

**Globalizing Daoism at Huashan:
Quanzhen Monks, *Danwei* Politics, and International Dream Trippers**

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Introduction¹

What happens when groups of Western Daoists go back to the “roots” of Daoism in China and meet with “real” Chinese Daoists? Does the encounter change them? Does it change the Chinese Daoists? This chapter is part of a study of a moment in the globalization of Daoism: a moment in which, having expanded to the West through the emigration of masters, a Daoism adapted to Western values and culture returns to China, bringing the process full circle. This is the moment when Daoism becomes truly “global”—after its outward dissemination and acculturation in various countries, in which the link between the indigenous “root” and the foreign “seed” becomes increasingly tenuous with the passage of time and divergent trajectories in China and

¹ This chapter is part of a joint research project conducted with Elijah Siegler—see Siegler and Palmer, *Dream Trippers*. In addition to Siegler’s contributions (“Chinese Traditions”; “Back to the Pristine”; “Daoism beyond Modernity”), other essays compare the construction of sacred space by Chinese and American pilgrims and spiritual tourists to Huashan (Palmer, “Transnational Sacralities”), and the constructions of body, self, and subjectivity by Chinese and American meditators at the mountain (Palmer, “Care of the Self”). The financial support of the London School of Economics and Political Science and the French Centre for Research on Contemporary China is gratefully acknowledged. My thanks are extended to Michael Winn, Fan Guangchun, and Daoist Masters Hu, Hao and Wen (pseudonyms) for their invaluable collaboration with this project.

abroad, a new stage begins in which a more mature Westernized Daoism returns to China, not only to connect with its roots, but also to bring something new to its ancestral soil. How does the mother respond to her long-lost child, who returns with the assertiveness and brimming self-confidence of a grown youth?

The encounters characteristic of this “moment” have been occurring with increasing frequency in the past few years, with the arrival in China, for short or long stays, of foreigners committed to varying degrees to the study, practice, and promotion of Daoism. Among these, it is *qigong* tours that have the greatest visibility and impact; these tours are taken by groups of thirty to forty Westerners and are organized by associations and enterprises active in the small but growing “Daoist” niche in the market for Oriental spiritual practices and experiences. In this paper, we will look at the encounter between groups organized by one such association—the Healing Tao center led by Michael Winn, the foremost disciple of Mantak Chia 謝明德 in the United States²—and the Quanzhen Daoist monks in the monastic communities and cave retreats at Huashan (Mount Hua), Shaanxi Province. The tours are billed as “Dream Trips” by the Healing Tao center, and I call the participants “Dream Trippers.” What I will discuss here is how Chinese Quanzhen Daoists react to these groups; what impact, if any, these encounters have on their own trajectories and religious careers as individuals; and how, if at all, the Quanzhen order responds as an institution to this phenomenon.

After presenting the anthropological methodology employed in the research presented here, the chapter turns to an examination of the attitudes of both parties at the onset of the encounter, followed by a brief narrative of the groups’ ascension of Huashan and their activities along the way. We then consider several layers of ethnographic background to our case: the general condition of Quanzhen Daoism in contemporary China as described by my informants; the inner dynamics and tensions of the monastic community at Huashan; and the reactions of my three

² Komjathy, “Qigong in America”; Siegler, “Chinese Traditions.”

³ Eberhard and Morrison, *Hua Shan*; Deng Ming-Dao, *The Wandering Taoist*.

principal Daoist informants to the Dream Trippers. The latter's view of Daoist cultivation (*xiulian* 修練), as the standard against which they measure their fellow monks, *qigong* practitioners in general, and Western ones in particular, would simply have comforted the Chinese Daoists in their sense of spiritual superiority over the Americans, if it were not for the “communicative epiphanies” that, at a few moments in their encounters, drew members of both groups into a deeper engagement with each other.

Methodology

The research methods employed for this project were primarily interviews and participant observation. Besides observation at the scene of contact—to which I had been invited by Winn in the capacity of interpreter and guest scholar for his groups—further research was conducted on both sides of the equation: I followed two Dream Trips (in 2004 and 2006) during their stays at Huashan, which lasted between three days and one week, during which I interviewed the Chinese monks while Elijah Siegler, my coresearcher, focused on the Westerners, and one or both of us accompanied the groups on other segments of their tours (notably to Chengdu, Qingchengshan, and Louguantai), during which group members were interviewed (a total of approximately forty-five interviews were conducted), questionnaires were distributed, and follow-up interviews were conducted by Siegler after their return home. Further investigations were also conducted by Siegler on the broader network and culture of the Healing Tao, notably Mantak Chia's Tao Garden resort in Chiang Mai, Thailand, and Michael Winn's Healing Tao University in Asheville, North Carolina. On the Chinese side, I returned to Huashan alone three times, staying each time for a week at the monks' quarters at Yuquanyuan 玉泉院 at the base of Huashan in August 2004, and at Beidouping in August 2007 and 2008. In addition, I conducted extensive interviews every summer between 2005 and 2010 with one of the Huashan monks, Master Wen, who was a leader of the Huashan Daoist Association (HDA) and Winn's main contact at Huashan, but who had returned to secular life to live as an urban hermit starting in 2005.

What we aimed for is not a broad survey of the globalization of Daoism, but rather a focused anthropological study of one encounter in the process. The result is necessarily limited, and we cannot yet firmly assert that the conclusions reached here can be generalized: we have focused on only one of several Western organizations operating Daoist tours in China, and on only one Daoist site in China. However, the Mantak Chia—Michael Winn network is one of the most well rooted, active, and influential within Western Daoist circles, and Huashan, thanks to the works of Hedda Morrison and Deng Ming-Dao,³ occupies an important place in Western Daoist lore and is therefore an indispensable stop on any Daoist tour to China. Altogether, according to the monks at Huashan, the total number of Western Daoist groups they had received (excluding groups that did not arrange to interact with the local Daoists) was not higher than a dozen; therefore, the type of encounter studied here is far from a mass phenomenon. Further, although we were able to interview almost all of the Western tour members, only a handful of local Daoists had significant interactions with the foreigners. Quanzhen Daoist culture reinforces a strong disposition to discretion and reserve toward strangers: it is not easy to enter into frank and in-depth conversations with monks. After repeated visits and interviews over a period of six years, however, I was able to build enough trust and familiarity with the three main Quanzhen actors in the encounters described here—masters “Wen”, “Hao,” and “Hu”⁴—to gain significant insights into the conditions and inner dynamics of the Daoist community at Huashan, the deeper motivations and concerns of individual Daoists, and their own spiritual and social trajectories during the period of interaction with the Westerners. Much of the information presented here is thus largely based on the accounts of only three individuals. How representative are they of Quanzhen monks in general? It is difficult to say—by their own accounts, not very. During the six years I have known them, they have become increasingly marginal to the Quanzhen mainstream: a distance that is either voluntary or imposed by the Daoist community, and in

³ Eberhard and Morrison, *Hua Shan*; Deng Ming-Dao, *The Wandering Taoist*.

⁴ Names of Daoist monks and Dream Trippers referred to in this chapter are pseudonyms.

which their ties with Westerners are a contributing factor. The marginality of these Daoists is thus significant, because it has been exacerbated by the global encounter that interests us here, and because it has given them a critical distance toward their own tradition and community. It is persons in such a position who are typically the ideal “informants” to the ethnographer.

