

Cave 4 texts. By nature these records are a dense read and the most salient pieces of information are already integrated into the body and notes of part one; however, they do provide some contour to the characters involved, and one gains a better sense of the human emotions, hopes, and disappointments of the McGill purchase. While Scrolls scholars are less likely to give this section more than a cursory read, historians of the Scrolls will find its contents illuminating.

The dual contribution of this book is immediately apparent: not only does it provide an account of the Scrolls' discovery from a fresh perspective, it also elucidates the details of a hitherto unwritten chapter of Canadian history. At times the authors' fondness for their *alma mater* and warm adoration for Scott bleeds through, but on the whole the history is noted for its candor, effective integration of unknown or unused documentation, and ultimately does justice to an integral facet of the story of the Scrolls that is all too often glossed over. Despite the fact that the "McGill Scrolls" never found their home on Canadian soil, certainly the efforts of R. B. Y. Scott and McGill ensured that the collection remained a unity to be studied by scholars of the Bible, early Judaism, and Christian origins for generations to come.

Making Transcendents: Ascetics and Social Memory in Medieval China

Robert Ford Campany. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2009.

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In this captivating inquiry into the religious landscape of early medieval China, Robert Campany elucidates the social and rhetorical mechanisms that made transcendents (*xian* 仙; 僊) and their claims possible.¹ *Making Transcendents* breaks with traditional scholarship on the topic by shifting attention away from practices of self-cultivation, and focusing instead on the processes whereby the successful transcendent was constructed within the religious *imaginaire* of the period.² Divided into eight chapters, this study rests on the analysis of a loosely cohesive collection of

1. Campany's previous monograph, *To Live as Long as Heaven and Earth: A Translation and Study of Ge Hong's Traditions of Divine Transcendents* (Berkeley: University of California Press 2002), dealt with the textual and historical dimensions of the quest for transcendence. In many respects, *Making Transcendents* constitutes a companion to this volume.

2. Earlier studies on transcendents, or "immortals" as they were sometimes referred to, defined the figures in relation to the techniques and methods they performed. We may cite here the works of Maxime Kaltenmark, Henri Maspero, Isabelle Robinet, Ngo Van Xuyet, Yamada Toshiaki and Robert Campany himself.

principally hagiographic sources from 320 BCE to 320 CE (see p. 7), many of which will be familiar to seasoned readers.

Chapter 1, "Bringing Transcendents Down to Earth," consists of an elaborate discussion of theory and methodology, crucial yet often overlooked aspects of the study of Chinese religions. Specialists from other disciplines in the humanities and social sciences will find in this chapter a convenient point of entry into the problematics of transcendence and its related discourse.

Campany succeeds in making the benefits of a cross-disciplinary analysis immediately clear in Chapter 2, "The Transcendent's Cultural Repertoire." Here, the author structures his survey of materials around two postulates: firstly, cultures function as *repertoires* of resources (images, patterns, expectations) that can be marshaled for the construction of a social role, and secondly, such repertoires can be employed in associative, but also contrastive capacities. These prefatory reflections lead Campany to the core of Chapter 2, and in many respects, the analytical impetus that drives the remainder of the book, namely, a description of the transcendent's cultural repertoire. The themes around which the identities of transcendents were negotiated are listed under eight rubrics: 1) Esoteric Practices; 2) the Ascetically-Enhanced Body; 3) Mastery of Space, Time, and Elements; 4) Eating; 5) Dwelling; 6) Mastery of Nonhuman Others; 7) Freedom from Social Convention and Constraint [regarding familial models, sexual mores, and social integration]; and 8) Endings.

Chapter 3, "Deeper Repertoire Analysis: Avoiding Grains," concentrates on a pivotal feature of the repertoire, specifically, the abstention from staple foods (*duangu* 斷穀) and implied sustenance on *pneuma* (*qi* 氣) (classified under "4) Eating"). After establishing the consumption of grains as a key marker of Chinese civilization, the author emphasizes the centrality of sacrifice and agricultural control to governance. By renouncing staple foods and adopting an alternate diet, transcendents were declaring *de facto* independence from state authority, but also from the congruent values and hierarchies of early medieval Chinese society, including weighty ritual obligations to gods, and more importantly, to ancestors.

Chapter 4, "Secret Arts, Manifest Wonders" addresses the dialectic between the rhetoric of esotericism and the strategy of display that transcendence-seekers alternately adopted. The first half of the chapter is devoted to an analysis of esotericizing mechanisms, including practices related to the circulation and transmission of texts, and initiation to their teachings. The second half considers the motif of transcendents as performers. Contrary to their stereotypical image as sheepish eremites, Campany shows that the figures were renowned for flaunting the capacities that came with their mastery of esoteric arts. Interestingly, both approaches, secrecy and the public display of skills, had the same seductive effect on receptive audiences.

