

The Tale of Meng Jiangnü: Its Salvation Theme and Ritual Function

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Introduction: The Religious Functional Dynamism of the Tale

The tale of Meng Jiangnü 孟姜女, who in search for her husband, Qi Liang 杞梁, ends up toppling the Great Wall with her weeping upon finding him dead, is the most popular folk story in China. The modern academic research done on the tale, beginning with Gu Jiegang 顧頡剛's pioneering work in 1924 discussing its importance, has covered with relative sufficiency many aspects, including the tale's literary tradition, its spread and thematic ideas.¹⁾ Utilizing the paradigm of folktale study, Gu employs the methodology of historical positivism to identify two original versions of the tale, "the elegy of Qi Liang's wife" and "a story about Meng Zhongzi dripping her blood on dead bones to identify those of her husband," circulating during the Tang Period, simultaneously, but independently, then being synthesized during the middle of the period in the *Diaoyuji* 瑯玉集 (Carved jade collection) as a new tale about the Great Wall.

Gu then sites the piece composed by late Tang Buddhist poet Guan Xiu 貫休 (832–912) entitled *Qi Liang Qi* 杞梁妻 (Qi Liang's wife) as "another important key to understanding the tale," and concludes,

The poem opened a new era of many legends concerning the death of Fan Lang 范郎 in the building of the Great Wall by the Qin Dynasty, based on the many legends related to Qi Liang's death in battle during the Spring and Autumn period. After this poem, the Great Wall and the married couple of Meng and Fan became inseparable within the literature.

Gu also points to the historical background to the sudden change in the tale, indicating a Tang society ravaged by war after war and in urgent need of defending its borders, conjuring up "feelings of sorrow for husbands who left home never to return" among all of its people.²⁾

Guan Xiu's *Qi Liang Qi* reads as follows:

The Qin lost the Way and its world withered.
 It built a great wall to protect it from the northern hordes.
 Barricade after barricade of earth and men stretching mile after mile.
 It was here that the faithful wife of Qi Liang wept,
 With no father to preside above her, no husband at her side,
 No children at her feet, all alone, so alone!
 She wailed and the wall came tumbling down, as the winter air grew
 ever bitter.
 She wailed again and the bones of Qi Liang appeared from the rubble.
 Weary souls and starving spirits alike all eventually return home.
 You young men on the roadway! Your fate will probably be no dif-
 ferent!³⁾

The lament of Qi Liang's wife, Meng Jiangnü, at the foot of the Great Wall "with no father to preside over me, no husband at my side, no children at my feet, all alone, so all alone," would express the sentiment of tens of thousands of women similarly widowed during the turbulent times of Tang China. However, relatively little attention has been drawn in the research to the fact that the haunting soul "left all alone, so alone" was really Qi Liang rather than Meng Jiangnü.

An entry for the 7th year of Zhaogong 昭公 (535 BC) in *Chunqiu Zuoshizhuan* 春秋左氏傳 tells of Zichan 子產, a leading statesmen of the Zheng 鄭, who upon appointing a descendant as successor to Boyou 伯有, who had been killed in an internecine feud 8 years previous in 543 BC, was successful in finally putting Boyou's vengeful soul (*ligui* 厲鬼) to rest. Zichan then explains how such vengeful souls appear. "When normal men and women suffered violent and/or untimely deaths, their *hun* 魂 and *po* 魄 can still attach to the living and became licentious demons (*yinli* 淫厲)" (匹夫匹婦強死, 其魂魄猶能馮依於人, 以爲淫厲). Here the term "violent and/or untimely death" (*qiangsi* 強死) refers to death by unnatural causes. In the words of Zichan, "when such a soul finds its resting place, it ceases to torment the living as a *ligui*." All souls of the dead must receive the proper offerings at the proper time, in order to avoid any chance of them becoming tormenting *ligui*.

In this sense Qi Liang was the epitome of such a vengeful soul. To begin with, he had no offspring, which is defined by the thesaurus, *Xiao Erya* 小爾雅, as a soul with no descendents to perform the lasting ancestral

worship rites which will turn into a *shang* 殤. Moreover, Qi Liang was the innocent victim of a sudden, unnatural death, and since he died for his country building the Great Wall, he was like any soldier who died by the sword on the battlefield with no one but the state to mourn him, a national martyr (*guoshang* 國殤). Still more importantly, Qi Liang died thousands of miles from his homeland, buried within the ramparts of the Great Wall with no one to retrieve his bones and allow his vengeful soul to receive the funeral rites for salvation.

If we consider the world of life and death in traditional Chinese society in the light of what is in the realm of *yin* 陰 being at rest and what is in the world of *yang* 陽 as being joyful, such a vengeful soul as Qi Liang would no doubt be searching for succor and peace through funereal rites and properly timed offerings in order to ultimately exist without having to reek torment and calamity upon the world of the *yang* living. Since the Six Dynasties period (220–585) beliefs pertaining to *ligui* have given rise to innumerable rites and ceremonies forming the nucleus of Chinese shamanism, including those involving incantation, exorcism and pacification.⁴⁾

Furthermore, the character of Qi Liang, as the “all alone, so alone” protagonist of the tale of Meng Jiangnü, finds its origins in the religious ideas about *ligui* in China and has appeared from that time on as a *ligui* in danger of causing harm to the world of the living, forming the religious themes and narrative motivation for stage plays and Tang transformation texts (*bianwen* 變文) taking up the subject of Meng Jiangnü. That is to say, the performance of the tale would go a step further than mere drama to bring appeasement and salvation to souls of the dead, thus forming the foundation of a widespread popular belief circulation about this tale.

The task of reexamining the tale of Meng Jiangnü from a religious viewpoint should enable one to bring out themes of religious narrative that have been disguised by the discourse of literary figures. For example, concerning “Meng Jiangnü Bianwen” 孟姜女變文⁵⁾ (Pelliot Chinois Manuscripts #5039; hereafter P. 5039),⁶⁾ which is the starting point of the discussion to be developed in the present article, many researchers have been satisfied to place it in the context of the development of a folkloristic variant of the tale’s literary theme with only a modicum of analysis, which ignores completely the socio-religious situation reflected in the text. It was in 1928 that Gu Jiegang copied P. 5039 and made the following evaluation.

The tale told in this text is generally similar to what was transmitted in later ages. The first part tells of the lost soul of Qi Liang and the second part laments the dead skull crying for the absence of anyone to claim his corpse. However, the scene of a living being and a dead soul coming into contact and conversing together here is something not encountered in any other text.⁷⁾

It was at that time that Gu not only mobilized a group of folklorists throughout China to collect the funeral hymns attributed to Meng Jiangnū, which became *Kuqigici* 哭七七詞,⁸⁾ but also argued that these hymns to bury one's husband were sentiments that had developed upon norms mentioned in the *Li Ji* 禮記's *Tangong* 壇弓 section account of "Mourning Qi Liang with Bitter Tears" in the Confucian custom of reaching an emotional state of complete sadness then sending off the deceased in songs and tears. However, Gu concludes, none of them contained accounts of the "spiritual other world" where living beings and dead souls consort. Gu's finding that P. 5039 was something very different from any other genre of the tale was not only recognized at the time by such dramatic arts researchers as Qian Nanyang 錢南揚 and Zhao Jingshen 趙景深, but even today in the study and debate over the various texts of the tale, no one would dispute Gu's conclusion.

In his book, *A History of Chinese Theatre*, Tanaka Issei 田仲一成 refers to the fact that the Dunhuang *bianwen* text of Meng Jiangnū was influenced by Buddhist ceremonies adopted by secular *sheyi* 社邑 communities in the region during the late Tang period and that rites directed at dead spirits and orphan souls were incorporated into *she* spring (rainmaking) and fall (thanksgiving) festivals.⁹⁾ Such an excellent insight has helped return Dunhuang literature back to within the context of religious ceremony conducted in local society and has added impetus to interpreting literary works from such multi-dimensional aspects as religion, dramatic arts and social history.

Of the scripts for ritual dramas of the *nuoxi* 傩戲 genre regarding the tale of Meng Jiangnū, which since the 1980s have been discovered all over China and cataloged, not a few contain religious content related to the salvation of orphan souls and are very helpful in understanding the religious background of Dunhuang P. 5039. By confirming the link between the ritual functions of the Dunhuang fragment and regional ritual drama, we now understand that the religious theme of salvation for orphan souls contained in the tale of Meng Jiangnū has survived now for over at least

a millennium.

1. The Place of “Meng Jiangnü *Bianwen*” in Literary Encounters with Dead Souls

The first part of Meng Jiangnü *Bianwen* P. 5039 has been lost. Its extant portion may be summarized as Meng Jiangnü delivering quilted winter clothing to the border, where the dead soul of Qi Liang appears before her. After reading a memorial (*jiwen* 祭文) to the dead, Meng sets off for home with his bones strapped to her back. The content of the extant text can be divided into two parts.

1) Part I: A conversation ensues between Meng and the dead soul of Qi Liang.

For fourteen lines of seven-character verses from Qi Liang: “I’m so grateful for your delivering winter clothing” (□貴珍重送寒衣) to: “The poor, ignorant foot soldier buried here will always remember his wife” (貧兵地下長相憶), Qi laments in soliloquy fashion the fate by which “my soul is gone, my life is over, dead within these walls” (魂消命盡塞垣亡). After hearing the account of her husband’s dead soul, a monologue ensues with Meng crying, “Your young life ended at this wall without me knowing!” (不知君在長城天) and ending in “And her cries toppled the Wall” (大哭即得長城倒), in which we find her lament, descriptive lines provided by the author and also words of praise in old-style five-character verses regarding Meng’s unusual strength and will to struggle.

2) Part II: Meng spills her blood to identify the bones of her husband, speaks with skulls and prays for their dead souls.

From “And she stopped weeping” (哭之已畢) to “Of his three hundred some odd bones, not one was out of place” (三百餘分, 不少一支), the author describes how Meng bit her finger to draw blood and went about finding her husband’s bones, depicting such horrible scenes as “innumerable skulls, so many dead, their bones strewn everywhere” (髑髏無數, 死人非一, 骸骨縱橫) in four-character verse in the form of third-person narration. This is followed by another soliloquy in seven-character verses, in which Meng, calling herself “this wretched woman,” in tears laments why the heavens have chosen to defy natural human emotions and not allow a husband and wife to die in each other’s arms.

At the moment when Meng’s blood leads her to Qi’s bones, the text turns to another theme.

But there were still many dead skulls left and no one to transport them. The woman cried in anguish, turned to them and said,

“There are so many of you!
Where are you all from?
Since I will be taking my husband’s bones back,
I’ll tell of your whereabouts.
Since you seem to have souls,
It is my duty to lead you to paradise.

The dead skulls had been asked their opinion. Being that it was now possible for their whereabouts to be reported back home, their souls replied to Qi Liang’s wife,...

更有數箇髑髏，無人搬運，姜女悲啼，向前借問
如許髑髏，佳俱 [家居] 何郡，因取夫回，爲君傳信，君若有神，兒當接引。
髑髏旣蒙問事意，已得傳言達故里，魂靈答應杞梁妻....

