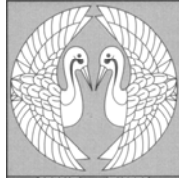


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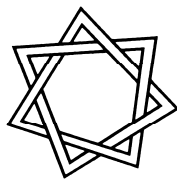
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## COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE ILLUSTRATIONS AND IMAGES OF THE CHINESE CLASSICAL NOVEL “INVESTITURE OF THE GODS” IN WOODBLOCK EDITIONS, POPULAR PRINTS AND TEMPLE PAINTINGS

**Abstract.** The paper discusses visual material based the plot of the Ming dynasty novel *Fengshen yanyi* (“Investiture of the Gods”, “封神演義”), formed on the basis of a large corpus of written historical works and Song—Yuan vernacular literature. Various illustrated woodblock and lithographic editions of the novel (published before 1911) are discussed in chronological order with focus on the special features and artistic level of the illustrations, their content and technique are compared. Artisans' approaches to interpretation of the novel is also a subject of discussion. Popular woodblock prints *nianhua* from Russian collections are examined in order to trace whether connections with book illustrations exist and what episodes of the novel became more popular and for what reason. The paper refers to materials stored in prominent libraries, museums and research centres of Russia, Europe, US and Asia.

**Key words:** “Investiture of the Gods”, woodcut block-print, lithograph, book illustration, popular woodblock prints *nianhua*, temple paintings

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### Introduction

The novel *Fengshen yanyi* (“Investiture of the Gods”, “封神演義”) is a unique masterpiece of Chinese literature created during the Ming dynasty (1369—1644). It is also known as *Fengshen bang* (“The Creation of the Gods”, “封神榜”), *Shang zhou lieguo quanzhuan* (“Complete Story of Zhang and Zhou”, “商周列國全傳”), *Wuwang fazhou waishi* (“Unofficial Story About Wu-wang's Campaign Against Zhou Xin”, “武王伐紂外史”), or *Fengshen zhuan* (“Story About Investiture of the Gods”, “封神傳”). The novel is a voluminous sprawling piece of prose consisting of one hundred chapters depicting the overthrowing of the last ruler of the Shang dynasty (1554—1046 BC) Zhou Xin (1105—1046 BC) by the founder of the succeeding Zhou

dynasty (1045—221 BC) Wu-wang (1087—1043 BC). The novel is based on historic chronicles, folklore and legends, containing quite a lot of fantasies. Its pages are filled with names not only of real historic figures, but also various spirits, immortals, zoomorphic creatures. This fact alone makes the novel an invaluable source of knowledge about Chinese mythology and folklore.

The novel “Investiture of the Gods” has not yet been translated into Russian, nor has it been deeply studied by Russian sinologists. Some mentions about the novel and its predecessors can be found in the study “*Pinghua* [1]. About Wu-wang's Campaign Against Zhou Xin” by academician B. L. Riftin (1932—2012) [2] and in the papers by I. S. Gurevich (1932—2016) [3]. As an expert in lit-

erary studies, B. L. Riftin focused on peculiarities of *pinghua* as a genre depicting a story similar to the one described in the novel “Investiture of the Gods”. I. S. Gurevich, whose scope of research included the evolution of the Chinese language, studied the grammatical features and vocabulary of both the *pinghua* and the novel. *Wuwang fazhou pinghua* (“*Pinghua* about Wu-wang’s Campaign against Zhou Xin”, “武王伐紂評話”) was briefly mentioned by L. K. Pavlovskaya (1926—2002), who examined the specifics of the *pinghua* as a genre [4]. Papers by T. I. Vinogradova [5], Ye. A. Zavidovskaya and P. V. Rud’ [6] have briefly mentioned illustrative material depicting some themes of the novel.

Over sixty articles on different aspects of the novel have been published in PRC since 1950, covering the problems of its authorship, time of its creation, the process of development of plot-lines, forms of their existence, versions of manuscripts, printed editions, the message of the novel, its artistic value, etc. Among them, Lu Sanqiang’s (陸三強) discussion of the problems of authorship and the novel’s evolution is quite notable [7]. Similar issues underwent deep analysis in the publications and dissertations of Zhou Bo (周博) [8] and Zhang Ailiang (張愛良) [9]. Chu Yinchao (褚殷超) [10] and Feng Jun (馮軍) [11] thoroughly examined various editions of the novel. Studies of book illustrations to the novel by Hiroyuki Takimoto (瀧本弘之) deserve our special attention [12]. In Western Europe the novel was studied by a German sinologist Wilhelm Grube (1855—1908), translation of the first 46 Chapters of the novel by Herbert Mueller was published in Leiden in 1912 [13]. Recently the novel has become a subject of research by a German sinologist Barbara Witt, whose monograph with focus on historiographic and literary aspects of the novel provides contextualization of the legend about the

Daoist deity Nezha (哪吒), one of the main protagonists of the novel [14], some of B. Witt’s materials on illustrations to the novel are available on the website [15].

It is well-known that the plot of the novel had a huge impact on the Chinese popular religion, theatre, and folk art. Ranging from woodblock prints *nianhua*, wood-carving, stone-carving, and sculpture, part of these art forms adorn religion-related venues, such as temples or ancestral shrines, while the disposable woodblock prints are favourite wall decoration of common households. The frequent occurrence of “Investiture of the Gods” is itself notable, the fact of its images appearing in both circumstances also merits an investigation. The novelty of our paper lies in a systematic approach to the history and evolution of the book illustrations to the novel “Investiture of the Gods” and popular Chinese wood-block prints *nianhua* (年畫) illustrating the scenes of the novel. Our research aims to describe and explain transformations of the book illustrations and woodblock print images as well as to define the peculiarities related to these images, to draw comparisons between the novel illustrations and *nianhua*, to reveal their differences and similarities and discuss underlying reasons for that. The topic of the paper appears especially pending in the light of the growing attention towards artefacts of Chinese culture kept overseas on the part of the scholars from China. We mainly focus on the editions and pictures held in Russian collections and libraries. We have closely examined woodblock and lithographic editions of the novel kept in the Oriental Department of the Scientific Library of St. Petersburg State University, *nianhua* prints from the collections of the State Hermitage and the Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography (St. Petersburg), as well as a variety of materials from a number of libraries (including electronic) in the USA, Germany and Taiwan.

## Process of the Novel Formation and Its Obtaining a Shape of a Book

The question of the authorship of the novel “Investiture of the Gods” and the history of its turning into a coherent book containing 100 chapters still remains open and provokes numerous debates. A widely accepted assumption is that it was created by Xu Zhonglin (許仲琳, d. 1566) or Lu Xixing (陸西星, d. 1601) [16]. An expert opinion concerning the genesis of the basic plot-line of the novel traces it back to some earlier literary forms, such as “*Pinghua* About Wu-wang’s Campaign Against Zhou Xin” (14th century) and the historical novel *Dongzhou lieguozhi* (“Chronicles of the Eastern Zhou Kingdoms”, “東周列國志”), its other title is *Lieguozhi zhuan* (“A Narrative History of the Zhou Kingdoms”, “列國志傳”) by Yu Shaoyu (余邵魚, 16th century), which depicts the events of The Eastern Zhou period (770—256 BC) [17]. Zhou Bo comes to a conclusion that the creation and formation of the novel covered a long period of time making use of such ancient historical treatises as *Shangshu* (“The Book of Documents”, “尚書”), *Yizhoushu* (“Lost Book of Zhou”, “逸周書”) and *Shiji* (“Records of the Grand Historian”, “史記”) by Sima Qian, as well as myths, historical legends and fan-

tasies, parables, plays of the Song (960—1279), Yuan (1280—1369) and Ming (1369—1644) dynasties, revised parts of the above-mentioned tale “*Pinghua* About Wu-wang’s Campaign Against Zhou Xin”, novels like “A Narrative History of the Zhou Kingdoms” by Yu Shaoyu (*juan* 1 and partly *juan* 2) and *Youshang zhizhuan* (“A Narrative History of Shang”, “有商志傳”) by Zhong Xing (鐘惺, 1574—1625) [18]. Besides that, Zhou Bo suggests that the author of “Investiture of the Gods” took some episodes from the novels *Sanguo yanyi* (“Three Kingdoms”, “三國演義”), *Shuihu zhuan* (“Water Margin”, “水滸傳”) and *Xiyouji* (“Journey to the West”, “西遊記”), from where he also borrowed artistic conceptions and methods [19]. All the material taken from these sources was artistically revised, adapted and supplemented, resulting in a new separate book. I. S. Gurevich’s study showed that the text of the novel has preserved 60% congruency of most plot-lines with the original “*Pinghua* about Wu-wang’s Campaign against Zhou Xin”, but it underwent lexical, grammatical and stylistic changes [20]. The author of the Preface to the reprinted version of the earliest available woodblock

edition of the book, which is kept in Japan (more information about it will be given below) remarks that *pinghua* accounts for three quarters of the total volume of the novel and that the author of the novel was more aware of the regional geography than the compiler of *pinghua*, the fact that reveals disparity between the levels of their education [21].

