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## Ambivalent Roots and Definitive Branches: Discourses on the Holy Man Shan Daokai (d. 359? AD)

### ABSTRACT:

The life of Shan Daokai is remarkably well documented in post-359 AD Chinese texts. Descriptions of his activities and accomplishments were transmitted and reconfigured by proponents of Chinese Buddhist, Confucian classicist, and religious Daoist teachings within a few centuries after his death. This paper questions the many identities composed about Shan during the medieval and early-modern periods and investigates how various images served different, competing cultural, social, and religious interests. It argues that a careful study of the making and remaking of Shan's life reveals ambivalences in the earliest descriptions, which created room for exclusive, partisan, and sectarian modifications of his image over time. The discursive branching out of Shan Daokai will be traced as a particularly clear and rich example of religious and hagiographic creativity, and as a potent reminder of the power of ambiguity in Chinese hagiography, the importance of comparative analysis, and the perils involved in the generic labeling of past holy persons who left little to no material traces.

### KEYWORDS:

Shan Daokai, holy person, Dunhuang, Luofu, biography, Buddhist, transcendent, Daoist, adept of mantic and medical techniques, Chinese religion, narrative theory

This paper investigates the first thousand years in the commemoration of a relatively unknown but surprisingly well-documented holy person named Shan Daokai 單[善]道開 (d. 359? AD). Over a dozen accounts of Shan are analyzed and compared to illustrate the radically different identities attributed to him through time, the importance of comparative textual analysis, and the perils involved in the uncritical labeling of holy persons of the past who left little to no material traces of their lives. I shall argue that the frequent refashioning of Shan Daokai in fourth- through fourteenth-century China was not only made possible by the lack of a clearly articulated identity in the earliest attested stories of his life, but was also facilitated by the sheer appeal of these stories, the intertextual and competitive nature of contemporary reli-

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gious discourse, and the significance and utility of written accounts of holy persons in the ongoing reimagining of religious traditions.<sup>1</sup>

A comparative analysis of Shan's many "lives" provides us with an extraordinary example of a process that Robert Campany has aptly termed "hagiographic co-optation ... the borrowing or outright stealing of figures from outsider traditions" to be remade into advocates for, or paradigms of, insider traditions.<sup>2</sup> The present study compares stories of Shan Daokai to illustrate how writers from the three major religious traditions coopted his image. It intends to show that proponents of these real or imagined religious communities drew from dynamic repertoires to refashion Shan's identity in purposeful ways.<sup>3</sup> For example, where Shan is identified, as we soon see, as "an adept of the Dao" (*Daoshi* 道士), "an accomplished being" (*zhiren* 至人), or "a transcendent" (*xianren* 仙人), his image is used to advocate Daoist teachings or the Way of transcendence (*xiandao* 仙道).<sup>4</sup> Where he is called "a renunciant" (*shamen* 沙門), "a monk" (*seng* 僧), "an eminent monk" (*gaoseng* 高僧), or "a dharm

<sup>1</sup> Several English-language studies focus on the discursive making of individual holy persons in premodern China; e.g., Russell Kirkland, "The Making of an Immortal: The Exaltation of Ho Chih-chang," *Numen* 38.2 (1991), pp. 214–30; Kirkland, "Tales of Thaumaturgy: T'ang Accounts of the Wonder-Worker Yeh Fa-shan," *MS* 40 (1992), pp. 47–86; Benjamin Penny, "Jiao Xian's Three Lives," in idem, ed., *Religion and Biography in China and Tibet* (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon, 2002), pp. 13–29; John McRae, *Seeing through Zen: Encounter, Transformation, and Genealogy in Chinese Chan Buddhism* (Los Angeles: U. California P., 2004), pp. xix–xx, 24–28; and John J. Jørgensen, *Inventing Hui-Neng, the Sixth Patriarch: Hagiography and Biography in Early Ch'an* (Leiden: Brill, 2005).

<sup>2</sup> Robert Ford Campany, *Making Transcendents: Ascetics and Social Memory in Early Medieval China* (Honolulu: U. Hawai'i P., 2009), p. 253. Examples introduced by Campany include the classical philosopher Mo Di 墨翟 (ca. 470–ca. 391 BC; Mozi 墨子) and the Han court Confucian classicists Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒 (ca. 179–ca. 104 BC) and Kong Anguo 孔安國 (d. ca. 100), all of whom were eventually remolded into seekers of transcendence.

<sup>3</sup> For the view that religions and cultures are "helpfully thought of as constantly changing repertoires of resources created and used by participants in imagined communities of identity, discourse, and practice," see Campany, *Signs from the Unseen Realm: Buddhist Miracle Tales from Early Medieval China* (Honolulu: U. Hawai'i P., 2012), p. 30; Campany, "'Buddhism Enters China' in Early Medieval China," in Mu-chou Poo, H. A. Drake, and Lisa Raphals, eds., *Old Society, New Belief: Religious Transformation of China and Rome, ca. 1st–6th Centuries* (New York: Oxford U.P., 2017), p. 14. Drawing from the work of literary critic Barbara Herrnstein Smith and narrative therapy expert Cheryl Mattingly, I understand narrative as "someone telling someone else something that's happened, regardless of whether or not it actually took place the way someone says it has"; Barbara Herrnstein Smith, "Narrative Versions, Narrative Theories," *Critical Inquiry* 7 (1980), pp. 213–36; and Cheryl Mattingly, *Healing Dramas and Clinical Plots: The Narrative Structure of Experience* (New York: Cambridge U.P., 1998). Narratives are not simply inanimate structures that relate information. They are social transactions, negotiations, and mediations initiated and received by human beings with dynamic personal and collective aims.

<sup>4</sup> Sound explanations of the concept of transcendence can be found in Isabelle Robinet, "The Taoist Immortal: Jesters of Light and Shadow, Heaven and Earth," *Journal of Chinese Religions* 13–14 (1986), pp. 87–105; Ursula-Angelika Cedzich, "Corpse Deliverance, Substitute Bodies, Name Change, and Feigned Death: Aspects of Metamorphosis and Immortality in Early Medieval China," *Journal of Chinese Religions* 29 (2001), pp. 12–17; Campany, *To*

master” (*fashi* 法師), his image is used to promote the Way of the Buddha (*Fodao* 佛道). And, narratives that portray Shan as a technician or a master of methods (*fashi* 法師) advance the Confucian classicist, or Ruist 儒, teachings of the imperial ritual system. Modern scholarship that treats Shan Daokai exhibits collectively the same variety in identifying Shan, but most of it, as we see next, offers more certain claims about who he was.

Hu Enhou 胡恩厚, for example, exclusively refers to Shan Daokai as an “adept of the Dao.”<sup>5</sup> Thomas Cleary frames him as a Daoist mystic,<sup>6</sup> Zornica Kirkova identifies him as a Daoist recluse,<sup>7</sup> and Stephen Eskildsen describes him as the “earliest known mummified Taoist.”<sup>8</sup> In a different vein, Guo Feng 郭鋒 identifies Shan as a “famous monk” (*mingseng* 名僧),<sup>9</sup> Li Min 利民 consistently portrays him as a “Buddhist monk” (*seng* 僧),<sup>10</sup> and Douglas Gildow and Marcus Bingenheimer argue that he represents one of the earliest examples of a mummified *Buddhist* in China.<sup>11</sup> Less exclusive labels applied to Shan include Erik

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*Live as Long as Heaven and Earth: A Translation and Study of Ge Hong's Traditions of Divine Transcendents* (Berkeley: U. California P., 2002), pp. 3–97; Miura Kunio, “*Xianren* 仙人 (Immortal; Transcendent),” in Fabrizio Pregadio, ed., *The Encyclopedia of Taoism* (London: Routledge, 2008), pp. 1092–94; and Campany, *Making Transcendents*.

<sup>5</sup> Hu Enhou 胡恩厚, “Dunhuang Mogaoku Daojiao shiji kaocha” 敦煌莫高窟道教史迹考察, *Zongjiaoxue yanjiu* 宗教學研究 1 (1988), p. 29.

<sup>6</sup> See Thomas F. Cleary, *Alchemists, Mediums, and Magicians: Stories of Taoist Mystics* (Boston: Shambhala, 2009), pp. 99–100, translating the *Jinshu* 晉書 tradition of “Dan Daokai.”

<sup>7</sup> See Zornica Kirkova, “Roaming into the Beyond: The Theme of Immortality in Early Medieval Chinese Verse,” Ph.D. diss. (Prague: Universita Karlova, 2007), p. 49.

<sup>8</sup> Stephen Eskildsen, *Teachings and Practices of the Early Quanzhen Taoist Masters* (Albany: SUNY P., 2004), p. 237, n. 38.

<sup>9</sup> Guo Feng 郭鋒, “Dunhuang Mogaoku jiuqing chuangjian yu heshi” 敦煌莫高窟究竟創建於何時, *Shehui kexue* 社會科學 6 (1987), pp. 109–11. The main argument of Guo’s article is that Shan Daokai and his early contemplation (*chan* 禪)-practicing companions were likely responsible for the initial development of the Mogao Grottoes (Mogaoku 莫高窟). Guo’s thesis is strong, but his defense is not. The Mogao Grottoes, also known as the Thousand Buddha Caves (Qian Fo dong 千佛洞), likely began to blossom into a center of Buddhist devotion in the mid-fourth century AD. According to Duan Wenjie 段文傑 (1917–2011), while the earliest date for the Mogao Grottoes is still being debated, “the usual date, which is 366, is based on Li Junxiu’s [李君修 (fl. 698)] book, *Fokan ji* (佛龕記) (*An Account of Buddhist Shrines*), written during the reign of Tang Empress Wu [武皇后] (684–704). This dating is corroborated by an inscription on the northern wall of Cave No. 300 of Zhang Daqian’s [張大千 (1899–1983)] index”; Duan, *Dunhuang Art: Through the Eyes of Duan Wenjie*, trans. Tan Chung (New Delhi: Indira Gandhi National Centre for Arts, 1994), p. 29. Duan also explains that in both of the accounts, a monk named Yuezun 樂尊 had a vision of many Buddhas at the site of what is now the Mogao Grottoes, inspiring him to construct the first grotto. For more on the general history of Dunhuang and the grottoes, see Xiang Da 向達, “Mogao Yulin erku zakao” 莫高榆林二窟雜考, in Xiang, ed., *Tangdai Chang’an yu xiyou wenming* 唐代長安與西域文明 (Beijing: Sanlian Bookshop, 1957), pp. 393–416; Duan, *Dunhuang Art*, pp. 27–31.

<sup>10</sup> Li Min 利民, “Suibing shiyao: Gudai Fojiao hongfa lisheng de zhongyao neirong zhiyi” 隨病施藥, 古代佛教弘法利生的重要內容之一, *Fojiao wenhua* 佛教文化 5 (2003), p. 50.

<sup>11</sup> See Douglas Gildow and Marcus Bingenheimer, “Buddhist Mummification in Taiwan:

Zürcher's "Chinese master," "expert physician," and "Buddho-Daoist thaumaturge";<sup>12</sup> and James Benn's "practitioner of longevity."<sup>13</sup> Justin Ritzinger and Bingenheimer, as well as Company, avoid labels altogether by focusing on practices attributed to Shan (or Dan 單) and the perspectives of the people responsible for those attributions.<sup>14</sup>

So who was Shan Daokai? My hypothesis, defended more fully below, is that Shan was an itinerant and ascetic renunciant who engaged in a variety of common Chinese religious practices that later came to be more exclusively received and identified as Buddhist, Daoist, or Confucian. Commemorators of his life were easily able to create specific images of him because of the ambivalent nature of the earliest extant descriptions of his life. This ambivalence, or ambiguity, opened the door to increasingly partisan portrayals, thus providing an excellent subject for discursive analysis and a "poster boy" for the perils of uncritical, generic labeling. These are not, however, the only reasons why memories of Shan are worthy of study.

An investigation of the discursive making and branching out of Shan Daokai reveals a remarkable number of stories about him that were composed and circulated during the millennium following his life. He is said to have lived during an era in which categorized collections of individual lives had long been a common genre of writing, and accounts of his life are included in collections compiled by proponents of all three of the major institutional religious traditions in medieval and Song China. And, Shan Daokai is consistently said to have been a native of Dunhuang 敦煌 (in northwest Gansu) who traversed a politically divided China proper during the mid-fourth century, to settle in the far southeast on Mount Luofu 羅浮山 (central Guangdong), where the famous alchemist and seeker of transcendence Ge Hong 葛洪 (283–343) had resided both early and late in life. Ge either died or attained transcendence there in 343,<sup>15</sup> while Shan's career found him on Mount

Two Case Studies," *AM* 3d ser. 15.2 (2002), p. 89.

<sup>12</sup> Erik Zürcher, *The Buddhist Conquest of China: The Spread and Adaptation of Buddhism In Early Medieval China*, 3d edn. (Leiden: Brill, 2007), pp. 182, 207.

<sup>13</sup> James A. Benn, *Tea in China: A Religious and Cultural History* (Honolulu: U. of Hawai'i P., 2015), p. 38. Benn points out that *Chajing* (cited in above table, no. 8) identifies Shan as one of the earliest tea drinkers in Chinese history. Lu did so by simply changing the character *tu* 荼 found in Shan's *Jinshu* biography to read *cha* 茶; see Lu, *Chajing*, in Yan Yiping 嚴一萍 et al., eds., *Baibu congshu jicheng* 百部叢書集成 (Taipei: Yiwen yinshu guan, 1965–1968) 3, p. 7a; Zheng Peikai 鄭培凱 and Zhu Zizhen 朱自振, comp., *Zhongguo lidai chashu huibian jiaozhu ben* 中國歷代茶書匯編校注本 (Hong Kong: Shangwu yinshu guan, 2007), p. 16.

<sup>14</sup> See Justin Ritzinger and Marcus Bingenheimer, "Whole-Body Relics in Chinese Buddhism: Previous Research and Historical Overview," *The Indian International Journal of Buddhist Studies* 7 (2006), pp. 57–58; Company, *Signs from the Unseen Realm*, pp. 168–71.

<sup>15</sup> Ge Hong 葛洪 (284–343), compiler of both *Shenxian zhuan* 神仙傳 and *Baopuzi* 抱朴子,

Luofu about sixteen years later, in or around 359. Finally, two of the boldest claims that have been made about Shan's contributions to Chinese society should be mentioned here. Neither can be confidently substantiated, but they both show that modern scholars continue to develop this sort of image of Shan Daokai. The first posits Shan as one of the first tea drinkers in China,<sup>16</sup> and the other contends that he was largely responsible for the establishment of the famous Mogao Grottoes 莫高窟 near Dunhuang.<sup>17</sup> More on Shan's tenuous links to tea and the Mogao Grottoes will be taken up, below.

