

A Study of the *Central Scripture* *of Laozi (Laozi zhongjing)*

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Acknowledgements

About six years ago, when I was an undergraduate student majoring in mathematics, I read one of the popular translations of the *Daodejing*; then, I read another one. Being impressed by both, I was very intrigued by their dissimilarity. From that moment on, I found myself learning Chinese, taking classes in East Asian Studies, and now, writing this thesis. During these years, I received generous help and support from a number of people, to all of whom I am very thankful.

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A Study of the *Central Scripture of Laozi*

Abstract

This thesis is a study of the *Laozi zhongjing*, an early medieval Chinese text, preserved in the Daoist Canon (*Daozang*) in two versions. In the first chapter, I compare the extant versions, inquiring into the relationship between them, and then establish the interval for the text's possible dates of composition. In the second chapter, I argue that the text was deliberately written as an esoteric scripture and analyze the techniques which the text uses to create an atmosphere of secrecy; I then suggest that the best way to approach an esoteric scripture consists in scrutinizing the text in order to unravel its understanding of the categories which underlie its lifeworld. The third chapter is an investigation of the practices described in the *Laozi zhongjing*; I aim to demonstrate that their main goal, immortality, is consistent with the text's cosmological model and is achieved via nurturing the Red Child, a numen residing within one's body that is associated with one's self.

Résumé

Cette thèse est une étude du *Laozi zhongjing*, un texte chinois datant du début du Moyen Âge, préservé dans le Canon taoïste en deux versions. Dans le premier chapitre je compare les versions existantes et examine la relation entre les deux; ensuite j'établis un intervalle approximatif de la date de composition de ce texte. Dans le deuxième chapitre, je soutiens que le texte a été délibérément conçu comme une écriture ésotérique et j'analyse les techniques utilisées dans le texte afin de créer une atmosphère secrète; ensuite je propose que la meilleure façon d'approcher une écriture ésotérique est d'examiner minutieusement le texte afin de discerner sa compréhension des principales catégories de son monde vécu. Le troisième chapitre est une investigation des pratiques décrites par le *Laozi zhongjing*; mon but est de démontrer que leur l'objectif principal, l'immortalité, est en accord avec le model cosmologique de ce texte, et qu'il est atteint en entretenant l'Enfant rouge, un *numen* qui réside à l'intérieur du corps et qui est associé avec le soi humain.

Conventions

Unless otherwise specified, all translations used in the thesis are my own. If the translated passage has been previously translated fully or partially, reference to the existing translation is provided in a footnote.

For the texts found in the *Daozang* 道藏, references at the first occurrence include the volume and page numbers in *Daozang* 道藏, 36 vols. (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe 文物出版社; Shanghai: Shanghai shudian 上海書店; Tianjin: Tianjin guji chubanshe 天津古籍出版社, 1988); the number assigned to the text in the catalogue by Kristofer Schipper, *Concordance du Tao-tsang: Titres des ouvrages* (Paris: École Française d'Extrême-Orient, 1975); if necessary, chapter, page and line numbers of the quoted passage within the text is specified. Each woodblock print contains twenty lines, divided into two tens, designated “a” and “b.” For example, CT 1032 18.3a2 is a reference to the second line, of the right ten, of the third page, of the eighteenth chapter of the *Yunji qiqian*. The second reference includes only the number in the catalogue and the chapter, page and line numbers.

Unless otherwise specified, the abbreviation *LZZJ* refers to the *Laozi zhongjing* as a scripture, and not to any of its particular versions.

Unless otherwise specified, all the dates in the text are in the Common Era.

Abbreviations

- BPZ* *Baopuzi neipian* 抱朴子內篇, CT 1185.
- CT* *Concordance du Tao-tsang: Titres des ouvrages*, ed. Kristofer Schipper. Paris: École Française d'Extrême-Orient, 1975.
- EOT* *The Encyclopedia of Taoism*, 2 vols., ed. Fabrizio Pregadio. London, New York: Routledge, 2008.
- HCD* *The Taoist Canon: a Historical Companion to the Daozang*, 3 vols., ed. Kristofer Schipper and Franciscus Verellen, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004.
- HTJ* *Huangting jing* 黃庭經, referring to both *Taishang huangting neijing yujing* 太上黃庭內景玉經 (CT 331) and *Taishang huangting waijing yujing* 太上黃庭外景玉經 (CT 332).
- LZZJ* *Laozi zhongjing* 老子中經, referring to all the versions of the text.
- WFX* *Taishang Lingbao wufu xu* 太上靈寶五符序, CT 388.
- YJQQ* *Yunji qiqian* 雲笈七籤, CT 1032.

Introduction

We, as human beings, are prone to illnesses, we age inevitably and, finally, succumb to death. While suggesting that it has always been so might seem blasphemous to many, it is quite safe to note that this fact has been well documented during the historical times. It is also clear that a certain fear of illness, old age and death has been accompanying the three “as a shadow that never departs,”¹ to quote a Buddhist source. However, as opposed to most Buddhist schools and many others, who accepted this as a given, some responses included an attempt to break the shackles of illness and death, and a search for health, longevity and, eventually, immortality. Chinese texts from the Eastern Zhou onward have maintained that the human life could be prolonged beyond the normal limit and that the body could be transcended; however, it is in the late Han and Six Dynasties period, with the emergence of the religion of Daoism, that these ideas were refined, discussed and written about most explicitly.² This thesis is a study of one text, the *Laozi zhongjing* 老子中經 or the *Central Scripture of Laozi*, which has been referred to as “one of the earliest technical manuals of Taoist meditation and longevity techniques.”³

On the Word “Daoist”

¹ *The Dhammapada*, trans. and ed. John R. Carter and Mahinda Palihawadana (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 3.

² Benjamin Penny, “Immortality and Transcendence,” in *Daoism Handbook*, ed. Livia Kohn (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2000), 109.

³ Livia Kohn, “*Laozi zhongjing*,” in *The Encyclopedia of Taoism*, 2 vols., ed. Fabrizio Pregadio (London, New York: Routledge, 2008), 1: 624.

This section's heading is a reproduction of the title of an article, which Nathan Sivin wrote in 1978. In this article, Sivin drew attention to the frequent confusion between many meanings of the word "Daoist" but warned against adopting a single operational definition of this term, because, he argued, no single definition of this term could encompass the diverse historical questions that scholars asked of the sources.⁴ Thirty years later, in his keynote speech for the 2009 International Conference on Daoism, Sivin pointed out that the debate on what Daoism was seemed to be over, but the confusion in nomenclature was still being maintained.⁵ Being consistent with his standpoint in the earlier article, he did not provide an explicit definition of Daoism.

There has been so much disagreement and debate about what Daoism is and what it is not, that it would be safer, perhaps, to avoid mentioning this term in the present study. Yet, examining a text ascribed to Laozi, instructing the Dao-loving adept how to be a Daoist (*daoshi* 道士) and practice the Dao (*weidao* 為道), that is certainly not an option. Since this thesis is focused on mainly one text, an appropriate definition is thus a provisional one, appropriate for the *Laozi zhongjing*; it is an instrument and not a final statement. I shall not attempt to provide my own definition, but shall use an existing one, proposed by Stephen Bokenkamp:

Daoism is by its own account the higher religion of China, characterized by the doctrine that the primordial and eternal Dao acts in human history both

⁴ Nathan Sivin, "On the Word 'Taoist' as a Source of Perplexity. With Special Reference to the Relations of Science and Religion in Traditional China," *History of Religions* 17 (1978), 327.

⁵ Sivin, "The Future of Daoist Studies and the Need for Generalists" (Paper Presented to the International Conference on Daoism 2009: New Approaches to the Study of Daoism in Chinese Culture and Society, Chinese University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong, November 26-28, 2009).

directly, through the agency of its hypostases, particularly Laozi, and indirectly, through a pantheon of deities that include those resident in the human body.⁶

Gil Raz pointed out that this definition, based on several major traditions and thus being an authoritative one, still did not allow the inclusion of texts such as *Taishang Lingbao wufu xu* 太上靈寶五符序 (Prolegomena to the Five Talismans of the Most High Spiritual Treasure). Raz has thus put forward a longer, less restrictive set of criteria, applicable to a wider range of Daoist religious groups.⁷ However, since Bokenkamp's shorter definition includes all the characteristics of the *Laozi zhongjing*, it is the one I shall use in this thesis.

A Brief Introduction to the *Central Scripture of Laozi*

One of the most influential contemporary researchers of Daoism, Kristofer Schipper, exploring the Daoist vision of the body, characterized the *Laozi zhongjing* as “the least systematized description, the most disorganized, and yet the most authentic, . . . the one I consider to be the most ancient.”⁸ The content of

⁶ Stephen Bokenkamp, *Early Daoist Scriptures* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 12.

⁷ Gil Raz, *Creation of Tradition: The Five Talismans of the Numinous Treasure and the Formation of Early Daoism* (Ph.D. diss., Indiana University, 2004), 21-23 *passim*. Raz's criteria are the following:

(1) The primary criterion is a view of the Dao as an overarching and effective force both inside and outside the universe, active, but not necessarily personified. (2) This force can be effectively approached by humans through ritual means, and those who are successful with this quest achieve transcendence. (3) These means are secret and guarded within strict lineages of transmission. (4) These lineages reject all practices which do not revere the direct manifestations of the Dao. (5) An eschatological vision underlies the quest for transcendence, differentiating Daoism from the earlier tradition of seekers of longevity.

⁸ Kristofer Schipper, *The Taoist Body*, trans. Karen Duval (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1993), 105.

the *Laozi zhongjing* is very diverse, and will be discussed in more detail later. For now, I shall limit myself to several general observations.

In addition to providing a distinctive insight into the structure of the outer cosmos with its multiple layers, abundant in numina (*shen* 神), the *Central Scripture* also explores the inner cosmos, or microcosm, of the human body. It might be the first extant text to give a detailed description of the lower *dantian* 丹田 (Cinnabar Field),⁹ a locus in the human body which has been playing a crucial role in medical and religious practices since then, and remains important in contemporary Qigong 氣功 and Taiji quan 太極拳. It also contains many references to the Red Child (*Chizi* 赤子), who was initially mentioned in the *Laozi* itself. The Red Child is probably related to the Inner Embryo, which later became the focal point of Daoist Inner Alchemy. The *Central Scripture* offers various longevity practices, consisting of visualization techniques and circulation of *qi* 氣. The text is divided into two chapters. The first chapter of the *LZZJ* is generally concerned with cosmology, mapping the outer cosmos and the human body, describing the numina inhabiting the remote constellations and human viscera. Sections in the first chapter usually begin with introducing a certain numen and a realm or cosmic location where he/she dwells, providing a description of his/her appearance; then the text often states, “Humans also have him/her” 人亦有之 and then describes the equivalent location and inhabitant inside the human body. The second chapter is generally devoted to the description

⁹ Fabrizio Pregadio, “Early Daoist Meditation and the Origins of Inner Alchemy,” in *Daoism in History*, ed. Benjamin Penny (London, New York: Routledge, 2006), 139.

of various practices, in which the reader is advised to engage at particular times; the practices mostly consist of circulating *qi* and *jing* 精, possibly first ingesting them, and visualizing various corporeal numina, in order to achieve longevity (*changsheng* 長生) and numinous immortality (*shenxian* 神仙). Thus, generally speaking, one could characterize the first chapter as more descriptive and the second one as more prescriptive. However, the *Laozi zhongjing* is by no means a well-organized text, and this division is not strict; for example, sections of the first chapter also contain instructions on visualization of the corporeal numina and sometimes end with a prayer addressed to the described numen.

The Key Terms and Concepts: *Jing, Qi, Shen* and *Xian*

Translation and interpretation of terms and concepts that have no Western equivalents is the perpetual problem which students and scholars of pre-modern China have to face.¹⁰ One is confronted with a choice of either adopting the original vocabulary or imposing a translation which inevitably entails narrowing of the original meaning.

Qi 氣 is a central concept in Chinese philosophical, religious, scientific and medical literature. People who know anything about Traditional Chinese Medicine, internal styles of Chinese martial arts, or Daoism have probably heard of the term *qi* (sometimes written as Chi, or Ch'i), no matter how they may

¹⁰ In truth, those terms that seem to directly correspond to their Western equivalents pose a serious problem and, in fact, create a trap. For example, the names of the internal organs, such as liver, heart, spleen, lungs and kidneys, which are in direct correspondence with English nomenclature, do not necessarily refer to the same objects. Thus, in translation, I capitalize those words when they refer to the Chinese viscera and not to modern anatomical terms.

actually interpret it. Currently, *qi* is a neologism in English, which the *Oxford Dictionary* defines as “circulating life force whose existence and properties are the basis of much Chinese philosophy and medicine.”¹¹ There is no concept similar to *qi* in Western biomedicine or philosophy. In an attempt to clarify this ambiguity, scholars have assigned to it a wide range of translations, such as energy, wind, vapour, influence, pneumas, etc. Robert Campany characterized *qi* as “a term so basic to Chinese world view, yet so multivalent in its meanings, spanning senses normally distinguished in the West, that a single satisfying Western-language translation has so far proved elusive.”¹² Sivin asserted that, by the late Warring States period, “*qi* meant air, breath, vapor, and other pneumatic stuff. It might be congealed or compacted in liquids or solids. *Qi* also referred to the balanced and ordered vitalities or energies, partly derived from the air we breath, that cause physical changes and maintain life. These are not distinct meanings.”¹³ Stable *qi* is what makes physical matter, while the rarefied *qi* is what animates living beings.¹⁴ *Jing*, most often translated as “essence,” is a refined condensed form of *qi*.¹⁵ *Shen*, often translated as “holy” or “numinous,” is a

¹¹ *Oxford Dictionaries Online*, s.v. “Qi.”

http://oxforddictionaries.com/view/entry/m_en_gb0142350#m_en_gb0142350. Retrieved 30 July 2010.

¹² Robert Campany, *To Live as Long as Heaven and Earth: A Translation and Study of Ge Hong's Traditions of Divine Transcendents* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 18.

¹³ Sivin, *Traditional Medicine in Contemporary China. A Partial Translation of Revised Outline of Chinese Medicine (1972) with an Introductory Study on Change in Present-day and Early Medicine* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, Center for Chinese Studies), 47.

¹⁴ Bokenkamp, *Early Daoist Scriptures*, 16.

¹⁵ Campany, *To Live as Long as Heaven and Earth*, 19; Bokenkamp, *Early Daoist Scriptures*, 20.

concept applied to animate forces or objects.¹⁶ Roger Ames claimed that the term *shen* always meant “human spirituality” and “divinity” at the same time.¹⁷

Catherine Despeux argued that the common translation of *jing* as “essence,” *qi* as “breath,” “pneuma,” or “energy,” and *shen* as “spirit” captured some of their respective features but could not be considered as entirely satisfying; she wrote:

In its broadest meaning, *jing* (a word that originally refers to bleached rice) is said to represent the life germ contained in the Dao . . . In the human being, it is a form of energy that mainly derives from food and nourishes the body, especially the five viscera . . . In an even more restricted sense, *jing* designates the energy attached to sexuality (semen in men, menstrual blood in women) . . . *Qi* is positioned between essence and spirit and therefore at the intersection point between matter and mind. Whereas *jing* is a carrier of life and has a nourishing function, *qi* is a dynamic force and has a transforming function. The term originally means “vapor.” *Shen* evolved from the original sense of “divinity” and outer and inner “spirits” into the designation of a single force, whose connotations include those of psychic essence and even of “soul.” To some extent, *shen* applies to anything that exists within the cosmos but has no material aspect, such as deities and human thought.¹⁸

Importantly, Despeux pointed to the interconnectedness of these three categories, which, I believe, should be defined in relation to each other. In this study, I shall explore their meanings and interrelation in the context of the *Laozi zhongjing*.

Since *qi* is now a part of the English language, I shall not adopt any other existing a translation of this term and simply refer to it as *qi*.¹⁹ I shall also generally leave the term *jing* untranslated, because the word “essence” has a range of meanings, some of which are not compatible with the term *jing*. However,

¹⁶ Bokenkamp, *Early Daoist Scriptures*, 25.

¹⁷ Roger Ames, *Sun-Tzu. The Art of Warfare: the First English Translation Incorporating the Recently Discovered Yin-ch'üeh-shan Texts* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1993), 72.

¹⁸ Catherine Despeux, “Jing, Qi, Shen,” in *EOT*, 1: 562-563.

¹⁹ However, I will keep it italicized to indicate that I am treating it as a Chinese term, which has a range of meanings exceeding the definition provided in the *Oxford English Dictionary*.

sometimes it is clear from the context that *jing* refers to the male reproductive fluid (for example when it is juxtaposed with the menstrual blood); in this case I shall translate *jing* as “semen.” As for the term *shen*, I shall translate it as “numen,”²⁰ since, unlike “spirit,” “divinity” or “god,” this term is not weighted with connotations.

As for *xianren* 仙人 (Immortals), *zhenren* 真人 (Realized Beings) and *shengren* 聖人 (Sages), Isabelle Robinet wrote:

It appears that the oldest texts (i.e., the fourth century B.C.E. *Chuang-tzu* [*Zhuangzi* 莊子] and the second century B.C.E. *Huai-nan-tzu* [*Huainan zi* 淮南子]) made no distinction among the *hsien-jen* (usually translated as “Immortals”), the *chen-jen* (the True Men), and the *sheng-jen* (the “Sages” or “Saints”). In later periods, however, these terms referred to different stages in the process of spiritual development.²¹

Robert Campany has accurately noted that it would be mistaken to project the dichotomies such as human/divine and death/immortality onto general Chinese and specifically Daoist worldviews; instead, it would be more appropriate to talk about gradations and hierarchical continuities.²² Bokenkamp argued that there was no single chasm between mortals and immortals, but a chain, a ladder; those who had risen to level higher than the one occupied by humans were the *xian*.²³ Accordingly, both Campany and Bokenkamp translated *xian* as “transcendent.”

“Transcendent” might be a more accurate and less restrictive translation of this term than “immortal.” Indeed, later, I hope to show that according to the

²⁰ Or “numinous,” when *shen* modifies another noun.

²¹ Isabelle Robinet, *Taoist Meditation: the Mao-shan Tradition of Great Purity*, trans. Julian F. Pas and Norman J. Girardot (Albany: State University of New York Press), 45.

²² Campany, *To Live as Long as Heaven and Earth*, 5.

²³ Bokenkamp, *Early Daoist Scriptures*, 23.

Laozi zhongjing, becoming a *xian* is a gradual process. Yet, the text clearly indicates that those who are *xian* do not die, and if the adept becomes a *xian*, he will not die as well. For example, a description of one of the practices is preceded by a clause, “[If] you truly want to practice the Dao, [become] and immortal [and] not to die, [you] should . . .”²⁴ 子審欲為道神仙不死當 . . . Therefore, in this thesis, I shall use “immortal”²⁵ as a provisional translation of *xian*.

The State of the Field

While it has been suggested that the material which the *Laozi zhongjing* contained was so rich that its full study would fill a book,²⁶ until now the text has received relatively little scholarly attention. Below is the list of summaries of all published academic articles which concern the *Central Scripture*.

Schipper, Kristofer. 1979. “Le Calendrier de Jade – Note sur le *Laozi zhongjing*.” *Nachrichten der Gesellschaft für Natur- und Völkerkunde Ostasiens/Hamburg* 125 (1979), 75-80.

This study is, as far as I am aware, the first study devoted the *Laozi zhongjing*. Schipper pointed to the existence of two copies of the text within the Daoist Canon, and conjectured that the *Daozang* editors printed an additional copy of the text to increase the overall volume of the Canon. He also suggested that each section of the text initially contained an illustration of an immortal, noted similarities between deities and talismans mentioned in the *LZZJ* and the *Baopuzi*

²⁴ *Laozi zhongjing* 老子中經, in *Daozang* 道藏, 36 vols. (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe 文物出版社; Shanghai: Shanghai shudian 上海書店; Tianjin: Tianjin guji chubanshe 天津古籍出版社, 1988), 22: 139; CT 1032, 18.22.a9.

²⁵ Or “immortality,” when *xian* refers to a characteristic.

²⁶ Kristofer Schipper, “The Inner World of the *Lao-tzu chung-ching*,” in *Time and Space in Chinese Culture*, ed. Chun-Chieh Huang and Erik Zürcher (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 115.

neipian 抱朴子內篇 (Book of the Master Who Embraces Simplicity: Inner Chapters), and argued that the *LZZJ* dated to the Eastern Han dynasty or the third century at the latest. Scholars, who wrote about the *Central Scripture* later, frequently referred to this preliminary study, addressing these assertions.

Maeda Shigeki 前田繁樹. 1988. “*Roshi chukyō oboegaki*” 「老子中經」覚書 [Notes on the *Laozi zhongjing*]. *Chūgoku kodai yōjō shisō no sogoteki kenkyū* 中國古代養生思想の総合的研究 [Collected studies on the conceptions of Nourishing Life in ancient China], ed. Sakade Yoshinobu 坂出祥伸, 474-502. Tokyo: Hirakawa shuppansha.

Unfortunately, having no Japanese reading ability, in this thesis, I can neither summarize Maeda’s work, nor fully benefit from the results of his research. Among other results, Maeda has produced a meticulous work, finding and juxtaposing all the similar passages in the *Taishang Lingbao wufu xu* and the *Laozi zhongjing*; I am using this result in Chapter 1.

Schipper. 1995. “The Inner World of the *Lao-tzu chung-ching*.” *Time and Space in Chinese Culture*, ed. Chun-Chieh Huang and Erik Zürcher, 114-31. Leiden: Brill.

This article is an expansion of Schipper’s first publication on the subject. Here, Schipper provided translations of selected passages from the *LZZJ*, exploring the pantheons of celestial and corporeal numina, and emphasizing the calendrical aspect of the praxis.

Katō Chie 加藤千恵. 1997. “*Laozi zhongjing yu neidan sixiang de qiyuan*” 老子中經與內丹思想的起源 [The *Laozi zhongjing* and the origins of *neidan*]. *Zongjiaoxue yanjiu* 宗教學研究 [Religious Studies] 4 (1997): 40-47.

Katō Chie proposed a later date for the *LZZJ*’s composition: fourth to fifth centuries CE. She also examined the *LZZJ*’s practice of the visualization and

circulation of *qi* within the body, isolating five different techniques. Finally, she argued that the text could be considered a precursor of the Tang dynasty inner alchemical treatises.

Lagerwey, John. 2004. “Deux écrits taoïstes anciens.” *Cahiers d’Extrême-Asie* 14 (2004): 139-171.

This article is a study of the *Laozi zhongjing* and the *Lingbao wufu xu*. Lagerwey noted several points of junction between the two texts: parallel passages, same names of the internal deities, and the practice of absorption of solar and lunar *jing*. He argued that there was not enough evidence indicating any connection between the *Wufu xu* and the *LZZJ*. Lagerwey translated select passages from the text, focusing on the paragraphs related to the Red Child.

Liu Yongming 劉永明 and Cheng Rong 程容. 2005. “Daojiao yixue de zaoqi chuancheng yu lilun chuangzao” 道教醫學的早期傳承與理論創造 [On the Early Legacy and Theories of Taoist Medicine] (the authors’ own translation of the article’s title). *Lanzhou daxue xuebao (shehui kexue ban)* 蘭州大學學報（社會科學版） [Journal of Lanzhou University (Social Sciences)] 33.5 (Sep 2005): 73-79.

In this article, Liu and Cheng provided a survey of medical passages contained in several early Daoist scriptures, including the *Laozi zhongjing*. The authors suggested that the *LZZJ* was influenced by the *Nanjing* 難經 (The Scripture of Difficult Issues).

