

# Authority and Discipline in the Early Daoist Church<sup>\*</sup>

Terry Kleeman

## Abstract

The early Daoist church formed its own faith-based communities, in which the authority of the state was wholly supplanted by that of the Daoist church and its representatives. Even after such Daoist communities became rare, Daoists continued to revere and support financially the local master who instructed them, as well as more distant figures in the church hierarchy. The master exercised

---

**Terry Kleeman** received his M.A. from the University of British Columbia in 1979 and his Ph.D. in Oriental Languages from the University of California, Berkeley, in 1988. He taught at the University of Pennsylvania, the University of Minnesota, and the College of William and Mary before joining the University of Colorado in 1998. Kleeman has served as the President of the Society for the Study of Chinese Religion and co-chair of the Chinese Religions Group of the American Academy of Religions. His research focuses on Chinese religion and thought, especially medieval religious Daoism and popular religion, as well as Chinese ethnic history, the local history of Southwest China, East Asian new religions, and Chinese archaeology. Major publications include *A God's Own Tale* (SUNY Press, 1994), *Great Perfection: Religion and Ethnicity in a Chinese Millennial Kingdom* (Hawaii, 1998), *The Ancient Chinese World*, co-authored with Tracy Barrett (Oxford, 2005), and *Daoist and the Philosophy of Co-existence/Dōkyō to Kyōsei shisō* (Taiga, 2009).

<sup>\*</sup> Research for this article was supported by grants from the Center for Chinese Studies at the National Central Library, Taiwan, and the National Endowment for the Humanities through the American Council of Learned Societies. I profited from suggestions made by Stephen Bokenkamp, Maruyama Hiroshi, and Chang Chaojan as well as two anonymous reviewers. Remaining flaws are my own.

considerable authority in relation to his flock of Daoist citizens and novices, overseeing their conduct and determining religious punishments for those who strayed. He also instructed novices and awarded them registers as they strove to become libationers. Novices who attained the status of full libationer passed through a stage as itinerant preachers before being assigned to a specific parish, at which stage they posed a challenge to the settled flocks of libationers who served established communities. One source of the Daoist libationer's authority was ongoing revelation from dead church founders and leaders, with church officials tasked with verifying such spirit communications. In spite of these strict limitations on conduct, church membership is experienced as empowering for the great majority of its adherents.

Keywords: authority, Celestial Masters, precepts, revelation, empowerment

Early Daoism (second to seventh centuries C.E.) was China's first indigenous organized religion and possessed its own distinctive faith communities, system of social status distinctions, and definition of transgression.<sup>1</sup> Although we now have a basic understanding of some of the sets of precepts that governed behavior and defined transgression or sin within the community, we do not have a very good idea of how individuals interacted within the Daoist community, how the precepts were enacted and enforced, and how punishment was meted out among these various segments of the church community. More broadly, we do not have an adequate idea of how authority was defined and constituted, who possessed power and how they exercised it, or what recourse individuals had in the face of this authority. This is the primary focus of this article.

Early ordination documents divided the Daoist world into three groups: Daoist citizens 道民,<sup>2</sup> novices 籙生, and officers 男官、女官.

---

<sup>1</sup> For a more detailed account of the early Celestial Master church, see my "Community and Daily Life in the Early Daoist Church," in *Early Chinese Religion: Part 2, The Period of Division (220–589)*, ed. John Lagerwey and Lü Pengzhi (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2010), 395–436. The most important single study of this period of Daoist history remains Ōfuchi Ninji, *Shoki no Dōkyō* (Tokyo: Sōbunsha, 1991). For a discussion of the nature, dating, and reliability of Daoist sources for this period, see my "Community and Daily Life," 400–402.

<sup>2</sup> Although the term *daomin* is sometimes interpreted as a Daoist "laity," this usage is misleading. *Min* was in Han China an administrative term referring to

Citizens were common believers who had accepted only the three basic moral precepts and could perform only the most rudimentary rituals, like the morning and evening audience rituals and the confession of sins known as the Personally-Written Missive to the Three Officers 三官手書.<sup>3</sup> Novices had embarked on a course of study and self-cultivation that would eventually lead them to full membership as a libationer 祭酒, what was later called a Daoist priest 道士. They usually started as children, aged seven or older, and could complete the course of study by the time they were ready for capping, around age twenty. They then became officers of the church, who had received full ordination and worked as local priests ministering to flocks of believers, though they may not have controlled their own parish immediately. There was also a hierarchy of church administrative officers above the level of the local parish, but it is poorly understood.<sup>4</sup>

## The Novitiate

Children in Daoist communities, as in most traditional societies, were nurtured by and expected to recognize the authority of their parents and

---

individuals who had been enrolled on government population rosters and regularly paid taxes and performed corvée labor. Daoist usage paralleled this: a Daoist citizen was someone who was enrolled on the *fate register* (*mingji* 命籍) of the local parish and regularly contributed the five peck tithing of grain. Such individuals were expected to maintain an oratory (*jingshi* 靜室) as a separate structure near their home and to perform morning and evening audience rituals to Daoist deities. Because all such church members personally performed ritual functions, the church is best understood at this point as a universal priesthood.

<sup>3</sup> On these documents see Lai Chi-tim [Li Zhitian 黎志添], “Tian, di, shui sangan xinyang yu zaqi Tianshidao zhibing jiezu yishi” 天地水三官信仰與早期天師道治病解罪儀式, in *Taiwan zongjiao yanjiu* 臺灣宗教研究 2, no. 1 (2002): 1–38.

<sup>4</sup> On the upper levels of ordination see John Lagerwey, “Zhengyi Registers,” in “ICS Visiting Professor Lecture Series,” special issue of *Journal of Chinese Studies* (2005): 35–88; on the ordination system as a whole, see Kristofer M. Schipper, “Taoist Ordination Ranks in the Tunhuang Manuscripts,” in *Religion and Philosophie in Ostasien (Festschrift für Hans Steininger)*, ed. Gert Naundorf, Karl-Heinz Pohl, and Hans-Herrman Schmidt (Würzburg, Germany: Königshausen and Neumann, 1985), 127–148.

other senior members of the family. Children under the age of seven *sui* 歲 were generally considered too young to have moral judgment or be independent members of the family. Upon reaching the age of seven, a boy or girl could enter the novitiate, apprenticing to a master who would teach the child the essentials of Daoism. Both men and women became masters, and one source tells us that women trained with female masters and men with male. This decision to enter the novitiate was made for the child by the parents, as we see in this passage on the status of maidens within the church:<sup>5</sup>

In general, a maiden who lives at home follows the father and mother's command in apprenticing to a master in order to receive the faith. The father and mother make the statement for her.

