

Sun Buer: Early Quanzhen Matriarch and the Beginnings of Female Alchemy

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Abstract

This article is the first detailed historical study of the life, teachings, and practices of Sun Buer (1119–83), the only female member of the so-called Seven Perfected of Quanzhen (Complete Perfection) Daoism. Drawing upon the earliest hagiographical accounts, this study provides an accurate picture of the historical Sun, with particular attention to her personal life and social location in the early Quanzhen movement. It includes complete annotated translations of the only extant writings reasonably attributed to Sun Buer.

Keywords

Daoism – female alchemy – Quanzhen – Sun Buer

Introduction

Sun Buer 孫不二 (Qingjing 清靜 [Clear Stillness]; 1119–83) is one of the most famous female Daoists in Chinese history.¹ Specifically, she was the only female

* For *k.t.*, *American Kundao*. An earlier version of this article was presented at the 7th International Conference on Daoist Studies: “Women and the Feminine” held at Nanyue (Changsha), Hunan, June 24–28, 2011. Here it was inspiring to observe the ways in which Sun Buer remains present in the lives of contemporary female Daoists. I am grateful for the support and contributions of Kate Townsend (Daoist Foundation), Suzanne Cahill (University of California, San Diego), Harriet Zurndorfer (*Nan Nü*), and the two anonymous *Nan Nü* reviewers.

1 I have chosen to use “female Daoist” rather than “Daoist woman” because I believe that the former more accurately reflects the order of importance in terms of Sun’s identity. She was a Daoist first, and a woman second. That is, her gender identity was less important

member of the so-called Seven Perfected (*qizhen* 七真) of early Quanzhen 全真 (Complete Perfection) Daoism, which was an ascetic, eremitic, alchemical and mystical movement at the end of the twelfth century.² The Seven Perfected were the senior Shandong disciples of Wang Zhe 王嘉 (Chongyang 重陽 [Redoubled Yang]; 1113–70), the founder of Quanzhen. Sun Buer apparently enters Daoist history as a first-generation Quanzhen initiate. However, her life-story is much more complex. It includes birth into a prominent eastern Shandong scholar family and a literary education in her youth. She married Ma Yu 馬鈺 (Danyang 丹陽 [Elixir Yang]; 1123–84), experienced three pregnancies, and gave birth to and raised three children. Thus Sun experienced wifehood and motherhood before meeting Wang Chongyang in 1167.³ After this date, she witnessed her husband and local acquaintances become Wang's earliest Shandong disciples. Such discipleship involved complete dedication to an

than her religious identity. For some general studies of and insights into the place of women in Daoism, see Suzanne Cahill, "Practice Makes Perfect: Paths to Transcendence for Women in Medieval China," *Taoist Resources* 2.2 (1990): 23–42; Suzanne Cahill, *Transcendence and Divine Passion: The Queen Mother of the West in Medieval China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993); Suzanne Cahill, *Divine Traces of the Daoist Sisterhood: Records of the Assembled Transcendents of the Fortified Walled City* (Cambridge, MA: Three Pines Press, 2006); Catherine Despeux, *Immortelles de la Chine ancienne: Taoïsme et alchimie féminine* (Puisseaux: Pardès, 1990); Catherine Despeux, "Women in Daoism," in Livia Kohn, ed., *Daoism Handbook* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 384–412; Catherine Despeux and Livia Kohn, *Women in Daoism* (Cambridge, MA: Three Pines Press, 2003); Shin-yi Chao, "Good Career Moves: Life Stories of Daoist Nuns of the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries," *Nan Nü: Men, Women and Gender in China* 10.1 (2008): 121–51; Robin Wang, "Daoists on the Southern Marchmount," *Journal of Daoist Studies* 1 (2008): 177–80; Robin Wang, "Kundao: A Lived Body in Female Daoism," *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 36.2 (2009): 277–92.

2 See Louis Komjathy, *Cultivating Perfection: Mysticism and Self-transformation in Early Quanzhen Daoism* (Leiden: Brill, 2007); Louis Komjathy, *The Way of Complete Perfection: A Quanzhen Daoist Anthology* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2013); and also, Stephen Eskildsen, *The Teachings and Practices of the Early Quanzhen Taoist Masters* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004).

3 For some insights in marriage during this period, see Patricia Buckley Ebrey, *The Inner Quarters: Marriage and the Lives of Chinese Women in the Sung Period* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993). On the broader issue of gender and sexuality, see Robert H. van Gulik, *Sexual Life in Ancient China: A Preliminary Survey of Chinese Sex and Society from ca. 1500 BC till 1644 AD* (Leiden: Brill, 2003 [1961]); Alan Cole, *Mothers and Sons in Chinese Buddhism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998); Charlotte Furth, *A Flourishing Yin: Gender in China's Medical History, 960–1665* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999); Paul Rouzer, *Articulated Ladies: Gender and the Male Community in Early Chinese Texts* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2001).

ascetic path, including the renunciation of family life. In the case of Ma and Sun, it also involved divorce and celibacy. Two years later, Sun became a Quanzhen renunciant, the first woman to enter the early eremitic community and emerging regional movement.⁴

The present paper first discusses Sun's life as documented in late medieval Quanzhen hagiographies. In the process, I attempt to distinguish historical fact from legend, although such an endeavor is always challenging when dealing with hagiographies. The next section examines Sun's place in the early Quanzhen community and in late medieval Quanzhen history. Here we find competing conceptions of and attempts to locate Sun. However, she eventually emerges as a member of the so-called Seven Perfected and as an early Quanzhen Matriarch (*zuzong* 祖宗). I suggest that as such she represents the beginning of a nascent Quanzhen Kundao 坤道 line. This part is followed by a discussion of writings attributed to Sun Buer, of which four poems contained in the fourteenth-century *Minghe yuyin* 鳴鶴餘音 (Lingering overtones of a calling crane; DZ 1100; 9 j.) are probably the only authentic ones. Next, I provide a close reading of these poems with particular emphasis on Quanzhen cultivational and alchemical practice according to Sun. As Sun was a woman engaging in internal alchemy and a female Daoist teacher instructing women, I believe that she may be considered one of the source-points for the emergence of late imperial female alchemy (*nüdan* 女丹). The paper concludes with a brief discussion of the later legacy and influence of Sun Buer and an Appendix with complete annotated translations of the only extant writings that may be reasonably attributed to her.

The Life of Sun Buer

Sun Buer's life is documented in four major early and independent hagiographies (biographies of saints), the first three of which originate in the Quanzhen movement itself. These include the following in chronological order:⁵ (1) *Jinlian zhengzong ji* 金蓮正宗記 (Record of the orthodox lineage of the

4 See Komjathy, *Cultivating Perfection*.

5 Catalogue numbers for Daoist textual collections follow my *Title Index to Daoist Collections* (Cambridge, MA: Three Pines Press, 2002), with numbers for the Ming-dynasty Daoist Canon (DZ) paralleling those of Kristofer Schipper and his colleagues. Other abbreviations include *Daozang jiyao* 道藏輯要 (Collected essentials of the Daoist Canon; JY) and *Zangwai daoshu* 藏外道書 (Daoist books outside the Canon; ZW). Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are my own.

golden lotus; abbr. *Jinlian ji*; DZ 173, 5.9a–11b) by Qin Zhian 秦志安 (Shuli 樗櫟 [Useless Timber] 1188–1244) and dated to 1241;⁶ (2) *Lishi zhenxian tidao tongjian houji* 歷世真仙體道通鑑後集 (Comprehensive mirror of successive generations of perfected immortals and those who embody the Dao, later anthology; abbr. *Lishi tongjian houji*; DZ 298, 6.15b–19a) by Zhao Daoyi 趙道一 (fl. 1294–1307) and dated circa 1294; (3) *Jinlian zhengzong xianyuan xiangzhuan* 金蓮正宗仙源像傳 (Illustrated biographies of the orthodox immortal stream of the golden lotus; abbr. *Jinlian xiangzhuan*; DZ 174, 39b–41a) by Liu Zhixuan 劉志玄 (fl. 1326) and Xie Xichan 謝西蟾 (fl. 1326) and dated circa 1326; and (4) *Shangyangzi jindan dayao liexian zhi* 上陽子金丹大要列仙志 (Master Shangyang's great essentials of the golden elixir: Record of arrayed immortals; abbr. *Jindan liexian zhi*; DZ 1069, 6b–7a) by Chen Zhixu 陳致虛 (fl. 1270–1350) and dated circa 1331.⁷ As discussed below, there are also a variety of later, more legendary sources, especially as appearing in late imperial writings associated with Sun.⁸

Drawing on late medieval sources, we may create a syncretic account of Sun's life, but we must keep a number of points in mind. First, the earliest hagiography, the *Jinlian ji*, dates to 1241, about sixty years after Sun's death and about forty years after the death of Qiu Chuji 丘處機 (Changchun 長春 [Perpetual Spring]; 1148–1227), who was the last first-generation member of Quanzhen.⁹ Second, hagiographies are a form of religious and devotional literature.¹⁰ Their primary purpose is to commemorate and inspire veneration of a given

6 Although Quanzhen became the primary name of Wang's community and eventual movement, early adherents also referred to it as Jinlian 金蓮 (Golden Lotus), Xuanfeng 玄風 (Mysterious Movement), and Wuwei qingjing 無為清靜 (Non-action and Clear Stillness). It later became identified as the so-called Beizong 北宗 (Northern School) of internal alchemy. See Komjathy, *Cultivating Perfection*; Komjathy, *The Way of Complete Perfection*.

7 Komjathy, *Cultivating Perfection*; Komjathy, *The Way of Complete Perfection*. See also Despeux, *Immortelles*, 83–95; Judith Boltz, *A Survey of Taoist Literature, Tenth to Seventh Centuries* (Berkeley: Institute of East Asian Studies, 1987), 155–56; Despeux and Kohn, *Women in Daoism* 140–49; Kristofer Schipper and Franciscus Verellen, eds., *The Taoist Canon: A Historical Companion to the Daozang* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004). Most of the Quanzhen entries in the latter were written by Vincent Goossaert.

8 See Boltz, *Survey of Taoist Literature*; Elena Valussi, "Beheading the Red Dragon: A History of Female Inner Alchemy in China" (Ph.D. diss., University of London, 2003).

9 A large portion of this Quanzhen hagiography, including the entry on Sun Buer, has been translated in Komjathy, *The Way of Complete Perfection*.

10 See, for example, Robert Ford Campany, *To Live as Long as Heaven and Earth: A Translation and Study of Ge Hong's Traditions of Divine Transcendents* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002); Komjathy, *The Way of Complete Perfection*.

figure. Such figures are thereby elevated as exemplars of specific religious qualities and models of practice. In the case of Sun Buer, the hagiographical accounts combine biographical and legendary elements. In terms of the latter, like other Daoist immortals (*xianren* 仙人) and Perfected (*zhenren* 真人), various miraculous abilities and occurrences are associated with Sun. Finally, as discussed below, different hagiographies have different motivations, purposes, and intended audiences.

Originally named Sun Fuchun 孫富春, and also referred to as Sun Yuanzhen 孫瑗禎 and Sun Xiangu 孫仙姑, Sun Buer was born in the first month of 1119, under the reign of Song Emperor Huizong 徽宗 (1082–1135; r. 1100–26). She was born into a moderately wealthy landowning family in the Ninghai 寧海 district (present-day Muping 牟平) of eastern Shandong. Her father was the literatus Sun Zhongyi 孫忠翊 (Sun Zhongjing 孫忠靖; fl. 1110–1140), and it appears that the family had at least one child older than Sun Buer, as she was referred to as “the second” (*er* 二). According to the hagiographies, Sun Buer’s birth was a miraculous occurrence. It was heralded by a divine dream that her mother had around the time of conception. In this dream, the mother saw seven cranes playing in her courtyard, six of which flew off leaving the seventh to magically enter her bosom. Like the mothers of sage-emperors and renowned Daoists before her, she intuitively knew that she was pregnant with a child of extraordinary powers, a soon-to-be born immortal symbolized by the crane, the bird of longevity and a mount of the immortals.¹¹

Sun Buer’s childhood was characterized by exhibitions of her divine nature, including exceptional intelligence, devotion to the rites, and observation of the rules of propriety. She enjoyed reciting chants and poems and practicing calligraphy. Born into an intellectual family, she was privileged to receive a literary education. In her teens, she married to Ma Congyi 馬從義 (Ma Yu), the son of a landowning family of the same community and a descendent of Ma Yuan 馬援 (14 BCE–49 CE), a famous general under the Han 漢 dynasty (202 BCE – CE 220). The couple had three sons.¹²

Sun Fuchun and Ma Congyi lived a peaceful life in the northern Shandong peninsula until 1167, when Wang Zhe the founder of Quanzhen, came to Shandong. About a month after his arrival, Wang set himself up in the southern gardens of Ninghai on a piece of property owned by Ma. According to some sources, Wang built a hermitage, called the Quanzhen an 全真庵 (Hermitage for cultivating perfection), and entered a 100-day retreat, which lasted from the first day of the tenth month to the beginning of the lunar new year. When he

11 Despeux, *Immortelles*, 111; Despeux and Kohn, *Women in Daoism*, 142–43.

12 Despeux and Kohn, *Women in Daoism*, 143.



FIGURE 1 *Earliest Extant Depiction of Sun Buer.* SOURCE: *JINLIAN XIANGZHUAN* 金蓮像傳, DZ 174

finally emerged, he began his career as a teacher and religious leader, naming his new movement Quanzhen. Ma Congyi became his follower in 1168, receiving the style-name Yu 钰 (Gold Jade) and religious name Danyang. However, his wife apparently was not pleased – experiencing her husband's interest as a major force disrupting her family life, social standing, and the comforts of her own locality. Some accounts, specifically the hagiographical entry on Sun in the *Jinlian ji*, suggest that rather than entering his retreat voluntarily, Wang Chongyang was locked in his hermitage by an annoyed Sun who wanted him out of her life so badly that she tried to starve him to death. When he was still alive after a hundred days, he had not only perfected his personal sainthood, but also made a reluctant convert of Sun.¹³ Although this account is viable, it is challenged by the parallel entry on Ma Danyang in the same text, which indicates that Wang entered his meditation enclosure on his

¹³ *Jinlian ji*, DZ 173, 5.9b.

own accord.¹⁴ Coupled with the famous episode of dividing pears (*fenli* 分梨) documented in the *Chongyang fenli shihua ji* 重陽分梨十化集 (Chongyang's anthology on ten conversions by dividing pears; abbr. *Fenli shihua ji*; DZ 1155), the relationships between Wang, Ma, Sun, both individually and collectively, must be recognized as complex. This is especially the case with respect to the various motivations and depictions in the extant hagiographies (our main "biographical" sources), deriving as they do from diverse historical contexts. In any case, the story of the retreat, embellished variously, became a model for later monastic practice. "It is also a classical statement on the conflict that women undergo between received social roles, including familial obligations, and their religious calling."¹⁵

Sun's biography in the *Lishi tongjian houji* relates another episode of a similar nature. One day Wang arrived at their house drunk and settled himself not only in Sun's room but even in her bed. Furious about his lack of propriety, Sun marched off to recall her husband who arrived promptly, only to attest that he had just been conversing with Wang in the marketplace and that the latter was neither drunk nor in Sun's bed. An examination of the room found it empty, confirming Wang's numinous powers, and apparently documenting both Sun's strong resistance against him and her reluctant acceptance of his spiritual abilities.¹⁶ From a different perspective, the story demonstrates Sun's high level of moral purity and propriety and confirms her worthiness as a potential disciple of Wang and senior member of the early Quanzhen religious community.

However, the conflict supposedly intensified when Wang demanded the separation of husband and wife, so that they could fully embrace Quanzhen religious commitments and the requirements for religious adherence and training, specifically a renunciant orientation. In order to become a fully-recognized disciple, one had to commit to the life of a renunciant (*chujia* 出家; lit., "leave the family"), which included forsaking intoxicants, sexual activity, greed and material accumulation, as well as anger. The latter were referred to as the Four Hindrances (*sihai* 四害) in early Quanzhen.¹⁷ Wang's demand for separation came in the form of poems and split pears, a homophone for the word "to separate" (*fenli* 分離), which he presented to the couple. As discussed below, the poems are contained in the *Fenli shihua ji*. Ma Yu did not take long to follow Wang's demand. At the age of forty-six, a month after the pears

14 *Jinlian ji*, DZ 173, 3.5a.

15 Despeux and Kohn, *Women in Daoism*, 144.

16 *Jinlian ji*, DZ 298, 6.16b; Thomas Cleary, *Immortal Sisters: Secret Teachings of Taoist Women* (Boston: Shambhala, 1989), 21–22; Despeux and Kohn, *Women in Daoism*, 144.

17 See Komjathy, *Cultivating Perfection*.

arrived early in 1168, Ma separated from his family, abandoned his property, and became a full-time renunciant, joining Wang and three other disciples in the Yanxia dong 煙霞洞 (Cavern of misty vapors) on Mount Kunyu 崑嶺 (near Yantai 煙台 and Weihai 威海 in eastern Shandong).¹⁸

Sun lingered a bit longer before leaving her home. She joined the group in the fifth month of 1169 when they established the Jinlian tang 金蓮堂 (Hall of the golden lotus; Ninghai), and only after Wang had urged her to convert ten times.¹⁹ The Jinlian tang, also known as the Jinlian hui 金蓮會, was one of the five earlier Quanzhen congregations and meeting halls (*wuhui* 五會) in Shandong, with the other four being Yuhua hui 玉華會 (Association of jade flower; Dengzhou 登州), Qibao hui 七寶會 (Association of seven treasures; Wendeng 文登), Sanguang hui 三光會 (Association of three radiances; Fushan 福山), and Pingdeng hui 平等會 (Association of equal rank; Laizhou 萊州).²⁰ Concerning Sun's conversion, Wang Chongyang wrote the following poem:

Over these years, I made ten attempts to convert you through divided pears;	分梨十化是前年，
I matched auspicious times with the heavens in their original suchness.	天與佳期本自然。
At that time you were unwilling to separate from your family;	為甚當時不出離，
You simply waited patiently for the right time to coalesce the Golden Lotus. ²¹	元來只待結金蓮。

Once accepted into the early Quanzhen community, Sun received her Daoist style-name Buer 不二 (Nondual), which indicates her oneness with the Dao and also plays upon her family position as a second child. As Wang Chongyang says in another poem,

In your family, your name was “Second” – Leave it so that your karmic fire may come to an end.	在家只是二婆呼， 出得家緣沒火鑪。
Cultivate your being, making it subtle and fine, And you will be ranked as an immortal. ²²	若會修行成鍛鍊， 教人永永喚仙姑。

18 *Qizhen nianpu*, DZ 175, 8a.

