The Daoist Tradition
Also available from Bloomsbury

*Chinese Religion*, Xinzhong Yao and Yanxia Zhao

*Confucius: A Guide for the Perplexed*, Yong Huang
For students
“凡為道合藥,及避亂隱居者,莫不入山。然不知入山法者,多遇禍害。故諺有之曰,太華之下,白骨狼藉。皆謂偏知一事,不能博備,雖有求生之志,而反強死也。”

“All of those seeking the Dao and preparing medicines, as well as those fleeing political disorders and living as hermits, go to the mountains. Many, however, meet with harm or even death because they do not know the method for entering mountains. Hence the saying, ‘At the foot of the great Mount Hua, bleached bones lie scattered.’ Everyone knows that someone may have special knowledge about one thing, but one cannot know everything about all things. Some people set on the search for life, drive themselves to their own deaths.”

—Ge Hong, *Baopuzi neipian*, Chapter 17
Contents

Preface ix
Acknowledgments xi
Conventions xiii
Illustrations xv
Charts xvi
Website xvii
Map xviii
Brief timeline of Daoist history xix

PART ONE Historical overview 1
1 Approaching Daoism 3
2 The Daoist tradition 17

PART TWO Identity and community 37
3 Ways to affiliation 39
4 Community and social organization 61

PART THREE Worldview 81
5 Informing views and foundational concerns 83
6 Cosmogony, cosmology and theology 101
7 Views of self 123

PART FOUR Practice 143
8 Virtue, ethics and conduct guidelines 145
9 Dietetics 165
10 Health and longevity practice 187
11 Meditation 205
CONTENTS

12 Scripture and scripture study 225
13 Ritual 243

PART FIVE Place, sacred space, and material culture 263
14 Temples and sacred sites 265
15 Material culture 281

PART SIX Daoism in the modern world 301
16 Daoism in the modern world 303

Basic glossary 317
Notes 325
Bibliography 331
Index 353
A large stone gate opens into the deep mountains. You ponder the history of this place, including how many people have passed through this gate and traveled through these mountains. They have had diverse orientations and motivations, from adherents seeking the Dao, to pilgrims rooted in reverence, to tourists interested in enjoying the beauty of landscape. As you muse on these dimensions of the experience, you notice an elderly nun standing near the gate. She gestures for you to enter. Her face reflects a life lived among mountains and forests, seasons and local influences. The deep facial lines might themselves be a map of the terrain. Peering into their depth, you begin to see contour lines, river valleys, and weather patterns. They are a physical history of weather patterns and days spent among sunlight, moonlight, darkness, silence, rain, mist, snow, wind, heat, and cold. Hers is a memory of mountain seclusion, conversations among peaks and valleys, dedicated self-cultivation, and commitment to tradition. You ask her the way into the deep mountains, and she replies that the path extends into the white clouds. It is the way to the Way. If you continue, you will find cave hermitages and Daoist recluses, large monasteries and monastic communities, and pilgrims and tourists of every possible persuasion. If you stay long enough, you might observe and even participate in Daoist practice. Some inhabitants write calligraphy, play the zither, practice longevity methods, engage in meditation, and perform ritual. Some residents eat a simple vegetarian diet, while others live off of wild foods. Some find themselves located in the larger parameters of Daoist institution, while others live at its margins.

Such is the Daoist tradition understood as a sacred site and a living community located in specific places at specific times. This book aims to provide a map of the various landscapes of Daoism. It represents a gate into the complex religious tradition which is Daoism. In the process, I encourage readers to imagine Daoism as an old growth forest, intact culture, and sacred site.

The present book attempts to provide a comprehensive and integrated introduction to Daoism (Taoism) as an indigenous Chinese religion deeply rooted in traditional Chinese culture and a contemporary global religious community characterized by cultural, ethnic, and linguistic diversity. It begins with a discussion of key interpretive issues and a framework for understanding (Chapter 1). Chapter 2 provides an overview of Daoist history from the Warring States period (480–222 BCE) through the early modern period (1912–78). The book then explores Daoist identity (Chapter 3) and community (Chapter 4). The next set of chapters, the “worldview chapters,” cover classical and foundational views (Chapter 5), cosmogony, cosmology, and theology.
(Chapter 6), and views of self (Chapter 7). This section is followed by the “practice chapters,” which explore ethics (Chapter 8), dietetics (Chapter 9), health and longevity practice (Chapter 10), meditation (Chapter 11), scripture and scripture study (Chapter 12), and ritual (Chapter 13). The account then discusses sacred space (Chapter 14) as well as material culture (Chapter 15). The presentation concludes with a pioneering chapter on “global Daoism,” which continues the history documented in Chapter 2.

Utilizing a thematic approach, and richly illustrated, The Daoist Tradition provides a new vision of Daoism as a complex tradition rooted in traditional Chinese culture, as a transnational religious tradition characterized by cultural, ethnic, and linguistic diversity, and as a living form of religiosity. Each chapter includes a chapter outline as well as suggestions for further reading. The book also contains a basic glossary of Daoism and a bibliography. Selections from representative texts also appear in textboxes throughout the chapters.

Throughout the account, I aim to present Daoism as at once singular and plural, varied and unified. It is a vision of Daoism as both tradition and traditions. It is a vision of Daoism as a distinctive and intriguing religious culture, soteriological system, and way of life.
Acknowledgments

The present book represents twenty years of engagement with Daoism, including reflection on the use and misuse of the name as well as participation in various discourse communities. The latter include Daoist Studies, Religious Studies, and the contemporary Daoist tradition, both as an indigenous Chinese and now global religion. These communities have contributed to my understanding of Daoism and to my writing of this presentation of Daoism. This occurred through formal academic exchange, informal conversations, and chance encounters and experiences. I am grateful to various friends, colleagues, students, and acquaintances who have clarified my understanding and supported my work.

The book benefited from close readings by Suzanne Cahill (University of California, San Diego), James Miller (Queen’s University), and Harold Roth (Brown University). Suzanne Cahill provided helpful comments on tone, organization, and presentation style. James Miller gave necessary theoretical challenges and interpretive clarifications. He was pivotal in improving the entire manuscript. Harold Roth contributed to my understanding of classical Daoism. His radical revisionist scholarship influenced and clarified some of my interpretations of the earliest Daoist communities in the Warring States period and Early Han dynasty. In terms of particular chapters, Michael Saso provided insights concerning contemporary ritual, David Palmer (University of Hong Kong) clarified my understanding of contemporary Hong Kong Daoism, while Elijah Siegler (College of Charleston) provided feedback on contemporary Western Daoism. I have done my best to address their comments and incorporate their suggestions. I am grateful for their involvement and for their contributions.

The book is also informed by my sustained inquiry into contemporary mainland Chinese Daoism and by conversations with various members of the global Daoist community. In particular, the opportunity to live as a participant-observer in a number of Quanzhen monasteries challenged my understanding of Daoism as a living and lived religion. In the interest of confidentiality, I will not name my Chinese Daoist friends, but I am especially grateful to various Daoists affiliated with the Huashan lineage of Quanzhen Daoism. Some of that “research” was supported by Professor Jiang Sheng and the Institute of Religion, Science, and Social Sciences of Shandong University. During my time as a visiting professor at IRSSS (2005–6), I also came to understand the importance of place and material culture in Daoism. These relationships and experiences thus inform the book, and I am grateful for these opportunities.

Members of global Daoism, especially many of the tradition-based Daoist communities mentioned in Chapter 16, were particularly generous. They helped to compose
the associated paragraphs and responded to my various inquiries. I have done my best to provide accurate representations of their communities, and I hope that they find them to be so. Although not mentioned in detail, I am also thankful for the support and interest of members of the Daoist Foundation (San Diego, California) and Gallagher Cove Daoist Association (Olympia, Washington), especially the Plaza family (Steve, Cheryl, Evan, and Elliott). The members of this American Daoist community helped to inspire the presentation, as I imagined the book being used not only by interested readers, students, and scholars, but also by Daoist adherents and sympathizers.

This book is the first introduction to Daoism to have been written with the assistance of the three major Western-language reference works for Daoist Studies, namely, *Daoism Handbook* (Livia Kohn [ed]; 2000), *The Taoist Canon: A Historical Companion to the Daozang* (Kristofer Schipper and Franciscus Verellen [eds]; 2003), and *The Encyclopedia of Taoism* (Fabrizio Pregadio [ed]; 2008). My presentation has benefited from the collective knowledge of Daoist Studies contained therein. I have also benefited from reading three other reliable introductions to Daoism, namely, those by Livia Kohn, James Miller, and Russell Kirkland. Readers would benefit from consulting any or all of these publications for deepening their understanding of Daoism.

Finally, I am grateful to Kate Townsend, my wife and companion, for everything that deserves more than thanks. Her love and support have buoyed me up during these challenging times. She also read and commented on the entire manuscript. Her lifetime of experience with and reflection on Daoism challenged and clarified many of my views and interpretations. Moreover, some of her insights are seamlessly interwoven with “mine,” and so readers might never otherwise know her influence. In particular, her enduring interest in Daoism, including the central importance of water, fluids, and female embodiment, have contributed to the book and to my life. I am grateful for our morning espresso rituals, our ongoing conversations, and our life together.

The manuscript was completed among the elevated peaks and hermitages of Huashan (Mount Hua; near Huayin, Shaanxi) and overlooking the canyons of Marston Hills (San Diego, California). I have tried to remember these and other places with their associated residents and communities in this book. That being said, it is my own account, and I gladly accept responsibility for the pages that follow.
The present book utilizes traditional Chinese characters; modern Mandarin pronunciations; Pinyin Romanization, with occasional reference to Wade-Giles; historical periodization based on Chinese dynasties; and standardized numbering systems for Daoist textual collections based on my *Title Index to Daoist Collections* (Three Pines Press, 2002).

Chinese history is divided into the following dynasties and periods.

- Shang (ca. 1600–1045 BCE)
- Zhou (1045–256 BCE)
  - Western/Early (1045–771 BCE)
  - Eastern/Later (771–256 BCE)
    - Spring and Autumn (770–480 BCE)
    - Warring States (480–222 BCE)
- Qin (221–6 BCE)
- Han (202 BCE–220 CE)
  - Western/Early (202 BCE–9 CE)
  - Eastern/Later (25–220)
- Six Dynasties/Period of Disunion (220–589)*
- Sui (581–618)
- Tang (618–907)
- Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms (907–79)
- Song (960–1279)
  - Northern (960–1127)
  - Southern (1127–1279)
- Yuan (1260–1368)
- Ming (1368–1644)
- Qing (1644–1911)
- Republic of China (1912–49; 1949–)
- People’s Republic of China (1949–)

The following abbreviations are used for important Daoist textual collections.

- DH Dunhuang manuscripts
- DZ Zhengtong daozang and Xu daozang
In order to avoid unnecessary complexity, I have not referenced extant translations, unless my translation is based on them. Interested readers may consult my “Daoist Texts in Translation” (2003), which provides a comprehensive, annotated catalogue of Daoist texts translated to date, and its forthcoming supplement. Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are my own.

The book also uses the following abbreviations:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>abbr.</th>
<th>abbreviated</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>b.</td>
<td>born</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BCE</td>
<td>Before the Common Era</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c.</td>
<td>century</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ca.</td>
<td>circa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CE</td>
<td>Common Era</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cf.</td>
<td>compare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d.</td>
<td>died</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dat.</td>
<td>dated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d.u.</td>
<td>dates unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>est.</td>
<td>established</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>j.</td>
<td>juan (scroll)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>per. comm.</td>
<td>personal communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>r.</td>
<td>ruled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>trad.</td>
<td>traditional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>trl.</td>
<td>translated</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Illustrations

Figure 1: Map of Chongyang gong (ch. 1)
Figure 2: Daoist Locatedness (ch. 3)
Figure 3: Yang Xi Receiving Revelations from Wangzi Jin (ch. 3)
Figure 4: Late Imperial Representation of Sun Buer (ch. 4)
Figure 5: Classical and Foundational Daoist Cosmogony (ch. 6)
Figure 6: Production and Control Cycles of the Five Phases (ch. 6)
Figure 7: The Three Purities (ch. 6)
Figure 8: Self in Early Medieval Daoism (ch. 7)
Figure 9: Internal Landscape Map (ch. 7)
Figure 10: Daoist Rendering of Tianmendong (Wild Asparagus Root) (ch. 9)
Figure 11: Mountain Flower Excrescence (ch. 9)
Figure 12: Ingesting Solar Effulgences (ch. 9)
Figure 13: Mao Xuanhan Commingling Dragon and Tiger (ch. 10)
Figure 14: Seated Eight Brocades (ch. 10)
Figure 15: Visualizing the Dipper (ch. 11)
Figure 16: Diagram of the Embryo of the Dao (ch. 11)
Figure 17: Meditation Posture Recommended for Women (ch. 11)
Figure 18: Transmission of Scriptures (ch. 12)
Figure 19: Traditional Wood-block Page of a Daoist Text (ch. 12)
Figure 20: Zhuang-Chen Dengyun Performing Jiao-offering (ch. 13)
Figure 21: “Perfect Forms” of the Five Marchmounts (ch. 14)
Figure 22: “Blue Mountains and Dragons” by Wu Jing-nuan (ch. 15)
Figure 23: Traditional Robe Associated with the Longmen Celestial Immortal Rank (ch. 15)
Figure 24: Traditional Daoist Temple Architecture and Layout (ch. 15)
Figure 25: Founding Members of the British Taoist Association (ch. 16)
1. Seven Periods and Four Divisions of Daoist History (ch. 1)
2. Examples of Classical Daoist Inner Cultivation Lineages (ch. 3)
3. Lineage Connections in Early Organized Daoism (ch. 3)
4. Seven Ordination Ranks of the Tang Monastic System (ch. 3)
5. Three Ordination Ranks of the Longmen Lineage (ch. 3)
6. Early Tianshi Community Organization (ch. 4)
7. Ternary Dimensions of the Daoist Tradition (ch. 5)
8. Five Phase Associations (ch. 6)
9. Approximation of Simplified Modern Daoist Pantheon (ch. 6)
10. Twenty-four Nodes Daoyin (Livia Kohn) (ch. 10)
11. Stages of Classical Daoist Meditation (Harold Roth) (ch. 11)
12. Spectrum of Global Daoism (ch. 16)
Website

http://www.bloomsbury.com/the-daoist-tradition-9781441168733/

For students:
Study sheets
   Historical Outline of Daoism
   Chronology of Daoist History
   Basic Information Sheet on Daoism
   Common Misconceptions concerning Daoism
   Models of Daoist Practice and Attainment
   Periodization of Daoist History
   Chinese Dynasties and Historical Periods
Weblinks
   Reliable Websites for the Study of Daoism

For Lecturers:
Sample Lesson Plan
Sample Syllabus
Sample Exam Questions
Images
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Century BCE</th>
<th>Event/Person/Event</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6th</td>
<td>Laozi (pseudo-historical)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th</td>
<td>Beginnings of classical Daoism, Zhuang Zhou (ca. 370-ca. 290), Neiye (ca. 350), Jixia Academy (ca. 340-ca. 230), Inner Chapters of Zhuangzi (ca. 300), Guodian Laozi (ca. 300)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>Huang-Lao, Mawangdui Laozi (ca. 168), Fangshi communities, Canonization of Laozi as Daode jing (ca. 150), Huainanzi (139)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st</td>
<td>Yan Zun (ca. 83 BCE–10 CE), Liexian zhuan (ca. 50 BCE), First Taiping jing (31–7 BCE)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>Beginnings of organized Daoism, Laojun (Lord Lao), Zhang Daoling (fl. 140s), Tianshi (Celestial Masters), Heming shan (Crane-Cry Mountain), Heshang gong (ca. 160?), Ge Xuan (164–244), Zhang Jue (fl. 164–84), Taiping (Great Peace), Zhang Lu (fl. 190), Laozi xiang’er zhu (ca. 190)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
BRIEF TIMELINE OF DAOIST HISTORY

3rd c.  
Wang Bi (226–49)  
Standard editions of the Daode jing (ca. 240)  
Wei Huacun (251–334)  
Guo Xiang (252–312)  
Xuanxue (Profound Learning)  
Taiqing (Great Clarity)  
Ge Hong (287–347)  
Huangting jing (ca. 288)

4th c.  
Baopu zi (320)  
Shenxian zhuan (ca. 320)  
Xu Mi (303–73)  
Yang Xi (330–86?)  
Maoshan (Mount Mao)  
Shangqing (Highest Clarity)  
Ge Chaofu (fl. 390s)  
Lingbao (Numinous Treasure)  
Kou Qianzhi (365–448)

5th c.  
Duren jing (ca. 400)  
Lu Xiujing (406–77)  
Santian neijie jing (420)  
Toba-Wei Daoist theocracy (424–51)  
Lingbao Catalogue (437)  
Tao Hongjing (456–536)  
Louguan (Lookout Tower Monastery; ca. 470)  
Daoist monasticism

6th c.  
Zhen’gao (500)  
Daoism proscribed (504)  
First Buddho-Daoist debate (520)  
Second Buddho-Daoist debate (570)  
Wushang biyao (574)

7th c.  
Lord Lao miracle (620)  
Fengdao kejie (620)  
Daode jing part of imperial examinations (674)  
Sandong zhunang (680s)  
Sun Simiao (601–93)  
Sima Chengzhen (647–735)
8th c. Zhang Wanfu (fl. 700–42)
Wu Yun (ca. 700–87)
Tang princesses ordained (711–12)
Tianchang guan (Temple of Celestial Perpetuity) (722)
Imperial recognition of classical Daoist figures (742)
Canonization of Zhuangzi as Nanhua zhenjing (742)
Lü Dongbin (b. 798?)

9th c. Daoist registry office established (806)
Daoism persecuted (845)
Emperor Xuanzong (r. 846–59) ordained (856)
Du Guangting (850–933)
Chongxuan (Twofold Mystery)

10th c. Chuandao ji (ca. 920)
Chen Tuan (d. 989)
Tianxin (Celestial Heart)

11th c. Da Song tiangong baozang (1019)
Yunji qiqian (1023)
Qingwei (Pure Tenuity)
Tongchu (Youthful Incipience)
Jingming (Pure Brightness)
Shenxiao (Divine Empyrean)
Liu Haichan (fl. 1031)
Daoist clerical examination system (1060)
Lin Lingsu (1076–1120)
Zhang Boduan (d. 1082)
Wuzhen pian (ca. 1060)

12th c. Wang Chongyang (1113–70)
Quanzhen (Complete Perfection)
Emperor Huizong self-identifies as Daoist monarch (1117)
Sun Buer (1119–82)
Ma Yu (1123–84)
Zeng Zao (fl. 1131–55)
Qiu Changchun (1148–1227)
Daoshu (ca. 1150)
Lijiao shiwu lun (ca. 1168)
Chongyang gong (Palace of Chongyang) (ca. 1171)
Longmen dong (Dragon Gate Grotto)
Longhu shan (Dragon-Tiger Mountain)
Bai Yuchan (1194–ca. 1227)
13th c.  
Tianchang guan restored (1223)  
Changchun gong (Palace of Changchun) (ca. 1228)  
Yongle gong (Palace of Eternal Joy) (1240)  
Xuandu baozang (1244)  
Buddho-Daoist debate (1258)  
Buddho-Daoist debate (1281)  
Anti-Daoist edicts (1281)

14th c.  
Xiuzhen shishu (ca. 1300)  
Imperial recognition of major Quanzhen figures (1310)  
Quanzhen qinggui (ca. 1320)  
Zhang Sanfeng (fl. 1360–80?)  
Wudang shan (Mount Wudang)  
Zhang Yuchu (1361–1410)  
Zhang Yuqing (1364–1427)

15th c.  
Zhengtong daozang (1445)

16th c.  
Wu Shouyang (1563–1644)

17th c.  
Xu daozang (1607)  
Wang Changyue (1622?–1680)  
Longmen (Dragon Gate)  
Chuzhen jie (ca. 1660)

18th c.  
Daozang jiyao (1733)  
Liu Yiming (1734–1821)  
Liu Huayang (fl. 1736)  
Min Yide (1758–1836)  
Daoshu shier zhong (ca. 1780)  
Huiming jing (1794)

19th c.  
James Legge (1815–97)  
Zhao Bichen (b. 1860)  
John Chalmers’ English translation of Daode jing (1868)  
Xingming fajue mingzhi (ca. 1880)  
Chen Yingning (1880–1969)  
Henri Maspero (1882–1945)  
The Texts of Taoism (1891)  
Wu-Liu xianzong (1897)
BRIEF TIMELINE OF DAOIST HISTORY

20th c.

- Zhang Enpu (1904–69)
- End of Chinese imperial patronage system (1911)
- Beginning of modern Daoism
- Zhuang-chen Dengyun (1911–76)
- Taoist Association of China (1913)
- Wudang martial arts (ca. 1915)
- Share K. Lew (1918–2012)
- *Daozang jinghua lu* (1922)
- Daoist Canon reprinted (1923)
- Min Zhiting (1924–2004)
- Taiwan Taoist Association (1950)
- Chinese Daoist Association (1957)
- Hong Kong Taoist Association (1961)
- Daoist Canon reprinted (1962)
- *Daozang jinghua* (1963)
- Bellagio conference on Daoist Studies (1968)
- Taoist Sanctuary (1970)
- *Taoist Yoga* (1970)
- *Zhuang-Lin xu daozang* (1975)

Emergence of global Daoism
- Orthodox Daoism in America (ODA; 1986–2004)
- *Taoist Resources* (1988–97)
- Sociedade Taoista do Brasil (1991)
- Associazione Taoista d’Italia (1993)
- *The Taoist Body* (1993 [1982])
- Singapore Taoist Mission (1996)
- British Taoist Association (1996)

21st c.

- Daoist Studies Website (2000)
- Taoism and the Arts of China exhibition (2000)
- Conference on Daoist Cultivation (2001)
- Asociación de Taoísmo de España (2001)
- Center for Daoist Studies (2003)
- Association Française Taoïste (2004)
- Daoist Studies Group of the American Academy of Religion (2005)
- Daoist Foundation (2007)
PART ONE

Historical overview
The study of Daoism can be perplexing. The sheer diversity and complexity of the Daoist tradition often subverts attempts at definition and characterization. One's perplexity may increase dramatically when one encounters the types of questions and issues that emerge through careful study. However, a theoretically sophisticated approach is part of gaining an accurate and informed understanding of the religious tradition which is Daoism. While we may assume that understanding Daoism is simply a matter of learning the “facts,” this is not the case. Those “facts” are themselves conditioned by one’s theoretical approach, interpretive framework, and guiding concerns. Every presentation is an interpretation, and every interpretation has specific commitments, whether recognized or not. Specifically, the study of Daoism is conditioned by various interpretive legacies, and by claims regarding the accuracy of designating something “Daoist.” In seeking to understand Daoism, we must thus be aware of our own unquestioned assumptions, ingrained opinions, and interpretive legacies.

Daoism (Taoism), the “tradition of the Dao” (Tao), is an indigenous Chinese religion rooted in traditional Chinese culture. Daoism is a religious tradition in which the Dao, translatable as “the Way” and “a way,” is the sacred or ultimate concern (see Chapter 6). “Daoism” is shorthand for Daoist adherents, communities, and their religious
expressions (see Chapter 2; passim). The emphasis on Daoism as a Chinese religion draws our attention to the importance of Chinese history, culture, and society in the historical development of Daoism. The most influential Daoist communities have been in mainland China and primarily of Han ethnicity. Many of the informing views of Daoism derive from or parallel those of traditional Chinese culture (see Chapters 5 and 6; passim). In addition, all of the key scriptures have been written in classical Chinese (see Chapter 12), and the ability to read and write Chinese is required for the performance of Daoist ritual (see Chapter 13). The most important Daoist sacred sites also are located in China (see Chapter 14). Moreover, the Daoist emphasis on ancestors, harmony, lineage, naturalistic cosmology, tradition, and so forth parallel and often derive from pan-Chinese concerns and traditions.

At the same time, Daoism is now a global, transnational religion characterized by cultural, ethnic, and linguistic diversity. The Daoist community now consists of adherents from a wide variety of cultural and ethnic backgrounds (see Chapter 16). Such a development begs the question of the relationship among ethnicity, culture, and religion. Briefly stated and traditionally speaking, Daoism cannot be separated from Chinese culture and Chinese language. While Daoism has tended to be characterized by diversity and inclusivity, it is not universalistic in the ways that many people imagine. This does not exclude the possibility of the conversion and participation of “non-Chinese” people. Rather, it challenges the construction of Daoism so prevalent in Europe and North America, interpretations that are rooted in colonialist, missionary, and Orientalist legacies (see Chapter 16).

Indigenous names, historical origins, and definitional parameters

Much ink—probably too much ink—has been spilt on the question of “What is Daoism?,” and particularly on the origin and parameters of the term. My characterization of Daoism as an indigenous Chinese religion is supported by Daoist Studies, that is, the specialized academic field dedicated to studying and understanding Daoism, but we should familiarize ourselves with some critical issues related to gaining a nuanced and accurate understanding of Daoism.

To begin, there is one representation of Daoism that is wholly inaccurate and untenable. This is the claim that there are “two Daoisms,” namely, so-called “philosophical Daoism” and so-called “religious Daoism.” We may label this interpretation as the “Victorian” or “Leggean view” of Daoism, as the Protestant missionary and Victorian James Legge (1815–97) was one of its most influential advocates (see Girardot 2002). This view of Daoism as a “bifurcated tradition” is the dominant received view of Daoism. Rooted in colonialist legacies, such an interpretive framework is epidemic among non-specialist accounts of Daoism, including among non-specialist educators and world religion textbooks (see Dippmann 2001), not to mention various
popular constructions (see Chapter 16). The conventional presentation suggests that so-called “philosophical Daoism,” associated with the Daode jing and Zhuangzi, is “original” or “pure Daoism,” while so-called “religious Daoism” is a “degenerate” and “superstitious” adjunct to the former, undeserving of serious attention. In popular accounts, it is the latter so-called “religious Daoism” that has also supposedly lost the original teachings of Daoism. Such a bifurcated interpretation of Daoism is flawed and inaccurate. It involves a systematic misunderstanding and misinterpretation of classical Daoism (see Chapters 2 and 3), usually through selective readings of inaccurate translations of classical Daoist texts (see Chapters 12 and 16). Reference to so-called “philosophical Daoism” and/or “religious Daoism” should be taken ipso facto as inaccuracy and misunderstanding with respect to the Daoist tradition. In contrast to this construction, classical Daoism, referred to as so-called “philosophical Daoism” in outdated accounts of Daoism, consisted of inner cultivation lineages that expressed religious commitments (see Roth 1999a; also LaFargue 1992). The lineages had distinctive cosmological and theological views (Dao), emphasized specific practices (apophatic meditation), and aimed at specific experiences (mystical union with the Dao). Here we find at least four of Ninian Smart’s (1999) seven dimensions of religion, namely, doctrinal, practical, experiential, and social. All of these are encompassed by the Daoist theological concern with the Dao (see Chapters 5 and 6). The so-called “philosophical/religious Daoism,” or so-called “elite/folk Daoism” bifurcation, also essentializes Daoism as corresponding to only two texts. This is problematic not only in terms of the relative importance of those texts in the Daoist tradition (see Chapter 12), but also with respect to the larger contours of Daoist history (see Chapter 2; passim). It denigrates almost 2,200 years of Daoist history that consists of numerous adherents, communities and movements, scriptures, sacred sites, and so forth.

While the sheer complexity of the Daoist tradition may be a source of perplexity, the so-called “philosophical/religious Daoism” bifurcation is not a viable way to resolve that perplexity. Although it is clear that there are “philosophical dimensions” of Daoism, these are almost always rooted in a religious worldview as well as in religious experience. In addition to philosophy, a nuanced understanding of Daoism must address cosmology, soteriology, theology, and so forth (see Glossary).

More “sophisticated” attempts to justify the bifurcation of Daoism draw upon two, and only two, indigenous terms used to designate Daoism, namely, daojia (tao-chia) and daojiao (tao-chiao). This primarily involves a terminological approach to understanding Daoism. In conventional accounts, these terms are said to refer to so-called “philosophical Daoism” and so-called “religious Daoism,” respectively. Outside of contemporary contexts, this is simply false. First, on the level of meaning, daojia means “Family of the Dao,” and could also be rendered as “Lineage of the Way,” or “Daoist school”; similarly, daojiao means “Teachings of the Dao.” Both emphasize the Dao, a Daoist cosmological and theological concept (see Chapter 6), as primary. The former suggests that lineage, whether biological or spiritual, is primary (see Chapter 3), while the latter suggests that teachings (and teachers by implication) are primary (see also Yao and Zhao 2010: 24–44). That is, the terms themselves do not lend
credence to the distinction. Second, each term has a complex history. Briefly stated, it seems that the earliest uses of *daojia* appear in Early Han dynasty historical sources as a way to categorize texts. However, into the early medieval period and later, *daojia* was used to designate ordained Daoist priests and the Daoist religious community as a whole. It meant something like “the Daoist community” or “Daoist tradition,” which consisted of various key figures, texts, and movements, including the inner cultivation lineages of classical Daoism. With respect to *daojiao*, the term was early on coined by Lu Xiujing (406–477), a key figure in the early Lingbao movement and architect of the early Daoist tradition (see Chapter 2), in order to distinguish Daoism from Buddhism (*fojiao*) (Kobayashi 1995; Kirkland 1997a: 2004). Throughout much of Chinese history, both terms were used interchangeably by Daoists to refer to their religious tradition.

As one can see, the question of the historical origins of Daoism is complex and multifaceted. Although most scholars of Daoism, and tradition-based Daoists, reject an interpretive framework that utilizes the distinction between so-called “philosophical Daoism” and so-called “religious Daoism;” or so-called *daojia* and so-called *daojiao*, there are different perspectives on when and how to locate the beginnings of Daoism. The corresponding responses tend to be based in assumptions about the defining characteristics of religion as well as the nature of tradition, including singularity/plurality and degree of self-consciousness. Within Daoist Studies, one of the primary debates centers on the historical origins of Daoism. In this respect, it is important to recognize that there are a variety of viable revisionist views of Daoism. The dominant revisionist view among Sinological scholars holds that Daoism as a religion begins in the Later Han dynasty, principally with Zhang Daoling (fl. 140s CE) and the Tianshi movement (see Chapter 2). This view was the first revisionist account of Daoism, and largely began as a corrective to the earlier emphasis on so-called “philosophical Daoism” and neglect of so-called “religious Daoism.” We may label this the “Strickmannian view” of Daoism, as the late Michel Strickmann (1942–94), who primarily taught at the University of California, Berkeley, was one of the principal early advocates (see Strickmann 1979) and as his students and intellectual heirs have become highly influential in the dominant specialist account of Daoism in North America. If one prefers a more impersonal characterization, we may refer to this interpretation as the “truncated tradition” view, as it privileges the Tianshi (Celestial Masters) movement in terms of both the origins and defining characteristics of Daoism. This approach was helpful for correcting certain early problematic constructions of Daoism, but it has outlived its usefulness. It is deficient on multiple grounds (see, e.g. Kirkland 1997a). It implicitly assumes the bifurcation of Daoism, accepting the notion that “Daoism” before the Tianshi movement is best understood as “philosophy” or “thought” with little to no social reality or connection to Daoism as such. In this account, actual Daoism only refers to “religious Daoism” (“*daojiao*”), specifically to one or more organized movements during the Later Han dynasty. It also essentializes and reifies “Daoism” as largely synonymous with the Tianshi movement and its religious affiliates; it is a Tianshi-centered (Taiwanese Zhengyi-centered?) view of Daoist history. It often neglects connections and continuities between classical
Daoism and early Daoism. Finally, it ignores the actual complexity and diversity of early Daoism itself (see Hendrischke 2000, 2007) as well as the relative importance of the earliest Daoist movements in Daoist history considered as a whole (see Chapter 2).

While there are a variety of other revisionist views (see, e.g. Schipper 2000; Kirkland 2002, 2004; Campany 2003), here I will concentrate on the one embraced and advocated in the present book. This perspective, which we might label the “lineal” (in the sense of lineage) or “continuous tradition” view, suggests that there was an actual Daoist religious community during the Warring States period and Early Han dynasty (see LaFargue 1992; Roth 1996, 1999a; Schipper 2000, 2008). Under this interpretative framework, Daoism as a Chinese religious tradition began, at least in seminal form and as a series of master-disciple communities, during the Warring States period and Early Han dynasty. Following Harold Roth of Brown University, we may reasonably label this “movement” as the “inner cultivation lineages” of classical Daoism.

With respect to the existence of an actual Daoist religious community during the fourth to second centuries BCE, there is a great deal of evidence for the social reality of the proposed inner cultivation lineages. The Zhuangzi (Book of Master Zhuang), in particular, documents a variety of teachers and disciples (see Chapter 3). In addition, texts do not exist independently of socio-historical contexts and anthropological realities. The compilation, preservation, and transmission of the texts of classical Daoism hint at a self-conscious religious community (see Chapters 2 and 12; also Schipper 2000; Komjathy 2008a). The Warring States and Early Han periods were a time of bamboo and silk manuscripts, of rare and precious hand-written texts (see Chapter 12); on some level, it is amazing that any texts from this period have been transmitted to the present time. From my perspective, that process suggests an early Daoist community and emerging tradition. Furthermore, the most significant evidence comes from the Zhuangzi itself. Revisionist scholarship on the text, like that on other texts of classical Daoism, suggests multiple source-points, and distinct Daoist lineages. Each and every text associated with classical Daoism is a multi-vocal anthology with diverse textual layers. Some passages indicate that members of that community distinguished their religious practice from their contemporaries; they thought of themselves as “practitioners of the Way.” Some evidence for these claims is found in Chapter 23 of the Zhuangzi, which is named after Gengsang Chu, the chapter’s central figure who is identified as a disciple of Lao Dan (Laozi).

THE FAMILY OF THE WAY

“The understanding of people of antiquity went a long way. How far did it go? To the point where some of them believed that things have never existed—so far, to the end, where nothing can be added. Those at the next stage thought that things exist. They looked upon life as a loss, upon death as a return—thus
This chapter alludes to various other chapters in the *Zhuangzi*. Without providing a specific name for the “movement,” it speaks of three groups of adherents being part of the same “royal clan” (gongzu), a “line of succession” (dai), a “fief” (feng), and something like a “family” (shi). That is, “Daoists” are located in specific families and lineages, some of which are identified by actual biological ancestry and others of which are identified by geographical and social location. Similarly, along with Chapter 33, Chapter 15 distinguishes “Daoist” practice from five lower-level forms of self-cultivation (see Chapter 10 herein). In contrast to these, “Daoist” practitioners (shi) are committed to apophatic meditation with the goal of mystical union with the Dao (see Chapter 11 herein). These various details point towards a self-conscious early Daoist religious community that can reasonably be labeled the “inner cultivation lineages.” Such is the beginning of the Daoist tradition, and such is one of the key source-points for the later movements of organized Daoism.

Although members of the inner cultivation lineages did not explicitly use *daojia* as a self-reference, there is evidence to take that name, like “Daoism,” as adequately exact. The texts themselves suggest a movement that might be called the “Family of the Dao.” Moreover, although *daojia* does not appear in the relevant texts, *daoshu* (techniques of the Way) does (Roth 1999a: 181–5). That is, members of the inner cultivation lineages saw themselves as practitioners of the “techniques of the Way.” For example, in Chapter 33 of the *Zhuangzi*, the authors contrast the techniques of the Way with limited “techniques of one-corner” (*fangshu*). The presentation proceeds to demonstrate the strengths and weaknesses of each of the six groups of teachers, concluding that only the models of Lao Dan (Laozi), Zhuang Zhou (Zhuangzi), and their disciples are completely worthy. Such techniques of the Way are aimed at developing “inner sageliness and outer kingliness” and so contain an important element of inner cultivation (Roth 1999a: 182–3; see also idem. 1996).

I would thus suggest that we might reasonably use *daojia*, only in the sense of the “family of the Dao,” as a viable indigenous designation for the earliest Daoist religious community and for the Daoist tradition as a whole. This designation is helpful for
drawing our attention to the way in which religious communities are viewed along ancestral lines and lines of transmission from a traditional Chinese perspective (see, e.g. Yao and Zhao 2010: 24–44). Moreover, as discussed in Chapter 3, the term directs us to study both actual Daoist families and spiritual lineages. Here we must also recall that later Daoists used the term to refer to a greatly expanded Daoist community and tradition.

The final interpretive issue related to the view that there was a Daoist religious community from the fourth to second century BCE must address the connection between so-called classical Daoism and the emergence of organized Daoism during the Later Han dynasty. If there were actual inner cultivation lineages, what became of such lineages in subsequent periods? Did they exert any influence on the later Daoist tradition? What are the connections between classical Daoism and early organized Daoism? At present, we do not know of any specific lineage connections, although I provide some conjecture in Chapter 3. More research is required on what I would label “Daoism-between-Daoism,” namely, historical developments between the compilation of the Huainanzi (139 BCE) and the emergence of the Taiping and Tianshi movements in the mid-second century CE. We await research on potential continuities and departures, divergences and convergences within the Daoist tradition and among distinct Daoist movements. At present, we do know that the history of Daoism is a history of continual reconfiguration. It is a history of the emergence, mingling, dissolution, and revitalization of distinct movements. Some movements emerged, and seemingly disappeared, only to reemerge in a new form decades or centuries later. The Daoist tradition is also characterized by diversity, inclusivity, and adaptation, including the incorporation of new cultural influences such as Buddhism from at least the fourth century CE forward. Research on continuities and departures is only just beginning.

In summary, Daoism is a diverse and complex religious tradition composed of Daoist adherents, communities, and their religious expressions. Our understanding of Daoism is complicated by a number of factors, including a scarcity of historically informed and nuanced studies, including accurate translations, as well as a “conspiracy of ignorance.” The latter consists of inaccurate representations, such as the distinction between so-called “philosophical Daoism” (equated with daojia) and so-called “religious Daoism” (equated with daojiao), popular translations, primarily of the Daode jing and Zhuangzi, as well as various New Age appropriations (see Chapter 16; Komjathy 2011b). Thus, what most have come to know as “Daoism” in the modern West is either a popular construction rooted in various Orientalist legacies, or a reified entity reconstructed through texts associated with early and early medieval Daoism. The former view is found among various “Daoist sympathizers,” hybrid spiritualities, and forms of spiritual capitalism. It is found in most non-specialist studies and world religion textbooks. The latter view is the dominant position in specialist discourse, especially among those who overemphasize the importance of the Tianshi movement and problematically interpret Daoism through the indigenous Chinese category of daojiao.
A more comprehensive understanding would recognize that Daoism is an indigenous Chinese religious tradition rooted in traditional Chinese culture. This religious tradition has multiple source-points, but begins with the inner cultivation lineages of the Warring States period and the Early Han dynasty. From this perspective, Daoism is the “tradition of the Dao,” which is made up of various “families” and “communities of practice.” Generally speaking, the Daoist tradition is characterized by diversity and plurality, especially with respect to setting parameters of inclusion and participation. The study of Daoism will always thwart neat categorization because the tradition itself embodies a resistance to hegemony, homogeneity, and monolithic structure. Daoism has multiple source-points, including various “founders,” foundational movements and lineages, key scriptures, and so forth. We must understand Daoism as both a tradition and a set of traditions, as both Daoism and Daoisms. It is simultaneously singular and plural, varied and unified. The complexity of Daoism, and the consistent willingness of Daoists to include new revelations and religious paths into their tradition, subverts attempts to establish unambiguous demarcation. For the study of Daoism, intellectual humility, interpretive openness, and sustained inquiry, with the commitment to discovery and surprise, are helpful attributes.

**Historical periodization**

Until the establishment of the Republic of China (1912), Chinese history was organized according to dynasties and the reign periods of specific emperors. What we refer to today as “China,” a unified geo-political “country” and nation-state, first came into being following the Warring States period, with the final victory of the state of Qin and the establishment of their Qin dynasty (221 BCE). Until the end of dynastic rule following the Manchu Qing, the subsequent dynasties were ruled by emperors or imperial families, and their bureaucratic hierarchies. On the culturally elite level, there was both an aristocratic land-holding class and a merit-based bureaucracy, with the latter characterized by relative social mobility based on education and success in examination systems.

Developing the work of Russell Kirkland (1997a, 2002; see also Kohn 1998: 164–7; 2000; Miller 2003), I would propose the historical periodization of Daoism based on seven major periods and four basic divisions.

The seven periods would roughly correspond to major watersheds for Daoism in Chinese dynastic and post-dynastic history: (1) Warring States (480–222 BCE), Qin (221–206 BCE), and Early Han (202 BCE–9 CE); (2) Later Han (25–220 CE); (3) Period of Disunion (220–589) and Sui (581–618); (4) Tang (618–907), Song (Northern: 960–1127; Southern: 1127–1279), and Yuan (1260–1368); (5) Ming (1368–1644) and Qing (1644–1911); and (6) Republican (1912–49; 1949–) and early Communist (1949–78). I would, in turn, divide the modern period into “early modern Daoism” (1912–78) and “late modern Daoism” (1978-present), with the latter including contemporary expressions.
and developments. In terms of Chinese history, 1978 is used as the key date because that was when Deng Xiaoping (1904–97) initiated the so-called Four Modernizations, socio-economic reforms that also led to an increase in religious freedom and eventually to the “revitalization” of Daoism. In concert with the Chinese Communist revolution (1949) and the subsequent flight of the Nationalists/Republicans to Taiwan, this was also a decisive factor in the globalization of Daoism (see Chapter 16). Period seven, in turn, encompasses more contemporary developments in mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan. It also includes the transmission and transformation of Daoism in other Asian, European, and North American contexts, as well as the establishment of the field of Daoist Studies throughout the world. While helpful, such periods should not lull one into believing that they encompass the dramatic changes that occurred between, for instance, the Tang and Song dynasties.

As discussed in Chapter 2, each of these periods saw the emergence of specific communities and movements. Briefly stated, classical Daoism encompasses the diverse communities and “school” of the inner cultivation lineages as well as Huang-Lao dao (Way of the Yellow Emperor and Laozi). Major movements associated with early Daoism include Taiping (Great Peace) and Tianshi (Celestial Masters). Early medieval Daoism consisted of such important movements as Taiqing (Great Clarity), Shangqing (Highest Clarity), and Lingbao (Numinous Treasure). Late medieval Daoism included a variety of internal alchemy lineages, including Quanzhen (Complete Perfection) and so-called Nanzong (Southern School), as well as new deity cults and ritual movements. Late imperial and modern Daoism was dominated by Zhengyi (Orthodox Unity; a.k.a. Tianshi) and Quanzhen, though it also saw the emergence of major lineages of the latter as well as new lineages of internal alchemy. The constituents of global Daoism are a highly complex topic, which will be partially addressed in Chapter 16. Briefly stated, from a tradition-based and institutional perspective,
global Daoism remains primarily a Zhengyi-Quanzhen tradition. However, there are also dynamic (and problematic) recent developments, including mediumistic cult influences, obscure family lineages, and diverse organizations. The student of Daoism is, in turn, faced with many perplexities and challenges when studying the contemporary landscape of things identified as “Daoist.”

For simplicity’s sake, we might further speak of four basic divisions of Daoism: (1) classical Daoism; (2) early organized Daoism; (3) later organized Daoism; (4) modern Daoism. The rationale for this grouping is to distinguish historical developments (see Chapter 2), types of community (see Chapter 4), and distinctive models of practice (see below). It draws our attention to the ways in which the inner cultivation lineages of classical Daoism differ from the householder, ascetic, and eremitic communities of early organized Daoism, as the Later Han dynasty witnessed the emergence of Daoism as an organized religious tradition with enduring institutions. Early organized Daoism may be distinguished from later organized Daoism based on the ascendance of a monastic model in the latter (see Chapter 4) and the emergence of new models of practice, especially internal alchemy. Modern Daoism corresponds to the end of dynastic rule in China and the increasing influence of Western values and political ideologies. In its more contemporary form, it directs our attention towards Daoism as a global religious tradition.

The seven periods and four divisions in turn provide a relatively simple and nuanced interpretive framework for discussing Daoism from a historical perspective, including attentiveness to larger cultural and social developments. In the following chapter I provide a concise overview of Daoist history based on this periodization model. It will also be utilized as one of the primary interpretive frameworks throughout the subsequent thematic and topical chapters.

Models of practice and attainment

While it may seem self-evident that “realization of the Dao” or “attunement with the Way” is both the origin and culmination of a Daoist training regimen, one cannot deny that Daoists have developed and advocated different and perhaps competing models for such realization or attunement. Some traditional models of Daoist praxis include the following:

1. **Alchemical**: Transformation of self through ingestion of various substances (external) and/or through complex physiological practices (internal).

2. **Ascetic**: Renunciation, perhaps even body-negation. May involve psychological purification (internal) or practices such as fasting, sleep deprivation, voluntary poverty, etc. (external).

3. **Cosmological**: Emphasis on cosmological integration and seasonal attunement.
4 Dietetic: Attentiveness to consumption patterns and influences.

5 Ethical: Emphasis on morality and ethics, including precept study and application.

6 Hermeneutical: Emphasis on scripture study and interpretation, often resulting in the production of commentaries.

7 Meditative: Meditation as central, with the recognition of diverse types of meditation.

8 Quietistic: “Non-action” (wuwei), involving non-interference, non-intervention, and effortless activity, as central.

9 Ritualistic: Ritual as central, with the recognition of diverse types of ritual expression and activity.

As discussed in more detail in the following chapter, these models emerge in specific contexts and may be associated with particular Daoist movements (see Komjathy 2008b), but most Daoists employed and recommended a combination. An interpretative framework based on models of Daoist practice helps one understand the diverse expressions of Daoist religiosity and “paths to the Dao.” This interpretative framework will, in turn, be used throughout the present book. In concert with insights derived from Religious Studies (see, e.g. Smart 1999), it supplies at least one of the organizational structures of our inquiry: cosmology and theology (Chapter 6), ethics (Chapter 8), dietetics (Chapter 9), health and longevity practice (Chapter 10), meditation (Chapter 11), hermeneutics (Chapter 12), ritual (Chapter 13), and material culture (Chapter 15).

Towards a postmodern and postcolonial approach

The aim of a postmodern and postcolonial approach to the study of Daoism would be to move beyond solely Western frameworks and concerns, especially Western academic accounts of Daoism. It would consider indigenous Chinese and Daoist views, especially through conversations and direct experience with Chinese Daoist adherents and communities, but it would not privilege those. It would attempt to avoid any ethnocentric bias. It would be neither Sinocentric nor Eurocentric, neither Orientalist nor Occidentalist. At the same time, the academic study of Daoism must be Sinocentric on some level. Pre-modern China is the source-culture of Daoism, and Daoism has deep connections with traditional Chinese culture. This includes language and informing worldviews. Any informed perspective must acknowledge “Chinese Daoism” as the source-tradition of contemporary “global Daoism.”

The postcolonial approach would specifically include voices from the Chinese Daoist tradition itself. It would attempt to understand Daoism from Daoist perspectives.
Historically speaking, one would understand the ways in which Daoists have defined and understood their tradition. This would include contemporary Daoist perspectives as well. Here we must recognize that Daoists are adherents of Daoism, with ordained and lineage-based priests and monastics being the primary representatives (see Chapter 3). To allow one’s understanding of Daoism to be informed by Daoist perspectives presupposes religious literacy concerning Daoism and Daoist religious affiliation, identity, and adherence. It requires that one actually has access to Daoists. Such an approach faces a number of challenges in the modern world, not the least of which is widespread misunderstanding and misrepresentation (see Chapter 16; Komjathy 2011b). Most self-identified “Daoists” in the West, most visible through various “virtual communities,” unreliable electronic sources, and popular publications, have fabricated their identities from the various colonialist, missionary, and Orientalist legacies already mentioned. Metaphorically speaking, they are primarily tourists or miners in the sacred site of Daoism.

In a postcolonial approach, ordained Daoists and adherents with formal standing in the religious community, actual committed Daoists and representatives of Daoism, would be empowered to speak for their tradition. This would especially include indigenous Chinese Daoist perspectives. It would recognize and respect individuals with formal commitments to and participation in the Daoist religious community. One interpretive benefit from the postcolonial approach is that it guides us to study the tradition through the tradition. It allows us to understand the ways in which Daoists have established and developed their tradition. We may then avoid some of the above-mentioned interpretive issues, although the question of historical viability remains. For example, most modern Daoists view the contours of Daoist history in a way parallel to the present book. They see so-called daojia as part of so-called daojiao. In such a context, daojia functions something like “classical Daoism,” while daojiao functions something like “organized Daoism.” That is, Daoism is a diverse, but unified religious tradition. This tradition begins with classical Daoism, and includes the Daode jing and Nanhua zhenjing (Zhuangzi) as Daoist scriptures, as sacred texts and manifestations of the Dao (see Chapter 12). Moreover, many modern Daoists read those texts as practice manuals, as guidebooks for Daoist cultivation.

Allowing Daoist views and perspectives to inform one’s understanding of Daoism is thus both challenging and enlightening. With respect to the former, it requires that one find actual Daoist adherents as conversation partners and actual Daoist communities and places as educational locales. This is especially challenging outside of China. Few “connoisseurs of Daoism” have actually met tradition-based Daoists, specifically ordained priests and monastics. To understand Daoism thus requires vigilance in terms of establishing parameters of inclusion and identifying legitimate sources of interpretive authority. It requires one to avoid, or at least to critically investigate, popular appropriations and distortions. It might involve avoiding the internet altogether as a viable source of information (see Chapter 16). In contrast, actual conversations with Daoists, whether through historical sources or modern clergy, reveal unexpected insights. These might include the importance of community, connection, cultivation,
approaching daoism

embodiment, energetic awareness, place, ritual, sacred presence, tradition, virtue, and so forth. For educators, a postcolonial approach that includes actual Daoist views might lead to alternative questions and new interpretations. One might in turn wonder whether or not a Daoist-inspired or actual Daoist type of scholarship is possible.

As this book attempts to demonstrate, there is an academic model of scholarship that may be simultaneously historical, theoretical, ethnographic, and postcolonial. Metaphorically speaking, such an approach would attempt to overcome approaching Daoism as historical artifact, museum piece, and/or mining site. Such an approach might understand Daoism as an old growth forest, intact culture, and/or sacred site. The present book in turn aims to be a field-guide and a map to the landscape of Daoism as a Chinese and now global religious tradition.

FIGURE 1 Map of Chongyang gong (Palace of Chongyang; Huxian, Shaanxi) during the Yuan Dynasty
Source: Photo by author (Louis Komjathy)
FURTHER READING


The Chinese term for tradition is *chuantong*, which literally means “to transmit and gather together.” The character *chuan* consists of the *ren* ("person") radical and the phonetic *zhuan* ("special"). Tradition is a transmission, something that passes between human beings. It is what is preserved and handed down over time. The character *tong* consists of the *mi* ("silk") radical and the phonetic *chong* ("to fill"). Like the character for scripture (see Chapter 12), *tong* suggests strands and threads of connection. By extension, the Daoist tradition is a community of practitioners connected to each other as a historical and energetic continuum. As mentioned in Chapter 1, Chinese Daoists have tended to speak of their tradition in terms of a “family” (*jia*) and “teachings” (*jiao*), with the assumption of teachers and scriptures as major sources of those teachings. The traditions of the Dao, the specific communities, movements, and lineages that comprise Daoism, also receive other designations. “Movements” tend to be referred to as *dao* ("ways") or as *liu* ("streams"). “Lineages,” usually sub-divisions of larger movements, tend to be referred to as *pai* ("tributaries"). That is, movements are paths or ways to the Dao, to *the Way*. These are the major expressions of the Daoist tradition; some important movements include Tianshi dao (Way of the Celestial Masters), Shangqing dao (Way of Highest Clarity), Quanzhen dao (Way of Complete Perfection), and so forth. These
are usually associated with particular “founders,” revelations, scriptures, and often places. Such movements are streams flowing into and out of the larger tradition, with the latter comparable to a river flowing towards the ocean of the Dao. Lineages are the tributaries that flow into and out of the streams of the Daoist movements. These are usually associated with major teachers or systems of practice.

As Daoism is a religious tradition with about 2,400 years of history, its substance and parameters have obviously varied. For members of the inner cultivation lineages of the Warring States period and Early Han, the Daoist tradition consisted of their own master-disciple communities, often in contrast to other religio-cultural and intellectual tendencies (“schools”) at the time (e.g. Confucianism, Legalism, etc.). For the Tianshi (Celestial Masters) of the Early Han dynasty, the Daoist tradition primarily designated Laozi and the *Daode jing* as well as their regional movement. Influential medieval Daoists like Ge Hong and Lu Xiujing viewed the Daoist tradition differently. Ge Hong saw it as a tradition of immortality with roots in the Warring States period and earlier, including major figures from the *Zhuangzi*. Lu Xiujing, one of the principal architects of Daoism as such, included most of the major Daoist movements of his time, namely, Tianshi, Sanhuang (Three Sovereigns), Shangqing (Highest Clarity), and Lingbao (Numinous Treasure). In the process, he distinguished Daoism from Buddhism. These details reveal the degree to which the Daoist tradition was an ever-changing and relatively inclusive tradition. With each subsequent historical period, new movements, revelations, and scriptures were included. This is especially apparent when one studies the history of Daoist textual collections (see Chapter 12). One connective strand among Daoists and throughout the diverse Daoist movements is an orientation towards the Dao (see Chapter 6). This includes communities and systems of practice with recognizable qualities and discernable results, manifesting in numinous presence and attunement with the Dao. It includes reverence for the external Three Treasures (*wai sanbao*) of the Dao, the scriptures, and the teachers, as well as for the Daoist tradition as such.

This chapter attempts to provide some initial orientation points to the religious tradition which is Daoism. Utilizing the two primary interpretive frameworks advocated in the previous chapter, namely, historical periodization and models of Daoist practice and attainment, the chapter provides an overview of Daoist history. Emphasizing key movements, figures, events, and scriptures, it covers classical Daoism, early organized Daoism, later organized Daoism, and modern Daoism. This chapter thus provides the necessary historical foundation for the subsequent thematic chapters that will deepen our understanding of Daoist movements.

## Classical Daoism

“Classical Daoism” refers to Daoism during the classical period, specifically during the Warring States (480–222 BCE), Qin (221–206 BCE), and Early Han (202 BCE–9 CE)
Following Harold Roth (e.g. 1996, 1999a), I will refer to the earliest Daoist religious community as the “inner cultivation lineages.” “Classical Daoism” thus replaces or should replace the outdated and inaccurate category of so-called “philosophical Daoism” and daojia, although the latter may be helpful as a designation for the entire Daoist tradition as the “Family of the Dao” (see Chapter 1). Classical Daoism is distinguished by loosely related master-disciple communities and the composition, compilation, and transmission of some of the most important Daoist texts. It is the beginning of the Daoist tradition and one of the primary source-points for the later movements of organized Daoism.

The most commonly discussed (and translated) texts associated with classical Daoism are the Laozi (Lao-tzu; Book of Venerable Masters; abbr. LZ), more commonly known as the Daode jing (Tao-te ching; Scripture on the Dao and Inner Power; abbr. DDJ), and Zhuangzi (Chuang-tzu; Book of Master Zhuang; abbr. ZZ). The former is associated with the pseudo-historical Laozi (Lao-tzu; Master Lao), whose name may be understood as the “old master” or “old child.” The latter text is attributed to Zhuang Zhou (Chuang Chou).¹ In terms of traditional attribution and biographical material, the standard source is Chapter 63 of the Shiji (Records of the Historian), which was at least partially compiled by Sima Tan (ca. 165–110 BCE), Grand Astrologer of the Han court during the early years of Emperor Wu’s reign (r. 141–87 BCE), and completed by his son Sima Qian (ca. 145–86 BCE).

---

**THE “BIOGRAPHY” OF LAOZI**

Laozi was a person of Quren village in the Lai district of Hu province in Chu. His surname was Li. He had the given name Er, personal name Boyang, and posthumous name Dan. He was a historiographer in charge of the archives of Zhou.

Kongzi [Confucius] once traveled to Zhou because he desired to ask Laozi about ritual (li). Laozi said, “The sages you speak about have long withered along with their bones. Moreover, when a superior person is in accord with the times, he rides in a carriage; when his time has not yet arrived, he wanders with the wind. I have heard that a good merchant fills his storehouses but appears to have nothing; an authentic superior person is overflowing with inner power (de) but looks like a fool. Abandon your prideful airs and various desires; get rid of your rigid posturing and lascivious thoughts. Each of these contains no benefit. I have nothing more to say.”

Kongzi left and later addressed his disciples, “Birds, I know, can fly; fish, I know, can swim; animals, I know, can run. For the running, one can make a net; for the swimming, one can make a line; for the flying, one can make an arrow. But when it comes to a dragon, I have no way of knowing how it rides the wind and clouds and ascends into the heavens. Today I have met Laozi who is really like a dragon.”
Laozi cultivated the Dao (xiūdào) and inner power. He taught that one should efface oneself and be without fame in the world. After he had lived in Zhou for a long time, he saw that the Zhou was in decline. Then he departed. When he reached the pass [Hangu Pass; near Lingbao, Henan], the keeper of the pass, Yin Xi, said, “We will see no more of you. I request that you write a book for us.” Laozi then wrote a book in two parts, discussing the Dao and inner power in 5,000 words. Thereupon, he departed. No one knows where he ended his life. (Shiji, Chapter 63)

The Shiji tells us that Laozi was a person of Chu (southeast China) with the surname Li, given name Er, personal name Boyang, and posthumous name Dan. Thus, Laozi is sometimes known as Li Er, Li Boyang, or Lao Dan. In this account, Laozi is said to have been an archivist of the Eastern Zhou dynasty (770–256 BCE) and a senior contemporary and teacher of Kongzi (“Confucius”; ca. 551–479 BCE). The same chapter of the Shiji explains that Zhuangzi (Master Zhuang; ca. 370–290 BCE) was a person from Meng with the family name Zhuang and given name Zhou. Concerning these personages, there is general agreement in modern scholarship: Laozi was a composite figure, and is thus pseudo-historical (Lau 1963; Graham 1998), while Zhuang Zhou was probably an actual historical figure (cf. Kirkland 2004: 33–9). Relating these personages to their related texts, modern scholarship divides the received version of the Zhuangzi into a number of distinct historical and textual layers (see Chapter 3); for our purposes, we may note that the so-called “inner chapters” (1–7) are associated with Zhuang Zhou. The Laozi or Daode jing is seen as an “anthology,” with no identifiable author and containing a wide variety of textual layers. This is partially a result of its varied content and partially a result of recent archaeological finds. Considered as a whole, both texts are anonymous multi-vocal anthologies with various textual and historical layers (see Chapters 3 and 12).

While the Daode jing and Zhuangzi are frequently elevated as the most representative texts of “classical Daoism,” recent revisionist scholarship by Harold Roth of Brown University and others would include parts of other important texts as well, including the Guanzi (Book of Master Guan), Huainanzi (Book of the Huainan Masters), and Lüshi chunqiu (Spring and Autumn Annals of Mister Lü) (see, e.g. Roth 1996, 1999a). Firstly, these texts document specific Daoist views and practices. Moreover, as discussed in Chapter 3, evidence of the classical inner cultivation lineages is found in the history of the texts themselves. Here we must recognize that much of the primary layers was based on oral teachings and transmissions. At that time, “texts” were primarily hand-written manuscripts on bamboo and silk. They were not widely disseminated through mass reproduction, such as wood-block printing. There was no equivalent to modern mechanical reproductions or electronic editions. Rather, teachings and compilations of teachings (manuscripts) had to be consciously
preserved and transmitted. Here one might see the beginning of Daoist traditions related to texts, including access to teachers, requirements for transmission, and processes of dissemination.

While familiarity with these various texts is important for gaining a fuller appreciation of classical Daoism, it should also be pointed out that in the later Daoist tradition the *Daode jing* occupied a central position (see Chapter 12). Over one hundred extant commentaries are housed in the Ming-dynasty Daoist Canon alone (see Robinet 1977, 1998, 1999). Of these, the commentaries of Heshang gong (2nd c. CE?) and Wang Bi (226–49) have been most influential (see Chan 1991a). In addition, there is the Dunhuang manuscript of the *Laozi xiang’er zhu* (Commentary Thinking Through the *Laozi*; DH 56; S. 6825), which is an early Tianshi (Celestial Masters) commentary (see below; also Chapters 5, 8, and 12).

Within the classical period, we may identify a variety of Daoist models of practice and attainment (see Chapter 1), including cosmological, meditative, and quietistic approaches. While it appears that there were various master-disciple communities, the primary approach was solitary self-cultivation. We might thus describe certain strains of classical Daoism as quasi-ascetic or eremitic (see Chapter 4). Within this context, the cosmological model involved aligning oneself with the Dao as cosmological process. The texts of classical Daoism place a strong emphasis on following the seasons, observing natural cycles, and being attentive to cosmological influences, especially as manifesting through place and self (see also Chapters 6 and 7). The meditative model of classical Daoism was apophatic. This form of Daoist meditation is contentless, non-conceptual, and non-dualistic. It emphasizes stilling and emptying the heart-mind until one enters a state of stillness and emptiness. This is one’s innate nature and original connection to the Dao (see Chapter 11). Finally, the quietistic model involves minimal activity and involvement. It is most often associated with “non-action” (*wuwei*), which is frequently misunderstood as “doing nothing” or following one’s own habituated desires. In the case of the quietistic model, one observes non-interference and non-intervention. One remains committed to effortless activity. The texts use the corresponding language of “decreasing,” “diminishing,” “releasing,” and so forth. It is about conservation, simplicity, and minimalism (see Chapter 5).

During the classical period a number of religious movements emerged that would influence the first organized Daoist movements (see Harper 1998; Csikszentmihalyi 2000, 2002; Puett 2002). Such historical precedents included a variety of models: therapeutic or medical, magico-religious, and self-divinization. Perhaps most importantly for the emergence of organized Daoism, the Early Han witnessed an increase in the authority of longevity practitioners, Fangshi (“formula masters”), and immortality seekers. The search for “immortality” or “transcendence” centered on two paradisiacal, terrestrial realms called Penglai Island (in the east) and Mount Kunlun (in the west). The latter was overseen by Xiwenmu (Queen Mother of the West), who occupies a central place in the larger Daoist tradition as well (see Chapter 6). Mythically speaking, the Queen Mother of the West was believed to oversee a
celestial park, which contained the famed Turquoise Pond (yaochi) and orchard where the “peaches of immortality” (xiantao) were grown. These peaches came to fruition every thousand years or so, during which time a huge feast would be held and anyone who acquired one of the blessed fruit instantly became an immortal. In some sense, in the Early Han we see the major patterns of religious activity that would come to dominate the organized Daoist tradition more generally: personal health and healing, magical control of the cosmos, and the search for self-divinization.

Revisionist scholarship on the Zhuangzi suggests that there are various lineages or “schools” documented in the text. Here a “school” refers to particular teachers and their disciples, specifically as a community of religious practice (see Roth 1999a: 173–203). These include the Primitivists, Individualists (“Hedonists”/“Yangists”), Syncretists, Zhuangists, and Anthologists (see Chapter 3). In the Early Han, the Syncretist tendency, specifically in the form of Huang-Lao dao (Way of the Yellow Emperor and Laozi), became especially prominent and politically influential. This was so much the case that the Huang-Lao approach to governing was adopted by ruling elite of the Early Han, although it was eventually replaced by Confucianism as state orthodoxy. Huang-Lao draws its name from Huangdi (Yellow Emperor), who here represents the ideal political leader and good governance, and Laozi, the attributed author of the Dao de jing and important elder of classical Daoism who apparently emphasized self-cultivation and a society ruled by a sage-king. Huang-Lao was a syncretic political movement, which sought a well-ordered and harmonious society based on classical Daoist principles (see Chapter 5) and Legalist governmental structures and political organization. For present purposes, a number of points stand out. First, it appears that Sima Tan (ca. 165–110 BCE), the earliest Chinese historiographer to use the phrase daojia (Family of the Dao) to designate classical Daoism, may have been a Huang-Lao adherent. According to Harold Roth, Huang-Lao was a form of Syncretic Daoism (see Chapter 3), and Chapters 63 and 74 of the Shiji identify members of the Jixia Academy and elsewhere as Huang-Lao adherents. It also appears that members of the classical Daoist inner cultivation lineages actually participated in the intellectual debates and quasi-salon of the Jixia Academy (Roth 1999a: 21–5; Kirkland 2004: 52–67).

**Early organized Daoism**

Early organized Daoism refers to the time when Daoism emerged as an organized religious movement, or series of movements during the Later Han (25–220 CE), Period of Disunion (220–581), and Sui (581–618). It is distinguished by the emergence of an organized community and new models for Daoist practice and attainment.²

During the Later Han, numerous communal and populace-supported forms of religious activity began to become more viable and widespread. It was also during this time that Laozi became imperially recognized as the deity Laojun (Lao-chün; Lord Lao) (see Chapter 6), and that the Laozi, conventionally rendered as Book of Master Lao but
more accurately translated as Book of Venerable Masters, received the honorific title of the Daode jing (Scripture on the Dao and Inner Power) (see Chapter 12). Thus, there is the Laozi ming (Inscription for Laozi), which dates from 165 CE and is the earliest extant textual evidence about the official cult of a deified Laozi.

The Later Han period can be characterized as one of popular religiosity and millennial expectations. During this period two Daoist movements were established that proved seminal for a more fully organized and coherent tradition. The first was called Taiping dao (Way of Great Peace), also known as the “Yellow Turbans” in Western literature (see Hendrischke 2000, 2007). Members of the Way of Great Peace wore yellow kerchiefs (huangjin) on their heads as a sign that the “azure” (qing), the color of the Wood phase, of the Han imperial house was becoming overtaken by the “yellow” (huang), the color of the Earth phase, of the Way of Great Peace. Based in northeast China, the Way of Great Peace was led by Zhang Jue (Chang Chüeh; fl. 164–84 CE) and centered on a millenarian conception of the world as found in the Taiping jing (Scripture of Great Peace; partially lost; DZ 1101). It was imagined and taught that the world would be transformed, through violent revolution, into an era of “Great Peace.” The rebellion was planned to commence in 184 CE, the jiazi or first year of the 60-year Chinese calendar, though it actually began slightly earlier due to military exigency.

Although this rebellion was defeated in the late second century, it established a model of prophetic world-leaders, cosmological rebellion, and utopian vision. It also contributed to the severe weakening of the power of the Han imperial house to the point that it was eventually overthrown.

The Han’s concern for this rebellion impeded its ability to address additional developments in the southwest. Around the same time when the Taiping movement was attempting to gain control, a new movement became organized in Shu (present-day Sichuan). This was Tianshi dao (Way of the Celestial Masters) (see Bokenkamp 1997; Kleeman 1998; Hendrischke 2000), which is frequently elevated to the position of the “first organized Daoist movement.” The name Tianshi (T’ien-shih) refers to the highest leadership position in the movement. According to traditional accounts, in 142 CE Zhang Daoling (Chang Tao-ling; fl. 140s CE) received a revelation from Laojun (Lord Lao), the “deified” form of Laozi and personification of the Dao, on Mount Heming (Crane Cry) (see Chapters 3 and 14). The Tianshi movement is sometimes referred to as Zhengyi (Cheng-i; Orthodox Unity), because of a description of its founding revelation as the “covenant of orthodox unity” (zhengyi mengwei), or as Wudoumi dao (Way of Five Pecks of Rice), because of its supposed requirement of an annual donation of “five pecks of rice” for religious membership. The latter practice was more likely a food distribution network. A more esoteric reading suggests that these five handfuls of rice were used to demarcate ritual space, specifically the five cardinal directions (see Chapters 6 and 13). During Lord Lao’s revelation, Zhang was appointed as terrestrial representative, the “Celestial Master,” and given healing powers as a sign of his empowerment. The movement in turn became patrilineal, passing from Zhang Daoling to his son Zhang Heng (d. 179) and then to the latter’s son Zhang Lu (d. 215). The Celestial Masters established “parishes” (zhi) with hierarchically ranked followers,
wherein the so-called libationers (jijiu) were highest (see Chapter 4). The intent was to establish “seed people” (zhongmin) who would populate an earth made ritually and morally pure. If a moral transgression occurred, a purification rite was performed (see Chapter 13). This consisted of an officiating priest utilizing his “registers” (lu), which gave him or her power over specific spirits, and submitting “petitions” (biao; zhang) to the so-called Three Bureaus (sanguan) of heaven, earth, and water. This was done through burning, burial, and submersion. In addition, individuals were secluded in “pure rooms” or “chambers of quiescence” (jingshe; jingshi; or qingshi), where they were supposed to reflect upon their actions and repent. Little original source material survives from this formative phase of the Tianshi movement. We do have the Laozi xiang’er zhu (Commentary Thinking Through the Laozi; DH 56; S. 6825), perhaps composed by Zhang Lu, and its related precepts (jie) as found, for instance, in the first section of the Taishang laojun jinglü (Scriptural Statutes of the Great High Lord Lao; DZ 786) (see Chapters 8 and 12). However, as there is some doubt concerning the date of the Xiang’er commentary and as so little early Tianshi material survives, discussions of this tradition must remain tentative.

Within the early period of Daoist history, we may identify a variety of Daoist models of practice and attainment, including cosmological, ethical, and ritualistic approaches (see Chapter 1). These were followed within a larger communal context (see Chapter 4). While the cosmology paralleled that of classical Daoism on some level, the Tianshi cosmology particularly emphasized the Three Powers (sancai) of heaven, earth, and water, with water later changed to humanity in certain contexts. Similarly, both movements emphasized correlative cosmology (see Chapter 6). One had to maintain harmonious relationships with the larger cosmos, including place (see Chapter 14). Moreover, one’s own morality was centrally important. The Tianshi movement emphasized the connection between morality and health as well as the importance of morality for communal wellbeing. This ethical model centered on precept study and application, on virtuous conduct (see Chapter 8). Both movements also envisioned a morally pure utopia, a Daoist theocracy. Finally, as mentioned above, early Tianshi Daoism in particular practiced ritual (see Chapter 13).

The religious program of the early Tianshi movement proved convincing and viable. After the armies of Zhang Lu were defeated by those of the famous general Cao Cao (155–220), the eventual founder to the Wei dynasty (220–265), in 215, the Celestial Masters were forced to migrate to various parts of northern and southern China. This brings us to the “early medieval period.” It was during this period that Buddhism, first introduced by Central Asian missionary-monks and merchants in the first and second centuries CE (see Wright 1959; Chen 1972; Zürcher 1959, 1980), established viable monastic institutions, with alternative models of self-identity and religious participation. Many Buddhist texts were translated and disseminated, and Buddhism began its transformation from a “barbarian religion” to a fully Sinicized (Chinese) tradition. Parallel to these developments, new types of scriptures, new forms of religious expression, were introduced. These included monastic rules (vinaya) and the Prajñāpāramitā (Perfection of Wisdom) texts, which emphasized the emptiness (Skt.: śūnyatā; Chn.: kong/xu) of independent existence.
A wide variety of new Daoist movements also emerged during the so-called Period of Disunity (221–581). The most important include Taiqing (T’ai-ch’ing), Shangqing (Shang-ch’ing), and Lingbao (Ling-pao). One could also include Xuanxue (Hsüan-hsüeh; Profound Learning), which was a literati Daoist movement sometimes identified as “Neo-Daoism” in earlier Western scholarship. First, we know of a southern tradition with its roots in the above-mentioned Han dynasty Fangshi and immortality-seeker movements. This is Taiqing dao (Way of Great Clarity), a tradition of external alchemy (waidan; lit., “outer cinnabar”), also referred to as “laboratory” or “operational alchemy” (see Campany 2002; Pregadio 2006a). The name Taiqing refers to the alchemically transformed ontological condition that could be attained through the Taiqing system of external alchemy and to the heaven with which the waidan methods were associated. Taiqing is known to us principally due to the efforts of its most well-known member, namely, Ge Hong (Ko Hung; Baopu [Embracing Simplicity]; 283–343). Ge Hong came from an aristocratic family based near Jiankang (present-day Nanjing), Jiangsu. His granduncle, Ge Xuan (Ko Hsuan; 164–244), was a renowned Fangshi, and his presence would also play a major role in the later Lingbao (Numinous Treasure) tradition (see Chapter 3). Ge Hong wrote two seminal works: the Baopuzi (Book of Master Embracing Simplicity; DZ 1185; DZ 1187) and the Shenxian zhuan (Biographies of Spirit Immortals; JHL 89). The latter is a collection of some 100-odd hagiographies (“biographies of saints”), while the former is a summa of fourth-century religious traditions and related methods, providing information on the production of elixirs (dan) through external alchemy, the highest religious pursuit according to Ge. Taiqing emphasized levels of attainment and involved the concoction of a mineral elixir, which consisted of highly toxic elements such as cinnabar, lead, mercury, and realgar (see Chapter 9). The process of elixir formation also involved complex purificatory practices, cosmological considerations, and ritual procedures.

Slightly later, with the forced migration of the Tianshi community, many of its leaders began a gradual movement south. This eventually led to a division, which is sometimes referred to as the “Northern Celestial Masters” and the “Southern Celestial Masters” (see Nickerson 2000; Kohn 2000b) The establishment of the Northern Celestial Masters centers on Kou Qianzhi (K’ou Ch’ien-chih; Fuzhen [Supporting Perfection]; 365–448), who was a member of a Tianshi family in the Chang’an area and received a revelation from Lord Lao in 415. According to this revelation, Kou was empowered to replace the Zhang family lineage as Celestial Master and to reform many of the tradition’s earlier practices. He eventually became recognized by the Toba rulers of the Northern Wei dynasty (386–534), so much so that in 440 the emperor received Daoist initiation and changed his reign title to Taiping zhenjun (Perfected Lord of Great Peace). This moment in Daoist history is often described as a “Daoist theocracy,” as it marked the first time that Daoism became state orthodoxy. Kou also established guidelines for Daoist conduct known as the “new code” (xinke), which is still partially extant in the Laojun yinsong jiejing (Precept Scripture of Lord Lao for Recitation; DZ 785).

Simultaneously, the members of Tianshi who had migrated south began their interaction with more established southern traditions, including Taiqing (see Chapter...
As the Tianshi movement gained a foothold, new revelations emerged. The first was Shangqing dao (Way of Highest Clarity) (see Robinet 1993, 2000; Miller 2008), a movement named after the heaven from which its revelations derived. In the 360s, members of the aristocratic Xu (Hsu) family, Xu Mi (303–76), the younger brother of Xu Mai (300–48), and the former’s son Xu Hui (341-ca. 370), hired the spirit medium Yang Xi (Yang Hsi; 330–86) to establish contact with Xu Mi’s deceased wife, Tao Kedou (d. 362). Through a series of revelations, Yang Xi described the organization and population of the subtle realms of the cosmos, particularly the heaven of Shangqing (Highest Clarity). Also deserving note is the presence of the deceased female Tianshi libationer Wei Huacun (251–334) as a central figure in the early Shangqing revelations (see Chapters 3 and 4). These various celestial communications included methods for spirit travel, visualizations, and alchemical concoctions (see Chapter 11).

A wide variety of texts are important for understanding the religious world of Shangqing, with two of the most important being the Dadong zhenjing (Perfect Scripture of the Great Cavern; DZ 6) and the Huangting jing (Scripture on the Yellow Court; DZ 331; 332). The revelations were, in turn, written down by Yang Xi and the Xu family in a calligraphic style that seemed divine. The texts were eventually inherited by Xu Huangmin (361–429) who disseminated them throughout the region. Then, Tao Hongjing (T’ao Hung-ching; Tongming [Pervading Illumination]; 456–536), a descendent of Tao Kedou and an advanced Shangqing adept, came across an original manuscript and became inspired to collect them. Tao Hongjing had established a religious center on Maoshan (Mount Mao; present-day Nanjing, Jiangsu), where he pursued alchemical and pharmacological studies (see Chapters 4 and 14). From there he traveled throughout southern China in search of the original Shangqing manuscripts (see Strickmann 1977: 41–62). In the process, he developed a critical analysis of calligraphic styles for determining textual authenticity. His collection efforts resulted in the Zhen’gao (Declarations of the Perfected; DZ 1016).

Partially in response to these Shangqing revelations, in combination with the more pervasive influence of Mahāyāna Buddhism (including its bodhisattva ideal and vision of universal salvation), Lingbao dao (Way of Numinous Treasure) emerged (see Bokenkamp 1983, 1997; Yamada 2000). The movement’s name refers to a medium or sacred object (bao; “treasure”) infused with numinosity (ling), especially the sacred talismans that Lingbao believed created and maintained the cosmos. A more esoteric interpretation understands ling as the celestial half of a talisman and bao as the terrestrial half. For our purposes, Lingbao refers to the tradition established by Ge Chaofu (Ko Ch’ao-fu; fl. 390s), apparently a Shangqing affiliate and grandnephew of Ge Hong. Lingbao may, in turn, be seen to have connections with each of the three earlier major Daoist movements, namely, Tianshi, Taiqing, and Shangqing (see Chapter 3). Ge Chaofu, who inherited the library of Ge Hong, claimed that the original Lingbao revelation went back to Ge Xuan, and was thus older (= more authoritative) than the Shangqing revelations. Lingbao centered on a cosmocrat (cosmic ruler) and magical manipulation of the cosmos. This cosmocrat, who resembles Mahāvairocana (Cosmic Sun Buddha) of the Buddhist Tantric tradition, was Yuanshi tianzun (Celestial Worthy of
The Daoist tradition began with the original teachings of Laozi and continued through various periods with new developments. Ge Chaofu emphasized levels of celestial realms, celestial administrators, and a host of divine beings, in combination with Han-dynasty correlative cosmology, Fangshi ideas and practices, and Tianshi ritual (see Chapters 6 and 13). A representative work documenting the magical dimension of Lingbao is the *Lingbao wufu xu* (Explanations of the Five Numinous Treasure Talismans; DZ 388). These “five talismans” were the foundation for harmony and control, whether personal, communal, socio-political, or cosmological. Lingbao also maintained soteriological aims, namely, the salvation of humanity as a whole. Following Mahāyāna Buddhism, this is referred to as “universal salvation” (*pudu*) (see Chapter 13). The scriptures of Lingbao became codified by the Daoist ritualist and bibliographer Lu Xiujing (Lu Hsiu-ching; Yuande [Primordial Virtue]; 406–477) in the so-called “Lingbao Catalogue” (see Bokenkamp 1997: 377–98; 2001; Yamada 2000; also Kirkland 2004; Chapter 12 herein). It was also Lu Xiujing who compiled the earliest known catalogue of Daoist texts, namely, the *Sandong jingshu mulu* (Catalogue of the Scriptures and Writings of the Three Caverns). As the name suggests, the central organizing principle was (and remains) a tripartite classification system known as the Three Caverns (*sandong*). As discussed in Chapter 12, Lu Xiujing’s categorization was pivotal in the creation of the Daozang (Daoist Canon) and the Daoist tradition by extension.

The early medieval period also witnessed the development of Daoist monasticism (see Kohn 2003a, 2004b), again under the influence of Buddhism. At the end of the Northern Wei dynasty, members of the Northern Celestial Masters congregated in a newly established center in the Zhongnan mountains (near present-day Xi’an). This was Louguan (Lookout Tower Monastery; called Louguan tai today; Zhouzhi, Shaanxi), which was founded by Yin Tong (398–499?) and became the first Daoist monastery (see Chapter 14). Yin Tong claimed descent from Yin Xi, the “guardian of the pass” who legend tells us received the *Daode jing* from Laozi as he left China for his Western travels. Louguan eventually grew significantly and rose to prominence under the leadership of Wang Daoyi (447–510). A number of visions of Lord Lao appeared there, which also helped to solidify the temple’s place of importance in the geo-political landscape. Some representative works from Louguan include the *Laojun jiejing* (Scriptural Precepts of Lord Lao; DZ 784), *Xisheng jing* (Scripture on Western Ascension; DZ 666; DZ 726), and *Chuanshou jingjie* (Scriptures and Precepts for Ordination; DZ 1241). Louguan Daoists also compiled encyclopedias, including the important *Wushang biyao* (Esoteric Essentials of the Most High; DZ 1138).

Within the contours of the early medieval period of Daoist history, we may identify a variety of Daoist models of practice and attainment, including alchemical, ascetic, meditative, monastic, revelatory, and ritualistic. While the so-called Northern and Southern Celestial Masters maintained and developed the earlier Tianshi program, the new Daoist movements proposed and represented alternatives. These included ascetic and eremitic models of community as well as householder approaches (see Chapter 4). Although historically speaking external alchemy predates Taiqing, perhaps going back to the second century CE in seminal form, it became a major Daoist model with that movement. Shangqing traced its origins to new revelations, and in the process
advocated apparently new views of self (see Chapter 7) and apparently new forms of meditation, specifically visualization (see Chapter 11). One can also identify proto-neidan (internal alchemy) dimensions in the Shangqing practice system, especially as so much later internal alchemy is indebted to that system. Moreover, Shangqing began a transition from eremiticism to quasi-monasticism, which contributed to the eventual emergence of monasticism proper under Buddhist influences (see Chapter 4). Both Shangqing and Lingbao also contributed new theological content to the Daoist tradition (see Chapter 6). In addition, Lingbao helped to establish the standard concerns and structure of Daoist ritual, including a Mahāyāna Buddhist-inspired concern for universal salvation (see Chapter 13).

Later organized Daoism

Later organized Daoism refers to the late medieval and late imperial periods, the time when Daoism became a fully integrated and systemized tradition, with monasticism as dominant. It specifically refers to Daoism during the Tang (618–907), Song (Northern: 960–1126; Southern: 1127–1279), Yuan (1260–1368), Ming (1368–1644), and Qing (1644–1911) dynasties. Later organized Daoism is distinguished by the emergence of a fully integrated monastic system, complete with ordination ranks (see Chapters 3 and 4), and of semi-centralized religious institutions. It is also pivotal in Daoist history for the ascendance of internal alchemy as the dominant form of Daoist meditation and for the introduction and incorporation of new forms of Daoist ritual.

Like the Han dynasty, the Tang dynasty marks a major watershed moment in Chinese history in general and Daoist history in particular (see Barrett 1996; Kohn and Kirkland 2000). During the Tang, Daoism was accepted and sponsored as state orthodoxy (see Chapter 4). Many Tang emperors and their courts showed imperial favor for the Daoist tradition. As noted above, Lord Lao as the deified Laozi became central to the Chinese state as early as the Han dynasty. Similarly, the patterns of millenarian prophecy were also well established. During the beginning of the Tang, the rulers embraced a prophecy centering on a figure with the surname Li (Li Hong) as the future Lord of Great Peace. Interestingly, Li was the surname of both Laozi (Li Er) and the founders of the Tang dynasty. Thus, the Tang rulers became linked with both Laozi, the preeminent figure in the Daoist tradition and now the Tang’s own original ancestor, and the vision of a Daoist utopia. Numerous miracles centering on divine appearances of Lord Lao occurred (see Chapter 3). One such vision took place at Bozhou, Laozi’s supposed birthplace, where Lord Lao caused a withered cypress tree to bloom again. Miraculous material signs were also discovered throughout China and at various Daoist sacred sites (see Chapter 14); these included inscribed stones, divine statues, and images on walls and cliffs. Such discoveries, of course, helped to ensure continued imperial patronage for places such as Louguan. Tang emperors gave extensive privileges to Daoists, offered lavish gifts to temples and monasteries,
established a Daoist track in the imperial bureaucracy, sponsored Daoist collection efforts, honored Lord Lao with the title Xuanyuan huangdi (Sovereign Thearch of Mysterious Origin), and aided the success of the tradition in general. Especially under Xuanzong (r. 713–55), Daoism flourished and membership grew extensively. Imperial princesses were given Daoist initiation in elaborate ceremonies (see Benn 1991). Monasteries (guan) were staffed by Daoist priests and priestesses (daoshi) (see Chapters 3 and 4), who performed jiao-offering and zhai-purification rituals for integrating society and cosmos (see Chapter 13). The Tang dynasty also established a system of official control, including a state-controlled ordination system and legal codes governing religious behavior. It was in this context that the Laozi was again recognized as a jing (“classic” or “scripture”) (see Chapter 12). In addition, the Daode jing became required reading for the imperial examinations. Also noteworthy is the fact that the Zhuangzi became “canonized” as the Nanhua zhenjing (Perfect Scripture of Perfected Nanhua) by an imperial edict of Emperor Xuanzong in 742.

With regard to major figures in Daoist history, two important and representative ones will be discussed here. One such person was Sima Chengzhen (Szu-ma Ch’eng-chen; Zhenyi [Pure Unity]; 647–735), the 12th Patriarch of Shangqing Daoism. Highly respected and supported at the Tang imperial court, Sima Chengzhen is most well known for his systematic discussions of meditation and personal refinement (see Chapter 11). This Tang-dynasty form of Shanqing meditation differs considerably from the earlier visualization methods. Sima Chengzhen’s writings place primary emphasis on the mind and evidence a synthesis of Daoist and Buddhist meditation practices. In particular, we find the influence of Buddhist insight meditation (Pali: vipassanā; Skt.: vipaśyanā; Chn.: guan) and a concern for the development of wisdom (Skt.: prajñā; Chn.: zhi). For instance, Sima’s Zuowang lun (Discourse on Sitting-in-Forgetfulness; DZ 1036) maps Daoist meditation in terms of seven stages: (1) Respect and Trust; (2) Interception of Karma; (3) Taming the Mind; (4) Detachment from Affairs; (5) Perfect Observation; (6) Intense Concentration; and (7) Realizing the Dao (see Kohn 1987). Although one notes much Buddhist influence, Sima Chengzhen clearly has a Daoist orientation.

In addition to such models of self-realization, Daoism during the Tang dynasty maintained ritualistic and scholastic concerns (see Chapters 12 and 13). In this respect, Du Guangting (Tu Kuang-t’ing; Guangcheng [Expansive Completion]; 850–933) stands out. Du Guangting lived at the end of the Tang dynasty, a time of radical socio-political upheaval. In the gradual disintegration of a unified Chinese empire that followed from such rebellions as that of An Lushan (755–63), Du set out to preserve and systematize earlier Daoist traditions. He compiled ritual compendia that became the basis for later forms of Daoist liturgy and hagiographies of outstanding Daoists (see Chapter 13), including the first hagiographical collection on female Daoists (see Chapter 4). In addition, Du Guangting had a profound interest in the Daode jing and its commentarial tradition. He reviewed and collated more than sixty previous commentaries, and became the leading codifier of the Chongxuan (Twofold Mystery) hermeneutical school. Drawing inspiration from the Buddhist Mādhyamika or Sanlun (Three Treatises)
school, Chongxuan emphasized the realization of an ontological condition where neither being nor non-being exists. This is the state of “oneness,” and Chongxuan adherents such as Du Guangting equated this with realization of the Dao. This is evident in the name “Twofold Mystery,” which is a reference to Chapter 1 of the *Daode jing*. Du’s commentary appears in the received Daoist Canon as the *Daode zhenjing guangsheng yi* (Expansive and Sacred Meaning of the Perfect Scripture on the Dao and Inner Power; DZ 725).

With the fall of the Tang dynasty, China eventually came to be divided into three distinct states: the Khitan state of Liao (907–1125) in the northeast, the Tangut state of Xixia (990–1227) in the northwest, and the Chinese state of Song (Northern: 960–1126; Southern: 1127–1279) in the middle and south. Under the Northern Song, Daoism continued to receive imperial support (see Skar 2000). The Song emperors in general viewed their mandate as a reflection of a larger Daoist dispensation, with legitimacy partly based on Daoist revelations at Louguan. The ideal of Great Peace (*taiping*) also formed the basis of Emperor Taizong’s (r. 976–97) consolidation of the empire. A number of Northern Song emperors also initiated and supported the compilation of Daoist textual collections (see Chapter 12). Moreover, Emperor Huizong (r. 1100–26) recognized two Daoist sacred sites in southern China: Maoshan, associated with Shangqing, and Longhu shan (Dragon-Tiger Mountain), associated with Tianshi, now known as Zhengyi (Orthodox Unity) (see Chapter 14).

Towards the end of the Tang and beginning of the Song, traditions of internal alchemy (*neidan*) became systematized (see Boltz 1987a: 173–88; Pregadio and Skar 2000; see also Schiper and Verellen 2004). The roots of these movements can be found in a number of earlier Daoist expressions such as “inner observation” (*neiguan*) meditation practices, longevity techniques (*yangsheng*), external alchemy (*waidan*), and *Yijing* (Classic of Changes) symbolism. Internal alchemy, alternatively referred to as the “Golden Elixir” (*jindan*), uses a highly symbolic language to describe a process of psychosomatic refinement, a shift in ontological condition from ordinary human being to a more cosmological being (see Chapter 11). The goal was the attainment of “immortality” or “transcendence” as a form of ecstatic otherworldly existence through a series of energetic mutations of the body, which would transform it into a spiritual entity known as the “immortal embryo” (*xiantai*) and “yang-spirit” (*yangshen*). Generally speaking, internal alchemy traditions emphasize the so-called internal Three Treasures (*nei sanbao*), namely, vital essence (*jing*), subtle breath (*qi*), and spirit (*shen*) (see Chapter 7). These psychosomatic “substances” are utilized in a three-stage process of self-transformation: (1) Refining vital essence to become qi (*lianjiing huaqi*); (2) Refining qi to become spirit (*lianqi huashen*); and (3) Refining spirit to return to Emptiness (*lianshen huanxu*) (see Chapter 11).

The earliest known tradition of internal alchemy is referred to as the “Zhong-Lü tradition.” This is a textual tradition associated with Zhongli Quan (Zhengyang [Aligned Yang]; 2nd c. CE?) and Lü Dongbin (Chunyang [Pure Yang]; b. 798?), with the latter eventually becoming the patriarch of internal alchemy traditions in general. The related texts center on dialogues between these two immortals, with two representative
works being the *Chuandao ji* (Anthology on the Transmission of the Dao; DZ 1309) and *Baiwen pian* (Treatise in One Hundred Questions; DZ 1017, j. 5).

The Zhong-Lü textual tradition provided much of the foundations for later, more socially confirmable movements. Conventionally speaking, a distinction, which follows Chan (Jpn.: Zen) Buddhism, is made between the so-called Beizong (Northern School) and Nanzong (Southern School). The Northern School refers to the Quanzhen (Complete Perfection) movement, founded by Wang Zhe (Chongyang [Redoubled Yang]; 1113–70), while the Southern School refers to a textual tradition (but this time with historically identifiable persons) that revolves around “Five Patriarchs.” Both of these internal alchemy lineages owe a great deal to the slightly earlier Zhong-Lü textual tradition.

Although traditional Chinese historiography and Western Sinological history often excludes “non-Chinese” states from “Chinese history,” Daoist history in general and the late medieval period in particular cannot be understood without such inclusion. The Khitan-Liao was eventually conquered by the Jurchens, a semi-nomadic people from an area in the far northeast (formerly called Manchuria) and ancestors of the later Manchus. The Jurchens established the Jin dynasty (1115–1234) and in the process conquered the Northern Song, forcing the court elite to flee south and establish the Southern Song dynasty (1127–1279). It was under the Jurchen-Jin dynasty that one of the most important movements in Daoist history emerged. This was Quanzhen dao (Way of Complete Perfection) (see Eskildsen 2003; Komjathy 2007a, forthcoming). The name of this movement refers to the alchemically transformed ontological condition that could be attained through the Quanzhen system of internal alchemy (see Chapter 11). Other names for early Quanzhen included Jinlian (Golden Lotus) and Xuanfeng (Mysterious Movement). Quanzhen was founded by Wang Zhe (Wang Che; Chongyang [Redoubled Yang]; 1113–70), a solitary ascetic and mystic who had a number of mystical experiences with immortals and who, after years of intensive seclusion, began accepting disciples (see Chapter 4). The most well known of these disciples are the so-called Seven Perfected (*qizhen*):

1. Hao Datong (Taigu [Grand Antiquity]/Guangning [Expansive Serenity]; 1140–1212)
2. Liu Chuxuan (Changsheng [Perpetual Life]; 1147–1203)
3. Ma Yu (Danyang [Elixir Yang]; 1123–83)
4. Qiu Chuji (Changchun [Perpetual Spring]; 1148–1227)
5. Sun Buer (Qingjing [Clear Stillness]; 1119–82), the only female member
6. Tan Chuduan (Changzhen [Perpetual Perfection]; 1123–85)
7. Wang Chuyi (Yuyang [Jade Yang]; 1142–1217)

Over time, Quanzhen attracted more and more followers and eventually established “associations” or “meeting halls” (*hui*/*she*/*tang*), sometimes rendered as
“congregations,” throughout northern China. In the year 1222, Qiu Chují met Chinggis Qan (Genghis Khan; ca. 1162–1227; r. 1206–27) and received de facto control of the whole of north China’s organized religious communities. This period was followed by Quanzhen’s rise in status and membership to become a fully established and widely disseminated form of monastic Daoism. This privileged status was short-lived and a number of anti-Daoist edicts were issued under Qubilai Qan (Khubilai Khan; Emperor Shizu; 1215–94; r. 1260–94), a warlord of the Mongol Yuan dynasty, which was the first non-Chinese dynasty to control the whole of China. The anti-Daoist edicts culminated in the burning and destruction of Daoist texts, textual collections, and printing blocks in 1281.

The Song and Yuan dynasties also saw the emergence of more popular forms of religiosity. In particular, deity cults and new ritual lineages became established (see Boltz 1987a: 23–53; Skar 2000). As noted, Lü Dongbin received much veneration and devotion, with different patrons and believers characterizing him differently depending on their socio-economic position (see Katz 1999). In terms of ritual lineages and deity cults, five in particular are currently known: (1) Qingwei (Pure Tenuity), associated with Zu Shu (fl. 889–904) and Huang Shunshen (Leiyuan [Thunder Abyss]; 1224-ca. 1286); (2) Tianxin (Celestial Heart), associated with Tan Zixiao (fl. 935) and Rao Dongtian (fl. 994); (3) Shenxiao (Divine Empyrean), associated with Lin Lingsu (1076–1120); (4) Tongchu (Youthful Incipience), associated with Yang Xizhen (1101–24); and (5) Jingming (PureBrightness), also known as Zhongxiao dao (Way of Loyalty and Filiality), associated with Xu Xun (292–374) and Liu Yu (Yuzhen [Jade Perfection]; 1257–1308) (see Boltz 1987a; Kohn 2000a; Skar 2000; Pregadio 2008a). Generally speaking, these lineages emphasized ethical rectification and ritual intervention as efficacious for communal wellbeing. They tended to concentrate on securing good fortune and healing disease (including exorcism). It was also in the context of such ritual lineages that “thunder magic” (leifa) developed. This type of atmospheric magic involved harnessing and channeling the power of thunder and lightning for self-transformation and healing. There was also a new celestial Leibu (Department of Thunder), to which petitions and memorials were submitted by the ritual master (fashi). These new ritual movements contributed many elements to a new standardization of Daoist ritual (see Chapter 13).

Within the late medieval period of Daoist history, we may identify a variety of Daoist models of practice and attainment (see Chapter 1), including alchemical, ascetic, meditative, monastic, and ritualistic. In this period, we find the emergence of fully systematized internal alchemy movements. Quanzhen also advocated a renunciant orientation, with corresponding ascetic practices such as seclusion, celibacy, sleep deprivation, voluntary poverty, and so forth. This ascetic and alchemical movement eventually became a major monastic order, which endures to the present day. Quanzhen also emphasized a meditative model, especially the practice of apophatic meditation and internal alchemy. Finally, the Song and Yuan dynasty ritual movements developed new forms of ritual, including thunder magic.

In terms of the late imperial period of Daoist history, the Mongol Yuan dynasty was eventually conquered by a native Chinese nationalist rebellion, which resulted in
the founding of the Ming dynasty (1368–1644) (see de Bruyn 2000). Unfortunately, research on Daoism in the periods following the late medieval period is just beginning. Thus, this section and the subsequent ones must be understood as provisional. The cultural trend of “syncretism,” fully established during the late medieval period, continued during the late imperial period. Syncretism, an approximation of the Chinese *sanjiao heyi* (“the three teachings made one”), refers to the tendency of distinct religious traditions to adopt and adapt aspects from other distinct traditions. In the case of Daoism, this meant borrowing and transforming various beliefs and practices from Buddhism and Confucianism in particular.

Two characteristics of the late imperial period in turn deserve note: simplification and popularization. For example, during this historical period, internal alchemy became simplified, with much of its esoteric language either systematically defined or discarded. Similarly, Daoist beliefs and practices became mingled with folk religious traditions and involved a greater attention to the needs of the common people. Thus, a number of local and popular deities became incorporated into the Daoist pantheon. In addition, new and powerful gods entered the scene. Some of these included Bixia yuanjun (Primordial Goddess of Cerulean Mists); Doumu (Dipper Mother); Tianfei (Celestial Consort), also known as Mazu (Mother Matriarch); Wenchang (God of Literature); and Xuanwu (Mysterious Warrior), also known as Zhenwu (Perfect Warrior) (see Chapter 6). Also deserving note is the fact that the Daoist mountain Wudang shan (Wu Tang) achieved national prominence during the Ming (see Chapter 14). This was partially a result of its association with the efficacious god Zhenwu. The increased popularization of Daoism is also evident in the expanded practice of “spirit-writing” as well as in the production of “precious scroll” (*baojuan*) literature and morality books (*shanshu*).

Other significant developments also occurred during the Ming dynasty. Of particular note is the imperial sponsorship of the *Zhengtong daozang* (Daoist Canon of the Zhengtong Reign), the earliest surviving Daoist textual collection and the basis for the development of modern Daoist Studies. Containing over 1,400 texts, this “canon” was overseen by Zhengyi priests and was completed in 1445 (see Chapter 12).

