

# TRANSLATOR'S INTRODUCTION

The *Daoist Liturgy of the Most High for Daily Recitation* (*Taishang xuanmen gongke jing* 太上玄門功課經; hereinafter referred to as the *Daily Liturgy*) is a liturgical text recited by Daoist masters every day, thus also known as the *Risong gongke jing* 日誦功課經 (Daily recitation liturgy). This translation is based on the *Daily Liturgy* edition collected in the *Chongkan Daozang jiyao* 重刊道藏輯要 (New edition of the *Essentials of the Daoist Canon*; hereinafter referred to as *CKDZJY*), lodge 26 (fol. 1), compiled in 1906 during the Guangxu 光緒 reign (1875–1908) of the Qing dynasty. This version, titled *Taishang xuanmen zaowan tan gongke jing* 太上玄門早晚壇功課經, has been circulated and upheld in the monasteries of the Quanzhen 全真 (Complete Perfection) School in China since the Jiaqing 嘉慶 era (1796–1820).

The *Daily Liturgy* consists of two main parts: the *Liturgy for Morning Altar Recitation* (*Zaotan gongke jing* 早壇功課經) and the *Liturgy for Evening Altar Recitation* (*Wantan gongke jing* 晚壇功課經; hereinafter referred to as the *Morning Liturgy* and the *Evening Liturgy* respectively). The recitation of scriptures constitutes an essential part of Daoist cultivation. It is through such recitation that practitioners offer homage to the Daoist pantheon of perfected sages and deities, thereby attaining communion with the divine. This facilitates their Daoist learning and cultivation towards perfection. Daoist masters should chant the scriptures with purity

of body and mind, demonstrating sincere reverence during the rites while repenting their sins and pleading for absolution. The *Daily Liturgy* embodies the profound Daoist tradition of scripture recitation for obtaining divine blessings, as stated in the “Preface”: “When one appeals for the aversion of calamities with rites, the calamities will be eliminated; when one prays for good fortune, good fortune will arrive. No prayer goes unheard, and every appeal is met with divine resonance.”

In a monastery, Daoist masters gather at the altar at specific times each morning and evening to chant the *Morning Liturgy* and the *Evening Liturgy*, respectively, for about an hour each. The liturgy at the morning altar takes place at dawn, before breakfast, during the *mao* 卯 hours (5:00–7:00 a.m.), when the yang pneuma is on the rise. During this period, Daoist masters should maintain the sincerity and tranquility of the mind, with not even a speck of dust attached. The evening liturgy is held before the evening meal during the *shen* 申 hours (3:00–5:00 p.m.). As with the morning recitation, Daoist masters gather in the altar hall to chant the *Daily Liturgy*. As dusk falls, the yin pneuma descends, and deviant thoughts of desire tend to arise. The chanting and recitation of scriptures and proclamations serve to dispel such deluded thoughts.

The recitation of the *Daily Liturgy* takes the form of vocal performance accompanied by musical instruments, known as “ritual instruments” (*faqi* 法器). Daoist adepts chant the *Daily Liturgy* with the accompaniment of such ritual instruments as wooden fish (*yu* 魚), drums, standing bells (*qing* 磬), handbells (*ling* 鈴), handled gongs (*dang* 鐃), cymbals (*cha* 鐺), hand chimes (*yinqing* 引磬), and brass bells (*tizhong* 提鐘). The interplay of instrumental music and vocal recitation showcases a musicality that characterizes and elevates the ritual's religious atmosphere.

Daoist masters perform the daily ritual of reciting the *Daily Liturgy* at the altar hall for the purpose of “examination.” As explained in the “Preface,” it is “an ‘examination of one’s merits [of cultivation]’ (*gongke* 功課). The examination of one’s merits hinges on the cultivation of one’s own way towards the Dao.” Thus, Daoist adepts are expected to recite the precious proclamations (*baogao* 寶誥) and scriptures of the great sages and patriarchs as a means of assessing their own merits. The recitation of the *Daily Liturgy* is regarded, in essence, as a path through which Daoist adepts cultivate towards perfection and immortality, thereby attaining the Great Way and recovering the primordial, innate nature.

