

DAOIST STUDIES GUIDES #2

Daoism

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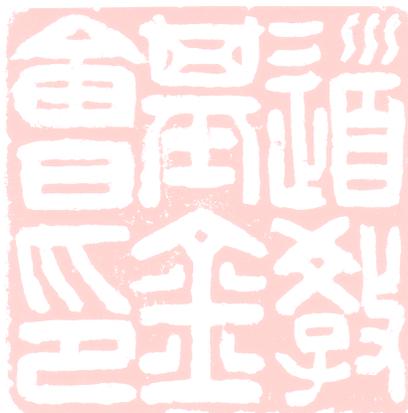
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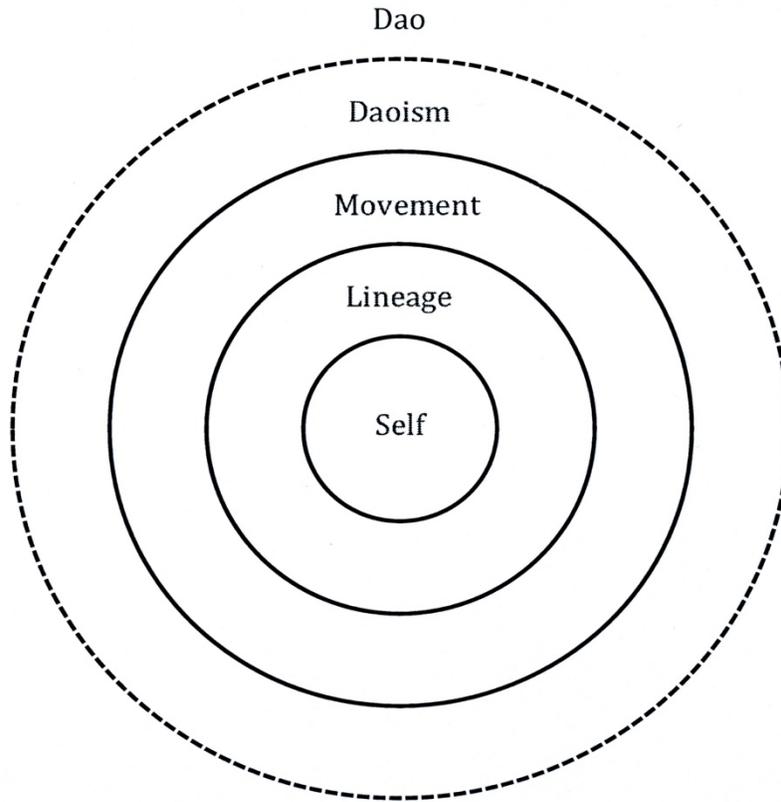


Primary Interpretive Frameworks for Understanding Daoism

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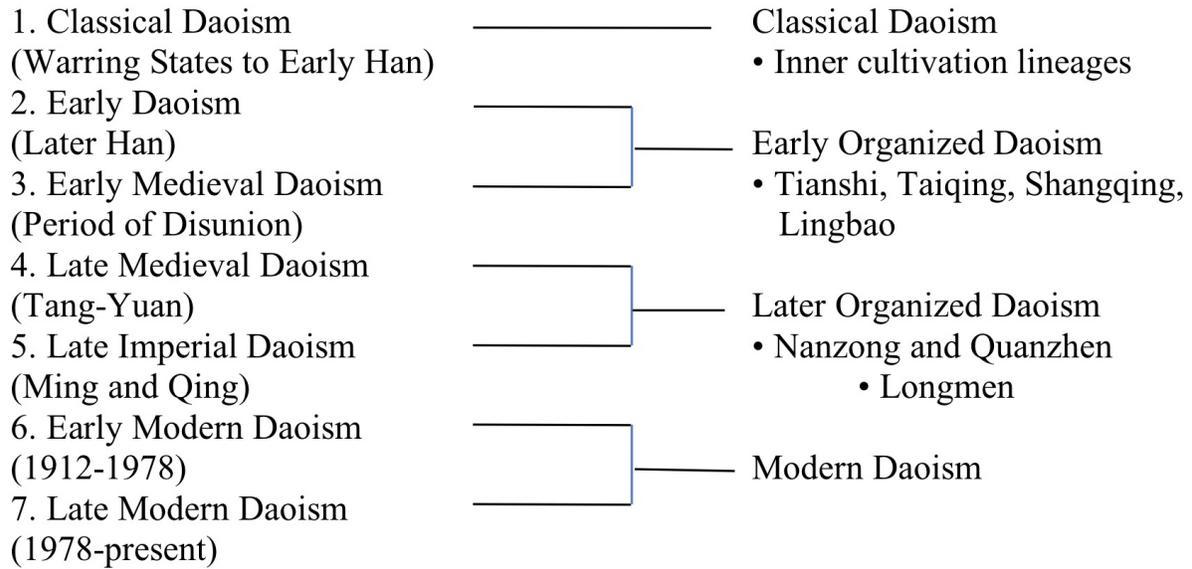
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DAOIST IDENTITY & LOCATEDNESS



Source: *The Daoist Tradition* (2013) by Louis Komjathy, 45;
Daoism: A Guide for the Perplexed (2014) by Louis Komjathy, 61

SEVEN PERIODS & FOUR DIVISIONS OF THE DAOIST TRADITION
(with Key Movements)



Source: *The Daoist Tradition* (2013) by Louis Komjathy, 11;
Daoism: A Guide for the Perplexed (2014) by Louis Komjathy, 9



MODELS OF DAOIST PRACTICE & ATTAINMENT

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” (*wúwéi* 無為), 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

Source: *The Daoist Tradition* (2013) by Louis Komjathy, 12-13;
Daoism: A Guide for the Perplexed (2014) by Louis Komjathy, 11



Some Indigenous Chinese Names for “Daoism/Taoism/Taoïsme/Taoismo/Taoismus”

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Bùyán zhī jiào 不言之教: Teaching Beyond/Without Words. Also translated as “Wordless Teaching.” Term used in classical Daoism to refer to elders and communities cultivating, embodying, and transmitting the Dao. Also invokes the Daoist emphasis on formlessness (*wúxíng* 無形), namelessness (*wúmíng* 無名), nondifferentiation (*wújí* 無極), and the like.

Dàojiā 道家: Family of the Dao. Also translated as “Lineage(s)/School(s) of the Way.” Originally used as a bibliographic and taxonomic category for the classical Daoist textual corpus. Technically refers to “classical Daoism,” but also later used to refer to the Daoist religious community in general and Daoist clergy in particular. Misleadingly equated with the outdated and inaccurate Orientalist construction of so-called ~~philosophical Daoism~~.

Dàojiào 道教: Teachings of the Dao. Also translated as “Doctrine of the Way.” Originally used to distinguish Daoism from Buddhism (*fójiào* 佛教 [lit., “Teachings of the Buddha”]). Technically refers to “organized Daoism,” but also used to refer to the Daoist tradition as a whole. Misleadingly equated with the outdated and inaccurate Orientalist construction of so-called ~~religious Daoism~~.

Dàoshù 道術: Techniques of the Dao. Also translated as “Arts of the Way.” Term used in classical Daoism to refer to the specific practices (apophatic/quietistic meditation) that facilitate realizing the Dao (*dédào* 得道).

Dàotǒng 道統: Tradition of the Dao. Technically a Ruist (“Confucian”) coopted category used by members of that tradition to refer to Rǔjiā 儒家 (Family of the Scholar-Officials; “Confucianism”), specifically with the intent of eclipsing and ultimately replacing Daoism. May be rehabilitated and should be reclaimed from a Daoist perspective.

Dào xué 道學: Study of the Dao. Also translated as “Way-Learning/Way-Studies.” Technically a Ruist (“Confucian”) coopted category used by members of that tradition to refer to Rǔjiā 儒家 (Family of the Scholar-Officials; “Confucianism”), specifically with the intent of eclipsing and ultimately replacing Daoism. May be rehabilitated and should be reclaimed from a Daoist perspective. Also now used to refer to Daoist Studies, which more commonly appears as *dàojiào yánjiū* 道教研究.

Gǔdào 古道: Way of the Ancients. Also translated as “ancient Dao” and “Way of Antiquity.” Term used in classical Daoism to refer to both the Dao (Way) and the associated path and practice community aspiring to cultivate, embody, and transmit the Dao.

