

MORTALITY IN
TRADITIONAL CHINESE THOUGHT

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SAGES, THE PAST, AND THE DEAD

Death in the *Huainanzi*

Michael Puett

Early China was a haunted world. Ghosts were pervasive and dangerous, and the living regularly performed sacrifices in an attempt to control or mollify the dead. Often, the sacrifices were insufficient.

Within this context, the *Huainanzi* offers a unique and powerful argument concerning death. The focus of the discussion here will be the text's presentation of sages—how they deal with death and teach nonsages to handle the same. I will focus on chapters 7 and chapter 13, and between these two we will get a fascinating glimpse of some of the complexities concerning visions of death in early China.

To ground this analysis, I will begin with a brief discussion of views about death during the Warring States and Western Han periods.

DOMESTICATING THE DEAD: VIEWS OF DEATH IN EARLY CHINA

In early China, the body of a living human was believed to contain several elements, including different souls and energies. Some of these energies were believed to be of heavenly origin; others were from the earth. At death, the former would float up to their ultimate abode in the skies while the latter would remain on or enter into the earth.¹

In many of the texts from the Warring States and Han periods, the elements from the heavens were the spirits (*shen*) and *hun* souls, whereas the elements from the earth included the bones, flesh, and *po* souls.²

According to early Chinese beliefs, these souls and energies are released from the body when one dies. This could be highly dangerous for the living. Some of the demonic forces—which would then simply be called ghosts (*gui*)—would tend to haunt the living.³ Harboring jealousies and resentments, they would be drawn to where they once lived and would send down disasters and misfortunes on their living family members. Indeed, this was believed to be the origin of many of the demonic illnesses that the living suffer.

In an attempt to prevent these dangers, rituals and sacrifices would be used to move the various souls and energies into places where they could be controlled, contained, and transformed into forces that would at least cause less harm to the living and potentially even be beneficial to them.

Immediately following a person's death, someone would recall the various souls that would have floated away after the death of the body. They would be called back to the corpse, which would then be placed, with its souls, into a tomb. In the tomb would also be placed various objects that the person had enjoyed while alive—foods, material goods, and texts. Since the souls contain the personality of the person, the hope was that, surrounded by objects that they had enjoyed while living, they would be likely to stay in the tomb and not harm living people. Exhortations would also be placed in the tomb stating that, since the souls are now dead, they should remain in the tomb and never again return aboveground.⁴ The living would then periodically hold feasts in the outer chambers of the tomb, in an attempt to maintain the familial feelings that the souls once possessed.

A separate set of rituals would be employed for the spirits, which by then would have floated into the heavens. The goal of these rituals was to transform the capricious but powerful spirits into ancestors who the living hoped would work on their behalf. The spirits would be given ancestral names and ancestral tablets, as well as a place in the ancestral cult based upon their lineage position. Sacrifices to them would then be provided in order to keep them in place within that ancestral lineage. The spirits would be called upon to act as ancestors—to see the living as their descendants and to give the living blessings as a parent would give blessings to his or her children. Thus, the descendants present themselves as following the paths laid out by the deceased, who are now explicitly called ancestors and who are then in turn called upon to support the living as their descendants.

If these rituals work, they result in some of the remains of what were once humans being kept safely in a tomb rather than turning into ghosts to haunt the living, and they would also result in the spirits' being transformed into ancestors who would then send down blessings to the living as their descendants.

This set of rituals was crucial for other reasons as well. Other spirits in the world, from the spirits of the mountains and rivers to the high gods

in the heavens, also tended to be highly capricious, and sacrifices were used in an effort to domesticate them as well. The ancestors, who tended to be more pliable by sacrifices, could also be called upon to mollify the higher spirits and attempt to gain their support.

Frequently, however, the rituals would not work. Ghosts would still haunt the living, and spirits would still send down harm and misfortune upon the living as well. Thus, the rituals were a never-ending attempt to keep the ghosts and spirits at bay. And for brief periods of time, such rituals might even be successful—but usually not for very long.

VISIONS OF DEATH IN THE *HUAINANZI*

The world of the *Huainanzi* is filled with ghosts and spirits, as was China at the time. The ghosts appearing in the text, at least, emerged from the same processes as seen in the dominant religious views of the day: “When people die, they become ghosts.”⁵⁵ Spirits of nature, as we will see later, are pervasive as well.

Moreover, gaining the blessings of the ghosts and spirits is crucial in the text. To quote from a *Huainanzi* passage that will be discussed in more detail further on: “If one fits with affairs of the world, obtains the patterns of man, accords with Heaven and Earth, and receives blessings from the ghosts and spirits, then one can govern” (“Fanlun,” 13/121/26–27). Chapter 13 argues that gaining the support of ghosts and spirits is necessary for a ruler.

However, there are significant differences between these views and those found in the practices of the day. To begin, and in direct contrast with the views that underlie common religious practices, the ghosts and spirits in the *Huainanzi* do not appear to be capricious. As John Major has pointed out: “Strangely lacking in this pantheon are malevolent gods and deities of the underworld.”⁵⁶ I would add that the same lack of malevolence exists among the celestial spirits as well. Absent, in other words, are the dangerous ghosts and spirits who need to be mollified and coerced through offerings or transformed through sacrifice into ancestors.

Moreover, in the world of the *Huainanzi*, the ghosts and spirits do not even eat the sacrifices given to them. Thus, the primary means used in religious practices of the time to gain the support of the ghosts and spirits is consistently ruled out throughout the *Huainanzi*. As chapter 18 bluntly states, performing sacrifices is “not to seek blessings from the ghosts and spirits” (“Renjian,” 18/189/8).

So, then, why does one perform the sacrifices, and how does one gain the blessings of the ghosts and spirits if sacrifice does not do so? In other words, what sort of a relationship is the text positing among humans, ghosts, and spirits?

To begin to answer these questions, I would like to begin with a discussion of chapter 7 of the *Huainanzi* and then move on to chapter 13.

SAGES AND DEATH

As do many of the texts of the day, “Jingshen,” chapter 7 of the *Huainanzi*, posits humans as having received different elements of the self from Heaven and Earth.⁷ When death occurs, each of these elements returns to its origin: “[T]he essence and the spirit are possessions of Heaven, whereas bones and limbs are possessions of Earth. When the essence and the spirit enter their gate, and when bones and limbs return to their root, how can ‘I’ exist?” (“Jingshen,” 7/54/27–28)

However, the text takes this view in a direction quite different from what one sees elsewhere. Since the elements that make up a human come from Heaven and Earth, the sage is called upon to take Heaven and Earth as his father and mother, respectively: “He takes Heaven as his father, Earth as his mother, yin and yang as his regulators, and the four seasons as his principles. Heaven is still by means of purity; Earth is settled by means of pacifying. As for the myriad things, if they lose these, they die; if they take these as their model, they live” (“Jingshen,” 7/55/1–2).

