

PACING THE VOID FOR MY STATE:
Textual Sources and Religious Thought of the Song Imperial “Pacing the Void” (*Buxu* 步
虛) Poetry

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ABSTRACT

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Pacing the Void for my State: Textual Sources and Religious Thought of the Song Imperial

“Pacing the Void” (*Buxu* 步虛) Poetry

Thesis directed by Professor Terry Kleeman

This thesis studies three suites of poems with the title “Pacing the Void” (*Buxu* 步虛), composed by three emperors of the Northern Song Dynasty (960-1127). It outlines the threefold identity of these three suites: these poems are simultaneously Daoist liturgical hymns, literary compositions, and state ritual texts.

The first chapter introduces “Pacing the Void” poetry as a sub-genre of Daoist liturgical hymns and as literary compositions from early medieval period to the Song dynasty. It considers this genre as both ritual texts and a developing structure for human authors. The second chapter discusses how the Song Imperial “Pacing the Void” poetry retained the Daoist features and was employed in the Golden Register Retreat, a Daoist liturgy exclusively for the imperial court. It analyzes the combinations of lyrics in Daoist liturgies before, during, and after the Northern Song Dynasty and concludes that the Imperial “Pacing the Void” poetry might be a part of the revised ritual system. The third chapter focuses on “Pacing the Void” poetry as literary compositions. It examines how each “Pacing the Void” suite fits in each emperor’s writing style and religious predilection. It seeks out clues to how the emperors view the function of “Pacing

the Void” poetry. The last chapter analyzes how the Song Imperial “Pacing the Void” poems functioned as state ritual texts by considering the public elements and modified pantheon in the poetry and by giving examples of parallel patterns in state ritual texts.

This thesis highlights the threefold identity of these understudied suites. It examines textual sources and religious thought from three aspects. A broader concern is to rethink the interaction between secular and religious power reflected in writings. On the one hand, the analysis of the text leads us to reflect on the employment of religious ritual for political purposes in the Northern Song Dynasty. On the other hand, the analysis of religious-political background sheds light on how various forces interact to form certain texts.

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INTRODUCTION

In early medieval Daoist scriptures, *Buxu* 步虛, or “pacing the void,” is a title of many poems recited in liturgies about excursions to the heavenly realm. These poems were ascribed to transcendent authors and used as ritual hymns. Later, in the Song Dynasty (960-1279), literary anthologies collected many poems with “Pacing the Void” in the titles composed by human authors as early as Yu Xin 庾信 (513-581), which follow specific rhetorical rules and incorporate personal emotions. Among these poems attributed to specific authors, three suites from the Song Dynasty, composed or compiled by the Emperors Taizong 太宗 (Zhao Jiong 趙炅, r. 976-997), Zhenzong 真宗 (Zhao Heng 趙恒, r. 997-1022), and Huizong 徽宗 (Zhao Ji 趙佶 r. 1100-1125), are notable, as they embody features of both ritual hymns and literary compositions, and they were used in a distinctive context—at the imperial court.

The performative nature of these suites is illustrated in anthologies that collect these Imperial “Pacing the Void” poems. These suites by the three emperors are labeled “imperially produced” (*yuzhi* 禦製) and are collected in *Hymns for Golden Register Retreat of the Three Caverns* (DZ 310 *Jinlu zhai sandong zanyongyi* 金籙齋三洞讚詠儀)¹, a Daoist anthology of ritual lyrics compiled ca. 1125. This traditional classification identifies these poems as Daoist poems because they reflect Daoist thought and were used in Daoist liturgies. Accounts from

¹ The *Daozang* number follows the numbering in Kristofer Schipper, *Concordance du Tao-Tsang: titres des ouvrages* (Publications de l'École française d'Extrême-Orient; 102 vols. Paris: École française d'Extrême-Orient, 1975), reprinted as *Daozang suoyin* 道藏索引, (Shanghai: Shanghai shudian, 1996).

the time also prove that these suites were very likely to be recited in Daoist liturgies. For example, Huizong's suite is also included in *Precious Tones of Liturgy* (*Yuyin fashi* 玉音法事), a collection of ritual lyrics and melodies of the Song Dynasty. *Precious Tones of Liturgy* records the melody for "Pacing the Void" poetry with curving lines (known as "shengquzhe pu" 聲曲折譜). The lyrics are followed by liturgical instructions about the ritual performance. Furthermore, based on recent fieldwork, these lyrics are still used in modern Daoist introits.² Given this, it is likely that Daoist liturgical use was a major driving force when the three emperors composed or compiled the "Pacing the Void" poems.

Therefore, the first object of this thesis is to study the Daoist religious connotation reflected in these poems. For example, some poems indicate Daoist liturgical procedures, some depict scenes of the heavenly realm, some include members of the Daoist pantheon, and some imply Daoist ideal of self-cultivation and so on. As for textual sources, these Imperial "Pacing the Void" poems inherit the vocabulary, syntax, and themes of other Daoist ritual

2 Recordings of contemporary performances of "Pacing the Void" music and songs, including versions from Shanghai 上海, Suzhou 蘇州, Shangrao 上饒, and Quanzhen zhengyun 全真正韻, see "Daojiao yinyue" 道教音樂, accessed February 1, 2022, <https://www.daoisms.org/music>. For selected music scores for contemporary performance, see Min Zhiting 閔智亭 et. al. ed., *Quanzhen zhengyun puji* 全真正韻譜輯 (Beijing: Zhongguo wenlian chuban gongsi, 1991). See also Kristopher M. Schipper, "A Study of Buxu: Taoist Liturgical Hymn and Dance," in *Studies of Taoist Rituals and Music of Today*, ed. Pen-Yeh Tsao and Daniel P. L. Law (Hong Kong: The Society for Ethnomusicological Research, 1989), 116.

hymns, especially other “Pacing the Void” poetry, from previous dynasties. Such Daoist elements distinguish them from other imperial literature at that time.

Second, the Song Imperial “Pacing the Void” poetry contains prominent themes about public welfare and royal destiny which distinguish it from previous lyrics found in Daoist anthologies. Thus, this thesis also probes into these suites in the context of the royal court. As state ritual texts, the poetry’s textual sources are state ritual texts from previous dynasties and contemporary times, as represented by the sections “Records of Music” (“Yuezhi” 樂誌) in official histories of many dynasties.

The combination of the two identities of the poems reflects the interaction between two sources of imperial power—orthodox discourses attribute imperial power to the Mandate of Heaven, whereas Daoist thought suggests a higher source of authority. Daoism, Buddhism, and some popular religions had been conferred official recognition in the Song Dynasty. The Song court also made efforts to organize these religions within the system of traditional state cult and rituals. Some Daoist retreat and offering rituals were sponsored by the state to pray for the wellbeing of the state and the emperors themselves. From this perspective, this thesis also studies these poems in this special historical background, and as products of religious syncretism.

In addition to Daoist lyrics and imperial literature, these suites possess a third identity as the three emperors’ literary compositions. Although imperial literature often seeks a balance between rhetorical flourishes and political clique, these poems still reveal the three emperors’ different writing styles and different religious concerns. This thesis identifies textual sources from which each emperor drew to form their own writing. Furthermore, the poetry shows the emperors’ attempts to take advantage of Daoism to strengthen their power, while simultaneously being alert to Daoism as a potential challenge to their authority.

Through a comprehensive survey of relevant sources, this thesis will provide an in-depth interpretation of texts that have not been thoroughly studied before. Broadly speaking, this thesis aims to develop a theoretical structure to analyze the textual sources related to “Pacing the Void” poetry and to assess the religious connotations of these poems as Daoist lyrics, imperial poetry, and personal literary composition. By combining literature studies and ritual studies, this thesis follows an innovative path to explore the interplay of literary tradition and religious goals in writings.

CHAPTER 1

A Brief History of the “Pacing the Void” Poetry as a Sub-genre

1.1 “Lyrics on Pacing the Void” (*Buxu ci* 步虛詞) in Lingbao Daoist ritual

“Pacing the Void” poetry originates from the lyrics of liturgical hymns in early *Lingbao* 靈寶 (Numinous Jewel) Daoism, represented by ten poems in the *Canon of Mysterious Cavern and Numinous Jewel on Pacing the Void at Jade Capital Mountain* (*Dongxuan Lingbao Yujingshan Buxujing* 洞玄靈寶玉京山步虛經, hereafter the *Lingbao Buxujing*) compiled by Lu Xiujing 陸修靜 (406-477). This Daoist canon of the Southern Dynasties provides an early form of “Pacing the Void” poetry, and the performance of the poetry is set in a clear ritual context.

As a liturgical text, the *Canon* centers on the rites to be performed in a retreat (*zhai* 齋) ritual of Lingbao-dongxuan 靈寶洞玄 Daoist school.³ The first passages depict a scene on Jade Capital Mountain of the Mysterious City, the highest heavenly realm of the early

³ In this context, the *zhai* ritual is a generic reference to a ritual of larger scale, rather than exclusively to the retreat rites before the main ritual, although this canon does not explicitly state the ritual’s specific function. Lü Pengzhi argues that the *zhai* ritual in Medieval Daoism was a self-contained public ritual, in contrast to an individual act or a preparation for individuals in the pre-Qin period. See Lü Pengzhi 呂鵬志, *Tang qian Daojiao yishi shigang* 唐前道教儀式史綱 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2008), 129-169.

Lingbao Daoism, in which transcendents are singing and dancing. It is in this setting that the hymns were originally created.

The Jade Capital Mountain of the Mysterious City is located above the Three Pure [Heavens]. Above the realms of no form and no defilements there is the Superior Palace of Purple Tenuity on the Mystery Terrace of the Seven Jewels of Jade Capital and Golden Portal. In the palace there are divine scriptures of the Three Jewels. To the eight directions of the Mountain trees made of the seven jewels sprout spontaneously. One grows in each direction, so the eight trees fill the space the eight directions, cover and shelter all the Heavens, and embrace the three realms to form the Supreme Limitless Great Canopy Heaven. This is the seat of the Most High Limitless Celestial Worthy, Sovereign of the Void. On the Mountain, in the forests and palace chambers are arrayed the registers recording names of the sages of all the Heavens. The sages, emperors, kings, high transcendents and perfecteds in innumerable hordes pay court three times a month upon the Mountain. They burn self-generated sandalwood and numinous incense of resurrection. Flying transcendents disperse flowers. They circumambulate the Mystery Terrace of the Seven Jewels three times, reciting the stanzas of the Empty Cavern. At that time, music is performed in all the Heavens, with hundreds, thousands, and ten thousand of performers, and their lithophones are loud and clear. Perfected goddesses sing along with the clappers stroke; transcendent lads clearly chant with solemn faces; jade maidens gently proceed with whirling and dancing. Freely, delicately, and demurely flows their dance; they are elegant, harmoniously together, and with effortless ease. Upon the Mountain is the splendid forest of the seven jewels. Its light and color are bright and shiny; the vermilion fruits are glorious and glistening. All is made of gold and silver, pearl and jade, crystal, glass, agate, and cornelian. When numinous wind vibrates

them, their sound spontaneously turns into tones, elegant and subtle, smooth and excellent. All the Heavens hear the sound and fly upward, never ceasing their music or suspending their songs. They praise and savor this utmost sound, which is not to be named or described. Divine animals, dragons and unicorns, lions, white cranes, rare birds, and phoenixes emotionally cry and vibrantly leap.

玄都玉京山在三清之上，無色無塵。上有玉京金闕七寶玄臺紫微上宮，中有三寶神經。山之八方自然生七寶之樹，一方各生一株，八株彌滿八方，覆蓋諸天，包羅三界，為無上大羅天太上無極虛皇天尊之治也。其山林宮室皆列諸天聖眾名籍。諸天聖、帝王、高仙、真人無鞅數眾，一月三朝其上，燒自然旃檀，反生靈香，飛仙散花，旋繞七寶玄臺三周匝，誦詠空洞歌章。是時諸天奏樂，百千萬妓，雲璈朗徹。真妃齊唱而激節，仙童凜顏而清歌，玉女徐進而跕躡，放窈窕而流舞，翩翩詵詵而容裔也。山上七寶華林，光色焯燁，朱實璨爛，悉是金銀、珠玉、水晶、琉璃、瑋琛、碼礪。靈風振之，其音自成宮商，雅妙宛絕。諸天聞聲而飛騰，勿輟絃止歌，嘆味至音，不能名狀。神獸、龍麟、獅子、白鶴、奇禽、鳳凰，悲鳴踴躍。

The Most High loudly strikes the drums of the Law, welcomes the guests into the jasper hall, and peacefully sits upon the lotus. The Most High preaches about the Way, the Quiet, the Truth, clearly chants the Cavern Scripture, expounds and explains the mysterious texts, distantly senses the inaudible and invisible, and delightedly moves all the transcendents. At that time, wind from the eight directions blows the pennants; fragrant flowers mutually disperse; flowing mist is dense and dim.

太上震響法鼓，延賓瓊堂，安坐蓮花，講道靜真，清詠洞經，敷釋玄文，遠味希夷，喜動群仙。其時八風颺旛，香花交散，流煙翳靄。⁴

Then, “Pacing the void” is introduced as a segment of the retreat ritual. According to the annotation (in smaller font) to the text, one should clack the teeth (*kouchi* 叩齒), swallow the saliva (*yanshu* 咽嗽), visualize the deities (*cunnian* 存念), and worship them (*libai* 禮拜) before reciting the hymns:

In the practice of the Lingbao Retreat, when reciting the poems of the Empty Cavern “Pacing the Void”: I clack the teeth three times, swallow three times, and then visualize in my mind the sun and the moon in front of one’s face. The rays enter through my nose. The sun enters through the left nostril, the moon through the right nostril, entering the Palace of the Golden Flower. The rays come out from the back of my head, and they change into a bright nine-colored halo, spread into the Jade Pillow (the occipital hole), and thoroughly illuminate the ten directions. They follow me in circumambulating the scripture, revolving around me as I walk. Again, I clack the teeth three times and swallow three times, and then visualize the Primordial Lord of the Three Simple (pneumata) in the Palace of the Golden Flower, in the likeness of infants.

⁴ DZ 1439 *Dongxuan Lingbao Yujingshan Buxujing* 洞玄靈寶玉京山步虛經 1a-1b. Here and in the following, all the translations are my own unless otherwise noted; all translations are partly revised by Terry Kleeman, my advisor.

脩靈寶洞玄齋，誦空洞步虛章，先叩齒三通，咽嗽三過。心存日月在己面上，光芒灌鼻，日從鼻左入，月從鼻右入，入金華宮。光明出頭後，煥然作九色圓象，溥入玉枕，徹照十方，隨我繞經旋迴而行。畢，又叩齒三通，咽液三過，存三素元君在金華宮，如嬰兒之狀。⁵

The scripture continues, listing the lyrics of the hymns, including ten poems of “Pacing the Void” lyrics, eight poems of “Anthems of the Scripture of the Greatest wisdom” (“Taishang zhihui jingzan” 太上智慧經讚), three poems of “Hymns Recited by the Lady Superior Bloom Right Blossom” (“Youying furen yinsong song” 右英夫人吟誦頌), and “Hymns from the Five Perfected” (“Wu zhenren song” 五真人頌), and three poems of “Incantation for Worshipping the Scripture” (“Lijing zhou” 禮經咒). At the end, there is a narrative about the transmission of the *The Canon of the Great Perfected of the Three Caverns, the highest purity* (*Shangqing sandong taizhen Daojing* 上清三洞太真道經) from Ge Xuan 葛玄 (ca. 164-244) to Ge Hong 葛洪 (ca. 283-363).

The following paragraphs examine the form and content of the ten “Pacing the Void” poems in this scripture. Each poem contains ten to twenty-two lines, and every line has five characters. The whole suite narrates a journey to the Jade-Capital Mountain and a gathering with transcendents.

⁵ DZ 1439 *Dongxuan Lingbao Yujingshan Buxujing* 3a; The translation is partly based on Schipper, “A Study of *Buxu*: Taoist Liturgical Hymn and Dance,” 115.

In terms of the structure, the ten poems show a certain continuity. The first two poems correspond to the ritual procedure depicted in the preceding paragraphs:

Touching my head to the ground, I worship the Most High. Burning incense, I return to the Void. The flowing light circles around with me, and the Wheel of the Law⁶ also spins three times.

稽首禮太上，燒香歸虛無。流明隨我回，法輪亦三周。(Lingbao Buxu poetry, 1st poem)

Pacing around and stepping on the cloud mainstay, I ride the void and pace the mysterious guidelines.

旋行躡雲綱，乘虛步玄紀。(Lingbao Buxu poetry, 2nd poem)

Visualize in your mind the sun and the moon in front of one's face... They enter the Palace of the Golden Flower. The rays come out from the back of the head, and they change into a bright nine-colored halo... They follow me in circumambulating the scripture, revolving around me as I walk.

心存日月在己面上.....入金華宮。光明出頭後，燦然作九色圓象.....隨我繞經旋迴而行。(Lingbao Buxujing preceding liturgy introduction, line 3a)

⁶ *Falun* 法輪 in Buddhist contexts is usually translated as “the Wheel of Dharma.”

The third poem depicts the view of the Jade-capital Mountain one can see after stepping into the heavenly realm. Such scenery descriptions can also be found in the preceding passages:⁷

On the loftily lifted terrace of the heavenly jewels, the glistening light flows from the sun. Bright and shiny is the jade bloom forest, lush and glorious are the flaring scarlet fruits. When you are constantly mindful of eating the prime essence, refining the saliva to firm the body and nature, the golden light disperses from the Purple Tenuity, and secludedly and subtly, you grandly leave behind the Great Vehicle.

.....岩岩天寶臺，光明爛流日。煒燁玉華林，葳瓌耀朱實。常念餐元精，煉液固形質。金光散紫微，窈窕大乘逸。 (*Lingbao Buxu* poetry, 3rd poem)

There is there the Superior Palace of Purple Tenuity on the Mystery Terrace of the Seven Jewels of Jade Capital and Golden Portal... On the mountain there is a splendid forest of the seven jewels. Its light and color are bright and shiny, the vermilion fruits are glorious and glistening... If you eat these fruits of the blossoms, you will become a transcendent of the golden light... Naturally you will achieve the Way.

⁷ As Wang Chengwen points out, the depiction of the Jade Capital Mountain and the Palace from the *Lingbao Buxujing* is an elaborated version of the DZ 22 *Yuanshi wulao chishu yupian zhenwen tianshujing* 元始五老赤書玉篇真文天書經. Some sentences are also seen in other earlier scriptures. See Wang Chengwen 王承文, “Zhonggu Daojiao Buxu yishi qiyuan yu gu Lingbaojing fenlei lunkao” 中古道教步虛儀式起源與靈寶經分類論考, *Zhongshan daxue xuebao* 54 (2014.4): 71. Thus, these scenery depictions are not an innovation of the *Lingbao Buxujing* but are inherited from earlier traditions. 中古

.....有玉京金闕七寶玄台紫微上宮.....山上七寶華林，光色焯燁，朱實璨爛.....
食此華實，為金光仙人.....道自成矣。(Lingbao Buxujing preceding liturgy
introduction, lines 1a-3a)

As Schipper notes, “the practice of *Buxu* was considered as conducive to longevity and might be accompanied by meditation,” as we see in the fourth poem. The fifth to tenth poems portray an experience in the heavenly realm, including “my” actions, transcendent and deities “I” encounter, “our” interaction, and the merit “I” gain through this journey. Generally, the ten poems construct a ballad which closely connects to the preceding liturgical description.

In terms of poetic devices, the vocabulary is plain. There is little strict parallelism in couplets. There are only a handful of couplets elaborating the heavenly scene; however, as mentioned above, similar sentences can be found in the preceding descriptive passage about the ritual process. We can assume that if practitioners, through internal transmission, are familiar with these terms in common Daoist scriptures, or if they are required to study the preceding liturgy introduction, the lyrics would be easy to remember, understand, and recite.

