# The Seat of Taiyi 太一 (Grand One) and New Light on an Old Problem: How Did Daoist Religion Happen?

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**Abstract:**

Haotan Tomb 1, Shaanxi, dated to the first century CE, has a spirit world mural that depicts the Taiyi *zuo* "seat of Grand One," with the three graphs written on a red banner. The function of the *shenzuo* "spirit seat" is an important feature of Eastern Han popular religion. This article examines textual sources and archaeological materials in order to interpret the Haotan seat of Grand One in the context of contemporaneous religious ideas and practices. The Fei Zhi stela and the so-called three-register mirrors are among the examples of the spirit seat that are related to the Haotan seat of Grand One.

**Keywords:** Taiyi *zuo* "seat of Grand One, " *shenzuo* "spirit seat," *bianzuo* "convenient seat," Fei Zhi stela, three-register mirrors

This article focuses on one image from the mural painted on the west wall of Haotan 郝灘 Tomb 1, Shaanxi, dated to the first century CE. Three graphs written on what appears to be a red banner identify the image as Taiyi *zuo* 太一坐 "seat of Grand One."[1] The function of the inscribed banner forms part of the religious function of the *zuo* "seat" depicted in the Haotan mural, and at present, the mural is the fullest visual realization of this religious object (Fig. 1). A scene of spirit-world festivities involving Xiwangmu 西王母 (Queen Mother of the West) shares space with the seat of Grand One in the mural (Fig. 2). In the following pages, I discuss how people of Han times read the mural and what information it offers to us regarding contemporaneous religious ideas and practices. As I begin, let me say that the process of researching the seat of Grand One in the Haotan mural

1 The graphs 大, 太, and 泰 are attested in Han occurrences of the spirit's name, which I render uniformly as Taiyi.

Fig. 1　Seat of Grand One and Queen Mother of the West in Haotan Tomb 1. Detail of spirit world mural on west wall.

Fig. 2　Spirit world mural on west wall of Haotan Tomb 1. Larger view.

has made clearer the connections between archaeological artifacts and written texts, and has sharpened my understanding of Han religion, especially during the first and second centuries when the earliest groups practicing Daoist religion are recorded in history. Let me further state that the subtitle—"How Did Daoist Religion Happen?"—remains unexplained in this article. Rather, as new archaeological evidence emerges to refine and correct our understanding of history, we know more about the circumstances of religion among people in their communities. Any examination of Daoist religion in the first and second centuries requires a nuanced interpretive strategy to situate Daoism in the broader religious landscape.

**Haotan Tomb 1 murals and related Eastern Han tombs in the region**

Haotan Tomb 1 was in a group of tombs discovered in April 2003, during construction work at a service area along the route of the G20 expressway in northwest Shaanxi. The site is about 2.5 kilometers north of the Haotan local government seat. After discovery, twenty horizontal-chamber tombs were excavated, including caves carved into the earth and brick-construction tombs. Most were looted long ago and few artifacts were found. Remains of an above-ground structure indicate that they were part of a family cemetery with worship hall. The archaeologists date the tombs to the Wang Mang 王莽 era (9–23 CE) and early Eastern Han period. Tomb 1 was a single-chamber cave located in the center of the site, with a north–south orientation and a sloping entrance-path on the north. The

chamber measured 4.75 meters long, 2.1 meters wide, and 1.8–1.9 meters high. There was a niche on the east wall near the entrance. Beyond the niche the brick floor was raised slightly, marking a separation between the space in the front of the chamber and the rear (as if the single-chamber tomb had front and rear chambers).[2] The walls and barrel-vault ceiling were coated with adobe first, followed by a layer of plaster, and then painted with a light green base-coat. At the corners of the chamber, vertical bands of red paint imitating wooden posts went from the floor to the base of the barrel vault, and horizontal bands separated the upper space of the vault from the lower wall-space. These bands also demarcated the separate spaces for the murals, which covered the chamber's walls and ceiling, except for the niche on the east wall.[3]

The portrait of the couple buried in the tomb dominates the south wall of the chamber in the arch-shaped space directly under the vault (Fig. 3). Below their portrait is a mural depicting a courtyard house and scenes of farming and hunting. The seated figures of the couple are roughly twice the size of the figures in other murals.[4] The surface of the vault forms a single mural depicting the celestial sphere, with stars drawn as circles connected by lines to represent *xiu* 宿 "stellar lodges" and other constellations. Although portions of the celestial-sphere mural were damaged by construction work, it seems that not all twenty-eight stellar lodges are depicted, and their placement does not form a precise diagram of their celestial positions. Some are identified by name, and the mural shows creatures and figures with human form associated with them (Fig. 4). The mural includes representations of the spirit creatures of the four quarters of heaven, the moon (the sun

2 These details follow the brief excavation report, "Shaanxi Dingbianxian Haotan faxian Dong Han bihua mu" 陝西定邊縣郝灘發現東漢壁畫墓, *Kaogu yu wenwu* 考古與文物 2004, no. 5: 20-21. See also, Lü Zhirong吕智荣, "Haotan Dong Han bihua mu shengtian tu kaoshi" 郝灘東漢壁畫墓升天圖考釋 , *Zhongyuan wenwu* 中原文物 2014, no. 2: 86-90; Sun Dalun 孫大倫, "Haotan Dong Han mu bihua yishu shulüe" 郝灘東漢墓壁畫藝術述略, *Shaanxi lishi bowuguan guankan* 陝西歷史博物館館刊 13 (2006), 271-275; *Bishang danqing: Shaanxi chutu bihuaji* 壁上丹青 : 陝西出土壁畫集 (Beijing: Kexue chubanshe, 2009), vol. 1, 47-79; Li Song 李淞, *Zhongguo daojiao meishushi* 中國道教美術史 (Changsha: Hunan meishu chubanshe, 2012), vol. 1, 150-155.

3 After their removal from the tomb, the murals have been conserved and are kept at the Shaanxi Province Institute of Archaeology. There is not a photographic record of all murals in their entirety, hence we rely on published descriptions. For the mural on the west wall with the seat of Grand One, see especially Lü Zhirong, "Haotan Dong Han bihua mu," 89-90 (Lü is one of the Shaanxi archaeologists who excavated Haotan Tomb 1).

4 Li Song, *Zhongguo daojiao*, 126, illustrates the scale of the portrait of the couple relative to the figure of the Queen Mother of the West on the west wall.

Fig. 3 Portrait of couple buried in Haotan Tomb 1, south wall.

Fig. 4 Celestial-sphere mural on the vault of Haotan Tomb 1. Detail.

may be missing in a damaged portion), spirits of nature such as Fengbo 風伯 (Wind Elder) and Yushi 雨師 (Rain General), and *xian* 仙 "transcendent beings" in flight. Murals on the east and west walls contrast the human world and spirit world. The mural on the east wall beyond the niche shows a procession with a horse-drawn carriage and horserider, which is typical for Eastern Han tombs with painted murals or carved-stone scenes (Fig. 5). The spirit world mural occupies the corresponding space on the west wall, with the drawings of the Queen Mother of the West and the seat of Grand One at the south end closest to the portrait of the couple. A mural of human figures engaged in herding is opposite the niche in the front of the chamber, separated from the spirit world mural by a vertical red band (which along with the raised floor and niche demarcated the separate spaces in the front and rear of the chamber). Different styles of artistic representation accentuate the contrast between human world scenes, on the one hand, and celestial sphere and spirit world scenes on the other. The celestial sphere and spirit world scenes are roughly sketched and colored, and they have a cartoon-like quality. In comparison, there is greater attention to detail and realistic representation in the human world scenes. I presume that the artists followed conventions of representation appropriate to the subject of the murals.

The seat of Grand One in the Haotan mural is currently the only example having the identifying banner with its three graphs. Aside from what the banner signified in the first century, for the modern historian of Han religion, it is written proof that the spirit world shown in the mural is overseen by the supreme deity called "Taiyi (Grand One)" in contemporaneous texts, both in transmitted sources and archaeologically excavated

Fig. 5 Horse-drawn carriage in Haotan Tomb 1. Detail of mural on east wall.

Fig. 6 Spirit world mural on east wall of front chamber in Yangqiaopan Tomb 1.

documents.[5] Since 2003 and the discovery of Haotan Tomb 1, three more Eastern Han tombs with murals in the region of the Haotan site have been excavated, each of which adds details to interpret the visual plan of the Haotan murals. This regional aspect of all four tombs provides vivid evidence of locally shared conventions of visual representation used to express people's worldview, and in particular their religious ideas.

For the seat of Grand One, the most important tomb is Yangqiaopan 楊橋畔 Tomb 1, Shaanxi, excavated in 2005, where the centerpiece of the spirit world mural is a second depiction of the seat (Fig. 6). It is unlabeled and differs in details, but the obvious relationship between the Haotan and Yangqiaopan murals confirms its identification as the seat of Grand One (Fig. 7). The distance between the Haotan and Yangqiaopan sites is 60–70 kilometers. Yangqiaopan Tomb 1, looted long ago, was a two-chamber brick tomb with barrel-vault ceiling. The entrance was at the south and the rear chamber (where the coffins had been, of which no traces remain) was at the north end of the tomb. The chambers were separated by making the rear chamber narrower in width and lower in height than the front chamber. The front chamber was 2.37 meters long, 1.86 meters wide, and 1.94 meters high; the rear chamber was 3.36 meters long, 1.54 meters wide, and 1.7 meters high.[6] On the walls, a design of brickwork and paint imitates the wooden columns and beams of the

5 For an overview of Grand One in texts and artifacts, see Li Ling, "An Archaeological Study of Taiyi (Grand One) Worship," *Early Medieval China* 2 (1995–1996), 1-39.

6 "Shaanxi Jingbian Dong Han bihua mu" 陝西靖邊東漢壁畫墓, *Wenwu* 2009, no. 2: 32-43; *Bishang danqing*, vol. 1, 80-113; Li Song, *Zhongguo daojiao*, 156-159.

Fig. 7 Seat of Grand One in Yangqiaopan Tomb 1. Detail of spirit world mural.

interior of a dwelling. The surface of the vault is bare, and there is no mural comparable to the celestial-sphere mural on the Haotan Tomb 1 vault. Murals are placed selectively in open spaces on the walls. Like Haotan Tomb 1, the portrait of the couple is on the far wall of the rear chamber directly under the vault, and they are larger than figures in the other murals. Two rectangular panels below the portrait depict scenes of farming (Fig. 8). The panels are part of the wall design, formed from two horizontal beams painted on the upper wall and separated by a vertical post. The walls of both chambers have the same design. Murals in upper panels on the east and west walls of the rear chamber have spirit world themes; the lower walls on the north, east, and west are bare.

In the front chamber, murals occur on upper panels and lower walls. The spirit world mural with seat of Grand One is just inside the entrance on the lower east wall. Behind it is a human world scene of dining and entertainment. The lower west wall has the horse and carriage procession scene. Except for three depictions of spirit world themes, the upper panels on east and west walls have human world themes, including a depiction of Kongzi 孔子, Laozi 老子, and Xiang Tuo 項橐 on the east wall.[7] The Yangqiaopan Tomb 1 murals exhibit the same contrast in artistic style between human world and spirit world scenes as in Haotan Tomb 1. The Yangqiaopan mural with seat of Grand One shows that this scene could stand alone in contemporaneous conventions of tomb decoration, and indicates that the Haotan mural may be treated as the combination of two themes: the seat of Grand One

7 There are a number of examples of scenes of Kongzi and Laozi together with the wise child, Xiang Tuo, in Eastern Han carved-stone reliefs. For a survey of the evidence, see Huang Jianhua 黃劍華, "Cong shike huaxiang kan Han dai dui zhongru xingjiao de chongshang" 從石刻畫像看漢代對重儒興教的崇尚, *Changjiang wenming* 長江文明 7 (2011), 29-33.