The following table lists just over a dozen narratives from before the mid-fourteenth century that commemorate Shan Daokai. I make no claims for comprehensiveness, but the table includes all of the accounts that I am aware of at the present time. Questions arise as soon as one considers how to chronologically arrange these narratives. Which should be listed first, an eyewitness account of a visit to Shan's resting grounds in 363 AD or a "separate tradition" (*biezhuan* 別傳) of his life that might have been composed even closer to 359? Making this decision even more difficult is the fact that both accounts first appeared only in much later texts. The eyewitness account was recorded in an early-seventh-century encyclopedia where it is cited as a fragment from a nonextant mid- to late-fourth-century local history, while the separate tradition (which my main text will call "*Shan biezuan*" for convenience) appears in a late-fifth-century collection of pro-Buddhist miracle tales. Because the eyewitness account is attributed to the compiler of the text in which it appears, it must have been composed after the author's purported visit to Mount Luofu in 363 and before his death in 376. The *Shan biezuan* tradition might have been composed shortly after 359, but it also might have been written as late as the late-fifth century. Because the eyewitness account can be more confidently dated, and because it might have been borrowed by the writer of the *Shan biezuan*,<sup>18</sup> it comes first in the table. These questions – and many others – are discussed below, after the following outline of the first thousand years in the discursive making and remaking of Shan's identity.<sup>19</sup>

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purportedly retired to Mount Luofu in around 331 with a small group of disciples in order to concoct an elixir of longevity and pursue transcendence. For more on his life, see Campany, *To Live as Long as Heaven and Earth*, pp. 13–17.

<sup>16</sup> Lu, *Chajing* 3, p. 7a; Zheng and Zhu, *Zhongguo lidai chashu*, p. 16.

<sup>17</sup> Guo, "Dunhuang Mogaoku jiuqing," pp. 109–11.

<sup>18</sup> It might have later been added to the *Mingxiang ji* account of Shan.

<sup>19</sup> For more on the notion of "discursive formation," see Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith (1969; trans. 1972; rpt. New York: Routledge, 2002), pp. 71–78, 130–31. Vincent Cornell, who borrows from Foucault's work to form an approach to the study of written materials on the lives of saints or holy persons, writes: "Sainthood is a

*Table. Fourth- through Fourteenth-Century Accounts of Shan Daokai*

NO.	DATE	SOURCE	IDENTITY
1	363-376	<i>Luoshan shu</i> 羅山疏 ( <i>Comments on [the History of] Mount Luo</i> ), comp. by Yuan Hong 袁宏 (ca. 328-ca. 376)	adept of the Dao
2	359-490	<i>Shan Daokai biezhuàn</i> 單道開別傳 (Separate Tradition of Shan Daokai), anonymous (cited as <i>Shan biezhuàn</i> )	renunciant
3	490	<i>Mingxiang jì</i> 冥祥記 ( <i>Record of Signs from the Unseen Realm</i> ), by Wang Yan 王琰 (ca. 454-ca. 490)	non-brahmanical renunciant ( <i>shamen</i> 沙門; Skt. <i>śramaṇa</i> )
4	516?	<i>Mingseng zhuan</i> 名僧傳 ( <i>Traditions of Famous Monks</i> ), comp. Baochang 寶唱 (ca. 464-ca. 516)	famous Buddhist monk
5	519	<i>Gaoseng zhuan</i> 高僧傳 ( <i>Traditions of Eminent Monks</i> ), comp. Huijiao 慧皎 (479-554)	eminent Buddhist monk
6	644	<i>Jinshu</i> 晉書 ( <i>History of the Jin Dynasty</i> ), j. 95, sect. "Yishu liezhuan" 藝術列傳 ("Arrayed Traditions of Artisans and Technicians"), comp. Fang Xuanling 房玄齡 (578-648) and Xu Jingzong 許敬宗 (592-672) et al. (cited as <i>Jinshu</i> 95)	healer and seer
7	664	<i>Ji shenzhou sanbao gantong lu</i> 集神州三寶感通錄 ( <i>Records of the Resonant Communications on the Three Treasures from the Divine Province</i> ), comp. Daoxuan 道宣 (596-667)	monk ( <i>seng</i> 僧)
8	760?	<i>Chajing</i> 茶經 ( <i>Classic of Tea</i> ), comp. and by Lu Yu 陸羽 (733-804)	tea drinker
9	1110?	"Luofu er xian zan" 羅浮二賢贊 ("Encomia for the Two Worthies of Luofu"), by Tang Geng 唐庚 (1070-1120) (cited as Encomia)	accomplished being ( <i>zhiren</i> 至人)
10	1149	<i>Tongzhi</i> 通志 ( <i>Comprehensive Treatise [on Institutions]</i> ), comp. Zheng Qiao 鄭樵 (1104-1162)	healer and seer
11	1154	<i>Sandong qunxian lu</i> 三洞群仙錄 ( <i>Records of Assemblies of Transcendents from the Three Caverns</i> ), comp. Chen Baoguang 陳葆光 (fl. 1154)	transcendent
12	1294-1307	<i>Lishi zhen xian tidao tongjian</i> 歷世真仙體道通鑑 ( <i>Comprehensive Mirror of Successive Generations of the Perfected, Transcendents, and Those Who Embody the Dao</i> ), comp. Zhao Daoyi 趙道一 (ca. 1294-1307)	transcendent
13	1335-1350	<i>Xuanpin lu</i> 玄品錄 ( <i>Records of Varieties of the Mysterious</i> ), comp. Zhang Yu 張雨 (ca. 1280-1350)	transcendent

matter of discourse ... a process of negotiation ... . Sainthood needs to be recognized by another to exist. Sometimes, a written record is part of the negotiating process. When this occurs, the saint is on the way to becoming what Michel Foucault has termed a 'discursive formation,' a sort of literary monument that imposes an artificial coherence on the saint's life"; Vincent Cornell, *Realm of the Saint: Power and Authority in Moroccan Sufism* (Austin: U. Texas P., 1998), p. 63. Cornell urges us to think of holy persons as hagiographic constructs, as negotiated memories that tend to develop into stable literary monuments.

AMBIVALENT ROOTS: MID-FOURTH TO  
LATE-FIFTH-CENTURY ACCOUNTS OF SHAN

Perhaps the earliest received account of Shan Daokai comes from Yuan Hong's *Luoshan shu*.<sup>20</sup> This local history is no longer extant, but chief compiler Ouyang Xun's 歐陽詢 (557–641) *Yiwen leiju* 藝文類聚 (*Categorically Compiled Arts and Letters*; 625) quotes at least two fragments from it.<sup>21</sup> The fragment featuring Shan Daokai reads:

Shan Daokai's corpse was in the stone cavern, at the base of the northern cliff [of Mount Luo]. His form and frame had decayed and rotted away, and only white bones remained. I formerly became acquainted with this "adept of the Way" in the capital. Hearing about him made me sigh sadly. His deeds were extraordinary and his practices strange. When it was time, he just molted like a cicada and detached from his bones. I took the earthenware bowl and incense that were already in the stone chamber, brushed them off, and burned incense for Shan.<sup>22</sup> 善道開屍在石室，北壁下。形體朽壞止有白骨在。昔在都識此道士。聞之使人慨然。其業行殊異。當蟬蛻解骨耳。石室中先有甌盛香得，編掃除燒香。

This short account of Shan Daokai gives us a blend of images and practices related to both transcendence and the way of the Buddha. Shan is said to have "molted like a cicada" and "detached from his bones," both common metaphors used to describe the attainment of transcendence, particularly the salvific achievements of "release from form" (*xingjie* 形解) and "escape by means of a simulated corpse" (*shijie* 尸解).<sup>23</sup> Shan also reportedly possessed an earthenware bowl and was

<sup>20</sup> Situated northwest of present-day Guangzhou, Mount Luofu is the first major ridge inland from the coast. For more on the mountain's early history, see Chen Shunyu 陳舜俞 (d. 1074), comp., *Luofu shan ji* 羅浮山記, in Tao Zongyi 陶宗儀 (d. 1396), comp., *Shuofu* 說郛 (Shanghai: Shanghai wuyin shuguan, 1927) 4, pp. 7a–7b; Wang Ming 王明, ed., *Baopuzi neipian jiaoshi* 抱朴子內篇校釋 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1985) 4, p. 872; Michel Soymié, "Le Lo-feou chan, étude de géographie religieuse," *BEFEO* 48.1 (1954), pp. 1–140.

<sup>21</sup> *Yiwen leiju* 藝文類聚, commissioned in 622 by Tang Gaozu 唐高祖帝 (r. 618–626; Li Yuan 李淵) was one of the first court-sponsored literary projects completed during the Tang dynasty. Chiefly directed by Ouyang Xun, the text was offered up to the throne in 624. See Wang Pu 王溥 (922–982) et al., comp., *Tang huiyao* 唐會要 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2006) 36, p. 759. For more on the textual history of *Yiwen leiju*, see Ouyang Xun 歐陽詢 (557–641) et al., comp., *Yiwen leiju* (rpt. with index, Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1982), pp. 1–16 (intro.); Teng Ssu-yü 鄧嗣禹, *Zhongguo leishu mulu chugao* 中國類書目錄初稿 (Taipei: Guting shuwu, 1970), pp. 5–6; and Hu Daojing 胡道靜, *Zhongguo gudai de leishu* 中國古代的類書 (rpt. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2005), pp. 104–13.

<sup>22</sup> Ouyang, *Yiwen leiju* 73, p. 3a; Li Fang 李昉 (925–996), comp., *Tai ping yulan* 太平御覽 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1966) 759, p. 6a–b.

<sup>23</sup> While "adept of the Way" is but one of many ways to translate the Chinese term *daoshi* 道士, the rest of the passage strongly suggests that it should be understood as "adept of the Dao," or "practitioner of 'the Way of transcendence' (*xiandao* 仙道)." The term *daoshi* is also used in reference to other kinds of religious practitioners, including Buddhists.

left in the wilderness to decompose after he died, suggesting Buddhist images and practices.<sup>24</sup> How should we deal with what, on the surface, appears to be a conflict in religious identity? Should we attribute it to carelessness on the part of Yuan Hong, a conscious effort to make a point, or an accurate reflection of the hybrid, perhaps ambivalent, nature of Shan's affiliations, practices, and identity?

Yuan Hong (table, no. 1) was an established essayist, poet, rhapsodist, biographer, and historian, and much of his work is extant.<sup>25</sup> Writings attributed to him strongly suggest that he was a Chinese member of the literati who was familiar with the teachings of the Buddha and the pursuit of transcendence. Assuming that Yuan authored the fragment translated above, which cited it, and that he was not intentionally deceiving his readers, it is reasonable to speculate that he witnessed Shan Daokai's decomposed corpse and skeletal remains in a north-facing cavern on Mount Luo in the years following 359 AD, yet chose to describe Shan's achievements in the language of proponents of transcendence. This is not surprising given the connection that already existed between transcendence and Mount Luo. Yuan's *Luoshan shu* would have almost

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Many earlier occurrences of the "molting like a cicada" metaphor suggest spiritual purification and transcendence. See, e.g., Liu Wendian 劉文典 (1889-1958), comp., *Huainan honglie jijie* 淮南鴻烈集解 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1989) 7, p. 235; Sima Qian 司馬遷 (145-85 BC) et al., *Shiji* 史記 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1959) 84, p. 2482; Wang Yi 王逸 (ca. 89-158), comp., *Chuci buzhu* 楚辭補注 (Chang'an: Chang'an chubanshe, 1991) 278, pp. 12-14. Isabelle Robinet ("Metamorphosis and Deliverance from the Corpse in Taoism," *History of Religions* 19 [1979], p. 65) points out that "detaching from one's bones" signifies a kind of imperfect perfection in early Daoist traditions: "the purification of the body, which could not be completed by the adept, is activated by the exercises he practiced during his life ... one part of the body becomes perfectly pure and regenerated, such as bones of jade (leaving the body without bones)."

<sup>24</sup> Many eminent Buddhists in early-medieval China were left exposed in the wilderness as a post-mortem method of accruing merit (by nourishing other living beings in the wilderness and by manifesting – and teaching – the empty nature of the body). For more on this practice, see Joseph Needham and Gwei-Djen Lu, *Science and Civilisation in China* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1974), vol. 5, part 2, pp. 299-304; and Liu Shufen, "Death and Degeneration of Life: Exposure of the Corpse in Medieval Chinese Buddhism," *Journal of Chinese Religions* 28 (2000), pp. 1-30. For the Buddhist practice of mummification or preservation of the corpse in China, see Robert H. Sharf, "The Idolation of Enlightenment: On the Mummification of Ch'an Masters in Medieval China," *History of Religions* 31.1 (1992), pp. 1-31; Bernard Faure, *The Rhetoric of Immediacy: A Cultural Critique of Chan/Zen Buddhism* (Princeton: Princeton U.P., 1991), pp. 158-60; and Gildow and Bingenheimer, "Buddhist Mummification in Taiwan," p. 89. Stephen Eskildsen argues that the practice of exposure burial in China ultimately has roots in Zoroastrian practices; *Asceticism in Early Taoist Religion* (Albany: SUNY P., 1998), pp. 139-42.

<sup>25</sup> The court-sponsored biographical tradition about Yuan Hong (byname Yanbo 彦伯) appears in the "Wenyuan" 文苑 section of Fang Xuanling 房玄齡 (578-648) et al., comps., *Jinshu* 晉書 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1974; hereafter *JŚ*) 92, pp. 2391-99. Two of Yuan Hong's most famous works are *Hou Hanji* 後漢紀 and *Mingshi zhuan* 名士傳. Both confirm Yuan's at least cursory familiarity with Buddhism and transcendence.

certainly contained an account of the most famous resident of the area, Ge Hong, who tried there to decoct an elixir of longevity and reportedly achieved transcendence sometime in or after 343 AD. Yet, the notion that Shan Daokai was really a Buddhist ascetic whom Yuan Hong – for one reason or another – described as a transcendent becomes complicated given Shan’s connections to Mount Luo, a place that became, in the terms of Erik Zürcher, “a Buddho-Daoist centre,” but not until the *late* fourth century, when “Buddhist elements penetrated into this stronghold of Daoism.”<sup>26</sup> Why did Shan Daokai go there? Was he attracted to the mountain, to Ge Hong and the pursuit of transcendence, or was his exposed burial there merely a coincidence? Yuan’s *Luoshan shu* does not answer any of these questions, but subsequent accounts began to do so in different ways.

Wang Yan’s late-fifth-century *Mingxiang ji* (table, no. 3) describes Shan Daokai as a Buddhist monk without explicitly labeling him as such. In it, the contemplative practices, miraculous abilities, and diet attributed to Shan share much in common with the activities of seekers of transcendence, but as we read below, Shan is explicitly said to have repelled transcedents with garlic in the account and there is no mention of molting like a cicada or detaching from one’s bones, not even in its summary of Yuan Hong’s visit to Mount Luofu. Shan is, however, clearly associated with a number of Buddhist practices. He accepts a Buddhist novice, frequents Buddhist monasteries, and engages in charitable acts as he wanders southeast from Dunhuang through central China before passing away on Mount Luofu in 359, where his corpse is subjected to exposure burial. Moreover, Buddhist notions of cause and effect are clearly operative in Wang Yan’s account of Shan.<sup>27</sup>

The dynastic history *Nanshi* 南史 (*History of the Southern Dynasties*) tells us that Wang Yan served as an official under the Qi 齊 (479–501) and Liang 梁 (502–556) and passed away sometime around 510.<sup>28</sup> Wang

<sup>26</sup> Zürcher, *Buddhist Conquest*, p. 114.