Many other medieval Daoist scriptures include introductions to the ritual in which “Pacing the Void” lyrics are performed. *Commentary on the Stanzas for Ascending to Mystery and Pacing the Void* (Dongxuan lingbao shengxuan buxuzhang xushu 洞玄靈寶昇玄步虛章序疏, ca. 618-907) has an annotation of the *Lingbao Buxujing*’s structure and the ten “Pacing the Void” poems.⁸ According to this annotation, the lyrics are closely connected

⁸ DZ 614 *Dongxuan lingbao shengxuan buxuzhang xushu* 洞玄靈寶昇玄步虛章序疏.

to the ritual performance in a chronological order. Another example from the early Daoist tradition is *Essential Instructions from All the Scriptures for the Ritual of the Lingbao Retreat, Expounded by the Perfected of the Great Ultimate* (*Taiji zhenren fu lingbao zhajie weiyi zhujing yaojue* 太極真人敷靈寶齋戒威儀諸經要訣, ca. 390-589). It mentions the hymns of “Pacing the Void” as an integral part of the Lingbao retreat ritual.⁹

Furthermore, in *Ritual for the Transmission of the Corpus of Lingbao Scriptures* (*Taishang dongxuan lingbao shouduyi* 太上洞玄靈寶授度儀, ca. 477), “Pacing the Void” hymns and dances are performed to accompany the transmission of scriptures.¹⁰ “Pacing the Void” hymns are also cited as a step in the Yellow Register Retreat.¹¹ Finally, they are seen at the end of a personal petition formula as a part of a ritual of confession. As recorded in *Liturgy of the Sworn Alliance with the Perfected, Kept in the Jade Chest of the Nine Realms of Darkness, in the Department of the Long Night* (*Dongxuan lingbao changye zhi fu jiuyou*

⁹ DZ 532 *Taiji zhenren fu lingbao zhajie weiyi zhujing yaojue* 太極真人敷靈寶齋戒威儀諸經要訣 6b-7a.

¹⁰ DZ 528 *Taishang dongxuan lingbao shouduyi* 太上洞玄靈寶授度儀.

¹¹ DZ 508 *Wushang Huanglu dazhai lichengyi* 無上黃籙大齋立成儀 34/4a-7b; DZ 507 *Taishang huanglu zhajie* 太上黃籙齋儀 53/1a-17a. The former mentions “when reciting the first poem, you should stand still; when reciting the second, you should pace around. ... When reciting the second, fifth, and eighth, you pace around and scatter flowers” which are exactly in accord with the content of the *Lingbao Buxu* poems.

yukui mingzhenke 洞玄靈寶長夜之府九幽玉匱明真科, ca. 400), the last step of a petition is to “circumambulate three times and recite the divine poems of the ‘Pacing the Void.’”¹²

The recitation of “Pacing the Void” hymns occurs while performing certain dancing steps in many early Lingbao scriptures. In addition to the description of “circumambulating” 繞經旋旋迴而行 in the preceding passages of *Lingbao Buxu*, for example, there are *Standardized Ritual of the Supreme Yellow Register Retreat* (*Wushang huanglu dazhai lichengyi* 無上黃籙大齋立成儀, dated 1223), which links it with “the refined step” (*yabu* 雅步), and *Golden Book of Salvation according to the Lingbao Tradition* (*Lingbao lingjiao jidu jinshu* 靈寶領教濟度金書, ca. 1300) mentioning “pacing the Dipper” (*gangbu* 罡步) which might be related to the patterns of constellations.¹³ The close relationship with dancing steps further proves that “Pacing the Void” hymns were used in an instrumental way, and they were likely to follow certain rhythmic rules.

Many other medieval Daoist scriptures collect variations of liturgical hymns with the title “Pacing the Void”. For example, in the *Ritual for the Retreat of Divine Incantations of*

¹² DZ 1411 *Dongxuan lingbao changye zhi fu jiuyou yukui mingzhenke* 洞玄靈寶長夜之府九幽玉匱明真科, 36b.

¹³ DZ 508 *Wushang Huanglu dazhai lichengyi* 34/5a; DZ 466 *Lingbao lingjiao jidu jinshu* 靈寶領教濟度金書 319/13b. Moreover, in DZ 530 *Shangyuan jinlu jianwen* 上元金籙簡文 (the Tablet of the Golden Register of the Supreme Principle, ca. 400), “Pacing the Void” reciting is cited in a ritual with group dancing and performance, demonstrating it was performed publicly. See also Poul Anderson, “The Practice of Bugang,” *Cahiers d’Extrême-Asie* 5 (1990): 15-53.

the Abyssal Caverns (**Dongyuan shenzhou zhaiyi* 洞淵神呪齋儀, probably a Tang manuscript), a template for a petition for fortune has eight “Buxu Hymns” (“Buxu song” 步虛誦) in the script to be recited by the petitioner or the ritual practitioner.¹⁴ In the *Bookcase of the Clouds with the Seven Labels* (*Yunji qiqian* 雲笈七籤, ca. 1020), there are five examples of “Buxu lyrics of the Many Transcendents” (“Zhongxian Buxu ci” 眾仙步虛詞) which feature more refined couplets. However, similar couplets reappear in the same suite, making them more repetitive while less well-organized as a “suite.”¹⁵ *Supreme Stanzas of Pacing the Void, Flying to the Origin of the Golden Perfected, in the Jade Purity of the Golden Origin* (*Shangqing wushang jinyuan yuqing jinzhen feiyuan buxu yuzhang* 上清無上金元玉清金真飛元步虛玉章, ca. 618-907), a Tang anthology, contains fourteen poems of “Pacing the Void” lyrics. The structure and vocabulary are remarkably similar to the *Lingbao*

¹⁴ BD 02983 **Dongyuan shenzhou zhaiyi* 洞淵神呪齋儀, see also Zhonghua Daozang edn., 30/143c-44a.

¹⁵ DZ 1032 *Yunji qiqian* 雲笈七籤 99/7b-9a. For example, there is “floating and fluttering, I go up to the path of the cloud; dim and dreary, I go into the far sky” 飄飄上雲路黯黯入長霄 in the first poem while “fresh and cool, I go up to the path of the cloud; dim and dark, I go into the far void” 泠泠上雲路窈窈入長虛 in the fifth; “the dark wind circles the flying canopy; the purple vapor floats around the transcendent carriage” 玄風轉飛蓋紫氣泛仙車 in the second while “the fragrant wind blows around the feathered canopy; the roaming vapor circles the carriage of whirlwind” 香風飄羽蓋遊氣轉飈車 in the fifth.

Buxu, although three poems have four characters instead of five in each line.¹⁶ Another Tang lyric anthology, *Petitions and Hymns of All the Perfected of the High Purity* (*Shangqing zhuzhenzhang song* 上清諸真章頌, ca. 618-907), includes three poems of “Hymns of the Three Contracts for Pacing the Void” (“*Buxu sanqi song*” 步虛三契頌). Each poem is much longer than the *Lingbao Buxu*, but the rhetorical features are similar.

In short, almost all the suites mentioned above include references to certain ritual actions mimicking the process of an excursion to the heavenly realm. The vocabulary of the scene, however, is limited, and the textual sources are represented by the passage from *Lingbao Buxujing* cited at the beginning. The terms drawn from classical Daoist sources are also commonly seen in other well-circulated scriptures. Therefore, the nature of these lyrics is not about creating artistic barriers and strangeness. Rather, they provide spiritual guidance through rituals, so as to obtain a religious experience, to cultivate the mind, and to complete the function of the whole liturgy. The form of most ritual “Pacing the Void” lyrics is relatively fixed to match a specific melody, while the content and vocabulary are closely related to normative passages in Daoist scriptures.

Now I will turn to the problem of authorship in reception history. From the perspective of religious Daoism, these lyrics were considered to have been composed by transcendents. In other words, they are not literary works by human authors. Many accounts imply that the lyrics, music, and choreography of “Pacing the Void” had a supernal origin. *The Grand Method of the Numinous Jewel of the High purity* (*Shangqing Lingbao dafa* 上清靈寶大法) by Jin Yunzhong 金允中 (1225) cites Du Guangting 杜光庭 (ca. 850-933): “The ten

¹⁶ DZ 1375 *Shangqing wushang jinyuan yuqing jinzhen feiyuan buxu yuzhang* 上清無上金元玉清金真飛元步虛玉章.

poems of “Pacing the Void” are from *Lingbao xuandu yujingshan jing* 靈寶玄都玉京山經. They are lyrics for numerous sages of the Ten Heavens singing to “cultivate perfection” (*xiuzhen* 修真) when they pace around the Jade Capital Mountain.”¹⁷ Similarly, Chao Gongwu 晁公武 (1105-1180) notes that “Pacing the Void” scriptures were “transmitted from the Right Perfected of the Grand Summit to the Left Transcendent Duke. The poems are all recited and sung by the high transcendents and great sages when they visit the Jade Capital Mountain of the Mysterious City and flying in the void.”¹⁸ An anachronistic anecdote from a fifth-century source writes: “When the King of Chensi 陈思王 (Cao Zhi 曹植) wandered once in mountains, he suddenly heard the sound of scriptures being recited, coming from afar, pure and clear. He then analyzed the sounds and noted them down and made them into the music of the divine transcendents. The Daoist priests (Daoshi 道士) imitated this music and made it into the ‘Pacing the Void’ melody.”¹⁹

Some Daoist scriptures related to “Pacing the Void” poetry depict a scenario with singing deities and transcendents. For example, an Eastern Jin (317-420) scripture writes:

¹⁷ DZ 1223 *Shangqing lingbao dafa* 上清靈寶大法, 21/21a.

¹⁸ *Junzhai dushuzhi* 郡齋讀書志, compiled by Chao Gongwu 晁公武 (1105-1180) (SKQS edn.), 8/37a.

¹⁹ *Yiyuan* 異苑, compiled by Liu Jingshu 劉敬叔 (d. 468) (SKQS edn.), 5/9b. The translation is from Schipper, “A Study of *Buxu*: Taoist Liturgical Hymn and Dance,” 111.

At this time, the Imperial Lord of the Grand Tenuity personally commanded the maids of the Grand Tenuity, Ji Linhua, Yan Caiyun, Zhu Tiaoyan, Han Fangyao, etc., to join in singing the lyrics of the Golden Perfected and songs of Pacing the Void together.

於是太微帝君……親命太微侍女，紀林華、嚴彩雲、朱條煙、韓放要等，合歌金真之詩，步虛之曲。²⁰

Similar accounts about the transcendents' performance are included in many other Daoist scriptures. As Wang Chengwen 王承文 concludes, "Pacing the Void" ritual and lyrics originally refers to songs and dances performed by the deities and transcendents as they are "pacing the void" in heaven. Thus, "Pacing the Void" ritual and lyrics performed by Daoist priests in liturgies since medieval China, in essence, were imitations of rituals and performances in the heavenly realm.²¹ Whether transmitted from or imitations of transcendents' compositions, the purpose was to serve public ritual. This is the reason for the lack of the human authors in accounts of liturgical "Pacing the Void" poetry.

1.2 "Pacing the Void" poetry by "human authors"

Although references to "Pacing the Void" poetry in early Daoist scriptures are usually accompanied by a narrative of the piece's performance or transmission by a transcendent,

²⁰ DZ 1334 *Dongzhen taishang shenhu yinwen* 洞真太上神虎隱文, 5a-5b.

²¹ Wang Chengwen, "Zhonggu daojiao *Buxu* yishi qi yuan yu gu Lingbaojing fenlei lunkao," 70.

later literary anthologies present different contexts. For instance, *Anthology of the Music Archive* (*Yuefu shiji* 樂府詩集, hereafter *Music Archive*), compiled by Guo Maoqian 郭茂倩 (1041-1099), collects forty-eight poems of “Pacing the Void” lyrics composed by ten human authors from the 6th to 9th century.²² They are categorized as “Miscellaneous lyrics” (“Zaqu geci” 雜曲歌辭), implying that “Pacing the Void” is classified as a regular literary theme. The title *Music Archive* (*Yuefu*) refers to a poetic genre set to traditional melodies. It is named after the Music Archive Office, a ministry of music first established in the first century BCE by the Emperor Wu of Han 漢武帝 (r. 141-87 BCE). The Music Archive Office specialized in collecting and transcribing folk music and songs as well as composing court music and lyrics. Earlier *Yuefu* poetry was usually not ascribed to specific authors. By the Sui-Tang Dynasties, the definition of *Yuefu* poetry had broadened. Some poems taking on traditional titles or imitating the *Yuefu* style, though not written to a specific melody, were also classified as *Yuefu* poetry. A substantial majority of *Yuefu* poems collected in *Music Archive* fit in this generalized definition, adopting traditional *Yuefu* titles but being attributed to specific authors. *Music Archive* often notes the origin and development of certain titles before listing all poems of this rubric. As for the title “Pacing the Void”, it draws on an account from *Abstracts of Traditional Titles of the Music Archive* (*Yuefu guti yaojie* 樂府古題要解), compiled by Wu Jing 吳兢 (670-749):

“Pacing the Void” lyrics are recited in Daoist abbeys. They thoroughly express the beauty of numerous transcendents when they are blown about and lightly ascend.

²² *Yuefu shiji* 樂府詩集, compiled by Guo Maoqian 郭茂倩 (1041-1099) (SKQS edn.), 78/4a-10b.

步虛詞，道觀所唱，備言眾仙縹緲輕舉之美。²³

This note explains the original context in which “Pacing the Void” lyrics were performed. However, most of the “Pacing the Void” poetry collected in *Music Archive* are no longer songs used in rituals, but personal compositions on a religious theme. This can be proved by narrations about the contexts of composition. For example, Bai Juyi 白居易’s (772-846) personal anthology includes two poems, titled “Two Quatrains as an Adscript to Ten Stanzas of ‘Pacing the Void’ Poems, to Send off the Refined Master Xiao” 送蕭鍊師步虛詞十首卷後以二絕繼之：

Now that you are about to leave for Yingzhou, at the time of departure, I present ten poems of “Pacing the Void” lyrics to you. Should the heavenly transcendents appreciate and ask about them, you can tell them that they are poems by the marshal of Jiangzhou.
欲上瀛洲臨別時，贈君十首步虛詞。天仙若愛應相問，可道江州司馬詩。

On flowery paper, bound with jade, the characters written with pine ink, with whom will you open them in Heaven? If you submit it to the Queen Mother, and she is willing to sing it, she will ask (her maid) Dong Shuangcheng to bring it in.

²³ *Yuefu shiji*, 78/4a.

花紙瑤緘松墨字，把將天上共誰開。試呈王母如堪唱，發遣雙成更取來。²⁴

Although the “Pacing the Void” suite itself is no longer available, we can infer the context of this composition from this adscript: Bai Juyi was seeing off the Daoist priest Xiao, and he wrote a suite of “Pacing the Void” poetry as a farewell gift. The two adscript poems presuppose that Xiao could bring these poems to heaven and submit them to transcendentals and deities. Although this is also a ritual context in which he intends that the recipient will use his poem for performance, and Bai Juyi wrote them with special paper and ink, he considered himself, a mortal author, would gain fame as a talented literatus. This demonstrates a strong sense of the author’s agency. Bai regarded his composition more as his own property and an instrument for interpersonal relationships rather than for public ritual.

Another example reflects the change of “Pacing the Void” poetry from the perspective of readers’ reception. There is a passage in “A Preface for the anthology of the Honored Master Wu [Yun], the Prior Born Genitor of the Unity of the Central Mountain” 中嶽宗元先生吳尊師集序 by Quan Deyu 權德輿 (759-818) commenting on the “Pacing the Void” suite written by Wu Yun 吳筠 (d. 778):

Wu Yun’s “Stanzas on Pacing the Void,” his compositions on “Roving transcendent” and “Mixed responses” sometimes lament the way of this world with far-ranging imaginings and reviews of antiquity, and sometimes they permeate myriad simulacra, thereby merging with [the celestial domains] surrounding the pivot. He researched the guide

²⁴ Bai Juyi 白居易 (772-846), *Baishi Changqing ji* 白氏長慶集 (SKQS edn.), 16/17b-18a.

ropes of human destiny to understand the evolution of human affairs.

其……步虛詞、遊仙、雜感之作，或遐想理古，以哀世道；或磅礴萬象，用冥環樞。稽性命之紀，達人事之變。²⁵

Wu Yun was known as a Daoist priest, and his Buxu suite contains abundant images of journeys to the heavenly realm as well as terms drawn from classical texts like *Laozi* and *Zhuangzi*. Reading the suite, we may define them as Daoist poetry because of these evident Daoist elements. However, there is no ritual setting or description of the astral journey. It starts directly with the scene, describing the architecture, the banquet, and the gathering. This arrangement is similar to many other non-ritual “roving transcendent” poems from the time. Considering his Daoist identity, this suite might have been written for ritual use, but we do not have clear information about whether this suite was composed to fit in a certain ritual melody, because this suite is not seen in other liturgical anthologies. It is only collected in his personal anthology and commented on in this preface, collected together with his non-ritual-oriented writings. Quan Deyu, as a contemporary of the author Wu Yun, comments on this suite from the perspective of content, rhetoric, theme, and writing style. The pragmatic perspective is omitted in this comment; instead, it presents an appreciation from a literary reader as well as a consciousness of his authorship.

²⁵ *Quan Tang wen* 全唐文, compiled by Dong Gao 董誥 (1740-1818) et al. (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1983), 489/20a; the translation is taken from See Edward Schafer, “Wu Yun’s ‘Cantos on Pacing the Void,’” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 41, no. 2 (December 1981): 387, with modifications.

From these two exemplary narrations on the context and authorship, we can infer the intention of some “human authors” in writing poems with the title “Pacing the Void” as well as the expectations of some human readers when reading them. Although the poems might also be written to fit in a certain melody, they could be used as a gift, and they could be collected and commented on as a part of their personal compositions. The authors devote their affections to the writing act with the help of supernatural themes. Although they certainly express a predilection for the Daoist religion, “Pacing the Void” poetry as a genre of personal composition, came to be a potential way to realize the authors’ self-identity and to gain appreciation from others.

In the following section, I take Yu Xin’s 庾信 (513-581) ten poems of “Pacing the Void” poetry as an example to examine rhetorical features of “Pacing the Void” poetry as personal writings.²⁶ With this analytical structure, we can observe similar features in other “Pacing the Void” poems of this type.

Listed as the first suite of “Pacing the Void” poetry in *Music Archive*, Yu Xin’s ten poems are considered the earliest surviving writings by literati in the genre of “Pacing the Void”. During the reign period of the King Wu of Zhou 周武帝 (r. 560-578), Yu Xin served as an official who composed lyrics for court music. The king’s suppression of Buddhism and supporting for Daoism promoted the use of Daoist ritual and the dominance of Daoist thought at court. In these circumstances, Yu Xin’s compositions on a Daoist theme might be not only

²⁶ *Yuefu shiji*, 78/3a-5b; see also Yu Xin 庾信 (513-581), *Yu Zishan ji* 庾子山集 (SKQS edn.), 7/5b-14a.

his personal lyricism, but also reflect of cultural trends and state policy.²⁷ Whichever of the reasons was most important, a utilitarian ritual function was no longer his major concern.

In terms of rhetoric, Yu Xin's "Pacing the Void" poetry features more concrete and sensuous visual images, in contrast to ritual elements such as bowing down, burning incense, clacking teeth, pacing around, visualization, breathing, swallowing, etc. commonly found in liturgical passages. These images are also not limited to the sun, flowers, trees, and clouds, which are common in ritual "Pacing the Void" lyrics, but encompass a wider scope of images, including spring, birds, geese, and metaphorical images like "earth mirror" and "heaven window." Examining Yu Xin's other compositions as well as contemporary poems on landscape and mystical excursion, we can observe that this suite shares, to a large extent, syntax, and antithetic vocabulary with contemporary mainstream non-liturgic-oriented writings. The table below compares couplets in Yu Xin's "Pacing the Void" poetry and other poems from Yu Xin himself and literati in his social circle.²⁸ Sentences in the left column are

²⁷ Wang Zhiqing examines Yu Xin's life and the political context when he composed his *Buxu* suite; see Wang Zhiqing 王志清, "Lun Yu Xin 'Daoshi *Buxu* ci shishou' de daoqu yuanyuan yu wenrenhua tedian" 論庾信道士步虛詞十首的道曲淵源和文人化特點, *Shanxi shida xuebao* 2007.5: 55-56.

