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ABSTRACT

In 1957, a Western scholar predicted: “Today, after centuries of decay, the [Daoist] church has reached the end of the road.” Observations and interviews taken in 2008 at the Quanzhen Daoist community at Heming Shan, Sichuan Province, however, prove that Daoism is not dead at all. But like all things that are not dead, it is growing, and changing. This thesis will combine a historical survey of Daoist practices with a case study of the Heming Shan community in order to argue that Daoism is a deep-rooted and complex tradition that has not been extinguished by the political oppression of the Communist State. The foundations of Daoist identity are still intact despite recent re-orientation towards the tourist industry, and Heming Shan is an example of a flourishing Daoist community that is preserving ancient traditions while progressively integrating itself with 21st-century Chinese society.

The Daoist community at Heming Shan is rooted in a historical tradition that dates back to the 2nd century CE. Since the Communist takeover in 1949, the traditional socio-political matrix that had supported organized Daoism for nearly 2,000 years is gone. Now the living forms of this ancient tradition are faced with the challenge of creating a new niche for themselves in the context of an industrialized, atheist state. Daoism still exists on the sufferance of the Communist State, and its right to exist today is judged in part by its ability to be self-sustaining. In recent years many Daoist communities have been adapting to the times by carving out a niche in the tourist industry, but the demands of the tourist industry represent unprecedented changes in the traditional lifeways of Daoist monastic communities. This project focuses on analyzing the collision between ancient traditions and the Chinese New Economy by incorporating oral testimony as its primary research tool.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My understanding of Chinese Daoism, as presented in this thesis, is the fruit of over ten years of academic study and hard-won experience. In China, though I often traveled solo, I did not go alone. So many wonderful people helped to inform my experience and support my quest for knowledge. Without them, this thesis would not have been possible.

I owe a particular debt to Dr. Yixin Chen, who has been my mentor and guide since 1999. I will always be grateful to him for igniting my passion for China. My association with him has been one of the greatest strokes of fortune in my entire life, and without his influence, I would simply not be the person I am today. I am also indebted to Dr. Lisa Pollard and Dr. Andrew F. Clark, who have both set enduring examples of what it is to be an excellent scholar and a caring teacher. I look forward to sharing their legacy with my own students in the future.

I would also like to recognize my Daoist teachers in China, particularly at Li Shan and Ba Xian An in Shaanxi Province, Baiyun Guan in Beijing, Qingcheng Shan in Sichuan Province, and, most especially, at Heming Shan in Sichuan. Time and again, I have been overwhelmed by the generosity of Daoists across China: their willingness to teach, their willingness to share, and their willingness to laugh. On my quest to learn, I have been graced with wisdom by many teachers who must remain anonymous. I thank them, heart and soul, for showing me the Mystery.

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INTRODUCTION

The genesis of this paper came in the spring of 2006, in Chengdu, the capital city of Sichuan Province. At the Tang-era (618-907 CE) Green Ram Temple (QingYang Gong), I encountered a massive promotional event: “The Second Annual Daoism Culture Festival,” an event aimed at building up the brand of Sichuan Daoism that featured, among other things, a 10,000 person synchronized tai chi performance, a specialized light-show/martial arts performance entitled “Taiji Verve,” and a lavish display of over 2,000 custom-made golden statues of Laozi, supposedly one for each year since Daoism first began in Sichuan in the Later Han Dynasty (25-220 CE). Although officials bemoaned the tremendous expense of the preceding First Daoism Culture Festival, in 2006 the Green Ram Temple was thronged like never before. Perhaps reminiscent of classical Chinese temple fairs, the event was a jolly mix of garish commercialism and religion (see figure one). Some visitors came to pray, but between the children snacking on ice cream, the numerous couples posing for silly pictures, and the vigorous rattle of mah jong tiles coming from the temple teahouse, the general atmosphere was decidedly one of fun, not of faith.¹

In the years 2001-2007, my curiosity about the state of Daoism in China today drove me to visit Daoist sites across the length and breadth of China. On these peregrinations, I noticed a trend: the traditional socio-political matrix that once supported organized Daoism is gone, and so in recent years many Daoist communities have been adapting to the times by carving out a niche in the tourist industry. But what does the clash between ancient faith and touristic funseeking

bode for Daoism in China? Mah jong, ice-cream freezers, and pleasant scenery might be well and good for visitors, corporations, and county governments, but what about the actual Daoists who live at these places? My travels China brought me into contact with male and female Daoists in many provinces. All those years, I thought nothing of having Daoist priests and priestesses cooking meals for tourists, selling them amulets and incense, putting them up in temple rooming houses, answering their incessant questions, and generally being constantly responsible for public safety (see figure two). But that day at the “Second Annual Daoism Festival,” some questions crystallized in my mind: *how are Daoists in China today balancing their spiritual practices with the increasing demands of the tourist market? Is tourism today altering traditional Daoist identity, and fundamentally changing what a Daoist does?*

This thesis is an attempt to answer these questions. In order to study the collision of an ancient religion and the Chinese New Economy, I spent one month in Sichuan Province, dividing my time between archival research and fieldwork at the Daoist monastery known as Heming Shan. My researches yielded a bifurcated answer: on one horizon, massive changes, pushed by the tide of the liberalizing economy, may be taking place in Chinese Daoism that will alter its look and feel forever. On the other horizon, at the same time, certain sects of Daoism at least are clinging proudly to their traditions, and are preparing to build a new future on the pillars of their ancient values. This thesis will present first a historical survey of Daoist practices, and then a case study of the Heming Shan community in order to argue that Daoism is a deep-rooted and complex tradition that has not been extinguished by the political oppression of the Communist State. The foundations of Daoist identity are still intact despite recent re-orientation towards the tourist industry, and Heming Shan is an example of a flourishing Daoist community that is
preserving ancient traditions while progressively integrating itself with 21st century Chinese society.

Today, Daoism’s traditional economic and social supports – land and the laity, respectively -- have been almost completely removed, in a process begun by the Nationalists (Guomindang) and completed by the Communist State. Now the living forms of this ancient tradition are faced with the challenge of creating a new niche for themselves in the context of an industrialized, atheist state. Under the logic of Marxism, monastics and clerics were “parasites” who lived by exploiting and oppressing the laboring classes. In the decades immediately following the Communist “Liberation” of China (1949), religious professionals of all stripes had to earn a place in society by hewing to the gold standard of industrial Marxism: production for the collective good.²

Most China scholars agree that the liberalization of the Reform era (1978-Present) has lead to greater freedom of religious expression. However, after being nearly extinguished by the current Communist regime, Daoism still exists on the sufferance of the Communist state, and its right to exist today is judged in part by its ability to produce and be self-sustaining. Therefore, Daoism is now at the mercy of a new kind of tyranny: that of modern market forces. Clearly, in the Reform era, officials are aware that religion cannot be quickly eliminated, and so it is being envisioned in a new role: that of a “cash cow.”³

Daoism in China is clearly undergoing a phase of complex change as Daoists negotiate the challenges of the New Economy. For a number of reasons, accurate, methodological studies of Daoism in 20th- and 21st-century mainland China are still few and far between. Scholarship assessing the impact that China’s liberalized market economy has had on traditional religions is also rather scant. But a 2005 publication entitled *State, Market, and Religions in Chinese Societies* offers some useful models of the types of interactions that are taking place between the government, corporate interests, and religious communities in Reform-era China. On one hand, Graeme Lang, Serena Chan, and Lars Ragvald, working primarily in South China, have observed what will be termed, for the purpose of this thesis, the “shopping mall” model. In this model secular entrepreneurs, often from Hong Kong or Taiwan, take control of temples and run them with a modern managerial style that often secularizes the temple and marginalizes the religious professionals who live there. Such temples are either newly built or heavily renovated by entrepreneurs, who view the temples as investments. The temples are openly advertised not for spiritual virtues but touristic ones. They are advertised towards a particular recreational niche, as pleasant places for a day of family fun or places to drink tea and relax. Religious professionals at such places are not required to fill their traditional roles as mediators between worshippers and divine forces. Rather, they are relegated to showpieces that accessorize the temple and lend a note of authenticity to its atmosphere.⁴

On the other hand, another article in *State, Market, and Religions* also describes the “alignment model.” In Yunnan Province, Thomas Borchert observed a community of Buddhist monks that was adapting to the boom in domestic tourism. His observations describe how, in certain instances, the local government’s desire to bring in more tourist revenue can align with

the religious community’s need to propagate its tradition. This alignment results in increased tourism and revenue, and also greater freedom and respect for the religious community. However, time spent in service to the tourist industry diverts monastics from their spiritual practices. Religious professionals in this alignment model understand they cannot be self-sustaining without tourism, but it is often irksome for them to be constantly subjected to the “touristic gaze.”

In the liberalized market economy of Reform-era China, Daoist communities are forced to struggle for survival by turning to a kind of “disneyfication:” producing pleasant, easy-access museum pieces in hopes of attracting tourist dollars. The Sichuan Daoist Association, in a 2007 promotional publication entitled *Immortal Land and Sacred Site: Nature, Life, Harmony and Development*, now eagerly speaks of building a new “brand” for Daoism in Sichuan, and of constructing an “exhibition system for Daoist culture.” Over and over again in Chinese history, dependant on the will of the Emperor, Daoist traditions have faced the razing of monasteries, the burning of canons, competition for public respect, and the confiscation of wealth – but they have never faced this new, 21st century challenge of becoming entertaining.

The studies in *State, Market, and Religions* provide useful models as to how traditional Daoist communities might be negotiating the unprecedented challenges of the Chinese New Economy. In hopes of enlarging upon the models described above, this thesis will present a case study of the monastic community located at Heming Shan, in Sichuan Province. The community at Heming Shan is an example of a traditional Daoist community on the cusp of potentially tremendous change. When I visited in 2008, the Heming Shan Daoists -- already living cheek-

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by-jowl with busloads of tourists that arrived every day – were preparing for a major tourist boom.

In 2006, the Second Annual Daoist Culture Festival displayed a billboard-sized poster celebrating the start of construction of a “Daoist Culture Tourist Area at Daoism’s Birthplace – Heming Shan in Dayi County, Sichuan Province.” Heming Shan is one of the oldest Daoist sites in Sichuan, which are themselves some of the oldest Daoist sites in all of China. According to an artist’s rendering on the giant billboard, the new facilities, slated to open in 2008, were to be known as the “Holy City at the Source of the Dao” (*Daoyuan Sheng Cheng*), and were to feature not only an on-site hotel, restaurant, museum, and study center, but in a later phase of construction would include a golf course and a massive statue of Laozi several stories high. A 2006 web article on the Holy City, posted on the China Taoist Association website, offered little discussion of the practical needs of believers or religious professionals, but rather sold the “Holy City” through its educational virtues. The venture, sponsored by the Dayi County government and an entity known as the “Stern Kindness Corporation” (*Enwei Jituan*), would allow potential visitors to admire, through the convenient museum, how Daoism was part of the fundamental basis of China’s 5,000 years of culture, philosophy, and enlightened rulership. This case study of Heming Shan will examine what kind of niche the Heming Shan Daoists have come to occupy at the new temple complex. As representatives of Daoism’s long trajectory from its ancient origins to its present situation in the industrialized, atheist world of modern China, are the Heming Shan Daoists fated to accessorize the temple “atmosphere,” or will they have to labor hard to preserve traditional identity and serve tourists?  

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The history of Daoism in the Reform era is but the utmost tip of an enormous iceberg. The history of Daoism encompasses nearly 2,000 years of growth and change. So, the question of what Daoism is in Reform-era China must be answered in part with a description of what Daoism was in Imperial China. Yet, as recently as the year 2000, Russel Kirkland articulated the central concern of an international coterie of Daoism scholars: the fact that “among the world’s religions, Daoism is undoubtedly the most incompletely known and poorly understood.”\(^8\) Many people the world over have read Daoist texts such as the *Daodejing* or the *Zhuangzi*. But few people outside the scholarly community have an accurate understanding of what Daoism is, and instead hold generalized stereotypes of Daoism that are still pervasive today, such as: Daoism is a religion of eccentrics and misfits. Daoism is a religion that values Laozi as its principle god, and the *Daodejing* is its “bible.” Daoists are all hermits that live deep in the mountains and worship nature. Daoism as practiced in China is a bunch of mumbo-jumbo aimed at the poorly educated peasantry. Perhaps the most pervasive stereotype is that “real Daoism” is just an easygoing attitude one can adopt after reading a few philosophical texts. The idea that “you, too can be a Daoist (if you just read this book)” cheapens thousands of years of devoted study and practice.\(^9\)

The egregious misrepresentation of Daoism is a result in part of geopolitical circumstance. Daoism is not a worldwide religion. It is indigenous only to China, and in the 20\(^{th}\) century, access to China has been limited by political and linguistic barriers. But, the roots of misrepresentation go back to the 19\(^{th}\) century. As recently as the 1990’s, scholarly studies of Daoism were colored by serious misperceptions propagated by Victorian-era Sinologists. In a 1998 article, “Meeting the Celestial Master,” Benjamin Penny pointed out that Many late 19\(^{th}\)-

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century observers of Daoism, such as W.E. Soothill (1912), were heavily influenced by their Protestant worldview. The Protestant tendency towards anti-clericalism lead these early observers to privilege the ancient texts of Daoism, such as the Daodejing and the Zhuangzi, which in their view were the pure wisdom of Daoism that could be accessed by any individual. At the same time, these observers tended to disparage organized Daoism, in which believers rely on the services of trained priests who act as ritual intermediaries between the human world and the spirit world. What little of organized, “religious” Daoism that was observable was often dismissed as mere superstition, wizardry, or charlatanism.10

The result of this anti-clerical worldview caused even dedicated sinologists to labor under a serious misperception of two kinds of Daoism: the “philosophical” Daoism expressed in the Daodejing, and the “religious” Daoism practiced by the Chinese people. Many scholars, such as W.M. Theodore deBary (1960) and Herlee Creel (1970), unconsciously supported the anti-clerical worldview of their forbears by positioning philosophical Daoism as the higher, more valuable tradition and religious Daoism as the corrupted bastard child of Daoism and Chinese folk religions. Because of this, the interpretive category of “Daoism” was split into two false categories that were difficult to reconcile. Even in 1968, T.H. Barrett has admitted, the question What is Daoism was still “baffling” to scholars the world over.11

From the 1960’s up until 1980’s, most scholars did not have access to living Daoist traditions. This 20-year period was marked by an increasing quality of studies of Daoist history, culled from documents in Western, Japanese, and Taiwanese archives. Western scholars such as Isabelle Robinet and Anna Seidel (1983, 1984) were able to describe a basic timeline of Daoist history, and chart the growth and development of its several divergent schools, philosophies, and

practices. Robinet’s *Taoism: Growth of a Religion* (1992) was one of the first histories of Daoism to present a relatively accurate historical narrative of Daoist history. Robinet’s work argued for a fundamental unity of the Daoist tradition. But Robinet, like many scholars, was still bedeviled with the question *What is Daoism?*\(^\text{12}\)

While the study of Daoism has improved and diversified in recent years, reliable, methodical studies of Daoism in Reform-era China are still few and far between. In the 1980’s scholars such as Kristofer Schipper (1985, 1994) and Michael Saso (1985) studied with living Daoists in Taiwan, and both Schipper and Saso were eventually ordained as Daoist priests. Their anthropological approach to living Daoism contributed greatly to the understanding of Daoist ritual, and also to the growing understanding of the functions that Daoists serve in Chinese society. However, because of matters of access, their studies focused solely on the *Zhengyi* School of Daoism, which is endemic to Taiwan and South China. The other surviving school of Daoism, the *Quanzhen* School, is endemic only to mainland China.\(^\text{13}\)

In the 1990’s a major breakthrough came with the scholarly “re-discovery” of the Daoist canon, the *Daozang*. The *Daozang* is a massive, multi-volume library of Daoist texts that was compiled in the *Ming* Dynasty (1368-1644 CE), by Daoists, for Daoists. But the texts it contains are much more than philosophical works – there are monastic manuals, biographies, histories and meditation guides, among many other texts. The *Daozang* was recognized by Western Sinologists in the 1920’s, but methodological study of this treasure trove is only beginning. Scholars such as Russel Kirkland (2004) are using it to put the dichotomy of “religious” vs. “philosophical” Daoism to rest. The *Daozang* proves that Daoism in all forms has a long tradition of serious thought behind it, and that its standards for personal practice are very high.

\(^{13}\) Russel Kirkland, et. al., “Introduction,” xv.
The Daozang is the factual data of Daoism. Scholars can no longer rely on prior misperceptions, and the texts of the Daozang stand to erase all prior ideas of “religious Daoism” as mumbo-jumbo and charlatanry.\(^\text{14}\)

Scholars today acknowledge that the major lacuna in Daoist scholarship is the lack of information about living Quanzhen Daoism in mainland China. Vincent Goosseart (2004, 2007) and Monica Esposito (2004) are two scholars who have recently produced social histories of Quanzhen Daoism. However, few Quanzhen rituals have been accurately described and studied, and the nature of Quanzhen monastic life in the context of the atheist Communist state is still poorly understood.\(^\text{15}\) This thesis is a modest attempt to remedy the lack of information about Quanzhen life. Looking for a few crumbs of wisdom about Daoist life in Reform-era China, I spent a month in Sichuan Province, dividing time between archival research and fieldwork at the Quanzhen monastic community at Heming Shan. For historical details about the Nationalist and Communist periods, I was able to cull a good deal of material from the Sichuan County Gazettes archived at the Sichuan Provincial Library in Chengdu.

For information on the living tradition, however, I turned to anthropological-style participant observation at Heming Shan. My analytical technique at Heming Shan was inspired by Clifford Geertz’s empathetic mode of “thick description.”\(^\text{16}\) In this mode, I followed Geertz’s idea that the daily life of the Heming Shan community was a “text” that I could read over the shoulders of the participants. Every detail of daily life at that I encountered at Heming Shan was valuable. So, my observations on the impact of the tourist industry on the community have come out of the context of daily life at the monastery. Another important technique that I used was the

oral interview. Vincent Goossaert has pointed out that “there cannot be a history of Daoism without the Daoists,”\textsuperscript{17} and in his work he stresses the importance of understanding Daoism through not just the grand sweep of ideas, but also through the daily life of average Daoist professionals in their own local environment.\textsuperscript{18} So little is known as about the life of Daoists in Reform-era China. Paul Thompson’s book, \textit{The Voice of the Past} (1978), champions oral history as a means to “open up a new area of inquiry”\textsuperscript{19} by allowing underrepresented groups to express their experiences. A major goal of this thesis is to give Daoists a voice. To do this, I prepared sets of interview questions according to the stringent guidelines of the Institutional Review Board and the Oral History Association. In 2006, during a brief ceremony at Beijing’s White Cloud Temple (\textit{Baiyun Guan}) I was confirmed as a lay Daoist, and given a special Daoist name. Because of this prior initiation into the etiquette and ritual of Quanzhen Daoism, I was able to take the interviews that are the crux of this thesis. Although my time at Heming Shan was short, and it would be intellectual suicide to claim anything conclusive, I did return with some valuable impressions of who Daoists are, what they do, where they have been, and where they might be going.

Daoism is a subject that is complex and poorly understood. To understand the nature of Daoist life today, and what a Daoist today \textit{does}, it is essential to first explore the roots of the Daoist tradition. To track the changes in what a Daoist did in Pre-Liberation times, vs. what a Daoist does now, this thesis will combine a generalized historical survey of Daoist practices with a case study of Daoism in 20\textsuperscript{th}-21\textsuperscript{st}-century Sichuan that focuses on the Heming Shan community. Chapter One is a basic introduction to Daoism: its place in traditional Chinese

society, its basic ideas, and the living traditions that represent Daoism today. Chapters Two, 
Three, Four, and Five will describe the fundamental continuities in Daoist identity that began 
with Daoism’s evolution in the Former Han period (206 BCE- 9 CE), and continue to shape Daoism into the present day. Chapter Two will examine Daoism’s unruly streak -- which manifests in its tendency to spark messianic popular rebellions -- that has colored its relationship with political authority to the present day. Chapters Three and Four will treat two important historical roots of Daoist practice: ritual intercession with the spirit world, and self-cultivation. Chapter Five is an examination of the phenomenon of Daoist monasticism, which continues at Heming Shan in the present day.

In Chapters Six through Twelve, the thesis will focus on 20th-21st century Sichuan, and the crucial question of the current day -- has what it means to be a Daoist changed? Chapter Six will introduce the history of Sichuan with a focus on its rich religious heritage. Chapter Seven will discuss 20th-century Daoism’s “slide into decline” during the Nationalist and Communist periods. Chapters Eight and Nine are occupied with the Communist rule up until 1976, and will elucidate the theories and policies that affected all religions in China, including organized Daoism. Chapter Ten will discuss the Reform era in Sichuan and the political drive to make religions in China self-sustaining. Chapters Eleven and Twelve focus on Heming Shan, the new religious economy of Daoism, and the effects of tourism on Daoist life.
CHAPTER 1
AN INTRODUCTION TO DAOISM

Daoism is China’s only indigenous religion, and, possibly, the oldest religion on earth, preserving within it rituals and beliefs widely believed to have originated in China’s tribal, prehistoric past more than six thousand years ago. It is a treasure trove of China’s collective hopes and fears, a repository of centuries of serious thought and dedicated practice by Chinese men and women from every region and background – simply put, there are few things on this earth more Chinese than Daoism.20

Although Daoism’s Shamanic roots in Chinese prehistory may be deep and hidden, its branches have grown and flourished for millennia and given shelter to some of the greatest achievements of Chinese culture, including things like gunpowder, traditional Chinese medicine, and astronomy. Self-identified Daoists have served society in positions ranging from backcountry doctor to poet to high court minister. Daoism has penetrated every level of society and remains tenaciously part of the Chinese mind even after the horrible persecutions of the 20th century. Daoism’s massive grip on Chinese culture is precisely what makes it such an important subject.21

Today in China, there are two main schools, the older Zhengyi or “Orthodox Unity” School, which traces its roots to the “Celestial Masters,” a unique peasant theocracy established

in the Han Dynasty (206 BC-220 CE). Then there is the younger tradition, the monastic Quanzhen, or “Total Reality” school, which has roots in ascetic practices, Confucianism, and Buddhism, beginning in approximately the 12th century. Heming Shan itself began as the very cradle of Zhengyi Daoism, but is today a Quanzhen community. Zhengyi and Quanzhen are but two survivals out of a multitude of traditions, however. Unlike Buddhism, Islam, and Christianity, Daoism is not a single tradition under a single god or founder, but rather a loosely interrelated set of ideas and rituals that changed radically over time and region, often motivated by original revelations of participants. Over the long course of its development, different schools of Daoism have emphasized different things, among them: attainment of corporeal immortality through chemical alchemy, attainment of spiritual immortality though meditation, martial arts such as qi gong and tai chi, exorcistic healing, the ability to speak to and control spirits, herbal medicine and even sexual yoga.  