It is generally accepted that the oldest preserved printed edition of the novel is the *Xinke zhongbojing xiansheng piping Fengshen yanyi* (“New Woodblock of the Popular Story About Investiture of the Gods with critical comments by Mr. Zhong Bojing”, “新刻鍾伯敬先生批評封神演義”) [22] in 20 small-size volumes-*juan* also known as *Jinchang shushi keben* (“The Wood-Cut Edition by Shu from Jinchang”, “金閫舒氏刊本”) [23]. It was published by Shu Zaiyang (舒載陽, another name — Shu Chongfu, 舒冲甫) during the Tianqi era (天启, 1621—1627) of the late Ming dynasty in the Jinchang district of Suzhou. Nowadays, it is in possession of The Cabinet Library (*Naikaku Bunko*, 内閣文庫) of Japan. The first *juan* of the book contains 100 high quality illustrations drawn by an unknown artist. Experts point out that this is the first illustrated edition of the novel “Investiture of the Gods” preserved until our days [24]. It was reprinted in the 1630-s and during the later periods. Altogether three printed editions of the novel are available now [25].

The second edition of the novel dated by the first half of the 17th century is a result of publishing activities of the dramatist Zhou Zhibiao (周之標) from Suzhou, also known under the name of Zhou Junjian (周君建). In fact, the information about him is so scarce that it is not possible to identify even the gender of this person [26]. Two editions of the novel (one from the publishing house *Weiwen tang* (蔚文堂)) with the preface written by Zhou Zhibiao are kept in the library of Beijing University. One edition dated from Chongzhen era (崇禎, 1627—1644) produced by the publishing house *Jian-*

*yang shufang* (建陽書坊) titled *Quanxiang Fengshen zhuan* (“The Story about Investiture of the Gods with all Portraits”, “全像封神傳”) contains 10 volumes and 100 chapters, and belongs to Oda Shokaku's Collection (織田小覚, 1858—1936) in Mukyukai Library, Tokyo (無窮会専門図書館織田文庫).

Finally, in the last decade of the 17th century the third version was published in the printing house *Sixue caotang* (四雪草堂), it is a highly artistically accomplished book with preface by a man-of-letters Chu Renhuo (褚人穫, 1635—1705?), the edition is titled *Xinke zhong bojing xiansheng piping Fengshenyanyi* (“New Wood-Cut Popular Story about Investiture of the Gods with critical comments by Mr. Zhong Bojing”, “新刻鐘伯敬先生批評封神演義”). T. I. Vinogradova underlines that “the highest quality editions both in terms of literary merits and illustration quality can be seen among the texts published by famous men-of-letters”. The edition of Chu Renhuo became an exemplary model for the succeeding editions of the novel and had undergone 28 reprints by the end of the Qing Dynasty (1644—1911) [27]. Actually, all editions of the novel include the Preface by Chu Renhuo (1695). What is known about him is that he came from a family of Suzhou scholars, never held any high rank position and entered the history of literature thanks to the novel *Suitang yanyi* (“Story about Sui and Tang”, “隋唐演義”), based upon historical epics books *Sui yangdi yanshi* (“The Romantic Story of the Sui Emperor Yang-di”, “隋煬帝艷史”) and *Suishi yiwen* (“Unpublished Sui History”, “隋史遺文”) [28]. Therefore, Chu Renhuo was rather knowledgeable of historical legends which were popular among the common people. Barbara Witt has discovered that the name of the author of one hundred illustrations to the edition of *Sixue caotang* was Ma Liang (馬良) and it is carved in the Chapter 85. The illustrations were drawn in 1694, i. e. one year earlier than the preface by Chu Renhuo [29].

### Specific Features of the Illustrated Versions of the Novel

The early printed editions of the novel “Investiture of the Gods” can be found at stocks of libraries in Japan, Taiwan, the USA, France, Germany, Russia and other countries. Three woodblock editions are kept in the Oriental Department of the Scientific Library of St. Petersburg State University under the shelf Nos: xyl. 717, xyl. 2378, BY 145. Edition BY 145 is a reprint of the edition by *Sixue caotang*, it is titled *Zhong bojing xiansheng piping xiuxiang Fengshenyanyi* (“Investiture of the Gods with Portraits and Critical Comments by Mr. Zhong Bojing”, “鐘伯敬先生批評繡像封神演義”), the preface is by Chu Renhuo (1695) with the mark of the printing house *Aodong shijieyuan* (“Garden as Large as a Mustard Seed”, “粵東拾芥園”) in Eastern Guangdong [30]. This edition is not dated. The book contains two cases-*tao*, 20 volumes, 100 chapters. Each page has 10 lines of 24 characters. The book pages have single line frame. There is one fish tail on the fold of the folios.

The book size is 18.4×11.9 cm. The frame is 16.7×10.5 cm. The edition is partially preserved, the number of pictures is reduced by 60 illustrations. Edition BY 145 reproduces the earlier Qing edition of the novel from Nanjing printing house *Qinglaige* (清賴閣) kept in the National Library of France, which is believed to be very close to the Ming edition “Wood-Cut Edition by Shu from Jinchang” [31]. Unlike the edition kept in France which contains 100 illustrations, the first volume of St. Petersburg University version (BY 145) has 40 pictures which are termed as “portraits” (*xiang*, 像), but actually illustrate episodes from different chapters. All of the 40 illustrations bear a significant resemblance to the same-name illustrations of the French edition. The captions to them (except illustration No. 19) reproduce the chapter headings or paraphrase them. The size of pages with pictures is 18.4×11.9 cm. The frame is 16.7×0.5 cm. The comparative table below clearly demonstrates this:

Nos.	Illustration Caption in BY 145 (Library of SPbU)	Chapter Heading and Its Number in the Novel	Illustration Caption in the <i>Qinglaige</i> Edition(the National Library of France)
1.	紂王女媧宮進香	Same heading (1)	Same caption
2.	冀州侯蘇護反商	Same heading (2)	Same caption
3.	姬昌解圍進妲	姬昌解圍進妲己 (3)	姬昌解圍進妲己
4.	恩州驛狐狸死妲	Same heading (4)	Same caption
5.	No caption	費仲計廢姜皇后 (7)	妲己計廢姜皇后
6.	No caption	方弼方相反朝歌 (8)	方弼方相反朝歌
7.	羨裏城囚西伯侯	Same heading (11)	Same caption
8.	乾元山哪咤下世	陳塘關哪吒出世(12)	乾元山哪咤下世
9.	昆侖山子牙下山	Same heading (15)	Same caption
10.	子牙火燒琵琶精	Same heading (16)	Same caption
11.	文王誇官逃五關	Same heading (21)	Same caption
12.	西伯侯文王吐子	Same heading (22)	Same caption
13.	紂王夜夢飛熊兆	文王夜夢飛熊兆 (23)	文王夜夢飛熊兆
14.	渭水文王聘子牙	Same heading (24)	Same caption
15.	太師回兵陳十策	Same heading (27)	Same caption
16.	子牙文王伐侯虎	子牙兵伐崇侯虎 (28)	子牙文王伐侯虎
17.	武王失陷紅沙陣	Same heading (49)	Same caption
18.	三姓計挑黃河陣	三姑計擺黃河陣 (50)	三姑計擺黃河陣
19.	子牙路遇申公豹	The chapter is absent	子牙路遇申公豹
20.	四聖西岐會子牙	Same heading (38)	Same caption
21.	聞太師西岐大戰	聞太師兵伐西岐 (41)	聞太師兵伐西岐
22.	姜子牙魂上昆侖	姜子牙一上昆侖 (37)	安子牙魂上昆侖
23.	子牙劫營破聞仲	Same heading (51)	Same caption
24.	絕龍嶺聞仲歸天	Same heading (52)	Same caption
25.	土行孫歸伏西岐	Same heading (55)	Same caption
26.	子牙設計收九公	Same heading (56)	Same caption
27.	姜子牙登台拜將	姜子牙金台拜將 (67)	姜子牙登台拜將
28.	首陽山夷齊阻兵	Same heading (68)	Same caption
29.	老子一氣化三清	Same heading (77)	Same caption
30.	三教會破誅仙陣	Same heading (78)	Same caption
31.	穿雲關四將被擒	Same heading(79)	穿雲關哪咤施威
32.	楊任下山破瘟司	Same heading (80)	楊任大破瘟黃陣
33.	三大師收獅象狻	Same heading (83)	Same caption
34.	子牙如取臨潼關	子牙兵取臨潼關 (84)	子牙兵取臨潼關
35.	紂王敲骨剖孕婦	Same heading (89)	Same caption
36.	子牙捉神荼郁壘	Same heading (90)	Same caption
37.	摘星樓紂王自焚	Same heading (97)	Same caption
38.	周武王鹿臺散財	Same heading (98)	Same caption
39.	姜子牙歸國封神	Same heading (99)	Same caption
40.	周天子分封列國	Same heading (100)	Same caption

