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# INTRODUCTION

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## Background in Brief

Through the prime years of his life, Tao Hongjing 陶弘景 (456-536) collected manuscripts of three men who had lived in the century before him: (1) Yang Xi 楊羲 (330-386), a shaman-like figure who was also a gifted writer and calligrapher, (2) Xu Mi 許謚 (303-376), Yang's aristocratic patron and benefactor, and (3) Xu Hui 許翮 (341-370), Xu Mi's youngest son. At the behest of the Xus, Yang Xi had established contact with a group of divine, immortal beings known as the "Perfected" (*zhenren* 真人), who would come down to him at night in a kind of vivid dream. His records of these visits, together with the scriptures they revealed to him and a handful of other materials that the Xus already had in their possession, formed the foundation of the Higher Clarity (Shangqing 上清) movement in Daoism and eventually had a pervasive, lasting influence on the Daoist religion as a whole.<sup>1</sup>

Although early Chinese history is replete with shamans and spirit-mediums, none approached Yang Xi for scope of vision or quality of literary output. On a nightly basis he produced poetry, scriptures, talismans, letters, various instructions, all supposedly dictated to him by the Perfected. He wrote them down in exquisitely beautiful calligraphy that Tao Hongjing later would judge the equal of work by China's "sage of calligraphy" Wang Xizhi 王羲之 (303-361). These writings, moreover, reflected an encyclopedic, synthesizing mind with deep knowledge not only of earlier Daoist traditions but of Chinese literature in general, astronomy, dietetic practices, alchemy, and so on. Nearly every sentence contains some kind of allusion—the numerous footnotes in the present translation only scratch the surface. The poetry was largely in the "roaming immortal" (*youxian* 遊仙) mode then popular, but one of its original features was that Yang used it to express the multiple, distinctive voices of his nightly visitors, as if they were characters in a drama, all while remaining within a consistent Higher Clarity vision. Needless to say, these manuscripts were cherished by almost all who had the good fortune to see them.

By Tao Hongjing's time, these writings had already been scattered, copied, altered, or plagiarized. Some were lost. Only thirty years after the Higher Clarity revelations there arose another Daoist movement, Numinous Treasure or Lingbao 靈寶, which combined the Higher Clarity source-materials with Buddhist ideas and practices to weave an even vaster, more complex web of belief. The Higher Clarity materials were already being mixed in so thoroughly with

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<sup>1</sup> This background is based mostly on Strickmann 1977 and short introductory materials on Tao Hongjing, ZG, and related texts, such as Verellen 1998, Robinet in TC 198-200, and other articles in references such as Kohn 2000, TC, and ET.

those from other lineages that they were at risk of being lost entirely. A scholar who preceded Tao Hongjing, Gu Huan 顧歡 (420/428-483/491), had collected the original manuscripts into an anthology titled *Zhenji jing* 真迹經 (Scripture of the Traces of the Perfected), but he missed many items and included some extraneous materials. However, Tao Hongjing was able to conduct a more thorough search over several decades, and he determined authenticity by examining the calligraphy. He compiled the writings that he had authenticated into two works: (1) *Zhen'gao* 真誥 (Declarations of the Perfected; ZG for short), which soon passed into general circulation, and (2) *Dengzhen yinjue* 登真隱訣 (Secret Instructions for Ascent to Perfection), which focused on the more technical details of how to attain the status of a Perfected being and was divulged only to Daoist practitioners. The ZG has survived to the present, though not without a few missing phrases, miswritten characters, later insertions, and errors of format. In its original form, it had seven chapters; these have since been split among twenty fascicles or scrolls.<sup>2</sup> As for *Dengzhen yinjue*, only three of its original 24 or 25 fascicles, plus various citations of the text in other works, have survived. Significant parts of the ZG's content appear also in the *Dengzhen yinjue*, but with Tao's meticulous, nearly phrase-by-phrase commentary added.

The ZG enjoyed wide circulation after Tao completed his work around 499, due to the strength of his reputation, the strong interest in spiritual matters throughout the educated classes during that period, and the exquisite quality of its writing. Gu Huan's earlier anthology eventually disappeared. Apart from its religious importance, the ZG also had an immense influence on Chinese literature, especially poetry. Many poets through the following centuries emulated the poetry it contains or used it as source-material whenever they contemplated the other world—the far-flung paradise-isles in the sea east of China, the distant holy mountains of the west and north, the starry realms and their undying inhabitants. Accordingly, it was widely cited in various encyclopedias and learning guides during the later period of division and the Tang and Song dynasties.