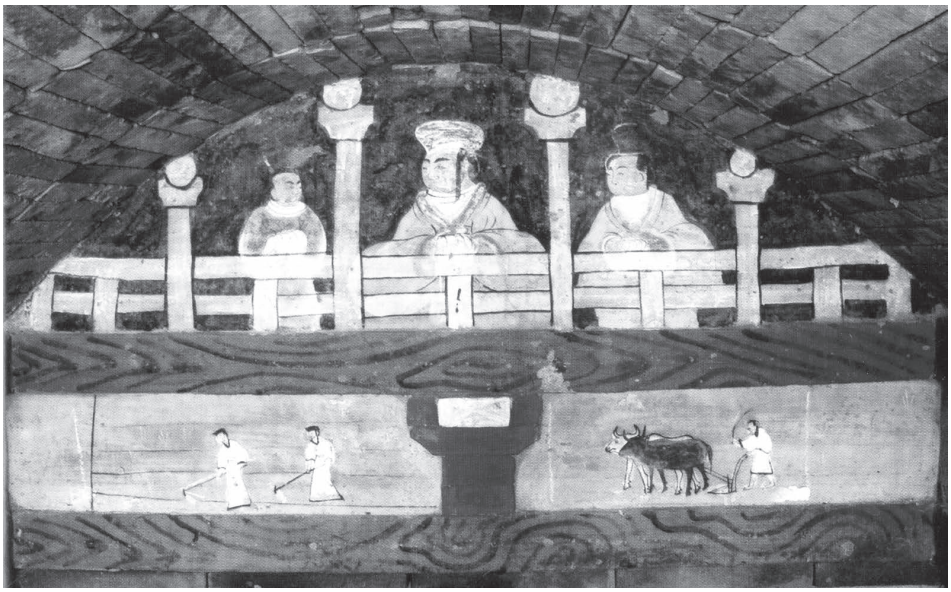

Fig. 8 Portrait of couple buried in Yangqiaopan Tomb 1, north wall of rear chamber.

and festivities involving the Queen Mother of the West.

Two tombs excavated at the site of Qushuhao 渠樹壕, Shaanxi, in 2008 and 2015 have drawn notice mainly for the celestial-sphere murals on their barrel-vault ceilings. Qushuhao is just several kilometers west of the Yangqiaopan site. The brief excavation report for the tomb excavated in 2015 was published in 2017 along with a separate study of its celestial-sphere mural.[8] The excavation report refers briefly to the tomb excavated in 2008, but to my knowledge a report for the latter tomb has not been published. The 2015 Qushuhao tomb does not have a wall mural comparable to the spirit world murals with seat of Grand One at Haotan and Yangqiaopan, hence the main comparison is between the celestial-sphere murals at Qushuhao and Haotan.[9] The Qushuhao mural covers the vaults of both the front and rear chambers of the brick-construction tomb. The combined length

8 "Shaanxi Jingbianxian Yangqiaopan Qushuhao Dong Han bihua mu fajue jianbao" 陝西靖邊縣楊橋畔渠樹壕東漢壁畫墓發掘簡報, *Kaogu yu wenwu* 2017, no. 1: 3-26; Duan Yi 段毅 and Wu Jiabi 武家璧, "Jingbian Qushuhao Dong Han bihua mu tianwentu kaoshi" 靖邊渠樹壕東漢壁畫墓天文圖考釋, *Kaogu yu wenwu* 2017, no. 1: 78-88.

9 The Qushuhao wall murals mostly represent human world themes, such as dining, entertainment, a horse-drawn carriage, a courtyard house, and farming activities. Unlike the Haotan and Yangqiaopan tombs, there is not a large-size portrait of the tomb occupants on the rear wall.

Fig. 9 The Three Platforms in the celestial-sphere mural on the vault of the Qushuhao tomb. Detail.

of the chambers is 5.7 meters; the front chamber is 2.1 meters wide and 2.45 meters high; the rear chamber is 1.8 meters wide and 2.25 meters high. In addition to the twenty-eight stellar lodges—a few are damaged and the lodge name is missing, but most are named and depicted with their associated creatures or human figures—the mural has other constellations, notably some circumpolar constellations. The graphs Beidou 北斗 (Northern Dipper) are written inside the bowl of the seven stars of the Big Dipper. In front of the Dipper bowl are three sets of stars that composed the Santai 三台 (Three Platforms) in Han astrology, labeled from bottom to top with the graphs Santai 三台, Zhong 中 (Middle), and Santai 三台 (the constellation corresponds to stars of Ursa Major located at the front of the bear) (Fig. 9). According to Han astrology, the topmost platform gave access to the Ziwei 紫微 (Purple Tenuity) region where the polestar and several stars associated with supreme deities were located, including Grand One.[10] None of these supreme-deity stars is in the Qushuhao mural.

The inhabitants of northwest Shaanxi in the first and second centuries were aware of the commonalities among the Haotan, Yangqiaopan, and Qushuhao tombs and their murals that we recognize through the lens of archaeology. The tombs were miniature dwellings, crafted with varying degrees of verisimilitude. For size and artistry, the single-chamber earth cave of Haotan Tomb 1 was the smallest and simplest. However, the use of murals was realized more fully than in Yangqiaopan Tomb 1, which lacked the celestial-sphere mural, and left blank large wall spaces of the rear chamber. The placement of the Haotan spirit world mural on the west wall below the vault with celestial-sphere mural and adjacent to the portrait of the couple, and its combined depictions of the themes

10 For details on these circumpolar constellations in Han astrology, see Sun Xiaochun and Jacob Kistemaker, *The Chinese Sky During the Han: Constellating Stars and Society* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 153-154 (Appendix I, especially nos. 53 and 58-62).

of the seat of Grand One and the Queen Mother of the West, are further evidence of a well-planned design. Comparing the Haotan and Qushuhao celestial-sphere murals, the Qushuhao mural is more elaborate, but the Haotan mural relied on the same body of knowledge in its production. Further, both murals use written text to make a diagram that textualizes the visual information. Celestial-sphere murals on vaults in the first century BCE tomb discovered in 1987 on the grounds of Jiaotong University 交通大學, in Xi'an 西安, Shaanxi, and the first century CE tomb discovered in 2003 at Yintun 尹屯, in Luoyang 洛陽, Henan, do not use written text.[11] They are no less significant as evidence of Han astrology. However, the Haotan and Qushuhao murals with text involved the simultaneous act of reading and naming, which affected how people understood the visual representation. Similarly, the Haotan image of the seat of Grand One with banner reading "Taiyi *zuo*" indicated to those who saw it that the scene corresponded to a well-known Grand One narrative, a collection of religious common knowledge expressed visually, in writing, or in a combination of both. The banner's explicit referentiality determined the meaning of the Haotan example of the seat of Grand One, while the expectation for the Yangqiaopan example was that its conventionality would be recognized without the intervention of writing.

As a philologist of early Chinese texts, I take interest in Chinese archaeological discoveries that attest to the shared referentiality of text and image in specific cultural objects, and this is what immediately drew me to the Haotan seat of Grand One.[12] The banner inscription is, of course, a modern godsend. It is a solution to an archaeological puzzle, connecting an image to a name and an identity, and without the inscription, we would not even be talking about the seat of the supreme deity called "Grand One" in connection with Eastern Han popular religion. My chief concern in this article is to see the Haotan seat of Grand One through the eyes of Eastern Han people, for whom the image in the mural represented a cultural object that they experienced in tomb murals and no doubt in other life circumstances—for instance, at a cult site—and to recreate its religious meaning for them.

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11 See *Xi'an Jiaotong daxue Xi Han bihua mu* 西安交通大學西漢壁畫墓 (Xi'an: Xi'an Jiaotong daxue chubanshe, 1991); "Luoyang Yintun Xin Mang bihua mu" 洛陽尹屯新莽壁畫墓, *Kaogu xuebao* 考古學報 2005, no. 1: 109-126.

12 For my ideas about the relationship between visual signs and text in several Mawangdui 馬王堆 Tomb 3 manuscripts, see Donald Harper, "Communication by Design: Two Silk Manuscripts of Diagrams (Tu) from Mawangdui Tomb Three," in *Graphics and Text in the Production of Technical Knowledge in China: The Warp and the Weft*, eds. Francesca Bray et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 169-189.

**Reading the seat of Grand One in Haotan Tomb 1 and Yangqiaopan Tomb 1**

I presume that the seat of Grand One was well known to Eastern Han people belonging to different social groups, but sharing in common religious ideas and practices, which they experienced in their communities across the empire. Thus, the idea and the actuality of the seat of Grand One can lead us to greater awareness of religion in daily life, beyond the narrow association with mortuary culture or with a "cult of immortality" (the usual English term for ideas and practices associated with *xian* "transcendent beings, transcendence" and the Queen Mother of the West). Historical studies of Han religion have tended to treat the so-called cult of immortality as a religion of the elite—a set of ideas and practices unknown to and unavailable to lower social groups—and to distinguish between the "popular religion" or "folk religion" of the nonelite and the religion of the elite. Since the 1970s, archaeological discoveries in China, including manuscripts, have provided abundant evidence calling into question the neat division between "elite" and "nonelite" (however they are defined) in early Chinese religion. In 1995 I proposed the term "common religion" for the religion that was "shared in common" by different social groups in the Warring States, Qin, and Han periods (453 BCE–220 CE).[13] Recently I have begun using "popular religion" to better align the treatment of religion with broader discussion of shared cultural characteristics that constitute "popular culture" in accord with ongoing debates on popular culture. My understanding of both terms is informed by the considerations that previously led me to adopt the term "common religion."[14]

My examination of the seat of Grand One begins with philological analysis of the word *zuo* "seat" as it was understood in the Eastern Han period, then details each part of the seat of Grand One depicted in the Haotan and Yangqiaopan murals. Additional archaeological evidence that can be brought to bear on the idea and religious function of the seat of Grand One includes bronze mirrors depicting a spirit seat like the seat of Grand One in the murals and stelae that served as spirit seats. These realia—objects used in everyday life—shared form and function with the seat of Grand One in the murals. That is, explaining the Haotan and Yangqiaopan seat of Grand One is a key to religion more

13 See Donald Harper, "Warring States, Ch'in, and Han Periods," in "Chinese Religions: The State of the Field," ed. Daniel Overmyer, *Journal of Asian Studies* 54, no. 1 (1995), 156-158.

14 For further discussion, see my chapter titled, "Daybooks in the Context of Popular Culture and Manuscript Culture Studies," in *Books of Fate and Popular Culture in Early China: The Daybook Manuscripts of the Warring States*, *Qin*, *and Han*, eds. Donald Harper and Marc Kalinowski (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 91-137.

generally in its multiple manifestations in the first and second centuries, which, in turn, may shed light on the formation of Daoist religion in its original setting.

The verb "sit in a kneeling position" was the main meaning of the word and its graph *zuo* 坐 in pre-Han usage; the noun was derived from the verb. In the Old Chinese reconstruction of William Baxter and Laurent Sagart, the verb was *[dz]ˤo[j]ʔ and the noun, derived from the verb by the addition of the morphological suffix *-s, was *[dz]ˤo[j]ʔ-s.[15] I have not found many occurrences of the noun *zuo* in pre-Han transmitted sources. The earliest is a verse on feasting in the *Shijing* 詩經 (Classic of songs). The verse contrasts the dignified manners of the guests when they first sit on their *yan* 筵 "mat" with their later drunken behavior when they *she qi zuo qian* 捨其坐遷 "leave their sitting-place and wander."[16] Whereas *yan* denotes the article of furniture on which people sat/knelt, my translation "sitting-place" for the nominalized form of *zuo* reflects my understanding that the word denoted the place or space where sitting occurred rather than the one article of furniture on which people sat.

Other pre-Han occurrences of *zuo* indicate a similar contrast between words for the article of furniture or "mat" (most often, *xi* 席 ) and occasional references to *zuo* for "sitting-place, sitting-space." In the *Lunyu* 論語 (Analects), the Book 10 instructions for proper conduct include the following pair regarding preparations for offering sacrifices: "For performing ritual abstinence you must change your diet and for residing you must move your sitting-space" ( 齊必變食居必遷坐 ). The commentary gloss of "for residing you must move your sitting-space," attributed to Kong Anguo 孔安國 (d. ca. 100 BCE), is *yi chang chu* 易常處 "change the regular dwelling-space."[17] The notion of *zuo* as indicating a space or spaces in a dwelling where the occupants sat—including the bedroom—is also evident in the *Hanfeizi* 韓非子 (Master Han Fei). In a story about a man who wanted new shoes, the man measured his foot and recorded the measurement with the intention of giving it to the shoemaker at the market: "He first measured his foot and set it

15 William Baxter and Laurent Sagart, *Old Chinese: A New Reconstruction* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2014), 197. The verb *zuo* also had the technical legal meaning "hold liable," referring to any circumstances that subjected a person to the Qin and Han criminal judicial process. See Anthony Barbieri-Low and Robin Yates, *Law*, *State*, *and Society in Early Imperial China: A Study with Critical Edition and Translation of the Legal Texts from Zhangjiashan Tomb no. 247* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 37 and 136.

16 *Mao Shi zhushu*毛詩注疏 (Taipei: Yiwen yinshuguan, 1965; reprint of 1815 woodblock edition of *Chongkan Song ben Shisan jing zhushu fu jiaokan ji* 重刊宋本十三經注疏附校勘記 ), 14C.13a ("Bin zhi chu yan" 賓之初筵, *Mao* 220).