Liu Yongming 劉永明. 2006. “*Laozi zhongjing* xingcheng yu Han dai kao” 「老子中經」形成於漢代考 [On the Origin of the *Central Scripture of Laozi*] (the author’s own translation of the article’s title). *Lanzhou daxue xuebao (shehui kexue ban)* 蘭州大學學報（社會科學版） [Journal of Lanzhou University (Social Sciences)] 33.4 (Jul 2006): 60-66.

Liu claimed that the *Laozi zhongjing* was a composite text, consisting of exactly two layers, written during the Eastern Han Dynasty. He also provided an overview of the text's cosmology, rearranging the relevant passages into a more coherent order, and argued that the text's cosmology was inspired by the *Laozi*.

Pregadio, Fabrizio. 2006. "Early Daoist Meditation and the Origins of Inner Alchemy." In *Daoism in History*, ed. Benjamin Penny, 121-158. London, New York: Routledge.

This article is a study of the transformations of Chinese alchemy. Pregadio argued that in alchemical practice meditation played an important role in the shift of emphasis from the world of gods and demons to the impersonal principles that fashioned and regulated the functioning of the cosmos and the human being. Pregadio compared the *Laozi zhongjing* and the *Huangting jing* 黃庭經 (Scripture of the Yellow Court), approaching the two as meditation manuals. He noted similarities between the two descriptions of the space within the human body and between the visualization practices described by the two texts. Pregadio also summarized the descriptions of the numina, which were listed in the first twelve sections of the text.

When writing about the *Laozi zhongjing*, Western and East Asian scholars alike were challenged by its disorganized nature and the abstruseness of its content. Thus, their approaches were very similar, consisting of finding relevant passages and regrouping them according to the discussed subject, and supplementing them with interpretative commentaries. For example, John Lagerwey found all the passages which were related to the Red Child. However, unlike scholars who

published their articles in Chinese, Western scholars were obliged to provide translations of the Chinese text. Due to its highly obscure technical language, translating the *Laozi zhongjing* into a Western language also required providing explanations of its basic underlying categories and technical terms, which contributed to a more detailed exegesis of the text.

The Aim of This Study

In this thesis, I intend to address several issues, which have not yet been explored in detail. The main body of this thesis is divided into three chapters. In the first chapter, I compare the extant versions of the *Laozi zhongjing*, investigating the relation between them; I then proceed to establish the possible dates of composition of the scripture. In the second chapter, I apply Campany's analysis of Early Medieval Chinese esotericism to show that the *LZZJ* was composed as an esoteric scripture; then I define an approach to reading and interpreting the text. Finally, in the third chapter, I examine the cosmological model and the practices presented in the text, paying special attention to the Red Child, who, as I argue, is the most important numen inhabiting the human body, identified with the human self, who should be nourished in order to achieve immortality. For the purpose of this thesis, I want to concentrate on the text itself, minimizing comparisons between the cosmological descriptions and praxis found in the *LZZJ* and other texts, making use of this comparison only for the purpose of establishing the text's date of composition.

Chapter 1: Versions, Layers, Dates

In his study of the alchemical traditions of the Jiangnan 江南 region, Fabrizio Pregadio noted that dating issues had for a long time been one of the main hindrances in the study of that kind of literature, as most texts were either anonymous and undated, or bore attributions that were meaningful within the tradition but were historically unreliable.²⁷ These criteria are also applicable to the *Laozi zhongjing* 老子中經, which is presented as a revelation of Laozi himself at the end of the Later Han dynasty, but whose *de facto* author and dates of composition are unknown. This produced a twofold result. On the one hand, it contributed to the fact that the text has not been explored to the degree it deserves. For example, Isabelle Robinet, in her monumental work on the *Shangqing* 上清 (Highest Clarity) School, acknowledged that the *LZZJ* could be among the ancient texts cognate with the *Shangqing* textual corpus and could be considered as its precursor; yet, having no certainty of its date of composition and doubting its antiquity, she chose not to focus on this text.²⁸ On the other hand, among all its aspects, the one which has received most academic attention is the *Central Scripture*'s possible date of composition, since all the scholars who have touched upon this text have addressed this issue to a certain extent. Presently, there is no unity of opinions – many dates have been proposed, ranging from the end of the

²⁷ Fabrizio Pregadio, *Great Clarity: Daoism and Alchemy in Early Medieval China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006), 14.

²⁸ Robinet explained, “Si sa date était connue avec certitude, il serait l’un des textes anciens les plus proches de ceux du Shangqing à certains égards, et pourrait être considéré comme un précurseur de cette école; mais ceci est plus que douteux.” Isabelle Robinet, *La révélation du Shangqing dans l’histoire du taoïsme*, 2 vols. (Paris: École Française d’Extrême-Orient, 1984), 1: 28.

Eastern Han Dynasty (late second to early third century CE) to the Southern Liang Dynasty (sixth century).

In this chapter, I shall consider the historical, conceptual and circumstantial evidence in the effort to shrink the range of the *Central Scripture*'s possible dates of composition. I shall also argue that the *LZZJ* is not homogeneous and consists of several textual layers; however, comprehensive layer identification is beyond the scope of this thesis. Moreover, although a linguistic approach would definitely provide indications about the scripture's dates of composition and would be helpful in analyzing its several textual layers, I shall not attempt to analyze its grammar and vocabulary from a historical linguistic perspective.²⁹

Before proceeding to dating the *Central Scripture* and decomposing it into layers, I shall provide a comparative analysis of its extant versions.

1.1 Versions

The Daoist Canon contains two versions of the *Central Scripture*. The first version, *Laozi zhongjing* 老子中經 (The Central Scripture of Laozi),³⁰ is preserved as the eighteenth and nineteenth *juan* 卷 (chapters) of the *Yunji qiqian* 雲笈七籤 (Seven Lots from the Bookbag of the Clouds);³¹ the title's subscript indicates that the text is also called *Zhugong yuli* 珠宮玉曆 (The Jade Calendar of

²⁹ As far as I am aware, the language of the *Laozi zhongjing* has not been studied in detail. Kristofer Schipper pointed out that the *LZZJ* contains numerous colloquialisms, such as the very frequent use of the word *zhao* 兆 as the personal pronoun of the second person. Schipper, "The Inner World of the *Lao-tzu chung-ching*," 115n. I hope to continue my research on the *Laozi zhongjing* in the future and include the historical linguistic approach once I am more familiar with this subject.

³⁰ *Laozi zhongjing* 老子中經, in *Daozang* 道藏, 22: 132-147; CT 1032, 18-19.

³¹ *Yunji qiqian* 雲笈七籤, in *Daozang*, 22: 1-850; CT 1032.

the Pearly Palace). The second version, titled *Taishang laojun zhongjing* 太上老君中經 (The Central Scripture of the Most High Lord Lao) is a free-standing text contained within the *Taiqing* 太清 (Great Clarity) division of the Daoist Canon.³² Both versions contain fifty-five numbered sections. The sections' headings read as follows, *Di yi shenxian* 第一神仙 (The First Numinous Immortal), *Di er shenxian* 第二神仙 (The Second Numinous Immortal), etc. A manuscript titled *Laozi zhongjing* 老子中經 containing the first seven sections and a part of the eighth section of the *Central Scripture* is found among in the Bibliothèque nationale collection of the Dunhuang 敦煌 manuscripts.³³ The two transmitted versions differ only slightly, while the differences between the retrieved text and the versions preserved in the *Daozang* 道藏 (the Daoist Canon) are quite notable.

1.1.1 The Transmitted Versions

Scholars have proposed different relations between the two versions, arguing about their respective anteriority. However, those arguments were based only on circumstantial evidence; as far as I am aware, no detailed textual comparison was ever presented to substantiate the argument. Most scholars based their research on the *YJQQ* version.³⁴ Kristofer Schipper described the CT 1168 version as being

³² *Taishang Laojun zhongjing* 太上老君中經, in *Daozang*, 27: 142-156; CT 1168.

³³ *Facang Dunhuang Xiyu wenxian* 法藏敦煌西域文獻 (Dunhuang and Western Region Documents Held in France), 34 vols. (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1995-2005), 28: 56-57. Pelliot Collection, P.3784.

³⁴ Most scholars, that is, except John Lagerwey, who explained his choice as follows, “Mes propres comparaisons conduisent à la conclusion qu’il n’y a aucune raison de préférer l’une à l’autre et, si j’utilise donc l’édition indépendante, ce n’est que pour éviter d’avoir à me référer aux

“virtually identical” with the *YJQQ* edition and suggested that CT 1168 was a copy of the version preserved in the *YJQQ*, which the Ming editors of the *Daozang* had “simply reprinted from the encyclopedia in order to increase the bulk of the Canon, which had suffered such big losses during the preceding dynasty.”³⁵ Mainland Chinese scholar Liu Yongming claimed that the content of the two texts was completely identical.³⁶

When comparing the CT 1168 version to the one in the *YJQQ*,³⁷ one can see that CT 1168 differs in several aspects: it contains insertions, deletions or replacements of at most two adjacent characters per phrase; it is printed with a different font, and thus, some characters, which are meaning-wise identical to the corresponding characters in the *YJQQ* version, are printed in different variants. Having looked at all the occurrences of textual differences between the two versions,³⁸ in this thesis I will present only those which are relevant to the subject of this study and those which will be helpful in resolving the question of the relation between the two versions.

Let us first list the possible relations between the two editions:

- The two versions are based on two different manuscripts (different degrees of cognateness are possible).
- The two versions were printed independently based on the same manuscript.

chapitres de l'encyclopédie plutôt qu'aux paragraphes du *Zhongjing* en tant que tel.” See John Lagerwey, “Deux écrits taoïstes anciens,” *Cahiers d'Extrême-Asie* 14 (2004), 62.

³⁵ Kristofer Schipper, “The Inner World of the *Lao-tzu chung-ching*,” 116.

³⁶ Liu Yongming, “*Laozi zhongjing xingcheng yu Han dai kao*,” 60.

³⁷ At this point, I use the later as a default because, as mentioned previously, most scholars chose it over the free-standing CT 1168.

³⁸ I have carefully read the two versions comparing them character by character. Yet, unfortunately, when comparing over forty pages of woodblock prints, there always exists a possibility of missing several discrepancies between the two texts.

- CT 1168 is a copy of the *YJQQ* version.
- *YJQQ* version is a copy of CT 1168.³⁹

The first visible difference is in the beginning of each section: in the *YJQQ* version, each section contains an opening clause which is absent in the CT 1168 version, *jing yue* 經曰 (“The scripture states”). It is hard and perhaps not necessary to calculate the precise number of the characters which differ between the two versions because most of the differences are due to the usage of historical variants of the same character, such as the negating character *wu* printed as 無 in the *YJQQ* and as 无 in CT 1168. Except for the alternative variants and the two-character clause in the beginning of each section, the two versions differ in approximately 45 characters.⁴⁰

In the passages that differ, many corresponding characters are similar enough to be scribal or carving errors, for example *wu* 五 (five) versus *wu* 吾 (I), *ri* 日 (sun) versus *yue* 曰 (to state, to say), *si* 思 “think” versus *gui* 鬼 (ghost), etc. In several cases the corresponding characters bear no visual or semantic resemblance, such as *xie* 邪 (evil) versus *jing* 精. It is important to note that the textual discrepancies between the two versions cannot be attributed to the erroneous nature of one of them. In case of some clauses, only the variant

³⁹ In fact, presenting these options as discrete is, to certain extent, a simplification. For example, it is not possible to draw a clear line between the option of the two texts being printed based of the same manuscript and the option of the two texts being printed based on two identical manuscripts. Making a list of discrete options is a tool which will allow me to find the most probable one by showing the implausibility of the others.

⁴⁰ I am counting both insertion/deletion and replacement as one occurrence. I am saying *approximately* because in some cases one cannot be completely certain whether the corresponding characters are in fact semantically different or are historical variants of one character, for example *ju* 俱 versus *ju* 具.

contained in the *YJQQ* version is grammatically correct and therefore more likely to be valid and the one in CT 1168 is not, while in other cases, it is the inverse; sometimes both variants are syntactically correct but one or another appears to be more appropriate contextually; finally, in some cases the differing characters produce two phrases with different meanings. Let us consider two examples of each case.⁴¹ First, let us look at two examples in which the CT 1168 version is the only correct variant:

Frequently think deeply of [the space] within the Stomach [as] exactly (self/white) as congealed fat.⁴²

常思念胃中正（自／白）如凝脂

There are three unvirtuous ones . . . the second one is called (cursing and chewing/cursing),⁴³ jealous and licentious.⁴⁴

無德者有三 . . . 二曰呪（咀／詛）嫉妒淫佚

Next, two passages in which the *YJQQ* version is the only correct variant:

Parents feed him; therefore he is obtaining the (numinous/immortality) immortality.⁴⁵

父母養之乃得（神／仙）仙

⁴¹ Of the two characters and corresponding translations separated by a slash, the first one is from the *YJQQ* version and the second one is from CT 1168. I underline the character and the corresponding translation which I consider to be the valid one.

⁴² CT 1032 19.14a6; CT 1168 2.13b9.

⁴³ *Ju* 咀 “to chew” does not make sense in the context; moreover since 嫉妒 and 淫佚 are paired, so is, most probably, 呪詛.

⁴⁴ CT 1032, 19.17b45; CT 1168, 2.17a6-7.

⁴⁵ CT 1032, 18.8a9; CT 1168, 18.8a5. *Shenxian* 神仙 (numinous immortal or numinous immortality) is a term which is very common throughout the text; the expression “obtain numinous immortality” 得神仙 occurs four times (excluding this one). On the other hand, *xianxian* 仙仙 (immortal immortal) clearly is a tautology, which never appears anywhere else in the text.

The Thearch of Wood has the Pure (Maiden/Jade) of *wu* and *ji*⁴⁶ [from] the Central Palace as a wife.⁴⁷

木帝以中宮戊己素（女／玉）為妻

In some passages, changing one character does not affect the meaning of the sentence. For example:

This is the (Vast/Great) Dao.⁴⁸

此（大／太）道也

Both epithets characterize the Dao. However, whereas the clause *taidao* 太道 (Great Dao) does not appear elsewhere in the text, the clause *dadao* 大道 (Vast Dao) appears three more times. It is therefore more likely that the text repeated the same epithet a fourth time.

Finally, the title of residence of one of the inner numina, *Taihe* 太和 (Great Harmony), *Wutai*, is written as 烏臺 (Blackbird Load) in the *YJQQ* version⁴⁹ and as 烏臺 (Blackbird Pavilion) in the CT 1168 version.⁵⁰ While the name of the district does not affect the sentence structure, the latter title corresponds to the allegoric reference to the Censor-in-chief, because the offices of the Censorate

⁴⁶ Two Celestial Stems associated with the Earth Phase.

⁴⁷ CT 1032, 18.20a2-3; CT, 1168 1.19b5. The *Central Scripture* contains references to both *Sunü* 素女 “Pure Maiden” and *Suyu nü*. 素玉女 “Pure Jade Maiden.” It is thus possible that each text omitted one character thus producing 素女 and 素玉. Nevertheless, referring to a wife, “Pure Jade,” being an inanimate object, is less suitable than “Pure Maiden;” the former can be only used figuratively, while the latter is suitable in its literal sense.

⁴⁸ CT 1032, 19.12b3; CT 1168 2.12a7.

⁴⁹ CT 1032, 18.5a1.

⁵⁰ CT 1168, 1.4b7.

during the Han were distinguished by a large cedar tree frequented by large numbers of birds.⁵¹ Thus, the CT 1168 variant appears to be correct.

One of the most important differences occurs in the last, fifty-fifth, section of the text, when the text, in first person, states:

YJQQ CT 1032 吾時時自案行此三篇三篇上下中經也 (19.21a8-9)

CT 1168 吾時時自案行此二篇 上下中經也 (2.21a1)

Schipper translated the passage in CT 1032 as follows, “From time to time I have myself testified. I have put into circulation three volumes: these three are the Upper Book, the Lower Book and the Middle Book.”⁵² Noting the order of the enumeration of the books, he argued that they could not refer to three parts of the same work because in that case the author would have used a standard “upper, middle, lower” order. This led Schipper to conclude that the upper and the lower volumes were anterior to the middle one and, what is more, the former two referred to the *Daodejing* 道德經, while the latter one was the *Central Scripture* itself.⁵³ The *Daodejing* was referred to as *shang xia pian* 上下篇 (The Upper and the Lower Volumes) as early as Sima Qian’s 司馬遷 *Shiji* 史記 (Records of the Grand Historian).⁵⁴ It has also been referred to as *Erpian shu* 二篇書 (The book in

⁵¹ Charles Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles in Imperial China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1985), 573, s.v. “Wu-t’ai” 烏臺.

⁵² Schipper, “Inner World of the *Lao-tzu chung-ching*,” 117.

⁵³ Schipper, “Inner World of the *Lao-tzu chung-ching*,” 117. It is also possible to suggest that *shang* 上, *xia* 下 and *zhong* 中 refer to more than just simple enumeration, representing Heaven, Earth and the body of the adept. This hypothesis is corroborated by the fact that the *Laozi zhongjing* describes the human body as a microcosm containing counterparts of celestial and terrestrial entities. See Chapter 3.

⁵⁴ Laozi’s biography in the *Shi ji* 史記, chapter 63. *Shiji jianzheng* 史記箋證, ed. Han Zhaoqi 韓兆琦, 10 vols. (Nanchang: Jiangxi renmin chubanshe, 2004), 7: 3749-3750.

two volumes) in the *Laozi ming* 老子銘 (The Laozi Inscription).⁵⁵ On the other hand, John Lagerwey translated this passage in its CT 1168 version as “Régulièrement, je note [les noms de] ceux qui pratiquent les deux chapitres de cet *Écrit au milieu*.”⁵⁶ In this translation there is no visible claim of the author to be Laozi and there is no connection between the *Central Scripture* and the *Daodejing*. It is thus very important to resolve the question of the relation between two versions because this would help to discover whether the text contained a notice of self-identification in relation the *Daodejing*.

Let us consider the variant containing “two volumes.” How could three characters *shang* 上, *xia* 下, *zhong* 中 be characterized as two volumes *pian* 篇? There are two possible options. First, the *shang* 上 and *xia* 下 could constitute one volume, while the *zhong* 中 is the other.⁵⁷ In this case *shangxia* 上下 could be still interpreted as the *Daodejing*. However, while, as mentioned previously, it was common to refer to the *Daodejing* as a book in two volumes *pian* 篇, referring to it as one volume and as *shangxia* 上下 at the same time seems to be inconsistent. The other option, suggested by Lagerwey’s translation, is that *shang* 上 and *xia* 下 refer to the two volumes of the *Central Scripture*. However, an internal reference

⁵⁵ For the original text and a French translation, see Anna Seidel, *La divinisation de Lao tseu dans le Taoïsme des Han* (Paris: École Française d’Extrême-Orient, 1992), 121-128. For the English translation, see Mark Csikszentmihalyi, ed. and tr. *Readings in Han Chinese Thought* (Indianapolis, Ind.; Cambridge, Mass.: Hackett, 2006), 105-112.

⁵⁶ Lagerwey, “Deux écrits taoïstes anciens,” 62. “I regularly note [the names of] those who practice the two chapters of the *Central Scripture*.” Whenever quoting Lagerwey’s translations, I shall leave them in French in order not to lose precision. However, I shall provide an English translation in the footnote to make the thesis fully accessible to an anglophone reader.

⁵⁷ Of course, we could also divide *shang* 上, *xia* 下, *zhong* 中 into *shang* 上 and *xiazhong* 下中, but that does not seem to make any sense.

to the bipartite division of the text would imply that this division existed at the moment of composition of the text, or at the phase of addition of the layer containing this phrase. In the Dunhuang version of the text, there is no indication of a bipartite division: the character *shang* 上 does not appear in the beginning of the text. Moreover, there is a Tang dynasty text which refers to the *LZZJ* as a text in one *juan*.⁵⁸ The first known mention of the *Central Scripture* in two *juan* dates to the Song Dynasty.⁵⁹ Finally, in the CT 1168 version, the chapters are referred to as *juan*, while in the *YJQQ* they are referred to just as *shang* 上 “The Upper” and *xia* 下 “The Lower.” In the currently extant versions, the term *pian* 篇 “volume” is never mentioned anywhere except for this phrase.⁶⁰ Therefore, in case of CT 1168, assuming the validity of either option leads to a contradiction. Thus, in this passage, the *YJQQ* version appears to be the correct one.

Let us suppose for a moment that one version is a copy of the other. I have shown above that both versions contain corruptions and that in the different versions the corruptions occur in different places.⁶¹ Therefore, if we assume that to be the case, regardless of which version was the earlier, the scribes or the carvers producing the later version should have corrected numerous corruptions of

⁵⁸ Please see p. 31 for more details.

⁵⁹ *Daozang tiyao* 道藏提要, ed. Ren Jiyu 任繼愈 and Zhong Zhaopeng 鐘肇鵬 (Beijing: Zhonghua shehui kexue chubanshe 中華社會科學出版社, 1991), 924.

⁶⁰ There is another Tang dynasty source, *Taishang hunyuan zhenlu* 太上混元真錄 (True Record of the Most High of the Undifferentiated Beginning), CT 954, which mentions *Yuli zhongjing san pian wushiwu zhang* 玉曆中經三篇五十五章 (The Central Scripture of the Jade Calendar in Three Volumes and Fifty-Five Sections). Please see p. 31 for more details.

⁶¹ According to Schipper, the CT 1168 version is “virtually identical with the *Yün-chi ch’i-ch’ien* version and contains the same faulty characters (while adding a few more).” (Schipper, “Inner World of the *Lao-tzu chung-ching*,” 116.) However, Schipper did not specify what the faulty characters were. Not denying that both versions might share errors, I still emphasize that some characters which were erroneous in the *YJQQ* version were in fact correct in CT 1168.

the earlier version, while introducing a number of their own. It seems unlikely that a scribe who possessed necessary language skills and was careful enough to locate and correct the errors in the earlier version, whichever one we assume it was, could make a comparable number of errors in the reproduced version. Therefore, it is doubtful that one version is a copy of another.

The length of the text is on the order of 12,000 characters. Thus, excluding the introductory *jing yue* 經曰 clause and the variant ways of writing, the number of characters which differ between the two versions accounts to less than half of a percent of the whole text. Both versions are divided into two chapters, while, as mentioned previously, there is a historical reference to the *Central Scripture* in one chapter, and the Dunhuang version does not mention the division either. Furthermore, the sections are numbered consecutively throughout the two chapters; the second chapter begins with the 28th section in both versions.⁶² Moreover, while the Dunhuang version is written without any special indentations – one paragraph corresponds to one section only, both transmitted versions have a completely identical paragraph division. The two passages containing Lord Lao's direct speech are made into separate paragraphs beginning with *Laojun yue* 老君 (Lord Lao said).⁶³ Whenever the text instructs the adept to pray (*zhu* 祝), the suggested prayer opens a new paragraph after the 祝曰 clause,⁶⁴ while any call (*hu* 呼) to a numen, what follows the *huyue* 呼曰 clause always

⁶² The first chapter contains twenty-seven sections, which are numbered 1 to 27. The second chapter contains twenty-eight sections, which are numbered 28 to 55.

⁶³ CT 1032, 19.8b5 and 19.10a8; CT 1168, 2.8a10 and 2.10a3.

⁶⁴ See, for example, CT 1032, 19.10b9; CT 1168, 2.11a5.

stays within the previous paragraph,⁶⁵ in each case the two versions follow an identical pattern. Furthermore, except for one occurrence, the two texts contain the same subscript commentaries, a part of the text written in half-size characters, two characters per line.⁶⁶ Thus, the degree of resemblance of the two versions is high enough to argue against their independent nature.

