SUGGESTED READINGS ON TAOISM

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(Not for citation)

General Works

Analyzes the origins and interpretive limitations of scholarly perspectives of previous generations, such as the long-orthodox preachings of Fung Yu-lan and H. G. Creel about differentiating the "sublime philosophy" of the tao-chia — the sainted Lao-Chuang texts — from the "degraded superstitions" of the later tao-chiao. Should be read along with Sivin (see below).

An introduction to the entire tradition, including an examination of its long-unappreciated ethical dimensions. A similar presentation, with a different slant, is the entry by the same author in Philosophy of Education: An Encyclopedia (New York and London: Garland, 1996), 633-36.
An overview of the roles of women in Taoism appears in the same author's entry in The Encyclopedia of Women and World Religions (New York: Macmillan, forthcoming).

An examination of definitional issues concerning the historical segments and phases of the entire Taoist tradition.

A sourcebook that should soon become standard fare in all courses on Asian religions. A very useful collection of readable extracts from texts of all segments of the Taoist tradition. Some are slightly revised versions of previously published translations. Specialists may quibble with Kohn's choice of texts, or her organization of the volume. But most teachers will find it extremely helpful for introducing many aspects of Taoism heretofore ignored by the traditional sourcebooks, like deBary's Sources of Chinese Tradition (1960) and Chan's Sourcebook in Chinese Philosophy (1963).

A collection of substantial state-of-the-art articles on virtually all important phases and topics in Taoist history, literature, and religion, by the world's leading authorities.

Though certainly not "an insider" (as the publisher would have us believe: Liu is an intellectual historian from mainland China), Liu presents a surprisingly thorough overview of the entire tradition.
His interpretations are sometimes debatable (e.g., his extravagant contention that the *Pao-pu-tzu* of Ko Hung was "the basic theoretical work of early Taoist religion"). But no other textbook on "World Religions" offers anything remotely comparable. Used critically, a valuable resource.


Contains Roth's selections from classical texts like the *Nei-yeh*, and extracts from several important texts of Later Taoism, reliably introduced and translated by leading scholars. But it ignores Ch'üan-chen, Inner Alchemy, and all forms of "gentry Taoism," as well as *Lao-tzu* and *Chuang-tzu*, so the picture it provides of Taoist practice is incomplete and slanted.


Robinet, Isabelle, *Taoism: Growth of a Religion*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997. The only reliable historical introduction to Taoism, from its classical origins through the early modern era. Regrettably, developments after the 14th century are not addressed. Robinet is a respected authority on topics like the Shang-ch'ing revelations and Inner Alchemy practices.

Schipper, Kristofer, *The Taoist Body*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994. This introduction to Taoism has been renowned among specialists since its French publication in 1982. Unfortunately, despite the updated bibliography, the text does not reflect the extensive research conducted since its original publication, and it is thus already quite dated. The first half focusses on the ritual activities of Taoist priests (particularly in the "Southern" Cheng-i tradition, in which Schipper is ordained); the second half discusses meditation, "immortals," and the Lao-Chuang classics. The book may confuse readers with its insistence that "true Taoism...is, above all, the liturgical structure of local communities" (220 n. 33). Schipper emphasizes the social and physical aspects of Taoist practice so strongly that the more intellectualized models of Taoist practice (e.g., those encountered in Kohn's *Taoist Mystical Philosophy*, or even the novel *Seven Taoist Masters*; see below) seem to have little place. Hence, while we can be grateful for the light that Schipper sheds on continuities in the Taoist tradition, this book makes too little of the profound changes that Taoism underwent during its history, and of its resulting diversity.


The final word by one of the scholars who established the serious study of Taoism in the 1970s. Seidel's earlier summaries in the *Encyclopedia Britannica* (1974), once the standard, are no longer reliable.

A highly informative discussion of the concept of "Taoism," helpful for distinguishing elements of the historical Taoist tradition from other phenomena that have mistakenly been associated with it in the popular mind, in both Asia and the West. No one should teach about "Taoism" without having learned what Sivin teaches us here.