A strange aspect of Daoism is that it is difficult to categorize and describe its central tenet of union with the Dao. The Dao, or, “The Way,” is believed by Daoists to be the mysterious single origin of all life and phenomena, from which everything flows and to which everything must eventually return. Most schools of Daoism throughout history emphasized a long, rigorous process of self-cultivation – be it through meditation, alchemy, communion with the spirit world, fasting, study, or even sex -- in order to bring about an experience of integration with the Dao, but hold that this experience of integration is fundamentally incommunicable. It can only be experienced. The ancient book known as the Zhuangzi, written roughly around the 4th century BCE and second only to the Daodejing in importance, tells the would-be seeker:

He who responds when asked about the Way does not know the Way. Thus, although one may ask about the Way, he doesn’t learn anything about it. For the Way is not to be asked about, and questions about the Way are not to be answered. If one answers what is not to be answered, the answer is inane.  

Although organized Daoism serves several important social functions, the central experience of Daoism is fundamentally an individual one. Generally, in the present day, Daoism does not actively proselytize. Transmission of the highest wisdom is made only from master to disciple, and its traditions prize secrecy and demand the utmost modesty from its initiates.

Modern-day Daoists indicate that most traditions of Daoism tend to revere Laozi and the Daodejing and that most traditions also stress meditation or some form of self-cultivation, and most importantly revere the Dao as the source of all that exists. However, Daoism branches quite widely from there. Isabelle Robinet has coined a famous metaphor of Daoism as ‘the happy wanderer:’ “Its history shows how ceaselessly it has proceeded by ‘recursive loops,’ taking up its past like a bundle under its arm in order to travel farther toward new horizons and, as it goes, gleaning all sorts of treasures along the way.” In the face of so much doctrinal diversity, it is the piecemeal way that Daoism has grown – a long process of accepting and rejecting ideas and theories – that is one of its most distinguishing characteristics.

In recent years, the re-discovery of the Daoist archive known as the Daozang has given scholars a more accurate picture of what Daoism is, and what Daoists do. Scholars outside of China once predicted that Communist oppression would completely extinguish the already declining practice of Daoism in mainland China. Holmes Welch wrote in 1957: “Today, after

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26 Robinet, Growth, 3.
centuries of decay, the church has reached the end of the road.” But, the nature of Daoism is such that it may be more resistant to eradication than scholars once believed. After a half-century of brutal attrition under Communist rule, Daoism is not dead at all. But like all things that are not dead, it is growing, and changing. Daoism has always been a religion of change, integration, and subtle refinement, and the long process of its historical evolution bears this out. Daoism’s genius is that it is not bound to one single covenant of morality, but rather to a doctrine that accepts change, growth, and death as the fundamental truth of life, and integration with these processes as the goal of human life. The Daoist worldview does not see the world as a dirty place, full of temptation and evil, but rather sees a cosmos of energies and forces that can be united, refined, and transformed within the crucible of the human body. Donald Harper has said that “Daoism is about personal transformation within a world that is set up for such a transformation.” Russel Kirkland provides an instructive definition of Daoism as a religion of, above all, integration and change:

Taoists did not find value in the Buddhist assumption that spiritual transformation could take place merely as a change in one’s consciousness, without any real reference to one’s physical life or to the subtle processes at work in the world around us. Taoists typically believed that personal transformation must be a holistic transformation, a transformation of all their being – including what other traditions have often distinguished as mind, body, and spirit – in accord with the most subtle and sublime processes at work in the world in which we live... It might be fair to say that the core of Taoist practice – from classical times down to the present – has involved a practice of self-cultivation within a cosmos of subtly linked forces [emphasis in the original].

Since Daoism’s ancient origins, Daoists of all schools have embraced the idea that humans are functioning parts of an organismic cosmos, and that the energies of the cosmos – qi – must circulate if they are to create life, ming. Because of this view of a constantly circulating

world, Daoism is a supremely adaptable religion -- when confronted with an obstruction, Daoism simply grows another way. Proof of this adaptable tendency lies in the fact that there have been many different schools of Daoism in Chinese history, but never a war over doctrine between the many schools. The surviving traditions of Daoism, the Zhengyi School and the Quanzhen School, are but two representatives of many traditions. From its origins in the 2nd century CE to the present day, Daoism has undergone many transformations, and has faced many challenges. Nonetheless, Daoism is facing some unique challenges at the dawn of the 21st century, and its ability to adapt is being tested by a set of unprecedented circumstances. If a group of 13th-century Quanzhen Daoists were transported in a time machine and set down at Heming Shan today, they might be confounded -- even offended-- by the recreational atmosphere. They would, however, be able to recognize the practices of their modern co-religionists. Even though the socio-political context of Daoism has changed dramatically, Daoists such as the ones at Heming Shan are still upholding the rituals and self-cultivation practices that are the core of Daoist identity.30

CHAPTER 2

EARLY DAOISM AND ITS CHALLENGE TO THE CHINESE STATE,

206 BCE-220 CE

Most of the Daoists at Heming Shan are open, friendly people. They are as curious about Westerners’ lives as Westerners are about theirs. Although inwardly they might have been groaning—or stifling a laugh—at some interview questions, they tended to answer kindly and straightforwardly. However, in the course of taking interviews at Heming Shan, it seemed that the surest way to make a Daoist screw up their normally relaxed and unlined face was to ask them about *Yiguan Dao*. *Yiguan Dao* was a very widespread, Daoist-inspired messianic rebellion that gathered steam in the chaotic days of the early 20th century. Since the earliest years of organized Daoism’s history in the Han dynasty, messianic, millenarian Daoist groups have at times used spiritual justifications for rebellion against unjust government. Such groups tend to have been particularly prominent during times of war or political disintegration—such as the Later Han period or the early 20th century—when displaced masses sought safety and solidarity in any alternative they could find. In order to understand the political oppression that informs Daoist life in the Reform era, it is important to first examine the roots of organized Daoism’s relationship with the Chinese state in the Han era.31

In the Former Han period (206 BCE-9 CE), the ritual and philosophical foundations of Daoism were forged in the atmosphere of a newly-unified Chinese culture. In this atmosphere, many groups were striving to define a social and political framework that would bring about the

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cherished ideal of *Tai Ping*: a harmonious world in which every being could reach their full potential. At the Han court, early Daoist thinkers formulated a vision of Tai Ping that eventually came into violent conflict with the Han Dynasty’s own claims to Tai Ping. Organized Daoism began its “social mission” in the chaotic period of disintegration known as the Later Han (25-220 CE), when Daoist thought and ritual filtered out of court and into the hands of charismatic popular leaders. On one hand were the relatively peaceful Celestial Masters, who created an independent theocracy in Sichuan. On the other hand were the “Yellow Turbans,” a violent group that claimed a mystical, moral imperative to destroy the corrupt ruling classes. Both groups were organizationally successful, and attracted many followers. The ideal of Tai Ping was common to the ruling Confucian ideology and to Daoist ideology. In harsh times of war and disintegration, messianic Daoism was able to challenge the Chinese State on the Chinese State’s own terms, by offering an alternate vision of Tai Ping when the State’s own claims to Tai Ping had failed. Violent messianic Daoism, as represented by Yiguan Dao or the Yellow Turbans, exerted a mystical attraction upon the dissatisfied and disenfranchised that at times exploded into violence.\(^{32}\)

Daoism is not a religion solely devoted to Laozi, so “Daoists” did not conveniently appear when the *Daodejing*, a scripture of central importance to Daoism, appeared around 300 BCE. Before the Former Han period, there were no Daoists. Ancient practitioners of the rituals and philosophies that today are considered part of the Daoist tradition surely had no idea of such a category in their times. Tang Dachao, a Chinese historian of Daoism, is of the view that Daoism as we know it only began to coalesce in the Later Han period, because Chinese sources

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purporting to exactly describe its more ancient origins are too contradictory to be useful and amount to “unfounded nonsense.”

Daoism’s very first entry onto the stage of Chinese history during the Former Han period was in a procession of many other groups. It was not identified as a religion but rather as another school of philosophy, such as that of the Confucians. *Sima Tan*, a famous early historian with Daoist leanings, provided the earliest known definition of the group, which in his view was the most useful among many competing “Jias,” or “houses.” Importantly, this designation of “Jia” implied a minor school, a tradition with little influence, in contrast to the designation for a major wisdom tradition, *Jiao*. Although but a humble *Jia* in the Han, Daoism is today known as *Daojiao*. From the Han period onward, Daoism’s appealing mix of practicality, mysticism, and flexibility helped it grow into one of the three *Jiaos* of China, along with *Fojiao*, Buddhism, and *Rujiao*, Confucianism.

After the fall of the *Qin* Dynasty (221-206 BCE), the Former Han period began on a reflective note as the formidable assembly of intellectuals at court all mulled over the best way to rule the newly unified China. It was a period of fantastic intellectual ferment, when many ideas that are thought of as fundamentally “Chinese” were cemented. In fact, the dominant ethnic group in China today, some 90% of the population, still identifies itself as “Han.” *Sima Tan*, a “Grand Historian” (*Da Shi*) of the Han court, was the first thinker of the Han period to grasp -- and define for posterity -- six influential schools of thought on new terms that had never been put forth before. His aim was to summarize their potential as tools of governance. Around 100

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BCE, he defined for history the “Naturalists,” the “Confucians,” the “Mohists,” the “Legalists,” the “Yinyang School,” and the “Daoists,” all terms that are still in use today.  

Sima said of the Daoists:

The Daoists enable the numinous essence within people to be concentrated and unified. They move in unison with the Formless and provide adequately for all living things. In deriving their techniques, they follow the grand compliances of the Naturalists, select the best of the Confucians and Mohists, and extract the essentials of the Yinyang School and Legalists.

They shift their policies in accordance with the seasons and respond to the transformations of things. In establishing customs and promulgating policies, they do nothing unsuitable. Their tenets are concise and easy to grasp, their policies are few but their achievements many.

Even in this initial stage, Daoism, or Dao Jia as it was then called, was identified as a champion of flexibility, integration, and harmony. Not all of the schools could achieve these virtues -- in contrast, Sima Tan wrote of the Confucians:

The Confucians are erudite and yet lack the essentials. They labor much yet achieve little. This is why their doctrines are difficult to follow completely.

For them, the ruler guides and the officials harmonize with him, the ruler initiates and the officials follow. Proceeding in this manner, the ruler labors hard and the officials sit idle.

There were two strains among these early proponents of the “House of the Dao:” the ecstatic strain, represented by ritual specialists known as the Fangshi and the Wu, and the intellectual strain, represented by the Huang-Lao School. Fangshi were a form of ancient “scientist,” working in astronomy, medicine, divination and geomancy, while Wu were an even more ancient strain of shamans and spirit mediums; the Chinese character for Wu today means

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36 Qtd. In Watson and Bloom, Sources, 198-99.
37 Qtd. In Watson and Bloom, Sources, 198-99.
“witch.” Such specialists performed liturgies for the sake of the ruler, and communicated with the ancestral spirits when guidance was needed. Fangshi and Wu played important roles in ancient Chinese culture. In the Shang dynasty (1766-1122 BCE), it was the Fangshi who acted as the scapulamancers who inscribed the famous “oracle bones” which today provide the first evidence of written Chinese. Scholars theorize that the learning of the Fangshi and Wu had a natural affinity for, or perhaps a shared ancestry with, the Huang-Lao School, and somehow the two began to intermix the intellectual and ecstatic tendencies that are hallmarks of Daoism today. However, in the Former Han period these ritual specialists were still courtly creatures, who made themselves useful by being able to tell rulers what was happening in the world on the basis of their familiarity with subtle, unseen realities, and gained influence by “offering Emperor Han Wu Di (r. 141-87 BCE) new ways of aggrandizing himself.”

Some scholars believe that the Huang-Lao school of thought was another early precursor of Daoism. This very early intellectual strain of proto-Daoism was not a religious movement, but an elite intellectual tradition centered squarely upon the Han court, vying with other groups such as the Confucians, the Mohists, and the Legalists to shape the conceptual framework in which the government operated. The principles articulated by the Huang-Lao School in the Former Han period did not earn the Huang-Lao School influence at court – that was eventually won by the Confucians. The “Mandate of Heaven” is a well-known principle of Imperial Chinese rulership. In Han times, many thinkers were striving to define what it was, and how to attain it, on different terms. The Huang-Lao School was in accord with many of the other schools of the day, particularly the Confucians, in its nostalgia for “a savior King who, unlike the monarchs of the

39 Kirkland, The Enduring Tradition, 81.
world around us, rules by *te*, magico-moral force alone. The coming of such a savior was looked forward to with messianic fervor. Were a true king to come, says Confucius, in the space of a single generation Goodness would become universal.”

In the view of the Huang-Lao School, one such True King was the semi-mythological Sage-King *Huang Di*, the father of Chinese civilization. In deep antiquity, Huang Di ruled his perfect world through the political application of the same principles advocated by Laozi in the *Daodejing*, such as *wu-wei*, or “non-action.” *Wu-wei* refers to a laissez-faire style of rulership, which was based upon the idea that harmony with the course of events would bring natural peace and prosperity. It was the True King’s task to first achieve an inner rectitude, and then simply place his rule into the endless flow of the Dao. If the True King could accomplish this task, then Tai Ping or “Great Peace” would reign, human society and nature would be in balance, and every living being would experience maximum fulfillment. As the Confucian School was promoting the *Liji* or book of rites as the ideal manual of governance, the Huang-Lao School promulgated the *Daodejing* as the ideal, and glossed Laozi as the “Teacher of Emperors.” Laozi himself was a metaphor for the emanation of the pure Dao. Laozi manifested himself only to the True King, who then served not for himself, but as an instrument of the Dao to spread *de*, or virtue, throughout the realm. This philosophical vision of enlightened rulership would soon take on a life of its own. Under the more literal interpretations of charismatic, non-elite leadership, the idea would return hundreds of years later like a boomerang to the Han Dynasty, and work to destroy it. Out of the effete world of court, Daoism’s social mission was beginning.

The mystical principles of governance articulated by Huang-Lao migrated from the rarefied air of the Former Han court. In a few short centuries, the ideas would mutate under the

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pressure of the collapse of the Han, and become the basis of what Anna Seidel has identified as “Daoist Messianism.” Daoist Messianism represents a recurrent trend in which charismatic leaders use the mystical, moral ideals of Huang-Lao in order to rouse dissatisfied people to reclaim the “Mandate of Heaven,” and bring about Tai Ping. The flexibility and mysticism of Daoism could serve to aggrandize even the most jaded of emperors. But, time and again in Chinese history, this same flexibility has also allowed charismatic leaders to use Daoist principles to spark massive, violent popular rebellions.43

In Shandong Province in 184 CE, the Huang-Lao-inspired Yellow Turbans seemingly came out of nowhere, marshalling an impressive force of over 360,000 men for a rebellion that had been secretly – and elaborately—planned. The Yellow Turbans were motivated by a leader known as Zhang Jue. Zhang was a man of common origins, who had been heavily influenced by a mystical strain Huang-Lao thought. He exerted a godlike power upon his followers because of his miraculous ability to heal. In a divine revelation, he saw that the corrupt ruling classes had lost the favor of heaven, and took it upon himself to organize a rebellion that would bring about Tai Ping once and for all. He inspired his troops through a mixture of mystical principles, and his rebellion was quite successful -- and bloody. Although the rebellion did not completely destroy the corrupt ruling classes, it went a long way to pushing the already tattered Later Han Dynasty towards collapse. The Yellow Turban rebellion was a major phenomenon that shaped the history of early China, and the history of Daoism as well.44

A key theme in Daoist texts from the 2nd century CE into the 21st century is that of “harmony.” Daoist philosophy prescribes integration with the physical and spiritual world. The Daoist worldview sees the human as one element in a cosmos of subtly linked forces. Many Daoist practices are geared towards attaining peaceful harmony among the many layers of existence: harmony between the worlds of the living and the malevolent dead, harmony between humans and the Gods, harmony between humans in a society, and the harmony of the individual within themselves. To attain harmony, Daoists take a practical approach to both the human and the spirit world. After careful training and practice, a Daoist can become an instrument of harmony by acting as a ritual mediator between the human and the spirit worlds. Early Daoist communities such as the Celestial Masters in Sichuan strove to create harmonious societies based upon Daoist principles. The theocracy of the Celestial Masters was founded in 142 CE at Heming Shan in Sichuan. The Celestial Masters represents the beginning of organized Daoism, and the roots of Daoist ritual practices. Under the Celestial Masters, a key element of Daoist identity was established: the practice of special rituals meant to harmonize the many layers of existence that comprise the Daoist cosmos.

The Han went into a long phase of dynastic decline that began in the last 50 years before the Common Era. In China, this period is comparable to the declining days of ancient Rome: a time that saw the rise of privileged families owning vast estates, imperial degeneracy,
factionalism at court, a growing barbarian threat, and a challenge to the ruling ideology. For the Romans, this challenge was Christianity. For the Chinese, it was popular Daoism. As things fell apart in the Later Han, people were displaced, hungry, and seeking a haven. The Yellow Turbans offered one such haven. But more important for Daoist identity was the haven offered by the independent, theocratic polity that became known to history as “The Celestial Masters.”

Evolving concomitantly with – but independent of --the Yellow Turbans during the chaos of the Later Han, the relatively peaceful Celestial Masters at Heming Shan were able to offer an organized theocratic alternative to the State itself. The Celestial Masters promised physical well-being, fair distribution of wealth, and active solidarity to all members. Not only did the Celestial Masters originate several of the rituals and philosophies used in Daoism today, according to scholars such as Stephen Bokenkamp, the Celestial Masters movement marks the beginning of Daoism’s “social mission.”

The classical history of the Later Han (Hou Hanshu), written during the reign of Emperor Han Shun Di (r. 125-144 CE) gives first mention of Heming Shan and the establishment of Daoism, with the words “Forefather Ling went to Shu and at Heming Shan studied the Dao.” “Forefather Ling” refers to the enigmatic figure known as Zhang Daoling. According to legend, Zhang Daoling was the first patriarch of Celestial Masters Daoism (Tianshi Dao). He was the first patriarch in a line that remains unbroken to this day, with the 64th patriarch currently residing in Taiwan. Although Zhang Daoling’s existence has been called into question by many scholars, his iconography and symbolic value are still firmly established within present-day Daoism. The most popular tales of the founding of Celestial Masters Daoism tend to describe

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47 Hou Hanshu Qtd. In Fuhua Wei, editor, *Zengbu Hemingshan Zhi [Supplementary Hemingshan Gazette]* (Sichuan Sheng Dayi Xian: Dayi Xian Tushuguan & Dayi Xian Daojiao Xiehui, 1999), 1.
the mystical origins of two important core practices that have extended out of early Daoism, and continue to shape Daoism into the present day: its “social missions” of exorcism and healing.\textsuperscript{48} A scripture known as the \textit{Taiping Guangji} tells of Zhang’s famous revelation at Heming Shan in the year 142 CE, when Laozi himself revealed Zhang’s mission:

\begin{quote}
Suddenly a heavenly man (tianren) descended, accompanied by a thousand chariots and ten thousand horsemen, in a Golden Carriage with a feathered canopy. Riding dragons and astride tigers, they were too numerous to count. At times the man referred to himself as the Scribe Below the Pillar [a name for Laozi] Sometimes others would call him the Lad from the Eastern Sea. He bestowed upon Ling Newly Emerged Correct and Unitary Dao of Covenanted Awe. Having received this, Ling was able to heal illness.\textsuperscript{49}
\end{quote}

In another version, Laozi enjoined Zhang to kill six evil demons that were wreaking havoc in Sichuan, and Zhang was given a magic sword with which he could kill any demons and exorcize ghosts. Zhang is popularly depicted with this sword. At Heming Shan, in the recently opened “new” section of the temple complex, stands enshrined a massive golden statue of Zhang Daoling, complete with weapon. Real or not, the youthful Daoists at Heming Shan today are proud of his association with the mountain, and glad to claim him as one of the “special spirits” of the mountain.\textsuperscript{50}

Despite controversy over Zhang Daoling, it is certain that his son Zhang Heng and grandson Zhang Lu were verifiable people, with canny political and organizational skills that allowed them to navigate their flock through the turmoil of the Later Han. Influenced by Zhang Daoling’s divine gift for healing, diverse shamanistic practices, and textual influences such as the \textit{Laozi} and the \textit{Zhuangzi}, the Celestial Masters crystallized an independent political and social


\textsuperscript{49} Taiping Guangji Qtd. In Kleeman, \textit{Great Perfection}, 67.

system, based in the region of Heming Shan, that extended into nearby regions of Sichuan. The Celestial Masters theocracy was divided into 24 smaller “parishes” (zhi), for administrative ease. Individual parishes were administered by proto-Daoist priests, morally-and magically empowered men (and women) who were known as “libationers.” Dayi County records pinpoint that the Qing-era (1644-1911 CE) temple known today as Taiqing Gong, which is at the center of the original Heming Shan temple complex, stands upon the site of the operational base of the third zhi, which was known to the Celestial Masters as Taishang Zhi.51

The theocracy of the Celestial Masters is sometimes referred to as “The Way of Five Pecks,” (Wu Dou Mi Dao) because all followers were expected to contribute five bushels of rice or millet, that were then stored and distributed according to collective need. These grain-tithes were made at thrice-annual meetings of all members within a zhi, when communal births and deaths were verified, and communal meals were held. Labor was also organized, and even punishment for minor transgressions in these communities was sometimes extracted in the form of corvee labor, such as road repair. In the harsh times of the Later Han, the Celestial Masters’ parishes maintained a system of “responsibility huts,” akin to post-houses, along the roads. At these places, travelers, most likely refugees from the disintegration of the Han, were fed and protected.52 Stephen Bokenkamp points to these compassionate gestures as proof that the Celestial Masters movement was unique among contemporary Chinese religious traditions because of its concern for the sufferings of the common folk, and states that “commoners and non-Chinese peoples alike rejoiced in the rule of the Celestial Masters.”53

53 Bokenkamp, Early Daoist Scriptures, 37.
The practices and beliefs of the Celestial Masters served to cement communal security and cohesion. For libationers, spiritual authority went hand-in-hand with the fruits of the covenant that was handed down from Laozi to Zhang Daoling: the power to heal. Historian Michel Strickmann holds that for the Celestial Masters, “therapy was the crucial function of the religion.” Illness among the Celestial Masters was seen as the result of a moral transgression. The sick were made to confess their transgressions, and rest in “chambers of quietness” where they might reflect on their sins and perform personal rites of penance. A famous ritual of the Celestial Masters that has survived to the present day in popular religion was the drinking of “talisman water.” A libationer, who would have been specially empowered to heal, wrote a talisman (fu) for the patient on sanctified paper, which was then burned. The ashes were then mixed with water and drunk by the patient, in process that would be akin to a doctor giving the patient his written prescription to eat. If the patient failed to recover, it was said to be a failure to harmonize with the Dao. Since disease was seen to be a moral failing, the faithful were held in check by the threat of illness that would attack if they transgressed.