However, if the two versions were printed based on the same manuscript, it would be difficult to provide an explanation of the reasons for the difference in their titles. Moreover, the fact that the two copies use different variants of the same characters would also be very difficult to explain.

Hence, I conclude that the two versions were based on two very closely related manuscripts, which originated from the same source. A comparable, small number of errors in the two versions and a small number of characters in which they differ suggest that they are located at the same, relatively short evolutionary distance⁶⁷ from the *ur-text*. Thus, working with the *Central Scripture*, one should definitely take into account both transmitted versions. In this thesis, when the two versions' content coincides, I will use the *YJQQ* version as a default.⁶⁸ In the passages where the two versions differ, I will provide parallel references to both, and make a choice on a case-by-case basis.

⁶⁵ See, for example, CT 1032, 18.21a3; CT 1168, 1.20b5.

⁶⁶ See, for example, CT 1032, 19.1a8; CT 1168, 2.1a4. The exception is in the ninth section. Describing *Nanji* 南極 (the Southern Ultimate), the scripture states, "His surname is Li, [his] name is Shang, also named Chang" 姓李名尚一名常 (一名常 written in half-size characters CT 1032, 1.5b8; 一名常 written in full-sized characters CT 1168, 1.5b4).

⁶⁷ By "evolutionary distance" I mean the amount of editing.

⁶⁸ As I mentioned on p.16, most scholars chose to work with the *YJQQ* version. I do not see any justification for choosing the *YJQQ* over the CT 1168 version; however, when working with the passages in which the content of the two versions is identical, I will quote the *YJQQ* version, accepting current scholarly convention.

1.1.2 The Dunhuang Version

As far as I am aware, except for being identified, the Dunhuang version of the *Central Scripture* has not been studied. Katō Chie considered the Dunhuang reading of the text to be the earlier version, the precursor of the printed *Daozang* version.⁶⁹ While it is certain that the Dunhuang manuscript, dating from before the turn of the first millennium, when the cave in which the Dunhuang documents were stored was sealed,⁷⁰ is older than the Ming woodblocks, there is no direct evidence showing that it contains an older version of the text. While this is certainly a possibility, it is also conceivable that the Ming publishers had an older transmitted manuscript, or that the *Daozang* and Dunhuang versions belong to different lineages of transmission.

The paper scroll preserves only the first seven and a half sections of the text; some of the characters are indistinct while others are not readable at all, thus limiting the amount of extractable information. The text carries the title *Laozi zhongjing* 老子中經. The name *Laojun* 老君 (Lord Lao), which appears in the sixth section of the text, is written as *Laozi* 老子 in the Dunhuang fragment. Unfortunately, the text mentions *Laojun* only once in the first eight chapters, so it is not possible to state that *Laojun* was designated as *Laozi* everywhere in the text. Moreover, it is possible to suggest that *zi* 子 and *jun* 君 are only a scribal error for

⁶⁹ Katō Chie 加藤千惠, “*Laozi zhongjing* yu neidan sixiang de qiyuan” 老子中經與內丹思想的起源” [The *Laozi zhongjing* and the origins of *neidan*], *Zongjiaoxue yanjiu* 宗教學研究 [Religious Studies] 4 (1997), 40.

⁷⁰ The cave was sealed not long after 1000 CE. See Christine Mollier, “Dunhuang Manuscripts,” in *EOT*, 1: 392.

each other. Yet, in no other context does the character *jun* 君 appear as *zi* 子 in the fragment (while the character *jun* 君 appears a number of times.) Similarly to the transmitted versions, each paragraph is called 神仙 and, as in the CT 1032 version, each paragraph is preceded by the clause 經曰. However, unlike the *Daozang* versions, the whole text is preceded by the clause *Laozi yue* 老子曰 (Laozi said), thus directly attributing the whole text to Laozi.⁷¹

The difference between the two transmitted and retrieved versions is significant. The Dunhuang version often omits whole passages present in the *Daozang* versions, each up to ten characters long; almost every line⁷² differs from the transmitted versions by at least one character. Providing a complete comparative study of the retrieved versus the transmitted versions of the *Central Scripture* is beyond the scope of this study; I will return to the Dunhuang version throughout the thesis, whenever the relevant material from the first eight sections is discussed.

1.2 Dating the Text

There are numerous ways of dating texts, which could provide either a lower bound (earliest possible date) or an upper bound (latest possible date) in the interval of the possible dates of composition of the text. One can determine a precise upper bound of the text's date if one finds citations from the text in other sources of known dates; if the date of the source which cites the text is unknown,

⁷¹ For the discussion of the text as a revelation from deified Laozi, please see pp. 68-69.

⁷² Each vertical line contains approximately twenty characters.

the problem of dating the text is extended to establishing the date of the source which cites it. One can also consider sources which mention the title of the text which should be dated. However, this method is less precise, because it is not possible to be entirely certain whether the quoted title actually corresponds to the text. A very certain lower bound can be established through historical references within the text: if a text mentions a historical event, its composition, or at least that part of the text in which the event is mentioned, must have been finalized after this event happened.

Moreover, some methods do not provide precise time boundaries but only offer certain time references. For example, the vocabulary and grammatical features of the text and concepts to which it refers might point to a certain period of time. One can also look at sources which contain passages parallel to the ones contained within the text in question. However, even if the date of the other text containing the same or a similar passage is known, it is often difficult to determine whether one of the passages is the earlier (and if so, which one is), or whether the two passages descend from a shared source.

In this study I will look at all the available evidence. Unfortunately, in the case of the *Laozi zhongjing*, the gap between the lower and upper bounds, which can be established by examining historical references and later citations of the text respectively, is very large. Therefore, in order to date the text, I will have to rely on parallel passages as well as conceptual similarities and differences between the *LZZJ* and other texts and teaching.

1.2.1 External Textual Evidence

There are several sources which quote passages from the *Central Scripture* or mention titles resembling that of the *LZZJ*, thus alluding to its existence at the time their composition.

The oldest work to do so is Ge Hong's 葛洪 *Baopuzi neipian* 抱朴子內篇. *BPZ* mentions a text titled *Laojun yuli zhenjing* 老君玉曆真經 (The True Jade Calendar Scripture of the Lord Lao).⁷³ To the best of my knowledge, there is no existing text carrying this exact title. It is quite possible that the *BPZ* refers to the *LZZJ*.⁷⁴ The *YJQQ* version of the *Central Scripture* provides *Zhugong yuli* 珠宮玉曆 (Jade Calendar of the Pearly Palace) as the text's alternative title.⁷⁵ The final, fifty-fifth, section of the *LZZJ* also provides its alternative title *Shenxian xuantu ri yuli wushiwu zhang* 神仙玄圖日玉曆五十五章 (Solar Jade Calendar of Mysterious Diagrams of the Numinous Immortals in Fifty-five Sections).⁷⁶ Schipper noted that the term *yuli* 玉曆 referred to a book which listed the names of those who had become immortal, and that it was precisely in this sense that the *LZZJ* used this term.⁷⁷ For example, at the end of a prayer the adept asks the numen whom he addresses, "Write my name [on] the Jade Calendar of

⁷³ *Baopuzi neipian* 抱朴子內篇, in *Daozang* 道藏, 28: 246; CT1185, 19.4a1.

⁷⁴ To the best of my knowledge, Chen Guofu 陳國附 was the first scholar to identify this title with the *LZZJ*. Chen Guofu 陳國附, *Daozang yuanliu kao* 道藏源流考, 2 vols. (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1981), 1: 80.

⁷⁵ *YJQQ* CT 1032, 18.1a5.

⁷⁶ CT 1032, 19.21a4-5. In the CT 1168 version, the character *ri* 日 is written as *yue* 曰 (2.20b7-8).

⁷⁷ Schipper, "The Inner World of the *Lao-tzu chung-ching*," 117.

Longevity.”⁷⁸ 著某甲⁷⁹長生玉曆 The final section of the *LZZJ* includes a description of several talismans:

There are also *Zhutai* (Pearly Embryo), *Qiji* (Seven Mechanisms), *Huagai* (Flowery Canopy), *Qingguan* (Clear View); all can control the Hundred Evils. These four talismans, wicked [and] filthy people cannot wear.⁸⁰

亦有珠胎七機華蓋清觀皆能制百邪此四符者惡穢人不可服也

BPZ mentions two of these talismans, *Zhutai fu* 珠胎符 and *Qiji fu* 七機符, as well.⁸¹ According to Schipper, these titles are not found in any other Daoist text known today.⁸² While the precise dates of Ge Hong’s life are not known, 283 and 343 are now generally accepted as the years of his birth and death.⁸³ Recent scholarship shows that the intent underlying the composition of the *BPZ* was to glorify the religious and ritual legacy of Ge’s native Jiangnan region.⁸⁴ By 317, when the Xiongnu destroyed the capital of the Western Jin, Luoyang, which resulted in a massive exodus of the northerners to the South, Ge Hong, according to his own statement, had already completed the *BPZ*.⁸⁵ Accordingly, *BPZ* appears to show no acquaintance with the School of the Celestial Masters (*Tianshi*

⁷⁸ CT 1032, 18.6b9-10.

⁷⁹ 某甲 indicates the place where one should insert one’s own name.

⁸⁰ CT 1032, 19.20b1-2.

⁸¹ CT 1185, 19.6b7-8.

⁸² Schipper, “Le Calendrier de Jade – Note sur le *Laozi zhongjing*,” 76; Schipper, “The Inner World of the *Laozi zhongjing*,” in *Time and Space in Chinese Culture*, ed. Chun-Chieh Huang and Erik Zürcher, 118n; Schipper, “*Taishang laojun zhongjing*,” in *The Taoist Canon: A Historical Companion to the Daozang*, ed. Kristofer Schipper and Franciscus Verellen, 3 vols. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 1: 93. Since his first article on the *LZZJ*, Schipper has remade this statement at least twice. I cannot verify the validity of this statement. Nonetheless, I can assert that I have never seen those titles anywhere else as well.

⁸³ Pregadio, “Ge Hong,” in *EOT*, 1: 442-443.

⁸⁴ Pregadio, “*Baopuzi*,” in *EOT*, 1: 215.

⁸⁵ Robert Campamy, *To Live as Long as Heaven and Earth*, 15-16n.

dao 天師道), to which many of the northern aristocrats who fled to the South belonged.⁸⁶ However, Ge Hong spent the last twelve years of his life in retirement on Mount Luofu 羅浮, purportedly engaged in self-cultivation and alchemical labors and some additional unspecified writings;⁸⁷ it is thus possible that he augmented or revised the *BPZ* over those years.⁸⁸ Therefore, the latest reasonable date of the *BPZ* in its extant form is the year of Ge Hong's death – 343.

Dongxuan Lingbao sandong fengdao kejie yingshi 洞玄靈寶三洞奉道科戒營始 (Codes and Precepts for Worshipping the Dao in Accordance with the Scriptures of the Three Caverns, a Dongxuan Lingbao Canon) compiled in the early Tang dynasty, around the years 620–630, and inspired by the collected statutes of Jinming Qizhen 金明七真 (fl. 545–554), mentions three different titles reminiscent of the *LZZJ*, “*Yuli jing* [in] one chapter, *Lizang jing* [in] one chapter, *Laozi zhongjing* [in] one chapter” 玉歷經一卷歷藏經一卷老子中經一卷.⁸⁹

Taishang hunyuan zhenlu 太上混元真錄 (True Record of the Most High of the Undifferentiated Beginning), dated between 650 and 750, mentions *Yuli zhongjing sanpian wushiwu zhang* 玉曆中經三篇五十五章 (The Central Scripture of the Jade Calendar in Three Volumes and Fifty-Five Sections).⁹⁰

⁸⁶ This is widely accepted point of view. For example, Schipper, “*Baopu zi* [sic.] *neipian*,” in *The Taoist Canon: A Historical Companion to the Daozang*, 1: 71. However, recently, it was challenged by Gil Raz, *Creation of Tradition: The Five Talismans of the Numinous Treasure and the Formation of Early Daoism*, 268-275.

⁸⁷ Campamy, *To Live as Long as Heaven and Earth*, 17.

⁸⁸ Campamy, *To Live as Long as Heaven and Earth*, 17n.

⁸⁹ *Dongxuan Lingbao sandong fengdao kejie yingshi* 洞玄靈寶三洞奉道科戒營始, in *Daozang*, 24: 758; CT 1125, 4.7a5-6.

⁹⁰ *Taishang hunyuan zhenlu* 太上混元真錄, in *Daozang*, 19:510; CT 954, 10b4-5.

Daojiao yishu 道教義樞 (The Pivotal Meaning of Taoist Doctrine), an encyclopedia of Daoist terms and concepts, compiled toward the beginning of the eighth century,⁹¹ quotes the opening passage of the tenth chapter of *LZZJ*,⁹² “*Laojun zhongjing* states, ‘The moon and the sun are Heaven’s Minister of Education and Minister of Works’”老君中經云日月者天之司徒司空也.⁹³ The identical passage is quoted by the *YJQQ* under the title of *Laozi lizang zhongjing* 老子歷藏中經.⁹⁴

Huangting neijing yujing zhu 黃庭內景玉經註 “Commentary on the Precious Book of the Internal Landscape of the Yellow Court” by Liang Qiuzi 梁丘子 (fl. 722-729)⁹⁵ cites the *Yuli jing* 玉曆經 four times:

(1) *Yuli jing* states, “Above the Great Clarity there is a five-coloured nine-storied flowery canopy. The human body also has it. [One] should visualize the Eye Child as the light of the sun and the moon.”⁹⁶

玉曆經云太清上有五色華蓋九重人身亦有之當存目童如日月之明也

This corresponds to the content from two passages of the *LZZJ*.⁹⁷

⁹¹ Hans-Hermann Schmidt, “*Daojiao yishu*,” in *HCD*, 1: 442.

⁹² CT 1032, 18.6a5.

⁹³ *Daojiao yishu* 道教義樞, in *Daozang*, 24: 829; CT 1129, 7.6a6-7. For translations of the titles *situ* 司徒 and *sikong* 司空, see Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles in Imperial China*, 458, n.5801 “*ssu-t’u* 司徒,” and Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles in Imperial China*, 450, n.5801, “*ssu-k’ung* 司空.”

⁹⁴ CT 1032, 23.2a8-9. It might make sense to read *zang* 藏 (canon, to store) as an alternative form of *zang* 臟 (viscera), thus translating the title of this text as “*Laozi’s Central Scripture of Passing through the Viscera*.”

⁹⁵ Schipper, “*Huangting neijing yujing zhu*,” in *HCD*, 1: 347.

⁹⁶ *YJQQ* CT 1032, 11.20a1-3.

⁹⁷ I reproduce a much larger excerpt of the text in order to contextualize Liang Qiuzi’s quotation.

The King Father of the East is the primordial *qi* of green *yang*. [He] existed before the ten thousand spirits. [He] is dressed in a five-coloured pearly vestment and is crowned with three spears, also denoted as Three-Spear Crown. Above [him] is the five-coloured glow of the Great Clarity cloud. [He] rules in the east. Below⁹⁸ [he] resides [in] Penglai mountains.⁹⁹ [His] surname is *Wuwei* (Non-action) . . . People also have him; [he] resides on [one's] head [at] the top of the crown of the head. To [his] left is Wangzi Qiao;¹⁰⁰ to [his] right is Chisong zi (Master Red-Pine). [He] rules in [one's] left eye and plays on [one's] head. His *jing* and *qi* above¹⁰¹ are the sun. [His] name is Fuxi. [In] Taiqing (Great Clarity) district, Dongming (Eastern Light) county, [is] the Queen Mother of the West . . . In the eyes are the sun and the moon. [In] the left eye is the sun; [in] the right eye is the moon. In the middle [between the two] eyes [is] a child, [his] style [is] *Yingming* (Beautiful Light). The King Father is in the left eye; the Queen Mother is in the right eye. The Child is in the center; [he] is equal [in size] to the two eyes.¹⁰²

東王父者青陽之元氣也萬神之先也衣五色珠衣冠三縫一云三鋒¹⁰³之冠上有太清雲曜五色治於東方下在蓬萊山姓無為 . . . 人亦有之在頭上頂

⁹⁸ I.e., on earth.

⁹⁹ I.e., Penglai Mountain Isles.

¹⁰⁰ Son of King Ling of Zhou (571-545 BCE). See Gil Raz, "Wangzi Qiao," in *EOT*, 2: 1028-1029.

¹⁰¹ I.e., in Heaven.

¹⁰² CT 1032, 18.2b3-4.

¹⁰³ "He is crowned with three seams, also denoted as Three-Spear Crown" 冠三縫一云三鋒之冠 (CT 1032, 18.2a8); "He is crowned with three seams, also denoted as Three-Seam Crown" 冠三縫一云三縫之冠 (CT 1168, 1.2a4); "He is crowned with a Three-Spear Crown" 冠三縫一云三鋒之冠 (*Facang Dunhuang*, 28: 57). I suppose that there has been an error and the character *feng* 縫 (seam) should read as *feng* 鋒 (point of a spear). 縫 (seam) is not mentioned in the Dunhuang version; being crowned with spears appears more conceivable.

巔左有王子喬右有赤松子治在左目中戲在頭上其精氣上為日名曰伏羲
太清鄉東明里西王母 . . . 在目為日月左目為日右目為月目中童子字英
明王父在左目王母在右目童子在中央兩目等也

and

Daojun (Lord of the Dao) is the One. He is the High Emperor of the August Heaven, the Central Star of the Northern Constellation of the Central Ultimate. [He] resides above the Nine Heavens, on a ten thousand *zhang* summit, within the Purple Chamber Palace in the Great Abyss. [He] is dressed in a five-coloured vestment and is crowned with a Nine-Virtue Crown. Above [him] is the five-coloured glow of the Great Clarity cloudy primordial *qi*. Underneath a nine-storied flowery canopy, Laozi and Taihe (Great Harmony) attend upon him [on his] left and right.¹⁰⁴

道君者一也皇天上帝中極北辰中央星是也乃在九天之上萬丈之巔太淵
紫房宮中衣五色之衣冠九德之冠上有太清元氣雲曜五色華蓋九重之下
老子太和侍之左右

(2) *Yuli jing* states, “The lower *dantian* (Cinnabar Field) is the root of the human life. [It] is the location where *jing* and *shen* are stored, the origin of the five *qi*. [It] is three *cun*¹⁰⁵ below the navel, attached to the spine. [Its] appellation is Red Child’s Residence. Men here use it to¹⁰⁶ store their semen,¹⁰⁷ women use it to store their foetuses. [It] is the gate which rules

¹⁰⁴ CT 1032, 18.3b4-4a.

¹⁰⁵ *Cun* 寸 – a unit of length approximately equal to 3.2cm, sometimes translated as “inch” or “Chinese inch.” *Dantian* is thus approximately ten centimeters below the navel.

¹⁰⁶ Treating 以 as 以之, thus the literal translation would be “using it” or “by it.”

¹⁰⁷ Semen is but one form of *jing*. However, since the *dantian* is located in the pubic area and since *jing* in this passage is associated with men only, it should be thus referring to semen.

harmonizing and joining Red Child's *yin* and *yang*. *Qi* in this *dantian* on the left is green, on the right is yellow, above is white and below is black.”¹⁰⁸

玉曆經云下丹田者人命之根本精神之所藏五氣之元也在臍下三寸附著脊號為赤子府男子以藏精女人以藏胎主和合赤子陰陽之門戶也其丹田中氣左青右黃上白下黑

which corresponds to the following passage in the *LZZJ*:

The *dantian* (Cinnabar Field) is the root of the human. [It] is the location where *jing* and *shen* are kept. [It] is the origin of the five *qi*. [It] is the residence of the Red Child. Men use it to store their semen, women here keep their menstrual fluids. [It] controls generating children and is the gate which joins and harmonizes *yin* and *yang*. [It] is three *cun* below the navel, attached to the spine, and is the root of the two Kidneys. Within the Cinnabar Field, the center is red, the left is green, the right is yellow, above is white and below is black. It is within a space that measures four inches, square and round.¹⁰⁹ Three *cun* below the navel, [it] is said to model itself on Heaven, Earth and the Human. Heaven – one, Earth – two, the Human – three, the Seasons – four; therefore it is said, “four *cun*.” [It] models itself on the Five Phases, therefore it possesses the “Five colours.”¹¹⁰

丹田者人之根也精神之所藏也五氣之元也赤子之府男子以藏精女子以藏月水主生子合和陰陽之門戶也 在臍下三寸附著脊脊¹¹¹兩腎根也丹田

¹⁰⁸ CT 1032, 11.36a4-8.

¹⁰⁹ Like Earth and Heaven. This interpretation was suggested by Pregadio, who translated this passage until this point (Pregadio, “Early Daoist Meditation and the Origins of Inner Alchemy,” 139-140). This passage can have a different meaning since *fangyuan* 方圓 could also mean “circumference.”

¹¹⁰ CT 1032, 18.13a5-b1.

¹¹¹ Pregadio based his translation on the term *weilü* (probably 尾閭), Caudal Funnel. He wrote, “The corresponding passage in the independent edition of the *Central Scripture* in the Daoist Canon (DZ 1168) has *jilü* (lumbar vertebra) for the *weilü*” (Pregadio, “Early Daoist Meditation

之中中赤左青右黃上白下黑方圓四寸之中所以在臍下三寸者言法天地
人天一地二人三時四故曰四寸法五行故有五色

(3) *Yuli jing* states, “The Jade Maiden of Obscure Radiance of the Great Yin
is the mother of the Dao. She is dressed in a five-coloured vermillion
vestment. [She] is above the Spleen Residence, below yellow cloudy
flowery canopy.”¹¹²

玉曆經云太陰玄光玉女道之母也衣五色朱衣在脾府之上黃雲華蓋之下

corresponding to:

The Empress, the Jade Maiden of Obscure Radiance of the Ultimate Yin, is
the mother of the Dao. [She] is present right above the spleen, in the Big
Dipper. [She] is dressed in a five-color pearl vestment; [she] is sitting under
the yellow cloudy *qi* flowery canopy; [she] is in charge of feeding the Red
Child.¹¹³

皇后者太陰玄光玉女道之母也正在脾上中斗中也衣五色珠衣黃雲氣華
蓋之下坐主哺 養赤子

(4) *Yulijing* states, “Laozi is the *hun* soul of Heaven and Earth, the lord of
spontaneity. [He] constantly attends upon the Lord of the Dao [as] an
attendant. The human body has him available.”¹¹⁴

玉曆經云老子者天地之魂自然之君常侍道君左右人身備[sic.]有之也

Corresponding to

and the Origins of Inner Alchemy,” 156). However, in the *Daozang*, the term appears as *jilü* 脊膂
in both versions (CT 1032, 18.13a8; CT 1168 1.13a3).

¹¹² CT 1032, 11.53a5-7. Also partially translated by Schipper, “Le Calendrier de Jade – Note sur le
Laozi zhongjing,” 76.

¹¹³ CT 1032, 18.6b10-7a3.

¹¹⁴ CT 1032, 12.3a4-5.

Laojun (Lord Lao) is the *hun* soul of Heaven. [He] is the lord of spontaneity. [He] constantly attends upon the Lord of the Dao on the left side . . . Humans also have him: in *Jinlou* (Golden Building) county, *Xiaolu* (Little Hut) village. [His] surname is Pi (Skin), name is Ziming (Enlightened Master or Child), his style is Lanlan (Indigo Indigo). [He] is dressed in blue vestment. [He] is nine *fen*¹¹⁵ long. [He] is holding the *zhi* plant¹¹⁶ and holding up a blue banner. [He] attends upon the Lord of the Dao on the left side. [He] follows the immortal Zhong Chengzi.¹¹⁷

老君者天之魂也自然之君也常侍道君在左方 . . . 人亦有之金樓鄉小廬里姓皮名子明字藍藍衣青衣長九分把芝草持青旛 侍道君在左方從仙人仲成子

Shangqing daobao jing 上清道寶經 (Highest Clarity Book of Treasure of the Dao), an encyclopedia, mostly based on the *Shangqing* scriptures, and dated to the Song Dynasty, before 1205,¹¹⁸ quotes the *LZZJ* at least twice.¹¹⁹ One passage quotes the above-mentioned sun-moon passage.¹²⁰ The other passage,

Lord of the Dao rides the emperor's carriage of pearls and jades . . . [from]

Laozi lizang jing.¹²¹

¹¹⁵ *Fen* 分 – one tenth of a *cun* 寸.