凡處女在家隨父母教之從師受法。父母為辭。

Once one entered the novitiate, the master became a sort of surrogate parent, though ties to the natal family were not cut off. A text called the *Correct and Unitary Solemn Etiquette for Serving the Master* tells us,<sup>6</sup>

Morning and night, you should straighten your ritual clothes and, holding the official tablet, pay court to your primary master and three masters using the ritual for one's father and mother.<sup>7</sup>

正一事師威儀：旦夕正其法服執簡朝本師、三師如父母禮。

The master was responsible for training the novice in the proper execution of ritual. Since Daoist ritual involved the formulation and presentation of written documents, the master may also have had a hand in transmitting literacy; certainly the program of study involved learning a variety of specific literary forms and set expressions. There was also a moral component to the master's instruction since promotion depended

<sup>5</sup> DZ 1243, *Zhengyi fawen taishang wailu yi*, 正一法文太上外籙儀 1a–b. The statement (*ci* 辭) of the petitioner is quoted at the beginning of each petition. It gives the name and status of the petitioner and sets out the nature of the request.

<sup>6</sup> DZ 791, *Zhengyi weiyi jing* 正一威儀經, 9a.

<sup>7</sup> The primary master refers to the teacher supervising one's novitiate. The three masters are the Roster Master 籍師, Ordination Master 度師, and Scripture Master 經師.

on the accumulation of merit and the assumption by the novice of progressively more demanding codes of conduct.

Some Daoist sources give a rough guideline for how long each stage in the novitiate should take. Here is the advice given in the *Protocol for the External Registers*:<sup>8</sup>

All those who receive the Gengling Register, after five years can advance to the One General [Register]; after four [more] years, to the Ten General [Register]; after three [more] years, to the Seventy-five General [Register]; after two [more] years, to the One hundred-fifty General [Register]. If, during the course of one year, one's motivation and conduct are lax and foolish and one makes no substantial progress, the entire year should be repeated. If after three repetitions there is no achievement and s/he does not know to establish virtue, then s/he should be left at that level; s/he is totally unsuitable for promotion. If among [the novices] there is one who is perceptive, talented, wise and extraordinary, whose merit and virtue surpasses the others, the yearly limits do not apply.

凡受更令五年得進一將軍，四年十將軍，三年七十五將軍，二年百五十將軍。一年若志行庸愚無長進者，悉又倍年。三倍無功，不知建德，直置而已，都不合遷。其中聰明才智秀異，功德超群，不計年限。

From this passage we see that the evaluation of the novice seems to have a significant subjective element. It was up to the master to decide if one was “lax” or “foolish.” One who did not measure up could be stranded at one level of the novitiate and never move on to full membership in the church.

The aspiring novice was not wholly without options, though. In traditional Chinese society, a series of masters and disciples constituted

<sup>8</sup> DZ 1243, *Zhengyi fawen taishang wailu yi*, 11a. A different course is laid out in the *Code of the Great Perfected (Taizhenke 太真科)*, ca. 420 C.E.), but this source claims students did not advance to the Ten General level until reaching adulthood. See *Yaoxiu keyi jielü chao 要修科儀戒律鈔*, 10.5b–6a. This seems improbable, especially since both the *Taishang sanwu zhengyi mengwei lu 太上三五正一盟威錄* (DZ 1208, 1/1a) and Zhang Wanfu's *Jiao sandong zhenwen wufa zhengyi mengwei lu licheng yi 醮三洞真文五法正一盟威錄立成儀* (DZ 1212, 13a) describe the Ten General register as that of an “adolescent” (*tongzi 童子*).

a lineage that was, strictly speaking, independent of all others, though presumably many distinct lineages could trace back to a common teacher some generations previously. Changing teachers meant adopting a new course of study. In Daoism, however, the relationship was different. Although one certainly required a master, all masters taught a common curriculum. It was possible to receive each register from a different teacher.

This clearly posed a threat to the authority and financial stability of the local master, which we see reflected in both admonitions and institutions. A certain penalty was built into the ordination rules, which could be substantial, depending on family fortunes. Obtaining a register required the provision of pledge offerings, a number of goods not intended to constitute a salary for the master but rather to supply the basic materials he or she needed to carry on his or her job. If the entire course of instruction occurred with one master, it seems that an aspirant had to supply only some of these goods once.<sup>9</sup>

When earlier and later [registers] are received from the same master, in the latter case one need not supply the rice and firewood; only the paper, brushes, etc., should be the same as in the former rite. If from a different master, each pledge offering is indispensable.

凡先受後受同一師者，後不須米薪，唯紙筆等如舊。異師，各信不可虧。

No doubt some provision had to be made for people who moved from one region to another since commuting to the former parish was not practical, but this could be abused. Lu Xiujing complains that in his day people would sometimes travel to a neighboring parish because they preferred the master there or the master offered better food at their feasts, which he thought quite improper:<sup>10</sup>

Many of the people today who worship the Dao do not attend the Assemblies. Saying it is because the trip is long or that they do not go to this establishment,<sup>11</sup> they forsake their own master and cross over to some

<sup>9</sup> DZ 1243, *Zhengyi fawen taishang wailu yi*, 11a.

<sup>10</sup> DZ 1127, *Lu xiansheng daomen kelue* 陸先生道門科略, 2b. I assume here that those “who worship the Dao” refers to both Daoist citizens and novices.

<sup>11</sup> The significance of this comment is uncertain. It may be a reference to the social

other parish. Only caring about the wine and food, they tempt each other.

今人奉道，多不赴會，或以道遠為辭，或以此門不往，捨背本師，越詣他治。唯高尚酒食，更相銜誘。

This problem was exacerbated by a structural issue in the church hierarchy: an intermediate stage between when a Daoist believer attained full membership through conferral of the one hundred fifty general register, and with it the title of “libationer,” and the conferral on him or her of the position of master of a parish, with a parish register (*zhilu* 治籙). These individuals became itinerant masters called “unassigned evangelists” (*sanhua* 散化) or “unassigned pneumas” (*sanqi* 散氣).<sup>12</sup> They were expected to constitute their own community by converting the “profane” (*su* 俗, referring primarily to those who offered blood sacrifice to the gods and ghosts of the traditional common religion), adding new members to the “fate roster” (*mingji* 命籍) each master carried. A new member earned a certain number of merits, and a sufficient number of merits qualified one for promotion to the next level, an appointment to the lowest level parish. It was no doubt difficult to convert the profane—who had to give up the security of deities they had worshipped for generations and accept onerous new codes of conduct that interfered with established life patterns—but one can imagine that there were always some disgruntled members of an established local parish willing to shift allegiance, as we saw in the quote above. Moreover, itinerant masters offered a more personalized service, coming to the believer’s home to preach or perform rituals. The *Statutes of the Mystic Capital* comments on this situation in his day, saying, “If they

---

origins of the master. The social background of masters could be quite diverse.