The early Celestial Masters in Sichuan were not only operationally sophisticated, but were also practicing spiritual innovations that earned many new followers and eventually became the cornerstones of Daoism today. At each zhi, the bureaucracy of morally-empowered leaders known as “libationers” mediated between the people and the bureaucracy of the spirit world. David Keightley has shown that since the dawn of recorded history in China, there has been a conception of the spirit world as a sort of mirror to the human world. In fact, the hierarchical, bureaucratic spirit world looked very much like the Imperial court.

54 Strickmann, Magical Medicine, 2.
Ancient Chinese religious concepts imagined many of the Gods and Goddesses as humanoids making their way in a Heavenly bureaucracy much like that on earth. And so the human relationship with the spirit world was attuned accordingly. Individual humans were (and still are) conceived of as having a reciprocal you-scratch-my-back-I’ll-scratch-yours relationship with the Gods that is based upon practical trust more than mystical faith, just as one would trust a bureaucrat to perform the task he was assigned. A libationer could bridge the two worlds because their earthly authority was not in a unidirectional continuum with an unknowable spirit world. Traditional Chinese religions held that the spirit world was nearly identical to the earthly political realm, and so each earthly mediator would, if perfectly focused and sincere, be able to correspond to a spirit counterpart on the other side. As authority was above, so it was below. Thus, the spirit world was thought to be was patterned on the human world: a world that was hierarchical, contractual, routinized, impersonal, and rational.  

For healing, a patient could also write out a letter of repentance to the “Three Offices” (San Guan) of the spirit world, highly placed spirit-bureaucrats known as the “The Heavenly Official,” the “Earthly Official,” and the “Water Official.” These divine officials were said to determine people’s fortune or misfortune, the promotion of deities and the reincarnation of the dead. These ancient figures remain quite important in Daoism today, as evidenced by the presence of a “San Guan Temple” at Heming Shan. While the onus was upon the ill individual to repent, it was the libationer’s task to commune with the spirits through proper ritual. The libationer was responsible for collecting the copies and placing them, with proper ceremony, in the domains of the Three Officials -- one upon a mountaintop, one buried in the earth, and one

57 Ebrey and Gregory, “Landscape,” 8-9
cast into the water. The practice of writing and delivering scared petitions remains a major task for the Daoist.\footnote{Wu, \textit{100 Chinese Gods}, 7; Bokenkamp, \textit{Early Daoist Scriptures}, 35.}

In Chinese traditional religions, from the ruler down to the people, one does not have to believe so much as do. As such, one of the libationer’s major responsibilities was to serve as a ritual bridge between the spirit world and the people. The well-being of the individual and the group depended in part on the libationer’s ability to placate the spirit world through perfect performance of special sacrifices and rituals. This very important concept as it was practiced by the Celestial Masters came to be a cornerstone of Daoism that continues to the present day. Early Daoists were anxious to distance themselves from local Shamanistic cults, with their emphasis on spirit possession and ecstatic communal rites of drumming, blood sacrifice, and orgiastic sex. First, early Daoists unmasked the “false gods” of the Shamans by revealing to the people that these gods were just mischievous spirits of the dead who actually caused illness, not cured it.\footnote{Strickmann, \textit{Magical Medicine}, 2-3.}

To the Celestial Masters, the excessive payment demanded by Shamans, blood sacrifices, and “Gods of the profane” were serious offenses against the Dao. Daoists began to establish themselves, in contrast to the profane Shamans, as highly trained, literate ritual specialists who were attuned to higher and purer energies.\footnote{Strickmann, \textit{Magical Medicine}, 3.} In a passage worth quoting at length, Michel Strickmann explains this cornerstone of Daoist identity in his 2002 book \textit{Chinese Magical Medicine}:

For Taoists, the distinction between their own faith and these cults was and remains quite simply a matter of life against death: the celestial Tao against the ill-omened, unhallowed dead and everything connected with them. In opposition to the violent cults of the deified spirits of the dead, Taoists set the pure, primordial, uncreated Tao, the first principle, and its anthropomorphic transformations, the Taoist pantheon. In place of uncontrolled shamans, Taoism offered a hierarchy of carefully
trained, literate priests, the Tao’s own representatives on earth. Instead of ecstasy and enthusiasm, Taoists worked through meditations: a strictly prescribed and modulated system of communications with the invisible world, framed by established ritual procedures.\textsuperscript{61}

To put it terms of a modern-day analogy, it seems that what a Daoist did was act as a kind of heavenly lawyer. Trained in the lingo and etiquette of the otherworldly courts, through ritual perfection a Daoist could intercede on a client’s behalf for healing and the release of their souls. Observations at Heming Shan proved that, despite the two millennia that separate Daoists then and now, and despite the 20\textsuperscript{th}-century persecutions that have ravaged Daoism, this ritual intercession is still at the core of what a Daoist does.

For example, the Daoists at Heming Shan still practice a form of ritual intercession with the spirit world that has been handed down from the Celestial Masters. The social mission of healing and harmony that was instituted by the Celestial Masters is still evident in the compassionate rituals that the Heming Shan Daoists perform for the sake of society. After the 05/12/08 earthquake in Sichuan, which measured 7.8 on the Richter scale, the Daoists at Heming Shan conducted a series of rites in which beautifully written petitions for the souls of the earthquake dead were solemnly chanted, and then burned. When interviewed about these rituals, a young priestess admitted that performing the rites was exhausting —the Daoist’s petition to the spirit world will only be accepted if the Daoist’s energies are focused and the rites are performed perfectly, so every step, every gesture, every word must be made great care. The goal of these grueling, hours-long rituals was the salvation of the dead, but also to purge the evil energies that had caused the quake in the first place.

The rituals of the Quanzhen sect, to which these monastics belong, have not been extensively described in scholarly literature, and so this brief sketch is not at all meant to be

\textsuperscript{61} Strickmann, \textit{Magical Medicine}, 4.
conclusive – it can only be offered to illustrate a general continuity in ritual practice and purpose. The group of Daoists – the majority of them female -- performed the ritual in front of the massive golden statue of Zhang Daoling that represents the highest altar in the new complex. Three musicians, playing the Chinese lute, *erhu*, and flute, accompanied them, sitting off to the side of the ritual arena and moderating the music to the chanting by following a set of complex cues. Three Daoists, wearing simple ceremonial robes of yellow and red, and the short, cylindrical black silk hat that marks a Daoist, lined up at long table. Each was holding a smaller instrument, such as a drum, bell, or gong. Books of scripture were open on the tables before each one. Across from them, as if in a mirror, faced another three Daoists in the same configuration, creating a kind of aisle directly in front of the high altar, which was laden with fruit and candles, and in pride of place, an elaborate incense burner.

To lilting, melodious chanting and music, the three main ritual actors solemnly took their places at the high altar. Two of them flanked the central actor by kneeling down at the altar, leaving the central actor to shine in her resplendent robe. Daoist vestments have long been an important means for Daoists to channel and reflect cosmic energies, and this long robe of red silk was very richly – almost hypnotically -- worked with colors and figures. Instead of a black hat, she had a small crown of gold and pearl pinned to her topknot. The long ritual began as incense ash from the high altar was manipulated, in a careful series of gestures, onto a ritual tablet. Then one of the three at the high altar sonorously read the carefully folded petitions that had been written in red ink on yellow paper. These were burned and mixed with water, as the music and chanting rose and fell interminably.

At the height of the ritual, the fabulously-robed priestess took up a square object that appeared to be a Chinese “chop,” or seal, and began to speak very loudly and powerfully to the
beat of a drum. With the seal, she wrote talismans in the air above the water, and then strode around the ritual space with measured steps, flicking the ash-water in all directions, her every gesture perfectly controlled. She seemed transformed in herself – her solemn face and gesture projected a potent sense of authority. She strode outside onto the porch of the temple, and, as her bright robe billowed in the winds coming out of a grey and stormy sky, flicked the water to the five directions. To see her outside of the bright red and gold environment of the temple, against the stormy sky, was a stunning image, brought to perfect pitch, no doubt, by her energetic performance of the ritual.

In the final phase, she performed a complicated, slow, and stately dance before the altar while holding three candles in each hand. Such dances go directly back to the earliest Daoist practices, in which priests paced a stylized pattern based upon the constellations, but I had never seen such a dance performed with candles, and it has not been mentioned in any of the literature yet read. Again, the contrast of her brilliant robe, the flickering flame, and her powerful persona were stunning. After observing such a dazzling ritual, it was easier to understand how Daoism served traditional Chinese society, and how it kept its grip on people. Such rituals – though long and complicated – are pure magic.

A viewer might be dazzled after such a ritual. But once it was done, the participating Daoists removed their robes with some relief, and immediately they were no longer the solemn emissaries to the spirit world they had appeared to be in the ritual -- they turned back into the boisterous, chatty, youthful people they usually were. With a sense of a tough job well done, they ribbed each other about mistakes they had made, packed the robes away, and, picking up tin lunch boxes and parasols, went back up the road to the old monastery complex, wondering aloud about what was for lunch.  

62 Author’s fieldnotes, Heming Shan, July 21 2008.
CHAPTER 4

NOURISHING LIFE: DAOIST SELF-CULTIVATION FROM THE EARLY HAN TO THE 21ST CENTURY

On the bumpy highway that leads through the Sichuan countryside to Heming Shan, the scenery is typical of rural China. Carefully cultivated orchards and fields stretch right across all the flat land, ending only at the feet of the green mountains that enclose the region. Small, single-story farmer’s homes dot the landscape, along with clusters of the recently built white-tiled buildings that indicate a prosperous countryside. About five minutes away from Heming Shan, however, a huge billboard rises incongruously two stories above the countryside. Its message is simple and direct: “Heming Shan: Meditate. Nourish Life” (Heming Shan: Xiu Xin. Yangsheng).\(^{63}\)

The abrupt billboard, no doubt intended to entice tourists, actually encapsulates two of the cardinal Daoist self-cultivation practices: meditation and the “nourishing of life.” For Quanzhen Daoists, such as the ones living at Heming Shan, these practices are the keystone of their Daoist identity. Daoist self-cultivation is a rich and complex tradition, and for Westerners, it is perhaps one of the most familiar aspects of Daoism. Anyone who has practiced tai chi, received acupuncture, or taken Chinese herbal medicine has experienced the fruits of Daoist wisdom. Of course, such things as acupuncture and herbal medicine are not the exclusive provenance of Daoism. But it is true that for thousands of years, Daoists of all schools were concerned with different methods of nourishing and protecting the physical body. Over several centuries of experimentation and refinement, Daoist practitioners generated a remarkable body of

\(^{63}\) Author’s fieldnotes, Heming Shan, July 25 2008.
medical techniques, meditation practices, nutritional guidelines, and medicinal knowledge that are widely practiced and respected by people all over the world.

The billboard advertising Heming Shan as a place to “meditate and nourish life” indicates that this valuable accrual of knowledge may in fact be a key to Daoism’s survival in present-day China. The Stern Kindness Corporation, which has poured billions of yuan into building the new Heming Shan temple complex, was founded by a Taiwanese man named Xue Yongxin. In the 1970’s, he studied with a Daoist teacher who he respected very much, and eventually Xue was cured of a serious illness through Daoist yangsheng techniques. Because of this cure, the founder expressly envisioned Heming Shan as world center of yangsheng education. Xue sees his investment in Heming Shan as a kind of sanctified mission to share Daoist wisdom with the world:

We initiate medical enterprise [at Heming Shan] to relieve physical suffering…Heming Shan is the ancestral court of Daoism, but it once got unfair treatment and suffered from ultra-left trends of thought, and it has been developing slowly and not matching its holy status as the cradle of Daoism. It is our responsibility to develop Daoism, the root of Chinese traditional culture and to carry on Daoist culture for several thousand years.

The long tradition of Daoist self-cultivation represents a repository of valuable knowledge. The self-cultivation practices of most Daoist schools in history are informed by the metaphor of alchemy: the Daoist body is a crucible in which divine energies are harmonized. In the Buddhist view, the body is a hindrance to be transcended. But the Daoist body is a precious crucible, a microcosmic replica that holds all of the energies of the universe. By activating these energies within the body and refining them with the power of the mind, a Daoist achieves not sudden enlightenment, but gradually strengthens the life-force until it is immortal, and does not

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64 The Businessman, Interview One, Heming Shan, July 27 2008; Yang, Xian Yuan Sheng Ji, 161.
65 Xue Qtd. In Yang, Xian Yuan Sheng Ji, 161.
disperse at death but remains as pure consciousness. The alchemical “body as crucible” idea is most fundamental to Daoism, and a major distinguishing feature between Daoism and Buddhism. In the centuries after the Celestial Masters, the tradition of Daoist self-cultivation would grow and branch into two main schools – scientific, or “outer” alchemy (wai dan) and spiritual, or “inner” alchemy (nei dan). But the essential ideal of self-cultivation by combining the energies of mind, body, and cosmos still constitutes a great deal of what it means to be a “Daoist” today.

Like so many roots of Daoist practice, the historical roots of Daoist self-cultivation are in the soil of Sichuan and the theocracy of the Celestial Masters. The independent theocracy of the Celestial Masters came to a relatively gentle end in 215 CE, when Zhang Lu, grandson of Zhang Daoling, handed over his rule to the famous Han military commander Cao Cao. Lu settled down to the plum position of Marquis of Lanzhong, a nearby territory, and was awarded a fief of nearly 10,000 households. Followers of the Celestial Masters were dispersed, and left for other parts of China, taking their form of religious belief and organization with them. Converts went on to develop practices in their own localities, each with the belief that their practices were orthodox emanations of those that were handed down to Zhang Daoling. Scholar Maeda Shigeki explains that this dispersal was the underlying cause for the emergence of the many new viewpoints and schools that contributed to the growth of Daoism in later times.66

After the end of the Celestial Masters theocracy, several schools of Daoism emerged and flourished. The most important of the direct outgrowths of the Celestial Masters to influence Medieval China was known as the Shangqing School, which emerged in the Jin period (265-420 CE). It was begun by a man known as Yang Xi, who received revelations, a la Mohammed, from a divine figure known as “Lady Wei.” This Lady Wei was something like a Goddess, and she was later referred to in histories and hagiographies as having been a “libationer” in her earthly

life. The Shangqing school was based on some Celestial Masters tenets, and spiced with revelations – often of a sexual nature -- said to come directly from a group of apparently rather randy immortals. The Shangqing School became very popular in the Chinese Medieval period, and established itself in a thriving Daoist center at Mao Shan, near Nanjing, the capital city of Zhejiang Province.67

The Shangqing school and its outgrowth, the Lingbao school, represent what is known today as the “liturgical school” of Daoism, which places primary emphasis on the perfect performance of ritual. The liturgical traditions focus on communication with the spirit world in order to heal illness, purge sins, prolong life, and invite good fortune. Their alchemical perspective is not so much based on compounding the divine forces within one’s body, but on the idea that energies from the spirit world can enter the body, be cultivated by the practitioner, and create immortality. Although the Shangqing and Lingbao schools no longer survive, they in turn are the direct ancestors of the Zhengyi School, one of the two surviving schools of Daoism today. The Zhengyi School traces its origins directly back through the Shangqing and Lingbao Schools to the covenant of Laozi and Zhang Daoling; its very name, “Orthodox Unity” references that covenant. The Zhengyi priesthood tends to be hereditary. Its practitioners can marry and live at home, and are summoned by Chinese customers to perform rituals upon request. They are sometimes referred to as “sanju Daoshi,” or “hearth Daoists.” The Zhengyi school is alive and well, particularly in South China, where it has been well-studied by many Chinese and Western Scholars. Although a high degree of self-cultivation and moral propriety is

required, it does not focus so heavily on inner alchemy as does the other surviving tradition of Daoism, the Quanzhen School.\textsuperscript{68}

The rise of the alchemical tradition began in the long “Age of Disunity” in China from the end of the Han to the rise of the Tang (220-589 CE). The first important wellspring of alchemical Daoist identity was tapped by the efforts of Ge Hong (280-340 CE), who worked in the “scientific” metallurgic/ alchemical tradition of Daoism. This scientific tradition was a branch of “outer alchemy,” and was aimed at obtaining immortality through compounding metals and chemicals that would preserve the body. Ge Hong wrote a highly influential treatise, known as the \textit{Baopuzi}, which, while summing up the ancient practices that had formed Daoism, also anticipated the currents to come. This emic history of Daoism was to resonate deeply through the tradition, and serve as a fountainhead of identity and legitimacy.\textsuperscript{69}

Drawing inspiration from earlier works such as the \textit{Daodejing} and the \textit{Zhuangzi}, Ge presented the essential path a Daoist must follow as a “divine process” of compounding the energies of the Dao. He saw the inner work of Daoism as a process by which the practitioner first connected to the essential Dao, and could understand its “mystery” by seeing the Dao at work in all phenomena. Only then could the practitioner work toward “unity” with the Dao and spiritual perfection, the end of which was immortality. Ge Hong’s important codification of the Daoist tradition included fresh descriptions of ancient practices: how to meditate, how to transmit the teachings, proper breathing technique, diet, and correct visualization procedures. Ge went into great detail, and as a result, the \textit{Baopuzi} is a precise manual on how to live a Daoist lifestyle: it is


\textsuperscript{69} David C. Yu, translator, \textit{History of Chinese Daoism Volume One}, (Maryland, University Press of America, 2000), 274-275.
a testament to its clarity that it is still honored and used by Daoists even today.\textsuperscript{70} Ge Hong’s commentary on Mystery and Unity are regarded as especially beautiful:

One visualizes the Mystery with in the body. One loses it if one is enamored by the external things. One who utilizes Mystery becomes a spirit and one who forgets it becomes a contrivance. This is how one cultivates the Mystery. When one visualizes the Unity in the body, one’s evils can be expelled and one’s body can be preserved. One is like a ruler who governs his country or the commander who faces his enemies. This is the method for pursuing immortality.\textsuperscript{71}

At the start of the Age of Disunity, Daoism faced a major identity crisis: how to separate itself from popular religion and establish its identity as an institution once and for all. In the shadowy years before the Han period, the Fangshi and Wu, unregulated and unaffiliated with an institution, were free to practice their own individual brands of religion that often shared many similarities with that of the Daoists, such as: common divinities, spirit communication, ritual sacrifices, ritual forms, and divination.\textsuperscript{72} Ge Hong’s work in the Baopuzi continued the Daoist process of self-definition by clearly contrasting what he described as “cults of demons”\textsuperscript{73} with the more “pure and moderate”\textsuperscript{74} practices of Daoism.

Daoists were anxious to distance themselves from the unregulated charlatans that they believed were propitiating dangerous spirits and also duping people, particularly the sick. Ge Hong contributed to Daoist identity by firmly defining what a Daoist was not. A Daoist did not conduct blood sacrifice, did not ask excessive and ruinous expenditures of the people he helped, did not propitiate minor local gods such those of as trees or rocks, and did not use possessed

\textsuperscript{70} James R. Ware, editor and translator, \textit{Alchemy, Medicine and Religion in the China of AD 320: The Nei-Pien of Ko Hung} (New York: Dover Publications, 1966), 70-74; Yu, \textit{History}, 274-75.

\textsuperscript{71} Ge Hong Qtd. In Yu, \textit{History}, 275.


\textsuperscript{73} Ge Hong Qtd. In Stein, “Religious Taoism,” 56.

\textsuperscript{74} Ge Hong Qtd. In Stein, “Religious Taoism,” 58.
spirit mediums to give oracles. However, a Daoist was deeply and personally in touch with the trio of Dao, Unity, and Mystery that pervades all things, and practiced carefully in order to attain long life, mental clarity, and integration with the Dao. A Daoist was not a mere ritual specialist, working for ritual’s sake, but a person on the path of self-realization.75

Under the Celestial Masters, the ability to heal and the ability commune with the spirit world were firmly established as two important foundations of what a Daoist does. A further foundation of Daoist identity was also established as the Daoist art of self-cultivation through meditation and lifestyle practices. The earliest known text of the Celestial Masters, called the Xiang’er (the title literally means Thinking of You), is not so much a philosophical tract but a repository of practical advice on care of the body and the prolonging of life. Buddhist self-cultivation views all earthly phenomena as illusory, and thus aims to awaken the practitioner to true reality. Daoist self-cultivation comes from a view that all earthly phenomena are emanations of the great Dao, and so the practitioner’s aim is progressive integration of their energies with all of the other energies around them. Daoist self-cultivation focuses as much on the body as the mind, leading to heavy emphasis within the Daoist tradition on diet, exercise, and meditation.76

Verse 42 of the Daodejing is the root of Daoist theories of self-cultivation. This excerpt from Verse 42 from the Daodejing, considered by scholars and many Daoist believers alike to represent the essential worldview Daoism, tells of a dynamic universe stemming from an essential unity:

The Way produces the One.
The One produces Two.
Two produces Three.
Three produces the myriad creatures.
The myriad creatures shoulder yin and embrace yang.

75 Stein, “Religious Taoism,” 53-56.
76 Kirkland, The Enduring Tradition, 192, Bokenkamp, Early Daoist Scriptures, 50-1.
And by blending these qi vital energies they attain harmony.77

This crucial verse encapsulates the fundamental theory that the One, known variously as “primordial chaos” or “primordial breath,” give rise to the Two, the forces of Yin and Yang. The circle that the two forces rest in is actually a symbol of the wholeness of the One. The point of divergence into Three has been rich ground for interpretation in China, and several interpretations abound. The number three is a potent number in many cultures, and China is no different. Most germane to organized Daoism is the anthropomorphized trinity of breath, spirit, and generative force that evolved and spread out of Daoism in the 4th century BCE.78

The Three then give rise to the five elements, which are not only concrete entities but also their energetic essences: fire, earth, metal, water, and wood. The interaction of these elements then gives rise to everything on earth, “the ten thousand things.” Five-elements theory is something like the major scientific paradigm of ancient China, arranging and classifying all natural phenomena within it. It provided a structure for the Chinese understanding of astrology, alchemy, geomancy, medicine, and even food.

Following is a diagram drawn by a modern scholar of Daoism that reproduces the mandalic arrangement of all things into their corresponding number, hexagram, and element.

