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COLLECTED ANOMALIES OF THE DIAMOND SŪTRA:
A STUDY AND TRANSLATION OF A CHINESE BUDDHIST MIRACLE TALE
COMPILATION

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For my parents, Heather and Jason Young.

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ABSTRACT

Despite their value as sources attesting to the reception of Buddhism by Chinese laypeople, miracle tale literature has escaped the attention of all but a few scholars of Chinese Buddhism. These scholars have tended to discuss this literature in general terms, seeking to understand this body of literature as a whole either by comparing different texts or by focusing on texts thought to be representative of the genre. This thesis consists of a detailed study and translation of a single miracle tale text, *Collected Anomalies of the Diamond Sūtra*, and seeks to understand the text within the historical-cultural context of the community which produced the tales and the author who compiled them.

In so doing, I hope to reveal certain aspects of this literature which have previously gone unnoticed. Specifically, this thesis explores the role of numinous efficacy (*ling*) in the cult of the *Diamond Sūtra* as exemplified in these tales. It also highlights the role of *sūtra*-focused piety in addressing certain common anxieties, especially those centered on death, fate, and the threat of injustice. It is my hope that this study contributes to the growing body of literature on miracle tales and helps to shape the way we approach these texts as this field expands.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This thesis consists of a study and translation of *Jin'gang jing jiuyi* 金剛經鳩異 (*Collected Anomalies of the Diamond Sūtra*, hereafter *Collected Anomalies*), a collection of Buddhist miracle tales compiled by the prominent Tang poet Duan Chengshi 段成式 (c. 802–863)¹ in 836.² It will examine this text as a case study in the popular reception of Buddhist scriptures by Chinese literati. It will not only highlight the importance of the “miracle tale” as a literary genre—which reveals the shared religious repertoire of medieval Chinese Buddhists—but also examine its role in Chinese literary history.

The tales contained in *Collected Anomalies* appear to show a marked disparity between the teachings contained in the *Diamond Sūtra*, which focuses on emptiness (Sanskrit: *śūnyatā*, Chinese: 空 *kong*) and the bodhisattva path, and the miracles attributed to it, which have no clear relationship to these teachings. Such miracles seem to have been inspired by another major theme in the *Sūtra*, which is the immense merit produced by reciting the *Sūtra* itself. To Chinese Buddhists in particular, the *Diamond Sūtra* was more than a set of doctrinal prescripts to be studied, but was also believed to embody mysterious, apotropaic powers. Recitation of the *Sūtra* could evoke not only protection from calamities and healing of illnesses, but could even bring the deceased back to life. What do these tales tell us about how this community understood

¹ Duan's exact birthdate is unclear. I defer to Carrie Reed, the leading English-language scholar of his work, who believes “he was born sometime in the period between 801 and 802”; Reed, *A Tang Miscellany*, 11. His death date is given as 863 in the brief biography of him found in volume 167 of the *Old Book of Tang*.

² Reed, *A Tang Miscellany*, 17.

Buddhist scriptures? How did they conceive of the miraculous and the anomalous? What can this text teach us about their collective anxieties and Duan's own personal concerns?

This thesis will be the first detailed study of *Collected Anomalies* in English, as Duan's text has thus far been almost entirely ignored in anglophone scholarship. Scholars studying Buddhist miracle tales have thus far shown more interest in the "miracle tale" genre as a whole than in any particular text, focusing on those which serve as representative examples of the genre. This is due in no small part to the fact that these scholars are among only a handful who study miracle tales at all, leaving it up to them to introduce, define, and explain the genre and its value to the wider scholarly community. They have done much to enhance our understanding of Chinese Buddhist literature and expand our idea of what different sorts of texts can tell us about the religious communities that produced them. Scholars such as Donald Gjertson and Robert Campany have demonstrated the potential of the miracle tale genre as a source, but they have only begun to access that potential. There is much more work to be done in this regard.

Gjertson, for example, has largely viewed miracle tales as rhetorical works intended to demonstrate the superiority of Buddhism over other religious traditions.³ Campany adds a great deal of nuance to this conception by borrowing Ann Swidler's notion of a cultural repertoire, which allows him to imagine "Buddhism," "Daoism," etc. as overlapping and often indistinct sets of repertoire elements, rather than holistic entities in conflict with one another.⁴ Explaining the miracle tale genre in terms of religious competition, he argues that the major function of early Buddhist miracle tales was "to demonstrate, by juxtaposing [...] two repertoire elements,

³ See Gjertson, "The Early Chinese Buddhist Miracle Tale."

⁴ Campany, "Religious Repertoires and Contestation," 106. I find Swidler's model especially useful for the study of miracle tales, both because it emphasizes utility (a major theme in miracle tale literature) and because it allows for internal contradiction among repertoire elements, which is a recurring issue in Chinese religion generally. A major limitation of this model is that it assumes a static repertoire and cannot easily account for developments across time. However, this does not present much of an issue when studying a singular text such as this. See Swidler, *Talk of Love*, 25 and 93.

that it is the Buddhist one that is true, more powerful, or otherwise preferable” to some non-Buddhist counterpart.⁵ My analysis of *Collected Anomalies* seeks to highlight both the rhetorical and non-rhetorical elements of the text, as well as those which further blur the distinctions between categories such as “Buddhist” and “non-Buddhist.”

In its rhetorical dimension, *Collected Anomalies* is not so much invested in proving the superiority of a Buddhist repertoire as in proving the superiority of a specific repertoire element—namely the copying and recitation of the *Diamond Sūtra*—over all others, whether Buddhist or not. Ironically, these proofs of the power of the *Sūtra* are not, to quote Stephen Teiser, necessarily “linked to an exclusively or at least identifiably Buddhist view of existence.”⁶ Buddhist doctrinal concepts and technical terminology are rarely used in *Collected Anomalies*, and the *Sūtra*'s value is not demonstrated via appeals to distinctly Buddhist values, but by presenting examples of its supreme numinous efficacy (*ling* 靈), demonstrating that the text was intended for a general audience of literati, rather than for committed Buddhists. This apparent tension within *Collected Anomalies* may be viewed as a result of an “imperfect”⁷ synthesis of Buddhist and indigenous Chinese repertoire elements or, even the mere augmentation of an indigenous Chinese worldview with a handful of Buddhist elements. With this in mind, it not especially surprising that the teachings of the *Diamond Sūtra* are not discussed at all,⁸ since the

⁵ Campany, “Religious Repertoires and Contestation,” 111.

⁶ Teiser, “The Growth of Purgatory,” 119. Here Teiser is describing early Chinese Buddhist notions of purgatory, which he argues were distinctively Buddhist, in contrast to the Song view of purgatory, which represents a synthesis of Indic and Chinese notions of the afterlife. See also Teiser, *The Scripture on the Ten Kings*.

⁷ I have placed scare quotes around “imperfect” here in an attempt to soften the teleological implications of using the term in this context. By an “imperfect synthesis,” I simply mean that there are tensions between these two worldviews that the text does not completely resolve. See Teiser, *The Scripture on the Ten Kings*, which describes an example of this in the synthesis of Indic and Chinese notions of the afterlife into a “mature” notion of purgatory in the Song.

⁸ The great merit gained by reciting and copying the *Diamond Sūtra* is a major theme in the *Sūtra* itself, so one could argue that, as examples of the benefits of these practices, the tales of *Collected Anomalies* are demonstrating the truth of the teachings of the *Sūtra*. However, the core doctrines articulated in the *Diamond Sūtra*, which deal mainly with the emptiness of phenomena, are only even hinted at once in the final tale, which includes a quote from

Sūtra's value is derived from its efficacy as an element of a ritual repertoire, not its teachings and the distinct worldview they communicate.

Previous scholarship has also tended to maintain a distinction between Buddhist miracle tales and non-Buddhist *zhiguai* or “strange tales,” a distinction which *Collected Anomalies* blurs.⁹ Although Duan's preface makes no secret of his intention to promote the *Diamond Sūtra*, his interest in the strange and anomalous is also well-documented. Duan's most famous work, *Youyang zazu* 酉陽雜俎 (*Miscellaneous Morsels from Youyang*),¹⁰ contains a wealth of strange tales, most of which make no mention of the *Diamond Sūtra* or Buddhism but otherwise closely resemble the tales in *Collected Anomalies*. It would be somewhat reductive to describe miracle tales in general as merely Buddhist strange tales,¹¹ but it is difficult to read *Collected Anomalies* without getting the sense that Duan's interest in Buddhist miracles is tied closely to his broader interest in the strange (*guai* 怪) and anomalous (*yi* 異). Duan himself apparently did not draw such clear distinctions between his catalogs of the anomalous. Ideas of what constituted strangeness was not circumscribed to any particular religious tradition in Tang China. For Duan, it was what undergirded the strange—in this case, *ling*—that unified the various stories. This dimension of Buddhist miracle tales (i.e. as curiosities) has thus far been under-emphasized in western scholarship.

the *Sūtra* alluding to these concepts, but this quote is not explained or discussed within the tale at all. See X87.1630: 471a7–15.

⁹ Ho, whom I discuss later on, specifically downplays the relationship between strange tales and miracle tales. Campany has written about both genres, but mostly in isolation from one another. See Ho, *Diamond Sutra Narratives*, 9, Campany, *Signs from the Unseen Realm* and *Strange Writing*.

¹⁰ *Collected Anomalies* is actually contained within the larger *Youyang zazu*, a text which English-language scholarship has near-unanimously overlooked. As I discuss in the next section, Carrie Reed seems to be the only person to devote serious attention to *Youyang zazu*.

¹¹ Francios Martin, for instance, states that miracle tales are “considered as a sub-genre of the *zhiguai*.” Martin, “Buddhism and Literature,” 903.

My approach to this text will draw on Campany's repertoire model as well as the psychological framework used by Stephen Bokenkamp in *Ancestors and Anxiety*. I find Bokenkamp's framework to be particularly relevant here thanks to a pervasive sense of anxiety I see running through *Collected Anomalies*. As I will discuss in more detail later on, a central theme of this text is not simply that the practice of the *Diamond Sūtra* will effect miracles, but that it will protect the practitioner from danger and allow them to change their fate (*ming* 命). The *Diamond Sūtra*-focused piety prescribed by this text may then be seen as an antidote to common anxieties or fears surrounding these subjects. This psychological approach is bolstered by the strength of Duan's editorial voice and autobiographical preface, which allow the reader to gain a much better sense of his mindset than that of many other miracle tale compilers.¹²

In a similar vein, this thesis will also put *Collected Anomalies* in conversation with Duan's other writings, such as the aforementioned *Youyang zazu*, as well as with comparable miracle tale compilations. This will serve to contextualize *Collected Anomalies* both within Duan's larger body of work and within the miracle tale genre. It will also historicize the text by looking at the circumstances of Duan's life and of Tang society in the mid-ninth century when the text was composed. Chapter 3 will discuss the influence of the An Lushan rebellion may have had on this text and the atmosphere of anxiety pervading it. Although the text itself was compiled nearly a century after the rebellion, the tales within were drawn from different periods, and many of them take place in the rebellion's immediate aftermath. These tales generally deal with fears that would have been more relevant during this period, such as the possibility of being killed in warfare along the western border or caught up in some internal political intrigue.

¹² Contrast Duan's preface to, for instance, Meng Xianzhong's much more impersonal preface to his *Collected Proofs of the Efficacy of the Diamond Sūtra* (金剛般若經集驗記 *Jin'gang bore jing jiyuan ji*) X87.1629: 499a6–b5.

Historical-biographical analysis of this sort has thus far not been emphasized in the study of miracle tales, due to the scholarly trend of focusing on miracle tales and strange tales as literature, or even fiction, rather than history.

This is not to say that I treat every claim in *Collected Anomalies* as a verifiable historical fact, as it should go without saying that I do not intend to determine whether any of these stories of miracles “really” happened. What interests me is the fact that Duan, his sources, and at least some of his readers *believed* that they happened. Duan specifies the location and date of almost every tale in the text, and many tales contain references to documented historical figures, indicating a historical approach to the subject and an intent to convince potential doubters. Figure 1 consists of a map of these locations, and Table 2 in Appendix B shows occurrences of these historical details in the tales. Only a handful of the tales contain records of their transmission, but the proximity of these tale locations to places Duan lived suggests that he heard them from people he knew personally. Furthermore, the later appearance of many of these tales in the *Taiping guangji* and *Song gaoseng zhuan* indicates that they were received as history by later generations.

An Introduction to the Miracle Tale Genre

Miracle tale compilations are one of the oldest genres of Chinese Buddhist literature, dating at least as far back as the late fourth century and flourishing during the Tang Dynasty (618–906). These texts consists of short narratives dealing with wondrous or strange events—such as miraculous retribution for karmic misdeeds, apparitions of bodhisattvas and guardian deities, or instances of the dead returning to life—typically compiled from a variety of sources and always

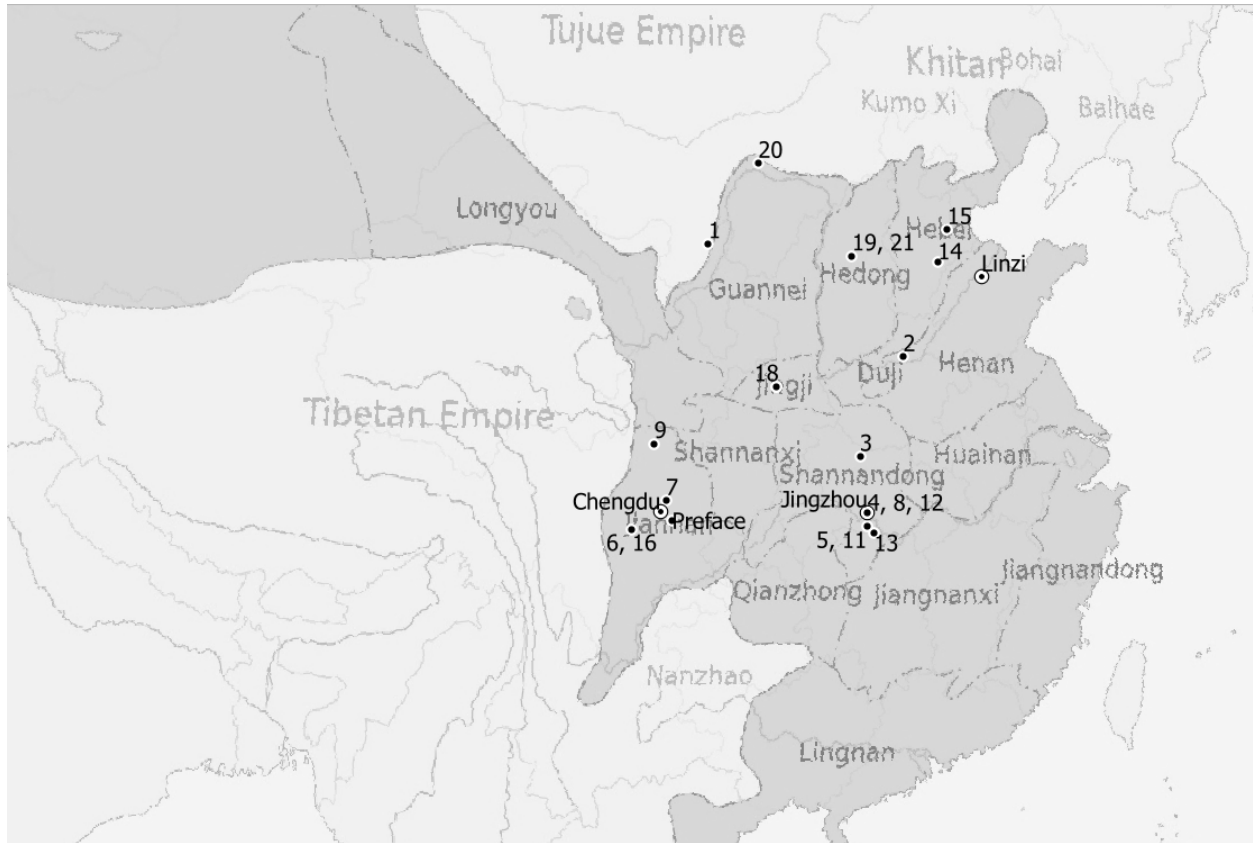


Fig. 1¹³: A map of tales in *Collected Anomalies*, highlighting important locations in Duan's life, namely his hometown of (Linzi 臨淄),¹⁴ his probable birthplace (Chengdu 成都),¹⁵ and his residence at the time of *Collected Anomalies*' writing (Jingzhou 荊州).¹⁶

presented as records of true events.¹⁷ Although they have some precedent in Indian Buddhist literature in the form of certain *avadāna* and *jātaka* tales involving miracles,¹⁸ the miracle tale as an independent literary genre is a distinctly Chinese phenomenon, which arose in response to

¹³ Specific coordinates for these locations are drawn from the Dharma Drum Institute's *Buddhist Studies Authority Database*. Some locations are more precise than others due to disparities in the precision of locations provided in the text. Tale no. 17 is not shown because no location is given in the text.

¹⁴ Sources disagree about Duan's hometown, but most—including *Youyang zazu*—refer to him as a man of Linzi (modern Zibo, Shandong). Others give Xihe 西河, Nanjun 南郡, Henan 河南, or Dongmou 东牟 as his hometown. See Reed, *A Tang Miscellany*, 9–11.

¹⁵ Reed, *A Tang Miscellany*, 11.

¹⁶ Reed, *A Tang Miscellany*, 10.

¹⁷ Gjertson, "The Early Chinese Buddhist Miracle Tale," 287.

¹⁸ One example is "The Story of the King of the Śibis" in Āryaśūra's *Jātakamālā*, in which Śakyamuni Buddha, in a previous life as king, selflessly gives away his eyes and has them miraculously restored; see 8–20 in J. S. Speyer's translation.

distinctly Chinese circumstances. The miracle tale developed during the introduction of Buddhism in the late Han dynasty, when the first few generations of Chinese Buddhists found themselves compelled to defend their new, foreign religion against various nativist critiques.¹⁹ In other words, this genre developed out of a need to make Buddhism appealing—or, at the very least, acceptable—to Chinese people, so its apologetic rhetoric is largely grounded in indigenous Chinese religio-cultural concepts, rather than those drawn from Indian Buddhism. It is for this reason that the particular “idiom” of Buddhism represented in miracle tales is, as scholars have noted, both “profoundly lay oriented” rather than monastic and “centered on practical efficacy”²⁰ rather than soteriology. Since the central purpose of a miracle tale is to convince the members of the literate elite to adopt Buddhist practices, the author will typically accomplish this by appealing to the concerns and worldview of this assumed audience. Rather than attempting to replace well-established indigenous concepts with Indic ones, miracle tales adopt and reinforce the Sinitic worldview in order to promote Buddhist practices on those terms. However, this received view of the miracle tale genre leaves open the question of why this genre continued to survive and even thrive after Buddhism became established in China. It must also be remembered that these texts played a role in intra-Buddhist contestation and also served as curiosities for those interested in accounts of the marvelous.

Miracle tale authors not only drew on concepts and values indigenous to Chinese culture, but on local literary forms. Miracle tales are deeply indebted to the indigenous genre of strange tales, or *zhiguai* 志怪 (lit. “accounts of the strange”), which predate Buddhist miracle tales by at least a century.²¹ Scholars have tended to distinguish the miracle tale from the strange tale by

¹⁹ See Campany, “Religious Repertoires and Contestation.”

²⁰ Campany, *Signs from the Unseen Realm*, 31.

²¹ Gjerston, “The Early Chinese Buddhist Miracle Tale,” 289.

defining the former—an etic category including all stories dealing with Buddhist miracles—as didactic or devotional and the latter emic category as secular merely entertaining.²² However, the writings of Duan Chengshi, the Tang poet and author who compiled *Collected Anomalies*, would seem to complicate this simple dichotomy, and this text in particular contains elements of both the strange tale and miracle tale genres. The fact that these Buddhist tales were included alongside “secular” strange tales shows that Duan did not draw strong distinctions between different categories of strangeness. I will explore this issue of motivation throughout this thesis and will return to the theme of strangeness specifically in the concluding chapter.

Scholars have proposed various typologies of miracle tale compilations, generally distinguished by the sort of type of cultic object they seek to promote. There are, for instance, numerous compilations of miracle tales centered on specific bodhisattvas, such as Guanyin.²³ There are also miracle narratives related to holy beings²⁴ and places, such as particularly sacred mountain sites.²⁵ *Collected Anomalies* belongs to a subgenre of miracle tale compilation centered on holy texts, one which reflects the wider phenomenon of “cults of the book,” which formed in China around such texts as the *Diamond Sūtra* and *Lotus Sūtra*.²⁶ In the centuries since the introduction of these *sūtras* to China, devotees produced countless manuscripts and printed copies of these texts both in order to propagate them and to demonstrate reverence for them. It is not by mere chance but by sheer numbers that a copy of the *Diamond Sūtra* from Dunhuang

²² See Martin, “Buddhism and Literature,” 903–910. Martin, like many scholars, assumes that strange tales were treated more or less as fiction, whereas miracle tales were treated as (at least ostensibly) factual. I discuss this assumption about strange tales in more detail in the conclusion.

²³ *Guanshiyin yingyan ji* 觀世音應驗記 (“Records of Guanshiyin’s Responsive Manifestations”), dated to the fourth century, is the oldest extant miracle tale compilation. For secondary scholarship on Guanyin miracle tales, see Yü, “Miracle Tales and the Domestication of Kuan-Yin” and Yü, *Kuan-yin*.

²⁴ See Shahrar, *Crazy Ji* for a study of popular literature on the charismatic Song monk Jigong 濟公.

²⁵ See Lin, *Building a Sacred Mountain*, 155–194, and Yü “P’u-t’o Shan,” which discuss miracle narratives surrounding Mount Wutai 五台山 and Mount Putuo 普陀山, respectively.

²⁶ See Schopen, “The Phrase ‘sa pṭhvīpradeśaḥ caityachīto bhavet’ in the *Vajracchedikā*.”

happens to be the oldest surviving printed text in the world.²⁷ These *sūtra* cults, inspired by these texts' statements about their own importance and the merits gained by reciting and copying them, approached Buddhist scriptures not primarily as prescriptive teachings but as objects of reverence and sources of numinous efficacy (*ling*).²⁸ These two attitudes towards *sūtra* texts are, of course, not mutually exclusive, as evidenced by Duan's references to attending lectures on the *Diamond Sūtra* and some of its commentaries.²⁹ Nonetheless, *sūtra* miracle tales share a singular focus on demonstrating the efficacy of devotion to their respective scriptures—expressed principally through recitation and copying, as advocated by the *sūtras* themselves—and *Collected Anomalies* is no exception. More specifically, this text is concerned with demonstrating the efficacy of *Diamond Sūtra* practice against existential threats, in this life and the next. Although the tales contained in *Collected Anomalies* express it in different ways, they are all demonstrating the same basic claim: *revering the Diamond Sūtra will protect your life and save you from suffering*.

A Note on Terminology

The task of defining the miracle tale genre raises the issue of the appropriateness of the term *miracle* in a Chinese Buddhist context. Some scholars have hesitated to use this term on the grounds that the word *miracle* “implies a divine intervention that temporarily suspends the natural order.”³⁰ This definition cannot be applied to Buddhist miracles, since a core tenet of Buddhism is that all phenomena may be explained by the workings of karma, an entirely natural

²⁷ See Wood and Barnard, *The Diamond Sutra: The Story of the World's Earliest Dated Printed Book*. It is also of note that this copy of the *Sūtra* is dated to 868, only five years after Duan Chengshi's death.

²⁸ See Wu, “From the ‘Cult of the Book’ to the ‘Cult of the Canon,’” 47.

²⁹ X87.1630: 467c15–18. See also Ho, *Diamond Sutra Narratives*, 88.

³⁰ Teiser and Stone, *Readings of the Lotus Sutra*, 34, quoted in Ho, “Sinitic Buddhist Narratives of Wonders,” 1118.

process which even a Buddha cannot suspend. However, as miracle tale scholar Chiew Hui Ho points out, this definition of the word *miracle* is a relatively new one, “grounded in the Enlightenment philosophical critique of Christian theology.”³¹ Prior to thinkers such as David Hume, the word *miracle* did not necessarily entail these rationalist assumptions, as it is derived from a Latin word meaning simply “wonder.”³² If we follow Ho, who defines a *miracle* as “an act or event—extraordinary or unusual enough—that evokes wonder,”³³ then the term is entirely appropriate here. The events described in *Collected Anomalies*, including apparitions of protector deities and the dead returning to life, are wondrous by any definition, but because they are explained as the workings of karma, they are not, strictly speaking, *supernatural*. Throughout this thesis, I will therefore avoid using the term *supernatural* in favor of the more precise *supernormal* or *supermundane*.

Previous Scholarship

Buddhist Studies

Despite the prominence of the miracle tale genre within the history of Chinese Buddhist literature, surprisingly few scholars in the field of Buddhist studies have examined the subject. Donald Gjertson laid the groundwork by publishing articles and two books on assorted miracle tale texts, providing valuable translations and bringing the genre to the attention of the scholarly community. Gjertson's work defined the parameters of the miracle tale genre, which he characterized as essentially a Buddhist spin on the older “strange tale” genre.³⁴ In the 1990s,

³¹ Ho, “Sinitic Buddhist Narratives of Wonders,” 1120.

³² Ho, “Sinitic Buddhist Narratives of Wonders,” 1118.

³³ Ho, “Sinitic Buddhist Narratives of Wonders,” 1118.

³⁴ See Gjertson, “The Early Chinese Buddhist Miracle Tale,” *Ghosts, Gods, and Retribution*, and *Miraculous Retribution*.

Glen Dudbridge³⁵ and Robert Campany followed Gjertson's lead, with Campany focusing on the “return from death” motif and engaging in comparative analysis with similar texts from the Daoist canon³⁶ and other accounts of anomalies in Chinese literature.³⁷ A few years later, Chün-fang Yu wrote about miracle tales and their role in the “domestication” of the bodhisattva Guanyin.³⁸ After this, very little scholarship was published on miracle tales for some time until the release of Campany's book *Signs from the Unseen Realm*, which provides an excellent translation and analysis of Wang Yan's 王琰 Six Dynasties-era compilation, *Mingxiang ji* 冥祥記 (*A Record of Signs from the Unseen Realm*). In this book, Campany applies a “repertoire” model which allows him to discuss the rhetorical dimension of miracle tales and their role in contestation among religious groups without falling into the common trap of treating “Buddhism,” “Daoism,” etc. as discrete, stable entities. This book has been especially influential on my analysis of *Collected Anomalies*. Notably, most of these works have focused on texts from the Six Dynasties period, leaving a noticeable gap in scholarship on Tang miracle tales.

Miracle tales specifically centered on *sūtra* texts have received almost no attention from western scholars, with the exception of two articles written by Stevenson and Campany in 2007 and 2018, respectively, both of which dealt with the *Lotus Sūtra*. To my knowledge, the only scholars currently writing about *Diamond Sūtra* miracle tales are Shih-shan Susan Huang, who wrote one article on the subject,³⁹ and Chiew Hui Ho, who published a book entitled *Diamond Sutra Narratives* in 2019, after I had begun working on a translation of this text.⁴⁰ Ho's book,

³⁵ See Dudbridge, *Religious Experience and Lay Society in T'ang China*.

³⁶ See Campany, “To Hell and Back.”

³⁷ See Campany, *Strange Writing*.

³⁸ Yu, “Miracle Tales and the Domestication of Kuan-yin.”

³⁹ Huang, “Illustrating the Efficacy of the *Diamond Sutra*.”

⁴⁰ Some previous writings on miracle tales or the *Diamond Sūtra* brushed up against the intersection between these two subjects, but none of these explored this intersection with much depth. See Yongyou, *The Diamond Sutra in Chinese Culture*, 93–125 and Gjertson, “The Early Chinese Buddhist Miracle Tale,” 294–295.

which emphasizes the role of “parasutraic narratives” in the creation and maintenance of the cult of the *Diamond Sūtra* among the laity, also includes the first known English translation of *Collected Anomalies*,⁴¹ along with some other *Diamond Sūtra* miracle tale texts. However, Ho's book devotes surprisingly little space to Duan's work, as he is more interested in the broader phenomenon of *Diamond Sūtra* narratives than any text in particular. He does not provide any in-depth analysis of *Collected Anomalies*, and his translation, while serviceable, has some issues and could be improved upon.⁴² In other words, Ho's book is by no means the definitive text on *Collected Anomalies*, and there is much more work to be done on this text.

Literary Studies

Perhaps more surprising than the scarcity of scholarship on miracle tales is the even more pronounced scarcity of scholarship on Duan Chengshi's work among scholars of Chinese literature. Despite his status as one of the most prominent poets of the Tang, Duan is largely referred to only in passing by western scholars,⁴³ with the exception of Carrie E. Reed who is, to my knowledge, the only living anglophone scholar studying Duan in detail.⁴⁴ Reed has written numerous articles on different aspects of Duan's writing,⁴⁵ as well as two books analyzing and translating portions of his most famous work, *Youyang zazu*, a vast compilation of works that includes *Collected Anomalies*.⁴⁶ Although Reed, as a scholar of literature rather than religion, does not linger too much on Duan's Buddhist works, her analysis and translation provide

⁴¹ Ho's translation is not, however, the first translation of *Collected Anomalies* into a European language, which was accomplished sixty years earlier by the francophone scholar Bruno Belpaire. See Belpaire, *T'ang kien wen tse*.

⁴² My translation in Appendix A highlights differences between my translation and Ho's.

⁴³ Victor Mair, for instance, has noted that Duan is the source of the earliest known version of the story of Cinderella. See Mair, “The First Recorded Cinderella Story.”

