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# A BUDDHIST *SŪTRA*'S TRANSFORMATION INTO A DAOIST TEXT

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*for Robert H. Gassmann, at his 60th birthday*

## *Abstract*

Daoism and Chinese Buddhism interacted in complex ways over the last two millenia. However, the precise nature of this two-way exchange still awaits a systematic investigation. Since the early 1980s, the Buddhist impact on *lingbao*-Daoism has become evident. Recently, it was suggested that the developing Daoist monasticism of fifth century Southern China may also have been influenced by the then already existing Buddhist one. Of special interest are Daoist texts that predate the *lingbao*-corpus and show some form of Buddhist influence as they might have had an impact on the latter. As a possible point of departure, an analysis of Yang Xi's adaptation of the Buddhist *Forty-two sections of Buddhist sutras* is offered. It shows that already a generation earlier than Ge Chaofu's *lingbao* scriptures Daoists not only had first hand knowledge of Buddhism but even made *verbatim* use of their scriptures to their own ends. As a by-product of this analysis, it is even possible to emend the received version of the *Forty-two sections of Buddhist sutras* where it apparently is defective.

## 1. Introduction

The first four centuries of the common era witnessed not only the arrival of some forms of Buddhism in China, this was also the formative period of several traditions of Daoism, the indigenous Chinese *Hochreligion*.<sup>1</sup> Both were essentially different: whereas the Buddhists sought to get out of *samsāra* by entering *nirvāṇa* or final extinction, the Daoists aimed at becoming immortals – either earthly immortals who would live on on earth for centuries, now and then changing their whereabouts and altering their social identities, or heavenly immortals who would ascend heaven in broad daylight in order to integrate themselves into the heavenly hierarchy.

1 An early version of this article was presented at the XVth EACS European Association of Chinese Studies Conference, Heidelberg, August 25–29, 2004.

Nevertheless, from the very beginning both religions influenced each other in various and complex ways. One of the reasons for this was that both competed with each other to win influence on the élite. Quite often when a monk found himself immersed in a discussion with some members of the court or high officials, he was confronted with Daoist notions and was asked whether or not the Buddhists had a similar concept. The same was true the other way round. The following example, taken from a Daoist source of the sixth century reporting events of earlier times, may give an impression of it:

Before that, when he (Lu Xiuqing, [406–477]) had reached Jiujiang<sup>2</sup>, the Prince of Jiujiang asked about the pros and cons as well as identical and different [points between] Daoism and Buddhism. The Master answered: “In Buddhism there is the *liu qin*<sup>3</sup>, in Daoism there is the Jade Sovereign<sup>4</sup>; these, however, by different roads lead to the same result, and that is all.” The princes and dukes praised [this as] good.

[...] The Son of Heaven then commanded the ‘minister of education’, the Prince of Jian’an,<sup>5</sup> and the ‘director of the imperial secretariat’, Yuan Can,<sup>6</sup> to provide the ceremony of a large banquet, to set up a platform for summoning the worthies, to invite all the accomplished gentlemen of the court, to widely gather the present-day [men of] excellence, and to assemble [them] at the Buddha-Monastery of the Ornament [of the Soul] (Zhuangyan Fo Si 莊嚴佛寺). At that occasion, the ‘scholars of the dark talk’ vigorously debated the *He [shang gong]* commentary [to the *Daode jing*]; the vastly learned *śramaṇas* [as their] opponents in discussion sharp-pointedly put forth [their counter-arguments]; argued back and forth the [teachings of] Laozi and [of] Śākyamuni,<sup>7</sup> competing in mutually questioning and arguing [against each other]. The Master marked [their] principles and disciplined [their] statements, untied [their] confusions and smoothed [their] sharp edges. The princes and dukes sighed and tapped in admiration, and those near and distant were pleased and submitted [to his arguments]. When the session was finished they submitted a report to the Lord ruling over the people<sup>8</sup>. Within ten days, [the emperor] again requested [that they] assemble, but this time in the ‘Lodging-house of the Invited Worthies’ in the [imperial]

2 Modern Jiujiang city, Jiangxi province.

3 留秦, although this seems to be a rather important expression – according to the fragment’s context – I have not yet been able to identify it. As it is presented here in parallel with the Daoists’ highest god 玉皇, it accordingly should indicate the highest divine being in Buddhism.

4 玉皇 or 玉皇上帝, is the God of Heaven, 天帝, the chief of the Daoist pantheon, cf. MASPERO 1981:88–91 *et passim*.

5 Liu Xiuren 劉休仁 (432–470). His official biography is in *Song shu* 宋書, ed. Zhonghua shuju, Beijing 1974, 72.1871–1878.

6 420–477. Official biography in *Song shu* 89.2229–2234.

7 李釋, lit.: “Li” and “Shi”. “Li” stands for Laozi, “Shi” is short for Shi jia mou ni 釋迦牟尼.

8 The emperor.

Hualin [park]. The emperor went out to attend in person. When the princes and dukes had fully gathered, and the Master wearing a deer head-cloth, ascended [the throne-platform], in order to pay his respectful visit to the emperor, the Son of Heaven sat gravely with enhanced respect, and personally asked about the *dao* and inquired about the utmost object of veneration. The Master pointedly explained the 'gate of the mysteries'<sup>9</sup>, exhaustingly expounded *samsāra* (?)<sup>10</sup>, and went to the infinitesimal as well as to all patterns of the mysterious without exception. The emperor's heart was pleased about it. The princes and dukes, too, asked: "We have not heard the Daoists (道家) explaining the 'three periods'<sup>11</sup>." The Master replied: "The scripture says: 'I don't know whose son [it]<sup>12</sup> is, [but] it images the forefather of God.'<sup>13</sup> When there already is a before, there presumably will be an after. When there is a before and an after, there will presumably be a middle. *Zhuangzi* says: 'No sooner is one born than one is dying.'<sup>14</sup> Both these [quotations] elucidate the three periods. But their words are terse and their principles are mysterious [so] the world was not yet able to apprehend it!" While the emperor<sup>15</sup> wanted to compel him [to stay] by [bestowing on him] honours, the Master gazed into the distance and was not interested<sup>16</sup>. [...]<sup>17</sup>

In such situations Daoists had to know Buddhist concepts and had to be able to relate them to their own ones. Similarly, Buddhists had to be acquainted with Daoist notions. Both picked up and adopted aspects of the other's systems as it seemed suitable. We should not forget that there also existed an economic competition between both over the control of ritual services which "certainly resulted in much of the shared vocabulary and doctrinal coincidence we find in the texts left to us".<sup>18</sup> A culmination was reached when the Daoist *lingbao*-(靈寶) tradition towards the end of the fourth century AD almost wholesale copied Buddhist *sūtras* into texts of their own corpus.<sup>19</sup>

9 This may be an allusion to *Daode jing* A1 and thus a metaphor for the *dao*.

10 流統. I have not yet found another reference for this expression. Probably 流統 stands for 流轉, the usual Chinese translation of the term *samsāra*.

11 三世, refers to the principle of karmic retribution which is known as 三世因果, "cause and effect of the three periods", which sets the retributive sequence through past, present and future.

12 S.c.: the *dao*.

13 *Daode jing* A.4.

14 *Zhuangzi* 2.

15 朝廷, original meaning "the Court", here obviously used in a derived meaning: the inhabitant of the court, the emperor.

16 不顧, lit.: "did not turn [his] head".

17 *Daoxue zhuan* 道學傳 ap. *Sandong zhu'nang* 三洞珠囊 HY 1131, 2.5a7–6b7, translated in BUMBACHER 2000:209–214.

18 BOKENKAMP 2004:331.

19 BOKENKAMP 2004 and 1990:126f.



While the investigation of the history of Buddho-Daoist interactions still is a *desideratum*, we should like to offer in the following but a small contribution to this wide and vastly and unexplored field.

## 2. The Buddhist version of the 佛經四十二章 *Forty-two sections of Buddhist sūtras*

The *Sūtra of Forty-two sections* 四十二章經 is traditionally considered the oldest extant Chinese Buddhist text. In fact, this is already hinted at in the first chapter of Huijiao's (497–554) 慧皎 *Gaoseng zhuan* 高僧傳 (Biographies of eminent Buddhist monks), where it is said that Kāśyapa Mātāṅga during the reign of Han Mingdi (r. 57–75) came to China as “the first of the *śramaṇas* in China” (漢地有沙門之始也) but did not preach as there were not yet any converts (但大法初傳未有歸信. 故蘊其深解無所宣述) – and “according to a record translated the *Sūtra of Forty-two sections* in one *juan*” (有記云. 騰譯四十二章經一卷).<sup>20</sup> The claim is, however, made explicit in *Gaoseng zhuan*'s biography of Dharmaratna. Here we learn that of the first five Buddhist texts originally brought to China only the *Sūtra of Forty-two sections* actually still exists, containing roughly two thousand words, of all *sūtras* extant on Chinese soil this is the first one (唯四十二章經今見在. 可二千餘言. 漢地見存諸經. 唯此爲始也).<sup>21</sup>

This received title is, however, not only not the original one but it is also misleading. *Sūtras* usually begin with the opening formula “thus I have heard” (如此我聞) which then is followed by a statement of the form “once the Enlightened One was preaching at such-and-such a place” to which the list of the most prominent members of his audience is added. While our text also begins with a kind of introduction, its form is entirely different from the traditional opening sequence of a *sūtra*, as will be shown shortly. In fact, not only all early references call our text 佛經四十二章 (Forty-two sections of Buddhist *sūtras*) or similar<sup>22</sup>, but the text itself refers to “forty-two sections” as it says: “They wrote down (or: copied) forty-two sections of selected Buddhist *sūtras*” (寫取

20 *Gaoseng zhuan* 高僧傳 T 50.2059:322cf.

