

TAOISM

AND THE ARTS OF CHINA



in conjunction with the program

Ancient China: The Legacy of Confucius and Laozi

A Teacher Workshop
February 24, 2001

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Ancient China: The Legacy of Confucius and Laozi

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Introduction: What is Taoism?

This packet introduces Taoism, and its expression in Chinese art. What exactly is Taoism? (pronounced “dow-ism”)

The “Tao” (pronounced “dow”) is change, motion, energy, the source of all matter and creation. It unfolds as the interaction of two kinds of energy (*qi*, pronounced “chee”), called yin and yang. These two energies interact in a state of constant movement.

Taoism is a world of beliefs, writings, ceremonial practices, philosophies, and art that strives to harmonize the life of human beings with the forever and naturally changing universe. Like any religion or set of indigenous beliefs, Taoism has evolved over the centuries to encompass many ideas, mythologies and cultural practices.

Some of the many dimensions of Taoism are:

- a philosophical tradition, centered around the reading of key works such as Laozi’s *Daode jing* (pronounced “dow-duh-jing”) and the *Zhuangzi* (pronounced “jwahng-dz”)
- a historically based religion, organized into different sects that include priests, temples, and many texts
- various practices for the cultivation and perfection of *qi* within one’s own body, leading to greater longevity of life, and possibly even immortality
- a vast hierarchy of deities that personify the many dimensions of the “Tao.”
- a world of popular beliefs and practices stemming from many different sources throughout Chinese culture

Additional notes for teachers:

- 1) A distinction should be noted between Religious Taoism and popular Taoism, or to be more accurate, the general religious practices of the average person in China. The art objects featured in this packet pertain mostly to Taoism as a historical, organized religion in China. These works represent a type of “official” or “upper class” Taoism with its priesthood, sects, liturgies, court sponsorship, etc., and not the general religious practices of the common people. Popular religious practice in China has moved freely between the beliefs of Taoism, Confucianism, and Buddhism, incorporating many local deities and heroes. It is less concerned with speculating on immortality or the nature of the cosmos, and more concerned with matters of health, happiness, and personal fortune. Yet, at the same time, we shall see examples of Religious Taoism incorporating popular Deities and Immortals into its pantheon—a testament to the richness and complexity of Taoism as both cultural and religious phenomenon.
- 2) Since most teachers are advised not to teach “religion” per se, we recommend that Taoism be presented as a cultural and historical phenomenon in China, that can be explored through works of art included in this packet. One can begin by discussing popular trends from China in American culture—tai ch’i and other martial arts, yin and yang symbolism, fengshui—that have ties to Taoism. For younger children, Taoism is rich with many stories associated with the gods and immortals.
- 3) Since teachers are often required to cover Confucius along with Laozi and Taoism in their classroom study of ancient China, we have included a section on Confucius and Confucianism in this packet. Both Laozi and Confucius were teachers who inspired followings, and these followings can be studied as two complementary beliefs that are fundamental to any appreciation of Chinese culture. Taoism has also had a lot of interaction with Buddhism in China. Buddhism is mentioned briefly in some of the slide descriptions, and in the background information on Laozi and the History of Taoism section.
- 4) Note on the use of terms:
 - a) ‘Taoism’ is spelled with a ‘T’ in this packet and in the exhibition catalogue, *Taoism and the Arts of China* since it has entered popular English language usage this way. Elsewhere in the packet, Chinese words are spelled using pinyin. “Tao” in Pinyin is spelled “Dao” and pronounced more like a “d” just as “tofu” is more accurately pronounced “dofu”.
 - b) BCE (“before the common era”) and CE (“common era”) are used by the museum in place of B.C. and A.D. The dates are the same either way.
- 5) We appreciate your comments and feedback on the contents of this packet. You may contact the Education department at the museum:

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Like unto A Dragon: Laozi and the History of Taoism



“Birds, I know, can fly; fish, I know, can swim; animals, I know, can run. For the running one can make a net; for the swimming one can make a line; for the flying one can make an arrow. But when it comes to the dragon, I have no means of knowing how it rides the wind and the clouds and ascends into heaven. Today I have seen Laozi who is really like unto a dragon.”