19 *Jinlian xiangzhuan*, DZ 174, 42a.

20 *Jinlian ji*, DZ 173, 2.5a; *Lishi tongjian xubian*, DZ 297, 1.5b–6a.

21 *Jinlian ji*, DZ 173, 5.9b; *Quanzhen ji*, DZ 1153, 2.19a.

22 *Fenli shihua ji*, DZ 1155, 2.6a.

Sun's reluctance to follow the call of the Dao, however predestined, was strong and not easily overcome. It was not only the severance of all family connection and security that made her so hesitant, but also the change in financial and social status. This aspect is noted in yet another poem by Wang Chongyang:

<p>Sun the Second, you hesitate to leave the family life Because you might cause damage to your assets. But if you persist in staying home, The honorable Ma will not become an im- mortal.²³</p>	<p>二婆猶自戀家業， 家業誰知壞了錢。 若是居家常似舊， 馬公無分做神仙。</p>
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As interpreted by Despeux and Kohn, this poem raises an important idea with regard to a woman's decision for the religious life: loyalty and support for a husband who needs to be free from family obligations in order to pursue a religious path. "The issue of loyalty to the husband transforms the problem from being a conflict between personal cultivation and family obligations into a tension between two different dimensions of family obedience – toward her children, native family, and social circle, on the one hand, and her husband, the mainstay of her social status, on the other."²⁴ By becoming a renunciant herself, the argument suggests, a woman frees her husband to realize his immortal potential. Leaving the family is thus the ultimate fulfillment of wifely duty. The argument echoes earlier medieval propaganda in both Buddhism and Daoism, which claimed that the utmost filial piety was concern with the fate of one's parents in the afterlife, and that the most filial act one could perform was to become a monk or nun – or at least give ample donations to monastic institutions.²⁵

When finally a fully-recognized member of the early Quanzhen community, comparable to the status of a nun in the later monastic order, Sun Buer became a resident of the Jinlian hui and received the Daoist religious name Qingjing 清靜 (Clear stillness), which often appears as Qingjing sanren 清靜散人 (Serene one of clarity and stillness). This name draws on the importance of clarity and stillness (*qingjing*) and the *Qingjing jing* 清靜經 (Scripture on clarity and stillness; DZ 620) in early Quanzhen.²⁶ On the most fundamental level, it refers

23 *Fenli shihua ji*, DZ 11551.2b.

24 Despeux and Kohn, *Women in Daoism*, 145.

25 Despeux and Kohn, *Women in Daoism*, 145–46. See also Cole, *Mothers and Sons in Chinese Buddhism*.

26 See Komjathy, *Cultivating Perfection*; Komjathy, *The Way of Complete Perfection*.

to a state of meditative absorption and mystical pervasion as well as to being morally pure, especially through sexual abstinence. Sun Buer was also made privy to several sets of transmissions, notably “secret formulas in cloud-seal script” and “celestial talismans.”²⁷

After her ordination, Sun had little contact with Wang Chongyang, who died shortly thereafter during a visit to Bianliang 汴梁 (present-day Kaifeng, Henan). His four main disciples returned his coffin to his native village in the Zhongnan 終南 mountains for burial and had a temple erected, first known as Zuting 祖庭 (Ancestral hall) and later renamed Chongyang gong 重陽宮 (Palace of redoubled Yang; present-day Huxian 鄠縣, Shaanxi). According to the *Jinlian ji*, Sun did not remain in Shandong either, but moved west, fighting rain, frost and bad terrain until she arrived three years later in Jingzhao 京兆 (present-day Xi'an, Shaanxi) and was reunited with Ma Danyang. When he asserted clearly, and in front of other disciples, that he did not consider himself married anymore, the couple made their separation formal and permanent. Ma wrote the following, which does not appear to exist in any of his anthologies:

I offer this poem to Lady Fuchun	奉報富春姑，
That she may abandon the desire to follow me –	休要隨予，
Today we are no longer husband or wife.	而今非婦亦非夫。
Each must engage in self-cultivation and	
complete perfection according to her own	
situation.	各自修完真面目，
Abandon the three defilements and refine	脫免三塗鍊氣莫教
<i>qi</i> , but do not teach the coarse.	廳，
Whether high or low, there is a sense of relaxation;	上下寬舒，
It is continuous and subtle, as though	
simultaneously existent and nonexistent.	綿綿似有卻如無。
Within each person there is a numinous purity –	箇裏靈童，
If we harmonize ourselves through its influence,	調引動，
We will be able to journey to the immortal	
capital. ²⁸	得赴仙都。

As a final farewell, Ma gave her a transmission centering on this poem and possibly on the alchemical classic *Cantong qi* 參同契 (Token on the kinship of the three; DZ 999),²⁹ whose instructions she followed over the next seven years.

27 *Jinlian ji*, DZ 173, 5.9b.

28 *Jinlian ji*, DZ 173, 5.10a.

29 This passage is open to interpretation, as *cantong* 參同 may simply mean “to agree,”

Sun practiced solitary meditation involving the purification of consciousness, unblocked the orifices and meridians in her body, refined the internal Three Treasures in her three elixir fields (*dantian* 丹田), and eventually attained complete realization. In 1179, she moved to Luoyang 洛陽, Henan and began to attract disciples.³⁰

In Luoyang, she lived in the Feng Xiangdong 風仙姑洞 (Cavern of immortal maiden Feng). This was a mountain-cave hermitage associated with a female Daoist recluse and eccentric³¹ from Henan named Feng Xiangnu 風仙姑 (Immortal maiden Feng; fl. 1145–1179), who had first arrived there in the mid-twelfth century.³² Despeux and Kohn assume that the hermitage had been abandoned when Sun arrived, and that Sun's choice was primarily symbolic: "By choosing this residence, she symbolically inherited not only a female lineage but also a claim to exorcism and eccentricity."³³ Although this may have been the case, it is unclear whether or not Feng was still there when Sun arrived and why Sun chose this location. The matter is further complicated by the fact that same text suggests that Feng lived, at least at some point, in an "upper cave," while Sun lived in the lower one. In addition, the *Lishi tongjian houji* even claims that whenever men would pass by the lower cave, Feng Xiangnu, or perhaps both Feng and Sun, would throw tiles and rocks, and thereby "external demons (*waimo* 外魔) [sexual temptations] could not cause a hindrance."³⁴ This opens up space for a number of conjectures. First, if Feng was still living in the hermitage, she may have become Sun Buer's female master. At the very least, she would have been a fellow Daoist adept. If the two

rather than being a reference to the text. At present, there is no evidence of Ma Danyang's engagement with the *Cantong qi*. However, there is a partially extant commentary by Hao Datong 郝大通 (Taigu 太古 [Great antiquity]/Guangning 廣寧 [Expansive serenity]; 1140–1213). Titled the *Zhouyi cantong qi jianyao shiyi* 周易參同契簡要釋義 (Concise exegesis on the *Zhouyi cantong qi*), the text appears in the first section of the Hao's *Taigu ji* 太古集 (Anthology of Taigu; DZ 1161).

30 *Jinlian ji*, DZ 173, 5.10a; Despeux and Kohn, *Women in Daoism*, 146. The *Jinlian xiangzhuan* of slightly later provenance does not mention the encounter with Ma Danyang and, rather than practicing self-cultivation and alchemical refinement, has Sun in Shaanxi performing rituals for Wang Chongyang before moving to Luoyang (42a).

31 Despeux and Kohn identify Feng as an "exorcist," but the text states that she dirtied her face and disheveled her hair to distance herself from the temptations of human company, literally, "demons of the world" (*shimo* 世魔).

32 *Lishi tongjian houji*, DZ 298, 6.17b. The life and teachings of Feng Xiangnu require more research. Like Sun Buer, she becomes identified as a matriarch of female alchemy during the late imperial period. See Valussi, "Beheading the Red Dragon"; and below.

33 Despeux and Kohn, *Women in Daoism*, 147.

34 *Lishi tongjian houji*, DZ 298, 6.18a.

women lived in the hermitage together, their eremitic community would represent a female parallel to Wang's earlier training in the eremitic community of Liujiang 劉蔣 (present-day Huxian, Shaanxi). Second, whether or not Feng was present at the cave-complex, the site became an eremitic community consisting of female Daoist ascetics – in other words, a proto-Quanzhen abbey. If Feng was present, the community would have been a fusion of Feng and her disciples with Sun and her disciples. If Feng was no longer present, one wonders if her disciples remained in residence there. If there was an established female eremitic community, Sun may have intentionally journeyed there in order to reside among women with similar aspirations and commitments. This latter point raises the question of the number of female Daoist communities in existence during the late medieval period, an understudied topic deserving further research. We do know that after becoming a monastic order under Qiu Chuji and his disciples, the Quanzhen community consisted of monks and nuns. For example, Quanzhen monasteries and temples were established throughout northern China and its clerical membership grew, so that by the late thirteenth century, about a hundred years after Sun's death, there were some 4,000 Quanzhen sacred sites and 20,000 monastics, of which possibly one third were nuns.³⁵ In any case, we know that Sun and her disciples established a Quanzhen eremitic community at Feng Xianggu dong in the late twelfth century and that Sun Buer resided there until her death on the twenty-ninth day of the twelfth month of 1182, at high noon, having predicted the hour of her departure.³⁶ Before her demise, she groomed herself, put on clean clothes, and presented herself to her disciples, sealing her life's work by reciting a poem.³⁷ Sitting erect in lotus posture, she became an immortal.

At the time of her departure, her former husband, although far away in Shandong, supposedly saw her rise up to the heavens on a five-colored cloud, soaring into the empyrean. She looked down on him and smiled, saying, "I'm the first, after all, to return to Penglai 蓬萊." Ma reacted by tearing off his clothes and dancing in celebration of her accomplishment.³⁸ At least according to her hagiography, the final act of Sun Buer, therefore, reaffirmed her role as part of the eternal Dao, as earthly wife of Ma Danyang, and as a

35 Vincent Goossaert, "The Invention of an Order: Collective Identity in Thirteenth-Century Quanzhen Taoism," *Journal of Chinese Religions* 29 (2001): 111–38. See also Vincent Goossaert, "La création du taoïsme moderne: l'ordre Quanzhen" (Ph.D. diss., École Pratique des Hautes Études, Section des Sciences Religieuses, 1997).

36 The post-Sun fate of the female Quanzhen community at the site is unclear.

37 *Jinlian ji*, DZ 173, 5.10b; *Minghe yuyin*, DZ 1100, 5.7a. The poem is translated below.

38 *Jinlian ji*, DZ 173, 3.10a, 5.10b–11a.

transcendent being who had completed the process of alchemical transformation. She triumphed, fully in control of her body and her life, and realized her original destiny by returning in splendor to the immortal realms.³⁹ As the commemorative poem in her hagiography reads,

She wiped off face-powder and the obscurity of dual faces;	洗盡胭脂兩臉霞，
For ten years she exerted herself tending the Yellow Sprouts.	十年辛苦種黃芽。
With accomplishment complete, she mounted an azure Luan-bird;	功成穩跨青鸞背，
She became the seventh petal of the Golden Lotus. ⁴⁰	開到金蓮第七華。

Before we discuss Sun Buer's place in the Quanzhen movement, specifically her recognition as one of the so-called Seven Perfected, we may recognize that the poem draws our attention to Sun as a renunciant and dedicated Daoist adherent. She removed the obscuration of make-up and the presentation of a false face, the construction of beauty based on social conventions. This is an interesting critique of cosmetics as actual practice and as symbolic expression. It recalls foundational Daoist values such as simplicity and naturalness, the Quanzhen emphasis on clarity and purity, as well as alchemical transformation demonstrating numinous presence and shifting *qi* 氣 (subtle breath) configuration. That is, if alchemical praxis transforms the foundation of oneself into a subtle manifestation, one should care quite little for skin and beauty, let alone products that cover skin. Each is a step further into ornamentation and superficiality, a step away from the Dao as one's innate nature. The poem in turn emphasizes dedicated, prolonged and intensive training as well as alchemical praxis aimed at complete psychosomatic transformation and self-divinization.

To summarize, on an actual historical and biographical level, we know that Sun Buer was born in 1119 to a wealthy landowning family and literatus father in present-day Muping, Shandong. She was well educated, as evidenced by her ability to read and write Chinese poetry utilizing traditional forms. She was married to Ma Danyang and gave birth to three children. She eventually divorced Ma, renounced family life, and became a formal disciple of Wang Chongyang in 1169. Thus Sun was around the age of fifty when she became a

39 Despeux and Kohn, *Women in Daoism*, 147.

40 *Jinlian ji*, DZ 173, 5.11b. The Luan was a legendary phoenix-like bird.

first-generation disciple of Wang Chongyang and an initiated member of the early Quanzhen community. Unlike many later Quanzhen nuns, she did not become a Daoist ordinand prior to sexual activity and in the absence of family life. Rather, she experienced both wifehood and motherhood before becoming a priest, teacher, and eventual immortal. In this way, she transcends easy categorization, and provides a variety of models for female Daoist participation.⁴¹ She moved to Luoyang in 1179, lived at the Feng Xiangdong, and gathered a small community of female disciples. She died there in 1183. On a less verifiable level, there are both positive and negative dimensions of the early legend of Sun Buer, which are discussed in more detail below with respect to early Quanzhen. Here we may simply note that Sun was said to have had a semi-miraculous birth, and that she possessed spiritual qualities from an early age. She seems to have had both a pre-destined affinity for Daoism as well as qualities that lent themselves to religious adherence and commitment. That is, her accomplishments were the result of both innate capacities as well as dedicated training. Sun apparently received secret transmissions from both Wang Chongyang and Ma Danyang, and her spiritual accomplishment was confirmed by Ma Danyang following her death, a fact that may have more than mere religious significance. The hagiographies also express ambivalent and contradictory views with respect to Sun's relationship to Wang and Ma and her place in the early Quanzhen community.

Sun Buer and Early Quanzhen Daoism

In terms of early Quanzhen Daoism, Sun Buer is best known as the only female member of the so-called Seven Perfected (*qizhen*), the seven senior first-generation Shandong disciples of Wang Chongyang. This conventional and received characterization raises a number of questions. What was Sun's actual relationship with Wang Chongyang and Ma Danyang? What was her place in the early Quanzhen community? In a larger frame, how were women viewed, and to what degree did women participate in early Quanzhen?

The apparently most straightforward approach to understanding Sun Buer's place in the early Quanzhen community involves tracing the historical usage of *qizhen*, assuming that this phrase actually provides a glimpse into the situation. For the moment, we will assume that it is at least provisionally relevant. Drawing upon earlier scholarship,⁴² Pierre Marsone has traced the early his-

41 See Despeux and Kohn, *Women in Daoism*.

42 David Hawkes, "Quanzhen Plays and Quanzhen Masters," *Bulletin de l'École Française*

tory of the designation of the Seven Perfected.⁴³ Here I will summarize Marsone's revisionist account. The expression "Seven Perfected" refers to two lists. The first includes Wang Chongyang and his six senior male Shandong disciples, namely, Hao Datong 郝大通 (Guangning 廣寧 [Expansive Serenity]; 1140–1213), Liu Chuxuan 劉處玄 (Changsheng 長生 [Perpetual Vitality]; 1147–1203), Ma Yu, Qiu Chuji, Tan Chuduan 譚處端 (Changzhen 長真 [Perpetual Perfection]; 1123–85), and Wang Chuyi 王處一 (Yuyang 玉陽 [Jade Yang]; 1142–1217). The second list does not include Wang Chongyang, who becomes one of the Five Patriarchs (*wuzu* 五組), and adds Sun. Both lists existed during the thirteenth century, but the texts written during the first decades of the Quanzhen movement do not include lists of the Seven Perfected. The first documented group of disciples is that of the "Four Worthies" (*sixian* 四賢): Liu, Ma, Qiu, and Tan. This group is mentioned twelve times in Ma Danyang's works, and it is already attested to in Ma's *Shengguang can* 神光燦 (Luster of spirit radiance; DZ 1150), which was edited in 1175.⁴⁴ In this same year, the first stele of the Quanzhen movement was erected at Qimen zhen 淇門鎮. This stele was carved on the initiative of Tan Chuduan 譚處端 (Changzhen 長真 [Perpetual Perfection]; 1123–85) and completed by a Quanzhen adherent named Shi Daojuan 石道涓 (fl. 1170s). The text of the stele, written by an otherwise unknown Sun Qianmian 孫謙勉, refers to Liu Changsheng, Ma Danyang, Qiu Changchun, and Tan Changzhen as the "Four Immortals" (*sixian* 四仙).

Until the year 1202, or during the first three decades of the Quanzhen movement, there is apparently no clear mention of a group of seven disciples. In that year, Wang Chuyi 王處一 (Yuyang 玉陽 [Jade Yang]; 1142–1217), who had visited the Jin 金 dynasty (1115–1234) court for the third time, made the first known allusion to the Seven Perfected in a poem in which he said, "My master, mystically converting Tan and Ma, increased the grace and seven flowers of the

d'Extrême-Orient 69 (1981): 153–70; Boltz, *Survey of Taoist Literature*, 64–65; Despeux, *Immortelles*, 121–22; Hachiya Kunio 蜂屋邦夫 *Kindai dōkyō no kenkyū – O Chōyō to Ba Tanyō* 金代道教の研究 – 王重陽と馬丹陽 (Tokyo: Tōkyō daigaku Tōyō bunka kenkyūjo hōkoku, 1992); Hachiya Kunio, *Kindai jidai no dōkyō: Shichijin kenkyū* 金元時代の道教: 七真研究 (Tokyo: Tōkyō daigaku Tōyō bunka kenkyūjo hōkoku, 1998).

43 Pierre Marsone, "Accounts of the Foundation of the Quanzhen Movement: A Hagiographic Treatment of History," *Journal of Chinese Religions* 29 (2001): 95–110.

44 This fact may add support and a precedent for Sun Buer's own oblique reference to the Seven Perfected in her poem "To the Tune 'Accentuating Slender Eyebrows.'" See below.