The final imperial dynasty was the Manchu Qing (1644–1911), a time of non-Chinese rulers who were the descendants of the Jurchens. The Qing dynasty saw the Longmen (Dragon Gate) lineage of Quanzhen rise to national prominence (see Esposito 2000, 2001, 2004). This lineage is named after Longmen dong (Dragon Gate Grotto; near Longxian, Shaanxi), the place where Qiu Chuji engaged in intensive training. Although conventionally associated with Qiu, the official, “orthodox” Longmen lineage was established by Wang Changyue (Kunyang [Paradisiacal Yang]; 1622?–1680), who was abbot of Baiyun guan (White Cloud Temple; Beijing) during the late 1600s. In the Qing, a variety of energetic and charismatic leaders helped to secure recognition for Longmen. These included such figures as Min Yide (Lanyun [Lazy Cloud]; 1758–1836), an eleventh-generation (according to Dragon Gate lineage formulation) lineage holder and compiler of major textual collections, and Liu Yiming (Wuyuan [Awakening to the Origin]; 1734–1821), another eleventh-generation lineage holder and author of the *Daoshu shier zhong* (Twelve Daoist Books). The *Daoshu shier zhong* has become highly influential in the West through
Thomas Cleary’s (b. 1949) various translations of texts contained therein. As mentioned, Quanzhen, dominated by its Longmen lineage, and Zhengyi, most likely reestablished on Mount Longhu in the eleventh century, are the only two distinct traditional Daoist movements in name that survive into the modern and contemporary periods (see below).

**Modern Daoism**

Modern Daoism refers the early modern and late modern periods, including contemporary developments. Here “modern” indicates the end of dynastic rule in China, with the Manchu Qing (1644–1911) being the last dynasty. This was and is the time when Western values and ideologies came to dominate Chinese society. Although the process began at least as early as the Qing dynasty, during the early and mid-twentieth century, traditional Chinese culture, including Daoism, was severely undermined. The early modern period of Daoist history corresponds to the Republican (1912–49; 1949-present) and early Communist (1949–78) periods, while the late modern period refers to the late Communist period (1978–). 1912 is used as the beginning of modern Daoism because it marks the end of dynastic rule. 1978 is used as the end of early modern Daoism and the beginning of late modern Daoism because this marks a time of major economic reforms, social liberalization, and religious revitalization.

In terms of the overall religious context and Daoism in particular, the modern period was a time of dramatic change. Monastic life was attacked as a form of escape from a country in need of workers and soldiers, while religious worldviews and lifeways were condemned as superstitious and wasteful. Such critiques were partially rooted in Marxist and Stalinist political ideologies, including the famous view that “religion is the opiate of the masses.” Although the Marxist leadership of the PRC did not believe in the validity of religion, they did include “freedom of religious belief” in their new constitution (see Maclnnis 1989; also Pas 1989; Overmyer 2003; Miller 2006). However, “religion” (zongjiao) was very different from “feudal superstition” (mixin). Daoism often fell into the latter, especially as it had no diplomatic significance. Traditional myths and stories were rejected, gods denounced, and organizations disbanded. Simultaneously, smaller-scale and more regional forms of “religious” practice were more difficult to control; spirit-writing cults as well as longevity and martial arts societies flourished. The latter was also employed as a form of nationalistic up-building: the atrophied bodies of older Chinese imperial courts, perhaps most clearly represented by eunuch culture and the practice of foot-binding, would become replaced by a nation of soldiers with high-level martial arts prowess. Such changes manifested in two important ways for the Daoist tradition. First, Daoism was effectively banned in mainland China as feudal superstition, with its monks sent out to work, marry, or be “reeducated;” its monasteries destroyed, closed, or used for military installations; and its priests forbidden to conduct rituals. Second, such persecution and suppression initiated an exodus from the “Central Kingdom” (Zhongguo). More and more Daoists fled to other East Asian
countries such as Hong Kong (then an independent British territory; 1841–1997), Korea, Malaysia, Singapore, Taiwan, and Thailand. Simultaneously, Chinese Daoists began a slow immigration to European and North American countries. That is, the Chinese Communist revolution had the unintended consequence of disseminating Chinese religious culture throughout the world and helping to make Daoism a “world religion.”

In the years of the Republic, Daoists attempted to establish Daoist organizations (see Wang 2006; Goossaert 2007). In 1912, a Central Association of Daoism was founded, but it was principally a local (Beijing) and sectarian (Longmen) organization. During the same year, Zhengyi Daoists created their own General Daoist Assembly of the Republic of China. Then, in 1932, another group came to the fore: the Chinese Daoist Association (Zhongguo daojiao xiehui). After World War II, Daoists in Shanghai planned the revival of Daoism. In 1947, they set up the Shanghai Municipal Daoist Association, with Zhang Enpu (1904–69), the 63rd Celestial Master, and Chen Yingning (1880–1969), a lay Daoist, as leaders. After the establishment of the PRC, Zhang Enpu fled to Taiwan and established Taiwan as the de facto headquarters of the Zhengyi tradition, although Longhu shan would later return to prominence. It was also during the early years of the PRC (1957) that the national Daoist Association was founded. In 1961, they defined their objectives as follows: to study the history of Daoism, publish journals, and set up training programs for young candidates. However, the so-called “Cultural Revolution” (1966–76), also referred to as the “Ten Years of Chaos,” with its socially engineered and fanatical youth brigade known as the Red Guards, stopped all efforts. All religious organizations suffered immensely, with monasteries and temples destroyed or closed and Daoist monks and priests forced into dominant ideological patterns. The degree of destruction is still evident in contemporary temples. Only since 1978 has there been a comeback. This began with the death of Mao Zedong (1893–1976) and the new leadership of Deng Xiaoping (1904–97), who initiated the Four Modernizations, opened the country economically and politically, and paved the way for massive development. Since 1980, religious organizations and practices, as well as the academic study of religion, have undergone a revival. Religious associations have reopened, such as the Chinese Daoist Association based at Baiyun guan (White Cloud Monastery; Beijing). By 1986, twenty-one key monasteries were returned to the Daoists, and since 1990 training programs for new candidates have been initiated in Beijing, Shanghai, and Chengdu.

By way of conclusion, I will content myself to make a few general observations regarding the globalization of Daoism, or the transmission, adaptation, and appropriation of Daoism in the modern world. In our time, Daoism has become a global religious tradition characterized by cultural, ethnic, and linguistic diversity. While the global dissemination of Daoism increased dramatically in the twentieth century, especially from 1949 to the present, the process of globalization began to occur much earlier. It is tied to earlier migration patterns from north to south China, including from south China (e.g. Fujian and Guangdong) into Hong Kong and Taiwan. This is not to mention the earlier conversion of “non-Han” ethnic groups such as the Ba (see Kleeman 1998) and Yao (see Lemoine 1982; Pourett 2002; Alberts 2006). While much
academic attention has been given to contemporary Taiwanese Zhengyi ritual, little research has been done on the actual history of Daoism in Taiwan or in Hong Kong (see Tsui 1991; Saso 1970, 1972a, 1978). This is even more the case with respect to Daoism in the larger Chinese cultural sphere, including in Laos, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam (see Chapter 16). It is also noteworthy that most accounts of Daoism fail to take the existence of Daoism beyond the Chinese cultural sphere seriously. For example, the Daoism Handbook (Kohn 2000a) and The Encyclopedia of Taoism (Pregadio 2008a) contain information on “Daoism in Japan” and “Daoism in Korea,” but nothing on “Daoism in Europe,” “Daoism in North America,” and so forth. In terms of understanding the contemporary Daoist tradition, it is imperative to recognize the ways in which Daoism remains rooted in and transcends its Chinese cultural origins (see Chapter 16).

FURTHER READING


PART TWO

Identity and community
“Ways to affiliation” refers to the traditional ways in which individuals have become Daoists. Such paths also relate to the ways in which Daoism has become a tradition, especially the emergence of new movements and lineages. In addition, it draws our attention to the ways in which Daoists have established and extended parameters of inclusion and participation, a topic discussed throughout the present book.

Daoist ways to affiliation are diverse and complex. While there can be no doubt that lineage and ordination have occupied a major place in the Daoist tradition and throughout Daoist history, overemphasis on these institutional dimensions of Daoist religious identity may obscure one’s understanding. Considered comprehensively, Daoism is a tradition comprised of ascetics, hermits, ordained householder and celibate priests, monastics, as well as the larger lay membership, and there are diverse models of community within its contours (see Chapters 4 and 8). While many Daoist priests and monastics have located themselves in specific movements and lineages, and in the process privileged lineage affiliation and ordination, many “ordinary Daoists” did not. These were individuals and families who made up the vast majority of Daoists throughout Chinese history, and who supported the clerical elite, temple networks, and monasteries. While little has been written on the lives of “ordinary Daoists,” their
own paths into the tradition deserve consideration. This includes the ways in which they expressed their own religiosity and sense of commitment. In many cases, this occurred under the guidance of Daoist leaders as well as established Daoist families. However, we do not know the specific motivations for their affiliation. Much of their lives probably centered on the cultivation of basic Daoist commitments, including ethical reflection and application (see Chapter 8), and on involvement with the larger Daoist community. Here we must recognize that the situation of Daoism in traditional Chinese contexts was radically different than in the contemporary world, wherein Daoism has become a global religious tradition.

**Daoist identity and adherence**

Similar to the question “What is Daoism?,” too much ink has been spilt on the question of “What is Daoist?” and “Who is a Daoist?” We must, nonetheless, attempt to gain some conceptual clarity. On the most basic level, a Daoist is an adherent of Daoism, a member of the indigenous Chinese and now global religious community. As discussed below and in Chapter 16, we may, in turn, make a distinction between “Daoist adherents,” those with formal commitment to and/or affiliation with the religious tradition, and “Daoist sympathizers,” those who find some aspect of that tradition appealing (see Komjathy 2004).

There are many “ways to affiliation” in the Daoist tradition. Traditionally speaking, these have included lineage, revelation, mystical experience, and ordination. Such dimensions of the tradition have set parameters for inclusion and participation. However, many of the most important “Daoists” in history were not originally Daoists; according to traditional accounts, they received revelations and mystical experiences that empowered them to establish new paths and transmit new teachings. Many of these individuals had no formal standing or training within the tradition before the associated revelations and mystical experiences; they were retrospectively incorporated into the Daoist tradition. So, while lineage and ordination are centrally important in Daoism, there have been Daoists, including hermits and ascetics (see Chapter 4), who lived on the margins of the established institution.

To claim Daoist identity is to claim, by definition, religious adherence and affiliation. As we have seen, Daoism is a religious tradition deeply rooted in traditional Chinese culture. So, to be a Daoist is to participate, in some way and on some level, in Daoism. This, of course, assumes understanding of and experience with that tradition. In a traditional Chinese context, such a statement would be relatively unproblematic, as such individuals might be part of Daoist families or communities, would have access to Daoist teachers and sacred sites, and would understand the various types of adherence in the tradition, including the corresponding commitments and responsibilities (see Chapters 4 and 8). They would be much more likely to understand the ways in which Daoists define their tradition, to recognize different forms of participation...
and social location, and to have direct experience with living Daoists and lived forms of Daoist religiosity. Spiritual direction as well as formal instruction and training would also be available. In the modern world, the situation is different. Especially in Canada, Europe, and the United States, most individuals have no access to such “resources.” They are most likely to have found “Daoist identity” through non-Daoist sources and popular constructions. They have different intellectual genealogies (see Chapter 16).

As documented throughout the internet and in popular presentations, such individuals most frequently associate “being a Daoist,” or “being a Tao-ist” in keeping with their own self-representations, with believing in the Dao and following the principles of the Daode jing. They are most likely to equate “real Daoism” with so-called “philosophical Daoism,” which was “lost” by the “Daoist religion.” They thus, either explicitly or implicitly, denigrate the tradition from which they construct personal identity. Such popular and inaccurate constructions will be discussed in Chapter 16, so here we may focus on actual Daoist views.

Drawing upon the ethnographic study of religion, we may utilize the principle of self-identification for identifying Daoists (Komjathy 2004). Under this approach, anyone who identifies himself or herself as Daoist is, at least provisionally speaking, considered such (see also Chapter 16). This approach to Daoist religious identity is relatively straightforward in traditional Daoist contexts. There one would find ordained and lineage-based Daoist priests and monastics as well as “ordinary Daoists” and Daoist families who participated in the life of an identifiably Daoist community. The context, with its corresponding activities and commitments, would make “identifying Daoists” relatively straightforward. In a modern Chinese context, one could even discuss religious identity and affiliation with the individuals in question. However, this exercise becomes more challenging in pre-modern contexts. It assumes that the individual uses indigenous terms approximated by the Western category of “Daoist.” Such is frequently not the case as one’s local community may be more significant than an abstract designation like “Daoism” (referring to the tradition as a whole). That is, many of the individuals in question would speak about being a member of something like Shangqing or Quanzhen. As these are Daoist movements, our identification of them is relatively unproblematic. In addition, the relative importance of a unifying name like “Daoism” (daojia-daojiao) varies depending on context. For pre-modern Chinese Daoists, and especially in the early and early medieval periods, the claim of Daoist identity and affiliation was most often invoked as a distinction from Buddhists and Confucians, and it most often occurred in the context of Chinese court politics, specifically in attempts to secure patronage and increase power and cultural capital. In a pre-modern context, Daoist self-identification as such was less frequent. However, that context, coupled with historical understanding and institutional parameters, makes self-identification unnecessary. We may identify them as “Daoists” because they clearly were Daoist adherents and members of the religious tradition (see also Chapter 12; cf. Kirkland 2004; Silvers 2005).

As mentioned, in the case of the historical study of Chinese Daoism, the topic of religious identity and affiliation assumes indigenous Chinese terms. Some of these
include *daoren*, *daoshi*, *daozhang*, *huoju*, and *jushi*, among others. These terms relate to types of religious identity and affiliation as well as degrees of adherence covered in other chapters. They also have corresponding commitments, obligations, requirements, and responsibilities. *Daoren* (lit., “person of the Dao”) may refer to anyone committed to and affiliated with the Daoist tradition. It refers to a “Daoist” in the most generic sense of the word. *Daoren* may refer to the whole spectrum of Daoist religious adherence, including ordained priests, “ordinary adherents,” and individuals who claim or exhibit Daoist affinities. In technical usage, *daoshi* (lit., “adept of the Dao”) refers to ordained Daoists, whether priests or monastics (see also Kirkland 2008a). Daoist priests may be married householders, associated with Zhengyi Daoism, or monastics, associated with Quanzhen Daoism. As discussed below and in Chapter 13, there are different types of Daoist ordination and different understandings of clerical identity. *Daozhang* (lit., “elder of the Dao”) is also used to designate Daoist priests and monastics (*daoshi*), but it has a variety of meanings. In the most technical sense, *dao Zhang* refers to an ordained Daoist priest who has been trained and qualified to perform Daoist ritual. This is primarily a Zhengyi definition, and in that context such priests are also called *lushi* (“register adepts”) based on their formal receipt of registers (see Chapter 13). In the context of modern Zhengyi Daoism, especially in Taiwan, priests also make a number of other distinctions (see, e.g. Saso 1972a, 1978; Schipper 1993). Returning to the term *dao Zhang*, it is also used by contemporary Quanzhen Daoist monastics and laypeople as an honorific form of address for ordained Daoists. It may be used as a generic form of address to Daoist priests and monastics, or it may be added to a surname, as in Chen dao Zhang (Daoist Elder Chen). Like *chu jia* (lit., “leave the home”), *huo ju* (lit., “fire-dwelling”) is a sub-type of *daoshi*. It indicates a married and householder Daoist priest, usually affiliated with Zhengyi. This designation may be implicitly or explicitly monastic, as it assumes monasticism as normative. Similarly, *jushi* (lit., “householder adept”) usually designates initiated lay Daoists; in the case of modern Quanzhen, this term is often used for householders who are lay disciples of a specific teacher or lineage. All of these terms derive from specific periods and often have context-specific meanings; they also tend to privilege institutional expressions of Daoist religious affiliation, identity, and adherence. Other related terms include “female Daoist” (*kundao*; *nü guan*; see Chapter 4), “immortal” (*xian ren*; see Chapter 6), “recluse” (*yin shi*; see Chapter 4), “renunciant” (*chu jia*; see Chapter 4), as well as various ritual appellations (see Chapter 13). This is not to mention “teachers” (*shifu*; see below and Chapter 13), whose qualities deserve careful investigation.

From these indigenous Chinese terms, we can see that the English term “Daoist” and other Western cognates obscure as much as clarify Daoist religious identity. On the one hand, most of the major indigenous Chinese Daoist technical terms do, in fact, recognize the importance of the Dao. For *daoren*, *daoshi*, and *dao Zhang*, the Dao, at least ideally, is their ultimate concern. By extension, the most basic meaning of “Daoist” is someone who reveres the Dao. At the same time, Daoists make a distinction among types of affiliation and degrees of adherence. Students of Daoism
are sometimes surprised by this, given the apparently universal nature of the Dao. We may make a number of initial points. As discussed in more detail in Chapter 6, *dao* is a Chinese character and a Daoist cosmological and theological concept. It is both culturally and linguistically Chinese, and a specifically Daoist name for the sacred. Perhaps in contrast, theologically speaking, it exists beyond the confines of the Daoist tradition. As one Chinese Quanzhen Daoist commented to me, “Daoism may cease to exist, but the Dao will not.” From this perspective, the “Dao” indwells in each and every being, and it is possible for someone to be aligned with the Dao outside of the Daoist tradition. However, that is not a *Daoist path*, a path associated with the Daoist tradition. Moreover, on a theological level, one may understand Daoism as the tradition that transmits the Dao. It is a community of practice that orients one towards the Dao and provides direction concerning such realization. These points draw our attention to the contributions and limitations of tradition and of lineage. The indigenous Chinese concepts also problematize the Western category of “Daoist.” From a Daoist perspective, there are types of Daoists, including ordained priests and monastics (*daoshi*). These are the community elders, spiritual elite, and religious leaders. They are those who have fully dedicated their lives to the Daoist tradition. There are corresponding commitments and responsibilities (see Chapters 4 and 8). While Daoist adherents (Daoists), including ordained priests and monastics, have traditionally recognized various forms of affiliation and participation, it is not anything goes. To be a Daoist is to recognize and support the religious tradition which is Daoism.

Reverence for the Dao is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for Daoist religious affiliation. From a more traditional Daoist perspective, the Dao is one of the external Three Treasures (*wai sanbao*), which include the Dao, the scriptures, and the teachers (see Chapter 5). In contemporary China, Daoists have attempted to set basic doctrinal requirements, possibly under the influence of Christianity, such as belief in Laojun (Lord Lao) and acceptance of the *Daode jing* as authoritative. Rather than take a normative or sectarian stance, we may rather identify patterns from the tradition. Generally speaking, Daoism is not a tradition based on orthodoxy or orthopraxy (cf. Saso 1972a, 1978), at least not under the control of a centralized institution or authoritarian interpretive community. While there are foundational Daoist views (see Chapters 5–7) and representative practices (see Chapters 8–13), Daoist religious commitments are diverse. There are also many models of Daoist practice and attainment (see Chapter 1), many Daoist paths to the Dao. Daoists have tended to emphasize the importance of affinity, community, connection, embodiment, lineage, place, tradition, transmission, and so forth. Primary forms of Daoist religious practice include ethics, dietetics, health and longevity techniques, meditation, scripture study, and ritual. Primary forms of Daoist religious experience include mystical experience, revelation, and spiritual direction. There are also various forms of Daoist community (see Chapter 4), with a strong emphasis on the importance of place (see Chapter 14).

An additional point involves conversion to Daoism. Historically speaking, Daoism has not been a missionary religion, and in this respect resembles Eastern Orthodox Christianity and Orthodox Judaism, where religious identity and ethnic identity are
nearly synonymous, and conversion is either a matter of personal affinity or actively discouraged. Chinese Daoists have tended to understand Daoist religious identity and Han ethnicity as interlinked. To be Daoist is to be Chinese; it presupposes Chinese cultural, linguistic, and perhaps ethnic identity (see Chapters 1 and 16). While some "non-Han" peoples, such as the Ba and Yao and a small minority of Koreans, converted to Daoism in earlier Chinese history (see Chapters 2 and 16), they always accepted the necessity of cultural assimilation on some level, especially in terms of ritual and scriptural uses of language. This pattern continues in the modern world, where many Chinese Daoists have a higher degree of respect for "foreign converts" who are rooted in the tradition, including facility in spoken and written Chinese.

At the same time, beginning in the Period of Disunion and from the Tang dynasty to the present, Daoists increasingly adopted the Buddhist-influenced belief in karma and reincarnation. This challenges institutional and ethnic constructions of Daoist identity, and opens up the possibility that earlier Chinese Daoists have been reborn as members of other ethnicities in other countries. Contemporary Daoists also frequently speak of "predestined affinities" (yuánfēn). That is, an individual's affinity with Daoism may be both existential and theological, may come from a place both within and beyond the momentary. Thus, to fully understand Daoist affiliation, identity, and adherence requires knowledge of the Daoist tradition in general and actual Daoist views in particular.

**Lineage**

Lineage has occupied a central place in the Daoist religious tradition from its earliest beginnings in the Warring States period (480–222 BCE). Here lineage refers to a particular line of spiritual ancestry, a line passed from teachers to students. In Daoism, this line may be biological, spiritual, and/or institutional. Daoist lineage is about connection, connection to the Dao and to a specific religious community and teacher. It is genealogical in the sense that one remembers and remains committed to ancestral origins. In this way, Daoist lineage affiliation and recollection might be understood as one expression of the Daoist principle of "returning to the Source" (guīgēn) (see Chapter 5)—the source of the teachings, the community, and the tradition.

Like any religious tradition, Daoism may be mapped according to its conception of the sacred, the names that designate that tradition, as well as the specific movements that comprise the tradition. The diagram of Daoist locatedness on the following page is a cosmological one that privileges the Dao, the sacred or ultimate concern of Daoists (see Chapter 6). From this perspective, the Dao manifests in/as/through the cosmos, world, life, and self. This suggests that it is possible for "non-Daoists" to have an affinity with the Dao, but there are specific paths and forms of relationship that are specifically Daoist, that are connected to the Daoist tradition (see also Chapters 1 and 2). Through tradition the Dao is re-membered and expressed. Moreover, Daoist
communities provide spiritual guidance for “returning to the Source.” Viewed from a Daoist perspective, the Dao is also that from which of all individual beings originate and in which they participate. The Dao is their innate nature (see Chapters 5 and 7). Finally, viewed from a socio-historical and cultural perspective, the Dao might be located in the innermost circle, as it is a Chinese character (道) and Daoist cosmological and theological conception (see Chapter 6). To invoke it is to invoke the tradition on some level.

The traditions of the Dao, the specific communities, movements and lineages that comprise Daoism, also receive other designations. These are usually associated with particular “founders,” revelations, scriptures, and often places. Such movements are streams flowing into and out of the larger tradition, with the latter comparable to a river flowing towards the ocean of the Dao. Lineages are the tributaries that flow into and out of the streams of the Daoist movements. These are usually associated with major teachers or systems of practice. Members of specific movements and lineages in turn often understand their affiliation in terms of ancestry (see Yao and Zhao 2010: 33).

The earliest evidence of Daoist lineages is found in the Zhuangzi (Book of Master Zhuang) and other texts of classical Daoism. Harold Roth has labeled these early
Daoist master-disciple communities as “inner cultivation lineages” (see, e.g. Roth 1996, 1999a; also LaFargue 1992), and careful study and reading shows that they were at least as diverse as the movements of organized Daoism. In addition to the textual evidence discussed below, we know about these earliest Daoist lineages through the compilation and transmission of classical Daoist texts (see also Schipper 2000, 2008). This point specifically relates to the Laozi (Lao-tzu; Book of Venerable Masters) and the Zhuangzi (Book of Master Zhuang), both of which are anonymous multi-vocal anthologies with a variety of textual and historical layers.

For example, the Laozi, more commonly known as the Daode jing (Tao-te-ching; Scripture on the Dao and Inner Power), is usually read in the third-century CE redaction of Wang Bi (226–49). This standard, “received edition” consists of 81 verse chapters. However, there are not only many editions, but also two early archaeological manuscripts: the Mawangdui silk manuscripts (dat. ca. 168 BCE) (see Henricks 1989), and the Guodian bamboo slips (dat. ca. 300 BCE) (see Henricks 2000). These recent archaeological discoveries and philological research reveal the Laozi as an anonymous multi-vocal anthology with a variety of textual and historical layers (Lau 1963; LaFargue 1992; Kohn and LaFargue 1998). There is no single author. There is much to recommend the view that the received text is an anthology of earlier (perhaps 5th and 4th c. BCE) oral traditions that were later (by at least 168 BCE) codified into a “coherent” text. Thus, one may tentatively identify at least five phases in the historical compilation of the received Daode jing: (1) oral traditions, including mnemonic aphorisms; (2) collections of sayings; (3) early anthologies; (4) codified, classified, and edited anthologies; and (5) fully integrated and standardized editions. For this reason, we should translate the title Laozi as Book of Venerable Masters, rather than the more conventional Book of Master Lao. The received text is thus a collection of teachings from various teachers and communities living between the fifth century BCE and the second century BCE. In combination with the material history of “books” in ancient China (see Chapters 12 and 15), the very fact that the teachings, practices and experiences contained in texts such as the Laozi were compiled and transmitted points to an early Daoist religious community. Members of this early Daoist community sought to embody and transmit its values.

Scholars have also studied the Zhuangzi as an anthology derived from various Daoist “families” or “schools” (jia). One might also choose to refer to the latter as strata, voices, or lineages. The received text, the thirty-three chapter redaction of the Xuanxue representative Guo Xiang (d. 312), is conventionally divided into three sections: (1) Inner Chapters (1–7), (2) Outer Chapters (8–22), and (3) Miscellaneous Chapters (23–33). While the Inner Chapters are attributed to Zhuang Zhou (ca. 370-ca. 290 BCE), the namesake of the Zhuangzi, the remaining twenty-six chapters are quite disparate. This has led some scholars, such as A. C. Graham, Liu Xiaoan, Victor Mair, and Harold Roth, to attempt to categorize them. Following Victor Mair’s schema, the classical Daoist inner cultivation lineages documented in the pages of the Zhuangzi include the following: (1) Primitivists (Chapters 8–10; parts of 11, 12, and 14); (2) Individualists (Chapters 28–31); (3) Syncretists (Chapters 12–16, 33); (4)
Zhuangists (Chapters 17–22); and (5) Anthologists (Chapters 23–27, 32) (Mair 2000, 37). Although there are debates about how best to categorize the chapters, and about which chapters or sections of chapters belong to which lineage, modern scholarship indicates that the *Zhuangzi* is an anthology of multiple early Daoist teachers and communities. These teachers and communities were committed to cultivating the Dao, but they often disagreed on the most efficacious methods and on the extent of its application, specifically in the realm of social engagement and political involvement. If one were more daring, one might also use these lineage distinctions to interpret the disparate layers of the received *Daode jing*.

Another noteworthy feature of the *Zhuangzi* is the presence of various teachers and students. Some key Daoist masters who appear in the text include Songrongzi (Master Dwelling-in-Beauty; Chapter 1), Liezi (Master Lie; Chapter 1), Lian Shu (Joined Brother; Chapter 1), Nanguo Ziqi (Adept Dissimilarity of South Wall; Chapters 2, 4, and 24), Changwuzi (Master Enduring Hibiscus; Chapter 2), Cook Ding (Chapter 3), Bohun Wuren (Uncle Obscure Non-identity; Chapters 5, 21 and 32), Nüyu (Woman Yu; Chapter 6), Huzi (Master Gourd; Chapter 7), Thief Zhi (Chapters 10 and 29), Guangchengzi (Master Expansive Completion; Chapter 11), Tian Zifang (Adept Square Field; Chapter 21), Gengsang Chu (Chapter 23), Xu Wuguí (Ghostless Xu; Chapter 24), Zeyang (Sudden Yang; Chapter 25), Lie Yukou (Chapter 32), and, of course, Lao Dan (a.k.a. Laozi; Chapters 3, 5, 7, 11, 12, 14, etc.) and Zhuang Zhou himself (see also Mair 1998). Of these, Ziqi is identified as a member of the Nanguo (South Wall) community, which also included other adepts such as Ziyou (Adept Wanderer; Chapter 2), Zikui (Adept Sunflower; Chapter 6), and Yanchengzi (Master Flourishing Completion; Chapter 24), an alternate name for Ziyou. We may, in turn, create corresponding lineage charts such as the one on the following page.

If we then wish to understand classical Daoism on a deeper level, specifically in terms of lineage-based teachings, we would read the relevant texts much more carefully. For example, when Nanbo Zikui (Adept Sunflower of Southern Elders) asks the female master Nüyu (Woman Yu), rendered as “Woman Crookback” by Burton Watson and also translatable as “Feminine Self-reliance” or the “female recluse,” about Daoist practice, she recounts her instructions to Buliangyi (Divining Beam-support).

### NÜYU’S INSTRUCTIONS TO BULIANGYI

“I began explaining and kept at (*shou*) him for three days, and after that he was able to put the world outside himself. When he had put the world outside himself, I kept at him for seven more days, and after that he was able to put things outside himself. When he had put things outside himself, I kept at him for nine more days, and after that he was able to put life outside himself. After he had put life outside himself, he was able to achieve the brightness of dawn, and when he had achieved the brightness of dawn, he could see his own aloneness (*du*)... After he had managed...
to see his own aloneness, he could do away with past and present, and after he had done away with past and present, he was able to enter where there is no life and no death.” (Zhuangzi, Chapter 6; see also Daode jing, Chapter 20)

CHART 2  Examples of Classical Daoist Inner Cultivation Lineages

Following these practice instructions, most likely stages of realization attained through Daoist apophatic meditation, Zikui asks Nüyu, “Where did you learn this?” Nüyu in turn traces her lineage: It begins with Yishi (Copying-the-Beginning); extends from Canliao (Merged Solitude) to Xuanming (Mysterious Obscurity), Yu’ou (According-with-Songs), Xuyi (Anticipated Application), Niexu (Whispered Oath), Zhanming (Revering Luminosity), and a grand-disciple of Luosong (Repeated-Recitation); and then becomes transmitted to a disciple of Fumo (Aided-by-Ink), who is the teacher of Nüyu (see also Schipper 2000). It is open to debate if any of these names refer to real people; one might prefer to understand them as symbolic representations of spiritual insights and religious commitments. However, even if the names are imaginary, many of the stories and teachings appear to derive from actual master-disciple communities, from early Daoist lineages. Especially noteworthy here is the fact that the text identifies the later part of the lineage as deriving from a “grand-disciple” (lit., “grandchild”; sun) of Luosong (Repeated-Recitation) and from a “disciple” (lit., “child”; zi) of Fumo (Aided-by-Ink). Here is a prototypical lineage construction that would become central in organized Daoism. In addition, a number of the early Daoist masters receive various honorific titles designating an “elder.”
Although the personages of the Zhuangzi are often identified as “characters” in some kind of proto-fiction (see Mair 1998; Kirkland 2004, 33–9, 126–7; cf. Campany 2002, 98–100), I would thus suggest that in many cases they were either actual Daoist adepts or characters based on actual individuals, many of whom would have been community elders. It is especially noteworthy that we find the classical Chinese grammatical construction related to lineage connection: teachers are identified by their surname or religious name followed by “master” (zi), while their disciples are identified by a nickname preceded by “adept” (zi), the same character. That is, when one is a student, zi precedes a nickname; when one becomes a teacher, zi is attached to one’s surname or religious name. This relationship is determined by context, whether textual or social.

These various details demonstrate that classical Daoism was a religious community, a series of master-disciple lineages (see also Roth 1996, 1999a: 173–203). It consisted of individuals and communities, albeit diverse and only loosely associated ones, aimed at “cultivating the Dao.” In this sense, they were individuals oriented toward the Dao (“Daoists”) and part of an emerging tradition of the Dao (“Daoism”). That tradition had foundational views, values and commitments, practices, and models of attainment, some of which are discussed in the chapters of the present book. We might, in turn, understand the indigenous category of daojia, “Family of the Dao,” as referring to these inner cultivation lineages (see also Roth 1996, 1999a). Evidence of its own sense of community, as an alternative to other early Chinese cultural movements, may be found in Chapters 15, 23 and 33 of the Zhuangzi and in Chapter 41 of the Daode jing. The former includes a hierarchical ordering of practice models, with Chapter 15 beginning with five inferior forms of practice, including health and longevity practitioners, and culminates with the privileged and advocated Daoist approach (see Chapter 10 herein). This is the classical Daoist commitment to apophatic meditation and mystical praxis. We also find an emphasis on the importance of practice and attainment in Chapter 41 of the Daode jing.

---

**CLASSICAL DAOIST DEGREES OF ADHERENCE AND COMMITMENT**

When the highest adepts hear about the Dao,
They are diligent in their practice of it.
When the middle adepts hear about the Dao,
They wonder whether or not it exists.
When the lowest adepts hear about the Dao,
They laugh loudly and mock it.
If they did not laugh, it would not be the Dao.
*(Daode jing, Chapter 41; also Chapters 15, 21 and 23)*
As this passage indicates, the early Daoist community, like any religious community, consisted of people with varying degrees of affinity and commitment. So, we find some unnamed “venerable master” complaining, like so many Daoists after him, about his fellow adherents not understanding and practicing the teachings (Daodejing, Chapter 70). These adherents are referred to as “adepts” (shi), which eventually became the technical term for an ordained Daoist priest in organized Daoism. With various degrees of formality, lineage remained central to both early and later organized Daoism. Unfortunately, at present, we do not have much information on the fate of the classical inner cultivation lineages, including the degree to which such lineages survived into the Han dynasty. We do know that lineages and communities of Fangshi (“formula masters”), or magico-religious practitioners, occupied a central place in the Han, but little work has been done on the origins and influences of these networks (see DeWoskin 1983; Csikszentmihalyi 2000, 2002).

Some hints at connections with classical Daoist lineages come from a number of sources and cultural developments. First, Lie Yukou (“Master Lie”), the figure mentioned in five chapters of the Zhuangzi, became the basis of the pseudonymous Liezi (Book of Master Lie; DZ 733), which was most likely compiled around the third century CE. Second, the Shenxian zhuan (Biographies of Spirit Immortals), one of the most important early Daoist hagiographies (biographies of saints) partially compiled by Ge Hong (283–343 CE), includes an entry on Guangchengzi (see Campany 2002), a figure mentioned in the Zhuangzi, the Huainanzi, and later Ge’s Baopuzi neipian (Inner Chapters of Master Embracing Simplicity; DZ 1185) (see also Little 2000: 177). Moreover, in texts such as the second-century Laozi bianhua jing (Scripture on the Transformations of Laozi; DH 79; S. 2295), Guangchengzi became identified as an incarnation of Laojun (Lord Lao), the deified Laozi.

Thirdly, Ge Hong also represents an important Daoist lineage. He was the grandnephew of Ge Xuan (164–244), a central figure in the formation of the Taiqing movement of external alchemy and later associated with the Lingbao movement. Ge Xuan traced his lineage through an obscure Fangshi named Zuo Ci (ca. 220-ca. 260 CE). According to Ge Hong, the Taiqing lineage was transmitted from Zuo Ci through Ge Xuan to Zheng Yin (ca. 215-ca. 300), Ge Hong’s own master. These details draw our attention to two unanswered questions: (1) Who were Zuo Ci’s teachers and how far back can this Fangshi lineage be traced?; (2) Was the inclusion of Guangchengzi and similar figures in the Shenxian zhuan an attempt to claim ancestral connections with the classical Daoist inner cultivation lineages? If so, were these actual or retrospectively constructed?

While Liezi, Guangchengzi, and Baopuzi are familiar names in Daoist history, there are also obscure and previously unidentified lineages. These lineages partially remain concealed in the annals of history because of various assumptions at work in Daoist Studies, most notably a neglect of continuities and connections among apparently distinct teachers, practitioners, and communities. For example, one possible bridge-figure between the classical inner cultivation lineages, Han-dynasty Fangshi lineages, and the beginnings of organized Daoism is Heshang gong (Master
WANSI TO AFFILIATION

A semi-legendary figure, the real identity of Heshang gong is unknown, but he is identified as a recluse, most likely during the Later Han dynasty (25–220). He is most well known as the attributed author of the *Laozi zhangju* (Chapter-and-Verse Commentary on the *Laozi*; DZ 682), one of the most influential Daoist commentaries (see Chapter 12). Drawing upon the work of Alan Chan (1991b), the “legend of Heshang gong” points towards two distinct Daoist lineages that became conflated during the early medieval period. The first line is the most complex. It begins with Yue Yang (fl. 408 BCE), passes through Yue Yi (fl. 284 BCE), his ancestral descendent, Anqi Sheng (fl. 260 BCE), Ma Xigong (d.u.), Yue Xiagong (d.u.), Yue Jugong (Yue Chengong; fl. 230), and finally arrives at Tian Shu (fl. 210 BCE), who in turn becomes the teacher of Cao Can (d. 190 BCE).

There are a number of noteworthy dimensions of this lineage. First, Yue Yi was an adherent of Huang-Lao, a syncretic political philosophy that combined elements of Daoism and Legalism and that became highly influential during the Early Han dynasty. Second, Anqi Sheng was a famous Fangshi and legendary immortal, who eventually became associated with both Taiqing and Shangqing. That is, this lineage indicates multiple source-points and cross-pollination. As interesting in terms of geography and migration, the members of the Yue and Tian families eventually relocated to the state of Qi and Hanzhong. The former was the location of the Jixia Academy, which played a major role in the development of classical Daoism (see Chapter 2). The latter was a key center of the early Tianshi (Celestial Masters) movement (see Kleeman 1998). All of these details point towards the importance of particular, previously unidentified Daoist families (see also below). As Alan Chan suggests, “the Way of the ‘Old Lord’ (Lao-chün Tao [Laojun dao]) as it is reflected in the Ho-shang Kung legend may be regarded as a transition from the Huang-Lao school of the early Han to the later Taoist religion” (1991b: 125).

The second line associated with Heshang gong traces the lineage from Xu Laile (d.u.) to Ge Xuan. As discussed above, Ge Xuan was a key figure in the emergence of Taiqing. As is the case for Guangchengzi, Ge Hong’s *Shenxian zhuàn* contains a biographical entry on Heshang gong. Regardless of the accuracy of the actual lineage, these details demonstrate a “sense of tradition” and further connections with Fangshi lines. All in all, the combined dimensions of the “legend of Heshang gong” reveal key lines of transmission and major Daoist families. One of these families, the Yue, goes back to a time contemporaneous with the classical Daoist inner cultivation lineages. Moreover, we find the intersection of ancestral lines, spiritual lineages, and geographical proximity among the Yue, Tian, Ge, and Li families. This occurred in Qi and Hanzhong, key locations for the emergence of organized Daoism. Moreover, the “legend of Heshang gong” includes the claim that the associated commentary on the *Daode jing* was transmitted to four individuals: Wu Guang (d.u.), Xianmen Zigao (d.u.), Qiuizi (d.u.), and Emperor Wen (r. 179–157 BCE), with Xianmen Zigao and Qiuizi being major Fangshi (Chan 1991b: 123). Moreover, the *Gaoshi zhuan* identifies Heshang gong as “an ancestor of the Family of the Dao (daojia zhi zong)” (cited in Campany 2002: 307).
These are just some details that reveal the importance of lineage in the formative moments of organized Daoism and that hint at a greater degree of connection between the emergence of an institutionalized tradition and the earlier inner cultivation lineages. As discussed in Chapters 1 and 2, most of the major Daoist movements trace their origins to specific teachers, including divine beings (see also Chapter 6). With respect to early organized Daoism, there was also a sense of connection and succession among many of the most important movements.

CHART 3 Lineage Connections in Early Organized Daoism

During this period Daoists used the term daojia as a designation for the Daoist religious tradition in general and for the Daoist clergy in particular. On the one hand, Daoists were members of a spiritual lineage that emphasized the transmission of a tradition, but on the other hand, early organized Daoism was comprised of actual families. In keeping with the Chinese term, we might speak of these groups of ancestrally related individuals as “families of the Dao.” In early organized Daoism, the Zhang family, associated with the hereditary, patrilineal position of the Celestial Master, became especially prominent. This is so much the case that some scholars, partially under Christian-influenced constructions of religion and later Taiwanese Zhengyi influence, would (problematically) identify Zhang Daoling (fl. 140s CE), the first Celestial Master, and/or Zhang Lu (d. 215), his grandson and the third Celestial Master, as the “founder of Daoism.” In fact, such individuals are more appropriately understood
as “founders of the Tianshi movement;” our account of the origins of Daoism must be plural, rather than singular. With respect to the actual position of the Celestial Master, the Tianshi movement claims a line of succession from Zhang Daoling to the present Celestial Master. Although the development and characteristics of this line are complex, and although the line was most likely broken and then reconstructed during the Tang dynasty (Kirkland 2008b), members of the contemporary movement identify a continuity between Zhang Daoling, the first Celestial Master, and the most recent Celestial Masters: Zhang Yuanxu (1862–1924; 62nd), Zhang Enpu (1904–69; 63rd), Zhang Yuanxian (1930–2008; 64th) (Kleeman 2008), and possibly Zhang Jiyu (b. 1962; 65th).³

While early organized Daoism evidenced the central importance of both actual biological families and spiritual lineages, later organized Daoism shifted from a household model of community to a monastic one (see Chapter 4). In that context, Daoists developed lineage-based name systems. In contrast to their Chinese Buddhist counterparts, who change their surname to Shi (Śakya) upon ordination, Daoist monastics retain their ancestral surname, but change their given name. In some cases, religious names are self-chosen; in other cases, they are bestowed by one’s teacher. An example of the former is the Quanzhen founder Wang Zhe’s (1113–1170) adoption of the religious name of Chongyang (Redoubled Yang). This name indicates Wang’s connection to the earlier immortals Zhongli Quan (fl. 2nd c. CE?) and his student Lü Dongbin (b. 798?), whose religious names are Zhengyang (Aligned Yang) and Chunyang (Pure Yang), respectively.

Regarding religious names bestowed by one’s teacher, a good example appears in contemporary Quanzhen. In contemporary mainland China, this monastic order consists of seven primary lineages, each of which is associated with one of the Seven Perfected, Wang Zhe’s senior disciples (see Chapter 2). Each lineage has its own associated 100-character lineage poem (paishi), which are often hand-written by one’s teacher and transmitted during ordination. They are also memorized by Quanzhen monastics, as they are used to identify other Daoists’ lineage. Let us take the example of the Longmen lineage poem, specifically characters thirty through forty.

世景榮惟懐希微衍自寧
Shi Jing Rong Wei Mao Xi Wei Yan Zi Ning
World Bright Flourish Only Mindful Rare Subtle Overflow Natural Serene

Suppose that a particular adherent’s teacher is a member of the 30th generation (dai), his or her religious name would begin with Shi. This teacher’s students would receive religious names beginning with Jing. The latter’s students would, in turn, receive religious names beginning with Rong, and become part of the 33rd generation. In this imagined expression of Longmen lineage affiliation, the individuals might be named Shiqing (Global Clarity), Jingshi (Bright Recognition), and Rongzhao (Flourishing Illumination). From the latter’s perspective, he or she would be a “disciple” (dizi;
tudi) of the former: Shiqing would be his “master-grandfather” (shiye), and Jingshi would be his “master-father” (shifu). Here we see the continued use of terms from family ancestry, but in a monastic setting in which ordinary family life and biological reproduction have been renounced. After Quanzhen Daoists learn another monastic’s name, they will frequently inquire concerning the names of that person’s master-grandfather and master-father. If the characters correctly line up according to the lineage poem, then the claim of lineage affiliation is accepted.

Revelation and mystical experience

Revelation and mystical experience also have been ways to Daoist religious affiliation. These categories are most often associated with “religious experience,” but they are also important for understanding how Daoist identity and tradition have been established. Revelation refers sacred communications between hidden dimensions of the cosmos, usually gods or divine entities, and human beings. Revelation usually results in the recipient claiming some special status and privileged position with respect to the sacred, and this position involves a spiritual message or teachings deemed essential for humanity. Mystical experience refers to an experience of that which a given individual or community identifies as sacred. There is no single, essential, and “ultimate” form of mystical experience; there are, rather, many types of mystical experiences, which differ according to the community and tradition involved and which assume different soteriologies and theologies.

Many influential Daoist religious movements originated in revelations or mystical experiences. Zhang Daoling (fl. 140s CE?), the founder of the Tianshi movement, received a revelation from Laojun (Lord Lao). Yang Xi (330–86), a spirit medium hired by the southern aristocratic Xu family, received a series of revelations and spiritual transmissions from a variety of Daoist gods and Perfected; in concert with his own spirit journeys to Daoist sacred realms and hidden regions of the cosmos, these revelations became the foundation for the emergence of the Shangqing movement. Wang Zhe (1113–70) had a number of mystical experiences with immortals, which may be considered a primary influence on the formation of Quanzhen, a Daoist renunciant community and subsequent monastic order. For the moment, one key point must be emphasized: none of these individuals were ordained Daoists, and none of them probably had physically embodied Daoist teachers. That is, the “founders” of many of the most important Daoist religious communities were not “Daoists” strictly defined. These details suggest that there are multiple source-points for entry into the Daoist religious tradition, including not only lineage and direct association with Daoist teachers and communities, but also divine communications and mystical experiences.

According to traditional accounts, in 142 CE Zhang Daoling received a revelation from Laojun, the “deified” (divine form of) Laozi and anthropomorphic manifestation of the Dao, on Mount Heming (Crane Cry; Dayi, Sichuan). During Lord Lao’s revelation,
In the 360s, members of the aristocratic Xu family, Xu Mi (303–76), the younger brother of Xu Mai (300–48), and the former’s son Xu Hui (341-ca. 370), hired the spirit medium Yang Xi (330–86?) to establish contact with Xu Mi’s wife, Tao Kedou (d. 362).

Similarly, Shangqing Daoism traces itself to a series of revelations from divine beings. There is an account of the Shangqing revelations in the Zhen’gao (Declarations of the Perfected), an anthology of the original Shangqing revelations compiled by Tao Hongjing (456–536).

In the 360s, members of the aristocratic Xu family, Xu Mi (303–76), the younger brother of Xu Mai (300–48), and the former’s son Xu Hui (341-ca. 370), hired the spirit medium Yang Xi (330–86?) to establish contact with Xu Mi’s wife, Tao Kedou (d. 362).
Through a series of revelations, Yang Xi described the organization and population of the subtle realms of the cosmos, particularly the heaven of Highest Clarity. In the process, Yang came in contact with the deceased female Celestial Master libationer Wei Huacun (251–334), the “Lady Wei of Southern Marchmount” mentioned above. Here Nanyue (Southern Marchmount) refers to the southern sacred peak of Hengshan (Mount Heng; near Hengyang, Hunan). The revelations were, in turn, written down by Yang Xi and the Xu family in a calligraphic style that seemed divine. Early Shangqing Daoism reveals another path to Daoist identity and religious affiliation: through a series of revelations, members of Shangqing established a new Daoist community and movement. In its formative moments, Shangqing’s claim to religious authority and Daoist pedigree derived from three sources: (1) Secret teachings bestowed by various divine beings, including a former Tianshi libationer; that is, the connection with Daoism, via Tianshi, came not from the terrestrial Tianshi community, but from connection with its early ancestors, now divine beings; (2) Access to higher sacred realms, and thus more advanced spiritual insights; specifically, Shangqing refers to the middle of the Three Heavens \(\text{santian}\), which is located between Yuqing (Jade Clarity; highest) and Taiqing (Great Clarity; lowest); and (3) Possession and understanding of revealed scriptures. Such patterns continued in later movements in Daoist religious history.

Daoist movements have also been established through the transformative effect of mystical experiences. One of the most famous examples is that of Wang Zhe, the nominal founder of Quanzhen (see Eskildsen 2004; Komjathy 2007a, forthcoming).
In 1161, at the age of forty-eight, Wang had a mystical encounter with one or more Daoist immortals, sometimes identified as the immortals Zhongli Quan and his spiritual disciple Lü Dongbin (see Chapter 6). This occurred on a bridge in Ganhe (near present-day Huxian, Shaanxi). The Quanzhen tradition claims that one of these immortals transmitted a “secret formula in five sections” (miyu wupian) (see Komjathy 2007a).

These details regarding Daoist revelations and mystical experiences demonstrate that there are diverse ways to religious identity in the Daoist tradition. From a certain perspective, revelation and mystical experience may be seen as alternatives to organized and institutionally sanctified forms of religious inclusion. While such phenomena may support tradition, they also force members of that tradition to make space for new expressions. The importance of revelation and mystical experience problematize easy explanations about Daoist religious identity and affiliation based solely on institutional frameworks. Some Daoists have found their connection through things such as lineage and ordination, but other Daoists have discovered this through revelation and mystical experience.

The key point here is that many founders of major Daoist movements were not ordained Daoists, and had no formal standing within the tradition. In some sense, many of them were not even “Daoists” (members of the Daoist religious tradition); rather, they were incorporated into its historical annals retrospectively. The major “ways” (dao) of Daoism most often derived from the religious experience of unique individuals, while the lineages (pai) were created by descendants or disciples of these. While theologically speaking there may be almost an infinite number of paths to the Dao, not all paths may be recognized as Daoist, that is, as authentic expressions of Daoist religious orientations. Daoist ways to affiliation have recognizable patterns and characteristics especially in terms of the virtue (de) and numinous presence (ling) that is manifested in the individual.

**Ordination**

As Daoism became more complex in its membership and organization, Daoists began creating integrated models of religious participation and ordination systems. This partially occurred under the influence of Buddhism, specifically through the Daoist adaptation of Buddhist monasticism.

Tang dynasty Daoists created one of the earliest fully integrated ordination systems, and there was also an increasing systematization of monasticism. As documented in the seventh century Fengdao kejie (Rules and Precepts for Worshipping the Dao; DZ 1125; Kohn 2004b), one of the earliest Daoist monastic manuals, the ordination system included seven ranks. The first three ranks were those of lay masters, while the last three were monastic, and the middle rank (Disciple of Eminent Mystery) signified a transitional stage that could be held either by a householder or a renunciant (Kohn
Ordinations into these ranks began early, with Daoist children initiated first into the Celestial Master level and receiving registers of protective generals. After that, each level required extended training, the guidance of an ordination master, and community sponsors. Once established, Daoists could serve as priests in larger communities, take up residence in a hermitage to pursue self-cultivation, or remain in a monastic institution to perform rituals both in-house or for lay donors, pray for the empire, and continue to strive for greater purity and immortality (ibid.). That is, to be a Daoist in the late medieval period meant to participate in a tradition, to have commitments to the religious community, and to locate oneself in a hierarchically ordered training regimen. One’s authority and affiliation were partially determined by this. The same is true with respect to lineage connections, or relationships to spiritual ancestors, in the larger tradition.

Daoists continued to reformulate norms of affiliation throughout Daoist history. One enduring model was that of the Longmen lineage of Quanzhen Daoism advocated by Wang Changyue (1622–80). Although the Longmen lineage is most often traced to Qiu Chuji (1148–1227) and his supposed lineage-successor Zhao Xujing (Daojian [Resolute-in-the-Way]; 1163–1221), the official, “orthodox” Longmen lineage was codified by Wang Changyue and his successors (see Chapter 2). While abbot of Baiyun guan in the late 1600s, Wang systematized the Longmen ordination system and monastic regulations into three levels.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>Texts</th>
<th>Affiliation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Register Disciple</td>
<td>Celestial Masters</td>
<td>See Fengdao kejie, section 13</td>
<td>Lay/Householder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Disciple of Good Faith</td>
<td>Great Mystery</td>
<td></td>
<td>Lay/Householder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Disciple of Cavern Abyss</td>
<td>Cavern Abyss</td>
<td></td>
<td>Lay/Householder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Disciple of Eminent Mystery</td>
<td>Laozi</td>
<td></td>
<td>Transitional (either)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Disciple of Cavern Spirit</td>
<td>Three Sovereigns</td>
<td></td>
<td>Monastic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Preceptor of Highest Mystery</td>
<td>Numinous Treasure</td>
<td></td>
<td>Monastic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Preceptor of Highest Perfection</td>
<td>Highest Clarity</td>
<td></td>
<td>Monastic</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CHART 4 Seven Ordination Ranks of the Tang Monastic System
The first level, open to both monastics and laypeople, centered on the Five Precepts and Ten Precepts of Initial Perfection; the second level, specifically for monastics, consisted of the Three Hundred Precepts of Medium Ultimate; and the third level was less clearly defined, but included the Ten Virtues of Celestial Immortality and the Twenty-Seven Virtuous Activities of Celestial Immortality (see also Chapter 8). According to Longmen accounts, Wang Changyue compiled, or at least disseminated, the three corresponding monastic manuals, namely, the *Chuzhen jie* (Precepts of Initial Perfection; JY 292; ZW 404), *Zhongji jie* (Precepts of Medium Ultimate; JY 293; ZW 405), and *Tianxian jie* (Precepts of Celestial Immortality; JY 291; ZW 403), as guidebooks for Quanzhen monastic life. They evidence a late-imperial Longmen monastic hierarchy, with the ethical requirements, expectations and types of adherence becoming increasingly strict as individuals progressed through the levels of commitment.

Although there are many self-identified Longmen communities throughout the modern world, many with only tenuous connections with the mainland Chinese lineage, that lineage remains one of the most visible organized communities in contemporary Daoism as Longmen monastics function as administrators for most major Daoist sites in mainland China (see Chapters 14 and 16). For present purposes, Longmen is fascinating for the way in which it preserves a monastic system based on ordination and lineage. In addition to its employment of large-scale public ordination ceremonies, which recommenced at Baiyun guan (White Cloud Temple; Beijing) in 1989 (Wang 2006: 149), Longmen is noteworthy for a number of features. First, its ordinands receive the three precept texts and monastic manuals mentioned above. They ideally study and apply the ethical commitments and values advocated in the texts (see Chapter 8). Second, like most of the major Quanzhen lineages in contemporary China, Longmen ordinands receive religious names (*faming*; *paiming*) based on the corresponding lineage-poem (*paishi*) contained in the *Xuanmen gongke* (Liturgy of the Mysterious Gate), the contemporary Quanzhen liturgy that is usually chanted in the morning and evening at Quanzhen temples (see Chapter 13). The Longmen lineage poem consists of one hundred Chinese characters, and ordinands receive a “generation-name” (*dai*) based upon their master-father’s (*shifu*) name.

As we saw in the example of the hypothetical Daoist master Shiqing (Global Clarity) and his disciple Jingshi (Bright Recognition) and grand-disciple Rongzhao (Flourishing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ordination Rank</th>
<th>Precept Text</th>
<th>Ritual Vestment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wondrous Practice/Initial Perfection</td>
<td><em>Chuzhen jie</em></td>
<td>Devotion Robe of Initial Perfection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wondrous Virtue/Medium Ultimate</td>
<td><em>Zhongji jie</em></td>
<td>Pure Robe of Lightened Dust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wondrous Dao/Celestial Immortality</td>
<td><em>Tianxian jie</em></td>
<td>Mist Robe of Celestial Immortality</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Chart 5 Three Ordination Ranks of the Longmen Lineage**
Illumination), this naming convention indicates not only Longmen lineage-affiliation but also relationship to a particular teacher. This coupled with possession of the lineage poem and the three monastic manuals, and sometimes of ordination certificates (see Schipper 1993: 68–9; Kohn 2004c: 87), in combination with adherence to the core Quanzhen commitments to celibacy (no sex), sobriety (no intoxicants), and vegetarianism (no meat), indicates that the person’s claim to lineage affiliation is verifiably authentic. This process is sometimes complicated by corruption in the monastic order (one can buy ordination certificates for the right price), fabrication of lineage, and lack of corresponding study, training, and attainment. Nonetheless, if we understand lineage and ordination as paths to a religious vocation, then we are forced to ask much more difficult questions. These questions take one into the Daoist tradition as a path to spiritual transformation and as an all-encompassing religious way of life.

**FURTHER READING**


Community, especially place-specific community, is a central dimension of the Daoist tradition, and there are diverse Daoist models of community, including ascetic, eremitic, householder, and monastic models. Some Daoists followed a way of life based in renunciation (ascetic, eremitic, and monastic), while others followed a way of life that involved commitment to family and often to social and even political involvement (householder). There are, in turn, different Daoist views on the most beneficial and “highest” religious paths. However, a more comprehensive and integrated perspective recognizes that each of these paths has been understood as one of many paths to the Dao, as one of many expressions of Daoist religious life. Of particular note in this chapter is the section on Daoist women and female participation. Although Daoism cannot be read as a “proto-feminist” tradition, it is among the more inclusive and empowering religious traditions with respect to female adherents.

Hermits and eremitic communities

On the most basic level, a hermit or recluse is someone who goes into seclusion. Such a person seemingly withdraws from the larger society, and takes up a
corresponding way of life rooted in simplicity and interiority. In Chinese, a recluse is usually referred to as *yinshi*, which literally means “hidden literatus.” In Daoist terms, one might translate this term as “concealed adept.” These individuals frequently live among “hills and mountains” (*qiushan*) and “mountains and forests” (*shanlin*). *Yinshi* may be actual hermits, who live in physical isolation from others, or members of eremitic communities, in which a group of recluses live together. In contrast to cenobitic (communal) institutions such as monasteries, eremitic communities consist of individuals living in separate dwellings but within a particular geographical area and with a sense of communal participation. They understand themselves to be supporting each other’s religious practice, whether through actual meetings, conversations, and spiritual direction or through a more subtle sense of connection. We may think of such recluses as members of an alternative or intentional community, a religious community opting out of the dominant social order and corresponding value-system. They embrace a different vision of human meaning and purpose.

Although very little work has been done on Daoist eremiticism, partially of course because the “hermit tradition” often exists on the margins of court politics and the larger religious institution, and thus outside of official historiography, there is evidence of such a flourishing Daoist subculture throughout Chinese history. Traces of Daoist eremiticism are found in hagiographies (biographies of saints) and in poetry. Although open to interpretation and debate, the earliest Daoist eremitic communities existed during the time of classical Daoism. These are the classical inner cultivation lineages already discussed in previous chapters of this book. Within the *Zhuangzi*, we find evidence to support the existence of hermits and eremitic communities. Some passages indicate temporary seclusion, while others point toward a more permanent way of life. For example, in Chapter 7 of the Inner Chapters, Huzi (Gourd Master) manifests the formless state of “being-not-yet-emerged-from-the-ancestral” to the shaman Ji Xian, who subsequently flees in terror. Liezi (Master Lie; see also Chapters 1, 18, 21, 28 and 32),¹ one of Huzi’s disciples who had been momentarily enamored by Ji Xian’s apparent power and prognostication skills, decides that he had never really learned anything.

---

**LIEZI ENTERS SECLUSION**

He went home and for three years did not go out. He replaced his wife at the stove, fed the pigs as though he were feeding people, and showed no preferences in the things he did. He got rid of carving and polishing and returned to simplicity (*su*). He let himself stand alone like an uncarved block (*pu*). In the midst of entanglement he remained sealed, and in this Oneness he ended his life. (*Zhuangzi*, Chapter 7; cf. *Daode jing*, Chapter 19)
This passage parallels others wherein three years is identified as the ideal period of temporary seclusion for intensive training: Cook Ding (Chapter 3), Gengsang Chu (Chapter 23), as well as adept Huan and Zhuping Man (Chapter 32). As three years is the traditional Chinese mourning period, one might read these descriptions both literally and metaphorically. One goes into physical seclusion, which also involves the death of one’s former self and mundane social concerns. For Liezi, seclusion establishes a situation conducive for intensive Daoist cultivation. It results in mystical union with the Dao, which may or may not include physical death. Here one also notes that the classical Daoist eremitic ideal did not involve abandoning one’s family and property. Such a renunciant model contradicts traditional Chinese values and appears later under the influence of Buddhism.

Seclusion is further emphasized in Chapters 23 and 28 of the Zhuangzi, which contain the earliest Daoist occurrences of the phrase *huandu* (lit., “four du squared”). This is significant because in later organized Daoism, specifically during the late medieval period, *huandu* took on a technical meaning of “enclosed and shut-off” and “meditation enclosure.”

---

**CLASSICAL DAOIST IDEALS OF EREMITIC WITHDRAWAL**

Master Gengsang Chu [a disciple of Lao Dan] said, “When the vernal qi manifests, the various grasses grow. Later, when autumn arrives, the myriad fruits ripen. And how could it not be like this? The Way of Heaven is already moving. I have heard that the utmost person dwells like a corpse in a four-walled room (*huandu zhi shi*). He leaves the various clans to their wild and reckless ways, unknowing of their activities.” (Zhuangzi, Chapter 23)

***

Yuan Xian [a disciple of Kongzi] lived in the state of Lu. He resided in a four-walled room (*huandu zhi shi*). It was thatched with living grasses, had a broken door made of woven brambles and mulberry branches for doorposts. Jars with the bottoms out, hung with pieces of coarse cloth for protection from the weather, served as windows for its two rooms. The roof leaked and the floor was damp, but Yuan Xian sat upright (*kuangzuo*), playing the zither and singing. (Zhuangzi, Chapter 28; see also 2, 11, 14 and 24)

---

Here we find the expression of classical Daoist eremitic commitments, including architectural requirements (see Chapter 15): the second passage states that the recluse lives in a hut constructed from natural, found, and discarded materials, including a thatched roof, woven-bramble door, mulberry-branch doorposts, and broken-jar windows. Such a life is informed by classical Daoist values of simplicity
and disengagement from wealth, reputation, and social status. Many of the stories are also framed as critiques of political power and social position, with various rulers and officials visiting Daoist adepts only to be rebuffed. The Zhuangzi also documents Daoist recluses associated with particular physical places such as Chu (present-day Hubei, Hunan, Henan, etc.; Chapter 4), the Hao and Pu rivers (Jiangsu; Chapter 17), the Liao river (Liaoning; Chapter 7), Lu (present-day Shandong; Chapters 20 and 28), Mount Gushe (Chapter 1), Mount Kongtong (possibly in Pingliang, Gansu; Chapter 11), Mount Kunlun (Chapters 6, 12, and 18), Mount Tai (Tai’an, Shandong; Chapter 29), Mount Weilei (Chapter 23), Mount Zhong (Chapter 28), and the Ying river (Chapter 28), a tributary of the Huai river (Henan, Anhui, Jiangsu) (see also Mair 1998). Interestingly, the Zhuangzi utilizes physical places and non-physical places as symbolic of Daoist commitments and spiritual states. Certain passages of the Zhuangzi also highlight the eremitic qualities of certain humans and animals, including fishermen (Chapters 17 and 31), firewood-gatherers and wood-cutters (Chapters 20, 26, and 29), warblers and moles (Chapter 1), as well as turtles (Chapters 17 and 26).

In the early medieval period, the Seven Sages of the Bamboo Grove (zhulin qixian) are often associated with Daoist eremitic withdrawal, with the members Ji Kang (Xi Kang; 223–262) and Ruan Ji (210–263) being among the most prominent. However, these individuals are better understood as disillusioned literati with Daoistic interests. They are probably best characterized as “Daoist sympathizers” (see Chapters 3 and 16) with particular interest in classical Daoist texts as opportunities for cosmological speculation as well as philosophical reflection and conversation.

In terms of actual early medieval Daoist hermits and recluses, one important representative is Yan Zun (Junping [Noble Peace]; ca. 83 BCE–ca. 10 CE), who was originally named Zhuang Zun. Yan Zun was an urban recluse and Fangshi who spent his days in the markets of present-day Chengdu engaging in divinization and prognostication and his nights teaching cultured elite the intricacies of the Chinese literati tradition. For instance, he taught Yang Xiong (53 BCE–18 CE), a famous Han poet and philosopher. Yan Zun wrote the Laozi zhigui (Essential Meaning of the Laozi; a.k.a. Daode zhenjing zhigui; DZ 693), which is the earliest surviving Daoist commentary on the Daode jing in the Daoist Canon. He was later bestowed with the honorific imperial title Miaotong zhenren (Perfected Subtle Pervasion) during the Shaoxing period (1131–62) of the Song dynasty (Berkowitz 2000: 93).

Eremiticism remained a primary model for Daoist community in later organized Daoism and even in modern Daoism. During the Song-Jin period, one relatively unknown recluse exerted an unexpected influence on the emerging Quanzhen movement. This was Liu Biangong (Gaoshang [Exalted Eminence]; 1071–1143), who lived as a solitary ascetic with a small group of disciples in Bingzhou, Shandong (Goossaert 1997: 47–54; 1999). Liu Biangong began his lifelong self-confinement at the age of fifteen. While mourning his father’s death, he encountered an “extraordinary person” and received secret teachings. He then dedicated himself to intensive and prolonged ascetic practice in a meditation enclosure (huandu) near his family home. He observed silence, wore a simple cloth robe, and maintained a vegetarian diet. He
also never married and practiced sexual abstinence. Following his death, his brother searched his hut and discovered a short treatise on cultivating clarity and stillness through meditation and within one’s daily life.

Liu’s commitments influenced the early Quanzhen community, which inhabited the same region of Shandong as Liu and his disciples. Ma Yu (1123–84) explicitly mentions the Shandong hermit.

MA YU REMEMBERS THE SHANDONG ASCETIC LIU GAOSHANG

“Liu Gaoshang lived in a meditation enclosure for forty years. He freed himself from everything but emptying the heart-mind, filling the belly, avoiding ornamentation, forgetting reputation, abandoning profit, clarifying spirit and completing qi. The elixir formed naturally, and immortality was completed naturally.” (Danyang yulu, DZ 1057, 8b)

Here we find one source of inspiration for early Quanzhen practice, especially with respect to the practice of meditation enclosure. Liu emphasized the importance of solitary meditation as the path to spiritual realization. In Ma’s description, Liu’s training is informed by classical Daoist values, as evident in the allusion to Chapters 3 and 19 of the Daode jing. At the same time, meditation enclosure allowed one to undertake intensive internal alchemy, which might culminate in immortality (see Chapters 7 and 11).

Moving back to a slightly earlier moment in the emerging Quanzhen community, Wang Zhe, at the age of 48, completely embraced the life of a Daoist renunciant and moved to Nanshi village, near present-day Huxian, Shaanxi. There he dug himself a “grave” that he named “Tomb for Reviving the Dead” (huo siren mu), often translated as “Tomb of the Living Dead.” This was a mound of dirt several feet high, with a ten-foot high ceiling dug under it. Near the entrance to this underground enclosure Wang placed a plaque that read “Wang Haifeng” (Lunatic Wang). Wang spent three years in this enclosure, most likely engaging in ascetic practices, practicing internal alchemy, and exchanging poetry with those who came to visit him. One account of Wang’s solitary training appears in his ten-poem cycle titled “Tomb for Reviving the Dead.”

WANG ZHE REVIVES THE DEAD MAN

Reviving the dead man, the living dead man,
I bury the Four Elements that are my cause.
In the autumn of 1163, Wang Zhe filled in his meditation enclosure and moved to the village of Liujiang (present-day Huxian), located in the Zhongnan mountains. There Wang trained with two hermits, He Dejin (Yuchan [Jade Toad]; d. 1170) and Li Lingyang (Lingyang [Numinous Yang]; d. 1189). It seems that the three renunciants lived on a small piece of land near a stream, where each had a separate grass hut. Wang engaged in solitary practice, focusing on asceticism and internal alchemy (see Komjathy 2007a).

After four years Wang Zhe burned down his hut, dancing while he watched it burn to the ground. This occurred in the summer of 1167, when Wang was 54 years old. Wang then traveled east, eventually arriving in Ninghai (present-day Muping, Shandong). While living in Shandong’s eastern peninsula for the last three years of his life, Wang gathered together a number of senior disciples, most often referred to as the Seven Perfected (see Chapter 2). They all engaged in alchemical, ascetic, and eremitic training, both individual and communal. Each senior first-generation adherent also lived for some period of time as a solitary recluse (see Komjathy 2007a).

While the early Quanzhen adherents spent time in seclusion, it is also noteworthy that they maintained connections with fellow practitioners and lay supporters. Evidence points toward an extensive community composed of solitary hermitages, eremitic communities, community meeting halls, and shrines (Komjathy 2007a). There was also a communal dimension of meditation enclosures.

---

**EARLY QUANZHEN EREMITICISM**

The master [Ma Yu] returned to the Ancestral Hall, locking himself in an enclosure and residing there. On the new moon of the eighth month of 1178, he emerged from enclosure. In the first month of the next year he traveled to Huating county. Li Dasheng invited the master to be attended by him. [Beginning on] the full moon of the second month, [Ma Danyang] lived in enclosure at his [Li’s] home, coming out only after one hundred days. The master revived a withered tree outside the enclosure. In spring of 1180, he arrived in Jingzhao (Shaanxi). Zhao Penglai offered his shelter as a hermitage. The master again lived in enclosure for one hundred days and then came out. (*Jinlian xiangzhuan*, DZ 174, 24b-25a)

---

In this tomb, I sleep soundly reclined near flowing waters;
Breaking through the Void, I crush every particle of dust.
(*Quanzhen ji*, DZ 1153, 2.10a)
Here Ma Yu is the model for aspiring adepts, committed to consistent and prolonged solitary religious praxis. In this passage and elsewhere, adherents were often attended by one or more fellow practitioners, disciples, or lay followers. These individuals were responsible for providing support, such as food, water, and medical attention. Solitary ascetic training enabled early adepts to separate themselves from familial and societal entanglements and to purify themselves emotionally and intellectually. It represented the opportunity to move from ordinary human being to more actualized ontological conditions, as defined and understood by the early Quanzhen Daoist religious movement (Komjathy 2007a, forthcoming).

The Quanzhen case is instructive on multiple levels. First, it reveals some of the specifics of ascetic training, including the importance of place, seclusion, spiritual direction, spiritual friendship, and intensive training. Second, Quanzhen began as a small eremitic community emphasizing ascetic and alchemical praxis. It then became a regional community in Shandong and Shaanxi, which included both fully committed renunciants and lay members. The next phase involved a transition from a regional religious movement to national monastic order. It is especially noteworthy that late medieval Quanzhen monasteries not only institutionalized asceticism and eremiticism, but also retained those early commitments, forms of practice, and communal dimensions. Many early Quanzhen monasteries incorporated rows of meditation enclosures into their architecture designs, and these meditation rooms were used for solitary and intensive meditation during huandu retreats. Such winter retreats usually occurred from the winter solstice to the end of the lunar New Year period and lasted for one hundred days (Goossaert 2001, 127).

Householder and proto-monastic communities

The eremitic model is only one of many forms of Daoist community and social organization. In fact, the dominant form of Daoist community is probably that of the householder living among other householders. Although the category of householder (“laity”) is often contrasted with renunciant and monastic, here it simply designates individuals who marry and have families. It is a family-centered form of social organization, and parallels dominant Chinese values rooted in Confucianism. It is also congruent with Mahāyāna Buddhist ideals, such as those expressed by the enlightened lay Buddhist in the Vimalakīrti Sūtra. In the case of Daoism, many householder communities include ordained, married priests as well as individuals and families living a committed religious life. Such patterns of adherence frequently revolve around specific values (see Chapter 5) and ethical commitments (see Chapter 8).

In the early Tianshi movement, the Daoist community centered on a hierarchically organized theocracy, a semi-independent state (Shu) oriented towards the Dao, organized according to Daoist commitments, and informed by Daoist religious views.
Early Tianshi Daoism benefited from a variety of political circumstances, including the decline of centralized Han power and the movement’s relative geographical remoteness. The same was true of the early Quanzhen community’s location in Shandong during the decline of the Jurchen-Jin dynasty.

As discussed in Chapter 2, the Tianshi movement began with a revelation from Laojun (Lord Lao), the deified Laozi and personification of the Dao, to Zhang Daoling in 142 ce. During Lord Lao’s revelation, Zhang was appointed as terrestrial representative, the “Celestial Master,” and given healing powers as a sign of his empowerment. The movement in turn became patrilineal, passing from Zhang Daoling to his son Zhang Heng and then to his grandson Zhang Lu (d. 215). The Celestial Masters established “parishes” (zhì) with hierarchically ranked followers, wherein the so-called libationers (jijiu) were highest. The intent was to establish “people of the Dao” (daomin) and “seed people” (zhongmin) that would populate an earth made ritually and morally pure.

CHART 6 Early Tianshi Community Organization

In early Tianshi, the Celestial Master was the highest socio-political and religious position filled by a single male of the Zhang family. It was patrilineal and hereditary: it passed from the senior male leader (father or elder brother) to next senior male heir (eldest son or brother) in the Zhang family. This remained the case into later and modern Daoist history, though the lineage was disrupted and then reconstructed during the Tang dynasty (see Chapters 2 and 3). The libationers were the highest-ranking community members below the Celestial Master and the Zhang family, and they reported directly to the Celestial Master. The libationers were the equivalent of ordained community priests, and they served as leaders of twenty-four parishes (see Wushang biyao, DZ 1138, 23.4a–9a). Their rank was based on degree of adherence,
ordination level with accompanying registers (lù), and ritual attainments. The registers were lists of spirit generals that Tianshi leaders could use for healing, protection, and exorcism. At the next level of the social organization, demon soldiers (guizu) were meritorious leaders of households who represented smaller units in the Celestial Master community. With the exception of the Celestial Master himself, all leadership positions could be filled by men or women, Han Chinese or ethnic minorities (see Kleeman 1998). In fact, some evidence suggests that the ideal model for priests was a married couple performing ritual together, thus expressing an embodied balance between yin and yang. At the bottom of the hierarchically ordered organization were congregants or ordinary adherents, who were again organized and counted according to households. Each of these had to contribute rice or its equivalent in silk, paper, brushes, ceramics, or handicrafts. Each Tianshi member, from childhood to adulthood, also underwent formal initiations at regular intervals and received the above-mentioned registers, including seventy-five for unmarried people and one hundred and fifty for married couples (Hendrischke 2000; Kohn 2004a: 71).

Early Tianshi Daoism is noteworthy for its influence on later Daoist models of participation and social organization. First, it appears that the position of Celestial Master was modeled on (or designed to replace?) the Chinese emperor as Son of Heaven who held the Mandate of Heaven (tianming). This position was viewed through a Daoist lens wherein the political leader should be a high-level Daoist practitioner (sage-king) as described in the Daode jing. There was thus a reciprocal and symbiotic relationship between the Celestial Master as community leader and the Tianshi community. Expressing a vision of communal welfare, each was responsible for the wellbeing of the other and for the community as a whole. Rather than view early Tianshi grain collection as a “tax” or “membership fee,” it is probably more accurate to understand it as a “food distribution system.” It was a form of charity that supported the community as a whole. It was used to help other members in need and to ensure social harmony. Here we find a specific example of Daoist utopianism, which also appears on a smaller scale in classical Daoism, especially among its Primitivist strain. Second, the early Tianshi movement attempted to create a community oriented towards the Dao. According to its own founding account, the inspiration for Tianshi Daoism came from Lord Lao as a personal manifestation of the Dao. Under a generous reading, the early community accepted the direction of that divine communication through Zhang Daoling and his successors. These Daoist religious leaders in turn attempted to guide a community to maintain and propagate Daoist religious commitments, values, and ideals (see Chapters 5 and 8). Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the Tianshi movement established a hierarchically organized community wherein deeper levels of religious commitment and degrees of adherence led to higher positions in the community. That is, as is the case in most traditional Daoist communities and forms of social organization, early Tianshi was an elder-centered system. Here “elder” is not solely a matter of age seniority; it is also based on level of commitment, training, and expertise.

The early, Shu-based Tianshi community under the leadership of Zhang Lu, the third Celestial Master, was eventually conquered by General Cao Cao (155–220) in 215 CE.
Cao Cao, who was instrumental in laying the foundations for the Cao Wei dynasty (220–65), then forced members of the Tianshi community to migrate to different parts of China. This geographical diffusion was pivotal for the emergence of subsequent Daoist movements, and for the development of a more diverse, integrated, and large-scale Daoist tradition.

In terms of Daoist social organization, Tianshi dissemination eventually led to a division within the community between the so-called Northern and Southern Celestial Masters, so named because of their respective locations in northern and southern China. A descendant of a Northern Celestial Masters family in Chang’an, Shaanxi, Kou Qianzhi (365–448), was a pivotal figure in the formation of the first formal Daoist theocracy (government ruled through the divine), which occurred through an alliance with the Toba (Northern) Wei dynasty. After going into seclusion on Songshan (Mount Song; Dengfeng, Henan), Kou supposedly received a revelation from Lord Lao (see Chapter 3). In 415, he received a divinely transmitted text titled Yunzhong yinsong xinke jiejing (Precept Scripture of the New Code, Recited in the Clouds; abbr. “New Code”; partially lost; DZ 785), which contained a set of precepts for a newly envisioned Daoist community. According to this revelation, Kou was to replace the Zhang family as the Celestial Master, abolish some of their received practices, and establish a community based on thirty-six rules. In 424, Kou obtained a court audience with Emperor Taiwu (408–52; r. 424–52) and gained support from the Prime Minister Cui Hao (381–450). Kou and Cui convinced the ruler to put the “New Code” into practice and thus established the Daoist theocracy of the Northern Wei. Kou became the official leader with the title of Celestial Master, while his disciples were invited to the capital to perform regular rituals. Within the early Toba Wei theocracy, Kou lived in a converted-palace monastery, the Chongxu si (Monastery for Venerating Emptiness), in the capital with some one hundred and twenty disciples and administrators. In 431, Daoist institutions, including temples, ordained clergy, moral rules, and rituals, were also established in the provinces, thus extending the reach of Daoist and state control farther into the countryside. The pinnacle of the theocracy occurred in 440, when the emperor underwent Daoist investiture rites and changed the reign title to Taiping zhenjun (Perfect Lord of Great Peace) (Mather 1979: 118; Kohn 2000b: 284–5). Following Kou’s death in 448, Daoism eventually fell out of favor, and the Daoist theocratic experiment came to an end, with Buddhism taking its place.

The Northern Wei Daoist theocracy provides another glimpse into forms of Daoist community and social organization. Here we find an example of state-sponsored Daoism, specifically through the systematic integration of Daoist religious institutions, clergy and values into the larger society and political system. One key issue, yet to be adequately explored, is the actual political policies, the larger societal institutions and practices, which were inspired by Daoism. What actually occurred on the ground, and how did it affect the daily lives of the average person? To what degree and in what ways was it “Daoist”? Historically, many court Daoists sought imperial patronage, both for themselves and the larger tradition, while many Chinese rulers and governments sought support and legitimation through Daoism. Such an expression of Daoist
community, still rooted in a certain utopian vision, reveals a political dimension. In this respect, Daoists competed with the dominant Confucian political project and with the increasingly powerful Buddhist monasteries.

The search for imperial patronage had diverse motivations and dimensions. Sometimes it involved an integrated vision for Chinese society and the Daoist tradition, but at other times, it involved intra-Daoist and inter-religious competition, especially with Buddhists. Some prominent examples include the alliance of the Southern Celestial Masters with the Liu-Song dynasty, partially as a result of Tianshi competition with the Taiping and Shangqing Daoist movements; the Tang dynasty elevation of Daoism to state religion, partially as a result of the imperial Li family tracing their ancestral line back to Li Er (Laozi); Yuan dynasty support of the Quanzhen monastic order, which was eventually lost through a series of Buddho-Daoist debates and subsequent anti-Daoist edicts; and Qing dynasty support of the Longmen lineage of Quanzhen.

In early medieval China, Buddhism gained a stronger role in Chinese culture and society. Han people, the indigenous ethnic majority of traditional China, found Buddhism increasingly attractive, primarily due to its alternative soteriological model and promise of relief from everyday suffering, and large numbers began converting to Buddhism. In addition, Buddhism provided a new model of community and social organization, namely, monasticism. Here we should remember that the model of eremitic communities already had a long and revered history in China, but, in keeping with traditional Chinese values, rejection of family and social reproduction (celibacy) was largely unheard of. Under Buddhist influence, Daoists began adopting and experimenting with quasi-monastic and monastic communities. Tao Hongjing's (456–536) Shangqing community at Maoshan (Mount Mao; Jurong, Jiangsu) is one representative expression of Daoist quasi- or proto-monasticism (see Strickmann 1977, 1979). Tao Hongjing was a descendent of Tao Kedou (d. 363), who was allied through marriage with the Xu family of the original Shangqing revelations (see Chapters 2 and 3). Tao Hongjing ranks as one of the most famous Daoists in Chinese history because of his collection and identification of the original Shangqing manuscripts, his development of a critical pharmacology, and his commitment to alchemical experimentation, especially through the search for external elixirs. While mourning the death of his father (484–86), Tao received Daoist training under Sun Youyue (399–489), abbot of the Xingshi guan (Abode for a Flourishing World) in the capital and a former senior disciple of Lu Xiujing (406–77). It was during this time that Tao first saw a Shangqing manuscript. Tao was enchanted by the calligraphic style and would dedicate a substantial portion of his life to collecting, transcribing, and classifying the extant Shangqing textual corpus. Over the next five years, he traced the manuscript owners and collected various manuscripts, especially those associated with Yang Xi and the Xu family (see Chapters 2, 3, 12 and 15).

Tao Hongjing retired to Maoshan in 492 at the age of thirty-six. There he lived in Huayang guan (Abode of Flourishing Yang) with some of his direct disciples as well as among other Shangqing adherents. The Maoshan community included solitary
and celibate members as well as communal and married members. That is, there were different paths to spiritual attainment, and renunciant and married adherents lived side by side. While it is unclear what Tao himself thought about these different models, he must have been fairly supportive. This is based on the fact that Zhou Ziliang (fl. 480–520), one of his senior disciples, moved to Maoshan with his entire family. In addition, as the mountain grew in fame, Maoshan became an object of pilgrimage and tourism for both the pious and curious. The mountain was only some thirty miles from the imperial capital; writing in 499, Tao describes the multitudes that annually flocked there on the two festival days associated with the Mao brothers. The community of permanent residents also continued to grow, with the mountain becoming populated by entire households, including young children (Strickmann 1979, 150–51). Tao’s seclusion involved residence in a mountain temple, study and compilation of Daoist scriptures, and decoction of elixirs of immortality. In the process, Tao describes his aesthetic appreciation of the landscape and the esoteric topography of Maoshan as particularly conducive for the compounding elixirs. These two dimensions commingle in Tao’s frequent visits to a northward ridge and an adjacent scenic spot with a bubbling spring (Strickmann 1979: 141–2).

Thus, on the Maoshan of Tao Hongjing, we find an inclusive, place-specific Daoist community. This community included men, women, children, and domestic animals. It included individuals following eremitic, quasi-monastic, or householder religious paths. It allowed space for various Daoist activities: from scholarship and meditation, through alchemical experimentation, to popular devotion and pilgrimage. Such perhaps is the most Daoist of models of community and social organization. Respecting traditional Chinese values and rooted in traditional Chinese culture, Maoshan Daoists accepted both individualistic and family-centered paths to the Dao. As an expression of foundational Daoist values and views (see Chapter 5), the Maoshan community was inclusive, flexible, minimalist, and relatively egalitarian in terms of recognizing potential. At the same time, there were clearly degrees of adherence and commitment (see Chapters 3 and 8). The community was organized hierarchically, recognizing differences of affinity, aptitude, and effort. We must also note that there are other Daoist minority and dissenting views that understand spiritual capacities as endowed, as is the case in some alchemical discussions of “immortal bones” (xiānguǐ). While there are many paths to the Dao, some are recognized as more efficacious, advanced, and esteemed.

The Maoshan community also reveals some of the challenges of inclusion, especially in terms of a daily life of cohabitation and shared place. Fame and public interest frequently leads to the diminishment of the very aesthetic and spiritual dimensions that created elevation (see Chapter 1). People came to Maoshan with different motivations, including materialist, tourist, devotional, and soteriological ones. Following a pattern in many contexts and traditions, increases in membership led to a decrease in commitment among the Maoshan community. This was so much the case that Tao Hongjing relocated to more secluded parts of the mountains later in life, and eventually departed incognito to an area farther east where he hoped to complete his alchemical transformation (Strickmann 1979: 150–1).
Monasticism

As a comparative category, monasticism refers to a community of people following a particular form of religious life, typically centering on formal religious vows and commitments, rules, daily schedules, religious discipline, and, at least ideally, an orientation towards the ultimate concern and dedication to the ideals of the associated tradition (see Weckman 1987). Historically speaking, monasticism is a highly organized type of religious institution, usually emerging out of earlier ascetic tendencies and eremitic (hermit and/or quasi-monastic) communities. The term is usually associated with Catholic religious orders, but it may be reasonably applied to other traditions, including Buddhism and Daoism. Those who follow this way of life and live in these types of communities are referred to as “monastics.” They may be monks (men) or nuns (women). Generally speaking, the title of monastic assumes a vow of celibacy. In addition, a distinction may be made between eremitic (solitary) forms and cenobitic (communal) forms of monasticism, although most monastic communities involve some degree of social interaction among the community members. Monastics live in monasteries, which are also referred to as nunneries or convents in the case of nuns. Some forms of monasticism are also mendicant or peripatetic, usually involving homelessness, wandering, and begging, while others are cloistered, usually involving complete isolation and residence in a separate cell. While monasticism has been a primary form of Daoist community and a central expression of the Daoist religious institution from the late medieval period to today, peripatetic and cloistered examples are rare.

Daoist monasticism developed under the influence of Buddhism, which had been introduced to China during the first and second centuries CE and became increasingly influential from the fourth century forward. Both the Northern Celestial Masters community of Kou Qianzhi and the Maoshan community of Tao Hongjing were quasi- or proto-monastic. These Daoist communities included unmarried, celibate practitioners, married priests and religious administrators, and disciples of various persuasions. They were thus not monastic in the strict sense of the word. They were not religious communities where celibate monastics (monks and/or nuns) lived according to a strict rule and schedule in a tightly knit religious community. The earliest Daoist monastery was roughly contemporaneous with the Maoshan community. After the Toba-Wei theocracy ended, Louguan (Lookout Tower Monastery; a.k.a., Louguan tai; Zhouzhi, Shaanxi) rose to become the major Daoist center in northern China and, in the early sixth century, also served as a refuge for southern Daoists who were persecuted under Emperor Wu (r. 464–549) of the Liang dynasty (Kohn 2003a: 41). Located in the foothills of the Zhongnan mountains and still a flourishing Quanzhen Daoist monastery today, Louguan was identified by Daoists as the place where Laozi transmitted the Daode jing to Yin Xi, the Guardian of the Pass (see Chapters 2 and 14). This version of the transmission legend arose in the mid-fifth century through Yin Tong (398–499?), a self-identified descendent of Yin Xi and owner of the Louguan
estate. During the early sixth century, a group of Daoists, primarily members of the Northern Celestial Masters, apparently lived within a monastic framework, specifically according to ethical guidelines, communal celibate living, and standardized daily schedule. Members of the early Louguan community practiced longevity techniques, observed the five precepts adopted from Buddhism, venerated Laozi and the Daodejing, and honored Yin Xi as their first patriarch (Kohn 2003a: 41). They also composed and compiled various texts, such as the influential Taishang Laojun jiejing (Precept Scripture of the Great High Lord Lao; DZ 784). Regardless of the degree to which the early Louguan community was fully monastic, the sacred site became one of the most important Daoist monasteries from the Northern Zhou dynasty and Tang dynasty to today.

Louguan and other early Daoist monasteries prepared the way for later fully developed monastic systems, such as those of the Tang, late Song and Yuan, and Qing. While the actual social organization of the early Louguan community remains unclear, we have detailed information on later Daoist monastic life. Medieval Daoist monasticism was characterized by distinctive ordination rites, training regimens, distinctive vestments, ritual implements, as well as buildings and compounds (Kohn 2003a, 2004b). During the Tang, there was a nationwide monastic system, with large and small monasteries inhabited by celibate monks and nuns adhering to ethical codes (see Chapter 8) and following a standardized daily schedule. In this way, Daoist monasticism paralleled the Chinese Buddhist system. Daily monastic life included hygiene practices, abstinence, meal regulations, ceremonial meals and associated foods, eating procedures, ritual performances, obeisances, and audiences with senior monastics, especially one’s spiritual director (Kohn 2003a: 112–39).

While fully systematized Daoist monasticism thus emerged during the Tang dynasty, the most influential Daoist monastic tradition, Quanzhen, was established during the late Song-Jin period and early Yuan. Quanzhen monasteries and temples were established throughout northern China and its clerical membership grew, so that by the late thirteenth century there were some 4,000 Quanzhen sacred sites and 20,000 monks and nuns (Goossaert 2001: 114–18). From records dating to the Yuan dynasty we know that late medieval Quanzhen monastic life was characterized by intensive meditation, spiritual direction, and a set daily schedule. According to the Quanzhen qinggui (Pure Regulations of Complete Perfection; DZ 1235), the standard daily monastic schedule was as follows:

- 3 a.m. – 5 a.m. Wake-up
- 5 a.m. – 7 a.m. Morning meal
- 7 a.m. – 9 a.m. Group meditation
- 9 a.m. – 11 a.m. Individual meditation
- 11 a.m. – 1 p.m. Noon meal
- 1 p.m. – 3 p.m. Group meditation
- 3 p.m. – 5 p.m. Individual meditation
- 5 p.m. – 7 p.m. Formal lecture or interviews
Some Daoist monasteries functioned as semi-independent communities, while others were part of a vast, interconnected network of temples. Like the Maoshan community of Tao Hongjing, many of these temples attracted tourists and pilgrims, and some received imperial recognition. Patronage from lay supporters, regional magistrates and aristocratic families, and the imperial court was essential. It is one thing to attempt to maintain a single monastery, but ensuring the flourishing of a nationwide monastic system with thousands of monks and nuns is a different matter entirely. As court Daoist and monastic leaders formed working relationships and political connections with emperors and officials, state regulation also became a social dimension of Daoist monasticism. For example, during the Ming dynasty, Emperor Taizu (1328–98; r. 1368–98) established the Xuanjiao yuan (Court of the Mysterious Teachings), an independent body that dealt with the administration of all Daoists throughout the empire. This court was abolished in 1371, after which Daoists were governed by the Daolu si (Bureau of Daoist Registration). This organization was a subdivision of the Libu (Ministry of Rites), responsible for the supervision of all levels of Daoist activity. It controlled the Daoji si (Bureaus of Daoist Institutions) on the provincial level, Daozheng si (Bureaus of Political Supervision of Daoists) on the prefectural level, and Daohui si (Bureaus of Daoist Assemblies) on the district level (de Bruyn 2000: 596). There were, in turn, various policies associated with these state-sponsored administrative agencies. In addition to regulating the ages and total numbers of Daoists, the Ming administration continued the system of ordination certificates first established during the Tang, through which the state certified monks and nuns after an official examination taken after three years of study. The certificates contained the names of the monastic, his or her religious affiliation, date of ordination, as well as their various appellations. The Ming administration also created the Zhouzhici (Register of Complete Comprehension), an official list that contained the names of all Daoists who had ever passed time in any monastery (de Bruyn 2000: 596–7). The Qing dynasty continued the Board of Rites and Bureau of Daoist Registration, and in certain ways it was the precursor to the modern PRC Bureau of Religious Affairs (see Chapter 16). In these bureaucratic institutions, we find another dimension of Daoist social organization, namely its ties to the Chinese imperial court and state control.

**Daoist women and female participation**

Women have occupied a central place in the Daoist tradition from the beginning; women comprised a substantial portion of every Daoist movement, and many served
as religious leaders. When considered comparatively, and especially in terms of pre-modern Chinese history, there can be little debate that Daoists tended to be on the more egalitarian side with respect to inclusion and recognition of women. Here we must distinguish three separate concepts: Daoist views of women and of the “feminine” (see Chapter 5); the Daoist veneration of goddesses and female Perfected (see Chapter 6); and the actual place of women in the Daoist tradition. These dimensions of Daoist religiosity are complex. Veneration of “feminine” qualities or goddesses does not necessarily correspond to the empowerment of women. In the case of Daoism, however, we do find evidence that these three dimensions of religious traditions often went hand-in-hand. There have, in turn, been various Daoist technical terms designating female Daoist adherents: daonü (“women of the Dao”), daomu (“mothers of the Dao”), nüguan (“female caps”), nüshi (“female masters”), nüzhen (“female Perfected”), and kundao (“female Daoists”), with Kun-earth being the trigram representing “the feminine” through three yin or “broken” lines. Many of these terms only refer to Daoist nuns.

Daoist women fulfilled conventional social roles such as that of mother, daughter, sister, wife, and sexual partner. These are rooted, more often than not, in patriarchal social networks: women are defined in relation to men. This statement, of course, requires additional reflection on actual power relations and women’s perspectives. Moreover, in what ways should we frame the discussion of gender: Is it more important to be a Daoist (“female Daoist”) or to be a woman (“Daoist woman”)? What is the relation between religious identity and gender identity? More important for present purposes, women have become Daoist religious leaders, teachers, priests, nuns, and founders. There also are female Daoist immortals and Perfected, women who became divinized on some level. Throughout Daoist history, these individuals have often been divine teachers and bestowers of revelations.

In terms of specific women, no discussion of Daoism would be complete without reference to Nüyu (Woman Yu), the female Daoist master mentioned in Chapter 6 of the Zhuangzi (see Chapter 3; above); Wei Huacun (252–334), a Tianshi libationer and eventual divine being who transmitted some of the early Shangqing revelations; Zu Shu (fl. 889–904), a Tang priestess who received a revelation from Lingguang shengmu (Holy Mother of Numinous Radiance) and founded the Qingwei (Pure Tenuity) school (see Chapters 2 and 13); the Tang princesses Jinxian (Gold Immortal) and Yuzhen (Jade Perfected), who were the youngest daughters of Emperor Ruizong’s (r. 710–12) third consort and who became ordained as Daoist priests in 711 after receiving six years of Daoist training (see Benn 1991); and Sun Buer (1119–82), the only senior first-generation female Quanzhen adherent and eventual matriarch of female alchemy (nüdan) (see Komjathy 2011e). Unfortunately, very little research has been done on post-Song Daoism, so we do not know much about female Daoists during the late imperial and modern periods (see Despeux and Kohn 2003: 151–74, 198–210). This is not to mention “ordinary” Daoist women whose names have been lost to history. We also lack studies of certain women such as the wives of the actual Celestial Master, women who were pivotal in daily Daoist communal life and in the
preservation and transmission of the Daoist tradition. Some insights may be gleaned from culling received Daoist hagiographies. In this respect, the Yongcheng jixian lu (Record of Assembled Immortals of the Walled City; DZ 783) is especially important (see Cahill 2006). This text is an anthology of women’s hagiographies compiled by Du Guangting (850–933), the famous Daoist religious leader, scholar and ritual expert.

Wei Huacun, also known as Lady Wei, is associated with both the Tianshi community and the Shangqing revelations. The daughter of a high official and apparently a birthright member of Tianshi, Wei Huacun eventually married a Tianshi religious leader and raised two sons. She then retired to a separate part of the family compound and devoted herself to self-cultivation. In 299, she had visions of several perfected beings who presented her with sacred scriptures and oral instruction, and she became a libationer with ritual powers and administrative duties. During the war that led to the rise of the Eastern Jin in 317, her family fled to Jiankang (present-day Nanjing, Jiangsu), after which she spent the rest of her life in seclusion, receiving further visits from celestial Perfected. She eventually attained the Dao on Hengshan (Mount Heng, Hunan), the southern sacred mountain that was an active center of both Buddhism and Daoism during the early medieval period (see Chapter 14). She was accordingly called Nanyue furen (Lady of the Southern Marchmount) and, after her ascension into the Daoist heavens, appeared to Yang Xi (330–386) and revealed numerous texts and instructions (Despeux and Kohn 2003: 13–14, 97). As recorded in the Zhen’gao (see above), the Perfected Wei Huacun described her own views on immortality practices.

### WEI HUACUN’S VIEWS ON IMMORTALITY PRACTICE

“The way of the yellow and red [bed-chamber arts; sexual practices], the art of commingling qi, constitutes one of the minor methods commended for becoming one of the elect as espoused by [the first Celestial Master] Zhang Daoling. The Perfected [of Shangqing] do not make use of such practices. Although I have observed some people interrupting their decline by practicing these methods, I have never met anyone who has attained eternal life through them.” (Zhen’gao, DZ 1016, 2.1a; adapted from Despeux and Kohn 2003: 16)

She thus became one of the central divine figures in the early Shangqing revelations. Also noteworthy is the pivotal role played by other female divinities and Perfected in those revelations. They include Shangyuan furen (Lady of Highest Prime), Xiwangmu (Queen Mother of the West), and Ziwei furen (Lady of Purple Tenuity) (see Chapter 6). Unfortunately, at present there are no systematic studies of Wei Huacun, including the specific revelations associated with her, but from her earthly life and post-mortem influence, we gain a glimpse into patterns of female participation in Daoist communal life: from wife and mother, through recluse and renunciant, to religious leader and
ultimately Perfected. With respect to the latter, Wei became divinized and located within the hierarchically ordered Daoist pantheon. Like many other Daoist apotheoses, she then became divine source for revelations and contributed to the formation of new communities and movements.

Female Daoists also lived as renunciants and monastics. One of the most famous was Sun Buer, the only female member of the so-called Seven Perfected of early Quanzhen.

