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## The Illumination of Ritual: Lu Xiujing's reflections on the Retreat

Franciscus Verellen

*I rejoice in the Law, my betrothed  
Scripture I covet, like a jewel  
Holding fast to the precepts, I master the Six Senses  
Mindful of the Way, I banish desire*

These opening lines of the Triple Announcement Hymn 三啟頌, intoned by Lu Xiujing 陸修靜 (406-477) and his followers at the beginning of the Retreat 齋 ritual,<sup>1</sup> capture several features of the patriarch's religious temperament: a man of fervent faith and a devotee of holy scripture, he was also an ascetic moralist and a stern preacher. Lu's exceptional contributions to the history of Taoism have long been recognized, especially in three main areas: his reform of the Heavenly Master community, his organization of the first Taoist canon, and his patronage of the new corpus of Lingbao scriptures 靈寶經, dating to the turn of the fifth century, together with its reformed, Buddhist-influenced liturgy. A staunch defender of the ancient Heavenly Master church, Lu's views on personal and communal religious practice in his time also embraced the recent Taoist revelations of the Shangqing 上清 and Lingbao scriptures, as well as the mounting Chinese enthusiasm for the beliefs and rituals of Mahāyāna Buddhism. Thanks to the patriarch's recorded instructions to his disciples and the Taoist community in fifth-century southern China, we are able to form a firsthand appreciation of his religious convictions and personality. Lu's sermons, in the form of private pronouncements made prior to performing the Retreat 齋 ritual, are especially revealing. The present paper will focus on the patriarch's teachings on the purpose and meaning of the Retreat, the rules and liturgical protocol for performing it, and the spiritual preparation required of its practitioners.

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<sup>1</sup> See *Wushang huanglu dazhai licheng yi* 無上黃籙大齋立成儀 16.7a-b, compiled by Jiang Shuyu 蔣叔輿 (1223), *Daozang* 508. Work numbers here and below are according to Kristofer Schipper and Franciscus Verellen, eds., *The Taoist Canon: A historical companion to the Daozang*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2004.

*New light on the Retreat*

The moral simile of ritual instruction as light dispelling obscurity and the definition of ritual itself as a guiding norm for human behavior and development are recurring themes in Lu Xiujing's writings on the Retreat. The "Extempore Explanations Elucidating the Retreat 燭光齋外說," for example, begin by spelling out what is meant by the terms in the title:

Elucidation 燭光 (literally: "torch light") is what Zhuangzi calls "the flame of the torch 燭火," referring to the weaker kind of luminosity.<sup>2</sup>

Lu Xiujing alludes here to the self-deprecating words of the emperor Yao 堯 when he yielded the empire to the recluse Xu You 許由, in the ancient myth as told by Zhuangzi: "If the sun or moon are shining and the torch fire is not extinguished, won't the latter have trouble shedding light?"<sup>3</sup>

By adopting this rhetorical figure of speech, Lu Xiujing indicates that the light shed in this work to elucidate the Retreat is his own. The imperfections of humanity, he continues, encapsulate in the Five Impurities or Opacities 五濁,<sup>4</sup> impede the ideal performance of the Retreat. The benighted state of the world is like the condition of cave dwellers in winding underground cavities where the sun does not penetrate. Plunged into perpetual darkness, they rely on lamp light. "Now this," says Lu Xiujing, "is what I mean by elucidation (or 'torch light')":

To make clear the general themes of the sacred texts on the Retreat 標齋經大旨 and appoint the high officiants for the liturgy 舉法體近要. The aim is to initiate profound perception by controlling coarseness and baseness. It is like this: the tree an artisan has selected is completely slanted and warped. Before he can approach it with a carpenter's guideline 繩墨, the artisan

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<sup>2</sup> In *Dongxuan lingbao zhai shuo guangzhu jiefa deng zhuyuan yi* 洞玄靈寶齋說光燭戒罰燈祝願儀, *Daozang* 524, 1a.

<sup>3</sup> Yao continues to say that when there is timely rain, irrigation is labor lost, implying that it was unnecessary for him to continue as emperor. See *Zhuangzi*, "Xiaoyao you 逍遙遊" (Guo Qingfan, ed. *Zhuangzi jishi*, 1.22-23).

<sup>4</sup> The Buddhist definition comprises (1) the latter-day kalpa; (2) wrongs views, egoism, etc.; (3) passions and delusions; (4) increasing human misery; (5) declining life span.

must first trim the outside of the wood and process it into a round-shaped piece. My own humble writings 余之鄙拙 are as uncouth as that...<sup>5</sup>

Lu Xiuqing likewise provides the title of the *Scripture on the Illumination of Ritual*, the *Fazhu jing* 法燭經 with an explanation.<sup>6</sup> Lu's various uses of the term *fa* 法 are situated at the intersection of several related concepts, requiring different translations as the case may be. Translated here as ritual, *fa* also means law, as well as method or technique. The beginning of the "Triple Announcement Hymn" quoted at the head of this article, a phrase found in numerous Buddhist scriptures (*I rejoice in the Law...*), suggests that for Lu Xiuqing the term *fa* also encompassed the semantic field of the Buddhist Sanskrit word *dharma*, which it translates into Chinese: law, standard, truth, doctrine, statutes, principle, usage, practice, morality, religion. In the present context, he specifies its meaning as follows:<sup>7</sup>

*Illumination of Ritual* 法燭

*Fa* 法 means regulation (literally: the compass and the carpenter's square 規矩), *fa* being the generic term. The compass is round, the carpenter's square square. All beings conform to these [standards] in order to attain correctness 正.