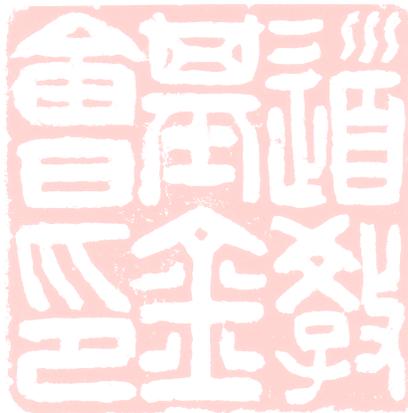
Qīngjìng wúwéi dào 清靜無為道: Way of Clear Stillness and Non-Action. Terms derived from the *Dàodé jīng* 道德經 (Scripture on the Dao and Inner Power). Identified by some Daoists as the essence of Daoism itself.

Shèngrén zhī dào 聖人之道: Way of the Sages. Term used in classical Daoism to refer the Daoist religious path and the practice community aspiring to cultivate, embody, and transmit the Dao.

Xuánfēng 玄風: Mysterious Movement. More literally, “mysterious wind/current.” *Xuán* 玄 is a (non)description of the Dao, and thus another (non)name for the Dao.

Xuánmén 玄門: Mysterious Gate. Also translated as “Door/Gate of the Mysterious.” *Xuán* 玄 is a (non)description of the Dao, and thus another (non)name for the Dao.

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Historical Periodization of Daoism

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(1) Classical Daoism

- Warring States (480-222 BCE) to Early Hàn (206 BCE-9 CE)
- Inner cultivation lineages
- “Nèiyè” 內業 (Inward Training), *Dàodé jīng* 道德經 (*Tào-té chīng*; Scripture on the Dao and Inner Power), and *Zhuāngzi* 莊子 (*Chuāng-tzu*; Book of Master Zhuang), among others
- Kirkland’s “classical Daoism,” Roth’s “early Daoism,” and Miller’s “proto-Daoism”
- Referred to as so-called ~~philosophical Daoism~~ in outdated and inaccurate accounts
- **Models:** Quietistic, meditative, cosmological, existential, mystical

→ Classical Daoism

(2) Early Daoism

- Later Hàn (23-220 CE)
- Tiānshī 天師 (T’iēn-shīh; Celestial Masters)
- Miller’s (problematic) “classical Daoism”
- Referred to as the beginning of so-called ~~religious Daoism~~ in outdated and inaccurate accounts
- **Models:** Communal, ethical, ritualistic, meditative

(3) Early Medieval Daoism

- Period of Disunion (220-589)
- Tàiqīng 太清 (T’ài-ch’īng; Great Clarity), Shàngqīng 上清 (Shàng-ch’īng; Highest Clarity), and Língbǎo 靈寶 (Líng-pǎo; Numinous Treasure)
- **Models:** Alchemical, dietetical, ecstatic, mediumistic, cosmological, ritualistic

→ Early organized Daoism

(4) Late Medieval Daoism

- Táng (618-907) to Yuán (1279-1368)
- Táng monastic system, with Shàngqīng as highest ordination rank
- Internal alchemy lineages, including Nánzōng 南宗 (Nán-tsūng; Southern School) and Quánzhēn 全真 (Ch’uán-chēn; Complete Perfection; a.k.a. Běizōng 北宗 [Northern School])
- New ritual lineages and deity cults
- **Models:** Alchemical, ascetic, ethical, monastic, communal, cosmological, ritualistic

(5) Late Imperial Daoism

- Míng (1368-1644) and Qīng (1644-1911)
- Zhèngyī 正一 (Chèng-ī; Orthodox Unity) and Quánzhēn 全真, especially Lóngmén 龍門 (Lóng-mén; Dragon Gate) lineage

- **Models:** Alchemical, dietetical, ethical, monastic, communal, cosmological, ritualistic, syncretistic

→ Later organized Daoism

(6) Early Modern Daoism

- Republican (1912-1949; 1949-) and early Communist (1949-1978)
- Zhèngyī and Quánzhēn, especially Lóngmén lineage
- **Models:** Alchemical, dietetical, ethical, monastic, communal, cosmological, ritualistic, syncretistic

(7) Late Modern Daoism

- Later Communist (1978-present)
- Zhèngyī and Quánzhēn, especially Lóngmén lineage
- Global Daoism, characterized by cultural, ethnic and linguistic diversity
- **Models:** Alchemical, dietetical, ethical, monastic, communal, cosmological, ritualistic, syncretistic

→ Modern Daoism



Key Daoist Movements

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INNER CULTIVATION LINEAGES

AKA DÀOJIĀ 道家 (FAMILY OF THE DAO)

Timeframe: Warring States (480-222 BCE) to Early Hàn dynasty (206 BCE-9 CE) (ca. 350-ca. 139 BCE)

Name Meaning: Master-disciple community, training, and transmission

Key Figures: Lǎo Dān 老聃/聃/儋 (trad. dat. 6th c. BCE) and Zhuāng Zhōu 莊周 (ca. 370-ca. 290 BCE). Also Gēngsāng Chǔ 庚桑楚 (d.u.; legendary?), Guǎngchéngzǐ 廣成子 (Master Expansive Completion; d.u.; legendary?), Liè Yùkòu 列禦寇 (“Lièzi” 列子; d.u.; legendary?), etc.

Key Locations (Early): State of Chǔ 楚

Key Locations (Later): Jìxià 稷下 (“below the Jì Gates”; Línzī 臨淄, Shāndōng); Huáinán 淮南 (“South of the Huái River”; southeast China), specifically Jiǔjiāng 九江 and Shòuchūn 壽春, Ānhuī; and Hángǔ 函谷 (“enveloped valley”; Guānzhōng 關中, Shǎnxī) (mythic),

Defining Characteristics: Apophatic and quietistic (emptiness-/stillness-based) meditation and mystical union with the Dao. Later imagined the possibility of a Daoist sage-king (*shèngwáng* 聖王)

TÀIPÍNG 太平 (GREAT PEACE)

AKA HUÁNGJĪN 黃巾 (YELLOW KERCHIEFS [“YELLOW TURBANS”])

Timeframe: Later Hàn dynasty (25-220 CE)

Name Meaning: Utopian socio-political ideal

Key Figures: Zhāng Jué 張角 (Zhāng Jiǎo; d. 184 BCE). Also his brothers Zhāng Bǎo 張寶 and Zhāng Liáng 張梁, collectively referred to as the “Three Zhāng Brothers.”

Key Locations: Jùlù 鉅鹿, Héběi; and Shāndōng

Defining Characteristics: Establishment of a Daoist theocratic (“Daocratic”) state characterized by the namesake state of Tàipíng 太平 (Great Peace) characterized by moral goodness and social harmony and stability

TIĀNSHĪ 天師 (CELESTIAL MASTERS) (Early)

AKA WŭDǒumǐ Dào 五斗米道 (WAY OF THE FIVE PEAKS OF RICE) AND Zhèngyī 正一 (ORTHODOX UNITY)

Timeframe: Later Hàn dynasty (25-220 CE)

Name Meaning: Highest communal and religio-political position

Key Figures (Early): Zhāng Líng 張陵/Zhāng Dào líng 張道陵 (fl. 140s CE; 1st CM) and his son Zhāng Héng 張衡 (d. 177; 2nd CM) and grandson Zhāng Lǔ 張魯 (d. 216 CE; 3rd CM), collectively referred to as the “Three Zhāngs.” Thus the Tiānshī 天師 (Celestial Master) position as patrilineal through the Zhāng 張 family

Key Figures (Later): Kòu Qiǎnzhī 寇謙之 (365-448; Northern) and Lù Xiūjìng 陸修靜 (406-477; Southern)

Key Locations (Early): Hè míng shān 鶴鳴山 (Crane-Cry Mountain; Dàyì 大邑, Sìchuān)

Key Locations (Later): Qīngchéng shān 青城山 (Azure Wall Mountain; Dūjiāngyàn 都江堰, Sìchuān); Lóuguān 樓觀 (Lookout Tower Monastery; Zhōuzhì 整屋, Shǎnxī); Lóngǔ shān 龍虎山 (Dragon-Tiger Mountain; near Yīngtán 鷹潭, Jiangxi); and Máoshān 茅山 (Mount Máo; Jùróng 句容, Jiāngsū)

Defining Characteristics: Revelation from Lǎojūn 老君 (Lord Lǎo), the deified Lǎozǐ 老子 (“Master Lǎo”) and personification of the Dao, to Zhāng Líng 張陵 in which the latter was appointed as the “Celestial Master,” the deity’s terrestrial representative. This was referred to as *zhèngyī méngwēi* 正一盟威 (“covenant of orthodox unity”). Establishment of a Daoist theocratic (“Daocratic”) state with the Celestial Master overseeing a hierarchically ordered Daoist clergy in charge of parishes. Characterized by moral goodness and social harmony and stability, with health and wellness linked to moral purity (precepts and codes). Also public rituals for cosmic renewal and communal welfare.