²⁸ Yu Xin's biography in the standard history recorded Xiao Gang's social group include Xiao Gang 蕭綱 (503-551, r. 531-551), Xu Chi 徐摛 (474-551), and others; see *Zhoushu* 周書 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1971), 41/733-45. According to his biography, he became a member of Xiao Gang's headquarter in 527 at the age of 15. The chart below is to demonstrate an affinity in word choices; it does not imply a chronological order between

from Yu Xin’s “Pacing the Void” stanzas, and those in the left are written by him or his contemporaries in a relatively social context. These are a few examples from many in which they share syntax and vocabulary:

<p>Resting my simurghs, I feast by the [Queen Mother’s] jasper river; on my path back, I ascend great Heaven.</p>	<p>On the jade mountain we ride four vehicles; by the chalcedony river eight dragons feast. The bridge of turtle floats on the junior sea; in a chariot with a canopy of swan feathers I ascends to the central peak.</p>
<p>停鸞宴瑤水，歸路上鴻天。(3rd)</p>	<p>玉山乘四載。瑤池宴八龍。龜橋浮少海。鶴 蓋上中峰。(Yu Xin, “Accompanying the Emperor’s Visit to the Mount Zhongnan, to match the poem of the royal secretary Yuwen ” 陪駕幸終南山和宇文內史詩)²⁹</p>
<p>Vernal springs releases the jade flow; blue birds turn toward Golden Flowers Palace.</p>	<p>Splitting the flower cluster emerge yellow birds; hanging on the rocks descends fresh spring.</p>

Xiao Gang’s and Yu Xin’s lines. However, Wang Taiqing’s lines quoted in the chart were composed in a gathering when Xiao Gang was the Prefectural Governor of Xuzhou 徐州刺史 (521-523). Considering Yu Xin’s age, his “Pacing the Void” Poetry was very likely written after this.

²⁹ *Yu Zishan ji*, 5/2b.

<p>春泉下玉溜，青鳥向金華。(6th)</p>	<p>分花出黃鳥。掛石下新泉。(Xiao Gang 蕭綱 [503-551], “Toward the Temple of Mount Huku” 往虎窟山寺詩)³⁰</p>
<p>In the Earth Mirror, the stairs basis is far; in the Heaven Window, the shadow and trace are deep. 地鏡階基遠，天窗影跡深。(9th)</p>	<p>On the long stairs the mist is hard to disperse; with the high window clouds are easy to come through. 階長霧難歇。窗高雲易通。(Wang Taiqing 王 臺卿 [fl. 523], “To Harmonize with King Jianwen of Liang (Xiao Gang)’s Poem by the Temple of King Gao of Han” 和簡文帝賽漢高 帝廟)³¹</p>

In the left column, Yu Xin’s scenic descriptions are all non-secular to some extent. The Queen Mother’s jasper river and the Golden Flower Palace are common Daoist images. There is an “Mount Earth Mirror” in *The Essence of the Supreme Secrets* (*Wushang miyao* 無上祕要, dated 570) and a “Heaven Window Cavern” in *Mr. Zhou’s Records of His Communication with the Invisible World* (*Zhoushi mingtongji* 周氏冥通記, dated 517). It is the way that Yu Xin arranges these Daoist images that is innovative among Daoist poetry, for

³⁰ *Han Wei Liuchao baisanjia ji* 漢魏六朝百三家集, compiled by Zhang Pu 張溥 (1602-1641). (SKQS edn.), 83/43b.

³¹ *Yiwen lei ju* 藝文類聚, compiled by Ouyang Xun 歐陽詢 (557-614) (SKQS edn.), 79/6b.

example, putting the “Earth Mirror” and “Heaven Window” in parallel, or pairing “Golden Flower” with the secular image “jade flow.” The way of creating these parallel passage is shared among Yu Xin’s “Pacing the Void” poetry and the non-ritual-oriented poems of his colleagues or social group members. This affinity for contemporary landscape poetry and “roving transcendent” poetry rather than the liturgy introduction implies that Yu Xin’s “Pacing the Void” suites would be read and commented on as landscape poetry and “roving transcendent” poetry. We can further assume that Yu Xin’s suite would not have been considered a liturgical lyrics or following liturgical regulations. Detailed images and delicate antithetical parallelism prompt the readers to slow down to appreciate the language, the rhyme, and the scene depicted, rather than to glance over it in recitation and repetition.

Another distinctive corpus draws on some non-Confucian classics apart from liturgical scriptures, such as *Laozi* 老子, *Inner Biography of the Emperor Wu of Han* (*Han Wu neizhuan* 漢武內傳), and *Biographies of Deities and Transcendents* (*Shenxian zhuan* 神仙傳). Yu Xin’s suite has abundant allusions, direct or indirect, to philosophical terms and figures in traditional tales. The chart below compares Yu Xin’s suite at the left and earlier texts and tales at the right:

Having no name is the origin of myriad beings; having a Way is the beginning of hundreds of spirits.	Having no name is the origin of heaven and earth; having a name is the mother of myriad beings.
無名萬物始，有道百靈初。(2 nd)	無名天地之始；有名萬物之母。(Laozi) ³²

³² *Laozi* 老子, commentary by Wang Bi 王弼 (226-249) (SBBY edn.), 1a.

In the essential and subtlety, I am mindful of the mysterious female; in void and emptiness, I cultivate the valley spirit.

要妙思玄牝，虛無養穀神。(5th)

The Nourishing Spirit never dies; this is so-called the mysterious female.

谷神不死，是謂玄牝。(Laozi)³³

The Emperor Wu of Han is arrogant and insolent; the King Huainan does not have a humble heart. Penglai has sunk into the sea; how could they find it?

漢武多驕慢，淮南不小心。蓬萊入海底，何處可追尋。(9th)

The Queen Mother, then, sends her maid Guo Mixiang... who said, "...Liu Che (the Emperor Wu of Han) was keen on the Way, and I have just come to see him. ... But his form is arrogant, and his spirit is defiled; ... I am afraid that he is probably not of the material to become a transcendent."

王母迺遣侍女郭密香.....雲：.....劉徹好道，適來視之。.....然形慢神穢.....殆恐非仙才。(Hanwu neizhuan)³⁴

[Liu] An, the King Huainan, had not ascended to Heaven to meet the transcendent earls. An was used to living in comfort and status at a young age, and he rarely practiced rites expressing

³³ Laozi, 4a.

³⁴ Han Wudi neizhuan 漢武帝內傳, compiled by Ban Gu 班固 (ca. 32-92) (CSJC edn.), 6-7.

humility. He sat and stood in a disrespectful manner; his speaking voice was vibrant and loud; sometimes he mistakenly referred to himself as “Guaren” (a first-person pronoun for the king). Thus, the chief of transcendent elders petitioned about An: “He is disrespectful. We should reject him and send him away.”

淮南王安，未得上天，遇諸仙伯。安少習尊貴，稀為卑下之禮。坐起不恭，語聲高亮，或誤稱寡人。於是仙伯主者奏安雲：不敬，應斥遣去。 (*Shenxian zhuan*)³⁵

The sea has no more than three feet of water; the mountains became a few inches of dust.

海無三尺水，山成數寸塵。(5th)

Magu said, “Since I serve as a transcendent maid, I have seen the eastern sea becomes mulberry fields three times. Once in Penglai, the water was again lower than before.”

³⁵ *Shenxian zhuan* 神仙傳, quoted in *Taiping guangji* 太平廣記, compiled by Li Fang 李昉 (925-996) (SKQS edn.), 8/5a.

麻姑自說：“接待以來，已見東海三為桑田；向到蓬萊，水又淺於往昔。” (*Shenxian zhuan*)³⁶

In terms of composition, allusions are devices to display the author’s familiarity with traditional writings. They are also a technique to convey complex emotions in a concise manner. Obviously, neither of these is a major concern for texts used in ritual. On the contrary, it is a distinctive feature for personal authors to express their thoughts. While alluding to these traditional anecdotes, Yu Xin even implies his critical thinking, sarcasm, and lament in these allusions. Compared to Daoist “Pacing the Void” poems, Yu’s “Pacing the Void” poems are more private and emotional.

Yu Xin adopts the poetic form of the “Pacing the Void” poetry used in *Lingbao Buxujing*, with five characters in each line and ten to twelve lines in each poem. As mentioned above, “Pacing the Void” poetry originated from lyrics written to a certain melody; most “Pacing the Void” poems before the early Tang Dynasty are in accordance with the form in Daoist scriptures. Thus, earlier authors still accepted limits on their form to fit with the traditional melody, despite their fading interest in the ritual. However, “Pacing the

³⁶ *Shenxian zhuan* 神仙傳, compiled by Ge Hong 葛洪 (ca. 283-363) (SKQS edn.), 3/9b.

Also, as *Shiji* 史記 and *Hanshu* 漢書 records, Emperor Wu was enthusiastic about looking for the Penglai 蓬萊, a legendary place where transcendent resides. See *Shiji* 史記 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1959), 28/1397: “The Emperor then visited the sea to the east, ... seeking the divine of Penglai” 上遂東巡海上...尋蓬萊神人.

Void” poetry since the Tang Dynasty took various forms. As “Pacing the Void” transformed from a title of ritual introit to that of common literature, personal writings deviated from the original musicality. Authors adjusted the number of lines and characters in each line, or even abandoned the form of multiple poems. Instead, they tended to imitate contemporary forms of metrical or semi-metrical verse. For example, Chen Tao’s 陳陶 (812-885) “Pacing the Void” poetry has eight lines and seven characters in each line; Gu Kuang 顧況 (fl. ca. 757-787) and Wei Qumou 韋渠牟 (749-801) have five-character octaves; Liu Yuxi 劉禹錫 (772-842), Su Yu 蘇鬱 (fl. ca. 805), Chen Yu 陳羽 (fl. ca. 806), and Gao Pian 高駢 (821-887) write in seven-character quatrains.³⁷ Later in the Song Dynasty, Cheng Bi 程秘 (1164-1242) composed “Buxu ci: For the Birthday of the Gate Minister Zhang” 步虛詞壽張門司 to the tune Xijiangyue 西江月 (a tune to which *ci* poems were composed).³⁸ In these various forms, “Pacing the Void” gradually became merely a common label to indicate content more or less associated with supernatural themes, and the ritual meaning diminished.

1.3 Final remarks

The various contexts and applications of “Pacing the Void” poetry are reflected in internal features such as content, form, and poetic devices on the one hand, and through external references including the categorization and narratives regarding authorship on the other.

³⁷ *Yuefu shiji*, 78/6a-10b.

³⁸ Cheng Bi 程秘 (1164-1242), *Mingshui ji* 洛水集 (SKQS edn.), 30/4b.

“Pacing the Void” lyrics for liturgical hymns share features of “ritual language” with other types of ritual poetry. First, the language itself describes the ritual. The beginning poems of most suites name the actions and the sequences of the liturgy and confirm its purpose for the practitioners. This is similar to some Zhou ritual hymns in which Martin Kern identifies “Ritual self-reference”:

A performance text—being, first of all, a text performed within a ritual act—is fundamentally self-referential by naming the reality of the performance within, and synchronically to, the ritual act; as such, it also duplicates this very act on the linguistic level. Lending voice to action, the text addresses a question lingering subliminally in any performance: “what are we doing here?” ... In the hymns as in the performance, past and present, mythical narrative and ritual practice are fused and expressed.³⁹

Beginning with words such as “bowing” and “pacing around,” “Pacing the Void” suites carry the power to transfer the practitioners into a public ritual space. While the prose passage introducing the liturgy provides information about ritual processes and meanings for practitioners, the practitioners would confirm this knowledge by reciting the lyrics out loud in a community. As actions like “bowing” and “pacing around” would finally lead them to the heavenly realm, the following poems’ depiction of the heavenly realm is natural and real. This is how such self-reference works in recitation. Notably, such ritual speech does not

³⁹ Martin Kern, “*Shijing* Songs as Performance Texts: A Study of ‘Chu Ci’ (Thorny Caltrop),” *Early China* 25 (2000): 59.

require archaic words or mystical terms which would be difficult for the practitioners to understand.

Secondly, the language demonstrates redundancy and repetition, and the plain rhetoric focuses on religious achievement rather than artistry. As common to many cultural traditions, ritual language has distinctive formal features, including rhyme, onomatopoeia, alliterative binomes and reduplicatives. As Stanley Tambiah said, it is “the hyper-regular surface structure of ritual language”: “the poetic devices such as rhyme, metre, assonance, and alliteration generate an over-all quality of union and a blurring of grammatical boundaries.”⁴⁰ With such patterns, the practitioners and audience would “extend texts, give them embellishments (within stylistic bounds), explore nuances of multivocal meanings; and from the point of view of performative efficacy the structure of the entire recursive recitation may be seen as an iconic analogue of the cycles of creations of the cosmic order in their temporal and spatial regularity and cumulative effect.”⁴¹ As discussed before, the rhetorical pattern in “Pacing the Void” suites possesses some power itself apart from its content. Even though lay audiences are not familiar with the specific words, the rhythm of the words would also bring them a ritual experience.

A more fundamental point in “Pacing the Void” suites, the one that determines their redundancy, is the melody. These suites are almost consistently five-character verse, with a set number of lines in each poem. “Pacing the Void” suites are transmitted across generations with the same melody or similar ways of making the melody. The direct impression of the

⁴⁰ Stanley Tambiah, *A Performative Approach to Ritual* (London: British Academy, 1979), 164.

⁴¹ Tambiah, *A Performative Approach to Ritual*, 137.

audience is their presentation in ritual rather than the semantic meaning in lyrics. Suzanne Langer coins such overshadow on words as “swallowing”: “When words and music come together in song, music swallows words; not only mere words and literal sentences, but even literary word-structures, poetry. Song is not a compromise between poetry and music, though the text taken by itself be a great poem; song is music.”⁴² Therefore, despite the characteristics of the lyrics we discussed above, the performative tradition, or the “semblance of speech” itself may play a leading role.

More personalized “Pacing the Void” suites that are attributed to human authors demonstrate different rhetorical features due to a change in social function, although they inherit the form and theme to some extent. Yu Xin, Wu Yun, the Emperor Yang of Sui, and Wei Qumou’s suites use a more traditional pattern with a ritual narrative; Bai Juyi and Cheng Bi’s still possess a “statement of purpose” like a ritual suite, but the “purpose” they cite is obviously more secular, such as giving poems as a birthday or a farewell gift. Compositions of later poets are more remote from the liturgical context in terms of both form and content. Their textual sources come from not only traditional liturgical “Pacing the Void” poetry, but also previous and contemporary literary works.

Examining the history of “Pacing the Void” poetry in the early medieval to high medieval period, the title of this chapter generalizes “Pacing the Void” poetry as a “sub-genre.” This generalization is based on two types of concern. First, “Pacing the Void” poetry is a sub-category of a specific genre, namely, poetry. The relatively fixed title, form, and theme made “Buxu poetry” a template for both liturgical lyrics and literary compositions.

⁴² Suzanne Langer, *Feeling and Form: A Theory of Art* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1953), 152.

Edward Schafer introduces the “Pacing the Void” poetry as a poetic form with Daoist content, and this title is reused by many writers with a predilection for the Daoist religion. He generalizes about some common themes in “Pacing the Void” poetry, including (1) expressions that display closer similarity to “Roving transcendent” (*youxian* 游仙) poems, (2) allusions to deities and places in Daoist mythology, (3) solid, physical, visual, and sensuous images, and (4) references to ritual procedures.⁴³ It is because of these shared features that these suites can be regarded as a “sub-genre.”

Second, a definition of “genre” is based not only on the form but also on the social function of the texts and the understanding of the text-users. Many contemporary theories tend to locate the definition of genre in social communication. For example, Bhatia defines genre as “language use in a conventionalized communicative setting in order to give expression to a specific set of communicative goals of a disciplinary or social institution, which give rise to stable structural forms by imposing constraints on the use of lexicogrammatical as well as discursal resources.”⁴⁴ Carol Berkenkotter and Thomas N. Huckin’s attention to social cognition also leads to the interpretation of the power of change in genre, which is characterized as “dynamism”: “Genres are dynamic rhetorical forms that are developed from actors’ responses to recurrent situations and that serve to stabilize experience and give it coherence and meaning. Genres change over time in response to their users’ socio-

⁴³ And (5) the personal motif of leisure travel and abstract images such as vapors, hazes, and twinkles for Wu Yun 吴筠’s (d. 778) suite in particular. See Schafer, “Wu Yun’s ‘Cantos on Pacing the Void,’” 389-90.

⁴⁴ V. K. Bhatia, *Worlds of written discourse: A Genre-based View* (London: Continuum, 2004), 23.

cognitive needs.”⁴⁵ The medieval “Pacing the Void” poetry might demonstrate consistency on a certain layer, but it developed diverse features in different social groups. Due to changes in purpose and composition context, both the genre’s own characteristics and the external narrative surrounding its creation have changed. In this sense, the prefix “sub” indicates the blurred boundary of this relatively closed category. This blurred boundary opened a space for a new direction in the Song dynasty’s writing of “Pacing the Void” poetry, which will be discussed more in the next chapter.

⁴⁵ Carol Berkenkotter and Thomas N. Huckin, *Genre Knowledge in Disciplinary Communication: Cognition, Culture, Power* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), 4.

CHAPTER 2

The Song Imperial “Pacing the Void” Poetry as Daoist Ritual Hymns

There are clear differences between lyrics “written by transcendents” and those written by humans but features of these two types subtly merge in three suites of “Pacing the Void” poetry written by three emperors of the Song Dynasty for Daoist liturgy. The introduction of this thesis mentions the “external narrative” of these suites, namely, their authors and categorization—they are written by human authors but collected in a Daoist scripture, *Hymns for Golden Register Retreat of the Three Caverns* (*Jinlu zhai sandong zanyongyi* 金錄齋三洞讚詠儀, hereafter *Hymns for Golden Register Retreat*). This chapter focuses on the compositions as Daoist poetry, examining the ritual practice, ritual purpose, and how the suites inherit rhetorical sources from previous Daoist poetry.

Daoism was recognized as the official religion of the Tang dynasty, and Daoism had also been conferred official recognition in the Song Dynasty. The Northern Song court incorporated Daoism into state religion and court rites.

Matsumoto Kōichi 松本浩一 discusses how the Song court destroyed “licentious shrines” 淫祠 and assigned titles to abbeys of Daoism and some folk deities. This demonstrates the official acknowledgement of Daoism and some popular cults as well as the court’s effort to organize these religions within the system of state religious activity.⁴⁶ During the Song Dynasty, some Daoist retreat and offering rituals were sponsored by the state to pray for the wellbeing of the state and the emperor. As Matsumoto notes, the Song court

⁴⁶ Matsumoto Kōichi 松本浩一, *Sōdai no Dōkyō to minkan shinkō* 宋代の道教と民間信仰 (Tōkyō: Kyūko Shoin, 2006), 249-66.

reorganized the ritual system, and it compiled new encyclopedia for Daoist liturgies which included special versions of Daoist liturgies for the emperors exclusively.⁴⁷ A recent study also outlines, based on legal documents, the policies and regulations on Daoism of the Song dynasty.⁴⁸ Edward Davis's book cites a twelfth-century collection of anecdotes, Hong Mai's 洪邁 (1132-1202) *Record of Hearsay* (*Yijian zhi* 夷堅誌) and shows the development of Daoism in Song society. In general, Song society witnessed a "syncretic field of religion" in which Daoist ritual specialists mediated among elites and commoners.⁴⁹

Furthermore, the Song court justified its authority by confirming a preordained Daoist theocracy. Xiang Zhongmin 向仲敏 collected historical records about how Daoism legalized the monarchical power of the Song Dynasty, including Daoist prophecies and myths in which the emperors were protected by Daoist gods or even advocated as Daoist gods.⁵⁰ Shin-yi Chao studied how Huizong's promotion of Daoism legitimized his rule and

⁴⁷ Matsumoto Kōichi, *Sōdai no Dōkyō to minkan shinkō*, 276-308.

⁴⁸ Zhang Longcheng 張龍成, Wu Qingyang 武清昉, Jin Kaiwen 金愷文, and Yuan Yumei 袁玉梅, *Songdai Daojiao guanli zhidu yanjiu* 宋代道教管理制度研究 (Chengdu: Sichuan daxue chubanshe, 2020).

⁴⁹ Edward L. Davis, *Society and the Supernatural in Song China* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2001), 153-61, 200-25.