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Under the five-elements theory, everything that exists is seen as connected back to the root paradigm of the Dao and its symbolic manifestation, the Taiji, familiar to Westerners as the symbol known as the “yinyang.” All of life was seen as a microcosm of the larger energy of Yin and Yang, with each aspect of life, no matter how small, corresponding back up the hierarchy of energies into greater and greater unity.\(^\text{80}\) A quote from the Daoist classic Huai-Nan Zi, a text that was compiled in approximately 122 BCE and then filtered to all levels of Chinese society, expresses the universal identification between the macrocosm and microcosm:

Heaven has four seasons, five elements, nine divisions, and three hundred and sixty days. Similarly man has four limbs, five internal organs, nine orifices, and three hundred and sixty joints. Heaven has


wind, ran cold, and heat; man similarly has joy, anger, taking, and giving.\textsuperscript{81}

An important aspect of Daoism is the understanding of phenomena in terms of macrocosm and microcosm: as above, so below. Human society and the human body itself directly correspond to divine energies, and when these energies are aligned, unity is attained. The idea of micro/macrocosp correspondence means that humans can make an energetic circuit of integration with the cosmos and the Dao, through meditation or through ritual practice.\textsuperscript{82}

The value placed upon progression of energies back through particulars and into unity is especially apparent in examining the fascinating tradition of Daoist alchemy, which employs a complex metaphorical vocabulary, understandable only to the initiated, in order to describe the process of transformation and integration. Strikingly similar to European alchemy, Daoist alchemy had as its goal a return to the Dao, and in the Dao, immortality. Outer alchemy (\textit{wai dan}) was scientific and involved with the physical world, experimenting with minerals that corresponded with the five elements in hopes of compounding an elixir of immortality that would allow the body to exist forever. Often, however, in compounding and swallowing things like mercury and gold, the body died.\textsuperscript{83}

Inner alchemy (\textit{nei dan}) was concerned with the inner world, experimenting with meditation techniques that would ensure spiritual immortality. Here the Three was used as a potent symbol by which the meditator could balance the elements, essences, and yin and yang energies in the body and thus return to the Dao. By circulating and balancing spirit, generative force, and breath, immortality could be attained. The following images are of the anthropomorphized Deities that came to represent the holy trinity of life forces:

\textsuperscript{81} Huai-Nan Zi Qtd. In Boehmer, “Taoist Alchemy,” 58.
\textsuperscript{82} Author’s Personal Observation, 2007.
\textsuperscript{83} Little and Eichman, \textit{Taoism and the Arts}, 337; Boehmer, “Taoist Alchemy,” 55-56.
The Numinous Worthy of the Way, representing Spirit and corresponding to the head heart, and liver
The Dao-De Worthy of the Way, representing Generative force and corresponding to the lower body, lungs and kidneys

The Primordial Worthy of the Way, representing Breath and corresponding to the abdomen, the center

The meditator, in balancing these energies throughout the body, was said to be “compounding the inner elixir.” Although techniques varied, the basic formula was stated by Daoist scholar Ge Hong: “through compounding the generative essence, the breath is transformed, through compounding the breath, spirit is transformed.” This was done by circulating a current of energy through the heart, then the kidneys, then lungs and liver into the other organs, where the current then went through the abdomen and out of the head, thus completing a circuit from the body into the cosmos. The result of completion was a mystical union with the Dao, wherein bodily microcosms literally aligned with universal macrocosms. Carl Jung, who was fascinated with inner alchemy, stated that the Dao was like light, an idea

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84 Both Paintings date from the early Qing Dynasty, 17th/18th c. Reproduced from Little and Eichman, *Taoism and The Arts of China*, 229-231.

85 Photo by the Author, Mian Shan, 2006.


that is neatly amplified in the alchemical scroll below, where the adept, in the final stage of meditational union (bottom left) is tuned into a circle of pure light.

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To the Quanzhen School, meditation is a core practice, and a key part of Quanzhen identity. Although I did not witness any Daoists meditating at Heming Shan, they assured me that meditation practice was part of their daily schedule both morning and night. When one Heming Shan priestess was asked what she considered as the best part of Daoist life, she unhesitatingly replied: “Practicing my beliefs. I like to meditate.”89 One priestess was also generous enough to provide some instruction in meditation. The priestess was especially devoted to Guanyin, the Chinese goddess of love and mercy who is revered by Buddhists and Daoists alike. The priestess told me that she had been on the Daoist path since she was twelve, when her grandmother told her a story about Guanyin. She emphasized how important meditation was to her because it connected her to the love of Guanyin. Her instructions confirmed the importance of the metaphor of “light” to Daoist meditation. In between teaching proper posture and

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88 Reproduced from Little and Eichman, *Taoism and the Arts of China*, 347.
breathing, she spoke about how meditation opens up “a gate” in the head, and points the head toward the divine. When one meditates, she said, it connects your energy to the divine “and turns you on like a lamp.”

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CHAPTER 5
DAOIST MONASTICISM FROM THE 4TH TO THE 21ST CENTURY CE

In Reform-era China, an increasing influx of tourists has altered the tone of daily monastic life. In many Daoist monasteries today, a festive atmosphere pervades the grounds. Couples stroll hand-in-hand, mothers pose impatient children for photographs, and the air is full of the clicking of cameras and mah jong tiles. The comprehensive Tang-era monastic manual known as the *Fengdao Kejie* indicates that since the inception of Daoist monasticism in the 4th century CE, monasteries were originally intended as solemn sanctuaries. Daoist monasteries were oriented towards an ideal shared by monastic institutions the world over: they served as havens for those who had morally renounced the secular world. Within the walls of a monastery, whether large or small, Daoist practitioners organized transcendent communities that were dedicated to personal liberation.\(^91\)

Much like Christian or Buddhist monasticism, Daoist monasticism is based upon strict obedience to hierarchy, and daily life is strictly regulated around a schedule of rituals and prayers. A Daoist monastic submitted their body and mind to regulations: the *Fengdao Kejie* instructs Daoists how to dress, how to interact with ordinary people, how to comb their hair, even how to sleep. To keep the mind alert and focused on spiritual goals, Daoists had to master and recite numerous scriptures, perform complex rituals, and say prescribed prayers before every action, even brushing their teeth. Daily life in a properly functioning Daoist monastery revolved around hard work, study, and concentration.\(^92\)

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Prior to the 20th century, monasteries were not places for socialization and recreation. To
the secular communities that monasteries served, a monastery was a place where believers could
go to worship the Gods. Believers went to monasteries to have rituals performed for the dead.
They could also turn to Daoist monastics for rituals of good fortune or the expiation of sins.
Daoist monastics certainly had their critics, particularly among the Confucian elite: in the early
Tang period, a Confucian advisor to the Imperial court known as Fu Yi recommended defrocking
all Daoist monastics, putting them to work, and using temples as military garrisons. To ordinary
people in need of spiritual succor, however, monastics were respected as karmically powerful
representatives of a divine law.93

The institution of Daoist monasticism represented a shift away from the independent,
popular Daoism practiced by the Celestial Masters. Aside from serving secular society, Daoist
monasteries also served the Chinese State. The rise of monasticism signified organized
Daoism’s permanent alignment with the State. To Chinese rulers, Daoist monasteries were useful
in two ways: through the institution of the monastery, the State could regulate and monitor
Daoists. The State could also harness the spiritual power of monastics by sponsoring rituals and
prayers for the well-being of the Emperor. Monasticism was truly a watershed in Daoist identity,
because by aligning Daoism with the State, Daoists gained sponsorship, prestige, and legal
legitimacy.94

The rise of monasticism began in the “Age of Disunity.” One of the larger and more
influential polities to emerge during this period was the Kingdom of Wei, established by a
sinified group of Turkic ancestry. The short years of 425 to 448 marked one of Daoism’s
greatest political peaks, and its official transition from Dao Jia to Dao Jiao, denoting a major

93 Kohn, Fengdao Kejie, 8; Kohn, Monastic Life, 102.
94 Kohn, Fengdao Kejie, 88.
school or tradition. In this period of consolidating Daoist identity, legitimacy was right alongside. Scholar Richard Mather characterizes it as nothing less than a jump from “primitive to established religion.”\(^{95}\) An accomplished senior Daoist known as Kou Qianzhi (365-488 CE), gained the unqualified attention of both the Wei Emperor and gentry through a series of fortuitous circumstances. Under his leadership, organized Daoism first began to identify itself as an entity that was allied with the Chinese rulership, not against it. The period of Kou’s lifetime was marked by another phase of great anxiety over popular rebellions sparked by Daoist messianism, and Daoism was still seen as dangerous. To Kou, the obvious solution for control was centralization and reform from the top down.\(^{96}\)

Kou was the first self-identified Daoist to establish a truly monastic community. Inspired by monastic Buddhism, which was flourishing in China, he promulgated a “New Code” by which Daoists could practice self-cultivation and ritual together in a monastic setting. In doing so, he also brought Daoism into a more intimate relationship with the Chinese State: the establishment of a monastery was not cheap, and so organized Daoism began to depend on Imperial patronage. Basing himself as the leader of the first known Daoist monastery, Chongxu Si, Kou assembled a large, ecumenical group of both celibate and non-celibate Daoist priests. These ritual specialists, alchemists, and philosophers were able to work closely with the Wei Emperor and his ministry. In return, they received the ruler’s largesse, beginning the long trend of Imperial patronage that was so important to future monasticism. From the Wei period onward, Imperial sanction and patronage was essential to the development of monasticism.\(^{97}\) The *Fengdao Kejie* proves that by the Tang era, Daoist monasticism was wholly dependent on


\(^{96}\) Mather, “K’ou Ch’ien Chi,” 103-5.

Imperial patronage. In the section of the manual devoted to the establishment of monasteries, it states:

Also in all cases, the institution must be sponsored and protected by an emperor or king, built and maintained with the help of ministers and officials [of the government]. Thereby they can help ordain male and female Daoists and allow them to inhabit [the institution] in perpetuity and present offerings. This is foremost among all good karmic deeds, with effects unimaginable.98

Kou and his retinue did not simply serve as ritual specialists for the ruler. They were also highly educated men who fulfilled an advisory function that came to characterize the role of court Daoists from then on. Kou’s advisory function was both spiritual and practical – he oversaw legal prohibitions that de-legitimized charismatic popular leaders and eliminated the controversial sexual practices they advocated. In a move typical of Daoism’s ability to integrate new forms, Kou’s “New Code” for Daoist practice incorporated newly available Buddhist ethical models and Confucian rituals, thereby giving structure to a more conservative ideology that became very popular with the powerful, and effectively made Daoism legitimate. By promulgating his “New Code” to a uniquely receptive audience, Daoism emerged from its stay at the Wei court and into a new epoch of its development.99

Kou’s loosely organized “proto-monastery” resembled Daoist monasteries today – it was a place where Daoists practiced self-cultivation together, performed rituals for the sake of society, and tended to the spiritual needs of the local laity. Following Kou’s code, itself based upon the Buddhist model, Daoist monasteries from Kou’s time evolved into the sophisticated hierarchical institutions that they are today. Under the supreme leader of the monastery on down, they are vertically structured communities where no two members are exactly equal, but

98 Kohn, Fengdao Kejie, 88.
99 Mather, “K’ou Ch’ien Ch’i,” 111.
each has their place. Life in a Daoist monastery – such as Heming Shan today -- is determined by monastic rules, a regular ritual schedule and the orders of superiors.\textsuperscript{100}

The primary economic support of a Daoist monastery, from Kou’s time until the fall of the Qing in 1911, was patronage. Imperial patronage alone could establish a monastery. After establishment, monastics could also turn to local patronage for financial support. Begging, as practiced by Buddhist monks in Southeast Asia, was looked down upon in China. Thus, Chinese monasteries were supported through donations of money and land. Donations from secular supporters could be large or small, but the crucial factor in the survival of a monastery was usually donated land. To survive, monasteries had to establish self-sustaining estates that produced food for the community.\textsuperscript{101}

Prior to the 20\textsuperscript{th} century, a monastic estate was much more than the grand buildings that tourists visit today. The spiritual center of a typical monastery consisted of the main worship halls, usually aligned on a central axis separated by courtyards. These included shrines, meditation halls, and lecture halls. On the sides of this central axis, there were utility buildings. On one side, the bathhouses, kitchen, and refectory. On the other, administrative offices, dormitories, and laity quarters. Outside this spiritual center lay the “fixed assets” (\textit{changzhu}) of the monastery: in a first circle, usually a gatehouse, servant’s quarters, workshops, and guest lodges. In a second circle beyond that was the wider territory that provided crucial support – the fields, orchards, fishponds, pastures, and if possible, a water mill for grinding grain, which was considered a very valuable asset. All these fixed assets were considered temple property, as dedicated to the temple as the statues, furnishings, and worship halls.\textsuperscript{102}

\textsuperscript{100} Kohn, \textit{Monastic Life}, 40, 138.
\textsuperscript{101} Kohn, \textit{Monastic Life}, 39, 97.
\textsuperscript{102} Kohn, \textit{Monastic Life}, 90.
The division of labor was another crucial aspect of monastic support. The question of who provided labor at a monastery, and how, was to become a serious issue during the Communist period. Were Daoist monasteries, as Communist phraseology alleged, “exploitative tools of the ruling class?” Since Daoist monasteries were dependant on Imperial sanction and patronage, their connection to the ruling classes is clearly a historical truth. In addition, there are records of Tang monasteries holding “slaves.” More commonly, the secular labor at Daoist monasteries was classed as “monastery households” or “households held in perpetuity.” These households were hereditarily attached to monastery and its lands in a manner somewhat akin to European serfs. Even in the 20th century, some counts of pre-Communist Daoist communities record the presence of “workers” (gongren) who served the monks.103

However, the relationship of the monastery to its households may not have been purely “exploitative.” The laborers at monasteries were often lay Daoists themselves, and Livia Kohn considers that “agricultural estates and water mills offered lay followers not only employment but also a chance to accumulate merit and gain a good standing in the Dao.”104 At Heming Shan, no one could offer a conclusive answer as to the nature of monastery labor in the pre-Communist period. However, all the secular laborers I interviewed at Heming Shan professed a belief in Daoism, and were deeply satisfied with their lives at the monastery.105 In addition, a small oral history from the Shaanbei region of China indicates that the traditional landlord-tenant relationship, which was violently persecuted by the Communists as “exploitative,” may not have been as cruel as once believed.

104 Kohn, *Monastic Life*, 98.
Jiangsui He’s 2006 article, “Death of a Landlord,” paints an affecting picture of the fearful changes wrought when Communist morality clashed with traditional Chinese morality in the Land Reform Era of the early 1950’s. Contrary to the Communist picture of a heroic battle against evil landlords, memories reveal that during the Land Reform program, the sacred bonds of the Confucian social covenant were violently broken; leaving a legacy of guilt that persists to the present day. The traditional concepts of guanxi and zeren that assured mutual care and protection were forcibly attacked under Land Reform, with the backing of the People’s Liberation Army. When asked about land reform, the Shaanbei villagers tearfully recounted how they were forced to denounce a well-liked landlord, and watch as he was beaten to death. The landlord family was locally beloved, and had long cared for and employed more than half of the village, even provisioning them against famine and protecting them against banditry. From this study, it might be possible to imagine that life as a laborer in a Daoist community, which would have been bound by an extensive moral code akin to the Confucian code, was not necessarily “exploitative.”

To keep the monastic estate functioning and orderly, Daoist monastics and lay believers alike lived under a strict moral code that advocated kindness and compassion above all. In the Daoist view, breaking the moral code resulted in a specific karmic punishment. The Fengdao Kejie offers an extensive list of sins and punishments that would befall anyone who disturbed monastic order. Abusing a holy person resulted in being reborn as a dog or pig, “where urine and excrement are his food and drink.” Being a loudmouth and criticizing the scriptures would result in rebirth as a sparrow. Anyone who stole the ceremonial food that had been prepared as an offering to the Gods would be hit by “claps of thunder.” Good deeds also had their rewards: by

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worshipping the Dao and wholeheartedly reciting scriptures and prayers, one could be reborn as a “monk or nun treated with great respect.” Those who presented offerings and donations would be “born in the body of a pure and upright person.”

In daily life Daoist monastics and devoted lay believers were enjoined to follow a set of precepts that clearly delineated acceptable moral behavior. These basic precepts formed the core of Daoist ethics, and were the basis by which Daoist monastics interacted with each other and with the secular world. These precepts were codified and widely disseminated during the Tang era, and are still used by Daoists and lay followers today:

1. Do not kill, but be always mindful of the host of living beings!
2. Do not commit immoral deeds or think depraved thoughts!
3. Do not steal or receive unrighteous wealth!
4. Do not cheat or misrepresent good and evil!
5. Do not get intoxicated, but always think of pure conduct!
6. I will maintain harmony with my ancestors and never do anything that harms my kin!
7. When I see someone do good, I will support him with joy and cheerfulness in my heart!
8. When I see someone unfortunate, I will support him to recover good fortune!
9. When someone comes to do me harm, I will not harbor thoughts of revenge!
10. As long as all beings have not attained the Dao, I will not expect to do so myself!

By the Tang period, Daoism had gone from “enemy of the State” to “State cult.” The relatively open, equal popular movements of the Celestial Masters were long gone. Daoism enjoyed full State support, and Tang-era laws served to streamline Daoist organization and regulate the behavior of Daoists. All monastics had to file an official registration with the State, and carry a certificate of registration with them at all times. They also had to comply with specific legislation concerning their behavior. Ordained monastics could not ride horses, possess military books, form cliques, solicit guests, stay for more than three days among lay families, or

107 Kohn, *Fengdao Kejie*, 76, 77, 81, 84.
participate in entertainments. Drinking liquor was punishable by hard labor, as was wearing silk
clothes or aristocratic colors. Desecration of sacred objects was punishable by hard labor or
exile. The price of charlatanry, such as fortune-telling and faith healing, was strangulation.\textsuperscript{109}

Despite strict legal regulations, in the Tang Dynasty Daoism enjoyed unparalleled Imperial
support. The Tang ancestral surname was \textit{Li}, supposedly also the surname of Laozi. So, in a
move to appropriate the legitimizing power of Daoism and shore up popular support, the Tang
emperors heartily promoted their “family connection” to the ancient sage of Daoism.\textsuperscript{110}

Another major indication of support for Daoism at this time is seen in the honor afforded
to the descendants of Zhang Daoling, the Han-era “founder” of Daoism. Although the
independent theocracy of the Celestial Masters was long gone, the line of Zhang’s descendents
were still known by the title “Heavenly Master” (\textit{Tianshi}). From the Tang on, these descendents
enjoyed particular political recognition and prestige. Depending on the climate, Tianshi were
frequent presences at court until the \textit{Daoguang} (1821-1851 CE) period of the late Qing.

However, by the end of the Tang, the wheel of change for Daoism had turned so completely
around that it was no longer popularly viewed as a champion of the people, but as a wasteful and
foolish religion, that was destroying the State through ruinous expenditures on court rituals.\textsuperscript{111}

The last emperor of the Northern Song Dynasty, \textit{Huizong} (r.1110-1125 CE), was well-
known for his infatuation with Daoism, and under the advisement of a courtly clique of Daoists
he built temples, ceremonial tripods, and even a mountain to ensure prosperity for his reign. In
doing this, he cleaned out the State’s coffers and, ironically, ensured his dynasty’s downfall.
However, out of the long years of disorder initiated by the end of the Northern Song Dynasty

\textsuperscript{109} Kohn, \textit{Fengdao Kejie}, 13.
\textsuperscript{110} Li Yangzheng, \textit{Dangdai Daojiao [Modern Daoism]} (Beijing: Dongfang Chubanshe, 1999), 30.
\textsuperscript{111} Tang, \textit{Zhongguo Daojiao Jianshi}, 343; Benjamin Penny, “Meeting the Celestial Master,” 56; Yao, “Quanzhen,”
568.
(960-1127 CE), a new Daoist movement, known as the “Quanzhen School,” began to grow. Like the ancestral Celestial Masters centuries before, this new branch of Daoism offered a haven for the displaced in times of turmoil, this time in the form of tight-knit, celibate monastic communities. Its founder, Wang Zhe (1113-1170 CE), was known to associate with all walks of life – Confucian scholars, military officials, Buddhists, and women. Under Quanzhen, in the second millennium of its existence, Daoism began again to open out to the people with a set of teachings and guidelines that any sincere individual might be able to follow.112

The Quanzhen movement represented both continuity and change in the Daoist tradition. Quanzhen practice focused very strongly on the “inner alchemy” that had come to full flower in the Tang period. Quanzhen organization had a reformist flavor, however, consciously seeking to pare Daoism down from the ruinous, rococo court Daoism of the Tang and Song times. Quanzhen monasticism is often thought to be some kind of weak attempt by the Daoists to ape Buddhist monasticism, and in fact, it is heavily influenced by Ch’an (Zen) Buddhism -- but it is also influenced by Confucian ideals of loyalty and filial piety. It is unmistakably Daoist, however, in its emphasis on inner alchemy, and the use of alchemical terminology. The first patriarch of Quanzhen, Wang Zhe, was one among many thinkers in this period of Chinese culture who were trying to “unite the three teachings” (sanjiao heyi), and the large body of Quanzhen literature speaks with respect for each tradition.113 In the words of a thirteenth-century Quanzhen Master:

Chan Buddhism, Confucian Noumenalism,
The Taoism of Complete Reality --
Three schools of teaching were set up
To contact later people.
For Buddhists, elements are nonabsolute
It’s necessary to see the essence,
As Confucians investigate phenomena,
They must maintain sincerity.