Moreover, since the sage models himself on the larger cosmos, he does not focus on the particular thing that is his current self. As the chapter argues, building upon images from the “Inner Chapters” of the *Zhuangzi*:

Heaven and Earth revolve and penetrate each other. The myriad things are collected and become One. If you are able to understand the One, then there is not one thing that is not understood; if you are not able to understand the One, then there is not one thing that can be understood. It is like my being placed within this world. I am also one thing. I do not know if all under Heaven takes me as completing its things. Moreover, if there were no “me,” would everything be complete? As such, I am a thing: a thing like other things, a thing in relation to other things. How am I to be compared with other things? And how did my birth add anything, and how will my death be a loss? Now, the producer of transformations made me into a clod; I do not have any means to oppose it. (“Jingshen,” 7/56/11–15)

With this, the chapter is clearly building upon a generally Zhuangzian vision, one in which the sage takes life and death as equal and sees himself as part of the larger transformations of the cosmos. These themes, in fact, appear in a number of the chapters. Chapter 16 argues: “Thus, sages see life and death as equal, and fools also see life and death as equal. Sages see life

and death as equal because of the patterns of allotment, whereas fools see life and death as equal because they do not understand where benefit and harm lie" ("Shuoshan," 16/164/5–6). The sage takes life and death as equal not in the sense of failing to understand wherein lies danger, but rather because he understands the larger patterns of the cosmos.

As such, the sage is unconcerned by the processes of life and death:

Thus, the sage uses nothing to respond to something and always traces out their patterns. [He] uses emptiness to receive fullness and necessarily exhausts their modulation. . . . The *hun* and the *po* souls are positioned in their abodes; the essence and spirit are held fast to their root. Death and life are not altered by him. Therefore, he is called: the ultimate spirit. ("Jingshen," 7/57/6–8)

For the sage, then, the *hun* and *po* do not seek to leave the body early, nor do they crave life after death. Thus, the processes of life and death are not altered by the sage.

Similar claims appear also in the anecdote that opens chapter 16:

The *po* asked the *hun*: "What is the structure of the Way?" The *hun* responded: "It takes nothing as its structure." The *po* asked: "Does nothing have a form?" The *hun* responded: "It does not have anything." The *po* asked: "How can one obtain and hear nothing?" The *hun* said: "One encounters it directly. If you look at it, it has no form; if you listen to it, it has no sound. It can be called the 'obscure darkness.' The 'obscure darkness' is how one refers to it, but it is not the Way." The *po* said: "I have obtained it." He thereupon turned back to himself and looked inwardly. The *hun* said: "In general, for those who obtain the Way, their form cannot be seen, the name cannot be grasped. Now, you still have a form and a name. How are you capable of the Way?" The *po* said: "What use are words? I will return to my ancestor." The *po* turned back to look, but the *hun* suddenly could not be seen. The *po* turned back to his own existence, and then he also submerged himself in the formless. ("Shuoshan," 16/154/3–9)

If the *hun* and *po* take the Way, rather than a specific individual, as their structure, then their concern is not with longevity but rather with becoming a part of the larger cosmos.

But if much of this reads like a lengthy elaboration of themes from the *Zhuangzi*, allow me to return to the end of the last quotation given from chapter 7: "Therefore, he is called: the ultimate spirit" ("Jingshen," 7/57/8). As I have argued elsewhere, such self-divinization claims are pervasive in the

Huainanzi, and they play a particularly significant role in chapter 7.⁸ The adept, by modeling himself on the cosmos, is able not simply to accord with it but also to take control of things within it—a concern quite removed from anything one finds in the *Zhuangzi*. The chapter goes on to assert that one can ascend to even higher levels than sage, become a True Man, and reach a point of being able to “employ ghosts and spirits” (“Jingshen,” 7/58/1). One actually gains direct power over ghosts and spirits—not by trying to coerce them with rituals but by being more refined than them and thus being able to control them directly.

Returning to the sage, the cosmology of chapter 7 has further implications. If the sage views Heaven and Earth as his father and mother, he is unconcerned with his human father and mother—and thus with the entire system of ancestral worship, of transforming the deceased into ancestors, of placing oneself within a lineage structure, and so on. And if the *hun* and *po* souls truly return to nothingness, they would not become ghosts. In other words, not only would the sage not be concerned about his deceased human ancestors, but his remains would also not become ghosts to threaten the next generation. In short, the sage is completely autonomous, in every way, from the dominant forms of practice in early China for dealing with the dead.

Indeed, the sage is autonomous from quite literally *all* human customs: “Thus, the sage models himself on Heaven and follows the circumstances. He does not adhere to custom; he is not seduced by men” (“Jingshen,” 7/54/28–7/55/1). As Griet Vankeerberghen has beautifully argued, such claims about the complete autonomy of the sage from custom, ritual, and precedent are pervasive throughout the *Huainanzi*.⁹

Most humans, of course, are not sages. Most do not take Heaven and Earth as their father and mother, and most follow the human customs into which they were born. The souls of most humans do not turn to nothingness but rather become ghosts, and the next generations then follow the sacrificial practices of the day to deal with those ghosts. As we have already seen, several of the *Huainanzi* chapters not only accept that the vast majority of people will perform these sacrifices but even argue that nonsages *should* perform the sacrifices.

So, what about nonsages? If it is the case that, through self-cultivation, the sage can become autonomous from the concerns of humans about death, and can even prevent himself from becoming a ghost after death, then what about all of those humans who are not sages? And, why should they continue to perform sacrifices that the sages have transcended?

To answer these questions, I will turn next to chapter 13, “Fanlun,”—a chapter that focuses on the sages, but specifically what the sages do with nonsages.

A WORLD MADE BY SAGES

Just as in chapter 7, the sage in chapter 13 models himself on the larger cosmos, is fully autonomous from human custom, and is unconcerned with the human dead as well as with the human past. But, unlike chapter 7, chapter 13 is directly concerned with how sages deal with the rest of humanity.

One of the crucial arguments of chapter 13 is that the world of humans (and thus much of the rest of the world as well) is a product of the creations of human sages: “Sages create standards, and the myriad things are formed within them” (“Fanlun,” 13/122/15). It is sages who create the world within which the myriad things live.

To demonstrate this point, the chapter opens with a narrative of how the inventions of the sages took nonsagely humans from a world in which they lived in caves, had no clothing, and barely had enough food to survive to one in which they had all they needed to live and thrive.¹⁰

One of the keys to this celebration of innovation is that sages must be fully free from following the standards of the past so that they can be allowed to create anew whenever necessary.