*Zhu* 燭 (literally: a candle or torch) is a luminous object 有光之物; supplementing the moon and seconding<sup>8</sup> the sun, it dispels obscurity and lightens darkness. Its brightness enables us to see.

This definition assimilates "illumination" with the term "elucidation" in the *Explanations on the Lingbao Retreat*, and hence with Zhuangzi's "torch light" that fades into insignificance in the presence of the sun or the moon. *Fa* is the

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<sup>5</sup> *Dongxuan lingbao zhai shuo guangzhu jiefu deng zhuyuan yi* 1a-b.

<sup>6</sup> *Taishang dongxuan lingbao fazhu jing* 太上洞玄靈寶法燭經. By Lu Xiuqing 陸修靜 (406-477). *Daozang* 349.

<sup>7</sup> *Taishang dongxuan lingbao fazhu jing* 1a. In the "Prologue to the Illumination of Ritual" excerpted in *Dongxuan lingbao zhai shuo guangzhu jiefu deng zhuyuan yi* 5a, these definitions appear as part of the main text.

<sup>8</sup> The *Zhuyuan yi* version here reads *fu* 輔 instead of *si* 嗣.

norm that guides and enlightens behavior. In another passage, cited below, Lu expresses this idea explicitly: “*fa* 法 means model or norm 法式.”

Adherence to the norm is correctness. Correct ritual practice thus serves as a means to enlightenment, while Lu Xiujing’s sermons illumine correct ritual practice:

Without ritual, deviation 邪曲 cannot right itself. If you practice ritual without understanding, you cannot discern your merits and demerits 得失. Those that desire righteousness cannot do without ritual. Those that practice ritual cannot do without understanding. To rectify oneself 自定,<sup>9</sup> it is indispensable to practice the Retreat. To practice the Retreat it is indispensable to read this scripture. This scripture therefore is the Illumination of Ritual.<sup>10</sup>

Concretely, masters of rites 法師 bore this text like a source of light<sup>11</sup> when approaching the altar to perform the ritual. The congregation 法眾 emptied their hearts and pledged to receive [the work’s] instruction 盟受:<sup>12</sup> “Then their sight and hearing shall be distinct, and the teaching of the great Way becomes clear to all.”<sup>13</sup>

#### *The setting of the sermons*

Another introductory commentary, inserted under the title “Extempore Explanations Elucidating the Retreat 燭光齋外說” and based on “the collection of Retreats 齋集 compiled by Lu Xiujing,” notes that the master

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<sup>9</sup> Cf. Sermon 1 below, where it means control of the senses.

<sup>10</sup> *Taishang dongxuan lingbao fazhu jing* 1a-b.

<sup>11</sup> The verb *bing* 炳 used here evokes the expression *bingzhu* 炳燭 or 秉燭, “to carry a candle.”

<sup>12</sup> The term *mengshou* 盟受 refers to Taoist initiation and ordination, which were always associated with the transmission of texts. Cf. *Wushang biyao* 56.3b: “Venture to abide by sacred scripture and be ordained with the texts of the Retreat 敢緣聖典。盟受齋文。” See also *Daojiao yishu* 道教義樞 2.6b: 洪又於馬跡山詣思遠盟受。洪號抱朴子 and *Yunji qiqian* 雲笈七籤 16.4a: 當齋金寶。奉師效心。依科盟受。

<sup>13</sup> *Taishang dongxuan lingbao fazhu jing* 2b.

pronounced these explanations after “burning incense in his private quarters 私房 and girding his belt 束帶,” that is, prior to performing the Retreat ritual.<sup>14</sup>

A similar commentary under the title “Prologue to the Illumination of Ritual 法燭敘” in the same work states that “according to the rites for establishing the Retreat 建齋 compiled by Lu Xiuqing, the ritual commenced at dusk, after burning incense, with the nocturnal announcement 宿啟.<sup>15</sup> [Lu Xiuqing] pronounced this text, facing East, before the visualization of the gods 思神.”<sup>16</sup>

The nocturnal announcement, the last of a series of preliminary rites named establishment of the altar 建壇, included the visualization rite known as the lighting of the incense burner 發爐.<sup>17</sup> *The Illumination of Ritual* refers meditation, or “visualization of the gods,” as a discipline for the mastery of mind and body that was essential for performing the Retreat.<sup>18</sup>

In addition to such exhortations in preparation for the performance of the Retreat, Lu Xiuqing’s ten sermons on the *Daode jing* were pronounced at prescribed moments throughout the liturgy, punctuating the ritual with pauses for reflection and meditation on the teachings of the *Laozi* as a source of inspiration for the Retreat:

Therefore I expounded ten verses of the Book [of the Way and its Virtue] 說經十章<sup>19</sup> in order to execute 施 the phases of the Retreat 齋時.<sup>20</sup> I titled [the work] *The Illumination of Ritual* 法燭. At the nocturnal announcement 宿啟 one verse is expounded. In the course of a ritual performance comprising

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<sup>14</sup> *Dongxuan lingbao zhai shuo guangzhu jiefa deng zhuyuan yi* 1a.

<sup>15</sup> See Lu’s “Gufa suqi jianzhai yi 古法宿啟建齋儀” in *Wushang huanglu dazhai licheng yi* 16.

<sup>16</sup> *Dongxuan lingbao zhai shuo guangzhu jiefa deng zhuyuan yi* 5a.

<sup>17</sup> *Wushang huanglu dazhai licheng yi* 16.3a-5a.

<sup>18</sup> *Taishang dongxuan lingbao fazhu jing* 2a.

<sup>19</sup> That the *Daode jing* is meant is made explicit below.