Since Chen Lin 陳琳’s *Yinma Changchengku Xing* 飲馬長城窟行 (Watering my horse at the caves of the Great Wall: In Xing style for musical accompaniment) written during the Eastern Han’s Jian’an 建安 era (196–220), poetry about the Great Wall has frequently described scenes of “skeletons of the dead heaped one upon the other.” However, such literary description portrays dead skulls of the Great Wall’s builders as inanimate, which is fundamentally different from P.5039. The latter expresses a very characteristic scene of the orphan souls of the builders conversing with living beings.

This kind of skull equipped with consciousness of self dates back to the “Zhi-Le” 至樂 section of *Zhuangzi* 莊子.¹⁰⁾ There Zhuangzi meets a dead skull and asks it how it died. Then the same skull appears in Zhuangzi’s dream that night to answer. In reaction to the skull’s answer, Zhuangzi argues that “one should look forward to death and regret having been born.”

Zhang Heng 張衡’s Eastern Han piece, “Dulou Fu” 髑髏賦 (Lyric essay on dead skulls), Cao Zhi 曹植’s Three Kingdoms period piece, “Dulou Shuo” 髑髏說 (Discourse on dead skulls), and of course the later drama of “Zhuangzi Laments a Dead Skeleton” 莊子嘆骷髏 are all based on this theme.¹¹⁾ In “Dulou Fu” the dead skull which Zhang Heng encounters possesses a conscious soul (*shen* 神), which exits the skull to converse.

“Then the soul of the skull solemnly appeared, but had no form, only sound” (於是肅然有靈，但聞神響，不見其形). As the dialogue comes to an end, the sound vanishes and the soul’s aura gradually fades, leaving only a mute dead skull lying before the author.¹²⁾ In “Dulou Shuo,” the author taps the dead skeleton, gasping, and is grief-stricken that no soul resided in the white bones. Consequently, in a dream that night, the dead skull becomes possessed by a spirit and appears ever so vaguely, scolding in a rough voice.¹³⁾

Souls slipping out of dead skulls and conversing with the living is a theme that also appears in *bianwen* P. 5039. Meng Jiangnü turns to the dead skulls among the rubble of the Great Wall and assures them, “If your souls have not yet departed, I will take them to their homes.” Hearing this, souls appear from the skulls and reply,

We were all sons of renowned families, but the Qin conscripted us in the building of the Great Wall. We could not endure the hardship, and all of us perished. Our corpses, exposed to the elements, lying on the yellow sand of the desert spring after spring, winter after winter, without anyone knowing our whereabouts. Tell our wives who grieve and bemoan their fate in their boudoirs, “Please take it upon yourselves not to forget to summon our souls and make offerings.” Always remember these words, so you can tell our mothers and fathers, if you ever happen to meet them.

我等竝是名家子，被秦差充築城卒，辛苦不襟 [禁] 俱歿死，鋪屍野外斷知聞，春冬鎮臥黃沙裏，爲報閨中哀怨人，努力招魂存祭祀，此言爲記在心懷，見我耶 [爺] 孃方便說。

Many of the ancient texts regarding such matters begin with horrible scenes of dead skulls thrown away and abandoned in some god-forsaken place. For example, in Zhang Heng’s “Dulou Fu” we find “one glance at the skull revealed that it had been thrown by the wayside onto the mud to be covered over by murky frost” (顧見髑髏，委于路旁，下居淤壤，上負玄霜).¹⁴⁾ And Cao Zhi’s “Dulou Shuo” states, “How lonely this empty sunken world, the path one walks so dark, each step blocked from making headway. Looking back at all the dead skulls and finding yourself completely alone” (蕭條潛虛，經幽踐阻，顧見髑髏，塊然獨居).¹⁵⁾ Such literary images overlap those of the dead skulls in P. 5039 being exposed to the elements, lying on the yellow sand of the desert for years without anyone knowing

their whereabouts. This image of being alone sprawled out on the desert is ever present in the literature of the Song and Yuan periods (960–1368). For example, Huang Tingjian 黃庭堅's (1042–1105) "Dulou Song" 髑髏頌 (Ode to a dead skull), reads,

This dead skull dried out and rotting in the desert may have once had a countenance as fair as a peach.

But now one cannot bear to look upon it, although we all would want to gaze upon such a figure in the day.

黃沙枯髑髏，本是桃李面，而今不忍看，當時恨不見。¹⁶⁾

In a lyric written by Wang Chongyang 王重陽, the founder of the Quanzhen 全真 Sect of Daoism, we find this scene,

On a rambling walk to go as they please,
Strolling into the abandoned outskirts west of town,
I encountered dead skeletons there,
which had fallen and lay in heaps upon the sand bar.

縱步閑閑，遊翫出郊西，見骷髏臥，臥臥沙堤。¹⁷⁾

As the research done to date has already indicated, in such works as Zen poetry from the Song period on, and also in the dead skull tantra of the Buddhist ceremony to assuage the burning thirst of the hungry ghosts (瑜珈焰口), Wang Chongyang's "Dead Skull Lament" and the Quanzhen Sect's rite lamenting dead skulls in its liturgy regarding almsgiving, "Tan Kulou Ke" 嘆骷髏科, we find religious talking points borrowing the image of dead bones to portray them as what the true result of empty human existence is, in the hope that those who hear will understand the Way before it is too late and dedicate themselves to its pursuit as quickly as possible.¹⁸⁾ What we should notice here in particular is that in the religious literature geared to enlightening the souls and minds of this world by borrowing the words of Zhuangzi, and the portraiture and poetry depicting bones of the dead, the emphasis is always on the singular existence of one skull or skeleton, for the purpose of adding a shocking visual effect in a personal way to the portrayal of death, and directly show the true nature of life itself. Here, dead skull and skeleton is also used in the world of religious meaning as symbol for "the present world," "mundane (vulgar) desires"

and “karma.”¹⁹⁾ There is also the elements of rebuke and exhortation for the participants in conversations that take place between dead skeletons and living beings.

However, in P. 5039 the skulls Meng Jiangnü encounters are innumerable, the dead lying everywhere and she addresses them en masse. This is a real life scene of the bones belonging to a great number of victims in the actual construction of the Great Wall in the north. Secondly, it is not the skulls that her words are directed at, but rather the stray orphan souls residing within them, who are unable to return home. This is not the same scene as in the sermons preached by Buddhist and Daoist priests conjuring up bones of the dead to create religious talking points. Meng Jiangnü is in no way either exhorting or lamenting, but rather sending information to the families of these souls with the good intention of performing a rite to summon them.

Upon tracing the origins of the tale of Meng Jiangnü in the versions extant before the late Tang Dynasty, one finds that endings to the story include Meng drowning herself in a river after toppling the Wall (Liu Xiang 劉向, *Lie Nü Zhuan* 列女傳 (Biographies of great women)) and after toppling the Wall and identifying Qi Liang’s remains with her blood, committing suicide upon carrying them home on her back (Tongxianji 同賢記 recorded in the Tang period collection *Diaoyuji*, the only extant version exists in Japan). And so, the Dunhuang version of the tale offers another climax by inserting Meng’s conversation with and promise to the souls of those who died at the Wall, between the blood-letting and her return home. There is no doubt that this is a very rare spin on the tale; however, by placing the Dunhuang *bianwen* text in the social context of the popularity enjoyed by ceremonies for summoning the souls of the dead during the Tang period, we may better understand this brief encounter between Meng and the dead souls of the Wall.

2. Tang Period Invocation Ritual

Invocation rituals (*Zhaohun* 招魂) during the Tang period can be divided into those summoning souls of the living and those summoning souls of the dead. It was obviously the latter that Meng Jiangnü promised to perform for the dead builders of the Wall, which was essentially a rite conducted as part of the funeral ceremony to summon the stray dead soul back to the corpse. In the Confucian liturgy, this rite is called *Fu* 復 (lit., return, restore) and according to the section dealing with mourning in the

Li Ji, at the funeral of a Confucian literati, “at a Fu rite for a minor official, he is to be laid out in official Court robes” (小臣復, 復者朝服). To this instruction Zheng Xuan 鄭玄 adds the annotation, “Fu is the act of summoning the *hun* ethereal soul and bringing back the *po* 魄 bodily soul” (復, 招魂復魄也). The chapter on “single victim border sacrifices” (Jiaotesheng 郊特牲) in the *Li Ji* explains further.

“The breath-soul (*hunqi*) returns to the heavens with its life force, the bodily soul (*xingpo*) returns to the earth with its form. Therefore, in sacrificial offering one should seek the meaning of the *yin-yang* principles.”

魂氣歸於天, 形魄還於地, 故祭, 求諸陰陽之義.

The purpose of the Fu invocation rite during the funeral ceremony is to summon the *hun* soul back to the body from its meandering state. In his commentary to the *Li Ji*, Kong Yingda 孔穎達 writes, “In general, Fu is a rite performed by filial pious sons, in the hope that the *hun* soul of the deceased will return to this world” (凡復子, 緣孝子之心, 望得魂氣復返). While this explanation interprets Fu from an ethical perspective, in real terms, the function of Fu in the funeral ceremony is to confirm that there is no hope of the deceased being resurrected, then dress the corpse in grave cerements and put it to rest according to the wishes of its family.²⁰⁾

In ancient times there were also invocation rites for summoning souls for the living, for such purposes as praying for long life and the expurgation of sin. For example, the section *Zhaohun* of *Chuci* 楚辭 dealing with the theme of invocation relates the customs in southern China regarding summoning lost, wandering souls.²¹⁾ Also in *Chuci*, “Jiuge” 九歌 (Nine ballads), there is an invocation piece for comforting the orphan souls of heroes who gave their lives for their kingdoms (*guoshang*). Invocation funeral rites dating from the Eastern Han period on generally indicate funerals held for those who died away from their homes and whose remains could not be brought back.²²⁾ For example, during the reign of Wei Dynasty Emperor Shizong 世宗 (r. 499–515), a high official, Pei Xuan 裴宣, made the following proposal,

After the relocation of the capital, all prefectural and county police inspectors shall be ordered to identify and bury the remains of dead soldiers found on roads leading from military encampments and bat-

tlefields. In addition, the regions from which the soldiers came shall be ascertained, and the families who sent these war victims should be required to summon their *hun* and restore their *po*, and include their souls in the worship of their ancestors.

自遷都以來, 凡戰陣之處, 及軍罷兵還之道, 所有骸骨無人覆藏者, 請悉令州郡戍邏檢行埋掩. 竝符出兵之鄉. 其家有死於戎役者, 皆使招魂復魄, 祔祭先靈.²³⁾

One aspect of the folk belief regarding soul-summoning funeral rites for those who died away from home or suffered unnatural death is the burial-related belief that they should be “put to rest in the ground,” and another aspect is the *ligui*-related belief that their orphan souls and lost spirits need to be pacified through such rites. The sources related to the Tang period contain not a few documents called *jiwen* 祭文 (memorial), which were read for the repose of the souls of war victims at invocation ceremonies. One example is the *jiwen* written in 702 by Zhang Yue 張說, a poet and top ranking bureaucrat during the reign of Emperor Xuanzong 玄宗, for those who died at the battle of Shiling 石嶺.