The version of the ZG that now appears in the Daoist canon or *Daozang* 道藏 (DZ), first printed in 1447, comes with a preface dated 1223 by the eminent Song dynasty bibliographer Gao Sisun 高似孫 (1158-1231). Based on the evidence contained in Gao's preface (also translated in this volume), this canonical version was based originally on an edition kept during the Southern Song era (1127-1279) either at Maoshan, the center of Higher Clarity Daoism located a little to the southeast of Nanjing, or at Shangqing gong 上清宮 (Higher Clarity Temple) near what is now Yingtan, Jiangxi province. The head of the latter temple, Yi Rugang 易如剛 (*fl.* 1200-1225), was having the ZG printed at

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<sup>2</sup> Parts One to Five are devoted to instructions from the Perfected, Part Six (fasc. 17-18) to writings by Yang Xi and the Xus, and Part Seven (fasc. 19-20) to Tao Hongjing's introduction to the book, to Yang and the Xus, the dispersal of their manuscripts, and textual glosses. Much of Part Seven (ZG 19.9b5-20.4b4) is translated in Strickmann 1977.

Maoshan, and he asked Gao, then serving as an Assistant in the Palace Library, to contribute a preface.

Gao Sisun correctly observes that the main title and seven chapter titles of the ZG were designed by Tao to indicate its “weft” or apocryphal status in support of the “warp” or canonical texts (Daoist scriptures, Confucian classics). The main title recalls that of documents in the *Shangshu* 尚書 (The Book of History), while the chapter titles resemble weft titles. Gao does not say *how* they resemble weft titles—he assumes his readers will spot their similarity with the three-character titles of *Zhuangzi*’s seven “inner chapters.” However, it seems that for Gao the “warp” or canonical titles were limited to *Laozi*, *Zhuangzi*, and the Confucian classics. His teacher’s remark, “Reading the *Changes* [i.e., the *Yi jing*] is enough!” runs completely counter to Higher Clarity teaching, which places primacy on the *Dadong zhenjing* 大洞真經 (True Scripture of the Great Cavern). Gao belongs to a different era, with a different set of beliefs.

In any case, the edition in the DZ remains the standard text, even though other versions continued to circulate outside of the canon. During the late Ming, a Nanjing-based poet and bibliophile named Yu Anqi 俞安期 (1551-1627) managed to gain access to the DZ, which was usually kept off-limits in select temples, and he reprinted the ZG in 1600 and 1604, the second time with annotations at the end of each fascicle that discussed pronunciations and variant readings. The Yu Anqi redaction in turn was reprinted in many other collectanea during the Qing dynasty (see Feng 2006). It became the *de facto tongxingben* 通行本 or “commonly circulating edition.”

## Motivation and Method

The main thing that motivated me to set about working on this annotated English translation of Part One of the ZG (the first of the original seven chapters) was the desire, “Make it accessible!” Despite the great amount of scholarship that has been done on the ZG and the frequency with which scholars of Daoism cite it, most of it has remained accessible only to those with a strong command of literary Chinese—or Japanese, the only other language for which a complete translation exists. This is a shame. I have long felt that a translation of at least part of it would let more people hear more directly the voices of Yang Xi, the Perfected who speak through him, the Xus, and Tao Hongjing, so that they would no longer have to content themselves with fragmented reports and discussions. Furthermore, in translation as opposed to ordinary reading one must wrestle word by word, phrase by phrase with the meaning, and convert this meaning into one’s own language, and in the process a far deeper understanding of the text is obtained. In fact, I am convinced that the translation process generates, for the translator at least, the closest possible reading of a text. My reading or translation is bound to err in places, but it will inform and facilitate others who read the ZG, and even if they disagree with my word-choices, they will nonetheless benefit.

I chose to translate Part One of the text because it *is* first, an indication of its importance, and because so much of it is extremely beautiful. It has a strong narrative component not found in the other parts. Its sections follow a mostly chronological order, though the editor Tao Hongjing deliberately places some sections out of sequence in order to bring together materials treating a particular topic or theme that would otherwise be widely separated. Part One occupies a position analogous to the first of *Zhuangzi*'s seven inner chapters, and like its *Zhuangzi* counterpart, it does not start out with systematic statements on beliefs and practices but rather draws the reader into its world gradually—mostly through the colorful language of poetry and narrative. Tao Hongjing clearly intended to dazzle and intrigue the reader first and let full understanding come later, after further reading, meditation, and guidance. To some extent, this arrangement reflects the common practice among Chinese anthologists to put poetry first and discursive prose second,<sup>3</sup> but it also lets Tao present the most attractive aspects of Higher Clarity first. For these reasons, Part One contains a large share of the most beautiful writing in the ZG, which also makes it very attractive for the translator (we shall eventually see that Part One also presents key aspects of Higher Clarity belief that are not revealed elsewhere).