Golden Lotus appeared.”⁴⁵ However, this is simply an allusion, and Wang does not indicate to whom or what the “seven flowers” refer. Forty years later, the *Jinlian ji* clearly asserted that it refers to the Seven Perfected because in that text the immortals order Wang Chongyang to go east in order to find the seven lotus flowers – his seven Shandong disciples.⁴⁶ Moreover, although the term “Seven Perfected” is not used by Wang Yuyang, the first list of the group also appears in members of Wang’s circle. A stele erected in 1214 to commemorate the story of Yuxu guan 玉虛觀 (Monastery of jade emptiness) at Shengshui, one of the centers of Wang’s activity, refers to Wang as the “divine master” (*shenshi* 神師) and asserts that “Danyang, Changzhen, Changsheng, Changchun, and Taigu were [his] brothers in a common undertaking.”⁴⁷ In this sentence, Hao and Wang are put for the first time on the same level as Wang Chongyang’s other disciples. As Sun does not appear, we may assume that the seven flowers, for Wang Yuyang and his followers, were Wang Chongyang and his six senior male Shandong disciples. Five years later, a disciple of Wang Yuyang at Shanzhou, Xin Xisheng 辛希聲 (fl. 1220s), asked the literatus Xin Yuan 辛原 to write a stele. The text presents Wang Yuyang as “the glory of our school ... as famous as the great immortals Qiu, Liu, Tan, Ma, Sun, and Hao.”⁴⁸ Here, after Wang Yuyang’s death, we find the first known list of the Seven Perfected that includes Sun Buer. However, before becoming standardized in 1241, this idea seems to have sparked controversies inside the movement, especially because of the opposition of Qiu Changchun’s circle. It took a long time for the story of the Seven Perfected, for which it appears Wang Yuyang and his disciples were primarily responsible, to be accepted and broadly recognized. The version of the Seven Perfected including Sun Buer was published in the *Jinlian ji* (dat. 1241), but in 1243, when Yuan Haowen 元好問 (1190–1257) wrote two inscriptions for Hao Taigu, he did not mention the Seven Perfected. In 1255 and 1271, there were at least two cases of lists of the Seven Perfected not including Sun Buer. After that date, almost one hundred years after her death, lists not including Sun Buer become less and less common.⁴⁹

45 *Yunguang ji*, DZ 1152, 4.4b; Marsone, “Accounts of the Foundation of the Quanzhen Movement,” 108.

46 *Jinlian ji*, DZ 173, 2.2a.

47 Chen Yuan 陳垣 (1880–1971), *Daojia jinshi lue* 道家金石略 (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1988), 442; Marsone, “Accounts of the Foundation of the Quanzhen Movement,” 109.

48 *Ganshui lu*, DZ 973, 2.5b; Chen Yuan, *Daojia jinshi lue*, 456–57; Marsone, “Accounts of the Foundation of the Quanzhen Movement,” 109.

49 Marsone’s account is problematized and perhaps must be qualified based on Sun Buer’s own writings. Assuming that the attributed poems were actually written by Sun, we find the following line: “[Remember] Tan, Ma, Qiu, Liu, Sun, Wang, and Hao Taigu” (*Minghe*

With these details in mind, we may reflect on their significance for the history of the early Quanzhen community in general and Sun Buer in particular. For Marsone, “we may consider that, by succeeding in introducing this new story of the foundation, he [Wang Yuyang] modified or rectified the initial account of the foundation and, to some extent, took revenge on history.”⁵⁰ Under this view, Wang’s creation of the category of Seven Perfected as the primary framework for understanding early Quanzhen either transformed Quanzhen history or corrected its earlier construction through the lens of the “Four Worthies” and “Four Immortals,” specifically the privileging of Liu, Ma, Qiu, and Tan. However, such analysis is instructive on the contributions and limitations of indigenous Chinese categories for understanding Daoism and Daoist history. Both interpretive frameworks, the “four” and the “seven,” clarify as well as obscure the early history of Quanzhen. With respect to the Four Worthies/Four Immortals framework, Liu, Ma, Qiu, and Tan were the four disciples who accompanied Wang Chongyang on his return journey to Shaanxi. They were the disciples who also witnessed his death in Bianliang, returned and interred his body in Liujiang, observed the traditional mourning period, and established a temple at Wang’s former Shaanxi hermitage and burial site. That is, their “worthiness” may have derived from these events as well as from their geographical and communal proximity: the four lived and practiced together in Shaanxi, while the other disciples tended to the Shandong community. As the earliest datable reference to the Four Worthies is 1175, five years after the death of Wang Chongyang (1170), and as it appears in the writings of Ma, who succeeded Wang as Quanzhen Patriarch, the “four” terms may be more about specific events and leadership structure than about the configuration of the early disciples or community. As I have suggested elsewhere,⁵¹ and as discussed below, there were two primary early Quanzhen communities: one in Shaanxi, which was probably earlier, and one in Shandong, which became more powerful in terms of institution and more influential in terms of historiography. Following Wang Chongyang’s death, Ma became the leader of the Shaanxi line, while Wang Yuyang became the leader of the Shandong line. It was only after the death of Wang Yuyang (1217) and Qiu Changchun’s ascendance to the position of Quanzhen Patriarch and his establishment of the Quanzhen monastic order that both communities were fully united.

yuyin, DZ 1100, 6.13a). That is, at least in Sun’s eyes, she was one of the so-called Seven Perfected. See below.

50 Marsone, “Accounts of the Foundation of the Quanzhen Movement,” 109–10.

51 Komjathy, *Cultivating Perfection*.

There are other dimensions involved in the Four Worthies/Seven Perfected constructions as well. These include age, gender, educational background, family and social standing, as well as geography. The seniority of the first-generation disciples would have been based, first and foremost, on age, date of conversion, and relationship with Wang Chongyang. Their birthplaces, birthdates, and dates of conversion are as follows: (1) Sun (Ninghai; 1119; 1169); (2) Ma (Ninghai; 1123; 1168); (3) Tan (Ninghai; 1123; 1167); (4) Hao (Ninghai; 1140; 1168); (5) Wang (Ninghai; 1142; 1167); (6) Liu (Donglai; 1147; 1167); and (7) Qiu (Qixia; 1148; 1167). The matter is complicated by a number of factors. It appears that Liu, Ma, Sun, Tan, and Wang were all part of the same social circle in Ninghai, although Sun was anomalous in terms of gender.⁵² There were also generational issues: Ma, Sun, and Tan were about twenty years older than Hao and Wang and almost thirty years older than Liu and Qiu. Moreover, the senior Quanzhen adherents had lived about twice as long as Liu and Qiu when they became Wang Chongyang's disciples. Such divergence in life experience must have created certain group dynamics. Finally, we know that Hao Guangning was somewhat peripheral to the main group, and that he may have been the only disciple actively recruited by Wang. Sun Buer's position is especially interesting: she was the eldest first-generation disciple in terms of age, but would have been the lowest in terms of conventional Chinese gender constructions. Taken together, these details provide additional points for reflection on the "four" and the "seven."

Following the death of Wang Chongyang, there seems to have been competing attempts to establish power, position, and authority. Ma, Qiu, and their circles were the most successful with the Four Worthies framework, but Wang and his circle were also influential with the Seven Perfected framework. However, even the latter was contentious, as some lists include and some exclude Sun Buer. I will explore Sun's actual position in the early community momentarily. However, in terms of the "Seven Perfected," it appears that her gender and relative powerlessness played a role in her exclusion. In contrast, her contributions to the development of Quanzhen are noteworthy on a number of levels, and her increasing inclusion in standardized lists of the Seven Perfected probably reflected changing socio-historical contexts and institutional demographics, specifically the relatively high number of nuns in the Quanzhen monastic order. We may, in turn, think of the elite members of the early Quanzhen community in terms of center and periphery. Ma, Wang, and Qiu were the

52 Of the Seven Perfected, it also appears that both Hao Guangning and Tan Changzhen were married prior to their conversion to Quanzhen and subsequently divorced their wives, who are not mentioned in any significant way in the hagiographies.

center following Wang Chongyang's death, while Liu and Tan were slightly more peripheral, serving primarily as their supporters and fellow elders. Hao and Sun were at the periphery, with neither being fully accepted by the other first-generation disciples and both following their own semi-independent paths.⁵³

Beyond the use of such indigenous categories, with their perhaps political motivations, we may make some additional inquiries into the early Quanzhen community. This will enable us to better understand the changing position and fortune of Sun Buer in terms of both Daoist and Chinese historiography. With regard to obscurity, the Four Worthies/Seven Perfected and similar frameworks overemphasize certain charismatic individuals, religious leaders, and the clerical elite. Although the activities and contributions of these individuals were centrally important for the success of early Quanzhen, especially in terms of the transition from a small eremitic community to a regional and then national religious movement,⁵⁴ the history of early Quanzhen is more complex in terms of adherence, demographics, dissemination, and institution. For example, we know that before becoming the "founder of Quanzhen" Wang Chongyang lived and trained with two Shaanxi hermits, namely, He Dejin 和德瑾 (Yuchan 玉蟾 [Jade Toad]; d. 1170) and Li Lingyang 李靈陽 (Lingyang 靈陽 [Numinous Yang]; d. 1189).⁵⁵ While living in the Liujiang eremitic community, Wang also accepted his two earliest known disciples: Shi Chuhou 史處厚 (Dongyang 洞陽 [Cavernous Yang]; 1102–74) and Yan Chuchang 嚴處常 (1111–83), both of whom are excluded from the standard hagiographies centering on Wang's main Shandong disciples. Moreover, after arriving in Shandong, Wang's first known convert was Liu Tongwei 劉通微 (Moran 默然 [Silent Suchness]; d. 1196).⁵⁶ Liu Tongwei did not stay with Wang, but instead went west to the Zhongnan mountains,⁵⁷ most likely to join the eremitic community at Liujiang.⁵⁸ Moreover, it appears that Wang Yuyang's widowed mother, whose maiden name was Zhou 周, went to Yanxia dong and became a renunciant. Wang Chongyang gave her the style-name Deqing 德清 (Virtue Purified) and

53 See Komjathy, *Cultivating Perfection*.

54 See Komjathy, *Cultivating Perfection*; Komjathy, *The Way of Complete Perfection*.

55 See *Jinlian ji*, DZ 173, 2.10a–14a; *Zhongnan neizhuan*, DZ 955, 1.1a–4a.

56 For English translations of the hagiographies of He Dejin, Li Lingyang, Liu Tongwei, Shi Chuhou, and Yan Chuchang, see Komjathy, *The Way of Complete Perfection*.

57 *Zhongnan neizhuan*, DZ 955, 1.4ab.

58 The *Zhongnan neizhuan* is the only Shaanxi-centered early Quanzhen hagiography. The others, namely, the *Jinlian ji*, *Jinlian xiangzhuan*, *Qizhen nianpu*, and much of the extant epigraphy are Shandong-centered.

religious name Xuanjing 玄靖 (Mysterious Stillness).⁵⁹ In terms of the present discussion, Zhou Deqing is especially noteworthy because she may have been another senior female disciple of Wang Chongyang. In any case, these details suggest that, in terms of the clerical elite, the early Quanzhen community consisted of at least eleven and possibly thirteen senior disciples, if not more. He, Li, Liu, Shi, and Yan were no doubt instrumental in maintaining and directing the early Shaanxi community.

Beyond the construction of religious affiliation in terms of charismatic leaders and clerical elite, we also know that the early Shandong community consisted of the above-mentioned Five Associations. It is generally unclear who initiated such establishments, how many people participated, what types of activities occurred, and what, if any, lasting influence they had on the later development of Quanzhen as a formal monastic order. As the modern scholar Yao Tao-chung has pointed out, "Since all of these places are in the northern part of Shan-tung peninsula and cover an area approximately two hundred miles long, it is fair to say that at the beginning the Ch'üan-chen sect claimed a rather small sphere of influence."⁶⁰ However, these meeting halls did provide a communal context for the early Quanzhen adepts, a place for potential adherents to become familiar with Quanzhen views and practices, and an opportunity for lay participation and involvement.

A number of other points should be made concerning these associations. First, although it is generally unknown who established them and how many people participated, we have only some fragmentary information. It seems that the Yuhua hui was established by two lay patrons by the name of Zhang 張 and Shao 邵.⁶¹ In addition, another source informs us that the Pingdeng hui may have had as many as one thousand members.⁶² The Shandong Quanzhen laity no doubt consisted of large numbers of women and families. Even a conservative estimate would have to acknowledge that at least one quarter, or 250 women, participated in the Pingdeng meeting hall.⁶³ Second, the early

59 *Jinlian xiangzhuan*, DZ 174, 36ab.

60 Yao Tao-chung, "Ch'üan-chen: A New Taoist Sect in North China during the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries" (Ph.D. diss., University of Arizona, 1980), 48. See also Yao Tao-chung, "Quanzhen – Complete Perfection," in Livia Kohn, ed., *Daoism Handbook*, 567–93.

61 *Quanzhen ji*, DZ 1153, 3.17a; Marsone, "Accounts of the Foundation of the Quanzhen Movement," 102.

62 *Lishi tongjian xubian*, DZ 297, 1.6a; Hachiya, *Kindai dōkyō no kenkyū*, 132; Eskildsen, *Teachings and Practices*, 10.

63 In this respect, one also thinks of the large numbers of elderly Chinese women who form the lay foundation of many contemporary Daoist temple communities. Author's field observations.

Quanzhen associations were lay organizations overseen by Wang Chongyang and his more dedicated disciples. We know that Wang accepted very few full-fledged disciples, since few were ready for his form of extreme renunciation and training. By establishing these associations, Wang created a context where those with less resolve and fortitude could gain spiritual benefits. The fact that the alternative names of these associations included *sanjiao* 三教 (The Three Teachings; Buddhism, Confucianism, and Daoism) suggests that Quanzhen's notoriety for "syncretism" may have come more from its popularized form than its internal dynamics. That is, in the context of lay associations, elite members of early Quanzhen seem to have emphasized parallels among the three traditions, especially with regard to basic morality. However, in their own religious praxis, ascetic and alchemical practices played a much stronger role. The associations also were places where communal ritual was carried out and where basic forms of meditation, emphasizing clarity and stillness, were taught. Finally, while the formation of these associations was at least partially intended to introduce the general population to the Quanzhen beliefs as well as basic ethical and meditation practice, there can be little doubt that these community centers also created patterns of patronage. Such lay patronage and popular support were instrumental in transforming semi-independent Quanzhen renunciants into a clerical and monastic elite. These points help temper the tendency to define early Quanzhen only in terms of the Four Worthies, Seven Perfected, or even "eleven first-generation disciples." They draw our attention to the mostly forgotten "ordinary adherents" and lay patrons who participated in the early community and who helped to ensure its flourishing and dissemination. Like the incorporation of the cult of Lü Dongbin 呂洞賓,⁶⁴ as well as the use of lineage-names and the institutionalization of "meditation enclosure,"⁶⁵ the Four Worthies and Seven Perfected frameworks are probably best understood as part of early Quanzhen "institution-building mechanisms." As such, they may obscure our understanding of Sun's place in the early community.

We have now discussed the most important points related to Sun and Quanzhen, namely the parameters of her own life. While it apparently took some time for Sun to become convinced of Wang Chongyang's worthiness, a trait perhaps deserving emulation in the modern world, she did eventually become a Quanzhen renunciant and was accepted as a formal disciple by Wang. She separated from Ma and embraced foundational Quanzhen commitments, including celibacy, sobriety, voluntary simplicity, psychological equanimity,

64 See Paul Katz, *Images of the Immortal: The Cult of Lü Dongbin at the Palace of Eternal Joy* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1999).

65 See Goossaert, "La création du taoïsme moderne"; Goossaert "The Invention of an Order."

and avoidance of anger. She stayed behind when Wang left Shandong and apparently helped minister to the needs of the community of the Jinlian hui. She also gathered her own disciples. After Wang's death and her final separation from Ma, she moved to Luoyang and established a female Quanzhen community. These details in and of themselves reveal Sun as both an integral member of the early Quanzhen community and as an emerging model for female participation, which I will discuss in more detail below.

Sun's actual place in the early Quanzhen community is obscured and perhaps irretrievable based on the paucity of non-hagiographical sources, specifically poetry exchanges. As far as my reading goes, there are only four extant poems in the writings of Wang and Ma addressed to Sun. In addition to those cited above from Wang's *Fenli shihua ji*, Ma wrote one poem on their separation and another praising Sun's level of spiritual cultivation.⁶⁶ These writings are insufficient to provide a clear glimpse into the situation. While some scholars might argue that such scarcity is itself telling, it is always problematic to rely on absence. For example, most of Wang's extant personal poems are addressed to Ma or to lay patrons and associates. This testifies to Ma's relatively high status in Wang's eyes as well as the efforts of Ma's disciples in preserving remnants of their relationship. However, poems by Wang and Ma addressed to other members of the so-called Seven Perfected are also relatively scarce. It may, in turn, be that Sun's interaction with the other senior disciples was primarily oral, that written exchanges occurred in the form of more ephemeral letters, or that various poems were lost and/or uncollected. It may also be that the surviving poems are the complete record, but given Wang and Ma's propensity for poetic expression this seems highly unlikely. Adding the positive dimensions of the hagiographies, at the very least Wang and Ma recognized Sun's abilities and accepted her as a member of the early circle.

Moving more deeply into the hagiographies, one wonders about Sun's exclusion and inclusion. One is tempted to read a linear development, from marginalization to incorporation. However, as mentioned, Sun's position in the early community remains unclear. It may be that she was more or less central in the early community, and then excluded for a variety of reasons. Alternatively, she may have never been part of Wang's inner circle, and then later included for a variety of reasons. We may, in turn, examine the relevant depictions (constructions) of Sun in the extant hagiographies and then reflect on her gradual incorporation into the so-called Seven Perfected. The *Jinlian ji*, written by a third-generation Quanzhen monastic in Qiu's line, suggests that Sun may have

66 *Jinyu ji*, DZ 1149, 7.6a and *Jianwu ji*, DZ 1142, 1.3b–4a, respectively.

locked Wang in his hermitage and declined to provide food or water.⁶⁷ Like most of the apparently disparaging dimensions of the hagiographies, this account finds no support in the actual writings of the early Quanzhen adherents. Moreover, Sun was still living with Ma at the time; she had contact with the other disciples; and Wang Chongyang was exchanging poetry with various individuals, poems that express no hardship or suffering. If one believes Qin Zhian's account, then one must in turn believe that Ma and perhaps the other disciples were either complicit in or actively involved in Sun's activities. This is highly unlikely. So, one must conclude that the hagiography is unreliable on this account.

