CHAPTER EIGHT

SHANGQING—HIGHEST CLARITY*

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DESCRIPTION

The term *Shangqing* 上清, Highest Clarity or Supreme Purity, refers to two distinct phenomena. First, it indicates a collection of texts, those originally revealed and those created later or "apocryphal," which were adopted by the Chinese aristocracy in the fifth and sixth centuries and came to occupy the highest rank among the Three Caverns (*sandong* 三洞), the organizational scheme used to arrange the scriptural corpus of medieval Daoism (see Robinet 1984). Second, the term designates the religious school which grew gradually from the texts and of which Tao Hongjing 陶弘景 was the true founder—a religious school with its own complete organization, including patriarchs, monasteries, holy centers, liturgies, a priestly hierarchy, as well as numerous later texts and rituals (see Robinet 1997).

Shangqing Daoism began with a series of revelations to the medium Yang Xi in the second half of the fourth century. It consisted of a synthesis of the Way of the Celestial Master and the traditions of the immortality seekers, some of which went back as far as the late Zhou (*Zhuangzi*, *Chuci*) and Han dynasties (*fangshi*). The cosmic insights of these two traditions further merged with the ecstatic traditions of south China and with various types of physiological practices: visions of spirits and of colored energies, absorption of astral florescences, ecstatic excursions around the earth and the heavens. Shangqing traces itself back to the immortals and immortality seekers who formed the ancient traditions of China, some of whose lineages can be documented historically. Shangqing appeared in the south of China at a time when the country was divided into north and south, the north having been invaded by "barbarians" of Xiongnu 匈奴 origin. Fleeing from the invaders, the Jin imperial court and a portion of the northern upper classes moved to the south, where they confronted a local aristocracy of long standing (see

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Strickmann 1978b). For Daoism, this meant a southward move of the religion of the Celestial Masters, which had been dominant in the north. Once in the south, it combined with the cosmological and spiritual techniques of Han-dynasty *fangshi* who had exerted a certain influence on Confucianism, but had been supplanted in the north by more rationalist tendencies. Having lost the north, their ideas and practices survived in the south, where they fruitfully reemerged in combination with the newly arriving Celestial Masters teachings.

The resulting Shangqing revelations thus marked something of a victory of the ancient southern traditions over those from the north. They won rapid success among the local aristocracy not only because they were southern but also because they exhibited a high literary quality. Aside from the remarkable poetic power of Shangqing language, which secured both texts and school a high standing within literary Chinese culture, the movement is also characterized by a great interiorization of religious practices. Shangqing formed an important link in the evolution from operative or laboratory alchemy to inner alchemy. It caused the transformation of physical sexual practices into platonic love relationships with the gods, diminished the bureaucratic, formal, and theurgical spirit of the Celestial Masters in its ritual and transmuted the ideal of quasi-physical immortality into one of spiritual salvation. At the same time it proved seductive to the poetic and mystical imagination, a feat which successfully distinguished it from the communal religiosity of the Celestial Masters as well as from contemporary speculative Buddhism.

Shangqing Daoism is sometimes referred to as Maoshan 茅山 Daoism in Western discussions because Mount Mao, southeast of Nanjing, served as one of its key centers (see Schafer 1980). However, this reference is not entirely correct since because the mountain has served as a center for a variety of Daoist groups and movements over the centuries and can in no way be identified with Shangqing—which should be called by its proper name.

History

Nothing is known about **Yang Xi** 楊羲 (330-386) except that he was a retainer of the aristocratic Xu 許 family originally from the north but which had emigrated to the south around the year 185 C.E. It seems that the family was related to Ge Hong 葛洪, the most celebrated representative of southern Daoism, and was also affiliated with the Celestial Masters. Between 363 and 370, then, a series of divine personages, the so-called perfected (*zhen* 真), appeared to Yang Xi and dictated to him the texts which were to form the foundation of Shangqing Daoism. They

were directed particularly at the Xus, notably at Xu Mi 許謐 (303-373) and his son Xu Hui 許翽 (341-ca. 370). The texts were very successful among the southern aristocrats and influenced the Lingbao school that developed a few decades later (see Strickmann 1978b; 1981; Tang 1955).

The grandson of Xu Mi, Xu Huangmin 許黃民 (361-429), moved to Zhejiang where he distributed the texts and upon his death bequeathed them to two further families, named Ma 馬 and De 杜. This bequest marks the first dispersion of the original Shangqing scriptures, to be followed by several others. A particularly notable set of forgeries appeared in the early fifth century that were connected with Wang Lingqi 王靈期 and Xu Rongdi 許榮弟, the son of Xu Huangmin.

Several eminent medieval Daoists put their best efforts into reassembling the original texts, including Lu Xiujing 陸修靜 (406-477), the seventh patriarch of the school who collected them in his monastery, the Chongxu guan 崇虛觀(Monastery of Venerating Emptiness) in the southern capital, and Gu Huan 顧歡 (420/8-483/91) who organized a community dedicated to their study. In addition, several emperors of the period were interested in the texts and bestowed their favor upon the patriarchs of the emerging school. In 481, for example, the emperor sent an envoy to Lushan 廬山 in search of the texts and indeed recovered some of them. The eighth patriarch, Sun Youyue 孫遊嶽(398-488) a disciple of Lu Xiujing, taught at a monastery in the imperial capital. His disciple, the ninth patriarch, Tao Hongjing (456-536), a relative of both the Xu and Ge families, was a great friend of Emperor Wu of the Liang who was otherwise more inclined toward Buddhism. Tao's friendships with Buddhists stimulated the syncretistic tendencies between Daoism and Buddhism more characteristic of later ages. He was also an herbalist of some renown (editing and annotating the *Shennong bencao* 神農本草 [Material Medical]), and engaged in a variety of alchemical experiments. He first set out upon an official career but in 492, seduced by the Shangqing manuscripts, retired to Maoshan where he greatly prospered under imperial protection. Directing a community of Daoists who lived very much like the monks in a Buddhist monastery, he continued the collection and compilation of the Shangqing texts begun by his predecessors. A learned bibliographer of some standing, he also established criteria for distinguishing forgeries from genuine manuscripts mainly on the basis of the calligraphic styles of Yang Xi and Xu Mi, and set about codifying the scriptures and classifying the practices they described. As a result, he published the *Zhen'gao* 真誥 (Declarations of the Perfected), which contains not only commentaries on some texts but also a report on the original revelation and on Tao's own quest for the texts. Under him, Maoshan became a major center of Daoist activity, a place of religious

retreat and goal of devout pilgrimage (see Mugitani 1976; Strickmann 1979).

The anti-Daoist proscriptions of the years 504 and 517 (see Strickmann 1978a) spared Tao's monastery because he was working under emperor Wu's direct protection but caused a number of other Daoists to emigrate to the north, where they further disseminated Shangqing teachings without, however, drawing the movement's center away from the south. Between the sixth and tenth centuries the school became the central and highest Daoist tradition. The encyclopedia *Wushang biyao*, compiled under the Northern Zhou around the year 570, already consisted largely of Shangqing materials, as did the *Sandong shunang* of the early seventh century. The 10th patriarch, **Wang Yuanzhi** 王遠知 (d. 635; see Yoshikawa 1990), won the favor of the first Tang emperor, serving as his legitimizing saint and initiating him into certain Shangqing texts. As a result he was granted the foundation of a new temple on Maoshan, a monastery later known as the Taiping guan 太平館 (Monastery of Great Peace). He was succeeded by Pan Shizheng 潘師正 (d. 694), whose conversations about the Shangqing texts with Emperor Gaozong still survive in fragments. He is also known for founding a group of Shangqing temples on Mount Song near Luoyang.

