

Chapter 1

Introduction

OPENING COMMENTS

This book explores the beliefs and practices of the Quanzhen (Complete Realization) School of the Taoist religion during its founding phases in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries. The Quanzhen School is a living tradition. It is the dominant school of monastic Taoism in the People's Republic of China, and numerous non-monastic Taoist temples and organizations in southern China, Taiwan, and other countries claim an affiliation with the Quanzhen tradition as well.¹ The emergence and rapid growth of the Quanzhen School during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries has frequently been cited as a pivotal event in the history of Taoism. Quanzhen Taoism in its doctrinal content has been described as the foremost representative of a "new Taoist religion" (*xin daojiao*) that in very fundamental ways differed from the "old Taoist religion" (*jiu daojiao*).

The monks and nuns in Quanzhen monasteries today pursue an austere lifestyle. To my knowledge, most or all of them practice celibacy and vegetarianism.² Although part of their regimen consists of reciting liturgies and learning ritual procedures, their most important pursuit is a form of meditation known as *neidan* (internal alchemy),³ or *jinggong* (motionless exercise). The ultimate goal of this is to gain immortality through the recovery of the Radiant Spirit (*yangshen*) or Real Nature (*zhenxing*) that exists without beginning and without end. One who progresses in this endeavor is thought to gain health, longevity, and inner tranquility. Although physical death eventually occurs, the Radiant Spirit is thought to survive to enjoy an eternal life unbound by the strife of *samsara*.⁴

As we shall see, the early Quanzhen masters lived very austere lives, while teaching and practicing the methods for recovering the Radiant Spirit/Real Nature. Since they were renowned adepts of these methods, the early Quanzhen masters are said to be immortal beings who can be prayed to for aid and guidance, or even encountered in meditative trances and dreams.⁵ Images of them are enshrined and worshipped in temples. Non-monastic Quanzhen organizations in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and overseas sometimes communicate with them through spirit writing (*fujī*)—especially with Lü Yan, one of the semi-legendary Quanzhen “patriarchs” (*zu*).⁶ While there is no evidence that the early Quanzhen masters themselves practiced spirit writing—or even knew of it—we shall see that they undoubtedly believed in immortal beings who could answer prayers and appear before diligent practitioners worthy of their sympathy. Furthermore, their own claims and doings contributed to bringing about their own deification shortly after their deaths, or even during their lifetimes.

Was the early Quanzhen School aptly describable as “new Taoist religion”? This depends on what one means by such a description. Some modern scholars have characterized the early Quanzhen School as a reform movement that set out to purge Taoism of its magico-religious elements (e.g., alchemy, belief in immortal beings, wonder-working rituals) and restore it to something reminiscent of the simple doctrine of serenity and non-action expounded in the *Daode jing*. These scholars also have laid great emphasis on the fact that the early Quanzhen School borrowed heavily from Buddhism and extolled the simultaneous adherence to the “Three Teachings” (*sanjiao*; Taoism, Buddhism, and Confucianism). Some have even suggested that the early Quanzhen movement should not be labeled “Taoist religion,” since it did not set out to propagate the “traditional Taoist religion.”⁷

Based on this perspective—the main proponents of which wrote during the 1950s and 1960s—any aspect of Quanzhen belief and practice pertaining to the supernatural seems like a corruption and deviation from the intentions of the movement’s founders. However, such a view is misleading. Although the early Quanzhen masters strongly remonstrated against charlatans, they certainly did not deny the existence of immortals, the possibility of miracles, or the efficacy of Taoist rituals. More recent scholarship is beginning to give us a much fuller view of the beliefs and practices of the early Quanzhen masters. However, there is still a strong tendency not to acknowledge or pay much attention to their lively mysticism or their enthusiastic belief in the realm of the transcendent and supernatural.

The syncretism of the Quanzhen School was hardly unique or new. The blending of Confucian and—especially—Buddhist elements into the Taoist religion had by and large already taken place during the Six Dynasties and Tang periods. Confucian social mores (e.g., filial piety, loyalty) had already

been well incorporated into Taoist doctrine, as had basic Buddhist notions such as *karma*,⁸ *samsara*, and liberation (which was equated to divine, celestial immortality). Secondly, while the early Quanzhen masters sincerely esteemed Confucianism and Buddhism for their capacity to bring about inner peace and moral growth, they clearly saw themselves as successors to legendary Taoist *neidan* master-immortals of the past. As *neidan* masters, their teachings delve into psycho-physiological theories foreign to the Confucian and Buddhist traditions. Recent scholarship has already shed a great deal of light on this fact.⁹

However, the Taoism of the second millennium was certainly very different from that of the first millennium. Perhaps the most striking difference lies in the predominance of *neidan*, which came to overshadow and replace other meditation methods.¹⁰ Significantly, various *neidan* texts articulate theories in which the highest immortality is gained by the Radiant Spirit/Real Nature and not by the physical body, thus they relinquish the much maligned view of earlier Taoists who claimed that the entire body of flesh could evade death and ascend to the heavens.¹¹ If the so-called “new Taoist religion” is defined in terms of adherence to *neidan* practice and theory, then the early Quanzhen School was certainly one of its most prominent representatives. Although the Quanzhen masters cannot claim credit for inventing the theory and praxis of *neidan* (which had already been developing and evolving for centuries), their approach to self-cultivation can perhaps be deemed distinctive for its straightforward emphasis on inner tranquility and the complementary performance of altruistic deeds. The Quanzhen masters were the most austere and unworldly of ascetics, yet they energetically saw to the spiritual and physical needs of the world. This is their most impressive characteristic, which goes a considerable way toward explaining why they have been revered by so many.

HISTORICAL SUMMARY

At this point it is appropriate to introduce the reader to the Quanzhen masters and provide a brief historical summary on the early Quanzhen movement. This book will focus on the teachings and practices of Quanzhen founder Wang Zhe (sobriquet, Chongyang,¹² 1113–1170) and his direct disciples. His most famous disciples were Ma Yu (sobriquet, Danyang, 1123–1184), Tan Chuduan (sobriquet, Changzhen, 1123–1185), Liu Chuxuan (sobriquet, Changsheng, 1147–1203), Qiu Chuji (sobriquet, Changchun, 1143–1227), Wang Chuyi (sobriquet, Yuyang, 1142–1217), Hao Datong (sobriquet, Guangning, 1140–1212), and Sun Bu'er (sobriquet, Qingjing, ex-wife of Ma Yu, 1119–1183). These seven disciples are commonly referred to collectively as the “Seven Realized Ones” (*qizhen*). Among these eminent disciples, particular

attention will be paid to Ma Yu and Qiu Chuji, since these two appear to have left the greatest impact on the movement after the passing of the founder. Unfortunately, much less attention can be given to Sun Bu'er, since no reliably authentic writings of hers have survived.¹³ This book also will refer frequently to the teachings of second-generation disciples Yin Zhiping (sobriquet, Qinghe, 1169–1251) and Wang Zhijin (sobriquet, Xiyun, 1178–1263). The works of both men contain frequent reminiscences on the sayings and deeds of their predecessors and confer deeper insight into their teachings.