What then were the motivations behind the various hagiographies, and why was Sun excluded and included from the emerging Seven Perfected framework? As we have seen, Sun Buer was a member of the early Quanzhen community. She was recognized as such by Wang Chongyang and Ma Danyang, the first two Quanzhen Patriarchs. Although somewhat peripheral to the center of early Quanzhen, especially as it transitioned from a local community and regional movement to a national one, Sun Buer contributed in her own ways to the growth and flourishing of Quanzhen. Given these historical facts, it appears that her "exclusion" primarily accurately reflects her peripheral position. The hagiographies are, however, perhaps more problematic. Although they include and generally revere Sun, they also express some troubling views. As mentioned, most of the extant hagiographies were written by male Quanzhen adherents, especially later members of Qiu's line. None of them were written by Sun's disciples, and we have to wait until the late imperial period to find such hagiographies written by female Daoists and pro-female authors. I would, in turn, suggest that, like their non-Daoist Chinese contemporaries, some male members of early Quanzhen expressed patriarchal biases and misogynistic tendencies. Unlike the case of Wang Yuyang, who seems to have been marginalized and unrecognized for political reasons, Sun's early institutional position appears to have been one of perceived irrelevance. Her marginal position may also have been the result of not only her gender, but also her former relationship with Ma Danyang. There must have been some tension and discomfort derived from the presence of a former wife of Wang's senior disciple, a woman who no longer had any claim to privileged access. At the same time, and perhaps most telling, the occasional attempt to vilify Sun as the woman who may have attempted to kill the founder (!) parallels other Quanzhen views concerning women.⁶⁸ This is especially relevant for the present discussion.

67 *Jinlian ji*, DZ 173, 5.9b.

68 Again, as previously mentioned, this view is problematized by the parallel entry on Ma

Although Wang Chongyang accepted women as disciples, and although the early community clearly consisted of large numbers of women, early Quanzhen had some phallogocentric dimensions. For example, internal alchemy (*neidan* 内丹) practice was almost always framed through the lens of the male embodiment and experience; there was no *neidan* practice specifically for women.⁶⁹ Rather, the foundation of alchemical praxis involved the conservation of vital essence (*jing* 精), specifically defined in terms of seminal emission. That is, conservation involved non-dissipation of vital essence through male sexual activity, whether actual or imagined. The Quanzhen solution was celibacy and sexual purity. However, within the male Quanzhen renunciant imagination, women were also a source of temptation and dissipation. This was the case not only with respect to actual women, but also in terms of renunciants' psychical experiences. Thus, women are identified as both one of the Ten Demons (*shimo* 十魔) and potential yin-ghosts (*yinqui* 陰鬼).⁷⁰ The former are potential forms of dissipation and hindrances to spiritual progress, while the latter are dream-time phantasms ("wet dreams"). Thus, actual women, as potential sexual partners, and imaginary women, especially as forms of sexual attraction in fantasies and dreams, could lead to seminal emission and to dissipation. Such views are the product of a male imagination, specifically a Quanzhen renunciant one. Here we must be careful of giving a modern feminist reading of such views, especially one that utilizes a "presentist bias" (i.e., taking the present as the standard by which to judge the past). On the one hand, they express actual male experiences. On the other, they objectify women as sources of sexual attraction. Both views are phallogocentric, but the former is rooted in Daoist religious practice and experience. They cannot be dismissed simply because they may offend modern feminist sensibilities. They may represent a radical challenge to modern conceptions of sexuality. Thus, a balanced account of the actual place of women and their doctrinal position in early

Danyang in the *Jinlian ji*, wherein we are told that Wang Chongyang voluntarily entered his meditation retreat. This leaves open questions about discrepancies. My own reading is that we find competing constructions in the *same* hagiography because different elements are being emphasized and different motivations (and constructions) are involved. One cannot assume that a given text is a coherent whole, including that the hagiographies were meant to be read from beginning to end.

69 While this was largely the case, especially with respect to what we generally understand as "female alchemy," some contemporaneous texts provide hints at female Quanzhen practice. See Eskildsen, *Teachings and Practices*, 69–70, 73–74, 83–84.

70 See Komjathy, *Cultivating Perfection*. As mentioned above, it is also noteworthy that female Daoists and Quanzhen adherents seemed to have utilized similar language to describe men.

Quanzhen must accept ambiguity and complexity. Women clearly participated in the community and movement, and they were recognized as such. Moreover, Quanzhen emphasizes that the innate nature (*xing* 性) of all beings is the Dao.⁷¹ Women have the same spiritual capacities as men, and their potential for spiritual realization is at least as strong as men. At the same time, for Quanzhen (male) renunciants, we must remember that they were the clerical elite, but that the community also included householders, women, whether real or imagined, who were potential sources of dissipation.⁷²

We may, in turn, trace the trajectory of Sun's inclusion: from senior, but peripheral member of Wang Chongyang's early Ninghai circle through relatively marginal figure in the early regional and national movement to fully recognized and venerated matriarch. The latter development seems to have emerged around 1241, about sixty years after Sun's death, with the early attempts to create standardized institutional histories, especially in the form of Shandong-centered hagiographies. As mentioned above, Sun Buer appears as one of the Seven Perfected, one of the "seven flowers of the Golden Lotus," in the *Jinlian ji* and *Jinlian xiangzhuan*. If such inclusion did not necessarily reflect Sun's actual position and influence in the early movement, then why did it occur? By way of conclusion, I will make a number of conjectures. As suggested above, large numbers of women probably participated in the early Shandong associations. Moreover, after Quanzhen became a monastic order under Qiu Changchun and his disciples, there were large numbers of nuns inhabiting Quanzhen monasteries. By the late thirteenth century, about a hundred years after Sun death, there were probably at least 6,000 Quanzhen nuns.⁷³ Such women looked to Sun as an exemplar of female Quanzhen religious adherence and dedicated practice. They may have been instrumental in the elevation of Sun, in terms of both their own devotionism and their increasing power within Quanzhen institutions.

71 On such Daoist views more generally see Louis Komjathy, *The Daoist Tradition: An Introduction* (London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013); Louis Komjathy, *Daoism: A Guide for the Perplexed* (London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014).

72 In this respect, one might consider various cultural constructions of marriage and family life, including children. Like their Buddhist monastic counterparts, early Quanzhen views challenged those of conventional Chinese society, as marriage was seen as a source of entanglement. On marriage in the Song-Jin period more generally see, e.g., Ebrey, *The Inner Quarters*. The foundational late medieval Quanzhen monastic position continues to be influential into the contemporary period. Author's field observations.

73 Goossaert, "The Invention of an Order," 114–18.

In this way, the incorporation of Sun into the official Quanzhen pantheon parallels the earlier Quanzhen institutionalization of the cult of Lü Dongbin.⁷⁴ Her appearance among the Seven Perfected confirmed Quanzhen's inclusion of women, provided a model for female Daoist adherence and commitment, and reminded women of their potentialities and capacities of Daoist cultivation. Sun's increasing status and improved fortune reached an early pinnacle in her imperial recognition during the Yuan dynasty (1260–1368). Qubilai Qan (Khubilai Khan; Emperor Shizu 世祖; 1215–94; r. 1260–94) bestowed the title of Qingjing yuanzhen shunde zhenren 清靜淵貞順德真人 (Perfected of clarity and stillness and deep perfection who follows virtue) in 1269. In 1310, Emperor Wuzong 武宗 (r. 1308–11) expanded this to Qingjing yuanzhen xuanxu shunhua yuanjun 清靜淵貞玄虛順化元君 (Primordial goddess of clarity and stillness and deep perfection who follows transformation),⁷⁵ raising her even higher in the celestial hierarchy. Such was the late medieval trajectory of Sun's elevation to early Quanzhen Matriarch. It thus appears that the Quanzhen Kundao lineage begins, at least on some level, with Sun Buer who was the first formal female Quanzhen adherent. As discussed below, the process would reach a new pinnacle in the late imperial period with Sun's appearance as Kundao source, and specifically of female alchemy lineages. In that context, we find Sun as immortal Kundao and primordial goddess.

Writings Associated with Sun Buer

Few if any writings actually composed by Sun Buer have survived into the modern world. Unlike each of the other members of the so-called Seven Perfected, there is no independent literary anthology associated with Sun. Moreover, also unlike the other early senior Quanzhen adherents, Sun's hagiographies do not list any writings associated with her, although the *Jianlian xiangzhuan* does mention her skillful use of poetry in spiritual instruction.⁷⁶ In terms of Sun's writings, the matter is complicated by the circulation of a number of spuriously attributed and/or revealed late imperial works, which are examined below.

As I have discussed elsewhere, the preferred form of literary expression among members of early Quanzhen was poetry, followed by discourse records

74 See Katz, *Images of the Immortal*.

75 *Jianlian xiangzhuan*, DZ 174, 43a.

76 *Jianlian xiangzhuan*, DZ 174, 41ab.

(*yulu* 語錄).⁷⁷ Here the generic English category of “poetry” contains most of the major genres of Chinese poetry utilized during the late medieval period, specifically “poetry” (*shi* 詩), “lyrics” (*ci* 詞), and “songs” (*ge* 歌). In terms of the early Quanzhen textual corpus, *shi*-poetry most often involves one of two forms, namely, *lüshi* 律詩 (regulated verse) and *jueju* 絕句 (quatrains). The former consists of eight seven-character lines, while the latter employs four five-character lines. The *jueju* form may also be written in seven-character quatrains.⁷⁸ *Ci*-lyrics were originally song texts set to existing musical tones. *Ci*-lyric titles always point to particular *cipai* 詞牌 (tune patterns) for which the lyric is composed. These tune patterns, totaling about 825, came to be viewed as definite verse patterns. *Ci*-lyrics are most often characterized by lines of unequal length, which stand in sharp contrast to regulated verse with its strictly five-character and seven-character lines. *Ci*-lyrics are generally associated with the Song dynasty (960–1279), for the genre reached its height during this period.⁷⁹ Fortunately, most of the early Quanzhen poetry has been collected in the *Quan Jin shi* 全金詩 (Complete poetry of the Jin) and the *Quan Jin Yuan ci* 全金元詞 (Complete lyrics of the Jin and Yuan), which has punctuation that is especially helpful in terms of the *ci*-lyrics.⁸⁰

The only writings that can be reliably, though by no means unproblematically, attributed to Sun Buer are contained in the fourteenth-century *Minghe yuyin*.⁸¹ This is an eclectic anthology of the poetry of major Daoist figures from the late medieval period. Although of unclear affiliation (it is not a Quanzhen anthology), it was edited by Peng Zhizhong 彭致中 (fl. 1340s) in 1347 and contains a preface by Yu Ji 虞集 (1272–1348). It consists of approximately five hundred items, for the most part *ci*-lyrics, written to more than 150 tunes, by forty different authors.⁸² The anthology was compiled almost 200 years after Sun's death. Generally speaking, the collection consists of works by Quanzhen mas-

77 See Komjathy, *Cultivating Perfection*; Komjathy, *The Way of Complete Perfection*; also Schipper and Verellen, *Historical Companion to the Daozang*.

78 Richard Bodman and Shirleen Wong, “Shih” (Poetry), in William H. Nienhauser, Jr., ed., *Indiana Companion to Traditional Chinese Literature* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 682–89.

79 Chang, Kang-i Sun, “T’zu” (Lyric), in William H. Nienhauser, Jr., ed., *Indiana Companion*, 846–49.

80 See Tang Guizhang 唐圭璋, ed. *Quan Jin Yuan ci* 全金元詞 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju chubanshe, 1979); and Xue Ruizhao 薛瑞兆 and Guo Mingzhi 郭明志, eds. *Quan Jin shi* 全金詩 (Tianjin: Nankai daxue chubanshe, 1995).

81 See Komjathy, *Cultivating Perfection*; Komjathy, *The Way of Complete Perfection*.

82 Boltz, *Survey of Taoist Literature*, 188–90; Schipper and Verellen, *Historical Companion to the Daozang*, 1150–52.

ters, although there are also poems by Daoists from other schools such as Bai Yuchan 白玉蟾 (Haiqiong 海瓊 [Oceanic Jade]; 1194-ca. 1227). Many of the Quanzhen poems have also been preserved in the early Quanzhen anthologies, but there are poems, such as those by Song Defang 宋德方 (Piyun 披雲 [Wrapped-in-Clouds]; 1183–1247),⁸³ which apparently only survive in the *Minghe yuyin*.⁸⁴ These details assist us to a certain degree in dating the poems attributed to Sun Buer. Although the *Minghe yuyin* dates from a relatively late date with respect to early Quanzhen, it is noteworthy that it contains poems that can be reliably dated to the period of early Quanzhen and attributed to first-generation members of the movement. That is, the existence of the same poems in early Quanzhen literary anthologies lends credence to the acceptance of the poems associated with Sun. Moreover, the fact that other early Quanzhen poems not preserved in independent editions are contained in the *Minghe yuyin* suggests that there may have been a collection effort aimed at gathering and preserving “lost Quanzhen poetry.” Our belief of authorial attribution is also supported by internal elements, none of which point towards a later date or alternative author. At present, this is about all that can be said with certainty concerning evidence for the authenticity of the Sun-attributed poems. Unlike the writings of other members of early Quanzhen, there are no verifiable works with which to compare Sun’s poems. As discussed below, if any of Sun’s own writings survive, they are the poems contained in the *Minghe yuyin*, and I am inclined to accept the attribution.

The relevant poems are contained the fifth and sixth scrolls (*juan* 卷) of the *Minghe yuyin*. The content of Sun’s poems will be analyzed below, so here I will be content to mention the names and formalistic features of the poems. There are four extant poems, two of which are actually poem-cycles. These “poems” are *ci*-lyrics written to the corresponding musical tunes, which follow a standardized formal structure. The poems are as follows: (1) “Bu suanzi 卜算子” (To the tune “Casting lots”; 5.7a; one stanza); (2) “Yao baomei 誘薄眉” (To the tune “Accentuating slender eyebrows”; 6.13a–15a; thirteen stanzas); (3) “Wu ye’er 梧葉兒” (To the tune “Tree leaves rustling”; 6.15a–16b; eleven stanzas); and (4) “Manting fang 滿庭芳” (To the tune “Fragrance filling the courtyard”; 6.16b–17a; one stanza).

In terms of other attributed and revealed works, none can be validated, and some are clearly later works. With respect to works contained in the Ming-dynasty Daoist Canon, Elena Valussi has suggested that two texts may be reason-

83 *Minghe yuyin*, DZ 1100, 3.7a–11a.

84 Schipper and Verellen, *Historical Companion to the Daozang*, 1151.

ably attributed to Sun Buer.⁸⁵ These are the *Yuqing taiyuan neiyang zhenjing* 玉清胎元內養真經 (Perfect scripture on internally nourishing the embryonic origin of jade clarity; abbr. *Taiyuan neiyang jing*; DZ 63) and *Yuqing wushang neijing zhenjing* 玉清無上內景真經 (Perfect scripture on the unsurpassed inner landscape of jade clarity; abbr. *Neijing jing*; DZ 64). Valussi's claim seems to be based on the fact that the texts are collected in the late imperial *Sun Buer yuanjun chuanshu dandao mishu* 孫不二元君傳述丹道秘書 (Secret writings on the way of the elixir transmitted by primordial goddess Sun Buer; JY 213; ZW 371). Interestingly, the latter text is contained in the *Daozang jiyao* 道藏輯要 (Collected essentials of the Daoist canon; abbr. JY; dat. 1700/1906; 315 titles in 10 vols.),⁸⁶ alongside other early Quanzhen works. However, there is no evidence that this or other Sun-attributed texts contained in "extra-canonical" Daoist collections pre-date the Qing dynasty (1644–1911), though it is possible that future research may prove otherwise. In terms of the present discussion of Sun's writings, the Ming dynasty Daoist Canon editions of the *Taiyuan neiyang jing* and *Neijing jing* make no mention of Sun Buer. In fact, they are anonymous texts claimed to be revealed by Yuanshi shangdi 元始上帝 (Highest thearch of original beginning).⁸⁷ The texts appear to be of a rather general *neidan* variety, without even specific Quanzhen content. I find no evidence for accepting them as the work of Sun Buer, especially as there is no record of their significance in early Quanzhen. Moreover, research suggests that the Quanzhen movement preferred to accept received Daoist "scriptures" (*jing* 經), such as the *Daode jing* 道德經 (Scripture on the Dao and inner power), *Yinfu jing* 陰符經 (Scripture on the hidden talisman; DZ 31), and *Qingjing jing*,⁸⁸ rather than to compose distinctively Quanzhen ones.⁸⁹ The only known exceptions may be the *Taishang laojun nei riyong miaojing* 太上老君內日用妙經 (Wondrous scripture for daily internal practice of the great high Lord Lao; abbr. *Nei riyong jing*; DZ 645) and *Taishang laojun wai riyong miaojing* 太上老君外日用妙經 (Wondrous scripture for external daily practice of the great high Lord Lao; abbr. *Wai riyong jing*; DZ 646).⁹⁰ Among the first-generation Quanzhen adherents, Sun's composition of a Daoist scripture, which are

85 Valussi, "Beheading the Red Dragon," Ch. 3.

86 See Komjathy, *Title Index to Daoist Collections*.

87 See Schipper and Verellen, *Historical Companion to the Daozang*, 1231–33.

88 The latter two texts have been translated in Louis Komjathy, *Handbooks for Daoist Practice* (Hong Kong: Yuen Yuen Institute, 2008).

89 See Komjathy, *Cultivating Perfection*; Komjathy, *The Way of Complete Perfection*; also Schipper and Verellen, *Historical Companion to the Daozang*.

90 The *Nei riyong jing* has been translated in Komjathy, *Handbooks for Daoist Practice*.

usually anonymous and revealed, would thus represent a major departure. It is highly unlikely.

