

The Daoist Doctrinal System through the Mirror of

Leishu Encyclopedias

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Though the history of the encyclopedic books called *leishu* 類書 may go back to the Pre-Qin period's *Lüshi chunqiu* 呂氏春秋 and the Former-Han's *Huainanzi* 淮南子, the compilation of the first typical work of this kind, the *Huanglan* 皇覽, took place at the time of Emperor Wen of the Wei (220-226). Thereafter, many *leishu* were compiled during the Wei, Jin, Southern and Northern Dynasties 魏晉南北朝, especially after the 5th century of the Common Era. From the point of view of learning and culture, this period was characterized by two important historical events: the importation and establishment of Buddhism in China, and the formation of Daoism. It is only natural that such momentous events came to be reflected in the contents of these texts, whose aim is to furnish—in the form of thematically arranged collections of comprehensive quotations from older books—an enormous amount of knowledge in a handy format. In view of their specific character, quite naturally the editors' worldviews are also reflected in them. In a *leishu* of Buddhist or Daoist tendency, then, one would expect to find an understanding of the respective doctrinal system, clearly expressed through the structure of the work itself.

The first Buddhist encyclopedias were compiled during the era of Emperor Wu of the Liang. First Emperor Wu ordered the compilation of the *Hualin bianlüe* 華林遍略, and next that of the *Zhongjing yaochao* 衆經要抄 and the *Jinglü yixiang* 經律異相, which are the oldest extant texts of their kind. The redaction of such Buddhist *leishu* could not take place without earlier compendia and catalogues of scriptures.

Around the same time, on the Daoist side, Emperor Wu of the Northern Zhou ordered the compilation in North China of the first Daoist encyclopedia, the *Wushang biyao* 無上祕要. As in the case of the two above-mentioned Buddhist encyclopedias, such a compilation could not occur without compendia and catalogues, in this case of Daoist scriptures. It is possible that during the same Northern Zhou Dynasty the Tongdao guan 通道觀—a kind of national research institute for religion—was established specifically for this purpose. Its actual activities, though, remain elusive.

In this paper I will examine the characteristics of the Daoist doctrinal system reflected in the *Wushang biyao* and other Daoist *leishu* from the Sui and Tang dynasties, as well as the function of the *leishu* genre in the Daoism of the times.