CHAPTER NINE

# THE LINGBAO SCHOOL*

YAMADA TOSHIAKI

## DESCRIPTION

The Lingbao 靈寶or Numinous Treasure school is one of the major schools of early medieval Daoism. It centers around a group of forty texts known as the "ancient Lingbao corpus," which were defined as such in the so-called "Lingbao Catalog" by the Daoist ritualist and bibliographer Lu Xiujing 陸修靜 (406-477). The texts in this corpus can be divided into three kinds: two ancient Lingbao texts that contain the five talismans and the belief in the five emperors of the five directions; scriptures revealed by the Buddhist-inspired deity Yuanshi tianzun 元始天尊 (Heavenly Worthy of Primordial Beginning); and texts associated with the immortal Ge Xuan 葛玄, originally a magical practitioner of the Later Han.

The two texts of the first group contain materials that go back to the Later Han and continue in their practices and outlook the worldview of the magical practitioners (*fangshi* 方士), the ancient ancestral rituals and the so-called apocrypha (*chenwei* 讖緯) or non-canonical interpretations of the classics of that era. Both texts were compiled in the fourth century, the first (*Wufu xu* 五符序, CT 388) in several stages between the years 300 and 440, the second (*Wupian zhenwen* 五篇真文, CT 22) by the Daoist Ge Chaofu 葛巢甫, a southern aristocrat who was a direct descendant of the would-be alchemist Ge Hong 葛洪(283-343) and an active member of the nascent Shangqing community.

The second group of twenty-nine texts center around the Heavenly Worthy, and were written in the first half of the fifth century. They exhibit such a degree of Mahâyâna Buddhist influence (see Zürcher 1980) that they were probably compiled only after translations produced under the leadership of Kumârajîva (344-413) had reached wider segments of the population. Their key doctrine is universal salvation and the liberation of one's ancestors from the hardships of transmigration. In literary

* Translated by Livia Kohn

format, doctrines, terminology, as well as general setting the texts are so close to Buddhist sûtras that they have been accused of being plagiarized more than once, even in medieval China (Kohn 1995, 130).

The third group consists of nine texts which are all closely associated with the immortal lord Ge Xuan, a great-uncle of Ge Hong and senior ancestor of Ge Chaofu, whose low ranking in the Shangqing pantheon had first inspired his descendant to create his own vision of cosmic unfolding (Bokenkamp 1983, 442). Ge Xuan was originally a *fangshi* (d. 244), about whom a number of miraculous legends developed. The texts linked with his name tend to be highly talismanic in nature; in doctrine, they emphasize the veneration of the first Celestial Master Zhang Daoling and Laozi's *Daode jing* but also acknowledge the texts of other Daoist schools. Hagiographic material about the immortal lord and questions asked by him round off the collection. It was probably compiled around the same time as the Heavenly Worthy scriptures but by a slightly different lineage within the Lingbao school, assumed to have been closely associated with the Ge family (Kobayashi 1982a; 1990, 175-83). Nonetheless this group still contains many Mahâyâna Buddhist ideas and practices.

The school defined by these rather disparate scriptures seems at first to have been disorganized and multilayered; it only achieved a sense of order with the systematization under Lu Xiujing around the middle of the fifth century. In the wake of his work, the Lingbao school became very important in medieval Daoism, and a large number of secondary Lingbao scriptures were compiled together with commentaries on, and expansions of, some of the ancient texts. Although the school was subsumed under the leadership of Shangqing in the integrated system of the Three Caverns that has predominated since the sixth century, its rites and liturgy have remained essential to all forms of Daoist ritual and can still be observed in practices today (for its modern forms, see Schipper 1975; Pang 1977; Boltz 1996).

## History

EARLY HISTORY. The term "Lingbao" or "Numinous Treasure" derives from the southern term *lingbao* 靈保 which means "guardian of the numinous" and originally referred to the spirit mediator who summoned and controlled the numinous souls of the dead. The term occurs prominently in shamanic chants of south China, especially in the "Nine Songs" of the *Chuci* 楚辭 (Elegies of Chu; see Hawkes 1959), as well as in the biography of Ma Rong 馬融 in the *Hou Hanshu* (see Kaltenmark 1960; Kaizuka 1977, 270; Ikeda 1981, 623-44). A *lingbao* or guardian of the

numinous was a specially gifted communicator with the spirit world who played a role highly similar to that of the shaman (*wu* 巫). His earliest appearance is in the "Odes of Chu" of the *Shijing* 詩經 (Book of Songs; see Legge 1960), the collection of odes and folksongs from the Yellow River plain that dates from about 700 B.C.E. Here he is called a *shenbao* 神保 or "guardian of the spirit" and played a role in ancestor worship.

In ancient China, when the soul of an ancestor was to be summoned, the grandchild—a boy in the case of the grandfather, a girl in that of the grandmother—would wear the skull of the deceased to provide the soul with a place into which to descend. In this role the child was commonly known as the "representative of the corpse" (*shi* 尸; see Ikeda 1981), but because he or she served as a location for the spirit or numinous essence of the ancestor, he was also called the "guardian of the spirit" (see Davis 1994, 317-18). In the following centuries, this particular form of ancestor worship was discontinued, and a wooden tablet, i.e., a spirit residence carved from wood in the shape of an elongated plaque, was used (Kaji 1990, 18). At the same time, people with the power to summon the spirits and numinous forces came to be known as guardians of the spirit or numinous. The expression "numinous treasure" consequently came to indicate those versed in the interaction with the otherworld. Especially in the southern country of Chu along the banks of the Yangzi, as described in the *Baopuzi* and the *Hou Hanshu*, shamans were actively engaged in the practice of calling down the spirits into themselves, thus serving as their guardians.

***Fangshi* and apocrypha**. The "spirit guardians" of old also found heirs in the magical practitioners of the Han dynasty. As described in Ma Rong's biography in the *Hou Hanshu*, both served as healers and exorcists, with the magical practitioners specializing in the expulsion of diseases and the prevention of disasters. Numerous biographies (see Ngo 1976; DeWoskin 1983) speak of their supernatural methods, indicating ways of controlling demons and spirits and invoking the souls of the dead. This art of *he* 劾 (investigating) as it was then called, moreover, was undertaken with the help of talismans. Thus, for example, Qu Shengqing 麴聖卿 is described as being skilled at writing out talismans in red ink and thereby commanding demons and spirits.

Many magical practitioners were also said to have used charts and rhymes along with a knowledge of astrology to make prophecies about the future. For example, Fan Ying 樊英 made use of charts of the major rivers, the *Hetu* 河圖 and *Luoshu* 洛書 (see Saso 1978), as well as the "Seven Apocrypha" or noncanonical interpretations of the classics (ed. in Yasui and Nakamura 1972), while Dong Fu 董扶 applied himself to the charts. These charts and apocrypha, moreover, can be described as a form of religious scripture. Associated either with the two rivers or with

the classics, they were manuals of fortune-telling and provided insights into the workings of the world (see Dull 1966; Seidel 1983). Beyond that, they were also closely associated with the belief in talismans as tokens of universal power. According to the apocryphal *Longyu hetu* 龍魚河圖 or "Dragon River Chart," the Dark Maiden 玄女 bestowed a military talisman upon the Yellow Emperor, with whose help he conquered the empire (Yasui and Nakamura 1972, 6:89). The talisman was an instrument of cosmic force and thus a key tool of the magical practitioners.

The apocryphal *Xiaojing yuanshen qi* 孝經援神契 (Spirit Tally of the Book of Filial Piety) describes the "shining writ of the Luo turtle as composed of red and green characters," referring to a divine talisman that was carried into the world upon the back of a turtle in the Luo River. This is directly related to a talismanic pledge described in the later *Wufu xu* (3.3a), which was also written in red and green and corresponded to strips of colored silk actually used in transmission ceremonies of the five talismans—at least in the fifth century. In either case, with the help of the talisman the human practitioner entered into a contract with heaven above through and was endowed with heavenly powers. This demonstrates the continuity of the tradition from the Han well into the organized religion of the Lingbao.