There are several subtle signs that Tao *did* intend for this part to be read first, and in sequence,<sup>4</sup> but to me the clearest indication comes through the handling of its general theme: cycling back, returning to the origin (the Way), and reverting to youth and childhood, which is contrasted by descriptions of movement away from the origin, as seen through aging, the devolution of calligraphic script, etc. The image of the adept stepping into a cave in order to be reborn most vividly expresses this turning back. But for any grand statement of its theme, one must wait for the opening of Part Two: "...the Way has a Great Return, which is [the process of] pure Perfection. Therefore, without the Way it is impossible to complete Perfection, and without Perfection it is impossible to complete the Way" (ZG 5.1a9-10). The statement may *begin* Part Two, but it sums up what precedes it in Part One. The one leads into the next.

Some may object that presenting Part One in isolation is not the most "useful" for non-specialists wanting to gain an understanding of what the ZG is all about, and that almost any other part would be more instructive. I would argue that would reflect a modern emphasis on efficiency that is absent from

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<sup>3</sup> One thinks especially of Xiao Tong's 蕭統 (501-531) placement of poetic genres first in *Wen xuan* 文選 (Selections of Refined Literature; trl. Knechtges 1982, 1987, 1996).

<sup>4</sup> After the list of Perfected persons in Fascicle One, Tao notes that even though the text is undated, he decided to place it there, before the other materials, because it lists names and titles (ZG 1.4b6-7). He could easily have tucked this rather tedious list into a more unobtrusive spot, but he did not: this introduces the Perfected players of the drama (he relegates introductions to the human players, by contrast, to last place, in Part Seven). A similar approach appears with Fascicle Three's undated poetic debate on "dependency and non-dependency" and the passages preceding it.

the ZG. While translating I developed a healthy respect for Tao's editorial work, and it would be extremely presumptuous for me to try to rearrange things. Ideally, I should present the entire ZG in one volume, but if the size of the present book is any indication, the total would reach around 1,500 pages.

This project was also motivated by simple curiosity. In the 1980s, while writing my dissertation, I had cited and translated a few passages from ZG, but there the matter rested until around 2000, when I began looking at it again. The demands of earning an income kept it a very low-level project. I would do one phrase or sentence per day and not proceed to the next until I was satisfied I had a good grasp of it. I had no pet theory to prove. Of course, from the work of many other scholars, I knew that the famous story of Yang Xi's marriage to Consort An would appear at the end of the first fascicle, that much of Fascicles Two to Four would be devoted to songs and poetry, and that the end of Fascicle Four would discuss curious matters concerning "escape by means of a simulated corpse" (*shijie* 尸解), but many other episodes still came to me as surprises. While translating, my main questions were always, "What does it really mean?" and, "What's the story?"

Only a few years ago, I would not have attempted this, despite the significant advances in Western scholarship on the Higher Clarity movement since the 1970s. What has made all the difference is that Internet-based search tools finally—I would put the date at around 2004—crossed a kind of threshold. Before this, a simple on-line search on a term or phrase from the ZG would rarely generate any interesting result, but after this, the chance of finding something useful greatly increased. Although web-based search results must be used with caution, they will at least often steer one in the right direction. Similar thresholds were crossed not only with searchable electronic editions of major Chinese collections but also with traditional publications on paper. It is now possible, without too great expense, to search electronically through all the major works and collections of traditional Chinese literature and to do one's own textual research without extreme difficulty. As for paper-based publications, many passages in the ZG have now been discussed, if not translated, by one or another researcher, and this body of scholarship has greatly reduced the guesswork that would have otherwise marred this translation. Furthermore, as the quantity of Western scholarship on Higher Clarity Daoism grows, three indispensable reference tools in English (these have scarcely left my desk) have been published (Kohn 2000; Schipper and Verellen 2004, or TC for short; Pregadio 2008, or EC). At all times I made use of the complete Japanese translation, which, despite a number of shortcomings, is an essential and extremely useful work (Yoshikawa and Mugitani 2000; SK for short).<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> The first major shortcoming to this translation, as I see it, is an overly mechanical approach to citing the works to which the ZG refers. That is, the works are cited in the original Chinese without further comment, and quite often not the best work or reference is selected. Although the ZG belongs to the Higher Clarity branch of Daoism, sometimes the translators gloss a term using something from another branch. The second major shortcoming stems

The usual practice when translating a text of this nature is to precede it with a scholarly introduction of a hundred-plus pages discussing the author or compiler's life and work, his or her social milieu, the historical background, the textual history, and so on. However, in the case of the ZG, so much scholarship has been devoted to those issues that perhaps nine-tenths of what I would write by way of a conventional introduction would already be somehow redundant. Extensively delving into the content here would also, I believe, dampen the experience of encountering the ZG as a kind of adventure, especially for those new to Higher Clarity Daoism. For Part One at least, it would provide too many "plot spoilers." We must also keep in mind Tao Hongjing's design encouraging readers first to form their own inferences about the material.