⁴⁴ Schaefer, who died in 1991, also wrote a brief introduction to Duan and his work, but there is very little else written about Duan in English. See Schaefer 1961.

⁴⁵ See Reed, “Tattoo in Early China,” which discusses Duan's early documentation of a form of tattooing in China.

⁴⁶ See Reed, *Chinese Chronicle of the Strange* and Reed, *A Tang Miscellany*.

invaluable personal context for my study of *Collected Anomalies*, which will analyze the text with a focus on its compiler and his editorial voice.

It is clear that there is still a range of issues related to miracle tales which have yet to be explored, as well as approaches which have yet to be applied. This thesis will attempt to raise some of these issues and provide a detailed analysis of *Collected Anomalies* as an example of what might be gained from applying new approaches to this body of literature.

Chapter Outline

Following this initial chapter introducing *Collected Anomalies* and the miracle tale genre, the following chapters explore the major themes I have identified in this text. Chapter 2 introduces the concept of numinous efficacy (*ling*) and some of its dimensions. This chapter argues that *ling* is the core underlying principle of *Collected Anomalies* and that these tales emphasize protective applications of this efficacy, which often manifests material changes to the world. Chapter 3 explores the theme of anxiety, which is pervasive throughout its tales, and looks at the historical and cultural background that might have produced this sense of anxiety. Chapter 4 examines the themes of injustice and the otherworldly as seen in the tales' portrayal of the earthly bureaucracy and its otherworldly counterpart. Chapter 5 consists of a brief conclusion which examines the role of the strange in this text and raises some questions that might motivate further inquiry into the miracle tale genre.

CHAPTER 2

LING AND ITS DIMENSIONS

Thus far, scholarship on miracle tales has largely understood their internal logic in terms of *ganying* 感應, a concept translated variously as “stimulus-response” or “sympathetic resonance,” according to which “the stimulus of intense devotional acts triggers miraculous responses.”⁴⁷ *Ganying* is undoubtedly a relevant concept to both Chinese Buddhism in general and to miracle tales in particular. Collected Anomalies’ compiler, Duan Chengshi, for example, refers to this concept in his preface, stating that “sincerity must create a stimulus (*gan*), and when there is a stimulus there must be a response (*ying*).”⁴⁸ However, an analysis that is singularly focused on *ganying* is inadequate, as this misses the fact that the term does not refer simply to miraculous responses to acts of devotion, but in fact denotes a much broader cosmological principle of correspondence among objects across the entire universe.

Robert Sharf describes *ganying* as the notion that “objects belonging to the same category or class spontaneously resonate with each other just as do two identically tuned strings on a pair of zithers.”⁴⁹ Much earlier, sinologists such as Joseph Needham had identified this “correlative thinking” as a fundamental law of Chinese cosmology, central to everything from divination to medicine.⁵⁰ *Ganying* then serves to explain not only miraculous responses, but indeed all ritual activity, including internal and external alchemy, medicine, and even the workings of the natural world. Paul Unschuld also provides an extensive explanation of the various sorts of correlative

⁴⁷ Campany, *Signs from the Unseen Realm*, 32. See also Ho, *Diamond Sutra Narratives*, 95, in which the author argues that both Buddhist miracle tales and strange tales are to be understood as expressions of *ganying*.

⁴⁸ X87.1630:467c5.

⁴⁹ Sharf, *Coming to Terms with Chinese Buddhism*, 83.

⁵⁰ See Needham, *Science and Civilization in China*, Vol. 2, 279–303.

thinking and how these notions of resonance and correspondence, along with a description of their development in pre-Buddhist Chinese thought. Unschuld explains that this cosmology is founded on elemental “lines of correspondence” and spiritual forces, through which ritual activity operates.⁵¹ One example he gives is the ancient practice of exposing shamans to the sun in order to produce rain, which operated on the principle that “the drops of sweat from the shaman compelled a corresponding drop of rain from the heavens,”⁵² due to this resonance via the element of water and the spiritual power of the shaman’s virtue (*de* 德).⁵³ Buddhist rituals and miracles are understood to operate by the same logic, whereby Buddhist practices produce the desired results by channeling their own spiritual forces through these lines of correspondence.

In this chapter, I examine the logic of *ganying*, its relationship to *ling*, and how it is demonstrated in all the miracle tales of *Collected Anomalies*. I suggest that, instead of holding up the cosmological principle of *ganying* as the central concept of miracle tales, the study of this literature should be centered on the more specifically pertinent notion of *ling* 靈, a concept which has thus far received significantly less focus than *ganying*. The term *ling* has a number of interrelated meanings and potential translations. As Chiew Hui Ho explains, “[t]he term *ling* has many connotations, including ‘shaman,’ ‘divinity,’ ‘felicity,’ ‘spirit,’ ‘numen,’ and—most important to subsequent understanding of Buddhist wonders and marvels—‘efficacy.’”⁵⁴ Stephen Feuchtwang describes *ling*, which he identifies as a core aspect of Chinese popular religion, as

⁵¹ Unschuld, *Medicine in China*, 56.

⁵² Unschuld, *Medicine in China*, 56.

⁵³ Unschuld defines *de* as “the magical force exerted, for example, by a properly performed ritual on the appearance of a desired natural event or, in Confucian terms, by morally faultless behavior on the harmony of society and of the universe.” *De* is most often translated as “virtue,” but sometimes also be translated as “power,” and might be described as the spiritual power of virtue. Unschuld, *Medicine in China*, 60.

⁵⁴ Ho, *Diamond Sutra Narratives*, 121. Ho and Campany both discuss *ling* as a relevant concept to the study of miracle tales, but neither centers it in their analysis.

“the use of [spiritual] power to benefit or to protect.”⁵⁵ There is no single English term that fully encapsulates these various meanings, but Jimmy Yu’s translation of the term as “numinous efficacy” captures the particular nuances most relevant to miracle tales, which are principally concerned with the efficacy of Buddhist practices in producing miraculous outcomes.⁵⁶ Yu’s analysis of sanctity in Chinese religion places *ling* in relation to other “discursive markers” in Chinese literature, namely notions of virtue (*de*) and sagehood (*sheng* 聖)—other types of spiritual power which, he stresses, “must be understood contextually, more as patterns of and powers within” a universe that operates according to *ganying*. Yu also points out that these concepts were near-universal reference points of Chinese religiosity and that none of them were exclusive to a particular religious tradition or text.⁵⁷

The relationship between these various notions might be understood through an analogy to the physical principles governing the workings of different sorts matter and energy. A copper wire can be used to channel either electricity from a battery or heat from a fire by means of the various principles of physics which govern conductivity. Similarly, a human being can channel *ling* from a *sūtra*—or *de* from virtuous deeds, or *sheng* from ascetic practices—by means of the principle of *ganying*. Because *ganying* is a generalized and universally-acknowledged cosmological principle, it is not centrally relevant to rhetorical texts such as these. What is at stake in Buddhist miracle tales, which generally aim to convince the reader of the value of Buddhist practices, is not the veracity of the principle *ganying*, which could be taken for granted. Rather, it is the *ling* of a specific practice, in this case the *Diamond Sūtra*, that needed to be

⁵⁵ Feuchtwang, *The Imperial Metaphor*, 194. See also Feuchtwang, “School-Temple and City Gods.”

⁵⁶ Yu, *Sanctity and Self-inflicted Violence*, 12. Contrast this with Kenneth Pomeranz’s translation of *ling* as “magical efficacy,” which I feel does not capture the somewhat mysterious quality of the concept. See Pomeranz, “Water to Iron, Widows to Warlords.”

⁵⁷ It should be noted that these types of spiritual power overlap to varying degrees and are not always completely distinct. See Yu, *Sanctity and Self-inflicted Violence*, 12.

proven to a potentially skeptical readership.

This chapter will explore how *ling* manifests, why it is deployed, and the means by which it is accessed. The miracles depicted in this text typically involve a physical manifestation of the *Sūtra*'s power, sometimes in the form of a mysteriously-appearing *Sūtra* scroll, which aids the protagonist materially in some way or another. This emphasis on material effects follows naturally from the primary purpose for which the *Sūtra* is invoked in these tales, which is the protection of human life from existential threats. Finally, I will conclude the chapter by exploring the text's focus on recitation and copying—the primary means by which the protagonists access the scripture's efficacy.

Table 2 contains important motifs of *ling* *Collected Anomalies* and total occurrences of each motif. Some stories contain more than one theme, while other stories display only one major theme. “Material *ling*” and “protective *ling*” refer to these dimensions of the miracles themselves and how they occur in the tales, while “upholding,” “reciting,” and “copying” refer to the methods of revering the *Diamond Sūtra* which these tales advocate. “Miraculous scroll” refers to a motif in which a physical *sūtra* scroll appears as part of a miracle. This table demonstrates that protection is the most prominent theme in the text, with the often-overlapping theme of material *ling* playing a key role as well. It also shows that *ling*, whether protective, material, or otherwise, is most often accessed through the practice of recitation, which appears in the vast majority of the tales.

Table 1. Motifs of *ling* in *Collected Anomalies*.⁵⁸

Motif	Material <i>Ling</i>	Protective <i>Ling</i>	Miraculous Scroll	Upholding	Reciting	Copying
# of Tales	8	13	5	8	16	3

⁵⁸ For a complete table of themes in the tales showing exactly which tale contains each theme, see Table 2 in Appendix B.

Material *Ling*

Each of the tales in *Collected Anomalies* is, in some way or another, illustrative of the concept of *ling*, in that they are primarily demonstrations of the *Diamond Sūtra*'s extraordinary *ling*—i.e. its efficacy and capacity to produce miracles. These demonstrations are, in most cases, material in nature in that the focus is on the miracles' effects on the material world. Such miracles stand in contrast to, for example, the “spirit-monk” motif found in some miracle tales, in which ghostly monks appear in apparitions to inspire awe or reveal information to the protagonist but may not affect them materially.⁵⁹ *Collected Anomalies*' miracles are, on the whole, notably more concrete. In certain tales, the *Sūtra*'s power physically blocks or disrupts attacks on the protagonist, such as by summoning a mysterious hand to protect a man's back from being flogged with a rod,⁶⁰ or by shattering instruments of torture about to be used on another.⁶¹ The material results of these miracles may be understood as concrete proof of the *Sūtra*'s *ling*. Although the reader has to take Duan at his word that this evidence exists, its materiality still has a degree of rhetorical weight. The protagonists of these tales not only told others about the miracles they experienced, but also had something to show others as evidence that the *Sūtra* could produce miraculous effects, making their stories much more difficult to dismiss than visions or apparitions.

A number of tales take this a step further by describing physical copies of the *Diamond Sūtra* manifesting as part of the central miracle, which serves as both material evidence of the miracle and a clear indication of its source.⁶² There can be no doubt as to what is responsible for

⁵⁹ Campany, *Signs from the Unseen Realm*, 55–56.

⁶⁰ Tale no. 2: Commander Wang Mou 虞候王某 X87.1630: 468a9–22.

⁶¹ Tale no. 21: Filial-and-Incorrupt Wang 王孝廉 X87.1630: 471a7–15.

⁶² Ho notes this trend in passing, but does not analyze it in detail. Ho, *Diamond Sutra Narratives*, 157. See Table 3 in Appendix B for a detailed table of themes and motifs.

the miracle when the *Diamond Sūtra* is literally and materially present as part of the event. One example of this sort of manifestation is the tale of Wang Mian 王沔, who is saved from drowning by clutching a bamboo rod which is later revealed to be a copy of the *Sūtra*.⁶³ An especially striking example appears at the end of the tale of the anonymous “beacon tower guard of Fengzhou” 豐州烽子:⁶⁴

數日後，為刺傷足倒磧中。忽有風吹，物窸窣過其前，因攬之裹足。有頃不復痛。試起步走如故。經信宿方及豐州界。歸家，母尚存。悲喜曰：「自失爾，我唯念金剛經，寢食不廢，以祈見爾。今果其誓因。」取經拜之，縫斷亡數幅，不知其由。子因道磧中傷足事。母令解足視之。所裹瘡物。乃數幅經也。其瘡亦愈。

After several days, he collapsed on the rocky ground due to cuts on his feet. Suddenly, there was a wind blowing, and something passed in front of him with a rustling noise, so he grabbed it and wrapped his feet [using this item]. In a short while there was no more pain [in his foot]. He tried to get up and he could walk as before.

He continued for two more nights until he reached the border of Fengzhou. He returned home, and his mother was still alive. In both sadness and joy, she said, “When I lost you, I did nothing but recite the *Diamond Sūtra*, except when sleeping and eating, praying to see you [again]. Now my vow has borne its fruit.”⁶⁵ She fetched the *Sūtra* to venerate it [and found that] the seams had broken and some pages were lost, but she did not know how. Her son then told her about hurting his feet on the rocky ground. His mother had him remove [the wrappings] from his feet to look at them, and what he had wrapped around his wounds were pages of the *Sūtra*, and his wounds were also healed.

Although this example might seem somewhat irreverent in its treatment of the holy text, the revelation that the protagonist has actually bandaged his feet with pages of the *Diamond Sūtra* is a clear and undeniable link between the miracle and the practice which produced it. Not

⁶³ X87.1630: 469b16–21.

⁶⁴ X87.1630: 470c16–71a6.

⁶⁵ This statement alludes to the Buddhist notion of a karmic vows, according to which vowing to perform a meritorious deed in order to produce a desired result will, through the law of karma, produce the result upon fulfillment of the vow. It is this logic which underlies bodhisattva vows. See Ohnuma, *Head, Eyes, Flesh, Blood*, 98.

only is the *Sūtra* the cause of this miracle, it is also the means by which the miracle is accomplished. In this tale and in the others of its kind, the *Sūtra* possess an undeniable agency or will of its own. The logic of this phenomenon rests on the Buddhist notion that *sūtra* texts are “dharma relics” (*fasheli* 法舍利) of the Buddha. In fact, the *Diamond Sūtra* itself states explicitly that “wherever but one four-line *gatha* of this dharma teaching is spoken or explained, that place is like a *stupa* [i.e., a reliquary] in the world of devas, humans, and asuras.”⁶⁶

In his study of relics in the Christian tradition, Peter Brown states that “*praesentia*, the physical presence of the holy, [...] was the greatest blessing that a late-antique Christian could enjoy,” because this *praesentia* was tantamount to “the presence of an invisible person.”⁶⁷ The same notion undergirds Buddhist attitudes toward relics, which have been regarded as central and preeminent objects of worship in almost every Buddhist culture.⁶⁸ In China, the *sūtra* as an object gained a new significance through its elevation to the same status as the bodily relic. The worship of *sūtra* texts is not a Chinese innovation, and neither is the use of *sūtras* for apotropaic and protective purposes, as both practices have ample precedent in Indian Buddhism.⁶⁹ A parallel development in Theravada countries is the recitation of *paritta* (“protection”) texts—Pali *sūtras* or excerpts from *sūtras*—for the purpose of preventing various mundane and supermundane dangers ranging from floods to demonic possession.⁷⁰ However, it was the convergence of Indian precedents with a long history of Chinese reverence for texts (e.g. the

⁶⁶ Translation from Pine, *The Diamond Sutra*, 241; “隨說是經，乃至四句偈等，當知此處，一切世間天、人、阿修羅皆應供養，如佛塔廟，何況有人盡能受持讀誦？須菩提！” T8.235:0750a6–8.

⁶⁷ Brown, *The Cult of the Saints*, 88.

⁶⁸ See Skilling, “Cutting Across Categories” for a discussion of the importance of relics in Buddhist history and Strong, *Relics of the Buddha* for an extensive exploration of the significance of Buddhist relics in various contexts.

⁶⁹ See Lopez, *Elaborations on Emptiness*, which explores both soteriological and apotropaic uses of the *Heart Sūtra* in Indian Buddhism. Chapter 7 in particular discusses the use of this *sūtra* for the purpose of exorcism.

⁷⁰ See Strong, *The Experience of Buddhism*, 241–244 and Tambiah, *Buddhism and the Spirit-Cults in North-East Thailand*, 199–222. This practice in particular strongly recalls the way the *Diamond Sūtra* is deployed in *Collected Anomalies*, and miracle tales are testimonials to the efficacy of such a practice.

Confucian classics) led to an expansion of the role of *sūtras* in Chinese Buddhist worship into a cult which rivaled that of the Buddha's bodily relics.⁷¹ Tales such as these would indicate that Duan and other practitioners interpreted the *Diamond Sūtra*'s statement quite literally and expected the *Sūtra* to behave, in some ways, like a bodily relic or even a living buddha.

Protective *Ling*

Protection and rescue from worldly threats is another major theme in the *Collected Anomalies*, especially from imminent death within the human realm. A large number of the tales contained in the text demonstrate the *Sūtra*'s specific capacity to protect human life. Although there is plenty of Buddhist literature explaining the importance of human life from a doctrinal standpoint, most of which emphasizes the rarity and preciousness of a human rebirth as an opportunity to practice the *dharma*,⁷² this text does not allude to any explanations of this kind. The paramount value of human life is, in a rather commonsensical way, taken for granted with the unstated assumption that the reader would be interested in a life-protecting ritual practice simply because he or she would like to continue living. Although there are two stories⁷³ which present *Diamond Sūtra* practice as a means of achieving an ideal death, *Collected Anomalies*' focus is overwhelmingly on preserving life.

Of the twenty-two⁷⁴ total tales contained within *Collected Anomalies*, thirteen⁷⁵ of these

⁷¹ See Wu, "From the 'Cult of the Book' to the 'Cult of the Canon,'" 47 and Strong, *Relics of the Buddha*, 8–12. Skilling, "Cutting Across Categories." See also Gentry, *Objects of Power in Tibetan Buddhism*, 177–179 for a discussion of the cult of the book, its relationship to the cult of relics, and the use of these objects for magical purposes within the Tibetan Buddhist tradition.

⁷² For just one example from within the Mahāyāna tradition, verse 55 of Nagarjuna's *Letter to a Friend*.

⁷³ These are the tale of He Zhen's wife 何軫妻 and the monk Weigong 惟恭; X87.1630: 470a10–17, X87.1630: 469a19–b4.

⁷⁴ This number includes a tale contained in the preface, which centers on Duan's father.

⁷⁵ These are tales no. 1, 2, 6, 9, 10, 11, 13, 16, 17, 20, 21, 14, and the preface. See Table 3 in Appendix B. Ho counts only nine such tales in *Collected Anomalies*, but he does not list which ones, so I cannot account for this discrepancy in our totals. Ho, *Diamond Sutra Narratives*, 158.

are centered on this motif of miraculous protection from death, making these tales a majority of the text. Aside from the many tales focused on protection from life-threatening danger, there are several others which demonstrate the *Sūtra*'s capacity to extend the practitioner's lifespan or even allow the practitioner to return to life after having already died.⁷⁶ One tale ends with the protagonist escaping punishment in the underworld but nonetheless expressing disappointment that his lifespan has been shortened.⁷⁷ "Protection and Rescue," a self-defined category in Meng Xianzhong's 孟獻忠 *Collected Proofs*,⁷⁸ is also the largest section in that compilation and reflects a broader trend in *Diamond Sūtra* miracle tales.⁷⁹ However, these tales only make up a much smaller quarter of Meng's compilation.

Collected Anomalies' tales demonstrating protective *ling* all follow a rather rigid narrative structure. First, the protagonist is introduced, usually with his⁸⁰ name and occupation, and then identified as a regular practitioner of *Diamond Sūtra* piety—or, to use Duan's usual wording, one who "always upheld the *Diamond Sūtra*."⁸¹ The protagonist then finds himself in some sort of mortal danger (e.g. drowning, execution, attack by wild animals, etc.) but is dramatically saved at the last moment by some miraculous turn of events, and in each case the event is invariably explained as the result of the protagonist's *Diamond Sūtra* practice. Finally, many of these tales conclude with a description of how the protagonist or other witnesses were affected by this experience, and a few contain a short postscript explaining how Duan came to

⁷⁶ See tales no. 4 (the monk Zhideng 智燈 X87.1630: 468b17–23), 5 (Wang Conggui's sister 王從貴妹 X87.1630: 468b24–c5), 9 (Dong Jinchao 董進朝 X87.1630: 469b5–15), and 12 (the monk Fazheng 法正 X87.1630: 469c3–11). The "return from death" motif will be discussed in greater detail later on.

⁷⁷ See tale no.7 on Chen Zhao 陳昭; X87.1630: 468c15–69a18.

⁷⁸ X87.1629: 449b14–452c14.

⁷⁹ Ho estimates that a third of all *Diamond Sūtra* tales have protection or rescue as their theme. Ho, *Diamond Sutra Narratives*, 158.

⁸⁰ I use male pronouns when referring to the protagonists of these tales because none of the tales of protection in this text involve female protagonists.

⁸¹ This is a translation of the Chinese phrase “常持金剛經” which appears with some frequency in this text.

hear the story.⁸²

A straightforward example of a protection story is the thirteenth tale in *Collected Anomalies*, which follows the novice monk Daoyin 沙彌道蔭, who invokes the *Sūtra* to protect himself from being devoured by a tiger:⁸³

石首縣有沙彌道蔭，常持念金剛經。寶曆初因他出夜歸，中路忽遇虎，吼擲而前。沙彌知不免，乃閉目而坐，但默念經，心期救護。虎遂伏草守之。及曙村人來往虎乃去。視其蹲處，涎流於地。

In Shishou county [in modern Jingzhou, Hubei] there was the novice monk Daoyin,¹ who always upheld and recited the *Diamond Sūtra*. At the beginning of the Baoli era [825–827], he went out at night, and as he was returning, he suddenly saw a tiger in the road, which roared and lunged forward. The novice knew there was no escape, so he closed his eyes and sat down. He just silently recited the *Sūtra* and hoped in his heart for rescue. The tiger then leaned over across the grass and guarded him. At dawn, when the villagers started coming and going [along the road], the tiger left. [Daoyin] looked at the spot where he had sat, and [the tiger's] saliva had flooded the ground.

This tale follows a motif common in biographies of eminent monks, which often record cases of monks taming wild animals, most often tigers or snakes. Such stories are not exclusive to Buddhism, but are also found in Daoist literature. These animals were among the most common threats to the lives of ascetics, especially those who dwelt in remote monasteries, so taming them served as “a way for both religious traditions to display their power.”⁸⁴ The normally-vicious tiger or snake's miraculously docile behavior serves to demonstrate the

⁸²These last two elements are not unique to the protection tales and are also quite common in the return from death tales.

⁸³ X87.1630: 469c12–16.

⁸⁴ From the perspective of environmental history, in Medieval China, with the increasing human population, Buddhist monks, Daoist priests, local villagers, and government administrators all faced threats from tigers and snakes. Indeed, these were the two biggest threats according to both religious and non-religious sources (appearing as the discourse of the so-called “tiger terror and snake disaster”) in medieval China, physically and psychologically. Local communities struggled with these threats. Both Buddhist and Daoist clergy attempted to help local communities overcome tiger violence and snake disaster. Taming tigers and killing snakes became crucial cultural capital for both religious traditions to show their religious power, in both reality and rhetoric. Specifically, killing snakes has a long history in Daoism. See Chen, “The Road to Redemption,” 247.

Buddhist monk's claim to spiritual attainment, which compels the animals to treat him with reverence.⁸⁵ However, in this tale the purpose of this motif is to demonstrate the spiritual power of the monk's recitation of the *Diamond Sūtra*. This shift is highlighted by the fact that the monk in this tale is a mere novice rather than an accomplished master, which serves to emphasize that the source of the spiritual power that tames the tiger comes from the *Sūtra*, not Daoyin. Once again, the *Sūtra* seems to display a kind of personhood by demonstrating its own *ling* in the manner of an eminent monk.

Most of the threats menacing *Collected Anomalies*' protagonists come from other humans. The very first tale in the text, which deals with the historical figure Zhang Qiqiu 張齊丘,⁸⁶ is a typical example:

張鑑相公先君齊丘，酷信釋氏。每旦，更新衣執經，於像前念金剛經十五遍。積數十年不懈。永泰初為朔方節度使。衙內有小將，負罪懼事露。乃扇動軍人數百定謀反叛。齊丘因衙退，於小廳閒行。忽有兵數十露刃走入。齊丘左右唯奴僕，遽奔宅門。過小廳數步，迴顧又無人。疑是鬼物。將及門，其妻女奴婢復叫呼出門云：「有兩甲士身出廳屋上。」時衙隊軍健聞變持兵亂入至小廳前。見十餘人，屹然庭中垂手張口，投兵於地。眾遂擒縛。五六人瘖不能言。餘者具首云：「欲[於]上廳忽見二甲士，長數丈，瞋目叱之。初如中惡。」齊丘聞之，因斷酒肉。張鳳翔即予門吏盧邁親姨夫，邁語予云。

Minister Duke Zhang Yi's 張鑑 deceased father, Qiqiu,⁸⁷ fervently devoted himself to Śākyamuni [Buddha]. Every morning, he would dress himself in clean clothes, uphold the [*Diamond*] *Sūtra* before a [Buddha] image, and recite the *Diamond Sūtra* fifteen times. He did so tirelessly for decades.

At the beginning of the Yongtai era [765–766], he served as military

⁸⁵ See Shinohara, "Animals in Medieval Chinese Biographies of Buddhist Monks."

⁸⁶ X87.1630: 467c20–68a8.

⁸⁷ Zhang Qiqiu 張齊丘 was a military commissioner (*jiedushi* 節度使) of Shuofang Circuit (朔方), which is headquartered in modern Yinchuan, Ningxia, during the reign of Emperor Xuanzong 唐玄宗 (r. 712–756). He was born in Kunshan 崑山, Suzhou 蘇州 Province. He is mentioned in volume 165, biography 77 of the *New Book of Tang*, under Zhang Yi 張鑑 (d. 783).

commissioner⁸⁸ of Shuofang 朔方 Circuit [modern Yinchuan, Ningxia]. Within his office⁸⁹ there was a young general who bore crimes that he feared would be revealed. So he incited several hundred soldiers to plot a rebellion. Since Qiqiu had just retired from his office, he was walking in a leisurely manner in his private quarter. Suddenly, dozens of soldiers moved in with their swords. Qiqiu, with his only servants to his left and right, rushed for the front gate. Several paces past the private quarter, he looked back and saw there was no one there. He suspected [what he had seen] were ghosts. When he was about to reach the gate, his wife, daughter, and servants called out and said, “There are two armored warriors on top of the roof of the private quarter!”

At that time, the strong military guards of the office heard of the rebellion, held their weapons, entered into the fray, and arrived before the private quarter. They saw dozens of people standing in the middle of the garden with their arms hanging limp and mouths agape, and their weapons on the ground. The assembly thereupon arrested them. Five or six of them could not speak. The rest of them said, “We suddenly saw, above the private quarter, two huge armored warriors as much as several *zhang* tall,⁹⁰ glaring and scolding at us. As such, it was so vicious [a sight].” Qiqiu heard of this and gave up alcohol and meat. Zhang Fengxian 張鳳翔 promptly gave [this story] to the gatekeeper Lu Mai’s 盧邁 close uncle, who then told me.

This tale is a representative example of the “setup-payoff” narrative structure that nearly all of Duan's human-realm tales follow: the protagonist's *Diamond Sūtra* practice is set up at the beginning as a sort of Chekov's gun, which then pays off later when the miracle occurs at the climax of the tale.⁹¹ This two-part narrative structure reflects the underlying notion of *ganying*. The stimulus of the protagonist's *Sūtra* practice functions narratively as a setup to the payoff of the miraculous response, which is brought about by means of the scripture's immense *ling*. However, this protective response is markedly different from those centered on material *ling*,

⁸⁸ *Jiedushi* 節度使; see Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles*, 143.

⁸⁹ *Ya* 衙 is an abbreviation for *yamen* 衙門, which refers to the headquarters of office of an imperial agency; see Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles*, 575.

⁹⁰ During the Tang dynasty, a *zhang* 丈 was equivalent to about 10 feet or 3 meters; see Wilkinson, *Chinese History: A New Manual*, 555.

⁹¹ Among the protection tales, the sole exception to this narrative format is the second tale, in which the protagonist Wang Mou's *Diamond Sūtra* practice is revealed to the reader after he is miraculously saved from danger—arguably to greater dramatic effect. See X87.1630: 468a9–22.

which focus on the will and autonomy of the *Sūtra* text itself. This story instead showcases the ability of the *Sūtra* to summon dharma-protecting deities (*hufashen* 護法神), who appear somewhat infrequently in *Collected Anomalies*.⁹² Such figures are commonly called upon for protection, including in military contexts, as guardians of the dharma and those who uphold it.⁹³ One such deity, Weituo 韋駄 (Sanskrit: *Skanda*), was regarded as a protector of *sūtras* and appears in some *Diamond Sūtra* miracle tales,⁹⁴ though the two featured in this tale are not identified by name. Duan's interest seems to have been more specifically in the protective ability of the *Diamond Sūtra* itself than in its ability to summon other sources of protection

Nonetheless, Zhang's tale is representative of *Collected Anomalies*' tales of protection in that it focuses on a military-affiliated protagonist. This is the most common type of protagonist in *Collected Anomalies*, with nine of the tales focusing on military men, including both officers and frontline soldiers. Military protagonists are common among *Diamond Sūtra* miracle tales in general, which suggests that the *Sūtra*'s cult may have been popular among the military during this period.⁹⁵ That a practice centered on protection would appeal to soldiers is not surprising, as the military occupation involves no small amount of risk to one's life, and military protagonists appear almost exclusively in tales of life-saving efficacy in the human realm,⁹⁶ in which their *Diamond Sūtra* practice protects them from threats such as death on the battlefield and unjust execution at the hands of a volatile superior. The military vocation necessarily entails danger to

⁹² In fact, his tale is the only clear instance of an appearance by a dharma protector in the text. A mysterious protective hand appears in tale no. 2, and an unidentified deity (神人 *shenren*) appears in tale no. 11, but the exact nature of these beings is unclear.