<sup>20</sup> A ritual day was divided into three phases or periods 三時行道, corresponding to morning, noon, and evening audiences. The nocturnal announcement was held during the preceding night.

six phases 六時行道, six verses are expounded. In the course of a meditation in three phases 三時思神, three verses are expounded.<sup>21</sup>

### *Protocol of the Retreat*

The “Extempore Explanations Elucidating the Retreat” have come down to us as part of the *Explanations on the Lingbao Retreat: Protocol for radiant illuminations, precepts and punishments, lamps and prayers*, a recompilation of a work by Lu Xiujing addressing the rites performed in preparation of the Retreat.<sup>22</sup> In its present form, the book incorporates, in addition to the “Extempore Explanations,” the “Prologue to the Illumination of Ritual,” together with the first sermon from the *Scripture on the Illumination of Ritual*. This is followed by what seems to have been the essence of the original protocol, here titled “Bestowal of the Superior Ten Precepts, Selection of Officiants, and Sanctions for Transgressions 授上品十戒選署禁罰,” with a note explaining the recompilation of the text from various sources.<sup>23</sup> This part consists of instructions for performing the Precepts Ritual (7b-12b), for selecting and consecrating the various categories of officiants (13a-14a), and finally rules for proclaiming and applying fines for violations of the ritual code and other transgressions (14a-end).

The “Extempore Explanations Elucidating the Retreat” were pronounced, as we have seen, while preparing to perform the Retreat. Its instructions can be divided into three parts: principles of comportment, ten specific steps to take in preparation of the ritual, and discussions of key terms and concepts related to the Retreat. The general attitude adopted by the followers should be this:

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<sup>21</sup> *Taishang dongxuan lingbao fazhu jing* 2b.

<sup>22</sup> *Dongxuan lingbao zhai shuo guangzhu jiefa deng zhuyuan yi* 洞玄靈寶齋說光燭戒罰燈祝願儀, *Daozang* 524.

<sup>23</sup> *Dongxuan lingbao zhai shuo guangzhu jiefa deng zhuyuan yi* 7b. The section beginning there corresponds to the summary of the work, attributed to “Heavenly Master Lu,” in *Wushang huanglu dazhai licheng yi* 無上黃籙大齋立成儀, *Daozang* 508, 16.18a. The work is titled there identically, except for the reference to lamps. The extant text refers to neither lamps nor prayers. The term *radiant illuminations* in the title presumably refers to the excerpts from *The Illumination of Ritual*.

Those who perform the Retreat should fold their hands in respectful silence, in a darkened room 拱默幽室, in order to subdue their spirit. Shut the spirit gate 神關<sup>24</sup> to stop outside concerns from entering. Uphold the Ten Precepts 十戒 [see below] to prevent profane thoughts from arising. Strengthen your intrepid resolve and observe the ten moral conducts 道行.<sup>25</sup> Firmly plant your intention: you may not waver! Fix your attention on the mysteries and thoughts of perfection 真念 until your thoughts are entirely purified. This is what is meant by “Retreat.”

This exhortation is followed by a list of ten acts of bodily and mental purification. Though performed here before and as part of the Taoist Retreat ritual, they are also at the heart of the ancient spiritual exercise known by the same word *zhai*, “fast” or “retreat,” in the Chinese tradition. It is not clear whether Lu Xiuqing had these ten exercises in mind when referring to “ten moral conducts” above. Each item is followed by a brief instruction, which we render here in synopsis:

**1. Bathe in perfumed water** 香湯沐浴<sup>26</sup> to purify your spirit 神 and breath 氣,<sup>27</sup> render the five extremities immaculate, and make shine the nine apertures. With clothing perfectly clean,<sup>28</sup> fragrant inside and out, welcome the exalted perfected 高真 descending and behold the approaching spirits 虛靈.

**2. Banish all worldly cares** 廢棄世務. Detach yourself from profane predestination 因緣, screening the inside from the outside. Untrammelled,

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<sup>24</sup> Object of Shangqing meditation, see *Zhen'gao* 真誥 (499) 9.2b and 17.1a, compiled by Tao Hongjing 陶弘景. *Daozang* 1016.

<sup>25</sup> A Buddhist as well as Taoist term. See *Bukkyō daijiten* (Oda)1171-3.

<sup>26</sup> Buddhist term. On Heavenly Master ritual ablutions 沐浴, see also Franciscus Verellen, “The Heavenly Master liturgical agenda according to Chisong zi’s Petition Almanac,” *Cahiers d’Extrême-Asie* 14 (2004): 335-36.

<sup>27</sup> See *The Illumination of Ritual* quoted below: “The necessary conditions for life are spirit 神 and breath 氣. This vitality 神氣 resides in the human body.”

<sup>28</sup> Cf. the Confucian ritual tradition.

practice non-intervention 無為. With your body and heart at ease, concentrate your thoughts on their single purpose 專精.

**3. Observe the fast after midday and abstain from delicacies** 中食絕味.<sup>29</sup>

This will blunt 挫割 the appetites,<sup>30</sup> allow fullness and emptiness to attain moderation, and harmonize the internal organs. With your spirit-and-breath 神氣 appeased, nurture the original source.

**4. Discipline your body and straighten your clothes** 謹身正服.<sup>31</sup> The order of the Retreat is severe. Discard inattention and avoid all negligence. Your acts of worship and prostrations 禮拜叩搏 must be perfectly measured.

**5. Seal your lips and cease conversation** 閉口息語. Let there be no improper talk 妄言. Harmonious sounds rectify the *qi*. The recitation of scripture 誦詠經文<sup>32</sup> awakens the intelligence of men and demons and enables contact with immortals and sages.