Although it is the international and cross-cultural—Chinese and American—contrast that is highlighted here, this dimension can be seen as overlaying another distinction, between monastics and lay self-cultivators, who have maintained complex relations in the history of Daoism. As shown by Goossaert in his study of late Qing and Republican-era Peking Daoists,⁵ although Quanzhen Daoists have long been a numerically negligible group among the many providers of spiritual and religious services, they have enjoyed immense prestige and legitimacy that other groups, such as redemptive societies and spirit-writing and lay cultivation groups, have always tried to draw on, while at the same time rejecting Quanzhen clericalism and institutional forms. An ambiguous relationship was maintained between the elite Quanzhen and the dynamic, popular lay groups—a pattern that continues today, between monastics and Chinese *qigong* groups, for example, and which, to a great extent, is merely carried over in the relations between the Quanzhen order and the American practitioners. From this perspective, the encounters described here are nothing new.

Attitudes and Motivations

During the “Dream Trips,” as they are marketed by Winn, group members pay between US\$3000 and US\$5000 for fifteen- to twenty-one-day day tours of China, with stops in Beijing, Huashan, Louguantai, Chengdu, Qingchengshan, and Tibet or Yunnan, for a travel experience designed to include shopping, sightseeing, and spiritual cultivation by practicing *qigong* in airports, temples, and caves. Participants range from deeply committed *neidan* (inner alchemy) practitioners and instructors in other, related traditions such as *fengshui*, martial arts, or *taijiquan*, to seekers whose

⁵ Goossaert, *Taoists of Peking*.

first exposure to Daoism is the DVD of Winn's Wuji *qigong* method, included in the tour package and sent to participants a few weeks in advance of the trip. The backgrounds and goals of the individual participants are analyzed in detail elsewhere;⁶ in this section, I focus on some of the attitudes of the tour organizers, which, beyond commercial benefit, shed light on some of the underlying motivations for offering the trips and which are shared to varying degrees by other group members.

The highlights of these groups' itineraries are visits to Daoist sacred mountains and interactions with Quanzhen masters who impart teachings to them—a form of pilgrimage, then, in which the travelers connect themselves with the places of origin and the living embodiments of the Daoist tradition.⁷ On the surface, these tours are welcomed by the monastic leaders of Huashan, who see them as part of the process of spreading Daoism around the world, something that will occur “without effort,” in the words of one, “simply because it will attract people,” leading, in the view of another monk, to the “flourishing of Daoism in the whole world in forty to fifty years.” Monks who hosted the tours also saw benefits for Daoism in China: “it will stimulate Chinese Daoists to study harder, give them confidence, and awaken them to the value of what they do”; in addition, “it can stimulate the interest of Chinese people who have no interest in Daoism: when they see foreigners doing it, it awakens their own interest.”

For Dream Trip organizers, the latter aspect was not a mere beneficial side effect of the tours, but a conscious objective. Tour participants were given the role of “ambassadors of the Tao,” were uninterested in the religious expression of Daoism as it exists in Quanzhen monasticism, and saw themselves as practitioners of a “true” way they consider was lost in Communist China. This is a form of silent missionizing, then, in which the travelers, through their *qi*, inject a lost authenticity into the sites they pass through and, through their public practice of *qigong*, deliberately aim to shock Chinese observers into reconsidering their own spiritual tradition:

⁶ Siegler, “Fluid yet Grounded in the Tao.”

⁷ Naquin and Yü, *Pilgrims and Sacred Sites*; Verellen, “Cultes des sites.”

“when forty foreigners come to cultivate at Qingkeping 青稞坪,” says Winn, “more than doubling the population of Huashan Valley, it shakes [the Chinese Daoists] and awakens them to the value of what they are doing.”

The posture of the American groups, then, is not one of mere sightseeing, nor of coming from afar to seek wisdom from true masters. The tours are not about China or about Chinese Daoism, but about connecting with an energy that is ignored by the Chinese and even most Daoists: “That’s the whole point: the Dao is universal. The Chinese people walking on these mountains may or may not be connected to it, but that’s not my concern,” says Winn. What the groups are seeking is not the living Daoists of today, but the energies opened up by the cultivators of past eras: “That’s why we come to China. The Daoists have been in communication with these nonhuman energies for thousands of years. The channel of communication has been opened by them. These energies exist elsewhere, but they have not been communicated with. Here, they are used to being communicated with over such a long time. We tread along a path that has already been treaded.” Along this path, the Americans “tame” the energies and open a channel of circulation with them: “at first, a few years ago, the energies were not used to being communicated with [owing to so few Chinese cultivators in recent times and to the unprecedented arrival of foreigners], so the experiences were hard to deal with. Now, they are more used to it; there have been more foreign meditators here; the powers have become more manageable.”

The Americans go to communicate with the mountain’s energies, but not to learn from Quanzhen approaches to them. Far from it, they claim to possess the superior approach of Western science. Returning to Winn:

The reason for the superiority of the West is that science opened up all the secrets and shared information, leading to the progress of science. In China, the culture of secret is what holds them back. Inner Alchemy will flourish and advance in the West because it is not smothered by the weight of history; it has nothing to do with Western culture. So in

the West, the secrets will be opened, they will be shared, and they will stimulate the development of Inner Alchemy in China. It is just like the compass, gunpowder, and paper. It was not the Chinese who fully developed their applications, but the West.

Winn thus approached the mountain as a technical expert on *qigong*, pleased to develop friendship *as an equal* with the Huashan Daoists. The talks and transmission of meditation techniques by Daoists at Huashan, which were included in the tour itinerary, were seen by him as more of an “exchange of views” between expert colleagues than as a transmission between master and student, as the Daoists expected. He thus engaged in a technical criticism of the Shining Heart (*guangming xin* 光明心) meditation taught by the Daoists, saying that “Westerners are not sufficiently grounded, so they should start with the *dantian* 丹田, not with the heart. Adjustments need to be made to fit the West. The Shining Heart method is suitable for people living in the mountains in isolation, where there are few complex methods and life is celibate. In modern, urban society, it is necessary to be better grounded, so that cultivation should begin at the lower *dantian*.” In the same vein, he commented that one of the Chinese Daoists, who had left a deep impression on many of the American group members, owed his accomplishment to his residing on the mountain and absorbing its *qi*, and that he would not be able to achieve the same level in a big city. And, from the standpoint of a Westerner with no hang-ups about sex, and whose *qigong* method, in contrast to Quanzhen precepts, *begins with* sexual cultivation, he commented on the sexual difficulties of celibate monks.

Besides the “pilgrimage” and commercial dimension of the tours, then, there are an underlying agenda and attitudes that set the stage for misunderstandings and tension between the American spiritual tourists and their monastic hosts.

Such, in any case, was the assumption Siegler and I held at the beginning of this study. Considering the American pretensions to be preposterous, we assumed that they would be rejected out of hand by the Quanzhen monks, and that any communication between the two groups could be based only on misunderstanding. And while the initial encounters confirmed our

assumption—the condescension of the Quanzhen Daoists toward the Dream Trippers was such that, when I played the role of interpreter, I had to avoid translating some of their comments—over time, it became apparent that the Quanzhen monks were coming closer to the Westerners’ point of view, while taking a more critical stance toward their own tradition and becoming increasingly marginalized within the monastic community.