The 12th patriarch, **Sima Chengzhen** 司馬承禎 (647-735), one of the greatest masters of the period (see Engelhardt 1987; Kirkland 1986), was a descendant of the royal house of Jin. After serving Pan Shizheng 潘師正, the 11th patriarch, he returned south and established himself on Mount Tiantai 天台山 (Zhejiang), where the emperor granted him the foundation of the Tongbo guan 桐柏觀 (Cypress Monastery). He was summoned to court several times by successive rulers, all of whom constructed temples in his honor, and initiated both the emperor Xuanzong and the poet Li Bo 李白 into several Daoist texts. An important administrative success of his came in 721 when the emperor granted Shangqing deities supervision over all the empire's local and mountain gods, and thereby intensified the hold of Daoism over the religions of the country. Sima died in 735 on Mount Wangwu north of the capital. His successor, Li Hanguang 李含光 (683-769) returned to Maoshan where he dedicated his life to making a new edition of the Shangqing scriptures. They were presented to the emperor in 748, and formed the basis of the first Tang Daoist canon to be copied and distributed throughout the empire.

Until the eleventh century, the Shangqing texts served as inspiration for poets, such as **Wu Yun** 吳筠 (d. 778; see Schafer 1981), and prose writers alike, while later patriarchs, such as Zhu Ziying 朱自英 (s. 1029) and Liu Hunkang 劉混康 (1035-1108), continued to benefit from imperial approval and variously initiated emperors and their families into the

secrets of the scriptures. The Daoist section of the *Taiping yulan* (dat. 983) consists for the most part of Shangqing materials. A similarly significant impact, in liturgy, meditation, and various practical instructions, is also found in the *Yutang dafa* 玉堂大法 (Major Methods of the Jade Hall; dat. 1120), a major compendium of Daoist ritual. In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, however, the Shangqing school was subsumed under the Celestial Masters who gained increasing dominance, but who still placed the Shangqing registers at the top of their ritual hierarchy.

The spirit of Shangqing nonetheless gradually moved toward greater institutionalization, ritualization, and a moralistic tendency entirely absent from the original corpus. Further codified and organized, the texts came to adopt values that defined the place of adepts within the hierarchy along the lines of the registers of the Celestial Masters. There were several works that systematized the pantheon and undertook a thematic classification of the texts. New texts were added to the ancient corpus that integrated elements from Lingbao, the Celestial Masters, and Buddhism. Living masters became increasingly more important than texts and practices. Protocols of transmission in the form of registers and certificates of ordination were essential, while the techniques of visualization and ecstatic practice underwent increasing simplification.

On Maoshan other revelations emerged which were of a different character. They greatly emphasized exorcism yet claimed Shangqing lineage. Finally, the 45th patriarch, **Liu Dabin** 劉大彬 (fl. 1317-1328), wrote a preface to the *Maoshan zhi* 茅山志 (Chronicle of Mount Mao, CT 304) in which he summed up the history of the school that is documented in the 33 j. of the "Chronicle," a monumental testimony to the sacred history of school and mountain, probably written by Zhang Yu 張雨 (1279-1350).

Texts

Although the revealed texts of Shangqing are distributed throughout the Daoist canon and have mostly been altered or redacted, it is possible to reconstitute the original corpus using lists found in texts (Robinet 1984, 2:15-22). Moreover the contents of the texts can be authenticated by referring to notes in Tao's *Zhen'gao*, as well as analyzing their vocabulary, pantheon, and inter-textual cross-references.

The texts contain many Daoist talismans, hymns, and poems. There are no long lists of divinities, as in comparable works of the Celestial Masters or of Lingbao, nor do they present theoretical expositions—at

least not in the early works. Rarely do Buddhist terms occur and if they do, they are not used in their proper Buddhist sense.

Dadong zhenjing 大洞真經 (Perfect Scripture of Great Profundity, 39 stanzas), dat. 360s (see Robinet 1983; 1984, 2:A1; 1993, 97-119; Mugitani 1992). This is the fundamental Shangqing text. It focuses on great profundity, defined as the "supreme, unlimited darkness where one attains the void and guards tranquility." The term appears as a synonym for Shangqing itself and designates the essential teaching of the entire school.

The text exists in several versions of varying titles that date for the most part from the Song and Yuan. There are, for example, the *Wenchang dadong xianjing* 文昌大洞仙經, placed under the patronage of the popular god Wenchang (CT 5) in 5 j.; its commented version (CT 103), in 10 j.; a *Dadong zhenjing* with different commentary (CT 6) in 6 j.; a "jade scripture" or *Dadong yujing* 大洞玉經 (CT 7) in 2 j.; as well as a version in the *Daozang jiyao* which contains fragments of yet three other editions. Despite the various redactions the text underwent, these versions have mostly been authenticated, and the version closest to the original is CT 6, although it contains added parts both in j. 1 and at the end of 6.

The central 39 stanzas are dedicated to celestial divinities, who are further correlated with visualizations of certain body gods that may have been added later. In addition, the scripture itself forms the core of a group of practices, such as the method of the whirlwind (*huifeng* 回風) which already was linked with the book in Tao Hongjing's time, and cannot be separated from its "revealed commentary," found in the *Yunji qiqian* (8.1a-14a) under the title *Shi sanshijiu zhang jing* 釋三十九章經 (incomplete). Actually two kinds of texts correspond to this title: one is contained at the end of CT 6 and again found in the *Jinhua yujing* 金華玉經 (Jade Scripture of the Golden Flower, CT 254, 6b-9a); the other is in the beginning of each paragraph of CT 6 and again regrouped in the *Yunji qiqian* (30.10b-22a). At the same time, an "oral formula" was attached to the different sections of the text and is partly contained in CT 6; it otherwise appears throughout the Shangqing corpus. The recitation of the *Dadong zhenjing* was moreover accompanied by a preparatory ritual, not unlike the method known as *Xuanmu bajian* 玄母八間 (Eight Tablets of the Mysterious Mother) and certain techniques described in the *Ciyi jing* (Scripture of the Female One, CT 1313).

Lingshu ziwen 靈書紫文 (Purple Texts Inscribed by the Spirits), one of the original Shangqing scriptures, found today in four different texts in the Daoist canon: CT 639, 255, 442 and 179 (trl. Bokenkamp 1997, 301-66; see Robinet 1984, 2:101-10; Schafer 1978). The first gives the composition story of the text as going back to Qingtong 青童, the

Azure Lad, a mediator between the divine and human realms. It then describes three methods of psycho-physiological refinement involving visualization, incantations and the absorption of talismans as well as control over the *hun* and *po* souls. The second text contains the recipe of the Langgan Elixir 郎玕之華, an astro-alchemical concoction that involves the absorption of stellar essences. The third is devoted to a description of the end of the world and discusses the savior figure Li Hong 李弘 who will come to rescue the chosen people. The fourth and last text lists ethical and ritual prohibitions.

Santian zhengfa jing 三天正法經 (Scripture of the Correct Method of the Three Heavens; see Ozaki 1974; Robinet 1984, 2:A7). The majority of this text is lost. It seems to have been an apocryphon of the Six Dynasties, and some fragments remain in the Daoist canon, in the 11 pages of CT 1203 as well as in the *Jiuwei badao jing* 九微八道經 (Scripture of the Eight Ways of the Nine Tenuities, CT 1395). The most authentic and important citations of the original text are found in the *Yunji qiqian* (2.4a-8a), describing a theory of the cyclical ending of the world. The original text probably described ways of escaping the cataclysmic disasters at the end of a cycle, using incantations and talismans.

Huangqi yangjing sandao shunxing jing 黃氣陽精三道順行經 (Scripture to Accompany the Yellow Energy, the Yang Essence, and the Three Ways, CT 33, 29 pp.; Robinet 1984, 2:A8). The "yellow energy" is the florescence of the moon, while "yang essence" refers to that of the sun. The "three ways" are the courses of the three key stars, the sun, the moon, and the Dipper. The adept follows the course of the sun and the moon and rides on the stars in order to acquire the nourishment necessary for immortality. He lies down on the Dipper, while the seven gods of the constellation transform into pure light.

Taidan yinshu 太丹隱書 (Secret Book of the Great Cinnabar, CT 1330, 46 pp.; Robinet 1984, 2:A18). The present version of this text has been reedited and is in some disorder but it does contain important original Shangqing materials. It deals with the regeneration of the adept and all the gods with the help of Taiyi 太一, the Great One, and focuses on Dijun 帝君, the Lord Emperor, as the highest god. The book also contains methods of having one's name inscribed in the registers of life through the intercession of the five "register spirits."