**6. Cleanse your mental perceptions** 滌除心意. Let there be no heterodox thoughts 邪想, discipline the Six Faculties 六根,<sup>33</sup> and suppress the Three Poisons 三毒.<sup>34</sup> By visualizing the gods and meditating upon the perfected, you penetrate profundity.

**7. Burn incense and present smoke offerings** 燒香奏煙. Sound the drum 鳴鼓 (i.e., grind your teeth) to summon the gods. Report to the Three Purities heavens 三清 above and proclaim your announcement to the Ten Directions of space 十方.

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<sup>29</sup> Buddhist term. Literally the midday meal, also called the “fast meal 齋食” after which no further food was to be consumed for the rest of the day.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Laozi quote *cuo qi rui, jie qi fen* 挫其銳, 解其紛 and several related uses of the word in the *Fazhu jing* sermons. Delicacies and spiced food aroused the desires.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Buddhist and Confucian ritual traditions regarding orderly clothing.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. calming influence of recitation in *Fazhu jing* sermon.

<sup>33</sup> Buddhist term for the sense perceptions of the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, skin and mind which engender affliction.

<sup>34</sup> Buddhist term: craving, anger, ignorance.

**8. Confess your faults** 懺謝罪咎 and beg for forgiveness. With a pure heart and utter sincerity, show diffidence and earnest regret.

**9. Disseminate great compassion** 發大慈悲 and take pity on all and sundry. Comprehensively pray for deliverance from every calamity and hardship and that transmigration 生死<sup>35</sup> may serene, with no further vexations.

**10. Let your conduct and action** 進止俯仰<sup>36</sup> be wholly calm and dignified. In discussion with others, limit your words to the Tao and do not depart from the law. When you realize your error or transgression, kowtow 稽顙 and make a confession 懺悔.<sup>37</sup>

The text continues to explain the rationale and efficacy of the Supreme Retreat of Lingbao Spontaneity 靈寶自然無上齋 ritual: it offers deliverance from the five destinies 五道,<sup>38</sup> promises universal salvation, and obliterates the process of transmigration 生死, allowing its practitioners “to transcend the three realms of *samsāra* 三界.<sup>39</sup> Thus it is called ‘supreme’.” We learn that all human beings, other than sages and the perfected, indwell their mortal bodies 處身. The Five Corruptions 五濁<sup>40</sup> and Three Corpses 三尸<sup>41</sup> vigorously thrive within them. These assault and injure the nine bodily apertures 九竅 and four articulations 四關, each striving to shorten the host’s life and to implicate him in multiple frustrations, suffering, and mounting misfortune. Even death affords no respite from these tribulations. Therefore,

The Most High Heavenly Worthy 太上天尊 opened the jade bookcase 玉笈 in the Supreme Palace of Ziwei of the Mysterious Capital 玄都上宮紫微 and

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<sup>35</sup> Buddhist term.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. sermon in *Fazhu jing*.

<sup>37</sup> *Dongxuan lingbao zhai shuo guangzhu jiefa deng zhuyuan yi* 1b-2b.

<sup>38</sup> Rebirth as a denizen of Hell, hungry ghost, animal, human being, or god.

<sup>39</sup> The three realms of *samsāra*: desire, form, and formlessness.

<sup>40</sup> Of living in an age of decline, of possessing erroneous views, of afflictions and delusions, of a sentient existence, and of a limited lifespan. The Buddhist concept seems to be assimilated here with the Taoist belief in the indwelling agents of physical corruption.

<sup>41</sup> Destructive demons dwelling in the human body, responsible for physical decline and death.

took out the wonderful Retreat of Lingbao 靈寶妙齋 so that human beings would not be incapacitated by disturbances to their three vital components 三關: The *body* is moved by violence, greed, and debauchery; therefore we master it through ritual worship. The *mouth* is liable to abuse, extravagance, and duplicity; therefore we discipline it through the recitation of scripture. The *mind* is subject to thoughts of covetousness and anger; therefore we employ it to visualize the gods 思神 (i.e., meditate). By applying these three methods, you cleanse your heart and purify your conduct. To purify one's heart and conduct to the limit, that is the meaning of the Retreat.<sup>42</sup>

Next, Lu Xiujing turns to a familiar theme: the moral failings of humankind in general and the depravity of specific groups or types of individuals, in particular those with a heavy burden of guilt inherited from previous existences.<sup>43</sup> The Precept Ritual is designed to strengthen their resolve. It forms part of a sequence of preparatory rites consisting of the Bestowal of the Superior Ten Precepts, the Selection of Officiants, and a reading of the Sanctions for Transgressions 授上品十戒選署禁罰.<sup>44</sup>

The protocol of the Precept Ritual opens with the Hymn to wisdom 誦智慧頌, three verses chanted in praise of wisdom.<sup>45</sup> This is followed by a series of prostrations in reverence to ten directions of space. The master of rites finally returns to the east, and facing west pronounces the solemn Prescripts ritual 戒威儀:

The Heavenly Worthy declared to the Most High Lord Tao:<sup>46</sup> It is now fitting to proclaim the sound of the dharma to enlighten all beings so that all men and women be delivered from calamities and the root of suffering 苦根,<sup>47</sup> to cause the living to see the body of the Tao 道身<sup>48</sup> and be saved

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<sup>42</sup> *Dongxuan lingbao zhai shuo guangzhu jiefa deng zhuyuan yi* 3a-b.

<sup>43</sup> Lu used the Buddhist term 前身, in contrast to the Heavenly Master tradition.

<sup>44</sup> *Dongxuan lingbao zhai shuo guangzhu jiefa deng zhuyuan yi* 7b-16a.