TÀIQĪNG 太清 (GREAT CLARITY)

Timeframe: Period of Disunion (220-581)

Key Figures: Gé Hóng 葛洪 (Bàopǔ 抱朴 [Embracing Simplicity]; 283-343). Also Bào Jīng 鮑靚/鮑靖 (d. 330), Gé Xuán 葛玄 (164-244), Zhèng Yīn 鄭隱 (ca. 215-ca. 302), and Zuǒ Cí 左慈 (3rd c. CE)

Name Meaning: Both Daoist sacred realm (“heaven”) and specific elixir

Key Locations (Early): Jùróng 句容, Jiāngsū; Luófú shān 羅浮山 (Luófú Mountains; Bóluó 博羅, Guǎngdōng); and Tiānzhu shān 天柱山 (Celestial Pillar Mountain; Qiánshān 潛山, Ānhuī)

Key Locations (Later): Bàopǔ dàoyuàn 抱朴道院 (Temple for Embracing Simplicity; Hángzhōu 杭州, Zhèjiāng)

Defining Characteristics: External alchemy (*wàidān* 外丹). Formulation, decoction, consumption, and transmission of elixirs (*dān* 丹), including the namesake Tàiqīng 太清 (Great Clarity) elixir associated with the Great Clarity heaven. Also associated meditation methods and rituals.

SHÀNGQĪNG 上清 (HIGHEST CLARITY) (Early)

Timeframe: Period of Disunion (220-581)

Key Figures (Early): Yáng Xī 楊羲 (330-386), Xǔ Mì 許謐 (303-376), and his son Xǔ Huì 許翮 (341-ca. 370), with the latter referred to as the “Xǔ 許 family.” Also the female Perfected Wèi Huácún 魏華存 (251-334), among other divine beings

Name Meaning: Daoist sacred realm, specifically the second and middle of the Three Heavens (*sāntiān* 三天)

Key Figures (Later): Táo Hóngjǐng 陶弘景 (Tōngmíng 通明 [Pervasive Illumination]; 456-536; 9th Patriarch) and Sīmǎ Chéngzhēn 司馬承禎 (Zhēnyī 貞一 [Pure Unity]; 647-735; 12th Patriarch)

Key Locations: Jùróng 句容, Jiāngsū, specifically and eventually Máoshān 茅山 (Mount Máo)

Defining Characteristics: Divine communication and revelation as well as self-divinization. Visualization, ecstatic flight, and otherworldly journeys

LÍNGBǎO 靈寶 (NUMINOUS TREASURE)

Timeframe: Period of Disunion (220-581)

Key Figures (Early): Gé Cháofǔ 葛巢甫 (fl. 390s-420s). Also Gé Xuán 葛玄 (164-244), so associated with the Gé 葛 family

Name Meaning: Sacred connections, contracts, and revelations, with *líng* 靈 (“numinous”) being the celestial half and *bǎo* 寶 (“treasure”) being the terrestrial/human half

Key Figures (Later): Lù Xiūjìng 陸修靜 (406-477)

Key Locations: Jùróng 句容, Jiāngsū

Defining Characteristics: Ritual, primordial cosmic scripts/scriptures (with apotropaic powers), and Buddhist-influenced soteriological models emphasizing universal salvation (*pǔdù* 普度)

TÁNG DYNASTY MONASTICISM (LATER SHÀNGQǐNG)

Timeframe: Táng dynasty (618-907)

Name Meaning: N/A

Key Figures: Various, including Sūn Sīmǎo 孫思邈 (581-682), Sīmǎ Chéngzhēn 司馬承禎 (Zhēnyī 貞一 [Pure Unity]; 647-735; 12th SQ Patriarch), and Dù Guāngtíng 杜光庭 (Guāngchéng 廣成 [Expansive Completion]; 850-933)

Key Locations: Various, including Cháng’ān 長安, Shǎnxī; Bózhōu 亳州 (Lùyì 鹿邑), Hénán; Lóuguàn 樓觀 (Lookout Tower Monastery; Zhōuzhì 整屋, Shǎnxī); and Wángwū shān 王屋山 (Mount Wángwū; near Jiyuán 濟源, Hénán)

Defining Characteristics: Systematized and integrated Daoist tradition, including hierarchically organized ordination system beginning with lay initiates and culminating with ordained priests and monastics. The highest rank corresponded to Shàngqīng 上清 (Highest Clarity)

ZHŌNG-Lǚ 鍾呂 (ZHŌNG-Lǚ)

Timeframe: Táng dynasty (618-907) and Northern Sòng dynasty (960-1127)

Name Meaning: Two associated immortals/patriarchs Zhōnglí Quán and Lǚ Dòngbīn

Key Figures: Zhōnglí Quán 鍾離權 (Zhèngyáng 正陽 [Aligned Yang]; 168?-256?) and Lǚ Dòngbīn 呂洞賓 (Chúnyáng 純陽 [Pure Yang]; b. 796?). Also Liú Hǎichán 劉海蟾 (fl. 900s)

Key Locations: N/A

Defining Characteristics: Internal alchemy (*nèidān* 內丹), specifically as documented and described in the Zhōng-Lǚ textual corpus

QUÁNZHÈN 全真 (COMPLETE PERFECTION) (Early)

AKA BĚIZŌNG 北宗 (NORTHERN SCHOOL), JĪNLIÁN 金蓮 (GOLDEN LOTUS), QĪNGJìNG WÚWÉI DÀO 清靜無為道 (WAY OF CLEAR STILLNESS AND NON-ACTION), & XUÁN FĒNG 玄風 (MYSTERIOUS MOVEMENT)

Timeframe: Jurchen-Jīn dynasty (1115-1234) and Southern Sòng dynasty (1127-1279)

Name Meaning: Projected, culminating state of alchemical transmutation (“immortality”)

Key Figures: Wáng Zhé 王嚳 (Chóngyáng 重陽 [Redoubled Yang]; 1113-1170; 1st Patriarch). Also the so-called Seven Perfected (*qīzhēn* 七真), especially Mǎ Yù 馬鈺 (Dānyáng 丹陽 [Elixir Yang]; 1123-1183; 2nd Patriarch), Qiū Chǔjī 丘處機 (Chángchūn 長春 [Perpetual Spring]; 1148-1227; 3rd Patriarch), and Sūn Bù’èr 孫不二 (Qīngjìng 清靜 [Clear Stillness]; 1119-1183), the only female member.

Key Locations (Early): Hùxiàn 戶縣 (Hùyì 鄠邑), Shǎnxī; Níngǎi 寧海 (Mùpíng 牟平), Shāndōng; and Kūnyú shān 昆崙山 (Kūnyú Mountains; near Yāntái 煙台 and Wēihǎi 威海, Shāndōng)

Key Locations (Later): Various, including Chóngyáng gōng 重陽宮 (Palace of Redoubled Yang; Hùxiàn 戶縣, Shǎnxī) and Tiāncháng guān 天長觀 (Monastery of Celestial Perpetuity; Běijīng)

Defining Characteristics: Asceticism, eremitism, internal alchemy (*nèidān* 內丹), and mysticism. Later monasticism, including celibacy (no sex) and sobriety (no intoxicants)

NÁNZŌNG 南宗 (SOUTHERN SCHOOL) (So-called)

Timeframe: Southern Sòng dynasty (1127-1279) and Yuán dynasty (1279-1368)

Name Meaning: Regional location in southern China

Key Figures (Early): Various, including Zhāng Bódūān 張伯端 (Zǐyáng 紫陽 [Purple Yang]; d. 1082)

Key Figures (Later): Various, including Bái Yùchán's 白玉蟾 (Hǎiqióng 海瓊 [Oceanic Jade]; 1134-1229)

Key Locations: Tiāntái 天台, Zhèjiāng and Wǔyí shān 武夷山 (Wǔyí Mountains; Nánpíng 南平, Fújiàn)

Defining Characteristics: Internal alchemy (*nèidān*), specifically as documented and described in the Nánzōng textual corpus

QUÁNZHÈN 全真 (COMPLETE PERFECTION) (Later): **LÓNGMÉN 龍門 (DRAGON GATE)** (Early)