Moving away from texts which might be legitimately accepted as written by Sun Buer, we find a variety of late imperial works that are spuriously attributed, inspired and/or revealed. Many of these works have received wide circulation and exerted strong influence in the West through Thomas Cleary's general-audience translations in his *Immortal Sisters* (1989).⁹¹ Here I will briefly summarize the works, drawing some information from the research of Elena Valussi.⁹² There are three late imperial works associated with Sun Buer: the *Qingjing yuanjun kunyuan jing* 清靜元君坤元經 (Scripture on the origin of *kun* by primordial goddess Clear Stillness; ZW 228), as contained in the *Nü jindan fayao* 女金丹法要 (Essential methods for the female golden elixir; dat. 1813; ZW 383); *Sun Buer yuanjun fayu* 孫不二元君法語 (Model sayings of primordial goddess Sun Buer; abbr. *Sun Buer fayu*; JY 212; ZW 370); and *Sun Buer yuanjun chuanshu dandao mishu* 孫不二元君傳述丹道秘書 (Secret writings on the way of the elixir transmitted by primordial goddess Sun Buer; abbr. *Sun Buer dandao mishu*; JY 213; ZW 371), all of uncertain provenance.⁹³ According to Elena Valussi, the first text dates to around 1683 and may represent the earliest *nüdan* text. It is a short work, a mere four pages in length, which includes information on Sun's life and instructions on female practice. The second two texts are initially found in the *Daozang jiyao*. This collection was apparently first compiled by Jiang Yuanting 蔣元庭 (1755–1819) in the Jiaqing 嘉慶 reign period (1796–1820), while the standard received edition is that of Erxian an 二仙庵 (Two immortals temple; Chengdu) published by He Longxiang 賀龍驤 (dates unknown) in 1906. The *Sun Buer fayu* consists of fourteen short poems of eight five-character lines. The *Sun Buer dandao mishu* consists of four different sections. The first two sections include the above-mentioned scriptures, here attributed to Sun. These are followed by a text attributed to Hengyue zhenzi 衡嶽真子, and another associated with Cui Shaoxuan 崔少玄.

There is also another Sun-attributed text of apparently recent provenance, namely, the *Qingjing sanren Sun Buer yuanjun gongfu cidì* 清靜散人孫不二元君功夫次第 (Practice stages of the primordial goddess Sun Buer, the serene

91 See also Douglas Wile, *Art of the Bedchamber: The Chinese Sexual Yoga Classics Including Women's Solo Meditation Texts* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992).

92 Valussi, "Beheading the Red Dragon," Ch. 3.

93 See Boltz, *Survey of Taoist Literature*, 155–56; Despeux, *Immortelles*, 170, 292–301; Despeux and Kohn, *Women in Daoism*, 212–14, 241–43; Komjathy, *Cultivating Perfection*; Komjathy, *The Way of Complete Perfection*.

one of clarity and stillness; abbr. *Sun Buer gongfu cidi*).⁹⁴ This text may date to the late nineteenth century, and it appears as a section of the early nineteenth-century *Nü jindan fayao* and has been anthologized by Hong Jianlin 洪建林 in his *Daojia yangsheng miku* 道家養生秘庫 (Secret collection on Daoist yangsheng).⁹⁵ Hong's work also includes the *Sun Buer nügong neidan citi shi zhu* 孫不二女功內丹次第詩注 (Commentary on the female alchemy poems of Sun Buer in sequence; abbr. *Sun Buer nügong shi zhu*), which is an annotated discussion of the *Sun Buer fayu*. The text associated with Sun consists of three different parts. The first includes her biography and five attributed poems. The second includes the fourteen poems contained in the *Sun Buer fayu*. The third is a text called *Kunjue* 坤訣 (Instructions for women), a compilation of six formulae with explanations attributed to Sun Buer and revised by Fu Jinquan 傅金銓 (fl. 1820s). Needless to say, all of this is quite complex and is more relevant for the study of late imperial Daoism in general and female alchemy in particular. The texts are less about the historical Sun Buer and more about her legend, elevated status, and influence during the late imperial period. Interested readers are directed towards the important dissertation of Elena Valussi for additional analysis.

Later poems attributed to Sun also appear in various collections, including the *Sun Buer nüdan shi zhu* 孫不二女丹詩註 (Commentary on Sun Buer's poetry about female alchemy),⁹⁶ *Nüdan hebian* 女丹合編 (Collected works on female alchemy),⁹⁷ and *Nü jindan fayao* 女金丹法要 (Essential methods of the golden elixir for women; JH 48).⁹⁸ Sections of the latter text and the *Sun Buer gongfu cidi* have been translated and published in Thomas Cleary's *Immortal Sisters: Secret Teachings of Taoist Women*. Readers should note, however, that none of these works were actually composed by Sun Buer.

Finally, we should note that most of the relevant late imperial texts identify Sun not simply as Sun Buer, but rather as Sun yuanjun 孫元君 (Primordial goddess Sun) or Qingjing yuanjun 清靜元君 (Primordial goddess Clear Stillness). As discussed in more detail below, Sun is no longer simply a human being, a historical personage associated with Wang Chongyang and early

94 See Tao Bingfu 陶秉福, ed., *Nüdan jicui* 女丹集萃 (Beijing: Beijing shifan daxue, 1989), 282–88.

95 Hong Jianlin 洪建林, ed., *Daojia yangsheng miku* 道家養生秘庫 (Dalian: Dalian chubanshe, 1991), 636–68.

96 Chen Yingning 陳櫻寧, *Sun Buer nüdan shizhu* 孫不二女丹釋註 (Shanghai: Yihuo tangshan shuju, 1934).

97 Tao Bingfu, *Nüdan jicui*, 1–188.

98 See Despeux, *Immortelles*, 170, 291–302; Despeux, “Women in Daoism;” Valussi, “Beheading the Red Dragon;” Despeux and Kohn, *Women in Daoism*, 206; 212–14.

Quanzhen; she is now an immortal and Perfected. Perhaps even transcending the Seven Perfected framework, she has become a “primordial goddess.” This recalls her own process of alchemical transformation and self-divinization as well as her recognition by the Yuan dynasty emperors. Like Xiwangmu 西王母 (Queen Mother of the West) and Wei Huacun 魏華存 (251–334) before her, she has entered the Daoist pantheon. As such, she is an object of devotion and an exemplar of female Daoist practice and attainment. At the same time, Sun, along with other female immortals such as Cao Wenyi 曹文遺 (fl. 1119–25), Feng Xiangu, and He Xiangu 何仙姑, became one of the most prominent and influential figures in the emerging Kundao⁹⁹ and female alchemy (*nüdan*) lineages of the Qing dynasty.¹⁰⁰ As we have seen, the late imperial Sun-attributed texts are spurious and apocryphal in terms of the historical Sun. However, there is an additional layer to the story. Some of the texts may have been inspired and revealed, possibly through spirit-writing. That is, although they were not written by the historical Sun, from a Daoist perspective they may have been transmitted by miraculous and numinous means. They may have been written by the “immortal” and “divine” Sun. At the very least, rather than being seen as “fabrications,” they were inspired by Sun’s life and example for female Daoists and practitioners of female alchemy. Although the actual provenance is unclear, the texts provide a glimpse into an emerging late imperial Daoist movement and into the resources used to create meaning and connection, specifically to earlier female Daoist exemplars. From this perspective, the Sun-attributed texts represent some of the early foundations, a topic that unfortunately is beyond the confines of the present paper. As mentioned, Elena Valussi has done preliminary research on late imperial works associated with female alchemy,¹⁰¹ but more detailed study is required. Specifically one would like to see annotated translations and detailed praxis-based analysis of the corpus. One would also like to see a history of Daoist women’s practice beyond the confines of “female alchemy.”

99 *Kundao*, literally “Way of Kun-earth,” is a Daoist technical term for nuns and female monastic practice by extension. Kun-earth refers to the corresponding trigram 坤, which consists of three yin-lines. It represents earth, and women by extension. In internal alchemy practice, it also sometimes corresponds to the feet, perineum, lower elixir field (navel region), and so forth.

100 See Valussi, “Beheading the Red Dragon;” Kohn and Despeux, *Women in Daoism*.

101 See also Sara Neswald, “Rhetorical Voices in the Neidan Tradition: An Interdisciplinary Analysis of the *Nüdan hebian* Compiled by He Longxiang” (Ph.D. diss., McGill University, 2007).

The Daoist Teachings and Practices of Sun Buer

Based on the previous discussion of the textual corpus associated with Sun Buer, one may seek to understand the teachings and practices of the historical Sun Buer, the only female member of the so-called Seven Perfected and early Quanzhen Matriarch. Alternatively, one could analyze the female alchemy of the immortal Sun Buer, as the inspiration behind some late imperial *nüdan* texts, and as an imagined source of specific Kundao and *nüdan* lineages. From this perspective, one could examine the changing views and interpretations of Sun during the late imperial period, especially with respect to the Daoist Kundao movement. While I provide a few insights into the latter, my main purpose in the present article is to understand the historical Sun Buer, especially as an important member of the early Quanzhen community. With this in mind, here I will analyze the four poems contained in the *Minghe yuyin* in terms of Sun's teachings and practices.

Before engaging in close textual analysis, a few preliminary points should be made with respect to early Quanzhen adherence and affiliation, especially as these were one of the foundations of Sun's religious praxis. First, Sun was a female Daoist initiate. She received ordination with corresponding religious names and transmissions from Wang Chongyang. As such, she was located in a specific Daoist community and master-disciple lineage, and she in turn represents the Quanzhen movement. Sun Buer was thus a female Daoist adherent committed to a specific teacher, community, lineage, and training system. Like the other first-generation disciples, Sun completely embraced and advocated Quanzhen religious commitments; her form of Kundao practice was ascetic, eremitic, and quasi-monastic.¹⁰² As such, we may identify her as the beginning of a nascent Quanzhen Kundao line, which eventually pollinated late imperial female Daoist practice.¹⁰³ Second, Sun Buer was one of Wang Chongyang's senior disciples. As such, she was one of the few initiated and fully-committed

102 See Komjathy, *Cultivating Perfection*; Komjathy, *The Way of Complete Perfection*.

103 For example, one finds the "Nüzhen jiujiè" 女真九戒 (Nine Precepts for Female Perfected) in the *Chuzhen jie* 初真戒 (Precepts of Initial Perfection; JY 292; ZW 404). This text was compiled by Wang Changyue 王常月 (Kunyang 崑陽 [Paradisiacal Yang]; 1594?-1680), the founder of the official Longmen 龍門 (Dragon Gate) lineage and abbot of Baiyun guan 白雲觀 (White Cloud Monastery; Beijing) during the seventeenth century. See Monica Esposito, "Daoism in the Qing (1644-1911)," in Livia Kohn, ed., *Daoism Handbook*, 623-58; Monica Esposito, "Longmen Taoism in Qing China: Doctrinal Ideal and Local Reality," *Journal of Chinese Religions* 29 (2001): 191-231; Monica Esposito, "The Longmen School and Its Controversial History during the Qing Dynasty," in John Lagerwey, ed., *Religion and Chinese Society* (Hong Kong: Chinese University of Hong Kong, 2004), vol. 2,

adherents. Like the other senior disciples, she was required to, and did in fact embrace foundational Quanzhen commitments. These included a renunciant orientation, ascetic discipline and alchemical praxis. She committed to the life of a renunciant (*chujia* 出家), which included forsaking the Four Hindrances namely, intoxicants, sexual activity, greed and material accumulation, as well as anger. The nascent Kundao lineage of Sun Buer was thus one with a Quanzhen pedigree.

Sun's poems in the *Minghe yuyin* include foundational Quanzhen commitments as well as general *neidan* principles and practice.¹⁰⁴ Unlike the late imperial texts mentioned above, Sun's actual poems are not examples of "female alchemy" as such, since they appear not to contain specific practices for women. Sun's poems generally emphasize non-gendered and widely applicable insights into self-cultivation and alchemical transformation. They are an expression of Sun's own religious commitments and practice as well as contemporaneous approaches to alchemical transformation. They are gendered on a personal and experiential level, but not in terms of corporeality and specifically female praxis. In contrast, female alchemy is not just internal alchemy practiced by women; it is *neidan* practice *for* women, with special attention to female embodiment and experience, to female anatomy and physiology. The latter only emerged during the Qing dynasty. Although more research is required, there is evidence of women-specific practices in various texts from the late medieval period, specifically from the Song dynasty.¹⁰⁵ However, the earliest independent work on female alchemy appears to be the above-mentioned *Qingjing yuanjun kunyung jing* (dat. 1683), while the last major manual seems to be the *Nüzi dao xue xiao congshu wuzhong* 女子道學小叢書五種 (Small encyclopedia in five books on Daoist study for female disciples; abbr. *Nüzi dao xue congshu*), which was edited by Chen Yingning 陳櫻寧 (1880–1969) and published in 1936.¹⁰⁶

621–98. For an annotated translation of the *Chuzhen jie*, see Komjathy, *The Way of Complete Perfection*, 326–60.

104 Internal alchemy (*neidan* 內丹) is a form of Daoist meditation that became systematized during the late Tang and early Song dynasties. It drew upon earlier Daoist views of self, technical terminology, and meditative techniques. Some of these include *Yijing* 易經 symbolism, classical Chinese medical views, external alchemy (*waidan* 外丹) terms, Shangqing 上清 visualization, Tang-dynasty inner observation, and so forth. On the most basic level, internal alchemy is a form of Daoist meditation aimed at complete psychosomatic transformation. This usually involves activation of the Daoist subtle body through complex, stage-based physiological methods.

105 Valussi, "Beheading the Red Dragon."

106 Valussi, "Beheading the Red Dragon," especially Ch. 2. See also Neswald, "Rhetorical Voices in the Neidan Tradition."

We should also distinguish “female alchemy” from Daoist women’s practice more generally, with the latter referring to the methods and training systems practiced by female Daoists. Female alchemy usually follows similar stages and processes of internal alchemy, though there is greater emphasis on the lived experience of female embodiment, of being a woman. This includes the central importance of the breasts, heart, blood, and uterus, and on menstruation as the primary form of dissipation of women’s vital essence (*jing* 精). Female alchemy is perhaps most clearly distinguished from internal alchemy more generally by the technique known as *zhan chilong* 斬赤龍 (slaying the crimson dragon; or beheading the red dragon), according to which the female practitioner permanently terminates menstruation, the “crimson dragon.”¹⁰⁷ This is a form of voluntary amenorrhea. One also finds an associated claim that the breasts of advanced female practitioners will shrink,¹⁰⁸ which may or may not be a good thing depending on one’s perspective. None of these dimensions of female alchemy is contained in Sun’s actual poems. Like all constructions and experiences of female embodiment, those of Sun occurred in a specific socio-historical framework, one that was quite different from the late imperial context during which female alchemy as such emerged, or the modern context during which Sun has been appropriated and reconceptualized. We might in turn categorize Sun’s poems as “proto-*nüdan*,” as one of the sources and inspirations for the emergence of *nüdan* as such. However, here one wonders about the actual influence of the poems contained in the *Minghe yuyin*, which appears negligible. I have not found any references to the poems in later texts, so it appears that the Sun-attributed *nüdan* poems replaced the actual poems, perhaps because the latter were not gynocentric enough.

107 This practice brings our attention to context-specific conceptions of menstruation. Generally speaking, in a pre-modern Daoist context, menstruation represents a form of dissipation, equivalent to seminal emission in male practitioners. Such views challenge and are challenged by various modern feminist views of menstruation as positive in nature. In this respect, one also thinks of the popular construction of Daoism as “going with the flow.”

108 In fact, many of the major *nüdan* texts describe the resulting “female” body as resembling an adolescent boy. This problematizes simplistic feminist readings of female alchemy, as it may not represent either a form of female empowerment or a fulfillment of female embodiment. There are complex dimensions of the phenomena that resist easy categorization. A further point involves sexuality. Although many so-called “Daoist sexual practices” circulate in the modern world, it appears that *nüdan* is largely ascetic and/or monastic. The woman in question renounces her own sexual appetites. Her status (and engagement) as sexual object (she is breastless) and as marriageable (she lacks menses and therefore the capacity to produce [male] offspring) also diminishes.

As mentioned above, the received writings of Sun Buer contained in the *Minghe yuyin* consist of four *ci*-lyrics, amounting to twenty-eight stanzas. These poems will be identified according to their tune titles: “Bu suanzi,” “Yao baomei,” “Wu ye’er,” and “Manting fang.”¹⁰⁹ Utilizing typical *neidan* symbolism, the poems mainly cover internal alchemy practice in a manner that parallels other early Quanzhen poetry. In these poems, Sun draws upon Buddhist and Quanzhen doctrine to inspire one to embrace an ascetic lifeway oriented towards the Dao and aimed at liberation and realization. This involves alchemical praxis with the goal of immortality.¹¹⁰ Each poem may, in turn, be read as a sequential discussion of the path towards realizing the Dao based on dedicated, consistent and prolonged Daoist practice. In fact, a close reading of the poems suggests that the editor may have organized the poems with a particular purpose in mind. The sequence of Sun’s poems contained in the *Minghe yuyin* moves from views, principles and methods of alchemical transformation to the ontological and existential states attained from them.

The first poem, “Bu suanzi” (one stanza),¹¹¹ may be read as practical, though symbolic instructions on foundational *neidan* praxis.¹¹² Here the title may be read as taking control of one’s own life-destiny (*ming* 命), a central theme in Daoist alchemy. The poem reads as follows:

When you seal the fists and loosen your robes,
 The Water and Fire will immediately commingle and merge.
 The misty vapors of the myriad districts manifest below the ocean;
 With a single strike, the Three Passes become penetrated.
 Immortal bliss continually expands
 As you constantly drink the delicious wine.

109 The characters of the poems, and their complete annotated translations appear in the Appendix at the end of this article.

110 For a detailed discussion of early Quanzhen *neidan* praxis see Komjathy, *Cultivating Perfection*. My presentation here draws insights from that study. See also my *The Way of Complete Perfection*, which includes a complete annotated translation of the *Dadan zhi-zhi* 大丹直指 (Direct Pointers to the Great Elixir; DZ 244).

111 *Minghe yuyin*, DZ 1100, 5.7a. As mentioned, this poem also appears in Sun’s hagiography in the *Jinlian ji* (DZ 173, 5.10b). For a translation of the latter see Komjathy, *The Way of Complete Perfection*, 268–72. The characters for this poem and the other three poems attributed to Sun may be found in the Appendix.

112 As internal alchemy utilizes highly symbolic and esoteric terminology, it is often difficult to determine the exact meaning. In the present discussion, I utilize the methodology advocated in my study *Cultivating Perfection*, namely, a “substitution method.” This involves utilizing clearly defined technical terms from contemporaneous *neidan* texts.

The wondrous medicine is completely beyond time limits;
The nine-times reverted cinnabar sand becomes complete.

