

## Principles of Daoist Translation 道教翻譯原則

Daoist Translation Committee 道教翻譯學會

Daoist Foundation 道教基金會

The following guidelines are intended to inspire deeper reflection on the possibility of “Daoist translation” and to inform such translation projects. In addition to providing guidance for our own work, they represent a “living document” for inquiry, reflection, discussion, application, and revision. They are one of the foundations for our collaborative translation work.

~ Daoist translation is, first and foremost, translation that is **Daoist-informed and ideally Daoist-inspired and Daoist-infused**. As such, it is rooted in a **Daoist scholar-practitioner approach**, or at least a **Daoist study-practice model**.

~ Daoist translation is *translation*, the “**carrying over**” from source-text to target-text, here referring to Chinese Daoist literature and English translation, respectively. It is the degree to which the connection is honored and maintained that the resultant translation is translation as such. Some **defining characteristics and core commitments of translation** include accessibility, accuracy, fluency, readability, and reliability. Our own approach centers on composing complete, annotated scholarly and literary translations through deep attentiveness to language and context, including what might be understood as “**Daoist linguistics**” and “**Daoist etymology**.”

~ More specifically, Daoist translation is translation work **informed by and ideally expressing foundational Daoist commitments, principles, qualities, and values**. Some of these include alignment, attunement, clarity, connection, cultivation, honesty, refinement, simplicity, stillness, and trustworthiness. Daoist translation should be infused with a “Daoist spirit” and “Daoist flavor,” if you will.

~ For us, Daoist translation is rooted in Daoist practice. It is **study informing practice, and practice informing study**. Specifically, it involves having direct experiential understanding of the insights, perspectives, views, and actual practices documented in the texts being translated. While ours is an **inner cultivation model**, we recognize the value and importance of lived ritual literacy for translating liturgical literature. For “non-Daoist” translators, a Daoist approach to translation may be approximated through formal consultation and dialogic exchange with knowledgeable Daoists, or at least “thinking through” the literature in question.

~ **Daoist translation is Daoist practice**. Daoist translation may be understood as a form of both **scripture study and close reading**. It also connects to meditation and Yǎngshēng 養生 (Nourishing Life). This is translation as a way of life. Here we recall that “scriptures” (*jīng* 經) are one of the external Three Treasures (*sānbǎo* 三寶) of Daoism, with the others being the Dao 道 and the teachers (*shī* 師). In this way, Daoist translation is theological, in the sense of being orientated towards something larger and something more. Like the composition of commentaries based on original sources, scholarly annotation involves deep engagement and familiarity with the given text. By undertaking Daoist translation, we thus participate in the larger Daoist scholastic and hermeneutical sub-tradition.

~ Daoist translation involves **contemplative reading**. This is a style of reading and interpretation informed by Daoist meditation, specifically as characterized by interiority, presence, and silence. “Contemplative reading” is, in turn, attentive, careful, intentional, reflective, and the like. We allow the primary text to inform our lives and to infuse our being.

~ Daoist translation is **community-oriented**. Daoist translators recognize the need for access to traditional Daoist literature by individuals who do not read Chinese. The associated translation work is undertaken with the aspiration to assist not just ourselves, but also others in deepening their understanding, practice, and realization. Daoist translations are **reverential gestures and offerings from and to the Daoist tradition**.

~ The resultant Daoist translations are **documentations of affiliation and lines of transmission**. They reveal Daoism as a **lived/living community, expression, and tradition** with contemporary relevance, manifesting in new forms and new places. Beyond texts as historical artifacts, Daoist translations provide opportunities for engagement, reflection, and application in/as/through **Daoist being, presence, and participation**.

~ **Essential Principles of Daoist Translation** ~