⁵⁰ Xiang Zhongmin 向仲敏, *Liang Song Daojiao yu zhengzhi guanxi yanjiu* 兩宋道教與政治關係研究 (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 2011), 24-37.

established himself as a messianic “true lord” in Daoist theocracy.⁵¹ These studies show the interaction between the Daoist religion and traditional state cult, political power, and imperial literature. This is the historical context in which the three suites of “Pacing the Void” poetry were composed or compiled.

2.1 The Golden Register Retreat ritual and new regulations of Daoist ritual in the Northern Song

Since early medieval times, versions of Daoist liturgies had been developed specifically for the royal court or emperors. The Golden Register Retreat was established since the Sui-Tang period as one such exclusive liturgy. Many medieval Daoist scriptures mention the purpose of the Golden Register Retreat. For example, *Established Order of Daoism (Daomen dingzhi 道門定制*, preface dated 1188 or 1201), a comprehensive liturgical manual, provides details of the revised Northern Song Golden Register Retreat:

The Golden Register Retreat is to bless and protect the emperor or king, to pacify the people and guard the state.

⁵¹ Shin-yi Chao, “Huizong and the Divine Empyrean Palace Temple Network,” in *Emperor Huizong and Late Northern Song China: The Politics of Culture and the Culture of Politics*, eds. Patricia B. Ebrey and Maggie Bickford (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), 325-58.

金籙齋……保佑帝王，安人鎮國。⁵²

The three register retreats are: On the fifteenth day of the first month, the day of the Higher Prime, the Golden Register Retreat is to be practiced by the emperor, to display the ritual to match the heaven. ... On the fifteenth day of the seventh month, the day of the Middle Prime, the Jade Register Retreat is to bless and protect the Six Palaces, to assist and pacify the queen and the imperial concubines. ... On the fifteenth day of the tenth month, the day of the Lower Prime, the Yellow Register Retreat is to be practiced universally by all officials and commoners, to pervasively benefit families and the state. ... The order of three register retreats above and the positions and names of the sages and perfected were revised by the prime minister Wang Qinruo (962-1025) in the years of Dazhongxiangfu (1008-1016), according to an imperial order, and issued to the Daoist abbeys in the capital as well as all famous mountains and blissful lands under heaven to reserve and hold, to prepare for the practice of the imperial court. In some cases, major ministers who govern the state are also allowed to practice the rites. Common people are not allowed to practice. Moreover, recently, since it has been the year of the Emperor's natal destiny and the Heaven Peace Festival, the retreats have been practiced seven times. Emissaries Bearing Tallies in some border regions conducted Golden Register rites. ... It has become a fixed regulation.

三籙齋者，上元金籙齋，帝王修奉，展禮配天。……中元玉籙齋，保佑六宮，輔寧妃後。……下元黃籙齋，臣庶通修，普資家國。……右三籙齋升降次第，及聖真位號，乃大中祥符年，詔推……丞相王欽若重修定，頒下在京宮觀並天下名山

⁵² DZ 1224 *Daomen dingzhi* 道門定制, 6/1b.

福地收掌，以備朝廷修奉；或大臣為國，亦許修設；庶人不許奉修。又近降皇帝本命及天寧節，逐年七次。藩方節鎮修建金籙道場，……永為定式。⁵³

According to *Daomen dingzhi*, the Golden Register Retreat liturgy experienced a revision during the Zhenzong period, but the purpose of the ritual was relatively unchanged. A clue about a new promulgation during the Huizong period is found in *the Book of Song* (*Songshi* 宋史) which records that the court published a “Ritual Guide for the Lingbao Daoist Ritual of the Golden Register” (“Jinlu Lingbao daochang yifan” 金籙靈寶道場儀範) in 1108.⁵⁴ *Lingbao yujian* 靈寶玉鑑 (*Jade Mirror of the Numinous Jewels*), a Southern Song liturgical manual, reiterate the exclusiveness of this ritual, which had become fixed since these revisions:

The Golden Register Retreat of the Upper Prime is used to purify and pacify the Two Principles, to show respect to Heaven and Earth; to pray to Heaven for a lasting Mandate; to benefit the state with auspicious signs; extend the pattern of roots and branches that has developed over one hundred generations, cultivate the altars of soil and

⁵³ DZ 1224 *Daomen dingzhi* 3/3b-4a. Notably, Wang Qinruo 王欽若 also revised the *jiaosi* 郊祀 (suburban sacrifice) ritual, the state ritual, for Zhenzong’s court.

⁵⁴ *Songshi* 宋史 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1985), 20/380. The exact text of “Jinlu Lingbao daochang yifan” is not preserved today. However, considering the time, the anthology *Hymns for Golden Register Retreat* might be a part of this publication by Huizong court.

grain that will survive ten thousand years, these are all matters for the Son of Heaven.

They cannot be performed without an edict from the Court.

上元金籙，可以清寧兩儀，參贊天地，祈天永命，致國休徵；衍百世之本支，培萬年之社稷。皆天子事，非有朝旨不可為也。⁵⁵

Although there had been a long tradition of performing this ritual, we can find clues to the Northern Song's revision of many details in scriptures before and after this period. The earliest version of the whole process of the Golden Register Retreat ritual is seen in *The Essence of the Supreme Secrets* (*Wushang miyao* 無上祕要), a large compendium dated 570.⁵⁶ In the "Chapter of the Golden Register Retreat" ("Jinlu zhai pin" 金籙齋品), the ritual takes place according to the following procedures:

Said the Divinity who Flies to Heaven: According to the Method of the Code of the Shining Perfected, Kept in the Jade Chest of the Nine Realms of Darkness, in the Department of the Long Night, when the emperor or the state territory experience misfortune, disease, war, invasion, danger, emergency, disaster, or calamity, you should write, in cinnabar, the five Perfected Scripts of Lingbao in the middle court. Set five tables in the five directions, with one of the Perfected Scripts invited to occupy each

⁵⁵ DZ 547 *Lingbao yujian* 靈寶玉鑑 (ca. 302-311), 1/19b.

⁵⁶ A similar version of this procedure and the script for petition for the state is also seen in DZ 1411 *Dongxuan lingbao changye zhi fu jiuyou yukui mingzhenke*, 25b-36b, although in DZ 1411 the ritual is not clearly labeled as the Golden Register Retreat.

table. Taking five ounces of gold, use each ounce to make a dragon. Make five dragons in total and use them to weigh down the five Perfected Scripts. Then, use pledge offerings of five-colored patterned silk to pacify the Five Emperors. The person suffering misfortune brings silk with purple patterns according to his age in order to extract and preserve his personal lifeforce, pacify the state and secure the throne, avert and resolve heavenly misfortunes.

飛天神人曰：長夜之府九幽玉匱明真科法，帝王國土灾疾兵寇危急厄難，當丹書靈寶真文五篇於中庭，五案置五方，一案請一篇真文。以金五兩，一兩作一龍，五兩合作五龍，以鎮五篇真文上。又以五色紋繒之信以鎮五帝，有灾之身隨年齋紫紋之繒，拔度身命，安國鎮祚，禳解天灾。

Under the bright stars and arrayed constellations, [light the lanterns] ...

明星列宿，[然燈].....

The Enlightened and Accomplished Great Master of the Law unbinds his hair at the center of the altar. He performs the Mud and Ash [Retreat] according to the instructions, setting forth his apologies six times a day and performing the rites at the center [of the altar]. If men and women of unsullied belief would assist the state to pray and appeal, they should stand outside the gate with unbound hair, to perform the Mud and Ash [Retreat] and state their appeals. ... When the day of ritual ends, the Perfected Scripts should be burned so that they disperse in the green smoke.

明達大法師於中央披頭散髮，依訣塗炭，六時請謝，中央行事。若清信男女，佐國祈請，當於門外散髮塗炭陳請。.....行道日竟，當燒真文，散之青烟。

Said the Divine who Flies in Heaven: The ritual master enters through the Gate of Earth (southeast). He burns incense and lights lanterns three times. He turns around and stands

facing the east. He clacks the teeth for thirty-two times. After that, he recites the Prayer for Uncovering the Incense Burner." The Leader of Recitations intones the names and ranks [of each spirit].

飛天神人曰：法師從地戶入，繞香燈三過，還東向立，叩齒三十二通。訖，誦發爐祝，都講唱各稱名位。

This is a respectful invocation from The Great Master of Law of the Three Caverns, a servant to the Perfected, (name):

三洞大法師小兆真人臣某甲上啟：

[The petition]

(祝文)

Then, rise and face the east, offer incense three times, and pray:

便起東向，三上香，祝曰：

[The petition]

(祝文)

Then, three more pinches of incense, and pray:

次又三捻香，祝曰：

[The petition]

(祝文)

Then, worship with the incense three times more, and pray:

次又三捻香，祝曰：

[Text of the petition]

(祝文)

Bow for nine times to the east, and say:

東向九拜，言曰：

[Text of the petition]

(祝文)

When finished, untie the scarf, knock the head on the ground and slap the cheeks eighty-one times.

畢，便解巾，叩頭、自搏各八十一過。

Then, face the south and bow three times. Make a vow following the method above. ...

Then, face the west and bow three times. Vow following the method above. ...

Then, face the north and bow three times. Vow following the method above. ...

Then, face the northeast and bow three times. Vow as the method above. ... Then, to the southeast, then to the southwest, then to the northwest, bow once to each of the four corners. Knock the head on the ground and strike the cheeks nine times each and pray following the method for the northeast. Then, face the direction above the northwest and bow for thirty-two times, and vow following the method above. ... Then, face the direction below the southeast and bow for twelve times, and vow following the method above. ...

次南向三拜，願如上法。.....次西向七拜，願如上法。.....次北向五拜，願如上法。.....次東北向一拜，願如上法。.....次東南向，次西南向，次西北向，四隅俱一拜，叩頭搏頰並各九過，祝如東北之法。次向西北上方三十二拜，願如上法。.....次向東南下方十二拜，願如上法。.....

When the vow, meditation, bowing, and apologies to the ten directions are finished, you should circumambulate three times, circling the incense and lamp, while reciting the “Cavern Stanzas of Pacing the Void.” When finished, return to face the east and perform the “Prayer for Covering the Incense Burner.”

十方願念禮謝都畢，當旋行三匝，繞香燈，口誦步虛洞章。竟，還東向復爐祝。⁵⁷

According to *Wushang miyao*, this large-scale ritual should take place at a huge altar surrounded by thousands of lamps. The performance of “Pacing the Void” is the next to last step before the “Prayer for Covering the Incense Burner.” Since Song Imperial “Pacing the Void” poetry had not been composed when *Wushang miyao* was created, the “Cavern Poems of Pacing the Void” (“Buxu dongzhang”) mentioned in *Wushang miyao* refers to the ten poems in *Lingbao Buxujing*, which was discussed in the last chapter. Clues from later ritual manuals indicate that the Golden Register Retreat ritual might have experienced a change, including a new standardization of the hymns, during the Northern Song period, which will be discussed below.

Rites to Open the Altar for the Golden Register Retreat (Jinlu zhai qitan yi 金錄齋啟壇儀), compiled by Du Guangting 杜光庭 (850-933), is another major source for the Golden Register Retreat before the Northern Song Dynasty. This ritual manual introduces the installation of the altars as well as the whole practice of the Retreat. Compared to the *Wushang miyao*, it includes more details, such as the content of the “five Authentic Scripts,” the petition scripts for every step in the ritual, and titles of the specific hymns. These titles include “Hymn for Taking the Three Refuges” (“Sanguiyi song” 三皈依頌), “Appreciation of the Glory and Grandness” (“Huaxia zan” 華夏讚), “Appreciation for Inviting the Three Masters” (“Qing sanshi zan” 請三師讚), “Hymn for Making the Three Entreaties” (“Sanqi song” 三啓頌), and “Hymn of Wisdom” (“Zhihui song” 智慧頌); and as noted in *Rites of*

⁵⁷ DZ 1138 *Wushang miyao* 無上祕要, 44/1a-8b.

Confirmation of the Officiants and the Promulgation of the Rules of the Golden Register Retreat (*Jinlu dazhai buzhi shuojie yi* 金錄大齋補職說戒儀) there would also be the “Hymn for Practicing the Precepts” (“Fengjie song” 奉戒頌) at the end.⁵⁸

However, the Northern Song *Hymns for Golden Register Retreat*, which includes the Imperial “Pacing the Void” suites, does not include lyrics with the titles above. Instead, it has “Music of the Great Purity” (“Taiqing yue” 太清樂), “Music of the Jade Purity” (“Yuqing yue” 玉清樂), “Appreciation of the White Crane” (“Baihe zan” 白鶴讚), “Lyric for Dispersing Flowers” (“Sanhua ci” 散花詞), and “Music of the High Purity” (“Shangqing yue” 上清樂), all composed by emperors. Notably, these titles are not seen in earlier scriptures. In other words, it is highly likely that they were new to orthodox Daoist traditions, first adopted into the formal rituals by the Northern Song emperors, or even invented by them.

Daomen dingzhi, compiled ca. 1200, offers more comprehensive and standardized versions of the large rituals. Although there is no reference to ritual hymns in the Golden Register Retreat in detail, the section on the Yellow Register Retreat, whose process was usually similar to that of the Golden Register Retreat, has an exhaustive list of the hymn titles used in the “ritual of recitation and chanting for three days and four nights” 三日四夜吟詠法事. This list includes not only titles from the tenth century *Jinlu zhai qitanyi* and *Jinlu dazhai buzhi shuojie yi* such as “Hymn for Practicing the Precepts,” “Hymn for Making the Three Entreaties,” “Appreciation of Wisdom” (“Zhihui zan” 智慧讚), “Appreciation of Taking Refuge” (“Guiyi zan” 歸依讚), and “Appreciation of the Commencement of the

⁵⁸ DZ 486 *Jinlu dazhai buzhi shuojie yi* 金錄大齋補職說戒儀, 5b-6a.

Scripture” (“Qijing zan” 啟經讚), but also those in the Northern Song *Hymns for Golden Register Retreat*, including “Music of the Great Purity,” “Music of the High Purity,” “Music of the Jade Purity,” and “Lyric of the White Crane” (“Baihe ci” 白鶴詞). This list also has “Buxu ci,” “Buxu Lyrics of the Jade Capital” (“Yujing Buxu ci” 玉京步虛詞), and “Buxu Lyrics of the Golden Portal” (“Jinque Buxu ci” 金闕步虛詞). This list of titles is generally consistent with the liturgical hymn anthologies in *Comprehensive and Requisite Manual of Daoism* (*Daomen tongjiao biyong ji* 道門通教必用集, preface dated 1201) and *Precious Tones of Liturgy* (compiled 1368-1644). In these two books, “Buxu Lyrics of the Jade Capital” refers to the suite in the *Lingbao Buxujing*; “Buxu Lyrics of the Golden Portal” refers to a short fifty-character poem; “Buxu ci” refers to the ten-poem suite by Zhenzong. Presumably, the list in *Daomen dingzhi* and the two liturgical hymn anthologies present the norm reestablished by the Northern Song Court.

In conclusion, the “Pacing the Void” poetry collected in *Hymns for Golden Register Retreat* is set in the ritual context of the Golden Register Retreat, which was to be performed for the welfare of the state and the emperor. “Pacing the Void” lyrics were recited in the last steps of this ritual together with certain performances. Comparing scriptures from before, during, and after the Northern Song period, we can observe some adjustment of the Golden Register Retreat, through both the direct narrative about the ritual and the list of hymn titles. The emperors’ composition of the “Pacing the Void” poetry was likely to be a part of the court’s recognition of Daoism and the legitimation of Daoist rituals for states.

2.2 Textual features as Daoist ritual hymns

All of the Imperial “Pacing the Void” poetry takes the form of five characters in each line and eight or sixteen lines in each poem, which resembles the “Pacing the Void” poetry in the *Lingbao Buxujing*, so that they should be able to fit a similar liturgical melody or means of performance.

As ritual texts, the Imperial “Pacing the Void” poetry also contains abundant liturgical descriptions, such as references to constructing the altar, touching the head to ground, burning incense, accepting registers, and pacing around. For example, Taizong’s poem begins with:

清靜建金壇，	With clarity and quiescence, I establish the golden altar;
無為大道理。	Non-action is the principle of the Great Way.
歸依玉帝前，	I take refuge before the Jade Thearch,
稽首求宗旨。	knocking my head to the ground to beseech the instructions of my ancestors.
發詠爇名香，	I begin the odes and burn the precious incense;
一心專不已。	My heart is concentrated and consistent.

As discussed in the previous chapter, the self-reference to the ritual act is a common feature of ritual texts, and it is a traditional way to start the “Pacing the Void” suites as seen in *Lingbao Buxujing*. Moreover, Taizong’s poems take on the traditional structure of a journey to the heavenly realm. The first poem starts with the ritual acts, and it ends with the couplets “Riding in a carriage with feathered canopy, pulled by green dragons, I travel through all rivers in the eight directions” 羽蓋駕青龍行徧八方水. Then, the second to fourth poems depict the scene in the heavenly realm during a gathering of transcendents. The fifth to seventh poems continue to describe the actions of the protagonist and the merits he gains through this journey. The eighth to tenth poems address some his actions.

Zhenzong and Huizong's suites are slightly different from Taizong's suite in terms of the beginning. Zhenzong's suite begins with an introduction to the natural environment in which the ritual takes place: "On the copper globe the spring arrives; in the jade portal the morning mist lifts" 銅渾春律至玉闕曉煙披. Although it is not the typical beginning with "ritual acts" featured, it can be viewed, in a broader sense, as a depiction of the ritual setting. Huizong's poem starts with a cosmogonic description "the Great Ultimate divided into the Highness and the Thickness; the light and the clear went up and belong to Heaven" 太極分高厚輕清上屬天. Such way to start a "Pacing the Void" suite is also seen in the Dunhuang manuscript, which starts with "the Great Way originates in the void; the mystical brightness illuminates the myriad beings" 大道出虛無玄明照眾生. In general, the three suites share the same narrative structure of ritual and journey as that of the *Lingbao Buxujing* version. They include the persona ascending to Heaven, the natural scene, the gathering of/with transcendants, actions taken, and merit gained.

Moreover, the depiction of the scene in these suites clearly borrows from the vocabulary used in the *Lingbao Buxujing* suite and the preceding liturgy introduction. For example, a common motif is the "Forest of the Seven Treasures." It is mentioned in the *Lingbao Buxujing* liturgy introduction, *Lingbao Buxujing* suite's seventh poem, and Taizong's second and tenth poems. The mythical animals mentioned in the *Lingbao Buxujing* preceding liturgy introduction, such as phoenix, crane, dragon, unicorn, and lion, are frequently seen in the emperors' suites as well. Furthermore, the procession and the dispersal of flowers are also shared motifs.

That being said, the emperors' suites feature a notable expansion of the vocabulary, syntax, and poetic devices, which will be discussed in detail in the next chapter. However, the general tone of the suites still lacks explicit emotions or critical thinking. Although we

observe the “authors” or “practitioners” piety in ritual acts, their calmness in meditation, delight in the gathering and in gaining merit, and even surprise when reacting to the heavenly scene, we see almost no allusions to anecdotes, historical criticism, or the consciousness of authorship. These features are consistent with traditional liturgical poetry.

In conclusion, the “Pacing the Void” poetry collected in *Hymns for Golden Register Retreat* is set in a Daoist ritual context, that of the Golden Register Retreat, which was to be performed for the welfare of the state. “Pacing the Void” lyrics were recited in the last steps of this ritual together with certain performances. From scriptures written before, during, and after the Northern Song period, we can observe revision of the hymns in the Golden Register Retreat, both in the preceding liturgy introduction and the list of hymn titles. The Song Imperial “Pacing the Void” poetry takes on the form, structure, and vocabulary of traditional ritual hymns, and it demonstrates few personal emotions. This is intricately connected to the aim of these suites—ritual performance. Choral singing is bound to dispel sentimentalism, since words retain only their very basic meanings when music “swallows” the lyrics. In other words, the music could not digest emotions inappropriate for sharing in a public ritual. However, the next chapter will discuss the personal literary styles of these poems as reflected in their vocabulary, syntax, and poetic devices.

