Liezi 列子
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Liezi 列子 - Master Lie¹, his real name being Lie yukou 列圉寇, is one of the most outstanding authors of the early philosophical Daoism.

Unfortunately, we have no biographical information on him. Allegedly, he lived during the Warring States period (Zhan guo 戰國 475-221 î.e.n.). Anyhow, in Hanshu 漢書 - The Book of the Han Dynasty, written by Bangu 班固 (32-92 e.n.), it is claimed that Liezi 列子 would have lived earlier than Zhuangzi 莊子 (369-286 î.e.n.)², since the latter mentioned him several times.

According to the homonymous treatise (chap. 1), Liezi 列子 had lived unknown for forty years in the state of 鄭 Zheng, after which he immigrated to the state of 衛 Wei due to famine; we also find this information in Lishi zhenxian tidao tongjian 歷世眞仙體道通鑒 - The Universal Mirror³ of the Transcendent Immortals Who Embodied the Dao in Successive Ages [or Chronological Order]⁴. According to Zhuangzi 莊子 (chap. 7 Ying diwang 應帝王 - On Monarchs), it seems that he also died in the state of 鄭 Zheng.

Tradition acknowledges him as Laozi 老子's disciple, whereas Guangyinzǐ 關尹子, Huqiuzǐ 壺丘子, Laoshangshi 老商氏 and Zhibogaozi 支伯高子 are supposed to have been some of his masters and friends, who also trained him in the Daoist spirit.

The legend goes that, after nine years of initiation, Liezi could "ride the wind", which is a metaphorical way of expressing ecstatic condition, when the spirit detaches himself as if he were carried with the wind, and leaves the body liberated, inert and insensitive.

“夫列子御風而行，泠然善也，旬有五日而反。”

"Liezi could ride the wind, he could manage to rise in the cool air, but he came back after fifteen days."

Zhuangzi 莊子, cap. 1 - Xiaoyao you 逍遙遊 - Easy Journeys.

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¹ zi = child (the image of a swaddled baby with its hands free), and in a wider sense master (title of respect), due to the fact that ancient emperors used to call scholars sons, in token of honor.

² Zhuangzi 莊子 - Master Zhuang, by his real name Zhuangzhou 莊周 - Daoist writer and philosopher.

³ jian, written 鉴 or 鑒 (graphic variants), originates in 火 (火 火 火) the image of a man looking into a vessel full of water, with the radical 金 metal added, meaning: great basin, bronze mirror, to reflect the light, to reflect the image of something, and by extension of the sense: memorable act having a didactic value, history.

⁴ biographical anthology of the Daoist saints, published by Zhao daoyi 趙道一 in 1294, and subsequently included in the Daozang - The Scripture of Daoism.
Spiritual journey is perceived as a result of man's identification with the universe, by means of putting biological rhythm in harmony with the natural rhythm.

"列子常在立春日乘風而遊八荒，列秋日就反歸風穴。立秋日就反歸風穴，風至則草木皆生，去則草木皆落。"

« Usually, on the day of the Beginning of Spring, Liezi travelled by wind towards the eight horizons, and, on the day of the Beginning of Autumn, he came back to the Wind Grotto. When the wind arrived, all the vegetation awoke to life, and when it left, all the vegetation withered away.»

Shuyiji 述異記 - Tales about Wonders.

Starting from Zhuangzi 莊子's phrase: “御風而行" yufeng erxing, lit. "to ride the wind and travel", where 御 yu = to drive a carriage, to control, by extension of the sense to ride, by homophony, it all resulted in writing the name of Lie yukou 列圄寇 as 列御寇.

