

THE HISTORICAL CONTOURS OF TAOISM IN CHINA: THOUGHTS ON ISSUES OF CLASSIFICATION AND TERMINOLOGY¹

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In the 1995 issue of *Journal of Chinese Religions* is a review article by Livia Kohn devoted to two recent Japanese reference works on Taoism: *Dokyo no daijiten* [The Great Encyclopedia of Taoism] and *Dokyo jiten* [Taoism Dictionary].² In it, Kohn briefly discusses the efforts of several Japanese scholars to generalize about the unity and diversity of "Taoism" that is, to make general statements about the fundamental elements of "Taoism" and about the divergences that we see in the different components of Taoism down through history. Kohn further suggests that Western scholars might consider drawing upon the ideas presented by those Japanese scholars, to "coin a standardized English terminology" for Taoism that would "help everyone involved in its study and teaching toward a higher clarity and better understanding."³

One grants that it would be difficult to gain universal agreement on a "standardized terminology" for Taoism, in any language. And if we extend the scope of such an effort, to attempt to reach agreement among Chinese and Japanese scholars as well as their Western counterparts, such an effort might seem to be a futile one. Nonetheless, I propose that the field of Taoist studies has now reached a level of maturity that would seem to justify--if not actually demand--a general consensus regarding certain basic aspects of our subject.

A generation ago, such was not the case: many important elements of the Taoist tradition were simply too poorly known for scholars to forge meaningful generalizations about the tradition as a whole. And even today, no one in the world has a detailed understanding of *every* element of Taoism. And yet, our knowledge about Taoism has been greatly enhanced in the last generation, in the West as well as in Japan. The time seems to be ripe for an effort to consolidate that knowledge. The 1995 issue of *Acta Asiatica*, published by the Toho Gakkai, was devoted to articles on "The Basic Structure of Taoism."⁴ Because of the fairly mature state that the field has thus begun to achieve, I propose that it might indeed be possible to pursue Kohn's suggestion to seek a general agreement about certain fundamental historical and interpretive issues.

ON THE QUESTION, "WHAT IS TAOISM?"

To begin with, I believe that it is safe today to state that most scholars around the world who specialize in Taoist studies no longer see the fundamental historical issue as being a differentiation between "*tao-chia'*" and "*tao-chiao*," or between "philosophical Taoism" and "religious Taoism." In the West, virtually all specialists stepped beyond that issue in the 1980s. At that time, many of us were profoundly affected by the writings of scholars such as Kristofer Schipper, who sought to enhance our awareness for the vital continuities that link the "philosophical" and "religious" strains of Chinese Taoism.⁵ Many of us were also affected by the insightful analysis of this issue published by Nathan Sivin in 1978.⁶ As Sivin noted, in premodern China the term *tao-chiao* denoted *all* Taoist teachings, as distinguished from Confucian and Buddhist teachings; it did *not* denote a "Taoist religion," as distinguished from any supposed "Taoist philosophy." Of course, the same point was also made by Japanese scholars like Sakai Tadao and Fukui Fumimasa, as far back as 1977.⁷ And in the 1995 issue of *Acta Asiatica*, Fukui explains in some detail why he is "unable to endorse the hitherto practice of Japanese scholars of clearly distinguishing between *tao-chiao* and *tao-chia*."⁸ So perhaps scholars of Taoism can now begin working together to decide how to understand the continuities that run through the Taoist tradition.

Though scholarship is still struggling to gain a clear idea of what "Taoism" is, I believe that there is evidence that that struggle is now beginning to reach a fruitful point. For instance, new Western publications on "Taoism" now open--almost routinely--with direct and meaningful attention to the question, "What is Taoism?"⁹ Indeed, an important work by Kohn opens with no fewer than three entire paragraphs of questions about Taoism, before the first declarative sentence appears.¹⁰ Why? I believe that it is because she, like most specialists today, is deeply aware that while the questions are now well known to us all, we still differ among ourselves about the answers.

One way to cope with that problem is to act as though all answers are equally valid. Indeed, some specialists have at times suggested that Taoism is everything that anyone has ever believed Taoism to be. For instance, in the work just mentioned, Kohn informs readers that Taoism "is an organized religion, a philosophy, and also the attitude that individuals have toward their lives and the world."¹¹ And of course, most of us would agree that that statement is generally true. And yet, one must also concede that it does not give most readers a very precise understanding of the nature of the Taoist tradition and its various components. It is for that reason that the recent Japanese reference works on Taoism are important, for, as Kohn has noted, the positions adopted by Japanese scholars in those works provoke Western scholars to re-evaluate our own concepts of the pertinent interpretive issues.

In my view, the issue today is *not*, in the first instance at least, that of answering the question, "How

do we define Taoism?" For my own part, I have had several occasions to offer my own answer to that question.¹² And of course, my views continue to evolve. But it does seem clear that the field of Taoist studies has now reached the point that many of us may be able to agree to certain fundamental conclusions regarding one key issue: *On what basis* do we determine whether or not a given cultural phenomenon is or is not truly "Taoist"? This simple analytical question is one that few Western scholars seem to have been willing to take on directly, largely because we are all so deeply aware of the historical subtleties of Taoism and of the interpretive differences among our colleagues in Asia and the West alike.

TAOISM, THE *TAO-TSANG*, AND THE T' IEN-SHIH TAO: PROBLEMS WITH STRICKMANN'S DEFINITION

Most scholars, in Japan as in the West, are aware that in the last few years the Western study of Taoism has been bereft of two of its most respected leaders, Anna Seidel and Edward Schafer. Even more recently, we have lost another significant contributor, Michel Strickmann. Strickmann's contributions were important, and many of us understand Taoism better because of them. It seems to me fitting to turn at this point to some of the daring suggestions that he once offered in pursuit of the fundamental question: On what basis do we determine whether a given cultural phenomenon is or is not truly "Taoist"?

In 1979, Strickmann advanced a highly restrictive definition of "Taoism":

. . . I am proposing to use the word *Taoist* only in referring to those who recognize the historical position of Chang Tao-ling [the founder of the T'ien-shih tradition], who worship the pure emanations of the Tao rather than the vulgar gods of the people at large, and--I may add--who safeguard and perpetuate their own lore and practices through esoteric rites of transmission. In other words, I should like to restrict the term to the Way of the Celestial Master and the organizations which grew out of it.¹³

Strickmann stated that he formulated that definition expressly in order to take into account "the complexities of Chinese social history," and to allow a differentiation of "Taoist" from "non-Taoist" based upon observed facts, such as the materials in the *Tao-tsang*, rather than upon "a priori notions" or "the obiter dicta of a tiny elite." In so doing, he relegated works such as *Lao-tzu* and *Chuang-tzu* to "the prehistory of Taoism."

Strickmann's definition has merit, for it provides clear criteria for determining whether someone or something is actually "Taoist." It also incorporates an appreciation of the historical realities of Taoism and its place within the civilization of traditional China. For those reasons, some other specialists in the West found Strickmann's position an attractive one.¹⁴

However, in my view, Strickmann's position has its disadvantages as well. First of all, there is virtually no chance that scholars either in Asia or in the West will agree to divest *Lao-tzu* and *Chuang-tzu* of the designation of "Taoist" writings. For one thing, the association is simply too well established. Secondly, today more than ever, members of the scholarly community do not share Strickmann's conviction that Taoist philosophy and Taoist religion "do not admit of meaningful comparison [much less] invite a factitious union under a single descriptive term."¹⁵ Most scholars today generally agree that there were meaningful continuities between the "Lao-Chuang" form of Taoism and the later tradition of the same name. It seems as improper to ignore those continuities as to exaggerate them.