Wang Zhe was born as the third son of a wealthy family in Dawei Village, Xianyang, west of present-day Xi'an (Shaanxi Province) on 12/22/Zhenghe 2¹⁴ (January 11, 1113). Not much is known about the early part of his life, although the various Quanzhen hagiographies give a miraculous account of his birth and speak admiringly of his striking appearance, keen intelligence, and generous character as a child and young man.¹⁵ He received a good education, and in his adolescence and early adulthood, he aspired to take the civil service examinations. Later he shifted his attention to mastering the military arts and took the military recruitment examinations. The hagiographies do not agree as to whether or not he passed these examinations, and they give no information concerning his eventual employment. One local gazetteer, however, does indicate that he served as a low-ranking official in charge of collecting the wine and liquor tax.¹⁶ Whatever the case, it appears that by middle age he had become disillusioned and had taken to drinking heavily. In the process, he neglected his responsibilities as a husband and father.¹⁷ His eccentric, disorderly behavior earned him the nickname "Lunatic" (Haifeng). It was during this period that he underwent a remarkable conversion that would completely change his life.¹⁸

The conversion took place in the sixth month of Zhenglong 4 (June 18–July 16, 1159), and the hagiographies claim that it occurred through direct personal encounters with immortals. Wang Zhe, we are told, was sitting in a butcher shop in Ganhe Township drinking wine and eating meat in large quantities when he was encountered by an immortal (who, strangely, appeared as *two* identical-looking young men clad in white woolen garments)¹⁹ and conferred secret lessons. From this time on, Wang Zhe started to act even more strangely. On 8/15 (September 16) of the following year, he met the same immortal(s) at Liquan. They then drank together at a saloon where Wang Zhe had more secret lessons transmitted to him. The hagiographies do not agree on the identity of the immortal(s) encountered on these occasions. Some do not specify who it was,²⁰ but most say that it was Lü Yan.²¹ One source claims that it was indeed two men—Lü Yan and his teacher, Zhongli Quan.²² Both of these figures were legendary *neidan* master-immortals who allegedly flourished around 800 c.e. and 200 c.e., respectively, and they are revered to this day among the "patriarchs" of the Quanzhen School.²³

Whatever actually took place, Wang Zhe at this time found the resolve to abandon his home and live as a mendicant. The next year (Dading 1 [1161]), he moved to Nanshi Village, where he made a mound of dirt several feet high and under it dug a vault over ten feet deep. On top of the mound he placed a sign that read, “Here rests Lunatic Wang.” Wang Zhe lived inside of this tomb, which he referred to as the “Grave of the Living Dead Man.” At four corners surrounding this peculiar dwelling, he planted four cherry apple (*baitang*) trees. When a fellow hermit, Mr. He, asked him what the meaning of this was, Wang Zhe proclaimed, “Some day I wish to make the teachings of the four directions into one!”²⁴ If Wang Zhe indeed uttered this statement, then it would mean that he already harbored the intention to start a large new religious movement, even while still in the process of working out his own salvation. His living inside of the burial mound most likely symbolized his resolution to put to death his old, worldly self.

In the autumn of Dading 3 (1163), Wang Zhe moved to Liujiang Village, where he trained together with two hermits, He Dejin (sobriquet, Yuchan; probably the same Mr. He who had asked about the cherry apple trees) and Li Lingyang.²⁵ The three men lived in three little grass huts, located together on a small island in a river. Wang Zhe, we are told, frequently made subtle and profound utterances that ordinary villagers simply disregarded as the ravings of a lunatic. Sometimes he would walk around with a pot of liquor, drinking and singing. Often, somebody would ask him for a drink, whereupon he would cheerfully share his liquor. Hagiographies tell us that on one such occasion, Wang Zhe had yet another momentous encounter with a legendary immortal. One day in Dading 4 (1164) when he was walking home from an outing to Ganhe, a man asked him for a drink. When Wang Zhe handed him the liquor pot, the man consumed its contents in one gulp and then made Wang Zhe refill the pot with water from the Ganhe River and drink it. This water had in fact been miraculously transformed into the “brew of the immortals.” The man then asked, “Do you know about Liu Haichan?” (Liu Haichan [or Liu Cao] was a famous *neidan* master-immortal of the early eleventh century—he also is revered as one of the Quanzhen “patriarchs”).²⁶ Wang Zhe responded, “I have only seen pictures of him.” The man went off laughing (he *was* Liu Haichan).²⁷ From this time on, Wang Zhe never drank alcohol. However, he frequently appeared to be drunk. His breath would smell so strongly of liquor that other people could get drunk just by smelling him.²⁸

This baffling story—most probably made up for the purpose of linking Wang Zhe to yet another famous figure in *neidan* lore—can perhaps be at least taken as an indication that at around this time, Wang Zhe found the inner strength to overcome alcohol addiction.

On 4/26/Dading 7 (May 16, 1167), Wang Zhe set fire to his hut at Liujiang Village. Some of the villagers, thinking he was in danger, came

rushing to his rescue, only to find him dancing ecstatically by the fire. When asked why he was doing this, he explained that in three years somebody would come to rebuild the hut (a prophecy that is said to have been fulfilled three years later, when his disciples erected a Taoist temple and buried his body there). The next morning, Wang Zhe set off by himself on a journey eastward to the Shandong Peninsula (roughly 1,000 miles away). When departing, he declared to his followers, "I am going to the eastern sea to capture a horse (*ma*; a prophetic pun on the name of Ma Yu, his favorite disciple whom he would meet in Shandong)."²⁹ His following at this time in Shaanxi was probably very small. It may have included only He Dejin, Li Lingyang (these two men were perhaps more his companions than his disciples), and two disciples, Shi Chuhou and Yan Chuchang, whom he had taken on while living in Liujiang.