THE GE FAMILY. The next major step in the development of Lingbao was Ge Hong (283-343) and his main text, the ***Baopuzi*** 抱朴子 (Book of the Master Who Embraces Simplicity, CT 1185; see Ware 1966). Ge Hong was the grand-nephew of the magical practitioner Ge Xuan and a member of the aristocratic Ge family of the kingdom of Wu in southeast China. This clan was particularly known for its active quest for immortality, which involved techniques of alchemy and sacred charts such as the *Wuyue zhenxing tu* 五嶽真形圖 (True Shape of the Five Peaks, CT 1281)and the *Sanhuang wen* 三皇文 (Texts of the Three Sovereigns; see Chen 1973; Fukui 1987; Robinet 1997). In his *Baopuzi*, Ge Hong thus laid out many of the traditional ideas and practices current in his time.

The text also describes a number of talismanic techniques which involved the use of protective written spells against harm from demons, tigers and wolves when entering the mountains to gather medicinal herbs for longevity and immortality. In addition, the *Baopuzi* is the first source that mentions the five Lingbao talismans as well as a work or works called *Lingbao jing* 靈寶經 (Scripture(s) of the Numinous Treasure; Ware 1966, 209). This comprises three sections, known as *Zhengji* 正機 (Proper Pivot), *Pingheng* 平衡 (The Equalizer), and *Feigui shou* 飛龜授 (Flying Turtle Transmission; see Chen 1975, 62), terms whose referent is not clear but may have had to do with Dipper worship. The texts, from what can be gleaned, described various ways of entering the mountains safely:

protective purifications before entering, ways of selecting the most auspicious days, methods to keep safe while in the wilderness, and prayers for finding the most potent immortality medicines. For all these, they offered suitable talismans with appropriate ritual instructions. That is to say, in the early fourth century C.E., the *Lingbao jing* was a manual by and for the magical practitioners that specified ways of entering the mountains and finding immortality medicines. There were mainly five Lingbao talismans at this time: those associated with the belief in the five sacred emperors who ruled the five directions of the universe. They are also the ones described in the *Lingbao wufu xu* (Explanation of the Five Lingbao Talismans, CT 388).

**Ge Chaofu.** As noted in Tao Hongjing's (456-536) *Zhen'gao* 真誥 (Declarations of the Perfected, CT 1016), Ge Chaofu was a second-generation descendant of Ge Hong, whose library and religious methods he inherited, as well as an active member of the southern aristocracy of Jurong, the center of the Shangqing revelations. In the 390s, Ge applied himself to Ge Hong's library, Shangqing scriptures, Han-dynasty cosmology and Buddhism, and on this basis reedited and expanded the five talismans of the *Baopuzi* and the *Wufu xu*. Doing so, he attributed new and increased powers to them and created a text known as the *Lingbao chishu wupian zhenwen* (Perfect Text of Numinous Treasure in Five Tablets, Written in Red), hereafter abbreviated *Wupian zhenwen* (see below).

The text is found in the Daoist canon (CT 22) and forms the first of the ancient Lingbao corpus, thus is also referred to as LB 1 (Ôfuchi 1974; Bokenkamp 1983, 479; Kobayashi 1990, 184). Tao says that Ge "fabricated" the Lingbao scripture(s) because he felt unhappy about the low rank accorded to his distant ancestor Ge Xuan in the Shangqing pantheon (Chen 1975, 67; Bokenkamp 1983, 442). Around the year 401, he transmitted this work to the Daoists Xu Lingqi 徐靈期 and Ren Yanqing 任延慶, who made it so popular that it inspired envy and the desire for more, similar scriptures (Bokenkamp 1983, 441).

As documented in the recent research of Kobayashi Masayoshi (1982a; 1990, 138), the work transmitted by Ge Chaofu was not the entire Lingbao corpus or even a large part of it but only the *Wupian zhenwen*, which was a spiritually more powerful expansion of the five talismans. The increased powers of the text included the ability to control the registers and ledgers of the immortals, to undertake travels around the heavens, to administer the northern realm of Fengdu 酆都, the world of the dead, and to overcome all harm wreaked by water. Notably the latter, the power to avoid all forms of drowning or flood disasters, makes it clear that the text came from a southern environment where, near the Yangzi River, disasters of floods and drowning were very frequent.

MATURITY. In the wake of the first Lingbao text, two sets of scriptures were created, one associated with the Heavenly Worthy, the other with Ge Xuan, developing Lingbao practice and doctrine to previously unattained levels by comprehensively integrating **Mahâyâna Buddhist worldview** and terminology (universal salvation, karma and rebirth, the ten directions, etc.; see Zürcher 1980) and also honoring the central texts of other schools. The predominant aim of these texts, which make up the bulk of the ancient Lingbao corpus, was to effect the salvation of the dead and to pray for the immortality of all beings, thus realizing the ideal of compassion for all creatures.

All these texts show the considerable influence of Mahâyâna Buddhism, and rely especially on sûtras translated in Chang'an in the first two decades of the fifth century under the leadership of Kumârajîva. These sûtras, which include the *Lotus sûtra*, the *Avatamsaka sûtra*, and other influential texts, were also responsible for the creation of various Chinese Buddhist apocrypha, the most important of which is the *Fanwang jing* 梵網經 (Brahma sûtra, T. 1484, 24.997a-1010a; see Yoshioka 1961; DeGroot 1969). The special characteristic of this text is its list of ten major precepts which became dominant in East Asian Buddhism after being adopted by the Tiantai school and transmitted into Japan by Saichô in 806 (see Groner 1990). It was thought possible to attain nirvâna by following these straightforward precepts, which were based on a striving to benefit others (*lita* 利他) and strongly reflected a philosophy of compassion and the liberation of all beings.

Chinese Mahâyâna as it was established in the early fifth century further influenced the Lingbao scriptures created at this time. Originally Daoists were chiefly concerned with self-cultivation for the sake of becoming immortal and ascending to heaven. Thus the ancient Lingbao talismans present methods and devices for protection during an individual's quest. Early Daoists had no calling or even concept of aiding others in their search for liberation nor did they strive for the universal salvation of all beings. On the other hand, the Lingbao scriptures, i.e., all except the two most ancient texts, contain many prayers for the attainment of immortality by others, for the peace and stability of the imperial rule and for the salvation of the dead. All these were now taken to contribute to the realization of perfection by practicing Daoists. The performance of Lingbao rites similarly was dedicated to the benefit of others while yet serving as an integral part of the personal quest for immortality.

**Lu Xiujing** 陸修靜. Lu Xiujing (406-477) was a major Daoist compiler, ritualist, and organizer in fifth-century south China. Not well documented in contemporary sources, his biography is contained in fragments of the *Daoxue zhuan* 道學傳 (Biographies of Daoist Adepts; see Bumbacher 1995), found in the *Sandong zhunang* and other encyclopedias.

It appears that he served in a debate with Buddhists in the capital under Emperor Ming and resided in later the Chongxu guan 崇虛館 (Center for Venerating Emptiness), where he collected the Shangqing scriptures of Yang Xi and the Xus and compiled his catalogs (Yoshioka 1955, 18). As is evident in his *Daomen kelue* 道門科略 (Abbreviated Rules for Daoist Followers, CT 1127; Nickerson 1996), he was originally a follower of the Celestial Masters but served also as the main organizer of Lingbao ritual, becoming thus the first representative of the Three Caverns in medieval Daoism (see Bell 1987). Lu Xiujing wrote over thirty works (Yoshioka 1955, 20), only a third of which remain today.

In 437, Lu classified the Lingbao corpus in a proper catalog (Yoshioka 1955, 16) which is lost today. He divided the scriptures into two groups, those associated with the Heavenly Worthy, which also included the *Wupian zhenwen*, and those linked with Ge Xuan, which also contained the *Wufu xu*. The entire set was then integrated into a comprehensive catalog of Daoist scriptures, which Lu compiled in 471 and which has survived partially in Dunhuang. Following the Mahâyâna division of scriptures into the three vehicles (*triyâna* 三乘) of greater, middle, and lesser (i.e., *srâvaka* or listener, *pratyekabuddha* or personally enlightened one, and *bodhisattva* or savior of all), he created the system of the Three Caverns (*sandong* 三洞; see Ôfuchi 1979a) and placed the Lingbao texts at the top, leading the Shangqing and Sanhuang 三皇 (Three Sovereigns) schools, to represent the ideal of the compassionate savior who rescues all.