Now, the Yin replaced the Xia; the Zhou replaced the Yin; the Spring and Autumn period replaced the Zhou. The rites of the three dynasties were not the same. Why should antiquity be followed? Great men create, and disciples transmit. If you understand whence standards and order arise, then you can respond to the times and change. If you do not understand the origin of standards and order, you end up in disorder even if you accord with antiquity. The standards and edicts of the current age should change with the times; the rites and propriety should be altered with customs. (“Fanlun,” 13/122/20–22)

Indeed, the text sees innovation as the key for dynastic change as well, as the previous three dynasties fell because the rulers were overly beholden to precedent, and each succeeding dynasty arose because the founding rulers were willing to innovate:

Placing a state in order has a constant: taking the benefit of the people as a basis. Correcting education has an alignment: putting commands into practice is most important. If one investigates benefiting the people, one does not necessarily imitate the ancients. If one investigates activities, one does not necessarily accord with the old. Now, as for the decline of the Xia and Shang: they did not change their standards, and they were destroyed. That the

three dynasties arose is due to their ruling without imitating their predecessors. Thus, sages set standards with the changes of time and set rites with the transformations of customs. Their clothes and utensils were each determined according to their function; the standards, the measures, the regulations, and the commands accorded with what was appropriate. Therefore, to change from the ancients is not something that can be opposed, and to accord with customs is not something that one should strive to do often. (“Fanlun,” 13/121/3–6)

Both standards and rituals, therefore, must be changed with the times, and sages must be allowed to create when necessary.

History is thus driven by the inventions of the sages, who are themselves defined as completely autonomous from the customs that previous sages created. All of humanity lives within the world created by sages, and the sages, to continue this process of inventing as necessary, are always free from that world. In other words, unlike a vision of history in which one is continuing the path laid out by one’s forebears (the normative vision emphasized in the ancestral cult), the *Huainanzi* chapter emphasizes a vision in which the sages are always free to create anew.

With rituals in particular, therefore, sages are again the creators, and they are fully autonomous from the rituals created by previous sages. Indeed, many of our rituals are simply the product of things that occurred in the past, but the sages should never be regulated by such precedents:

Duke Zhao of Lu had a nurse whom he loved. When she died, he had a cap of silk made on her behalf. Thus, there came to be mourning clothes for nurses. The lord of Yang killed the lord of Liao and took his wife. Thus, there came to be the ritual of excusing women from great feasts. When the regulations of the former kings were not appropriate, they were discarded; in the activities of the later ages, if they were good, they were promoted. This is why the rites and music have not yet begun to have constancy. Therefore, the sages instituted rites and music; they were not regulated by them. (“Fanlun,” 13/121/1–3)

Rituals hold the practitioners within them and restrict practitioners’ actions. Sages, by definition, are outside of rituals, following the Way rather than precedent:

The people regulated by the standards cannot plan far ahead; the men held by the rituals cannot respond to changes. An ear that does not pick up the distinction between clear and distorted can-

not order pitches and notes; a heart that does not understand the distance between order and disorder cannot impose regulations and standards. It is necessary to hear clearly and see clearly, for only then is one capable of acting in accord with the Way. (“Fanlun,” 13/122/15–18)

Given such concerns, one of the central issues in the chapter is how a sage can assess (*lun*) what to do, when to innovate, when to follow past practices, and so on. If no standard from the past can be assumed to be applicable to the present, then how can one know when and what to create? The basis is the “Way”:

Therefore, that which the sage follows is called the “Way”; what he does is “activities.” The Way is like metal and stone [musical] instruments: once tuned, they do not change. Activities are like the *qin* and *se*: they need to be re-tuned continuously. Therefore, standards, regulations, rituals, and propriety are the instruments for governance, but not the means by which to govern. Thus, humanness constitutes the warp, propriety constitutes the weft; this does not change in ten thousand generations. It is like the fact that one can test the abilities of the people and study the ways they can be used even though daily there are changes. Does all under Heaven have unchanging standards? If one fits with affairs of the world, obtains the patterns of man, accords with Heaven and Earth, and receives blessings from the ghosts and spirits, then one can govern. (“Fanlun,” 13/121/24–27)

Concretely, then, following the Way means fitting with the affairs of the world, understanding the patterns of the populace, and according with Heaven and Earth.

However, the list also indicates that one receives blessings from ghosts and spirits. Ghosts, as well as spirits, do exist, and rulers do indeed need their blessings. Yet how does one receive such blessings? The chapter is not explicit, but the answer would appear to be that the ghosts and spirits respond to the harmony generated by the proper ordering of the sages. In other words, all of these issues on the list are interrelated: the blessing of the ghosts and spirits occurs as one accords with Heaven and Earth, fits the times, and understands the patterns of humans.

In short, the sage does not follow precedent or past standards but instead follows the larger cosmic order:

As for the *qi* of Heaven and Earth, none is as grand as harmony. Harmony is the interchange of yin and yang, the distinction of day

and night, and the generating of things. In the period of spring things are born, and in that of autumn they are completed; they need to obtain the essence of harmony. Therefore, the way of the sages is lenient yet firm, strict yet kind, pliant yet upright, forceful yet humane. Too much hardness leads to inflexibility; too much softness leads to laxity. The sage properly resides between hardness and softness and thereby obtains the root of the Way. If one accumulates yin, one will sink; if one accumulates yang, one will rise. When yin and yang join, they are thereby able to complete harmony. (“Fanlun,” 13/122/29–13/123/2)

As in chapter 7, the sages’ reliance on the larger cosmos renders him autonomous from the demands of custom and precedent.

But why do the sages create rituals to regulate the nonsages? And, more particularly for the concerns of this essay, why do they create rituals for the dead?

When the chapter first turns to ancestral rituals, it emphasizes the point we might expect—that ancestral rituals have been changed throughout history:

In the time of the Xia, the tablet for the deceased was placed above the eastern steps; the Yin placed it between two pillars; the Zhou placed it above the western steps. The rites were not the same. Shun used earthen coffins; the Xia encircled them with stonework; the Yin used double coffins; the Zhou built a partition and arranged feathers upon it. These burial practices were not the same. The Xia sacrificed at night; the Yin sacrificed during the day; the Zhou sacrificed at dawn. These sacrifices were not the same. (“Fanlun,” 13/120/20–23.)