From a modern Western perspective, then, it would seem that there is a kind of "perverse" element to Tao's overall design of the ZG plus *Dengzhen yinjue*. His placement of most of ZG's colorful poetic and narrative materials first, saving the more didactic material for later, is part of a broader pattern. The clearest, most explicit, most advanced presentation of Higher Clarity techniques, found in the *Dengzhen yinjue* as well as the main Higher Clarity scriptures, was restricted, to be passed down only from master to disciple. By contrast, the ZG, containing more generalized instruction and advice, alludes to the advanced techniques by name, or mentions them in passing, or encourages people to follow them, or lavishes high praise on them—but never divulges them in complete, precise detail. Yet *this* was the text that passed into general circulation. It thus tantalizes its readers with wonderful things that are kept just beyond their reach, the better to motivate them to seek a suitable teacher.

Another aspect of this seemingly perverse design may be glimpsed through Tao's commentary. I have already mentioned how Tao places what we would consider to be introductory at the end. For example, he places a large number of glosses relating to members of the Xu family at the end (ZG 20.12a9-13a8), not in the main text where the Xus first appear, and not in any introduction. Another, more subtle, example: Yang Xi was in the habit of using the word *fei* 扉 (which usually refers to a door leaf) for *pai* 排 (to push open or apart), but Tao provides a gloss to that effect (ZG 2.20a3) only after the word's sixth appearance. Sometimes the prime consideration for arranging the material in Part One seems to have been chronological order; sometimes it seems to have been thematic. Isabelle Robinet has thus described the ZG's compilation as having "a certain disorder" (2004f, 199; 1984, 2:317-18). Certainly this is due

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from the fact that it was done by many hands, which in the case of Part One means that the individual translators did not have the chance to identify or explore in full its broader underlying motifs. Later on, a Chinese version of this work was published: Yoshikawa and Murgitani 2006. Its main virtue is that it makes the Japanese scholars' annotations more accessible to people in China. Unfortunately it does not translate the ZG into modern Chinese. Another annotated Chinese edition, Zhao 2011, which reached my desk too late to be used here, limits itself to textual notes.

partly to the vagaries of transmission, partly to the mixed, fragmentary nature of the source material, but I also think that part of this is deliberate—to ensure that the text yields its secrets only to those who put the greatest effort into it. Part One reveals a number of astonishing secrets, but I am sure that Tao Hongjing *wanted* them to remain all but closed to casual readers.

If I were genuinely to be true to Tao Hongjing's intentions, therefore, I would have readers plunge directly into the text without any guiding hand, and they would reemerge dazzled—but very confused. That would not be an acceptable option. Some background is necessary, if only to make up for all the missing background knowledge that Chinese readers of long ago, Tao Hongjing's intended audience, would have had as they approached the text. Surely few of those readers approached the ZG “cold.” That is, when Chinese readers long ago received their copies of the text or copied it out for themselves, they would almost certainly have known something about its content in advance, whether from other textual sources, friends, teachers, or persons with their own copies. Furthermore, many of the allusions, at least those to classical sources, would have been immediately transparent to them, whereas today's readers usually need footnotes. Finally, Chinese readers during the early stages of the ZG's transmission would have benefited from a better text. For example, Tao had used different colors of ink to help keep the various human and divine voices separate (ZG 19.9a9-9b4), but these colors disappeared long ago.

Thus, as I worked on the translation and pondered the best strategy for presenting the text, the idea of alternating the translation and commentary in the form of a guided reading took shape in my mind. Just as the ZG gathers together many brief pieces, likewise my commentary would parallel the text in the form of brief essays. Such a format would bring the reader into the ZG and its secrets gradually. It would become more like a voyage of discovery—just as it was for me.

As for my working method, I carefully followed the text as it appears in the DZ, translating both the main text and Tao's commentary. First I photocopied pages from the DZ, expanding each to fill an entire A4 page. This revealed certain things that most modern printed or electronic editions of ZG often do away with: nonstandard characters, the use of *biao* 標 for its homonyms 標 or 鏢, the character *yi* 已 frequently printed as *si* 巳, and so on. I then prepared my own working Chinese files on that basis.<sup>6</sup> Later as I translated I could have the Chinese and English conveniently above and below each other in the same file.

Most of Tao's comments appear in the form of interlinear comments—I transformed these into lettered endnotes, placed after the translation of the

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<sup>6</sup> For the photocopies, I used the 61-volume (including index volume) edition published in 1957 by Xinwenfeng chuban gongsi in Taipei, because of its larger format. For general research purposes, however, I used the 36 volume edition published in 1986 by Wenwu chubanshe of Beijing. The content and page/column divisions are the same.

main text in each section, to distinguish them from my own copious numbered footnotes. Comments that appear as indented lines in the Chinese text are also indented in translation, italicized, and kept in the main text. Some of the indented comments are actually written by Yang Xi or Xu Mi, not Tao Hongjing, but the reader will have no difficulty figuring out who is commenting. To enhance clarity, I divided the text further into separate sections, to which I added subheadings, with Western dates for the sections that are precisely dated.