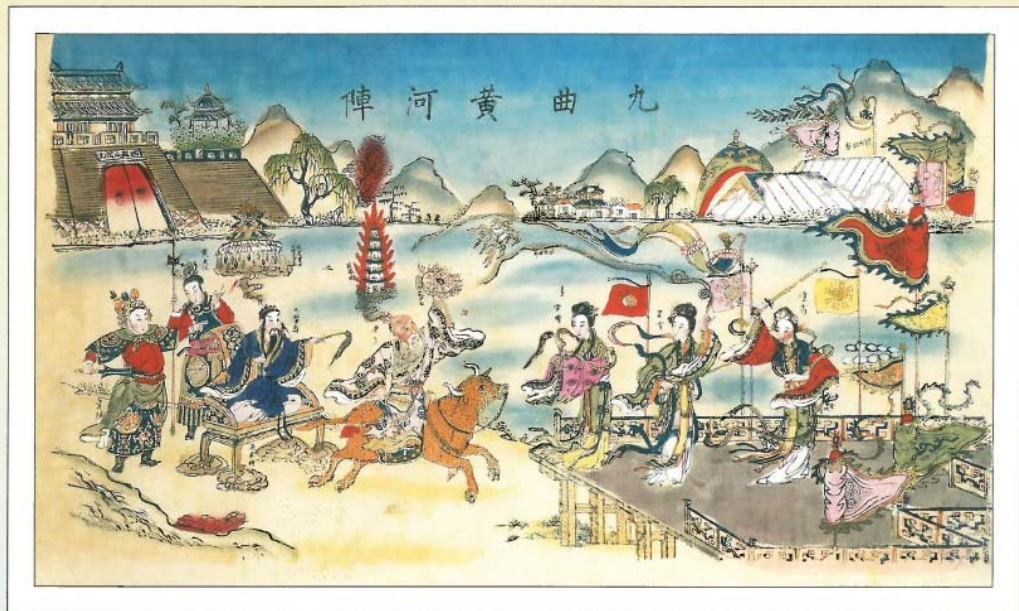
Locations of the illustrations Nos. 20—22 in the SPbU version of the book shows that the publishers broke with the traditional direct correlation of illustrations with the sequence of chapters in the novel. This change can be explained as a technical mistake made by the block-carvers who prepared the wood blocks for printing.

Worth attention is the fact that though the pictures in the version SPbU BY 145 (fig. 1) are similar to those in *Qinglaige* edition, they are not identical. The images are the same in what concerns the meaning of episodes (or scenes), however, the location of characters and some details, as well as the silhouette quality of figures and elements, are different. These illustrations open the *juan* with illustrations and portray an episode from Chapter 1

of the novel. For example, in the French version there are some objects on the table in the pavilion *Niwa gong* (女媧宮), the servants hold big fans, while in the SPbU book there are no objects on the table, the fans are not so visible and look more like curtains. The reduction of the number of illustrations and their simplification may have sprung from the intention of the publisher to reduce the production cost and make the book more affordable for buyers.

Another old edition in the collection of SPbU library is *Zhong bojing xiansheng yuanben quan xiang Fengshen yanyi* (“Original Zhong Bojing's Edition of Popular Story About Investiture of the Gods with all Portraits”, “鐘伯敬先生原本全像封神演義”, xyl. 717), published in 1769 in the printing house *Zhihe tang* (致和堂). This







version is not complete, consists of two cases-*tao* with nine volumes with parts 1—6, 8—9 in the first case (book 8 with part 7 missing) and ten volumes with parts 10—19 in the second *tao*. Each page consists of 11 lines with 24 characters. The book pages have single line frames. The book size is 28.5×20.5 cm. The frame is 23.8×15.5 cm. This book appears to be quite similar to the edition *Xiuxiang Fengshen yanyi shang zhou lieguo zhuan ba juan* (“Popular Story about Investiture of the Gods with Portraits: The Legend about Shang and Zhou. In eight parts”, “繡像封神演義商周列國傳。八卷”) printed by *Jingyuan tang* (經元堂) in 1778 and kept in the Fu Sinian (傅斯年) library of Academia Sinica, Taiwan. The illustrations in both books are classified as portraits *xiuxiang* (繡像) of the main characters preceding the text of the novel, but a higher level of mastery of the drawings in the earlier edition belonging to SPbU (xyl. 717) can be easily seen. SPbU edition (xyl. 717) also resembles the edition *Zhong bojing xiansheng ping chong juan huixiang Fengshen yanyi* (“New Wood-Cut Edition of Popular Story about Investiture of the Gods, Complemented by the Comments of Mr. Zhong Bojing”, “鍾伯敬先生評重鐫繪像封神演義”) of *Shancheng tang* (善成堂) printing house, kept in Banarian State Library (Bayerische Staatsbibliothek) in Munich [32].

The edition kept in SPbU (xyl. 717), similar to the Bavarian version, has the first case containing 32 portraits of the following characters: 1) Lao-jun (老君); 2) Yuanshi Tianzun (元始天尊); 3) Tongtian Jiaozhu (通天教主); 4) Jie Yin (接引); 5) Zhou Wen-wang (周文王); 6) Zhou Wu-wang (周武王); 7) Zhou-wang (紂王); 8) Jiang Shang (姜尚); 9) Guang Cheng-zi (廣成子); 10) Boyi-kao (伯邑考); 11) Bi Gan (比干); 12) Yang Jian (楊戩); 13) Lei Zhen-zi (雷震子); 14) Li Tian-wang (李天王); 15) Nezha (哪吒); 16) Wen Zhong (聞仲); 17) Wu Cheng-wang (武成王); 18) Zhao Gong-ming (趙公明); 19) Yang Ren (楊任); 20) Dujiao longxuhu (獨脚龍須虎); 21) Wei Tuo (韋陀); 22) Feng Tian-wang (風天王); 23) Diao Tian-wang (調天王); 24) Yu Da-wang (兩大王); 25) Shun Tian-wang (順天王); 26) Heng Jiang-jun (哼將軍); 27) Ha Jiang-jun (哈將軍); 28) Fang Bi and Fang Xiang (方弼、方相); 29) Tu Xing-sun (土行孫); 30) Yin Jiao (殷郊); 31) Su Jie-ji (蘇姐己); 32) Shen-gong Bao (申公豹). The size of pages with pictures is 28.5×20.5 cm. The frame is 23.8×15.5 cm. According to Barbara Witt, this particular order of the portraits can be explained by the status of characters in the pantheon, so that the first pages contain the images of the highest deities of Taoist pantheon [33]. The portraits in the both editions are absolutely identical in content, style, quality of drawing, calligraphy style and the composition of characters in poetic captions to the portraits. The only identifiable difference between two editions is in the order of two portraits: in the Bavarian book Yang Ren's portrait is listed as No. 17 and Wu Cheng-wang's is No. 19, some minor graphic details are also different.