21 Ibid.:323a.

22 E.g., Mouzi 牟子 ap. *Hongming ji* 弘明集 T 52.2102:4c, *Zhen gao* HY 1010:9.20a, *comm. Shishuo xinyu* 世說新語, Taipei 1974:53.

佛經四十二章).<sup>23</sup> The designation *sūtra* or *jing* 經 seems to have been given to this text during the Tang dynasty, in order to make evident the prestige of this text also in its title.

The earliest extant edition<sup>24</sup> apparently is that of the Korean Buddhist canon of 1251<sup>25</sup> on which the *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* edition, edited by Takakusu Junjiro, Tokyo 1924–1932, is based.

The text consists of two parts of unequal length, namely an introductory narrative relating Han Emperor Ming's famous dream of a golden person surrounded by a halo who flew to his palace and who was later identified as the Buddha. Upon learning who this golden person was, the emperor spiritually awoke and sent messengers to the west who eventually brought the text to China. As a consequence of which *stūpas* and monasteries were erected and Buddhism vastly expanded. The second part of the text, on the other hand, contains forty-two sections including the Buddha's instructions on precepts, proper conduct and ethical behaviour to be observed by the monks.

Both parts seem to have originated at different times. Most scholars agree that the introductory narrative must have been written after the Han dynasty but before ca. AD 300, most probably around 250.<sup>26</sup> The main text, however, must be older: There exists indeed an unmarked early quotation in the famous memorial submitted by the scholar Xiang Kai 襄楷 in AD 166.<sup>27</sup> It may be useful to give the relevant phrases in a synopsis:

*Synopsis of the relevant phrases of Xiang Kai's memorial and the corresponding passage of the received version of the Forty-two sections of Buddhist sūtras*

HHS	天神遺以	好女，	浮屠	曰此但	革囊盛血
42	天神獻	玉女於佛欲以試佛意觀佛道	佛	言	革囊眾穢

23 *Sishier zhang jing* 四十二章經 T 17.784:722a.

24 On the editions of the *Sishier zhang jing* cf. T'ANG 1936:147–155.

25 On the Korean Buddhist canon, cf. LANCASTER 1979:ix–xvii.

26 ZÜRCHER 1959:22.

27 *Hou Han shu* 後漢書 30B:1082. Zürcher speaks of “two quotations from the ‘Sūtra in Forty-two Sections’” (ZÜRCHER 1959:38). However, the second “quotation”, in my view at least, deviates too much from the corresponding sentence in the Buddhist original to be termed a quotation. The original sentence reads: “[the *shamen*] under a mulberry tree stays over night once” 樹下一宿, whereas Xiang Kai's memorial has: “The Buddha did not sleep three nights under the [same] mulberry tree” 浮屠不三宿桑下.

Xiang Kai's sentences may be rendered as: "A heavenly spirit presented [him] with a beautiful girl, [but] the Buddha said: 'This is no more than a bag of skin filled with blood.'" The received version of the *Forty-two sections*, on the other hand, reads: "A heavenly spirit offered a jade girl to the Buddha, wanting to test the Buddha's mind and examine the Buddha's Way. [But] the Buddha said: 'This is no more than a bag of skin full of dirt.'"

Provided that Xiang Kai is quoting literally – which by no means can be taken as for granted – and given the present state of knowledge, we cannot decide whether he has abridged the text or whether the additional phrases in the received version are later interpolations. Be it as it may, collating both versions we notice immediately two things: firstly, Xiang Kai's quotation still uses the term *fou tu* 浮屠 as the very early transliteration for Buddha which later became *fo* 佛 in Chinese. And secondly, the *textus receptus* differs in a few instances from the earlier one. In any case, this quotation would provide us with a *terminus ante quem* for the main text in its original form, namely AD 166.

### 3. Introductory narrative

The earliest direct quotation of the introductory narrative is to be found in Sengyou's 僧祐 *Chu sanzang ji ji* 出三藏記集 (Collection of excerpts from the Tripiṭaka), first published in 515 and revised in 518, which calls it a "preface" 序.<sup>28</sup> Collation of the received version and that of the *Chu sanzang ji ji* (CSZJJ, for short) reveals that both are identical except two characters: the name Fu Yi 傅毅 is in the CSZJJ given as Chuan Yi 傳毅 and the received version has a *di* 第 in the expression 在第十四石函中 which is lacking in CSZJJ:

*Synopsis of the received version of the introductory narrative and CSZJJ's version*

42 昔漢孝明皇帝。夜夢見神人。身體有金色。項有日光。飛在殿前。意中欣  
CSZJJ 昔漢孝明皇帝。夜夢見神人。身體有金色。項有日光。飛在殿前。意中欣

42 然。甚悅之。明日問群臣。此為何神也。有通人傅毅曰。臣聞天竺。有得  
CSZJJ 然。甚悅之。明日問群臣。此為何神也。有通人傳毅曰。臣聞天竺。有得

28 *Chu sanzang ji ji* 6.42c For an early investigation of this part of the text cf. MASPERO 1910.

42 道者。號曰佛。輕舉能飛。殆將其神也。於是上悟。即遣使者張騫羽林中  
CSZJJ 道者。號曰佛。輕舉能飛。殆將其神也。於是上悟。即遣使者張騫羽林中

42 郎將秦景博士弟子王遵等十二人。至大月支國。寫取佛經四十二章。在第  
CSZJJ 郎將秦景博士弟子王遵等十二人。至大月支國。寫取佛經四十二章。在

42 十四石函中。登起立塔寺。於是道法流布。處處修立佛寺。遠人伏化願爲  
CSZJJ 十四石函中。登起立塔寺。於是道法流布。處處修立佛寺。遠人伏化願爲

42 臣妾者。不可稱數國內清寧。含識之類。蒙恩受賴。于今不絕也。  
CSZJJ 臣妾者。不可稱數國內清寧。含識之類。蒙恩受賴。于今不絕也。

If the *textus receptus* of this narrative section represented indeed the original text, the *CSZJJ* ought to be considered a trustful witness. However, turning to the indirect quotations it becomes evident that the original version of this introductory narrative must have been different from the received version and that, most probably, the latter was at some time altered on the basis of the *CSZJJ* version.

There are two early indirect quotations. One is integrated into the Buddhist *Mouzi* or, more precisely, *Mouzi's Lihuo lun* 牟子理惑論 (Master Mou, On removing the doubts), the other is contained within the Daoist *Zhen gao* 真誥 (Declarations of the perfected). As to the *Mouzi*, its date of composition is still not quite clear. The *Mouzi* is preserved in Sengyou's 僧祐 (435–518) *Hongming ji* 弘明集 (Collection of [essays relating the] expansion and elucidation [of Buddhism]).<sup>29</sup> As the *Mouzi* refers to Prince Sudāna whose story is taken from the *Vessantara jātaka*<sup>30</sup> the earliest version of which was translated into Chinese some time between 247 and 280,<sup>31</sup> this gives us a *datum post quem*. On the other hand, the *Mouzi* was included in Lu Cheng's 陸澄 (425–494) collection of Chinese Buddhist literature, the *Fa lun* 法論 which was compiled shortly after 465.<sup>32</sup> So it must have been written somewhere between 247 and 465. However, we were able to gather evidence that the received version of the *Mouzi* may have been altered at some time during its transmission. There exist

29 *Hongming ji* 1b–7a, especially 4c.