⁹³ See Goble's *Chinese Esoteric Buddhism* for a full explanation of how these deities were invoked by ritual masters such as Amoghavajra (不空 *Bukong*) for the purposes of warfare during the Tang.

⁹⁴ Ho, *Diamond Sutra Narratives*, 3.

⁹⁵ Yongyou notes the frequent appearance of military protagonists in *Diamond Sūtra* tales, but does not devote much attention to this trend. See Yongyou, *The Diamond Sutra in Chinese Culture*, 124. An inquiry into how popular the *Diamond Sūtra* actually was among soldiers of the Tang would require historical and archaeological research beyond the scope of this thesis, but may be fertile ground for future scholarship.

⁹⁶ The only real exception is the tale of Sun Xian.

life and limb, and these stories present the *ling* of the *Sūtra* as a last resort of protection against the various dangers that must have been common among soldiers during this time. This tale, like many others in *Collected Anomalies*, reflects a great deal of anxiety about death and emphasizes the common, unpredictable, and arbitrary nature of life and death. In response, they present the *Diamond Sūtra* as the most effective means of protection against sudden death and, by extension, the best antidote to death anxiety. Anxiety is a major theme in this text, one which I will explore fully in Chapter 3.

Means of Accessing *Ling*

Miracles in the *Collected Anomalies* are accessed through upholding, reciting, and copying the *Diamond Sūtra*. Ho compares *Diamond Sūtra* miracle tales to Guanyin tales of the Six Dynasties period, which he observes are even more overwhelmingly focused on themes of protection.⁹⁷ However, despite their similar themes, the narrative structures of these two types of tales are actually quite different. Whereas the protagonists of these Guanyin tales almost invariably call on the bodhisattva for protection in the moment of danger,⁹⁸ *Collected Anomalies*' protagonists generally do not do the same with the *Diamond Sūtra*. Rather than reciting the *Sūtra* in the moment for immediate protection, Duan's protagonists are protected by the merits they've already accumulated from having previously recited or copied it repeatedly. While a few protagonists do recite the *Sūtra* in their moments of need, all of them are established at the beginning of their tales as regular upholders of the *Sūtra*.⁹⁹

⁹⁷ Ho, *Diamond Sutra Narratives*, 156.

⁹⁸ Campany, *Signs from the Unseen Realm*, 44.

⁹⁹ One partial exception to this rule is the tale of the unnamed Left Encampment Section Leader of tale 6, who recites the title of the *Sūtra* after being captured by Tibetan horsemen. However, with all the other protagonists of the protection tales, the Section Leader stated to have recited the *Sūtra* prior to this incident. See X87.1630: 468c6–14.

This term “upholding” appears repeatedly in Kumārajīva’s translation of the *Diamond Sūtra* as the most commonly-prescribed practice, often alongside the more specific exhortation to “study and recite” it (*dusong* 讀誦).¹⁰⁰ This is the second most commonly-used term for *Diamond Sūtra* practice within *Collected Anomalies*, after “reciting” (*nian* 念), and followed by “copying” (*xie* 寫), and then “studying and reciting” (*dusong*).¹⁰¹ These terms also appear in the text of the *Sūtra* itself, which advocates doing all of these things in order to receive its benefits.¹⁰² Some examples include He Zhen’s wife 何軫妻, who recites the *Sūtra* nonstop for at least an entire night,¹⁰³ and Commander Wang Mou 虞候王某, who informs a friend that he has been reciting the scripture for years after his life is miraculously saved.¹⁰⁴ While the *Sūtra* is supremely efficacious, its benefits apparently cannot be obtained through a single recitation or by making the occasional copy here and there, but only by adopting a regular practice of “upholding” (*chi* 持) or revering the text. The *Sūtra* itself praises the great merit of upholding even as few as four lines of the text. Yet, there is a tension between *Collected Anomalies*’ main rhetorical technique, which is to emphasize the *Diamond Sūtra*’s unparalleled *ling* and ability to produce wonders, and the ultimate goal of that rhetoric, which is to persuade the reader to uphold or copy the *Sūtra* regularly and thus accumulate countless recitations. The question this raises, however, is if the *Sūtra* is so powerful, then why is a single or even a handful of recitations insufficient to produce these effects?

One might explain this discrepancy as a result of the difference in the type of cultic object at the centers of these two categories of tale. After all, the “Universal Gate” chapter of the *Lotus*

¹⁰⁰ Yongyou, *The Diamond Sutra in Chinese Culture*, 159.

¹⁰¹ *Nian* appears in fifteen tales, *chi* in eight, and *xie* in and *du(song)* in two each.

¹⁰² See Pine, *The Diamond Sutra*, 21; T8.235: 749b.

¹⁰³ X87.1630: 470a10–17.

¹⁰⁴ X87.1630: 468a9–22.

Sūtra repeatedly stresses how reliably Guanyin responds to the cries of all who call on his name even a single time,¹⁰⁵ while the *Diamond Sūtra* simply refers to the immeasurable merits of revering it without focusing on any specific results.¹⁰⁶ The difference in practice would thus be assumed to follow the prescriptions of the relevant canonical texts. However, this cannot be the whole story, simply because *Collected Anomalies*' insistence on cumulative practice is not a universal feature of *sūtra* miracle tales, or even of those specifically involving the *Diamond Sūtra*. For example, Meng's *Collected Proofs* includes the tale of Du Zhiliang 杜之亮, a bureaucrat who seems to have no experience with the *Diamond Sūtra* until he is told in a dream to recite it for protection from an impending execution.¹⁰⁷ The *Sūtras* was even sometimes carried or worn as a protective amulet, possibly by those who were not literate or otherwise incapable of recitation and copying.¹⁰⁸

What then might explain this idiosyncrasy of *Collected Anomalies*? I suspect that an answer lies, in part, in the text's preface, which contains an additional protection tale involving Duan's own father:¹⁰⁹

貞元十七年，先君自荊(一作蘄)入蜀，應韋南康辟命(南康王韋皋)。泊韋之暮年，為賊闢讒構，遂攝尉靈池縣。韋尋薨，賊闢知留後。先君舊與闢不合，聞之連夜，離縣。至城東門，闢尋有帖不令諸縣官離縣。其夕陰風及返。出郭二里，見火兩炬夾道，百步為導。初意縣吏迎候，且恠其不前，高下遠近不差。欲及縣郭方滅，及問縣吏，尚未知府帖也。時先君念金剛經，已五六年數無虛日。信乎至誠必感，有感必應。向之導火，乃經所著迹也。

In the seventeenth year of the Zhenyuan era [801], my late father¹¹⁰ left Jingzhou 荊州 [modern Jingzhou, Hubei] for Shu 蜀 [modern Sichuan] in response to Wei

¹⁰⁵ Watson, *The Lotus Sutra*, 298–306; T9.262: 53b.

¹⁰⁶ Pine, *The Diamond Sutra*, 21. T8.235: 749b.

¹⁰⁷ X87.1629: 449b24–c7

¹⁰⁸ See Ho, *Diamond Sutra Narratives*, 141 and Yongyou, *The Diamond Sutra in Chinese Culture*, 170–171.

¹⁰⁹ X87.1630: 467b21–c19.

¹¹⁰ Duan Chengshi's father was Duan Wenchang 段文昌 (773–835), a prominent official of the Tang who served as chancellor under Emperor Muzong. His biography is found in volume 167 of the *Old Book of Tang* and volume 89 of the *New Book of Tang*.

of Nankang's enlistment order (Nankang was ruled by Wei Gao).¹¹¹ During Wei's later years, [my father] was slanderously accused by the traitor [Liu] Pi,¹¹² who then became Acting District Defender¹¹³ of Lingchi County 令諸縣 [modern Jianyang, Sichuan]. When Wei died, the traitor Pi became Capital Liaison Representative.¹¹⁴ My late father and Pi had not gotten along in the past, so he left the county the very night he heard this news.

Upon reaching the east gate of the city, [he found that] Pi had issued a notice forbidding all county officials from leaving the county. That night, there was a cold wind, so he had to turn back. Two *li*¹¹⁵ from the outer wall, he saw two burning torches on either side of the road, leading him for a hundred paces. At first he thought they were county officials coming to meet him, but he found it strange that they never got closer, and their height and distance did not change [as he moved towards them]. When he reached the outer wall of the county, [the torches] went out, and when he asked the county officials [at the wall], [they said that] they had not heard of any prefectural¹¹⁶ notice. At this time, my late father had been reciting the *Diamond Sūtra* for five or six years without missing a day. He believed that sincerity must create a stimulus, and when there is a stimulus there must be a response. The torches which had guided him were thus traces of the *Sūtra*['s response].

I believe that this story, which Duan would certainly have heard directly from his father and which clearly inspired the writing of this text, may have served as a pattern that directly informed Duan's tellings of the other protection tales. Duan was known to have had an especially close relationship with his father,¹¹⁷ and he states later on in the preface that he took up the

¹¹¹ Wei Gao 韋皋 (745–805), or the Prince of Nankang 南康 (in modern Ganzhou 贛州, Jiangxi), served as military commissioner (*jiedushi* 節度使) of Xichuan 西川 Circuit from 785 to 805. He is mentioned in volume 140 of the *Old Book of Tang* and in volume 158 of the *New Book of Tang*.

¹¹² Liu Pi 劉闢 (d. 806) was an official who served under Wei Gao 韋皋 (745–805) in Xichuan 西川 Circuit. See story 6 for Wei Gao. After Gao's death, Liu claimed the title of military commissioner (*jiedushi* 節度使) and rebelled against Emperor Xianzong until he was defeated and executed in 806. Like Wei Gao, he is mentioned in volume 140 of the *Old Book of Tang* and in volume 158 of the *New Book of Tang*; see also van de Ven, *Warfare in Chinese History*, 163.

¹¹³ See Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles*, 564.

¹¹⁴ See Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles*, 317.

¹¹⁵ The *li* 里 was never a very precise measure in premodern China, and varied throughout the period and across regions. During the late Tang, it was generally equivalent to about 1800 feet (0.34 miles or 0.55 km). This term is sometimes translated into English as “third-miles” or simply “Chinese miles,” but I leave it untranslated throughout this text; see Wilkinson, *Chinese History: A New Manual*, 555.

¹¹⁶ See Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles*, 216.

¹¹⁷ Reed, *A Tang Miscellany*, 2 and Schafer, “Notes on Tuan Ch'eng-Shih,” 15–16.

practice of reciting and copying the *Diamond Sūtra* at his father's request.¹¹⁸ Although this would be difficult to prove with any high degree of certainty, I would suggest that Duan's devotion to his father may have influenced his framing of his human-realm tales, and furthermore that this might be a major reason that the text favors this type of tale so strongly in the first place. Since Duan himself draws a direct link between his relationships with his father and with the *Sūtra*, we have good reason to believe he may also have wanted to circulate stories that resemble the one his father experienced and which emphasize his father's particular model of piety. For Duan, the recitation of the *Sūtra* was both an efficacious means of producing miracles and an act of filial piety.

Another explanation may be drawn from an episode in one of the text's several "return from death" tales. This is a common subgenre of miracle tales which focuses on protagonists who die and then return to life after a brief period of time to tell the living of what they saw in the purgatorial realms.¹¹⁹ Within *Collected Anomalies*, the function of such tales is to demonstrate that the *Diamond Sūtra*'s power extends beyond this life and into the underworld, where recitation of the *Sūtra* is shown to be highly effective at protecting against possible punishment. This dimension of the *Sūtra*'s efficacy is dramatized in this excerpt from the tale of Sun Xian 孫咸,¹²⁰ who witnesses the following spectacle during his tour of the lower realms:

又見一人被拷覆罪福。此人常持金剛經，又好食肉。左邊有經數千軸，右邊積肉成山。以肉多將入重論，俄經堆中，有火一星飛向肉山，頃刻銷盡。此人遂履空而去。

[Sun] also witnessed a person being tortured and interrogated for his crimes and

¹¹⁸ X87.1630: 467b21–c19.

¹¹⁹ See Teiser, "The Growth of Purgatory" for a thorough examination of how this conception of purgatory developed through a synthesis of indigenous Chinese understandings of the afterlife and Indian Buddhist notions of hell (*naraka*) and the intermediate state (*antarābhava*). This specific motif of returning from death is discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

¹²⁰ X87.1630: 468a23–b18.

merits. This man always upheld the *Diamond Sūtra* but was fond of eating meat. On his left side were several thousand *sūtra* scrolls, and on the right was a mountain of meat. Because of the amount of meat, he was about to be judged harshly, when suddenly amidst the pile of scriptures, a single spark of flame flew towards the mountain of meat and instantly incinerated everything. The man then left and vanished into the air.¹²¹

Here, the specific practice of copying the *Diamond Sūtra* is shown to be dramatically efficacious for the purpose of cancelling out transgressions, and the importance of regular practice is illustrated through the clear visual metaphor of the great piles of meat and *Sūtra* pages. This anonymous man is only saved because the pile of *Sūtra* pages is larger than the pile of meat. This can be interpreted most literally as saying that he copied the *Sūtra* more times than he ate meat, or more broadly as saying that the merits of making these many copies outweigh the demerits of his meat-eating. A similar message is conveyed in the tale of the monk Weigong 惟恭 who, despite his habit of drinking and ignoring other monastic rules, achieves rebirth in a pure land by regularly reciting the *Sūtra*.¹²² The *ling* the *Sūtra* is shown in these tales to be more efficacious than observing precepts or abstaining from meat—even allowing those who revere it to essentially sidestep karmic retribution entirely—but only if the number of recitations is sufficiently high. In other words, it is better to atone for all possible misdeeds in this life, where the dharma and the *Diamond Sūtra* are accessible, rather than wait for them to bear fruit in the next, and it is impossible to know for certain how many recitations will be sufficient to avoid retribution. The

There are, however, some exceptions to this rule. Chen Zhao 陳昭, another “return from death” tale protagonist, escapes punishment for slaughtering an ox merely by telling an

¹²¹ X87.1630:468b8-10.

¹²² X87.1630: 469a19–b4.

underworld judge that he had once recited the *Sūtra* at his cousin's house.¹²³ The apparent moral leniency of this tale does seem to contradict the text's overall emphasis on regular recitation, as well as its advocacy of vegetarianism.¹²⁴ Inconsistencies such as this are reminders of the composite authorship of miracle tale texts, composed of collected tales, each of which would have come to the compiler via its own chain of "hearers, tellers, and recorders,"¹²⁵ all of whom are sure to have left their mark on the story.¹²⁶ Considering this fact of the genre, a text such as this is unlikely to be completely consistent in its perspective and internal logic. Despite its inconsistency with some other themes, Duan may have included this tale because it strengthens the central rhetorical claim of the text, which is that the *Sūtra* is so supremely efficacious that even a single recitation is enough to blot out these relatively serious crimes.

The stress that *Collected Anomalies* places on recitation and copying can be seen as a logical outgrowth of its centering of material *ling*. Notably, this text contains no references to nonverbal recitation or any sort of visualization practice, such as those common in the pure land tradition.^{127,128} This, I would argue, is a consequence of a difference in objective between these two sets of practices. The primary purpose of visualizing Amitābha or mentally recalling his name is to obtain rebirth in his pure land—a thoroughly immaterial goal, only to be achieved in the next life. In order to obtain the sort of material results described in this text, such as

¹²³ X87.1630: 468c15–69a18.

¹²⁴ Vegetarianism is also a common theme in miracle tales generally. See Campany, *Signs from the Unseen Realm*, 59–61 and Yongyou, *The Diamond Sutra in Chinese Culture*, 122–123. It is worth noting that, based on some of his writings about food in *Youyang zazu*, Duan seems not to have practiced vegetarianism himself. See Reed, *A Tang Miscellany*, 97.

¹²⁵ Campany, *Signs from the Unseen Realm*, 25.

¹²⁶ In many cases, miracle tale compilers will include a record of this chain at the end of the tale. Stories no. 1, 2, 5, 6, 8, 11, and 12 in *Collected Anomalies* contain at least a partial record of the tale's transmission.

¹²⁷ See Yu, "Pure Land Devotion in East Asia," which discusses both the "easy" practice of recitation and the more rigorous and ascetic practices of visualization and *samadhi* for rebirth in the pure land.

¹²⁸ Rebirth in the pure land may be signaled by certain material signs or omens, but these are not the goal of such practices. See Stevenson, "Death-Bed Testimonials of the Pure Land Faithful."

protection from mortal danger, the practitioner must materially “embody” the text,¹²⁹ either by copying it or reciting it out loud. As with the link between rain and the sweat of a shaman, the practice and its result must correspond to one another through the link of materiality.

Conclusion

Collected Anomalies’ central idea is the supreme *ling* of the *Diamond Sūtra*, and the text is principally concerned with demonstrating that *ling* to the reader. Duan, the text’s compiler, achieves this aim largely by emphasizing the material dimension of *ling* and the material benefits the practitioner can receive from it. Of the various potential benefits of this kind, the one to which Duan devotes the most attention is the preservation of human life, for which he advocates the practice of the *Sūtra* as the most effective form of spiritual protection. Furthermore, this *ling* can only be accessed, according to most of these tales, through repeated and sustained recitation or copying of the scripture, which embodies the text and its material dimension.

The way Duan illustrates the *Sūtra*’s *ling* seems to betray a sense of anxiety that runs throughout *Collected Anomalies*. Both the human realm and the underworld are depicted in this text as places of extreme danger, where protagonists are constantly exposed to a barrage of threats, and where the practice of the *Diamond Sūtra* is the only available protection. What might be the source of this anxiety? How does it manifest in the various tales? What role does *Diamond Sūtra* practice play in either soothing or exacerbating this anxiety? The next chapter addresses these questions by exploring this theme of anxiety and its role in this text.

¹²⁹ See Matthias Richter’s *The Embodied Text*, which explores this issue of writing as the embodiment of a literary work.

CHAPTER 3

FATE AND ANXIETY

A distinctive feature of *Collected Anomalies* is the pervasive sense of anxiety it communicates through its many tales, nearly all of which center on sudden or unforeseen calamities of various kinds.¹³⁰ While *ling* is a central concern of the miracle tale genre as a whole, the tales in this text are overwhelmingly concerned with the *Diamond Sūtra*'s efficacy towards the specific end of avoiding impending disaster. Individually, these tales might read as simply dramatic demonstrations of the *Sūtra*'s power in extreme situations, but taken as a whole, they seem to portray a world brimming with danger. This type of tale—in which the protagonist is miraculously saved in a moment of crisis—is not unique to *Collected Anomalies*, but what is unique is that nearly all other types of tale are excluded. Meng Xianzhong's *Collected Proofs* contains tales of *Sūtra* scrolls miraculously surviving fires and of animals spontaneously circumambulating those who chant the *Sūtra*, but no such tales appear in *Collected Anomalies*.¹³¹ The protagonists of *Collected Anomalies*' tales are, almost without exception, besieged by existential threats both mundane and supermundane, including wild animal attacks, shipwreck, and arrest and torture by underworld officials. These tales evince a persistent anxiety about the subject of *ming* 命, a notion deeply rooted in the Chinese worldview, which may be translated as “command,” “allotment,” “lifespan,” or “fate.” Despite the often fatalistic implications of these English terms, the idea that one's fate, though determined by heaven before birth, could be

¹³⁰ Ho also notes this sense of anxiety as an element of many *Diamond Sūtra* miracle tales, and even mentions many of the specific anxieties covered in this chapter. However, he does so only in passing and not devote much attention to this theme. See Ho, *Diamond Sutra Narratives*, 196.

¹³¹ Ho, *Diamond Sutra Narratives*, 350; X87.1629: 458b9–12 and Ho, *Diamond Sutra Narratives*, 355–356; X87.1629: 459b16–21.

affected and improved by various moral or ritual actions had already become widespread long before the Tang.¹³² According to *Collected Anomalies*, the most effective method of improving one's fate (i.e. lifespan or post-mortem destiny) and alleviating any associated anxiety is by relying on the *ling* of the *Diamond Sūtra*.

I use the term *anxiety* here with the caveat that it does not have a single, clear emic precedent in Chinese sources, though I believe that the concept itself is very much relevant to this text. The closest Chinese term found in the text of *Collected Anomalies* is *ju* 懼, which is most commonly translated as “fear” and appears frequently in a number of these tales.¹³³ My use of the term *anxiety*, draws principally on Stephen R. Bokenkamp's *Ancestors and Anxiety*, which deals with transformations in the position of ancestors in the Chinese imagination that occurred during the integration of Buddhism into the broader Chinese worldview.¹³⁴ As Bokenkamp writes, “I have frequently found that the statements I analyze express certain ‘anxieties’ concerning the fate of the dead and the threats that Buddhist notions of rebirth initially posed to traditional ancestral practice.”¹³⁵ The Daoist authors Bokenkamp studies express great anxiety over the possibility that their parents and other ancestors might be suffering in the afterlife due to some unintentional or forgotten transgressions.¹³⁶ These anxieties resonate in many ways with those expressed in *Collected Anomalies*, which are also largely concerned with death, but they differ in some key ways.

One major difference is that the anxieties Bokenkamp describes is centered on ancestors,

¹³² See Campamy, “Living off the Books.”

¹³³ The term *ju* appears in the preface, as well as tales 2, 3, 7, 14, 17, and 19. Other roughly synonymous terms found much less frequently in this text are *wei* 畏 and *pa* 怕, each of which appears only once in the preface and tale 14, respectively.

¹³⁴ Bokenkamp's use of this category likewise draws on Harold Bloom's *Anxiety of Influence*.

¹³⁵ Bokenkamp 18.

¹³⁶ Bokenkamp 3–4.

whereas *Collected Anomalies* is notably individualistic in that its protagonists copy and recite the *Diamond Sūtra* exclusively for the purpose of improving their own fates. Although the protagonists' motives for upholding the *Sūtra* are rarely stated explicitly, the result of their practice is—with at most one or two exceptions—only ever *self*-preservation, and not the benefit of ancestors, living relatives, or any other people besides the practitioners themselves.¹³⁷ Furthermore, *Collected Anomalies*' anxieties are not universally centered on “the fate of the dead” or the afterlife, but often on the more immediate concern of death in and of itself. While death anxiety and afterlife anxiety may at first sound like essentially the same thing, and indeed both are related to the core notion of *ming*, these are two distinct forms or dimensions of anxiety as expressed in this text. This chapter will explore these twin anxieties, their origins, and how they manifest in *Collected Anomalies*.

Death Anxiety

I argued in Chapter 2 that *Collected Anomalies* is concerned primarily with the *Diamond Sūtra*'s ability to protect life, which could also be phrased as a concern with avoiding death. Each of the tales examined in that chapter shows the protagonist narrowly escaping sudden death, which they for granted as something to fear and to avoid, in contrast to the attitude of equanimity towards death one might associate with prescriptive Buddhist teachings. This is distinct from anxieties about a negative afterlife or unfortunate rebirth in that death itself, rather than whatever follows, is the primary source of anxiety. Although belief in rebirth was no doubt an aspect of Duan and his sources' worldview, the subject of rebirth is not mentioned in these tales, which treat death as a mundane and worldly source of anxiety.

¹³⁷ These exceptions are the tales of Dong Jinchao 董進朝 and the Beacon Tower Guard of Fengzhou 豐州烽子, both of which are discussed in this chapter; X87.1630: 469b5–15, X87.1630: 470c16–71a6.

A clear example of this sort of death anxiety may be found in the tale of Commander

Wang Mou 虞候王某:¹³⁸

劉逸淮在汴時，韓弘為右廂虞候，王某為左廂虞候，與弘相善。或謂二人取軍情將不利於劉。劉大怒，俱召詰之。弘即劉之甥，因控地碎首大言。劉意稍解。王某年老股戰不能自辯。劉叱令拉坐，杖三十。時新造赤棒頭徑數寸，固以筋漆。拉之不什數五六當死矣。韓意其必死及昏。造其家，恠無哭聲，又謂其懼不敢哭。訪其門卒，即云：「大使無恙。」弘素與熟遂至臥內問之。王云：「我讀金剛經四十年矣。今方得力。言初被坐時，見巨手如簸箕翕然遮背。」因袒示韓，都無撻痕。韓舊不好釋氏，由此始與僧往來。日自寫十紙，乃積計數百軸矣。後在中書，盛暑有諫官因事謁見。韓方浹汗寫經。恠問之，韓乃具道王某事。予職在集仙常侍。柳公為予說。

When Liu Yihuai¹³⁹ was in Bianjing [modern Kaifeng, Henan], Han Hong¹⁴⁰ served as [Commander of] the Right Wing of the Palace Police Patrol¹⁴¹ while Wang Mou served as [Commander of] the Left Wing. He and Hong were good friends. Someone said that the two men got hold of military intelligence that would be unfavorable for Liu. Liu was furious and summoned both of them for interrogation. Hong was Liu's nephew, so he kowtowed and tried to explain, and Liu was somewhat understanding. Wang Mou was elderly; he trembled and was unable to explain himself. Liu shouted an order for him to be dragged to a seat and beaten [with a rod] thirty times. At the time, the newly-made red rod had a head a few *cun*¹⁴² in circumference and was hardened with lacquer. If [Wang Mou] were flogged with it, it would only take five or six blows to kill him! Han thought that [Wang Mou] would surely die and thus fainted.

[After Han awoke] he went to [Wang's] household, but strangely heard no weeping and said [to himself], "They must be refraining from crying out of fear (*ju* 懼)." He asked the guard at his gate, who said, "The general is in good health." Han was familiar [with Wang's family], so he naturally proceeded to [Wang's] bedroom to inquire about him. Wang replied, "I have been reading the *Diamond Sūtra* for forty years! Now I have received its power. When I was first seated, I saw a giant hand like a winnowing basket open to cover my back." He showed his back to Han and it did not have any flogging scars.

¹³⁸ X87.1630: 468a9–22.

¹³⁹ Liu Yihuai 劉逸淮 seems to be another name for Liu Xuanzuo 劉玄佐 (730–787), military governor (*jiedushi* 節度使) of Xuanwu 宣武 Circuit. This name appears in chapter 145 of the *Old Book of Tang*.

¹⁴⁰ Han Hong 韓弘 (765–823) was a general who served as chancellor during the reigns of emperors Xianzong and Muzong and is mentioned in chapter 156 of the *Old Book of Tang*.

¹⁴¹ The Palace Patrol (*yuhou* 虞候) was a military unit responsible for guarding the Heir Apparent, which was divided into left and right wings (*xiang* 廂); see Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles*, 590.

¹⁴² During the Tang dynasty, a *cun* 寸 was equivalent to about 1.18 inches or 3.03 centimeters. See Wilkinson, *Chinese History: A Manual*, 238.

Han did not previously think highly of Buddhism, but because of this, he began to interact with monks. Every day he would hand copy ten pages of [the *Diamond Sūtra*] and thus amassed several hundred scrolls. Later, while Han was in the middle of [copying] a book at the height of summer, an imperial censor contacted him, and he was sweating while copying the *Sūtra*. Puzzled, the censor asked about it, so Han told him about Wang Mou's story. My duty is collecting [stories of] the extraordinary. Liu Gong¹⁴³ told me.

The conclusion to this tale, in which Wang is miraculously saved by the merit of his *Sūtra*-copying, emphasizes the core theme of the *ling* of the *Diamond Sūtra*, but the first part of the tale showcases this element of anxiety. The protagonists not only face an obviously frightening situation, but we also see evidence of the psychological effects it has on them—Wan trembles in fear (股戰 *gu zhan*, literally “his thighs shivered”), and Han even faints. This anxiety is heightened by the fact that the protagonists are in this dire situation completely by happenstance, simply as a result of their superior hearing a spurious rumor about them.¹⁴⁴ Tang law allowed for magistrates to use torture, including flogging with this “newly-made red rod” (*xinzaο chibang* 新造赤棒) to extract confessions from the accused, though Liu resorts to this option quite hastily and without any concern about whether he will kill them in the process.¹⁴⁵ The impression given in this tale is that even the innocent have good reason to fear torture or even execution without much evidence against them. This tale, like many others in *Collected Anomalies*, reflects a great deal of anxiety about death and emphasizes the common, unpredictable, and arbitrary nature of life and death. Furthermore, it prescribes the *Diamond Sūtra* as the most effective means of protection against sudden death and thus the best antidote to

¹⁴³ This probably refers to Liu Gongquan 柳公權 (778–865), a famous calligrapher of the Tang dynasty and contemporary of Duan Chengshi. Like Duan, Liu was not only a devout Buddhist, but is also known to have engaged in devotional copying of the *Diamond Sūtra*. His biography can be found in volume 165 of the *Old Book of Tang*.

¹⁴⁴ This aspect of the tale also ties into the theme of legal injustice, which I explore in the next section.

¹⁴⁵ Although they were not always followed in practice, Tang legal codes included limits on the use of judicial torture on the grounds that a confession extracted under torture cannot necessarily be trusted. See Brook et al, *Death by a Thousand Cuts*, 46–47.

death anxiety.