Ciyi yujian wulao baojing 雌一玉檢五老寶經 (Precious Scripture of the Five Old Lords, Enveloped in Jade of the Female One, CT 1313, 58 pp.; Robinet 1984, 2:B1; Lagerwey 1981, 241-43). This seventh-century Shangqing edition contains authentic early material that consists largely of methods (*fa* 法) that complement other scriptures and focuses on the "formula" of the *Dadong zhenjing*. Certain parts are apocryphal, but still in harmony with the original revelations. The core text concerns the

Three Ladies of Simplicity (Sansu 三素), the female counterparts of the male deities of the Grotto Chamber (*dongfang* 洞房) in the center of the head and their sons, to whom one portion of the text is also dedicated (24a-27a). This latter portion, which is also cited under the title *Dongfang neijing* 洞房內經, also appears in the *Dongfang jingzhu* 洞房經註 (Annotated Scripture of the Grotto Chamber, CT 133, pp. plus 7 pp., later comm.). It may go back to the third century, when it was received by the masters Su Lin 蘇林 and Juanzi 涓子, and later adopted into Shangqing. The *Ciyi jing* presents a harmonization of practices found in the older *Dongfang jing* and those of the *Taidan yinshu*.

Basu jing 八素經 (Scripture of the Eight White [Chariots]; Robinet 1984, 2:A3). The *basu* are eight chariots of white clouds closely connected with the *bajing* 八景 or eight chariots of light on which the divinities move about. They are also female gods. The "Basu Scripture" actually consists of several texts that all have to do with the absorption of astral florescences: the *Basu zhenjing* 八素真經 (CT 426, 28 pp.) and the *Basu zhenjing fu riyue huanghua jue* 八素真經服日月皇華訣 (Basu Scripture Formula on the Absorption of the Sovereign Florescence of the Sun and Moon, CT 1323, 26 pp.). The first of these two versions describes an exercise of evoking the planets and their spirits during the *wutong* 五通 days when the spirits mount to heaven to attend to the registers of good and bad deeds. It complements the practice undertaken on the *huiyuan* 迴元 days as described in the *Jiuzhen zhongjing*. In addition, the text also has procedures to exorcise demons, formulas for pacifying the *hun* souls, and ways to eliminate the Three Corpses (*sanshi* 三尸). The second version of the *Basu jing* teaches how to absorb the essences of the sun and the moon. It also describes the ritual of the Eight Gates of the Mysterious Mother, which addresses the divinities riding in the chariots of clouds and light, and gives instructions on the visualization of the gods riding during the eight nodal points, the major divisions of the year.

Jiuzhen zhongjing 九真中經 (Central Scripture of the Nine Perfected, CT 1376, 2 j.; CT 1377, 22 pp.) and *Dongfang shangjing* 洞房上經 (Highest Scripture of the Grotto Chamber; CT 405, 19 pp; see Robinet 1979; 1984, 2: A5; Yamada 1989). These two texts cite and complement each other, containing summaries of important Shangqing methods even though neither has retained its original form. Three techniques stand out.

1. The method of the Nine Perfected, i.e., the nine souls of the Lord Emperor who give life to the body. The practitioner meditates on the Lord Emperor, on Taiyi, and on the five register spirits, who fuse nine times, joining each time into one great spirit who then goes to the Niwan 泥丸 palace in the head. The same type of exercise is found in the *Jiudan shanghua taijing zhongji jing* 九丹上化胎精中記經 (Scripture of the Central

Record of the Ninefold Cinnabar of the Upper Transformation of the Embryo Essence, CT 1382, 27 pp.; Robinet 1984, 2: A20), here dedicated to loosening the embryonic knots in the body which are the cause of human mortality.

2. The method of the *Dijun jiuyin jing* 帝君九陰經 (Scripture of the Nine Yin of the Lord Emperor). The secret spouses of Great Yin who live in the Dipper and in the Mingtang 明堂 (Hall of Light) in the head control deliverance of the body through disappearance and invoke powers of vanishing and transformation. Adepts should visualize the relevant divinities, such as the Lord Emperor, the Great One, the five register spirits, and the gods of the Dipper in the various palaces of the head and heart. They then transform into a radiant infant who illuminates everything.

3. The method of the *Yuyi jielin* 鬱儀結璘, the esoteric names of the sun and the moon. This appears in numerous texts and was also adopted in later rituals. It consists of visualizing the emperors of the stars who descend to take the adept into the heavens.

In addition, various methods of the five and twenty-four spirits, of the five planets, and of *huiyuan*, are found spread out in CT 1376 and 1377. They are best collected in CT 405, the *Dongfang shangjing*, a text quite distinct from the *Dongfang jing* related to the *Ciyi jing*. The methods involve various exercises using the five spirits of the hands, the feet, and the lungs (or of the head), as well as the twenty-four luminous body gods and the divinities of the planets. On the special *huiyuan* ("return to the origin") days adepts can erase their names from the register of sins and make the gods of the Dipper descend into their bodies.

Bu tiangang fei diji shangjing 步天綱飛地紀上經 (Highest Scripture for Pacing the Heavenly Net and Flying over the Mainstays of Earth, CT 1316, 29 pp.; Robinet 1984, 2:A4). This details the pacing of the Dipper (*bu beidou* 步北斗), a practice that probably antedates Shangqing (see Andersen 1990). The text is truncated in parts and may not all be authentic, but the parts that describe the pacing of the Dipper seem to be authentic Shangqing revelations.

Guishan xuanlu 龜山玄錄 (Mysterious Register of Turtle Mountain, CT 1393, 3 j.; Robinet 1984, 2:A27). Turtle Mountain is described as a cosmic mountain that touches the boundaries of the earth. It is located east of Kunlun, the home of the Queen Mother of the West (Xiwang mu 西王母), an ancient deity who is also the patroness of this text. The second scroll was added after the revelations between the first and third of the original. One part of the text (1.4a-8b) is written in talismanic characters spontaneously created by the purple energy of heaven which also gave birth to the Queen Mother, the spirit of the west. The text gives a list of the 74 divinities of the *Dadong zhenjing* as they appear in

different forms, sometimes as animals, sometimes as light, depending on the seasons. It teaches the way to meditate on these gods and return them to their original shapes.

Waiguo fangpin qingtong neiwen 外國方品青童內文 (Esoteric Text of the Green Lad on the Distribution of Foreign Lands, CT 1373, 2 j.; Robinet 1984, 2:A9). This text is slightly later than the revelation to Yang Xi. Its two scrolls seem to be two distinct scriptures, with one section of the second being apparently written after the emergence of the Lingbao texts. It names the 36 heavens and 36 earths in groups of four and can be grouped with ecstatic excursion texts and manuals on exorcism by chanting heavenly sounds. Its cosmology is a compromise between the mainstream Chinese vision of the isles of the immortals, the stages of the sun, and the potentially beneficial countries of the barbarians—all of which it describes—and Buddhist features such as the names of the four Buddhist continents and Sanskritic names for far-off places. The division of the heavens and earth, however, is by six and nine, following the cosmology of Shangqing and not that of Buddhism.

Suling dayou miaojing 素靈大有妙經 (Wondrous Scripture of [the Heavens] Dayou and Suling, CT 1314, 68 pp.; Robinet 1984, 2:B2). This present, probably incomplete, version of this complex of materials is full of later interpolations and thus differs in form from that of the seventh century. It consists of textual strata from the Han to the late fifth century and demonstrates an early stage of the hierarchical division of Daoist texts that later grew into the full scheme of the Three Caverns. Some of its methods were linked with Su Lin and Juanzi and predate Shangqing, but were later adopted into the tradition.