AKA XUÁN MÈN 玄門 (MYSTERIOUS GATE)

Timeframe: Qīng dynasty (1644-1912)

Name Meaning: Lóngmén dòng 龍門洞 (Dragon Gate Grotto; Lǒngxiàn 隴縣, Shǎnxī), the location where Qiū Chǔjī 丘處機 (Chángchūn 長春 [Perpetual Spring]; 1148-1227; 3rd Patriarch) engaged in intensive solitary training

Key Figures (Early): Wáng Chángyuè 王常月 (Kūnyáng 崑陽 [Paradisiacal Yang]; 1622?-1680)

Key Figures (Later): Various, including Liú Yīmíng 劉一明 (Wùyuan 悟元 [Awakening-to-the-Origin]; 1734-1821) and Mǐn Yīdé 閔一得 (Lǎnyún 懶雲 [Lazy Cloud]; 1758-1836)

Key Locations: Various, including Lóngmén dòng 龍門洞 (Dragon Gate Grotto; Lǒngxiàn 隴縣, Shǎnxī) and Báiyún guān 白雲觀 (White Cloud Monastery; Běijīng)

Defining Characteristics: Monasticism, including the three core vows/commitments of celibacy (no sex), sobriety (no intoxicants), and vegetarianism (no meat). Also precept study and application, specifically as expressed in the three monastic manuals compiled by Wáng Chángyuè

Associated Sub-lineages: Wǔ-Liǔ 伍柳 (Wǔ-Liǔ) & Qiānfēng 千峰 (Thousand Peaks)

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Essential Daoism (Taoism)

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PRELIMINARY ORIENTATIONS

- Daoism as the “tradition of the Dao”
- Indigenous names: Dàojiā 道家 (Family of the Dao), Dàojiào 道教 (Teachings of the Dao), Xuánfēng 玄風 (Mysterious Movement), etc.
- Daoism as indigenous Chinese religion rooted in traditional Chinese culture
- Daoism as a religious tradition characterized by diversity and inclusivity
- No founder or authoritative text → Founders of specific lineages and movements. Different Daoist texts receive a place of veneration in different Daoist movements
- No authoritarian institution, centralized religious leader, or orthodox beliefs
- Not a missionary religion and very little interest in conversion (“affinity”)
- Now global religious tradition characterized by cultural, ethnic, linguistic, and national diversity

DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS

- Orientation toward the Dao (see below)
- Primary language: Classical Chinese (traditional characters). Daoist scriptures as texts written in classical Chinese
- Tradition as the external Three Treasures: The Dao, the scriptures, and the teachers. Interrelated
- Strong emphasis on community, connection, cultivation, embodiment, lineage, ordination, place, practice, teachers, training, tradition, and transmission
- Various types of Daoist community, including eremitic, householder and monastic
- Daoism is generally divided into movements/schools/sub-traditions, lineages, and even sub-lineages
- Considered from an integrated and comprehensive perspective, Daoist training includes aesthetics, dietetics, ethics, health and longevity practice, meditation, ritual, scripture study, and so forth
- There are thus many viable paths to the Dao, including diverse forms of contemplative practice
- Affiliation and adherence
 - Daoist as an adherent of Daoism, as a member of the religious tradition *which is* Daoism
 - Orientation towards the Dao as necessary, but not sufficient condition
 - Distinction among ordained Daoist priests and monastics, lay adherents, and sympathizers
 - Importance of lineage and ordination
 - Also recognition of revelation and mystical experience

COGMOGONIC, COSMOLOGICAL AND THEOLOGICAL VIEWS

- Cosmogony (origins of the universe), cosmology (underlying patterns, principles, and structure of the universe), and theology (conception of the sacred)
- **Daoist Theology**
 - Dào 道 (*d'òg) as sacred and ultimate concern of Daoists
 - Four primary characteristics: (1) Source of everything; (2) Unnamable mystery; (3) All-pervading sacred presence (qi); and (4) Universe as cosmological process
 - Primary Daoist theology: Monistic, pantheistic, and panenhenic. Also apophatic
 - Secondary Daoist theology: Animistic and polytheistic
- **Daoist Cosmogony**
 - Dao as unrepresentable before. Primordial nondifferentiation. Unknowable
 - Spontaneous impersonal change (Source) → differentiation (manifest universe)
 - Emanation and immanence

- No agency, no intentionality, no design. Structure as random configuration
- No “good” and “evil”
- **Daoist Cosmology**
 - Universe as impersonal, amoral transformative process based on yin-yang interaction (“traditional Chinese cosmology”; shared worldview)
 - Change and transformation as the only constant
 - World-affirming view: Body, nature, world, and universe as manifestations of the Dao

HISTORICAL PERIODIZATION

- Three primary historical divisions (“periods”)
 - (1) Classical Daoism (4th-2nd c. BCE). Major movement: Early inner cultivation lineages (master-disciple communities). Major texts: *Dàodé jīng* 道德經 (*Tào-té chīng*; Scripture on the Dao and Inner Power) and *Zhuāngzi* 莊子 (*Chuāng-tzu*; Book of Master Zhuāng). Emphasis placed on apophatic meditation and mystical union with the Dao
 - (2) Early organized Daoism (2nd-7th c. CE). Major movement: Tiānshī 天師 (Celestial Masters). Major texts: *Lǎozǐ xiǎng’ěr zhù* 老子想爾注 (Commentary Thinking Through the *Lǎozǐ*). Emphasis placed on moral purity, theocratic community, and communal ritual. Householder tradition with married priests (men and women) living in local communities and performing ritual
 - (3) Later organized Daoism (7th c. CE-present). Major movement: Quánzhēn 全真 (Complete Perfection), especially its later Lóngmén 龍門 (Dragon Gate) lineage. Major texts: *Chóngyáng lìjiào shíwǔ lùn* 重陽立教十五論 (Master Redoubled Yang’s Fifteen Discourses to Establish the Teachings). Emphasis placed on asceticism, meditation, and alchemical transformation. Renunciant and monastic tradition with monastics (monks and nuns committed to celibacy [no sex], sobriety [no intoxicants], and vegetarianism [no meat]) living regimented life in hermitages and monasteries

MODELS OF PRACTICE AND ATTAINMENT

- Soteriology (ultimate goal of a given adherent or community). May include actualization, divinization, liberation, perfection, realization, salvation, etc.
- Diverse models of practice and attainment
 - Aesthetic, alchemical, ascetic, communal, cosmological, dietetic, ecstatic, ethical, existential, hermeneutical, meditative, mediumistic, monastic, mystical, quietistic, ritualistic, solitary, syncretistic, therapeutic, etc.
 - Combined by different Daoists and Daoist communities in different ways
 - Many ways (*dào*) to the Way (Dao)
- Two primary models of practice: Meditative and ritualistic

COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS VERSUS INFORMED VIEWS

- Not the modern fiction and popular construction of so-called ~~philosophical Daoism~~ and so-called ~~religious Daoism~~
 - Religious tradition. Historical periodization and models of practice and attainment (diversity and complexity)
- Not Protestant Christianity (individualism, anti-clericalism, anti-institutionalism)
 - Closer resemblance to Eastern Orthodox Christianity, Orthodox Judaism, and Roman Catholicism (“tradition”)
- Not emphasis on founder and central text
 - Different founders, lineages, movements and important texts (diversity and inclusivity)
- See “Common Misconceptions about Daoism” by Louis Komjathy (Daoist Foundation)

Basic Information Sheet on Daoism (Taoism)

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This is an essentialized and simplified information sheet on Daoism (Taoism). It is particularly intended for non-specialist educators who teach Daoism or who are interested in deepening their understanding.

PRELIMINARY POINTS

Daoism (spelled Taoism in the older Wade-Giles Romanization system) is an indigenous Chinese religious tradition in which reverence for the Dao, translatable as “the Way” and “a way,” is a matter of ultimate concern. Daoism was a *religious* community from the beginning, here dated to the Warring States period (480-222 BCE). As a Western category, “Daoism” may be understood as shorthand for Daoist adherents, communities and their religious expressions. With over two thousand years of history, Daoism is a diverse and complex religious tradition; it includes varied forms of religiosity that may be perplexing to those who construct “religion” in terms of founders, authoritative scriptures and “orthodox beliefs.” Throughout Chinese history Daoists have consistently focused on the Dào 道 as sacred and ultimate concern. This is expressed in indigenous Chinese designations, including *dàojiā* 道家 (Family of the Dao), *dàojiào* 道教 (Teachings of the Dao), *dàoshi* 道士 (adept of the Dao), and *xuánfēng* 玄風 (Mysterious Movement). That is, Daoists have understood themselves as those who “transmit the Dao” (*chuándào* 傳道); they have seen themselves as part of the “tradition of the Dao” (*dàotǒng* 道統). In the modern world, Daoism also has become a global religious tradition characterized by cultural diversity and multiethnicity. At the same time, like Zen Buddhism before it, Daoism is the object of various Western fantasies, fictions, and fabrications.