Indeed, relations with the Americans exacerbated preexisting tensions among leading members of the Huashan Daoist community. Although it is still too early to assess what impact these encounters will have on the broader Quanzhen culture in the long term, it is clear that, besides having an interest in short-term economic gain and prestige, monastic institutions as a whole remain indifferent to the increasing exchanges with Western Daoists. They have merely marginalized those who, as a result of the cross-cultural contact, found themselves at a greater distance from the Quanzhen mainstream.

Narrative of the Trip

Let us now follow our group on its Dream Trip to Huashan.⁸ After a two-hour drive from Xi’an, across the dusty yellow plains of central Shaanxi, the tour bus comes within sight of a chain of mountains to the south, thrusting upward out of the earth, a forbidding wall separating North and South China. The crown of these summits is Huashan, its towering cliffs propping up, like a stem, a ring of peaks shooting out of a central bulb, akin to the petals of a flower, thus the name Huashan, or “Flower Mountain.”

At the foot of the mountain lies the filthy town of Huayin, a single street of dingy hotels, variety stores, and noodle shops leading to the Yuquanyuan (Jade Springs Monastery) at the foot of the mountain. Our group enters the outer court of the monastery, an elegant traditional garden where the wooden pavilions, steles, and stones carrying poetic inscriptions by famous visitors

⁸ The narrative presented here is a composite of two trips that occurred in July 2004 and May 2006. The actual order of the itinerary on the mountain was slightly different each time.

offer pleasant perspectives and photo opportunities. They peek into the shrines, take their snapshots, and continue into the inner court.

The Yuquanyuan is small and graceful, more like the modest *sibeyuan* 四合院 courtyard of an old gentry home than the sprawling palace of a god. Even standing, the forty group members almost fill up the entire inner court. Each building of the quadrangle exemplifies the forces that conjoin in the contemporary social configuration of Quanzhen Daoism: on the southern side, the locus of religious worship: the shrine to the famed tenth-century ascetic Chen Tuan 陳搏, his back to the mountain; on the northern side, the locus of commercial transactions: the entrance hall containing the souvenir shop, opening up to the market town of Huayin below; in between, the two buildings lateral to the central shrine to Chen are the spaces for state-sponsored management. On one side, the administrative office, containing two wooden desks, chairs, and a telephone. A board shows the work assignments of the monks to the different temples on the mountain. On the wall, a picture of the China Daoist Association with Chinese Communist Party Politburo leader Li Ruihuan 李瑞环, and various certificates on the wall, such as the permit as a designated place for religious activity (*zongjiao huodong changsuo* 宗教活動場所), the legal incorporation, and so on. This is the “socialist work unit” room of the Huashan Daoist Association. Opposite the courtyard, the association’s reception room is the place where association leaders formally receive guests to the temple for a cup of tea.

Daoist Master Wen, a Daoist monk in his early thirties—but already office director (*bangongshi zhuren* 辦公室主任) of the Huashan Daoist Association, in charge of the day-to-day management of the ninety monks and the dozen temples that dot the mountain—greet the group. While the travelers explore the temple shrines, he meets with group leader Michael Winn in the reception room, then leads the whole group to the temple’s meeting room, in a building to the back. All take a seat around the long oval table, a cup of tea for each participant. Wen, standing at the head of the table, under a portrait of Wang Changyue 王常月, founder of the Longmen lineage, gives

a brief lecture on the history of Huashan, listing the names of the cultivators who have stayed at the mountain, emphasizing the lineage of Huashan masters.

In the evening, the group witnesses a Dipper Ritual. After a spending the night in a hotel, the group sets off the next morning for the peaks of Huashan, taking the cable car on the eastern flank of the mountain, which follows the path taken by a Red Army detachment to capture the mountain from the last holdouts of the Kuomintang army in Shaanxi in 1949, immortalized by a 1950s revolutionary film, *The Conquest of Huashan* (*Zhiqu Huashan* 智取華山), on sale in VCD format at all the shops and stalls on the mountain. Other for-sale print and video materials highlight the scenic beauty of Huashan but hardly mention the Daoist history and presence (a fact we will return to later, in the discussion of contemporary Daoism at Huashan).

As the group hikes from the North Peak, along the mountain crest and around the four-peaked flower, they pass by temples dedicated to Zhenwu, the Queen Mother of the West, the Dragon God, the Jade Maiden, the Jade Emperor, and the Dipper Mother. The group settles for three days at the Zhenyuegong 鎮岳宮, a temple nestled under a cliff near the Western Peak, a dilapidated wooden and concrete building turned into a tourist guesthouse. (At my first visit to the mountain, blaring hip-hop music continually played by the managers of this guesthouse was most effective in dispelling any sense of silence and loneliness.) The temple/guesthouse houses a shrine to Xiyue dadi 西岳大帝, and, in the cliff, a cave shrine dedicated to the God of Medicine. For the whole first day, the group members disperse around the peaks. Some sit in meditation under a monument on the windy summit of the Western Peak, others boast of practicing *qigong* in the nude on a deserted promontory, while a few adventurous souls try the perilous wooden platform to reach the most inaccessible caves.

At each of these vistas, they peer down the spectacular cliffs and across toward the other mounts and crags, feeling the *yang* energy surging up from the entrails of the earth, their gaze following the bulges, the folds, and the sheer vertical smoothness of the white rock faces that

shoot upward from distant gullies below and poke at the firmament above. Sitting on ledges, some of them in the lotus position, over an abyssal drop of over 1,000 meters, they watch the sunset on the western horizon as it splashes its orange, red, and dark violet light over the mountainscape.

They take turns taking digital snapshots of one another beside the glowing solar disk. Back at the temple, as they review their pictures, one young American in his early twenties spots a bright-white winged creature, which looks strangely like an angel, in the foreground of one of his photos. And in another shot is a translucent white globe, also in the foreground. Shocked and amazed, he excitedly shows the picture to his fellow travelers, causing quite a stir. “Now I really believe this stuff,” he exclaims and vows to fully soak in the rest of the trip, which, he admits, he had not fully enjoyed until then. “Those are the Immortals [*xianren* 仙人] of Huashan,” said Master Hu. “I see them all the time.”

The next morning, the group congregates in the shrine to Xiyue dadi to receive a teaching from Master Hu: a meditation technique, the Shining Heart: *After the opening posture, visualize lights at the level of the Shanzhong acupoint, at the center of the chest: first yellow, at the center, then green (at the left), then purple (at the back), then white (at the right), then red (at the front). Let all the lights converge into the center, illuminate the whole body, all the organs, and even into all the bones. Then let a lotus flower appear, with white petals, and a child in the center. Send off the child and flower, and return to the converging lights. Repeat forty-nine times for one cycle; each cycle can be repeated any odd number of times (one, three, five...) during the day.*

Several, but not all, of the group participants enter into meditative posture during the explanation and follow the instructions. During the question-and-answer session, a large, middle-aged, blonde American woman mentions that she felt like crying and had heart palpitations. “Very good,” responds Hu, “the message is penetrating your heart.”

In the middle of the question-and-answer session, Hu’s mobile phone rings, he steps outside, and never comes back. It is the Huashan Daoist Association, ordering him to stop dealing with this foreign group, calling him down for a police interrogation.

The reasons are not clear and nobody comes up the mountain to harass the foreign travelers, who continue hiking around the mountaintop and practicing *qigong* on stones, in forests, and on viewing platforms, ethereally oblivious to the machinations of the forces of order down below.

