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Communicating Civilization Through Rituals: Mount Tai Pilgrimages in Song China, 960-1279

Han Lifeng

Abstract

This paper examines the imperial *feng* 封 and *shan* 禪 ritual at Mount Tai in 1008 and its connection with popular pilgrimages among the Mount Tai cult. It aims to demonstrate how ritual can be used as a tool of the imperial state in communicating its political and cultural agenda.

Placing the imperial pilgrimage within its historical context at the turn of the eleventh century, it can be understood as an effort to secure mass identification with the state and its authority. More importantly, it could be used to establish ownership of Chinese civilization by the Song dynasty (960-1279) in its competition with the Khitan, who had long adopted Chinese institutions and ideology. Various strategies were deployed by the throne to communicate the imperial symbolism of the mountain. The mountain, therefore, had become valuable symbolic capital. Through the composition of temple inscriptions, the literati were able to redefine the popular ritual practices of the Mount Tai cult and brought them into a hegemonic discourse on the mountain. This facilitated the construction of an imperial cultural identity accessible to all social groups and allowed an abstract concept of Chinese culture to be communicated through the fabric of society.

Keywords

communication – *feng* and *shan* ritual – pilgrimage – symbolism

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Introduction

This paper scrutinizes the imperial *feng* 封 and *shan* 禪 pilgrimages to Mount Tai and their complex domestic and intercultural background, particularly the ritual competition from the Liao state for the Mandate of Heaven. It examines how the mountain became a symbol of the orthodoxy of Chinese civilization and culture. Through sophisticated manipulation of ritual and communication strategies, the Song court managed to convey its legitimacy and establish its monopoly over the interpretation of the mountain as a symbol. Further attention is paid to investigating how popular pilgrimages and religious rituals connected to the Mount Tai cult were redefined and interpreted through the efforts of the literati and how the symbolism of the mountain penetrated popular life.

In 1127, the Song Dynasty (960-1279) lost nearly half its territory in the north to the Jurchen, also known as the Jin Dynasty (1115-1234), including the sacred seat of Mount Tai. The center of the Mount Tai cult shifted from northern China to the south. In scholarly writings, we see the change as well as continuity regarding the pilgrimages of the Mount Tai cult. The symbolism of the mountain was enhanced in the absence of its geographical availability and was strongly invoked in defense of the enduring legitimacy of the Song.

This paper treats ritual and ceremony as indispensable parts of establishing political legitimacy and its power structure. This approach draws inspiration from sociological work in which the power of ceremony and the ceremonials of power have been important areas of study.¹ The functional relationship between power and public events, such as feasts, festivals, and ceremonies, has also attracted considerable attention among many anthropologists who consider the symbolic representations of power as essential to the ordering of a society.² Clifford Geertz, for one, has argued that in premodern Bali, pomp was not the handmaiden of power; rather, it was the other way around. It was

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- 1 The literature on this subject is vast. See, in particular, David Cannadine, "Introduction," in *Rituals of Royalty: Power and Ceremonial in Traditional Societies*, ed. David Cannadine and Simon Price (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 2; David Chaney, "A Symbolic Mirror of Ourselves: Civic Ritual in Mass Society," *Media, Culture and Society*, no. 5 (1983): 119-135; Ronald L. Grimes, *Symbol and Conquest: Public Ritual and Drama in Santa Fe, New Mexico* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1976); David Kertzer, *Ritual, Politics and Power* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989); Steven Lukes, "Political, Ritual, and Social Integration," in his *Essays in Social Theory* (Aldershot, UK: Gregg Revivals, 1994); Edward Shils and Michael Young, "The Meaning of the Coronation," *Sociological Review* 1, no. 2 (December 1953): 63-81.
 - 2 See, for instance, Cannadine, "Introduction," 3; Raymond Firth, *Symbols, Public and Private* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1973); Clifford Geertz, "Centers, Kings and Charisma: Reflections on the Symbolics of Power," in *Culture and Its Creators*, ed. Joseph Ben-David and Terry N.

through the performance of state ceremony that the Balinese king exercised his rule.³ Many historians have also studied power and ceremonial ritual with an attempt to reveal their close connection in a historical way.⁴

This paper looks at ritual as a tool of the imperial state in the operation of power. It was a choreographed public performance that was meant to display imperial power and authority before its subjects and to articulate the political and cultural agenda of the state.

The Early History of Mount Tai

Mount Tai, also known as the Eastern Sacred Peak (*dongyue* 東嶽), was a numinous magnet for Chinese from all walks of life and believers of different religious traditions.⁵ Chinese cosmology identifies several mountains as more sacred and powerful than others. These mountains were called Sacred Peaks (*yue* 嶽).⁶ Initially there was a system of four Sacred Peaks located in the four cardinal directions.⁷ The *Zuo Commentary* (*Zuozhuan* 左傳) links the four Sacred Peaks to non-Chinese tribes,⁸ symbolizing the four regional leaders defending the frontiers against foreign invasion. In this system, the Sacred Peaks are “defined as outside of or at least peripheral to the Chinese cultural sphere.”⁹ According to the canonical *Book of Documents* (*Shangshu* 尚書), the

Clark (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977); Victor Turner, *Dramas, Field, and Metaphors: Symbolic Action in Human Society* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1974).

- 3 Clifford Geertz, *Negara: The Theatre State in Nineteenth-Century Bali* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 13, 136.
- 4 Cannadine and Price, *Rituals of Royalty*; W.R. Connor, “Tribes, Festivals and Processions: Civic Ceremonial and Political Manipulation in Archaic Greece,” *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 107 (1987); James Laidlaw, “On Theatre and Theory: Reflections on Ritual in Imperial Chinese Politics,” in *State and Court Ritual in China*, ed. Joseph McDermott (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Edward Muir, *Civic Ritual in Renaissance Venice* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981).
- 5 Terry Kleeman, “Mountain Deities in China: The Domestication of the Mountain God and the Subjugation of the Margins,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 114, no. 2 (April-June 1994): 226.
- 6 Brian R. Dott, *Identity Reflections: Pilgrimages to Mount Tai in Late Imperial China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), 30.
- 7 *Shangshu zhengyi*, *juan* 3, in SSJ, 1: 266. The four mountains are the Eastern Sacred Peak (Mount Tai in present-day Shandong province), the Western Sacred Peak (Mount Hua in Shaanxi province), the Northern Sacred Peak (Mount Heng in Shanxi province), and the Southern Sacred Peak (Mount Heng in Hunan province).
- 8 *Zuozhuan zhengyi*, *juan* 32, in SSJ, 5: 4243-4244.
- 9 Kleeman, “Mountain Deities in China,” 228.

sage-ruler Shun went on imperial inspections (*xunshou* 巡守) during certain months of the year to the four Sacred Peaks. He presented offerings to Heaven by burning them and did the same to the mountains and rivers successively.¹⁰ Traveling through the sacred space, the ruler, with the presence of his holy body as the son of Heaven, ordered the spatial hierarchy of the Chinese landscape, defining the center and the periphery of Chinese civilization.

