

## Cultivating Conduct and Establishing Merit: Pursuing the Good Life in Early Daoism

Terry Kleeman

### Abstract

Most Daoist texts dealing with morality consist of negative statements, lists of prohibitions and taboos, rather than positive exhortations to good conduct. In the form of precepts, these rules defined Daoist society, since each rank in the Daoist hierarchy observed a different set of precepts, increasing in number and complexity with rank in the church and social status. Such lists give us a good idea of what Daoists of the day considered evil or perverse. We are considerably less well informed about Daoist conceptions of virtuous behavior, as might be represented in codes that exhort Daoists to achieve positive moral conduct, acts of goodness. The Protocol of the Outer Registers (*Zhengyi fawen taishang wailu yi* 正一法文太上外錄儀) preserves one list of Five Virtues and two lists of the Nine Merits, which are recorded to provide guidance for one seeking

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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* (Hawai'i, 1998), *The Ancient Chinese World* (co-authored with Tracy Barrett; Oxford, 2005), and *Daoist and the Philosophy of Co-existence* (*Dōkyō to kyōsei shisō* 《道教と共生思想》) (Tokyo: Taiga, 2009).

to accumulate merit for the purposes of promotion. The recommended conduct includes both ascetic elements like dietary restrictions as well as thaumaturgical endeavors involving the harnessing of local spirits. These lists will serve as a point of departure to consider just what was considered worthy and commendable conduct in the early Daoist church, and then assess the import of these values in a comparative perspective.

**Keywords:** precept, merit, ordination, *Protocol of the Outer Registers* (*Zhengyi fawen taishang wailu yi*), evangelization

Morality and virtue have always been central to the Chinese tradition, and rulership has been justified as a reward for virtuous conduct in the theory of the Mandate of Heaven. There should be little surprise, then, that moral concerns have been central to the Daoist religion since its founding in the second century of our era.

A prime example of the documents testifying to this is the Xiang'er 想爾 (“Thinking of you”) commentary to the *Laozi*, which was attributed to Zhang Daoling and already understood to be a central Celestial Master text by the third century.<sup>1</sup> There we find repeated invocation of precepts (*jie* 戒), and in explaining a key term from the *Laozi*, “keeping the one” (*shouyi* 守一), which is often understood to refer to a meditative process, the Commentary says, “Keeping the One is keeping the precepts.”<sup>2</sup>

It is not completely clear what precepts are meant, though. There are a set of nine precepts associated with the Xiang'er, which follow closely the language of the *Laozi* itself, and another set of twenty-seven that are more specific in content and linked to the language of the Xiang'er Commentary. But these precepts do not seem to be particularly early, and they find little resonance in early Celestial Master texts.<sup>3</sup>

The earliest surviving set of precepts would then seem to be the twenty-two articles in the *Demon Statutes of Lady Blue* (*Nüqing guilü* 女青鬼律, late 3<sup>rd</sup> c.).<sup>4</sup> This set seems particularly archaic in several respects. First, it is poorly organized, with multiple, seemingly unrelated topics mentioned in a single entry and no clear organizing principle. Second, the penalties assessed for each infraction seem arbitrary and inconsistent, with extreme variation

<sup>1</sup> On the Xiang'er Commentary, see Stephen R. Bokenkamp, *Early Daoist Scriptures* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 29–148.

<sup>2</sup> *Laozi Xiang'erzhu* ch. 10, Bokenkamp, *Early Daoist Scriptures*, 89.

<sup>3</sup> On the Xiang'er Precepts, see Ōfuchi Ninji 大淵忍爾, *Shoki no Dōkyō* 初期の道教 (Tokyo: Sōbunsha, 1991), 252 ff, citing Pelliot 3001 and *Taishang jingjie* (DZ 787), 17b–19a.

<sup>4</sup> On these precepts see my “Daoism in the Third Century,” in Florian C. Reiter, ed., *Purposes, Means and Convictions in Daoism: A Berlin Symposium*, Asien- und Afrika-Studien der Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin Band 29 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2007), 11–28.

in the fines assessed and little relation of the fine to the severity of the offense. Third, the language accords well with that found in other early Celestial Master texts, like the Encyclicals “Precepts and Commands for the Family of the Dao” and “Yangping Parish.” Finally, many items are concerned with the practice of the Merging the Pneumas (*heqi* 合炁) sexual rite of initiation. References to this rite in later literature are rare.