However, the question remains as to why this text expresses so much anxiety about death in the first place. One reason may be the time in which it was written, which was a period of great social disorder and the beginning of institutional decline of the Tang. *Collected Anomalies* was completed in 836, placing it in the wider aftermath of the An Lushan Rebellion, which ended just over seventy years prior in 763.¹⁴⁶ The immediate impact of the rebellion had faded by then, but it was also the most destructive war which had ever occurred in China up to that time and remains proportionally one of the deadliest conflicts in human history. After the powerful general An Lushan defected and attempted to start his own imperial dynasty, the Tang empire was ravaged by warfare, and the imperial government lost much of its control over the various regional governors (節度使 *jiedushi*), many of whom capitalized on this chaos to launch rebellions of their own.¹⁴⁷ Even after these rebellions were quashed, the centralized control of the empire was a thing of the past, and the remaining loyal regional governors were often left to their own devices, and other border territories were lost altogether to invading Tibetans and Uyghurs from the west.¹⁴⁸ It is likely a result of these historical circumstances that western foreigners, and Tibetans in particular, show up occasionally in these tales.¹⁴⁹

Many of the tales in *Collected Anomalies* take place during or immediately after the rebellion¹⁵⁰ and reflect this chaotic and dangerous situation. As Figure 2 shows, the turbulent western border regions are a common setting, especially for tales about military figures, some of

¹⁴⁶ Reed, *A Tang Miscellany*, 17.

¹⁴⁷ Beckwith, *Empires of the Silk Road*, 157.

¹⁴⁸ Twitchett and Fairbank, *The Cambridge History of China, Vol. 3*, 17. See also Beckwith, *The Tibetan Empire in Central Asia*, which explores the Tibetan empire's conflict with China as well as its other neighbors to the north and west.

¹⁴⁹ Tibetans appear in tales no. 6 and 20, while a Tibetan dog (possibly a mastiff) plays a major role in tale 18. Tangut horsemen are mentioned in tale no. 20, and Kuchean musicians show up in tale no. 8.

¹⁵⁰ Tales no. 1–6, 20, and 21 all take place within twenty years of the end of the rebellion.

whom invoke the *Diamond Sūtra*'s power to save themselves from invading horsemen.¹⁵¹ The most vivid example of this is the tale of an unnamed beacon tower guard of Fengzhou, which I quote in part in Chapter 2:¹⁵²

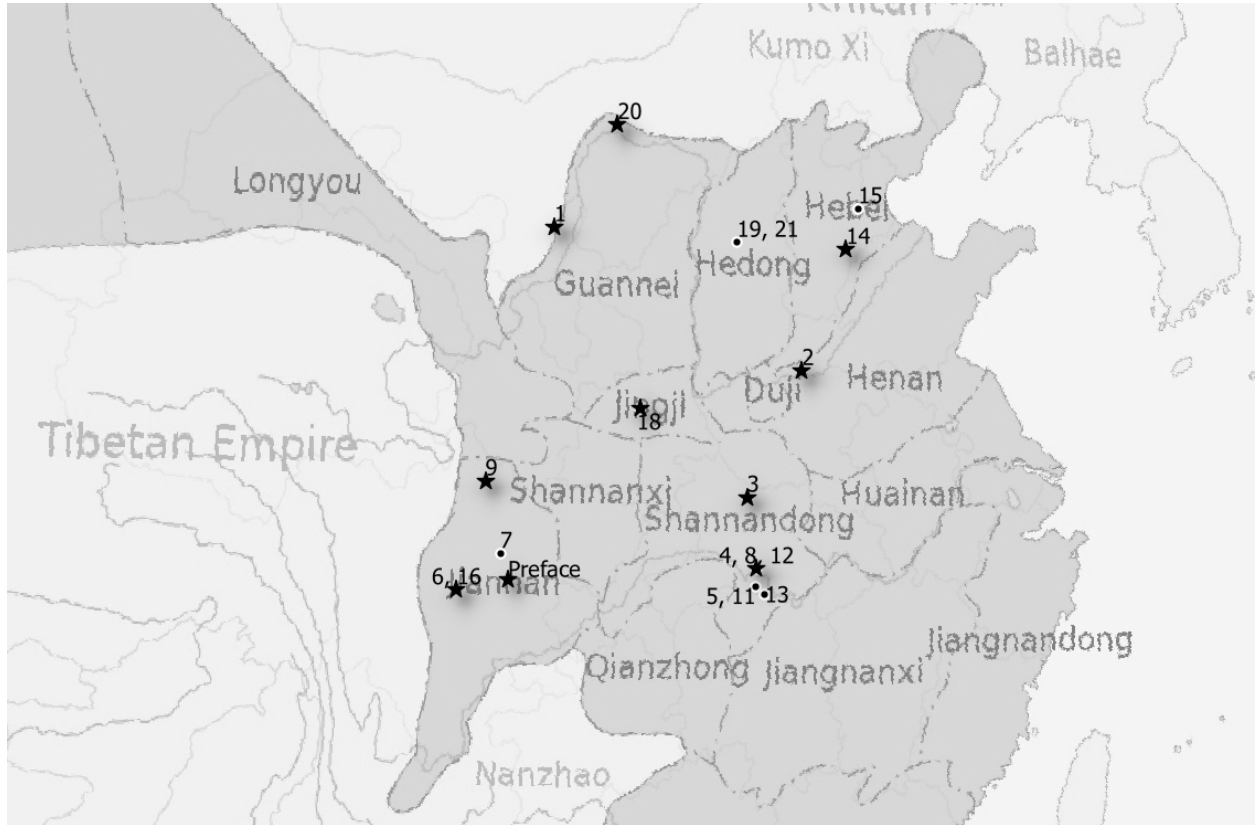


Fig. 2: A map of the tales in *Collected Anomalies* showing the borders of the Tang empire. Tales involving military figures are marked with a star (★).

永泰初，豐州烽子，暮出為党項縛，入西蕃易馬。蕃將令穴肩骨，貫以皮索。以馬數百蹄配之。經半歲，馬息一倍。蕃將賞以羊革數百，因轉近牙帳。贊普子愛其了事，遂令執纛，左右有剩肉餘酪與之。又居半年，因與酪肉悲泣不食。贊普問之，云：「有老母，頻夜夢見。」贊普頗仁，聞之悵然。夜召帳中語，云：「蕃法嚴，無放還例。我與爾馬有力者兩匹，於某道縱爾歸，無言我也。」烽子得馬極驕俱乏死。遂晝潛夜走。數日後，為刺傷足倒磧中。忽有風吹，物窸窣過其前，因攬之裹足。有頃不復痛。試起步走如故。經信宿方及豐州界。歸家，母尚存。悲喜曰：「自失爾，我唯念金剛經，寢食不廢，以祈見爾。今果其誓因。」取經拜之，縫斷亡數幅，不知其由。子因道磧中傷足事。毋令解足視之。所裹瘡物。乃數幅經也。其瘡亦

¹⁵¹ These are the tales of the The Beacon Tower Guard of Fengzhou 豐州烽子 and the Left Encampment of 500 左營伍伯; X87.1630: 468c6–14, X87.1630: 470c16–71a6.

¹⁵² X87.1630: 470c16–71a6.

愈。

At the beginning of the Yongtai era [765–766], in Fengzhou [modern Urad Qianqi, Inner Mongolia] there was a beacon guard¹⁵³ who went out at dusk and was [captured and] tied up by Tanguts¹⁵⁴ and taken to Tibet, [where] he was put in charge of horses. The Tibetan general ordered that holes be put in his shoulder bones in order to pass a leather cord through them, and he was given several hundred horses to care for. This went on for half of a year, then the number of horses doubled. The Tibetan general rewarded him with several hundred sheep and moved him closer to the capital tent. The *tsem-po*¹⁵⁵ liked how [the beacon guard] handled things and proceeded to have him carry the great banner, and when there was leftover meat or cheese, it was given to him.

He stayed there for another half of a year, and when he was given his cheese and meat he wept with grief and did not eat. The *tsem-po* asked him about this, and he said, “I have an elderly mother, whom I often dream of at night.” The *tsem-po* was quite kind, and when he heard this he was very upset. That night he summoned [the beacon guard] into his tent and said, “Tibetan law is strict: there is no precedent for returning [prisoners]. I will give you two powerful horses, and you will return [home] on a certain route and say nothing about me [having released you].” The beacon guard took the horses and rode them until they both died of exhaustion. He then hid during the day and walked at night. After several days, he collapsed on the rocky ground due to cuts on his feet. Suddenly, there was a wind blowing, and something passed in front of him with a rustling noise, so he grabbed it and wrapped his feet [using this item]. In a short while there was no more pain [in his foot]. He tried to get up and he could walk as before.

He continued for two more nights until he reached the border of Fengzhou. He returned home, and his mother was still alive. In both sadness and joy, she said, “When I lost you, I did nothing but recite the *Diamond Sūtra*, except when sleeping and eating, praying to see you [again]. Now my vow has borne its fruit.” She fetched the *Sūtra* to venerate it [and found that] the seams had broken and some pages were lost, but she did not know how. Her son then told her about hurting his feet on the rocky ground. His mother had him remove [the wrappings] from his feet to look at them, and what he had wrapped around his wounds were pages of the *Sūtra*, and his wounds were also healed.

This tale, set in the immediate aftermath of the Rebellion, reflects the dangers which

¹⁵³ The term *fengzi* 烽子 refers to a soldier whose duty was to guard a fire beacon tower (*fenghuo tai* 烽火臺).

¹⁵⁴ The Tanguts (党項 *Danxiang*) were a nomadic people who lived in the Western Xia (modern Northwest China) and were allied with the Tibetans during this period. Skaff, *Sui-Tang China and Its Turko-Mongol Neighbors*, 38.

¹⁵⁵ *Zanpu*(zi) 贊普(子) is a Chinese transliteration of the Tibetan word *tsem-po* (*btsan po*), which refers to the ruler of Tibet and is variously translated as “king” or “emperor.”

soldiers in particular would have faced during this time of unrest—namely capture, enslavement, and even mutilation at the hands of western invaders. Even decades afterwards, the lingering shadow of this chaos and mass death would surely have left an impact on Duan and his sources, at least some of whom must have lost friends and relatives in the war or its aftermath. This grim historical situation likely contributed to the sense of death anxiety that runs through these tales.

Afterlife Anxiety

Although much of *Collected Anomalies* treats death as a subject of anxiety on its own, anxieties about death cannot be completely detached from anxieties about rebirth and the afterlife. It is worth noting, for instance, that the tales centered on protection all involve protection from sudden and unnatural deaths, such as the summary execution threatening Wang Mou. While there may be plenty of reasons one might be anxious about the prospect of a premature or unexpected death, from a Buddhist perspective, a major cause of such anxiety is that this sort of death is more likely to lead to rebirth in a lower realm. Untimely death (*hengsi* 橫死), defined as one which occurs before a person has completed their naturally allotted lifespan,¹⁵⁶ is thought to result in unfortunate rebirths for two main reasons. The first reason is that the dying person will likely find it difficult or impossible to properly focus their final thoughts on enlightenment or a higher realm, which is often seen as a prerequisite for a fortunate rebirth.¹⁵⁷ A “good death,” in a Chinese Buddhist context, is one in which the dying person knows the time of his or her death in

¹⁵⁶ Hirakawa, *A Buddhist Chinese-Sanskrit Dictionary*, 670. See also Csikszentmihalyi, “Allotment and Death in Early China” for a discussion of the origins and development of this notion of allotted lifespan in Chinese religion.

¹⁵⁷ This concept is known as “right mindfulness at the moment of death” (*linzhong zhengnian* 臨終正念). According to *abidharma* literature, a dying person's thoughts in their last moments are especially karmically potent and could be the key factor in determining their next rebirth. This doctrine gave rise to a tradition of elaborate deathbed rites centered on ensuring proper mindfulness of a buddha or buddha-land at the moment of death. See Yu, “Death, Afterlife, and Rebirth in the Pure Land Tradition” and Stone, *Right Thoughts at the Last Moment*.

advance¹⁵⁸ and faces it with complete serenity and utmost piety. Although *Collected Anomalies* is largely concerned with the *Diamond Sūtra*'s power to protect life, the tale of He Zhen's wife 何軫妻 is an important exception, one which serves to show the *Sūtra*'s capacity to provide a good death, and thus a positive rebirth.¹⁵⁹

何軫鬻販為業，妻劉氏。少斷酒肉，常持金剛經。先焚香像前，願年止四十五，臨終心不亂，先知死日。至太和四年冬，四十五矣，悉捨資裝供僧，欲入歲遍別親故。何軫以為病魅，不信。至歲除日，請僧授戒。入關沐浴易衣。獨處一室趺坐，高聲念經。及辨色悄然，兒女排室入看之，已卒。頂熱灼手。軫以僧禮葬。塔在荊州北郭。

He Zhen worked as a peddler, and his wife was surnamed Liu.¹⁶⁰ She abstained from meat and alcohol from a young age and always upheld the *Diamond Sūtra*. She had previously burned incense before a [buddha] image and then prayed for the years [of her life] to end at forty-five, that at the moment of death her mind would not be confused, and that she would foreknow the day of her death. In the winter of the fourth year of the Taihe era [830], [she turned] forty-five, so she gave away her entire dowry¹⁶¹ to offer to the sangha, and as she had wished, on entering into the next year, she bid farewell to all of her relatives and friends. He Zhen thought her illness was bewildering her and so he did not believe her.

On New Year's Eve, she requested that the monks confer [monastic or novitiate] precepts onto her. She went into a solitary retreat, bathed and changed clothes. She stayed alone in a room, sat in a lotus position and recited the *Sūtra* loudly. When dawn arrived, it was very quiet, and her children lined up at the entrance of the room to see her. She had already died. The crown of her head was so hot that it burned the hand.¹⁶² Zhen arranged for her to be buried as a monastic, and her stupa is located at the northern wall of Jingzhou.

¹⁵⁸ This is thought to be a good omen and a sign of the person's spiritual accomplishments. See Stone, *Right Thoughts at the Last Moment*, 129–132.

¹⁵⁹ X87.1630: 470a10–17.

¹⁶⁰ In premodern China, women were not usually identified by personal names outside of their families. Married women were usually identified by their husband's family name followed by a gendered indicative (e.g. 何妻 *He Qi* “Wife He”) or, more formally, by their own family name (*shi* 氏; e.g. 劉氏 *Liu Shi* “[Woman of the] Liu Clan”). See Wilkinson, *Chinese History: A Manual*, 101.

¹⁶¹ In premodern China, a dowry might consist of money, jewelry (as indicated by the term *zizhuang* 資裝, lit. “money and adornments”), land, or other property and was the only means by which a daughter could receive inheritance. A bride's dowry was kept separate from the property of her husband and could be sold at her discretion. See Lü, “Bridal Dowry Land and the Economic Status of Women.”

¹⁶² According to Chinese Buddhist interpretations of *abhidharma*, the location where the vital energy leaves a body—i.e the last place where warmth can be felt—indicates the next rebirth of the deceased person, with higher and lower realms corresponding to upper and lower parts of the body. One whose warmth is last felt in the crown of the head will be reborn in a holy path, such as a Pure Land. See Yu, “Death, Afterlife, and Rebirth in the Pure Land Tradition,” 70.

This tale demonstrates that, while the practice of revering the *Diamond Sūtra* may be quite effective for the purpose of avoiding death, death cannot be put off indefinitely. When the time comes to prepare for death, one should continue to rely on the power of the *Sūtra* to ensure a good death and avoid an unfortunate rebirth. As with most of the tales discussed in the previous chapter, this tale emphasizes the importance of persistent, cumulative recitation (*nian*) and copying (*xie*) of the *Sūtra*. Mrs. He not only recites the *Sūtra* nonstop for at least an entire night, she had also, just like Wang Mou, been reciting it for years up to that point. This emphasis on the salvific necessity of cumulative practice may be contrasted with the rhetoric of “buddha-mindfulness” (*nianfo* 念佛), which has tended instead to emphasize the possibility of securing rebirth in Amitābha's pure land through a mere ten recitations of his name.¹⁶³ To be sure, *nianfo* and other pure land practices have also often involved their own share of anxiety and a focus on cumulative recitation, as evidenced by the existence of elaborate deathbed rituals intended to insure rebirth in the pure land, as well as a long Chinese Buddhist tradition of reciting Amitābha's name astronomical numbers of times.¹⁶⁴ Nonetheless, ten recitations of the name is still generally considered sufficient for salvation, if only at the lowest grade of rebirth and perhaps only if performed with perfect concentration at the very moment of death.¹⁶⁵ No such parallel notion of a “minimum quota” of *Diamond Sūtra* recitations is brought up in *Collected Anomalies*, which seems to insist that more is always better and that no amount will ever be completely sufficient.

¹⁶³ Stevenson, “The Ties That Bind,” 172.

¹⁶⁴ The pure land master Daochuo 道綽, for instance, is said to have recited Amitābha's name ten to fifteen thousand times per day. These numbers are likely exaggerated, but this claim speaks to the fact that the inconsequential time commitment involved in a single recitation of a buddha's name has historically lent itself to this sort of cumulative practice. The same is true, if to a lesser degree, of short *sūtras* like the *Diamond Sūtra*. See Pas, *Visions of Sukhāvātī*, 93.

¹⁶⁵ Stevenson, “The Ties That Bind,” 172.

This brings us to the other major reason to fear an unexpected death, which has nothing to do with the dying person's final moments and everything to do with the life leading up to them. Beyond the fear of dying without proper concentration, one must also be concerned about the possibility of dying without having the chance to accumulate sufficient merit to avoid postmortem karmic retribution, especially rebirth in a hell realm. As demonstrated in the case of the twin mountains of meat and *sūtra* pages from the tale of Sun Xian quoted in the previous chapter, it is best to recite or copy the *Diamond Sūtra* as many times as possible simply because this is a more secure karmic "bet." This anxiety is further exacerbated by the possibility that one might already committed some moral transgression in a previous lifetime that would merit such a rebirth, so even those who have lived morally-upright lives cannot rest easy. Since there is no limit to the number or severity of possible sins, there is also no way of knowing how much merit-making will be necessary to prevent disaster in the next life. This anxiety in particular resonates with the afterlife anxieties described by Bokenkamp. Bokenkamp cites one author, the Daoist ritualist Lu Xiujing 陸修靜 (406–477), who worries that his parents might have fallen into hell and speculates as to why this might have happened. "Perhaps, wanting only abundance for me, they thoughtlessly became covetous and extravagant," he wonders. "Perhaps they became of no account,¹⁶⁶ going against both heaven and earth and harming others. [...] Now they have fallen into the three paths and suffer the myriad hardships [of hell]."¹⁶⁷ Likewise, Teiser observes that the incorporation of Indian Buddhist ideas like karma and hell intensified anxieties about death and immortality which had already existed in China by reinforcing and codifying ill-defined indigenous notions of divine surveillance and otherworldly bureaucracy

¹⁶⁶ In other words, Lu fears his parents may have transgressed out of negligence and a desire to provide for him.

¹⁶⁷ Bokenkamp, *Ancestors and Anxiety*, 3.

into a frightening vision of postmortem judgment and torture.¹⁶⁸

Many of Duan's underworld tales deal with this moral dimension of death anxiety, although these are largely self-directed as well. This excerpt from the tale of Gao She, a clerk called to the underworld to answer for the slaughter of a sheep, is a clear example:¹⁶⁹

當案者似崔行信郎中，判云：「付司對。」復引出至一處，數百人露坐與豬羊雜處。領至一人前，乃涉妹婿杜則也，逆謂涉曰：「君初得書乎時，作新人局，遣某買羊四口。記得否？今被相債，備嘗苦毒。」涉遽云：「爾時祇使市肉，非羊也。」則遂無言。因見羊人立齧則，逡巡被領他去。倏忽又見一處，露架方梁，梁上釘大鐵環。有數百人，皆持刀以繩繫人頭，牽入環中，剗剔之。涉懼走出，但念金剛經。倏忽逢舊相識楊演云：「李說尚書時，杖殺賊李英道為劫賊事。已於諸處受生三十年。今却訴前事。君常記得否？」涉辭以年幼不省。又遇舊典段怡先與涉為義兄弟。逢涉云：「先念金剛經，莫廢忘否？向來所見未是極苦處。勉樹善業。今得還乃經之力。」因送至家，如夢。死已經宿，向所拓處數日青腫。

The one in charge of the case, who resembled Director¹⁷⁰ Cui Xingxin,¹⁷¹ decreed, "Hand [Gao She] over to the officials to testify." Again, he was led out to an area where several hundred people sat in the open air alongside pigs and sheep.

He was brought before a man, and it was She's brother-in-law Du Ze, who greeted She and said, "When you first received the books [i.e. became a clerk], you threw a newcomer's [welcome] party and sent someone to buy four sheep. Do you remember? Now I am implicated in this [karmic] debt¹⁷² and am experiencing bitter suffering." [Gao] She then said, "At that time, you were only sent to the market for meat, not sheep." [Du] Ze then had nothing to say. He then saw a sheep stand up like a man and bite Ze, and immediately he was led away somewhere else. Suddenly he saw another place, with open racks and square columns, and on the columns were nailed great iron rings. There were several hundred people, all holding knives and using rope to tie people to the rings, cut them open, and butcher them. [Gao] She was afraid (*ju*) and ran out and did nothing but recite the *Diamond Sūtra*.

¹⁶⁸ Teiser, *The Scripture on the Ten Kings*, 15.

¹⁶⁹ X87.1630: 470b20–c15.

¹⁷⁰ See Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles*, 301.

¹⁷¹ I have not found other sources that mention Cui Xinxin 崔行信. Based on the context, which assumes familiarity with him and his appearance, he would assume he was a prominent official around the time that this tale was written.

¹⁷² In Chinese Buddhist texts, past karmic transgressions are often described as lingering debts (*zhai* 債) that must be repaid through retribution or penance; see Soothill, *A Dictionary of Chinese Buddhist Terms*, 348.

Suddenly, he ran into his old acquaintance Yang Yan, who said, “In Director¹⁷³ Li Shuo's¹⁷⁴ time, they flogged the traitor Li Yingdao¹⁷⁵ to death for banditry. Now that I tell of these past events, do you remember them?” [Gao] She stated that because of his youth he was unaware [of these things]. He also met an old [friend], the clerk Duan Yixian, whom She considered to be like an adopted younger brother. Meeting She, he said, “You used to recite the *Diamond Sūtra*. Might you have abandoned or forgotten it? That which you have previously seen is not the place of the most extreme suffering. Make an effort to cultivate good karma. You are now able to return [to the human realm] due to the power of the *Sūtra*.” He was then delivered home, as if in a dream. He had been dead for a night, and the spot where he had been pushed was bruised and swollen for several days.

As with so many miracle tales, both in *Collected Anomalies* and in other compilations, the central moral concern is animal welfare.¹⁷⁶ However, in keeping with the text's focus on *ling*, the recitation of the *Diamond Sūtra* is depicted as a means to overcome the negative karma of harming animals. The anxiety communicated by this tale, for which the *Sūtra* is prescribed, is similar to that expressed by Lu Xiuqing in so far this tale is concerned with both moral laxity and its karmic consequences. Although Gao is worried about his own post-mortem fate and Lu with that of his parents, both passages express anxiety at the prospect of falling into hell for a mistake made in ignorance or carelessness. As Bokenkamp points out, such anxieties are largely the result of a widespread acceptance on the part of the Chinese populace of many aspects of the Buddhist worldview, namely rebirth and karmic retribution.¹⁷⁷ While Buddhist miracle tale authors such as Duan made use of many concepts indigenous to Chinese religion, it is also significant that these sorts of tales, set in a Buddhist-inflected underworld governed by the law of

¹⁷³ See Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles*, 411, 524.

¹⁷⁴ Li Shuo 李說 (740–c.800) was a minor official of the Tang dynasty and the son of Li Yu 李遇 (d. 791), Vice Censor-in-Chief under Emperor Xuanzong. Li Shuo served as military governor of Hedong Circuit 河東, which was headquartered at Taiyuan. He is mentioned in chapter 146 of the *Old Book of Tang*.

¹⁷⁵ I have not found any references to this Li Yingdao 李英道 in other sources.

¹⁷⁶ See Campany, *Signs from the Unseen Realm*, 59-60. Three tales in *Collected Anomalies* mention that the protagonist gave up drinking alcohol and eating meat after their miraculous experience.

¹⁷⁷ See Teiser's *Scripture on the Ten Kings* for a full discussion of how these concepts were synthesized with indigenous Chinese beliefs about the afterlife.

karma, would not have been intelligible to a wide audience had these ideas not already been adopted and synthesized by Chinese laypeople, Buddhist and non-Buddhist alike.

The key distinction between the Daoist Lu and the Buddhist Duan is not the source of their anxieties or any particular divergence in their worldviews, but rather how they seek to ameliorate the anxieties they express. Lu's solution is a penitential ritual called the "Retreat of Mud and Ash," whereas Duan's tale demonstrates the *ling* of the *Diamond Sūtra* towards the same purpose. However, tales such as this one should inspire us to broaden our understanding of the significance of this notion of *ling*. It is helpful here to conceive of *ling* not only as efficacy towards practical ends, such as saving oneself or one's parents from hell, but also towards psychological ends—i.e. as a way of resolving the anxieties surrounding these practical concerns. This is to say that, on one level, Duan and other participants in the cult of the *Diamond Sūtra* recited and copied this scripture in order to protect themselves from sudden death and to prevent rebirth in a hell realm. On another level, we can also say that they did this for the purpose of assuaging their anxieties, particularly those concerning death. Anxieties surrounding death are found in probably every culture, and in a medieval Chinese context, such anxieties often center around a cluster of concerns involving the afterlife. One of these is the possibility that the dead, especially those who died violently or who have become involved in some trouble in the afterworld, might return to haunt the living.¹⁷⁸

Another obvious source of death anxiety is the hell realms, which looms large over *Collected Anomalies* and was a widely-accepted aspect of the Chinese imaginary shared across religious traditions. Vivid depictions of the torments of hell, based partially on the actual torments used by the imperial government, were used to inspire both piety and fear among the

¹⁷⁸ See Chapter 2 of Bokenkamp, *Ancestors and Anxiety*.

populace at large, “who lived in near-constant fear of becoming bodies in pain and dissolution.”¹⁷⁹ Teiser records that one such painting inspired such terror in the mind of the Jingai 靜藹 (534–578) in his youth that it inspired his immediate resolution to become a monk.¹⁸⁰ We can see such responses to death anxiety in *Collected Anomalies*, such as in the postscript to the tale of Wang Mou, which tells us that after seeing the *Sūtra*’s life-saving effects first-hand, Han began copying ten scrolls of the scripture each day until he had amassed several hundred such scrolls.¹⁸¹ We can also see this in the tales of Sun Xian—whom we are told “exhausted his family’s wealth by copying the *Diamond Sūtra*” after visiting hell¹⁸²—and Duan’s own father, who apparently made a habit of reciting the *Sūtra* well into the night until he fell asleep.¹⁸³

In the process of arguing for the efficacy of *Diamond Sūtra* recitation as a superior practice, Duan’s text constructs an atmosphere of pervasive anxiety, against which it positions this practice as its antidote. Although we cannot read these men’s minds, in light of the nature of the experiences that led them to adopt these practices, it is possible to understand their obsessive copying and recitation as not merely pious behavior but *anxious* behavior.¹⁸⁴ While those issues might be debatable, what seems clear is that Duan, his sources, and many of their contemporaries practiced these pieties both to produce miraculous responses and to quell their own anxieties about death, the afterlife, and their moral standing.

¹⁷⁹ Brook, *Death by a Thousand Cuts*, 124.

¹⁸⁰ Teiser, “Having Once Died and Returned to Life,” 437.

¹⁸¹ X87.1630: 468a9–22.

¹⁸² X87.1630:468b15.

¹⁸³ X87.1630:467c9

¹⁸⁴ A reductive, perhaps quasi-Freudian interpretation might describe these behaviors as *neurotic*, but that is not what I am suggesting. I do not think that anxiety is always the motivation behind piety, but the two are also not mutually exclusive, and in this case they seem to be mutually reinforcing.

Conclusion

Collected Anomalies' central idea is the supreme *ling* of the *Diamond Sūtra*, and one of the major applications of its *ling* is the possibility of changing one's fate (*ming*)—a goal which stems from anxiety surrounding death and the afterlife. While both of these concepts seem to have been major concerns of Duan in particular, there is also evidence that they were of some importance to the broader Buddhist community that produced the individual tales. The historical circumstances of the aftermath of An Lushan's rebellion, invasion of ethnic groups from beyond the northwestern border, along with a cluster of widely-held Buddhist ideas about rebirth and hell, likely contributed to this overwhelming sense of anxiety, as well as a recurring theme of foreignness in the text. These factors may also have contributed to *Collected Anomalies*' concern with injustice, and the repeated subversion of injustice is one of the most important ways in which the *ling* of the *Sūtra* is demonstrated. The next chapter will examine how this theme is developed through Duan's treatment of bureaucracy and the strange.

CHAPTER 4

(IN)JUSTICE AND THE (OTHER)WORLDLY

One of the major sources of anxiety in *Collected Anomalies* is the threat of injustice. Although the term *yuan* 冤 (“injustice”) only appears in two tales, the concept itself is of central importance to a large portion of the tales.¹⁸⁵ The especially at the hands of the earthly bureaucracy of Tang China, which is consistently depicted as arbitrary and corrupt in its operations. Authority figures, such as the General Liu who attempted to flog Wang Mou to death, are rather consistently depicted as hot-tempered, rash, and self-interested. Generals and officials deal out death to those beneath them to cover up their own wrongdoings or merely on a whim. *Collected Anomalies* is at pains to show that injustice is an ever-present danger in the human realm, and the practice of the *Diamond Sūtra* is often the only protection against being unjustly killed or otherwise persecuted by earthly authorities.