30 KEENAN 1994:106.

31 ZÜRCHER 1959:14.

32 ZÜRCHER 1959:13.

three *Mouzi* quotations which, including by chance the passage which is relevant for our purposes, differ from the received version:

The first is to be found in Liu Jun's 劉峻 (462–521) commentary to Liu Yiqing's 劉義慶 (403–444) *Shishuo xinyu* 世說新語 (New account of tales of the world).<sup>33</sup> The second appears in Li Shan's 李善 (c. 630–689) commentary to Xiao Tong's 蕭統 (501–531) *Wen Xuan* 文選 (Selections of [refined] literature)<sup>34</sup> which was also copied into the *Taiping yulan*<sup>35</sup>. The most important quotation, however, is that in the anonymous *Lidai fa bao ji* 歷代法寶記 (Historical record of the law)<sup>36</sup> of ca. 780. It contains phrases that are no longer seen in the *textus receptus* of the *Mouzi* but appear, at least partially, also in the *Shishuo xinyu* quotation or in the *Wen xuan* quotation, which makes it quite likely that these sentences were part of the original *Mouzi* – and not interpolations of the *Lidai fa bao ji* – but were later either deliberately eliminated or accidentally lost. This is, at least in my view, a clear indication that the *Mouzi* has been subject to alterations during its transmission.

Let us present in a synopsis the passage as preserved in the received *Mouzi*, the *Mouzi*-quotation of the *Shishuo xinyu* commentary, that of the *Wen xuan* commentary and the *Mouzi*-quotation of the *Lidai fa bao ji*:

*Synopsis of Lihuo lun passage and its quotations in three later sources*

LHL	牟子曰.	昔	孝	明皇	帝.	夢見	神人.	身有日光.	飛在
SSXY	牟子曰:	漢		明	帝.	夜	夢	神人.	身有日光
WX	牟子曰:	漢		明	帝		夢見	神人,	身有日光,
LDFBJ	牟子云.	昔	漢	孝	明皇	帝.	夜	夢見	神人.
								身有日光.	飛在
LHL	殿前.	欣然		悅之.	明日	博問群臣.	此爲何神.		
SSXY					明日	博問群臣.			
WX	殿前.					以問群臣.			
LDFBJ	殿前.	意中	欣然也.	心甚	悅之.	明日	傳問群臣.	此爲何物.	

33 *Shishuo xinyu*, loc. cit.

34 *Wen Xuan* 59.8a.

35 *Taiping yulan* 653:4b.

36 *Lidai fa bao ji* 179c.

LHL	有	通	人傳毅	曰. 臣聞天竺有得	道者.	號曰佛.	飛
SSXY		通	人傳毅對	曰: 臣聞天竺有	道者.	號曰佛. 輕舉能	飛
LDFBJ	有	通事舍	人傳毅	曰. 臣聞天竺有德	道者.	號曰佛. 輕舉	飛
LHL	行虛空.	身有日光.	殆將其神也.	於是上寤.	遣中郎蔡愔.		
SSXY		身有日光.	殆將其神也.	於是	遣		
LDFBJ	騰.	身有日光.	殆將其神.	於是上寤.	遣		
LHL		羽林郎中秦景.	博士弟子王遵等	十八人. 於	大月支.	寫	
SSXY		羽林將軍秦景.	博士弟子王遵等	十二人. 之	大月氏國.	寫	
LDFBJ	使張騫	羽林郎中秦.	博士弟子王尊等一	十二人.	大月支.	寫	
LHL		佛經四十二章. 藏	在蘭臺石室第十四間.	時於洛陽城西雍門外起			
SSXY	取	佛經四十二部.	在蘭臺石室.				
LDFBJ	取	佛經四十二章.	在蘭臺石室第十四.	即時洛陽城西雍門外起			
LHL	佛寺. 於	其壁畫	千乘萬騎繞塔	三匝. 又於南宮清涼			
SSXY							
LDFBJ	佛寺.	其壁畫朝廷	千乘萬騎繞騎十	三匝. 又於南宮清涼			
LHL	臺. 及開陽城	門上作佛	像. 明帝	時.	豫修	造	
SSXY							
LDFBJ	臺. 及開陽	門上作佛形	像. 明帝在	時. 知命無常.		先	造
LHL	壽陵	曰. 顯節亦於其上作佛圖像.		時國豐民寧. 遠夷			
SSXY							
LDFBJ	壽陵. 陵	曰. 顯節亦於其上作佛圖像. 於未滅	時國豐民寧. 遠夷				
LHL	慕義.						
SSXY							
LDFBJ	慕義.	咸來歸德. 願爲臣妾者. 以爲億數. 故諡曰明也. 自是之後. 京					
LHL			學者由此而滋.				
SSXY							
LDFBJ	城左右及州縣處處各有佛寺.	學者由此而滋.					

Whereas both the *Shishuo xinyu* commentary and the *Wen xuan* commentary are abridging the text they are quoting but, on the other hand, are complementing each other, it is the *Lidai fa bao ji* which gives the passage in full. We may now



attempt to tentatively reconstruct the original version of the *Lihuo lun* passage in question:

*Tentative reconstruction of the Lihuo lun passage*

昔〈漢〉孝明皇帝. 〈夜〉夢見神人. 身有日光. 飛在殿前. 〈意中〉欣然〈也〉. 心甚〈悅之〉. 明日博問群臣. 此爲何神也. 有通〈事舍〉人傅毅〈對〉曰. 臣聞天竺有得道者. 號曰佛. 〈輕舉能〉飛騰行虛空. 身有日光. 殆將其神也. 於是上寤. 遣中郎蔡愔. 〈使張騫〉羽林郎中秦景. 博士弟子王尊等〈一〉十〈八〉〈二〉人. 〈於〉〈之〉大月〈支〉〈氏國〉. 寫〈取〉佛經四十二章. 藏在蘭臺石室第十四間. 〈即〉時於洛陽城西雍門外起佛寺. 於其壁畫〈朝廷〉千乘萬騎繞塔三匝. 又於南宮清涼臺. 及開陽城門上作佛〈形〉像. 明帝〈在〉時. 〈知命無常.〉豫修造壽陵曰. 顯節亦於其上作佛圖像. 〈於未滅〉時國豐民寧. 遠夷慕義. 〈咸來歸德. 願爲臣妾者. 以爲億數. 故諡曰明也. 自是之後. 京城左右及州縣處處各有佛寺.〉學者由此而滋.

The other early indirect quotation of the introductory narrative of the *Forty-two sections* appears among the Daoist Yang Xi's 楊羲 (330–386?) texts – written between AD 364 and 370 – that were collected by Tao Hongjing 陶弘景 (456–536) in his *Zhen gao* 真誥 (Declarations of the perfected) of 499.

The *Zhen gao* is divided into seven books with a further subdivision into 20 卷 *juan*. The first five books, or *juan* 1–16, collect what the Perfected had revealed to the Daoist medium and “private religious specialist” to the Xu 許 family, Yang Xi 楊羲 (330–?) during the years 364–370. The sixth book contains letters, memoranda, and accounts of dreams recorded by Yang and the Xu family members themselves, “while they still dwelt in the world of men”<sup>37</sup>. Whereas the texts preserved within the first six books are all accompanied by Tao Hongjing's running commentary, the seventh book represents Tao's own editorial preface, in which he gives “a meticulous account of the manuscript components of the work”, his “reconstruction of their textual history, and a reasoned genealogy of the Xu family”.<sup>38</sup>

In *juan* nine we find the introductory narrative of the *Forty-two sections*. In his commentary to the passage, Tao Hongjing asserts that it is identical with the Buddhist text (*wai shu* 外書): 此說粗與外書同. We will now have to assess this statement.

37 STRICKMANN 1977:4.

38 Loc. cit.



Collating the *Zhen gao* version of the introductory narrative with the received version of the *Forty-two sections* we indeed find that, on the one hand, both versions agree to a large extent but, on the other, that there exists a series of differences between both:

*Synopsis of the received Forty-two sections and the Zhen gao versions of the introductory narrative*

- 42 昔 漢孝明皇帝. 夜 夢見神人. 身體 有金色. 項有日  
ZG 漢孝明皇帝. 夜 夢見神人. 身 長丈六. 項生圓
- 42 光. 飛在殿前. 意中 欣然. 甚 悅之. 明日 問群臣.  
ZG 光. 飛在殿前. 欣然 悅之. 遍 問朝廷.
- 42 有 通人傅毅 曰. 臣聞天竺. 有得道者. 號曰佛. 輕舉能  
ZG 通人傅毅對 曰. 臣聞天竺國. 有得道者. 號曰佛. 傳聞能
- 42 飛。 殆將 其神也。 於是 上 悟。即遣使者張騫  
ZG 飛行。身有白光。 殆 其神乎。 帝乃 悟。即遣使者張騫
- 42 羽林中 郎將 秦景. 博士弟子 王遵等十二人. 至大月支國. 寫  
ZG 羽林 郎 秦景. 博士 王遵等十四人. 之大月氏國. 採 寫
- 42 取 佛經四十二章. 在 第十四石函中. 登 起  
ZG 佛經四十二章. 祕蘭臺石室 第十四. 即時 起洛陽城西門外
- 42 立塔寺. 於是道法流布. 處處修 立佛寺.  
ZG 道北 立佛寺. 又於南宮清涼臺. 作佛形
- 42  
ZG 像. 及鬼子母圖. 帝感非常. 先造壽陵. 亦於殿上作佛象. 是時. 國豐民安.
- 42 遠人伏化. 願爲臣妾者. 不可稱數國內清  
ZG 遠夷慕化. 願爲臣妾. 佛像來中國. 始自明帝時耳.
- 42 寧. 含識之類. 蒙恩受賴. 于今不絕也.  
ZG

