

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I have never taken up the practice of meditation because I seriously lack patience and bodily flexibility. Attempting certain meditation postures such as the full lotus position would probably kill me. The restricted dietary regimens that frequently accompany meditation practice are also problematic, as I tend to require more nutrition than the average person. However, the experiences of people who meditate—especially if they are Daoists—somehow fascinate me.

This book developed over the course of the past ten years as my constant curiosity toward Daoism, meditation, and mystical experience drew my attention toward specific texts that vividly attest to the variety and magnitude of sensory and physical phenomena that may be brought about just by making the mind clear and calm. Actually, such texts range in date from the Latter Han right down to the modern period, and I had originally envisioned a volume of much broader chronological scope than this one. However, I eventually came to realize that the Han-through-Tang material easily yielded enough interesting data to fill a monograph, and that a proper, careful analysis of the Neidan (internal alchemy) materials of the Song period onward was an endeavor that needed to be deferred to the future.

Most of the material in this book has not been previously published. Exceptions to this are found in parts of chapter 3 and chapter 4. Some of the discussion on *The Manifest Dao* has appeared in my article “Some

Troubles and Perils of Taoist Meditation” (*Monumenta Serica*, no. 56 [2008]): 259–291). Some of the discussion on *Contemplating the Baby* and *The True Record* has appeared in my recent article “Red Snakes and Angry Queen Mothers: Hallucinations and Epiphanies in Medieval Daoist Meditation” (in *Hindu, Buddhist and Daoist Meditation: Cultural Histories*, ed. Halvor Eifring [Oslo: Hermes Publishing, 2014], 149–184). Some of the discussion on *The Original Arising* appeared in my article “Mystical Ascent and Out-of-Body Experience in Medieval Daoism” (*Journal of Chinese Religions* 35 [2007]: 36–62).

The people I need to thank on this occasion are many. My gratitude goes out to all of my teachers of past years, especially Daniel Overmyer and Joseph McDermott. I am grateful to the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga for providing me with a happy work environment for many years, and for providing me with a Faculty Research Grant to do fieldwork in China during the summer of 2010. I thank all of my friends and colleagues in Chattanooga for their kindness over the years. I thank Nancy Ellegate and her fine staff at the State University of New York Press, along with the two anonymous readers who took the time to read the manuscript carefully and provide helpful, insightful feedback.

Perhaps the main reason for why I was finally able to complete this book this year was that I had the outrageous good fortune of receiving a one-year Visiting Research Fellowship from the Käte Hamburger Kolleg, “Dynamics in the History of Religions between Asia and Europe” situated at the Ruhr-University Bochum (Germany). My stay in Bochum has been extremely intellectually stimulating, and has allowed me the time and resources to complete my project. I would like to particularly thank Volkhard Krech, Licia DiGiacinto, and Lucia an der Brügge for their generosity.

But my most constant companion and supporter over the past decade has been my wife, Eiko Namiki. I thank her for her love and encouragement, and look forward to her future scholarly monographs. I also thank Hana-chan and Kobuton (the ascended) for all of the furry, cuddly comfort that they have provided. Finally, I send my love and gratitude to my parents Edward and Marion Eskildsen, my brothers Tom and Walter, and my Aunt Lucile—all of whom have been a blessing to me for my entire life.