ON “DAOISM” AND “TAOISM” (ROMANIZATION)

Both “Daoism” and “Taoism” refer to the same Chinese religion; they are both pronounced with a “d” sound. “Taoism” derives from Wade-Giles romanization, an earlier way of approximating the sound of Chinese characters into alphabetic script. “Daoism” derives from the more recent Pinyin romanization system, which is the official system created by the People’s Republic of China and utilized throughout mainland China and now internationally. Wade-Giles uses “Tao,” “Taoist,” and “Taoism.” If these terms were pronounced with a “t” sound, they would appear as “T’ao,” “T’aoist,” and “T’aoism.” That is, in Wade-Giles, a “t” without an apostrophe (’) is a “d” sound. Pinyin uses “Dao,” “Daoist,” and “Daoism.” The latter is the preferred form. The matter is complicated because some scholars now use Pinyin Romanization, but continue to employ the Wade-Giles derived “Tao,” “Taoist,” “Taoism.” The rationales for this are varied, but none of them hold up to critical scrutiny.

Scholarly opinion differs on the origins and early history of Daoism. Nonetheless, there is consensus that the category of “philosophical Daoism” is inaccurate and outdated. It should be completely abandoned. Unfortunately, specialist research has yet to influence non-specialist discourse, both academic and popular. Every major “world religions” textbook utilizes the misleading distinction between so-called ~~philosophical Daoism~~ and so-called ~~religious Daoism~~.

The use of these categories should be taken, *ipso facto*, as a sign of ignorance and inaccuracy. The easiest solution to this problem is to replace “philosophical Daoism” with “classical Daoism,” and to emphasize the religious dimensions of classical Daoism, of the “early inner cultivation lineages” (Harold Roth, Brown University). These dimensions include an identifiable religious community that engaged in and taught apophatic meditation with the aim of mystical union with the Dao.

PRIMARY CHARACTERISTICS AND ESSENTIAL POINTS

Considered **as a historical cultural tradition** and in terms of geographical origins, Daoism is an indigenous Chinese religion. Daoism is Chinese because it originates in Chinese culture and, in some sense, because it is most clearly understood through the Chinese language and views of being. Daoism is a “religion” because it involves an orientation towards and relationship with the sacred. Daoism is a “tradition” because it is a community of dedicated practitioners connected to each other as a historical and energetic continuum.

The Dào 道/衛, pronounced something like *kə.lʰuʔ (Karlgren: *d’ôg) in Ancient/Old Chinese, is the sacred or ultimate concern of Daoists. From a Daoist perspective, there are four primary characteristics of the Dao: (1) Source (*yuán* 元); (2) Unnamable mystery (*xuán* 玄); (3) All-pervading sacred presence (*líng* 靈; also *qì* 氣); (4) Universe as cosmological process (Nature) (*huà* 化). The Dao is impersonal, amoral, and ineffable. Through a spontaneous, impersonal process, the Dao moved from primordial nondifferentiation to differentiation (the manifest world). Daoist “theology” thus emphasizes emanation and immanence. It is primarily monistic, panentheistic, panenhenic, and secondarily animistic and polytheistic. Daoists view gods and immortals as manifestations of the Dao. There is no necessary distinction between the Dao as unnamable mystery and its various phenomenal expressions.

Daoism does not have a founder or principal scripture. Different Daoist adherents, communities and movements revere different individuals and scriptures. Generally speaking, **Lǎozǐ** 老子 (Lǎo-tzu; “Master Lǎo”) receives a place of veneration, but Lǎozǐ is pseudo-historical and mythological. He is a composite figure. In terms of influential scriptures, the **Dàodé jīng** 道德經 (*Tào-té-chīng*; Scripture on the Dao and Inner Power), also known by its earliest title of *Lǎozǐ* 老子 (*Lǎo-tzu*; Book of Venerable Masters), has perhaps been most central and influential. Although attributed to Lǎozǐ, the text is, in fact, an anonymous multivocal anthology consisting of material from at least the fourth to second centuries BCE. It contains the teachings and practices of various anonymous elders associated with the inner cultivation lineages of classical Daoism, the earliest Daoist religious community. We know this because of actual archaeology discoveries and because of textual archaeology. The standard received edition of the *Dàodé jīng*, consisting of eighty-one “verse-chapters,” was redacted by Wáng Bì 王弼 (226-249), a member of the early medieval quasi-eremitic salon and hermeneutical movement known as Xuánxué 玄學 (Profound Learning). The latter is referred to as so-called “Neo-Daoism” in outdated and inaccurate Orientalist constructions of Daoism.

The primary textual collection in the Daoist tradition is called **the Dàoàng** 道藏 (Daoist Canon), which more literally means “storehouse of the Dao.” The current edition was compiled in the fifteenth century CE and consists of roughly 1,500 texts. The texts come from every major period and movement of Daoist history.

For simplicity's sake, we may divide the history of Daoism into **four primary periods**: (1) Classical Daoism; (2) Early organized Daoism; (3) Later organized Daoism; and (4) Modern Daoism.

- Classical Daoism refers to the early inner cultivation lineages, master-disciple communities, of the fourth through second centuries BCE. It is associated with the *Dàodé jīng*, *Zhuāngzi* 莊子 (Book of Master Zhuāng), and other, less well-known works. Emphasis is placed on apophatic meditation (stillness and emptiness) aimed at mystical union with the Dao.
- Early organized Daoism is the beginning of Daoism as an organized religion. It begins in the second century CE and extends to roughly the seventh century. The principal movement is called *Tiānshī* 天師 (Celestial Masters), which was founded by *Zhāng Dàolín* 張道陵 (fl. 140s CE). Also called *Zhèngyī* 正一 (Orthodox Unity), this is a householder tradition. It tends to be a village-based community with married, ordained priests who conduct rituals for community benefit. The second century also corresponded to the introduction of Buddhism into China from Central Asia. Other key movements in early organized Daoism include *Tàiqīng* 太清 (Great Clarity), *Shàngqīng* 上清 (Highest Clarity), and *Língbǎo* 靈寶 (Numinous Treasure). Early organized Daoism is distinguished by the emergence of a highly organized community and new models for Daoist practice and attainment, specifically ethical, ritualistic, alchemical, and ascetic.
- Later organized Daoism begins around the seventh century and extends to the early twentieth century. The principal movement is *Quánzhēn* 全真 (Complete Perfection), which was founded by *Wáng Zhé* 王嘉 (*Chóngyáng* 重陽 [Redoubled Yang]; 1113-1170). It is a monastic tradition that emphasizes celibacy (no sex), sobriety (no intoxicants), and vegetarianism (no meat). Other key movements include various internal alchemy (*nèidān* 內丹) lineages as well as new deity and ritual traditions. Later organized Daoism is distinguished by the emergence of a fully integrated monastic system, complete with ordination ranks, and of semi-centralized religious institutions. It also is 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.
- Modern Daoism refers to Daoism following the end of Chinese dynastic rule in 1912. It may be further divided into “early modern Daoism” (1912-1978) and “late modern Daoism” (1978-present), including contemporary developments. Technically speaking, modern Daoism is part of “later organized Daoism.” One of the key developments here is the globalization of Daoism, specifically the emergence of a transnational, international movement characterized by cultural, ethnic and linguistic diversity.

Major divisions of contemporary Daoism.