Thirdly, I cannot assent to Strickmann's contention that his definition of Taoism "seems to emerge naturally from the study of the texts in the Taoist canon."¹⁶ For one thing, the *Tao-tsang* incorporates numerous texts that simply do not represent "Taoism" as he defined it. On the one hand, it includes a number of texts that certain Taoists chose to preserve, but that they certainly never composed, or even actually used in any specific context.¹⁷ On the other hand, the *Tao-tsang* contains not only the basic texts of "philosophical Taoism" (*Lao-tzu*, *Chuang-tzu*, etc.), but also an extensive commentarial literature on them. Moreover, much of that commentarial literature originated among sections of Chinese society that, according to Strickmann's definition, were not "Taoist." Hence, if we are to define "Taoism" with reference to the contents of the *Tao-tsang*, we would logically seem to need a definition that is both broader and more precise than that which Strickmann offered.

For another thing, in historical terms, the *Tao-tsang*, far from accentuating the T'ien-shih order, seems originally to have contained no T'ien-shih materials at all. According to research by such scholars as Ofuchi Ninji, the original *san-tung* (or Three Arcana) of the fifth century were devoted to (1) texts of the Shang-ch'ing order; (2) texts of the Ling-pao order; and (3) materials relating to the *San-huang wen* [Text of the Three Sovereigns]. T'ien-shih materials appear properly in the *ssu-fu* (Four Adjuncts), which were apparently added around the turn of the sixth century. Some T'ien-shih materials were later inserted into the *san-tung* (particularly the third, the *tung-shen pu*, Arcanum of Spirit).¹⁸ But the evidence indicates that the first Taoist canon was compiled not by representatives of T'ien-shih tradition, but rather by persons who implicitly *distinguished themselves* from that tradition. It is even conceivable that the Taoist canon was initially organized by persons who categorically denied the T'ien-shih order a place within "Taoism." Hence, again, if we are to define "Taoism" with reference to the *Tao-tsang*, it seems illogical to adorn the T'ien-shih order with the mantle of "true Taoism." Quite to the contrary, the T'ien-shih order appears to represent, at most, only one of a number of subtraditions of comparable standing.

Moreover, not all of the subtraditions of Taoism can meet the criteria of Strickmann's definition. For

instance, according to Strickmann himself, the *San-huang wen* represents the “old occult traditions of Chiang-nan prior to the arrival there of the Way of the Celestial Master in the second decade of the fourth century.”¹⁹ Hence, while one might be able to affiliate the Shang-ch’ing and Ling-pao traditions to that of Chang Tao-ling, it does not seem possible to do so with the tradition represented by the *San-huang wen*. Secondly, even some of the Western scholars who have followed Strickmann’s definition have noted that the affiliation of some Taoist movements to that of Chang Tao-ling was at times merely artificial.²⁰ Indeed, my own research in medieval Taoism indicates that even the claim of the Cheng-i Taoists of Lung-hu-shan to be the direct descendents of Chang Tao-ling is, in historical terms, quite dubious. In reality, Lung-hu clerics named Chang were occasionally mentioned in medieval times, but certainly not continually, and there is no evidence that any of them were actually descendents of Chang Tao-ling.²¹

From the sixth to tenth centuries, the acknowledged leaders of Taoism were actually the Shang-ch’ing masters of Mao-shan. When, for instance, T’ang emperors summoned the Taoists’ leading representatives to court, it was generally the “Grand Master” (*tsung-shih*) of the Shang-ch’ing order who was presumed to speak most authoritatively on issues pertaining to Taoism.²² Moreover, T’ang texts sometimes make clear that the “origins” of those Taoist leaders were associated with the reputed originators of the Shang-ch’ing tradition.²³ I believe that some modern scholars may have been misled into accepting the contention of modern Cheng-i practitioners that their form of Taoism was always central to Taoism because of those practitioners’ claim of affiliation with Chang Tao-ling’s movement. But now that we have begun to understand the history of Taoism more fully, it is becoming increasingly clear that a number of the significant components of the historical Taoist tradition had little connection whatever--real or artificial--with the T’ien-shih order of late antiquity.

This point seems to become increasingly clear when we expand our consideration to the other traditions that arose after T’ang times. From the time of T’ao Hung-ching in the sixth century to the time of Tu Kuang-t’ing in the tenth, there seems to have been a fairly homogeneous Taoist tradition: ideas and practices of diverse origin--from the *Tao te ching* to the universalistic soteriology of Ling-pao liturgies--were integrated into an ecumenical whole, led by masters who claimed Shang-ch’ing authority. But during Sung times, and especially in the North under the Conquest Dynasties of Chin and Yüan times, that ecumenical Taoist tradition was supplanted by a variety of new movements. Among those new movements was the Cheng-i order of Mt. Lung-hu. But there were also a number of other new Taoist movements during that period, movements that generally did not associate themselves with the long-defunct T’ien-shih tradition. It is to these new movements that I would now like to turn. For I propose that Western scholars, and some Asian scholars as well, have failed to appreciate the full significance of those movements. I shall argue that only when we have fully

appreciated those movements will we be able to compose a portrait of "Taoism" that is truly representative of the entire tradition.

THE NEGLECT OF POST-T'ANG TAOISM

In 1989, I noted that Western scholarship on Taoism has so far focused almost exclusively on the formative periods of Taoist history, i.e., the Han-T'ang periods.²⁴ Regrettably, there have still been relatively few Western studies attempting to elucidate the historical and interpretive significance of such "new" Taoist movements as Ch'ing-wei, or even Ch'üan-chen.²⁵ Maruyama has noted that Japanese scholarship is in nearly the same condition in this regard.²⁶ It is my contention that scholars of Taoism are not always sufficiently conscious of the interpretive implications of such movements for our general understanding of the Taoist tradition as a whole.

It is at this point that I believe that we in the West can profit most richly from the perspectives of some of our Japanese counterparts. In her aforementioned review article, Kohn notes that contributors to the new *Dokyo jiten*, such as Fukui and Akizuki, have attempted to suggest the importance of what they have called "New Taoism"--"a new phase of the religion that also adds a separate dimension to its overall scope."²⁷ While my own interpretation of the historical and thematic significance of "New Taoism" might at times vary from that of such scholars, I certainly endorse their view that our general picture of "Taoism" is woefully deficient if we fail to consider the implications of the various new branches of Taoism that arose in the tenth to twelfth centuries. I believe that it is also crucial to maintain due awareness of the fundamental discrepancies *among* those movements.

AN INTERPRETIVE OUTLINE OF THE HISTORY OF TAOISM

In an effort to facilitate discussion of the various branches of Taoism, I have prepared a historical outline of the entire tradition, and have appended it below. This outline originated as a handout for my students, and I have periodically revised it over the years. I have now revised it once more, to address more directly some of the interpretive issues that I have raised here.²⁸

The fundamental issue involved here is the issue of categorization. Let me note, first of all, that I describe "Taoism," in broad terms, as "a component of Chinese culture that embraces a broad array of moral, social, philosophical, and religious ideas and practices."²⁹ It is clear to any observer that the Taoist tradition included a diverse array of subtraditions, within which "Taoism" was conceived and practiced in diverse ways. My goal in offering this historical outline is to attempt to "sort out" the diverse strands of Taoism, in order to facilitate "thought and discourse which orders things in their proper relations," as the late A. C. Graham explained Chuang-tzu's approval of the term *Jun*.³⁰

Let me begin by presenting a number of important disclaimers. First, I certainly do not claim that this outline constitutes a definitive schema of the Taoist tradition: even on the “objective” level, it presents only a crude characterization of various components of the tradition. It constitutes merely a rough outline of major elements of Taoist history as found in my own research and in the scholarship with which I am familiar. Even on the second count, the outline fails to reflect some extremely important new research, such as Harold Roth’s current studies of Taoist practices in classical times. But my fundamental reason for offering the outline is not to answer all possible questions about the historical facts, but merely to stimulate discussion of the interpretive issues involved in any effort to “sort out” the historical elements of the Taoist tradition.