<sup>12</sup> *San* here is read in the rising tone and normally indicates an official title “without fixed responsibilities” (*meiyou guding de zhiwu* 沒有固定的職務, *Hanyu dacidian*), as in the common sinecure for literary figures: unassigned cavalier in ordinary (*sanji changshi* 散騎常事). See DZ 1127, *Lu xiansheng daomen kelue*, 5b. Kou Qianzhi 寇謙之, in his reorganization of the Celestial Master tradition, uses some of these terms differently but is consistent in using *sanqi* as an appellation for libationers who are not assigned households. See DZ 785, *Laojun yinsong jiejing* 老君音誦戒經, 21a.

cannot convert [new members] with the code and faith, they just take them [from other parishes]” 不能以科法化喻，輒便領受。<sup>13</sup>

Established masters tried to frame this as a moral choice, arguing that for a citizen or novice “coming to study” with a parish master showed greater reverence than, and hence was morally superior to, asking an itinerant master to “go to teach,” as we see in the following passages:<sup>14</sup>

From the devaluation of the Dao inherent in “going to teach” we can understand the regard for Perfection expressed by “coming to learn.”<sup>15</sup> They [those who go teach] are minor masters who, not yet able to establish their own parishes, travel about among the people, devoting themselves to evangelizing others. Their karmic affiliation [with the Dao] is fleeting, and they do not feel restrained by the major rites.

自往教之輕道，明來學之重真。其間小師未能立治，履歷民間，行化自効，因緣暫爾，不拘大儀。(外籙儀 1a)

In general, when receiving the marvelous teachings, you should always go to your master's household. You must not inconvenience this revered person by forcing him or her to go to your humble abode, as if an itinerant ritual master whom you can invite any time you please. Coming to study shows that your intention is sincere; if they go to teach, it means you take the endeavor lightly.

凡受妙法，皆詣師門。不得屈尊曲從鄙舍，若遊行法師。延請隨時。來學則志篤往教則業輕。(傳授經戒儀注訣 12a)

The access to alternate masters offering a parallel curriculum posed a problem for the ability of masters to enforce precepts and other codes of conduct, including rules concerning infractions of the secular legal system. A novice or citizen facing punishment mandated from his or her local master could transfer to another parish or to one of the itinerant masters

<sup>13</sup> DZ 188, *Xuandu liuwen* 玄都律文, 13a.

<sup>14</sup> See DZ 1243, *Zhengyi fawen taishang wailu yi*, 1a; DZ 1238, *Chuanshou jingjie yi zhujue* 傳授經戒儀注訣, 12a.

<sup>15</sup> Compare this passage from the *Record of Rites*, “In the Rites one hears of coming to study, but one never hears of going to teach.” See Ruan Yuan 阮元, *Liji zhushu* 禮記註疏, “Quli” (1815; repr., Taipei: Yeewen, 1974), 1.10a.

mentioned above, or even abandon Daoism altogether to return to profane worship. In dealing with such individuals, masters were advised to act mercifully, counseling repentance and offering forgiveness three times, and only then applying sanctions. Moreover, even after suffering the greatest penalty, loss of all registers, a door was left open for the miscreant to return to the flock through repentance and virtuous conduct:<sup>16</sup>

All those who transgress against the precepts, whether they rebel against their admonishments, join with other Daoists to put faith in deviant forces, or mix worship and put faith in the profane, this represents a lack of fidelity and a betrayal in their heart of hearts, foolish confusion and doubt, and a deep entanglement in misleading hindrances. The master should admonish the individual three times. If s/he can truly change and preserve the One without confusion, then s/he will be effective in summoning the gods. If after three admonishments the person does not reform, this is rebelling against the Dao and opposing one's revered master; by law, s/he should be stripped of registers. If the person has transgressed against the Perfected by worshipping the profane [gods] or serving no one, the master may take pity on them and not blame or reprimand them for their former actions. If the person responds with enmity and goes to serve another, abandoning the root and pursuing the branch, though they may be said to be worshipping the Dao, in fact they are offending against the orthodox code. The master should transfer his/her various [spirit] officers; this must not be permitted. If after time has passed s/he knows enough to express regret, and again establishes exceptional merit, then begs to return, they should be permitted to advance according to their virtue. If they become angry and flee, not turning in their register(s) and talisman(s), the master should not harshly demand them; just transfer the officers.

凡違戒者，背負鞠言，協道信邪，雜事信俗，此為不專，中心懷二，愚迷猶豫，惑障纏深。師三誨之，必能改革，守一不惑，召神有效。三誨不悛，是為叛道，乖逆師尊，法應奪籙。違真俸俗，及無所事，師慈愍之，不追咎責。怨對事他，棄本逐末，雖名奉道，實犯正科。師移諸官，不得容受。積久知悔，更立殊功，乞還聽許，依德昇遷。若瞋恚委遁，不輸籙符，師勿苦求，但移而已。

---

<sup>16</sup> DZ 1243, *Zhengyi fawen taishang wailu yi*, 12b.

The three admonitions without punishment is a feature of historical Daoist communities, noted in the *Record of the Three Kingdoms* account of the Hanzhong community as well as the Cheng-Han state created on a Daoist model in Sichuan during the first half of the fourth century.<sup>17</sup> It stands in sharp contrast to the harsh legal system of imperial China, inherited from the Legalist Qin state, where minor civil or criminal infractions and first offenses often were met with crippling corporal punishments. The ultimate authority of the Daoist master in this passage is seizure of the register, and this could be accomplished without the cooperation or even the presence of the accused. The master simply invoked a ritual form that removed all the celestial generals, clerks, and soldiers from the offender's body, transforming the sacred register into a meaningless length of cloth and leaving the offender with no protection whatsoever against the supernatural dangers that filled the world.

Since offenses against the Daoist code were taken quite seriously, a correct assessment was important. A deliberative mechanism is specified in the *Protocol of the External Registers* whereby the masters and novices of a parish meet to assess the conduct of one of their members:<sup>18</sup>

If one internally transgresses against the otherworldly officials, the master and friends should remonstrate with him/her. If the person continues to do it and does not follow their advice, s/he should in all cases be stripped of registers. The severity of the offense should be assessed in detail, with the master and fellow students discussing it. The commands and rules must be appropriately applied; both hidden and manifest [powers] value knowing [all the facts]. If the mistake of breaking the precepts continues, the master will suffer the same fate.

內犯陰官，師友諫喻，苟作不從，皆宜格奪。輕重詳量，師朋評議，令法取允。幽顯貴知。破戒謬濫，師資格同。

Here again there is first a warning and punishment follows only when that warning is not heeded. Consultation among members of the parish determines the severity of the offense so that the punishment may be appropriate. The importance of enforcement is underlined in the last sentence, which warns that a failure to check improper conduct can

<sup>17</sup> See Chen Shou 陳壽, *Sanguozhi* 三國志 (Beijing: Zhonghua), “Weishu” 魏書, 8/263.

<sup>18</sup> DZ 1243, *Zhengyi fawen taishang wailu yi*, 13a.

result in punishment for the master as well. This passage is followed by yet another statement about how the sinner can redeem his or her actions through repentance and the performance of virtuous actions.

The master was also required to take cognizance of the workings of the secular legal system. Sometimes that system, lacking divine guidance, applied inappropriately severe punishment or even convicted the innocent. The master could interfere in this process:<sup>19</sup>

Further, if one externally transgresses against the officials of the mortal world, committing a mortal offense worthy of being sentenced to corporal punishment, this is also a betrayal of the Dao, and all such persons should be stripped of registers. After being beaten in order to redeem the punishment, the person can be absolved through submission of a memorial. If someone who is innocent suffers corporal punishment, announce this fact [to heaven?] and do not strip him/her of registers.

