

*The Sōushén hòujì*

Latter Notes on Collected Spirit Phenomena

Attributed to Táo Yuānmíng (365–427)

By

Richard VanNess Simmons

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THE *SŌUSHÉN HÒUJÌ*

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(365–427)

An Annotated Translation

by

RICHARD VANNESS SIMMONS

AMERICAN ORIENTAL SOCIETY

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To the Memory of Alan J. Berkowitz



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## ABBREVIATIONS

- Bsl* Bó Jūyì 白居易 (772–846). *Bó shì liùtiē shìlèi jí* 白氏六帖事類集. Taipei: Xinxing shuju, 1971.
- Btsc* Yú Shìnán 虞世南 (558–638). *Běitáng shūchāo* 北堂書鈔. N.p.: Nanhai Kongshi sanshi you sanwan juan tang, 1888.
- Cxj* Xú Jiān 徐堅 (659–729). *Chū xué jì* 初學記. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1962.
- Fyzl* Dào Shì 道世 (fl. 668). *Fāyuàn zhūlín* 法苑珠林. *Sìbù cóngkān* edn.
- Gsz* Huìjiǎo 慧皎 (497–554). *Gāo sēng zhuàn chū jí* 高僧傳初集. Taipei: Taiwan yinjingchu, 1970.
- Sbck* *Sìbù cóngkān* 四部叢刊.
- Slf* Wú Shù 吳淑 (947–1002), ed. and comm. *Shì lèi fù* 事類賦. N.p.: n.d.
- Sshj* *Sōushén hòujì* 搜神後記. *Xuéjīn tāoyuán* 學津討原 edn.
- Ssj* Gān Bǎo 干寶 (d. 336). *Sōushén jì* 搜神記. Edited by Wāng Shàoyíng 汪紹楹. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1979. (Based on the *Xuéjīn tāoyuán* edn.)
- Ssxy* Liú Yìqìng 劉義慶 (403–444). *Shìshuō xīnyǔ* 世說新語. Edited by Wāng Zǎo 汪藻 (fl. 13th c.). Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1962.
- Tpgj* Lǐ Fǎng 李昉 (925–996), ed. *Tàipíng guǎngjì* 太平廣記. Taipei: Xinxing shuju, 1958.
- Tpyl* Lǐ Fǎng, ed. *Tàipíng yùlǎn* 太平御覽. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1960.
- Xjsshj* *Xīnjí Sōushén hòujì*, in *Xīnjí Sōushén jì Xīnjí Sōushén hòujì* 新輯搜神記新輯搜神後記. Edited by Lǐ Jiànguó 李劍國. 2 vols. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2007.
- Xssj* *Xù Sōushén jì* 續搜神記.
- Ywlj* Ōuyáng Xún 歐陽詢 (557–641), ed. *Yìwén lèijù* 藝文類聚. Taipei: Xinxing shuju, 1969.



## INTRODUCTION TO THE PUBLISHED EDITION OF THIS TRANSLATION

In the many years since this translation was first completed as a Master's thesis at the University of Washington in 1986,<sup>1</sup> we have seen the production of a good deal of fine scholarship about the *zhìguài* 志怪 genre and its social, cultural, and religious context. This new scholarship has greatly developed our understanding of the many collections of 'records of anomalies', including their intended uses and readership. This new scholarship generally surpasses the fairly rudimentary overview of the *Sōushén hòujì* 搜神後記 (*Sshj*) and its genre that the present volume provides in its introductory discussion. The interested reader who wishes to explore beyond the stories and anecdotes in this volume and seek out a deeper understanding of the *Sōushén hòujì* and related texts in their time and place will find much of value in this later scholarship.

One significant recent advance has been the collation of the text in light of the many piecemeal variants and fragments preserved in various historical texts. Our opening discussion of the textual history of the *Sshj*, which still accurately characterizes the essentials of what is known about the general arc of the traditional text's formation and evolution, notes that "if verification of authenticity and origin for any given section of the *Sshj* is to be at all accurate and useful with regard to the historical context of that specific section, such verification must be undertaken individually for each entry in question."<sup>2</sup> That task has since been meticulously completed by the hand of Lǐ Jiànguó 李劍國 in his *Xīnjí Sōushén jì Xīnjí Sōushén hòujì* 新輯搜神記新輯搜神後記 (2007). Lǐ has painstakingly sorted through all extant versions of the anecdotes of both *Sōushén jì* and *Sōushén hòujì* and developed what is considered to be the new authoritative version of both texts.<sup>3</sup> Lǐ's second volume attends to the *Sshj* and argues that twenty-four entries in the received text, which is derived from the *Micè huìhán* 祕册彙函 edition, are invalid inclusions while restoring another twelve entries from other sources that Lǐ judges should be included. Lǐ also identifies five *Sshj* stories that he asserts should be in the *Sōushén jì*. Finally, Lǐ undertakes a major reordering of the entire contents of the *Sshj*, while also editing many entries in light of trusted versions in other sources. The result is a ten-*juàn* version that contains a total of ninety-nine anecdotes. Appendix 2 of this volume lists all the *Sshj* entries by title and provides Lǐ Jiànguó's collation decisions, indicating what he includes in his *Xīnjí Sōushén hòujì* (*Xjsshj*), which twelve stories he has added, which he rejects for inclusion, and which he reassigns to Gān Bǎo's 干寶 (d. 336) *Sōushén jì*. New translations for the twelve passages restored by Lǐ Jiànguó in *Xjsshj* are added to the main text

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1. See also the Translator's Postface below.