112 Yao, “Quanzhen,” 567, 574.
113 Yao, “Quanzhen,” 574, 567-8.
On the Taoist’s alchemical stand
Are kept points of fire;
All kinds of atoms are melted down
In the spiritual mansion.
When you understand all differences
Are resolved in one goal,
Then on the bright terrace
All is spring, inside and out.114

Although Quanzhen did not gain a huge following in Wang’s lifetime, his seven disciples—six men and one woman—helped the religion gain a large following. The real enfranchisement of Quanzhen began in truly epic fashion in 1219. Qiu Chuji, one of the seven disciples, was particularly revered for his ascetic lifestyle. In 1219, at the age of 72, Qiu accepted a summons from Genghis Khan to come to the Khan’s court in Central Asia and teach the Khan the “method for preserving and prolonging life.”115

The fame of Daoism’s “life-nurturing” (yangsheng) self-cultivation practices had even reached beyond the pale of China at this time, and were by then an important part of what a Daoist did. The Mongols were followers of Shamanism, and were, theologically speaking, tolerant of other religions. Politically, however, the Mongols made it clear that they would destroy any religion that did not try to win their favor. So, in 1220 Qiu set out with 18 disciples on a trip that took three years to complete. Upon arriving in Central Asia, Genghis Khan and Qiu Chuji got along swimmingly. Qiu instructed the Khan on various spiritual methods for cultivating longevity, and the Khan must have been pleased, because he subsequently issued an edict exempting Qiu’s followers from taxes and labor. Additionally, Genghis Khan made Qiu the head of all religions in China.116

As soon as word spread about the Khan’s edict, the Quanzhen School became the most popular religion in all of North China, and the school entered its golden age. Part of the edict

115 Yao, “Quanzhen,” 571.
116 Yao, “Quanzhen,” 571-72.
gave Qiu the authority to take charge of “all those who leave their families” (chujia), resulting in a flood of converts who were initially perhaps not attracted by doctrine, but by the simple offer of a safe haven. However, this period of growth and stability in the early 13th century was brief. In 1225, a Buddhist monk went to the Mongol court and charged that the Quanzhen School had illegally seized Buddhist temples and were circulating forged scriptures that purported that Laozi had actually instructed the Buddha during the Buddha’s lifetime. In fact, the Quanzhen School, under Qiu’s authority, had legally taken over temples abandoned during the inter-dynastic strife, but had restored them as Daoist temples and not Buddhist ones.\footnote{Yao, “Quanzhen,” 572.}

As for the forged scriptures: the emperor convened a series of Buddhist-Daoist debates at court. Such debates were convened when tension between Daoists and Buddhists ran high. Even though the Medieval representatives of the Celestial Masters tradition came from the south to help the Quanzhen debaters, the Daoists lost every one of the “Yuan debates.” These official debates were quite serious affairs; at times, the losers were required to shave their heads and convert to the other side’s religion, as had happened to the Daoists in a famous episode of Imperial debate in 555 CE. In 573, when the Buddhist side was edged out by the Daoists, the Buddhists foolishly turned their criticism on the Emperor, and the next day both religions were proscribed. For a brief period afterward, 40,000 temples were shut down and three million monks – out of 46 million people in China at the time – had to return to lay life. In the case of the Yuan debates, the results were not so serious. The forged scriptures were confiscated and burned; in fact, all Daoist scriptures were ordered burned, but fortunately, this was not carried out.\footnote{Yao, “Quanzhen,” 573-73; Holmes Welch, Taoism: the Parting of The Way, 151-52.}
However, such debates underscored the fact that organized Daoism’s existence was still a matter of official sanction. Rulers remained wary of the pull of popular Daoism and its explosive tendencies, so the Quanzhen founders wisely took steps to ingratiate their sect with the State. They crafted a new order of monastic Daoism that was designed to co-exist peacefully with state power, by making it a moral duty for Quanzhen monastics to obey the state. Wang Zhe drafted a set of ten prohibitions for his followers, the “Clear Rules of Quanzhen” (Quanzhen Qinggui) that are still in use today. The very first rule was: “Those who offend national laws will be punished by expulsion from the order.”119

The Quanzhen order is the living representative of the Daoist monastic tradition. The nature of the Quanzhen order encompasses not only the legacy of earlier monasticism, but also innovations that are unique to Quanzhen. Members are celibate and enjoined to follow a vegetarian diet. The Quanzhen order emphasizes the principle of permanently leaving one’s secular home and family and joining the spiritual family of the monastery. Quanzhen monastics practice rituals that have been handed down from the Celestial Masters, such as the ritual described in Chapter Two. But the spiritual focus of the Quanzhen lifestyle is not on the outer world as much as the inner world. Self-cultivation and study are the cornerstones of Quanzhen, and Quanzhen monastics are expected to devote themselves to a very rigorous lifestyle in hopes of eventually achieving transcendence. In the 13th century, a typical daily schedule for Quanzhen monastics was as follows:

3-5 a.m.: The sound of the plank indicates that the “non-movement” period is over. Everyone washes his face and rinses his mouth. Then they worship the perfected and the sages.
5-7 a.m.: Morning meal.
7-9 a.m.: Group meditation.
9-11 a.m.: Group meditation.

119 Yao, “Quanzhen,” 588.
“Non-movement” meditation. Each person meditates quietly by himself.
11 a.m. - 1 p.m.:
Noon meal.
1-3 p.m.:
Group meditation.
3-5 p.m.:
“Non-movement” meditation.
5-7 p.m.:
Late gathering.
7-9 p.m.:
Group meditation and offering of tea and soup.
9-11 p.m.:
“Non-movement” meditation.
11 p.m.-1 a.m.:
“Chanting time.” Adepts chant poems meant to enable them to resist the “sleeping devils” (i.e., to overcome the tendency to fall asleep). Each verse is sung three times and no more.
1-3 a.m.:
The gathering is dismissed. One can do whatever one wants.\textsuperscript{120}

In the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644 CE), Daoism’s long phase of Imperial sanction, and the glow of that sanction’s prestige, began to end. The massive compilation of Daoist texts known as the Daozang was completed in the Ming. But in the later years of the Ming, Daoism was something of a victim of its own success, as the chants and ritual practices used at court began to diffuse heavily into the arena of popular usage. In terms of political prestige, this diffusion was a loss. In the popular world, however, it was a lively time, with Daoism and folk religion stimulating each other and consummating a new phase of their “intimate but muddled relationship.”\textsuperscript{121}

China was rocked by Western intrusions in the late Qing, such as the Opium Wars (1839-1860). Organized Daoism was badly weakened by late 19\textsuperscript{th}-century political and cultural changes, and started on a permanent trend of what Tang Dachao characterizes as “ruination and decline.” Classical Daoism as it had existed and evolved since the Han was altered irrevocably when, in the Daoguang period (1821-1851), the 59\textsuperscript{th} Heavenly Master Zhang Yu was explicitly

\textsuperscript{120} Yao, “Quanzhen,” 598.
\textsuperscript{121} Li, Dangdai Daojiao, 34.
forbidden to have any contact with the court, or to even come to the capital at Beijing. The Imperial decree strictly forbade any further participation in the life of the court, or the political arena at large. However, the Qing rulers still quietly continued to support and fund Popular Religious projects, such as shrines to the Sea Goddess Mazu and Earth Goddess Hou Tu.122

Because of this, Tang Dachao suggests that the excommunication of Daoist authority was not a spiritual rejection of Daoism, but rather a hardheaded political calculation geared to keeping up with the changing times. In cutting out organized Daoism but still associating with it in its popular forms, the royals and court were, in effect, maintaining an appearance of distance for “modernity’s” sake -- but likely were also still interested in covering their spiritual behinds, perhaps fearing the punishment of angry Gods deprived of their rightful worship. Although later Heavenly Masters would attempt to return to good graces, organized Daoism would never enjoy the same support from the political center as it had in previous centuries.123

122 Tang, Daojiao Jianshi, 343-44.
123 Tang, Daojiao Jianshi, 344.
In the Tang period, poet Li Bai wrote the famous lines: “The road to Shu is harder than the road to Heaven.” Li’s ode to Shu – better known today as Sichuan Province – is just one fragment of the rich geographic and cultural heritage that adheres to one of China’s largest, most diverse, and most fertile provinces (see map, appendix B). Sichuanese tend to think of their land horizontally along a division of east and west, and vertically along a division of Sichuan’s famed scenery of “mountains and waters” (shan-shui). Relatively sparsely populated and dominated by the Tibetan ethnic group, western Sichuan is mountainous, measuring 4,900 meters at the highest point. East of the mountains is the heavily populated, Han-dominated “basin.” The very name Sichuan means “four rivers,” but by geographer’s count, Sichuan can boast 1,419 rivers large and small. From glacial peaks to panda-harboring bamboo forests to the best orchards in China, Sichuan is such a rich and fertile land that it is nicknamed tianfu, or “land of Heavenly abundance.” Furthermore, it counts 27 ethnic groups within its borders, and 3.7% of its population is non-Han, quite a large number for a province that is considered “in the pale” of China proper.\(^{124}\)

Sichuan is a fascinating province that offers much to the traveler, and even more to the historian. Archeological discoveries in the 1980’s revealed that a very sophisticated civilization existed in Sichuan in a period roughly 4,170-2,875 years before the present. Nicknamed the

\(^{124}\) Jie Liu, editor, *Sichuan Luyou Zhinan [Sichuan Travel Guide]* (Chengdu: Sichuan Kexue Zhimu Chubanshe: 2004), 5-6, 12.
Sanxingdui civilization after the place where it was first discovered, this civilization produced sophisticated bronzes and jades. The discovery of Sanxingdui threw a major curve into the accepted history of China, which traditionally followed the line that the Han people were the first and only group to spread advanced metallurgy and civilization throughout the land of China. Nevertheless, Sanxingdui was flourishing roughly contemporaneously with – but completely independent of – the Shang Dynasty in Central China.¹²⁵

If Sichuan’s prehistory is a testament to the incredible regional diversity of China, then its entrance into recorded history is equally incredible. Protected by its mountains, the civilizations of Sichuan evolved on their own. As Han civilization was taking root to the east, Sanxingdui flourished, and, as archeology shows, came to a sudden end, standing as an enigmatic “lost civilization” until archeology can in time reveal more. Out of its ashes, literally, came two cultures, the *Ba* culture and the *Shu* culture, which were in full swing by the time of the earliest Han incursion into Sichuan in the early *Zhou* period (1122-256 BCE). Eventually, both cultures melded and produced another set of unique bronzeworks, and the as-yet-undeciphered “Ba-Shu script.” In 316 BCE, the ruthless Qin annexed Shu by way of the “stone-cattle road,” which was built by Qin forces in order to gain easier access to Shu’s riches. Eventually the Ba-Shu were more or less sinicized. The civilizing legacy of the Ba-Shu is still apparent in the fact that modern-day Chengdu, the province’s current capital, was once the ancient Shu capital. Sichuanese like to reference their Ba-Shu origins as a factor in the proud sense of difference, of unique “Sichuanese-ness,” that is palpable in the province today.

Sichuanese have a right to their pride. Stephen Sage theorizes that the Qin annexation of the rich lands of Sichuan created a powerhouse that shaped the course of subsequent Chinese history.  

Daoism has always been marked by its open, catholic nature; the tradition has always accepted any ethnicity or gender into its ranks with remarkably little discrimination. Daoism’s openness may be due in part to its early origins in multi-ethnic Sichuan. Terry Kleeman points out that early Daoism in Sichuan was influenced as much by non-Han cultures as Han. Because of Sichuan’s great diversity and fertility, it is little wonder that the ground of Sichuan was the place that organized Daoism took root. The vitality of Sichuanese culture has contributed to a remarkable religious heritage throughout the province, from the Buddhist sites of Emei Shan and the Leshan Great Buddha (Da Fo) -- the largest Buddha sculpture in the world— to the Daoist Mountain of Qingcheng Shan, a major hub of Daoist scholarship and monasticism for almost 2,000 years. The Sichuan Religion Gazette rightly says that “in history, religion has had a deep, heavy, and profound influence on Sichuan’s politics, economy, and culture.”

Although Daoist elements such as the deification and worship of Laozi, the author of the Daodejing, were surely already percolating in many parts of 1st-century CE Chinese society, the earliest historically recognized cradle of this significant part of Chinese culture is Heming Shan, in Dayi County, a few kilometers to the west of Chengdu. Dayi County today is a rather sleepy, peaceful county, and Heming Shan today, despite its recent face-lift, still has a long way to go before it can take on the mantle shared by such busy tourist centers as Emei Shan or Qingcheng Shan.

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126 Sage, Ancient Sichuan, 28, 40, 75, 199-200, 198.
127 Terry Kleeman, Great Perfection, 1-7, 61; Liu, Sichuan Luyou Zhinan, 36, 233, 240-41.
128 Sichuan Sheng Bianzuan Weiyuanhui, Sichuan Shengzhi: Zongjiao Zhi, 1.
129 Kleeman, Great Perfection, 65; Bokenkamp, Early Daoist Scriptures, 14-15.
According to the *Dayi County Gazette*, Heming Shan is under the jurisdiction of *Yuelai* Township, a tiny nearby town that is little more than a bustling strip of market stalls. A 1992 count shows that Yuelai township is an intensely agricultural township with a total of 10,870 households. Of these, 10,337 are engaged in agricultural pursuits. Its main products are corn, rapeseed, mulberry leaves, silkworms, and fruit. Sichuan is a province justly famous for its fruit. At almost any time of the year, the sidewalks of Chengdu are blanketed with peddlers in from the countryside, selling baskets of whatever delicacy is in season. In a province positively choked with fruit, Yuelai is Dayi County’s largest-scale producer of fruit – a rather impressive fact that is quite telling of the intensity of agriculture in Yuelai Township (*see figure three*).\(^{130}\)

The newly paved road through Yuelai towards Heming Shan is bounded on all sides with green. The intense green of Sichuan is so deep it is almost blue. Farmers’ huts can be seen through the endless orchards, and here and there the flash of one of the rocky, muddy red rivers that run in their deep chasms through the township. The heavily forested mountains rising on all sides give the impression of being in a living, growing bowl. It is in this environment that Daoism crystallized, and emerged into history in 142 CE.\(^{131}\) It seems odd that such a peaceful place could be accused by the Communist state of harboring an “oppressive and exploitative system” that “used religion as a cloak for bad elements and counterrevolutionaries.”\(^{132}\) However, these recent accusations only encapsulate the 20\(^{th}\) -century manifestation of the long and often uneasy relationship between Daoism and the Chinese State.

\(^{130}\) Dayi Xian Xianzhi Bianzuan Weiyuanhui, *Dayi Xianzhi, 41.*
CHAPTER 7
NEW IDEOLOGIES, NEW CHINA: DAOISM’S SLIDE INTO DECLINE IN THE 20TH CENTURY

After a few days of observation at Heming Shan, it became obvious that the Daoists were uncomfortable with the idea of speaking into a digital recorder. They tended to be more open when interviews were transcribed with paper and pen. They soon became very generous with details of their daily life and practice, but the cautious Daoists also left a telling silence around the subject of the Communist government. Some Daoists offered a few details about the Cultural Revolution, but, when asked about the “Religious Affairs Bureau” (R.A.B.) and the current government, they elected not to answer any questions. A secular businessman in the employ of the Enwei Corporation indicated that the reluctance of the Daoists was due to lingering fears of Communist persecutions. It was not unknown for representatives of the R.A.B. to spy upon the activities of Daoists, and thus their fear of being recorded, or answering sensitive questions. As the organ of government that oversees religion in China, the R.A.B. could bring down serious consequences on any religious professional who gave even the appearance of criticizing the government. Comprehensive legal restrictions of Daoism have existed since at least the Tang period. But in the context of Imperial China, Daoism served as a kind of spiritual buttress in a State that incorporated religion into its function. After the fall of the Qing Dynasty, the wheel turned for Daoism once again. Daoism was an “enemy of the State” in the Han and became the “State cult” in the Tang. In the 20th century, however, under two regimes which openly derided Daoism as superstition and nonsense, Daoism once again became an “enemy of the State.”

133 The Businessman, Interview One, Heming Shan, July 27 2008.
As one of the five religions officially recognized by the People’s Republic of China – the others being Buddhism, Islam, Protestantism and Catholicism – organized Daoism is currently being regulated right out of existence. The five religions are directly linked into Central government control through “patriotic religious associations” which are overseen by the Religious Affairs Bureau. Membership in a religion is only legal when groups and their constituents have been officially registered and identified. The R.A.B. then monitors meetings, religious training, selection of clergy, and publications. It even has control over revenues produced at religious sites. Anything outside these legally registered groups is officially labeled as either a “cult” or a “feudal superstition” and subject to severe punishment according to the will of the Party.134

Although Communist restrictions on religion are a major part of Daoism’s occlusion, it is a misperception that recent persecution is the sole cause. Even before the 20th century, Daoism among the elite was in decline. Organized Daoism’s “face” and power in the social and economic spheres diminished once the buttress of Imperial support was removed in the late Qing. After the Communist takeover, organized religion was painted as a hateful tool of “feudal society,” that served only to keep people beholden to the ruling classes. Communist leaders often pointed to the rich temples, temple landholdings, and the non-productive lifestyles of the monks and nuns who occupied them as evidence that organized religion was leeching from society.135

From the earliest Communist regulations and Land Reform campaigns in the 1950’s, organized religion was picked apart and digested by the State apparatus. In the Reform era, restriction has eased greatly, but Daoism still suffers from a lack of autonomy and a dangerously

135 Author Unknown, “Buddhists and Taoists at Mount Nan-Yue Welcome the People’s Communes,” 256-7.
over-dependent relationship with political authority that is slowly draining the traditional
spiritual significance and cultural legitimacy out of it. Tourism may not be the ideal solution for
Daoists, but considering that the alternative is basically extinction, Daoist groups such as the one
at Heming Shan make adjustments to the demands of the tourist industry so that they --and the
tradition they represent -- can survive in the context of Communist China.

Enfeebled by the double bind of lost Imperial support and the lingering association of
organized Daoism with the old Imperial order, organized Daoism was ripe for attack by the same
intelligentsia that might have, in previous times, supported it. In 1911, the newly formed
“People’s Government” (Minguo Zhengfu) theoretically supported religious freedom, and
Daoism was legally allowed to exist. With the fall of the Imperial order in 1911, however, the
cultural and social milieu of China was changing rapidly. Thinkers and essayists such as Chen
Duxiu (1879-1942), Hu Shi (1891-1962), and other members of the Western-influenced
intelligentsia came at Daoism -- and all forms of religion -- with knives out. The “New
Culture Movement” favored by thinkers and reformers of the Nationalist period (1911-1949) was
unabashedly in support of democracy and science, and reviled old ways that smacked of
autocracy and superstition: “one after another, New Culture representatives unleashed vigorous
written attacks” on all forms of religion.

Prasenjit Duara analyzes the collision of newly introduced Western influences and
traditional religion in his book Rescuing History from the Nation (1995). Duara argues that
Western thought, as translated through the Chinese intelligentsia, produced something that he
calls “the end of history syndrome” in China. The end of history syndrome was characterized
by “the absolute conviction of the radical reformers that they possessed the Truth derived from

136 Tang, Daojiao Jianshi, 346.
137 Tang, Daojiao Jianshi, 346.
the logic of History the telos of which is self-consciousness."

Generally, New Culture reformers believed that because of science, human history had unfolded to a point of perfect freedom and understanding, defined by understanding of natural law and limited only by the individual’s power to choose.

A keystone of the end of history syndrome was the Hegelian idea of methodological individualism: that a person was an individual, self-conscious of his or her freedom, and defined by the choices that he or she made. Methodological individualism contrasted with “backward” philosophies, such as Daoism, that placed the individual in a cosmic system wherein choices were made by unseen forces. Daoism in this light was an anachronism; an anathema to progress that had to be done away with in order to build a truly perfect society. Another keystone idea of the New Culture Movement was “scientism:” the notion that all reality -- including human society -- could be known and understood by science. Everything, from the movements of the planets to human social life, was governed by natural law, and these natural laws could be known and understood. Humans were no longer beholden to archaic notions of supernatural forces, because in the scientific view such forces simply did not exist. The Gods were no longer necessary, because science had proven that there were no Gods.\(^\text{140}\)

Early reformers and thinkers of the pre-1949 “May Fourth” generation did not see religion as a harmless entity. They believed that religion was a dangerous, influential actor in society -- a force whose influence negative rather than positive. This stigmatization translated directly into political theories that passed through the May 4\(^{th}\) thinkers and on to the Communist intelligentsia. Where previously religion and the Imperial State had had an uneasy co-existence, early 20\(^{th}\)-century thinkers were quick to identify religion as a potential obstacle on the way to

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\(^{139}\) Duara, *Rescuing*, 86.

\(^{140}\) Duara, *Rescuing*, 86-87.
“modernity.” The general idea among reformers was that in the dawning Nationalist era, the people were to be their own sovereigns. The new State would be for the people and by the people, so the people had to be made worthy to govern themselves. This meant eliminating the “superstitions” that limited people’s ability to make good choices as individuals.\textsuperscript{141}

These Nationalist ideals may have justified more damage and violence against religion than previously imagined. When Westerners think of “religion in 20th-century China,” they tend to think in terms of the persecutions carried out by the Communists -- statues being hacked to bits by Red Guards, or temples turned into plastic factories under Mao’s directives for rapid industrialization. A study of Sichuan County Gazettes indicates that, in Sichuan at least, the Nationalist regime inflicted its share of destruction and disorder on Daoist life. A randomly chosen sampling of eight Sichuan County Gazettes shows that in at least two places, Xichang City and Leshan City, Nationalist forces were responsible for requisitioning Daoist temples and their valuable land assets for secular purposes, and dispersing the religious personnel.

