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Research Note

English-Language Studies of Precious Scrolls: A Bibliographical Survey

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Before trying to summarize the history of English language scholarship on precious scrolls (*baojuan* 寶卷), it is first necessary to introduce the early developments of the field in China and Japan. The modern study of precious scrolls can be said to begin with the publication by Zheng Zhenduo 鄭振鐸 of his “Foqu xulu” 佛曲敘錄 (A catalogue of Buddhist songs; 1927) in *Zhongguo wenxue yanjiu* 中國文學研究 (Studies on Chinese Literature). This article presented brief descriptions of a few *bianwen* 變文 (transformation texts), followed by more detailed descriptions of 36 precious scrolls. In his *Zhongguo su wenxue shi* 中國俗文學史 (A History of popular literature in China; 1938), Zheng devoted a separate chapter to the discussion of precious scrolls, in which he provided lists of the titles he had seen and illustrated his argument by extensive quotations from selected precious scrolls.¹ Precious scrolls were part of the materials that were collected in the 1930s by the Academia Sinica.²

Scholarship on precious scrolls in China in the 1950s and 1960s was basically limited to the publication of catalogues, such as Hu Shiying 胡士瑩, *Tanci baojuan shumu* 彈詞寶卷書目 (A catalogue of plucked string ballads and precious scrolls; 1957), and Li Shiyu 李世瑜, *Baojuan zonglu* 寶卷總錄 (A comprehensive catalogue of precious scrolls; 1960). Li Shiyu had encountered precious scrolls in his research on local religions (sects) in Northern China, which he published in his *Xianzai Huabei mimi zongjiao* 現在華北秘密宗教 (Secret religions in contemporary North China; 1948). For the first three decades of the People’s Republic of China (PRC), scholarship on precious scrolls was almost non-existent because of the obvious link of the genre to popular religion, but it should be pointed out that Chen Ruheng 陳汝衡 treated precious scrolls briefly as a

* A Chinese version of an earlier draft of this research note will accompany the reprint of the precious scrolls in the collection of the Harvard-Yenching Library by the Guangxi shifan daxue chubanshe 廣西師範大學出版社 (Guangxi Normal University Press). This publication, edited by Dr. Huo Jianyu 霍建瑜, will mostly consist of texts from the Hanan Collection. I would like to express my thanks to Dr. Huo Jianyu, Dr. Rostislav Berezkin, Prof. James Robson, my student Sun Xiaosu, and an anonymous reviewer for pointing out omissions and mistakes in earlier versions of this research note and drawing my attention to additional materials.

¹ See Rostislav Berezkin, “Zheng Zhenduo’s Contribution to the Study of *Baojuan* (Precious Scrolls): Problems of the Origin and Early History of the Genre,” in *Problemy literatur Dal’nego Vostoka: Sbornik materialov III Mezhdunarodnoi nauchnoi konferentsii, Sankt-Peterburg, 24-28 iyunia 2008 g.* (Papers from the 3rd International Scientific Conference “Issues of Far Eastern Literatures,” Saint-Petersburg, June 24-28, 2008), Guo’en Chen and E. A. Serebriakov, eds., 2 vols. (Saint-Petersburg: Saint-Petersburg University Press, 2008), 1: 9-19.

² Many of these are reproduced in *Su wenxue congkan* 俗文學叢刊 (Folk literature: Materials in the collection of the Institute of History and Philology), 500 vols. (Taipei: Xin wenfeng, 2001-2006), vols. 351-61.

genre of prosimetric storytelling in his *Shuoshu shihua* 說書史話 (A history of storytelling; 1958 [pp. 123-29]).

During those three decades, however, important work on precious scrolls was done by Japanese scholars. As early as 1960, Sakai Tadao 酒井忠夫 included a long chapter on the precious scrolls and sectarian religions of the Ming dynasty in his famous *Zhūgoku zensho no kenkyū* 中国善書の研究 (A study of China's morality books; pp. 437-85). The most important scholar in the field, however, was Sawada Mizuho 澤田瑞和. Sawada published widely on many genres of traditional popular literature. His most important contribution to the study of precious scrolls was his *Hōkan no kenkyū* 寶卷の研究 (A study of precious scrolls; 1963). An expanded version of this work was published in 1975 as *Zōho Hōkan no kenkyū* 増補寶卷の研究 (A study of precious scrolls, expanded and supplemented). In the first part of this work Sawada discussed over three hundred individual precious scrolls, providing for each title a detailed summary of the contents along with discussions of authorship, printing history and other such matters. The second part of the volume consisted of a number of articles each devoted to one of the new religions of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries that used precious scrolls to propagate their teachings. Sawada's study has served as a major work of reference for all later students of precious scrolls, especially those outside the PRC, where it is not as well known as it should be. Another Japanese scholar whose contribution to the study of precious scrolls has to be mentioned is Yoshioka Yoshitoyo 吉岡義豊, who in his *Dōkyō no kenkyū* 道教の研究 (Studies on Daoism; 1988-90) reprinted an eighteenth-century edition of the long version of the *Xiangshan baojuan* 香山寶卷 (Precious scroll of Incense Mountain) and carefully compared it to the more common shorter version of the nineteenth century and later. From the 1980s onward we also witness the growth of studies on precious scrolls in Taiwan as younger generations of scholars became interested in the manifestations of Chinese culture, including popular religion, on Taiwan.