The chapter also emphasizes that different figures have disagreed on the proper ancestral rites:

Singing to lutes and dancing to drums so as to make music; turning, bestowing, diminishing, yielding so as to practice the rites; having lavish burials and lengthy mourning so as to send off the dead: these were established by Kongzi, but Mozi opposed them. Universal love, honoring the worthy, esteeming ghosts, opposing fatalism: these were established by Mozi, but Yangzi opposed them. Keeping one’s nature intact, protecting the authentic, not allowing things to entangle the form: these were established by Yangzi, but Mencius opposed them. In urging and rejecting, people differ, and each has an understanding mind. Thus, right and wrong have

their proper conditions. If you obtain the proper conditions, then there is no “wrong”; if you lose the proper conditions, there is no “right.” (“Fanlun,” 13/123/20–23)

Here we arrive at a crucial question. Yes, sacrificial rites have changed throughout history, and yes, immediately preceding figures have offered differing interpretations regarding proper mourning rituals. But throughout all of the changes that the chapter documents, no sage seems to have said that humans ought not practice sacrificial rituals at all. The only question is whether, for example, the sacrifices should be given during the day, during the night, or at dawn. So yes, the rituals are changed with the times; thus, as far as death is concerned, mourning rituals are changed as well. But, why were rituals for the dead created in the first place?

As do so many other chapters, chapter 13 denies that sacrifices are actually eaten by ghosts and spirits, so the means that was used at the time to win the favor of deceased and divine powers is ruled out as an effective method. But, and also as stated in other chapters, this does not mean that the sacrifices should not be undertaken:

The present age sacrifices to the well and stove, the gate and door, the basket and broom, the mortar and pestle, not because one takes their spirits as being capable of eating the sacrifices. One relies and depends on their power so that difficulties and bitterness will be stopped, and therefore one sees their power at the proper time. This is the means by which one does not forget their merit. (“Fanlun,” 13/131/6–7)

The examples here are telling. These are the tools and instruments associated with obtaining water, cooking food, and establishing households. All of these are associated with the crucial inventions of the sages to enable humans to live better, more productive lives. People sacrifice to these items not because their spirits can eat the sacrifices, but because doing so reiterates the crucial advantages that these objects bring to human activities.

This is true of sacrifices to natural objects as well:

It rams stones together and expels them, then spreads them out thinly and pulls them back together; within a morning it can cover all under Heaven with rain: this is Mount Tai. Though the earth be reddened for three years, they do not cease flowing; they moisten for a hundred miles and yet still can water the grasses and trees: these are the Yangzi and Yellow Rivers. This is why the Son of Heaven ranks them and sacrifices to them. (“Fanlun,” 13/131/7–9)

Sacrifices, whether given commonly or by the Son of Heaven, are meant to emphasize—both to the practitioner and to other humans—the power of those objects.

The same is true of sacrifices to the deceased. These are performed not to coerce dangerous ghosts but rather to emphasize to the living the significance of those who have undertaken meritorious deeds:

Therefore, if a horse has saved people from trouble, after it dies, people will bury it, using a screen as a shroud. If an ox has merit with humans, after it dies, people will bury it, using the sideboard of a great chariot as its burial mat. If oxen and horses that have merit cannot be forgotten, then how much more so with humans! This is the means by which the sages reiterate humaneness and inherit kindness. Therefore: Yandi created fire; when he died, he became the God of the Stove. Yu labored under Heaven; when he died, he became the God of the Soil. Houji created sowing and reaping; when he died, he became the God of the Grains. Yi ridded all under Heaven from harm; when he died, he became the God of the Ancestral Temple. This is the means by which ghosts and spirits were established. (“Fanlun,” 13/131/9–13)

The consequence of this argument is that the pantheon of gods sacrificed to by humanity is a product of the sages’ work. Natural forces that are significant for humanity, as well as deceased sages who produced significant inventions for humanity, are made into gods—not because the former are capricious spirits who can be coerced through offerings, and not because the latter became dangerous ghosts who needed to be controlled through sacrifice, but rather because making them into gods allows the sages to control those sorts of behaviors that cannot be controlled through written rules and texts:

Therefore, they rely on ghosts and spirits in order to make admonishments. With all of these, none could be successfully made manifest in documents, tablets, bamboo, and silk and stored in temples and archives. Therefore, they use portents and omens to make it clear. The foolish do not understand the dangers. [The sages] thereby borrow the awesomeness of ghosts and spirits in order to give voice to their teachings. (“Fanlun,” 13/131/2–3)

As we have seen, the claim that the pantheon of gods was composed of deceased humans and the spirits of natural forces would not have been surprising at the time. What would have been surprising is that neither is presented as capricious or dangerous, and that the reason the sacrifices are

helpful is not that they coerce the capricious ghosts and spirits but rather that they help guide human behavior in ways that bring about harmony in the world—and thus the blessings of ghosts and spirits. What would have been even more surprising is the claim that the sages are outside of this process. The sages created the rituals, but they themselves are not bound by them at all: sages are able to connect with ghosts and spirits through self-cultivation, not through sacrifice. They created the pantheon of popular religion as a means of celebrating themselves and training the populace in ways that would otherwise not be possible.

In short, chapter 13 is arguing that the entire world of humans is an ongoing creation of the sages. Thus, the rituals for dealing with the dead, including sacrifices, were created by the sages in order to direct the activities of nonsagely humans in ways that would lead to an orderly and harmonious world. Previous sages, therefore, are made into spirits who will then be sacrificed to by the latter-born, and the material objects invented by those sages, along with significant natural forces, will become the object of sacrifice as well.

As in the world of popular religion, in the text the pantheon of deceased humans and natural powers is domesticated, constructed, and maintained by humans. But in the “Fanlun” chapter of the *Huainanzi*, it is not sacrifices that so domesticate the powers; instead, it is the sages who name them, rank them, and create the sacrifices for them—but all in order simply to direct the activities of the populace. There is no concern here with transforming the dangerous ghosts of the deceased or with coercing the capricious powers of the spirits.

SAGES, GHOSTS, AND SPIRITS

I have argued elsewhere that the cosmology of several of the chapters of the *Huainanzi* (along with several other texts dating from the late Warring States and early Han periods) represents a reversal of that found in the dominant religious practices of the day.¹¹ In those practices, the assumption was that nature was a highly perilous and fragmented world controlled by dangerous ghosts and capricious spirits. Thus, the goal was to use sacrifices and ritual to transform and domesticate such powers into a pantheon that people hoped would act on their behalf. In several chapters of the *Huainanzi*, the aim is to recognize that, on the contrary, the world is a monistic cosmos generated by the One, which should therefore be considered the ancestor of everything. The goal is not to domesticate the recently deceased and the local spirits into a more unified pantheon but rather to cultivate oneself to become ever closer to the One.

However, here I would like to underline that this is true only for the sages—as well as for those such as the True Man who are even more refined

than the sages. For the humans beneath the sages, however, the “Fanlun” chapter of the *Huainanzi* explicitly argues that the religious practices of the day were in fact created by the sages simply to control their behavior.