2. See p. 9 below.

3. Campamy, *A Garden of Marvels: Tales of Wonder from Early Medieval China* (Honolulu: Univ. of Hawai'i Press, 2015), 61.

following the *Sshj* translation. However, this volume maintains all entries from the *Sshj* and does not eliminate those that Lǐ Jiànguó did not include in *Xjsshj*.

It is of note that Lǐ's *Xjsshj* excludes the one entry that is independently identifiable as a composition by Táo Qián 陶潛 (365–427), “The Peach Blossom Wellsprings” (j. 1, no. 5). Yet though Lǐ Jiànguó does not think this story belongs in *Sshj* he nevertheless maintains the identification of Táo Qián as the author of *Sshj* (and of the stories he includes in *Xjsshj*). Thus Lǐ adds one story that was clearly attributed to Táo Qián in *Gāo sēng zhuàn* 高僧傳, “The Hemp Frocked Monk” (X7).

Aside from these additions, this translation presents the text mostly “as is,” so to speak, and does not restructure it to match Lǐ Jiànguó's new collation. This allows modern readers to experience the text as a whole, in the shape it took under the hand of traditional editors, the good stories and the mediocre ones, the longer and the shorter, unmitigated by the preferences and selection choices of modern scholars. Thus, the present translation serves to represent a kind of time-capsule of the traditional take on the text and its original arrangement, or at least the arrangement received by late tradition, while also including the twelve additional passages restored by Lǐ Jiànguó. Certainly, the various details provided in the notes to each translated passage remain quite accurate and useful and generally have not been superseded by the few representative translated passages that occur in recent anthologies and studies in English.

Other significant advances have been made in our understanding of the *zhìguài* genre and its social, cultural, and religious milieu. Among the most penetrating scholarship in the field is found in the abundant collection of studies by Robert Ford Company, whose rich work spans the decades between the original completion of this translation in 1986 and the present day. In *Strange Writing: Anomaly Accounts in Early Medieval China*, published in 1996, Company includes the *Sōushén hòuji* in a study of over sixty other *zhìguài* collections from the fourth to sixth centuries. Company's *Strange Writing* provides a comprehensive new perspective on, and interpretation of the *zhìguài*. Indeed, Stephen Teiser calls this volume “the definitive treatment” of the *zhìguai* genre.<sup>4</sup> Company moves away from the view that the *zhìguài* represent an early, nascent form of fiction and emphasizes their documentary nature, which aligns well with the conclusion in the present volume regarding the essentially historical character of the *Sōushén hòuji* stories. Acknowledging the historical and evidentiary elements of the stories, Company shows us how the *zhìguài* can provide a window on medieval Chinese culture, particularly with regard to the popular and spiritual elements of that culture. The texts can thus be read for what they tell us about religion in medieval China. Company undertakes that approach quite deftly in chapters 7 and 8 of *Strange Writing* wherein he approaches the texts and the stories they contain in the development of a kind of ethnography of early Chinese religion. Much of Company's subsequent work continues fruitfully in this direc-

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4. Teiser, review of *Strange Writing: Anomaly Accounts in Early Medieval China*, by Robert Ford Company, *History of Religions* 39.3 (2000): 310.

tion, for example, his 2012 *Signs from the Unseen Realm: Buddhist Miracle Tales from Early Medieval China*.

In the same year that Campany came out with *Strange Writing*, Kenneth J. DeWoskin and J. I. Crump produced a complete translation of Gān Bǎo's *Sōushén jì*, titled *In Search of the Supernatural: The Written Record*. Campany's review of this volume chides it for continuing to treat the *zhìguài* "as precursors of the later 'birth of fiction' in China."<sup>5</sup> Yet he nevertheless acknowledges that it is a competent and readable translation. It is certainly a fine representative in English of the text to which the source for the present volume was intended to be the sequel.

A notable and useful dedicated study of the *Sōushén jì* is found in Rémi Mathieu's *Démons et merveilles dans la littérature chinoise des Six Dynasties: Le fantastique et l'anecdotique dans le Soushen ji de Gan Bao*. In his review of Mathieu's volume, Wolfgang Behr tells us:

Mathieu's *Démons et merveilles* serves as a kind of essayistic companion to [. . .] translations of the *Soushen ji*. Its primary aim is to elaborate on certain recurrent topics of the collection in the form of a close reading and thematic synopsis of the sources, to reconstruct the dense network of intra-textual relationships between the respective short accounts as well as their inter-textual indebtedness to Classical predecessors and to other less well-known representatives later subsumed under the *zhìguai* and *xiaoshuo* labels, in a very learned and heavy footnote apparatus.<sup>6</sup>

In addition to DeWoskin and Crump, the translations of the *Sōushén jì* to which Behr refers here include those by Rémy Mathieu et al. (1993) and L. N. Men'sikov (1994).

Other recent translations of *zhìguài* include Zhang Zhenjun's 2018 translation of the *Yōumínglù* by Liú Yìqíng 劉義慶 (403–444), which follows upon Zhang's earlier study of the same collection. For an excellent broad selection of *zhìguài* stories in English, the reader is referred to Campany's *zhìguài* collection titled *A Garden of Marvels: Tales of Wonder from Early Medieval China* (2015). This is an eminently readable anthology of tales and anecdotes from a variety of sources, including *Sōushén hòujì*, thus placing this volume and its stories among its peers and providing background perspective and a raised-relief look at the *zhìguai* genre as a whole.

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5. Campany, review of *In Search of the Supernatural: The Written Record*, tr. by Kenneth J. DeWoskin and J. I. Crump, *China Review International* 4.1 (1997): 118.

6. Behr, review of *Démons et merveilles dans la littérature chinoise des Six Dynasties: Le fantastique et l'anecdotique dans le Soushen ji de Gan Bao*, by Rémi Mathieu, *Oriens* 36 (2001): 362.

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