Outside East Asia the study of precious scrolls as a genre developed only very slowly. The earliest Western scholar to discuss precious scrolls was probably the Dutch sinologist J.J.M. De Groot, who obtained several precious scrolls in Fujian and provided synopses of them in his *Sectarianism and Religious Persecution in China: A Page in the History of Religions* (Amsterdam, 1903). But very few European or American collections held substantial holdings of precious scrolls and the scholarly study of Chinese religion such as it existed in the 1950s and 1960s tended to focus on elite rather than popular culture. This situation changed as more Western scholars started to combine the study of written sources with fieldwork in Singapore, Hong Kong, and Taiwan. Here they discovered a great variety of tracts and other texts, including precious scrolls, that had escaped the attention of most scholars so far but that played an important role in the life of local believers. For instance, Marjorie Topley as early as 1963 drew on the sectarian writings used by religious groups in Singapore and Malaysia in her "The Great Way of Former Heaven: A Group of Chinese Religious Sects" (*Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 26.2).³

³ Russian studies fall outside the scope of this survey but some important publications must be mentioned here. Boris L. Riftin discussed several precious scrolls about Meng Jiangnü 孟姜女 in his *Skazanie o Velikoī stene i problema zhanra v kitaīskom fol'klore* (The legend of the Great Wall and the problem of

The doyen of Western scholars of precious scrolls writing in English is Daniel L. Overmyer. His *Folk Buddhist Religion: Dissenting Sects in Late Traditional China* (Cambridge, MA, 1976)⁴ was the first Western language work to provide a systematic introduction to the new religions (sects) of the late Ming and early Qing. The primary sources for this study are precious scrolls from which the author quotes at length throughout the book. He also discusses the characteristics of precious scrolls as a genre (pp. 176-86). For his second monograph, *The Flying Phoenix: Aspects of Chinese Sectarianism in Taiwan* (Princeton, 1986, co-authored with David K. Jordan),⁵ Professor Overmyer turned to the more recent spirit-writing cults, but he returned to precious scrolls in his third monograph, *Precious Volumes: An Introduction to Chinese Sectarian Scriptures from the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Cambridge, MA, 1999).⁶ As the long subtitle of this work makes clear, the author does not discuss the non-sectarian narrative precious scrolls that started to especially proliferate from the second part of the 18th century onward and that were widely distributed throughout China in the early twentieth century thanks to the activities of the Shanghai lithographic publishers of that time,⁷ but focuses on the sectarian precious scrolls that were produced in the period from the fifteenth to the seventeenth centuries. In his first chapter, however, the author discusses the earliest texts that are commonly classified precious scrolls and that date from the Yuan dynasty or even earlier. Three precious scrolls are discussed in this chapter in some detail: *Jingang jing keyi* 金剛經科儀 (Ritual amplification of the Diamond Sutra; pp. 34-38), the *Xiangshan baojuan* (pp. 38-46), and the *Mulian jiu mu chuli diyu sheng tian baojuan* 目連救母出離地獄生天寶卷 (Precious scroll of Mulian rescuing his mother from purgatory and her ascension to heaven; pp. 46-47).⁸ The second chapter, “An Early Model: The Bureaucracy of Salvation in a Fifteenth-Century Text, The *Huang-chi pao-chüan*,” is devoted to an analysis of the *Huangji baojuan* 皇極寶卷

genre in Chinese folklore; Moskva: Izd-vo vostochnoi lit-ry, 1961), pp. 144-79. Elvira S. Stulova published a detailed study and complete Russian translation together with a reproduction of the *Puming baojuan* 普明寶卷, a rare edition dated to 1599 of an early scripture of the Yellow Heaven religion, as *Baot □s □zi □u □ an' o Pu-mine: Faksimile* (The precious scroll of Puming: A facsimile edition; Moskva: “Nauka,” Glav. red. vostochnoi lit-ry, 1979).

⁴ This work is available in a Chinese translation as Ou Danian 歐大年, *Zhongguo minjian zongjiao jiaopai yanjiu* 中國民間宗教教派研究, Liu Xinyong 劉心勇 et al., trs. (Shanghai: Shanghai guji, 1993).

