

THE LONGMEN “LINEAGE POEM”

(*Longmen paishi* 龍門派詩)

A Translation

Many Taoist lineages bestow “ordination names” or “lineage names” using the characters found in a specially-written poem. Each generation of disciples receives their names using in sequence one character of the poem. Thus the name of a first generation master includes the first character; the name of a second-generation master includes the second character; and so forth. These poems are known in general as “lineage poems” (*paishi* 派詩). Lay families in premodern China, and also in some parts of present-day China, have used analogous poems to assign names to each generation of descendants.

The most famous “lineage poem” in Taoism is the one of the Longmen (Dragon Gate) lineage. Known as the “Longmen Lineage Poem” (*Longmen paishi* 龍門派詩), “Hundred-Character Lineage of Ancestor Qiu” (*Qijuzu baizi pai* 邱祖百字派), or in other similar ways, it is made of 20 verses of 5 characters, with the first and second quatrain rhyming on the characters *ming* 明 and *ning* 寧, and the fourth and fifth rhyming on the characters *xin* 新 and *qin* 亲. The 100 different characters of the poem should suffice to assign lineage names for about two and a half millennia, and perhaps even longer.

Part 1 of this PDF contains a translation of the poem. In the translation, I have taken care to translate each word with a different English word, and to retain the sequence of the words in each verse. While this results in a definitely not elegant (and possibly ungrammatical) translation, it gives a better idea of the nature and purpose of the poem. The 100 “key” words are shown in bold.

Part 2 contains a few basic annotations. I have not attempted to provide references to the sources of expressions found in the poem, although some of them have clear antecedents (for example, “inaudible and imperceptible” derives from the *Daode jing*).

Part 3 contains a list of characters until the 25th, more or less corresponding to the present generation of Longmen masters. On the right side of the page are the names of some masters, cited as examples of the application of the poem to the bestowing of lineage names. This list could also be used to detect the generation of other Longmen masters. In this case, caution is needed to use the ordination name (sometimes called *daohao*, “Taoist appellation”), and not any other name of the master in question; failure to do so may result in errors. (Note, moreover, that several Longmen sub-lineages have their own “lineage poems.”)

For the translations of some verses, I have benefited of the explanations by Xu Zonglai 余宗来, published in the official journal of the Chinese Taoist Association, *Zhongguo Daojiao* 中國道教 (Chinese Taoism), vols. 2000:1 and 2000:2.

The translation found in this PDF is released to the “public domain.”

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1. TRANSLATION

- 1 道德通玄靜 The Dao and its Virtue pervade the mysterious quiescence,
2 真常守太清 true constancy guards the grand clarity.
- 3 一陽來復本 The One Yang comes and returns to the root:
4 合教永圓明 the united teaching is unendingly whole and bright.
- 5 至理宗誠信 The perfect principle is at the origins of sincerity and truthfulness:
6 崇高嗣法興 venerable and lofty, it transmits the doctrine's prosperity.
- 7 世景榮惟懋 The world's appearance is flourishing and thoroughly luxuriant,
8 希微衍自寧 the inaudible and imperceptible spreads and of-its-own is peaceful.
- 9 住修正仁義 Dwell in cultivating the correct humanity and righteousness:
10 超升雲會登 transcending and rising to the clouds, you will be able to ascend.
- 11 大妙中黃貴 In the great subtlety the central yellow is honored:
12 聖體全用功 the saintly body entirely performs its function.
- 13 虛空乾坤秀 In emptiness and vacuity, Qian and Kun are splendid:
14 金木性相逢 Metal and Wood in their natures reciprocally meet.
- 15 山海龍虎交 In mountains and seas, Dragon and Tiger conjoin:
16 蓮開現寶新 the lotus opens and manifests the treasure anew.
- 17 行滿丹書詔 When the practice is complete, the red writ is proclaimed,
18 月盈祥光生 and from the moon's fullness an auspicious radiance is born.
- 19 萬古續仙號 For ten-thousand ages shall continue the immortals' names,
20 三界都是亲 and the three realms will all be akin.

2. NOTES

- 4 **United** 合 : Complete and integrated in all of its parts
- 5 **Is at the origins** 宗 : Also “gives precedence / priority to”, “puts first”
- 6 **Transmits** 嗣 : That is, the “perfect principle” passes the doctrine on from generation to generation of masters and disciples
- 6 **Doctrine** 法 : Also “dharma”
- 9 **Dwell** 住 : A variant has *wei* 謂, which requires translating this sentence as “This means that by cultivating ...”
- 11 **Subtlety** 妙 : Also “wondrousness”
- 11 **Central yellow** 中黃 : That is, the center, which is traditionally represented by the color yellow
- 12 **Performs its function** 用功 : That is, the “saintly body” sets its own operation in motion; *gong* 功 also means “merit”
- 13 **Qian and Kun** 乾坤 : Qian (☰) and Kun (☷) represent True Yang and True Yin, respectively
- 14 **Metal and Wood** 金木 : Metal (☱) and Wood (☴) represent True Yang within Yin and True Yin within Yang, respectively
- 17 **The red writ is proclaimed** 丹書詔 : That is, one’s name will be inscribed in the records of the immortals; the color red represents “authenticity”
- 19 **Ages** 古 : Lit., “antiquities”
- 19 **Shall continue the immortals’ names** 續仙號 : The names of the immortals will succeed one another by means of this “lineage poem”
- 20 **Three realms** 三界 : Here this expression refers to Heaven, Earth, and Mankind

3. LIST OF CHARACTERS

from the 1st to the 25 generations

1	道	<i>dao</i>	Dao	Zhao Daojian 趙道堅
2	德	<i>de</i>	virtue	Zhang Dechun 張德純
3	通	<i>tong</i>	to pervade	Chen Tongwei 陳通微
4	玄	<i>xuan</i>	mystery	Zhou Xuanpu 周玄樸
5	靜	<i>jing</i>	quiescence	Zhang Jingding 張靜定; Shen Jingyuan 沈靜圓
6	真	<i>zhen</i>	true	Zhao Zhensong 趙真嵩; Wei Zhending 衛真定
7	常	<i>chang</i>	constancy	Wang Changyue 王常月
8	守	<i>shou</i>	to guard	Zhan Shouchun 詹守椿; Shao Shoushan 邵守善; Huang Shouzheng 黃守正; Guo Shouzhen 郭守貞; Xu Shoucheng 徐守誠
9	太	<i>tai</i>	grand	Zhou Tailang 周太朗; Fan Taiqing 範太青
10	清	<i>qing</i>	clarity	Chen Qingjue 陳清覺
11	一	<i>yi</i>	one	Liu Yiming 劉一明; Min Yide 閔一得; Zeng Yiguan 曾一貫
12	陽	<i>yang</i>	Yang	
13	來	<i>lai</i>	to come	
14	復	<i>fu</i>	to return	
15	本	<i>ben</i>	root	
16	合	<i>he</i>	to unite	
17	教	<i>jiao</i>	teaching	Chen Jiaoyou 陳教友
18	永	<i>yong</i>	unending	
19	圓	<i>yuan</i>	whole (round)	
20	明	<i>ming</i>	bright	
21	至	<i>zhi</i>	perfect	
22	理	<i>li</i>	principle	
23	宗	<i>zong</i>	to originate	Zhang Zongxuan 張宗璿
24	誠	<i>cheng</i>	sincerity	
25	信	<i>xin</i>	truthfulness	Zhang Xincheng 張信誠