又外犯陽官，死罪從刑，即是負道，皆應奪錄，鞭笞贖罰，章奏解之。刑而枉者，啟告勿奪。(外錄儀12b)

Here we see that the divine codes of conduct are assumed to share a common set of values with that of secular law, hence a profane crime is also an offense against the Dao, but Daoist codes still transcend secular ones: for a true criminal the Daoist punishment of a reduction of Daoist rank through the confiscation of registers along with a ceremonial lashing to express repentance for the offense is substituted for the state's corporal punishment, and even this is avoided if the master determines that the individual was wrongly convicted. The offender's secular sentence is then voided through submission of a petition to Heaven.

## **Evaluation and Promotion**

The novitiate culminated in the achievement of the rank of libationer, the bottom rung of the Daoist administrative hierarchy. The levels above the master, however, are poorly understood. It seems that aspiring libationers went through a series of progressively higher postings, moving from parish to parish on the basis of evaluations of their conduct

---

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 12b.

by their colleagues. Lu Xiuqing describes the system in the following terms:<sup>20</sup>

When citizens have three Endeavors, this constitutes one Merit, and three Merits constitute one Virtue. When citizens have three Virtues, then they have differentiated themselves from the norm and are permitted to be appointed to a register. After they have received the register, they must have merits to be promoted again, from the stage of the Ten General Register to One Hundred Fifty. If among the register clerks there are individuals who are loyal, worthy, earnest and straightforward, who are humble and careful, fond of the Dao and especially diligent, familiar with precedent and aware of change, worthy of being entrusted with evangelization, they can be appointed as Daoist priests of Unassigned Pneumas. If amongst these Unassigned Pneumas [Daoist priests] there are individuals capable of pure cultivation, they can be promoted to a position in an alternate parish.<sup>21</sup> If amongst those in alternate parishes there are, again, those who are assiduous and earnest, they can be promoted to a position in a roving parish. If among those in roving parishes there are individuals who are scrupulous and capable, they can be promoted to a position in a lower parish. If among those in lower parishes there are individuals who are extolled for their merits, they can be promoted to a position in an accompanying parish. If among those in accompanying parishes there are individuals who meet the standards, all of the Daoist priests in the parish may join in recommending them, memorializing the Celestial Master's descendant that they may be appointed to one of the twenty-four parishes, starting with an appointment to one of the lower eight [parishes]. If they humbly devote themselves to the Dao and achieve merit in promoting evangelization, they may advance to a position in the middle eight. If they rescue and bring order to the myriad clans of the realm, supporting the imperiled and saving the weak, and are able to survive the

---

<sup>20</sup> DZ 1127, *Lu xiansheng daomen kelue*, 4b–5a. See also Franciscus Verellen, “The Twenty-Four Dioceses and Zhang Daoling: The Spatio-liturgical Organization of Heavenly Master Daoism,” in *Pilgrims and Place*, ed. Phyllis Granoff and Koichi Shinohara (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2003), 15–67.

<sup>21</sup> This passage implies a hierarchy of parishes somewhat different from that found in other sources. See the chart below and, for more detailed information, the Verellen article cited in the preceding note.

three fates,<sup>22</sup> they will advance to a position in the upper eight. If they can refine to brightness the pneumas of the Dao, rescue everyone, extinguish demonic pneumas, and cause the myriad clans to submit to them, then they can be installed in the parish offices of the three pneumas at Yangping, Lutang, and Heming. You must carefully investigate their conduct and merit when selecting those to be appointed. Do not choose a person not appropriate for the job, or a job that is not appropriate for the person.

民有三勤為一功，三功為一德。民有三德，則與凡異，聽得署籙。受籙之後，須有功更遷，從十將軍籙階，至百五十。若籙吏中有忠良質朴，小心畏慎，好道翹勤，溫故知新，堪任宣化，可署散氣道士。若散氣中能有清修者，可遷別治職任。若別治中復有精篤者，可遷署遊治職任。若遊治中復有嚴能者，可署下治職任。若下治中復有功稱者，可遷署配治職任。若配治中復有合法者，本治道士皆當保舉，表天師子孫，遷除三八之品，先署下八之職。若有伏勤於道，勸化有功，進中八之職。若救治天下萬姓，扶危濟弱，能度三命，進上八之職。能明鍊道氣，救濟一切，消滅鬼氣，使萬姓歸伏，便拜陽平、鹿堂、鶴鳴三氣治職。當精察施行功德，採求職署，勿以人負官，勿以官負人。(陸先生道門科略 5b–6a)

This passage tries to articulate specific virtues that are applicable to each level in the hierarchy, but it does not seem that these were widely accepted, since they are not found in other similar documents concerning promotion. The *Protocol of the External Registers* discusses many of the same ranks in the following terms:<sup>23</sup>

<sup>22</sup> These are the correct fate (*zhengming* 正命) or received fate (*shouming* 受命), encountered fate (*zaoming* 遭命), and following fate (*suiming* 隨命), first mentioned in the Han apocrypha. See *Lunheng jiaoshi* 論衡校釋, ed. Huang Hui 黃暉 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1990), 49–50.

<sup>23</sup> DZ 1243, *Zhengyi fawen taishang wailu yi*, 18b–19a. Note that in this passage the terms *Unassigned Pneumas* and *Unassigned Office* are applied to all levels of the novitiate. In fact they did share with libationers who had not yet received parish office this quality of being “unassigned,” so this is not that surprising. Apparently, since novices could never hold parish office and were by definition “unassigned,” some sources thought it unnecessary to point this out.

Scribal clerks and register novices who are intelligent, perceptive and easy to enlighten, and whose bone pneumas accord with the Perfected naturally form a separate category. They should first practice [at the rank of] Unassigned Pneuma. The Unassigned Pneuma is when young men and women inquire about the living pneumas and the methods of avoiding death. When they have a rough understanding of the entire process then they are advanced to Unassigned Transformation. Those who hold the Unassigned Transformation one general register are called Unassigned Pneuma Young Male or Young Female Libationers; those holding a Ten General register are called Unassigned Office Preserving Pneuma Libationers; those holding a Seventy-five [General] register are called a Unassigned Office Steadfast Pneuma Libationers; those holding a One Hundred Fifty [General] register are called Sunshine Pneuma Libationers. All employ talismans and charm water, instruct the common people, and use petitions and memorials to rescue the living and save the dead. If they convert three people, this is a Merit; three merits constitute an Endeavor; three Endeavors constitute an Award. Those with an Award possess virtue and can be appointed to an Inner, Outer, or Stellar Parish. They receive these according to the prescribed order, with those possessing virtue as commemorated by an Award being recommended for recognition by their teachers and friends.