This synopsis shows whole phrases that do occur in the *Zhen gao* but are absent in the received Buddhist version. Are these interpolations made by Yang Xi's hand? Of special interest are two sentences, namely:

1) The second phrase of 作佛形像, 及鬼子母圖 “they made an image of the shape of the Buddha, and a picture of Hārītī”. Note that the name *guizimu* 鬼子母 or Hārītī is not found in the Daoist literature, while it is quite prominent in the Buddhist texts from the *Samyuktāgama* to the *Lotus sūtra*. Hārītī was “a woman who having vowed to devour all the babies at Rādjaṅṛha was reborn as a female ghost (*rākṣasī*), and gave birth to 500 children, one of which she was to devour every day. Converted by Śākyamuni she entered a convent. Her image is to be seen in all nunneries.”<sup>39</sup> According to the *CSZJJ* there existed also a *Hārītī sūtra*. It is, therefore, quite likely that the “portrait of Hārītī” must have already been in the version of the *Forty-two sections of Buddhist sūtras* Yang Xi was using but in later versions was eliminated for unknown reasons. We thus may emend the received *Forty-two sections of Buddhist sūtras* accordingly.

2) The second sentence that is unique in Yang Xi's version reads: 佛像來中國. 始自明帝時耳 “that pictures of the Buddha came to China started from Mingdi's time on”. These phrases could be both, either a comment added by Yang Xi himself, or it could have been part of the early version of the *Forty-two sections* which was dropped (or lost) in later versions.

Apart from some *variorum* readings, all other apparent additions are most likely not expansions or complements made by Yang Xi – they may rather represent an earlier state of the text, still including parts that were discarded in later versions of the Buddhist version. To test this hypothesis, let us collate Yang Xi's version (ZG) with the reconstructed *Mouzi* version (LHL r) and with the Buddhist *textus receptus* (42).

*Synopsis of the received Forty-two sections, the Lihuo lun and the Zhen gao versions of the introductory narrative*

42	昔漢	孝明皇帝. 夜	夢見神人. 身體	有金色.	項
LHLr	昔〈漢〉	孝明皇帝. 〈夜〉	夢見神人. 身		
ZG	漢	孝明皇帝	夢見神人. 身	長丈六.	項

39 EITEL 1904:62f.

- 42 有日光. 飛在殿前. 意中 欣然. 甚 悅之. 明日  
 LHLr 有日光. 飛在殿前. 〈意中〉 欣然〈也. 心 甚〉 悅之. 明日博  
 ZG 生圓光. 飛在殿前. 欣然 悅之. 遍
- 42 問群臣. 有 通 人. 傅毅 曰.  
 LHLr 問群臣. 此爲何神也. 有 通〈事舍〉 人. 傅毅〈對〉 曰.  
 ZG 問朝廷. 通 人. 傅毅對 曰.
- 42 臣聞天竺 有得道者. 號曰佛. 輕 舉 能 飛.  
 LHLr 臣聞天竺 有得道者. 號曰佛. 〈 輕 舉 能〉 飛騰 行虛  
 ZG 臣聞天竺國 有得道者. 號曰佛. 傳 聞 能 飛 行.
- 42 殆將 其神也. 於是 上 悟. 即 遣  
 LHLr 空. 身有日光. 殆將 其神也. 於是 上 悟. 遣中郎蔡  
 ZG 身有白光. 殆 其神乎. 帝乃 悟. 即 遣
- 42 使者 張騫. 羽林 中郎將 秦景. 博士弟子 王遵等  
 LHLr 倍. 〈 使 張騫〉 羽林郎 中 秦景. 博士弟子 王尊等  
 ZG 使者 張騫. 羽林郎 秦景. 博士 王遵等
- 42 十 二人. 至 大月 支  
 LHLr 〈一〉 十 (八) 〈 二〉 人. (於) 〈 之〉 大月 (支) 〈 氏  
 ZG 十 四人. 之 大月 氏
- 42 國. 寫取 佛經四十二章. 在 第十四石函中.  
 LHLr 國〉. 寫〈取〉 佛經四十二章. 藏 在蘭臺石室 第十四間. 〈  
 ZG 國. 採 寫 佛經四十二章. 祕蘭臺石室 第十四.
- 42 登 起立塔寺. 於是道法流布.  
 LHLr 即〉 時 於 洛陽城西雍 門外 起  
 ZG 即 時起 洛陽城西 門外道北
- 42 處處修 立 佛寺.  
 LHLr 佛寺. 於其壁畫〈朝廷〉千乘萬騎繞塔三匝. 又於南宮  
 ZG 立 佛寺. 又於南宮

42

LHLr 清涼臺. 及開陽城門上 作佛〈形〉 像. 明 帝〈在〉  
 ZG 清涼臺. 作佛形 像. 及鬼子母圖. 帝

42

LHLr 時. 〈知命 無常.〉 豫修 造壽陵曰. 顯節. 亦於其上作  
 ZG 感 非常. 先 造壽陵. 亦於殿上作

42

LHLr 佛圖 像. 〈於未滅〉 時. 國豐民寧. 遠夷慕義. 〈咸來  
 ZG 佛 象. 是 時. 國豐民安. 遠夷慕化.

42

LHLr 歸德. 〉 願爲臣妾者. 不可稱數. 以爲億數. 故諡曰明也. 自是之  
 ZG 願爲臣妾.

42

LHLr 後. 京城左右及州縣處處各有佛寺. 〉 學者由此而滋.  
 ZG 佛像來中國.

42

LHLr 國內清寧. 含識之類. 蒙恩受賴. 于今不絕也.  
 ZG 始自明帝時耳.

This synopsis reveals that certain phrases that are lacking in the introductory narrative of the received *Forty-two sections* but are to be seen in the *Zhen gao* and could, accordingly, be considered inventions made by Yang Xi in fact also occur in the *Lihuo lun*. They, therefore, most certainly must have been part of the original version. These phrases include: 身有白光 “his body has a white light [surrounding it]”, 祕蘭臺石室 “he secreted [it] in the Stone Chamber at Lantai [in Luoyang]”, then 又於南宮清涼臺作佛形像 “moreover, he had an image of the Buddha’s shape made in the Qingjing tower of the Southern Palace” and, finally, the passage 帝感非常. 先造壽陵. 亦於殿上作佛象. 是時國豐民安 “the Emperor’s influence is not a constant one. [Therefore,] he earlier had [his] tomb built [in preparation for his death] and on top of [its] temple he had an image of the Buddha made. During that time, the realm prospered and the people were at peace.”

However, we still are left with the *Zhen gao* phrases 夢見神人. 身長丈六 “in a dream he saw a spirit person [whose] body was ‘of the ten feet measure six times’ long”. As the awkwardness of this English translation indicates, there must be something wrong with the second part of this passage. In fact, measures such as *chang* 丈 (ten feet) are usually preceded by the numeral. The correct reading of this passage which, as its source is older than the *Zhen gao*, corroborates the hypothesis that the *Zhen gao* has not expanded the text but kept to its source, can be found in another text: In the late years of the third or the first years of the fourth century a certain Wang Fou 王浮 compiled a work entitled *Hua hu jing* 化胡經 (Scripture of the conversion of the barbarians), originally in one *juan*.<sup>40</sup> In one of the preserved fragments, to be found in Zhen Luan’s 甄鸞 (fl. 570) *Xiao dao lun* 笑道論 (On laughing at Dao[ism]),<sup>41</sup> an indirect quotation of our text is to be seen which says: 明帝夢神人. 長一丈六尺. “Emperor Ming in a dream saw a spirit person [whose] body was sixteen feet (one *chang* and six *chi*) long”.<sup>42</sup> If this indeed represents the original reading, then – due to a scribal error – in the *Zhen gao* version the numeral *yi* – must have been lost during its transmission process. We have thus good reason to believe that both the (reconstructed) *Lihuo lun* and the *Zhen gao* still have the original text of the introductory narrative of the *Forty-two sections*, although abbreviated. We may thus venture to suggest a reconstruction of the narrative part of the *Forty-two sections*.

#### 4. Reconstruction of the introductory narrative

Based on the received version of the *Forty-two sections*, the reconstructed *Lihuo lun*, the *Zhen gao* and *CSZJJ* the following reconstruction can be proposed which we put side by side with the *textus receptus*:

40 On this text and its complex development until it was destroyed on imperial demand and on its author cf. ZÜRCHER 1959:293–298.

