

35. Texts for Stabilizing Tombs

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Over the past half century, archaeologists have unearthed hundreds of texts buried in ancient Chinese tombs. The variety of interred writing is remarkable. From about the fifth century B.C.E. on, works of philosophy, literature, and history appear with some frequency among the grave goods buried with the dead, as do documents concerned with legal, administrative, ritual, and military issues; treatises on medicine, macrobiotics, divination, and portent reading; and almanacs and examples of sacred cartography.¹ These manuscripts, written on silk and bamboo or wooden slips, were the treasured personal property of the deceased, and their placement in the tomb made them available for the deceased's use in the afterlife. A closer look at the particular texts interred reveals that they were not chosen as casual reading material. Some scholars have argued that certain texts may have guided the dead on their perilous journey to transcendent realms or provided esoteric knowledge that would aid in the pursuit of posthumous immortality.² Donald Harper has suggested that these buried libraries may also have served a "talismanic" function designed to protect the corporal remains and spiritual essences housed in the tomb.³

The most pervasive type of burial text is the "tomb inventory" (*yiwushu* 衣物疏 or *qiance* 遣策), which lists the personal items interred with the deceased individual. Occasionally these inventories are accompanied by letters to underworld

authorities presenting the deceased to the subterranean bureaucracy and informing them how to appropriately handle the transfer of the burial goods.⁴

Shifting sociopolitical realities and changing views of the divine during the Eastern Zhou (770–221 B.C.E.) profoundly influenced the various ways in which early Chinese imagined the afterlife and their relationships with their dead.⁵ Over several centuries, the Zhou feudal order, founded on lineage ties and noble birth, gradually gave way to centrally administered bureaucratic states in which government appointments were based on merit and one's social status could be elevated through service to the state. In turn, these new ways of organizing society altered the perceptions of the underworld, giving rise to an elaborate bureaucratic conception of the afterlife.⁶ By the Eastern Han dynasty (25–220), we find a panoply of celestial and subterranean spirits mentioned in tomb-interred documents. These divine functionaries carried out numerous responsibilities inspired by the political and judicial institutions prevalent among the living.

In the mid-Eastern Han, two new types of text begin to appear in many tombs of low-level elites: "land-purchase contracts" (*maidiquan* 買地卷) and "tomb-stabilizing writs" (*zhenmuwen* 鎮墓文).⁷ These documents, like the tomb inventories, differed from the other kinds of interred texts (e.g., philosophical, legal, or divinatory writings) in that their messages were directed to underworld divinities with the primary aims of securing the tomb and peacefully assimilating the newly deceased individual into the world of the dead. In other words, these texts are meaningful only in the immediate burial context and were not consulted by the deceased during his or her lifetime.⁸

Land-purchase contracts were written or inscribed on durable material such as lead, stone, brick, or jade and were buried inside the tomb to prove the lawful occupation of a plot of sacred space in which a grave could be constructed. The earliest authentic specimen excavated so far dates to 82 C.E., and similar contracts continue to be produced even today. Terry Kleeman highlighted two regionally distinctive types of entombed land-purchase contracts: those from the North, which are modeled on real-world documents and involve actual sellers, witnesses, and reasonable amounts of money,⁹ and those produced in the South, which record transactions involving exorbitant amounts of cash paid to terrestrial divinities.¹⁰ In most Southern contracts, deified natural entities such as the sun, the moon, the four seasons, Heaven, Earth, and the five phases, as well as supernatural entities like the Sovereign Sire of the East, the Queen Mother of the West, and the Lad of the Eastern Sea, serve as witnesses. Money is paid not only to cover the cost of the burial ground but also to make amends for intruding into the realm of the earth spirits.¹¹

Proper documentation, in the form of a land-purchase contract, ensured that the deceased could not be evicted from his property by the contentious spirits of those previously buried in the same soil, or a later tenant whose own interment might encroach on the contract holder's authorized burial space.¹²

Without such a deed, an abandoned corpse residing within the same plot of land could threaten the deceased by laying claim to the tomb or unlawfully pilfering sacrifices that had been offered to him.¹³ Land-purchase contracts address these potential problems by often including what Kleeman calls a “corpse clause.” These are provisions stating that all deceased individuals previously buried in the land acquired by the contract will become the permanent slaves of the deceased purchaser; even plants and animals living on the land will become the property of the deceased.¹⁴ Land-purchase contracts thus reveal the logical application of legal and administrative authority in securing a place for the dead that kept them close enough to be properly propitiated yet safely separated from their living descendants.

A second mortuary document prevalent during the late Han and early medieval period is the tomb-stabilizing writ. Unlike land-purchase contracts, which are still used in burials, tomb-stabilizing writs were in use for only about 250 years during the late Eastern Han and Jin (265–420) dynasties before their functions were apparently subsumed by land contracts.¹⁵ The physical form of these burial objects differs markedly from that of land contracts. Instead of inscribing text on a flat slab of durable material, tomb-stabilizing writs were written with a brush, often in vermilion ink, on the outside of small, unglazed pottery jars. Some of the jars seem to have contained a kind of divine medicine (*shenyao* 神藥), which is occasionally mentioned in their texts.¹⁶

Besides providing sustaining nutrients, tomb-stabilizing jars and their accompanying texts served three main purposes: (1) to absolve the deceased from responsibility for violating the boundary between land appointed for human use and the realm of the soil divinities, (2) to present the newly deceased individual to the underworld authorities, and (3) to protect living descendants from the adverse effects of death pollution, including illness, misfortune, and additional family deaths, by stressing the segregation of the living and the dead.¹⁷

The content of the typical tomb-stabilizing writ consists of an appeal to the authority of heavenly deities—such as the Envoy of the Celestial Thearch (Tian-di shizhe 天帝使者) or the Yellow God (Huangshen 黃神), Lord of the Northern Dipper (Beidouzhushu 北斗主)—who announce the arrival of the deceased to the underworld bureaucrats, which include such figures as the Elder of Haoli (Haoli fulao 蒿里父老),¹⁸ the Tumulus Vanguard (*Zhongqian* 冢前), the Tomb-mound Assistant (*Qiucheng* 丘丞), and the Tomb Earl (*Mubo* 墓伯).¹⁹ Commands or orders (*ling* 令) are sometimes issued stipulating how the dead and their living descendants should be treated. Three tomb-stabilizing writs are translated in this chapter (documents 11–13).

A subgenre of the tomb-stabilizing writ is the “infestation-quelling writ” (*jiezhuwen* 解注文). As with regular *zhenmuwen*, infestation-quelling writs were written on the surface of small pottery jars that were then buried in the tomb. It was hoped that the presence of such jars would help stave off the undesirable effects of death pollution (primarily disease) that might otherwise be

inadvertently or deliberately passed to living descendants by their recently deceased ancestor.²⁰ Document 14 is an example of this type of text.