⁵ This work is available in a Chinese translation as Jiao Dawei 焦大衛 and Ou Danian, *Fei luan: Zhongguo minjian jiaopai mianmian guan* 飛鸞: 中國民間教派面面觀, Zhou Yumin 周育民, tr. (Hong Kong: Xianggang zhongwen daxue, 2005).

⁶ This work is available in a Chinese translation as Ou Danian, *Baojuan: Shiliu zhi shiqi shiji Zhongguo zongjiao jingjuan daolun* 寶卷: 十六至十七世紀中國宗教經卷導論, Ma Rui 馬睿, tr. (Beijing: Zhongyang bianyi, 2012).

⁷ On these, see Rostislav Berezkin, “The Lithographic Printing and the Development of Baojuan Genre in Shanghai in the 1900-1920s: On the Question of the Interaction of Print Technology and Popular Literature in China (Preliminary Observations)” *Zhongzheng daxue Zhongwen xueshu niankan* 中正大學中文學術年刊 (Chongcheng University Bulletin of the Department of Chinese Language and Literature) 13 (2011): 337-68.

⁸ The author might have pointed out more strongly that such non-sectarian precious scrolls were popular throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. There are descriptions of precious scroll performances in works such as the anonymous sixteenth-century novel *Jinpingmei* 金瓶梅 (Plum in the Golden Vase) and its seventeenth-century sequel *Xu Jinpingmei* 續金瓶梅 (Sequel to Plum in the Golden Vase) by Ding Yaokang 丁耀亢 (1599-1662).

(Precious scroll of the Imperial Ultimate), the earliest known sectarian scripture (early fifteenth century) to carry the words *baojuan* in its title.⁹ The third chapter, “Wu-wei Sect Scriptures by Lo Qing,” is devoted to the famous “Five Books in Six Volumes” of the charismatic religious teacher Luo Qing 羅清 (1443-1527). Chapter Four, “The *Chiu-lien pao-chüan* of 1523,” discusses an anonymous text that Professor Overmyer sees as continuation of the *Huangji baojuan*. Following these in-depth studies on individual texts, the next two chapters, “Themes in Later Sixteenth-Century *Pao-chüan*” and “‘Precious Volumes’ from the Seventeenth Century,” deal with larger groups of materials: The study is concluded by a chapter that once again focuses on a single text, “The *Dragon-Flower Scripture*,” followed by “Concluding Comments.”

As Professor Overmyer is a student of comparative religion, he is primarily interested in the content of these “sectarian scriptures” and less in their performance or their literary qualities. He supports his argument, however, by extensive quotations that allow his readers to form a clear idea of the contents and format of the texts he discusses. We find the same emphasis on content in the various articles which Professor Overmyer has published over the years, such as “Attitudes Toward the Ruler and the State in Chinese Popular Religious Literature: Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century *Pao-chüan*” (*Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 44 [1984]), “Values in Sectarian Literature: Ming and Ch’ing *Pao-chüan*” (in *Popular Culture in Late Imperial China*, ed. by David Johnson et al. [Berkeley, 1985]), “Women in Chinese Religions: Submission, Struggle, Transcendence” (in *From Beijing to Benares: Essays on Buddhism and Chinese Religion. In Honor of Prof. Jan Yün-hua*, ed. by Koichi Shinohara and Gregory Schopen [Oakville, ON, 1991])¹⁰ and “Social Perspectives in Chinese Sectarian Scriptures from the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries” (in *État, société civile et sphère publique en Asie de l’Est* [State, civil society and public domain in East Asia], ed. by Charles le Blanc and Alain Rocher [Montréal, 1998]).¹¹

In recent years Professor Overmyer has turned his interest to village temples in Northern China and their temple festivals, as becomes clear from his *Local Religion in North China in the Twentieth Century: The Structure and Organization of Community Rituals and Beliefs* (Leiden, 2009). One of his case studies concerns the large temple complex in Beiqi 北齊 village in Ding 定 county dedicated to Patriarch Han, who is none other than Han Piaogao 韓飄高 (d. 1598), who founded the Hongyang 紅陽 sect and authored several precious scrolls. While the village leaders knew of the sectarian connections of the temple and had some of the precious scrolls, according to Overmyer, “to the ordinary worshipers he was simply a local protective deity” (p. 159). Drawing upon the research of T.D. Dubois in *The Sacred Village: Social Change and Religious Life in Rural North China* (Honolulu, 2005), Professor Overmyer discusses the

⁹ See also Daniel L. Overmyer and Thomas Li Shiyu, “The Oldest Chinese Sectarian Scripture, *The Precious Volume, Expounded by the Buddha, on the Results of [the Teaching of] The Imperial Ultimate [Period] (Fo-shuo Huang-chi chieh-kuo pao-chüan, Pub. 1430)*,” *Journal of Chinese Religions* 20 (1992): 17-31. The early date of this text has been questioned by other scholars.