At the same time, Lu also reorganized and modernized Lingbao ritual, providing a standardized format for all Daoist rites as they were practiced in precept ordinations (*jie* 戒), purification ceremonies or meager feasts (*zhai* 齋), and offerings (*jiao* 醮). Continuing Lu's model, the high-Tang master Zhang Wanfu 張萬福, ab. 700) and the late-Tang ritualist Du Guangting 杜光庭 (855-930) further expanded and reformed the ritual structure, shaping Daoist rites as they have been performed ever since (see Yamada 1992; 1995).

Lu was not the first to attempt to bring order and system to the Lingbao texts. Most of them were created in the approximately fifty years between the lives of Ge Chaofu and Lu Xiujing, but this period of creativity did not follow any plan or organized purpose—which were only supplied by Lu's catalog of 437. As he says in the preface which survives in the *Yunji qiqian* (4.5a), there was an earlier listing of the texts by a certain Zong Jingxian 宗竟鮮 who apparently was a Daoist senior to Lu Xiujing and may even have been a compiler of some Lingbao texts. His listing, however, did not prove successful because, following the texts' original disorder, it too was rather chaotic. We can therefore say that it was only through the efforts of Lu Xiujing that the Lingbao scriptures were established powerfully enough as talismanic scriptures in their own

right and thus were able, as a group, to provide the foundation for the Lingbao school.

LATER DEVELOPMENTS. In the wake of Lu's work, the Lingbao scriptures developed in two major areas. One is the continued active belief in and worship of the *Duren jing* 度人經 (Scripture of Salvation; DZ 1, 87-93); the other is worldview that emerged in the compilation of the *Yinyuan jing* 因緣經 (Scripture of Karmic Retribution, DZ 336). Both texts are prominent among Dunhuang manuscripts and had an active following in the Tang. There were also many other texts with the word "Lingbao" in their title that appeared from the sixth century onward. They tend to show much influence from the Shangqing and Celestial Masters schools and by no means restrict their worldview to the ideas expressed in the texts of the ancient Lingbao corpus. The notions and visions of the Lingbao school are thus best understood from the early texts, which forms the focus of this presentation.

## TEXTS

*THE CATALOG.* Lu Xiujing compiled two catalogs, the *Lingbao jingmu* 靈寶經目 (Catalog of Lingbao Scriptures) in 437 and the *Sandong jingshu mulu* 三洞經書目錄 (Catalog of the Scriptures and Writings of the Three Caverns) in 471. Both contained a complete list of the Lingbao texts, as he himself states in his *Lingbao shoudu yibiao* 靈寶授度儀表 (Memorial on Transmission and Ordination of Lingbao, CT 528). However, both catalogs were lost early on and for a long time scholars had to rely on later documents for information, including the early Tang manual *Fengdao kejie* 奉道科戒 (Rules and Precepts for Worshiping the Tao, CT 1125, 4.8a-9b; see Benn 1991, 93-95); its partial Dunhuang version, the *Fengdao kejie yifan* 奉道科戒儀範 (Observances and Models; P. 2337; see Yoshioka 1955, 301-40); and Liu Yongguang's 留用光 *Huanglu zhaiyi* 黃籙齋儀 (Observances of Yellow Register Rites, CT 508, 1.5a-7a; see Bokenkamp 1983, 485-86) of the year 1223.

Then a manuscript version was discovered, contained in the *Lingbao jing yishu* 靈寶經義疏 (Supplementary Explanation of the Lingbao Scriptures), which in turn is part of the second scroll of Song Wenming's 宋文明 (fl. 500) *Tongmen lun* 通門論 (On Entering the Gate [of Perfection]). The manuscript is extant in two versions, P. 2861.2 and P. 2256 (Ôfuchi 1979, 725-26), the former of which is slightly more complete but still lacks the first four texts of the list which, however, can be supplied from later sources. Ôfuchi in his study of the catalog (1974; 1997) names these texts the "ancient Lingbao corpus" to distinguish them from the old Lingbao scriptures mentioned in the *Baopuzi* and from the first text cre-

ated by Ge Chaofu. Later Kobayashi ascertained that the catalog contained in the manuscript was not the one written in 437, but formed part of the Three Caverns list of 471 (Kobayashi 1990, 144-52).

The catalog is divided into two groups of scriptures, linked with the Heavenly Worthy and the immortal Ge Xuan. Among the former, it lists both scriptures that are available on earth and those that are "not yet revealed," giving varying numbers of scrolls, although most texts are said to consist of one scroll only. In addition, later editing and loss of scriptures has resulted in a great deal of variation (see Maeda 1994), both in titles and scroll count, between the way the texts are listed in the catalog and how they are presently contained in the Daoist canon or found at Dunhuang. A complete list of texts, with titles abbreviated on the basis of their most common version, is found in Table 1.

**TABLE 1: THE LINGBAO SCRIPTURES**

| No. | LP | CT | Title |
|---|---|---|---|
| LB 1 | 1 | 22 | *Wupian zhenwen chishu* 五篇真文赤書 (Perfect Text in Five Tablets, Written in Red) |
| LB 2 | 2 | 352 | *Yujue* 玉訣 (Jade Instructions) |
| LB 3 | — | — | *Yundu daqie jing* 運度大劫經 2 (Scripture of Great Kalpa Revolutions) |
| LB 4 | — | 320 | *Yundu xiaoqie jing* 運度小劫經 2 (Scripture of Lesser Kalpa Revolutions) |
| LB 5 | — | 322 | ... *tiandi yundu* 天地運度 (... Revolutions of Heaven and Earth) |
| LB 6 | 3 | P. 2399 | *Kongdong lingzhang* 空洞靈章 (Numinous Stanzas of Emptiness and Profundity) |
| LB 7 | 4 | 1439 | *Shengxuan buxu zhang* 昇玄步虛章 (Stanzas on Ascending to the Mystery and Pacing the Void) |
| LB 8 | 5 | 318 | *Jiutian shengshen zhangjing* 九天生神章經 (Stanzas of the Vital Spirit of the Nine Heavens) |
| LB 9 | 6 | 671 | *Ziran wucheng wen* 自然五稱文 (Text of the Five Spontaneous Correspondences) |

| No. | LP | CT | Title |
|---|---|---|---|
| LB 10 | 7 | 97 | *Zhutian neiyin yuzi* 諸天內音玉字 (Inner Sounds and Jade Characters of All Heavens) |
| LB 11 | — | 361 | *Bawei zhaolong jing* 八威召龍經 (Scripture of the Eight Animals and Ruling Dragons) |
| LB 12 | 8 | 457 | *Zuigen shangpin dajie* 罪根上品大戒 (Highest Precepts for the Roots of Sin) |
| LB 13 | 9 | 177 | *Zhihui shangpin dajie* 智慧上品大戒 (Highest Precepts of Wisdom) |
| LB 14 | 10 | — | *Shangyuan jinlu jianwen* 上元金錄簡文 (Bamboo Text on the Golden Register of Upper Prime) |
| LB 15 | 11 | 1411 | *Mingzhen ke* 明真科 (Rules of the Luminous Perfected) |
| LB 16 | 12 | 352 | *Zhihui dingzhi jing* 智慧定志經 Scripture on Firming Up Determination and Wisdom) |
| LB 17 | 13 | P. 3022 | *Duren benxing jing* 度人本行經 (The Original Endeavor of Universal Salvation) |
| LB 18 | 14 | 346 | *Quanjie falun jing* 勸誡法輪經 (Scripture of Exhortations on the Wheel of the Law) |
| LB 19 | 15 | 1 | *Wuliang duren jing* 無量度人經 (Scripture of Limitless Universal Salvation) |
| LB 20 | 16 | 23 | *Duming miaojing* 度命妙經 (Wondrous Scripture on the Salvation of Life) |
| LB 21 | 17 | 369 | *Miedu wulian jing* 滅度五練經 (Scripture of Salvation by Fivefold Purification) |
| LB 22 | 18 | 456 | *Sanyuan pinjie* 三元品戒 (Precepts of the Three Primes) |
| LB 23 | — | 228 | *Suming yinyuan* 宿命因緣 (Karmic Retribution and Rebirth Destiny) |
| LB 24 | — | — | *Zhongsheng nan* 眾聖難 (Hardships of the Sagely Host) |
| LB 25 | — | — | *Daoyin ... xing* 導引..星(Gymnastic Exercises and ... the Stars) |
| LB 26 | 19 | 1407 | *Ershisi shengtu* 二十四生圖 (Chart of the Twenty-four [Energies of] Life) |
| LB 27 | — | 1118 | *Feixing sanjie* 飛行三界 (Flying through the Three Worlds) |
| LB 28 | — | — | *Yaopin* 藥品 (Assorted Medicines) |
| LB 29 | — | 1406 | *Zhipin* 芝品 (Assorted Mushrooms) |
| LB 30 | — | — | *Bianhua kongdong* 變化空洞 (Transformations of Emptiness and Profundity) |
| LBX 1 | 20 | 388 | *Lingbao wufu xu* 靈寶五符序 (Explanation of the Five Lingbao Talismans) |