17 *Lunyu zhushu* 論語注疏 (*Shisan jing zhushu* ed.), 10.8a ("Xiangdang" 鄉黨 ).

down at his sitting-space” ( 先自度其足而置之其坐 ). The man forgot the record when he went to the market, went home to get it, and when he returned to the shoemaker he found that the market was closed, leading someone to ask why the man did not just show his foot to the shoemaker.[18] The bamboo-slip inventory of burial goods found in Changtaiguan 長臺關 Tomb 1, Henan (late fourth century BCE), attests a related usage of *zuo* as the measure word to count one entire assembly of bronze chime-bells and stand as well as another assembly of chimestones and stand.[19] In sum, the noun *zuo* in pre-Han usage did not identify the article of furniture for sitting—*xi* and related words for “mat” served that purpose, as did *chuang* 床 “bed”—but was applied to the spatial aspect of sitting or of physically occupying space (the latter sense also accounts for the case of chime-bells and chimestones).

Examples of *zuo* in Han sources include the verb “sit in a kneeling position,” the noun for “sitting-place, sitting-space” as well as for the article of furniture (“seat”), and compounds such as *zuoxi* 坐席 “sitting mat,” in which the verb *zuo* modifies the noun *xi*. The graph 座 probably represents a post-Han orthographic practice to specify the noun *zuo*.[20] Textual evidence of the religious function of *zuo* “seat” is Eastern Han. In ongoing research, I am studying shifts in meaning of the noun from the pre-Han to the immediate post-Han periods, focusing on religious function, and I refer selectively to relevant details in the present article.[21] The first dictionary definition of the noun *zuo* is ca. 200 CE, in Liu

18 Zhang Jue 張覺 ed., *Hanfeizi jiaoshu* 韓非子校疏 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2010), 11.745 (“Wai chushuo zuoshang” 外儲說左上 ).

19 Liu Guosheng 劉國勝 , *Chu sangzang jiandu jishi* 楚喪葬簡牘集釋 (Beijing: Kexue chubanshe, 2011), 5, slip 2-018, and 21n84.

20 Occurrences of the verb *zuo* are ubiquitous. For examples of noun usage, see *Han shu* 漢書 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1962), 39.2020, *zhangzuo*張坐 “arrange the seats”; and 46.2194, *bianzuo* 便坐 “convenient sitting-space” (for discussion of this term, see below, pp. 343-346). For *zuoxi* as modifying verb usage, see *Han shu*, 63.2766. I have not seen occurrences of 座 in pre-Han and Han excavated manuscripts or other paleographic materials. In my judgment, occasional occurrences of 座 in Han transmitted texts—sometimes replacing 坐 in a parallel version of the same text—should be treated as a post-Han phenomenon.

21 The nouns *suo* 所 “place” and *wei* 位 “position” to designate the space occupied by a spirit are older than *zuo*, occurring as early as the Warring States period. Ken-ichi Takashima, in studies on the script and language of the Shang oracle bone inscriptions, identifies one Shang graph as 坐 , not based on paleographical evidence linking the graph to attested forms of *zuo* 坐 in later sources, but rather based on a hypothetical “contextual analysis.” Takashima argues that the graph in question, when examined in the context of occurrences in Shang inscriptions, must have a meaning that he associates with the later word/graph *zuo* 坐 , even though there is no paleographical proof of the association he posits. His translation is “to seat (an ancestral spirit) *in situ* (at the altar place/niche of).” See Ken-ichi Takashima, *Studies of Fascicle Three of Inscriptions from the Yin Ruins*

Xi's 劉熙 *Shiming* 釋名 (Explanations of names), in the section "Chuang zhang" 床帳 (Beds and drapery). In fact, Liu Xi's entry defines a compound, *duzuo* 獨坐 , which is a type of *chuang* "bed":

> 人所坐卧曰床，床装也所以自装載也。長狹而卑曰榻，言其體榻然近地也。小者曰獨坐主人無二獨所坐也。
>
> What people sit on and sleep on is called *chuang* "bed." *Chuang* means *zhuang* "load" and is what people load themselves onto. The type that is long, narrow, and low is called *ta* "bench," which is to say that its body extends out close to the ground. The small type is called *duzuo* "single seat" and is what the master sits on singly when there is not a second person.[22]

This is the only occurrence of *duzuo* in a Han text. Two more entries describe variations on the basic *chuang* "bed."

Archaeologically, several low platforms used for sitting have been found in Han tombs. Carved-stone reliefs and murals depict similar platforms on which the person sits in kneeling position, with and without angled side-screens.[23] Perhaps the one-person platforms were called by the *Shiming* name, *duzuo* "single seat," but other names were available and more common. Moreover, the distinctive quality of *zuo* as a name in Han usage drew upon its association with culturally defined behavior expressed in the act of kneeling in specific settings while occupying a designated space. This well-composed arrangement of space—part of a larger architectural space—was the *zuo*. It was not just the wood or stone of the bed frame or the material components used in making the mat placed on the bed.

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(Taipei: Institute of History and Philology, Academia Sinica, 2010), vol. 2 New Palaeographical and Philological Commentaries, 410-411. Ken-ichi Takashima, "Literacy to the South and the East of Anyang in Shang China: Zhengzhou and Daxinzhuang," in *Writing and Literacy in Early China: Studies from the Columbia Early China Seminar*, ed. Li Feng and David Prager Branner (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2011), 166-167, refers to Shang occurrences of *zuo* 坐 as if the hypothetical graph identification is unproblematic (the original Shang graph is not shown or discussed). As a consequence, K.E. Brashier, *Public Memory in Early China* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard-Yenching Institute, 2014), 276-277 and 457n55, cites Takashima on the Shang meaning of *zuo* in his discussion of the religious meaning of *zuo* in Han sources. Takashima's "contextual analysis" graph identification may be methodologically acceptable in the field of Shang paleography. However, this kind of conjecture cannot be treated as evidence for historical analysis of the word/graph *zuo* 坐 , and I leave it aside in my study.

22 *Shiming* (*Congshu jicheng chubian* 叢書集成初編 ed.), 6.93.

23 See Sun Ji 孫機 , *Han dai wuzhi wenhua ziliao tushuo*漢代物質文化資料圖說 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2011), 251-254; and Hayashi Minao林巳奈夫 , *Kandai no bunbutsu*漢代の文物 (Kyoto: Kyōto daigaku jinbun kagaku kenkyūjo, 1976), 199-200.

The oldest and fullest attestation of the meaning just presented is a surviving quotation from the now lost *Han jiuyi* 漢舊儀 (Old Han ceremonial) by Wei Hong 衛宏 (first half of first century CE), which is also the oldest attestation of the religious function of *zuo*. The *Han jiuyi* was Wei Hong's record of the ceremonial practices of the Western Han imperial court, about which he also advised the court of the Eastern Han founder, Emperor Guangwu 光武帝 (r. 25–57). The passage concerns the imperial ancestral sacrifice called Xia 祫 . Contemporaneous accounts of the observance of Xia refer to offering sacrifices to the ancestors' *shenzhu* 神主 "spirit tablets." The *Han jiuyi* is unique in describing the interior of the Gao Shrine 高廟 in Chang'an 長安 dedicated to the Han founder, Gaozu 高祖 (High Ancestor), and detailing Gaozu's *zuo* "seat":

> 宗廟三年大祫祭。子孫諸帝以昭穆坐於高廟。諸隳廟神皆合食設左右坐。高祖南面。幄繡帳望堂上西北隅。帳中坐長一丈廣六尺。繡絪厚一尺著之以絮四百斤。曲几黃金釦器。
>
> At the Ancestral Shrine every third year there was the great Xia sacrifice. The sons and grandsons and all emperors were seated in the Gao Shrine in the *zhao* and *mu* sequence. All spirits of abandoned shrines were fed with the collectivity, and their seats were placed on the left and right.[24] The High Ancestor faced south. The canopy and embroidered curtains were positioned at the upper end of the hall toward the northwest corner. Inside the curtains, the seat was one *zhang* long (2.31 meters) and six *chi* wide (1.39 meters). The embroidered mattress was one *chi* thick (23.1 centimeters), and was filled with four hundred *jin* of wadding (100 kilograms). There were angled tables and gold-rimmed implements.[25]

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24 For discussion of the *zhao* and *mu* sequence as applied in Han imperial ancestral sacrifices, see K. E. Brashier, *Ancestral Memory in Early China* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard-Yenching Institute, 2011), 366-367n46. Brashier (*Ancestral Memory*, 152-155) also discusses the ritual protocol adopted by Emperor Guangwu and the matter of which imperial ancestors received regular sacrifices and which did not. The shrines for the latter were considered *hui* 隳 "abandoned" (Brashier refers to them as "decommissioned"). Under Emperor Guangwu, the Xia sacrifice was an occasion to sacrifice to all ancestors at a single imperial shrine, and the spirit tablets from abandoned ancestral shrines were brought to the imperial shrine for the observance.

25 *Hou Han shu* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1965), "Zhi" 志 , 9.3195, as quoted in Liu Zhao's 劉昭 (fl. 502-520) commentary. A briefer quotation occurs in *Taiping yulan* 太平御覽 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1960), 526.2b-3a. The main text of the *Hou Han shu* contains Zhang Chun's 張純 memorial presented to Emperor Guangwu in 50 CE to explain the Xia and Di 禘 sacrifices; the memorial refers to the ancestors' spirit tablets, not to the seats.

The similarity of these details to the visual depiction of the Haotan Tomb 1 seat of Grand One is obvious. The *Han jiuyi* lacks the banner, but we might suppose that Wei Hong neglected to mention a banner inscribed Gaozu *zuo* 高祖坐 "seat of High Ancestor." There are several more observations to make about the *Han jiuyi* before turning to the seat of Grand One in the Haotan and Yangqiaopan murals. First, I presume that Wei Hong was describing the Gao Shrine in Chang'an, because the *Han jiuyi* mostly concerns a Western Han imperial ceremonial. However, there are passages that concern Wang Mang's 王莽 Xin 新 era and the Eastern Han. Further, the Xia sacrifice became an issue for imperial ceremonial during the reign of Emperor Guangwu, who established a second Gao Shrine in Luoyang 洛陽. Thus, we should admit the possibility that the *Han jiuyi* account of the appearance and interior arrangement of seats in the Gao Shrine represents a first century CE idealized description related to Eastern Han discussion of the Xia sacrifice.[26] Whether or not the *Han jiuyi* reflects a Western Han actuality does not affect its relevance for the Eastern Han idea and religious function of *zuo* "seat" and its importance for interpreting the Haotan and Yangqiaopan murals.

Second, the seat described in the *Han jiuyi* was the same assemblage that occurred in a domestic setting. Details in the *Han jiuyi* about other seats include the seat for Gaozu's wife, Gaohou 高后 (Dowager Gao), which was slightly smaller than his seat and had silver-rimmed implements. Among the seats for lower-ranking imperial ancestors, some had *quji* 曲几 "angled tables" like Gaozu's seat, some had *qubingfeng* 曲屏風 "angled side-screens," and some were like carriage seats. Whether in a dwelling or a shrine, a complete seat consisted of curtains and canopy on the outside with frame, mat or mattress, and accessories inside the fabric enclosure. Regarding size of the seat inside the enclosure, Gaozu's seat was comparable to measurements for one style of mat recorded in the bamboo-slip inventories of burial goods placed with the goods in Mawangdui 馬王堆 Tomb 1 and Tomb 3, Hunan (the Tomb 3 burial date is 168 BCE): one *zhang* long (2.31 meters) and four *chi* wide (0.92 meter).[27] The wooden bed-frame found together

26 On the Gao Shrines in Chang'an and Luoyang, see Hans Bielenstein, "The Restoration of the Han Dynasty: Volume IV, the Government," *Bulletin of the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities* 51 (1979), 163-165. Brashier (*Ancestral Memory*, 151-155) recounts the matter of the Xia sacrifice at Emperor Guangwu's court.

27 *Changsha Mawangdui yi hao Han mu* 長沙馬王堆一號漢墓 (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1973), vol. 1, 152, slip 287; *Changsha Mawangdui er san hao Han mu* 長沙馬王堆二、三號漢墓 (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 2004), 68, slip 306.

with mats in Baoshan 包山 Tomb 2, Hubei (ca. 316 BCE)—recorded in the inventory of burial goods as *chuang* "bed"—was nearly the same size: 2.2 meters long and 1.36 meters wide.[28] When recording the mats, the Baoshan inventory also distinguished between *zuoxi* "sitting mat" and *qinxi* 寢席 "sleeping mat." The contemporaneous Changtaiguan Tomb 1 inventory made the same distinction between *zuoyin* 坐茵 "sitting mattress" and *qinyin* 寢茵 "sleeping mattress" (*yin*, written 絪 in the *Hanjiuyi* quotation, was a style of mat that was padded). [29]

Finally, the *Han jiuyi* account of the Xia sacrifice states that sacrificial offerings were placed by each seat in the Gao Shrine and the emperor himself passed by the seats offering a libation to each. Although the text does not mention placing the appropriate ancestor tablet on its corresponding seat, the tablet had to have been installed to make the ancestor present for the sacrifice. The terms *shenzhu* "spirit tablet" and *shenzuo* 神坐 "spirit seat" are attested in Eastern Han sources in religious contexts that indicate the distinctive features of each and their complementary relationship when used together. We have several descriptions of how spirit tablets were made and their use. If the form and function of the spirit seat are less well known, it is because the *Han jiuyi* quotation is the only detailed textual record of its appearance as a seat with drapery resembling something that people knew from domestic furnishings.[30]

All of these elements of the religious function of *zuo* "seat" converge in the seat of Grand One in the Haotan mural. I describe the seat of Grand One first, comparing the Haotan and Yangqiaopan drawings, and then speculate on the larger scene organized around the seat and how Eastern Han people might have read the religious narrative of the scene. The *Han jiuyi* description of Gaozu's seat informs my description. The Haotan

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28 *Baoshan Chu mu* 包山楚墓 (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1991), vol. 1, 118; Liu Guosheng, *Chu sangzang jiandu*, 47, slip 260-1.