¹⁰ For a comparable article, also drawing heavily on precious scroll literature, see Beata Grant, “Patterns of Female Religious Experience in Qing Dynasty Literature,” *Journal of Chinese Religions* 23 (1995): 29-58.

¹¹ A complete list of Professor Overmyer’s publications (up to 2008) is appended to Randall L. Nadeau, “A Critical Review of Daniel Overmyer’s Contribution to the Study of Chinese Religion,” in *The People and the Dao: New Studies in Chinese Religions in Honour of Daniel L. Overmyer*, Philip Clart and Paul Crowe, eds. (Nettetal: Institut Monumenta Serica, 2009), pp. 23-35.

transformation of sectarian communities into local communities more generally (pp. 181-83).

If precious scrolls were not very conspicuous in Beiqi village, they were much more prominent in the ritual and musical life of the peasants of South Gaoluo Village just south of Beijing as studied by the ethno-musicologist Stephen Jones in his *Plucking the Wind: Lives of Village Musicians in Old and New China* (Leiden, 2004). The manuscripts of some of these precious scrolls (e.g., *Houtu baojuan* 后土寶卷 [Precious scroll of Divine Earth], *Baiyi baojuan* 白衣寶卷 [Precious scroll of the White-Robed (Guanyin)], and *Dizang baojuan* 地藏寶卷 [Precious scroll of Ksitigarba]) date back to the eighteenth century. Professor Jones stresses the nature of these manuscripts as performance manuals.¹² The small number of titles listed by Professor Jones contrasts sharply with the much larger number of individual texts that are recorded for contemporary communities in Western Gansu and Southern Jiangsu.¹³

Some of Professor Overmyer's students, as might be expected, have also studied precious scrolls. Of these Randall Nadeau is particularly worthy of note. His dissertation, "Popular Sectarianism in the Ming: Lo Ch'ing and his 'Religion of Non-Action'" (University of British Columbia, 1990) is often praised as the fullest monographic treatment of Luo Qing and his writings. His "Genre Classifications of Chinese Popular Religious Literature: *Pao-chüan*" (*Journal of Chinese Religions* 21 [1993]) forcefully drives home the point that all precious scrolls, irrespective of date or format, when used in performance are part of a religious ritual—this applies as much to the so-called "sectarian" precious scrolls of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as to the so-called non-sectarian narrative precious scrolls of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.¹⁴ Yet another article by Nadeau is his "The Domestication of Precious Scrolls: The *Ssu-ming Tsao-jün pao-chüan*" (*Journal of Chinese Religion* 22 [1996]). Of the same basic

¹² Stephen Jones, *Ritual and Music of North China: Shawm Bands in Shanxi* (Aldershot, Hampshire: Ashgate, 2007), pp. 77–78, briefly discusses the performance of precious scrolls in the village of Gushan in Yanggao district in northern Shanxi.

¹³ For early introductions to the contemporary precious scrolls of Western Gansu, see Victor H. Mair, *Painting and Performance: Chinese Picture Recitation and its Indian Genesis* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1988), pp. 8-13; and Wei Chiao, "Folk Literature and Popular Beliefs in the Ho-hsi Corridor (Kansu Province)," in *Minjian xinyang yu Zhongguo wenhua guoji yantaohui lunwenji* 民間信仰與中國文化國際研討會論文集 (Collected articles of the international conference on popular belief and Chinese culture; Taipei: Hanxue yanjiu zhongxin, 1994), pp. 181-200.

¹⁴ It should be kept in mind that this article was written before the rich materials on contemporary performance practices became widely available. For descriptions of contemporary performances see, for instance, Mark Bender, "A Description of *Jiangjing* (Telling Scriptures) Services in Jingjiang," *Asian Folklore Studies* 60 (2001): 101-133; Rostislav Berezkin, "Scripture-telling (*Jiangjing*) in the Zhangjiagang Area and the History of Chinese Storytelling," *Asia Major*, Third Series, 24 (2011): 1-42; Rostislav Berezkin, "An Analysis of 'Telling Scriptures' (*Jiangjing*) During Temple Festivals in Gangkou (Zhangjiagang), With Special Attention to the Status of the Performers," *CHINOPERL Papers* 30 (2011): 25-76; and Rostislav Berezkin, "Modern Performances of 'Precious Scrolls' as a Part of Folk Religious and Social life in the Shanghu area of Changshu city in Jiangsu Province, China," in E.A. Serebryakov and Fijita Rina, eds., *Issues of Far Eastern Literatures: Papers of the 5th International Scientific Conference June 27-July 3 2012* (Saint-Petersburg, Saint-Petersburg State University, 2012), Vol. 2, pp. 128-145. Earlier, David Johnson provided a detailed survey of the written records on the performances of precious scrolls in his "Mu-lien in *Pao-chüan*: The Performance Context and Religious Meaning of the *Yu-ming Pao-ch'uan*," in *Ritual and Scripture in Chinese Popular Religion: Five Studies*, David Johnson, ed. (Berkeley: Chinese Popular Culture Project, 1995), pp. 55-103.