- *Tiānshī* 天師 (T'iēn-shīh; Celestial Masters). A.k.a. *Zhèngyī* 正一 (Chèng-ī; Orthodox Unity). Begins in 2nd c. CE with a revelation from *Lǎojūn* 老君 (Lord Lǎo), the deified Lǎozǐ and personification of the Dao, to *Zhāng Dàolín* 張道陵 (fl. 140s CE). Originally CM was a patrilineal position via the *Zhāng* 張 family. Householder (married priests), community/village-based (rural), and ritualistic. Often wear Western dress and short hair.
- *Quánzhēn* 全真 (Ch'üán-chēn; Complete Perfection). A.k.a. Complete Reality. Begins in 12th c. with *Wáng Zhé*'s 王嘉 (*Chóngyáng* 重陽 [Redoubled Yang]; 1113-1170) mystical experiences with immortals. Local then regional ascetic/eremitic movement; then monastic

order (13th c.-present). Revitalized in 17th as the Lóngmén 龍門 (Dragon Gate) lineage under Wáng Chángyuè 王常月 (Kūnyáng 崑陽 [Paradisiacal Yang]; 1622-1680). Primarily monastic (celibacy, sobriety, vegetarianism), monasteries, and meditative and ritualistic. Its headquarters is at Báiyún guān 白雲觀 (White Cloud Monastery; Beijing). Also includes lay initiates.

- Also other monastic and family lineages.

Key Figures

- Like Hinduism, NO FOUNDER → Movements and lineages with influential figures and principal teachers
- Early master-disciples, with Lǎozǐ and Zhuāngzi being most famous
- **Lǎozǐ** 老子 (Master Lao; trad. dat. 6th c. BCE). “Old Master.” Lǐ Ěr 李耳 & Lǎo Dān 老聃/聃/儋. Pseudo-historical. Attributed author of *Dàodé jīng*
- **Zhuāngzi** 莊子 (Master Zhuāng; ca. 370-ca. 290 BCE). Zhuāng Zhōu 莊周. Teachings contained in so-called Inner Chapters (chs. 1-7) of the *Zhuāngzi* 莊子 (Book of Master Zhuāng)
- **Zhāng Dào líng** 張道陵 (fl. 140s CE). Founder of Celestial Master movement and 1st Celestial Master
- **Lǚ Dòngbīn** 呂洞賓 (Chúnyáng 純陽 [Pure Yang]; b. 796?). Most famous immortal in Daoist history
- **Wáng Zhé** 王嘉 (Chóngyáng 重陽 [Redoubled Yang]; 1113-1170). Founder of Complete Perfection movement and 1st Patriarch (cf. Chan/Zen).
 - Also **Seven Perfected** (Mǎ, Qiū, Sūn), Wáng Zhé’s seven senior Shāndōng disciples
- Founders of other movements and famous lineage members
- Also immortals, divine beings, and gods

Major Texts (Narrative dimension; also oral)

- Complex historically. Various historical layers, even in same book
- Different texts emphasized in different Daoist movements and lineages, although the *Dàodé jīng* is probably the most influential text in the Daoist tradition. Also lineage-specific (diversity)
- **Dào zàng** 道藏 (**Daoist Canon**). **Open canon**; constantly changing with new additions. 1st compiled around 5th c. CE. Received version compiled in 15th c., with 17th c. supplement. Roughly 1,500 texts, with varying levels of relevance
- Many **genres** of texts
- *Dàodé jīng* and *Zhuāngzi* most influential/foundational
- **Dào dé jīng** 道德經 (*Tào-té-chīng*; Scripture on the Dao and Inner Power). A.k.a. *Lǎozǐ* 老子 (Book of Venerable Masters), which is conventionally translated as “Book of Master Lǎo.” Attributed to Lǎozǐ (pseudo-historical). **Anthology**. **Received edition** 81 chapters (poetic stanzas). Many historical and textual layers. **Multivocal** and **polysemic** (multiple significations) anthology
- *Zhuāngzi* 莊子 (Book of Master Zhuāng). Also known as *Nánhuá zhēnjīng* 南華真經 (Perfect Scripture of Master Nánhuá), with Nánhuá 南華 (Southern Florescence) being an honorific name for Zhuāngzi. **Multi-vocal anthology**. **Received edition** 33 chapters

(prose). Parables and stories. Many historical and textual layers. **Inner Chapters** associated with teachings and writings of ZZ

- **Daoist readings and views.** Also commentaries
- **NOT *Yijing*** 易經 (Classic of Change)
- **Also not *Tao of Pooh*** (Benjamin Hoff), *Wisdom of Tao* (Wayne Dyer), or *Tao Te Ching* by Mantak Chia, Ursula Le Guin, Stephen Mitchell, Solala Towler, and similar popularizers. Like the use of “philosophical Daoism” or reference to Tao should be taken as sign of inaccuracy and misunderstanding

Distinctive Beliefs (Worldview/Symbol System)

- **Theology.** Dao. Primarily monistic and panentheistic. But Dao immanent in everything → Panenhenic, polytheistic, and animistic. Many gods. Most important are Lǎojūn 老君 (Lord Lao) and Sānqīng 三清 (Three Purities)
- **Cosmogony/cosmology.** Emanation. From primordial nondifferentiation to differentiation. Spontaneous, amoral, impersonal (no agency or intentionality; not “God” or “creation”). Yin-yang. Not Daoist (“traditional Chinese cosmology” → pan-Chinese, even pan-East Asian)
- **Soteriology.** Diverse/multiple. (1) Alignment/union with the Dao → Living through the Dao; (2) Immortality
- **View of Self:** (1) Composite (two-“soul” model) (spiritualist=transitory spirit [not eternal soul]) → Dissolution after death or created immortality (transcendent spirit). (2) Later, Buddhist-influenced=consciousness-based and reincarnation (quasi-docetic)
- **Anthropology.** High. Overly optimistic and world-affirming. Humans as manifestations of the Dao. Innate nature. Also not anthropocentric. More theocentric, cosmocentric, and geocentric. Also shared animality
- **Key values/concerns.** Non-action (*wúwéi* 無為; also practice), clarity-and-stillness, contentment, desirelessness, flexibility, namelessness (invisibility/unknowability), non-contention, non-knowing, simplicity, and yielding
- **Lineage, ordination, community**
 - Degrees of commitment and adherence (precepts)
 - Degrees of affiliation and participation (self-cultivation)
- **Sense of place and rootedness**

Key Practices

- Diverse—tends to be lineage- and community-specific
- A **comprehensive Daoist training regimen** includes dietetics, ethics, health and longevity practice, meditation, ritual, seasonal awareness, and scripture study
- For members of **Orthodox Unity**, ritual is most important. Usually communal and public. Sometimes large-scale performances. Zhāi-purification and Jiào-offering/renewal rites
- For members of **Complete Perfection**, meditation and ritual are primary. Also celibacy (no sex), sobriety (no intoxicants), and vegetarianism (no meat) as core vows and commitments
 - Meditation. Diverse. (1) Quiet sitting (apophatic/emptiness-based meditation); (2) Internal alchemy
 - Ritual. Bowing. Scripture recitation. Chanting liturgy. Occasionally large public rituals (*zhāi* 齋 & *jiào* 醮). Also *chànghuǐ* 懺悔 (atonement/repentance)

- Unlike Buddhism, Christianity and Islam, neither Confucianism nor Daoism have missionary tendencies. Like Orthodox Judaism and Orthodox Christianity, Daoists tend to be unconcerned with or even discourage conversion. **Ethnic religion**, but now **affinity** (*yuánfēn* 緣分)
- **NOT** Chinese medicine, Fēngshuǐ 風水 (Chinese geomancy), Qìgōng (Ch’ì-kūng; Energy Work/Qi Exercise), sexual yoga, Tàijí quán 太極拳 (T’ài-chí ch’üán; Great Ultimate/Yin-Yang Boxing), “Taoist/Yin Yoga,” etc. **Some connection, relevance, and applicability**

Sacred Sites (also Pilgrimage Sites) and Architecture

- Ancestral Halls: (1) Lóguàn 樓觀/Lookout Tower Monastery (Zhōuzhī, Shǎnxī); (2) Chóngyáng gōng 重陽宮 /Palace of Chóngyáng (Hùyì, Shǎnxī); (3) Lóngmén dòng 龍門洞/Dragon Gate Grotto (near Lǒngxiàn, Shǎnxī)
- Lónghǔ shān 龍虎山/Dragon-Tiger Mountain (near Yīngtán, Jiāngxī). Contains Tiānshī fǔ 天師府 (Mansion of the Celestial Master). Becomes prominent after Táng dynasty (618-907)
- Báiyún guān 白雲觀/White Cloud Monastery (Běijīng). Zhōngguó dàojiào xiéhuì 中國道教協會 (Chinese Daoist/Taoist Association), part of the PRC Bureau of Religious Affairs
- Lineage specific; also many sacred mountains and grotto-heavens

Symbols

- Usually Yin-yang/Taiji Diagram, but technically inaccurate
- Dao character
- Dipper
- Lotus (Buddhist)

Distinctive Dress and Gestures

- Monk and priest robes. Traditionally, dark blue robes with diagonal cut
- Also long hair and beards, topknots, hairpins and hats

COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS AND PITFALLS TO AVOID

Unfortunately, most of these are present in World Religions textbooks and non-specialist publications, even by self-identified Daoists (“Tao-ists”).