Leshan City presents a particularly surprising case of brutish Nationalist violence. Within the city, there was a precious statue of the mythological Sage-King Yan Di that was believed to especially powerful. Usually the statue resided in a temple above the city, where it was generally believed that from his bird’s-eye view, Yan Di could protect the city from disaster. Every year the statue was the focus of a lively “Yan Di festival” where worshippers paraded the Yan Di statue around the city and then installed it, with all due pomp and ritual, in another temple for a period of twenty days. In 1932, in a gesture meant to shock the restive city dwellers into submission, a Nationalist general who was garrisoned in the temple had the statue beheaded. His men then paraded the head around the city on a spike as a mockery of the traditional festival. The \textit{Leshan City Gazette} reports – a little wistfully, perhaps—that “Henceforth, the Leshan Yan

\textsuperscript{141} Duara, \textit{Rescuing}, 86-7, 90-1.
Di festival passed into history.” In Xichang, Nationalist forces temples seized and occupied temples for secular purposes. The *Xichang City Gazette* reports that Nationalist occupiers used the temples so recklessly that they literally “declined and collapsed,” causing a precipitous decline in the number of Daoists in the county. In some cases, Nationalist seizures, not Communist persecutions, had a serious negative impact on Daoist life.\(^{142}\)

Although the Nationalist regime was famously weak and disorganized, it did put in place some legal and regulatory measures that were harbingers of the severe legal circumscription of religion that is so characteristic of China today. In the late 1920’s, Daoism and its sister, Popular Religion, bore the initial brunt of political repression. In 1928, a wide-reaching decree, the “Temple Maintaining and Suppressing Standards,” went out. An enormous list of deities common to Daoism and Popular Religion were officially sanctioned, with the declaration that the equally enormous number of local popular deities not mentioned on the list were forbidden. It was the first set of serious legal boundaries placed on religion in the 20\(^{th}\) century. By destroying Popular Religion, the Nationalist government hoped to “save the people from themselves.” In effect, this code represented the first crude 20\(^{th}\)-century attempt to separate “legitimate religion” from “superstition,” even though so much of the code proscribed a grey area between the two. Small pockets of local enforcement and subsequent resistance sprang up, particularly in Jiangsu Province, Anhui Province, and Guangdong Province, but Tang Dachao points out that in actuality, the times were so chaotic that there was no real way of enforcing these standards. Therefore, religious life among the masses went on much as before. Even though Daoism among the “upper strata” had declined irrevocably, Daoism was still strong and dynamic among the people in its popular forms, and even enjoyed a surge in status among minority cultures.\(^{143}\)

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Popular religion served as an “escape hatch” for some Daoist philosophies and practices. Some practices were taken up by heterodox shamans and witches, who still use and perpetuate them today, outside the pale of “legal” religion. However, Daoist professionals who based their lives on the practice of Zhengyi or Quanzhen Daoism could not escape so easily. Although at least one Sichuan County Gazette reviewed indicates that there was some bureaucratic oversight of Daoism in late Qing Sichuan, all of the County and City Gazettes mention the formation of “Daoism Chapters” (fenhui) in the Nationalist period. Apparently, these chapters could elect their own leaders. But they also took careful counts of all the Daoists in the region, and the property they held. These chapters were almost certainly mandated by the Nationalist government as a means of monitoring Daoism. Given the patchy nature of Nationalist governance, however, the chapters were formed and administered with varying degrees of success. In the case of Santai county, the chapter was able to convene hundreds of members to an election meeting in 1947. In Ya’an city, a chapter was “planned” in 1939, but only halfheartedly formed in 1945, after two city temples were destroyed by fire, and one demolished to make way for a movie theatre, causing almost all the professional Daoists to leave the city. These “Daoism Chapters,” however, laid the groundwork for the much more sophisticated organs of government control that would be instituted by the Communists.\(^\text{144}\)

\(^{144}\) Santai Xian Xin Xianzhi Bianzuan Weiyuanhui, editors, *Santai Xianzhi [Santai County Gazette]* (Chengdu: Sichuan Renmin Chubanshe, 1992), 806; Ya’an Shizhi Bianzuan Weiyuanhui, *Ya’an Shizhi*, 776; Zhongjiang Xian Difangzhi Bianzuan Weiyuanhui, editors, *Zhongjiang Xianzhi [Zhongjiang County Gazette]* (Chengdu: Sichuan Renmin Chubanshe, 1994), 702.
The May 4th intelligentsia laid the groundwork for the “modern” stance against religion, but organized religions were to face a much more serious foe in the form of the Chinese Communists, who believed that religion was the opiate of the masses. Marxist philosophy held that religion was a tool of the ruling classes that functioned to keep the masses enslaved. Under the light of Socialism, however, when all class distinctions were removed, religion itself would finally fade away forever. Because of civil war and Japanese invasion in the 1930’s and 1940’s, earlier reformers could only rely on words and half-hearted campaigns to support their convictions; the Communist Party, however, could lean on the might of the People’s Liberation Army to help carry out its directives. The resources of organized religion must have looked like a tasty prize for the impoverished Communist government as it embarked upon its project of “building Socialism.” Girded with a fervent belief in the theoretical supremacy of Marxism-Leninism, the campaign to appropriate both the resources of organized religion was underway almost before the official establishment of the People’s Republic on October 1, 1949.145

In the post-1949 period, one pattern becomes strikingly evident: policy toward organized religion as articulated by central authority was often very different from the actual practices carried out on the ground. Mao and Reform-era Chinese religious policy is marked by high

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levels of jingoistic rhetoric that does not always translate into concrete practices. Communist China has always been a nation marked by the rule by law, not rule of law.\textsuperscript{146}

Immediately following the Communist takeover a janus-faced approach to religion became evident. Zealous intellectual campaigns in the pre-Communist period soon coalesced into laws that eviscerated organized religion’s material base, although in the Chinese constitution religion was protected with what amounts to a flimsy screen of words. The “Common Program” laws adopted in September of 1949 fatally undercut organized religions’ material bases with the decree: “Rural land belonging to ancestral shrines, temples, monasteries, churches, schools, organizations, and land owned by public bodies shall be requisitioned.”\textsuperscript{147}

In post-1949 China, law and politics were, and remain, in a very intimate relationship. The speeches and writings of uppermost officials assume a vastly more important role in interpreting “law” in China than legislation, regulations, or court rulings. As Kim-Kwong Chan and Eric Carlson state in their recent study of religion and law in China, “administrative rulings comprise most of the black-letter law in China.”\textsuperscript{148} In other words, the will of a small group of high officials functions as the maker of law, as well as ultimate judge, jury, and executioner. Without checks and balances of any sort, the Party has complete legal, moral, and ideological hegemony – it is the only “legitimate” moral voice in Chinese culture. Religion is prostrate to the will of the Party, and this means that the party has been free to construct, destroy, and re-construct religion in a manner that serves the Party’s ends.\textsuperscript{149}

The “Common Program” laws of 1949 were squarely aimed at organized religion, and amounted to a clear and total seizure of religious property. But these laws were an ominous

\textsuperscript{146} Chan and Carlson, \textit{Handbook}, xvi-1.
\textsuperscript{147} Author Unknown, “The Common Program, Articles 3 and 5,” 21.
\textsuperscript{149} Chan and Carlson, \textit{Handbook}, 1-2.
portent of worse things to come. In Sichuan, local gazettes reveal that although the slide into
destruction and decay was begun by the Nationalist regime, the real deathblow for many large
urban temples and small rural temples alike was the “Agrarian Land Reform” that was carried
out in the early years of the 1950’s. The Cultural Revolution was a deadly time for temples with
valuable property, but for temples that were less well endowed, land reform was tantamount to
doom. In 1982, Communist officials estimated that there had been 100,000 temples in China
before liberation. Only 30,000 survived into the early 1980’s. Vincent Goosseart indicates in his
article “The Quanzhen Clergy, 1750-1949” that small rural temples, with few staff and tiny land
holdings, were the real casualty of Communist persecution, and small temples were more
frequently destroyed than large ones. The Sichuan gazettes bear this out. Many small “hut
temples” (an) in Sichuan, though obviously patronized by the local people, were not historically
distinguished or particularly prestigious, and so disappeared almost without a trace.150

The Guanghan County Gazette reports that up until the late 1940’s, Daoism had an
enthusiastic following in the county. In 1944, the Daoism Chapter counted 56 members, three of
them female. 1948, it was recorded that there were 20 active temples holding 104 mu (about 60
acres) of land among them. By 1952, all of the temple land had been redistributed among the
secular peasantry, and every single temple building had been converted into a school. Being thus
unceremoniously dumped out of their old homes, the remaining Daoists in the county “had to
quickly find new places to live.” By 1985, the county had only two male and five female Daoists,
all of them sanju or “hearth-dwelling” Daoists operating out of their own homes.151

In Xichang County, Daoism was already in collapse because of Nationalist seizure. Land

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150 Secretariat of the Central Committee, “Document 19,” 50; Zhongjiang Xian Difangzhi Bianzuan Weiyuanhui, 
Zhongjiang Xianzhi, 702; Santai Xian Xianzhi Bianzuan Weiyuanhui, Santai Xianzhi, 806.
151 Guanghan Xianzhi Bianzuan Weiyuanhui, editors, Guanghan Xianzhi [Guanghan County Gazette] (Chengdu: 
Sichuan Renmin Chubanshe, 1994), 615.
down to one single tenacious nun by the time of the Cultural Revolution. Zhongjiang County presents a particularly clear example of the devastation land reform wreaked on vulnerable rural Daoist communities. The history of organized Daoism in Zhongjiang dates back to 759 CE. Starting at that time, a large network of several Daoist temples and hermitages were established in the county, and classical Chinese poet Du Fu even immortalized one in a poem. In 1945, Zhongjiang counted 1,395 Daoists of both sexes, 100 of them Quanzhen monastics who lived among 56 temples. In 1951, temple land was seized for redistribution, and the Zhongjiang County Gazette reports that “priests and priestesses resumed secular life, given appropriate placement by the government, and Daoism in Zhongjiang ceased activities.” Daoism has not returned to the county, and so Zhongjiang serves as a prime example of how quickly a bustling community could be cut dead once its economic and social support was removed.152

152 Xichang Shizhi Bianzuan Weiyuanhui, Xichang Shizhi, 968; Zhongjiang Xian Difangzhi Bianzuan Weiyuanhui, Zhongjiang Xianzhi, 702.
A Song Dynasty census reveals that there were 4,600 Daoists in Sichuan. In 1916, there were 35,856. But by 1949, the number had dropped quite precipitously to 4,177. Perhaps practicing Daoists immediately after Liberation were not soothed by the promise of “religious freedom” coming from the mouths of avowed atheists, and decided to resume secular life.

Although it appears simple and straightforward, on closer inspection, the matter of constitutional protection of religion in Communist China opens onto a morass of double-speak. In the original 1954 Constitution, Article 88 stated: “Every citizen of the People’s Republic of China shall have freedom of religious belief.”

The Chinese constitution amounts only to another policy paper, and is subject to reinterpretation at the Party’s will. Firstly, the term “belief” in practice meant that citizens were free to believe, but their right to express that belief was subject to Party interpretation. Article 87 of the 1954 Constitution granted freedom of assembly, demonstration, association and procession, but this freedom did not apply to religious activities. The official doctrine of the People’s Republic was and remains atheism. The individual’s right to atheism is also legally protected. Atheists have freedom to hold their belief, and religious believers must not attempt to force religion on atheists. Therefore, no religious services were to be held outside of specifically religious sites, on the grounds that the freedom of atheists might be impinged upon. Interpreted under the Chinese Communist framework, the legal protection of atheism from theism means

that all public, non-religious space in China is therefore atheistic space, and theism has no place in it. Article 88 granted theoretical freedom of religion, but in practice, any religious activities outside the walls of churches and temples were prohibited. This process of narrowly defining—and confining—religion in Communist China sprung in part from Marxist ideology.\textsuperscript{155}

Communist leaders quickly advocated freedom of religion, but the “freedom” offered by the Communists was actually a kind of ideological booby-trap. Communist theories about religion and society were influenced by the scientistic outlook that filtered down from the May 4th generation. Scientism and Marxism translated into the classic Chinese Communist stance that religion was merely an anachronism that would eventually disappear. As one high Party official wrote in 1962:

\begin{quote}
At the root of the genesis and existence of religion is man’s oppression by the forces of nature and society, therefore, only when class exploitation has been eliminated from human society and man’s power to control nature has been greatly developed, and on this basis man’s consciousness and scientific-cultural level have been greatly raised, may religion gradually die out. From this it can be seen that religion has its own laws governing its birth, development and extinction which are not determined by the subjective will of any man. Therefore, it is radically impossible to use compulsory methods as the solution when dealing with people’s religious beliefs; only by adopting a policy of religious freedom in religious belief can we agree with the law within religion.\textsuperscript{156}
\end{quote}

In other words, the natural laws that had governed religion’s growth in a primitive, feudal society would also bring about the demise of religion when society had been enlightened by science and Marxist-Leninist-Mao Zedong thought. The Communists’ theoretical outlook on religion allowed them to construct an idea that destroying religion was part and parcel of the patriotic group project of building “New China.” Shepherding religion towards extinction was, to the Communists, an essential part of society’s coming perfection. The narrow scope of state-approved expression of religious belief was linked to the recent, Nationalist notion of


\textsuperscript{156} Chang Chih-I Qtd. In Bush, \textit{Religion in Communist China}, 18.
“patriotism.” Any religious expressions deemed harmful to the state could then be extinguished under the rubric of being “counter-revolutionary” or “anti-patriotic.” In the Mao-era Communist worldview, religious leaders were associated with the feudal age and decried as tools of the oppressive overclass. Liu Shaoqi (1898-1969), Chairman of the People’s Republic from 1959-1968, wrote in 1954 that feudal landlords were for a time to be deprived of their right to vote and stand for election. By extension, religious leaders and believers could also be grouped into this distrusted “counter-revolutionary” class as well. This direct connection between religion and the well-being of the State translated into the justification for bureaucratic monitoring of religion that continues in China to this day. It also translates into the notion that any religious activities deemed harmful to the State are subject to punishment.157

The Party conceded that it could not stamp out religion wholesale. Thus, the Party has implemented the characteristic policy of strict control over religion in hopes of affecting its gradual fade-out. To corral religion into easily controllable channels, the government instituted a proliferation of bureaus and offices in order to monitor religion’s “progress.” The predicted decline of religion was to be overseen by these offices, and aided by indoctrinated “activist” or “patriotic” religious leaders who were employed in common cause with the government, and whose main approach to religion was to “educate and remodel” leaders and believers. In the early stage of Communist involution, the support of religion offered by Communist authorities was intended to bring religion’s end. The Religious Affairs Bureau, originally part of Mao Zedong’s “United Front” movement, was the first governmental organ charged with control of religion. The R.A.B oversaw a tremendous program of ideological education, propagandizing, and subtle pressures directed at leaders of organized religions. If the silence of the Heming Shan

157 Bush, Religion in Communist China, 16-8; Speigel, China: State Control of Religion, 2.
Daoists is any indication, the R.A.B still controls religion in China today, and is a force to be feared.\footnote{Bush, 	extit{Religion in Communist China}, 18, 29; Speigel, 	extit{China: State Control of Religion}, 1; Chan and Carlson, 	extit{Handbook}, 2.}

In Sichuan, the corralling of Daoist professionals was justified by the 	extit{Yiguan Dao} movement, which was quickly and violently put down by the People’s Liberation Army. Although Daoist professionals today disavow this movement, it did have links to Daoist philosophy, and some of its leaders were charismatic, renegade priests. Yiguan Dao followers paid a heavy price for their devotion, and were executed by the score until the movement was completely eradicated in mainland China.\footnote{Chengdu Shi Difangzhi Bianzuan Weiyuanhui, 	extit{Chengdu Shizhi – Gong’an Zhi [Chengdu City Public Security Gazette]} (Chengdu: Sichuan Renmin Chubanshe, 1999), 71-76.} Unfortunately, because of Yiguan Dao, organized Daoism was viewed with great suspicion by the Communist State. In the 	extit{Sichuan Religion Gazette}, an exhaustive compilation of Sichuan religious history, the phrase that recurs again and again in connection with Daoism in the 1950’s is “bad elements and counterrevolutionaries using religion as a cloak.”\footnote{Chengdu Shi Difangzhi Bianzuan Weiyuanhui, 	extit{Chengdu Shizhi – Gong’an Zhi}, 71-76.}

\textit{Yiguan Dao} was in strong opposition to the Communists on the ground that they were morally unfit to rule – and at times expressed this quite violently. In Sichuan at least, the consolidating Communist State considered Yiguan Dao such a threat that, as soon as “Liberation” was declared in 1949, Communist forces carried out a targeted campaign to eradicate them. It was eventually successful, but even today the mention of Yiguan Dao strikes fear into the hearts of bureaucrats and professional Daoists alike.\footnote{Sichuan Sheng Difangzhi Bianzuan Weiyuanhui, 	extit{Sichuan Shengzhi: Zongjiao Zhi}, 7.} The reason for this fear is that Yiguan Dao represents only the latest mutation of a powerful current of Daoist messianism. There are several precedents for Daoist popular rebellions which caused serious disturbances in China, including the mother of them all, known as “The Yellow Turban Rebellion.”
Although present-day Daoists (loudly) disavow Daoism’s relationship with movements such as *Yiguan Dao*, the lessons learned from Daoism’s messianic, rabble-rousing tendencies no doubt contributed to the pronounced suspicion of Daoism that characterizes the attitude of the Communist state. For example, in the immediate post-liberation period Sichuanese Christians were repeatedly under scrutiny for “imperialist” connections, while Sichuanese Daoists were constantly accused of “acting as a cloak for bad elements and counter-revolutionaries.”

Taken with the harsh lessons learned from Han history, along with the threat of a dangerous rebellion right on their doorstep, it is no wonder that the consolidating Communist State was – and is -- wary of Daoism’s cohesive power.

This wariness is manifested in the narrow legal circumscription of Daoism today. To practice as a “legal” Daoist, a person has to negotiate a network of schools, examinations, associations, and registrations that have been set up by the State in order to strictly monitor Daoists all over the country. According to Sichuan law, a person can only practice as a Daoist once they have been through a government-approved “patriotic education” program, registered with the government and been issued a special certificate. Today the Sichuan law code reserves the most severe punishments for any religious professional who found “using religion to interfere with national administration and justice,” or “using religion to illegally form associations, hold meetings, hold demonstrations or parades or carry out other illegal activity.”

No wonder one layperson at Heming Shan griped, “*Yiguan* Dao is not a religion! It is something that the government blew out of proportion to discredit Daoism as a religion.”

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164 The Musician, Interview One, Heming Shan, July 22 2008.
Land reform had abolished Daoist communities’ traditional means of being self-sustaining and independent, leaving the remaining Daoist professionals especially vulnerable to State intervention in their lives and spiritual practices. In the 1950’s the State, flush from having destroyed “the oppressive and exploitative system of feudal religion,” began a heavy program of ideological re-education for religious professionals. Daoists in Sichuan were under State scrutiny, and had to scramble to prove their love of country. Every temple was made to organize patriotic study groups, and vigorously prove their love of country through “patriotic activities.” Some of these were relatively innocuous, such as reforestation projects and agricultural labor. However, in the case of Sichuan, the Sichuan Religion Gazette reports that some young religious professionals were sent into service with the People’s Liberation Army on its drive into Tibet, “until the major work was done.”

The emphasis on “productivity” that even now marks the Chinese State’s relationship to religion was in full swing. At this stage in China, however, “productivity” did not exactly mean productivity as a cash cow for tourist revenue. It meant hard individual labor. The concept of re-education through labor had great currency in the Mao era. “Religious professionals,” as they were termed, were put to work by the score. The 1958 Great Leap Forward was the next massive campaign to mobilize organized religion. In a newspaper article from the Great Leap Forward entitled “Buddhists and Taoists at Mount Nan-Yue Welcome the People’s Communes,” a Buddhist and Taoist collective set to growing rice and making steel set forth a series of declarations and pledges, stating:

This year, under the correct leadership and support of the Party and the Government, we Buddhists and Taoists in Nan-Yue have gone through a systematic socialist learning session. Through this learning session we have elevated our socialist awareness, have clearly understood the

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165 Sichuan Sheng Difangzhi Bianzuan Weiyuanhui, Sichuan Shengzhi: Zongjiao Zhi, 6-7.
166 Sichuan Sheng Difangzhi Bianzuan Weiyuanhui, Sichuan Shengzhi: Zongjiao Zhi, 7.
struggle between the two roads, and have completely overcome capitalism on the economic, political, and ideological fronts. ….

We guarantee that as soon as we join a people’s commune we will thoroughly carry out the principle of laboring with diligence and frugality and refrain from eating expensive food and other wasteful enjoyments, so that we may accumulate production capital for the commune through centralization of material and the saving of money.\textsuperscript{167}

Such an article underlines the increasing currency of the idea that religious professionals were leeches, living a life of luxury, and that it was best for them and for society that they be put to work. Religion had no place in a Marxist society, and so, under the rhetoric of “patriotism,” everyone in China was made to serve the needs of an industrializing State. From sources in Sichuan, there comes a sense that at first this concept of re-education through labor was crudely implemented. Evidence from Sichuan indicates that religious professionals were not encouraged to work as a collective so much as individuals. Nor is it entirely clear if the labor religious professionals performed in this stage was voluntary. For example, in 1958, the 282 monks among 38 Buddhist monasteries in Chengdu were sent in wildly different directions. 75 were sent to do agricultural labor, 86 were sent to factory work, and 71 were put in service work. In other parts of Sichuan, the labor pool of Buddhist communities was put to work as tailors, weavers, pickle makers, and vegetarian chefs. While similar, equally cohesive data has been not yet been found on Daoist labor in Sichuan, it would seem that under pressure to prove loyalty and thus secure some kind of niche in the new Communist society, Daoists also did their share of labor.\textsuperscript{168}

Religious professionals and the local communities that they lived in could no longer share the kind of symbiosis that they had in pre-Communist China. Religious professionals had to be self-sustaining. Surely, the time spent on labor and ideological re-education cut down

\textsuperscript{167} Author Unknown, “Buddhists and Taoists at Mount Nan-Yue,” 256-7.

severely on the time that could be spent for self-cultivation and ritual. None of the Daoists at Heming Shan today had practiced during the first decade of Communist rule, and so could not provide any details on this period. Sichuanese histories of religion during this period indicate that it was a chaotic period marked by great ideological zeal, particularly for “patriotism” and “Socialism” -- but this zeal only just covered for a lack bureaucratic stability and standardization. Religious professionals were booted off their long-held lands without so much as a how-do-you do, and those that remained might find themselves vigorously studying Marxism one day and making pickles the next.

However, the hierarchical organs of control that are familiar to in Sichuan Daoists today began to coalesce in the 1960’s. In 1962 the Sichuan Daoist Association (xiehui) was formed. These associations, like their predecessors, the “Daoist Chapters” of the Nationalist period, served to organize and categorize local Daoists, and place them directly under bureaucratic control. In the case of the Communist bureaucracy, direct oversight of these associations was, and still is, in the hands of the Religious Affairs Bureau. In the 1960’s, Religious Associations represented a degree of stability and legitimacy. Now that there was a clear organ of control over religious professionals, some of the counterrevolutionary stigma was cleansed. By allying so directly with the State, religious groups could “thoroughly cast off the control and use by the counterrevolutionary ruling class…and genuinely become their own masters in conducting the religious undertaking.”¹⁶⁹ For a moment, things were looking up. The Sichuan government began allocating funds for temple maintenance and repair, started a project to classify “key points” of cultural and historical interest, and organized religious communities into collective work units (danwei) that were then responsible for their own temples, churches or mosques.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁹ Sichuan Sheng Difangzhi Bianzuan Weiyuanhui, Sichuan Shengzhi: Zongjiao Zhi, 7.
¹⁷⁰ Sichuan Sheng Difangzhi Bianzuan Weiyuanhui, Sichuan Shengzhi: Zongjiao Zhi, 7.
The fragile stability established in the early 1960’s was, to use a recurrent phrase in Sichuan publications, “wantonly trampled upon” by the Cultural Revolution that began in 1966. However, the Cultural Revolution in Sichuan was not “the perfect storm” of destruction that it is sometimes thought to be. The crudity of the Nationalist era and the overnight transformations of Land Reform had much to do with why organized Daoism in Sichuan was so vulnerable to the violent attacks of the “Red Guards” -- Daoism was already tottering on its feet when the knockout blow came. However, research reveals a happy surprise ending. It seems that the Sichuanese government acted quickly to redress the physical and emotional damage of the Cultural Revolution. The generous attention – and funding – that was paid by government bureaucrats in the Reform era may have paved the way for Sichuan’s booming religious economy in the present day.

