

UH Mānoa  
Department of  
Religion



# Becoming a Daoist God in Late Imperial China

A talk by  
**Aaron Reich**  
PhD candidate  
at the University of  
Wisconsin–Madison

On Wednesday  
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SAKAMAKI  
A-302

During China's late imperial dynasties, communities could promote their local gods into the sanctioned Daoist pantheon through a ritual process called canonization (*daofeng*). While this process remains largely unmentioned in official histories, one unusual handscroll painting from the early seventeenth century offers a rare glimpse into precisely this segment of late imperial religious life. Currently held at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, the 30-foot handscroll documents and illustrates the canonization of a specific local god from Jiangxi Province. In a close study of both the textual and pictorial components of this handscroll, speaker Aaron Reich presents the first comprehensive account of the canonization ritual it records. The details of this single account provide new insights into how local communities established ties with the Daoist institution and its sacred empire.