The final genre of entombed text that I discuss here is the tomb inventory. As mentioned earlier, this type of text is among the most common found in the tombs of early and medieval China. The geographical area across which tomb inventories have been discovered is vast. While most have come from tombs located in Hubei and Hunan, others have been discovered in Henan, Guangxi, Jiangxi, and Jiangsu Provinces. Perhaps the most outstanding specimen was found in tomb 3 (sealed 168 B.C.E.), constructed for the Marquis of Dai 戴 at Mawangdui 馬王堆 near modern Changsha 長沙, Hunan. This particular inventory, written on bamboo slips and continuing on seven wooden boards, lists more than four hundred items assembled to provide for the marquis's posthumous comfort.²¹ Even more interesting for our purposes is the attached letter addressed to underworld authorities. This document, written on one of the wooden boards by the household assistant (*jiacheng* 家丞) of the Li family (the Marquis of Dai is surnamed Li), is addressed to the Gentleman of the Interior Responsible for Burial Goods (*Zhuzang langzhong* 主藏郎中). The document instructs this underworld official to transmit the list of funerary goods to his supervisor, the Chief Administrator of Burial Goods (*Zhuzang jun* 主藏君).²²

Although only a fraction of the total number of tomb inventories are paired with letters addressed to members of the underworld administration, the fact that such lists were buried in tombs supports the assumption that they were meant to be read by officials serving in the subterranean bureaucracy. Document 15 is an example of a tomb inventory with an attached letter dating from the early medieval period.

The recovery of land-purchase contracts, tomb-stabilizing writs, and tomb inventories provides a rare window into the common religious beliefs and practices of early China, practices that continued to be widely implemented during the early medieval period. The famous adage, attributed to Confucius, that the dead should be treated with reverence but kept at a distance,²³ appropriately describes the ambivalent attitudes that the men and women of these eras held toward their dead. On the one hand, interred documents were deployed to protect departed loved ones from potentially malevolent or intrusive spirits, but on the other hand, they served to limit contact between living descendants and deceased ancestors. Overall, these texts aimed at directing the deceased's numinous power toward securing long-term family stability and prosperity.

FURTHER READING

The seminal study in English of excavated land contracts and tomb-stabilizing writs is Terry F. Kleeman, "Land Contracts and Related Documents," in *Makio Ryōkai Hakase shōju kinen ronshū, Chūgoku no shūkyō: Shisō to kagaku* 牧尾良海

博士壽計記念論集, 中國の宗教: 思想と科學 (Tokyo: Kokusho kankōkai, 1984), 1–34. But see also the excellent articles by Anna Seidel, “Traces of Han Religion,” in *Dōkyō to shūkyō bunka* 道教と宗教文化, ed. Akizuki Kan’ei 秋月觀暎 (Tokyo: Hirakawa shuppansha, 1987), 221–57, and “Post-mortem Immortality, or: The Taoist Resurrection of the Body,” in *GILGUL: Essays on Transformation, Revolution and Permanence in the History of Religions*, ed. Shaul Shaked, David Shulman, and Gedaliahu G. Stroumsa (Leiden: Brill, 1987), 223–37. For an informative article on land-purchase contracts from the Song dynasty (960–1279), see Ina Asim, “Status Symbol and Insurance Policy: Song Land Deeds for the Afterlife,” in *Burial in Song China*, ed. Dieter Kuhn (Heidelberg: Edition Forum, 1994), 307–70. The most comprehensive study of medieval and early modern contracts, including those buried in tombs to secure land from underworld divinities, is Valerie Hansen, *Negotiating Daily Life in Traditional China: How Ordinary People Used Contracts, 600–1400* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1995). For a convenient list of excavated land contracts and tomb-quelling writs discovered up through 1980, including transcriptions, see Ikeda On 池田温, “Chūgoku rekidai boken ryakkō” 中國歷代墓券略考, *Tōyō-bunka kenkyūjo kiyō* 東洋文化研究所紀要 86 (1981): 193–278; now superseded by Zhang Xunliao 張勳燎 and Bai Bin 白彬, *Zhongguo daojiao kaogu* 中國道教考古, 6 vols. (Beijing: Xianzhuang shuju, 2006). For informative overviews of the variety of religious practice in early and early medieval China, see Mu-chou Poo, *In Search of Personal Welfare: A View of Ancient Chinese Religion* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998); and Richard von Glahn, *The Sinister Way: The Divine and the Demonic in Chinese Religious Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004). A number of valuable studies have been published that view land contracts and tomb-quelling writs as sources for understanding the development of early religious Daoism. See Angelika Cedzich, “Ghosts and Demons, Law and Order: Grave Quelling Texts in Early Daoist Literature,” *Taoist Resources* 4, no. 2 (1993): 23–35; Peter S. Nickerson, “Taoism, Death, and Bureaucracy, in Early Medieval China” (Ph.D. diss., University of California, 1996); and Michel Strickmann, *Chinese Magical Medicine*, ed. Bernard Faure (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2002).



1. LAND-PURCHASE CONTRACT FOR THE NEIGHBORHOOD

MARQUIS OF KUAIJI 會稽亭侯 (252 C.E.)

[recto] The Neighborhood Marquis [*Tinghou* 亭侯] of Kuaiji 會稽,²⁴ concurrent director of the Qiantang 錢唐 navy,²⁵ and General Who Subdues the Distant [*Suiyuan jiangjun* 綏遠將軍], has purchased from the Earth Sire [*Tugong* 土公] a tomb fortification—one mound. Its eastern and southern limits are the ridges of Phoenix Mountain 鳳山, its western limit is the lake, and its northern limit is

the end of the mountain [range]. Cash paid in total was 8 million. This day the transaction is complete. The Sun and the Moon are witnesses, and the Four Seasons are guarantors. For those who possess private contracts, it is fitting [to proceed according to] statutes and ordinances. In the third month of the first year, which was *renshen* 壬申, in the era of Shenfeng of the Great [State of] Wu 吳, we “split the contract” [*pobie* 破蒯], [resulting in] “great auspiciousness” [*daji* 大吉].

[side] On the sixth day of the third month in the first year, which was *renshen*, in the era of Shenfeng [April 2, 252], Sun Ding 孫鼎 made this contract [*zuobie* 作蒯].²⁶

[For transcriptions and images, see Ikeda On 池田溫, “Chūgoku rekidai boken ryakkō” 中國歷代墓券略考, *Tōyō-bunka kenkyūjo kiyō* 東洋文化研究所紀要 86 (1981): 225, no. 25 and fig. 2; and Zhang Xunliao 張勳燎 and Bai Bin 白彬, *Zhongguo daojiao kaogu* 中國道教考古 (Beijing: Xianzhuang shuju, 2006), 820, no. 4, and 821, fig. 3. See also Tian Hengming 田恒銘, “Yi fang hanjian de Wu zhuan—Shenfeng yuan nian diquan ji qi shufa” 一方罕見的吳磚—神鳳元年地券及其書法, *Wenwu tiandi* 文物天地 4 (1991): 40]

2. LAND-PURCHASE CONTRACT FOR HUANG FU 黃甫 (254 C.E.)

Today, the eighteenth day of the tenth month in the first year of the era of Wufeng [November 15, 254],²⁷ we raised a tumulus dwelling [*zhongzhai* 冢宅] behind Mount Mofu 莫府山 near its southern edge for the adult male Huang Fu 黃甫 of Jiujiang 九江, age eighty. From Heaven we purchased land, from Earth we purchased a dwelling. The cost was three hundred. The eastern [limits] extend to *jiageng* 甲庚, the western [limits] extend to *yixin* 乙辛,²⁸ the northern [limits] extend to *rengui* 壬癸, and the southern [limits] extend to *bingding* 丙丁.²⁹ If there are those who contest the land, they should direct inquiries to the Celestial Emperor [Tiandi 天帝]; if there are those who contest the dwelling, they should direct inquiries to the Soil Earl [*Tubo* 土伯].³⁰ [Observe this] in accordance with the statutes and ordinances of the Celestial Emperor.³¹

[For transcriptions, see *Wenwu ziliao congkan* 8 (1983): 5; and Zhang and Bai, *Zhongguo daojiao kaogu*, 822, no. 5]

3. LAND-PURCHASE CONTRACT AND INVENTORY LIST FOR CAO YI 曹翌 (285 C.E.)

[recto] On the twenty-fourth day of the sixth month in the sixth year of the Taikang era [August 11, 285], the late Left Gentleman of the Interior [*Zuolangzhong* 左郎中] for the [State of] Wu 吳 and Commandant of Established Credentials [*Lijie xiaowei* 立節校尉] Cao Yi 曹翌, courtesy name Yongxiang 永翔, of Jiangning 江寧 [District] in Danyang 丹楊 [Commandery], died in his thirty-seventh year.