generation as Nadeau but not trained under Professor Overmyer is Janet Lynn Kerr, who contributed the article “*Pao-chüan*” to the second volume of *The Indiana Companion to Traditional Chinese Literature* (ed. by William H. Nienhauser, Jr. [Bloomington, 1998]),¹⁵ but passed away before she could revise and publish her 1994 University of Chicago dissertation, “Precious Scrolls in Chinese Popular Religious Culture.”

A scholar who like Professor Overmyer has worked for many years on sectarianism in late Ming China is Richard Hon-Chun Shek. He obtained his doctorate from the University of California at Berkeley in 1980 with a dissertation entitled “Religion and Society in Late Ming: Sectarianism and Popular Thought in Sixteenth and Seventeenth century China.” One of his most important publications within the context of this survey, co-authored with Tetsuro Noguchi, is his densely annotated “Eternal Mother Religion: Its History and Ethics” (in *Heterodoxy in Late Imperial China*, ed. by Kwang-Ching Liu and Richard Shek [Honolulu, 2004]). Other articles by Professor Shek in which he draws on precious scroll materials include his “Millenarianism without Rebellion: The Huangtian Dao in North China” (*Modern China* 8.3 [July 1982]) and “Daoist Elements in Late Imperial Chinese Sectarianism” (in *Millenarianism in Asian History*, ed. Ishii Yoneo [Tokyo, 1993]).

Another group of scholars who encountered sectarian religions and their writings in their research were social historians. One scholar who has to be mentioned in this respect is Susan Naquin. She used the extensive quotations from sectarian scriptures collected by Huang Yupian 黃育樞 in his *Poxie xiangbian* 破邪詳辯 (A detailed refutation to destroy heresies) to reconstruct the beliefs of the protagonists of her *Millenarian Rebellion in China: The Eight Trigrams Uprising of 1813* (New Haven, 1976).¹⁶ Professor Naquin discusses the role of scriptures (*baojuan*) in the transmission of Ming-Qing sects in her “The Transmission of White Lotus Sectarianism in Late Imperial China” (in *Popular Culture in Late Imperial China*, ed. by David Johnson et al. [Berkeley, 1985]). Together with Thomas Shiyu Li, Professor Naquin also authored “The Baoming Temple: Religion and the Throne in Ming and Qing China” (*Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 48 [1988]). One of the topics discussed in this long article is the composition at this temple in the late sixteenth century of five precious scrolls by the young nun Guiyuan 歸元, and the subsequent history of the Dacheng 大乘 sect that relied on her works as their scriptures.

Yet another social historian who should be mentioned is David Johnson, who particularly turned to the study of Chinese popular culture in the late 1980s, when he co-founded the Chinese Popular Culture Project (CPCP) at the University of California at Berkeley. The first publication of the CPCP was *Ritual Opera Operatic Ritual: “Mu-lien Rescues his Mother” in Chinese Popular Culture: Papers from the International Workshop on the Mu-lien Operas with an Additional Contribution on the Woman Huang Legend by Beata Grant* (Berkeley, 1989). In this collection Gary Seaman discussed the precious scrolls used by religious specialists (along with dramatic performances) in central Taiwan in his “Mu-lien Dramas in Puli, Taiwan.” Beata Grant’s long article in this

¹⁵ For another short, introductory article on precious scrolls, see the item on this topic by Catherine Bell in *The Encyclopedia of Taoism*, Fabrizio Pregadio ed. (London: Routledge, 2008), pp. 212-15.

¹⁶ This is available in a Chinese translation as Han Shurui 韓書瑞, *Qiannian moshi zhi luan: 1813 nian Baguajiao qiyi* 千年末世之亂: 1813年八卦教起義, Chen Zhongdan 陳仲丹, tr. (Nanjing: Jiangsu renmin, 2010).

collection, “The Spiritual Saga of Woman Huang: From Pollution to Purification,” traces in exhaustive detail the development of the legend of Woman Huang 黃氏 in dramatic and other performative genres (see pp. 227-36 for discussion of the precious scroll versions, beginning with the long description of a performance of a precious scroll on the topic in Chapter 74 of the anonymous sixteenth century novel *Jinpingmei*¹⁷). The late nineteenth-century prosimetric version of the legend of Woman Huang entitled *Huangshi dui Jingang* 黃氏對金剛 (Woman Huang answers questions concerning the Diamond Sutra), later translated by Professor Grant as *Woman Huang Recites the Diamond Sutra* (in Beata Grant and Wilt Idema, *Escape from Blood Pond Hell: The Tales of Mulian and Woman Huang* [Seattle, 2011]), is not classified as a precious scroll but nevertheless exhibits a clear connection to sectarian religion.