<sup>27</sup> Miraculous events recorded in *Mingxiang ji* are almost always preceded by a pious action that appears to stimulate a miraculous response in deliberate ways. This “A-B” structure is commonly known as the *yanying* 驗應 (evidential response) trope. For more on this, see Robert Campany, *Strange Writing: Anomaly Accounts in Early Medieval China* (Albany: SUNY P., 1996), pp. 322–23. In the *Mingxiang ji* account of Shan, his actions are repeatedly portrayed as stimuli (*gan* 感) for resonant responses (*ying* 應) of an evidential (*yan* 驗) kind. For example, his seclusion in the mountains and his special dietary regimen appear to act as stimuli for his miraculous ability to cover great distances in a short amount of time. And, his ability to remain unfazed by spirits is framed as a result of his piety and ascetic diet – garlic thrown in for an extra measure of protection.

<sup>28</sup> He is credited with authoring at least two works: *Song chungiu* 宋春秋 and *Mingxiang ji*, the latter probably a much longer work than today’s reconstruction. See Li Yanshou 李延壽 (ca. 618–676) et al., comp., *Nanshi* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1975) 57, p. 1421.

Guoliang 王國良, drawing from a variety of sources, convincingly argues that Wang Yan's ancestral home was in present-day Taiyuan 太原 (central Shanxi) and that his family moved south at the beginning of the Eastern Jin 東晉 (318–420) to settle in Jiankang 建康.<sup>29</sup> Most of the remaining information about Wang's life appears in his "Author's Preface" (*zixu* 自序) to *Mingxiang ji*,<sup>30</sup> where his attraction to the miraculous and his desire to promote the efficacy of Buddhism are explained.<sup>31</sup>

Campany's excellent 2012 translation and study of the 131 Chinese Buddhist miracle tales comprising *Mingxiang ji* dates the collection to the late-fifth century, pointing out that the text contains internal dates as late as 485 AD and is mentioned in the preface to Lu Gao's 陸杲 (459–532) circa 501 AD *Xi Guanshiyin yingyan ji* 繫觀世音應驗記 (*Appended Record of Avalokiteśvara's Responsive Manifestations*).<sup>32</sup> Campany also provides evidence that Wang Yan borrowed extensively from Liu Yiqing's 劉義慶 (403–444) *Xuanyan ji* 宣驗記 (*Record of Proclamations of Manifestations*) to compile his collection,<sup>33</sup> just like the later collections of Lu Gao and Huijiao appropriated much from Wang's *Mingxiang ji*.<sup>34</sup> Because Campany has already provided us with a superb translation of *Mingxiang ji*'s account of Shan Daokai, I refer interested readers to it.<sup>35</sup> I will merely summarize it and suggest a single divergence.

<sup>29</sup> Wang Guoliang 王國良, *Mingxiang ji yanjiu* 冥祥記研究 (Taipei: Wenshizhe chubanshe, 1999), pp. 2–3. Jianye 建業 was located around the present-day city of Nanjing 南京 in south-west Jiangsu, on the south side of the Yangtze River. It had previously served as the capital of the kingdom of Wu 吳 (222–80). In the first year of the reign of Jin emperor Min 晉愍帝 (r. 313–317; Sima Ye 司馬鄴), the city was renamed Jiankang 建康 and became the capital of the Eastern Jin in 318.

<sup>30</sup> Lu Xun 魯迅 (1881–1936), comp., *Guxiaoshuo gouchen* 古小說鈎沈 (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1954), pp. 373–74; Wang, *Mingxiang ji yanjiu*, pp. 67–70. The whole preface and additional information on Wang Yan's writing *Mingxiang ji* can be found in Campany, *Signs from the Unseen Realm*, pp. 63–67 and pp. 7–17, respectively.

<sup>31</sup> Wang, *Mingxiang ji yanjiu*, p. 68. For details of this description, see Campany, "The Real Presence," *History of Religions* 32.3 (1993), p. 266; Campany, *Signs from the Unseen Realm*, p. 67, n. 26.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 10–11. For the account in which this "latest internal date" appears, see Lu, *Guxiaoshuo gouchen*, p. 456.

<sup>33</sup> Campany, *Strange Writing*, p. 4. The same point is made in Gjertson, "Early Chinese Buddhist Miracle Tale," 294–95. For more on Lu Xun's recompilation of *Xuanyan ji*, see Campany, *Strange Writing*, p. 77. On the different sources used to compile *Mingxiang ji*, see Shinohara Koichi 莊司格一, "Meishoki ni tsuite" 冥祥記について, *Tōyōgaku shūkan* 東洋学集刊 22 (1969), pp. 41–65; Shinohara, "Two Sources of Chinese Buddhist Biographies: Stupa Inscriptions and Miracle Stories," in Phyllis Granoff and Koichi Shinohara, eds., *Monks and Magicians: Religious Biographies in Asia* (New York: Mosaic Press, 1988), p. 131; and Campany, *Signs from the Unseen Realm*, pp. 17–27.

<sup>34</sup> Campany, *Strange Writing*, pp. 82–83. We will see one example of Huijiao's borrowing when we examine his *Gaoseng zhuan* account of Shan Daokai, below.

<sup>35</sup> Campany, *Signs from the Unseen Realm*, pp. 168–71.

Wang Yan introduces Shan 單 as a Latter Zhao 後趙 (319–351) monk (Ch.: *shamen* 沙門; Skt.: *śramaṇa*) whose surname is sometimes written with the character Shan 善.<sup>36</sup> After stating that his exact place of birth is unknown, Wang quotes a *biezhuan* (discussed, above) concerning Shan Daokai, which states that “he was from Dunhuang,<sup>37</sup> was originally surnamed Meng 孟,<sup>38</sup> and renounced family ties at an early age.”<sup>39</sup> It is difficult to determine how much Wang Yan is quoting from this “*Shan biezhuān*” in the *Mingxiang ji* account. He might only be quoting the passage just translated, as Campy contends, but his whole narrative of Shan might be taken from it. I will treat the whole narrative, except the brief introduction (and perhaps the conclusion), as a version of the “*Shan biezhuān*,” but my only defense is that there is nothing in any of the editions of the text that have been examined thus far that precludes such a reading. Wang Yan almost certainly did not mean the account to be read as a long quote, but even if he was only using a small piece of information from the “*Shan biezhuān*,” it must have greatly informed “his” miracle tale.

<sup>36</sup> Jan Nattier points out that the category of *śramaṇa* (non-brahmanical renunciant) was already well established in the time of the Buddha, and early Buddhist monks or nuns were viewed as varieties of *śramaṇa*. Nattier, *A Few Good Men: The Bodhisattva Path According to the Inquiry of Ugra (Ugrapariprocchā)* (Honolulu: U. Hawai'i P., 2003), p. 75 and p. 286, n. 514. In China, the term came to be transliterated as *shamen* 沙門 and translated as *xixin* 息心 (calm hearted; unafraid) before the end of the Han. Nattier's translation of the canonical Tibetan version of the *Ugrapariprocchā-sūtra* (*The Inquiry of Ugra Scripture*) contains a passage at the beginning of sect. 25 (“The Virtues of Wilderness-Dwelling,” pp. 291–307) describing *śramaṇa* as purified, guarded, calmed, and tamed beings who exert themselves and put forth great effort in wilderness dwelling. This passage ends with a question, which is then answered through the rest of the section: “So why do I live in the wilderness? It is for this [reason]: I should fulfill the aim of the *śramaṇa*” (p. 291). The same kind of self-doubt and self-questioning about living the life of a recluse is found in the hymn attributed to Shan, and just as Nattier describes the *śramaṇa* movement as “a profoundly individual and solitary enterprise” (p. 195, n. 2), one could describe the seemingly fearless, selfless, and ascetic enterprises of Shan Daokai as an almost perfect example of an *Inquiry of Ugra* ilk of *śramaṇa*. *The Inquiry of Ugra* was translated into Chinese before the end of the Han. For more on the Indic use of the designation *śramaṇa*, see P. S. Jaini, “*Śramaṇa* Conflict,” in J. W. Elder, ed., *Chapters in Indian Civilization* (Dubuque: Kendall/Hunt, 1970), pp. 40–81.

<sup>37</sup> Dunhuang was at various times under the control of the kingdom of Wei 魏國 (220–265), the Western Jin 西晉 (265–316), and the Latter Zhao 後趙 (319–351). The Former Liang took control in the early-4th c., but this likely postdated Shan's birth and early years. Dunhuang was no stranger to Buddhist converts and travelers when Shan was young, but the famous Buddhist grottoes located there were established in the middle of the 4th c., seemingly long after he had left Dunhuang.

<sup>38</sup> I have not been able to locate any information on the Dunhuang Meng clan.

<sup>39</sup> This “*Shan biezhuān*” might be the title *Daoren Shan Daokai zhuan* 道人單道開傳 (*Tradition of Shan Daokai, Man of the Way*) attributed to Kang Hong 康泓 (ca. mid- to late-4th c.) by the compilers of *Suishu* 隋書 (*The Book of Sui*) “Bibliographic Treatise”; see Wei Zheng 魏徵 (580–643) et al., comp., *Suishu* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1973) 33, p. 978. Besides a few words in later accounts of Shan that mention Kang, nothing else is known about him.

Wang Yan's tale goes on to explain that Shan Daokai secluded himself in the rugged mountain valleys around Dunhuang, where he abstained from grains and staple foods for three years,<sup>40</sup> ate only refined pine resin for thirty years,<sup>41</sup> then limited his diet to small pebbles.<sup>42</sup> If his body shivered from wind or cold, he just chewed on peppercorns and ginger.<sup>43</sup> His breath (*qi* 氣) was faint and his vigor was weak, but his complexion was fresh and glossy, and he could walk as if flying. Mountain spirits tested him on a number of occasions, but they never distracted him from his aims. Transcendents often came, but they too were unable to curb his resolve. Shan chewed on garlic to repel them.<sup>44</sup>

*Mingxiang ji* goes on to explain that after residing in Baohan 抱罕 for a time,<sup>45</sup> Shan was invited from Xiping to Ye in 334.<sup>46</sup> He walked

<sup>40</sup> On abstinence from grains as a central practice on the way to transcendence, see Campy, "The Meanings of Cuisines of Transcendence in Late Classical and Early Medieval China," *TP* 91.3-5 (2005), p. 39. On the notion that this practice came about due to subsistence diets in famine times, see Li Ling 李零, *Zhongguo fangshu kao* 中國方術考 (Beijing: Dongfang chubanshe, 2001), p. 349.

<sup>41</sup> Pine resin (*songzhi* 松脂), extracted from the Chinese pine tree (*Pinus sinensis*), was commonly used in recipes for longevity. See F. Porter Smith and George Ashur Stuart, *Chinese Materia Medica: Vegetable Kingdom* (Shanghai: American Presbyterian Mission Press, 1911), p. 333. As the essence of a tree symbolizing long life, ingested pine resin became associated with human longevity and was thought to be the source of *fuling* 茯苓/伏苓 (*Pachyma cocos*) (discussed below), another substance traditionally tied to longevity and transcendence.

<sup>42</sup> In modern medical terms, the ingestion of stones is referred to as lithophagy, on which, and also on the related geophagy (consumption of earth or soil to make up for mineral deficiencies), see Oliver Wings, "Identification, Distribution, and Function of Gastroliths in Dinosaurs and Extant Birds with Emphasis on Ostriches," Ph.D. diss. (Bonn: Friedrich-Wilhelms Universität, 2004), pp. 29-30. B. Bhushan, "An Unusual Case of Lithophagy," *Journal of the Indian Medical Association* 40.2 (1963), pp. 40-79. I thank Clarke Hudson for drawing this topic to my attention.

<sup>43</sup> Li Shizhen's 李時真 (1518-1583) *Bencao gangmu* 本草綱目 describes the medicinal qualities of pepper and ginger that share much in common with Shan Daokai's purported applications. E.g., Li's text claims that the ingestion of peppercorns and ginger root "dispels wind [pathogens]" (*chufeng* 除風) and "warms the inside" (*wenzhong* 溫中); Li Shizhen, comp., *Bencao gangmu* (Shanghai: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1959) 26, p. 717; 32, p. 30.

<sup>44</sup> *Bencao gangmu* describes garlic as a pungent, carminative plant that muddles the mind, decreases willpower, and incites passions. It is commonly proscribed in both Buddhist and Daoist precepts, present and past; Li, *Bencao gangmu* 26, pp. 52-55; and Smith and Stuart, *Chinese Materia Medica*, pp. 27-28. Regarding *Mingxiang ji*'s account of Shan, Campy perceptively points out that the narrative could easily be read as a description of a successful transcendent up to this point. The mention of garlic, as one of my reviewers insightfully suggested, isn't so much pro-Buddhist as it is a rejection of the quest for transcendence. It is an example of an outsider or extrinsic activity (chewing garlic) used to distinguish the actor from an insider tradition (quest for transcendence). Garlic interestingly disappears from accounts of Shan as proscriptions against it become better documented in Chinese Buddhist texts.

<sup>45</sup> Baohan was a commandery located in the western reaches of the Former Zhao 前趙 empire (Han-Zhao 漢趙; 304-329), around present-day Linxia County 臨夏縣 in southern Gansu, approximately eighty kilometers southwest of Lanzhou 蘭州.

<sup>46</sup> The Former Liang commandery of Xiping 西平 was located in present-day Xining county 西寧縣 in eastern Qinghai. Ye 鄴, or Yecheng, was located in present-day Linzhang county

over 700 *li* (about 380 km) in a single day. When he was passing through Nan'an 南安,<sup>47</sup> he converted a thirteen- or fourteen-year-old boy and made him a novice monk (*shami* 沙彌; Skt.: *śrāmaṇera*). They traveled to Zhaode Buddhist Monastery 昭德佛圖,<sup>48</sup> where Shan built a raised structure inside of his room for meditation.<sup>49</sup> Shan continued to abstain from grains, but he frequently ingested medicines with the scent of pine resin and *fuling* 茯苓.<sup>50</sup> He was skilled at curing eye maladies, and he often traveled into remote regions to heal people. Princes and nobles came from afar to see Shan. All of the gifts they gave him were dispersed as charity; not a single thread remained.

Finally, Wang Yan's *Mingxiang ji* account of Shan Daokai claims that Shan foresaw the chaos to come at the end of Shi Hu's 石虎 reign (r. 333–349),<sup>51</sup> so he and his disciple went south to Xuchang 許昌.<sup>52</sup> In early 359 they arrived in Jianye 建業, then continued on to Panyu 番禺.<sup>53</sup> Shan secluded himself on Mount Luofu, where he died in the seventh lunar month (Aug. 10–Sept. 8) of 359. His last instructions stated that his corpse be left exposed in the woods, and when the time came, his disciples did that. The account ends with the following passage:

Yuan Yanbo (i.e., Yuan Hong) of Chen commandery became governor of Nanhai in the first year of the Xingning reign-period (i.e., 363).<sup>54</sup> Together with his younger brother [Yuan] Yingshu (dates

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臨彰縣 on the border of Hebei and Henan. It became the capital of the Latter Zhao at the beginning of Shi Hu's reign.