— (*Shiji*, ch. 63, Confucius’s first meeting with Laozi)

One of the most intriguing and mysterious figures in China’s philosophical and religious history is the ancient sage Laozi (pronounced “low-dz”). Very little is known about this great philosopher who is credited with authoring the *Daode jing* (*Classics on the Way and its Virtue*, pronounced “dow-duh-jing”), the primary text of Taoism. Studying the life of Laozi is not unlike studying the Tao (pronounced “dow”) itself – the more one learns, the more questions arise.

There are several reasons why Laozi’s life has remained so elusive to historians. To begin with, the *Daode jing* does not tell us about the life its reputed author.

It was common practice for philosophers of ancient China to refrain from

signing and dating their work. For this reason, determining the time period of Laozi’s life has proved to be especially difficult. Another element that makes the life of Laozi mystifying is the establishment of Taoism as an organized religion during the Han dynasty (206 BCE–220 CE, pronounced “hahn”). During this period, Laozi attained a complex sacred biography in which he was deified. Therefore, Laozi is recognized as having a historical biography (human life) and a sacred biography (divine life). Over the past eighteen hundred years, the two seemingly opposite histories have been so well integrated that scholars are unclear how to distinguish between them. The enigmatic legend of Laozi is curiously appropriate to the teachings of Taoism. Just as the complementary opposites of yin and yang (pronounced “yahng”) spontaneously transform and support each other, so do the biographies of Laozi.

The Historical Laozi

One of the earliest accounts of Laozi’s historical biography is recorded in Sima Qian’s *Shiji* (*Records of the Historian*; pronounced “shr-jee”), the first general history of China, dated 104 BCE. According to the *Shiji*, Laozi was born Lao Dan (personal name: Erh, and surname: Li) in the Chujen village of Lai District, Hu Province in the state of Chu. He was an archivist in the Zhou (pronounced “joe”) court during the 6th century BCE. It is said that Laozi, upon predicting the decline of the Zhou court, decided to emigrate to the west. He traveled to the west riding an ox, accompanied by a young servant. When he reached the western frontier at Hangu Pass, he was stopped by the guardsman Yin Xi (pronounced “yin-shee”). It is said that Yin Xi recognized the elderly archivist as a divine person and requested Laozi to transmit to him his teachings before leaving the country. It was in this circumstance that Laozi wrote the *Daode jing* (*Classics of the Way and its Virtue*). Upon revealing the teachings of the Tao in this text, Laozi departed westward and no one knows what became of him.

The date of Laozi’s life is a source of great debate among historians. In the *Shiji* and the *Zhuangzi* (written 4th–3rd century BCE, pronounced “jwahng-dz”), Laozi is described as the elder contemporary of Confucius (551–479 BCE). In the *Shiji*, Laozi is also said to have been the Grand Historiographer of Zhou who predicted the rise of the Qin dynasty in 374 BCE. Based on these dates, Laozi lived to be 160–200 years old. The sage’s long life is attributed to (in the *Shiji*) Laozi’s union with the Tao: it is from this achievement that he attained the ultimate gift of longevity.

The Sacred Laozi

With the rise of Taoism as an organized religion, Laozi's biography underwent numerous transformations. The ambiguous nature of his historical biography has also lent itself to the evolution of a sacred life. Laozi has been represented as: an archivist of the Zhou court; a cosmic deity; the messiah; the personification of the Tao; and in certain sects of Taoism, the Buddha. The complex history of Laozi reveals how various segments of ancient China's society interpreted Laozi's teachings on the Tao. They have become a part of religious Taoism's oral tradition and reflect the political impact of Taoism on China's history.