Eventually, such short lists of dos and don'ts developed into much more comprehensive guides to personal and ritual conduct that were styled codes (*ke* 科) or collections of statutes (*lü* 律). They have come down to us, whole or in partial form, under names like the *Statutes of the Mystic Capital* (*Xuandu lü[wen]* 玄都律文) or *Code of the Great Perfected* (*Taizhen ke* 太真科). Although there is some overlap, in general such lengthy codes of conduct or deportment do not fulfill the same function as numbered lists of precepts. They are texts to be consulted rather than sets of commandments to be memorized and internalized. They reveal the intricate network of rules and taboos that governed every aspect of life as a Daoist, including when, where, and how one slept, ate, or bathed, how one sat as a group, clothing appropriate for various ritual activities and times, and so on.

Daoism was founded as a communal religion, with libationers (*jijiu* 祭酒) administering to flocks of Daoist citizens (*daomin* 道民) and training a cohort of novices or register students (*lusheng* 籙生).<sup>5</sup> Citizen families were recorded on a fate roster (*mingji* 命籍), and their names and status as good Daoists were reported to the Heavenly Bureaus thrice annually at large meetings called Assemblies (*hui* 會). Daoists could submit their children, male and female, for training and service in the novitiate under the direction of their local libationer. The libationer acted as both pastor and master to these citizens and novices, tending to their worries and fears, counseling them on the sources of their misfortunes,

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<sup>5</sup> For a general introduction to the early church see my “Community and Daily Life in the Early Daoist Church,” in John Lagerwey and Lü Pengzhi, eds., *Early Chinese Religion: Part Two: The Period of Division (220–589)* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 395–436.

submitting petitions for clemency to the Heavens, and conveying to the faithful the penalties assessed for infractions of the precepts.

Daoist society was inherently ranked internally. Daoist citizens were differentiated by the number of precepts they observed; novices were divided into groups who received progressively larger, more elaborate registers of first one, then ten, then seventy-five, then one hundred and fifty spirit generals. The Hundred and Fifty General Register qualified one for appointment as a libationer. Libationers were internally differentiated by their office in a list of twenty-four (or twenty-five) parish offices, and also by the parish to which they belonged, with these two systems eventually fusing together. Moreover, there was a series of “internal register” ranks for church officials and more advanced adepts.<sup>6</sup>

The system, like that of Chinese officialdom, was meritocratic in its conception. Individuals were to be evaluated and the worthy approved for promotion to the next rank. For Daoist citizens and novices, it was the local libationer who acted as master in assessing each individual for elevation to the next level in the hierarchy. The ultimate authority for all ordinations was, of course, the Celestial Master, but there is little sign of an active office of the Celestial Master in documents from the fourth century on. Since all masters must someday die and students sometimes exceed their teacher’s rank, some mechanism must have been evolved for evaluating aspirants to higher levels of Daoist society.

In general, we can assume that the basic system of evaluation was tied to the precepts that each individual had undertaken to follow as part of his or her ordination(s). Although everyday breaches were probably dealt with through the famous “personally written missives to the Three Offices” (*sanguan shoushu* 三官手書), more severe matters required the intervention of the family’s

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<sup>6</sup> On the register system, see the seminal work by Kristofer Schipper, “Taoist Ordination Ranks in the Tunhuang Manuscripts,” in Gert Naudorf, Karl-Heinz Pohl, and Hans-Herrman Schmidt, eds., *Religion und Philosophie in Ostasien (Festschrift für Hans Steininger)* (Königshausen: Neumann, 1985), 127–48. On the upper level or Inner Registers, see John Lagerwey, “Zhengyi registers,” in *ICS visiting professor lecture series Journal of Chinese Studies special issue* (Hong Kong, 2005), 35–88.

libationer, who would compose a petition like those preserved in the *Master Redpine's Petition Almanac* and dispatch it ritually to the otherworld.<sup>7</sup> Thus the libationer would know something of the conduct of the members of his or her parish, and this was even more the case with novices. Novices were systematically evaluated for promotion. Although there were normative times in advancing to each rank, exceptional individuals could be singled out to progress at a faster pace.<sup>8</sup>

One of the few texts to discuss the promotion process in any detail is the *Protocols of the Outer Registers* (*Zhengyi fawen taishang wailuyi* 正一法文太上外籙儀), which provides samples of ritual documents concerning the novitiate and instructions on their use. There we find a section titled, “Establishing Merit and Seeking Promotion” (*ligong qiujin* 立功求進, 13b–16b), that will form the focus of our discussion. The central theme is set out in the first sentence:<sup>9</sup>

All those who aspire to learn [about the Dao] should follow their master in cultivating their conduct in accordance with the precepts, establishing merit and virtue.