CHAPTER 3

The Song Imperial “Pacing the Void” Poetry as Literary Compositions

Although the preceding chapters defined the Imperial “Pacing the Void” poetry as a type of liturgical poetry, we must be aware of its nature as “literature.” Literary criticism in the Song Dynasty did not establish an exclusive aesthetic standard for “Buxu poetry.” Ultimately, they were created and compiled as “literature” with certain poetic devices rather than meaningless sounds for practice. Examining the texts, we discover that the composers did not randomly put words together and throw them into a ritual context. On the contrary, the three emperors showed various levels of concern about poetic devices, and they demonstrated their personal literary styles and religious predilections consciously or unconsciously.

I admit that the emperors may have had the assistance of court literati in composing these poems. However, it was Taizong, Zhenzong, and Huizong, who were the composers or compilers,⁵⁹ which connect each suite to a different person. This connection is bidirectional. On the one hand, the emperors composed or compiled the poems, integrating their personal attributes. On the other hand, as the emperors approved the publication of the anthology and put their names on it, they acquiesced to a consensus with the audience, that these poems

⁵⁹ I consider the word “compile” with a broader definition. It refers to action of arranging existing textual units together, the action of adding new texts and editing current texts, and the action of approving the publication and the usage. Therefore, even if the anthology labeled “imperial produced” might not be actually written only by the individual emperors, it was neither written by an abstract “court.” The emperors’ agency was crucial in this process.

constitute a part in the emperors' identity as "writers" and they are eligible to represent their style. Therefore, this chapter puts aside the question "who actually wrote these suites" and instead focuses on the emperors as "the authors."

3.1 Taizong's suite

Although the Song emperors generally engaged with Daoism in their government, distinctive movements in Taizong's reign period supported Buddhism. Taizong's attention to Buddhism was stronger than any other emperor of the Song Dynasty. He initiated three movements which enlarged the sangha community in the years 976, 982, and 986. In 982, he wrote "Preface for the New-Translated Tripitaka of the Divine Teaching" ("Xinyi sanzang shengjiao xu" 新譯三藏聖教序) for a new compilation of Buddhist scriptures. In 983, he established the Academy for Printing Scriptures (*yingjing yuan* 印經院) to organize the project of translating Buddhist sutras. He also supported the construction of monasteries and pagodas. His literary compositions include hundreds of poems titled with "Chant for Distant Roaming" ("Xiaoyao yong" 逍遙詠) or "Causation and Cognition" ("Yuanshi" 緣識) with Daoist or Buddhist themes, some of which were compiled during the Zhenzong period into the *Anthology of Wondrous Enlightenment* (*Miaojue ji* 妙覺集), which was soon incorporated into "Buddhist scriptures."⁶⁰ A common feature of these poems, including those in his "Pacing the Void" suite, is the mixture of Daoist and Buddhist vocabulary and

⁶⁰ *Xu Zizhi tongjian changbian* 續資治通鑑長編, compiled by Li Tao 李燾 (1115-1184) (SKQS edn.), 90/5b; *Dazhongxiangfu fa shilu* 大中祥符法寶錄, compiled by Zhao Anren 趙安仁 (957-1018) and Yang Yi 楊億 (974-1020) (SKQS edn.), 18/105b-6a.

thought. The following table provides a list of couplets from his “Pacing the Void” suite with such mixture:

The teaching of the Flower Garland, held in the Pearl of the Fulfilled Wishes, the sacred manifestation is beyond the thought and words.

華嚴⁶¹如意珠⁶²，聖化不思議。(Taizong, “Pacing the Void” 2nd)

The good of the lion [of the Dharma] is extraordinary; the subtle method of the Huaxu is wise.

⁶¹ *Huanyan* 華嚴 (Avatamsaka), or the Flower Garland, A school of Buddhist teaching.

⁶² “Pearl of Fulfilled Wishes” is usually used as a metaphor for the Buddha-nature. See T 1509 *Da zhi du lun* 大智度論, 59/ 478a: “This precious pearl’s name is ‘fulfilled wishes.’ It does not have fixed color. It is pure and clean, intangible and subtle; all beings under the four Heavens are all illuminated by it.” 此寶珠名如意，無有定色，清澈微妙，四天下物，皆悉照見. The Buddhist scriptures number follows the numbering in *Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō* 大正新脩大藏經. It is also seen in Daoist tradition, referring to a type of alchemical compound as elixir: “The so-called ‘Reverted Elixir’ ... has another name, ‘Pearl of the Fulfilled Wishes’” 夫還丹者.....或號如意珠, see DZ 1032 *Yunji qiqian*, 72/36b.

師子⁶³善非常，華胥⁶⁴妙法智。(Taizong, “Pacing the Void” 2nd)

As the Fulfilled Wishes looking the body, its manifestation conjures the city and city walls.

如意一顧身，所化化城郭。⁶⁵(Taizong, “Pacing the Void” 10nd)

Speaking of “coherency” or “consistency,” the mixture of sources from various religious traditions might cause confusion in readers. Modern translators would hesitate when choosing between a “Daoist”/local-Chinese term or a “Buddhist” term in Pali or Sanskrit. It would be confusing for a modern Chinese as well to discern whether Taizong was praising Buddhism

⁶³ “The lion” is a metaphor for Buddhist Dharma. T 316 *Foshuo dasheng pusa zang zhengfa jing* 佛說大乘菩薩藏正法經, 13/809b: “It is Tathāgata ..., among all people, who can roar like a lion and turn the subtle Dharma Wheel.” 如來....於大眾中，能師子吼，轉妙梵輪。

⁶⁴ “Huaxu” is a metaphor for the ideal Daoist state practicing non-interference governance. “Huangdi” 黃帝, in *Liezi* 列子 (SKQS edn.), 2/1a: “[the Yellow Emperor] was sleeping during the day. He had a dream in which he traveled to Huaxu’s State. ... There was no leader or ruler in that state; the state was so of its own accord. The people had no desire or addiction; the people were so of their own accord” 晝寢而夢，游於華胥氏之國。.....其國無帥長，自然而已;其民無嗜欲，自然而已。

⁶⁵ “The Conjured City” is a Buddhist metaphor for the use of skillful means. In the section “Parable of the Conjured City” in T 262 *Miaofa lianhua jing* 妙法蓮華經, 3/22a-27b, the Buddha conjured an imaginary city for travelers to take a rest before continuing the long journey.

or Daoism. This might lead us to recognize these poems as “bad” literature—with wavering arguments, narratives, or lyrical themes. For Taizong, however, it was not a problem. The coherency or consistency of these poems as “Daoist poetry” is less important than the action of “writing poetry” itself. By writing, Taizong hoped to demonstrate the harmony and peace after he conquered a large territory. He might also have intended to show, or to lead the people to an indifference to fame and wealth. Furthermore, the writing itself functioned as a support to non-Confucian rituals. All “non-Confucian” discourses were feasible in this context. Therefore, although he wrote for the Golden Register Retreat which is a Daoist ritual, he never thought Buddhism should be excluded from this conversation. All traditions which deviate from daily politics were useful to fill this blank.

Another feature of Taizong’s suite is “artless” literary devices. We frequently see imbalanced couplets with unconventional sentence caesura, overly ornate terminology, and excessively vernacular sentences. These are also commonly seen in his other poems. For example, a “strict” couplet usually produces the same sentence structure for both lines. Below is a typical couplet from the ninth poem in Huizong’s suite:

[(九)	天]	風	靜默
Numeral	Noun	Noun	Adjective
	Adverbial Modifier	Subject	Predicate
Nine	Heavens	Wind	Quiet and Tranquil
[(四)	極]	氣	澄清
Numeral	Noun	Noun	Adjective
	Adverbial Modifier	Subject	Predicate
Four	Poles	Air	Clear and Pure

This chart shows that Huizong gives the same number of characters for each part of speech in both lines. By contrast, Taizong’s suite has very few parallelisms and seldom follows rules for tonal distribution. Many sentences in Taizong’s suite do not follow this rule.

In the left column of the chart below, I list two examples from Taizong’s “Pacing the Void” poetry, among many, along with other couplets with similar structures from Taizong’s other compositions in the right column.

Taizong, “Pacing the Void” 2 nd				Taizong, “Chant for Distant Roaming” ⁶⁶			
The good of the lion [of the Dharma] is extraordinary; the subtle method of the Huaxu is wise.				The ignorant and confused will always have a shallow view; The perceptive ones have a superior, profound understanding.			
(師子)	<u>善</u>		非常	<u>愚迷</u>	[終]	(淺)	見
Noun	Noun		Adjective	Noun	Adverb	Adjective	Noun
Topic	Subject		Predicate	Subject	Adverbial Modifier		Object
Lion	Good		Extra-ordinary	Ignorant and confused	Always	Shallow	View
(華胥)	(妙)	<u>法</u>	智	((達)	者)	<u>智</u>	高深
Noun	Adjective	Noun	Adjective	Adjective	Noun	Noun	Adjective
Topic	Modifier	Subject	Predicate	Topic		Subject	Predicate
Huaxu	Subtle	Method	Wise	Perceptive	Ones	Wisdom	Superior and profound

Taizong, “Pacing the Void” 4 th					Taizong, “Chant for Distant Roaming” ⁶⁷				
On the Ten Islands disperse the Rain-like Flowers; the Five Blessings is the Secret of the Perfected.					The One Pneuma has no limitation or end; the subtlety of the Three Powers is more profound.				
[(十)	洲]	散	[雨]	花	(一)	氣	無	窮極	
Numeral	Noun	Verb	Noun	Noun	Numeral	Noun	Verb	Noun	
	Adverbial Modifier	Predicate		Object		Subject		Predicate	
Ten	Islands	Disperse	Rain	Flower	One	Pneuma	No	Limitation	
(五)	福	(真人)	祕		((三)	才) ⁶⁸	<u>妙</u>	[更]	深
Numeral	Noun	Noun	Noun		Numeral	Noun	Noun	Adverb	Adjective

⁶⁶ Zhao Jiong 趙昉 (939-997), *Yuzhi xiaoyao yong* 御製逍遙詠 (SKQS edn.), 2/963b.

⁶⁷ Zhao Jiong, *Yuzhi xiaoyao yong*, 5/973c.

⁶⁸ Conventionally, the “Three Powers” refers to Heaven, Earth, and Humanity.

Subject		Predicate		Topic	Subject	Predicate	
Five	Blessings	Perfected	Secret	Three	Powers	Subtlety	More Profound

The two charts demonstrate the imbalance in Taizong’s poetry. In the first pair of couplets (four lines in total), Taizong uses the first two characters of each line to form a noun. These nouns parallel perfectly in both form and content, and this indicates that he probably intends to write a neat parallelism here. However, the other three characters become imbalanced. In the left column, from “Pacing the Void”, the lower line has a modifier while the upper line does not; the lower line has one syllable for the predicate while the upper line has two. In the right column, from “Chant for Distant Roaming,” the upper line has an adverbial modifier while the lower line does not, and their subjects are put in different positions. Similarly, in the second chart, all four lines start with a number and a noun, seemingly making them parallel. However, the Numeral-Noun conjunction forms different parts of speech. “The ten island” is an adverbial modifier, while “the five blessings” is a subject; the “One Pneuma” is the subject, while the “Three Powers” is a topic followed by the true subject “subtlety.” What is more, the other three characters are divided with different pauses, which adds to their imbalance. In short, although these couplets seem to have coherent topics respectively, and they even have some words in clear parallel, they do not make perfect parallelisms throughout the line.

Another feature that distinguishes Taizong’s suite from those of Zhenzong and Huizong is a large amount of non-paired couplets. Many couplets form one sentence instead of two, and one line usually serves as an adverbial clause for the other. It is evident in English translation that we use a comma rather than a semicolon between the two lines. For example:

When the Perfected received the Mandate, the awakened ones attain their start and end.

真人受命時，覺者有終始。(Taizong, “Pacing the Void” 1st)

The transcendent gathering takes place at the Mysterious metropolis, where the Dharma Wheel is consistently turning.

仙集會玄都，法輪常轉處。(Taizong, “Pacing the Void” 4th)

When the fragrant flowers follow the carriage, they will propagate the teaching and raise their voice.

香華從輦時，揚教動喉舌。(Taizong, “Pacing the Void” 8th)

These “long sentences” also appear frequently in Taizong’s other poems. Although Zhenzong and Huizong’s suites include such sentences as well, there are not as many as in Taizong’s suite. The long sentences in Taizong’s suite generate its grammatical affinity to prose. Due to the lack of condensation, the meaning is more accessible, and the poetic devices are more artless.

The third feature is the overly ornate images and terms directly from Daoist scriptures without regard for pacing or elegance. Taizong tends to create less innovative lines but uses more combinations of scenic or liturgical terms from the Daoist tradition. In the examples below, images such as “qibao” 七寶 (seven jewels), “liuli” 琉璃 (colored glaze), “gong” 宮 (palace), “xuandu” 玄都 (mysterious metropolis), “tan” 壇 (altar), etc., come from the prose from the *Lingbao scripture* cited in Chapter one. Terms such as “yulu” 玉籙 (Jade Register), “keyi” 科儀 (liturgy), “shangdi” 上帝 (the Highest Thearch), “yongzan” 詠讚 (hymns and eulogies), and “changsheng” 長生 (longevity) are also common in Daoist texts:

In the crystal palace of the Seven Jewels, crimson pennants line up with the flying talismans.

七寶瑠璃宮，飛符排絳節。(Taizong, “Pacing the Void” 8th)

The hymns and eulogies are also extraordinary; the longevity will never end or perish.

詠讚亦非常，長生無隕滅。(Taizong, “Pacing the Void” 8th)

The Mysterious Metropolis quells the eight directions; surrounding the altar the foliage is flourishing.

玄都鎮八方，臨壇皆蓊鬱。(Taizong, “Pacing the Void” 9th)

The Jade Register is received from the Scripture Master; the liturgy reveres the Highest Thearch.

玉籙受經師，科儀尊上帝。(Taizong, “Pacing the Void” 3rd)

The hundreds of grains are paying court to the Ultimate; all mists and clouds are beautiful and elegant.

百穀盡朝宗，煙霞全美麗。(Taizong, “Pacing the Void” 3rd)

Compared to Zhenzong and Huizong’s suites, which I will discuss in the next section, Taizong’s suite uses a large amount of familiar vocabulary. These inherited materials lead to the lack of creativity and subtlety. A literary critic might question the quality of these couplets: What do you mean by saying “beautiful and elegant,” and will you offer more descriptions of the “mists and clouds” in detail? Will you tell the readers why you put the “Mysterious Metropolis” and “tress around the altar” in one couplet, and why not say more about the scenic settings? When you say, “liturgy is to respect the Highest Thearch,” do you convey any information other than the liturgy itself already implies? When you say, “the hymns and eulogies are also extraordinary,” how is this line meaningful other than filling in

the syllabic blank? From a literary perspective, the dense terms and images are weak in elaborating the scene, and some are even redundant. A reader may argue that this is “bad poetry” because it is neither creative nor ornate enough.

With incoherent themes, imbalanced caesura, prose-style long sentences, and dense images and terms, however, I put the word “bad poetry” in quotation marks. This is because we should hesitate to judge this suite based on the conventional notion that “good poetry should have fine poetic devices.” An alternative perspective would be to accept Taizong’s understanding of this genre, rather than to assert that his literary talent was not sufficient to produce good poetry, although the latter might be true. This perspective requires us to compare his writings under religious titles and those written under secular circumstances.

The majority of Taizong’s poems are titled “Chant for Distant Roaming” or “Causation and Cognition,” indicating Daoist or Buddhist connotations. These poems are just like the “Pacing the Void” suite, with artless rhetorical skills and vague meanings. However, he has a few poems titled “Presented to” somebody (*ci* 賜) that are highly regulated. For example, the poem “Presented to Su Yijian” 賜蘇易簡 is written as a standard regulated poem (*lüshi* 律詩) with four couplets. The second and third couplets are strictly parallel:

[從	風]	<u>臣</u> 偃	光	朝野
Verb	Noun	Verb/Noun	Verb	Noun
Adverbial Modifier		Subject	Predicate	Object
Follow	Wind/Manner	Humbleness and obedience	Luminate	The Court and the Commons
[此	日]	<u>清</u> 華	見	[翰林]
Pronoun	Noun	Noun	Verb	Noun
Adverbial Modifier		Subject	Predicate	Adverbial Modifier
This	Day	Purity and splendor	Appear	Imperial Academy

<u>舉措</u>		<u>樂</u>	<u>時</u>	<u>周</u>	<u>禮法</u>
Verb/Noun		Verb	Noun	Verb	Noun
Subject		Predicate		Predicate	Object
Words and Deeds		Delight (in)	Time	Thoroughly cover	Ritual and Law
<u>思</u>	<u>賢</u>	<u>教</u>	<u>古</u>	<u>善</u>	<u>規箴</u>
Verb	Noun	Verb	Noun	Verb	Adjective
Predicate	Object	Predicate		Predicate	Object
Long for	Worthy person	Teaching (of)	Antiquity	Perfect	Rule and Admonition

This poem was composed in 982. It was a gift to his minister Su Yijian 蘇易簡 (958-997) to praise his political contributions to the state.⁶⁹ The context is this-worldly. Therefore, the poem follows a this-worldly rule—a literary rule which shows the poets’ technique under certain restrictions, including the requirement of “perfect parallelism.” Although the parts of speech in these two couplets vary to a minor extent, the caesura and phrasing in each line always corresponds to its counterpart. This indicates that Taizong had the knowledge to recognize parallel patterns as well as some ability to create a few, putting aside whether his ability was limited or not. Thus, a plausible reason for the artless style in his “Pacing the Void”, “Chant for Distant Roaming” and “Causation and Cognition” is that he understood these poems with religious themes as a distinct genre from secular poems.

Taizong was not unique in terms of treating religious poetry and secular poetry as separate genres. Although direct references to a “religious genre” are rare in Song literary criticism, we can find clues in medieval literati who belittle the poetry of Buddhist monks and Daoist priests. Song literati coined a term “the whiff of vegetables and bamboo shoots” (*shusun qi* 蔬筍氣) to criticize some verses written by monks and priests, meaning they are

⁶⁹ *Zengxiu shihua zonggui* 增修詩話總龜, compiled by Ruan Yue 阮閱 (fl. ca. 1126) (SKQS edn.), 49/2b.

tasteless, dull, and insipid. Accordingly, the phrase to praise some verses is “without the whiff vegetable and bamboo shoots style” (*wu shusun qi* 無蔬筍氣).⁷⁰ When Thomas Mazanec examines the development of the term *gāthā* (*ji* 偈, or Buddhist verses) through history, he argues that *gāthās* in the early medieval period are clearly distinguished from poetry, while the Tang monks began to “write verse in abundance, which their literati contemporaries often referred to as *gāthās*. These *gāthās* were seen as less witty, less important, and less crafted than poems.” This anxiety of distinction came along with the fuzzy border between *gāthā* and poetry since the Tang-Song periods.⁷¹ Such attempts in literati communities lasted as least to the year 1814 when the Emperor Jiaqing 嘉慶 (r. 1796-1820) organized the compilation of *Complete Writings of the Tang* (*Quan Tangwen* 全唐文). The compilers intentionally excluded Buddhist and Daoist writings “in order to cut off the traditional malady, and to rectify the human mind.”⁷²

The separation of religious and secular poetry in early medieval China as well as the attempt to make a distinction with fuzzier borders since the Tang period imply that people

⁷⁰ *Zengxiu shihua zonggui*, 92/6b. In this account, Su Shi 蘇軾 (1037-1101) was using the phrase “without the whiff of vegetable and bamboo shoot” to as an ideal standard for literary criticism of monks’ poetry.

⁷¹ Thomas J. Mazanec, “The Medieval Chinese Gāthā and its Relationship to Poetry,” *T’oung Pao* 103, no. 1-3 (2017): 150.