![Image](FIGURE 4 Late Imperial Representation of Sun Buer Source: Daoyuan yiqi jing, ZW 87)

Sun Buer was born as Sun Yuanzhen in a small town in the Ninghai (present-day Muping), Shandong. As a daughter of a local scholar-official, Sun received a literary education. In her teens, she was married to Ma Yu, the son of a prominent Ninghai landowning family. The couple had three sons and lived quietly until 1167, when Wang Zhe, the founder of Quanzhen, arrived. Ma and Sun eventually became his formal disciples, which required the couple to divorce and become Daoist renunciants. There are various accounts of these events, with competing positive and negative conceptions of Sun. Wang’s various attempts to convince the couple to pursue dedicated Daoist training is documented in the twelfth-century *Chongyang fenli shihua ji* (Chongyang’s Anthology of Ten Conversions by Dividing Peaches; DZ 1155).
Following the death of Wang in 1170 and complete separation from Ma around 1173, Sun began wandering throughout northern China. She moved to Luoyang in 1179, where she trained with a female Daoist recluse from Henan named Feng Xiangu (Immortal Maiden Feng; fl. 1145–79). According to the *Lishi tongjian houji*, Feng lived in an “upper cave” (*shangdong*) and had Sun live in the lower one. Sun practiced and taught there until her death in 1182. Her teachings are obscure because few works remain. The only writings that may be reasonably attributed to Sun appear in a fourteenth-century anthology of poems, the *Minghe yuyin* (Lingering Overtones of the Calling Crane; DZ 1100) (see Komjathy forthcoming). From this text it seems that Sun adhered to foundational Quanzhen commitments and practiced internal alchemy. Her place in early Quanzhen is complex, as it appears that there were varying degrees of acceptance and conceptions of her. While Wang Zhe clearly accepted her as a disciple, the other first-generation adherents and second-generation disciples oscillated among recognition, indifference, disregard, and even explicit dismissal. The latter tendency reveals misogynist tendencies, patriarchal at the very least, in the early community. However, Quanzhen eventually became a nationwide monastic order, within which nuns composed a substantial portion. In addition, as Quanzhen monasticism continued to develop, and as women became increasingly prominent, Sun Buer was accordingly elevated to matriarch of “female alchemy” (*nüdan*) (see Chapter 11). She also reached the highest status as nominal founder of Qingjing pai (Clarity and Stillness lineage), a Quanzhen women’s lineage. Various poems and prose works were, in turn, attributed to her. Like Wei Huacun, the parameters of Sun Buer’s life reveal patterns of participation for female Daoists: from daughter, wife and mother, through renunciant and alchemist, to immortal and matriarch.

While we await a detailed study of daily monastic life with specific attention to nuns, it appears that most Daoist monasteries that included women were inhabited by both men and women. It appears that there were few, if any, pre-modern Daoist convents where women lived only among other women. In contemporary Daoism, women continue to have a prominent position. Although rural Zhengyi communities have generally departed from tradition by excluding women from ordination, mainland Chinese monasticism as well as other Taiwanese and Hong Kong Daoist communities tend to be more inclusive and empowering. For example, the Taiwanese Daode yuan (Morality Temple) in Gaoxiong and Cihui tang (Compassion Society Temple) near Taipei are contemporary female Daoist communities (Ho 2009). There are also large numbers of prominent nuns in contemporary Quanzhen monasteries, many of whom also serve in leadership positions. Some of the largest populations of Daoist nuns are in Sichuan. Interestingly, a new Daoist seminary for women also was established at Hengshan, the place of Wei Huacun’s seclusion and eremitic training, near Changsha, Hunan (see Wang 2008).
FURTHER READING


PART THREE

Worldview
Daoism has distinctive beliefs, doctrines and worldviews. These “views” are the principles, values, commitments, and concerns that Daoists have endeavored to live by. Following Geertz’s (1977) “definition” of religion, Daoist views are the “symbol system” of Daoism, providing a specific conception of “reality” and creating meaning and purpose. Drawing upon the metaphors of Chapter 1, these views might be thought of as the roots of the old growth forest of Daoism.

This chapter is perhaps the most problematic of all of the chapters of the present book. As repeatedly emphasized, Daoism is a tradition characterized by diversity and complexity, and consequently, it is difficult to make generalizations or to discuss its “defining characteristics.” Daoism has no universally accepted orthodoxy or orthopraxy, nor is there a centralized Daoist institution. Rather, there are identifiable, often movement-specific and lineage-specific views, practice styles, and distinctive methods.

For example, although the Tianshi and Quanzhen movements based much of their foundational worldview on the Daode jing, Lingbao did not. This fact does not make Lingbao “less Daoist” than the other movements, especially given the fact that Lu Xiujing (406–77) was so central in the development of organized Daoism; rather, it tells us something fundamental about the Daoist tradition, specifically the Daoist tendency...
towards ambiguity, inclusivity, and plurality within every period of Daoist history, including within classical Daoism itself. That is, doctrinal difference is not simply about “between,” but also about “within.” For example, the Primitivist lineage of classical Daoism emphasized eremitic withdrawal, while the Syncretic lineage emphasized social engagement and political involvement (see Chapters 2 and 3). While these “schools” were connected by shared worldviews, as well as foundational meditative techniques, on some level their existential applications were at variance. Given these facts, this chapter should not be read as the “essence” or “normative doctrine” of Daoism.

This chapter covers major informing views and foundational concerns of Daoism. In concert with Chapters 3, 6, 7, and 8, it attempts to provide a framework for understanding major Daoist beliefs, principles, values, commitments, and concerns. Knowledge of these allows one to understand the continuities and departures, divergences and convergences among different Daoist communities and movements. Such dimensions of Daoism also relate to Daoist cosmogony, cosmology, and theology and to Daoist views of self, which are covered in Chapters 6 and 7, respectively. Together with this chapter, these three chapters comprise the “worldview chapters” of the present book. They reveal some of the key Daoist views of the world and accounts of “reality.”

**Orientations**

Daoists have traditionally recognized the importance of the Three Treasures (sanbao). Although conventionally associated with internal alchemy (see Chapters 7 and 11), there is actually a reference to this concept in the *Daode jing*.

---

**THE THREE TREASURES OF CLASSICAL DAOISM**

I have Three Treasures that I cherish and protect:
The first is compassion;
The second is frugality;
And the third is not daring to be first [humility].
Through compassion, one can be brave.
Through frugality, one can be expansive.
Through humility, one can become a vessel-elder.
Bravery without compassion,
Expansiveness without frugality,
And advancing without retreating,
These are fatal.
*(Daode jing, Chapter 67)*
Here emphasis is placed on core Daoist principles and commitments, including humility, circumspection, and deference, which are also expressed in Daoist ethics (see Chapter 8). In the later tradition, the Three Treasures refer to both the internal Three Treasures (nei sanbao) and the external Three Treasures (wai sanbao). The former refer to vital essence (jing), qi, and spirit (shen). Adapting the Three Refuges of Buddhism (Buddha, Dharma, Sangha), the external Three Treasures refer to the Dao, the scriptures (jing), and the teachers (shi). The latter may be understood as specific teachers (embodied and disembodied), community elders, and the Daoist religious community as a whole. The external Three Treasures are also used in a manner parallel to Buddhism: Daoists often “take refuge” in the Three Treasures as the first step towards affiliation (see Chapter 13). From a Daoist perspective, all three are an essential part of the tradition, and they are interrelated and mutually dependent. The scriptures and the teachers, specifically realized beings, ordained priests and monastics, are manifestations of the Dao. Reading Daoist scriptures and receiving teachings from advanced practitioners is an encounter with the Dao. Each embodies and transmits the Dao. The Three Treasures are associated with other dimensions of the tradition as well, especially the Three Purities (sanqing), Three Heavens (santian), and three elixir fields in the body (san dantian) (see Chapters 6 and 7). The correspondences are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Heaven</th>
<th>Deity</th>
<th>Body Location</th>
<th>External Treasure</th>
<th>Internal Treasure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jade Clarity</td>
<td>Celestial Worthy of Original Beginning</td>
<td>Upper elixir field (center of head)</td>
<td>Dao</td>
<td>Spirit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highest Clarity</td>
<td>Celestial Worthy of Numinous Treasure</td>
<td>Middle elixir field (heart or lower abdomen)</td>
<td>Scriptures</td>
<td>Qi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great Clarity</td>
<td>Celestial Worthy of Dao and Inner Power</td>
<td>Lower elixir field (lower abdomen or perineum)</td>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>Vital essence</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CHART 7 Ternary Dimensions of the Daoist Tradition

Of the external Three Treasures, the Dao is the fundamental orientation of Daoists and Daoist communities. On the most basic level, it is the sacred or ultimate concern of Daoists. Daoists are thus those who orient themselves towards the Dao. However, such an orientation is a necessary, but not a sufficient condition for being a Daoist. Properly speaking, “Daoist” designates an adherent of Daoism, someone who is following a Daoist religious path. In contrast to “Daoist adherent,” we might reserve the term “Daoist sympathizer” for someone interested in the Dao, the Daode jing, or other aspects extracted from community and tradition (see Chapter 16).

The principle of orientation (fangxiang) is also centrally important for Daoists. It is an informing view and foundational concern. Orientation is an astronomical, geographical,
and cartographical metaphor. One thinks of the practice of orienteering, or being able to use map and compass to locate oneself and to navigate through landscapes, both familiar and unfamiliar, known and unknown. It also relates to stellar navigation, both in terms of water navigation and ecstatic journeys. For Daoists, the landscape of the Dao and Daoism is diverse (see Chapters 1 and 2). There are different terrains, territories, inhabitants, paths, and destinations. Some Daoists have preferred the solitude of mountain peaks (see Chapters 4 and 14), even defining their orientation as being lost among valleys and streams, cliffs and caves. Others have oriented themselves towards social participation and engagement. They have worked on political, social, and community levels (see Chapter 4).

Daoists have also been attentive to both physical and subtle landscapes. They have mapped visible and invisible dimensions of the cosmos. This type of interest and activity also relates to another centrally important Daoist principle, namely, observation (guan). The character guan 観 consists of guan 雲 (“egret”) and jian 見 (“to perceive”). Guan is the quality of an egret observing barely visible or unseen presences. Such observation is rooted in stillness, attentiveness, and presence. Interestingly, the character guan has been used to designate both Daoist monasteries (see Chapters 4, 14 and 15) and a specific type of Daoist meditation called “inner observation” (neiguan; see Chapter 11). With respect to the first, guan originally designated astronomical observatories. Daoist monasteries might thus be understood as places to align oneself with the Dao as cosmos and to explore the inner universe of the self. For this, darkness, silence, and seclusion are essential. With respect to the second, Daoists have understood the body as inner landscape and microcosm (see Chapter 7). By turning one’s gaze inward, one may illuminate the corporeal terrain. The inner landscape and microcosm of the body correspond to and interpenetrate with the external landscape and macrocosm. Thus to observe one is to gain insight into the other, to realize their interconnection and mutual influence.

Such concern for landscape and universe has been expressed in the Daoist tradition, both actually and symbolically. Many Daoists have inhabited, observed, and participated in natural locales. They have also seen Nature and its myriad expressions as teachers and models, especially with respect to self-cultivation. For example, in the Zhuangzi we find a conversation about “governing” (zhì) and inner power (de) occurring between Madman Jie Yu and Jian Wu.

### HOW TO GOVERN THE WORLD

The madman Jie Yu said, “This is inauthentic virtue (de). To try to govern the world like this [through contrivance and manipulation] is like trying to walk the ocean, to drill through a river, or to make a mosquito shoulder a mountain! When the sage governs, does he govern what is on the outside? He makes sure of himself first, and then he acts. He makes absolutely certain that things can do what they are
This “governance,” also translatable as “regulation,” is first and foremost about self-cultivation. Here we should note that Daoists have tended to use the language of “cultivation” to refer to Daoist religious practice and commitment. This is an agricultural metaphor (see Lakoff and Johnson 1980; Lakoff 1987), and there is some question about the relationship between wildness and cultural refinement in the Daoist tradition. That is, there is an ongoing tension in Daoist history between uninhibited freedom and domestication, between foraging and agriculture. The Daoist emphasis on “cultivation” is, in turn, found in frequent references to “fields” (tian), “roots” (ben; gen), “seeds” (zhong), “sprouts” (ya), “tending” (yang), and so forth. Returning to classical Daoism, such inner cultivation, rooted in stillness and non-interference, is the basis of and has an application to any activity, even politics. In terms of observation of Nature, one can imagine the patience required to understand the life and activity of field mice in the passage above. On one occasion, one sees that they make shallow holes. Viewing them as “pests” and “nuisances,” people then destroy their residences, whether by digging or smoking them out. In response, the field mice learn and adapt, burrowing deeper in order to protect themselves. This becomes a model for those who would avoid chaos and injury.

Foundational values and concerns

One approach to Daoist values and concerns focuses on classical Daoist texts like the Daode jing (Scripture on the Dao and Inner Power) and Zhuangzi (Book of Master Zhuang) (cf. Yin 2005: 25–39). Although there is much doctrinal diversity in the tradition, the principles transmitted by the classical inner cultivation lineages became part of what might be labeled a “foundational Daoist worldview.” They comprise one major element of Daoist doctrine and belief, although Daoists have tended to place greater emphasis on community and tradition as well as on embodiment, practice, and experience than on doctrine or faith as such (see below).

A close reading of the Daode jing, especially with attentiveness to its emphasis on self-cultivation and the qualities of sages (shengren), reveals a variety of principles and key convictions.
Such passages are, of course, open to interpretation, but many Daoists have read these and similar insights as a map for inner cultivation. Emphasis is placed on decreasing: a model of voluntary simplicity, of living through only what is essential. One practices non-action (wuwei), which may be understood as effortless activity, non-interference, and non-intervention. It means acting with minimum effort, only doing what is necessary. From a cosmological and theological perspective, one ceases doing everything that prevents one from being attuned with the Dao. Here we should note that there is much confusion about the Daoist view of wuwei. It is not “doing nothing,” which is impossible. (Try releasing all of the tension in your body and see what happens!) It is about ease and relaxation in everything, whether thinking, speaking, or moving. It is about complete presence and conservation, or non-dissipation (wulou) (see Chapter 10). The same is true of the sister-term ziran (tzu-jan), often translated as “spontaneity” or “naturalness.” The phrase literally means “self-so.” A more accurate translation might be “so-ness;” “thusness;” or “suchness;” although the latter is often used for Buddhist notions and thus may create confusion without explanation. Using the language of European phenomenology, we might understand ziran as “being-so-of-itself.” In any case, ziran is the state or condition realized when one returns to one’s innate nature, which is the Dao. In classical Daoist terms, this is “accomplished” through the practice of wuwei. The Daoist notion of ziran, or suchness, thus assumes a distinction between habituated being and realized being. It does not mean, as often assumed in modern popular culture, the reproduction of habituation or following one’s own desires. Practicing wuwei and abiding in ziran require the mastery of Daoist principles, including decreasing desires.
INFORMING VIEWS AND FOUNDATIONAL CONCERNS

Ziran in turn relates to another technical term from classical Daoism: pu. Most often rendered as “unadorned simplicity” or “uncarved block,” the character pu 朴 is written with the mu 木 (“tree”) radical, and we can speculate in a Daoist way about how simplicity is comparable to trees. We can think of indigenous trees growing in their own natural and wild environs, which grow and flourish according to their own tendencies and patterns in concert with various natural influences (climate, weather, insects, birds, animals, etc.). They are located in a wider system; there is an ecological and cosmological dimension. This vision of trees as models does not include trees employed for human use, trees made into “lumber.” Such “trees” are no longer trees; they have been altered according to human desires and utilitarian constructs.

The simplicity of the uncarved block leads to numerous discussions of the positive “value” of uselessness (wuyong), and specifically the uselessness of village and mountain trees in the Zhuangzi. One day while traveling, a certain Carpenter Shi and his apprentice pass by an enormous oak tree that serves as a cover for the village earth-shrine.

THE “VALUE” OF USELESSNESS

His apprentice stood staring for a long time and then ran after Carpenter Shi and said, “Since I first took up my ax and followed you, Master, I have never seen timber as beautiful as this. But you don’t even bother to look, and go right on without stopping. Why is that?”

“Forget it—say no more!” said the carpenter. “It’s a worthless tree! Make boats out of it and they’d sink; make coffins and they’d rot in no time; make vessels and they’d break at once. Use it for doors and it would sweat sap like pine; use it for posts and the worms would eat them up. It’s not a timber tree—there’s nothing it can be used for. That’s how it got to be that old!” (Zhuangzi, Chapter 4)

However, the story does not end here. In the subsequent episode, which might be read as evidence of Daoist animism and quasi-shamanism, the oak tree appears to Carpenter Shi in a dream and transmits specific teachings.

AN OLD OAK’S TRANSMISSION

After Carpenter Shi had returned home, the oak tree appeared to him in a dream and said, “As for me, I’ve been trying for a long time to be of no use, and though I almost died, I’ve finally got it. This is of great use to me. If I had been of some use, would I ever have grown this large? Moreover you and I are both of us things.
What’s the point of this—things condemning things? You, a worthless person about to die, how do you know I’m a worthless tree?”

When Carpenter Shi woke up, he reported his dream. His apprentice said, “If it’s so intent on being of no use, what’s it doing there at the village shrine?”

“Shhh! Say no more! It’s only resting there. If we carp and criticize, it will merely conclude that we don’t understand it. Even if it weren’t at the shrine, do you suppose it would be cut down? It protects itself in a different way from ordinary people. If you try to judge it by conventional standards, you’ll be way off!” (ibid.; adapted from Watson 1968: 63–5; see also Chapters 1, 4, 9, 12, 19, 20, 24, 25, 29)

Stories like these, especially many contained in the Zhuangzi, form part of the folklore, culture, and oral tradition of Daoism (see Chapters 12 and 15). In terms of foundational Daoist beliefs, the “value of uselessness” is that it allows one to live one’s own life through naturalness, simplicity, and suchness. It allows one to discover one’s own connection to the Dao. At the same time, it protects one from becoming a tool manipulated by others for their own egoistic purposes. The Zhuangzi, in turn, contains various comments on the value of abiding in suchness and simplicity, of being “useless” and “worthless” (see Zhuangzi, Chapters 4 and 20). The suchness of the tree, in turn, stands in contrast to the instrumentalist mentality and conditioned perception of the carpenter. Read from a symbolic perspective, the ax represents the ordinary human mind with its linguistic and conceptual categories and its psychopathological way of interacting with the world.

The uselessness of the tree enables it not only to flourish in a free and extended state, but also to become a natural shrine, most likely an outdoor altar to a locality god. That is, the oak tree’s unusability and naturalness create a space for accessing the sacred. The tradition recognizes this value in various other beings as well, including wild birds (free of cages), wild fish (free of nets), wild horses (free of bridles, harnesses, and corrals), sea tortoises (free of divinization methods), and so forth (see Komjathy 2011f). Such animals represent the ideal of pu, or simplicity, and symbolize a life beyond contrivance, convention, utilitarianism, and instrumentalism. Trees and other wild beings become models for humans: their very uselessness provides inspiration for human flourishing and they express existential and spiritual insights through their very being, observation of which may be applied to spiritual practice.

One can connect the classical Daoist notions of ziran and pu to other terms related to one’s core being. In some classical Daoist texts, the view that one’s own being is the Dao becomes expressed through the use of the terms “innate nature” (xing) and “life-destiny” (ming), with the latter also translated as “fate.” In a classical sense, these terms are often employed synonymously, as a kind of endowed capacity or ontological givenness. This stands in contrast to their more nuanced and technical use
in the later tradition, especially in internal alchemy lineages, wherein \textit{xing} is associated with the heart-mind, spirit as well as divine capacities, while \textit{ming} is associated with the kidneys, vital essence as well as foundational vitality and corporeality (see Chapter 7). For members of the classical inner cultivation lineages, \textit{xing} and \textit{ming} designate the ground of one’s being, the Dao manifesting in/as/through one’s own embodied existence. On some level, they are “fate” in the sense of one’s innate and personal capacities, and what one must do in order to have meaning, purpose, and fulfillment. On another level, they must be actualized or expressed as embodied being in the world. They are both given and actualized.

\begin{tcolorbox}
\textbf{RETURNING TO THE SOURCE}

Apply emptiness completely;  
Guard stillness steadfastly.  
The ten thousand beings arise together;  
I simply observe their return.  
All beings flourish and multiply;  
Each again returns to the Source.  
Returning to the Source is called stillness;  
This means returning to life-destiny.  
Returning to life-destiny is called constancy;  
Knowing constancy is called illumination.  
\textit{(Daode jing, Chapter 16)}

The Dao was pulled apart for the sake of goodness; virtue was imperiled for the sake of conduct. After this, innate nature was abandoned and minds were set free to roam, heart-mind joining with heart-mind in understanding; there was knowledge, but it could not bring stability to the world. After this, “culture” was added on, and “breadth” was piled on top. “Culture” destroyed the substantial, “breadth” drowned the heart-mind, and after this the people began to be confused and disordered. They had no way to revert to the true form of their innate nature or to return once more to the Beginning. (\textit{Zhuangzi, Chapter 16})
\end{tcolorbox}

Here is a representative account of the loss of cosmic integration, of separation from the Dao. At root, one becomes disoriented through societal conditioning, familial expectations and obligations, and personal habituation. Such claims of course beg the question of how human beings, as manifestations of the Dao, \textit{originally} lost their cosmic integration. From a Daoist perspective, the account of human disorientation is existential and psychological, not cosmogonic or theological. That is, it is about the human experience of being in the world, and the consequences of certain human activities. There is thus the following traditional Daoist statement: “Humans may
be distant from the Dao, but the Dao is never distant from humans." That is, one's "separation from the Dao" is only apparent. Ultimately, separation is impossible. But what about the question of benefit and harm, of morality and immorality? There are two primary Daoist responses. First, from a cosmological and theological perspective, there is no such thing. Terms such as "morality" are human constructs, ways of creating meaning and order in an impersonal universe. Using a famous phrase from Chapter 5 of the Daode jing, everything in the phenomenal world is a "straw dog" (chugou), with straw dogs being effigies used in ancient Chinese ritual. On some level, we are simply sacrificial offerings in the unending decomposition and recomposition ritual of the universe. We simply participate in the unending transformative process of the Dao. Second, in the case of human beings, innate nature is innately good. To express this nature is to act with virtue. But this is not socially constructed morality, as in the case of Confucianism. Rather, it is the way in which one's innate nature naturally manifests, as a beneficial presence and influence. Such a condition has moral qualities from a conventional perspective, but it is simply one's own innate nature, the Dao, becoming present in human relationship and interaction (see Chapter 8).

When virtue does not flourish, this is due not to the "presence of evil" in the world, but rather to widespread psychological and spiritual confusion. On the personal level, the primary sources of such confusion include sensory engagement with the world through the "passages" and "doorways" mentioned in the Daode jing passage above, and emotionality, especially negative, harmful, and inappropriate emotional reactions. This leads to a state of disorientation that is manifest in distinctions, categories, biases, and opinions emanating from one's own limited, egoistic viewpoint. This Daoist description of disintegration is also a map for reintegration. The most important principle here is "returning to the Source" (guigen), a term that means attunement with the Dao. The tradition proposes various ways to do this, but taking classical Daoism to its logical conclusion, it simply involves abiding in the ground of one's being. One accepts what is, and allows each being to unfold according to its own innate nature. With respect to religious discipline, one trains oneself to have a positive and accepting view of oneself and others. Generally speaking, the ideal here is not becoming emotionless. Rather, it is to attain a state of "true joy," a calm contentment and buoyancy undisturbed by gain and loss, by the trials and tribulations of existence, or by fulfillment or frustration of mundane desires. It requires recognition of change as the one universal constant. "The sage penetrates bafflement and complication, rounding all into a single body, yet he does not know why—it is his innate nature. He returns to fate and acts accordingly, using the cosmos (tianxia) as his teacher" (Zhuangzi, Chapter 25; also Chapter 5).

This foundational worldview incorporates a vision of human existence in a larger energetic, cosmological and theological context (see Chapter 6). One endeavors to follow a way of life that is participatory, that is fully present to the moment. For example, we encounter an exchange between Zhuangzi and Huizi, a famous representative of the so-called Mingjia (Logicians/Terminologists).
THE JOY OF FISH

Zhuangzi and Huizi were strolling along the dam of the Hao River when Zhuangzi said, “See how the minnows come out and dart around where they please! That’s what fish really enjoy!”

Huizi said, “You’re not a fish, so how do you know what fish enjoy?”

Zhuangzi said, “You’re not me, so how do you know I don’t know what fish enjoy?”

Huizi said, “I’m not you, so I certainly don’t know what you know. On the other hand, you’re certainly not a fish—so that still proves you don’t know what fish enjoy!”

Zhuangzi said, “Let’s go back to your original question. You asked me how I know what fish enjoy—so you already knew I knew it when you asked the question. I know it by standing here beside the Hao River.” (Zhuangzi, Chapter 17; adapted from Watson 1968: 188-9)

Although passages like this tend to be read “philosophically,” I would suggest that they are about being alive in the world. Huizi can only understand the conversation and “reality” through his own linguistic and conceptual frameworks. He can only speak from the limited perspective of his own philosophical commitments, especially through the cognitive faculty of intellect and reason. In contrast, Zhuangzi views existence from a different perspective. By walking through the landscape, by enjoying its contours and presences, by observing the joy of fish, Zhuangzi participates in the underlying mystery and all-pervading sacred presence of the Dao. While the experiences of fish and humans appear to be different, the actual condition of experiencing and participation is the same.

Within the texts of classical Daoism, we also find other core Daoist values and commitments. These include non-contention (wuzheng), non-knowing (wuzhi), and clarity and stillness (qingjing). Within the phrases wuwei, wuzheng, and wuzhi, one notices the repetition of wu (“without”), that is, the term that negates the character which follows. This type of discourse has led some scholars to characterize classical Daoist views as “quietistic” or “apophatic,” emptying the heart-mind of emotional and intellectual content. While this might seem to support a philosophical reading of classical Daoism in terms of “relativism,” “skepticism,” and philosophy of language (see, e.g. Kjellberg and Ivanhoe 1996; Cook 2003), such language rather draws one’s attention to the disruptive effects of “acting,” “contending,” and “knowing,” especially in conventional ways. They also point towards something else, namely, the transformative effect of contemplative practice and a larger vision of personhood and being. The stillness at the ground of one’s being, often identified as innate nature (see above), is the Stillness which is the Dao (LaFargue 1992: 229–30; also 53–85, 243). Here we find a high anthropology and a sophisticated psychological understanding (see Chapter
7). From this perspective, human beings have untapped potential, and consciousness cannot be reduced to intellect or reason. Consciousness in a more complete sense includes “spiritual capacities” such as contentless and non-conceptual awareness as well as mystical abiding, a condition of non-dualistic being. This is not to say that intellect and reason are unimportant or irrelevant. Rather, they have a function that must be understood and appropriately employed.

Daoist traditions formulated precepts and practices based on these classical foundations. For example, in the early Tianshi movement, community members applied Nine Practices (jiuxing).

### THE NINE PRACTICES OF EARLY TIANSHI DAOISM

1. Practice non-action (wuwei).
2. Practice softness and weakness (rouruo).
3. Practice guarding the feminine (shouci). Do not initiate actions.
4. Practice being nameless (wuming).
5. Practice clarity and stillness (qingjing).
6. Practice being adept (zhushan).
7. Practice being desireless (wuyu).
8. Practice ceasing with sufficiency (zhizu).
9. Practice yielding and withdrawing (tuirang).

(\textsc{Laojun jinglü}, DZ 786, 1a; see also Bokenkamp 1997: 49; Kohn 2004c: 59)

These nine principles derive from various chapters of the \textit{Daode jing} (see Komjathy 2008a, v. 5), and form a clear connective strand between classical Daoism and early Daoism. In this respect, it is also noteworthy that the \textit{Daode jing} had a central position in this movement. The third Celestial Master, Zhang Lu (d. 215), may have written a commentary to the text, which is titled the \textit{Laozi Xiang’er zhu} (Commentary Thinking Through the \textit{Laozi}; DH 56; S. 6825; see Bokenkamp 1997). The \textit{Xiang’er} commentary is only one of over a hundred extant Daoist commentaries on the \textit{Daode jing} in the Daoist Canon (see Chapter 12), almost none of which have unfortunately been studied or translated. The early Tianshi community also extracted precepts, the Twenty-Seven Xiang’er Precepts, from their early commentary (see Chapter 8). These conduct guidelines, in turn, became collected in various Daoist precept texts (see Kohn 2004c).

### Embodiment, practice, experience

Viewed from a comprehensive and integrated perspective, one finds a strong emphasis on embodiment, practice, and experience within the Daoist tradition. The
foundational Daoist view of human being and existence is psychosomatic, and recognizes physical, physiological, psychological, and spiritual dimensions of personhood. At the same time, “self,” from a traditional Daoist perspective, is relational, communal (human and “non-human”), cosmological, as well as theological. Thus, complete “embodiment” is about integration and participation. It is about being and presence. On a cosmological and theological level, it is about the mysteriousness and numinosity of the Dao manifesting through one’s life. It is about becoming an *embodiment* of the Dao in the world.

Here one notices a fundamental Daoist concern: physicality and aliveness. Daoists tend to have body-affirming and world-affirming views. Even in Daoist communities where “immortality” and “transcendence” are primary, the attainment of such a state occurs within and through the body in an intentional way. Going farther, many Daoists have sought to encounter the Dao in all things. First and foremost, this involves attentiveness to one’s own body and corporeal reality, including diet (see Chapter 9) as well as vitality and longevity (see Chapter 10). It also involves training oneself to see the Dao manifesting through each and every being. As an embodied being in the world, there are different ways of experiencing the Dao’s innumerable manifestations. These may be mapped along a spectrum from personal to impersonal and transpersonal, from psychological to cosmological and mystical. Such categories, of course, are not necessarily mutually exclusive.

Daoist practice has included aesthetics, art (e.g. calligraphy, music, painting, and poetry), dietetics, health and longevity practice, meditation, ritual, scripture study, and so forth. The point to be made here is that whatever path Daoists follow, practice is essential. That is, although there are clearly distinctive Daoist worldviews, Daoists have tended to deemphasize belief and doctrine. The importance of practice throughout Daoist history has often been neglected by those who would construct Daoism primarily as “philosophy” or “way of life.” This view is especially prominent among readers and interpreters of classical Daoist texts, which are frequently read as about disembodied “ideas” and “ways of thinking.” However, if contextualized appropriately and read carefully, one finds that Daoists and Daoist communities are less interested in epistemology (ways of knowing); they tend to be more interested in ontology (ways of being) and soteriology (ways towards the Dao). That is, although worldview, practice, and experience are interrelated, Daoists have tended to place primary emphasis on practice and experience. One cannot understand the views expressed in Daoist texts without understanding the practices that inspired, are informed by and express those views.

For this reason, “practice” in Daoism most often refers to *both* one’s own spiritual discipline and one’s training at the hands of teachers, the community, and tradition. While auto-didacticism (teaching oneself) is not completely absent from the Daoist tradition, it tends to be a minority viewpoint. Self-directed spiritual practice often leads to confusion and self-absorption, perhaps even narcissism. Authentic teachers and community elders can inhibit such tendencies and provide spiritual direction.
THE IMPORTANCE OF TEACHERS AND TRAINING

Perfected Jin said, “Alas, as I look at people in the world seeking a teacher and inquiring about the Dao, [I find that] they are not willing to subordinate themselves to others. They only speak about everyone else as inferior to themselves. When it comes to cultivation, they are unwilling to be diligent and attentive, patient and forbearing. They merely engage in hollow speech and never even start the right effort towards perfection. Moreover, they are not truly committed to cultivation. When they see people in poverty, they lack any inclination to be of assistance or to come to the rescue. With each successive step, they squander their efforts and practice until they utterly lose their hidden virtue and act in opposition to the Dao. Adepts like this who want to complete immortality and have confirmation of the Dao—how much more distant could they be!” (Jin zhenren yulu, DZ 1056, 2b-3a)

This quotation from the early twelfth-century Jin zhenren yulu (Discourse Record of Perfected Jin) emphasizes the importance of guidance under a teacher. It recalls Chapter 70 of the Daode jing: “My words are very easy to understand and very easy to practice, but no one understands or practices them” (see also Chapter 41). Ideally, Daoist teachers have a deep root in practice and familiarity with the challenges and contributions of committed religious practice. Such teachers, usually referred to as “master-fathers” (shifu), also help to clarify the disciple’s vocation.

Here one example will suffice to illustrate the importance of formal religious training. As discussed in Chapter 13, ritual is one of the primary religious activities of Daoists. Daoist ritual tends to include an officiant (head priest), cantors (assistant priests), and attending members of the larger religious community, whether patrons, other priests and monastics, or ordinary believers. The first two positions require long-term and intensive training. This is especially the case for the officiant, who leads the ritual. He is the primary intermediary between deities and the community. While lay believers may have personal altars, where they bow and make offerings such as incense and fruit, they lack the formal training, expertise, and standing to ascend the community altar, to lead the ritual, and to have audience with divinities. This requires the services of an officiant with the necessary training to perform such a complex ritual.

The final element of the tripartite understanding of Daoist practice and attainment is experience. Religious practice and religious experience are interrelated. Specific types of practice lead to specific types of experiences, and specific types of experiences confirm the efficacy of specific training regimens (Komjathy 2007a). These include theistic and dualistic encounters with deities, immortals, and Perfected as well as monistic and unitive experiences of the Dao, whether as Nature (panenhenic) or as primordial undifferentiation (monistic) (see Chapters 3 and 6). At the same time, Daoists have tended to view such experiences as blessings, beyond one’s personal control, or as by-products of practice.
In terms of religious practice and religious experience, some Daoists have emphasized “experiential confirmation” and “verification” (zhengyan), also translated as “signs of proof” (Eskildsen 2001; see also Eskildsen 2004; Komjathy 2007a). For example, the final section of the tenth-century Chuandao ji (Anthology on the Transmission of the Dao; DZ 263, j. 14–16), one of the most influential early Zhong-Lü texts, is titled “Lun zhengyan” (On Experiential Confirmation). It informs the Daoist adept that specific training regimens may result in specific experiences. After one conserves vital essence, opens the body’s meridians, and generates saliva, one begins a process of self-rarification and self-divinization (see Chapters 7 and 11). At the most advanced stages of alchemical transformation, one becomes free of karmic obstructions and entanglements and one’s name becomes registered in the records of the Three Purities. The embryo of immortality matures, which includes the ability to manifest as the body-beyond-the-body and to have greater communion with celestial realms. After the adept’s bones begin to disappear and become infused with golden light, he or she may receive visitations from divine beings. This process of experiential confirmation is said to culminate as follows: “In a solemn and grand ceremony, you will be given the purple writ of the celestial books and immortal regalia. Immortals will appear on your left and right, and you will be escorted to Penglai. You will have audience with the Perfect Lord of Great Tenuity in the Purple Palace. Here your name and place of birth will be entered into the registers. According to your level of accomplishment, you will be given a dwelling-place on the Three Islands. Then you may be called a Perfected (zhenren) or immortal (xianzi)” (16.30a; see Komjathy 2007a).

Closely associated with these signs of proof, Daoist practitioners have suggested that Daoist religious practice may result in certain “boons along the way,” specifically in the acquisition of “numinous abilities” (shentong) and “numinous pervasion” (lingtong). The “Lun liutong jue” (Instructions on the Six Pervasions), a Yuan dynasty internal alchemy text, provides a clear description.

THE SIX PERVASIONS

(1) Pervasion of Heart-mind Conditions, involving the ability to experience unified nature as distinct from the ordinary body.
(2) Pervasion of Spirit Conditions, involving the ability to know things beyond ordinary perception.
(3) Pervasion of Celestial Vision, involving the ability to perceive internal landscapes within the body.
(4) Pervasion of Celestial Hearing, involving the ability to hear the subtle communications of spirits and humans.
(5) Pervasion of Past Occurrences, involving the ability to understand the karmic causes and effects relating to the Three Realms of desire, form, and formlessness.
(6) Pervasion of the Heart-minds of Others, involving the ability to manifest the body-beyond-the-body. (Neidan jiyao, DZ 1258, 3.12a-14a; see also Chapter 11 herein)
These parallel the Buddhist emphasis on the attainment of “supernatural powers” and “paranormal abilities” (Skt.: siddhi), including magical powers, the divine ear (clairaudience), penetration of the minds of others (clairvoyance), the divine eye (ability to see into time and space), memory of former existences, and knowledge of the extinction of karmic outflows. As is the case among Buddhists, Daoists have tended to identify such abilities as a natural outcome of practice. One should not pursue, elevate, or become attached to such abilities. Instead, one must recognize them for what they are: byproducts of practice. They are simply one possible form of experiential confirmation. Other forms include an increased sense of meaning and purpose, a teacher’s recognition, or veneration by others. At the same time, none of these things may occur. It depends on one’s affinities, constitution, and the time.

**Adherence and community**

Adherence is also a foundational dimension of the Daoist religious tradition. Adherence refers to a person’s formal association with a religious tradition. An “adherent” is a member of a religious tradition, and the concept replaces earlier terms such as “believer.” With respect to the academic study of religion, adherence is often framed in terms of “belief” and “self-identification” (see Chapters 1 and 16). It thus relates to religious identity (see Chapter 3). However, simply understanding adherence in terms of the individual fails to recognize pivotal elements of religious identity, including community and tradition. In the case of Daoism, adherence, community, and tradition are interrelated.

One does not have to directly participate in a formal religious community to receive indirect influences from it. Take, for example, the *Daode jing*, a “text” that has become part of contemporary global culture. As many have pointed out, the text is second only to the Bible as the most translated book in “world literature.” However, how is it that the *Daode jing* exists? How is it that the *Daode jing* is accessible in the contemporary world? Members of the inner cultivation lineages of classical Daoism remembered sayings, compiled earlier anthologies, and preserved and transmitted those manuscripts (see Chapters 2 and 3). At the same time, throughout Chinese history, Daoists created standardized editions of the *Daode jing* with their own unique commentaries, which express the views of specific Daoists and specific Daoist communities. Daoists have tended to read the *Daode jing* with the guidance of Daoist teachers rooted in Daoist traditions of reading and interpretation. Thus, the *Daode jing* not only is a Daoist scripture, a sacred text written in classical Chinese, but also exists because of Daoists and Daoist communities. The very existence of the scripture and the opportunity to read it in English todaylocates one on some level in the Daoist tradition, a tradition with specific views and interpretations of scripture (see Chapter 12).

Closely associated with community is place. Daoists have tended to place a strong emphasis on place, especially intentional communities living in hermitages,
temples, or monasteries in natural environs (see also Chapter 1). Typical examples include Taiqing gong (Palace of Great Clarity), an oceanside monastery near Qingdao, Shandong, and Yuquan yuan (Temple of the Jade Spring), a mountain monastery near Huayin, Shaanxi. These places reveal one resolution of the above-mentioned tension between wildness and cultural refinement in Daoism. On the one hand, these places are highly cultured: they are temple compounds that house monastics adhering to a regulated life, which consists of a daily schedule, simple vegetarian meals, no intoxicants, celibacy, and cenobitic monasticism. The temple compound also includes altars to specific gods, liturgical performances, and other dimensions of Daoist culture, such as calligraphy and temple boards (see Chapter 15). On the other hand, the temples exist within a more-encompassing wild environment. It is filled with granite boulders, untamed trees, and wild birds and animals. Both temple compounds located in the surrounding locale remind one of Chinese landscape paintings: the monastics and temples are barely noticeable from the viewpoint of landscape and cosmos. Finally, although the mountains are “wild” on some level, they are traversed by walking paths and mountain trails; they also house other smaller hermitages and temples. There is a way in. There is a space for human residence and participation.

Thus, place-specific community is centrally important in Daoism. One might go so far as to say that “Daoist practice” outside of a Daoist context, Daoist community, and Daoist place lacks key elements. For Daoists, participation in the tradition involves certain values, qualities, places, and responsibilities. In terms of religious standing, it consists of connection (tong). On the most basic level, such connection refers to one’s degree of alignment and attunement with the Dao, the degree to which one is living through the Dao. In this respect we may recall the external Three Treasures of the Dao, the scriptures, and the teachers. Each one of these is an aspect of tradition, and ideally each one has a connection to the unnamable mystery and all-pervading sacred presence of the Dao.

---

**FURTHER READING**


As comparative categories, cosmogony refers to discourse on and theories about the origins of the universe; cosmology to discourse on the underlying patterns and principles of the cosmos; and theology to discourse on the sacred, with the designation of “sacred” or “ultimately real” depending on specific individuals, communities, and traditions (see Tracy 1987; Jackson and Makransky 1999; Clooney 2010). Thus, cosmogony directs one’s attention towards the origin(s) of the universe. Cosmology relates to the ways in which the universe is structured and functions, specifically the underlying patterns and principles of the cosmos. Finally, theology inspires consideration of what is ultimately real, including questions of transcendent meaning and purpose, though such questions may also be existentialist. Daoist cosmogonic, cosmological, and theological views reveal the ways in which Daoists, like other religious adherents, have their own unique symbol systems and accounts of “reality.”

In a Daoist framework, there is a close connection among these three categories because the universe and world are the Dao on some level, and because one may understand the Dao through observation of the patterns in Nature. While the classical and foundational Daoist cosmogony and cosmology are naturalistic (impersonal, transformative process), Daoist theological views are quite diverse. This is often one of the primary areas of perplexity concerning the Daoist tradition.
Daoist cosmogony

The primary Daoist cosmogony involves an impersonal and spontaneous process of manifestation and emanation. One dimension of the Dao manifests in and as the universe as cosmological process (“Nature”). Generally speaking, Daoists do not believe in intentionality, agency, or inherent and transcendent meaning in the cosmos. That is, in contrast to many monotheists, Daoists believe in neither a creator god nor “creation” as such. The foundational Daoist cosmogony involves a spontaneous transformation that led from primordial nondifferentiation to differentiation.

---

CLASSICAL AND FOUNDATIONAL DAOIST COSMOGONY

The Dao generated (or generates) the One;
The One generated the two;
The two generated the three;
The three generated the myriad beings.
The myriad beings carry yin and embrace yang,
And it is empty qi [or, “infusing qi”] (chongqi) that harmonizes these.
(Daode jing, Chapter 42; see also Zhuangzi, Chapter 4)

***

There was a beginning. There was not yet beginning to be a beginning. There was not yet beginning to be not yet beginning to be a beginning. There was being. There was nonbeing. There was not yet beginning to be nonbeing. There was not yet beginning to be not yet beginning to be nonbeing. Suddenly there was nonbeing. But when it comes to nonbeing, I don’t know what is being and what is nonbeing. Now I have just said something. But I don’t know whether or not what I have said has really said something. (Zhuangzi, Chapter 2)

***

When the heavens and earth were not yet formed, everything was ascending and flying, diving and delving. We refer to this as the Great Inception. The Dao originally birthed the nebulous void; the nebulous void birthed the cosmos; and the cosmos birthed qi. This qi divided like a shoreline: the clear and light rose and became the heavens; the heavy and turbid sank and became the earth. It is easy for the clear and wondrous to converge, but difficult for the heavy and turbid to congeal. Thus the heavens were completed first, while the earth was established after. The conjoined essences of the heavens and earth became yin and yang, and the disseminated essence of yin and yang became the four seasons. The scattered essences of the four seasons became the myriad beings. (Huainanzi, Chapter 3; cf. Major 1993: 62; see also Lau and Ames 1998)
In the *Daode jing* passage, the Dao represents primordial nondifferentiation or pure potentiality. In a pre-manifest “state,” the Dao is an incomprehensible and unrepresentable “before,” also understood as original qi, the primordial “energy” of the universe. Through a spontaneous, unintentional, and impersonal process of unfolding or differentiation, this nondifferentiation became the One or unity. That is, even unity or the wholeness of Being-before-being is not the Dao in its ultimate sense. The One represents the first moment or stage of differentiation. From this unity, separation occurs. In the next phase of differentiation, the one divides into two, yin and yang (see below). Here yin also relates to terrestrial qi or the qi of the earth (*diqui*), while yang relates to celestial qi or the qi of the heavens (*tianqi*). At this moment yin and yang have not yet formed patterns of interaction. The interaction of yin and yang is referred to as “three;” this moment involves yin and yang in dynamic and continual interaction, resulting in further differentiation. This further differentiation leads to the emergence of materiality as well as to more individuated beings and forces, including human beings. Human beings, as vertically aligned beings, are often seen as the life form with the clearest capacity to connect the heavens and the earth. This is a structural and organizational distinction, not an ontological or theological one. In the later Daoist tradition, the three dimensions of the heavens, earth, and human beings are referred to as the “Three Powers” (*sancai*).

A similar cosmogonic account appears in Chapter 2 of the *Zhuangzi* (Book of Master Zhuang; DZ 640) and Chapter 3 of the *Huainanzi* (Book of the Huainan Masters; DZ 1184) (see above). The former may be read in a number of ways. On one level, it is representative of the *Zhuangzi*’s playfulness and apparent skepticism concerning human language and our capacity for actual understanding, especially in terms of a more encompassing perspective. In this view, ordinary human beings are narrow-minded and egoistic, limited by their own views and assumptions. While they attempt to create convincing and comprehensive accounts of reality, such realization is beyond rationality, linguistic expression, and conceptualization. The passage thus provides a sarcastic account aimed to mock individuals who engage in cosmogonic and theological reflection, to subvert and remedy such rumination. On another level, however, Daoists have read this passage as an intuitive and experientially sound cosmogony. The universe is finite; it will come to an end. So, at some point, there was a beginning. However, that beginning came from a source that “existed” before the beginning. Daoists generally interpret this to mean that the Dao as Source “pre-dates” the manifest universe and will not cease to exist when this cosmic expression disappears. In addition, the Dao in its own suchness will not be diminished by that fact.

Paralleling Chapter 42 of the *Daode jing* and Chapter 2 of the *Zhuangzi*, Chapter 3 of the received *Huainanzi*, which is titled “Tianwen” (Celestial Patterns), provides another classical and foundational Daoist cosmogonic account. In the beginning, before the imagined beginning in fact, there was an unrepresentable “before;” there was primordial nondifferentiation. The *Huainanzi* speaks of this “moment” in terms of the Dao as nebulous void. From the nebulous void, the Great Inception (*taichu; taishi*) commenced, which initially led to the division of the heavens and earth, yang and yin.
Each of these moments of emanation, and the eventual formation of further differentiated beings, involved spontaneous shifts of qi. In this passage and the parallel one from the Zhuangzi, one also notices a lack of emphasis on human beings. They are not important players in the account; they are part of the “ten thousand things” (wanwu). Like everything that exists, humans are spontaneous and random expressions of the Dao, however unique and interesting one may find them. That is, Daoism tends to be more theocentric (Dao-centered) and cosmocentric, less anthropocentric. There are larger concentric circles decreasing in diameter from the Dao, to the cosmos, including visible and invisible realms, world, and then to individuated beings such as terrestrial animals and plants.

Within the larger contours of the Daoist tradition, the foundational and primary cosmogonic account, the movement from nondifferentiated Source and primordial unity to differentiation, is spoken of in terms of Wu wuji (“without non-differentiation”), Wuji (“non-differentiation”) and Taiji (“differentiation”), which may be represented in a chart (cf. Pregadio 2008a: 555).

FIGURE 5 Classical and Foundational Daoist Cosmogony
Taiji, which literally means the "Great Ridgepole," or the "Great Ultimate" by extension, refers to the dynamic interaction of yin and yang. It is a cosmological category. Etymologically speaking, "ji" is the "ridgepole" or the center beam in an architectural structure. Applied to yin and yang, it suggests both distinction (a center dividing point) and connection (a center meeting point). This cosmogonic and cosmological process, involving yin and yang in continual, dynamic interaction, is not just in the past; it also represents the context of being and becoming, the unending process that is the world and being-in-the-world. Yin-yang interaction may be further mapped according to the Five Phases (wuxing), which are represented cosmogonically in the above chart. That is, they are located in their associated directions (Water/north; Wood/east; Fire/south; Metal/west; and Earth/center).

As the above illustration indicates, one of the primary Daoist soteriologies involves "returning the Source" (guigen), to the Dao as primordial origin (see Chapter 5). This is a movement from differentiation to nondifferentiation. Daoists in turn use various technical terms when referring to the Dao as primordial nondifferentiation. These include "source" (yuan), "root" (gen), "mother" (mu), "beginning" (shi), and "ancestor" (zong). Here we must recognize that these are metaphors (see Chapter 1), and these metaphors have a context-specific Chinese cultural and Daoist religious meaning. In particular, the Daoist view of the Dao is primarily impersonal, especially when considering the Dao as primordial Source and in its own suchness. Thus, Dao as "mother" does not refer to a compassionate and loving being, a personal divine consciousness (see below). Rather, it refers to that which gave birth to the world, to life, and to all beings. It is the source of life and that which nourishes all beings without conscious concern. It is neither an actual mother (or father) nor gendered in any essential respect. At the same time, one might recognize that the Dao as impersonal Source also manifests through beings who do express personal concern and consideration. This includes humans who embody humaneness.

Daoist cosmology

The foundational Daoist cosmology parallels that of pre-modern Chinese society and culture, and it centers on yin-yang and the Five Phases. This cosmology is not Daoist per se. It is best understood as "traditional Chinese cosmology" or part of the dominant "traditional Chinese worldview," as it was the primary cosmological viewpoint in traditional China. It was, in turn, employed in various indigenous systems, such as those of Confucianism, Daoism, and Chinese medicine. Historically speaking, this correlative cosmology, also referred to as the system of correspondences, was systematized by Zou Yan (ca. 305–240 BCE) and within the so-called Yinyang jia (Family of Yin-yang) (see, e.g. Schwartz 1985; Graham 1989). The latter "school" is often referred to as the "Cosmologists" or "Naturalists" in Western language publications, and it was part of the intellectual and cultural diversity of the Warring States period (480–222 BCE) and Early Han dynasty (206 BCE–9 CE). While such a cosmology is not Daoist per se, it is often misidentified as such because Daoism is one of the few places were the view remains prominent in the contemporary world.
This cosmology is based on the principles and forces of yin-yang, which we encountered above in the classical Daoist cosmogonic accounts. Etymologically speaking, yin 隱 depicts a hill (fu 阜) covered by shadows (yin 陰), while yang 阳 depicts a hill (fu 阜) covered by sunlight (yang 易). At the root level, yin and yang are ways of speaking about the same place at different times or moments of the day. Yin and yang are not “polar opposites” or antagonistic substances; they are, in fact, complementary principles, aspects, or forces. As the characters suggest, yin and yang are used to represent different dimensions of the same phenomenon or situation. By extension, there are various associations:

- yin/female/earth/moon/dark/death/cold/moist/heavy/turbidity/descent/rest/inward
- yang/male/heavens/sun/light/life/hot/dry/light/clarity/ascent/activity/outward

At times, “yin” is also used to designate “negative” or harmful aspects of life more generally (immorality, ugliness, disease, etc.), while “yang” becomes related to “positive” or beneficial aspects of life (morality, beauty, health, etc.). What must be emphasized is that these are relative associations, not absolute characteristics. They do not parallel conventional views of so-called “good” and “evil” as distinct ontological categories. Just because women are considered “yin” in one respect or in one context, it does not follow that they are also “immoral” or “turbid.” There are also varying degrees of yin and yang in every phenomenon, in each moment or experience, and in every being. So, certain men may be more yin than certain women, and vice versa. People in one context may be more yang (e.g. talkative or hot), while in another that same person may be quite yin (e.g. quiet or cold). Because the universe is understood as a transformative process (zaohua), this also means that any negative or harmful pattern or manifestation may be transformed into a positive or beneficial pattern or manifestation. In the context of a classical Chinese worldview in general and Daoism in particular, life is seen as depending on the mutually beneficial interaction of yin and yang. Even when Daoists speak of entities like “demons” (mo 魔) or “ghosts” (gui 鬼) (see below), they generally understand them to be a momentary, unresolved energetic pattern capable of transformation into a more beneficial pattern. Generally speaking, such beings are not irrevocably lost or distorted. A skilled Daoist priest may assist their transformation.

Here we should also note that yin and yang take on specific and alternative meanings in certain contexts. For example, in many internal alchemy lineages (see Chapters 7 and 11), yin appears to be defined negatively, while yang appears to be defined positively. A distinction must be made between yin-yang as cosmological principles, and yin-yang as alchemical map, specifically as a map of alchemical transformation. That is, there are cosmological and alchemical interpretations and applications of yin-yang, with the associations varying depending on system and context. The cosmological dimension cannot be changed—it is the underlying structure of cosmos. However, on an existential and alchemical level, yin may designate mortality, defilements, delusion, and so forth; yang may designate immortality, purity, realization, and so forth. Internal alchemists thus
frequently speak of transforming yin into yang, of becoming a yang-spirit, a pure yang being. This does not mean that one transcends the foundational cosmological harmony of yin and yang. In fact, classical Daoism and the foundational Daoist worldview urge one to “embrace the feminine” (see Chapter 5), understood as correlative with “yin qualities” (flexibility, passivity, receptivity, silence, etc.). Rather, it means that the internal alchemist works to become a perfected being in which all negative characteristics have been transformed into their positive counterparts.

The foundational Daoist cosmology also centers on the so-called Five Phases (wuxing), also rendered as Five Elements or Five Agents. Integrated into a single system, yin-yang and the Five Phases are referred to as “correlative cosmology” and the “system of correspondences.” This again is best thought of as “traditional Chinese cosmology.” The Five Phases include Wood, Fire, Earth, Metal, and Water, and the sequence is important. In terms of yin-yang, Wood is minor or lesser yang, while Fire is major or greater yang. Metal is minor yin, while Water is major yin. Earth is generally thought to be a balance of the two forces or a transition between them.

Conventionally rendered as “Five Elements,” wuxing literally means something like “five activities” or “five movements.” This dynamic and process-orientated aspect becomes more satisfactorily rendered in the designation of “Five Phases.” While these five do, in fact, relate to actual substances as well as related phenomena and energetic qualities of the “phases,” the system is much more complex and dynamic than “elements” would lead one to believe. Also referred to as “naturalistic medicine,” this system of correspondences consists of the following associations:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Associations</th>
<th>Wood</th>
<th>Fire</th>
<th>Earth</th>
<th>Metal</th>
<th>Water</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Season</td>
<td>Spring</td>
<td>Summer</td>
<td>(Indian Summer)</td>
<td>Autumn</td>
<td>Winter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direction</td>
<td>East</td>
<td>South</td>
<td>Center</td>
<td>West</td>
<td>North</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Color</td>
<td>Azure</td>
<td>Red</td>
<td>Yellow</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Black</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emblem</td>
<td>Azure Dragon</td>
<td>Vermilion Bird</td>
<td>White Tiger</td>
<td>Mysterious Warrior</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taste</td>
<td>Bitter</td>
<td>Sweet</td>
<td>Pungent (Acid)</td>
<td>Salty</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Climate</td>
<td>Wind</td>
<td>Heat</td>
<td>Dampness</td>
<td>Dryness</td>
<td>Cold</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life Stage</td>
<td>Birth</td>
<td>Adolescence</td>
<td>Adulthood</td>
<td>Maturation</td>
<td>Old-age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultivation Cycle</td>
<td>Planting</td>
<td>Tending</td>
<td>Harvesting</td>
<td>Storing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practice Stage</td>
<td>Enthusiasm</td>
<td>Inspiration</td>
<td>Commitment</td>
<td>Discipline</td>
<td>Unification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planet</td>
<td>Jupiter</td>
<td>Mars</td>
<td>Saturn</td>
<td>Venus</td>
<td>Mercury</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yin-Yang</td>
<td>Lesser Yang</td>
<td>Greater Yang</td>
<td>Center</td>
<td>Lesser Yin</td>
<td>Greater Yin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Animal</td>
<td>Fish</td>
<td>Birds</td>
<td>Human</td>
<td>Mammals</td>
<td>Crustaceans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domestic Animal</td>
<td>Sheep</td>
<td>Fowl</td>
<td>Ox</td>
<td>Dog</td>
<td>Pig</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grain</td>
<td>Wheat/Barley</td>
<td>Beans</td>
<td>Rice</td>
<td>Millet</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yin (Zang)</td>
<td>Liver</td>
<td>Heart</td>
<td>Spleen</td>
<td>Lung</td>
<td>Kidneys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yang (Fu)</td>
<td>Gall Bladder</td>
<td>Small Intestine</td>
<td>Stomach</td>
<td>Large Intestine</td>
<td>Bladder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spiritual Dimension</td>
<td>Ethereal Soul (An Qi)</td>
<td>Spirit (Zhi Qi)</td>
<td>Thought (Yi Qi)</td>
<td>Corporeal Soul (Po Qi)</td>
<td>Will (Zhi Qi)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sense Organ</td>
<td>Eyes</td>
<td>Tongue</td>
<td>Mouth</td>
<td>Nose</td>
<td>Ear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tissue</td>
<td>Sinews</td>
<td>Vessels</td>
<td>Muscles</td>
<td>Skin</td>
<td>Bones</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive Emotion</td>
<td>Humaneness</td>
<td>Respect</td>
<td>Honesty</td>
<td>Righteousness</td>
<td>Kindness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative Emotion</td>
<td>Anger (Mu)</td>
<td>Excessive Joy (Xi)</td>
<td>Worry (Wei)</td>
<td>Fear (Pi)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Injuries</td>
<td>Excessive Walking</td>
<td>Excessive Talking</td>
<td>Excessive Sitting</td>
<td>Excessive Reclining</td>
<td>Excessive Standing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Here it is important to recognize that these are, from a traditional Chinese and Daoist perspective, actual correspondences and associations. Each element of the column
directly relates to, and often may be substituted for, the others. For example, eye problems frequently appear or become exacerbated during spring; heart issues may manifest in problems with arteries; feelings of grief and depression may be more pronounced during autumn; kidney problems may manifest as a groaning voice; and so forth.

The Five Phases, including their various associations, are, in turn, understood to relate to each other in patterns of dynamic interaction. The so-called “production cycle” is as follows: Wood → Fire → Earth → Metal → Water → Wood. Then there is the “destruction cycle”: Wood → Water → Metal → Earth → Fire → Wood. Finally, there is the “control cycle”: Wood → Earth → Water → Fire → Metal → Wood. In contemporary Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), these sequences are often represented as a circle (the production cycle) with a pentagram inside (the control cycle).

As the patterns of interaction are interrelated, dynamic, and mutually influential, each association or correspondence may be placed in the above diagram. Viewed in the production cycle, the liver (Wood) influences the heart (Fire), which influences the spleen (Earth). Viewed in the same cycle, intense grief (Metal) may lead to fear (Water). Viewed in the control cycle, honesty (Earth) may help to alleviate fear (Water). These are just some examples of the patterns of dynamic interaction drawn from the above chart of correspondences.

The final element of traditional Chinese cosmology, and of foundational Daoist cosmology by extension, is qi (ch’i). Etymologically speaking, the standard character for qi 氣 consists of qi 氣 ("vapor") above mi 米 ("rice"). Qi is like steam derived from the cooking of rice, with the latter often seen as paralleling vital essence (jing) in the human body (see Chapter 7). Interestingly, there is also a Daoist esoteric character for qi 炁, which consists of wu 无 ("non-being") above huo 火 ("fire"). From this perspective, qi is a subtle (lit., "non-existing") heat in the body. In Western language sources, qi has been rendered relatively accurately as “subtle” or “vital breath,” anachronistically as “energy,” and obfuscatingly as “pneuma.” While it does have some
similarity with the Indian notion of prāṇa and the Greek concept of pneuma, qi, like “Dao” and “yin-yang,” is best left untranslated. Qi refers to both material breath as well as subtle breath. With respect to the former, it is associated with the lungs and with physical respiration. In terms of the latter, it circulates through the universe and the human body as a subtle force or energetic presence. As discussed in Chapter 7, the notion of qi moving through the body relates to the organ-meridian system, subtle networks and channels throughout the body, and to the various vital functions of the organs. In combination with the Daoist notion of “elixir fields” (dantian), this system became an essential component of internal alchemy practice.

As an animating force or sacred wind, qi bridges the apparent divide between the “material” and “spiritual,” “body” and “mind,” and so forth. From a traditional Chinese and Daoist perspective, everything consists of qi; everything is qi. Everything may be mapped along a spectrum of qi, from the most substantial (rocks and bones, for example) to the most rarified (cosmic ethers and gods, for example). However, qi is not simply an undivided or unified quasi-substance. There are types of qi. As we saw above, on the most basic level, qi may be distinguished in terms of “celestial qi” (tianqi), the subtle breath associated with the sky and heavens, and “terrestrial qi” (diqi), the subtle breath of the earth. These are related to yang and yin, respectively. In the human body, they are thought to enter through the crown-point (Baihui) and soles of the feet (Yongquan), respectively. Although conventionally associated with “celestial qi,” there are also other cosmological influences, such as from the sun, moon, stars, and so forth. Such attentiveness was especially prominent in early Shangqing and related visualization practices (see Chapters 9 and 11). Daoism and Chinese medicine also distinguish so-called “prenatal qi” (xiantian qi), which literally means “before heaven qi,” from so-called “postnatal qi” (houtian qi), which literally means “after heaven qi.” Prenatal qi refers to the qi that one receives from the universe and one’s ancestors, especially one’s parents, before birth. Postnatal qi refers to the qi that one acquires and gathers after birth, specifically from breath and food. Other types of qi include ancestral qi (zongqi), nutritive qi (yingqi), protective qi (weiqi), and original qi (yuanqi). From this perspective, qi is part of the vital substances of the body (see Chapter 7). On a more specifically Daoist level, there is daoqi, the qi of the Dao, which is mentioned, for instance, throughout the standard Quanzhen liturgy. While one might be inclined to think of all qi as the “qi of the Dao,” we must remember the above-mentioned cosmogonic account. There are some forms of qi that are less differentiated and closer to the Dao in its primordial suchness (ziran). Often discussed as “original,” “primal,” or “primordial qi” (yuanqi), daoqi is a “purer” form of qi, a sacred presence. It is not simply manifest in the universe and world; it is also activated and actualized through Daoist religious practice. From a Daoist perspective, its presence may be embodied, recognized, and transmitted within and among Daoists. From an emic (“insider”) or adherent perspective, this is one of the ways in which Daoist being would be understood and identified. Daoists frequently refer to its presence as “connection” (tong) and/or as “numinosity” (ling).
Daoist theology

As a comparative category, “theology” (lit., “god-talk”) refers to discourse on the sacred. Due to its close association with Christianity and theistic views, some interpreters may resist the use of “theology” to discuss the Daoist tradition. However, the use of language and semantic meaning changes over time, and I take a more pragmatic and heuristic perspective. Here theology does not specifically mean “god-talk,” and as such makes space for “non-theistic” theologies. As discourse on the sacred, theology may thus relate to metaphysics, or hidden realities, beings and presences beyond the physical world.

Before examining Daoist theology, it is also helpful to understand the various types of theology, with some modifications in order to make space for non-theistic views in a comparative framework. We may identify at least the following theologies: animistic, atheistic, monistic, monotheistic, panenhenic, pantheistic, panentheistic, and polytheistic. Animistic theologies hold that nature is populated by personal gods and/or spiritual entities. Such deities and spirits tend to be place-specific. Although resistant to such designations, atheistic theology, which is technically anti-theological, denies the existence of gods, especially the Abrahamic god (“God”). Monistic theologies hold that there is one impersonal Reality. Monotheistic theologies hold that there is one supreme, personal god, usually with conventional attributes of personhood and agency (e.g. God the Creator, God the Father). Panenhenic theology holds that Nature as a whole is sacred. Pantheistic theology claims that the sacred is in the world, that the world is a manifestation of the sacred. Because this creates certain theological problems, such as the diminishment of the sacred through extinction, some theological discourse tends towards panentheism, that is, that the sacred is in and beyond the world. Under this view, there is both an immanent (world-affirming) and transcendent (world-negating) aspect. Finally, polytheistic theology is belief in many gods. These various theologies may not be mutually exclusive or necessarily irreconcilable.

The primary Daoist theology is monistic, panenhenic, and panentheistic. Daoist theology is secondarily animistic and polytheistic. Daoist theology centers, first and foremost, on the Dao (Tao). The Dao is the sacred and ultimate concern of Daoists. It is, first and foremost, a Chinese character as well as a Daoist cosmological and theological concept. Etymologically speaking, the character dao 道, probably pronounced something like *d’ôg in archaic and ancient Chinese (Karlgren 1964, 272), consists of chuo 行 (“to walk”) and shou 首 (“head”). It is a road that one travels, and a religious or existential path by extension. Dao may thus mean “path,” “way,” “to walk,” and “to speak.” Like “qi” and “yin-yang,” Dao is best left untranslated, though it has been rendered as “Way.” Here it is important to recognize that dao was part of the shared intellectual and conceptual repertoire of ancient China (see Schwartz 1985; Graham 1989). In that context, various individuals and movements discoursed on dao. However, more often than not, such individuals meant their specific “way” or “path.” In contrast, the inner cultivation lineages of classical Daoism (see Chapters 2, 3 and
4) elevated the concept of dao to designate that which is ultimately real (“the Way”), that which transcends and encompasses all of the small daos (“ways”).

The Dao cannot be separated from the religious tradition which is Daoism. It is a Daoist cosmogonic, cosmological, and theological concept. From a Daoist perspective, veneration of the Dao and commitment to realizing the Dao involves both recognition of the character as a place-holder for [ ] and reflection on Daoist theological views. To mistake “Dao” for [ ] is either idolatry or a mistaken view.

---

**DAO BEYOND DAO**

The dao that can be spoken is not the constant Dao.
The name that can be named is not the constant Name.
Nameless—the beginning of the heavens and earth.
Named—the mother of the ten thousand beings.
Thus, constantly desireless, one may observe its subtlety.
Constantly desiring, one may observe its boundaries.
These two emerge from sameness, but differ in name.
This sameness is called “mysterious.”
Mysterious and again more mysterious—
The gateway to all that is wondrous.
(Daode jing, Chapter 1; see also Baopuzi, DZ 1185, Chapter 1)

The first line of Chapter 1 of the Daode jing reads dao kedao feichang dao, which literally means, “The dao that can be daoed (i.e. made into ‘dao’) is not the continuous Dao.” That is, the labeling of [ ] as “Dao” limits its suchness. In addition, the second to the last line reads xuan zhi you xuan, zhongmiaozhi men, which literally means, “The even more mysterious within the mysterious is the gate to all wonders.” That is, the Dao as such is a twofold mystery, a mysteriousness that even “mystery” cannot express. Similarly, in Chapter 25 of the Daode jing, we are informed: “Forced to name it, I call it ‘great’.” Here da 大, the character rendered “great,” depicts a human being (ren 人) with outstretched arms (—). The Dao as da is beyond the human capacity for comprehension (encompassment), especially through linguistic, conceptual, and intellectual frameworks. As a further expression of such views, the anonymous, eighth-century Qingjing jing (Scripture on Clarity and Stillness; DZ 620) comments, “Forced to name it, we call it ‘Dao’.” That is, even “Dao” is simply an approximation of that which is ultimately real. Moreover, as one can see from these various Daoist theological insights, there is a strong skepticism in the Daoist tradition concerning language, conceptualization, and the human tendency toward “knowing.” As Chapter 1 of the Zhuangzi explains, “Names are the guest of reality.” Moreover, in Chapter 2 of the same text, which is titled “On
Making Things Equal,” we find a major Daoist theological and existential perspective: The commitment to abiding in a state of “non-knowing” (wuzhi).

## NON-KNOWLEDING

“Suppose you and I have an argument. If you defeat me instead of me defeating you, then are you necessarily right and am I necessarily wrong? If I defeat you instead of you defeating me, then am I necessarily right and are you necessarily wrong? Is one of us right and the other wrong? Are both of us right or are both of us wrong? If you and I don’t know the answer, then other people are bound to be even more in the dark. Whom shall we get to decide what is right? Shall we get someone who agrees with you to decide? But if he already agrees with you, how can he decide fairly? Shall we get someone who agrees with me? But if he already agrees with me, how can he decide? Shall we get someone who disagrees with both of us? But if he already disagrees with both of us, how can he decide? Shall we get someone who agrees with both of us? But if he already agrees with both of us, how can he decide? Obviously, then, neither you nor I nor anyone else can decide for each other. Shall we wait for still another person? But waiting for one shifting voice [to pass judgment on] another is the same as waiting for none of them. Harmonize them all with Celestial Equality, leave them to their endless changes, and so live out your years. What do I mean by harmonizing them with Celestial Equality? Right is not right; so is not so. If right were really right, it would differ so clearly from not right that there would be no need for argument. If so were really so, it would differ so clearly from not so that there would be no need for argument. Forget the years; forget distinctions. Leap into the boundless and make it your home!” (Zhuangzi, Chapter 2; adapted from Watson 1968: 48)

This relates to apophatic discourse (based on negation, or more accurately “beyond”) as primary, and kataphatic discourse (based on affirmation) as secondary. This dimension of classical Daoism has been labeled “relativism” and “skepticism,” but such characterizations fail to recognize the ways in which such views are rooted in meditative praxis and the resulting mystical experiences and spiritual insights. That is, Daoist apophatic discourse is primarily soteriological and theological, rather than merely intellectual and philosophical. It is primarily existential (about existence) and ontological (about being), and only conventionally epistemological (about knowing).

From a Daoist perspective, that which is referred to as “Dao,” has four primary characteristics: (1) Source of all of existence; (2) Unnameable mystery; (3) All-pervading sacred presence; and (4) Universe as cosmological process. This is the foundational Daoist theology. As discussed above, everything emerged from and through the Dao’s spontaneous and impersonal process of cosmogonic unfolding and emanation. In this respect, the Dao represents an unrepresentable and incomprehensible before. From its cosmogonic emanation, all differentiated existences came into being: from
in invisible realms and cosmic ethers to solar systems, stars, and sentient life. As mentioned above, this is the Dao as “mother,” as impersonal origination process. Daoists generally believe that this emanationist process moved from more undifferentiated and subtle cosmological dimensions to more differentiated and material dimensions. That is, Daoists do not have a developmental model that privileges later forms of “evolution” (e.g. the emergence of humans on earth); such life forms are, cosmogonically speaking, more distant from the Dao as Source, as primordial unity. Various Daoist texts in turn urge practitioners to “return to the Source” (guigen). At the same time, Daoists understand the universe, world, and ultimately all things as manifestations of the Dao. The Dao is immanent in the universe, and this is so much the case that it is difficult to draw a distinction between the Dao and Nature as such. The Daoist reverence for the cosmos, and the human body by extension, is expressed in various admonitions to practice seasonal attunement, specifically through attentiveness to solar and lunar cycles (see Chapters 5, 9, 10 and 13). As a famous Daoist oral saying has it, “Out of step with the times, but not with the seasons.” The second characteristic of the Dao, as unnamable mystery, suggests that the Dao as such is beyond human linguistic and conceptual expression and intellectual comprehension. It is a mystery so mysterious that it is beyond mysteriousness. Thus, classical Daoist texts speak of the Dao as “dark” (xuan), “subtle” (miao), “dim” (hu), “indistinct” (huang), and so forth. At the same time, the Dao is an all-pervading sacred presence in the world. It can be directly experienced and participated in, and humans can cultivate a greater sensitivity to its presence, in whatever form it takes. This can occur as and through mountain summits, oak trees, extraordinary dogs, immortals, spiritual teachers, and so forth. However—and this cannot be stressed enough—there are degrees of presence. Although everything is the Dao in some sense, and everything expresses the Dao in certain respects, the sacred presence of the Dao (daqi) has different degrees of intensity and clarity (see also Chapter 7). Finally, the Dao is understood as the universe as cosmological process, specifically as expressed in the constant patterns of oscillation between yin and yang. In this respect, the Dao is the universe, but it is a universe of constant change and transformation. The Dao’s manifest patterns are most clearly observed in the shifts of the constellations and seasons. The alterations of yin and yang, rest and activity, darkness and light, cold and heat, are literally the Dao.

From this brief account, one may recognize the ways in which the primary Daoist theology is monistic, panenhenic, and panentheistic. With respect to a monistic view, everything is the Dao. The Dao is Oneness, the primordial unity before the manifest cosmos and the totality of that universe. This includes all beings in all places at all times. Here one encounters the Dao-centered perspective that many Daoists endeavor to realize. Such is primarily an impersonal or transpersonal existential approach, although it does manifest through some sentient beings as love and compassion. With respect to the panenhenic view, the universe and Nature are the Dao. To be alive as an embodied being in the world is to participate in the Dao. Here one encounters the cosmocentric dimension of Daoism. On the one hand, the universe and its constant
transformative shifts are primary; on the other hand, that universe is manifest in and expressed through each individual being. For Daoists, one problem with being human is an overemphasis on that category of being and an obsessive concern for one’s individual life. Finally, in terms of the panentheistic view, the Dao is simultaneously immanent and transcendent, neither immanent nor transcendent. Although the universe is the Dao, the Dao will not cease to exist when the universe goes out of being. Daoists hold that the Dao is both Being and Nonbeing. While there is some question as to whether the universe is deemed eternal in the Daoist tradition, careful study seems to indicate that the dominant view is a finite universe that will one day end. In this way, the classical and foundational Daoist cosmogonic account seems to parallel the contemporary Big Bang theory to some extent; after the expansion (yang) reaches its extreme, contraction (yin) will increase until all returns to primordial unity. Daoists often compare this to human respiration. From a Daoist panentheistic perspective, we cannot know either what the Dao was before this manifestation or what it might be afterwards. Such a Daoist view would, in turn, emphasize the nature of embodiment, and one’s location in a universe functioning according to yin-yang interaction.

The secondary Daoist theology is animistic and polytheistic. That is, the vast majority of Daoists throughout Chinese history believed in gods and spirits, and this remains true in contemporary Daoism. On some level, Daoists are polytheists, although one must consider Daoist conceptions of such deities (see below). Daoist polytheism recognizes both place-specific deities, usually referred to as “locality-gods” (dishen; tudi gong), as well as cosmic, divine beings. The former include mountain-gods, such as the gods of the Five Marchmounts (see Chapter 14), and the gods of the five directions. Many of these deities were adopted from the Chinese popular pantheon; they are not “Daoist gods” as such. Cosmic deities are discussed in more detail below, but they may be primordial gods, early emanations of the Dao, or apotheoses, human beings who went through a process of divinization.

Daoists also generally accept the standard Chinese distinction among gods (shen), ghosts (gui), and ancestors (zong) (see Jordan 1972; Wolf 1974). Gods are divine beings. Ghosts are disenfranchised and anomalous dead, usually those who fall outside the family structure, such as orphans or widows, or those who died unexpectedly or strangely, such as suicides. Ancestors are person-specific; they are the people from whom one descends. Ghosts are usually associated with unsettled corporeal souls (po), while ancestors are usually associated with settled ethereal souls (hun) (see ch. 7 herein). To this tripartite structure, we should also add demons (mo), important in certain Daoist movements, and immortals (xianren) and Perfected (zhenren). Demons are usually viewed as malevolent entities, disoriented spirits and/or unresolved qi patterns. Depending on the Daoist sub-tradition, they are more or less permanent and fixed. As discussed below, immortals and Perfected tend to be understood as individuals who completed a process of self-divinization, who made themselves into “gods.” However, they differ from gods as such because they are outside the bureaucratic structure and are free from obligations.
As a final Daoist theological point, many individuals find it difficult to reconcile the primary Daoist theology (monistic, panenhenic, panentheistic) with the secondary one (animistic and polytheistic). However, if one understands Daoist emanationist cosmogony, such diverse theological views are easily reconciled. The Daoist cosmogonic account does not simply address the appearance of the visible universe; it also claims an earlier cosmogonic moment during which invisible or subtle realms formed. Within the dominant Daoist theological tradition, the universe contains multiple sacred realms inhabited by multiple gods. The unseen universe is as diverse as the seen universe. As the *Laozi xiang’er zhu* (Commentary Thinking Through the Laozi; DH 56; S. 6825) explains, “The One exists beyond the heavens and earth. When it enters the space between the heavens and earth, it simply comes and goes in the human body. It resides within the entire skin; it does not dwell in just one place. The One scatters its form as qi; it assembles its form as Taishang Laojun (Great High Lord Lao), who constantly governs Mount Kunlun” (see also Chapter 12). Deities are thus simply differently differentiated aspects of the Dao, and worshipping deities is not, in and of itself, different than having reverence for the unnamable mystery which is the Dao. At the same time—and this is centrally important for understanding the Daoist tradition—gods may be “higher” on some level, but Daoist panenhenic and panentheistic commitments recognize the ways in which the Dao may manifest through everything. So, some Daoists focus on divine immortals, while others venerate embodied teachers. Both may be manifestations of the Dao. Similarly, encountering a cherry tree blooming in spring may be as much of an encounter with the Dao’s sacred presence as the appearance of Lord Lao or Lü Dongbin.

**Daoist deities and pantheons**

A comprehensive history of Daoist deities has yet to be undertaken. Here I will simply provide a few brief historical points on the “history of Daoist gods.” Such a statement highlights the fact that all gods have histories, whether one understands them in terms of revelation or human construction. This account will be followed by a discussion of Daoist theological claims regarding specifically Daoist deities. I will conclude with information on major Daoist deities, with particular emphasis on the contemporary pantheon, and Daoist interpretations of those gods.

With respect to historical development, the earliest gods to receive a place of veneration in Daoism were Xiwangmu (Queen Mother of the West) and Laojun (Lord Lao). Although the former goddess predates Daoism, she was incorporated into the Daoist pantheon quite early, partially as a source of cultural capital related to the Han dynasty cult of immortality. There are various accounts of Xiwangmu (see Cahill 1993), but a standard one locates her palace in the mythological Mount Kunlun, the western paradise, where she oversees an orchard where the peaches of immortality grow.
Every thousand years or so she holds an invitation-only banquet during which she bestows the peaches, and the lucky guests become immortals. Her standard iconography is a headdress featuring the peaches of immortality. Peaches in turn become a symbol for immortality in Daoism. Xiwangmu is also known as Yaochi jinmu (Golden Mother of the Turquoise Pond). Although contemporary Daoists recognize Xiwangmu, she tends to be less central than the goddesses Bixia yuanjun (Primordial Goddess of Cerulean Mists), Doumu (Dipper Mother), and Guanyin ([Buddhist] Bodhisattva of Compassion) (see, e.g. Despeux and Kohn 2003). Within certain Daoist views, each of these particular goddesses is simply one manifestation of the Goddess, occasionally identified as Xiwangmu herself.

The second major early Daoist deity is Laojun. Laojun is the deified Laozi (Master Lao), the pseudo-historical figure often elevated to “founder of Daoism” and attributed author of the *Daode jing* (see Chapter 2 herein; also Komjathy 2011b). Unlike Xiwangmu, Laojun is technically a Daoist deity, though the matter is complicated by the pan-Han dynasty veneration of this god. Laojun has been variously characterized as the “god of the Dao,” “deified Laozi,” “personification of the Dao,” and so forth (see Kohn 1998a). These claims suggest that attention must be given to the context-specific conception of Laojun. For example, some Daoist movements identified Laojun as the apotheosis of Laozi (Laozi became Laojun), while others saw Laozi as a manifestation of the deity (Laojun became Laozi). Historically speaking, Laozi as a “historical” personage (Warring States) predates Laojun (Early Han). In any case, as discussed in previous chapters, Laojun became the source of the founding revelation of the early Tianshi movement, and he generally maintained a place of veneration throughout Daoist history. For example, there is a Daoist theological view that emphasizes the “transformations” (*bianhua*) or “manifestations” of Laojun (see Little 2000: 174–6), including as Guangchengzi (see Chapter 3). Laojun also became the revelatory source of various later Daoist scriptures, such as the fifth-century *Xisheng jing* (Scripture on the Western Ascension; DZ 666) and eighth-century *Qingjing jing* (Scripture on Clarity and Stillness; DZ 620) (see Chapter 12 herein). In some cases, he is even elevated to the status of “creator” and “cosmocrat” (ruler of the universe) (see Kohn 1998a). As such, however, he is still a manifestation of the Dao. While he may be a more primordial and cosmic deity, he will go out of being when the universe ends.

Another pivotal development in the emergence of a standardized Daoist pantheon occurred within the early Lingbao tradition, which proposed a more primordial god named Yuanshi tianzun (Celestial Worthy of Original Beginning). Although more research needs to be done, it appears that Lingbao eventually systematized the competing early Daoist pantheons into one that became fairly standard from the Period of Disunion forward (see Kohn 2008b). This involved recognition of a triad of highest cosmic and primordial deities, namely, Yuanshi tianzun (abbr. YSTZ), Lingbao tianzun (Celestial Worthy of Numinous Treasure; abbr. LBTZ), and Daode tianzun (Celestial Worthy of the Dao and Inner Power; a.k.a. Laojun; abbr. DDTZ). These deities were, in turn, located within the Three Heavens of Yuqing (Jade Clarity), Shangqing (Highest Clarity), and Taiqing (Great Clarity), respectively. Here one notes a potentially
polemical and sectarian element. Just as early Shangqing located its heaven above that of the earlier Taiqing movement (see Chapter 2), so early Lingbao placed its associated deities in the Shangqing heavens. Especially noteworthy is the fact that the god associated with the Lingbao tradition itself is located in the highest heaven of Jade Clarity. At the same time, the highest god of the Tianshi movement, Lord Lao, is located in the third and lowest position.

The history and development of Daoist deities and pantheons are, of course, quite complex, with different gods recognized as more or less important in different historical contexts and religious movements. Generally speaking, Daoists have been quite inclusive with respect to the selection of and devotion to various deities and immortals. This tends to be dependent on individual persuasion and communal influence. Moreover, in the case of temples and sacred sites, there is also local and regional variation, often based upon specific associations (see Chapter 14). For present purposes, it is also important to locate Daoist theological claims within the larger context of Chinese culture and society. Daoists early on made claims that the Daoist pantheon was superior to both the popular gods worshipped by both common people and the society as a whole and the official pantheon established by emperors and the ruling elite. As Daoism gained cultural capital and political power, and as one of the means through which it accomplished this, Daoists made claims about the superiority (greater power and efficacy) of Daoist deities. Daoists claimed that there was another pantheon above the received one: it was inhabited by specifically Daoist deities. As discussed in Chapters 9 and 13, the Daoist gods, in contrast to the deities of Chinese society more generally, did not depend on blood offerings. In addition, they only responded to petitions offered by ordained Daoist priests. The Daoist clergy thus came to be conceptualized as more powerful, at least in spiritual matters, than the emperor himself. It was through them and their performance of efficacious rituals that cosmic and societal harmony would be established and preserved.

The number of deities in the Daoist pantheon is extremely large, and a complete inventory would require an entire book (see, e.g. CDA 1995; Little 2000; Silvers 2005: 17–51; Wang 2006: 65–92). Here I will emphasize some of the most important and representative ones, especially those that tend to be venerated in Daoist temples and monasteries. As mentioned, such deities may be either cosmic, primordial gods, or apotheoses, human beings who became gods. At the pinnacle of the standard, modern Daoist pantheon is the Sanqing (Three Purities). They are also known as the Sanzun (Three Worthies). One finds them represented as three old Chinese men, usually sitting on elevated platforms. Yuanshi tianzun sits in the center, with Lingbao tianzun on his left and Daode tianzun on his right. From a traditional Chinese perspective, this positions Yuanshi tianzun as host, and Lingbao tianzun as first guest and Daode tianzun as second guest. Here we may note a theological issue: Laojun, formerly the “high god of Daoism,” has become located in a triad in which he is technically in the lowest position. Whereas in earlier Daoist history he was a single high god, here he stands in relation to the other Three Purities. One explanation is that Daode tianzun is a more primordial, less differentiated presence, which becomes manifest
in the personal deity of Laojun. This conception parallels modern Daoist views of Yuhuang dadi (Jade Emperor), the high god of the Chinese popular pantheon.

In terms of iconography, Yuanshi tianzun usually holds a sphere or circular object in his hand, which represents unity. Lingbao tianzun holds a Ruyi scepter, which represents cosmic power and a wish-fulfilling capacity. Daode tianzun holds a fan, which usually depicts his celestial paradise and represents immortality. In a correct altar configuration, the scepter and fan extend out and away from the center as a sign of respect to Yuanshi tianzun. Different Daoists have different interpretations of the Sanqing. Some hold that they are personal, and will respond to petitions, including personal prayers. However, many modern Daoists believe that the Sanqing are impersonal, and represent the three primordial ethers or energies of the cosmos. They are usually placed on the central Daoist altar because they are the earliest emanation of the Dao, and closest to the Dao as Source. Beyond them, the Dao as primordial undifferentiation cannot be represented iconographically. The Three Purities also receive additional correspondences, including the external Three Treasures of the Dao, scriptures, and teachers, and the internal Three Treasures of spirit, qi, and vital essence (see Chapters 5 and 7).

Immediately beneath the Three Purities in importance is Yuhuang dadi (Jade Emperor). In standard Daoist accounts, he is the cosmocrat, the supreme ruler of the cosmos. The Jade Emperor is assisted by various other nature deities in governing the cosmos. Associated especially with early Tianshi (Celestial Masters) ritual, the Three Officials (sanguan) oversee heaven, earth, and water (see Chapter 13). The Five Emperors (wudi) are the rulers of the five directions (north, south, west, east, center). These Daoist deities are usually synonymous with the Five Marchmounts (see Chapter 14).

FIGURE 7 The Three Purities
Source: Frontpiece of Daozang; Duren jing, DZ 1
Other key deities are Bixia yuanjun (Primordial Goddess of Cerulean Mists), who is the daughter of the Eastern Emperor (Taishan) and protects women and children; Doumu (Dipper Mother), associated with the Northern Dipper and a salvific figure along the lines of Guanyin; Jiuku tianzun (Celestial Worthy Who Relieves Suffering), who is also a salvific figure along the lines of Guanyin; Leigong (God of Thunder), who controls thunder and lightning and who is associated with exorcism and purification; Wenchang (God of Literature and Culture), who is the patron saint of scholars and students; Yaowang (God of Medicine), who was originally the Daoist physician Sun Simiao (581–682) and who is the patron saint of physicians and aids in healing; and Zhenwu (Perfected Warrior), also known as Xuanwu (Mysterious Warrior), who is sometimes associated with Northern Emperor and martial arts. Like the immortal Zhang Sanfeng, Zhenwu is the patron saint of Wudang shan (Mount Wudang; near Shiyan, Hubei) (see Chapter 14). In addition to Doumu, we also find Daoist astronomical interests expressed in gods associated with the moon, twenty-eight (lunar) lodges (xiu; constellations), sixty stem-branch combinations, as well as the stars of the Northern and Southern Dipper. These are just some of the most important and venerated Daoist deities. As mentioned, while some Daoists understand these theistically, as actual gods (divine beings with subjectivity), many others understand them as energetic influences and spiritual resonances. We should also be aware of a “lesser god,” Wang Lingguan (Spirit Guardian Wang), who is the guardian of Daoist temples.
He is easily identifiable because of his iconography (ferocious appearance, sword, and sword hand-seal) and his location at the entrance to temples.

From a Daoist perspective, every god, like every being in the manifest universe, is finite and ephemeral. While deities may seem eternal from a limited human perspective, they will eventually go out of existence and become reabsorbed into the Dao’s totality. Daoist theological views also make space for the emergence and disappearance of gods, as well as for the possibility of self-divinization. Thus, the boundaries between “divinity,” “nature,” and “humanity” are permeable, and the historical Daoist pantheon is an ever-expanding and ever-contracting one.

Daoists often revere immortals (xianren) and Perfected (zhenren), beings who have completed the process of self-transformation and who serve as inspiring models. They tend to be understood as individuals who completed a process of self-divinization, who made themselves into “gods.” The standard character xian 仙, variously translated as “ascendent,” “immortal,” and “transcendent,” consists of ren 人 (“human”) and shan 山 (“mountain”), thus apparently emphasizing seclusion and loftiness (see Chapter 4). The alternative character xian 僊 consists of ren 人 and qian 無 (“to fly”). Immortals transcend the limitations of mundane concerns and terrestrial life, especially associated with mortality. In this respect, we should note that there has been much debate about the best translation of xianren, here rendered as “immortal.” “Immortal” suggests eternal life, while “transcendent” suggests going beyond ordinary existential and ontological modes. Both translations are viable, but limited (see Komjathy 2007a: 216). Throughout Chinese history, Daoists have also distinguished various types of immortals. For example, Ge Hong (Baopu [Embracing Simplicity]; 283–347) presented one of the earliest typologies of Daoist immortals.

**TYPES OF DAOIST IMMORTALS**

Superior adepts who rise up in their bodies and ascend to the Void are called celestial immortals (tianxian). Mid-level adepts who wander among renowned mountains are called terrestrial immortals (dixian). Lesser adepts who first die and then cast off [their shell] are called corpse-liberated immortals (shijie xian).

*(Baopuzi neipian, DZ 1185, 2.11a; see also Lai 1998; Campany 2002, especially 75-80)*

In an influential and nearly standard late medieval expression, associated with the Zhong-Lü textual tradition (see Chapter 2), there are five types: “The immortals have five ranks, including ghost immortal, human immortal, terrestrial immortal, and spirit immortal. The celestial immortal is beyond rank. All of these are immortals” *(Chuandao ji, DZ 263, 14.2b; also Jinguan yusuo jue, DZ 1156, 13a; Komjathy 2007a: 337–8; see*
also Wong 2000: 23–30). Many texts in turn describe the corresponding levels of attainment, degrees of rarification, as well as numinous abilities and divine qualities (see Chapter 11 herein; Komjathy 2007a: 216–38). In standard accounts, the “spirit immortals” and “celestial immortals” are highest.

Different periods of history and different movements have emphasized different immortals and Perfected. Some major early important figures include Zhang Daoling, Wei Huacun, Ge Hong, Lu Xiujing, Tao Hongjing, and Sima Chengzhen (see Chapter 2). This is not to mention important figures from classical Daoism (see Chapter 3) as well as the many names that appear in various Daoist hagiographies (biographies of saints) (see Chapters 3 and 4). In the case of contemporary Quanzhen Daoism and popular Daoist devotionalism, Zhongli Quan and Lü Dongbin are probably the most venerated. As documented in the Quanzhen liturgy (see Chapter 13) and as manifested in Quanzhen temple configuration and altars, there are three Quanzhen sets of immortals: (1) Five Northern Patriarchs, five key figures in early Quanzhen; (2) Five Southern Patriarchs, five key figures in the so-called Nanzong (Southern School) of internal alchemy; and (3) Seven Perfected, the seven senior Shandong disciples of Wang Zhe (see Chapter 2). The Five Northern Patriarchs include Wang Xuanpu (Donghua dijun), Zhongli Quan, Lü Dongbin, Liu Haichan, and Wang Zhe. Occasionally Laozi is added before Donghua dijun, and Liu Haichan is subtracted. Here the Five Southern Patriarchs include Zhang Boduan, Shi Tai, Xue Shi, Chen Nan, and Bai Yuchan. The Eight Immortals are a more popular and “trans-Daoist” (pan-Chinese) group. The most famous and popular list includes Cao Guojiu, Han Xiangzi, Han Zhongli (Zhongli Quan), He Xiang, Lan Caihe, Li Tieguai, Lü Dongbin, and Zhang Guolao. There are many popular stories about these characters, both within Daoism and in late medieval and late imperial Chinese fiction and theatre. While there are many different meanings, devotionalism is a strong dimension of popular Daoist religiosity, including various forms of offering and petition. In this respect, immortals also become one dimension of pilgrimage and tourism: Chen Tuan is venerated at Huashan; Laozi at Louguan tai; Zhang Sanfeng at Wudangshan; and so forth (see Chapter 14).

---

**FURTHER READING**


“Self” refers to the various dimensions that make up human personhood. Understood in an integrated way, “self” includes corporeal, psychological, cognitive, spiritual, inter-subjective and cultural aspects. That is, a comprehensive understanding of self acknowledges personhood as psychosomatic, relational, and social. In this context, one might prefer to use the theological concept of anthropology, or “discourse on the human” (see also Robinet 1997: 7–14; Miller 2008: 17–22). In the case of religious traditions, self is usually seen as consisting of trans-human or “divine elements.” Moreover, human meaning and purpose are often defined in relation to that which is identified as sacred (see Chapter 6). Anthropology is, in turn, another foundational aspect related to Daoist worldview.

From a comparative and cross-cultural perspective, we may identify a number of primary views of self: (1) Docetic (self as eternal soul); (2) Spiritist (self as transitory spirit); (3) Psychosomatic (self as mind-body system); (4) Materialist or naturalistic (self as biological organism); and (5) Composite (self as combination of disparate elements). The latter usually includes “spiritual” dimensions, but these elements separate upon physical death. A composite view is also expressed in the foundational Buddhist notion of anatman (“no soul”), which emphasizes “self” as an illusory
construct composed of the Five Aggregates (see below). One might label this and similar conceptions as “impermanence views.” Although not necessarily mutually exclusive, these various views of self place different degrees of emphasis on “body” and “mind” conventionally understood. That is, some see the body as relatively insignificant (docetic), while others almost equate self with body (materialist/naturalistic), or at least with biological processes (e.g. consciousness as hard-wired neural processes). As discussed below, views of self directly relate to death, dying, and the afterlife. In all cases, there are different perspectives on the relative importance of the body, both in life and in determining one’s post-mortem fate. These various points, of course, require that one understands the specific conceptions of “body” and “mind” within particular cultural, philosophical, and religious systems.

Daoists generally emphasize the importance of the body, and the foundational Daoist view of self tends to be among the more body-affirming of the world’s religions. In particular, Daoists have mapped the body as internal landscape, as microcosm, as alchemical crucible, as residence of divinities, and as manifestation of the Dao (see Schipper 1978, 1993; Needham et al. 1983; Despeux 1994, 1996; Kohn 1991c; Komjathy 2007a, 2008c, 2009). Developing Kohn (1991c), and for the purposes of the present chapter and for future research, I would identify seven primary Daoist views of self, some of which often overlap: (1) Naturalistic; (2) Cosmological; (3) Bureaucratic; (4) Theological; (5) Ascetic (including demonological); (6) Alchemical; and (7) Mystical. The naturalistic view, especially prominent in classical Daoism, views the body as part of Nature, specifically as an organic and “biological” entity destined to decompose. Overlapping with the naturalistic view, the cosmological view sees self as a microcosm, specifically as an expression of correlative cosmology (see Chapter 6). This view is one of the foundational and dominant Daoist views of self; it is utilized in various Daoist training regimens. Paralleling classical Chinese medicine, the bureaucratic view sees the body as ordered hierarchically and functionally like the traditional Chinese imperial bureaucracy. In particular, the heart is seen as the “ruler,” supported by each of the body’s organs as “officials” or “ministers” responsible for specific functions. The theological view sees the body both as a manifestation of the Dao and as inhabited by an inner pantheon, specifically by body-gods. This view was especially prominent in Shangqing, though it also appears in internal alchemy. The ascetic view sees the body as inhabited by malevolent entities. It was one of the major views of medieval Daoism; it tends to become psychologized from the late medieval period forward. Overlapping in certain respects with ascetic views, and incorporating dimensions from the cosmological and theological views, the alchemical view understands self as an alchemical crucible, as a vessel in which alchemical transformation occurs. From the late Tang dynasty forward, this view became utilized in internal alchemy. Finally, paralleling the theological and alchemical views in certain ways, the mystical view understands the body as a portal into the Dao. Specifically, it understands the body as having subtle, semi-spatial or non-spatial dimensions that may be accessed through Daoist practice. These views help to make sense of the complex and diverse doctrinal and practical dimensions of the Daoist tradition. They should not
be understood to indicate a “fragmented self”; they are different, sometimes comple-
mentary, sometimes not, views of self related to specific Daoist movements and
training regimens. We should also remember that the Daoist community as a whole
is often conceptualized as “the Daoist body” (see Schipper 1993; Chapter 1 herein).

Composite personhood

Paralleling a traditional Chinese worldview, the foundational Daoist view of self is that
of composite personhood. It appears that there were two principal classical Daoist
maps of personhood. The first was the fairly standard Chinese view of a composite
self consisting of two primary spiritual elements. The second was also a composite
view, but here the person was seen as a temporary accumulation of qi, of subtle
breath as animating power. These are not mutually exclusive, and they may have
been simply different ways of expressing the same fundamental Daoist anthropology.
The key connective strand is that, from a traditional Chinese and foundational Daoist
perspective, one’s self is composite and ephemeral. Human beings contain both
“biological” and “spiritual” elements. However—and this is centrally important for
understanding Daoism—every aspect of self is transitory and impermanent. We may
think of this in terms of atoms, although that concept is foreign to Daoism. Just as
atoms break apart and reform into new configurations, so too every dimension of self
is reabsorbed and recycled in the energy system of the cosmos. This is an impersonal
view of the cosmos and selfhood, and it stands in contrast to classical Hellenistic and
Hindu views of an eternal soul, whether going through one lifetime or multiple ones
(reincarnation). That is, from a classical and foundational Daoist perspective, one is
not eternal, and if there is post-mortem existence, it is temporary. The ultimate fate of
ordinary human beings is to disappear into the cosmos.