In one sense, then, a generally Zhuangzian vision is being appropriated to assert a radical idea of sagehood in which the sage is fully autonomous from precedent and from norms derived from history and culture. In chapter 7, one also finds an assertion of a generally Zhuangzian vision of death in which the sage comes to view himself as part of a larger cosmos and thus does not fear his own particular death.

Yet several chapters—chapter 13 being a particularly striking example—take this strong vision of sagehood in a counterintuitive way. The sage in chapter 13 is defined as a creator, the creator of the worlds in which the myriad things grow and develop. The sages are thus the creators of customs and precedents that completely regulate the life of the nonsages. Included therein are the mortuary rituals and the pantheon of ghosts and spirits to which nonsages sacrifice.

In terms of death, this results in a two-tiered approach. The nonsages fear their own deaths, fear the ghosts of those already dead, and follow the precedents and customs of the past. In short, they live in a haunted world. In contrast, the sages do not fear death, do not become ghosts or fear those who have died previously, and are fully autonomous from the customs and precedents of the past. Although the sages are also surrounded by ghosts and spirits, they live in a distinctly unhaunted world.

GHOSTS IN EARLY CHINA

Having discussed the arguments from chapters 7 and 13 of the *Huainanzi*, it may be helpful to place these arguments in the larger debates of the time concerning death, ghosts, and sagehood.

As mentioned previously, the dominant religious practices of early China were focused on dealing with a world of capricious and potentially malevolent ghosts and spirits. The practices, therefore, involved endless sacrifices, exorcisms, and divinations. Many of our received texts from early China, however, take a distancing position from these practices.

One of the ultimately (although not immediately) influential visions was developed by the Mohists. The *Mozi* argues that ghosts do exist and do act in the world, but they are not capricious at all. On the contrary, the cosmos is fully moral and indeed was created by Heaven, a moral deity. The ghosts who populate the world are organized by Heaven into a hierarchy to dispense justice in the world, rewarding the good and punishing the bad. The goal of human sages was thus to clarify the moral order instituted and maintained by Heaven and the ghosts:

Therefore, in ancient times the sage kings made manifest and understood what Heaven and the ghosts bless and avoid what Heaven and the ghosts detest so as to increase the benefits of all under Heaven and eradicate the harms of all under Heaven. This is why Heaven made coldness and heat, placed the four seasons in rhythm, and modulated the yin and yang, the rain and dew. At the proper time the five grains ripened and the six animals prospered. Diseases, disasters, sorrows, plagues, inauspiciousness, and hunger did not arrive.¹²

Indeed, Heaven, a moral deity, created the cosmos itself in order to benefit humanity and supervise human behavior through rewarding the good and punishing the bad:

Moreover, there are ways that I [Mozi] know Heaven loves the people deeply. It shaped and made the sun, moon, stars, and constellations so as to illuminate and guide them [i.e., the people]. It formed and made the four seasons, spring, autumn, winter, and summer, so as to weave them into order. It sent down thunder, snow, frost, rain, and dew so as to make the five grains, hemp, and silk grow and prosper, and sent the people to obtain materials and benefit from them. It arranged and made mountains, streams, gorges, and valleys, and [it] distributed and bestowed the hundred affairs so as to oversee and supervise the goodness and badness of the people. It made kings, dukes, and lords and charged them with, first, rewarding the worthy and punishing the wicked, and, second, with plundering the metals, wood, birds, and beasts and working the five grains, hemp, and silk so as to make the materials for people's clothing and food.¹³

Sacrifices, therefore, are not an attempt to coerce or mollify capricious spirits. Instead, sacrifices were instituted by the sages to clarify the wishes of Heaven and the ghosts and to teach humanity obedience to these higher powers:

Therefore, if it were like this, then Heaven would send down cold and heat without moderation, snow, frost, rain, and dew at the improper time; the five grains would not grow; and the six animals would not prosper. . . . Therefore, in ancient times, the sage kings clarified what Heaven and the ghosts desire and avoided what Heaven and the ghosts detest. They thereby sought to increase the benefits of all under Heaven and push away the problems of all under Heaven. They thereby led the myriad peoples under Heaven to purify themselves, bathe, and make libations and offerings to sacrifice to Heaven and the ghosts.¹⁴

The ruler, as well as the populace, does need to gain the support of Heaven and the ghosts but does so through proper behavior, not through coercing the spirits through sacrifice.¹⁵

This vision of sages as having instituted sacrifices to Heaven and the ghosts in order to transform the behavior of humanity was also used in the sacrifice chapters of the *Book of Rites (Liji)*.¹⁶ In these chapters, the capricious and potentially malevolent nature of the ghosts and spirits is downplayed as well, but not out of a claim that ghosts and spirits are, contrary to common belief, part of a moral, regularized hierarchy of divine powers. The goal instead is to shift the focus to the effect of rituals on their practitioners. The argument is that humans should sacrifice to ghosts and spirits, as well as (if one is a ruler) Heaven and Earth, but not in order to coerce or manipulate ghosts, nor to teach humans to obey the will of a moral Heaven and set of ghosts. Instead, the purpose was to transform the dispositions of the practitioners, teaching them to respect that from which they arose, to accept proper hierarchy, and to have proper feelings toward one another.

For example, the “Jiyi” chapter argues that “ghosts” and “spirits” are the names given to the earthly soul (*po*) and vital energy (*qi*) of the deceased, respectively:

Zai Wo said: “I have heard the names ‘ghosts’ and ‘spirits,’ but I do not know what they mean.” The Master said: “*Qi* is the flourishing of spirit; the earthly soul (*po*) is the flourishing of the ghost. . . . Everything that is born will die. When one dies, one returns to the ground. This was called the ‘ghost.’ The bones and flesh wither below; hidden, they become the earth of the fields. Their *qi* is sent out above; it becomes radiant brightness. According with the essence of things, instituting the pivot of action, [the sages] clearly named ‘ghosts’ and ‘spirits,’ taking them as a pattern for the black-haired people. The populace was thereby awed, and the myriad people thereby submitted.”¹⁷

Moreover, these terms, and the entire system of ancestral worship, were created by the sages in order to bring order to the populace:

The sages took this as still insufficient, so they constructed dwellings and houses and set up temples and ancestral halls. They thereby differentiated closer and more distant kinship, and closer and farther removed in terms of descent. [The sages] taught the people to turn to the past and look back to the beginning, no longer forgetting where they came from. The populace submitted to this and therefore obeyed with greater urgency.¹⁸

Sacrifices to the ghosts and spirits were then established to improve the behavior of those still alive:

When these two ends were established, they responded with two rituals. They set up the morning service, burning fat and manifesting it with the radiance of [burning] southernwood. They thereby responded to the *qi*. This taught the populace to return to the beginning. They offered millet and rice and served liver, lungs, head, and heart, presenting them and separating them into two bowls, and supplementing them with sacrificial wine. They thereby responded to the earthly souls (*po*). This taught the people to love one another and taught superiors and inferiors to utilize their dispositions. This was the utmost of ritual.¹⁹

In many ways, the arguments of these chapters are closer to the practices of the day than the Mohist arguments: instead of claiming that the world of Heaven and ghosts is already arrayed in a moral hierarchy, the emphasis here is on the claim that the rituals are transformative in shifting ghosts into ancestors. As in popular practice, but very much unlike the theory of the Mohists, the hierarchy of the divine world is a product of human ritual. Unlike popular practice, however, the emphasis here is less on using sacrifice to transform ghosts into (hopefully) supportive ancestors and more on refining the dispositions of the human participants such that they think of ghosts as ancestors and thus come to appreciate the importance of hierarchy and the past.