Religion in Sichuan has a very long history and, concomitantly, a rich material legacy of that history – which, in the 1960’s, represented the legacy of the hateful feudal oppressors. Chengdu was home to two particularly vicious factions of Red Guards, who wreaked destruction on religious sites across Sichuan. Emei Shan, a famous Buddhist mountain, and today a huge tourist draw, was ripe for the attentions of the Red Guards, and suffered very heavy damage. Statistics show that in a space of only 12 days in October of 1966, 37 of the 44 temples there were severely damaged, and the remaining seven were almost completely demolished. In just 12 days, 3,764 statues were destroyed, as well as 300 stone memorial tablets. As for Daoist temples, Qingcheng Shan, a major Daoist center and present-day tourist plum, was badly damaged, but not as severely as Emei Shan. At Heming Shan, two temples were demolished, and a worker there reported that all of the statues were smashed. In the case of Tibetan Buddhism,
the *Sichuan Religion Gazette* reports that every single Tibetan temple was either occupied or demolished.\textsuperscript{171}

Throughout the entire province, religious professionals were universally subject to search and seizure. They were also victimized by public denouncements, and driven wholesale out of seized religious properties. Suspicions fostered since the early days of Communist consolidation resurfaced for all to see as religious professionals were forced to parade in dunce caps that labeled them as an “active counterrevolutionary” or an “imperialist spy.” As the Cultural Revolution in Sichuan reached fever pitch, religious professionals were arrested outright, put under constant surveillance, or sent to hard labor. Statistics show that 312 religious professionals were searched and had personal property confiscated. 175 were subjected to degrading public “struggle sessions,” 12 were severely beaten, and four were forced to commit suicide.\textsuperscript{172}


\textsuperscript{172} Sichuan Sheng Difangzhi Bianzuan Weiyuanhui, *Sichuan Shengzhì: Zongjiao Zhi*, 498.
The architecture of the “old” complex at Heming Shan is in the typically graceful style of Qing-era temples, a style that strikes even the most untutored Westerner as “Chinese.” However, on my first day there, I noticed a squat, grey concrete box on a hill near the temple. In the peaceful, intensely rural atmosphere, it seemed to bubble up out of the green landscape like a socialist-era wart. The *Sichuan Religion Gazette* provided the answer to its incongruous presence: it seems that during the later phase of the Cultural Revolution, Heming Shan, like so many other temples and monasteries in Sichuan, was seized by the State and completely re-purposed. Heming Shan’s fate was to serve the national defense. The “Third Front Industry,” an engineering and industrial corps geared to national defense, worked in a joint project with the Sichuan Branch of the Chinese Meteorological Academy to dig a cave in the hillside next to Heming Shan that could be used as a factory. The temple complex was converted to dormitories and living areas for the project’s workers. Today, the project is over, but the derelict grey bubble sitting next to the lively temple is a testament to just how much times – and attitudes -- have changed.173

Heming Shan did not re-open to religious personnel until 1987. A history of religious policy in Sichuan classifies the years from 1979 to 1987 as a phase of “arduous work” on the part of the Provincial Government, as bureaucrats, top leaders, and religious professionals came together to “bring order out of chaos” and “rectify mistaken policies.”174

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watershed “Third Plenum of the Eleventh Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party,” it seems that the Sichuan Provincial Government embarked on ambitious project of not only redress for individual religious professionals, but also plunged into the complicated process of returning seized religious properties to their rightful occupants, and further, allocating generous funds for those properties’ repair and maintenance. However, this generosity was not purely altruistic. As mentioned, Sichuan is an especially beautiful province that has a very rich and attractive religious legacy. It seems that whilst they were doling out funds, Sichuanese bureaucrats were envisioning the resurrection of religious culture in Sichuan in the context of its practical benefits, not spiritual ones. Religion had to be made self-sustaining and productive again. This time, weaving, pickle-making and rock-breaking were out – but for a province as well endowed as Sichuan, tourism was most definitely in.¹⁷⁵

From 1980 to 1987, special committees attached to the Provincial Government were convened in Sichuan. These special committees, functioning at both the provincial and the local levels, were convened to redress the mistaken, falsified cases brought against religious professionals during the Cultural Revolution. 675 such cases were identified. Of these, 157 people were judged to have been mistakenly labeled as “rightists.” 201 people were to be returned to their rightful places, or be resettled. The Provincial Government even inventoried 536 households believed to be harboring illegally confiscated religious paraphernalia, and one-by-one began the process of returning them to their rightful owners. In the case of destroyed or lost items, the original monetary value of the item was paid to the claimant. Overall, the value of returned items and compensation amounted to 8,540,000 yuan (1,249,031 USD).¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁶ Sichuan Sheng Difangzhi Bianzuan Weiyuanhui, Sichuan Shengzhi: Zongjiao Zhi, 498.
In addition, salaries lost to religious professionals during the Cultural Revolution were also repaid, to the tune of 440,000 yuan (64,352 USD). The entire province returned a total of 1,142,586 square meters of illegally confiscated religious property, estimated to be 94% of the original properties. For religious properties that were destroyed, the cost of rebuilding was assessed and paid out of a special fund worth 8,120,000 yuan (1,187,603 USD). A further fund of two hundred and fifty million yuan was established for Tibetan Buddhist sites, which had been almost wiped out during the Cultural Revolution. Finally, another fund established with both Provincial and Central Government money was established to disburse subsidiary payments to religious sites for upkeep and maintenance.\textsuperscript{177}

In 1983, a Central Government policy paper demanded “perfection” from provincial governments in transferring religious property and re-opening religious sites. It seems that the Sichuan Provincial Government heeded this demand. By 1989, the Provincial Government had once again sanctioned religious activities in 1,184 places – most of them Tibetan Buddhist, 20 of them Daoist. By 1985 Sichuan had re-established the six provincial-level Religious Associations, and instituted 15 prefectural and 109 county-level religious organizations. By 1989, each temple, mosque and church had organized a democratic management board so that they could practice “efficacious self-management.”\textsuperscript{178} Indeed, after all the payout and arduous work, by the mid-1980’s, the buzzwords for religious communities were “self-management” and “religious industry management.”\textsuperscript{179}

The massive repair and restructuring projects of the 1980’s laid the foundations for Daoism’s re-orientation towards the tourist market. Now, at least in the eyes of the State, religion’s value to 21\textsuperscript{st}-century Chinese culture is practical first and spiritual second. The

\textsuperscript{178} Sichuan Sheng Difangzhi Bianzuan Weiyuanhui, \textit{Sichuan Shengzhi: Zongjiao Zhi}, 499.
Sichuan government’s policy is that of “positively pushing forward and supporting religious organizations in giving free rein (fahui) to each religion’s superior assets.” Religious communities are expected to initiate production and service enterprises for the public good, raise their own funds, and “expand channels for marketing, operations, and service quality, but all the while abide by policies and laws in a harmonious and balanced way.” Urban temples are advised to “do what is available to set up small enterprises, general stores, snack bars, hostels, baths, and teagardens.” Rural temples are directed to try such enterprises as small hydroelectric plants, grain mills, oil presses, brick and tile factories, or processing plants for herbal medicine. However, the most enthusiastic rhetoric is reserved for places situated in scenic or historical areas, which are advised to “give free rein to their geographical gifts and co-ordinate with the tourist industry to develop guest services. So as to vigorously develop the place’s economy, and oneself, walk out on a new approach.”

In 1985, an anonymous Chinese author wrote an article praising the productive capabilities of the Daoist community at Qingcheng Shan. The article, entitled “The Current Situation of Daoism at Qingchengshan, Sichuan Province,” heralds the return to stability brought about by the recent legal reforms in Sichuan:

With the help of the People’s Government, the lingering problems of Qingcheng Shan were solved at the end of 1985 when responsibilities were allocated as follows: the government will take care of the mountain, the priests will manage the temples, and the tourist trade will be conducted outside the temples. By solving the problems in this way, the doubts of religious believers were effectively eliminated, their unity [with the people] was strengthened, their patriotism was reinforced, and their support for the four modernizations as brought fully into play.

The general Communist emphasis on increased productive capabilities is evident as the author sings the praises of “Dongtian wine,” a special herbal liquor produced on the mountain,

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which had been produced more effectively than ever before through a modern factory that had been established there. The author also praised the 200,000 yuan in tourist revenues that had been generated in 1985. The article indicates the type of Reform-era restructurings that returned a measure of autonomy to religious professionals, but still implies that religious sites are firmly embedded in the atheist space of the State, and that religion’s most important role is as an economically productive tool.  

Since the economic reforms of the 1980’s, Daoist sites across China are adapting to the
tourist trade. Mian Shan, near Pingyao in Shanxi Province, exemplifies one extreme of the
“shopping mall” trend that is taking hold in China. Mian Shan is a Daoist site repackaged as a
place of recreational enjoyment. It had served as a Daoist hermitage since the Jin Dynasty in the
Spring and Autumn Period (771-481 BCE), but achieved prominence after the visit of Tang
Emperor Li Shimin (r. 626-649 CE), who established a temple complex there. According to
plaques at the site, most of the original structures had been damaged by Japanese bombing. A
casual chat with locals intimated that the sites were more completely destroyed and looted during
the Cultural Revolution. Now they have been replaced by spanking-new structures wholly
sponsored by the 300 million yuan investment of a mainland corporation known as the “Shanxi
Sanjia Coal-Chemistry Co.”

A tough journey up a sacred mountain is one of the paramount spiritual metaphors of
Chinese religion, be it Popular Religion, Buddhism, or Daoism. From ancient times, Emperors
and peasants alike endeavored to climb sacred mountains in hopes of gaining longevity, fertility,
or the favors of the Gods. Traditionally at least, such a journey was not supposed to be easy –
and so the convenience and ease of Mian Shan represents a curious new manifestation of
Daoism. Mian Shan was not renovated with traditional pilgrimage in mind. The entire place is
organized to please visiting tourists. It is well-designed, interesting, and convenient. On most

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184 Author Unknown, Gulao Shenqide Mian Shan [Ancient Mystical Mian Shan] (Shanxi: Shanxi Jieben Mian Shan
Luyou Kaifa Gongsi, date unknown, likely 21st century), 122-3, 4.
Daoist mountains, the pilgrim anticipates a difficult journey up a steep trail, but Mian Shan offers the visitor plenty of convenient parking and even elevators for those not inclined to climb steps (see figure four). The complex includes hotels, restaurants, souvenir stands and kitschy, Daoism-themed “attractions” all geared toward the entertainment and comfort of visitors. For example, Mian Shan features a walk-through funhouse in the shape of a giant snake that supposedly commemorates the vision of a Qing dynasty official. The official visited Mian Shan in hopes of healing a deadly illness, and was cured by a vision of a giant python rising to the sky. Today, the Plexiglas body of the snake loops dramatically over the entire hillside complex of temples, hotels, and shops. Inside, the maze-like giant snake features fake tiki-torches and eerie music (see figure five). The extreme corporate makeover that Mian Shan has received contrasts sharply with more typical Daoist sites such as Kongtong Shan, in Gansu Province, also established in the Tang period. Kongtong Shan is a venerable Daoist complex of comparable size and fame, but without the investment of secular entrepreneurs, it has a very different feel (see figure six).

The interiors of these two Daoist mountains present a study in contrasts. Kongtong Shan embodies the typical sense of graceful hunkering down into musty age that many complexes across China share – at places like this, paint flakes, water drips, and somewhere incense is burning away (see figures seven, eight and nine). A coterie of Daoist priests and priestesses are usually to be found at their various tasks of the day, such as cleaning, preparing food, or working with tourists. In contrast to the sedateness of Kongtong Shan, Mian Shan’s corporate makeover

185 Author’s fieldnotes, Mian Shan, October 12 2006.
186 Author Unknown, Gulao Shengide Mian Shan, 104-5.
has resulted in a kind of Daoist-themed fun park, complete with artificial waterfall, festive red lanterns and catchy fiberglass dragon sculpture (see figure ten). At Mian Shan in 2006, actual priests and priestesses were nowhere to be seen, and this seemed to alter the atmosphere of the place more than any other aspect. Rather than contemplate any religious meaning, visitors to Mian Shan are encouraged to enjoy the quaintness of Daoism in a cartoony, plastic-fantastic reconstruction (see figure eleven). Mian Shan boasts several spanking-new temples, complete with light-display palm trees, picnic areas and ice-cream freezers for easy snacking. In clean, orderly places such as Mian Shan, the visitor is subtly encouraged to observe and enjoy solely as a tourist, and not participate and reflect as a pilgrim. In the eyes of the new breed of secular entrepreneurs who manage temples such as Mian Shan, Daoism is no longer a religion, but rather a fascinating part of China’s past, suitable for day of edifying family fun (see figure twelve).

In a contrast similar to that of Kongtong Shan and Mian Shan, Heming Shan embodies the difference between old and new approaches to Daoism on a single site. At Heming Shan, the “old” and the “new” are literally side by side. The original monastery complex is on the site of one of the original “parishes” established by the Celestial Masters almost two thousand years ago. Temples have been built there since the Tang Dynasty. Most of the structures today are from the Ming and Qing period. It is also the heart of the Daoist community, where the priests, priestesses, and workers live, eat, and carry out their daily ritual life (see figures thirteen through nineteen).

Daoists at the old complex of Heming Shan live cheek-by-jowl with secular world, as Heming Shan is also visited daily by several busloads of tourists, only some of whom come to worship. Daoists at Heming Shan confirmed an observation that generally, tourists to Heming Shan are more interested in the scenery and the pleasant, unassuming atmosphere of the temple

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188 Dayi Xian Xianzhi Bianzuan Weiyuanhui, Dayi Xianzhi, 473-474.
than in worship or self-cultivation. Each day the temple teahouse, staffed by lay laborers, seemed to be doing a roaring business. The clicking of mah jong tiles resonated throughout the temple complex, and picnickers seemed to outnumber worshipers (see figures twenty through twenty three). Tourist yuan are the bred and butter of the religious economy at Heming Shan. Like most temples in Reform-era China that are frequented by tourists, the community at Heming Shan has traditionally relied upon revenues from five legally-sanctioned sources to cover operational costs: incense sales, teahouse proceeds, fees charged by the temple’s small hostel, individual donations, and fees from rituals performed for clients (see figure twenty four). In 2007, Abbot Yang Mingjian reported that the old temple complex made about 600,000 yuan per year from tourist revenues. According to one worker at Heming Shan, these proceeds are put in a community pot and shared: “we are all helping each other in here.”

Across the river, however, is the “new” complex, where the priests, priestesses, and workers work. The new complex is directly overseen by the Taiwanese-Chinese joint investment company known as the “Stern Kindness Corporation” (Enwei Jituan), which advertises the new complex as “The Holy City at the Source of The Dao.” The Enwei Jituan first proposed the project in 1986, and construction began in 2006. The first, major phase of development had been freshly completed in the summer of 2008. According to the recently published Hemingshan Gazette, the spanking-new complex occupies 22.65 square kilometers, and was constructed at a cost of 1.2 billion yuan (see figures twenty five through twenty eight).

189 Author’s fieldnotes, Heming Shan, July 21 2008.
191 The Gatekeeper, Interview One, Heming Shan, July 26 2008.
The heart and soul of Heming Shan is still in the old complex. In the summer of 2008, the new complex – though clean, spacious, and stocked with amenities – had the feeling of a ghost town. However, the Enwei Corporation envisions the Holy City at the Source of the Dao as a future “world Daoist pilgrimage site.”193 As the extensive Holy City complex demonstrates, since the economic reforms of the 1980’s and 90’s have generated more disposable income for Chinese citizens, tourism has become bigger and bigger business – and now entrepreneurs, local officials, and religious professionals at Heming Shan are clearly preparing for a tourist onslaught (see figures twenty nine through thirty one).194

193 Su, Guowen Ban Heming Shan Zhi, 60.
194 Author’s fieldnotes, Heming Shan, July 24 2008.
CHAPTER 12
THE RELIGIOUS ECONOMY OF HEMING SHAN, 2008

What does massive entrepreneurial investment in the tourist industry bode for the Daoists living at Heming Shan? Will it change what they do? Observations from Heming Shan were provocative, but can at best only serve as impressions. It might be instructive first to offer some evidence from more systematic scholarly studies. Although studies of the “religious economy” of China and its impact on the daily lives of religious professionals are still fairly recent and inconclusive, a series of articles in *State, Market, and Religions in Chinese Societies* (2005) by scholars working in Yunnan Province and Guangdong Province describe different scenarios of how religious professionals are affected by the tourist industry.

The first scenario comes from Guangdong Province, a region of China that supports many temples, and has a reputation for lively participation in religion. Graeme Lang, Selina Chan and Lars Ragvald point out that some newly built or renovated temples there are being run according to the “shopping mall model.” In this model, temples are marketed according to their practical, not spiritual, virtues. Supported by entrepreneurial backing – particularly form Hong Kong or Taiwan entrepreneurs, shopping mall temples are like “firms” for the profit of the entrepreneurs and secular businessmen who run them as managers. Such temples are marketed much like shopping malls, by offering the consumer a description of their practical virtues and advantages so as to entice the consumer to visit: this temple may have peaceful green space for weary city-dwellers to enjoy; this one might be good for a day of family fun; and this one has great historical value. Religious professionals in shopping mall temples are relegated to a
sidelight, and do not manage the temples themselves but are paid to perform rituals by the temple management. Sometimes they are even imported from other temples to give the shopping mall temples a bit more color.\textsuperscript{195}

In this model religious professionals may be sacrificing some of their traditional communal identity for a new role as gears in a money-making “firm,” but the upshot is that they may also have more personal time in which to study, socialize, and practice. It seems that colorful, cartoony Mian Shan, discussed in the introduction, is an example of a shopping mall temple. With few Daoists operating there, but plenty of amenities, Mian Shan seems more oriented toward gaining the money of fun seekers, rather than spiritual seekers, for the entrepreneurs of the Sanjia-Coal Chemistry Corporation.\textsuperscript{196}

In Yunnan Province, Thomas Borchert has described a scenario called the “alignment model.” His observations as an ethnographic observer in a Buddhist temple in Yunnan reveal that tourism can be both bitter and sweet for religious professionals. In this model, the local government encourages the development of temple tourism because it brings in more money to the local economy. The local government and the temple organization are drawn into alignment on the need to preserve and respect the lifestyle of religious professionals. Officials value and support a temple for its role as tourist draw. But religious professionals also benefit in greater autonomy for the temple as a community, and greater freedom in propagating their religious tradition on their own terms. In this model, both the practical and the spiritual aspects of religion play a role in attracting tourist revenue.\textsuperscript{197}

Borchert observed that in the case of Yunnan, the monks’ attitude towards tourists was rather ambivalent. Tourists wandered in and out of the complex all day, often taking an

\textsuperscript{196} Lang, et. al., “Temples and the Religious Economy,” 171-175.
\textsuperscript{197} Thomas Borchert, “Of Temples and Tourists,” 100-104.
irreverent attitude towards the customs of the place. The monks had to accommodate the tourists because, after all, they could not kick them out. One consequence was that the monks were often on “the other end of camera lens,” constantly subject to a “touristic gaze” where they were perceived as the “exotic other.”

Although distracting for the monks, on the other hand it also reinforced their sense of group identity and solidarity. The second main consequence of tourism was the diversion of monks into service labor. Borchert observed that time spent selling incense, performing small rituals on demand for busloads of tourists, and taking tickets was something that monks had never historically had to do before, and surely took time away from their traditional monastic routines. It seemed that while the monks could not openly reject the tourists, there was a sense that they would rather the tourists not be there.

The case of Heming Shan appears to be combination of both the “shopping mall” and “alignment” scenarios. In the Imperial period, monasteries such as Heming Shan depended on the patronage of wealthy supporters, but still retained a measure of communal autonomy. In the present day, while Heming Shan has received a fortune in investments from an entrepreneurial group, they are not expected to be gears in an Enwei Corporation money machine. Nor are the Heming Shan Daoists cut completely out of the projected profit. Because of Enwei’s uniquely ethical orientations, the relationship between Enwei and the Heming Shan community seems to be – surprisingly – one of old fashioned patronage.

The founder of Enwei is, according to an employee of a subsidiary company that manages the Holy City, a fervent believer in Daoism who was cured of illness though Daoist medical techniques, and originally envisioned the Holy City as a center for preserving and propagating the “life-nurturing” (yangsheng) techniques that are a core of Daoist self-cultivation.

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200 The Businessman, Interview One, Heming Shan, July 27 2008.
practices. Indeed, Enwei’s description of its mission at Heming Shan gives an impression of sincere respect for Daoism, and a genuine wish to propagate Daoism.\textsuperscript{201} It uses Daoist philosophical terms such as \textit{wu-wei} to describe its entrepreneurial goals, and states that “the outstanding traditional culture of China serves as guides for Enwei employees. Investing in tourism is Enwei’s nucleus of business. Enwei carries forward traditional culture, and to bless and protect life is Enwei’s lofty mission.”\textsuperscript{202}

Combining practical and spiritual values, the Holy City was created to be a place that “caters to Daoist believer and tourist alike.”\textsuperscript{203} In what appears to be rather shrewd business decision, the Holy City is conveniently located on a highway that tourists must travel if they wish to reach a more established weekend spot, \textit{Xiling Shan}. Once the complex is in full swing, there are built-in performance areas and retail spaces where weekending tourists can enjoy local snacks, folk performances and tai chi demonstrations, shop for handicrafts, and even view “brewing exhibitions of Daoist wine.” In keeping with the “yangsheng” theme, the complex has established a vegetarian restaurant that can serve 500 patrons simultaneously. As of 2008, local, secular workers provided the labor for these enterprises, except in the temples. In the temples, a novice or an ordained priest was always on hand –though sometimes napping – to receive worshippers.\textsuperscript{204}

This division of labor also explains the division of revenues at the Holy City. The revenues from the tourist business will be the plum that Enwei receives for its investments. However, to combat “commercialization and worldliness” at the Holy City, the Heming Shan Daoists will retain a measure of control over it. All of the temples will be managed by Daoists,

\textsuperscript{201} The Businessman, Interview One, Heming Shan, July 27 2008.
\textsuperscript{202} Su, \textit{Guowen Ban Heming Shan Zhi}, 59-61.
\textsuperscript{203} Su, \textit{Guowen Ban Heming Shan Zhi}, 64.
\textsuperscript{204} Su, \textit{Guowen Ban Heming Shan Zhi}, 64, 69.
not secular managers. Pilgrims will not be charged a fixed rate for incense but be allowed to donate what they wish, a huge source of potential revenue if the Holy City takes off.