In translating each passage, I consulted the complete Japanese translation and, where possible, earlier Western translations,<sup>7</sup> as well as alternate versions appearing in other early Chinese citations. On first approach, I used only the original Chinese, then Japanese sources (mainly SK), and finally other English translations. Of course, I often had to revise my initial tries based on the work of other scholars. With Stephen Bokenkamp and Paul Kroll especially, sometimes I felt, like Xu Mi, “that my fitfully flickering, proximate radiance is unable to form a triad with the distant splendors of the Two Lights” (ZG 3.17a3-4). My translation thus inevitably contains echoes of their and other scholars’ work; I expect that any future translation will in turn contain echoes of mine.

Even so, for many years I had no idea how all the individual passages fit together. Apart from the forward march of their dates, they did seem rather chaotically organized, as Isabelle Robinet had observed. The overarching “story” or organizing principle of Part One did not begin to emerge for me until I had reached the end of Fascicle Three. At this point, as I became more aware of how everything fit together, I began writing the comments for each section. The final pieces of the puzzle suddenly fell into place when I was about one-third of the way through Fascicle Four. Afterward, the work of translation went much more smoothly—but my new realization also forced me to rework nearly everything I had done earlier.

The first round of revision began in 2009. Revising Fascicles One and Two each took one year, Fascicles Three and Four each only half a year. As I wound through the text a second time, I wrote more extensive comments after each section. During the second round of revision, in 2012, I focused mostly on the footnotes, making sure that the various terms and titles were more con-

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<sup>7</sup> Elizabeth W. Hyland (1984) includes a translation of Fascicle One, and though many passages are still beyond her reach, it is a valiant effort. Michel Strickmann (1979) has a number of passages from the end of Fascicle Four with detailed analysis and commentary. Stephen R. Bokenkamp (1996) has most of Yang Xi’s betrothal and marriage with the Perfected Consort An (ZG 1.11b4-2.2b6); I differ with him on only a few points, all but one of them minor. Paul W. Kroll (1996) has fine translations of many of Lady Right Blossom’s songs. The previous two items appear together in a widely-used anthology (Lopez 1996) that has benefited many students. Elsewhere Kroll has translated and analyzed most of the Lady of Purple Tenuity’s poems (2003), and through the years (2007, 2010) he has done much work on the poem series on dependency and non-dependency (ZG 3.2b8-5a5). I have also made much use of Kroll’s article on light terminology (1999).

sistently rendered. I also deleted approximately 20 footnotes in each fascicle that I thought were unnecessary.

I may have started the work with only general goals in mind, but once I realized how ZG's first part was put together, I felt that I should share my discoveries as soon as possible. I cannot claim to have read everything about the ZG, but I am certain that crucial aspects of Yang Xi and the Xus' story have never been set out clearly before. Dozens of scholars have read and researched this material in the past, and Part One has long been known to concern courtship, marriage, death, and the search for immortality, but many of the connections among these elements have been overlooked. Perhaps too many people have been approaching it as a source for information on one or another doctrine, one or another meditation practice, or one or another socio-historical phenomenon, and so they have failed to integrate the material sufficiently.

There are, in my opinion, at least five aspects of ZG's first part that have been mostly overlooked. First is the keenness of its (mostly male-centered) perspectives on sexuality. This may seem surprising, considering its numerous admonitions to avoid sex entirely, but once one gets past all the courtly, flowery language, the euphemisms and circumlocutions, and the otherworldly nature of so much of the subject-matter, the book reflects a profound awareness of the human sexual experience, from masturbation to intense newlywed passion to erectile dysfunction among elderly men. Second, closely related to the first, is the sex-replacement regimen that it sets out for the human players, and how the "mechanics" of spiritual union with Perfected partners are visualized in meditation.<sup>8</sup> These are spelled out indirectly, in terms that would not offend the refined sensibilities of either the Perfected or aristocratic human participants, but once pieced together they become transparent analogues to what occurs in ordinary sex—with certain unusual role reversals. The role reversals between bride and groom in Yang Xi's famous account of his own betrothal and marriage with the Perfected Consort An extend both to the way they consummate their union and to its outcome. Third is the entanglement of destinies among the protagonists of this drama, on both the human and Perfected sides. The shocking secret that underlies the intertwining fates of Xu Mi and Xu Hui has scarcely been mentioned. Meanwhile, frequent misinterpretations of Perfected ranks and titles, particularly their abbreviated forms, and failures to investigate names, titles, and connections deeply enough, have caused some of the familial ties among the Perfected to "disappear." Fourth is the manipulative nature of Yang Xi. Although Stephen Bokenkamp, writing in his *Ancestors and Anxiety*, has already hinted at certain unsavory aspects of Yang's character (2007, 156), I would go further and call Yang a master of psychological manipulation, one who applies all kinds of subtle strategies that play on his patron's anxieties to convince him to follow the path of Perfection. Fifth is the relationship between the entire courtship-related part of the story and the part