Unlike the Mohist chapters, which strongly assert that ghosts and spirits do exist, the sacrifice chapters of the *Book of Rites* say little about the ontological status of those things the sages deemed “ghosts” and “spirits.” The hope would presumably be that all participants in the rituals (including, therefore, the recipients of the sacrifices) would come to think in filial terms—with the ghosts’ truly acting toward the descendants as ancestors should (i.e., giving benefit, not harm), just as the living would be filial toward the ghosts. Some passages seem to imply that this is indeed the case. The “Biao ji” chapter, for example, emphasizes that sacrifice results in a proper ordering of both the ghosts and the living: “The Master said, ‘As for the sacrificial victims, ritual, and music being properly arranged and flourishing, this is the means by which there is no harm from the ghosts and spirits and no resentment from the hundred families.’”²⁰ However, the primary focus of the chapters is less on the recipients of the sacrifice and much more on altering the dispositions of the living participants.

All of these arguments in the sacrifice chapters of the *Book of Rites* concerning the degree to which the entire world of ancestral sacrifice was a

creation of sages to bring order to humanity are very similar to the claims in chapter 13 of the *Huainanzi*. But there is a significant difference with many of the *Huainanzi* chapters. If the sacrifice chapters of the *Book of Rites* are relatively uninterested in focusing on the recipients of sacrifice, this is not true of the *Huainanzi* chapters: the *Huainanzi* chapters do assert that the cosmos is ruled by spirits, and it is filled with ghosts as well (even though the ghosts are notably nonmalevolent). This is crucial since—building on the previously mentioned self-divinization literature—several chapters argue that humans can, through self-cultivation, gain many of the same powers as spirits, can become spirits themselves, and can ultimately even become more powerful than the spirits.

Like the *Mozi*, then, the *Huainanzi* chapters do assert that ghosts and spirits exist and that they indeed organized the cosmos. Also like the *Mozi*, ghosts and spirits are not capricious creatures that one must try to coerce through sacrifices and divination. And, again, like the *Mozi*, a ruler must gain the support of the ghosts and spirits in order to rule effectively; this is done through proper action, not through coercive sacrifices. Sacrifices are defended, but not because they coerce and transform capricious spirits, but rather because they help to inculcate proper behavior.

Thus, although the text opposes the nonsagely view of ghosts and spirits (that they are capricious creatures one must try to coerce through sacrifices and divination), the text does assert that they exist, that a sage's harmonious rule gains their support, and that a True Man can in fact control the ghosts directly. The key here, though, is that sages (and anyone who cultivates himself beyond the level of sage, into becoming a True Man) do not seem to become ghosts because their souls return to nothing. Thus, the ghosts are the dead of nonsagely humans who continue to haunt the nonsagely living, while the sages are fully autonomous from this world of ghosts—both in the sense that they do not themselves become ghosts after death and in the sense that they are not haunted by the past deeds of humanity.

The sages, then, live in a world very comparable to that seen in the self-divinization literature: a world of autonomy from both the precedents and rules of humanity and the caprices of the ghosts and spirits. They follow the patterns of the cosmos, but they do so spontaneously. For the rest of humanity, however, the sages create mortuary rituals directly comparable to those seen in the sacrifice chapters of the *Book of Rites*. And, for the nonsages, the world they live in is very much one like that described by the Mohists: a world filled with ghosts and spirits, but not capricious ones, to whom humans are called upon to undertake constant rituals and sacrifices.

This debate that we have sketched concerning sages, ghosts, and the nature of the cosmos indicates the significant weight given to concerns about death and ghosts in early China. Most religious practices of the day were concerned with ghosts as well as other potentially malevolent spirits,

and the various positions sketched here are involved with defining humans in relation to these practices—the Mohist concern with claiming that such ghosts are, contrary to common views, part of a moral pantheon created and organized by a benevolent deity; the concern in the *Book of Rites* with transforming the relationship of the living to the ghosts; the concern in the self-divinization literature with attaining autonomy from the world of ghosts; and the concern in the *Huainanzi* chapters with embracing portions of all these positions.

All of these arguments, however, are made against a background defined by the absolute pervasiveness of the religious practice of the day—practices concerned with pacifying the capricious and highly dangerous ghosts of the dead. The question for all of these texts, then, is what attitude one should take toward such practices.

HISTORY

The chapters from the *Huainanzi* under discussion here posit a bifurcated cosmology in which the sages practice self-cultivation techniques to gain full autonomy from the world of humans while also creating rituals and regulations to organize the rest of humanity. Historically, such a vision would come to have great significance. The *Huainanzi* was, of course, an imperial text. It was commissioned by Liu An, the uncle of Han Wudi, and certainly supported the maintenance of a powerful empire ruled by the Liu clan. As we know, Liu An's vision for the empire ultimately failed to win the day. Han Wudi went on to build a highly centralized empire under a very different set of claims, and Liu An himself was charged with treason. Later, at the end of the Western Han, the vision of the *Book of Rites* became crucial at court, and the text would be designated as one of the Five Classics. The *Huainanzi* was, to say the least, out of favor in imperial circles.