David Johnson would go on to contribute a major article on one of the precious scroll adaptations of the legend of Mulian to the third publication of the CPCP, *Ritual and Scripture in Chinese Popular Religion: Five Studies* (Berkeley, 1995). This article, entitled “Mu-lien in *Pao-chüan*: The Performance Context and Religious Meaning of the *Yu-ming Pao-ch’uan*,” provides a detailed discussion of a precious scroll that would appear to have been quite popular in Northern China in the nineteenth century. The precious scroll adaptation of the Mulian legend that was popular in the Jiangnan area at the same time seems to have been the *Mulian sanshi baojuan* 目連三世寶卷 (Precious scroll of three lives of Mulian), which is available in a full translation by Wilt L. Idema as “The Precious Scroll of the Three Lives of Mulian” (in Grant and Idema, *Escape from Blood Pond Hell*). The many precious scroll adaptations of the Mulian legend from the Yuan dynasty to the present day are the subject of Rostislav Berezkin’s dissertation, “The Development of the Mulian Story in Baojuan Texts (14th-19th Century) in Connection with the Evolution of the Genre” (University of Pennsylvania, 2010). It should be pointed out that in his dissertation Dr. Berezkin not only relies on Chinese, Japanese, and English scholarship, but also on secondary sources in Russian, and that his discussion also covers rare Chinese materials in Russian libraries.¹⁸

One of the most popular precious scrolls of the Qing dynasty was the already mentioned *Xiangshan baojuan*, which has a preface dated to 1103. This early date is not generally accepted. While there are indications for the existence of a text of this title by the late fifteenth century, the earliest preserved editions date from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and include a long and short version. The *Xiaoshan baojuan* tells the legend of the princess Miaoshan 妙善, who achieves enlightenment and after sacrificing her own eyes and arms to cure her father, becomes the bodhisattva Guanyin 觀音 with a thousand arms and eyes. The development of the legend of Miaoshan has been studied by the British sinologist Glen Dudbridge in his *The Legend of Miaoshan* (London, 1978;

¹⁷ For a full translation of this chapter including the text of the Woman Huang precious scroll as recited in it, see David Tod Roy, tr., *The Plum in the Golden Vase or Chin P’ing Mei, Volume Four: The Climax* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), pp. 420-55.

¹⁸ A Russian version of his work was published in 2012 in Saint Peterburg by the Saint-Petersburg Center for Oriental Studies as Rostislav Berezkin, *Dragotsennye svitki (baotszuan’) v duhovnoi culture Kitaia, na primere ‘Baotszuan’ o treh voplossheniiah Muliania’* (The Function of Precious Scrolls [Baojuan] in the Culture of China, with *The Baojuan of Three Lives of Mulian* as an Example)

revised edition, Oxford, 2004).¹⁹ The long and short versions are discussed in this work (pp. 44-50 of the original edition and pp. 47-56 of the revised edition). Elsewhere in the same book (pp. 68-73 of the original and pp. 82-87 of the revised edition), Professor Dudbridge discusses the *Guanyin jidu benyuan zhenjing* 觀音濟渡本願真經 (True scripture of Guanyin's original vow of universal salvation),²⁰ a rewriting of the Miaoshan legend as a precious scroll from the perspective of the Xiantian dadao 先天大道 religion.²¹ The legend of Miaoshan is also discussed in considerable length by Chün-fang Yü in her encyclopedic survey of Guanyin in Chinese culture, *Kuan-yin: The Chinese Transformation of Avalokiteśvara* (New York, 2001), especially chapter eight, "Princess Miao-shan and the Feminization of Kuan-yin." Professors Dudbridge and Yü both emphasize the role of Guanyin as a savior of sinners in hell in the Miaoshan legend. In her book, Professor Yü also treats the role of Guanyin in the sectarian writings of the Ming and Qing in a chapter entitled "Venerable Mother: Kuanyin and Sectarian Religions in Late Imperial China." In it she provides (pp. 467-477) detailed descriptions of three precious scrolls that designate Guanyin systematically as "Venerable Mother Guanyin" (Guanyin laomu 觀音老母). These three texts are *Xiaoshi baiyi Guanyin pusa song ying'er xiasheng baojuan* 銷釋白衣觀音菩薩送嬰兒下生寶卷 (Explanatory precious scroll of the white-robed bodhisattva Guanyin who comes into the world bringing children); *Jiuku junan linggan Guanshiyin baojuan* 救苦救南靈感觀世音寶卷 (Precious scroll of Guanshiyin of the efficacious responses who saves one from suffering and disasters); and *Guanyin shizong ribei dounan jing* 觀音釋宗日北斗南經 (Scripture of Guanyin explaining the truth from the north of the sun to the south of the Dipper).