In Kohn’s review, she expressed the wish for the development of “a standardized English terminology” for discussing the major components of the tradition. I wonder whether scholars in any field of the humanities truly enjoy the luxury of a universally accepted “standardized terminology.” And I am certainly not sanguine concerning the prospects for achieving such a goal in our own field, whether our terminology be English, Japanese, or any other language. But as I stated above, I believe that the field of Taoist studies--in both Asia and the West--has now reached a level of maturity sufficient for us all to begin at least to consider the possibility of adopting some basic categorical terms. Doing so would reduce misunderstandings and confusion in discussions among specialists and non-specialists alike. In the West, many textbooks on Chinese civilization and textbooks on world religions continue to present Taoism in terms that date back to an age when little was actually known about Taoism in imperial China: they perpetuate concepts of the structure and history of the tradition that strike an informed specialist of our own age as truly bizarre. Specialists like ourselves have a responsibility to students, to scholars in other fields, and to the general public throughout the world to make every possible effort to render “Taoism” comprehensible to them by employing, as Kohn has suggested, terminology that is consistent, comprehensible, and historically accurate.

The outline that I present here attempts to “sort out” the various historical subtraditions of Taoism in the broadest possible terms, and to clarify the continuities and discontinuities among those subtraditions. My overarching goals in designing it were (1) to keep like things with like things, (2) to take due account of historical realities, and (3) to suggest ways in which we may speak meaningfully about the intrinsic characteristics of the many forms of Taoism.

CRITERIA FOR CLASSIFICATION

First of all, one will note that my outline completely discards the “traditional” segregation of Taoism into the categories of “*tao-chiao*” and “*tao-chia*.” Because of the inherent shortcomings of those terms for historical analysis, and because arguments over their applicability are generally

non-productive, I am proposing that they be relegated to the dust-heap of history, that they become terms that did not survive in the discourse of Taoist studies at the opening of the third millennium of the Common Era.

Secondly, one will note that I have attempted to acknowledge certain apparent dissimilarities between the "Taoism" that we know from late classical texts and the "Taoism" that evolved after the appearance of the *T'ai-p'ing ching* in Han times. In the broadest general terms, those dissimilarities involve *the issue of social participation in groups or organizations that were consciously aware of themselves as constituting, in some sense, co-pursuers of the Tao*. Current research seems to indicate that the so-called "Taoist school" of classical time--the famous *tao-chia*--was actually "a retrospective creation," an illusion that began as the reification of a Han-dynasty bibliographic classification and took its present form in post-Han times.³¹ Now it is possible that future research may alter our picture of pre-Han culture: evidence might emerge of certain localized groups who shared certain concepts of life and even certain meditative practices.³² If such a picture emerges, it might seem appropriate to refer to such groups as constituting "Taoists" in some meaningful *social* sense.

On this point, it seems important to recognize Strickmann's wisdom in his 1979 arguments. As noted above, the specific definition that he offered was highly restrictive, in ways that no longer seem historically tenable. Yet, he did argue persuasively that the terms "philosophical Taoism" and *tao-chia* should "revert to the original restricted usage [of the latter term]..as a bibliographic classification."³³ And perhaps more importantly, he argued, "I see no reason to call [something] 'Taoist' except where it occurs in an indubitably Taoist social context. The history of Taoism would obviously gain enormously in precision if we were to see it as a succession of social groups..."³⁴ This is a point that certain other Western scholars have maintained down to the present day.³⁵ I agree with Strickmann's fundamental proposition:

...whether or not my own criteria are accepted, I maintain that utter and disgraceful confusion will flourish in Sinology as long as scholars try to define Taoism without reference to the contents of the Taoist Canon, and without taking into account the complexities of Chinese social history.³⁶

But I also agree with Ofuchi and Sivin that *the issue of social participation in groups* involves groups who were *consciously aware* of themselves as constituting, in some sense, co-pursuers of the Tao: "There was no Taoism, Ofuchi has argued--no community of interest or consciousness of shared conviction among early sects now considered Taoist--until it was created by the classification of scriptures" at the hands of Lu Hsiu-ching and T'ao Hung-ching during the fifth and sixth centuries.³⁷ Contrary to Strickmann, who argued that "Taoists" should be initially defined as people "who recognize the historical position of Chang Tao-ling," Ofuchi has argued eloquently for a different

understanding of Taoist social history:

The essential condition for the creation by Taoists of a Taoist canon must have been a common sense of identity as Taoists. But in fact what was conspicuously lacking in early Taoism was any shared belief on the part of the faithful in a definite founder, or any well-defined body of doctrine which they considered to represent the teachings of such a founder....Consequently, although during the early stages of the religion (ca. 150-600 c.E.) there may have existed a number of doctrines which later came to be known as 'Taoism,' the people who held these beliefs were organized in separate groups regardless of the degree of actual similarity there may have been in the nature of their respective beliefs or in the form of their several organizations.³⁸

Other Japanese scholars, such as Kobayashi Masayoshi, have presented cogent arguments that a sense of "Taoist identity" evolved in South China during the Liu-Sung Dynasty of the fifth century. By that time, Buddhism had become a powerful throughout China, especially after Kumarajiva's translations of Mahayana texts stimulated Chinese interests:

All in all, with the rulers of the Liu-Sung protecting Buddhism and seeking Buddhist support for their government, the Celestial Masters had little choice but to...present a doctrine and scriptural corpus that would stand up to comparison. Thus they restored order to their ranks, standardized their followers' garb and behavior, joined with other Taoist traditions--those of the Ge [Ko] family and of Highest Clarity, and changed what used to be a confusing mix of Taoist strands into an organized Taoist religion.³⁹

While scholars may debate some of these arguments, it seems to me vital that in our discussions of the lives, beliefs, or writings of "Taoists" we do our utmost to recognize and respect the presence--or absence--of specific groups of historical people who conceived of themselves as sharing a common identity as "Taoists," and/or as members of specific groups or subtraditions of Taoists.

Another key issue in my outline is *the issue of historical periodization*. As a matter of fact, I have attempted to emphasize as much as possible the appearance of chronological phases in the history of Taoism, and to de-emphasize real or apparent "doctrinal" divergences among Taoists. Certainly, there is much room for analyzing and debating the relative prominence of specific ideas or goals--such as, for instance, the real or supposed goal of "immortality"--among specific Taoist individuals or groups. Such analysis is often highly fruitful, but it is a painstaking and sometimes controversial process. On the other hand, it is generally not difficult to establish whether or not Taoists of a certain recognizable subtradition existed during a given historical period. For instance, it seems safe to state that there were no Shang-ch'ing Taoists during the pre-Han period, nor any Ch'üan-chen Taoists during the T'ang period. Certain subtraditions clearly flourished during certain

periods: some arose and disappeared, while others endured for many centuries.

Moreover, there were certain periods during which several new subtraditions arose at once, sometimes eclipsing or even supplanting other subtraditions that had arisen in earlier eras. Such was the case, for instance, during the fourth and fifth century C.E., when the Shang-ch'ing and Ling-pao subtraditions emerged to take the place of both the T'ien-shih tradition and the old traditions of Chiang-nan. And, more importantly, I believe, such was also the case during the tenth to twelfth centuries. It is the fact of the emergence of a number of new forms of Taoism during that latter period that has allowed me to provide a fairly clear set of proposals for a broad periodization of Taoism--a periodization that reflects certain recent proposals of Japanese scholars, and also differs from them in some ways.