We purchased ten square *li* 里 of cultivated land at Luya Fields 虜牙田 near Shizi Ridge 石子崗. The cost was a million cash. [The land is to be] used for burial. May no one encroach on or seize it. The text of the contract is distinct and clear.

[verso] As for the slave Zhu 奴主, the slave Jiao 奴教, and the maidservant Xi 婢西, these three people [listed] at the right are [Cao] Yi's slaves and maidservant.³² One garment of fine-twined linen,³³ one cloak of lustrous silk.³⁴

[For transcriptions, see *Kaogu xuebao* 1 (1957): 189; Ikeda, "Chūgoku rekidai boken ryakkō," 226–27, no. 28; and Zhang and Bai, *Zhongguo daoqiao kaogu*, 832, no. 16]

4. LAND-PURCHASE CONTRACT FOR LI DA 李達 (300 C.E.)

Completed on *yiyou* 乙酉, the twenty-seventh day of the eleventh month, the new moon of which was an *wuwu* 戊午 day, in the first year of the Yongkang era [December 4, 300]. Li Da 李達 of Geyang 葛陽 [District], Poyang 鄱陽 [Commandery],³⁵ age sixty-seven, today purchased land from Heaven and a dwelling from Earth. In the east it culminates at *jiayi* 甲乙, in the south it culminates at *bingding* 丙丁, in the west it culminates at *gengxin* 庚辛, in the north it culminates at *rengui* 壬癸, [and] its center is *wuji* 戊己. The money used to purchase the land and the dwelling was three hundred, [together with] a three-foot embroidered kerchief [*huajin* 華巾]. Guarantors acknowledging [the transaction] are the Sovereign Sire of the East and the Queen Mother of the West.³⁶ If later [there are those who have] ambitions [to occupy] this dwelling, they should consult the Sovereign Sire of the East and the Queen Mother of the West. [Observe this] in accordance with laws and ordinances.³⁷

[For transcriptions and an image, see *Kaogu* 6 (1984): 540–41; and Zhang and Bai, *Zhongguo daoqiao kaogu*, 834–35, no. 20, and 836, fig. 8]

5. LAND-PURCHASE CONTRACT FOR MR. HOU 侯氏 (D. 302 C.E.)

[recto] On *gengwu* 庚午,³⁸ the twentieth day from the new moon, which was a *xin Hai* 辛亥 day, in the second month of the second year of the Yongning era [April 4, 302], the Grand Palace Grandee [*Dazhong daifu* 大中大夫], and . . . of Ruyin 汝陰 [. . . Mr. Hou] of Congyang District 樅陽縣, Lujiang Commandery 廬江郡, Yang Province 揚州, [purchased] land at Caihu Village 蔡湖里, Lai Township 賴鄉, Jiangning District 江寧縣, Danyang Commandery 丹陽郡.³⁹ Its dimensions are five *qing* and eighty *mu*,⁴⁰ cash paid was 2 million. This day the transaction is complete. The eastern quadrant [extends to] *jiayi* 甲乙, the southern quadrant [extends to] *bingding* 丙丁, the western quadrant [extends to] *gengxin* 庚辛, the northern quadrant [extends to] *rengui* 壬癸, and the center to *wuji* 戊己.⁴¹ The Tumulus Vanguard [*Zhongqian* 冢前] witnesses and acknowledges [the transaction]. [Observe this] in accordance with statutes and ordinances.

If someone asks by whom this [contract] was	若有問誰
written—it was a fish.	所書—是魚
Where is the fish?	魚所在
In deep waters swimming.	深水游
Those who desire to find him,	欲得者
Should seek out the River Earl. ⁴²	河伯求

[verso] The Grand Year Star [Jupiter] is in *renxu* 壬戌 [302 C.E.].⁴³

[For transcriptions, see *Wenwu* 6 (1965): 44; Ikeda, “Chūgoku rekidai boken ryakkō,” 227, no. 30; and Zhang and Bai, *Zhongguo daoqiao kaogu*, 835–37, no. 21]

6. TOMB-STABILIZING STONE BY ZHANG ZHENGZI 張正子 FOR HIS PARENTS (433 C.E.)

It was a *gengshen* 庚申 day, the twenty-sixth of the tenth month, with the new moon falling on *guihai* 癸亥, in the second year of the Great [State of] Dai's era of Yanhe,⁴⁴ with the Year Star in *guiyou* 癸酉 [November 23, 433 C.E.], that the orphaned and sorrowful son Zhang Zhengzi 張正子 ventured [to offer] a shining announcement to the God of the Tomb Ridge [Mugang zhi shen 墓崗之神]. [The announcement] says: “I, Zhengzi, inherited this plot of ground. Today, having attained auspicious divination [results], I present the numinous encoffined body [*lingjiu* 靈柩] of my deceased father, the ‘filial and immaculate gentleman’ [*xiaosushi* 孝素士], for joint burial at the gravesite of his ‘gentle spouse’ [*ruren* 孺人], my deceased mother of the Zou 鄒 clan. It is situated at *qian* 乾 [northwest] facing *si* 巳 [south]. To the left is the mountain, to the right is the river; truly it is an auspicious burial place. Divine One [*shen* 神], may you watch over them. If imps and goblins infiltrate the tumulus or ‘dark palace’ [*yougong* 幽宮], or if dholes, wolves, foxes, or rabbits tread across the tomb path, Divine One, may you punish them and pacify the souls of my forbearers. At the spring and autumn sacrifices, Divine One, may you feast with them. [If anyone] oversteps [the conditions] of this covenant [*meng* 盟], proceed according to [the dictates of] this stone. I venture to make this announcement.”⁴⁵

[For a transcription and images, see *Zhongguo shufa* 中國書法 10 (2005): 27–29]

7. LAND-PURCHASE CONTRACT FOR NAI NÜ 孀女 (443 C.E.)

The twenty-fourth day, *bingyou* 丙酉, of the eleventh month, the new moon of which was *guimao* 癸卯, in the nineteenth year of the Yuanjia era, the Grand Year Star is in *renwu* 壬午 [January 10, 443].

Nai Nü 孀女 of Xincheng Village 新城里 in the East Township 西鄉 of Shixing District 始興縣 in Shixing Commandery 始興郡, age . . .-five, passed away during the hour of the dog 戌 [7:00–9:00 P.M.] on the twenty-seventh day of the fourth month of the *jiaxu* 甲戌 year [June 19, 434]. The *Demon Statutes of the Dark Metropolis* [*Xuandu guilü* 玄都鬼律] and the *Statutes and Ordinances of the Subterranean Nüqing Edicts* [*Dixia nüqing zhaoshu lüling* 地下女青詔書律令] [state]: “Since the coming of military disorder, all the dead under heaven must heed and obey the living at the district and commandery where they are buried.” A sepulcher has been excavated and a mounded tomb [*qiumu* 丘墓] constructed for Nai Nü across from Xikou Settlement 夕口村 at Xincheng Village in the East Township of Shixing District in Shixing Commandery.