41 A complete English translation with introduction was published by KOHN 1995. For a review, cf. BUMBACHER 1996.

42 *Xiao dao lun* ap. *Guang hong ming ji* 廣弘明集 T 52.2103.147c.

*Proposed reconstruction of the  
Chinese text*

*Received Chinese text (T 784)*

昔漢孝明皇帝。夜夢見神人。身長  
〈一〉丈六。有金色<sup>43</sup>。項有日光。  
飛在殿前。意中欣然〈也。心〉甚悅  
之。明日博問群臣。〈此爲何神  
也。〉有通〈事舍〉人。傅毅〈對〉  
曰。臣聞天竺〈國〉有得道者。號曰  
佛。輕舉能飛。騰行虛空。身有日  
光。〉殆將其神也。於是上悟。即遣  
〈中郎蔡愔。〉使者張騫。羽林郎  
〈中〉秦景。博士弟子王尊等〈一〉  
十二人。之<sup>44</sup>大月〈支〉〈氏〉國。  
寫取佛經四十二章。〈藏〉在〈蘭臺  
石室第十四間。〉（登）〈即〉〈時  
於洛陽城西雍門外道北〉起立佛寺。  
<sup>45</sup>〈於其壁畫朝廷千乘萬騎繞塔三  
匝。又於南宮清涼臺。及開陽城門上  
作佛形像。及鬼子母圖。明帝在時知  
命無常。豫修造壽陵曰。顯節。亦於  
其上作佛圖像。於未滅是時。國豐民  
寧。〉遠（人）〈夷〉（伏）〈慕〉  
化。〈咸來歸德。〉願爲臣妾者。  
（不可稱數）。〈以爲億數。〉〈故  
諡曰明也。自是之後。京城左右及州  
縣處處各有佛寺。學者由此而滋。佛  
像來中國。始自明帝時耳。〉國內清  
寧。含識之類。蒙恩受賴。于今不絕  
也。

昔漢孝明皇帝。夜夢見神人。身體有  
金色。項有日光。飛在殿前。意中欣  
然。甚悅之。明日問群臣。此爲何神  
也。有通人傅毅曰。臣聞天竺有得道  
者。號曰佛。輕舉能飛。殆將其神也。  
於是上悟。即遣使者張騫羽林中郎將  
秦景博士弟子王遵等十二人。至大月  
支國。寫取佛經四十二章。在第十四  
石函中。登起立塔寺。於是道法流布。  
處處修立佛寺。遠人伏化願爲臣妾  
者。不可稱數。國內清寧。含識之類。  
蒙恩受賴。于今不絕也。

43 It cannot be ruled out that the phrase 有金色 is a later interpolation as it only occurs in the received *Forty-two sections* and in the *CSZJJ*.

44 Preferring the *lectio difficilior* 之 over the *lectio faciliior* 至.

45 Instead of 立佛寺 the received *Forty-two sections* and *CSZJJ* have 立塔寺. 於是道法流布. 處處修, which might well be a later interpolation.



We now have to ask how Yang Xi has dealt with this narrative part of the *Forty-two sections*. Collating both the reconstructed version of the narrative part and its quotation in the *Zhen gao* makes evident that Yang Xi's version shows alterations only at four insignificant, as it seems, places. The phrase 項有日光 "the nape of [his] neck had a sunny light [surrounding it]" became 項生圓光 "the nape of [his] neck brought forth a nimbus" (reading 圓光兒 for 圓光, which – as the nimbus was introduced into China by the Buddhists – may even preserve an earlier reading of the Buddhist version than its reconstruction). In Yang's version the emperor does not ask "all ministers" (群臣) but he asks "the court" (朝廷) about his dream. Then after the phrase 有得道者. 號曰佛 "[...] there is someone who has obtained the Way. [His] name is Fo" Yang inserted 傳聞 "Fu [Yi] has [further] heard that [...]". And finally, the passage 寫取佛經四十二章 "they copied forty-two sections of selected Buddhist sūtras" he changed into 採寫佛經四十二章 "they selected and copied forty-two sections of Buddhist sūtras", thus emphasizing even stronger what the reader of the *Forty-two sections* has sensed anyway: that the main body of the text must be some sort of *pastiche* compiled from various Buddhists texts.

In other words, Yang saw no necessity to change much of this Buddhist text whose religious provenance was evident anyway. He rather omitted parts not considered relevant for his purposes. Accordingly, the main differences between both versions consist of a series of abbreviations Yang Xi had made. That the *Zhen gao* version lacks the phrase 有金色 "[whose body] had a golden hue" does not necessarily mean that Yang Xi purged it. It is well possible, as mentioned earlier, that this phrase is a later interpolation. On the other hand, most probably intentional omissions include passages like 於其壁畫朝廷千乘萬騎繞塔三匝 "on its walls they painted the emperor, a thousand chariots and ten thousand riders [who] were circumambulating the *stūpa* three times" and 及開陽城門上 "as well as above the Kaiyang wall gate [they made images]" that provide the reader with specific information concerning localities in northern China, in and around the capital Luoyang. As Yang Xi delivered his writings to an audience resident in southern China, such detailed descriptions of sites from another part of the country that, furthermore, was no longer accessible as it now was under the control of foreigners, may not have been considered of great interest.

The other pieces of the text disregarded by Yang comprise sentences that describe the positive effects Buddhism had on the barbarians, such as 咸來歸德 "[the foreign tribes] came altogether and returned to virtue", or 以爲億數 "[those who wished to serve the Buddha] were considered amounting to more



than a hundred thousand” and they contain phrases characterizing the development of Buddhism on Chinese soil like 故諡曰明也。自是之後。京城左右及州縣處處各有佛寺。學者由此而滋 “therefore, [the Emperor] was given the posthumous title ‘the enlightened’ (*ming*). After this time, everywhere [in] the neighbourhood of the capital as well as in the regions and districts every [place] had [its] Buddhist monastery, the learners [of the *dharma*] hence increased” and 國內清寧。含識之類。蒙恩受賴。于今不絕也 “the interior of the country became pure and tranquil and [all] kinds of sentient beings received [this] favour with gratitude and obtained [something they could] trust to. Until today it has not ceased to be so”.

In analysing the narrative part of the *Forty-two sections* we in fact did not so much detect a new or specific Daoist reading of it – but thanks to this very early quotation in a Daoist text we were able to emend the received version and reconstruct the original one. Things, however, change considerably when we now turn towards the main textual body of the *Forty-two sections*.

## 5. Main text

As early as in 1933 Hu Shih identified twenty sections of the *Sūtra of 42 sections* as also appearing in the *Zhen gao* 真誥 and presented thirteen of them side by side with their Daoist counterpart.<sup>46</sup> In 1936 T’ang Yung-t’ung 湯用彤 observed that, in fact, almost half of the main body of the Buddhist text can also be found in the *Zhen gao*.<sup>47</sup> However, close examination of the *Zhen gao* reveals that it does not contain twenty, as Hu and T’ang maintained, but, in fact, twenty-five sections. Also note that both apparently overlooked (or did not take into account) that the introductory narrative, as we have seen, also can be found in the *Zhen gao*, although in a different chapter.

In general, T’ang was not interested in the Daoist aspects of these “borrowings” but he used the *Zhen gao* version to show that the Korean edition of *Forty-two sections of Buddhist sūtras* preserves an earlier reading than the other editions he investigated. Later, Isabelle Robinet as well as Stephen

46 HU no date I:155–176.

47 T’ANG 1936:147–155.

Bokenkamp mentioned the *Zhen gao*'s connection with the *Forty-two sections*, although without examining in any detail the relationship between the two.<sup>48</sup>

## 6. The Daoist version

In *juan* six of the *Zhen gao* almost half of the main text of the *Forty-two sections* is to be found, although in an edited version. Differences and identical passages will become immediately obvious when we list both texts in a synopsis, which is arranged according to the *Zhen gao* sequence of the sections:

### *Synopsis of the main part of the 42 Sections of Buddhist Scriptures and the Zhen gao*<sup>49</sup>

#### Section 35

- 42 佛言。 人爲道亦苦。不爲道亦苦。惟人自生至老。自老至病。  
 ZG 方諸青童見告曰。 人爲道亦苦。不爲道亦苦。惟人自生至老。自老至病。
- 42 自病至死。其苦無量。心惱積罪。生死不息。其苦難說。  
 ZG 護身至死。其苦無量。心惱積罪。生死不絕。其苦難說。況多不終其天年之
- 42  
 ZG 老哉。爲道亦苦者。清淨存其真。守玄思其靈。尋師轉軻。履試數百。勤心
- 42  
 ZG 不墮。用志堅審。亦苦之至也。

#### Section 42

- 42 佛言。吾 視諸侯之位。如過客。視金玉之寶。如礫石。視紈素之好。 如  
 ZG 視諸侯之位。如過客。視金玉之寶。如磚石。視紈綺 如
- 42 弊帛。  
 ZG 弊帛者。始可謂能問道耳。

48 ROBINET 1984, I:87; II:336. In II:338 there is no mention of the dream of Emperor Ming as to be found in the *Forty-two sections*, although it is mentioned in vol. I, loc. cit. BOKENKAMP 1986:141. YOSHIOKA 1971 was not available to me.