The *Santien nei zhi jing* (*Scripture of the Inner Explanations of the Three Heavens*, TT 1205, pronounced "sahn-nay-jr-jing") dated approximately 420 CE was the first text to account for the mythological lives of Laozi. It was compiled by the Celestial Masters sect, the first school of religious Taoism, which was organized in 142 CE. In this text, Laozi is described as having two births. In his first birth, Laozi arises as the God of the Tao. He is born in the form of an elderly man from the left armpit of the Jade Maiden of Mystery and Wonder (*Xuan miao yu nu*, pronounced "shwahn-myow-yoo-noo"): it is from this appearance that he is named Laozi or "Old Child." His second birth is that of his human life. He is born from Mother Li of the Shang (pronounced "shahng") dynasty who carries him in her womb for eighty-one years; after which, he emerges from her left armpit as an elderly man and becomes the archivist of the Zhou court as it is recorded in the *Shiji*. In the *Xuan mian neiping* (*Esoteric Record of Mystery and Wonder*, pronounced shu-ann-myen-neh-bing) written in the 5th century CE, Laozi is recorded as having a third birth. In this birth, Laozi is born as the Buddha from Jing miao (Queen Maya, pronounced "jing-myow"), the wife of the King of India. It is important to note that these myths adapt many of the same characteristics of Buddha's birth (even though Taoism is a separate religion from Buddhism). For instance, the Buddha (Shakyamuni) is born to Queen Maya and emerges from her right side.

The mythological births of Laozi fulfilled the needs of various segments of ancient China's society. To the schools of religious Taoism, the deified Laozi was a model of cosmic harmony. To the popular religious cults, Laozi was a messiah. To the imperial family, the legend of descendancy from Laozi enabled rulers an opportunity to express power in both the spiritual and earthly worlds. For instance, imperial families who claimed ancestorship to Mother Li enjoyed political power and the "mandate of heaven."

The historical relationship between the popular foreign religion of Buddhism and the indigenous religion of Taoism was marked by periods of antagonism. Buddhism and Taoism fought for patronage among the imperial rulers. The third birth of Laozi as the Buddha was one of the ways in which Taoism attempted to incorporate and find superiority over Buddhism. The *Scripture on Laozi's Conversion of the Barbarians* (*Laozi huahu jing*, pronounced "low-dz-hua-hoo-jing") by Wang Fou in the 4th century CE was another text describing Laozi as the Buddha. In this text, Laozi transformed himself into the Buddha to convert the people of India to Taoism. When Buddhism arrived in China during the 1st century CE, the ancient practices of Taoism were already well established. In fact, in its early stages, Buddhism was essentially seen as a foreign version of Taoism by the Chinese people—this despite the fact that these two religions are ideologically quite different.

Because there is so little factual evidence of the life of Laozi, some scholars wonder if he ever existed at all. As more archaeological discoveries are unearthed in China, scholars hope to realize the "true" history of Laozi. Until such time, it is his teachings on the Tao, the *Daode jing*, that remain most important to scholars and religious followers of Taoism. By learning more about the *Daode jing*, the origins of Taoism and perhaps the origins of Laozi will be unveiled.

The Teachings of Laozi

The *Daode jing* (also known as the *Laozi* after its reputed author and pronounced “dow-duh-jing”), is the central text of the Taoism. In the West, the *Daode jing* is known primarily as a philosophical text; while in China, it has been used for eighteen hundred years as a sacred scripture. In the Celestial Masters sect of religious Taoism, the text has been used for meditation, ritual ceremonies, and ordination rites. Although all segments of society in ancient China (the common people, particularly) viewed the *Daode jing* as a guide to self-cultivation, it was written primarily as a guide for rulers. It promoted the image of the ideal ruler who governs small agricultural communities according to the “Tao” (which has been translated as “Way”). The text has since become a universal guide to the search for harmony within the universe.

In the *Daode jing*, Laozi describes the origins of the Tao. In the beginning, before the existence of the universe there was the Tao. It was eternal void, formless, and empty. Spontaneously, a primal energy (*qi*, pronounced “chee”) emerged from this emptiness and formed a state of primal chaos (*hundun*, pronounced “huhn-duhn”). From this chaos patterns of pure energy (*qi*) evolved and divided into yin and yang. The complementary opposites of yin and yang define the relationship between all things in the universe. For instance: Can one truly know what happiness feels like without experiencing sadness? Can one judge beauty without also judging ugliness? This is the theory of relativity that is applied in Taoism to humans, nature, and the cosmos. Therefore, all things come from the Tao, contain *qi* and are propelled by yin and yang (natural tension). These are the forces of the universe.