Injustice, however, is something of a problem from the perspective of Buddhism, since strict application of the doctrine of karma does not allow for injustice in the grand scheme of things, since all wrongs are ultimately righted through the workings of the unseen world. What looks like injustice only appears to be such from the limited perspective of a single human life.¹⁸⁶ However, this explanation is not necessarily comforting to most laypeople, including the educated elite like Duan and, who still would have had practical reasons to worry about falling victim to injustice, or at least what looks like injustice from their perspective. Duan, like many miracle tale authors, does not raise these issues, as they are ultimately irrelevant to his purposes.

¹⁸⁵This term appears in tales no. 18 and 21. See Table 3 in Appendix B for a full list of tales centered on injustice.

¹⁸⁶ See Bronkhorst, *Karma*, 76-88.

These tales further sidestep this issue by having these potential injustices thwarted dramatically at their climaxes. Instead of comforting readers by assuring them that all apparent injustices are merely the workings of karma, the comfort these tales offer is the *Diamond Sutra* itself, which it shows to be a supremely effective method of protection against injustice.

Worldly Injustice

In many of *Collected Anomalies* tales of protection, the *Sūtra*'s responses do not merely save potential victims from harm, but conspicuously interrupt the execution of their unjust sentences. The mysterious hand protecting Wang Mou's back, quoted in Chapter 2, is one example of such a response. Another example can be found in the tale of the commoner Zhao An, who's unjust torture is thwarted in a similar manner to Wang Mou's:¹⁸⁷

郭司空離蜀之年，有百姓趙安，常念金剛經。因行野外，見衣一襖遺墓側。安以無主，遂持還。至家言於妻子。隣人即告官趙盜物，捕送縣賊曹。怒其不承認，以大關挾脛，折三段。後令杖脊，杖下輒折。吏意其有他術問之，唯念金剛經。及申郭，郭亦異之，判放。及歸其妻云：「某日聞君經函中震裂數聲，懼不敢發。」安乃馳視之，帶斷、軸折、紙盡破裂。安今見在。

In the year that Minister of Works Guo [Zhao] left Shu [modern Sichuan],¹⁸⁸ there was the commoner Zhao An, who often recited the *Diamond Sūtra*. As he was going through the countryside, he saw a simple garment left beside a grave. An, assuming it did not have an owner, proceeded to pick it up to take back with him. When he arrived back home, he told his wife and children [about this]. His neighbor [who found out] immediately told the authorities that Zhao stole the item, and he was arrested and taken to [the official in charge of] the county bureau of crime.¹⁸⁹ [The official] was angry that he did not confess and used a large vice (*daguan*) to crush his shins, but this broke into three pieces. After this, he was ordered to be flogged on his back, but the cane broke as soon as it was brought

¹⁸⁷ X87.1630: 470b1–8.

¹⁸⁸ This refers to the year in which Guo Zhao gave up his position as military governor of Xichuan Circuit, an event recorded in chapter 120 of the *Old Book of Tang* as having occurred in the fourth year of the Taihe era (830). This is corroborated by the *Taiping guangji*'s version of this tale, which includes an interpolation specifying that it occurred in 830.

¹⁸⁹ *Zeicao* 賊曹 literally means “bureau of crime” or police section but, based on this context, it is possible that the term is being used metonymically to refer to the official in charge of such a bureau. See Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles*, 521.

down [on him].

The officials thought he had some special technique and asked him about it, to which he replied that he recited the *Diamond Sūtra*. They reported this to Guo, and Guo also found this strange and ordered for him to be released. Upon his return, his wife said, “One day, I heard the sound of several cracks coming from your *sūtra* box, but out of fear (*ju*) I did not dare to open it. An then hurried to look at it, [and found that] the cord [closing the *sūtra* box] had snapped, the spool was broken, and the paper was completely torn up. An is still seen [alive] today.

Like Wang Mou, Zhao An is hastily accused of grave robbing and nearly tortured as a result. The officials attempt to extract a confession by employing both of the two most common methods of torture allowed by the Tang legal code: the ankle press (*jiagun* 夾棍 or *daguan* 大關) and the interrogation baton (*xunzhang* 訊杖). Flogging with a baton was the most common such method, as evidenced by its appearance in the tale of Wang Mou, but the use of the ankle press was limited only to those accused of serious crimes, such as murder and armed robbery.¹⁹⁰ However, as in that tale, torture is deployed hastily and with little consideration or evidence. Also like Wang Mou’s, Zhao An’s rescue comes in the form of a dramatic interruption of this unjust punishment—in this case via the miraculous destruction of the instruments of torture. In both cases, the protagonist’s rescue is not only undeniably supernormal in nature, but also an act of direct confrontation with the persecutors. The *Diamond Sūtra*’s power does not simply whisk Wang Mou and Zhao An away to safety; it physically obstructs these injustices as they are occurring, either by breaking the flogging rod or blocking its blows by force. In the context of a worldview defined by a sympathetically resonant (*ganying*) cosmos—one which responds miraculously to human devotion and virtue—these miraculous confrontations may be interpreted as testaments to the innocence of the protagonists and the unjust nature of their punishment.

The *Sūtra*’s power goes beyond merely protecting against injustices to actively

¹⁹⁰ Brook et al, *Death by a Thousand Cuts*, 43.

subverting it and subtly condemning them. In this case, as in the tales of the beacon tower guard and Wang Mian, we see the *Sūtra* manifesting materially and displaying a sort of autonomy, in this case by bearing a physical punishment on behalf of the persecuted protagonist. In these cases, the *Sūtra*'s presence and the evidence of physical damage it bears serve as a supernormal witness to the protagonists' virtue.

Is this portrayal of the Tang government a result of Duan's own perspective on these institutions and to what extent might it be something that was simply in the air during this period in Tang China? It is important to consider once again the effects of the An Lushan rebellion. Although corruption, sedition, and internal strife were always potential issues within the bureaucratic apparatus of the Tang empire, such issues were greatly exacerbated during this period due to this disordered and arbitrary government which struggled to control its peripheries. Considering this fact, many of Duan's sources would likely have been concerned with widespread injustice within the bureaucracy and might have found solace in the justice of the unseen world and the supreme *ling* of the *Diamond Sūtra*. As Denis Twitchett explains, "the central government, which had barely survived the rebellion, was forced to delegate a great measure of responsibility to the provinces," whose regional governors could rule however they liked, with little oversight from the imperial capital.¹⁹¹ However, there is also evidence that the issue of bureaucratic¹⁹² injustice was of a personal concern to Duan.

As mentioned in Chapter 2, *Collected Anomalies*' preface contains a tale describing Duan's father's escape from persecution by the corrupt general Liu Pi 劉闢, accomplished with

¹⁹¹ Twitchett, *The Cambridge History of China*, Vol. 3, 574.

¹⁹² Liu Pi 劉闢 (d. 806) was an official who served under Wei Gao 韋皋 (745-805) in Xichuan 西川 Circuit. See story 6 for Wei Gao. After Gao's death, Liu claimed the title of military commissioner (*jiedushi* 節度使) and rebelled against Emperor Xianzong until he was defeated and executed in 806. Like Wei Gao, he is mentioned in volume 140 of the *Old Book of Tang* and in volume 158 of the *New Book of Tang*; see also Hans van de Ven, *Warfare in Chinese History*, 163. Liu Pi also appears in the underworld in tale no. 7.

supernormal aid summoned by his devotion to the *Diamond Sūtra*. In recounting his father's story, Duan places particular emphasis on Liu's treachery and injustice.¹⁹³

後闢逆節漸露，詔以袁公滋為節度使。成式再從叔少從軍，知左營事，懼及禍。與監軍定計以蠟丸帛書通謀於袁。事旋發，悉為魚肉，賊謂先君知其謀。

Later on, Pi's seditious intent was gradually exposed, so by imperial decree, Mr. Yuan Zi¹⁹⁴ was made military commissioner.¹⁹⁵ A distant uncle of mine, who had served in the army since his youth, knew about matters in the Left Encampment¹⁹⁶ [related to Liu Pi's sedition] and was afraid (*ju*) that disaster would reach him. He and the Army Supervisor¹⁹⁷ made a plan to use wax balls with messages written on silk [concealed inside] to tell Yuan [about Liu Pi's plan]. This affair was immediately exposed, so they were all put on the chopping block,¹⁹⁸ and the traitors said that my late father knew of the plan.

Based on lines such as these, particularly in the context of this clearly formative tale dealing with Duan's dear father escaping unjust treatment, it seems reasonable to conclude that *Collected Anomalies*' concern with bureaucratic injustice reflects his personal feelings. It is relevant that Duan never held any official position himself, preferring to occupy his time with writing as he followed his father around to his father's various official posts.¹⁹⁹ Duan seems to have belonged to a tradition of the literatus who shuns the bureaucracy to pursue his own interests, as "the worthy gentleman who does not achieve success but instead disdains

¹⁹³ X87.1630: 467b21–c19.

¹⁹⁴ Yuan Zi 袁滋 (739–818) was an official and general who served in various positions under Emperors Dezong, Shunzong, and Xianzong. After Liu Pi began his rebellion in 805, Emperor Xianzong sent Yuan to convince him to surrender. When this failed, Yuan was appointed military commissioner of Xichuan, but he did not dare to advance on Liu, and as a result he was soon demoted to prefect of Ji Prefecture 吉州 (modern Ji'an, Jiangxi). He is mentioned in chapter 185 of the *Old Book of Tang*, chapter 151 of the *New Book of Tang*, and chapters 235, 236, and 239 of the *Zizhi tongjian*.

¹⁹⁵ *Jiedushi* 節度使; see Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles*, 143.

¹⁹⁶ This term refers to the Militant-as-Dragons Army (*longwu jun* 龍武軍), which was divided into Left and Right Encampments (*ying* 營); see Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles*, 325.

¹⁹⁷ See Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles*, 147.

¹⁹⁸ The Chinese idiom 為魚肉 literally means "to treat like fish meat," so here I have translated it with the similar English idiom "to put on the chopping block," which has roughly the same meaning.

¹⁹⁹ Reed, *Chinese Chronicles of the Strange*, 2 and Reed, *A Tang Miscellany*, 23

competition for power and prestige as an inferior mode of life.”²⁰⁰ His view of the bureaucracy would have been informed by his position as a person very close to it, yet still outside of and possibly disdainful of it.

Otherworldly Justice

The consistent injustice of the earthly bureaucracy as depicted in *Collected Anomalies* may contrasted with the justice of the underworld bureaucracy, which is nearly as consistent. Eight of the tales follow the “return from death” motif, in which the protagonist dies and then returns to life after a brief period—usually a few days—to tell the living of what they saw in the purgatorial realms.²⁰¹ This narrative motif is, perhaps unsurprisingly, quite common in Buddhist miracle tales, as it allows for vivid descriptions of the gruesome punishments awaiting those who do not follow Buddhist teachings. The task of meting out these various punishments is typically shown to be the responsibility of a vast underworld bureaucracy (*mingsi* 冥司)²⁰²—an otherworldly justice system whose functionaries often guide the protagonists along in their journeys to purgatory and back.

The presence of such figures in this text is representative of a broader pattern in Chinese Buddhism—and, indeed, Chinese religion in general—of imagining both the hell realms (*diyu* 地

²⁰⁰ Zeitlin, *Historian of the Strange*, 66.

²⁰¹ The English phrase “return from death” was coined by Campany, but the motif itself, which corresponds roughly to the indigenous category of the “returned soul” (還魂 *huanhun*), had been identified previously by scholars such as Teiser and Gjerston. See Campany, “To Hell and Back,” Gjerston, “The Early Chinese Buddhist Miracle Tale,” 299, and Teiser, “Having Once Died and Returned to Life.” This motif is not unique to China, as evidenced by the large body of Tibetan literature on *délok* (‘*das log*, “passed away and returned”), or people who have returned from death. For an introduction to this category, see Cuevas, “The Death and Return of Lady Wangzin.” For a full exploration of this literature, see Cuevas, *Travels in the Netherworld*.

²⁰² The character *ming* 冥 has a number of related meanings, including “underworld,” “dark,” “obscure,” “profound,” and “hidden,” whereas *si* 司 can refer to a bureaucratic department or an officer of such a department. Although I have generally translated the phrase *mingsi* as “underworld bureaucracy,” it could also be rendered as “unseen officials,” or a number of other options.

獄) and intermediate state between rebirths (*zhongyou* 中有) in increasingly bureaucratic terms, replete with judges and other officials managing the destinies of recently deceased. Death itself is imagined as an arrest by otherworldly officials, who come to take the deceased into custody once their allotted lifespan has been exhausted, and these near-death experiences are sometimes explained as the revived person being called to the underworld to testify in a court case.²⁰³ This view of the afterlife is the product of a synthesis of notions of karma and postmortem judgment drawn from Indian Buddhism with local Chinese concepts of an otherworld government mirroring the earthly one. *Collected Anomalies*' view of this underworld bureaucracy is generally consistent with other Chinese Buddhist texts, which depict its functionaries as faultless bodhisattvas, in accordance with prescriptive teachings on the inescapability of karma.²⁰⁴ Many tales serve as reminders that wrongs committed in the human realm will produce consequences in the underworld. This is perhaps illustrated most vividly in the case of Liu Pi, the treasonous general who persecuted Duan's father, who later appears in the underworld in the tale of Chen Zhao. Liu's crimes against his subordinates and the Tang authorities are not discussed in this tale, as the protagonist is called to the underworld to testify against Liu for the crime of ordering the slaughter of some forty-seven cattle. Chen, as a clerk, knows of a document implicating Liu in this crime, which he locates for the court, securing Liu's conviction. Although Liu's punishment is left to the reader's imagination, his accomplice Dou Xuan 竇懸 is heard screaming from the next room, and Chen is told that "Mr. Dou's appearance is extremely dreadful,"²⁰⁵ implying that Liu will suffer greatly. Although Duan does not add any editorial commentary to the tale, it is easy to imagine that he relished the thought of his father's

²⁰³ These are tales no. 3, 7, and possibly 19. See Campany, "To Hell and Back" for an exploration of the motif of death as a summons from the underworld in both Buddhist and non-Buddhist texts.

²⁰⁴ See Teiser, "The Growth of Purgatory," and Teiser, *The Scripture on the Ten Kings*, 19–86.

²⁰⁵ X87.1630: 468c15–69a18.

persecutor facing retribution for his earthly misdeeds.

Another example of this emphasis on otherworldly justice is tale no. 18, which concerns a man named Wang Han 王翰.²⁰⁶

太和五年，漢州什邡縣百姓王翰，常在市，日逐小利。忽暴卒，經三日，却活。云冥中有十六人，同被追，十五人散配他處，翰獨至一司。見一青衫少年，稱是己姪，為冥官廳子。遂引見推典，又云是己兄，貌皆不相類。其兄語云：「有冤牛一頭訴爾。燒畚枉燒殺之。爾又曾賣竹與殺狗人作篴篥，殺狗兩頭。狗亦訴爾。爾今名未係死籍，猶可以免。為作何功德？」翰欲為設齋及寫法華經金光明經，皆曰不可。乃請曰，持金剛經日七遍與之。其兄喜曰：「足矣。」及活遂捨業出家。今在什邡縣。

In the fifth year of the Taihe era [831], in Shifang County in Hanzhou [modern Deyang, Sichuan], the commoner Wang Han was always at the market and would make a small profit each day. He suddenly took ill and died, and after three days returned to life. He said that in the underworld there were sixteen other people who also were brought there, and fifteen of the people were sent to other offices, but Han was brought alone to a single ministry. There he saw a black-clad youth who said he was [Han's] nephew, serving as an attendant to the underworld officials. He proceeded to take [Han] to the investigating clerk,²⁰⁷ whom [the youth] said was his elder brother, though their appearances did not look at all similar.

His elder brother said, “There is an aggrieved ox pressing charges against you. When you set fire to a field, you unjustly burned it to death. You also sold bamboo to a dog-killer to make a trap,²⁰⁸ which killed two dogs. The dogs are also pressing charges against you. As of now, your name is not yet in the registry of the deceased, so you may still be pardoned. What merit will you make to this end?” Han wanted to arrange a vegetarian feast and copy the *Lotus Sūtra* and *Golden Light Sūtra*, but they said all of these were insufficient and requested that he uphold the *Diamond Sūtra* seven times a day for them [the animals]. His older brother happily said, “That is plenty!” When he revived, he proceeded to give up his business and leave home [to become a monk]. Today he is still [alive] in Shifang County.

The central idea of this tale is, like the rest of the tales, the supreme *ling* of the *Diamond Sūtra*, which is explicitly stated here to be greater than that of two other popular Buddhist

²⁰⁶ X87.1630: 470b9–19.

²⁰⁷ See Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles*, 508, 549.

²⁰⁸ *Konghou* 篴篥 refers to a musical instrument similar to a harp and is a homophone of *konghou* 空喉, which is a trap used to catch dogs. This is either a scribal error or a set of archaic variant characters.

scriptures. Although not a major theme in this text, this line testifies to the role miracle tales likely played in intra-Buddhist contestation—in this case between competing *sūtra* cults. This aspect of miracle tales has rarely been touched on in scholarship on this literature, which has largely focused on contestation between Buddhists and non-Buddhists.²⁰⁹ However, it also speaks to the absolute justice of the underworld bureaucracy which, unlike the worldly authorities, investigates crimes thoroughly before rendering a verdict. The underworld bureaucrats' advocacy of the *Diamond Sūtra* is a further contrast to the earthly bureaucracy, whose unjust punishments are repeatedly interrupted by the *Diamond Sūtra*'s power. Speaking in terms of the *Sūtra* as an autonomous person, as discussed in Chapter 2, we can say that *Collected Anomalies* consistently depicts the *Sūtra* as cooperating with the underworld bureaucracy while subverting the earthly authorities. Collectively, these tales express a sense of dissatisfaction with earthly authority and a hope that its wrongs will be righted in the next life.

Justice Overturned

Although *Collected Anomalies* repeatedly affirms the truth of otherworldly justice and the many horrors awaiting wrongdoers in the underworld, this aspect of the text is often at odds with its central rhetorical aim of demonstrating the *ling* of the *Diamond Sūtra*. Because the *Sūtra*'s *ling* is paramount in these tales, other aspects of Buddhist teaching are often subordinated to it—including the inescapability of karmic retribution, which seems to be superseded completely by revering the *Sūtra*.²¹⁰ Rather than cooperating with the underworld bureaucracy, as in the tales

²⁰⁹ See Campany, "Religious Repertoires and Contestation," which rightly criticizes the scholarly tendency to take "Buddhism" and "Daoism" as discrete entities, yet still frames miracle tales exclusively in terms of contestation between Buddhists and non-Buddhists. Ho claims we cannot "discern intense contestation between the cult of the *Diamond Sutra* and indigenous and other Buddhist cults," but tales such as this would seem to indicate otherwise. See Ho, *Diamond Sutra Narratives*, 193.

²¹⁰ Reed observes this in her discussion of *Collected Anomalies*. See Reed, *A Tang Miscellany*, 75.

discussed previously, in certain other tales the *Sūtra* appears to dominate this bureaucracy entirely, overturning whatever justice it might have enacted. Returning to the tale of Chen Zhao, we can see the tension between these two notions of justice quite clearly. After Chen assists the underworld bureaucracy in locating a document implicating Liu Pi, the underworld judge detains him to question him about his own involvement in the crime:²¹¹

趙語昭：「爾自有一過知否？竇懸所殺牛，爾取一牛頭。」昭未及對。趙曰：「此不同人間，不可抵假。」須臾見一卒挈牛頭而至。昭即恐懼求救。趙令檢格合決。一百考五十日。因謂昭曰：「爾有何功德？」昭即自陳：「設若干人齋畫某像。」趙云：「此來生緣爾。」昭又言：「曾於表兄家轉金剛經。」趙曰：「可合掌請。」昭依言。有頃，見黃襪箱經自天而下，住昭前。昭取視，即表兄所借本也。有燒處尚在。又令合掌。其經即滅。趙曰：「此足以免。」

[Judge] Zhao told [Chen] Zhao, “Do you know that you also have a transgression? When Dou Xuan killed the cattle, you took one of them.” Chen Zhao did not have time to answer before Judge Zhao said, “This is not like the human realm. You cannot rely on falsehood.” In just a moment, a soldier arrived bringing the cow along. Chen Zhao was then frightened and pleaded for mercy. Judge Zhao ordered the court to come to a ruling of one hundred beatings in fifty days. He asked Chen Zhao, “What merit do you have?” Chen Zhao then explained himself: “I arranged some vegetarian feasts and commissioned [Buddha] images.” Judge Zhao said, “This karma will determine your next birth.” Chen Zhao continued, “Once at my cousin's house, I had read [i.e. recited] the *Diamond Sūtra*.” Judge Zhao said, “Would you please join your palms?” Chen Zhao complied with his words. In just a moment, a *sūtra* box draped in yellow descended from the sky and appeared before Chen Zhao. Chen Zhao took a look at it, and indeed it was the copy that his cousin had lent him. There were still burn marks on it, and he was again asked to join his palms. The *sūtra* then went up in flames. Judge Zhao said, “This is enough to excuse you.”

According to this tale, the *ling* of the *Diamond Sūtra* is so great that reciting it just once is sufficient for Chen Zhao to receive pardon for the relatively serious transgression of killing a cow.²¹² In the interest of extolling the power of the *Sūtra*, this tale turns the act of killing into a

²¹¹ X87.1630: 468c15–69a18.

²¹² Incidentally, this is also the only tale in which a single recitation of the *Sūtra* is shown to produce a response.

trivial concern. As in the cases of the ill-behaved monk Weigong of tale no. 8 and the deceased meat-eater in tale no. 3, morality seems to come a distant second to *Sūtra* piety in terms of determining one's fate. This tale also raises the issue of the fallibility of the underworld bureaucracy. Although Judge Zhao's statement, "This is not like the human realm. You cannot rely on falsehood," would seem to underscore the bureaucracy's omniscience, the very fact that the judge had to ask Chen about his merits at all contradicts this—to say nothing of his calling Chen to testify in another case. Although typically shown to be an effective and just system, the underworld courts seem to be bound by at least some of the same limitations as the earthly bureaucracy.

There is one instance of underworld officials behaving unjustly, which is the rather unusual tale of Dong Jinchao 董進朝. Through his *Diamond Sūtra* recitation, this protagonist unwittingly "bribes" some underworld officials into extending his lifespan by taking the life of his neighbor:

董進朝元和中入軍。初在軍時，宿直城東樓上。一夕月明，忽見四人著黃。從東來聚立城下。說己姓名，狀若追捕。因相語曰：「董進朝常持金剛經。以一分功德，祝庇冥司。我輩久蒙其惠。如何殺之？須枉命相代。若此人他去，我等無所賴矣。」其一人云：「董進朝對門有一人，同姓同年壽限相埒。可以代矣。」因忽不見，進朝驚異之。及明已聞對門復魂聲，問其故。死者父母云：「子昨宵暴卒。」進朝感泣，說之。因為殯葬供養其父母焉。後出家法號慧通。住興元唐安寺(初陸其志於此有疑，後識者云：「壽限相埒則非枉命」其疑乃釋)。

Dong Jinchao joined the army during the Yuanhe era [805–820]. When he was first in the army, he was stationed at night in a tower on the eastern wall of the city. One evening, when the moon was bright, there suddenly appeared four men wearing yellow. They came from the east and assembled at the base of the wall. They mentioned his full name, and it seemed as though they were here to find and arrest him. They said to each other, "Dong Jinchao always upholds the *Diamond Sūtra*. Using a portion of his merit, he prays to protect the underworld officials. We have long received his blessings. How could we kill him? We must exchange and seize [another person's] life for his. If this other man were to go on behalf of

him [Dong], we could not be blamed for it!” One of the other men said, “Across from Dong Jinchao[’s house] there is a man with the same surname, of the same age and lifespan. He could be exchanged!” They then suddenly disappeared, and Dong Jinchao was frightened by this strange occurrence.

At dawn, [Dong] heard the sound of summoning the soul²¹³ from the neighboring house and asked them about the reason [for their mourning]. The deceased’s parents said, “Our son died inexplicably last night.” Jinchao was moved to tears and told them about it [what he had seen the night before]. He then arranged a funeral and provided for his [the deceased’s] parents. Afterwards, he left home [to become a monk], took the dharma name Huitong 慧通, and lived at Tang’an Monastery²¹⁴ in Xingyuan [in modern day Hanzhong, Shaanxi Province]. (At first, Lu Qizhi 陸其志²¹⁵ doubted this [story], but after a knowledgeable person told him, “When people have the same lifespan, then it is not a premature death,” his doubts were resolved.)

This tale certainly complicates the otherwise spotless moral reputation of the underworld bureaucracy in *Collected Anomalies*, as it shows that at least the low-level officials of the underworld are not immune to corruption. This portrayal of the underworld bureaucracy is more reminiscent of indigenous conceptions of a fallible and often venal spirit-world bureaucracy. In fact, as Duan’s postscript to the tale implies, this specific motif of postponing death by substituting someone with the same name is a recurring and documented pattern in Chinese folklore.²¹⁶ This tale repurposes the motif in order to promote the *Diamond Sūtra*, painting a Buddhist facade over a thoroughly Chinese cosmology. Teiser argues that *The Scripture on the Ten Kings*, an apocryphal Chinese text from the Song dynasty which depicts indigenous deities as judges in a Buddhist purgatory, represents a “mature synthesis” of Indian and Chinese views of the afterlife.²¹⁷ By contrast, *Collected Anomalies*, composed during the Tang, can be said to

²¹³ *Fuhun sheng* 復魂聲 (“soul-reviving sounds”) May refer to either the sounds of instruments used in mortuary rites or the sounds of crying mourners; see Watson and Rawski, *Death Ritual in Late Imperial and Modern China*.

²¹⁴ Tang’ansi 唐安寺 (“Vast Peace Monastery”) was founded during the Sui as Falunsi 法輪寺 (“Dharma Wheel Monastery”) and received its current name in 846.

²¹⁵ I have not been able to find other sources mentioning Lu Qizhi 董進朝. Judging from the context of this interjection and its absence from the *Taiping guangji*, the name would seem most likely to refer to some acquaintance of Duan Chengshi.

²¹⁶ Campany, “Living off the Books,” 130.

²¹⁷ Teiser, “*The Growth of Purgatory*,” 116.

represent an *immature* synthesis of these same views, with elements like karma and *Sūtra*-recitation grafted awkwardly onto a cosmology which operates according to a totally different logic from the system in which they originated.

Conclusion

Collected Anomalies displays a particular concern with the subject of injustice, which is portrayed as an ever-present danger that can only be avoided by upholding the *Diamond Sūtra*, whose *ling* will intervene to rescue those persecuted by earthly authorities. The injustice of these authorities is underscored by the justice of the underworld bureaucracy, which enacts karmic retribution against those whose misdeeds go unpunished in the human realm. However, the justice of the underworld is not completely inescapable, at least for those who revere the *Sūtra*. Such people have no reason to worry, as their practice of reciting and copying the scripture allows them to sidestep the usual mechanism of karma and avoid the strict justice they would otherwise face.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

This thesis has demonstrated the primacy of *ling* in *Collected Anomalies*, which I believe exemplifies the importance of this concept to the miracle tale genre and, more broadly, to Buddhism as it was practiced by Chinese literati of the Tang. Literati of the Tang did not receive Buddhist scriptures primarily as sources of prescriptive teachings but as ritual objects imbued with *ling*. Instead of seeking liberation from the cycle of rebirth, they upheld, recited, or copied scriptures like the *Diamond Sūtra* as a means of addressing the concerns and anxieties they would have faced in their day-to-day lives. As the tales in *Collected Anomalies* demonstrate, devotees of the *Diamond Sūtra* believed that its immense power could protect them from impending death, rewrite their fates, prevent grave injustices, and even cancel out their transgressions. Through each of its tales, *Collected Anomalies* displays these various applications and dimensions of the *Sūtra*'s *ling*, a theme to which scholars of miracle tales may wish to devote more attention in the future. Further inquiry into the miracle tale genre might also benefit from approaching each text and author individually and devoting more attention to their particular idiosyncrasies, rather than simply focusing on larger bodies of literature or texts thought to be representative of the genre.

Despite the consistency with which the *Sūtra* produces miracles in this text, it bears repeating that they are, from the perspective of the text itself, *anomalous*. Even if miracles are expected to occur as part of the natural workings of the world—as they are in Buddhist conceptions of the miraculous²¹⁸—they are still regarded as rare and even strange (*guai*). This is,

²¹⁸ Brown, “Expected Miracles,” 24.

after all, what makes these events notable and worth recording. This element of strangeness is highlighted by simple fact that the title of Duan's text refers to the tales as "anomalies" (*yi*) rather than "proofs" (*yan* 驗), the more commonly-used term for Buddhist miracle tales.²¹⁹ *Collected Anomalies* itself is only one part of Duan's most famous work, the brush notes (*biji* 筆記)²²⁰ text *Youyang zazu* 酉陽雜俎 (*Miscellaneous Morsels from Youyang*), which contains assorted jottings Duan made during his time living in the Youyang mountains in Jingzhou, especially stories of strange events.²²¹

The fact that Duan included these Buddhist tales within a larger work containing "strange tales" (*zhiguai*) problematizes the oft-assumed dichotomy between these two genres, and it further suggests that Duan's interest in Buddhism might well have ultimately been subordinate to his well-documented interest in the strange, exotic, and otherworldly, which he devoted much of his life to documenting. Carrie Reed, one of the only Anglophone scholars to have written in detail about *Youyang zazu*, identifies this theme of strangeness as central to the text, which contains an entire section devoted solely to "chronicles of the strange." Although Duan pays some attention to mundane subjects like food²²² and linguistic idioms,²²³ the bulk of the text is devoted to cataloging the strange and anomalous, including "stories of bloodthirsty vampires and *raksasas*, dangerous magical black fish and frightening vaporous dragons."²²⁴

Collected Anomalies is, in many ways, less a Buddhist work which deals with the strange than a detour into Buddhism within a catalog of strangeness. In his preface to *Collected*

²¹⁹ See Ho, *Diamond Sutra Narratives*, 89.