¹¹⁶ The term *zhi* 芝 has no equivalent in Western languages; it refers to a variety of supermundane substances often described as plants, fungi, or “excrescences.” The term *zhicao* 芝草 is commonly translated as “*zhi* plant.” Pregadio, “Zhi,” in *EOT*, 2: 1271-1273.

¹¹⁷ CT 1032, 18.4b2-5.

¹¹⁸ Kristofer Schipper and Yuan Bingling, “Shangqing daobao jing 上清道寶經,” in *HCD*, 2: 1053.

¹¹⁹ Below are the citations. Isabelle Robinet refers to another passage in 2.11a, quoting the content of the *LZZJ* from 18.2b under the title *Zang zhongjing* 藏中經 “Canon of the Central Scripture” (Robinet, *La révélation du Shangqing dans l’histoire du taoïsme*, 28n). However, I could not identify this passage.

¹²⁰ *Shangqing daobao jing* 上清道寶經, in *Daozang*, 33: 711. CT 1353, 2.4a6-7.

¹²¹ CT 1353, 4.2b10-3a1.

道君乘珠玉之輦... 老子歷藏經

is analogous to a part of the description of the Lord of the Dao provided in Chapter 5 of the *LZZJ*:

The Lord of the Dao is the One. He rides a chariot of cloudy *qi*, pearls and jades, driving horses of nine Ultimates. [He] sometimes rides six dragons in order to manage the world.¹²²

道君者一也乘雲氣珠玉之車驂駕九極之馬時乘六龍以御天下

It is also important to pay attention to several texts which do not mention the *LZZJ*. For example, *Wushang biyao* 無上祕要 (Supreme Secret Essentials) and the *Sandong zhunang* 三洞珠囊 (The Pearl Satchel of the Three Caverns) ignored the *LZZJ*.

The *Wushang biyao* is a late sixth century general survey of Daoist cosmology and practices in the form of a collection of quotations from Daoist texts.¹²³ While its presently existing version¹²⁴ does not quote the *LZZJ*, it must be noted that of the original one hundred chapters only sixty-six are still extant.¹²⁵ A manuscript containing its table of contents dating from the early eighth century has been discovered at Dunhuang.¹²⁶ Presently, this full list of the names of all the sections and rubrics of the *Wushang biyao* is the only extant clue to the subject matter of the lost chapters. Among the missing material, the titles of some rubrics correlate with the content of the *LZZJ*, such as:

¹²² CT 1032, 18.4a5-6.

¹²³ John Lagerwey, *Wu-shang pi-yao: Somme taoïste du VI^e siècle* (Paris: École Française d'Extrême-Orient, 1981), 1.

¹²⁴ *Wushang biyao* 無上祕要, in *Daozang*, 25: 1-296; CT 1138.

¹²⁵ Lagerwey, "Wushang biyao," in *HCD*, 1: 118.

¹²⁶ It is now part of the Pelliot collection (P. 2861).

183. 仙相品	Characteristics of Immortals
210. 安形神品	Pacifying Bodily Numina
211. 守三一品	Keeping the Three Ones
212. 療眾病品	Healing a Multitude of Illnesses ¹²⁷

Without having the whole content of the encyclopedia available, it is not possible to prove that it did not quote the *LZZJ*. Moreover, the *Wushang biyao* is by no means an objective comprehensive collectanea. It is only a collection of passages extracted from texts which its compilers considered to be of importance. For example, among the one hundred and twenty texts cited, there are only two quotations of scripture from the Celestial Masters order.¹²⁸ Therefore, the fact that it did not mention the *Laozi zhongjing* does not imply that the *LZZJ* was composed after the *Wushang biyao*.

The *Sandong zhunang* is a collection of excerpts from scriptures, biographies, and other texts dating from the second through the sixth centuries, in ten chapters.¹²⁹ However, Song bibliographies indicate that the *Sandong zhunang* originally comprised thirty chapters (*juan*).¹³⁰ Florian Reiter argued that the *Sandong zhunang* was intended to provide Daoist priests with instructive guidelines, and was not compiled as a complete catalogue of Daoist scriptures and literary works.¹³¹ Therefore, as in the case of the *Wushang biyao*, we cannot conclude that the initial version of this text did not mention the *LZZJ*, and even

¹²⁷ Lagerwey, *Wu-shang pi-yao: Somme taoïste du VIe siècle*, 49-71. Lagerwey provides a French translation of the complete table of contents.

¹²⁸ Charles Benn, “*Wushang biyao*,” in *EOT*, 2: 1063.

¹²⁹ Charles Benn, “*Sandong zhunang*,” in *EOT*, 2: 822.

¹³⁰ Florian Reiter, “*Sandong zhunang*,” in *HCD*, 1: 441.

¹³¹ *Idem*.

the absence of a mention would not constitute a proof of a later date of the *Central Scripture*.

Hence, except for the *Baopuzi*, there seem to be no pre-Tang references to the *Central Scripture*. Based on this fact, Isabelle Robinet argued that the *LZZJ* was a product of a recast of ancient writings, which had borrowed a title that had existed previously.¹³² According to this argument, the text mentioned in Ge Hong's bibliography is not a version of the *Central Scripture*, but a different text, which has been lost. This conjecture is also supported by the fact that the text is referred to and cited under various titles, some of which, for example the *Laozi zhongjing* and the *Yuli jing*, are listed side by side as two autonomous texts. Yet, as shown previously, the *Central Scripture* existed under two different titles as late as the Ming Dynasty. If one were to enumerate the texts in the *Daozang* without conducting research first, one could also list the *Laozi zhongjing* and the *Taishang laojun zhongjing* as two different texts or as two identical scriptures with two different titles. Therefore, the fact that the *Yuli jing* and the *Laozi zhongjing* were listed side by side does not imply that those were two different, independent scriptures. Since the *BPZ* mentioned a title which resembled that of *LZZJ* and titles of two talismans which are found only in *LZZJ*, it is reasonable to suggest that at least a part of the *Central Scripture* antedates Ge Hong, and was thus composed by the early fourth century.

The *Yunji qiqian* encyclopedia was compiled during the Song Dynasty by Zhang Junfang 張君房 (fl. 961?-1042?). In the preface dating to circa 1029-30, he

¹³² Robinet, *La révélation du Shangqing dans l'histoire du taoïsme*, 1: 27-28.

states that the anthology contains 120 *juan*.¹³³ However, the version presently extant in the *Daozang* contains 122 *juan*. Judith Boltz argued that its inconsistent use of alternative graphic forms in honor of Song taboos suggested that the editors of the Canon had drawn from a combination of editions in print or manuscript form.¹³⁴ Thus, it is not possible to be completely confident that the *Laozi zhongjing* in its current form was part of the original *Yunji qiqian*, although that is a reasonable conjecture. The provenance of the CT 1168 *Taishang laojun zhongjing* is unclear as well. In general, there is as yet no definitive study tracing the history of the *Daozang*.¹³⁵ All modern editions of the *Daozang* are based on the Ming Dynasty edition, whose main corpus was printed in 1444-45. The Ming corpus is a reconstruction and expansion upon its antecedents. The origin of many texts is unknown because the compilers of the 1444-45 canon and its 1607 supplement often did not indicate the sources of the material used in the edition. The earlier versions, including the first printed edition of 1119 and that of 1244 are reported to have been destroyed by the late thirteenth century during the Mongol reign of China. First, in 1258, a purge of approximately forty anti-Buddhist works was ordered, after Daoists lost in the Buddho-Daoist debate at court in front of the future emperor Kublai; then, in December 1281, the official ban on Daoist books was extended to all works with the exception of the *Laozi*.¹³⁶ However, some portions of the earlier canons are preserved in archives even

¹³³ *YJQQ*, in *Daozang*, 22: 1; CT 1032, 0.2b4-5; Judith Boltz, “*Yunji qiqian*,” in *EOT*, 2: 1203.

¹³⁴ Boltz, “*Yunji qiqian*,” in *EOT*, 2: 1204.

¹³⁵ Boltz, “*Daozang and Subsidiary Compilations*,” *EOT*, 1: 29.

¹³⁶ Schipper, “General Introduction,” in *HCD*, 1: 29-30.

nowadays.¹³⁷ Therefore, it is doubtful that the editors of imperially sponsored projects had no access to the then extant versions. Yet, it is not known what fraction of the earlier versions of the *Daozang* still existed at the time of the compilation of the Ming Canon.

As demonstrated, passages from the *Huangting neijing yujing zhu* and the *Shangqing daobao jing*, quoting the *Yuli jing* and the *Laozi lizang jing*, contain passages almost identical to sections in the currently extant versions of the *LZZJ*. Therefore, the text must have been still changing at least as late as the Tang Dynasty.

Liu Yongming argued that the *Laozi zhongjing* was not the same text as the *Yuli jing*, but the former was based upon the latter. He argued that while every section began with the *jingyue* 經曰 clause, it was not clear what that scripture was; he also noted that the clauses *shi yue* 師曰 (teacher said), *Laojun yue* 老君曰, *you zhu yun* 有注云 (there is a commentary saying) were followed by content that differed significantly from the content of the rest of the text. This led Liu Yongming to argue that *jing yue* 經曰 referred to the *Yuli jing*, while the other three formed a layer not present in the *Yuli jing*.¹³⁸ Indeed, the passages which follow the clauses *shi yue* 師曰 and *Laojun yue* 老君曰 are sometimes of an explanatory and elaborating nature.¹³⁹ Let us look at one example:

¹³⁷ Judith Boltz, *Cartography in the Daoist Canon* (Kyoto: EFEO Library. Unpublished Manuscript), 2.

¹³⁸ Liu, “*Laozi zhongjing xingcheng yu Han dai kao*,” 60.

¹³⁹ I shall examine them in detail in the next chapter.

Constantly think of [the space] within the Stomach [as] exactly white as congealed fat. Inside there is the yellow *qi* filling the Great Granary, above reaching the mouth. Swallow it until [you are] replete. Teacher said, “The Stomach is the Great Granary. All the numina go to the Great Granary to drink and eat from the yellow golden kettle and golden pot.”¹⁴⁰

常思念胃中正白如凝脂中有黃氣填滿太倉上至口中咽之即飽師曰胃者太倉也諸神皆就太倉中飲食中黃金釜金甌

In this passage, the terms *Stomach* and *Great Granary* are first used independently. Then, the teacher puts a sign of equality between the two, and provides an additional description of the process, taking place within the Stomach. It is thus quite possible that the second part of this passage was added later as an explanation.

The only occurrence of the *you zhu yun* 有注云 clause is in the context of quoting the *Laozi*. Describing the visualization of the sun and the moon, the text suddenly quotes the *Laozi*, “Therefore it is said, ‘Emerging together but named differently.’”¹⁴¹ 故曰同出而異名也 The text immediately adds, “There is a commentary saying, ‘The sun and the moon emerge together [but they are] named differently.’”¹⁴² 有注云日月同出異名 This phrase might refer to a presently unknown commentary of the *Laozi*, in which case it is probably as old as the quotation itself. However, since the commentary relates the quotation to the previously described practice of visualizing the sun and the moon, it is possible to

¹⁴⁰ CT 1032, 19.14a5-7.

¹⁴¹ CT 1032, 18.7b1.

¹⁴² CT 1032, 18.7b1-2.

suggest that it is a commentary related not to the *Laozi* itself, but to this passage in the *LZZJ*. This could have been a short commentary attached to the *LZZJ* which was later incorporated into the main body of the text.

While there is no sufficient evidence to separate the text in exactly two layers, one coming from the *Yuli jing* and one added to it later, it is very likely that the *LZZJ* is not a homogeneous scripture; the current versions must be products of numerous deletions and interpolations. Thus looking at any excerpt of the *LZZJ*, we can only make arguments about the date to which this excerpt belongs, and cannot extend this date to the *Central Scripture* as a whole.

1.2.2 Related Scriptures and Circumstantial Evidence

The text which bears the most resemblance with the *Central Scripture* is the *Taishang Lingbao wufu xu* 太上靈寶五符序. Its extant version is an anthology in three chapters, composed from very diverse texts over a period of approximately one hundred years, from the late third to early fifth century.¹⁴³ The second and third chapters of the *Wufu xu* provide herbal recipes for achieving longevity, introduce healing techniques and apotropaic talismans. While the first chapter, which contains numerous passages parallel to the *LZZJ*, describes the *wuya* 五芽 (Five Shoots) method of ingesting the *qi* of the Five Directions, practices of meditation and circulation of *qi* through the Five Viscera, the practice of absorption of solar and lunar *jing*; it also lists numerous corporeal numina. Let us look at one example:

¹⁴³ Gil Raz, “*Lingbao wufu xu*,” in *EOT*, 1: 675.

Lingbao wufu xu

Laozi zhongjing

Gall Bladder is the Son of Heaven, Lungs are the Secretariat; Liver is the the Lord of the Vast Dao; Spleen is Orchid Pavilion; Heart is the Defender-in-the Empress, the Noble Lady; chief; the left Kidney is the Minister of Heart is the Defender-in-chief;¹⁴⁴ Education; the right Kidney is the Minister the left Kidney is the Minister of of Works; Spleen is the Empress, the Noble Education; the right Kidney is the Lady,¹⁴⁵ the Consort;¹⁴⁶ Gall Bladder is the Minister of Works. Son of Heaven, the Lord of the Vast Dao.

膽為天子大道君脾為皇后貴女心 肺為尚書肝為蘭臺心為太尉公左腎為司
為太尉公左腎為司徒公右腎為司 徒公右腎為司空公脾為皇后貴人夫人膽
空公 (1.20a10-b1) 為天子大道君 (19.7b10-8a2)

Here we see very similar personifications of the Five Viscera, which are placed in a different order. The *Wufu xu* then provides a description of other numina, which corresponds to a different passage of the *Laozi zhongjing*:

Lingbao wufu xu

Laozi zhongjing

The numina of the Eight Outside of the Five Cities,¹⁴⁷ there are eight Trigrams, the eight, together scribes, who are the numina of the Eight with the Great One of the Navel, Trigrams. Together with the Great One, [they] constitute nine ministers. constitute nine ministers.

¹⁴⁴ For a translation and a detailed history of the title *Taiwei gong* 太尉公, see Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles in Imperial China*, 485, n6260, s.v. “t’ai-wei 太尉” and n6261 “t’ai-wei kung 太尉公.”

¹⁴⁵ For a translation of the title *Guiren* 貴人, see Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles in Imperial China*, 289, s.v. “Kuei-jen 貴人.”

¹⁴⁶ For a translation of the title *Furen* 夫人, see Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles in Imperial China*, 218, s.v. “Fu-jen 夫人.”

¹⁴⁷ *Wucheng* 五城 (Five Cities) is an alternative name of the navel, provided earlier in the text (18.10b8).

八卦神八者並臚太一為九卿 五城之外有八史者八卦神也並太一為九卿
(1.20b1-2) (18.10b10-11a1)

In this example the order of the parallel passages differs. In general, the content of the excerpt from the first chapter of the *Wufu xu* 1.18b9-1.22a3 corresponds to several excerpts from the *LZZJ* in the following order: 19.4b10-5b8; 19.8a; 18.10b-11a; 18.21b.¹⁴⁸ Establishing the chronological order of the *LZZJ* and *WFX* seems to be an unfeasible task; in fact Isabelle Robinet argued that nothing proved the anteriority of one of these texts.¹⁴⁹ It is important to note the different arrangement of the parallel passages and the rearrangement of content within them. The other parallel passages follow the same pattern. I therefore conjecture that shared passages derive independently from an earlier source.¹⁵⁰ This source could be a precursor of the *LZZJ* or of the *WFX*, or a different, now lost, scripture.

Dongshen badi miaojing jing 洞神八帝妙精經 (Scripture of the Wondrous Essence of the Eight Emperors, of the Dongshen Canon) contains a passage very similar to the twenty-fifth section of the *LZZJ*.¹⁵¹ This text is a compilation of the material of the Dongshen canon, which formed around the now lost *Sanhuang wen* 三皇文 (Script of the Three Sovereigns); the date of the compilation is

¹⁴⁸ The parallel passages were identified, probably independently, by Isabelle Robinet and Maeda Shigeki. Robinet, *La révélation Shangqing*, 1: 29; Maeda Shigeki, “Roshi chukyō oboegaki,” 491-495.

¹⁴⁹ Robinet, *La révélation Shangqing*, 1: 29.

¹⁵⁰ This suggestion was first made by Maeda Shigeki, and was cited by Pregadio, “Early Daoist Meditation and the Origins of Inner Alchemy,” 154. Unfortunately, presently, not being able to read Japanese, I cannot access any information outside of Pregadio’s citation and thus do not know Maeda’s justification for this hypothesis.

¹⁵¹ *Dongshen badi miaojing jing* 洞神八帝妙精經, in *Daozang*, 11: 356; CT 640, 3a1-b3 and CT 1032, 18.20a8-21a7. I thank Dominic Steavu for pointing to these parallel passages.

unclear, probably sixth century.¹⁵² The creation of the *Sanhuang wen* is often attributed to Bao Jing 鮑靚 (?-330), Ge Hong's father-in-law.¹⁵³ This text was included in Ge Hong's bibliography.¹⁵⁴ However, since the original text was lost, it is not possible to establish whether the passage in the *Dongshen badi miaojing jing* belonged to the original *Sanhuang wen* and therefore not possible to provide a valid, even approximate date. Thus, it is not useful in establishing the *LZZJ*'s date of composition.

Zhen'gao 真誥 (Declarations of the Perfected), compiled and annotated by Tao Hongjing 陶弘景 (456-536) in 499,¹⁵⁵ although not generally related to the *Central Scripture*, contains a dating statement regarding a practice of "Partaking of the Green Shoots," which is described in the *LZZJ*, as a part of practice of ingesting *qi* of the Five Directions:¹⁵⁶

Constantly, in the middle of the night, at the time when roosters crow, pray, "Green Shoot of the East, Purple Cloud of flowing aura!" [Then] ingest the Green Shoot.¹⁵⁷

常以夜半雞鳴時祝曰 東方青牙紫雲 流霞 飲食青牙¹⁵⁸

Fourth month of the second year of *Taihe*. Partaking of the Green Shoots. (This is the Method of Budding of the Green Shoots, a scripture that has not appeared for ages).¹⁵⁹

¹⁵² Poul Andersen, "Dongshen badi miaojing jing," in *HCD*, 1: 266.

¹⁵³ Yamada Toshiaki, "Sanhuang wen," in *EOT*, 2: 839.

¹⁵⁴ There are numerous references throughout the nineteenth chapter of the *BPZ*.

¹⁵⁵ Robinet, "Zhen'gao," in *HCD*, 198.

¹⁵⁶ First noted by Katō Chie, "Laozi zhongjing yu neidan sixiang de qiyuan," 40.

¹⁵⁷ CT 1032, 18.22b1-2.

¹⁵⁸ 牙 here is an abbreviation of 芽.

泰和二年四月服青牙(此青牙始生法世未見經)

Katō Chie interpreted this as an indication that this method became known only in the second year of *Taihe*, 367, and thus argued that this was the *Central Scripture's* earliest possible date.¹⁶⁰ However, it is more likely that *Zhen'gao* refers to a method which was known in the second year of *Taihe*, while the commentary refers to a certain Method of Budding of the Green Shoots not yet known as a scripture. In fact, the *Daozang* contains a scripture titled *Dongzhen taishang qingya shisheng jing* 洞真太上青牙始生經 (Most High Scripture from the Cavern of Perfection on the Budding of the Green Shoots).¹⁶¹

Kristofer Schipper once noted that in the vast number of Daoist texts, historical data were lacking.¹⁶² However, one of the arguments for the early dating of the text is within the text; the closing sentence states, “I have passed through the times of Qin and Xiang and did not appear. I appear for the Han to harmonize with the Yellow Era. Seeing me is a great auspice”¹⁶³ 吾度秦項不出為漢出合於黃世見吾大吉. This passage allows us to conclude that the speaker situated himself around the time of the Han dynasty (206 BCE – 220 CE). However, this does not exclude the possibility of it being a later apocrypha, written with a

¹⁵⁹ *Zhen'gao* 真誥, in *Daozang*, 20: 598; CT 1016, 18.11b10. The part of the text inside the parentheses is written in half-sized characters, two characters per line.

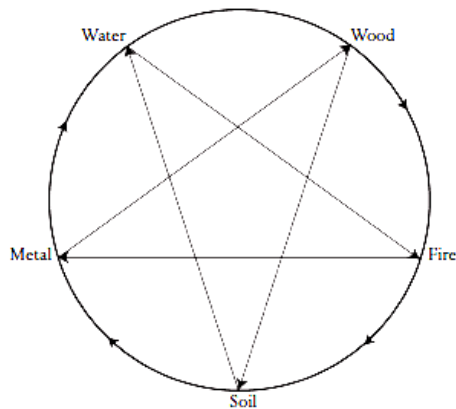
¹⁶⁰ “可以看出，这个在‘泰和二年’（367）左右出现的，因此，可以说那时就是‘老子中经’成书时期的上限。” Katō Chie, “*Laozi zhongjing yu neidan sixiang de qiyuan*,” 40. The era of reign of Jin Feidi 晉廢帝 was designated *Taihe* 太和 (Great Harmony).

¹⁶¹ *Dongzhen taishang qingya shisheng jing* 洞真太上青牙始生經, in *Daozang*, 33: 637-38; CT 1349.

¹⁶² Schipper, *Taoist Body*, 5.

¹⁶³ CT 1032, 2.21b10-2.22a1. Also translated by Schipper, “The Inner World of the *Lao-tzu chung-ching*,” 118. The text seems to be implying the acceptance of Xiang Yu's regime; this view was accepted by Sima Qian but not by later orthodox historians. (Robin D.S. Yates, personal communication).

deliberate claim to antiquity. Yellow was the color of the Former Han (206 BCE – 9 CE). Yet, it is highly improbable that the text belongs to that period because, among many reasons, of its colloquial language and designation of Laozi as *Laojun* 老君, the Old Lord, which is his deified name.¹⁶⁴ The first official and most precisely dated early document on the divinization of Laozi, is the *Laozi ming*, from 165 CE.¹⁶⁵ Therefore, if the *LZZJ* belonged to the Former Han, it would have to antedate the *Laozi ming* by more than one hundred and fifty years. This seems very unlikely. Moreover, The more likely possibility is that the Yellow Era refers to the time after the Later Han Dynasty. At the end of the Former Han, the mutual conquest order of the Five Phases was replaced by the mutual production order, and the Han thus adopted the Fire phase. After Wang Mang's interregnum (9-23 CE), the Later Han dynasty identified itself with Fire as well.¹⁶⁶ According to the new order, Red Fire produces Yellow Earth.



Wuxing 五行 (The Five Phases). Mutual production (*xiangsheng* 相生) sequence is represented by the arrows along the circumference; mutual conquest (*xiangke* 相克服) sequence is represented by the arrows along the chords.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁴ Since the term *Laojun* 老君 is replaced with *Laozi* 老子 in the Dunhuang manuscript, it is possible to conjecture that he was originally designated as Laozi throughout the text, and *Laojun* is a later substitution. Yet, this seems unlikely because both *Laojun* and *Laozi* designations are preserved in the transmitted versions.

