

Preliminary Study of the Later Shu Stone Inscription on 'Exorcizing Lady Yuan's Hidden Demonic Attachment' Dated Guangzheng 13 (950) from Chengdu, Sichuan Province

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The Chengdu Cultural Archeology Research Office has a stone carving made for a Daoist exorcism, dated the thirteenth year of Guangzheng in the Later Shu kingdom (950), which describes the chronic “pain of mind and spirit” of Lady Yuan, wife of Yang Jingtang. After being unrelieved for a long time, she underwent prognostication by a diviner who determined it was caused by three female demons surnamed Gao, Wu, and Gao who had possessed her. Therefore they asked a Daoist to activate charms and perform rituals, to write the names and send them to the god of the waters, and receive a talismanic diagram to expel them. This stone carving is the first of its type discovered in Chengdu and the Sichuan region. It provides valuable evidence for research on Daoist activity in the late Tang and five Dynasties period in Sichuan.

After deciphering the characters in the inscription and considering the meaning of expressions like *taishang*, *Hebo shuifu*, *bujue*, *fulian* etc. the author began to examine the nature of the stone and its significance in relation to these expressions in Daoist texts, the purpose of the stone carving, and its Daoist sectarian associations. The stone carving is likely to be a valuable record of the performance of a ritual to expel hidden demonic attachments or *fulian* from the Lady Yuan. *Fulian* can be written in different ways and expressed in various terms indicating continuing or repeated attachment, fixation, or obsession. In early Daoist belief the relationship between humans and demons or ghosts was explained in religious terms. There is a substantial number of accounts of this in Daoist texts of the Tang and Song, such as the *Taishan jidu zhangshe*, the *Taishang xuanci zhuhuazhang*, the *Yunji qiqian*, The *Shangqing tianxin zhengfa* and the *Wushang xuanyuan santian yutan dafa* on this subject. Discussion of *fulian* first occurs exclusively in Heavenly Master Daoism. In Eastern Han and Wei, Jin and Sixteen Kingdoms period tombs in Shaanxi, Henan, Gansu and other areas, there are not a few excavated remains of this kind. Later these beliefs were adopted by Lingbao and Shangqing sects of Daoism.

The Lady Yuan exorcism stone carving preserves some of the characteristics of early Heavenly Master Daoism with its writing of the names of the female demons and sending them to the River God, and its use of talismanic diagrams or insignia. It attributes the chronic and non-contagious emotional illness to possession by demonic ghosts of deceased women. This is seldom seen in archeological objects. No matter that the circumstances of its discovery and the objects with which it was found are not clearly known, however from the connections with Daoist texts, it can be argued that this stone was probably placed near the residence of the afflicted or the site where the possession first took place, and that it is not likely to have come from a tomb. The earliest archeological evidence of Daoist insignia or talismans is in the Eastern Han and Southern Dynasties. It is not heard of in the Tang, but becomes more common in the Song and Ming. In the Five Dynasties there are only two examples, of which the

Lady Yuan stone carving is earlier. Its style of drawing is not like that of the other example, a *dijuan* of Lady Ma and the twenty-four maids of the fifth year of Dabao (962), nor is does it conform to the demon-expelling insignia described in Daoist texts. However, there are similarities with the insignia on the upper part of the “Stele of the Taishang exorcism of a demonic attachment” of Shenxiao sect from Gongnan, Sichuan. This shows the the exorcism stone of Lady Yuan has some relationship to the Shenxiao sect. Before the late Tang and Five Dynasties Period, exorcism methods were primarily by petitioning. Afterward activation of talismans and rituals became predominant. From this perspective on the late Tang and Five Dynasties period, a degree of change in the types of Daoist activity is already apparent.