Additional rhetorical strategies are examined in Chapter 5, "Verbal Self-Presentation and Audience Response." These generally consist of narrative conventions that recur in a large number of hagiographies, for instance, difficulty in accessing teachers and obtaining instruction, the construction of prestigious transmission lineages, or the authentication of claims pertaining to marvels or distant travels.

In Chapter 6, "Adepts and Their Communities," Campany explores the way in which transcendents interacted with their communities, more pointedly, the way in which the services they provided for clients were regarded as ingredient components of the local socio-economic landscape. Healing was a notable service offered by transcendents—sometimes in exchange for remuneration, sometimes *pro bono*—along with prognostication, the management of local gods and demons (so-called "divine protection rackets;" 166), and other, less common, offerings such as resurrection, the ripening crops, and even legal advice. The later part of the chapter broaches the rich topic of lay patronage, a hitherto unexplored facet of the quest for transcendence. Campany vividly describes pictures of how practitioners of esoterica garnered support across the entire social spectrum, from commoners to officials and rulers. Patrons provided food, living space, offerings, and material assistance for practicing the arts of transcendence. In return some received instruction, but many were satisfied with the social status, cultural capital, and general "blessings" transcendents won for sponsors and their families. When transcendents departed, lay patrons occasionally established shrines to honour them, thereby weaving their narratives into that of the locality and its collective memory.

In Chapter 7, "Adepts, Their Families, and the Imperium," Campany turns to additional interpersonal networks that defined the contours of *xianhood*. He challenges the stereotype of the reclusive world-renouncing transcendent with hagiographic evidence of practitioners ascending together with their entire families (including companion animals). Remarkably, some even transfer the fruits of their achievements to their *deceased* family members and ancestors (188–89). However, more customarily, sources depict transcendents negotiating between ascetic and familial demands; but in the end, the pursuit of transcendence trumps the obligations or hierarchies dictated by matrimonial or blood relations. It also trumps the bond between ruler and subject. The respective projects of transcendence and of the imperium were fundamentally incompatible, although some degree of conciliation was achievable provided that the station of rule was understood to be subordinate to that of transcendent (208–13).³ Paradoxically, the disregard transcendents that had

3. In actuality, or rather, outside of hagiographic narratives, transcendents were bound up in the same locative systems of imperial authority as everyone else. A number of accounts describe the unfortunate ends that adepts met with as a result of challenging the authority of a ruler too

for authority was prescribed by their cultural repertoire, compliance with which secured official-class or even imperial support.⁴ Adepts were thus compelled to walk a tight rope between, on the one hand, the role that they had devised for themselves and were expected to perform, and on the other, the social, familial, economic, and political realities of early medieval China.

The final chapter, “Hagiographic Persuasions,” fleshes out some of the lines of inquiry initially broached in the preceding chapters. It accounts for the impact of intermediaries such as compilers or editors of hagiographies, but also sponsors of hagiographic steles, on the formation of the transcendent’s repertoire. This chapter notably contains integral translations of two stele inscriptions from the Eastern Han (25–220 CE). Aside from its philological contributions, this section is significant for its examination of how certain narratives concerning transcedents were appropriated, contested, re-affirmed, and re-circulated by means of translocal narrative vectors (such as Tang’s rat, who regenerates his entrails after vomiting them; 237–43) throughout Chinese history. In this regard, Campamy composes his own “biography” of a live, organic, and dynamic tradition.

Making Transcendents is confirmation that scholars of Chinese religions have much gain from a methodological dialogue with their homologues in other fields. Campamy’s study offers invaluable insight into the social and rhetorical mechanisms that constitute and perpetuate the construct of *xianhood*. Its even broader appeal lies in that it brings the quest for transcendence into larger cross-disciplinary debates. In the process, one hopes that academic discourse in the humanities and social sciences will be relieved of some of its stubbornly persistent Eurocentric tendencies.

audaciously—although instances of capital punishment were typically explained away as deliberate “martial liberation” (*bingjie* 兵解) (210–212).

4. By and large, seekers of transcendence were eminently sociopolitical figures for whom ultimate validation lay in obtaining sponsorship from the ruling class or the emperor himself. Campamy raises the issue on a few occasions (143, 246), but Lothar von Falkenhausen’s translation of one of Anna Seidel’s seminal articles offers a more thorough analysis of some of the political ramifications of the quest for transcendence; see Anna Seidel, “The Emperor and His Councillor: Laozi and Han Dynasty Taoism,” *Cahiers d’Extrême-Asie*, 17 (2008), 125–65. The article was originally published as “Der Kaiser und sein Ratgeber: Lao tzu und der Taoismus der Han-Zeit,” *Saeculum* 29.1 (1978), 18–50.