²²⁰ This term refers to a genre of prose literature consisting of miscellaneous informal writings, including anecdotes, gossip, and musings. See Wilkinson, *Chinese History: A Manual*, 610–612.

²²¹ Reed, *A Tang Miscellany*, 2.

²²² Reed, *A Tang Miscellany*, 53–54.

²²³ Reed, *A Tang Miscellany*, 61.

²²⁴ Reed, *A Tang Miscellany*, 4.

Anomalies, Duan states that his intention in compiling these tales is simply the desire to fill in a deficiency in records regarding Buddhist matters.²²⁵ While I see no reason to doubt his honesty, interest in these stories was no doubt founded in a desire to demonstrate the efficacy of his favorite scripture, it must also have stemmed from his general interest in the strange and anomalous. Furthermore, the fact that Duan was not alone in being entertained by tales of the strange is probably a major reason that miracle tale literature continued to flourish long after Buddhism had become mainstream in China.²²⁶

Besides the intrinsic and self-evident strangeness of the miraculous events described in these tales, Duan's interest in the strange manifests in other aspects of *Collected Anomalies*. This aspect of Duan's writing can be seen most clearly in his approach to the foreign and exotic, which form another dimension of strangeness parallel to the strangeness of the supernatural. As Reed points out, Duan's interest in "the peripheral" included both the supernatural and the alien—i.e. that which is outside of the "normal" of Tang China—and betrayed the porousness of the boundary between the two. This is perhaps demonstrated most clearly in the tale of the monk Weigong, whose death is followed by several auspicious signs, the most notable of which is the appearance of a mysterious band of Kuchean musicians.²²⁷ Kucha, a flourishing Buddhist kingdom in Central Asia conquered by the Tang in the seventh century, occupied a prominent place in the Tang imagination as an exotic Buddhist paradise.²²⁸ The Kuchean musicians seem

²²⁵ X87.1630: 467b21–c19.

²²⁶ This is not to suggest that criticism of and attacks on Buddhism disappeared after Buddhism became popular, but simply that it became less relevant as a motivation in the production of miracle tale texts. Ongoing intra-Buddhist contestation, which I touched on briefly in the Chapter 4, was also likely a factor. Ho also notes this shift in the rhetorical aims of the miracle tale genre away from validating Buddhism generally towards advocating specific practices. See Ho, *Diamond Sutra Narratives*, 193. See also Yu, *Sanctity and Self-Inflicted Violence*, 102–105, which discusses the ways in which tales of extraordinary examples of female chastity served as a form of entertainment to readers.

²²⁷ X87.1630: 469a19–b4.

²²⁸ Schaefer, *The Golden Peaches of Samarkand*, 52.

more like apparitions than flesh-and-blood people, and their mere presence is treated as nearly as marvelous as that of the dharma protecting deities appearing in other tales. The distinction between the supernatural and the merely foreign is thus shown to be rather soft, as is the distinction between the mundane and supermundane.

Scholarship on strange tales has often treated the genre as a kind of proto-fiction or stepping stone to the development of fictional writing in China, implying that the authors of these texts “knew” that the stories they told were fantastical and untrue.²²⁹ *Collected Anomalies*, alongside many of Duan’s other writings about the strange, complicates this idea through its insistence on the truth of its tales, which are, in the mold of other Buddhist miracle tales, presented as historical and usually grounded by references to specific dates, locations, and historical figures. Duan’s long-held fascination with the strange may indicate that he was entertained by these stories, and his compulsion to include those grounding details would indicate that some might have doubted their accuracy, it is nonetheless clear that he believed them to be as true as any historical record. For Duan and many of his contemporaries, the supernatural and the otherworldly were just as real as Kucha or Tibet—and perhaps even closer at hand.

²²⁹ See Lu, *From Historicity to Fictionality*, 106 and the introduction to Zeitlin’s *Historian of the Strange*.

APPENDIX A

TRANSLATION

Collected Anomalies of the *Diamond Sūtra* (Jin'gang jing jiuyi 金剛經鳩異)

X87.1630

by Duan Chengshi 段成式 (c. 802–863);

序 Preface

[0467b22] 貞元十七年，先君自荊(一作蘄)入蜀，應韋南康辟命(南康王韋皋)。泊韋之暮年，為賊闢讒構，遂攝尉靈池縣。韋尋薨，賊闢知留後。先君舊與闢不合，聞之連夜，離縣。至城東門，闢尋有帖不令諸縣官離縣。其夕陰風及返。出郭二里，見火兩炬夾道，百步為導。初意縣吏迎候，且恠其不前，高下遠近不差。欲及縣郭方滅，及問縣吏，尚未知府帖也。時先君念金剛經，已五六年數無虛日。信乎至誠必感，有感必應。向之導火，乃經所著迹也。後闢逆節漸露，詔以袁公滋為節度使。成式再從叔少從軍，知左營事，懼及禍。與監軍定計以蠟丸帛書通謀於袁。事旋發，悉為魚肉，賊謂先君知其謀。於時先君念經，夜久不覺因寐。門戶悉閉，忽覺聞開戶而入，言：「不畏」者再三，若物投案爆然有聲。驚起之際，音猶在耳。顧視左右，吏僕皆睡。俾燭樺四索，初無所見，向之門扃，已開闢矣。先君受持此經十餘萬遍，徵應事孔著。成式近觀晉宋已來，時人咸著傳記彰明其事。又先命受持講解，有唐已來，金剛經靈驗記三卷，成式當奉先命受持講解。太和二年，於揚州僧栖簡處，聽平消御注一遍。六年，於荊州僧靖奢處，聽大雲疏一遍。開成元年，於上都懷楚法師處，聽青龍疏一遍。復日念書寫，猶希傳照罔極，盡形流通。撫拾遺逸，以備闕佛事，號金剛經鳩異。

In the seventeenth year of the Zhenyuan era [801], my late father²³⁰ left Jingzhou 荊州 [modern Jingzhou, Hubei] for Shu 蜀 [Sichuan] in response to Wei of Nankang's enlistment order (Nankang was ruled by Wei Gao).²³¹ During Wei's later years, [my father] was slanderously

²³⁰ Duan Chengshi's father was Duan Wenchang 段文昌 (773–835), a prominent official of the Tang who served as chancellor under Emperor Muzong. His biography is found in volume 167 of the *Old Book of Tang* and volume 89 of the *New Book of Tang*.

²³¹ Wei Gao 韋皋 (745–805), or the Prince of Nankang 南康 (in modern Ganzhou 贛州, Jiangxi), served as military commissioner (*jiedushi* 節度使) of Xichuan 西川 Circuit from 785 to 805. He is mentioned in volume 140 of the *Old Book of Tang* and in volume 158 of the *New Book of Tang*.

accused by the traitor [Liu] Pi,²³² who then became Acting District Defender²³³ of Lingchi County 令諸縣 [modern Jianyang, Sichuan]. When Wei died, the traitor Pi became Capital Liaison Representative.²³⁴ My late father and Pi had not gotten along in the past, so he left the county the very night he heard this news. Upon reaching the east gate of the city, [he found that] Pi had issued a notice forbidding all county officials from leaving the county. That night, there was a cold wind, so he had to turn back. Two *li*²³⁵ from the outer wall, he saw two burning torches on either side of the road, leading him for a hundred paces. At first he thought they were county officials coming to meet him, but he found it strange that they never got closer, and their height and distance did not change [as he moved towards them]. When he reached the outer wall of the county, [the torches] went out, and when he asked the county officials [at the wall], [they said that] they had not heard of any prefectural²³⁶ notice. At this time, my late father had been reciting the *Diamond Sūtra* for five or six years without missing a day. He believed that sincerity must create a stimulus, and when there is a stimulus there must be a response.²³⁷ The torches which had guided him were thus traces of the *Sūtra*['s response].

²³² Liu Pi 劉闢 (d. 806) was an official who served under Wei Gao 韋皋 (745-805) in Xichuan 西川 Circuit. See story 6 for Wei Gao. After Gao's death, Liu claimed the title of military commissioner (*jiedushi* 節度使) and rebelled against Emperor Xianzong until he was defeated and executed in 806. Like Wei Gao, he is mentioned in volume 140 of the *Old Book of Tang* and in volume 158 of the *New Book of Tang*; see also Hans van de Ven, *Warfare in Chinese History*, 163.

²³³ See Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles*, 564.

²³⁴ See Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles*, 317.

²³⁵ The *li* 里 was never a very precise measure in premodern China, and varied throughout the period and across regions. During the late Tang, it was generally equivalent to about 1800 feet (0.34 miles or 0.55 km). This term is sometimes translated into English as "third-miles" or simply "Chinese miles," but I leave it untranslated throughout this text; see Wilkinson, *Chinese History: A New Manual*, 555.

²³⁶ See Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles*, 216.

²³⁷ *Ganying* 感應 ("stimulus-response") is a deeply-rooted Chinese religious concept, according to which the stimulus of a practitioner's devotion was believed to invite a response from the unseen world. This idea predates Buddhism, but is commonly employed in Chinese Buddhist sources due to its strong resonance with Indic conceptions of karma. For a thorough treatment of this subject, see Sharf, "Chinese Buddhism and the Cosmology of Sympathetic Resonance" in *Coming to Terms with Chinese Buddhism*.

Later on, Pi's seditious intent was gradually exposed, so by imperial decree, Mr. Yuan Zi²³⁸ was made military commissioner.²³⁹ A distant uncle of mine, who had served in the army since his youth, knew about matters in the Left Encampment²⁴⁰ [related to Liu Pi's sedition] and was afraid that disaster would reach him. He and the Army Supervisor²⁴¹ made a plan to use wax balls with messages written on silk [concealed inside] to tell Yuan [about Liu Pi's plan]. This affair was immediately exposed, so they were all put on the chopping block,²⁴² and the traitors said that my late father knew of the plan.

At one time, my late father was reciting the *Sūtra* well into the night and, without realizing it, had fallen asleep. The doors of his house were all closed, and he suddenly awoke to hear [someone] open the door and enter. [The person] said, “Do not fear” repeatedly, and the sound of the words was explosive, like objects being thrown onto a table. He was startled and got up, the sound still in his ears, and looked around to see that all of the officials and servants were asleep. He grabbed a birch candle and looked around, and at first he did not see anything there, but when he looked at the door bolt, [he saw] that it had already been opened.

My late father accepted and upheld this *Sūtra* more than a hundred thousand times, and the signs of its response were outstanding. I, [Duan] Chengshi, have recently observed that since the Jin [265–420] and [Former] Song times [420–479], people have written biographical records

²³⁸ Yuan Zi 袁滋 (739–818) was an official and general who served in various positions under Emperors Dezong, Shunzong, and Xianzong. After Liu Pi began his rebellion in 805, Emperor Xianzong sent Yuan to convince him to surrender. When this failed, Yuan was appointed military commissioner of Xichuan, but he did not dare to advance on Liu, and as a result he was soon demoted to prefect of Ji Prefecture 吉州 (modern Ji'an, Jiangxi). He is mentioned in chapter 185 of the *Old Book of Tang*, chapter 151 of the *New Book of Tang*, and chapters 235, 236, and 239 of the *Zizhi tongjian*.

²³⁹ *Jiedushi* 節度使; see Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles*, 143.

²⁴⁰ This term refers to the Militant-as-Dragons Army (*longwu jun* 龍武軍), which was divided into Left and Right Encampments (*ying* 營); see Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles*, 325.

²⁴¹ See Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles*, 147.

²⁴² The Chinese idiom 為魚肉 literally means “to treat like fish meat,” so here I have translated it with the similar English idiom, “to put on the chopping block.” The implication here seems to be that they were executed.

in order to shed light on these matters. My father also ordered me to accept, uphold, and recite the three-fascicle *Record of the Proven Efficacy of the Diamond Sūtra*,²⁴³ from [the beginning of] the Tang. I should follow my father's order to accept, uphold, and explain it. In the second year of the Taihe era [828], I once listened to [a lecture on] the *Imperial Commentary of Peaceful Explication*²⁴⁴ by the monk Xijian 栖簡 of Yangzhou [modern Yangzhou, Jiangsu]. In the sixth year [832], I once listened to [a lecture on] the *Great Cloud Commentary*²⁴⁵ by the monk Jingshe 靖奢 of Jingzhou [modern Jingzhou, Hubei]. In the first year of the Kaicheng era [836], I once listened to [a lecture on] the *Blue Dragon Commentary*²⁴⁶ by Master Huaichu 懷楚 of Shangdu 上都 [modern Xi'an].²⁴⁷ Every day, I recite and copy [the *Diamond Sūtra*] in hopes of passing it on in accordance with its boundlessness and circulating it until the end [of my life]. I have gathered a collection of miscellaneous [stories about the *Diamond Sūtra*] in order to repair a deficiency in [records of] Buddhist matters, entitled *Collected Anomalies of the Diamond Sūtra*.

²⁴³ As with the other texts Duan mentions in this section, there is some ambiguity as to exactly which text the title *Jin'gang jing lingyan ji* 金剛經靈驗記 refers to. It would seem most obviously to refer to the *Jin'gang bore jing lingyan ji* 金剛般若經靈驗記, a now-lost text by Xiao Yu 蕭瑀 (575–648) and the earliest known compilation of *Diamond Sūtra* miracle tales. However, according to a tale concerning Xiao found in chapter 10 of the *Taiping guangji*, his *Lingyan ji* consisted of only eighteen tales. If this is true, Xiao's text was probably too short to be the same three-fascicle *Lingyan ji* to which Duan refers here. For this reason, Ho believes that Duan is referring to the longer *Jin'gang bore jing jiyuan ji* 金剛般若經集驗記 (X87.1629) by Meng Xianzhong 孟獻忠 (d.u.), which is the oldest extant *Diamond Sūtra* miracle tale compilation.

²⁴⁴ *Imperial Commentary of Peaceful Explication* (*Pingxiao yuzhu* 平消御注) most likely refers to Emperor Xuanzong's imperial commentary (*yuzhu* 御注) on the *Diamond Sūtra*.

²⁴⁵ This “Great Cloud Commentary” (*Dayun shu* 大雲疏) may refer to a five-fascicle commentary on the *Diamond Sūtra* recorded by the eighth-century monk Yuanhui 圓暉 (d.u.) of Dayun (“Great Cloud”) Monastery 大雲寺, whose biography can be found in the *Song Biographies of Eminent Monks* (T50.2061 50:734a11–22).

²⁴⁶ “Blue Dragon Commentary” (*Qinglong shu* 青龍疏) most likely refers to a commentary composed by Daoyin 道胤 (668–740) of Qinglong (“Blue Dragon”) Monastery 青龍寺, called *Yuzhu Jin'gang bore boluomi jing xuanyan* 御注金剛般若波羅蜜經宣演 (*Tribute to the Imperial Commentary on the Diamond Sūtra*). A biography of Daoyin can be found in the *Song Biographies of Eminent Monk*, which refers to Daoyin giving lectures on the *Sūtra* (T50.2061: 50735).

²⁴⁷ This is another name for Chang'an 長安, the capital of China during the Tang.

1. Zhang Qiqiu 張齊丘

[0467c21] 張鑑相公先君齊丘，酷信釋氏。每旦，更新衣執經，於像前念金剛經十五遍。積數十年不懈。永泰初為朔方節度使。衙內有小將，負罪懼事露。乃扇動軍人數百定謀反叛。齊丘因衙退，於小廳閒行。忽有兵數十露刃走入。齊丘左右唯奴僕，遽奔宅門。過小廳數步，迴顧又無人。疑是鬼物。將及門，其妻女奴婢復叫呼出門云：「有兩甲士身出廳屋上。」時衙隊軍健聞變持兵亂入至小廳前。見十餘人，仡然庭中垂手張口，投兵於地。眾遂擒縛。五六人瘖不能言。餘者具首云：「欲[於]上廳忽見二甲士，長數丈，瞋目叱之。初如中惡。」齊丘聞之，因斷酒肉。張鳳翔即予門吏盧邁親姨夫，邁語予云。

Minister Duke Zhang Yi's deceased father, Qiqiu,²⁴⁸ fervently devoted himself to Śākyamuni [Buddha]. Every morning, he would dress himself in clean clothes, uphold the [*Diamond*] *Sūtra* before a [Buddha] image, and recite the *Diamond Sūtra* fifteen times. He did so tirelessly for decades.

At the beginning of the Yongtai era [765–766], he served as military commissioner²⁴⁹ of Shuofang 朔方 Circuit [modern Yinchuan, Ningxia]. Within his office²⁵⁰ there was a young general who bore crimes that he feared would be revealed. So he incited several hundred soldiers to plot a rebellion. Since Qiqiu had just retired from his office, he was walking leisurely in a private quarter. Suddenly, dozens of soldiers moved in with their swords. Qiqiu, with his only servants to his left and right, rushed for the front gate. Several paces past the private quarter, he looked back and saw there was no one. He suspected [what he saw] were ghosts. When he was about to reach the gate, his wife, daughter, and servants called out and said, “There are two armored warriors on top of the roof of the private quarter!”

²⁴⁸ Zhang Qiqiu 張齊丘 was a military commissioner (*jiedushi* 節度使) of Shuofang Circuit (朔方), which is headquartered in modern Yinchuan, Ningxia, during the reign of Emperor Xuanzong 唐玄宗 (r. 712-756). He was born in Kunshan 崑山, Suzhou 蘇州 Province. He is mentioned in volume 165, biography 77 of the *New Book of Tang*, under Zhang Yi 張鑑 (d. 783).

²⁴⁹ *Jiedushi* 節度使; see Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles*, 143.

²⁵⁰ *Ya* 衙 is an abbreviation for *yamen* 衙門, which refers to the headquarters of office of an imperial agency; see Hucker, *A Dictionary of Imperial Titles*, 575.

At that time, the strong military guards of the office heard of the rebellion, held their weapons, entered into the fray, and arrived before the private quarter. They saw dozens of people standing in the middle of the garden with their arms hanging limp and their mouths agape, with their weapons on the ground. The assembly thereupon arrested them. Five or six of them could not speak. The rest of them said, “We suddenly saw, above the private quarter, two huge armored warriors as much as several *zhang* tall,²⁵¹ glaring at and scolding them. As such, it was so vicious.” Qiqiu heard of this and gave up alcohol and meat. Zhang Fengxian 張鳳翔 promptly gave [this story] to the gatekeeper Lu Mai’s 盧邁 close uncle, who then told me.

2. Commander Wang Mou 虞候王某

[0468a10] 劉逸淮在汴[京]時，韓弘為右廂虞候，王某為左廂虞候，與弘相善。或謂二人取軍情將不利於劉。劉大怒，俱召詰之。弘即劉之甥，因控地碎首大言。劉意稍解。王某年老股戰不能自辯。劉叱令拉坐，杖三十。時新造赤棒頭徑數寸，固以筋漆。拉之不什數五六當死矣。韓意其必死及昏。造其家，恠無哭聲，又謂其懼不敢哭。訪其門卒，即云：「大使無恙。」弘素與熟遂至臥內問之。王云：「我讀金剛經四十年矣。今方得力。言初被坐時，見巨手如簸箕翕然遮背。」因袒示韓，都無撻痕。韓舊不好釋氏，由此始與僧往來。日自寫十紙，乃積計數百軸矣。後在中書，盛暑有諫官因事謁見。韓方浹汗寫經。恠問之，韓乃具道王某事。予職在集仙常侍。柳公為予說。

When Liu Yihuai²⁵² was in Bianjing 汴京 [modern Kaifeng, Henan], Han Hong²⁵³ served as [Commander of] the Right Wing of the Palace Police Patrol²⁵⁴ while Wang Mou²⁵⁵ served as [Commander of] the Left Wing. He and Hong were good friends. Someone said that the two men

²⁵¹ During the Tang dynasty, a *zhang* 丈 was equivalent to about 10 feet or 3 meters; see Wilkinson, *Chinese History: A New Manual*, 555.

²⁵² Liu Yihuai 劉逸淮 seems to be another name for Liu Xuanzuo 劉玄佐 (730-787), military governor (*jiedushi* 節度使) of Xuanwu 宣武 Circuit. This name appears in chapter 145 of the *Old Book of Tang*:

²⁵³ Han Hong 韓弘 (765–823) was a general who served as chancellor during the reigns of emperors Xianzong and Muzong and is mentioned in chapter 156 of the *Old Book of Tang*.

²⁵⁴ The Palace Patrol (*yuhou* 虞候) was a military unit responsible for guarding the Heir Apparent, which was divided into left and right wings (*xiang* 廂); see Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles*, 590.

²⁵⁵ Wang Mou 王某 (d.u.) is mentioned in the the *Mufu yanxian lu* 幕府燕閒錄 ("Records from the Banquets in the Prefect's Office"), by the Song scholar Bi Zhongxun 畢仲詢.

got hold of military intelligence that would be unfavorable for Liu. Liu was furious and summoned both of them for interrogation. Hong was Liu's nephew, so he kowtowed and tried to explain, and Liu somewhat understanding. Wang Mou was elderly; he trembled and was unable to explain himself. Liu shouted an order for him to be dragged to a seat and beaten [with a rod] thirty times. At the time, the newly-made red rod had a head a few *cun*²⁵⁶ in circumference and was hardened with lacquer. If [Wang Mou] were flogged with it, it would only take five or six blows to kill him! Han thought [Wang Mou] would surely die and fainted.

[After Han awoke] he went to [Wang's] household, but strangely heard no weeping and said [to himself], "They must be refraining from crying out of fear." He asked the guard at his gate, who said, "The general is in good health." Han was familiar [with Wang's family], so he naturally proceeded to [Wang's] bedroom to inquire about him. Wang replied, "I have been reading the *Diamond Sūtra* for forty years! Now I have received its power. When I was first seated, I saw a giant hand like a winnowing basket open to cover my back." He showed his back to Han and it did not have any flogging scars.

Han did not previously think highly of Buddhism, but because of this, he began to interact with monks. Every day he would copy ten pages of [the *Diamond Sūtra*] by hand and thus amassed several hundred scrolls. Later, while Han was in the middle of [copying] a book at the height of summer, an imperial censor contacted him, and he was sweating while copying the *Sūtra*. Puzzled, the censor asked about it, so Han told him about Wang Mou's story. My duty is collecting [stories of] the extraordinary. Liu Gong²⁵⁷ told me.

²⁵⁶ During the Tang dynasty, a *cun* 寸 was equivalent to about 1.18 inches or 3.03 centimeters. See Wilkinson, *Chinese History: A Manual*, 238.

²⁵⁷ This probably refers to Liu Gongquan 柳公權 (778–865), a famous calligrapher of the Tang dynasty and contemporary of Duan Chengshi. Like Duan, Liu was not only a devout Buddhist, but is also known to have engaged in devotional copying of the *Diamond Sūtra*. His biography can be found in the *Old Book of Tang*, 165.

3. Sun Xian 孫咸

[0468a24] 梁崇義在襄州未阻兵時，有小將孫咸，暴卒。信宿却蘇。夢至一處如王者所居，儀衛甚嚴。有吏引與一僧對事。僧法號懷秀，亡已經年。在生極犯戒，及入冥無善可錄。乃給云：「我常囑孫咸寫法華經。」故咸被追對。咸初不省僧故執之，經時不決。忽見沙門，曰：「地藏尊者語云：弟子若招承亦自獲祐。」咸乃依言因得無事。又說對勘時，見一戎王衛者數百自外來。冥王降階齊級升殿。坐未久乃大風捲去。又見一人被拷覆罪福。此人常持金剛經，又好食肉。左邊有經數千軸，右邊積肉成山。以肉多將入重論，俄經堆中，有火一星飛向肉山，頃刻銷盡。此人遂履空而去。咸問地藏：「向來外國王，風吹何處？」地藏云：「彼王當入無間。向來風即業風也。」因引咸看地獄。及門烟焰扇赫。聲若風雷。懼不敢視。臨回鑊湯，跳沫滴落左股，痛入心髓。地藏乃令一吏送歸，不許漏洩冥事。及迴如夢。妻兒環泣。已一日矣。遂破家寫經。因請出家。夢中所滴處成瘡，終身不差。

When Liang Chongyi²⁵⁸ was in Xiangzhou 襄州 [modern Hubei] and was not yet obstructing the army,²⁵⁹ there was the young general [under him] named Sun Xian, who died suddenly. He was sent back to Su 蘇 [Jiangsu Province, where he was from] but then was revived. [When he awoke, he said that] he had dreamed that he went to what looked like a king's palace, with guards whose appearance were extremely stern. There was an official leading [Sun Xian] to a monk for questioning. The monk's name was Huaixiu 懷秀, and he had already been dead for years. In life, he gravely transgressed the monastic precepts, and when he plunged into the netherworld, he was without any virtues to report. Thereupon [the monk] lied and claimed, "I always urged Sun Xian to copy the *Lotus Sūtra*." This was why Xian was sought out to corroborate [this claim]. When Xian said that he was not aware of this, the monk grabbed onto him. Judgment could not be reached for some time. Suddenly there appeared a *śramaṇa* saying,

²⁵⁸ Liang Chongyi 梁崇義 (d. 781), born in Chang'an, was the military commissioner of Shannan East Circuit 山南東道, headquartered in modern Xiangyang 襄陽, Hubei. More information on him can be found in the *Old Book of Tang*, 121 and the *New Book of Tang*, 224a.

²⁵⁹ Liang ruled his circuit semi-independently from 772 until 781, when he launched a failed rebellion against the imperial court, leading to his suicide and the reclamation of his territory by the Tang; see Xiong, *Historical Dictionary of Medieval China*, 363.

“[I,] the honored Dizang,²⁶⁰ say that if a disciple confesses he shall receive protection!” On the basis of these words, Xian was exonerated.

[Xian] also said that at the time of the investigation, he saw a foreign-looking king with hundreds of guards coming from outside. That king of hell had descended and risen to a dais. Not long after having sat down, a great wind whirled him away. He also witnessed a person being tortured and interrogated for his crimes and merits. This man always upheld the *Diamond Sūtra* but was fond of eating meat. On his left side were several thousand *sūtra* scrolls, and on the right was a mountain of meat. Because of the amount of meat, he was about to be judged harshly, when suddenly, amidst the pile of scriptures, a single spark of a flame flew towards the mountain of meat and instantly incinerated everything. The man then left and vanished into the air.

Xian asked Dizang, “Earlier, to where did the wind bring that foreign king?” Dizang said, “That king had gone to Avīci [Hell]; the winds were the winds of karma.” And so he led Xian to visit this hell. At its gates, the smoke and flames were smoldering and dreadful; the cries [of suffering] were as loud as winds and thunder. Xian was afraid and did not dare to look. When he was about to turn back, he saw a cauldron of boiling water whose froth splashed out, and a trickle fell on his left thigh, the pain of which entered into his heart. Dizang then ordered an official to take Xian back [to the world of the living] and told Xian not to divulge the secrets of the underworld. Xian returned [from death] as if it were a dream. His wife and child surrounded him weeping. It had already been a whole day! Xian exhausted his family’s wealth by copying the *Diamond Sūtra*. He also asked [his family] to permit him to leave the householder's life. The

²⁶⁰ Dizang 地藏 (“Earth Storehouse”) is the Chinese name for the bodhisattva Kṣitigarbha, who is typically depicted as a monk with a shaved head and revered as the patron bodhisattva of the hell-beings and the dead in general. See Zhiru, *The Making of a Savior Bodhisattva*.

spot on his thigh where he was burned in the dream had formed a flesh wound that for the rest of his life did not go away.

4. The Monk Zhideng 僧智燈

[0468b18] 貞元中，荊州天崇寺僧智燈，常持金剛經。遇疾死。弟子啟手足猶熱，不即入木。經七日却活，云：「初見冥中若王者。以念經故，合掌降階。因問訊言：『更容上人十年在世勉出生死』又問：『人間眾僧中後食薏苡仁及藥食？此大違本教。』燈報云：『律中有開遮條如何。』云：『此後人加之非佛意也。』」今荊州僧眾，中後無飲藥者。

During the Zhengyuan era [742–805], in Jingzhou 荊州 [modern Jingzhou, Hubei] at Tianchong Temple 天崇寺, was the monk Zhideng, who always upheld the *Diamond Sūtra*. He fell ill and died. A disciple stated that [Zhideng's] hands and feet felt warm, so he was not put into a coffin. After seven days he returned to life and said, "I saw what looked like a king of hell. Because I recite [the *Diamond*] *Sūtra*, he clasped his hands and descended to where I stood. He bowed and stated, "I will allow you, venerable one, ten more years on earth, so that you may strive to transcend birth-and-death."

He also asked, 'Do many of the monks in the human realm after their midday meal eat *yiyi* kernels²⁶¹ as their medicine meal?²⁶² This is a great violation of the original teaching.' Deng reported, 'According to the *vinaya* there are lists of exceptions and preventions for different situations. But as for these, the people of posterity have added to them. [Eating this meal] was not the intention of the Buddha.'" Today in Jingzhou, among the many monks there are none who take the medicine meal after midday.

²⁶¹ *Yiyi* 薏苡 refers to *Coix lacryma-jobi*, a vegetable native to Southeast Asia, known variously in English as Job's tears, Chinese pearl barley, or adlay millet. It is widely cultivated throughout East Asia for use in food and traditional medicine.

²⁶² The "medicine meal" (*yaoshi* 藥食) refers to an exception in the *vinaya* rules that allows monks and nuns, who are normally forbidden to eat after midday, to eat a nourishing evening meal when they are ill; see Buswell, "Medicine," 518.