During the late Warring States Period (481-221 BCE) and Han Dynasty (202 BCE-220 CE), the central peak (Mount Song in present-day Henan province) was added to the sacred peaks, yielding a total of five mountains. With the expansion of Chinese territory, the sacred peaks no longer marked the frontiers of Chinese civilization but had become part of the heartland instead.¹¹ We see the rising importance of the Eastern Sacred Peak, Mount Tai, starting in the Han, when the system was correlated to the five agents (*wuxing* 五行). Located in the east, Mount Tai was associated with the sunrise and all the creative forces or elements, such as spring, green, and wood. This connection led Mount Tai to be seen as the source of all life. Because of this, Mount Tai became the most important and thus the leader of the Five Sacred Peaks. (五嶽之尊)¹²

Apart from being the site for imperial tours, Mount Tai was also a sacred place for imperial rituals and a source of political legitimacy. Among the rituals, the *feng* and *shan* sacrifices dedicated to heaven and earth respectively were the most solemn and influential. *Feng* was often interpreted in traditional Chinese scholarship as “to pile up earth” in order to construct a raised altar, and *shan* as “to sweep away the earth” to make a flat altar. These two glosses thus signified the preparation for a sacrifice.¹³ The origins of the *feng* and *shan* rituals themselves are unclear. Though Sima Qian in his famous *Records of the Grand Historian* (*Shiji* 史記) stated that the tradition had begun in antiquity, traditional Chinese opinion on it has never arrived at a consensus.¹⁴ Mark Lewis notes that “as early as the Liang Dynasty (502-526 CE) Chinese scholars began to posit that the sacrifices were created in the Qin and the Han.”¹⁵

Traditionally, “the sacrifices bore strong political as well as religious overtones. . . . They were an expression of the ruler’s reception of the Mandate of

10 *Shangshu zhengyi*, *juan* 3, in SSJ, 1: 268; *Liji zhushu*, *juan* 11, in SSJ, 4: 2871-2872.

11 Kleeman, “Mountain Deities in China,” 230.

12 Dott, *Identity Reflections*, 31.

13 For interpretations of the two terms, see *Shiji*, *juan* 28: 1355. For conclusions by modern scholars, see Mark E. Lewis, “The *feng* and *shan* Sacrifices of Emperor Wu of the Han,” in McDermott, *State and Court Ritual in China*, 54; Howard Wechsler, *Offerings of Jade and Silk: Ritual and Symbol in the Legitimation of the T’ang Dynasty* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 172.

14 Wechsler, *Offerings of Jade and Silk*, 171.

15 Lewis, “The *feng* and *shan* Sacrifices of Emperor Wu of the Han,” 52.

Heaven. . . . They were an announcement to Heaven and Earth that the ruler had unified the empire and brought peace to the world, that is, that the divine charge had been fulfilled.”¹⁶ But despite the great significance of these rites, they were rarely carried out. Six emperors at most in all of Chinese history are recorded to have performed the rites: Shi Huangdi of the Qin (220-210 BCE), Emperor Wu of the Former Han (141-87 BCE), Emperor Guangwu of the Later Han (25-57 CE), Emperors Gaozong (649-683 CE) and Xuanzong of the Tang (712-756 CE), and Emperor Zhenzong of the Song (997-1022 CE). The last performance was in 1008.¹⁷

Mount Tai’s association with life and Heaven was complemented with a connection with death, Earth, and the underworld. Beginning in the Han, people believed that Mount Tai presided over death.¹⁸ The spirit of the mountain was seen as a male god who, by Tang times, ruled the underworld as the judge of the dead.¹⁹ He received imperially bestowed titles such as king (*wang* 王) and emperor (*di* 帝).²⁰ His common appellation in the Song was “Emperor of Humane Holiness, Equal to Heaven” (*tianqi rensheng di* 天齊仁聖帝). In post-Tang China, temples to the Eastern Sacred Peak were found in every major town and city.²¹

A Popular Pilgrimage to Mount Tai

In the third month of 1080, a group of boat people from Sizhou (泗州, roughly in the area of modern-day Xuyi 盱眙 in Jiangsu province) and Peixian (沛县) went on a pilgrimage to Mount Tai. They visited the principal temple of the God of the Eastern Sacred Peak and an attached shrine dedicated to the Lord of Mount Haoli,²² who was claimed to be an assistant of the God of Mount

16 Wechsler, *Offerings of Jade and Silk*, 170.

17 See CB 70: 1563-1573; *Hou-Han shu*, 1: 82; *Jiu Tangshu*, 5: 89; 8: 188-189; *Shiji*, *juan* 28: 1366-1367, 1397-1398, 1401, 1403; *Tang huiyao*, *juan* 7: 113-119.

18 Edouard Chavannes, *Le T'ai Chan: Essai de monographie d'un culte chinois* (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1910), 398-399; Kleeman, “Mountain Deities in China,” 230; Ye Tao, *Taishan xiangshe yanjiu* (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2009), 53.

19 Susan Naquin, “The Peking Pilgrimage to Miao-Feng-Shan: Religious Organizations and Sacred Site,” in *Pilgrims and Sacred Sites in China*, ed. Susan Naquin and Chü-fang Yü (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 4.

20 See *Jiu Tangshu*, 8: 188; ss, 102: 2486; *Tang huiyao*, *juan* 47: 977.

21 Kleeman, “Mountain Deities in China,” 230.

22 Another name for the mountain is Mount Gaoli. Located to southwest of the city of Tai’an, it was believed to be the entrance and exit for souls undergoing reincarnation. During the

Tai. After performing *sai* (賽) rituals²³ and conducting prayers to the gods, the pilgrims erected a long pole in the courtyard of the temple to honor the shrine. A presented scholar (*jinshi* 進士) from Dongping (東平, in present-day Tai'an) wrote a text for them to commemorate the event. They had it carved in stone and placed the stele in front of the shrine.²⁴ The text reads:

Fenggao county [in present-day Tai'an] in the prefecture of Yanzhou, with Mount Tai to its north, is a town of great significance under Heaven. It is venerably said that the God of the Eastern Sacred Peak is the Emperor of Humane Holiness, Equal to Heaven. From the Qin and Han dynasties until the great Tang up to our time, the Song, the *feng* and *shan* sacrificial rites have been practiced. The façade of the god's temple is lofty and intimidating, its halls outstanding and spacious, all in conformity with the layout of celestial palaces. The humble visitors become more respectful and cautious. Oh, the virtue of the god is being wise and righteous, while his duty is to take charge of the happiness, goodness, misfortune, and excessiveness in the world. Staying in shadows, he is unfathomable; showing his presence, he answers all the prayers. Therefore, people from the four directions all submit to him and venerate him. In the west wing of the temple stands the shrine for his subordinate, the god of the Gaoli Mountain. The temple title was inscribed in the Han dynasty. He is the leader of all the bureaus [*si*] of the underworld and in charge of the records about the lengths of people's lives. The glory of his everlasting power is preserved in sacrificial canons.

Today there is the boat merchant Zhang Ping of the Yellow River from the ancient town Peixian. He organized a [pilgrimage] society and collected money to perform the annual *sai* ritual at the shrine. [The pilgrims,] after praying devoutly in front of the statue of the god, erected a long pole in the courtyard of the temple. The pole is made out of catalpa wood decorated with polished emeralds. The pole rises up straight and towering, glorifying the god's altar. Upon the completion of the event, the text is therefore composed to keep a record. [We] have it carved in stone so that it will pass on forever.

last three performances of the *feng* and *shan* sacrifices (in 666, 725, and 1008) the *shan* ceremony was conducted at the mountain immediately to its east, Mount Sheshou.

23 *Sai* is an archaic term for offerings to the gods. Later, it generally meant religious procession with music and all kinds of performances.

24 The stele is now lost. Its rubbing is preserved in the Tai'an Museum. The text can be found in Tang Zhongmian 唐仲冕, "Dailan 岱覽," in SDWXJC, *juan* 20: 17.

This happened in the third month of the third year of Yuanfeng [1080], of the great Song Dynasty.