凡能志學，皆應從師如戒修行，立功建德。

The merit and virtue is to be tallied through a rubric called the Five Virtues and Nine Merits. The masters should evaluate their novices compassionately, emphasizing their positive traits, as revealed through this rubric:<sup>10</sup>

The master should assess his disciples, calculating their merits and reforming their transgressions. Minor infractions can be forgiven but

<sup>7</sup> On these personally-written missives see the study by Lai Chi-Tim, “Tian, di, shui san guan xinyang yu zaoqi Tianshidao zhibing jiezui yishi” 天地水三官信仰與早期天師道治病解罪儀式, *Taiwan zongjiao yanjiu* 2.1 (2002), 1–38.

<sup>8</sup> On the relationship of master to novice, see Kleeman, “‘Take charge of Households and Convert the Citizenry’: The Parish Priest in Celestial Master Transmission,” Special Issue: Affiliation and Transmission in Daoism: A Berlin Symposium, *Abhandlungen für die Kunde des Morgenlandes* 78 (2012), 19–39.

<sup>9</sup> *Zhengyi fawen taishang wailu yi*, 13b.

<sup>10</sup> *Zhengyi fawen taishang wailu yi*, 16b.

great virtues should be commended. Always in establishing merit or virtue, it should be in harmony with the five [virtues] and nine [merits].

師量弟子，計功補過。小愆可恕，大德宜嘉。凡立功德，五九相和。

Curiously, the *Protocols* preserves two sets of Five Virtues and Nine Merits. Below we will compare them in detail. First, let us follow for a moment the process in which these rubrics would have been used.

The novice, or perhaps the novice's parents if he or she was still quite young, would approach the local master to inquire about the possibility of promotion. This would no doubt have been accompanied by appropriate pledge offerings as a sign of faith. If the master is satisfied that the aspirant is indeed qualified for the next higher rank, he or she would draft a petition to the Heavenly Bureaus to seek this new rank. Our text notes that the text of the petition would have to be adjusted to fit individual cases, but gives a general model to follow:<sup>11</sup>

I, a male/female novice named XY, from a certain province, commandery, county, district, and hamlet, of a certain age, kowtow, slap myself, and beg for mercy. My statement: Fortunate to enjoy a worthy karmic heritage, I worship and serve the great faith. On a certain year, month, day and time I received from my master (if you previously had a different master, say: received from the male/female<sup>12</sup> master named XY from a certain province, commandery, district, and hamlet) the transmission of the transcendent/numinous officer register. Since I began to serve the faith, for so-many years and months I have relied upon the teachings and formulae, observed the admonishments, and humbly followed the precepts and regulations, never daring to disobey or transgress. Foolish, shortsighted and unenlightened, I may have transgressed without knowing it. Lacking in both talent and strength, my cultivation of my conduct has been incomplete. Contemplating this I am so ashamed that I forget to sleep or eat. I

<sup>11</sup> *Zhengyi fawen taishang wailu yi*, 14a–b.

<sup>12</sup> Underlined sections of the translation indicate that the user would choose the appropriate term from the options given. Other expressions like “a certain day” would also be filled in with the correct information.

consider myself just an ordinary person whose simple understanding is not yet vast. On a certain year, month, day and time I began to practice a certain matter, and up until today I have had some crude results. My merit is slight and my achievement shallow so I dare not rest. I venture to hope for a minute promotion to encourage me in my foolish ignorance. Reverently I bring pledges according to the code and dare to offer up these words for your consideration. Prostrating myself, I request that the enlightened master will grant to me completion, cleaning the dust from my mysterious mirror. Pursuing my papers in alarm and terror, I reverently make this statement.