## Textual Organization

The *Morning Liturgy* and the *Evening Liturgy* differ in both content and purpose. The former is intended for cultivating the Dao, prolonging life, and praying for blessings and well-being. The latter extends beyond one’s own cultivation to cover also the merit of delivering the souls of the deceased for early ascent to the realm above. That being said, they are similar in structure, as both consist of three major components: 1. scriptures, 2. divine incantations (*shenzhou* 神咒), and 3. precious proclamations of the perfected. These three genres of texts constitute the basis of liturgical recitation for the examination of merits.

Divine incantations are words of deities of the heavenly realms or esoteric utterances endowed with mysterious power for the purposes of averting calamities and curing diseases. Precious proclamations are associated with the teachings or orders of the Daoist pantheon, including heavenly worthies and perfected over the ages. They glorify the sacred deeds and extraordinary achievements of these deities and sages. The recitation of precious

proclamations always starts with the phrase *zhixin guiming* 志心皈命 (“With a sincere heart, we devote our lives”) to declare one’s submission and willingness to follow divine instructions and embrace the teachings with single-minded dedication away from any mundane distraction. This is a daily practice of self-discipline and devotion to the cultivation of perfection. Overall, the *Daily Liturgy*, regardless of editions, includes the following parts:

1. Verses and hymns upon the commencement;
2. The eight divine incantations;
3. Scriptures;
4. The precious proclamations of various sages;
5. The writ of repentance;
6. Vows;
7. Verse for the conclusion of the scripture; and
8. The Three Conversions.

The *Daily Liturgy* is practiced across different Daoist sects and geographical regions, resulting in different versions with varying content. For instance, the *Morning Liturgy* practiced by the Quanzhen School contains precious proclamations of the School’s founders, including the Five Patriarchs of the Northern Lineage (*Beizong* 北宗), the Five Patriarchs of the Southern Lineage (*Nanzong* 南宗), and the Seven Perfected (*Qizhen* 七真). The *Morning Liturgy* of the Zhengyi 正一 (Orthodox Unity) School, on the other hand, features proclamations of its two patriarchs—Zhang Daoling 張道陵, the founding Heavenly Master, and Zhang Xujing 張虛靖, the thirtieth-generation Heavenly Master. The *Evening Liturgy* of the Maoshan 茅山 School likewise includes the precious proclamation of its founding sages, i.e., the Three Perfected Lords Mao (*Sanmao zhenjun* 三茅真君). As Master Min Zhiting 閔智亭, the late President of the Taoist Association of China,

explained, Daoist disciples chant the precious proclamations of the patriarchs to receive “the true teachings transmitted by Daoist heavenly worthies and perfected of different generations.” These proclamations, he noted, have been “the principal texts recited daily by Daoist masters for their cultivation, embodying the very essence of Daoist schools since their early days.”<sup>1</sup>

The “Preface” to the *Daily Liturgy* opens with the defining statement: “We humbly venture to take the golden writings and the jade scriptures as the gate to the Way, and the chanting and recitation of scriptures and incantations as the path for cultivating immortality.” A similar statement is found in the *Daily Liturgy* edition propagated by the Jueyuan Altar 覺源壇 (Altar of the Origin of Awakening), a spirit-writing altar for Patriarch Lü (Lüzü 呂祖) in Beijing, titled *Qingwei hongfan daomen gongke jing* 清微宏範道門功課經 (Glorious exemplar in the examination of Daoist merits from the Pure Tenuity; hereinafter referred to as the *Glorious Exemplar*), except that, in that edition, “the path for cultivating immortality” lies in “the precious proclamations and scriptures of the elixir” rather than in “the chanting and recitation of scriptures and incantations.”<sup>2</sup> Despite the slight differences in wording, both prefaces point to the same idea that the path for cultivating immortality lies in the recitation and chanting of the three major components of the *Daily Liturgy*, i.e., scriptures, divine incantations, and precious proclamations, which make up the daily liturgy practiced by Daoist adepts in their cultivation towards perfection.