5. Wang Conggui's sister 王從貴妹

[0468c01] 公安潺陵林百姓王從貴妹未嫁。常持金剛經。貞元中，忽暴疾卒。埋已三日，其家復[廣記作覆]墓，聞塚中呻吟。遂發視之，果有氣輿歸。數日能言。云：「初至冥間。冥吏以持經功德放還。」王從貴能治木，常於公安靈化寺起造。其寺禪師曙中常見從貴說。

In Gong'an County, in the forest of the Chanling village [in modern Jingzhou, Hubei], lived Wang Conggui's younger sister, who had not married. She always upheld the *Diamond Sūtra*. In the Zhengyuan era [742–805], she suddenly became violently ill and died. She had been buried for three days when her family returned to her grave and heard groaning from the burial mound. Thereupon, they discovered her and indeed realized that she was breathing and would be able to return.

After a few days, she could speak. She said, "I arrived in the underworld. An underworld official, due to my merit from upholding the *Sūtra*, released me." Wang Conggui was skilled in wood working and was always at Linghua Temple 靈化寺 in Gong'an County doing renovations. The meditation master of this temple would often see Conggui at dawn talking about [this story].

6. The Section Leader of the Left Encampment 左營伍伯

[0468c07] 韋南康鎮蜀時，有左營伍伯，於西山行營，與同火卒學念金剛經。性頑初一日讒得題目。其夜堡外拾薪，為蕃騎縛去。行百餘里乃止。天未明，遂踣之於地，以髮繫檣，覆以駝毳，寢其上。此人惟念經題，忽見金一鋌放光止於前。試舉首動身，所縛悉脫。遂潛起逐金鋌走。計行未得十餘里，遲明不覺已至家，家在府東市。妻兒初疑其鬼，具陳來由。到家五六日，行營將方申其逃。初韋不信，以逃日與至家日不差，始免之。

When Wei of Nankang guarded Shu [Sichuan], in the Left Encampment²⁶³ was a section

²⁶³ This term refers to the Militant-as-Dragons Army (*longwu jun* 龍武軍), which was divided into Left and Right Encampments (*ying* 營); see Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles*, 325.

leader.²⁶⁴ At the camp in western mountains,²⁶⁵ among the same squad of soldiers, he learned to recite the *Diamond Sūtra*. He was dense by nature, so after a day he had only grasped the title [of the *Sūtra*]. That night, he went outside the fort to gather firewood, and was taken away by Tibetan²⁶⁶ horsemen. They rode about a hundred *li* before stopping. The dawn had not yet arrived when they brought him down to the ground, tied his hair to a post, and had him sleep on top of a camel hair rug. He did nothing but recite the title of the [*Diamond*] *Sūtra*, and suddenly there appeared a golden lance shining before him. He tried to lift his head and move his body and was able to free himself. Thereupon, he took the lance and ran away.

He had not yet gotten more than ten *li* when he slowly realized that he had already arrived at home, which was located on the east side of a government building in the city. His wife and son at first suspected that he was a ghost, so he explained how he had come [home]. He stayed with his family for five or six days before going to the encampment's general to explain how he had escaped. At first, Wei did not believe him, but because the day he escaped and the day he arrived home were not inconsistent, he thereupon pardoned him.

7. Chen Zhao 陳昭

[0468c16] 元和初，漢州孔目典陳昭。因患病見一人著黃衣，至牀前云：「趙判官喚爾。」昭問所因，云：「至自冥間。劉闢與竇懸對事。要君為證。」昭即留坐逡巡。又有一人。手持一物如毬胞前。吏恠其遲。答之曰：「緣此，候屠行開。」因笑謂昭曰：「君勿懼。取生人氣。須得猪胞，君可面東側臥。」昭依其言。不覺已隨二吏行路甚平。可十餘里。至一城。大如府城。甲士守門焉。及入，見一人怒容可駭，即趙判官也，語云：「劉闢收東川。竇懸捕牛四十七頭。送梓州稱准闢判殺。闢又云：『先無牒』。君為孔目

²⁶⁴ *Wubo* 伍伯 refers to a soldier in charge of five subordinates. I have followed Ho in translating the term as “section leader,” since a section or squad in a modern army typically consists of between six and twenty people.

²⁶⁵ *Xi shan* 西山 most likely refers to the Min mountains 岷山 in northern Sichuan, which lay on the western border of the Tang empire..

²⁶⁶ *Fan* 蕃, literally means “foreign” or “barbarian,” was also used as a variation of *Fan* or *Bo* 蕃, an abbreviation for the Chinese name for the medieval Tibetan empire, *Tufan* or *Tubo* 吐蕃. Because this tale is set in Sichuan, it can be inferred that these horsemen are probably Tibetan.

典。合知事實。」未及對。隔壁聞竇懸呼：「陳昭好在。」及問兄弟妻子存亡。昭即欲參見。冥吏云：「竇使君形容極惡。不欲相見。」昭乃具說殺牛實。奉劉尚書委曲，非牒也，紙是麻。見在漢州某司房架。²⁶⁷即令吏領昭至漢州取之。門館扃鎖，乃於節竅中出入。委曲至，闢乃無言。趙語昭：「爾自有一過知否？竇懸所殺牛。爾取一牛頭。」昭未及對。趙曰：「此不同人間，不可抵假。」須臾見一卒挈牛頭而至。昭即恐懼求救。趙令檢格合決。一百考五十日。因謂昭曰：「爾有何功德？」昭即自陳：「設若干人齋畫某像。」趙云：「此來生緣爾。」²⁶⁸昭又言：「曾於表兄家轉金剛經。」趙曰：「可合掌請。」昭依言。有頃，見黃襪箱經自天而下，住昭前。昭取視，即表兄所借本也。有燒處尚在。又令合掌。其經即滅。趙曰：「此足以免。」便放回復，令昭往一司。曰生祿，檢其修短。吏報云：「昭本名釗，是金傍刀，至某年改為昭。更得十八年。」昭聞惆悵。趙笑曰：「十八年大得作樂事。何不悅乎。」乃令吏送昭。至半道見一馬當路。吏云：「此爾本屬可乘。」此即騎乃活。死已一日半矣。

At the beginning of the Yuanhe era [805–820], in Hanzhou 漢州 [modern Deyang, Sichuan] there was a clerk²⁶⁹ named Chen Zhao. Because he fell ill, he saw a man wearing a yellow gown who walked to his bed and said, “Judge Zhao summons you.”²⁷⁰ [Chen] Zhao asked for the reason why, and [the man in gown] replied, “You are needed in the underworld to testify about Liu Pi²⁷¹ and Dou Xuan 竇懸 as a witness.” Zhao remained seated in hesitation. There was also a man who held in his hand a sack, like a placenta, and official [in yellow] complained to him about his lateness. [The late official] replied, “[My lateness is] due to this. I was waiting for the butcher to cut it out.” This made [the other official] smile, and he said to Zhao, “Do not fear, sir. To get human vitality, you must obtain a pig's placenta. You may lie on your side and face east.” Zhao complied with his words.

²⁶⁷ This sentence begins with *mianjian* 面見; I have deleted the character *mian* 面.

²⁶⁸ In the *Taiping guangji*, the text has “merit” instead of “condition for future birth.”

²⁶⁹ For *Kongmu* 孔目, see Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles*, 297, no. 3503; for *dian* 目, see 499, no. 6515.

²⁷⁰ “Judge Zhao” 趙判官 may refer to Zhao Gongming 趙公明, a god of pestilence and money generally depicted as a black-faced official. Aside from his role as a protector against plagues, he was also called upon as a judge who corrected unjust monetary transactions; see Yuan Ke 袁珂, *Zhongguo shenhua chuanshuo cidian* 中國神話傳說詞典 (1985), 268.

²⁷¹ Liu Pi 劉闢 (d. 806) was an official who served under Wei Gao 韋皋 (745–805) in Xichuan 西川 Circuit. See story 6 for Wei Gao. After Gao's death, Liu claimed the title of military commissioner (*jiedushi* 節度使) and rebelled against Emperor Xianzong until he was defeated and executed in 806. Like Wei Gao, he is mentioned in volume 140 of the *Old Book of Tang* and in volume 158 of the *New Book of Tang*; see also Hans van de Ven, *Warfare in Chinese History*, 163.

Before he knew it, he had already followed the two officials along a very flat road for perhaps more than ten *li*, and they arrived at a city that was as large as a capital. Armed soldiers guarded its gates, and they entered to see a man with an angry and fearsome countenance, namely Judge Zhao, who said, “Liu Pi reigned in Dongchuan 東川 [circuit in modern Sichuan]. Dou Xuan seized forty-seven head of cattle and delivered them to Zizhou 梓州 [modern Mianyang, Sichuan] and gave permission to Liu Pi to slaughter them. Pi had also claimed that there was no documentation for this. You, as a clerk, would know the truth of this matter.” Before the interrogation took place, from behind a wall they heard Dou Xuan cry out, “Fortunately, Chen Zhao has arrived!” and ask if his siblings, wife, and children were alive or dead. [Chen] Zhao wished to see him. The underworld official said, “Because Mr. Dou's appearance is extremely dreadful, he does not wish to see you.” [Chen] Zhao thus stated, “The whole truth of the killing of cattle is that it was the order of the minister Liu. There was no documentation, only [an order written on] a hemp sheet. It may be found on a shelf in a certain department building in Hanzhou.” [The judge] promptly ordered the officials to lead [Chen] Zhao to Hanzhou to fetch it. The building's door was locked, so they pried open a hole at the joint [of the door] and entered. The full story was then resolved. Pi thus had nothing to say [for himself].

[Judge] Zhao told [Chen] Zhao, “Do you know that you also have a transgression? When Dou Xuan killed the cattle, you took one of them.” Chen Zhao did not have time to answer before Judge Zhao said, “This is not like the human realm. You cannot rely on falsehood.” In just a moment, a soldier arrived bringing the cow along. Chen Zhao was then frightened and pleaded for mercy. Judge Zhao ordered the court to come to a ruling of one hundred beatings in fifty days. He asked Chen Zhao, “What merit do you have?” Chen Zhao then explained himself: “I

arranged some vegetarian feasts and commissioned [Buddha] images.” Judge Zhao said, “This karma will determine your next birth.” Chen Zhao continued, “Once at my cousin's house, I had read the *Diamond Sūtra*.” Judge Zhao said, “Would you please join your palms?” Chen Zhao complied with his words. In just a moment, a *sūtra* box draped in yellow descended from the sky and appeared before Chen Zhao. Chen Zhao took a look at it, and indeed it was the copy that his cousin had loaned him. There were still burn marks on it, and he was again asked to join his palms. The *sūtra* then went up in flames. Judge Zhao said, “This is enough to excuse you.”

He then released [Chen Zhao] to return to life, and ordered that Chen Zhao go toward a certain chamber. He said, “As for your registry of life, I have examined it and shortened your lifespan.” The official announced, “Zhao’s original name was *zhao* 釗 with a *jin* 金 character and a knife (*dao* 刀) radical, and it continued for some years until it was changed to Zhao 昭.²⁷² [Due to this,] he will get eighteen more years.” Chen Zhao heard this and became despondent. Judge Zhao smiled and said, “In eighteen years you can amass a great deal of meritorious works. Why not be pleased?” He then ordered an official to escort Chen Zhao [out of the underworld]. When they were halfway there, they saw a horse in the middle of the road. The official said, “This horse originally belonged to you, so you can ride it.” As he rode on it, he came to life. He had been dead for a day and a half.

8. The Monk Weigong 僧惟恭

[0469a20] 荊州法性寺僧惟恭。三十餘年，念金剛經日五十遍。不拘僧儀。好酒，多是非。為眾僧所惡。後遇疾且死，同寺有僧靈巖。其迹類惟恭，為一寺二害。因他故出，去寺一里，逢五六人年少甚都，衣服鮮潔，各執樂器。如龜茲部。問靈巖：「惟恭上人何在？」靈巖即語其處，疑其寺中有供也。及晚回入寺聞鐘聲，惟恭已死。因說向來所見。其日，合寺聞絲竹聲，竟無樂人入寺。當時名僧云：「惟恭蓋承經之力，生不動國。」

²⁷² This alludes to a practice, common in premodern China, of changing one's name to something considered more auspicious in the hopes of increasing luck or longevity; see Wilkinson, *Chinese History: A New Manual*, 118.

(「國」原作「罔」，據明鈔本改。)亦以其跡勉靈歸也。」靈歸感悟，折節緇門。(出《西陽雜俎》)

At Faxing Temple 法性寺 in Jingzhou [modern Jingzhou, Hubei] lived the monk Weigong,²⁷³ who recited the *Diamond Sūtra* fifty times every day for over thirty years. He also ignored monastic decorum and was fond of drinking alcohol and spreading rumors. He was detested by the rest of the monks. After he fell ill and died, in the same temple was a monk [called] Lingkui 靈歸, whose behavior was similar to that of Weigong, so there were two troublemakers in one temple. Because he had gone out one *li* outside the temple, he met five or six people, all very young, wearing colorful, clean clothes, and each holding a musical instrument like a Kuchean band.²⁷⁴ They asked Lingkui, “Where is venerable Weigong?” Lingkui told them where he [Weigong] was. They suspected that the temple was hosting an offering.

When he [Lingkui] returned to the temple in the evening, he heard the sound of the bell [and knew] that Weigong had already died. He then told [the other monks] what he had seen. On that day, the whole temple heard the sound of music, even though no musicians had entered the temple. At that time, a famous monk said, “Weigong, relying on the power of the [*Diamond Sūtra*], was reborn in the land of Akṣobhya²⁷⁵ and has used this sign to exhort Lingkui.” Lingkui was moved to understanding and came around to the integrity of the monastic order.

9. Dong Jinchao 董進朝

[0469b06] 董進朝元和中入軍。初在軍時，宿直城東樓上。一夕月明，忽見四人著黃。從東來聚立城下。說己姓名，狀若追捕。因相語曰：「董進朝常持金剛經。以一分功德，祝

²⁷³ Weigong 惟恭 (796–896) was a Tang dynasty monk whose biography is found in the *Song Biographies of Eminent Monks* (*Song gaoseng zhuan* 宋高僧傳); see T50.2061:869b15.

²⁷⁴ Qiuci 龜茲 is the Chinese name for Kucha, a flourishing Buddhist kingdom in Central Asia. Kuchean music was widely popular in Tang China; see Schaefer, *The Golden Peaches of Samarkand: A Study of T'ang Exotics*, 52.

²⁷⁵ *Budongguo* 不動國 (“Immovable Country”) refers to Abhirati, the eastern pure land of the buddha Akṣobhya (不動如來 *Budong rulai*, “Immovable Tathāgata”); see Soothill, *A Dictionary of Chinese Buddhist Terms*, 106.

庇冥司。我輩久蒙其惠。如何殺之？須枉命相代。若此人他去，我等無所賴矣。」其一人云：「董進朝對門有一人，同姓同年壽限相埒。可以代矣。」因忽不見，進朝驚異之。及明已聞對門復魂聲，問其故。死者父母云：「子昨宵暴卒。」進朝感泣，說之。因為殯塋供養其父母焉。後出家法號慧通。住興元唐安寺(初陸其志於此有疑，後識者云：「壽限相埒則非枉命」其疑乃釋)。

Dong Jinchao joined the army during the Yuanhe era [805–820]. When he was first in the army, he was stationed at night in a tower on the eastern wall of the city. One evening, when the moon was bright, there suddenly appeared four men wearing yellow. They came from the east and assembled at the base of the wall. They mentioned his full name, and it seemed as though they were here to find and arrest him. They said to each other, “Dong Jinchao always upholds the *Diamond Sūtra*. Using a portion of his merit, he prays to protect [us] underworld officials. We have long received his blessings. How could we kill him? We must exchange and seize [another person's] life for his. If this other man were to go on behalf of him [Dong], we could not be blamed for it!” One of the other men said, “Across from Dong Jinchao[’s house] there is a man with the same surname, of the same age and lifespan. He could be exchanged!” They then suddenly disappeared, and Dong Jinchao was frightened by this strange occurrence.

At dawn, [Dong] heard the sound of summoning a soul²⁷⁶ from the neighboring house and asked them about the reason [for their mourning]. The deceased’s parents said, “Our son died inexplicably last night.” Jinchao was moved to tears and told them about it [what he had seen the night before]. He then arranged a funeral and provided for his [the deceased’s] parents.

Afterwards, he left home [to become a monk], took the dharma name Huitong 慧通, and lived at Tang’an Monastery²⁷⁷ in Xingyuan 興元 [in modern day Hanzhong, Shaanxi Province]. (At first,

²⁷⁶ *Fuhun sheng* 復魂聲 (“soul-reviving sounds”) May refer to either the sounds of instruments used in mortuary rites or the sounds of crying mourners; see Watson and Rawski, *Death Ritual in Late Imperial and Modern China*.

²⁷⁷ Tang’ansi 唐安寺 (“Vast Peace Monastery”) was founded during the Sui as Falunsi 法輪寺 (“Dharma Wheel Monastery”) and received its current name in 846.

Lu Qizhi²⁷⁸ doubted this [story], but after a knowledgeable person told him, “When people have the same lifespan, then it is not a premature death” his doubts were resolved.)

10. Wang Mian 王沔

[0469b17] 元和中，嚴司空綬在江陵時，涪陽鎮將王沔，常持金剛經。因使歸州勘事，回至咤灘船破。五人同溺。沔初入水，若有人授竹一竿。隨波出沒，至下牢鎮。著岸不死，視手中物。乃授持金剛經也。咤灘至下牢，三百餘里。

During the Yuanhe era [805–820], when Minister of Works²⁷⁹ Yan Shou²⁸⁰ was in Jiangling 江陵 [in modern Jingzhou, Hubei], there was Cenyang 涪陽 Garrison Commander²⁸¹ Wang Mian, who always upheld the *Diamond Sūtra*. [Wang] was sent to Guizhou 歸州 [in modern Hubei] to investigate something, and as he was returning his boat shattered on the shore in Zhatan 咤灘 [in modern Zigui, Hubei]. Five men drowned altogether. [Wang] Mian at this time [also fell] into the water, and it seemed as though someone handed him a bamboo rod. [As he held onto it] he bobbed in and out of the water until he arrived at Xialao 下牢 Garrison [in modern Yichang, Hubei]. He landed on the shore without dying and looked at what was in his hand and found that it was the *Diamond Sūtra*. From Zhatan to Xialao is at least three hundred *li*.

²⁷⁸ I have not been able to find other sources mentioning Lu Qizhi 董進朝. Judging from the context of this interjection and its absence from the *Taiping guangji*, the name would seem most likely to refer to some acquaintance of Duan Chengshi.

²⁷⁹ See Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles*, 450.

²⁸⁰ Yan Shou 嚴綬 (746–822) was an official of the Tang dynasty who held many prominent positions in the imperial bureaucracy over the course of his career. His biography appears as volume 146 of the *Old Book of Tang*.

²⁸¹ *Zhen* 鎮 or “garrison,” was a strategic division of the Tang territory, each of which was headed by a commander (*jiang* 將); see Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles*, 121. The headquarters of Cenyang Garrison was in modern Jingzhou, Hubei.

11. The Monk Huizong 僧會宗

[0469b23] 長慶初，荊州公安僧會宗，姓蔡。常中蠱得病骨立。乃發願念金剛經，以待盡。至五十遍，晝夢有人令開口，喉中引出髮十餘莖。夜又夢吐大蟪長一肘餘，因此遂愈。荊山僧行堅見其事。

At the beginning of the Changqing era [821–825], at Gong'an in Jingzhou [in modern Jingzhou, Hubei] there was the monk Huizong,²⁸² whose surname was Cai 蔡. He was always [afflicted by] intestinal parasites and became so ill that he was emaciated. He therefore vowed to recite the *Diamond Sūtra* as he waited for the end [of his life].

After having recited fifty times, he had a dream during the day that someone made him open his mouth and pulled out more than ten strands of hair from his throat. At night, he also dreamed that he vomited up a great worm longer than a forearm,²⁸³ and as a result of this, he proceeded to recover. The monk Xingjian 行堅 of Jingshan 荊山 [in modern Nanzhang, Hubei] witnessed this event.

12. The Monk Fazheng 僧法正

[0469c04] 江陵開元寺，般若院僧法正，日持金剛經三七遍。長慶初，得病卒。至冥司見若王者，問：「師生平作何功德？」答曰：「常念金剛經。」乃揖上殿，令登繡坐念經七遍。侍衛悉合掌階下，拷掠論對皆停息而聽念畢。後遣一吏引還。王下階送云：「上人更得三十年在人間。勿廢讀誦。」因隨吏行數十里，至一大坑。吏因臨坑自後推之，若隕空焉。死已七日，唯面不冷。法正今尚在。年八十餘。荊州僧常靖親見其事。

²⁸² A biography of Huizong, which includes this story, appears in the *Song Biographies of Eminent Monks* (T50.2061 50:868a16).

²⁸³ This word (*zhou* 肘 lit. “shoulder”) is used in Chinese Buddhist texts to translate the Sanskrit *hasta*, which is the length from the elbow to the tip of the middle finger; see Soothill, *A Dictionary of Chinese Buddhist Terms*, 243.

In Jiangling 江陵 [in modern Jingzhou, Hubei] at the Prajña Hall of Kaiyuan Monastery²⁸⁴ was the monk Fazheng,²⁸⁵ who recited the *Diamond Sūtra* twenty-one times per day. At the beginning of the Changqing era [821–824], he fell ill and died. He arrived in the underworld and saw [someone who] looked like a king, who asked, “Master, during your lifetime, what meritorious deeds did you do?” to which [Fazheng] responded, “I often recited the *Diamond Sūtra*.” [The king] then bowed, sent him up to the palace hall, and had him sit on an embroidered seat and recite the *Sūtra* seven times. The attending guards all clasped their palms [in reverence] at the foot of the [palace] steps. The torture and discussion all came to a halt, and they listened to the entire recitation.

Afterwards, [the king] sent an official to lead him back [to the world of the living]. The king descended the stairs to see him off and said, “Reverend, you shall receive thirty more years in the human realm. Do not abandon your recitation²⁸⁶ [of the *Sūtra*].” And so he followed the official and walked for dozens of *li* until they arrived at a huge pit. The official had him face the pit and pushed him into it from behind, and he felt like he was falling through the air! [When he returned] he had already been dead for seven days, and only his face was not cold.²⁸⁷ Now Fazheng is still alive at over eighty years old.²⁸⁸ The monk Chanjing 常靖 of Jingzhou personally witnessed this event.

²⁸⁴ Prajña Hall 般若院 and Kaiyuan Monastery 開元寺 are also mentioned in the biography of Shenhui 神會, a prominent monk of the “Northern School” of Chan, of which Kaiyuan monastery was the last stronghold. See McRae, *The Northern School and the Formation of Early Ch’an Buddhism*, 64–66, 241.

²⁸⁵ A biography of Fazheng (c.765 – c. 850), which contains a variation of this story, is found in Zanning’s *Song Biographies of Eminent Monks* (T50.2061 50:867c27–868a11) in the section on sūtra recitation.

²⁸⁶ The practice of oral recitation (*dusong* 讀誦) is one of several practices prescribed within the text of the *Diamond Sūtra*, which is mentioned using this phrase nine times in Kumārajīva’s translation. As with exhortations to copy and explain the *Sūtra* to others, this is an instance of the rhetoric of self-promotion found in many Mahāyāna *sūtras*. See Yongyou, *The Diamond Sutra in Chinese Culture*, 159.

²⁸⁷ See Yu, “Death, Afterlife, and Rebirth in the Pure Land Tradition,” 70.

²⁸⁸ Since Fazheng is said to have received thirty more years at the beginning of the Changqing era, which ended in 825, this story dates the text as no later than 855.

13. The Novice Daoyin 沙彌道蔭

[0469c13] 石首縣有沙彌道蔭，常持念金剛經。寶曆初(廣記云長慶)因他出夜歸，中路忽遇虎，吼擲而前。沙彌知不免，乃閉目而坐，但默念經，心期救護。虎遂伏草守之。及曙村人來往虎乃去。視其蹲處，涎流於地。

In Shishou 石首 County [in modern Jingzhou, Hubei] there was the novice monk Daoyin,²⁸⁹ who always upheld and recited the *Diamond Sūtra*. At the beginning of the Baoli era [825–827] (the *Taiping Guangji* says Changqing [821–824]), he went out at night, and as he was returning, he suddenly saw a tiger in the road, which roared and lunged forward. The novice knew there was no escape, so he closed his eyes and sat down. He just silently recited the *Sūtra* and hoped in his heart for rescue. The tiger then leaned over across the grass and guarded him. At dawn, when the villagers started coming and going [along the road], the tiger left. [Daoyin] looked at the spot where he had sat, and [the tiger's] saliva had flooded the ground.

14. Wang Zhonggan 王忠幹

[0469c18] 元和三年，賊李同捷阻兵滄景，帝命劉祐統齊德軍討之。初圍德州城，城堅不拔，翌日又攻之。自卯至未，十傷八九，竟不能拔。時有齊州衙內八將官健兒王忠幹，博野人，常念金剛經。積二十餘年，日數不闕。其日忠幹上飛梯，將及堞身，中箭如蝟，為櫺木擊落。同火卒曳出，羊馬城外置之水濠裏岸。祐以暮夜命抽軍。其時城下矢落如雨，同火人匆忙，忘取忠幹屍。忠幹既死。如夢至荒野遇大河。欲渡無因仰天大哭。忽聞人語聲。忠幹見一人長丈餘，疑其神人。因求指營路。其人云：「爾莫怕我，令爾得渡此河。」忠幹拜之，頭低未舉，神人把腰擲之空中。久方著地。忽如夢覺，聞賊城上交二更。初不記過水，亦不知瘡。擡手捫面，血塗眉睫，方知傷損。乃舉身強行百餘步却倒。復見向人持刀叱，曰：「起，起！」忠幹驚懼遂走一里餘。坐歇方，聞本軍喝號聲。遂及本營，訪同火卒，方知身死在水濠裏，即夢中所過河也。忠幹見在齊德軍。

²⁸⁹ A biography of Daoyin, which includes this story, appears in Zanning's *Song Biographies of Eminent Monks* (T50.2061:871c21–26) in the same section as Fazheng. The story is repeated verbatim except for an extra line stating that Daoyin then practiced even harder after this event.

In the third year of the Yuanhe era [805–820], the rebel Li Tongjie²⁹⁰ was obstructing the army at Jingcheng, Cangzhou²⁹¹ [modern Cangzhou, Hubei], and the emperor ordered Liu You²⁹² to gather the Qide Army²⁹³ to suppress him. When [the army] first surrounded Dezhou city [modern Dezhou, Shandong], its walls were strong and it could not be captured, but the next day they attacked it again. Between early morning and afternoon,²⁹⁴ eight or nine out of ten soldiers were injured, and they indeed could not capture [the city].

At that time, in the Qizhou 齊州 office (*ya[men]* 衙[門]), there was the squad leader²⁹⁵, a strong one, Wang Zhonggan, a man of Boye 博野 [modern Baoding, Hebei], who often recited the *Diamond Sūtra*. Altogether, he did so for over twenty years, every day, without fail. On this day, Zhonggan was climbing a siege ladder, and as he was about to reach the battlements, his body was filled with so many arrows that he resembled a hedgehog, and he was struck down by a defensive beam. His fellow soldiers dragged him out of the defensive walls and put him down on the banks of the moat. Because night had fallen, [Li] You ordered the soldiers to retreat. At this

²⁹⁰ Li Tongjie 李同捷 (d. 829) was the son of Li Quanlüe 李全略, military governor (*jiedushi* 節度使) of Henghai Circuit 橫海. After his father's death in 826, Li Tongjie, attempting to succeed his father as governor of Henghai, refused an imperial edict ordering his reassignment to another circuit, prompting a military campaign against him. This rebellion lasted until 829, when Li surrendered and was summarily executed on the way to Chang'an. His biography can be found in chapter 143 of the *Old Book of Tang* and in chapter 213 of the *New Book of Tang*. See also Xiong, *Historical Dictionary of Medieval China*, 356.

²⁹¹ “Cangjing” 滄景 is an abbreviation for Jingcheng commandery 景城郡 in Cangzhou 滄州, where Henghai Circuit was headquartered.

²⁹² This seems to be another error, and should probably match the *Taiping Guangji*, which refers to Li You 李祐 (d. 829), one of several generals appointed military governor of Henghai and tasked with suppressing Li Tongjie's rebellion, and the one to whom Li Tongjie eventually surrendered. Li You fell ill during his army's assault on Li Tongjie, and he died shortly after hearing of Li Tongjie's death. His biography can be found in chapter 161 of the *Old Book of Tang* and chapter 214 of the *New Book of Tang*.

²⁹³ I have been unable to find other contemporary references to a military unit called the Qide Army 齊德軍. It may be refer to an army based out of Qizhou 齊州 (modern Shandong), Duan's home province. The name might then be translated as the “Righteous Army of Qi[zhou].”

²⁹⁴ *Mao* 卯 and *wei* 未 refer respectively to the fourth and eighth of the twelve divisions of the day used in Tang China. *Mao* corresponded roughly to 5:00–7:00 and *wei* corresponded to 13:00–15:00; see Wilkinson, *Chinese History: A New Manual*, 538.

²⁹⁵ I have been unable to find information about the title *bajiangguan* 八將官. Following Ho's assumption that the title refers to someone in charge of eight or so subordinates, I have translated this term as “squad leader” in order to avoid confusion with the “section leader” (*wubo* 伍伯) in tale no. 6.

time, arrows were falling from the city walls like rain, and his fellows were so hurried and busy that they forgot to retrieve Zhonggan's body. Zhonggan had already died.