¹⁶⁵ Livia Kohn, "Laozi ming," in *EOT*, 1: 622.

¹⁶⁶ Schipper, "The Inner World of the *Lao-tzu chung-ching*," 119.

¹⁶⁷ Christopher Cullen, "Wuxing," *EOT*, 2: 1068-1070.

Thus, the text might be announcing the beginning of new post-Han era. This hypothesis is in agreement with the overall messianic mood prevalent at the end of the Later Han. For example, the *Taiping Dao* 太平道 (Way of Great Peace) worshipped the *Huangtian* 黃天 (Yellow Heaven) and believed in a new era under its reign to be coming after the end of the Han.¹⁶⁸ It is in honour of the Yellow Heaven that all the adepts wore yellow turbans, from which the name of the movement was derived.¹⁶⁹ The Yellow Turban Rebellion took place in 184; the rebels remained reasonably strong until at least 192.¹⁷⁰ Thus, unless it is a later imitation, this passage should be placed between late second and early third centuries CE.

Another argument for the *LZZJ*'s early date is based on the text's description of the heavens. The *Central Scripture* mentions the Great Clarity as the residence of most major numina of the outer pantheon.¹⁷¹ For example:

The Supreme Great One is the father of the Dao. [He] existed before Heaven and Earth. [He] resides above the Nine Heavens, within the Great Clarity.¹⁷²

上上太一者道之父也天地之先也乃在九天之上太清之中

¹⁶⁸ The *LZZJ* mentions the clause *zhonghuang* 中黃 a number of times. Liu Yongming argued that this substantiated a Later Han date for the scripture (Liu, 62). However, the pair “center” and “yellow” is standard in Chinese correlative thought, and has been ubiquitous over the time, from early imperial China until nowadays, for example in the technique and art of geomancy, Feng Shui 風水. Thus, the presence of the Central Yellow in the *LZZJ* does not necessarily imply the expectation of the arrival of the Yellow Era. It would be helpful to find the date of the first occurrence of this term.

¹⁶⁹ Isabelle Robinet, *Taoism: Growth of Religion*, trans. Phyllis Brooks (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 54.

¹⁷⁰ Benjamin Penny, “Yellow Turbans,” in *EOT*, 2: 1157.

¹⁷¹ First noted by Pregadio, “Early Daoist Meditation and the Origins of Inner Alchemy,” 132.

¹⁷² CT 1032 18.1a6-7, partially translated in Schipper, “The Inner World of the *Lao-tzu chung-ching*,” 125; Pregadio, “Early Daoist Meditation and the Origins of Inner Alchemy,” 133.

On the other hand, the heaven of *Shangqing* 上清 (Highest Clarity) is not mentioned once. This indicates that the text, or at least its description of the main numina, was written before the *Shangqing* texts became widespread, since, thereafter, the Great Clarity lost its status of being the most exalted celestial domain and was replaced by other heavens in this role.¹⁷³ The *Shangqing* texts were revealed between 364 and 370 and during fifth and sixth centuries became widespread among the aristocracy; gradually, a sect was formed, and became well-organized under Tao Hongjing.¹⁷⁴ When, by the year 471, the *Sandong* 三洞 (Three Caverns) division of the Daoist scriptures was introduced, *Shangqing*'s status was high enough for its scriptural collection to be placed in the *Dongzhen* 洞真 (Cavern of Perfection), the first of the Three Caverns.¹⁷⁵ Hence, the description of the heavens was written before the second half of the fifth century.

The text's reference to the other two numina – the Queen Mother of the West and the King Father of the East – indicates that most probably it could not have been composed before the Common Era because the earliest known movement worshipping the Queen Mother dates from 3 CE.¹⁷⁶

The *Central Scripture* seems to show no acquaintance with Buddhism – it neither argues against Buddhism, nor incorporates any of its concepts or terminology. In the whole scripture, the only term which reminds us of Buddhism

¹⁷³ Pregadio, "Early Daoist Meditation and the Origins of Inner Alchemy," 132.

¹⁷⁴ Robinet, *La révélation du Shangqing dans l'histoire du taoïsme* 1: 1.

¹⁷⁵ Boltz, "Sandong," in *EOT*, 1: 33-34. In 471, Lu Xiuqing 陸修靜 presented the *Sandong jingshu mulu* 三洞經書目錄 (Index of Scriptures and Writings of the Three Caverns), the earliest comprehensive canonical list known to modern scholarship, to the throne. See Stephen Bokenkamp, "*Sandong jingshu mulu*," in *EOT*, 2: 828-829.

¹⁷⁶ Tadao Yoshikawa, "Xiwang mu," in *EOT*, 2: 1120.

is *niwan* 泥丸 (Muddy Pellet), which some early sinologists, for example Henri Maspero, deemed to derive from the Sanskrit word *nirvana*.¹⁷⁷ Later scholars suggested that *niwan* might allude to the central Earth Phase, since *ni* 泥 means “mud,” and to its round form, since *wan* 丸 means “pellet,”¹⁷⁸ and was thus not influenced by Buddhism. The *LZZJ* mentions the *niwan* as a separate term only once – introducing the Lord of the Dao, the scripture states:

[he] is the spontaneity [of] the primordial *qi*. . . people also have him. Constantly visualize him between the eyebrows. Through the Muddy Pellet, *qi* rises connecting with the Heaven.¹⁷⁹

元氣自然耳 . . . 人亦有之常存 之眉間通於泥丸氣上與天連

The text also introduces *Niwan jun* 泥丸君, “Lord of the Muddy Pellet is the numen of the brain” 泥丸君者腦神也.¹⁸⁰ In all the occurrences of the term *niwan* in the Taishō 大正 Buddhist Canon, it does not mean *nirvana*.¹⁸¹ There seems to be no justification of the hypothesis that *niwan* originated as a transliteration of

¹⁷⁷ «Le nom de ce dernier signifie au propre Pilule de Boue, mais en même temps c’est la transcription du mot sanscrit Nirvâna . . . Les Taoïstes écrivent toujours *niwan*, graphie qu’on ne rencontre jamais chez les traducteurs et auteurs bouddhistes qui écrivent *nihuan* ; on pourrait par suite hésiter à identifier les deux termes. Mais toutes les citations anciennes de livres taoïstes dans les pamphlets bouddhistes antitaoïstes ont toujours *nihuan* pour le terme taoïste . . . exactement comme pour l’expression bouddhiste. Il est possible que la graphie *wan* ait été adoptée par les Taoïstes après le VIIe siècle pour se différencier des Bouddhistes.» Henri Maspero, *Le Taoïsme et les religions chinoises* (Paris: Gallimard, 1971), 493.

¹⁷⁸ Monica Esposito, “Niwan,” in *EOT*, 2: 775-777.

¹⁷⁹ CT 1032, 18.1b7-18.2a5, also translated by Gil Raz, *Creation of Tradition: The Five Talismans of the Numinous Treasure and the Formation of Early Daoism*, 424-425.

¹⁸⁰ CT 1032, 18.5a7.

¹⁸¹ Fabrizio Pregadio, “Early Daoist Meditation and the Origins of Inner Alchemy,” 140.

nirvana. Thus there is no reason to relate the date of the composition of the *LZZJ* to the dates of the spread of Buddhism in China.¹⁸²

The location of *niwan*, namely the head, is identical to that in other scriptures. However, the *LZZJ* does not contain any description of the Muddy Pellet and does not relate it to any other locations in the body. *Suling jing* 素靈經 (The Scripture of the Pure Numen), which contains material from before the second half of the fifth century,¹⁸³ provides a description of *niwan*, integrating it into a tripartite Cinnabar Field system:

Between the two eyebrows is the Upper Cinnabar Field. The Heart Crimson Palace is the Central Cinnabar Field. Three *cun* below the navel is the Lower Cinnabar Field . . . [As for] the Upper [Cinnabar Field] between the two eyebrows, retreating¹⁸⁴ by one *cun*, [there] is the Hall of Light; retreating by two *cun*, [there] is the Cavern Chamber; retreating by three *cun* [there] is the Cinnabar Field Muddy Pellet Palace . . . The Cinnabar Field Muddy Pellet Palace is exactly square, each side [measures] one *cun*.¹⁸⁵

兩眉間上丹田也心絳宮中丹田也臍下三寸下丹田也 . . . 兩眉間上卻入一寸為明堂卻入二寸為洞房卻入三寸為丹田泥丸宮 . . . 丹田泥丸宮正四方面各一寸

Moreover, another text, *Dongfang neijing* 東房內經 (Inner Scripture of the Cavern Chamber), dated to the Six Dynasties period (220-589) and possibly

¹⁸² The spread of Buddhism in China was a gradual process, which started in the first century CE. However, since there is no apparent link between the *LZZJ* and Buddhism, the latter will not be discussed in this study.

¹⁸³ Robinet, “*Suling jing*,” in *The Encyclopedia of Taoism*, 2: 921-922.

¹⁸⁴ Here, one is visualizing one’s own head, gradually moving from the forehead to the back of one’s head.

¹⁸⁵ *Dongzhen taishang suling dongyuan dayou miaojing* 洞真太上素靈洞元大有妙經, in *Daozang*, 33: 410; CT 1313, 31b8-32a4.

predating the *Shangqing* revelations,¹⁸⁶ also places the three locations into one triad:

The three Subtles are the Muddy Pellet in the head, the Crimson Palace in the Heart, the Cinnabar Field below the navel.¹⁸⁷

三微為頭中泥丸心有絳宮臍下丹田也

The *Baopuzi* itself contains a depiction of the three Cinnabar Fields, although not associating the upper one with the Muddy Pellet:

The One has a surname and a style, clothes and colours. [In] men it is nine *fen* [tall]; [in] women it is six *fen* [tall]. Sometimes [he] is two *cun* and four *fen* below the navel, in the Lower Cinnabar Field. Sometimes [he] is below the Heart, [at] the Crimson Palace's Golden Gates, the Central Cinnabar Field. Sometimes [he] is between the two eyebrows; retreating by one *cun* [there] is the Bright Hall, by two *cun* – the Cavern Chamber, three *cun* – the Upper Cinnabar Field.¹⁸⁸

一有姓字服色男長九分女長六分或在臍下二寸四分下丹田中或在心下絳宮金闕中丹田也或在人兩眉間卻行一寸為明堂二寸為洞房三寸為上丹田也

Therefore, the notion of the *dantian* triplet antedates Ge Hong and therefore must have emerged before 343. While the *LZZJ* also mentions *jianggong* 絳宮 (Crimson Palace), and directly associates it with the Heart, “Heart is the Crimson Palace” 心為絳宮,¹⁸⁹ it never calls it “Central Cinnabar Field,” nor does it relate

¹⁸⁶ Robinet, “*Taishang dongfang neijing zhu*,” in *HCD*, 1: 185-186.

¹⁸⁷ *Taishang dongfang neijing zhu* 太上東房內經註, in *Daozang*, 2: 877; CT 133, 5a1.

¹⁸⁸ *BPZ*, CT1185, 18.1b3-6, also translated by Pregadio, “Dantian,” in *EOT*, 1: 303.

¹⁸⁹ CT 1032, 19.8a5-6.

the Muddy Pellet and the Upper Cinnabar Field. In fact, in the *LZZJ*, there is only one Cinnabar Field, without any further specification; located below the navel, it corresponds to the Lower Cinnabar Field in other scriptures. The first known occurrence of the term *dantian* is in the *Laozi Inscription*,¹⁹⁰ where only one *dantian* is mentioned, “[Laozi] concentrates his thought on the Cinnabar Field.”¹⁹¹ 存想丹田 Therefore, the passages of the *LZZJ* describing the Cinnabar Field, Crimson Palace and Muddy Pellet, were composed after 165 but before 343, by which year the notion of the three Cinnabar Fields had emerged.

Another text which we should consider is the *Huangting jing* 黃庭經 (Scripture of the Yellow Court). A text with this title was known to Ge Hong; he listed it in the bibliography chapter of the *Baopuzi*.¹⁹² In the *Daozang*, it is preserved in two versions: the longer “esoteric” *Taishang huangting neijing yujing* 太上黃庭內景玉經 (The Most High Scripture of the Internal Landscape of the Yellow Court) and the shorter “exoteric” *Taishang huangting waijing yujing* 太上黃庭外景玉經 (The Most High Scripture of the External Landscape of the Yellow Court). *HTJ* is a poetic description of the inner world, meditation and visualization practices. The *External Scripture* is almost entirely contained within the body of the *Internal Scripture*; unlike the latter, the former does not provide the detailed description of the numina dwelling inside one’s body.¹⁹³

¹⁹⁰ Pregadio, “Dantian,” in *EOT*, 1: 303.

¹⁹¹ Seidel, *La divinisation de Lao tseu dans le Taoïsme des Han*, 129.

¹⁹² CT 1185, 19.5b6.

¹⁹³ Robinet, *Taoist Meditation: The Mao-shan Tradition of Great Purity* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993), 56.

The chronological order of the two versions of the *HTJ* is still debated. Max Kaltenmark suggested that the External Scripture had been reserved for the non-initiates.¹⁹⁴ On the other hand, Schipper argued that the external version had been the original scripture, entitled *External* by the *Shangqing* tradition, in order to distinguish it from their own *Internal Scripture*; he then argued that its prosody and rhymes corresponded to the Eastern Han or Three Kingdoms (220-265) usage and pointed to the fact that it had been mentioned in *Zhengyi fawen tianshi jiaojie kejing* 正一法文天師教戒科經 (Commandments of the Heavenly Master from the One and Orthodox Canon), which dates circa 255.¹⁹⁵ Indeed, the *Commandments* mention “The Seven-Character Verses on the Three Numina and the Yellow Court” 黃庭三靈七言.¹⁹⁶ It is not clear to which version of the *HTJ* this title refers because both begin with self-designating *qiyan* 七言 (“seven character verses” or “heptameter”).¹⁹⁷ However, since, unlike the *External Scripture*, the *Internal Scripture* contains several references to the *Shangqing*,¹⁹⁸ it seems unlikely that it was composed before the *Shangqing* revelations. This confirms Schipper’s hypothesis of the *External Scripture*’s anteriority. The External version of the *Huangting jing* also mentions only one *dantian*, “The Kidney *jing* moves towards the Clear Hall, reaching the Cinnabar Field” 腎精望

¹⁹⁴ Max Kaltenmark, “Au sujet du *Houang-t’ing king*,” in *Annuaire de l’École Pratique des Hautes Études, Ve Section*, 75 (1967-1968): 117–18.

¹⁹⁵ Schipper, “*Taishang huangting waijing yujing*,” in *HCD*, 1: 96-97.

¹⁹⁶ *Zhengyi fawen tianshi jiaojie kejing* 正一法文天師教戒科經, in *Daozang*, 18: 237; CT 789, 16a7, also translated by Stephen Bokenkamp, *Early Daoist Scriptures* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 175.

¹⁹⁷ CT 331, 1a9; CT 332, 1.1a2.

¹⁹⁸ For example, the first section is titled *Shangqing zhang di yi* 上清章第一 (The First Section of the Greatest Clarity); CT 331, 1a7.

於明堂臨丹田。¹⁹⁹ The location of the Cinnabar Field, near the Kidneys, thus corresponds to its location indicated by the *LZZJ*. On the other hand, the Internal version, still not referring to the Cinnabar Field as lower, central or upper, talks about three fields, “In the three Fields, the *jing* and *qi* are subtle” 三田之中精氣微。²⁰⁰ A detailed comparative study of the two versions of the *LZZJ* and the two versions of the *HTJ* is beyond the scope of this study. Nevertheless, based on the role of the *dantian* in the three scriptures, it is thus reasonable to suggest that the passages which containing a detailed description of one Cinnabar Field, postdate the External version of the *Huangting jing*, but antedate the Internal one.

1.2.3 Summary

Having no direct evidence to refute the Late Eastern Han date proposed by Kristofer Schipper, and having numerous indications of its pre-*Shangqing* and pre-*BPZ* dates, I conclude that at least a certain part of the *Central Scripture* was written during the late second or the early third century, while the bulk of the text was finalized by the early fourth century. Later, the text was circulating in several versions under various names, being modified throughout the Six Dynasties and the Tang.

¹⁹⁹ *Taishang huangting waijing yujing* 太上黃庭外景玉經, in *Daozang*, 5: 914; CT 332, 2.2b9-10, also translated into French by Patrick Carré, *Le Livre de la Cour Jaune: Classique taoïste des IV^e-Ve siècles* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1999), 89.

²⁰⁰ *Taishang huangting neijing yujing* 太上黃庭內景玉經, in *Daozang*, 5: 909; CT 331, 2a7, also translated by Carré, *Livre de la Cour Jaune*, 46.

We are entering into a period that I would be tempted to call *phanic*.²⁰¹ We display in broad daylight texts, ideas, beliefs, rites, etc., which normally should have remained hidden, and access to them reserved only to initiates. I don't know whether this phenomenon has been the object of any study dealing with the philosophy of culture. We're dealing, however, with a fact that is as fascinating as it is paradoxical: Secret, that is, 'esoteric,' doctrines and methods are only unveiled and put within reach of everyone *because they no longer have any chance of being understood*. They can henceforth only be badly understood and poorly interpreted by non-initiates.

Mircea Eliade²⁰²

Chapter 2 Approaching Esotericism

This chapter has two interrelated aims. The first one is to examine the *Laozi zhongjing*'s self-presentation, in other words what the texts claims to be, what purpose it claims to serve and which matters it concerns. The second one is to formulate an approach to reading the *Laozi zhongjing* in order to gain an understanding of the material revealed by the text. I hope to demonstrate that the *Laozi zhongjing* was written as an esoteric manual, providing methods of achieving longevity and immortality. I shall then define a hermeneutic framework, which I shall use in Chapter 3 to interpret those methods.

The *Laozi zhongjing* has been cited and listed under different titles, with only one invariable character – *jing* 經. This term designates *warp*,²⁰³ and also

²⁰¹ From Greek *phainein*, φαίνω (to display, to show).

²⁰² Mircea Eliade, *Journal III, 1970-78* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 107-108, cited by Norman Girardot, "Foreword," in Isabelle Robinet, *Taoist Meditation*, xxvi.

²⁰³ Warp – (in weaving) the threads on a loom over and under which other threads (the weft) are passed to make cloth. *Oxford Dictionaries Online*, s.v. "Warp."

scripture or *canon*.²⁰⁴ Stephen Bokenkamp argued the same term was used by Confucians to refer to the classics of their tradition, seen as the Master text containing the ancient teachings on a particular subject in their fullness; later, this term was applied to Daoist scriptures and Buddhist sutras.²⁰⁵ He pointed out that a Daoist *scripture* was “regarded as a part of a whole, finally unobtainable, truth – a representation of the timeless frozen in time and congealed in debased human writing (*wen* [文]) that can, by its very nature, only point to what lies beyond.”²⁰⁶ Isabelle Robinet described a Daoist *scripture* as a “work that both reveals the full range of similarities and affinities which order the universe and also arranges these relations into a coherent system.”²⁰⁷ Providing knowledge of the foundations of the world, it is thus a canon of government, because the right knowledge leads to a corresponding power. For example, knowing the names gives one power over what one names; therefore, giving the adept the names of the numina means giving him power over them. It is thus unsurprising that, as tokens of power, *scriptures* were often in limited circulation and their improper transmission was a great transgression;²⁰⁸ in other words, many *scriptures* can be classified as esoteric texts.

2.1 Esotericism

http://oxforddictionaries.com/view/entry/m_en_gb0273640#m_en_gb0273640. Retrieved 14 July 2010.

²⁰⁴ The range of meanings of the term *jing* 經 includes “warp threads,” “canonical texts,” “natural cycles,” “acupuncture tracts,” “menses.” See Francesca Bray, *Technology and Gender: Fabrics of Power in Late Imperial China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 382.

²⁰⁵ Bokenkamp, *Early Daoist Scriptures*, 20.

²⁰⁶ Bokenkamp, *Early Daoist Scriptures*, 21.

²⁰⁷ Robinet, *Taoist Meditation*, 21.

²⁰⁸ Robinet, *Taoist Meditation*, 20-24.

The *Oxford English Dictionary* provides the following definition of the term *esoteric*, “Intended for or likely to be understood by only a small number of people with a specialized knowledge or interest.”²⁰⁹ This definition is, of course, a very general one; for example, according to this definition, most of modern specialized knowledge, even that which is publicly available, can be classified as esoteric.²¹⁰ For the purpose of this study, I shall provide a more specific definition, which I am basing on Edward Tiryakian’s “Toward the Sociology of Esoteric Culture.” *Esoteric knowledge* consists of practices, techniques, or procedures which draw upon hidden or concealed forces in nature or the cosmos that cannot be measured or recognized in any different way, and which have as their desired or intended consequences results, such as either obtaining knowledge of the empirical course of events or altering them from what they would have been without this intervention, as well as a religiophilosophic belief systems which underlies these practices.²¹¹ Tiryakian also noted,

[...] a crucial aspect of esoteric knowledge is that it is a secret knowledge of the reality of things, of hidden truths, handed down, frequently orally and not all at once, to a relatively small number of persons who are typically ritually initiated by those already holding this knowledge. Moreover, it should be added, this knowledge is not of a detached or objective sort about

²⁰⁹ *Oxford Dictionaries Online*, s.v. “Esoteric.” http://oxforddictionaries.com/view/entry/m_en_gb0273640#m_en_gb0273640. Retrieved 15 July 2010.

²¹⁰ Most of the publications in academic journals are neither intended for, nor can be understood by a general audience.

²¹¹ Edward A. Tiryakian, “Toward the Sociology of Esoteric Culture,” *The American Journal of Sociology* 78.3 (1972), 498-499. Tiryakian first labeled the praxis *occult* and then applied the term *esoteric* to the theory, which underlies this kind of praxis. I chose to apply the term *esoteric* to both theory and praxis in order not to create a false impression of the separability of the two and in order to minimize the usage of special terms. I have thus reorganized and combine the two definitions provided by Tiryakian. Please see Chapter 3 for more details on theory and praxis in the *Laozi zhongjing*.

an outer reality which stands against the observer as this page stands against the reader; esoteric knowledge is of a participatory sort [...]²¹²

An esoteric text is passed on from master to disciple, and is thus hidden from non-initiates. Whether or not the *Laozi zhongjing* was supposed to be read by those not worthy of reading it, this is precisely what happened. In the beginning of the twentieth century, the Daoist Canon was reprinted; the *LZZJ* has thus become widely available.

Presently, our sole material evidence is the text itself in its Ming Dynasty form and a fragment of a manuscript from Dunhuang. It is virtually impossible to make any extratextual claims, that is any assertions about the event surrounding the text and actions taken by those who had read the text, based on intratextual evidence. While the fact that the *LZZJ* was not cited for centuries after its composition seems to corroborate the conjecture of its esoteric nature, it is by no means a sufficient proof of the *LZZJ*'s esotericism. In fact, we can only argue that, irrespective of its eventual meaning to those who read it, the text was initially composed as an esoteric scripture.