Although the hagiographies depict Wang Zhe's conversion and training in vivid detail, they nonetheless leave us with some puzzling questions. Who actually was his teacher? Could he have been self-taught? Did he have any connections to organized Taoist religion, and did he receive any formal Taoist ordination? Pierre Marsone has pointed out that Wang Zhe's own writings refer to two men—one Taoist and one Buddhist—who appear to have provided him some guidance.³⁰ Two of Wang Zhe's poems mention a certain Ritual Master Chi (Chi Fashi) who had written a commentary to the ancient Taoist philosophical classic, the *Daode jing* (a.k.a. the *Laozzi*).³¹ It appears that Wang Zhe had studied this commentary and perhaps received some personal instruction from Chi Fashi. Two other poems bear clear testimony to the fact that Wang Zhe once considered himself the disciple of Buddhist Dharma master Ren (Ren Fashi), who had taught him methods of confession and the "Eighteen Precepts."³² It is unclear as to when or for how long Wang Zhe studied under either teacher, and to what extent their teachings influenced the teachings that he would pass on to his own disciples.

Wang Zhe appears to have been particularly familiar with two major Mahayana Buddhist scriptures—the *Diamond Sutra* (*Jin'gang jing*) and the *Heart Sutra* (*Xin jing*).³³ He was probably also familiar with some Chan (Zen) literature, and Hachiya Kunio has pointed out a passage in Wang Zhe's writings that was perhaps inspired by a similar passage in the recorded sayings of Chan master Dazhu Huihai (fl. Ca. 780).³⁴ More recently, Hu Qide has argued that Wang Zhe's writings and preaching methods bear the influence of Linji Sect Chan master Yuanwu Keqin (1063–1135).³⁵ However, as Hachiya has astutely observed, Wang Zhe did not abide by the thoroughgoing negation and non-assertion of Mahayana Buddhist philosophy. Fond as he was of borrowing Buddhist language to preach detachment from this provisional, fleeting world of *samsara*, Wang Zhe ardently believed in the eternal, universal Real Nature/Radiant Spirit that is the ground and wellspring of consciousness (spirit [*shen*], Nature [*xing*]), and vitality (*qi*,³⁶ Life [*ming*]) within

all living beings. This to him was not “empty” (lacking inherent existence); it was fully Real (*zhen*).³⁷

Wang Zhe’s teachings bear considerable affinity to the *neidan* theories and methods of the so-called Zhong-Lü tradition (which claims to be handed down from immortals Zhongli Quan and Lü Yan; representative texts of this tradition that we have at our disposal include *Zhong-Lü chuandao ji*,³⁸ *Lingbao bifa* [DT1181/TT874],³⁹ and *Xishan qunxian huizhen ji* [DT245/TT116]⁴⁰). In this sense, the stories of his alleged encounters with Lü Yan and Zhongli Quan at least seem indicative of his spiritual heritage. Wang Zhe also appears to have been familiar with the *Daode jing*, *Yinfu jing* (DT31/TT27), *Qingjing jing* (DT615/TT341), and *Huangting neijing jing* (DT330/TT167),⁴¹ all standard reading materials for *neidan* practitioners of the time.⁴² Another lesser known text that provided Wang Zhe with considerable inspiration was *Jin zhenren yulu* (DT1046/TT728), the recorded sayings of a certain Realized Man Jin. Although little can be known about this figure, it appears that his full name was Jin Daocheng (sobriquet, Chongzhen), and that he flourished during the eleventh or early twelfth century.⁴³ In studying all these doctrines and texts, did Wang Zhe have a teacher? Would it have been possible for a devout layman to gather the relevant books and practice *neidan* all by himself? Perhaps not. While it certainly was not unusual for laypeople to learn and practice *neidan* (some of the most famous *neidan* masters were neither monks nor priests),⁴⁴ texts do not seem to adequately disclose the actual procedures of cultivating meditative trance.

Marsone has suggested the intriguing possibility that He Dejin and Li Lingyang may in fact have been Wang Zhe’s teachers, since both men had roughly ten more years of experience as religious mendicants than did Wang Zhe.⁴⁵ While this hypothesis is difficult to verify, the life stories of these two men hint at the existence of a culture of solitary Taoist ascetics who at times could cooperate and learn from each other. Interestingly, both men also are said to have undergone mysterious conversion experiences.

He Dejin’s conversion is said to have taken place as the result of a very strange episode involving a fatally ill “person of the Tao” (*daozehe*) whom he had kindly housed and cared for. According to the hagiographic account, the ailing Taoist died after a year in He Dejin’s home. Not long thereafter, He Dejin, at the imploring of the deceased’s elderly grieving mother, opened the coffin and found it empty. The grieving mother thereupon disappeared as well. The ailing Taoist had thus allegedly feigned his death and attained immortality through the ancient procedure of “corpse liberation” (*shijie*).⁴⁶ He Dejin thereupon “abandoned his wife and children to enter the Tao.” Some time later he heard that Wang Zhe had similarly undergone unusual experiences and was training in Zhongnan (the county where Ganhe Township and Nanshi Village were located). He thus decided to join him.⁴⁷

Li Lingyang had been a vagrant Taoist ever since encountering and being converted by an “extraordinary person” during the Tiande reign era (1149–1153). He wandered the wilderness “enjoying himself in the Tao,” “covering his radiance and obscuring his traces.” He would not reveal his personal name to people, so villagers would refer to him as “Realized Man Li.”⁴⁸

He Dejin and Li Lingyang were thus both solitary Taoist monks prior to meeting Wang Zhe, and there were perhaps others like them in the local area. The Zhongnan mountains, located in the vicinity of where they lived and trained, are historically—and presently—one of the most important centers of monastic Taoism in northern China.⁴⁹ There were perhaps many other solitary monks in the area connected somehow to the local temples and monasteries. (Significantly, it is known that He Dejin and Li Lingyang took up residence at the Zhongnan Taiping Gong monastery some time after Wang Zhe departed eastward.)⁵⁰

Concerning the eastward journey and subsequent ministry of Wang Zhe, the hagiographies provide a great deal of information. Throughout his long journey eastward, Wang Zhe carried an iron jug and begged for his sustenance. In Ye County (Shandong), he bestowed “secret instructions on the cultivation of Reality” upon a certain Liu Tongwei.⁵¹ In Weizhou, he visited the Realized Man Xiao, the leader of the Taiyi School of Taoism. Wang Zhe had hoped to form a cooperative relationship with the “Realized Man,” but ultimately he found him incompatible. Upon taking leave of the “Realized Man,” Wang Zhe presented him with a poem, the subtleties of which he could not fathom.⁵² (This episode involving Realized Man Xiao sounds suspiciously like a polemical embellishment. However, there is some reason to think that Wang Zhe did have some contact with the Taiyi School and received some influence from it in the area of ritual.)⁵³