The first comprehensive Western-language introduction to Taoism by a native practitioner of the tradition. Part One introduces the major phases in the evolution of Taoism that scholars today recognize. Part Two illustrates the variety within Taoism by identifying five distinctive "Systems of Taoism." Wong's interpretation here is debatable, but is basically viable. The book contains errors and debatable interpretations, but if read as an "insider's guide," which seeks appreciation for the tradition as much as an understanding of it, it stands up quite well. Useful for teachers knowledgeable enough to guide students past its flaws. See review by Kirkland in *Education About Asia*, in press.

Brief extracts from twenty Taoist texts of all periods, covering many aspects of Taoism. See review by Kohn in *Journal of Chinese Religions*, in press.

**Classical Taoism**

A thorough critical exploration of the figure "Lao-tzu" throughout Chinese history, by a well-informed specialist.

A substantial (though now dated) presentation of the received text of the *Tao-te ching*, with copious notes from both traditional commentaries and modern studies, Asian and Western alike. The translation is sometimes skewed by Chan's Neo-Confucian bent. Like any translation that predated the discovery of the Ma-wang-tui texts, should be used with some caution.

The best available translation and analysis of the second best-known text of classical Taoism.


The new standard, by one of the West's foremost authorities on the Ma-wang-tui editions of the text. The first half presents an unannotated translation for the general reader; the second gives scholars the original texts and detailed textual analysis. Highly recommended.

An introduction to current scholarly thought on the *Tao-te ching* and its composition.


A revised edition of the most sober and substantial study of the *Daode jing* in the English language before Henricks. The 1963 Penguin edition is still available; its fine introduction and competent translation keep it useful.


Introduces the self-cultivation practices of classical Taoism, as found in long-neglected texts like the *Nei-yeh*. A complete translation of the *Nei-yeh is in progress*. Roth's work promises to transform our entire perspective on classical Taoism.

### Later Taoism

The serious study of Later Taoism did not really get underway until the 1970s, so little published before 1978 is very reliable. The following works are recommended.


The first Western-language translation of complete texts of early Traditional Taoism. First-rate scholarship. All scholars should acquaint themselves with this material.


An collection of essential, if highly technical, articles by Japanese and European scholars on Taoist spiritual practices of all period. Though far too difficult for most students to cope with, scholars should be aware of the material presented here.


A thorough study of a short text of the 5th or 6th century CE that is reminiscent of the *Tao te ching*. Kohn uses it as the starting point for constructing a Taoist "mystical philosophy." See review by Kirkland in *Journal of Chinese Religions* 21 (1993).


This translation of Robinet's 1979 French study (updated by the author) focuses on the medieval Shang-ch'ing tradition, which emphasized individual spiritual elevation through visualizational meditation. Robinet really uses Shang-ch'ing texts here as a starting point for exploring certain broad themes of Traditional Taoism. While it does shed light upon many aspects of that tradition, readers do not get to see how medieval Taoists differed among themselves in thought and/or practice, or how Taoist ideas and practices evolved historically. Should be used along with her *Taoism: Growth of a Religion*.

A non-scholarly translation of delightful novel of early Ch'ing times, the *Ch'i-chen chuan* ("Accounts of the Seven Perfected Ones"), which fictionalizes the exploits of Wang Che (the founder of Ch'üan-chen or "Northern Taoism") and his seven primary disciples. Didactic monologues introduce the practice of self-cultivation according to Wang's tradition. Students can identify with the spiritual journeys of the characters: through dedication, sacrifice, and meditative discipline, they overcome various failings and exemplify the process of moral and spiritual maturation. Though fictionalized (e.g., there is no evidence that the woman disciple Sun Pu-erh ever actually disfigured herself), the novel makes a good introduction to many of the concepts, values, and practices of the later Taoist tradition, including "Inner Alchemy" and the ascent to "immortality" through spiritual self-discipline.