| No. | LP | CT | Title |
|---|---|---|---|
| LBX 2 | 21 | 425 | *Taiji yinjue* 太極隱訣 (Secret Instructions of Great Ultimate) |
| LBX 3 | 22 | 330 | *Zhenwen yaojie* 真文要解 (Essential Explanations of the Perfect Texts) |
| LBX 4 | 23 | P.2356 | *Ziran jing* 自然經 (Scripture of Spontaneity) |
| LBX 5 | 24 | 53 | *Fuzhai weiyi jing* 敷齋威儀經 (Dignified Observances in Laying Out Meager Feasts) |
| LBX 6 | 25 | 344 | *Xiaomo dajie shangpin* 消魔大戒上品 (Highest Precepts to Dissolve Evil) |
| LBX 7 | 26 | 1114 | *Xiangong qingwen* 仙公請問 (Questions of the Immortal Lord) |
| LBX 8 | 27 | 1115 | *Zhongsheng nan* 眾聖難 (Hardships of the Sagely Host) |
| LBX 9 | — | — | *Shenxian benqi neizhuan* 神仙本起內傳 (Inner Biographies of Deeds of Spirit Immortals) |
| LBX 10 | — | — | *Xiangong qiju jing* 仙公起居經 (Activities and Rest of the Immortal Lord) |

ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|---|---|
| LB | numbers of the Heavenly Worthy texts |
| LBX | numbers of the Ge Xuan texts |
| LP | numbers in Bokenkamp 1983, 479-85<br>texts marked as "not yet revealed" do not have LP numbers |
| CT | numbers of matching texts in the Daoist canon |
| P. or S. | numbers of Dunhuang manuscripts |

NOTES

LB 8 also has commentated editions in CT 396-98
LB 13 also appears in P. 2461
LB 18 also appears partially in CT 348, 455, and 647
LB 19 also has commentated editions in CT 87-93
LBX 7 also appears in S.1351
LBX 8 also appears in P. 2454

The scriptures of the Heavenly Worthy group, as described in P. 2861.2, can be divided into **ten sections**, each presenting a particular aspect of Lingbao teaching:

1. Nos. 1-4 "clarify the doctrines of the gods' emergence and the root of the transformations." They contain the "Perfect Text" and its ex-

planation together with materials on cosmic cycles and unfolding. The titles of LB 3 and 4, moreover, although the texts were marked "not yet revealed," were nonetheless used in Lingbao rituals as part of incantations and prayers as described in the *Lingbao zhai zhuyuan yi* (Incantations and Prayers for Lingbao Rites, CT 524), a text that contains ritual chants used in both major lineages.

2. No. 5 "clarifies the cosmic cycles of good and bad fortune." Similarly "not yet revealed," this text may, however, be matched with CT 322, which describes how knowledge of the kalpic disasters at the end of a cosmic cycle can facilitate the attainment of long life.

The text refers to the immortal lord Ge Xuan and records his formulas of recitation, while making no reference at all to the doctrines of the *Wupian zhenwen*. It thus was probably part of the Ge Xuan lineage of scriptures, or maybe was created later.

Nos. 6-8 "clarify the broad compassion and wisdom of the gods." The texts contain poems or "stanzas" of cosmic power that are at the root of creation and contain the power of the universe and describe their nature, origins, and ways of talismanic application in the world. LB 8, for example, describes how the three gods of Heavenly, Numinous, and Spirit Treasure with the help of such stanzas combined the three basic energies into nine and thus created the world.

Because of this, human beings too pass through nine months of pregnancy to be born (4ab). What is more, the power that made the energies coagulate was concentrated in a divine talisman wielded by the gods; the scripture itself, written in four-character verses, is a direct expression of the divine sounds.

3. Nos. 9-11 "clarify the numinous and wondrous virtue of the gods." LB 9, the *Ziran wucheng wen*, in its extant version consists of two scrolls, the first of which has talismans corresponding to the five directions with a description of their efficacy and application. The second scroll is somewhat different, explaining the various rituals associated with the five directions as well as the use of sacred talismans linked with specific days, such as the beginnings and high points of the seasons (eight nodes). It appears that the first scroll of the present text is older and was intended in the catalog listing.

4. LB 10, the *Zhutian neiyin yuzi*, is listed as having two scrolls, but the present edition consists of four. Among the latter, the first scroll contains explanations of the secret sounds of great Brahma that also make up the main body of the *Duren jing*, and is very similar to the commentary on the latter text by Li Shaowei 李少微 of the Tang. The expression "inner sounds" in the title accordingly refers to the mystical Brahma language that lies at the root of creation.

LB 11, the *Bawei zhaolong jing* records the "sagely virtue and divine powers of the Heavenly Worthy," but is recorded as still present only in heaven—the *Daozang* text developing later.

5. Nos. 12-15 "clarify the order and ranks of the precepts." All these have to do with rules, regulations and precepts. LB 12 and 13 contain a standard set of ten precepts and twelve vows and focusing on the religious rules to be followed by practitioners. Neither deals with ritual patterns and observances but both concentrate on the moral conditions underlying them. In addition, there is the *Xiaomo dajie shangpin* (LBX 6), which is highly similar in content but belongs to the Ge Xuan lineage.

6. Nos. 16-18 "clarify the distinctions of good and bad in human behavior." Containing sets of precepts received from the Heavenly Worthy, they prohibit bad and encourage good forms of conduct. Most important among them are the ten precepts which, in analogy to Buddhism, prohibit killing, lasciviousness, stealing, lying, and intoxication, and encourage family harmony, delight in good deeds, helping others, abstention from anger, and the vow not to attain the Dao before others (CT 167, 1b).

7. Nos. 19-21 "clarify the doctrine of wide universal salvation." All revealed by the Heavenly Worthy, these three texts describe the best way to attain political stability and good fortune for the people, thus opening the path of universal salvation.

8. Nos. 22-24 "clarify the factual reality of karmic cause and effect." This details precepts associated with the Three Primes, here defined as the administrations of heaven, earth and water. They record the sins of humanity, put a stop to evil deeds and clarify the wondrous powers of merit. The altogether 300 precepts closely integrate the Celestial Masters' set of 180 (see Hendrischke and Penny 1996).

9. Nos. 25-27 "clarify the various methods of religious practice." Texts of physical cultivation, embryo breathing, and visualization, these present various techniques which also involve the body gods of Shangqing. Eight in each of the three major sections, these 24 gods are shining powers of inner light whose activation renders the adept more heavenly.

10. Nos. 28-30 "clarify the different means of attaining health and long life." Although "not yet revealed," these texts clearly were to describe dietetic and pharmacological practices. Only one of them has been vaguely identified in the canon.

The scriptures of the Heavenly Worthy are described in the catalog as "old," while the Ge Xuan texts are designated "new." Although their date of compilation is approximately the same, it seems that the Ge

Xuan texts were revealed in succession to the Heavenly Worthy ones, hence their description as "new."