The text can be divided into three major sections. The first is dedicated to the Three-in-One which are formed A) by the Three Abysses (*sanyuan* 三淵), the three cosmic levels of heaven, earth, and water which govern the Suling heaven and the three cinnabar fields; B) by the nine palaces (*jiugong* 九宮) in the head where the gods of the Male and the Female One reside; or C) by the Three Ones identical with the Three Primes (*sanyuan* 三元) who reside in the cinnabar fields. The latter are the object of a meditation called *wudou sanyi* 五斗三一 (Five Dipper Stars and Three Ones) which carries the adept to the Dipper. The topology of the head, moreover, as described here is probably anterior to Shangqing and is a bit different from that found in other texts of the school.

The second major section of the text (41a-44a) presents a developed and ritualized procedure linked with the hagiography of Peijun 裴君. The third part (44a-end) is a later code called *Jiuzhen mingke* 九真明科 (Luminous Code of the Nine Perfected), which systematizes the rules of textual transmission. It appears again, yet further developed, in the later *Siji mingke* 四極明科 (Luminous Code of the Four Poles, CT 184, j. 3).

Zhen'gao (Declarations of the Perfected, CT 1016, 20 j.), by Tao Hongjing, dat. 499, with a postface by Gao Sisun, dat.1223 (see Ishii 1966-68; Robinet 1984, 2:C1; Kamitsuka 1986; Akamatsu 1992; Yoshikawa 1998 [collection of essays]). This comprehensive presentation of the revelations given to Yang Xi by the various perfected recovers numerous texts, partly because it cites them, partly because it is cited in them. The texts consist of scattered notes taken by Yang Xi or the Xus in describing Yang's visions, the gods and their intentions outside of the actual revelations. Some explain the texts that are being revealed, others trace the ancient history of the methods applied or describe the people who transmitted them, others again respond to direct questions put by Yang or the Xus. Tao Hongjing in addition comments now and then on the authenticity of the text, whether or not he deemed it an original Shangqing fragment, or where the particular passage came from—a great help in identifying texts whose titles were changed over the years.

The *Zhen'gao* divides into seven sections (originally ten), which give a general coherence to the presentation. The first five sections concern the revealed texts, beginning with a retelling of Yang Xi's visions and a transcript of the incantations of the perfected (j. 1-4). It then moves on to instructions of methods by lesser divinities (j. 5-6) and to information gathered from beyond the grave among the Xus' family and friends (j. 7-10). The fourth section (j. 11-14) describes Maoshan and retells its history, while the fifth (j. 15-16) is dedicated to the underworld. The sixth section (j. 17-18) contains personal writings by Yang and the Xus, fragments of correspondence and reports of dreams. The last section (j. 19-20) is by Tao himself, describing his methods of research and presentation as well as giving a history of the texts and a genealogy of the Xu family. Despite this overall order, there are frequent interpolations and repetitions among the sections, with the result that the chronology and the logical order of presentation are often both confused. Alterations have slid into the work of Tao Hongjing, and certain texts dictated by the perfected are scattered and truncated.

Dengzhen yinjue 登真隱訣 (Secret Formula on Ascending to Perfection, CT 421, 3 j.), by Tao Hongjing, dat. 514 (see Ôfuchi 1964, 308; Strickmann 1981; Robinet 1984, 2:C2). The majority of this text is lost today, and what remains is a collection of Shangqing texts made by Tao Hongjing for his disciples and thus, unlike the *Zhen'gao,* available for copying and reproduction. It contains an excerpt from the biography of Su Lin, discussing the practice of "guarding the One" (*shouyi* 守一; j. 1), fragments of the revelation to Yang Xi on lesser practices and apotropic methods also found in the *Zhen'gao* (j. 2), as well as rituals taught by Wei Huacun 魏華存 and attached to her biography (j. 3). A number of citations not found in the surviving text appear in later anthologies, fitting

closely with the work and supplementing it, especially in regard to the use of various drugs commonly described in the context of the hagiographies of Shangqing saints.

HAGIOGRAPHIES. Shangqing hagiographies describe immortals prior to Yang Xi who appeared to him to dictate their lives or present their biographies. These immortals have many similar points in common and often belong to the same lineage. Outlining the progress of spiritual initiation, they aim chiefly to integrate the immortals and their methods into accordance with the Shangqing corpus (see Mugitani 1982), while yet showing that their earlier ways were somewhat inferior and that the immortals occupied a slightly lower rank. Hence they often describe differences in immortals' hierarchies. Descriptions of methods, moreover, that were part of the biographies are often set apart but can be found in other Shangqing texts.

Sujun zhuan 蘇君傳 (Biography of Lord Sun, *Yunji qiqian* 104.1a-4b; Robinet 1984, 2:C6), attributed to Zhou Jitong, a Shangqing immortal. It contains forms of guarding the One, also found attached to the *Suling jing* (CT 1314) described above. They include the method of the Nine Palaces and that of the Five Stars and Three Ones, of which a more complete version appears in *Yunji qiqian* 49.11a-17b. They probably also included drug recipes associated with Su Lin.

Su Lin, *zi* Zixuan 子玄, came from Qushui in Jiangsu. After having studied different methods with various masters, whose biographies appear in the ancient *Liexian zhuan* 列仙傳, he became the disciple of Juanzi who taught him how to expel the three deathbringers and transmitted the *Wudou sanyi jing* 五斗三一經 and the method of the Grotto Chamber to him. After having successfully practiced these techniques, he ascended to heaven in broad daylight.

Qingxu zhenren wangjun neizhuan 清虛真人王君內傳 (Biography of Lord Wang, Perfected of Pure Emptiness, *Yunji qiqian* 106.1a-8a; Robinet 1984, 2:C7), describes Wang Bao 王寶, *zi* Zideng 子登, the master of Wei Huacun. The extant text is at least in part apocryphal; it contains two formulas: one on the absorption of the "cloudy germs" of the four directions, which appears in various Daozang texts; the other, which forms a pair with the first, is called the "green essence" and appears in *Yunji qiqian* 74.1a-7b.

Qingling zhenren peijun zhuan 清靈真人裴君傳 (Biography of Lord Pei, Perfected of Pure Numen, *Yunji qiqian* 105, 26 pp.; Robinet 1984, 2:C8), attributed to Dengyunzi 登雲子 but probably recreated on the basis of an earlier original, which was altered and subjected to interpolations. The *Taiyi jinque yuxi jinzhen ji* 太一金闕玉璽金真紀 (Record of the Jade Seal and Golden Perfection of the Golden Tower of the Great One, CT 394, 7 pp.) provides another, probably later, version.

Lord Pei, *zi* Xuanren 玄仁, came from Xiayang in Shanxi and was born in a Buddhist family under reign of Emperor Xiao (180-57 B.C.E.) or again under that of Emperor Ming (57-75 C.E.), the latter being more likely. In a Buddhist temple he met Zhi Ziyuan 支子元, a disciple of a *Liexian zhuan* immortal known as Chijiangzi Yu 赤將子輿, who transmitted to him five recipes, included in the biography, that are named after his master. After receiving his instructions, Lord Pei took an elixir, the recipe of which too is found in the text. Thereafter he took a tour around the polar mountains where he met various divinities who gave him food of the immortals and sacred books, so that he could attain a successful journey to the highest heavens of Shangqing.

The recipes he received from Zhi Ziyuan include a) a method for making the spirits of the planets descend upon the adept's body; b) a general exposition of the principles involved in sexual practices; c) a method to expel the three corpses; d) another to make the immortals come down; and e) a way to erase one's sins and get oneself and one's ancestors registered in the ledgers of life. The biography also waxes extensively on the method of the sun and the moon (*yuyi jielin*), otherwise found in the *Jiuzhen zhongjing*, a text which Lord Pei also received and followed.

Ziyang zhenren neizhuan 紫陽真人內傳 (Esoteric Biography of the Perfected of Purple Yang, CT 303, 19 pp., *Yunji qiqian* 106.8a-15a), dat. 399 (trl. Porkert 1979; see Robinet 1984, 2:C9). Probably written by Hua Qiao 華僑, who had received a visit from both this immortal and Lord Pei, this survives in two versions, neither of which retains the original but present either an expansion or contraction. It contains Shangqing hymns, a list of texts received by Ziyang—close to those listed in Wei Huacun's biography—reminiscences of the biography of Su Lin, and a preface describing the life of Hua Qiao. Methods tend to be similar to those of "guarding the One."