Respectfully from the boatmen of Sizhou and their head of society Wang Zhengnan. Zhang Ping, the head of society of Liucheng in Peixian, the prefecture of Xuzhou, set up the stele.

Composed by Hu Yuanzi, advanced scholar of Dongping; calligraphy—Xu Peisong; the title in seal script—the guidance officer of the East Sacred Peak . . . Shoude; engraving—Zhang Xibai.²⁵

The stone inscription is a valuable record of the earliest popular pilgrimages to Mount Tai.²⁶ The participants in the event were mostly boat people. The major purpose of their pilgrimage was to set up a pole in the temple. At the beginning of the message carved in stone, however, they confirmed a confident and panoramic perception of the whole country, even the universe. The small town of Fenggao, hosting the seat of Mount Tai, was described as a “town of great significance under Heaven (*tianxia* 天下).” It attracted “people from the four directions (*sifang* 四方).” The terms “all under Heaven” and “the four directions” might be read simply as conventional references to vast areas or different places, but they were also the prevalent terms adopted in ancient and contemporary discussions of world order.²⁷ In the Chinese worldview, China, the Middle Kingdom, was the center of the universe and thus the heart of the civilized world. Barbarians from the four directions (*siyi* 四夷) all came and

25 兗之奉高，北有岱山焉，乃天下之巨鎮也。尊之曰：東嶽神，即天齊仁聖帝也。自秦漢而下，沿巨唐，逮我本朝，封禪之禮備焉。廟貌威崇，殿宇顯廠，一如上方制度，俾至者加其恭肅。噫，聰明正直，神之德也。福善禍淫，神之職也。幽而罔測，顯而有靈，則四方之民，咸歸仰之。在帝廟之西，有高裡山之祠，即聖帝輔相之神也。其廟號，本漢封爵也。領袖群司，掌判陰籍，光載祀典，靈威不泯。

今有古沛張平者，即長河之舟賈也。乃集社聚縉，歲賽于祠下。睹其神像，虔啟愿心，立長竿于廟庭。由是選梓木以為之材，礪翠琰以為之硖。聳而上直，表著其壇。功畢告成，故書其始。刻之于石，以永其傳。

時大宋元豐三年庚申歲三月。

泗州船戶同糾首王政男欽，徐州沛縣留城鎮都糾首張平立石。

東平進士胡元資撰，徐民裴聳書，將仕郎守東嶽令□□□守德篆額，張希白刻。

26 The record dated the earliest is a rubbing of stone inscription describing the pilgrimages of an incense society based in Chanzhou 澶州 from 936 to 941. The rubbing is preserved in Tai'an Museum in Shandong province.

27 For the discussion during the Song, see examples in Ouyang Xiu, “Zhengtong lun 正統論,” in *Ouyang Xiu quanqi*, *juan* 16: 265-275; Shi Jie, “Zhongguo lun 中國論,” in *Culai xiansheng wenji*, *juan* 10, 116-117.

submitted to China's authority. In this sense, the rhetoric in the text amplified the landscape of Mount Tai and implicated a global, cultural hierarchy highlighting the superiority of Chinese civilization. To justify the implication, the author drew on the grandest imperial *feng* and *shan* sacrifices performed in history. Except for the turbulent Five Dynasties (907-960) interregnum, the Song came directly after the great Tang. A lineage of cultural tradition was thereby created. The Han and Tang dynasties are generally considered the most glorious epochs in Chinese imperial history, especially in terms of their ability to impose a Chinese world order on their neighbors. The Song dynasty consistently claimed to have inherited the empire from the Tang, though it was greeted with suspicion and challenge during the first two decades of its creation.²⁸ The reference to the *feng* and *shan* sacrifices seemingly secured its legitimate position as heir to an "abstraction defined as Chinese culture."²⁹

Undoubtedly, this intricacy of meanings conveyed in the inscription could not be the genuine intention of the pilgrims, who were most likely illiterate. They traveled more than 200 kilometers to erect a pole that they believed would honor the altar of the God of Mount Haoli. Why Mount Haoli instead of Mount Tai? It was pointed out in particular in the text that the honorable title of the God of Mount Haoli was granted in the Han period. The founder of this long-lasting empire, Liu Bang (劉邦), came from Peixian, the hometown of the head of the pilgrimage society and some other pilgrims. This fact indicated, or was meant to indicate, the relationship between the town and the god. The pole, erected to honor the altar of the god, and the stele, set up to pass on the story, were reminders of the connection to ensure long-lasting blessing and protection from the god.

The author, however, was a scholar with the title of *jinshi*. Fostered by a standard education curriculum, he tended to, or felt obligated to, connote in his writing a broader picture in alignment with the officially approved ideology. Therefore, the popular pilgrimage was placed in the context of the imperial expeditions throughout history, and the *sai* rituals performed by the boat people seemed a microcosm of the grand imperial ritual of *feng* and *shan*. What was the message that the author was trying to convey? As an outsider in the pil-

28 Wang Gungwu, "The Rhetoric of a Lesser Empire: Early Sung Relations with Its Neighbors" in *China Among Equals*, ed. Morris Rossabi (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 47.

29 James L. Watson, "Standardizing the Gods: The Promotion of T'ien Hou Along the South China Coast, 960-1960," in *Popular Culture in Late Imperial China*, ed. David Johnson, Andrew J. Nathan, and Evelyn S. Rawski (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 292.

grimage community (he was from Dongping, the local area of Mount Tai, not from the hometown of the pilgrims), did he wish to transform the practice in the text? These questions force us to reflect upon the relationship among politics, religion, and power. In the interpretation of rituals, how were values and symbols transformed as they crossed social boundaries? How did the influence of imperial ritual percolate into the quotidian experience of people at different positions in the hierarchy of power? In order to analyze these questions thoroughly, we need to review the imperial *feng* and *shan* sacrifices in the Song era, as they defined the framework of the broad picture into which the author tried to locate the popular ritual.

The Chanyuan Treaty and the Imperial *feng* and *shan* Sacrifices

In early Song times, the biggest menace to the empire came from the state of the Khitans (Qitan) or the Liao (遼). Continuous Khitan raids on the Song borders escalated in the early eleventh century. A peace treaty between the Song and the Liao was concluded in early 1005 after their military confrontation in Chanyuan (澶淵, also known as Chanzhou 澶州, modern-day Puyang 濮陽 in Henan province). According to the treaty, the Song court would grant annual payments to the Liao. In return, the Khitan army evacuated occupied territories and agreed to enter into friendly relations with the Song.³⁰

According to some official sources, though the treaty was at first hailed as a diplomatic victory, an equal treaty with “barbarians” was still seen as upsetting the Chinese view of the Middle Kingdom as the center of the world. Emperor Zhenzong, under such circumstances, decided to perform the *feng* and *shan* sacrifices at Mount Tai in order to wash away the shame of the Chanyuan agreements.³¹ After claiming in front of his officials that he had received the “Heavenly Text,”³² and with numerous purportedly auspicious omens being reported from different places, the emperor, in the tenth month of 1008, made

30 Lau Nap-Yin and Huang K’uan-Chung, “Founding and Consolidation of the Sung Dynasty Under T’ai-tsu, T’ai-tsung, and Chen-tsung,” in *Cambridge History of China*, vol. 5, pt. 1: *The Sung Dynasty and Its Precursors, 907-1279*, ed. Denis Twitchett, and Paul J. Smith (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 262-270.