INDIVIDUAL SCRIPTURES. *Wufu xu*. The "Explanations of the Five Lingbao Talismans" (CT 388) has been studied variously by Maxime Kaltenmark (1981; 1983), Stephen Bokenkamp (1986), Ishii Masako (1981; 1984), Kobayashi Masayoshi (1988; 1990, 45) and the present author (Yamada 1984; 1989). Its three scrolls contain the most ancient Lingbao materials found to date, continuing the tradition of the five talismans already mentioned in the *Baopuzi*. The rites it describes, moreover, can be assumed to have been practiced by Lingbao followers even in the fourth century. Also apparent in the "Perfect Text," they can be described as the oldest root of all Lingbao ritual, whose unfolding has been most perceptively described by Kristofer Schipper (1991).

The center of the text is the five Lingbao talismans. The first scroll contains their myth, telling how they served the Three Sovereigns and Five Emperors and were hidden by Di Ku 帝嚳 in the Kunlun mountains 崑崙山. After that they were recovered, used, and hidden again by the flood hero Yu 禹, to be acquired a millennium later with improper means by King Helü 闔閭 of Wu, who duly lost his kingdom. Finally, they were made accessible to Ge Xuan who transmitted them to the Ge-family tradition and thence to the Lingbao canon. The talismans themselves, with illustrations and explanations, are contained in the third scroll. Kaltenmark (1981) and Kobayashi (1990) see the talismans as the oldest part of the text. All scholars agree that members of the Ge family played a central role in compiling the scripture (see also Ôfuchi 1997).

Then there are descriptions of the techniques and lineages of certain Han-dynasty immortals or magical practitioners, including Lezichang 樂子長 and Huaziqi 華子期 who ingested sesame and the five sprouts and worked on expelling the three worms or corpses (*sanshi* 三尸) from the body. They are described in the first scroll. Yamada considers their methods and lineage crucial for the development and compilation of the *Wufu xu* (1984, 1989a). The entire second scroll, moreover, is dedicated to dietary methods, including many detailed recipes for the concoction of immortality drugs. This is an extension of the *fangshi* methods described in the first scroll. It also corresponds closely with Ge Hong's *Baopuzi*; thus, some scholars date it to the fourth century. Kobayashi thinks it forms part of the latest level of the text; that is, it dates from around the year 410.

In addition, there are specific meditation instructions on the ingestion of solar and lunar essences and the visualization of the gods of the body contained in the first scroll. Although similar to the *Taiping jing* and, thus, possibly fairly early, these represent a different tradition that is more focused on religious visions and ritual. Rather than to the magical practi-

tioners, this part goes back to the early Daoist movements (Yamada 1989a).

The third scroll, finally, has a number of additional talismans and spells with specific explanations. They serve to protect the active adept from serpents, dragons, tigers, panthers, and other dangerous creatures of the wild. In this, they are close to the magical charms described in the *Baopuzi* and might again be rather early. The more formal ritual, however, also found in the third scroll, belongs to a later phase of editing.

***Wupian zhenwen.*** The "Perfect Text in Five Tablets" (CT 22) has not been translated to date. It is the first and most fundamental scripture of the Heavenly Worthy group. On its basis, the other texts of this group were created, all following the same basic pattern in that they represent scriptures that were originally contained as "perfect writing" in the heavens in a transliterated form accessible to human understanding. The "Perfect Text" divides according to the texts and talismans of the five directions, into east, south, center, west and north, and records the secret seal script of the heavens above. The key text itself is contained on p. 7b-28b, and an explanation is found in CT 352, 1.8a-16a.

The *Wupian zhenwen* contains a new religious doctrine in that it presents the five directions in their abstract form as the five talismans and claims to record the efficacious methods of the Five Ancient Lords who created the world with the help of heavenly texts. Unlike the old Lingbao talismans mentioned in the *Baopuzi*, the text integrates the Buddhist notion of a sacred form of writing that lies at the root of creation and pervades the universe. It also uses the Buddhist notion of kalpas and kalpa cycles, combined with Daoist vision of eschatological endings of the world (CT 352, 1.9a; T. 23), thus formulating the key doctrine of Lingbao. As this is honored in all Heavenly Worthy scriptures, it is apparent that that these scriptures were compiled only after the *Wupian zhenwen*.

***Zhihui shangpin dajie.*** The "Highest Precepts of Wisdom" (CT 177; P. 2461), in its sixteen pages, specifies a total of six sets of precepts and admonitions to be followed by adepts and supporters of the school. It begins with the Heavenly Worthy, in Mahâyâna fashion, residing in a splendid heavenly hall and being addressed by the Lord of the Dao with a plea for guidance. In response, he presents the various precepts, ordering him to "cause all living beings to see the Dao and be free from the eight difficult conditions, make all dead souls rejoice and feast in the heavenly halls and be reborn soon on the human plane to continue their lives among the sage kings" (1a).

The first set is one of ten precepts (1b-2a), based on Buddhist bodhisattva precepts and representing a mixture of the ten good deeds and the precepts of the *Fanwang jing*. The same list also appears in various other texts: LB 2 (1.2b-3b; see Bokenkamp 1989); *Wushang biyao* (46.9a-10a;

35.6b-7b); *Chujia chuandu yi* (CT 1236, 8b-9a); and *Yunji qiqian* (39.18a-19a). Next, the Heavenly Worthy gives a set of twelve resolutions (3ab), six precepts of wisdom to control the passions and six precepts for the salvation of living beings, which are also found in LB 2 and the *Wushang biyao*, where they occur in a ritual context (48.5a-6a; 50.3b-4a; see Yoshioka 1961; Kusuyama 1982).

The next two lists consist of six rules each, one to "block the six passions" (6ab), admonishing disciples to keep a tight control over their five senses and the mind, the other for "the salvation of all living beings" (7ab). The latter encourages practitioners to think thoughts of goodwill when seeing someone poor, hungry, cold or hurt as well as towards all birds and beasts, even the lowly worms. The final two lists are the "Admonitions to Do The Ten Good Deeds" (8a-9a) and the "Precepts of Retribution for Merit and Wisdom" (13b-14a). They are directed respectively to the active disciples of the school and to its supporting community, making the former venerate the Dao, obey the teachers, study the scriptures, and generally work hard for their and the world's salvation, while the latter are strongly admonished to "give freely" to the religious community, supplying living space, utensils, and other necessities to all, including also the poor among themselves. The first of these two lists is also found in LB 25 (9b-10a), in P. 2461, and in the *Shangpin jiejing* (CT 454, 3a-4a), as well as in *Wushang biyao* (46.13a-14a), *Yaoxiu keyi* (5.2ab) and *Yunji qiqian* (38.11b-12b).

The goal of the practice in all cases is the attainment of universal salvation, approached when individual followers "uphold the precepts and always remain attuned to the mind of heaven, continuously behaving with great compassion and thus being liberated from this world" (2b). The bodhisattva ideal, moreover, is clearly expressed in the twelfth resolution, which has the vow that the disciple "will be with an enlightened teacher life after life, receive the teachings and spread them so that innumerable living beings may be saved" (4a).

***Duren jing***. The "Scripture of Salvation" (CT 1) has received a number of commentaries (CT 87-93), among which those contained in CT 87 are most important. They include the works of Yan Dong 嚴東 of the Southern Qi (ab. 485), Xue Youqi 薛幽棲, Li Shaowei 李少微, and Cheng Xuanying 成玄應 of the Tang, and their collection by Chen Jingyuan 陳景原 (1025-1094) of the Song. The text, in both its original and expanded and commented forms, has been studied variously (Gauchet 1941; Strickmann 1978; Sunayama 1984; 1990, 272-303; Bokenkamp 1997, 373-438). It is a text of the Heavenly Worthy group that describes the creation and ordering of the world with the help of heavenly writings and sacred sounds. Explaining the way to worship the "Perfect Texts" that create the universe and thereby attain long life with the help of the

Ruler of Fates (Siming 司命) and other celestial administrators, it lists a total of 32 secret "Brahma" spells that give key powers to both gods and practitioners. Activating these spells and learning to understand them correctly brings adepts into the cosmic sphere.