The legend of Miaoshan has also drawn comparative interest. In his monograph on her, Professor Dudbridge has compared the legend with the plot of Shakespeare's *King Lear* and the many folktales in which a seemingly disobedient third daughter turns out to be the caring daughter in the end. Wilt L. Idema, "Evil Parents and Filial Offspring: Some Comments on the *Xiangshan baojuan* and Related Texts" (*Journal of Central and*

¹⁹ The original edition was translated into Chinese by Li Wenbin 李文彬 and published, with additional materials, as Du Deqiao 杜德橋, *Miaoshan chuanshuo: Guanyin pusa yuanqi kao* 妙善傳說: 觀音菩薩緣起考 (The legend of Miaoshan: A study of the origin of the bodhisattva Guanyin; Taipei: Juliu tushu gongsi, 1990).

²⁰ Confusingly, the *Guanyin jidu benyuan zhenjing* occasionally also circulates under the title of *Xiangshan baojuan*. A Dutch-language summary of the *Guanyin jidu benyuan zhenjing* was provided as early as 1897 in Henri Borel, *Kwan Yin: Een boek van de goden en de hel* (Guanyin: A book of the gods and Hell; Amsterdam: P.N.Kampen en Zoon, 1897), pp. 15-31.

²¹ Such sectarian rewritings of well-known legends are not uncommon. See, for instance, Wilt L. Idema, "The Filial Parrot in Qing Dynasty Dress: A Short Discussion of the *Yingge baojuan* (Precious Scroll of the Parrot)," *Journal of Chinese Religions* 30 (2002): 77-96 and Shin-yi Chao, "The Precious Volume of Bodhisattva Zhenwu Attaining the Way: A Case Study of the Worship of Zhenwu (Perfected Warrior) in Ming-Qing Sectarian Groups," in *The People and the Dao: New Studies in Chinese Religions in Honour of Daniel L. Overmyer*, Philip Clart and Paul Crowe, eds. (Nettetal: Institut Monumenta Serica, 2009), pp. 63-82. Professor Chao first discusses the incorporation of Zhenwu into the sectarian pantheon of the sixteenth century and then proceeds to a more detailed discussion of the *Zhenwu pusa dedao baojuan* 真武菩薩得到寶卷 (Precious scroll of the achievement of the way by the bodhisattva Zhenwu) of the nineteenth century, in which Zhenwu is mentored by Guanyin. See C.K. Wang, "The *Hsiao-shih Meng Chiang Chung-lieh Chen-chieh Hsien-liang Pao-chüan*," *Asian Culture Quarterly* 7.4 (1979): 46-72, for a late-Ming sectarian rewriting of the tale of Meng Jiangnü.

East-Asian Religions 12-13 [2001-2002]) has compared the precious scroll version of the legend and the legends of female saints in Medieval France. Material from this and another article²² was included in the introduction to Wilt L. Idema, *Personal Salvation and Filial Piety: Two Precious Scroll Narratives of Guanyin and her Acolytes* (Honolulu, 2008), which provides a complete translation of the *Xiangshan baojuan* in its short version together with a translation of the *Shancai Longnü baojuan* 善才龍女寶卷 (Precious scroll of Good-in-Talent and Dragon Daughter).²³

While none of the sectarian precious scrolls of the fifteenth to seventeenth centuries is available in a complete English translation so far, an increasing number of “narrative precious scrolls” of the mid-Qing and later are now available in English versions. Apart from the three translations already mentioned above, Wilt Idema has also provided translations of four more precious scrolls. *Meng Jiangnü brings Down the Great Wall: Ten Versions of a Chinese Legend* (Seattle, 2008) includes translations of the *Meng Jiang xiannü baojuan* 孟姜仙女寶卷 as “The Precious Scroll of the Immortal Maiden Meng Jiang” and of the *Meng Jiangnü ku Changcheng baojuan* 孟姜女哭長城寶卷 as “The Precious Scroll of Maiden Mengjiang Weeping at the Long Wall.”²⁴ The first text circulated widely in the Jiangnan region and beyond in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, while the second text was popular in the late twentieth century in Zhangye in Western Gansu. In his *The White Snake and Her Son: A Translation of The Precious Scroll of Thunder Peak, with Related Texts* (Indianapolis, 2009), Wilt L. Idema included a full translation of the *Leifeng baojuan* 雷峰寶卷 (Precious scroll of Thunder Peak).