A NEW INTERPRETIVE PERIODIZATION OF TAOISM IN CHINA

Kohn reported that certain contributors to the recent *Dokyo jiten*, such as Fukui Fumimasa, argued that we should envision Taoism as having had three major segments: *tao-chia* (philosophical Taoism), *tao-chiao* (religious Taoism), and *hsin tao-chiao* (new Taoism).⁴⁰ I believe that such arguments have merit. But, as noted above, I believe that it is prudent to avoid the imprecise and contentious terms *tao-chia* and *tao-chiao* and their usual Western counterparts. I propose instead that we attempt to acknowledge, in the first instance, that "Taoism" took on different characteristics during certain ranges of time in Chinese history.

In my outline, I list the celebrated writings known as *Lao-tzu* and *Chuang-tzu* under the rubric of "Classical Taoism." I selected this term in the first instance because those writings are generally considered to reflect the ideas of certain people who lived during the time of the "Warring States" of ancient China, a period that is widely known in the West as "Classical China." Of course, this periodization is actually somewhat inaccurate, since we now know that the "classical" Taoist texts actually took their present shape in Han times, or, in some cases, later still. For that reason, some might prefer another term, such as, for instance, "Ancient Taoism." In fact, Kohn has suggested precisely such a term:

Adopting the tripartite vision of Taoism in its historical and lineage development, one might coin a standardized English terminology that replaces the old 'philosophical,' 'religious,' and 'new' with slightly more descriptive terms....By doing so, one could also change the delimitation from the Former to the Later Han and include the immortality practitioners (*fang-shi*) and Huang-Lao political vision in a first form of Taoism that would then no longer be merely 'philosophical,' a term widely resented with good reason, but maybe something like 'rudimentary' or 'ancient' Taoism. The various Taoist schools and their activities and

scriptures from the Later Han to the Northern Song could then be 'organized' or 'medieval' Taoism, while the new developments since the Jin and Yuan would be 'popular' or 'modern' forms of the religion.⁴¹

I find much to commend in Kohn's approach. But I would like to suggest certain variations. First, I would note that many interpreters may be reluctant to place the *fang-shih* of Han times (whether or not they might best be described as "immortality practitioners") in the same category as the "philosophical" writings long supposed to preserve the wisdom of "Lao-tzu" and "Chuang-tzu." I find myself among those reluctant interpreters. Nonetheless, it might be possible to gain general assent among both Asian and Western specialists that, in general terms, "Taoism" became something fundamentally new (1) during the course of the Han dynasty, and then once more (2) during the early second millennium.

Yet, in the outline that I am presenting here, I have maintained a general linkage of the second two phases, combining them under the superlatively vague rubric of "Later Taoism." However scholars may argue the *substantive* differences between what I am here styling "Classical" and "Later" Taoism, I believe that most will concede that the forms of Taoism that evolved during *Imperial* China eventually displayed characteristics that are not readily apparent in the forms of Taoism that existed in pre-Han times.⁴² In any event, the periodization that I offer would seem to permit arguments of any kind regarding the nature and extent of common elements within and between pre-Han and post-Han Taoism.⁴³

"TRADITIONAL TAOISM" AND "NEW TAOISM"

Let me now turn to a further categorization that I have introduced *within* the general classification of "Later Taoism." One will note that the first section of my outline of "Later Taoism" is devoted to subtraditions that I call "Traditional Taoism," while the second section concerns subtraditions that I group together as "New Taoism." The latter term is of course borrowed from the aforementioned Japanese scholars; the former is one that I happily encountered in a recent publication of Yao Tao-chung.⁴⁴ Such terminology seems to me highly felicitous. First of all, it preserves the fundamental emphasis upon chronological phases, rather than upon substantive issues. To me, it seems easy to agree that "Taoism" in late imperial China and the twentieth century has certain characteristics that distinguish it from the earlier Taoist tradition. As noted above, Tang Taoism seems to have been a fairly unified tradition, in which meditative practices aimed at personal self-perfection were undertaken alongside liturgical performances; moreover, it embraced all levels of society (including "literati") and was deeply respected by all, including many of the great Tang poets, as well as by public officials who served both at the imperial court and in the provinces.⁴⁵ All of that began to

change, however, after the tenth century, and the forms of Taoism that endure today generally trace their roots only to the tenth-twelfth centuries.⁴⁶ My outline emphasizes the great transformation that occurred at that time, and attempts to make sense of it.

The primary interpretive question is that of the specific sense(s) in which “Taoism” became “new” during the Sung/Chin/Yüan period. This is a point upon which differences of opinion are certainly possible. As noted above, Kohn, following Sakade Yoshinobu, suggested that we consider referring to the “various Taoist schools from the Later Han to the Northern Song...[as] ‘organized’ or ‘medieval’ Taoism,” and to “the new developments since the Jin and Yuan” as “‘popular’ or ‘modern’ forms” of Taoism:

Sakade proposes a threefold division of Taoism into philosophy, organized religion (*kyokai dokyo*, lit., church Taoism) and popular practice (*minshu dokyo*, lit., folk Taoism). Although these different forms of Taoism were dominant at different times in the religion’s development, he says, there is an essential continuity between them that supports the variety and richness of Taoism as a whole.⁴⁷

There is certainly a good argument to be made for Sakade’s position here, and for Kohn’s extension of it. The “Taoism” of medieval times was clearly “organized” in a way that the “Taoism” of post-Sung/Chin times never became. And the former was clearly *not* a religion of “the masses” (*minshu*), in the sense that the modern Cheng-i tradition, for instance, came to be. One could thus argue that the division between what I call “Traditional Taoism” and “New Taoism” can be established on terms that are truly substantive, not merely chronological.

On the other hand, we must be careful not to overstate the disparities between the two, and I believe that we must be attentive to the broader connotations of our terminology. As noted above, I believe that any effort to characterize the various components of Chinese Taoism must take into account the fact that our terminology will inevitably shape the fundamental understanding of the tradition among non-specialists, who often overlook the subtle nuances with which scholars employ such terminology. I am therefore very hesitant to employ the term “popular Taoism” at all, since to many --in the West, at least--such a term would inevitably suggest ignoble superstitions among the ignorant masses. Such ideas about Taoism--at least about post-classical Taoism--remain strong among Western non-specialists, as seen in our general textbooks, and sometimes encountered in discussions with colleagues in other specialties. I am thus willing to take considerable pains to devise terminology that might alleviate, rather than perpetuate, such misunderstandings among non-specialists.

THE DIVERSE TRADITIONS OF "NEW TAOISM"

It will be noted that my outline sometimes employs the term "liturgical Taoism," which seems clearly definable, and seems to lend itself readily as a designation for a number of historical subtraditions, within both "Traditional Taoism" and "New Taoism." At times, the usage of the term might be questionable, as, for instance, when a given subtradition features ritual activity the focus of which might seem more individual than social. For that reason, my outline refers broadly to the "New Ritual and Liturgical Traditions" of the tenth to thirteenth centuries. But here it once again seems wise to bear in mind Strickmann's caveat about making sure that any "form of Taoism" that we discuss constitutes more than just a vague abstraction. Past generations have often made the mistake of looking at a collection of texts--or even at a loose set of ideas, values, or attitudes--and reifying them into a supposed "school" of Taoism, despite the fact that there may never have been any identifiable group of people who were conscious of themselves as a group who shared such ideas.

It also seems to me essential that we remember Ofuchi's observation, that in order to speak accurately about "Taoists" we must be able to identify historical groups who shared "a common sense of identity." It is for these reasons that, in my outline, I have cautiously classed together "The New Movements of 'The Taoist Reformation'" and have distinguished them from earlier "New Traditions of Individual Practice." The latter "traditions," like "Classical Taoism," may actually constitute little more than a collection of texts--texts composed by individuals of different times and places who never shared any sort of social cohesion. At least, that point is arguable. On the other hand, the three new movements listed as "The New Movements of 'The Taoist Reformation'" seem to have been real historical groups, with "lineages" established to carry on the teachings and practices of a single historical "founder."

