

## SUGGESTED READINGS ON TAOISM

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(Not for citation)

### General Works

Kirkland, Russell, "Person and Culture in the Taoist Tradition." *Journal of Chinese Religions* 20 (1992), 77-90.

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).

------. "Taoism." In *The Encyclopedia of Bioethics*, 2nd edition (New York: Macmillan, 1995), 5: 2463-2469.

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).

------. "The Historical Contours of Taoism in China: Thoughts on Issues of Classification and Terminology." *Journal of Chinese Religions* 25 (1997), in press.

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

Kohn, Livia, *The Taoist Experience: An Anthology*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993.

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).

------, ed., *A Handbook of Taoism*. Leiden: E. J. Brill. In progress.

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.

Liu Xiaogan, "Taoism," in Arvind Sharma, ed., *Our Religions* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1993), 229-289.

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.

Lopez, Donald S. Jr., ed., *Religions of China in Practice*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996.

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.

Pas, Julian, *A Select Bibliography on Taoism*. 2nd revised edition. Saskatoon: Saskatoon China Pavilion, 1997. First edition (SUNY Press, 1988) is now quite outdated. Neither is annotated, and many entries direct readers to unreliable works.

------. *A Historical Dictionary of Taoism*. Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, forthcoming. Brief entries by a respected scholar on many important names and topics.

Pregadio, Fabrizio, ed., *Encyclopedia of Taoism*. London: Curzon Press. In progress. Contains 900 reliable entries, by leading scholarly authorities from Asia and the West.

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.

Seidel, Anna, "Taoism: The Unofficial High Religion of China." *Taoist Resources* 7.2 (1997), in press.

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.

Sivin, Nathan, "On the Word 'Taoist' as a Source of Perplexity," *History of Religions* 17 (1978), 303-331.

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.

Wong, Eva, *The Shambhala Guide to Taoism*. Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1997.

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.

------. *Teachings of the Tao*. Boston and London: Shambhala Publications, 1997.

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**

Boltz, Judith Magee, "Lao-tzu." In *The Encyclopedia of Religion* (New York: Macmillan, 1987), 8:454-59.

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

Chan, Wing-tsit, trans., *The Way of Lao Tzu*. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1963.

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.

Graham, A. C., trans., *Chuang-tzu: The Seven Inner Chapters and Other Writings from the Book of Chuang-tzu*. Translated by A. C. Graham. London: Allen & Unwin, 1981.

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

------. "The Origins of the Legend of Lao Tan." In his *Studies in Chinese Philosophy and Philosophical Literature* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990), 111-24.

Helps unravel the process by which "Lao-tzu" was invented.

Henricks, Robert G., trans., *Lao-tzu Te-Tao Ching*. New York: Ballantine Books, 1989.

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.

Kirkland, Russell, "The Book of the Way." In Ian P. McGreal, ed., *Great Literature of the Eastern World* (New York: HarperCollins, 1996), 24-29.

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

Lau, D. C., trans., *Chinese Classics: Tao Te Ching*. Second edition. Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 1982.

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.

Roth, Harold D. "The Inner Cultivation Tradition of Early Daoism," in Donald S. Lopez, Jr., *Religions of China in Practice* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 123-38.

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.**

Bokenkamp, Stephen, with a contribution by Peter Nickerson, *Early Daoist Scriptures*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997.

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

Kohn, Livia, ed., *Taoist Meditation and Longevity Techniques*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Center for Chinese Studies, 1989.

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.

----- *Taoist Mystical Philosophy: The Scripture of Western Ascension*. Albany: SUNY Press, 1991.

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).

Robinet, Isabelle, *Taoist Meditation: The Mao-shan Tradition of Great Purity*. Albany: SUNY Press, 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*.

Wong, Eva, trans., *Seven Taoist Masters: A Folk Novel of China*. Boston and London: Shambhala Publications, 1991.

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.