A small group of about eight, among the more intense meditators and adventurous travelers, set out for the long hike down the western flank of Huashan, two hours down steps sometimes carved into vertical cliffs, to Qingkeping at the head of Huashan Valley, and then back up the eastern slope of Lion's Ridge, the neighboring mountain, along a muddy path through woods leading to Beidouping 北斗坪, the Northern Dipper Platform, which commands a stunning view of the entire length and height of Huashan. This is where all pilgrims and cultivators used to come before the trail up Huashan itself was carved in the Yuan dynasty; now, all that remains are a few vine-covered stone pillars and crumbling archways half-concealed in the thick foliage, a romantic shadow of the spiritual splendors of times past. Officially closed to visitors, the spot is home to a single Daoist hermit, Master Hao, who tends a small vegetable garden and oversees a complex of meditation caves carved into the rock face.

Master Hao, with his wispy beard, twinkling eyes and flowing Daoist robe, darts around the rocks and ledges like a mountain goat. Easily provoked into rolling laughter, he is visibly happy at the arrival of visitors from so far away. He shows the caves to the meditators, who unroll their sleeping bags in the Cave of Purple Subtlety (Ziweidong 紫微洞), the Cave of the Three Origins (Sanyuandong 三元洞), the Cave of the Dipper Mother (Doududong 斗母洞), and others. Some of them make a vow of silence and fasting for three days of intensive meditation, rarely coming out of their caves, while others are there simply for a new experience. At meal times, Master Hao eagerly distributes stale steamed buns and rice porridge with slices of potato, and he asks the participants, with curiosity and humor, about their Sufism, their shamanism, their martial arts, and their sexual liberation and waxes lyrical about their Statue of Liberty, the Goddess of Freedom (Ziyou nüshen 自由女神).

After two nights of caving, a group of porters arrives to pick up the Americans' bags, and the group sets off from Beidouping, back down the mountain path, and then, from Qingkeping, follows the old route down Huashan Valley, alongside a gurgling, stony brook. As they proceed and pass the temples along the way, the steep slope of the path becomes gentler, the stream widens, until, after a few hours, they reach the mouth of the valley, behind Yuquanyuan.

While these Americans head directly to the hotel to join the rest of the group (those who had stayed atop Huashan and had not joined the cavers), I am asked to find Master Hu in the temple and invite him to a thank-you banquet for lunch. The purpose of the banquet is also to provide the temple with a large donation—around 8000 yuan—in exchange for the hospitality and arrangements made. But I find Master Hu nervous and unwilling to talk with me the way we had during many long hours together when I had visited the temple alone. This time, he leads me into the Daoist Association office and tells me the story of his police interrogation: seven officers had interrogated him for hours, constantly asking the same questions about what he had been doing with those foreigners. Their story: on the group's entering China, an immigration official had informed the State Security Ministry, which had assigned a spy to follow the group for the entire trip. Since at all the other sites the group had only gone sightseeing, they had not interfered, but here, since they had been in contact with the Daoists, the police intervened. The officers threatened Master Hu and told him to never again interact with foreign groups.

“I will never do this again,” said Master Hu, visibly traumatized by the experience.

“Up on the mountain, the energy is good. But down here, the *dao qi* 道氣 is very bad.”

Contemporary Quanzhen Daoism at Huashan⁹

What was the true cause of the police incident? Besides Hu himself, no other Daoist I interviewed, at Huashan or elsewhere, believed the police's story about a spy following Winn's

⁹ On contemporary Quanzhen monasticism, see Herrou, *La vie entre soi*.

group. Everyone agreed that the incident was related to internal politics at Huashan, in which contact with foreigners was the pretext, Winn's group was the instrument, and Master Hu the unwitting victim. To better understand the inner relations and tensions that led to this incident and shaped the social and spiritual trajectories of our informants as they engaged with the Americans, this section will describe the state of Quanzhen Daoism as it is observed in the monastic community at Huashan.

One morning during my stay at the Yuquanyuan, I went to Master Wen's personal quarters, an office and bedroom, in the monks' dormitory. On his desk were calligraphy implements and a traditional tea service. Next to the color TV, sitting on the traditional-style, rather gaudy Chinese ornamented wood chairs and sofas, Wen was playing go (*weiqi* 圍棋) with another Daoist. They were leisurely oblivious to anything else.

After I sat through the *weiqi* game, we had lunch in the office, eating simple dishes carried over from the dining hall: potatoes, cabbage, soup, and tofu. Later, stepping outside, as I walked around the park, most of the Daoists on duty in different shrines were playing the flute; one was playing the *guqin* 古琴. And heading to the yard outside the dormitory for *guan* 掛單 monks (traveling monks from other temples who are admitted to stay at the temple for a short duration), in which I was staying, some Daoists played a wind instrument that looks like a conch: a *xun* 埙; an older Daoist was teaching a younger one. Others were playing Chinese chess. This is a kind of cultivation, told me a *daoshi*, regulating *qi* and emotions through various musical instruments and games. After dinner, I went back to the dorm. The Daoists were eager to watch a historical soap opera on TV—a program that features heroes in flowing robes and long hair tied into a bun, just as they dressed themselves. These heroes were often Daoist magicians and martial arts virtuosos, which many of the monks aspired to become. Indeed, several told me that it was through reading knight-errant novels (notably by Jin Yong 金庸) and watching kung fu films as teenagers that they had become motivated to enter the Quanzhen order. Now, at Yuquanyuan, they tried to

embody their adolescent fantasies, blurring the distinction between the “period costume” soap operas (*guzhuang pian* 古裝片) they watched and their own lives in the monastery.

Life at Yuquanyuan is leisurely, a re-creation of an imperial-era aristocratic, lettered, and effete lifestyle—*taijiquan*, *weiqi*, *guzhen*, poetry, calligraphy, idleness...one does not get the impression of strong discipline; rather, one of boys at play. But this is refined play: unlike boys in the outside world, in their public lives these do not play cards, smoke, drink, see girls, or play football. No, they comb their long hair, read, watch soap operas, play chess, and blow the flute.

There were few nuns at Yuquanyuan, and most of the fifty or so monks were of a young age, in their twenties and thirties. The leaders of the monastery were in their mid thirties, and the handful of senior monks were hardly to be seen. Almost all of the monks had entered the monastic order in the past decade or two—members of the post-Mao generation and products of reform-era religious institutions.

Huashan combines the hereditary *zisun* and public *conglin* forms of Quanzhen temples (*ban zisun ban conglin miao* 半子孫半叢林廟), as well as the *danwei* 單位 form of Chinese socialist social organization:¹⁰ the monastery is controlled by a hereditary succession of masters affiliated to the Huashan lineage of the Quanzhen order, who may accept newly ordained monks as disciples; at the same time, a large proportion of the residents are “outsider” *guan dan* monks, who entered the order in other hereditary temples and cannot take disciples at Huashan. In the contemporary *danwei* system, this dual organization is reflected through the different political rights of the two groups of monks: all monks have voting rights at the elections to the Huashan Daoist Association but only Huashan monks can be elected.

Those monks who enter the monastic order (*chujia* 出家) at Huashan follow the Quanzhen initiation procedure. When they first make the request to enter the order, the majority are encouraged to go home and give up. “This is different from Buddhism, which encourages people

¹⁰ See Palmer, “China’s Religious *Danwei*.”

to *chujia*. Daoism doesn't encourage people to *chujia*." Applicants are accepted on the basis of their strong faith in Daoism, their level of education, and their good morality. They should be healthy; "from their eyes, we can see that their minds are not mentally ill." Applicants also need to produce a police certificate, showing no criminal record, and letters of recommendation from their neighborhood committee (*jumin weiyuanhui* 居民委員會). The most important is the police certificate. With it, one can be dispensed of producing the other certificates.