One will also note here that I have followed the suggestion of Kubo Noritada regarding "The New Movements of 'The Taoist Reformation'." That is, they can all be seen as having included characteristics that remind us in certain ways of the Christian movements that arose in Europe during the Protestant Reformation. In each case, the new movements to some degree left behind the institutional framework of an older organization, and turned their focus to the personal spiritual development of the individual practitioner.⁴⁸ It is on the basis of this heuristic comparison that I have--at times somewhat subjectively--separated certain of the new Taoist movements of the tenth-thirteenth centuries into the broad category of "New Ritual and Liturgical Traditions." Scholars with greater historical knowledge than I may provide good arguments for transferring certain of these movements from one category to another. But in any event, I have provided here a classification of the various forms of "New Taoism" that seems defensible in terms of the positions that I have taken in this paper regarding definitional and classificational issues.

I wish that we could identify a more felicitous term than the word "New" for the forms of Taoism that emerged in the second millennium CE.⁴⁹ Kohn suggested that we might refer to "the new developments since the Jin and Yuan" as "'modern' forms" of Taoism. It is true that Taoism in the twentieth century consists primarily of the "new" forms of Taoism known as Cheng-i and Ch'üan-chen. But I fear that the term "modern" already carries far too much baggage. And common use of the term "modern Taoism" might tend to over-emphasize the characteristics of twentieth-century Taoism at the expense of the distinctive characteristics of those same subtraditions in earlier centuries. One wishes that one could use the term "Reformed Taoism," but it, too, might mislead non-specialists. For example, to many Westerners the term "Reformed" invites comparisons to the various "Reformed" churches within Christianity, not to mention comparisons to "Reform Judaism." While well-informed historians of religion may be able to draw such parallels in a valid and appropriate manner, it would seem to me very difficult to explain the most well-known branch of "New Taoism," the Cheng-i tradition, as being "Reformed" in such a sense. The substantive dissimilarities between Cheng-i Taoism and such "reformed" movements as Ch'üan-chen Taoism seem to necessitate maintaining a clear categorical distinction between the two.

CONCLUSION

It seems appropriate to reiterate that the outline of Taoism that I have presented here is not one that I consider truly definitive. In fact, my own ideas about the historical contours of Taoism continue to change as I learn more about the historical realities of the tradition and wrestle with the pertinent interpretive issues. I am well aware that Kohn's hope for "a standardized English terminology" is one that may never be fulfilled. One should also note that any "standardized terminology" that specialists may be able to achieve ought, ideally, to be one that can be shared among specialists of *all* countries, i.e., a terminology that can be approximated in Chinese, Japanese, and other European languages. Whether specialists in the study of Taoism around the world can reach any such agreement is, of course, difficult to predict. But I certainly agree with Kohn on the desirability of Asian and Western scholars working together to achieve "a higher clarity and better understanding" by seeking a common interpretive framework for understanding "Taoism." It is my hope that the thoughts expressed here may make some contribution to that process.

END NOTES

1. An earlier version of this paper was presented at the American-Japanese Taoist Studies Conference in Tokyo, May 1995. A Japanese version of that paper will appear in Yamada; a Japanese summary of the conference appears in Maruyama 1995a. I thank Stephen Bokenkamp for his helpful comments on early versions of the Tokyo paper, and Professor Maruyama for his response to my presentation there.

I should point out here that my discussion here is restricted to the Taoist tradition as it evolved in *China*. For

some years, Japanese scholars have noted the presence of Taoist elements in Korea, and at the 1995 meeting of the Association for Asian Studies in Washington, D.C., Peter Yun and John Gouldie presented convincing arguments that elements of Taoism were clearly present in Korea during the Koryo and Choson periods, if not earlier. Of course, there are many who also interpret elements of Japanese culture as "Taoist," though such interpretations are the subject of much debate. In any event, my discussion of "the historical contours of Taoism" is not intended to address the issue of understanding Taoism as an "international religion." Such issues will have to await another occasion.

2. Kohn 1995.

3. *Ibid.*: 161.

4. Fukui 1995. The volume presents contributions from several leading specialists, including participants at the 1995 Tokyo conference, such as Professor Yamada and Professor Maruyama.

5. See Schipper 1993.

6. Sivin 1978.

7. See Sakai and Fukui 1983. I thank Professor Bokenkamp for this reference. See also Thompson 1993. Thompson paraphrases thirteen Japanese definitions of "Taoism" presented by Sakai and Fukui.

8. Fumimasa 1995: 13-14.

9. See Bokenkamp 1997, Robinet 1997, and Norman Girardot's Foreword to Robinet 1993.

10. Kohn 1993: 1.

11. *Ibid.*: 1.

12. See Kirkland 1995a, 1995b, 1996.

13. Strickmann 1979: 165-67.

14. Girardot, for instance, wrote in 1983 that "the idea of a Taoist tradition in Chinese history and society must be linked with the scriptural movements that collectively trace their heritage back to Chang Tao-ling" (Girardot 1983: 170-71).

15. Strickmann 1979: 166.

16. *Ibid.*: 165.

17. See, for instance, Sivin 1978: 320.

18. See Ofuchi 1969; and the English version in Ofuchi 1978, esp. pp. 265-67.

19. See Strickmann 1978: 333-34 n. 10.

20. See Girardot 1983: 170.

21. See Kirkland 1984. A new study of this issue by Timothy Barrett (1994) has just appeared, despite its nominal 1994 date of publication. Barrett examines what seems to be all the available evidence concerning Lung-

hu Taoists in T'ang times, and concludes that "it seems hardly likely that the claims of the Chang family will ever be capable of subjection to rigorous scrutiny" (Barrett 1994: 103). But he does observe that "the very notion of a Chang line could only come into being in the countryside of Kiangsi [i.e., at Mt. Lung-hu] once it had been perceived that the Li line had failed," i.e., once "the T'ang [had] descended into complete powerlessness..." By representing themselves as the heirs of the 2nd/3rd-century Changs of Szechwan, these Kiangsi Changs, who are attested "not earlier than the ninth century" (101), "could offer a religious substitute for political power" (105). Their "lineage" seems to have been, at the very least, doctored and embellished for political and social effect, as was also the case with the "lineages" concocted in late-T'ang Ch'an (104). "Above all," Barrett concludes, "the concept of a single line of supreme hierarchs, passing on from generation to generation, is entirely absent from these early references," even as late as the mid-T'ang (103).

22. See, e.g., Kirkland 1986a.

23. *Ibid.*: 47.

24. Kirkland 1989: 190.

25. The most substantial work to date in English is Boltz 1987. German studies of Ch'üan-chen Taoism include Endres 1985; Franke 1994; and several works by Florian Reiter, of which the most important are Reiter 1984, 1988, and 1994. In North America, the only comparable scholarship is that of Yao Tao-chung, in Yao 1980 and 1986. Of course, few of these publications are known to any but the most advanced of specialists, and the only widely distributed publications in this field are the non-scholarly books of Thomas Cleary, such as Cleary 1986, 1987, and 1989 (a translation of Li Tao-ch'un's *Chung-ho ch'i*).

26. See Maruyama 1995b: 85.

27. Kohn 1995: 161.

28. I have also revised the outline since I presented it at the 1995 Tokyo conference.

29. Kirkland 1995b: 1053.

30. Graham observes, "Although Chuang-tzu rejects *pien*, 'disputation,' the posing and arguing out of alternatives, he always speaks favourably of *lun*, 'sorting, grading,' thought and discourse which orders things in their proper relations. In common usage this word tended to imply grading in terms of relative value, but Chuang-tzu's kind of *lun* is, to quote the title attached to his second chapter, the 'sorting which evens things out'. It would cover all common-sense thinking about objective facts in order to arrive at a coherent picture before responding" (Graham 1981: 12).