<sup>45</sup> For the text, see also *Licheng yi* 16.

<sup>46</sup> This introduction and the following Ten Precepts are taken from 177 *Taishang dongzhen zhihui shangpin dajie* 1a-2b.

<sup>47</sup> See *Bukkyō daijiten* (Mochizuki) (v.1-6) 634a,4038a.

from the Eight Difficulties 八難;<sup>49</sup> and for the dead to rejoice in food and drink in paradise 天堂 and obtain an early reincarnation among human beings. The sage princes practiced the Retreat to obtain the Way. Let all with one heart ask to receive 請奉 the meaning of the Ten Precepts...<sup>50</sup>

1. Harbor no resentment 心不惡妒 and engender no secret malice 陰賊. Examine your speech careful of committing a fault. Let your thoughts reside in the Law.
2. Hold to benevolence, do not kill 守仁不殺.
3. Maintain chastity and cede to righteousness 守貞讓義
4. Avoid the temptation of sex 不色不欲
5. Refrain from using abusive language 口無惡言
6. Abstain from wine<sup>51</sup> and principle your conduct 斷酒節行
7. Do not envy those who excel you 不嫉人勝己
8. Do not dispute scripture or doctrine 不得評論經教
9. Do not brawl or argue 不得鬪[鬥]亂口舌
10. Let your conduct and actions be evenhanded and of single purpose 舉動施為平等一心. Thus will men will be appeased and their spirits serene. Be constant!

### *The Way and its Virtue*

Beside the fragmentary traces of Lu Xiuqing's teaching on the Retreat recovered from the *Explanations on the Lingbao Retreat*, the complete set of ten sermons preserved in the *Scripture on the Illumination of Ritual*, represents a more sustained attempt to explain the meaning and practice of the ritual through sessions of predication that were, as we have seen, periodically inserted into the liturgical sequence of the ritual.

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<sup>48</sup> *Bukkyōgo daijiten* (Nakamura) 1016a

<sup>49</sup> Eight circumstances in which it is difficult to see the Buddha or hear his teaching [Buddhist Dict.], especially conditions of rebirth.

<sup>50</sup> Based on *Taishang dongzhen zhihui shangpin dajie* 太上洞真智慧上品大戒 1a-2b. *Daozang* 177.

<sup>51</sup> *Taishang dongzhen zhihui shangpin dajie* has "Reduce wine 減酒"

The inspiration for each of the ten sermons is drawn from a phrase in the *Daode jing*, Laozi's "Book of the Way and its Virtue." This fundamental scripture of Taoism played an important role in Heavenly Master ritual and meditative practice.<sup>52</sup> Indeed, Lu Xiuqing's sermons emphasize that to him the very notion of the purifying retreat *zhai* 齋 was rooted in Laozi's quietist mysticism. Lu's introductory remarks also set out this psycho-physiological rationale for the Retreat:

The Tao says: Among the ten thousand beings, man is the most noble.<sup>53</sup> Human beings regard life as the most precious. The necessary conditions for life are spirit 神 and breath 氣. This vitality 神氣 resides in the human body. For the animation 命 of his four limbs 四體, the human being cannot for one moment be without breath, nor may he even for an instant lose his spirit. When you lose your spirit, the five organs 五臟 break down. He who loses his breath, hastens to his death. The relationship of breath to spirit is to perpetually proceed in mutual succession. The relationship of the spirit to breath is to perpetually derive strength from mutual emulation. When the spirit departs, breath perishes. When breathing is discontinued, the body dies. All and sundry know the fear of death and the joy of life,<sup>54</sup> yet they are unaware that their existence is the result of spirit and breath. Those who time after time do violence to their heart-and-mind 心 and abuse their breath, who degrade their spirit over and over and dissipate 鬻<sup>55</sup> their life, who care not for quietude 靜 nor safeguard their true nature 真, end up

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<sup>52</sup> On the Heavenly Master practice of reciting the *Daode jing*, see Ōfuchi Ninji 大淵忍爾, *Shoki no dōkyō: dōkyōshi no kenkyū, sono ichi* 初期の道教—道教史の研究, 其の一, 170-74. Tokyo: Sōbunsha, 1991. For a fifth-century meditation practice based on the *Daode jing*, see Liva Kohn, "The *Tao-te-ching* in Ritual," in *Lao-tzu and the Tao-te-ching*, edited by Livia Kohn and Michael LaFargue, 152-53, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998.

<sup>53</sup> Cf. *Xiaojing* 孝經 (孝經注疏 / 卷五 / 聖治章第九) 5.36: "天地之性人為貴性生也言天地之所生唯人最貴也"

<sup>54</sup> Cf. above, "Human beings regard life as the most precious."

<sup>55</sup> *Zhuyuan yi* version here has *diao* 凋.

deformed and broken 枉殘.<sup>56</sup> How can a person not cherish his essence 精 and guard his breath with the aim of wanting them to endure. Kindness and the nurturing of creatures is the blessing of “branch and leaf” 枝葉.<sup>57</sup>

Historically, according to a recurring theme in Lu Xiujing’s writings on ritual, the sages instituted the Retreat to save and reform mankind:

Because the sages considered that ordinary people, contending for advantage 奔競 and [indulging] the Five Senses 五慾,<sup>58</sup> were incapable of self-control 自定 [cf. above], they established the ritual of the Retreat 齋法<sup>59</sup> to provide relief in various circumstances; the precepts 禁戒 to guard against 關<sup>60</sup> the enemy within 內寇, the solemn rites 威儀 to ward off the thief without 外賊<sup>61</sup>; recitation 禮誦 to master the body and mouth, and take advantage of movement in order to return to quietude 靜. Meditation 思神 [literally, visualization of the gods]<sup>62</sup> masters the mind and thoughts and subjugates being 有 in order to return to nothingness 虛.<sup>63</sup> He who is capable of quietude and can achieve nothingness unites with the Tao. It is

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<sup>56</sup> *Daode jing* 42, which forms the basis for this sermon, ends with the adage that the violent come to a sticky end (see Zhu Qianzhi, *Laozi jiaoshi*, 176).