某州郡縣鄉里男女生姓名年歲，叩搏乞恩。辭：幸藉善緣，崇奉大法。某年月日時蒙師（若先以他師云蒙男女師某州郡縣鄉里）姓名，賜授某官錄。奉法以來積如干年月。依案訣遵行鞠言。伏從戒律，不敢違負。愚短未達犯或不知。才力未深，修行未究。思此慙忸，寔忘寢食。自揆庸品，簡悟未弘。某年某月日起習某事。從來至今粗有効驗。功微業淺，不敢閑寧。仰希寸進，以獎愚蔽。謹賞科信，冒辭以聞。伏願明師賜垂成就，塵躡玄鑿。追紙驚惶，謹辭。

On the basis of this statement by the aspirant, the master would have crafted a petition that relayed this statement, evaluated it accorded to Daoist practices, and made a formal request to the celestial officials that the aspirant's request for promotion be granted. We see this process clearly laid out in the Dunhuang manuscript S.203, which has been studied in detail by Lü Pengzhi and Maruyama Hiroshi.<sup>13</sup> The ritual transfers to the aspirant a cohort of spirit soldiers who will protect and do the bidding of the newly promoted individuals, and culminates in the conferral of the physical register, a document written on silk, to be worn in a bag suspended from the waist.

<sup>13</sup> Maruyama Hiroshi, "Shōitsu Dōkyō no juroku ni kansuru kisoteki kōsatsu: Tonkō shutsudo monjo Sustain nizerosangō o shiryō to shite" 正一道教の受録にかんする基礎的考察 敦煌文書スタイン203号を史料として, *Tsukuba Chūgoku bunka ronsō* 10: 39–61; Lü Pengzhi 呂鵬志, "Tianshidao shoulu keyi: Dunhuang xieben S203 kaolun" 天師道授錄科儀——敦煌寫本 S203 考論, *Bulletin of the Institute of History and Philology, Academia Sinica* 77.1 (March 2006), 79–166.



## The Five Virtues and Nine Merits

Let us now turn to the evaluatory rubrics of the Five Virtues and Nine Merits. As I mentioned earlier, this source contains two lists of each category. The first list of Five Virtues is quite simple and follows closely Confucian formulations:

仁。好生惡殺。

Benevolence: Care for the living and hate killing.

禮。敬慎和柔。

Ritual deportment: Be respectful, cautious, harmonious, and gentle.

信。忠直不妄。

Integrity: Be loyal, straightforward, and not reckless.

義。明斷無邪。

Righteousness: Make enlightened decisions without perversion.

智。清正通達。

Wisdom: Be pure, correct, comprehensive, and understanding.

The list of Nine Merits that accompanies this list is not quite as conventional, but still rather abstract. It focuses on the action of “ordering” (*li* 理).<sup>14</sup>

1. 理元炁，願念無形。

Order the Primal Pneumas: Desire to ponder the formless.

2. 理上天，志存大神。

Order the Heavens on high: Aspire to visualize the great gods.

3. 理下地，守靜思真。

Order the Earth below: Keep stillness and meditate on the Perfected.

4. 理四時，隨順仙化。

Order the Four Seasons: Follow them to transform into a Transcendent.

5. 理五行，宣揚大道。

Order the Five Agents: Promote and extoll the Great Dao.

6. 理陰陽，係續聖種。

Order Yin and Yang: Link to and continue the sagely seed.

<sup>14</sup> It may well be that the text originally had *zhi* 治, which was re-written as *li* to avoid the taboo on the personal name of Tang emperor Gaozong 高宗, Li Zhi 李治. *Zhi* occurs multiple times in the *Protocol*, but not once in this section on promotion.

7. 理文書，讚弘道法。  
Order written documents: Praise and glorify the way of the Dao.
8. 理草穀，攝延凡命。  
Order the grasses and grains: Align and prolong the common lifespan.
9. 理財貨，利下通上。  
Order possessions and wealth: Benefit those below and help them communicate with those above.

This set of injunctions is still somewhat abstract in its goals, but it does point to some concrete religious practices, including visualization and meditation. It also expresses concern for everyday issues like food and material possessions. Perhaps most interesting is item six, dealing with sex, which may be related to the Merging the Pneumas (*heqi* 合炁) ritual that was so central to the early church.<sup>15</sup> Finally, in item seven we see reference to the evangelical spirit that was key to the expansion of Daoism into a national religion.