書吏籙生慧解易悟，骨炁合真，自然有分，先習散炁。散炁者，童男童女諮問生炁、不死之方，粗知終始，便進散化。散化一將軍籙稱散炁童男童女祭酒，十將軍籙稱散官保炁祭酒，七十五籙稱散官持炁祭酒，百五十籙稱晞炁祭酒，皆行符勅水，教訓萬民，章表奏聞，濟生救死。化得三人為一功，三功為一勤，三勤為一勳。勳者有德，仍得署治內、外、星宿，隨次受之。有勳德者，師友褒賞。

A comparison of these two passages reveals several interesting discrepancies. First, the basic units of evaluation are different and those that are the same are differently arrayed; it is unclear if this reflects differences that should be attributed to regional practice or to the dating of the texts. Moreover, in the second passage the categories of unassigned pneuma or unassigned transformation are applied to novices, who are described, however, as libationers, a term usually restricted to those holding the full ordination marked by the one hundred fifty general

register. Finally, the ranking of parishes differs somewhat, as expressed in the following chart:<sup>24</sup>

三洞珠囊	陸先生道門科略	正一法文太上外籙儀
	散氣道士	
遊治 (8)	別治	
別治 (4)	遊治	
配治 (8)	下治	
星宿治 (4)	配治	星宿治
下治 (8)	下八治	
中治 (8)	中八治	外治
上治 (8)	上八治	內治
	三氣治	

Unfortunately, the sources that shed light on the parish system are late, the earliest dating to the sixth and seventh centuries, and are mutually contradictory.<sup>25</sup> This is no doubt because the actually functioning of the parishes changed greatly with the move of the church outside of Sichuan in 215 and to south China around 317. By the time of Lu Xiuqing, it seems that parishes were hierarchically arrayed with no reference to geography and transfer between parishes primarily represented promotion in rank.

## Church Hierarchy

All this information raises the question of the actual role of the church hierarchy in its direction. Today there is no central authority governing local Daoist priests. Once they have progressed to the level of chief priest (*gaogong* 高功, literally [master of] high merit), they operate independently of each other with no formal mechanism for regulating

<sup>24</sup> On the system of parishes, see Verellen, “Twenty-Four Dioceses,” 15–67.

<sup>25</sup> Verellen, “Twenty-Four Dioceses,” 16, identifies the earliest source as the *Protocol of the Celestial Master’s Parishes* (*Tianshi zhi yi* 天師治儀) of the thirteenth Celestial Master, Zhang Bian 張辯, which he dates to 552. See DZ 1244, *Shoulu cidì faxin yi*, 受籙次第法信儀, 19bff.

improper conduct or verifying qualifications. We are perhaps warranted to ask if this has been the situation ever since the dissolution of the Hanzhong community.

Let us first consider what we know about the church in the period before dissolution, when the church maintained a theocratic state that competed directly with the secular government and sought to supplant it completely in a utopian world to come of Great Peace. It really is not much.<sup>26</sup> Historical sources mention the head of the religion, called Celestial Master, but in Daoist scriptures it looks as though that applies only to Zhang Ling, with his son Heng called *sishi* 嗣師 or “inheriting master” and his grandson Lu referred to as *xishi* 系師 or “connecting master.” Sources also mention two ranks within the church: libationer (*jijiu* 祭酒) and parish-heading great libationer (*zhitou dajijiu* 治頭大祭酒).<sup>27</sup> The first term is common in Celestial Master scriptures, but we never find the second term anywhere, though there is a close parallel in the opening of the essay “Yangping parish.”<sup>28</sup> What we see in its place is *zhuzhe* 主者, a term that might be translated “leader” and seems to indicate someone heading a parish. Our only hard evidence, a stele from 173, records a group of libationers being awarded esoteric scriptures at the command of a figure who is identified as a “demon soldier” (*guibing* 鬼兵) of a god known as the Heavenly Elder 天老. This seems to be evidence that already some decisions in the church were being made by spirit revelation. By contrast, early historical sources say that new entrants to the church were called “demon troopers” (*guizu* 鬼卒), but this term is not found in any surviving Daoist document and may have been a misunderstanding by an outsider reporting on a (to him or her) exotic religion.

We lose track of the Celestial Master office for a time after the death of Zhang Lu. Chronologies of the Zhang family in the *Daozang* do not seem to be reliable for this period.<sup>29</sup> We do read of two Zhang-surnamed

<sup>26</sup> See Chen, *Sanguozhi*, “Weishu,” 8/263–266.

<sup>27</sup> *Sanguozhi* specifically notes that Zhang Lu “did not establish [county] heads or clerks, but rather administered everything through the libationers,” 不置長吏，皆以祭酒為治。

<sup>28</sup> See DZ 789, *Zhengyi fawen tianshi jiao jieke jing* 正一法文天師教戒科經, 20b.

<sup>29</sup> The *Han Tianshi shijia* 漢天師世家, chapter 2, has the fourth-generation Celestial Master already at Longhushan in southeastern China and places the tenth-

Celestial Masters in the south in the first half of the sixth century, the twelfth-generation Celestial Master Zhang Daoyu 張道裕 (fl. 503–515), who had his headquarters on Mount Yu 虞山 (north of modern Suzhou), and the thirteenth-generation Celestial Master Zhang Bian 張辯,<sup>30</sup> but cannot really trace the lineage again (if it is even truly continuous) until the late Tang. It seems likely that there was a Celestial Master throughout the early medieval period but less clear to what degree he was actually able to command the allegiance of and extract material support from believers.

There are a couple passages in the *Statutes of the Mystic Metropolis* that talk about the way contributions to local parishes are to be shared with the center, as represented by the Celestial Master:<sup>31</sup>

The statute says: In the administrative system, all male or female officers who lead a parish, take charge of households, and have a parish position have a rank in the ritual codes and a ranked title. If it is parish X that has charge of the citizens and collects rent rice of 100 bushels, 70 bushels may be claimed by the parish for its use, while 30 bushels should be diverted and sent to the parish of the Celestial Master. If it is 200 bushels, they should proceed to the home parish to distribute the rice by establishing [kitchens]. If they are separated from the home parish by more than 300 *li* (about 100 miles), they are permitted to establish them in their homes.

律曰：制男官女官主者領戶治位皆有科次品號。若是甲治受所領民租米百斛，七十斛納治中用，折三十斛傳天師治。若二百斛，皆當詣本治施設。若去本治三百里以外，聽於家設。

Another passage in the same document (13b–14a) gives a different ratio, saying that the local parish can keep 80 percent of the rent rice and send

---

generation Celestial Master in the Sui dynasty (589–618), nearly a century later than the historical twelfth-generation Zhang Daoyu discussed below.

<sup>30</sup> On Zhang Daoyu, see the inscription by Xiao Gang in Yan Kejun 嚴可均, *Quan Shanggu, Sandai, Qin, Han, Sanguo, Liuchao wen* 全上古三代秦漢三國六朝文, 4 vols. (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1958), Quan Liangwen 14/2a–3b, vol. 3:3029–3030. For Zhang Bian, who served as military adjutant to Xiao Ji 蕭紀, the King of Wuling, see DZ 1244, *Shoulu cidì faxin yi*, 19b.