The third book in the library of SPbU *Huitu zengxiang Fengshen yanyi* (“Illustrated Popular Story about Investiture of the Gods with newly added portraits”,

“繪圖增像封神演義”, xyl. 2378) is a late lithographic edition from the printing house of Shanghai *Jiujingsan* (上海久敬叅石印) dated by 1909. It reproduces the Preface from the *Sixue caotang* edition (1695), the illustrations look similar to those in the reprinted version of 1889 from the printing house *Guangbaisong zhai* (廣百宋齋) [34]. *Jiujingsan* was one of the first largest printing houses producing illustrated lithography books. The copy kept at SPbU can be characterized as follows. Each page contains 24 lines with 48 characters in each. The book pages have double-lined frame with one black fish tail on the fold of each folio. The book size is 24.7×17.6 cm. The frame is 20×13.3 cm. The same stands for the pages with pictures. There is one case with eight small volumes — eight *parts*. The book is complete. The publisher supplied it with two types of illustrative materials — 50 portraits of the heroes and a hundred of drawings each depicting one episode of a chapter. The publisher presented three (in two cases even four) portraits on each side of the folios (*plate 1, figs. 1—2*), which can be explained by his urge of to save paper. Altogether the following images are given in the book: fol. 1a — Jiang Huang-hou (姜皇后), Zhou-wang (紂王) and Daji (妲己); fol. 1b — Shi-ji (石機), Huang Niang-niang (黃娘娘) and Hu Ximei (胡喜妹); fol. 2a — Yin Hong (殷洪), Wen Tais-hi (聞太師) and Yin Jiao (殷郊); fol. 2b — Bi Gan (比干), Ji-zi (箕子) and Wei-zi (微子); fol. 3a — Su hu (蘇護), Shang Rong (商容) and Jiang Huan-zhi (姜桓之); fol. 3b — Youhun (尤渾), Fang Bi (方弼), Fang Xiang (方相) and Fei Zhong (費仲); fol. 4a — Zhen Lun (鄭綸), Wei Hu (韋護) and Chen Qi (陳奇); fol. 4b — Jinzha (金吒), Nezha (哪吒) and Muzha (木吒); fol. 5a — Zhou Wen-wang (周文王), Boyi-kao (伯邑考) and Wu-wang (武王); fol. 5b — San Yi-sheng (散宜生), Huang Fei-hu (黃飛虎) and Nan Gong-shi (南宮适); fol. 6a — Zhao Gong-ming (趙公明), Jiang zi-ya (姜子牙) and Wu Ji (武吉); fol. 6b — Molihong (魔禮紅), Moli Shou (魔禮壽), Moli Hai (魔禮海) and Moli Qing (魔禮青); fol. 7a — Yang Jian (楊戩), Lei Zhen-zi (雷震子) and Huang Tian-hua (黃天化); fol. 7b — Lao-zi (老子), Hongjun Laozu (洪鈞老祖) and Yuanshi Tianjun (元始天尊); fol. 8a — Tongtian Jiaozhu (通天教主), Randeng Daoren (燃燈道人) and Duobao Daoren (多寶道人); fol. 8b — Yuandu Hongshi (元都泓師), Nanji Xianweng (南極仙翁) and Cihang Daoren (慈航道人).

It is safe to suggest that the illustrations of the 1909 edition (xyl. 2378) were modeled on the drawings of the 1889 version published by *Guangbaisong zhai* (廣百宋齋) in Shanghai with one portrait per page (*fig. 2*). Printing house *Guangbaisong zhai* was among the first to publish illustrated lithography books of classical novels and novelettes, among them the works by Qing writer Pu Songling (蒲松齡, 1640—1715) [35]. The heroes on the portraits of lithographic edition demonstrate marked differences from those in the wood-block versions: the poses and gestures and some elements in the attires are not identical. A lot of variability can be found in the illustrations to the chapters, in the lithography book they mostly tend to show other episodes than those on woodblock editions.

## The Characters of “Investiture of the Gods” on Stage and in Popular Art

Here we will examine how the novel “Investiture of the Gods” was reflected in such popular form of art as woodblock prints *nianhua*. The novel had a profound influence on folk arts of imperial China, namely, ballads, narratives and theatrical performances which were especially popular among the wide public as well as on the related visual arts. Numerous works of vernacular literature, ballads, narratives and the plays of the Chinese traditional theatre *xiqu* (戲曲) were inspired by the “Investiture of the Gods”. The “Dictionary of Peking Opera Plays” lists nearly four pages of play titles based on the novel, proving that the number of plays with the plots and characters taken from the novel in *jingju* (京劇) genre alone was impressive [36]. For instance, performances lasting for several days *liantaibenxi* (連臺本戲, lit. “continuing performances”) titled *Fengshen bang* (“封神榜”) were given on the stages of Shanghai at the end of the 19th century, apart from that about 60–70 short performances termed *zhezixi* (折子戲, lit. “one-act plays”) were welcomed by the audience, and their plots could seriously deviate from the events described in the novel [37]. It can be claimed that long theatrical performances borrowed ideas and characters from the novel, while ballads and narratives circulating among the common people could form the basis of short theatrical plays *zhezi*.

We now discuss how theatrical performances influenced by the novel “Investiture of the Gods” were reflected in no less popular woodblock prints *nianhua*. Our research proves that published woodblock prints depicting theatrically staged episodes from the novel are not numerous: the catalogue “Old Theatrical Folk Pictures” includes only one folk print from Fengxiang County (Shaanxi) [38], two catalogues of theatrical *nianhua* edited by Wang Shucun (王樹村) include just two theatrical scenes — one titled *Weishui he* (“Weishui River”, “渭水河”) from a workshop in Kaifeng (Henan) and the other piece under the title of *Guowu guan* (“Passage through Five Gates”, “過五關”) comes from Zhuxianzhen (朱仙鎮, Henan) [39]. The catalogue of the *Nianhua* Museum in Yangliuqing presents an example of *nianhua* of the Qing dynasty titled *Weishui fangxian* (“Visiting a Sage on the Weishui River”, “渭水訪賢”), in the foreground of which the characters are wearing theatre costumes and makeup, while the background features a landscape with a river and part of a town wall [40]. The popularity of the motif of “The Weishui River” (Chapter 24 of the novel) which was performed by both capital and regional opera troupes is proven by the abundance of pictures from Wuqiang (武強) published in the multivolume publication *Zhongguo guban nianhua zhenben* (“Rare Editions of Chinese Folk Woodblock Prints”, “中國古板年畫珍本”, 2015), among them are Qing prints with “The Weishui River” scene from the collection the Chinese National Library and those with the scene of *Wuwang fangxian* (“Wu-wang Visiting a Sage”, “武王訪賢”) from the private collection of Wang Shucun [41]. The composition of the prints “The Weishui River” or “Visiting a Sage on the Weishui River” in folk woodblocks follows a canonical

pattern: the top left corner of the print is occupied by a figure of a magician Jiang Ziya wearing a fisherman cap, to the right of him is ruler Wen-wang making a gesture of a pious greeting, a servant is holding a parasol over Wen-wang's head. Apart the above-mentioned prints from Yangliuqing and Wuqiang, the same composition is typical of the prints from Kaifeng, where artists drew scenes of theatrical performances based on the “Investiture of the Gods” with actors [42].

As was mentioned above, the plays based on the novel were especially popular in the theatres of Shanghai. Woodblock and lithographic prints produced in Shanghai in 1900–1902 add more knowledge to it, the State Hermitage and the Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography holds a print with the title *Lutai fuyan zhou wang da ji qingxian* (“A Feast Gathering in the Deer Tower: Zhou-wang and Daji Dining and Wining the Immortals”, “鹿臺赴宴紂王妲姬請仙”, MAE No. 3676-225, plate 1), which portrays the events of Chapter 25 of the novel *Su Daji qingyao fuyan* (“Su Daji Invited the Spirits to the Feast”, “蘇妲己請妖赴宴”). The episode on the print is shown to take place on a theatre stage, we see the ascetic interiors and the balustrade rails surrounding the stage in the foreground of the print, but the characters are not wearing any theatrical makeup. Exaggeratedly bright colourful festive attires which would help the audience to identify social statuses and roles of characters on the stage do not match well with tables hardly laid to dinner in the situation of a real-life festive occasion depicted here. Moreover, the specific placement and looks of the tables and the plain red columns nearby bear a strong resemblance to stage sets and humble interiors of traditional tea-houses, where performances used to be given. Sitting at a noticeably more generous table at top centre position is the drunk ruler Zhou-wang, on his right and his left two sisters-spirits Su Daji and Nine-Headed Pheasant are offering wine-cups to him. In the left part of the print, to the right of Zhou-wang, three men wearing dresses of high officials are sitting at one table: Owl Earl Fei Zhong (費仲), Prime Minister Bi Gan (比干) and Hun You (魂尤). Tipsy women who symbolize spirits and demons (*yao* 妖) occupy the rest of the festive tables. They sit without any particular order in different poses violating the etiquette cannons. Open-access digital library “The Chinese Text Project” created by Harvard University professor Donald Sturgeon (2006) has photographs of the above-mentioned edition of “New Wood-Block Popular Story about Investiture of the Gods with Critical Comments by Mr. Zhong Bojing” by Nanjing *Qinglaige* with the Preface of 1695. Taiwan State History Museum has a picture No. 07474, which is an illustration taken from this edition, it has the heading of the chapter *Su daji qing yao fuyan* (“Su Daji Invited the Spirits to the Feast”, “蘇妲己請妖赴宴”) in the bottom left corner of the page 13 [43]. A careful look at this page brings to light some similarities in the compositions of the two images (book illustration and popular print), namely, the tables and their placement. Needless to say, no feast can

go without tables. However, in popular print (*plate 1*) the tables are occupied mainly by female characters, while in the book illustration officials are sitting solemnly ac-

ording the ancient etiquette. Moreover, the tables are placed in an orderly manner with dishes and plates on them.