29 See Liu Guosheng, *Chu sangzang jiandu*, 47, slip 263 (Baoshan Tomb 2); 6, slip 2-021 (Changtaiguan Tomb 1).

30 *Hou Han shu*, 1A.28, records that in 26 CE Emperor Guangwu had the eleven spirit tablets of the Western Han emperors—from Gaozu to Emperor Ping 平帝—brought from Chang'an to Luoyang. These were the tablets that were placed in the corresponding seats in Emperor Guangwu's ancestral sacrifices. Brashier (*Public Memory*, 275-278) surveys the evidence for the material form and use of spirit tablets. Brashier, however, treats the term "spirit seat" as synonymous with "spirit tablet" and misses the distinction between them ( 276). Wu Hung (*The Art of the Yellow Springs: Understanding Chinese Tombs* [Honolulu: Univ. of Hawai'i Press], 64-69) notes the connection between the *Han jiuyi* account and assemblages in Han tombs that he identifies as the spirit seat for the tomb occupant. See n84 below for references to stelae functioning as spirit seats.

drawing is more schematic, as if meant to open up the parts of the seat to the sight lines of the viewer. Looking from top to bottom, the canopy is shown turned up with the result that the short strips hanging down from the edge of the canopy (which look like feather-streamers in the Yangqiaopan drawing) are made to point up. Perhaps the intention was to accentuate the inscribed red banner placed just below the canopy, which the canopy would have obscured. The two rectangular panels on either side of the drawing are side-screens, connected by the horizontal line at the bottom. The panels are angled to show the outside surface of the screen on the right side of the drawing and the inside surface of the screen on the left side. Again, the effect is to direct the viewer's line of sight into the bed-like interior of the seat, where the object composed of six arcs beneath the banner has to be a padded mattress (related to the one-*chi*-thick *yin* "mattress" described in the *Han jiuyi*).[31] I have more to say about the arcs—they are a cloud design—when I finish with the general description of the seat.

The Haotan drawing below the horizontal line shows the upper body of four male figures in front of whom is a curving and twisting band of fabric. Looking across the length of the band, the edge with the thick black line is the top and the edge with the thick red line is the bottom. In the bottom right side of the spirit world mural, the artist used the same technique to paint a pair of fluttering banners attached to a pole-mounted drum.[32] In the seat of Grand One drawing, the main curve matches the width of the seat and the top of the band (black line) twists downward to give a better view of the male figures. I identify the fabric band with the curtained enclosure described in the *Han jiuyi*. Like the canopy and side-screens above it, the viewer would have expected the band/curtains to obscure things from view, so twisting the band downward has the effect of enhancing the viewer's sight lines. What the male figures are doing in the Haotan image of the seat of Grand One is not obvious from the drawing. I will speculate about them presently.

Comparing the seat of Grand One in the Yangqiaopan drawing to the Haotan drawing, we note that the main missing piece is the inscribed banner to identify the seat. It is not an insignificant detail, but Han people knew to connect the seat in this scene with Grand One in the same way that we deduce the identity by comparing the Haotan and Yangqiaopan murals. The difference is that they knew the religious narrative communicated in the murals, whereas we rely on the clue provided by the inscribed banner and do not know

31 Li Song (*Zhongguo daojiao*, 152) already observes that the object with six arcs resembles a mattress.

32 See Fig. 11. The drum belongs to the Queen Mother of the West scene.

what they knew. In the Yangqiaopan drawing, the canopy is attached to a central pole.[33] There are no side-screens. Instead, there are two fabric bands. The longer band passes beneath a five-arc mattress. Like the Haotan band, the thick black line is the top, the thick red line the bottom. In the Yangqiaopan drawing, this band curves and twists downward to show the mattress. The shorter band beneath it encloses three male figures, curving and twisting downward to highlight the figures.

The visual evidence of the Haotan and Yangqiaopan drawings correlates well with the *Han jiuyi* textual description. Archaeology frequently presents us with images and scenes whose meaning is unclear, and we are not always this lucky. We now know that the image of the seat in the murals was familiar to Eastern Han people in other representations, domestic and religious. The details of the two drawings fulfilled people's expectations of a seat as everyday object and realia, with functions that included making contact with spirits by means of the seat dedicated to the spirit. The depiction of the seat of Grand One in the Haotan and Yangqiaopan spirit world murals is de facto evidence that people knew of spirit seats dedicated to Grand One at cult sites where Grand One was worshipped, such as the Wangziqiao 王子喬 shrine in Meng 蒙 county (present-day Henan), at which a stela was erected in 165 CE.[34] To be sure, modern speculations test the limits of available evidence, and expectations about what it signifies influence our evaluation of the evidence. However, it is by testing the limits and by self-criticism of our expectations that we reach a better understanding of early Chinese culture.

Explanation of the mattress in the seat of Grand One and its arc-cloud design illustrates the process of speculation and its foibles. My identification is based on the visual evidence of the Yangqiaopan mural and the connotation of the word/graph *yin* 茵 / 絪 "mattress," and I interpret the visual and linguistic evidence in the context of Eastern Han ideas to which both are connected. My research leads me to reject a previous speculation associating the arcs with water in the form of a waterfall and connecting the Eastern Han visual image of the seat of Grand One to the water cosmogony in the ca. 300 BCE manuscript discovered in Guodian 郭店 Tomb 1, Hubei. The opening line of the cosmogony is Taiyi *shengshui* 太一生水 "Grand One generates water." The speculation

33 See Figs. 14-15 below for more examples of canopy with central pole.

34 The stela inscription refers to worship of Grand One there. Activities at the shrine included acts of ordinary religious devotion and the quest for immortality. See Marianne Bujard, "Daybooks in Qin and Han Religion," in *Books of Fate and Popular Culture in Early China: The Daybook Manuscripts of the Warring States*, *Qin*, *and Han*, eds. Harper and Kalinowski (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 324.

first appeared in a 2011 article by Xing Yitian, in which he considers connections between the pre-Han cosmogonic text and two Han materials: the Mawangdui Tomb 3 silk manuscript currently referred to as *Taiyi zhutu* 太一祝圖 (Grand One incantation and diagram) and the Haotan and Yangqiaopan murals.[35] Xing concludes that Grand One as represented in the Mawangdui diagram with text is unrelated to the Haotan and Yangqiaopan murals. His interpretation of the object with arcs in the Haotan and Yangqiaopan drawings of the seat of Grand One focuses exclusively on water and the waterfall explanation. Xing proposes that the seat of Grand One drawings must be Han-time representations of the concept in the "Grand One generates water" text "transformed into a visual image, signifying the idea that 'Grand One generates water,' 'Grand One is water,' or 'Grand One is stored in water.'" Xing's idea that an Eastern Han mural shows the visual transformation of a pre-Han water cosmogony involving Grand One seems to be grounded in his own visual response to the Haotan and Yangqiaopan drawings under the influence of the Guodian manuscript, and he further proposes that the so-called waterfall in the drawings signifies Grand One.[36]

Despite Xing's collecting visual representations of water in Han archaeological materials, their relevance to the arcs is inconclusive and his speculation is problematic. He connects the pre-Han manuscript to the Eastern Han murals without considering the nuances of each item's place in its temporal, cultural, intellectual, and religious context, and he has not considered the evidence for an alternative explanation.[37] One consequence of his speculation is to promote the notion that we ought to be looking for a diachronic relationship among newly discovered artifacts—in this case how the idea of water in a pre-

35 Xing Yitian 邢義田, "Taiyi shengshui, Taiyi chuxing, yu Taiyi zuo: du Guodianjian, Mawangdui bohua he Dingbian, Jingbian Han mu bihua de lianxiang" 太一生水、太一出行與太一坐: 讀郭店簡馬王堆帛畫和定邊、靖邊漢墓壁畫的聯想, *Taiwan daxue meishushi yanjiu jikan* 臺灣大學美術史研究集刊 30 (2011), 1-34. For the Mawangdui manuscript, see *Changsha Mawangdui Han mu jianbo jicheng* 長沙馬王堆漢墓簡帛集成 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2014), vol. 2, 144-148 (photographs); vol. 6, 103-105 (annotated transcription).

36 Xing Yitian, "Taiyi sheng shui," 13. Li Song (*Zhongguo daojiao*, 152-154) also speculates on the relationship between the Haotan and Yangqiaopan drawings of the seat of Grand One and the Guodian manuscript. His understanding is similar to Xing.

37 Another speculation identifies the curving band and human figures as passengers (perhaps transcendents) on a ship headed for the realm of Grand One just above the so-called ship formed by the band. See Wang Yu 王煜, "Han dai Taiyi xinyang de tuxiang kaogu" 漢代太一信仰的圖像考古, *Zhongguo shehui kexue* 中國社會科學 2014, no. 3: 186-188; and Lü Zhirong, "Haotan Dong Han bihua mu," 88-89. This speculation is also implausible.

Han Grand One cosmogony reappears centuries later as the identifying characteristic of Grand One in an Eastern Han religious context. In the field of early China studies, there is a general presumption that assortments of archaeological evidence can be put together to write history. However, essential differences may be overlooked in the effort to forge connections. In my judgment, Xing's treatment of the Haotan and Yangqiaopan drawings of the seat of Grand One is a case of misjudgment.

My identification of the arc object in the Haotan and Yangqiaopan drawings as a cloud-design mattress relies chiefly on painting conventions employed in the Yangqiaopan mural. Below the seat of Grand One is a type of large carriage known in Han literature as *xiche* 戲車 "party vehicle"; that is, a vehicle with a platform for performers and a large drum in the center. A white elephant is yoked to the vehicle, which has clouds for wheels.[38] The cloud wheels form a set of five arcs, each arc composed of a band of white with a thick black line above and a thick red line below. Above, in the seat of Grand One, the artist highlighted the five arcs in red and drew black lines on each arc to make three segments. The cloud-wheel arcs match the seat-mattress arcs, but the arcs curve in opposite directions. The overall effect emphasizes the motion of the cloud-wheel vehicle toward the seat of Grand One (Fig. 10). There is no need to collect additional evidence of cloud designs in Han art to know that the artist of the Yangqiaopan mural intended the viewer to see clouds in the seat and in the vehicle. The artist of the Haotan mural employed the same convention, but reversed the curve of the seat-mattress arcs because the cloud vehicles are to the right of the seat of Grand One in the Haotan mural (they are to the left of the seat in the Yangqiaopan mural).[39]

The linguistic link between cloud and mattress is between *yin* 絪 "mattress" and the same graph in the compound *yinyun* 絪縕. The locus classicus for *yinyun* is the "Xici" 繫辭 (Attached statements) of the *Zhou yi* 周易 (Zhou changes), referring to the condition of harmony between heaven and earth.[40] Han literary usage is best attested in a composition by Yang Xiong 揚雄 (53 BCE–18 CE) presented to Emperor Cheng 成

38 For references to *xiche*, see Sun Ji, *Han dai wuzhi wenhua*, 120. For another example of an elephant yoked to a *xiche*, see the painting on the wooden ruler excavated from the Han tomb at Shuanglong 雙龍 , in Lianyungang 連雲港 , Jiangsu, illustrated in *Lianyungang Kongwangshan* 連雲港孔望山 (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 2010), 241, fig. 308 (the vehicle has regular wheels).

39 In the Haotan mural, the whole vehicles are clouds yoked to several creatures. Fig. 2 shows a cloud vehicle yoked to a fish to the right of the seat of Grand One; Fig. 11 shows two more cloud vehicles that are behind the fish-yoked vehicle in the mural.

40 *Zhou yi zhushu* 周易注疏 (*Shisan jing zhushu* ed.), 8.14a-b ("Xici xia" 繫辭下 ).