- Making a distinction between so-called “philosophical Daoism” and so-called “religious Daoism.” Daoism was a religious community from the beginning
- Essentializing classical Daoism as “original Daoism.” There’s no such thing
- Identifying Lǎozǐ as the founder of Daoism. Lǎozǐ is mythological and pseudo-historical
- Identifying the *Dàodé jīng* as authored by Lǎozǐ. The *Dàodé jīng* is a multi-vocal anthology that consists of various historical and textual layers
- Identifying any of the following as Daoist: Chinese medicine, Fēngshuǐ, Qìgōng (Ch’ì-kūng), sexual yoga, Tàijí quán (Tài-chí ch’üán), “Tao/Taoist/Yin Yoga,” the *Yijīng* (*I-chīng*), yin-yang, and so forth

- Using inaccurate translations of the *Dàodé jīng* (e.g., Mantak Chia, Stephen Mitchell, Ursula Le Guin, Solala Towler). Accurate translations include those of Stephen Addiss (literary/poetic), Louis Komjathy (literary/historical/practical), Michael LaFargue (historical/practical), D.C. Lau (philological/historical), John Wu (philological), Wu Yi (philological), and so forth
- Treating popular appropriations as though they are part of the Daoist tradition (e.g., Benjamin Hoff's *The Tao of Pooh*, Wayne Dyer's *Change Your Thoughts or Living the Wisdom of the Tao*, etc.). As I say to my students, "Daoists are not idiotic bears," "pop psychologists," or "self-help gurus"
- Presenting organized Daoism as superstition or as a later, degenerate expression of classical Daoism

RELIABLE SOURCES AND FURTHER READING

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Common Misconceptions about Daoism

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Popular misconceptions about Daoism are numerous and increasingly influential in the modern world. All of these perspectives fail to understand the *religious tradition which is Daoism*, a religious tradition that is complex, multifaceted, and rooted in traditional Chinese culture. These misconceptions have their origins in traditional Confucian prejudices, European colonialism, and Christian missionary sensibilities, especially as expressed by late nineteenth-century Protestants. Most of these views are located in American designer hybrid (“New Age”) spirituality, Orientalism, Perennial Philosophy, and spiritual capitalism. They domesticate, sterilize and misrepresent Daoism, and disempower actual Daoists and Daoist communities. In their most developed expressions, they may best be understood as part of a new religious movement (NRM) called “Popular Western Taoism” (PWT), with Taoism pronounced with a hard “t” sound. The current state of Daoism in America may thus be compared to that of Zen Buddhism in the 1950s and 1960s (cf. *Dharma Bums* and Alan Watts with the Mountains and Rivers Order), although some have suggested that it more closely resembles the Euro-American understanding of Buddhism in the 1890s. In terms of the Western encounter with Daoism, this was the time of the World’s Parliament of Religions (1893) and James Legge’s (1815-1897) contributions to the *Sacred Books of the East* (Max Muller, ed.), especially *The Texts of Taoism* (1891).

Popular Misconception	Informed View
Dao (Tao) is a trans-religious and universal name for the sacred, and there are “Dao-ists” (“Tao-ists”) who transcend the limitations of the Daoist religious tradition.	道, Romanized as <i>dào</i> or <i>tào</i> , is a Chinese character utilized by Daoists to identify that which they believe is sacred and ultimately real (Reality). There are specific, foundational Daoist views concerning the Dao, which originate in the earliest Daoist communities of the Warring States period (480-222 BCE).
Daoism consists of two forms, “philosophical Daoism” and “religious Daoism.”*	The distinction between so-called philosophical Daoism and religious Daoism is a modern Western fiction, which reflects colonialist and missionary agendas and sensibilities. The use of such categories, even in scare quotation marks, should be taken, <i>ipso facto</i> , as indicative of ignorance and misunderstanding concerning Daoism. From its beginnings in the Warring States period (480-222 BCE), “Daoism” consisted of religious practitioners and communities.

* These characterizations require reflection on the categories of “philosophy” and “religion,” including the ways in which Daoists have constructed and understood their/our own tradition.

	<p>Considered as a whole, Daoism is a complex and diverse religious tradition. It consists of various adherents, communities and movements, which cannot be reduced to a simplistic bifurcation. Its complexity may be mapped in terms of historical periodization as well as models of practice and attainment.</p>
<p>“Philosophical Daoism” is the original form of Daoism and is best understood as “philosophy” (disembodied thinking/way of thought).</p>	<p>Outside of the modern world, there is no form of Daoism that is not “religious.” Although there are aspects of Daoism that are “philosophical,” the category philosophical Daoism fails to consider the centrality of embodied practice (way of being), community, and place in Daoism, especially in “classical Daoism.” It is based on a systematic mischaracterization of the inner cultivation lineages of Warring States Daoism and a misreading of the earliest Daoist texts, namely, the <i>Lǎozǐ</i> (<i>Lǎo-tzu</i>; a.k.a. <i>Dàodé jīng</i>) and <i>Zhuāngzǐ</i> (<i>Chuāng-tzu</i>), among others.</p>
<p><i>Dàojiā</i> 道家 and <i>dàojiào</i> 道教 correspond to the Western categories of “philosophical Daoism” and “religious Daoism,” respectively.</p>	<p><i>Dàojiā</i> 道家, literally “Family of the Dao,” and <i>dàojiào</i> 道教, literally “Teachings of the Dao,” are indigenous Chinese categories with no correspondence to the Western constructs of philosophical Daoism and religious Daoism. Each term has a complex history, with its meaning changing in different contexts. For example, in the fifth century, <i>dàojiā</i> referred to the Daoist religious community in general and the Daoist priesthood in particular.</p>
<p>Lǎozǐ 老子 (Lǎo-tzu; Master Lǎo/Old Master/Old Child) is the founder of Daoism.</p>	<p>Lǎozǐ, a.k.a. Lǎo Dān 老聃 and Lǐ Ēr 李耳, is a pseudo-historical figure. His received “biography,” as contained in Sīmā Tán’s 司馬談 (ca. 165-110 BCE) and Sīmā Qiān’s 司馬遷 (ca. 145-86 BCE) <i>Shǐjì</i> 史記 (Records of the Historian; dat. ca. 94 BCE), combines information about a variety of people from various sources. If Lǎozǐ existed, we do not know anything about him. There is, in turn, no “founder” of Daoism; “Lǎozǐ,” translatable as “venerable masters,” is best understood as a place-holder for the early</p>

	<p>inner cultivation lineages. Daoism, in turn, has multiple source-points. A variety of figures, both human and divine, are identified as important with respect to the formation of the Daoist tradition.</p>
<p>Lǎozǐ wrote the <i>Dàodé jīng</i> 道德經 (<i>Tào-té chīng</i>; Scripture on the Dao and Inner Power)</p>	<p>The <i>Dàodé jīng</i>, a.k.a. <i>Lǎozǐ</i> 老子 (Book of Venerable Masters), is a composite text. It is an anonymous multivocal anthology that consists of historical and textual material dating from the fourth to second centuries BEC. It contains the teachings and practices of various anonymous elders associated with the inner cultivation lineages of classical Daoism. Some of these historical and textual layers may have come from the oral teachings of the shadowy figure Lǎo Dān (see <i>Zhuāngzi</i>, chs. 3, 5, 7, 11, 12, 13, 14, 21, 23, 25, 27, 33).</p>
<p>The <i>Dàodé jīng</i> and <i>Zhuāngzi</i> are the only Daoist texts that matter because they are the “essence” and “original teachings” of Daoism.</p>	<p>There is no principal Daoist scripture. Although the <i>Dàodé jīng</i> is probably the most central and influential scripture in Daoist history, different Daoist adherents, communities and movements revere different scriptures. The primary textual collection in the Daoist tradition is called the <i>Dào zàng</i> 道藏 (Daoist Canon). It was an open textual collection, with new additions having been made throughout Daoist history. The first version was compiled in the fifth century CE. The received version was compiled in the fifteenth century, with a seventeenth century supplement. It consists of roughly 1,500 texts, texts that come from every major period and movement of Daoist history.</p>
<p>Daoism began with a revelation from Lǎojūn 老君 (Lord Lao) to Zhāng Dàolíng 張道陵 (fl. 140s) in 142 CE. This was the beginning of the Tiānshī 天師 (Celestial Masters) movement.</p>	<p>While the Tiānshī movement was formative in the establishment of Daoism as an organized religious tradition and represents one of the most important movements in Daoist history, there were Daoist adherents and communities before the Celestial Masters. Moreover, not every subsequent Daoist movement recognized Zhāng Dàolíng and the Celestial Masters as the source of</p>