On 7*/18/Dading 7⁵⁴ (September 3, 1167), about three and a half months after his departure from Liujiang Village, Wang Zhe arrived in the town of Ninghai, located near the eastern tip of the Shandong Peninsula. There he visited the estate of a local official, Fan Mingshi, who was entertaining a group of guests. Wang Zhe, with his strange attire (dressed heavily in the blazing summer heat), eccentric behavior, and profound utterances, captured the fancy of host and guests alike. Among the guests was a local tycoon, Ma Congyi (later to be renamed Ma Yu), who agreed to allow Wang Zhe to set up a hut in the garden of his estate.⁵⁵ Wang Zhe named his new hut “the Hut of Complete Realization” (Quanzhen An). Wang Zhe lived there until the following spring, and in the meantime he succeeded in making disciples out of Qiu Chuji,⁵⁶ Tan Chudian, Wang Chuyi, and eventually Ma Yu. The conversion of Ma Yu was a particularly difficult endeavor, since Wang Zhe had to convince him to abandon his great wealth and divorce Sun Bu'er, his wife of many years. The hagiographies give detailed and frequently incredible accounts of

how he accomplished this. We are told that Wang Zhe had himself locked inside the Hut of Complete Realization for 100 days, from 10/1/Dading 7 (November 14, 1167) to 1/10 Dading 8 (February 20, 1168). During this period, he employed various means to convince Ma Yu and Sun Bu'er to end their marriage and become his disciples. He regularly presented them with didactic poems, to which Ma Yu would compose responses. He also gave them sliced pears, taros, and chestnuts to eat, which symbolized the need for husband and wife to separate.⁵⁷ (He himself is said to have eaten infrequently during his self-confinement, although sources disagree as to how infrequently.)⁵⁸ Furthermore, we are told that he exhorted and instructed Ma Yu by sending his Radiant Spirit out to communicate with him in both his waking experience and his dreams.⁵⁹ On 2/8/Dading 8 (March 19, 1168), a month after Wang Zhe ended his self-confinement, Ma Yu became his disciple. Sun Bu'er would hold out for a while longer.

On 2/29/Dading 8 (April 9, 1168), Wang Zhe took his disciples, Qiu Chuji, Tan Chuduan, Ma Yu, and Wang Chuyi, with him to live in a grotto on Mt. Kunyu, which he named the "Smoky Mist Grotto" (Yanxia Dong). Wang Zhe was a stern teacher who often inflicted insults and beatings upon his disciples. This he did to test their resolve and strengthen their character.⁶⁰ In order to vanquish their pride, he demanded that they all go out begging in the streets, a requirement that the highly bred Ma Yu found particularly difficult (see chapter 3). Although in fact many people came to train under Wang Zhe, most of them fled. Nonetheless, he did take on some more disciples during this period, the most important among these being the fortune teller, Hao Sheng (who later took on the personal name, Datong), whose mother had just passed away.⁶¹ Interestingly, Wang Chuyi's mother (nee Zhou) also came and became a disciple, assuming the personal name, Deqing, and the sobriquet, Xuanjing.⁶²

In 8/Dading 8 (September 4–October 2, 1168), Wang Zhe and his disciples left Mt. Kunyu and began to travel and preach throughout Shandong for over a year. During that span, Wang Zhe succeeded in forming five congregations (*hui*). These were the Seven Treasures Congregation (Qibao Hui) in Wendeng, the Golden Lotus Congregation (Jinlian Hui) in Ninghai, the Three Lights Congregation (Sanguang Hui) in Fushan, the Jade Flower Congregation (Yuhua Hui) in Dengzhou, and the Equality Congregation (Pingdeng Hui) in Laizhou. During this period, Ma Yu's ex-wife, Sun Bu'er, became a disciple (in Ninghai on 5/5/Dading 9 [June 1, 1169]), as did young Liu Chuxuan (in Laizhou in 9/Dading 9 [September 23–October 21, 1169]).⁶³

In 10/Dading 9 (October 22–November 20, 1169), Wang Zhe departed from Shandong, taking with him Ma Yu, Tan Chuduan, Liu Chuxuan, and Qiu Chuji. While his intention seems to have been to return to his home

region of Shaanxi to re-establish his ministry there, he and his party ended up taking extended lodging at an inn in Bianjing (present-day Kaifeng, Henan Province). Wang Zhe's treatment of his disciples then became harsher than ever before. He resorted to scolding and beatings even more readily, and he subjected his disciples to strange, harrowing ordeals. (These will be discussed in chapter 3.) Roughly two months later, on 1/4/Dading 10 (January 22, 1170), Wang Zhe died, after designating Ma Yu as his successor.

There are numerous questions that need to be asked about Wang Zhe's ministry in Shandong during the last three years of his life. How large did his following become during his lifetime, and what sorts of people were attracted to him? What was the nature of the five congregations?

Judging from the short duration of his ministry and the fact that he relocated so frequently, it seems doubtful that his following could have been too large. Nonetheless, to initiate five congregations seems like a pretty significant achievement. In fact, one source indicates that the Equality Congregation in Laizhou had over 1,000 members.⁶⁴ This success was perhaps due to a prevailing religious climate in which the belief in immortals and interest in *neidan* were already fairly widespread among people of various social strata. Wang Zhe was a charismatic personality who embodied and articulated this religiosity in a compelling way.

Wang Zhe's seven top disciples came from various backgrounds. Hagiographic sources all indicate that Ma Yu was a man of great wealth who had received a high level of education. Sun Bu'er, his wife, also had been born into a prominent family and was well educated. Interestingly, even prior to his encounter with Wang Zhe, Ma Yu apparently had a considerable interest in Taoism and had practiced meditation. Yin Zhiping, in his "record of sayings," states: "Master-Father Danyang (Ma Yu) before leaving his family (*chujia*)⁶⁵ [to become a Taoist monk] was of robust personality and fond of drinking. However, he had already been practicing methods of exercise (presumably *neidan*) and knew that the root of the Tao naturally exists within ones [Real] Nature."⁶⁶ It also appears that Ma Yu had been a generous patron of the Taoist religion. One source states that one night he dreamt of two cranes alighting in his vegetable garden; this inspired him to build a Taoist monastery (*daoguan*) and to invite a certain Taoist Lu (Lu Daoren) to live there.⁶⁷ It appears that Wang Zhe also became acquainted with this Taoist Lu and admired his expertise in medicinal healing (see chapter 4).⁶⁸

Tan Chudian, who was the son of an artisan (goldsmith and silversmith), eagerly pursued an education in his adolescence and became precociously skilled at writing poetry. Interestingly, we are told that a severe illness was what caused him to turn to the Taoist religion in his middle age, and ultimately to assume discipleship under Wang Zhe. One day he contracted a chronic rheumatic illness from lying down drunk in the snow (why he did this is

unclear). Convinced that medicines could not cure his illness, he took to constantly reciting a Taoist scripture, the *Beidou jing* (Northern Bushel [the constellation Ursa Major] Scripture).⁶⁹ One night in a dream he encountered the Great Emperor and Astral Lords of the Ursa Major and upon waking made the resolution to dedicate himself to the Tao.⁷⁰ Some time after this he sought out Wang Zhe, who, we are told, miraculously cured his chronic illness (see chapter 4).