<sup>47</sup> Nan'an was a Former Liang commandery situated in present-day northeast Longxi county 隴西縣 in Gansu.

<sup>48</sup> Zhaode Buddhist Monastery was located in Ye.

<sup>49</sup> Or, "he engaged in intense mental concentration (*chan* 禪) inside of it." The structure is said to have been eight or nine *chi* (about 2 m) tall and covered by a thatched reed canopy.

<sup>50</sup> *Fuling* is a fungus or tuber that grows on the roots of pine trees. It was used by the Chinese both as a food and medicine, and traditionally thought to be produced from the slow metamorphosis of pine resin over thousands of years. For more traditional uses of *fuling* as a medicine, see Smith and Stuart, *Chinese Materia Medica*, p. 298. On on associations among *fuling*, longevity, and transcendence, see Campany, *To Live as Long as Heaven and Earth*, p. 310, n. 73.

<sup>51</sup> Shi Hu, byname Jilong 季龍, was a member of the Jie tribe, traditionally centered around present-day Liao county 遼縣 in Shanxi 山西. The Jie were one of the Five Hu tribes (Jie, Xiongnu 匈奴, Xianbei 鮮卑, Di 底, and Qiang 羌 peoples) who helped bring about the fall of the Western Jin. Shi Hu took the throne in a coup after the death of his uncle, Shi Le 石勒 (r. 319–333), founder of the Latter Zhao. Shi Hu moved the capital from Xiangguo to Yecheng 鄴城 in 335, a year after he took the throne.

<sup>52</sup> The Latter Zhao commandery of Xuchang was located a few kilometers west of the present-day city of the same name in central Henan.

<sup>53</sup> Panyu, located in the present-day city of the same name in Guangdong, was a district situated about 25 km south-southeast of present-day Canton.

<sup>54</sup> Chen 陳 was an Eastern Jin commandery located around present-day Huaiyang 淮陽 in western Henan.

unknown), they climbed Mount Luofu. Honoring [Shan Daokai's] decayed corpse, they burned incense and paid obeisance.<sup>55</sup> 陳郡袁彥伯，興寧元年，爲南海太守，與弟穎叔登游此岳，致敬其骸，燒香作禮。

The “*Shan biezhuān*” is the earliest extant source to claim that Shan was a native of Dunhuang. Subsequent narratives of his life never contradict this point. Shan was likely active there in the late-third and early-fourth centuries, when the strategically important Hexi 河西 corridor came under the control of the Western Jin 西晉 (265–317) and the Former Liang 前涼 (320–376). The ethnically Chinese commander of Liang province, Zhang Gui 張軌 (255–320), successfully defended the corridor and remained loyal to the Jin after 317, at least until the late 320s, when the ethnic Jie 羯 people's state of Latter Zhao became too strong to resist.<sup>56</sup> Because Dunhuang was under the control of ethnic Chinese authorities for most of the early-fourth century, many scholars argue that Chinese culture dominated the region at this time.<sup>57</sup> Jiang Boqin 姜伯勤, for example, contends that although the area was culturally and ethnically diverse, Confucian classicist teachings provided the ideological foundation for the elite of that time period, while Huang-Lao 黃老 thought and the pursuit of transcendence pervaded the popular culture of Dunhuang.<sup>58</sup>

<sup>55</sup> Translating from the *Mingxiang ji* account of Shan Daokai as it is recorded in Daoshi 道世 (d. 668), comp., *Fayuan zhulin* 法苑珠林, T 2122, vol. 53, j. 27, p. 485A, ll. 4–24. On other editions of the same account, see Lu, *Guxiaoshuo gouchen*, p. 491; Wang, *Mingxiang ji yanjiu*, p. 67. My translation closely follows that of Campany, *Signs from the Unseen Realm*, pp. 168–71.

<sup>56</sup> The Xiongnu state of Han-Zhao (Former Zhao 前趙) was a vassal of the Han, the Cao-Wei, and the Jin until it took Luoyang and then Chang'an from the Western Jin, seizing control over much of north-central China. In 319, the Jie 羯 state of Latter Zhao, led by Shi Le, managed to divorce itself from the Former Zhao, and took control of most of what is now northeast China (north of the Yangzi). By 319, the Latter Zhao was able to fully conquer Han-Zhao. See David Graff, *Medieval Chinese Warfare (300–900)* (New York: Routledge, 2002), pp. 54–64.

<sup>57</sup> Similar arguments are proposed and defended in a number of studies dealing with the early-medieval history of Dunhuang, including Gao Guofan 高國藩, *Zhongguo minsu tanwei: Dunhuang gusu yu minsu liubian* 中國民俗探微，敦煌古俗與民俗流變 (Nanjing: Hehai daxue chubanshe, 1989); Jiang Boqin 姜伯勤, *Dunhuang yishu zongjiao yu liyue wenming* 敦煌藝術宗教禮樂文明 (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 1996); and Yan Tingliang 顏廷亮, “Guanyu Dunhuang diqu zaoqi zongjiao wenti” 關於敦煌地區早期宗教問題, *Dunhuang yanjiu* 119 (2010), pp. 56–61.

<sup>58</sup> Jiang, *Dunhuang yishu zongjiao yu liyue wenming*, p. 268. Shan Daokai is not the only – or the earliest – proponent of transcendence introduced in Jiang's work. Suo Jing 索靖 (239–303), for example, is described as a member of an extended clan known for their adherence to Huang-Lao 黃老 teachings. He is said to have developed a free-flowing calligraphic style that he described as “script from the cliff-grottoes of transcendents” (*xianyan zhi wen* 仙岩之文). According to the *Jinshu* tradition of Suo Jing, he was a native of Dunhuang who was born into a long line of officials. Trained in the classics, he served at the Jin court until the late-3d c., when he was ordered to govern a number of different areas in the north. He ended his career as governor and protector of the Hexi corridor. He is famous for his calligraphy, poetry, and prose works on the five phases (*wuxing* 五行), *yinyang* 陰陽, and the Dao; *Ji* 60, pp. 1648–50.

There was already a rich variety of religions and ethnic cultures present in Dunhuang by the time Shan Daokai was born, and Buddhism was a contender in its religious market, if not at an elite level, certainly on a popular one. While Confucian classicist and Daoist teachings thrived in Dunhuang through the Han dynasty and well into the fourth century, there is little evidence that the Way of the Buddha was established in the region until after the Han.<sup>59</sup> And, as Tsukamoto Zenryū convincingly argues, people received and filtered early transmissions through their own local and institutional religious traditions.

Buddhism, this foreign religion, was accepted, so to speak, by the Chinese as a sort of sylphic, magical religion, in the manner of the religion [of] ... the Han court itself, one in which incense was burnt, spells pronounced, and prayers for the aversion of calamity and the invitations of good fortune offered before golden images of the Buddha, India's superhuman sylph, through the intermediacy of foreign adepts called śramaṇa and upāsakas; one in which the Indian Buddha was the recipient of sacrifices simultaneous with the Yellow Emperor and Lao-tzu, both reverently believed to have been ancient Sages who had achieved the status of superhuman sylphs.<sup>60</sup>

The religion of the Eastern Han (25–220 AD) court and the pursuit of transcendence remained prominent in Dunhuang into the early-medieval period, but by the time Shan Daokai was raised there, Dunhuang had already produced a number of famous Buddhist monks. One of the earliest monks associated with Dunhuang is Dharmarakṣa (Fahu 竺法護; ca. 266–313), a master translator and famous transmitter of Buddhist scriptures who frequently traveled back and forth between his hometown Dunhuang and the capital in Chang'an.<sup>61</sup> Fasheng 法乘

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For more on Suo Jing, see David R. Knechtges and Taiping Chang, eds., *Ancient and Early Medieval Chinese Literature: A Reference Guide* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), pp. 1064–65.

Tsukamoto Zenryū 塚本善隆 points out that fall of the Western Jin caused a rapid rise in the population of Dunhuang. Strong local rulers of Han ethnicity, however, maintained control of the area and kept trade with the western regions open during the early-4th c. See Tsukamoto Zenryū, *A History of Early Chinese Buddhism: From Its Introduction to the Death of Hui-yüan*, trans. Leon Hurvitz (rpt. New York: Kodansha International, 1985), pp. 53, 59, 118, and 124–25.

<sup>59</sup> If, as Erik Zürcher convincingly argues, Buddhism first infiltrated China between the early-1st c. BC and the middle of the 1st c. AD, then it must have “infiltrated” Dunhuang earlier; Zürcher, *Buddhist Conquest*, p. 23.

<sup>60</sup> Tsukamoto, *History of Early Chinese Buddhism*, p. 115.

<sup>61</sup> For a detailed account of the life and achievements of Dharmarakṣa, see Daniel Boucher, “Dharmarakṣa and the Transmission of Buddhism to China,” *AM* 3d ser. 19.1–2 (2006), pp. 13–37. See also, Zürcher, *Buddhist Conquest*, pp. 65–70; and Tsukamoto, *History of Early Chinese Buddhism*, pp. 193–230.

(Dharmayāna; ca. 270–ca. 313), one of Dharmarakṣa’s most dedicated disciples,<sup>62</sup> permanently resided in Dunhuang, where he built and administered a monastery.<sup>63</sup> And Fasheng’s fellow disciples Faxing 法行 and Fazun 法尊, renowned recluse monks, were also active in late-third and early-fourth-century Dunhuang. Another example is the famous spiritual proselytizer Fotudeng 佛圖澄 (ca. 232–349), who might have been a native of Dunhuang, but who more likely merely sojourned there at that same time.<sup>64</sup> Shan could have been a disciple or student of any of these figures, but early accounts of his life tell us almost nothing about his younger years in Dunhuang. They do, however, claim that he engaged in a mix of different practices and ended up traveling through Han-Zhao and Eastern Jin lands on his way to Mount Luofu.

To make a rough summary, Shan Daokai was an itinerant recluse and renunciant from Dunhuang who engaged in practices now commonly associated with Buddhist monks, seekers of transcendence, and court-commemorated mantic and medical technicians. His purported blend of ascetic, contemplative, prognostic, healing, and charitable activities allowed later commemorators of his life to selectively feature practices that could help legitimize and promote the teachings with which they themselves were most familiar. During the sixth and seventh centuries, two similar accounts of his life portray him as a Buddhist monk. During the seventh, and eighth centuries, at least two texts commemorate Shan as a contributor to the welfare of society from a Confucian perspective. And, between the twelfth and fourteenth centuries, at least four descriptions completely strip him of his then well-attested Buddhist identity to portray him as a transcendent. The increasingly exclusive identities forced upon Shan Daokai generate different traditions or branches of his life as they are told and retold.

<sup>62</sup> Boucher, “Dharmarakṣa,” p. 18, n. 28.

<sup>63</sup> For more on Zhu Fasheng, see Zürcher, *Buddhist Conquest*, p. 67; and Tsukamoto, *History of Early Chinese Buddhism*, pp. 203–4 and pp. 231–32.

<sup>64</sup> For more on the controversy surrounding his place of origin, see Tsukamoto, *History of Early Chinese Buddhism*, pp. 252–57. Early works describe Fotudeng as “a foreign Dharma master” (*waiguo fashi* 外國法師) and a native of the “western regions” (*xiyu* 西域). See, respectively, Sōshō, comp., *Mingseng zhuan chao*, in *Shinsan Dai Nihon zoku Zōkyō* 新纂大日本續藏經 (Tokyo: Kokusho kankōkai, 1975–89) 1523, vol. 77, p. 349A, l. 7; Huijiao 慧皎 (479–554), comp., *Gaoseng zhuan*, T2059, vol. 50, j. 9, p. 383B, l. 16. Arthur Wright, in his lengthy study of the life of Fotudeng, argues that he was “probably from Kucha” (in present-day west-central Xinjiang); Wright, “Fo-t’u-têng: A Biography,” *HJAS* 11.3–4 (1948), pp. 324, 336.

DEFINITIVE BRANCHES: SIXTH- THROUGH  
FOURTEENTH-CENTURY ACCOUNTS OF SHAN

Each of the three clusters of accounts just mentioned – Buddhist, Confucian, and Daoist – will be discussed as a discrete branch in the discursive formation of Shan Daokai. Every one of these accounts postdates and agrees, at least in certain ways, with the narratives introduced above, but each also modifies Shan’s image in order to make it fit contingent aims and perspectives.

*Shan Daokai As a Buddhist Monk: The Sixth- and Seventh-Century Branch*

While it is hard to argue against the impact and lasting influence of the three accounts we have already introduced (table, nos. 1-3), Huijiao’s *Gaoseng zhuan* presents us with the longest received account of Shan’s 單 life. It commemorates the lives of over 500 mid-first- to early-sixth-century Buddhist monks, and its tradition concerning Shan Daokai became the standard for subsequent pro-Buddhist accounts. Huijiao not only borrowed from early Buddhist collections of miracle tales and lives like *Mingxiang ji* and *Mingseng zhuan* to compile his *Gaoseng zhuan*,<sup>65</sup> but he also drew much from the “separate traditions” of monks and less institutionally affiliated holy persons.<sup>66</sup>

The modern scholar Li Fengmao 李豐楙 clearly shows that many of the miraculous abilities featured in Huijiao’s collection are also found in Ge Hong’s earlier *Shenxian zhuan* 神仙傳 (*Traditions of Divine Transcendents*).<sup>67</sup> Focusing on the “Divine Marvels” (“Shenyi” 神異) section, where the account of Shan Daokai appears, Li first argues that the tropes of *ganying* 感應 (stimulus-response) and *shentong* 神通 (literally, penetration into the spiritual realm; Skt.: *abhijñā*, or miraculous abilities) predominate and are meant to convince audiences of the powers that exist in the Way of the Buddha.<sup>68</sup> He then explores the undeniable

<sup>65</sup> For a list of all 257 *Gaoseng zhuan* biographies, the corresponding order of biographies that appeared in the nonextant *Mingseng zhuan*, and some other works that contained accounts of these figures prior to the completion of Huijiao’s collection, see Makita Tairyō, “*Kōsō den no seiritsu*” 高僧傳の成立, *THGH* 44 (1973), pp. 115–23. For a list of the specific Buddhist miracle tales from which Huijiao likely borrowed, see Shinohara, “Two Sources of Chinese Buddhist Biographies,” 188–93.

<sup>66</sup> See Shinohara, “Two Sources of Chinese Buddhist Biographies,” 125–27.

<sup>67</sup> Poo Mu-chou similarly contends that both Ge Hong and Huijiao drew from a “common religious mentality” in China that had existed long before their times; Mu-chou Poo, “The Images of Immortals and Eminent Monks: Religious Mentality in Early Medieval China (4–6 c. A.D.),” *Numen* 42 (1995), p. 183. See also, Murakami Yoshimi 村上嘉実, “*Kōsōden no shini ni tsuite*” 高僧傳の神異について, *THGH* 17 (1961), pp. 1–17.