Under the Sui and Tang, the recitation and worship of the *Duren jing* flourished greatly, as can be seen from its extensive commentary by Xue Youqi (fl. 700). The latter however reinterprets the text to the effect that it is less about the attainment of cosmic powers than about benefits in this world and the salvation of ancestors. This reinterpretation is placed in the text itself in the "explanations" by the Lord of the Dao, which were, however, not part of the early scripture. They show a trend in the development of the scripture away from the heavenly and towards the worldly and practical. The "explanations" also praise the benefits gained from reciting the text, the manifold forms of good fortune it will bring and the formal methods of how such recitation is to be practiced. In essence they propose that one can attain immortality and save one's ancestors by mere recitation, showing how the *Duren jing* from a scripture outlining the origins of the cosmos had grown into a sacred mantra-like work with serious supernatural effects. These effects, then, made the text the basis for a widespread popular worship and general representative document of the Lingbao scriptures. It became the first scripture of the Daoist canon under the Song, since it was greatly revered by the Emperor Huizong (see Strickmann 1978).

***Yinyuan jing.*** The "Scripture of Karmic Retribution" (CT 336) has been only scarcely studied (Nakajima 1984; Kohn 1998). It was compiled in the late sixth century and contains several items of Daoist doctrine that proved to be central in later ages: the belief in the Ten Heavenly Worthies Who Rescue From Suffering (Jiuku tianzun 救苦天尊; see Yûsa 1989) and the concept of multiple hells, where sinners are punished after death.

The former involved the fashioning of statues of these deities, associated with the ten directions and imitating a corresponding set of buddhas, together with their formal worship and prayers to them. The latter meant that Daoism, through the later Lingbao texts, fully integrated the Buddhist doctrine of karma and retribution. The *Yinyuan jing* is central in the formulation of both beliefs, which continue earlier Daoist trends to worship statues of deities and to strive for saving the dead from suffering. Both these are closely connected with Buddhist cosmology, hells and the doctrine of karma; they came to flourish greatly in the Tang and Song and have a strong impact on popular Chinese religion.

## WORLDVIEW

TALISMANS AND COSMIC CHARTS. The most ancient and fundamental aspect of Lingbao doctrine, central to both the *Wufu xu* and the *Wupian zhenwen*, is the cosmology of the five phases joined by the belief in the five emperors of the five directions. The earliest form of this belief is found in the apocrypha. As Kaltenmark has shown, the *Hetu yincan fu* 河圖隱存符, *Yiluo feigui* 伊雒飛龜, and *Pingheng an* 平衡案, mentioned in the *Wufu xu* as the three parts of the ancient Lingbao scripture, were all based—at least in name—on apocryphal interpretations of the ancient cosmic charts. The thinking of cosmic patterns and correspondences they represent, together with the symbolism of dynastic omens and officially used talismans (tallies for the recognition of royal orders and messengers) lay at the root of the Lingbao doctrine as it took shape toward the end of the fourth century (Kaltenmark 1981, 1-10; Seidel 1983).

This can be shown in a number of concrete instances. For example, the three titles of the oldest Lingbao scripture mentioned in the *Baopuzi* had as yet nothing to do with the river charts but were probably more linked with worship of the Dipper and only received reinterpretation in the *Wufu xu*. Then again, the Han apocryphon *Hetu jiangxiang* 河圖絳象 (Red Images of the River Chart) has a story according to which the sage ruler Yu, in his effort of taming the floods, received "perfect texts" from the gods. The same tale appears in the geographical work *Yueque shu* 越絕書 (History of Yue), probably of the sixth century, where the "perfect texts" of Yu are clearly identified as the five Lingbao talismans.

Still, the same story, expanded into a longer and more complex narrative, appears as the origin myth of the five talismans in the *Wufu xu* (1.7ab) and served as inspiration for Tao Yuanming's (365-427) famous "Peach Flower Font" (see Bokenkamp 1986). In the process, too, the various talismanic texts mentioned in the apocrypha and the *Baopuzi* were linked with the cosmic charts *Hetu* and *Luoshu* and were, together with the Lingbao scripture, raised to the status of full world-protecting talismans. From marginal materials, they evolved into central documents of Lingbao orthodoxy.

POLITICAL RELEVANCE. Before the teaching arose that Daoist texts were actively transmitted from originally heavenly writings, they were generally venerated because of their talismanic nature and because they served as good omens for state and country. The *Taiping jing* 太平經 (Scripture of Great Peace), reconstituted in the sixth century, and Kou Qianzhi's *Lutu zhenjing* 錄圖真經 (Perfect Scripture of Registers and Charts), for example, still contain such talismanic elements.

Among the ancient Lingbao corpus, the texts with the strongest talismanic character are those belonging to the Ge Xuan group, which

also exhibit a great veneration for the first Celestial Master Zhang Daoling and for Laozi's *Daode jing*. As Anna Seidel has shown, Lingbao Daoists of the fifth century saw in the Liu-Song rulers the successors of the ruling family of the Han (also named Liu), whose reign they wished to support with signs of Lord Lao's heavenly grace and appropriate good omens (1980, 31-47). This interest in the revival of the Han ruling house, however, also involved the revitalization of the Celestial Masters of old, thus the Lingbao also venerated their founder and sacred texts.

As a result of this political dimension, the most important effect of the Lingbao scriptures and especially their power as described in the Ge Xuan texts lay in the protection of the sacrality of the imperial house and the salvation of all people. The first scroll of the *Wufu xu* has "five initial methods of Great Clarity" that bring about the desired state of political stability or Great Peace, showing again how the ancient Daoist (and original Lingbao) concern for personal attainment of immortality was transformed into a much wider creed under the influence of both Buddhism and political considerations.

INTEGRATIVE TENDENCIES. The political goal of dynastic legitmation moreover entailed a religious unification. About half of the Ge Xuan texts not only honor the *Daode jing* but also accept the *Dadong zhenjing* 大洞真經 (Perfect Scripture of Great Profundity) of the Shangqing school and the *Sanhuang wen* 三皇文 of the Three Sovereigns as valuable talismans. A single integrated structure of talismanic documents not only meant that Lingbao texts were elevated to the Great Vehicle of Daoism, but because they contained the most powerful talismans, they could also claim the status of the highest vehicle.

As noted earlier, the main protagonist to give the Lingbao scriptures a new form and system, and imbue them with a whole new worldview, was Lu Xiujing. As a result, his catalog is more than just a list or classification of the texts available and known in his time. It is rather the first establishment of an integrated structure of Lingbao and, by extension, of all Daoist scriptures and doctrine, even pointing out the direction the teaching was to take in the future by listing a number of texts as "not yet revealed." Bearing in mind that Lu himself was originally a follower of the Celestial Masters, it becomes clear just to what extent he, and Lingbao scriptures and doctrine through him, were tied up with the revival of the Liu ruling house.

In the preface to his catalog (*Yunji qiqian* 4.4a-6a) Lu says, that he thought the talismanic texts called "Lingbao" were the most venerable scriptures for all Daoist schools. Seen from a different angle, this means that Lu established the Lingbao scriptures as a corpus that could be venerated by all Daoists, thereby giving birth to their nature as religious talismans.

PRIMORDIAL BEGINNING. The key deity who revealed the Heavenly Worthy texts is described first in the *Wupian zhenwen* as the Primordial Beginning (*yuanshi* 元始) of the universe. This term appears originally in the *Huainanzi* (ch. 1) and continues the veneration of primordiality in Daoist philosophy. The first to add a heavenly title to "Primordial Beginning" were the *fangshi* who named the ruler and creator of the world the Heavenly King of Primordial Beginning (Yuanshi tianwang), a title duly adopted in the Shangqing scriptures. The latter stylized him as the creator of the cosmos who produced sacred scriptures and talismans and had them carved in sacred script in the caverns of heaven, from where he would make them accessible to humanity. Lingbao Daoists, in turn, followed the lead of Shangqing but changed "Heavenly King" to "Heavenly Worthy," taking over a commonly used title of the Buddha, who later, in contrast to the Daoist deity, became generally known as the World-Honored One (*shizun* 世尊; see Fukunaga 1987, 140-41; Wang 1989, 67-68).

The Heavenly Worthy, who has a hagiography in the *Yunji qiqian* (101.1a-2a), is the one high god who arose from the cosmic void and is the source of all sacred scriptures associated with him in the Lingbao catalog. All scriptures, that is, except one: the *Wupian zhenwen* which arose immediately from the cosmic void and thus represents, in abstract and symbolic form, the power of the five emperors ruling the five directions. Uncreated and primordial, the text is considered directly responsible for the division of the world into the five directions and the five phases; it is the central agent that rules and controls the universe in all its aspects and thus takes on the role of high god and creator, a role ascribed to the Heavenly Worthy in all other texts of this group.