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<sup>8</sup> Eskildsen (1998, 75-79) comes closest on this "mysticism of sublimated sexuality" (79).

at the end dealing with death and the examination of corpses. There are many other things that I will set out here that may surprise the reader.

As for the rest of the ZG, I do hope to continue the work of translating it in the future, but I may be much older than Xu Mi by the time I finish!

### Passages and Pieces

One of the greatest difficulties in presenting the ZG in an organized fashion centers on a seemingly innocuous word that appears frequently among Tao Hongjing's comments: *tiao* 條, which I render as "passage" (occasionally the word *pian* 篇 or "piece" is used instead). *Tiao* refers to a block of text in calligraphy, and *pian*, usually, to a poem. The word *tiao* appears in the comments that Tao inserts periodically to identify the calligraphers of the original documents before him, and they usually take the form, "For the previous three passages, there is calligraphy by so-and-so." This would seem easy enough, but sometimes one has difficulty determining where the breaks are, because so many have disappeared from current versions of the ZG—a situation at least partly due, once again, to the vagaries of transmission.

In the poetic passages, the original breaks may be recovered by finding changes in the rhyme scheme. For instance, the poems appearing in ZG 3.5a6-3.8b3 are followed with the comment, "For the preceding, from the words 'With vaulting leaps,' thirteen pieces in all, there is calligraphy by Yang..." but if we count the number of blocks of text as they appear in the current DZ beginning from the phrase specified, there appear to be only eleven pieces. Where have the other two gone? On closer examination, the poems in the third and fifth blocks show a change in rhyme scheme, signaling that each should in fact be counted as two. Some passage divisions have disappeared simply because the last character of a passage happens to complete one of the DZ's standard 17-character columns of text. Others can be recovered only by very careful reading and the piecing together of clues. In general, all of the "missing" divisions can be recovered, but sometimes they are hard to find. In fact, I believe that the greatest number of textual transmission errors in ZG, at least in Part One, may be found among Tao Hongjing's comments on his manuscript sources, in the formatting, and in the way the blocks of text are divided, not in the content of the declarations themselves. Copyists through the ages probably exercised greater care with the words of the Perfected persons' speeches than with the format and Tao's comments on manuscript sources.

There appear to be some inconsistencies in the way Tao Hongjing counts the *tiao*. At one point, a single sentence containing a list of names is divided among seven passages (ZG 2.7b4-10) that Tao Hongjing later includes in his count of *tiao*; at another point, a similar list of names is subsumed under a single *tiao*, and Tao does not count the names separately (ZG 2.2b7-3a4). However, this may easily be the outcome of errors in transmission. The names in the

latter list were not necessarily written in separate columns in the original manuscript. There are also inconsistencies in the way that comments in the form of postscripts are counted, particularly in Fascicle One. For example, the declarations of July 28, 365 consist of three *tiao*, followed by four miscellaneous comments not included in any count of *tiao*, even though Tao, in one of his notes to the latter comments, does speak of it as a *tiao* (ZG 1.11a7). The declarations of July 25 and 26, 365 (ZG 1.4b9-6a1), consisting of speeches by Mao Gu and Zhou Yishan, had two *tiao*, and the division between them had to have been at the end of Mao Gu's speech—otherwise there would have been nothing to signal where Mao's speech ended and Zhou's speech began. However, in the current DZ text they are printed in a single block of text, so that Yang Xi's concluding remark becomes the second *tiao*—even though such comments are not elsewhere included in the count. The long list of Perfected (ZG 1.2a10-4b8) preceding that section lacks Tao's concluding statement to identify the calligrapher, and it cannot be somehow squeezed into the *tiao* count that concludes the section that follows it. Moreover, we can gather that it was not from the same manuscript that contained the following section. Considering the care with which Tao Hongjing approached the original materials, it seems very unlikely that he would have forgotten to identify the calligrapher and number of *tiao* for the manuscript source. I would rather put the blame for these problems on errors in transmission.