### Popular Plots of Wood-Block Prints Featuring the Novel

In his informative article on illustrated editions and wood-block prints of the novel “Investiture of the Gods”, the Japanese specialist in book illustrations Hiroyuki Takimoto points out that *nianhua* mostly depicted several fixed scenes from the novel, including *Zhao gongming xia shan* (“Zhao Gongming is Going Down the Hill”, “趙公明下山”) and *Jiuqu huanghe zhen* (“The Battle at the Nine Loops of the Yellow River”, “九曲黃河陣”) [44]. Having examined the collections in Russia we agree with the opinion of the Japanese expert. The Fund of Acad. Peter Leopold von Schrenck (the Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography, the Russian Academy of Sciences) possesses a picture from Wuqiang county (Hebei, MAE No. 675-48/18) depicting the episode “Zhao Gongming is Going down the Hill” [45].

Among the prints from Russian collections available to us, we have come across three versions of the picture named “The Battle at the Nine Loops of the Yellow River” [46]. One of them is included into the catalogue “Chinese Popular Picture *Nianhua* from the Collection of the State Hermitage” (St. Petersburg, Russia, ed. by M. L. Rudova) under the number JIT-6461 (*fig. 3*), it came out of the printing house *Hongzhang huadian* in Yangliuqing and was acquired by Acad. V. M. Alekseev in China during his studies there in 1906—1909. The Catalogue quotes the translation of a comment written by Meng Xijue (孟錫珏, 1870—1938), a Chinese tutor of Alekseev:

Three sisters are taking revenge for their brother — the army commander Zhao Gongming. On the tower to the left, the three sisters are standing holding three amulets symbolizing the birth of a baby. The amulets, in their opinion, are stronger than the strongholds at the loop of the Yellow river. Towards them (from left to right) heavenly warriors, the enemies of their brother, are rushing, but they all are absorbed by the amulets of the sisters. The novel “Investiture of the Gods” and “The Comments to Coarse Popular Prints” No. 401 [47].

The above given commentary of the V. M. Alekseev's teacher seems vague, closer reading of Chapter 50 of the novel titled *Sangu jiba ihuanghezhen* (“Three Aunties Conducting Warfare at the Yellow River”, “三姑計擺黃河陣”) leads to better understanding of the events depicted in the print (*fig. 3*). The three sisters of Zhao Gongming — Yun-xiao (雲霄), Bi-xiao (碧霄) and Qiong-xiao (瓊霄) used the Golden Vessel of the Primordial Chaos (*hunyuanjindou*, 混元金斗) to drag the enemies into it using magic. In the on-line Catalogue of the State Hermitage there is another print under the same name (JIT-5893 [48]), the two prints (JIT-6461 and JIT-5893) differ in the characters with whom the sisters are fighting. Print JIT-5893 shows Nezha, or Nuozha (哪咤), with his brothers Jinzha (金咤) and

Muzha (木咤) and the army commander Yang Jian (楊戩), who are galloping towards the sisters' stronghold. Meanwhile, the print JIT-6461 (*fig. 3*) depicts Lao-zi racing on a bull towards the platform holding an amulet, behind him a Taoist deity the Celestial Venerable of the Primordial Beginning (or the Primeval Lord of Heaven, *Yuanshi Tianjun*, 元始天尊) is resting on a magic throne, behind his back a warrior Huang Tianhua (黃天化) is standing. Chapter 50 recounts that they came just in time to attack the sisters, and secured the victory over them [49]. The volume *Eluosi cangping juan* (“The Russian Collections”, “俄羅斯藏品卷”) in the series *Zhongguo muban nianhua jicheng* (“Collections of the Chinese Woodblock Prints”, “中國木版年畫集成”) under the editorship of Feng Jicai (馮驥才) includes one more print portraying the same event which belongs to the collection of the Russian National Library in St. Petersburg (No. 11315) [50] and combines all the characters from the two other prints: at the bottom of the platform is Nezha, behind him is not-mounted Guang Chengzi (廣成子) wearing theatrical makeup and holding a magic seal, further behind him is Lao-zi riding a bull, from whose hand the Scissors of the Golden Water Dragon (*jinjiaojian*, 金蛟剪) are flying and a burning pearl, behind Lao-zi's back the army commander Yang Jian is letting the Heavenly Dog (*tianquan*, 天犬) out, the same dog is in the print from Wuqiangcounty (MAE No. 675-48/18). The composition of all the three prints is quite similar — the platform with the sisters is to the right, their enemies are to the left [51]. What they all have in common is a fortified platform or tower, which can be called “a stronghold” (*zhen*, 陣). The illustration of the above-mentioned Qing edition of the printing house *Qinglaige* has only the images of the sisters en-face standing on the platform with a rough sea around them (page spread 15) [52]. Therefore, we can hardly speak of a straightforward copying or borrowing of the book illustration composition and transferring it into the popular wood-block picture.

Another popular plot with the characters of the novel “Investiture of the Gods” quite often seen on popular prints is a scene *Nezha naohai* (“Nezha is Winning over the Sea Dragon”, “哪咤鬧海”). Of significance is the fact that the story of little Nezha endowed with magic powers subdued the Sea Dragon-King appears in Ming novels, notably, in “Journey to the West” by Wu Cheng'en and in the *Sanjiao soushen daquan* (“Complete Set of Materials Collected about the Spirits of the Three Teachings”, “三教搜神大全”) by an unknown author, it was borrowed to the “Investiture of the Gods” from these sources [53]. The catalogue by M. L. Rudova contains a print (JIT-662) featuring this scene produced by a well-known publishing house of Yangliuqing *Qijianlong* (齊健隆), with a commentary by Meng Yuxi:

Nuozha is a character of the novel “Investiture of the Gods”. One day, when he was just seven years old, accompanied by his servants, Nuozha went for a swim in the sea. At that age he already possessed a magic girdle and with the help of his amulet he rippled the sea (in the print he is standing on the shore to the left). The enraged sea dragon (to the right) ordered his sons and grandsons to fight with Nuozha. The latter is letting his girdle-amulet out towards the sea dragon. Commentaries to Coarse Popular Prints. No. 384 [54].

Comparison of this print illustrating Chapter 12 of the novel *Chengtang guan nezha chushi* (“Nezha is Born into the World at the Gate of Chentang-guan”, “陳塘關哪咤出世”) to the illustration of the Nanjing *Qinglaige* edition (full page 6) reveals some similarities in their composition: lifting his foot, Nezha is preparing to throw his magic girdle (*qiankun quan*, 乾坤圈), the third son of the dragon-king Aobing (敖丙), is riding a dragon holding a spear in his raised hand. However, the composition is drastically different: in the book illustration the view is from the sea, while in the popular print the view is reversed — from the land towards the sea. This can be considered as evidence to the fact that the popular print composition of the event “Nezha is Winning over the Sea Dragon” was also formed independently rather than under the influence of the book illustration.