A second set of Five Virtues and Nine Merits is recorded following the supplicant's Statement (translated above). We immediately notice that these injunctions are different in kind, lengthier, and much more specific about practices. Here are the Five Virtues:<sup>16</sup>

One: Observe a prolonged fast on dried and vegetarian foods. Do not eat the fat or glistening [freshly killed]. Release the living and rescue the dead, maintaining a unified heart of equanimity.

一者：長齋乾蔬。不食肥鮮。放生救死，平等一心。

Two: Contribute to and nourish the Three Treasures. Fulfill the requirements for ritual obeisance; be amiable and compliant in serving; avoid indolence and insolence.

二者：供養三寶，禮拜盡節。承奉和順，不生怠慢。

<sup>15</sup> On the Merging the Pneumas rite, see Gil Raz, "The Way of the Yellow and the Red: Re-examining the Sexual Initiation Rite of Celestial Master Daoism," *Nannü* 10.1 (2008), 86–120; Terry Kleeman, "The Performance and Significance of the Merging the Pneumas (Heqi) Rite in Early Daoism," *Daoism: Religion, History, and Society* 6 (2014), 85–112.

<sup>16</sup> *Zhengyi fawen taishang wailu yi*, 15a–b.

Three: Be truthful in your words. Practice no deceit; make use of expedient means according to the teachings; do not do violence to other beings to profit yourself.

三者：言語真實，無有虛詐。方便依法，不損物益己。

Four: Clearly distinguish right and wrong. Inquire after your master and friends; distribute charity equitably and correctly; resolve and eliminate perverse doubts.

四者：辯是明非，諮師問友。布施平正，斷決邪疑。

Five: Be exacting and perceptive in your wisdom. Rely upon the scriptures in what you say; understand comprehensively without obstructions; accord with the Dao in action and repose; do not create your own faith, contravening against both this world and the next.

五者：智慧精審，所說依經。經通無礙，動靜會道。不自作一法，違負幽明。

This set of injunctions simultaneously exhibits archaic and later features. It has certain parallels to the twenty-two item code in the *Demon Statutes of Lady Blue*: each item is lengthy and frequently addresses two or more seemingly unrelated topics. Moreover, the final injunction, to “not create your own faith” is a phrase characteristic of the earliest Celestial Master sources.<sup>17</sup>

At the same time, Buddhist influence is prominent in terms like “release the living” or “unified heart of equanimity.” Buddhist elements entered the Daoist context primarily with the Lingbao revelations of the late fourth and early fifth centuries. In the early fifth century we also find figures like Kou Qianzhi in the North, using Buddhist terminology that likely is derived from direct contact with Buddhism, rather than through Lingbao. The reference to a prolonged fast centering on dried meats and vegetables reflects a distinctly Daoist conception of health and eating.<sup>18</sup>

Here is the accompanying list of Nine Merits:<sup>19</sup>

<sup>17</sup> See, for example, *Nüqing guilü*, 3/4a; *Xuandu liuwen*, 17b.

<sup>18</sup> The phrase occurs only twice in the Daoist canon, the other citation being in the Tang encyclopedia *Sandong zhunang* 三洞珠囊 and not once in the Buddhist Tripitaka.

<sup>19</sup> 15b–16a.

One: Encourage your co-religionists to meditate upon the body being non-active, envision the self as wholly pure, and entrust your pneumas to the formless.

一者：勸諸同志念身無為，思身洞白，委炁無形。

Two: Contemplate the form as empty and pure, like jade without impurities.

二者：守形虛白，若玉無瑕。

Three: Accumulate essence and look within, counting from your hair to your feet.

三者：積精內視，數髮至足。

Four: Envision the gods of the five viscera, seeing and conversing with them.

四者：思五藏神，見與言語。

Five: Meditate on summoning the gods of the body, [through them] controlling the four seasons and five phases.

五者：念召體神，使四時五行。

Six: Offer jiao-sacrifice to the Six Jia spirits and the Eight Emissaries [reading *shi* 使 for *li* 吏], sending plaques with talismans for the gods of the earth.

六者：醮六甲八吏，符刺地神。

Seven: Employ for errands the many gods of the altars of soil and grain as well as those of the mountains and streams.

七者：役使社稷山川眾神。

Eight: Practice welcoming the essential pneumas to prognosticate the truth or falsity of a statement.