<sup>68</sup> Li Fengmao 李豐楙, “Huijiao *Gaosengzhuan* ji qi shenyi xingge” 慧皎高僧傳及其神異性格, *Zhonghua xueyuan* 中華學苑 26 (1982), pp. 123–37, esp. 134–35.

congruencies, especially with regard to diet, between the ways of transcendence and the Buddha. Shan Daokai is singled out as an example, and long passages from *Gaoseng zhuan* account of his life are reproduced in support of Li's arguments concerning the text's reliance on common Chinese forms of religious rhetoric and practice.

The *Gaoseng zhuan* hagiography of Shan Daokai (table, no. 5) is longer than earlier accounts of his life. It involves a number of additional figures and the *ganying* trope predominates. It opens up with the same information found in most early-medieval Chinese biographical traditions (e.g., name, native place, exceptional qualities or skills exhibited as a youth). After telling us that Shan secluded himself in Huaixi, we get a detailed description of his diet and energy-enhancing discipline of "passing nights in the seated position without lying down." The "stimulus-response" trope is set up by Shan's correct and unfailing adherence to the difficult ascetic regimens introduced at the beginning of the account. As sources of piety and discipline, they function as "stimuli" for all of the wondrous abilities or "responses" that appear throughout the rest of the narrative.

Huijiao's account of Shan is given as follows:

Shan Daokai, surnamed Meng, was a native of Dunhuang. When young, he [already] harbored intentions to dwell as a recluse. He could recite four hundred thousand passages from the [Buddhist] *sūtras* [by heart]. Cutting himself off from grains, he ate arbor vitae berries.<sup>69</sup> [When] arbor vitae berries were hard to come by, he regularly ingested pine resin. Later, he ate tiny pebbles. Swallowing a number of pellets in one gulp, he ate [just] once every few days. He sometimes chewed much and sometimes chewed a little ginger and pepper. It was like this for seven years. Afterwards, he did not fear cold or heat, being warm in the winter and cool in the summer. He passed nights without lying down.<sup>70</sup> He made a pact [to desist from] eating food with ten of his fellow students. After more than a decade, some died and some quit. Only [Dao] kai (hereafter Daokai) was of unfailing will.

<sup>69</sup> The berries or fruit (*shi* 實) of the *Thuja orientalis* (*bo* 柏) or Chinese arbor vitae tree ("tree of life") are mentioned in a number of early Chinese texts. A passage cited from the long-lost *Liexian zhuan* 列仙傳 records that the ingestion of arbor vitae berries can help one grow new teeth. Another, from *Jinshu*, notes that eating these berries was able to make the eminent recluse Guo Yu 郭瑀 (d. 387?) feel much lighter. See, respectively, Li, *Taiping yulan* 954, p. 4b; and *JŚ* 94, p. 2454.

<sup>70</sup> For more specific information on this ascetic practice, often included as one of thirteen practices known as *dhūtaguṇas*, see Reginald A. Ray, *Buddhist Saints in India: A Study in Buddhist Values and Orientations* (New York: Oxford U.P., 1994), pp. 293–323.

單道開，姓孟，嫩煌人。少懷栖隱。誦經四十餘萬言。絕穀餌柏實。柏實難得復服松脂。後服細石子。一吞數枚數日一服。或時多少噉薑椒。如此七年。後不畏寒暑冬溫夏涼，晝夜不臥。與同學十人共契服食。十年之外或死或退。唯開全志。

The governor of Fuling sent a horse to Daokai,<sup>71</sup> but he declined it. Three hundred *li* (about 160 km) away at the time, he was able to reach Fuling on foot in a single day. Spirits of mountains and trees sometimes appeared in strange shapes to test him, but from the start, he had no fear of their forms. 阜陵太守遣馬迎開，開辭。能步行三百里路，一日早至。山樹神或現異形試之，初無懼色。

In the twelfth year of Shi Hu's Jianwu reign-period (i.e., 346), Shan Daokai came from Xiping, traveling seven hundred *li* in a single day. Arriving in Nan'an, he converted a young boy and made him a novice monk (*śrāmaṇera*). [The boy] was fourteen years old. Bestowed with the teachings of the Dharma, the boy's practices matched those of Daokai. At that time, the [court's] grand scribe said to [Shi] Hu, "The star of the transcendent has appeared. A great adept will enter our borders." Hu sent a widespread imperial decree to the districts and commanderies. If they harbored an extraordinary person, they were to report it and let it be heard. During the winter of that year, in the eleventh lunar month, the regional inspector of Qinzhou<sup>72</sup> sent up a report to the throne and delivered Daokai. Initially, Daokai sojourned in Fachen Temple west of the city of Ye. Later, he became a disciple at Linzhang's Zhao Temple. Inside the living quarters, he built a two-layered platform. A little over eight or nine *chi* (ca. 2.5 m) in height, it was topped by a meditation chamber made of thatched reed, which was about ten bamboo baskets in cubic capacity. He often sat (that is, meditated) inside of it. The wealth that Hu bestowed upon him was extraordinarily generous. Daokai gave all of it away as charity. At that time, many of those who took joy in transcendence came to him with inquiries and questions. Daokai did not answer, however, he did relate the following Buddhist hymn:

以石虎建武十二年從西平來，一日行七百里。至南安度一童子為沙彌。年十四。稟受教法行能及開。時太史奏虎云：有仙人星見，當有高士入境。虎普敕州郡。有異人令啓聞。其年冬十一月，秦州刺史上表送開。初止鄴城西法綝祠中。後徙臨漳昭德寺。於房內造重閣。高八九尺許，於上編菅為禪

<sup>71</sup> There was an Eastern Jin commandery named Fuling 阜陵 located about 30 km west of present-day Nanjing, on the north side of the Yangtze River in eastern Anhui.

<sup>72</sup> The former region of Qin 秦, situated within the territory of the Former Zhao, was located around present-day Tianshui 天水 in southeast Gansu.

室，如十斛籬大。常坐其中。虎資給甚厚。開皆以惠施。時樂仙者多來諮問。開都不答。迺爲說偈云：

我矜一切苦	I pity all suffering,
出家爲利世	[So] I left my household to benefit the world.
利世須學明	To benefit the world, one must cultivate enlightenment,
學明能斷惡	Cultivating enlightenment, one is able to cut off evil.
山遠糧粒難	If the mountains are distant, provisions are hard to come by,
作斯斷食計	[So] I undertook this plan to cut myself off from food.
非是求仙侶	This does not mean that I seek transcendent companions,
幸勿相傳說	Please do not transmit tales [about me]!

Daokai was able to alleviate eye ailments. Once, the Honorable Shi Tao of Qin (d. 348)<sup>73</sup> approached him and Daokai treated his eyes. Applying medicine [produced] a bit of pain, and though Tao was very terrified, verification was obtained in the end (that is, the treatment proved effective). Fotudeng said, “This adept of the Way is able to [fore]see the rise and decline of nations. If he leaves, there is sure to be great turmoil.”<sup>74</sup> In the first year of the Taining reign-period (349) of Shi Hu, Daokai, and his disciples crossed into the south [and entered] Xuchang. Hu’s sons and nieces (that is, the younger generation) murdered one another during a great rebellion in the capital in Ye. In the third year of the [Eastern] Jin’s Shengping reign-period (359), [Shan Daokai] went to Jianye. All of a sudden, however, he proceeded to Nanhai, and afterwards entered Mount Luofu to live alone in a hut of thatch and reeds, beyond the mundane. [After having lived] a hundred and some cycles of spring and autumn, he passed away in his mountain hut. He had ordered his disciples to take his corpse and place it in a stone cavern. His disciples consequently moved him into the stone chamber.

開能救眼疾。時秦公石韜就開治目。著藥小痛韜甚憚之，而終得其效。佛圖澄曰：此道士觀國興衰。若去者當有大災。至石虎太寧元年，開與弟子。南度許昌。虎子姪相殺鄴都大亂。至晉昇平三年，來之建業。俄而至南

<sup>73</sup> Shi Tao of Qin 秦公石韜, son of Shi Hu, was killed by his older brother Xuan 宣, heir to the throne, in the eighth lunar month of 349. Xuan died in the same year; *JŚ* 13, p. 374.

<sup>74</sup> The relatively long *Gaoseng zhuan* hagiography of Futudeng directly precedes that of Shan. See *T* 2059, vol. 50, j. 9, pp. 383B–387A.

海，後入羅浮山，獨處茅茨蕭然物外。春秋百餘歲卒于山舍。敕弟子以屍置石穴中。弟子迺移之石室。

There was a certain Kang Hong who, in the past, had been in the north and heard Daokai's disciples state that formerly, when Daokai was in the mountains, whenever spirits and transcendents passed by him, he would just maintain a detached mind and respectfully bow to them. And later, his followers personally met with him in Nanhai. Coming to the edge of their mats, they "bored [down] and rose [up],"<sup>75</sup> completely and exhaustively receiving his instructions. Then, they composed a tradition for him. The encomium [attached to the tradition] read: 有康泓者，昔在北間聞開弟子敘開昔在山中每有神仙去來，迺遙心敬挹。及後從役南海，親與相見。側席鑽仰，稟聞備至。迺爲之傳。讚曰：

蕭哉若人	So reverent is this man!
飄然絕塵	Fluttering above the dusty [world of <i>samsāra</i> ].
外軌小乘	Outwardly regulated by the Little Vehicle, <sup>76</sup>
內暢空身	Inwardly unrestrained as an empty self.
玄象暉曜	A mysterious simulacrum, radiating and dazzling,
高步是臻	His lofty paces brought him to this place.
浪蕙芝英	Feasting on meals of <i>zhi</i> blossoms, <sup>77</sup>
流浪巖津	He floats aimlessly over cliffs and through fords.

In the initial year of the Xingning reign-period, when Yuan Hong of Chen commandery was serving as governor of Nanhai, he, together with his younger brother [Yuan] Yingshu and the *śramaṇa* Zhifafang (dates unknown), climbed up Mount Luofu. When they reached the entrance to the stone chamber, they saw [Shan] Daokai's form and frame (namely, body). Incense was still

<sup>75</sup> "Yan Yuan heaved a heavy sigh and said, 'When I look up at *it*, *it* grows higher. When I bore down into *it*, *it* grows harder. I catch a glimpse of *it* right before me, and then, suddenly, *it* is behind me' 顏淵喟然歎曰：仰之彌高，鑽之彌堅。瞻之在前，忽焉在後"; *Lunyu zhushu* 論語注疏 (SSJZS ed.) 9, p. 2490b-c. The term "*it*" most likely refers to the Master's (i.e., Confucius's) teachings. Yan Yuan seems to be saying that no matter how hard he tries to understand them, they elude him. Likewise, Shan's disciples are depicted as putting forth their most concentrated efforts to understand his teachings in spite of their elusiveness.

<sup>76</sup> "Little Vehicle" (*xiaosheng* 小乘) pejoratively refers to non-Mahāyāna Buddhist teachings.

<sup>77</sup> Stephen Bokenkamp, questioning the common translation "mushroom" for *zhi* 芝, explains that, "The word is from the etymon 之/止 'to go, to come, remain,' and denotes a plant which appears and disappears as a divine gift and a heavenly sanctioning of the state. For the ancient Chinese, it was a growth of stellar matter and might take a number of strange, unearthly shapes"; Bokenkamp, "The Entheogenic Herb Calamus in Taoist Literature," *Phi Theta Papers* (Publication of the Oriental Languages Students Association) 15 (1983), p. 20, n. 35. Campany writes that *zhi* "is redolent of the numinous; it clearly does not mean 'mushroom' but is a generic word for protrusions or emanations from rocks, trees, herbs, fleshy animals, or fungi (including mushrooms). These exudations ... are anomalous by virtue of straddling taxonomic boundaries"; Campany, *To Live as Long as Heaven and Earth*, p. 27.

burning and his earthenware bowl was still present. [Yuan] Hong said, “The Dharma Master’s karmic actions set him apart from the crowd. It is reasonable to suspect that he – like a cicada – shed his shell.” He then made up an encomium for him, which read: 晉興寧元年陳郡袁宏爲南海太守，與弟穎叔及沙門支法防共登羅浮山。至石室口，見開形骸。及香火瓦器猶存。宏曰。法師業行殊群。正當如蟬蛻耳。迺爲讚曰：

物俊招奇	Beings with fine qualities attract the extraordinary,
德不孤立	The virtuous do not stand alone [in this]. <sup>78</sup>
遼遼幽人	Remote and removed, a man hidden from view,
望巖凱入	He gazed at the cliff and happily entered.
飄飄靈仙	The drifting and floating numinous transcendents,
茲焉遊集	This is where they roam and congregate.
遺屣在林	Abandoning his sandals in the grove
千載一襲	Every thousand years [there is] a single passage.

Later, the *śramaṇas* Sengjing (dates unknown) and Daojian (dates unknown) also hoped to climb Mount Luofu. In the end, they never reached the summit.<sup>79</sup> 後沙門僧景道漸，並欲登羅浮。竟不至頂。

The many different layers of recognition and commemoration in Huijiao’s account help construct Shan’s image as an “eminent monk” associated with divine marvels. First and foremost is Huijiao’s choice to include Shan in his collection. The figures he included did not have to be well known, but they did have to pass Huijiao’s standards for “eminence.” In addition to being associated with divine and marvelous abilities, Shan was invited by the governor of Fuling, visited by spirits, associated with the “star of the transcendent” and called a “great adept” by the grand scribe-astrologer. Shi Hu lavished him with riches, the eminent Fotudeng complimented his powers of foreknowledge, and “those who take joy in transcendence” approached with questions. Shan was also allegedly followed and praised by disciples, and even posthumously visited by a local governor and at least three other monks. This recognition and commemoration is framed as a response to the piety

<sup>78</sup> Confucius’s *Analects* records an almost identical line; *Lunyu zhushu* 4, p. 2472A.

<sup>79</sup> *T* 2059, vol. 50, j. 9, p. 387B–C. For a complete French translation, see Soymié, “Biographie de Chan Tao-k’ai,” *Mélanges publiés par l’Institut des Hautes Études chinoises* 1 (1957), pp. 415–22. An almost identical account is recorded in *T* 2122, vol. 53, j. 46, p. 642A–C. Only two passages from the *Gaoseng zhuan* narrative are missing: the description of the two-storied platform (meditation chamber) that Shan purportedly constructed and the account of Shan’s treatment of Shi Tao’s eye ailment.

reflected in his purported actions. Moreover, Shan is not only said to have performed pious acts of conversion, charity, and curing, but he also could perform difficult practices.

John Kieschnick, commenting on the pervasiveness of difficult or ascetic practices in early-medieval Chinese accounts of Buddhist monks, writes: “The basic forms of asceticism required of all monks separated them from the rest of society, marking them as a fundamentally different category of person. Finally, even within this select group, the range of ascetic practices available to the monk allowed him to distinguish himself from fellow members of the *sangha*.”<sup>80</sup> In Huijiao’s *Gaoseng zhuan*, Shan is presented as an exemplar of the Buddhist ascetic ideal. However, much of his regimen, including his diet and his travels are described in terms of transcendence. And, Huijiao does not censor his record of the eyewitness account of Yuan Hong. Shan is said to have molted like a cicada. Though constantly subjected to remodification, the image of Shan as an ascetic and itinerant *Buddhist* holy man and healer is well attested in post-mid-sixth-century Chinese Buddhist texts.