Hiroyuki Takimoto does not classify some plots of the popular wood-block prints discovered by us in Russian collection as wide-spread. For example, a print from the workshop *Hemaoyi* (和茂怡) in Yangliuqing (MAE No. 3676-33; *fig. 4*) [55] named *Xiqi yikao jingong* (“Boyi-kao Offers Tribute from Xiqi”), “西岐邑考進貢”), which serves as an illustration to Chapter 19 *Boyikao jingong shuzui* (“Boyi-kao is Offering Gifts to Redeem his Father”, “伯邑考進貢贖罪”), the print is done with the highest artistic skill. The elder son of Zhou Wen-wang, Boyi-kao (伯邑考), a gifted musician, is depicted in the print as playing the *guqin*. To the palace of Zhou-wang he brought ten beauties in the Chariot of Seven Scents (*qixiang baoche*, 七香寶車), the Carpet to Sober the Intoxicated, (*xingjiutan*, 醒酒毡), and a monkey with a white face, and these offerings are shown in the print. Boyi-kao became a hostage of Zhou-wang in the hope that the latter would release his father. Zhou-wang's favourite concubine, Su Daji, fell for Boyi-kao, but he rejected her, and she revenged the insult severely. *Fig. 4* shows Zhou Xin sitting at the centre of the hall, to his left Su Daji is seated, in the cloud there is an image of a fox revealing the true face of the cruel charmer. There are two groups of people flanking the hall on both sides, five ladies on the left are the beauties that are part of the tribute to King Zhou, six men on the right are all King Zhou's ministers. According to the convention of prints, many of the characters' identities are written near or above the person in question. Therefore, we are able to confirm that none of them appear in the chapter depicted in this print. Takimoto has argued that artisans add un-related, but famous characters in one scene so as to cater to people's liking, and to make the print more fun and lively [56]. While that may have been

true in many cases, we would like to add that the arrangement of this print is also an obvious attempt to strike a balanced composition. With that addition, the print is divided into two sides with males on the right and females on the left. That is not an exclusive feature of woodblock prints. There are also similar examples found in decoration paintings in temples.

The illustration from the *Qinglaige* [57] edition demonstrates the characters of this scene differently: Zhou-wang, Su Daji and two officials are listening to the young man playing the *guqin*, the action is taking place inside a pavilion. Therefore, it can be concluded that in the popular folk print the scene from the novel is shown in more detail and a greater number of the characters are participating.

Nor do we only draw comparisons between popular prints and book illustrations, but also analyze how precise are these image in reflecting the content of the novel. Apparently, after careful examination we find that characters appearing in the same battle on the picture do not participate on one battle in the novel. It brings us to conclusion that many prints do not represent any particular scene of the “Investiture of the Gods”. And this was probably a usual practice, rather than an exception. One easy solution is to assume that the artisans were mostly illiterate. Not having read the book itself, they may have no the precise information on the plot. This point, though most likely to be true — considering that one often finds many poorly-written phrases and / or wrong word used in prints — is difficult to confirm. Artisans in the past largely remain anonymous. Even if that is the case, they may not need actual copies of books to know the story. There are other occasions where they could learn the plot from, such as story-telling or drama, either in a commercial tea house, theatre, and temple fair, or domestic gatherings. The kind of people who might purchase prints of the “Investiture of Gods” are those who also learn the story from similar sources. That is not to say artisans fabricated these plots because they misplace characters with scenes due to poor memory. Rather, the composition could be a conscious choice of the artisan. H. Takimoto speculates that pictures accompanying a book publication have content that closely follows the text, possibly either because the artisans have read the book conscientiously or that they are under the supervision of the author or publisher. However, when it comes to folk woodblock prints, the artisans would modify images of characters according to popular taste in order to boost sale [58]. In addition, we would like to argue that it is common practice of woodblock prints, and perhaps other forms of folk art, to “squeeze”, “cram” people into the scenes where they are not supposed to be, above mentioned print MAE No. 3676-33 (*fig. 4*) may be seen as an example for that.

In the album “Rare Chinese Popular Prints from the Soviet Collections” we see one more interesting print from the State Hermitage, which can be considered as an attempt to relate the whole contents of the novel “Investiture of the Gods” on a single folio (JIT-4767) [59]. According to album editors, this print was created in Weixian county (濰縣) of Shandong province:

The print is divided into four sections with different episodes from the historical epic “Investiture of the Gods” (16th century). Each section consists of several scenes (termed *chu*, 出, the word borrowed from the theatre lexicon,

further the album provides a detailed description of each of the 22 scenes [60]. Notably, another catalogue of prints from Weifang county (濰坊) contains an identical print which is kept in the centre of manufacturing prints in Yangjiabu (楊家埠) of Weifang county, and it is the only print in the catalogue with such “multi-chaptered” composition, which makes it look alien [61]. In our opinion, its style, colouring and manner of execution bring the print (JIT-4767) closer to prints from Wuqiang county in Hebei, whose typical feature was in presenting numerous episodes and scenes (*chu*) on one folio accompanying them with textual comments or explanations. Editors B. L. Riftin and Wang Shucun may have defined the print JIT-4767 as produced in Weixian county due to the consideration that V. M. Alekseev had visited Weixian in 1907 and could have acquired the print there. We are inclined to suggest that prints from workshops of Wuqiang could have been sold in Shandong, or close connections between the two regions and their printing houses could have existed.

Similar “narratives in pictures” were published by Shanghai printing shops in the early 20th century, which mostly produced lithographs using new printing press which affected the clarity of a print and led to the reduction of prices. For example, the State Hermitage possesses a series of prints (JIT-5364, JIT-5365) under the title *Xinke wuwang fazhou Fengshen bang* (“Newly Cut About Wu-wang Struggling Against Zhou and the Investiture of the Gods”, “新刻武王伐紂封神榜”). The prints are pro-

duced in the year *bingwu* (丙午, 1906) by the printing house *Zhaoyida* (趙一大), one of the best known in Shanghai. These prints were purchased by Academician V. M. Alekseev in 1909 (in all probability) during his trip to Shanghai. On each folio we see six episodes with the names of the characters: on the first folio (JIT-5364) the above mentioned scenes with Nezha fighting against the sea prince, Jiang Ziya denouncing the spirit of the Jade archilute and dragging it to Zhou Xin (Chapter 16), leopard Shen-gong cutting off his own head with a sword, which it being brought away by a stork (Chapter 37) are depicted. Coincidentally, the scene with Shen-gong presents an exact replica of the composition of the book illustration from the *Qinglaige* edition. On the second folio (JIT-5365) the episode of the battle at the nine loops of the Yellow River with the three sisters of Zhao Gongming is easily recognizable. It is worth noting that all the characters are wearing theatre costumes and makeup, though the action is taking place not on the stage.

The print from the famous workshop *Sunwenya* (孫文雅) in Shanghai (JIT-5363) depicts the events from Chapter 69 of the novel *Kong xuanbing zu jinjingling* (“The Army of Kong Xuan is Blocking the Ridge of the Golden Rooster”, “孔宣兵阻金雞嶺”), the characters are also shown in actor's robes with theatre makeup, the painter thoroughly follows the details of the narration: in accordance with the lines of the novel, Kong Xuan is depicted with five rays of light of different colours behind his back. Battle-pieces of this kind were typical of popular folk prints of Shanghai and Yangliuqing (staged battle-scenes in theatre performances were especially popular as well). In all probability, the artisan aimed at creating series of battle-pieces taken from a number of novels rather than a set of illustration to the novel “Investiture of the Gods”.

## The Novel's Links to Popular Religion and Its Temples

Woodblock prints and paintings on temple walls featuring scenes or characters of the novel “Investiture of the Gods” deserve our attention, since they allow us to trace novel's links to the popular Daoism and worship practices of the Chinese. In woodblock prints, when characters appear in a vertical layout print, it is usually a portrait, called “paper icon” *zhima* (紙馬) or *shenma* (神馬), which serve for the worship of deities, after the worship is complete, these paper icons are burned as an offering. Interestingly, certain characters from “Investiture of the Gods” are often featured in woodblock prints, among them is Daoist Zhao Gongming (趙明公). Zhao Gongming appears in both vertical *zhima* and horizontal narrative scenes. A general with advanced Daoist alchemy power, Zhao Gongming fought the Shang-Zhou war representing the Shang coalition but fell dead in a battle with Jiang Ziya (姜子牙) and Daoist Luya (陸壓道人) from the Zhou camp. Despite his prowess in Daoist alchemy, Zhao Gongming is not worshipped as a god of battle, but rather, as a god of fortune Caishen (財神). His subordinate officers also became fortune-related “deities” (albeit rarely worshipped separately). The kind of prints, called *zhima*, or *shenma*, dis-

plays a deity in half or full body, accompanied by one or two servant lads or subordinate officials. In *zhima* dedicated to Zhao Gongming's worship, he is often identified as “True Lord of Black Altar” (*Xuantan Zhengjun* 玄壇真君), a title bestowed upon him in the final canonization ritual mentioned in the novel. As a god of fortune, the *zhima* of Zhao Gongming most often appear as a military general accompanied with his black tiger and his weapon, a nine-sectioned *bian* (鞭) whip. He is escorted either by subordinate officer(s) or servant lads. However, the escorts are reduced in scale and appear to be half the size of Zhao Gongming himself. There are also an assortment of fortune-related symbol objects on the *zhima*, implying his divine power as a god of wealth. In fig. 5, although the black tiger is absent (possibly represented by the tiger head on his armour), we can still discern Zhao Gongming's identity from the (mistakenly-written) title *xuntan* (巡壇, patrolling altar), and his nine-sectioned *bian* whip. Scattered on the bottom of the print are banana leaf, silver ingot, fire pearl, and conjoined two coins, all these objects symbolize fortune.