The Daoist adept sits down in meditation, probably in full-lotus posture. She¹¹³ then “seals her fists and loosens her robes.” The former phrase, which literally means “grasp firmly,” is an allusion to chapter fifty-five of the *Daode jing*. In alchemical practice, it refers to a specific sacred hand-configuration (Chinese: *shouyin* 手印; Sanskrit: *mudrā*), wherein the tips of the thumbs touch the inside base of the ring-finger and the other fingers fold over the thumbs. The sealed fists usually rest on the lap or knees. One also loosens one’s robes so that there is no constraint or tension in the body, so that *qi* may flow smoothly. Water and Fire refer to the kidneys/emotions/vital essence (*jing* 精) and the heart/consciousness/spirit (*shen* 神), respectively. Their commingling indicates alchemical physiology, wherein there is psychosomatic integration. The specific method utilized here is unclear; based on context, it may happen naturally by practicing quiet sitting (*jingzuo* 靜坐). That is, simply entering meditative absorption may naturally settle vital essence and emotionality as well as lead to spiritual clarity. In early Quanzhen, this state was referred to as “clarity and stillness” (*qingjing* 清靜), which is also Sun Buer’s religious name. One concentrates on the lower elixir field (*dantian* 丹田), the Ocean of Qi (*qihai* 氣海), and the *qi* circulating through the various meridians become stored therein. Using intention (“the single strike”), one then circulates the *qi* through the Three Passes (*sanguan* 三關). Located along the spine, the standard Three Passes are Tailbone gate (*weilü* 尾閭; GV-1; the coccyx), Narrow ridge (*jiaji* 夾脊; GV-6; mid-spine), and Jade pillow (*yuzhen* 玉枕; GV-17; occiput).¹¹⁴ This is the method known as the Lesser Celestial Cycle (*xiao zhoutian* 小周天; also known as Microcosmic Orbit) and Waterwheel (*heche* 河車). The Daoist adept then feels internal joy, contentment and carefree ease. This is also complete psychosomatic integration and corporeal connection. Through alchemical praxis, clear fluids (“delicious wine”), specifically in the form of pure saliva, are produced. One then practices saliva-swallowing, during which the saliva is directed towards the lower elixir field. One completes the process of alchemical transformation and attains the elixir of immortality, namely, energetic

113 As the poems are mainly a description of Sun’s views on Quanzhen Daoist practice and expressions of her own practice, I will use the gendered pronoun “she/her” in my discussion. However, the reader should remember that she is not necessarily focusing solely on Daoist women’s practice.

114 GV refers to the “Governing Vessel,” with numbers here corresponding to the associated acupuncture points utilized in Chinese medicine.

presence and the formation of a transcendent spirit. One becomes free of the bounds of time and mortality.

The second poem, “Yao baomei” (thirteen stanzas), is less concise.¹¹⁵ Here the title may suggest attentiveness to refinement, in this case meaning self-cultivation and alchemical transformation. As such it subverts the importance of manipulating physical appearance, and instead emphasizes inner cultivation. We may recall the above-cited commemorative poem for Sun wherein she renounces cosmetics and the “obscurity of dual faces.” The poem begins by expressing foundational religious commitments and exhorting adepts to ethical purity and spiritual realization. If read sequentially, the beginning of Daoist praxis involves the recognition of certain existential facts as well as influences on and consequences of spiritual discipline, or the lack of it. In the first stanzas, Sun utilizes a variety of Buddhist and Daoist terms in order to inspire the reader to embrace a Daoist renunciant life. The first stanza reads as follows:

Admonish people to awaken.
In cultivation and practice, renounce the suffering of the Three Roads.
Attain enlightened liberation,
And leap through the doorway.
[Remember] Tan, Ma, Qiu, Liu,
Sun, Wang, and Hao Taigu.
The ocean of divine law is a raft of compassion;
Inside the kingdom, there is universal salvation.

Cultivation and practice with the goal of awakening, enlightenment, and liberation are primary. For this, one must become a renunciant and avoid the Three Roads, which is a Buddhist technical term referring to three inauspicious forms of rebirth. For this religious path, the Way of Complete Perfection, the Seven Perfected may serve as inspirations and models. Quanzhen thus takes the place of Buddhism as the “raft of compassion” and the tradition that aims at “universal salvation.” In the next stanza, Sun speaks of purifying oneself of ignorance and delusion and of neutralizing negative karma. In terms of substantiating authorial attribution, it is noteworthy that here Sun admonishes adepts (her female disciples?) to “separate from husband and children in the Burning House” as sources of karmic and samsaric entanglement. As we know, Sun herself did this. Ultimately, for Sun, the Daoist adept should reside in a state of non-discrimination and equanimity.

¹¹⁵ *Minghe yuyin*, DZ 1100, 6.13a–15a. Here and in citing the next poem I will reference the stanza number.

In stanzas three through five, Sun begins to turn to Daoist alchemical praxis in particular. She emphasizes the importance of becoming an ascetic and engaging in solitary practice. Here the poem expresses foundational early Quanzhen commitments and practices, including sleep deprivation (stanza 3), voluntary poverty (stanza 3), eremitic withdrawal (stanza 4), meditative enclosure (stanza 4), and scripture study (stanza 4). Living in a thatched mountain hut, the adept becomes nourished by the surrounding natural landscape. She observes and becomes the companion of the “luminous moon and clear wind,” which also symbolically refer to divine radiance and numinous pervasion.¹¹⁶ In stanza five, Sun admonishes aspiring Daoist practitioners to still emotional and intellectual activity, which is referred to “tying up the monkey-mind” and “corralling horse-thought.” One must also disengage from involvement with the mundane world, especially by decreasing sensory engagement, with the six senses referred to as the “Six Thieves” (stanza 5) because they steal one’s foundational vitality and energetic aliveness. Perhaps most importantly, one is instructed to decrease desires and concern for personal benefit (stanza 5) eventually attaining a state of desirelessness. One thus cultivates innate nature (*xing* 性) and life-destiny (*ming* 命) (stanza 5), one’s original spirit and perfect qi, respectively.

In stanzas six through ten, Sun discusses various methods and experiences related to *neidan* praxis. Here she speaks of the importance of conserving and storing *qi* (stanzas 6, 7, and 10). She also mentions various dimensions of alchemical practice, including qi circulation (stanzas 6, 8, and 9), salvia production and ingestion (stanzas 7 and 10), and of course a variety of physiological interactions and transformations (*passim*). In terms of specific methods, it appears that the primary practice involves quiet sitting in combination with the Waterwheel (stanza 9), which is also referred to as the Celestial Cycle (stanza 6) and the Dharma Wheel (*falun* 法輪; stanza 9). Sun describes the latter practice as “moving the Terrestrial Axle” and “revolving the wheel” until it reaches the Celestial Pass. This method involves circulating *qi* through the Governing Vessel, the meridian located along the centerline of the back, and the Conception Vessel, located along the centerline of the torso. Here the Terrestrial Axle probably refers to the perineum as the base of the body, which is associated with earth in the human body. It is an “axle” or a “cart” because the turning of the Waterwheel begins here. The Celestial Pass probably refers to the occiput as the gateway into the head, which is associated with heaven in the human body. Interestingly, in this section of the poem, Sun also tells us, “The landscape is covered by a map.” This recalls various earlier and contemporaneous

116 Here the appearance of the moon anticipates stanzas 7–11 of the subsequent poem.

Daoist views of the body as landscape, and Daoist views and practices as a map that provides orientation, access and exploration.¹¹⁷

In the final three stanzas, Sun describes the culmination of Quanzhen training and its experiential verification (*zhengyan* 證驗), or the ontological and existential states attained. These include simultaneously residing in and transcending Being and Nonbeing, and specifically returning to the Void (stanza 11), to mystical union with the Dao. One becomes an immortal and attains the capacity to communicate with the various Daoist immortals and Perfected (stanza 12). Interestingly, Xiwangmu is emphasized here (stanza 12), which is unique in early Quanzhen. This may add credence to my suggestion of an emerging Quanzhen Kundao line via Sun, as a goddess is being particularly venerated. “Yao baomei” concludes with the following stanza:

Present offerings to the celestial offices.
 When immortal robes are bestowed, you become transcendent.
 Mount the ascending phoenix,
 And be carefree and enjoy the pure metropolis.
 Among the treasure hall and precious tower,
 Gold spikes fill the vermilion portals.
 Perpetual spring without nightfall,
 There is no longer coming or going.

While this stanza could be read metaphorically, it appears to resemble other contemporaneous *neidan* writings wherein the culmination of alchemical transformation is post-mortem entrance into the Daoist sacred realms. Specifically, the successful Daoist practitioner is welcomed by the various immortals and Perfected through an elaborate celestial ordination ceremony.

The third poem, “Wu ye’er” (eleven stanzas),¹¹⁸ is more obscure and idiosyncratic in terms of *neidan* technical terminology. On an esoteric level, the title may be read as referring to awakening the subtle body and circulating its numinous currents. The first stanza reads as follows:

Observing the white phoenix,
 Watching the black raven,
 I grope for fish and shrimp beneath the water.

117 See Louis Komjathy, “Mapping the Daoist Body: Part I: The *Neijing tu* in History,” *Journal of Daoist Studies* 1 (2008): 67–92; Louis Komjathy, “Mapping the Daoist Body: Part II: The Text of the *Neijing tu*,” *Journal of Daoist Studies* 2 (2009): 64–108.

118 *Minghe yuyin*, DZ 1100, 6.15a–16b.

Orioles thread the willow trees;
 Butterflies seek out the flowers.
 Shadowed in secluded retirement,
 If not a disciple of clouds, no one can brag.

On a literal level, Sun speaks of observing the external landscape. She presents herself in eremitic withdrawal and as a companion of the clouds, which usually refers to a wandering Daoist. On a more symbolic level, Sun is probably alluding to her own inner cultivation. She is “groping for fish and shrimp beneath the water,” meaning that she is exploring the inner regions of her own body. For Sun, such phrases were probably pregnant with meaning, as she was from a seaside town on the Shandong peninsula where fishing was a major source of sustenance and commerce. In the case of self-cultivation, “secluded retirement” refers to meditative praxis and absorption. The practitioner enters the mountains within the self.¹¹⁹ The poem becomes more explicitly internal and alchemical in the next stanza, wherein Sun emphasizes regulating thought and establishing a foundation (also stanza 4). In internal alchemy practice, the latter phrase frequently refers to cultivating virtue (*de* 德), especially in the form of good deeds and meritorious activities (*xinggong* 行功). Sun also urges the aspiring adept to free herself from sources of dissipation (stanza 3) and to refrain from sensory engagement and psychological reactivity (stanza 5). Here one must focus on the Celestial Pivot (*tianji* 天機). In terms of Quanzhen, this phrase recalls the sixth-century *Yinfu jing* 陰符經 (Scripture on the hidden talisman; DZ 31), wherein the heart-mind is identified as the pivot. For Sun, one’s own body contains hidden dimensions and unknown presences (stanza 4), which also hints at the internal Three Treasures (*nei sanbao* 內三寶) of vital essence, *qi*, and spirit. Through Daoist cultivation and alchemical refinement, one merges with the Dao’s suchness and silent mystery. One also gains specific numinous abilities.¹²⁰ In the present one, Sun identifies Dharma-vision (*fayan* 法眼; stanza 5)¹²¹ which refers to the ability of bodhisattvas to utilize the various teachings in order to lead all beings to enlightenment. In stanza six, Sun suggests that after establishing a foundation in Daoist practice and gaining some preliminary success, the adept should help to disseminate the teachings and to assist others through spiritual direction. This social engagement parallels stanzas one and three of “Yao baomei” as well as early Quanzhen religious activity.

119 See Kristofer Schipper, *The Taoist Body* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

120 See Eskildsen, *Teachings and Practices*; Komjathy, *Cultivating Perfection*.

121 Compare *Daode jing*, ch. 10.

In stanzas seven through eleven, Sun uses the image of the moon to discuss Daoist practice, and one is tempted to refer to this section as the “moon cycle.” Here it is noteworthy that the sequence begins and possibly ends with the full moon (stanzas 7 and 11), which differs from more conventional presentations that begin with the new moon. On the most straightforward level, Sun emphasizes the process of becoming spiritually realized, from initial glimpses (new moon; stanza 8) through fuller experiences (crescent moon; stanza 9) to completion (full moon; stanzas 10 and 11). Throughout this section of the poem, Sun emphasizes the importance of self-cultivation and alchemical transformation. One realizes that the moon, one’s capacity for spiritual realization, mystical attunement, and immortality, resides within one’s own heart-mind (“the south”). Interestingly, Sun also admonishes Daoist adepts as follows: “In discussing the wondrous and mysterious, do not speak about break-through (*pò* 破), but teach people about what to consider” (stanza 10). That is, Daoists must help individuals to have the correct orientation and embrace Daoist views and practices, rather than discuss the culmination of such practice, including “extraordinary experiences.” Emphasis on the latter will lead to disorientation and regression. On a more conjectural level, and in terms of the present discussion, it is particularly interesting that Sun utilizes the moon in her presentation. From a Daoist perspective, women are, broadly speaking, associated with *yin* 陰, while the menstrual cycle is associated with lunar phases. Thus, women by nature have a natural connection to the actual moon, which is one of the embodiments of cosmic *yin*. Returning to the poem itself, it appears that Sun looks at the actual moon in the sky, and then goes through (and advocates) a process of establishing the moon inside one’s body. However, is Sun talking about actual menstruation and/or her perspective on the moon and *yin* influences? This is open to interpretation. If so, then the poem may be suggesting that menstruation becomes sublimated into more subtle processes, resulting in complete alchemical transformation. The latter is symbolized by the calabash (stanza 11), which might be seen as representing the female body as well.

The final poem, “Manting fang” (one stanza),¹²² is a brief discussion of internal alchemy. The title may be interpreted symbolically as referring to awakening the subtle body and circulating its numinous currents. Also noteworthy is the fact that many *neidan* texts describe the emergence of “sweet fragrances” emanating from the bodies of advanced adepts as a byproduct of their practice. Sun begins by emphasizing the impermanent and ephemeral nature of human existence, with the insight that the only appropriate response is to en-

122 *Minghe yuyin* DZ 1100, 6.16b–17a.

gage in Daoist cultivation and refinement. Fundamentally speaking, one must abandon mundane concerns and orient oneself towards the Dao.

Moment by moment constantly maintain these meetings –
 Be unified in walking and in sitting;
 Be unified in drinking the nectar of mists.
 Be unified as a companion of the clear wind and luminous moon;
 Be unified in a single aspiration;
 Be unified in perceiving celestial radiance.
 Be unified in mutually beneficial associations;
 Be unified with your master in seeking the Dao;
 Be unified in your singing as fragrance fills the courtyard.

These admonitions may be understood as informing views, foundational principles, as well as existential experiences related to alchemical training and transformation. One ultimately attains complete cosmic integration and mystical unification.

In summation, in the four *ci*-lyrics contained in the *Minghe yuyin* Sun Buer emphasizes the importance of dedicated, consistent and prolonged Daoist practices, specifically alchemical training and transformation. In the process, she expresses and advocates foundational Quanzhen commitments. At the same time, assuming that the attribution is reliable, the poems provide insights into Sun's own Daoist practice and experience, and thus into female Daoist practices by extension. However, they express the views of a specific female Daoist practitioner located in a specific community and movement at a particular time, specifically the early Quanzhen community under the direction of Wang Chongyang. Sun's poems in turn emphasize the importance of renunciation and ascetic practice. As such, following Quanzhen religious commitments and views, they negate the relevance of sexuality, sexual activity, family life, and motherhood. As Sun says, "Separate from husband and children in the Burning House." That is, following Sun's model, married women must abandon their families and "unmarried women" must renounce marriage and reproduction. From a Quanzhen perspective, and according to Sun, solitary ascetic and eremitic practice is the only path to complete spiritual attainment. Sun thus might be seen as the beginning of a Quanzhen Kundao line. She also might be identified as one of the source-points of female alchemy, which would more fully emerge in the late imperial period. Although Sun does not express female embodiment in the same way as her late imperial counterparts, she is noteworthy on multiple levels. She is a female Daoist practicing and instructing on internal alchemy. This practice apparently parallels that of

contemporaneous men, but Sun does emphasize the importance of the heart and of the moon, perhaps even beginning an explicit inquiry and discussion of menstruation. This should not surprise us, as Wang Chongyang provided explicit instructions on women's practice and its relationship to vital essence as blood in his *Jinguan yusuo jue* 金關玉鎖訣 (Instructions on the gold pass and jade lock; DZ 1156).¹²³ The beginnings of a Quanzhen Kundao line and emergent female alchemy also appear in Sun's identification with Xiwangmu. As mentioned, Xiwangmu, Cao Wenyi, Feng Xiang, Sun Buer, and He Xiang became central figures in the late imperial construction of female alchemy.

The Legacy of Sun Buer

The transformation of the image of Sun Buer both within and beyond the Daoist tradition seems to have begun with the early Quanzhen community itself, wherein she was included, excluded, marginalized, elevated, and finally deified as one of the so-called Seven Perfected. In some sense, the historical Sun Buer as a woman with her own voice and experience is lost to the annals of history. What we have left are glimpses into the initiated female Daoist. These fleeting glimpses derive from the four attributed poems, from other extant Quanzhen poems, and from late medieval hagiographies, which have various levels of historical and legendary strata. However, we have no idea how Sun would have liked to be presented and remembered, except that she hoped for some recognition and respect: "Remember Tan, Ma, Qiu, Liu, Sun, Wang, and Hao Taigu." Like the order of the so-called Seven Perfected presented here, she was not first, but she also hoped not to be last. By age, she was the senior first-generation disciple of Wang Chongyang; by ordination date and community standing, she was lower. In either case, she was a recognized member of the early Quanzhen community. By way of conclusion, I would like to briefly examine some of the changing representations and interpretations of Sun in later Daoist and Chinese history, a topic that deserves a fuller study.

As mentioned above, Sun received imperial recognition during the Yuan dynasty. During that time, she received a number of honorific titles, including Primordial Goddess. In terms of Quanzhen, she was represented in various statues, manuscripts and paintings among the other six senior Shandong disciples, and she has been enshrined in some Daoist temples, such as the altar to the Seven Perfected at Huashan 華山 (near Huayin 華陰, Shaanxi). During the

123 For a complete annotated translation of this text see Komjathy, *Cultivating Perfection*, 286–367.



FIGURE 2 *Late Imperial Representation of Sun Buer.* SOURCE: *DAOYUAN YIQI JING* 道元一氣經, ZW 87

Yuan dynasty, she also appeared as a member of the Seven Perfected in a variety of plays depicting the group's exploits.¹²⁴ As we move into the late imperial period, Sun plays a major role in dramatic and fictional accounts of the Seven Perfected, including in the influential late Qing novel *Qizhen shizhuan* 七真史傳 (Tales of the seven perfected). Like the late imperial poems translated in Thomas Cleary's *Immortal Sisters*, this popular source has exerted major influence on the Western imagination through Eva Wong's general-audience *Seven Taoist Masters* (1990).¹²⁵ The work tells us a great deal about the incorporation

124 See Hawkes, "Quanzhen Plays and Quanzhen Masters;" Wilt Idema, "Skulls and Skeletons in Art and on Stage," in Leonard Blussé and Harriet Zurndorfer, eds., *Conflict and Accommodation in Early Modern East Asia: Essays in Honor of Erik Zürcher* (Leiden: Brill, 1993), 191–215.