⁷² “This anthology excludes all petitions, spells, *gāthās*, hymns, and the like, of Buddhism and Daoism, in order to cut off the traditional malady, and to rectify the human mind” 至釋、道之章咒偈頌等類，全行刪去，以防流敝，以正人心。 *Quan Tang wen*, 2-3.

were aware of the differences between “religious poetry” and “typical/literary” poetry. Mazanec also discusses such awareness among the Song monks and literati: When a poet monk, Qiji 齊己 (ca. 860-ca. 937) was trying to make a distinction between *gāthā* and poetry, Mazanec argues that it is because “people were confusing the two. ... It seems that the average, literate man of tenth-century China did have a concept of ‘religious poetry.’ Poetry and *gāthā* were, at least formally, impossible to tell apart. It was only by referring to extra-textual phenomena, such as the function of a piece in a given community or the identity of the author, that one could clearly separate the two terms.”⁷³

Jason Protass draws similar conclusions about *gāthā* in the Song Dynasty when writers and readers “transposed the scriptural genre of anonymously authored hymns into a creative genre for individually authored religious poetry.”⁷⁴ On the one hand, most Buddhist still understood literary poetry as a genre distinct from *gāthā* and as an “outer” form of knowledge; on the other hand, *gāthā* were viewed as peripheral to the mainstream of Chinese literature. However, by the Northern Song Dynasty, *gāthā* was not exclusively verses spoken by the Buddha or Buddhist masters; the writing and collecting of *gāthā* expanded, and they were used not only for ritual and edifying but also for a wider range of occasions.⁷⁵

Daoist liturgical poetry in the Northern Song Dynasty was in the same position. We find evidence of both “separation” and “merging” between the categories of religious poetry and literary compositions in the history of “Pacing the Void” poetry discussed in the first chapter.

⁷³ Mazanec, “The Medieval Chinese *Gāthā* and its Relationship to Poetry,” 134-5.

⁷⁴ Jason Protass, *The Poetry Demon: Song-Dynasty Monks on Verse and the Way* (Honolulu, University of Hawai’i Press, 2021), 76.

⁷⁵ Jason Protass, *The Poetry Demon: Song-Dynasty Monks on Verse and the Way*, 33-75.

It is reasonable to assume that Taizong was also aware of this difference, since his secular writings demonstrate a different style from that of his “Buxu,” “Chants for Distant Roaming,” and “Causation and Cognition” poems. Such conscious or unconscious awareness manifested itself in poetic devices. Notably, this “artless style” should be differentiated from an intentionally artless style advocated by some Song literati. These literati explored new textual sources, including Daoist and Buddhist corpus, for their literary compositions.⁷⁶ Their aims were to innovate fresh writing styles within the tradition of literature by appropriating various sources. On the contrary, Taizong’s “Pacing the Void” suite was written within the tradition of Daoist ritual hymns.

It is helpful, therefore, to look for another literary standard to evaluate this suite. Although there are few aesthetic discussions from the Song dynasty focused on “Buddhist/Daoist poetry” or “liturgical poetry,” there is an introduction to the genre of Daoist “Green declarations” (*qingci* 青詞) in *Daomen dingzhi*:

In a declaration you first make the vow. The idea is you should explicitly state the problem. You must not use parallelism to link the phrases. Though some might say this

⁷⁶ Zhou Yukai 周裕鍇 discusses a new trend in the Song poetry in which poets appropriate “found materials” into their poems or utilize “new language sources, taken from Buddhist or Daoist corpus, which distinguish their poetry from traditional literati discourses.” Zhou Yukai 周裕鍇, *Songdai shixue tonglun* 宋代詩學通論 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2019), 152-161; Zhou Yukai 周裕鍇, “Yi su wei ya: Chanji su yuyan dui Songshi de shentou yu qishi” 以俗為雅：禪籍俗語言對宋詩的滲透與啟示, *Sichuan daxue xuebao* 108, no. 3 (2000): 79.

facilitates recitation, if you do not know the style for declarations and also include parallelism, so that matters are repeated, this is not solemn and concise.

且詞先入願，意欲直具事由，不可以對偶聯屬。雖雲宣讀之便不知詞文，又有對偶，事意重復，不嚴簡耳。⁷⁷

The style of a petition or declaration should be substantial rather than embellished, artless rather than skillful, plain rather than flowery, factual rather than false, straightforward rather than circuitous, clear rather than redundant, supple rather than defiled, pure rather than polluted, upright rather than biased; one should concisely express oneself. Truly it would be able to move the heaven and earth, ghost and spirits. It ascends to the Heavenly Bureau, and the reward should instantly arrive.

章詞之體，欲實而不文，拙而不工，樸而不華，實而不僞，直而不曲，辯而不繁，弱而不穢，清而不濁，正而不邪，簡要而輸。誠則可以感天地、動鬼神，徑上天曹，報應立至也。⁷⁸

This standard shows an ideal of artlessness and concerns about function. Taizong's "Pacing the Void" suite is closer to this standard for ritual texts than to the standards of poetry in the Song dynasty. Although it lacks rhetoric or originality, it has a style and vocabulary familiar to ritual attendees. It is easy to understand with simple vocabulary and structure. In a word, it is valued for its efficacy more than its aesthetics. Even when certain poetic devices are used, they contribute to recitation and memorization and to a more decent text for deities. In the context of Taizong's religious policies, the act of writing this suite

⁷⁷ DZ 1224 *Daomen dingzhi* 1/2a.

⁷⁸ DZ 1224 *Daomen dingzhi* 1/2b.

itself might have served as a proof of his support for Daoism. “Writing for Daoist rituals” was even more important than “creating good poems.”

3.2 Zhenzong’s and Huizong’s suites

Zhenzong’s and Huizong’s suites contrast strongly with that of Taizong. First of all, there are hardly any Buddhist terms in the two suites.⁷⁹ Each poem shows a clear theme, and the ten poems are arranged in a reasonable order. Second, the form is highly regulated. All poems consist four couplets, and most couplets use parallelism. Zhenzong’s suite has thirty-five couplets out of forty that are parallel; Huizong’s suite has twenty-seven out of forty that are parallel. All non-parallel couplets are the first or the last couplets of each poem, which is in accord with the conventions of regulated verse (*lüshi* 律诗). Third, the considerable number of parallel lines reduce the space left for “long sentences,” leading to greater deviation from daily language. Fourth, although their suites demonstrate a clear identity as “Daoist poetry” with inherited Daoist vocabulary, they feature many innovative images, metaphors, and parallels. Below I cite two typical poems from each suite to demonstrate their writing style.

Zhenzong, “Pacing the Void” 1st

銅渾春律至	On the copper globe arrives the sound of spring;
玉闕曉煙披	In the Jade Portal the morning mist lifts.
吉夢通天意	An auspicious dream connects to the will of Heaven;

⁷⁹ Although Zhenzong supported Buddhism with policies and also wrote Buddhist poetry himself, collected in the *Fayin ji* 法音集 (*Collection of the Voice of the Law/Dharma*), he does not show such a predilection in his “Pacing the Void” suite.

靈文表帝期	The spiritual text declares the imperial time.
奉符成鉅典	We present talismans to complete the great rite;
胥宇報純禧	Observers of the cosmos report the pure auspiciousness.
克布烝民祐	Now may the divine aid be spread to all the people,
應諧百福宜	May the hundred blessings be nicely harmonious.

Zhenzong, “Pacing the Void” 2nd

錫符瞻絳闕	We are conferred the talisman, gazing at the crimson portal;
揆日會彤庭	We measure the sunlight, gathering at the vermillion court.
迎導森容衛	Welcoming and guiding, the procession is solemn;
夤威罄典刑	Respectfully and majestically, we completely follow the norms.
氤氳流協氣	The harmonious air is invigoratingly flowing;
絡繹奏祥經	The auspicious scripture is endlessly performed.
苾苾修嘉薦	In the fragrant air we prepare nice offerings;
祇祇達杳冥	Reverently we reach the dim and dusky.

Huizong, “Pacing the Void” 1st

太極分高厚	The Great Ultimate divides into the Highness and the Thickness;
輕清上屬天	The light and pure goes up and belongs to Heaven.
人能修至道	Humans practice the Ultimate Way;
身乃作真仙	Our bodies become perfected transcendents.
行溢三千數	The moral actions exceed three thousand deeds,
時丁四萬年	The time lasts through forty thousand years.
丹臺開寶笈	On the red altar opens the precious case;

金口為流傳⁸⁰ May the golden words be transmitted forever.

Huizong, “Pacing the Void” 9th

水噴魔宮懾 Water is spitted; the Demon Palace cowers.
燈開夜府明 Lamps are lit; the Bureau of Night is luminated.
九天風靜默 The wind of the Nine Heavens is quiet and tranquil;
四極炁澄清 The pneumas of the Four Poles are clear and pure.
嘯詠朱陵曲⁸¹ I whistle and recite tunes of the Vermillion-Mount;
翱翔白玉京 I fly and soar into the White-Jade Capital.
至誠何以祝 With my utmost sincerity, for what will I pray?
國祚永安榮 May the destiny of my state be forever peaceful and glorious.

Zhenzong’s first poem opens the suites with a grandiose ritual set at court. His second poem then depicts a majestic ceremonial scene in the secular realm, while the last sentence, “prepare nice offerings” and “reach the dim and dusky,” directs the audience to the sacred realm in the third poem. This demonstrates a clear flow in terms of thematic arrangement. Moreover, all couplets in these two poems show strict parallelism. Words such as “Jade Portal,” “spiritual text,” “talisman,” and “perform the scripture” are evident elements of Daoist poetry, but the author chooses relatively uncommon vocabulary items as counterparts

⁸⁰ *Jinkou* 金口 (Golden Mouth) is primarily a Buddhist term referring to the Buddha’s mouth. By Huizong’s period, however it had been used to refer to prestigious people’s words or prestigious teachings.

⁸¹ *Zhuling* 朱陵 (Vermillion-Mount) is one of the thirty-six minor *dongtian* 洞天 (Grotto-Heavens) where transcendents reside, see “Tiandi gongfu tu” 天地宮府圖, in DZ 1032 *Yunjiqian*, 27.

for these terms. For example, “Jade Portal” 玉闕 was usually paired with “Golden Register” 金錄 in previous Daoist poetry, while Zhenzong pairs it with “copper globe” 銅渾. “Present the talisman” 奉符 in Zhenzong’s poem is paired with “observe the cosmos” 胥宇 instead of “present petitions” 奏章. These arrangements make the vocabulary engage more in this-worldly discourse since “copper globe” and “observing the cosmos” were more related to the royal court and state ritual. Furthermore, although “harmonious air” and “auspicious scripture” are common Daoist vocabulary, Zhenzong uses an alliterative compound *yin yun* > *ʔjien ʔjwən 氤氳 (invigoratingly) and the rhyming couplet *luo yi* > *lâk jiäk 絡繹 (endlessly) to modify them, which are delicate mimetic words with a specific concern about phonological aesthetics.

The overall structure of Huizong’s suite progresses from *metaphysics* to *physics*. It starts with a philosophical argument at the beginning, follows with actions and scenes in the heavenly realm in the middle, and treats this-worldly ritual performance and the political purpose in the ninth and tenth poems. However, the structural similarity of Zhenzong and Huizong’s suite is their coherent narrative flow throughout the suite and distinct themes for individual poems. Moreover, Huizong’s poems also feature strict parallelism, especially in couplets in the middle. He also employs traditional Daoist terms such as “the Great Ultimate,” “the Ultimate Way,” “transcendents,” and “demon palace,” but he uses innovative ways to pair these terms with one another—for example, “the Ultimate Way” 至道 with “perfected transcendents” 真仙, “Nine Heavens” 九天 with “Four Poles” 四極, and “demon palace” 魔宮 with “bureau of night” 夜府. This way of creating parallelism is similar with Yu Xin’s and Wu Yun’s suites to a large extent, while Huizong’s textual sources are different from those of Yu Xin’s and Wu Yun’s suites. I will examine their textual sources in the following section.

Zhenzong and Huizong’s fine vocabulary and parallelism are also seen in other writings. For Zhenzong, the most important texts to read together with his “Pacing the Void” suite are prose pieces written by Zhenzong himself for imperial Daoist rituals collected in *Song Zhenzong yuzhi yujing ji* 宋真宗禦製玉京集 (*Imperially Produced Anthology of the Jade Capital by the Emperor Zhenzong*, hereafter *Yujing Anthology*).⁸² Although many of his secular poems collected in *Songshi jishi* 宋詩紀事 (*Accounts of the Song Poetry*)⁸³ also have a wide range of vocabulary and strict parallelism, his “Pacing the Void” suite, consisting of poetry for imperial Daoist ritual, has an evident affinity with his compositions for imperial Daoist ritual in the *Yujing Anthology*. These texts were to be read out loud by individual practitioners, usually the emperor himself. A typical example usually contains a title and opening stating the occasion, a petition as the body, and a closing remark such as “Your servant knocks his head to the ground, knocks his head to the ground, bows twice, and reverently speaks” 臣頓首頓首再拜謹言. The petition usually take the form of “parallel prose” (*pianwen* 駢文). This genre since the Early Medieval period requires strict parallelism and ornate language. Zhenzong’s petitions also include a wide range of vocabulary drawn from imperial Daoist rituals, as does his “Pacing the Void” suite:

May the divine aid be spread to all
the people; may the hundred
blessings be nicely harmonious.
克布烝民祐，應諧百福宜。
(Zhenzong, “Pacing the Void” 1st)

May you cover the condescending aid of the three
celestial bodies and bring about the universal nicety
of hundreds of blessings.
蓋三辰之垂祐，俾百福以鹹宜。

⁸² DZ 315 *Song Zhenzong yuzhi yujing ji* 宋真宗禦製玉京集.

⁸³ *Songshi jishi* 宋詩紀事, compiled by Li E 厲鶚 (1692-1752) (SKQS edn.), 1/4a-7b.

	<p>(“Two Declarations of Thanks for receiving respectful title from Heaven” 謝上尊號表二道, to Heaven 天)⁸⁴</p>
<p>An auspicious dream communicates the will of Heaven; the spiritual text declares the imperial timing. 吉夢通天意，靈文表帝期。 (Zhenzong, “Pacing the Void” 1st)</p>	<p>Special auspicious signs manifested in the dream; perfected drivers arrive on time. 殊祥兆夢，真馭應期。 (“Two speeches of Thanks for the Descent of the Sage Ancestor” 謝聖祖降臨詞二道, to the Great Thearch of the Celestial Worthy Sage Ancestor 聖祖天尊大帝)⁸⁵</p>
<p>Prosperous auspiciousness initiates flourishing lineage; great felicity protects myriad beings. 發祥開茂緒，介祉佑羣生。 (Zhenzong, “Pacing the Void” 5th)</p>	<p>The transcendent journey is radiantly conducted, and we respectfully see your lustrous appearance; we reverently hold your precious advice, and we strive to listen to the great lineage. We receive prosperous auspiciousness right here, and we hope you will offer limitless blessings to people. 僊遊昭格，恭覲於睟儀；寶誨⁸⁶欽承，緬聞於丕緒。荷發祥而斯在，期錫類以無疆。 (“One Speech for the Start of Construction of the Grand Spirit Palace” 景靈宮興工詞一道, to the Jade Thearch 玉皇)⁸⁷</p>

⁸⁴ DZ 315 *Song Zhenzong yuzhi yujing ji* 4/2a.

⁸⁵ DZ 315 *Song Zhenzong yuzhi yujing ji* 5/3b.

⁸⁶ I translate 誨 as 譬, a variant of *mou* 謀.

⁸⁷ DZ 315 *Song Zhenzong yuzhi yujing ji* 5/6b-7a.

The evident affinity between Zhenzong's poems and prose pieces implies that Zhenzong's "Pacing the Void" poetry is written as a part of the imperial legitimation of Daoism. His political move, confirming a Daoist ancestor for the royal family, legitimated the authority of the imperial Zhao family's reign, claiming that it was derived from a higher source of power.⁸⁸ This is seen in the title "Two speeches of Thanks for the Descending of

⁸⁸ *Songshi jishi benmo* 宋史紀事本末, compiled by Feng Qi 馮琦 (1558-1603) (SKQS edn.), 4/13b-14b: "[In the tenth month of the year 1012] The emperor told his ministers: 'I dreamed of a divine person who conveyed to me a command from the Jade Thearch as follows: "I ordered your ancestor Zhao Xuanlang 趙玄朗 to give you a Heavenly Text. Now I am ordering him to give you an audience again.'" The next day I dreamed once more of a divine person who transmitted these words from the Sage Ancestor: "My seat is in the Western Dipper. Set up six places and wait." That day, in the Hall of Extended Mercy, I set up a ritual area, with musicians playing five drums and a single flute. First we smelled a peculiar fragrance. A second later, a yellow light filled the hall, and the Sage Ancestor arrived. As I repeatedly made obeisance before him, I saluted him from below the hall. Six men suddenly arrived, The Sage Ancestor said, "I am one of the nine rulers of humans. I am in fact the earliest ancestor of the Zhao family. I have repeatedly descended as Xuanyuan Huangdi 軒轅黃帝 [i.e., the Yellow Emperor]. In the later Tang, I descended again and took charge of the clan of Zhao. It is now one hundred years since then. You, the emperor, are most able at protecting and nourishing the people. Do not neglect my former aims." Then he left the seat, mounted a cloud, and disappeared.'" 帝語輔臣曰: "朕夢神人傳玉皇之命云: '先令汝祖趙玄朗授汝天書, 今令再見汝。' 明日, 復夢神人傳聖祖言: '吾座

the Sage Ancestor” cited above. He also established many Daoist festivals such as Celestial Grant (*Tiankuang* 天貺) Festival, Celestial Auspiciousness (*Tianzhen* 天禎) Festival, and Descending Sage (*Jiangsheng* 降聖) Festival, placing Daoism in the imperial calendar. Thus, both his “Pacing the Void” suite and *Yujing anthology* under this background were likely a

西，斜設六位以候。是日即於延恩殿設道場，五鼓一籌。先聞異香，頃之黃光滿殿，聖祖至。朕再拜。殿下俄有六人至，揖聖祖，皆就坐。聖祖命朕前，曰：‘吾人皇九人中一人也。是趙之始祖，再降乃軒轅黃帝。後唐時復降，主趙氏之族，今已百年。皇帝善為撫育蒼生，無怠前志。’即離座乘雲而去。” This narrative is also mentioned in *Xu Zizhi tongjian changbian*, 83/8a; *Song huiyao jigao* 宋會要輯稿, compiled by Xu Song 徐松 (comp. 1809), 16 vols. (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2004), 75; *Songshi*, 104/2541-2. The punctuation is by myself. The translation is by Suzanne E. Cahill, “Taoism at the Sung Court: The Heavenly Tet Affair of 1008,” *Bulletin of Sung and Yüan Studies* 16, no.1 (1980); reprinted *Journal of Song-Yuan Studies* 50 (2021): 19, with modification.

Huizong’s sixth poem in his “Pacing the Void” suite starts with “Once at the Hall of Extended Mercy, the Nine Sovereigns descended in the midnight” 昔在延恩殿中宵降九皇. These lines refer to the above mentioned “history event” of Zhenzong’s time.

For in-depth researches of the Heavenly Text Affair, see Suzanne E. Cahill, “Taoism at the Sung Court: The Heavenly Tet Affair of 1008,” *Bulletin of Sung and Yüan Studies* 16, no.1 (1980): 23-44; reprinted *Journal of Song-Yuan Studies* 50 (2021): 7-31; Helwig Schmidt-Glintzer, “Die Manipulation von Omina und ihre Beurteilung bei Hofe—Das Beispiel der Himmelsbreife Wang Ch’in-jos unter Chen-tsong (regierte 998-1023),” *Asiatische Studien* 35, no. 1 (1981): 1-14.

part of this huge project about ritual reformulation. The emperor's effort in writing with refined devices was to show the contemporary audience his support for the legitimation and acceptance as a part of the state religion.