31. As Roth has put it, "the 'Lao-Zhuang' tradition...is actually a Wei-Jin literati reconstruction, albeit a powerful and enduring one" (Roth 1995: 157). The origins of the bibliographic concept of a *tao-chia* in Han historiography is discussed in Graham 1989: 170-71.

32. I refer here specifically to the ongoing research of Roth in particular.

33. Strickmann 1979: 166.

34. *Ibid.*: 166. He goes on to specify "a succession of social groups developing out of the Way of the Celestial Master, with considerable local incidence of assimilation and syncretism..."

35. For example, in a 1994 review, Nathan Sivin observed that within the work in question "[t]he idea of Taoism is used in a way reminiscent of a generation ago; that is, as a disembodied essence discussed as if it were a

social entity, but not related to the actual Taoist movements that have been carefully distinguished" by the scholars of the present generation (Sivin, 1994: 185).

36. Strickmann 1979: 166.

37. Sivin 1978: 321. Sivin refers specifically to positions taken by Ofuchi in his article "Dozo no seiritsu." Fukui takes a position similar to that of Ofuchi: "When discussing Taoism as a religion, one should restrict oneself to the fifth century and later, when Taoism had been established as a national religion and the term 'Taoism' (*tao-chiao*) had assumed the same meaning that it has today, otherwise terminological confusion will ensue" (Fukui 1995: 8).

38. Ofuchi 1979: 258.

39. Kobayashi 1992: 37.

40. Kohn 1995: 160-61. It would seem to me that if one translate the phrase *tao-chiao* as "religious Taoism," then one must translate the phrase *hsin tao-chiao* not merely as "new Taoism," but actually as "new religious Taoism." I am, however, for my own reasons, content with Kohn's phraseology here.

41. Ibid: 161.

42. Some might argue (as both Maspero and Kubo have done) that both pre-Han and post-Han "Taoism" share a fundamental goal of personal immortality. I remain unconvinced that the ideal of a deathless existence--whether as an extension of one's physical life or as the attainment of a "post-mortem" existence--was actually a *fundamental* concern of *most* Taoists throughout history. This issue is much too complex to discuss fully here. See my discussion of "Taoist Attitudes toward Death" in Kirkland 1995a, and Kirkland 1991.

43. Of course, it will be noticed that my outline is hardly consistent, in that I have grouped the *Lieh-tzu* under the rubric of "Classical Taoism," even though it is now known to be of post-Han date. One might retort that the *Chuang-tzu*, too, is--in its present form--also of post-Han date, since the 52-chapter version that existed in Han times was cut down to the present 33 chapters by Kuo Hsiang (died ca. 312 C.E.). See, for instance, Knaul (Kohn) 1985. In all honesty, however, I have succumbed in this instance to the argument that the category "classical Taoism" is, like *tao-chia*, properly a bibliographic convention rather than a chronological category.

44. See Yao 1995: 156. It is possible that other scholars have used the term "traditional Taoism" in a similar sense, but it was only when I read Yao's new work that it struck me as a significant categorical tool. The term "New Taoism," of course, goes back historically at least as far as the pioneering scholarship of Ch'en Yüan in the early 1940s.

45. See, for instance, Kirkland, 1986b and 1997. Schipper (1994) notes that "Taoism of the middle ages saw itself as universal" (63) and "conceived of itself as a national ideology, espousing many elements of Rujiao," i.e., Confucianism (81). "As Taoist sources from later periods amply demonstrate, the harmony with Rujiao was almost complete...The alliance was disrupted only, it seems,...from the sixteenth century on" (81). "Further research on the history of Taoism in modern China is needed to explain why the positive relationship between Daojiao and Rujiao was later reversed" (63). In Kirkland 1992, I have suggested an explanation for that rupture, relating it to the sweeping changes set into motion by the conquest of North China, and eventually the entire country, by the Khitan, Jurchen, and Mongols, beginning in the eleventh century. I propose that it was because of those conquests that Taoism--theretofore an integral and respected part of the social and cultural mainstream-- became politically marginalized: native social and intellectual leaders, keen to avoid arousing their conquerors' fears of rebellious collusions, began to distance themselves from Taoist activities, except for such individualized, quasi-Protestant pursuits as Inner Alchemy, which could be practiced alone, with nothing more than a text and a willingness to meditate. Wang Che, the nominal founder of Ch'üan-chen in the twelfth-century, explicitly abjured seeking Taoist goals as a member of a group (see e.g., Reiter 1984), thereby repudiating the

universalism that had characterized Traditional Taoism through T'ang times.

46. My assessment here seems to be in general agreement with some of the points made by Miyakawa; see Maruyama 1995b: 87-88. "Twentieth-century Taoism," as depicted by most scholars, filmmakers, etc., has certain characteristics that might have looked entirely different had it not been for the simple facts that for several decades the Chinese mainland was generally inaccessible and Taoism was in dire straits there. Ironically, North American students have begun to learn Taoism from a completely different perspective, again for reasons of "historical accident." A number of "Taoist centers" have been established in North America in recent years, and the most prominent of them--popularized by a number of widely distributed books--were established by Chinese Taoists of very different subtraditions. The Fung Loy Kok Taoist Temple, founded in Hong Kong in 1968, "traces its lineage from the Hsin T'ien Wu-chi sect of the Huashan system." It now operates temples in Denver, Toronto, Edmonton, Calgary, and Tallahassee, and has come to the attention of a broader public through the publications of Wong (e.g., Wong 1997). Another set of centers was established by Ni Hua-ching, who immigrated to Los Angeles in 1976 and established centers there and in Malibu. More recently, he established a center in suburban Atlanta. Master Ni's specific lineage is not altogether clear: he vaguely identifies himself as part of the "Southern Branch" of Taoism, which he associates with Mt. T'ien-t'ai and with such figures as T'ao Hung-ching and Ssu-ma Ch'eng-chen. He distinguishes his tradition from the "Northern Branch," which he equates with the Ch'üan-chen lineage, and from the otherwise unidentified "Western and Eastern branches" which, he says, were formed during the Ming and Ch'ing dynasty respectively (Ni 1979: 148-49).

47. Kohn 1995: 157.

48. A discussion of some of these historical and interpretive issues appears in Kirkland 1992.

49. The corresponding Chinese and Japanese terms will have to be considered separately.

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THE TAOIST TRADITION IN CHINA: A HISTORICAL OUTLINE

1. THE TEXTS OF "CLASSICAL TAOISM"

The *Nei-yeh* (mid fourth century B.C.E.)

The brief and long-overlooked *Nei yeh* (Inner Cultivation; preserved in the *Kuan-tzu*) teaches how to internalize spiritual forces--*ch'i* (life-energy), *ching* (vital essence), and *shen* (spiritual consciousness)--through meditative quiescence and purification. To balance and quiet his/her *hsin* (heart/mind), the practitioner builds up his/her *te* ("proficiency at obtaining" such energies) by practicing daily self-control over thought, emotion, and action. Such practices deeply influenced later Taoism, though such influence has never been noticed.

The *Chuang-tzu* (late fourth century B.C.E., and later material)

Originally 52 chapters; cut down to 33 by Kuo Hsiang in third century .C.E.. Most of chapters 1-7 originated in writings of Chuang Chou (ca. 370-300 B.C.E.); other chapters are by later writers who liked Chuang's ideas but had somewhat different views. The full text was completed ca. 130 B.C.E..