The admitted novice is then placed on two years' probation, during which he cannot formally choose a master. The Daoist Association will evaluate the novice on the basis of his overall conduct, his adapting to the milieu, and his overall qualities. Almost all are accepted at this stage, as long as they have good behavior and get along well with the others.

After the two-year probationary period, the newly accepted *daoshi* can find a master and be given a Daoist name and a position in the genealogy of his religious lineage. There is no requirement to master specific knowledge or skills. "It's not like Zhengyi, which places a greater emphasis on ritual and techniques: Zhengyi Daoists *must* recite scripture and conduct rituals, otherwise there's no reason for their existence. But Quanzhen is based in monasteries; there are many different things one can do. If one can't recite scriptures or master ritual, one can do other things."

According to one of the monastery leaders, many monks are actually not really interested in Daoism; they become Daoists for a variety of reasons: they want to avoid family problems, they cannot do a job in society, they just want to pass their days idly. These monks are called "temple rascals" (*miaogunzi* 廟棍子). But they are not punished or evicted. They are given tasks that they can do; as long as they do their job, they are accepted. "There are also higher-level temple rascals (*gaoji miaogunzi* 高級廟棍子), who are good at *guanxi* networking and politics, and end up as directors of the Daoist Association."

As mentioned previously, the majority of the monks are of a younger generation—a condition that prevails in most religious communities in China, owing to the generation gap caused by the Mao-era restrictions and the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976), when almost all the monks were forced to return to lay life. When religious life was normalized in the early 1980s, most of the Huashan Daoists were old and nearly senile, having entered the order at least forty years earlier. At the same time, a new cohort of young monks entered the monastery, but they were reluctant to become disciples of the senior masters. Besides the large age differential between the two generations, making communication difficult, the younger monks doubted the religious qualifications of their seniors: during the Republican period, Huashan had been located on the front line of both the anti-Japanese war and the Chinese civil war (the kidnapping of Chiang Kai-shek 蔣介石 by Zhang Xueliang 張學良 in the Xi'an incident occurred in a resort a short distance from Huashan) and had been crawling with warlord and KMT army soldiers and officers.¹¹ Many of these were rumored to have become Daoist monks in the dying days of the KMT regime, in an attempt to erase their past and to find religious refuge from the new political order. Since many of the younger monks had refused to take these senior Daoists as their masters, the newly established Huashan Daoist Association had to force them to take masters. Several then chose to become disciples of dead Daoists, holding *baishi* 拜師 rites at their graves and thus inscribing themselves into the genealogy of the Huashan lineage.

There is thus an almost complete rupture in the transmission of Daoism between the pre-1949 generation of masters and the new, post-Mao generation of monks. Some continue to describe their spiritual trajectories in terms of becoming disciples to initiatory masters (*shifu* 師父), for those of the Huashan lineage, or supplementary masters (*xiansheng* 先生) for the *guan* monks, as well as seeking other types of masters such as *yinshi* 引師 (inducting masters), *enshi* 恩師 (role-model masters), and *dushi* 度師 (accomplished masters), but how much such a system continues

¹¹ Palmer, “Dao and Nation.”

to operate beyond mere formality remains unclear. For example, one *daoshi*, having overheard his fellow explaining these categorizations to me, sneered to me: “so full of bookish knowledge, and they don’t know anything about the reality under their noses.”

Overlaid onto the traditional modalities of transmission is the modern, state-sponsored, classroom-based Daoist training system.¹² During the winter months, when most monks posted in the mountain temples descend to Yuquanyuan, training classes in Daoist culture are held for all the monks, at which knowledgeable Daoists, scholars, and officials give lectures to the collective body of monks. One of the monastic leaders emphasized to me that he teaches nothing of substance at these lectures and nothing about true cultivation. But these courses are the foundation for a selective training system in which, through applications and recommendations, monks can apply to complete a two-year primary-level training, a two-year advanced course at Xi’an, and finally, after passing an entrance examination, the three-year program of the Daoist Academy in Beijing, which enrolls fifty students nationwide per intake. According to one graduate of this program, who was then residing at Huashan—and who had nothing but scorn for academic scholarship on Daoism, on which much of the academy’s program is based—the entire course of study was a waste of time and bore no relation to Daoist cultivation. The main result of the courses was to train Daoist officials, monks who could occupy administrative positions in Daoist associations. Indeed, several of the leading Daoists at Huashan were graduates of the Beijing Academy. Equipped with such modern-style training, they could manage temples according to bureaucratic norms and were socialized into the *danwei* culture of officialdom, which they share with their counterparts in units such as the local government, the Religious Affairs Bureau, and the tourism administration.

Temple leadership is thus nominally attributed according to genealogical succession within the Huashan lineage, but in reality according to the methods of the United Front,¹³ in which

¹² Yang, “Revolution of Temporality.”

¹³ The United Front is an agency of the Communist Party Central Committee that is charged with

members of the religious community who are seen as possessing both religious legitimacy and impeccable political credentials are co-opted into leadership positions. The monastic community—consisting of the sixty or so monks residing at Yuquanyuan and the mountain temples—is administered by the seven-member Huashan Temple Administration Committee, whose membership is identical to the Huashan Daoist Association. These bodies are elected at irregular intervals every four years or so. When the time comes to hold elections to renew the membership, agents representing the United Front and the Religious Affairs Bureau travel to Huashan to establish an election work group (*huanjie gongzuozu* 換屆工作組) made up of Huashan monks. Through private discussions with members of this group, a consensus emerges on the suitable candidates, and the government representatives then make their choices known during a meeting of the group. On election day, the group nominates a candidate for each position and asks for those who agree to clap their hands. The election is thus concluded.

As mentioned earlier, only Daoists of the local Huashan lineage (as opposed to *guadan* monks) can be elected to the Daoist Association or appointed to administrative positions. However, according to one account, breaking with this tradition, the newly appointed office director, after Master Wen's departure in 2006, was a *guadan* “outsider” of the Longmen lineage, specifically installed by the government to put a check on the “clannish” power of the local monks. A further check to local power is provided by the Daoist Association's general secretary, since 1997 a political appointee assigned to this post jointly by the religious affairs bureau, the CCP United Front department, the Civil Affairs Administration, and the Tourism Bureau. A CCP member, the secretary is a young cadre whose room/office looks like any Chinese *danwei* dormitory room, with a small sofa, a computer, and a hard bed. His job is to “assist” in the management of the temple, to give political direction, and to transmit policies from the government.

co-opting non-Communist elites, notably the leaders of overseas Chinese, ethnic minorities, religious communities, chambers of commerce, and non-Communist political parties.

Being a *danwei* does not guarantee the HDA's good relations with its other state-controlled counterparts. Relations with the Huashan Tourism Bureau are notoriously bad. In contrast with other famous Daoist sites such as Qingchengshan or Louguantai, in which "Daoist culture" is strongly promoted by the local government and tourist authorities to draw more visitors, and temples are built and restored for purely commercial reasons, the development and promotion of Huashan as a major tourist attraction makes almost no reference to its Daoist heritage. Informants have variously attributed this situation to the conservatism and lack of vision of the Tourism Bureau or to the highly charged political history of Huashan Daoism as having strong links to the KMT prior to Liberation. Whatever the reason, the consequences are evident in the lamentable state of the temples on the Huashan peaks: the Jintiangong 金天宮, the main temple dedicated to the God of Huashan, which commands the entire mountain from a flat meadow just ahead of the Southern Peak, destroyed in 1967, remains entirely in ruins, while the Zhenyuegong, dedicated to Xiyue dadi and situated below the Western Peak, has been occupied by a guesthouse, even though the main shrines remain. The pitiful remnants of these two temples are nonetheless inscribed as National Key Daoist Temples, an official list of the two dozen most important Daoist monasteries in China.