Translations of precious scrolls have begun to appear in anthologies of Chinese literature and sourcebooks on Chinese culture. A full translation of the *Chenxiang baojuan* 沉箱寶卷 (Precious scroll of Chenxiang) by Wilt Idema is included in Victor Mair and Mark Bender’s *The Columbia Anthology of Chinese Folk and Popular Literature* (New York, 2011).²⁵ The same anthology also includes a long excerpt from the *San Mao baojuan* 三茅寶卷 (Precious scroll of the three Mao brothers), translated by Qu Liquan and Jonathan Noble as “Jingjiang ‘Telling Scriptures’ from the *San Mao* Precious

²² Wilt Idema, “Guanyin’s Acolytes,” in *Linked Faiths. Essays on Chinese Religions and Traditional Culture in Honour of Kristofer Schipper*, Jan A.M. De Meyer and Peter M. Engelfriet, eds. (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1999), pp. 205-26.

²³ Wilt L. Idema earlier published Dutch translations of these two texts in W. L. Idema, *Prinses Miaoshan, en andere Chinese legenden van Guanyin, de bodhisattva van barmhartigheid* (Princess Miaoshan, and other legends of Guanyin, the bodhisattva of compassion; Amsterdam: Atlas, 2000). This work also includes a translation of the *Tilan baojuan* 提籃寶卷 (Precious scroll of the carrying basket), a precious scroll that tells the legend of Guanyin saving a village of sinners from destruction by appearing to them in the guise of a pretty young fish monger.

²⁴ See C.K. Wang, “The *Hsiao-shih Meng Chiang Chung-lieh Chen-chieh Hsien-liang Pao-chüan*,” *Asian Culture Quarterly* 7 No. 4 (1979): 46-72 and “From *Pao-chüan* to Ballad: A Study in Literary Adaptation as Exemplified by Two Versions of the Meng Chiang-nü Story,” *Asian Culture Quarterly* 9.1 (1981): 48-65 for a discussion of the precious scroll versions of this legend, starting from a long sectarian rewriting of the legend in the late Ming.

²⁵ For a detailed study of the legend of Chenxiang, which is also known as *Baolian deng* 寶蓮燈 (Precious lotus lantern), see Glen Dudbridge, “The Goddess Hua-yüeh San-nang and the Cantonese Ballad *Ch’en-hsiang T’ai-tzu*,” *Hanxue yanjiu* 漢學研究 (Chinese Studies) 8 (1990): 627-46.

Scrolls.”²⁶ Major excerpts from the *Zaohuang baojuan* 竈皇寶卷 (The Precious Scroll of the Lord of the Stove) as translated by Robert L. Chard are included in *Sources of Chinese Tradition: The Modern Period*, edited by William Theodore de Bary (New York, 2008).

In the last few decades the situation of the study of precious scrolls has changed greatly. While precious scroll studies have continued to develop and flourish in Japan and Taiwan, publications from the PRC have rapidly increased in number. Major collections of reprints of precious scrolls both from Taiwan and the Mainland have made many texts that were hard to find easily accessible to scholars all over the world. Some major libraries, such as the Harvard-Yenching Library at Harvard and the University Library of Waseda University in Tokyo (which holds the collection of Sawada Mizuho), have made their precious scrolls available on the web. Many regions in China, including Hebei, Shanxi, Gansu, and Jiangsu, have witnessed a revival of precious scroll performance beginning in the 1980s, and many local performers made great efforts to recover the texts that had been thought to have been completely destroyed in earlier decades. More recently, many districts have submitted their local tradition of precious scroll performance for recognition at the provincial and national level as “intangible cultural heritage,” and to support such applications have collected not only texts but also sources on performers and performance, resulting in lavish publications. Foreign scholars have been allowed to conduct fieldwork on precious scrolls and their performance in collaboration with Chinese colleagues. We also have seen a growing number of collaborative publications involving Chinese and foreign scholars. As we already noted, Thomas Li Shiyu collaborated both with Daniel Overmyer and Susan Naquin. As another example of such collaboration, we can mention Hubert Seiwert and Ma Xisha 馬西沙, *Popular Religious Movements and Heterodox Sects in Chinese History* (Leiden, 2003). There is a new generation of scholars trained by scholars who received their own training in the 1950s or trained themselves as specialists in this field. One final indication of the flourishing state of precious scroll studies we can point to is the number of titles and editions we now have information on: whereas Li Shiyu’s 1960 catalogue only included something over 500 titles, Che Xilun’s 車錫倫 *Zhongguo baojuan zongmu* 中國寶卷總目 (Comprehensive catalogue of the precious scrolls of China; 2000) records over 1500 titles, a number that will be further increased when Professor Che Xilun soon publishes a revised version of the catalogue.

²⁶ Wilt L. Idema, “Prosimetric and Verse Narrative,” in Kang-I Sun Chang and Stephen Owen, eds., *The Cambridge History of Chinese Literature*, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 2: 343-412, includes short discussions of precious scrolls as a literary genre (pp. 350-354 and 399-401).