帝 (r. 32–7 BCE), the "Hedongfu" 河東賦 (River-east verse). The verse addresses the tradition of imperial progress across a hallowed geography where empire, cosmos, and spirit world conjoin, and praises the emperor's role in uniting heaven, earth, and spirits. The phrase *yinyun xuanhuang* 絪縕玄黃 "harmony of effulgent vapor, dark and yellow" describes the splendor of their response.[41] Yan Shigu's 顏師古 (581–645) commentary glosses *yinyun* as *tiandi heqi* 天地合氣 "harmonious vapor of heaven and earth" and glosses *xuanhuang* as *tiandi se* 天地色 "color of heaven and earth." The pun between words for "mattress" and cloudy "effulgent vapor"—vapor manifesting the harmony of heaven and earth—is expressed visually in the Haotan and Yangqiaopan murals. I would characterize the artists' visual pun as cultural knowledge that did not depend on knowing the locus classicus of *yinyun* or participation in the literary culture centered on the imperial court.

Fig. 10 Seat of Grand One and party vehicle in Yangqiaopan Tomb 1. Detail of spirit world mural.

As already noted, the Haotan and Yangqiaopan drawings fulfilled people's expectations of the spirit seat dedicated to Grand One. Its arc-cloud mattress was simply the proper mattress for the seat of a supreme deity. The correctness of the drawings also explains why the artists did not portray the deity seated on it. Like Gaozu's seat in the Gao Shrine, the seat of Grand One created the space to be occupied by the deity at the appropriate moment. Looking at the Haotan mural, the spirit seat itself with its inscribed banner was the focus of attention. The seat's religious functionality is well expressed as drawn, and not showing the deity positioned on the seat was unexceptional. The depiction of the Queen Mother of the West on her seat to the left of the seat of Grand One indicates a difference between the spirit world scene in which she is the central figure and the scene centered on the seat of

41 *Han shu*, 87A.3538.

Fig. 11 Two cloud vehicles (above) and tiger beating drum (below) in Haotan Tomb 1. Detail of spirit world mural.

Grand One.[42]

Moving beyond the image of the seat of Grand One to consider the larger scene, it is useful to first address the Haotan spirit world mural, in which the seat of Grand One scene appears together with the Queen Mother of the West scene. Although the Queen Mother is so close to the seat of Grand One that the left end of the seat's fabric band is beneath the right side of her canopy, the two scenes are separate. The seat of Grand One scene occupies a narrow register in the upper third of the mural, and the Queen Mother scene occupies the lower two-thirds. The Haotan seat of Grand One scene is less expansive than the Yangqiaopan scene, in which the full height of the mural depicts cloud vehicles and human figures mounted on creatures arranged in three tiers and heading toward the seat of Grand One. In the Haotan scene, there is a cloud vehicle yoked to a fish to the right of the seat of Grand One. To its right, a second cloud vehicle is yoked to a creature that looks like a deer, followed by a larger cloud vehicle yoked to four dragon-like creatures (Fig. 11).[43] The Haotan Queen Mother scene depicts the Queen Mother at the left end using the full height of the mural. To the right, in the register below the seat of Grand One scene, are depictions of creatures engaged in festive activities, ending with a tiger beating the pole-mounted drum (directly below the four-dragon cloud vehicle).

I have an idea about the narrative associated with the seat of Grand One scene

42 For Xing Yitian ("Taiyi shengshui," 13) and Li Song (*Zhongguo daojiao meishushi*, 154), the so-called waterfall in the seat symbolizes the presence of Grand One (for Xing and Li, the identity of Grand One in the Haotan and Yangqiaopan murals lies somewhere between a cosmogonic principle and a full-fledged deity). I address the question of the empty seat in connection with the spirit seat in the three-register mirrors; see below, pp. 337-338. Speculation on the empty seat as a form of aniconism fails to recognize the functionality of *zuo* "seat" in Han religion.

43 Various publications reproduce parts of the mural, but a single reproduction of the entire mural has not been published. Only one poor quality black and white photograph shows the creature yoked to the second cloud vehicle. See Lü Zhirong, "Haotan Dong Han bihua mu," 89 and fig. 2. Lü identifies it as a deer.

connecting it to popular religion. I am less certain of the Queen Mother scene. However, her hair is white in the mural, and the white hair suggests that the scene communicated more than the perspective of an exclusive, elite "cult of immortality." Rather, I suspect that both the Queen Mother and Grand One scenes expressed the theme of spirits who watched over humankind and aided people in times of trouble. The popular cult of the Queen Mother of the West is attested in eight separate passages in the *Han shu* 漢書 (*Book of Han*)—imperial annals, treatises, and biographies—all concerned with an occurrence of social unrest in 3 BCE. In the east of the empire, people by the thousands carried a piece of straw or a stick and spread the word that it was the "tally transmitting the rescript" (*xingzhao chou* 行詔籌 ); that is, the rescript of the Queen Mother of the West. They headed for Chang'an, distributing tallies as they went and conducting sacrifices to the Queen Mother that included singing, dancing, and games. By summer, the movement reached the capital. A declaration from the Queen Mother herself promised that those who wore her document (*shu* 書 ) would not die. Anyone who doubted the Queen Mother's word should look beneath the door pivot of their dwelling, where they would discover white hair. By autumn the movement had subsided.[44]

The Queen Mother's white hair formed part of her image as a mother figure. Ma Yi's recent examination of the iconography and early cult of the Queen Mother of the West clarifies the connection between her cult and the natural, social, political, and economic disturbances at the end of the first century BCE that led to the events of 3 BCE. The cult itself continued into the Eastern Han.[45] In the spirit world mural on the west wall of Haotan Tomb 1, human-figure attendants sit on either side of the Queen Mother and two more figures in feather clothing hold her canopy and serve a beverage. To the right are the creatures engaged in festive activities. Rather than a gathering of human figures or transcendents at the court of the Queen Mother in her paradise, the creatures suggest

44 *Han shu*, 27B-1.1476. This account, which is in the five-agent treatise, is the fullest. For the other passages, see Ma Yi 馬怡, "Xi Han monian 'xing Xiwangmu zhaochou' shijian kao: jianlun zaoqi de Xiwangmu xingxiang ji qi yanbian" 西漢末年行"西王母詔籌"事件考：兼論早期的西王母形象及其演變. Bamboo and Silk Manuscripts (website). Published electronically, 25 July 2017. http://www.bsm.org.cn/show_article.php?id=2848. Accessed 28 November 2017. My paraphrase of the five-agent treatise passage presumes that the *shu* "document" people wore was the tally containing the Queen Mother's rescript.

45 Ma Yi, "Xi Han monian 'xing Xiwangmu zhaochou.'" Many predictive statements in the *Yilin* 易林 (Forest of changes) have the Queen Mother as topic and attest to the Eastern Han Queen Mother cult (see below, nn71-73).

celebrants analogous to the participants in the Queen Mother cult in 3 BCE, who sang, danced, and played games while sacrificing to her. In the first century CE, someone looking at this mural or similar depiction would have known of the popular cult that co-existed with the idea of immortality and the spiritual goal of achieving transcendence. The broad theme of human well-being was known across social groups, elite and nonelite.[46]

The Haotan mural's seat of Grand One scene has stronger evidence for the kind of reading I propose for the Queen Mother scene. Both scenes share a spirit world setting, with relevant religious narratives for each. In the case of the scene showing the seat of Grand One, Eastern Han people recognized the depiction of the *shenzuo* "spirit seat" associated with the Grand One cult and simultaneously with Grand One's location or "seat" in the geography of the spirit world. In speculating further on the narrative associated with the seat of Grand One scene, let me begin with my judgment on the difference between the spirit world mural on the west wall and the celestial-sphere mural on the vault of Haotan Tomb 1. The celestial-sphere mural included transcendents, Wind Elder, and Rain General along with the moon, stellar lodges, and other constellations. Thus, the difference was not absolute, and in many respects, Han people treated the spirit world and the celestial sphere as equivalent spaces. Yet the tomb-vault mural replicated the vault of heaven. The circle-and-line drawings of the constellations together with their associated human figures and creatures were the mural's main subject, and astrology provided the context for its narrative, which was different from how the details of the seat of Grand One scene were read in the wall mural.

The Haotan celestial-sphere mural did not depict a supreme star deity (nor did the Qushuhao celestial-sphere mural). The *Shiji* 史記 (Records of the scribe) and *Han shu* astrological treatises are useful to show how Grand One in astrology and the astrological use of *zuo* "seat" differed from the religious representation in the seat of Grand One scene. The *Shiji* astrological treatise identifies Grand One as the brightest star near the polestar, without using the name "seat of Grand One"; the information in the *Han shu* treatise is the same.[47] *Zuo* occurs just once in the treatises to name a location and the star spirits associated with that location: the Wudi *zuo* 五帝坐 "seat of the Five Emperors" in the *nangong* 南宫 "southern palace" of the celestial sphere.[48] Other occurrences of *zuo* "seat"

46 For the involvement of the Queen Mother cult in the design of the three-register mirrors that depict a spirit seat in the top register, see below, pp. 337-338.

47 *Shiji*, 27.1533; *Han shu*, 26.1274.

48 *Shiji*, 27.1544; *Han shu*, 26.1276.

in the treatises refer to locations where unspecified star spirits resided. This is the meaning of *zuoting* 坐廷 "seat and court" and *zuowei* 坐位 "seat and position," and the verb-object compound *zhongzuo* 中坐 "strike the seat" describes the event of a planet or other entity intruding on the seat of a star spirit.[49] In Han astrological usage, *zuo* did not have the meaning that in medieval China was expressed by *xingzuo* 星坐 "star seat"; that is, it did not refer to the concept of a "constellation" in the sense of the stars belonging to a specific star formation with a name, whether a stellar lodge or another constellation.[50]

Grand One was a prominent star spirit in Han astrology and was incorporated into imperial ceremonial as early as the second century BCE. However, to read the Haotan seat of Grand One scene we should focus on the context of the west-wall mural and look for clues to its themes and narrative in ideas about the spirit world in popular religion rather than in astrology and imperial ceremonial.[51] The Wangzi Qiao stela of 165 CE is one reference point for Grand One in Eastern Han popular religion. The inscription recounts that the Wangzi Qiao shrine was a place where: "Companions who love the Way come from afar to congregate. Some play zithers as they sing to Grand One. Some engage in contemplation and make the circuit of their cinnabar fields" ( 好道之儔自遠來集或絃歌以詠太一或談思以歷丹田 ).[52] The sick also came to the shrine to be healed. People who failed to maintain proper devotion after receiving divine favor were instantly struck down. The inscription does not mention spirit seats for Wangzi Qiao or Grand One. However, the end of the inscription does mention setting out *jiyan* 几筵 "tables and mats" to carry out sacrifices at the shrine, which might refer to parts of the spirit seat assemblage.

For confirmation that Grand One watched over humankind in Eastern Han popular religion, first there is the gloss by Gao You 高誘 (ca. 168–212) in his commentary to the *Huainanzi* 淮南子 (Master of Huainan). The *Huainanzi* was contemporaneous with second century BCE ideas about the spirit Grand One in astrology and imperial ceremonial. However, the *Huainanzi* Grand One passage treats of Grand One as the supreme cosmic principle to be embodied by the highest category of ruler, followed by three more

49 See *Han shu*, 26.1276, for *zuoting*; *Shiji*, 27.1602, for *zuowei*; and *Shiji*, 27.1544, for *zhongzuo*.

50 To my knowledge, the earliest occurrence of *xingzuo* in transmitted sources is the *Sui shu* 隋 書 astrological treatise, composed by Li Chunfeng 李淳風 (602–670). See *Sui shu* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1973), 19.520.

51 For an overview of Han ideas about Grand One, see Li Ling, "An Archaeological Study of Taiyi."

52 The stela inscription is attributed to Cai Yong 蔡邕 (133–192). See *Cai Zhonglang ji* 蔡中郎集 (*Sibu beiyao* 四部備要 ed.), 1.21a. For the translation of the complete stela inscription, see Marianne Bujard, "Le culte de Wangzi Qiao ou la longue carrière d'un immortel," *Études chinoises* 19 (2000), 125-130.