Contents:

- Casts doubt upon social conventions and common-sense ideas
- Raises questions about the value of "rational thought" as a reliable guide to truth
- Emphasizes a revolutionized perception of reality

The *Tao te ching* [Lao-tzu] (early third century B.C.E.)

Origins:

- (1) ideas from anonymous people (not intellectuals) of sixth-fourth centuries B.C.E., probably including local elders ("*lao-tzu*"), possibly including women; possible origins in the land of Ch'u;
- (2) teachings about meditative practices and ambient spiritual realities influenced by the tradition that produced the *Nei-yeh*.

Transmitted orally for generations, shifting and expanding in content; committed to writing in the early third century B.C.E. by an unknown intellectual, who converted the content to a socio-political program in response to the concerns of the intellectual elite of the political centers of his day.

Eventually attributed to a character called "Lao-tzu," who was actually a pious fiction.

Contents:

1. Early Layers: Emphasis on natural simplicity, harmony, "feminine" behaviors
Ideal: The Tao (Way) — the source and natural order of things
Thesis: One should act through Non-action (*wu-wei*)
Education is unnecessary, and can be destructive of natural simplicity.
2. Later Layers: Emphasis on sagely government; rejection of Confucian moralism
Human Ideal: The "Sage" (*sheng-jen*) — one who is like the Tao
Government: If the Sage-ruler holds to the Tao, the world will be orderly.

Other "Classical Taoist" Texts: *Huai-nan-tzu* (early Han); *Lieh-tzu* (fourth century B.C.E.?)

2. LATER TAOISM

A. TRADITIONAL TAOISM (second-twelfth centuries C.E.)

I. "Incipient Organized Taoism": Movements That Produced the Traditions that Flowed into Organized Taoism

1. Origins (Han dynasty: first-second centuries C.E.)

Roots: various social, political, and religious currents of Han times, including:

- a. prognostic and prophetic texts (*ch'an-wei*) by court advisors (*fang-shih*)
- b. imperial divinization of Lao-tzu (Lao-chün)
- c. popular interest in "the immortals" (*hsien*) and in the Queen Mother of the West
- e. Han Confucian thought (the unity of macrocosm and microcosm)

Primary Text: The *T'ai-p'ing ching* [Scripture of Grand Tranquility] (second century C.E. & later additions).

A compendium of religious ideas of diverse provenance. Most of the elements of later Taoism (including meditational practices) are found in the *T'ai-p'ing ching* to some degree.

2. The T'ien-shih (Celestial Master) Tradition (second century - seventh century C.E.)

Founder: Chang Tao-ling, who claimed have received a Covenant from Lao-chün in 142, and claimed to be the "Celestial Master" promised in the *T'ai-p'ing ching*

Goal: salvation from illness and inherited sins through confession and good works

Organization: very systematic and hierarchical, down to the laity; members received graded "registers" associated with specific spiritual forces, and renounced the worship of any unapproved spirits
Opposed all other cults; regarded itself as the religious orthodoxy

Priesthood was open to women and non-Chinese; leadership was hereditary

Had no sophisticated doctrine or thought to maintain the interest of intellectuals

In 215 C.E. it aligned itself with the government of new Wei dynasty; remained aligned until North China fell to invaders and rulers fled south (316 C.E.); lost influence thereafter

Attempted revival in North by K'ou Ch'ien-chih (early fifth century); little historical effect

Eventually died out as a separate tradition, though some of its institutions were preserved in "Organized Taoism"

The later Cheng-i sect groundlessly claims to be a direct continuation of the "Celestial Master" tradition.

3. Old Southern Taoism (? - fourth century)

Roots: Old (pre-fourth-century) southern traditions of bio-spiritual self-development and talismanic ritual

Emphases: (1) esoterism; (2) individual pursuit of health, longevity, and immortality

Primary Texts:

1. *San-huang wen* [Text of the Three Sovereigns]: methods of invoking spirits

2. *Wu-fu ching* [Scripture of the Five Talismans]: talismanic magic

A writing often associated with the southern tradition is the *Pao-p'u-tzu* [(The Writings of) the Master who Embraces Simplicity]: the writings of Ko Hung, a fourth-century southerner intent to demonstrate that the pursuit of immortality is a fitting goal for upstanding gentlemen who seek government office (i.e., for Confucians). Ko was actually not a representative of any form of "Taoism": he repudiated the classical Taoists and had no use for the T'ien-shih Taoists. He is thus best character-

ized as a maverick Confucian.

4. The Great Revelations: Shang-ch'ing and Ling-pao (fourth-fifth centuries)

Common Characteristics:

- a. Arose in same historical setting
- b. Were based upon revelations to chosen individuals from celestial beings
- c. Venerated revealed texts
- d. Transmitted teachings secretly from master to initiate
- e. Required religious activity to effect the spiritual goal.

A. THE SHANG-CH'ING TRADITION

Arose in South among former followers of the "Celestial Master" tradition; flourished into T'ang times.

Revealed texts: (a) scriptures; (b) biographies of the "Perfected Ones"; (c) oral instructions.

Doctrine and Praxis: The "Perfected Ones" (*chen-jen*) reside (1) in the heavens (one of which is called Shang-ch'ing, "Supreme Clarity"); (2) in underground grottoes; and (3) in the microcosm of the individual. The practitioner's goal is to become assimilated to the "Perfected Ones" and ascend to their heavens.

Methods of self-perfection: (1) visualizational meditation; and (2) alchemy (only for rare advanced adepts, under strict supervision)

Eschatology: Soon the world will end, and "the Sage of the Later Age" will arrive to save those who are prepared for heavenly ascent. This "messianic" expectation gradually faded in later centuries.

B. THE LING-PAO TRADITION

Roots: "Southern Taoism"; stimulated by the Shang-ch'ing revelations and by Mahayana Buddhism

Founder: Ko Ch'ao-fu (fl. late fourth century)

Primary Text: The (*Ling-pao*) *Tu-jen ching* [Scripture for the Salvation of Humanity]

Doctrine and Praxis: A supreme deity (Yüan-shih t'ien-tsun) has existed since the beginning of the world, and constantly seeks to save humanity. He sends an emissary to reveal the *Tu-jen ching*, which is an emanation of the Tao. The adept recites the text, re-actualizing its primordial recitation by the deity and thus perpetuating its salvific efficacy. Some Ling-pao writings display clear influence of Buddhist ideas, making it the only movement in "traditional Taoism" directly stimulated by Buddhism.

II. "ORGANIZED TAOISM" (FIFTH CENTURY - TWELFTH CENTURY)

A sense of "Taoist identity" evolved in South China during the Liu-Sung Dynasty of the fifth century. By that time, Buddhism had become a powerful force in both the North and the South (especially after the corpus of Kumarajava's translations stimulated interest in Mahayana Buddhism). In order to compete with Mahayana Buddhism, some members of the Taoist movements of the day began to organize their traditions into a coherent whole. They assembled a corpus of scriptures (*San-tung*, The Three Arcana), which included works of Ling-pao, Shang-ch'ing, and "Old Southern Taoism." Later, four supplementary sections were added, containing texts pertaining to the *Tao te ching*, the *T'ai-p'ing ching*, alchemy, and the T'ien-shih tradition. The Ling-pao master Lu Hsiu-ching (406-477) drew upon ritual traditions of the various earlier movements to establish

new liturgical forms (*chiao* and *chai*), adding elements of both imperial ritual and popular worship. The resulting organization became known as *Tao-chiao* (the Teaching of the Tao, a tradition comparable to *Fo-chiao*, the Teaching of the Buddha, and *Ju-chiao*, the Teaching of the Confucians). Under Ling-pao auspices, Taoism became an ecumenical, non-sectarian tradition, in which any text or group devoted to higher spiritual goals found a place. The Ling-pao synthesis became a social and cultural bridge, blending compatible Buddhist concepts and values with more traditional Taoist forms in such a way that intellectuals, mystics, and pious peasants could all participate in a single comprehensive religious system. Eventually, the leadership of the tradition was assumed by masters ordained in the Shang-ch'ing tradition, such as T'ao Hung-ching (456-536). Taoists of the subsequent T'ang period traced their authority back to T'ao.