Accounts of Wang Chuyi's life prior to joining the Quanzhen movement are perhaps the most interesting. At age seven *sui*,⁷¹ he is said to have abruptly fallen dead and come back to life. Through this experience he allegedly gained a special insight into life and death. Also at age seven *sui*, he is said to have encountered the immortal Donghua Dijun (a legendary figure who came to be ascribed the status of first Quanzhen Patriarch by ca. 1240),⁷² an incident that he himself confirms in his poetry collection *Yunguang ji* (4/1a) (see chapter 5). Hagiographies also mention two more such strange encounters that occurred later in his youth. At fourteen *sui*, he allegedly encountered an old man seated on a large boulder who rubbed him on the head and proclaimed to him that he would one day become a great leader of the Taoist religion. On another occasion, he allegedly heard from midair the voice of "the master of the Palace of the Mysterious Court" (Xuanting Gongzhu).⁷³ After these experiences, he took to going about barefoot dressed in rags, singing and dancing crazily in public. Some people thought he was mad. There were others who, knowing his insanity was feigned, tried to pressure him into getting married. Wang Chuyi scorned all such suggestions. Along with his mother, he practiced the Taoist "methods" (his father had died when he was very young). By the time he was twenty-seven *sui*, he was dwelling in a hermitage on Mt. Niuxian, when he heard about Wang Zhe, sought him out, and became a disciple.⁷⁴ As mentioned before, his mother also became a disciple; indeed, one wonders whether Wang Chuyi's intense religiosity, manifested from such an early age, was largely the result of being raised by a devout Taoist mother.

Liu Chuxuan and Hao Datong, it perhaps should be noted, also lost their fathers early, and they are noted in the hagiographies for their faithful devotion to their mothers. Hao Datong was born to a wealthy family of scholar-officials.⁷⁵ However, he developed a fondness for more arcane studies (Taoist philosophy⁷⁶ and *Yi jing* [Book of Changes]), and he chose divination as his occupation. One source states that he once had a dream in which a "divine man" (*shenren*) revealed to him the secret meanings of the *Yi jing*, and thus he acquired his great divinatory skills.⁷⁷ Thus prior to his eventual conversion by Wang Zhe, he had studied some Taoist literature and may have had some propensity for mystical experience. He seems to have been the only Quanzhen master trained in the arts of divination (although all the Quanzhen masters had a great reputation for their alleged clairvoyant powers).

Qiu Chuji was orphaned as a young child. At the tender age of nineteen *sui*, he abandoned the secular world to study the Tao on Mt. Kunyu. He met Wang Zhe and became his disciple a year later. Thus like Wang Chuyi, he had been a Taoist monk prior to joining the Quanzhen fold. Some sources indicate that he was from a prominent family and was well educated.⁷⁸ However, one source indicates quite the opposite, stating in fact that he was illiterate and was first taught to read and write by Wang Zhe. The same source goes on to say that he then made amazing progress; he memorized over 1,000 Chinese characters a day, and eventually he became a very adept poet.⁷⁹ The reminiscences of Yin Zhiping seem to indicate something similar in regard to Liu Chuxuan and Wang Chuyi:

Master-Father Changsheng (Liu Chuxuan); even though he did not read books, his writings and statements came flowing out from his insides (lit., “his lungs and belly”). [Works] such as his hundred and twenty “Rui zhegu” (Auspicious Pheasant) poems and his sixty “Feng ru song” (Wind Enters the Pines) poems were all brought about through oral dictation. He also wrote commentaries to the scriptures of the Three Teachings (Taoism, Confucianism, and Buddhism), his brush never stopping. Although deficient stylistically, their principles are more than sufficient. People who understand regard them as surpassing even the standard set by divine immortals.⁸⁰

Grand Master Yuyang (Wang Chuyi) read the *Daode jing* only after having already acquired the Tao.⁸¹

The attitude conveyed by Yin Zhiping is that the extent of one’s literacy and book learning does not determine one’s capacity for true spiritual insight. This is indeed consistent with the attitudes of Wang Zhe and Ma Yu, who both harbored reservations regarding the value of studying books.⁸² Nonetheless, it appears that Wang Zhe taught reading and writing to Qiu Chuji—as well as perhaps to his other illiterate (or semi-literate) disciples. The Quanzhen masters, in all sorts of circumstances, depended on poetry to express themselves. When coaxing secular people to abandon their sinful, worldly ways, they wrote poems. When relating their meditative experiences, or conveying *neidan* procedures to their disciples, they wrote poems. When they were about to die, they made their final testament through poems (see chapter 7). This emphasis on poetic expression is probably what motivated Wang Zhe to teach reading and writing.

Wang Zhe, as we have seen, had two female disciples (at least), namely, Sun Bu’er (Ma Yu’s wife) and Zhou Deqing (Wang Chuyi’s mother). Female monasticism would thrive under the subsequent leadership of Wang Zhe’s disciples,⁸³ and it continues to be a prominent feature of Quanzhen Taoism to

this day. While it appears that Wang Zhe was reluctant to allow nuns to participate intimately in his inner circle, he did instruct them with strictness resembling that which he employed on monks. One source tells us that when Sun Bu'er came asking to be made a disciple, Wang Zhe told Ma Yu to momentarily leave the premises while he ritually ordained her.⁸⁴ He then led her out onto the streets and made her beg for food. He also made her set up and live in a separate hut of her own. Her subsequent lifestyle appears to have been very austere—perhaps no less so than her male colleagues (see chapter 3). She did not accompany Wang Zhe to Bianjing, but she did travel to Shaanxi to pay her respects at his grave after hearing of his death. From there she eventually proceeded to Luoyang to train under the tutelage of an eccentric nun, Feng Xiang (Immortal Girl Feng). Feng Xiang, we are told, was a nun from “west of the Pass” (i.e., Shaanxi), who went to train in Dongzhou (environs of Luoyang) during the Huangtong reign era (1141–1149). Nobody knew her age or her real name, but everybody recognized that she spoke in a distinct Qin (Shaanxi) dialect. She went about begging with her hair disheveled and her face and body covered with grime and dirt. She feigned madness and slept in abandoned temples.⁸⁵ When Sun Bu'er came to train with her, Feng Xiang had her live in the “lower grotto” near her own “upper grotto.” In front of their grottos, the two nuns placed piles of bricks and stones. Whenever they saw men approaching their dwelling, they would throw the bricks and stones at them; such was their commitment to solitude and celibacy.⁸⁶