The Perfected of Purple Yang is Zhou Yishan 周義山, *zi* Jitong, who was born in 80 B.C.E., became a disciple of Su Lin, and was among the immortals who appeared to Yang Xi. In his youth he studied the *Daode jing*, *Lunyu*, and *Yijing*, enjoyed absorbing solar essences and practiced alms-giving. He received a visit by Su Lin who gave him alchemical and dietetic recipes that would destroy the three deathbringers. After this, he spent long years searching for the method of the Three Ones, wandering over mountains and through valleys, going to all the sacred mountains of China and visiting their grottos and immortals to receive various teachings. He finally discovered within himself the method he searched for and practiced it with dedication.

Taiyuan zhenren maojun neizhuan 太元真人茅君內傳 (Esoteric Biography of Lord Mao, the Perfected of Great Prime, *Yunji qiqian*

104.10b-20a; *Maoshan zhi* 5, 18 pp.; see Schafer 1986; Robinet 1984, 2:C10). This Shangqing biography of Lord Mao—the *Shenxian zhuan* version is extraneous—is attributed to Li Zhongfu 李中甫 or Zhonghou 中候, a fellow disciple of his. The more complete version is the one in *Maoshan zhi*.

Mao Ying茅盈, *zi* Shushen 叔申, was the descendant of an immortal and the grandson of a general of the First Qin Emperor. The oldest of three brothers, he retired to Mount Heng to study the *Daode jing* and the *Yijing*. There he received a visit of the immortal lady Taixuan nü 太玄女 who advised him to follow the school of Wang Yuan 王遠, an immortal of the *Shenxian zhuan*. As a result, Mao searched for him everywhere, visiting, among others, Xiwang mu who gave him two writings of Shangqing, the *Yupei jindang* 玉佩金璫 (Jade Pendant and Golden Bell, CT 56, 1.23b)—names of the soul deities of the nine heavens who reside in the sun and the moon—and the related method *Mingtang xuanzhen* 明堂玄真 (Mysterious Perfection of the Hall of Light). Having mastered these, Lord Mao also taught his brothers. After his ascension in 1 B.C.E., the latter continued to receive divine instructions and sacred texts from celestial jade maidens. Later the Mao brothers established themselves on Mount Gouqu, south of Nanjing, which was renamed Maoshan after them. From there they flew up into heaven and, like their older brother, became celestial supervisors of the spirits of the countries of Wu and Yue. The Shangqing text contains two episodes borrowed from Lord Mao's *Shenxian zhuan* biography that relate miracles he performed.

In addition, the latter also contained a) a description of Maoshan, of which only a few other traces remain in *Zhen'gao* 4 and *Maoshan zhi* 6; b) several drug recipes also found in the *Jiuzhuan huandan jing yaojue* 九轉還丹經要訣 (Essential Formula of the Scripture on Ninefold Reverted Cinnabar, CT 889; see Strickmann 1979, 146-61); c) the method of the mysterious perfection of the Hall of Light, also found in CT 56 (23b-26b) and in CT 424 (10 pp., trl. Schafer 1978).

Nanyue wei furen zhuan 南嶽魏夫人傳 (Biography of Lady Wei of the Southern Peak, *Taiping guangji* 58; Robinet 1984, 2:C11). The original, no longer extant, was a revealed text, and the *Taiping guangji* contains only a small remnant. Lady Wei Huacun, *zi* Xian'an 賢安, the main teacher of Yang Xi, came originally from Rencheng in Shandong. In her youth she preferred a retired life, dedicating herself to the study of the Confucian and Daoist classics, taking immortality drugs, and practicing breathing techniques. She married an official on her parents' advice and gave birth to two sons, yet rose in rank in her own right to become a libationer of the Celestial Masters. She was initiated into the religion through two visits of immortals, including her master Wang Bao, the first when she was 48, the second at the age of 83. From them she re-

ceived a number of lesser Shangqing methods, including the practice of the *Huangting jing* 黃庭經 (Yellow Court Scripture), meditations on the planets, ways of pacing the Dipper, as well as certain drug recipes, which have not survived except one (in *Sandong zhunang* 8.28a-29b). She also received the Shangqing scriptures in revelation but was unable to follow their instructions until after she attained deliverance from the corpse with the help of a sword, which made her into an earth immortal. In this state, she practiced the *Dadong zhenjing* and became a celestial immortal.

The hymns linked with her biography are conserved in *Wushang biyao* 20 and *Yunji qiqian* 96. Ritual rules associated with it are found in *Dengzhen yinjue* 3, including one rite concerning the proper entry into the meditation chamber which Lady Wei received from Zhang Daoling himself and a set of rules about the correct writing of petitions to the gods, recovering procedures applied among the Celestial Masters (see Cedzich 1987). Wei Huacun, therefore, can be described as the link between the two schools. She was actively worshiped later, and her shrine on the Southern Peak became a pilgrimage center (see Schafer 1977a).

WORLDVIEW

SACRED SCRIPTURES. The scriptural corpus of Shangqing assembled and organized into a coherent whole the ancient oral traditions that were transmitted from master to disciple without a formal or institutional framework. The central place that Shangqing accords to the revealed scriptures (even its "oral formulas" are originally written) breaks with the oral form of the ancient traditions, and the greater coherence created through the collection of scriptures into one organized whole makes it possible to speak of Shangqing as a "school," whereas previously there were only "lineages" largely independent of one another. On the other hand, Shangqing cannot be described as a "church," which had been the formal organization of the early Celestial Masters.

The scriptures are innately sacred and precosmic. Issued from the void, they took shape and were written by divinities eons before they were revealed to humanity. Their growth followed a process of condensation which is the equivalent of the gradual influx of the gods onto the earth. The scriptures assure a connection between humanity and the gods who are made from the same primordial energy and similarly remain in more or less subtle original states (Robinet 1993, 19-54). They are "treasures" (*bao* 寶), auspicious signs (*rui* 瑞) or tokens (*xin* 信) of divine protection, not unlike the wondrous signs heaven used to send to earth in order to show that a certain ruler had won the Mandate. Most frequently the scriptures are developed from a talisman that represents

the "true form" of immortals' paradises or the names of gods, and thereby gives access to them. Or they are amplifications of the magically empowered names of gods. Thus the "methods" of visualization and physiological practices are built on the basis of the core created by these forms and names. They are the central guide of the religion and thus replace priests as intermediaries to the gods: the master is relegated to the secondary role of being a mere witness and guarantor of the sacred transmission.

This transmission ritual over which he presides seems to go back to the environment of the *fangshi* and reveals the particular nature of the Shangqing scriptures. It takes the form of a legal contract witnessed by gods and contains threats against anyone who transmits the sacred documents carelessly or without due authority. Whoever violates this essential rule will never become immortal, for he has broken the key contract of the religion, a contract that takes place not on a social but a sacred, ontological level.

HUMANITY. Shangqing maintains the earlier Daoist concept of humanity that differs from classical Chinese thought in the sense that the human body is not simply inhabited by the two souls *hun* 魂 (celestial) and *po* 魄 (earthly) but also houses a multitude of body gods. This is typical of a Daoist vision of humanity found in texts as early as the Han apocrypha.

Human beings possess a triple nature: they are autonomous and responsible individuals, integral members of their lineage, and active participants in the cosmos. Shangqing continues the ancient notion of a universe founded on the direct correspondence between humanity and the cosmos, based on the patterns of yin/yang and the five phases, and also maintains the importance of energy (*qi* 氣) and essence (*jing* 精). It also inherits physiological ideas found in Ge Hong and the *Huangting jing*, including the three cinnabar fields (*dantian* 丹田), residence of life-preserving gods, and the Three Deathbringers, demon parasites who inhabit the body. Shangqing also introduces the notion of the "embryonic knots," congenital causes of death, ontological and physiological germs of mortality that are found in precise points of the human body from well before birth. They are divided into three groups of four each: in the upper body, they are located in the Niwan palace in the head, the mouth, the cheeks, and the eyes; in the middle, they are in the viscera, the stomach, the large and small intestines; and in the lower portion, they are in the bladder, the genitals, the anus, and the feet. Beyond these, the *Dadong zhenjing* and the *Guishan xuanlu* enumerate a great number of bodily points where the energy of death may accumulate.