There have been many conflicts between the Huashan Daoists and the Tourism Bureau, and even some fights between monks and bureau staff. Around 1999, over thirty Daoist monks went up Huashan to reclaim the Zhenyuegong from the Tourism Bureau, which responded by sending up the police. It was 24 April, just a few days before May Day weekend. The monks planned to occupy the temple over the holiday, so that many tourists, including foreigners, could witness the standoff, forcing the government to give in to their demands. But the government offered the chairman (*huizhang* 會長) of the Huashan Daoist Association several positions in the Peoples' Congress, the Political Consultative Committee, and the like, and he capitulated. According to one informant, when the Daoists walked down, they did not utter a word, and, upon returning to Yuquanyuan, when the chairman spoke to them they all turned their heads and refused to look at

him. After that, they signed a petition to have him removed. This monk-official was already so unpopular that, fearing resistance from the other monks, the election to renew his term had been postponed for three years. After this incident, however, the government assigned him to his new political appointments, he left Huashan, and a new chairman was elected a year later.

Relations between the HDA and the local police are complex. According to one account, at one period an informal cooperation had existed between the Daoists and the police, by which they split revenues from temple donations and ticket sales. Several informants speculated that the police incident with Winn's group was motivated by the Public Security Bureau's desire for (or anger at not receiving) a "cut" of Winn's 8000-yuan donation to the temple.

Another explanation given was that the chairman had intentionally called the police to embarrass Master Hu, given the poor relations between them, a combination of personality clash and power struggle between the "local" Huashan lineage and Hu as an "outsider" rumored to have been appointed as office director to restrict the locals' influence.¹⁴

As described by one *daoshi*, "there are many complicated struggles and relationships at Huashan, just like in any *danwei*. They struggle over titles (*guan* 官) and personnel matters (*ren shi* 人事). But the relationships are so complex that there is a balance, and nobody will seriously try to hurt another." More than direct political interference in the daily life of Huashan, it is the petty politics of the *danwei* culture that permeate social relations in the monastic community. The Daoist Association and the temple committee only manage work assignments and material matters; there is virtually no spiritual direction. Within *danwei* assignments, monks are free to live as they wish, and monastic discipline is notoriously lax. While the diet is vegetarian at the Yuquanyuan dining hall, monks relish the opportunity to entertain guests with meat and liquor at

¹⁴ These hypotheses are mere speculation and gossip by various Daoists, and I have not been able to verify which, if any, is true. But, since they reveal the lines of division and tension, as well what monks consider to be the norm of actual (as opposed to prescribed) behavior of their fellows within the monastic community, they are significant data nonetheless.

local restaurants. According to more than one report, it is common for monks to visit their wives, mistresses, or prostitutes outside the temple precincts.

My main informants, some of whom had held important leadership positions in the temple and were among the main beneficiaries of this system, were unanimous in their descriptions of the poor spiritual atmosphere of Yuquanyuan: “Many monks don’t wear their Daoist robes,” said one, “they are sloppy most of the time, and don’t meditate or cultivate. But as soon as disciples or foreign visitors come, they quickly put on their best robes, and sit in the lotus position. They start talking about Daoist teachings and leave the light on till late at night to give the impression of late-night cultivation.” “There are so many ‘temple rascals’ that if you talk about cultivation they will laugh at you and tell you to be realistic. So I never let people in the monastery know that I cultivate. Because they will test you and try to put you down. And if they recognize your accomplishment, they will seek you out, take you as a model and seek teachings from you, and become a burden on you. So I avoid such topics. If they bring it up, I change the subject.”

For Master Wen—who, in his public appearances with Winn’s group, appeared the incarnation of orthodox monasticism, but was actually already planning to leave the Quanzhen order, the world of Daoist cultivation (*Daojiao xiulian jie* 道教修煉界) was quite distinct from that of Daoist religion (*Daojiao zongjiao jie* 道教宗教界)—the two of which, together with Daoist academics (*Daojiao xueshu jie* 道教學術界), form three overlapping but distinct circles. He laughed at the fact that he and his fellows were being sought out by Western groups because they were “Daoist masters” wearing traditional robes at a famous mountain:

Some people feel reassured when they see someone who seems to live a detached life transcending desire, even though they aren’t willing to do it themselves. Just knowing that such people exist, wearing special costumes, gives them a sense of comfort and tranquility: so they will even demand that such people go about wearing their costumes.... People think true cultivation is in a mountain or a cave. Actually, it is not:

it's in the city. The true cultivator is not someone wearing a costume in a sacred spot, but could be someone sitting right next to you in a restaurant, looking like a common person. That's the true meaning of hidden cultivation (*yin xing* 隱行). Actually, when people see a Daoist *daoshi* practicing *taijiquan* with a layman, most people think the layman is learning from the Daoist, but it's quite probable that it's the Daoist who is learning from the layman.

The Communicative Epiphanies

Given the Huashan Daoists' perception of and attitudes toward the American Dream Trippers, we might conclude that they would humor them as fellow wayfarers for a few days, collect their donations, sigh with relief when they left, and go back to their flutes, chess games, and soap operas. Indeed, the *institutional* attitude of Huashan as a Quanzhen monastic community and *danwei* could perhaps be thus characterized. But for the *individual* Daoist monks who had close dealings with the Americans, over time a human and spiritual bond did emerge, leading them out of their aloof condescension and to attempt to engage with the foreigners on a deeper level. This growing attraction was partly the result of the natural affection that grows between friends from afar after repeated visits. But it was strongly reinforced by what I might term moments of "communicative epiphany," when conversations between both sides not only broke through the barriers of their respective cultures and expectations, but even created what they felt as a sense of breaking out of the limits of the ordinary world.

To understand how these experiences occurred, it is essential to consider how the conversation between two or more individuals involves the constant generation of a world of consciousness between them. We can consider the metaphor of birds singing, used by one Daoist monk to describe his communication with fellow monks:

Once some monks came to debate about scriptures with me. I refused. They asked me why. I said: In a tree, there are many birds, some of which sing beautiful melodies, others

that sing plain melodies, but all are free to sing their melodies in that tree. Now if a phoenix were to land on that tree, can one possibly compare the song of that phoenix with those of the smaller birds? Can they possibly sing together? If the phoenix were to begin chanting, all the other birds should quiet down and listen. But the phoenix won't sing, because it has just landed on the tree for a moment, on its way to fly elsewhere.

In this particular instance, the speaker was implying that his level of spiritual accomplishment was so high that, like a phoenix, he would never lower himself to sing with the common birds. Putting aside the immodesty of this statement, we may consider the idea that when there is harmony and compatibility among the different species of birds singing in the tree, the result is a beautiful symphony, but that when there is no such harmony, it is better to keep silent and move on. In the moments of communicative epiphany described here, the Quanzhen monks—who can be said to have seen themselves as phoenixes—joined the Americans in “singing together” and were unexpectedly carried away by the melodies that resulted.