<sup>31</sup> DZ 188, *Xuandu liiwen*, 11b–12a.

only 20 percent on to the Celestial Master. This may, again, reflect a difference in date or geographical origin of the passage. It also specifies the treatment of pledge offerings made when performing a public oath.<sup>32</sup>

All should be as above. Calculate the number of feet [of cloth] in order to calculate how much to send for use of the myriad peoples of the realm. If it is one bushel of rice, then they should make sure that two pecks are sent to the parish of the Celestial Master. If the rice does not reach the Celestial Master, the leader of the parish will be guilty of a crime of cutting off [payments]. Only paper, brushes, and ink can supply the needs of the parish and one need not take the trouble to send them up.

一如上治，計丈尺以傳天下萬民。米一斛具使令二斗達天師治。其米不至天師，主者受割截之罪。唯紙筆墨給治用，不煩傳上。(玄都律文 13b-14a)

The *Statutes of the Mystic Metropolis* is a text containing both some very early and some much later material, which seems to have formed through accretion over the first six centuries of church history. There is little in these passages to indicate a date of composition, although the first passage clearly reflects a period when the religion covered a relatively sizable amount of territory, and so perhaps dates from after the fall of the Hanzhong community.

Evidence that this obligation to supply the central parish of the Celestial Master continued after the spread of the religion to South China in the fourth century can be found in the *Code of the Great Perfected*, a Shangqing-inspired ritual code from around 420 C.E.:<sup>33</sup>

The *Code of the Great Perfected* says: “If you have been given charge of households that have been split off from the parish of the Celestial Master, you must not follow the split of twenty percent used for households you have converted yourself. You should divide the merit equally, splitting off fifty percent to be submitted to the parish of the Celestial Master. We promulgate this command so that all may be aware of it. If there is one

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 13b-14a.

<sup>33</sup> DZ 463, *Yaoxiu keyi jielü chao* 要修科儀戒律鈔, 1.8a; Ōfuchi Ninji 大淵忍爾, *Dōkyō to sono kyōten: Dōkyōshi no kenkyū sono ni* 道教とその教典道教史の研究その二 (Tokyo: Sōbunsha, 1997), 492.

who disobeys, they will be judged according to the code of the five corporal punishments.”

太真科曰：受天師治割配領戶，不得同自化十二之折。當中分其功，十折五進入天師治。宣示此令，咸使知聞。如其有違，五刑律論。

This passage would support the second quote above. Perhaps the 30 percent split was common at an earlier period, when central control was stronger, but the evidence that the Celestial Master was able to command 20 percent of local revenue as late as the fifth century, and enforce it with a threat of corporal punishment, indicates that the office still maintained considerable power and prestige.

The only clear prerogative of the Celestial Master other than the financial provisions above lay in determining appointments to parish offices. There were originally only twenty-four parishes, arrayed across the territory of modern Sichuan, but later sources record that Zhang Ling added four more so that each parish could be matched with one of the twenty-eight mansions and Zhang Lu added eight more to cover northern regions not originally within the scope of the movement. It seems likely that up until the dissolution of the Hanzhong community in 215 appointments to these parishes were tightly controlled by the Celestial Master himself. Several of the twenty-four offices recorded in the *Bag of Pearls from the Three Caverns* seem to have been involved in this process.<sup>34</sup> After the movement spread across north China and eventually was transmitted to the south in the fourth century, it seems that a new system was needed and likely the parishes evolved into a system of ranking, with multiple parishes in widely scattered communities identified as representing a single named parish. The following passage from the *Statutes of the Mystic Metropolis* may reflect this early period when central power was first challenged:<sup>35</sup>

<sup>34</sup> For example, the Supervisor of Appointments 領署 is responsible for “[t]he name roster of appointments to the twenty-four offices, and the collation and recording in the fate roster of the documents recording the achievements and commendations of the various officers.” 署二十四職名籍。功賞諸職文書次第，校投命籍。See DZ 1139, *Sandong zhunang* 三洞珠囊, 7.17b–19b.

<sup>35</sup> DZ 188, *Xuandu liuwen*, 15b.

The statute says: “Male and female officers who administer a parish receive a ritual register and a title with their position in a parish. This is like a king’s throne. As for selection and appointment, all comes from the Celestial Platform. But recently the many officials have each time appointed each other privately. Some receive a small parish but add people until it is a large parish. Some take the rituals they themselves possess and bestow them on others. All of this is not in accord with the canons of the netherworld. If someone is fit for a post, you report this up in an Announcement (*biao*).”

律曰：男官女官主者受法籙治職之號。譬如王位。至於選補，皆由天臺。而頃者，衆官輒便私相拜署。或所受治小而加大治。或以身所佩法以授人。此皆不合冥典。若堪任者，當表言上。（玄都律文 15b）

Even more direct evidence of this initial breakdown is found in the mid-third-century *Commands and Precepts of the Great Daoist Family*, where we read that after 231 C.E. church officials started appointing officers themselves, without reference to the spiritual instructions of the former celestial masters (*bufu you wuqi* 不復由吾氣), as expressed through the office of the Supervisor of Gods (*lingshen* 領神).<sup>36</sup> The tendency to slip into traditional forms of hereditary succession must have been very strong. In sum, we cannot be sure to what degree the Celestial Master was able to exert influence on the process of selection of parish officials after the first century of the movement.

## Supernatural Authority

The evaluation of individuals for promotion involved another type of input as well: reports from supernatural beings. Daoists believed in a variety of spirits that might report on one’s personal conduct. These included some figures who were well known in the common religion that Daoists usually condemned as profane, such as the God of the Hearth (*zaojun* 灶君) and the Director of Fates (*siming* 司命) as well as entities that dwelled in the body such as the Three Worms or Three Corpses (*sanchong* 三蟲; *sanshi* 三尸).<sup>37</sup> Moreover, the generals, clerks,

<sup>36</sup> DZ 789, *Zhengyi fawen tianshi jiaojie kejing* 正一法文天師教戒科經, 17a.

<sup>37</sup> DZ 463, *Yaoxiu keyi jielü chao* 要修科儀戒律鈔, 8.4a–b, citing the *Scripture of*

and soldiers who were conveyed to the Daoist novice or priest through conferral of a register had a similar function. In the course of the conferral of the register, these spirits actually enter the body of the practitioner and there observe his or her conduct. Improper conduct causes these spirits to desert their posts, leaving the Daoist open to supernatural attack that would bring misfortune, infection, illness, and even death.<sup>38</sup> It was for this reason that illness was primarily treated by confession of sins and repentance.