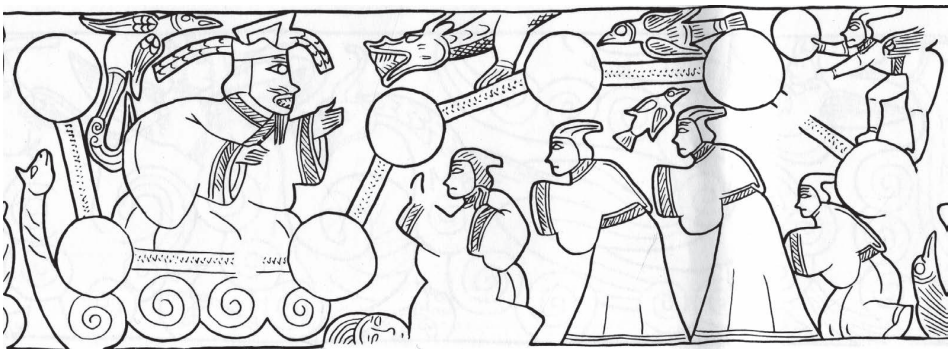

Fig. 12 Carved-stone relief of supreme deity with Northern Dipper as carriage. Wu family cemetery shrines. Line drawing.

principles in descending order: *yinyang* 陰陽, *sishi* 四時 “four seasons,” and *liulü* 六律 “six pitch standards.” Gao You’s gloss on Grand One is *tian zhi xingshen* 天之刑神 “the spirit in heaven who punishes,” which seems to be out of keeping with the idea of Grand One in the *Huainanzi* as well as in astrology and imperial ceremonial.[53] Rather, the gloss reflects an Eastern Han perspective on Grand One as the supreme deity who meted out punishment and granted favor in response to human behavior and need. Gao You’s understanding accords with the evidence of the Wangzi Qiao stela.

One of the carved-stone reliefs from the Wu family 武氏 cemetery shrines at Jiaxiang 嘉祥 , Shandong (Eastern Han), depicts the supreme deity seated in the carriage formed by the stars of the Northern Dipper in the act of passing judgment on a dead person, indicated by the upturned face with unbound hair. Four male figures to the right are presenting the dead person’s case to the deity (Fig. 12). Hayashi Minao identifies the deity as Grand One based on Gao You’s *Huainanzi* commentary.[54] Han transmitted texts and archaeological materials attest several supreme deities, which, as Anna Seidel observes, “are different names or facets of the same supreme deity of Han religion in various traditions and contexts.”[55] Besides Grand One, the supreme deity name Tiangong 天公 (Heaven Sire) occurs in wooden-slip spirit contracts dated to 79 CE and on an Eastern Han bronze mirror. Both archaeological materials are relevant to reading the seat of Grand One scene in the

53 *Huainan honglie jijie* 淮南鴻烈集解 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1989), 8.258 (“Benjing” 本經 ).

54 Hayashi Minao 林巳奈夫 , *Kandai no kamigami* 漢代の神神 (Kyoto: Rinsen, 1989), 161.

55 Anna Seidel, “Traces of Han Religion in Funeral Texts Found in Tombs,” in *Dōkyo to shukyō bunka* 道教と宗教文化, ed. Akitsuki Kan’ei 秋月觀英 (Tokyo: Hirakawa, 1987), 29.

Haotan spirit world mural.

The spirit contracts, looted from an unknown site in China and now in the Chinese University of Hong Kong Art Museum, were prepared on behalf of Xuning 序寧, a woman whose illness ended in death. Family members had documents of two types prepared on her behalf, called *quanshu* 券書 "contract writ" and *quanci* 券刺 "contract record" on the contracts themselves.[56] The contract writs were petitions composed in formulaic language and delivered to particular spirits seeking their favor. Each spirit was promised sacrifices, and because Xuning died, the contract writs stated that she, herself, would bring them to the other world using the identical formula: "Xuning takes it all to go to the Heaven Sire's place to report" ( 皆序寧持去天公所對 ). The contract records verified that the family provided the sacrifices (dried meat slices and ale in all but one contract record).

*Suo* 所 "place" was the standard word for the location inhabited by a spirit in pre-Han and Han times.[57] During the Han, *zuo* "seat" acquired the same usage. Hence, "Heaven Sire's place" in the Xuning contracts and "seat of Grand One" in the Haotan mural referred to the same dwelling-place of Grand One/Heaven Sire. In the mural, there is an aspect of formality in the seat of Grand One scene that is most evident in the precise arrangement and sober facial expressions of the four male figures behind the fabric band in the seat of Grand One drawing (in contrast to the festive atmosphere of the Queen Mother of the West scene). The three male figures in the same position in the Yangqiaopan mural are unclear due to damage to the mural. Might these figures be Grand One's officials posted at the entrance to his spirit world domain to receive visitors, including the dead reporting to Grand One for final judgment?

The Eastern Han bronze mirror discovered in Nanyang 南陽, Henan, provides another clue to reading the seat of Grand One scene in the Haotan mural. The depiction of the spirit world in the mirror's outermost ring features Heaven Sire and Hebo 河伯 (River Elder), each riding in a carriage—dragons are yoked to Heaven Sire's carriage, fish to River Elder's carriage—and each identified by his name inscribed near his

56 Donald Harper, "Contracts with the Spirit World in Han Common Religion: The Xuning Prayer and Sacrifice Documents of A.D. 79," *Cahiers d'Extrême-Asie* 14 (2004), 233-245.

57 For the oldest example of *suo* meaning "spirit place," see the incantation addressed to the spirit Wuyi 武夷 in the daybook from Jiudian 九店 Tomb 56, Hubei (ca. 300 BCE), *Jiudian Chu jian* 九店楚簡 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2000), 50 , slip 44. For another pre-Han occurrence, see Yan Changgui, "Daybooks and the Spirit World," in *Books of Fate and Popular Culture in Early China*, eds. Harper and Kalinowski, 227 (the incantation in one of the Qin daybooks from Shuihudi 睡虎地 Tomb 11, Hubei, naming the place of the spirit who controls nightmare demons).

Fig. 13 Ink rubbing of Nanyang bronze mirror with Heaven Sire and River Elder.

carriage (Fig. 13).[58] The visual image of Heaven Sire with name inscribed in the outer ring is duplicated in the second line of the verse inscribed two rings in: "Heaven Sire travels out—joy is without end" ( 天公行出樂未央 ). The other three lines of the verse concern the mirror's magical efficacy and express the wish that descendants and all people prosper.[59] Reading the verse together with the depiction in the outer ring, Heaven Sire is *xingchu* 行出 "traveling out" with an entourage having just emerged from two gate towers, which are the *tianmen* 天門 "gate of heaven." The person who owned this mirror was reminded visually and textually that the scene of the progress of the supreme deity signified endless joy for humankind.

In the Haotan seat of Grand One scene, three cloud vehicles are traveling toward the seat. The fish-drawn and deer-drawn vehicles in front each have a driver and passenger. The passengers wear the same headgear as the four male figures at the seat, indicating that they, too, are Grand One's officials. The four-dragon cloud vehicle behind them is twice their size. In addition to the driver, two attendants flank the passenger and two escorts riding birds follow behind. The passenger's distinctive headgear, dragon-drawn vehicle, attendants, and escorts all indicate to me that the passenger is Grand One returning to his seat. Eastern Han people would have read the Haotan seat of Grand One scene and the Nanyang mirror as depictions of the end and the beginning of the progress of the supreme deity.[60] The seat of Grand One scene in the Yangqiaopan spirit world mural does not repeat my proposed reading of the Haotan seat of Grand One scene. Among the cloud

58 Liu Shaoming 劉紹明,"Tiangong xingchu jing" 天公行出鏡, *Zhongguo wenwu bao* 中國文物報, 26 May 1996.

59 Harper, "Contracts with the Spirit World," 259-260.

60 My identification of the passenger as Grand One is based on the evidence of Heaven Sire in the Nanyang mirror. Sun Dalun ("Haotan Dong Han mu bihua," 271) and Lü Zhirong ("Haotan Dong Han bihua mu," 89) identify the passenger as the man buried in Haotan Tomb 1, who, on the evidence of the portrait of the couple on the south wall, was buried with a wife. Li Song (*Zhongguo daojiao meishushi*, 155) considers this identification implausible and identifies the passenger as a celestial official in Grand One's service.

vehicles and human figures mounted on creatures—arranged in three tiers, all moving in the direction of the seat of Grand One—none is like the dragon-drawn vehicle in the Haotan mural. Rather than the progress of the supreme deity, their arrangement suggests a procession of spirits toward the seat of Grand One.

The Haotan and Yangqiaopan examples of the seat of Grand One scene shared a narrative based on Grand One in Eastern Han popular religion, which was related to the narrative associated with Heaven Sire in the Nanyang mirror. We are indebted to those who planned the Haotan and Yangqiaopan tombs—roughly contemporaneous, in the same region—and to the artists who painted the murals for creating the visual record that we see today thanks to the serendipity of archaeology. The most obvious reason to have spirit world murals depicting the seat of Grand One scene in the two tombs was the idea that Grand One judged the dead and the expectation that they received Grand One's favor. It is difficult to say more about the seat of Grand One scene in the specific context of the tombs and mortuary culture. We might conjecture that the seat of Grand One scene played a role in the afterlife of the tomb occupants because the Haotan Tomb 1 example adjoined the Queen Mother of the West scene at the rear of the chamber, adjacent to the portrait of the couple. How, then, do we explain the placement of the second example of the scene in the front chamber by the entrance of Yangqiaopan Tomb 1? Despite the different placement and having only two examples, they shared conventions of representation; the seat of Grand One scene was part of the local repertoire of mural subjects for tomb decoration. I presume that the scene was recreated across regions in both tomb and non-tomb settings as a product of Grand One's popularity. In short, we can read the seat of Grand One scene as evidence of Eastern Han popular religion.

To sum up the narrative of the Haotan seat of Grand One scene, it reflects the contemporaneous Grand One cult that was observed among the people (not only in the region of present-day Shaanxi). The seat as depicted with its inscribed banner, arc-cloud mattress, and fabric enclosure replicated the appearance of the spirit seat for Grand One in a shrine setting, and at the same time, instantiated the spirit world dwelling of Grand One. The progress of Grand One in his four-dragon cloud vehicle was a joyful event for humankind, while the four officials at the seat reminded people that Grand One both helped and judged them.

**The seat of Grand One and other spirit seats**

A type of Eastern Han mirror, often called *sanduanshi* 三段式 "three-register style"

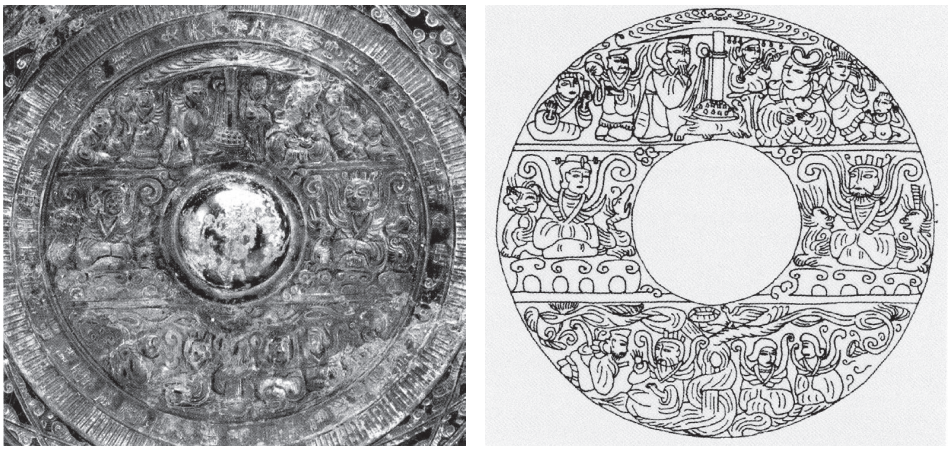

Fig. 14 Three-register mirror from Hejiashan Tomb 1. Photograph of mirror (left) and line drawing of center with registers (right).

mirror in modern scholarship, is notable for the depiction of a spirit seat comparable to the seat of Grand One in the Haotan and Yangqiaopan murals. The three registers are arranged horizontally inside a large circle in the center of the mirror. The drawing of the spirit seat is in the top register, shown as a canopy attached to a pole, like the Yangqiaopan seat of Grand One canopy, and mounted on a turtle at the base. Text—sometimes a verse—is inscribed in the ring next to the circle in most examples. On some mirrors, the correspondence between the inscription and the scene depicted in each register is remarkable. We know from the inscription how Eastern Han people read the narrative of the three registers.

Over twenty examples of the three-register mirror are known, dispersed between China, Japan, and the United States.[61] None is earlier than Eastern Han, and several may be slightly later. Archaeologists have identified four centers of bronze mirror production in the Eastern Han period, and have classified mirror types by production center. The three-register mirror represents a product of the region of present-day Sichuan.[62] The shared referentiality of text and image is most evident in three examples. The mirror found in 1989 in Hejiashan 何家山 Tomb 1, at Mianyang 綿陽, Sichuan, stands out for its clear archaeological provenance and inscribed verse. The verse does not use the word *zuo* "seat," but the spirit seat depicted in the top register and its function are noted (Fig. 14). The second mirror was discovered in Qionglai 邛崍, Sichuan, in the 1970s during a construction project and placed with

61 Li Song, *Zhongguo daojiao*, 97-99.

62 Huo Wei 霍巍, "Sandanshiki shinsenkyō to sono sōkan mondai ni tsuite no kenkyū" 三段式神仙鏡とその相關問題についての研究, *Nihon kenkyū* 日本研究 19 (1999), 39-40.

the local office for the administration of cultural relics in the 1980s. The inscription is an abbreviated version of the Hejiashan mirror verse (Fig. 15). The third mirror was acquired by the Jingzhou Museum, in Jingzhou 荆州, Hubei, in the 1980s. Its inscription differs from the Hejiashan and Qionglai mirrors, and one line uses the word *zuo* to describe the spirit seat in the top register. Another line says that the Queen Mother of the West and the King Father of the East 東王父 *ai wanmin* 哀萬民 "pity the ten thousand people," referring to their images in the middle register of the Hejiashan, Qionglai, and Jingzhou mirrors. Like the Queen Mother scene in the Haotan mural, the three-register mirror was associated with the Queen Mother cult and popular religion.