Finally, a block of text in calligraphy loosely resembles a paragraph in a modern text, but we must always remember that the breaks among these “passages” rarely fall in places where modern Western writers would separate paragraphs. Chinese calligraphers had (and still have) much greater freedom than their Western counterparts in choosing where to divide their texts. They may lump together very different subjects, or even break apart a sentence. The ZG usually separates each poem into its “passage” or “piece,” but sometimes two or three poems are lumped together.

The original materials that Tao Hongjing had to deal with were themselves a very mixed bag—some came from long scrolls, some from stray pieces of paper. Sometimes a manuscript contained information from one night's declarations; sometimes it contained records of several nights' declarations. From Tao's comment on the manuscript sources for the account of Yang Xi's betrothal and marriage (ZG 2.4b7), which mentions 24 passages, the continuity of the narrative indicates that two manuscripts served as the source: one was Yang Xi's personal record of his betrothal and marriage, and the other was a slightly different version that he provided to Xu Mi. I believe that the scroll with Yang Xi's personal record resumes with the section in which Consort An reveals a number of scriptures to Yang Xi and divulges his future (ZG 2.5b8-2.10b5), but there is no solid evidence for this apart from Tao Hongjing's rather cryptic comment at the end of the latter section, “...there is also Lord Yang's personal record.” Thus, in many cases we can catch a glimpse of what the original documents looked like or contained, but in other cases there is no indication of

whether a group of passages was taken from one or several documents, or whether passages from a particular source were omitted and placed elsewhere.

In the present translation, therefore, I insert a bracketed number at the beginning of each new passage or *tiao*. This way, if one of Tao Hongjing's notes mentions "the previous five passages," then the reader can easily find where they begin and how they are divided.

### Stylistic Matters

I generally follow scholarly convention when translating Daoist terms, but there are two exceptions, mainly for stylistic reasons. The first is the name of the branch of Daoism in which ZG is so important: Shangqing 上清. Usually it is rendered "Highest Clarity," but I call it "Higher Clarity." Why? I do not see any indication of the superlative in the term. If this is "Highest," then what would *taishang* 太上, *wushang* 無上, *shangshang* 上上, or *zuishang* 最上 be? Furthermore, if we take a look at the *Dongxuan lingbao zhenling weiye tu* 洞玄靈寶真靈位業圖 (Chart of the Positions of Perfected Numina; DZ 167; abbr. WYT), which maps out the "pantheon" of deities, Perfected beings, immortals, and underworld figures, we see that the first-tier divinities are situated in the heaven of Jade Clarity (Yuqing 玉清) while the second-tier divinities are situated in the heaven of Higher Clarity. In the matter of style, I am also wary of freely dishing out superlatives. Somehow it seems safer and more sensible to me to render Shangqing as Higher Clarity than Highest Clarity.

Second, the word *jing* 景 is a common term in Daoism that refers to bright heavenly bodies or their bright counterparts in the body—the body's own gods, often described in terms of bright dragons, horses, chariots and so on, eight or twenty-four in number. It has become almost standard among researchers specializing in Daoism to render *jing* as "Effulgences" or "Luminants." By themselves, these are perfectly fine translations, but something dreadful happens if they are used while translating Daoist poetry at length. Given the frequency of references to *jing*, the poetry begins to sag under the weight of all those "Effulgences." By analogy, we may appreciate Robert Harrick's "liquefaction of her clothes," but if he had spilled "liquefaction" on every page, it would only become annoying. Thus, after some experimentation, I settled on rendering *jing* with the capitalized "Lights." Think of it: we are accustomed to translating *ying* 影 as "shadow," so why must its opposite be "effulgence" instead of "light"? I capitalize it to distinguish the term from ordinary lights and to indicate that this is, in fact, a special term that refers to a set of deities.

The ZG often uses the word *qi*, written 棲 or 栖, to describe how the adept settles into position, whether physically or spiritually, in the mountains or otherworldly locales. In translation I usually retain its root meaning of "perch" or "roost" to ensure that the deep association between immortals and birds is

not lost. Also, where jade (*yu* 玉) denotes brightness, I use “jade-bright,” and where *kong* 空 refers to the heavens or space, I use “the vault of space.”

Deciding whether to translate or romanize names was always very difficult. I always romanize place names for sites in China and the surnames and names of both worldly and Perfected persons. Otherworldly place names are usually translated, with certain exceptions. In some cases, such as Mount Kunlun and the paradise isles Penglai, Fusang, and so on, these are already well-known among Western readers of Chinese literature, so I leave them as they are. Others, if translated, would become awkward. For example, I only romanize Mount Tongbo because it is much easier than “Paulownia and Cypress Mountain” and because it has a corresponding earthly site in China. If I were to use the translated term, its connection with the earthly site would be broken. I faced similar difficult decisions every time I encountered immortals known only by their sobriquets: should I say Chisongzi or Master Redpine? Guxizi or Master Valley-Rarified? Master Changli Xue or Master Longvillage Xue? In such cases, the final decision depended purely on what sounded right to my ears.