49 ZG 6.6a–10a. Tao Hongjing's interspersed commentaries are excluded.

## Section 40

42 佛言。 人 爲道能拔愛欲之根。 譬如摘懸珠。 一一摘

ZG 方諸青童君曰。 人之 爲道能拔愛欲之根者。 譬如掇懸珠。 一一掇

42 之。 會有盡時。 惡 盡 得道也。

ZG 之。 會有盡時。 稍去外 惡。 會有 盡時。 盡則 得道矣。

## Section 41

42 佛言。 諸沙門行道。 當如 牛負行深泥中。 疲極不敢左右顧。 趣欲離

ZG 又 近喻 牛負重行泥中。 疲極不敢左右顧。 趣欲離

42 泥以自 蘇息。 沙門視情欲。 甚於彼泥。 直心念道。 可免眾苦。

ZG 泥以 蘇息。 道士視情慾。 甚於彼泥中。 直心念道。 可免眾苦。 亦得道

42

ZG 矣。

## Section 36

42 佛言。 夫人離三惡道得爲人難。 既得爲人。 去女即男難。

ZG 西城王君告曰。 夫人離三惡道得爲人難也。 既得爲人。 去女爲男難也。

42 既得爲男。 六情 完具難。 六情已具。 生中國難。 既處中

ZG 既得爲男。 六情四體 完具難也。 六情既具。 得 生中國難也。 既處中

42 國。 值奉佛 道 難。 既奉佛道 值有道之君難。 生菩薩 家

ZG 國。 值有 道父母國君 難也。 既得 值有道之君。 生學道之 家

42 難。 既生菩薩家。 以心信三尊。 值佛世難。

ZG . 有慈仁善心難也。 善心既發。

42

ZG 信道德長生者難也。 既信道德長生。 值太平壬辰之運爲難也。 可不勗哉。

## Section 37

42 佛 問諸沙門。 人命在幾 間。 對曰。 在數日 間。 佛

ZG 太上 問道人曰。 人命在幾日 間。 或 對曰。 在數日之 間。 太上

42 言。 子未能爲道。 復 問一沙門。 人命在幾 間。 對 曰。 在飯食

ZG 曰。 子未能爲道。 或對 曰。 人命在飯食之 間。 太上 曰。

42 問佛子 未能爲道。 復問一沙門。 人命在幾間。 對曰。 呼吸之

ZG 子去矣。 未謂爲道。 或 對曰。 在 呼吸之

42 問。佛言。善哉。子可謂爲道者矣。

ZG 問。太上曰。善哉。可謂爲道者矣。吾昔聞此言。今以告子。子善學

42

ZG 道。庶可免此呼吸。

#### Section 38

42 佛言。弟子去離吾數千里。意念吾戒。必得道。

ZG 弟子雖去吾〔教〕千萬里。心存吾戒。必得道矣。研玉

42 在吾左側。意在邪。終不得道。其實在

ZG 經寶書。必得仙也。處吾左側者。意在邪行。終不得道也。

42 行。近而不行。何益萬分耶。

ZG

#### Section 39

42 佛言。人爲道猶若食蜜。中邊皆甜。吾經亦爾。

ZG 人之爲道讀道經行道事者。譬若食蜜。遍口皆甜。

42 其義皆快。行者得道矣。

ZG 六腑皆美。而有餘味。能行如此者得道矣。

#### Section 4

42 佛言。人有眾過。而不自悔。頓止其心。罪來歸

ZG 太虛真人南嶽赤君告曰。人有眾惡。而不自悔。頓止其心。罪來歸

42 身。猶水歸海。自成深廣矣。有惡知非。改過得善。罪日消滅。後會

ZG 已。如川歸海。日成深廣耳。有惡知非。悔過從善。罪滅善積。亦

42 得道也。

ZG 得道也。

#### Section 5

42 佛言。人愚吾以爲不善。吾以四等慈。護濟之。重以惡來者。吾

ZG 夫。人遇我以禍者。

42 重以善往。福德之氣。常在此也。害氣重殃。反在于彼。

ZG 當以福往。是故福德之氣。恆生於此。害氣重殃。還在於彼。此學

42

ZG 道之行也。

## Section 7

- 42 佛言. 惡人害賢者. 猶仰天而唾. 唾不污天. 還污己身.  
 ZG 又告曰. 惡人害賢. 猶仰天而唾. 唾不污天. 還污己〔刑〕.
- 42 逆風坩人. 塵不污彼. 還坩于身. 賢者不可毀. 過必滅己也.  
 ZG 逆風揚塵. 塵不污彼. 還灌其身. 道不可毀. 禍必滅己.

## Section 9

- 42 佛言. 飯凡人百. 不如飯一善人. 飯善人千. 不如飯持五戒者一.  
 ZG 太虛真人曰. 飯凡人百. 不如飯一善人. 飯善人千. 不如飯一學道者.
- 42 人. 飯辟支佛百億. 不如以三尊之教度其一世.  
 ZG 寒栖山林者. 益當以爲意.
- 42 二親. 教千億. 不如飯一佛學願求佛欲濟眾生也. 飯善人. 福最深重. 凡人事  
 ZG
- 42 天地鬼神. 不如孝其親矣. 二親最神也.  
 ZG

## Section 10

- 42 佛言. 天下有五難. 貧窮布施難. 豪貴學道難. 制命不死難.  
 ZG 紫元夫人告曰. 天下有五難. 貧窮惠施難也. 豪富學道難也. 制命不死難
- 42 . 得睹佛經難. 生值佛世難.  
 ZG 也. 得見洞經難也. 生值壬辰後聖世難也.

## Section 11

- 42 有沙門問佛. 以何緣得道. 奈何知宿命. 佛言. 道  
 ZG 我昔問太上. 何緣得識宿命. 太上答曰. 道德
- 42 無形. 知之無益. 要當守志行. 譬如磨鏡. 垢去明存. 即自見形. 斷欲  
 ZG 無形. 知之無益. 要當守志行道. 譬如磨鏡. 垢去明存. 即自見形. 斷六
- 42 守空. 即見道真. 知宿命矣.  
 ZG 情. 守空淨. 亦見道之真. 亦知宿命矣.

## Section 17

- 42 佛言. 一日行常念道行道. 遂得信根. 其福無量.  
 ZG 又曰. 念道行道信道. 遂得信根. 其福無量也.

## Section 14

42 佛言。 夫 爲道者。 譬如持炬 火入冥室中。 其冥即滅。 而明猶

ZG 紫微夫人告曰。 爲道者。 譬彼持 火入冥室中。 其冥即滅。 而明獨

42 在。 學道見諦。 愚癡都滅。 得無不見。

ZG 存。 學道存正。 愚癡即滅。 而正常存也。

## Section 20

42 佛言。 財色之於人。 譬如小兒貪刀。 刀之蜜 甜。 不足一食之

ZG 財色之於己也。 譬彼小兒貪刀。 刀之蜜。 其 甜 不足以

42 美。 然 有截舌之患也。

ZG 美口。 亦即 有截舌之患。

## Section 21

42 佛言。 人繫於妻子寶宅之患。 甚於牢獄桎梏銀鐐。 牢獄

ZG 玄清夫人告曰。 夫 人係於妻子寶宅之患。 甚於牢獄桎梏。 牢獄桎梏會

42 有原赦。 妻子情欲。 雖有虎口之禍。 己猶甘心投焉。 其罪無赦。

ZG 有原赦。 而 妻子情慾。 雖有虎口之禍。 己猶甘心投焉。 其罪無赦。

## Section 23

42 佛言。 愛欲之 於人。 猶執炬火逆風而行。 愚者不釋炬。 必有

ZG 情累 於人也。 猶執炬火逆風行也。 愚者不釋炬。 火 必

42 燒手之患。 貪姪恚怒愚癡之毒。 處在 人身。 不早以道除斯禍者。 必有

ZG 燒手。 貪欲恚怒愚癡之毒。 處 人身中。 不早以道除斯禍者。 必有

42 危殃。 猶 愚貪執炬自 燒其 手也。

ZG 危殆。 愚癡者火 燒 手之謂也。

## Section 25

42 佛言。 夫 爲道者。 猶木在水。 尋流而行。 不左觸岸。 亦不右觸岸。

ZG 爲道者。 猶木在水。 尋流而行。 亦 不左觸岸。 亦不右觸岸。

42 不爲人所取。 不爲鬼神所遮。 不爲洄流所住。 亦不腐敗。 吾保其入海矣

ZG 不爲人所取。 不爲鬼神所遮。 又不腐敗。 吾保其入海矣

42 . 人爲道。 不爲情欲所惑。 不爲眾邪所誑。 精進無疑。 吾保其得道矣。

ZG . 人爲道。 不爲穢慾所惑。 不爲眾邪所誑。 精進不疑。 吾保其得道矣。

## Section 31

- 42 佛言。 人從愛欲 生憂。 從 憂生 畏。 無愛即無憂。 不  
 ZG 南極夫人曰。 人從愛 生憂。 憂生則有 畏。 無愛即無憂。 無  
 42 憂即無畏。  
 ZG 憂則無畏。