Other innovations include the nine palaces in the head, which later became a general feature of the Daoist bodily landscape. The nine inner

palaces are an imitation of those passed by the god Taiyi in the sky . This concept—already hinted at in earlier texts, although Ge Hong, for example, only mentions three palaces instead of nine—becomes fundamental in Daoist thought despite later variants in their names and, less commonly, in their number. The palaces are internally connected and are arranged on two levels; unlike the cinnabar fields, they are not the residences of their own special deities but house the Three Ones (*sanyi* 三一) —at least if and when one meditates on them: the masculine one (*xiongyi* 雄一), the female one (*ciyi* 雌一), and the supreme one (*shangyi* 上一 [see Andersen 1980]).

SALVATION AND IMMORTALITY. "My destiny is my own and does not lie with heaven!" This *leitmotiv* of longevity texts indicates that salvation is the concern of the individual and depends on his own deeds. Acccording to Shangqing salvation theory, however, the sins and merits of one's ancestors are reflected in the adept's status, just as the actions of the adept have an effect on the immortality of his forebears. The salvation of the individual cannot be conceived apart from his ancestors, to whom he is linked ontologically. Thus the highest sin, transmitting a sacred text without due authority, has consequences both for the adept and for his ancestors: they are condemned to the tortures of the underworld, whereas he loses all possibility of ever gaining immortality.

Shangqing immortality involves the cosmicization of the individual: human beings are both the place and the product of the interaction of heaven and earth. They cannot achieve true self-realization unless they become fully conscious of their cosmic and divine nature. Salvation in Shangqing is thus universal in the sense that the adept becomes one with heaven, not in the Buddhist sense of striving to save all living beings. Shangqing salvation is not an outward embrace of all things, but a movement inwards that melts into the whole of the universe.

Immortality also means the unification of the numerous spirits and entities that make up the complex individual. Doing so he creates a subtle, "glorious body," made luminous by the power of the gods who animate its innermost being. An analysis of this vision of immortality reveals the human being to be a complex figure. He is both autonomous and responsible, yet also ontologically linked with his lineage and the universe. This in turn indicates a mystical dimension of the teaching, which is most evident in the vows that adepts take: to become one with the cosmos and the gods in order to merge with ultimate truth, primordial energy or emptiness, and to renounce the world to do so. This mystical aspect is not at all incompatible with the ancient—naive and popular—concept of the immortal as a possessor of fantastic magical powers. On the contrary, the old idea is part of the new vision, of an adept who has "immortal's bones" and whose name, at least according

to certain texts, is already inscribed in the heavenly registers of life. All he has to do on earth is to realize his potential. Immortality is already promised to him, becoming both more immediate and personal than envisioned in earlier texts such as Ge Hong's, where it was a far-off goal and distant vision.

Though consistent with previous notions of immortality, Shangqing adds a completely new element that fundamentally transforms the ideal. Previously the key was to acquire an immortal body. There was no question of life after death as one simply did not die (even though certain miraculous cases of revivification were reported). The Shangqing scriptures, to the contrary, outline procedures that assure a life beyond the grave, a birth after death or regeneration to immortality. Thus it becomes possible even for inhabitants of the underworld to attain immortality by a gradual ascent through the spiritual hierarchy that eventually reaches the highest heavens. The adept may also be reborn in the heavens or on some other high cosmic level. This idea of rebirth is a new contribution of Shangqing to the ideal of immortality, and is taken up seriously in the later texts of inner alchemy. It does not, however, contain anything of the Buddhist sense of reincarnation, which had a certain impact on the Lingbao. In fact it is quite the opposite, since rebirth here is a way to salvation, not a way of being bound to earth. Furthermore, while the notion of the "return to the embryo" is found in Shangqing texts, the key idea of inner alchemy, that of the "immortal embryo," arises only with inner alchemy in later centuries.

PANTHEON. The most significant feature of the Shangqing pantheon is that it does not share the same bureaucratic nature as other Daoist movements. It is not always described coherently in the texts, but with slight simplification a fairly homogeneous structure emerges. Certain gods are ancient divinities, such as the Queen Mother of the West and the Ruler of Fates (Siming 司命), but there are none of the ancient nature gods among Shangqing deities, a tendency that is congruous with the struggle of the *Zhen'gao* against various forms of animism.

Beyond a central group of 74 celestial deities, those most prominent are the gods whose primary role is to serve as mediators between heaven and humanity and who are the origin of certain revealed texts. Key among them are the Celestial King of Primordial Beginning (Yuanshi tianwang 元始天王), the Highest Lord of the Dao (Taishang daojun 太上大道君), and the Lord Emperor (Dijun 帝君). The Latter-Day Sage (Housheng 後生), so called in contrast to the precosmic sages of primordiality, takes the name Li Hong 李弘, the traditional appellation of Laozi as messiah and is also known as Lord Goldtower (Jinque dijun 金闕帝君; see Strickmann 1981). Together with the Queen Mother of the West and the Green Lad (Qingtong 青童) he also serves as an important interme-

diary. Texts describing their "biographies" also recount their initiatic travels around the heavens.

There are further cosmic deities, including the gods of the stars and the five sections of space, who play a fundamental role in visualizations. Beyond all those, finally, are the numerous gods in the body, who are also its subtle principles. Some of them have names very much like those found in Han-dynasty apocrypha and earlier Daoist texts, such as the *Wufu xu* 五符序 or the *Laozi zhongjing* 老子中經. They include the gods of the three cinnabar fields, the Three Ones—bodily forms of the Three Primes who created the world—as well as a series of twenty-four gods divided in three groups of eight known as the *jing* or bodily luminants who correspond to the twenty-four seasonal energies. The Three Primes are also divided into three, making a total of nine primordial deities who are present at the genesis of the cosmos and of the subtle human body. They are called the Nine Perfected and reside in the essential organs of the body, or again in the Nine Palaces, three each in the three main areas. Eight luminants are associated with each of the Nine Perfected to form a group of 72 divinities who are governed by the Primordial Father (Yuanfu 元父) and the Mysterious Mother (Xuanmu 玄母). These altogether 74 deities guard the adept's body and contribute to its spiritualization; they are in close touch with the 74 celestial gods of the *Dadong zhenjing*. The Father and Mother, in addition, represent the original yin and yang and are associated with the upper and lower cinnabar fields. They are the true creators of the spiritual aspect of the human being and preside over his divine rebirth.

Next, the five "register spirits" play a key role in the visualization exercises used to have one's name inscribed in the registers of life. They are five body gods who govern the formation of the human embryo: Taiyi, the chief among them all, resides in the head; Wuying 無英, governor of the essence is found in the liver; Baiyuan 白元, ruler of the *hun* and *po* souls, is in the lungs; Siming, the Ruler of Fates, has his palace in the genitals; and Daokang 道康, the spirit of the beginning of life and of sexual energy, can be found in the lower cinnabar field during the day and to the right of Taiyi at night. Wuying and Baiyuan, joined by Huanglao 皇老, represent the manifestation of the male One; they are the sons of the three Ladies of Simplicity, forms of the female One, who is their superior. The three gods reside in the Grotto Chamber in the center of the head, which is also called the Flowery Palace 華宮.