The first Daoist expression of a composite view of personhood is the so-called
“two-soul model.” We find this view expressed in some classical Daoist sources such
as Chapter 10 of the Daode jing, “Carrying the ethereal and corporeal souls, embracing
the One, can you be without separation?” The Zhuangzi expresses a similar view.
From this perspective, the person consists of one hun and one po, though in the later Daoist tradition these are sometimes three and seven in number, respectively (see below). The former is conventionally translated as “cloud” or “ethereal soul,” while the latter is conventionally rendered as “white” or “corporeal soul.” The use of “soul” is misleading, as it implies something substantial and eternal. In understanding these terms, it is helpful to examine them etymologically. Hun 魂 consists of yun 云 (“cloud”) and gui 鬼 (“ghost”), while po 魄 consists of bai 白 (“white”) and gui 鬼 (“ghost”). The use of gui indicates that these aspects of self are ethereal, ephemeral, apparitional, and animating; the hun and po are best understood as animating forces or spiritual elements. “Cloud” is used for hun to suggest that it is more ethereal, while “white” is used for po to suggest that it is more material and physical. For clarity’s sake, one may think of the hun as the yang-ghost and the po as the yin-ghost: the yang-ghost is associated with subtle and celestial aspects of self, while the yin-ghost is associated with the flesh and bones. According to the standard account, after death, the various composite aspects of self separate. The hun ascends into the heavens to become an ancestor, while the po descends into the earth, eventually dissipating as the body decomposes. In the standard account, one remains an ancestor for seven generations, though it is unclear to what extent this is a conscious and intentional post-mortem existence, rather than an “influence” partially maintained through the act of remembrance and ritual offerings by one’s descendants. In any case, it is important to note that the hun and po are ephemeral, and eventually dissipate into the cosmos.

The second Daoist expression of a composite view of personhood centers on qi: “Human life is a coming-together of qi. If it comes together, there is life; if it scatters, there is death” (Zhuangzi, Chapter 22; see also ibid., Chapter 4; Daode jing, Chapter 42). According to this perspective, one’s being is a relatively random occurrence, wherein qi happens to come together in a specific way at a specific time. This apparent randomness is, of course, offset by various factors, which Daoists recognize: one is born in a specific place at a specific time within a specific family. There are thus astronomical, astrological, and constitutional aspects of personhood that manifest as one’s unique being.
These passages point towards the Dao as an impersonal, cosmological process, and challenge the nearly ubiquitous anthropocentrism of the world’s cultures. At times, these Daoist views of personhood seem to border on being ecological, in which each and every being is part of a larger system. Within that system, the death and decomposition of some beings is necessary for the sustenance and flourishing of others. Here compost seems to be both a viable metaphor and lived experience of human existence.

***

“I received life because the time had come; I will lose it because the order of things passes on. Be content with this time and dwell in this order and then neither sorrow nor joy can touch you. In ancient times this was called ‘freeing the bound.’ There are those who cannot free themselves because they are bound by things. But nothing can ever win against the heavens—that’s the way it’s always been.” (ibid., Chapter 6)

COMPOSITION, DECOMPOSITION, RECOMPOSITION

The seeds of things have mysterious workings (ji). In the water they become Break Vine; on the edges of the water they become Frog’s Robe. If they sprout on slopes, they become Hill Slippers. If Hill Slippers get rich soil, they turn into Crow’s Feet. The roots of Crow’s Feet turn into maggots and their leaves turn into butterflies. Before long the butterflies are transformed and turn into insects that live under the stove; they look like snakes and their name is Qutuo. After a thousand days, the Qutuo insects become birds called Dried Leftover Bones. The saliva of the Dried Leftover Bones becomes Simi bugs, and the Simi bugs become Vinegar Eaters. Yiluo bugs are born from the Vinegar Eaters, and Huangshuang bugs from Jiuyou bugs. Jiuyou bugs are born from Mourui bugs and Mourui bugs are born from Rot Grubs and Rot Grubs are born from Sheep’s Groom. Sheep’s Groom couples with bamboo that has not sprouted for a long while and produces Green Peace plants. Green Peace plants produce leopards and leopards produce horses and horses produce humans. Humans in time return again to the mysterious workings. So all beings come out of the mysterious workings and go back into it again. (Zhuangzi, Chapter 18; adapted from Watson 1968: 195–6)
While this passage seems to derive from both the close observation of natural cycles and creative imaginings about the relation between sentient beings and the “mysterious workings,” the text expresses a biocentric and organicist understanding of the Dao as transformative process. Through reciprocal and mutually influencing patterns of interaction, some beings are born from and nourished by others. This is a complex, interdependent set of relationships; it is beyond the comprehension of most human beings. Thus, one must speak of it as both observable and mysterious. All beings participate in and express the Dao’s transformative process, emerging from and then eventually returning to its interconnected totality. This is as true for human beings as for fern leaves and maggots.

Viewing the classical and foundational Daoist composite view of self, various interpretations are possible. At times, this view seems to be more materialistic and naturalistic, more biological and organic. One gets the impression of participating in a vast compost system. At other times, there seems to be a spiritist dimension, that is, it seems that human beings contain spiritual elements that, at least for some period of time, transcend physical death. It is important to note, however, that the Daoist composite view of self has a psychosomatic (“mind-body”) dimension: one’s post-mortem fate, at least the fate of the po, is dependent upon the proper treatment of the body. This is expressed in the traditional Chinese and Daoist practice of full-body interment as the primary burial and funeral practice.

**Ascetic and alchemical views**

In order to understand various later Daoist practices, goals, and ideals, it is essential to be familiar with the foundational Daoist view of personhood as composite self. The ordinary human being, like all organic entities, is destined to decompose and be reabsorbed into the cosmos. The classical Daoist response to such an existential given was acceptance and cosmic integration. Within the context of the inner cultivation lineages, Daoist adepts practiced apophatic meditation with the goal of mystical union with the Dao (see Chapter 11). This transpersonal experience revealed the transitory and illusory nature of separate existence. To be a separate individual, especially one rooted in egoistic desires, was to be separated from the Dao, at least when viewed from an experiential and psychological perspective. Once one attained disappearance of self and abided in the Dao, one came to understand that death and life are part of the same transformative process. In some sense, higher-level Daoist practitioners die while still alive, and so their way of perceiving death becomes transformed. Nonetheless, death was still the end of personhood and terrestrial being. One dies, and death is nothingness on a personal level.

However, as time went on, some Daoists proposed a different response and solution to the givenness of a composite self and its dissipation through death. From this perspective, which I refer to as the “alchemical view,” one can unite the disparate
aspects of self into a single whole. That imagined goal is actualized and accomplished; it is not given. Through complex alchemical processes, whether external or internal, one could create a transcendent spirit, one could ensure personal post-mortem existence. Considered from a more encompassing Daoist perspective, one can simply accept one's bio-spiritual fate to disappear into the cosmos; within such a Daoist religious path, one cultivates a sense of cosmological and mystical integration. However, if one wants personal post-mortem existence, there is only one choice: to engage in alchemical practice. Even then, perhaps disturbingly, there is no guarantee of success.

The alchemical view is connected to three movements in Chinese history: the cult of immortality and Fangshi (“formula masters”) lineages; external alchemy (waidan; lit., “outer pill” or “outer cinnabar”), also translated as “laboratory” or “operational alchemy”; and internal alchemy (neidan; lit., “inner pill” or “inner cinnabar”), also translated as “physiological alchemy.”

The cult of immortality gained prominence during the Early Han dynasty (206 BCE–9 CE) (see Csikszentmihalyi 2000; Penny 2000). At this time, many Chinese emperors employed the services of Fangshi and sent out expeditions in search of the “immortal realms” of Penglai Island (east) and Mount Kunlun (west). Many members of the cultural elite, Daoists included, imagined a way to transcend the confines of ordinary human being. This eventually involved the search for methods and formulas to become a xianren, variously translated as “ascendant,” “immortal,” or “transcendent” (see also Chapter 6).

The earliest materials related to external alchemy (waidan) date to the Later Han dynasty (9–220 CE) and the Period of Disunion (220–589). Simply stated, external alchemy involves combining various rare substances and ingredients into “elixirs” (dan) or chemical compounds that could fuse together the elements of the composite self so that one would either postpone physical death or gain personal post-mortem existence.

In early external alchemy, one also finds a more complex mapping of the composite self, the original source of which is difficult to trace, although it was widely used in the early medieval Daoist tradition. According to this map, human beings consist of the Three Hun (sanhun), Three Death-bringers (sanshi), Seven Po (qipo), and Nine Worms (jiuchong). This view evidences ascetic tendencies as well. One of the standard sources on these various substances is the ninth-century Chu sanshi jiuchong jing (Scripture on Expelling the Three Death-bringers and Nine Worms; DZ 871), which includes illustrations. According to this text, the Three Hun are positive in nature, while the other three dimensions of self are negative influences. The Three Hun are the three yang and positive spirits associated with the liver (1ab). They are identified (right to left) as Shuangling (Lively Numen), Taiguang (Terrace Radiance), and Youjing (Mysterious Essence). Here one is informed: “The Three Hun are located beneath the liver. They look like human beings and wear green robes with yellow inner garments. Every month on the third, thirteenth, and twenty-third, they leave the body in the evening to go wandering around” (1b). One of the main goals in alchemical practice is to keep the Three Hun within the body.
Alternatively rendered as “Three Corpses” and sometimes appearing as “Three Worms” (sanchong), the Three Death-bringers are conventionally understood as three biospiritual parasites residing in the human body. They reside in the three elixir fields (dantian), namely, Palace of Nirvana (center of head), Vermilion Palace (heart region), and Ocean of Qi (lower abdomen). The Chu sanshi jiuchong jing (DZ 871, 7a–8a) contains illustrations of the Three Death-bringers, wherein they are identified as follows (right to left): Peng Ju (upper), Peng Zhi (middle), and Peng Jiao (lower) (see also DZ 817). Thus, they are sometimes referred to as the “Three Pengs” (sanpeng). Other texts, such as the Sanchong zhongjing (Central Scripture on the Three Death-bringers; Yunji qiqian, DZ 1032, 81.15b–17a), provide alternative names: Qinggu
VIEWS OF SELF

(Blue Decrepitude; upper), Baigu (White Hag; middle), and Xueshi (Bloody Corpse; lower) (also DZ 303, 4a). Various malevolent and harmful influences are attributed to them, including inciting people to become greedy, angry, forgetful, deluded, sexually deviant, and so forth.

From an early medieval Daoist perspective, the Seven Po are also bio-spiritual entities which exert negative influences on the individual and which lead to dissipation, and often to premature death. In the eleventh-century encyclopedia Yunji qiqian (Seven Tablets from a Cloudy Satchel; DZ 1032), they are identified as follows (right to left): (1) Shigou (Corpse Dog), (2) Fushi (Concealed Arrow), (3) Queyin (Sparrow Yin), (4) Tunzei (Seizing Thief), (5) Feidu (Negative Poison), (6) Chuhui (Oppressive Impurity), and (7) Choufei (Putrid Lungs) (54.7ab). Visual representations appear in the Chu sanshi jiuchong jing (DZ 871, 3a). According to that text, “The Seven Po consist of yin and deviant qi. They are ghosts. They can make people into walking corpses, causing them to be stingy and greedy, jealous and full of envy. They give people bad dreams and make them clench their teeth. They command the mouth to say ‘yes’ when the heart-mind thinks ‘no’. In addition, they cause people to lose their vital essence in sexual passion and become dissipated by hankering after luxury and ease. Through them, people completely lose their purity and simplicity” (2a).

Finally, the Nine Worms are nine material parasites residing in the human body. Visual representations appear in the Chu sanshi jiuchong jing (DZ 871, 9a–14a). Here they are identified as follows (right to left): (1) Fuchong (Slinking Worm), (2) Huichong (Coiling Worm), (3) Baichong (White Worm), (4) Rouchong (Flesh Worm), (5) Feichong (Lung Worm), (6) Weichong (Stomach Worm), (7) Gechong (Diaphragm Worm), (8) Chichong (Crimson Worm), and (9) Qiaochong (Stilted Worm). This and related texts also provide the length (between one and four inches) and colors of the various worms, indicating that they were seen as material in nature.

As one might expect, the aspiring alchemist aims to expel or transform the Three Death-bringers, Seven Po, and Nine Worms. One relevant formula appears in the Lingbao wufu xu (Explanations of the Five Talismans of Numinous Treasure; DZ 388), wherein one is advised to combine wild asparagus root (tianmen dong) with poke root (shanglu) (see Chapter 9). In this respect it is difficult to separate specific views of self from their related practices and projected soteriological goals (see Komjathy 2007a). Here the Daoist adept engages in ascetic and dietetic practice, specifically in what is known as bigu, “grain avoidance” or “abstention from cereals.” As discussed in Chapter 9, it appears that bigu frequently refers to fasting more generally, rather than simply eliminating grains from one’s diet. In any case, from this dietetic and external alchemical viewpoint, one must expel “the worms,” probably actual parasites in the present context, but possibly also the Three Death-bringers. The latter is possible because bigu practice often involves this informing worldview. Here one finds both a parasitological and possibly even demonological view of the body—it houses malevolent biospiritual parasites and actual worms, which must be expelled in order to attain longevity and immortality. This begs the question of the “natural condition” of the human body and the relationship between Daoist anthropological and theological views.
There is some debate as to whether early medieval Daoists actually sought bodily immortality; that is, there is debate about the relative strength of a psychosomatic view of self in medieval Daoism (see Cedzich 2001; Campany 2002: 47–60). In some cases, it appears that Daoists could not imagine “immortality,” or complete personhood, without a body; for these early medieval Daoists, “immortality” seems to have meant extended longevity on earth. In other cases, the body was recognized as a “shell,” out of which a unified spirit could exit. It is the latter view that informs internal alchemy.

As discussed in Chapters 2 and 11, fully systematized internal alchemy (neidan) first emerged during the late medieval period, specifically during the late Tang (618–907) and Northern Song (960–1126). From this period forward, it became one of the primary forms of Daoist religious practice. As the name suggests, internal alchemy focuses on inner transformation, specifically through the physiological and energetic transformation of the mundane self. It is “internal” because internal alchemists believe that the “elixir of immortality” is *within* the body; one does not need to take external substances as in the case of external alchemy. Here we should note that, while internal alchemy emerged from external alchemy, it did not wholly replace it. The practice of external alchemy continued alongside that of internal alchemy, even into the contemporary period. The latter tends to be in the form of medicine, but there are contemporary Daoists who continue to ingest actual cinnabar and similar substances.

Continuing the early medieval and external alchemy attempt to map the self in terms of positive and negative dimensions, early internal alchemy texts also contain references to the Three Death-bringers, Seven Po, and Nine Worms. In this context, they frequently appear to become psychologized, that is, understood as negative and depleting emotional aspects of self that must be transformed. More common, however, is a map of alchemical transformation focusing on the Three Poisons (sandu), Six Thieves (liuzei), and Ten Demons (shimo) (Komjathy 2007a). Adapted from Buddhism, the former refer to greed, anger, and ignorance. In this framework, one also finds reference to “defilements” (lit., “dirt”; chen) and “vexations” (fannao). The latter include such consciousness states as covetousness, anger, ignorance, arrogance, doubt, and false views. Also appearing as the Six Roots (liugen) and Six Desires (liuyu), the Six Thieves refer to the eyes (seeing), ears (hearing), nose (smelling), mouth (tasting), body (feeling), and mind (thinking). For late medieval internal alchemists, these are potential sources of dissipation. Finally, the so-called Ten Demons are additional harmful psychological influences. According to the tenth-century *Chuandaoji* (Anthology on the Transmission of the Dao; DZ 263, 16.25a–26b) and late thirteenth-century *Dadan zhizhi* (Direct Pointers to the Great Elixir; DZ 244, 2.5a–6b), they are as follows: (1) Demon of the Six Desires, (2) Demon of the Seven Emotions, (3) Demon of Wealth, (4) Demon of Nobility, (5) Demon of Affection, (6) Demon of Calamity, (7) Demon of Violence, (8) Demon of Sagely Excellence, (9) Demon of Prostitute Pleasure, and (10) Demon of Women and Sex. Here we note that the latter two “demons” express a male-centered perspective and have a patriarchal bias, although they probably also provide a glimpse into male ascetic and monastic experience. That
being said, the presence of any of these psychological states indicates that alchemical transformation has not yet been completed.

The alchemical view of self further involves understanding the subtle aspects of personhood. The body contains “vital substances,” including vital essence (jing), fluids (jinye), qi, and spirit (shen). Internal alchemists often emphasize the importance of the internal Three Treasures (nei sanbao), namely, vital essence, qi, and spirit (see also Chapter 11). Vital essence is one’s foundational or core vitality. It is associated with sexual reproduction, and specifically with menstrual blood in women and semen in men. Fluids are straightforward, but perhaps relatively unfamiliar is the Daoist view that alchemical practice produces clear and sweet saliva. Often referred to as the Jade Nectar (yujiang), Spirit Water (shenshui), and Sweet Dew (ganlu), this saliva is swallowed during Daoist alchemical practice. Best left untranslated like “Dao” and “yin-yang,” qi relates to both air derived from material respiration and vital breath, subtle currents that flow through the cosmos and the body (see Chapter 6). Although anachronistic, some people find it helpful to think of qi as “energy.” Finally, spirit is even more subtle than qi; it is often associated with divine capacities and consciousness. Etymologically speaking, shen 神 consists of shi 示 (“omen”) and shen 申 (“to extend”). Spirit is a capacity to connect with subtle realities. In the context of internal alchemy practice, the practitioner attempts to conserve and prevent the dissipation of these aspects of self. This often involves temporary or permanent celibacy.² The standard, simplified alchemical process, in turn, involves three basic stages: (1) Transforming vital essence into qi, (2) Transforming qi into spirit, and (3) Transforming spirit into emptiness.

The alchemical view of self also utilizes the so-called organ-meridian system, which parallels Chinese medicine to a certain extent. It thus relates to correlative cosmology and a “cosmological view of self” (see Chapters 6, 9 and 10). Taken together, one might refer to the vital substances and organ-meridian system as the “Daoist alchemical body” (Komjathy 2007a). The organs refer to the five yin-organs and the six yang-organs. The former include the liver, heart, spleen, lungs, and kidneys. The latter include the gall bladder, small intestine, stomach, large intestine, urinary bladder, and Triple Warmer. Paired with the five yin-organs, the pericardium is added as the yin counterpart to the Triple Warmer. Each of these organs has specific functions. Taken as a whole, they form a corporeal energetic network called the twelve meridians, which are the pathways or channels through which qi circulates. These are the energy channels associated with the twelve organs. In addition to the twelve primary meridians, Daoist internal alchemy also utilizes the Eight Extraordinary Vessels. These include the Governing Vessel (center of back), Conception Vessel (center of torso), Belt Vessel (around the waist), Thrusting Vessel (through center of body), and two arm and two leg channels. These are utilized in different ways in Daoist alchemical practice. One typical example involves connecting the Governing and Conception vessels through a practice known as the Lesser Celestial Circuit (Microcosmic Orbit; xiao zhoutian) and as the Waterwheel (heche). Within this practice, one keeps the tip of the tongue touching the upper palate, while one circulates qi up the Governing Vessel and down the Conception Vessel. This forms a complete energetic circuit.
Daoist internal alchemy practice also utilizes various subtle or mystical corporeal locations (see Komjathy 2007a, 2008c, 2009). Drawing on various earlier sources, but especially esoteric names found in the third-century Huangting jing (Scripture on the Yellow Court; DZ 331; DZ 332), this aspect of Daoist subtle anatomy and physiology consists of the so-called “elixir fields” (dantian) and Nine Palaces (jiugong), among others. The standard three elixir fields are as follows: (1) Palace of Nirvana (center of the head), (2) Vermilion Palace (heart), and (3) Ocean of Qi (lower abdomen). In some systems, the heart is excluded. The Ocean of Qi then becomes the middle elixir field, while the Earth Door (perineum) becomes the lower elixir field. Also occasionally referred to as the Nine Peaks (jiufeng), the Nine Palaces refer to nine “mystical cranial locations” (see below).

Reminding ourselves of the composite nature of self from a foundational Daoist perspective, the goal of alchemical practice is complete psychosomatic transformation, specifically the formation of a transcendent spirit. The process involves refining the negative aspects of self into their positive counterparts. It also involves conserving one’s foundational vitality and storing the vital substances within the body. As one integrates and transforms these various dimensions of self, one gradually becomes a unified energetic and spirit being. Internal alchemists refer to the culmination of alchemical practice as the formation of the “immortal embryo” (xiantai), “yang-spirit” (yangshen), and “body-beyond-the-body” (shenwai shen). Through alchemical practice, one may create a transcendent spirit. One may become an immortal guaranteed of personal postmortem existence (see Chapters 6 and 11).

The inner landscape

Another distinctive Daoist view of self identifies the body as microcosm and internal landscape. In a certain way, this view, first documented in early and early medieval Daoism, develops the classical and foundational Daoist naturalistic and cosmological conception of personhood.

THE TRANSFORMATION OF LAOZI

Laozi transformed his form. His left eye became the sun, and his right eye became the moon. His head became Mount Kunlun. His beard became the planets and constellations. His bones became dragons; his flesh, wild animals; and his intestines, snakes. His belly became the ocean; his fingers, the five sacred mountains; and his hair, grasses and trees. His heart became the Flowery Canopy [the constellation Cassiopeia]. Finally, his two kidneys were united and became the true father and mother. (Xiaodao lun, T. 3102, 52.144b13-15; cf. Yunji qiqian, DZ 1032, 10.7b-8a; see Schipper 1993: 114; also Kohn 1995: 54-5)
From certain Daoist perspectives, Laozi is the cosmos and the cosmos is Laozi. Through Daoist religious practice, he merged with the Dao and became the universe. Laozi in turn represents the Daoist adept’s own possibility—each person’s eyes are the sun and the moon, and each practitioner’s consciousness contains the numinous presence that “Laozi” embodied. The “essence” of the Dao and the Daoist tradition is literally contained in one’s own brain. The human being, from this Daoist perspective, is a cosmological being: one’s very own body contains mountains, temples, constellations, and the locus for immortality and perfection. In some forms of Daoist religious praxis, specifically visualization (cunxiang) and inner observation (neiguan) forms of meditation, the Daoist adept “reverts the radiance” (fanzhao), turning the light of the sun and moon (the eyes) inward and thus illuminating the internal landscape which is his or her own body.

In addition, as Kristofer Schipper has explained in his influential explorations of the Daoist body (1978, 1993), the Daoist vision of body as landscape includes the importance of mountains (see also Chapters 4 and 14 herein).

‘The human body is the image of a country,’ say the Taoists. There they see mountains and rivers, ponds, forests, paths, and barriers, a whole landscape laid out with dwellings, palaces, towers, walls, and gates sheltering a vast population. It is a civilized state, administered by lords and ministers. (Schipper 1993: 100, passim; see also Kohn 1991c)

Here the body as country is populated by diverse inhabitants (bureaucratic view), and the harmony of the country depends on mutually beneficial relationships among the inhabitants. One might suggest that this is a vision of the body as ecosystem. Schipper in turn documents the ways in which the body is seen as a mountain and the central significance of mountains in the Daoist tradition, not only actual physical mountains and mountain seclusion, but also mountains as metaphors. With respect to the latter, Daoists frequently use the phrase “enter the mountains” (rushan) to mean both ascending the altar to perform Daoist ritual (Schipper 1993: 91) and engaging in Daoist meditation. The former interpretation is supported by the fact that early Daoist altars were mounds of raised earth in the open air, preferably on actual mountain peaks, and that Daoist incense burners, a central component of Daoist altars (see Chapters 13 and 15), are often shaped like mountains (ibid.: 91–2).

The Daoist view of the body as internal landscape was eventually expressed in illustrations, or “Daoist body maps.” Two of the earliest extant diagrams come from the late Southern Song dynasty (1127–1279) or early Yuan dynasty (1279–1368), and both are referred to as the “Neijing tu” (Internal Landscape Map) (Zazhu jiejing, DZ 263, 18.2b–3b; Nanjing zuantu jujie, DZ 1024, 5a–6b; Needham et al. 1983: 109–10; Despeux 1994).
These body maps established precedents for the two most famous Daoist diagrams, namely, the *Neijing tu* (Diagram of Internal Pathways; see Komjathy 2008c, 2009) and *Xiuzhen tu* (Diagram for Cultivating Perfection; see Despeux 1994). Dating to the late nineteenth century, both of these diagrams were commissioned by Liu Chengyin (Suyun [Pure Cloud]; d. 1894), a Longmen monk and court eunuch. They are stone steles now housed at Baiyun guan (White Cloud Monastery, Beijing), with global distribution in the form of ink rubbings on paper.

The *Neijing tu* is a map of the Daoist internal landscape and a storehouse of Daoist cultivation practices, and depicts the head and torso of the Daoist body as seen from the side and in seated meditation posture. It illustrates recognizable aspects of the human body in combination with Daoist subtle anatomy and physiology. The spinal column, framed on the right and connecting the lower torso with the cranial cavity, draws one’s immediate attention. It combines a conventional representation of the spinal column with specifically Daoist realities: three temples can be seen within the spine, corresponding to the Three Passes (*sanguan*) through which Daoist adepts engaging in the process of alchemical transformation endeavor to circulate qi. In addition, the three elixir fields (*san dantian*)—with the lower one corresponding to the ox (abdominal region), the middle to the Cowherd (heart region), and the upper to the old man (head region)—are clearly discernable. One also notes the head as a
series of mountain peaks and the presence of bridges and pagodas inside the body. In addition, streams are flowing throughout the map (and throughout the body). These various details reveal the internal landscape discovered and actualized through Daoist cultivation, specifically within certain circles of late imperial Daoism and branches of Daoist internal alchemy.

**Buddhist-influenced perspectives**

The previously painted picture becomes more complex with the introduction of Buddhism as one of the so-called Three Teachings (*sanjiao*). Introduced into China by Central Asian merchants and missionary-monks during the first and second centuries CE, Buddhism was initially rejected as a “foreign,” and therefore inferior, religion (see Chapter 2). However, after about two hundred years, Chinese people began converting to Buddhism in larger numbers. Buddhist views and practices became more commonplace, and Daoists began adopting various elements of Buddhism. This led to pivotal cross-pollinations: Chan (Zen) Buddhism developed under the influence of classical Daoist texts, while Daoists began to systematize their tradition along Buddhist lines, including the creation of Daoist monasticism (see Chapters 3 and 4).

In terms of the present chapter, Buddhism introduced an entirely new worldview from India into Chinese culture. This worldview centered on karma, samsara, and nirvana. Karma is the universal law of moral cause and effect. Positive (moral) actions lead to beneficial results and influences; negative (immoral) actions lead to harmful results and influences. This occurs within the context of samsara, the apparently endless cycle of birth, death, and rebirth. This is a reincarnation model. On the most basic level, Buddhists aim to liberate themselves from samsara through the attainment of nirvana (lit., “to blow out”). Here I will not attempt to define nirvana. For our purposes, it is enough to say that nirvana is the end of samsara. From a foundational Indian and Buddhist perspective, the body and world thus are samsaric emanations.

In order to understand the influence of Buddhism on Daoist views of self, not to mention Chinese culture, we need to understand two other doctrinal aspects. First, according to the Four Noble Truths, the nature of existence is suffering (*dukkha*), and suffering is caused by desire. In order to overcome suffering, and eventually attain nirvana, one must extinguish desires. That is, ordinary human existence is a source of suffering, especially in the form of sickness, old age, and death. This suffering continues through each subsequent lifetime based on one’s accumulated karma. Second, Buddhism emphasizes that an abiding self or eternal soul (*atman*) is illusory. In fact, what we mistakenly identify as “self” is composed of the Five Aggregates (Skt.: *skandha*), which are also impermanent. The Five Aggregates include form/matter, feeling/sensation, perception, conception, and consciousness. Here an inevitable question emerges: if there is no self, then what reincarnates? The standard
Buddhist response is that there is a transference of consciousness and karma from one existence to another, like the passing of a flame from one candle to another. In this way, Buddhism appears to replace a strict interpretation of self as radically impermanent with a quasi-docetic view, and in practice emphasizes mind or consciousness over the body. This stands in contrast to traditional Chinese psychosomatic views.

Buddhism exerted a profound influence on Chinese culture, and Daoists increasingly accepted the Buddhist idea of reincarnation. While Daoists tended to reject claims concerning the body and world as samsaric, as sources of suffering as such, there were parallel classical Daoist ideas about the potentially disorienting effects of desire.

Lingbao was the first Daoist sub-tradition to incorporate the Buddhist view of reincarnation (lunhui), also rendered as transmigration (see Bokenkamp 1997; Yamada 2000). Although reincarnation did not replace the earlier composite and alchemical views, it did become one of the dominant Daoist views of self, and today the majority of mainland Chinese Daoists tend to believe in reincarnation. With the addition of reincarnation, the rationale for internal alchemy became slightly reconceptualized. Daoists now tend to frame this rationale in terms of “realizing innate nature” (dexing) or “awakening original spirit” (wu yuanshen). The ultimate goal of internal alchemy also shifts from the formation of a transcendent spirit to the ability to consciously direct one’s subsequent existences. Unfortunately, little research has been conducted on the place of reincarnation in specific systems of internal alchemy.

Death, dying and the afterlife

Just as there are three primary Daoist views of self, namely, composite, alchemical, and Buddhistic (quasi-docetic), so too there are three corresponding Daoist views of death and the afterlife: (1) Death as dissipation into the cosmos, (2) Death as immortality, and (3) Death as reincarnation. There are ways in which these are mutually exclusive, and ways in which they are compatible. As the third view is quite straightforward (see above), here I will focus on the first two, which are indigenously Chinese. This will be followed by a brief discussion of traditional Daoist funeral practices (see also Chapter 13).

The classical location for the first view, death as dissipation, is in the texts of classical Daoism, specifically the Zhuangzi. Here two representative passages from Chapter 6, “The Great Ancestral Teacher,” will suffice. This is probably the key chapter for understanding classical Daoist perspectives on death and dying.
ADEPT YU AND ADEPT LAI EMBRACE THE DYING PROCESS

All at once Adept Yu fell ill. Adept Si went to ask how he was. “Amazing!” said Adept Yu. “The transformative process is making me crooked like this! My back sticks up like a hunchback and my vital organs are on top of me. My chin is hidden in my navel, my shoulders are up above my head, and my ponytail points at the sky. It must be some dislocation of the qi of yin and yang!”

“Do you resent it?” asked Adept Si.

“Why no, what would I resent? If the process continues, perhaps in time it will transform my left arm into a rooster. In that case I’ll keep watch on the night. Or perhaps in time it will transform my right arm into a crossbow pellet and I’ll shoot down an owl for roasting. Or perhaps in time it will transform my buttocks into cartwheels. Then, with spirit for a horse, I’ll climb up and go for a ride. What need will I ever have for a carriage again?

“I received life because the time had come; I will lose it because the order of things passes on. Be content with this time and dwell in this order and then neither sorrow nor joy can touch you. In ancient times this was called ‘freeing the bound.’ There are those who cannot free themselves because they are bound by things. But nothing can ever win against the heavens—that’s the way it’s always been. What would I have to resent?” (Zhuangzi, Chapter 6; adapted from Watson 1968: 84)

***

Suddenly Adept Lai grew ill. Gasping and wheezing, he lay at the point of death. His wife and children gathered round in a circle and began to cry. Adept Li, who had come to ask how he was, said, “Shoo! Get back! Don’t disturb the process of change!”

Then he leaned against the doorway and talked to Adept Lai. “How marvelous the transformative process is! What is it going to make of you next? Where is it going to send you? Will it make you into a rat’s liver? Will it make you into a bug’s arm?”

Adept Lai said, “A child, obeying his father and mother, goes wherever he is told, east or west, south or north. And yin and yang—how much more are they to a person than father or mother! Now that they have brought me to the verge of death, if I should refuse to obey them, how perverse I would be! What fault is it of theirs? The Great Clod burdens me with form, labors me with life, eases me in old age, and rests me in death. So if I think well of my life, for the same reason I must think well of my death. When a skilled smith is casting metal, if the metal should leap up and say, ‘I insist upon being made into a Moye!’ he would surely regard it as very inauspicious metal indeed. Now that they have brought me to the verge of death, if I should say, ‘I don’t want to be anything but a human! Nothing but a human!’, the transformative process would surely regard me as a most inauspicious sort of person. So now I think of the heavens and earth as a great furnace, and the transformative process as a skilled smith. Where could it send me that would not be all right? I will go off to sleep peacefully, and then with a start I will wake up.” (ibid; adapted from Watson 1968: 85; see also Zhuangzi, Chapters 2, 3, 7, 13, 15, 17, 18, 22, 23, and 33)
This passage reflects the classical view of the Dao as transformative process (zaohua), which is frequently mistranslated as “creation” or “Creator.” Just as one participates in this process, the energetic oscillation of yin and yang, while alive, so too in death. Death is simply another moment in the endless unfolding of the Dao. Taken as a whole, the various passages seem to indicate that death is the dissolution of self, the separation of the various elements of personhood. There is no personal post-mortem existence, no personal survival after death. One becomes reabsorbed and recycled in the cosmos, and different elements, possibly even aspects of consciousness, become redistributed to and as new beings.

The second major Daoist view of death, death as immortality, is a response to the first view, which was the standard, received account. The second view developed in the context of Daoist alchemy, both external and internal. This Daoist perspective frequently leads to perplexity among students of Daoism, as many see it as “inconsistent” or “contradictory” with respect to the first. In fact, it is a response, or an alternative, to the foundational Daoist view of death as dissipation into the cosmos. If one is content to decompose, then one simply accepts death as another moment in the transformative process of the Dao. However, there is no subjective experience, no awareness, of that process after physical death, and one loses the capacity of conscious participation. If one desires personal post-mortem existence, “immortality,” one must engage in alchemical practice and transformation. This cannot be emphasized enough. The Daoist view of death as immortality is not a given; it must be actualized and accomplished through training. One must activate the Daoist subtle body; one must create a transcendent spirit. This is the path to immortality and transcendence. Before the influence and adaptation of a Buddhist-inspired reincarnation model, there was no possibility of a prolonged afterlife, especially as a unified being, without alchemical practice—and even then, there was no guarantee of success, of the completion of alchemical transformation.

Although these views are often seen as mutually exclusive, a passage from the sixth-century Xisheng jing (Scripture on the Western Ascension; DZ 666; DZ 726) is instructive. The text presents itself as a record of an esoteric transmission given by Laozi to Yin Xi as a supplement to the Daode jing. Throughout the text, Laozi instructs Yin Xi on various dimensions of Daoist training, including practices that might be labeled “proto-neidan.” The text in turn oscillates between the Daoist soteriological goals of “return” and “transformation.”

---

**NON-DUALISTIC MYSTICAL BEING**

Laozi said, “I will now revert my spirit and return to Namelessness [Dao]. I will abandon separate personhood and end my existence; in this way I will live continuously. Now I will leave this world and return to the unified Source.”
While there are a variety of ways to read this passage contextually, one especially relevant to the present discussion is that it is possible to merge with the Dao and retain the ability to manifest as a differentiated being. That is, one may reside in a post-mortem state wherein one is simultaneously everything (Oneness) and an individual thing (one). Just as all beings participate in and express the Dao, the Dao manifests in every individual being. Here Laozi is simultaneously Dao, personal god, as well as historical figure and human being. This is the Daoist adept’s own potentiality as well.

The final point of this chapter concerns funeral practices (see also Kohn 2003a: 190–95), which are informed by and expressions of specific views of self, whether explicit or implicit. The standard funeral practice in traditional Chinese society, both within and beyond Daoism, is full-body interment (burial). This stands in contrast to the standard Indian, and thus traditional Buddhist, practice of cremation. The former expresses a psychosomatic view, while the latter is docetic or quasi-docetic. In a traditional Chinese context, the treatment of the body is extremely important; this includes the burial process, the selection of the site, and the orientation of the body. The placement of the deceased is seen to have consequences for that person's post-mortem fate and for that person's descendants. One’s family and community include those who are technically “dead.” From a traditional Chinese perspective, they continue to exert influence on the “living,” especially their own progeny. Full-body interment helps to settle the po in the earth, and provide the necessary time for the process of separation to occur, specifically the hun’s ascent into the heavens. The preservation of the body and maintenance of the tomb or gravesite also contribute to a prolonged afterlife. Here we see the way in which the traditional Chinese and traditional Daoist worldview may be read in terms of composite, spiritist and psychosomatic views. The body is centrally important, though to what degree requires

Suddenly he disappeared. At that moment, the building was illuminated by a five-colored radiance, dark and brilliant.

Yin Xi went into the courtyard, prostrated himself and said, “Please, spirit being, appear one more time. Let me receive one more essential principle so that I may guard the Source (shouyuan).”

Yin Xi then looked up and saw Laozi’s body suspended in mid-air several meters above the ground. He looked like a statue (jinren) [possibly “golden being”]. The apparition appeared and disappeared, vague and indistinct. His countenance had no constancy. Laozi then spoke, “I will give you one more admonition. Make sure to follow it: Get rid of all impurities and stop your thoughts; still the heart-mind and guard the One. When all impurities are gone, the myriad affairs are done. These are the essentials of my way (dao).”

Finishing this, the apparition vanished. (Xisheng jing, DZ 666, 6.15a-17b)
attentive consideration. We will return to this topic in Chapter 13, when we examine Daoist death rites and funeral practice.

---

**FURTHER READING**


PART FOUR

Practice
Generally speaking, virtue relates to moral excellence. By extension, it refers to particular virtues, that is, qualities and characteristics valued as promoting individual and collective wellbeing. As discussed below, “virtue” as been used as one translation of the Daoist technical term de, or the ways in which the Dao manifests through specific beings. Associated with one’s character and integrity, morality generally refers to a sense of conduct that differentiates intentions, decisions, and actions between those that are beneficial (“good” or “right”) and those that are detrimental (“bad” or “wrong”). Ethics technically refers to a branch of philosophy or a type of philosophical reflection that addresses questions about morality. In the present chapter, ethics designates both one’s moral condition and views concerning virtue, especially virtuous conduct. Ethics may, in turn, be understood as one expression of religious doctrine and practice. In the case of religious traditions, ethics direct our attention to behavioral models as well as religious commitments and obligations.

Throughout the Daoist tradition, there has been and remains a strong concern for virtue and ethics. Like dietetics, ethics is often considered a necessary prerequisite for more advanced training. This is so much the case that many Daoists have claimed that meditation or ritual without an ethical foundation will be fruitless. In the context of organized Daoism, such values and commitments are most often expressed in

**Chapter Outline**

- Classical and foundational Daoist views
- Community-based Daoist views
- Types of ethical commitments
- Conduct guidelines

---

8

Virtue, ethics, and conduct guidelines
the form of precepts and conduct guidelines. These range from proscriptions against
certain kinds of behaviors, whether expressed in thought, speech, or action, to
prescriptions for alternative ways of being, for modes that may contribute to personal,
interpersonal, and transpersonal flourishing. They include admonitions, injunctions,
and resolutions. They challenge one to reflect on the possibility of human goodness,
social welfare, and even ecological synergy. Some Daoist precepts have community-
and place-specific dimensions. Others cover the entire spectrum of Daoist religious
life, including physical and material dimensions such as clothing, eating, and hygiene.

In this chapter, I first discuss classical and foundational Daoist views on de,
“virtue” or “inner power.” I then present community-based views. The latter charac-
terization should not give the impression that the inner cultivation lineages, members
of classical Daoism, do not qualify as a religious community (see Chapters 1–4); it
rather suggests that formal Daoist conduct guidelines were first composed in the
context of early organized Daoism, the moment when Daoism became characterized
by more complex social organization and larger numbers of adherents (see Chapter
4). The community-based views section is followed by the presentation of types of
ethical commitments and specific conduct guidelines. Considered historically and
contextually, careful inquiry into and understanding of Daoist ethics reveals a close
connection with the “ways to affiliation” covered in Chapter 3. There are different
types of Daoist religious adherence, and these frequently have increasing degrees of
commitment and responsibility. One thus finds precepts that are specifically intended
for lay adherents, householders, ordained priests, monastics, and immortals. Virtue is
one way in which Daoist ethical commitments and responsibility become embodied
in the world. This chapter in turn represents the beginning of the “practice chapters,”
although ethics could also be considered a dimension of Daoist worldviews, especially
those related to foundational values, concerns, and commitments (see Chapter 5). In
combination with Chapters 9 through 13, and pilgrimage related to Daoist sacred sites
(Chapter 14), this chapter reveals some of the contours of committed Daoist practice.

Classical and foundational Daoist views

On the most basic level, Daoist ethics views human beings as innately “good.” When
aligned and attuned with the Dao, when free of social conditioning, familial obligation,
and personal habituation, human beings are naturally ethical. Throughout the pages
of classical Daoist texts, one encounters the Daoist technical term de, which may be
translated as “virtue” (in the sense of one’s entire character or personhood including
the capacity for moral excellence) or more appropriately as “inner power” (in the
sense of one’s innate capacity to become an embodiment of the Dao).1 It is an innate
potential, but a key question involves how de becomes manifest. Is it recognized,
discovered, realized, actualized, cultivated, or perfected? If we are already de, then is
there anything that really must be done? These types of questions intersect with other
classical Daoist concerns such as non-action (wuwei), suchness (ziran), and innate nature (xing) (see Chapter 5).

Under one etymological reading, the character de 德 consists of chi 步 ("step") and zhi 直 ("direct, "straight," upright," "correct") over xin 心 ("heart-mind"): To be virtuous is to have an aligned heart-mind that is expressed as embodied activity, activity that reveals one's degree of self-cultivation and exerts a transformational influence on others. De ("virtue" or "inner power") is the Dao manifested in human beings as numinous presence and as embodied activity in the world, especially as a beneficial and transformational influence that might be categorized as "good." From this perspective, "morality" and "ethics" are natural outcomes of Daoist practice, natural expressions of Daoist ontological conditions or ways of being.

Reflection on de was a pan-Chinese preoccupation during the Warring States period to Early Han dynasty, not limited to Daoists (see Schwartz 1985; Graham 1989). However, the inner cultivation lineages of classical Daoism did develop specifically Daoist views on de, which paralleled their unique conception of dao and often included a critique of Confucianism and Legalism.

### VIRTUE BEYOND MORALISM AND LEGALISM

The highest virtue is not virtuous;  
In this way, it remains virtuous.  
The lowest virtue never loses virtue;  
In this way, it lacks virtue.  
The highest virtue manifests through non-action,  
And through this is free from effortful activity.  
The lowest virtue acts upon things,  
And through this is filled with effortful activity.  
(Daode jing, Chapter 38; see also Zhuangzi, Chapter 32)

***

After the great Dao was abandoned,  
Humaneness and righteousness appeared.  
After knowledge and cleverness arose,  
Great hypocrisy appeared.  
After the six relationships lost harmony,  
Filial piety and familial kindness appeared.  
After the state fell into chaos and disorder,  
Loyal ministers appeared.  
(ibid., Chapter 18)
From a classical Daoist perspective, virtue that demands to be recognized as “virtue” indicates the absence of true virtue. Authentic virtue requires neither recognition nor reward. It is the natural expression of one’s being beyond egoistic limitations. Moreover, “morality,” in the sense of concern for and discussion of “virtues” and “moral obligations,” indicates that humans have lost their original alignment: a situation that requires discussion of morality and ethics indicates the absence of such qualities. The teachings of the “venerable masters” collected in the Daode jing, in turn, encourage people to discard sagehood and learning (Chapters 19 and 20) and to renounce violence and legalistic coercion (Chapters 46, 74 and 75).

From a Daoist perspective, therefore, de does not refer to conventional morality, understood as a received set of social norms demanding conformity. De may be distorted through education, social systems, and power structures. Rather, de is the way in which the Dao manifests as embodied activity in the world. Although there are recognizable patterns of de, individuals frequently manifest de in their own unique way, and there is much diversity with respect to individual expressions of de. To fit oneself into the mold of another’s de is to distance oneself from the Dao. In this way, one may think of “virtue” or “inner power” along the lines of a cognate Chinese character de 得 (“to attain”), in the sense of “realizing the Dao” (dedao).

### INNER POWER AS ALIGNMENT WITH THE DAO

Thus we may consider this qi—
It cannot be controlled by force,
But it can be stabilized through inner power (de).
It cannot be expressed in sound,
But it can be welcomed through awareness.
Reverently guard it and do not lose it:
We call this “completing inner power:”
When inner power is complete and insight emerges,
The ten thousand beings will be realized.
(“Neiye,” Chapter 2)

***

A complete heart-mind at the center
Cannot be concealed or hidden.
It will be known through your appearance;
It will be seen in the color of your skin.
If you encounter others with this exceptional qi,
They will be kinder to you than your brothers.
If you encounter others with harmful qi,
They will injure you with their weapons.
Classical Daoist methods for “realizing the Dao” and manifesting inner power (de) are rooted in apophatic meditation (see Chapter 11). By stilling the heart-mind and emptying it of emotional and intellectual activity, one returns to one’s innate nature, which is the Dao. The above passages from the fourth-century BCE “Neiye” (Inward Training) chapter of the Guanzi show how inner power relates to both qi and the heart-mind. One’s inner power, one’s attunement with the Dao, becomes complete when qi and the heart-mind are pure. Inner power in turn manifests as a recognizable energetic quality that pervades the Daoist adept’s psychosomatic being and emanates through his or her skin, pores, and hair.

Classical texts often avoid discussion of specific virtues, possibly out of concern that people will mistake the outcome for the practice, but there are some hints.

**QUALITIES AND EXPRESSIONS OF INNER POWER**

Know the male, but guard the female—
Become the streambed of the world.
Becoming the streambed of the world, 
Constant inner power does not separate.
Return to a condition of childhood.
Know the white, but guard the black—
Become the pattern of the world.
Becoming the pattern of the world, 
Constant inner power does not deviate.
Return to a condition of non-differentiation.
Know honor, but guard disgrace—
Become the valley of the world.
Becoming the valley of the world, 
Constant inner power is then sufficient.
Return to a condition of simplicity.

*(Daode jing, Chapter 28)*

Here Daoists are instructed to apply lessons learned from observing “water” (shui), “streambeds” (xì), “valleys” (gù), “uncarved blocks” (pù), and “vessels” (qi) (see, e.g.
This passage suggests that the fulfillment of Daoist practice results in specific abilities and benefits (see also *Daode jing*, Chapters 50 and 55; Roth 1999a: 99–123). Sages avoid injury and become free from despair derived from the oscillations of life.

Members of the classical inner cultivation lineages often speak of those who have achieved excellence in embodying Dao and manifesting inner power as sages (*shengren*). Sages are free of unnecessary discrimination and obstructing influences; they embrace what is and activate the spiritual insight contained in the heart-mind (*Daode jing*, Chapers 4 and 56). They develop groundedness in place, depth in perspective, kindness in assistance, sincerity in speech, regulation in rectification, aptitude in action, and appropriateness in responsiveness (Chapter 8). They embody attentiveness, carefulness, impeccability, expansiveness, sincerity, vastness, and connectedness (Chapter 15); and they cultivate the “three treasures” of compassion, frugality, and deference or humility (Chapter 67).

The *Zhuangzi* describes such people as obtaining “utmost inner power” (*zhide*).

### UTMOST INNER POWER

“Those who understand the Dao fully comprehend the principles. By fully comprehending the principles, one illuminates circumstances. By illuminating circumstances, one does not allow things to harm oneself. When one has utmost inner power, fire cannot burn, water cannot drown, cold and heat cannot afflict, birds and animals cannot injure. I’m not saying that one makes light of such things. I mean that such a person distinguishes safety and danger, remains calm amidst fortune and misfortune, and is careful in arriving and departing. Therefore nothing can harm one.” (*Zhuangzi*, Chapter 17; see also Chapter 5, 9, 12, 15, and 22)

*Daode jing*, Chapters 8 and 78; *Zhuangzi*, Chapter 17; also Allan 1997; Girardot et al. 2001). Inner power emulates the qualities of water such as acceptance, emptiness, flexibility, inclusiveness, lowliness, non-differentiation, receptivity, simplicity, and unhindered movement.

Famous exemplars of inner power in the *Zhuangzi* include, among others, Master Zhuang himself, who knows the way to the Village of Nothing-Whatsoever (Chapter 1) and the joy of fish (Chapter 17); Changwuizi (Master Enduring Hibiscus), who knows how to tuck the universe under his arm and instructs on the Great Awakening (Chapter 2); Cook Ding, who cuts apart an ox with complete effortlessness (Chapter 3); Nüyu (Woman Yu), who teaches a stage-based training regimen that results in freedom from the bounds of life and death (Chapter 6); Huzi (Gourd Master), who, in emptiness, allows the not-yet-emerged-from-the-ancestral to manifest through him (Chapter 7); Liezi (Master Lie) and Guangchengzi (Master Expansive Completion), both of whom live in seclusion to cultivate the Dao (Chapters 7, 11, 28, and 32);
Gengsang Chu, who commits himself to follow the teachings of Lao Dan and the Way of Heaven (Chapter 23); and Thief Zhi, who transcends the limitations of conventional, obligation-based morality and turns Kongzi’s (Confucius’) mind inside out (Chapter 29).

While most classical Daoist discussions of de focus on human beings, there are a few passages that indicate that every being has the potential to manifest the Dao. Examples in the Zhuangzi include the Great Peng-bird, which wanders carefree above the cares of the world (Chapter 1); an ancient, gnarled tree, which teaches the value of uselessness (Chapters 1, 4, and 20); fish, which flow with the currents, abide in the shadows, and rest at ease with their place in water (Chapters 6 and 17); magpies and wasps, which embody the Dao’s transformative process (Chapter 14); tortoises, which enjoy dragging their tails in the mud (Chapter 17); and sea turtles, which have the experience of swimming in the ocean’s vastness (ibid.). That is, animals, simply by living and by being (“naturalness”), are embodiments of the Dao (Komjathy 2011f).

Some early Daoists also engaged in practices that involved imitating the movements of specific animals (see Chapter 10 herein).

**Community-based Daoist views**

As the Daoist tradition transitioned from loosely connected religious communities to a more formal organized religion in the Later Han dynasty, Daoists developed diverse views on virtue and morality as well as more formal ethical systems. While members of the inner cultivation lineages primarily emphasized a “meditative model” (see Chapters 1 and 11 herein), members of early organized Daoism developed an “ethical model,” wherein ethical reflection and application became a means to return to the Dao.

Since the notion of returning to the Dao was also linked with avoiding harm and possessing long life, Daoist ethics became connected with understandings of illness and disease. In particular, the early Tianshi community linked illness with moral transgression, and identified immorality as a potential source of disease. This conception of disease also included ancestral and demonological components, as early Tianshi sources indicate that moral transgressions undermine one’s innate protective capacities and expose the individual to malevolent entities and noxious influences. The sick were, in turn, sent to “pure chambers” (jingshi), where they meditated on their mistakes and purified themselves. They acknowledged their moral failures, vowed not to commit the offense again, and performed acts of atonement. At the same time, community leaders, called libationers (see Chapters 2 and 4), performed purification and exorcistic rituals, which involved sending petitions to the Three Bureaus (sanguan) of the heavens, earth, and water. An early commentary on the Sanguo zhi (Record of the Three Kingdoms) documents this view.
SICKNESS AND MORAL TRANSGRESSIONS

[Libationers] were responsible for praying for the sick. The ritual of prayer involved writing down the sick person’s name, including a confession of his or her moral transgressions. Three sets were made. One was sent up to the heavens and was placed on a mountain. One was buried in the earth. The last was submerged in water. These were called the “handwritten documents of the Three Bureaus.” (8: 265; adapted from Nickerson 1997: 232)

By burning, burying, and submerging the petitions to the heavens, earth, and water, respectively, the sick person’s transgressions would be neutralized, and he or she would return to health. At the same time, one could avoid illness by maintaining virtue. One way that this was accomplished was through precept study and application. According to the Laozi xiang’er zhu (Commentary Thinking Through the Laozi; DH 56; S. 6825), an early Tianshi commentary on the Daode jing possibly composed by Zhang Lu (d. 215), the third Celestial Master, precept study and application had the potential to immunize one from moral transgression and sickness.

THE IMPORTANCE OF PRECEPT STUDY AND APPLICATION

Whenever human beings wish to undertake some action, they should first gauge it against the precepts of the Dao, considering it calmly to determine that the principles of their action do not contravene the Dao. Only then should they gradually pursue it, so that the way of life does not depart from them. (Bokenkamp 1997: 100)

Ethical reflection on and application of such conduct guidelines would ensure not only communal harmony, but also personal wellbeing. While one might be inclined to interpret this as a major departure from classical Daoist views, there is in fact some continuity. As examined above, Daoist cultivation, especially prior to Buddhist influences, has a psychosomatic dimension. Stated positively, strong Daoist adherence and deep practice would result in alignment with the Dao and manifest as personal wellbeing. Stated negatively, deficient practice, linked with immorality in the case of the early Tianshi community, would result in illness. Such psychosomatic perspectives also find a clear expression in later Yangsheng (“nourishing life”) practices (see Chapter 10).

Another major Daoist view related to the connection among virtue, health, and self-transformation emerged in internal alchemy (neidan), a type of physiological and
This passage suggests that human beings must refine themselves of negative characteristics and tendencies. From this perspective, alchemical transformation involves refining yin (negative) dimensions of self into their yang (positive) counterparts. With respect to ethics and “establishing the foundations,” it involves becoming completely virtuous.

Without a foundation of virtue and health, alchemical praxis is pointless. For example, aspiring adepts of Quanzhen Daoism were encouraged to develop a root in ethical reflection and application. Adherents committed themselves, first and foremost, to psychosomatic purification (see Komjathy 2007a). This included abandoning the Four Hindrances of alcohol, sex, greed, and anger; it involved sobriety, desirelessness, non-attachment, and inner serenity. In addition, drawing insights from Buddhist views of consciousness, early Quanzhen adepts attempted to cleanse themselves of the Three Poisons, Six Vexations, and Ten Deviances. The Three Poisons refer to anger, greed, and ignorance. The Six Vexations are covetousness, anger, ignorance, arrogance, doubt, and false views. The Ten Deviances are killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying, slander, coarse language, equivocating, coveting, anger, and false views. From a Quanzhen perspective, these are yin-qualities that distort one’s innate nature and hinder one’s alignment with the Dao. They are defilements of consciousness that must be transformed into their yang-counterparts. The alchemical endeavor, the process of becoming immortal and perfected, involves the movement from habituation to realization, from distortion to integration. For this, the cultivation and embodiment of virtue is one foundational dimension.

A similar perspective is expressed by Hsien Yuen (Xuan Yuan; b. ca. 1935), a Taiwanese immigrant Zhengyi priest and the head priest of the American Taoist and Buddhist Association (ATBA; New York) (see Chapter 16 herein). In his The Taoism of the Sage Religion: Tan Ting Sitting Meditation, a text on Daoist internal alchemy, Hsien
Types of ethical commitments

Daoist religious identity and affiliation involve various types of adherence, which include increasing degrees of commitment and responsibility. In all cases, however, virtue is key. Careful observation of human beings reveals high degrees of habituation, self-deception, and mass delusion that prevent them from realizing their innate virtue. Simply consider the ignorance of living conditions of animals in “feed-lots,” of workers in “sweat-shops,” and of individuals enslaved in the “sex-trade.” As the lessons of history and daily observation reveal, people can convince themselves of anything, even that the unethical is ethical.

Here a word is in order about the foundational Daoist values and concerns of “non-action” (wuwei) and “suchness” (ziran) (see Chapter 5). There is much confusion about these terms, especially when interpreted as justification for some kind of laissez-faire (“anything goes”) attitude, characterized by uninhibited personal fulfillment. Under this reading, wuwei and ziran contain implicit critiques of morality. However, from a Daoist perspective, the terms are intricately related: the practice of wuwei leads to a state of ziran. Wuwei is effortless activity, the practice of not doing anything extra or unnecessary; we may think of it in terms of conservation and non-attachment. In certain social and environmental contexts, it may be understood as “non-intervention” and “non-interference,” as letting be, as allowing space for existential freedom. Ziran (tzu-jan) is frequently translated as “self-so,” “naturalness,” or “spontaneity.” The latter two renderings are problematic if not interpreted contextually. Returning to or attaining the state of ziran, which is the Dao as such, presupposes four dimensions mentioned
in Chapter 19 of the *Daode jing*: appearing plain, embracing simplicity, lessening personal interest, and decreasing desires. Ziran is not “going with the flow” in the sense of following one’s own selfish desires. Rather, it refers to an ontological condition beyond the limitations of egoistic identity. Ziran is best understood as “suchness,” or “being-so-of-itself,” to use a phrase from the German philosopher Martin Heidegger (1889–1976). It is simultaneously one’s “natural” condition and the manifestation of the Dao through one’s being. However, too often wuwei is misunderstood as apathy or atrophy, while ziran is misunderstood as the reproduction of habituation. Within the Daoist tradition, there is actually much discussion of and different perspectives on the relationship between “fate” (ontological givenness) and freedom, or the capacity for independent action and the possibility and desirability of “perfection.” Wuwei involves allowing each being to unfold according to its own nature and connection with the Dao. It involves allowing space for ziran to appear. Applied to ethics, wuwei inspires one to stop doing everything that prevents one from being who one is and that inhibits other beings from expressing their innate condition with the Dao. Such a condition is characterized by virtue. For Daoists, it is possible to be “naturally ethical,” but that entails a corresponding transcendence of social conditioning, familial obligations, and personal habituation. It involves understanding the sources of desire. A lack of attentiveness to the condition of one’s core goodness also frequently results in acceptance of what should be rejected and rejection of what should be accepted.

Formal and fully systematized expressions of Daoist ethics center, first and foremost, on precepts (*jie*). On the most basic level, precepts relate to basic moral imperatives such as abstention from killing, and relate to internal judgment and awareness of what is right. These types of precepts are considered foundational and frequently occur across religious traditions and human cultures. Daoist precept texts also contain “prohibitions” (*jiř*) and “taboos” (*ji*). The former proscribe certain socially disruptive behaviors and focus on specific social actions and attitudes. Taboos have a cosmological dimension and center on space and time; they proscribe entering certain places or engaging in certain kinds of activities at defined times. The latter include abstaining from specific substances on taboo days or times. Refraining from eating eggs at the beginning of spring, the time of birth according to correlative cosmology (see Chapter 6 herein), is an example of a Daoist taboo. In addition to precepts, Daoist ethical guidelines and commitments include “admonitions” (*quan*), “injunctions” (*ke; gui*), and “resolutions” (*yuan*). Admonitions are formulated as “should” and indicate a preferred course of action. Injunctions, also appearing as “dignified observances” (*weiyi*) and “statutes” (*lü*), prescribe in detail how and when to perform a certain action. These types of ethical guidelines are framed as imperatives. In contrast, resolutions, also translatable as “vows” and appearing as “remembrances” (*nian*), are declarations of positive intent and personal guidelines for developing a cosmic attitude and mindset. Resolutions often include specific prayers, good wishes, as well as declarations of determination (Kohn 2004c: 2–6). Here it should also be mentioned that Daoist precept texts, especially those related to monastic life, developed under the influence of the Buddhist Vinaya (Monastic Codes), and many Daoist conduct manuals model themselves on earlier Buddhist texts.
Conduct guidelines

In terms of Daoism as an organized religious tradition, the earliest extant precepts originated in the early Tianshi community and derive from passages in the *Daode jing* and from the Xiang’er commentary on the text. Both sets of precepts are preserved in the *Taishang laojun jinglü* (Scriptural Statutes of the Great High Lord Lao; DZ 786), a sixth-century CE Tianshi anthology. The Nine Practices are translated in Chapter 5 herein, and they may be understood as effortlessness, flexibility, receptivity, anonymity, serenity, aptitude, non-attachment, contentment, and deference. For anyone familiar with the *Daode jing*, the genius of the distillation is clear, and these prescriptive precepts reveal strong connections between classical Daoism and early organized Daoism. The “Twenty-seven Xiang’er Precepts” are proscriptive in nature. They include such commitments as not wasting qi (2), not seeking merit or fame (5), not forgetting the methods of the Dao (7), not killing or speaking of killing (9), not being petty or easily provoked (15), and so forth (see Bokenkamp 1997; Kohn 2004c; Komjathy 2008a, v. 5). These precepts appear to have been communal commitments in the early Tianshi movement, that is, the entire community, regardless of rank, attempted to live according to them.

After Buddhism became more widely accepted in the larger Chinese society, specifically from about the fourth century onward, Daoists increasingly adopted the five precepts as the core of Daoist ethics. The five precepts include not killing, not stealing, not lying, not taking intoxicants, and not committing sexual misconduct, which means psychological and physical celibacy for monastics.

---

**THE FIVE “DAOIST” PRECEPTS**

1. The precept to abstain from killing belongs to the east [and the Wood phase]. It embodies the qi of receiving life and presides over growth and nourishment. People who kill will receive corresponding injury to the liver.

2. The precept to abstain from stealing belongs to the north [and the Water phase]. It embodies the essence of greater yin and presides over resting and storing. People who steal will receive corresponding injury to the kidneys.

3. The precept to abstain from sexual misconduct belongs to the west [and the Metal phase]. It embodies the substance of lesser yin and presides over men and women being pure and resolute. People who engage in sexual misconduct will receive corresponding injury to the lungs.

4. The precept to abstain from intoxicants belongs to the south and the Fire phase. It embodies the qi of greater yang and presides over completion. People who consume intoxicants will receive corresponding injury to the heart.
These precepts come from the *Taishang laojun jiejing* (Precept Scripture of the Great High Lord Lao; DZ 784), a sixth-century CE Northern Celestial Masters text associated with Louguan (Lookout Tower Monastery; Zhouzhi, Shaanxi). Here we find Daoists interpreting the basic ethical system of Buddhism through correlative cosmology, the Five Phase correspondences of Wood, Fire, Earth, Metal, Water (see Chapter 6 herein), and through specifically Daoist concerns. In terms of traditional Chinese cosmology, which was part of a pre-modern, pan-Chinese worldview, the Five Phases have the following correspondences: humaneness (Wood), respect (Fire), honesty (Earth), righteousness (Metal), and wisdom (Water). According to the above precepts, and paralleling the previous discussion of Daoist psychosomatic views, failure to follow each precept will result in a discernable malady of the corresponding organ: killing will injure the liver, stealing the kidneys, sexual misconduct the lungs, intoxicant consumption the heart, and lying the spleen.

As we know that the early Tianshi community included married priests and a hierarchically organized community, and as we know that sixth-century Louguan Daoism was a key source-point for the emergence of Daoist monasticism (see Chapters 2 and 4), it is noteworthy that the Nine Practices, Xiang’er Precepts, and Five Precepts from Louguan are intended for every member of the Tianshi community without distinction. There were thus core Daoist ethical commitments for priests, monastics, and laity alike. At the same time, we find various examples of ethical guidelines that only pertain to community members with deeper commitments and responsibilities, especially those who endeavor to be exemplars of core values and ideals. For example, the “One Hundred and Eighty Precepts of Lord Lao,” often simply discussed as the “180 Precepts,” is most likely a fourth-century CE Tianshi set of conduct guidelines that was intended for libationers, high-ranking members and leaders of the Tianshi community. It first appears in the above-mentioned *Taishang laojun jinglü*. The text divides into one hundred and forty prohibitions, which are followed by forty admonitions (see Hendrischke and Penny 1996; Kohn 2004c). The One Hundred and Eighty Precepts of Lord Lao is seminal in Daoist religious history, as many other community codes incorporate its guidelines. In addition to emphasizing basic ethical commitments like the Five Precepts, the One Hundred and Eighty Precepts express distinctive and important Daoist ethical commitments.
SELECTIONS FROM THE ONE HUNDRED AND EIGHTY PRECEPTS

8. Do not raise pigs or sheep.
10. Do not eat garlic or the five strong smelling vegetables.
15. Do not use gold and silver for eating utensils.
16. Do not pursue learning about military and state affairs or divine their good and bad fortune.
17. Do not wantonly get intimate with soldiers or brigands.
20. Do not have frequent audiences with the emperor or high officials nor wantonly get intimate with them.
21. Do not slight and despise your disciples or cause disorder by wrongly favoring one over another.
25. Do not accumulate material goods and despise the orphaned and poor.
26. Do not eat alone.
28. Do not seek knowledge about other people’s marriages.
31. Do not speak about other people’s faults or conjecture on and presume a hundred different issues.
32. Do not speak about other people’s hidden and private affairs.
34. Do not praise other people to their face yet in a different place discuss their faults.
37. Do not be alone with your clan leader to cultivate personal closeness.
43. Do not distribute writings that slander others.
44. Do not claim to be skilled.
45. Do not claim to be noble.
46. Do not take pride in yourself.
48. Do not slander, yell at or curse anyone.
54. Do not discuss or criticize your teachers.
56. Do not slight and despise the teaching of the scriptures.
60. Do not rely on awe and power for advancement.
68. Do not cast spells so that other people die or suffer defeat.
69. Do not delight in other people’s death or defeat.
71. Do not stare at people.
75. Do not act as a tax inspector for ordinary people.
78. Do not practice astrology, star divination, or analyze the cycles of heaven.
81. Do not view any of your disciples in a partial or one-sided way. Note: View them as your own children.
85. Do not denigrate others’ accomplishments and merits and speak only of your own virtue.
86. Do not select the best accommodation or room and most comfortable bed to sleep.
92. Do not use your connections with district officials to harm other people.
111. Do not talk too much and exert your mouth and tongue.
115. Do not make friends with soldiers.
The One Hundred and Eighty Precepts express traditional Daoist values such as being deferential, avoiding fame and unnecessary political connections, practicing purity of speech and activity, and maintaining reverence for Daoist scriptures, teachers, and elders. There are also specific activities and professions that should be avoided. One is advised to avoid becoming an astrologer (78), butcher (4, 39, 40, 172, 173), doctor (125, 135), fortune-teller (16, 78), lawyer (127), lender (123), psychic (78), realtor (123), soldier (4, 16, 17, 40, 42, 115), “stock” breeder (animal husbandry; 8), or tax-collector (75). In general, the One Hundred and Eighty Precepts emphasize maintaining some degree of neutrality and a sense of communal welfare.

Precepts 119 and 120 are especially fascinating, as they suggest a deep understanding of the contributions and limitations of precept study and application. Rather than helping to cultivate virtue, precepts may become a further source of disorientation, especially if they are simply understood as mandated rules demanding conformity. Read on a deeper level, one might hear echoes of earlier Daoist views that undermine statements which may be interpreted in absolutist ways. As in the case of precepts 119 and 120, these are often expressed through the use of contradiction and paradox. For example, in Chapter 13 of the Zhuangzi, Wheelwright Pian comments on the “words of the sages”: “What you are reading is nothing but the chaff and dregs of people of antiquity.” In addition to locating such statements in their proper context, specifically as insights into the connection between theory and practice, a deeper reading reveals that the Zhuangzi itself would be “chaff and dregs.” However, one must read the Zhuangzi in order to learn this lesson. There is some profound relationship among contemplative reading, scripture study, philosophical reflection, and practical application (see Chapter 12). In a parallel manner, one must study the One Hundred and Eighty Precepts, at least through precepts 119 and 120, in order to encounter a precept about the danger of excessive precept study. One must engage in actual precept-based ethical reflection and practice in order to understand the paradox: precept study and application both supports and undermines ethics. It may help to establish an ethical orientation, or it may become a substitute for ethical embodiment.

The Ming-dynasty Daoist Canon as well as extra-canonical collections also contain precept texts only intended for ordained priests and monastics. For such community members, there are higher levels of involvement and degrees of adherence, with corresponding ethical commitments and responsibilities. More often than not, these assume proficiency or mastery of more foundational ethical adherence, adherence
that should characterize the lives of lay Daoists. For example, the Ten Precepts of Initial Perfection, which are the first-level precepts for Longmen initiates, both monastic and lay, begin by emphasizing that adepts should be familiar and proficient with the five foundational precepts and the *Taishang ganying pian* (Treatise on Response and Retribution of the Great High [Lord Lao]; DZ 1167) before focusing on the Ten Precepts of Initial Perfection. In addition, many of the extant texts discuss ethical commitments according to specific ordination ranks and their corresponding precepts. A representative example is the late imperial Longmen ordination system (see Chapters 3 and 4). According to this system, there are three ranks with corresponding precept texts: (1) Initial Perfection and the *Chuzhen jie* (Precepts of Initial Perfection; JY 292; ZW 404), (2) Medium Ultimate and the *Zhongji jie* (Precepts of Medium Ultimate; JY 293; ZW 405), and (3) Celestial Immortality and *Tianxian jie* (Precepts of Celestial Immortality; JY 291; ZW 403). One practices each in sequence, and bestowal of the subsequent monastic rank requires proficiency in the former. The first rank centers on the Ten Precepts of Initial Perfection.

---

**TEN PRECEPTS OF INITIAL PERFECTION**

1. Do not be disloyal, unfilial, inhumane or dishonest. Always exhaust your allegiance to your lord and family, and be sincere when relating to the myriad beings.

2. Do not secretly steal things, harbor hidden plots, or harm other beings in order to profit yourself. Always practice hidden virtue and widely aid the host of living beings.

3. Do not kill or harm anything that lives in order to satisfy your own appetites. Always act with compassion and kindness to all, even insects and worms.

4. Do not be debased or deviant, squander your perfection, or defile your numinous qi. Always guard perfection and integrity, and remain without deficiencies or transgressions.

5. Do not ruin others to create gain for yourself or leave your own flesh and bones. Always use the Dao to help other beings and make sure that the nine clan members all live in harmony.

6. Do not slander or defame the worthy and good or exhibit your talents and elevate yourself. Always praise the beauty and goodness of others and never be contentious about your own accomplishments and abilities.

7. Do not drink alcohol or eat meat in violation of the prohibitions. Always harmonize qi and innate nature, remaining attentive to clarity and emptiness.
8. Do not be greedy and acquisitive without ever being satisfied or accumulate wealth without giving some away. Always practice moderation in all things and show kindness and sympathy to the poor and destitute.

9. Do not have any relations or exchange with the unworthy or live among the confused and defiled. Always strive to control yourself, becoming perched and composed in clarity and emptiness.

10. Do not speak or laugh lightly or carelessly, increasing agitation and denigrating perfection. Always maintain seriousness and speak humble words, so that the Dao and inner power remain your primary concern. *(Chuzhen jie, ZW 404, 9b–10a)*

The second Longmen ordination rank focuses on the Three Hundred Precepts of Medium Ultimate. Rather than containing precepts per se, the *Tianxian jie*, corresponding to the third and highest Longmen ordination rank, provides general encouragement for developing certain ethical qualities. These might be best understood as resolutions to cultivate the Ten Virtues of Celestial Immortality, namely, wisdom, compassion, forbearance, meritorious activity, mind-cultivation, positive karma, strong determination, self-concealment, removal of passions, and universal mind. By applying and embodying these virtues, the adept also engages in the Twenty-seven Virtuous Activities of Celestial Immortality, such as avoidance of verbal transgressions, sensory engagement, psychological impurity, deviant thinking, and so forth (see Kohn 2004c; Komjathy forthcoming).

Interestingly, Daoist conduct guidelines also address the totality of Daoist religious life. Traditionally, this would include living in community, place, and often temples and monasteries (see Chapters 4 and 14). It would include various physical and material dimensions. For instance, the seventh-century *Fashi jinjie jing* (Prohibitions and Precepts Regarding Ceremonial Food; DH 80) contains thirty-eight rules related to ritual observances at meals. The eighth-century *Fafu kejie wen* (Rules and Precepts Regarding Ritual Vestments) contains forty-six rules on the proper treatment of vestments (see Kohn 2003a, 2004b, 2004c), which were also incorporated into the seventeenth-century *Chuzhen jie* (see Chapter 15 herein). Perhaps most importantly, some precepts emphasize the importance of community and attentiveness to place. Returning to the above-mentioned One Hundred and Eighty Precepts from the early medieval Tianshi community, individuals are encouraged to consider the consequences of their activities and adopt corresponding ethical commitments and practices.
Kristofer Schipper (2001) has brought attention to the “ecological dimensions” of these precepts, and one might justifiably think of them in terms of “environmental ethics.” They originate in a community rooted in place (see Chapters 4 and 14), individuals committed to preserving its beauty and ensuring its wellbeing. Here the foundational Daoist value of conservation (see Chapter 5), usually understood as pertaining to inner cultivation and non-dissipation of one’s core vitality, is expressed as a sense of place. Daoist adepts who embrace the prescribed conservationist ethic endeavor to support the flourishing of birds, animals, forests, and waterways. They are an applied, grass-roots ethics, a form of ecological engagement that is informed by and remembers a place-specific community. They express the Daoist tendency towards biocentrism, organicism, and bioregionalism over anthropocentrism: humans are participants and members of an ecological community, a community characterized by diversity embodying the Dao’s transformative process.
FURTHER READING


Dietetics refers to food consumption and to theories related to eating and nutrition. Conventionally speaking, dietetics is primarily about food and liquids, especially consumable beverages. In contemporary America, the dominant view of food is based on modern theories of nutrition and modern scientific categorizations, though there are also cultural and religious minority viewpoints. In addition to fruits and vegetables, grains, dairy, and meat, the dominant view includes scientific analysis based on “vitamins and minerals,” “sugars,” “proteins,” carbohydrates,” and so forth. Such views differ from those of traditional Chinese and Daoist dietetics, a point which highlights the cultural dimensions of diet. The most common analytical framework in Chinese dietetics centers on yin (cold/cooling/moistening)-yang (hot/warming/drying) and Five Phase characteristics (e.g., the five flavors). Such categorization is also utilized in Chinese pharmacology and the classification of herbal substances. Like other dimensions of the Daoist tradition, such as the foundational cosmology (see Chapter 6) and certain views of self (see Chapter 7), Daoist dietetics is, first and foremost, rooted in traditional Chinese views and consumption patterns.

Although “dietetics” technically refers to theories and practices related to food intake, and especially to the modern study of nutrition in terms of health, Daoist
dietetics is much more complex than “food consumption.” In addition to the conventional, therapeutic, and cosmological ingestion of food, Daoist dietetics includes ascetic, alchemical, and monastic approaches. Considered comprehensively, it encompasses dietary modification, fasting regimens, herbol ogy and mineralogy, as well as vegetarianism, avoidance of the five strong-smelling vegetables, and abstention from intoxicants. Daoist dietetical views, the religious rationales and motivations behind one’s relationship to food, consumable substances, and forms of nourishment, are also diverse. As is the case with Daoist Yangsheng practice (see Chapter 10), motivations range from health and healing through vitality and longevity to immortality.

Food intake

The traditional Chinese, and thus Daoist, diet centers on the consumption of grains, vegetables, beans and legumes, as well as fruit, with smaller, supplemental amounts of eggs and the flesh of slaughtered animals (“meat”). Before the modern period, dairy products were scarce, if not non-existent in the Chinese diet. This was a shared Chinese and pan-East Asian diet. In certain regions, the standard Chinese diet also includes mushrooms, nuts and seeds, and seaweed. Water and tea, hot water infused with dried leaves from the Camellia sinensis tree, were the primary beverages of traditional China. Various types of grain alcohol were also consumed.

Daoist dietetics related to food intake involves a therapeutic orientation and parallels classical Chinese medicine. A Daoist therapeutic diet emphasizes the complex interplay among one’s constitution and energetic tendencies, climate and seasons, and qualities of food. On the most basic level, it categorizes things in terms of yin (cold, cooling, moistening, etc.) and yang (hot, warming, drying, etc.). Next, it categorizes things in terms of the Five Phases (wuxing), namely, Wood, Fire, Earth, Metal, and Water (see Chapter 6). One’s constitution may have, for example, an excess of Water and Earth, and a deficiency of Wood and Fire. Each of these is associated with particular organs, tissues, conditions, seasons, flavors, grains, vegetables, meat, etc. (see Chapter 6; Liu 1995; Pitchford 2003). A common use of correlative cosmology with respect to dietetics involves the five flavors, namely, sour (Wood/liver), bitter (Fire/heart), sweet (Earth/spleen), spicy (Metal/lungs), and salty (Water/kidneys). The ideal meal consists of a balance of each of the five flavors. One may, in turn, adjust one’s lifestyle and diet to return to an increased condition of equilibrium and homeostasis, of health and wellbeing. At the same time, one may simply be attentive to the energetic qualities of specific foods in relation to one’s constitution. One may consume food in a more therapeutic and energetic way.

From a Daoist perspective, a therapeutic diet includes a seasonal and energetic component (see Chapters 5 and 6). This takes us to another dimension of Daoist dietetics, namely, cosmological attunement. A cosmological orientation again utilizes
correlative cosmology, that is, yin-yang and the Five Phases. One becomes attentive to the energetic qualities of specific seasons: spring (minor yang), summer (major yang), fall (minor yin), and winter (major yin), and adjusts one’s lifestyle and diet accordingly. The primary factors in one’s health, after cosmological, ancestral, and environmental influences, are food (spleen/stomach) and breath (lungs). From this perspective, clean air, nourishing food, and good sleep are the foundations of health and wellbeing. Connecting these insights to seasonal awareness, one adjusts one’s sleeping and eating patterns in relation to the corresponding seasons: in spring, one goes to bed early and wakes up early; in summer, one goes to bed late and wakes up early; in fall, one goes to bed early and wakes up early; in winter, one goes to bed early and wakes up late (see Komjathy 2008a, v. 3). That being said, many Daoist practitioners find that they require less sleep and less food as their practice deepens. With respect to eating, one eats foods in season. In a contemporary, industrialized context, this is often difficult to determine, as food grown all over the world is transported to international locations. However, in a traditional context, one can observe the principles of seasonality and bioregionalism, that is, eating local, seasonal, and organic foods. An interesting modern example, which expresses some classical Daoist principles, is Masanobu Fukuoka’s (1913–2008) The One Straw Revolution (1978).

Finally, with respect to food intake, Daoists have often followed standard Chinese dietary principles, principles which have a root in Yangshang (“nourishing life”) practices (see Chapter 10). One is encouraged to recognize the ancestors (human and non-human) before eating. One adjusts one’s diet with attentiveness to age, season, and health issues. One eats pure and fresh foods. One eats food containing the various flavors. One eats a nourishing meal during the time of the stomach (7 a.m. – 9 a.m.). One primarily eats vegetables, fruits, grains, and beans. One takes at least 100 steps after finishing a meal. One enjoys the food and company that surrounds one. With respect to dietary prohibitions, one is advised to avoid eating anything discolored or bad-flavored. One avoids eating anything not well cooked. One avoids eating anything that is rotten, old, or stale. One avoids eating late at night and eating a full meal at dinner. One avoids over-eating. One avoids lying down immediately after eating. One avoids negative emotions when eating. In a modern context, one also avoids drinking ice water with meals, as it taxes the spleen-stomach and inhibits digestion, which is sometimes compared to a warm stew (see Flaws 1998). There are also specifically monastic guidelines (see below), which parallel Daoist ideals of ritual purity (see Chapter 13). One avoids eating strongly flavored dishes (garlic, onions, leeks, etc.), which are associated with the creation of heat and activation of sexual energy. One abstains from smoking. One abstains from drinking alcohol (see also Liu 1990).

While these dietary principles derive from a variety of sources, both Daoist and “non-Daoist,” both ancient and modern, it is noteworthy that one already finds a precursor in the fourth-century BCE “Neiye” (Inward Training) chapter of the Guanzi (Book of Master Guan; see Roth 1999a).
THE WAY OF EATING

Considering the way of eating,
If you over indulge, your qi will be injured.
This will cause your body to deteriorate.
If you over restrict, your bones will be weakened.
This will cause your blood to congeal.
The place between over-indulgence and over-restriction,
We call this “harmonious completion.”
Here is the lodging-place of vital essence.
It is also where knowing is generated.
When hunger and satiation lose their regulation,
You must make a plan to rectify this.
If you are overly satiated, engage in activity.
If you are hungry, expand your thinking.
If you are old, forget your worries.
If you are overly satiated and do not move,
The qi will not circulate through the limbs.
If you are hungry and do not expand your thinking,
When you finally do eat you will not stop.
If you do not forget your worries when old,
The wellspring of your vitality will dissipate.
("Neiye," Chapter 23)

Ascetic diets

Although the majority of Daoists throughout Chinese history have followed a “traditional Chinese diet,” Daoists have advocated different diets and dietary approaches. Above, we already encountered three approaches: (1) Standard/Conventional, (2) Therapeutic, and (3) Cosmological. To these we may add the following: (4) Ascetic, (5) Life-prolongation, (6) Alchemical, and (7) Monastic. The ascetic diet emphasizes the modification or cessation of food intake, often with wild or foraged foods replacing an agrarian diet. Life-prolongation diets aim to increase vitality and longevity. Alchemical diets, here primarily referring to external alchemy (waidan), aim at immortality. While each Daoist dietary approach, with its corresponding views, principles, and practices, developed within different contexts, they eventually became part of “Daoist dietetics” more broadly conceived. That is, although Daoist asceticism emerged during the early medieval period, one can find ascetic tendencies among later and even contemporary Daoist adherents and communities.

The eighth-century Laozi shuo fashi jinjie jing (Scripture on the Prohibitions and Precepts for Ceremonial Eating Revealed by Laozi; DH 80; P. 2447; abbr. Fashi jinjie
One might thus identify “basic Daoist food groups”: (1) Vegetables, (2) Grains, (3) Mushrooms and fungi (wild and foraged foods), (4) Herbs, metals and minerals (herbal and alchemical formulas), and (5) Qi (subtle breath and primordial vapor). According to the Daoist systematization expressed in *Fashi jinjie jing*, there is a hierarchical order to these substances and the associated diets.

Here a number of points deserve emphasis. First, the text expresses a particular monastic perspective and ought not be regarded as representative of the tradition as a whole. Moreover, the text presents itself as normative discourse, prescribing what one ought to do based on a distinct worldview. As will become clear below, such totalizing statements are tempered by other Daoist dietary principles, approaches and views. Second, the text conceives Daoist dietetic practice in terms of increasing levels of rarification. Food is the most basic level of sustenance; it is one of the foundations of health for ordinary human beings. However, as one progresses through various Daoist diets and related religious practices, one becomes less dependent on actual food consumption (material sustenance). The text advises the aspiring Daoist adept to move from food intake to herbology and mineralogy (external alchemy) to qi ingestion (proto-internal alchemy; see below). Eventually, one merges with the cosmos, and, with separate personhood dissolved, one no longer needs to ingest anything, even qi. This is the movement from ordinary, coarse ontological conditions (yin/corporeal/terrestrial) to refined, subtle ontological conditions (yang/spiritual/celestial).

The above passage from the *Fashi jinjie jing* thus represents a late medieval synthesis of earlier Daoist dietetic approaches and serves as an orientation point for understanding Daoist dietetics from a more nuanced and comprehensive perspective. In its outline of graduated Daoist dietary practice, it incorporates views and methods from ascetic, life-prolongation, and alchemical approaches. While distinct on some level, these approaches often overlap and parallel each other. With respect to the

---

**LATE MEDIEVAL DAOIST “FOOD GROUPS”**

Eating everything is not as good as eating vegetables. Eating vegetables is not as good as eating grains. Eating grains is not as good as eating mushrooms and excrescences. Eating mushrooms and excrescences is not as good as eating gold and jade [metals and minerals]. Eating gold and jade is not as good as eating primordial qi. Eating primordial qi is not as good as not eating at all. By not eating at all, even though Heaven and Earth may collapse, one will survive forever. (Kohn 2004b: 124–5; Kohn 2010: 12)
fourth major approach, Daoist ascetic diets involve decreasing or eliminating food intake (see Eskildsen 1998). They involve self-restraint and a biologically transcendent orientation. Daoist ascetic diets may replace cultivated food with wild foods, with elimination diets, or with temporary or prolonged fasting. Ascetic diets frequently replace cultivated foods, substances produced through agriculture and animal husbandry, with foraged foods. In this way, Daoist ascetic diets often overlap with life-prolongation orientations (see Chapter 10). Daoist ascetic diets may have been partially inspired by the Primitivist strain of classical Daoism and may be thought of as a practical diet for hermits living in the mountains, which became incorporated into larger Daoist religious commitments.

The middle chapter of the fifth-century Lingbao wufu xu (Explanations of the Five Talismans of Numinous Treasure; DZ 388) describes seventy dietary regimens. These regimens identify forty-one vegetal substances that act as active ingredients, alone or in combination, for increasing health, purifying oneself, and achieving extreme longevity. The nine most popular ingredients in the text are black sesame seeds (heizhima; found in 18 recipes), wild asparagus root (tianmendong; 12), Chinese foxglove root/Rehmannia (shengdihuang; 9), Chinese root fungus (fuling; 7), pine tree sap (6), poke root (shanglu; 6), lotus tree seeds (lianzi; 6), wolfberries (gouqizi; 4), which are also known as Goji berries in the modern world, and ginger (ganjiang; 4) (see Akahori 1989; Yamada 1989).

FIGURE 10 Daoist Rendering of Tianmendong (Wild Asparagus Root)
Source: Tujing yanyi bencao, DZ 768; 769
These ingredients are also common in other early medieval hagiographical texts such as the second-century CE *Liexian zhuàn* (Biographies of Arrayed Immortals; DZ 294) and fourth-century *Shenxian zhuàn* (Biographies of Spirit Immortals; JY 89; JH 54), a text partially written by Ge Hong (287–347). Other typical wild foods consumed by Daoists throughout Chinese history include pine nuts, wild berries, as well as mushrooms, fungus, and other natural excretions (see Campany 2001; 2002). Pine trees are especially prominent, both actually and symbolically. With respect to the first, various Daoists have believed in the beneficial qualities of pine trees, whether in the form of seeds, nuts, resin, sap, bark, or roots. Second, pine trees, as evergreens, are a symbol of vitality, longevity, and immortality. As one can see from the list of ingredients, some substances utilized in Daoist ascetic diets are also incorporated into more mainstream Chinese cooking and eating (see, e.g. Flaws and Wolf 1985; Zhao and Ellis 1998). One also notices overlap with classical Chinese medicine, as such substances have specific energetic and medicinal qualities (see below). Here we must acknowledge that the connection with Yangsheng practice and Chinese medicine has also had a disturbing consequence, namely, species endangerment or extinction (see Bensky et al. 2004: xxx–xxxi). Some substances associated with “vitality” and “longevity” (read: male virility), such as bear gall-bladder, deer antlers, musk deer secretions, rhinoceros horn, seahorse, and tiger bone, have led to ecological degradation, not to mention individual suffering and extermination.

Another ascetic element of Daoist dietetics involves the elimination of particular foods. One of the most well-known elimination practices from Daoist ascetic dietetics is “abstention from grains” (*bigu*), also referred to as “avoidance of cereals” (*quegu*) (see Maspero 1981: 331–9; Lévi 1983; Eskildsen 1998; Campany 2002). Conventionally understood, *bigu* involves eliminating grains from one’s diet, that is, complete abstinence from eating any grain or grain byproducts. There are different rationales and motivations for the practice, but this ascetic approach to dietetics emerged in the context of early medieval Daoism. In medieval sources, the practice of *bigu* is associated with eliminating the Three Death-bringers (*sanshi*; see Chapter 7). The Three Death-bringers are harmful bio-spiritual parasites that depend on cereals or grains for nourishment; they also attempt to bring the human being to early death. As the Three Death-bringers depend on grains for sustenance, grain abstention leads to their expulsion or extermination, and to increased freedom and longevity for the Daoist practitioner.

Certain *bigu* regimens also have cosmological and theological components. For example, many medieval Daoists claimed that the Three Death-bringers would leave the body on every *gengshen* day, the fifty-seventh day in the traditional Chinese sixty-day cycle. On this day, they are believed to report one’s moral transgressions to Siming, the Ruler of Life-destiny or Arbiter of Fate, who would deduct time from one’s lifespan depending on the type of transgression. By staying awake on the *gengshen* day, one could prevent the Three Death-bringers from making their report. Much more effective, though also more exacting, was observation of a certain period of grain abstention, usually one hundred days, which would eliminate the Three
Death-bringers. This perspective stands in contrast to the late medieval monastic one cited above. From an early medieval ascetic perspective, grains seem to be among the lowest forms of nourishment, perhaps because of their connection to sedentary, agrarian civilization; they are below vegetables and wild foods, as indicated by the importance of various vegetal and herbal substances in ascetic, therapeutic, and alchemical dietetics. In addition, the ingestion of certain substances, such as poke root, was believed to expel or exterminate the Three Death-bringers and other, more physical parasites (see Eskildsen 1998: 61–2, 65, 110, 144).

Before moving on to Daoist alchemical dietetics, two additional points need to be made regarding the medieval Daoist preoccupation with the Three Death-bringers and the practice of bigu. First, although early medieval sources unequivocally suggest that the Three Death-bringers are bio-spiritual parasites, late medieval sources seem to begin a process of “psychologization,” a process which culminates in various late imperial presentations of internal alchemy, such as those of Liu Yiming (1734–1821), whose works have been translated by Thomas Cleary. For example, in early Quanzhen, the Three Death-bringers appear to be harmful psychological states (see Komjathy 2007a). They represent conditions or tendencies that obscure the corresponding spiritual capacities; they are forms of dissipation. In that context, the Three Death-bringers inhabit the three elixir fields (dantian). The upper Death-bringer, associated with the head and with the desire for delicious foods and various other desires, disrupts spirit (shen) and the capacity for higher levels of consciousness. The middle Death-bringer, associated with the heart and with greed and anger, disrupts qi and the capacity for energetic aliveness and cosmological attunement. The lower Death-bringer, associated with the abdomen and/or genitals and with fancy clothing, alcohol, and sex, disrupts vital essence (jing) and the capacity for emotional stability. By “removing the Three Death-bringers,” by purifying oneself through religious training and alchemical praxis, one could attain immortality. This Daoist view also suggests that certain foods produce specific psychosomatic conditions, a view shared by many Daoist monastics (see below).

The second point relates to the technical meaning of bigu. Although conventionally understood as “abstention from grains,” in certain contexts it appears to designate fasting, that is, complete elimination of food (Eskildsen 1998: 43; Campany 2002: 21–4). Eskildsen (1998: 43–68) identifies various Daoist fasting regimens including fasting proper, swallowing saliva, ingesting the Five Qi, ingesting solar and lunar essences, swallowing talismans, sucking on seeds, and herbal formulas (“drug taking”; see below). For example, according to the Tang-dynasty Taiqing zhonghuang zhenjing (Perfect Scripture on the Central Yellow from Great Clarity; DZ 817; abbr. Zhonghuang jing), the practitioner is instructed to stop eating solid foods immediately and to endeavor not to drink fluids. One must ingest qi (fuqi; also rendered as “swallow air”) through the mouth and into the esophagus. This is supposed to suppress hunger and nourish one’s body with original qi (yuanqi) from the cosmos. Through intensive and sustained practice, one purges the defiling qi of ordinary foods, referred to as “grain qi” (guqi), from the body and also eliminates malevolent corporeal entities and
harmful influences. Once this has been accomplished, the body becomes the abode of celestial deities, and its latent numinous qi can be activated. One is then ready to proceed to “embryonic respiration” (taixi; see Chapter 10), which in this case denotes a rigorous type of breath retention. Holding the breath activates the numinous qi of the five yin-organs, which are united into a subtle body. While engaging in embryonic respiration, one also practices visualization (see Chapter 11) and takes ecstatic journeys through the Daoist sacred realms, especially those of Taiji (Great Ultimate) and Taiwei (Great Sublimity). In this way, the Daoist adept gains a foretaste of the realms that he or she hopes to inhabit after the completion of terrestrial existence (Eskildsen 1998: 44). This type of Daoist fasting thus involves a movement from ordinary existence, here associated with terrestrial food and embodiment (yin), to immortal life, here associated with Daoist sacred realms and spiritual transcendence (yang)—that is, fasting results in rarification and self-divinization.

Moreover, although one might assume that prolonged fasting would have catastrophic consequences, the Zhonghuang jing suggests that severe weakness and emaciation are temporary; they eventually give way to increased vitality as the next phase of fasting (Eskildsen 1998: 51–2). Some contemporaneous fasting regimens also emphasize the importance of consuming herbs and herbal formulas, sometimes discussed as “drug taking” in the sense of medicinal substances (see below). With respect to fasting, it appears that certain substances, such as poke root, suppress hunger; that is, if one took these herbs while fasting, one’s desire for food would possibly diminish. Here we should note that these are not “starvation diets,” with the modern preoccupation with weight loss and socially constructed body image. In addition, there are types of fasting in the Daoist tradition that do not have such a strong ascetic orientation. For example, fasting is sometimes used as a purification method, that is, as a way to break habituated consumption habits, to free oneself from certain types of influences (e.g. cravings based on ancestral influences), and to gain spiritual clarity and higher levels of attunement with the Dao. One might refer to this type of fasting as “cosmological,” “therapeutic,” or “seasonal;” as it is most often undertaken in spring. In traditional Chinese, and thus Daoist, cosmology (see Chapter 6), spring is associated with the Wood phase, which also corresponds to birth, new beginnings, the liver, and so forth. By fasting in spring, one may help to cleanse the liver and to relieve potential stagnation accumulated during the winter. Considered from a larger perspective, Daoists have thus practiced temporary and prolonged fasting, and Daoist motivations for fasting are diverse: from psychosomatic purification through exorcism to rarification.

Alchemical diets

In Daoism, alchemical diets refer to the ingestion of specific substances related to external alchemy (waidan), which stands in contrast to internal alchemy (see below).
We might also think of alchemical diets as “cuisines of immortality,” because the ultimate goal was to become divine, to transcend the limitations of ordinary human life and the dissolution of the body after death (see Chapter 7). Many Daoist texts provide detailed information on alchemical ingredients and formulas. Of particular note are Ge Hong’s Baopuzi neipian (Inner Chapters of Master Embracing Simplicity; DZ 1185) and Tao Hongjing’s reconstructed Shennong bencao jing (Divine Farmer’s Classic of Herbology; partially lost). With respect to the latter, bencao, which literally means “roots and grasses,” is a Chinese textual genre related to herbal and pharmacological lore; it is frequently rendered into English as “herbology,” “pharmacology,” or materia medica (Latin: “medicinal materials”). The potential connection between Chinese medical herbology and Daoist external alchemy is interesting here. It appears that some of the former derived from the Daoist search for ingredients that would increase longevity and potentially result in immortality. For example, the Shennong bencao jing contains 364 entries, including botanical (252), mineralogical (45), and zoological (67) substances. Each entry is evaluated for taste (wei) and temperature characteristics (qi). Toxicity is also carefully noted (Bensky et al. 2004: xv). Tao Hongjing further divides the substances into three categories or grades (sanpin), namely, highest/superior, medium/average, and lowest/inferior (lit., upper, middle, and lower).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GRADES OF MEDICINAL SUBSTANCES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>There are 120 superior class medicinals which are used as sovereigns. They mainly nourish life and correspond to heaven. They are nontoxic and taking them in large amounts and for a long time will not harm people. If one intends to make the body light, boost the qi, prevent aging, and prolong life, one should base [one’s efforts] on the superior class.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There are 120 medium class medicinals which are used as ministers. They mainly nurture personality and correspond to humanity. They may or may not be toxic, and [therefore,] one should weigh and ponder before putting them to their appropriate use. If one intends to control disease, supplement vacuity, and replenish exhaustion, one should base [one’s efforts] on the middle class.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There are 125 inferior class medicinals which are used as assistants and envoys. They mainly treat disease and correspond to earth. They are usually toxic and cannot be taken for a long time. If one intends to eliminate cold and heat and deviant qi, break accumulations and gatherings, and cure disease, one should base [one’s efforts] on the inferior class. (Shennong bencao jing; adapted from Yang 1998: ix-x)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tradition tells us that Tao Hongjing reconstructed his attributed edition of the text from an earlier version. This is partially substantiated by Chapter 11, titled “Medicines of Immortality,” of the Baopuzi neipian.
Both of these passages emphasize a hierarchical ordering of the various medicinal and alchemical substances, and it was the highest type of herbs and minerals that interested external alchemists (see also Ramholz 1992; Teegarden 1985; Unschuld 1986). Daoists have also been particularly interested in baihe (lily bulb), gancao (Chinese licorice root), Gingko, Ginseng, heshouwu (“black-haired He”; flowery knotweed), shihu (dendrobium stem), and so forth.

External alchemy aims at the attainment of immortality, whether physical (corporeal/terrestrial) or spiritual (non-corporeal/celestial), through the ingestion of various external substances and formulas. It assumes the foundational Daoist view of self as a composite entity destined to dissipate into the cosmos upon death. Eternity and immortality are not ontological givens; they must be actualized or created (see Chapter 7). Early Daoist external alchemy practice involved “decoction.” This involved highly esoteric and technical knowledge of ingredient properties, their correct combination (specific amounts and recipes) into formulas, as well as cosmological and ritualistic elements (see Needham et al. 1976, 1980; Campany 2002; Pregadio 2006a). The external alchemical process takes place in a “laboratory,” called the elixir chamber. The furnace (lu) or stove (zao) is typically placed on a three-tiered platform or altar (tan). The crucible (fu) or tripod (ding) is arranged over the furnace or sometimes inside it (Pregadio 2008b: 1004). These are used for alchemical processes such as “forging” and “refining” (lian), “reverting” (fan; huan), and “firing times” (huohou). The incorrect formula and procedure could lead to illness and to death, especially in the form of self-mummification, an apparently everlasting body absent of vitality and consciousness. This was because of the highly toxic nature of some of the ingredients utilized.

Here I will provide a couple of specific examples of Daoist alchemical diets. First, with respect to an alchemical diet primarily utilizing herbs, we find a poke root recipe in fifth-century Lingbao wufu xu (Explanations of the Five Talismans of Numinous Treasure).
In terms of the use of herbs in Daoist alchemical dietetics, this passage is noteworthy on a number of levels. It combines the previously discussed ascetic practice of fasting and grain abstention, here apparently meaning the consumption of cooked grains, with the ingestion of poke root. According to the Lingbao wufu xu, the practice results in the expulsion of parasites from the body and increased clarity of consciousness. It also emphasizes the importance of ethics, ritual, cosmology, and meditative seclusion. For present purposes, the recipe is significant on account of its detailed understanding of herbology as well as the application of that knowledge to Daoist ascetic and alchemical training. In addition, this “dietetic practice” is clearly rooted in a larger Daoist soteriological system aimed at self-transformation.