## Section 33

- 42 有沙門夜誦經甚悲。 意有悔疑。 欲生思 歸。 佛呼沙  
 ZG 昔 有一人夜誦經甚悲。 悲至 意感。 忽有懷 歸之哀。 太上真  
 42 門 問之。 汝處于家將阿修爲。 對曰。  
 ZG 人忽作凡人。 徑往 問之。 子 嘗彈琴耶。 答曰。 在家時  
 42 恒彈琴。 佛 言。 絃緩何如。 曰。 不鳴矣。 絃急何如。  
 ZG 嘗彈之。 真人 曰。 絃緩何如。 答 曰。 不鳴不悲。 又問 絃急何如。  
 42 曰。 聲絕矣。 急緩 得中何如。 諸音普悲。  
 ZG 答 曰。 聲絕而傷悲。 又問 緩 急 得中如何。 答曰。 眾音和合。 八  
 42 佛告沙門。 學道猶然。 執心調適。 道可得矣。  
 ZG 音妙奏矣。 真人曰。 學道亦然。 執心調適。 亦如彈琴。 道可得矣。

## Section 22

- 42 佛言。 愛欲 莫甚於色。 色之爲欲。 其大無外。 賴  
 ZG 愛慾之大者。 莫大於色。 其罪無外。 其事無赦。 賴其  
 42 有一矣。 假其 二。 普天之民無能爲道者。  
 ZG 有一。 若復有 二。 普天之民莫能爲道者也。

## Section 8

- 42 佛言。 夫人 爲道務博愛。 博 哀施德莫大 施。  
 ZG 夫 學道者。 行陰德莫大於 施惠。 解救志莫大於  
 42 守志奉道。 其福甚大。 睹人施道。 助之歡喜。 亦得福報。 質  
 ZG 守身奉道。 其福甚大。 其生甚固矣。  
 42 曰。 彼福不當減乎。 佛言。 猶若炬火。 數千百人。 各以炬來。 取其火去。  
 ZG  
 42 熟食除冥彼火如故。 福亦如之。  
 ZG



## Section 6

42 有人聞佛道. 守大仁慈. 以惡來. 以善往. 故來罵. 佛默然不答愍之. 癡冥  
ZG

42 狂愚使然. 罵止問曰. 子以禮從人. 其人不納. 實禮如之乎. 曰持歸. 今  
ZG 有

42 子罵我. 我亦 不納. 子自持 歸. 禍子 身矣. 猶  
ZG 人惡我者. 我 不納惡. 惡自 歸己. 將 禍而歸 身中. 猶〔景〕

42 響 應 聲. 影之追形. 終無免離. 慎爲惡也.  
ZG 響之 隨形 聲矣.

It is in this main body of the *Forty-two sections* that the most important differences between the Buddhist and the Daoist versions are seen. First of all, the Daoist version is a recent and direct transmission the gods passed on or, more probably, orally dictated to Yang Xi – as it says right at the beginning: “The Lord Green Youth of [the Isle of] Fangzhu visited [me] and declared [...] (方諸青童見告曰)”. In contrast to the Buddhist version which was an anthology of extracts of Buddhist scriptures made, as the tradition of the initial narrative part has it, by the members of the expedition sent to India by Emperor Xiao Ming. Although Buddhist *sūtras* were regarded as the word of the Buddha which, therefore, represented the ultimate truth, his word was uttered in a different time, in a different country, made for a different audience and was handed down through the vicissitudes of the medium of scriptures. The Daoist version was, on the other hand, a revelation recently made in Southern China by its own gods in a direct encounter with the eye- and ear-witness Yang Xi. This version, therefore, represented the actual truth referring to an actual situation in China proper. As such it was claiming a “higher” truth than, in the Daoists’ view, the Buddhist version.

Another difference between both versions consists in the sequence of the individual sections. The Daoist version starts with section 35, then follow in this order: 42, 40, 41, 36, 37, 38, 39, 4, 5, 7, 9, 10, 11, 17, 14, 20, 21, 23, 25, 31, 33, 22, 8, 6. Omitted are the sections 1–3, 12, 13, 15, 16, 18, 19, 24, 26–30, 32, 34 or seventeen of the original sections. What might have been the reason for their omission?

Let us have a look at the first three of those of the forty-two sections which Yang discarded. In section one, a series of definitions of Buddhist “technical” terms is provided: the *śramaṇa* is described as a follower of the 250 precepts

who eventually will become an *arhat* or saint. An *arhat* represents the highest human being (before attaining *nirvāṇa*) and is described in similar terms than a Daoist immortal or *xian* 仙 in that he is “able to fly and assume different forms, lives a long life and can move Heaven and Earth”.<sup>50</sup> Next come the stages of a “non-returner” *anāgāmin*, of a “once-returner” *sakṛdāgāmin* and of a “stream-winner” *śrotaāpanna* who still has to be reborn seven times before attaining sainthood. Obviously, these are concepts to which Yang Xi did not have Daoist equivalents at hand nor did he want to invent any. As a consequence, he simply disregarded these sections.

Moreover, Yang systematically excluded all those sections that deal in one way or another with desire, passion or sexuality (i.e., sections 13, 19, 24 [the Buddha’s attempted seduction], 26–30) which, in general, are considered evil according to the Buddhist version. As is well known, for some Daoist traditions sexuality played an important role. The *heqi*- 和氣 (merging pneumas) ritual, e.g., was an integral part of the Heavenly Masters’ communal life.<sup>51</sup> Although Yang Xi relegated carnal knowledge to a minor status, he himself adhered to a higher form of sexuality, that of the *hieros gamos*, the union with immortals of the opposite sex in a state of trance.<sup>52</sup> In view of this, it made no sense to him, to keep to the Buddhists’ rejection of sexuality and to retain the relevant passages of the *Forty-two sections*.

Less dramatic are the differences in those sections which Yang Xi accepted but abbreviated in order to only keep those parts that seemed suitable. So, e.g., the beginning of section nine “feeding one hundred common men is not as good as feeding one good man; feeding one thousand good men is not as good as feeding one who observes the five precepts” is kept, but the following passage “feeding ten thousand men who observe the five precepts is not as good as feeding one stream-winner; feeding one million stream-winners is not as good as feeding one once-returner [...]” is dropped as, again, it deals with specific Buddhist notions (stream-winner, once-returner etc.) that were of no importance to Yang Xi. The second section describing the Buddhist monks, the *śramaṇas*, whose relevant passage reads: “The Buddha said: ‘Those who shave their heads and faces are *śramaṇas*. They receive the teaching, abandon worldly wealth and possessions, and beg, seeking only what is necessary. Taking a single meal at

50 In general, I adopt Sharf’s translation of the main text of the *Forty-two sections*, cf. SHARF 1996.

51 MASPERO 1981:386f., 536–541; SCHIPPER 1982:150–152.

52 STRICKMANN 1977:10f.

midday, and lodging a single night under a tree, they take care not to repeat either. [...]” is accordingly discarded, too. As the Daoists neither shaved their heads nor went around begging for food there was no need to retain this section in the Daoist version of the text.

Also, sections concerning the Buddhist philosophy of the constituents of the body and the “I” or personality are dropped like section eighteen: “The Buddha said: ‘Ardently contemplate the four primary elements that comprise the body. While each has a name, they are all devoid of self. The [sense of an] ‘I’ emerges from the aggregate, but it is not long lived and is really but an illusion.’”

Small wonder, then, that the Buddhist philosophy of impermanence found no place in the Daoist version. Yang Xi did not include section sixteen which reads: “The Buddha said: ‘When gazing at Heaven and Earth contemplate their impermanence. When gazing at mountains and rivers contemplate their impermanence. When gazing at the tremendous variety of shapes and forms of the myriad things in the world contemplate their impermanence. If you keep your mind thus you will attain the Way in no time.’”

Not only did Yang Xi leave out phrases that seemed unfit for his purposes, in a few cases he also added sentences of his own. At the end of section forty-two he appended the sentence “only then [I] say [that you] are able to inquire after the Way!” (始可謂能問道耳). To section thirty-six he added: “[It’s difficult to be born] with [people] who have a good heart of compassion and benevolence. Even if a good heart is manifest, faith in the Way and [its inherent] power and in long life is difficult. Even [having] faith in the Way and [its inherent] power and in long life, to meet with great peace and a revolution of the [cyclical] year *renchen* is difficult. [So you] may not exert yourself” (有慈仁善心難也。善心既發。信道德長生者難也。既信道德長生。值太平壬辰之運爲難也。可不勗哉). The “revolution of the year *renchen*” refers to a specific Daoist apocalyptic notion of the fourth and fifth centuries to which we will return shortly. Here Yang Xi is introducing an important aspect of his Daoist cosmology which plays a vital role elsewhere in his writings.