The ultimate goal in Taoism is to attain union with the Tao. Individuals may achieve this goal by practicing the two essential principles; *ziran* (spontaneity or naturalness, pronounced “dz-rah-n”) and *wu wei* (non-action, pronounced “woo-way”). Taoists often compare the achievement of these principles to a recapturing of childhood naiveté, spontaneity, and naturalness. In the *Daode jing*, the principals of *ziran* and *wu wei* were applied to the art of rulership. Whereas Confucianism emphasized the use of ancient rituals and a strict moral code to establish social and political order, the *Daode jing* taught that an ideal ruler should govern through noninterference and naturalness. The ruler should also relinquish all personal desires, practice humility, and to use as little violence as possible in times of warfare.

The teachings of the Laozi in the *Daode jing* were appealing to the ancient Chinese for several reasons. Its origins can be traced to the various ancient beliefs and practices. For instance, yin and yang cosmology dates back to the Shang dynasty (approx. 1600–1100 BCE), divination (*Yi jing* or *I Ching*, pronounced “yee-jing”) dates to the Western Zhou period (approx. 1100–771 BCE), and practitioners of longevity (*fangshi*, pronounced “fahng-shr”) date to the Warring States period (481–221 BCE). These concepts were well established as part of the popular religion and culture of ancient China. The *Daode jing*, however, was the first text to explain the origin of these concepts and the respective roles of the ruler and common people within it. The *Daode jing* also expounded the central principle of Taoism. This is the belief in correspondence (macrocosm vs. microcosm)—all things in the universe correspond to and are reflections of one another—human body, nature, and the cosmos

The exact date that the *Daode jing* was written is unknown and is the source of debate among scholars. It was an accepted tradition among followers of a school of philosophy to “add” to a philosophical text. They often did so without claiming authorship to their added segments. For this reason, the search for the earliest version of the *Daode jing* has two purposes: earlier versions will bring scholars closer to the original text and closer to its alleged author. In 1973 archaeologists discovered silk manuscripts of the *Daode jing* in the tomb of Marchioness of Dai at Mawangdui (pronounced “mah-wahng-dway”) in Changsha, Hunan province, dating to 168 BCE. An even earlier version of the *Daode jing* was discovered

in 1993 in a tomb at Guodian, Hubei province. In this tomb, three bundles of bamboo slips dating from the late 4th century BCE were found inscribed with the ancient text. The bamboo slips, also known as the Guodian manuscripts, are at present the earliest known version of the *Daode jing*. They are approximately two hundred years earlier than the text found at Mawangdui.

Zhuangzi and Other Followers of Laozi



The Taoist text that has greatly impacted the lives of ancient Chinese people and the people of China today is the *Zhuangzi* (pronounced “jwahng-dz”). It was composed by Zhuang Zhou (369–286 BCE, pronounced “jwahng-joe”), also referred to as *Zhuangzi*, in the late 4th century BCE. *Zhuangzi* is believed to have written the “inner chapters” or the first seven chapters of the text; subsequent segments of the text were “added” later by other philosophers. *Zhuangzi* was a follower of Laozi and is believed to have lived in the kingdom of Wei (pronounced “way”)

or Song (pronounced “soong”). In the *Records of the Historian*, Sima Qian writes that *Zhuangzi* declined a high government position in preference to the contemplative life of a sage. The *Zhuangzi* is a collection of charming and often humorous prose that illustrates the teachings of Laozi in metaphorical parables. Zhuang Zhou’s narrative embodied the ideals expressed in the paradoxical writings of the *Daode jing*. The Taoist priest Kristopher Shipper describes the difference between the two scriptures the following way: “The *Daode jing* sounds a single voice, the book of Zhuangzi (“Master Zhuang”) as an orchestra ... suites of themes and variations make this immortal work into a symphony..”