As we saw above, Daoist alchemical diets utilize not only herbal and vegetal substances, but also minerals, including various “heavy metals.” The latter include things like cinnabar (mercuric sulfide; HgS), lead (Pb), mercury (Hg), realgar (arsenic sulfide; As$_4$S$_4$), silver (Ag), and so forth. The reason that this Daoist sub-tradition has been referred to using the European category of “alchemy” is because of its parallel concern for refinement and transformation. Just as conventional European alchemy aimed to transmute base metals into gold, so too Daoist waidan aimed to create a “pill of immortality.” Because of its fairly systematic exploration of naturally occurring “elements,” waidan has also been discussed in terms of “Chinese proto-chemistry” (Needham et al. 1976; 1980). In any case, typical Daoist waidan formulas, associated with the Taiqing movement (see Pregadio 2006a), appear in Ge Hong’s Baopuzi neipian.

**THE POWER OF POKE ROOT**

Add one dou of wild asparagus root (tianmendong; asparagus cochinchinensis) powder to ten jin of yeast and three dou of rice. Place the gathered poke root (shanglu; phytolacca acinosa) [in this mixture] for six days. Thereupon, begin eating them, while observing ritual prohibitions. After six days, your food intake will decrease. After twenty days, grains will be eliminated and your intestines will be so large that they can only hold air. The various worms will leave. Your ears and eyes will hear and see clearly. All of your moles and scars will disappear. When the moon resides in the Yugui constellation on a ding-stem day, gather the poke root plant. Eat a piece the size of a jujube three times per day. Daoist adepts always grow this plant in a garden by their meditation chamber. It allows a person to communicate with gods. (Lingbao wufu xu, DZ 388, 2.11a; adapted from Eskildsen 1998, 61)
Before moving on to other dimensions of Daoist dietetics, we should note that the Daoist ingestion of herbs and minerals has frequently been referred to as “drug taking” (see Akahori 1989; Eskildsen 1998). This may give the false impression that Daoists were taking mind-altering drugs, rather than medicinal, pharmacological, and alchemical substances. It was generally the latter practice to which “Daoist drug taking” refers. Technically, a “drug” is any substance that alters body functions; it designates substances that have psychoactive effects. However, this begs the question as to the place of psychotropic and psychedelic (“hallucinogenic”) substances in Daoist diets. While very little research has been done on the Daoist consumption of “drugs” in the conventional sense, there is some evidence that certain Daoists consumed large amounts of alcohol as well as certain psychotropic substances. The most famous example of the latter is so-called “Cold Food Powder” (hanshisan), also known as the Five Minerals Powder (wushisan). The former name refers to the fact that one had to eat cold food and bathe in cold water to counteract the rise in body temperature produced by the powder (Engelhardt 2008). According to Sun Simiao’s (581–682) Qianjin yifang (Revised Prescriptions Worth a Thousand Gold Pieces), it contained five minerals—fluorine, quartz, red bole clay, stalactite and sulfur—one animal ingredient, and nine plant substances. It is associated with the Seven Sages of the Bamboo Grove, a group of reclusive aristocrats and artists who had Daoistic leanings. The effects of Cold Food Powder are currently unclear, though some sources claim increased vitality and spiritual clarity.

It is also noteworthy that medieval Daoists were especially interested in a category of substance called zhi, which is conventionally rendered as “mushroom” but which often refers to “excrecences” or various supernatural outgrowths (see Campany 2001; 2002: 25–30; Pregadio 2008c). Although unclear at the moment, it is reasonable to assume that some of these organic materials contained psychotropic properties and that they resulted in “altered states of consciousness.”

PREPARING THE ELIXIR FLOWER FORMULA

The first elixir is called “elixir flower.” One should first prepare the mysterious yellow [substance] (xuanhuang) [perhaps lead-mercury amalgam or mixed oxides]. Add to it a solution of realgar [arsenic sulphide] and a solution of alum. Take several dozen pounds each of rough Gansu salt (rongyan), crude alkaline salt (luxian), alum, [powdered] oyster shells, red bole clay, [powdered] soapstone, and lead carbonate; and with these make the Six-One Lute [and seal the reaction-vessel] with it. After thirty-six days, the heating of the elixir will be completed, and anyone who takes it continuously for seven days will become an immortal. (Baopuzi neipian, DZ 1185, 4.5b–6a; adapted from Needham et al. 1976: 83–84; cf. Ware 1966: 76)
Daoist monastic life involves a standardized daily schedule, including fixed communal eating times. In early medieval Daoist monasteries, Daoists gathered together for breakfast and lunch, but they refrained from eating after noon (see Chapter 4). The latter follows one of the five additional Buddhist precepts for monastics. In contemporary Daoist monastic life, Daoists tend to eat three meals, including breakfast, lunch, and dinner, in refectories.

Daoist monastic diets are most often associated with vegetarianism, avoidance of the five strong-smelling vegetables (wuxin), and abstention from intoxicants (see Kohn 2010: 77–84). Each of these religious commitments was adapted from Buddhism (see Mather 1981; Kieschnick 2005), and they contrast sharply with traditional Chinese practice, as well as the more traditional Chinese diets of Zhengyi priests and religious communities. In contemporary Quanzhen monasticism, vegetarianism, avoidance of the five strong-smelling vegetables, and abstention from intoxicants are, at least strictly speaking, requirements for religious affiliation (see Chapter 3) and part of Quanzhen vows, identity, and ways of life. In Quanzhen refectories, monastics eat simple dishes

**Monastic diets**

Daoist monastic life involves a standardized daily schedule, including fixed communal eating times. In early medieval Daoist monasteries, Daoists gathered together for breakfast and lunch, but they refrained from eating after noon (see Chapter 4). The latter follows one of the five additional Buddhist precepts for monastics. In contemporary Daoist monastic life, Daoists tend to eat three meals, including breakfast, lunch, and dinner, in refectories.

Daoist monastic diets are most often associated with vegetarianism, avoidance of the five strong-smelling vegetables (wuxin), and abstention from intoxicants (see Kohn 2010: 77–84). Each of these religious commitments was adapted from Buddhism (see Mather 1981; Kieschnick 2005), and they contrast sharply with traditional Chinese practice, as well as the more traditional Chinese diets of Zhengyi priests and religious communities. In contemporary Quanzhen monasticism, vegetarianism, avoidance of the five strong-smelling vegetables, and abstention from intoxicants are, at least strictly speaking, requirements for religious affiliation (see Chapter 3) and part of Quanzhen vows, identity, and ways of life. In Quanzhen refectories, monastics eat simple dishes
composed primarily of various vegetables. Quanzhen monastic diets thus tend to be closer to vegan (no animal products, including eggs and dairy) than to ovo-lacto (eggs and dairy) vegetarian. The vegan dimension also extends to clothing, as Quanzhen monastics tend to avoid dress related to animal slaughter (e.g. leather belts and shoes). However, some Quanzhen refectories serve eggs and dairy products; some Quanzhen monastics eat eggs and dairy, especially in the form of yogurt; and some Quanzhen monastics wear leather shoes. Thus, at least on appearance, vegetarianism is more primary than veganism.

With respect to the two other dimensions of Daoist monastic diets, namely, avoidance of the five strong-smelling vegetables and abstention from intoxicants, the former refers to various kinds of onions and garlic, all of which are plants in the modern botanical genus *Allium*. They include the following: (1) common onion (*hucong*; *Allium cepa*); (2) scallion (*cong*; *Allium fistulosum*); (3) garden shallots (*xie*; *Allium ascalonicum*); (4) leek (*jiu*; *Allium odorum*); and (5) garlic (*suan*; *Allium sativum*). According to the standard Daoist perspective, these substances, commonly used as spices in Chinese cooking, activate sexual energy and thus undermine monastic practice, rooted as it is in celibacy, sublimation, and rarification. Strangely, however, in contemporary Quanzhen monastic contexts, the same prohibition often does not apply to red chili paste, ginger, or substances with similar energetic qualities and effects as the five strong-smelling vegetables.

Intoxicants, most often in the form of alcohol, are also avoided. There are a variety of Daoist views on the importance of renouncing intoxicants. Intoxicants are believed to injure the liver, which is responsible for the smooth flow of qi throughout the body; to disturb the heart-mind, associated with consciousness and spirit; and to disrupt one’s connection with the Dao, resulting in various types of deviant and depraved behaviors (e.g. sexual impropriety). Here it is noteworthy that Daoists have traditionally drunk tea. Tea is understood to be a “stimulant” rather than an “intoxicant,” though individuals who have consumed large quantities of high-quality teas may be more inclined to categorize tea as a hallucinogen! From a Daoist perspective, tea leads to greater clarity of consciousness, awareness, and wakefulness; it also can support the religious practice of those who have a tendency towards lethargy and sleepiness. This stands in contrast to alcohol, which decreases spiritual presence and obscures consciousness.

**Swallowing saliva and qi ingestion**

Beyond the various practices related to the ingestion or avoidance of material substances, Daoists have also engaged in saliva swallowing and qi ingestion. From a Daoist perspective, saliva and fluids more generally are vital body substances (see Chapter 7); qi, subtle breath or “energy,” is both a subtle corporeal and cosmological element (see Chapters 6 and 7). Both body fluids and qi are viewed as key
In addition to the early reference to grain avoidance, this passage describes living on wind and dew and mist. Later Daoist self-cultivation movements interpreted “wind” and “dew” as qi and saliva, respectively, and used the terms “drinking dew” and “imbibing mist” to designate swallowing saliva.

Swallowing saliva has been practiced by longevity practitioners, both Daoist and non-Daoist, by immortality seekers, and later by internal alchemists (see, e.g. Kohn 1989a; Kohn 2008a; Eskildsen 1998). Early references to the practice are found in the Mawangdui medical manuscripts dating from the Early Han dynasty (see Chapter 10; Harper 1998). Swallowing saliva could be categorized as a life-prolongation or alchemical practice, rather than as a dietary practice in the Western sense. However, I would like to expand the notion of “diet” through a Daoist lens to include a broad range of “ingestion practices” and alternative types of nourishment.

Generally speaking, here “saliva” does not refer to ordinary spittle; rather, it refers to clear and pure fluids generated during training. There are various Daoist technical terms used to designate this saliva, including gold fluids (jinjin), jade fluids (yuye), jade nectar (yujian), mysterious pearl (xuanzhu), snow flower (xuehua), spirit water (shenshui), and sweet dew (ganlu). These pure fluids are often associated with actual mist and dew.

**A CLASSICAL DAOIST PRECEDENT FOR GRAIN ABSTENTION AND QI INGESTION**

There is a spirit being (shenren) living on the distant Gushe mountain, with skin like ice and snow, and gentle and shy like a young child. He doesn’t eat the five grains, but inhales wind and drinks dew. He ascends the clouds and mist, rides a flying dragon, and wanders beyond the four seas. With his spirit coalesced, he can protect beings from sickness and plagues and make the harvest plentiful. (Zhuangzi, Chapter 1)

In addition to the early reference to grain avoidance, this passage describes living on wind and dew and mist. Later Daoist self-cultivation movements interpreted “wind” and “dew” as qi and saliva, respectively, and used the terms “drinking dew” and “imbibing mist” to designate swallowing saliva.

The practice of swallowing saliva is described in a fairly standard way in almost any Daoist text that utilizes the practice. First, through Daoist religious training, including meditation and Yangsheng practice, pure saliva forms in the mouth. One then gathers saliva using the tongue, often in combination with tapping the teeth (see Chapter 10). Next, one swallows the saliva, usually by dividing it into three portions and
This passage utilizes standard esoteric terms for saliva (Mysterious Pearl and Sweet Dew) and the tongue (Crimson Dragon; also referred to as Descending Bridge). The former describes the tongue’s color (crimson) and its capacity for flexible movement (dragon). The designation of Descending Bridge brings one’s attention to the fact that the tip of the tongue ideally rests touching the upper palate, thus linking the Governing Vessel and Conception Vessel (see Chapters 7, 10, and 11). In this context, saliva is one of the most important “ingredients,” an ingredient that combines with qi in the lower elixir field to form the “elixir of immortality.” For example, the twelfth-century Jinguan yusuo jue (Instructions on the Gold Pass and Jade Lock; DZ 1156) provides aspiring Quanzhen adepts with instructions on swallowing saliva.

---

**SWALLOWING SWEET DEW**

“Now, when one uses this exercise, one should begin sitting cross-legged [full-lotus posture] at the hour of zi [11 p.m.–1 a.m.] and the hour of wu [11 a.m.–1 p.m.] and rub the hands together. If the perfect qi is active in the body, pass it through the Celestial Bridge to the forehead skin. Make it go to the area above the jaws. Using the intention, divide the perfect qi in two and have it flow down to move in the center of the Great Yang Prime. Let it flow deeper into the jaw, ascending into the teeth. Then collect the ye-fluids from the right and left corners of the mouth. This in turn is the Mysterious Pearl and the Sweet Dew. Use the Crimson Dragon to stir and obtain the proper blending, so that it coagulates into a snow flower. White in color, it has a sweet flavor.” (Jinguan yusuo jue, DZ 1156, 8b; also 11b)

This passage utilizes standard esoteric terms for saliva (Mysterious Pearl and Sweet Dew) and the tongue (Crimson Dragon; also referred to as Descending Bridge). The former describes the tongue’s color (crimson) and its capacity for flexible movement (dragon). The designation of Descending Bridge brings one’s attention to the fact that the tip of the tongue ideally rests touching the upper palate, thus linking the Governing Vessel and Conception Vessel (see Chapters 7 and 11). When swallowing saliva, one lowers the tongue, extends the neck slightly, and guides the saliva down.

The primary Daoist rationale for swallowing saliva relates to conservation and non-dissipation. As fluids are associated with vital essence (jing), one’s foundational vitality (see Chapter 7), preserving and reabsorbing saliva increases one’s energetic integrity. At the same time, swallowing saliva relates to fluid physiology. As I have suggested elsewhere (Komjathy 2007a: 204–6), one can attempt to understand the practice in terms of the physiology of internal alchemy in general and elixir formation in particular. Beyond the simplified formula of refining vital essence and qi to eventually become spirit and merge with the Dao, internal alchemy is a complex process of self-refinement and psychosomatic transformation, of rarification and self-divinization. For
example, refining vital essence, associated with the kidneys, leads to the production of blood, with the assistance of the lungs and heart, and the production of fluids, with the assistance of the spleen and stomach. These fluids in turn nourish and moisten the muscles, skin, joints, and orifices of the sense organs. In combination with marrow derived from vital essence, the fluids also nourish the brain and spinal cord. Simultaneously, the fluids transferred to the heart become blood, the material basis of spirit. That is, the seemingly simple formula of “refining vital essence to become qi” initiates a complex set of physiological responses. More specifically, producing, conserving, and ingesting fluids leads to both a greater resiliency to disease, through increased protective qi, and an abundance of spirit, through increased blood and marrow production. Nourishing and attending to the various organs and their related substances initiates a dynamic physiological process. This physiology provides a foundation for the activation of mystical body locations, as well as for the patterning of a pathway for the spirit to transcend the mundane world and become an immortal.

Qi ingestion is the final aspect of Daoist dietetics that I would like to discuss. There are a variety of Daoist technical terms for this practice, including “ingesting qi” (fuqi), “eating qi” (shiqi), and so forth. Qi ingestion involves the ingestion of seasonal and local influences as well as absorption of astral effulgences. That is, there are ecological and cosmological aspects of the practice, as well as different informing views. Some approaches to qi ingestion emphasize cosmological attunement, while others focus on rarification and self-divinization. Early Shangqing was one of the earliest Daoist movements to incorporate qi ingestion into its religious training and soteriological system; in that context, it appears as an element that presages the later systematization of internal alchemy in the late medieval period. Some representative qi ingestion practices include absorbing the qi of the five directions (east, south, center, west, north) and the energies of the sun, moon, stars, and planets.

One key characteristic is the central importance of light (Robinet 1989a, 1993; Miller 2003, 2008). This is so much the case that one might understand the practice as “nourishing on light” or “living on light.” In this way, it connects to various Daoist views and approaches discussed above. It is also noteworthy that Daoist qi ingestion seems to find some support in contemporary astrophysics, especially in its identification of primordial energies circulating through the cosmos and the concepts of “dark matter” and “dark energy.” That is, modern scientific cosmology may support Daoist claims that one can access primordial ethers and vapors.

Here we will be content to examine one Daoist example: the technique known as “Method of Mist Absorption,” which involves ingesting the so-called “five sprouts” (wuya). The method is early on described in various Shangqing and Lingbao texts and was transmitted to the Shangqing medium Yang Xi (330–386) by Wei Huacun (251–334) (Robinet 1989a: 165). According to the standard practice, one absorbs the qi of the five directions and locates the qi in the corresponding yin-organ. The method begins with swallowing saliva while chanting invocations to the original qi (yuanqi) of the directions. At dawn, one faces the associated direction, usually beginning with the east, and visualizes the qi of that direction in its corresponding colors. A general
myst in the beginning, it gradually forms into an orb of light. It then becomes more concentrated, during which stage it decreases in size and approaches the adept’s body. Eventually the size of a pill, the sprout is swallowed and directed to its corresponding yin-organ. According to the late seventh-century *Fuqi jingyi lun* (Discourse on the Essential Meaning of Absorbing Qi; DZ 277; DZ 830; DZ 1032, j. 57) by Sima Chengzhen (647–735), there are five associated invocations.

**INVOCATIONS FOR THE FIVE SPROUTS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SPROUT</th>
<th>Invocation</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Green Sprout of the East</td>
<td>Become absorbed and nourish my green sprout. I drink you through the Morning Flower.</td>
<td>Yuyi jielin tu, DZ 435</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vermilion Cinnabar of the South</td>
<td>Become absorbed and nourish my vermilion cinnabar. I drink you through the Cinnabar Lake.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Lofty Great Mountain of the Center:
Become absorbed and nourish my essence and qi.
I drink you through the Sweet Spring.

Radiant Stone of the West:
Become absorbed and nourish my radiant stone.
I drink you through the Numinous Liquid.

Radiant Sap of the North:
Become absorbed and nourish my mysterious sap.
I drink you through the Jade Sweetness.

(Fuqi jingyi lun, DZ 277, 3ab; also Taixi qijing, DZ 819; Wufu xu, DZ 388, 3.21ab; Robinet 1989a: 165; Eskildsen 1998: 55; Kohn 2008a: 156)

Here the first and second lines refer to the esoteric names of the corresponding external sprout (directional qi) and internal yin-organ (liver, heart, spleen, lungs, kidneys). The final lines are also esoteric names for corporeal locations and substances (root of upper teeth, root of lower teeth, root of molars, saliva inside the lips, saliva on the tongue). After chanting each invocation, one stimulates the salivary glands by rubbing various parts of the mouth with the tongue and swallows the saliva three times for each sprout.

As the late Isabelle Robinet (1989: 166) has pointed out, the sprouts originally are the “germinal essences of the clouds” or “mist.” They represent the yin principle of heaven, that is, yin within yang. They manifest in human saliva, again a yin element in the upper, yang part of the body (“heaven”). They help to nourish and strengthen the five yin-organs. They are tender, comparable to fresh sprouts of plants, and assemble at dawn in the celestial capital, from where they spread all over the universe until the sun begins to shine. Turning like the wheels of a carriage, they ascend to the gates of the nine heavens, from where they continue to the medium level of the world—to the Five Marchmounts ruled over by the Five Emperors of the five directions (see Chapters 6 and 14)—and finally descend into the individual adept. They thus pass through the three major levels of the cosmos, namely, heaven, earth, and humanity.

The technique is part of a Daoist religious training regimen that includes saliva swallowing, cosmological attunement, and chanting esoteric invocations. Through the practice, the Daoist adept becomes rarified and cosmicized. The incorporation of the qi of the five directions, in concert with other astral and celestial energies, results in a new ontological condition. The adept becomes a rarified being composed primarily of cosmic ethers and theological emanations, a being infused with numinous presences who literally circulates something different. This numinous presence is an essential expression of Daoist religious identity and affiliation, a defining characteristic of the Daoist community. It is the qi of the Dao (daoqi) infusing and manifesting in, as, and through the Daoist adept’s own body.
FURTHER READING


Daist health and longevity practice primarily involves specific techniques aimed at strengthening vitality, increasing wellbeing, and prolonging life. Traditional Daist health and longevity practice is designated by a variety of technical terms, with Yangsheng (“nourishing life”) and Daoyin (“guided stretching”) being most common. Yangsheng is a more encompassing umbrella term. Daist Yangsheng tends to focus on conserving vital essence (jing) and cultivating qi, both as physical respiration (breathing techniques) and as subtle or vital breath. There is thus some overlap with internal alchemy practice (see Chapter 11). Daist Yangsheng practice involves physiological, psychological, and behavioral principles and includes daily behavior (see Chapter 8), dietetics (see Chapter 9), massage (anmo), qi circulation practices (xingqi), qi ingestion methods (fuqi), and respiratory techniques. Daoyin is usually used in a more restrictive sense to designate physical practices involving stretching and breath-work, although there can also be cosmological, energetic, purificatory, and exorcistic dimensions. The technical term daoyin literally means “guiding and pulling” or “to guide and direct” (see also Kohn 2008a: 11–12). It has been translated as “gymnastics” and “calisthenics,” and more recently as “healing exercises,” and most problematically as “yoga.” None of these is satisfactory, so I will leave the term...
untranslated, but believe that “guided stretching” would be the best rendering. In a contemporary context, Daoists tend to designate moving, sequential, and qi circulation practices as Yangsheng; they tend to designate seated or stationary postures that involve stretching and breath-work as Daoyin.

**Historical origins**

Similar to Chinese and Daoist conceptions of disease (see Chapters 6, 8, and 9), Daoist views concerning and approaches to Yangsheng practice are complex. There is a tendency either to ignore Daoist Yangsheng practice or to conflate it with Yangsheng practice more generally, especially in terms of contemporary forms of Qigong and Taiji quan (see Komjathy 2006, 2011b). However, as Livia Kohn has pointed out, we must consider these as distinguishable traditions (Kohn 2008a: 10), and there can be no doubt that practicing Chinese health and longevity techniques is not a requirement for being a member of the religious tradition which is Daoism.

The earliest extant texts related to Chinese health and longevity practice date from the Early Han dynasty and were discovered in two key archaeological sites: Mawangdui (near Changsha, Hunan) and Zhangjiashan (Jiangling, Hubei). The Mawangdui discoveries include the *Daoyin tu* (Diagram of Guided Stretching), while the Zhangjiashan discoveries include the *Yinshu* (Book on Stretching) (see Kohn 2008a: 29–61). Here we must note that the title *Daoyin tu* was given to the text by modern Chinese archaeologists. In addition, while these texts are most often categorized as “medical manuscripts,” more research needs to be done on their actual context of composition and practice.

The *Yinshu* is divided into three parts: a general introduction on seasonal health regimens, a series of about a hundred exercises in three sections, and a conclusion on the etiology of disease and ways of prevention. About a quarter of the text is dedicated to naming and describing basic routines. The second section of the text first presents forty exercises, which can be divided into five groups according to the body parts and types of movements: legs and feet (9), chest and neck (7), lunges (4), forward bends (8), and shoulder openers (12). The text then moves on to the medicinal use of the practices. Beginning with the condition to be remedied, it contains a total of forty-five items, some of which include more than one possible treatment. The third and last part of the *Yinshu* has some additional information on the Eight Meridians Stretch and the use of breathing in the prevention and cure of diseases (Kohn 2008a: 41–58). Most of these practices appear to be practiced as sets, as integrated and complementary systems.

This stands in contrast to the *Daoyin tu*, which consists of forty-four techniques that were practiced as separate, self-contained exercises. As the name indicates, the *Daoyin tu* is an illustrated manual; it consists of forty-four diagrams with captions identifying the associated ailment. The majority of figures appear in standing postures,
but four are kneeling or sitting. A few postures are named after animals, and it is here that we find one of the earliest references to three animal postures (Bear [#41], Bird [#32], and Monkey [#35 and #40]) that would later appear in the famous Five Animal Frolics (see below). As mentioned, the Daoyin tu also contains captions identifying specific ailments or areas of the body to be treated. Conditions mentioned include pain in the ribs, legs, neck, and knees, as well as inguinal swelling, abdominal problems, deafness, fever, upper side blockages, internal heat, warm ailments, and muscle tension. Also noteworthy is posture #37, which aims “to enhance qi flow in the Eight Extraordinary Vessels” (Kohn 2008a: 36–41). Thus a therapeutic perspective is clearly documented in both the Yinshu and Daoyin tu.

Daoist views and approaches

Moving to specifically Daoist materials, the earliest explicit Daoist reference to health and longevity practices appears in Chapter 15 of the Zhuangzi, which instructively is titled “Ingrained Opinions.” As I have suggested, the chapter provides key evidence for a self-conscious religious community, the classical inner cultivation lineages, that may reasonably be labeled “Daoist.” Here health and longevity practice is discussed as one of five lower-level forms of self-cultivation (cf. Kohn 2008a: 14).¹

CLASSICALDAOISTVIEWSONHEALTHANDLONGEVITYPRACTICE

To practice chui, xu, hu and xi breathing, expelling the old and ingesting the new (tugu naxin), engaging in Bear-hangs and Bird-stretches, longevity one’s only concern—such is the approach of the adept who practices Daoyin, the person who nourishes his body, who hopes to live to be as old as Pengzu. (Zhuangzi, Chapter 15; see also Daode jing, Chapter 29)

In terms of the above discussion, the passage is significant on two accounts. First, it has a reference to the same type of stretching routine (Bear-hangs and Bird-stretches) as documented in the Daoyin tu. Second, the text distinguishes Daoyin practice from Daoist practice per se. Daoyin is explicitly named as a distinct approach and stands in contrast to the practices of the inner cultivation lineages of classical Daoism.
This text emphasizes apophatic meditation with the goal of mystical union with the Dao and “longevity without relying on Daoyin.” From this we can see that although classical Daoists recognized the value of Daoyin, they considered this to be an inferior practice.

Despite this, there can be no debate that throughout Chinese history Daoists have concerned themselves with vitality, longevity, and immortality, and have engaged in Daoyin and Yangsheng practice often as a foundation for more advanced practice. The Daoist interest in health and longevity practice is attested to by the sheer volume of related texts in the Daoist Canon (see Kohn 2008a; Schipper and Verellen 2004). Here two representative examples will suffice.

Two major Tang dynasty Daoists recognized the importance of health and longevity practice. These were Sun Simiao (581–682), an ordained Tianshi priest and a famous herbalist and physician later deified as the God of Medicine (see Chapter 6), and Sima Chengzhen (647–735), the 12th Patriarch of Shangqing Daoism. Both of these Daoists discuss health and longevity practice within a larger framework of Daoist training. In his Fuqi jingyi lun (Discourse on the Essential Meaning of Absorbing Qi; DZ 277; DZ 830; DZ 1032, j. 57), Sima Chengzhen advocates specific practices for specific ailments.

### SIMA CHENGZHEN ON YANGSHENG PRACTICE

If you have an aching or sore head, loosen your hair and comb it with vigor for several hundred strokes. Then turn the head to the left and right several ten times.
Sima Chengzhen, the leader of Shangqing and the individual who had attained the highest level of ordination in the Tang-dynasty monastic system (see Chapter 4), advocates health and longevity practice with a therapeutic orientation. However, it is essential to remember that Sima was an ordained Daoist priest who practiced Daoyin and Yangsheng within the context of a larger Daoist religious system. Within this system, which included ethics, chanting, qi ingestion, visualization, investiture training, scripture study, and so forth, the health and healing techniques are identified as basic practices. In order to engage in more advanced Daoist practice, health, vitality, and wellness were prerequisites. The ultimate goal of the system was immortality, that is, to become a member of the Daoist spiritual elite and celestial elect.

Another noteworthy text is the *Daoshi jushan xiulian ke* (Guidelines on Cultivation and Refinement for Daoist Priests and Mountain Hermits; DZ 1272), a Tang-dynasty manual. As Daoyin and Yangsheng practice became more established dimensions of Daoist practice, they were also formalized in the clerical hierarchy of Daoism, introduced with ritual formalities and transmitted in ordination-type ceremonies (see Chapter 13). The text focuses on the physical cultivation of Daoist practitioners, culminating in the transformation of their bodies into vehicles of the pure Dao that are independent of food and drink and can live on qi alone. In terms of Daoyin and Yangsheng practice specifically, the text describes a variety of stretches with coordinated breathing patterns as well as qi-ingestion methods (Kohn 2008a: 158–61). Once again, health and longevity techniques are located in a larger Daoist religious and soteriological system. This system involves precept study and application; formal
ritual, including altar maintenance, incense offering, bowing, and transmissions; Daoist cosmology and theology, including the invocation of deities; as well as special practice chambers. Here we find a central dimension of religious practice that I have been emphasizing throughout the present book: the complex interplay among view, practice, and experience.

From these brief comments on Daoist views of and approaches to Daoyin and Yangsheng practice, we can discern a number of basic insights and patterns. A distinction must be made between health and longevity practice as such and the Daoist employment and understanding of such methods. Most of the methods are not Daoist, and Daoists have tended to engage in such practice within larger Daoist training regimens.

There are also different Daoist views concerning the appropriateness and relevance of Daoyin and Yangsheng. While some Daoists have engaged in such practice, many Daoists have not. For those who have utilized Daoyin and Yangsheng methods, they have often done so at a particular moment in their training. There are varied rationales, motivations, and conceptions involved. Daoists have tended to understand Daoyin and Yangsheng practice as remedial, preliminary, and/or foundational. As we saw in the Zhuangzi, Daoists have tended to locate health and longevity practices in a larger religious and soteriological framework, a framework that may or may not involve such methods. In the case of the larger Daoist tradition, Daoyin and Yangsheng have tended not to be seen as a sufficient or advanced practice. They have been placed within larger ascetic, alchemical, and monastic training regimens. They are, perhaps, necessary for health, vitality, and longevity, but deficient in terms of immortality and mystical modes of being.

Respiratory practice

Depending on the context, Daoist respiratory or breathing practice may fall into the category of Yangsheng or meditation. There are a wide variety of indigenous Chinese names for breathing practices. The most common is *huxi* (lit., “exhaling and inhaling”), which may simply refer to breathing more generally. Daoist technical terms include *tiaoxi* (“harmonizing the breath”); *zhongxi* (“heel breathing”), which is contrasted with *houxi* (“throat breathing”); *taixi* (“embryonic respiration”); and so forth.

The most common Daoist approach to breathing is naturalistic. One simply allows the breath to find its own natural rhythm without manipulation or interference. This is the application of the Daoist principle of *wuwei* to breathing. Generally speaking, as one returns to a state of harmony and ease, one’s breathing patterns become long, slow, and deep. This occurs naturally. Daoists also generally emphasize inhaling and exhaling through the nose, with the tongue touching the upper palate. However, Daoists sometimes utilize exhaling through the mouth as a way to release tension and to expel impure qi. This is also one of the reasons behind the Daoist proscription against blowing out incense or candles.
Daoists have also recognized the deeper psychosomatic connection between breathing patterns, physical tension, and psychological states. Changing the body changes the mind; changing the mind changes the body; changing the breath changes body and mind; and so forth. As anyone who has observed the breath knows, breathing becomes shallow and/or irregular when one is agitated, upset, or tense. So, while “natural breathing” is the foundational Daoist approach, attentiveness to and intentional modification of respiration patterns also play a role in Daoist practice. We may refer to this as “Daoist breath-work.” Such methods are sometimes practiced on their own, but breath-work is also utilized in Daoist Daoyin, Yangsheng, qi-ingestion, and internal alchemy. For example, in many Daoyin systems, one exhales while stretching. This allows one to deepen and lengthen the stretch, and to increase flexibility.

One of the most well known Daoist breath-work practices is heel-breathing. The term first appears in Chapter 6 of the Zhuangzi.

---

**HEELED BREATHING**

The authentic person (zhenren) of ancient times slept without dreaming and woke without care; he ate without savoring, and his breath came from deep inside. The authentic person breathes with his heels; the masses breathe with their throats. Crushed and bound down, they gasp out their words as though they were retching. Deep in their passions and desires, they are shallow in the workings of the heavens. (Zhuangzi, Chapter 6)

---

There are various Daoist interpretations of the practice. On the most literal level, one breathes down to and up from the heels. In certain Daoist Yangsheng and internal alchemy contexts, this is often associated with a qi-ingestion practice that focuses on the Yongquan (Bubbling Well; KI–1) point, the center of the balls of the feet, and on terrestrial qi (diqi). That is, one inhales the qi of the earth through the soles of the feet, the primary entry-point of terrestrial qi in the body. Another, more symbolic Daoist interpretation understands heel-breathing as whole-body breathing, that is, the phrase directs the Daoist adept to breath with and through the entire body. The physical breath, and thus the qi, penetrates throughout the limbs, even to the fingertips and toes. For Daoists, heel-breathing is thus one way to complete embodiment, to total presence.

Another important Daoist breath-work practice involves “embryonic respiration” (see Maspero 1981: 459–505). Recalling classical Daoist ideas such as the Child and “being nourished by the mother” (Daode jing, Chapter 12), embryonic respiration draws one’s attention to a state of cosmological integration and unitary being. Sun Simiao (581–682), an ordained Tianshi priest and a famous herbalist and physician, explains: “In the practice of embryonic respiration, one does not use the nose or the mouth. Instead, one
breathes in the manner of an embryo inside the womb. One who realizes this has truly attained the Dao” (Sheyang zhenzhong fang, DZ 1032, 33.9b; adapted from Englehardt 1989: 287). According to the Tiaoqi jing (Scripture on Regulating Qi; DZ 820), the aspiring adept is advised to enter a state of deep relaxation, and then practice breath regulation. This involves holding the breath in various ways. The practitioner slows down, stores, and apparently discontinues physical respiration, that is, breathing patterns that require the lungs, nose, and mouth. “After a long time, the breath exits through the hundred hair follicles, rather than through the mouth” (20a). The practitioner thus enters a state of mystical abiding. Like the higher Daoist dietetic state of living on qi (see Chapter 9), one understanding of embryonic respiration is the cessation of physical respiration, the end of the necessity for actual inhalation and exhalation. Like food, physical respiration is a form of “post-natal qi.” It is required because we have separate identities. A central Daoist view is that when one merges with the Dao, one no longer needs post-natal qi or even personal qi. In a state of mystical union, one lives through original qi (yuanqi), which is often referred to as the “qi of the Dao” (daoqi) in the Daoist tradition.

A final representative and highly influential respiratory technique utilized by Daoists is the “Six Sounds” (liuzi jue), which literally means “instructions on the six characters” and which conventionally appears in English-language presentations as the “Six Healing Sounds” (see Despeux 2006). This practice involves performing specific postures while exhaling six sounds, which derive from modern pronunciations of six Chinese characters. Based on Chinese historical phonetics, in archaic and ancient Chinese the characters probably would have been pronounced something like *χio (xù), *χâ (he), *g’o (hu), *si’d (si), *t’wia (chui), and *χi&r (xi) (Karlgren 1964). Early historical precedents appear in Chapter 15 of the Zhuangzi and in the Yinshu. As discussed above, the Zhuangzi mentions chui, xu, hu and xi. The Yinshu discusses chui, xu, and hu (Lo forthcoming; Kohn 2008a: 56–8). These facts indicate that the practice most likely originated in Yangsheng or therapeutic circles, rather than in a Daoist context. In addition, it is currently unclear when the actual Six Sounds practice became integrated and fully systematized. In the earliest historical examples, they appear to be separate and distinct practices, even though they have family resemblances with respect to the use of breath-work and sound. A relatively early Daoist discussion appears in the Daoyin jing (Scripture on Guided Stretching; DZ 818), a Daoist text on Daoyin possibly dating to the seventh century. According to the Daoyin jing, the Six Sounds is a sequential practice utilizing the sounds (in modern Mandarin pronunciation) of xu, he, hu, si (xi), chui, and xi, though the sequence varies. The text identifies each breath-sound with an associated organ: xu (liver), he (heart), hu (spleen), si (lungs), chui (kidneys), and xi (Triple Warmer). Each exercise, in turn, relates to specific ailments and corresponding conditions viewed through traditional Chinese cosmology and medical diagnostics (see Kohn 2008a: 101–2). Interestingly, the text clearly understands the practice as remedial, as a method to rectify imbalances and heal illnesses. “If you practice this beyond being cured, however, it will cause renewed diminishment” (16a). As the Daoyin jing is not illustrated, we do not know how this version of the Six Sounds was practiced, specifically with respect to posture. In more contemporary forms, there are
specific postures utilizing the associated meridians. Moving through the given posture, one exhales through the mouth while pronouncing the associated sound.

**Yangsheng: Nourishing life**

Daoist Yangsheng ("nourishing life") practice frequently overlaps with Chinese medical and therapeutic views and practices and might best be considered as a shared repertoire of traditional Chinese culture. On the most basic level, Yangsheng refers to health and longevity techniques, specifically to methods that increase health and vitality, with vitality usually associated with qi (see Chapters 6 and 7). Yangsheng practice focuses on the body, with particular attention to its physical and energetic dimensions. Here vitality and longevity are connected: Yangsheng practitioners want extended lifespans, but *if and only if* vitality remains throughout one’s later years of life. This is the overall goal of Yangsheng practice: to be vital and alive throughout the entirety of one’s life.

Before we examine specific Daoist Daoyin and Yangsheng practices, we should also recognize that Yangsheng may have a larger meaning. While Yangsheng practice is most often equivalent to health and longevity techniques, and while this is the way that it is being used in the present section, Yangsheng may refer to a larger existential approach that overlaps with dietetics, hygiene, lifestyle, and so forth. In this framework, Yangsheng extends to diet and nutrition, including principles such as walking after eating and not eating to fullness (see Chapter 9), as well as various hygiene practices, such as bathing and brushing one’s hair and teeth. For some Daoists, it would also require the cultivation of virtue (see Chapter 8). That is, while it is possible to isolate Yangsheng practice from other Daoist pursuits and convictions, many Daoists hold that Yangsheng practice absent of virtue, meditation, and ritual will not result in health and longevity. Also noteworthy is the fact that *sheng* refers to “life,” the totality of sentient existence, as a whole. If this is the case, then one’s individual life participates in a larger context of being, in which other beings suffer and strive for fulfillment. Nourishing one’s own life may, in fact, lead to the diminishment of “life” more generally. This expanded view of Yangsheng encourages one to reflect on the deeper dimensions of “nourishing life,” including the possibility of ethical embodiment (see Chapters 5 and 8).

On a broad level, Yangsheng involves moderation, conservation, and non-dissipation; it involves preserving one’s foundational vitality and tending to one’s health and wellbeing.

### DAOIST GUIDELINES FOR NOURISHING LIFE

The method of nourishing life involves not spitting far and not walking hastily. Let the ears not listen excessively; let the eyes not look around extensively. Do not
The *Yangsheng lun* (Discourse on Nourishing Life; DZ 842) proposes similar guidelines to those listed above, which it supplements with a set of six exhortations to release mental strain and sensory engagement. These include letting go of fame and profit, limiting sights and sounds, moderating material accumulation and wealth, lessening smells and tastes, eliminating lies and falsehood, and avoiding jealousy and envy (1b). The text then repeats the set of twelve “lesser” activities (1b–2a) as found in the *Yangsheng yaoji* and moves on to echo Pengzu’s warning against wearing “heavy clothes and thick sleeves,” against eating “meats, fatty foods and sweets and getting intoxicated,” and against enjoying “sexual infatuation, engagements with the opposite sex, and overindulgence in the bedroom” (Kohn 2008a: 70–3; see also Englehardt 1989). Within these various Yangsheng principles and commitments, we notice the classical and foundational Daoist emphasis on simplicity, including decreasing sensory engagement and desire-based existential modes (see Chapter 5).

Returning to Yangsheng in the more narrow sense of health and longevity techniques, Yangsheng is movement-based practice. It usually involves moving through different postures, often in sequence. In terms of Daoist Yangsheng, there are various types of practice as well as specific methods. With respect to the former, typical types include walking, orchestrated physical movements, often with attention to the organ-meridian system, qi ingestion (fuqi), and qi circulation (xingqi).

With respect to dimensions of Yangsheng practice, beyond the qi ingestion techniques discussed in Chapter 9, the *Yangsheng yaoji* (Essential Compilation on Nourishing Life; partially lost) and the *Yangxing yanming lu* (On Nourishing Innate Nature and Extending Life-destiny; DZ 838) are helpful. Once again, these texts locate health and longevity techniques within a larger Daoist training regimen. As outlined in the *Yangxing yanming lu*, there are ten fundamental elements of Yangsheng practice: (1) Strengthening spirit; (2) Cherishing qi; (3) Nourishing the body; (4) Daoyin; (5) Proper speech; (6) Eating and drinking; (7) Bedchamber arts (sexual practices); (8) Rejecting mundane concerns and habits; (9) Herbal medicine; and (10) Taboos and prohibitions (DZ 838, 1.9b).
Daoist Daoyin ("guided stretching") practice is characterized by stretching and breath-work. It usually involves holding specific postures. Some Daoyin routines are undertaken in standing positions, while others utilize seated or supine positions. There are also systems that combine all three. In general, Daoyin does not involve flowing or sequential (one after another, without pausing) movements. In the context of integrated Daoist training, Daoyin is most often used as a supplement to seated meditation. While the potentially harmful and dangerous aspects of meditation practice are rarely discussed, especially in a modern therapeutic context, religious contemplatives, Daoist and otherwise, have frequently recognized and documented such possibilities. These include physical injuries, energetic stagnation, medical problems, psychological disruption (e.g. hyper-emotionality, nervous breakdown or psychosis), and, in certain cases, possession. This is one of the reasons why experienced and trustworthy teachers as well as holistic training are necessary. Many modern practitioners engaging in intensive and prolonged seated meditation have experienced various physical and medical issues, including knee and lower back pain as well as prolapse of the organs. For Daoists, practices such as Daoyin, including self-massage (see below), help to relieve stagnation and support continued practice.

The Daoyin jing is the only known text in the Daoist Canon that deals exclusively with Daoyin. The text is attributed to the fourth-century Master Jingli or Jinghei, who is also associated with the Shenxian shiqi jin’hui miaolu (Wondrous Record of the Golden Chest on Spirit Immortals’ Eating Qi; abbr. Jin’hui lu; see Kohn 2008a: 72–88). The text dates to possibly as early as the seventh century, with some material perhaps going back to the fourth century. It stands out from earlier medical practices and animal forms in that it presents exercise sequences associated with four major ancient immortals, all with first biographies in the Han-dynasty Liexian zhuan (Biographies of Arrayed Immortals; DZ 294). Important legendary figures often associated with the Daoist tradition, they are Pengzu (Ancestor Peng), who allegedly ate only cinnamon and lived for hundreds of years through the Xia and Shang dynasties; Chisongzi (Master Redpine), the Lord of Rain under the mythical Shennong (Divine Farmer), best known for his magical powers of riding the wind; Ningfengzi (Master Ningfeng), the Lord of Fire under Huangdi (Yellow Thearch), who was immune to heat and burning; and Wangzi Qiao (Wangzi Jin), who could travel through the universe at will.

As the Daoyin jing ascribes different methods and sequences to these four, it is possible that they were seen as representatives of different schools (Despeux 1989: 230; Kohn 2008a: 98–9). Integrating various forms of exercises and modes of guiding qi, the Daoyin jing brings the tradition of health and longevity practice to a new level of development, characterized by certain key features. They are the refinement and variation of medical exercises and animal forms, the organization of healing practices into integrated sequences and their ascription to legendary Daoist immortals, and the
use of meditation techniques that integrate qi circulation with various body imaginings and Daoist visualizations. The text accordingly has three major kinds of instructions: (1) methods for medical relief that constitute a development of those first found in archeological manuscripts; (2) integrated sequences of practice that can be used to facilitate healing but more dominantly marked as methods of long life and immortality, and (3) meditative ways of guiding qi and visualizing the body that put the practitioner into a more divine and spiritual context. Within these three areas, the *Daoyin jing* first shows the systematic progress from healing through longevity to immortality, which becomes central in most later Daoist Daoyin forms and systems (Kohn 2008a: 101, also 101–27). Here we also find an earlier example of associating specific methods with particular immortals. This may be one possible defining characteristic of Daoist health and longevity techniques. However, it is important to remember that Daoist immortals also became part of Chinese culture and the Chinese literary tradition, specifically in theatrical performances (see Hawkes 1981; Idema 1993) and popular Chinese novels (see Wong 1990). That is, there are many examples of Chinese literature utilizing Daoist themes and characters, and none of these were written by Daoists or within Daoist communities. This begs the question as to what degree they are purely fictional, however inspiring or entertaining they may be.

In contrast to the *Daoyin jing*, most pre-modern Daoist presentations of Daoyin practice appear in texts that cover a wide variety of practices. Some key Daoyin practices utilized and/or developed by Daoists include the Five Animal Frolics (*wuqin xi*), Seated Eight Brocades (*baduan jin*), Twelve Sleeping Exercises (*shier shuigong*), and Twenty-four Nodes Daoyin (*ershisi qi zuogong daoyin*). Here I will briefly introduce the Five Animal Frolics and the Twelve Sleeping Exercises, and then provide a more detailed discussion of the Seated Eight Brocades and Twenty-Four Nodes Daoyin.

As the name suggests, the Five Animal Frolics involves taking the postures and imitating the movements of five animals, namely, tiger, deer, bear, monkey, and bird (crane) (see *Yangxing yanming lu*, DZ 838, 2.7b–8a; Berk 1986: 57–62; Despeux 1988: 102–11; 1989; Zong and Li 1992: 68–80; Wang and Barrett 2006; Kohn 2008a: 163–9). Associated with the semi-legendary physician Hua Tuo (ca. 145–208 CE), the integrated sequential practice is first attested to in the official biography of Hua Tuo. According to the third-century *Sanguo zhi* (Record of the Three Kingdoms), “The practice of the frolics aids the elimination of diseases and increases the functioning of the limbs and joints … In due course the body becomes lighter and more comfortable, and a healthy appetite will return” (29.2a; cited in Kohn 2008a: 165). Here we again see a Daoist recognition of animals as teachers. Modified versions of the Five Animal Frolics continue to be a central practice in contemporary Qigong circles.

Not surprisingly, the Twelve Sleeping Exercises are a series of twelve sleeping exercises (*shuigong*) (see Takehiro 1990; Zong and Li 1992: 201–8; Kohn 2008a: 184–9), which are practiced primarily just before going to sleep while reclining on the right side. In this way, they parallel the preferred Daoist sleeping posture, namely, lying on the right side with the right hand under the right ear and the left hand resting on the outer leg or between the thighs of one’s slightly bent legs. A contemporary
Daoist explanation for the posture emphasizes the way in which the posture facilitates the liver’s function of purifying the blood and ensuring the smooth flow of qi throughout the body.

The Twelve Sleeping Exercises might also be categorized as “Daoist sleeping meditation,” as they include contemplative and inner alchemical dimensions. They are recorded in a section of the late sixteenth-century *Chifeng sui* (Marrow of the Crimson Phoenix; ZW 320; QYC 13), which is titled the *Huashan shier shuigong zongjue* (Comprehensive Instructions on the Twelve Sleeping Exercises of Mount Hua). The exercises are attributed to the Daoist immortal Chen Tuan (Xiyi [Infinitesimal Subtlety]; d. 989), who is the patron saint of Huashan (Huayin, Shaanxi) and co-patriarch, with Hao Datong (1140–1212), of the Huashan lineage of Quanzhen Daoism.

**FIGURE 13**  *Mao Xuanhan Commingling Dragon and Tiger*

Source: *Chifeng sui*

The Seated Eight Brocades is a series of eight stretches utilizing seated postures (see Berk 1986: 48–56; Zong and Li 1992: 105–9; Kohn 2008a: 180–83). The earliest presentation of the sequence appears in the thirteenth-century *Xiuzhen shishu* (Ten Books on Cultivating Perfection; DZ 263). They are also reproduced in other influential works such as the *Chifeng sui* and the seventeenth-century *Neiwei gong tushuo jiyao* (Collected Essentials and Illustrated Descriptions of Internal and External Exercises;
Like many Daoist Daoyin and Yangsheng practices, including the Twelve Sleeping Exercises, they are attributed to a Daoist immortal, in this case Zhongli Quan (Zhengyang [Aligned Yang]; 2nd c. CE). Zhongli Quan is most often identified as the teacher of Lü Dongbin (Chunyang [Pure Yang]; b. 798?). Like Lü, Zhongli Quan is a central figure in the Daoist tradition, perhaps most importantly for his association with the Zhong-Lü lineage of internal alchemy and as a patriarch of Quanzhen and a member of the Eight Immortals (see Chapters 2 and 6), figures who also became part of popular Chinese culture. The Seated Eight Brocades crosses the conceptual categories of meditation, ritual, Daoyin, and self-massage, as it exhibits characteristics of each of these. The exercises are said to stimulate qi flow and facilitate alchemical transformation. According to descriptions that accompany the diagrams, the Eight Brocades are a mixture of qi-circulation and simple physical movements executed on the basis of deep concentrative meditation and serving the purpose of “burning the body” (fenshen), an internal alchemy practice aimed at eliminating illnesses or demonic influences. The technique involves swallowing qi in the form of a mixture of breath and saliva and guiding it into the lower elixir field where, in conjunction with the fire of the heart, it turns into a wheel of fire that gradually

**FIGURE 14 Seated Eight Brocades**
Source: Xiuzhen shishu, DZ 263
expands and burns throughout the body. This eliminates various demonic and psychological problems, such as anxiety, nightmares, and hallucinations. Moreover, the practitioner becomes free of negative desires and attachments, such as to wealth and success, passions and amorous relationships, military and political prowess, and quick progress and supernatural powers. This allows the aspiring adept to focus fully on internal alchemical practice and transformation (Baldrian-Hussein 1984: 160–2; Kohn 2008a: 180–83).

INSTRUCTIONS ON THE SEATED EIGHT BROCADES

1. Tapping the Teeth and Concentrating Spirit. Tap the teeth thirty-six times. Then place both hands on your head and beat the Celestial Drum [the occiput] twenty-four times.

2. Rotating the Celestial Pillar. Rotate the Celestial Pillar [the neck] to the right and the left twenty-four times each.

3. The Crimson Dragon Churns the Ocean. Move the tongue [Crimson Dragon] around the mouth right and left, reaching upward to the gums. Repeat thirty-six times. Swallow the saliva in three gulps like a hard object. After that you may circulate qi in accordance with the proper firing times.

4. Massaging the Kidney Hall. Massage the Kidney Hall with both hands. Rub the kidneys thirty-six times. The more you do this, the more marvelous the results will be.

5. Single-pass Rotation. Rotate the torso at the single pass [shoulders] like an axle to the right and left. Repeat this thirty-six times.

6. Double-pass Rotation. Rotate the torso at the double pass [waist] like a pulley to the right and left. Repeat this thirty-six times.

7. Interlocking the Fingers on Top of the Head. Rub the hands together and exhale with he. Repeat five times. Then interlock the fingers, palms facing outward, and raise the arms above the head to support the heavens. Then press the hands against the top of the head. Repeat nine times.

8. Hands and Feet Hook Together. With both hands formed into hooks, bend forward and press the soles of the feet. Repeat this twelve times. Then pull the legs in and sit cross-legged with the back straight. (Xiuzhen shishu, DZ 263, j. 19; adapted from Kohn 2008a: 181–2)
The Seated Eight Brocades continue to be practiced in contemporary contexts and by Qigong practitioners and self-identified Daoists (see Olson 1997; Shijing 1999; also Ni 1991; Chia 1999), though the latter claim deserves critical scrutiny (Komjathy 2006; also Chapter 16 herein). The Seated Eight Brocades stand in contrast to the Standing Eight Brocades, which preliminary research indicates probably originated in Shaolin Gongfu (Kung-fu), rather than Daoist or medical, circles and may be of quite recent provenance (see Komjathy 2006; Kohn 2008a: 190–2). One indicator of this is that the figures appear with shaven heads (Buddhist monks), rather than with topknots or long hair (ordained Daoists). The Standing Eight Brocades have fairly wide circulation in contemporary Qigong circles.

Another important and influential Daoist practice is the Twenty-four Nodes Daoyin (see Berk 1986: 19–47; Zong and Li 1992: 24–47; Kohn 2008a: 170–2). The sequence is first attested to in the above-mentioned Neiwai gong tushuo jiyao, a collection of health and longevity practices possibly dating from the seventeenth century. Interestingly, like the Twelve Sleeping Exercises, the Twenty-four Nodes Daoyin is associated with Chen Tuan. The Twenty-four Nodes Daoyin is a set of twenty-four seated postures correlated to the twenty-four nodes, that is, the key seasonal and energetic times of the year. Here we must acknowledge that the twenty-four nodes are not specifically Daoist, but are best understood as part of “traditional Chinese culture.” Like correlative cosmology and the stem-branch (ganzhi) system, the nodes are not Daoist in origin or essence; rather, Daoists, like most Chinese people in pre-modern China, utilized the system. The various postures of the Twenty-four Nodes Daoyin involve stretching with attentiveness to the associated time, season, organ and meridian, and seasonal imbalances that may appear. That is, this is a practice aimed at seasonal and cosmological attunement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mo Period</th>
<th>Practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Spring Beginning</td>
<td>cross-legged, press both hands on R/L knee, turn neck R/L, 15x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rain Water</td>
<td>press both hands on R/L thigh, turn neck and torso R/L, 15x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Insects Stirring</td>
<td>make tight fists, lift arms to elbow level, turn neck R/L, 30x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring Equinox</td>
<td>stretch arms forward, turn neck R/L, look over shoulders, 42x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pure Brightness</td>
<td>pull arms into shooting bow position R/L, 56x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crop Rain</td>
<td>lift arm up, palm out, place other arm across torso, turn shoulders, 35x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Summer Beginning</td>
<td>cross-legged, interlace fingers, hug knee into chest R/L, 35x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slight Ripening</td>
<td>lift arm up, palm out, press other arm on legs, press R/L, 35x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Seeds Sprouting</td>
<td>stand up, lift both arms to ceiling, slight back bend, 35x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer Equinox</td>
<td>sit with legs out, lift one leg, hold with both hands, stretch R/L, 35x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Slight Heat</td>
<td>kneel on one leg, stretch other leg away, lean back, R/L, 15x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great Heat</td>
<td>cross-legged, lean forward over legs, push floor, turn neck R/L, 15x</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The ailments that they propose to heal tend to be associated with qi-blockages (one of the main sources of illness in Chinese medicine), including joint pain, digestive problems, and muscular weakness. The corresponding time for the practice is during the hour of zi (11 p.m.–1 a.m.) during winter (10th, 11th, and 12th exercises), and after sunrise, during the hour of mao (5–7 a.m.), at the beginning and into the height of summer (4th and 5th exercises). During the remainder of the year, it is ideal to practice them at dawn. One is advised to alternate the postures to the right and left and to practice them on each side for a given number of repetitions.

One distinguishing feature of contemporary Daoist meditation is the use of self-massage at the completion of practice. Usually referred to as Anmo (lit., “pressing and rubbing”), many of the methods utilized have a precedent in the earliest Daoist Daoyin materials, and some of them appear to derive from, or at least parallel, the Seated Eight Brocades. Self-massage might thus be understood as one expression of Daoist Daoyin practice. As the name suggests, Daoist self-massage involves massaging the body, especially after meditation practice. Following meditation practice, many Daoists tap the teeth together thirty-six times, swirl the tongue around the mouth, gather saliva, and swallow the saliva down to the lower elixir field (see also Chapter 9 herein). The most frequent explanations for this practice involve strengthening the teeth, conserving vital essence in the form of fluids, and forming the elixir of immortality. Another dimension involves “beating the Celestial Drum.” During this part of self-massage, the Daoist adept places the palms over the ears and flicks the index and middle fingers on the occiput, referred to as Yuzhen (Jade Pillow; GV–16). Common explanations include strengthening the ears and kidneys, opening the Upper Pass (the occiput), so that qi may complete its upward circuit, accessing the Ancestral Cavity (center of the head associated with original spirit), and awakening divine presences (“gods”) associated with the brain. Self-massage as such includes moving the hands,
and specifically the Laogong (Labor Palace; PC–8) points, the palms of the hands, over the entire body. The Laogong points are one of the main places where qi moves to the surface of the body, and this point is often used in external qi healing. Typical regimens include rubbing the face, torso, lower abdomen, kidneys, legs, and arms. Particular attention is given to the Eight Extraordinary Vessels. The practice usually concludes with storing qi in the lower elixir field, the lower abdomen, with the palms joined on the navel (see Komjathy and Townsend 2010b).

---

**FURTHER READING**


Generally speaking, “meditation” involves seated postures aimed at developing some capacity, clarifying meaning and purpose, and/or deepening one’s connection to the sacred (see Chapter 6). Although meditation is often associated with seated postures and assumed to be synonymous with Buddhist meditation, there are types of meditation practice that utilize standing, walking, and supine postures. Considered from a comparative perspective, “meditation” is an umbrella category that includes various types of associated practices, including alchemy, concentration, devotion, intentional respiration (breath-centered), mindfulness, relaxation, visualization, and so forth. The goals of meditation are also diverse, and they are usually tradition-specific. These may include the attainment of higher levels of consciousness or numinous abilities; the development of attentiveness, wisdom, compassion, or some other capacity or quality; divinization (making oneself into a god) or rarification (making oneself more refined); and so forth.

Daoist meditation, most generally referred to in Chinese as dazuo (lit., “to engage in sitting”), is among the most diverse in terms of technique and orientation. Five major types of Daoist meditation may be identified: apophatic or quietistic meditation, which relates to a variety of Daoist technical terms; visualization (cunxiang); ingestion (fuqi); inner observation (neiguan); and internal alchemy (neidan). Daoists also developed a

---

Chapter Outline

- Apophatic meditation
- Visualization
- Internal alchemy
- Female alchemy
specific type of practice for women, known as “female alchemy” (nüdan), which was first systematized during the late imperial period.

**Apophatic meditation**

Daoist apophatic or quietistic meditation is first attested to in classical Daoist texts, where it receives various technical names. These include “embracing the One” (baoyi), “guarding the One” (shouyi), “fasting of the heart-mind” (xinzhai), “sitting-in-forgetfulness” (zuowang), and so forth. In contemporary Daoism, where the practice usually incorporates internal alchemy dimensions, it is usually called “quiet sitting” (jingzuo), also translated as “tranquil sitting,” “stillness meditation,” or “sitting-in-stillness.” Apophatic meditation emphasizes emptiness and stillness; it is contentless, non-conceptual, and non-dualistic. One simply empties the heart-mind of all emotional and intellectual content.

Classical descriptions of Daoist apophatic meditation appear in many Daoist texts (see, e.g. Roth 1997, 1999a, 1999b; also LaFargue 1992). These works provide instructions and guidelines for the practice. According to the fourth-century BCE *Daode jing* (Scripture on the Dao and Inner Power), “Empty the heart-mind and fill the belly. Weaken the will and strengthen the bones” (Chapter 3; also Chapter 12). We also find more detailed instructions.

---

### INSTRUCTIONS ON CLASSICAL DAOIST APOPHATIC MEDITATION

Carrying the ethereal and corporeal souls, embracing the One,
Can you be without separation?
Concentrating the qi and attaining softness,
Can you be like a newborn child?
Cleansing and purifying mysterious perception,
Can you be without flaws?
Loving the people and governing the country,
Can you abide in non-knowing?
Opening and closing the Celestial Gates,
Can you become like a female?
Illuminating and purifying the four directions,
Can you abide in non-action?
(*Daode jing*, Chapter 10)

---

***

Attain emptiness completely;
Guard stillness sincerely.
Similarly, the fourth-century BCE “Neiye” (Inward Training) chapter of the Guanzi (Book of Master Guan) explains: “The Dao is without a set place, but the calmness of an adept heart-mind makes a place. When the heart-mind is still and qi is patterned, the Dao may then come to rest … Cultivate the heart-mind and still your thinking; the Dao may then be realized” (Chapter 5; also Chapters 14, 17, 19, and 25). This text also provides more specific guidelines.
Both of these classical Daoist texts discuss apophatic meditation in terms of “oneness” or “unity”; chapter eleven of the Zhuangzi and the “Neiye” refer to this practice as “guarding the One” (shouyi), which interestingly becomes a more general designation for Daoist meditation in the organized tradition (see Kohn 1989b). Paralleling the “Neiye,” the Daode jing uses the technical designation of “embracing the One” (baoyi). In the fourth-century BCE Inner Chapters of the Zhuangzi (Book of Master Zhuang), it is presented as “fasting of the heart-mind” (xinzhai) and “sitting-in-forgetfulness” (zuowang).²

XINZHAI AND ZUOWANG

“You must fast! I will tell you what that means. Do you think that it is easy to do anything while you have a heart-mind? If you do, the luminous heavens will not support you...Make your aspirations one! Don’t listen with your ears; listen with your heart-mind. No, don’t listen with your heart-mind; listen with qi. Listening stops with the ears, the heart-mind stops with joining, but qi is empty and waits
on all things. The Dao gathers in emptiness alone. Emptiness is the fasting of the heart-mind.” (Zhuangzi, Chapter 4)

***

“I’m improving… I can sit in forgetfulness… I smash up my limbs and body, drive out perception and intellect, cast off form, do away with understanding, and make myself identical with Great Pervasion. This is what I mean by sitting-in-forgetfulness.” (ibid., Chapter 6)

Based on these passages, we may reconstruct the practice. Although detailed information on pre-Buddhist meditation postures is rare in Daoism, the “Neiye” provides some hints. The text emphasizes aligning the body (zhengshen) and aligning the four limbs (zheng siti). Based on reasonable conjecture, especially drawing upon roughly contemporaneous texts and archaeological finds (see Harper 1995, 1998; also Chapter 10 herein), it appears that the corresponding posture involved sitting on the heels in a fashion that parallels the later Japanese seiza position. The spine would have been elongated and erect, and the shoulders aligned with the hips. The hands probably rested on the lap. In addition, the practice seems to have been solitary, rather than communal. With respect to actual method, adepts sought to empty the heart-mind of emotional and intellectual activity; they endeavored to enter a state of stillness, wherein perceptual and cognitive activity decreased. This was a hypoaroused and hyperquiescent state (see Fischer 1980; Forman 1990), that is, a condition characterized by deep relaxation and decreased physiological activity. According to the texts of classical Daoism, apophatic meditation eventually leads to the dissolution of self, to the end of subject-object dichotomies and separate identity. Through dedicated and prolonged practice, one may attain a state of mystical union with the Dao and become an embodiment of the Dao in the world.

Harold Roth, who has done the most extensive research on classical Daoist apophatic meditation, has mapped the practice comparatively in terms of a variety of stages.
While the texts are diverse, here we may use the “Neiye” as the most technical discussion of classical Daoist meditation. According to Harold Roth (1999a: 109), “The practices outlined in *Inward Training* aim to generate and retain vital essence [here meaning concentrated qi] through developing an inner tranquility and an inner power associated with attaining the numinous ‘mind within the mind,’ the nondual awareness of the Way.” The text emphasizes a “fourfold aligning”: (1) Aligning the body; (2) aligning the four limbs; (3) aligning qi; and (4) aligning the heart-mind (ibid.: 109–12). The first two stages involve establishing oneself in a comfortable posture. Here we see the classical and foundational Daoist psychosomatic view: meditation practice and the associated psychological benefits (see below) are directly connected to postural alignment. Aligning qi refers to settling and circulating qi. Roth—problematically in my view—occasionally interprets the third stage as referring to breath regulation. While “aligning qi” could refer to breath regulation, it seems, instead, to indicate settling, storing, and circulating qi in the body. As mentioned in Chapters 6 and 7 herein, qi may designate both physical respiration and a more subtle energetic presence. The final stage involves stilling and emptying the heart-mind, and eventually “attaining” mystical union with the Dao.

Classical Daoist texts established the foundation for later Daoist meditation practice. This is so much the case that an entire Daoist meditation manual was inspired by the second passage from the *Zhuangzi*. The eighth-century CE *Zuowang lun* (Discourse on Sitting-in-Forgetfulness; DZ 1036), a central text of the later Shangqing movement written by Sima Chengzhen (647–735), provides the following instructions: “As a method, we refer to it as ‘blunting the sharpness and untying the knots’ [*Daode jing*, Chapters 4 and 56]. If you maintain constancy of cultivation, you will complete innate nature through practice. Smash up limbs and body, drive out perception and intellect, and experience detachment and forgetfulness. Unmoving in silence, you imperceptibly and subtly enter illumination” (section 6).

Many classical Daoist texts furthermore claim that there are specific benefits to meditation. For example, the “Neiye” suggests that Daoist practice will result in physical, psychological and spiritual benefits (see Roth 1999a: 118–23, 140–2, 164–9). Assuming that one has been committed to consistent and prolonged apophatic meditation, specific qualities and states will emerge.

---

**Chart 11: Stages of Classical Daoist Apophatic Meditation**

Source: Harold Roth (with slight modifications)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Aligning the body</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Aligning the four limbs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Aligning qi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Aligning the heart-mind</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

While the texts are diverse, here we may use the “Neiye” as the most technical discussion of classical Daoist meditation. According to Harold Roth (1999a: 109), “The practices outlined in *Inward Training* aim to generate and retain vital essence [here meaning concentrated qi] through developing an inner tranquility and an inner power associated with attaining the numinous ‘mind within the mind,’ the nondual awareness of the Way.” The text emphasizes a “fourfold aligning”: (1) Aligning the body; (2) aligning the four limbs; (3) aligning qi; and (4) aligning the heart-mind (ibid.: 109–12). The first two stages involve establishing oneself in a comfortable posture. Here we see the classical and foundational Daoist psychosomatic view: meditation practice and the associated psychological benefits (see below) are directly connected to postural alignment. Aligning qi refers to settling and circulating qi. Roth—problematically in my view—occasionally interprets the third stage as referring to breath regulation. While “aligning qi” could refer to breath regulation, it seems, instead, to indicate settling, storing, and circulating qi in the body. As mentioned in Chapters 6 and 7 herein, qi may designate both physical respiration and a more subtle energetic presence. The final stage involves stilling and emptying the heart-mind, and eventually “attaining” mystical union with the Dao.

Classical Daoist texts established the foundation for later Daoist meditation practice. This is so much the case that an entire Daoist meditation manual was inspired by the second passage from the *Zhuangzi*. The eighth-century CE *Zuowang lun* (Discourse on Sitting-in-Forgetfulness; DZ 1036), a central text of the later Shangqing movement written by Sima Chengzhen (647–735), provides the following instructions: “As a method, we refer to it as ‘blunting the sharpness and untying the knots’ [*Daode jing*, Chapters 4 and 56]. If you maintain constancy of cultivation, you will complete innate nature through practice. Smash up limbs and body, drive out perception and intellect, and experience detachment and forgetfulness. Unmoving in silence, you imperceptibly and subtly enter illumination” (section 6).

Many classical Daoist texts furthermore claim that there are specific benefits to meditation. For example, the “Neiye” suggests that Daoist practice will result in physical, psychological and spiritual benefits (see Roth 1999a: 118–23, 140–2, 164–9). Assuming that one has been committed to consistent and prolonged apophatic meditation, specific qualities and states will emerge.
This parallels other passages in the *Daode jing* and *Zhuangzi* where aspiring Daoist adepts are informed that Daoist practice will result in freedom from injury. One either does not encounter or becomes impervious to harmful influences.

**Visualization**

Daoist visualization practices were developed and systematized by two early medieval communities in particular, the Taiqing and Shangqing movements (see Chapter 2). The Taiqing alchemist Ge Hong’s (283–343) *Baopuzi neipian* (Inner Chapters of Master Embracing Simplicity; DZ 1185) is especially relevant. In Chapter 18, titled “Dizhen” (Terrestrial Perfection), Ge Hong discusses “guarding the One.”

**GUARDING THE ONE IN EARLY MEDIEVAL DAOISM**

My teacher used to say, “By knowing the One, the myriad affairs are complete.” Knowing the One means that not a single thing remains unknown. ...Visualize (cun; or “maintain”) it, and it is there; startle it, and it is lost. Welcome it, and there is good fortune; turn your back on it, and there is bad luck. Protect it, and there is prosperity without end; lose it and life declines with qi becoming exhausted....A scripture on immortality says, “If you want perpetual life, guard the One and cultivate illumination. Meditate on the One”.... The One has names and colored clothing. In men it is nine tenths of an inch tall; in women it is six tenths of an inch tall. Sometimes it is located in the lower elixir field, 2.4 inches below the navel. Sometimes it is located in the middle elixir field, the Gold Portal of the Scarlet Palace below the heart. Still others find it in the Hall of Light, one
Here “the One” does not seem to be the mystical unification mentioned in classical Daoist texts, but rather the sacred presence of the Dao manifested in distinct forms in different parts of the body. As the text says, “The One has names and colored clothing” and can be visualized in the body’s “three elixir fields” (san dantian), located in the navel, heart, and head regions. Through the practice mentioned in the Baopuzi, aspiring adepts will be able to “connect with gods” or “pervade spirit” (tongshen). By “guarding the One,” the Daoist practitioner will gain numinous abilities, including the ability “to see all the celestial numens and terrestrial spirits, and to summon all the mountain and river gods” (DZ 1185, 18.4a; see also Campany 2002: 75–85). This parallels the above-mentioned benefits associated with classical Daoist apophatic meditation.

The subsequent Shangqing movement, which had some connection to Taiqing adherents and which emerged among southern aristocracy in Jurong (near Nanjing, Jiangsu) in the fourth century (see Chapters 2 and 3), developed the most complex and systematic forms of Daoist visualization practice in Chinese history, many of which also became seminal in later Daoist internal alchemy. One of the most important and influential texts associated with the early Shangqing movement is the Huangting jing (Scripture on the Yellow Court; DZ 331; DZ 332) (see Robinet 1989a; 1993). The text exists in two editions: (1) A so-called “outer view” (waijing) text (DZ 332), which is generally considered older, predates Shangqing, and is roughly contemporaneous with some Later Han texts; and (2) A so-called “inner view” (neijing) version (DZ 331), which is probably based on the former and which might be of actual Shangqing provenance, not in content per se but in composition and application. This “inner view” is especially interesting for the way it visualizes each yin-organ of the body containing distinct body-gods, complete with esoteric names, colors, symbols, and clothing (see Chapter 7 herein).

inch behind the space between the eyebrows, or the Grotto Chamber, two inches in, or the upper elixir field, three inches in. (Baopuzi neipian, DZ 1185, 18.1ab)

### NAMES AND APPEARANCES OF DAOIST BODY-GODS

The spirit of the heart is [called] Elixir Origin, given name Guarding the Numen.
The spirit of the lungs is [called] Brilliant Splendor, given name Emptiness Complete.
The spirit of the liver is [called] Dragon Mist, given name Containing Illumination.
The spirit of the kidneys is [called] Mysterious Obscurity, given name Nourishing the Child.
The spirit of the spleen is [called] Continuously Existing, given name Ethereal Soul Pavilion.
The spirit of the gall bladder is [called] Dragon Glory, given name Majestic Illumination. (*Huangting neijing jing*, DZ 331, 3a)

***

[The youth (tongzi) of the lungs wears] white brocade robes with sashes of yellow clouds...[The youth of the heart wears] flowing cinnabar brocade robes with a jade shawl, gold bells and vermilion sashes...[The youth of the liver wears] azure brocade robes with a skirt of jade bells...[The youth of the kidneys wears] black brocade, cloud robes with dancing dragon banners...[The youth of the spleen wears] yellow brocade, jade robes with a tiger-emblem sash...[The youth of the gall bladder wears] nine-colored brocade robes with a green flower skirt and a gold belt. (ibid., 3b–6a)

The original *Huangting jing* became a central text of Shangqing Daoism, in which visualization occupied a major position. The late Isabelle Robinet (1932–2000) attempted to map the Shangqing system (see Robinet 1989a, 1993; see also Miller 2008). Here I will simply provide some glimpses into key Shangqing visualization practices, which also became a standardized and shared repertoire in later Daoist internal alchemy. Paralleling the *Huangting jing*, the *Dadong zhenjing* (Perfect Scripture of the Great Cavern; DZ 6) provides detailed instructions on visualization. It concludes by describing how the Daoist adept creates a transcendent spirit by ingesting and coalescing cosmic ethers that descend from his or her upper elixir field.

**INSTRUCTIONS ON DAOIST VISUALIZATION**

Next contemplate a five-colored purple cloud entering into your body from the Niwan (Mud-ball or Nirvana) point [crown-point]. Then swallow this divine cloud with your saliva. It will coalesce into a spirit-body wrapped in a five-colored, purple, white and roseate round luminous wheel. There is a god [or simply “spirit”] inside this wheel. Below he spreads himself within your entire body, distributing his presence (qi) to your Nine Apertures. It coalesces on the tip of your tongue. (*Dadong zhenjing*, DZ 6, 6.13b–14a)

The text identifies this transcendent spirit as Diyi zunjun (Venerable Lord Sovereign One), thereby equating him with Shangshang Taiyi (Supreme Great One) of the earlier model expressed in texts such as the *Huangting jing* (Pregadio 2006).
Shangqing visualization practice also focused on the larger cosmos and included connecting with various constellations and hidden celestial realms. One of the most representative types of meditation focuses on the sun, moon, and stars. In the *Jinque dijun sanyuan zhenyi jing* (Scripture on the Perfect Ones of the Three Primes by Lord Golden Tower; DZ 253; abbr. *Sanyuan zhenyi jing*, cf. DZ 1314; see Andersen 1980), part of the original fourth-century Shangqing revelations, aspiring adepts are instructed to visualize the Northern Dipper (Big Dipper) according to the method of “guarding the One,” also referred to as “guarding the Three Ones.”

**A NEW METHOD FOR GUARDING THE ONE**

At midnight on the *lichun* (Spring Begins) node [approx. February 2nd], practice aligned meditation (*zhengzuo*) facing east. Exhale nine times and swallow saliva thirty-five times.

Then visualize the seven stars of the Northern Dipper as they slowly descend toward you until they rest above you. The Dipper should be directly above your head, with its handle pointing forward, due east. Visualize it in such a way that the stars Yin Essence and Perfect One are just above the top of your head. The two stars Yang Brightness and Mysterious Darkness should be higher up. In addition, Yin Essence and Yang Brightness should be toward your back, while Perfect One and Mysterious Darkness are in front. Though the image may be blurred at first, concentrate firmly and focus it in position.

Then concentrate on the venerable Lords, the Three Ones. They appear suddenly in the bowl of the Dipper above your head. Before long their three ministers arrive in the same way. After a little while, observe how the six gods ascend together Mysterious Darkness, from where they move east. When they reach the Celestial Pass, they stop.

Together they turn and face your mouth. See how the Upper Prime supports the upper minister with his hand; how the Middle Prime supports the middle minister; and how the Lower Prime supports the lower minister.

Then take a deep breath and hold it for as long as you can. The Upper Prime and his minister follow this breath and enter your mouth. Once inside they ascend and go to the Palace of Niwan in the head.

Take another breath as deep as you can. The Middle Prime and his minister follow this breath and enter your mouth. Once inside they descend and go to the Scarlet Palace in the heart.

Take yet another breath as deep as you can. The Lower Prime and his minister follow this breath and enter your mouth. Once inside they descend and go to the lower Cinnabar Field in the abdomen.

Next visualize the star Celestial Pass and bring it down to about seven inches in front of your mouth. While this star stands guard before your mouth, the Three Ones firmly enter into their bodily palaces.
Within this method, the Daoist adept visualizes the Northern Dipper, associated with “fate” (ming) in the Daoist tradition, above his or her head. The seven visible stars are identified as follows (from bowl to handle, ending with the Polestar): (1) Yangming (Yang Brightness), (2) Yinjing (Yin Essence), (3) Zhenren (Perfect One), (4) Xuanming (Mysterious Darkness), (5) Danyuan (Cinnabar Prime), (6) Beiji (North Culmen), and (7) Tianguan (Celestial Pass). The two lower stars of the dipper bowl rest in close proximity to the top of the head, while the handle extends forward so that the seventh star, called Celestial Pass, rests in front of the mouth. At the beginning of spring, one faces east, that is, one enters a posture of cosmological alignment based on

With this complete, concentrate again on the Perfected to make sure they are all at rest in their residences. From then on, whether sitting or lying down, always keep them firmly in your mind.

At any point during the practice, if concerns or desires arise in your mind, it will push to pursue them. Then, however much the mind strains to break free, make sure to keep it firmly concentrated on the Three Ones. See that you remain at peace and in solitude. Moreover, if your room is quiet enough, you may continue the practice well into the day. (Sanyuan zhenyi jing, DZ 253, 6a–7a)
the Five Phases (Wood/spring/east) (see Chapter 6 herein). One in turn visualizes the Three Ones, also known as the Three Primes or Three Purities, in the dipper bowl. They ascend together to the fourth star, Mysterious Darkness, move to the seventh star, Celestial Pass, and wait there facing towards the adept’s mouth. The adept then visualizes each one in sequence (upper, middle, lower) entering their respective corporeal locations (Niwan [center of head], Scarlet Palace [heart], Cinnabar Field [navel region]). In this way the Three Heavens and their corresponding gods become located in the Daoist adherent’s very own body. The text, in turn, advises the Daoist aspirant to follow the same instructions for the commencements of the other seasons: Lixia (Summer Begins; approx. May 5th) facing south; liqiu (Autumn Begins; approx. August 8th) facing west; and lidong (Winter Begins; approx. November 11th) facing north (see Chapter 6). The corresponding time seems to be the same, namely, 11 p.m. to 1 a.m. There are thus seasonal, cosmological, and theological dimensions of the practice.

Internal alchemy

Internal alchemy (neidan), which literally means something like “inner pill” or “inner cinnabar” and which is also translated as “inner elixir,” is a complex physiological practice aimed at complete psychosomatic transformation. Combining a variety of early traditions and dimensions of traditional Chinese culture, early internal alchemy was extremely complex. Considered as a whole, early internal alchemy includes elements from the following sources: classical Daoist texts, earlier meditational techniques, correlative cosmology, *Yijing* (Classic of Changes) symbology, Yangsheng views and practices, cosmological views and technical terms related to external alchemy (*waidan*), Chinese medical theory, and occasionally Buddhist soteriology (see Needham et al. 1983; Robinet 1989b, 1995; Pregadio and Skar 2000).

The earliest systems emerged during the late Tang and early Northern Song dynasties (see Chapter 2 herein). They are documented in the Zhong-Lü textual tradition, named after the famous Daoist immortals Zhongli Quan and Lü Dongbin, in the Quanzhen movement, and in texts of the so-called Nanzong. Generally speaking, early internal alchemy was a stage-based system that involved dedicated and prolonged practice of complex physiological techniques aimed at complete psychosomatic transformation. The goal was the creation of a transcendent spirit, usually referred to as the “immortal embryo” (*xiantai*), “yang-spirit” (*yangshen*), or “body-beyond-the-body” (*shenwai shen*) (see Komjathy 2007a).

Here a word is in order about the informing worldview, specifically the associated view of self (see Chapter 7 herein). Like its antecedent tradition of external alchemy (*waidan*), early internal alchemy utilized a complex map of human personhood, wherein humans are understood as composed of diverse and
disparate elements such as the ethereal soul (hun) and corporeal soul (po). The aim of internal alchemy is to unite these elements, through inner smelting and fusion, into a single, unified entity capable of transcending physical death. That is, ordinary human beings are composite selves destined to dissipate into the cosmos, to have the various elements separate and dissolve. From this perspective, there is no eternal soul or transcendent consciousness, and post-mortem existence is not an ontological given. However, in contrast to contemporary secular materialist perspectives of self as biological organism with a finite lifespan, early internal alchemists understood self as consisting of both biological and spiritual dimensions. These could be united into a transcendent spirit, one could become an “immortal” (xianren), but such an accomplishment was difficult and extraordinary. There was no guarantee of success. It required, first and foremost, the search for, encounter with, and acceptance by a reliable teacher. It then required spiritual direction and intensive training under one’s teacher, usually located within specific lineages. In fact, most of the early texts are highly symbolic and esoteric; they required corresponding oral instructions. That is, early internal alchemy was guarded by secrecy. The reasons for this were varied, but two recurring themes are the dangers of the practice and the potential distortion by unethical individuals who might misuse the teachings, especially as sources of egoism, authority, and personal profit.

Our understanding of internal alchemy is complicated by the highly symbolic and often obscure language of the early texts. A representative example is Zhang Boduan’s Wuzhen pian (Treatise on Awakening to Perfection; DZ 1017, j. 26–30), which is most often read in combination with later Daoist commentaries (see Chapter 12 herein). Most of the early neidan texts utilize poetic descriptions and technical alchemical terms to describe both the somatic landscape and related physiological practices. For example, the lower abdomen is the “elixir field” and “Ocean of Qi,” the heart is the “Scarlet Palace,” the kidneys are the “Dark Towers,” the tongue is the “Descending Bridge” or “Crimson Dragon,” and so forth (see Komjathy 2007a). Similarly, the texts frequently assign a technical lexicon to the various vital substances and subtle dimensions of self. Along these lines, alchemically refined saliva is called the Sweet Dew or Jade Nectar. We also find references to lead and mercury, Child and Maiden, dragon and tiger, as well as the trigrams and hexagrams of the Yijing (Classic of Changes). The technical meaning of these symbolic terms often varies depending on teacher, community, lineage, and context. As mentioned, they usually required clarification through direct spiritual direction and oral instructions by one’s teacher. The matter is complicated because straightforward technical descriptions of the various techniques are rare; there are few early technical manuals of internal alchemy.

However, as we move forward in Chinese history, we find illustrated manuals, some of the earliest of which date to the Yuan dynasty. In addition, certain authors begin to provide more explanation and guidance in writing, especially in the form of commentary on earlier texts. Little research has been done on this historical development, but we may reasonably conjecture that there were greater numbers of
practitioners separated by vast geographical distances. For example, when Quanzhen was a small, local community in eastern Shandong province, it was relatively simple for Wang Zhe, the founder, to provide direct instruction to his senior disciples (see Chapter 2). However, when Quanzhen subsequently became a national monastic order, there were not enough elders to oversee the training of monks and nuns. In this context, we find the earliest illustrated Quanzhen manual of internal alchemy, namely, the Dadan zhizhi (Direct Pointers to the Great Elixir; DZ 244; see Komjathy forthcoming). As we move into the next periods of Chinese history, the Ming and Qing dynasties, there is a greater tendency towards popularization and simplification, that is, internal alchemy becomes more accessible, intelligible, and widely disseminated. It is in such texts that one finds the standardized and fairly common emphasis on a three-stage alchemical process: (1) Transforming vital essence (jing) into qi; (2) Transforming qi into spirit (shen); and (3) Merging spirit with the Void.

Let us consider one influential late imperial text that exhibits the previously mentioned tendencies. The Huiming jing (Scripture on Wisdom and Life-destiny; ZW 131) is a representative and relatively accessible example of internal alchemy. It is a late eighteenth-century text on Daoist internal alchemy combined with Chan meditation and soteriology, completed by Liu Huayang (Chuanlu [Transmission Vessel]; 1735–99) in 1799. In terms of contemplative practice, the Huiming jing describes an eight-stage process of alchemical transformation according to the following diagrams and corresponding instructions:

1. Diagram of the Cessation of Outflow
2. Diagram of the Six Phases of the Dharma Wheel
3. Diagram of the Governing and Conception Channels
4. Diagram of the Embryo of the Dao
5. Diagram of Sending Out the Fetus
6. Diagram of the Transformation Body
7. Diagram of Facing the Wall
8. Diagram of Disappearance into the Void

The text begins with a now-standardized corporeal landscape emphasizing the abdominal region as the “lower elixir field,” as the place where qi is stored, and the body as a system of “meridians,” or intersecting energetic pathways. Aspiring adepts are first instructed to seal themselves off from every source of dissipation, including sensory engagement, excessive emotional and intellectual activity, and sexual stimulation. This allows one to conserve and fortify qi and spirit. Then one must activate the Waterwheel or Microcosmic Orbit, that is, connect the Governing Vessel along the centerline of the back with the Conception Vessel along the centerline of the torso. This is done by circulating qi up the back and down the front of the body so that the
body becomes an integrated energetic whole, so that one activates the Daoist subtle body. Through this process, in concert with the cultivation of stillness, one becomes a spiritually integrated and transformed being.

Liu discusses the culmination of this training in both Daoist and Chan Buddhist terms. One completes the immortal fetus, attains the Buddha form, returns to the Source, and disappears into the Void. One becomes an immortal and Buddha simultaneously. From Liu Huayang’s perspective, this seems to mean the end of separate personhood and mystical union.

In a manner paralleling the benefits from apophatic meditation and the early medieval practice of “guarding the One” (see above), there are various numinous abilities that result from successful neidan training. An interesting modern example appears in the Yinshizi jingzuo fa (Quiet Sitting Methods of Master Yinshi; abbr. Jingzuo fa). First published in 1914 and still receiving wide circulation in contemporary Daoist and Qigong circles, the Jingzuo fa was written by the lay Buddhist adherent and Daoist sympathizer Jiang Weiqiao (1873–1958), who was a major player in the emerging Qigong movement (see Kohn 1993b; Palmer 2007). According to his own personal narrative, Jiang suffered from a weak constitution throughout his life. After
practicing various Daoist methods, especially the Microcosmic Orbit, Jiang completely cured himself of all illness and attained a high level of vitality (see Lu 1964: 167–82). In addition to being a rare example of auto-didacticism, having taught himself from a book, Jiang Weiqiao is interesting because he adopted a quasi-monastic life rooted in abstention from sex and alcohol and in adherence to a simple, nourishing diet (ibid.).

**Nüdan: Female alchemy**

Although women have occupied a central position in the Daoist tradition from the beginning, it appears that there were few, if any, methods specifically intended for or developed by female Daoists before the late imperial period. Unfortunately, little research has been done on female Daoist practice, referred to in late imperial and modern Daoism as Kundao (“women’s way”) and often associated with Daoist nuns. When women’s practice is discussed, it is most often framed as “cultivating yin” or “cultivating the feminine,” which are actually only loosely gendered ideas. In this case, “yin” or the “feminine” are best understood as dimensions of human personhood, rather than as associated with women in particular (see Chapters 6 and 7). In the modern world, one also finds much reference to “women’s Qigong” or “Daoist sexual practices,” which preliminary research indicates have little, if any, actual connection to Daoism. Specifically, semen-retention sexual intercourse, “multi-orgasmic sex,” and sexual vampirism seem to derive either from Chinese court circles or to be fairly recent Western fabrications (see Komjathy 2011b). As mentioned in other chapters, the place of sexuality and sexual activity is complex in terms of Daoism.

One of the major forms of Daoist women’s practice is female alchemy (*nüdan*), which is technically a form of internal alchemy specifically for women (see Despeux 1990; Wile 1992: 192–219; Despeux and Kohn 2003: 198–220; Valussi 2002; Neswald 2007). Although there are some glimpses of an emerging female alchemy in the Song, Yuan and Ming dynasties, independent and systematic manuals did not appear until the Qing dynasty, particularly during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Only some of these were actually written by women. Here we should note that Sun Buer, the only female member of the so-called Seven Perfected of early Quanzhen (see Chapters 2 and 4), is often identified as one of the matriarchs of female alchemy. This is largely because of her importance as an exemplar of women’s practice and because of a number of revealed and spuriously attributed late imperial works. These writings have been highly popular in the West through Thomas Cleary’s general audience book *Immortal Sisters* (Shambhala, 1989). As I have documented elsewhere, the only writings that may have been genuinely composed by Sun are contained in the fourteenth-century *Minghe yuyin* (Lingering Overtones of a Calling Crane; DZ 1100; see Komjathy 2007a, 2011e, forthcoming).
The earliest works on female alchemy date from the late imperial period. In addition to Daoist practice as such, this development is interesting on a socio-historical and cultural level. At the same time that women were being disempowered through the Chinese practice of foot-binding, a cultural tradition that perhaps parallels eunuch culture in terms of men, women found a place of refuge and empowerment within Daoism. There are, of course, a number of complex feminist issues involved here, such as the relative freedom and power of women within the larger society and actual gender constructions at work in the practice itself. In terms of the emergence of female alchemy, specialized texts were primarily revealed by Sun Buer and to a lesser degree by He Xiangu (Immortal Maiden He), the latter of whom is one of the Eight Immortals (see Chapter 6; also Despeux and Kohn 2003: 135–7). The goddess Xiwangmu (Queen Mother of the West) also occupies a central position. Extant texts on female alchemy include about thirty works of uneven length, both in prose and poetry and which date from 1745 to 1892.

Preliminary research indicates that women’s practice of internal alchemy generally follows similar stages and processes of men, though there is greater emphasis on the lived experience of female embodiment, of being a woman. This includes the central importance of the breasts, heart, blood, and uterus, and on menstruation as the primary form of dissipation of women’s vital essence (jing).

FIGURE 17 Meditation Posture Recommended for Women
Source: Neiwei gong tushuo jiyao
Like internal alchemy, female alchemy primarily involves conservation (non-dissipation), qi circulation, and the activation of the subtle body, with the ultimate goal of immortality. In terms of specifically female practice, a variety of texts prescribe breast massage. The sequence of the nüdan practice closely resembles that of neidan practice, and nüdan theory is close in terminology, structure, and process to standard neidan theory. However, nüdan includes other dimensions which are made explicit not only in the gendering of the language, and in its distinction from what is termed nandan (male alchemy), but also in the inclusion of chapters on female morality (Valussi 2002). That is, like most traditional Daoist systems of internal alchemy, virtue and ethics are necessary foundations (see Chapter 8 herein). In the case of female alchemy and Daoist monasticism, there are specific guidelines and principles related to female Daoist adherence (see Kohn 2004c).

According to Valussi’s detailed study of the primary texts (2002), we may create a comparative chart of the dimensions or stages of female alchemy: (1) Collecting the heart-mind; (2) Nourishing qi; (3) Practice and attainment; (4) Slaying the Crimson Dragon; (5) Nourishing the elixir; (6) Embryonic respiration; (7) Talismanic fire; (8) Receiving the medicine; (9) Refining spirit; (10) Ingestion; (11) Avoidance of grains; (12) Wall gazing; (13) Sending out the spirit; and (14) Flight and ascent (cf. Despeux and Kohn 2003: 215–20). With respect to female alchemy proper, the most distinctive method is known as “Slaying the Crimson Dragon” (zhān chīlóng), also translated as “Beheading the Red Dragon.” This is the female counterpart to the male ascetic and often monastic practice of “Subduing the White Tiger” (jiāng báihu) and “reverting vital essence to repair the brain” (huānjīng bùnāo), which usually involves temporary or permanent celibacy. For men, the point is to diminish or extinguish sexual desire. In the case of women, female Daoists, mainly celibate Quanzhen and Longmen nuns, aim to stop menstruation. Again, from a traditional Chinese medical perspective, and arguably from an actual experiential perspective, the primary source of depletion for women is menstruation, the inner lunar cycle from a Daoist perspective. In female alchemy, women utilize a method that ends this process. Specific methods are described in the early twentieth-century Nüdan hebian (Collected Works on Female Alchemy) by He Longxiang (fl. 1900–10):

---

**INSTRUCTIONS ON FEMALE ALCHEMY**

“Refining the form of the great yin” is very similar to the method of refinement for men. At the beginning of the practice, close your eyes and focus on the spirit, stop everything and rest for a while. Allow your heart-mind to be peaceful and your breathing to be regular. Then concentrate the spirit and direct it inside the Cavity of Qi within the breasts and above the heart’s abode. The two hands cross and hold the breasts; very lightly rub and massage them twenty times, making the qi descend of itself to the elixir field. Very slightly inhale thirty-six times, then, with
That is, by concentrating on the heart region, in combination with breath regulation and breast massage, menstruation will cease. According to various *nüdan* texts, successful practice will become apparent through the return of the female body to a prepubescent state, with the breasts diminished in size. Here we may note that menopause is not looked upon favorably in *nüdan* texts, because it represents nearly complete exhaustion of vital essence. Aspiring female adepts who have gone through menopause without Slaying the Crimson Dragon must practice techniques that reactivate menstruation and then practice the menstruation-cessation methods.

**FURTHER READING**


“Scripture” is a comparative category for the central and authoritative sacred texts of religious traditions (see Smith 1993). For religious adherents, scriptures are sacred, timeless, enduring, and authoritative. They are classics that help to preserve and transmit tradition, and they are usually one of the primary sources of authority among religious adherents and communities. At the same time, the preservation and dissemination of scriptures involves the participation of particular adherents and communities.

In the case of Daoism, Daoist scriptures (daojing) are usually identified as manifestations of the Dao (see Chapter 6) and as a key dimension of the Daoist tradition (see Chapters 2–4). They are one of the external Three Treasures that comprise the Daoist tradition. At the same time, there are many types of Daoist literature (see Bokenkamp 1986; Boltz 1986b, 1987a, 1987b; Kohn 2000a; Komjathy 2002, 2007a; Schipper and Verellen 2004; Pregadio 2008a). On the most basic level, “scriptures” (jing) may be distinguished from “texts” (shu) and “literature” (wen). More specifically, Daoist literature includes commentaries (zhu), hagiography (zhuan), instructions (jue), poetry (shi), precepts (jie), records (ji or lu), and so forth. In the case of scriptures, commentaries are especially important as they help one understand the ways in which Daoists have read and interpreted Daoist texts.
Every major Daoist scripture is written in classical Chinese and, unfortunately, very little Daoist literature has been reliably translated to date (see Komjathy 2003a). The exception to this fact is the perpetual and unnecessary appearance of “new” translations of the *Daode jing* (see Hardy 1998; LaFargue and Pas 1998; Dippmann 2001). Even more problematic are the various appropriations and so-called “versions” or “adaptations” of the text for popular consumption (see Chapter 16; also Komjathy 2011b). We still await reliable translations of most of the other major Daoist scriptures, and so the situation of Daoism stands in contrast to the sacred literature of other religious traditions where much has already been translated into English.

**Daoist views concerning scripture**

Daoist scriptures are sacred texts written in classical Chinese using calligraphy, and most often transmitted in manuscripts (see Chapter 15). This statement brings our attention to the importance of actual writing and manuscripts (see below). The Chinese character and Daoist religious category here translated as “scripture” is jing (ching) 經, which has also been rendered as “classic” or “canon.” As jing may refer to the “classics” of Confucianism and later to the “sutras” of Buddhism, Daoists often refer to their scriptures as daojing (“scriptures of the Dao”), also translatable as “Daoist classics.” The character jing consists of the mi 糾 (“silk”) radical and jing 巖 (“underground stream”). The latter is generally taken to be a phonetic, meaning that it indicates pronunciation. However, a further etymological reading might suggest that the jing phonetic is also a meaning-carrier. Under this reading, “scriptures” are threads and watercourses that form and re-form networks of connection. They connect Daoists to the unnamable mystery and sacred presence which is the Dao and to the Daoist tradition, the community of adepts, as a historical and energetic continuum.

For this reason Daoist jing are religious texts; they are not simply “classics” or “wisdom literature.” They were composed, preserved, and transmitted within Daoist communities, although their origins are usually anonymous and/or attributed to divine beings such as Laojun (Lord Lao) or Yuanshi tianzun (Celestial Worthy of Original Beginning) (see Chapter 6). Thus, for many Daoists, Daoist scriptures are not simply human compositions or material texts. As inspired or revealed, they are manifestations of the Dao in the world, and they contain and express the numinous presence of the Dao. Some Daoists view the texts as sacred in and of themselves; the mere encounter with and custody of Daoist scriptures may thus be a blessing, a blessing which involves religious orientations and responsibilities. Zhu Ziyang (Guanmiao [Observing-the-Wondrous]; 976–1029), the 23rd Shangqing Patriarch, expresses such a Daoist view in his preface to the *Dadong zhenjing* (Perfect Scripture of the Great Cavern; DZ 6).
Thus actual reading and study of texts may thus be less important than gaining transmission and living in their proximity.

Here a note is in order concerning the *Daode jing* (a.k.a. *Laozi*) and *Nanhua zhenjing* (a.k.a. *Zhuangzi*) as Daoist scriptures. These two texts are among the most widely “translated” and popularized Daoist scriptures (“wisdom literature”), especially in popular and general-audience “translations.” Such translations almost universally fail to acknowledge the Daoist tradition as source, to translate the texts in historically and contextually accurate ways, or to consider the ethical and political dimensions of popular appropriation and commodification. Although some might point out that the texts were originally titled the *Laozi* (Book of Venerable Masters), more conventionally translated as *Book of Master Lao*, and the *Zhuangzi* (Book of Master Zhuang), even those titles invoke the inner cultivation lineages of classical Daoism (see Chapters 1–3, *passim*). However, from a Daoist perspective, these texts are *jing*. They are sacred texts written in classical Chinese and have an inspired or divine element.