Fig. 15 Three-register mirror from Qionglai. Line drawing of center with registers.

The Hejiashan mirror inscription is the basis for my examination of the narrative of the three registers. In order to identify the lines that refer to each register, I divide the text into numbered sections (section 2 corresponds to the top register, section 3 to the middle register, and section 4 to the bottom register):

1. 余造明鏡
I made the bright mirror.
2. 九子作容翠羽秘盖靈鵝臺杠
It creates the appearance of the nine sons, with the sacred canopy of kingfisher feathers and the holy goose platform and pole.
3. 調刻神聖西母東王
Carved and engraved: There are the divine saints West Mother and East King.
4. 堯帝賜舜二女
And Emperor Yao giving two daughters to Shun.
5. 天下泰平風雨時節五穀孰成其師命長
In Under Heaven there is grand peace, wind and rain accord with the seasonal markers, and the five grains ripen to perfection. The master's lifespan is long.[63]

63 Transcription follows Narayama Mitsuteru楢山満照, "Go Kan jidai Shikawa chi-iki ni okeru 'seijin' zuzō

All three mirror inscriptions mention the *jiuzi* 九子 “nine sons” as the subject of the top register. The Jingzhou Museum mirror inscription adds two key words, *mu* 母 “mother” and *zuo* “seat”: “one mother returns to the seat and the sons are nine people” ( 一母歸坐子九人 ). The line is simple: a mother without children offers sacrifices at a spirit seat and the result is nine sons (or children). The corresponding scene in the top register on the three mirrors shows the spirit seat in the center (with its “sacred canopy of kingfisher feathers”), a female figure sitting on the right side nursing a baby, and several infants among the other human figures on the right and left of the spirit seat. The *jiuzi* “nine sons” or *jiuzi mu* 九子母 “mother of the nine sons” theme is attested in Han transmitted sources. In astrology, the nine stars of the stellar lodge Wei 尾 (Tail) were associated with the nine sons and with the women’s quarters of the imperial palace;[64] and Ying Shao 應劭 (second century) knew that one of the halls used for childbirth was decorated with a painting of the mother of the nine sons.[65] Pre-Han attestation of the theme is in the “Tianwen” 天問 (Heaven questions) of the C*hu ci* 楚辭 (Chu verses), which asks how Nüqi 女歧 gave birth to nine sons without engaging in intercourse.[66]

I identify the top register’s scene of the spirit seat with the female figure and baby as a representation of the “mother of the nine sons” theme known in Han literature and art. For the original users of the three mirrors, the identification was easily recognizable in the shared referentiality of the visual image and the inscription, which on the Jingzhou Museum mirror narrated the story of “one mother” who “returned to the seat” and nine children were born. My guess is that the scene in the top register depicted the mother’s miraculous event from the perspective of the cult dedicated to her. The spirit seat was both

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no hyōgen: Sandanshiki shinsenkyō no zuzōkaishaku o megutte” 後漢時代四川地域における聖人圖像の表現三段式神仙鏡の圖像解釋をめぐって , *Bijutsushi* 美術史 57, no. 1 (2007), 196.

64 *Shiji*, 27.1543n1.

65 *Han shu*, 10.301n2.

66 Wen Yiduo聞一多, *Tianwen shuzheng*天問疏證 (Beijing: Xinhua chubanshe, 1980), 11. Wen Yiduo (*Tianwen shuzheng*, 11-15) discusses the nine sons and the identity of Nüqi in detail, noting variants of her name. In addition to the nine-sons-and-mother theme, the idea that nine was the ideal number for progeny is attested in a variety of early sources. Xie Mingliang 謝明良 (“Guizimu zai Zhongguo: Cong kaogu ziliao tansuo qi tuxiang de qiyuan yu bianqian” 鬼子母在中國：從考古資料探索其圖像的起源與變遷, *Meishushi yanjiu jikan*美術史研究集刊 27 [2009], 119-121) concludes that the nine-sons-and-mother theme was borrowed from Indian-world ideas associated with the spirit Hārītī or Guizimu 鬼子母 (who became prominent in medieval China), arguing that the theme was among a number of ideas with non-Chinese origins in the “Tianwen.” On balance, Wen Yiduo’s assessment of the evidence is more judicious and Xie Mingliang’s claim is unconvincing.

where she offered sacrifices when childless, and her spirit seat as the recipient of sacrifices offered by followers of the cult.[67] The three mirrors typify the region of present-day Sichuan, and perhaps we can call her Nüqi, but there were local variations in the identity of the mother and her cult; the region of Lu 魯 in present-day Shandong had its own mother of the nine sons.[68]

Comparing the middle and bottom registers, the bottom register was a commemorative embellishment. Everyone knew the legend that Yao 堯 designated Shun 舜 to be his successor and gave his daughters to Shun, harmonizing marriage and government with the tranquil operation of the cosmos.[69] In the bottom register of the Hejiashan and Jingzhou Museum mirrors, the female figures on the right are the daughters and the male figures on the left are Yao and Shun; in the Qionglai mirror, their positions are reversed. The depiction of the Queen Mother of the West and the King Father of the East in the middle register was both commemorative and religious in nature (the Queen Mother is on the left in the Hejiashan mirror, but on the right in the Qionglai and Jingzhou Museum mirrors). On the Jingzhou Museum mirror, the line of the inscription corresponding to the middle register—"King Father of the East and Queen Mother of the West pity the ten thousand people, Oh!" ( 東王父西王母哀萬民兮 )—resonated with the contemporaneous popular cult of the Queen Mother, to whom people prayed and sacrificed to receive her protection and blessings.

The dual nature of the Queen Mother in the middle register is reconfirmed in the *Yilin* 易林 (Forest of changes). The attribution of the *Yilin* to Jiao Gan 焦贛 (first century CE) is uncertain, but it is unquestionably an Eastern Han work. The *Yilin* multiplies the original sixty-four hexagrams of the *Zhou yi* to become 4,096 derived hexagrams (64 times 64).[70] Many of the predictive statements attached to the hexagrams are related to Eastern Han religious ideas. The Queen Mother of the West is the topic of more than a dozen predictive statements, most of them concerning protection and blessings.[71] Two statements are

67 Several examples of the mirror depict the woman with wings to indicate her spirit status.

68 For the Lu tradition, see *Lienü zhuan jiaozhu* 列女傳校注 (*Sibu beiyao* ed.), 1.11b-12b. Clay statues of a woman nursing a baby have been found in Eastern Han tombs in Sichuan, which may be related to the female figure and baby in the top register of the mirrors. For examples, see *Sichuan Pengshan Han dai yamu* 四川彭山漢代崖墓 (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1991), 60-61.

69 *Huainan honglie jijie*, 20.672 ("Taizu xun" 泰族訓 ) provides a convenient Han-time account of the legend.

70 See Kristofer Schipper and Franciscus Verellen eds., *The Taoist Canon: A Historical Companion to the Daozang* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2004), 80-82.

71 Ma Yi, "Xi Han monian ‘xing Xiwangmu zhaochou,'" nn 64-66, identifies all of the statements with the

especially relevant to the middle register of the mirrors:

稷爲堯使西見王母拜請百福賜我喜子

Ji was dispatched by Yao and in the west saw the Queen Mother. Saluting to request the hundred blessings, give me a happy son.[72]

西逢王母慈我九子

In the west meet the Queen Mother. Favor me with nine sons.[73]

The first statement commemorates the event of Ji 稷 meeting the Queen Mother and concludes as a prayer to the Queen Mother for a happy son. The second statement generalizes the meeting to apply to anyone and uses the "nine sons" theme to express the same wish. The Eastern Han reader of the *Yilin* knew the popular cult of the Queen Mother that was expressed in the predictive statements and manifest in the mirrors.

The other examples of the three-register style mirror are not all in conformity with the three mirrors described. However, the central seat with canopy is always present in the top register and the seated figure is female. Moreover, the mirrors share a visual and textual narrative related to progeny and wellbeing, with each register contributing to the overall reading. Two earlier speculations regarding the mirrors are no longer tenable. Hayashi Minao reads the top register as a representation of the upper portion of the cosmos and identifies the seat and figure as the supreme deity by his seat located in the circumpolar region, an interpretation that misidentifies the figure and overlooks the relevance of the inscriptions to the interpretation of the mirrors.[74] Wu Hung, following a line of speculation associating the mirrors with specifically Daoist religious ideas, focuses on the seat alone as symbolizing the presence of the deified Laozi. He considers the seated figure and other figures to be peripheral to the central image of the seat, which he claims is purposefully empty and serves as the aniconic representation of Laozi, in accord with teachings of the Tianshi Dao 天師道 (Way of the Celestial Masters) prohibiting depictions of the deity. The fact that the mirrors were produced in Sichuan is taken as evidence of the involvement of the Sichuan-based Tianshi Dao in their production and use.[75]

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Queen Mother as the topic.

72 *Yilin* (*Zhengtong daozang* 正統道藏 [Shanghai: Shangwu chubanshe, 1923–1926]; no. 1475 in Schipper and Verellen, *The Taoist Canon*), "Shangjing" 上經, 1.9a.

73 *Yilin*, "Xiajing" 下經, 3.43a.

74 Hayashi Minao, *Kandai no kamigami*, 28-31.

75 Wu Hung, "A Deity without Form: The Earliest Representation of Laozi and the Concept of *Wei* in Chinese Ritual Art," *Orientations* 33 (2002), 43-45.

To be sure, the mirrors were produced in Sichuan and had religious significance. However, the scenes in the three registers as confirmed by the mirror inscriptions are unrelated to the contemporaneous Tianshi Dao. Moreover, comparison with the Haotan and Yangqiaopan seat of Grand One scene shows that the spirit seats depicted in murals in Shaanxi and on mirrors in Sichuan belonged to the repertoire of religious images used in artistic productions, the significance of which varied by context. Collectively, these images and the objects on which they occur give evidence of the common elements of Eastern Han popular religion.

Archaeology has given us two Eastern Han religious artifacts that refer to themselves by name as *bianzuo* 便坐 "convenient seat," neither of which has the form of an article of furniture. The first is the stela dedicated to Fei Zhi 肥致, who according to the inscription was a *daoren* 道人 "person of the Way" and *zhenren* 真人 "perfected person" around whom a cult had formed. The stela was found inside a tomb near Luoyang 洛陽, Henan, in 1991.[76] Fei Zhi was not the tomb occupant and before the stela was put in the tomb, it was probably used in connection with the cult. Although the inscription refers to the date 169, the composition of the text and the making of the stela came later (Fig. 16).[77] The second artifact is the inscription with detailed description of the decor of the carved-stone relief tomb at Cangshan 蒼山 , Shandong, excavated in 1973. The inscription—on the west wall of the front chamber and dated 151—describes the location and appearance of the *bianzuo* on the east wall of the front chamber, and the carved-stone reliefs on the east wall match the text of the inscription (another instance of shared visual and textual referentiality) (Fig. 17).[78]

Modern speculation on the precise denotation of *bianzuo* mostly focuses on its occurrence in relation to mortuary culture, and differences of opinion are based on commentaries, not on self-evident details in the original Han historical sources or

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76 See "Yanshi xian Nancaizhuang xiang Han Fei Zhi mu fajue jianbao" 偃師縣南蔡莊鄉漢肥致墓發掘簡報, *Wenwu* 1992, no. 9: 37-42. See also, Kristofer Schipper, "Une stèle taoïste des Han orientaux récemment découverte," in *En suivant la Voie Royale: Mélanges en homage à Léon Vandermeersch*, eds. Jacques Gernet and Marc Kalinowski (Paris: École française d'Extrême-Orient, 1997), 239-247.

77 Liu Zhaorui 劉昭瑞 (*Kaogu faxian yu zaoqi daojiao yanjiu* 考古發現與早期道教研究 [Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 2007], 39-41) questions the generally accepted assumption that the stela found in the tomb was made in 169.