The final stage of the conferral of a new register, as recorded in the *Protocols of the Outer Registers*, involves the master summoning supernatural officers called the Four Lords of Interrogation and Summoning (*kaozhao sijun* 考召四君). The only surviving version of the famous Personally-Written Missive to the Three Officers 三官手書, preserved in Du Guangting's *Petitions of the Most High to Promulgate Compassion and Aid Conversion* 太上宣慈助化章, invokes at the very beginning of the document the "Four Lords of Interrogation and Summoning who inject their pneumas to observe and investigate in all four directions" (*simian zhuqi jiancha kaozhao sijun* 四面注氣監察考召四君). In the "Petition submitting the Advance in Register Plaque" the master announces the result of the investigation:<sup>39</sup>

I reverently dispatched the emissary of the Board of Merit and the Lord of Examination Summons with his clerks to examine the mortal, in order to determine his true nature. X is a good choice.

謹遣功曹使者、考召君吏，考覈肉人，審知情實，某應良選。

---

*Essential Teachings* 旨教經, lists ten days each month when the Director of Fates travels about recording good and evil actions. Sacrifices to the Hearth are mentioned in *Lu xiansheng daomenke lie* (DZ 1127, 1b). The Three Corpses are first mentioned in southern scriptures like the *Zhengao* 真誥 (DZ 1016, 5.11b, 9.22b, 19.24a–25b) and the Lingbao scripture *Yuanshi wulao chishu yupian zhenwen tianshu jing* 元始五老赤書玉篇真文天書經 (DZ 22, 3.8a).

<sup>38</sup> See DZ 1243, *Zhengyi fawen taishang wailu yi*, 12a: "If a person breaks the precepts, the soldiers and clerks leave his body far behind and return to the celestial bureau(s). The interrogation officer then arrives, bringing disasters and illness." 破戒之人，吏兵遠身，還上天曹，考官便捷，致諸厄疾。

<sup>39</sup> DZ 1243, *Zhengyi fawen taishang wailu yi*, 10a.

We do not know how the master received this answer from the spirits about the suitability of the candidate. Today such questions are often determined by casting oracle blocks. Some mantic means must have been in use in the early Daoist church as well.

A key term in understanding such spirit communication is *zhuqi* 注氣, literally, “injecting pneumas.” Most discussion of this term in Western scholarship has focused on the injection of pneumas by a malefic spirit, which can cause disease and other misfortunes, sometimes even leading to death. But, as in the passage from the *Personally-Written Missive to the Three Offices* cited above, there is another important usage that suggests the term is more multifaceted. The “Petition for Release from the Net of Heaven and the Mainstays of Earth” 解天羅地網章, for example, invokes the local tutelary god in the following terms:<sup>40</sup>

May the perfected officer of the locality where he resides inject his pneumas in order to investigate, interrogate and summon.

所居里域真官注氣監察考召。

Here the injection of pneumas serves to gather and transmit information. Similarly, Kou Qianzhi 寇謙之, the fifth-century spiritual entrepreneur who tried to recreate Celestial Master Daoism with himself as its leader, claimed that these local tutelary deities had maintained the faith in the supposed absence of Zhang-surnamed Celestial Masters following Zhang Ling’s ascension to Heaven:<sup>41</sup>

Since Ling crossed over, his office has long been empty and no one was installed in the position of Attached Celestial Master. I had the perfected tutelary officers of the various provinces, commanderies, and counties inject their pneumas (*zhuqi* 注氣) in order to administer ghostly matters and control the population rosters of the mortals; I made no use of the defiled, disordered method of having the mortal libationers govern the citizens.

從陵昇度以來，曠官寘職，來久不立係天師之位。吾使諸州郡縣土地真官注氣治理鬼事，領籍生民戶口。不用生人祭酒理民濁亂之法。

In this case, the injection of pneumas can be seen to have played an even more active role, as the vehicle for the transmission of administrative

<sup>40</sup> DZ 615, *Chisong zi zhangli* 赤松子章曆, 4.4b.

<sup>41</sup> DZ 785, *Laojun yinsong jiejing*, 2a.

matters and the maintenance of the rosters recording the fates of the living.

We can be more certain of the functioning of one type of revelation: spirit possession. The Tang Daoist encyclopedia *Bag of Pearls from the Three Caverns* records a church office called the Supervisor of Determination:<sup>42</sup>

The Supervisor of Determination is in charge of the demon-pneuma men and women, who are possessed by the pneumas and transmit words. S/he supervises the determination of teachings, distinguishing between Chinese and barbarian [spirits] like [those of] the Yi, Hu, Rong, Di, Di and Qiang, and between true and false [communications].

領決職：主鬼氣男女，被氣傳語。領決教分別秦、夷、胡、戎、狄、氏、羗；真、偽。<sup>43</sup>

In the early church it seems this figure was known by a slightly different name, the Determiner of Pneumas (*jueqi* 決氣), but the function seems to be similar—to control, authenticate, and convey spirit communications. We find mention of this figure twice in the mantically revealed texts collected in the *Scripture of Precepts and Codes Taught by the Celestial Master* 正一法文天師教戒科經:<sup>44</sup>

The Dao has again and again saved your lives, sometimes speaking to you through the Determiner of Pneumas, sometimes even having a former official order you to correct yourselves, and yet you do not believe. This is so lamentable.

道乃往往救汝曹之命，或決氣相語，或有故臣、令相端正，而復不信，甚可哀哉。(大道家令戒)

<sup>42</sup> DZ 1139, *Sandong zhunang*, 7.19a.

<sup>43</sup> An alternate interpretation, proposed by Bokenkamp, is that the office is in charge of distinguishing between true and false communication initiated by these seven ethnic groups. This would assume that the early Celestial Masters regularly received spirit communications that originated with spirits of all these ethnic minorities. It is certainly grammatically possible, but I deem it historically unlikely.

<sup>44</sup> DZ 789, *Zhengyi fawen tianshi jiao jieke jing*, 14b–15a, 21a.

Why am I so anxious? I am anxious to turn the people of the parish about. The Determiner of Pneumas has sent down teachings, telling you all what Lord Lao, the Most High, has passed on, that he wants to make all of you take care, to earnestly exert yourselves, and further to exhort yourselves for the sake of the Dao to maintain all of the principles, and to encourage the commoners to convert.

吾有何急？急轉著治民。決氣下教，語汝曹輩，老君、太上轉相督，欲令汝曹人人用意，勤心努力，復自一勸，為道盡節，勸化百姓。(陽平治)

Both these passages derive from documents produced through some sort of spirit writing. They are in the first person, record events from the first decades of Daoism, but also reference more recent events from after the date of death of the early leaders. It is not clear who is speaking, but it seems likely to be either the founder, Zhang Ling, or his grandson, Zhang Lu, the two figures most responsible for establishing church institutions. Direct communication with deceased church elders must have been an important shaping force in early church history. Although it is unclear how such revelations were articulated with the current church administrative hierarchy at the time of revelation, the presence of church officials charged with authenticating such messages, whether called Supervisor of Determination or Determiner of Pneumas, reflects an attempt by the church to control the influence of such messages. It is noteworthy that only one scripture from this early period preserves such documents.

Thus we have seen that sin was reported and punished by spirits, that the spirits participated in assessing individuals for promotion, and that spirits played an active role in directing the lives of Daoists in the first few centuries of its existence. We also noted the importance of the master, who is a teacher, ritual officiant, and evangelist. Even the novices played a certain role in deliberating the fate of their fellows.