“Converted believers” of Daoism will not be charged an entrance fee. In addition, a secular manager attached to the Holy City management company – himself a holder in an advanced degree in Daoist history, not business – indicated that Enwei helps the Heming Shan community meet monthly expenses if it falls short. Generally, the impression that garnered from interviews and from Sichuan publications is that in the matter of economic support, Heming Shan has been relatively lucky in that it has a kind of corporate patron, not owner.205 In the present day, Heming Shan has a combination of autonomy and support – revenues from the “old” community all stay in the community pot, but Heming Shan Daoists still receive some benefits of the Holy City’s profits. In general, when asked about their feelings towards the new complex, the Heming Shan Daoists displayed the mellow, all-embracing attitude that is so characteristic of Daoism. One priestess summed it up well: “We are all together. It’s all Daoism.”206

One senior priest at Heming Shan had been living there for a relatively long period since the place had been re-opened in 1987. When interviewed about his experiences, he said he had arrived there in 1996, and that in those days times at the temple were very hard and “there was no food.”207 Heming Shan has come a long way from those harsh times. The impression garnered from observing the Daoist community at Heming Shan was a hopeful one. At Heming Shan, Daoism is not dead, nor is it becoming secularized or “worldly.” Despite the intrusions of the tourist industry, it seems that the younger generation of Daoists at Heming Shan is laboring sincerely and hard to preserve Daoist traditions.

205 Yang, Xian Yuan Sheng Ji, 158.
207 The Priest, Interview One, Heming Shan, July 22 2008.
A casual chat with an acquaintance in Chengdu revealed that Heming Shan has a reputation for being especially conservative and authentic. He said that “at Heming Shan they are still practicing the real Dao.”

Just as Thomas Borchert noticed that tourism heightened the monk’s sense of identity and solidarity, at Heming Shan it also seemed that the presence of tourists gave the priests and priestesses a sense of pride in their chosen life. Almost every day at Heming Shan, it was possible to watch young Daoists practicing and working together amid the tourist crush with a sense of devotion that was almost palpable. On three occasions, a group of about ten Daoists, most of them female, gathered in the temple courtyard to study ritual forms and music. One afternoon, as tourists looked on, hanging over the rails of the teahouse to get a better view, a senior priestess guided the younger ones in the complicated dance steps and gestures that were used in the elaborate type of ritual that had been performed for the sake of the earthquake dead. The senior priestess molded hands into the perfect gesture, criticized dance steps, and traced talismans in the air as the junior priests and priestesses avidly followed with full attention. In another session, a series of musical notations was written on a dry-erase board, and the “ritual clique” of young Daoists gathered around, singing each note carefully until it was approved as perfect by a senior (see figures thirty two and thirty three). These long sessions were taken quite seriously by the participants, but at the same time had an atmosphere of joy in a job well done –the impression was of people doing something that they loved, even though it was difficult.

To be sure, the life of a Daoist is not an easy life. Not only is there the demanding schedule dictated by monastic discipline, at the same time Daoists must learn to master very complex group rituals in which each member must work in perfect concert with the others. A lay

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209 Author’s fieldnotes, Heming Shan, July 24 2008.
musician at Heming Shan groused that tourists today generally have a mistaken impression that Daoist lives are “so relaxed and free.” The original code of Quanzhen discipline discussed in chapter five belies this impression – members were to wake at 5 a.m. and begin a grueling series of meditations and rituals that lasted until 3 a.m. the next morning. Despite their historically unprecedented duties with tourists, the Daoists at Heming Shan still begin their days at 5 a.m. and hew to a strict schedule of meditation, ritual, and study that ends at 6 p.m. (see figure thirty four).

The two major group rituals of every Quanzhen day are known as “early ritual” (zao ke) at 5:30 a.m. and “late ritual” (wan ke), at 4:30 p.m. In this ritual, six Daoists don flowing ceremonial robes and face a ritual altar. The main purpose of these hour-long rituals is to chant a special scripture of supplication and praise of the Gods, which is intended to bring blessings for the whole world. The scripture is set to music, and each Daoist not only chants but also plays an instrument, such as chime, drum, or bell or gong, in a complex orchestration. The chanting moderates in speed and tone as according to the content of the scripture. Furthermore, the chanting is performed entirely in a kneeling position. At Heming Shan, this part of the day was greeted with pleasure and reverence. A study of temples in Guangdong indicates that these rituals are treated mostly as performances, but at Heming Shan, they are still treated as serious worship services. The priests are joined by a small congregation of local followers who have also mastered the complicated scripture, and chant it along with the priests in perfect time, also on their knees.

The Heming Shan Daoists consider the afternoon ritual as a relatively simple one, when compared to the more elaborate services such as those performed for the earthquake dead.

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212 Author’s fieldnotes, Heming Shan, July 23 2008.
Participating in this ritual, however, made it clear that even a “simple” Daoist ritual is not at all easy. The scripture is in an old-fashioned language that is difficult to master, and kneeling upright for even one hour in the July heat was nearly overwhelming. In my first attempt at participating in the ritual, the chanting and the heat nearly brought on a fainting spell, much to the concern of the Daoists and temple laborers. It seems that at Heming Shan at least, the *wan ke* and *zao ke* rituals are a major and valued part of what a Daoist does. For the dedicated Daoists and worshippers, mastery of the ritual is a major mark of community identity. Once I was familiar enough with the text and ritual to participate without embarrassment, there was a marked uptick in acceptance from the community. Even the reticent male priests, usually shy around a foreign woman, began to acknowledge my presence.\(^\text{213}\)

Each afternoon, just as this beloved ritual was being carried out, it seemed that a tour bus would arrive in the parking lot of the old complex and disgorge a load of tourists. The only means of entrance into the temple complex is directly across the ritual space. So, each afternoon, as worshippers were participating in the ritual, there arose a kind of “touristic storm” that would gather behind the worshippers, taking pictures and commenting loudly. Then this cloud of humanity would burst across the ritual space and stream up the stairs, and the ritual would continue in peace. This daily intrusion is a good metaphor for the overall relationship of tourists to Daoists at Heming Shan. The presence of tourists who are generally completely ignorant of the realities of Daoist life definitely *complicates* matters at Heming Shan, but it cannot *destroy* the obviously sincere devotion of the Daoists and their followers. During the *wan ke* ritual, there was a clear sense of “us” and “them” that, in that moment, really did serve to highlight and strengthen the community bond.\(^\text{214}\)

\(^{213}\) Author’s fieldnotes, Heming Shan, July 23 2008.

\(^{214}\) Author’s fieldnotes, Heming Shan, July 23 2008.
Daoists at Heming Shan, like the monks in Yunnan, accept the tourists. But they would probably prefer that tourists not be present. When asked about tourism in the temple, one priestess seemed to characterize it as a necessary evil with the wistful statement “hao ye bu hao (it’s good and bad).”\textsuperscript{215} This priestess had come to Heming Shan as an earthquake refugee from Qingcheng Shan, a tourist draw several orders of magnitude bigger than Heming Shan. She remarked that a Russian friend had said that the priestess appeared so much more relaxed and happy since coming to Heming Shan, where the crush of tourists is much less. Because of the relatively smaller tourist industry at Heming Shan, the priestess said that her life at Heming Shan is much less “chaotic (launqibazoao).”\textsuperscript{216} In her opinion, most tourists come for the scenery and for recreation, not because they believe in Daoism. A priestess since 1990, in her experience, believers in Daoism are actually quite few. Other interviewees also echoed this sentiment, that today in China not many Chinese people can comprehend Daoism.\textsuperscript{217} However, this does not mean that Daoists hold tourists in contempt – at Heming Shan many Daoists see it as an important duty to keep Daoism alive and teach visitors about traditional Daoist culture, even if the visitors are slow to understand. The priestess from Qingcheng Shan indicated that while it is wearying at times dealing with tourists, in her heart she is glad to give visitors contact with Daoism, in the hopes that in the future more people will come to understand it.\textsuperscript{218} An elderly priestess told me that while the Daoists at Heming Shan welcome all comers, her speech seemed to emphasize what kind of visitors the Daoists would prefer: “we welcome believers – it doesn’t matter who – this is our religion and we welcome those who are interested.”\textsuperscript{219}

\textsuperscript{215} Priestess A, Interview One, Heming Shan, July 23 2008.
\textsuperscript{216} Priestess A, Interview Four, Heming Shan, July 26 2008.
\textsuperscript{217} Priestess A, Interview One, Heming Shan, July 23 2008; The Musician, Interview One, Heming Shan, July 22 2008.
\textsuperscript{218} Priestess A, Interview Two, Heming Shan, July 24 2008.
\textsuperscript{219} Priestess B, Interview One, Heming Shan, July 25 2008.
Believers or not, the tourists arriving at Heming Shan are increasing. Although Heming Shan is fortunate in that it has a devoted set of lay laborers who seem to love the place, the Daoists themselves must attend to the needs of tourists who worship in the temples. They sell incense; mark each prayer by ringing a special bell, and sell amulets and charms. They spend a great deal of time answering the questions of tourists. In general, Daoists are educated people, and many are glad to share the wisdom of their tradition. However, as bus after bus of tourists arrives, Daoists are subject to the curiosity of tourists all day every day, and, if not being questioned, are still very much subject to the “touristic gaze.” For example, for reasons of monastic modesty, the Heming Shan Daoists were extremely sensitive to having their pictures taken but were powerless to stop the clicking of the many cameras that were pointed at them. At Heming Shan, it seems that the tourists are perceiving the Daoists as public assets that are part and parcel of the temple experience. From the security of the touristic perspective, visitors can view Daoists as simply part of the scenery, not as individuals with a lifestyle that revolves around serious spiritual duties. This new perception is one of the major changes in what a Daoist does today – because their monasteries are now public spaces, Daoists are public figures in a way that they have never been before – whether they like it or not.220

However, at Heming Shan, the sincere devotion of the Daoists has fostered a group identity that serves as a kind of antidote to tourist intrusions. Like it or not, a Daoist is now a public figure. To tourists, Daoists might be entertaining figures, or curiosities. But Daoists are adjusting to their new life in the touristic gaze by imbuing it with an aura of spiritual dignity, and positioning themselves as tradition-keepers and repositories of sacred wisdom. They are preserving Daoist traditions that date back thousands of years so that, in the future, the world may again benefit from them.

220 Author’s fieldnotes, Heming Shan, July 23-26 2008.
Tourism leads the Daoists to redouble their efforts at traditional Daoist practices like ritual and self-cultivation – in order to ensure that tradition at the heart of their identity will not be diluted and lost. In interviews, the Daoists were always asked what, in their opinion, was the biggest change in Daoism in the past 100 years. Not one mentioned tourism, which was the expected answer. All answered that the Cultural Revolution had been the biggest disruption, and now that it is over, Daoist life has “come back almost the same as before.” It seems clear that the Heming Shan Daoists still view their Daoist identity as something that cannot be altered by hordes of tourists. Their identity is something that is firmly fixed in the traditions and rituals prescribed by the forefathers and foremothers of Daoism. At Heming Shan, ritual and self-cultivation are still what Daoists do. Whereas the social and economic context of Daoism has changed a great deal, it is still the tradition that matters most. This was brought home to me most powerfully when an elderly priestess was asked what she believed has changed. She pulled herself up proudly and said: “Not much has changed. Daoism is still very traditional and we are preserving the traditions.”

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Observations at Heming Shan lead to an optimistic conclusion: Daoism is not a dead religion. However, it has undergone many changes since its inception in the early Han, and it has weathered especially dramatic changes in the 20th century. The first major change was in Daoism’s source of economic support. For approximately 1500 years, Daoist monastic communities had relied upon a system of Imperial patronage. Patronage from the ruling house and wealthy lay believers supplied the all-important land that allowed Daoist communities to be relatively self-sustaining and autonomous within themselves, and create relatively private environments conducive to self-cultivation and ritual. The massive land reform of the early Communist period ended this traditional economic context almost overnight and left Daoist communities to seek for new means of supporting themselves. The propagation of atheist culture in China has also removed the believing laity who constituted the traditional social support of Daoism.

Without this support, organized Daoism has had to seek for a new niche in “New China.” Because of its messianic tendencies, there are now strict legal circumscriptions on organized Daoism that have been designed to prevent Daoists from being able to even begin to claim any kind of moral imperative over the ruling Communist powers. It is accepted that Daoism is now firmly under control of the ruling powers. This represents one of the biggest changes in what a Daoist does – they can no longer openly claim a moral high ground on the basis of spiritual authority. The loss of traditional spiritual authority along with traditional social and economic supports has left Daoism in a precarious position in Chinese society. Opening the monastic
world to tourism has now become the greatest means of support for many Daoist communities. Tourism provides badly-needed revenue and also a source of legitimacy for Daoism, because, in re-orienting itself towards the tourist industry, Daoism has become productive and self-sustaining, and shed the earlier Marxist image of Daoist professionals as exploitative leeches living off of the laboring classes. In the case of Heming Shan at least, tourism and commercialization do bring the secular world into much closer contact with the monastic world, but in the end, the result may not be wholesale watering-down and secularization of Daoist wisdom traditions.

This is because of Daoists themselves; the actors who have individually made up the great body of achievements that we today call “Daoism.” The Heming Shan Daoists exemplify a new generation of sincere, devoted Daoists who are proud of their traditions and proud of their role in preserving these traditions for the future. These individuals work hard almost every day on the traditional Daoist arts of ritual and self-cultivation. While a Daoist has now become a public figure in a way that is unprecedented, there is still a depth and richness to Daoist life that tourists do not see, and cannot touch.

Daoism is a religion of change and integration, and it has just performed one of its most amazing transformations – successfully re-inventing and re-orienting itself to the challenges of 21st century China. This transformation is all the more amazing for the fact that Daoists can re-invent their public face, but at the same time, hold tight to their beloved traditions and maintain the practices and rituals that originated thousands of years ago. Daoism in China is not dead at all; it is just beginning to enter a new phase. In the words of the gatekeeper at Heming Shan, who served day in and day out on the front lines of the tourist crush: “Daoism has a lot to teach us, and it will come back slowly – China will need it.”

223 The Gatekeeper, Interview One, Heming Shan, July 26 2008.
APPENDIX A

PHOTO ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure One. A scene from the 2006 “Second Annual Daoism Culture Festival” at the Green Ram Temple, Chengdu.

224 All photos in Appendix A taken by the Author, 2006-2008.
Figure Two. A Daoist priest cleans up after tourists at the Quanzhen Monastery of Baiyun Guan, Beijing.
Figure Three. Fruit sellers in Yuelai Township, Sichuan Province.
Figure Four. The entrance to Mian Shan, with plenty of convenient parking.
Figure Five. Mian Shan features a Daoist-themed funhouse in the shape of a giant snake.
Figure Six. The entrance to Kongtong Shan, Gansu Province.
Figure Seven. A temple at Kongtong Shan.
**Figure Eight.** A temple at Kongtong Shan (note flowers growing on the roof as well as the garden).
Figure Nine. A typical Daoist shrine at Kongtong Shan, this one to a nature God.
Figure Ten. The scene that greets visitors to Mian Shan.
Figure Eleven. An unusual new style of shrine at Mian Shan. Visitors must pick their way over stones in a pool of water to reach the shrine, where they leave the small donations that are customary at all Daoist shrines.
Figure Twelve. A temple at Mian Shan complete with light displays and ice cream freezer.
Figure Thirteen. Seen from the road, the old Heming Shan complex presents a modest front.
Figure Fourteen. The old gate, under which a long line of local (and vocal) fruit-sellers wait in the shade to sell fruit to tourists.
Figure Fifteen. Approaching the temple across the “Welcoming Immortals Bridge.” The large building is “Welcoming Immortals Pavilion,” and to its left are living quarters for the temple laborers, including some blue makeshift tents for staff and Daoists who had been forced to move out of original quarters because of the earthquake.
**Figure Sixteen.** The view from the bridge – a view very typical of Sichuan *shan-shui* scenery.
Figure Seventeen. Inside the “old” temple complex. A view of Taiqing Gong, built on the exact site of an ancient zhi of the Celestial Masters. A priest or priestess usually sits at the red-draped table to attend to tourists.
Figure Eighteen. The large central temple, *San Qing Dian*, damaged by the earthquake.
Figure Nineteen. Monastic living quarters to the left of the main axis, also damaged by the earthquake.
Figure Twenty. Tourists burning incense at the gate-temple, “Welcoming Immortals Pavilion.”
Figure Twenty one. The single entrance for tourists, through the Welcoming Immortals Pavilion. From this gate, to reach the main complex one must travel up a steeply vertical stone staircase. The priests and priestesses also perform daily group rituals here, making for bizarre human traffic jams when a busload of tourists arrives during the solemn rituals.
Figure Twenty two. After walking up the stone staircase from the Welcoming Immortals Pavilion, visitors reach the first courtyard of the old complex. This view is directly facing the popular second-story teahouse. At left, the Taiqing Gong temple. The family picnic on the ground level is being carried out right in front of the abbot’s office, in an area that also doubles as a lecture and practice space for the priests and priestesses.
Figure Twenty three. Tourists picnicking in the garden area between Welcoming Immortals Pavilion and the main axis of temples, on plastic picnic tables among stelae and trees that are about 1,000 years old.
Figure Twenty four. Special prayer lamps outside of Taiqing Gong. A Daoist on duty sells these lamps to tourists, who inscribe wishes and prayers on the slip of red paper beneath the lamp.
Figure Twenty five. The main entrance gate of the new “Holy City at the Source of the Dao” featuring an elaborately carved tower showing scenes of the Celestial Masters.
Figure Twenty six. The central temple of the new Holy City. The yellow banner advertises the “Sichuan Earthquake Disaster Blessing and Protecting Rites” which were being carried out by the Heming Shan Daoists in July 2008, as described in Chapter Two.
Figure Twenty seven. One of the smaller temples, dedicated to Wenchang, God of Literature and patron of students. The Enwei Corporation is particularly proud that all of the buildings are designed in a Han Dynasty style, reflecting the heritage of the original Celestial Masters who once lived on the same spot the Holy City is built upon.
Figure Twenty eight. Behind the main axis, an impressive hammered-copper relief of Daoist history from the Sage-Kings to the present day.
Figure Twenty nine. A brightly-pennanted bridge leading into the main axis of temples, shops, and restaurants. Note how the complex layout is designed to be horizontal, clean, and convenient.
Figure Thirty. A dedicated teahouse overlooking the river, with plenty of space and seating.
Figure Thirty one. An incense and souvenir shop at the left of the main axis.
Figure Thirty two. A group of Heming Shan Daoists gather to study ritual music. A lay musician, with back to camera, accompanies them on the *erhu*. 
Figure Thirty three. The complex system of notation used to teach ritual music.
The daily schedule at Heming Shan is punctuated by simple vegetarian meals. Here, the Daoists gather in the temple kitchen for lunch.
1. Xichang City
2. Ya’an City
3. Dayi County Seat
4. Leshan City
5. Chengdu City
6. Santai County Seat
7. Zhongjiang County Seat
8. Guanghan County Seat

Map reproduced from Jie Liu, *Sichuan Luyou Zhinan [Sichuan Travel Guide]*, 413.
APPENDIX C
GLOSSARY OF CHINESE TERMS

Ān 庵

Bā 巴

Báiyún Guàn 白云观

Bàopǔzǐ 抱普子

Cáo Cāo 曹操

Chán 禅

Chángzhù 常住

Chén Dúxiù 陈独秀

Chéngdū 成都

Chóngxū Sì 崇虚寺

Chūjiā 出家

Dà Shǐ 大史

Dānwèi 单位

Dào 道

Dàodéjīng 道德经

Dàoguāng 道光
Dàojiao 道教

Dàoyuán Shèngchéng 道源圣城

Dàozàng 道藏

Dàyì Xiàn 大邑县

Dé 德

Dù Fǔ 杜甫

Éméi Shān 娥眉

Ēnwēi Jítuán 恩威集团

Èrhú 二胡

Fāhuī 发挥

Fāngshì 方士

Fēnhui 分会

Fójiào 佛教

Fú 符

Gé Hóng 葛洪

Gōngrén 工人

Guānyīn 观音

Guānxi 关系

Guómíndǎng 国民党
Hàn (Dynasty) 汉
Hàn Shùn Dì 汉顺帝
Hàn Wǔ Dì 汉武帝
Hèmíng Shān 鹤鸣山
Huáinán Zǐ 淮南子
Huáng Dì 黄帝
Huáng-Lǎo 黄老
Hòu Hánshū 后汉书
Hòu Tǔ 后土
Hú Shi 胡适
Jiā 家
Jiāo 教
Jìn (Dynasty) 晋
Kōngtòng Shān 崆峒山
Kòu Qiānzhī 寇谦之
Lǎozǐ 老子
Lèshān 乐山
Lèshān Dà Fó 乐山大佛
Lǐ 李
Lǐ Báì 李白
Lǐ Shimín 李世民
Língbào 灵宝
Liú Shàoqí 刘少奇
Máo Shān 茅山
Māzǔ 妈祖
Míán Shān 綿山
Míng 命
Míng (Dynasty) 明
Mínguó Zhèngfǔ 民国政府
Nányuè Shān 南岳山
Nèi Dān 内丹
Qi 气
Qìgōng 气功
Qín (Dynasty) 秦
Qīng (Dynasty) 清
Qīngchéng Shān 青城山
Qīngyáng Gōng 青羊宫
Qiū Chùjǐ 邱处穖

Quánzhēn 全真

Quánzhēn Qīngguī 全真清规

Rújiào 儒教

Sān Guān 三官

Sānjiào Héyī 三教合一

Sānjū Dàoshi 散居道士

Sānxīngduī 三星堆

Sichuān (Province) 四川省

Sīmǎ Tán 司马谈

Shān-shuǐ 山水

Shāndōng (Province) 山东省

Shāng (Dynasty) 商

Shàngqīng 上清

Shǔ 蜀

Sòng (Dynasty) 宋

Tàijí 太极

Tàipíng 太平
Tàipíng Guǎngjì 太平广记
Tàishàng Zhì 太上治
Tàiqīng Gōng 太清宫
Táng (Dynasty) 唐
Tiānfǔ 天府
Tiānshī 天师
Tiānshī Dào 天师道
Wài Dān 外丹
Wǎn Kè 晚课
Wáng Zhé 王哲
Wèi (Dynasty) 魏
Wénchāng 文昌
Wū 巫
Wǔ Dǒu Mǐ Dào 五斗米道
Wúwéi 无为
Xiǎng’ěr 想尔
Xiéhuì 协会
Xīlǐng Shān 西岭山
Xiū xīn 休心

Xuē Yǒngxīn 薛永新

Yǎ'ān 雅安

Yán Dì 炎帝

Yāngshēng 养生

Yáng Xī 杨羲

Yīguàn Dào 一贯道

Yuèlái 悦来

Yuán (Dynasty) 元

Zhāo Kè 早课

Zhèjiāng (Province) 浙江省

Zhèngyì 正义

Zhāng Dàolíng 张道陵

Zhāng Héng 张衡

Zhāng Jué 张角

Zhāng Lǔ 张鲁

Zhāng Yù 张钰
Zhi 治

Zhuāngzǐ 庄子

Zhōu (Dynasty) 周
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