This account is particularly interesting, because it tells us about a solitary female Taoist ascetic whose career began prior to the emergence of the Quanzhen movement. Also interesting is the fact that she originally hailed from Shaanxi. All of this seems to again suggest that Taoism in its solitary, ascetic mode was alive and well in the late twelfth century, particularly in Wang Zhe's home region in Shaanxi; furthermore, women also participated in it. The Quanzhen School seems to have inherited, perpetuated, and expanded this trend.

In sum, the “Seven Realized Ones” varied in their social and educational backgrounds. However, most or all of them had had prior interest or participation in some aspect of Taoist religion—whether philosophy, meditation, mystical experience, or the worship of immortals and deities. This was indeed a time when Taoist religiosity was alive and vigorous throughout diverse segments of society. In fact, as is well known, the Quanzhen School was not the only new Taoist school to emerge and gain prominence in northern China during this period. Both the Taiyi School (founded by Xiao Baozhen around 1138) and the Dadao School (founded by Liu Deren around 1142) emerged some decades prior to the Quanzhen School, and they enjoyed considerable prominence into the late thirteenth century.⁸⁷

Also noteworthy is the small ascetic Taoist lineage started by Liu Biangong (a.k.a. Liu the Sublime [Gaoshang], 1071–1143) in Binzhou (Shandong), which Vincent Goossaert has recently brought to attention.⁸⁸ Liu Biangong gained fame for his many years of silent, secluded meditation in his tiny hut, a practice similar to what was carried out by Wang Zhe, Ma Yu, and many Quanzhen monks thereafter.⁸⁹ Ma Yu himself alludes to Liu Biangong as follows in his “record of sayings”:

Liu the Sublime lived in his meditation hut (*huan du*)⁹⁰ for forty years. He did nothing else but simply empty his mind and fill his belly, avoid what is elegant, forget about fame, abandon all profit, clarify his spirit, and complete his *qi*. His elixir (Radiant Spirit/Real Nature) formed naturally, and his immortality was naturally accomplished.⁹¹

It is clear that Ma Yu admired this figure and drew inspiration from him. The same could well be true of the Quanzhen School as a whole.

The five congregations founded by Wang Zhe probably consisted primarily of lay believers. Through his Spartan teaching methods, Wang Zhe limited the number of his full-fledged disciples. However, by establishing lay congregations, he probably meant to provide a means by which people of lesser resolve and fortitude could gain spiritual benefits. Members apparently were not bound on a daily basis to the strict precepts demanded of full-fledged disciples but nonetheless convened periodically to engage in worship (and perhaps confession) and other practices to enhance their religious merit. Evidence in Wang Zhe’s poetry suggests that members paid a monthly fee of four copper coins and perhaps met twice a month on the first and fifteenth days.⁹² Wang Zhe’s syncretistic tendencies seem to have been particularly strong when he ministered to the laity. One source tells us that Wang Zhe instructed people to recite specific scriptures central to each of the “Three Teachings,” namely, the Confucian *Xiao jing* (Classic of Filial Piety), the Buddhist *Heart Sutra*, and the Taoist *Daode jing* and *Qingjing jing*. The same source also indicates that the five congregations each bore the words “Three Teachings” (*sanjiao*) at the beginning of their names (“Three Teachings Seven Treasures Congregation,” “Three Teachings Golden Lotus Congregation,” etc.).⁹³ Another source states that when instructing beginners, he first made them read the *Xiao jing* and the *Daode jing*.⁹⁴ Evidence from Wang Zhe’s own writings also suggests that members of the five congregations received instructions on how to clarify and purify the mind and perhaps practiced some simple form of meditation (see chapter 2). It also appears that it was precisely in the area of mental and moral cultivation that Wang Zhe perceived the common ground between the “Three Teachings” (see chapter 2).

In the hagiographic accounts, the two traits of Wang Zhe that stand out the most are his eccentricity and miraculous power. One might question the sanity and emotional stability of Wang Zhe. His eccentric behavior could be favorably interpreted as a sign that he was an enlightened holy man free of all pride and vanity, whose ways eluded the comprehension of worldly people. Eccentricity is indeed one of the standard traits attributed to the protagonists of Taoist hagiography throughout the centuries. Some of the accounts concerning Wang Zhe's strange acts may well be embellishments meant to fit him into the classic model of the Taoist immortal. More troubling—and rather atypical of Taoist hagiography—is the volatile temper and abusive behavior manifested by Wang Zhe in his interactions with his disciples. His disciples and admirers would justify this as being the “tough love” or “skilful means” of a compassionate teacher, but perhaps it is part of a pattern of emotional instability and abusive behavior that tainted his character throughout his life. In one of his own poems, Wang Zhe reminisces about how he had squandered his family's fortune through his excessive drinking and had habitually abused his kinfolk verbally.⁹⁵ Whatever the case, it would appear that his religious conversion did largely cure him of his despondent state of mind. It is otherwise difficult to explain the great self-discipline and vigor that he manifested in the late years of his life.

The miraculous powers attributed to Wang Zhe in the hagiographies are manifold (as we shall see in chapter 6). Along with exhibiting clairvoyance on numerous occasions, Wang Zhe manifests his form in multiple locations, emits radiance from his body, heals diseases with talismans or by physical contact, makes a boulder stop in midair, throws an umbrella to a location 100 km. away, and so on. We also are told that he appeared before disciples and believers after his death. One source claims that his corpse still appeared “life-like” a full year after his death. This is all of course the typical stuff of hagiography in various religious traditions worldwide. While much of it probably can be understood as embellishment woven out of the pious imagination of hagiographers, we shall be seeing that the teachings and claims of the Quanzhen masters themselves were highly instrumental in engendering such stories.