31 CB, *juan* 67: 1506; also see Kou Zhun’s 寇准 biography in SS, *juan* 281: 9531-9532.

32 The Heavenly Text was reported to have appeared three times in the year 1008: at the Chengtian Gate 承天門 in the first month (BM, *juan* 22: 135); on the Tower of Merits and Virtues 功德閣 within the imperial palace in the fourth month (CB, *juan* 68: 1530); and at Mount Tai in the sixth month (BM, *juan* 22: 136).

the controversial expedition to Mount Tai, where he performed the imperial sacrifices.³³ Subsequently, in 1011, he carried out the Earth sacrifice at Fenyin (汾陰),³⁴ another great occasional imperial sacrifice, second in prestige only to the *feng* and *shan*. In the first month of 1014, he left the capital again on a religious mission to pay a formal visit to Laozi's temple in Bozhou (亳州). Beginning with the appearance of the first Heavenly Text in the first month of 1008 to the last one in the third month of 1018, the Heavenly Text affair featuring grand imperial rituals and ceremonies and the construction of Daoist temples lasted for ten years.³⁵

The Domestic and International Situation

Some scholars regard the imperial sacrifices as a climactic stage in building up the legitimacy of imperial power since the founding of the Song dynasty.³⁶ The Song started as just another short-lived dynasty of North China during the Five Dynasties period. The founder of this dynasty, Zhao Kuangyin (趙匡胤), also known as Emperor Taizu (太祖), ended the fragmentation and turbulence with military force and established a highly centralized government. Military force, however, might achieve only temporary results if it failed to legitimize itself in the eyes of the people.

One of the urgent tasks for the new government of the Song was, therefore, to resume the classical system of rituals and ceremonies through which an announcement of the dynasty's reception of the Mandate of Heaven could be made. During the period of formation and consolidation of the Song dynasty, a series of measures was taken to establish a ritual and symbolic pattern as it moved from reliance on military force to more efficient and stable means of exercising power. In 960, the first year of the new dynasty, Emperor Taizu sent emissaries to Mount Tai to offer sacrifices.³⁷ The Song mostly adopted the dynastic ritual code of the period of Kaiyuan (713-741) in the Tang.³⁸ As

33 Zhenzong's decision met with plenty of criticism from scholar-officials. See some officials' critical memorials in BM, *juan* 22: Sun Ji 孫籍, 165; Zhou Qi 周起, 165-166; Sun Shi 孫奭, 166-168.

34 Fenyin is in modern-day Wanrong 萬榮 county in Shanxi province. Both Han Wudi and Tang Xuanzong sacrificed to the Earth god at Fenyin.

35 For detailed accounts of the affair, see BM, *juan* 22; CB, *juan* 67-71; SS, *juan* 7-8; *Sushui jiben*, *juan* 6: 113-116; for descriptions in English, see Suzanne E. Cahill, "Taoism at the Sung Court: The Heavenly Text Affair of 1008," *Bulletin of Sung-Yuan Studies* 16 (1980): 23-35.

36 Ge Zhaoguang, *Zhongguo sixiang shi* (Shanghai: Fudan daxue chubanshe, 2001), 2: 168-172; He Pingli, "Song Zhenzong dongfen xisi luelun," *Xueshu yuekan*, no. 2 (2005).

37 Tang, "Dailan," *juan* 3: 36.

38 *Shilin yanyu*, *juan* 1: 8.

in the Tang period, the sacrifice to Mount Tai was listed as one of the middle-ranking rites.³⁹ In 963, fire was chosen among the five elements to symbolize the Song Dynasty; its corresponding color was red.⁴⁰ In the eleventh month of 968, Emperor Taizu offered sacrifices to Heaven and Earth at the southern suburban altar. A great amnesty was declared and the regnal name (era-name) was changed.⁴¹ As Wechsler observed in his study of the techniques of control used by the first Tang ruler, “the employment of rites and symbols . . . arouses a deep sense of identification with the regime and its authorities. . . . Such rites and symbols can cause the regime and its authorities to be positively evaluated.”⁴² Zhenzong’s commitment to the *feng* and *shan* sacrifices, the most solemn imperial ritual for the declaration of receiving the Mandate of Heaven, was an important step in this process of attaining legitimacy.

At the international level, the Song Dynasty had lived under the ever-present threat of military invasion and conquest since its beginning. The Liao, which had interfered in the policies of the various Chinese states prior to the establishment of the Song, was arguably the most powerful state in East Asia at the time. They founded a Chinese-style dynasty and had their own emperor, who challenged the supremacy of the emperors and kings in China proper by claiming to be the Son of Heaven.⁴³ Before the Song, the Khitans and the Five Dynasties had already formed an international order in which the Khitans drew upon the historical experience of Sino-foreign relations in dealing with the Chinese states.⁴⁴ After Yelu Deguang (耶律德光) destroyed the Later Jin (936-947) and seized the capital Bianjing (汴京, modern-day Kaifeng 开封), he began to use the imperial carriage and regalia of the Chinese court and the imperial seals, a symbol of imperial authority. The seals of office and instruments of state ceremonies were moved to the Khitan court after his death. The Chinese rulers of later periods had to refashion them based on illustrations in books, which was a painful and humiliating experience.⁴⁵

The early Song rulers never engaged in military action to remove the external threat, though they did engage in campaigns to regain the sixteen prefectures

39 SS, *juan* 102: 2485.

40 CB, *juan* 4: 113.

41 Ibid., *juan* 9: 212.

42 Wechsler, *Offerings of Jade and Silk*, 4.

43 Yelu Abaoji 耶律阿保机, the founder of the Khitan state, crowned himself Heavenly Emperor in 907 (*Liaoshi*, *juan* 1: 3); in an edict of 924, he proclaimed he had received the Mandate of Heaven (ibid., *juan* 2: 19).

44 Tao Jing-shen, *Two Sons of Heaven: Studies in Sung-Liao Relations* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1988), 25.

45 Ibid., 27.

of Yan and Yun (the northern part of modern-day Shanxi and Hebei provinces as well as modern-day Beijing). Emperor Taizong (太宗), Taizu's brother, launched two military campaigns, in 979 and 986, to achieve the goal. Both, however, ended disastrously. At the same time, the leader of the Tangut people on China's far northwest border, nominally a vassal of the Song, declared their independence. During the late tenth and early eleventh centuries, the entire Chinese northern border zone, from the Liao in the northeast and north to the Tanguts in the far northwest, was unsettled and in peril.⁴⁶

When Emperor Zhenzong succeeded his father, Taizong, in 997, the internal consolidation of the state was completed and the Song was the uncontested master of South China and much of North China. But Zhenzong still had to contend with the Khitans.⁴⁷ The Chanyuan treaty had revealed his military weakness. Chinese cultural superiority and the traditional concept of the Chinese emperor as the Son of Heaven were also constantly challenged. Yuan historians described this awkward situation in a "critical essay" appended to the annals of his reign in the *History of the Song* (*Songshi* 宋史):

At a later time when compilation of the Liao History was in progress, [features of the] old Khitan customs were observed. This permitted discovery of subtle implications in the Song histories. From the time of Taizong's defeat at Youzhou, the Song hated to discuss warfare. As for the Khitan, their ruler relied upon Heaven and their consorts praised earth. In a single year they sacrificed to Heaven innumerable times. Upon hunting they were able to seize flying wild geese with their hands, while the wild birds seemed to spread themselves on the ground of their own accord. They considered all these things to be gifts from Heaven. In their sacrifices they would report such things and praise the glory.⁴⁸

The text implies competition from the Liao for the Mandate of Heaven. The wild geese as auspicious birds remind us of the famous red geese that Emperor Wu of the Han caught during an expedition to the ocean.⁴⁹ The auspicious

46 F.W. Mote, *Imperial China 900-1800* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), 112-113.

47 Rossabi, "Introduction," in *China Among Equals*, 7.

48 ss, *juan* 8, 171; the translation comes from Cahill, "Taoism at the Sung Court," 36. 他日修《遼史》，見契丹故俗而後推求宋史之微言焉。宋自太宗幽州之敗，惡言兵矣。契丹其主稱天，其後稱地，一歲祭天不知其幾，獵而手接飛雁，鵠自投地，皆稱為天賜，祭告而誇耀之。

49 *Hanshu*, *juan* 6: 206.

omens were usually interpreted as Heaven's explicit signs of its blessing for the royal house.