<sup>57</sup> *Taishang dongxuan lingbao fazhu jing* 1b-2a.

<sup>58</sup> I.e., 五欲 (*Zhuyuan yi* text has this character): sensual desires arising from sound, sight, smell, taste, and mind/heart, with slight Buddhist and Taoist variations.

<sup>59</sup> Cf. gratitude expressed in *Wugan wen* for the sages who established this ritual.

<sup>60</sup> *Zhuyuan yi* version here has *xian* 閑, meaning “ward off.”

<sup>61</sup> *Zhanguo ce*, 450 蘇秦死其弟蘇代欲繼之：「內寇不與，外敵不可距。王自治其外，臣自報其內，此乃亡之之勢也。」

<sup>62</sup> Cf. Introduction to *Fazhu jing* above.

<sup>63</sup> Quietude and nothingness are attributes of the Tao, thus return to the “Tao.” See also introduction to *Wugan wen*, where the Tao is said to be “pure and void.” Nb these three methods address Buddhist *sanye* 三業, i.e. body 身, mouth 口, and mind 意. On Taoist *sanye*, see Chan Kwan, 11, n12.

like turning back the paces of a noble steed 逸驥, the mount with which to return wholly to one's true nature 真.<sup>64</sup>

Lu characteristically highlights the divergence of contemporary practice from the norm. Quoting Yan Zun 嚴遵 (59-24 BC),<sup>65</sup> the Former Han commentator on the *Daode jing*, he says "Empty your mind to return to the Way and its Virtue; calm your breathing to visualize the gods 虛心以原道德，靜氣以期[存]神明."<sup>66</sup> In an admonition reminiscent of the harangues in *Master Lu's Summary of Taoist Liturgy*,<sup>67</sup> the patriarch contrasts this classical ideal with the degenerate actuality of his own time:

But the scholars of this latter age 末世<sup>68</sup> value what is showy and despise what is substantial. Grace lies in quietude, yet they agitate themselves to obtain it. Destiny resides in oneself, yet they abandon themselves in pursuit of the outside world. Followers like this 若斯之徒, though they willingly perform Retreats, do not understand the ritual of the Retreat 齋法, or if they understand the ritual of the Retreat, do not know the liturgy of the Retreat 齋體. Or if they know the liturgy of the Retreat, they do not comprehend the meaning of the Retreat 齋義. Or if they comprehend the meaning of the Retreat, they do not grasp its intent 齋意. Floundering in confusion and

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<sup>64</sup> *Taishang dongxuan lingbao fazhu jing* 2a. Tang Yijie, *Wei Jin Nanbei chao shiqi di dao jiao*, 161, cites this to illustrate Lu's notion of the Retreat as religious self-discipline, control of mind and body (修煉=修鍊).

<sup>65</sup> I.e., Zhuang Zun 莊遵 (also known as Yan Junping 嚴君平). The character *zhuang* was tabooed after the reign of Han Mingdi (AD 57-75), in deference to the emperor's personal name. On his interpretation of the *Daode jing*, see Alan K.L. Chan, "The essential meaning of the Way and Virtue: Yan Zun and 'Laozi Learning' in early Han China." *Monumenta Serica* 46 (1998): 105-127.

<sup>66</sup> *Taishang dongxuan lingbao fazhu jing* 2a. See Yan Zun's *Daode jing* commentary "Return to the Meaning of the Way and Its Virtue," *Daode zhenjing zhigui* 道德真經指歸 8.7b, *Daozang* 693; *Laozi zhigui* 老子指歸, edited by Wang Deyou 王德有, 22. Peking: Zhonghua shuju, 1994. The original reads *cun* 存 in the place of *qi* 期.

<sup>67</sup> *Lu xiansheng daomen kelüe* 陸先生道門科略. By Lu Xiujing 陸修靜 (406-477). *Daozang* 1127.

<sup>68</sup> See also introduction to *Wugan wen*, cited below.

error, nothing is left undone.<sup>69</sup> Moving erratically, they lose sight of their origins and remain forever blinded as to their destiny.<sup>70</sup> It's like turning one's back to the gale or following a strong current: not knowing that it is by going against the stream that you return to the source, they eternally sink into the Sea of Woes 苦海<sup>71</sup>. Are they not indeed to be pitied! Is this not painful indeed!<sup>72</sup>

The ten sermons each begin with the phrase "Thus says the Tao 道言" and end in a quotation from the *Daode jing* introduced with the words "Thus it is said 故曰":

[Sermon 1]

Thus says the Tao: The *Way* is the source of the ultimate principles 至理. *Virtue* is the application of these principles to one's conduct. The *Book* is the path<sup>73</sup> through which we directly apprehend them. "Way" stands for road. "Virtue" denotes goodness 善德. *Jing* as in "book" stands for direct passage 徑度. "Conduct" 行 means walking 行步. The word *fa*, "law" or "ritual," means model or norm 法式. Those who wish to study the Tao must rely on the rites and probe the Book, do good and achieve virtue, before they can reach the Way. Those who do not accomplish merit, but only hold to the One 守一 without stirring, will in the end not attain the Tao.<sup>74</sup> It's like people sitting in their home without stepping forth 行步. How can the Way thus be attained? For the Way, the Three must be united and Virtue accomplished. If Virtue is not complete in the Three, then nothing will be accomplished. The Three are the Way, the Virtue, and Man. Man comes first.