## Sources and Editions

The origin of the *Daily Liturgy* remains a subject of scholarly debate to this day, with no definitive conclusion so far. This liturgical text

is not collected in the Ming-dynasty *Zhengtong Daozang* 正統道藏 (hereinafter referred to as the *Daozang*) compiled in 1445. However, editions of the *Daily Liturgy* have been circulated and published under various Daoist schools, including the Quanzhen, Zhengyi, and Jingming 淨明 (Pure and Bright), since the early Qing dynasty (1644–1911). Within the Quanzhen tradition, it is believed that the daily recitation of this scripture began with its founding patriarch, Wang Chongyang 王重陽, when he established the Daoist monastic cultivation system, and Quanzhen Daoist masters have since been following this recitation tradition. The earliest extant Quanzhen *Liturgy* is a 1797 edition by the White Cloud Monastery 白雲觀, Beijing, with the title *Taishang Quanzhen gongke jing* 太上全真功課經 (Quanzhen liturgy of the Most High for examination of merits; hereinafter referred to as the *Quanzhen Liturgy*), now collected in the National Library of China. An earlier edition of the *Daily Liturgy*, however, can be found circulated within the Jingming School as *Xiuzhen zhaoke* 修真朝課 (Morning recitation for cultivation of perfection) and the *Xiuzhen wanke* 修真晚課 (Evening recitation for cultivation of perfection), included in folio 10 of the *Taishang lingbao jingming zongjiao lu* 太上靈寶淨明宗教錄 (Transcripts of the principal teachings of the Pure and Radiant Lineage of the Most High Numinous Treasure), edited and emended by Hu Zhimin 胡之玟 (Daoist title Dezhou 德周) and others during the Kangxi 康熙 reign (1662–1722), as seen from the copy in the Qingyunpu Daoist Cloister 青雲譜道院 collection in Jiangxi.<sup>3</sup> The three main components of the *Daily Liturgy*—scriptures, divine incantations, and precious proclamations—are already established in this Jingming edition.

The above-mentioned 1797 edition of the *Quanzhen Liturgy* contains a preface, which is signed, “New edition from the eleventh lunar month of the *Dingsi* year in the Jiaqing reign of the Great Qing”

崑大清嘉慶歲次丁巳仲冬究眾重刻。 This preface has since appeared in all subsequent Quanzhen editions of the *Daily Liturgy*, such as the 1887 edition by Yiqing Daoren 一清道人 and the edition collected in the *CKDZJY* (1906).

Around 1815, under the leadership of Jiang Yupu 蔣予蒲 (courtesy name Yuanting 元庭; 1756–1819), Daoist adepts at the Jueyuan Altar compiled the *Daozang jiyao* 道藏輯要 (Essentials of the Daoist Canon; hereinafter referred to as the *DZJY*). Divided into twenty-eight lodges, the *DZJY* includes, in its lodge 27 (fol. 1), another edition of the Jueyuan Altar's *Liturgy*, namely the *Glorious Exemplar* mentioned earlier, which consists of liturgy at the morning, noon, and evening altars.<sup>4</sup> Its *Morning Altar* and *Evening Altar* sections are like other editions of the *Daily Liturgy*, which feature scriptures, divine incantations, and precious proclamations as their main components. The *Noon Altar* section, on the other hand, is mainly for the recitation of precious proclamations of immortals and perfected. Its sixty-three precious proclamations include those of Perfected Lord Liu Shouyuan Who Supervises the Jueyuan Altar, Right Prime Minister at the Jade Pivot Who Enforces the Transformations and Propagates the Teachings 掌壇真人玉樞右宰贊化宏教柳守元真君; Perfected Lord Cheng Who Safeguards the Rules, Junior Steward of the Jade Monarch with Great Mercy and Expansive Deliverance 護法真人玉宸少宰隆恩宏濟程真君; and Heavenly Lord Ma, Marshal Who Protects the Altar and Safeguards the Rules 守壇護法元帥馬天君. Since Daoist masters at the Jueyuan Altar uphold the tenets of the Golden Elixir traditions of heavenly immortals transmitted by Patriarch Lü, they called themselves the Tianxian 天仙 (Heavenly Immortals) Sect, and the *Glorious Exemplar* refers to their lineage as “the Tianxian Sect with the legacy of the Quanzhen teaching and the inheritance of the Zhengyi rites” 全真演教正一垂科天仙法派.<sup>5</sup>