How heartbreaking! Why, oh why, do you brave men who have become our fallen heroes not petition heaven to have your vengeful souls descend upon us here?

The drums evoking airs of anguish are beating, as hatred and regret over the battlefields in the desert sands of the northwest ever deepens.

痛茲壯士, 翦爲國殤, 盍訴天帝, 降厲鬼方, 助氣金鼓, 複怨沙場.²⁴⁾

The *jiwen* is intended to put an end to fury and bitterness through the invocation rite by “sealing the remains of the dead where they fell and summoning their souls back home where they belong” (封屍死所, 招魂故鄉).

The Anshi Rebellion (755–763), which tore China apart during the mid-Tang period, resulted in not a few orphan souls, both of royal and common origins, and of combatants dying in strange places far from their homes. Concerned over this state of affairs, the Tang Court began emphasizing invocation funerals, and Emperor Suzong 肅宗 (r. 756–762), in particular, issued an edict ordering the Department of Rites to summon the souls of those princes and imperial consorts who had perished in the

rebellion without anyone knowing their whereabouts.²⁵⁾ At about the same time, Zhang Han 張翰 petitioned Emperor Suzong proposing that invocation funeral rites be held for the troops under General Zhang Xun 張巡 who had died in the defense of Suiyang 睢陽 (present day Henan Province), which had been besieged by the An Lushan 安祿山 rebel forces in 757. Zhang stated,

Your servant has heard those who died in vain have become vengeful souls (*ligui*) whose wandering spirits will reek havoc. If they are allowed to return, disaster will be avoided. General Zhang's head was severed from his body, and the bones of his soldiers lie uncovered on the plains. Your servant feels that a plateau north of the Suiyang fort should be chosen to inter the souls of General Zhang and his men in a single splendid grave after an invocation funeral ceremony. If this is done, the souls in the underworld would be dedicated to the nation and the troops of the three regiments would not hesitate to sacrifice their lives. By arousing both this and the other world, we will be able to eliminate the bitterness and fury for the time being. Moreover, by pointing out our mistakes and showing benevolence, the Dynasty will be sending an admonition to all generations to come.

臣又聞：強死爲厲，遊魂爲變，有所歸往，則不爲災。巡旣身首支離，將士等骸骼不掩，臣謂：宜於睢陽城北，擇一高原，招魂葬送巡竝將士，大作一墓而葬，使九泉之魂，猶思效命，三軍之眾，有以輕生，旣感幽明，且無冤厲，亦國家志過旌善，垂戒百世之義也。²⁶⁾

What these examples tells us is that if the souls of heroes, who sacrificed their lives for the state but now find themselves isolated due to their unknown remains, cannot be properly comforted and allowed to find a place of repose, they will turn into *ligui* that will haunt the region around where they died.

The grief and bitterness suffered by wives who were left at home by husbands who joined the army and were stationed at border outposts is a major theme running through Tang period literature. Within such sadness lurks the same apprehension mentioned by Zhang Han above: “Those who die in vain will turn into *ligui* whose wandering souls will reek havoc” (強死爲厲，遊魂爲變). Take for example, the description in Du Fu 杜甫's *Bingche Xing* 兵車行 (The ballad of the caisson).

Can you see? On the shores of Qinghai,
The white bones exposed there since antiquity with no one to bury them?
Souls of the recent dead suffer in bitterness, while the old ones wail.
When the heavens grow dark and they are drenched with rain,
You can hear their lonely moans, “Jiu-jiu.”

君不見青海頭，古來白骨無人收，新鬼煩冤舊鬼哭，天陰雨濕聲啾啾。

Also in Wang Han 王翰's *Yinma Changchengku Xing* 飲馬長城窟行, written during the Kaiyuan 開元 era, we find,

At dusk on the northern border, where the smoke from campfires no longer rises,
The dead souls cry, “jiu-jiu,” in voices to stir up the heavens.
Innocent, but still punished; exemplary, but left unrewarded.
Orphan souls wandering aimlessly around the fortress.

黃昏塞北無人煙，鬼哭啾啾聲沸天，無罪見誅功不賞，孤魂流落此城邊。

These poems also express the same apprehension regarding *ligui* out in the borderlands, restless with no one to give them the proper offerings and final repose.

This image of orphan souls wandering aimlessly around border fortresses conjures up the sadness and bitterness towards a kind of world that has lost all order, and is thus far more intense than a grieving wife alone at home. In this sense, invocation rites to summon and give repose to orphan souls take on a different and unique religious dimension within the theme of *guiyuan* 閨怨 (boudoir grieving) in the Tang period literature dealing with wives left behind by husbands marching off to war.

There is the relatively well-known mid-Tang period poem by Zhang Ji 張籍 entitled *Zhengfu Yuan* 征婦怨 (Bitterness of a soldier's wife) which reads,

With no one to bury the bones of the dead at the Wall,
Their families summon the souls from beneath it to bury.

萬里無人收白骨，家家城下招魂葬。

Here we see separate families of those who died in conscripted forced labor at the border conducting private invocation rites for their lost loved ones. Then in Guan Xiu's late Tang period piece *Qi Liang's Wife* mentioned above, the wretched situation takes on a universal character with the words "Weary souls and starving spirits alike all eventually return home" (疲魂飢魄相逐歸). We find a similar image in P. 5039 of bones of the dead discarded in no man's land with no one to collect them, as a foreshadowing for the lines, "Tell our sad and bitter wives grieving in their boudoirs to take heed in summoning our souls and making lasting offerings" (爲報閨中哀怨人, 努力招魂存祭祀). Of course, P. 5039's descriptions of dead bones at the Great Wall, wives grieving in their boudoirs and the performance of invocation funeral ritual all fall into two of the Tang period's major themes—the tribulation's of the soldier's wife and invoking the return of the lost souls of the dead—but it does so in the dramatic style of a living being addressing skulls of the dead and conversing with the souls that inhabit them.²⁷⁾

The whole Tang period was characterized by a series of wars in which conscripted soldiers and corvee labor played an important part; and as such, the number of people dying away from home greatly increased, making *in absentia* invocation funerals an important part of the period's religious customs. Take for example the Dunhuang region, whose Buddhist temples at the time were conducting universal salvation rituals named *shishi* 施食 in which alms would be offered to nourish all souls who had been abandoned, in response to feelings of sadness and dismay within Tang society towards *ligui* with nowhere to return.

Document S. 2144 from the Aurel Stein Collection, which is a vow concerning the merit earned by setting an altar for such almsgiving, expresses that society's fear concerning orphan souls that have no one to make offerings for them.

From death in battle to execution under the law, between these two columns there exists a gathering of hungry ghosts...Even if it be a soul who died accidentally on the highway and cannot return home, it will try to cause harm.

或於軍陣鬪死, 或犯官法而死, 兩楹之間, 作羣餓鬼...或是客死之鬼, 未得歸還, 欲作禍祟。

It was the Taifu 太傅 (Regent) of Dunhuang who donated the altar for the

five day-five night almsgiving ceremony to pacify the hungry ghosts with food. The vow made upon completion reads,

[The merit generated by this ritual is directed towards] the hope that you [hungry ghosts] will avoid trouble and bring prosperity, that you will guard our Shazhou [Dunhuang], its regent, sheriff, administrators and its families and clans. May you [hungry ghosts] escape such a terrible curse, find salvation in the next world, avoid doing harm to others and never again enter the realm of the hungry ghosts.

願汝回禍爲福，守護我沙州一境及太傅，刺史，尚書，枝羅，宗族，免斯妖禍，歸依他界，莫愆萬人，永離鬼趣。²⁸⁾

Here the statement of Gu Jiegang in 1928 concerning P. 5039 that “we find no other text depicting the living in contact with dead souls and conversing together” unfortunately not only shows a lack of detail in analyzing the religious background of invocation rites, but there is also the fact that he had not seen Dunhuang P. 3718, *Meng Jiangnü Quzi Mingmu* 孟姜女曲子名目 (In praise of the song of Meng Jiangnü). The fourth song of P. 3718 reads,

Her melancholy at the foot of Great Wall crying at it
 Made such an impression [on heaven] that the wall collapsed.
 For half a mile the skulls number in the thousands.
 She would collect the bones strewn about and not return empty handed.

長城下，哭成(城)憂，敢德(感得)長成(城)一朵(垛)堆(摧)，里半瀆樓(髑
 髏)千萬個，十方獸(收)骨不空回。²⁹⁾

In this wretched scene at the foot of the Wall among the bones of thousands of dead workers that would not be claimed, Meng Jiangnü conducts an invocation ritual for dead skulls everywhere, vowing “not to return home empty-handed” and thus functioning as a universal redemptrix of orphan souls.

In summing up the literature on invocation ritual, the words in P. 5039, “Tell our sad and bitter wives grieving in their boudoirs to take heed in summoning our souls and making lasting offerings,” represent the voices of anguish of all the tens of thousands of orphan souls who lost their lives far away from home during Tang times.

3. *Jiwen* as the Common Document Form in Universal Salvation Rites

In document P. 5039 of the Dunhuang Collection, after the souls of the dead skulls request Meng to inform their loved ones about their whereabouts, she bows to them in acceptance, gathers the bones of her dead husband, then reads a *jiwen*.

I hereby perform the sacrificial rites by reading this document on the △Day of the △Month of the Year△.... (name of celebrant), having prepared this food, respectfully memorialize (name of deceased)...together make ready at the foot of...and as a written document, submit the Seventh Chapter [*Qipian* 七篇]³⁰ as testament.

Long ago, in the days when you were alive, your name reverberated through village and country.

You were loved by those of both the older and younger generations and trusted by their men and women alike.

Then, while building the Great Wall, having been sent so unbelievably far away as a conscript and unable to bear such hardships, your *hun* souls and bodily *po* returned to Mt. Haoli, the realm of the dead. It was like a red petal fluttering to the ground never to witness the splendor of its blossom.

But if I chant the White Snow Song for the offering and pray to heaven, your *hun* soul will surely find the road of return to the clouds.

Alas! And now with great humility I offer this single cup of wine.

Laying out an orchid carafe on a jade mat, with tasty delicacies and a goblet of gold.

If your soul has intelligence, may it take and accept these offerings!

文祭曰：「△年△月△日，...庶修(羞)之奠，敬祭...行俱備，文通七篇。昔存之日，名振饗(響)於家邦。上下無嫌，剛柔得所。豈起爲差充兵卒，遠築長城，喫苦不襟(禁)，魂魄還於蒿里。預(喻)若紅花標(飄)落，長無睹萼之暉。延白雪以詞天，氣有還雲之路。嗚呼，賤妾謹饌單盃，疏蘭尊於玉席，增歆饗已(以)金盃。惟魂有神，應時納受。」

Here the text ends with the incomplete sentence “Now the ceremony have ended, she tied her husband’s bones together, shouldered them...” (祭之已了，角(絞)束夫骨，自將背負，□□□□，來(下缺，全文完))。

This *jiwen* read by Meng Jiangnü was probably not composed especial-

ly for the dead soul of Qi Liang. The phrase “the △Day of the △Month of the Year△” for the date suggests that it was a commonly used document form, the date of which was to be filled in by the celebrant. There are a few characters that follow the date, but they are illegible, but clearly a space has been placed before the main body of the document beginning with 庶羞之奠 (offering of food), probably for the name of the celebrant. Another space is provided after 敬祭 (respectfully memorialize), no doubt for the name of the ritual receiver, the deceased. That means the time and the name of the celebrant and the deceased were left blank to be filled in later. Such items placed in the text suggest that P. 5039 is a form of a *jiwen* document frequently used at memorial services conducted throughout Dunhuang.