Huijiao’s tradition of the life of Shan Daokai selectively draws from the more ambivalent eyewitness account and the *Shan biezhuàn*, both previously examined, in order to help develop a pro-Buddhist branch of the life of Shan Daokai that more exclusively portrays him as a Buddhist monk. This branch begins – as far as received records now show – with Wang Yan’s *Mingxiang ji* and Huijiao’s *Gaoseng zhuan*, then extends through Daoxuan’s 644 AD *Ji shenzhou sanbao gantong lu* (table, no. 7). Versions of all three of these accounts are recorded in Daoshi’s 道世 (d. 668) mid-seventh-century *Fayuan zhulin* 法苑珠林 (*A Grove of Pearls in the Garden of the Dharma*).<sup>81</sup> It does not stop there, and scholars today who exclusively identify Shan Daokai as a Buddhist further extend this branch, whether they are conscious of it or not.

#### *Shan Daokai As a Court-Commemorated Technician: The Sixth- and Seventh-Century Branch*

While Shan Daokai was commonly depicted as a practitioner of what are now recognized as Buddhist and Daoist activities, his attested

<sup>80</sup> John F. Kieschnick, *The Eminent Monk: Buddhist Ideals in Medieval Chinese Hagiography* (Honolulu: U. Hawai‘i P., 1997), p. 66. For at least one other study on Buddhist forms of asceticism in medieval China, see Benn, *Burning for the Buddha: Self-Immolation in Chinese Buddhism* (Honolulu: U. Hawai‘i P., 2007). For more on Chinese forms of asceticism, see Eskildsen, *Asceticism in Early Taoist Religion*; and Aat Vervoorn, *Men of the Cliffs and Caves: The Development of the Chinese Eremitic Tradition to the End of the Han Dynasty* (Hong Kong: Chinese U.P., 1990), esp. pp. 38–39.

<sup>81</sup> See, respectively, *T* 2106, vol. 52, j. 3, p. 428B; *T* 2122, vol. 53, j. 27, p. 485A, ll. 4–24.

skills in prognostication and healing made it relatively easy for later court historians to coopt his image, modify it, and use it to promote the state's mantic and medical ideals. This process appears to have begun with the biographic tradition of Shan recorded in the mid-seventh-century *Jinshu*, which portrays him as an “adept of [mantic and medical] techniques” (*shushi* 術士) who contributed to the welfare of the general populace. Shan was not an imperial official, but in *Jinshu* he is portrayed as having contributed to social welfare, and by extension, the state. Later texts that adopt the *Jinshu* representation of Shan include Lu Yu's famous mid-eighth-century *Chajing* (table, no. 8) and the mid-twelfth-century *Tongzhi* (table, no. 10).

Tang emperor Taizong 唐太宗 (r. 626–649; Li Shimin 李世民) commissioned *Jinshu* in 646. It was completed just two years later.<sup>82</sup> The *Jinshu* team selected and utilized fourteen earlier attempts at a Jin history (all titled *Jinshu*). Their Tang-court product was often criticized as a mess of fictitious materials reorganized in a manner complimentary to the policies of the mid-seventh-century Tang elite, including especially Taizong,<sup>83</sup> but it was in fact the first of the standard histories since *Shiji* 史記 (*The Grand Scribe's Records*; ca. 90 BC), speaking only of the latter's chapters on ancient dynasties, to compile from sources the history of a dynasty relatively far-removed in time. *Jinshu* preserves transmissions of many older and contemporary literary works like poems, rhapsodies, encomia, and memorials. Ultimately, because of Taizong's active role in its compilation it was not rewritten or reshaped after the Tang.

Fang Xuanling, director of the team commissioned by Taizong earlier to complete the histories of the Northern Qi, Northern Zhou, Liang, Chen, and Sui dynasties, also led the *Jinshu* team. Different parts of the latter work, like the court annals (*ji* 紀), treatises (*zhi* 志), and arrayed biographic traditions (*liezhuan* 列傳) were, however, led by

<sup>82</sup> For more on court-sponsored historiographical projects, see Liu Xu 劉煦 (887–946) et al., comp., *Jiu Tangshu* 舊唐書 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1975) 71, p. 2549–50; and 73, p. 2597; also Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修 (1007–1072) and Song Qi 宋祁 (998–1061), *Xin Tangshu* 新唐書 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1975) 102, p. 3983. Some modern studies are: David McMullen, *State and Scholars in Tang China* (New York: Cambridge U.P., 1988), pp. 165–66; Denis C. Twitchett, *The Writing of Official History Under the Tang* (New York: Cambridge U.P., 1992), pp. 21–22, esp. nn. 65–66; and Howard L. Goodman, “*Jinshu* 晉書,” in Cynthia L. Chennault, Keith N. Knapp, Alan J. Berkowitz, and Albert E. Dien, eds., *Early Medieval Chinese Texts: A Bibliographical Guide*, China Research Monograph 71 (Berkeley: Inst. E. Asian Studies, 2015), pp. 136–45. The five histories of the second commission (covering the Liang, Chen, Qi, Zhou, and Sui dynasties) are collectively referred to as *Wudai shi* 五代史 (*Histories of the Five Dynasties*).

<sup>83</sup> McMullen, *State and Scholars*, p. 170, in discussing the political agenda of the Tang compilers of *Jinshu*, and the general criticisms that the work drew, states that it is “scarcely less valuable as corroborative evidence for early Tang political issues than as an accurate history of China.”

smaller teams. Xu Jingzong (see table, no. 6) is said to have supervised the compilation of the biographical traditions.<sup>84</sup>

The *Jinshu* chapter titled “Yishu liezhuan” (hereafter, *Jinshu* 95) is the fifteenth of twenty-four chapters devoted to biographical traditions. It features diviners, astrologers, meteorologists, seers, exorcists, and healers, all neatly grouped together as “artisans and technicians” (*yishu zhi shi* 藝術之士). Medieval Chinese mantic and medical “technicians” contributed to advances in Chinese sciences like astronomy, meteorology, harmonics, and mathematics. Unlike the modern scientific worldview, however, spiritual stuff was ubiquitous in the medieval Chinese cosmos. *Jinshu* 95 discusses much concerning arts, techniques, and methods of accessing – and sometimes avoiding – different notions of divine or spiritual power,<sup>85</sup> and part of the preface to this fascicle clearly articulates a certain empirical and rational basis for the place of spirits in the classical teachings of the sages. Likely composed by Xu Jingzong, it reads:

It is said that the spirits have a relation with knowledge; they store past [events] so as to know what is to come.<sup>86</sup> Their hidden assistance and occult tallies aid in the successful completion of human affairs. Once having bestowed benefits and eliminated harm, they awe the people in order to build up authority. This is what is known as the Way of the spirits established in the teachings [of the sages]. [Spirits] lead by means of this.<sup>87</sup> 曰神與智，藏往知來。幽贊冥符，彌成人事；既興利而除害，亦威眾以立權，所謂神道設教，率由於此。

The account of Shan Daokai recorded in *Jinshu* 95 closely follows Huijiao’s earlier account in *Gaoseng zhuan*. It retains references to piety and spirits, and it follows the same basic sequence of events in spite of its shorter length. Yet it eliminates explicit references to the Way of the Buddha and commemorates its biographical subject as a healer and seer who aided the populace. It reads:

Shan Daokai was a native of Dunhuang. Constantly clothed in the coarse and drab, he was sometimes presented with fine silk gar-

<sup>84</sup> Goodman, “*Jinshu*,” p. 138.

<sup>85</sup> For example, the character for “spirit/spirits/spiritual” (*shen* 神) appears in 11 of the 24 traditions.

<sup>86</sup> This notion draws from the following line in the “Xici” 繫辭 chapter of the *Yijing* 易經; it highlights the methods for discerning future and past that were worked out by the sages (*shengren* 聖人): “The divine [yarrow] was used to discern what was to come and [human] knowledge [of the hexagrams] was used to store up what had passed. Who else would have been able to accomplish this? 神以知來·知以藏往·其孰能與此哉?” *Zhouyi zhengyi* 周易正義 (SSJZS ed.) j. 7, p. 82A.

<sup>87</sup> *JiS* 95, p. 2467.

ments, but he wore none of them. He feared neither cold nor heat, and for days and nights did not lie down. He regularly ingested tiny pebbles, swallowing a number of them once daily in a single gulp, sometimes more and sometimes less. He was fond of living in the mountains, and even though various spirits of the mountain's trees manifested in strange forms to test him, he never feared the apparitions. 單道開，敦煌人也。常衣粗褐，或贈以繪服，皆不著。不畏寒暑，晝夜不臥。恒服細石子，一吞數枚，日一服，或多或少。好山居，而山樹諸神見異形試之，初無懼色。

During the reign of Shi Jilong (i.e., Shi Hu), Shan Daokai came from Xiping, traveling seven hundred *li* [on foot] in a single day. With him was a novice monk of fourteen *sui* who kept pace with him. When they arrived in Qinzhou,<sup>88</sup> Shan Daokai was summoned by memorial to Ye. Shi Jilong ordered Fotudeng to speak with him [and attempt to make him stay], but Fotudeng was unable to sway Shan Daokai. Shan initially stopped west of the city of Ye at the ancestral shrine of the monk Fachen, and later moved to Zhaode Temple in Linzhang.<sup>89</sup> Within its building he constructed a layered foundation eight or nine *chi* tall and wove together reeds for a meditation chamber that he placed on top of it. He often sat inside of it. 石季龍時，從西平來，一日行七百里。其一沙彌年十四，行亦及之。至秦州，表送到鄴。季龍令佛圖澄與語，不能屈也。初止鄴城西沙門法祿祠中，後徙臨漳昭德寺。於房內造重閣，高八九尺，於上編菅為禪室，常坐其中。

Shi Jilong lavished him with wealth, all of which Shan Daokai gave to others. People sometimes came to request advice, but Shan Daokai did not answer any of them. Every day, he ingested a number of pellets of preventative medicine. Big as paulownia seeds,<sup>90</sup> the medicine contained the scent of pine resin, ginger, cinnamon,<sup>91</sup> and *fuling*, and he occasionally took it with just one

<sup>88</sup> The former region of Qin, situated within the territory of the Former Zhao, was located near the present-day city of Tianshui 天水 in southeast Gansu.

<sup>89</sup> The commandery of Linzhang 臨彰 straddled part of the border between the present-day provinces of Hebei and Henan.

<sup>90</sup> The term *wuzi* 梧子 (paulownia seeds) refers to the seeds of the paulownia or parasol tree (*wutong* 梧桐, *Sterculia plantanifolia*), an ornamental tree that was and still is frequently found around temples and homes in China. Smith and Stuart explain that the seeds are found on the margins of the tree, are oily, and are often baked into Chinese moon-cakes; *Chinese Materia Medica*, p. 423.

<sup>91</sup> There are a number of different kinds of cinnamon (*Cinnamomum cassia*) in China. Smith and Stuart explain that the spice comes from the bark of different varieties of cassia trees; and as a medicine it is known for gastric, stimulative, carminative, astringent, sedative, and tonic qualities. "It is especially recommended in colic and excessive sweating ... The prolonged use of the better qualities of cassia is thought to improve the complexion, giving one a more youthful, rubicund appearance"; *Chinese Materia Medica*, p. 110. Smith and Stuart also list a

or two *sheng* (200–300 ml.) of [infused?] sow thistle (*Sonchus oleraceus*) and *Perilla* leaves.<sup>92</sup> He himself claimed that he was able to alleviate eye ailments, and his cures proved to be rather efficacious in those he treated. Fotudeng said, “This adept of the Way can foresee the rise and decline of nations. If he leaves, [it must mean that] there will surely be great turmoil.” At the end of [Shi] Jilong’s reign (348 AD), Daokai crossed south into Xuchang. [Shi] Jilong searched for him, but great turmoil broke out in Ye. 季龍資給甚厚，道開皆以施人。人或來諮問者，道開都不答。日服鎮守藥數丸。大如梧子，藥有松蜜薑桂伏苓之氣，時復飲茶蘇一二升而已。自云能療目疾，就療者頗驗。視其行動，狀若有神。佛圖澄曰：“此道士觀國興衰。若去者，當有大亂。”及季龍末，道開南渡許昌，尋而鄴中大亂。

In the third year of the [Eastern Jin dynasty] Shengping reign-period, he went to the capital (Jiankang). Later, he went to Nanhai, entered Mount Luofu, and lived alone in a thatched hut, secluded and detached from worldly affairs. A hundred and some years old, he passed away in his mountain lodge. He had ordered his disciples to take his corpse and place it in a stone cavern, and his disciples consequently moved [his corpse] into a stone chamber. When Yuan Hong of Chen commandery was serving as governor of Nanhai, he, together with his younger brother [Yuan] Yingshu and the monk Zhifafang, climbed up Mount Luofu. When they reached the entrance to the stone chamber, they saw that Daokai’s body looked as if it was still alive, incense was burning, and his earthenware pottery was still there. Hong said, “The Dharma Master’s meritorious actions set him apart from the crowd. Right now, he just resembles a cicada.” Then he composed an encomium for him.<sup>93</sup> 升平三年至京師，後至南海，入羅浮山，獨處茅茨，蕭然物外。年百餘歲，卒於山舍。敕弟子以尸置石穴中，弟子乃移入石室。陳郡袁宏為南海太守，與弟穎叔及沙門支法防共登羅浮山。至石室口，見道開形骸如生，香火瓦器猶存。宏曰：“法師業行殊羣。正當如蟬蛻耳。”乃為之贊云。

True to the chapter in which it appears, Shan is not primarily commemorated as a seeker of transcendence, an adherent of the Way of the Buddha, or adept of the Dao, but as an itinerant ascetic, prognosticator, and healer who contributed to the welfare of society. The lack of

number of miraculous abilities associated with the prolonged ingestion of cinnamon that are mentioned in classical Chinese literary works. A few of these include the ability to walk on water, the ability to walk great distances in a single day, the ability to lift extremely heavy objects, and longevity.

<sup>92</sup> *Perilla* leaves (*su* 蘇), also known as *zisu* 紫蘇, are a variety of mint.

<sup>93</sup> *JŚ* 95, pp. 2491–92.

any mention of the Buddha or his teachings in the account appears to have been a purposeful move. The *Jinshu* 95 accounts of Fotudeng and Kumārajīva 鳩摩羅什 (344–413), for example, clearly portray them as followers and proponents of the Buddha’s teachings who happened to be skilled in occult techniques and arts (Fotudeng is commemorated for his astrological readings and Kumārajīva is celebrated as a spirit binder and exorcist). Shan Daokai is never explicitly identified as a monk, but he allegedly took a novice monk as a disciple, sojourned at Buddhist establishments, and interacted with Fotudeng, who is said to have referred to him as a *fashi* (“adept of the Dharma” or “master of methods”). *Jinshu* 95 consciously subverts the Buddhist identity imposed upon Shan in earlier accounts of his life to construct an identity that emphasizes his contributions to state welfare.