Daoist scriptures are thus expressions of the Dao, both materially and spiritually. We may think of this in multiple ways. First, in a pre-modern context, possession of Daoist scriptures often indicated formal affiliation with the Daoist tradition. Through ordination ceremonies and master-disciple transmissions (see Chapter 13), they were bestowed to Daoists both as a sign of their religious affiliation and as a form of empowerment and authority. Second, Daoist scriptures may assist adherents in aligning themselves with the Dao. They contain Daoist principles, views, practices, and models. Third, Daoist scriptures are inspired or revealed. For Daoists, they originate from a divine source, a source beyond the merely human. In the case of theistic revelation, Daoist scriptures provide access to specific Daoist sacred realms and deities. This is especially true in the case of petitions, invocations, and registers used in Daoist ritual (see Chapter 13). Finally, Daoist scriptures are infused with the sacred presence of the Dao. On some level, they are regarded as actual manifestations of the Dao in the world.
Like most foundational classics of traditional Chinese culture, the earliest Daoist texts that became recognized as scriptures were named after their associated authors, namely, Laozi (Master Lao) and Zhuangzi (Master Zhuang). Terminologically speaking, there were no Daoist *jing* per se before the emergence of organized Daoism (see Chapter 2). It was at this time that the *Laozi* received the imperial designation of the *Daode jing* (Scripture on the Dao and Inner Power) (see Chan 2000). The *Zhuangzi* became officially canonized under the Tang dynasty as the *Nanhua zhenjing* (Perfect Scripture of Perfected Nanhua; DZ 670) (see Mair 2000), with Nanhua (Southern Florescence) being an honorific name for Zhuangzi. Some of the earliest Daoist scriptures identified as “revealed” are the second-century CE *Taiping jing* (Scripture on Great Peace; DZ 1100), third-century CE *Huangting jing* (Scripture on the Yellow Court; DZ 331; DZ 332), and fourth-century CE *Duren jing* (Scripture on Universal Salvation; DZ 1) (see also below). Such statements of course inspire one to consider when, by whom, and in what contexts Daoist conceptions of “scripture” developed, but there can be no doubt that from at least the Later Han dynasty onward Daoists had their own conceptions of and views concerning scripture.

Daoist scriptures have often been viewed as actual emanations of the Dao, storehouses that contain the sacred presence of the Dao (see also Bokenkamp 1997: 20–1). For example, the Lingbao community suggested that the original ethereal “editions” of Daoist scriptures were housed in their corresponding heavens and that the universe was, on some level, maintained by divine talismans and scriptures. We find this Daoist view expressed in the *Duren jing* (Scripture on Universal Salvation).
In addition to being revelations, here we see an esoteric dimension of Daoist scriptures: they are approximations of a secret, hidden celestial language, and they are storehouses of subtle energies and primordial ethers. They are sacred emanations from divine sources.

**The importance of scripture study**

Throughout Chinese history, scripture study (*jingxue*) has occupied a central place in the Daoist tradition, especially for the Daoist cultural elite. Here scripture study refers to the careful reading of, reflection on, and application of Daoist texts, and involves attentiveness to their language, meaning, and relevance. In addition, scripture study locates Daoists in the Daoist religious community. Such statements may inspire one to consider the ways in which specific texts are read and understood within the Daoist tradition. For example, although the *Daode jing* is a Daoist scripture, it may be interpreted in "non-Daoist" ways, and there can be no doubt that it was part of the larger Chinese society and culture. However, there are various Daoist ways of reading and applying the text. In this context, I would emphasize *ways of reading*. Although there is a tendency in the modern world to emphasize “consumptive reading” (e.g. “best-sellers” and “voracious readers”), other approaches are possible. In particular, inspired by Daoist religious practice, one might adopt “contemplative reading,” especially with respect to scripture study. Contemplative reading suggests that reading may be informed by contemplative practice or might be contemplative practice itself. This is a practice-based perspective emphasizing attentiveness. It emphasizes careful reading, close textual analysis, philosophical reflection, practice-based application, and the emergence of spiritual insight. It reveals the close connection among study, practice, understanding, and experience. Each informs the other.

Here we must also acknowledge that, in pre-modern China, literacy levels would have been relatively low, and one wonders about the percentage of literate Daoists.

---

**ETHEREAL EDITIONS OF DAOIST SCRIPTURES**

Above are the Illimitable Tones of the Hidden Language of the Great Brahma of All the Heavens. The ancient graphs were all one zhang square. Of old, the Celestial Perfected Sovereign wrote out this script in terrestrial graphs in order to reveal the correct pronunciations. The various heavens will send down spirit kings who fly through the heavens to keep watch over the bodies and record the meritorious strivings of all those who know these pronunciations and are able to change them during retreats. These things will be reported back to the heavens. (*Duren jing*, DZ 1, 4.25b; adapted from Bokenkamp 1997: 430)
Given the fact that a great deal of Daoist religious practice involves reading and writing, one would assume that there was a relatively high literacy rate among Daoists, but at present this is mere conjecture. Nonetheless, it draws our attention to two additional points. First, in pre-modern China, Daoism frequently occupied a central place in the larger Chinese society and culture. Many Chinese intellectuals and cultural elite entered the Daoist ranks, and many Daoists made major contributions to Chinese culture. In imperial China, Daoism often had a privileged position, and wielded immense cultural and political power. On the other hand, the vast majority of Daoists were ordinary people who would have been illiterate. We must thus acknowledge the importance of oral tradition, including storytelling. For example, much of the language and many stories of the Zhuangzi were circulated orally and became part of Daoist folklore.

Although scriptures occupy a central place in the Daoist tradition, there are diverse Daoist views concerning the importance of scripture study, ranging from strong emphasis to almost complete indifference. Some Daoists have made scripture study an essential part of their religious practice. Other Daoists have included scripture study in their practice, while also offering cautions concerning its relative importance. For example, Chapter 13 of the Zhuangzi, titled “The Way of Heaven,” records an exchange between Duke Huan and a certain Wheelwright Pian concerning reading books.

---

**BOOKS AS CHAFF AND DREGS**

Duke Huan was in his hall reading a book. Wheelwright Pian, who was in the yard below chiseling a wheel, laid down his mallet and chisel, stepped up into the hall, and said to Duke Huan, “This book Your Grace is reading—may I venture to ask whose words are in it?”

“The words of the sages,” said the duke.

“Are the sages still alive?”

“Dead long ago,” said the duke.

“In that case, what you are reading there is nothing but the chaff and dregs of people of antiquity!”

“Since when does a wheelwright have permission to comment on the books I read?” said Duke Huan. “If you have some explanation, well and good. If not, it’s your life!”

Wheelwright Pian said, “I look at it from the point of view of my own work. When I chisel a wheel, if the blows of the mallet are too gentle, the chisel slides and won’t take hold. But if they’re too hard, it bites in and won’t budge. Not too gentle, not too hard—you can get it in your hand and feel it in your mind. You can’t put it into words, and yet there’s a knack to it somehow. I can’t teach it to my son, and he can’t learn it from me. So I’ve gone along for seventy years and at my age I’m still chiseling wheels. When people of antiquity died, they took with them
Yin Xi’s response to Laozi’s instructions provides a variety of insights into the place of texts and textual transmission in Daoism. Aspiring adepts, represented by Yin Xi, must study and apply any teachings, whether oral or written, received from their teachers.

For Wheelwright Pian, and therefore for Daoists with similar intuitions, texts are not documentations of attainment, but rather reminders of loss and potential communal diminishment. Reading may become mere distraction, especially if it fails to be a source of inspiration or guidance. Like other passages in classical Daoist texts, the passage seems to emphasize the limitations of language, conception, and knowing. However, in typical Daoist fashion, one comes to the insight that books written by deceased teachers and masters are “the chaff and dregs of people of antiquity” by reading the Zhuangzi. Scripture study itself revealed the limitations of scripture study! At the same time, the above passage is about books and received cultural influences. Daoist scriptures had not yet appeared.

Daoists have also emphasized the importance of scripture recitation and chanting. One interesting expression appears in the fifth-century Xisheng jing (Scripture on the Western Ascension). This is a text of Louguan (Lookout Tower Monastery) provenance that purports to be a secret transmission from Laozi to Yin Xi, the Guardian of the Pass. It thus presents itself as a supplement to the Daode jing. In the fourth section of the text, Laozi admonishes Yin Xi to cherish the teachings and to practice carefully.

**SCRIPTURE RECITATION AS DAOIST PRACTICE**

Yin Xi was deeply moved by these words. Thus he excused himself from his duty on the pass, pleading illness, gave up his official position, and withdrew in solitariness to a chamber of emptiness and leisure. In deep serenity, he meditated on the Dao, focused his aspirations, and guarded the One (shouyi). In ultimate emptiness and original Nonbeing, he penetrated the secrets of the One. He realized that the inner meaning is not revealed through complicated phrases and marvelous words. He recited the composition [Daode jing] ten thousand times. His vital essence became stable and his meditation became pervasive. By practicing perfection and returning to personhood, he was able to pervade the Mystery. By discussing the undifferentiated Source, he was able to attain spirit immortality. (Xisheng jing, DZ 666, 1.7a–8a)
For Wang, the aspiring adept must reflect on the place of scripture study in his or her own life and practice. The relevance of scripture study is relative to the individual. This recalls Chapter 70 of the *Daode jing*: “My words are very easy to understand and very easy to practice, but no one understands or practices them.” For Daoists reading the *Daode jing*, this line directs them to deepen their own practice, to become embodiments of the teachings. In the case of Yin Xi, he takes Laozi’s teachings so seriously that he goes into meditative seclusion (see also Zhuangzi, Chapters 7, 23, and 28). This includes repeatedly reciting the *Daode jing*. According to the *Xisheng jing*, scripture recitation results in specific physiological changes and in mystical realization.

While Yin Xi’s (sixth-century) recitation practice appears to be self-initiated and self-directed, chanting became a major dimension of Daoist ritual from at least the Tang dynasty forward (see Kohn 1998b). Interestingly, in Tang-dynasty ritual performance, the *Daode jing* occupied a central position. It appears that ritual chanting developed in Daoism through the influence of Chinese Buddhist recitation methods centering on Chinese Buddhist sutras or at least Chinese versions of early Buddhist sutras. However, texts such as the *Daode jing* appear to collect earlier mnemonic aphorisms (see Chapters 2 and 3), and they have rhythmic patterns that lend themselves to easy memorization, recollection, and oral citation. Certain Daoist scriptures seem to have been intentionally composed for use in Daoist ritual chanting. The relevant format usually consists of four or five character combinations, often with specific rhythm and rhyme patterns. For more stylized Daoist chanting types, such formats lend themselves to a higher degree of melody and musicality.

There is also a middle way between the dismissal of texts as “chaff and dregs” and the complete elevation and veneration of texts as evidenced in scripture recitation. This middle way involves a qualified advocacy and practice of scripture study. This is probably the dominant Daoist view, a view that accepts the authority of texts, but that seeks to define beneficial ways of interacting with texts. One finds this perspective among members of early Quanzhen Daoism (see Komjathy 2007a, forthcoming). As documented in the *Lijiao shiwu lun* (Fifteen Discourses to Establish the Teachings), Wang Zhe (1113–70), the founder of Quanzhen, gives advice on reading, understanding and applying Daoist texts.

---

**THE WAY TO STUDY TEXTS**

The way to study texts is not to strive after literary merit, and thereby confuse your eyes. Instead, you must extract the meaning as it harmonizes with the heart-mind. Abandon texts after you have extracted their meaning and grasped their principle. Abandon principle after you have realized the fundamental ground. After you realize the fundamental ground, then attend to it until it completely enters the heart-mind. (*Lijiao shiwu lun*, DZ 1233, 1b–2a)

For Wang, the aspiring adept must reflect on the place of scripture study in his or her own life and practice. The relevance of scripture study is relative to the individual.
practitioner, and such relevance is based on his or her affinities and commitments. Reading and study (and translation) may support Daoist practice, or they may become a distraction. In a Quanzhen context, the point of reading and study is to deepen practice. One endeavors to apply a given text’s insights to one’s daily life. Scripture study thus is not only an intellectual exercise; it is also a spiritual one. According to Wang, one must focus on the transformational experience and influence of reading Daoist scriptures. Here there is a complex interplay among study, practice, and experience. Study without practice and experience may lead to a lack of discernment concerning relevance; practice and experience without study may lead to various forms of self-delusion.

Key Daoist scriptures

Just as there is no single founder or primary community in the Daoist tradition, so too there no single central scripture. Different Daoist adherents and communities privilege different scriptures. While the *Daode jing* is probably the most influential and consistently privileged text in Daoist history, it is an oversimplification to think of that text as the central scripture of Daoism. In fact, when speaking about texts in the Daoist tradition, we should first discuss either the movement-specific textual corpuses or the *Daozang* (Daoist Canon), the primary collection of Daoist texts from the late medieval period forward (see below). Moreover, as I will document in the present section, different scriptures occupy a central position in different Daoist movements and lineages. While some Daoist texts have received almost universal recognition and circulation throughout the Daoist tradition, others were lineage-specific. We might, in turn, profitably adopt the categories of “texts in general circulation” and “texts in internal circulation” (Schipper and Verellen 2004), that is, texts that were circulated throughout the tradition and often in the larger Chinese population, and texts that were circulated within specific communities and lineages.

In terms of early Daoism, the *Daode jing* occupied a central place in the Tianshi movement. This was so much the case that Zhang Lu (d. 215), the third Celestial Master, appears to have written one of the earliest Daoist commentaries, which is titled the *Laozi xiang’er zhu* (Commentary Thinking Through the *Laozi*; DH 56; S. 6825; Bokenkamp 1997). As we saw in Chapter 8, the early Tianshi community also developed an ethical system based on precepts derived from the *Daode jing* and the *Xiang’er* commentary. The former include the so-called Nine Practices, while the latter include the so-called Twenty-seven Xiang’er Precepts. For members of the early Tianshi movement, the *Daode jing* thus provided principles and inspiration for living a Daoist religious life. In the early medieval Tianshi community, the *Xiang’er* commentary and the *Santian neijie jing* (Scripture on the Inner Explanations of the Three Heavens; DZ 1205) were especially important (see Bokenkamp 1997). Apparently in contrast, the Taiping movement emphasized the importance of the *Taiping jing* (Scripture on Great
The Shangqing movement venerated the manuscripts that recorded the Shangqing revelations and the *Huangting jing* (Scripture on the Yellow Court; DZ 331; DZ 332), a text that apparently predates Shangqing and was originally composed in a “non-Shangqing” context. Important original Shangqing texts include the *Dadong zhenjing* (Perfect Scripture of the Great Cavern; DZ 5–7; DZ 103) and *Lingshu ziwen* (Purple Texts Inscribed by the Spirits; DZ 179; DZ 255; DZ 442; DZ 639) (see Robinet 1993, 2000, 2008). The early Shangqing texts describe the hidden structure of the cosmos, consisting of Daoist sacred realms as well as deities and Perfected (see Chapter 6), and provide technical instructions on Shangqing religious practice, including qi ingestion, visualization, and proto-*neidan*. After being disseminated to

Moving into early medieval Daoism, in Chapter 4 of the *Baopuzi neipian* (Inner Chapters of Master Embracing Simplicity; DZ 1185), Ge Hong (287–347) identifies three scriptures that formed the core of the Taiqing textual tradition: the *Taiqing jing* (Scripture on Great Clarity), *Jiudan jing* (Scripture on the Nine Elixirs), and *Jinye jing* (Scripture on the Gold Liquid) (see Pregadio 2006a; also Campany 2002). Ge Hong also had a large library (see Ware 1966, 379–83), part of which was inherited from his grand-uncle Ge Xuan (164–244), and which was eventually transmitted to Ge Hong’s grandnephew Ge Chaofu (fl. 390s), who is in turn associated with the Lingbao movement. Interestingly, in his *Baopuzi neipian*, Ge Hong criticizes an overemphasis on the importance of the *Daode jing* and *Zhuangzi*, so evident in contemporaneous aristocratic and intellectual movements such as Qingtan (Pure Conversation) and Xuanxue (Profound Learning) (Campany 2002: 84–5).

### A DAOIST CRITIQUE OF “LAO-ZHUANG” DAOISM

Even if the five thousand characters [*Daode jing*] come from Laozi, they are only a general discussion and a rough outline of our topic [alchemy and immortality]. The contents in no way allow a complete exposition of the matter from beginning to end that could be employed as support for our pursuit. Merely to recite this classic blindly without securing the essential process would be to undergo useless toil. How much worse in the case of texts inferior to the *Daode jing*… Is it not a pity that the eloquent rogues and base scoundrels of these later days should be allowed refuge in Laozi and Zhuang Zhou? (*Baopuzi neipian*, DZ 1185, 8.5b–6a; adapted from Ware 1966: 142; also 14.2b–3a; 16.4b)

The Shangqing movement venerated the manuscripts that recorded the Shangqing revelations and the *Huangting jing* (Scripture on the Yellow Court; DZ 331; DZ 332), a text that apparently predates Shangqing and was originally composed in a “non-Shangqing” context. Important original Shangqing texts include the *Dadong zhenjing* (Perfect Scripture of the Great Cavern; DZ 5–7; DZ 103) and *Lingshu ziwen* (Purple Texts Inscribed by the Spirits; DZ 179; DZ 255; DZ 442; DZ 639) (see Robinet 1993, 2000, 2008). The early Shangqing texts describe the hidden structure of the cosmos, consisting of Daoist sacred realms as well as deities and Perfected (see Chapter 6), and provide technical instructions on Shangqing religious practice, including qi ingestion, visualization, and proto-*neidan*. After being disseminated to
various members and families associated with Shangqing, the original manuscripts were later re-collected and compiled by Tao Hongjing (456–536) in his Zhen’gao (Declarations of the Perfected; DZ 1016).

Developing in competition with Shangqing, the early Lingbao movement emphasized its own revelations and scriptural corpus. Although most often associated with Ge Chaofu (fl. 390s), the grandnephew of Ge Hong whose library and religious methods he inherited, the Lingbao corpus was systematized by Lu Xiujing (406–77). Lingbao centers on a group of forty texts known as the “ancient Lingbao corpus,” which were defined as such in the so-called “Lingbao Catalogue” by Lu (see Bokenkamp 1983; Yamada 2000). The texts in the corpus can be divided into three kinds: two ancient Lingbao texts that contain the five talismans and the belief in the Five Thearchs (wudi) of the five directions (see Chapter 14); scriptures revealed by the Buddhist-inspired deity Yuanshi tianzun (Celestial Worthy of Original Beginning); and texts associated with Taqing and the immortal Ge Xuan, originally a Fangshi practitioner of the Later Han and grand-uncle of Ge Hong (Yamada 2000, 225, 233–5). Important early Lingbao texts include the Lingbao wufu xu (Explanations of the Five Lingbao Talismans; DZ 388) and Duren jing (Scripture on Salvation; DZ 1; DZ 87–93).

In late medieval Daoism, especially in the context of the Tang-dynasty monastic system, the various earlier Daoist textual traditions and their associated movements were hierarchically categorized and organized into corresponding ordination levels (see Chapters 3 and 4). For the subsequent Song-Jin period, the Quanzhen movement is centrally important. However, although little research has been done, there were also a variety of deity cults and ritual movements with their own textual corpuses (see Chapter 2). These movements contributed many additional dimensions to Daoist ritual (see Chapter 13). In this case, it is important to recognize that such texts were not the focus of “scripture study”—rather, they were ritual manuals, with corresponding oral instructions and formal training.

The Quanzhen movement is especially noteworthy with respect to the central importance of scripture. Given its enduring influence within the Daoist tradition and into the modern world, Quanzhen is all the more significant. While Shangqing and Lingbao composed their own scriptures, with the accompanying claim of new revelations (see Chapter 3), it appears that Quanzhen did not exhibit a similar pattern. The tradition does indeed claim secret transmissions from immortals, but these did not become the basis of new scriptures. Instead, they were expressed in Quanzhen oral transmissions, informed Quanzhen religious practice, and were incorporated into Quanzhen hagiographies. Thus there are no originary texts that can be labeled “Quanzhen scriptures.” Rather than compiling new scriptures, members of early Quanzhen adopted the Daode jing, the sixth-century Yinfu jing (Scripture on the Hidden Talisman; DZ 31), and the eighth-century Qingjing jing (Scripture on Clarity and Stillness; DZ 620) as their central texts (see Komjathy 2007a, 2008a, forthcoming). As Wang Zhe, the founder, comments: “[To practice spiritual refinement] you must fully understand the three hundred characters of the Yinfu jing and read up on the five thousand words of the Daode jing” (Quanzhen ji, DZ 1153, 13.7b–8a). The importance
of these texts, as well as of the *Zhuangzi*, in early Quanzhen is evidenced by their frequent citation and by the existence of commentaries by Liu Tongwei (Moran [Silent Suchness]; d. 1196) (DZ 974) and by Liu Chuxuan (Changsheng [Perpetual Life]; 1147–1203) (DZ 122; DZ 401). Liu Chuxuan also composed a lost commentary on the *Daode jing*. However, the preferred form of textual expression among the early Quanzhen adepts was poetry and discourse records (*yulu*), with most of the latter compiled by their disciples. These texts, in turn, became read, disseminated, and transmitted among members of the later tradition. In addition, they eventually became associated with seven lineages related to the Seven Perfected, most likely during the late imperial period. For example, the Huashan (Mount Hua) lineage, associated with Chen Tuan (Xiyi [Infinitesimal Subtlety]; d. 989) and Hao Datong (Guangning [Expansive Serenity]; 1140–1213), follows the early Quanzhen emphasis on the *Daode jing*, *Yinfu jing*, and *Qingjing jing*. At the same time, it focuses on texts associated with Chen and Hao. In contrast, the Longmen (Dragon Gate) lineage focuses on texts associated with Qiu Chuji (Changchun [Perpetual Spring]; 1148–1227). More than these, it emphasizes study and application of the three precept texts associated with Wang Changyue (Kunyang [Paradisiacal Yang]; 1622?–80). These include the *Chuzhen jie* (Precepts of Initial Perfection; JY 292; ZW 404), *Zhongji jie* (Precepts of Medium Ultimate; JY 293; ZW 405), and *Tianxian jie* (Precepts of Celestial Immortality; JY 291; ZW 403) (see Chapters 3, 8, and 13 herein).

While none of the early texts appear to have exerted significant influence outside of Quanzhen communities, some roughly contemporaneous texts from the late medieval period did attain such status. These include texts associated with the so-called Zhong-Lü and Nanzong lineages of internal alchemy. With respect to the former, the tenth-century *Chuandao ji* (Anthology on the Transmission of the Dao; DZ 263, j. 14–16; DZ 1017, j. 39–41) has been especially influential. In terms of the Southern School, a “movement” consisting of loosely associated teachers and lineages, the *Wuzhen pian* (Treatise on Awakening to Perfection; DZ 263, j. 26–30; DZ 1017, j. 18) and the *Jindan sibaizi* (Four Hundred Characters on the Golden Elixir; DZ 263, j. 4; DZ 1081), both by Zhang Boduan (Ziyang [Purple Yang]; d. 1082), are nearly canonical. Later influential and centrally important internal alchemy texts include the *Zhonghe ji* (Anthology of Central Harmony; DZ 249) by Li Daochun (fl. 1290) and various works by Liu Yiming (Wuyuan [Awakening-to-the-Source]; 1734–1821), an eleventh-generation Longmen Patriarch. This is especially the case with his *Daoshu shier zhong* (Twelve Daoist Books), which includes Liu’s commentaries on the *Huangting jing*, *Yinfu jing*, *Wuzhen pian*, and *Jindan sibaizi*. Among Liu’s original works, the *Wudao lu* (Record of Awakening to the Dao; ZW 268) has been especially influential. Liu generally clarifies the technical meaning of esoteric internal alchemy terminology and provides more psychological interpretations of internal alchemy practice. These works have also become circulated in the Western world through the various popular translations of Thomas Cleary published by Shambhala. Like Eva Wong’s general-audience translations and most popular publications on “Daoism,” especially popular “translations” of the *Daode jing* (e.g. Dyer, Le Guin, Mitchell), these works must be read with caution,
however, as the translations are frequently problematic (see, e.g. Kohn and LaFargue 1998; Komjathy 2003a, 2008a, 2011b).

These examples are sufficient to get a sense of the diversity of Daoist scriptures, the relative importance of various Daoist texts in different Daoist movements, and the importance of scripture study as a major Daoist religious practice. They also draw our attention to the Daoist commitment to the preservation, careful dissemination, and transmission of Daoist scriptures. While I have indicated the ways in which different Daoist scriptures were emphasized in different Daoist movements, no discussion of Daoist texts would be complete without the *Daozang* (*Tao-tsang*; Daoist Canon), the primary textual collection of the Daoist tradition from the late medieval period forward.

At various periods in Chinese history, prominent Daoist leaders, usually with imperial patronage and/or aristocratic support, compiled collections of Daoist texts. Such collections received the designation of *Daozang*, which literally means “storehouse of the Dao” (see Komjathy 2002; Schipper and Verellen 2004). The compilation of such Daoist collections is indebted to Lu Xiujing, who also compiled the above-mentioned Lingbao Catalogue. Lu created the earliest known catalogue of Daoist texts, which was titled the *Sandong jingshu mulu* (Catalogue of the Scriptures and Writings of the Three Caverns). It was presented to Emperor Ming (r. 465–72) of the Liu-Song dynasty (420–79) in 471. Lu Xiujing maintained that “there had been 1,228 scrolls (*juan*) of Taoist scriptures and works including prescriptions of drugs, talismans, and pictures.” In addition, “of these scriptures, 1,090 scrolls had been known to the world, while the remaining 138 scrolls were still preserved in the heavens” (adapted from Liu 1973: 111; also Boltz 1987a: 4). From these statements, one may estimate that during the Liu-Song dynasty texts categorized as “Daoist” amounted to approximately 1,100 *juan*.

Various earlier editions preceded the compilation of the “received *Daozang*” (see Kohn 2000a; Komjathy 2002; Schipper and Verellen 2004; Pregadio 2008a), a term that refers to the edition compiled during the Ming dynasty (1368–1644). This edition survives into the modern world and remains the primary textual source for the academic study of Daoism. The received *Daozang* technically consists of two collections: the *Zhengtong daozang* (Daoist Canon of the Zhengtong Reign) and *Xu daozang* (Supplement to the Daoist Canon). Dated to 1445 and consisting of 5,318 *juan*, the former was compiled under the direction of Zhang Yuchu (1361–1410) and Zhang Yuqing (d. 1426), the 43rd and 44th Celestial Master, respectively, and Ren Ziyuan (fl. 1400–22), the general intendant of Mount Wudang (Hubei), with the imperial patronage of the Yongle Emperor (Chengzu; r. 1403–1424). Dating to 1607 and consisting of 240 *juan*, the *Xu daozang* was compiled under the direction of Zhang Guoxiang (d. 1611), the 50th Celestial Master, with the imperial patronage of Ming Emperor Shenzong (r. 1572–1619). The received, Ming-dynasty *Daozang* in total consists of 1,487 texts (see Schipper and Verellen 2004; also Komjathy 2002).

The central organizing principle for Daoist textual collections is a tripartite classification system known as the Three Caverns (*sandong*). Dating from at least as early as the fifth century, the designation imitates the Three Vehicles (*sansheng*) of Buddhism
and originally referred to three distinct scriptural or revelatory traditions: (1) Cavern Perfection (dongzhen), corresponding to the Shangqing (Highest Clarity) tradition; (2) Cavern Mystery (dongxuan), corresponding to the Lingbao (Numinous Treasure) tradition; and (3) Cavern Spirit (dongshen), corresponding to the Sanhuang (Three Sovereigns) tradition. Each “cavern” is further divided into Twelve Sections (shier bu). After the first half of the sixth century, when there was an increase in the number and diversity of Daoist texts, four supplementary divisions were developed. These are the so-called Four Supplements (sifu) (see Komjathy 2002; Schipper and Verellen 2004; Pregadio 2008a). Given the continuous addition of new Daoist texts, these divisions prove relatively unhelpful with respect to the received Daozang, although they do provide some insight into an earlier structure and underlying substrate.

Although the received Daozang now exists in mechanically reproduced editions and digital formats, it was originally printed using wood-block plates. Wood-block printing involves carving characters into wooden blocks. These blocks are then dipped in ink and imprinted on paper. This results in stitch-bound “fascicles” (literary serial) (ce), which may also be translated as “folio.” These fascicles are hand-stitched using “stab-binding” with covers and labels with the corresponding title. This technological advance draws our attention to a number of dimensions of Daoist material culture (see Chapter 15). First, wood-block printing created standardized and easily reproduced editions of Daoist texts. On the one hand, there could be relatively large “press runs” resulting in wide distribution. This development led to a decrease in hand-written, calligraphic renderings of Daoist texts and fewer personal collections of such manuscripts. At the same time, more individual Daoists owned personal copies of Daoist texts in the form of wood-block printed manuscripts. In contrast, modern editions of the Ming-dynasty Daozang are printed like Western books in large, hard-bound volumes based on a Ming-dynasty wood-block edition. It appears that the Ming-dynasty Daozang only survived in one copy, which was preserved by the Daoists of Baiyun guan (see Schipper and Verellen 2004: 1–51). The actual printing blocks were destroyed during the Boxer Rebellion of 1900, but the canon was reprinted in 1926 in reduced format facsimile. If the Baiyun guan copy had been lost, it is likely that most of the history of the Daoist tradition, a history that led to the present book, would also have been lost.

Chinese characters in Daoist texts appear from top-to-bottom and right-to-left. The unpunctuated texts are printed in “fascicles” (ce). These are small, hand-stitched booklets. In the printed Daozang, such fascicles often consist of multiple texts, but individual texts may be printed and disseminated separately. In traditionally printed editions of the Daozang, often referred to as the “concertina edition,” individual fascicles are sequentially numbered and stacked in folding cases. The received collectanea consists of 1,120 fascicles. Individual juan may, in turn, consist of multiple shorter texts, while longer texts require multiple juan. In modern editions, each wood-block page consists of two pages of the corresponding fascicle. Thus, one modern page actually consists of four or sometimes six traditional Chinese pages. There are, in turn, various numbering systems for the Ming-dynasty Daozang. These include by fascicle (abbr. TT), by text number according to a Harvard-Yenching index (abbr. HY), and by text number
according to an index compiled under the direction of Kristofer Schipper (abbr. CT/DZ). The latter has become the standard system with the publication of the *Historical Companion to the Daozang* (Schipper and Verellen 2004; also Komjathy 2002).

---

**FIGURE 19** *Traditional Wood-block Page of a Daoist Text*

*Source: Received Daozang*

Before moving on to discuss Daoist commentaries, two additional points need to be made. First, as the history of Daoist textual collection indicates, the final layer of the received *Daozang* dates from 1607. More than four hundred years of Daoist textual production are not included. This helps to explain the difficulty and relative scarcity of research on late imperial Daoism, that is, Daoism during the Ming and Qing dynasties. There are a variety of “extra-canonical collections.” Most importantly, these include the *Daozang jiyao* (Collected Essentials of the Daoist Canon; abbr. JY; dat. 1700/1906; 315 titles in 10 vols.), *Daozang xubian* (Supplementary Collection of the Daoist Canon; abbr. XB; dat. 1834/1952/1989; 23 texts), *Daozang jinghua lu* (Record of Essential Blossoms of the Daoist Canon; abbr. JHL; dat. 1922; 100 titles in 2 vols.), *Daozang jinghua* (Essential Blossoms of the Daoist Canon; abbr. JH; dat. 1956; 108 titles in 115 vols.), and *Zangwai daoshu* (Daoist Texts Outside the Canon; abbr. ZW; dat. 1992/1994; 991 titles in 36 vols.) (see Komjathy 2002; Pregadio 2008a). In terms of recent publications, the *Zhonghua daozang* (Chinese Daoist Canon; abbr. ZH; dat. 2004; 1,524 titles in 49 vols.) is especially noteworthy. Published under the direction of Zhang Jiyu (b. 1962), Wang Ka (Chinese Academy of Social Sciences; Beijing) and the Chinese Daoist Association, and published by Huaxia chubanshe, this is the first punctuated edition and consists of the entire Ming-dynasty Daoist Canon as well as texts from archaeological finds such as Dunhuang, Guodian, and Mawangdui.
Commentary as Daoist practice

Commentary composition is another important Daoist practice. We may understand commentary as close reading and textual analysis, as a deeper and more committed form of scripture study. While scripture study may be individual or communal, commentary composition is usually a solitary undertaking. In this way, it may be seen as contemplative practice. While scripture study may be preserved through oral teachings, commentary involves actual textual production. It is an intentional and sustained inquiry that results in an additional text, a text that may be disseminated. In this way, commentary composition is intended to clarify the meaning of a text, to transmit a particular interpretation of that text, and to provide guidance for other adherents. Daoist commentary composition thus relates to exegesis (critical explanation), hermeneutics (art and theory of interpretation), and scholasticism (intellectual method of learning).

Daoist commentaries (zhù) most often focus on jīng. Less frequently, they aim to elucidate other types of texts, such as esoteric internal alchemy works that have attained a certain canonical status. With respect to the received Daozang, there are major commentaries on such influential scriptures as the Huangting jīng (Scripture on the Yellow Court; DZ 331; DZ 332), Qingjing jīng (Scripture on Clarity and Stillness; DZ 620), Yinfu jīng (Scripture on the Hidden Talisman; DZ 31), and so forth (see Schipper and Verellen 2004). However, by far the largest number of Daoist commentaries focus on the Daode jīng (see Robinet 1977, 1998, 1999; Komjathy 2008a), with the commentaries of Heshang gōng (2nd c. CE?) and Wang Bi (226–49), a member of the Xuanxue (Profound Learning) movement, having been most influential (see Chan 1991a, 2000). Some prominent Daoists who have engaged in exegesis and composed influential commentaries include the following: Du Guangting (850–933) on the Daode jīng (DZ 725); Tang Chun (Jinling daoren [Daoist of Nanjing]; 11th c. CE?) on the Huangting jīng (DZ 121); Liu Chuxuan (1147–1203) on the Huangting jīng (DZ 401), and Yinfu jīng (DZ 122); and Liu Yiming (1734–1821) on the Yijing and Yinfu jīng, as contained in his Daoshu shier zhong (see above).

Commentaries are primarily composed in order to elucidate the meaning of texts and to provide guidance concerning preferred interpretation. Some Daoist commentaries engage in line-by-line exegesis; others provide more general interpretation; and still others, which might not be considered commentaries as such, incorporate systematic citations of Daoist texts into a larger doctrinal framework. There are thus different approaches to and types of commentary. Commentaries may also inspire readers to actually read and reflect upon a given text. Thus, one finds summary explanations of the Huainanzi (Book of the Huainan Masters; DZ 1184) in the postface to the text. Commenting on Chapter 1, which is titled “Yuandao” (Dao-as-Source) and represents a Daoist cosmological chapter (see Chapter 6 herein), the editors explain the potential contributions of studying the chapter.
So, in the case of Chapter 1 of the Huainanzi, the aspiring Daoist adept receives insights into the Dao as transformative process and ways to become cosmologically attuned, specifically through Daoist practice. The postface even goes so far to suggest that simply reading and understanding the text results in physiological benefits. How then could one not want to read the text! Similarly, in the preface to his Qingtian ge zhu (Commentary on the “Song of the Clear Sky”), Wang Jie (Daoyuan [Dao’s Source]; Hunran [Primordial Suchness]; fl. 1331–80), a Yuan-dynasty Quanzhen monk, explains the value of Quanzhen poetry for Daoist self-cultivation.

AWAKENING THROUGH READING POETRY

The “Qingtian ge” (Song of the Clear Sky) was written by Perfected Qiu Changchun. As a song with flowing tones comprised of thirty-two lines, it parallels the thirty-two heavens mentioned in the Duren jing (Scripture on Salvation). This is the Dao as circulation and transformation. Each time I chant its tones, I enjoy its literary terseness and the directness and authenticity of its principles. It covers shortcuts to cultivating perfection and graduated steps for entering the Dao. The first twelve lines illuminate the foundations of cultivating innate nature. The middle twelve lines discuss the work of returning to life-destiny. The final eight lines describe the fusion of innate nature and life-destiny. This is the subtlety of spiritual transformation and casting off the embryo. When the ignorant look at worldly people, they only compose mournful writings while singing and dancing. In the end, they do not know that the principles of the ten matchings and nine harmonies are inside this. From ancient times to the present, those with mettle have composed commentaries for the benefit of later generations. When the unpretentious examine their simplicity and begin to study, nearly all of them will receive a beneficial influence on awakening. (Qingtian ge zhu, DZ 137, preface)
According to Wang, Qiu’s poem, and Wang’s commentary by extension, provides spiritual insights concerning one’s foundational vitality (ming) and spiritual capacities (xing) (see Chapters 5, 7, and 11 herein). It enables one to gain deeper insight into the nature of existence and the human condition, as well as to attain spiritual transformation and awakening through Daoist self-cultivation. For one who takes such Daoist claims seriously, one may be inspired to actually read the commentary.

Daoist commentaries thus demonstrate particular Daoist ways of reading Daoist texts. In the modern world, this is important because Daoist texts are frequently appropriated as part of “world scriptures” or “wisdom literature” without recognition of the source-tradition and without understanding of the ways in which Daoists and Daoist communities have read and interpreted the texts. That is, there are Daoist interpretations of Daoist texts, and these interpretations are venerated by Daoists. Daoist commentaries reveal the ways in which Daoist texts were interpreted and applied from Daoist perspectives and within specific Daoist communities. This point helps us to remember that texts such as the Daode jing are Daoist, that they belong to a particular tradition with its own distinctive views, practices, and experiences of reading and interpretation.

FURTHER READING

“Ritual” is a comparative category used to designate certain forms of human behavior and social activity, both religious and secular (see Zuesse 1987; Bell 2005; Duntley 2005). In addition to studying major types of ritual and tradition-specific expressions, there are also a wide variety of theories of ritual (see, e.g. Bell 1992, 1998). The study of ritual in turn relates to ritual studies, performance studies, movement studies, embodiment, and somatic disciplines. According to Ronald Grimes, an informed view of ritual would identify at least five defining characteristics: repetition, sacrality, formalism, traditionalism, and intentionality (Grimes 1995: 60–1). To this characterization, we should probably add that ritual has socially cohesive, symbolic, and performative dimensions, with frequent overlap with “dance” and “theatrics.” Grimes also emphasizes the importance of “ritualization,” or the process through which rituals are created and modified (ibid.: 60–74). On an experiential level, ritual involves prescribed, coordinated and socially recognizable formal behavior and movement patterns. In terms of large-scale, public activity, ritual is orchestrated movement. A sophisticated understanding of ritual in turn requires interpretation to be informed by theory and theory to be informed by specific examples.

Various issues emerge from critical reflection on the characteristics, purposes, and functions of ritual. One component, especially relevant for Daoist ritual, is the
connection between certain forms of ritual and magic. While “magic” often has pejorative connotations, here it will be used to refer to the alteration of reality, specifically to the power of religious practitioners and ritualists to change Nature and “reality” on some level. In the case of ritual, “magical” indicates elements that are actually efficacious and transformative. Daoist ritual involves mediation, intervention, and transformation. On some level, a new universe, or a least a transformed existential condition, is created through ritual. These points inspire one to consider the various functions and symbolism of ritual in general and Daoist ritual in particular.

### Historical overview of Daoist ritual

The early Tianshi community was the first Daoist movement committed to formal ritual. Just as the inner cultivation lineages of classical Daoism established meditation as one of the primary models of Daoist practice and attainment (see Chapters 1 and 11), so too the early Tianshi community contributed a ritualistic model as a primary form of Daoist religiosity. Unfortunately, very little research has been done on that history and the technical specifics of pre-modern Daoist ritual. This is partially because ritual is performative, embodied, and enacted. More often than not, it requires prolonged training, actual performance, and participation. Daoist ritual manuals rarely provide complete information on such performance, and it is difficult to reconstruct ritual from texts. One needs access to actual ritualists in order to fully understand ritual. In the case of Daoism, one also needs initiation and training under a ritual expert and within a Daoist community engaging in ritual. This has, understandably, led to contemporary Daoist ritual receiving the most scholarly attention. For this reason, the present section must be taken as tentative, and it is deeply indebted to Kenneth Dean’s parallel discussion (Dean 2000: 663–9).

Members of the early Tianshi movement practiced a form of communal ritual involving “memorials” or “petitions” (biao; zhang). Such rituals had a variety of rationales and functions. Sometimes, they involved cosmic renewal, cosmological attunement, or announcements to the gods. At other times, they were intended to purify a given individual of moral transgressions and to reestablish community harmony. As we saw in Chapter 8, virtue as well as ethical reflection and application were, and remain, part of the Daoist tradition, and of the Tianshi movement in particular. In addition, as discussed in Chapters 8, 9, and 10, there are diverse Daoist conceptions of disease with corresponding therapeutic responses. One of these views, expressed and applied within the early Tianshi community, was the conception of illness as a result of immorality. In terms of ritual, the individual went into a “pure chamber” (jingshi; jingshe) and purified himself or herself. This involved a formal confession of moral transgressions, which anticipates the later Daoist ritual practice known as chanhui (see below). The early Tianshi community thus placed strong emphasis on faith-healing based on the assumption that illness was largely self-generated and...
due to moral transgressions, but could also be the result of resentful actions of the wronged dead, including one’s own relatives and ancestors (Dean 2000: 664).

More formal, large-scale, and communal rituals were also performed. This was the province of senior members of the Tianshi community, specifically the Celestial Master himself and libationers (jijiu). Such ritual activity focused on the Three Bureaus (sanguan), namely, the spiritual forces of the heavens, earth, and water (later replaced with humanity). From the beginning of the Tianshi movement, regular assemblies featuring ritual activities, communal meals, and matters of practical concern were held. Specific cosmological and calendrical dimensions were also involved (see Chapter 6). The Three Assemblies (sanhui) took place on the seventh day of the first month (shortly after lunar New Year), on the seventh day of the seventh month (beginning of autumn), and on the fifth day of the tenth month (after the harvest). The first served to inform deities of changes in the congregations, the second to propagate precepts and regulations, and the third was the time of donation, often referred to as “rice tax.” These Three Assemblies probably also corresponded to the Three Bureaus. Later, the Three Assemblies were held to honor the Three Primes (sanyuan); the latter superseded the earlier calendrical associations and occurred on the fifteenth day of the first, seventh, and tenth months (Stein 1979: 70–1; Hendrischke 2000: 159). In addition, the Celestial Master himself and libationers often submitted petitions to the Three Bureaus; these were requests for specific interventions and forms of assistance, such as fertility, purification, welfare, and so forth. Here one might be inclined to identify a type of Daoist petitionary prayer as well as ritual as therapeutic modality. During such rituals, the officiant submitted three petitions to the corresponding bureau: to the heavens by burning, to the earth by burial, and to water by immersion. Such ritual performance evidences a naturalistic and cosmological conception of ritual.

The early Tianshi ritual masters also seem to have used processes of visualization to summon body-gods (see Chapter 11), and with their aid submitted petitions to the higher gods of the newly revealed Daoist pantheon (see Chapter 6). They healed with talismans and talismanic (consecrated) water (fushui), which contained the ashes of talismans. In addition, the early Tianshi movement appears to have instituted graded initiations involving the investiture of initiates with registers (lu) of protective and martial deities as well as body-gods at their command (Dean 2000: 664–5).

The next major development in Daoist ritual occurred within the context of the early Lingbao movement. Drawing upon the earlier Tianshi model, early Lingbao was primarily a ritualistic movement, that is, ritual was the primary form of early Lingbao religious practice. As described in Lu Xiujing’s (406–77) Wugan wen (Text on Fivefold Response; DZ 1278), early Lingbao ritual centered on nine zhai-purification rites. As discussed below, zhai-purifications can be defined as a complex rite consisting of three separate parts: (1) Bodily purification through bathing, fasting, abstention from sexual relations and avoidance of defilements; (2) Mental purification through confession of moral transgressions and meditation; and (3) Formal petitionary ritual for distinct purposes, part of which usually involved the sharing of food, whether between the gods and the people, the masters and the community, or the donors...
and recluses (Yamada 2000: 249; see also Benn 2000). There were nine main kinds of zhai-purification rites in early Lingbao (see ibid.). Within the major early medieval types, we find not only the central importance of zhai-purification rites, but also important dimensions of Daoist ritual practice, including emphasis on reverence, protection, purification, petition, repentance, absolution, ancestral and communal welfare, cosmic transformation, and universal salvation (pudu), with the latter adapted from Mahāyāna Buddhism. In combination with Tianshi initiatory and petitionary rites and Shangqing visualization practice (see Chapter 11), and an additional Mahāyāna-Buddhist influenced vision of universal salvation, Lingbao ritual helped to establish some of the primary components of “orthodox” Daoist ritual.

The development of Daoist ritual is also directly connected to the development of the Daoist pantheon, specifically the early Daoist claim that Daoist deities were purer and higher than “non-Daoist” gods and the gods of the popular and imperial pantheon. As discussed in Chapter 6, Daoist cosmology includes the structure of the Three Heavens populated by specifically Daoist gods, gods defined as pure emanations of the Dao. In contrast to the gods of the popular and imperial pantheon, these celestial beings did not eat meat, consume blood, or drink alcohol; they would only respond to written petitions issued by legitimate authorities, specifically ordained Daoist priests (daoshi) (Kleeman 1994a; see also Komjathy 2011c). Daoist deities were nourished simply by their location among cosmic ethers and astral palaces, and “orthodox” Daoist ritual centered on bloodless and meatless offerings. In addition to asserting superiority through theological claims regarding their nearness to the primordial nondifferentiation of the Dao, the rejection of standard Chinese ritual activity also served a political function; because Daoist deities were higher, and thus more powerful than non-Daoist gods, and because only ordained Daoist priests could issue petitions to these powerful beings, rulers, officials, and people in general were dependent on Daoist ritual experts for assistance. To this, Lingbao, following Mahāyāna Buddhism, added the “six paths” (liudao) of reincarnation, namely, gods, demigods, humans, animals, hungry-ghosts, and hell-dwellers. Lingbao Daoists also emphasized the Nine Subterrains (jiuyou), an underworld system wherein certain beings, possibly including one’s own ancestors, resided and were morally purified before rebirth (Yamada 2000). Daoist ritual was thus the most powerful and efficacious because of the Daoist access to the highest theistic realms of the cosmos, and because Daoist ritual interventionism had the potential to transform apparent givens, such as karmic consequences and samsaric location.

Like the formation of a self-conscious, integrated Daoist institution (see Chapters 1–4), many of the earlier semi-independent Daoist ritual traditions were merged and codified between the fifth and ninth centuries. During the Tang dynasty, standardized versions were either created or documented by Zhang Wanzu (Dade [Great Virtue]; fl. 712) and Du Guangting (850–933). As discussed in previous chapters, Daoism became state orthodoxy during the Tang dynasty, as members of the imperial Li family considered themselves to be descendants of Laozi (Li Er). In the context of state patronage, Daoists were able to more fully systematize Daoist ritual in a manner
that paralleled the Tang monastic system (see Chapters 3 and 4). Dating from the second to eighth centuries CE, and discovered at the beginning of the twentieth century, materials from the archeological site of Dunhuang (Jiuquan, Gansu) confirm the continuity of Daoist initiation rites and the transmission of a hierarchy of registers, scriptures, liturgies, seals, and talismans at this time (Dean 2000: 667). Tang imperially mandated ritual compendiums also add a few Daoist rites to the expanding list of zhai-purification rites. Several texts claim that there were twenty-four versions, while others have as many as forty-two, fifty-six, or seventy-two jiao-offerings, the other primary type of communal Daoist ritual (see below). During the Tang, zhai-purifications were integrated with jiao-offerings, but the latter eventually became an independent ritual form in its own right. As far as current research goes, the oldest surviving extended liturgies for Daoist jiao-offerings include several works by Zhang Wanfu. As expressed in his Jiao sandong licheng yi (Observances to Establish Jiao-offerings to the Three Caverns; DZ 1212), the key elements are as follows: (1) Establishing the altar and seating the gods; (2) Purifying the altar; (3) Invocations for entry of the masters; (4) Lighting the incense burner; (5) Exteriorization of the numinous officials (body-gods); (6) Requests to the register-officials; (7) Sending off the gods; (8) Directing the minor clerks (body and locality gods) to return to their posts; (9) Interiorization of the officers; (10) Extinguishing the incense burner; (11) Hymns to send off the gods; and (12) Closing invocations (Dean 2000: 667). In other texts, Zhang describes ritual vestments and investitures of registers, drawing on his personal experience as a priest involved in the initiation of two Tang princesses (Benn 1991, 2000). As in the above Tianshi and Lingbao rituals, one notices a strong bureaucratic dimension to Tang-dynasty Daoist ritual, a model that was adapted from Chinese court protocol. This feature persists into the modern world.

After the collapse of the Tang dynasty, the court Daoist Du Guangting reassembled pieces of the Daoist tradition. His ritual texts, such as the Huanglu zhai yi (Observances for the Yellow Register Rite; DZ 507), became the basis for many standard liturgical collections of the Song. Other late Tang dynasty sources such as those associated with the Jingming (Pure Brightness) movement reveal the increasing propensity of Daoism to merge with local and regional cults, generating in the process new ritual forms (Dean 2000: 668; see also Chapter 2 herein).

The Song dynasty saw the emergence of new deity cults and ritual movements, whose original connection with Daoism is unclear, but which were eventually incorporated into the mainstream Daoist tradition. At that time, Daoist ritual reached its most elaborate expressions, but there was also a conservative backlash that postulated simplicity and the reestablishment of traditional models. Several major schools can be distinguished at the time, and each has important liturgical compendiums. Among them, the mainstream Lingbao ritual tradition, which follows earlier rites as set out by Lu Xiujing, Zhang Wanfu, and Du Guangting, is represented in the Huanglu dazhai yi (Observances for the Great Yellow Register Rite; DZ 508), a work based on the teachings of Liu Yongguang (1134–1206) (Dean 2000: 668). The Yellow Register Rite was a requiem (gongde), a ritual for the dead. Key new Song-dynasty deity cults and
ritual movements that contributed to Daoist ritual practice include Shenxiao (Divine Empyrean), Tongchu (Youthful Incipience), Tianxin (Celestial Heart), and Qingwei (Pure Tenuity) (see Chapter 2; Boltz 1987a; Skar 2000). Especially noteworthy is the development of “thunder rites” ("thunder magic"; leifa) and the incorporation of mandala (sacred diagrams) via the influence of Tantric Buddhism. Thunder rites involve the worship and ritual embodiment of the powers of thunder and lightning. In the last two decades of the Northern Song dynasty, the Tianshi community began adopting this form of ritual practice. Also emerging here are elaborate schemes for articulating the powers of thunder in theory, scripture, meditation, and ritual that developed more fully during the Southern Song. This broad class of exorcistic ritual appeared under such names as Five Thunders (wulei) and Thunderclap (leiting) (Skar 2000: 423). Thunder rites involve harnessing and directing the power of thunder and lightning during ritual.

The modification of Daoist ritual of course did not cease with the Song dynasty deity cults and ritual movements. It continued into the late imperial and modern periods, with the fourteenth-century Daofa huiyuan (Collected Sources on Daoist Ritual; DZ 1220; 268 juan) and the eighteenth-century Guangcheng yizhi (Ritual Systematization of Master Guangcheng; ZW 413–ZW 687; 270 texts) being especially significant. In fact, there is widespread regional and family variation in the practice of contemporary Daoist ritual (see below). However, the above outline is sufficient to reveal typical features and representative dimensions of Daoist ritual taken as a whole. The two primary forms of Daoist communal ritual include zhai-purifications and jiao-offerings. The rituals are conducted by ordained Daoist priests, including a head-priest or officiant (gaogong), who have undergone formal ordination and investiture rites, through which they have been empowered and trained to conduct rituals through the transmission of registers and texts. The corresponding rituals tend to utilize such distinctively Daoist elements as announcements/memorials (biao), invocations (zhou), petitions (zhang), registers (lu), seals (yin), and talismans (fu). There are also calendrical, cosmological, exorcistic, petitionary, purificationary, salvific, and therapeutic dimensions.

**Types of Daoist rituals**

Daoist rituals can be categorized according to their size, frequency, and purpose. They include rites of atonement, consecration, harmonization, initiation and ordination, intercession, invocation, petition, purification, and so forth. Particularly important are Daoist ordination rites, rituals for communal welfare and cosmic harmonization, as well as funeral rites and requiems. Celebrations of birth, adolescence, and marriage, as well as rituals that might correspond to the general category of “rites of passage” (Arnold van Gennep; Victor Turner), tend to fall within the purview of Confucian ritual and mainstream Chinese society. Daoists also modeled some Daoist ritual on court protocol and later on certain Buddhist rituals. Daoists also competed with Buddhists with respect to patronage and the performance of specific types of ritual, especially
those focused on deceased relatives who remained part of the community of the living as ancestors and/or who required post-mortem intervention.

Generally speaking, large-scale Daoist public ritual performance can be described as an elaborate and awe-inspiring oratorio, combining singing, chanting, recitation, and sometimes dance to the accompaniment of drums, gongs, cymbals, strings, and woodwinds. The rich costumes, altar hangings, ritual implements, oil lamps, and incense burners set the stage for intricate symbolic actions. These actions range from solemn court audiences to highly dramatic exorcisms complete with sword dances. Daoist rituals can be performed by a solitary ritual specialist or by a troupe led by a Master of High Merit (gaogong), the head officiant. The troupe can vary in size, but often includes a chief cantor (dujiang) and one or more assistant cantors (fujiang), a keeper of the incense, and a leader of the dance (Dean 2000: 659). There is a high degree of formality, complexity, organization, and material dimensions (e.g. aesthetics, architecture, clothing, and paraphernalia; see Chapter 15 herein).

Zhai-purification and jiao-offering rituals are the two primary forms of large-scale Daoist public ritual performance. Zhai-purifications, also referred to as “fasts,” “retreats,” and levée, are formal court audiences with the gods. In earlier ritual contexts, zhai were actual fasts aimed at purification and preparation for ritual. Such fasts involved withdrawing into seclusion, bathing, and meditating as well as abstaining from eating meat or drinking alcohol and engaging in sexual intercourse. As acts of purification, they elevated officiants to a state of grace so that they could legitimately approach the gods at altars. After the emergence of organized Daoism, the term retained this ritual sense. Daoists had codes and rules requiring fasts for visiting preceptors to make inquiries, copying scriptures, drawing talismans, and concocting elixirs, among other things (see Chapter 8). However, in the fifth century, the word zhai acquired a new meaning when Daoists compiled liturgies for major rituals. It came to stand for the actual rites of worship, rather than the preliminary procedures of seclusion, meditation, and abstention. It appears that zhai-purifications ceased being a separate ritual at least as early as the Tang dynasty. Within this context, large-scale offerings were incorporated as part of the overall liturgy, and term jiao was introduced to designate the concluding segment. The combined term zhaijiao then became current in reference to major Daoist ceremonies (Andersen 2008). In contemporary Daoism, zhai-purifications are generally not performed independently but rather during the first half of the jiao-offerings (see below). In most cases, there is a litany of atonement, followed by the presentation of the memorial or petition to notify the deities of the merits accrued through atonement. After the zhai-purification rite has been performed, the jiao-offering proper begins, during which the deities are thanked and given offerings (ibid.). However, in southeast mainland China, the term zhai is used to designate requiems (gongde), Daoist death rites and funeral services, while jiao designates communal sacrificial rites (Dean 2000: 667).

The second major type of large-scale Daoist public ritual is the jiao-offering. As mentioned, it appears that zhai-purifications and jiao-offerings originally existed as separate rituals, but became combined into a single ceremony at least as early as the
Tang. The jiao-offering that was added to the zhai-purification liturgy had a separate origin and followed a separate line of development during the Six Dynasties. In fact, some of the earliest descriptions associate the practice with Fangshi ("formula master") communities and contrast it with the "pure rites" of the Tianshi movement (Andersen 2008). In its early Daoist formulations, it appears that jiao-offerings focused on subordinate spirits, while zhai-purifications focused on the highest deities. In more contemporary usages, jiao-offerings are large-scale Daoist ceremonies. In terms of modern Zhengyi Daoism, they are organized by local communities, and by religious associations, in order to define themselves on a religious level, and specifically in order to establish or confirm a semi-contractual relationship between the group and its tutelary (guardian or protector) deity. A jiao-offering may be performed at intervals of three, five, or more years (depending on local traditions) as either a recurrent rite for renewing life and blessings for the community, or a rite that responds to immediate problems such as drought, floods, or epidemics (ibid.).

Although zhai-purification and jiao-offering rites have received the most attention in terms of Daoist ritual, there are many other types of Daoist ritual activity. Viewed from the perspective of large-scale, communal ritual performance, these appear to be “parts,” “stages,” or “purposes” of those ceremonies (see below). However, in many contexts, they are distinct ritual practices, and may be performed separately. Other key types of Daoist ritual include the following: chao ("audience"), chanhui ("atonement"), chuanshou ("ordination"), gongde ("requiem"), gongke ("liturgy"), jiuku ("alleviation of suffering"), kaiguang ("consecration"), liandu ("salvation through refinement"), nianjing ("scripture recitation"), pudu ("universal salvation"), and xiaoxie ("dispersal of deviance"). Here we must content ourselves with examining two of these rituals, namely, ordination and consecration.

Daoist ordination rites (chuanshou; lit., “to transmit and bestow”) are rituals through which one becomes formally recognized and empowered as a priest and/or monastic. As we have seen in previous chapters, Daoist ordination rites frequently involve the transmission of specific teachings, precepts, scriptures, and so forth (see also Benn 2000: 327–32). Key Daoist texts describing late medieval Daoist ordinations include the seventh-century Fengdao kejie (Rules and Precepts for Worshipping the Dao; DZ 1125) and the eighth-century Chuanshou jingjie falu lueshuo (Synopsis of Transmissions for Scriptures, Precepts, and Liturgical Registers; DZ 1241), among others (see ibid.: 322–5; idem. 1991). A traditional Daoist rite of ordination involves the "hair-pinning ceremony" (zanpi), during which the ordinand’s master forms her hair into a topknot (faji) and inserts a hairpin (zanzi). This is a Daoist version of the traditional Chinese hat-donning and hair-pinning ceremonies, rites of passage for boys and girls respectively, which marked the transition from adolescence to adulthood. Ordination rituals may also be considered a form of empowerment and investiture, as ordinands are usually given robes (see Chapter 15), spirit registers (lu), scriptures, and so forth.

Recently, large-scale Longmen ordinations have been held at the ordination platform (jietan) of Baiyun guan (White Cloud Monastery; Beijing) and at other major
Daoist temples in mainland China (Wang 2006: 146–53). For Longmen ordinands, this involves the presentation of the three Longmen precept texts with the expectation of ethical study and application (see Chapter 8). Thus Longmen ordination is frequently referred to as shoujie (“receiving the precepts”). Simple forms of ordination may involve bowing before a Daoist altar while taking refuge in the external Three Treasures of the Dao, the scriptures, and the teachers, in a rite adapted from Buddhism. In Daoism, this is called the “three vows” (san guiyi). Less well known are ordinations that do not involve formal public ceremonies, but rather direct transmissions between a master and disciple. As we have seen, these forms of lineage preservation and transmission have a historical precedent in classical Daoism, in Fangshi communities, and in Daoist ascetic and eremitic traditions. In either case, whether public ordination ceremonies or private ordinations, ordinands receive religious names that often indicate their connection to specific lineages (see Chapters 3, 4, and 16) Traditionally speaking, ordinands also receive “ordination certificates” (zhengming shu; jiedie) (see Schipper 1993: 68; Dean 1993: 54; Kohn 2004c: 87), which may be hand-written by a given master. Another dimension of certain Daoist ordinations is the submission and placement of the ordinand’s name in the celestial registers (tiance), also known as the registers of immortality (xiance). This may be understood as an audience or announcement ceremony. Following ordination ceremonies, Daoists are then referred to as “Daoist priests” (daoshi); female ordinands also receive the designations of nüguan (lit., “female hats”) or kundao (lit., “women’s way”) (see also Yin 2005: 42–4).

Consecration ceremonies (kaiguang; lit., “opening the radiance”) involve “activating” or “animating” statues, paintings, and/or other material objects. During such rituals, a Daoist priest infuses the object with numinous qi and requests the spiritual power of a specific deity. This is usually done by chanting, either audibly or silently, corresponding invocations. Consecration is a form of blessing and sanctification. A typical statue consecration involves smearing the Yintang (Seal-Hall; “third-eye”) point with cinnabar dust and/or placing an invocation or talisman in the back.

Before moving on to discuss the role of ritual in Daoist daily life, a few additional features of Daoist ritual need to be addressed. First, Daoist ritual involves spatial reorganization, or specific configurations of space; in the case of temples and monasteries, Daoist ritual is usually performed in front of the central altar, to more primordial and cosmic gods, gods who are closer to the Dao as Source. However, Daoist ritual is often practiced outside, in front of temporary altars. A ritual area is established, with a central altar dedicated to a particular deity or deities. This is the altar before which the primary ritual is performed. The main or northernmost altar (facing south) is dedicated to the highest, most venerated, and honored god(s) related to the specific ritual.

Second, Daoist ritual is attentive to major cosmic cycles and the Daoist liturgical calendar (see, e.g. Silvers 2005). The new and full moon as well as the twenty-four seasonal nodes, and the Eight Nodes in particular, are especially important. On a cosmic scale, the jiazi year, the first year of the Chinese sexagesimal (sixty-year) cycle, is also pivotal.

Third, Daoist ritual traditionally employs documents hand-written in classical Chinese with traditional characters, that is, literacy with respect to Chinese language
is a foundational requirement. Daoist priests must be able to read liturgical texts written in classical Chinese as well as write classical Chinese, usually with some degree of refinement in terms of calligraphy. Such documents include announcements, petitions, and talismans. The latter are particularly specialized, as they are often esoteric, orally transmitted, and only learned through formal liturgical training. Talismans are highly stylized and complex magical characters (see, e.g. Despeux 2000b; Pregadio 2008a). They may be utilized for a variety of purposes, such as exorcism, protection, purification, and so forth. Daoist priests also frequently "write" using ritual swords or ritual rulers. This dimension of certain rituals involves using the implement to draw characters in the air. It recalls Daoist views of the ethereal and divine dimensions of writing and scriptures (see Chapter 12).

Finally, there are a variety of ritual positions or clerical roles in Daoist ritual performance. Each assumes that the candidate is an ordained Daoist priest or monastic (daoshi), that is, one must have been ordained (see above). Here we should note that not all Daoists have affinities with ritual, engage in ritual, or are trained to perform ritual. In the case of contemporary Quanzhen monasteries, there tends to be "division of labor," wherein only certain monastics receive formal ritual training. In terms of actual ritual positions, the most important is the officiant (gaogong; lit., "lofty merit"), which also appears as "master of high merit," "head priest," or "celebrant." This is the head priest who conducts the ritual. He or she is assisted by the chief cantor (dujiang) and assistant cantors (fujiang). In contemporary Taiwanese ritual, the ritual leadership often includes the leader of the troupe (yinban) and keeper of incense (shixiang). Here "cantor" is a phrase adopted from Christianity to designate ecclesiastical officers leading liturgical music. In the case of Daoist ritual, cantors are "assistant priests" to the officiant. In contemporary Quanzhen monastic contexts, "scripture master" (jingshi) is often used to refer to the four to eight principal cantors of the liturgy (see below).

Formal Daoist ritual usually includes or concludes with the statement jiji ru luling ("Quickly, quickly, in accordance with the statutes and ordinances"). This is a phrase of commemoration used to send off the prayers and petitions and to ensure efficacious responsiveness.

**Daily Daoist ritual activities**

Most academically informed views of Daoist ritual are primarily derived from the study of contemporary Taiwanese Zhengyi communal ritual. This has led to a general neglect of Daoist daily ritual activities as well as less publicly visible expressions. Zhengyi Daoists tend to engage in purification before ritual performance; this often includes bathing, temporary vegetarianism and/or fasting, temporary sexual abstinence, as well as temporary avoidance of intoxicants. There are also more formal ritual approaches to "ordinary" activities in Quanzhen, and its Longmen lineage in particular. This includes a
standard procedure upon waking up. One washes one’s hands and face, brushes one’s teeth and rinses the mouth, and combs one’s hair. The hair is then placed in a topknot with the hairpin. One then puts on one’s pants, socks, and shoes. This is followed by the main robe. Finally, one puts on one’s hat (see also Chapter 15). The seventeenth-century *Chuzhen jie* (Precepts of Initial Perfection; JY 292; ZW 404), a Longmen monastic manual and precept text, contains invocations for many daily activities.

### QUANZHEN INVOCATIONS FOR DAILY RITUAL ACTIVITY

**Invocation when Waking Up**
May all sentient beings awaken from delusion and instantaneously gain clear understanding.

**Invocation when Hearing the Bell Sound**
May this great and rare sound enable awakening and the experience of perfection.

**Invocation when Putting on Undergarments**
May I transform deviance and return to goodness. In the ledgers, may the Three Radiances grant perpetual life, so that I may ride the luminosities and mount the clouds.

**Invocation for Combing Hair**
Above Niwan, the precious essence of Xuanhua (Mysterious Flower). To the left, a hidden sun; to the right, the moon’s base. May vital essence be refined through the six directions, so that the hundred spirits receive grace.

**Invocation for Washing Hands and Face**
May I wash away the dirt so that spirit expands. May I coalesce perfection without dissipation.

**Invocation for Rinsing the Mouth**
May Great Yang harmonize the qi, opening spring and giving life to the willows. In taking this single branch, may I be able to purify body and mouth. In studying the Dao and cultivating perfection, may I transcend the Three Worlds.

**Invocation for Fixing Hair and Cap**
May all sentient beings’ head and face be constant and upright, so that their faces manifest the myriad classes.

**Invocation for Putting on Robes**
May I arrange and tie these in a dignified demeanor, so that my clothing and upper garments express goodness and the sacred teachings.
In addition to these invocations, the *Chuzhen jie* provides guidance on how to care for and dispose of daily robes, of which Quanzhen Daoists generally have two sets (see Chapter 15). Robes are folded, stored, and occasionally hung in prescribed ways. When they become old and worn, they are supposed to be burned.

Other important daily ritual activities undertaken by Daoists include bowing and altar care. Bowing is probably the most common and foundational form of Daoist ritual activity. It is used in greeting fellow Daoists as well as within more formal ritual performance. The standard form of Daoist bowing involves joining the hands into the *ziwu* mudra (“hand-seal”), also known as the yin-yang or Taiji mudra. One joins all of the finger-tips of the right hand to the thumb-tip of the right hand. The thumb of the left hand then touches the inside base of the ring-finger of the right hand, while the other fingers of the left hand rest on top of the right hand. The tip of the left middle-finger touches the outside base of the right ring-finger. There are three levels of formality of the corresponding bowing. The least formal simply involves raising the hands slightly to fellow Daoists; this is done when the person involved is familiar or encountered frequently. The next level of bowing involves making a semicircle forward and then backward with the joined hands while bending slightly at the waist. Finally, the most formal Daoist bowing is full-body prostrations. It follows the previous pattern, but after the hands return to heart-level, the hands sink down the front center-line of the body, separate, and then move around the belt line. The latter is a method for opening liturgical garments (see Chapter 15). One then bends the knees and kneels on the prostration-mat. As one bends the waist and leans forward, one extends the right hand (palm down) and places it on the mat before one’s forehead. The left hand is then placed over the right hand, palms down. One then taps the forehead (*koutou*; *ketou*; “kowtow”) three times onto the extended hands. This is one full prostration. One then stands up and repeats the process two more times. This amounts to three full-body prostrations and nine bows in total (3x3) (see also Silvers 2005). Such bowing is, first and foremost, a sign of respect and an expression of reverence. At the same time, many Daoists practice it as a Yangsheng (see Chapter 10) and internal alchemy method (see Chapter 11). Interestingly, one can also identify disciples of specific masters by their style and quality of bowing.

Altar care is another major Daoist ritual activity. Daoist altars usually have a standard configuration, including statues, scrolls, or paintings; an incense burner; two candelabras; and two red candles (see also Silvers 2005: 18–21, 54–77). They also include the wooden fish-drum and the prayer-bell (see Chapter 15). As mentioned, Daoist altars have a southward orientation. If one is facing the altar, the prayer-bell is located on the
left side (west), while the fish-drum is located on the right side (east). Daoist altars also have offerings, such as flowers and fruit, with peaches, a symbol of immortality, being especially common. At permanent, active Daoist altars, altar attendants (hutan) care for a specific altar. Responsibilities include opening the altar in the morning and closing the altar in the evening, keeping the altar and hall clean, and actually “tending the altar.” This involves arranging altar offerings in appropriate ways and assisting visitors and patrons in making offerings. Upon request, altar attendants are also expected to introduce the deities and to provide spiritual guidance. When someone bows, the altar attendant rings the prayer-bell, ideally three times for each patron. After the latter finishes, bowing to the corresponding deity, gods, or immortals, he or she traditionally bows to the altar attendant, who responds in turn. This is followed by the phrase cibei, which literally means “compassion,” but here is an expression of gratitude.

With respect to incense, Daoists, and Daoist deities and immortals by extension, prefer pure sandalwood (tanxiang) and aloeswood (chenxiang), although the latter is becoming quite scarce. Both are said to harmonize qi, settle the heart-mind, and increase spiritual insight. Incense is ideally offered in sets of three. One approaches the altar with the incense sticks held in the hands like an audience tablet (see Chapter 15). After one bows three times, one places the incense in the incense burner with the left hand: first stick in center, second stick to the right (facing the altar), and third stick to the left. If an altar attendant is not present, one may ring the prayer-bell three times. Just as one allows incense to burn down completely, one allows the sound of the prayer-bell to dissipate naturally. Interruption of either is believed to disrupt the offering and petition. Incense is also used in Daoist meditation, in which case Daoists often use only one incense-stick. In addition to supporting meditation practice, incense may be used to measure time.

The final aspect of Daoist daily ritual activity involves the use of language. The Daoist tradition tends to emphasize minimalism of speech, circumspection, and/or voluntary silence (see Chapter 5). This value may be understood in terms of conservation and contemplation, specifically the connection among innate nature, stillness, and alignment with the Dao. Daoists also use language in specifically religious ways—for example, when addressing fellow ordained priests or monastics, Daoists frequently use the title daozhang (“elder of the Dao”). Similarly, Daoists address their primary teacher as shifu (“master-father”) and their teacher’s teacher as shiye (“master-grandfather”) (see also Chapter 3). When expressing gratitude, Daoists frequently use cibei, which literally means “compassion.” When ending letters or other forms of correspondence, Daoists often write baozhong (“take care”). Finally, when parting company or concluding formal meetings, Daoists will frequently use the phrase daoqi changcun (“may the qi of the Dao be forever preserved”).
Contemporary Daoist ritual

In contemporary Zhengyi Daoism, the primary form of communal ritual activity is the performance of jiao-offerings, which incorporate many of the rites mentioned above. These rituals are performed by an officiant and his or her assistants before a central altar. A typical three-day Taiwanese Zhengyi jiao-offering consists of a variety of stages.

### TYPICAL MODERN TAIWANESE ZHENGYI JIAO-OFFERING

**Day 1**
1. Announcement
2. Invocation
3. Flag-raising
4. Noon Offering
5. Division of the Lamps
6. Sealing the Altar
7. Invocation of the Masters and Saints
8. Nocturnal Invocation

**Day 2**
1. Morning Audience
2. Noon Audience
3. Evening Audience

**Day 3**
1. Renewed Offering
2. Presentation of the Memorial
4. Orthodox Offering
5. Universal Salvation

(Schipper 1975: 10–11; see also Saso 1972a, 1978; Lagerwey 1987: 293; Schipper 1993; Dean 2000: 675–6; Andersen 2008)

Some of these elements are inherited from early Daoist ritual, while others are of more recent provenance. The former include establishing, purifying, and consecrating the sacred space, which is often referred to as the “enclosure of the Dao” (daochang). Here the officiant fixes the Five Lingbao Talismans in the five directions of the ritual area.

More ancient layers also include visualizations known as lighting the incense burner and the exteriorization of the body-gods as well as the presentation of the memorial. The Presentation of the Memorial, which corresponds to the earlier Statement of
Merit (see above), is accompanied by large-scale displays of offerings addressed to
the Jade Emperor and inaugurates a whole series of additional major rites in which
offerings are presented to all categories of the spirit-world (Andersen 2008). These
are commonly followed by offerings to the high gods, the sending off of the gods,
reabsorption of the body-gods, and extinguishing the incense burner (Dean 2000:
676–7).

Although mainland Chinese Quanzhen monastics with ritual training occasionally
perform jiao-offerings, the primary monastic ritual activity is recitation of the Quanzhen
liturgy (gongke) (see Hammerstrom 2003; Kim 2006). The most common title for this text
is the Xuanmen risong zaowen gongke jing (Morning and Evening Liturgy of the Mysterious
Gate for Daily Recitation). An official, standardized edition was recently published by the
Chinese Daoist Association (2004). The Daoist Foundation, an American non-profit Daoist
educational and religious organization dedicated to preserving and transmitting traditional
Daoist culture, has recently published a bilingual “American edition” of the Quanzhen
liturgy for use in its Daoist communities (see Daoist Foundation 2008a, 2008b).

The liturgy consists of a morning (zaotan) and evening (wantan) section. The former
is usually chanted in the early morning, immediately after monastics wake up and

FIGURE 20 Zhuang-Chen Dengyun Performing Jiao-offering (Zhu’nan, Taiwan; 1970)
Source: Michael Saso
before breakfast. The latter is usually chanted in late afternoon, just prior to dinner. In either case, cantors—the monastics who have been formally trained to chant the liturgy and who have the primary recitation responsibility—gather before the altar. They stand behind tables upon which the liturgy, in folded or accordion-style editions (see Chapter 15), rests. In wealthier temples and during important occasions, the cantors are accompanied by musicians. The most common ritual instruments for cantors are the wooden fish-drum, which sets the rhythm and functions like a quasi-metronome, and the prayer-bell (see Chapter 15). In more elaborate performances, other cantors use various cymbals, gongs, and drums. The rest of the community stands behind the cantors.

The standard recitation of Quanzhen liturgy involves a variety of complex chanting styles, accompanied by sections of standing, bowing, and kneeling. Guidance is provided in the “Essential Instructions for Chanting Scriptures” at the beginning of the morning liturgy.1

**ESSENTIAL INSTRUCTIONS FOR CHANTING SCRIPTURES**

When chanting scriptures, one must be ritually pure (zhaijie; lit., “fast and abstain”). One should be dignified, with robes and hat properly arranged. Make the heart-mind sincere and qi concentrated. Tap the teeth in such a way that a sound can be heard. Then begin chanting with a clear voice. Be reverential and serious, as though speaking during an interview. Be attentive and solemn, aware of each and every thought without any oversight. Adhere to the vows and pray sincerely. Resonance and response (ganying) will occur naturally. First be attentive in Pacing the Void (buxu). Then recite (song) the scriptures and invocations. (Xuanmen risong zaowen gongke jing, morning section)

These instructions appear in four-character mnemonic sets, so as to be easily memorized.

Both the morning and evening liturgy have a similar structure, with five major divisions: (1) Preparation; (2) Recitation of scriptures; (3) Declarations (gao) and commemorations (hao); (4) Petitions, vows, and wishes (yuan); and (5) Closing (see also Hammerstrom 2003; Kim 2006). Although the sequence is similar, the content, purposes, and emphases are different. The morning liturgy generally focuses on the living, while the evening liturgy places stronger emphasis on the dead.

The first section of morning liturgy begins with initial requests or invitations (qing) for divine assistance and eight spirit invocations (shenzhou), which aim at psychosomatic purification and activation of subtle dimensions of self. The invocations focus on the heart, mouth, body, place, cosmos, incense, golden radiance (divine illumination), and scriptures. This is followed by the second section: the recitation of scripture.
Monastics chant the eighth-century *Qingjing jing* (Scripture on Clarity and Stillness; DZ 620), seventh-century *Xiaozai huming jing* (Scripture for Dispersing Calamities and Protecting Life; DZ 19), *Du’e rangzai jing* (Scripture for Dispelling Disasters and Saving from Calamities; DZ 357), and *Yu huang xinyin jing* (Scripture of the Mind-seal of the Jade Emperor; DZ 13). Following scripture recitation, attention turns to the third section: the declarations and commemorations. There are twelve declarations recognizing the Three Heavens and Three Purities (1–3), their four assistants (4–7), the god of longevity (8), the Five Patriarchs of Quanzhen (9), Five Patriarchs of the Southern School (10), the Seven Perfected (11), and the God of Thunder and universal salvation (12). Next comes the fourth section: the petitions and vows. This section begins with an announcement, a hymn of praise, and an atonement rite (*chanhui*) associated with Qiu Chuji. It is followed by twenty-two petitions and vows. Repeated three times each, they cover such subjects as peace, welfare of teachers and friends, abstention from meat, sex, and intoxicants, as well as encounters with divine beings and commitment to universal salvation. These are followed by twelve prayers of gratitude acknowledging things such as life, happiness, harmony, clarity, and illumination. Next, monastics chant a small verse of praise and additional invocations to the God of Thunder, God of Temple Protection (Wang Lingguan), and Earth God. These may be understood as protective deities with respect to weather, place (temple), and land (altar). In the final section, the morning liturgy concludes with taking the Three Refuges of the Dao, scriptures, and teachers, which are also associated with the external Three Treasures and Three Purities (see Chapters 5, 6, and 7).

Following a similar structure and sequence, but with different orientations and purposes, the first section of the evening liturgy begins with requests to Jiuku tianzun (Celestial Worthy Who Relieves Suffering), the “Daoist Guanyin,” for assistance in the release and appeasement of ethereal souls. In contrast to the morning liturgy, the evening liturgy does not utilize purificatory invocations; instead, there is a verse praising the teachings of Daoism. This is followed by the second section: the recitation of scripture. Monastics chant the (tentatively dated) eleventh-century *Jiuku bazui jing* (Scripture for Relieving Suffering and Removing Transgressions; DZ 374); eighth-century *Shengtian dedao jing* (Scripture on Living through Heaven and Attaining the Dao; DZ 24); and seventh-century *Jieyuan bazui jing* (Scripture on Deliverance from Enmity and Removal Transgressions; DZ 372). Following scripture recitation, attention turns to the third section: the declarations and commemorations. There are nine declarations recognizing the Dipper Mother (1), Three Officials (2), Perfect Warrior (3), Zhang Daoling (4), God of Literature (5), Lü Dongbin (6), Qiu Chuji (7), Lord Sa (8), and Jiuku tianzun (9). Other versions do not recognize Qiu. Next comes the fourth section: the petitions and vows. This section begins with an announcement, a hymn of praise, and an invocation for rewarding kindness. It is followed by twelve petitions and vows, which cover such subjects as favorable weather, crops and harvests, peace, harmony, longevity, and attainment of perfection through study and practice. These are followed by a hymn of praise, a declaration to the God of Temple Protection, and an invocation to the Earth God. In the final section, the evening liturgy concludes with taking the
Three Refuges and final prostrations to the sponsoring deities. Although the service technically ends here, the evening liturgy also includes supplemental prayers for ancestors and lost souls. Some editions also contain the 100-character lineage poems associated with the Seven Perfected and their corresponding lineages.

As a final point, we should recognize that the experience of Daoist ritual is often different for different Daoists and for “non-Daoists.” Such experience frequently correlates to levels of ordination, training, and access. For example, commenting on modern (1970s) Taiwanese Daoist ritual, Michael Saso distinguishes dimensions and layers of Daoist ritual experience.

---

**INNER DIMENSIONS OF DAOIST RITUAL**

The ritual of religious Taoism [sic] is esoteric; that is, it is not meant to be directly understood and witnessed by all the faithful. The esoteric meaning of Taoist ritual and magic is concealed from all but the initiated; only after many years of training and a gradual introduction to religious secrets is the disciple deemed worthy of elevation to the rank of master and full knowledge of the esoteric meanings of religious ritual. ... The expertise of a Taoist priest is judged by several criteria, the first one being his external performance of ritual. ... The second criterion for judging a Taoist [priest], which determines his rank at ordination, is his knowledge of the esoteric secrets of the religion, including the ability to perform the meditations and breath-control techniques of internal alchemy (*nei-tan*), and to recite the classical orthodox lists of spirits’ names [*lu*-registers] and apparel and the mantric summons found in the Taoist Canon. (Saso 1978: 325–6; see also Saso 1972a)

That is, one’s degree of training (instruction and practice) depends on one’s position within the community, one’s level of adherence, and one’s degree of commitment to the Daoist tradition. This training in turn most often leads to a different level of practice, even when one is practicing the “same” technique or performing the “same” ritual. There is thus an inner (cultivation) dimension and an outer (performatve) dimension of Daoist ritual. The former may remain completely unknown outside of Daoist clerical circles.

---

**FURTHER READING**

PART FIVE

Place, sacred space, and material culture
Place is centrally important in the Daoist tradition, and sacred sites have occupied a primary position throughout Daoist history and within the Daoist imagination. Daoist sacred sites may include hermitages, temples, or monasteries. They often include some form of Daoist community (see Chapter 4), and these communities have various commitments and engage in various forms of practice. Daoists have preferred mountain environs, though there are also examples of forest and seaside temples. Over time Daoist sacred sites acquire layers of historical and cultural meaning, and there is thus a Daoist history of specific places. For Daoists, a place’s sacrality is often connected to the lives of specific Daoists and Daoist communities who have lived there. Like Daoism itself, such places may, in turn, be encountered as inhabitant, as pilgrim, or as tourist, with the corresponding orientations, concerns, forms of participation, and degrees of adherence (see Chapter 3). In addition to drawing upon relevant scholarship, much of this chapter derives from my own field observations and experiences in mainland China over the last fifteen years, and is informed by direct experience with Daoists, place-specific Daoist communities, and sacred sites.
The importance of place

While Daoists have lived in a variety of environs, including urban settings, rural villages, and even wild places, there can be little debate that mountains have occupied a special place in the Daoist imagination. As Ge Hong (287–347) informs us in his *Baopuzi neipian* (Inner Chapters of Master Embracing Simplicity; DZ 1185), “All of those cultivating the divine process and preparing medicines, as well as those fleeing political disorders and living as hermits, go to the mountains” (17.1a). In the Daoist tradition, mountains are seen as manifestations of the Dao, as portals into the sacred, as places to collect immortal substances, as ideal locations for self-cultivation, and so forth. Many Daoists have entered the mountains in order to engage in deeper Daoist practice. This perennial Daoist sentiment is echoed by Xue Tailai (1923–2001), one of the most prominent modern Huashan monastics and 24th-generation representative of the Huashan lineage: “Monks who live here [on Huashan] have to take care of visitors. We can’t concentrate on our practice. No one can accomplish anything this way. People who want to practice have to go deeper into the mountains” (Porter 1993: 80).

For many Daoists, mountains are places where the heavens (yang) and the earth (yin) come closest together and are thus regarded as ideal locations for religious activity. A human being who goes into the mountains may experience deepened practice, divine communications, and mystical experiences (see Chapter 3). This connection is so much the case that the Chinese character *xian* 山, translated as “ascendant,” “immortal,” or “transcendent,” consists of *ren* 人 (“human”) and *shan* 山 (“mountain”), and the phrase “to enter the mountains” (*rushan*) may refer not only to actual mountain seclusion, but also more broadly to engaging in Daoist meditation, or to ascending the altar during ritual (see Schipper 1993). To cultivate such a connection, of course, requires a particular orientation and intention (see Chapter 5). Paralleling certain contemporary forms of mountaineering, Daoist “cloud-wandering” (*yunyou*) and pilgrimage (*chaosheng*, lit., “revering the sacred”) often have been attempts to participate more completely in the Dao. We might think of this commitment as “mountain-based contemplative practice.”

Specific places have occupied a central position in Daoism (see Hahn 2000: 862–8), both as sources of revelation and particular communities and as later sacred sites and pilgrimage (and tourist) destinations. There is a strong “sense of place” among Daoists and Daoist communities. In some cases, this came from a perceived aesthetic, energetic, or divine quality of the place. In other cases, it originated in a particular set of experiences that occurred in the associated locale. Various Daoist revelations, mystical experiences, as well as important events and personages are associated with specific places. For example, Chapter 1 of the *Zhuangzi* tells of a “spirit being” (*shenren*) who lives on Gushe mountain: “He doesn’t eat the five grains, but sucks the wind, drinks the dew, climbs up on the clouds and mist, rides a flying dragon, and wanders beyond the four seas. By concentrating his spirit, he can protect creatures from sickness and
Although modern scholarship has demonstrated the pseudo-historical nature of “Laozi” (see Chapter 2), the Shiji account is noteworthy for its emphasis on place-specific transmission. The pass in question was early on identified as Hangu Pass near Lingbao city, Henan province. During the fifth century, Daoists shifted the location of transmission to the Zhongnan (Southern Terminus) mountains in Shaanxi province. Located in Tayu village in Zhouzhi county, Louguan (Lookout Tower Monastery; a.k.a., Louguan tai; see below) rose to become a major Daoist center in northern China and, in the early sixth century, also served as a refuge for southern Daoists who were persecuted under Emperor Wu (r. 464–549) of the Liang dynasty (502–87) (Kohn 2003a: 41).

Located in the foothills of the Zhongnan mountains and still a flourishing Quanzhen Daoist monastery today, Louguan was identified by Daoists as the place where Laozi transmitted the Daode jing to Yin Xi. This version of the transmission legend arose in the mid-fifth century through Yin Tong (398–499?), a self-identified descendent of Yin Xi and owner of the Louguan estate. During the late fifth or early sixth century, a group of Daoists, primarily members of the Northern Celestial Masters, apparently lived within a monastic framework, specifically according to ethical guidelines, communal celibate living, and standardized daily schedule. Both of the famous Daoists Wang Daoyi (fl. 470s) and Wei Jie (496–569) also lived there. In that context, and especially during the Tang dynasty, Louguan, known primarily as Zongsheng gong (Palace of the Ancestral Sage) and Shuojing tai (Terrace of the Revealed Scripture) at the time, received a high degree of imperial patronage, partially because of the Tang ruling family’s imagined ancestral connection to Laozi (“Li Er”) and various miraculous events that occurred there (see Kohn and Kirkland 2000: 341–2). In combination with Bozhou (see below), Louguan’s close connection with Laozi, and with Laojun (Lord Lao) by extension,
effectively elevated the site to the terrestrial location most proximal to the god. This is documented in texts such as the *Xisheng jing* (*Scripture on the Western Ascension; DZ 666*), wherein Laozi ascends to the heavens, reappears as the god Lord Lao, and bestows additional, secret Daoist instructions to Yin Xi (see Kohn 1991b). Louguan became a Quanzhen monastery during the early fourteenth century.1

In terms of the emergence of Daoism as an organized religious tradition, mountains have occupied a central place. Most of the major Daoist movements in Chinese history are associated with specific places and with mountains in particular. In 142 CE, Zhang Daoling (fl. 140s CE), the nominal founder of the Tianshi movement, received a revelation from Lord Lao, the deified Laozi, on Heming shan (Crane-Cry Mountain; see below). This mountain is currently identified as located in Heming village in Dayi county, Sichuan province, although there is also a mid-level temple, Tianshi dong (Celestial Master Grotto), on Qingcheng shan (Azure Wall Mountain; Guanxian, Sichuan) about which Qingcheng Daoists make similar claims. Here we find intra-Daoist competition for cultural capital and religious significance in a way that parallels earlier attempts to secure imperial patronage. In any case, Zhang Daoling and his patrilineal descendants established and maintained the early Tianshi movement as a regional religious community throughout Sichuan during the second and third centuries CE.

Other pivotal figures in Daoist history received revelations, attained mystical experiences, and engaged in important work at a variety of places. Kou Qianzhi (365–448), the founder of the Toba-Wei Daoist theocracy and the so-called New Celestial Masters (Northern Celestial Masters) movement, reportedly received two revelations from Lord Lao on Songshan (Mount Song; see Chapter 4), one of the Five Marchmounts discussed below. Thus three historically significant Daoist sacred sites, namely, Heming shan, Louguan tai, and Songshan, are associated with revelations from Lord Lao, including associated, revealed texts (see Chapter 12). Lu Xiujing (406–77), the compiler of the Lingbao scriptures and key contributor to the emergence of the first Daoist Canon, lived on Lushan (Jiujiang, Jiangxi; 8th minor grotto-heaven) from 453 to 467. Here Lu established a hermitage and trained disciples. Lushan is also well known as one of the residences of the ordained Daoist priest and important Daoist poet Wu Yun (Zongxuan [Ancestral Mystery]; d. 778). Wu Yun lived most of his life as a poet-recluse on Maoshan, Tiantai shan, and Tianzhu shan, in addition to Lushan. Paralleling the life of Lu Xiujing, Tao Hongjing (456–536) established a quasi-monastic center on Maoshan (Mount Mao; Jurong, Jiangsu; 8th major grotto-heaven and 1st auspicious site). From his mountain headquarters there, Tao engaged in his important collection and redaction of the earlier Shangqing revelations, which became the basis of his *Zhen’gao* (*Declarations of the Perfected; DZ 1016*). Maoshan is so named because of its association with the three Mao brothers, who retired to its peaks during the Han dynasty, practiced there, ascended from its peaks as immortals, and were later venerated in the Shangqing tradition. Maoshan, in turn, became almost synonymous with early Shangqing, which originated there between the fourth and fifth centuries. Xu Hui (341-ca. 370), the son of Xu Mi (303–76), was among the first to retire to Maoshan in order to study the newly revealed scriptures.
Moving beyond the confines of early organized Daoism, Wang Zhe (Chongyang [Redoubled Yang]; 1113–70), the nominal founder of Quanzhen, and his early community are associated with a variety of places. First, Quanzhen traces its early inspiration to a variety of Wang Zhe’s mystical experiences, specifically mystical encounters with the immortals Zhongli Quan and Lü Dongbin. Wang’s first experience, which initiated his conversion process, occurred in Ganhe county, while his second experience, during which he received five secret transmissions, occurred in the town of Liquan. Both of these places are in Shaanxi, and it is noteworthy that the contemporary Daoist monastery Baxian gong (Temple of the Eight Immortals; Xi’an, Shaanxi) contains the Yuxian qiao (Bridge for Encountering Immortals), which commemorates Wang’s experiences. Wang eventually joined the Liujiang eremitic community, where he engaged in meditative seclusion as well as ascetic and alchemical praxis. This site is the current location of Chongyang gong (Palace of Chongyang) in Zu’an village in Huxian county, Shaanxi province. Because of the site’s close proximity to the Zhongnan mountains, Quanzhen is often associated with its densely forested peaks. Following Wang’s time at Liujiang, he moved to Shandong province. There he built the Quanzhen an (Hermitage of Complete Perfection; Muping, Shandong), which is no longer extant. In Shandong, Wang Zhe gathered many of his major senior Shandong disciples, and then took them to the Kunyu mountains near Weihai and Yantai, Shandong. The topographical features are noteworthy because, like certain Shaanxi landscapes such as Huashan, it is characterized by a landscape strewn with large granite boulders. Today there is a renovated Daoist monastery there, which was reportedly funded by a Taiwanese businessman originally from Shandong.

A work of this size cannot, of course, provide an exhaustive inventory and descriptive account, but these details allow a sufficient glimpse into the importance of place in Daoist history.

**Standardized geographical schema**

Throughout Chinese history, various systems for identifying and elevating sacred sites have been put forward. Some of these were adopted by Daoists, while others were uniquely Daoist expressions. Three systems in particular stand out: the Five Marchmounts (wuyue), the grotto-heavens (dongtian), and the auspicious sites (fudi).

The Five Marchmounts system began under imperial auspices and seems to have been standardized by the Han dynasty. As time went on, these sacred peaks also became the residences of recluses with diverse religious and cultural commitments as well as the location of Buddhist and Daoist temples and monasteries. As James Robson has recently suggested (2009), it is important to consider these sacred sites from a “non-sectarian perspective,” perhaps better conceptualized as an integrated perspective. There were complex patterns of competition, negotiation, and cooperation on these and other Chinese mountains. In this context, it appears that
Daoists first began to adopt and claim jurisdiction over the Five Marchmounts during the Period of Disunion (see Robson 2009: 46–52). This move was, at least partially, an attempt to increase Daoists’ cultural capital and political power, and drew on a uniquely Daoist understanding of these sites in which each of the Five Marchmounts has an esoteric and talismanic dimension. This is perhaps most clearly expressed in the Wuyue zhenxing tu (Diagram of the Perfect Forms of the Five Marchmounts), which Ge Hong discusses.

**The Diagram of the Perfect Forms of the Five Marchmounts**

Lord Zheng [Yin] told me that no Daoist book surpasses the Sanhuang wen (Writings of the Three Sovereigns) and Wuyue zhenxing tu in importance. These books are the honored secrets of ancient immortals and can only be obtained by those with the title of “immortal.” They are only transmitted every forty years. When they are transmitted, an oath must be taken and sealed by smearing the blood of a sacrificial victim on the lips [a blood oath]. Presents are also exchanged. All of the famous mountains and the Five Marchmounts have these texts, but they are stored in the darkened recesses of stone caves. If those destined to attain the Dao enter mountains and sincerely keep them in mind, then the mountain deity will respond and open the mountain, allowing them to see the texts. (Baopuzi neipian, DZ 1185, 19.8ab)

For those who are worthy to receive the transmission and who maintain their integrity in subsequent transmissions, the Wuyue zhenxing tu provides protection from potential harmful influences. Its magical nature also provides access into the hidden recesses of mountains.

There are, in turn, a variety of extant versions of the Wuyue zhenxing tu (see Boltz 2008d). As expressed in the fifteenth-century Wuyue guben zhenxing tu (Ancient Version of Diagram of the Perfect Forms of the Five Marchmounts; DZ 441), the “true” or “perfect forms” are represented in the figure below. Here the black shape, located in the square box, represents the mountain’s actual structure and central terrain; the lines and small inner points, intended to be red in color, indicate the sources and courses of the waterways; and the larger points, intended to be yellow in color, are grottos. In their more well-known expression, the “perfect forms” are preserved in a variety of steles and texts dating from the fourteenth century and later. An early seventeenth-century version preserved at Songshan and reproduced at the other marchmounts identifies the “perfect forms” as follows: eastern , southern , central , northern , and western (see Despeux 2000b; Little 2000a: 359). These representations are more talismanic, and are perhaps even derived from earlier cosmic
diagrams. In this way, they parallel the Five Lingbao Talismans (Lingbao wufu xu, DZ 388) (see Chapters 12 and 13). In both cases, the five magical diagrams correspond to the five directions and provide magical protection. While the Five Lingbao Talismans correspond to primordial ethers that maintain the cosmic structure, the Five Perfect Forms are “energetic shapes” of the corresponding landforms. Interestingly, there are also associated practices. In addition to using the talismans for their invocatory and apotropaic power, both when entering mountains and when protecting a specific site, medieval Daoists also visualized their body’s five yin-organs as the Five Marchmounts and the Five Planets. One cannot but then wonder if the talismans were utilized as visual aids in Daoist visualization practices.

In their standardized expression, which again seems to have become established to some degree and with occasional variations during the Han dynasty, the Five Marchmounts are as follows:

1. The Northern Marchmount of Hengshan\(^{(1)}\) (Mount Heng; Datong, Shanxi). Meaning “stable mountain,” Hengshan\(^{(1)}\) has an elevation of 2,017 meters or 6,617 feet. This mountain is the highest of the five sacred peaks.

\(^{(1)}\) Source: Wuyue guben zhenxing tu, DZ 441
The Southern Marchmount of Hengshan\(^{(2)}\) (Mount Heng; Hengshan, Hunan). Meaning “balanced mountain,” Hengshan\(^{(2)}\) has an elevation of 1,290 meters or 4,232 feet.

The Western Marchmount of Huashan (Mount Hua; Huayin, Shaanxi). Meaning “splendid” or “flower mountain,” Huashan has an elevation of 1,997 meters or 6,551 feet.

The Eastern Marchmount of Taishan (Mount Tai; Tai’an, Shandong). Meaning “great,” “eminent,” or “tranquil mountain,” Taishan has an elevation of 1,545 meters or 5,068 feet.

The Central Marchmount of Songshan (Mount Song, Zhenfeng, Henan). Meaning “lofty mountain,” Songshan has an elevation of 1,494 meters or 4,901 feet.

Hengshan\(^{(1)}\), the Northern Marchmount, is characterized by densely forested hillsides and lush green cliffs. It consists of beautiful scenery, with forests and deep gorges overlooking a dry plain. Although there are some Daoist temples, its most famous and visited site is the Xuankong si (Suspended Monastery), a Buddhist temple built on stilts in the middle of a cliff.

Hengshan\(^{(2)}\), the Southern Marchmount, is traditionally said to consist of seventy-two peaks, of which five are given special significance. These peaks stretch for some four hundred kilometers (approx. 250 miles), beginning at Huiyan (Returning Geese) peak and ending at Yuelu (Mountain Deer) peak. A heavily wooded mountain landscape, Hengshan\(^{(2)}\) has towering peaks and picturesque scenery. The primary mountain consists of three Daoist temples, with associated communities at the base, mid-point, and summit. The base-temple is a renovated one, apparently funded by Hong Kong patrons. Hengshan\(^{(2)}\) is associated with Wei Huacun (251–334; a.k.a. Nanyue furen), the early medieval female Tianshi libationer who was pivotal in the early Shangqing revelations. This mountain is also home to a recently established Daoist Kundao college (seminary for nuns) (see Wang 2008), which is intended to supply female monastic administrators to Daoist temples throughout China.

Huashan, the Western Marchmount, is characterized by nearly vertical granite cliffs rising above a densely forested plain. The mountain is so named because its five peaks are said to resemble a lotus flower. The pilgrimage route begins at the base-temple of Yuquan yuan (Temple of the Jade Spring), traverses through the river valley, to perilous stone steps and along a lengthy ridge, to eventually arrive at the summit. Huashan is primarily associated with the Daoist immortal Chen Tuan (d. 989), famous for his practice of Daoyin and “sleeping exercises” (shuigong) (see Chapter 10). It is the only Marchmount with a Daoist lineage named after it.