COSMOLOGY. Shangqing cosmology in its overall structure follows traditional Chinese patterns. It consists of a horizontal division into five (the five phases) and a vertical one into three (the three forces: heaven, earth, humanity). Together this structure is expressed as the "Three and Five" (*sanwu* 三五). The numbers 1, 2, 3, 5, and 9, which play key roles

in ancient Chinese cosmology, similarly appear in the Shangqing system, either as divinities or as heavens. The One is Taiyi, god of the Great Unity; the Two is yin and yang or heaven and earth, as well as the original Father and Mother; the Three and Five are the *sanwu* described above; the Nine are the nine great primordial heavens created from pure cosmic energy and divine forces that rule the rebirth of the adept under the guidance of the original Father and Mother. There are a total of 36 heavens, three issuing from each of the original nine, as well as eight heavens arranged horizontally. The southern paradise is a place of purification and rebirth; the Three Clarity heavens—Jade, Highest, and Great Clarity (Yuqing 玉清, Shangqing 上清, and Taiqing 太清)—are subsequent stages in the adept's progress. Beyond the heavens, there are further paradises too numerous to name. Among them are the stations of the sun and the moon as well as the stars themselves, including the sun, moon, planets, and Ursa Major—described as the Dipper and consisting of seven stars plus two invisible ones. In addition, there are the far-off corners of the earth. They all are named after traditional myths or given appellations based on the Shangqing tradition but sometimes may also be called by Buddhist or Sanskrit names.

Shangqing adopts the "Chart of the True Shape of the Five Peaks" (*Wuyue zhenxing tu*, 五岳真形圖, CT 1223) mentioned by Ge Hong. In the practice, each adept aligns himself with one of the peaks. Other sacred mountains of China are important as the locations of the grotto-heavens (*dongtian* 洞天; see Miura 1983), residences of the immortals and storage places of the scriptures before their revelation to humanity. The most important mountain is Kunlun, the traditional *axis mundi*, which in Shangqing is also called Xigui shan 西龜山 (Western Turtle Mountain) or Longshan 龍山 (Dragon Mountain). Other sacred peaks play similar roles, e.g., Renniao shan 人鳥山 (Birdmen Mountain).

The underworld does not play an important part in the system. It is associated with the Dipper because it is its counterpart, both lying beyond the "gate of demons" and being able to open the "door of life." It is located in the ancient mountain-city of Fengdu shan 酆都山 or Luofeng shan 羅酆山 (a real place in Sichuan), which serves as the center of an underworld administration organized in Six Palaces and judgment courts of the dead. There are three major courts, those of fire, water, and women. The palaces, numbered six because six is the number of yin, correspond to the realm of the nefarious Six Heavens as opposed to the grand Nine Heavens of creation (nine being the number of yang). They are in fact lesser or underworld heavens, which house all those not yet able to ascend to the heavenly realms but who have, by merit of their moral qualities or practices of lesser techniques, managed to become ser-

vants fulfilling minor regulatory functions in a celestial hierarchy that will allow them to gradually ascend the ladder toward the higher heavens. Fengdu is governed by the great emperor of the demon administrators, the Lord Emperor of the North and of the Dipper (see Mollier 1997). It also falls under the authority of King Wu, founder of the Zhou dynasty and lord of the Pole Star. Many of the underworld functionaries in this world are ancient rulers or celebrated masters of antiquity. These rather humble "underworld governors" (*dixia zhu* 地下主) are immortals of an inferior rank.

The Shangqing pantheon also has its own demons, called *mo* 魔 in accordance with Buddhist terminology and not *gui* 鬼 as among the Celestial Masters and in traditional China. They are great kings, with powers of both destruction and salvation (see Kamitsuka 1996).

WORLD CYCLES. Many texts evoke the end of the world which will come with the running-down of cosmic cycles, either of yang as "yang-nine" (*yangjiu* 陽九), marked by fire, or of yin as "hundred six" (*bailiu* 百六), marked by a flood. The same idea is already found in the *Hanshu*, the world being destroyed when yin and yang have reached their point of exhaustion. Lesser and greater such cycles are distinguished: 3,600 celestial yang or 3,300 terrestrial yin revolutions as opposed to 9,900 yang or 9,300 yin (see Kobayashi 1990, 430-54). The practice of certain texts allows selected adepts to escape from the disasters and escape to Mount Kunlun, where the cataclysms never reach. At the end, moreover, there are judges: the Mother of Water, the divine horse, and a great bird, as well as Li Hong 李弘, the Latter-Day Sage who will arrange the distribution of the faithful. The Shangqing concept of world cycles has eschatological moments but it does not present a form of messianism that implies a teleology as well as the establishment of a completely new law. Rather it maintains a cyclical vision, according to which the world is destroyed and recreated in the same pattern over and over again.

Practices

Unlike in the Way of the Celestial Master where religious practices were communal, those in Shangqing, following the southern tradition, consist of meditations undertaken individually in the meditation chamber or "chamber of quietude" (*jingshi* 靜室; see Yoshikawa 1987). Certain practices the school took over from previous models—transmitted by the sages of the hagiographies described earlier, they were integrated on a lower level. Others, ranked higher because they alone could afford salvation, were unique to Shangqing, although they too on occasion developed from earlier techniques. Most commonly they are linked to a

kind of cosmic journey which recalls the movements of Taiyi around the eight poles of the universe and have the adept orient his practice to the eight rising winds. Shangqing also lends more weight than previous traditions to mental images, though it never completely dispensed with physiological practices. All its traits—the cosmic journey, the importance of the imagination, interiorization and cosmicization, as well as the increasingly symbolic value attributed to alchemical recipes—anticipate the inner alchemy of later centuries.

VISUALIZATION AND THE UNIFICATION OF THE GODS. Most Shangqing practice consists of the visualization and the invocation of the gods and the paradises, whose names and forms are revealed in the texts. The recitation of the *Dadong zhenjing* is in itself an invocation of the celestial divinities and the luminous gods of the body, both essential and subtle vital forces. The adept invokes them so that they close the gates of the body through which the energy of death can enter. In the practice, the heavenly and bodily spirits are joined together into one unity which is described either as the One Emperor of Great Profundity or the Great One, the ancient god Taiyi, ruler of all the body gods, with whom the adept identifies himself. The same complex unity is also realized as a kind of tri-unity represented by the Three Primes who govern the 24 energies or body luminants from the three cinnabar fields, or again the groups of gods of the male One and the female One, who serve as assistants to Taiyi.

Two types of body gods are central in visualization practice: those that dwell in each average human being, e.g., the Three Primes; and those who reside only in the body of adepts who visualize them to the effect that the body is vitalized and made spiritual.

GUARDING THE ONE. "Guarding the One" (*shouyi* 守一) is an expression that goes back to the *Daode jing* and the *Zhuangzi*. It describes a meditation that existed before Shangqing. Although considered somewhat inferior, it was adopted and developed by the tradition. It appears in various forms in most Daoist traditions (see Kohn 1989), and in Shangqing is present as part of the technique of the Five Dippers and Three Ones (*wudou sanyi* 五斗三一), which teaches adepts to ascend to the Dipper in the company of the Three Ones (see Cadonna 1984; Robinet 1993, 120-38). The practice begins with the three cinnabar fields where one visualizes the gods, then sees them together with their ministers go from the cinnabar fields to the Dipper or descend from the invisible star Fu of the Dipper into the body.

The meditation on the Nine Palaces is a Shangqing development of earlier methods involving the cinnabar fields and visualizations of the palaces in the head. Adepts merge with the resident body gods and fly off into the Dipper. The methods associated with the Grotto Chamber (see

Yamada 1989), residence of the sons of the three Ladies of Simplicity, and with the Mysterious Cinnabar (Xuandan 玄丹), residence of Taiyi, may also be described as Shangqing variants of "guarding the One."

EMBRYONIC KNOTS, DEATH, AND REBIRTH. There are two types of exercises designed to unravel the knots of death that all humans receive during their embryonic stage. The first involves reliving the adept's life as an embryo in a divine and cosmic mode. He receives the energies of the nine primordial heavens, one each month, while constantly invoking the Primordial Father and Mysterious Mother who, as the embodiments of pure yang and yin, heaven and earth, become his new parents. Completion of the exercise requires the celestial king to descend into one's body so that the new parents can refine it into an immortal body of jade. The method fully imitates the "nine transformations" of operative alchemy, but at a physiological level.