Strictly speaking, Zhao Gongming, or True Lord of Black / Mysterious Altar, and his identity of Fortune





God is at most a spin-off from the novel, as long as there is no plot related to him that even faintly hints of wealth. One possibly related detail is that the four subordinates assigned to him at the end of the book all bear titles that suggest wealth [62]. Another vertical layout print featuring Zhao Gongming is in the setting of door gods *men-shen* (門神). In figs. 5 and 6 he stands guard with his rival, Daoist Holding a Lamp (*Randeng daoren*, 燃燈道人) [63]. With his whip *bian* and black tiger, Zhao Gongming here holds an ingot in his left hand. Daoist Holding a Lamp, who fought against him in chapter 44 of the novel, has a *ruyi* (如意) sceptre in his right hand. Since the counting word for silver ingots is *ding* (錠), which sounds like *ding* (定, “definite”), therefore the pair constitute an auspicious phrase “your wish is guaranteed” (*yiding ruyi*, 一定如意). The door gods guarding front gates are usually generals who are supposed to defend the household from any invading force, in this case we see civil door gods bringing fortune to the house (figs. 5–6).

Just like other popular tales and novels, e. g. *Sanguo yanyi* (“Romance of Three Kingdoms”, “三國演義”, *Baishhezhuo* (“White Snake”, “白蛇傳”), “Investiture of the Gods” is also one of the favourite subjects of traditional architecture decoration. Artisans chose similar scenes for wall decorations, so it is quite common to see the same scene depicted in several temples. In two neighbouring temples of Chiayi (嘉義) county, Taiwan, we have observed two sets of pictures depicting same scenes from our novel. It is natural to see dissimilarities between pictures painted by different artisans. However,

the two sets of paintings that we observed differ not in minor details, but in the major characters. Figs. 7 and 8 show the same scene where Daoist Guang Chengzi fights Holy Mother of Lightning (Chapter 46) painted in two temples. According to the plot in the book, there are only Guang Chengzi and Holy Mother of Lightning in the battle scene. But on fig. 7 we see additional Nezha, on fig. 8 Yang Zian (identified by their outfit and weapon). Neither of them are part of the battle described in the novel. It is quite possible that the two “additional characters” are there because they are famous and immediately recognizable figures. Having them on the scene increase viewer's interest and helps recognize “Investiture of the Gods” story.

However, E. Zavidovskaya's interview with the painter Mr. Yan Kunxing (嚴錕興), who is in charge of Zhentian temple's (*Zhentian fu*, 震天府) renovation, reveals a more practical purpose [64]. Temple decoration is after all a “trade” commissioned by the temple administration. Therefore, Mr. Yan's role is not an artist who creates according to his free will but one who fulfils what he is entrusted according to the price paid. When he was paid handsomely, he gives the commissioned paintings more ornate details. Sometimes there is still blank after he had painted the major characters from a scene. In this case, he would add figure(s) to fill in the blank. This usually happens at where a horizontal layout is required, such as the component part used to fortify a beam structure from below. Figs. 7 and 8 best illustrate such circumstances. This is a practice understandably also applied to the woodblock prints.

## Conclusion

The paper gives an outlook of the complicated process in which the novel “The Investiture of the Gods” was forming and developing, the history of its publications and editions with a special emphasis on the peculiarities of evolution of its illustrative material. We have demonstrated that the early versions of the novel were mainly of three types: (i) containing only the portraits-*xiang* of the principal characters (totalling up to 50); (ii) containing only pictures of the scenes / episodes also called “portraits-*xiang*” (as a rule, up to 100 pictures) and (iii) containing the combination of the both kinds of illustrations (exceeding 150 illustrations per edition). The first two kinds are typically presented in wood-blocks, with the illustrations to the earlier editions being of higher quality. The third kind of editions tends to be widely represented in lithographic books. The Scientific Library of SPbU houses all the three types of the novel editions. It can be noted that the illustrations to the edition kept under the code No. BY 145 are of lower quality if compared to the editions kept in France or Harvard, while the earlier edition (xyl. 717 of 1769) is characterized by the better quality images than those in the other comparable versions analyzed in the paper. Lithographic edition xyl. 2378 is characterized by general poor quality of printing. Comparing the editions kept in SPbU with the books in stock abroad the paper shows that, as for the contents of illustrations, publishers

of wood-blocks adhered to a cannon different from that which was followed by lithographers. What the both pictorial traditions might have in common is the inclination of artists to introduce into their pictures some repetitive elements which bore special message or meaning. Artisans who produced popular prints were also quite free in the interpretation of the content of the novel, so that pictures often did not comply with content.

The analysis of a number of folk prints *nianhua* made in various centres — in Yangliuqin, in the counties of Wuqiang, Weixian and in Shanghai — makes it possible to conclude that their composition nor imitates, nor copies the book illustration from the edition by *Sixue caotang*, yet we may find some similarities in the appearance of the characters or in the composition of the scenes, along with the occasional usage of the same details or elements. Remarkable is the fact that there are relatively few prints based on the novel “The Investiture of the Gods” if compared to those based on the novel “Three Kingdoms”, historical epics about Xue Dingshan (薛丁山), the Sui and Tang dynasties, the Yang family of generals or about the White Snake. Moreover, in the Russian collections we do not hold prints that would show a theatre performance on stage *xichu* (戲出), with the characters of the novel “Investiture of the Gods” participating in it, in spite of the fact that theatre plays inspired by the novel were numerous



and widespread among the commoners. Pictures portraying a scene from the short play “The Weishui River” circulated in Yangliuqin, Wuqiang and Kaifeng. We feel safe to suggest that the compositions of pictures based on the novel were coined by folk artists themselves, but not copied from book illustrations. For instance, in Yangliuqin a fixed way or some kind of canon of representing particular scenes was formed, which can be seen from the example of the plot of the “Battle at the Nine Loops of the Yellow River”. A logical assumption is that these pictures could have been inspired by the art of wandering narrators of folk tales

or could have resulted from reading the novel, this, in turn, infers literacy on the part of artists. At the same time, those who created *nianhua* quite obviously made attempts to experiment and produce art forms filled with new and fresh compositional ideas (JIT-4767). The questions of the scope of this phenomenon, its roots and causes (among other things it might have been motivated by competition and desire of artists to win favours with buyers) remain to be answered, since the few popular folk prints based on the novel which are currently available for studying might unveil just the tip of the iceberg and the whole picture is yet to be seen.