[From the guardian spirits] of the settlement, neighborhood, village, and fief, as well as the Subterranean Ancestors [*Dixia xianren* 地下先人], the Elder of Haoli [Haoli *fulao* 蒿里父老], the Tomb Ministers arrayed in order to the right [*Muqing yuozhi* 墓卿右秩], the Sepulchral Lords of the Left and the Right [*Zuoyou zhonghou* 左右冢侯], the Tomb Mound Assistant [*Qiucheng* 丘丞], the Tomb Earl [*Mubo* 墓伯], the Subterranean Two-Thousand-Bushel Officials [*Dixia erqiandan* 地下二千石], the Assistant of Andu 安都丞,⁴⁶ and the King of Wuyi 武夷王,⁴⁷ we purchase this sepulchral land. Its dimensions are five *mu* 畝.⁴⁸ We excavate it to bury Nai Nü’s remains within. Cash provided was a myriad-myriads nine-thousand nine-hundred and ninety-nine. This day [the transaction] is complete.

May the Subterranean Ancestors, the Elder of Haoli, the Tomb Ministers arrayed orderly at the right, the Sepulchral Lords of the Left and the Right, the Tomb Mound Assistant, the Tomb Earl, the Subterranean Two-Thousand-Bushel Officials, the Assistant of Andu, the King of Wuyi, and others all rise and heed Nai Nü who is buried in the sepulcher that has been excavated out of this ground. May they not allow those [deceased individuals] dwelling to the right and left, [who may harbor] rash ambitions, to delimit [again] the boundaries of this sepulchral land.

Those acknowledging [this transaction] are Zhang Jiangu 張堅固 and Li Dingdu 李定度; each has been supplied a liter of purchased wine [*gujiu geban* 沽酒各半], and jointly [they] make [i.e., validate] the contract.⁴⁹

[See Zhang and Bai, *Zhongguo daojiao kaogu*, 851–54, no. 27]

8. LAND-PURCHASE CONTRACT FOR OUYANG JINGXI 歐陽景熙 (470 C.E.)

The ninth day of the eleventh month in the sixth year of the Song 宋 era Taishi [December 17, 470]. The deceased “man of the Way” [*daomin* 道民], Ouyang Jingxi 歐陽景熙, from Dutang Village 都唐里 in the Metropolitan Township 都鄉 of Shian District 始安縣 in Shian Commandery 始安郡 passed away. Today he returns to Haoli. The deceased purchased this burial ground with myr-

iad 9,999 coins. The eastern [boundary] extends to the Azure Dragon [Qinglong 青龍], the southern [boundary] extends to the Vermilion Bird [Zhuniao 朱鳥], the western [boundary] extends to the White Tiger [Baihu 白虎], and the northern [boundary] extends to the Dark Warrior [Xuanwu 玄武]. The [boundary] above extends to the Azure Heavens [Qingtian 青天]; the boundary [below] extends to the Yellow Springs [Huangquan 黃泉]. Within these four regions, everything belongs to the deceased. This day [the transaction] is complete. Those present at the time are Wangzi Qiao 王僑, Chisongzi 赤松子, Li Ding[du], and Zhang [Jian]gu. We split the contract and make [its conditions] clear. [Observe this] in accordance with statutes and ordinances.⁵⁰

[For a transcription, see Zhang and Bai, *Zhongguo daojiao kaogu*, 861, no. 31]

9. ENTOMBED EPITAPH AND LAND-PURCHASE CONTRACT FOR SHEN HONGZHI 申洪之 (472 C.E.)

His Excellency, surname Shen 申, taboo name Hongzhi 洪之, is a native of Wei District 魏縣 in Wei Commandery 魏郡.⁵¹ His great-grandfather [Shen] Zhong 申鍾 was Minister of Education for the earlier [state of] Zhao 趙 and Duke of Dongyang 東陽公.⁵² His grandfather [Shen] Daosheng 申道生 was Bulwark General of the State, Governor of Yan Province 兗州, and Marquis of Jinxiang District 金鄉縣侯.⁵³ His [i.e., Shen Daosheng's] sons and grandsons established their families there.

As a youth [Shen Hongzhi] met with tribulation and setbacks and, together with his elder brother, the “straightforward and diligent” director [Shen] Qianzhi 申乾之, entrusted his life to the [state of] Wei 魏. His Excellency's memory was clear and his physique strong, his conduct was earnest, and his character upright. He was filial, friendly, compassionate, and humane; congenial, respectful, kind, and harmonious. Elder and younger brother dwelt together, and grew white haired together in joyful interaction. The inner quarters [of their households] were appropriately managed, and the [interactions among the] nine-clan relations set a pattern and model [for others]. Owing to his extensive abilities [in managing] the responsibilities placed in his charge, his eminence was appointed adviser to the Eastern Palace.⁵⁴ He was about to set forth flourishing achievements and accomplish exalted deeds for the ages, but the years granted him were not extensive; and in his fifty-seventh year, on the fifth day of the tenth month, in the second year of the Wei era of Yanxing [November 21, 472 C.E.], he passed away at the capital.

Since he was separated from the old burial grounds by great distance, returning [his remains] to the crypt for burial proved too difficult.⁵⁵ Moreover, spare and lavish burials indeed follow the [prevailing custom] of the times. Testing our plans with turtle shell and milfoil stalk, all proposals were declared auspicious. Subsequently, we constructed a hall at Pingcheng 平城 south of the Sangqian River 桑乾河.⁵⁶ His physical form, following transformation, has

moved on. However, his virtue stands out among [those of this] era. We venture to cut this stone in order to illuminate that which does not decay [*buxiu* 不朽].⁵⁷

From the former landlords Wenniuyu Wuti 文忸于吳提, Helai Tufuyan 賀賴吐伏延, Helai Tugen 賀賴吐根, and Gaoli Gaoyutu 高梨高郁突, four men, [we] purchased twenty *qing* [228 acres] of land with one hundred bolts of official [grade] silk taffeta.⁵⁸ From that point until now, twenty years have passed. Today, Hongzhi's corpse and spirit [*sangling* 喪靈] find eternal rest here. Hence we make a record of this [transaction].⁵⁹

[For a transcription with commentary and a rubbing of the epitaph, see Hibino Takeo 日比野丈夫, "Boshi no kigen ni tsuite" 墓誌の起源について, in *Egami Namio kyōju koki kinen ronshū, minzoku, bunka hen* 江上波夫教授古稀記念論集, 民族, 文化篇 (Tokyo: Yamakawa shuppansha, 1977), 189–91. See also Ikeda, "Chūgoku rekidai boken ryakkō," 229–30, no. 35]

10. LAND-PURCHASE CONTRACT FOR ZHANG SHENLUO 張神洛 (507 C.E.)

On the sixteenth day of the ninth month during the fourth year of the era Zhengshi [October 7, 507], Zhang Shenluo 張神洛, an inhabitant of the North Ward 北坊, purchased from Lu A'dou 路阿兜, an inhabitant of the district, three *mu* of cultivated land for a tomb.⁶⁰ To the south [it extends] to the tomb of Qi Wang 齊王, to the north it extends fifty-three paces, to the east it extends to the tomb of Qi Tu 齊塗, and to the west it extends twelve paces. Payment was nine bolts of satin. This land is guaranteed not to have been stolen. If another person claims [it as his], then [Lu A']Dou will need to give forth fine land of equivalent *mu*. . . . When people privately employ contracts, they cannot thereafter recant on a whim. The one who first reneges must put forth [an additional] five bolts of satin. Drafting [the contract] indicates an act of trust.