Huizong was also a strong advocate for Daoism. In terms of writing, he annotated *Liezi* 列子 (1111-1118), *Laozi* 老子 (1118), and *Xisheng jing* 西昇經 (ca. 1118), and he compiled the *Record of the Descent and Manifestation of Heavenly Perfected* (*Tianzhen jianglin shixian ji* 天真降臨示現記, 1113) about the manifested destiny of the imperial family and the *Scripture of the Divine Achievement* (*Shengji jing* 聖濟經, ca. 1118) about maintaining good health through Daoist practice. He also established many Daoist abbeys as well as a palace for worshipping himself as a Daoist Thearch.⁸⁹ He sought out famous Daoist priests, invited them to work for the court, and set up Daoist official positions patterned on the court official hierarchy.⁹⁰ It is the poems related to these events that demonstrate more similarity to his “Pacing the Void” suite. For example, in the year 1117, Huizong reconstructed and renamed all Celestial Peace and Longevity Abbeys (Tianning Wanshou

⁸⁹ *Songshi*, 7/136: Huizong established the Radiant Response Palace (Zhaoying gong 昭應宮) in 1008; *Songshi*, 7/142: Huizong set Celestial Felicity Temples (Tianqing guan 天慶觀) around the states in 1009; *Songshi*, 21/390, 398: Huizong established the Harmonious Yang Palace of the Jade Purity (Yuqing heyang gong 玉清和陽宮) in 1113 and renamed it the Divine Empyrean Palace (Yuqing shenxiao gong 玉清神霄宮) in 1117; *Songshi*, 462/13529: Huizong established Precious Register Palace of the High Purity (Shangqing baolu gong 上清寶錄宮) in 1116.

⁹⁰ *Songshi*, 462/13529.

guan 天寧萬壽觀) across the country as Divine Empyrean Jade Purity and Myriad Longevity Palaces (Shenxiao yuqing wanshou gong 神霄玉清萬壽宮, hereafter Divine Empyrean Palaces).⁹¹ Two years later, the Divine Empyrean Palace in the capital, Bianjing

⁹¹ *Songshi*, 21/397; *Tongjian changbian jishi benmo* 通鑑長編紀事本末, compiled by Yang Zhongliang 楊仲良 (fl. ca. 1230) (SKQS edn.), 127/3823.

About the background of the establishment of the Divine Empyrean Palace network, the biography of Lin Lingsu 林靈素 in *Songshi*, 462/13258 records Lin's speech to Huizong in 1117, addressing Huizong as a Daoist thearch: "The King of the Divine Empyrean of the Jade Purity is the eldest son of the Highest Thearch. His designation is the Great Thearch-Lord of the Longevity. It is you, your majesty" 神霄玉清王者，上帝之长子，主南方，号长生大帝君，陛下是也。 See also "Account of the Descending Sage at the Xuanhe Hall" ("Xuanhedian jiangsheng ji") 宣和殿降聖記, collected in *Zizhi tongjian houbian* 資治通鑑後編, compiled by Xu Qianxue 徐乾學 (1631-1694) (SKQS edn.), 99/19b: "[In 1117] the Emperor was then aware that he was originally the Great Thearch-Lord of the Longevity" 皇帝乃悟本長生大帝君。

Lee Li-Liang's 李麗涼 thoroughly examines the regulation, administration, and geographical distribution of the Divine Empyrean Palaces network. Lee Li-Liang, "Beisong Shenxiao daoshi Lin Lingsu yu Shenxiao yundong" 北宋神霄道士林靈素與神霄運動, (Phd diss., Hong Kong Chinese University, 2006), 138-66. Shin-yi Chao studies functions of the Divine Empyrean Palace network as a part of the Divine Empyrean Movement. Shin-yi Chao, "Huizong and the Divine Empyrean Palace Temple Network," 325-58.

汴京, was completed.⁹² Huizong wrote a “Edict for the Divine Empyrean Palace” 神霄玉清萬壽宮詔 which contains descriptions of the heavenly realm as follows:

Thunder and lightning peal in succession; divine light luminates the sky. Numerous transcendents come, floating in the air. Some throw precious swords, some disperse jade papers. The scene shocks the ears and dazzle the eyes; [they] pursue the Three and become a part of the One.

震電交舉，神光燭天，群仙翼翼，浮空而來者，或擲寶劍，或灑玉篇。駭聽奪目，追參化元。⁹³

He then assigned the grand preceptor Cai Jing 蔡京 (1047-1126) to moderate the statue setting, and wrote two poems to him, with the title or preface “the Divine Empyrean Palace has been completed with the heavenly favor. You work as the chief and set the Sage’s statue according to my order. I heard you have two poems written on the screen. I condescend to use their rhyme characters and give them as present to the grand preceptor” 神霄玉清萬壽宮慶成，卿以使事，奉安聖像，聞有二詩書幀，俯同其韻，復賜太師:

碧落金風爽氣回 In the blue sky blows golden wind and returns brisk pneuma;

⁹² *Tongjian changbian jishi benmo*, 127/3838-3839.

⁹³ “Shenxiao yuqing wanshougong bei” 神霄玉清萬壽宮碑, text transcribed in Chen Yuan 陈垣, ed., *Daojia jinshi lue* 道家金石略 (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1988), 339-40.

藂霄乍喜瑞霞開	of auspicious clouds lifted on the luxuriant empyrean we are surprisingly delighted.
經營欲致黎元福	I manage and plan [things] for the sake of my people's welfare;
敢謂詩人詠子來	I venture to tell the poet to rhapsodize on your arrival.
曠曠日馭曉光回	With growing gleam the sun rises; morning light returns.
金碧相宜玉府開	Gold and blue are harmoniously together; the Jade Mansion opens.
步武煙霞還舊觀	Pacing through the hazy auroral mists, I return to my previous abbey;
百神應喜左元來 ⁹⁴	hundreds of deities will be delighted of the coming of the Left Prime. ⁹⁵

We observe similar word choices and poetic devices in the “Pacing the Void” suite, the prose pieces and poems for the Divine Empyrean Palace above, as well as other texts about the Precious Register Palace of the High Purity (Shangqing baolu gong 上清寶籙宮, built ca. 1116), etc.⁹⁶ Unlike Taizong or Zhenzong, whose “presented to ministers” poetry follows

⁹⁴ *Huichen qianlu* 揮塵前錄, compiled by Wang Mingqing 王明清 (ca. 1127-1202) (SBBY edn.), 19/11a-b.

⁹⁵ The Left Prime (Zuoyuan 左元) is mentioned in early Daoist scriptures such as DZ 1138 *Wushang miyao*, 9/3a with a deity named Lord Left Prime of the Purple Pallor (Zisu zuoyuan jun 紫素左元君) and in DZ 508 *Wushang Huanglu dazhai lichengyi*, 55/7b with a deity named Great Officer of the Left Prime of the Great Ultimate (Taiji zuoyuan dafu 太極左元大夫). It is not clear which deity it refers to here exactly.

⁹⁶ *Huichen qianlu*, 19/11b-2a records a poem for an event in the Precious Register Palace of the High Purity.

different rules from their “Pacing the Void” suites, some of Huizong’s “presented to ministers” poems demonstrate an affinity with his “Pacing the Void” suite but note that these “presented to ministers” poems are all related to Daoist occasions. Notably, although Huizong composed a large number of palace poems about court banquets, the lives of concubines, music, painting, and dancing,⁹⁷ the gorgeous style employed in these poems is clearly distinct from his “Pacing the Void” suite. Ronald Egan notes that “Huizong’s (palace) poems may be read as a projection of life within his palace as he wanted it to be known to others and to history. Perhaps they even reflect his own perception of what palace life was actually like during his reign.”⁹⁸ Some other poems he wrote for his ministers follow this ornate style as well, but these are not written for Daoist events.

We can conclude that Daoist ritual was not a part of the “daily life within his palace” but more of the “public life of the state.” For Huizong, *theme* rather than *purpose* may be a larger concern when deciding in which style to write. When the *theme* is religious, he followed a certain style, regardless of whether the texts would be used as lyrics, edicts, or presented to ministers; when the *theme* was secular, he used another style, regardless of whether they were “Palace poetry” or “Presented to ministers” poems.

⁹⁷ *Erjia gongci* 二家宮詞, compiled by Mao Jin 毛晉 (1599-1659), collects about three hundred palace poems written by Huizong. See also recently published Fu Xuancong 傅璇琮 et al., ed., *Quan Songshi* 全宋詩 (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 1998), vol.1, 22.1.310-39.18.449.

⁹⁸ Ronald Egan, “Huizong’s Palace Poems,” in *Emperor Huizong and Late Northern Song China: The Politics of Culture and the Culture of Politics*, 393.

3.3 Conclusion

This chapter discussed the three emperors' different writing styles. Although we *analyze* their personal styles in terms of “thematic coherency,” “levels of parallelism,” or “range of vocabulary,” we should not *judge* their poetry on such criteria. We may want to rethink how the notion of “the features of good poetry” was established, and why the Song Imperial “Pacing the Void” suites cannot simply fit into this notion. We may not define these poems as “good poetry” or “bad poetry” based on their “skills,” regardless of innovation or paganization, plain or fancy, or strict or random. This is because they are not only poetry but also imperial Daoist lyrics. However, analysis of poetic devices using these criteria is valuable in terms of examining why and how they wrote these poems, how the poems should function according to the author's expectations, and what the readers of the time may have perceived.

Looking for textual similarity with their other writings also helps to find out their different intentions concerning and understanding of the “Pacing the Void” genre. Taizong might have seen it as a political tool in which the act of writing is more crucial than the content. Zhenzong might have seen it as part of the grand project of establishing a new anthology of imperial Daoist ritual speeches. Huizong cares more about the religious themes, writing in a rather consistent style for all poems with Daoist themes. In any case, the common feature of the three emperors is that they consciously distinguished the genre of “Pacing the Void” from that of “secular life” in terms of writing styles: for Taizong, it was to distinguish it from all “Presented to minister” poetry; for Zhenzong, it was to distinguish it from political poetry; for Huizong, it was to distinguish it from poetry on “secular themes”.

Another difference in the textual sources is the extent to which they use the discourse of traditional imperial state, which will be examined in the next chapter. On the one hand, it was

related to their literary composition style; on the other hand, it was more connected to their different political goals and different politico-religious relationships during their reigns.

CHAPTER 4

The Song Imperial “Pacing the Void” Poetry as State Ritual Texts

The most distinctive part of these emperors’ “Pacing the Void” poetry from previous “Pacing the Void” poetry is their identity as state ritual texts. These “Pacing the Void” suites were composed in the context of the syncretism of Daoism and traditional state cult, and they were targeted to be put in the corpus of state ritual texts. This distinctive identity is reflected, on the one hand, in the purposes of these poems which are different from those of previous Daoist hymns, and on the other hand in their vocabulary and syntax which demonstrate affinity with past and contemporary state-ritual hymns.

4.1 Ritual purpose reflected in the lyrics

The Golden Register Retreat, as discussed in Chapter 2, was a Daoist liturgy intended to benefit emperors and the state exclusively. The aims of this ritual were “to bless and protect the emperor or the king,” “to pacify the people and guard the state,” and “to display the ritual to match the heaven.”⁹⁹ Thus, the hymns for the Golden Register Retreat serve these purposes as well. Compared to previous Daoist hymns, these poems show more concern for the public welfare. This is reflected in the use of vocabulary items such as “people,” “eight directions,” “nine territories,” “ten directions,” and “myriad beings.” For example:

⁹⁹ DZ 1224 *Daomen dingzhi*, 6/1b.

The Highest Thearch subdues the demon king; all those in charge are worthy and wise.

They look downward into the mass of the people; the spirit officials are arrayed in ranks.

上帝伏魔王，執事皆賢哲。下察向黎民，靈官為等列。(Taizong, 8th)

The great fortune comes from the Vaulted Brilliance; the flowing auspiciousness reaches the people below.

介祉從穹昊，流祥及下民。(Zhenzong, 4th)

May the divine aid be spread to all the people; may the hundred blessings be nicely harmonious.

克布烝民祐，應諧百福宜。(Zhenzong, 1st)

I offer respectfully to seek for the abundant blessing; I expect persistently that the graciousness spread throughout the nine territories.

欽奉求多福，常期惠九圍。(Zhenzong, 9th)

With my utmost sincerity, for what will I pray? May the wave of the four seas be forever clear.

至誠何以祝，四海永澄瀾。(Huizong, 8th)

The mysterious metropolis quells the eight directions; those that surrounds the altar are verdant and flourishing.

玄都鎮八方，臨壇皆蓊鬱。(Taizong, 9th)

Instead of personal concerns about individual longevity or merit, Imperial “Pacing the Void” poetry emphasizes the “people” of a broader territory. It is true that vocabulary items such as “eight directions” or “four seas” are also included in the *Lingbao Buxu* lyrics, but obviously these words are used to depict the heavenly scene or to highlight the superiority of Daoist deities, rather than to show public concern about the secular world. For example, “the

ten directions revere the One Sovereign” 十方宗皇一 from the *Lingbao Buxu* third poem is to highlight the superiority of the “One Sovereign.” This poem then turns to the heavenly scene and individual merit. “The eight heavens are just like pointing to my palm; the six seams are not distant” 八天如指掌六合何足遼 from the *Lingbao Buxu* eighth poem is to depict a personal roving experience in which an individual gains supernal power to travel through a vast space. These are also common devices in the tradition of “Roving transcendent” poetry, and they are clearly different from the public concern in the Song Imperial “Pacing the Void” poetry.

Notably, “people” in these lines are set in a hierarchical structure. In other words, the so-called “public” welfare is not an egalitarian concern but a hierarchical concern. Taking the first and second lines cited above as examples, there is a top-down structure from the “Highest Thearch” or “Heaven” to “heavenly officials” and to “people.” The Song emperors themselves are also set in this hierarchy between the “Highest Thearch” and the “people” since they use words such as *shang* 上 (superior) for the Highest Thearch and *xia* 下 (inferior) for people. These lines were written from the perspective of the imperial court. By writing and performing these poems, the authors naturally engaged the imperial court as a Daoist structure.

This leads to the second feature of the Imperial “Pacing the Void” poetry that relates to the state cult—a modified pantheon. The following table lists the names and titles in the *Lingbao Buxu* poems and the Song Imperial “Pacing the Void” suites:

Lingbao Buxu

Superior beings	The Most High 太上 (4) ¹⁰⁰
	The One Worthy Thearch 帝一尊
	The One Sovereign 皇一
	The Great One 太一
	The Celestial Worthy 天尊
	The Seven Ancestors 七祖
	High transcendents 高仙子
	High superiors 高上人
Companions	Yuyi (the deity of the sun) 鬱儀
	Jielin (the deity of the moon) 結璘
	Wuying 無英 ¹⁰¹
“My” ideal achievement	Golden Flower Transcendent 金華仙 ¹⁰²
	Perfected 真人
Ritual practitioners	Prince 公子
	All Perfecteds 眾真

¹⁰⁰ The number in parentheses indicates the times that this title appears.

¹⁰¹ Wuying 無英 (Blossomless) is a deity mentioned in DZ 6 *Shangqing da dong zhen jing* 上清大洞真經. It is a deity that resides within the human being that connects the human being to deities of the outer pantheon.

¹⁰² *Jinhua* 金華仙 (Golden Flower Transcendent) refers to Chisongzi 赤松子 (Master Red-Pine). It is quoted in DZ 388 *Taishang dongxuan Lingbao wufu xu* 太上洞玄靈寶五符序 that a mortal named Huang Chuping 黃初平 became a transcendent on Mount Golden Flower (in Zhejiang) and changed his name to Chisongzi.

	High transcendents 高僊 ¹⁰³
	All transcendents 眾仙/諸僊/群仙
Inferior beings	Lower transcendents 下僊
	Lad of the Eight Seas 八海童
Demons	The demon king 魔王 (2)
Taizong's Suite	
Superior beings	The Jade Thearch 玉帝
	The Highest Thearch 上帝 (3)
	The Celestial Worthy 天尊 (3)
	The Lord of the Great Way 大道君
	The Sun 日
	The Moon 月
	The Five Stars 五星
	The Great One 太一
	Stellar officials 星官
	The Jade Sovereign 玉皇
	The Three Officials 三官 ¹⁰⁴
	The Five Thearch-Lords 五帝君 ¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³ The *Daozang* version uses 仙 and 僊 for “transcendent” interchangeably, although they are graphical variations of the same word. In this table, I keep the variants according to the *Daozang* version.

¹⁰⁴ The Three officials 三官 refer to the Officials of Heaven, Earth, and Water.

¹⁰⁵ The Five Thearch-Lords 五帝君 refer to the Thearchies of the Five Directions. They are common deities of both Daoism and traditional state cult. The section “liyi” 禮儀 (“Ritual

	Divines and transcendents 神仙 (3)
	Scripture masters 經師
Ritual practitioners	All Perfecteds 眾真 All transcendents 諸仙
Inferior beings	Little children 小丫童 Myriad beings 眾生 (2) Six Dings 六丁 ¹⁰⁶ Multitudes 黎民
Demons	Malicious demons 邪魔 (2) The demon king 魔王
Unknown	Spiritual officials 靈官 Perfecteds 真人 (2) Awakened 覺者 Master of the Law 法師 The Pure Lady 清娥 ¹⁰⁷ Great transcendents 太仙
Zhenzong's Suite	
Superior beings	Heaven 天

and rites”) from *Suishu* 隋書 (*the Book of Sui*) mentioned them as major deities in state ritual. *Suishu* 隋書 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1973), 6/117.

¹⁰⁶ Six Dings 六丁 are six gods with the Earthly Branch *ding* 丁 among the sixty gods of Celestial Stems and Earthly Branches. They are considered as representative of Yin spirits. They can be controlled by Daoist priests. See DZ 584 *Shangqing liujia qidao mifa* 上清六甲祈禱祕法, 2b-3a.

¹⁰⁷ The Pure Lady (Qing’e 清娥) refers to Chang’e (or Heng’e), the Lady in the Moon.

	Thearch 帝
	The Highest Thearch 上帝
	Perfected 真
	Mighty divines 威神
	The Vaulted Brilliance 穹昊
	The High Darkness 上蒼 ¹⁰⁸
Inferior beings	All the people 烝民
	All the people 群生
	People underneath [Heaven] 下民
<hr/>	
Huizong's Suite	
Superior beings	The Lords of Three Heavens 三天主
	The Five Ancient Worthies 五老尊
	The Thearch 帝
	The Sun Thearch 日帝
	The Nine Sovereigns 九皇
	Transcendent-soldiers 仙兵
	The High Darkness 上蒼
"Me" or "My" ideal achievement	Perfected transcendents 真仙
	Filial grandsons 孝孫
Ritual practitioners	Human voice 人聲
Inferior beings	Myriad beings 萬物
Demons	The Demon Palace 魔宮
	The Bureau of Night 夜府
Unknown	Leathered guests 羽客
	Transcendent-officials 仙官
	Myriad perfecteds 萬真

¹⁰⁸ Both Vaulted Brilliance 穹昊 and the High Darkness 上蒼 refers to Heaven.

This list demonstrates drastic differences in deities/beings in *Lingbao Buxu* and the Song Imperial “Pacing the Void” poetry. First of all, in *Lingbao Buxu*, the “superior beings,” “companions,” and “‘my’ ideal achievement” in “my” journey to the heavenly realm are evidently traditional Daoist supernal beings. Many among them have clear identities and even names. Taizong’s suite has a similar group of “superior beings,” but there is no personal name or any “‘my’ companions” in detail such as Yuyi, Jieli, and Wuying in the *Lingbao Buxu*. Although “I” observe supernal beings such as “spiritual officials” and “perfecteds” in “my” journey, the suite never explicates whether they are superior beings or “my” companions, thus these names are listed as “unknown” in the table above. Besides, the personal merits are not reflected by gaining some titles such as “the Perfected” but more about abstract moral achievement so that they are not listed above. Zhenzong and Huizong’s suites show further deviation from the Daoist tradition. The superior beings include a number of non-personal¹⁰⁹ beings such as “Sun,” “Moon,” “Five Stars” “Heaven,” “the Vaulted Brilliance,” and “the High Darkness,” which are closely related to the notion of celestial bodies and Heaven in traditional state ritual. The “Heaven” in this context became closer to the “Heaven” in the traditional and contemporary suburban sacrifice (*jiaosi* 郊祀) system.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁹ “Non-personal,” means that they are “not-explicitly-personal.” I do not deny that these beings could have personal attributes.

¹¹⁰ The Highest Thearch of the Vast Heaven 昊天上帝 was the highest being in state sacrifice system since early China. “Sun,” “Moon,” and certain stars and constellations were also major beings to accept sacrifice in this system. According to *the Comprehensive Rituals*

The emperors in the Golden Register Ritual played a similar role as in the state *jiaosi* ritual. They monopolized the privilege of being the chief priest.¹¹¹ They did not “see” personal beings, but they interacted with a higher power. Huizong’s suite even explicitly engaged traditional Confucian ethics through the word “Filial grandsons,” in the fifth suite, which makes the identity of the “Nine Sovereigns,” in the same suite, blurry, since the “Nine Sovereigns” may refer to either nine Daoist deities or nine ancient emperors mentioned in the Confucian classics.