The vision seen in the *Huainanzi* accordingly came to be seen as, in a sense, a road not taken by the empire. As such, the vision would eventually be appropriated—with significant changes of course—by later movements hoping to make a claim for building a different type of empire than the one that ultimately came to dominate the Han. A possible example of this was the Celestial Masters, a movement that began in the second century C.E. and would ultimately become a major influence on later Daoist movements.²¹ One of the texts associated with the Celestial Masters, the *Xiang'er* commentary to the *Laozi*, probably written in the second century C.E.,²² makes a very comparable argument in which the population should continue to perform sacrifices to ghosts while the sages should instead focus on self-cultivation, refining the spirits within their body, and ultimately working to achieve transcendence.²³

Intriguingly, however, the *Xiang'er* commentary roots this bifurcated world within a cosmology directly reminiscent of the Mohists': the cosmos is ruled by a moral deity (called "the Way" by the *Xiang'er*, "Heaven" by the Mohists) who created the cosmos in general and who presides over a moral pantheon in which Heaven and the spirits reward the good and punish the bad. Indeed, death itself was established by the Way as a punishment to those who fail to follow its precepts. Those who do follow the precepts of the Way, on the contrary, are rewarded with long life.²⁴

The Way established life in order to reward the good and established death in order to punish the bad. As for death, this is what all men fear. The transcendent rulers and nobles, like the common people, know fear of death and enjoyment of life; it is what they practice that is different. . . . Although the common people fear death, they do not try to trust in the Way, and they enjoy committing bad acts. Is it surprising that they are not yet trying to escape from death? The transcendent nobles fear death, trust in the Way, and hold fast to the precepts. Therefore, they join with life.²⁵

Those who do follow the admonitions of the Way will behave properly and will also undertake practices of self-divinization very comparable to those found in texts such as the *Huainanzi*—they will accumulate essences, complete spirits, and thereby live long:

Humans should only preserve their bodies; they should not love their bodies. What does this mean? By maintaining the admonitions of the Way, we accumulate goodness and complete accomplishments; accumulate essences and complete spirits. When spirits are completed, the transcendent live long. This is why we treasure our bodies.²⁶

For the *Xiang'er*, then, death is associated with losing the Way, and those who instead follow the precepts of the Way can become transcendent nobles and live long. Since they turn away from the world of death, they also turn away from the world of sacrifices to the dead: "Those who practice the Way live; those who lose the Way die. The correct method of Heaven does not reside in sacrificing, praying, and offering. The Way therefore forbade sacrifices, prayers, and offerings."²⁷

The rest of humanity, however, will use their essences not to complete spirits but rather to reproduce. Since the Way needs more humans—some of whom will follow the precepts and complete spirits—it accepts that this is necessary. These people, of course, will die, and the Way accepts that ancestral sacrifices will need to be performed for them. In fact, it was actu-

ally the Way that created ancestral sacrifices for those who will not become transcendent nobles:

Now this [copulating to reproduce] produces great calamities. Why did the Way create (*zao*) it? The Way values ancestral sacrifices and values that the species does not end. It desires that humans join their essences and generate life; therefore, [the Way] teaches it. . . . However, humans with utmost power . . . are able to not unite and produce life. From a young age they stop this [i.e., the losing of their essences through copulation], and they are able to complete good spirits earlier. These are called the essences of the Way. Thus, Heaven and Earth have no sacrifices, dragons no offspring, transcendents no wives, the Jade Maiden no husband.²⁸

Such an argument is a fascinating blend of many of the positions previously outlined. Like the *Huainanzi*, the *Xiang'er* commentary makes a distinction between the majority of people, who perform ancestral sacrifices to the dead and then in turn die themselves, and those who instead practice techniques of cultivating spirits and thus transcend both death and the world of ancestral sacrifices. But unlike the *Huainanzi's* celebration of the autonomy of those who so transcend the world of death, the *Xiang'er* instead asserts a cosmology directly reminiscent of the Mohists', in which the Way becomes—like Heaven for the Mohists—a deity who governs the cosmos, rewarding the good and punishing the bad. Indeed, for the *Xiang'er*, it was the Way itself—not human sages—that created ancestral sacrifices. And for those hoping to transcend the world of death, the path was to follow the precepts of the Way, thus completing the spirits that would help the Way to bring harmony to the cosmos.

Thus, for the *Xiang'er*, it was a moral deity that created the type of social hierarchy seen in the *Huainanzi* chapters: the Way called upon the sages to cultivate the spirits within them, but they did so in order to generate spirits that would then help to bring harmony to the cosmos. Ultimately, these practitioners could achieve immortality while the remainder of the populace would continue to form families, procreate, die, and become ghosts for which their descendants would perform ancestral sacrifices. Such a claim concerning a moral deity overseeing both the cosmos and all humans within it dramatically limits the types of autonomy supported in self-divinization texts such as the *Huainanzi* and instead asserts the forms of hierarchy seen so strongly among the Mohists. Here, we see yet another example of the endless permutations that will recur in these attempts by movements in early and early medieval China to define themselves in relationship to current religious practices—in the case at hand, supporting arguments comparable to those in the *Huainanzi* concerning the importance of a group of people

asserting autonomy from the world of death and ancestral sacrifice but then also appealing to a cosmology comparable to the Mohists' in order to restrict the degree of autonomy such figures themselves would be allowed to exercise.

In short, what one sees in the *Huainanzi* chapters under discussion is the beginning of something that will become very common in later Daoist movements, with Daoist practitioners seeking autonomy from the religious practices of the rest of the populace—most of which will continue to be devoted to pacifying, coercing, and manipulating the ghosts of the deceased. But the ultimate cosmology of these early Daoist movements will involve an assertion of a creator deity and a moral bureaucracy directly reminiscent of the Mohists', instead of the claims of autonomy characteristic of the *Huainanzi*.

CONCLUSION

In the haunted world of early China, one approach was to transform ghosts into beneficial (one hoped) ancestors. Another was to claim that ghosts are, on the contrary, embedded in a moral pantheon that rewards the good and punishes the bad. Yet another approach was to seek to step outside such a process altogether—not worship ghosts, not become a ghost oneself—and instead seek some form of self-divinization. What is particularly fascinating about the *Huainanzi* chapters under discussion here is that they attempted to assert portions of each of these positions—to have a world of nonsages undertaking sacrifices to (relatively nonmalevolent) ghosts and also a world of sages (as well as those even more refined) claiming full autonomy from such sacrifices. If such a system was never to win the day at the Han court, a version of it would later become highly important among the Celestial Masters and thereafter among numerous self-proclaimed Daoist movements that would also connect to this vision a hierarchical cosmology highly reminiscent of the Mohists' position.

Ghosts, in short, were so pervasive in early China that one either endlessly performed rituals to control them, endlessly attempted to embed them in larger moral pantheons, or endlessly worked instead to gain full autonomy from the world they haunted. A substantial portion of the cultural, intellectual, and religious history of early and early medieval China can be written in terms of these permutations on the never-ending attempts to deal with the world of ghosts.