八者：習延炁，占說是非。

Nine: Summon demons to ask them about luck and misfortune.

九者：呼鬼問以吉凶。

This is a very intriguing list, full of specific practices that we understand at best poorly. We first note that all are solitary practices intended for the individual aspirant rather than a priest serving parishioners. All can be performed in the oratory with no participation from the community.

Most practices focus on meditation and visualization. It is not entirely clear what is involved in “entrusting one’s pneumas to the formless” but it is interesting that in a ranked list of divine personages in the *Scripture of Great Peace*, the highest is said to be the “divine man who to the formless entrusts his pneumas” 無形委炁之神人, and there he is said to “control the primal pneumas” 治元氣, which strongly recalls the first item of the other list of Nine Merits.<sup>20</sup> The second and third items refer to visualizations of the body, which are common enough in the Shangqing tradition, but I could find no parallel in Buddhist or Daoist texts to the injunction to count one’s hairs.

The tradition of meditation on the gods of the Five Viscera goes back at least to the Latter Han, where it is mentioned in stele inscriptions, but this practice of visualizing them so concretely that one could speak with them adds new detail.<sup>21</sup> Worship of these spirits is intended to maintain the health of the practitioner’s body.

The gods of the body mentioned in item five present many more options. Here they play a cosmic role in ensuring the proper succession of the seasons and the cycles of the five agents. This seems abstract, but we see concrete applications of these principles in the Monthly Ordinances and similar texts.<sup>22</sup> In Daoist ritual, these body gods play a key role in establishing the sacred area for performance, in summoning the local and heavenly spirits to attend the ritual, in maintaining communications during the ritual, and in dispatching the assembled spirits upon its conclusion. Items six and seven refer to the employment of these spirits in ritual. Cosmic forces like the Six Jia spirits are potent supernatural enforcers<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> *Taipingjing chao*, 3/6b. In fact *li* 理 has been used as a substitute for *zhi* 治 when it was tabooed, so the wording could originally have been identical.

<sup>21</sup> On early Daoist meditation practices, see Fabrizio Pregadio, “Early Daoist Meditation and the Origins of Inner Alchemy,” in *Daoism in History: Essays in Honour of Liu Ts’un-yan*, ed. Benjamin Penny (London: Routledge, 2006), 121–58.

<sup>22</sup> Treatises in the standard histories on the calendar and the five agents are key repositories of such information on such rules and how they were applied over the centuries.

<sup>23</sup> On the Six Jia spirits, see Mugitani Kunio’s article in Pregadio, ed., *Encyclopedia of Taoism*, I, 695–97.

who can protect one against and also punish evildoers. The spirits of the local earth altars and the nature spirits of prominent local features are also summoned to rituals as they will be charged with seeing that whatever commands are issued as part of the Daoist's petition will actually be enacted on the local level. In practice, unscrupulous individuals can employ such low level spirits of dubious morality in a variety of ways—to assure personal gain or exact personal revenge. The next two items deal with even more questionable practices, involving not deities but demons and sprites. These are still meritorious acts as long as they are performed for proper, salutary reasons, but the temptations are many. Our texts warns:

There is much perversion in the activities of merits number six to nine.<sup>24</sup> If you do not carefully maintain your precepts you will certainly fall into the hordes of demons. The lowest level of the Dao has these three stages. The methods are extremely perilous and it is best if you take care with them. When those who are fond of them seek promotion, they should speak about this somewhat in their statements.

自六功至九，其事多邪。不精持戒，必陷魔群。道之下品有此三階法，甚危險。慎之乃佳。佳者求進，辭略言之。

In the end, one who can successfully perform these actions without being drawn into perversity is permitted to cite these among meritorious actions that would justify his or her promotion. Moreover, there were offices in the early church dedicated to these activities, including the Great Director of Attacks (*dadugong* 大都攻), who “attacked pneumas that were not orthodox, evildoers, and rebellious demons,” and the Supervisor of Determinations (*lingjue* 領決), who is charged with deciding whether spirit revelations, potentially from Chinese or non-Chinese spirits, are true or false.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Given the later reference to “three steps,” this must exclude number six, referring only to seven through nine.

<sup>25</sup> *Sandong zhunang*, 7/17b, 19a.