125 Eva Wong, *Seven Taoist Masters: A Folk Novel of China* (Boston: Shambhala, 1990), 20.

of Daoist themes and figures in popular Qing literature, but little about actual Daoist history. Of course, many individuals prefer popular fictional views of Daoism to Daoism as a living and lived Chinese religion rooted in traditional Chinese culture.¹²⁶ In any case, unlike her portrayal in the hagiographic sources, here Sun appears as the leading spirit in Ma Danyang's conversion. Childless, she encourages her husband to dedicate his life to the Dao, plotting variously to bring Wang Chongyang into the family compound and to convince the Ma family to donate their property to the emerging Quanzhen community. The story of Wang's simultaneous appearance in her bedroom and with her husband occurs twice, this time without the sexual connotations and issues of moral transgression and social impropriety. As a purely "spiritual occurrence," the experience results in Sun's increasing trust in the powers of the Dao, demonstrating her awakening to a proper understanding of the mutual necessity of *yin* 陰 and *yang* 陽.¹²⁷ The novel also recounts her journey from Shandong to Luoyang, describing how she made herself intentionally ugly by splashing boiling oil on her face, so that she could survive the trip unmolested.¹²⁸ In another scene, the novel focuses on Sun's death. Here Sun Buer creates the image of a man and a woman from two tree branches and has them publicly embrace in the street. The local magistrate orders that the effigies be burned. During the fire, three immortals appear in the flames, with Sun Buer among them on her ascent into the Daoist heavens. The event is followed by an auspicious rainfall that nurtures the area for several years.¹²⁹ For Despeux and Kohn, "The latter

126 See Komjathy, *The Daoist Tradition*; Komjathy, *Daoism: A Guide for the Perplexity*. Strangely, during my ethnographic fieldwork on global Daoism, I have met individuals in the West who engage in autodidactic Daoist practice based on these *fictional* accounts.

127 Wong, *Seven Taoist Masters* 47, 49.

128 Wong, *Seven Taoist Masters*, 57; Boltz, *Survey of Taoist Literature*, 60; Beata Grant, "Patterns of Female Religious Experience in Qing Dynasty Popular Literature," *Journal of Chinese Religions* 23 (1995): 29–58; Despeux and Kohn, *Women in Daoism*, 148. This particular part of Sun's later mythology has become especially influential in contemporary Popular Western Taoism (PWT) (author's field observations), perhaps in response to contemporary body-image constructions. Here we may note that the *Jinlian ji* simply contains the following: "She laid down in the snow and slept in the frost. She ruined her facial appearance without any sense of grief" (DZ 173, 5.10a). From my perspective, this suggests that Sun's disfigurement, if it actually occurred, was a byproduct of committed and sustained Daoist practice, rather than an intentional act of self-mutilation. Nonetheless, Sun was unconcerned about her physical appearance and conventional notions of "beauty." I leave it to the reader to determine if physical beauty is incompatible with spiritual realization. In this respect, the various illustrations of Sun are instructive.

129 Wong, *Seven Taoist Masters*, 120–23; Despeux and Kohn, *Women in Daoism*, 148–49.

tale suggests the existence of a cult in Sun's honor in the region of Luoyang, which may also have been associated with Feng Xiangu."¹³⁰

Sun's trajectory of veneration thus appears to have been one of increasing prominence. However, before the Qing dynasty it seems that such prominence was always based on proximity to men, specifically Wang Chongyang and his six senior male disciples. That is, Sun was venerated primarily in the context of the Seven Perfected framework. This situation changed during the Qing dynasty, when an explicit Daoist Kundao and female alchemy movement began. As mentioned, the earliest independent work on female alchemy appears to be the *Qingjing yuanjun kunyung jing*, which dates to around 1683. It is particularly significant that the text is attributed to the Primordial Goddess of Clear Stillness, that is, to the divine Sun Buer. Here Sun is being venerated independently as a female immortal and goddess. Along with Xiwangmu, Cao Wenyi, Feng Xiangu, and He Xiangu, she becomes identified as one of the early matriarchs of emerging female alchemy lineages.¹³¹ As my analysis of Sun's poems indicates, this recognition may be more than mere fabrication and legend. It may have some legitimacy in terms of Sun's own life and practice. Moreover, such historical details demonstrate the ways in which Sun was reimagined during the late imperial period. Specifically, she comes to be seen as a model and inspiration for female Daoist practice and for female alchemical transformation. One would in turn like to know more about the ways in which Sun's devotional cult, like that of Lü Dongbin, was expressed in the lives and practices of Daoist women. There were a variety of contexts in which this occurred, including the Quanzhen Kundao line that occupies a central position in contemporary mainland Chinese Daoism.¹³² That is, there are attributed texts in which Sun emerges as an actual immortal teacher.

Sun Buer may thus be considered an early Quanzhen Matriarch and one of the sources for the emergence of female alchemy. In this respect, it is noteworthy that there are a variety of *nüdan* lineages associated with particular women.¹³³ In the case of Sun Buer, she is associated with Qingjing pai 清靜派 (Clarity-and-stillness lineage), which is a Quanzhen Kundao, and therefore, monastic lineage. It is unclear when this lineage construction first occurred,

130 Despeux and Kohn, *Women in Daoism*, 149.

131 See Valussi, "Beheading the Red Dragon." Interestingly, other important female Daoists, such as Wei Huacun and Zu Shu 祖舒 (fl. 889–904), do not appear. See Despeux and Kohn, *Women in Daoism*; Cahill, *Divine Traces of the Daoist Sisterhood*.

132 See, for example, Wang, "Daoists on the Southern Marchmount;" Wang, "Kundao: A Lived Body in Female Daoism."

133 See Valussi, "Beheading the Red Dragon," ch. 2; Despeux and Kohn, *Women in Daoism*, 202–10.

but it may have been during the late imperial period, the time when the official Longmen 龍門 (Dragon gate) lineage was established by Wang Changyue 王常月 (Kunyang 崑陽 [Paradisiacal Yang]; 1594?–1680).¹³⁴ As discussed above, there is evidence of a nascent Quanzhen Kundao lineage in Sun's life and poetry and in her early Luoyang community. Sun's religious name was Qingjing, and like her early Quanzhen counterparts, she emphasized the cultivation of "clarity and stillness," which refers to both sexual purity and meditative absorption. Like the other first-generation Quanzhen adherents, however, there is no evidence that Sun actually saw herself establishing a distinct Quanzhen lineage. It is equally unclear what happened to her early disciples and their Luoyang community, specifically whether this group bore the subsequent lineage that identified itself with the religious name of Sun Buer. What we do know at this point is that during the Qing dynasty Sun Buer was recognized as the founder of the Qingjing pai. A study by the modern scholar Yoshiyoka Yoshitoyo 吉岡義豊 of documents held in the archives of the Baiyun guan 白雲觀 (White cloud monastery; Beijing) records some of the Daoist schools supposedly active in the early twentieth century, and the list includes Sun's Qingjing pai.¹³⁵ Moreover, Chen Yingning, in a response to a query by Ms. Zhu Changya 朱昌亞, a doctor educated in the United States, gives a detailed description of what he believes to be different schools of female alchemy, including that of Sun Buer.¹³⁶ I have also met a number of modern Quanzhen Kundao who identify themselves as members of Qingjing pai.

In conclusion, Sun Buer's legacy is complex and multifaceted: from early Quanzhen adherent through eventual Quanzhen Matriarch to source-point for a Quanzhen Kundao line and divine inspiration for late imperial female alchemy. As a model for female Daoist participation and practice, she represents wife, mother, ascetic, hermit, teacher, immortal, and goddess. She thus transcends easy categorization. In the beginning, she was a wife and mother involved in the emerging Quanzhen community. She subsequently fully embraced the Quanzhen ascetic path and became an alchemist in her own right. She then asserted her own authority by becoming a teacher and attracting disciples, specifically in the Luoyang eremitic community. Following her death, or

134 See Esposito, "Daoism in the Qing;" Esposito, "Longmen Taoism in Qing China;" Esposito, "The Longmen School and Its Controversial History during the Qing Dynasty."

135 Yoshioka Yoshitoyo, *Eisei e no negai: Dōkyō 永生への願い: 道教* (Tokyo: Tankōsha, 1970), 194–228. See also Koyanagi Shikita 小柳司氣太, *Hakuunkan shi (Baiyun guan zhi) 白雲觀志* (Tokyo: Tōhō bunka gakuin Tōkyō kenkyūjo, 1934), 91; Valussi, "Beheading the Red Dragon."

136 Valussi, "Beheading the Red Dragon," Ch. 2.

ascent into the immortal realms in keeping with Quanzhen views, she was imperially recognized and deified as Primordial Goddess Clear Stillness. The post-mortem history of the legend is equally fascinating, as it points towards Kundao practice and female alchemy, within which Sun Buer was venerated as immortal and goddess, as the inspiration for various later attributed works on female Daoist practice. In following Wang Chongyang, Sun's Luoyang community, late imperial female alchemists, and the present revisionist account, perhaps we may now recognize Sun as a major female Daoist adherent who is truly “not second” in Chinese history.

Appendix

Translations of the Earliest Extant Poems Attributed to Sun Buer 孫不二 (119–1183)

卜算子

握固披衣候，
水火頻交媾。
萬道霞光海底生，
一幢三關透。
仙樂頻頻奏，
常飲醞酬酒。
妙藥都來頃刻間，
九轉金丹就。

To the Tune “Casting Lots”¹³⁷

When you seal the fists and loosen your robes,¹³⁸
The Water and Fire will frequently commingle and merge.¹³⁹
The misty vapors of the myriad districts manifest below the ocean;
With a single strike, the Three Passes become penetrated.¹⁴⁰

137 *Minghe yuyin*, DZ 1100, 5.7a.

138 “Seal the fists” (*wogu* 握固), which literally means “grasp firmly,” is an allusion to chapter 55 of the *Daode jing*.

139 Water (*shui* 水) and Fire (*huo* 火) refer to the kidneys/vital essence (*jing* 精) and the heart/spirit (*shen* 神), respectively.

140 The Three Passes (*sanguan* 三關) are three locations along the spine, through which it is difficult to circulate *qi*.

Immortal bliss continually expands
 As you constantly drink the delicious wine.¹⁴¹
 The wondrous medicine is completely beyond time limits;¹⁴²
 The nine-times reverted cinnabar sand becomes complete.¹⁴³

誘薄眉

To the Tune “Accentuating Slender Eyebrows”¹⁴⁴

其一

勸人悟。
 修行脫兔三塗苦。
 明放著，
 跳出門戶。
 譚馬丘劉，
 孫王郝太古。
 法海慈航，
 寰中普度。

- 1 -

Admonish people to awaken.

In cultivation and practice, escape the suffering of the Three Roads.¹⁴⁵

-
- 141 In the context of internal alchemy, “delicious wine” refers to the clear fluids, specifically pure saliva, produced through alchemical practice. They are more often referred to as Jade nectar (*yujiang* 玉漿), Spirit water (*shenshui* 神水), and/or Sweet dew (*ganlu* 甘露). There is a corresponding practice of saliva-swallowing, part of alchemical training manifesting in psychosomatic transformation, known as “drinking.”
- 142 “Wondrous medicine” refers to the elixir of immortality, complete energetic presence and the formation of a transcendent spirit created through *neidan* praxis. The latter is variously referred to as the body-beyond-the-body (*shenwai shen* 身外身), immortal embryo (*xiantai* 仙胎), and yang-spirit (*yangshen* 陽神).
- 143 “Nine-times reverted cinnabar sand” also refers to the elixir of immortality. Sometimes the phrase is primarily symbolic, as “nine” indicates pure *yang*. At other times, it refers to an actual process during which one either practices a method nine times or completes a nine-stage training regimen.
- 144 *Minghe yuyin*, DZ 1100, 6.13a–15a.
- 145 As a Buddhist technical term, the Three Roads (*santu* 三塗) refer to three inauspicious forms of rebirth: (1) Road of Fire, which involves rebirth in the Earth Prisons (*diyu* 地獄); (2) Road of Knives, which involves rebirth as a hungry ghost; and (3) Road of Blood, which involves rebirth as an animal.

Attain enlightened liberation,
 And leap through the doorway.
 [Remember] Tan, Ma, Qiu, Liu,
 Sun, Wang, and Hao Taigu.¹⁴⁶
 The ocean of divine law is a raft of compassion;¹⁴⁷
 Inside the kingdom, there is universal salvation.

其二

化愚魯。
 拋離火院夫兒女。
 憑慧劍，
 斬斷三塗苦。
 人我山崩，
 是非海已枯。
 舊業消除，
 新殃不做。

- 2 -

Transform ignorance and delusion.
 Separate from husband and children in the Burning House.¹⁴⁸
 Rely on wisdom and discernment,
 And sever your ties to the Three Roads.
 Distinctions between self and other are landslides;
 The ocean of right and wrong results in personal decay.
 Old karma must be expelled;
 New misfortune must not be created.

其三

應仙舉。
 汞鉛黑白希夷路。

146 The so-called Seven Perfected of early Quanzhen. These are the seven senior first-generation Shandong disciples of Wang Chongyang, the founder of Quanzhen.

147 The "ocean of divine law" conventionally refers to Buddhism, but here designates Daoism and specifically Quanzhen.

148 Burning House (*huoyuan* 火院) is a symbolic name for *samsāra*, the apparently endless cycle of reincarnation characterized by suffering and determined by karma. It is derived from the famous Parable of the Burning House in the *Lotus Sūtra*.

端的下，
 苦志工夫。
 晝夜無眠，
 羸衣淡飯足。
 乞化街頭，
 十方父母。

- 3 -

Respond to the immortal offering.
 Mercury and lead, the black and white, are the path to longevity.¹⁴⁹
 Making progress from the beginning,
 Attend to your work through bitter determination.
 Do not sleep day or night;
 Coarse clothes and simple food are sufficient.
 Beg and teach at the road heads;¹⁵⁰
 Become a caretaker of the ten directions.

其四

無憂慮。
 孤雲野鶴無拘束。
 草庵內，
 閑看金書。
 窗外林泉，
 限山傍水竹。
 明月清風，
 堪為伴侶。

- 4 -

Be free from grief and anxiety.
 A solitary cloud and wild crane [recluse] beyond constraint

149 Though their meanings vary based on text, mercury (*hong* 汞) usually refers to original *qi* (*yuangqi* 元氣) and life-destiny (*ming* 命), while lead (*qian* 鉛) usually refers to original spirit (*yuanshen* 元神) and innate nature (*xing* 性).

150 The emphasis on the importance of begging, especially as a method for overcoming personal identity and conventional social concerns, reflects early Quanzhen commitments. We know that Wang Chongyang required his senior disciples to beg in their hometowns. See Komjathy, *Cultivating Perfection*, 47, 167, 169–70, 197.

Within a thatched hut,¹⁵¹
 Leisurely read the golden books.¹⁵²
 Forests and streams outside the window,
 At the edge of the rolling hills, water and bamboo.
 Luminous moon and clear wind;
 Become worthy to be their companion.

其五

養元初。
 心猿意馬牢拴住。
 六賊盡，
 不曾貪圖。
 杳杳冥冥，
 昏昏默默處。
 湛湛澄澄，
 性停命住。

- 5 -

Nourish the original beginning.
 The monkey-mind and horse-thought must be corralled and tied up.¹⁵³
 With the Six Thieves completely exhausted,¹⁵⁴
 Do not seek or be concerned about anything.
 Vague and indistinct,

151 This line reflects early Quanzhen commitments to solitary ascetic training and meditative enclosure (*huandu* 環堵). See Komjathy, *Cultivating Perfection*, 45, 157–66, 174, 179, 239. On this topic, the first and fifth sections of Wang Chongyang's *Lijiao shiwu lun* 立教十五論 (Fifteen Discourses to Establish the Teachings; DZ 1233) are especially relevant. The first discusses living in hermitages, while the fifth discusses the characteristics of thatched huts. For a translation see Komjathy, *Handbooks for Daoist Practice*; Komjathy, *The Way of Complete Perfection*.

152 The early Quanzhen views on scripture study are diverse. See Komjathy, *The Way of Complete Perfection*. However, the third section of the Wang Chongyang's *Lijiao shiwu lun* emphasizes the importance and most appropriate way to study texts.

153 The “monkey-mind” (*yuaxin* 猿心) and “horse-thought” (*mayi* 馬意) refer to the ordinary mind and habituated nature, which are characterized by agitation and confusion.

154 The Six Thieves (*liuzei* 六賊) are sight, sound, smell, taste, touch, and phenomena. They are often identified as desires (sources of dissipation) generated by sensory engagement.