The *Glorious Exemplar* is also included in the CKDZJY (1906). Largely different from the text of the *Daily Liturgy* in the same collection, this edition of the *Glorious Exemplar*, for instance, comprises five scriptures in its *Morning Altar* section, namely:

1. *Yuqing yuanshi tianzun shuo shengxuan xiaozai huming miaojing* 玉清元始天尊說昇玄消災護命妙經 (Wondrous scripture for ascending to the Mysterious, averting calamities, and protecting lives, spoken by the Heavenly Worthy of the Primordial Beginning of the Jade Clarity);
2. *Taishang Laojun shuo chang qingjing jing* 太上老君說常清靜經 (Scripture on perpetual purity and quiescence, spoken by the Most High Lord Lao);
3. *Wushang yuhuang xinyin miaojing* 無上玉皇心印妙經 (Wondrous scripture by the Supreme Jade Sovereign for the mind to be imprinted);
4. *Jiutian yingyuan leisheng puhua tianzun shuo yushu baojing* 九天應元雷聲普化天尊說玉樞寶經 (Precious scripture of the Jade Pivot, spoken by the Heavenly Worthy of Universal Transformation Whose Sound of Thunder Corresponds to the Primordial Origin over the Nine Heavens); and
5. *Fuyou shangdi chunyang Lüzu tianshi xinjing* 孚佑上帝純陽呂祖天師心經 (Heart scripture by the Heavenly Master Patriarch Lü, Savior of the Needy of the Pure Yang).

Two of these scriptures (4 and 5) differ from the four included in the *Morning Altar* section of the CKDZJY edition of the *Daily Liturgy*. Moreover, the *True Scripture for Averting Calamities and Overcoming Perils, Spoken by the Heavenly Worthy of Numinous Treasure of the Most High* 太上靈寶天尊說禳災度厄真經 has been added to the CKDZJY edition.

Another edition of the *Daily Liturgy* was published jointly by Xinchengtang 心誠堂 and Mingdeyuan 明德院 in 1803 during the

Jiaqing reign, a copy of which was bequeathed by Robert Morrison and is currently preserved at the library of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London. Consisting of two sections, the *Morning Recitation* and the *Evening Recitation*, this edition had been circulated among Daoist altars in Nanhai 南海 county, Guangdong.

From the circulation of the extant editions of the *Daily Liturgy*, we can confidently conclude that the Daoist communities in China were already performing the *Daily Liturgy* during the Kangxi–Jiaqing times. However, without documentary evidence definitively linking it to a specific Daoist school, the exact origin of the *Daily Liturgy* has remained a subject of scholarly investigation.

Jiang Yupu's *DZJY*, compiled also during the Jiaqing reign, only collects the *Glorious Exemplar*, but not the White Cloud Monastery edition of the *Quanzhen Liturgy* (i.e., the *CKDZJY* edition). We could, therefore, argue that the White Cloud Monastery edition might have been circulated among Quanzhen communities as a standalone piece. A textual comparison shows that the White Cloud Monastery edition of the *Quanzhen Liturgy* and the *DZJY* edition of the *Glorious Exemplar* were two distinct texts, with parallel circulation in the Jiaqing period. The claim by some scholars that “the *Daily Liturgy* was adapted and developed from the *Glorious Exemplar*”<sup>6</sup> does not seem to hold any truth. The White Cloud Monastery edition of the *Daily Liturgy* in circulation today in the Quanzhen circle is a reissue by Yiqing Daoren in 1887. Its text is identical to that of the 1797 *Quanzhen Liturgy*, suggesting that the former is most likely a reprint based on the 1797 edition.

Between 1898 and 1906, Abbot Yan Yonghe 闍永和 of the Erxian Abbey 二仙菴 (of the Quanzhen School) in Chengdu, Sichuan, oversaw the re-edition of the *DZJY* and renamed it to *CKDZJY*. Edited and emended by scholars such as He Longxiang