The early development of the Quanzhen School took place under consecutive periods of foreign rule, first under the Jin dynasty of the Jurchen people and then the Yuan dynasty of the Mongols. The Jurchens gained full control of northern China after a long and bloody war with the Chinese Song dynasty that lasted from 1125 to 1142. The Mongols began to attack the Jurchens in 1210 and succeeded in conquering the entire region north of the Yellow River in 1215. The Jurchens, whose kingdom had dwindled to just the regions of Henan and Shandong, tried to make up for the territory that they had lost by engaging in another war with the Song, but they were

unsuccessful. Pressure from the Mongols, the Chinese, and the Xixia kingdom in the west, combined with peasant revolts, brought the Jin dynasty to its demise in 1234. Conflict and bloodshed continued until the Mongols conquered all of China in 1279.⁹⁶

The political and social circumstances of the time must have had a great impact on the development of the Quanzhen School. Wang Zhe and his older disciples probably witnessed some of the anguish and bloodshed of the Jin-Song war, which probably instilled in them an acute awareness of the evil and suffering that pervades the world. Also, a lack of good employment opportunities under the Jurchen government probably caused a high number of Chinese intellectuals such as Wang Zhe and Ma Yu to turn to religion. While the earliest years of the movement's existence coincided with a period of relative peace and stability, the movement seems to have grown at a phenomenal rate during the years of the Mongol conquest. The tormented masses in great numbers sought spiritual and physical help from the Quanzhen School, which provided ministry, ritual services, healing, and charity (especially free food; see chapter 8).

After burying Wang Zhe in Bianjing, Ma Yu, Tan Chuduan, Liu Chuxuan, and Qiu Chuji travelled westward to Shaanxi. There they met up with Shi Chuhou, Yan Chuchang, Liu Tongwei, He Dejin, and Li Lingyang and constructed a tomb and a small temple (*an*; hermitage) at the very site at Liujiang Village where Wang Zhe had burned his grass hut.⁹⁷ They then retrieved their master's body from Bianjing and interred it at the Liujiang temple. This temple, the Chongyang Gong, is regarded as the Patriarchal Garden (*Zuting*), the foremost sacred site of the Quanzhen tradition.⁹⁸

For three years, Ma Yu, Tan Chuduan, Liu Chuxuan, and Qiu Chuji lived in mourning at the Liujiang temple, after which they parted ways to pursue their own training and preaching. The new leader, Ma Yu, evangelized in Shaanxi with great success, but in the winter of 1181, the Jurchen government started to view the growing Quanzhen movement with disfavor and suspicion and ordered Ma Yu to leave Shaanxi and return to Shandong. Ma Yu obeyed, leaving his Shaanxi ministry in the hands of Qiu Chuji.⁹⁹ Ma Yu died in 1183, but the movement continued to grow. In 1187, Wang Chuyi was summoned by Emperor Shizong for advice on how to seek longevity. Wang Chuyi told the emperor that the key to cultivating the body lay in the cherishing of seminal essence (i.e., sexual restraint) and completion of the Spirit. He further pointed out that sitting regally and doing nothing (non-intrusive governing) is the basic principle for ruling the empire.¹⁰⁰ Similar invitations eventually went out to Qiu Chuji in 1188 and Liu Chuxuan in 1197.¹⁰¹ As the Jin kingdom began to receive the deadly blows of the Mongol war machine, the Quanzhen School seems to have grown more rapidly than ever with Qiu Chuji and Wang Chuyi as its most lauded figures. The fame of Qiu Chuji grew so

much that Genghis Khan eventually heard of him and decided to summon him. Qiu Chuji (who was seventy-three *sui* at the time) complied and during the first lunar month (February 6–March 6) in 1220¹⁰² embarked on a long westward journey from the Shandong Peninsula to the Hindu Kush mountains in present-day Afghanistan. He finally arrived there in the third lunar month (April 14–May 12) in 1222 and met with Genghis Khan. He urged the ruthless conqueror to be less brutal in his conquest tactics and instructed him in the basic principles of cultivating health and longevity. As a result of this mission, Qiu is said to have saved many lives. Furthermore, Genghis Khan decreed that all Taoist monks and nuns in his domain were to operate under Qiu Chuji's authority, and that their institutions would be exempt from taxation. This heroic journey is a great highlight in Quanzhen history that has made Qiu Chuji the most revered of all the Quanzhen masters.¹⁰³ After Qiu Chuji's death in 1227, the Quanzhen School continued to grow in prominence under the leadership of his disciple, Yin Zhiping (originally a disciple of Liu Chuxuan), who had been among the members of the party who accompanied him on the famous journey.

Under the Mongol Empire, the Quanzhen sect was clearly the largest and most influential Taoist movement in northern China. Goossaert has estimated that by the end of the thirteenth century, there were about 4,000 Quanzhen monasteries and 20,000 Quanzhen clerics, of which about a third were women.¹⁰⁴ One of the greatest accomplishments during this period was the restoration and expansion (completed in 1244) of the *Xuandu baozang* ("Precious Storehouse of the Mysterious Capital) in 7,000 volumes, the largest Taoist Canon ever compiled. Spearheaded by the erudite monks, Song Defang (1183–1247) and Qin Zhi'an (1188–1244), this was the only such project in history initiated and carried out by an individual Taoist school without government sponsorship.¹⁰⁵ However, less than four decades later, this canon was destroyed as a result of a very dismaying chain of events. The Buddhist monk, Fuyu, complained to the Mongol court that the Quanzhen School was printing and distributing the controversial *Laozi huahu jing* (Scripture of Laozi's Conversion of the Barbarians), along with illustrations known as the *Laozi bashiyihua tu* (Diagrams of the 81 Transformations of Laozi). This text propagated the infamous legend (which had been the focus of ugly Buddhist-Taoist debates way back in the sixth century)¹⁰⁶ in which the Taoist sage, Laozi, travels to India and creates the Buddhist religion as a lower doctrine fit for barbarians. The Buddhists further complained that the Quanzhen Taoists had occupied Buddhist temples and destroyed Buddhist images.¹⁰⁷ In response to the complaints, the government decreed in 1255 that the printing blocks for the slanderous texts be destroyed, and that thirty-seven temples be returned to the Buddhists. However, the Taoists were not fully compliant to these measures, which provoked further complaints from the Buddhists. Consequently,

the emperor decided to resolve the issue by staging a debate between the Taoists and Buddhists in 1256. The Taoists, to his dismay, declined to participate. Debates eventually were held in 1258 and 1281. On each occasion, the Taoists were defeated and punished severely. In 1258, forty-five “false scriptures” were condemned to fire. In 1281, alas, the entire Taoist canon—excluding the *Daode jing*—saw the same fate.¹⁰⁸

I would venture to surmise that Wang Zhe himself would have been perturbed by the conduct of his successors during this period. The attitude toward Buddhism reflected in his own writings and actions was consistently one of appreciation and conciliation. Yet it is also true that the larger *neidan* tradition held a particular polemical stance against Buddhism—a stance maintaining that the spiritual liberation won through *neidan* practice was inherently superior to that gained through the Buddhist path. This stance, which is not readily apparent in the teachings of Wang Zhe, can be identified in a particular text ascribed to Qiu Chuji (*Dadan zhizhi* [DT243/TT115]), as well as in the immortality lore that came to be promoted by the Quanzhen movement (see chapter 4).