Motivation and Purpose

In this sense, Zhenzong's motivation for the performance of the *feng* and *shan* sacrifices could not be simply to wash away the shame of the Chanyuan Treaty, as suggested in the standard sources. As some contemporary and modern scholars have argued, the Heavenly Text affair and the imperial *feng* and *shan* sacrifices were more likely part of a rationally calculated plan to impress the Khitan with manifestations of Song power.⁵⁰ For instance, when Zhenzong embarked on his journey to Mount Tai and returned from the mountain to the capital, he made symbolic visits to Chanyuan on both trips.⁵¹

After the military conflicts between the Song and the Liao were resolved, a contest for political legitimacy and cultural supremacy ensued. With the more frequent exchange of envoys, the Song court must have gained a better understanding of Khitan customs. The Khitans listed sacrifices to mountains as grand rites.⁵² Mostly the imperial rulers of the Liao offered sacrifices to the Muye and Black Mountains. For the former, there were spring and autumn sacrificial rites, and for the latter, the ritual was usually performed on the winter solstice.⁵³ The Khitans believed that the Black Mountain, like Mount Tai, was a sacred place where the souls of the dead went. The mountain deity had power over life and death.⁵⁴ Wang Chengli, in his study of the Khitan sacrifices to the Black Mountain, argues that the royal rites performed on the winter solstice were influenced by the dynastic ritual code of the Tang and the Song and possibly the imperial *feng* and *shan* sacrifices.⁵⁵ The mountain rituals undoubtedly carried a political overtone of the Khitan ruling house's reception of the Mandate of Heaven.

In a sense, Zhenzong's spectacular campaign of the *feng* and *shan* to Mount Tai and his declaration of receiving the Heavenly Text can be rendered as

50 See Du Hao's 杜鎬 conversation with Zhenzong in Sima Guang, *Sushui jiwén*, *juan* 6: 120. For an analysis in the secondary literature, see Cahill, "Taoism at the Sung Court"; He, "Song Zhenzong dongfeng xisi luelun."

51 For the outbound trip, see CB, *juan* 70: 1569; SS, *juan* 7: 137, and; for the return trip, see CB, *juan* 70: 1576.

52 *Liaoshi*, *juan* 56: 905.

53 Zhang Guoqing, *Liaodai shehui shi yanjiu* (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 2001), 221-222.

54 Wang Chengli, "Qidan ji heishan de kaocha," in *Liao-Jin shi lunji*, ed. Zhang Changgen (Beijing: Shehui kexue wenxian chubanshe), 6: 21.

55 *Ibid.*, 22, 25.

communicating orthodoxy and cultural hierarchy through rituals. The measures he adopted were linked more to antiquity than to the so-called policies of the ancestors (*zuzong zhi fa* 祖宗之法).⁵⁶ Zhenzong's father, Taizong, rejected repeated petitions from officials and the local people of Mount Tai to perform *feng* and *shan* rites in 984.⁵⁷ He also strongly disapproved of the auspicious omens. In an edict in 988, he prohibited all local officials from offering any rare animals or birds as auspicious omens.⁵⁸ In his memorial dated the ninth month of 1100, an official at a later time criticized Huizong's hobby of collecting auspicious objects. He mentioned Taizong's edict and referred to it as ancestors' (*zuzong*) ideas.⁵⁹ Kubota Kazuo argued that Zhenzong's policies were peculiar in the Northern Song period in his reverting to ancient ways.⁶⁰

If we place his policies in the context of the broad intellectual background of the time, however, they seem more reasonable and less idiosyncratic. The Northern Song period witnessed the booming of the scholarship of the *Spring and Autumn Annals* (*Chun Qiu Jing* 春秋經) as well as the prevalence of the notion of honoring the king and crusading against the barbarians (*zunwang rangyi* 尊王攘夷).⁶¹ Northern Song intellectuals expressed unprecedented anxiety over the concepts of the Middle Kingdom (*zhongguo* 中國), Chinese and barbarians (*huayi* 華夷), and orthodoxy (*zhengtong* 正統).⁶² On his return journey from Mount Tai, Zhenzong visited the ancestral temple of Confucius and the shrines of his disciples, as well as the temples of other Zhou Dynasty (c. 1046-256 BCE) paragons, including that of the duke of Zhou. He bestowed

56 Regarding policies of the ancestors, Professor Deng Xiaonan has given a thorough discussion in her book *Zuzong zhi fa: Beisong qianqi zhengzhi shulue* (Beijing: Sanlian shudian, 2006).

57 Taizong initially accepted the petitions, but decreed a renunciation of the *feng* and *shan* pilgrimage in the sixth month of 984 (SS *juan* 4, 74).

58 SHY, *Ruiyi* 瑞異 1.8, 2068.

59 See Chen Shixi's 陳師錫 memorial to Huizong (1100) in *Songchao zhuchen zouyi, juan* 36: 360.

60 Kazuo Kubota, *Songdai Kaifeng yanjiu*, trans. Guo Wanping (Shanghai: Shanghai guiji chubanshe, 2010), 260-262.

61 For a study of the Northern Song commentaries on *The Spring and Autumn Annals*, see Alan Wood, *Limits to Autocracy: From Sung Neo-Confucianism to a Doctrine of Political Rights* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1995), 15-16, 19-20, 27-29, 71-78, 83-110, 96, 115, 121, 129; see also Hilde De Weerd, "Recent Trends in American Research in Song Dynasty History" (paper presented at a workshop at Osaka City University, January 28, 2006), 22-23.

62 Ge Zhaoguang, "Songdai Zhongguo yishi de tuxian—guanyu jinshi minzu zhuyi sixiang de yige yuanyuan," *Wen shi zhe*, no. 1 (2004): 9.

on them honorable posthumous titles.⁶³ His stops signified the connection of the undertaking to the figures of Confucian orthodoxy and the Chinese ruling house of antiquity. Conjuring up the spirits of the ancient sage-kings on their imperial tours, Zhenzong's trip to Mount Tai and the performance of *feng* and *shan* can be seen as efforts to demarcate the territory of Chinese cultural influence and reaffirm the hierarchy of the sacred landscape. The orthodox cultural lineage was therefore re-established. The line between Chinese and non-Chinese was carefully drawn in a reconstructed system of honoring the king and crusading against the barbarians.

Impact on the Population

Zhenzong's spectacular pilgrimage to Mount Tai lasted for forty-seven days. Its legacy lingers even now.⁶⁴ Despite the constant criticism by the literati, which can be observed in official and non-official historical documents, one wonders how it was actually received by the populace. This type of question might be the most intriguing, yet challenging one to social historians. It is always difficult to give a satisfying and well-documented answer. I start with Zhenzong's efforts from on high to communicate with his subject during this pilgrimage.