### Notes

1. *Pinghua* (評話) — an early genre of vernacular literature in China “combining written (historic) and folk (oral) traditions” [Pavlovskaya, 1973: 111].
2. Riftin, 1969: 104—117.
3. Gurevich, 2008: 85—101; idem, 2014: 108—116.
4. Pavlovskaya, 1973: 109—112.
5. Vinogradova, 2012.
6. Zavidovskaya & Rud’, 2020: 75.
7. Lu, 1991: 97—101.
8. Zhou, 2007.
9. Zhang, 2011.
10. Chu, 2006.
11. Feng, 2012: 63—66.
12. Takimoto, 2015: 6—20; idem, 2012.
13. Grube, 1912.
14. Witt, 2020.
15. Idem, 2019.
16. Gurevich, 2014: 112.
17. Li, 2018: 258.
18. Zhou, 2007: 3.
19. *Ibid.*
20. Gurevich, 2014: 113.
21. Li, 2018: 2.
22. Pen-name of Zhong Xing (鐘惺, 1574—1625).
23. Takimoto, 2012; Li, 2018.
24. The library of Harvard University has in its stock *Zhongbojing xiansheng yuanben quanxiang Fengshenyanyi* (“Original Zhong Bojing’s Edition of Popular Story About Investiture of the Gods with All Portraits”, “鐘伯敬先生原本全像封神演義”) with the mark of the printing house *Benya* (本衙), the preface of 1695. Its illustrations are highly reminiscent of the illustrations in the oldest edition (by Shu from Jinchang). Scanned images of the book are available at the repository: <http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:FHCL:27258313> [Accessed 01.07.2020]. Importantly, the same library also keeps the illustrated edition published by the printing house *Jinlingdeju tang* (金陵德聚堂), which is known for a peculiar way of locating the illustrations on each page above the text — a composition similar to that of the earliest Yuan edition of the *pinghua Xinkan quanxiang pinghua wu wang fa zhou shu* (“New Wood-Cut *Pinghua* About Campaign of Wu-wang Against Zhou Xin with All Illustrations”, “新刊全像評話武王伐紂書”), kept in Japan.
25. Chu, 2006: 8.
26. Zhang, 2014: 77—78.
27. Vinogradova, 2012: 123.
28. Takimoto, 2015: 8.
29. Witt, 2019: 3.
30. Zavidovskaya & Mayatsky, 2012: 212.
31. Scanned images of the book are available at the repository: <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k96116925/fl.item.r=bpt6k9611692.zoom> [Accessed 01.07.2020].
32. Scanned images of the book are available at the repository of Bavarian State Library: [https://reader.digitale-sammlungen.de/de/fs1/object/display/bsb11129917\\_00025.html?contextType=scan](https://reader.digitale-sammlungen.de/de/fs1/object/display/bsb11129917_00025.html?contextType=scan) [Accessed 01.07.2020].
33. Witt, 2019: 4.
34. In 2003 the *Shandong huabao chubanshe* (“Shandong poster publishing house”, “山東畫報出版社”; Jinan, 濟南) released a reprinted version of the lithography book *Xiuxiang Fengshen yanyi* (“Investiture of the Gods with All Portraits”, “繡像封神演義”) with 175 illustrations, published by the printing house *Guangbaisong zhai* (上海廣百宋齋) in Shanghai in 1889, which is now in the possession of the Beijing University library.
35. Zavidovskaya, 2020: 94—107.
36. Zeng Bairong, 1989: 1—3. Scholars agree that the first play featuring story of the “Investiture of the Gods” (*Fengshenbang*, “封神榜”, another name is *Fengshen tianbang*, “封神天榜”) belonged to the southern genre *kunqu* (昆曲), it circulated in ten folders-*ben*, consisted of 240 scenes, and was loosely based on the novel; records of some imperial theatre plays have also been preserved till our days [Wu Xinlei, 2002: 135]. The *Qinggong xihua* [Ye & Liu (eds.) (2016)] includes a scene titled *Chentang guan* (“The Gate Chentang-guan”, “陳塘關”) and features Nezha (哪咤), depicting the performance of palace actors in 1830—1870s [Zhongguo jingju, 2011: 156].
37. In 1928 a famous actor of the *jingju* opera Zhou Xinfang (周信芳), who specialized on female characters *dan*, staged the revised play *Fengshenbang* (“封神榜”) in 16 folders-*ben*, which had been gathering full houses in Shanghai for three years. New revised versions of the novel were also staged in Beijing and Shanghai in 1957 and in 1979. Zhongguo jingju, 2011: 139, 140.
38. Zhang, 1999: 18.
39. Wang, 2007: 71.
40. Liu, 2015: 54.

41. Bo, Wei, 2015: 147, 148.
42. Bo, Ren, 2015: 201—203.
43. [Online]. Available from:  
<https://ctext.org/library.pl?if=gb&file=92554&page=57> [Accessed 06.07.2020].
44. Takimoto, 2015:14.
45. Zavidovskaya & Rud', 2020: 72, 75.
46. Northern provinces of China, whether under the influence of this plot or without it, have formed a tradition of building labyrinths with lanterns named “The Nine Loops of the Yellow River” (“*jiuqu huanghe*”, “九曲黄河”), people wander along it during the Lantern Festival after the Chinese New Year Spring Festival. However, the illustrations are lacking anything even remotely reminiscent of a labyrinth.
47. Rudova, 2003: 185.
48. All the prints from the State Hermitage mentioned in the paper can be viewed on-line by entering their number into the search box of the on-line museum's catalogue: <http://collections.hermitage.ru> [Accessed 01.07.2020].
49. In the on-line catalogue of the State Hermitage there is a partly preserved print with the same plot (JIT-6270), the left side of which is a replica of the print JIT-6461 (fig. 3).
50. Feng, 2009: 108—109.
51. The composition of the print from Wuqiang county *Huanghe zhen* (“The Battle at the Huanghe”, “黄河阵”) is different — to the left of the print are the three female figures on the platform raising swords, to the right are Lao-zi and the Celestial Venerable of the Primordial Beginning either mounted or on the chariot [Bo & Wei, 2015: 150].
52. [Online]. Available from:  
<https://ctext.org/library.pl?if=gb&file=92554&page=82> [Accessed 08.07.2020].
53. The popularity of Nezha's image is supported by the print held in the MAE of the Russian Academy of Sciences from a printing house of Yangliuqing (MAE No. 3676-20), which shows the Nezha flying his girdle towards evil creatures swimming in the rough sea, though this one is an illustration to the episode *Shuiman jinshan si* (“Flooding in the Monastery of Jinshan-si”, “水漫金山寺”) in the *Baishe zhuan* (“Legend of the White Snake”, “白蛇傳”). So, in this print Nezha belongs to the category of guarding deities or protectors.
54. Rudova, 2003: 187.
55. Rifting, Wang, 1991: ill. 45.
56. Takimoto, 2015: 15.
57. [Online]. Available from:  
<https://ctext.org/library.pl?if=gb&file=92554&page=51> [Accessed 08.07.2020].
58. Takimoto, 2015, 15—20.
59. Rifting, Wang, 1991: 46.
60. *Ibid.*, 47.
61. Bian (comp.), 1996: 79.
62. They are *zhaobao* (招寶) “summon treasure”, *nazhen* (納珍) “bring in treasure”, *zhaocai* (招財) “summoning wealth”, *lishi* (利市) “profitable trade”.
63. Yang, 2016: 36—39.
64. Mr. Yan Kunxing, a native of Xingang (新港), Chiayi county, is an experienced painter for temples. He is also the master in charge of the renovation of Zhentian Temple in Minxiong (民雄) township, Chiayi.

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## Illustrations

### Front cover:

**Plate 1.** The lithographic popular print “A Feast Gathering in the Deer Tower: Zhou-wang and Daji Dining and Wining the Immortals”. Paper, 54.0×32.0 cm. China, early 20th century. MAE RAS, call No. MAE 3676-225. Courtesy of the Museum.

*Inside the text:*

- Fig. 1.** A scene from the xylograph. *Zhong bojing xiansheng piping xiuxiang Fengshenyanyi* (“Investiture of the Gods with Portraits and Critical Comments by Mr. Zhong Bojing”, “鐘伯敬先生批評繡像封神演義”) (n. d.), Eastern Guangdong: Aodong shijieyuan. Paper, 18.4×11.9 cm, 20 volumes. St. Petersburg State University Scientific Library, call No. BY 145, vol. 1, p. 1. Courtesy of the University.
- Fig. 2.** Portraits of Jiang Huang-hou (姜黃后), Zhou-wang (周王) and Daji (妲己), *Huitu zengxiang Fengshen yanyi* (“Illustrated Popular Story about Investiture of the Gods with newly added portraits”, “繪圖增像封神演義”) (1909), Shanghai: Jiujiingsan. Paper, 24.7×17.6 cm. Scientific Library, St. Petersburg State University Scientific Library, call No. xyl. 2378, vol. 1, p. 1. Courtesy of the University.
- Fig. 3.** The woodblock print “The Battle at the Nine Loops of the Yellow River”. Paper, 106.0×60.0 cm. The State Hermitage, call No. JIT-6461. Reprint from: Rudova, 2003: 185.
- Fig. 4.** The woodblock print “Boyi-kao offers tribute from Xiqi”. Paper, 55.0×100.0 cm. China, early 20th century. MAE RAS, call No. MAE 3676-33. Courtesy of the Museum.
- Fig. 5.** The woodblock print “Zhao Gongming as Door God”. Paper, 37.0×23.0 cm. Zhuxianzhen, Henan, early 20th century. State Museum of the History of Religion, St. Petersburg, call No. Д-3083. Courtesy of the Museum.
- Fig. 6.** The woodblock print “Daoist Holding a Lamp as Door God”. Paper, 37.5×23.0 cm. Zhuxianzhen, Henan, early 20th century. State Museum of the History of Religion, St. Petersburg, call No. Д-3084. Courtesy of the Museum.
- Fig. 7.** Scene from Chapter 46 of “Investiture of the Gods”. Zhentian temple. Chiayi county, Taiwan. Photo by Y. Yang.
- Fig. 8.** Scene from Chapter 46 of “Investiture of the Gods”. Zhentian temple. Chiayi county, Taiwan. Photo by Y. Yang.
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