We can put this text in the fixed documentary form of *jiwen* used during the Tang period.

1) Introductory remarks

On this day, the △of △ in the year △, △△△, hereby respectfully memorializes the soul of △△△ with humble offerings of wine and victuals.

2) A description of the life of the deceased.

3) Expression of mourning and personal grief by the celebrant.

4) Exclamation of grief followed by an entreaty urging the deceased to partake of the offering.³¹⁾

The *jiwen* in “Meng Jiangnü Bianwen” follows this form to the letter.

Before Meng’s reading of the *jiwen*, the souls inhabiting the skulls relate their fate (quoted above) as “the scions of well-known families.” The *jiwen* also relates the life of the deceased as “reverberating through village and country” and is followed by more words of praise that could be used for the lives of others beside that of Qi Liang. Therefore, given the common use character of both the form and the content, there is the strong possibility that this was a particular form of *jiwen* to be used in sacrificial services for the souls of those who had worked and died far away from their homes on the borders and in the hinterland. At the same time, we can probably interpret the invocation ritual reflected in “Meng Jiangnü Bianwen” as being directed not exclusively towards Qi Liang, but towards all the abandoned souls of those who perished at the Great Wall.

The only other member of the Dunhuang *bianwen* collection to contain a *jiwen* is P. 2553, “Wang Zhaojun Bianwen” 王昭君變文. The sacri-

ficial service in that case involved an envoy of the Han Dynasty going to the border to pay his respects to the deceased Princess Wang Zhaojun, then traveling to her Grassy Tomb (Qingzhong 青塚) to deliver an official message from Emperor Ai 哀帝 and give the eulogy. The *jiwen* reads, “On this day, the △of △, △, representing the lord of the Han Dynasty, I humbly memorialize the soul of Princess Wang Zhaojun with an offering of the purest wine” (維年月日, 謹以清酌之奠, 祭漢公主王昭軍(君)之靈).³²⁾ Although the date has not been filled in, both the names of the celebrant and the deceased, both historical figures, are clearly written into the text with no other standard form spacing like in P. 5039.

These dissimilarities greatly accentuate the particular ritual performance and ceremonial function characteristic of the “Meng Jiangnü Bianwen” among the extant *bianwen* of Dunhuang. Furthermore, we may even go as far as to say that the people of Dunhuang may have borrowed the dramatic aspects of the tale of Meng Jiangnü and incorporated its performance into their invocation rites for the salvation of orphan souls.

For the very reason of being a ceremonial document memorializing all the dead souls buried at the foot of the Great Wall, Meng’s *jiwen* praises them for their virtue and outstanding lives. Such praise resonates with the affirmation of achievements of those who perished in the Han period *Yuefu* 樂府 ballad, *Zhan Chengnan* 戰城南 (Fighting south of the wall), “You proved to be a loyal subject, and loyal subjects are truly beloved” (思子良臣, 良臣誠可思).³³⁾

The *jiwen* laments the tragedy of dead souls not yet redeemed, unable to rise to the heavens due to death by unnatural causes. Before her conversation with the skulls, Meng Jiangnü completes the task of identifying her husband’s bones with drops of her blood and putting the soul that resides in his skull to rest. This is why she can comply with the request of the other skulls to “be diligent in summoning our souls.” It is Meng’s hope in her feelings of compassion to summon the orphan souls who lost their lives at the Great Wall to enjoy a final ritual feast, where upon partaking of the food and wine, these souls that aimlessly wander the earth and meander in the heavens will find the “road of return to the clouds” (還雲之路).

Among those who have studied P. 5039 to date, few have pondered the common use character of the document’s form, and they have been bereft of insights into the religious predicament of “wandering souls scattered about caught in the brambles” (遊魂散漫隨荆棘) that the text emphasizes over and over again. For this reason, all of the annotated texts

of the Dunhuang documents have not taken notice of the “road of return to the clouds” as a religious phrase that appears frequently in the Daoist salvation liturgy; namely, “the great way to the Nine Celestial Realms on which souls of the dead ascend upon salvation.” A petition ritual text *shangzhang ci* 上章詞 in the Daoist Yellow Register Retreat (黃籙齋) of late Tang period Daoist Du Guangting 杜光庭’s work states, “We ask for the mercy that the souls of the ancestors of the patron of the Retreat will escape from Trial after Death held by the hell officials and let the souls roaming their cloud road in carefree leisure and let this happiness be witnessed by all the clan descendants” (次乞齋主某家九世七玄, 息地司之簡對, 幽靈滯識, 沙 [抄 = 超] 雲路以逍遙, 見在宗親).³⁴⁾

From the Song period on, in Daoist rituals concerned with salvation by sublimation, a group of merit officers (*gongcao* 功曹) named *Jiutian yunlu zhengyi gongcao* 九天雲路正一功曹 (Zhengyi Gongcao of the cloud road in the nine celestial realms) would gather “to unfurl a ‘banner’ (*lingfan* 靈幡) which would lead the souls being celebrated, shining sunlight on the earth below to show them the road to the clouds and help them ascend it” (開導靈幡, 接引所薦亡魂, 蒙陽光之下燭, 指雲路以上昇).³⁵⁾ Since the Song period in southern China, universal salvation rituals have featured documents called *guhun die* 孤魂牒, which call on all orphan souls to “return to the road leading to the clouds, ascend to the streets of heaven; flee the secular country bogged down in the meaningless affairs of life and death, be purified and attain the state of perfect leisure” (各還雲路, 昇陟天衢, 脫沈淪生死之鄉, 達清淨無垢之境).³⁶⁾

What was the most frightening thing about the *ligui* who rise out of unnatural deaths suffered by corvee laborers, like Qi Liang, at the Great Wall was “having no place of repose” and wandering about in a state of starvation “with no one to administer the last offerings”. Consequently, donating food and clothing for such abandoned souls to stave off cold and hunger has always been an important ingredient of invocation funeral rituals.

According to the previously mentioned *jiwen* composed by Zhang Yue, the Tang Court “dispatched Pei Siyi with an offering of wine, cured meat and seasonal fruit to offer sacrifice for the souls of those who died in the battle at Shiling” (遣裴思益以酒脯時果之奠, 致祭於石嶺戰亡兵士之靈).³⁷⁾ After offering such repose to these orphan souls, a priest concluded the ceremony with the prayer,

I bless you with the blood of your enemies and let you taste their

salted flesh. Bury the corpses where they fell, but call their souls back home. Eat, drink and be merry!

虜血爾酌，虜醢爾嘗，封屍死所，招魂故鄉，尙饗。³⁸⁾

These words are the same as those of Meng Jiangnü. “I humbly place a single cup, prepare the banquet, to honor the souls of the dead.” Here we discover the character of feasting in the invocation rituals of the Tang period.

The Tang poet Li Yi 李益 (748–827) describes the banquet atmosphere in the poem *An Ode to Celebrate Heroic Death Composed with the Troops During the Evening Encamped North of Liuhu While Watering My Horse Beside the Sword Sharpener*³⁹⁾

I have heard that wherever the souls are summoned there is also good wine.

So let us pour the wine and drink to the river flowing back east.

You souls of dead heroes! Return to your homes.

The desert battlefields are no place for you.

Not even one of you should have to linger there.

又聞招魂有美酒，爲我澆酒祝東流。殤爲魂兮，可以歸還故鄉些，沙場地無人兮，爾獨不可以久留。

This poem and the P. 5039 also put much emphasis on the banquet ceremony feasting orphan souls. And we should take due notice here to both its realistic function and public dimension.

If we begin with the invocation ritual of P. 5039, then refer to the 6th song of P. 3718, *Meng Jiangnü Quzi Mingmu*, we will come to a better understanding of the deep concern drawn to the orphan souls of the Dunhuang tale of Meng Jiangnü.

Ever cherish these words, my wife! It has been tens of years since I left my parents. When are you going back home? Be diligent in performing with *bosan* 餽散 ritual for me. At month's end remember to offer gold-colored bills for me. At month's end remember to offer gold-colored bills for me.

娘子好，體一言，離別耶(爺)娘數十年，早萬(晚)到家鄉，勤餽散，月盡日，

挄(交)管黃至前(紙錢). 小(少)長無, 挄(交)管黃至前(紙錢).

The request made by the soul of Qi Liang that Meng Jiangnü sacrifice for him by donating food and money reflects, according to Ren Erbei 任二北, the Tang period belief in burning gold-colored imitation currency at the end of every month as offerings to the souls of the dead. Ren regards the term *bosan* as light teatime pastries.⁴⁰⁾ Such a meaning, however, does not fit the spirit of the text here.

Recently, linguists using other Dunhuang manuscripts have shown that this term and the term *posan* 破散 signify ritual acts of scattering food here and there to satiate the appetites of hungry ghosts that lurk about.⁴¹⁾

During the Five Dynasties period (907–960), *posan* (潑散 or 破散) became an alms-giving ceremony conducted either out in remote areas or along the roads (*yeji* 野祭). In a Song period commentary on the Five Dynasties period, Wang Fu 王溥 mentions *Hanshi Yeji* 寒食野祭, a ceremony beginning on the 105th day after the winter solstice and observed for three days during which the use of fire is prohibited and food must be eaten cold. The *Hanshi* sacrifice called “*posan*,” was first held in the Later Tang period by Emperor Zhuangzong 莊宗 (r. 885–926) and from that time on, his example was adopted by all the emperors as a kind of sacrificial ritual for the repose of souls.⁴²⁾

The ritual alms-giving (*shishi* 施食) in Dunhuang Buddhism is alike to *posan*, also known as *sanshi* 散食 (lit. scattering food about). The celebrant would take easily scattered or sprinkled food like rice, rice cakes, etc., turn in the direction of the hungry ghosts, and offer it to them reciting the vow, “May this food spread throughout the three thousand worlds and satiate all who reside there” (願此食遍於三千大世界, 眾生普同飽滿).⁴³⁾

From the above analysis, it should be clear that the salvation of the orphan souls of the dead is a major theme in the Dunhuang tale of Meng Jiangnü. There is no doubt that the Dunhuang manuscript contains the major age-old theme of the sorrow experienced by wives left alone at home by their husbands; however, the interpretation offered here, based on a return to as true a historical setting of the Tang period as possible, argues that the related literature also embodies fears concerning vengeful souls (*ligui*) of the dead and how to provide them with repose.