The other major exercise consists of visualizing the twenty-four luminants of the body, governed by the deities of the female One who reside in the three cinnabar fields. These luminant spirits destroy the embryonic knots. Beyond that, the adept can also assure himself of immortality by getting his name inscribed in the celestial registers of life with the help of the five register spirits. Then again, he might undergo a purification by fire in order to be reborn in the Palace of Red Fire or in the Court of Liquid Fire, located in the extreme south of the cosmos, from where he can be reborn as an immortal (see Robinet 1993, 139-52).

ABSORPTION OF COSMIC FLORESCENCES. The Shangqing texts have considerably developed the theme of cosmic absorptions, found already in ancient texts, such as the *Chuci*, and also mentioned by Ge Hong. This absorption is a form of immortal nourishment which replaces the five grains used by ordinary humans. The florescences often are the energies of the poles, described as "cloud sprouts" (referring to an earlier exercise); they are the yin principles of heaven, best taken at dawn when "the two energies [yin and yang] are not yet separated." This recovers the genesis of the world, charged with the powers of the far-off borders. Youthful and growing strong, they crystallize in the practitioner's saliva, which he or she swallows while chanting an invocation to the "sprouts" (see Robinet 1989).

The florescences of the stars are also the nourishment of pure light that the adept absorbs after he has visualized them. He then "absorbs the light" (*fuguang* 服光) instead of the earlier practice of "absorbing energy" (*fuqi* 服氣). The adept, and the whole world through him, thereby becomes illuminated.

DELIVERANCE FROM THE CORPSE. The ancient idea of *shijie* 尸解 (deliverance from the corpse, corpse-liberation) is also significantly developed in Shangqing. Rather than being simply the simulation of

death, is has now become a form of post-mortem transformation in the event that the adept have died without having sufficiently spiritualized his body. The deliverance may take one of several forms of initiatory death, some of which are described as inferior because they only enable the adept to achieve the state of an earthly immortal or underworld governor. Deliverance from the corpse is directly related to the transformation and sublimation of the body that is eventually attained alchemically. The successful adept may transform himself at will, appearing or disappearing, and when his spirit is delivered, he has the power to escape and go beyond his body. The sublimation continues to include all those organs that were animated by meditation while the adept was alive, and culminates in the "purification of the highest yin." It acts as a crucible in which the body is purified first by being dissolved and then by being reborn. The process is the counterpart of the purification by fire in the Southern Palace. Generally speaking even this process is an incomplete purification. The body is still unable to ascend "to heaven in broad daylight" and waits in its coffin for the process of purification to reach all parts of the revitalized adept, finally enabling him to fly off into the heavens. In this redefinition of corpse deliverance Shangqing adapted pre-existing ways, but it also contributed new methods, the most superior of which was considered to be deliverance by the sword. This involves forging a divine sword following precise ritual rules similar to those used in the concoction of an alchemical elixir. Both Tao Hongjing and Sima Chengzhen were masters of this art (see Robinet 1979b; Schafer 1979; Fukunaga 1970).

METAMORPHOSES. The notion of metamorphosis plays an important role in Shangqing texts. It may refer to those adepts who specially learn their practice or to those gods who change their appearance at will. The powers of metamorphosis had always been a key characteristic of the immortals, but these powers came to be even more central in Shangqing where they were synonymous with deliverance and salvation. They are, of course, closely linked to the general Chinese idea of *bianhua* 變化, i.e., of a world that is constantly becoming, growing, and changing, and that of an ultimate truth that takes all forms and is limitlessly manifold (see Sivin 1991).

Certain Shangqing texts describe procedures for transforming oneself into clouds, light, or fire as a way of attaining salvation. The *Shenzhou qizhuan qibian wutian jing* 神州七轉七變舞天經 (Scripture of Spirit Country on the Seven Revolutions and Transformations During the Dance on Heaven, CT 1331), for example, places them on the same level as the metamorphoses, the arts of "leaving being and entering nonbeing" or "of delivering oneself of one's body and escaping all."

The gods themselves, such as the invisible stars of the Dipper, are closely linked with the idea of metamorphosis. Many texts describe their different forms so that adepts can recognize them properly. Thus, CT 1393 (1.9a), for example, insists that they are the primordial principle, originally formless, eternal, and supra-cosmic. The adept who has himself become skilled at transformation should be able to see them in their "true form."

ECSTATIC EXCURSIONS AND TRIPS TO THE STARS. The ecstatic excursions typically found in Shangqing are an heirloom of the past. The texts teach adepts to travel to the far ends of the world, to the major sacred peaks, or to the isles of the immortals. In all these places adepts may encounter the gods of the five regions of the world who provide them with immortal nourishment. Or again, the adept may cause the gods to descend into his meditation chamber and his body, where they can nourish him with cosmic ethers, supported by texts and talismans that unveil the true form (see Robinet 1976). The idea of places having wondrous powers and of talismans representing their essence has a long history in Chinese religion and was taken over by Shangqing. The latter then transformed it to include the vision of the true places as located simultaneously in the world, in the heavens before creation and in the body of the adept.

Adepts may also climb up to the stars—the planets, sun, and moon, which form a triad parallel to and identical with the Three Ones in the body. Among the planets, they encounter the various resident gods who correspond to the rulers of the five directions on earth. Similarly they join the sun and the moon, celestial manifestations of yin and yang, matching their alternating movements in an anticipation of the rhythmic patterns of inner alchemy. They visit the various stations that are paradises, tasting of the fruits and juices of immortality, just as the astral florescences illuminate their bodies (see Robinet 1989; 1993, 187-99).

The Dipper similarly forms a triad with the sun and the moon. In relation to the sun and the moon, forming part of a horizontal cosmology, the Dipper represents the center of the world projected into the sky. A complex unity in itself, it is the residence of Taiyi, the Great One, but also consists of nine stars. It has an ancient role as exorcistic power and allows adepts to protect themselves against all sorts of malevolent forces by cloaking themselves in the Dipper. Also, one of its stars, the Heavenly Pass (Tianguan 天關), is responsible for letting adepts into the higher realms.

Following the Steps of Yu (*yubu* 禹步) they may pace across its stars lined up on a band of silk while invoking its gods, or they may ascend to the constellation whose stars are also paradises. The "Pace of the Dipper" is again an older practice adapted by Shangqing and developed

extensively. Previously called "pacing the net" (*bugang* 步綱), "flying through the heavens" (*feitian* 飛天), or "pacing the void" (*buxu* 步虛; see Andersen 1990; Schafer 1977b; Robinet 1976; 1993, 200-26), the practice has given rise to a famous medieval hymn that has also been included in Daoist cosmology. It can be performed according to the "three paths:" first, by moving "in order," i.e., to the left and outward of the constellation and then from first star to last; second, by "going in reverse," i.e., from last to first star; and third, by pacing around the Dipper in the yin direction of the constellation. This third method, however, is considered inferior because it does not allow adepts to reach higher than the rank of an earth immortal or underworld governor.

There is also the method of "pacing the network," called *kongchang* 空常 after the names of the gods of the Dipper's invisible stars. It is to be undertaken before one marches on the Dipper itself. To practice this, one moves over a network of 25 "black" stars, invisible to the normal eye, that surround the Dipper. They are inhabited by the spouses of the Dipper gods and project a "light that does not shine" onto the constellation.

DRUGS AND RITUAL RULES. Shangqing texts, especially the hagiographies, contain a number of drug-based recipes which for the most part come from earlier traditions. Some of them, however, are also new to the movement and are linked with the absorption of astral florescences (see Strickmann 1979). Thus, certain traditional ingredients, such as orpiment or realgar, are renamed "soul of the sun" (*rihun* 日魂) or "flower of the moon" (*yuehua* 月華). This form of alchemy again marks a milestone in the development of inner alchemy. The great Shangqing patriarchs, such as Tao Hongjing and Sima Chengzhen, were highly adept at it.

Ritual rules that either precede or accompany the transmission of the sacred scriptures and help adepts put their instructions into practice, tend to focus only on ritual purity and, with few exceptions, are neither new nor unique to Shangqing. They discuss bodily purity, food and calendar taboos, and prohibit any contact whatsoever with death. Their pattern continues the earlier tradition and is secondary to the key Shangqing practices of visualization and ecstatic excursions.

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