Strangely, despite the humiliation and punishment that resulted from the debates, the Quanzhen School survived and even managed to regain the favor of the government. In 1310, Emperor Wuzong bestowed honorary posthumous titles upon the Quanzhen patriarchs (Donghua Dijun, Zhongli Quan, Lü Yan, Liu Cao, and Wang Zhe), the Seven Realized Ones, and fifteen other eminent Quanzhen monks.¹⁰⁹ While the Quanzhen School never regained the supreme status it held in the mid-thirteenth century, it has survived to this day as the foremost school of monastic Taoism.

PREVIEW OF THIS BOOK'S CONTENTS

The purpose of this book is to provide a thorough description and analysis of the teachings and practices of the early Quanzhen masters. For this purpose, one must amply employ the voluminous writings left behind by the masters themselves. The vast bulk of this material—unfortunately, one might say—consists of poetry that is frequently difficult to comprehend due to its abstruse *neidan* symbolism. Fortunately, this material is supplemented and clarified by prose discourses (preserved largely in a genre of writing known as *yulu* or “records of sayings”) that are much more straightforward. By employing these materials, my intent is to let the masters speak for themselves, and for this reason I beg the reader’s indulgence with the frequency of direct quotes (some fairly long).

Quanzhen doctrine is remarkable for its balance and thoroughness. The Quanzhen masters taught a balanced and complementary cultivation of mind

and body. Furthermore, in their view, personal religious attainment had to be supplemented and counterbalanced by compassionate action in the world. My plan thus is to provide a full exposition of the Quanzhen path of cultivation at both the mental and physical levels, followed by a discussion of the types of compassionate worldly action taught and practiced by the Quanzhen masters.

Chapter 2 will focus primarily on the mental aspect of the Quanzhen path. This first and foremost means the cultivation of inner clarity and purity attained not only through the diligent practice of seated meditation (*dazuo*) but through an inner vigilance that pervades all daily activities. Inner purity and clarity, if attained, are seen as conducive to naturally bringing about physical control and well-being, as well as a spontaneous capacity for compassion that manifests itself in altruistic deeds. Yet in the process of acquiring this all-important purity and clarity of mind, the Quanzhen masters maintained that conscious effort must be made to discipline the body and perform altruistic deeds.

Chapter 3 will focus on an aspect of the Quanzhen lifestyle that is so vividly portrayed in the hagiographies, namely, the rigorous asceticism. Here I will describe the various types of self-discipline and self-denial pursued by the Quanzhen masters and discuss the underlying motives and rationale of these practices.

Chapter 4 will focus on teachings concerning the maintenance of physical health and longevity. The Quanzhen masters ultimately saw the cultivation of mental purity and clarity as holding the key to immortality. They conceded the mortality of the ordinary physical body as inevitable and put their hopes in the immortality of the Radiant Spirit/Real Nature. Yet this did not eliminate the need for physical health and longevity, since the process for recovering the Radiant Spirit involved the refining and manipulation of the subtle essences and energies that animate the physical organism. Ultimately, a decrepit body was deemed to be an inadequate apparatus for the internal alchemical process. I will examine here the various theories of the Quanzhen masters pertaining to physiology and the various strategies recommended and employed for the curing and prevention of disease.

Chapter 5 will examine the various mystical experiences attested to by the Quanzhen masters, such as visions, locutions, and unusual bodily sensations and symptoms. These things were referred to as “signs of proof”—proof that the adept is making progress in his or her pursuit of immortality. Nonetheless, an ambivalent attitude existed in regard to these phenomena that could at times be harrowing, and even deluding. Mystical experiences were fervently desired for affirmation of one’s worthiness yet were not to be too eagerly sought or anticipated.

Chapter 6 will deal with the issue of miracles. Many or most of the miracle

stories in the hagiographies were certainly woven out of the imagination and evangelistic zeal of pious followers. The Quanzhen masters themselves were critical of Taoists who sought to infatuate the credulous with outlandish claims. Yet a deeper examination reveals that many such claims were logically consistent with what *neidan* cultivation purports to accomplish. Furthermore, an examination of the Quanzhen masters' own statements reveals that they themselves believed in immortals and their miraculous manifestations and furthermore sometimes confirmed the alleged miraculous feats of their brethren.

Chapter 7 will examine the issue of death and what it meant to the Quanzhen masters. Hagiographies preserve ample information on how the masters died, along with what they said and how they behaved in the face of death. The masters' own writings preserve specific insights regarding what death is and how one should prepare for it and face up to it. One may doubt whether their comportment in their final moments was as heroic as what the hagiographies portray. However, the early Quanzhen masters clearly intended to face death with equanimity and dignity and believed that this could be accomplished by fostering mental detachment from one's body and the world.

Chapter 8 will begin to examine the altruistic worldly involvement of the Quanzhen masters. Here we will examine how the Quanzhen masters, particularly in the years after Wang Zhe's death, actively engaged in charity and evangelism out of their fervent pathos for the plight of the world.

Another compassionate activity deemed essential was the performance of Taoist rituals. The tendency of some modern scholars, who deemed such rituals as representative of the irrationality of the "old Taoist religion," has been to maintain that such things were incongruous with the intent of Wang Zhe. In chapter 9 I will argue that Wang Zhe did not categorically disapprove of Taoist rituals; rather, he at times eagerly participated in them. When his successors eventually began to perform Taoist rituals frequently, this constituted not a deviation from the founder's vision but rather yet another facet of compassionate worldly activity. Particularly emphasized were rituals for the miserable souls of the dead, the number of which drastically increased during the Mongol conquest. Wang Zhe's disciples did at times express concern over excessive ritual involvement as well as disdain for the decadence and insincerity they saw in the religious rituals being performed around them. Their ultimate solution was, however, to reform rather than to abstain, and to extol purity and sincerity as the fundamentals of proper, efficacious Taoist rituals.