The one who wrote the contract was Pan Miao 潘藐.

Lu Shanwang 路善王 was present at the time.

Lu Rongsun 路榮孫 was present at the time.⁶¹

[For a transcription, see Ikeda, "Chūgoku rekidai boken ryakkō," 232, no. 39. See also Jacques Gernet, "Le vente en Chine d'après les contrats de Touen-Houang (IX^e–X^e siècles)," *T'oung Pao* 45 (1957): 387–89]

11. TOMB-STABILIZING WRIT FOR SUI FANG 睢方 (LATE SECOND CENTURY C.E.)

May the Yellow God [Huangshen 黃神], Lord of the Northern Dipper [Beidou-zhu 北斗主], on behalf of the buried individual Sui Fang 睢方, stabilize [the tomb] and gain [his] release from culpability and calamity. If the burial has transgressed against the God of the Tomb [*Mushen* 墓神] and the Tomb Earl [*Mubo* 墓伯], may that which is harmful to the living be deflected and removed

today. May the tomb house [*mujia* 墓家] be without calamity.⁶² May Sui Fang, and the rest [of the subterranean spirits], lay no charge to [his] sons, grandsons, wife, nephews, or brothers. For these reasons we trouble [you], great god [*dashen* 大神], to benefit the living and descendants yet unborn. [Observe this] in accordance with statutes and ordinances.⁶³

[For a transcription, see Ikeda, “Chūgoku rekidai boken ryakkō,” 275, no. 10]

12. TOMB-STABILIZING WRIT FOR THE YANG 楊 FAMILY (LATE SECOND CENTURY C.E.)

The Envoy of the Celestial Emperor respectfully on behalf of the Yang clan 楊氏 stabilizes and renders peaceful the shadowy barrow and tomb. [Furthermore,] he respectfully, by means of the lead man [*qianren* 鉛人],⁶⁴ gold, and jade, absolves culpability on behalf of the dead and, for the living, removes crimes and transgressions. After receiving this jar, command the mother to be pacified, and the lineage gentleman to sustain himself from annual underworld rents of 20 million [cash]. Command that sons upon sons and grandsons upon grandsons of later generations become gentlemen officials and ascend to the ranks of duke and marquis and that their wealth and nobility as generals and ministers never be cut off. Dispatch [these ordinances] by means of the Tomb Mound Assistant and the Tomb Earl below to those who should implement them. [Observe this] in accordance with statutes and ordinances.⁶⁵

[For transcriptions, see *Wenwu* 11 (1975): 79; Ikeda, “Chūgoku rekidai boken ryakkō,” 275, no. 12a. See also Mu-chou Poo, *In Search of Personal Welfare: A View of Ancient Chinese Religion* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), 173]

13. TOMB-STABILIZING WRIT FOR CUI ZONGYING 崔宗盈 (FOURTH CENTURY C.E.)

Cui Zongying 崔宗盈, your own meager life mandate at an early age has ended, your longevity exhausted, the accounts depleted [*shouqiong suanjin* 壽窮算盡].⁶⁶ The dead appear before the Eight Ghosts [*bagui* 八鬼],⁶⁷ the Nine Canals [*jiukan* 九坎],⁶⁸ and the Senior Inspector of Mount Tai [*Taishan zhangyue* 泰山長閔].⁶⁹ May you go forth and accept this. [The living and the dead] in suffering do not recall one another, and in joy do not think of one another. After the separation has been carried out, do not allow the deceased to walk among the living. As for the sacrifices of the *ci* 祠, *la* 臘, *she* 社, and *fa* 伏, [may he] seek them beyond the suburbs.⁷⁰ In a thousand years, myriad Jupiter cycles, perhaps we may again have occasion to meet. [Observe this] in accordance with statutes and ordinances.⁷¹

[For a transcription, see Ikeda, “Chūgoku rekidai boken ryakkō,” 276, no. 13]

14. INFESTATION-QUELLING WRIT CONCERNING
CHEN XIAOQING 陳小晴 (297 C.E.)

On the twenty-eighth day of the eighth month in the seventh year of the Yuan-kang era [October 1, 297], [Chen Xiaoqing] died. Sir, you had a meager life mandate and came to an early end. May you be unable to infest your repugnant [pathogens on the living].⁷² May you be unable to infest your mother, and may you also be unable to infest your elder and younger brothers, or your wife and children. As for all those yet to come [i.e., descendants yet unborn] may you be unable to infest them. Regarding affairs [in the world] below, all punishments are Chen Xiaoqing's 陳小晴. [Observe this] in accordance with statutes and ordinances.⁷³

[For a transcription, see Zhang and Bai,
Zhongguo daojiao kaogu, 395–96, no. 10]

15. TOMB INVENTORY FOR LADY PAN 潘氏 (D. 357 C.E.),
WITH ATTACHED LETTER TO UNDERWORLD AUTHORITIES

One square-cut garment of damask; one garment of rep-woven lustrous silk;⁷⁴ one garment of rep-woven taffeta; two blouses of lustrous silk; one [upper garment] [front and back] of open-work leno-weave; one [upper garment] [front and back] of crepe openwork; [one] pair of scarlet double-layered trousers; one purple and cyan double-layered skirt; one purple and cyan lined skirt; one scarlet and cyan lined skirt; one lined skirt of purple gauze; one set of knee coverings [made of] fine purple and yellow silk; one scarlet jacket; one jacket of yellow crepe; one . . . of purple mesh; one [garment of] gauze, crepe, and openwork [fabric]; a pair of pearl earrings; a pair of silver and hematite [earrings]; one armband with round gems; a pair of silver bracelets; two silver hairpins; . . . tortoise shell hairpins; two . . . raw silk handkerchiefs; two . . . of miscellaneous silk fabrics; a pair of damask “flying garments”; a silk sash; seven strings of cash; one box of cosmetics and fragrances; a pair of male and female [i.e., fine-tooth and wide-tooth] combs; a bronze mirror; one clothing chest; one brush; one black[?] needle-and-thread bag; one yellow needle-and-thread bag; one set of scissors and ruler; five needles for silk cloth; one skein of hemp thread; one skein of silk thread; four hand towels of lustrous silk; two hand towels of silk pongee; a pair of lustrous silk socks; a pair of socks with striped uppers; one large towel of white linen; five bags containing the five grains; one yellow damask pillow; one cloak; one rain hat[?]; one fine bamboo mat; a pair of jade swine;⁷⁵ one coffin; five sturdy nails; one garment of rib-woven linen; [and] one violet skirt.