Benefactions of the Emperor

The declaration of great amnesties and the bestowal of beef and ale or the holding of a bacchanal (*cipu* 賜酺) were age-old ways of showing the ruler's benefaction to his subjects, especially following a new emperor's enthronement or change in the era name. Immediately after his completion of the *feng* and *shan* rites, Zhenzong announced a great amnesty and a three-day bacchanal.⁶⁵ During the ten-year Heavenly Text affair, he ordered seven amnesties and three bacchanals.⁶⁶ In addition to the sacrificial performance, he also exempted people in the prefectures of Yanzhou (兗州) and Yunzhou (鄆州) from the summer and autumn taxes of the coming year and the property tax. They were also exempted from the compulsory labor services for two years. All prefectures had their property tax reduced by at least 20 percent.⁶⁷ In the seventh month of 1009, he exempted people from taxes of 12,660,000 strings of

63 BM, *juan* 22: 165; CB, *juan* 70: 1574; SS, *juan* 7: 138-139.

64 The Song Cliff Inscription composed by Zhenzong can still be seen at the top of the mountain.

65 BM, *juan* 22: 165; CB, *juan* 70: 1572, 1573; SS, *juan* 7: 138.

66 BM, *juan* 22: 161-176.

67 CB, *juan* 70: 1572-1573.

cash (*min* 緡) due before the *feng* and *shan* rites.⁶⁸ In addition to these conventional beneficiary measures, he went even further and met local people in areas adjacent to Mount Tai in person, especially the respected elders (*fulao* 父老), and rewarded them with clothing, tea, and silk.⁶⁹ On his return trip to the capital, he held banquets with officials and local respected elders in Yunzhou, Puzhou, Chanzhou, Weicheng county, and Changyuan county.⁷⁰

We can view Zhenzong's strategies as a means of gaining support from the people for his regime and were part of the meticulously designed spectacle of declaring his reception of the Mandate of Heaven. By responding to the pecuniary motives of subjects, Zhenzong's orders and actions constituted an appeal that served to promote bonding with his subjects and solidifying political stability or, as it can be called, "legitimacy."⁷¹ In his examination of the development of the imperial power structure through the Qin and Han Dynasties, Lei Ge argues that one of the indispensable elements of the emperor's authority is his ability to establish a personal and transcendent connection with his subjects, which allows the populace to perceive his presence in their everyday life.⁷² During Zhenzong's campaign, the emperor's personal concern for his people served positively to engage their emotions. And the personal contacts with members of local elite facilitated the fostering of loyalty from the local denizens.

Visual Attractions

The *feng* and *shan* pilgrimage was one of the grandest spectacles in the Song Dynasty. The whole process, from the beginning of the trip to the sacrificial performance at the mountain, was carefully designed by the top officials and Zhenzong himself. On the day of departure, the Heavenly Text was taken reverently out of the palace to the Qianyuan Gate (乾元門). It was put in a jade carriage surrounded by an honor guard carrying yellow flags.⁷³ They were followed by rows of musicians with drums and flutes and sizable retinues. Court officials saluted and prostrated themselves at the sides of the road. After a short while, the emperor appeared, wearing the Skyscraping Crown (*tongtian guan* 通天冠) and crimson silk robe and riding in the grand sedan chair. He stopped

68 SS, *juan* 7: 141.

69 CB, *juan* 70: 1573.

70 Ibid., 1575-1577.

71 Wechsler, *Offerings of Jade and Silk*, 3.

72 Lei Ge, "The Heavens Are High and the Emperor Is Near: An Imperial Power System That Is Open to the People," *Journal of Chinese Humanities* 1, no. 1 (2015).

73 The jade carriage was usually taken by the emperor.

on his journey in twelve places before he finally arrived in Qianfeng county, where Mount Tai was located, sixteen days later. On stops at the Chanzhou and Yongding (永定) courier stations, the size and scale of the honor guard and the grand sedan chair were too large to pass through the city gate. Zhenzong stopped the officials' attempt to dismantle the gate and ordered the honor guards to go around the city walls to bypass the town. The entourage included emissaries from southwestern "barbarian" tribes who paid their tribute for the first time and wanted to witness the imperial sacrifices. Envoys from the kingdom of Champa (Zhancheng 占城) and the Abbasid Empire (Dashi 大食) also waited along the road to Mount Tai, offering their local specialties as tribute.⁷⁴ On the day of the imperial rites, the emperor again was dressed in his crimson silk robe and Skyscraping Crown. He was riding in a gold carriage and keeping the Statutory Carriage (*fajia* 法駕) for possible use.⁷⁵ Guardsmen were standing along the "winding path" (*pandao* 盤道) from the foot of the mountain to the Great Peace Summit (Taiping ding 太平頂), one every two paces. It was reported that clouds in five colors were rising above the top of Mount Tai, upon which auspicious lights were shining. When the sacrifices were completed, the accompanying civil officials, led by the grand chancellor, extended their congratulations. Then, from the top of the mountain to its foot, people called out, "Ten thousand years!" According to the account, the voices were so loud that they reverberated across the valley, shaking the mountain.⁷⁶

Because our sources are incomplete, we are not certain about the commoners' perceptions of this event. We are told that people from the capital Kaifeng, the Huai River basin, the regions to the east of Kaifeng, and the regions to the north of the Yellow River lined the roads from Mount Tai to Kaifeng, waiting to view the emperor's carriage. They ran back and forth to see his majesty's "heavenly countenance." The onlookers were so dense that they were packed along the route, forming an endless line.⁷⁷ For the people living outside the capital, it was one of the rare occasions to see an imperial procession in person. It must have been dazzling for them to see the luxurious grand carriage,

74 *Zhancheng* is in what is now southern and central Vietnam. *Dashi* is a general term in Chinese history loosely referring to the Muslim or Arab countries.

75 According to Patricia Ebrey, the carriage employed was linked to the weight of the occasion. The Statutory Carriage was employed for formal occasions such as imperial visits to Bright Hall, the holy Mount Tai, and on other provincial ritual journeys. See Patricia Ebrey, "Taking out the Grand Carriage: Imperial Spectacle and the Visual Culture of Northern Song Kaifeng," *Asia Major* (Taipei), 3d ser., no. 12 (1999): 34.

76 The narrative of this entire procession is based on CB, *juan* 70: 1567-1572.

77 *Ibid.*, 70: 1577.

the spectacular honor guard, the impressive entourage with high-ranking civil officials, and exotic foreign envoys. Viewers did not necessarily comprehend the full significance of each element and symbol that was employed by the throne to present itself to the general public. However, it is not difficult to infer that the imperial procession with all its visual details would be talked about over and over by local people as the most spectacular event they had ever seen and passed down to later generations.

The imperial symbolism meant to create or reinforce the legitimacy of the throne was, in the spectacle, associated with the pluralism of the identities of Mount Tai embodied in the popular beliefs about the mountain. The emperor's concern about the northern threat and the legitimacy of his authority, his intention of acquiring potency through association with the Heavenly Text, and the literati's anxiety over the orthodoxy of Chinese civilization and their vigilance against penetration by "barbarian" culture, might seem remote and inconsequential to the people on the street. Yet the emotions of awe and passion that the grand royal tour aroused were shared by those who saw the event and heard the story, thereby generating mutual identification and pride in being a member of the cultural complex. After the ephemeral event was over, its legend lingered. Mount Tai stands as a reminder forever.