Except when discussing rhyme schemes, I use the contemporary pronunciations of Chinese words when romanizing, hence *Wushang mijiao* instead of *Wushang bijiao*, Li Bai instead of Li Bo, and so on. The medieval Chinese pronunciations that appear in comments concerning rhyme are based on the work on historical pronunciations by Prof. William Baxter, who was kind enough to send me a file listing them. In many instances Yang Xi’s rhymes seem very loose. However, Tao Hongjing notes that Yang “seems to have come originally from Wu” (ZG 20.11a10-11b1), and it is likely that Tao had noticed this from Yang’s choice of rhyme words and other forms of wordplay (ZG 4.7b10-8a1). Yang Xi and the Perfected who spoke through him were thus speaking with an eastern accent that in Tao’s view varied a bit from the standard.

The reader will notice that several different line and margin formats are used in the translation: (1) standard prose—no comment needed; (2) rhymed poetry—sharp indentation, unjustified right margins; (3) unrhymed parallel prose—slight indentation, both margins justified, with each matching pair of phrases placed in a single line; (4) lists—slightly indented left margins only; (4) interlinear comments—moved to the end of each section and placed before the “Comments,” printed in slightly reduced font. As mentioned earlier, separate lines of commentary that are indented in the DZ text are italicized in translation. I should add that Chinese prose from this period relies heavily on parallel phrasing. Thus in my first rough translations I carefully graphed out all the parallel constructions by insertions of format (3) in every instance. The words seemed to dance all over every page, but this helped me to grasp the sentence structures. In later drafts, I kept format (3) only where the parallelism was most extensive and consistent.

I am not afraid of footnotes, and in fact I delight in them. The ZG will never be an easy book, so I footnote generously and keep abbreviations to a minimum for clarity. When new figures are introduced, I will usually mention

his or her position in the “pantheon” described in the WYT, which is based on a chart that Tao Hongjing had compiled.<sup>9</sup> When I refer to any other DZ text in a footnote, I provide its full romanized title and the DZ number (based on Komjathy 2002). On first mention I provide its Chinese characters and the translated title. If the scripture is also discussed in the second volume of Isabelle Robinet’s *La Révélation du Shangqing*, I provide a “Robinet number” as well. There are nearly 1,500 scriptures in the DZ, but only a handful have direct bearing on the content of the ZG, so referring to these Robinet numbers makes it possible for the reader to zero in on the Higher Clarity scriptural legacy quickly. Robinet’s work takes the form of an outline: scriptures A.1 to A.34 are on a list of Higher Clarity scriptures in *Fengdao kejie yingshi* 奉道科戒營始 (Initial Rules and Precepts for Worshipping the Dao; DZ 1125; trl. Kohn 2004b), 5.1a3-2a9, and these may be considered “core” to the movement. Scriptures on the B list are also essential to the movement, though they were somehow not included in the first list, and scriptures on the C list include works like ZG, the biographies of Higher Clarity saints, and so on—works that were part of the early Higher Clarity literary corpus but did not quite have the status of scriptures whose transmission was strictly limited (I do not include these notes for the later scriptures on Robinet’s D and E lists).

In the footnotes there is a great deal of cross-referencing, given the extensive specialized vocabulary used in Higher Clarity Daoism. In general, I try to gloss a term or identify a name upon first mention, and then refer back to it on the second or even third appearance. After that, it passes without further comment. I also vary from usual academic practice by referring often to dictionaries (*Hanyu da cidian* or HDC and Morohashi 1984), but I do think they should be so credited—too often translators err by not using them assiduously even where they may think they already understand the terms.

The first footnote for Fascicle One, which concerns the title, is the longest. In retrospect, this did not occur by chance. The three characters of the title represent Tao Hongjing’s distillation of everything contained here, and I am sure that he had pondered their selection a long time. Unfortunately, at one point during the centuries of the ZG’s transmission it must have baffled someone who then went on to change it. Even worse, the one passage in ZG that would have best explained the title seems to have gone missing. What, after all, does *yun tixiang* 運題象 mean? I eventually settled on “Setting Scripts and Images into Motion,” which happens to sound cinematic, but I think this also helps convey to Western readers the idea that this part of ZG may be read as a story. Possible alternates would be “Activating / Moving / Animating / Cycling the Scripts and Images.” Even so, I am certain that the reader will not fully grasp what it means until he or she has finished studying the entire content of this

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<sup>9</sup> My footnotes will speak often of the pantheon in WYT, but one should keep in mind that Daoist pantheons have always been quite fluid, as pointed out in Bokenkamp 2010.

book. This is part of the “perverse design” again: the very first item to appear is by far the hardest thing to understand.