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<sup>69</sup> A pun on the famous line "The Tao is unchanging. It does not act, yet nothing is left undone" in *Daode jing* 37 (Zhu Qianzhi, *Laozi jiaoshi*, 146).

<sup>70</sup> Cf. same expression 自覺 in Sentiment 3 in *Wugan wen*.

<sup>71</sup> On Lu Xiuqing's use of the Buddhist term, referring to the boundless suffering that is the lot of mortals, see Tang Yijie, *Wei Jin Nanbei chao shiqi di dao jiao*, 280.

<sup>72</sup> *Taishang dongxuan lingbao fazhu jing* 2a-b.

<sup>73</sup> The author is here equating the word *jing* 經, "book, classic, scripture" with *jing* 徑, "path."

<sup>74</sup> NB importance of moral component in salvation for Lu. Meditation and self-cultivation is not enough.

Meritorious conduct is second. The attainment of the Way, once Virtue is complete, is number three. When these three things come together, then the Way is attained. If a person only performs meritorious acts but does not comprehend the Tao, then he will not attain the Tao, either. If he only understands the Tao but does not perform meritorious acts, then he will also not attain the Tao. If the law of the Tao 道法 existed without human beings, then the ultimate principles 至理 would fall away and disappear, and [the Tao] would return to the state of non-being 無有. It's like sowing cereals. If you cast the seeds into the ground but there is no water to moisten them, then how can they grow? If you have a lord and ministers but no people, then how can there be government? If you have Heaven and Earth but no human beings, then how can life come to fruition 成養? Thus it is said "The Three engender all things 三生萬物."<sup>75</sup>

[Sermon 2]

Thus says the Tao: He who wants to rule men, should first rule himself. He who wants to correct others, you should first correct himself. For ruling oneself and correcting one's thoughts, there is nothing superior to the discipline of the Retreat 齋直.<sup>76</sup> Retreat 齋 means to put in order 齊. It serves to order mankind's muddled conduct. Discipline 直 is rectitude 正. It serves to correct man's mind as a novice 入道. Purity of thought and stillness of spirit, this is the meaning of *zhai* and the object of undergoing the Retreat. The life of man knows four great anxieties 累: when he is hungry, he worries about food. When he is cold, he worries about clothing. When he has already attained sufficiency in clothing and food, he worries about amassing more. Those who are poor desire wealth. Those who are lowly desire nobility. Thus [craving for] honors 榮, taste 味, sounds 聲, and sights,<sup>77</sup> and all the various desires, engender one another. While he has not yet gained, he worries about not gaining. When he has already gained, he

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<sup>75</sup> From the Taoist cosmogony according to *Daode jing* 42 (Zhu Qianzhi, *Laozi jiaoshi*, 174).

<sup>76</sup> See also Sermon 4.

<sup>77</sup> These last could also mean "song and sex," but the subsequent text makes clear that Lu is referring to the sensory perception of the ear and the eye.

worries about losing. His ambitions know not a moment's respite. All his life he worries about nothing but toil. Agitated, he strives to get ahead, while affairs keep piling up. Right and wrong, gain and loss, sorrow and joy, happiness and anger, a vexed mind, tired body, and bitter spirit, these distance the *qi* of the Way 道氣<sup>78</sup> from the self. When the *hun* 魂 and *po* 魄 souls depart from a human being, the body becomes like an empty city. Calamities are daily encountered, infants ail and fall ill, people die prematurely and are buried, and find themselves demoted to the three evil destinations of rebirth 三塗,<sup>79</sup> erring calamitously in the afterlife 後世.<sup>80</sup> It is for that reason that the sages instituted the Retreat. Purity and stillness 清淨 shield against the cares of this world, fully account for the *hun* and *po* souls, rest the essential spirit 精神. You must practice it with utmost sincerity and reverence, cease speech and refrain from making noise, nor must you jest. If there is reprehensible behavior, miscellaneous thoughts and lack of attention, the eye lacks discernment and sees not right and wrong, the ear is deaf hears not good and evil tidings. Let a simple life be your goal, and emptiness and nothingness your objective. Make moderation your principle and eating little your foundation. If you focus your thoughts of the Way and meditate upon the spirit 存神, then Heaven and Man will be in consonance, disaster will be averted, blessings will descend, and your original destiny 性命 will be fulfilled. Thus it is said "With purity and stillness you can rule the world 清淨為天下正."<sup>81</sup>

The theme of Sermon 3 is "To seize the world, be ever detached 取天下常以無事;"<sup>82</sup> Sermon 4: "Free from desire, I am tranquil; and the world is governed

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<sup>78</sup> See also sermon 3.

<sup>79</sup> See also *Wugan wen* and elsewhere (*Chisong zi zhangli* chapter).

<sup>80</sup> Another Buddhist term for *laishi* 來世, the world after death.

<sup>81</sup> The last line of *Daode jing* 45 (Zhu Qianzhi, *Laozi jiaoshi*, 184), on the power of quietude. For *qingjing* 清淨 read *qingjing* 清靜. This sermon discussed in Cheng Kit-ting paper.