2.2 Self-Esotericization

Campany argued that esotericism, or secrecy, was a cluster of forms of discourse rather than a type of content. Accordingly, in an esoteric teaching, secrecy and power formed a reciprocal relationship, in which knowledge was deemed powerful because access to it was restricted, while access to knowledge is

²¹² Tiryakian, "Toward the Sociology of Esoteric Culture," 499.

restricted precisely because it is deemed powerful.²¹³ Thus, while the teaching was declared to be secret, its secretiveness was made known. Hugh Urban named this strategy “advertising a secret,” which he defined as “the claim to possess very precious, rare, and valuable knowledge, while simultaneously partially revealing and largely concealing it. For a secret is only worth anything if someone knows you have a secret.”²¹⁴ Proceeding to the analysis of the esotericizing discourse, Campany first examined its intratextual construction and argued that the way in which esoteric texts were written created a sense of their own inaccessibility, rarity and sacred power; these texts expressed their secrecy by choosing proper nomenclature, claiming divine origins and extreme antiquity, or claiming to disclose the secret practices of ancient or divine figures.²¹⁵ He thus designated the corresponding texts “self-esotericizing.”²¹⁶

In addition, Campany examined the methods used to restrict the access to the esoteric texts, pinpointing five main ways. First of all, the scarcity of the text was controlled via managing the frequency of its transmission: not so frequently as to dilute its power and not so infrequently as to risk letting it disappear altogether. Secondly, the texts were often deemed to be physically inaccessible, being described as discovered in places which were very difficult to reach, for example, in deep caves. Thirdly, access to esoteric texts was restricted by means of formal rites of transmission, emphasizing the recipient’s sacred oath not to

²¹³ Campany, *Making Transcendents*, 88-89.

²¹⁴ Hugh B. Urban, “The Torment of Secrecy: Ethical and Epistemological Problems in the Study of Esoteric Traditions,” *History of Religions* 37 (1998), 235.

²¹⁵ Campany, *Making Transcendents*, 91-93.

²¹⁶ Campany, *Making Transcendents*, 91.

reveal their content to the uninitiated; many texts described the dreadful punishments for unauthorized transmission and emphasized that unseen spirits constantly guarded them. Fourthly, the access to esoteric teaching was restricted by the means of oral instructions, which were essential supplements to the written texts, sometimes constituting keys to their deliberately arcane terminology; these were not supposed to be written down but only passed from the master to disciple. Finally, the selection of those who received the esoteric texts was depicted as a rigorous process, which often involved trials of worthiness.²¹⁷

Campany defined those five methods more precisely as “five ways in which such [esoteric] texts were portrayed as being hard to obtain, the question of their actual accessibility remaining an open (and difficult) one.”²¹⁸ Those criteria were formulated for and applied to both the external references to esoteric scriptures – “the social world in which they were created and which they also helped to create.”²¹⁹ However, not having sufficient external references to the *Laozi zhongjing*,²²⁰ I shall, with slight modifications, apply them to the *LZZJ* itself. Although these characteristics are helpful in analyzing esotericizing discourse, it is important to understand that they are not inherently present, discrete properties. They are part of a theoretical construction, a model, which is useful if applied properly. Some of the five categories are not independent, but, on the contrary, interconnected and often hard to distinguish. Thus, I will consider the frequency

²¹⁷ Campany, *Making Transcendents*, 94-100.

²¹⁸ Campany, *Making Transcendents*, 94.

²¹⁹ Campany, *Making Transcendents*, 94.

²²⁰ Please see Chapter 1 for the extant references and quotes. None of them provides any kind of description of the scripture.

of transmission, ritual aspect of transmission and selection of the candidates as aspects of one characteristic – controlled transmission of a scripture.

2.2.1 Nomenclature

The *Laozi zhongjing* contains a large number of technical terms, names and titles. Describing the locations of the corporeal numina and flows of *qi* within the body, the text uses internal organs as points of reference. In addition to their colloquial names, the texts uses various metaphoric terms: *zifang* 紫房 (Purple Chamber) – Gall Bladder, *jianggong* 絳宮 (Crimson Palace) – Heart, *taicang* 太倉 (Great Granary) – Stomach, *huangting* 黃庭 (Yellow Court) – Spleen. The cryptic names intermingle with the colloquial ones; there is no visible pattern in their usage. It is important to note that an unfamiliar appearance of a literal translation of a term does not necessarily imply its esoteric nature. For example, modern Mandarin Chinese words *zigong* 子宮 (uterus) literally translated as “Child Palace,” and *yinjing* 陰莖 (penis) literally meaning “Yin stalk,” seem to belong to the same order of classification. However, these are by no means esoteric terms.²²¹ Yet, even if Yellow Court and Crimson Palace were not secret references per se, they nevertheless suggest a certain specialization, thus contributing to the overall esoteric status of the text.

2.2.2 Disclosure of Secret Identities

²²¹ Suffice it to say that the *Xiandai hanyu da cidian* 現代漢語詞典 (*Modern Chinese Dictionary*) provides definitions of these two terms.

This strategy was used as early as the Han weft texts, which claimed to convey the secret message of older books. Providing a new definition (or, alternatively, uncovering the old, original, but previously hidden definition) of a known concept, object or character, emphasized the exclusiveness of the knowledge contained in the text. Thus, a person who possessed the scripture would naturally become a part of the circle of insiders; at the same time the majority, which did not have the book, could only access the surface, conventional meaning.²²²

The *LZZJ* exhibits a similar self-esotericizing strategy, which consists of a systematic correlation of known phenomena with unknown. Campany argued that each item, a practice or a familiar numen, introduced by the text, comprised “newly revealed information about these items’ true identities, correspondences, and stations, or about how to perform associated practices correctly – an esotericizing hermeneutic.”²²³ While it is difficult to verify the antecedence of all characters, it is clear that at least the names of the principal numina had been known long before the *Laozi zhongjing* was composed. For example, the earliest known discussion of *Taiyi* 太一 (the Great One) is found in the *Guodian* 郭店 manuscripts, which scholars have titled *Taiyi sheng shui* 太一生水 (The Great One Generated Water) after its opening sentence; this text, dated to the second half of the fourth century BCE, describes the Great One first generating Water, then Heaven with the help of Water, and then Earth, with the help of Heaven,

²²² Campany, *Making Transcendents*, 94.

²²³ Campany, *Making Transcendents*, 94.

generating other numina.²²⁴

The Great One gives birth to water. Water goes back and supplements [i.e., joins with] the Great One. They thereby complete Heaven. Heaven Goes back and supplements the Great One. They thereby complete Earth. Heaven and Earth [return and supplement] each other. They thereby complete the spirits and the illuminated (*shen ming*). The spirits and the illuminated return and supplement each other. They thereby complete the spirits and the illuminated (*shen ming*). The spirits and the illuminated return and supplement each other. They thereby complete the yin and yang.²²⁵

太一生水水反輔太一是以成天天反輔太一是以成地天地[復相輔]也是以成神明神明復相輔也是以成陰陽²²⁶

The *LZZJ* begins with introducing the Great One, investing him with similar attributes: he is the father of the Dao who existed before Heaven and Earth.²²⁷ However, the text almost immediately proceeds to the description of the appearance and physical location of the Great One:

This numen [has] a head [of] a human, body [of] a bird and a shape like [that of] a rooster, five colours of a phoenix, and pearly clothing, dark and yellow [in hue]. [He is] right above your head, nine feet away [from] your body. [He] constantly stays in a purple cloud, living below a flowery canopy. [When] you see him, say, “Supreme Great One! [Your] great

²²⁴ Poul Andersen, “Taiyi,” in *EOT*, 2: 957; Robinet, “Guodian Manuscripts,” in *EOT*, 1: 467.

²²⁵ Translated by Michael Puett, *To Become a God: Cosmology, Sacrifice, and Self-Divinization in Early China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2002), 160-161.

²²⁶ Yang Chaoming 楊朝明, *Chutu wenxian yu rujia xueshu yanjiu* 出土文獻與儒家學術研究, vol. 32 of *Chutu sixiang wenwu yu wenxian yanjiu congshu* 出土思想文物與文獻研究叢書, ed. Ding Yuanzhi 丁源植 (Taipei: Taiwan shufang chuban youxian gongsi, 2007), 171.

²²⁷ Please see Chapter 1, p. 50, for the translation of this passage.

grandson so-and-so,²²⁸ [having] a pure will and loving the Dao, wishes to obtain a long life.²²⁹

其神人頭鳥身狀如雄雞鳳凰五色珠衣玄黃正在兆頭上去兆身九尺常在紫雲之中華蓋之下住兆見之言曰上上太一道君曾孫小兆王甲潔志好道願得長生

In other words, the reader is told where to find the Great One, what he looks like, and what one should do after identifying him. The text clearly “brings the Great One down to earth,” locating him in close proximity to the reader’s body, making this powerful high numen, who stands at the beginning of the universe, identifiable and approachable.

Similarly, the *LZZJ* locates Queen Mother of the West, King Father of the East, Laozi and many other numina within or in proximity to the human body; only those who have access to the scripture can obtain this information.

2.2.3 Divine Origins

Most of the revealed texts of the *Shangqing* 上清 tradition begin with a paragraph which affirms their existence before the cosmogenesis, tell of their transcription by the celestial numina, describe the celestial palaces where they are preserved, and list the numina who transmitted the scriptures to each other before revealing them to humans.²³⁰ Later texts, particularly those belonging to the *Lingbao* 靈寶 tradition, begin with a description of the heavenly regions where a numen

²²⁸ When uttering this phrase, the adept should use his/her own name.

²²⁹ CT 1032 18.1a9-b3, also translated by Lagerwey, “Deux écrits taoïstes anciens,” 151, and partially translated by Schipper, “Inner World of the *Lao-tzu chung-ching*,” 125; Pregadio, “Early Daoist Meditation and the Origins of Inner Alchemy,” 133.

²³⁰ Robinet, *Taoist Meditation*, 22.

expounds the scripture's features in front of an assembly of the faithful.²³¹ This kind of introduction is not present in the *LZZJ*. Instead, the first chapter of the text begins by immediately introducing the Supreme Great One.

Yet, it is clear that the speaker, whose words the text represents, is Laozi.²³² As mentioned in the first chapter, the Dunhuang version makes a direct attribution of the scripture's origin to Laozi by placing the clause *Laozi yue* 老子曰 at the beginning of the text. Unfortunately, it is not possible to establish whether this clause was present in all the earlier manuscripts of the text and lost by the Ming era or whether it is unique to the Dunhuang manuscript. However, this clause does not add anything to the format of the *Central Scripture*, and only makes the implicit evidence more explicit. Both present titles of the scripture attribute it to Laozi. Moreover, the scripture is written in the first person, with a frequent use of the pronoun *wu* 吾 (I). The first description of the Lord Lao²³³ is followed by an extrapolation, "Therefore I equal nine men. [I] am the lord with nine heads" 故吾等九人九頭君也.²³⁴ In the first section, providing a description of the Supreme Great One, the speaker says, "I do not know his name" 吾不知其名也,²³⁵ which is a phrase from the twenty-fifth chapter of the *Daodejing*, "I don't know its name,

²³¹ Robinet, *Taoist Meditation*, 232.

²³² It is perhaps strange to use the term *speaker* in the context of a written scripture; yet, this term seems to be the most accurate one. The term *author* implies creation of the text; *narrator* means giving an account of something previously existing; *writer* excludes the oral legacy.

²³³ "Laojun (Lord Lao) is the *hun* soul of Heaven. [He] is the lord of spontaneity. [He] frequently attends upon the Lord of the Dao on the left side" 老君者天之魂也自然之君也常侍道君在左方. Please see p. 37.

²³⁴ CT 1032, 18.4b3.

²³⁵ CT 1032, 1.1a9.

[I] style it Dao” 吾不知其名字之曰道.²³⁶ Finally, as mentioned previously, the speaker most probably claims the authorship of the *Daodejing*. Hence, it is clear that he could be no one but Laozi himself, who, by the late Han, was deified, and was thus seen not as a human author of the *Daodejing*, and not as even as a person who had reached transcendence, but as a manifestation of the Dao.²³⁷ Thus, the text is clearly positioned as a divine revelation.

2.2.4 Physical Inaccessibility

At this point, knowing virtually nothing about the social context and the circulation space of the *LZZJ*, it is impossible to make any substantial claims about the transmission of the text and the ways it physically survived before it became part of the *YJQQ* or before an unknown scribe wrote a manuscript later found in Dunhuang. The idea of the inaccessibility of a certain object only makes sense outside of the object. The text itself does not contain any description of the place where one should look for its copy. However it contains a reference to the location of the original version:

A Realized Being obtains the Dao in a period of eighteen thousand years; a Master of the Dao obtains the Dao in a period of one thousand years. Thus

²³⁶ *Daode zhenjing* 道德真經, in *Daozang*, 22: 476; CT 664, 1.7a4-5.

²³⁷ Anna Seidel, *La divinisation de Lao tseu dans le Taoïsme des Han* (Paris: École Française d'Extrême-Orient, 1992), 84-91. As discussed in the first chapter (see p. 48), the speaker situated himself around the time of the Han dynasty, most probably the end of the Later Han. Having no direct evidence showing that the passage making that assertion belongs to a later period, I cannot argue that this was a deliberate claim to antiquity.

[I] wrote the *Central Scripture* in order to transmit it to later generations.

The original is kept [in] a golden casket of the High Sovereign.²³⁸

真人得道萬八千歲一會道士得道千歲一會故作中經以遺後世本上皇藏之金匱

The original is [in] a golden basket [inside] a jade bookbag [in] a golden casket of the High Sovereign, sealed with nine layers.²³⁹

本在上皇金匱玉笈玉笥中封之九重

The original copy is thus securely stored. Therefore, the only way of accessing the scripture is via transmission.

2.2.5 Controlled Transmission

Right after pointing to the location of the original version of the scripture, the speaker proceeds to giving handling instructions:

[Once] you obtain it, be cautious not to rashly transmit [it]. You [should] take care of it, do not accept money [for transmitting] it. [Once/if you] find this person, than transmit it. [It] allows [one] to obtain numinous immortality. From time to time I have myself testified; I have put into circulation these three [volumes],²⁴⁰ the three volumes are the *Upper*, *Lower* and *Central Scriptures*. I frequently send the Director of Destinies to instruct the demons to guard you. Do not rashly extend [or] shorten my text.

²³⁸ CT 1032, 19.16a1-3. Also translated by Schipper, “The Inner World of the *Lao-tzu chung-ching*,” 117.

²³⁹ CT 1032, 19.21a4-5.

²⁴⁰ Following Schipper’s translation. Please see pp. 21-23 for the discussion of the possible translations of this phrase.

[If] one character is missing, I will immediately know it. You [should] take care of it. Take care of it as I say.²⁴¹

兆得之慎勿妄傳子慎之勿受錢之得其人即傳之可得神仙吾時時自案行此三三篇上下中經也吾常使司命教鬼守汝勿妄增減吾文一字不具吾即知之兆汝慎之慎之如吾言

A Person of the Dao, [even] getting one thousand [pieces of] gold, must not disseminate it.²⁴²

道人得千金勿傳出也

While the text does not contain any direct instructions as to how often the teaching should be transmitted by those who got hold of it to others, it is clear that the purported speaker of this text, Laozi himself, appeared very rarely:

I have taught eighty-one disciples – all became immortal. Of them, ten persons are spread among the folk, [they are] roaming Grain Immortals. I passed through [the times of] Qin and Xiang [Yu] without appearing. I appear for the Han to harmonize with the Yellow Era. Seeing me is a great auspice.²⁴³

吾教八十一弟皆仙其十人布在民間遊遨²⁴⁴穀仙吾度秦項不出為漢出合於黃世見吾大吉

If we assume the fact that the text could not have been written before the late Han and take into account the speaker's claim of not having appeared during the Qin

²⁴¹ CT 1032, 19.21a5-10, partially translated by Lagerwey, “Deux écrits taoïstes anciens,” 163.

²⁴² CT 1032, 19.16a1-4, also translated by Schipper, “The Inner World of the *Lao-tzu chung-ching*,” 117.

²⁴³ CT 1032, 19.21b8-22a1, also translated by Schipper, “Inner World of the *Lao-tzu chung-ching*,” 118.

²⁴⁴ In the text the character appears as a combination of 𨔵 and 𨔵. Based on the context, I believe that this is a variation of the character 𨔵 (to roam).

dynasty, we can conclude that the speaker claimed to have not appeared for more than four hundred years.

2.2.6 Oral Instructions

Oral instructions complement the written part of a teaching, expanding concise phrases and elucidating abstruse statements. The *Laozi zhongjing* is written in a highly symbolic and, perhaps, cryptic language; it is often impossible to understand the text based only on the literal meaning of the words it uses. Thus the hypothesis of the oral instructions accompanying the transmission of the text seems reasonable. Yet, simply assuming that the difficult passages were incomprehensible to the target audience, and thus required additional explanation, would be a mistake. The possible internal indication of the necessity of additional instructions is in the last paragraph; the speaker proclaims, “I am using metaphors. You should strive to find a teacher”²⁴⁵ 吾以喻汝努²⁴⁶力求師.

The purpose of keeping the instructions in oral form was to restrict access to the complete teaching. Of course, nothing could be said about the instructions given orally which indeed have not been written down. However, as mentioned in the first chapter, the *LZZJ* contains passages which begin with a clause *shi yue* 師曰 (teacher said) and *Laojun yue* 老君曰 (Lord Lao said); some of these passages clearly are of an explanatory nature. Therefore, it is possible to suggest that those

²⁴⁵ CT 1032, 19.21b8-22a1, also translated by Schipper, “Inner World of the *Lao-tzu chung-ching*,” 118.

²⁴⁶ In the CT 1168 version, the character *nu* 努 (to strive) is written as *nu* 弩, which is a variation of 弩 (I.M.Oshanin, ed., *Great Chinese-Russian Dictionary*, 4 vols. (Moscow: Nauka, 1983-84), 3:542, n.7979), and thus should not be read as “crossbow.”

were initially oral instructions given with the text, which were written down at a certain point. Unfortunately, these are present only in the second part of the text and thus are not found in the Dunhuang manuscript; it is thus not possible to verify the presence of these passages during the Tang-Song era.

Let us consider several examples.²⁴⁷ In the first one, the teacher gives and explanation of the epithet, which the text ascribes to the Cinnabar Field:

The primordial *yang* Cinnabar Field is the palace of semen storage. Teacher said, “The ‘primordial’ is *qi*, the ‘*yang*’ is the sun.”²⁴⁸

元陽丹田藏精宮也師曰元者氣也陽者日也

Let us look at another example:

Constantly, on the *jiawu* day, at midday time, having covered the hair, [with] head [facing] south, lie supine. Eyes closed, reflect on the Cinnabar Field, three *cun* below the navel, yellow inside. Its *qi* is exactly red, [as] large as a palm. Its outside is black; the next outer [layer] is green. Above the navel, there is white *qi* covering it; it is the Lung *qi*. On the left, there is green; on the right, there is yellow. Each [as] large as a palm. These three [are] the Liver *qi*, Spleen *qi*, and Lung *qi*. Teacher said, “The red inside the Cinnabar Field, it the Great *Yin qi*. Its outside black is the Minor *Yin qi*. The green [on] the next outside [layer] is the Minor *Yang qi*. The three unite completing the Virtue. The three *qi* keep it, promptly [resulting in] longevity.”²⁴⁹

²⁴⁷ I translated one other example in Chapter 1, p. 43. The passage containing the direct speech of Lord Lao will be analyzed in the next chapter, please see pp. 96-97.

²⁴⁸ CT 1032, 19.13a3-4.

²⁴⁹ CT 1032, 19.15a6-b2.

常以甲午之日日中時被髮南首偃卧瞑目念臍下三寸丹田中黃其氣正赤大如手掌其外黑次其外青臍上有白氣覆之肺氣也左有青右有黃各大如手掌此三者肝氣脾氣肺氣師曰丹田中赤者太陽氣其外黑者太陰氣次外青者少陽氣三合成德三氣守之即長生矣

This passage describes a visualization practice. In this passage, the teacher provides the details of the practice mechanism – what happens within the body when the adept performs visualizations, and its goal – longevity.

In both cases, the teacher’s commentary is a piece of information related to but not contained within the passage commented on. I therefore conjecture that those passages refer to oral instructions which, initially, were accompanying the written version and were written down at a certain point during the transmission of the text.

2.2.7 Summary

With the information available now, is virtually impossible to prove or disprove that the *Laozi zhongjing* was an esoteric text. One should not classify a text as esoteric only because of one’s inability to understand its content through one’s own categories.²⁵⁰ Yet, not having any evidence of its circulation, one cannot claim that the text was easily accessible, and thus classifiable as exoteric. However, having examined various methods and tactics used by the text in order to create an atmosphere of secrecy, I argue that the *Laozi zhongjing* is a self-esotericizing text, composed with a deliberate claim to esotericism.

²⁵⁰ Observation made about the “*Nei ye*” 內業 by Fabien Simonis, “A Chinese Model of Cognition: the *Neiye*, Fourth Century B.C.E.” (M.A. thesis, McGill, 1998), 6.

2.3 Hermeneutic of a *Jing*

Whether the *Laozi zhongjing* was read by a broad audience or by a small circle of initiates, we can be sure about one thing, it was not composed for us.²⁵¹ It is bearing this thought in mind that one should be approaching this text. The text clearly describes an understanding of reality, which is different from that to which the present-day reader is used.²⁵² The categories underlying this reality are clearly different, too.

One possible explanation of individual's understanding of reality was given by German phenomenologists: *Lebenswelt* (lifeworld) – the world as it appears in ordinary experience prior to conscious critical reflection,²⁵³ one's world as one perceives and conceptualizes it. Formulating a theoretical approach to his study of the *Daodejing*, Michael LaFargue argued that our lifeworld was

too massively and pervasively present to our consciousness and beyond its control to be actually regarded as not part of “the real world,” as a mental creation or projection, and so on. Inevitably, when we speak of something being “part of objective reality,” the “objective reality” we actually have in mind is the *Lebenswelt* we live in.²⁵⁴

Thus, according to LaFargue, the “original meaning of the text” consists in what it says about the lifeworld(s) of the text's author(s).²⁵⁵ Therefore, a perfect understanding of this original meaning can be gained through accessing this

²⁵¹ In the preface to his translation, Stephen Bokenkamp wrote, “The impediments to our understanding are immense. None of the texts written here was composed for us – a future readership bringing wholly unpredictable cultural expectations to the task.” Bokenkamp, *Early Daoist Scriptures*, xiv.

²⁵² I am certainly not claiming that all present-day readers have the same understanding and feeling of the reality. Yet, it would be safe to assume that most anglophone readers do not think of the constellations and of their own organs as places inhabited by various numina.

²⁵³ Michael LaFargue, *Tao and Method: A Reasoned Approach to the Tao Te Ching* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), 13.

²⁵⁴ LaFargue, *Tao and Method*, 17.

²⁵⁵ LaFargue, *Tao and Method*, 19.

lifeworld. However, being bound to one's own lifeworld, even being aware of the existence of those of others, accessing them is a challenging, if at all feasible task. Angus Graham once noted, "That people of another culture are somehow thinking in other categories is a familiar idea, almost a commonplace, but one very difficult to pin down as a topic for fruitful discussion."²⁵⁶ Indeed, in case of the *Laozi zhongjing*, on one hand, extending one's own categories into the scripture would inevitably distort its content; on the other hand, how would it be possible to approach a text without making any assumptions at all? The deliberately esoteric nature of the text poses another impediment. In his study of the *Daodejing*, Michael LaFargue has proposed a solution to the problem, which I shall quote at length in order not to lose its precision:

Interpretation involves giving second-order description of first-order worldviews. Second-order description of the worldviews of a given text needs to take place within a framework that includes some general philosophical assumptions about what is possibly real. But the philosophical framework must remain as formal and "thin" as possible, in order to allow the greatest scope for "thick" description based on empirical historical research. This framework should have no implications concerning first-order substance, favoring one world-view. If it does have such implications, the framework itself will be a potential *competitor* with the worldview of the text.²⁵⁷

However, in case of the *Laozi zhongjing*, historical research often cannot provide the necessary accuracy in interpreting the terms and concepts employed within the

²⁵⁶ Angus Graham, *Studies in Chinese Philosophy and Philosophical Literature* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990), 360.