It is now possible to clarify such questions as 1) why the Dunhuang manuscript emphasizes the “aimless wandering of orphan souls,” 2) why skulls left to rot in the wilderness appeal in unison for “diligence in sum-

moning our souls and making offerings” and 3) why attempts were made to send dead souls off to ascend the road to the clouds by means of ceremonies feasting them with food and wine.⁴⁴⁾

4. The Ritual Function of Invocation for Salvation in “Meng Jiangnü Bianwen”

Kominami Ichiro 小南一郎 and Tokura Hidemi 戸倉英美 have summarized the composition of *Chuci* and Han period *naoge* 饒歌 (songs for military bell accompaniment) related to the invocation of the souls of dead heroes as follows.⁴⁵⁾

- I Reenactment of the life (military career) of the hero
- II Sadness over his wandering soul and his conversation with the invocation ceremony celebrant.
- III Salvation of his wandering soul by the celebrant.

Most of the content of eulogies for those who gave up their lives for the empire (*guoshang*) consists of narrative about the emotional aspects of battle told in soliloquy by the soul of the dead soldier; and in order to comfort his soul, which haunts the living, the proper rituals are performed on stage with ballads about the scene of his death. Wen Yiduo 聞一多 has discussed the character of religious sacrificial songs regarding *goushang* and *lihun* 禮魂 (the honoring of souls) arguing that the two types constitute “mini-ceremonies honoring the achievements of dead heroes,” thus stressing the aspect of the commendation of military exploits during their lives.⁴⁶⁾

In Dunhuang P. 5039, Meng Jiangnü’s response to the entreaties of her husband and the other dead skulls at the Great Wall falls into above characteristics I and II. In their anguish and through their entreaties, we are able to look back on the severity of the service they were subjected to before their deaths. Then the *jiwen*, which concludes the document, functions as characteristic III in leading them to salvation. From this perspective, the Meng Jiangnü manuscript of Dunhuang follow the invocation literature tradition of past eras in placing both the dead souls and the celebrant as protagonists in the narrative.

In contrast to the invocation ballads found in *Chuci*, for example, the Dunhuang manuscript displays a marked dramatic performance aspect in the way it was written. That is to say, both protagonists of the tale give nar-

rative performances by means of monologues, although the dead skulls recite their lines in unison. The two scenes characterized by I and II are played by Meng Jiangnü, who acts more like the celebrant of an invocation ritual than the wife of one of the dead souls. Her conversations with the dead souls (both her husband and the others) and her reading of the *jiwen* are all soliloquy performances by the Meng Jiangnü character.

When placing the themes of concern for dead souls and the major theme of salvation in P. 5039 with texts in the rest of the Meng Jiangnü-related literature, we would have to agree with the observations of scholars like Gu Jiegang, Qian Nanyang and Zhao Jingshen that “in no other work do we see the living conversing with the souls of the dead.” The texts of dramatic works concerning Meng Jiangnü during the Song and Yuan periods (960–1368) are no longer extant⁴⁷⁾; and only a few poetic works of the Ming period (1368–1644) remain, like the 20 verse fragments recorded by Qian Nanyang and Wang Gulu 王古魯⁴⁸⁾ and *Meng Jiangnü Hanyi Ji* 孟姜女寒衣記 contained in *Fengyue Jinnang* 風月錦囊 that was reprinted in 1553.⁴⁹⁾ An investigation of the content of the extant works reveals not one case of Qi Liang or the other dead souls speaking. Furthermore, all of these dramatic texts are found in the collections of literary figures and have thus been subjected to a kind of textual criticism and editing that has completely ignored such details as the socio-religious situation of the plots and information about regional society in the original texts. Consequently, despite painstaking effort, this writer has not been able to find in the extant drama literature collections even the slightest trace of the invocation ceremony portrayed in P. 5039.

Fortunately, in the many sources related to ritual theater and religious ritual from all over China that have been compiled and published since 1990, we are finding not only dramatic works dealing with the character of Meng Jiangnü, but also much information on the actual environment in which drama was staged in rural communities, sacrificial societies and the overall liturgical order of things. Thus we can recognize the function of religious rituals incorporated in the tale of Meng Jiangnü circulating in folk society. As one example, let us take a look at dramatic works of a ritual drama called “sense of awakening” (*xinggan xi* 醒感戲) found in Yongkang 永康 County, central Zhejiang 浙江 Province.

The sense of awakening play is a form of ritual performed by Daoist priests who are married householders. The performance, which is staged with both inner and outer altars, portrays the salvation of dead souls and incorporates such funereal rites as *Qingchan Honglou Dahui* 慶懺鴻樓大會

(celebration of virtue, repentance of sins), *Chan Lanpen* 懺蘭盆 (Yulanpen 盂蘭盆 ceremony of repentance) and *Shuilu Daochang* 水陸道場 (creation of land and water ritual sanctuaries). According to the research done by Xu Hongtu 徐宏圖, the sense of awakening play originated during the reign of Ming Dynasty Emperor Zhengde 正德 (1506–1521) and was first performed by the Daoist order of Yongkang Country. Then during the reign of Emperor Kangxi 康熙 (1654–1722), it spread throughout Zhejiang Province to such places as Wuyi 武義 County, Jinhua 金華 Prefecture and Dongyang 東陽 County.⁵⁰⁾

Nine scripts exist today, all of which deal with the theme of untimely, unnatural death.⁵¹⁾

Shinü Shang 逝女殤
(Death of Phantom Girl)

Duanyuan Shang 斷緣殤
(Death by Estrangement)

Huli Shang 狐狸殤
(Death of Being Perplexed by the Spirit of a Fox)

Maotou Shang 毛頭殤
(Death of Moutou's Child Bride)

Hancheng Shang 撼城殤
(Death of Meng Jiangnü Destroying the Wall)

Jingzhong Shang 精忠殤
(Death of Yue Fei's Quintessential Loyalty)

Nishui Shang 溺水殤
(Death by Drowning)

Caoji Shang 草集殤
(Miscellaneous Deaths)

Wuni Shang 忤逆殤
(Death from Filial Disobedience)

The “Nine Shang” 九殤 at the outer altar are performed by the Daoist priests belonging to the Shamanistic Daoism (*shijiao* 師教) that deifies Longshui Wang 龍水王 as master and expert in ritual performance. At the inner altar, the Daoist priest belongs to the Daojiao 道教 that deifies Xuantian Shangdi 玄天上帝 (Divine Warrior Emperor of the North) as master and expert in liturgy. Both inner and outer altar priests venerate Celestial Master Zhang 張天師 as their patron deity.⁵²⁾

The performances on the outer altar are timed to coincide with the Daoist rituals conducted at inner altar, throughout the five-day and five-night salvation ritual for the souls of the client family. During the daytime of the 2nd day, the following Daoist rites from No. 1 to No. 12 are held on the inner altar.

1. Juanlian 捲簾 (Scrolling the Screen)
2. Fenhui 分輝 (Inviting the Light)
3. Jinzhong 金鐘 (Ringing the Bell)
4. Anzhen 安鎮 (Settling the Gods)
5. Jintan 禁壇 (Sealing the Altar)
6. Chitan 敕壇 (Purifying the Altar with Holy Water)
7. Zhao Shenfo 召神佛 (Invoking the Saints)
8. Xiangong 獻供 (Offering of Food)
9. Gongwang 供王 (Calling upon the Lord Saviour)
10. Wuzhai 午齋 (The Noon Meal)
11. Songjing 誦經 (Chanting the Sutras)
12. Bai jiuyou chan 拜「九幽懺」 (The Nine Darkness Repentance Ritual)

At the same time, the celebrant at the outer altar is performing *Huli Shang*, in which Celestial Master Zhang delivers the soul of a girl who suffered an untimely demise, training her and initiating her into the Way.

During the evening of the 2nd day, the following five Daoist rituals are performed on the inner altar.

13. Dapo jiuyu 大破九獄 (Destroying the Nine Hells)
14. Zhaohun 召魂 (Invocation of Souls)
15. Tianyi Jiao 天醫醮 (Exorcism to Heal the Souls)
16. Mingyang Hu 冥陽斛 (Food for the Multitude)
17. Shi Fashi 施法食 (Offering Food to Orphan Souls)

Also in the evening, *Hancheng Shang*, Zhejiang's theatre version of the tale of Meng Jiangnü, is performed at the outer altar. The plot may be summarized as follows.

Shortly after his marriage Fan Qiliang is conscripted for corvee labor in the borderlands and loses his life laboring at the Great Wall. His innocent soul appears before Meng Jiangnü in a dream to tell her of how terribly he has suffered working at the Wall. Meng Jiangnü journeys to the Great Wall in search of her husband. Her wailing upon arrival topples the Wall to the amazement of the Jade Emperor. The Jade Emperor sends a boy and a girl from his entourage to save the couple, by having them ascend into heaven and live happily ever after. Finally the Celestial Master Zhang builds a ritual sanctuary and concludes the performance by saving all the innocent, orphan souls

that perished so horribly in the building of the Great Wall.⁵³⁾

While the inner altar ritual has the main celebrant (Daoist Ritualist of High Merit 高功) burning the talisman to destroy Hell (*podiyu-fu* 破地獄符) and summon countless dead souls to the altar, then burning the talisman to summon the divine tiger in order to beseech the gods to descend and chase the souls towards the altar, the *Hancheng Shang* performers are enacting the soul of a weeping Qi Liang telling Meng Jiangnü of the fate he has suffered.

While the inner altar celebrant scatters the ritual food produced in the Hushi 斛食 (food for the multitude) sacrifice allowing all orphan souls languishing in all ten directions and the four modes of the six rebirths, who have suffered all twenty-four varieties of fatality and all thirty-six types of untimely demise, to partake of the ambrosia, the outer altar performance at the same time reaches its climax with the Celestial Master's salvation of all the innocent, orphan souls that perished so horribly in the building of the Great Wall. At this moment, all of the orphan souls in the Daoist cosmos are transformed into the lost souls portrayed in the dramatization, in order for the audience to experience religious salvation while enjoying the performance.

Here the two religious themes of the invocation and the offering of food to orphan souls found in "Meng Jiangnü Bianwen" are being separately enacted at the inner and outer sense of awakening altars in ritual and dramatic form, both resonating in total unison.

5. From Shamaness to Meng Jiangnü: The Evolution of Ritual Drama

In the versions of the tale of Meng Jiangnü circulating during the late Tang Dynasty, we already are hearing the sorrowful screams of a wife separated from her husband and witnessing the mental suffering over a spouse having died alone in the wilderness, both experienced by an uncountable number of women during that time destined to sleep in empty boudoirs. Moreover, since the invocation ritual pervaded all of Tang period society, it was from the religious rituals to redeem the souls of the dead in the Dunhuang region that the dramatic enactments centering around the tale of Meng Jiangnü sprung, or it is rather more probable that the empathy expressed by society towards souls of the dead as portrayed in the tale of Meng Jiangnü itself escalated into the religious mechanism of

invocation and salvation.