On *jiawu*, the twenty-ninth day of the sixth month, the new moon of which was *binyin* day, in the fifth year of the Shengping era [357 C.E.], Lady Pan 潘氏, the wife of the Commandant of the Guard for the Dukedom, Zhou Fangming

周芳命 of Jiyang Village 吉陽里 in the Metropolitan Township 都鄉 of Linxiang District 臨湘縣, Changsha Commandery 長沙郡, Jing Province 荊州, “became unsalaried” [*bulu* 不祿]. She was fifty-eight when on the said day, she “became drunk on wine and unsalaried” [*zuijiu bulu* 醉酒不祿].⁷⁶ The articles of clothing and objects [listed] are all those that Lady Pan wore and adorned herself with when alive. Another person cannot falsely claim them to remit [their own] debts.⁷⁷ The Lad of the Eastern Sea 東海童子 wrote [this]. When the document arrives, [he will] return to the sea. [Observe this] in accordance with laws and ordinances.⁷⁸

[For a transcription and a hand-copied reproduction, see Li Zhengguang 李正光, “Changsha Beimen Guihuayuan faxian Jin mu” 長沙北門桂花園發現晉墓, *Wenwu cankao ziliao* 文物參考資料 11 (1955): 134–36. For a revised transcription with commentary and a rubbing of the stone, see Shi Shuqing 史樹青, “Jin Zhou Fang mingqi Pan shi yiwushu kaozheng” 晉周芳命妻潘氏衣物疏考正, *Kaogu tongxun* 考古通訊 2 (1955): 95–99. See also Zhang and Bai, *Zhongguo daoqiao kaogu*, 956–57, no. 5]

NOTES

1. For an extensive list of manuscripts excavated from tombs, see Enno Giele, “Early Chinese Manuscripts: Including Addenda and Corrigenda to *New Sources of Early Chinese History: An Introduction to the Reading of Inscriptions and Manuscripts*,” *Early China* 23–24 (1998/1999): 247–337. Also available online at <http://lucian.uchicago.edu/blogs/earlychina/research-and-resources/databases> (accessed May 9, 2012). Although manuscripts and inscribed texts recovered from tombs constitute a valuable body of unaltered source material, tombs containing texts make up only a tiny fraction of the total number of excavated burials.
2. A. F. P. Hulswé, “Texts in Tombs,” *Asiatische Studien* 18–19 (1965): 78–89. Compare Enno Giele, “Excavated Manuscripts: Contexts and Methodology,” in *China’s Early Empires: A Re-appraisal*, ed. Michael Nylan and Michael Loewe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 114–34.
3. Donald Harper, “Warring States, Qin, and Han Manuscripts Related to Natural Philosophy and the Occult,” in *New Sources of Early Chinese History: An Introduction to the Reading of Inscriptions and Manuscripts*, ed. Edward L. Shaughnessy (Berkeley: Society for the Study of Early China and Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California, 1997), 227.
4. So far, only a half dozen tombs have been found to contain such letters: Fenghuangshan tomb 168, Gaotaishan tomb 18, and Maojiayuan tomb 1, all from Hubei; Mawangdui tomb 3, located near Changsha in Hunan; Huchang tomb 5, located in Jiangsu; and the tomb of Lady Pan (d. 357 C.E.), wife of Zhou Fangming, located at Guihuayuan, also near Changsha, Hunan. The document found in Lady Pan’s tomb is translated here (document 15).

5. For two influential interpretations of religious change in early China based on archaeological evidence, see Wu Hung, "From Temple to Tomb: Ancient Chinese Art and Religion in Transition," *Early China* 13 (1988): 78–115; and Lothar von Falkenhausen, "Sources of Taoism: Reflections on Archaeological Indicators of Religious Change in Eastern Zhou China," *Taoist Resources* 5, no. 2 (1994): 1–12.
6. On the bureaucratic view of the underworld in the Warring States period, see Donald Harper, "Resurrection in Warring States Popular Religion," *Taoist Resources* 5, no. 2 (1994): 13–28; and Jeffrey Riegel, "Kou-mang and Ju-shou," *Cahiers d'Extrême-Asie* 5 (1989/1990): 53–83.
7. On the smaller size and less lavish furnishings of tombs containing land-purchase contracts and tomb-stabilizing writs, see Zhuo Zhenxi 褚振西, "Shaanxi Huxian de liang zuo Han mu" 陝西戶縣的兩座漢墓, *Kaogu yu wenwu* 考古與文物 1 (1980): 48; and Anna Seidel, "Traces of Han Religion," in *Dōkyō to shūkyō bunka* 道教と宗教文化, ed. Akizuki Kan'ei 秋月觀暎 (Tokyo: Hirakawa shuppansha, 1987), 227–28.
8. "Entombed epitaph inscriptions" (*muzhiming* 墓誌銘) constitute another important type of burial text that also began to appear in late Eastern Han and more widely in early medieval tombs. These objects differed from the more pragmatic genres of land-purchase contracts and tomb-stabilizing writs because as commemorative texts, their laudatory function was designed to long outlast the initial funerary context. Although the "original" *muzhiming* text was inscribed on stone and buried in the tomb, manuscript copies circulated above ground and more admired examples were collected in anthologies or were preserved in the author's collected works.
9. Documents 9 and 10, translated in this chapter, are examples of northern contracts involving human sellers and witnesses.
10. Terry F. Kleeman, "Land Contracts and Related Documents," in *Makio Ryōkai Hakase shōju kinen ronshū, Chūgoku no shūkyō: Shisō to kagaku* 牧尾良海博士壽計記念論集, 中國の宗教: 思想と科学 (Tokyo: Kokusho kankōkai, 1984), 3–4. For studies of litigation in the courts of the underworld, see Valerie Hansen, "Why Bury Contracts in Tombs?" *Cahiers d'Extrême-Asie* 8 (1995): 59–66; Peter S. Nickerson, "The Great Petition for Sepulchral Complaints," in Stephen R. Bokenkamp, *Early Daoist Scriptures* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 230–74; and Michel Strickmann, *Chinese Magical Medicine*, ed. Bernard Faure (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2002), 1–57.
11. On the rites required to absolve the deceased from culpability caused by digging into the soil, see Wang Chong 王充, "Jiechu" 解除, in *Lun heng jiaoshi* 論衡校釋, comp. Huang Hui 黃暉 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1990), 25.1044; and Alfred Forke, trans., *Lun-Hêng* (Berlin: Kommissionsverlag von Georg Reimer, 1909), 1:535–36.
12. Kleeman, "Land Contracts and Related Documents," 20. The large monetary sums involved were chosen for their auspicious associations (e.g., the number nine, linked with yang and life, appears often) and do not represent real amounts exchanged.
13. For an early account of one spirit stealing the offerings meant for another, see Yang Bojun 楊伯峻, *Chunqiu Zuozhuan zhu* 春秋左傳注 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1990), 487 (Xi 31).