NOTES

1. For notions of death in early China, see Mu-chou Poo, *In Search of Personal Welfare: A View of Ancient Chinese Religion* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998); Constance A. Cook, *Death in Ancient China: The Tale of One Man's*

Journey (Leiden: Brill, 2006); Anna Seidel, "Traces of Han Religion in Funeral Texts Found in Tombs," in *Dōkyō to shūkyō bunka*, ed. Akitsuki Kan'ei (Tokyo: Hirakawa, 1987): 21–57; Michael Puett, "The Offering of Food and the Creation of Order: The Practice of Sacrifice in Early China," in *Of Tripod and Palate: Food, Politics, and Religion in Traditional China*, ed. Roel Sterckx (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005), 75–95; Puett, "Human and Divine Kingship in Early China: Comparative Reflections," in *Divine Kingship in the Ancient World*, ed. Nicole Brisch (Chicago: Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 2008), 199–212.

2. Ying-Shih Yu, "'O Soul, Come Back!' A Study in the Changing Conceptions of the Soul and Afterlife in Pre-Buddhist China," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 47.2 (1987): 363–395. K. E. Brashier has argued that, contrary to the textual tradition, both the *hun* and *po* were seen as normatively residing in the tomb while only the spirit would float to the heavens. See his outstanding article, "Han Thanatology and the Division of 'Souls,'" *Early China* 21 (1996): 125–158.

3. On ghosts in early China, see Mu-chou Poo, "The Concept of Ghost in Ancient Chinese Religion," in *Religion and Chinese Society*, ed. John Lagerwey (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 2004), 173–191; Poo, "Imperial Order and Local Variation: The Culture of Ghost in Early Imperial China," *Acta Orientalia* 56 (2003): 295–308.

4. Seidel, "Traces of Han Religion in Funeral Texts Found in Tombs."

5. *Huainanzi*, Chinese University of Hong Kong, Institute of Chinese Studies, Ancient Chinese Text Concordance Series (Hong Kong: Commercial Press, 1992), "Dixing," 4/34/26 (hereafter, most citations of this text will appear in parentheses within the current text). Here and throughout, my translations have been aided by those given in *The Huainanzi: A Guide to the Theory and Practice of Government in Early Han China*, by John S. Major, Sarah A. Queen, Harold D. Roth, and Andrew Meyer, with additional contributions by Michael Puett and Judson Murray (forthcoming). My overall understanding of the *Huainanzi* has been helped greatly by Judson Murray, "The Way and the Sage in Early Han Thought: Cosmology, Self Cultivation, and Rulership in the *Huainanzi*" (Ph.D. diss., Brown University, 2007); Griet Vankeerbergen, *The Huainanzi and Liu An's Claim to Moral Authority* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001); Sarah A. Queen, "Inventories of the Past: Rethinking the 'School' Affiliation of the *Huainanzi*," *Asia Major*, 3rd ser., 14.1 (2001): 51–72; Judson Murray, "A Study of 'Yaolue,' 'A Summary of the Essentials': Understanding the *Huainanzi* from the Point of View of the Author of the Postface," *Early China* 29 (2004): 45–108.

6. John Major, *Heaven and Earth in Early Han Thought: Chapters Three, Four, and Five of the Huainanzi* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993), 48.

7. My overall understanding of chapter 7 of the *Huainanzi* has been aided greatly by Harold Roth, "Psychology and Self-Cultivation in Early Taoistic Thought," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 51.2 (1991): 599–650.

8. Michael Puett, *To Become a God: Cosmology, Sacrifice, and Self-Divinization in Early China* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center, 2002), 259–286.

9. Griet Vankeerbergen, *The Huainanzi and Liu An's Claim to Moral Authority* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001).

10. Michael Puett, *The Ambivalence of Creation: Debates concerning Innovation and Artifice in Early China* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2001),

159–166; Puett, “The Belatedness of the Present: Debates over Antiquity during the Han Dynasty,” forthcoming in *Perceptions of Antiquity in China’s Civilization*, ed. Dieter Kuhn and Helga Stahl.

11. Puett, *To Become a God*, 145–200, 259–286, 317–319.

12. Mozi, “Tianzhi, zhong,” *Sibu beiyao* ed., 7.6a–b.

13. Mozi, “Tianzhi, zhong,” *Sibu beiyao* ed., 7.6b–7a.

14. Mozi, “Shangtong, zhong,” *Sibu beiyao* ed., 3.5a–b.

15. For a fuller discussion of these passages from the *Mozi*, see Puett, *The Ambivalence of Creation*, 51–56; *To Become a God*, 101–104.

16. See Puett, “The Offering of Food and the Creation of Order”; Puett, “Human and Divine Kingship in Early China”; Puett, “Combining the Ghosts and Spirits, Centering the Realm: Mortuary Ritual and Political Organization in the Ritual Compendia of Early China,” in *Early Chinese Religion: Shang through Han (1250 BC–220 AD)*, ed. John Lagerwey and Marc Kalinowski (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 695–720.

17. *Liji*, “*Ji yi*,” ICS, 126/25/24–27.

18. *Liji*, “*Ji yi*,” ICS, 126/25/28.

19. *Liji*, “*Ji yi*,” ICS, 126/25/29.

20. *Liji*, “*Biao ji*,” ICS, 151.33.27.

21. Ōfuchi Ninji 大淵忍爾, *Shoki no dōkyō* 初期の道教 (Tokyo: Sōbunsha, 1991); Terry Kleeman, *Great Perfection: Religion and Ethnicity in a Chinese Millennial Kingdom* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 1998).

22. For excellent studies of the *Xiang’er* commentary, see Rao Zongyi 饒宗頤, *Laozi Xiang’er zhu jiaojian* 老子想爾注校箋 (Shanghai: Guji chubanshe, 1991); Ōfuchi, *Shoki no dōkyō*; Stephen Bokenkamp, “Traces of Early Celestial Master Physiological Practice in the *Xiang’er* Commentary,” *Taoist Resources* 4.2 (December 1993): 37–51; Bokenkamp, *Early Daoist Scriptures* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 29–77; William G. Boltz, “The Religious and Philosophical Significance of the ‘Hsiang Erh’ Lao-tzu in Light of the Ma-wang-tui Silk Manuscripts,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 45 (1982): 95–117.

23. Michael Puett, “Forming Spirits for the Way: The Cosmology of the *Xiang’er* Commentary to the *Laozi*,” *Journal of Chinese Religions* 32 (2004): 1–27.

24. My translations of the *Xiang’er* commentary have been aided immeasurably by the outstanding translation given by Stephen Bokenkamp in *Early Daoist Scriptures*, 78–148.

25. *Xiang’er*, lines 299–303. I follow Bokenkamp in referencing the line number of the commentary as given in the photographic copy of the manuscript in Ōfuchi Ninji 大淵忍爾, *Tonkō dōkyō: Zurokuhen* 敦煌道經：圖錄編 (Tokyo: Fukutake, 1979), 421–434.

26. *Xiang’er*, lines 161–163.

27. *Xiang’er*, lines 374–375.

28. *Xiang’er*, lines 57–63.