“Meng Jiangnü Bianwen” is itself the embodiment of theatrical performance combined with ritual function. This ritual drama portrays the whole story of a living being, putting stress on one who heard the appeals of dead souls and conversed with one of them, her husband. Meng Jiangnü in the role of celebrant is a performance symbolizing the life of a wife separated from her husband; and in her dialogue with dead skulls we can find no trace of rebuke as we always find in later religious ritual, such as the Skull Lament conducted by Buddhist or Daoist priests. The type of salvation “from without” (justification by faith alone) that is stressed so much in the religious worship of supernatural beings, like in some sects of Mahayana Buddhism, has been completely transformed into a ritual for the repose of orphan souls conducted “from within” by one single fragile woman, Meng Jiangnü. Even the dark, netherworld into which the souls of the dead fall is not the realm of Hell or the hungry ghosts we find in the Dunhuang *bianwen* concerning the exploits of Buddhist apostle Maudgalyayana, but rather the pre-Buddhist Chinese indigenous underworld of Haoli 蒿里.⁵⁴⁾

The dramatic nature of religious rituals and the religious nature of dramatic literature, two elements required in the formation of primitive drama, are articulated with perfect compatibility in the Dunhuang tale of Meng Jiangnü. The secular subject matter here, like the Maudgalyayana *bianwen* 目連變文 that was also popular at the time, takes on the function of redeeming the orphan souls so dearly sought for by folk society. The action taken by Meng Jiangnü in spontaneously treating souls of the dead to a banquet of food and wine serves the function of religious salvation similar to Buddhist and Daoist rituals offering foods to orphan souls lost in the wilderness.

While literati and scholars of the past look for feminine chastity and filial piety in the character of Meng Jiangnü, folklorists prefer to talk about an openly loving, courageous woman. Underneath the surface on which such narrative appears, the role of Meng Jiangnü as a redemptrix of the souls of dead men probably has fostered the historical growth and development of the tale.

By highlighting the function of the repose of souls in the tale, it may be possible to show, like the informative survey of ritual drama in Asia done by Tanaka Issei, that the dramatic productions of ancient China owe their origins to religious rituals aimed at relieving dead souls. Now there is the problem of where to place “Meng Jiangnü Bianwen” in the historical

development of Chinese religious ritual.

China does have a tradition dating from ancient times of female shamans serving the diety ritual. During the Tang period, it was very common for such shamanesses to officiate at sacrificial rites held by *she* communities and rainmaking ceremonies. For example, there is the following description of a ceremony held at a shrine in Wang Wei 王維's song about a shamaness celebrating Mt. Yu.⁵⁵⁾

Beating the drum, "Kan-kan"
 At the foot of Mt. Yu.
 Blowing the bamboo flute
 While gazing upon the distant waterfront.
 The shamaness comes.
 She dances round and round.
 Setting the banquet with jade-like seats.
 Pouring the pure wine.

坎坎擊鼓，魚山之下，吹洞簫，望極浦，女巫進，紛屢舞，陳瑤席，湛清醕。

Here we see a shamaness conducting a ceremony to greet the descent of the gods, in which she arranges a banquet while performing a dance. There were also shamanesses who became possessed by gods and spoke for them.

However, this type of welcome ritual is very different from our female celebrant in the "Meng Jiangnü Bianwen" of Dunhuang who officiates at a Daoist-like invocation of soul ritual. That is to say, in the former, a divine spirit descends and possesses the shamaness, whose role is to speak and act on its behalf, while the latter summons the souls of the dead to redeem them in a ceremony, meaning that there are two different roles to be performed in the latter, not just one as in the former. There is another possibility that Tang period rituals in which shamanesses possessed by divine spirits, along with popular invocation rites, came to be involved at the same time in the narrative role of wives mourning husbands killed while conscripted and sent to far away campaigns.

Or rather, conversely, in order for the tale of Meng Jiangnü to function as a salvation ritual for orphan souls, she would have to assume the role of shamaness, while Qi Liang and the dead remains of his fellow workers at the Great Wall would have to assume the role of the souls summoned in the rite, thus infusing shamanistic rites of Dunhuang society

with the character of ritual drama.

As mentioned above, Tanaka Issei has shown how Dunhuang *she* communities during the late Tang period were influenced by Buddhist purification ritual and incorporated rites for the dead and orphan souls into their spring rainmaking and autumn thanksgiving agrarian ceremonies. Now further evidence can be added to such an incisive and stimulating argument. For example, in another work by Wang Wei composed during the same Kaiyuan era about the outskirts of Liangzhou 涼州 (present day Gansu 甘肅 Province and important gateway to Central Asia) we find the example of ritual performance conducted by a shamaness, in which the features of community agrarian ritual combined with local salvation rites can be recognized.

Only three old, rustic houses stand
 In a hinterland village with no neighbors.
 The shamaness whirls across the She community shrine,
 With flute and drum, they give thanks to the mercy of the rice god
 for a harvest year.
 Wine is poured on dogs made of straw (*chugou*).
 Incense is burned in veneration to men carved of wood (*muren*).
 The shamaness dances round and round
 With such fury that her gauze slippers raise clouds of dust.⁵⁶⁾

野老才三戶，邊村少四隣，
 婆娑依里社，簫鼓賽田神，
 灑酒澆芻狗，焚香拜木人，
 女巫紛屢舞，羅襪自生塵。

Here we see shamaness giving thanks to agrarian gods with flute, drum and dance in the all so familiar scene of the ancient *she* community festival.

The function of the shamaness who officiates over the ceremony in Wang Wei's poem may also exist in the ritual folk culture depicted in "Meng Jiangnü Bianwen" of Dunhuang. After all, Dunhuang was under the jurisdiction of Liangzhou during the Tang period. An evolutionary development from the dance of the shamaness in the poetry of Wang Wei into Meng Jiangnü of Dunhuang should probably be looked upon as religious ritual evolving toward ritual drama and the invocation religious function seen as the most important moving force behind the evolutionary process.

During the Song period we observe the further evolution of ritual

drama starring shamanesses. One direction this evolution takes is the element of the characters in literary tales abandoning religious ritual altogether in favor of dramatic amusement with exclusively secular themes. One example is the dramatic scripts of the Jin Dynasty (*Jin Yuanben* 金院本), including a piece dealing with the tale of Meng Jiangnü itself. Another direction is the element of religious ritual, the invocation ceremony of Meng Jiangnü, losing its dramatic character, grows into independent salvation rituals at the hands of serious clerical priests performing salvation rites under strict Buddhist and Daoist liturgical traditions. One text of a salvation ritual, *Huanglu Jiuyou jiao wuai yezhai cidi yi* 黃籙九幽醮無碍夜齋次第儀 (Outline of the ritual for an unobstructed night retreat and offering to the souls in the nine realms of darkness of the Yellow Register), was written at the corresponding time to the above arrangement, that is, during the Northern Song Dynasty (early 12th century).

The “Maudgalyayana Bianwen” of Dunhuang followed the same bifurcation process as “Meng Jiangnü Bianwen.” The tale of Maudgalyayana, a great apostle of Buddha, using supernatural skills to find his deceased mother (Qingti 青提) suffering in the realm of hungry ghosts threw off its religious significance, first through a play entitled, *Mulian Jiumu Zaju* 目連救母雜劇, which was performed during the Northern Song period prior to the Avalambama 盂蘭盆 (all souls) Ceremony, and later developed into a Jin Dynasty dramatic script as *Da Qingti* 打青提 (A drama of teasing Qingti). On the other hand, the ritual of feeding alms to the burning mouths of hungry ghosts in the Maudgalyayana tale was not only incorporated into the Buddhist All Souls liturgy of the 15th day of the 7th month, but was also adopted as the offertory rite accompanying pre-funereal fasting.

In conclusion to this article, it is hoped that the above analysis of “Meng Jiangnü Bianwen” will help better clarify the way in which dramatic productions originated from invocation rituals within the history of Chinese literature and the way in which salvation rituals were separated out by professional priests from invocation rites within the history of Chinese religion, as both processes ran parallel to each other during the Five Dynasties and Northern Song periods.

Both evolutionary processes, which are internally linked in terms of logic, proceeded through history mutually dependent on one another.

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Notes

- 1) General introductions to the tale of Meng Jiangnü include Hatano Taro 波多野太郎, “Mo Kyojo Koji Sosetsu” 孟姜女故事綜說 [Overview of the accounts of Meng Jiangnü], *Yokohama Shiritsu Daigaku Ronso: Jinbun Kagaku Keiretsu* 橫濱市立大學論叢：人文科學系列 24, no.1 (1973): 146–182 and Yang Zhenliang 楊振良, *Meng Jiangnü yanjiu* 孟姜女研究 [Studies on Meng Jiangnü], (Taipei: Xuesheng shuju, 1985), pp. 21–32. For English-language studies on the historical development of the tale, see Ch’iu-kuei Wang, *The Transformation of the Meng Chiang-nu Story in Chinese Popular Literature* (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Cambridge, 1978) and Wilt L. Idema, *Meng Jiangnü Brings Down the Great Wall: Ten Versions of a Chinese Legend* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2008).
- 2) Gu Jiegang, “Meng Jiangnü gushi de zhuanbian” 孟姜女故事的轉變 [The transformation of the tale of Meng Jiangnü], in *Meng Jiangnü gushi yanjiuji* 孟姜女故事研究集 [Collected papers on the tale of Meng Jiangnü] (Zhongshan University Language and History Institute, 1928). Here, the Shanghai guji chubanshe 上海古籍出版社 reprinted version, 1984, p. 38 has been quoted.
- 3) *Quan Tang shi* 全唐詩 [Complete poetry of the Tang dynasty] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1960), vol. 826, p. 9304.
- 4) See Lin Fu-shih 林富士, *Guhun yu guixiong de shijie: beitaowan de ligui xinyang* 孤魂與鬼雄的世界：北臺灣的厲鬼信仰 [The world of orphan souls and malicious ghosts: *Ligui* beliefs in Northern Taiwan] (Taipei: Xianli wenhua zhongxin, 1995), ch. 8.
- 5) *Bianwen* 變文 is a late Tang period literary form originating in sermons given at Buddhist temples to introduce the common people to the scriptures. Written in a mixed prose/verse style using vernacular terms, themes were chosen from both Buddhist scripture and Chinese folklore. It is thought that illustrations were also used in the art form, hence its relation to the *bianxiangtu* 變相圖 genre of slide show Buddhist sermons. *Bianwen* is mentioned in many contemporary Tang sources, but it was not until the excavation of Dunhuang at the end of the 19th century that actual texts reached the light of day.
- 6) The manuscript, P. 5039 preserved at Bibliothèque nationale de France, which contains a fragment version of the tale is heavily damaged and is missing its beginning and end portions. The text can probably be dated ninth or tenth century. The extant 39 lines of the fragment appear in a cursive writing style. The document has been annotated in Xiang Chu 項楚, *Dunhuang bianwen xuanzhu* 敦煌變文選注 [Selected annotation of the Dunhuang Bianwen texts] (Chengdu: Bashu shushe, 1990), pp. 94–105 and Huang Zheng 黃徵 and Zhang Yongquan 張湧泉, *Dunhuang bianwen jiaozhu* 敦煌變文校注 [Collation and annotation of the Dunhuang Bianwen texts] (Beijing:

- Zhonghua shuju, 1997), pp. 60–65. This paper has consulted the image of P. 5039 published at the website of Bibliothèque nationale de France and will attempt to make additional annotations to those mentioned above.
- 7) Gu Jiegang, “Meng Jiangnü gushi biji jilu” 孟姜女故事筆記輯錄 [Collected notes on the tale of Meng Jiangnü], in *Meng Jiangnü gushi yanjiuji*, p. 294.
 - 8) The first volume of Gu’s *Meng Jiangnü gushi yanjiuji* records funeral songs found in nearly 10 provinces, including Jiangsu 江蘇, Hubei 湖北, Hunan 湖南, Sichuan 四川 and Shanxi 山西.
 - 9) Tanaka Issei, *Chugoku Engeki-shi* 中國演劇史 [A history of Chinese theater] (Tokyo: Tokyo Daigaku Shuppankai, 1998), ch. 2, p. 35.
 - 10) Guo Qingfan 郭慶藩, ed., *Zhuangzi jishi* 莊子集釋 [Collected works of Zhuangzi with commentary] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1989), pp. 617–619.
 - 11) *Dulou* 髑髏 means the head part among the bones of a fully dried up dead skeleton, *kulou* 骷髏 means both the skull and skeletal structure. However, over time these two term have been gradually confused. This paper does not differentiate between them either. On the theme of dead skeletons and skulls in Ming and Qing period drama, see Wangkui 王夔, “Mingkan xiqu sanchu ‘Zhouzhuangzi tan kulou’ xintan” 明刊戲曲散出『周莊子嘆骷髏』新探 [A new investigation of the Ming period fragment of the drama, *Zhouzhuangzi Lamenting a Skeleton*], *Anhui Daxue Xuebao* 安徽大學學報 1 (2005): 121–125.
 - 12) Zhang Heng, “Dulou Fu,” in Zhang Zhenze 張震澤 ed., *Zhangheng shiwenji jiaozhu* 張衡詩文集校注 [Collation and annotation of Zhang Heng’s poetry and prose] (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1986), pp. 247–248.
 - 13) Cao Zhi, “Dulou Shuo,” in Zhao Youwen 趙幼文 ed., *Cao Zhiji jiaozhu* 曹植集校注 [Collation and annotation of Cao Zhi’s collected works] (Beijing: Renmin wenzue chubanshe, 1984), p. 524.
 - 14) Zhang Heng, “Dulou Fu,” p. 247.
 - 15) Cao Zhi, “Dulou Shuo,” p. 524.
 - 16) Huang Tingjian, “Dulou Song,” in *Quan Song shi* 全宋詩 [Complete poets of the Song period] (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 1991), f. 17, vol. 1024. Some are of the opinion that this poem was Huang’s teacher Su Shi 蘇軾’s “Dulou Zan” 髑髏贊 [In praise of dead skulls].
 - 17) Wang Chongyang, “Qiqizi (2)” 七騎子(之二), in *Chongyang Quanzhen Ji* 重陽全真集 [The complete works of Quanzhen master Chongyang], vol. 11, *Zhengtong Daozang* 正統道藏 [Taoist canon of the Zhengtong era] (Taipei: Xinwenfeng chuban gongsi, 1977), f. 25, p. 754.
 - 18) On the religious literature dealing with dead bones in late imperial China, see Itakura Seitetsu 板倉聖哲, “Dokuro Gengi—Chugoku Kaiga niokeru ‘Sei to Shi’ no Hyosho” 骷髏幻戲—中國繪畫における「生と死」の表象 [Skeleton fantasy: Depictions of life and death in Chinese painting], in *Bijutsu Forum* 21 美術フォーラム21, no. 8 (2003): 53–58; Kang Baocheng 康保成, “Kulouge de zhenwei yu yuanyuan xintan” 『骷髏格』的真偽與淵源新探 [A new investigation on the existence and origin of *Kulouge*], *Wenxue Yichan* 文學遺產 2 (2003): 99–144; and Yi Ruofen 衣若芬, “Kulou huanxi—Zhongguo wenzue yu tuxiang zhong de shengming yishi” 骷髏幻戲—中國文學與圖象中的生命意識 [Skeleton fantasy: Consciousness about life in Chinese litera-

- ture and painting], *Zhongguo Wenzhe Yanjiu Jikan* 中國文哲研究集刊 26 (2005): 73–125.
- 19) As to the religious meaning of skeleton in the Quanzhen Sect, see Louis Komjathy, *Cultivating Perfection: Mysticism and Self-transformation in Early Quanzhen Daoism* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), ch. 3, pp. 100–104.
 - 20) For an English discussion on this issue, see Yü Ying-Shih, “‘O Soul, Come Back!’ A Study in the Changing Conceptions of the Soul, Afterlife in Pre-Buddhist China,” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 47, no. 2 (1987): 363–395.
 - 21) There are two opinions about the souls to be invoked in *Chuci*: invocation is for souls of the living (Song Yu 宋玉 summons Qu Yuan 屈原 and Qu Yuan summons himself) vs. invocation is for the dead (Qu Yuan summons Chu Zhaowang 楚昭王). Fujino Iwamoto 藤野岩友, *Fukei Bungakuron* 巫系文學論 [Shamanic literature] (Tokyo: Daigaku Syobo, 1951), pp. 198–269.
 - 22) In central China from the era of *Shi Jing* 詩經 [The book of songs], on the third day of the third month, also known as the “Shangsi 上巳 Festival,” people invoked the souls of the living back to strengthen their bodies and ward off bad luck. The Shangsi invocation was still popular during the Tang period, but since it is quite different from the soul-summoning in Meng Jiangnü *bianwen*, it will not be further discussed in the present article. Incidentally, Kang Baocheng, “Meng Jiangnü gushi yu shanggu fuxi xisu” 孟姜女故事與上古祓禊風俗 [The tale of Meng Jiangnü and the ancient purification customs], *Xiju Yishu* 戲劇藝術 2 (1992): 64–74 approaches the tale from the perspective of the veneration of sexual reproduction, arguing that it is an ancient purification rite.
 - 23) *Weishu* 魏書 [Book of Wei] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1974), vol. 45, Pei Xuan Zhuan 裴宣傳 [Bibliography of Pei Xuan], p. 1074. Stephen Bokenkamp has discussed invocation funerals of the Eastern Jin Dynasty in *Ancestors and Anxiety: Daoism and the Birth of Rebirth in China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), ch. 2, pp. 60–66.
 - 24) Zhang Yue, “Wei Wei Yuanzhong zuo ji shiling zhanwang bingshi wen” 爲魏元忠作祭石嶺戰亡兵士文 [Composing a memorial for General Wei Yuanzhong to commemorate his soldiers who died at the battle of Shiling], in *Quan Tang wen* 全唐文 [Complete works of Tang literature] (Taiyuan: Shanxi jiaoyu chubanshe, 2002), vol. 233, p. 1404. The *jiwen* originated in ancient China as a dramatic text accompanying the rites of offering and libation to the dead. The importance of this literary genre may be seen from the hundreds of texts found in *Quan Tang wen*.
 - 25) “Shouzang yuhai wangfei zhao” 收葬遇害王妃詔 [Imperial edict for collecting and burying the princess consorts’ corpse murdered in the rebellion], in *Quan Tang wen*, vol. 43, p. 290.
 - 26) Zhang Han, “Jin Zhang Xun Zhongcheng zhuan biao” 進<張巡中丞傳>表 [Petition for the biography of Zhongcheng Zhang Xun], in *Quan Tang wen*, vol. 430, p. 2596.
 - 27) Gao Guofan 高國藩’s discussion of the Meng Jiangnü folktale of Dunhuang does mention the ancient funereal customs of Dunhuang depicted in the tale, but does not touch upon the aspect of invocation rites. *Dunhuang Ming-*

- jian Wenxue* 敦煌民間文學 [The folklore in Dunhuang] (Taipei: Lianjing chubanshe, 1994), pp. 415-422.
- 28) S. 2144 “Jietan sanshi huixiang fayuanwen” 結壇散食回向發願文 [Text of a vow to direct merit for setting an altar to distribute alms], in Huang Zheng 黃徵 and Wu Wei 吳偉 eds., *Dunhuang Yuanwen Ji* 敦煌願文集 [Dunhuang collection of prayers] (Changsha: Yuelu shushe, 1995), p. 564. The research dates S. 2144 in the early 10th century. See Rong Xinjiang 榮新江, *Guoyijun-shi yanjiu* 歸義軍史研究 [Studies in the history of the allegiance army] (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1996), pp. 129-132.
- 29) In 1961, Dzo Ching-chuan and Paul Demieville edited for the first time the 6 songs concerning Meng Jiangnü which are found on the back side of the P.3718 manuscript. Then a debate over the interpretation of these songs arose between Ren Erbei and Rao Zongyi. Pan Chonggui 潘重規 put their arguments together and interpreted the text for the time being. See Pan Chonggui, “Dunhuang xieben quizi Meng Jiangnü de zhendang” 敦煌寫本曲子孟姜女的震蕩 [The stir caused by the Dunhuang manuscript of Meng Jiangnü folk songs], in *Dunhuang Cihua* 敦煌詞話 [Commentary on Dunhuang lyrics] (Taipei: Shimen tushu, 1981), pp. 2-7.
- 30) Xiangchu’s annotation on p. 104 states that *Qipian* 七篇 “may be the seven classics of Confucianism.” However, this is debatable. In a 742 AD petition to Emperor Xuanzong requesting an order to the official chroniclers about *Nanhua Zhenjing* 南華真經, Chen Xilie 陳希烈 asks that Zhuangzi be addressed as the Daoist Saint of Nanhua by the Emperor and his works up to first, most essential “The Seven Inner Chapters” (those thought to be written by Zhuangzi himself) be renamed the *True Book of Nanhua* (“Qingyi nanhua zhenjing xuanfu shiguan zou” 請以南華真經宣付史官奏 [Petition of requesting an order to the official chroniclers about *Nanhua Zhenjing*], in *Quan Tang wen*, vol. 345, p. 2078). *Nanhua Zhenjing* was thereafter proclaimed the Tang Dynasty’s supreme text of state Daoism.
- During the late years of the Dynasty, Jia Su 賈餗 likened the dream of Zhuangzi to “a butterfly that dusted ten thousand flowers and brought the Seven Chapters back from antiquity” (“Zhuangzhou mengwei hudie fu” 莊周夢爲胡蝶賦 [Lyric of Zhuangzhou’s dream of a butterfly], in *Quan Tang wen*, vol. 731, p. 4444). We can only conclude that the Seven Chapters referred to here is the work of Zhuangzi and implies his encounter with a skull in a dream in juxtaposition to Meng Jiangnü’s reading of this *jiwen* to the dead souls of the skulls lying around her.
- 31) See Yu Junli 于俊利, “Tangdai jiwen de wenti yanbian” 唐代祭文的文體演變 [The evolution of the written style of Tang period *jiwen*], *Shehui Kexue Pinglun* 社會科學評論 2 (2008): 83-90 and Wu Hanqiang 武漢強, “Dunhuang jiwen yanjiu erti” 敦煌祭文研究二題 [Two studies on Dunhuang *jiwen*], *Dunhuang Yanjiu* 敦煌研究 4 (2007): 110-114. Although Wu Hanqiang does reproduce the general form and describe the use of *jiwen* in Dunhuang, he does not touch upon the documents in the case of invocation rites.
- 32) Bibliothèque nationale de France P. 2553 “Wang Zhaojun Bianwen” 王昭君變文 [Memorial for Princess Wang Zhaojun] quoted in Xiang Chu, *Dunhuang*