<sup>82</sup> *Daode jing* 48 (Zhu Qianzhi, *Laozi jiaoshi*, 193), another line on the power of quietude.

by itself 無欲以靜，天下自正；”<sup>83</sup> Sermon 5: “Blunt the edge, untie the entanglements 挫其銳，解其紛；”<sup>84</sup> Sermon 6: “The spirit of the valley never dies 谷神不死；”<sup>85</sup> Sermon 7: “To return to one’s destiny is to become unchanging. He who does not to know the unchanging is reckless and will meet with misfortune 復命曰常，不知常，妄作凶；”<sup>86</sup> Sermon 8: “Stop the openings, shut the doors; use the light and return to discernment 塞其兌，閉其門，用其光，復歸其明；”<sup>87</sup> Sermon 9: “Harbor [your soul] and embrace the One; polish the mirror of mystery 載營[魄]抱一，滌除玄覽；”<sup>88</sup> and Sermon 10: “One can know the Way of Heaven without peering through the window; one can know the world without leaving the door 不窺牖，見天道；不出戶，知天下。”<sup>89</sup>

### *On filial debt and redemption*

In the winter of the *guiji* 癸己 year (AD 453),<sup>90</sup> Lu Xiujing led his disciples in preparing for the ritual deprivations 科禁 of the Mud and Coal Retreat 三元塗炭之齋.<sup>91</sup> The disciples underwent extreme hardship during the lengthy ritual in harsh winter conditions. Lu Xiujing records that they dared not relent. To strengthen and encourage the disciples, he says, he pronounced a sermon on

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<sup>83</sup> Conflated from *Daode jing* 57 (Zhu Qianzhi, *Laozi jiaoshi*, 232): “I value tranquility, and the people are governed by themselves... I am free from desire, and the people of themselves achieve simplicity 我好靜，人自正 ... 我無欲，人自朴。”

<sup>84</sup> Or: “... blunt the edge, dissolve your anger (*fen* 忿)...” See *Daode jing* 4, 56 (Zhu Qianzhi, *Laozi jiaoshi*, 19, 228). See also Sermon 6.

<sup>85</sup> *Daode jing* 6 (Zhu Qianzhi, *Laozi jiaoshi*, 25).

<sup>86</sup> Conflation of *Daode jing* 16 (Zhu Qianzhi, *Laozi jiaoshi*, 66): “... To return to one’s destiny is to become unchanging. To know the unchanging is to be discerning. He who does not to know the unchanging acts recklessly and will meet with misfortune 復命曰常，知常曰明。不知常，忘作，凶。”

<sup>87</sup> Excerpted from *Daode jing* 52 (Zhu Qianzhi, *Laozi jiaoshi*, 206-7).

<sup>88</sup> Excerpted from *Daode jing* 10 (Zhu Qianzhi, *Laozi jiaoshi*, 37, 40).

<sup>89</sup> Inversion of the two opening phrases from *Daode jing* 47 (Zhu Qianzhi, *Laozi jiaoshi*, 189).

<sup>90</sup> Yuanjia 30, last year of the reign of Wendi; accession of Xiaowu di in the fourth month.

<sup>91</sup> See discussion at the end of this work. See also *Xiaodao lun*, with reference to Lu Xiujing (Chan Kwan paper, 6-9). Yamada Akihiro, “Totansai kō.”

The Five Sentiments of Gratitude,<sup>92</sup> an exercise in contrition consisting of five meditations on debt and redemption. A new sense of anxiety conveyed in this sermon reflects an important development in fifth-century Taoism: the reorientation of the liturgical program towards the felicity and salvation of one's deceased parents. The radical separation of the realms of the living and the dead in early Heavenly Master ritual, beginning in the Later Han period, here gives way to a revival of the ancestral cult and the importance of filial devotion thanks to the assimilation of these Chinese religious traditions with the increasingly popular Buddhist rites for the dead.<sup>93</sup> With the Lingbao renewal of Taoist ritual, the redemptive focus begins to shift towards the deliverance of deceased ancestors for their own sake, in the place of the earlier principal objective of exorcising the unsettled dead as a source of disease and misfortune befalling the living.<sup>94</sup> This reorientation responded to a Buddhist recasting of Chinese filial devotion as the ritual intercession of a celibate sangha, the Buddhist monastic community, on behalf of deceased parents. Lu Xiuqing's heart-rending meditations in the Five Sentiments on the gratuitous kindness and self-sacrifice of parents links their redemption to the sincerity of the descendants contrition and sacrifices on their behalf, in language that closely resembles Buddhist popular scriptures of the period.<sup>95</sup> For Lu Xiuqing, the link between China's ancient tradition of the Retreat and the liturgical program of the Lingbao scriptures lay in the attitudes of detachment, purification, and self-examination that his Ten Sermons, pronounced at the main junctures throughout the ritual itself, eloquently linked to the classical Taoist thought of the *Daode jing*.

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<sup>92</sup> *Dongxuan lingbao wugan wen* 洞玄靈寶五感文, *Daozang* 1278.

<sup>93</sup> See Franciscus Verellen, "The Five Sentiments of Gratitude," in *Sources of Chinese Tradition*, vol. 1., edited by Wm. Theodore de Bary and Irene Bloom, 404-406. New York: Columbia University Press, 1999.

<sup>94</sup> See Franciscus Verellen, "The Heavenly Master liturgical agenda according to Chisong zi's Petition Almanac," *Cahiers d'Extrême-Asie* 14 (2004): 291-343.

<sup>95</sup> See Mugitani Kunio 麥谷邦夫, "Shinfubo kō: Dōkyō ni okeru shinfubo no gainen to kō o megutte 眞父母考 道教における眞父母の概念と孝をめぐって," in *Chūgoku chūsei shakai to shūkyō* 中國中世社會と宗教, edited by Mugitani Kunio, 19-38. Kyoto: Dōkisha, 2002.