## Conclusion

So what can we learn from these two sets of virtues and merits? First, it is hard to see how any of these lists could be used directly to evaluate candidates for promotion, except in a rather general way. The second set of Five Virtues and Nine Merits, in particular, refers to actions that we can associate with the historical early Daoists. The second Five Virtues even looks like an early Daoist precept list. A real list of virtues would likely have looked rather like this.

What seems missing in these lists is any sense of the Daoist serving a community of believers. Services for fellow parishioners as well as the Daoist citizens and novices under the direct supervision of a libationer must have been central to everyday life in Daoist communities. Some of the actions in the second list of merit, such as employing various sorts of spirits, might be directed toward such goals, but it is curious that the merit earned specifically by performing these actions for others is not mentioned.

Another notable absence is mention of evangelization. The early centuries of church history were a period of extremely rapid expansion, as Daoism grew in popularity first across North China, and then—in the fourth century—assuming a dominant position in South China as well. As I have argued elsewhere, the system of parishes developed by at least the fifth century into a ranking system, with promotion being determined largely by the number of parishioners under one's care.<sup>26</sup> Yet this effort to spread the good news and attract new members to the movement is not mentioned at all in the second set of virtues and merits, and referred to only obliquely in the fifth item of the first set of Nine Merits.

This brings us to the nature of the *Protocol of the External Registers*. As the title indicates, this text was part of an effort to form a Celestial Master canon called the *Ritual Texts of Correct Unity* (*Zhengyi fawen* 正一法文). Up until that time, Daoist texts

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<sup>26</sup> See Terry Kleeman, “‘Take charge of Households and Convert the Citizenry’: The Parish Priest in Celestial Master Transmission,” *Special Issue: Affiliation and Transmission in Daoism: A Berlin Symposium, Abhandlungen für die Kunde des Morgenlandes* 78 (2012), 19–39.

had circulated in manuscript form, with each master making additions and deletions as he or she saw fit. Because of this, the texts collected were not standard ones used across the breadth of the Daoist community, but rather individual exemplars taken from the collections of practicing priests. This is probably why we have two sets of Virtues and Merits that differ so radically. There perhaps never was a definitive formulation of positive standards of good conduct to be used in evaluation for promotion. The specific examples gathered in the *Protocol* seem to have derived from individuals or families who were no longer serving as communal priests.

Nonetheless, the two sets of Five Virtues and Nine Merits do give a good idea of the diversity of Daoism towards the end of the Period of Disunion. One aspect of Daoism still remained devoted to abstract moral ideas deriving from Daoist and Confucian classics, stressing values like Benevolence and Righteousness but also Non-Action. Another aspect revealed clearly in these codes is that of Daoism as a path of self-cultivation, pursued through reflexive internal meditation and visualization of various sacred personages and places. This is, if you will, the private side of the priest. What we catch only a halting glimpse of in this material is the Daoist in his or her community, interacting with parishioners and responding to their needs through petition rituals. To grasp that aspect of Daoist life, we must combine these materials with the more extensive normative codes like the *Code of the Great Perfected* and *Statutes of the Mystic Metropolis*, which address communal Daoist life more directly. Here we see primarily the ethical goals to which they aspired.

## Works in the Daoist Canon

*Nüqing guilü* 女青鬼律 (DZ 790)

*Sandong zhunang* 三洞珠囊 (DZ 1139)

*Taipingjing chao* 太平經抄 (DZ 1102)

*Xuandu liuwen* 玄都律文 (DZ 188)

*Zhengyi fawen taishang wailu yi* 正一法文太上外籙儀 (DZ 1243)



## 修行立功：早期道教的理想生活

祁泰履

### 摘要

道經的倫理標準往往注重禁忌忌諱，比較少有勸善的字句。當時的每個道教徒都按照教內的身份有必須遵守的戒律，地位越高戒律則越多越繁瑣。甚至可以說，戒律奠定了道教的社會構造。從這些戒律，我們瞭解教內所認為邪惡或被禁的行為，可是何種行為才算是值得讚美可以用來集功的善行仍然不清楚。為了衡量想升位受更高的籙的籙生，傳世的《正一法文太上外籙儀》有兩套「五德九功」的記載。本論文用此兩套文獻來探討早期道教教內對善行的定義與重要性。

關鍵詞：善行、戒律、功德、傳教、五德、九功、太上外籙儀