- bianwen xuanzhu*, p. 223.
- 33) Tokura Hidemi has interpreted this piece as a conversation between the souls of the dead and the celebrant attempting to give them repose, while arguing that the invocation ceremony can be traced back to the section on the invocation of souls in *Chuchi*. See “Kan Gyoka ‘Sen Jo Nan’ ni kansuru Ichi Kosatsu” 漢饒歌『戰城南』に關する一考察 [On the Han period ballad *Zhan Chengnan*], in *Chugoku Koten Bungaku Ronshu: Matsuura Tomohisa Hakushi Tsuito Kinen* 中國古典文學論集：松浦友久博士追悼記念 [Collection of essays on Chinese classical literature in commemoration of Dr. Matsuura Tomohisa] (Tokyo: Kenbun Shuppan, 2006): pp.193–214.
- 34) Du Guangting, *Taishang huanglu zhaiyi* 太上黃籙齋儀 [The supreme yellow register retreat canon], vol. 41, in *Zhengtong Daozang*, f. 9, p. 300.
- 35) *Taishang Sandong Biaowen* 太上三洞表文 [Memorials of the three caverns of the most high], vol. 2, Qianba wangling zhang 遷拔亡靈章 [Petition for sublimating souls], in *Zhengtong Daozang*, f. 19, p. 877.
- 36) Ofuchi Ninji 大淵忍爾, ed., *Chugokujin no Shukyo Girei: Bukkyo Dokyo Minkan Shinko* 中國人の宗教儀禮：佛教道教民間信仰 [Religious ceremonies among the Chinese: Buddhist, Daoist and folk beliefs] (Tokyo: Fukutake Shoten, 1983), p.403.
- 37) Zhang Yue, “Wei Wei Yuanzhong zuo ji shilling zhanwang bingshi wen.”
- 38) *Ibid.*
- 39) Li Yi, “Congjun yeci liuhubei yinma mojiashi wei zhushang ci” 從軍夜次六胡北飲馬磨劍石爲祝殤辭, in *Quan Tang shi*, vol. 282, p. 3211.
- 40) Ren Bantang (Erbei) 任半塘, *Duanhuang Geci Zongbian* 敦煌歌辭總編 [Collected Dunhuang folksongs] (Shanghai, Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1987), p. 583.
- 41) Jing Shengxuan 景盛軒, “Shuo bosan” 說「餗餼」 [On *Bosan*], *Guhanyu Yanjiu* 古漢語研究, 4 (2007): 62–63. Du Zhengqian 杜正乾, “Dunhuang fojiao wenxian jiaoshi erze” 敦煌佛教文獻校釋二則 [Two interpretations of Dunhuang Buddhist texts], *Tushuguan Zazhi* 圖書館雜誌 1 (2008): 72–73 have discussed the term *posan* 潑散 found in many Dunhuang and Tang poetry texts.
- 42) Wang fu 王溥, “Hanshi baisao” 寒食拜掃, in *Wudai Huiyao* 五代會要 [Essential facts of the Five Dynasties period] (Shanghai, Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1978), vol. 3, p. 39.
- 43) S. 8427 “Jietan sanshi huixiang fayuanwen,” in *Dunhuang Yuanwen Ji*, pp. 572–576. In his analysis of Dunhuang sources related to Buddhist alms-giving, Yu Xin 餘欣 states, “In the rites pertaining to alms-giving, folk religious practices coexisted with those of Buddhism, Daoist and Esoteric rites without contradiction. The rituals were characterized by a great deal of integration and flexibility and were by no means pure Buddhist liturgy” (*Shendao renxin, Tang Song zhiji Dunhuang minsheng zongjiao shehuishi yanjiu* 神道人心—唐宋之際敦煌民生宗教社會研究 [The way of the Gods, the hearts of men: Social history of folk religion in Dunhuang during the Tang and Song periods] (Beijing, Zhonghua shuju, 2006), pp. 56–74).
- 44) The conventional research has criticized this appeal scene for “spreading

superstition” and argues that it lessens the value of the whole story. For example, Ren Bantang in his *Duanhuang Geci Zongbian*, p. 575 borrows a quote from Zhao Jingshen saying, “Such superstitious belief in money with no value is unacceptable.” Beliefs about *ligui* and the liturgy regarding dead souls were matters of infinite truth for the ancients, and we scholars have no right to hold them responsible with our modern definitions of “superstition.” Rather we should be more sensitive in acknowledging the background of religious culture in ancient society. Only then will we begin to gain more insight into the social context of the literary works of the past.

- 45) Kominami Ichiro, *Soji* 楚辭 (Chikuma Shobo, 1973), pp. 48–55; idem, *Soji to Sono Chushakusha Tachi* 楚辭とその注釋者たち [*Chuci* and its commentators] (Kyoto: Hoyu Shoten, 2003), pp. 80–118; and Tokura Hidemi, “Kan Gyoka ‘Sen Jo Nan’ ni kansuru Ichi Kosatsu.” The last work contains an analysis of the structure of Han *naoge* from the viewpoint of invocation rites for the souls of heroes. For a detailed treatment of the relationship of rites for the repose of souls and the origins of drama, see Saigo Nobutsuna 西郷信綱, “Chinkon Ron” 鎮魂論 [On the comforting of souls], in *Shi no Hase-Bungaku ni okeru Genshi Kodai no Imi* 詩の發生—文學における原始・古代の意味 [The origins of poetry: The meaning of primitive times in literature] (Tokyo: Miraisha, 1964), pp. 241–294.
- 46) Wen Yiduo, “Jiuge’ de jieou” 『九歌』的結構 [The structure of *Jiuge*], in *Wen Yiduo Quanji* 聞一多全集 [Collected works] (Wuhan: Hubei renmin chubanshe, 1993), f. 5. pp. 353–355.
- 47) There are records of the complete dramatic works from the 11th century on. For example, there is a dramatic script entitled *Meng Jiangnü Yuanben* 孟姜女院本 from *Jin Yuanben* 金院本 [Dramatic scripts of the Jin dynasty] recorded in a catalog contained in *Chuogeng Lu* 輟耕錄 [Notes upon retirement from farming], vol. 25. For the Yuan period, the dramatist Zheng Tingyu 鄭廷玉’s *Meng Jiangnü Song Hanyi Zaju* 孟姜女送寒衣雜劇 [Meng Jiangnü sending the winter clothing] is found in the catalog in *Lu Gui Bu* 錄鬼簿 [A registry of ghosts]. For the Ming period there are two *chuanqi* 傳奇 dramas, *Qiliangqi Chuanqi* 杞良妻傳奇 [Opera of Qi Liang’s wife] and *Changchengji Chuanqi* 長城記傳奇 [Opera of the Great Wall] by anonymous authors in *Quhai Zongmu Tiyaoyao* 曲海總目提要 [Catalog and synopses of the world of drama], vol. 35. Also *Yongle Dadian* 永樂大典 [Encyclopedia of the Yongle era], vol. 13966 records the drama *Meng Jiangnü Song Hanyi* 孟姜女送寒衣. However, all of these versions of the tale have unfortunately been lost.
- 48) A reconstruction by Qian Nanyang in *Songyuan Xiwen Ji* 宋元戲文輯佚 [Collected Song and Yuan period dramatic works] (Shanghai: Gudian wenxue chubanshe, 1956), pp. 84–86. Wang Gulu, *Mingdai Huidiao Xiqu Sanchu Ji* 明代徽調戲曲散出輯佚 [Collected rare Ming period drama scenes of Anhui music] (Shanghai: Gudian wenxue chubanshe, 1956), pp. 36–38 contains scenes from *Changcheng Ji* 長城記, and pp. 151–153 has a scene from *Meng Jiangnü* in *Na Shuying qupu buyi* 納書楹曲譜補遺 [Appendix to music for the bookshelf, 1791], vol. 4.
- 49) *Zhahui qimiao xubian quanjia jinnang Jiangnü hanyiji xia liujuan* 摘匯奇妙續編全

- 家錦囊姜女寒衣記下六卷, in Sun Chongtao 孫崇濤 and Huang Shizhong 黃仕忠 eds., *Fengyue Jinnang Jianjiao* 風月錦囊箋校 [Brocade pouch of romances collated and annotated] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2000), pp. 633-647.
- 50) Xu Hongtu, annot., *Zhejiang Xinggan Xi* 浙江醒感戲 [Sense of awakening plays in Zhejiang Province], Mingsu Quyi Congshu 民俗曲藝叢書 f. 96 (Taipei: Shih Hocheng Foundation, 2007), pp. 173-174.
- 51) On the the relationship of sense of awakening drama to Daoist ritual, see Judith Magee Boltz, “Exploring the Daoist Canon for Ritual Counterparts to Xinggan xi,” in Lian Xiaoming 連曉鳴 ed., *Tiantaishan ji Zhejiang quyu daojiao guoji xueshu yantaohui lunwenji* 天臺山暨浙江區域道教國際學術研討會論文集 [Proceedings of the international research conference on the Daoism of Mount Tiantai and the Province of Zhejiang] (Hangzhou: Zhejiang guji chubanshe, 2008), pp. 447-479.
- 52) On the Daoist ritual order and guidance at the inner alter, see *Zhejiang Xinggan Xi*, pp. 175-191.
- 53) *Hancheng Shang* 撼城殤 is also known in the conventional literature as *Meng Jiangnü* and *Changcheng Ji* as mention above, none these literary works exist today. All that exist today are a copy of a script for the role of a clown (丑) in *Changcheng Ji* in 1911 and script for the role of a young woman (旦) in *Meng Jiangnü* in 1929. Both scripts are contained in *Zhejiang Xinggan Xi*, pp.126-143.
- 54) Hao-li appears in both Dunhuang manuscripts P. 5039 and P. 5019 concerning Meng Jiangnü. At the same time, other Dunhuang *bianwen* feature such Buddhist underworlds as Hell and the three dark realms (fire=Hell, bloodletting=animal and the sword=hungry ghost). At the present stage of an ongoing analysis of religious terminology and concepts of the underworld, we assume that the Dunhuang Meng Jiangnü ritual text is most closely related to Daoist salvation rites and await further research. Concerning Tang period Daoist salvation ritual, see Kominami Ichiro, “Dokyo Shinko to Shisha no Kyusai” 道教信仰と死者の救済 [Daoist beliefs and salvation of the dead], *Toyo Gakujutsu Kenkyu* 東洋學術研究 27 (1988): 74-107.
- 55) Wang wei, “Yushan shennu ci ge” 魚山神女祠歌, in Chen Tieming 陳鐵民, annot., *Wang Wei Ji Jiaozhu* 王維集校注 [Collation a and annotation of the collected works of Wang Wei], vol. 1, pp. 52-53.
- 56) Wang Wei, “Liangzhou jiaowai youwang” 涼州郊外游望 [Overlooking the outskirts of Liangzhou], in *Wang Wei Ji Jiaozhu*, vol. 2, p. 139.