In addition, the cosmic void is also expressed by the term *kongdong* 空洞, which plays a key role in subsequent Lingbao texts. This term, "emptiness and profundity," connotes the state of primordial oneness when heaven and earth had not yet separated and the sun and the moon did not yet shine. It was a state of cosmic chaos without brightness, without even emptiness. In this primordial state, then, suddenly an empty space, a cosmic void, unfolded. From this in turn the world was formed in its division of heaven and earth (1.1a). This cosmic void is known as the initial emptiness of the world, indicating a Daoist "big bang" theory of creation.

HEAVENLY WRITINGS. Heavenly writings are originally celestial texts and signs that have descended to earth, either by direct transmission of their form or by translation into worldly language. Their appearance is always a sign of great good fortune for all beings, whether they are manifested on the backs of spirit animals or strange stones (e.g., the river charts), appear on the walls of sacred grottoes, (e.g., the texts of

the Three Sovereigns), or are transmitted through a medium in trance, (e.g., the Shangqing revelations). The recipient in all cases has to be a person of great sageliness and virtue who will make it his task to see them deployed for the benefit of all (*Wufu xu* 1.4a). The transmission can happen only upon the mediation of a divine agent or a god, who either dictates the contents or writes the sacred characters down directly.

The key Lingbao texts claim to be immediate manifestations of heavenly writings. The Ge Xuan texts, as described in the *Lingbao jingmu xu* (*Yunji qiqian* 4.4b), accordingly were received by Ge Xuan himself on Mount Tiantai; the Heavenly Worthy texts, on the other hand, were first bestowed upon the Yellow Emperor, from whom they went to a number of sage rulers, including Yao, Shun and Yu (*Wufu xu* 1.3a-4a). As they were already emperors, these recipients were men of exceptional merit and virtue, just as Ge Xuan was a highly qualified Daoist sage. It was only because of their personal merit that they could attain these texts which bestowed upon them not only power in this world but also long life and immortality. This vision of the texts as being directly from heaven and bestowed upon masters of great virtue is uniquely Lingbao. It is different from the Shangqing revelations, where heavenly information was translated into a human language through the mediation of Wei Huacun, a dead spirit who had ascended.

THE LORD OF THE DAO. This deity, Taishang daojun 太上道君, is also known as the Highest Lord (Taishang) and often named simply "the Dao." He functions as the mouthpiece of the creator in the void, is the revealer of sacred scriptures upon instruction by the Heavenly Worthy and serves as the latter's disciple and messenger. The relationship between the two deities is patterned on Mahâyâna Buddhism, with the Heavenly Worthy residing in celestial splendor above the known universe and the Lord of the Dao begging for instruction to help suffering humanity.

His exploits are described variously, most comprehensively in his hagiography in the *Yunji qiqian* (101.2a-3a). Among the Lingbao texts he features for example in the *Zuigen shangpin dajie* (LB 12), which begins with him confronting the Heavenly Worthy in a wondrous celestial hall and outlining his previous progress. He describes how he "for a hundred million kalpas has transformed along with the world" and received instruction "in the divine scriptures of the Three Treasures, given the great precepts, and told the sacred sounds of the law" (1.1a). Now he has again come before the deity to learn what he has not heard before, so that he can further aid humanity, helping "even souls already suffering for long kalpas to find salvation through me and be reborn in the halls of happiness" (1.1b). In response, the Heavenly Worthy decides to present the key precepts and tells his own story of continued salvific efforts over

many eons, which still could not prevent a gradual decline of the world. At some point, then, an assistant and interlocutor became necessary, which is the role of the Lord of the Dao. The same information is also found in the *Duren benxing jing* (LB 17).

KALPA CYCLES. The Heavenly Worthy, after creating the world with the help of celestial writings, descended to earth many times, in each cosmic cycle providing the perfect support humanity needed. Still, despite his efforts a certain decline set in, which is described in terms of succeeding kalpa cycles, one slightly more corrupt than the next. The classic kalpas are:

1. *Longhan* 龍漢 (Dragon Han): People were pure and free from evil and led a simple life. The Heavenly Worthy descended to help them live in perfect accordance with the rule of the Dao. There was no sin. At the end of this kalpa the world collapsed.
2. *Chiming* 赤明 (Red Radiance): There was a trace of impurity and evil among living beings, and karma and retribution first began. The Heavenly Worthy saved as many as he could and established the first colonies of celestial beings above. Again, the kalpa ended with the complete destruction of everything.
3. *Kaihuang* 開皇 (Opening Sovereign): People were still living simply, but there were the beginnings of culture and civilization, as exemplified in the knotting of cords for reckoning. Since the minds of people were simple and still largely unconscious, their life-spans were as long as 36,000 years. Again, the Heavenly Worthy supported the age.
4. *Shanghuang* 上皇 (Highest Sovereign): Culture developed fully and the world declined seriously. There was strife and jealousy, hatred and war, bringing the dark age of humanity, which still continues. Ever since, the Heavenly Worthy has handed down precepts and rules to ensure the survival and salvation of at least a few (LB 12.2a-3a).

These four kalpas represent a combination of traditional Chinese cultural cycles following the five phases and the Indian notion of declining ages or *yugas*. Here the perfect age, Krta Yuga, is followed by a time of slight decline in the Tretâ Yuga, which moves on to a time of shortened life-spans and advanced culture in the Dvâpara Yuga, and finally ends in a dark age of evil and corruption, the Kali Yuga. After the world has passed through an entire cycle of four phases (*mahâyuga*), it is completely destroyed and begins anew.

Daoist eschatology, in addition, distinguished greater and lesser kalpa cycles, at the end of which sacred scriptures vanish, depending on their original status in heaven. Thus, the *Duming miaojing* (LB 20) distinguishes three types of sacred writings. The first, on practical techniques, such as gymnastics and nourishing life, "change with the kalpas and are scattered among ordinary folk, being tied to the Six Heavens of the World of Desire" (14b). They perish even in a lesser kalpa. Next, the texts associated with Shangqing and the *Taiping jing* revolve around the eighteen heavens of the World of Form and survive a lesser kalpa revolution. However, they too end when a great kalpa turns, and only the third and highest kind, the "tiger script of divine perfection, the writings in gold and jade characters, and the perfect texts of Lingbao, which originated in Primordial Beginning and rest above the twenty-eight heavens," (15a) will be rescued by returning to the Mountain of Jade Capital 玉京 (Yujing) in the highest heaven of Grand Veil 大羅天 (Daluo tian). Here no disaster ever reaches, it is a permanent realm of Primordial Beginning.

The groups of heavens mentioned here are again a combination of Buddhist and Daoist thought. The standard number given in medieval Daoism is 36, a number first mentioned in the *Weishu* 魏書 "Treatise on Buddhism and Daoism." It says, "above there are 36 heavens, in which there are 36 palaces, each occupied by one ruler," indicating that the 36 heavens are celestial palaces that house the gods. The *Duren jing* similarly has nine heavenly palaces each in the four directions, making a total of 36. In other medieval texts, however, a Daluo tian or Heaven of Grand Veil (a name inspired by the Sanskrit *dhâranî*) appears as the highest heaven, which in turn contains the Three Clarities (*sanqing*). These were, however, separate from the early 36 heavens, which consisted of the original nine heavens of the early medieval texts plus their multiplication by three or 27 heavens. In other words, at some point in medieval Daoism, there were 36 heavens plus the Three Clarities and Daluo.

In the *Duming miaojing* and other later standard texts, such as the *Yunji qiqian*, on the other hand, a system inspired by Buddhism has taken over: a total of 36 heavens, with Daluo and the Three Clarities at the top, followed by four so-called Brahma heavens for true believers. The bottom 28, then, were divided into the worlds of formlessness (4), form (18), and desire (6), imitating the Buddhist model of the Three Worlds. Here we have 33 heavens in the *Da zhidu lun* 大智度論 (T. 1509) and 36 heavens in the *Jushe lun* 俱舍論 (T. 1558).