*Chajing* of a century or so later (table, no. 8) merely extracts tidbits from the *Jinshu* 95 account, weaving minor changes regarding Shan’s diet into the information it relates. The other, from the much later *Tongzhi* (table, no. 10), simply reproduces the *Jinshu* tradition of Shan.<sup>94</sup> We will confine and conclude this portion of our discussion with a few comments on the former.

Lu Yu’s *Chajing* draws the following topoi from *Jinshu* 95: “A native of Dunhuang, Shan Daokai did not fear cold or heat. He constantly ingested small pebbles. All of the medicines he ingested contained the scent of pine, cassia, and honey. The only things he drank were tea and *Perilla*.”<sup>95</sup> Based on this short passage, Lu claims that Shan was one of the first documented tea drinkers in China. As previously noted, he did so by simply emending the character *tu* 荼 found in Shan’s *Jinshu* biography to read *cha* 茶.

The *Jinshu* 95 biographical tradition of Shan Daokai and the *Tongzhi* reproduction of it were both compiled under court sponsorship. As such, it is fair to describe them as Confucian accounts. There is, however, nothing inherently Confucian about Lu Yu’s personal life or his *Chajing*.<sup>96</sup> Lu had strong ties to each of the three teachings, but rather

<sup>94</sup> Zheng Qiao 鄭樵 (1104–1162) et al., comps., *Tongzhi* 通志 (Hangzhou: Zhejiang guji chubanshe, 2000) 182, p. 2918A–C.

<sup>95</sup> 敦煌人，單道開不畏寒暑。常服小石子。所服藥有鬆、桂、蜜之氣。所飲茶蘇而已；see Lu, *Chajing* 3, p. 7a; Zheng and Zhu, *Zhongguo lidai chashu*, 16.

<sup>96</sup> James Benn says that, “Lu was celebrated in his own time mostly as a gifted thinker and writer, rather than as an advocate for a particular religious ideology”; Benn, *Tea in China*, p. 116. Benn’s fine overview of the life and work of Lu Yu (pp. 96–116) draws from too many sources to list here, but significant early accounts of Lu’s life include Li Fang 李昉 (925–996), comp., *Wenyuan yinghua* 文苑英華 (Taipei: Huawen shuju, 1965) 793, pp. 6a–7a; and Ouyang and Song, *Xin Tangshu* 196, pp. 5611–12. The former is translated in Victor Mair, “The Autobiography of Instructor Lu,” in Mair, ed., *The Columbia Anthology of Traditional Chinese*

than drawing from pro-Buddhist or pro-Daoist traditions, he culls his information directly from the *Jinshu* version. As such, I regard his brief account as an extension of the Confucian “branch” of Shan’s discursive making.

*Shan Daokai as a Seeker of Transcendence: The Twelfth- through Fourteenth-Century Branch*

According to our collection of narratives of the life of Shan Daokai, as laid out in the table (right column), he was not solely described as a seeker of transcendence until Tang Geng’s early-twelfth-century *Meishan Tang xiansheng wenji* 眉山唐先生文集 (*Collected Writings of Master Tang of Mount Mei*; hereafter *Collected Writings*).<sup>97</sup> Found in the latter work, his preface to “Luofu er xian zan” (“Encomia on the Two Worthies of Luofu”; table, no. 9), while offering praise for the two “worthies 賢,” also comments on the relationships and differences between Ge Hong and Shan.

Tang Geng, byname Zixi 子西, was a native of Danleng 丹稜 in Meizhou 眉州.<sup>98</sup> The biographical tradition of his life in the standard-history *Songshi* 宋史 (*History of the Song*) claims that his literary talents were recognized early and he was appointed to serve in the capital. Later, he was implicated in some crime and sent south to Huizhou 惠州 (south-central Guangdong), at the southern end of Mount Luofu.<sup>99</sup> It was most likely during this period, or at least based on his experiences there, that he composed the Encomia partially translated below.<sup>100</sup>

A good question to ask here is to what extent Tang Geng was familiar with earlier accounts of Shan Daokai. The preface to his Encomia claims that people who lived around Mount Luofu knew nothing about Shan, but it is highly unlikely that Tang, being a noted writer, had not known any of the earlier accounts of Shan’s life. He tells us that Yuan Hong’s portrayal of Shan Daokai was lost, but this shows that he knew of the account. The information that he does relate is so basic – Shan

*Literature* (New York: Columbia U.P., 1994), pp. 699–702.

<sup>97</sup> Tang Geng 唐庚 (1070–1120), *Meishan Tang xiansheng wenji* 眉山唐先生文集 (SBCK edn.) 10, p. 4a. The *wenji* was purportedly compiled in 1122, just after Tang’s death.

<sup>98</sup> The Song city of Danleng was located around the present-day city of the same name in central Sichuan, about 100 km SSW of present-day Chengdu 成都.

<sup>99</sup> Tuotuo 脫脫 (1313–1355) et al., comp., *Songshi* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1985) 443, pp. 13100–1.

<sup>100</sup> In addition to a large number of poems, essays, rhapsodies, other encomia, and inscriptions, Tang Geng is credited with writing a number of longer works, two of the more famous being *Wenlu* 文錄 (*A Record of Literature*) and *Sanguo zashi* 三國雜事 (*Miscellaneous Matters of the Three Kingdoms*).

was a recluse who ate pebbles – that it could have come from any of the earlier descriptions we’ve examined thus far. However, his explicit mention of Yuan Hong, the pairing of Shan with Ge Hong, and, as we shall see, the characteristics “insipid” (*dan* 淡) and “accomplished” (*zhi* 至) that he attributes to Shan strongly suggest that Tang Geng was adding his own layer upon the earlier pro-Buddhist accounts.

Tang Geng’s preface to – and encomium for – Shan follows:

Ge Zhichuan’s (Ge Hong’s) transformation [had already been] completed for thirty and some years [when] Shan Daokai first came to Luofu.<sup>101</sup> At present, the people of these mountains know that there was a Ge Zhichuan, but they do not know that there was a Shan Daokai. Zhichuan was provided with a dwelling in the mountains by Deng Yue (d. 336).<sup>102</sup> He was a writer of books on firing and smelting (that is, alchemy), and his cinnabar crucibles were all maintained for years. Yet Daokai on usual days just ate a hundred tiny pebbles. Because he insipidly avoided action, later generations did not have anything to receive about him. Yet, when we examine Yuan Hong of Chen commandery, although he composed an encomium for Daokai, he once [also] composed a “Letter of the Nine Bestowals”<sup>103</sup> for Huan.<sup>104</sup> How could it have been fitting for these hands to dally with otherworldly affairs? Moreover, his encomium was also, [like the letter], never again seen in the world.

<sup>101</sup> This statement is problematic. If we take the year of Ge Hong’s “transformation” to be the year of his death (i.e., 343), then Shan would have reached Mount Luofu in 373. This is almost fifteen years after he is said to have arrived in almost every other account of his life (i.e., 359). Perhaps Tang is referring to the year that Ge Hong entered the mountains (i.e., 331). If that is the case, then there were nearly thirty years separating their respective retirements to Mount Luofu.

<sup>102</sup> Deng Yue, byname Boshan 伯山, was a native of Chen commandery (see above, n. 54). He was serving as regional inspector (*cishi* 刺史) of this area when he provided Ge Hong with a dwelling on Mount Luofu. Deng’s biography is in *JS* 81, p. 2131.

<sup>103</sup> Such a proposal has as its precedent that submitted to Wang Mang 王莽 (45 BC–23 AD); it announced the virtues of Wang, who was staging a usurpation, and set out the reasons why Wang should receive a certain nine objects that symbolized ruling authority: e.g., carriages, clothing, and other ritual items.

<sup>104</sup> Tang Geng is telling us that Yuan Hong deserves our suspicion because he composed such a letter justifying Huan Wen’s 桓溫 (312–373) illegitimate claims to the throne. Huan was a powerful Eastern Jin general who deposed the Jin emperor in 371. He set up a puppet ruler and was about to usurp the throne himself when he passed away in 373. The following passage from Wang Shaozhi’s 王韶之 (380–435) *Jin Andi ji* 晉安帝紀 is quoted in Liu Jun’s 劉峻 (462–521) commentary on Liu Yiqing’s ca. 430 *Shishuo xinyu* 世說新語: “When Huan Wen was in Gushu (Anhui, 373), he hinted to the court that he would like the Nine Bestowals. Xie An had the clerk of the Board of Civil Office, Yuan Hong, prepare the draft, and showed it to the vice-president, Wang Biaozhi. Biaozhi, the color rising to his face, cried, ‘Sir, how can you talk to me about a matter like this?’”; Richard Mather, *Shih-shuo Hsin-yü: New Accounts of Tales of the World*, 2d edn. (Ann Arbor: U. of Michigan Center for Chinese Studies, 2002), p. 81.

Consequently, [I] composed two encomia. [I] inscribed them in a mountain valley, but did not reveal their location in order to reward curiosity seekers in later generations. They read ... (here skipping the one for Ge Hong):<sup>105</sup>

葛稚川化去三十餘年，單道開始來羅浮。今山中人知有稚川，而不知有道開。蓋稚川既為鄧岳所居山。燒煉著書者，年丹灶具存，而道平日惟食細石百。淡無為以，故后世莫得。而考陳郡袁宏，雖作道開贊，然宏嘗為溫作九錫文矣。此手豈宜復弄世外事。而贊文亦不見於世。遂作二贊。書之山谷，而不顯其處，以貽后代之好奇者。云 ...：

“Encomium for Daokai” 贊道開

世人菇柔	People in this realm eat the soft,
剛則吐之	If it is hard, they spit it out.
匙抄爛飯	Ladling out over-cooked rice,
口如牛嚼	Their mouths resemble cows in their chomping.
至人忘物	Accomplished persons are oblivious to the substance of things,
剛柔一致	They take the hard and soft as amounting to the same.
其視食石	With this view, they eat stones,
如啗餅餌	As if crunching on cookies or crackers.
北平飲羽	[In the story of] the “drinking of the [arrow-shaft] feathers” in Beiping,
出於無心	It was the result of mindlessness. <sup>106</sup>
食石之理	The reasoning behind eating stones,
於此可尋	Can be sought in this.
我雖不能	Although I am unable [to do it],
而識其理	I can comprehend the reasons for it.
庶幾漱之	Perhaps people swish them around [in their mouths],
以礪厥齒	In order to polish their teeth. <sup>107</sup>

Tang Geng’s preface reveals at least three intentions for writing the Encomia. He wants to save Shan from obscurity, praise him along with the near-contemporary figure with whom he is being juxtaposed,

<sup>105</sup> Tang, *Meishan Tang xiansheng wenji* 10, pp. 3a–b. Only the encomium for Shan is translated here.

<sup>106</sup> This couplet refers to the *Shiji* account of the famous general and archer Li Guang 李廣 (d. 129 BC), who once served as governor of the Han commandery of Youbeiping 右北平 (situated around present-day Beijing). He once mistook a stone for a tiger and shot at it. The arrow embedded itself in the stone up to the feathers on the shaft (feathers “eating” the stone), but after he realized his mistake and tried again, the arrows simply bounced off; Sima Qian, *Shiji* 109, pp. 271–72. Tang Geng is telling us that mindlessness plays a part in eating pebbles, just as it had done in Li Guang’s ability to pierce a stone with an arrow.

<sup>107</sup> Tang, *Meishan Tang xiansheng wenji* 10, p. 4a.

and, to a certain degree, replace the encomium for Shan that was written by Yuan but “never again seen in the world.” At the beginning of the preface, Tang plainly states that the people around Mount Luofu all knew of Ge Hong, but not of Shan Daokai. As a resident of this area and a compiler of its local history, it is natural that Tang Geng would have at some point taken up the subject of two of its most famous visitors. Ge Hong had made his presence known when he lived there, but Shan Daokai had not. Shan simply ate tiny pebbles and lived an “insipid” life. Here, although Tang is admitting that Ge Hong was the more prolific figure, he is in fact insinuating that Shan was just as, if not more, worthy of commemoration. The Chinese term *dan* carries many associations,<sup>108</sup> at one level “insipid” and “bland,” but at another there exists a powerful positive connotation of “modest,” “detached,” and “content without seeking fame or fortune.”<sup>109</sup>

Tang’s preface and Encomia contain no explicit mention of the Way of the Buddha. Associations with the Way of transcedents come indirectly, through references to Ge Hong, but they are confined to an implicit understanding that both Ge Hong and Shan Daokai were pursuing the same quest. This link – predominately based on the fact that Shan Daokai happened to pass away in the same area in which Ge Hong practiced techniques associated with transcendence – seems to have been adopted and restated with much more certainty in three subsequent accounts of Shan now found in the *Daoist Canon*. The first was written less than fifty years after Tang’s account; the second, written around 1300, reproduces Tang’s preface and Encomia verbatim; and the third also depicts Shan as a transcendent without including any references to Buddhism. All three accounts completely strip Shan of any information that might tie him to Buddhist teachings, and all three claim that he attained transcendence. It is to the first of these pro-Daoist narratives that we now turn.

A short composition entitled “Daokai shicu, Shitan yibi” 道開食籬, 石坦衣弊 (“Daokai, Eater of the Coarse, [and] Shitan, Wearer of the Tattered”) appears in Chen Baoguang’s 陳葆光 (fl. 1154) *Sandong qunxian lu* (table, no. 11).<sup>110</sup> Its account of Shan Daokai is attributed to a

<sup>108</sup> For a detailed study of the concept, see François Jullien, *In Praise of Blandness: Proceeding from Chinese Thought and Ascetics*, trans. Paula M. Varsano (New York: Zone Books, 2004), esp. pp. 55–58. I thank Benjamin Brose for introducing this work to me.

<sup>109</sup> The latter sense of the term is aptly conveyed in a passage from *Liji* 禮記, which reads: “The Way of the *junzi* [rests in] modesty and not impressiveness” (*junzi zhi dao, dan er buyan* 君子之道, 淡而不厭); *Liji zhengyi* 禮記正義 (SSJZS ed.), j. 30, p. 1635A.

<sup>110</sup> Chen Baoguang 陳葆光 (fl. 1154), comp., *Sandong qunxian lu* 三洞群仙錄, *DZ* 1248, j. 4, pp. 13b–14a. Chen’s work includes brief accounts of over a thousand so-called transcedents. Like Tang Geng’s encomia for Ge Hong and Shan Daokai, persons commemorated are

long-lost work known as *Maoting ji* 茆亭記 (*Records from the Couch-Grass Pavilion*). This source is cited elsewhere in Chen's work,<sup>111</sup> but no author is ever named, and it is not, to the best of my knowledge, quoted elsewhere.<sup>112</sup> Quite a bit, however, can be said about Chen Baoguang and his work.