During most of the medieval period (i.e., the late Six Dynasties, T'ang, and Northern Sung dynasties), Taoism generally maintained close ties to the government and to the cultural elite. The T'ang emperors claimed descent from Lao-tzu, and continued the tradition of linking the government to Taoism for legitimacy support that had evolved in the north during the Six Dynasties. All the T'ang emperors (esp. Hsüan-tsung, r. 712-755) heavily patronized Taoism. The Sung emperors Chen-tsung (r. 998-1022) and Hui-tsung (1101-1125) favored Taoism, and commissioned collections of Taoist texts. But though imperial support for Taoist institutions was strong, many rulers tried to maintain control of all religious organizations.

In T'ang times, leaders like Ssu-ma Ch'eng-chen (seventh-eighth century) wrote new texts on meditation and personal refinement, and associated freely with political and cultural leaders. They thus greatly influenced contemporary literature and politics as well as religion. Monasteries or abbeys (*kuan*), first established in seventh century, were staffed by celibate priests (*tao-shih*, some of whom were women); they performed liturgical rituals (the *chiao* and *chai*) designed to integrate society and cosmos. Eventually, the historical traditions of Organized Taoism were collected and re-presented by the tenth-century court scholar Tu Kuang-t'ing.

B. NEW TAOISM (TENTH CENTURY - PRESENT)

I. New Traditions of Individual Practice (tenth-thirteenth centuries)

Chin-tan (Golden Elixir) Taoism: a system of spiritual refinement through meditation, otherwise known as "inner alchemy." Not a sect, but rather a new approach to the Taoist life, as expressed by such writers as Chang Po-tuan (eleventh century) and Li Tao-ch'un (thirteenth century). In this tradition, older practices of physiological refinement are re-interpreted as a more abstract process of purifying the mind. Absorbed into the later Ch'üan-chen tradition.

II. New Ritual and Liturgical Traditions (tenth-thirteenth centuries)

1. Ch'ing-wei (Clarified Tenuity) Taoism: a complex of ritual traditions founded by a young woman ca. 900. Its "thunder rites" (*lei-fa*) allow a priest to internalize the spiritual power of thunder to facilitate meditative union with the Tao. He then heals, banishes evil influences, and blesses children.

2. T'ien-hsin (Heart of Heaven) Taoism: a tradition of ritual healing based upon scriptures discovered in the late tenth century; codified at the Sung court by a Taoist scholar named Yüan Miao-tsung ca. 1100. Its scriptures teach priests how to heal mental illness by drawing down spiritual power from stars. It influenced several important novels, and is still practiced among some Chinese in Thailand.

3. Shen-hsiao (Divine Emyrean) Taoism: a liturgical tradition established by Lin Ling-su at the court of the Sung emperor Hui-tsung (early twelfth century). Lin revised the Ling-pao *Tu- jen ching* and presented Hui-tsung as a divine ruler whose reign would provide salvation to all. In modern China, Cheng-i leaders gave the Shen-hsiao title to some priests, but deemed them inferior.

4. T'ung-ch'u (Youthful Incipience) Taoism: An obscure tradition of therapeutic rituals founded by a young man in 1121, claiming continuity with the Shang-ch'ing tradition.

5. CHENG-I (Orthodox Unity) Taoism: the only Taoist liturgical tradition to survive through the twentieth century. This sect, centered at Mt. Lung-hu in south China, flourished under imperial patronage from the eleventh to eighteenth centuries. The sect was led by hereditary clerics of the Chang clan, who claimed to be the descendents of Chang Tao-ling and the successors to his "Celestial Master" mandate. In the eleventh-thirteenth centuries, this sect was patronized by the Sung and Yüan emperors, and in the fourteenth century, it was given formal jurisdiction over all Taoists in the south. To the present day, Cheng-i Taoism is found generally in Southeast China (and among the Chinese of Taiwan, many of whom emigrated from Southeast China). Hence, the modern Cheng-i tradition is sometimes known as "Southern Taoism." As in the old T'ien-shih tradition, Cheng-i leaders from the outset sought to undermine all local cults, and they branded all other forms of Taoism (e.g., Shen-hsiao) as dangerous (i.e., as evil and/or subversive). In the mid-eighteenth century, the Ch'ing court lost interest in them, and early Western references to Cheng-i leaders as Taoist "popes" constituted gross exaggerations. Cheng-i priests continue to practice, but their authority in modern times has been negligible. Cheng-i priests maintain the old *chiao* liturgies (harmonizing the local community with the cosmos), and they also serve the public with healing rituals. Unlike the other surviving form of Taoism--the less visible monastic tradition of Ch'üan-chen Taoism--Cheng-i generally appealed to the public, wherefore Chinese rulers and modern intellectuals came to dismiss "Taoism" as nothing but the worthless superstitions of the ignorant masses. A few Westerners have been ordained as Cheng-i priests.

III. The New Movements of "the Taoist Reformation" in North China (twelfth-fourteenth centuries)

Common Characteristics:

- a. Arose in different parts of North China under the conquest regimes (Chin & Yüan dynasties)
- b. Attracted followers from all levels of society
- c. Disregarded most elements of the medieval liturgical tradition
- d. Synthesized elements of Confucianism and Buddhism into Taoism
- e. Stressed dedication to moral ideals, and sometimes healing
- f. All except Ch'üan-chen died out by the fourteenth century

1. T'ai-i (Supreme Union) Taoism: Founded by Hsiao Pao-chen in the twelfth century, it stressed ritual healing and social responsibility. Though popular among emperors (like the Mongol ruler Khubilai Khan), the sect's leaders left no writings, and their movement is therefore poorly known.

2. Chen-ta (Perfected Greatness) or Ta-tao (Great Way) Taoism: "centered on practical morality." Founded by Liu Te-jen in the twelfth century, it syncretized the basic moral teachings of Buddhism, Confucianism and Taoism, and was patronized by Chin government. It sought healing through prayer (rather than ritual), and stressed the classical Taoist moral values of "yielding," simplicity, humility, and respect for others. Like T'ai-i Taoism, the Chen-ta Taoists left no writings.

3. CH'ÜAN-CHEN ("Integral Perfection") Taoism: the only "reformed" Taoist movement to survive through the twentieth century. It originated in the teachings of Wang Che (Wang Ch'ung-yang), a twelfth-century scholar. Wang taught that immortality can be attained in this life by entering seclusion, cultivating one's internal spiritual realities (*hsing*), and harmonizing them with one's external life (*ming*). His seven famous disciples included a woman named Sun Pu-erh and a man named Ch'iu Ch'ang-ch'un, who was courted by several rulers, including the Mongol general Chinggis Khan. The tradition soon adopted a monastic setting, and its teachings became a spiritualized re-interpretation of the older Taoist practices known as Chin-tan (Golden Elixir) or "inner alchemy." Ch'üan-chen Taoism paralleled $\frac{3}{4}$ and interacted with $\frac{3}{4}$ the meditative traditions of Ch'an Buddhism and Neo-Confucianism: all three stress individual moral and spiritual discipline rather than a philosophical, scriptural, or ritual focus. Ch'üan-chen Taoism endures today, both intellectually and institutionally, though it is largely unknown to Westerners, and has attracted little attention from Western scholars. Since its traditional focus was always in North China, and its headquarters today remains the White Cloud Abbey (Po-yün kuan) in Beijing, the modern Ch'üan-chen tradition is sometimes known as "Northern Taoism."