## Personal Empowerment

There is one more aspect of the topic of authority that merits discussion: the authority of individual Daoists of whatever rank to influence the actions of supernatural beings and the workings of fate. This was ultimately the reason for the great appeal of the early church. In the

popular understanding of the common religion, one's fate was determined by the willful decisions of otherworldly officials far beyond one's understanding, much less influence. The Daoist "covenant with the powers" (*mengwei* 盟威) was exacting in its demands upon the living but promised a role in the functioning of the universe that was inconceivable in the common religion of the day. One had to accept a series of increasingly onerous codes of precepts that severely restricted one's conduct so as to be worthy for participation in the covenant, but it held out the promise of unimaginable power. The secular administration of the Chinese empire at the time might have contained the seeds of meritocracy, but it was in practice an elite institution where participation was largely determined by birth.<sup>45</sup> Daoism offered a path by which any individual, noble or common, male or female, free or enslaved, Chinese or barbarian, might actually become an official of heaven, commanding a huge number of generals, clerks, and soldiers, ordering the apprehension and punishment of demons and lower gods, and able to petition directly the most exalted and powerful beings in the universe. In this sense, membership in the Celestial Master movement was profoundly empowering.

The model on which the church was founded was an autocratic empire, and for this reason any individual's power was limited. The generals and troops on one's register could repel certain threats themselves, but more complex problems involved working the levers of power from a relatively low position on the totem pole. The petitions for promotion are packed with language of utmost humility, such as the following passage from the petition of someone of lowly birth asking for promotion to a higher register:<sup>46</sup>

Because in my previous karma my crimes were many, I have now been born into a lowly state. In my heart I suffer the hardship willingly and do

---

<sup>45</sup> On the medieval system for selection to office, see the classic study by Donald Holtzman, "Les débuts du système médiéval de choix et de classement des fonctionnaires: Les Neuf Catégories et l'Impartial et Juste," in *Mélanges publiés par l'Institut des Hautes Études Chinoises*, vol. 1, Bibliothèque de l'Institut des Hautes Études Chinoises, vol. 11 (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1957), 387–414.

<sup>46</sup> DZ 1243, *Zhengyi fawen taishang wailu yi*, 4b.

not dare to bear resentment. [Lowly as] an insect or weeds, I was fortunate to be able to serve a Daoist household. Hearing and seeing virtuous acts, I sincerely delighted in them. Although I, X, am lowly and obstinate, I humbly know to use reverent care. Morning and night I exhaust my efforts. Meek of heart, I do not dare to malingering. Longing for life and wanting to live, I humbly serve my lord, obeying the great household. I look up to and hope for the aid of the Dao, begging that it will grant me relief.

先緣罪深，今生底下，甘苦在心，不敢有怨。蟲草有幸，得奉道門，聞見善事，誠欣誠躍。某雖卑頑，謬知謹慎，夙夜盡勤，小心敢懈，貪生願活，伏事君郎，承順大家，仰希道祐，乞以休息。(外籙儀 4b)

Moreover, the presentation of such a memorial was accompanied by multiple physical expressions of one's humble state, including full prostrations, slapping one's own face, and striking one's head against the ground.

Despite the humility that was required toward the higher powers of the universe, and the perils inherent in interacting with such figures, the net result of membership was positive. Compared to the position of a normal mortal and imperial subject, the Daoist had many advantages. We can get some sense of this empowerment in this passage from the petition one submitted upon receiving the full complement of one hundred fifty generals that marked full membership in the church and conferred the title of libationer:<sup>47</sup>

Before I received this register, I committed millions of sins and billions of transgressions. Today I request that all will be pardoned. Make it so that from now on, whatever direction I turn my face metal and stone will open for me, water and fire will be dispelled, and the thousand ghosts and myriad spirits all will submit and acquiesce. Those I evangelize will convert, those I cure will be healed, and I will receive a great grace in order to exhort those who have yet to be enlightened.

某未受籙之前億罪兆過，即日乞丐一切赦貰，令某自今以後，所向金石為開，水火為滅，千鬼萬神，盡為伏諾，所化者化，所治者差，被受大恩，以勸未悟。(外籙儀 6b)

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 5b.

## **Conclusion**

Early Daoists lived in a net of authority unique unto themselves and quite different from the world experienced by the average Chinese of the day. Having pledged themselves to a strict code of conduct, they were constantly observed by numerous supernatural beings. Their conduct was continuously observed by their local libationer, who received periodic reports from the spirits on their registers, and their hope of higher office, bringing both greater protection and expanded personal powers, was dependent on the evaluation of both. Moreover, they could look forward to the counsel and admonitions of the former leaders of their religion, transmitted through church mediums and verified by high church officers.

If the lives of observant Daoists were more tightly restricted than those of the profane, they were also infused with greater personal authority. They could call upon otherworldly forces greater than those commanded by any but the most prominent secular military leaders, could address directly with their petitions exalted heavenly officials more majestic than the emperor on the throne of China, whose name could not even be spoken. They looked forward to an afterlife in heavenly realms not accessible to the profane, no matter how high their station or vast their personal wealth, and would enjoy in that world an official position to which few in this life could imagine aspiring.

In sum, early Celestial Master Daoists submitted to new and unfamiliar forms of authority but in return gained for themselves and for their families a new type of power and influence that set them apart from all around them. This was surely a key element in the evangelization that was a duty of each believing Daoist. In converting their neighbors, they were both calling them to a life of service and promising a rich set of rewards. This unprecedented opportunity created the framework of a religious institution that was to survive two millennia and influence profoundly all aspects of Chinese life, culture, and society.

## 早期道教教團內的權威與懲罰

祁泰履 (Terry Kleeman)

### 摘要

早期的天師道教團形成以信仰為核心、政教合一的共同體，即公元後191年於漢中建立的道教千年王國。在以「天師治」為單位的信仰共同體內，天師道祭酒取代中央政府的地方官行使權力。雖然天師治逐漸式微，道教徒還是繼續尊奉本治的祭酒，持續供奉租米和各種信物。各個天師治祭酒對本治內的道民與籙生擁有相當的權威，經常檢查他們的日常行為，有罪則分配適當的懲罰。此外，祭酒必須訓誨籙生，教之如何上章、如何畫符等等，然後對優秀的籙生授籙，度為祭酒。初度為祭酒之籙生須經一段遊行宣化的生活，以傳教方式累積功德，達到一定的功行才能拿到帶有治位的治籙。處於遊行教化階段的祭酒，對已擁有信眾的某治祭酒造成某種程度的競爭與威脅。道教祭酒獲受權威還有另一種途徑，即是神仙以及已成仙的天師所降下的神示；道官系統內設有專門檢定這種啟示的官位。當道教徒並不簡單，天神觀察信者所作所為甚嚴。然信徒既有道教神祇的保佑，又能向宇宙最高的神靈請求心願，故比起一般俗民更加有權威。

關鍵詞：權威、戒律、啟示、天師、受權