Taishan, the Eastern Marchmount, is the most famous of the set. It is characterized by sheer granite walls. The pilgrimage route weaves through a ravine to a steep flight of some thousand stone-steps of the Stairway to Heaven. Completing the arduous ascent, assuming one has not taken the cable-car or minibus, one arrives at the Bixia
ci (Shrine for Bixia). This temple is dedicated to Bixia yuanjun (Primordial Goddess of Cerulean Mists; a.k.a. Jade Woman of Taishan), the divine daughter of the Eastern Thearch. The latter is believed to preside over the post-mortem fate of the dead, who in certain popular accounts reside in Taishan’s subterranean depths. Taishan was designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1987.

Finally, Songshan, the Central Marchmount, is actually a large chain of mountains, usually divided into the Taishi and Shaoshi ranges. It primarily consists of boulder-like outcroppings with scattered vegetation. Although there is a local Daoist association, Songshan is primarily Buddhist. Its place in the popular imagination is dominated by Shaolin Temple, the reputed temple where Bodhidharma (sixth c.?), the nominal founder of Chan (Zen) Buddhism, attained enlightenment and the birthplace of acrobatic Shaolin Gongfu (Kung Fu) (see Shahar 2008).

Unlike the Five Marchmounts system, the second major geographical schema is uniquely Daoist. This is the Daoist notion of *dongtian*, meaning “grotto-heaven” or “cavern-haven.” Dong specifically denotes caves or caverns, and here we should pause to recognize the importance of caves in the Daoist imagination. Many Daoist hermits lived in such mountain environs, both temporarily and permanently. Some of the best examples of actual Daoist cave-hermitages may be found on Huashan (see Porter 1993; Chen 2003). “Grotto-heavens” in particular are a Daoist technical designation. It appears that the earliest *dongtian* system consisted of thirty-six places (Verellen 1995: 275), which would parallel the early medieval Daoist cosmological and theological system of thirty-six heavens (see Chapter 6). However, in its most mature and influential expression, the system is a Tang dynasty development and includes ten major grottos and thirty-six minor grottos. This early standardization may be found in the work of Sima Chengzhen (647–735), the 12th Shangqing Patriarch, and of Du Guangting (850–933), the important Tang scholastic and liturgist (Verellen 1995: 275). Developing the cosmogonic account from Chapter 3 of the second century BCE *Huainanzi* (Book of the Huainan Masters) (see Chapter 6 herein), Du Guangting writes a description of the cavern-heavens.

---

**THE COSMOGONIC FORMATION OF THE GROTTO-HEAVENS**

When the heavens and earth divided, and the clear separated from the turbid, they produced the great rivers by melting and the lofty mountains by congealing. Above they arrayed the stellar mansions; below they stored the grotto-heavens. With their affairs administered by great sages and superior Perfected, they contain numinous palaces and divine residences, jade halls and gold terraces. Consisting of coalesced qi, these are soaring structures of accumulated clouds. (*Dongtian fudi yuedu mingshan ji*, DZ 599, preface)
From a Daoist perspective, the grotto-heavens are secret worlds hidden within famous mountains and beautiful places. They are basically terrestrial paradises where one gains greater access to sacred and divine transmissions. They are portals into the numinous presence of the Dao. The ten major grotto-heavens with their associated mountains are as follows:

1. Xiao yao qingxu. Located on Mount Wangwu (Jiyuan, Henan)
2. Da you kongming. Located on Mount Weiyu (Huangyan, Zhejiang)
3. Taixuan zongzhen. Located on Mount Xicheng (Ankang, Shaanxi)
4. Sanyuan jizhen. Located on Mount Xixuan (Huashan; Huayin, Shaanxi)
5. Baoxian jiushi. Located on Mount Qingcheng (Guanxian, Sichuan)
6. Shangqing yuping. Located on Mount Chicheng (Tiantai, Zhejiang)
7. Zhuming huizhen. Located on Mount Luofu (Boluo, Guangdong)
8. Jintan huayang. Located on Mount Gouqu (Jurong, Jiangsu)
9. Youshen youxu. Located on Mount Linwu (Lake Taihu, Jiangsu)
10. Chengde yinxuan. Located on Mount Guacang (Xianju, Zhejiang)

(Tiandi gongfu tu, DZ 1032, 27; Dongtian fudi yuedu mingshan ji, DZ 599, 3b–4b; cf. Yin 2005: 59–60)

In addition to the cosmological, mythical, and mystical dimensions, the wide-ranging geographical distribution of these sacred sites provides a glimpse into the degree to which Tang dynasty Daoism was a diverse and integrated religious tradition with national distribution and vast temple networks.

The ten major grotto-heavens are complemented by the thirty-six minor grotto-heavens and the seventy-two auspicious sites (fudi) (see Verellen 1995, appendix; Yin 2005: 60–5; Miura 2008b: 370–1), with the latter being the last of the three major Daoist geographical schema. Like the grotto-heavens, the auspicious sites, also translated as “blessed lands” or “divine realms,” are a system for identifying important energetic and religious sites. Taken together, the three standardized geographical schema of the Five Marchmounts, grotto-heavens, and auspicious lands reveal an esoteric, hidden, and mystical landscape within the visible one. Together they form an interconnected, subterranean network of subtle spatial channels circulating the numinous presence of the Dao, which recalls the ways in which rivers (terrestrial waterways) and meridians (corporeal waterways) overlap in Daoism (see Chapter 7). The Daoist geo-theological schema reveals the interpenetration of the “spiritual” and the “physical” in a Daoist view: landscapes are manifestations of the Dao and contain portals into the divine. The terrestrial (yin) thus is an entryway into the celestial (yang), and the celestial permeates the terrestrial. Here we may recall the Daoist panenhenic and panentheistic theological views discussed in Chapter 6.
Major temples and sacred sites

The designation of major Daoist sacred sites follows a discernable pattern. This involves the identification of the place, its transformation into a “sacred site,” and the eventual formation of a residential community and perhaps the construction of a more permanent temple or monastery. If the temple was important enough, such as in the case of Louguan, there were frequent restoration projects as well as accumulated honors, with imperial recognition and redesignation being the most prestigious. For example, the mountain in Sichuan named Heming shan (Crane Cry Mountain) became associated with a revelation from Laojun to Zhang Daoling. At this point the mountain became a Tianshi sacred site, and eventually a site sacred to Daoism as a whole. A Daoist temple was eventually built there, and in contemporary China it is inhabited by and under the control of the Quanzhen monastic order.

The earliest markers of Daoist sacred sites, however, were not temples and monasteries but rather platforms or open-air altars (tan; daotan). They usually consisted of several layers of tamped earth or bricks, one slightly narrower than the next, which allowed devotees and petitioners to ascend higher toward the sky and the gods. In the case of Daoism, such altars usually consisted of three levels, symbolizing cosmological forces and representing control of a vast and important mythological heritage (Hahn 2000: 685). While it is unclear when distinctively “sacred sites” with corresponding buildings first emerged in Daoism, the Zhuangzi does mention particular hermitages and mountain abodes. As Daoism moved from diffuse and loosely affiliated religious communities of master-disciple lineages to an organized religious tradition during the Later Han dynasty (see Chapters 2 and 4), Daoists began to establish shrines and temples. Within the context of the early Tianshi movement, it appears that the community tended to shrines and maintained communal hostels associated with the twenty-four parishes (zhi) (see Kleeman 2008b). When the Celestial Master and libationers conducted purification rites and offered petitions (see Chapter 13), it appears that they did so in open-air, temporary altars, in a way that parallels much of contemporary Zhengyi ritual.

As we move into the Period of Disunion, there is a clear process of distribution and institutionalization, which included the establishment and occupation of temples. It was also during this period that Buddhism began to take a deeper root in the larger Chinese society, with increasing numbers of Han converts and the gradual emergence of Sinified forms of Buddhism (see Chapter 2). During this process of cultural interaction and cross-pollination, Daoists began to adopt a monastic model from Buddhism. During the late fifth and early sixth century, Daoists established the first Daoist monastery in the Zhongnan mountains. This was the above-mentioned Louguan monastery.

By the Tang dynasty, there was a national network of Daoist temples and monasteries, and a Daoist community consisting of hermits, ordained married priests, celibate monastics, and laity. This network remained relatively intact from the Tang
dynasty into the late imperial period, and it continues to exist in our own time. Most of these temples were either on mountains or in close proximity to imperial capitals. The latter fact reveals a close connection between Daoism and the court, including high levels of prestige and patronage.

There are, in turn, a variety of technical terms used to designate Daoist sacred sites. Some of the most important technical designations are as follows: *an*, *ci*, *dong*, *gong*, *guan*<sup>(1)</sup>, *guan*<sup>(2)</sup>, *miao*, *tai*, and *yuan* (Hahn 2000: 686–8; Steinhardt 2000: 57–9; Wang 2006: 93–5). Of these, *guan*<sup>(2)</sup> and *gong* are the most common. With the exception of *ci*, *miao*, and *yuan*, which may also be used for Buddhist sites, each of the terms, as religious designations, indicates a Daoist place. *An* (lit., “hut”) refers to hermitages. It is also occasionally used to designate small temples, as in the case of Erxian an (Temple of the Two Immortals), the earlier name of Qingyang gong (see below). *An* parallels other Daoist technical terms and their associated practices of seclusion and solitary praxis. For example, early medieval Daoist communities used “pure chambers” (*jingshi; jingshe*), also translated as “chambers of quiescence” (see Boltz 2008b); late medieval Daoists engaged in retreats in “meditation enclosures” (*huandu*; lit., “enclosed and sealed off”) (see Komjathy 2007a), which were eventually integrated into temple architecture. *Ci* (“shrine”) and *miao* (“temple”) are more generic names for temples, usually with one primary altar and key deity and with a small number of residents. As we saw above, *dong* (lit., “cave”) refers to mountain caverns, but more commonly appears as the technical designation of *dongtian* (“grotto-heavens”). *Dong* is occasionally used to denote a hermitage. *Gong* (lit., “palace”) is an imperial designation, usually bestowed by the emperor himself. Technically a term for a royal residence, it indicates a higher level of recognition and status. *Gong* may be temples or monasteries, and they usually have a larger footprint, more altars, and larger community. Technically speaking, after the end of the Qing dynasty and thus the dynastic system (1911), there can be no new *gong*. *Guans*<sup>(1)</sup> (lit., “hostel” or “hall”) is an early Daoist name for a community center; it was widely used before the emergence of Daoist monasticism. In that context, it was used for Daoist mountain communities, such as early medieval Maoshan, that were not celibate and did not function according to standardized rules (Hahn 2000: 687). The term was eventually replaced by *guans*<sup>(2)</sup> (lit., “watchtower” or “observatory”). Originally designating an astronomical observatory, and also referring to a specific type of Daoist meditation (see Chapter 11), *guans*<sup>(2)</sup> are Daoist monasteries, also referred to as “abbeys”, “belvederes”, or “cloisters” in order to distinguish them from their Buddhist counterparts referred to as *si* (“temple”). Daoist *guans*<sup>(2)</sup> tend to be large-scale sites inhabited by monastics, as in the case of Baiyun guan in Beijing. Daoist temples and monasteries usually consist of *dians* (“altars”) and *tangs* (“halls”) dedicated to specific deities. Finally, *tai* (lit., “terrace” or “tower”) and *yuan* (lit., “courtyard”) may designate Daoist temples, although they refer to specific architectural features as well (Steinhardt 2000: 58–9). Thus, in the case of Louguan tai, the name indicates both the monastery’s architecture (“tower”) and a place to observe the constellations (“observatory”).

With these details in mind, we may now consider a few important and representative contemporary sites. All of the important Daoist sacred sites and most
of the important temples are in mainland China. As discussed in Chapter 16, such sites are usually under the jurisdiction of the Bureau of Tourism, Bureau of Religious Affairs, and of national, regional, and local Daoist associations. Although contemporary Daoism in mainland China technically consists of Zhengyi priests, Quanzhen monastics, and their communities, most of the major sacred sites and temples are overseen by the Quanzhen monastic order, especially by administrative monastics (monks and nuns) associated with its Longmen lineage. The number and geographical distribution of these Daoist places are nearly limitless (see Silvers 2005: 189–207; Yin 2005: 57–169; Wang 2006: 91–124). Some of the most important and prominent contemporary mainland Chinese Daoist temples with active communities are as follows:

- Baxian gong (Eight Immortals Palace; Xi’an, Shaanxi), named after the famous Eight Immortals, who became central objects of popular devotion from the Yuan dynasty forward, and associated with Wang Zhe’s mystical experiences.
- Baiyun guan (White Cloud Monastery; Beijing), the headquarters of Quanzhen and its Longmen lineage as well as of the Chinese Daoist Association (see Chapter 16).
- Heming shan (Crane Cry Mountain; Dayi, Sichuan), associated with the original Tianshi revelation, but today inhabited by a Quanzhen monastic community.
- Louguan tai (Lookout Tower Monastery; Zhouzhi, Shaanxi), associated with the supposed transmission of the *Daode jing* from Laozi to Yin Xi.
- Jianfu gong (Palace for Establishing Happiness; base), Tianshi dong (Celestial Master Grotto; mid-level), and Shangqing gong (Palace of Highest Clarity; summit) at Qingcheng shan (Azure Wall Mountain; Guanxian, Sichuan), associated with the early Tianshi community and the fifth major grotto-heaven.
- Qingyang gong (Palace of the Azure Ram; mistranslated as Black Sheep Temple), associated with a vision of Yin Xi wherein he saw the divinized Laozi as a boy leading a green ram.
- Taiqing gong (Place of Great Clarity) and Shangqing gong (Palace of Highest Clarity) at Laoshan (Mount Lao; near Qingdao, Shandong).
- Tianshi fu (Celestial Masters Mansion) at Longhu shan (Dragon-Tiger Mountain; near Yingtan, Jiangxi), the headquarters of the Celestial Master from at least the Tang dynasty into the early modern period.
- Wanfu gong (Palace of Myriad Blessings) at Maoshan (Mount Mao; Jurong, Jiangsu), associated with early Shangqing and with the three Mao brothers and Tao Hongjing in particular.
- Yuquan yuan (Temple of the Jade Spring) at Huashan (Mount Hua; near Huayin, Shaanxi), associated with the Huashan lineage of Quanzhen and with
the immortal Chen Tuan, famous practitioner of Daoyin and sleep exercises, and Hao Datong in particular.

- Zixiao gong (Palace of the Purple Empyrean) at Wudang shan (Mount Wudang; near Shiyan, Hubei), associated with the god Zhenwu (Perfect Warrior; a.k.a. Xuanwu [Mysterious Warrior]), Zhang Sanfeng (14th c.?), and the mythical origin of Chinese internal martial arts such as Taiji quan (T’ai-chi ch’üan; Great Ultimate Boxing).

While most of these are located in rural and mountain locations, Baxian gong, Baiyun guan, and Qingyang gong are urban sites. As mentioned, most of the sites are inhabited by Quanzhen monastics, but Longhu shan and Maoshan are specifically Zhengyi communities. At present, most of their dates of establishment and historical development are currently unknown.

There are, in turn, a variety of ways to categorize and analyze Daoist temples and sacred sites. They include giving attention to architecture and layout, historical significance, religious associations and symbolism, as well as associated deities and immortals. In the context of contemporary mainland Chinese Daoism, one of the most common frameworks centers on the three ancestral halls (zuting). The standard Quanzhen list includes Louguan tai, Chongyang gong, and Longmen dong. Under this reading, Louguan tai is identified as the birthplace of Daoism, as it is where Laozi supposedly transmitted the Daode jing to Yin Xi. Chongyang gong is the birthplace of Quanzhen, as it is where Wang Zhe established a hermitage and engaged in eremitic training. It is also where his body was interred. Longmen dong is the birthplace of the Longmen lineage, as it is where Qiu Chuji engaged in solitary religious praxis. There are also alternate lists, with Bozhou, the imagined birthplace of Laozi, sometimes replacing Louguan tai, and Baiyun guan, the monastic residence of Qiu Chuji beginning in 1223 and later of Wang Changyue, replacing Longmen dong. In any case, the standard list of the “three ancestral halls” is obviously a Quanzhen and Longmen construction. It demonstrates the degree to which Quanzhen dominates the contemporary Chinese religious landscape, especially in terms of political power and influence.

In terms of topography and architectural layout, the primary part of Louguan tai is a relatively modest temple on a small hill with its primary altar dedicated to Laozi. Its compound includes two steles with the two conventional divisions of Daode jing engraved on them. Although we do not have detailed studies of contemporary Daoist temples and monasteries, especially with respect to residents, when I last visited Louguan tai in June of 2011 there were approximately twenty Quanzhen monks living there. The temple complex was currently undergoing renovation, with a new temple compound constructed in front of the older site. Like other Daoist sites such as Qingcheng shan and Maoshan, Louguan tai, primarily under a mandate from the PRC Bureau of Tourism (see Chapter 16), has witnessed the recent construction of a giant statue of Laozi. Unfortunately, these golden statues are monstrous eyesores and
TEMPLES AND SACRED SITES

blights on the surrounding landscape, and they represent a modernist sensibility that contradicts traditional Daoist aesthetics (see Chapter 15).

Chongyang gong is also a modest temple, although a Yuan dynasty map indicates that it was once a large and thriving monastery (see Chapter 1). There has been some recent restoration, but the temple feels more like an archaeological site than a living Daoist community. Its primary distinguishing features are the tomb of Wang Zhe and a variety of Yuan and Qing dynasty steles. As of 2011, there were eight Quanzhen monks living there.

Not to be confused with the famous Buddhist sacred site and UNESCO World Heritage Site (near Luoyang, Henan), Longmen dong is quite remote and rustic. Although some Chinese tour groups visit for the scenery, there is no electricity and few amenities. There are about six Quanzhen monastics living at Longmen dong, all of whom are Shaanxi natives who only speak Shaanxi dialect. The primary feature of Longmen dong is a thousand-foot granite wall with three altars carved in ascending order. As of 2011, the altars had been renovated and rededicated.

By way of conclusion, let us examine one of the most important and representative contemporary Daoist sacred sites (see Eberhard and Morrison 1973; Chen 2003). Located in the western part of Shaanxi province, Huashan (Mount Hua) is a 1,997 meter (6,551 foot) granite peak. As discussed above, Huashan is the Western Marchmount and is associated with the fourth major and fourth minor grotto-heavens. It is one of the only Daoist places with a Daoist lineage named after it. Like many Daoist mountain sites, Huashan has a complex and diverse layout and religious landscape. The base-temple and central monastery is Yuquan yuan (Temple of the Jade Spring). As of my last visit in 2011, there were approximately fifty Quanzhen monastics living in Yuquan yuan and its surrounding temples. Some of them were affiliated with the Longmen lineage, while others were connected to the Huashan lineage. Unlike the standard Daoist temple configuration (see Chapter 15), Yuquan yuan's central altar is not dedicated to the Sanqing (Three Purities). Instead, there are two central altars: the first is dedicated to Hao Datong, while the second and successive altar is dedicated to Chen Tuan. These are the two patriarchs of the Huashan lineage. In addition to Yuquan yuan, there are other smaller temples and shrines outside its walls and along its horizontal axis. These include Chunyang guan (Monastery of Purified Yang), Xianggu guan (Monastery of the Immortal Maiden), and Quanzhen guan (Monastery of Complete Perfection). The latter is associated He Zhizhen (1212–99), a disciple of Hao Datong and possibly the actual founder of the Huashan lineage. Just outside Chunyang guan is a pagoda dedicated to Xue Tailai, who was quoted above. Above Yuquan yuan and along the ascent route, one encounters abandoned cave hermitages and active shrines. At the summit, there are technically five peaks and associated temples, but most of these are defunct and have been converted into hotels and guesthouses. Most of the dedicated Daoists actually live on the backside of the mountain, including various hermits in cave and mountain hermitages. In such a way, they perhaps embody the insight from Xue Tailai about dedicated Daoist practice: “People who want to practice have to go deeper into the mountains” (Porter 1993: 80).
FURTHER READING


Material culture refers to the objects and material expressions related to specific cultures and traditions. In the case of religious traditions, material culture brings our attention to the material and physical dimensions of daily life and religiosity. It includes architecture, artifacts, clothing, devotional and liturgical objects, painting, sculpture, and so forth. Although one may focus on the actual materiality of specific objects (e.g. materials, design, styles), it is also important to consider their history, symbolism, and functions. In particular, although much religious material culture is encountered as artifact and museum piece (see Chapter 1), we need to be attentive to such objects as the expressions of specific communities and as utilized by specific individuals in specific activities. This is the living dimension of religious materiality.

Daoist material culture is complex and multifaceted. It relates to traditional Chinese and Daoist aesthetics as well as Chinese cultural traditions. With respect to the former, there is a strong emphasis on refinement and subtlety in traditional Daoist material culture. This extends to an appreciation of landscape and attentiveness to space, especially open and harmonious space. Aesthetics and material culture are key dimensions of Daoist culture. They inform Daoist practice and being. As discussed in other chapters of the present book, there is a strong emphasis on embodiment and
physicality in the Daoist tradition. One might go so far as to say that Daoist adherence without Daoist aesthetics, community, culture, and place is only fragmentarily so. The intersection among these dimensions of the Daoist tradition occurs in Daoist temples and sacred sites. Here one gains a glimpse of Daoism as an intact culture and as a form of embodied and lived religiosity.

**Artistic expression**

Historically speaking and on the most fundamental level, Daoist artistic expression and material culture are rooted in traditional Chinese cultural pursuits, including bronze casting, calligraphy, dance, inscription, literature, music, painting, poetry, pottery, sculpture, seal carving, and theatre. Here a few words are in order concerning the category of “Daoist art” (see also Little 2000b). Should this term be used to designate art produced by Daoists and in Daoist contexts? Does it need to have Daoist content? If a painting (or poem, novel, play, etc.) created by a “non-Daoist” contains Daoist content, is it Daoist? Following my seemingly simple definition of “Daoist” as anything associated with the religious tradition (see Chapters 1, 3, 5, and 16), we might take a more restrictive approach and say that Daoist art is art produced by Daoists or in a Daoist context. However, what if a modern Daoist is an abstract photographer? Is such photography “Daoist photography”? Is any art produced by Daoists “Daoist art”? As discussed below, the easiest response is to emphasize “Daoist liturgical art” and “Daoist temple art,” but this approach neglects a great deal of fascinating material. In a larger frame of reference, we might say that “Daoist art” refers, first and foremost, to art created or commissioned by Daoists as well as art utilized in Daoist religious communities and contexts. “Art influenced by Daoism” encompasses art that employs Daoist themes or that was inspired by the Daoist tradition. Like other distinctions utilized in the present book, we must recognize “Daoist artists” and “artists with Daoistic concerns.” This parallels the distinction between Daoist adherents and Daoist sympathizers (see Chapters 1, 3, and 16).

There is a great deal of Daoist-inspired art. In addition to a variety of paintings depicting various key Daoists, such as Laozi, Zhuangzi, Zhang Daoling, Tao Hongjing, Lü Dongbin, Qiu Chuji, Wang Changyue, and so forth, there are obviously many paintings and statues depicting Daoist gods, sacred realms, and sacred sites. Most of these artistic expressions fall under the category of Daoist liturgical or temple art, even though they are contained in private and museum collections (see Little 1988, 2000a). Unfortunately, at the present moment, little if any research has been done on pre-modern Daoist painters or the history of the Daoist commission of art.

There are also many examples of Daoist art, or art produced by Daoists and associated with the Daoist tradition. In terms of calligraphy, it is clear from simple historical and cultural familiarity that many Daoists wrote calligraphy. Unfortunately, we do not know to what extent they were advanced calligraphers or wrote calligraphy
as “art practice.” One clear example is the calligraphy of Yang Xi (330–86) and the Xu family (see Chapters 2 and 12), which is no longer extant. According to Tao Hongjing (456–536), who later collected the original Shangqing manuscripts, the calligraphy of Yang Xi and the Xu family was extraordinary, perhaps divine and infused with numinosity (ling). This point draws our attention to the material and “non-material” (subtle) dimensions of Daoist material culture in general and texts in particular. In terms of extant Daoist calligraphy, one of the most significant is Wang Xizhi’s (307–65) rendering of the Huangting jing (Scripture on the Yellow Court; DZ 331; DZ 332) (see Little 2000a: 338–9). Wang Xizhi is regarded as one of the greatest early Chinese calligraphers. He belonged to a Tianshi family, engaged in Daoist self-cultivation, was a close associate of the Xu family and the early Shangqing community, and had a deep interest in Huang-Lao (see Chapter 2). On a more general level, we should acknowledge the various anonymous calligraphers who brushed Daoist manuscripts such as those contained in archaeological finds such as Mawangdui (ca. 168 BCE; Changsha, Hunan; Hunan Provincial Museum) and Dunhuang (ca. 8th c.; Dunhuang, Gansu; British Library; Bibliothèque Nationale de France) (see Little 2000a: 38, 118–20, 172–3). In a more modern context, many Quanzhen monastics practice calligraphy, and one finds examples of the late Min Zhiting’s (Yuxi [Jade Stream]; 1924–2004) calligraphy on temple boards throughout China. Here we should also recognize the importance of calligraphy in Daoist ritual (see Chapter 13). Finally, there are many highly skilled contemporary calligraphers who write lines or passages from famous Daoist texts, with the Daode jing being especially popular. Another favorite Daoist character-set is xianfeng daogu 仙風道骨 (“immortal currents and bones of the Dao”), which refers to immortality and numinous presence.

Although often associated with “Chinese landscape poetry” and famous poets such Tao Qian (Yuanming [Profound Illumination]; 365–427), Wang Wei (699–761), Du Fu (712–70), and Bo Juyi (772–846), Daoist poetry is more than pastoral or eremitic. Of the more famous poets in Chinese history, there is some preliminary evidence that Li Bo (Li Bai; 701–62) received Daoist initiation from Sima Chengzhen (647–735) (Robinet 2000, 199). Wu Yun (d. 778) was probably the most famous Daoist poet in Chinese history (see De Meyer 2006). He was ordained in the 720s on Songshan by a disciple of Pan Shizheng (585–682) (Kohn and Kirkland 2000: 348), the 11th Shangqing Patriarch and leading disciple of Wang Yuanzhi (528–635). Wu Yun is known for his ecstatic poetry, such as “Cantos on Pacing the Void” and “Saunters in Sylphdom” (see Schafer 1981, 1983). In Edward Schafer’s idiosyncratic and imaginative translation, the former begins with a description of the Daoist sacred realms.

### CANTOS ON PACING THE VOID

The host of transcendents looks up to the Numinous Template.
Dignified equipages—to the Levee of the Divine Genitor.
Wu Yun’s poetry arguably compares favorably with Chinese poetry as literature. Perhaps less noteworthy on a literary level is the large amount of Daoist religious and devotional poetry, little of which has been translated to date. There is a large amount of neidan poetry from the Song dynasty, with the Wuzhen pian (Treatise on Awakening to Perfection; DZ 263, j. 26–30) by Zhang Boduan (d. 1082) being especially influential. There are also major anthologies associated with most of the first-generation Quanzhen adherents. In combination with discourse records (yulu), poetry was the primary form of literary expression within the early Quanzhen community (see Komjathy 2007a, forthcoming).

Music has also occupied a central place in the Daoist tradition. In addition to “liturgical music” (see below), zither (qin) music has been especially revered among Daoists. Sometimes translated as “lute,” the qin-zither is an ancient Chinese “silk” (“string”) instrument (see van Gulik 1969). It consists of seven strings arranged horizontally on a wood bridge. The strings are plucked using the fingers of one hand while the other hand slides across the strings. One of the most famous stories related to zither music, self-cultivation, and friendship appears in the Lüshi chunqiu (Spring and Autumn Annals of Master Lü).

**THE MUSIC OF MOUNTAINS AND STREAMS**

Whenever Bo Ya played the qin, Zhong Ziqi would listen to him. Once when he was playing, his thoughts turned to Taishan (Mount Tai). Zhong Ziqi said, “How splendidly you play the qin! Lofty and majestic like Taishan.” A short time later, when his thoughts turned to flowing waters, Zhong Ziqi said, “How splendidly you play the qin! Rolling and swirling like flowing water.” When Zhong Ziqi died, Bo Ya smashed his qin and cut its strings. To the end of his life he never played again.
In the Daoist tradition, this story is most often read in terms of affinity and spiritual friendship (see also *Zhuangzi*, Chapter 6; *Lijiao shiwu lun*, DZ 1233, 3a), with Daoist spiritual companions and intimate fellow religious often referred to as “Companions of the Way” (*daoban*; *daoyou*). The zither pieces “Gaoshan” (High Mountains) and “Liushui” (Flowing Waters) are associated with Bo Ya. Other major *qin*-zither pieces associated with Daoism include “Xiaoyao you” (Carefree Wandering), “Yuhua dengxian” (Ascending to Immortality through Winged Transformation), and “Zhuang Zhou mengdie” (Zhuang Zhou Dreaming of a Butterfly). Most of these *qin*-zither pieces appear to have been composed during the late imperial period. Some legendary famous Daoist *qin*-zither players include Ji Kang (Xi Kang; 223–62), Tao Hongjing (456–536), and Sima Chengzhen (647–735).

As mentioned, in the modern world, the attempt to identify “Daoist art” and “Daoist artists” becomes more complex. Although some individuals are beginning to self-identify as “Daoist artists” or to be identified as such by non-specialist historians, there is a great deal of perplexity. This derives from the misidentification of Chinese landscape painting as Daoist as well as of certain themes or tendencies, such as yin-yang, effortlessness, spontaneity, and so forth, as Daoist. In order to speak of modern Daoist art or Daoist-inspired art, one must actually understand the Daoist tradition and identify Daoist elements of the art. Here I will provide two interesting contemporary American examples: Wu Jing-nuan’s (1933–2002) abstract paintings, and Juan Li’s (b. 1946) practice diagrams. Associated with the Taoist Health Institute (Washington, D.C.), Wu Jing-nuan was a Chinese immigrant and self-identified Daoist, practitioner of Chinese medicine, and abstract painter. In addition to publishing translations of the *Huangdi neiijing lingshu* (Yellow Thearch’s Inner Classic: Numinous Pivot) and *Yijing* (Classic of Changes), Wu created a variety of abstract paintings inspired by Daoist and Chinese medical themes. These include “The Healing Cure,” “The Eight Treasures,” “Three Cinnabar Fields,” “Trigram of Heaven,” and so forth (see www.wushealingart.com). Wu’s “Blue Mountains and Dragons” depicts a semi-abstract landscape consisting of a series of blue mountains beneath a tan-white sky and copper-colored sun. Observant readers will recall the importance of mountains in Daoism and note the Gen-mountain trigram in the upper right-hand corner on the painting below.

Along a different trajectory, Juan Li is a Cuban immigrant who executed a variety of practice diagrams for early Healing Tao, a syncretic Qigong movement originally associated with Mantak Chia (b. 1944) and now split into Healing Tao USA (Healing Dao)
and Universal Healing Tao (a.k.a. Universal Tao; Thailand) (see Chapter 16). Originally a collaborator with Chia and now associated with White Cloud Institute (Phoenix, Arizona) and an American syncretic group called I Ching Dao, Juan Li was the primary artist for a variety of diagrams depicting Healing Tao practices. These include “Inner Smile,” “Fusion of the Five Elements,” “Functional Channel,” “Governor Channel,” as well as other neidan-related views and practices (see Chapters 7 and 11). Li’s depictions were used on Chia’s book covers and mass-produced in poster form (see www.healing-tao.com). Although these depictions are clearly syncretic, evidencing the influence of Indian, especially Tantric and Yogic, iconography, they do contain some Daoist content regarding views of self and practices related to internal alchemy.

**Scriptures and manuscripts**

As discussed in previous chapters, texts are centrally important in the Daoist tradition. While Daoist texts tend to be encountered in the modern world in mass-produced publications or electronic editions, we need to recognize the ways in which texts are part of Daoist material culture. Historically speaking, Daoist texts, and specifically “scriptures” (jing; see Chapter 12), have primarily been hand-written in classical
Chinese using calligraphy (ink and brush usually on paper). This point draws our attention to the corporeal and material dimensions of Daoist texts. It also highlights the ways in which our access to Daoist texts is indebted to the Daoist tradition, and the multiple sources of Daoist texts. The latter includes specific revelations, teachers, communities, as well as language. Daoist texts have also occupied a central place in ordination and transmission (see Chapters 3 and 13). As will be discussed shortly, there is a history of material culture behind the modern encounter with Daoist literature.

The earliest Daoist texts originally were not texts. While Daoists might take this to refer to the “non-material” cosmic ethers or “celestial versions” of Daoist scriptures (see Chapter 12), it rather points toward their material history, specifically the oral dimension. The earliest texts appear to have been oral teachings and transmissions (see Chapter 3), especially in the form of mnemonic aphorisms, which were eventually compiled into texts such as the Laozi (Book of Venerable Masters), which is honorifically titled the Daode jing (Scripture on the Dao and Inner Power). The earliest surviving Daoist texts are, in turn, multi-vocal anthologies, or “sayings collages” (Lau 1963; LaFargue 1992). They were transcribed on bamboo and silk. Thus, we have the so-called “Bamboo Laozi” from Guodian (ca. 300 BCE; see Henricks 2000), and the early “silk manuscripts,” especially from Mawangdui (ca. 168 BCE; see Henricks 1989; Harper 1998). The existence of these materials suggests that there was a community committed to preserving and transmitting specific teachings and practices, and specific texts. In terms of material culture, the earliest Daoist texts were written either on bamboo slips or sheets of silk (see Tsien 2004, 96–144). Bamboo and silk manuscripts were, in turn, transmitted through specific teachers and communities in the form of hand-written copies, whether written by the teacher, disciple, or a scribe. Here one may recognize the rarity of such texts, and the importance of access to specific teachers. One’s acceptance into and affiliation with a specific community partially involved textual transmission (see Chapters 4, 12, and 13).

Hand-written manuscripts on paper eventually replaced other materials. The earliest examples of paper seem to derive from the Early Han dynasty, and specifically from the first century BCE, but its invention is traditionally dated to the first century CE and ascribed to Cai Lun (50?–121 CE). Early Chinese paper was hand-woven using various materials, including silk rags, hemp fibers, mulberry bark, worn-out fishing nets, and a variety of natural materials. The highest quality materials for early paper included plant fibers such as hemp, jute, flax, ramie, and rattan; tree bark of mulberry; grasses, such as bamboo, reeds, and stalks of rice and wheat; and other fibers (Tsien 2004: 161). These details draw our attention to both the actual material dimensions of paper, including the fact that actual plants and trees are required, and the history of paper-making. Although beyond the scope of the present book, we should also consider the history of ink-making, of book collecting, as well as of book publishing and selling (see, e.g. Twitchett 1983: 17–18).

While papermaking and the use of paper for books began in the Early Han dynasty, it was not until about two hundred years later that paper became the primary material used for books. It gradually supplanted the use of bamboo and wood tablets and
partially that of silk (Tsien 2004: 150). Traditional Chinese books eventually consisted of various forms, including string-bound ("stab/stitch-bound") folios, paper or silk rolled scrolls, as well as folded or accordion-style editions. The latter type is used for Daoist liturgical texts. For present purposes, these details suggest that for about the first one thousand years of Daoist history, Daoist books were relatively rare and existed mainly in hand-written and transmitted silk and paper manuscripts. As the early Shangqing and Lingbao movements suggest, these manuscripts were usually in the possession and under the control of specific Daoist families, such as the Xu and Tao as well as Ge and Lu, respectively (see also Chapters 1 and 3). Textual transmission and the possession of texts were thus an intricate part of early Daoist affiliation and ordination (see Chapters 3, 12, and 13). We also know that there were imperial editions of Buddhist and Daoist texts in general circulation that were brushed by official scribes.

In terms of textual dissemination, a major development occurred in the Tang dynasty, namely, the emergence of wood-block printing and the production of wood-block editions. These are the earliest examples of "printing," which is a process of reproduction with ink on paper or other surfaces from a reverse or negative image. On a material culture level, it contains at least three essential elements: a flat surface, originally cut in relief, containing a mirror image of whatever is to be printed; the preparation of the mirror image; and the transfer of the impression of this image on to the surface to be printed (Tsien 1985: 132–3). In the case of wood-block printing, hand-written calligraphy must be carved on wood-blocks, which are then dipped in ink and pressed on paper.

Following the great diffusion of Buddhism during the Sui and Tang, the demand for mass production of Buddhist literature became the motivating force behind the invention of printing. Although there are Tang-dynasty examples of wood-block printing, with that of the Confucian canon (dat. 952) being particularly important (Twitchett 1983, 31), printing became a fully developed and advanced art during the Song dynasty. During this time, the Buddhist Canon was first printed (dat. 983), followed by the Daoist Canon (dat. 1019) (Tsien 1985: 159; Twitchett 1983: 34–42; see also Chapter 12 herein). The former required approximately 130,000 blocks and occupied 130 bays of a special storehouse (Twitchett 1983: 35), while the second printed edition of the latter (dat. 1191) required approximately 83,000 blocks (ibid.: 38). Wood-block printing in turn became the standard printing method from the late medieval to late imperial period. In terms of material culture, these details draw our attention to a number of elements related to Daoist editions. First, as discussed in Chapter 12, the collection of Daoist texts and their preparation for printing was accomplished by Daoists. It required dedication and actual physical labor. Second, the writing of the calligraphy for and engraving of the printing-blocks required enormous amounts of work on the part of many anonymous artisans and craftsmen—think of the number of lives, bodies, and hands as well as places involved. Third, the wood-block printed editions were disseminated to various Daoist temples and monasteries. There they
had to be stored and preserved. In terms of the existence of Daoist texts, wood-block printing was also pivotal for Daoist book production and textual dissemination.

Two additional points need to be made. While wood-block printing was used for large-scale projects, such as the Daoist Canon, and for producing popular editions for general circulation, the tradition of Daoist manuscripts did not cease. Books were still hand-written in calligraphy. For example, the early Quanzhen works were hand-copied manuscripts circulated among Quanzhen adherents and communities. Many of these writings were eventually included into the Daoist Canon, but many more were lost (see Komjathy 2007a). In subsequent historical periods, there was thus a received set of “canonical” writings, those contained in the Daoist Canon, and new Daoist textual traditions, some of which were eventually included in the collection and others of which were not. In this respect we may profitably utilize the categories of the catalogue of the Ming-dynasty Daoist Canon (Schipper and Verellen 2004), wherein a distinction is made between “texts in general circulation” and “texts in internal circulation” (see Chapter 12 herein). Some of these have been collected in “supplemental” and “extra-canonical” collections (see Komjathy 2002; also Chapter 12 herein). However, there are various private and family collections of manuscripts, and many secret texts not available for non-initiates. Contemporary Zhengyi communities are especially noteworthy for their esoteric traditions of textual transmission. Some evidence of this is contained in the *Zhuang-Lin xu daozang* (Supplement to the Daoist Canon from the Zhuang and Lin Families; dat. 1975; 25 vols.), which was collected by Michael Saso.

The second point is that the use of wood-block printing continued into the early twentieth century. Although there were personal collections of manuscripts, our access to the Ming-dynasty Daoist Canon (see Chapter 12), the primary source for Daoist Studies, is solely dependent on the existence of a single wood-block edition. The Ming-dynasty Daoist Canon was printed in 1445, with a supplement printed in 1607. The original plates were eventually destroyed. The various Daoists who inhabited Baiyun guan (White Cloud Monastery; Beijing) during the Ming, Qing, and early Republican period preserved and protected the collection. It was only “rediscovered” in the early twentieth century, and subsequently became the basis of modern editions and modern Daoist Studies. If not for the lives of countless Daoists and the living community of the Daoist tradition, our understanding of pre-modern Daoism would have been severely limited and impoverished. Also noteworthy in this respect is the existence of the original metal plates for the *Daozang jiyao* (Collected Essentials of the Daoist Canon), which are housed in Qingyang gong (Azure Ram Palace; Chengdu, Sichuan).

Thus the history of Daoist texts is connected to the history of Chinese culture and society in general and to the Daoist tradition in particular. The continued existence of Daoist texts is literally evidence of the Daoist tradition as such, and of the dedication of Daoists and Daoist communities. Moreover, from a Daoist perspective, they are storehouses of the Dao (see Chapter 12), one of the external Three Treasures of the Daoist tradition. The opportunity to read translations of Daoist texts written in classical Chinese is indebted, at least on some level, to Daoists.
Clothing and vestments

Traditionally speaking, Daoists wear particular types of clothing that indicate adherence, affiliation, and participation in Daoist community and tradition. Traditional Daoist dress is connected with pre-modern Chinese clothing and styles of attire. At present, very little research has been done on the history, styles, functions, and symbolism of traditional Daoist clothing, especially before the Tang dynasty. We do, however, have some knowledge related to the late medieval period (see Kohn 2003a: 147–59; 2004b; 2004c: 91–3), late imperial period (see Kohn 2004c; Komjathy 2007b), and contemporary period (see Lagerwey 1987: 291–2; Schipper 1993: 69–71, 95–9; Yin 2005: 44–7; Komjathy 2007b). There is also some specific information on Daoist liturgical vestments (Wilson 1995; Little 2000a: 195–9). In the contemporary period, Zhengyi priests as well as Daoists outside of mainland China tend to wear Western dress in their daily lives. Tradition-based Daoists will often don traditional robes and liturgical vestments for more formal religious and ritual occasions.

In contrast, Quanzhen monastics in mainland China wear traditional Daoist robes in their daily lives. Technically speaking, only ordained Daoist priests and initiates may wear Daoist robes, although this has changed in the modern world wherein many self-identified Daoists wear Daoist dress as a source of identity, authority, and spiritual legitimation. Here I will concentrate on traditional Daoist religious attire, knowledge of which comes from my ethnographic fieldwork and participant-observation in contemporary Quanzhen monastic communities.

In contemporary Quanzhen monastic communities, monks and nuns wear a standardized and uniform set of vestments. In daily life, this most often includes black cloth shoes with rubber soles, knee-high white socks, a plain (i.e., undecorated) dark blue robe, dark blue or black pants, a topknot (faji) with wooden hairpin (zanzi), and some type of kerchief or cap. In the summer, many monks and nuns choose to wear white robes in order to stave off the heat. The standard robe, referred to as the “robe of the Dao” (daoyi), parallels the late imperial one with a diagonally folded design—that is, the right, inside portion of the robe comes diagonally across the body to the left, while the left, outside portion goes over the right portion, diagonally to the right. This robe is usually made out of cotton or hemp. The sleeves, referred to as “cloud sleeves,” are fairly wide and open at the ends, and in length usually extend just past one’s hand with fingers extended, though they can be much longer. Contemporary robes are most often bound together with inner ties and Velcro. In less formal contexts, contemporary Quanzhen monastics also wear robes with a vertical cut down the center, which resembles Chinese martial arts clothing bound with small square-knots that go through loops. The standard distinction in daily religious dress centers on the “decorous garment” (lifu) and the “convenient garment” (bianfu). The former is a long, dark blue robe that hangs to anywhere from the lower calf to ankle. The latter is a shorter version that hangs to just above the knees. Both follow the standard diagonal pattern. The convenient garment is so named because of the freedom of movement.
that it allows; it is the garment of choice for traveling to other temples and monasteries or for pilgrimage, “mountain hopping,” and “cloud wandering.”

Like their medieval and late imperial counterparts, contemporary Quanzhen monastics bind their long hair in topknots with hairpins and wear various styles of “kerchiefs” or caps (jīn), with the Hunyuan (Chaos Prime), a hard-rimmed round hat, being most common (see Komjathy 2007b). Topknots can be formed in a number of ways, which often vary from monastery to monastery and which one learns from one’s teacher (shifu) or “Companions of the Way” (daoyou). Hairpins are usually made of wood, especially Boxwood and Peachtree wood, and it is rare to see bone or horn, most likely because of the Quanzhen commitment to vegetarianism and non-harm. Preferred shapes for the decorative head of the hairpin include lotus pods, lotus blossoms, dragons, and phoenixes.

There are also robes that have more restricted uses. These robes are usually made out of silk. When receiving initiation (rumen; shoujie) into the Longmen lineage of Quanzhen, initiates wear “preceptor robes” (jiéyì). These are square-cut robes that are yellow in color with black borders. The preceptor robe has wide, open sleeves, and the entire garment hangs down to between the lower calf and ankle. Technically speaking, only those members of the Quanzhen monastic order who have gone through a formal Longmen ordination ceremony are permitted to wear these robes. This type of contemporary ordination usually involves the transmission of the previously mentioned Chuzhen jie, Zhongji jie, and Tianxian jie (see Chapter 8), although the extent to which these texts are actually read and applied requires further research. The highly organized, formal Longmen ordination ceremony stands in contrast to individual or master-disciple ordinations (chuandao); these vary from teacher to teacher and community to community (see Chapter 13).

When performing rituals or overseeing liturgical services, contemporary Quanzhen Daoist priests (daoshi) wear “liturgical vestments” (fāyì), also referred to as the “wrapping of the Dao” (daopao).

FIGURE 23  Traditional Robe Associated with the Longmen Celestial Immortal Rank
Source: Chuzhen jie, ZW 404
There are two main types of ritual garments and liturgical vestments used by Daoist ritual experts. The basic robe, usually worn by cantors and ritual assistants when chanting the morning and evening liturgy, has the same design and cut as the preceptor robe, but it is red in color with black borders. In contrast to the other forms of Daoist dress, the more formal liturgical vestment is a multicolored and ornate garment. It too is cut in the standard ritual pattern, with the lower hem of the garment hanging to between the lower calf and ankle. The primary color of this liturgical vestment varies: red, yellow, and purple are most common, but I have also seen turquoise and orange. These robes are traditionally hand-embroidered with a variety of symbols and images. Among contemporary versions, the distinguishing features include swirling gold clouds, the Eight Trigrams, the Three Purities (sanqing) and/or Three Heavens (santian), and Luotian (Canopy Heaven) located at the center of the back. Other noteworthy graphic features include the sun and moon, pagodas, as well as dragons, cranes, and unicorns.

In terms of medieval and late imperial vestments, there are both continuities and departures in contemporary Daoist dress. First, paralleling their Daoist monastic predecessors, contemporary Quanzhen monks and nuns generally treat their religious garments with respect and care. Monastic protocol (and sometimes bureaucratic surveillance) requires one to keep robes clean and orderly. Contemporary Quanzhen liturgical vestments also express ordination ranks: only Longmen initiates are permitted to wear the preceptor robe, and only those with liturgical training may don the ritual robe.

While each and every dimension of traditional Daoist dress has symbolic associations, here we must be content to examine two representative examples. The symbolic center of the contemporary Daoist monastic’s textile universe is the robe of the Dao. As mentioned, this garment is dark blue in color with long sleeves that have wide openings. The sleeves are associated with the garments of immortals and Perfected; they have a flowing and billowy quality that lends an air of ethereality and obscurity. The color is conventionally described as qing (“azure”), the color of the Wood phase and thus having the correspondences of east, spring, morning, and so forth. Under this reading, it also has various other correlative associations, namely, the liver/gall bladder, youth, birth/new growth, smooth flow of qi, and so forth (see Chapter 6). However, the color is technically huilan (“dusty indigo”), and a more esoteric description identifies the color as xuan 玄, which may be translated as “dark” or “black” as a color but which also refers to “mysterious” when related to the Dao. One Daoist etymological reading of the character is a skein of silk dipped in indigo dye. The locus classicus for this color/quality is Chapter 1 of the Daode jing: “Mysterious and again more mysterious/The gateway to all that is wondrous.” That is, xuan is the colorless color of the Dao; the ordained Daoist who puts on this color, the dark blue of his or her daily robes, becomes clothed in the Dao. One becomes enfolded by the Dao’s darkness, subtlety and mysteriousness. This is the darkness that takes in everything.

More refined and well-made robes of the Dao also have specific seam patterns. The sleeves are divided into two sections, while the torso section is divided at the
shoulders. Similarly, the collar has three sections. Three, as a yang number, is one of the primarily significant numbers in the Daoist tradition, perhaps only second in importance to the number nine (3x3). The trifold pattern of daily vestments in turn has an almost infinite number of correspondences, including the Three Essentials (sanyao), Three Fields (santian), Three Treasures (sanbao), Three Passes (sanguan), Three Purities (sanqing), Three Heavens (santian), and so forth (see Chapters 5–7 herein). For Daoists who are aware of and contemplate these associations, donning religious garb situates them in a specific cosmos and reminds them of the vigilance required for alchemical praxis and transformation. Robes of the Dao display the ordained and tradition-based Daoist’s standing in a particular religious community, which includes access to, communication with, and participation in the purest emanations of the Dao and the highest celestial realms. At the same time, daily vestments focus the practitioner’s attention on preserving energetic integrity, activating subtle dimensions of self, awakening latent spiritual capacities, and advancing the process of alchemical transformation.

With respect to the liturgical vestments, the contemporary Quanzhen ritual robe contains a variety of symbolic designs, which have multiple layers of meaning. On the most basic level, these ornamental features reveal the Daoist priest’s access to the Daoist sacred realms as well as his standing in the celestial community. Whether on the liturgical vestment or on the liturgical carpet, the Eight Trigrams, associated with the eight directions, represent the extending influence of the officiant’s ritual power and efficacy. This may be thought of as the “horizontal plane” of ritual activity. On the “vertical plane,” the Luotian heaven on the back of the ritual garment represents the Daoist priest’s communication with the most accessible, highest sacred realm. The Luotian heaven is the Daoist heaven “below” the Three Heavens. It is the residence of the Jade Emperor, the cosmocrat paralleling the terrestrial emperor in governing function (see Chapter 6). Also part of the popular Chinese pantheon, here the Jade Emperor is located at the highest level of the pantheon, and he is the highest deity who receives petitions and requests from Daoist priests.

**Liturgical art and ritual implements**

In terms of material culture, one of the most straightforward ways of identifying “Daoist art” is to concentrate on “liturgical art” and ritual implements, that is, to focus on elements of material culture utilized by Daoists in ritual contexts. With respect to liturgical art, the most common forms are paintings and statues depicting Daoist gods and immortals (see Chapters 6 and 13). In Daoist temples and ritual contexts, they are arranged in specific ways, which relate to altar configuration and sacred space (see Chapters 13 and 14). Beautiful and refined examples of Daoist liturgical art may be found throughout the pages of *Taoism and the Arts of China* (Little 2000a). While some Daoist temples, especially Baiyun guan (White Cloud Monastery; Beijing), still
have Daoist collections, most examples of finely executed Daoist liturgical art were removed from China at various periods, but especially in the context of colonialism in late imperial China. Much of this “art” is housed in private and museum collections in Europe, Japan, and North America.

The most common and important Daoist ritual implements (faqi) include the following: (1) Audience or announcement tablet (ban; hu; jian), with chao (“audience”) often preceding these characters; (2) Command placard (lingpai); (3) Prayer-bell or bowl (qing; zhong); (4) Ritual ruler (fachi); (5) Ritual seal (fayin); (6) Seven-star sword (qixing jian); and (7) Wooden fish-drum (muyu) (see also Asano 2008a). With the exception of the metal prayer-bell and sword, most of the primary ritual implements of modern Daoists are made of wood, especially of Peachtree wood, which is associated with exorcistic qualities. The audience tablet is a long slender tablet held by the head officiant during ritual. Modeled on Chinese court tablets, it indicates the authority of the officiant and his or her access to the Daoist deities and sacred realms. The command placard, also known as the Five Thunder Command Placard (wulei lingpai), is a long and narrow wooden slat, rounded at the top and flat on the bottom. Modeled on imperial tallies or talisman (fu) given to officials by the emperor, this implement is used by the officiant when giving orders to the celestial officers and generals. It is also used for dispersing demons and ghosts, especially in Daoist space clearing rites (see Chapter 13). Modern versions often include the esoteric names of the Three Purities, specific constellations, and esoteric characters believed to have spiritual power. The ritual ruler is a long square piece of wood. It is most often used in exorcism, with officiants using it to “write” characters before the altar. The ritual ruler often contains the name of specific gods, the sun and moon, twenty-eight lunar lodges, and so forth. The ritual seal is a square seal used for stamping documents during ritual. It is a sign of the officiant’s authority and invests the document with spiritual power. Like the audience tablet and command placard, the ritual seal is modeled on Chinese court ritual with its related objects, functions, and symbolism. Engraved with the pattern of the Northern Dipper, the seven-star sword is another exorcistic tool. Finally, the prayer-bell, or “chime,” and the wooden fish-drum, both of which include strikers made of wood and covered with rubber, are the two primary musical instruments used in Daoist ritual. The former is struck as a form of petition, while the latter is struck in a rhythmic pattern to guide chanting (see Chapter 13). The wooden fish-drum is also used at the beginning of Daoist meditation, when it is struck three times. It is said to correspond to the sound of thoughts and emotions disappearing in meditation, into stillness and emptiness. The prayer-bell is used in both meditation and daily temple offerings, and is struck three times at the end of meditation. It is said to correspond to the quality of consciousness after meditation, specifically as characterized by expansiveness, clarity, resonance, and so forth. The prayer-bell is also rung when making offerings, especially of incense. In contemporary Quanzhen temples, it is—at least ideally—run by the altar attendant during each of an individual’s three prostrations before the altar.
Architecture and temple layout

Daoist temple architecture is largely based on the traditional Chinese architecture. The earliest temple-like structures appear to have been built by the early Tianshi community, and the first Daoist monastery, Louguan (Lookout Tower Monastery; Zhouzhi, Shaanxi), appeared in the fifth century (see Chapter 14). The earliest extant Daoist buildings date from the Song and Yuan dynasties, specifically from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries (see Steinhardt 2000; Qiao 2001). One of the most important examples is Yongle gong (Palace of Eternal Joy; Ruicheng, Shanxi), which includes major temple murals related to early Quanzhen Daoism (see Katz 1999).

Daoist temple architecture has utilized and continues to utilize the primary materials, construction methods, and styles of traditional Chinese architecture (see Steinhardt 2000; Qiao 2001). Most surviving Daoist temples utilize brick and timber construction. They include large wood columns and sloping tile roofs with over-arching eaves. They also have various stone elements, including stone steps, railings, and arches.

Following traditional Chinese architecture, one of the most interesting architectural features of Daoist temples is the door-sill (menkan; hukun). Usually part of the larger doorframe, door-sills are located at the entrance of temples and altars and measure about one foot to two feet in height. They have practical, mythological, and spiritual dimensions. On the most basic level, they prevent rain and mud from entering. In terms of mythology, I have heard a variety of explanations. One of the more interesting is that there are short, one-legged demons whose only form of mobility is hopping; the door-sill is too high for them to jump over. On a deeper spiritual level, door-sills demarcate sacred space; they are physical and spiritual boundaries. For residents and pilgrims (see Chapter 1), to cross this threshold is to enter a Daoist sacred place. This involves stepping over the raised, wooden ledge with the left foot first. It involves awareness and attentiveness. One can enter the sacred space consciously or not. Like Daoist bowing (see Chapter 13), stepping over door-sills can be a Daoist contemplative practice, and that experience may influence one's daily life more generally. In application, one remains attentive to boundaries, crossing thresholds, and abiding in sacred space. One also becomes more sensitive to the qualities and functions of space.

The layout of Daoist temples varies depending on size and location. Specifically, the uniformity and conformity to the standard layout is greater for lowland and urban temples, and less for mountain sites. Moreover, as discussed below, there is often a deeper mythological and soteriological dimension of the layout (see also Lagerwey 1992). Again paralleling traditional Chinese architecture, and specifically imperial temples, the standard Daoist temple layout is along a north-south axis. Ideally speaking, this is actually and symbolically the case, that is, it is sited facing south. However, from a Fengshui perspective (see, e.g. Wong 1996; Bruun 2003, 2008), the temple is always discussed along these lines, with the entrance being “ritual south.” Facing south, the back of the temple is north (Mysterious Warrior), the front is south.
(vermilion bird), the right is west (white tiger), and the left is east (azure dragon) (see Chapters 6 and 13 herein). Here we should note that, although utilized in Daoist architecture and by some Daoists, Fengshui (lit., “wind and water”), also known as Chinese geomancy, is not Daoist; like some other elements of the Daoist tradition, such as correlative cosmology (yin-yang/Five Phases), calendrics, and the incorporation of popular gods into the Daoist pantheon and altars (see Chapter 6), it is best understood as part of “traditional Chinese culture” (see Komjathy 2011b).

In terms of Daoist architectural layout, a paradigmatic example is Baiyun guan (White Cloud Monastery; Beijing) (see Yoshioka 1979; Qiao 2001; Komjathy forthcoming). This sacred site consists of the main altars along the central, vertical axis as well as side altars along horizontal axes. If one were moving through the actual temple, one would notice open courtyards, sheltering trees, places to sit, as well as other architectural features and dimensions of Daoist material culture. One would note the spaciousness and peacefulness characteristic of traditional Daoist temples and spaces. Returning to the layout, the altars are usually arranged hierarchically. Moving along the north-south axis, with north in back and representing Mystery, the front altars contain “lower” deities, while the back altars contain “higher” deities, those that are more primordial and closer to the Dao as Source. The deepest altar, or the most elevated altar in the case of Daoist mountain temples, is the highest in terms of the pantheon. In contemporary Daoist temples, the central altar is usually dedicated
to the Sanqing (Three Purities), the earliest, primordial emanations of the Dao (see Chapters 6 and 13).

All of the examples so far derive from traditional Daoist temples and sacred sites. However, as I have suggested in sections of the present book, and as discussed more fully in the next chapter, Daoism is now a global religious tradition. Like modern “Daoist art” and Daoism more generally, there is the possibility and perhaps necessity of cultural adaptation. With respect to Daoist architecture and uses of space, one can identify particular principles and characteristics. Daoist temples frequently contain large open spaces, covered walkways, various partitions and corridors, as well as many natural features such as trees and stones. There is a guiding aesthetic, energetic attentiveness, and refined spatiality that could be applied to other forms of architecture. Although yet to appear, one can imagine new Daoist sacred sites and religious spaces, which combine traditional Chinese Daoist aesthetics with new architectural designs and more local materials. Here we should note that there are few, if any, actual Daoist temples and sacred sites outside of China and the Chinese cultural sphere. While there are some Daoist spaces, such as altars in commercial buildings, there are few actual Daoist places in the West. One is most likely to find self-identified Daoist organizations located in private homes, commercial spaces, or former Christian churches. This is largely a matter of the expense of purchasing land and undertaking new construction projects as well as the lack of support for tradition-based Daoist communities in the West. The main exception with which I am familiar is a Daoist temple utilizing traditional Chinese architecture near Toronto. Completed in 2007 and located in Orangeville, Ontario, this temple was constructed by the Taoist Tai Chi Society/Fung Loy Kok, which has some connection to the Yuen Yuen Institute (Yuanxuan xueyuan) of Hong Kong. As one might expect, this temple received major funding from overseas, immigrant and ethnic Chinese members (see Chapter 16), and it is no coincidence that it has connections to Hong Kong Daoism.

The final aspect of Daoist material culture related to Daoist temples and temple communities centers on the various objects contained within the temple walls and utilized by temple inhabitants. On a more “mundane” level, this would include each and every material element of daily life. On a more “profound” level, it would include objects related to lived and living Daoist religiosity. This is Daoist “material culture” as rooted in community life and religious practice. Within Daoist temple compounds, one often finds steles (beike; shike), their associated rubbings (tuopian), temple boards (muban), cliff inscriptions (moya), and temple murals (bihua). Engraved on large stone tablets, and less occasionally on bronze or wood, steles generally contain information on temple history, including renovations, and on key inhabitants and patrons. There are also famous and rarer examples that contain images, especially portraits of famous Daoists or specific body-maps and practice aids (see, e.g. Needham 1983; Depeux 1994; Little 2000a: 124, 138–9, 144, 148, 336, 344–5; Komjathy 2008c, 2009, 2011d). Temple boards are wood boards engraved with calligraphy. The most visible temple
boards are horizontal ones above entrances, containing either the name of the temple or of the specific altar. However, one also finds vertical temple boards engraved with Daoist practice principles and/or poems.

Entering into the inner sections of Daoist temples and sacred sites, one encounters altars. Such altars usually consist of bowing mats in front of one or more wooden altar tables. The primary constituents of Daoist altars are the incense burner, incense, matches or a lighter, two candelabras, two red candles, as well as the prayer-bell and wooden fish-drums (see above; Chapter 13). It should be mentioned that the incense is usually lit from the flame of the candles, and that the incense flame is extinguished by shaking the incense stick in the air. In Daoism, one does not blow out incense or candles, as exhaling through the mouth expels toxins from the body; it is considered noxious qi. Like the sound of the prayer-bell, one also allows incense to completely burn down, as it is an offering and a petition.

On a personal level, in addition to their clothes and ritual implements, Daoists have their own books and manuscripts, altars and altar art, hairpins, tea-sets, cultivational art, and so forth. In terms of material culture, Daoists believe that objects may be infused with sacred presence. This may occur through daily use by advanced practitioners, and such objects are often bestowed to disciples or Companions of the Way (daoyou; fellow adherents with similar affinities and orientations) as the individual nears death or upon death. On a more formal level, objects such as statuary and altar art may be “activated,” infused with numinosity, through actual consecration (kaiguang; lit., “opening the radiance”) rituals (see Chapter 13).

By way of conclusion, we must recognize that we cannot separate Daoist sacred sites, temples, and material culture from the associated Daoist communities who occupy those places (see Chapters 4 and 16; also Herrou 2005; Goossaert 2007). Although there is a tendency to collect “Daoist material culture” as somehow distinct from “Daoist religious life” (see Chapter 1), or to collect the Dao and other dimensions of Daoist culture as distinct from the Daoist tradition, every “object” has a source and a history. For Daoists, such material culture plays a central role in Daoist religious life, the preservation of Daoist culture, and the transmission of the Daoist tradition to future generations.

FURTHER READING


PART SIX

Daoism in the modern world
All that was once directly lived has become mere representation.
—Guy Debord, *Society of the Spectacle* (1967)

Simulation is no longer that of a territory, a referential being, or a substance. It is the generation by models of a real without origin or reality: a hyperreal...The era of simulation is inaugurated by a liquidation of all referentials...It is no longer a question of imitation, nor duplication, nor even parody. It is a question of substituting the signs of the real for the real.

These passages point towards the fragmented and surreal, perhaps hyperreal, experience of living in the modern world, especially in modern industrialized societies with their post-humanistic scales and their increasing banality. They also point towards the ascendance of disembodied forms of communication and placeless (“virtual”) community as the primary dimensions of selfhood (“digital identity”) in such contexts. As we have seen, pre-modern Daoism has tended to emphasize aesthetics, community, embodiment, place, and so forth. Such values and commitments challenge most modernist and postmodernist mentalities. This does not mean...
that Daoism is solely archaic and primitive. Rather, it suggests that Daoists and Daoist communities tend to be rooted in meaning systems and social realities that seem radically different when juxtaposed with the systems and processes of modern life. The question thus arises as to the fate of Daoism in the modern world. Some have suggested that Daoism is on the brink of extinction, while others believe that the tradition is currently undergoing renewal and revitalization. This largely depends on how one understands Daoism, and what one believes its defining characteristics and essential features are. The truth is probably somewhere in the middle: the landscape of Daoism has experienced massive erosion, deforestation and desertification, but there are communities attempting to inhabit and restore the sacred site.

There can be no doubt that Daoists, Daoist communities, and Daoist culture suffered immense difficulties during China’s Cultural Revolution (1966–76), in which religious sites were closed or destroyed and the overt functioning of religion was banned. This resulted in a “lost generation” of mainland Chinese Daoists (ages 50–80) and a massive disruption in the continuity of the tradition. At the same time, the Chinese Communist Revolution also prepared the way for the globalization of tradition-based Daoism, and mainland Chinese Daoism has gradually regained some of its vitality from the 1980s onward. However, like the near-absence of Daoist clerical voices in the modern representation of the tradition, the presence of “Daoism” in the modern world is largely a series of intellectual fabrications, fictions, and fantasies. While such constructions and appropriations are simulacra (copies without an original), actual Daoism, as an indigenous Chinese and global religious tradition, has begun to be disseminated and established throughout the modern world. Remaining rooted in and transcending its Chinese origins, the global Daoist tradition is characterized by cultural, ethnic and linguistic diversity. In that context, Daoism is both a Chinese religion and a transnational movement. Such a development requires reflection on the relationship among cultural, ethnic and religious identity.

**Approaching global Daoism**

As emphasized throughout the present book, Daoism is first and foremost an indigenous Chinese religion deeply rooted in traditional Chinese culture and history. At the same time, Daoism is now slowly becoming established throughout the modern world. With varying degrees of connection with the Chinese source-tradition, Daoism is becoming transmitted and adapted in the modern world. Beyond the Chinese cultural sphere, there are tradition-based Daoist adherents and communities in Australia, Brazil, Canada, France, Great Britain, Italy, Spain, the United States, and so forth. These adherents and communities consist of people from a wide variety of cultural and ethnic backgrounds.

Before discussing the history, defining characteristics, and dimensions of contemporary Daoism, some theoretical points and interpretive frameworks may be helpful.
We may map the landscape of contemporary global Daoism along a spectrum: from transmission through adaptation to appropriation and fabrication. These relate to tradition and innovation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transmission</th>
<th>Adaptation</th>
<th>Appropriation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Traditionalism</td>
<td>Innovation</td>
<td>Fabrication</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Chart 12: Spectrum of Global Daoism**

Transmission is the most tradition-based; it emphasizes the preservation and transmission of tradition. This of course requires investigating the conception and construction of “tradition” within particular communities. However, with the religious literacy gained from the earlier chapters of the present book, the contours and parameters of the Daoist tradition should be relatively clear. Adaptation involves both a connection to the earlier tradition and a commitment to innovation. It usually involves modifying the received tradition to meet the influences of new socio-historical and cultural contexts as well as the challenges of modernity. Some degree of assimilation and accommodation is involved. A question here is at which point do “innovation” and “adaptation” become so removed from the source-tradition that they are no longer part of that tradition. Finally, appropriation involves appropriating bits and pieces of a religious tradition. In the case of Daoism, this is most often done in the name of “personal spirituality.” As a form of intellectual and spiritual colonialism (see Lau 2000; Carrette and King 2004), appropriation is the most widespread phenomenon of Western engagement with Daoism, and there are major ethical and political issues involved. Simply stated, most forms of appropriation involve denial of the defining characteristics of Daoism, disempowerment of ordained Daoists and Daoist religious communities, and disparagement of the Daoist tradition as such. Most of what goes by the name of “Daoism” in the West, especially throughout the internet and popular publications, are forms of appropriation and fabrication. They are rooted in colonialist, missionary and Orientalist legacies.

**Daoism in contemporary China**

The center of global Daoism remains mainland Chinese Daoism, followed closely behind by Taiwanese and Hong Kong Daoism. That is, Daoism as such remains predominantly an indigenous Chinese religion practiced by people of Han ethnicity in China and the larger Chinese cultural sphere. It is largely a Chinese religion rooted in traditional Chinese culture. The latter includes Chinese aesthetics, cultural values, food, language, worldviews, and so forth. The contemporary landscape of global Daoism is intricately connected to the history of modern China. As briefly touched upon in Chapter 2, the modern history of Daoism is one of turbulence, disruption,
THE DAOIST TRADITION

and almost complete devastation (see also Schipper 2000). It is largely a history of loss: the loss of community, cultural capital, patronage, place, tradition, and actual material culture. Prior to the 1980s, the modern history of Daoism appeared to be one of geographical contraction, cultural diminishment, and spiritual dissolution (see Pas 1989; Overmyer 2003; Miller 2006). And yet, it is also a story of revitalization.

Chinese dynastic history, with its corresponding emperors, ruling houses, aristocracy, and officialdom, ended with the Qing dynasty (1644–1911). This occurred in 1912 when the Republicans, also known as the Nationalists, established the Republic of China (ROC; 1912–49; 1949–). This government was subsequently replaced by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and the People’s Republic of China (PRC) in 1949. At that time, the Republicans as well as many of the Chinese cultural elite fled to Taiwan, where they relocated the Republic of China. Unlike Hong Kong, which was reincorporated from Great Britain in 1997 as a Special Administrative Unit under the “one country, two systems” system, Taiwan remains independent from the PRC. Two other key dates should be mentioned. First, the Cultural Revolution occurred between 1966 and 1976, wherein a systematic attempt was made to destroy all remnants of traditional Chinese culture and religion. Daoists, Daoist communities, and Daoist sacred places suffered immense damage, including the forced evacuation of Daoist temples and the forced laicization of Daoist clergy. Second, following the death of Mao Zedong (1893–1976), Deng Xiaoping (1904–97) initiated the Four Modernizations, economic and social reforms that commenced in 1978. These developments opened the way for increased religious freedom and revitalization. However, unlike in the United States where there is legal separation of church and state, religious activity is monitored and managed by the state in the modern PRC. The Chinese Communist government recognizes five official religions, including Buddhism (fojiao), Catholicism (tianzhu jiao), Daoism (daojiao), Islam (yiselan jiao), and Protestant Christianity (jidujiao) (see Poceski 2009; Yao and Zhao 2010). All of these occur within institutional structures that are overseen by the Bureau of Religious Affairs, and the corresponding religious association. In the case of historically and culturally significant sacred sites, the Bureau of Religious Affairs oversees the clergy and their activities, while the Bureau of Culture controls important artifacts and the Bureau of Tourism oversees tourist activity, including entrance fees. Thus, mainland Chinese Daoist sites are not primarily under the control of Daoists.

Contemporary Daoism in mainland China is dominated two primary movements: Zhengyi and Quanzhen, especially the latter’s Longmen lineage (see also Lai 2003; Chen 2008). While this is undoubtedly the case, such statements should also be qualified. Daoism has also been popularized through various Daoist and “non-Daoist” Yangsheng (Qigong) and internal alchemy practices, continuing the process of simplification, popularization, and laicization that began during the late imperial period. That is, there are non-clerical and non-institutional expressions of Daoism in contemporary China. This engagement with “Daoism” also appears as interest in so-called “Daoist philosophy” (zhexue) and “Daoist thought” (sixiang). A number of modern Chinese intellectuals, such as Hu Fuchen (Chinese Academy of Social Studies) and
Liu Xiaogan (Chinese University of Hong Kong), have attempted to establish so-called “New Daojia” (xin daojia), in a manner perhaps paralleling “New Confucianism” in the twentieth century.

These points notwithstanding, Zhengyi and Quanzhen remain the primary forms of Daoism in contemporary China, especially when one considers Daoism as a religious tradition, an intact culture, and an integrated soteriology. As we have seen in previous chapters, Zhengyi is an alternate name for the Tianshi movement. The former name refers to the revelation and covenant, while the latter name refers to the highest clerical position, the Celestial Master. In the modern world, the Celestial Master is less important, but we should at least know something about the complex modern history of the position. The most recent Celestial Masters are as follows: Zhang Yuanxu (1862–1924; 62nd), Zhang Enpu (1904–69; 63rd), Zhang Yuanxian (1930–2008; 64th) (Kleeman 2008a), and possibly Zhang Jiyu (b. 1962; 65th). The eldest son of the 62nd Celestial Master, Zhang Enpu fled to Taiwan with the Nationalists, where he established Taipei, Taiwan as the de facto headquarters of Tianshi Daoism. Zhang Enpu was instrumental in establishing the Taiwan Daoist Association (Taiwan sheng daojiao hui) in 1950, later renamed the Daoist Association of the Republic of China (Zhonghua minguo daojiao hui), and in securing the reprinting of the Ming-dynasty Daoist Canon in 1962 (see Chapter 12 herein). Following Zhang Enpu’s death, the position of the Celestial Master passed to his nephew, Zhang Yuanxian and then possibly to Zhang Jiyu following the former’s death in 2008. The circumstances of the most recent transfer are unclear, but it is significant because the Celestial Master now appears to be in mainland China, rather than in Taiwan. Zhang Jiyu is currently one of the vice-presidents of the Chinese Daoist Association.

Perhaps more important than the Celestial Master himself are the various family lineages and local Zhengyi communities, which are especially prominent in southeastern China and Taiwan (see Chapter 13). These groups have received a relatively high degree of scholarly consideration, especially through ethnographic fieldwork, and have in turn exerted strong influence on Western academic accounts of Daoism. Particularly noteworthy are the Taiwanese priests Zhuang-Chen Dengyun (1911–76), who was studied by Michael Saso, and Chen Rongsheng (b. 1927), studied first by Kristofer Schipper, then by John Lagerwey and Poul Andersen, among others. In terms of the history of global Daoism, we should also note that both Saso (b. 1930) and Schipper (b. 1934) were among the first known Westerners ordained as Daoist priests. They are both ordained members of Zhengyi, and they have also helped to establish a model of Daoist scholar-practitioners inside of Daoist Studies. In contemporary mainland China, the two principal sacred sites associated with Zhengyi are Longhu shan (Dragon-Tiger Mountain; near Yingtan, Jiangxi) and Maoshan (Mount Mao; Jurong, Jiangsu) (see Chapter 14). It also appears that the recent reinstitution of large-scale ordination ceremonies at Longhu shan has included a number of Westerners.

Although there are Zhengyi priests and communities throughout contemporary mainland China, most of the major temples and sacred sites are under the jurisdiction of Quanzhen (see Chapter 14), and specifically its Longmen lineage. At the same
time, contemporary mainland Chinese Quanzhen is deeply bound to the Bureau of Religious Affairs and the Chinese Daoist (Taoist) Association (CDA/CTA; Zhongguo daojiao xiehui). The CDA was established in 1957, with its headquarters at Baiyun guan (White Cloud Monastery; Beijing). The first assembly was attended by ninety-one representatives including Daoist scholars and priests from Daoist lineages, mountains, and temples located throughout China. Sixty-one members were elected, and Yue Chongdai (1888–1958), the abbot of Taiqing gong (Palace of Great Clarity; Shenyang, Liaoning), was chosen as president (Wang 2006: 137–72; Sakade 2008b). The activities of the CDA were suspended during the Cultural Revolution, but recommenced in 1980. The CDA functions under the direction of the Bureau of Religious Affairs, which is the primary bureaucratic organization governing contemporary mainland Chinese Daoism. Its national presidents (huizhang) have included the following individuals: (1) Yue Chongdai (1888–1958), (2) Chen Yingning (1880–1969), (3 & 4) Li Yuhang (1916–2002), (5) Fu Yuantian (1925–97; Longmen), (6) Min Zhiting (Yuxi [Jade Stream]; 1924–2004; Huashan), and (7) Ren Farong (Miaohua [Wondrous Transformation]; b. 1936; Longmen). The CDA is based at Baiyun guan, which also serves as a major research center for Chinese Daoist Studies, and as one of the principal training centers and ordination sites for Longmen novices. In terms of training, the Chinese Daoist Seminary (Daojiao xueyuan) is there.

**Contemporary Daoism in the Chinese cultural sphere**

The “Chinese cultural sphere” refers to those areas within which China was the primary cultural influence. Broadly speaking, it refers to East Asia, including Hong Kong, Taiwan, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, as well as parts of Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Thailand, and Vietnam. The cultural and religious situation of each of these countries is unique, and many of them are now characterized by a combination of capitalism, Buddhism, and Christianity. That is, Chinese cultural and Daoist influence are relatively minor. However, there are nonetheless examples of global Daoism in these countries. Unfortunately, very little research has been done on this topic, so the present account must be taken as preliminary and tentative.

Contemporary Taiwanese Daoism has received a relatively high degree of attention in modern Western scholarship (see Chapter 13 herein). This was largely a response to contemporary Chinese history, with mainland China being relatively inaccessible prior to the 1980s. During the Cultural Revolution in mainland China, Taiwanese Daoists played a major role in preserving traditional Daoist culture, including material culture of historical significance such as Daoist liturgical art, manuscripts, and ritual traditions (see Chapter 15). Contemporary Taiwanese Daoism is dominated by the Zhengyi movement, with hereditary priests and Daoist families who perform rituals for local communities. Generally speaking, these are full-time ritual experts whose services are commissioned by members of the local community. Like Hong Kong Daoism,
Taiwanese Daoism is highly syncretic, often combining elements from Confucianism, Buddhism, Chinese popular religion, and even Christianity. In addition, due to Taiwanese laws concerning legal status, many newer religious movements such as Yiguan dao (I-kuan tao; All-pervading Truth; Unity Sect), with only tenuous connections to Daoism, have been categorized as Daoist.

Outside of Hong Kong itself, contemporary Hong Kong Daoism is less well known than its Taiwanese counterpart. To date, it has only received one Western-language study (see Tsui 1991). Much of Hong Kong Daoism is dominated by powerful and wealthy Daoist families. There are also a number of large and prominent temples, with Ching Chung Koon (Qingsong guan; Azure Pine Monastery; New Territories), Fung Ying Seen Koon (Peng-Ying xianguan; Immortal Community of Peng and Ying; New Territories), Wong Tai Sin (Huang daxian; Great Immortal Wong; Kowloon), Yuen Yuen Institute (Yuanxuan xueyue; Complete Mystery Institute; New Territories), and Yuk Hui Temple (Yuxu gong; Palace of Jade Emptiness; Cheung Chau Island) being among the most influential. In particular, Wong Tai Sin is probably the most famous and popular temple as well as a major tourist destination (see Lang 1993). In addition, it appears that Moy Lin-shin (1931–98) and Mui Ming-to (d.u.), the co-founders of Fung Loy Kok (Penglai ge; Penglai Pavilion) in North America, had some connections with the Yuen Yuen Institute. As many of the Hong Kong temples are highly syncretic and incorporate a variety of elements of popular Chinese religiosity, their categorization as “Daoist” deserves additional research and reflection.

Due to the somewhat factional nature of Hong Kong Daoism, there are also a number of competing Hong Kong Taoist Associations. Hong Kong Daoism in turn consists of Zhengyi, Longmen, as well as various family lineages with less clear histories. With respect to Zhengyi, Zhengyi priests are the main ritual experts for festivals and for the jiao-offering rituals in the villages of the New Territories and outlying islands; they also dominate the market for “non-Christian” funeral services (David Palmer, per. comm.). In terms of Longmen, as in Taiwan, the lineage differs from its mainland Chinese counterpart; generally speaking, it is not monastic and does not adhere to foundational Quanzhen religious commitments. In fact, research suggests that the establishment of Daoist communities and institutions in Hong Kong was largely an extension of popular spirit-writing cults and charitable societies in southern China during the late Qing dynasty (1644–1911) (see Tsui 1991; Mori 2002; Shiga 2002). Many of the former specifically focused on mediumistic activity related to Lü Dongbin (“Ancestor Lü”), a famous Tang dynasty immortal and wonder-worker identified as the patriarch of certain internal alchemy lineages (see Chapter 6). For some reason, these groups often identified themselves as Longmen. If one believes the internal histories of certain southern families, it seems that there were also formal Longmen temples in southern China, whose affiliates eventually migrated to Hong Kong. According to the Luofu zhinan (Guide to Luofu), ordained Longmen priests first established temples in Guangdong in the late seventeenth century (Tsui 1991: 66–70), but the actual relationship between these temples and the Daoist temples in Hong Kong remains unclear (see Shiga 2002). In any case, major Daoist temples and
organizations began to be established in Hong Kong from the late nineteenth through the middle of the twentieth century.

The Hong Kong organizations consist of both ordained, married clergy as well as a much larger lay community. Hong Kong Daoism has developed its own unique characteristics and forms of ritual activities, including newer forms of Daoist liturgical practice. It seems that the dissemination and growth of Daoism among southern Chinese groups who eventually migrated to Hong Kong was largely due to two major factors. First, in the case of Lüzu (Ancestor Lü) cultic activity and temples, individuals were given insights into an unpredictable future through spirit-writing sessions. In addition, many people reported supernatural and healing experiences. Such events no doubt proved appealing to potential converts. Second, in the case of charitable societies, people were given assistance in times of need. Combined together, one finds a context where popular devotionalism and social solidarity flourished. Such patterns of community involvement continue in the contemporary Hong Kong Daoist emphasis on services for departed ancestors. Here we should also mention that, given their relatively high degree of cultural capital and material resources, Taiwanese and Hong Kong Daoist organizations have played a major role in the revitalization of contemporary mainland Chinese Daoism, especially in terms of funding mainland Chinese Daoist restoration projects and research on Chinese Daoism. Many temple construction and renovation projects are the result of their funding.

In terms of Japan, initial research indicates that the history of Daoism in Japan was largely one of the dissemination and adoption of specific views and practices, rather than enduring institutions (Masuo 2000; Sakade 2008a). Of the major Daoist beliefs adapted, the emergence of the “Kōshin cult” in medieval Japan is noteworthy. The kōshin (Chn.: gengshen) day, the fifth-seventh day of the sexagesimal (sixty-day) cycle when the Three Deathbringers supposedly reported an individual’s moral transgressions (see Chapters 7 and 9 herein), became a popular religious festival and celebration. In contrast to their Chinese Daoist ascetic counterparts, Japanese participants engaged in extravagant banquets, drank wine, ate meat, performed music, watched dance performances, and played games. The current situation of Daoism in Japan is unclear, although Daoyin, Yangsheng, and internal alchemy, some of which have roots in Daoism, have some circulation through the larger populace.

Beyond Taiwan and Hong Kong, and within the larger Chinese cultural sphere, it appears that Korea received the greatest degree of early transmission and acceptance. Current research indicates that Daoism was first introduced into Korea when Emperor Gaozu (r. 618–26) of the Tang dynasty sent Chinese Daoist priests and a statue of a Celestial Worthy to the kingdom of Koguryŏ in 624, and had priests read the Daode jing before the Korean king and court (Jung 2000; Miura 2008a). The first Daoist temple, named Bokwŏn kung (Palace of the Auspicious Source), was built at the beginning of the twelfth century under the Koryŏ dynasty (918–1392). It housed statues of the Sanqīng (Three Purities) and was tended to by more than ten white-robed Korean Daoist priests. It appears that some form of institutionalized Daoism,
however small, existed in Korea until the Chosŏn dynasty (1392–1910), which adopted Confucianism as state ideology. The then-extant fifteen officially recognized sites for Daoist offerings and rites that had been established during the Koryo dynasty were almost all abolished. Early Korean engagement with Daoist beliefs and practices primarily centered on the court; Daoist priests performed rituals to protect the state on behalf of the court and royal family. With the decline of Daoist state ritual under the Chosŏn dynasty, Korean intellectuals became more interested in Yangsheng and internal alchemy practices. Around the fifteenth or sixteenth century, such interest grew into the formation of a specifically Korean neidan school, namely the Haedong sŏnp’a (Korean Immortal Lineage) (Miura 2008a). Although the motivations behind and degree of Korean conversion is currently unknown, Daoist internal alchemy practice became one dimension of Korean religious culture. For example, the contemporary group Kuksŏn to (Way of National Immortals) practices a form of neidan-inspired breathing techniques. There is also Sundo (Way of the Immortals; a.k.a. Mountain Taoism), a more recent group founded by Hyunmoon Kim (d.u.). The movement is present in the United States among groups associated with Hyunmoon Kim as well as with Hyunoon Sunim (d.u.) of the Sixth Patriarch Zen Center (Berkeley, California). Both groups are principally rooted in Korean Son (Zen) Buddhism, but Son meditation is combined with Daoyin and internal alchemy practice. This is not to mention the global organization known as Dahn Yoga® (Dahn Hak) founded in 1986 by Ilchi Lee (Lee Seung-heun; b. 1950). Dahn Yoga® is a form of hybrid spirituality and spiritual capitalism that utilizes some Daoist respiratory and internal alchemy practices.

The history and contemporary situation of Daoism in Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam is even less well known. A fair amount of recent research has, however, been dedicated to the Yao (see Lemoine 1982; Pourrett 2002; Alberts 2006; also Chapter 2 herein). The Yao, also distinguished as Miao-Yao and Hmong-Mien, are a minority ethnic group whose members converted to Daoism. Traditionally speaking, Yao tribal culture was characterized by slash-and-burn agriculture, upland habitation, and widespread migratory patterns. People of Yao ethnic identity have lived in the southern Chinese provinces of Fujian, Hunan, Guangdong, Guangxi, and Yunnan. They eventually migrated to Vietnam, Laos, and Thailand, probably in the thirteenth century, where they continue to form a segment of those societies. The Yao have their own non-Sinitic (possibly Sino-Tibetan) language, but, similar to pre-modern Japanese, Korean, and Vietnamese, they utilize Chinese script as the primary form of written language.

Extant sources and current research suggest that large numbers of Yao most likely began converting to Daoism during the Southern Song dynasty (1127–1279). With the defeat of the Northern Song by the Jurchens, the Song imperial court and masses of northern Chinese migrated to Hangzhou in Zhejiang province. There they came in direct contact with the Yao and other indigenous peoples living in southern China. In that context, Daoism, specifically as expressed by Daoist ritual masters and communities in the newly codified “orthodox rites of Celestial Heart” (tianxin zhengfa) (see Chapters 2 and 13), formed part of the dominant Chinese state, wherein it served as
a means by which to assimilate and “civilize” non-Chinese peoples (i.e., Sinification). According to Michel Strickmann’s institution-centered perspective, “T’ien-hsin cheng-fa (Tianxin zhengfa) priests worked as ambulant missionaries, bringing their exorcistic and theurapeutic rituals directly into the homes of the common people. There is evidence that they received official support...several magistrates who were initiated into the movement...made use of T’ien-hsin rites in the course of their official duties: pacifying their district, reducing epidemics, and guaranteeing the harvest” (Strickmann 1982; cited in Lemoine 1982: 22). In terms of the Yao’s own motivations for conversion, little research has been done to date. Many accounts, following a fairly conventional anthropological and sociological perspective wherein the Yao are seen as passive recipients rather than active agents, fail to consider the Yao’s own views on Daoism and their own process of “Yaoicization” of Daoism. That is, the Yao did not simply become Sinicized or Daoicized.

One of the most interesting and distinctive characteristics of “Yao Daoism,” especially as expressed among contemporary Yao communities in Laos, Thailand, and Vietnam, is its social organization. The Yao maintain a universal Daoist priesthood, with every member passing through successive levels of ordination with corresponding Daoist spirit registers (lù). Social standing within Yao society is based on one’s position in the religious community. The Yao situation is particularly noteworthy because identity formation and social standing is directly correlated to Daoist religious adherence and affiliation. To be a respected and senior member of Yao society is to be a higher-level Daoist ordinand. Here we see a context of conversion and adaptation wherein certain Yao communities have become “more Daoist” than their indigenous Chinese counterparts. While the Yao have, of course, adapted and modified Daoist beliefs and practices to their own cultural concerns, “it is still remarkable that they have maintained a non-Chinese society over an extended period of time based upon the strictures and beliefs of a distinctively Chinese religion” (Kleeman 2002, 33). In terms of global Daoism, the Yao, like the Ba (see Kleeman 1998), are especially interesting. They are clear examples of earlier historical precedents for “non-Chinese” conversion to Daoism and for Daoism as a multi-ethnic and multicultural tradition. However, as has been a consistent pattern throughout Chinese history, Ba and Yao conversion involved Sinification. They adopted major Chinese cultural traditions, including classical Chinese, and they utilized such language in scriptural and ritual contexts. It also formed the basis of ordination, including the transmission of scriptures and other religious documents. The modern fate of such patterns of adherence and affiliation, especially in the West (see below), is unclear.

Before moving on to discuss global Daoism beyond the Chinese cultural sphere, I would like to highlight two additional examples of transmission and appropriation. The first example is the Taoist Mission of Singapore (Xinjiapo daojiao xiehui; TMS). The Taoist Mission was founded in 1996 by a group of young and enthusiastic Daoists who wanted to promote Daoism, to preserve Chinese traditions and values, and to provide education on various aspects of Daoism. It is currently under the direction of Lee Zhiwang (b. ca. 1945), who serves as president (huizhang). Lee is an ordained
Longmen Daoist priest, having received training and ordination under the late Sun Mingrui (1925–2010). Lee also received ritual training at Baiyun guan in Beijing. The organization offers a variety of education and culture-preserving activities, and conducts Daoist rituals for its community. The organization is also a major promoter of the International Daoism Day (2/15) and has strong connections with the Chinese Daoist Association and the Italian Taoist Association. Its members are primarily Singapore citizens of Chinese ethnic descent.

The second example relates to “Thai Daoism.” Healing Tao (Healing Dao), also known as Tao Yoga and Universal Tao, was first established in the United States in 1979 by Mantak Chia (b. 1944), a Thai citizen of Chinese ancestry who lived in America during the formative moments of the movement (see Belamide 2000; Siegler 2003, 2011; Komjathy 2004). Healing Tao/Universal Tao was created from a variety of sources (it is a form of hybrid spirituality), transformed into an international organization, and then exported “back” to Thailand, where Mantak Chia established the Tao Garden Health Spa and Resort (Chiang Mai, Thailand). Healing Tao/Universal Tao represents one of the most successful spiritual businesses appropriating Daoism. In its American expression, it includes a hierarchically ordered credential system and offers various “dream trips” to China, which represent a form of spiritual tourism. It has been instrumental in contributing to the Western construction of Daoism as reducible to techniques, specifically sexual methods with no connection to Daoism as a living Chinese and now global religion.

**Global Daoism beyond the Chinese cultural sphere**

Global Daoism may be defined as a globalized, multicultural, multi-ethnic and transnational religion which exhibits strong family resemblances and a high degree of recognizability with the Chinese source-tradition. Its primary representatives are ordained priests or lineage-based Daoists, including immigrant and ethnic Chinese teachers as well as those of “non-Chinese,” most often European, ancestry. Some of these individuals trained in China, while others were ordained in their respective countries. The corresponding communities are committed to tradition-based Daoist practice and forms of community. They are addressing the challenges of modernity and of adapting Daoism to a global context with a relatively high degree of attentiveness to the Chinese tradition as source. As with any religious tradition, there are always issues of affinity, authenticity, and credibility involved in the associated teachers and communities, and I leave it to readers to find their own positions on these and other matters.

Beyond the Chinese cultural sphere, some important organizations include Asociación de Taoismo de España (Spanish Taoist Association; Xibanya daojiao xiehui; est. 2001); Association Française Daoïste (French Daoist Association; Faguo daojiao xiehui; est. 2003); Associazione Taoista d’Italia (Italian Taoist Association; Yidali daojiao
xiehui; est. 1993); British Taoist Association (Yingguo daojiao xiehui; est. 1996); and Sociedade Taoista do Brasil (Brazilian Taoist Association; Baxi daojiao hui; est. 1991). As indicated above, the use of xiehui in these organizations’ Chinese names models itself on the Zhongguo daojiao xiehui (Chinese Daoist Association), with xiehui largely being a political designation.

Of these principally European organizations, one specific example will have to suffice. The British Taoist Association was established in 1996 by four British converts and ordained Longmen priests with the support of two mainland Chinese Daoist priests. The former included Shijing (Alan Redman; b. ca. 1950), Shidao (Peter Smith; b. ca. 1970), Shiran (Paul Dunnett; d.u.), and Shizhi (Hooileng Dunnett; d.u.). The latter included Feng Xingzhao (b. ca. 1950) and Huang Shizhen (b. ca. 1965). The British Daoists were ordained by Feng Xingzhao at Leigu tai (Beating Drum Tower; Ziyang, Shaanxi). Based in Buckhurst Hill, just outside of London, the British Taoist Association is a small, non-sectarian Daoist community. It primarily consists of about 200 supporting members, most of whom are British citizens. BTA offers Daoist retreats with particular emphasis on “tranquil sitting” (jingzuo) and Daoyin. These retreats are held at Hourne Farm, in the Sussex countryside. They are mainly taught by Shijing, BTA’s chairman (president), but other Chinese and Western teachers have

FIGURE 25 Founding Members of the British Taoist Association
Source: British Taoist Association
also led retreats through the organization. This organization also publishes a Daoist magazine titled The Dragon’s Mouth. It maintains connections with the Chinese Daoist Association and other European Daoist organizations. Shijing and Shidao also serve on the advisory board of the Daoist Foundation (see below).

In terms of North America, the situation is extremely complex. Here I will simply list some tradition-based Daoist communities and organizations. From my perspective, “American Daoism” refers to the entire landscape of tradition-based Daoism in America, that is, it includes immigrant, ethnic Chinese, and “non-Chinese” adherents and communities. Some tradition-based North American communities and organizations include the following: American Taoist and Buddhist Association (New York, New York; est. 1979); Center of Traditional Taoist Studies (Weston, Massachusetts; est. 1978); Ching Chung Taoist Association (Ching Chung Taoist Church; San Francisco, California; Vancouver, British Columbia; est. 1978); Daoist Foundation (San Diego, California; est. 2007); Daoist Gate Wudang Arts (Boston, Massachusetts; est. 2011); Fung Loy Kok/Taoist Tai Chi Society (Toronto, Canada; Denver, Colorado; est. 1970); Orthodox Daoism in America (formerly in Santa Cruz, California; Seattle, Washington; 1986–2004); Taoist Restoration Society (formerly in Nederland, Colorado; 1997–2007); and Taoist Studies Institute (Seattle, Washington; est. 1991) (see Komjathy 2003b; 2003c, 2004; Siegler 2003, 2010).

As with the revitalization of mainland Chinese Daoism from the 1980s to the present, the establishment of tradition-based global Daoism is a slow process, a process that is still in its formative moment. Thus, the story of “global Daoism,” at once rooted in and transcending the Chinese source-tradition, is just beginning to be composed.

---

**FURTHER READING**


Adherent: A member of a religious tradition. Replaces earlier concepts such as “believer.” In the case of Daoism, individuals who are committed to and/or have formal association with the religious community and tradition. An English approximation of various indigenous Chinese Daoist terms, including daoren (“person of the Dao”), daoshi (“adept of the Dao”; Daoist priest and/or monastic), daozhang (“elder of the Dao”; Daoist priest and/or monastic), and so forth.

Anthropology: Comparative category referring to discourse on, study of, or theories about the human. Most often used to refer to a social scientific discipline studying human culture. As a theological category, refers to claims about human nature and personhood, especially in relation to the sacred. Following traditional Chinese culture, the standard Daoist anthropology emphasizes a composite self that consists of one hun (yang-ghost) and one po (yin-ghost).

Apophatic meditation: A form of contentless, non-conceptual, and non-dualistic meditation first practiced and advocated by members of the inner cultivation lineages of classical Daoism. Meditation practice emphasizing emptiness and stillness. As an umbrella category, “apophatic meditation” approximates a variety of Daoist technical terms, including baoyi (“embracing the One”), jingzuo (“quiet sitting”), shouyi (“guarding the One”), xinzhai (“fasting of the heart-mind”), zuowang (“sitting-in-forgetfulness”), and so forth.

Baiyun guan (Pai-yün kuan): White Cloud Monastery. Originally named Tianchang guan (Temple of Celestial Perpetuity), it was first established in the mid-eighth century as a state-sponsored temple for officially recognized Daoist clergy. During different periods of Chinese history, control of the temple alternated between Zhengyi and Quanzhen Daoists. Located in Beijing, today Baiyun guan is a Quanzhen monastery. Also current headquarters of the Quanzhen monastic order and the national Chinese Daoist Association as well as the location of the Chinese Daoist Seminary.

Chinese Daoism: Indigenous Chinese religion deeply rooted in traditional Chinese culture and history. A religious tradition practiced largely by people of Han ethnicity and using classical Chinese, especially with respect to scripture and ritual. From a Chinese Daoist perspective, culture (Chinese), ethnicity (Han), and religion (Daoism) are intricately related, if not inseparable. The vast majority of Daoist history is the history of Chinese Daoism.

Classical Chinese: Pre-modern literary Chinese. The primary language of Daoism. The language in which Daoist scriptures have traditionally been composed and transmitted and in which Daoist ritual is conducted.

Cosmogony: Comparative category referring to discourse on, study of, or theories about the origins of the universe. The standard Daoist cosmogony emphasizes an impersonal and spontaneous process of manifestation and emanation, a movement from primordial nondifferentiation to differentiation. The process of cosmogonic unfolding includes multiple gods and sacred realms.

Cosmology: Comparative category referring to discourse on, study of, or theories about the underlying principles and patterns of the universe. Following traditional Chinese...
culture, the standard Daoist cosmology focuses on yin-yang and the Five Phases (wuxing). The universe is an impersonal transformative process characterized by the alterations and interactions of yin and yang.

**Dao (Tao):** Pinyin Romanization of a Chinese character meaning “Way” (cosmic order) and/or “way” (lifepath). As a Daoist cosmological and theological category, utilized by Daoists to designate their sacred or ultimate concern. In the case of Daoism, best left untranslated as “Dao.” From a Daoist perspective, the Dao has four primary characteristics: Source of all existence; unnamable mystery; all-pervading sacred presence; and universe as cosmological process.

**Daode jing (Tao-te ching):** Scripture on the Dao and Inner Power. Also translated as “Classic on the Way and Virtue.” One of the main texts of classical Daoism and a central scripture of the Daoist tradition. Attributed to Laozi (Master Lao), but actually a multi-vocal anthology with historical and textual layers from the 4th to 2nd c. BCE. Originally titled Laozi (Lao-tzu), which is conventionally translated as *Book of Master Lao*, but better rendered as *Book of Venerable Masters*. The received text, usually the Wang Bi (226–49) redaction, consists of eighty-one verse chapters.

**Daoism (Taoism):** Indigenous Chinese religious tradition (“Chinese Daoism”). Now a global religious tradition characterized by cultural, ethnic, and linguistic diversity (“global Daoism”), which recognizes Chinese Daoism as source-tradition. As an approximation of various indigenous Chinese terms, designates Daoist adherents, communities, and their religious expressions.

**Daoist (Taoist):** An adherent of the religious tradition which is Daoism. In a more restrictive sense, ordained clergy (daoshi) with formal standing in a Daoist religious community (priests and/or monastics). In a more inclusive sense, individuals (daoren) following a Daoist religious path (householders and/or laity). Also problematically applied to individuals who “believe in the Dao.” The latter are best understood as “Daoist sympathizers.”