The place of darkness and silence.¹⁵⁵
 Deep and clear,
 Innate nature settles and life-destiny resides.¹⁵⁶

其六

認真趣。
 木金間隔通玄路。
 軀四象，
 五行圓聚。
 炁結神凝，
 陰陽自返復。
 遍體薰蒸，
 周天火足。

- 6 -

Realize true progress.
 The path to pervasive mysteriousness is between Wood and Metal.¹⁵⁷
 Within the four symbols of the body,¹⁵⁸
 The Five Phases completely assemble.¹⁵⁹
Qi coalesces and spirit congeals,
 While *yin* and *yang* naturally revert.
 The whole body fills with a fragrant mist;¹⁶⁰
 The fire of the Celestial Cycle is sufficient.¹⁶¹

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- 155 The characters *yao*, *ming*, *hun*, and *mo* derive from the *Daode jing* wherein they are used to describe the Dao and the Daoist adept by extension. See *Daode jing*, chapters 20 and 21.
- 156 Innate nature (*xing* 性) and life-destiny (*ming* 命) are two key early Quanzhen and *neidan* technical terms. Innate nature corresponds to the heart, spirit, and consciousness, while life-destiny corresponds to the kidneys, vital essence, and physicality.
- 157 Wood (*mu* 木) and Metal (*jin* 金) are two of the Five Phases (*wuxing* 五行). In internal alchemy, they have the following correspondences: (1) Wood: liver: east: azure dragon: Zhen-thunder: beginning of spring and vernal equinox: *jiayi* 甲乙: *mao* 卯 (5–7am): ethereal soul (yang-ghost; *hun* 魂): *jin*-fluids; (2) Metal: lungs: west: white tiger: Dui-lake: beginning of autumn and autumnal equinox: *gengxin* 庚辛: *you* 酉 (5–7pm): corporeal soul (*po* 魄): *ye*-fluids.
- 158 The four directions.
- 159 The *qi* of the five yin-organs, namely, liver, heart, spleen, lungs, and kidneys.
- 160 “Fragrant mist” refers to *qi*.
- 161 Celestial Cycle (*zhoutian* 周天), also known as the Waterwheel (*heche* 河車), is a *neidan*

其七

破昏衢。
 地雷震動山頭雨。
 黃芽長，
 白雪飛舞。
 露灑譎漿，
 瑞草滿園圃。
 玉藥紛紛，
 金花綻吐。

- 7 -

Break through the dark road.
 When thunder shakes the earth, rain falls on mountain peaks.¹⁶²
 The Yellow Sprouts grow,¹⁶³
 And the White Snow floats down.¹⁶⁴
 Dew descends as precious nectar,
 While fragrant grasses fill the garden.
 The Jade Stamen unfurls and diffuses;
 The Gold Flower opens and reveals itself.¹⁶⁵

其八

境堪圖。
 翱翔雲水縱橫步。
 曲江上，
 飛鳥走兔。
 虎繞龍蟠，
 坎高相會聚。

method during which one circulates *qi* up through the Governing Vessel, the meridian along the centerline of the back. It often includes circulating the *qi* down the Conception Vessel, the meridian along the centerline of the torso.

- 162 Here “rain” probably refers to the pure saliva generated through alchemical praxis.
 163 The Yellow Sprouts (*huangya* 黃芽) usually refer to the elixir of immortality. They are often associated with the spleen (Yellow Court; *huangting* 黃庭) as a major subtle location in *neidan*.
 164 “White Snow” (*baixue* 白雪) refers to the pure saliva.
 165 The Jade Stamen and Gold Flower are both names for the elixir of immortality, specifically the energetic presence in the lower elixir field.

斡轉天關，
運動地軸。

- 8 -

The landscape is covered by a map.
Soaring like clouds and streams, one traverses it
Above the winding Jiang River,¹⁶⁶
Flying birds and running rabbits.
The Tiger encircles and the Dragon coils,¹⁶⁷
Kan-water and Li-fire join together.¹⁶⁸
Revolving the wheel through the Celestial Pass,¹⁶⁹
You shift and move the Terrestrial Axle.¹⁷⁰

其九

法輪鼓。
河車穩穩三十輻。
搬日月，
輓入金爐。
玉鼎烹煎，
九陽真火煮。
萬道霞光，
千重翠霧。

- 9 -

The Dharma Wheel is roused.¹⁷¹

-
- 166 Changjiang River (that is, the Yangzi) is the major southern river in China. Here the alchemical symbolism is somewhat obscure.
- 167 In internal alchemy practice, the Tiger (*hu* 虎) and Dragon (*long* 龍) are usually associated with subtle breath (*qi* 氣) and spirit (*shen* 神), respectively.
- 168 Kan-water and Li-fire are two of the eight trigrams associated with the *Yijing*. They correspond to the kidneys/vital essence and heart/spirit, respectively.
- 169 Here the Celestial Pass probably refers to the occiput as the gateway into the head, which is associated with heaven in the human body.
- 170 Terrestrial Axle probably refers to the perineum as the base of the body, which is associated with earth in the human body. It is an “axle” or a “cart” because the turning of the Waterwheel begins here.
- 171 Dharma Wheel (*falun* 法輪) is another name for the Celestial Cycle and Waterwheel.

The Waterwheel is strong in its thirty spokes.¹⁷²
 Shift the sun and moon¹⁷³
 So that they revolve to enter the gold furnace.
 The jade cauldron becomes warm,
 And the perfect fire of nine-fold yang is decocted.
 Misty vapors emerge from the myriad districts;¹⁷⁴
 A thousand-layered kingfisher-green mist.

其十

罩明珠。
 化生養就胎仙舞。
 真慶會，
 姹女圓聚。
 渴飲瑤漿，
 玉琴自然撫。
 韻定仙音，
 敲金擊玉。

– 10 –

Collect the luminous pearl.
 Through refinement and completion, the immortal embryo dances.
 In the Association of Perfect Blessings,
 The Maiden completely gathers.¹⁷⁵
 When thirsty, drink the precious nectar;
 The jade zither naturally pacifies.
 Its harmony stabilizes the immortal sound;
 Pound the gold and strike the jade.¹⁷⁶

172 The “thirty-spoke wheel” alludes to chapter 11 of the *Daode jing*. If it has a technical *neidan* meaning, it suggests that there are thirty points along the spine and torso being activated.

173 The left and right eye, respectively.

174 Compare Sun’s lyric “To the Tune ‘Casting Lots’” (above).

175 The Maiden (*chanü* 姹女) usually refers to the lungs, Fire, and perfect *yang*. She usually appears with the Child (*ying'er* 嬰兒), who represents the liver, Water, and perfect *yin*.

176 Gold and jade are both key ingredients in external alchemy. Here they seem to be used generically to refer to internal alchemy practice.

十一

有中無。
 無中更有些兒做。
 有無中裏面搜取。
 無內藏真，
 有內卻如無。
 有無雙忘，
 還同太虛。

- 11 -

Nonbeing is within Being.
 Within Nonbeing, still other progeny are produced.
 Inside Being and Nonbeing,
 Practice inward contemplation and selection;
 Inside Nonbeing, store perfection;
 Inside Being, maintain resemblance to Nonbeing.
 When Being and Nonbeing are both forgotten,
 One returns to merge with the great Void.

十二

行功足。
 蓬萊三島群仙聚。
 瑤池會，
 聖賢無數。
 盡是修真，
 學道列仙侶。
 侍奉高真，
 西王聖母。

- 12 -

Practice and accomplishment become sufficient.
 Among the Three Islands of Penglai, various immortals gather.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁷ The Three Islands (*sandao* 三島) are both paradisiacal lands of immortality and the body as locale of perfection. In the former sense, they are three eastern island paradises usually identified as Penglai 蓬萊, Fangzhang 方丈, and Yingzhou 瀛洲. As a technical *neidan*

In the Association of the Turquoise Pond,¹⁷⁸
 Sages and worthies are beyond number.
 Each one completely cultivates perfection;
 Study the Dao and become a companion of the arrayed immortals.
 Focus on the elevated Perfected
 The sacred Queen Mother of the West.¹⁷⁹

十三

享天廚，
 仙衣掛體身輕舉。
 乘鸞鳳，
 翫賞清都。
 寶殿瑤樓，
 金釘滿朱戶。
 不夜長春，
 無來無去。

- 13 -

Present offerings to the celestial offices.
 When immortal robes are bestowed, you become transcendent.
 Mount the ascending phoenix,
 And be carefree and enjoy the pure metropolis.¹⁸⁰
 Among the treasure hall and precious tower,
 Gold spikes fill the vermilion portals.
 Perpetual spring without nightfall,
 There is no longer coming or going.

term, they refer to the three elixir fields (*dantian* 丹田), with the head as the upper island, the heart as the middle island, and the kidneys as the lower island.

178 Yaochi jinmu 瑤池金母 (Gold mother of the Turquoise pond) is an alternate name for Xiwangmu.

179 Xiwangmu is an ancient Chinese goddess associated with immortality who predates Daoism. She was eventually incorporated into the Daoist pantheon. She is associated with the western terrestrial paradise of Mount Kunlun 崑崙 and the orchards where the peaches of immortality grow about once in every thousand years. See Cahill, *Transcendence and Divine Passion*.

180 The Daoist heavens and sacred realms of immortality.

梧葉兒

To the Tune “Tree Leaves Rustling”¹⁸¹

其一

觀白鷺，
看烏鴉，
水底摸魚蝦。
鶯穿柳，
蝶戀花。
景幽雅，
若非雲門莫誇。

- 1 -

Observing the white phoenix,
Watching the black raven,
I grope for fish and shrimp beneath the water.¹⁸²
Orioles thread the willow trees;
Butterflies seek out the flowers.¹⁸³
Shadowed in secluded retirement,
If not a disciple of clouds, no one can brag.¹⁸⁴

其二

想林濟，
大慈悲，

181 *Minghe yuyin*, DZ 1100, 6.15a–16b. As mentioned in the text, this *ci*-lyric consists of various idiosyncratic technical terms. When annotations do not appear, I have been unable to decipher the context-specific meaning with sufficient certainty. For an attempt to establish an early Quanzhen *neidan* lexicography see Komjathy, *Cultivating Perfection*; Komjathy, *The Way of Complete Perfection*.

182 “Groping for Fish” is another tune pattern.

183 This stanza is highly symbolic and idiosyncratically obscure. If the various terms have technical meanings, they are unclear. However, the adept is observing the inner landscape of the body.

184 “Disciple of the clouds” (*yunmen* 雲門) refers to a Daoist renunciant (*chujia*), and often to a wandering one. The more standard term is “cloud wanderer” (*yunyou* 雲遊). For example, the Quanzhen meaning and corresponding practice is described in the second section of Wang Chongyang’s *Lijiao shiwu lun*. Here this may refer to actual eremitic withdrawal or to meditative praxis.

究竟作根基。
 打一棒，
 去片皮。
 好呆癡，
 痛癢猶然不知。

- 2 -

With the forest of thought regulated,
 And by broadening compassion,
 In the end one establishes a foundation.
 With a rap of the staff,
 One leaves behind the splayed covering.¹⁸⁵
 Enjoying simple idiocy,
 Painful discomfort seems totally unknown.

其三

龜毛拂，
 兔角錐，
 蝦蟆撲天飛。
 泥牛吼，
 木馬嘶。
 少人知，
 俯仰泄漏天機。

- 3 -

When the tortoise scales are shaken off,
 And the rabbit's horn pierces,
 The toad leaps towards heaven and flies.
 The mud oxen roars;
 The wood horse neighs.
 Few people know this –
 They are taken away by the times and dissipate the Celestial Pivot.

185 The mundane ordinary body and mundane self. In early Quanzhen, ordinary human beings, engaging in various patterns of dissipation, are also referred to as “walking corpses,” “running bones,” “skeletons,” and “marionettes.” See Komjathy, *Cultivating Perfection*.

其四

麥有麵，
 粟有米，
 布袴裏更有腿。
 山有石，
 海有水。
 語真實，
 洞霞無極立基。

- 4 -

Wheat contains flour,
 Millet contains grains.
 And even cotton leggings have legs inside.
 Mountains contain stones,
 While oceans contain water.
 Discuss the perfectly real –
 Establish a foundation among the limitlessness of cavern mists.

其五

擒意馬，
 鎖心猿，
 神氣養交全。
 非扭捏，
 合自然。
 體幽玄，
 法眼超過大千。

- 5 -

Capture the horse of thought;
 Lock up the monkey of the mind;
 Then spirit and *qi* are nourished and join in completion.
 Do not put on coquettish airs,
 But merge with suchness.¹⁸⁶

186 Here “suchness” translates *ziran* 自然. The latter literally means “self-so,” and might be best understood as “being-so-of-itself.” It has been conventionally translated as “natural-

Embodying the silent mystery,
Dharma-vision leaps beyond the great multitude.¹⁸⁷

其六

玄妙塞，
化城關，
一腳蹬翻。
花紅處，
柳綠間。
役遮攔，
處處仙佛面顏。

- 6 -

Bringing the mysterious and wondrous to rest,¹⁸⁸
Converting those among the cities and passes,¹⁸⁹
Each footprint is a step towards return.
The flower has a red space;
The willow has green throughout.
You do not have to fence yourself off –
The countenances of immortals and buddhas are everywhere.

其七

天邊月，
月正圓，

ness” and “spontaneity,” with various mistaken connotations of following one’s unconstrained desires.

187 Dharma-vision is one of the so-called Five Visions (*wuyan* 五眼), which is a Buddhist technical term that designates five types of perception related to five corresponding ontological conditions. They include the following: (1) The vision of those who have a material body (human), (2) The vision of celestial beings in the world of form (*deva*), (3) The vision of wisdom by which Theravāda adherents observe the thought of impermanence or emptiness (Theravāda), (4) The vision of *dharmā* by which bodhisattvas perceive all teachings in order to lead all beings to enlightenment (Mahāyāna), and (5) Buddha-vision or omniscience.

188 “Mysterious” (*xuan* 玄) and “wondrous” (*miao* 妙) are traditional Daoist descriptions of the Dao.

189 *Hua chengguan* 化城關, here translated as “converting those among cities and passes,” may be an allusion to the “passage to the Phantom City” in the *Lotus Sūtra*.

掘地去尋天。
 有無有，
 顛倒顛。
 妙玄玄，
 正道須當要口傳。

- 7 -

The moon in the sky,¹⁹⁰
 The moon aligned and whole,
 Travels to heaven after passing through the earth.
 Being and Nonbeing exist;
 Inversion involves turning over.
 The Wondrous is a twofold mystery;¹⁹¹
 For the orthodox Dao, you must seek oral transmission.

其八

天邊月，
 月上絃，
 卯酉不虛傳。
 八兩汞，
 八兩鉛。
 一觔全，
 照破了三千及大千。

- 8 -

The moon in the sky,
 The moon high and thin,

190 The moon, also know as Taiyin 太陰 (Great Yin), conventionally represents enlightenment in Chan (Zen) Buddhism. Here it may also have the connotation of divine radiance activated through *neidan* practice. It is also noteworthy that Daoist practice frequently gives particular attention to aligning oneself with the cycles of the moon, beginning with the new moon on the first day, moving through the waxing (increasing) phase until it reaches the full moon on the fifteenth, and then moving through the waning (decreasing) phase.

191 An allusion to chapter 1 of the *Daode jing*: “Mysterious and again more mysterious, the gateway to all wonders.”

Mao and *you* are not empty transmissions.¹⁹²
 Eight *liang* of mercury,¹⁹³
 And eight *liang* of lead.
 With one *jin* total,¹⁹⁴
 In enlightened break-through, one realizes three thousand reaches the
 multitude.

其九

天邊月，
 月應弓，
 真道妙無窮。
 龍擒虎，
 虎擒龍。
 兩相逢，
 結一朵金花弄風。

- 9 -

The moon in the sky,
 The moon resonant and crescent,
 The wondrousness of the perfect Dao is infinite.
 The dragon takes hold of the tiger,
 And the tiger takes hold of the dragon.
 When these two meet each other,
 They coalesce into a Gold Flower playing in the wind.

其十

天邊月，
 月正南，
 前後各三三。

192 *Mao* 卯 and *you* 酉 are the fourth and tenth terrestrial branches, respectively. In this combination, *mao* usually refers to the heart and spirit, while *you* refers to the kidneys and vital essence.

193 *Liang* 兩 is an ancient Chinese measurement for object mass and monetary objects, often translated as “ounce” or “tael.”

194 *Jin* 觔 is an ancient Chinese measurement, consisting of sixteen *liang*. It is sometimes translated as “catty.”

離是女，
坎是男。
妙玄談，
不說破，
教人家怎參。

– 10 –

The moon in the sky,
The moon aligned in the south,
Forward and behind, each is three times three.¹⁹⁵
Li-fire is female;
Kan-water is male.¹⁹⁶
In discussing the wondrous and mysterious,
Do not speak about break-through, but teach people about what to consider.

十一

天邊月，
月應爐，
鉛汞鼎中居。
金憑火，
鍊就珠。
一葫蘆，
三百八十四銖。

– 11 –

The moon in the sky,
The moon resonant and blazing,
The lead and mercury reside in the cauldron.
Gold depends on the fire;

195 Equaling nine, which is known as “pure yang” (*chunyang* 春陽) and “redoubled yang” (*chongyang* 重陽). These are the Daoist names of Lü Dongbin and Wang Chongyang, respectively.

196 The gender associations here refer to the *yin* (broken)-line in the center of the Li-fire trigram (*yin* within *yang*), and the *yang* (unbroken)-line inside of Kan-water (*yang* within *yin*).

Refinement completes the pearl.¹⁹⁷

A single calabash –¹⁹⁸

Three hundred and eighty-four *zhu* in weight.¹⁹⁹

滿庭芳

石火光陰，
 人身不久，
 算來生死難防。
 忽生或滅，
 恰似電爭光。
 識破形骸假合，
 尋得箇，
 出世仙方。
 思量後，
 回心向道，
 要認箇法中王。
 時時常見面，
 同行同坐，
 同飲霞漿。
 同伴清風明月，
 同一志，
 同見天光。
 同相會，
 同師訪道，
 同唱滿庭芳。

To the Tune “Fragrance Filling the Courtyard”²⁰⁰

The radiance of the mineral fire is hidden;
 The human body does not last long;
 When reckoning comes, one realizes that life and death are difficult to guard
 against.

197 “Pearl” refers to the elixir of immortality.

198 Calabashes or gourds are a traditional Daoist symbol. In addition to symbolizing immortality more generally, they represent the universe and the human body.

199 *Zhu* 銖 is an ancient Chinese measurement for weight, equaling one twenty-fourth of a *liang*.

200 *Minghe yuyin*, DZ 1100, 6.16b–17a.

Whether suddenly born or suddenly perishing,
 It is just like the brilliance of a lightning strike.
 Recognize and break-through the provisional joining of physical form;
 Endeavor to obtain this
 And abandon the world for the immortal regions.
 After thinking reaches its limits,
 Turn the heart-mind back to the Dao
 And seek to know the ruler within these phenomena.²⁰¹
 Moment by moment constantly maintain these meetings –
 Be unified in walking and in sitting;
 Be unified in drinking the nectar of mists.
 Be unified as a companion of the clear wind and luminous moon;
 Be unified in a single aspiration;
 Be unified in perceiving celestial radiance.
 Be unified in mutually beneficial associations;
 Be unified with your master in seeking the Dao;
 Be unified in your singing as fragrance fills the courtyard.

201 The “king” (*wang* 王) and “ruler” (*zhu* 主) usually refer to the heart-mind.