Mount Tai as a Palimpsest of Inscribed Symbols

During Zhenzong's imperial pilgrimage to Mount Tai, the state sought at every level to establish its monopoly over the symbolism of the mountain. Using the Heavenly Text as a medium, the imperial pilgrimage closely linked the mountain to the legitimacy of imperial power and institutions. The association between the pilgrimage and the Daoist religion reinforced the potency of the mountain as a symbol of imperial power. The official bestowal of the imperial title *di* (帝) to the deity of Mount Tai secured the state's monopoly over the channels of communication with the deity. In other words, the state's efforts outlined the interpretive framework for Mount Tai as a symbol in which other versions of interpretation were compelled to reorder their status in relation to it.

The stele inscription commemorating the popular pilgrimage to Mount Tai in 1080 perfectly illustrates what Prasenjit Duara has called the "interpretive arena."⁷⁸ The common pilgrims went on the journey to worship the God of the Haoli Mountain, a folk deity subordinate to the God of Mount Tai, whom they believed to be ruling the underworld. Their humble purpose was to erect a pole

78 Prasenjit Duara, "Superscribing Symbols: The Myth of Guandi, Chinese God of War," *Journal of Asian Studies* 47, no. 4 (November 1988): 780.

to honor his shrine. In the text written by a literate man from the local area of the mountain, instead of a straightforward account in a matter-of-fact tone, the official image of the leading mountain deity and connotation of the imperial *feng* and *shan* sacrifices was meticulously crafted to pave the way for a description of the popular pilgrimage. In this sense, the seemingly insignificant spring pilgrimage was redefined and elevated into a broader elite discourse. Mount Tai had become the metaphorical center of the imagined world order (*tianxia*) to which those living nearby flocked and those who lived far away submitted to its authority.

The Booming of the Mount Tai Cult at the Local Level

In 1010 at the request of people in Shanxi who wished to build a local Eastern Sacred Peak temple because the pilgrimage to the mountain was too far away, Zhenzong issued a decree granting permission for them to build temples and shrines dedicated to the Mount Tai god as they wished.⁷⁹ Afterward, the Mount Tai temples and the cult of the God of Mount Tai spread to every corner of the empire.⁸⁰

The Eastern Sacred Peak temple on the Mountain of Good Fortune (Fushan 福山) in Changshu county (常熟, in present-day Jiangsu province) was one of the largest and the most famous, and it attracted pilgrims every spring from different areas of South China.⁸¹ It started as a small temple in the mid-eleventh century. When it was restored and expanded in late Northern Song times, a local scholar Wei Bangzhe (魏邦哲) wrote a temple inscription (*ji* 記) to commemorate the event. It begins:

Now, our Emperor Zhenzong of the Song, embarking on an eastbound expedition to Mount Tai, announced the dynastic accomplishments to Heaven through the grand imperial *feng* and *shan* sacrifices. In order to honor the God of Mount Tai, he was acclaimed in the imperial edicts and was elevated to an exalted and glorified position. The god is offering protection to our state and blessing to all the living beings. His power and merit is beyond our imagination. Should it not be our obligation to repay

79 Stele inscription at the Eastern Sacred Peak temple in Dingxiang county, Xinzhou, Shanxi province. The text can be found in SDSKW, 1: 636.

80 Zhou Ying, "Dongyue miao zai quanguo de chuanbo yu fenbu," *Taishan xueyuan xuebao* 30, no. 2 (March 2008): 17.

81 *Qinchuan zhi*, *juan* 10, in SYDFZCS, 4: 2740.

his favor? Therefore, people from the four directions would travel ten thousand *li*, however arduous the journey might be, to offer sacrifices to the god. [Later,] the subordinate temples were mushrooming everywhere modeled after the layout of the Eastern Sacred Peak temple. But none of them exceeded the scale and fame of [the temple of] the Mountain of Good Fortune in the area of Gusu (that is, Suzhou).

The temple of the Mountain of Good Fortune was built during the years of Zhihe (1054-1056) and has existed for sixty years. Its towers, halls, gates, and corridors, together with its attached buildings, are lofty and magnificent. People from Jiang, Huai, Min, and Yue come annually by land or water to offer whatever they have to the god to show their piety. First, they wish for the longevity of the emperor; then they pray for a year of good harvests; and finally they ask for protection of their household. They express their wishes in the prayer. They come in organized groups called “associations and societies.” The sound of flutes and drums could be heard from the road. And tens of thousands of people crowded in the streets. People who cannot travel far to Mount Tai go to the Mountain of Good Fortune.⁸²

Without tracing the event back to the Han or the Tang, the text immediately starts with a reference to the Song emperor’s honoring of the mountain deity, which invokes strongly contemporary state culture in a symbolic way. Unlike the stone inscription composed in 1080 recording the boatmen’s pilgrimage, in which the expression of the Mount Tai God’s duty is rather ambiguous, it demonstrates explicitly the god’s image as a protector of the empire. And, because of this, people would make the pilgrimage to the mountain and build the subordinate temples. Whatever Mount Tai may have actually meant to the ordinary pilgrims, the “superscription”⁸³ of its image by the state is so dominant in the text that it dictates the prayers of the celebrators of the deity’s birthday. There is no reference to the popular image of the mountain god as the ruler

82 *Qinchuan zhi*, *juan* 13, in *ibid.*, 2793; *Wujun zhi*, *juan* 13, in *ibid.*, 2330. 維我宋真宗皇帝，東幸泰山，告功于天，大修封禪，禮泰山之神，顯冊褒嘉，位號崇隆，得非衛社稷、福生靈、運功烈于冥冥之際，宜有所報稱歟？是故四方萬里，不以道途為勞，往奉祀事，往往規模岱廟，立為別廟多矣。然未有盛于姑蘇之福山也。

福山廟，經始于至和之中，垂六十年。樓殿門廊，并諸從舍，巍然而輪奐。江淮閩粵，水浮陸行者，各自其所有，以效歲時來享之誠。上祝天子萬壽，且以祈豐年。以後保其家，凡有求必禱焉。率以類至，號曰會社。簫鼓之音，相屬于道，不知幾千萬人，不及之乎太山，則之福山焉。

83 Duara, “Superscribing Symbols,” 81.

of the underworld. Rather, it is said that people go to pray for longevity of the emperor, good harvests, and protection of their household. We cannot be certain whether it was their true purpose or it illustrates the efforts of the literati to wrest control over the vernacular of religious practices and bring them to a hegemonic discourse. The official image of the god, however, was perpetuated by the state and the literati as an ally and even managed to replace the popular one, at least as illustrated in the temple inscription.

In the prescription of the prayers of the local believers, the author attempted to link the state ceremony to community-based religious cults. Ensuring good harvests and protection of households usually fell into the jurisdiction of local tutelary deities such as the city god or the earth god.⁸⁴ The God of Mount Tai, symbolic of the state and the imperial culture, permeated local areas by assuming duties as a community protector. Thus a relationship of the local with the state was established, and the interpretations of the image of the god both at state and social levels were brought into a hegemonic discourse. The local festive scene, set in the context of the interaction between the state and the local, accentuates the prosperity of the local under the guidance of state culture.

To justify the fact that the Mountain of Good Fortune had become an efficacious pilgrimage site of the Mount Tai cult in South China, the author continued,

The Mountain of Good Fortune borders the river and the sea. The mountain, rising high, is covered with dense forest, while its ranges form a stretch of curves. It is certainly a scenic place. The respected elders said, on the day when sacrificial rites were about to start, a painting appeared floating on tidal waves. It was a portrait of the Mount Tai god. After receiving the portrait, the local denizens became more devoted to the god and served him more respectfully. The mountain was initially named “upturned wok,” because it looks like one. Later its name was changed to the Mountain of Good Fortune. The temple was built on the top of it. It is by no means coincidental that the mountain has become the sacred site for people near and far to pray for good fortune. Composed by Wei Bangzhe, the presented scholar of Kunshan county in the eighth month of the seventh year of Zhenghe (1117).⁸⁵

84 David Johnson, “The City-God Cults of T’ang and Sung China,” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 45, no. 2 (December 1985): 363-457.