As if in a dream, he arrived in the wilderness and encountered a great river. He wanted to cross, but there was no way to do so, so he looked to the sky and wept greatly. Suddenly he heard the sound of a person's voice. Zhonggan saw a man over a *zhang*²⁹⁶ in height and suspected it was a deity, so he beseeched [the man] to point him toward the road to the barracks. The man said, "Do not fear me, I will get you across this river." Zhonggan bowed to him, and before he could lift his head [back up], the deity had grabbed him by the waist and tossed him into the air. Only after a while did he hit the ground.

Suddenly, as if waking from a dream, he heard the rebels atop the city walls changing shifts for the second watch of the night.²⁹⁷ At first, he did not remember crossing the water, nor did he know of his injuries. He lifted his hand to touch his face, smeared blood across his brow, and only then realized he was wounded. He then lifted up his body and forced himself to walk over a hundred paces until he collapsed. Once again, he saw the man from earlier holding a blade and shouting at him, saying "Get up! Get up!" Zhonggan was terrified and continued to run for another *li*. Only when he stopped to rest did he hear the sound of his own army shouting and roaring. He proceeded to reach his barracks and asked his fellow soldiers [about what happened], and only then realized that he had died at the moat, which was the river he crossed in the dream. Zhonggan is [still] seen with the Qide army.

²⁹⁶ Zhang Qiqiu 張齊丘 was a military commissioner (*jiedushi* 節度使) of Shuofang Circuit (朔方), which is headquartered in modern Yinchuan, Ningxia, during the reign of Emperor Xuanzong 唐玄宗 (r. 712-756). He was born in Kunshan 崑山, Suzhou 蘇州 Province. He is mentioned in volume 165, biography 77 of the *New Book of Tang*, under Zhang Yi 張鑑 (d. 783).

²⁹⁷ The second watch of the night corresponded to the period between 21:00 and 23:00; see Endymion Wilkinson, *Chinese History: A New Manual*, 538.

15. He Zhen's Wife 何軫妻

[0470a11] 何軫鬻販為業，妻劉氏。少斷酒肉，常持金剛經。先焚香像前，願年止四十五，臨終心不亂，先知死日。至太和四年冬，四十五矣，悉捨資裝供僧，欲入歲遍別親故。何軫以為病魅，不信。至歲除日，請僧授戒。入關沐浴易衣。獨處一室趺坐，高聲念經。及辨色悄然，兒女排室入看之，已卒。頂熱灼手。軫以僧禮葬。塔在荊州北郭。

He Zhen worked as a peddler, and his wife was surnamed Liu.²⁹⁸ She abstained from meat and alcohol from a young age and always upheld the *Diamond Sūtra*. She had previously burned incense before a [buddha] image and then prayed for the years [of her life] to end at forty-five, that at the moment of death²⁹⁹ her mind would not be confused, and that she would foreknow the day of her death. In the winter of the fourth year of the Taihe era [830], [she turned] forty-five, so she gave away her entire dowry³⁰⁰ to offer to the sangha, and as she had wished, on entering into the next year, she bid farewell to all of her relatives and friends. He Zhen thought her illness was bewildering her and so he did not believe her.

On New Year's Eve, she requested that the monks confer [monastic or novitiate] precepts onto her. She went into a solitary retreat, bathed and changed clothes. She stayed alone in a room, sat in a lotus position and recited the *Sūtra* loudly. When dawn arrived, it was very quiet, and her children lined up at the entrance of the room to see her. She had already died. The crown

²⁹⁸ In premodern China, women were not usually identified by personal names outside of their families. Married women were usually identified by their husband's family name followed by a gendered indicative (e.g. 何妻 *He Qi* “Wife He”) or, more formally, by their own family name (*shi* 氏; e.g. 劉氏 *Liu Shi* “[Woman of the] Liu Clan”). See Wilkinson, *Chinese History: A Manual*, 101.

²⁹⁹ This passage alludes to the idea of “right mindfulness at the moment of death” (*linzhong zhengnian* 臨終正念). According to *abhidharma* literature, a dying person's thoughts in their last moments are especially karmically potent and could be the key factor in determining their next rebirth. This doctrine gave rise to a tradition of elaborate deathbed rites centered on ensuring proper mindfulness of a buddha or buddha-land at the moment of death. See Yu, “Death, Afterlife, and Rebirth in the Pure Land Tradition” and Stone, *Right Thoughts at the Last Moment*.

³⁰⁰ In premodern China, a dowry might consist of money, jewelry (as indicated by the term *zizhuang* 資裝, lit. “money and adornments”), land, or other property and was the only means by which a daughter could receive inheritance. A bride's dowry was kept separate from the property of her husband and could be sold at her discretion. See Lü, “Bridal Dowry Land and the Economic Status of Women.”

of her head was so hot that it burned the hand.³⁰¹ Zhen arranged for her to be buried as a monastic, and her stupa is located at the northern wall of Jingzhou.

16. Wang Yin 王殷

[0470a19] 蜀左營卒王殷，常讀金剛經，不茹葷飲酒。為賞設庫子，前後為人誤累。合死者數四，皆非意得免。至太和四年，郭釗司空鎮蜀。郭性嚴急，小不如意皆死。王殷因呈綿纈，郭嫌其惡弱，令袒背將斃之。郭有番狗，隨郭臥起，非使宅人，逢之輒噬。忽吠數聲，立抱王殷背。駢逐不去。郭異之，怒遂解。

In the Left Encampment³⁰² of Shu [modern Sichuan] was the soldier Wang Yin, who often recited the *Diamond Sūtra* and did not eat meat or drink alcohol. In his capacity as Storehouseman of Reward Allotment,³⁰³ he found himself implicated in the mistakes of others. He came close to death several times, and in each case he unexpectedly evaded it. In the fourth year of the Taihe era [830], Minister of Works³⁰⁴ Guo Zhao³⁰⁵ occupied Shu. Guo was by nature strict and volatile, so anyone slightly out of accord with his wishes would die. Because Wang Yin presented some embroidered silk to Guo, and its inferior quality displeased him, he ordered [Wang Yin] to bare his back and wanted to execute him. Guo had a foreign³⁰⁶ dog that followed him from when he awoke to when he went to bed, and whenever someone not of his household

³⁰¹ According to Chinese Buddhist interpretations of *abidharma*, the location where the vital energy leaves a body—i.e the last place where warmth can be felt—indicates the next rebirth of the deceased person, with higher and lower realms corresponding to upper and lower parts of the body. One whose warmth is last felt in the crown of the head will be reborn in a holy path, such as a Pure Land. See Yu, “Death, Afterlife, and Rebirth in the Pure Land Tradition,” 70.

³⁰² This term refers to the Militant-as-Dragons Army (*longwu jun* 龍武軍), which was divided into Left and Right Encampments (*ying* 營); see Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles*, 325.

³⁰³ Hucker translates *kuzi* 庫子 as “storehouseman,” while Ho uses “treasurer.” According to Ho, “the term *shangshe kuzi* could perhaps refer to a store man or treasurer of an agency that rewarded armies with bounties on behalf of the authorities. See Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles in Imperial China*, 283; Ho, *Diamond Sutra Narratives*, 410.

³⁰⁴ See Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles in Imperial China*, 450.

³⁰⁵ Guo Zhao 郭釗 (772–830) was the grandson of Guo Ziyi 郭子儀 (697–781), a famous general known for his role in suppressing the An Lushan rebellion, as well as a great grandson of Emperor Daizong. He is mentioned in chapter 120 of the *Old Book of Tang* and chapter 137 of the *New Book of Tang*.

³⁰⁶ *Fan* 番 generally means “foreign,” but is also a variant of *Fan* 蕃, which means “Tibetan.” *Fanguo* 番狗 may therefore refer to a Tibetan mastiff or similar breed of Tibetan dog.

encountered it, it would immediately bite them. Suddenly, it barked a few times and embraced Wang Yin's back. [Guo] tried to drive it away, but it would not go. Guo was surprised by this, and he then begrudgingly released [Wang].

17. Zhao An 趙安

[0470b02] 郭司空離蜀之年，有百姓趙安，常念金剛經。因行野外，見衣一樸遺墓側。安以無主，遂持還。至家言於妻子。隣人即告官趙盜物，捕送縣賊曹。怒其不承認，以大關挾脛，折三段。後令杖脊，杖下輒折。吏意其有他術問之，唯念金剛經。及申郭，郭亦異之，判放。及歸其妻云：「某日聞君經函中震裂數聲，懼不敢發。」安乃馳視之，帶斷、軸折、紙盡破裂。安今見在。

In the year that Minister of Works Guo³⁰⁷ left Shu [Sichuan],³⁰⁸ there was the commoner Zhao An, who often recited the *Diamond Sūtra*. As he was going through the countryside, he saw a simple garment left beside a grave. An, assuming it did not have an owner, proceeded to pick it up to take back with him. When he arrived back home, he told his wife and children [about this]. His neighbor [who found out] immediately told the authorities that Zhao stole the item, and he was arrested and taken to [the official in charge of] the county bureau of crime.³⁰⁹ [The official] was angry that he did not confess and used a large vice³¹⁰ to crush his shins, but this [device] broke into three pieces. After this, he was ordered to be flogged on his back, but the cane broke as soon as it was brought down [on him].

³⁰⁷ This is the same Guo Zhao 郭釗 from the previous tale.

³⁰⁸ This refers to the year in which Guo Zhao gave up his position as military governor of Xichuan Circuit, an event recorded in chapter 120 of the *Old Book of Tang* as having occurred in the fourth year of the Taihe era (830). This is corroborated by the *Taiping guangji*'s version of this tale, which includes an interpolation specifying that it occurred in 830.

³⁰⁹ *Zeicao* 賊曹 literally means “bureau of crime” or police section but, based on this context, it is possible that the term is being used metonymically to refer to the official in charge of such a bureau. See Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles*, 521.

³¹⁰ *Daguan* 大關 is another term for *jiagun* 夾棍, a vise-like instrument of torture used to crush a victim's limbs. See Scott, *The History of Torture Through the Ages*, 102.

The officials thought he had some special technique and asked him about it, to which he replied that he recited the *Diamond Sūtra*. They reported this to Guo, and Guo also found this strange and ordered for him to be released. Upon his return, his wife said, “One day, I heard the sound of several cracks coming from your *sūtra* box, but out of fear I did not dare to open it. An then hurried to look at it, [and found that] the cord [closing the *sūtra* box] had snapped, the spool was broken, and the paper was completely torn up. An is still seen [alive] today.

18. Wang Han 王翰

[0470b10] 太和五年，漢州什邡縣百姓王翰，常在市，日逐小利。忽暴卒，經三日，却活。云冥中有十六人，同被追，十五人散配他處，翰獨至一司。見一青衫少年，稱是己姪，為冥官廳子。遂引見推典，又云是己兄，貌皆不相類。其兄語云：「有冤牛一頭訴爾。燒畚枉燒殺之。爾又曾賣竹與殺狗人作筊篲，殺狗兩頭。狗亦訴爾。爾今名未係死籍，猶可以免。為作何功德？」翰欲為設齋及寫法華經金光明經，皆曰不可。乃請曰，持金剛經日七遍與之。其兄喜曰：「足矣。」及活遂捨業出家。今在什邡縣。

In the fifth year of the Taihe era [831], in Shifang 什邡 County in Hanzhou [modern Deyang, Sichuan], the commoner Wang Han was always at the market and would make a small profit each day. He suddenly took ill and died, and after three days returned to life. He said that in the underworld there were sixteen other people who also were brought there, and fifteen of the people were sent to other offices, but Han was brought alone to a single ministry. There he saw a black-clad youth who said he was [Han's] nephew, serving as an attendant to the underworld officials. He proceeded to take [Han] to the investigating clerk,³¹¹ whom [the youth] said was his elder brother, though their appearances did not look at all similar.

His elder brother said, “There is an aggrieved ox pressing charges against you. When you set fire to a field, you unjustly burned it to death. You also sold bamboo to a dog-killer to make a

³¹¹ See Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles*, 508, 549.

trap,³¹² which killed two dogs. The dogs are also pressing charges against you. As of now, your name is not yet in the registry of the deceased, so you may still be pardoned. What merit will you make to this end?” Han wanted to arrange a vegetarian feast and copy the *Lotus Sūtra* and *Golden Light Sūtra*, but they said all of these were insufficient and requested that he uphold the *Diamond Sūtra* seven times a day for them [the animals]. His older brother happily said, “That is plenty!” When he revived, he proceeded to give up his business and leave home [to become a monk]. Today he is still [alive] in Shifang County.

19. Gao She 高涉

[0470b21] 太和七年冬，給事中李公石為太原行軍司馬，孔目官高涉因宿使院。至鼕鼕鼓起時，詣隣房，忽遇一人長六尺餘，呼曰：「行軍喚爾！」涉遂行。行稍遲，其人自後拓之，不覺向北。約行數十里，至野外，漸入一谷底，後上一山。至頂四望，邑屋盡眼下，至一曹司所追者呼云：「追高涉到！」其中人多衣朱綠。當案者似崔行信郎中，判云：「付司對。」復引出至一處，數百人露坐與猪羊雜處。領至一人前，乃涉妹婿杜則也，逆謂涉曰：「君初得書乎時，作新人局，遣某買羊四口。記得否？今被相債，備嘗苦毒。」涉遽云：「爾時祇使市肉，非羊也。」則遂無言。因見羊人立齧則，逡巡被領他去。倏忽又見一處，露架方梁，梁上釘大鐵環。有數百人，皆持刀以繩繫人頭，牽入環中，剗剔之。涉懼走出，但念金剛經。倏忽逢舊相識楊演云：「李說尚書時，杖殺賊李英道為劫賊事。已於諸處受生三十年。今却訴前事。君常記得否？」涉辭以年幼不省。又遇舊典段怡先與涉為義兄弟。逢涉云：「先念金剛經，莫廢忘否？向來所見未是極苦處。勉樹善業。今得還乃經之力。」因送至家，如夢。死已經宿，向所拓處數日青腫。

In the winter of the seventh year of the Taihe era [833], in which Supervising Secretary³¹³ Mr. Li Shi³¹⁴ served as adjutant³¹⁵ of Taiyuan 太原 [modern Taiyuan, Shanxi], the clerk³¹⁶ Gao She was

³¹² *Konghou* 箜篌 refers to a musical instrument similar to a harp and is a homophone of *konghou* 空喉, which is a trap used to catch dogs. This is either a scribal error or a set of archaic variant characters.

³¹³ See Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles*, 133.

³¹⁴ Li Shi 李石 (786–847) was a famous official who held several posts under Emperors Wenzong (r. 827–840) and Wuzong (r. 840–846), best known for his role in calming the political turmoil that followed the Ganlu Incident of 835, in which the emperor tried and failed to kill the imperial eunuchs, whose growing power began to threaten him. His biography is found in chapter 172 of the *Old Book of Tang* and chapter 131 in the *New Book of Tang*.

³¹⁵ See Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles*, 244.

³¹⁶ See Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles*, 297.

spending the night at the police office.³¹⁷ When the morning drum sounded, he went to visit a neighboring room and suddenly encountered a man over six *chi*³¹⁸ tall, who shouted, “The adjutant summons you!” [Gao] She then departed. He walked a bit slowly, so the man pushed him from behind and he, without realizing it, headed northward. After walking about ten *li*, he arrived in the countryside, gradually entered a valley, and then later climbed a mountain. Upon reaching the peak, he looked around and saw village houses all over [the valley] below. He then arrived at a government office, where his summoner shouted, “The summoned Gao She has arrived!” Among these people there were many wearing vermilion and green. The one in charge of the case resembled Director³¹⁹ Cui Xingxin,³²⁰ who decreed, “Hand him over to the officials to testify.” Again he was led out to an area where several hundred people sat in the open air alongside pigs and sheep.

He was brought before a man, and it was She's brother-in-law Du Ze 杜則, who greeted She and said, “When you first received the books [i.e. became a clerk], you threw a newcomer's [welcome] party and sent someone to buy four sheep. Do you remember? Now I am implicated in this [karmic] debt³²¹ and am experiencing bitter suffering.” [Gao] She then said, “At that time, you were only sent to the market for meat, not sheep.” [Du] Ze then had nothing to say. He then saw a sheep stand up like a man and bite Ze, and immediately he was led away somewhere else. Suddenly he saw another place, with open racks and square columns, and on the columns were nailed great iron rings. There were several hundred people, all holding knives and using rope to

³¹⁷ See Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles*, 431.

³¹⁸ During the Tang, a *chi* 尺 was equal to about a foot; see Wilkinson, *Chinese History: A New Manual*, 556.

³¹⁹ See Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles*, 301.

³²⁰ I have not found other sources that mention Cui Xinxin 崔行信. Based on the context, which assumes familiarity with him and his appearance, he was probably a prominent official around the time that this tale was written.

³²¹ In Chinese Buddhist texts, past karmic transgressions are often described as lingering debts (*zhai* 債) that must be repaid through retribution or penance; see Soothill, *A Dictionary of Chinese Buddhist Terms*, 348.

tie people to the rings, cut them open, and butcher them. [Gao] She was afraid and ran out, and did nothing but recite the *Diamond Sūtra*.

Suddenly, he ran into his old acquaintance Yang Yan, who said, “In Director³²² Li Shuo's³²³ time, they flogged the traitor Li Yingdao³²⁴ to death for banditry. Now that I tell of these past events, do you remember them?” [Gao] She stated that because of his youth he was unaware [of these things]. He also met an old [friend], the clerk Duan Yixian 段怡先, whom She considered to be like an adopted younger brother. Meeting She, he said, “You used to recite the *Diamond Sūtra*. Might you have abandoned or forgotten it? That which you have previously seen is not the place of the most extreme suffering. Make an effort to cultivate good karma. You are now able to return [to the human realm] due to the power of the *Sūtra*.” He was then delivered home, as if in a dream. He had been dead for a night, and the spot where he had been pushed was bruised and swollen for several days.

20. The Beacon Tower Guard of Fengzhou 豐州烽子

[0470c17] 永泰初，豐州烽子，暮出為党項縛，入西蕃易馬。蕃將令穴肩骨，貫以皮索。以馬數百蹄配之。經半歲，馬息一倍。蕃將賞以羊革數百，因轉近牙帳。贊普子愛其了事，遂令執纛，左右有剩肉餘酪與之。又居半年，因與酪肉悲泣不食。贊普問之，云：「有老母，頻夜夢見。」贊普頗仁，聞之悵然。夜召帳中語，云：「蕃法嚴，無放還例。我與爾馬有力者兩匹，於某道縱爾歸，無言我也。」烽子得馬極驕俱乏死。遂晝潛夜走。數日後，為刺傷足倒磧中。忽有風吹，物窸窣過其前，因攬之裹足。有頃不復痛。試起步走如故。經信宿方及豐州界。歸家，母尚存。悲喜曰：「自失爾，我唯念金剛經，寢食不廢，以祈見爾。今果其誓因。」取經拜之，縫斷亡數幅，不知其由。子因道磧中傷足事。毋令解足視之。所裹瘡物。乃數幅經也。其瘡亦愈。

³²² See Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles*, 411, 524.

³²³ Li Shuo 李說 (740–c.800) was a minor official of the Tang dynasty and the son of Li Yu 李遇 (d. 791), Vice Censor-in-Chief under Emperor Xuanzong. Li Shuo served as military governor of Hedong Circuit 河東, which was headquartered at Taiyuan. He is mentioned in chapter 146 of the *Old Book of Tang*.

³²⁴ I have not found any references to this Li Yingdao 李英道 in other sources.

At the beginning of the Yongtai era [765–766], in Fengzhou [modern Urad Qianqi, Inner Mongolia]³²⁵ there was a beacon guard³²⁶ who went out at dusk and was [captured and] tied up by Tanguts³²⁷ and taken to Tibet, [where] he was put in charge of horses. The Tibetan general ordered that holes be put in his shoulder bones in order to pass a leather cord through them, and he was given several hundred horses to care for. This went on for half of a year, then the number of horses doubled. The Tibetan general rewarded him with several hundred sheep and moved him closer to the capital tent. The *tsempo*³²⁸ liked how [the beacon guard] handled things and proceeded to have him carry the great banner, and when there was leftover meat or cheese, it was given to him.

He stayed there for another half of a year, and when he was given his cheese and meat he wept with grief and did not eat. The *tsempo* asked him about this, and he said, “I have an elderly mother, whom I often dream of at night.” The *tsempo* was quite kind, and when he heard this he was very upset. That night he summoned [the beacon guard] into his tent and said, “Tibetan law is strict: there is no precedent for returning [prisoners]. I will give you two powerful horses, and you will return [home] on a certain route and say nothing about me [having released you].” The beacon guard took the horses and rode them until they both died of exhaustion. He then hid during the day and walked at night. After several days, he collapsed on the rocky ground due to cuts on his feet. Suddenly, there was a wind blowing, and something passed in front of him with

³²⁵ This is the modern location corresponding to Fengzhou 豐州 in the Tang, according to the *Buddhist Studies Authority Database*. Ho locates Fengzhou in Bayan Nur, Inner Mongolia but does not provide a source for this claim. See Ho, *Diamond Sutra Narratives*, 413.

³²⁶ The term *fengzi* 烽子 refers to a soldier whose duty was to guard a fire beacon tower (*fenghuo tai* 烽火臺).

³²⁷ The Tanguts (党項 *Danxiang*) were a nomadic people who lived in the Western Xia (modern Northwest China) and were allied with the Tibetans during this period. Skaff, *Sui-Tang China and Its Turko-Mongol Neighbors: Culture, Power, and Connections, 580-800*, 38.

³²⁸ *Zanpu*(zi) 贊普(子) is a Chinese transliteration of the Tibetan word *tsempo* (*btsan po*), which refers to the ruler of Tibet and is variously translated as “emperor” or “king,” as Ho does.

a rustling noise, so he grabbed it and wrapped his feet [using this item]. In a short while there was no more pain [in his foot]. He tried to get up and he could walk as before.

He continued for two more nights until he reached the border of Fengzhou. He returned home, and his mother was still alive. In both sadness and joy, she said, “When I lost you, I did nothing but recite the *Diamond Sūtra*, except when sleeping and eating, praying to see you [again]. Now my vow has borne its fruit.”³²⁹ She fetched the *Sūtra* to venerate it [and found that] the seams had broken and some pages were lost, but she did not know how. Her son then told her about hurting his feet on the rocky ground. His mother had him remove [the wrappings] from his feet to look at them, and what he had wrapped around his wounds were pages of the *Sūtra*, and his wounds were also healed.

21. 王孝廉 Filial-and-Incorrupt Wang

[0471a08] 大曆中，太原偷馬賊誣一王孝廉同情。拷掠旬日，苦極強服。推吏疑其冤，未即具獄。其人惟念金剛經，其聲哀切，晝夜不息。忽一日有竹。兩節墜獄中。轉至於(廣記作止其)前。他囚爭取之，獄卒意藏刃，破視內。有字兩，行云：「法尚應捨何況非法。」書蹟甚工。賊首悲悔。具承以匿嫌誣之(廣記作舊嫌)。

During the Dali [766–779] era, in Taiyuan [modern Taiyuan, Shanxi], a horse thief accused the Filial-and-Incorrupt Wang³³⁰ of being his accomplice. He was interrogated and tortured for ten days, suffered severely and was forced to confess. The investigating official suspected he had been wronged, and did not yet close the case. This man [Wang] did nothing but recite the *Diamond Sūtra*—his voice very sorrowful—ceaselessly all day and night. Suddenly one day, a

³²⁹ This statement alludes to the Buddhist notion of a karmic vows, according to which vowing to perform a meritorious deed in order to produce a desired result will, through the law of karma, produce the result upon fulfillment of the vow. It is this logic which underlies bodhisattva vows. See Ohnuma, *Head, Eyes, Flesh, Blood*, 98.

³³⁰ “Filial-and-incorrupt” (孝廉 *xiaolian*) was a category of scholar nominated to the capital by local officials for appointment to an official position. See Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles*, 237. Ho treats *xiaolian* as a personal name. See Ho, *Diamond Sutra Narratives*, 414–415.

bamboo in two pieces fell into the prison, turned around and landed in front of him.³³¹ The other prisoners fought over it, and the jailer thought it was concealing a knife, so he broke it open to look inside. There were words in two columns, saying “Do not cling to *dharma*, much less to no *dharma*.”³³² The handwriting was highly skilled. The thief started to feel sorrow and regret and completely confessed to falsely accusing [Wang] due to a hidden resentment.³³³

³³¹ *Taiping guangji* has “stopped in front of him.”

³³² This is a quote from the sixth chapter of the *Diamond Sūtra*, in which the Buddha explains that, because of the emptiness of all *dharma*s (i.e. mental and physical phenomena), there is ultimately nothing to which a being can become attached. (T235.8:749b11) This English translation is borrowed from Pine, *The Diamond Sutra*, 86.

³³³ The *Taiping guangji* has “old resentment.”

APPENDIX B

TABLES

Table 2. Historical Details in *Collected Anomalies*

No.	Protagonist	Date	Location	Record of Transmission?	Also appears in
P	Duan Wenchang 段文昌	801	Jianyang, Sichuan		
1	Zhang Qiqiu 張齊丘	712–756	Yinchuan, Ningxia	yes	<i>Taiping guangji</i> (TPGJ) 58, <i>Dingminglu</i>
2	Commander Wang Mou 虞候王某	730–787	Kaifeng, Henan	yes	TPGJ 66, <i>Yinhualu</i>
3	Sun Xian 孫咸	762–781	Hubei		TPGJ 67
4	Zhideng 智燈	785–805	Jingzhou		TPGJ 68
5	Wang Conggui's sister 王從貴妹	785–804	Jingzhou, Hubei	partial	TPGJ 69
6	Left Encampment Section Leader 左營伍伯	785–805	Sichuan	partial	TPGJ 70
7	Chen Zhao 陳昭	805–820	Deyang, Sichuan		TPGJ 72
8	Weigong 惟恭	~896	Jingzhou, Hubei		TPGJ 79, <i>Song</i> <i>gaoseng zhuan</i> (SGSZ) T50.2061:869b15
9	Dong Jinchao 董進朝	805–820	unclear		TPGJ 81, <i>Baoying ji</i>
10	Wang Mian 王沔	805–820	Jingzhou, Hubei		TPGJ 80
11	Huizong 會宗	821–825	Jingzhou, Hubei		SGSZ T50.2061 50:868a16

Table 2 - continued

No.	Protagonist	Date	Location	Record of Transmission?	Also appears in
12	Fazheng 法正	821–825	Jingzhou, Hubei		<i>TPGJ</i> 85, <i>SGSZ</i> T50.2061 50:867c27–868a11
13	Daoyin 道蔭	825–827 or 821–825	Jingzhou, Hubei	partial	<i>TPGJ</i> 86, <i>SGSZ</i> T50.2061:871c21–26
14	Wang Zhonggan 王忠幹	829	Dezhou, Shandong	partial	<i>TPGJ</i> 73
15	He Zhen's wife 何軫妻	830	Jingzhou, Hubei		<i>TPGJ</i> 90
16	Wang Yin 王殷	830	Sichuan		<i>TPGJ</i> 91
17	Zhao An 趙安	830	Sichuan (implied)		<i>TPGJ</i> 89, <i>Baoying ji</i>
18	Wang Han 王翰	831	Deyang, Sichuan		<i>TPGJ</i> 92
19	Gao She 高涉	833	Taiyuan, Shanxi		<i>TPGJ</i> 95
20	The Beacon Tower Guard of Fengzhou 豐州烽子	765–766	Urad Qianqi, Inner Mongolia		<i>TPGJ</i> 57
21	Filial and Incorrupt Wang 王孝廉	766–779	Taiyuan, Shanxi		<i>TPGJ</i> 60

Table 3. Themes in *Collected Anomalies*

No.	Protective <i>Ling</i>	Material <i>Ling</i> ³³⁴	Extending Life	Positive Rebirth	Worldly Injustice	Otherworldly Justice	Practice
P	X				X		reciting, copying
1	X		X				reciting
2	X	X			X		reciting
3		X*		X		X	copying
4			X			X	upholding, reciting
5			X			X	upholding
6	X	X					reciting
7			X			X	reciting
8				X			reciting
9			X				upholding
10	X	X*				? ³³⁵	upholding
11	X		X				reciting
12			X	X		X	upholding, reciting (讀誦) ³³⁶
13	X					X	upholding, reciting
14	X		X				reciting

³³⁴ An asterisk (*) indicates that this tale contains a material manifestation of the *Sūtra* itself in the form of a scroll or page.

³³⁵ This is the tale of Dong Jinchao which, as discussed in Chapter 4, is the sole example of what might be called underworldly injustice.

³³⁶ Although there are slight nuances distinguishing the terms *nian* 念, *dusong* 讀誦, and *du* 讀, for the sake of simplicity I have translated all three as “reciting.” with the Es “reciting” for lack of a better term. The term only appears in this tale, so I have inserted the Chinese characters here in order to distinguish this terminology from *nian* 念, which appears elsewhere in the tales and which I also translate as “reciting.”

Table 3 - continued

No.	Protective <i>Ling</i>	Material <i>Ling</i> ³³⁷	Extending Life	Positive Rebirth	Worldly Injustice	Otherworldly Justice	Practice
15				X			upholding, reciting
16	X	X			X		reciting (讀)
17	X	X*			X		reciting
18			X			X	upholding
19			X			X	reciting
20	X	X*					reciting
21	X	X*			X		reciting

³³⁷ An asterisk (*) indicates that this tale contains a material manifestation of the *Sūtra* itself in the form of a scroll or page.

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