Another important kind of modifications made by Yang Xi was his substituting certain Buddhist names and terms by Daoist ones. One example we have already come accross: in the Daoist version it is no longer the Buddha who speaks but a series of Daoist deities and immortals. Furthermore, whereas the second part of section nine is omitted, the first part is kept in the Daoist version but the original expression 持五戒者 *chi wu jie zhe* “somebody who observes the five precepts” is substituted by the term 一學道者 *yi xue dao zhe* “one who

studies the Way”, implying a Daoist disciple. Or elsewhere we find, for example, the term 沙門 *shamen* for *śramaṇa* replaced by either 一人 *yi ren* “one person”<sup>53</sup> or by 道士 *dao shi* “Daoist”.<sup>54</sup>

An interesting example is section ten. Here the Buddha – or in the Daoist version: Lady Purple Prime (紫元夫人 *Ziyuan furen*) – are defining the “five difficulties” that exist on earth. Whereas both versions agree in the first three of them, namely: “[...] It is difficult for the poor to give alms, it is difficult for the very wealthy to study the Way, it is difficult to control fate and avoid death [...]”, the Buddhist version then has: “[...] it is difficult to attain a glimpse of the Buddha’s *sūtras*, and it is difficult to be born at the time of a Buddha.” Yang Xi’s version now substitutes 佛經 *fo jing* “Buddhist *sūtras*” by 洞經 *dong jing* “Grotto scriptures”, Daoist texts that is. In addition, the original sentence “it is difficult to be born at the time of a Buddha” is replaced by the phrase “it is difficult to be born at the time of the Latter Sage of the 壬辰 *renchen* [year].” This now clearly refers to the apocalyptic and messianic ideas of the Daoists of the fourth and fifth centuries. The Latter Sage is, as Strickmann and others have shown, a messianic figure to appear in a *renchen* year when humankind will have been tormented with catastrophies, inundations, famine, fire and, finally, with facing the end of the world and only those will be saved who believe in the Latter Sage and follow his instructions.<sup>55</sup>

Section thirty-three concerns a Buddhist monk who cherished the idea of returning to secular life. The Buddha seeing it summoned him and discussed the issue. The Buddha is here the still mortal but enlightened being of Hīnayāna Buddhism. In the Daoist version it is the Perfected of Most High (太上真人 *Taishang zhenren*) who, when apparently a Daoist longed for returning to secular life, changed himself into a mortal being and from Heaven directly came down to that man to discuss the situation with him. The mortal Buddha is substituted by an immortal Daoist god capable of changing his form at will. (One may ask, however, whether this could have been influenced by the Mahāyānist concept of a transcendent Buddha capable of assuming every form suitable to help human beings).

Another interesting modification made by Yang Xi is seen in section thirty-eight which in the Buddhist version reads: “The Buddha said: ‘Should a disciple venture several thousand miles from me yet remain mindful of my precepts, he is

53 Sect. 33.

54 Sect. 41.

55 STRICKMANN 1979:153–155; BOKENKAMP 1997:295–299.



certain to attain the Way.” In the Daoist version, this is not only uttered by Taishang zhenren instead of the Buddha, but Yang Xi inserts the following phrases: “and if he investigates the ‘jade scriptures’ and ‘treasure books’, he is certain to become an immortal.” With this additional phrases Yang Xi makes it perfectly clear that the Daoist goal, namely to become an immortal, is entirely different from the Hīnayānist goal, to become an *arhat* who will get out of *samsāra* by entering *nirvāṇa* or final extinction.

However, quite a series of sections remain that show almost no or only very minor changes in Yang Xi’s version. Examples are sections 7, 20, 21, 31. Why did Yang Xi preserve them in their original form and did not formulate them anew – especially since he was such a gifted author? He apparently did not only not have the slightest interest to camouflage their provenance, but – quite on the contrary – as the *Forty-two sections* was already a very well-known text in his own time and as, accordingly, the informed reader would have immediately identified the source, he must have done it deliberately. Why? It was in the Perfected’s interest to correct the texts of other religious traditions, works which had been deformed by “premature” or “imperfect transmission”. By adopting texts from other traditions they could be taken on one’s own board, as it were. A relationship of some sort could thus be established between the other traditions and the own one. However, by having the own gods correcting the other texts the superiority of the own texts over the other versions was made evident – which was just a clever device to show the superiority of the own tradition over the others.

## 7. Conclusion

In order to transform the Buddhist *Forty-two sections of Buddhist sūtras* into a Daoist text, Yang Xi first separated the “preface” or narrative part, which explicitly mentions not only the Buddha but also refers to its own title, from the main body of the text. Then, as we have seen, by a series of modifications he removed or substituted all unequivocal Buddhist aspects that had no Daoist correspondence or could not be utilized to his ends. And, finally, he had several Daoist deities and immortals directly reveal the text to himself. It thus was the gods who bestowed upon him their corrected – which means: Daoist – version of the text whose previous transmission by the Buddha was obviously no longer considered adequate by the gods. Note that the same scheme was already applied

when the gods revealed to Yang Xi a new and revised version of the *Huangting jing* 黃庭經 (Scripture of the Yellow Court) whose original version was a text cherished by the older Daoist tradition of the Celestial Masters.<sup>56</sup> In both cases, the original versions, that must have been quite well-known in Yang Xi's time, were neither explicitly criticised nor discarded by him but were simply reduced to a status of lower prestige by the new and "authoritative celestial recensions"<sup>57</sup>.

We may now ask why Yang Xi knew Buddhist texts in the first place. The answer probably lies in the fact that Xu Mi had introduced him to the former King of Guiji, Sima Yu 司馬昱. Sima Yu is recorded in the dynastic histories as an ardent patron of Buddhism and *qingtān* 清談 who fervently admired Buddhist monks like the famous Zhi Dun 支遁 (314–366). Sima Yu, the future emperor Jianwen (r. 371–373), still as King of Langye employed Yang Xi in his own household. This court must be imagined as a place frequented by lots of Buddhists. If not already before, then Yang Xi must have come into contact with Buddhist scriptures during his service at Sima Yu's court at the latest. It was probably here that he has seen the original *Forty-two sections of Buddhist sūtras*.

It may be interesting to note in this context that Yang Xi placed some historically high-ranking officials and generals of the early fourth century with wellknown Buddhist sympathies or relations into his *shangqing* 上清 ([Heaven of] Highest Clarity) pantheon as officials of the Daoist nether world. Examples are the sometime president of the 'board of civil office', Zhou Yi 周顗 (269–322), or the 'generalissimo of the central army', Yin Hao 殷浩 (306–356), or the 'general protecting the army', Feng Huai 馮懷 (fl. 340).<sup>58</sup>

Furthermore – as Isabelle Robinet already had observed – some of the immortals made known by Yang Xi had first been Buddhists themselves or had Buddhists as their disciples.<sup>59</sup> Lord Pei, Perfected Immortal of Qingling, originally came from a Buddhist family and in his early years was educated by a Buddhist monk. Later, when he had become a Daoist, he had Buddhist disciples as had Zhou Yishan, the Perfected of Ziyang. This cannot be by mere chance. Rather, by the time when Yang Xi acted as a private medium and religious specialist on behalf of the Xu family – a family of high-ranking officials –, Buddhism had already taken firm root in at least the upper classes of the southern Chinese society. Yang Xi who, as we have seen, also worked for a ruler with

56 SCHIPPER 1975:8–10.

57 STRICKMANN 1977:10.

58 ROBINET 1984, I:87.

59 Loc. cit.

Buddhist interests, had to take this into account. As a Daoist introducing a new denomination that distinguished itself from the Celestial Masters' tradition on the one hand and Buddhism on the other, he could not openly criticise Buddhism. However, by introducing immortals who had started as Buddhists but later turned Daoists he indirectly made clear that his Daoist denomination was superior. It was precisely to this end that he took in the Buddhist text *Forty-two sections of Buddhist sūtras* and had it revealed by members of his Daoist pantheon in a revised form, which means, had it transformed into a superior Daoist text.

From a Buddhological point of view it is interesting to note that – as our analysis has shown – highly praised early sources such as the *Hongming ji* must be handled with care as they may not preserve the original versions of the texts they contain. In this respect we also have seen at least one instance of Sengyou's *Chu sanzang ji ji* containing modified versions of the texts it quotes. Thus, Daoist adaptations of Buddhist scriptures may be used to emend the Buddhist originals.

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