14. Kleeman, "Land Contracts and Related Documents," 3.
15. Some documents join features from two different genres of entombed text. For example, document 3 combines a land-purchase contract with a short tomb inventory.
16. For an example of such a jar, see Ikeda On 池田温, "Chūgoku rekidai boken ryakkō" 中國歷代墓券略考, *Tōyō-bunka kenkyūjo kiyō* 東洋文化研究所紀要 86 (1981): 274, no. 9. For a translation, see Seidel, "Traces of Han Religion," 25.
17. Kleeman, "Land Contracts and Related Documents," 4–9. Seidel explains that in addition to an apotropaic function, these texts served as "letters of introduction or passports to the underworld" ("Traces of Han Religion," 25). The jars are between 5.5 and 9.5 inches high.
18. Haoli is the name of a district in the subterranean geography of the dead located beneath Mount Tai. See documents 7 and 8.
19. Kleeman, "Land Contracts and Related Documents" 4–5. For more on the envoy of the Celestial Emperor, see Seidel, "Traces of Han Religion," 34–37.
20. For an informative introduction to "ghost infestations" (*guizhu* 鬼注), deadly contagions sometimes transferred from the resentful dead to their living posterity, see Strickmann, *Magical Chinese Medicine*, 23–39.
21. He Jiejun 何介鈞, *Mawangdui Han mu* 馬王堆漢墓 (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1982). Tomb 1, constructed for the wife of the marquis, also contained an extensive tomb inventory extending over 312 bamboo slips.
22. *Wenwu* 7 (1974): 43; Seidel, "Traces of Han Religion," 25.
23. *Analects* 6/22. Falkenhausen points out that this idea, rather than originating with Confucius, reflects the general attitude toward the dead that prevailed from around the Middle Eastern Zhou, in "Sources of Taoism," 8.
24. Present-day Zhejiang.
25. Present-day Hangzhou.
26. The provenance of this contract is not firmly established. It appears to have been discovered in the 1950s near Hangzhou, Zhejiang. It was carved into a brick slab measuring 5 × 4 × 1 inches.
27. The second era of Sun Liang's 孫亮 (r. 252–258) reign in the state of Wu 吳.
28. The scribe who wrote the contract mixed up the usual combination of "Heavenly Stems" (*tiangan* 天干): *geng* 庚 and *yi* 乙 have been interchanged. The correct pairing should be *jiayi* for the east and *gengxin* for the west.
29. These four pairs of Heavenly Stems correlate with the cardinal directions as given in the contract. Kleeman suggested that this was a way of designating the vast dimensions of sacred space within which the spirit of the dead would be allowed to roam, in "Land Contracts and Related Documents," 14.
30. The Soil Earl (*Tubo* 土伯) appears in the "Zhao hun" 招魂 piece from the *Lyrics of Chu* (*Chuci* 楚辭) as the menacing guardian of the underworld dead. He is described as a monstrous creature with the head of a tiger and the body of a bull. Wang Yi 王逸 (second century c.e.) states that the Soil Earl's authority was granted by the Earth Sovereign (*Houtu* 后土). See *Chuci buzhu* 楚辭補注, SBCK 9.107.

31. This contract was recovered in 1979 from a tomb located near Nanjing, Jiangsu. It was written on a brick slab measuring $15 \times 3 \times 1$ inches. See Zhang and Bai, *Zhongguo dao-jiao kaogu*, 822 and 823, fig. 4.1.
32. The authors of the excavation report suggest that Zhu, Jiao, and Xi are the given names of the three servants. They further note that no corresponding manikins were found in the tomb. See Jiangsu sheng wenwu guanli weiyuanhui 江蘇省文物管理委員會, “Nanjing jinjaio liuchao mu de qingli” 南京近郊六朝墓的清理, *Kaogu xuebao* 考古學報 1 (1957): 189.
33. My translation of *gou* 溝 as “fine-twined” is based on Bernhard Karlgren, *Gramatica Serica Recensa* (Stockholm: Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities, 1957), 49, no. 109.
34. This portion of the text, inscribed on the back of the contract, constitutes a brief tomb inventory list. This contract was unearthed from tomb 1 located at Nanjing, Jiangsu, in 1955. It was inscribed on a thin lead slab measuring $11 \times 2 \times 0.04$ inches.
35. Modern Jiangxi.
36. The Queen Mother of the West (Xiwangmu 西王母), often associated with the paradise realm of Mount Kunlun in the far west and with the bestowal of deathlessness, is the embodiment of yin forces. Here she is paired with her cosmic counterpart, the Sovereign Sire of the East (Dongwanggong 東王公), the manifestation of yang energy. The male divinity of this pair is sometimes called Lord of the Eastern Regions (Dongfangjun 東方君).
37. This contract was recovered in 1980 from a tomb located in Jiangsu. It was carved into a brick slab measuring $13 \times 6 \times 2$ inches.
38. The scholars transcribing the tomb inventory have incorrectly identified the twentieth day of the second month as *gengzi*. The twentieth was actually a *gengwu* day. While mistakes in cyclical dating are one of the criteria for identifying forgeries, I think this is merely a case of mistakenly reading *zi* 子 for *wu* 午. The two characters are very similar in appearance and could be easily confused, especially considering the poor state of preservation in which the lead contract was found.
39. Both Ruyin and Lujiang Commandery are located in modern Anhui. Lai District of Danyang Commandery is located south of present-day Nanjing, Jiangsu. The surname of the tomb occupant, which is obscured in the original document, is derived from additional inscriptions on several of the bricks used in the actual construction of his tomb.
40. About one hundred acres. (A *mu* is roughly equal to one-sixth of an acre, and a *qing* is the equivalent of one hundred *mu*.) The extensive area claimed here is perhaps best understood as referring to the size of the deceased’s landholdings in the world of the spirits.
41. We should remember that these immense concepts of space and the exorbitant price were meaningful only in the world of the spirits, as Kleeman has suggested in “Land Contracts and Related Documents,” 13–15.
42. The significance of this curious concluding section is unclear. A similar passage is found in the text of a contract dating to 226 C.E. that was excavated near Nanchang, Jiangxi. However, in that case the fish is paired with a crane: “The fish enters the abyss”

while the crane “flies up to heaven.” For a transcription and translation, see Ikeda, “Chūgoku rekidai boken ryakkō,” 224, no. 23; and Kleeman, “Land Contracts and Related Documents,” 23–24. Perhaps the crane and fish serve as messengers to transport the content of the contract to divine authorities in the spirit bureaucracies of the celestial and watery worlds. This may reflect Daoist ideas regarding the Three Offices (*Sanguan* 三官) that were believed to direct the administration of the tripartite spiritual bureaucracies known as the Office of Heaven, Office of Earth, and Office of Water (with the copy buried in the tomb effectively delivering the contract to the Office of Earth). In a similar manner, the fish identified as the scribe of Mr. Hou’s land contract is also the agent charged with transmitting the terms of the contract to his superior the River Earl (He Bo). The River Earl, or divinity of the Yellow River, is mentioned in several early texts, including the “Autumn Floods” chapter of the *Zhuangzi* and the “Nine Songs” (*Jiu ge* 九歌) section of the *Lyrics of Chu*. Another possible interpretation is that these sentences demonstrate the utter inaccessibility of the contract’s divine scribe, thereby implying that the party with whom changes to the contract must be negotiated is so remote as to prohibit rewriting any of its terms.

43. This contract was recovered in 1964 from a tomb located near Nanjing, Jiangsu. It was carved into a thin lead slab measuring $7 \times 2 \times 0.06$ inches.
44. Dai 代 was the name of an independent Tuoba state that controlled parts of northern China, including the region around Hohhot, Inner Mongolia, from 338 until 376 when it was defeated by Fu Jian 苻堅 (338–385) of the Former Qin 前秦 (351–394). Although this document was written during the Northern Wei 北魏 period (386–534), the author maintains the older designation for this territory.
45. This inscribed stone was discovered near Hohhot, Inner Mongolia, in the early 1990s.
46. The name Andu probably refers to the underworld habitations of the dead and might be rendered “Metropolis of Repose.”
47. An announcement or prayer to Wuyi on behalf of soldiers fallen in battle was excavated from tomb 56 at Jiudian 九店, Hubei (slips 43 and 44). This tomb dates to the Warring States period. See Hubei Sheng Wenwu Kaogu Yanjiusuo 湖北省文物考古研究所, *Jiangling Jiudian Dong Zhou mu* 江陵九店東周墓 (Beijing: Kexue Chubanshe, 1995), 508 and pl. 103; and Rao Zongyi 饒宗頤, “Shuo Jiudian Chu jian zhi Wuyi jun yu fu shan” 說九店楚簡之武夷君與復山, *Wenwu* 6 (1997): 36–38.
48. Less than one acre.
49. The divinity Zhang Jiangu, whose name means something like “affirmer of what is certain,” and his counterpart Li Dingdu, whose name perhaps means “fixer of measurements,” appear as witnesses in a number of Southern land contracts. See, for example, document 8 in which they are listed together with the famous transcendents Wangzi Qiao and Master Red Pine (Chisongzi). This contract was excavated from a tomb located in Shixing County, Guangdong, during the 1980s. It was inscribed on a stone slab measuring $9.5 \times 4 \times 0.8$ inches. A second contract bearing the same inscription was found in the same tomb. The translation is based on the composite transcription supplied in Zhang and Bai, *Zhongguo daojiao kaogu*, which combines the legible portions of both contracts.