Furthermore, all titles in *Lingbao Buxu* are non-secular beings. In other words, all beings mentioned in *Lingbao Buxu* are figures “I” encountered in the Heavenly realm. On the contrary, the imperial suites include secular beings such as the “people” and the “myriad beings.” In Zhenzong and Huizong’s suites especially, the encounters in heavenly realms are more represented by travelling around visiting places rather than meeting personal deities. Even the ritual practitioners turn from deities to human. These differences indicate the melding of the traditional Daoist pantheon in the imperial poetry as well as the imperial ritual. When Daoism was syncretized with the state ritual, it was simultaneously syncretized with the traditional state cult by finding places for traditional Heaven, the human emperor, and people.

of the Kaibao Period (968-976) (Kaibao tongli 開寶通禮, comp. ca. 973), and New Rites of the Five Rituals of the Zhenghe Period (1111-1118) (Zhenghe wuli xinyi 政和五禮新儀, comp. 1111), the Northern Song Dynasty maintained a similar structure.

¹¹¹ Technically, some imperial officials in the Northern Song dynasty occasionally played the role of the chief priest, but they did this as the representatives of the emperors or the court.

In fact, such turn from a pure-Daoist pantheon to the traditional state cult system is not only observed in the “Pacing the Void” poetry but also other sub-genres when a new group of people got more engaged in writing. The identity of authors as well as the contemporary ideological trend together may have weakened the Daoist religious aims but highlighted the other part, namely, the traditional state cult. However, there may be other underlying dynamics that facilitated this turn. This is the potential conflict between two sources of authority—Daoist authority and the traditional Mandate of Heaven.

Although the emperors took advantage of Daoism by deriving their authority from a Daoist lineage and claiming titles for themselves as Daoist deities, they were alert to Daoism’s potential threat to their traditional source of authority. Such alertness is mirrored in land, population, and religious policies,¹¹² and it is also seen in the Imperial “Pacing the Void” poetry in modifications of the pantheon as well as the concerns expressed for public welfare. Although using a genre that originated within Daoism, they did not keep an unchanged pantheon or ritual purposes. Daoist vocabulary and form became instruments rather than the purpose.

This leads to the third feature that distinguishes Imperial “Pacing the Void” suites from previous Daoist hymns—the appeal for divine support of the destiny of state and their throne. Instead of the individual’s longevity, the Imperial “Pacing the Void” poetry praises the longevity of the state. These lines are some examples of such concern:

¹¹² Xiang Zhongmin 向仲敏 cites the Song Dynasty land-tax policies and clerical-certificate policies and discusses the balance between agricultural land and temple land and between agricultural population and monks and priests. Xiang Zhongmin, *Liang Song Daojiao yu zhengzhi guanxi yanjiu*, 131-153.

May the all-encompassing source be shining, emerging from profound places; may the great almanac be united without limit. Rewarding us with grant, our pious mind may be entrenched; accumulating the fortunate signs, the auspicious mandate will prosper.

鴻源昭濬發，丕曆協無疆。報況虔心積，儲休瑞命昌。(Zhenzong, 6th)

With my utmost sincerity, for what will I pray? May the thone of my state be forever peaceful and glorious.

至誠何以祝，國祚永安榮。(Huizong, 9th)

4.2 A comparison of textual sources from the corpus of state ritual texts

The concern expressed for the public and for the destiny of the state, as well as the modified pantheon were realized by drawing upon textual sources from past and contemporary state ritual texts. These ritual texts included lyrics and liturgies for state sacrificial rituals to heaven and earth, sacrificial rituals to the imperial ancestors, and court rituals related to political events. A large number of state ritual texts are collected in the “Record of music” (“Yuezhì” 樂志) and “Record of Ritual” (“Lizhi” 禮志) chapters in the official histories of previous dynasties and of the Song dynasty. They also include texts in official ritual manuals and imperial edicts.

Among many parallels between Imperial “Pacing the Void” poetry and these ritual texts from the state cult, this chapter examines three poetic usages in which we can observe a clear line of development from earlier state ritual texts to the Song state ritual texts and Song Imperial “Pacing the Void” poetry.

The first theme, found in Taizong’s suite, uses a description of plants as a metaphor for fortune, blessing, or virtue. Plants are depicted in these lines not only as a scenic background

but also as an exteriorization of divine auspiciousness. Thus, these lines intertwine “plant” and “blessing” with one another:

The Nine Heavens benefit all beings; the leaves in the forest of jewels intercross and entwine. The teaching of images blesses the human world;¹¹³ the flowers of the transcendence bloom with purple calyxes.

九天利物多，寶林葉交錯。象教福人間，仙花開紫萼。(Taizong, 10th)

In the suburban sacrifice (*jiao* 郊) and ancestral temple sacrifice (*miao* 廟) lyrics of the Han to Tang Dynasties, we find lines with similar structures which use plants as both a scenic background and a metaphor for fortune. For example, in a Han Dynasty hymn for the *miao* ritual from the time of Han Gaozu 漢高祖 (r. 202-195 BCE) we read:

The blue spring spirit is spreading and moving; roots and embryos are growing. The nourishing and enriching rain covers the land, reaching all beings.

¹¹³ Xiangjiao 象教, the teaching of images, traditionally refers to Buddhism. Xiao Yi 蕭繹 (r. 552-555) “Neidian beiming jixu” 內典碑銘集序, in T 2103 *Guang hongming ji* 廣弘明集, 20/244c: “The teaching of images flows to the East, and the conversion proceeds to the southern state” 象教東流化行南國.

青陽開動，根菱以遂。膏潤並愛，跂行畢逮。¹¹⁴

A Southern Dynasties Song (420-479) hymn for the state offering to the Qingdi 青帝 (Green Thearch), one of the five thearchies of the five directions, in the *jiao* ritual, uses images of the spring season in the lyrics:

The geese are coming, the tung trees sprout leaves. The mild wind is dancing, the warm sunshine extends. Sprouting and moving; myriad beings are new. You nourish the vast space and enrich the boundless land.

雁將向，桐始蕤。柔風舞，暄光遲。萌動達，萬品新。潤無際，澤無垠。¹¹⁵

A Sui Dynasty (581-619) hymn for the state offering to the Chidi 赤帝 (the Red Thearch) in the *jiao* ritual applies this metaphor as well:

The cherries offer fruits; the hibiscuses hang down fronds. When the heavenly favor and award is proceeding, the highness and brightness can be occupied. According to the time we set the sacrifice; this event is manifested, and the blessing may be raised.

¹¹⁴ *Hanshu* 漢書 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1962), 22/1054.

¹¹⁵ *Songshu* 宋書 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1974), 20/569-70.

含櫻薦實，木槿垂蕤。慶賞既行，高明可處。順時立祭，事昭福舉。¹¹⁶

A contemporary example from the Song Dynasty is a hymn for offering a jade object (*dian yubi* 奠玉幣) to the Highest Thearch in a court ritual at the Imperial Hall of Light (Mingtang 明堂) from the Shaoxing 紹興 period (1131-1162):

Golden branches are beautifully flourishing; embroidered pavilions are loftily stretching.
For generations you enjoy the shining sacrifice; may you declare the longevity of the
Song state.

金支秀發，黼帳高張。世歆明祀，曰宋是常。¹¹⁷

The second poetic usage, found in Zhenzong's suite, presents the structure ritual action > interaction with/mention of the ancestor/deity > request for blessing or protection > pray for longevity of the throne/welfare of a broad area:

On the spiritual altar we raise the solemn ritual; at the palace, reverently, we return the favor to the mighty divine. The great fortune comes from the Vaulted Brilliance; the flowing auspiciousness reaches the people below.

¹¹⁶ *Suishu*, 15/362.

¹¹⁷ *Songshi* 133/3013-4.

靈丘揚典禮，恭館答威神。介祉從穹昊，流祥及下民。(Zhenzong, 4th)

We find the same pattern in one of the early Chinese state ritual lyrics, collected in the section “Minor Elegantiae” (“Xiaoya” 小雅) of the *Book of Odes* (*Shijing* 詩經):

The winter offerings and the feast are fragrant and aromatic. The sacrificial service is greatly shining; the former ancestor is illustrious. He may requite us with great blessings; our longevity may be without limit.

是烝是享，苾苾芬芬。祀事孔明，先祖是皇。報以介福，萬壽無疆。¹¹⁸

A Han Dynasty hymn for the *jiao* ritual include four lines that exactly fits in this pattern:

Worthy offering stands are placed in order; so that the divine beings will be a part in the feast. They may remove the misfortune and disaster; the glory spread to the eight expanses.

嘉籩列陳，庶幾宴享。滅除凶災，烈騰八荒。¹¹⁹

¹¹⁸ *Maoshi zhengyi* 毛詩正義 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1979, *Shisanjing zhushu* 十三經註疏 edn.), 13.2/203c.

¹¹⁹ *Hanshu*, 22/1057.

A Jin Dynasty (256-420) hymn for checking the offerings at the evening (*xisheng* 夕牲) before the main *jiao* ritual at the Imperial Hall of Light follows the same pattern:

Nice sacrifices are to be enjoyed; with the fragrant virtue [the offerings are] to be accepted. We receive the aid from Heaven; the divine power may spread to the four directions.

嘉牲匪歆，德馨惟饗。受天之祐，神化四方。¹²⁰

A Tang Dynasty (618-907) hymn for the sending the divine back to the heaven (*songshen* 送神) in the *jiao* ritual uses this structure as well:

The odes have ended, and the ritual is completed; riding six dragons, the divine is going to ascend. We sense the bright virtue, not only to the grain; great blessings are sent down, the destiny [is manifested in] auspicious sign.

歌奏畢兮禮獻終，六龍馭兮神將昇。明德感兮非黍稷，降福簡兮祚休徵。¹²¹

A contemporary example from the Song Dynasty is a hymn for drinking blessed wine (*yinfu* 飲福) in the *jiao* ritual from the Jianlong 建隆 period (960-963):

¹²⁰ *Songshu*, 20/566.

¹²¹ *Jiu Tangshu* 舊唐書 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1975), 30/1091.

We purify the five types of wine; we pour them into the six goblets. The utmost sincerity is achieved; the ritual to follow is vast and profound. To pray for the radiant blessings, may the future generations prosper forever.

潔茲五齊，酌彼六尊。致誠斯至，率禮彌敦。以介景福，永隆後昆。¹²²

The third poetic device, from Huisong's suite, uses the structure music performance > blessing. Although descriptions of musical performances are frequently seen in *Lingbao Buxu* pomes and other Daoist liturgical hymns, they are typically performed by e supernal beings in the heavenly realm. The musical performances mentioned in traditional state ritual texts, by contrast, are usually performed by humans. In other words, the practitioners restate what they are doing from a third-person perspective—they say by the way of performing music that “we are performing music.” The example below from Huizong's suite follows the practice of state compositions. The officiant intoning the hymn is not describing a performance in the heavenly realm, but instead refer to performances made as part of the ritual. This consciously implies that the musical performances themselves has a ritual function, which might be to *entertain* deities rather than to *imitate* deities. Since the music performance is playing the function of a ritual function, after its completion, the performers then ask for blessings:

In the Land of the Flowery and Elegant, the chant penetrates far; the human voice rises and falls. Unfathomable Emptiness returns to Way and Virtue; the winding voice matches the tones of Gong and Shang. ...With my utmost sincerity, for what will I pray? May the grains be forever prosperous and luxurious.

¹²² *Songshi*, 132/3068.

華夏吟哦遠，人聲自抑揚。沖虛歸道德，曲折合宮商。……至誠何以祝，
多稼永豐穰。(Huizong, 10th)

Such awareness of the musical performances' function, to entertain deities, is even clearer in other state ritual texts. For example, in the section “Zhou song” 周頌 (“Hymns of the Zhou”) from *Shijing* we read:

Their voice of the bells is ringing; in solemn unison they harmonize their sound. Our ancestors will listen. Our guests will be there, for long, seeing the performance completed.

嗶嗶厥聲，肅雝和鳴。先祖是聽。我客戾止，永觀厥成。¹²³

A Han Dynasty hymn for offering to the Luminous Star (Jingxing 景星, or the Star of Virtue) says:

Five tones and six pitches are harmoniously united with radiant voice. Miscellaneous and various sounds mix together, the refined sound spread far and wide. ... The High Heaven gives us support and the Sovereign Earth perfects us; may the four seasons flourish in this luxurious and prosperous year.

¹²³ *Maoshi zhengyi*, 19.3/327b.

五音六律，依韋饗昭。雜變並會，雅聲遠姚。……上天布施后土成，穰穰豐年四時榮。¹²⁴

A Northern Dynasties, Qi 齊 (550-577) hymn for welcoming the divine (*yingshen* 迎神) in the *miao* ritual with song and dance also follows this structure:

With the Lutao drums and the Yinzhū pipes, [we perform] virtuous songs and radiant dances. The sacrificial service is greatly shining; the hundred spirits are truly solemn. May the hearts of the spirits turn to us, and guarantee to us great blessings.

路叢陰竹，德歌昭舞。祀事孔明，百神允穆。神心乃顧，保茲介福。¹²⁵

In a contemporary example from the Song Dynasty, a hymn celebrates the ritual “removal of the bowls” (*chedou* 徹豆) in the sacrifice to Tearch of the Stimulated Birth (Gansheng di 感生帝) from the Zhenghe 政和 period (1111-1118):

The bells and drums sound in harmony; the divines are all drunk. We remove worthy offering stands; may they forever secure the blessings and benedictions.

¹²⁴ *Hanshu*, 22/1063.

¹²⁵ *Suishu*, 14/321.

鐘鼓惶惶，神具醉止。其徹嘉籩，永綏福祉。¹²⁶

From the three sets of comparisons above, we can conclude that the Song Imperial “Pacing the Void” poetry borrowed from state ritual texts of the traditional state cult, not only adopting vocabulary items and phrases but also inheriting traditional patterns expressed across a set of lines. These patterns had been used in the system of state ritual texts for thousands of years and had become familiar to the authors, performers, and audiences of court ritual. These patterns thus legitimized and confirmed the efficacy of the Imperial “Pacing the Void” suites as state ritual texts.

4.3 Conclusion

The Song Imperial “Pacing the Void” poetry claimed its identity as state ritual texts by demonstrating concern for the welfare of both the state and its citizens, and through the adoption of a modified pantheon including figures from the state cult and Daoist deities. These poems demonstrate similarities in vocabulary and textual patterns with previous and contemporary state ritual texts. Historic records of Song ritual events shows the syncretism of Daoist and state ritual regulations: Rituals at Daoist abbeys and palaces such as Jade Purity Radiant Fulfillment Place (Yuqing Zhaoying gong 玉清昭應宮), the Luminous Spirit Palace (Jingling gong 景靈宮), and the Divine Empyrean Palace (Shenxiao gong 神霄宮) were incorporated into the regular state ritual program. The composition of lyrics for the Golden Register Retreat was also a part of this syncretism. From this perspective, the emperors were

¹²⁶ *Songshi*, 132/3094.

not creating Daoist lyrics and adding in elements from state ritual; actually, they were creating state ritual texts within a religious tradition, while appropriating a Daoist genre for the Daoist-like ritual.

CONCLUSION

Poetry is born free, but everywhere it is in chains. All poems are in between of two extremes: being personal and spontaneous, and being regulated and constrained. The Song Imperial Buxu poetry is a perfect example. It is written in the era of religious syncretism as a production of various forces: Daoism, traditional state cult, and literary regulations. The three forces pull these suites to different directions, but they finally find the balance in the version preserved in *Hymns for Golden Register Retreat*. The three forces are embodied in religious thought and textual sources of these suites. As Daoist ritual hymns, they were recited in contemporary Daoist ritual, and they use vocabulary and structure from previous Daoist scriptures; as literary compositions, the authors show different personal styles and distinguished their *Buxu* suites from their secular writings in various ways; as state ritual texts, they adopt phrase and patterns from previous texts for the traditional state cult, and they show the state's awareness of appropriating Daoism for its own purpose.

The three suites have been understudied because of its threefold nature since they do not perfectly fit in any categories—they are of neither pure Daoism nor traditional state cult, and they are not “good” enough as literary compositions. However, this ambiguity is also the crux of their significance. The study of the three suites demonstrates, from the perspective of literary history, how texts draw from various literary traditions and form their unique style. This thesis proposes a structure to analyze the text generation. This structure contains an analysis from the textual perspective, including vocabulary, phrases, syntax, and poetic devices; it also contains the perspective of authors, including their writing style, predilection, and political cliques. Furthermore, this structure considers the context of such generation—we may discover the dynamics of text making through social-political events, religious reformulation, or trends in literary history.

Meanwhile, this study urges us to rethink how a sub-genre can be appropriated and adapted for developing new communication functions and for establishing different communities. A traditional Daoist genre can be reused through history, which echoes the modern studies that defines the genre from not only lexico-grammatical but also communicative and socio-cognitive perspectives. The study of “Pacing the Void” provides an example among many, showing the development of genres or sub-genres.

Furthermore, with the historical context, this study of the texts mirrors the integration of religious thought and rituals between Daoism and the traditional state cult. This highlights the significant potential of religious poems. “Religion” and “poetry” are two forces that put forward contradictory demands on the texts, which was noticed by many classical critics.¹²⁷

¹²⁷ Samuel Johnson discusses the contradiction between poetic creativeness and religious piety. He argues, “of sentiments purely religious, it will be found that the most simple expression is the most sublime. Poetry loses its lustre and its power because it is applied to the decoration of something more excellent than itself. All that pious verse can do is to help the memory and delight the ear, and for these purposes it may be very useful; but it supplies nothing to the mind.” Samuel Johnson, *Lives of the English Poets and a criticism on their works*, vol.1 (Dublin: Printed for Messrs. Et al., 1779), 128. David Cecil argues that religious poetry is meant to express what is supposed to be felt, and this conflicts with the nature of poetry as an expression of the individual’s spontaneous feelings. Thus, “religious sentiment is not proved to be the most fertile soil for poetry.” David Cecil, ed., *The Oxford Book of Christian Verse* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1940), 1-33. Helen Gardner summarizes the two viewpoints and discusses the difficulties writing and evaluating from a perspective of changing times. She argues that the prosperity of religious poetry is related to

Thus, religious poems may be plain or redundant; they may be valued as “bad poetry,” but they embody important historical information. As social-political events and religious reformulations mold the literature, literature reflects the historical facts. Therefore, historical research should never be independent from some “not-good-enough” literature.

the changes in people’s religious thought and experience during the period. It is also related to people’s view to poetry and poets. Helen Gardner, *Religion and Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), 149-152.

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DZ 483 *Jinlu zhai qitan yi* 金錄齋啟壇儀

DZ 486 *Jinlu dazhai buzhi shuojie yi* 金錄大齋補職說戒儀

DZ 507 *Taishang huanglu zhaiyi* 太上黃錄齋儀

DZ 508 *Wushang Huanglu dazhai lichengyi* 無上黃錄大齋立成儀

- DZ 528 *Taishang dongxuan lingbao shouduyi* 太上洞玄靈寶授度儀.
- DZ 530 *Shangyuan jinlu jianwen* 上元金錄簡文
- DZ 532 *Taiji zhenren fu lingbao zhajie weiyi zhujing yaojue* 太極真人敷靈寶齋戒威儀諸
經要訣
- DZ 547 *Lingbao yujian* 靈寶玉鑑.
- DZ 584 *Shangqing liujia qidao mifa* 上清六甲祈禱祕法
- DZ 607 *Yuyin fashi* 玉音法事
- DZ 614 *Dongxuan lingbao shengxuan buxuzhang xushu* 洞玄靈寶昇玄步虛章序疏
- DZ 1032 *Yunji qiqian* 雲笈七籤
- DZ 1138 *Wushang miyao* 無上祕要
- DZ 1223 *Shangqing lingbao dafa* 上清靈寶大法
- DZ 1224 *Daomen dingzhi* 道門定制
- DZ 1334 *Dongzhen taishang shenhu yinwen* 洞真太上神虎隱文
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