	their tradition.
Daoists, or Dao-ists, are those who love the Dao and go with the flow.	From a Daoist perspective, there are various types of religious adherence and affiliation. These involve different degrees of commitment and responsibility. The Daoist tradition consists, first and foremost, of ordained priests and monastics and lay supporters. Lineage and ordination are primary dimensions of Daoist identity and religious affiliation. This requires training under Daoist teachers and community elders with formal affiliation with the Daoist religious community and tradition. A distinction may, in turn, be made between Daoist adherents and Daoist sympathizers. In the case of Daoism in the West, one also finds various forms of spiritual appropriation, spiritual capitalism, and spiritual colonialism.
Correlative cosmology, based on yīn-yáng 陰陽, the Five Elements (<i>wǔxíng</i> 五行), and qì 氣 (<i>ch'i</i>), is Daoist.	These concepts are not Daoist. They are part of what is best understood as “traditional Chinese cosmology” and a “traditional Chinese worldview.” In pre-modern China, these concepts formed the foundation of a pan-Chinese worldview. Like other aspects of traditional Chinese culture, they formed part of the foundational Daoist worldview. Thus, correlative cosmology is not Daoist in origin or in essence.
Chinese medicine is Daoist and/or there is some form of Chinese medicine called “Daoist Medicine.”	Chinese medicine is not Daoist. This misidentification, and the construct of “Daoist medicine,” most often comes from a conflation of correlative cosmology (see above) with Daoism. Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) is, in fact, a modern form of Chinese medicine created by the Chinese Communist government and influenced by Western biomedicine and a scientific paradigm. In terms of classical Chinese medicine, there is some overlap between the two traditions, but little research has been done on this topic. We do know, however, that Daoists such as Gé Hóng 葛洪 (283-343), Táo Hóngjǐng 陶弘景 (456-536), Sūn

	<p>Sīmiǎo 孫思邈 (581-682), and Wáng Bīng 王冰 (fl. 760s) made major contributions to Chinese medicine. They were Daoists and, in the case of Sūn and Táo, Chinese medical practitioners.</p>
<p>Fēngshuǐ 風水 (lit., “Wind and Water), or Chinese geomancy, is Daoist.</p>	<p>Fēngshuǐ is not Daoist. Like correlative cosmology (see above), it is part of what is best understood as “traditional Chinese culture.” While some Daoists have utilized Fēngshuǐ throughout Chinese history, it is not Daoist in origin or essence. Using Fēngshuǐ, even so-called “Taoist Fengshui,” thus does not indicate Daoist religious affiliation or identity.</p>
<p>Qìgōng 氣功 (Ch’ì-kūng; Energy Work/Qi Exercise) is Daoist.</p>	<p>Qìgōng is not Daoist. Qìgōng refers to a modern Chinese health and longevity movement aimed at national upbuilding. It combines traditional Chinese health and longevity practices with modern Chinese concerns and a Western scientific paradigm. Some of these derive from earlier Daoist Yǎngshēng 養生 (Nourishing Life) practices. There also are many different types of Qìgōng, including Buddhist, Daoist, medical, and martial. Most Daoist Qìgōng incorporates internal alchemy (<i>nèidān</i> 內丹) methods.</p>
<p>Sexual yoga, including the search for multiple orgasms and the practice of sexual vampirism, is Daoist.</p>	<p>The place of sexuality in Daoism is complex. Most of the practices identified as “Daoist sexual practices” originated in non-Daoist contexts, in imperial court circles in particular. While some Daoists have practiced “paired” or “partnered practice,” often referred to as “dual cultivation” (<i>shuāngxiū</i> 雙修), a different conception of sexual intercourse was involved. Moreover, such practices almost always occurred within a larger system of alchemical transformation in which the sublimation of sexual energy was a preliminary and foundational step.</p>

<p>Tàijí quán 太極拳 (Tài-chí ch'úán; Great Ultimate/Yin-Yang Boxing) is Daoist.</p>	<p>Tàijí quán is not Daoist. It is a Chinese martial art. Like Bāguà zhǎng 八卦掌(Eight Trigram Palm) and Xíngyì quán 形意拳 (Form-Intent Boxing), it originated in non-Daoist circles. It was a nativist response aimed at national upbuilding. While some Daoists, especially Wǔdāng 武當 Daoists, practice Tàijí quán, practicing Tàijí quán does not make one a Daoist. It is, first and foremost, a martial art that is not Daoist in origin or essence.</p>
<p>Taoist Yoga, a.k.a. Tao Yoga, Flow Yoga or Yin Yoga, is Daoist.</p>	<p>“Taoist Yoga” is a misnomer, a mistaken category with no correlation to indigenous Chinese categories. Yoga is a Sanskrit technical term related to indigenous Indian practices aimed at union (<i>yuj</i>) with the divine. Most so-called “Taoist Yoga” is either modified Hatha Yoga (Western postural yoga) or derives from Chinese Wǔshù 武術 (martial arts) practices. Current research suggests that little if any so-called “Taoist Yoga” derives from Daoist Dǎoyǐn 導引 (Guided stretching; calisthenics/gymnastics) or internal alchemy (<i>nèidān</i> 內丹) practices, which are the indigenous Daoist categories.</p>
<p>Mount Wǔdāng 武當 is the birthplace of the soft or internal martial arts, such as Tàijí quán. Zhāng Sānfēng 張三丰 (d. 1457?), the patron saint of Mount Wǔdāng, is the creator of Tàijí quán.</p>	<p>Chinese “internal style” (<i>nèijiā</i> 內家) martial arts are not Daoist and do not originate in a Daoist context. Current research indicates that Wǔdāng-style martial arts represent a late imperial/early modern synthesis of Bāguà zhǎng, Tàijí quán, and Xíngyì quán. Zhāng Sānfēng is pseudo-historical.</p>
<p>The <i>Yìjīng</i> 易經 (<i>ì-chīng</i>; Classic of Change) is a Daoist text. As the trigrams and hexagrams derive from it, they also are Daoist symbols.</p>	<p>The <i>Yìjīng</i> 易經 (Classic of Change) is not a Daoist text. It pre-dates distinct, indigenous cultural traditions like Rǔjiā 儒家 (“Confucianism”) and Dàojiā 道家 (“Daoism”). From a traditional Chinese perspective, it is one of the so-called “Five Classics” of classical Confucianism, and specifically utilized as a divination manual. Throughout Chinese history, some Daoists have studied the cosmology of the <i>Yìjīng</i> and</p>

	utilized the trigrams and hexagrams as a symbol system, especially for external and internal alchemy. However, interest in the <i>Yijing</i> and hexagrams/trigrams does not make one a Daoist.
Translations of the <i>Tào-té-chīng</i> by Mantak Chia, Ursula Le Guin, Stephen Mitchell, Ni Hua-ching, Solala Towler and other popularizers are accurate and provide direct access to the original teachings of Daoism	Such “translations” are not, in fact, translations, but rather “adaptations” and “versions.” For example, Le Guin, Mitchell and Towler do not know classical Chinese. Moreover, such popular Western cultural productions are popular exactly because they expunge all of the culturally specific and religious dimensions of the text. Daoist scriptures (<i>jīng</i> 經) are sacred texts written in classical Chinese. Moreover, there are various Daoist views about the origin, nature and meaning of such texts. Many <i>jīng</i> are considered to be revealed and/or inspired.
Popular publications like <i>The Tao of Pooh</i> (Benjamin Hoff) as well as <i>Change Your Thoughts</i> and <i>Living the Wisdom of the Tao</i> (Wayne Dyer) provide accurate glimpses into Daoist beliefs and concerns.	Such works have no place in a serious inquiry into and an accurate understanding of the Daoism. They are part of popular Western culture, New Age spirituality, as well as self-help and pop psychology. They are part of “spiritual capitalism” and a new form of alternative spirituality best understood as “Popular Western Taoism” (PWT), with “Taoism” pronounced with a “t” sound. That movement has little to no connection with the <i>religious tradition which is Daoism</i> .

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