50. This contract was recovered in 1938 from a tomb located near Guilin. It was carved into a thin piece of soapstone or steatite (*huashi* 滑石) measuring $7.2 \times 4.5 \times 0.2$ inches.
51. Located in southern Hebei.
52. Shen Zhong served as Minister of Education under the Later Zhao 後趙 (319–351) ruler Shi Jian 石鑒 (r. 349–350). When Ran Min 冉閔 killed Shi Jian and assumed supreme authority in 350 C.E., Shen Zhong transferred his loyalties to Ran. See JS 107.2793.
53. Both the Dongyang fiefdom and the Jinxiang District are located in present-day Shandong.
54. The Eastern Palace is the residence of the crown prince.
55. A proper burial was one in which the deceased, having lived out his or her allotted life span, was peacefully laid to rest in the family cemetery, reverently remembered, and offered regular sacrifices. The inability to carry out this ideal internment was a source of concern among the deceased's posterity, not only because filial obligations to the ancestors continued after their demise, but also because the "unquiet dead" could inflict real harm on the health and prosperity of living family members. For a fascinating study of early medieval apprehensions concerning the dead, see Stephen R. Bokenkamp, *Ancestors and Anxiety: Daoism and the Birth of Rebirth in China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007).
56. Located in present-day Shanxi Province.
57. In other words, his virtue.
58. The unusual names of landlords given at the end of this document are transliterations from a non-Chinese language. They are the names of real individuals and not deities. Helai is a Xiongnu surname originally the designation of one of nineteen Xiongnu tribes. See JS 97.2549; and Yao Weiyuan 姚薇元, *Beichao hu xing kao* 北朝胡姓考 (Taipei: Huashi chubanshe, 1977), 32–38. Surnames similar to Wenniuyu and Gaoli are also found in Yao's study, though not the exact names given in this document.
59. This epitaph and contract was unearthed about 1940 near Datong 大同, Shanxi 山西, the early capital of the Northern Wei regime. They were inscribed on a stone measuring 21×17 inches.
60. About a half acre.
61. The scribe and witnesses of this Northern contract are actual members of the local community and not divinities. The exact provenance of this contract is unclear. In "Chūgoku rekidai boken ryakkō," Ikeda states that it was excavated in Zhuozhou 涿州, Hebei.
62. The exact meaning of the term *mujia* is unclear. It could refer to the physical structure of the tomb or more figuratively to the living lineage (*jia* 家) members related to Sui Fang.
63. This tomb-stabilizing writ was recovered in 1979 from a tomb located near Baoji, Shaanxi. It was written in vermilion ink on the outside of a small earthenware jar measuring 9.1 inches high.
64. Representations of humans made from lead were placed in a number of tombs to toil on behalf of the deceased. One such specimen was recovered from tomb M1 constructed for Wang Xingzhi. See Nanjing shi wenwu guanli weiyuanhui 南京市文物管理委員會,

- “Nanjing Rentaishan Dong Jin Xingzhi fufu mu fajue baogao” 南京人臺山東晉興之夫婦墓發掘報告, *Wenwu* 文物 6 (1965): 29.
65. This document was one of five nearly identical texts recovered from a tomb in Lingbao County, Henan, in 1972. Like the other four texts, it was written with a brush in vermilion ink on the surface of a jar. Perhaps the duplication of the document was meant to enhance the potency of its message.
 66. One’s life mandate (*ming* 命) was allotted at conception and, owing to moral choices, could be extended or reduced. On the mutability of *ming* through various bureaucratic, alchemical, and meditative practices, see Robert Ford Campany, *To Live as Long as Heaven and Earth: A Translation and Study of Ge Hong’s Traditions of Divine Transcendents* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 47–60; and Stephen R. Bokenkamp, “Simple Twists of Fate: The Daoist Body and Its *Ming*,” in *The Magnitude of Ming: Command, Allotment, and Fate in Chinese Culture*, ed. Christopher Lupke (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2005), 151–68.
 67. The Eight Ghosts (*bagui* 八鬼) may be what Sima Qian refers to as the “eight spirits” (*bashen* 八神) in “Fengshan shu” 封單書. The group consists of (1) the Lord of Heaven, (2) the Lord of the Earth, (3) the Lord of Weapons, (4) the Lord of Yin, (5) the Lord of Yang, (6) the Lord of the Sun, (7) the Lord of the Moon, and (8) the Lord of the Four Seasons. See *SJ* 28.1367.
 68. The Nine Canals (*jiukan* 九坎) may be an alternative name for *jiuquan* 九泉, which are the Nine Springs of the underworld. In some contexts, the term *jiukan* refers to a cluster of nine stars located south of the Ox Herd star. These stars are among those that “govern matters pertaining to irrigation.” If this reference is applicable at all, it is probably due to the association of these stars with water: the element linked with darkness, the north, and death. Another possibility is that the Nine Springs are the subterranean correlative to the astral configuration. See *JS* 11.305; and Ho Peng Yoke, *The Astronomical Chapters of the Chin Shu* (Paris: Mouton, 1966), 107.
 69. Several grave-quelling jars refer to the bowels of the Eastern Marchmount, Mount Tai, as the location where the dead are assembled and evaluated for posthumous service in the underworld. Compare the tomb-stabilizing writ for Xu Wentai dating to 175 C.E., which states, “The living are under the jurisdiction of Chang’an in the West, the dead are under the jurisdiction of Mount Tai in the East.” See Ikeda, “Chūgoku rekidai boken ryakkō,” 273, no. 7; and Seidel, “Traces of Han Religion,” 31.
 70. These four sacrifices were performed during each of the four seasons: spring, winter, autumn, and summer, respectively.
 71. This tomb-stabilizing writ was discovered with another jar bearing the same text in a tomb located near Dunhuang, Gansu, in 1944.
 72. The phrase is *zhuwu* 注誤 (件/忤; infest your repugnant [pathogens]). The graphic variations are discussed in Zhang and Bai, *Zhongguo daojiao kaogu*, 521–22.
 73. This infestation-quelling writ was found in a tomb located near Dunhuang, Gansu, in 1987. It was written with a brush in black ink on the outside of a small pottery jar.
 74. Lustrous silk refers to silk that has been treated or degummed to remove the gelatinous protein sericin.

75. Pairs of small stone pigs have been found in dozens of southern tombs. They were grasped in the hands of the deceased and may have served an apotropaic function.
76. The phrase *zuijiu bulu* and the connotations of joyfully passing from life to death after having imbibed the intoxicating wine of the immortals is discussed in Peter S. Nickerson, "Taoism, Death, and Bureaucracy in Early Medieval China" (Ph.D. diss., University of California, 1996), 187n.15.
77. That is, another ambitious spirit cannot appropriate Lady Pan's rightful possessions to pay debts they might owe the underworld authorities.
78. This inventory and letter was unearthed in 1954 near Changsha, Hunan. The text was inscribed on a stone slab measuring 9 × 5 inches.