Let us begin with the case of Master Hu, who stressed that the relationship with a master must be one of absolute belief, without a trace of suspicion or doubt. For Hu, any trace of skepticism has the effect of interfering with the flow of power from the master to the students, thus damaging the “energy field” (*qi chang* 氣場) created through the encounter. Referring to an instance when a foreign group came with a skeptical interpreter who ruined the atmosphere, the “energy field was bad” and he did not want to say anything. But with Winn's group, “the energy field is extremely strong.” Sitting in the darkness of the mountain dusk on a temple belvedere with American practitioners around him, after hours of climbing and talking of caves, cultivation, and the special powers of Huashan, the rumbling noises of civilization having been left in the dusty plains far below, while the spirits of all present were as carried upward by the wispy breezes coiling around the pine trees and temple columns, gliding along the cliff walls, pouring into the grottoes, and spreading into the nighttime void, Hu told stories of green-haired fairies who fluttered into the caverns and out into heaven, and all became as starry-eyed children listening to

a bedtime story. The walls of self-defense and doubt had vanished, and the listeners ingested each of Hu's words like a magical elixir pill. Hu himself was carried into the fantasy world, describing the immortal realms in vivid detail as if he were physically there; indeed, several of those present, feeling flows of *qi* in their groins and backbones as he spoke and chanted in his grave voice, were even viscerally transported there. It was as if he had never known of any other world.

The Americans left with deep memories of this exchange, but, as I found when I visited Hu a few weeks later at Yuquanyuan, it had left a strong impression on him as well. He was clearly back into this world of dust, far from the realms of the Mysterious Maiden of the Nine Heavens. Even he did not seem to "believe" in the Green-Haired Lady as much as that night on the mountain. But he fondly yearned to be carried away by the winds of Huashan again.

A comparable moment of communion occurred when, at the Western Peak, a young American captured, with his digital camera, images of white "angels," as described earlier. When Master Hu described the images as "Huashan immortals," and told of his own encounters with them, again the walls of skepticism crashed;¹⁵ Hu found a receptive audience to his stories, and he and his listeners could all release their imaginations to fly with the angels. As noted by Winn, "now that they have seen these pictures, they will be more receptive to your teachings."

In contrast to the Greek and Western tradition of seeking after the truth through doubt and debate, Master Hu's insistence on unquestioning belief aimed, not to blindly impose some dogma, but to open the field for the mutual generation of an other world, through an untrammelled communication of the imagination, of feelings, and even, through *qi* sensations, of somatic energies: a total fusion, orchestrated by the master, in which he and his disciples carry themselves away into the worlds of fantasy they have coelaborated, realms in which the laws and limitations of this world do not apply.

¹⁵ In this case, my own interpretation of the "angels" is, unfortunately, quite different: Taking a photograph of the sunset, in the darkness of dusk, the camera automatically flashed; a fly and a speck of dust that were in the air just in front of the camera, owing to the distorting effect of the focus (aimed at the distant horizon) and of the bright flash appeared as indistinct, oversized, shining white "winged angel" and "round globe."

Such fantasy worlds cannot be coelaborated without mutual reinforcement between the master and his audience. Responses indicating receptivity—and physical reactions such as tears or sensations of *qi*—are positively reinforced as markers of progress. Those who have strong reactions are seen as having great potential. For the disciple, the reactions are signs of the master's power; for the master, they are signs of the disciple's receptivity. For both, they are signs of the reality of the alternate world they are drawing themselves into; in fact, they are signs of the relationship's efficacy. When the signs are strong, each may thus nudge the other further, augmenting the reactions and their significance.

What these experiences showed Hu was that Americans, too, could be receptive; they could count among the “cocreators” he needed to pursue his journeys in the alternate worlds. Several such moments also occurred in the exchanges between Master Hao and the American “cavers.” In one instance, Hao was chatting with Larry, a tall, long-haired, dark-skinned man in his forties, in his appearance and demeanor a member of the counter-culture, an experienced meditator who specialized in Native Shamanism.

Larry had a gift for Hao, a metal bowl with a stick for striking it. “The days spent here have meant a lot to me. I would like to give you this gift,” he said.

“Oh, thank you, thank you!” exclaimed Hao, as he struck the bowl and listened to its chimes. “What scriptures do you recite?”

Larry thought a while and replied, “I ask the mountain and it tells me its secrets.”

“Oh, very good, very good!” Hao's excitement grew. “There is a country in the Northeast, where they practice the religion of shamanism (*samanjiao* 薩滿教) and don't recite scriptures.” (Interestingly, he and Larry hadn't conversed before and he didn't know that Larry was precisely a “shaman.”) He started striking the bowl, improvising a rhythm as he went along, appearing to enter a different mental state. He then went into his hut and came back with an old, worn, wooden fish (*myu* 木魚), which he offered to Larry.

“I have used it a lot, it has strong spiritual power 靈.”

“I have also used the bowl often in shamanistic rituals. What’s this? Why is it called a wooden fish?”

“There was a man cultivating near a river,” replied Hao. “In the river there was a fish cultivating, and near him there was a tree cultivating. The fish and the tree were interfering with the man’s cultivation. So an Immortal told him to chop down the tree and kill the fish with it. That’s what he did, and thus the wooden fish came into being. Now he could cultivate without interference.”

At this moment, a huge flying bug, looking like an oversized, four-inch-long bee, buzzed past.

“Do you know what that is?” exclaimed Hao. “It’s an ant!”

When I looked puzzled—showing that I hadn’t completely entered Hao’s world—he looked at me sternly. “You can’t understand! It’s an ant that has been cultivating for ten years. Ever since it has been here, I have been watching it. [Pointing at Larry]: He understands!”

Around the shaman’s bowl, the wooden fish, and the giant flying ant, a complicity was established between Hao and Larry, about a world they could understand and communicate about, a secret world that mystifies outsiders. In another exchange, the rapport was created through bodily contact, in demonstrating martial arts moves. This occurred between Hao and Nicolo, a martial arts instructor from Mexico City, a stout, middle-aged man in sunglasses who made no secret of his fascination for Daoist sexual techniques and took pleasure in describing his experimentation with them. Nicolo had been practicing martial arts for over twenty years and is a martial arts instructor. He has studied many martial arts forms but now specializes in the Wing Chun 詠春 form, transmitted from Hong Kong. It is one of the forms practiced by Bruce Lee. By Nicolo’s account, it was founded by a nun, who was one of the only survivors of Shaolin Temple after it was overrun by the Qing. She had devised a soft form of martial arts to resist the oppressor. Her first four generations of disciples were women. It includes a technique by which, by pressing a finger on an acupoint of the adversary’s body, the adversary can be killed. It was a

secret technique, which was not to be transmitted to foreigners. Nicolo claimed that his teacher's master was killed by the Triads after he revealed this secret to foreign students.

"Can you demonstrate?," asked Master Hao, as if to challenge Nicolo.

The Mexican gave a demonstration of his martial arts method, in three different sets. The first set involved only movements of the wrists and hands; the other sets involved more complete movements. After that, he demonstrated some combat moves with his student Isaac, a thirty-two-year-old Mexican Jewish film director who often spoke of his past dreadlocks and rave partying but now looks very clean-cut and trendy. During the demonstration, Hao also joined in, playfully fighting Nicolo back with light hand strokes.