²⁵⁷ LaFargue, *Tao and Method*, 24. LaFargue explained that he used the term "thick" in the sense Clifford Geertz introduces it in his essay "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture" (LaFargue, *Tao and Method*, 564). Although Geertz himself does not provide an explicit definition of "thick description," from his usage of the term, it is clear that "thick description" refers to not only describing the observed but also providing a contextual interpretation of the observed. See Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays by Clifford Geertz* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 6-9 *passim*.

text because the text's possible date of composition still constitutes a fairly wide range, while the social context in which the text was composed is not precisely known. Fortunately, containing numerous definitions, multiple parallel and intersecting passages, describing the same numen or practice, the text itself provides numerous clues to its lifeworld. Therefore, in this study, I shall place maximum emphasis on the internal analysis of the scripture; examining a particular concept, numen or practice, I shall compare and analyze several passages devoted to the subject. I am thus making one important assumption: although the text seems to be of a composite nature, unless there is any evidence of the opposite, the text can be treated as internally consistent, and, therefore, information contained in different passages can be considered as a set of complementing, and sometimes overlapping, pieces, which can be assembled and combined into one bigger picture.

Chapter 3: Health, Longevity, Immortality

The *Laozi zhongjing* provides what Schipper called “a didactic description of the universe in terms of mythical time and space.”²⁵⁸ The universe, in this case, should be understood as having two modules: Heaven and Earth as the outer universe – the macrocosm, and the human body as the inner universe – the microcosm. The text contains a detailed cosmographic exposition – it describes various spheres or both macro and microcosms, and their numinous inhabitants. It also proposes practices which are based on visualizing²⁵⁹ these loci, the numina who inhabit them and flows of *qi* which go through them. The text promises that these practices will produce healing effects, restoration of lost youth and acquisition of longevity, and finally, achievement of immortality. In this chapter, I shall overview the text’s diverse types of praxis; in particular, I intend to show that achieving immortality is possible due to the presence of the Red Child within the human body.

3.1 The Inner World

The text establishes a correspondence between the macrocosm and the microcosm stating:

Your body is on par with Heaven and Earth. Heaven, Earth and the myriad of things cannot be opposed – the numina of Heaven and Earth will know

²⁵⁸ Schipper, “The Inner World of the *Lao-tzu chung-ching*,” 120.

²⁵⁹ The text uses a wide range of terms referring to meditation and visualization. The most common are *si* 思, *nian* 念, and *cun* 存, which I translate as “think,” “reflect” and “visualize.” It is difficult to establish what exactly each term meant. I was not able to identify a pattern in their usage.

about it. The human body's four limbs also cannot be hurt. [If] there is a pain [or] an itch, the numina will also know it.²⁶⁰

兆身與天地等也天地萬物不可犯觸也天地之神則知之矣而人身體四支²⁶¹亦不可傷也有痛癢者神亦知之

From this passage, one can deduce at least two points. First, since the human body is on par with the universe (Heaven and Earth), it follows that whatever exists in the universe also exists within the body. Second, the numina are associated with one's physical well-being.

Starting with the first section, the text introduces numina, who dwell in different celestial spheres and inhabit different parts of the human body and its proximity. The pantheon is very complex. Many numina are related to each other; most of the numina have several names and titles and are often referred to by any of them.²⁶² Moreover, they often occupy the same loci and thus superimpose on each other. Therefore, constructing either their comprehensive genealogy chart or a comprehensive map of their locations is quite difficult.

Introducing its pantheon, the *LZZJ* explicitly notes the *qi* nature of the high numina. In the first section, introducing the highest numen, the Supreme Great One, the speaker, right after saying “I don't know his name”²⁶³ adds “[He] is the primordial *qi*” 元氣是耳.²⁶⁴ The second section introduces the next numen:

²⁶⁰ CT 1032, 18.14a1-3, also translated by Schipper, “The Inner World of the *Lao-tzu Zhongjing*,” 124.

²⁶¹ In both versions of the text, the character *zhi* 肢 appears as *zhi* 支.

²⁶² I do not know whether the text uses names and titles indiscriminately; I was not able to identify any pattern.

²⁶³ In fact, it seems that the Supreme Great One is the only numen whose name, surname or sobriquet is not mentioned.

²⁶⁴ CT 1032, 18.1a9.

The Most High Original Lord of the Ultimateless is the lord of the Dao . . .

[He] is the son of the Supreme Great One. [He] is not his [real] son; [he] is the spontaneity [of] the primordial *qi*.²⁶⁵

無極太上元君者道君也 . . . 上上太一之子也非其子也元氣自然耳

The King Father of the East, who is introduced in the third section, is the primordial *qi* of the green *yang*;²⁶⁶ while the Queen Mother of the West, introduced in the fourth section, is the primordial *qi* of the great *yin* 西王母者太陰之元氣也.²⁶⁷ Another important numen who is characterized in terms of *qi* is the Jade Maiden of Obscure Radiance, described as “the mother of the primordial *qi* of the Dao” 玄光玉女者道元氣之母也.²⁶⁸

Liu Yongming argued, “The *Laozi zhongjing*’s philosophical thought inherited the cosmogonic discourse of the *Laozi*; however, [the *LZZJ*] interpreted it via the primordial *qi* and spontaneity, and got closer to transforming into a religion.”²⁶⁹ Liu based his claim on his observation of an interesting parallel between the *Daodejing* and the *Laozi zhongjing*. The forty-second chapter of the *Laozi* begins with a cosmogonic statement, “The Dao gives birth to one, one gives birth to two, two gives birth to three, three gives birth to the myriad of things” 道

²⁶⁵ CT 1032, 18.1b5-7.

²⁶⁶ CT 1032, 18.2a7. Please see Chapter 1, pp. 33, for the translation of the whole passage. Note that in Chinese correlative thought, East, as a direction, is *yang*, and is associated with the phase of Wood, which is also associated with the green (or blue, *qing* 青) colour.

²⁶⁷ CT 1032, 18.3a3.

²⁶⁸ CT 1032 18.14b8.

²⁶⁹ Liu, “*Laozi zhongjing* xingcheng yu Han dai kao,” 61. 《老子中经》的哲学思想继承了《老子》的宇宙生成论模式，而以“元气”、“自然”之说进行诠释，并将其进一步宗教化。

生一一生二二生三三生萬物,²⁷⁰ Liu concluded that the *Laozi*'s "The Dao gives birth to one" corresponded to the primordial *qi* (the Supreme Great One) giving birth to the spontaneity (Most High Original Lord of the Ultimateless); while "one gives birth to two" corresponded to the spontaneity giving birth to the *yin* and the *yang* (Queen Mother of the West and King Father of the East); finally, "two gives birth to three" corresponded to all those individuals born after the *yin-yang* division of the spontaneity. Liu did not mention whether the *LZZJ* contained any reference to the "three gives birth to myriad of things" stage.

While this is certainly an interesting hypothesis, the *LZZJ* does not contain any indication of the King-Queen pair being generated by the Most High Original Lord of the Ultimateless; neither does it suggest that all the other numina originated from this couple. Instead of a cosmogonic interpretation of the first sections of the text, I propose to look at the location of these numina in relation to and within the human body: the Supreme Great One is nine feet above the adept's head;²⁷¹ the Most High Original Lord of the Ultimateless is "Exactly on the top of your head" 正在兆頭上;²⁷² the King-Queen pair is located in the adept's eyes.²⁷³ Thus, the text describes the numina in the order corresponding to their location in the human body, starting with the top and going downwards. Therefore, from the very beginning of the text, we can see that the structure of the pantheon is grounded in the anatomy of the human body.

²⁷⁰ CT 664, 2.2b1.

²⁷¹ CT 1032, 18.1a10-b1. Please see Chapter 2, pp.66-67, for the translation of the passage.

²⁷² CT 1032, 18.1b7-8.

²⁷³ CT 1032, 18.2b4-5. Please see Chapter 1, pp. 33-34, for the translation of the passage.

The text provides further description of the functioning of the microcosm and its correlation with the macrocosm:

The Heart is empty; the Kidneys are primordial. Empty *qi* because of its purity rises becoming Heaven; primordial *qi* because of its peaceful [nature] descends becoming Earth. They enter the Great Abyss. Therefore, the hollow empty *qi* produces exhalations; the primordial *qi* produces inhalations. The Heart is the sun, the Kidneys are the moon, the Spleen is the Dipper [constellation]. The Heart *qi* descends; the Kidney *qi* ascends. [They] unite [and] thereupon become one.²⁷⁴

心為虛腎為元虛氣以青²⁷⁵上為天元氣以寧下為地入於太淵故虛氣生為呼元氣生為噓心為日腎為月脾為斗心氣下腎氣上合即為一

The text contains many other similar passages. Those passages seem to lack consistency, often associating the same celestial bodies with different corporeal locations. For example, “As for the sun and the moon . . . people also have them: they are the two Kidneys”²⁷⁶ 日月者 . . . 人亦有之兩腎是也. Nevertheless, these passages express the general notion of completeness of the microcosm, which contains all the elements of the macrocosm. In this context, it is not surprising that the primordial *qi* originates in the human body as well:

Kidneys are the root of the primordial *qi*.²⁷⁷

腎者元氣之根也

²⁷⁴ CT 1032, 19.15b4-7.

²⁷⁵ The character *qing* 青 should be translated as “green.” However, CT 1168 contains the character *qing* 清 instead, which means “pure.” Because it is being juxtaposed with *ning* 寧, “peaceful” or “tranquil,” I think 清, “pure,” makes more sense in the context.

²⁷⁶ CT 1032, 18.6a4-6.

²⁷⁷ CT 1032, 18.15a6.

[The space] between the two Kidneys is called the Great Ocean, also called Weak Water. In [it], there is a numinous turtle, which inhales and exhales the primordial *qi*, which circulates to become the wind and the rain. [Within] the four limbs, there is no [place which it] does not reach.²⁷⁸

兩腎間名曰大海一名弱水中有神龜呼吸元氣流行作為風雨通氣四支無不至者

In addition to the celestial entities, the human body also contains entities which are associated with terrestrial locations:

Constantly, during the four seasons worship my ancestors: [during] the first month [on] the *hai*²⁷⁹ day, when the rooster crows, sacrifice [at] the temple [in] the suburbs; [during] the second month [on] the *hai* day sacrifice [on the altars of]²⁸⁰ the God of Soil and the God of Harvest to the Duke of Wind and the Master of Rain . . . The suburbs are on the head, amidst the entrances of the brain;²⁸¹ the temple is on the top of the head, above the ulterior bones; the [altar of] the God of Soil is in the left extremity of the Spleen; the [altar of] the God of Harvest is at the end [of] the Large Intestine.²⁸²

常以四時祠吾祖先正月亥日鷄鳴時祠郊廟二月亥日祠社稷風伯雨師 . . . 郊在頭上腦戶中廟在頂後骨之上社在脾左端稷在大腸窮

²⁷⁸ CT 1032, 18.14b3-5.

²⁷⁹ The twelfth of the twelve Earthly Branches.

²⁸⁰ Later, the locations of the God of Soil and the God of Harvest are listed together with the locations of the suburbs and the temple. Therefore, it makes sense that the text refers not to the God of Soil and the God of Harvest, but to their altars.

²⁸¹ *Naohu* 腦戶 appears in the text several times. It is not clear in which part of the head it is located.

²⁸² CT 1032, 18.8b4-b10, also translated by Schipper, “The Inner World of the *Lao-tzu chung-ching*,” 127.

As for the ancestral temple, it is also made of *qi*:

The primordial *qi* [from] the upper visceral cavity²⁸³ rises entering the head,
[where it] becomes an ancestral temple.²⁸⁴

上焦元氣上入頭中為宗廟

3.2 Healing Practices

As shown above, *qi* is a fundamental constituent of the human body. As a result, the movement of *qi* within one's body affects its condition.

Constantly think [of] the white *qi* between the Kidneys. Above, it rises reaching the head; below, it reaches the center of the soles of the feet and the tips of the fingers. Circulate it around the whole body twelve times and stop. Hands and feet will [become] hot. [You] will not get hungry, thirsty, or cold. [This] prevents people [from] ageing, white hair [becomes] black again.²⁸⁵

常思腎間白氣上升至頭中下至足心十指之端周行一身中十二遍而止手足皆熱可以不飢不渴不寒令人不老白髮復黑

The nature of this practice is remarkably similar to modern Qigong practices.²⁸⁶

The *LZZJ* also contains passages of a medical diagnostic nature, declaring that the cause of different medical problems lies in the condition of one's *qi*:

[If] someone is slow, [it means that] the Gall Bladder *qi* is feeble; [if] someone is blind, [it means that] the Liver *qi* is feeble; [if] someone is timid,

²⁸³ I.e., the space above the diaphragm and below the tongue.

²⁸⁴ CT 1032, 18.13b10-1.14a1.

²⁸⁵ CT 1032, 18.14b1-4.

²⁸⁶ An observation made from personal practice of Qigong.

[it means that] the Lung *qi* is feeble; [if] someone is insane, [it means that] the Heart *qi* is feeble. If someone is sluggish, [it means that] the Kidney *qi* is feeble; [if] someone is dumb and deaf, [it means that] the Spleen *qi* is feeble.²⁸⁷

緩和者膽之氣衰也盲者肝之氣衰也懦者肺之氣衰也顛者心之氣衰也濡者腎之氣衰也不肖喑聾者脾之氣衰也

Whereas the pair liver – eyes is standard in Chinese correlative thought, the ears are usually associated with the Kidneys and not with the Spleen.²⁸⁸ The text then proposes a treatment through visualization:

All those, whose Five Viscera are feeble, should see [the viscera] in themselves. [When] sorrowful [and] unhappy, then [one] hurts the Liver; [if one] hurts the Liver, then the eyes [become] weak-sighted [and] the head [becomes] white; [one] ought to think of the Kidneys and the Heart in order to nourish it.²⁸⁹ [When] wanton pleasures go too far, then [one] hurts the Kidneys; [if one] hurts the Kidneys, the waist hurts [and] the body [feels] heavy, [in] the feces and urine, [there is] pus and blood; [one should] think of the Liver and the Lungs in order to nourish them. [When one is] enraged, then [one] hurts the Heart; [if one] hurts the Heart, then [one] goes mad and spits blood; [one should] think of the Liver and the Spleen in order to nourish it. [When one] encounters suffering, is [in] worry and distress, then [one] hurts the Lungs; [if] one hurts the Lungs, [one should] think [of] the

²⁸⁷ CT 1032, 2.6b1-3.

²⁸⁸ Christopher Cullen, “Wuxing,” in *EOT*, 2: 1070.

²⁸⁹ It most probably refers to the Liver. In general, in each sentence within this paragraph, each “it” must be referring to the organ which is hurt.

Spleen [and] the Kidneys in order to nourish [them]. [When one] drinks and eats not reaching one's fill and [one's] drunkenness goes too far, then [one] hurts the Spleen. [If one hurts] the Spleen, then [one should] think of the Heart and Lungs in order to nourish it. Make the Child and the Mother jointly nourish them. (A person seeking numinous immortality loathes hurting the Five Viscera; a scholar illuminates them).²⁹⁰

其五藏²⁹¹衰者皆自見於己也憂悲不樂則傷肝傷肝則目瞑頭白當思腎心以養之淫樂過度即傷腎傷腎則腰疼痛身沉重大小便膿血思肝肺²⁹²以養之恚怒則傷心傷心則病狂²⁹³吐血思肝脾以養之遭患憂難則傷肺傷肺則思脾腎以養之飲食絕飽酒醉過度則傷脾傷脾則思心肺以養之令其子母相養之即病癒疾除（求神仙之人惡傷五藏學士明照之）²⁹⁴

Let us note that the prescribed visualization seems to be based on the Mutual production order of the Five Phases.²⁹⁵

→ Wood →	→ Fire →	→ Soil →	→ Metal →	→ Water →
Liver	Heart	Spleen	Lungs	Kidneys

In case any of the viscera is hurt, the viscera which should be visualized in order to nourish it are the one it generates and the one which generates it. At the end of

²⁹⁰ CT 1032, 19.6.b3-7a1.

²⁹¹ The character *zang* 臟 (viscera, organ) regularly appears as 藏 in the CT 1032, the “flesh” radical being omitted.

²⁹² In the CT 1168, 2.6b1-2, instead of the character *fei* 肺 (Lungs), there is a character *gan* 肝 (Liver). 肝肝 is clearly a tautology; moreover, in the whole passage, the Viscera of which the adept should think are mentioned in pairs. Therefore, I believe the CT 1032 version's 肝肺 is correct.

²⁹³ In the CT 1168, 2.6b2, instead of the character *kuang* 狂 (mad), there is a character *qiang* 強 (strong). Since in the previous passage, feeble Heart *qi* is associated with insanity, I believe that 狂 is contextually more appropriate.

²⁹⁴ The phrase inside the parenthesis is written in a half-size font. As mentioned in Chapter 1, half-size fonts appear in both versions of the *LZZJ*. It is not certain whether or not those are later commentaries.

²⁹⁵ Please see Chapter 1, p. 49, for another illustration.

the passage, it is said that the Mother and the Child can also help in nourishing the viscera, however, no particular method of invoking them is mentioned. This brings us back to investigating the role of the corporeal numina.

3.3 The Father, the Mother and the Child

Among various practices described by the text, immortality practices require visualizing the Numinous Family.

[If] you truly want to obtain numinous immortality, [you] ought to know the location of Heaven and Earth, the Father, the Mother and the Red Child. [If] you want to practice the Dao, you have to know the names of these five numina. [You] ought to be painstaking. Know them, use them, hold fast to them, constantly reflect on them, then [you will become] a numinous immortal!²⁹⁶

兆審欲得神仙當知天地父母赤子處兆汝為道不可不知此五神名也當自苦耳知之行之堅守之常念之即神仙矣

While Heaven and Earth are not personified in the text, the Father, the Mother, and the Red Child refer to the three corporeal numina. The text provides a detailed description of these three and lists their names.

The Empress, the Jade Maiden of Obscure Radiance of the Ultimate Yin, is the mother of the Dao. [She] is present right above the spleen, in the Big Dipper. [She] is dressed in a five-colour pearly vestment; [she] is sitting under the yellow cloudy *qi* flowery canopy; [she] controls and feeds the Red

²⁹⁶ CT 1032, 1.16a2-4.

Child. Constantly think [that] below the two nipples²⁹⁷ there are a sun and a moon. In the sun and the moon, there are [respectively] yellow *jing* and red *qi*. [They] enter the Crimson Palace [and] again enter the Yellow Court and the Purple Chamber. Yellow *jing* [and] red *qi* fill the Great Granary. The Red Child is in the midst of the Stomach tube. [He]²⁹⁸ sits facing due south, drinking and eating yellow *jing* [and] red *qi* until [he is] replete. The hundred illnesses are eliminated and the myriad disasters do not strike. You [should] constantly visualize him, [then you will] rise to being a Realized Being.²⁹⁹

皇后者太陰玄光玉女道之母也正在脾上中斗中也衣五色珠衣黃雲氣華蓋之下坐主哺養赤子常思兩乳下有日月日月中有黃精赤氣來入絳宮復來入黃庭紫房中黃精赤氣填滿太倉中赤子當胃管中正南面坐飲食黃精赤氣即飽矣百病除去萬災不干兆常思存之上為真人

Another passage indicates that the Cinnabar Field is the Red Child's residence.

The Red Child is also called Zidan 子丹 (Child Cinnabar).³⁰⁰

²⁹⁷ The word 乳 could be translated as either “breast” or “nipple.” Just before this sentence the text gave a brief description of the Empress, which might imply that 乳 refers to her breasts. However, there is a later statement below 乳 there are both yellow *jing* (which is a male substance, usually associated with sperm) and red *qi* (which is a female substance, usually associated with menstrual blood) suggests that 乳 refers to the nipples of the non-gendered body of the adept.

²⁹⁸ Later, in the chapter 12, the Red Child is called Primordial Yang. Since *yang* is male, I shall refer to the Red Child as “he.”

²⁹⁹ CT 1032, 18.7a3-b1.

³⁰⁰ When I presented a paper “From Mortality to Immortality: Self-Divinization in the *Laozi Zhongjing*” at the 2009 Harvard East Asia Society Graduate Conference, the panel discussant, Prof. Wilt Idema, asked why I did not translate the *Chizi* 赤子 as “newborn.” While “newborn” is one possible meaning of this term, and while John Lagerwey, in his study of the *LZZJ*, translated *Chizi* as “Nouveau-né,” I believe that since his alternative title, Child Cinnabar, also contains a reference to a shade of red, “Red Child” is reasonable translation.

Call out to this numen, “Jade Maiden of Obscure Radiance, feed your Red Child, the Realized Being Zidan.”³⁰¹ . . . Therefore it is said, “[In] one body, the numina [are] the Father, the Mother; altogether three persons.”³⁰²

呼其神曰玄光玉女養子赤子真人子丹 . . . 故言一身神有父母凡三人

The Mother is on his top right, holding and nourishing him. The Father is on his top-left, teaching and protecting him. Therefore the Father is called Lingyang (Mound of Yang) [and] styled Ziming (Enlightened Master).³⁰³ The Mother is called Taiyin (Great Yin) [and] styled Xuanguang Yunü (Jade Maiden of Obscure Radiance). One’s body³⁰⁴ is Yuanyang (Primordial Yang), styled Zidan (Child Cinnabar).³⁰⁵

母在其右上抱而養之父在其左上教而護之故父曰陵陽字子明母曰太陰字玄光玉女己身為元陽字子丹

The Spleen numina are five individuals the Jade Maiden of Obscure Radiance, is the mother of Zidan . . . Realized Being Zidan is above, lying in the midst of the Stomach tube; yellow cloudy *qi* for a curtain, pearls and jades for a bed. [He] eats yellow pastry of gold and jade, drinks a sweet wine spring [and] jade fluid, ingests the Great One’s numinous cinnabar,

³⁰¹ This part is also translated in Lagerwey, “Deux écrits taoïstes anciens,” 159.

³⁰² CT 1032, 19.2b10-3a2. Since in the second part of the passage only two numina are listed, the third one must be the Child himself.

³⁰³ In alchemical texts *lingyang zi ziming* 陵陽字子明 is a synonym of mercury. Pregadio, “Early Daoist Meditation and the Origins of Inner Alchemy,” 156.

³⁰⁴ Provisional translation of 己身, the meaning of which will be discussed later. Here, it could be also translated as “I.”

³⁰⁵ CT 1032, 18.8a1-3.

chews jade plum [and] *zhi* plant. Visualize and nourish him [for] nine years
[and you] will become a realized [being].³⁰⁶

脾神五人玄光玉女子丹母也 . . . 真人子丹在上臥胃管中黃雲氣為帳珠
玉為牀食黃金玉餌飲醴泉玉液服太一神丹噉玉李芝草 存而養之九年成
真矣

Thereupon again reflect on the Realized Being Zidan in the Stomach tube;
pray, “Jade Maiden of Obscure Radiance, nourish my Realized Being
Zidan³⁰⁷ [who] eats the primordial *qi* and imbibes a sweet wine spring.”³⁰⁸

乃復念真人子丹在胃管中祝曰玄光玉女養我真子丹服食元氣飲宴³⁰⁹
醴泉

Another passage describes the Great One in a pair with the Mother of Dao,

The Great One enters the Yellow Court, fills the Great Granary [and]
nourishes the Red Child [and] again enters the Great Abyss.³¹⁰ Suddenly,
[his] whereabouts [become] unknown . . . Constantly reflect [on] the Great

³⁰⁶ CT 1032, 1.18a8-b3; Partially translated in Lagerwey, “Deux écrits taoïstes anciens,” 159.

³⁰⁷ CT 1032, 19.7b4-7.

³⁰⁸ CT 1032, 19.7b4-8.

