

Tracing Back Wang Changyue's Precepts for Novices in the History of Daoism*

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Abstract

Wang Changyue (1594–1680?) is generally known as a Daoist monk who allegedly restored the Complete Perfection Tradition by establishing its precepts for ordaining Daoist monks. It is usually said that Wang established the three sets of Precepts consisting of *Precepts for Novices* (*Chuzhen jie* 初真戒), *Precepts of the Central Pole* (*Zhongji jie* 中極戒), and *Precepts for Celestial Immortals* (*Tianxian jie* 天仙戒). However, because of lack of sources, the facts about Wang Changyue and his precepts remain largely unclear. Among the extant texts of the three sets of precepts, association with Wang cannot be confirmed for the latter two. Even with *Precepts and Disciplines for Novices* (*Chuzhen jielü* 初真戒律), the text which conveys the *Precepts for Novices*, though, very basic question remain: Did Wang really compile it? And if he did, what time precepts did he restore? Therefore, in this article, only *Precepts and Disciplines for Novices* will be discussed. This article aims to determine

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Wang Changyue's precepts in usage of the same set of *Precepts for Novices* in the history of Daoism. The article will make a reasonable assumption about Wang and his disciples' intention in compiling *Precepts and Disciplines for Novices*. In the first half of this article, I will make a reference to the "Precepts and disciplines for Novices" from the Kangxi era (1662–1722): This provides clear evidence that the book was already in circulation by the early 18th century. In the second half of this article, I will follow the history of *Precepts for Novices* as it is found in various texts from the late-Tang to Ming periods. In that process, we find that the same set of *Precepts for Novices* used by Wang was conferred on Daoist novices in the Ming period. The compilation of *Precepts and Disciplines for Novices* by Wang and his disciples will be considered as an attempt to restore the ordination ritual performed during the Ming period.

Keywords: Wang Changyue, Precepts for Novices, Ten Precepts, Zhou Side, Quanzhen

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