In Lüshi chunqiu 呂氏春秋 - Master Lü's Spring and Autumn Annals (chap. 17), a book written by the clients of Lü buwei 呂不韋 (?-235 ì.e.n.) it is said that Liezi 列子 “貴虚” guixu « cherished emptiness», with reference to the mental emptiness achieved by meditation. By means of this technique, the mind of the 真人 zhenren Perfect Man reflects

5 荒 huang = waste, desolate, desert, 死 devastation (入 = 入 enter into a □ corner, a hiding place, to hide, to vanish, to die, to destroy; 入 got flattened into 亠 of 草 plants caused by 川 floods. This phrase is meant to designate metaphorically far-away provinces, outskirts, considered to be inferior as against the noble 中 center.
6 menke 門客 - client (門 = gate, 客 = guest), social stratum that emerged by the end of the Zhou 周 dynasty, consisting of educated noblemen and poor wandering philosophers, hosted by high officials, merchants or mandarins who provided for them in exchange for the scholars' literary and artistic gifts.
7 merchant and statesman, minister of the last Qin 秦 prince, the founder of the empire - he managed to gather around him more than 3000 clients (menke 門客), for whom he had hired 10000 servants.
8 貴 gui (貴) = valuable, noble, precious, important, to attach importance; originally 两手 two hands over the 土 earth, soil being the most valuable thing in an agricultural society, later the sign 貝 was added, meaning shell, and by extension of the sense coin, in order to emphasize the idea of value.
9 虛 xu (虛) = empty, unoccupied, deficit, lack, 矢 two men searching for food in a place where 犬 the tiger passed.
10 真 zhen, graphic variant of 真 = right, perfect, faultless, 直 (十 目) + 十 ten 目 eyes looked from all □ angles and found no fault, so it can be placed on a 兀 table, by extension of the sense true, sincere, genuine. In the Daoist writings 十 was replaced by 匚, ancient form of 化 (化) hua = to change, to transform, symbolized by 亅 → 亅 → 亅 → 亅 a man who stands – alive, beside 亅 → 亅 → 匚 a man who lays down – dead (ex.: Zhuangzi 莊子, chap. 22, § 5: “已化而生，又化而死。” « One change and there is life, another change and there is death» or: « One change gave them life, another change kills them»), whence the extended meaning
reality like a mirror, without being influenced or altered by events and without even trying to anticipate them.

Many exegetes consider that his work is a compilation made by his disciples, and written after the master’s death. The original version including twenty chapters (pian 篇)\(^{11}\), was revised by Liuxiang 劉向 (c.77-6 i.e.n.)\(^{12}\), who eliminated repetitions from the text and rearranged it into eight chapters.

The first reference to this eight-chapter version of the Liezi 列子’s treatise is to be found in Hanshu 漢書 - The book of the Han Dynasty, vol. 30, chapter Yiwenzi 藝文志 - The History of Literature:

“列子八篇。 "[The treatise] Liezi, [in] eight chapters, the name\(^{13}\) [of the author] Yukou, prior to Zhuangzi, [since] Zhuangzi cites him.”

_Hanshu 漢書 - Yiwenzi 藝文志._

Thanks to the respect that Liezi 列子 enjoyed in the Daoist circles, during the reign of Xuanzong 宣宗 (712-756) of the Tang 唐 dynasty, he was honored with the title 沖虛眞人 Chongxu zhenren - Transcendent Master of Emptiness, while his work was named 沖虛眞經 Chongxu zhenjing - The Treatise of the Transcendent Master of Emptiness. Moreover, during Xuanhe 宣和 period (1119-1125) of the Song 宋 dynasty, he came to be named Chongxu guanmiao zhenjun 沖虛觀妙眞君 - Transcendent Sovereign of Emptiness and Sublime Contemplation.

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of transcendent; 眞人 zhen ren = perfect man, transcendent man, saint.
11 Chinese books are comprised of juan 卷 = roll, volume, book, authentic writing (in fact, originally, the Latin word _volumen_ also meant something rolled) divided into pian 篇 or zhang 章 = chapters and jie 節 = paragraphs.
12 Liuxiang 劉向 - poet, scholar, and exegete of the ancient Chinese writings.
13 in China, the name of a person consists of the family name - xing 姓, which is always placed before the other names, the given name - ming 名, received at one’s birth, the title - zi 字, granted at the age of 20, together with the manliness’ cap, and the posthumous name - hui 諡, awarded to famous people. In our case, Lie 列 is the family name (姓) and Yukou 圍寇 is the given name (名).