³⁰⁹ The character *yan* 宴 (to feast) appears as *yan* 嚥 (to gulp) in the CT 1158, 2.7a1. In both cases, I translate 飲宴 or 飲嚥 as “to imbibe.”

³¹⁰ *Taiyuan* 太淵 (the Great Abyss) is a term which appears in several other passages. It is possibly associated with the navel or with the Gall Bladder.

In the sixth section, describing the lord of the Dao, the text states: 乃在九天之上萬丈之巔太淵紫房宮中 (CT 1032, 18.3b5-6), which Pregadio translated as “He resides above the Nine Heavens, ten thousand *zhang* on high, within the Palace of the Purple Chamber (*Zifang gong*) in the Great Abyss (*taiyuan*)” (Pregadio, “Early Daoist Meditation and the Origins of Inner Alchemy,” 122). The Purple Chamber is a cryptic term for the Gall Bladder; it is not clear whether the Great Abyss is within the Purple Chamber or whether the two locations are independent. Schipper, having translated the sixth sentence, did not translate this particular phrase (Schipper, “Inner World of the *Lao-tzu chung-ching*,” 120-121).

The other reference 臍中名為太淵都鄉之府也 (CT 1032, 19.9b4) could be translated as “The name of the Navel’s center is ‘Government of the City and Villages of the Great Abyss.’”

One [and] the Mother of the Dao of Obscure Radiance nourishing the
Realized Being *Zidan*, [who is] exactly my body.³¹¹

太一入黃庭滿太倉養赤子復入太淵忽忽不知所在復...常念太一玄光
道母養真人子丹正吾身也

Thus, the speaker identifies himself with the Red Child. As argued in the second chapter, the text is written in the first person, on behalf of Laozi. Still, as evident from this passage, the problem of the speaker's identity as well as the use of the first person pronoun in the *Laozi zhongjing* deserves more attention. Therefore, before examining the Red Child, we need to further investigate the meaning of “I” in the text.

3.4 The “I”

Referring to the term “I,” the text uses two characters: *wo* 我 and *wu* 吾.³¹² In addition, the text uses the term *ji* 己³¹³ – oneself or self; moreover, 己 and 吾 are sometimes combined into 己吾, which modifies the character *shen* 身 (body). Among these four, 我 is the easiest to interpret. It appears twelve times, inside passages which follow the word *yue* 曰, which marks the beginning of direct speech. Therefore 我 is always inside the prescribed uttering of the adept; it thus

³¹¹ CT 1032, 18.13b4-7. The second part of the passage is also translated by Lagerwey, “Deux écrits taoïstes anciens,” 159.

³¹² The text uses a variety of second person pointers as well: *zi* 子, *zhao* 兆, *ru* 汝, and a composite pointer *zhaoru* 兆汝. As far as I am aware, the usage of different second person pronouns has not been addressed in academic scholarship. I was not able to notice any pattern in their usage. Possibly, different pointers belong to different textual layers. In this study, I translate all of the above as “you.”

³¹³ Probably due to the condition or state of the woodblocks from which the text was printed, the characters *si* 巳, *yi* 己, *ji* 己 are indistinguishable. Therefore, when translating the text, one has to make a contextual decision and choose one of the three.

refers to the adept and corresponds to English “I,” first person pronoun referring to a human being, and the possessive adjective “my.” On the contrary, 吾 never follows 曰, and, therefore, is never part of the direct speech assigned to the adept, and seems to be reserved for the speaker.³¹⁴

The most abstruse clause in the whole text is, perhaps, the first line of the twelfth paragraph: 吾者道子之也人亦有之非獨吾也.³¹⁵ Its meaning is particularly ambiguous because of the uncertain function of the first *zhi* 之 and because the second *zhi* 之, while definitely being the object pronoun with the clear meaning of “it,” is referring to the 吾, which is exceptionally strange. Before addressing this phrase, let us first look at the passage which follows right after:

[He] is right in the Great Granary – Stomach tube. Facing due south, [he] sits on the top of a bed [of] pearls and jades, a yellow cloudy flowery canopy covers him. He is dressed in five-coloured pearly clothing.³¹⁶

正在太倉胃管中正南面坐珠玉床上黃雲華蓋覆之衣五綵珠衣

This passage clearly refers to the Red Child. The text then proceeds to describe his mother and father.³¹⁷

吾者道子之也人亦有之非獨吾也: this particular sentence caught the attention of all the Western scholars who studied the text; their interpretations differed significantly. Pregadio translated it as “The self is the son of the Dao;

³¹⁴ I analyzed several passages which contained 吾 in previous chapters. Please see pp. 68-71. In those passages, it was clear that 吾 referred to Laozi.

³¹⁵ CT 1032, 18.7b9.

³¹⁶ CT 1032, 18.7ab9-8b1.

³¹⁷ See p. 89.

this is what he is. Human beings also have him, not only me.”³¹⁸ In this translation, one more 也 is assumed. The direct counterpart of the first part of this translation would be 吾者道子也之也. Moreover, it treats 之 as a predicate, which is also not common. Pregadio explained:

The initial part of this passage defies a proper translation, for Laozi (the speaker of the *Central Scripture*, refers to himself in both the first and the third person. He introduces himself as ‘I’ (*wu*) and says that he resides in every human being (‘human being also have me’, i.e., ‘him’); he is therefore one’s own ‘self’ (*wu*) represented by the Red Child.³¹⁹

Thus, Pregadio translated the character *wu* 吾 as “self” and “me” depending on the context. In his translation, “me” or “I” are personal pronouns and do not refer to a metaphysical noun “I.” Schipper translated this passage as “I am the child of the Tao. The human being has me too, but it is not the individual ‘I’ [you think it is].”³²⁰ He then argued that the phrasing “非獨吾也” was similar to the phrasing “非其子也”³²¹ in the second paragraph as well as phrasings in other texts, meaning a circumstantial negation of preceding affirmation: “not a [sic] you may think.”³²² While Lagerwey translated it as “‘Je’: c’est le Dao qui l’enfante. Il n’y a pas que ‘je’ qui l’ait : l’homme le possède aussi.”³²³

If we look at the opening sentences of the first, sixth and seventh paragraphs: 上上太一者道之父也, 老君者天之魂也, 太和者天之魄也, we can

³¹⁸ Pregadio, “Early Daoist Meditation and the Origins of Inner Alchemy,” 138.

³¹⁹ Pregadio, “Early Daoist Meditation and the Origins of Inner Alchemy,” 155, n.56.

³²⁰ Schipper, “Inner World of the *Lao-tzu chung-ching*,” 124.

³²¹ Referring to the Most High Original Lord of the Ultimateless, see p. 80.

³²² Schipper, “Inner World of the *Lao-tzu chung-ching*,” 124n. “Not a [sic] you may think” should be probably read as “Not as you may think.”

³²³ Lagerwey, “Deux écrits taoïstes anciens,” 160. “I”: it is the Dao who gives birth to it. It is not only the “I” who has it: humans also possess it.

notice a similarity in their structure. In fact, they follow the same pattern: A 者 B 之 C 也. If in the phrase under consideration the characters *zhi* 之 and *zi* 子 switch positions, the resulting phrase *wuzhe daozi ziye* 吾者道之子也 conforms to the same structure. Considering that there are a certain number of errors contained in the text, a simple error of inverting two characters is possible, especially since in the cursive form characters *zi* 子 and *zhi* 之 bear a certain resemblance.³²⁴

Lagerwey argued that the central theme of the *Laozi zhongjing* is the nature of the relation between the Child and “me” or “my body”; therefore, in some passages, he chose to translate *wu* 吾 and *wushen* 吾身 as ‘je’ or ‘le corps du je’ in order to emphasize that *wu* 吾 referred to what the adept would become once his/her practice led him/her to immortality.³²⁵ He applied this translation not only to *wu* 吾 but also to *ji* 己 and *jiwu* 己吾.

The character *ji* 己 appears both in the main body of the text and inside the direct speech prescribed to the adept. In either case, it seems to refer to the adept. For example, describing one of the immortality practices, the text states, “Support [your] Heart with the sun. When the Heart gets the sun’s *jing*, ‘己’ thereupon [will become] a numinous immortal” 以日托心心得日精己乃神仙矣.³²⁶ On the other hand, the adept is sometimes told to use the term 己 referring to himself when addressing a numen, “Call out to this numen, ‘Realized Being, Jade Maiden of the

³²⁴ I thank my fellow graduate student, Lin Fan, for this suggestion.

³²⁵ Lagerwey, “Deux écrits taoïstes anciens,” 159. ‘Je’ (‘I’) and ‘le corps du je’ (‘the body of I’) are originally in single quotation marks.

³²⁶ CT 1032, 19.5a9-10.

Yellow Court, be friends with 己, stay and be 己's envoy" 呼其神曰真人黃庭玉女與己為友留為己使.³²⁷ From these two passages, it is possible to conclude that *ji* 己 always refers to the adept.

The passage designating the Red Child as "one's body"³²⁸ *jishen* 己身 is followed by a visualization instruction:

Therefore, constantly think of the Realized Being Zidan exactly in the Great Granary – Stomach tube, sitting facing due south, eating yellow *jing* and red *qi*, partaking [from] a sweet wine spring. Yuanyang Zidan is nine *fen* long. [When] you think [of] him, make [him] on a par with your body. Parents nourish him, then [he] may obtain numinous immortality. Constantly reflect [on] the Child in the Stomach tube of your body, dressed in a five-coloured clothing, sitting on a bed [of] pearls and jades, [with] yellow cloud [and] red *qi* for a curtain. [He] eats yellow pastry of gold and jade, ingests numinous cinnabar [and] *zhi* plant; [he] drinks [from] a sweet wine spring.³²⁹

故常思真人子丹正在太倉胃管中正南面坐食黃精赤氣飲服醴泉元陽子丹長九分思之令與己身等也父母養之乃得神仙常自念己身在胃管中童子服五色綵衣坐珠玉之牀黃雲赤氣為帳食黃金玉餌服神丹芝草飲醴泉

In this passage, contextually, it makes sense to translate 己身 as "your body," as it clearly refers to the body of the adept.

So, what does 己 or "one" really refer to? Is it the Red Child or is it the adept? Moreover, how should the character *wu* 吾 be understood? Is it an

³²⁷ CT 1032 19.3a2-3. The phrase 與己為友留為己使 appears in the text seven times, when the adept addressed different numina.

³²⁸ See p. 89.

³²⁹ CT 1032, 18.8a6-b2.

equivalent of the pronouns “I” and “my” or is it a metaphysical “I”? Could it have a different meaning or could it be both at the same time?

I suggest that in the *Laozi zhongjing*, the character 己 carries the meaning of the human self.³³⁰ It is a polar continuum with the mortal human adept’s (or “your body” *zhaoshen* 兆身) on one side, and the numinous, potentially immortal Red Child’s body (or “my body” *wushen* 吾身) on the other;³³¹ and thus the term *jishen* 己身 refers to both the adept’s and the Red Child’s bodies. As for the term *wu* 吾, let us look at another passage:

Lord Lao said, “The myriad of ways are numerous, but, keeping the One³³² [and] reflecting on Zidan only, is one way. The one in the Purple Chamber Palace, is the Gall Bladder. Zidan is I. I am precisely my³³³ body.”³³⁴

³³⁰ It is indeed difficult to define a concept such as “self.” We often operate the words intuitively, not being able to explain their meaning if asked to. In some way, the vague terms are shaped by their overlapping context. When analyzing the role of the self in Western thought, David L. Hall and Roger T. Ames divided the existing models into four principal categories:

The self is either a physiological mechanism swirling in social space, or a mind or consciousness detachable from its bodily housing, or an organic, socially interactive, goal-achieving organism, or a willing, deciding, potentially self-creating agent whose meaning is determined by persuasive agency.

See David L. Hall and Roger T. Ames, *Thinking from the Han: Self, Truth, and Transcendence in Chinese and Western Culture* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), 7.

³³¹ I use the term “polar continuum” in the same sense as Roger Ames used it describing the Classical Chinese conception of the relationship between mind and body. Seeing mind and body as constituting a polar continuum implies that they can be understood only by reference to each other; also, mind and body require each other as a necessary condition for being what they are. Ames argued that in classical Chinese philosophy, a human being was regarded as a holistic psychosomatic process. Moreover, according to Ames, human and divine also constituted a polar continuum. Thus, human being in realizing himself was a deity. See Roger T. Ames, “The Meaning of Body in Classical Chinese Philosophy,” in *Self as Body in Asian Theory and Practice*, ed. Thomas P. Kasulis (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993), 158-161.

³³² Distinguish from “guarding the One” (*shouyi* 守一). Keeping the One is not mentioned anywhere else in the text.

³³³ As shown above *ji* 己 often refers to the adept. So, here *jishen* 己身 could be also translated as “one’s body” or even “your body,” referring to the body of the adept.

³³⁴ CT 1032, 2.8b5-7, also translated by Schipper, “Inner World of the *Lao-tzu chung-ching*,” 123.

老君曰萬道衆多但存一念子丹耳一道也在紫房宮中者膽也子丹者吾也
吾者正己身也

Here, 吾 is once again identified with Laozi, the speaker, who is then identified with one's self. Thus, revisiting the opening phrase of the twelfth passage in its corrected form 吾者道之子也人亦有之非獨吾也, I translate it as "I am a son of the Dao. Human beings also have it,³³⁵ not just me." Deified Laozi thus claims to be present within human body in the form of the Red Child.

The practice then consists of nurturing the Red Child, making him grow:

The Jade Maiden of Obscure Radiance of Great Yin is dressed [in] dark-yellow five-coloured pearly clothing; [she is] nine *fen* long. Think [of] her [as] also three *cun* long, in the Palace of Great Plainness, feeding the Realized Being Zidan, [who] slowly grows until he himself becomes on a par with your body.³³⁶

太陰玄光玉女衣玄黃五色珠衣長九分思之亦長三寸在太素宮中養真人子丹稍稍盛大自與己身等也

[When] a Realized Being obtains the Dao, [he] unites with Heaven and Earth. Yuanyang (Primordial Yang) Zidan is me.³³⁷

真人得道與天地合元陽子丹者吾也

3.5 Conclusion

Let us consider the following passage, which embodies several aspects of the *Laozi zhongjing*'s praxis:

³³⁵ I.e., "such a son."

³³⁶ CT 1032, 18.4a3-4.

³³⁷ CT 18.18b5-6, also translated in Lagerwey, "Deux écrits taoïstes anciens," 159.

Eat the moon's *jing* in order to nourish the Kidneys' root; white hair will again become black, teeth, which have fallen out, will grow again. One will thereupon obtain numinous immortality. Constantly, at midnight, think [that] between the Kidneys [there is] white *qi*. Circulate [it] around the whole body, above reaching the entrances of the brain, below reaching the arches of the feet . . . Constantly, on the fifteenth day of the month, pray in the direction of the moon, "Lord of the Moon Master"³³⁸ Radiance, link [your] Power with me, nourish the little child in my Cinnabar Field. Eyes closed, reflect [on] the lunar white and yellow *jing* and *qi* descending in front of the eyes and entering the mouth. Swallow them three [to] seven [times] and stop. With a hand,³³⁹ massage-send it downward reaching the Cinnabar Field. In the Cinnabar Field, *qi* is exactly red. In [this] *qi*, there is one person, nine *fēn* long, the little child.³⁴⁰

食月之精以養腎根白髮復黑齒落更生己乃得神仙常以夜半時思腎間白氣周行一身中上至腦戶下至足心自然之道 . . . 常以月十五日向月祝曰月君子光與我合德養我丹田中小童子因瞑目念月白黃精氣來下在目前入口中咽之三七而止以手摩送之下至丹田之中丹田中氣正赤氣中有一人長九分小童子也

From this passage, we can see that one should first acquire *jing* and *qi*, then assimilate them by circulation, and only then ask an internal numen to feed the Child. In other passages, it was mentioned that the Child eats *jing* and *qi*,

³³⁸ *Zi* 子 could also mean "child." However, since the adept asks this numen to feed another child, "master" seems to be a more appropriate translation.

³³⁹ In this passage, it is not clear whether the adept should use one or two hands. However, since other passages contain explicit references to two hands 兩手, I conclude that since in this place the text does not mention the number "two," it must refer to only one hand.

³⁴⁰ CT 1032, 19.5b2-9.

therefore it seems that by absorbing and circulating *jing* and *qi*, the adept provides the internal numina with the food, which they should later give to the Red Child.

One of the prayers, addressed to Most High Original Lord of the Ultimateless, contains an utterance, “[Let] all the poisonous bugs and fierce beasts, when seeing me, hibernate” 毒蟲猛獸見我皆蟄伏.³⁴¹ Therefore, the adept wants to acquire the characteristics of the newborn, described in the *Laozi*:

One who has an abundance of Power is like a newborn (*chizi* 赤子):
poisonous bugs will not bite him, fierce beasts will not snatch him, birds of
prey will not attack him.³⁴²

含德之厚比於赤子毒蟲不螫猛獸不據攫鳥不搏

While making an argument about the meaning of any passage of the *Laozi* is a difficult task lying outside of the scope of my work, nevertheless, it is worth noting that grammatically this is a comparison. According to Lafargue, this passage “celebrates that marvelous benefits attributed to the Te/virtue Laoists cultivate.”³⁴³ However, in the *Laozi zhongjing*, the *chizi* 赤子 is not an image of a newborn, whose characteristics one aspires to acquire, but a numen within one’s body, whom one should nourish. The Red Child, a son of the Dao, is present in every human body—or at least there are no statements excluding any particular individual’s body. His initial height is nine *fen*. One can nourish him by absorbing and circulating *qi* within one’s body and then asking the internal numina to feed the Child and visualizing the numina doing that.

³⁴¹ CT 1032, 18.1b10-a2.

³⁴² CT 664, 2.5b6-7.

³⁴³ Lafargue, *Tao and Method*, 415.

Comparing different passages describing the Red Child and the visualization practices involving him, we can see that as one performs the practice of nourishing the Red Child, several processes happen concurrently: the Red Child obtains numinous immortality, the Red Child grows to the size of the adept's body, the adept becomes a realized being (while the Red Child is a realized being from the very beginning.) Thus, one nurtures the Red Child, one's smaller body, making him grow to the size of one's normal body. The two sides of the continuum then unite.

Conclusion

In Daoist Studies, one of the recurring issues in discussions of immortality is whether it is a universally attainable goal or whether it is the fortune of a selected few.³⁴⁴ With regard to the opinions of the author(s) of the *Laozi zhongjing*, there is no simple answer to this question. On the one hand, the text claims that the knowledge which it contains is powerful and secret; on the other hand, it does not contain any indication of formal prerequisites required for engaging in practices which it offers, not limiting them to a particular group of people who satisfy certain criteria. The only implicit specification about the adept is about one's gender, "These two numinous Jade Maidens . . . [you should] respect and attend upon them. Be cautious not to marry them" 此二神玉女 . . . 敬而侍之慎無妻也.³⁴⁵ Assuming a heterosexual nature of marriage, it is possible to conclude that this passage is addressed to men only. However, the text never specifies that only men can practice the Dao and seek immortality. According to the text, the adept's body already contains the various numina; thus, one does not have to search for them elsewhere and does not need to attract them to one's person. The Red Child does not need to be conceived; he is already present, but the adept should become aware of him and nurture him according to the detailed prescriptions present in the text. In fact, if one views the *LZZJ* as a practice manual, then the practice thus consists of ensuring that the numina continue performing their functions in feeding the Red Child well, by visualizing this process and verbally addressing

³⁴⁴ Penny, "Immortality and Transcendence," 123.

³⁴⁵ CT 1032, 18.20a3-4; also translated in Lagerwey, "Deux écrits taoïstes anciens," 157.

the numina. The text also does not specify that visualizing internal viscera and circulating *qi* within one's body would require any special qualities, whether this is an independent healing practice or a part of a more extensive immortality practice, in which *qi* should be fed to the Red Child. Neither does it mention any possibility of failure of the prescribed practices.

And yet, in order to perform these practices, one should be able to, first, gain access to the text and, second, understand its content, which is expressed in an esoteric language. It is difficult to assess the actual number of obstacles which a potential adept had to overcome in order to be able to gain access to the *LZZJ*'s praxis; it is also not clear which criteria those who had access to the teaching would use in order to decide who could be considered worthy enough to be granted such access. However, it is certain that according to the text itself, it was not intended to be a piece of freely circulating knowledge. Therefore, while everybody had the potential for immortality, the teaching was intended to be transmitted very selectively, and thus not everybody was supposed to become immortal.

Isabelle Robinet once wrote that the Daoist Canon was given to us in its raw state, being a massive accumulation of documents lacking any detailed inventory.³⁴⁶ This characteristic could be extended from the Canon itself to many of the texts it contains, two of which are versions of the *Central Scripture of Laozi*. While the amount of information in the text is indeed immense, retrieving

³⁴⁶ Robinet, *Taoist Meditation*, 1.

and comprehending it is a challenge, just as it might have been for the seekers of immortality in Early Medieval China.

This thesis aimed to examine the relation between the extant version of the *Laozi zhongjing*, date the text, analyze the text's self-presentation and develop an approach to reading it, and finally, overview the text's practices. I hoped to have shown that it contained at least two textual layers, with the later one consisting of the oral instructions, which were written down at a certain point. I wanted to provide a fully justified range of its possible dates of composition, with the late second or the early third century being the lower bound and the early fourth century being the upper bound as the range of its possible dates of composition. Having briefly discussed the nature of esotericism and self-esotericization, I then showed that the text was written as an esoteric manual, which provided methods aiming at achieving longevity and immortality. Finally, I examined some of these methods and a belief system which underlies them, showing that achieving immortality was possible due to the presence of the Red Child in one's lower trunk. Unlike later Daoist Inner Alchemical texts, which discuss the Inner Embryo, which was supposed to be conceived and generated by the adept himself through his practice,³⁴⁷ in the *Laozi zhongjing*, the Red Child resides within one's body unconditionally, representing one's potentially immortal self, which should be nurtured in order to realize one's immortal potential.

Owing to limitations of space and time, in this thesis I did not provide a full analysis of all the practices described in the text and only partially investigated the

³⁴⁷ Pregadio, "Early Daoist Meditation and the Origins of Inner Alchemy," 138.

system through which the text explained the macro and microcosms. I hope to pursue this question further in my future research.

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Listed by *Concordance du Tao-tsang* number (CT):

- 133 *Taishang dongfang neijing zhu* 太上東房內經註
- 331 *Taishang huangting neijing yujing* 太上黃庭內景玉經
- 332 *Taishang huangting waijing yujing* 太上黃庭外景玉經
- 388 *Taishang Lingbao wufu xu* 太上靈寶五符序
- 640 *Dongshen badi miaojing jing* 洞神八帝妙精經
- 664 *Daode zhenjing* 道德真經
- 789 *Zhengyi fawen tianshi jiaojie kejing* 正一法文天師教戒科經
- 954 *Taishang hunyuan zhenlu* 太上混元真錄
- 1016 *Zhen'gao* 真誥
- 1032 *Yunji qiqian* 雲笈七籤, chapters 18 and 19 contain
Laozi zhongjing 老子中經
- 1125 *Dongxuan Lingbao sandong fengdao kejie yingshi* 洞玄靈寶三洞奉道科戒
營始
- 1129 *Daojiao yishu* 道教義樞
- 1138 *Wushang biyao* 無上祕要
- 1168 *Taishang Laojun zhongjing* 太上老君中經
- 1185 *Baopuzi neipian* 抱朴子內篇
- 1313 *Dongzhen taishang suling dongyuan dayou miaojing* 洞真太上素靈洞元大
有妙經

1349 *Dongzhen taishang qingya shisheng jing* 洞真太上青牙始生經

1353 *Shangqing daobao jing* 上清道寶經

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