## Practices

TALISMANS AND IMMORTALITY TECHNIQUES. The *Wufu xu* in particular is a treasure house of immortality techniques. In its first scroll, it describes methods of ingesting the essence of the sun and the moon (1. 18b-19a), which involved exposing oneself to the planets on certain days of the month, closing one's eyes, and visualizing their innermost essence coagulate and enter one's body. The essence of the sun was then matched with the heart and envisioned as red; the essence of the moon was matched with the kidneys and seen as black. The second volume of the text, next, contains numerous recipes for immortality drugs, including ways of preparing pine resin, sesame, pepper, ginger, calamus, and many others more (2.1a-2a). In the third volume, finally we have talismans and spells to protect practitioners as they enter the mountains together with prescriptions for the right days and directions to use. Thus, one should, for example, proceed "on a *jiazi* day and first write the talismans of the four directions on pieces of five-colored silk, then suspend them from boulders on the mountain one wished to enter while offering a prayer for long life" (3.8b). Taken together, the various methods and techniques reveal a rich culture of immortality practice at the root of Lingbao teachings.

MORAL RULES. As noted above, the Lingbao school had a number of different sets of moral rules, from the ten precepts inspired by Buddhism through the ten abstentions, the twelve vows, and so on, to the 300 rules of the Three Primes. Its moral thinking was based both on Buddhist models and on the indigenous precepts created by Kou Qianzhi in his "New Code." In particular the ten abstentions, at least except the last, are immediately Buddhist: do not kill, steal, be lascivious, use fancy speech, use evil words, become intoxicated, be jealous, destroy sacred scriptures or lie, as well as always be in harmony with nature. Similarly the twelve vows follow Mahâyâna inspiration, and encourage practitioners to work for universal salvation, observe the divine law as set out in the scriptures and do good in every situation.

In contrast to this, the Celestial Masters had a set of 180 precepts which strongly emphasized Confucian virtues, such as filial piety, loyalty and good faith, and were in general more oriented toward harmonious community living rather than universal salvation. At the same time, the historical development of the Lingbao communities on the basis of Celestial Masters organization is obvious in the strong integration of the latter's precepts in Lingbao teachings.

RITUAL. The center of all Lingbao practice is ritual. This ritual practice, in turn, as described in Lu Xiujing's *Wugan wen* 五感文 (Text of Fivefold Response, CT 1278), centers on the nine *zhai* or purification

ceremonies. A *zhai* 齋 can be defined as a complex rite consisting of three separate parts: bodily purification through baths, fasting, abstention from sexual relations and avoidance of defilements; mental purification through confession of sins and meditations; and a prayer ritual for certain distinct purposes, part of which usually involved the sharing of food, whether among the gods and the people, the masters and the community or the donors and the recluses.

The nine main kinds of *zhai* in Lingbao are: (1) the Golden Register Ceremony (*jinlu zhai* 金錄齋) to ensure harmony and peace in country and state; (2) the Yellow Register Ceremony (*huanglu zhai* 黃錄齋) to extirpate the karmic roots of sin of the ancestors up to nine generations; (3) the Ceremony of the Luminous Perfected (*mingzhen zhai* 明真齋) to save the souls of the Daoists' own ancestors; (4) the Ceremony of the Three Primes (*sanyuan zhai* 三元齋) to offer repentance of the Daoist's personal sins; (5) the Ceremony of the Eight Nodes (*bajie zhai* 八節齋) to offer repentance for the sins of all beings in the present age; (6) the Ceremony of Spontaneity (*ziran zhai* 自然齋) to dissolve disasters and misfortunes; (7) the Ceremony of the Three Sovereigns (*sanhuang zhai* 三皇齋) to expel all defilements through formal purification and bathing; (8) the Ceremony of the Great One (*taiyi zhai* 太一齋) to honor the unity of the universe; and (9) the Ceremony of Instruction (*zhijiao zhai* 指教齋), a rite of purification and mental clarity.

The Golden Register Ceremony was dedicated to the establishment of harmony between yin and yang and peace in state and country. An open-air altar was erected in preparation, a multi-tiered platform about 10 meters high, the top of which was about one square meter in size. Doors were inserted on the sides, at the top and bottom, as well as above and below—making a total of ten symbolizing the ten directions. On top nine lamps, each one nine feet tall, would be set up, illuminating the altar and through it the universe.

The sacred writings of the five directions (the "Perfect Texts" or five talismans) were next placed on benches in the five directions around and in the center of the altar. Then five dragons were cast of pure gold to be buried in the appropriate directions to communicate the officiants' prayers to the gods. The ceremony lasted nine days in the spring, three days in summer, seven days in the fall and five days in winter—matching the numbers of the five phases. If undertaken monthly, it would be held on the first, sixth and twentieth day. In order to dissolve all the sins of the world, the sacred texts were burnt in the end and the golden dragons cast into running water (see Chavannes 1919: Yamada 1991).

The ceremonies typically involve a sense of personal guilt, of having committed transgressions which have to be expiated and from which one has to be cleansed, and the ritual undergoing of hardships or punishments which will serve this effect. They are a continuation of the

repentance rites performed by the Celestial Masters of the Later Han, which involved the personal confession of one's misdeeds and a petition for exoneration sent to the Three Bureaus of heaven, earth and water (see Tsuchiya 1994). They also show a Buddhist influence in that the transmission of the prayer and the expiation of sins took place on the basis of the merit created through the ceremony, a characteristic specially formulated by Lu Xiujing.

In ancient China, a *zhai* was originally a rite of purification and fasting undertaken in connection with a sacrifice to the gods (see Malek 1985). This rite was transformed by Lu Xiujing into a formal ceremony that also involved prayers and repentance, making use of the Buddhist notion of merit, which alone could effect the proper expiation of sins. This is explained in some detail in Lu's *Zhuyuan yi* 祝願儀 (Observances of Incantations and Prayer, CT 524) while his reasons for providing ritual instructions in the first place are detailed in his *Lingbao shoudu yibiao*. According to this text, he found that the Lingbao scriptures of his day hardly ever spoke of ritual rules and observances, and thus decided to supplement them himself. This fact is indeed borne out by the Lingbao texts themselves, which give some indications of the use of the talismans (*Wufu xu*) or the "perfect texts" (*Wupian zhenwen*), but are nowhere near the detailed and complex rites that Lu describes. Unlike the bulk of the ancient Lingbao corpus, the *Wupian zhenwen* did not provide new ritual forms for the use of its sacred materials, relying entirely on the earlier *Wufu xu*. Lu Xiujing thus has to be credited with giving a ritual format to the extensive Lingbao scriptures and making their worship accessible to a wider public.

He himself was aware of this situation and called the old rites the "mysterious rules of the ancient documents." With this he probably referred to the talismanic rites of offering and incantation (*jiaozhou* 醮咒) performed by the followers of the five talismans in the fourth century. In contrast to these, the new rites composed by Lu involved the interaction of the participants' body gods, themselves heavenly officers, with the celestial deities of the otherworld. These officers would then return into the adept's body and be able to summon the celestial deities down into it. As their directives descended upon the altar of the ceremony, so the prayers of the officiant reached the celestial administration.

These rites combine several key elements of other Daoist schools, such as the Shangqing belief in body gods and the Celestial Masters' practice of sending petitions to the Three Bureaus, while also integrating the Buddhist notions of repentance and the creation of merit. Again, as in Ge Xuan talismanic doctrine so in the ritual practice of all Lingbao, there was a serious integration of the different traditions, placing the Lingbao school in the highest position of the great vehicle of Daoism.

Once established, the rites continued to be actively practiced throughout Daoist history and are still dominant in the religion today. That, of course, does not mean that the rites as Lu organized them can still be observed in any given Daoist temple or have remained unchanged since the fifth century. But we do know of their continuity because they were codified in the sixth-century *Wushang biyao* and again revised by Du Guangting in the tenth century (see CT 507). The latter, in particular, joined the ancient rites of purification (*zhai*) and offering (*jiao*醮) into one integrated structure, which first leaned more towards the *jiao* than the *zhai* and eventually became the foundation of the *jiao* ritual of renewal that is still practiced today (see Saso 1972; Lagerwey 1987).

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