Hao applauded, saying they weren't bad at all. "You are a good master," he told Nicolo, and, turning to Isaac: "you be a good disciple." In this encounter, the connection was made through the sight and contact of bodies as, for an hour, Hao and the Mexicans joined the same field of *gongfu* practice.

Such moments of bonding usually occurred when they were least expected, whereas, at other times when both sides consciously attempted to establish a more enduring relationship, they failed. An example is the case of Marvin Rubinstein, a short, balding Jewish man with glasses, in his early fifties, very earnest in his appearance and speech, who, in addition to being a *qigong* instructor, ran a Sufi center in Seattle. He had placed the portrait of his guru on the altar in the Cave of Purple Subtlety. He told Hao that his students had given him money to donate to a charitable cause and that he had decided to donate the funds for an interfaith meditation center Hao had spoken of building at Beidouping. "I have been practicing *qigong* for thirty years and teaching it for twenty. I know many *qigong* forms and have inner experience, but what I lack is lineage. One reason I came to Huashan is to find lineage. Can you help me?" "No problem!" replied Hao. "We will have a ritual, and donors like yourself will be invited. All will wear special robes, and after the ritual you will be given a certificate, just like a university diploma." "What are the requirements? How long must one study?" Hao did not answer the question, stressing that

this would be a collective undertaking, that everyone would decide together how to organize it.

“All the major investors will be able to take part in the ritual.”

Rubinstein then told him about his Sufi practice.

“Just last week I felt that Mohammad would come. And when I saw you I saw the shadow of Mohammad around you. Isn’t that true? Am I not right?” exclaimed Hao. “You are the successor of Mohammad.”

“Yes and no. I do not transmit the type of Islam practiced by most Muslims.”

“You are the only true successor of Mohammad.”

“No, there are many others.”

“But you are the only true one. May you spread the teaching of Mohammad far and wide! Mr. Mohammad, together we can build this meditation center that will spread religious culture around the world!” They then talked more about Sufism, Hao always addressing Rubinstein as Mr. Mohammad, and then Hao talked more about his plans for a meditation retreat. Addressing the five or six foreigners who were present, he said: “In this religious retreat, it will not be necessary to become a *daoshi*. To be a follower (*xintu* 信徒) will be sufficient. Would you like to become followers?”

There was a long silence among the foreigners...then, “er, maybe...” Marvin said with hesitation.

Hao planned to build Beidouping into an interfaith meditation and cultivation center, drawing believers from all religions around the world to come together, worship, and cultivate. “Not for anybody, but for cultivators.” He already had friends and supporters in Shenzhen and Taiwan raising funds for this project. It would be a special meditation center, open to people of all faiths—because all of the Immortals, including Laozi, Mohammad, Chen Tuan, and the Goddess of Liberty promote the ideal of the “free man.” Although his plans sounded grandiose, when asked about the specifics, he talked about rebuilding the roof of his hut (done), repairing the front wall (maybe next year), building a dining room, and laying a concrete floor and drain in the

Ziweidong cave, which is so damp. Simple improvements, then, so that he could be a better host to his guests from abroad and from Taiwan. All of his plans revolve around the expectation of overseas visitors. Indeed, when I visited in August 2007, I found him carefully cleaning pine nuts on a stone outside his hut and thought they were intended for some medicinal or alchemical diet, but he told me he was planning to string them together into necklaces, to offer as gifts to his foreign visitors.

In reality, visitors to Beidouping are few and far between. So when Winn's groups of eight or nine members come up for a few days of cave meditation, it is the most exciting time of the year for Hao. Coming to see me in my cave, he once told me:

In the past few years, there have been foreign visitors to Beidouping, but very few Chinese. And when the Chinese come, they always come with their business, family, and money problems. They just want to download their problems on others. How can we cultivate under such conditions? The whole point is for us to avoid the problems of the world! Chinese people have very grave limitations in their thinking. They have a feudal attitude: as soon as they have the means, they become lazy. They want to get things without effort. They want instant initiations, opening the celestial eye, et cetera, without any training. To achieve anything in cultivation, you must undergo great hardship. One Daoist monk from Yuquanyuan came up once, saying he wanted to stay in one of the caves, but he then realized how hard it would be. He didn't realize that my talkativeness and humor is the fruit of my loneliness. It's not like with you foreigners. Foreigners go around the world cultivating; they are not concerned with mundane things. With you foreigners, we can speak about Dao! It's not like that with Chinese, not even with other Daoist monks. Even they are only interested in a more comfortable life. When I go down and into the cities, I never visit Daoist temples. Quanzhen Daoism is in a state of acute decline, because they are always closed to the world. We are now like a small family who

know each other so well that we are sick of each other. We have to go out and meet people of different countries and religions.

Hao, the lone hermit on Beidouping, lived with the fantasy of building an international multireligious meditation retreat. He tried to draw the Dream Trippers into his dream and was particularly excited when Marvin's philanthropic plans seemed to fit with his own. But in the end, Marvin told me he had decided not to contribute: this type of lineage affiliation was not exactly what he had in mind.

Conclusion

What can the trajectories of these three Daoists tell us about the globalization of Quanzhen Daoism? Hu, Hao and Wen are very different individuals, whose paths came together for a few years at Huashan, where they interacted over a few years with Winn's Dream Trippers, but, since then, have been moving in increasingly divergent directions. The three of them are passionate about *xinlian*—a passion they acutely sense is not shared by their fellow Daoists. Their subjective sense of alienation is compounded by their objective marginalization by the Quanzhen institution, in relation to which they have positioned themselves in radically different ways: Hu has chosen to remain at the foot of Huashan in Yuquanyuan, firmly in the path of politically orthodox monasticism, even if this means suffering the backbiting and intrigues of his fellow Daoists; Hao has assumed the exile that was imposed on him when, after a conflict with other monks, he was sent by the HDA up to the remote, unprofitable ledge of Beidouping, finding in the life of a mountain hermit the fulfillment of his early dreams of spiritual freedom; and Wen—who, more than the other three, was successful in the political and social scene at Yuquanyuan and had largely benefited from it—simply quit the life of a Daoist monk, but not to return to the secular life of finding a job and building a family. Rather, as an urban hermit, he would devote himself even more ardently to his spiritual destiny.

Such was the context in which the Dream Trippers made their appearance in the lives of Hu, Hao and Wen. Though their Quanzhen background predisposed them to approach the Americans with benevolent condescension, other factors drew them into a more earnest engagement with the Westerners, an attraction which was reinforced by the strong memories of the moments of meaningful communication with them. This attraction reinforced their marginalization from the monastic community: the ties with Westerners were the cause of a plot against Hu; they became the centre of Hao's dreams for the future development of his hermitage; and for Wen, after he left Huashan, Winn and other foreign groups continued to seek him out, providing him with an audience and a social role independent of the monastic institution.

In this paper I have dealt mostly with globalization as it affects individual trajectories. On an institutional level, it is too early to say if, and how, the Quanzhen institution will react to the increasing frequency of contacts with foreign spiritual tourists—contacts which, if we take the case studied here as indicative, could ultimately reinforce internal criticisms and challenges to Quanzhen's institutional legitimacy. But this is certainly not the first time in history that Quanzhen monasticism has been challenged by lay cultivational movements.¹⁶ Will it be any different in the encounters with movements coming back to China from the West? This remains to be seen.

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¹⁶ Goossaert, “Daoists in the Modern Chinese Self-Cultivation Market.”

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