85 *Qinchuan zhi*, *juan* 13, in SYDFZCS, 4: 2793; *Wujun zhi*, *juan* 13, in *ibid.*, 2330. 福山臨江海上，巋焉蓊鬱，岡巒環回。殆亦勝地。父老云：肇祀之日，有幅畫乘潮水至，乃嶽神像也。居民得之，歛事而加信焉。山初號覆釜，蓋因其形似。後易

The Mountain of Good Fortune, 40 *li* north of the Changshu county seat, is located at the lower reaches of the Yangzi River. In the local gazetteer of Changshu, its location is considered strategically important, with its steep cliffs facing the fast-flowing river. It was usually guarded by a large number of forces.⁸⁶ In this text, however, the mountain is presented as a beautiful scenic spot with no implication of any defensive tension. The portrait of the Mount Tai God, carried by the river from places unknown, symbolically connects the locality to the outside, that is, it puts it within a wider context, such as an imperial perspective, state patronage, and imperial culture, which were imbedded in the Mount Tai cult. The landscape of the Mountain of Good Fortune, as it emerges from the temple inscription, reveals an idealized spatial hierarchical relationship between the state and the locality. Mount Tai in the Central Plains of China, superscribed by the imperial pilgrimage, represents overarching state power and imperial culture, with the mountain god acting as a protector of the empire. Mountains in other parts of China where the subordinate temples and shrines were built, such as the Mountain of Good Fortune, served as supplementary pilgrimage centers for the local inhabitants. Local communities were protected by the presence of the god within their landmarks.

Reordering the Local Spatial Hierarchy

This idealized spatial hierarchy was bound to be shattered after China lost the geographical seat of Mount Tai to the Jurchen state. In 1130 the Jurchen armies crossed the Yangzi River and reached the wealthy and culturally refined Jiangnan area, including Suzhou, Wei Bangzhe's hometown. The damage was catastrophic. The town of Suzhou was wiped out, according to a temple inscription composed by Li Xun (李薰) in 1133, when the temple on the Mountain of Good Fortune was restored. Changshu county, around 50 kilometers away from Suzhou, however, remained intact, despite being the home of grain-filled barns and commodities and wealth accumulated by high-ranking officials and businessmen, not to mention its strategic significance. The invaders cruised along the outside of the town and fled without looking back. Li explained that it was because the town was protected by the Mount Tai god. People from near and far, therefore, served the god more devoutly.⁸⁷ The temple restoration proj-

名為福山，廟據其上。遂為遠邇祈福之地，豈偶然哉。政和七年八月乙亥，鄉貢進士昆山魏邦哲記。

86 *Qinchuan zhi*, *juan* 5, in *ibid.*, 2696.

87 *Qinchuan zhi*, *juan* 13, in *ibid.*, 2794.

ect was initiated by the county magistrate. After it was completed, the locals, led by the respected elders, held a great celebration in front of the temple, culminating in the writing of the temple inscription. Li attached an ode to the god at the end to praise him for his blessings of the country in such a difficult time.

Though the geographic location of Mount Tai was taken by the enemy, its image as a protector of the empire and local communities was enhanced, at least in scholarly writings. For instance, Han Yuanji (韓元吉, 1118-1187), a famous poet and scholar, wrote a temple inscription for the construction project of a new Eastern Sacred Peak temple in Quanzhou, a seaport along China's southern coast. The locals believed that due to the guardianship of the God of Mount Tai, the area had been spared from the ravage of warfare ever since the Five Dynasties. A new and grand temple was therefore built in 1151 to repay the god for his blessings.⁸⁸

Another scholar in the Southern Song period, Huang Zhen (黃震, 1213-1280), wrote in a prayer essay (*zhuwen* 祝文) dedicated to the local temple of the Mount Tai cult in Guange (in present-day Anhui province),

Mount Tai is in charge of rain, including the whole process from the condensation of water vapor to rainfall. Though the territory [of our country] may change, the god's blessings, sincere and profound, are extended to every corner of China. The ramparts of Tongchuan county are low, but the town is surrounded by mountains. Local people serve the deity [of Mount Tai] for his power of presiding over the weather, wet or dry.⁸⁹

The dynastic ritual code dictates that sacrificing to the five sacred peaks is one of the official rituals of praying for rain.⁹⁰ The text indicates that although the geographic possession of the mountain was lost to the people in the Middle Kingdom, the mountain deity continued to carry out his duties to protect the empire and bring rain to the people. In Huang's prayer essay, therefore, the mountain deity's official duty of taking charge of rain is associated with his image as the protector of the empire. The popular religious activities were

88 *Nanjian jiayi gao*, vol. 5, *juan* 19: 373-374.

89 *Huangshi richao*, *juan* 94, in SKQS, 708: 1005. 起膚寸而雨天下者，泰山也，地域有變遷而神之福吾中國者，無往不拳拳其間也。桐川小壘，而所多者山也，民之事神于茲，正以水旱所關也。

90 For the study of the official rituals of praying for rain in Tang and Song times, see Lei Wen, *Jiaomiao zhi wai: Sui-Tang guojia jisi yu zongjiao* (Beijing: Sanlian shudian, 2009), 293-339; Pi Qingsheng, *Songdai minzhong cishen xinyang yanjiu* (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2008), 143-203.

redefined within this context. When China was under attack by foreign “barbarians,” the identification of the Eastern Sacred Peak with the Chinese and their civilization, shaped by the imperial state and the elite, was invoked strongly in defense of its enduring legitimacy.

Conclusion

The imperial *feng* and *shan* pilgrimage was one of the most important events in the Song Dynasty and is worthy of deeper scrutiny. It can be understood as an effort by the throne to acquire potency for Song power through association with the Heavenly Text. More importantly, it could be used to establish Song ownership of Chinese culture in order to compete with the Khitan, who had long adopted Chinese institutions and ideology. Various strategies were deployed by the throne during the campaign to reach out to the masses and to communicate the imperial symbolism of the mountain.

Its impact on the population may be difficult to evaluate objectively. It is evident, however, that the mountain, superscribed by the state, had become valuable symbolic capital. As such, the literati elite, through the composition of temple inscriptions, created a link between the imperial pilgrimage and the popular ritual of the Mount Tai cult. In this way, they were able to redefine the popular ritual and managed to channel the popular cultural memory into the imperial context. This link facilitated the construction of an imperial cultural identity accessible to all social groups. It also allowed an abstract concept of Chinese culture to be communicated through the fabric of society.

List of Abbreviations

BM	<i>Songshi jishi benmo</i> 宋史紀事本末
CB	<i>Xu zizhi tongjian changbian</i> 續資治通鑑長編
SDSKWX	<i>Songdai shike wenxian quanbian</i> 宋代石刻文獻全編
SDWXJC	<i>Shandong wenxian jicheng</i> 山東文獻集成
SHY	<i>Song huiyao jigao</i> 宋會要輯稿
SKQS	<i>Siku quanshu</i> 四庫全書
SS	<i>Songshi</i> 宋史
SSJ	<i>Shisan jing zhushu</i> 十三經注疏
SYDFZCS	<i>Song-Yuan difangzhi congshu</i> 宋元地方志叢書

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