

Preface

Of all the classical Chinese texts, the *Dào/Dǎ Jīng* is by far the best known. The present version seeks to make it a little better understood, by presenting it not as a single text, but as a textual process, as it evolved over the period from the mid 04th to the mid 03rd century.

The DDJ has its roots in an art of meditation by breath control, an Indian technique which had appeared in China already in the early 05c; Confucius's favorite disciple, the mentally quick and concentrated Yén Hwéi, was an adept. A meditation school in Chí, which was aware of newer Indian developments, dates from the mid 04c; the *Dào/Dǎ Jīng* is the text produced by that school. From an initial core (DDJ 14), the text grew by increments (we will call them "sections" rather than "chapters"), added both before and after the core.

The Confucians and the Micians were neighbors of the DDJ, and the tension between them is a major feature of the text. There was an early and fruitful relationship with the Chí military theorists whose text was the *Sūndž*. By the 03rd century, the possibility of any state policy except direct military force had dwindled, and the DDJ program, a sort of "power politics of the powerless," came to seem increasingly empty. As mid-century neared, the DDJ entered a twilight period; the earlier parts of it gained a second public among the antigovernment groups whose writings were gathered into the text called *Jwāngdž* 莊子. Finally, in the mid 03c, the DDJ group was shut down by the philosopher Sywǎndž (the Chǔ governor of the region), along with the Micians, two Mencian schools, and the *Analects* group, the home school of Confucius. For more on the history of the text, see the Introduction.

The DDJ is here presented in the order of its composition, so that its growth and expansion may be directly experienced. Each translated section is followed by a brief Commentary, notes on the places where early manuscripts have different readings ("Text"), and a Context section which quotes contemporary writings, to let modern readers see what was going on outside the DDJ window: what it reacted to, and what immediate effect it had on its world.

Information about the author (there were three, of whom Lǎu Dān or Lǎudž, "the Old Master," was the second), the early manuscripts on which our text is based, and the uses made of the DDJ in Warring States and Imperial times, are given in the Introduction, with further information available in the Appendices. The Apparatus at the end of the book includes an overview of the chronology of the DDJ and the principal contemporary texts which we have quoted in our commentary. For a comprehensive picture of the entire Warring States period, as it escalated its way to the military solution which left only one state standing, and thus at last created the unified Chín Dynasty, see our companion volume, *The Emergence of China*.

Conventions. Keyword citations are expanded in the Works Cited section at the end of the book. “0312” is “312 BC,” a universal convention that works also in French and German, as the well-intentioned “BCE” does not; “04th century” may be abbreviated as “04c” and so on. “Circa” dates (such as c0348) are best-guess positions within a system of relative dates. Chinese words are spelled in Common Alphabetic, which is less misleading for beginners than other systems; it has the advantage that it is compatible with the universally used Hepburn system for Japanese. It follows the formula “consonants as in English, vowels as in Italian,” plus these conventions for vowels with no fixed English spelling: -æ as in “cat,” -v [compare the linguist’s inverted Λ] as in “gut,” -r as in “fur,” -z as in “adz,” -yw (after l or n, simply -w) for “umlaut u.” An equivalence table comparing CA with two other systems is given at p241. Pronunciations are based on modern standard Chinese, but initial ng- has been restored to distinguish a few words such as the states Wèi 衛 and Ngwèi 魏, both now pronounced “Wèi.” Note also the tonally distinguished *state* of Hán (rising tone) and the later Hàn *Dynasty* (falling tone, as in an exclamation).

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Dedication. In recent centuries, several people have noticed the signs that the Dàu/Dǎ Jīng was later than the legends surrounding Lǎudǎ would require, but it was the 19/20c scholar and reformer Lyáng Chǐ-chāu who seems to have endured the most censure for holding that opinion, and who deserves to be remembered for seeing it right in the first place, and for persisting in that view against those who prefer to take their Sinology from tales their amah told them. We take pleasure in dedicating this work to Lyáng Chǐ-chāu.

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