Chen Baoguang was an adept of the Way of Orthodox Unity (Zhengyi 正一) and a disciple of Jingying Temple 靜應庵 in Jiangyin.<sup>113</sup> At some point in his life, he is said to have dreamt that the Great Thearch of Perfected Martiality (Zhenwu dadi 真武大帝) descended to bestow upon him a traditional ritual object called a *bi* 璧, a flat jade disk with a hole in the middle. The disk granted him the power to make efficacious talismans that were used to treat illness and prevent disasters. In his later years, Chen retired high into the Mao Mountains 茅山, where he pursued transcendence and attempted to make an elixir of longevity.<sup>114</sup>

In the "Preface" to his *Sandong qunxian lu*, Chen Baoguang claims that a transcendent is a being who nourishes his or her form in order to live long and "transcend" one's divinely mandated lifespan. Transcendence would be attained not by accumulating knowledge, but by performing correct longevity practices, winning merits, and cultivating pure virtues.<sup>115</sup> After offering a general history of the notion of

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all presented in pairs. Each entry begins with an eight-character line, which is then explained using two different passages culled from earlier texts. More than 200 different sources are cited in *Sandong qunxian lu*, including *Liexian zhuan*, *Shenxian zhuan*, and *Zhen'gao* 真誥.

<sup>111</sup> See *DZ* 1248, j. 12, p. 12a.

<sup>112</sup> There is a long tradition of classical Chinese works focused on the topic of "couch-grass pavilions" (*maoting* 茅亭/茆亭; the character *mao* 茅 is a common variant for *mao* 茆). None of the pieces I have examined provides any clues about the author or date of the text cited in *Sandong qunxian lu*. Pavilions, however, are often portrayed as contact points between the realms of heaven and earth, and couch-grass was traditionally used to make mats for the straining of sacrificial offerings of alcohol used in ancestral rites. These associations with the sacred add a bit of credence to the view that *Maoting ji* was a work that included accounts of divine transients.

<sup>113</sup> Jiangyin was located in the present-day city of the same name in south-central Jiangsu.

<sup>114</sup> The Mao Mountains – or Mountain of the Maos – is a cluster of peaks in southwest Jiangsu. Edward Schafer explains that the mountain chain measures about 25 km north to south and that the highest peak is approximately 520 m high. The summit is known as Gouqu 句曲 (Hooked Bend) because of its twisted, contorted aspects. Schafer further writes that, "In Taoist traditions at least as old as the fifth century of our era, this was one of the sacred mountains beneath whose hidden roots lay ghostly worlds, each equipped with its own system of planets and stars"; Edward H. Schafer, *Mao Shan in Tang Times* (Boulder: Society for the Study of Chinese Religions, 1980), p. 1. For a more comprehensive summary of Chen Baoguang's life and accomplishments, see Daoist Society of China ed., *Daojiao dacidian* 道教大辭典 (Beijing: Huaxia chubanshe, 1994), p. 603b.

<sup>115</sup> *DZ* 1248, p. 1a–b.

transcendence in China, Chen contends that these spiritual beings left traces of their practices behind that should be recovered and recorded so that later practitioners do not veer from or abuse the Way. A clear reason for Chen's having made the collection is stated in the middle of the preface, where he writes:

I gathered up documents from the “nine currents” and the hundred clans,<sup>116</sup> all the way down to the discourses of minor officials and local expressions. All kinds of matters about divine transcendents were copied and compiled for this text. It is meant to enlighten later students about the earnestness of the eminent transcendents in their cultivation of perfection, achievements in their aid of living beings, the seriousness of their offerings to Heaven, the hardships involved in their obtaining of methods, and similar examples of their toils and difficulties. Can death bring [these kinds of] achievements or not?<sup>117</sup> 網羅九流百氏之書，下逮稗官俚語之說。凡載神仙事者，哀爲此書，以曉後學使知夫列仙修真之勤，濟物之功，奉天之嚴，得法之艱。如此之勤苦，勞勩。卒能有成不。

Chen concludes the preface with a statement that adepts of the Dao who find ways to extend benefits to members of their own generation are sure to receive recompense from the heavens. He describes himself as “an adept of the Dao” in the colophon at the end of the preface, further clarifying the pro-Daoist perspective he brings to the work. This perspective also shines through the account of the transcendent Shan Daokao, about whom he quotes from *Maoting ji*.

The first half of “Daokai, Eater of the Coarse, [and] Shitan, Wearer of the Tattered” reads:

*Records from the Couch-Grass Pavilion:* Shan Daokai despised food and despised clothing. He did not fear exposure to cold and loved living in the mountains. Although mountain spirits and wood essences repeatedly tested him,<sup>118</sup> he was never distressed by them. Later, he moved to Mount Luofu, where he lived alone in a thatched hut, secluded and detached from worldly affairs. At a hundred and some years of age, he “escaped by means of a simulated corpse.”<sup>119</sup>

<sup>116</sup> These “nine currents” refer to nine traditional schools of thought in ancient China: Ruist (Classicist), Daoist, Yin-Yang, Legalist, Nominalist, Moist, Diplomatist, Miscellaneous, and Agriculturalist.

<sup>117</sup> *DZ* 1248, p. 3a.

<sup>118</sup> For earlier uses of the term *mujing* 木精 (wood essences or spirits), see Fan Ye 范曄 (398–445) et al., comp., *Hou Hanshu* 後漢書 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1999) 30B, p. 1079. See also, Gan Bao 幹寶 (fl. 317–322), *Soushen ji* 搜神記, ed. Wang Shaoying 汪紹楹 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1979), *j.* 2, no. 32, p. 20, and *j.* 18, no. 418, p. 218.

<sup>119</sup> *DZ* 1248, *j.* 4, pp. 13b–14a. The practice of “escape by means of a simulated corpse” is

茆亭記: 單道開惡食惡衣. 不畏飢寒, 好山居. 而山神木精屢試之, 而不懼. 後遷入羅浮山, 獨處茅茨蕭然物外. 百餘歲, 尸解.

This compact narrative reproduces many of the descriptions found in earlier accounts of Shan Daokai. Shan's aversion to normal food and clothing, his imperviousness to cold and heat, his seclusion in the mountains, his fearlessness in the face of spirits who come to test him, and his eventual settling on Mount Luofu are all documented in both Wang Yan's and Huijiao's accounts, and in almost all of the accounts that later drew from them. However, there are two major differences in Chen Baoguang's portrayal. Shan's image has been purged of all elements associated with the Way of the Buddha, and he is explicitly said to have performed "escape by means of a simulated corpse." Subsequent pro-Daoist tellers of Shan's story continued to ignore the medieval pro-Buddhist characteristics imposed upon the image of Shan in order to accentuate his identity as a successful practitioner of the Way of transcendence.

*Maotingji* may either have predated Tang Geng's Encomia, or may have been compiled about the same time. In any event, it is the earliest received work I know of that explicitly and unequivocally presents Shan as a transcendent. It would not be the last.

Zhao Daoyi's *Lishi zhen xian tidao tongjian* (see table, no. 12) combines parts of the *Jinshu* 95 and the *Sandong qunxian lu* accounts of Shan.<sup>120</sup> The first half of Zhao's Yuan-dynasty portrayal of Shan's life is based on the *Jinshu* 95 tradition. A note inserted into this part of the account merely cites a line from the *Gaoseng zhuan* account of Shan claiming that in 347, the grand astrologer of Jin emperor Mu 晉穆帝 (r. 344–361; Sima Dan 司馬聃) predicted the entrance of a great adept into Jin territory based on the appearance of the transcendent star.<sup>121</sup> The second half of Zhao's account includes Tang Geng's preface and Encomia, namely the encomium for Shan, obfuscating any linkage to Buddhism that one might infer based on earlier comments. Considered along with the previous two narratives, it is clear that a branch or tradition depicting Shan Daokai as a transcendent continues to develop into the fourteenth century.

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just one means by which a person can transcend the normally allotted lifespan. For comments on different levels of transcendence in early-medieval China, including "escape by means of a simulated corpse," see Company, *To Live as Long as Heaven and Earth*, pp. 75–80.

<sup>120</sup> Zhao Daoyi 趙道一 (ca. 1294–1307), comp., *Lishi zhen xian tidao tongjian* 歷世真仙體道通鑑, *DZ* 296, j. 28, pp. 3a–4a.

<sup>121</sup> *DZ* 296, j. 28, p. 3a.

Finally, Zhang Yu's mid-fourteenth-century *Xuanpin lu* (table, no. 13) records a short entry on the life of Shan Daokai closely resembling Zhao Daoyi's account.<sup>122</sup> The brief quotation from the *Shijiao shu* is omitted, suggesting both a purposeful erasure of Shan's Buddhist identity, and a re-emphasis on Shan's Daoist connections to and quest for transcendence.

## CONCLUSION

This paper has reconstructed the first thousand years in the formation of a discourse about a mid-fourth-century AD holy person. It brings our attention to the pitfalls inherent in uncritically accepting the unambiguous identities ascribed to him by proponents of specific textual traditions. One mines a certain work to find out that Shan Daokai is an eminent Buddhist monk; mine another, and he is a transcendent. Yet another, and he is an unaffiliated itinerant renunciant who engages in a wide variety of common Chinese religious practices. Shan's many lives not only provide us with an effective way to pick apart numerous strands and learn more clearly about an early-China holy man, but they also provide extraordinary examples of hagiographic poaching and refashioning.

Prosaic and poetic descriptions suggest much about who Shan Daokai might have been and what he might have done (and perhaps in the case of the Buddhist hymn attributed to him in *Gaoseng zhuan*, what he might have said), yet all are filtered through persons who separate us from him. This separation is significant. Ignoring it, as I've shown, can easily lead to the perpetuation of overly reified and exclusive labels for figures commemorated in early Chinese biographies and hagiographies.

Stories about Shan reveal commonalities in his actions and identity. Born in Dunhuang, on the northwestern fringe of the traditional Chinese empire, Shan spent a relatively long period of time in Ye, the capital of the Latter Zhao (until 350 AD), and a very short time in Jianye, the capital of the Eastern Jin. He ultimately ended up on Mount Luofu in southeastern China, where he either passed away or achieved transcendence sometime around 359. He is associated with a wide array of difficult practices and miraculous abilities, including ingestion of tiny pebbles and medicinal substances in lieu of common foods, im-

<sup>122</sup> Zhang Yu 張雨 (ca. 1280–1350), comp., *Xuanpin lu* 玄品錄, DZ 781, j. 3, pp. 16b–17b. For a brief textual history, see Benjamin Penny, “*Xuanpin lu* 玄品錄 (Accounts of Varieties of the Mysterious),” in Pregadio, ed., *Encyclopedia of Taoism*, p. 1140.

perviousness to cold and heat, fearlessness in the face of malevolent or baleful spirits, the ability to traverse great distances in a single day, foresight, and healing. These practices and abilities cannot be exclusively relegated to any single religious tradition or community, but as we have seen in the narratives translated in this paper, commemorators did bring more exact identities to their descriptions of Shan Daokai. Each constructed Shan in different ways, but all presented him as a holy person worthy of veneration and commemoration.

In what I argued as having been the earliest attested account of Shan Daokai, religious identity is most evidently manifested in Yuan Hong's descriptions of Shan's achievements. Yuan claims that Shan, in a manner most consistent with the Way of transcedents, "molted his cicada shell" and "detached from his bones." However, Yuan also mentions Shan's decomposed corpse, leaving open the possibility that Shan subjected himself to exposure burial, a practice commonly associated with the teachings of the Buddha. In the perhaps later *Shan biezhuàn* and the definitely later *Mingxiang jì* account, a number of elements common to both medieval Chinese transcedents and Buddhist holy men remain, but Shan's *goals* take on a distinctly Buddhist bent. Here, he is said to have "desired reduction to the extreme" and was, at the end of his life, exposed on Mount Luo to die. Quite a few subsequent accounts also emphasize Shan's Buddhist identity, but they retain more popular and common Chinese elements in their accounts to help "ground" their narratives and make them more familiar and palpable to contemporary Chinese audiences. For example, the clever dialectic Huijiao constructs between the Way of the Buddha and the Way of transcedents, endorsing the former while attracting the attention of his audience with the latter, would make his account of Shan's life the standard for many subsequent retellings. Later pro-Daoist narratives emphasize the image of Shan as a seeker of transcendence. They do so by completely erasing Shan's connections to Buddhism and by associating him with a prolific promoter of transcendence, Ge Hong. Subsequent twelfth- and fourteenth-century descriptions directly or indirectly build on the change to reaffirm and perpetuate the image of Shan as a transcedent.

Shan Daokai continued to be commemorated long after the fourteenth century. The amount of material on his life that can be mined from local histories is too substantial to detail here.<sup>123</sup> Instead, a six-

<sup>123</sup> For just a few examples, see Chen Lian 陳樾 (fl. 1410), comp., *Luofu zhi* 羅浮志 (in Yan,

teenth-century poetic narrative summing up Shan's travels, his ascetic practices, and his associations with deathlessness and transcendence will conclude the present study. It offers a final glimpse at his ongoing discursive formation.

“Ti Shan Daokai shi” 題單道開石 (“On Shan Daokai’s Stones”), by Ou Daren 歐大任 (1516–1595)<sup>124</sup>

衣褐南來客	A coarsely garbed guest came south,
羅鄆路不迷	Never losing his way to Luofu.
初行秦甸外	Before [reaching there] he traveled to the out-
	skirts of Qin,
肯止鄴城西	[And] willingly stayed in the western parts of
	the city of Ye.
餐石何須煮	Dining on stones, what need was there for
	cooking?
編茆尙可樓	[With only] woven reeds, he was still able to
	shelter himself.
千秋蟬蛻地	[In] a place where cicadas molt once every
	thousand autumns,
謝豹爲誰啼	For whom are the cuckoos <sup>125</sup> crying? <sup>126</sup>

### LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

JS Fang Xuanling 房玄齡 et al., *Jinshu* 晉書

*Baibu congshu jicheng* 2, p. 4a; j. 3, p. 1a; j. 4, pp. 6b–7a; j. 6, p. 1b; and j. 8, p. 6a. See also Song Guangye 宋廣業 (fl. 1716), comp., *Luofu shan zhi huibian* 羅浮山志會編 (*Xuxiu* SKQS edn.), j. 4, pp. 9b–10a; Xue Songliu 薛訟留, ed., *Guangdong tongzhi* 廣東通志 (Taipei: Hwa-wen shuju, 1968), j. 328, p. 4b. Many of the local histories listed in Michel Soymié’s study on Luofu also contain passages on Shan; e.g., Soymié, “Le Lo-feou chan,” pp. 128–32.

<sup>124</sup> Ou Daren, byname Zhenbo 楨伯, was a native of Shunde 順德 (near the present-day city of the same name situated about 50 km south of Guangzhou). He was a student of Huang Zuo 黃佐 (1490–1566), portrayed as a member of the “Later Five Poets of the Southern Garden” (Nanyuan hou wuzi 南園後五子) and accredited with a revival of classical scholarship during the sixteenth century. A short biography of Ou is recorded in Zhang Tingyu 張廷玉 (1762–1755) et al., comps., *Mingshi* 明史 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1974) 287, p. 7366.

<sup>125</sup> In China, the cries of the cuckoo (*xiebao* 謝豹; also called *zigui* 子規 and *dujuan* 杜鵑; *Cuculus canorus*) are said to cause people to spit up blood and are generally considered to be an omen of death. See Li, *Bencao gangmu* 47, p. 49. Ou Daren, after reminding us that this place is to be associated with transformative powers instead of death, is asking for whom the cuckoos are crying.

<sup>126</sup> Song, *Luofu shan zhi huibian*, j. 17, p. 12b.