**Daoist Studies (Taoist Studies):** Modern academic field dedicated to education, research, and publication with respect to Daoism. Scholars of Daoist Studies usually have a Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) degree in Asian Studies and/or Religious Studies. There are, in turn, diverse theoretical and methodological approaches to the academic study of Daoism, including comparative, ethnographic, historical, textual, and so forth.

**Daojia (tai-chia):** Family of the Dao. One of the earliest indigenous Chinese names for Daoism. Primarily used to designate the inner cultivation lineages of classical Daoism. Often mistranslated and misrepresented as so-called “philosophical Daoism.”

**Daojiao (tai-chiao):** Teachings of the Dao. One of the most prominent indigenous Chinese names for Daoism. Conventionally used to identify organized Daoism. Often mistranslated and misrepresented as so-called “religious Daoism.”

**Daojing (tai-ching):** Scriptures of the Dao. Jing is usually translated as “scripture” (sacred text) and/or as “classic.” On a material culture and linguistic level, manuscripts written in classical Chinese using calligraphy. The most important genre of Daoist literature. One of the external Three Treasures of the Dao, the scriptures, and the teachers. The character jing 經 consists of the mi 綢 (“silk”) radical and jing 行 (“underground stream”). Scriptures are threads and watercourses that form and re-form networks of connection. They connect Daoists to both the unnamable mystery and sacred presence which is the Dao and the Daoist tradition, the community of adepts that preceded one, as a historical and energetic continuum. From a Daoist perspective, scriptures are inspired or revealed. They are usually anonymous and/or attributed to divine beings such as Laojun (Lord Lao) or Yuanshi tianzun (Celestial Worthy of Original Beginning).
Daotong (tao-t'ung): Tradition of the Dao. Term here proposed to designate the Daoist tradition, so-called daojia-daojiao. Conventionally refers to Rujia (Family of the Scholars; “Confucianism”).

Daozang (Tao-tsang): Daoist Canon. The term literally means “storehouse of the Dao.” Primary Daoist textual collection and source for Daoist Studies. In the modern world, refers to the Daoist Canon compiled during the Ming dynasty (1368–1644), which consists of 1,487 texts.

De (te): Virtue or inner power. The Dao manifested in human beings as numinous presence and as embodied activity in the world, especially as a beneficial and transformational influence that might be categorized as “good.”

Epistemology: Comparative, philosophical category referring to discourse on, study of, or theories about knowledge. Often misidentified as a central Daoist concern.

Existentialist: Comparative, philosophical category relating to existence, specifically human being. Often related to questions of meaning and purpose. A central Daoist concern.

Ge Hong (Ko Hung; Baopu [Embracing Simplicity]; 287–347): Grandnephew of Ge Xuan (164–244) and disciple of Zheng Yin (ca. 215-ca. 300). Major representative of the Taqing (Great Clarity) movement of external alchemy (waidan). Author of the highly influential Baopuzi neipian (Inner Chapters of Master Embracing Simplicity; DZ 1185) and primary author of the Shenxian zhuan (Biographies of Spirit Immortals; JHL 89).

Global Daoism: Modern Daoism as an international and transnational religious tradition. Although rooted in Chinese Daoism as historical and cultural source-tradition, global Daoism is a “trans-Chinese” tradition. With global dissemination, it is characterized by cultural, ethnic, and linguistic diversity. Comprised of Daoist adherents and communities committed to Daoism as a religious tradition and way of life.

Inner Cultivation Lineages: Name proposed by Harold Roth (Brown University) to refer to the earliest master-disciple communities of classical Daoism, specifically during the Warring States period and Early Han dynasty. Emphasis placed on aphophatic meditation aimed at mystical union with the Dao.

Laojun (Lao-chün): Lord Lao. Deified Laozi. Often identified as “personification of the Dao.” Early high god of Daoism. From a Daoist perspective, the god who manifests through various human beings, including Laozi. Also the revelatory source of many key Daoist scriptures. Eventually incorporated into the Sanqing (Three Purities) as Daode tianzun (Celestial Worthy of Dao and Inner Power).

Laozi (Lao-tzu): Master Lao. Laozi may also mean “old master” or “old child.” Pseudo-historical figure traditionally identified as the author of the Daode jing. Problematically identified as the “founder of Daoism.” Also known as Li Er, Li Boyang, or Lao Dan (Lao Tan). As Lao Dan, possibly one of the senior teachers and elders of the inner cultivation lineages of classical Daoism, with some of his teachings possibly preserved in the Daode jing and Zhuangzi.

Lingbao (Ling-pao): Numinous Treasure. Major early medieval Daoist religious movement established by Ge Chaofu (fl. 390s), a Shangqing adherent and grandnephew of Ge Hong. Systematized by Lu Xiujing (406–77). First major Daoist movement to exhibit strong Buddhist influences, Lingbao places emphasis on ritual and universal salvation.

Longmen (Lung-men): Dragon Gate. Most prominent lineage of Quanzhen (Complete Perfection) Daoism. Traditionally associated with Qiu Chujii (Changchun [Perpetual Spring]; 1148–1227). The official, “orthodox” lineage was established during the Qing dynasty by Wang Changyue (Kunyang [Paradisiacal Yang]; 1622–80), then abbot of Baiyun guan. Emphasis placed on lineage-based internal alchemy as well as precept study and application.
Louguan tai (Lou-kuan t’ai): Lookout Tower Monastery. Located in Zhouzhi, Shaanxi, earliest Daoist monastery. Probably established in the late fifth or early sixth century. During the early medieval period, identified by Daoists as the place where Laozi transmitted the *Daode jing* to Yin Xi. This version of the transmission legend arose in the mid-fifth century through Yin Tong (398–499?), a self-identified descendent of Yin Xi and owner of the Louguan estate. Now a Quanzhen monastery and tourist destination.

Lu Xiujing (Lu Hsiu-ching; 406–77): Lingbao (Numinous Treasure) adherent and highly influential early medieval Daoist leader. Organized the Lingbao scriptures into the “Lingbao Catalogue.” Also compiled the earliest known catalogue of Daoist texts, which established the Three Caverns (*sandong*) as the primary division of Daoist textual collections. As a major systematizer and scholaristic, Lu Xiujing was one of the principal architects of Daoism as a diverse, but unified religious tradition.

Neidan (nei-tan): Internal alchemy. Literally means “inner pill” or “inner cinnabar.” Also translated as “inner elixir.” Complex Daoist practice aimed at complete psychosomatic transformation and immortality. Usually involves sequential, stage-based methods utilizing various subtle and mystical dimensions of self. First systematized during the late Tang and early Song dynasties. One of the primary forms of Daoist meditation.

Ontology: Comparative, philosophical category referring to discourse on, study of, or theories about being. A central Daoist concern.

“Philosophical Daoism”: Outdated and inaccurate “translation” of *daojia*. Conventional, received Western name for the inner cultivation lineages of classical Daoism. Use of the term should be taken as indicative of inaccuracy and misunderstanding concerning Daoism.

Popular Western Taoism (PWT): New form of Western hybrid spirituality with little to no connection to the religious tradition which is Daoism. Pronounced with a hard “t” sound, PWT is primarily characterized by appropriation, fabrication, and spiritual colonialism. Rooted in colonialist, missionary and Orientalist legacies, PWT is represented through various so-called “Tao Groups” and “Tao-ists.” Through its ubiquitous presence on the internet and in popular publications, the primary influence on the popular Western construction and misunderstanding of Daoism.

Qi (ch’i): Subtle or vital breath. Often translated as “energy” or “pneuma.” May refer to both actual physical respiration or subtle breath, the subtle currents flowing through the universe and self. Best left untranslated as “qi.”

Qiu Chuji (Ch’iu Ch’u-chi; Changchun [Perpetual Spring]; 1148–1227): Youngest of the senior first-generation Quanzhen (Complete Perfection) adherents and member of the so-called Seven Perfected. Third Quanzhen Patriarch who helped to transform the movement into a monastic order.

Quanzhen (Ch’üan-chen): Complete Perfection. Also translated as “Complete Reality” or “Completion of Authenticity.” Influential late medieval Daoist movement emphasizing asceticism, alchemical practice, and mystical experience. Established in the late twelfth century by Wang Zhe (Chongyang [Redoubled Yang]; 1113–70) based on a series of mystical experiences with immortals. Quanzhen is one of the major divisions of Daoism in the modern world. Primarily comprised of monastics committed to celibacy (no sex), sobriety (no alcohol), and vegetarianism (no meat).

“Religious Daoism”: Outdated and inaccurate “translation” of *daojiao*. Conventional, received Western name for organized Daoism. Problematically associated with the Tianshi (Celestial Masters) movement and its derivatives. Use of this term should be taken as indicative of inaccuracy and misunderstanding concerning Daoism.

Sacred: A comparative category referring to that which is defined as ultimately real by an individual or community. Relates to a variety of tradition-specific categories with distinctive defining characteristics and related theological views. In the case of Daoism, the sacred is the Dao. The Dao has four primary characteristics: Source of all existence; unnamable mystery; all-pervading sacred presence; and universe as cosmological process.

Sanqing (San-ch’ing): Three Purities. Also translated as Three Pure Ones. The highest “gods” of the Daoist pantheon, they include Yuanshi tianzun (Celestial Worthy of Original Beginning), Lingbao tianzun (Celestial Worthy of Numinous Treasure), and Daode tianzun (Celestial Worthy of the Dao and Inner Power; Lord Lao). Anthropomorphic representations of three primordial cosmic ethers. Associated with the Three Heavens of Yuqing (Jade Clarity), Shangqing (Highest Clarity), and Taiqing (Great Clarity), respectively.

Seven Perfected: Seven senior Shandong disciples of Wang Zhe (1113–70), the founder of Quanzhen (Complete Perfection) Daoism. The Seven Perfected include (1) Hao Datong (Taigu [Grand Antiquity]/Guangning [Expansive Serenity]; 1140–1212); (2) Liu Chuxuan (Changsheng [Perpetual Life]; 1147–1203); (3) Ma Yu (Danyang [Elixir Yang]; 1123–83); (4) Qiu Chuji (Changchun [Perpetual Spring]; 1148–1227); (5) Sun Buer (Qingjing [Clear Stillness]; 1119–82), the only female member; (6) Tan Chuduan (Changzhen [Perpetual Perfection]; 1142–1217). In early Quanzhen, Ma Yu and Qiu Chuji were especially influential as the second Patriarch and third Patriarch, respectively. In the later tradition, each senior first-generation adherent becomes associated with a particular lineage.

Shangqing (Shang-ch’ing): Highest Clarity. Major early medieval Daoist religious movement associated with the spirit-medium Yang Xi (330–86) and the Xu family. A series of revelations from the Shangqing heaven, including those of the former female Tianshi libationer Wei Huacun (251–334). The original manuscripts were later collected by Tao Hongjing (456–536). Early Shangqing placed primary emphasis on visualization and ecstatic experience.


Soteriology: Comparative category referring to discourse on, study of, or theories about actualization, liberation, perfection, realization, salvation, or however the ultimate purpose of human existence is defined. Usually relates to the culmination and projected goal of religious discipline. In the case of Daoism, the standard Daoist soteriology involves attunement with or realization of the Dao, though there are diverse Daoist paths to such an existential and ontological condition.

Sympathizer: Individuals who claim some affinity with a religious tradition without being committed to or formally associated with it. In the modern world, Daoist sympathizers are most often individuals engaging in appropriation and following hybrid, designer spirituality. Such individuals usually take bits and pieces, whether ideas, beliefs or practices, out of a larger Daoist religious framework. They often cling to various common misconceptions concerning Daoism.

Tao Hongjing (T’ao Hung-ching; 456–536): Descendent of Tao Kedou (d. 362) and advanced Shangqing adherent. Later compiler of original Shangqing manuscripts and author of the Zhen’gao (Declarations of the Perfected; DZ 1016). Also established a religious center on Maoshan (Mount Mao; near present-day Nanjing, Jiangsu), where he pursued alchemical and pharmacological studies.

Theology: Comparative category referring to discourse on, study of, or theories about the sacred. Includes various types of theology, with mutually exclusive, equally convincing
accounts of “reality.” Some types of theology include animistic (gods or spirits in Nature), monistic (one impersonal Reality), monotheistic (one personal god (“God”)), panenhenic (Nature as sacred), pantheistic (sacred in the world), panentheistic (sacred in and beyond the world), polytheistic (many personal gods), and so forth. Daoist theology focuses on the Dao, with the primary theology being monistic, panenhenic and panentheistic, and the secondary theology being animistic and polytheistic.

**Three Treasures:** Used by Daoists to discuss primary values, key dimensions of self, and/or central constituents of the Daoist tradition. The phrase first occurs in Chapter 67 of the *Daode jing*. In the fully developed Daoist tradition, under the influence of Buddhism, the external Three Treasures (*wai sanbao*) refer to the Dao, the scriptures, and the teachers, with the latter understood as specific teachers (embodied and disembodied), community elders, and the Daoist religious community as a whole. In internal alchemy (*neidan*), the internal Three Treasures (*nei sanbao*) refer to vital essence (*jing*), qi, and spirit (*shen*).

**Tianshi** (T‘ien-shih): Celestial Masters. Also translated as “Heavenly Teachers.” Refers to both an early Daoist movement (Celestial Masters) and its highest religious position (Celestial Master). The latter is a patrilineal position passed down through the Zhang family. As a movement, established by Zhang Daoling (fl. 140s CE), who received a revelation from Laojun (Lord Lao) in 142 CE. Also referred to as Zhengyi (Orthodox Unity). Emphasis placed on communal ritual activity. One of the major divisions of Daoism in the modern world. Primarily comprised of married, ordained priests and a larger lay community.

**Traditional Chinese culture:** Pre-modern Chinese culture. Also referred to as “traditional Chinese worldview.” Largely consists of Confucianism as primary value system with some elements from Daoism (indigenous), Buddhism (non-indigenous, then Sinified), and popular religion (syncretic). Includes a cosmology based on yin-yang and the Five Phases (“traditional Chinese cosmology”). Also includes cultural elements such as Chinese medicine, Fengshui, health and longevity practice (e.g. Qigong), martial arts (e.g. Taiji quan), and so forth. Many elements of traditional Chinese culture are often misidentified as Daoist.

**Wang Changyue** (Wang Ch’ang-yueh; Kunyang [Paradisiacal Yang]; 1622?–80): Late imperial abbot of Baiyun guan (White Cloud Monastery) and founder of the official Longmen (Dragon Gate) lineage of Quanzhen Daoism. Compiled its three precept texts: *Chuzhen jie* (Precepts of Initial Perfection), *Zhongji jie* (Precepts of Medium Ultimate), and *Tianxian jie* (Precepts of Celestial Immortality).

**Wang Zhe** (Wang Che; Chongyang [Redoubled Yang]; 1113–70): Founder of Quanzhen (Complete Perfection) Daoism. Said to have had a series of mystical experiences with the immortals Zhongli Quan (Zhengyang [Upstand Yang]; 2nd c. CE?) and Lü Dongbin (Chunyang [Pure Yang]; b. 798?). Eventually gathered disciples who transformed Quanzhen from a local religious community into a regional and national movement and then into a monastic order.

**Wuwei** (wu-wei): Non-action. Classical and foundational Daoist principle and practice emphasizing effortless activity. Non-intervention and non-interference. Life beyond contrivance. Living through one’s innate connection with the Dao. Often misunderstood as “doing nothing” or “going with the flow.”

**Wuxing** (wu-hsing): Five Phases. Also translated as Five Elements. The five main constituents and processes of the universe. Part of traditional Chinese cosmology incorporated into the foundational Daoist worldview. In combination with yin-yang, referred to as “correlative cosmology” and the “system of correspondences.” Consists of Wood (minor yang), Fire (major yang), Earth, Metal (minor yin), and Water
BASIC GLOSSARY

Xianren (hsien-jen): Immortal. Also translated as “ascendant” or “transcendent.” Later Daoist religious ideal, especially in Daoist alchemical movements and lineages. Someone who has completed alchemical transformation and who will survive physical death as a spirit-being.

Yin-yang: Yin-yang. The two primary cosmological principles or forces from a traditional Chinese perspective. Not polar opposites or antagonistic forces. Complementary and mutually dependent principles. Yin-yang have various associations (e.g. dark/light, heavy/light, cold/hot, earth/heaven, etc.) and relate to each other in patterns of dynamic interaction. Part of traditional Chinese cosmology incorporated into the foundational Daoist worldview. In combination with the Five Phases, referred to as “correlative cosmology” and the “system of correspondences.” Often misidentified as Daoist, this cosmology is best understood as “traditional Chinese cosmology” and a dimension of the “traditional Chinese worldview.” It is pan-Chinese.

Zhang Daoling (Chang Tao-ling; fl. 140s ce): Founder of the Tianshi (Celestial Masters) movement and the first Celestial Master. Said to have received a revelation from Laojun (Lord Lao) on Heming shan (Crane Cry Mountain; Dayi, Sichuan) in 142 ce. One of the most important leaders of early organized Daoism. In place of Laozi, often problematically identified as the “founder of Daoism.”


Zhuang Zhou (Chuang Chou; ca. 370-ca. 290): Zhuangzi (Master Zhuang). One of the senior teachers and elders of the inner cultivation lineages of classical Daoism. Attributed author of the Zhuangzi (Book of Master Zhuang). Zhuang Zhou’s teachings and writings are primarily contained in the Inner Chapters (Chapters 1–7).

Ziran (tzu-jan): Suchness. Literally meaning “self-so,” ziran has also been translated as “naturalness” and “spontaneity.” Being-so-of-itself. The state or condition realized (major yin). These have various associations and relate to each other in patterns of dynamic interaction. Often misidentified as Daoist, this cosmology is best understood as “traditional Chinese cosmology” and a dimension of the “traditional Chinese worldview.” It is pan-Chinese.
when one returns to one's innate nature, which is the Dao. In terms of classical Daoism, this is “accomplished” through the practice of wuwei. Often assumed in modern popular culture as the reproduction of habituation or following one's own desires (“going with the flow”).

**Zongjiao ju** (Tsung-chiao chü): Bureau of Religious Affairs. Branch of Chinese Communist bureaucracy in charge of supervision of members and activities of the five officially recognized religions (Buddhism, Catholicism, Daoism, Islam, Protestant Christianity) of contemporary China, including their infrastructure. Often works in concert, and often at odds with, the Bureau of Culture and Bureau of Tourism.
Notes

Prelims

As the names suggest, the so-called Period of Disunion as well as the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms are extremely complex and consist of many different dynasties. This also is true of the Song dynasty, which actually existed concurrently with three other “non-Chinese” dynasties: Khitan Liao, Tangut Xixia, and Jurchen Jin.

Chapter 1

My emphasis on Daoism as a religion requires reflection on the meaning of “religion, religions, religious” (see Smith 1998). On the most basic level, Daoism is a religion because it consists of adherents and communities orientating themselves towards the Dao, the sacred or ultimate concern of Daoists. We may also think of Daoism as a “symbol system” (Clifford Geertz) and in terms of the “seven dimensions of religion” (Ninian Smart), namely, doctrines, ethics, experiences, myths/narratives, practices, social organization, and materiality. In contrast to many presentations, the present account neither underemphasizes nor overemphasizes the importance of institution with respect to understanding the Daoist tradition.

Chapter 2

At the first appearance of Daoists’ names, I supply the Wade-Giles version of the name. In the case of ordained and lineage-based Daoists, I also supply the most common religious name of the person. After Daoism became a fully organized tradition, most ordained Daoists had their family surname (xing), their family given name (ming), sometimes various style-names (zi), and religious names (faming; daohao). For example, Sima Chengzhens Daoist name is Zhenyi (Perfect Unity).

Here we must recognize an omission, namely, what I would refer to as “Daoism-between-Daoism.” This term designates an unanswered question of what happened between the compilation of the Huainanzi (139 BCE) and the emergence of the Taiping (Great Peace) and Tianshi (Celestial Masters) movements in the mid-second century CE. That is, there is a missing period of roughly three hundred years of Chinese history in this and other accounts of Daoism.
Chapter 3

1 As discussed in Chapter 1, there has been much debate about the actual existence of Daoist communities during the Warring States period and Early Han. This includes a technical debate over the meaning of “school,” which is often used as a translation for jia. For some specialists, “school” implies a specific founder and disciples, associated text, sense of solidarity, and enduring social institution (Roth per. comm.; see also Roth 2003: 181-219). In the present book, the notion of classical Daoist “schools” is simply used to suggest social trends, intellectual tendencies, and soteriological trajectories. In the case of Daoism, there was an early religious community with a certain sense of solidarity.

2 If one were more daring, one might rather think of the Zhuangzi as a Daoist proto-hagiography.

3 Although the Zhang family has become nearly synonymous with Daoism, there have been other key and prominent families throughout Daoist history. In terms of early organized Daoism, some of these include the following: the Wei and Li families, also associated with the Tianshi movement; the Ge family, associated with the Taiqing and Lingbao movements; the Xu and Tao families, associated with the Shangqing movement; and the Ge and Lu families, associated with the Lingbao movement. Other, lesser-known early Daoist families include Bo, Kou, Li, Shen, Tian, Wang, Wei, and Yue (see also Mather 1979: 109). Michel Strickmann (1977: 40) has also reconstructed a genealogy of the Xu family based on the Zhen’gao (Declarations of the Perfected; DZ 1016).

4 In contrast, the contemporary Taiwanese Zhengyi ordination system consists of either seven or nine ranks. According to the Sanshan dixue pai (Lineage of the Three Mountains Blood Alliance), which is circulated in manuscript form, they are as follows: (1) Shangqing (highest); (2) and (3) Qingwei; (4) and (5) Zhengyi mengwei; and (6) and (7) Lingbao (see Saso 1972a: 106; 1978: 198; per. comm.). These various ranks have corresponding spirit registers (lü) and related to specific types of ritual training.

Chapter 4

1 Note also the existence of the text Liezi (Book of Master Lie; DZ 733), which incorporates material from the Zhuangzi and which most likely dates to around the third century CE.

2 Here guan (“abode”) is a different character than the later guan (“observatory”). The former is the earliest designation for Daoist “monasteries,” which were set up by rulers or local officials to house one or several hermits. The latter term is a monastery in a more strict sense (i.e. a place where celibate religious live).

Chapter 6

1 Developing Paul Unschuld’s typology of Chinese medical history (Unschuld 1985), one may identify a number of diverse approaches to illness and their related
therapeutic responses in terms of distinct models. These include ancestral medicine, demonological medicine, naturalistic medicine, moralistic medicine, and soteriological medicine. Each one of these is associated with a particular cause of illness (ancestors, demons, climatic influences, moral transgression, suffering as an ontological given) and therapeutic response (recognition/pacification, exorcism/ritualistic intervention, harmonization/purgation, confession/religious intervention, elimination/liberation). Such approaches emerged during specific moments of Chinese history and are often associated with particular religious “traditions”: Shang dynasty (ca. 1550-1030 BCE)/ancestor worship; Zhou dynasty (ca. 1030-222 BCE)/wu (“shaman”)-oriented communities and Fangshi (“formula master”; magico-religious practitioner) lineages; Early Han dynasty (202 BCE-9 CE)/Cosmologists and Ruists (“Confucians”); Later Han dynasty (25-221 CE)/early Daoism; and Six Dynasties (265-581)/Buddhism. Such a linear historical mapping may suggest progression, but these diverse approaches to illness continued to coexist throughout Chinese history.

Chapter 7

1 This line is, in fact, more complex than my translation indicates. The line does not contain hun and po, but rather ying and po. There has been much debate about the meaning of ying. Although the contextual meaning remains obscure, in Chinese medicine ying (nutritive qi) is associated with hun and the liver, while wei (protective qi) is associated with po and the lungs. The point is to harmonize the ying and wei, the hun and po. The Heshang gong commentary also suggests that ying refers to hun, and this reading makes sense in terms of the notion of “embracing the One,” that is, maintaining unity.

2 Most of the so-called “Daoist sexual yoga practices” in circulation in the contemporary world are not Daoist. See Komjathy 2011b.

3 There has been some confusion in this regard concerning classical Daoist views, specifically with respect to the translation of shen. For example, in Chapter 13 of the Daode jing, we are told: “The reason why I have calamities is because I have a self (shen). If I did not have a self, what calamities would I have?” Although shen may mean body, here it more likely refers to a separate (constructed and habituated) self. We must avoid Hellenized Christian-influenced readings of shen as “body,” with the implication that there is a soul inside that physical shell.

Chapter 8

1 Other translations of de include “integrity,” “potency,” and “potentiality.” For some additional scholarly perspectives on the meaning of de see Waley 1958: 31–2;
Chapter 9

1 Many individuals have suggested that the category of “hallucinogen” be replaced with “entheogen” (lit., “god-spawning substance”), especially with respect to naturally occurring organic (not humanely synthesized) substances such as Peyote and Psilocybin mushrooms (see, e.g. Grof 2001; Smith 2003).

Chapter 10

1 The first line of the passage literally reads “to pant and puff, to hail and sip,” with the latter two characters generally used for exhaling and inhaling. These are probably four types of breathing. See Kohn 2008a: 56–8. I have left the characters untranslated in order to demonstrate the ways in which the passage anticipates the Six Sounds, which are discussed below.

Chapter 11

1 The first line of Chapter 10 of the Daode jing actually does not specifically refer to the ethereal soul (hun). I have followed the Heshang gong commentary in reading hun (“ethereal soul”) for ying (“encampment”). For the technical meaning of hun see Chapter 7 herein.

2 Note that Burton Watson, in his highly influential and generally reliable rendering of the text, has mistranslated qi as “spirit.” In the texts of classical Daoism, it is clear that qi is central, although the contextual meaning of the term, whether subtle breath or physical respiration, is open to interpretation. Following Watson, most non-specialists misinterpret the passage.

Chapter 13

1 In the passage, buxu refers to both approaching the altar and the recitation of the opening liturgical hymn chanted by the officiant or chief cantor (jingzhu).
Chapter 14

1 Interestingly, the Daqin (Roman) Pagoda, a seventh-century Nestorian Christian missionary site, is located about two miles west of Louguan tai and is visible from the surrounding landscape. Later, probably by the late eleventh century, the site was converted into a Buddhist temple.

Chapter 16

1 While Daoism, especially the Primitivist lineage of classical Daoism, clearly has some overlap with modern movements such as deep ecology, Neo-Primitivism, and “back-to-the-land” intentional communities, it is not completely anti-technological; Daoism is not a quasi-Luddite movement. Rather, generally speaking, Daoism has emphasized place-specific communities utilizing appropriate technology, that is, technology on a human scale and characterized by sufficiency. See, for example, Chapter 12 of the Zhuangzi, wherein a gardener responds to the offer of technological advance as follows: “Where there are machines, there are bound to be machine worries; where there are machine worries, there are bound to be machine heart-minds.”

2 Here “family resemblance” and “recognizibility” refer to the degree to which the observed phenomenon resembles its source-tradition or source-community.

3 At present, it is unclear how the organizations calculate membership. Some seem to mean committed members and supporters. Others seem to mean anyone who has some degree of association. In general, I have used the statistics supplied by the given organization.


Watson, James, and Evelyn Rawski, (eds) *Death Ritual in Late Imperial and Modern China*. Berkeley: University of California Press.


Index

180 Precepts see One Hundred and Eighty Precepts of Lord Lao
abstention 65, 166–7, 170–1, 176, 178–9, 220
abstention from grains see bigu
accommodation 305
adaptation 297, 305 see also innovation
Adept Lai 139
Adept Yu 139
adherence 14, 40–4, 49–50, 67–9, 72, 98–9, 146, 159, 222, 260, 265, 290, 312
adherents 3, 14, 40, 85, 225, 282, 317–18
aesthetics 72, 95, 249, 266, 279, 281–2, 297, 303, 305
affiliation 14, 39–60, 85, 146, 154, 227, 288, 312
affinity 43–4, 50, 72, 233, 252, 298
afterlife 138–42
agriculture 87, 170 see also grain
alchemy 12, 128, 131, 140, 176, 234, 267, 293 see also internal alchemy; external alchemy
alcohol 166, 172, 177, 179, 246, 249, 252 see also sobriety
altars 96, 118, 121, 135, 247, 249, 254, 258, 266, 275–6, 293–4, 298, 328
“American Daoism” 315
American Taoist and Buddhist Association 153, 315
an see temples
An Lushan 29
anatman 123, 137
ancestors 9, 44–5, 50, 56, 114, 126, 151, 167, 173, 245–6, 249, 258–60, 267, 273, 310, 327
ancestral halls 278
Andersen, Poul 307
animals 19, 64, 72, 87, 89–90, 99, 104, 113, 134, 150–1, 154, 159, 162, 166, 170, 175, 177, 179, 189, 197–8, 246 see also specific animals
animism 89, 110, 113–14
An Mo 187, 203 see also self-massage
announcements 244, 248, 251–2, 256, 259, 294
Anqi Sheng 51
anthropocentrism 104, 127, 162
anthropology 7, 307, 312, 317 theological understandings of 93, 123, 125, 131, 317 see also ethnography
aphorisms 46, 232, 287
apophatic meditation 21, 48, 128, 149, 190, 205–11, 317, 319 benefits of 210–11
indigenous Chinese terms for 206 stages of 209–10 see also meditation; shouyi; xinzhai; zuowang
appropriation 9, 305, 312, 320 see also fabrication
architecture 63, 67, 74, 105, 278, 295–8
art 281–6
artifacts 15, 281
asceticism 12, 21, 31, 39–40, 61, 64–7, 73, 124, 128–34, 168–73, 222, 251, 267, 269, 310
assimilation 305
Asociación de Taoísmo de España 313
Association Française Daoiste 131
associations 31–2 see also xiehui
Associazione Taoista d’Italia 313
astrology 126, 158–9
astronomy 85–6, 119, 126, 276
astrophysics 182
atonement 245, 248–9, 259
attunement 12, 18, 88, 92, 99, 113, 146, 149, 166, 172–3, 182, 184, 202, 241, 244, 321
audiences 70, 74, 96–7, 158, 249–51, 256, 294
auspicious sites 269, 274
auto-didacticism 95, 220
axes 90
Ba people 35, 44, 312
Baduan jin see Eight Brocades
Bagua see Eight Trigrams
Bai Yuchan 121
Baihui 109
Baiwen pian 31
Baiyun guan 33, 35, 58, 136, 238, 250, 276–8, 289, 293, 296, 308, 313, 317, 319, 322
bamboo see material culture
Bamboo Laozi see Guodian
banality 303
bajouan see precious scrolls
Baopuzi see Ge Hong
Baopuzi neipian vi, 25, 50, 120, 174–7, 211–12, 234, 266, 270, 319
boyi see shouyi
bathing see shouyi
Baudrillard, Jean 303
Buddhism 226, 288, 308–9, 311
and Chinese court politics 70–1
Chinese sacred sites of 77, 269, 272–3, 276, 279
Daoist influence on 137
as foil to Daoism 6, 18
Han conversion to 137, 275
in People's Republic of China 308
influence on Daoism 9, 26–9, 31, 44, 57, 67, 71, 73–4, 85, 98, 132, 137–8, 140, 152, 156, 178, 216, 232, 235, 237, 246, 248, 251, 319, 322
interactions with Daoism 73–4, 77, 269, 309
introduction to China 24
monastic dimensions of 73–4, 155–6, 178
as one of Three Teachings 33
and religious identity 41
as renunciant model 63, 67
worldview of 44, 71, 85, 88, 98, 123, 132, 137–8, 153, 237
Buddho-Daoist debates 71
Buliangyi 47
Bureau of Culture 306, 324
Bureau of Religious Affairs 75, 277, 306, 308, 323–4
Bureau of Tourism 277–8, 306, 324
burial see full-body interment

Bo Ya 284–5
body 86, 97, 109, 113, 115, 124, 131–2, 134, 137, 141, 168, 173–4, 177, 184, 195, 208, 216–17, 219, 221–2, 327
see also self
body maps 135, 297
body-beyond-the-body 97, 134, 216, 219
body-gods 124, 212–13, 245, 247, 256–7
Bohun Wuren 47–8
Bokwŏn kung 310
book printing 287–9
books see literature; manuscripts; texts
bowing 254, 294
Boxer Rebellion 238
Bozhou 28, 267, 278
breast massage 222
breathing 109, 188, 192–5, 210, 298, 328
see also respiratory techniques
British Taoist Association 314–15
Buddhism 226, 288, 308–9, 311
and Chinese court politics 70–1
Calvino, Italo 301
INDEX

Cai Lun 287
calendrics 23, 202, 245, 248, 251, 296
see also twenty-four nodes
calisthenics see Daoyin
calligraphy ix, 26, 56, 71, 95, 99, 226, 238,
251–2, 282–3, 286–9, 297, 318
Cambodia 308, 311
cantor 249, 252, 258, 292, 328
Cantos on Pacing the Void 283
Cao Can 51
Cao Cao 24, 69
carefree wandering 151, 285
Carpenter Shi 89
cavern-heavens see grotto-heavens
ce 238, 288
Celestial Drum 201, 203
Celestial Master (position) 23, 53, 68–70,
237, 307
Celestial Masters (movement) see Tianshi
celstial qi 103, 109
celibacy 32, 60, 71, 99, 133, 154, 156,
179, 220, 222, 320, 326
Center of Traditional Taoist Studies 315
see Quanzhen
Chan, Alan 51
Chang Tao-ling see Zhang Daoling
Changwuzi 47–8, 150
chanhui see atonement
chanting see recitation
charitable societies 309–10
charity 69, 154, 309 see also patronage
Chen Nan 121
Chen Rongsheng 307
Chen Tuan 121, 199, 202, 236, 272, 278–9
Chen Yingning 35, 308
Cheng-i see Zhengyi
ch'i see qi
Chi-hsia see Jixia
Ch'i-kung see Qigong
Chia, Mantak 285
Chifeng sui 199
China 10
Chinese (ethnicity) see Han (ethnicity)
Chinese (language) 4, 98, 226, 238, 251,
289, 304, 312, 317–18
Chinese Communist Party (CCP) 306
Chinese Daoism 3–4, 13, 41, 317–19,
passim
as source-tradition 304–5, 313, 315,
318–19
Chinese Daoist Association see Zhongguo
daojiao xiehui
Chinese Daoist Seminary see Daojiao
xueyuan
Chinese Healing Exercises 203
Chinese medicine 105, 108–9, 132–3, 166,
171, 174, 203, 216, 222, 285, 322, 327
Ching Chung Koon 309, 315
Ching Chung Taoist Association 315
Chinggis Qan 32
Chisongzi 197
Chongxu si 70
Chongxuan 29
Chongyang gong 15, 269, 278–9
Chongyang lijiao shiwu lun see Lijiao
shiwu lun
Chosŏn dynasty 311
Christianity 110, 252, 297, 308–9, 327, 329
Chu sanshi jiuchong jing 129–31
Ch'üan-chen see Quanzhen
Chuandao ji 31, 97, 120, 132, 153, 236
Chuang Chou see Zhuang Zhou
Chuang-tzu see Zhuangzi
chuanshou see ordination
Chuanshou jingjie 27, 250
chuantong 17
chujia 42 see also monasticism
Chunyang guan 279
Chuzhen jie 59, 160–1, 236, 253–4, 291, 322
cibei 255
Cihui tang 79
cinnabar 132, 176
cinnabar fields see elixir fields
Clarity and Stillness Order see Daoist
Foundation
clarity and stillness 65, 93–4
classic see scripture
classical Daoism 7–9, 11–12, 14, 18–22,
45–50, 62, 98, 102, 110, 121, 167,
170, 193, 227, 231, 244, 251, 317–18
and foundational Daoist values 87–95,
125, 146–51
and lineage 7, 45–50
misunderstanding of 5
and organized Daoism 9, 21–2, 50, 94,
156
as origin of the Daoist tradition 6
practices of 62–3, 170, 180, 189–90,
206–11, 317
as religious community 6–7, 19, 50, 62, 190
textual corpus of 7, 19–20, 318
worldview of 24, 65, 84, 87–95, 106, 111–12, 125, 138–40, 146–51
see also inner cultivation lineages
Cleary, Thomas 34, 172, 220, 236
clothing 74, 161, 253–4, 258, 290–3, 304
cloud-wandering 266, 291
Cold Food Powder 177
colonialism 9, 294, 305, 320
commentary 98, 217, 225
as Daoist practice 240–2
commitment ix, 40, 43, 48, 50, 58, 64, 69, 72–3, 83, 96, 145–6, 154–6, 233, 237, 260, 265, 303, 309
community ix, 3, 6–10, 11–12, 14, 17, 39, 46, 61–99, 141, 151–4, 225, 229, 244, 246, 260, 265–6, 275, 289–90, 297, 304, 313, 318, 326
Companions of the Way 285, 291, 298
Complete Perfection see Quanzhen
Complete Reality see Quanzhen
compost 127–8
conduct guidelines 156–62 see also ethics
confession see atonement
Confucianism 18, 22, 33, 41, 71, 92, 105, 147, 226, 288, 309, 311, 319, 322
Confucius see Kongzi
connection 14, 43–4, 52, 99, 109, 226, 266, 318
consciousness see heart-mind; psychology; spirit
consecration 248, 251, 298
conservation 88, 90, 154, 162, 181, 195, 222, 255
conspiracy of ignorance 9
contemplative reading 159, 229, 240
continuous tradition 7–10, passim
conversion 4, 43, 268, 310–11
Cook Ding 47, 63, 150
corporeal soul see po
correlative cosmology see Five Phases
cosmic renewal 244 see also jiao-offering
cosmocentrism 104
cosmogony 91, 101–5, 112, 115, 317
cosmological integration 21, 91, 113, 128–9, 166–7, 173, 215, 241, 244, 251
Cosmologists see Yin-yang jia
cosmology 5, 12, 24, 101, 105–9, 133, 155, 157, 171, 173, 192, 194, 216, 245–6, 273, 317–18 see also Five Phases; yin-yang
court protocol 247–8
Crane-Cry Mountain 23
creation see transformation
cremation 141 see also funeral practices
Crimson Dragon 181, 201, 222–3
Cui Hao 70
cultivation ix, 14, 20, 40, 86–8, 96, 99, 113, 136, 147, 150, 152, 162, 180, 189, 210, 241, 253, 260, 266, 283–4
Cultural Revolution 35, 304, 306, 308
culture 4, 298, 304, 312–13, 315, 318
Dadan zhizhi 132, 218
Dadong zhenjing 26, 226–7, 234, 234
Dahn Yoga 311
dan see elixirs
dance 243
dantian see elixir fields
Danyang yulu 65
dao see Quanzhen
as ancient Chinese concept 110
ancient Chinese pronunciation of 110
as Chinese character 110
and Daoism 3, 5, 110
as Daoist cosmological and theological concept 110
Daoist views of 112
daochang see enclosure of the Dao
and classical Daoism 14
Daoist interpretations of 240, 242
meditation according to 206–7
and “philosophical Daoism” 5
popular appropriations of 227, 236
in Tianshi 18, 21, 152
see also Laozi
Daode tianzun 85, 116 see also Laojun
Daode zhenjing guangsheng yi 30
Daode yuan 79
Daofa huiyuan 248
Daohui si 75
Daoism 3, 41, 45, 318, passim
and art 282
beyond the Chinese cultural
sphere 313–15
as bifurcated tradition 4–5
in the Chinese cultural sphere 308–12
in contemporary China 305–8
as continuous tradition 7–10, passim
Daoist views of 13–15
as daotong 319
definitional parameters of 4–10
as family 7–8
female participation in 42, 75–9
as global religion ix, 11, 35, 39, 303–15
historical origins of 4–10
historical periodization of 10–12
indigenous Chinese names for 4–10
interpretive frameworks for
understanding 10–13, 305
metaphors for understanding ix, 12,
14–15, 83, 304
in the modern world 303–15
popular constructions of 5, 9, 14, 41,
88, 220, 304, 311, 313, 320
revitalization of 11, 34, 304, 306, 310,
315
as state orthodoxy 28
as truncated tradition 6–7
as “world religion” 35
see also Chinese Daoism; global Daoism
Daoism Handbook xii, 36
Daoist 54, 85, 282, 285
as adherent of Daoism 14, 40–1
indigenous Chinese terms for 41–2, 76
see also specific technical terms
Daoist Canon see Dazoung
Daoist Foundation xii, 257, 315
Daoist Gate Wudang Arts 315
Daoist Studies 4, 6, 11, 15, 33, 50, 237–8,
252, 289, 307–8, 310, 318–19
Daoji si 75
daojia 5–7, 9, 14, 19, 22, 41, 49, 51,
318–19
daojiao 5–6, 9, 14, 41, 318–19
Daojiao xueyuan 308, 317
daojing see scripture
Daolu si 75
daqi 109, 113, 184, 194
daqi changcun 255
daoren 42, 317
daoshi 29, 42–3, 50, 191, 246, 251–2,
291, 317–18 see also clergy
Daoshi jushan xiulian ke 191
daoshu 8
Daoshu shier zhong 33, 236, 240
daotan see altars
daotong 319
Daoyin 187, 189, 272, 310–11, 314 see
also self-massage
Daoyin jing 194, 197–8
Daoyin tu 188–9
daoyou see Companions of the Way
Daozang 27, 33, 94, 159, 233, 237–40,
268, 288–9, 307, 319
numbering systems for 238–9
Daozang jinghua lu 239
Daozang jinghua 239
Daozang jiyao 239, 289
Daozang xubian 239
daozhang 42, 255, 317 see also clergy
Daozheng si 75
de 19, 57, 86, 91–2, 145–51, 190, 195,
210, 244, 319, 327–8
Dean, Kenneth 244
death 63–4, 126–7, 138–42, 174–5, 217,
227, 258, 273
Debord, Guy 303
decomposition 92, 124, 126–7, 138, 140
deities see gods
deep soldier 68–9
demonology 131, 151, 201, 327
demons 106, 114, 132, 294
Deng Xiaoping 11, 35, 306
desire 88–9, 94, 111, 137–8, 153–5, 196
devotionalism 32, 72, 117, 121, 205, 277,
281, 284, 310
Di 127
dietetics 13, 95, 131, 161, 165–84, 195, 220
alchemical approaches to 173–8
and food intake 165–8
INDEX

and qi ingestion 179–84
ascetic approaches to 168–73
monastic approaches to 169, 178–9
differentiation 102–4, 113, 317 see also Taiji; yin-yang
Dipper Mother see Doumu
discourse records 236, 284
disease see sickness
dissipation 138, 140
Diyi zunjun 213
doctrine 84, 87, 124, 145 see also values; worldview
dogs 113
Donghua dijun 121
dongtian see cavern-heavens
Dongtian fudi yuedu mingshan ji 273
doorsills 295
Doumu 33, 116, 259
Dragon Gate see Longmen
Dragon-Tiger Mountain see Longhu shan
Dragon’s Mouth 315
dreams 89–90, 131, 193, 285
drugs 173, 177, 328 see also herbology
Du Fu 283
Du Guangting 29, 77, 240, 246–7, 273
Du’e rangzai jing 259
dujiang see cantor
Dunhuang 239, 247, 283
Duren jing 118, 228–9, 235, 241
Dyer, Wayne 236 see also Popular Western Taoism
dying 139–42
dynasties xiii, 10, 34
early organized Daoism 22–8, 146, 151, 156
earth gods see locality gods
East Asia 34, 166, 308, 327
Eastern Orthodox Christianity 43
eating see dietetics
ecology 89, 127, 135, 146, 162, 171, 182, 329
egret 86
Eight Brocades 198–203
Eight Extraordinary Vessels 133, 188, 204, 218–19, 286
Eight Immortals 121, 200, 221, 277
Eight Trigrams 76, 217, 285, 292–3
ejaculation see semen; sex
elixir fields 85, 109, 130, 134, 136, 172, 181, 200, 203, 211–12
Elixir Flower Formula 177
elixirs 25, 129, 132, 181
embracement 15, 43, 85, 87, 91, 94–9, 105, 109, 113, 135, 146–8, 151, 153, 159, 173, 193, 195, 209, 221, 231, 243–4, 248, 281, 303, 321 see also self
embryonic respiration 173, 192–94, 222
emotionality 67, 92–3, 132, 149, 167, 172, 197, 206, 209, 218, 204
Emperor Gaozu (Tang) 310
Emperor Huizong (Song) 30
Emperor Ruizong (Tang) 76
Emperor Shenzong (Ming) 237
Emperor Taiwu (Toba-Wei) 70
Emperor Taizong (Song) 30
Emperor Taizu (Ming) 75
Emperor Wen (Han) 51
Emperor Wu (Han) 19
Emperor Wu (Liang) 73, 267
Emperor Xuanzong (Tang) 29
emperors 10 see also specific emperors
emptiness 21, 24, 30, 91, 133, 150, 160–1, 190, 206, 209, 218, 231, 294, 317, 231
enclosure of the Dao 256
Encyclopedia of Taoism xii, 36
energy see qi
environmentalism see ecology
epistemology 95, 112, 319
eremiticism 21, 27–8, 61–7, 71–3, 79, 84, 170, 251, 267, 269, 273, 278–9, 283, 326
Erxian an 276
establishing the foundations 153–4
etereal soul see hun
ethics 13, 24, 32, 67, 74, 85, 92, 106, 145–62, 191, 217, 222, 233, 244, 251, 305, 328 see also de; precepts
ethnicity 4, 35, 43–4, 69, 304, 312–13, 315, 318 see also specific ethnicities
ethnocentrism 13 see also Orientalism; Sinocentrism
ethnography 15, 41, 290, 307, 318 see also anthropology
INDEX 359

eunuchs 34, 136, 221
Europe 294, 313–15
evolution 113
excrencences 169, 171, 175, 177
exegesis see commentary; hermeneutics
exorcism 32, 69, 119, 151, 173, 187, 201, 248–9, 252, 294, 312, 327
experience 87, 94–9, 113, 192, 260
experiential confirmation 97–8
external alchemy 25, 27, 30, 129, 168–9, 173, 176, 216, 319
fabrication 305 see also appropriation
“facts” 3
Fafu kejie wen 161
Fajia see Legalism
family 5, 7, 9–10, 17, 40, 46, 52, 61, 67, 71–2, 141, 288, 307–9, 326 see also householders; specific families
Family of the Dao see daojia
family resemblances 194, 313, 329
Fangshi 21, 25, 50–1, 64, 129, 250–1, 327
fangshu 8
faqi see implements
fascicles see ce
fashi 32
Fashi jinjie jing 161, 168–9
fasting 166, 169–70, 172–3, 245, 249, 252
fasting of the heart-mind see xinzhai
female alchemy 76, 79, 205–6, 220–3
femininity 76, 94, 107, 149 see also gender; women
Feng Xiangu 79
Feng Xingzhao 314
Fengdao kejie 57, 250
Fengshui 295–6, 322
Fenli shihua ji 78
feudal superstition 34
firewood-gatherers 64
fish 90, 93, 151
fish-drum 254, 258, 294, 298
fishermen 64
Five Aggregates 124, 137
Five Animal Frolics 189, 198
Five Elements see Five Phases
Five Emperors 118, 184, 235
five flavors 165–7
Five Lingbao Talismans see Lingbao
wufu xu
Five Marchmounts 118, 184, 268–73
Five Patriarchs 31, 121, 259
Five Phases 105, 107–8, 157, 165, 292, 296, 318, 322 see also cosmology
five precepts 156–7, 160
Five Qi 172
Five Sprouts 182
five strong-smelling vegetables 166–7, 178–9
Five Thousand Character Classic see Daode jing
folios see ce
folk religion 33
folklore 90, 230
food see dietetics
foot-binding 34, 221
four divisions of Daoism 11–12
Four Hindrances 153
Four Modernizations 11, 35, 306
Four Supplements 238
freedom 90, 155
French Daoist Association see Association Française Daoïste
friendship 8, 67, 139, 158, 259, 284–5 see also Companions of the Way
Fu Yuantian 308
fudi see auspicious sites
Fukuoka, Masanobu 167
tuling 170
full-body interment 128, 141 see also funeral practices
funeral practices 128, 141, 248
Fung Loy Kok 297, 309, 315
Fung Ying Seen Koon 309
fuqi see qi ingestion
Fuqi jingyi lun 183–4, 190–1
gancao 175
Ganying pian 160
gaogong see officiant
“Gaoshan” 285
Gaoshi zhuan 51
Ge Chaofu 26, 234–5, 319
Ge family 51, 288
Ge Hong vi, 18, 25, 50, 120–1, 171, 174, 176, 211, 234–5, 266, 319
Ge Xuan 25–6, 50–1, 234, 319
Geertz, Clifford 83, 325
gender 76, 105–6, 113, 149, 207, 220, 222
genealogy see ancestors; lineage
Genghis Khan see Chinggis Qan
Gensang Chu 7, 47, 63, 151
INDEX

gengshen 171, 310
geomancy see Fengshui
ghosts 106, 114, 294
Gingko 175
Ginseng 175
global Daoism 4, 11–12, 13, 303–15, 319
spectrum of 305
globalization 11–12, 35, 304
God of Literature see Wenwchang
God of Medicine see Yaowang
God of Thunder see Leigong
goddesses 76, 116 see also specific
goddesses
gods 96, 114, 115–21, 124, 212, 216, 227, 234, 244–6, 251, 257, 282, 293 see also pantheon; specific gods
“going with the flow” 155, 322, 324
Goji berries see gouqizi
gong see temples
gongde see requiem
gongke see liturgy
gouqizi 170
Graham, A. C. 46
grain 69, 172, 176, 245 see also
agriculture
Great Clarity see Taiqing
Great Inception see Taichu
Great Peace (concept) 23, 30, 234
Great Peace (movement) see Taiping
Great Ultimate see Taiji
grotto-heavens 269, 273–4, 276
guan see observation; temples
Guangcheng 47, 50–1, 116, 150
Guangcheng yizhi 248
Guanyin 116, 119
Guanzi 20, 149, 167, 207, 209
guarding the One see shouyi
guigen 44, 91–2, 105, 113, 126, 151, 207, 227
Guo Xiang 46, 323
Guodian 46, 239, 287
guqin see qin
Gushe mountain 180, 266
gymnastics see Daoyin

Haedong sŏnp’asa 311
hagiography 50, 62, 77, 121, 171, 225, 235, 326
hair see topknots
hair-pinning ceremony 250

hairpins 250, 253, 290
Han (ethnicity) 35, 69, 71, 297, 304–5, 313
Han dynasty 6–7, 9, 10, 18, 22, 50–1, 68, 105, 116, 129, 147, 151, 180, 188, 228, 271, 275, 287, 319, 326
Hangu Pass 20, 267
hanshisan see Cold Food Powder
Hanzhong 51
Hao Datong 31, 199, 236, 278–9
hats 253, 258, 290
He Dejin 66
He Longxiang 222
He Xiang 121, 221
He Zhizhen 279
healing 22–3, 32, 55, 68–9, 119, 152, 166, 188, 191, 194–5, 197, 203–4, 220, 310, 326–7
Healing Tao 285, 313
health 24, 152, 165–7, 187–92
heart-mind 21, 65, 88, 91, 93, 97, 124, 131, 141, 147–50, 179, 206–11, 222, 232, 254–5, 258, 317, 329 see also
psychology
heche see Waterwheel
heel breathing 192–3
Heming shan 23, 54, 268, 275, 277, 323
Hengshan 56, 77, 79, 271–2
herbology 131, 165–6, 169, 173–5, 327
see also specific herbs
hermeneutics 13, 98, 240 see also
commentary; scripture study
hermits see eremiticism
Heshang gong 21, 50–1, 240, 327–8
heshouwu 175
hexagrams 217
Highest Clarity see Shangqing
Hinduism 125
Historical Companion to the Daozang xii, 239
Hong Kong 35, 79, 272, 297, 305–6, 308–10
Hong Kong Taoist Association 309
horses 90
Hsien Yuen 153–4
Hsüan-hsüeh see Xuanxue
Hu Fuchen 306
Hua Tuo 198

_Huainanzi_ 9, 20, 50, 102–3, 209, 240–1, 273, 325

_huandu_ see meditation enclosure

Huang Shizhen 314

Huang Shunshen 32

Huang-Lao 11, 22, 51, 283

_Huang-Lao boshu_ 209

Huangdi 11, 22, 197

_Huangdi neijing_ 285

Huangjin 23

see also Taiping

_Huanglu dazhai yi_ 247

_Huanglu zhai yi_ 247

_Huangting jing_ 26, 134, 212–13, 228, 234, 236, 240, 283

Huashan 99, 121, 199, 236, 266, 269, 272–3, 277, 279, 308

_Huashan shier shuigong zongjue_ 199

Huayang guan 71

_Huiming jing_ 218–19

Huizi 92

_hun_ 114, 125–6, 141, 206, 217, 259, 327–8

_huo siren mu_ see Tomb for Reviving the Dead

_huojù_ 42

Huxian 15, 65–6, 269

Huizi 47, 62, 150

hybrid spirituality 9, 305, 311, 313, 320–1

hygiene 162, 195, 245, 249, 252–3

Hyunmoon Kim 311

Hyunoong Sunim 311

I Ching Dao 286

_I-ching_ see Yijing

iconography 116, 118–20, 286

ideas see doctrine; philosophy; worldview

identity 14, 40–4, 98, 154, 304, 312 see also self-identification

illness see sickness

immortal bones 72

immortal embryo 30, 134, 216, 218–19

Immortal Sisters 220


Immortal Sisters 220


Types of 120–1

imperial examinations 29, 75

implements 74, 293–4

incense 255, 294

incense burner 135, 247, 249, 256–7

inclusion 10, 14, 39–40, 57, 72, 76

Indonesia 308, 311

initiation 29, 69, 244–5, 260

innate nature 45, 88, 90–3, 138, 147, 149, 153, 175, 210, 241, 255, 324

inner cultivation lineages 5–6, 7–8, 11–12, 17, 19, 46–50, 62, 91, 98, 110, 128, 147, 150–1, 189, 227, 244, 317–19

see also classical Daoism

inner observation 86, 135, 205

inner power see _de_

innovation 305 see also adaptation


instruments see implements; material culture; music

intact culture ix, 15, 307

interiority 62


history of 11, 28, 30, 32–3, 172

influences on 28, 30

lineages of 30–1, 121, 200, 218


and ritual 260

worldview of 91, 97, 106–7, 109, 124, 132–4

International Daoism Day 313

Internet xvii, 14, 41, 320

interpretive legacies 3–7

intoxicants see alcohol; drugs

investiture see initiation; ordination

invocations 182–4, 192, 247–8, 253–4, 259, 271

“Inward Training” see “Neiye”

Italian Taoist Association see Associazione Taoista d’Italia

Jade Emperor see Yuhuang

Jade Nectar see saliva

Japan 294, 308, 310

Ji Kang 64, 285

Ji Xian 62
INDEX

Jian Wu 48, 86
Jianfu gong 277
Jiang Weiqiao 219
Jiao sandong licheng yi 247
jiao-offering 247–50, 256–7, 309
Jie Yu 48, 86
Jieyuan bazui jing 259
ji ji ru lüling 252
ji ju see libationers
Jin zhenren yulu 96
jing see scripture
jing see stillness
jing see vital essence
Jingming 32, 247
jingshi see pure chamber
Jinguan yusuo jue 181
jingzuo 206, 314, 317
Jinlian 31
Jinlian xiangzhuan 66
Jinque dijun sanyuan zhenyi jing see
Sanyuan zhenyi jing
Jinque dijun wudou sanyi tujue see
Wudou sanyi tujue
Jinye jing 234
jiuchong see Nine Worms
Jiudan jing 234
jiugong see Nine Palaces
Jixia Academy 22, 51
juan 237, 288
Juquezi 48
Jurchens 31
jushi 42
kaiguang see consecration
karma 44, 97–8, 137–8, 246, 328
Khubilai Khan see Qubilai Qan
Kirkland, Russell 10
knots 88, 210
Ko Hung see Ge Hong
Koguryô 310
Kohn, Livia 188, 203
Kongzi 19–20, 48, 63
Korea 44, 308, 310–11
Koryô dynasty 310
Kôshin cult 310
Kou Qianzhi 25, 70, 73, 268
Kuksôn to 311
Kundao 42, 76, 220, 251
Kundao college 272
Kunlun 21, 115, 129, 134
Kuyu mountains 269
laboratory alchemy see external alchemy
Lady Wei see Wei Huacun
Lagerwey, John 307
landscape ix, 12, 15, 72, 86, 99, 124,
134–5, 274, 279, 281, 304–5
language 44, 93, 111–12, 217, 229, 255,
287, 311–12, 317 see also Chinese
(language)
Lao Dan 8, 20–21, 47, 63, 151, 319
Lao Tan see Lao Dan
Lao-tzu see Laozi
Lao-Zhuang 234 see also classical Daoism
Laogong, 204
Laojun 22–3, 25, 279, 43, 50–1, 54,
69–70, 115–17, 226, 267–8, 275,
318–19, 322–3
Laojun jiejing 27, 74, 157
Laojun jinglü 24, 94, 156–7, 162
Laojun yinsong jiejing 25
Laos 308, 311
Laoshan 277
Laozi 18–20, 28, 43, 58, 71, 134–5, 278,
282, 318–20
“biography” of 19–20, 267
and the Daode jing 19–20, 22, 228
as Laojun 22–3, 28, 116
and Louguan 27, 73, 121, 231, 277
as pseudo-historical 19–20
in Quanzhen 121
and the Tang dynasty 246
transformation of 134, 140–1
transmission to Yin Xi 27, 73, 140–1,
231, 278
see also Lao Dan
Laozi bianhua jing 50
Laozi ming 23
Laozi shuo fashi jinjie jing see Fashi jinjie
jing
Laozi xiang’er zhu 21, 24, 94, 115, 152,
156, 233
Laozi zhigui 51
Laozi zhigui 64
INDEX

later organized Daoism 28–34
lay people see householders
Le Guin, Ursula 236 see also Popular Western Taoism
lead 176
Lee, Ilchi 311
Lee Zhiwang 312
Legalism 18, 51, 147
Legge, James 4
Leggean view of Daoism 4–5
Leibu 32
leifa see thunder magic
Leigong 119, 259
Leigu tai 314
Lesser Celestial Cycle 133, 181, 218, 220
Li Boyang see Laozi
Li Daochun 236
Li Er see Laozi
Li family 28, 51, 246, 267
Li Hong 28
Li, Juan 285–6
Li Lingyang 66
Li Yuhang 308
Lian Shu 47–8
lianzi 170
libationers 24, 68, 151, 157, 245
Libu 75
Lie Yukou 47–8, 50, 62–3, 150
Lieyang 76
Lingshu ziwen 234
Liu Biangong 64–5
Liu Chengyin 136
Liu Chuxuan 31, 236, 240
Liu Haichan 121
Liu Huayang 218–19
Liu Tongwei 236
Liu Xiaogan 46, 306
Liu Yiming 33, 172, 236, 240
Liu Yongguang 247
Liu Yu 32
Liu-Song dynasty 71, 237, 247
“Liushui” 285
Liuzi jue see Six Sounds
livelihood see work
locality gods 89, 259
Logicians see Mingjia
longevity 131, 180, 187–92
longevity techniques see Yangsheng
Longhu shan 30, 34–5, 277–8, 307
ordination ranks of 59
see also Quanzhen
Longmen dong 33, 278–9
Lord Lao see Laojun
Lord Sa 259
Louguan 27–8, 30, 73–4, 121, 157, 231, 267–8, 275–8, 295, 320, 329
Lü Dongbin 30, 53, 57, 115, 121, 200, 216, 259, 268, 282, 309–10, 322
Lu family 288
Lu Xiujing 6, 18, 27, 71, 83, 121, 235, 237, 245, 247, 268, 319–20
Luofu zhinan 309
Luotian 292–3
Luoyang 79
lushi 42

Lingbao tianzun 85, 116
Lingbao wufu xu 27, 131, 170, 175–6, 235, 256
Lingguang shengmu 76
Lingshu zivven 234
Liquan 269
Lishi tongjian houji 79
literacy 229–30, 251
literature 225, 283–4, 318 see also specific genres
liturgy 257, 282 see also ritual
Liu Biangong 64–5
Liu Chengyin 136
Liu Chuxuan 31, 236, 240
Liu Haichan 121
Liu Huayang 218–19
Liu Tongwei 236
Liu Xiaogan 46, 306
Liu Yiming 33, 172, 236, 240
Liu Yongguang 247
Liu Yu 32
Liu-Song dynasty 71, 237, 247
Lu family 288
Lu Xiujing 6, 18, 27, 71, 83, 121, 235, 237, 245, 247, 268, 319–20
Luofu zhinan 309
Luotian 292–3
Luoyang 79
lushi 42

Lingbao Catalogue 27, 235, 320

and early organized Daoism 6, 11, 18, 25, 52, 83
history of 26–7, 138, 234
key scriptures of 235
ritual in 245–7, 256
worldview of 26–7, 116–17, 138, 228–9

Lingbao Catalogue 27, 235, 320
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Page(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lushi chunqiu</td>
<td>20, 209, 284–5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luzu</td>
<td>see Lü Dongbin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ma Xigong</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ma Yu</td>
<td>31, 65–7, 78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>macrobiotics</td>
<td>see dietetics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>magic</td>
<td>244</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mahâvairocana</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mair, Victor</td>
<td>46, 328</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaysia</td>
<td>308, 311</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manchus</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mandate of Heaven</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>manuscripts</td>
<td>7, 20, 46, 188, 226, 238, 283, 286–90 see also specific manuscripts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mao brothers</td>
<td>268, 277</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mao Xuanhan</td>
<td>199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mao Zedong</td>
<td>35, 306</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maoshan</td>
<td>26, 30, 71–3, 75, 268, 276–8, 307, 321</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>maps</td>
<td>ix, xviii, 15, 88, 92, 106, 124, 129, 132, 135, 213, 216</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>martial arts</td>
<td>34, 119, 322</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marxism</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>massage</td>
<td>see Anmo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>material culture</td>
<td>46, 63, 74, 238, 281–8, 306, 308, 318 see also specific types</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mawangdui</td>
<td>46, 180, 188, 239, 283, 287</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mazu</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>meat</td>
<td>see slaughtered animal flesh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>medicine</td>
<td>see Chinese medicine; healing meditation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>meditation enclosure</td>
<td>63–7, 276</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mediumship</td>
<td>12, 26, 54–5, 62, 182, 309</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>memorials</td>
<td>see petitions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>menopause</td>
<td>223</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>menstruation</td>
<td>133, 221–3 see also vital essence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mercury</td>
<td>176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>meridians</td>
<td>see organ-meridian system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>metaphors</td>
<td>ix, 12, 14–15, 17, 83, 86–7, 105, 127, 135, 281, 304</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>metaphysics</td>
<td>see cosmology; theology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Method of Mist Absorption</td>
<td>182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Microcosmic Orbit</td>
<td>see Lesser Celestial Cycle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>millenarianism</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>millennialism</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Min Yide</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Min Zhiting</td>
<td>283, 308</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>minerology</td>
<td>166, 169, 176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ming</td>
<td>see life-destiny</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ming dynasty</td>
<td>33, 75, 218, 220, 237, 239, 289, 319</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minghe yuyin</td>
<td>79, 220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mingjia</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mining site</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministry of Rites</td>
<td>see Libu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>missionization</td>
<td>14, 305, 320</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mitchell, Stephen</td>
<td>236 see also Popular Western Taoism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mixin</td>
<td>see feudal superstition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>models of practice</td>
<td>12–13, 21, 24, 27, 32, 72, 87, 90, 120, 145, 227, 275 see also specific models</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>modernity</td>
<td>303–15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>monasteries</td>
<td>see temples</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in China</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>as Daoist social organization</td>
<td>53–4, 73–5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>defining characteristics of</td>
<td>53–4, 99, 156, 320</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>history of Daoist forms</td>
<td>27–8, 32, 34, 54, 137, 157, 218, 267–8, 275</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and ordination</td>
<td>57–60, 250, 252</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>see also chujia</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mongols</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>monism</td>
<td>110, 113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>morality</td>
<td>see ethics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>morality books</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mountain Flower Excrescence</td>
<td>178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mountains</td>
<td>ix, 72, 86, 99, 113, 120, 135, 137, 170, 212, 265–6, 270, 275, 285–6, 296, 308 see also specific mountains</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>movement awareness</td>
<td>see Daoyin; Yangsheng</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>movement studies</td>
<td>243</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INDEX

movements 11, 17–18, 39, 45, 233
see also specific movements
Moy Lin-shin 309
Mui Ming-to 309
Muping 66, 78, 269
museums 15, 281–2, 294
mushrooms see excrescences
music 249, 258, 284
Mysterious Warrior see Xuanwu
Mystery see Dao
mythical experience 8, 40, 49, 56–7, 63, 94, 112, 128–9, 140, 182, 190, 192, 194, 209, 219, 265, 268–9, 319
mysticism see mystical experience
names 53, 59, 111
Nanbo Zikui 47–8
Nanguo 47
Nanguo Ziqi 47–8
Nanhua 228, 323 see also Zhuang Zhou
Nanhua zhenjing 14, 29, 227–8, 323 see also Zhuangzi
Nanjing zuantu jujie 135–6
Nanyue see Hengshan
Nanyue furen see Wei Huacun
Nanzong 11, 31, 121, 216, 236, 259
Nationalists 11, 306–7
Naturalists see Yinyang jia
naturalness see ziran
Nature 86, 101–2, 110, 113, 124, 244
neidan see internal alchemy
Neidan jiyao 97
neiguan see inner observation
“Neijing tu” 135
Neijing tu 136–7
Neiwai gong tushuo jiyao 199, 202, 221
“Neiye” 148–9, 167–8, 207–11
Neo-Primitivism 329
Neo-Taoism (so-called) see Xuanxue
New Code 25, 70
“New Confucianism” 307
“New Daoja” 307
Nie Que 48
Nine Palaces 134
Nine Practices 94, 233
Nine Worms 129–31
Ningfengzi 197
Ninghai 66, 78
nirvana 137
Niwan 213–14, 216, 223, 253
non-action see wuwei
non-contention 93
non-knowing 93, 112, 206
nonbeing 8, 30, 102, 108, 114, 231, nondifferentiation 102–4, 113, 118, 149, 190, 231, 246, 317
North America 4, 6, 11, 35–6, 294, 313, 315
Northern Celestial Masters 25, 27, 70, 73, 157, 267
Northern Dipper 119, 214–15, 294
Northern School see Beizong
Northern Zhou dynasty 74
novels 198
nüdan see female alchemy
Nüdan hebian 222–3
nüguan 42, 76, 251
numinosity 18, 26, 57, 95, 109, 112, 135, 147, 160, 173, 184, 210, 223, 226, 251, 274, 283, 298, 319, 321
numinous abilities 94, 97–8, 121, 205, 212, 219
Numinous Treasure see Lingbao
Nüyu 47–8, 76, 150
observation 86, 90, 101, 111, 154, 171, 193, 241, 276
offerings 121, 255, 298
officiant 248–9, 252, 292, 294, 328
old growth forest ix, 15, 83
One see Dao
One Hundred and Eighty Precepts of Lord Lao 157–9
One Straw Revolution 167
ontology 95, 112, 146, 155, 169, 184, 217, 320
opening the radiance see consecration
operational alchemy see external alchemy
orality 20, 98, 230, 287
“ordinary Daoists” 39, 41, 69, 76, 90, 96, 207, 306
ranks of 58–9, 292
ordination certificates 60, 75, 251
organ-meridian system 97, 109, 133, 181, 184, 196, 202, 212, 218, 271 see also Eight Extraordinary Vessels
organicism 128, 162, 167, 328
organized Daoism 8–9, 11–12, 14, 46, 53, 228, 249, 268, 275, 318 see also early organized Daoism; later organized Daoism; specific movements
Orientalism 9, 13, 305, 321
orientation 29, 57, 73, 84–7, 159, 166, 169, 226, 265–6, 298
orienteering 86
Orthodox Daoism in America 315
Orthodox Judaism 43
Orthodox Unity see Zhengyi
orthodoxy 22, 25, 28, 43, 83, 246, 260
painting see art; material culture
Pan Shizheng 283
panenhenism 110, 113, 274
panentheism 110, 113, 274
pantheon 33, 78, 114, 115–21, 124, 246, 321
paper see material culture
paraphernalia see implements
parasitology 131, 172, 176
parishes 23, 68, 275
participation 4, 10, 14, 24, 39–40, 43, 57, 61–2, 69, 75–9, 86, 93, 95, 99, 140, 225, 244, 265, 290, 293
patriarchs 29–30, 74, 121, 190–1, 199–200, 226, 236, 273, 279, 283, 309, 320–1
patriarchy 76, 79, 132
patronage xxiii, 28, 34, 41, 70–1, 75, 237, 246, 248, 255, 267–8, 276, 297, 306
peaches 22, 115, 255
Peng-bird 151
Penglai 21, 97, 129
Pengzu 189, 196, 197
Pengzu lun 196
People's Republic of China 34, 75, 277–8, 304, 306
five official religions of 306, 324
Perfect Warrior see Zhenwu
Perfected 54–5, 76–8, 96–7, 107, 114, 120–1, 215, 229, 234, 273, 292, 323
performing arts 243
perplexity 3, 5, 12, 101, 140, 285
personhood 93, 95, 123, 125, 180, 216, 288, 303, 317 see also self
petitions 24, 121, 244, 246, 248, 255, 293, 298
pharmacology see herbology; minerology
Philippines 308, 311
"philosophical Daoism" (so-called) 5–6, 9, 19, 41, 318, 320 see also classical Daoism
philosophy 5–6, 93, 95, 112, 145, 159, 306, 328 see also epistemology; ontology
physicality see embodiment
pilgrimage 72, 75, 121, 146, 265–6, 272, 291, 295
pine trees 89, 170–1
place ix, 43, 61, 64, 67, 98–9, 161, 265–9, 293, 303 see also sacred sites; specific places
po 114, 125–6, 141, 206, 217, 327–8
poetry 53, 59, 62, 65, 225, 235–6, 241, 283–4
poke root see shanglu
politics 28, 32, 70–1, 75, 87, 117, 246, 270, 275–6, 278, 305, 310–11
polytheism 110, 113–14
popular culture 5, 9, 14, 41, 88, 117, 227, 236, 304, 309
Popular Western Taoism 227, 236, 320
postcolonialism 13–15
postmodernism 13–15
postratal qi, 109
posture 181, 188, 194, 196–8, 203, 205, 208–9, 210, 215, 221, 254
practice 8, 87, 93, 94–9, 140, 145–261, 265–266 see also specific practices
Prajñāpāramitā 24
prayer see meditation; ritual
prayer-bell 254, 258, 294, 298
precepts 94, 146, 152, 155–62, 178, 191, 225, 233, 236, 241, 245, 250–1, 319 see also conduct guidelines; specific precepts
precious scrolls 33
prenatal qi 109
presence 91, 109–13, 193, 212, 227, 283, 298
priesthood see clergy
Primitivists 22, 46, 69, 84, 170, 304, 329
principles see values
Profound Learning see Xuanxue
prostration see bowing
psychology 91, 93, 95, 128, 132–3, 137–8, 153, 156, 172, 197, 201, 209–10, 236 see also heart-mind
INDEX

pu 62, 88–9, 149
pudu see universal salvation
pure chamber 24, 151, 176, 244, 276
purity 167, 173, 176, 227, 245, 249, 252, 258
qi 85, 102–3, 108–9, 114, 126, 133, 168,
172, 174, 179, 187, 192, 195, 201,
206–8, 218, 253, 273, 287, 320 see also specific types
Qi (state) 51
qi ingestion 172, 180, 182, 187, 191, 196,
213, 234
qi of the Dao see daoqi
Qianjin yifang 177
Qigong 188, 198, 202, 212, 219, 285, 306,
322 see also Daoyin; Yangsheng
qin 284
Qin dynasty 10, 18
Qing dynasty 10, 33–4, 71, 75, 218, 220,
239, 276, 289, 306, 309, 319
Qingcheng shan 268, 278
Qingdao 99
qingjing see clarity and stillness
Qingjing 79
Qingjing jing 111, 116, 235–6, 240, 259
Qingtan 234
Qingtian ge 241
Qingwei 32, 76, 248
Qingyang gong 276–7, 289
qipo see Seven Po
Qiu Chuji 31–3, 58, 236, 241, 259, 278,
282, 319–20
Qiuzi 51
qizhen see Seven Perfected
Quanzhen 17, 34–5, 41–2, 53–4, 56, 58,
76, 78–9, 121, 153, 199, 216, 220,
241, 267–8, 283–4, 289–91, 295,
306–8, 317, 319–20, 322
contemporary liturgy of 59, 109, 121,
257–60
history of 31–4, 57, 64, 71, 74
important modern sacred sites of 278
key scriptures of 235–6
and later organized Daoism 11
in the modern world 12, 79, 178, 252,
267, 275, 277, 279, 307–8
practices of 60, 64–7, 74–5, 153, 178–9,
181, 218, 253–4, 290, 320
worldview of 83, 153, 172, 232–3,
235–6
Quanzhen gongke 258
Quanzhen guan 279
Quanzhen ji 66
Quanzhen qinggui 74
Qubilai Qan 32
Queen Mother of the West see Xiwangmu
quiet sitting see jingzuo
quietism 13
Rao Dongtian 32
reading see contemplative reading;
scripture study
realgar 176
“reality” 83–4, 93, 101, 103, 244
received views 5–6
recitation 231–2, 249–51, 257–8, 292,
328
recognizability 313, 329
reeducation 34
registers 42, 69, 97, 245, 247, 250, 260,
312
reincarnation 44, 137–8, 153, 246
religion 4, 6, 8, 34, 49, 226, 325
religious literacy 14, 305
“religious Daoism” (so-called) 5–6, 9, 318
see also organized Daoism
Religious Studies xi, 13, 318
Ren Farong 308, 320
Ren Ziyuan 237
renunciation 63, 65, 72, 78 see also
asceticism
repentance see chanhui
Republic of China 10, 34–5, 306
Republcations see Nationalists
requiem 247–9
respiratory techniques 173, 192–5, 210,
311
indigenous Chinese names for 192
responsibility xii, 40, 42–43, 67, 69, 99,
146, 152, 154, 157, 159, 226, 255
returning to the Source see guigen
revelation 18, 23, 26, 40, 54–6, 76, 78,
226–7, 229, 235, 266, 268, 287, 319
see also specific revelations
reverting the radiance 135, 223
revisionist views 6–10, passim
revitalization 9, 11, 34–5, 304, 306, 310,
315
ritual studies 243
INDEX

daily 252–5, 313, 319
history of 244–8
implements for 294
in modern Daoism 256–60
types of 248–52
see also specific rituals
ritualization 243
River Cart see Waterwheel
robes see clothing
Robinet, Isabelle 184, 213
Robson, James 269
Roman Catholic Christianity 73
Roth, Harold 7, 19–20, 45–6, 209–10, 319
Ruan Ji 64
Rujia see Confucianism

sacred sites ix, 4, 14–15, 40, 117, 265–9, 282, 293, 295, 304, 307
geographical schema for 269–75
see also specific sites
sages 22, 69, 86–7, 92, 150, 190, 230, 321
saliva 133, 180, 213, 217
saliva swallowing 172, 179, 203, 214
sanshi see Three Treasures
sancai see Three Powers
Sanchong zhongjing 130
sandong see Three Caverns
Sandong jingshu mulu 27, 237
sanguan see Three Bureaus
sanguan see Three Passes
Sanguo zhi 151–2, 198
Sanhuang 18, 238
Sanhuang wen 270
sanjun see Three Hun
sanjiao see Three Teachings
sanjiao heyi 33
sanpeng see Three Pengs
Sanqing 85, 97, 116–18, 216, 259, 279, 292–4, 297, 310, 319, 321
sanshi see Three Death-bringers
santan see Three Heavens
Santian neijie jing 233
Sanyuan zhenyi jing 214–15
Saso, Michael 257, 260, 289, 307
Schafer, Edward 283–4
Schipper, Kristofer 135, 239, 307
scholasticism 29, 240, 273
scripture 4, 14, 17–18, 29, 43, 56, 85, 98, 116, 158, 225–42, 250, 258–9, 286–90, 317–19
Daoist views concerning 226–9
see also literature; manuscripts; texts; specific scriptures
scripture study 159, 191, 225–42
importance of 229–33
scrolls see juan
seals 248
seasonal attunement see cosmological integration
seclusion 62–4, 66, 77, 135, 150, 176, 231, 249, 266, 276
secrecy 217
seed people 24, 68
self 45, 86, 95, 123–42, 175, 216, 258, 286, 293, 303, 327
ascetic and alchemical views of 128–34
Buddhist-influenced perspectives on 137–8
composite views of 125–8
inner landscape of 134–7
see also anthropology; body; embodiment; personhood
self-divinization 21–2, 97, 114, 120, 173–4, 181–2, 184, 205
self-identification 14, 24, 41, 59, 98, 202, 285, 290, 297
self-massage 197, 200, 203–4
semen 133, 154, 220 see also vital essence
sensory engagement 92
Seven Perfected 31, 53, 66, 78, 121, 220, 236, 259–60, 320–1
seven periods of Daoist history 10–12
Seven Po 129–31
Seven Sages of the Bamboo Grove 64, 177 see also specific members
sex 77, 131, 133, 172, 196, 218, 220, 249, 252, 313, 327 see also celibacy
sexual yoga see bedchamber arts
shamanism 62, 89
shanglu 131, 170, 172–3, 175–6
Shangqing 17–18, 29–30, 41, 51–2, 54–6, 58, 71, 76–7, 85, 116, 210–14, 226,
INDEX

238, 246, 268, 272–3, 277, 283, 288, 321
and early organized Daoism 11, 17, 25, 52, 71
foundating revelations of 55–6, 77
history of 25–6
key scriptures of 26, 234–5
practices of 28, 109, 182, 190–1, 212–16, 321
revelations of 25–6
worldview of 109, 124
Shangqing gong 277
Shangshang Taiyi 213
Shangyuan furen 77
shanshu see morality books
Shaolin Gongfu 202, 273
Shaolin Temple 273
shen see spirit
shengdihuang 170
shengren see sages
Shengtian dedao jing 259
Shennong 197
Shennong bencao jing 174
shenwai shen see body-beyond-the-body
Shenxian shiqi jin’gui miaolu 197
Shenxian zhuai 25, 50–1, 171, 319
Shenxiao 32, 248
Sheyang zhenzhong fang 194
Shi Tai 121
Shidao 314
shifu 42, 54, 59, 96, 251, 255
shihu 175
Shiji 19, 22, 267
Shijing 314
shiye 54, 255
shouyi 206–8, 211, 214, 231, 317, 327
see also apophatic meditation
Shu 23, 67, 69
Shuojing tai 267 see also Louguan
sickness 106, 137, 151–2, 157, 174–5, 180, 182, 188, 191, 194, 198, 200, 203, 220, 244, 326–7
siddhi see numinous abilities
sihai see Four Hindrances
silk see material culture
Silk Laozi see Mawangdui
Sima Chengzhen 29, 121, 183, 190–1, 210, 273, 283, 285
Sima Qian 19
Sima Tan 19, 22
Siming 171
simplicity 62–3, 88–90, 149, 155, 195–6, 241, 247 see also pu
simulacra 303–4
Simulacra and Simulation 303
Singapore 308, 311–13
Singapore Taoist Mission see Taoist Mission of Singapore
Sinification 24, 275, 312, 322
Sinocentrism 13
Sinology 6, 31
sitting-in-forgetfulness see zuowang
Six Desires 132
Six Sounds 194, 328
Six Thieves 132
Six Vexations 153
Sixth Patriarch Zen Center 311
slaughtered animal flesh 117, 166, 179, 246, 249 see also blood; vegetarianism
Slaying the Crimson Dragon 222–3
sleep 139, 154, 193, 196, 272
Smart Ninian 5, 325
sobriety 60, 99, 166, 178, 220, 252, 320
social engagement 86
social organization 61–99, 312
Society of the Spectacle 303
somatic disciplines 243
Song dynasty 30–1, 68, 74, 132, 135, 153, 216, 220, 235, 247, 284, 288, 311, 320, 325
Songrongzi 47
Songsan 70, 268, 272–3, 283
Source see Dao
Southern Celestial Masters 25, 70–1
Southern School see Nanzong
space 281, 293, 295
Spanish Taoist Association see
Asociación de Taoísmo de España
species extinction 171
spirit 85, 133, 172, 179, 182, 218, 266 see also yang-spirit
spirit-writing 34, 309
spiritual capitalism 9, 311, 313
spiritual colonialism 305, 320
spiritual tourism 14, 313
spontaneity see ziran
INDEX

statuary see art; material culture
stillness 86, 91, 93, 149, 206–8, 210, 219, 255, 294, 317
storytelling see folklore
straw dogs 92
Strickmann, Michel 6, 312, 326
Strickmannian view 6
Subduing the White Tiger 222
suchness see ziran
suffering 137
Sun Buer 31, 76, 78–9, 220–1
Sun Mingrui 313
Sun Simiao 119, 177, 190, 193
Sun Youyue 71
Sundo 311
supernatural powers see numinous abilities
Sweet Dew see saliva
swords 249, 252
symbol system (Geertz) 63, 101, 325
sympathizers 9, 85, 282, 318, 321
syncreticism 33, 286, 309
system of correspondences see Five Phases

T’ai-chi ch’üan see Taiji quan
Taihu 102
Taiji 104–5, 173, 227 see also differentiation; yin-yang
Taiji quan 188, 278, 322
Taiqing 9, 11, 325
key scriptures of 233–4
Taiqing jing 23, 228, 233
Taiqing 11, 25, 50–2, 56, 71, 85, 116, 176, 211–12, 319
key scriptures of 234
Taiqing gong 99, 277, 308
Taiqing jing 234
Taiqing zhonghuang zhenjing see Zhonghuang jing
Taishan 119, 272
Taishang ganying pian see Ganying pian
Taishang laojun jinglū see Laojun jinglū
Taishi see Great Inception
Taiwan 35, 42, 52, 79, 252, 256, 260, 269, 305–9
Taiwan Daoist Association 307
Taiwei 173
taixi see embryonic respiration
talismons 245, 248, 251, 256, 270, 294
Tan Chuduan 31
Tan Zixiao 32
tan-t’ien see dantian
Tang Chun 240
Tao see Dao
Tao family 288
Tao Garden Health Spa 313
Tao Groups see Popular Western Taoism
Tao Kedou 55, 71, 321
Tao Qian 283
Tao Yoga see Healing Tao
tao-chia see daojia
tao-chiao see daojiao
Tao-ist see Popular Western Taoism
Tao-te ching see Daode jing
Tao-tsong see Daozang
Taoism see Daoism
Taoism and the Arts of China 293
Taoism of the Sage Religion 153–4
Taoist see Daoist
Taoist Health Institute 285–6
Taoist Mission of Singapore 312
Taoist Restoration Society 315
Taoist Studies Institute 315
Taoist Tai Chi Society 297, 315
Taoist Yoga (misnomer) see Daoyin; internal alchemy
tapping the teeth 180, 191, 201, 203, 258
TCM see Traditional Chinese Medicine
tea 166, 179
teachers 5, 17, 21, 40, 42–4, 48–9, 52, 60, 76, 85, 95–6, 98, 113, 158, 197–8, 211, 217, 231, 251, 287, 291 see also shifu
teachings 5, 17
Techniques of the Dao see daoshu
temples 117, 135, 161, 251, 265–79, 282, 288, 295–8, 308, 326
indigenous Chinese terms for 276 see also specific temples
Ten Demons 132
Ten Deviances 153
Ten Precepts of Initial Perfection 160–1
ten thousand things 104, 111
INDEX

Ten Virtues of Celestial Immortality 161
terrestrial qi 103, 109
texts 5–7, 21, 226, 233
extra-canonical collections of 239, 289
Thailand 308, 311, 313
theatre 198, 243
theocentrism 104
theocracy 23–25, 67, 70, 73, 234, 268
theology 5, 91, 101, 110–15, 131, 171, 184,
192, 216, 246, 273, 318, 321
types of 110
Thief Zhi 47, 151
thought see doctrine; philosophy;
worldview
Three Assemblies 245
Three Bureaus 24, 151, 245
Three Caverns 27, 237, 320
Three Death-bringers 129–31, 171–2, 310
Three Essentials 293
Three Heavens 56, 85, 116, 216, 246, 259,
292–3, 321
Three Hun 129–30
Three Hundred Precepts of Medium
Ultimate 161
Three Officials 118, 259
Three Passes 136, 293
Three Pungs 130
Three Poisons 132, 153
Three Powers 24, 103
Three Primes 245
Three Purities see Sanqing
Three Radiances see Sanqing
Three Refuges see Three Treasures
Three Sovereigns see Sanhuang
Three Teachings 137
Three Treasures 18, 30, 43, 84–5, 99, 118,
133, 150, 225, 251, 259, 293, 322
Three Worlds 253
thunder magic 32, 248
Tian family 51
Tian Shu 51
Tianfei 33
Tian Zifang 47
Tianmendong 131, 170, 176
tianming see Mandate of Heaven
Tianshi 9, 17–18, 21, 23, 25, 51–4, 58,
67, 76–7, 83, 116–18, 161, 193, 268,
272, 283, 295, 322–3, 325
dangers of privileging 6, 9
and early organized Daoism 11, 17, 26, 71
founding revelation of 23, 54–5, 277
history of 23–5
key scriptures of 24, 233
ritual in 118, 244–5, 248, 250
social organization of 67–71, 157, 275
worldview of 24, 94, 151–2, 156–9, 322
see also Zhengyi
Tianshi dong 268, 277
Tianshi fu 277
Tianxian jie 59, 160–1, 236, 291, 322
Tianxin 32, 248, 311–12
Tiaoqi jing 194
Title Index to Daoist Collections xiii, 239
Toba-Wei dynasty 73, 268
Tomb for Reviving the Dead 65
Tong see connection
Tongbo zhenren zhentu zan 56
Tongchu 32, 248
topknots 250, 253, 290
tourism ix, 14, 72, 75, 121, 265–6, 277–8,
306, 309, 313, 324 see also spiritual
tourism
tradition ix, 6–7, 9–10, 14, 17–18, 39, 43–4,
51, 73, 83, 85, 98–9, 225, 285, 287,
289–90, 298, 305, 307, 313, 318,
passim see also chuantong
traditional Chinese cosmology 105, 107–8,
323
traditional Chinese culture 3–4, 10, 13, 34,
40, 141, 195, 198, 202, 216, 228–9,
281–2, 296, 304–5, 308, 317, 322
Traditional Chinese Medicine 108, 195,
322, 327
traditional Chinese worldview 105, 125,
138, 165, 323
training 12, 33, 35, 40–2, 58, 60, 63,
65–7, 69, 71, 74, 76, 78–9, 92, 95–7,
124–5, 140, 145, 149–50, 167, 172,
176, 180, 182, 184, 190–2, 196–7,
207, 210, 217–19, 235, 244, 248,
252, 257–8, 260, 268, 278, 292,
308, 313
tranquil sitting see jingzuo
transcendence see immortality
transcendents see immortals
transformation 92, 102, 106, 112, 114, 116,
120, 125, 128, 132, 134, 139, 139,
147, 151, 153, 162, 181, 191, 200,
216, 233, 241, 246, 275, 293, 318,
323
INDEX

translation xiv, 19, 226–7, 236
transmission 7, 9, 11, 17, 20, 43, 46, 51–2, 73, 85, 98, 109, 191, 225–8, 231, 234, 236, 239, 250–1, 267, 270, 274, 291, 298, 305, 310, 312
Travelling Canteen 175
trees 89–90, 113, 115, 287, 291
trigram see Eight Trigrams
truncated tradition 6

tujing yanyi bencao 170
Turquoise Pond 22
turtles 64, 90, 151

Twelve Sections 238

Twelve Sleeping Exercises 198–9

Twenty-four Nodes Daoyin 198, 202
twenty-four nodes 202–3, 251

Twenty-seven Virtuous Activities of Celestial Immortality 161

Twenty-seven Xiang’er Precepts 94, 156, 233
two-soul model 125

twofold Mystery see Chongxuan

Tzu-jan see ziran

ultimate concern (Tillich) 3, 42, 44, 73, 85, 110, 318, 325
uncarved block see pu

UNESCO World Heritage Site 273, 279

Unity Sect see Yiguan dao
universal salvation 26–8, 228, 246, 250, 256, 259, 319

Universal Tao see Healing Tao

Unschuld, Paul 326

uselessness 89–90

utopianism 23, 69, 71, 234 see also theocracy

values 65, 67, 69, 71–2, 83, 87–94, 145, 159, 167, 297, 303 see also doctrine; worldview

Valussi, Elena 222

veganism 179

vegetarianism 60, 64, 99, 178–9, 252, 291, 320

vestments see clothing

Victorian view of Daoism 4–5

Vietnam 308

view see worldview

Vimalakīrti Sūtra 67

Vipassanā 29

virtue see also de

visualization 29, 109, 135, 173, 182, 191, 198, 205, 211–16, 234, 256, 271


vitality 187–92 see also health; longevity

vocation 60, 96

Waley, Arthur 328

Wang Bi 21, 46, 240, 318

Wang Changyue 33, 58, 236, 278, 282, 319, 322

Wang Chuyi 31

Wang Daoyi 27, 267

Wang Jie 241

Wang Ka 239

Wang Lingguan 119, 259

Wang Ni 48

Wang Wei 283

Wang Xizhi 283

Wang Xuanpu 121

Wang Yuanzhi 283


mystical experiences of 57

Wangzi Jin (Qiao) 56, 197

wanwu see ten thousand things

Warring States 7, 10, 17–18, 44, 105, 147, 319, 326

water xii, 17, 24, 86, 107, 118, 127, 133, 149–52, 156, 162, 166–7, 180, 226, 245, 270, 274, 284–5, 296, 318, 322

Waterwheel 133, 218, 223

Watson, Burton 328

websites see internet

Wei Huacun 26, 55–6, 76–7, 121, 182, 272, 321

Wei Jie 267

Wenchang 33, 119, 259

Wheelwright Pian 159, 230

White Cloud Institute 286

White Cloud Temple see Baiyun guan

wild asparagus root see tianmendong

wild foods 168, 170–71

wilderness see nature

wildness 63, 87, 89–90, 99, 134, 162, 175, 266,

Woman Crookback see Nüyu
INDEX

women 42, 75–9, 106, 220–3 see also femininity; gender; specific women
Wong, Eva 236
Wong Tai Sin 309
wood-block printing 238–9, 288
wood-cutters 64
work 159
World Wide Web see internet
worldview 44, 81–142, 192, 227
worms see Nine Worms; parasitology
Wu Guang 51
Wu Jingnuan 285–6
Wu Yun 268, 283
Wudang shan 33, 119, 121, 237, 278
Wudao lu 236
Wudou sanyi tujue 215, 228
Wugan wen 245
Wuji 104, 190 see also nondifferentiation.
Wuqin xi see Five Animal Frolics
Wushang biyao 27
wuwei 13, 21, 88, 93–4, 147, 154–5, 190, 192, 206, 322
wuxing see Five Phases
wuya see Five Sprouts
wuyue see Five Marchmounts
Wuyue guben zhenxing tu 270–1
Wuyue zhenxing tu 270
Wuzhen pian 217, 236, 284
Xi Kang see Ji Kang
xianfeng dao gu 283
Xiang’er see Laozi xiang’er zhu
Xiang’er Precepts see Twenty-Seven Xiang’er Precepts
xiangu see immortal bones
Xiangu guan 279
Xianmen Zigao 51
xianren see immortals
xiantai see immortal embryo
xiao zhoutian see Lesser Celestial Cycle
Xiaodao lun 134
“Xiaoyao you” 285
xiaoyao you see carefree wandering
Xiaozai huming jing 259
xin see heart-mind
xin dao jia see “New Daoja”
xing see innate nature
Xingshi guan 71
xinke see New Code
xinzhal 206, 208–9, 317
Xisheng jing 27, 116, 140–1, 231, 268
Xiu zheng shishu 199–201
Xiu zheng tu 136
Xiwangmu 21, 37, 115–16, 221
Xu dao zang 237
Xu family 55–6, 283, 288, 321
Xu Huangmin 26
Xu Hui 26, 55, 268
Xu Laile 51
Xu Mai 26, 55
Xu Mi 26, 55, 268
Xu Wugui 47
Xu Xun 32
xuan 292 see also mysteriousness
Xuanfeng 31
Xuanhua 253
Xuanjiao yuan 75
Xuankong si 272
Xuanmen gongke 59, 257–60
Xuanwu 33, 119, 278, 295
Xuanxue 25, 46, 234, 240
Xue Shi 121
Xue Tai’ai 266, 279
Yan Zun 64
Yanchengzi 47–8
Yang Xi 26, 54–6, 71, 77, 182, 283, 321
Yang Xiong 64
Yang Xizhen 32
yang-spirit 30, 107, 129, 134, 138, 140, 213, 216
Yangsheng lun 196
Yangsheng yao ji 196
and Daoyin 197–204
and respiratory techniques 192–5
Daoist views of 189–92
historical origins of 187–9
parameters of 195–6
see also Daoyin; respiratory techniques; specific practices
Yangxing yanning lu 196
Yao people 35, 44, 311–12
Yaochi jinmu 116
Yaowang 119, 190
Yellow Emperor see Huangdi
Yellow Register Rite 247
Yellow Turbans see Huangjin
Yiguan dao 309
INDEX

Yijing 30, 216–17, 240, 285
Yin Tong 27, 73, 320
Yin Xi 20, 27, 73, 140–1, 231, 267–8, 277–8, 320
yin-yang 69, 102–3, 105–6, 110, 113, 139, 149, 153, 165–7, 169, 173, 184, 253, 285, 293, 296, 318, 322–3 see also cosmology
Yin-yang jia 105
Yinfu jing 235–6, 240
yinshi 62
Yinshizi jingzuo fa 219
Yinshu 188–9, 194
Yintang 251
Yoga see Daoyin
Yongcheng jixian lu 77
Yongle Emperor 237
Yongle gong 295
Yongquan 109, 193
Yuan dynasty 32, 71, 74, 97, 217, 220, 241
Yuan Xian 63
“Yuandao” 240–41
yuanfen 44
Yuanshi tianzun 26, 85, 116, 226, 235, 318 see also Sanqing
Yue Chongdai 308
Yue family 51
Yue Jugong 51
Yue Xiagong 51
Yue Yang 51
Yue Yi 51
Yuen Yuen Institute 297, 309
Yuhuang 118, 223, 257, 293
“Yuhua dengxian” 285
Yuhuang xinyin jing 259
Yuk Hui Temple 309
yulu see discourse records
Yunji qiqian 131, 134
yunyou see cloud-wandering
Yunzhong yinsong xinke jiejing 70
Yuqing 56, 85, 116
Yuquan yuan 99, 272, 277, 279
Yuixian qiao 269
Yuyi jielin tu 183
Yuzhen 203

Zangwai daoshu 239
zaohua see transformation
Zeyang 47
zhai-purification 245, 247–50
Zhang Boduan 121, 217, 236, 284
Zhang Daoling 6, 23, 52, 54, 68–9, 77, 121, 259, 268, 275, 282, 322–23
Zhang Enpu 53, 307
Zhang family 52, 55, 68, 326
Zhang Guoxiang 237
Zhang Heng 23, 55, 68
Zhang Jiyu 53, 239, 307, 323
Zhang Jue 23
Zhang Lu 23–4, 52, 55, 68–9, 94, 152, 233
Zhang Sanfeng 119, 121, 278
Zhang Wanfu 246–7
Zhang Yuanxian 53, 307
Zhang Yuqing 237
Zheng Yin 50, 270, 319
Zhengtong daozang 33, 237
zhengyan see experiential confirmation
contemporary ritual of 256–7, 260
important modern sacred sites of 278
in modern China 306–7
see also Tianshi
zhiren see Perfected
Zhenuwu 33, 119, 259, 278
zhi see excrescences
zhi see parishes
Zhicao pin 178
Zhong Ziliang 72
Zhong Ziqi 284–5
Zhong-Lü 30–1, 97, 120, 200, 216, 236
Zhong-Lü chuandao ji see Chuandao ji
Zhongguo daojiao xiehui 35, 239, 257, 277, 307–8, 313, 317, 320, 323
Zhonghe ji 236
Zhonghua daozang 239
Zhonghuang jing 172–3
Zhongji jie 59, 160–1, 236, 291, 322
Zhongli Quan 30, 53, 57, 121, 200, 216, 269, 322
zhongmin see seed people
Zhongnan 27, 66, 73, 267, 269, 275
Zhongxiao 32
Zhou Ziliang 72
Zhouzhi ce 75
Zhu Ziyang 226
Zhuang Zhou 8, 19–20, 46–7, 92–3, 150, 228, 282, 323
“Zhuang Zhou mengdie” 285
Zhuang Zun see Yan Zun
Zhuang-Chen Dengyun 257, 307
Zhuang-Lin xu daoza 289
and classical Daoism 7, 14
and “philosophical Daoism” 5
as multi-vocal anthology 7, 20, 46
meditation according to, 208–10
see also Nanhuazhenjing
Zhuangzi see Zhuang Zhou
Zhuping Man 63
Zikui 47–8
Ziqi 47–8
ziran 88–90, 103, 104, 109, 111, 147, 151, 154–5, 285, 323
zither see qin
Ziwei furen 77
Zixiao gong 278
Ziyou 47–8
Zongsheng gong 267 see also Louguan
Zou Yan 105
Zu Shu 32, 76
Zuo Ci 50
zuowang 206, 208–9, 317
Zuowang lun 29, 210
Zuqiao 203
zuting see ancestral halls