78 "Shandong Cangshan Yuanjia yuannian huaxiang shimu" 山東蒼山元嘉元年畫像石墓, *Kaogu* 考古 1975, no. 2: 124-134. See also, Wu Hung, "Beyond the 'Great Boundary': Funerary Narrative in the Cangshan Tomb," in *Boundaries in China*, ed. John Hay (London: Reaktion Books, 1994), 81-104. I follow the transcription of the inscription edited by Nagata Hidemasa 永田英正, *Kandai sekkoku shūsei* 漢代石刻集成 (Kyoto: Dōhōsha, 2004), vol. 2, 110-111.

Fig. 16 Fei Zhi stela.

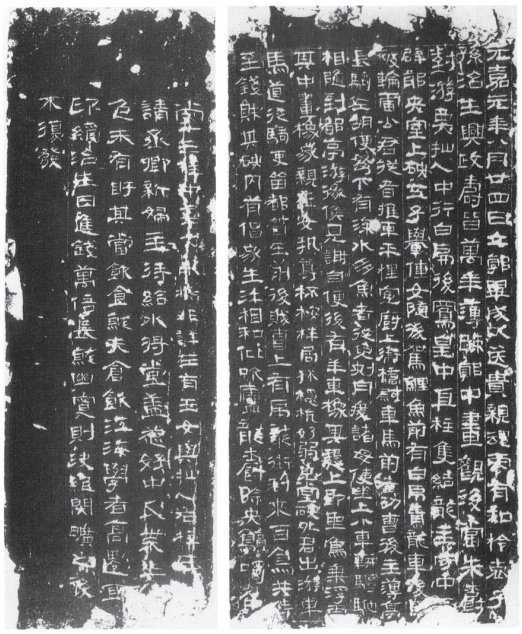

Fig. 17 Ink rubbing of Cangshan tomb inscription describing locations and decor in the tomb. Reference to bianzuo “convenient seat” in col. 6.

archaeological evidence. “Convenient” is a commonly attested meaning of the word *bian*. I use it expediently, without intending to enter into current arguments over the term *bianzuo*. At present, the Cangshan tomb inscription is the only archaeological occurrence of *bianzuo* to designate a location in the tomb. The evidence coincides with commentary on the *Shiji* passage describing arrangements for Huo Guang’s 霍光 burial in 68 BCE, which mentions the *bianfang* 便房 “convenient chamber.” The commentary cites Fu Qian 服虔 (second century CE), who states that *bianfang* “convenient chamber” refers to the tomb’s *bianzuo* “convenient seat.”[79] The terms were also used synonymously in home design, attested in the *Han shu* account of Shi Fen 石奮 (d. 124 BCE), whose home had a *bianzuo*. Yan Shigu’s 顏師古 (581–645) commentary explains that it was not the *zhengshi* 正室 “principal chamber,” but rather was a *biance* 便側 “subsidiary” space.[80]

The inventory of burial goods in Xiejiaqiao 謝家橋 Tomb 1, Hubei (burial dated

79 *Shiji*, 68.2949n4.

80 *Han shu*, 46.2194n3.

183 BCE), a vertical pit tomb with wooden tomb chamber (*guo* 槨 ), includes the tomb chamber in the list, calling it *bianguo* 便廓 "convenient chamber."[81] Some scholars treat the inventory as proof that Yan Shigu's commentary is incorrect and that *bian* used in compounds related to Han mortuary culture referred to the whole tomb or to the main chamber, yet they do not address the application of the same terms to domestic architecture.[82] I treat the definition of *bian* in the relevant excavated and transmitted sources as unresolved. Medieval usage indicates that in mortuary and other religious contexts, *bianzuo* "convenient seat" continued to refer to the location or object where the spirit was located; that is, its usage paralleled *shenzuo* "spirit seat."[83] Both the Cangshan tomb inscription and Fei Zhi stela exemplify this understanding of *bianzuo*.

The Fei Zhi stela has particular significance as an example of *bianzuo* designed to function as a cult object, including three dishes carved into the stone of the rectangular plinth supporting the stela, which held sacrificial offerings. The inscription celebrates Fei Zhi's spiritual accomplishment in language typical of Daoist religious ideas.[84] His chief follower was Xu You 許幼, who "served Lord Fei as teacher of transcendence" ( 仙師事肥君 ). It was in 169 that Xu You's son, Xu Jian 許建, cognomen Xiaochang 孝萇, made the *bianzuo* "convenient seat" for Fei Zhi:

> 孝萇爲君設便坐朝莫舉門恂恂不敢解殆敬進肥君綴順四時所有神仙退泰穆若潛龍雖欲拜見道徑無從謹立斯石以暢虔恭表述前列啓勸僮蒙
>
> Xiaochang installed the convenient seat (*bianzuo*) for the Lord. Day and night the whole household is vigilant and dares not be remiss in reverently presenting sacrificial offerings to Lord Fei in accord with what the four seasons provide. When the divine transcendent withdraws from the abode his imposing manner is like the dragon entering the depths. Although wishing to salute him and gain audience, the pathway cannot be traced. Respectfully erecting this stone serves to make manifest the most sincere veneration and to set forth the events recorded here in order to enlighten and exhort ignorant youths.

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81 *Jingzhou zhongyao kaogu faxian* 荊州重要考古發現 (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 2009), 192, sixth bamboo slip counting from the left side.

82 Gao Chongwen 高崇文, *Guli zuzheng: Lizhi wenhua de kaoguxue yanjiu* 古禮足徵禮制文化的考古學研究 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2015), 270-271.

83 See Liu Zhaorui, *Kaogu faxian*, 42-45.

84 I follow the transcription of the text in Liu Zhaorui, *Han Wei shike wenzi xinian* 漢魏石刻文字繫年 (Taipei: Xinwenfeng chuban gongsi, 2001), 70-71.

The sentence beginning “Respectfully erecting this stone” is not the end of the inscription, which continues with a verse praising Fei Zhi. Finally, there is a brief record of another transcendent, Dawu Gong 大伍公 , who received the *xiandao* 仙道 “way of transcendence” from the Queen Mother of the West, and his five followers, who achieved transcendence after ingesting drugs. It appears that Xu Jian made a *bianzuo* “convenient seat” for Fei Zhi in 169, that it was used in the Xu household, and that the seat was in the form of an inscribed stone; that is, the seat was a stela, but not the stela found in 1991 in the Luoyang tomb. As noted by Liu Zhaorui, a man composing a stela inscription would not have referred to himself by his cognomen. The more likely explanation is that someone else composed the inscription based on the earlier inscribed-stone *bianzuo* made by Xu Jian, cognomen Xiaochang. The details about Dawu Gong and his followers at the end of the Fei Zhi stela inscription are a further indication that the stela we have today was made later for use by a wider group of followers beyond the Xu household. In sum, the Fei Zhi stela is evidence of a local cult whose followers, from the standpoint of the history of Daoist religion, were Daoists.[85]

**Daoist appropriation of the seat of Grand One**

The residue of Eastern Han religion is ever-present in medieval Daoist scriptures. I conclude this article with an account of the appropriation of the seat of Grand One in several early Daoist alchemical texts that detail the method to make the seat and urge readers to not fail to engage in prayers and sacrifices to Grand One, lest their alchemical endeavors come to naught. My intention is to situate the seat of Grand One in a Daoist setting to highlight how medieval Daoist religious life incorporated the ideas, practices, and material objects of Eastern Han religion as evidenced in the Haotan seat of Grand One. Appropriation has occurred, but I do not examine that process here. For now, it is enough to describe the phenomenon.

The *Jiudan jing* 九丹經 (Scripture of the nine elixirs) was an alchemical text composed at the end of the Han or in the early medieval period. Although lost, the first chapter of the twenty-chapter Tang scripture, *Huangdi jiuding shendan jingjue* 黃帝九鼎神丹經訣 (Instructions on the scripture of the divine elixirs of the nine cauldrons of the Yellow Emperor) preserves the old core of the text. The remaining nineteen

85 Liu Zhaorui, *Kaogu faxian*, 39-41. For details on two Wei period stelae with inscriptions identifying them as the *shenzuo* of Bao Juan 鮑捐 and Bao Ji 鮑寄, see Liu Zhaorui, *Kaogu faxian*, 410-411.

chapters represent an expanded explanation or commentary, dating to no later than the Tang dynasty.[86] The method to construct the Taiyi *shengzuo* 太一聖座 "holy seat of Grand One" is in chapter 20:

> 太一聖座用新床方三尺六寸高二尺八寸敷以新席西向以三尺絳繒安席上
> For the holy seat of Grand One use a new bed that is a square three *chi* six *cun* to a side and two *chi* eight *cun* high. Spread out a new mat on it, and have it face west. Place three *chi* of scarlet silk fabric over the mat.[87]

While the seat measurements were smaller than Gaozu's seat described in the *Han jiuyi*, its form and function were the same. Other patron spirits of alchemy are named in Chapter 1, but the seat of Grand One served as the model for altars used in the prayers and sacrifices that preceded alchemical operations.

A second scripture is the *Shangqing jiuzhen zhongjing neijue* 上清九真中經内訣 (Inner instructions on the central scripture of the nine perfected of Highest Clarity), associated with the texts of the earliest period of the Shangqing 上清 (Highest Clarity) revelations.[88] The scripture includes a section on the "Jiao Taiyi fa" 醮太一法 (Method for the offering ceremony to Grand One). Its content concerns the "method to follow whenever ingesting cinnabar drugs and the eight stones as well as pills and powders using cloud mother (mica) and the hundred herbs with the desire to extend years, nurture life, and seek divine transcendence" ( 諸餌丹砂八石及雲母百草丸散欲延年養性求神仙之法 ). The first stage of the method is the offering ceremony to Grand One. Unless Grand One is worshipped according to the instructions, the alchemical operation will fail, or even if the elixir or drug is produced, it will be inefficacious and useless. When performing the ceremony, all of the materials to be used for the elixir or drug are placed in front of the seat of Grand One along with the sacrificial offerings, which include the familiar meat and ale of Eastern Han popular religion.[89] The outcome is described as follows: "Grand One descends to inspect it or sends down a Jade Woman. The divine *qi* infuses the blending of the drug, and when the drug is perfected, it has verified results when ingested" ( 太一下臨

86 *Huangdi jiuding shendan jingjue* (*Zhengtong daozang*; no. 885 in Schipper and Verellen, *The Taoist Canon*). See Fabrizio Pregadio, *Great Clarity: Daoism and Alchemy in Early Medieval China* (Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 2006), 55-56; and Shipper and Verellen, *The Taoist Canon*, vol. 1, 378-379.

87 *Huangdi jiuding shendan jingjue*, 20.3a.

88 *Shangqing jiuzhen zhongjing neijue* (*Zhengtong daozang*; no. 908 in Schipper and Verellen, *The Taoist Canon*). See Pregadio, *Great Clarity*, 285n7; and Schipper and Verellen, *The Taoist Canon*, vol. 1, 102.

89 *Shangqing jiuzhen zhongjing neijue*, 2b-4b. For sacrificial offerings of meat and ale in Han religion, see Harper, "Contracts with the Spirit World," 243n46.

之或遣玉女下神氣所加合藥成服之有驗 ).

Alchemy in both scriptures required Grand One’s blessing, which was obtained by means of sacrificing to Grand One at the seat of Grand One, doing what Eastern Han people did when they sacrificed to Grand One. My final thought is this: Were medieval followers of Daoist religion to have entered Haotan Tomb 1 and seen the mural on the west wall, they would have known exactly how to read the seat of Grand One scene because they recognized it from their religion. We know that Eastern Han popular religion was different. The difference is a problem for the history of religions.

**List of Figures**

*Zhongguo wenwu bao* 中國文物報 , 26 May 1996.

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Fig. 15 Three-register mirror from Qionglai. Line drawing of center with registers. After Li Song, *Zhongguo daojiao meishushi*, vol. 1, 98.

Fig. 16 Fei Zhi stela. After Li Song, *Zhongguo daojiao meishushi*, vol. 1, 189.

Fig. 17 Ink rubbing of Cangshan tomb inscription describing locations and decor in the tomb. Reference to bianzuo “convenient seat” in col. 6. After Nagata Hidemasa, Kandai sekkoku shusei 漢代石刻集成 (Kyoto: Dōhōsha, 2004), vol. 2, 111.

# 太一坐和一個舊題的新解
## ——道教是怎樣發生的?

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**提　要:**

陝西郝灘一號墓的年代爲公元一世紀。墓裏的神界壁畫有“太一坐”的圖像(三個字寫在紅色方形的幡上)。在東漢流行宗教中,“神坐”有很明顯的意義和功能。這篇文章用文獻和考古資料來說明郝灘太一坐在當時的宗教意義。除了郝灘太一坐,肥致碑和所謂三段式鏡也跟神坐有關。

**關鍵詞:** 太一坐、神坐、便坐、肥致碑、三段式鏡