The *Zhuangzi* emphasizes the act of self-cultivation, that is, the fulfillment of the individual in accordance with the Tao. Differing from the *Daode jing*, the *Zhuangzi* glorified the sage as opposed to the ideal ruler. *Zhuangzi* believed that all people are capable of obtaining the Tao by mastering *ziran* (spontaneity) and *wu wei* (non-action). An example is the artist who has perfected his/her craft, thereby exhibiting “naturalness.” *Zhuangzi*’s parables also illustrate the notion of correspondence and relativity. In a famous example, *Zhuangzi* describes a dream in which he becomes a butterfly. The dream is so real that upon awakening, he wonders whether he is actually a butterfly dreaming of being *Zhuangzi*.

Zhuangzi is also notable for his elaborate description of a pantheon of immortals (*xian*, pronounced “shyen”). These are individuals who have attained harmony through obtaining the Tao. They dwell in the sacred mountains and travel freely between the celestial and earthly world. The stories of these immortals, their fantastic adventures, and interaction with humans, have greatly influenced the lives of the Chinese. They are subjects of China’s rich artistic tradition and, to this day, continue to be honored by the Chinese.

The search for immortality became an obsession for many imperial rulers. It was believed that immortality could be achieved through the ingestion of dangerous elixirs. As a result, many of them died. However, the definition of immortality was not necessarily living eternally in one’s human body. Immortality came to be defined as a celestial existence. This meant achieving harmony with the cosmos as well as one’s natural longevity on earth. In other words, an individual could attain “immortality,” even in death.

While the *Daode jing* and the *Zhuangzi* are the earliest known texts on the Tao, religious Taoism has produced a myriad of sacred scriptures. Largely unknown of in the West, the largest compilation of Taoist scriptures is recorded in the *Daozang* (*Tao-tsang*, pronounced “dow-zang”) or *Taoist Cannon*. At the beginning of the twentieth century, only one complete copy of the *Daozang* was known to exist. It contained approximately one thousand five hundred sacred texts. In 1926 it was translated for the first time from a photo-lithographic reprint of a 15th century woodblock print. As a result of this translation, the realm of religious Taoism has been unveiled, transforming the world’s perception of Taoism in ancient China.

Schools of Taoism

Philosophy and religion in ancient China cannot be clearly distinguished. They interweave and coexist in such a way that it would be incorrect to entirely separate the two. The transformation then of Taoism into an organized religion shows how philosophical teachings such as Taoism can serve as the seeds of a blossoming religion. The impetus for this transformation would include several factors: the decline of the Han dynasty, an increased interest in the pursuit of spiritual enlightenment and immortality, and the influence of the foreign religion of Buddhism into the country.

The transformation of Taoism from a philosophy to an organized religion is dated to the Eastern Han dynasty (25–219 ce). Since this time, China witnessed the rise of religious Taoism. Two main schools emerged, the Way of the Celestial Masters (*Tianshi dao*, pronounced “dyen-shr-dow”) or Orthodox One Covenant (*Zhengyi mengwei*, pronounced “juhng-yee-muhng-way”) and the Complete Reality (*Quanzhen*, pronounced “chuan-juhn”). In addition to these schools, the Highest Clarity (*Shangqing*, pronounced “shan-ching”) and Sacred Jewel (*Lingbao*, pronounced “ling-bow”) scriptures further transformed the Taoist tradition. Originally received by the mediums of the Way of the Celestial Master clergy, the Highest Clarity (*Shangqing*) scriptures incorporated the indigenous mystical traditions of Southeast China, and the Lingbao texts incorporated Buddhist theology and rituals. Despite that fact that these schools held different Taoist views, they coexisted and often “borrowed” from each other’s traditions.

The founding of religious Taoism in the Eastern Han dynasty (25–219 CE) is attributed to Zhang Daoling (pronounced “jahng-dow-ling”). In 142 BCE, Zhang Daoling claimed that while meditating on Crane Cry Mountain in Szechuan Province, he received a revelation from the deified Laozi (Taishang Laochun, pronounced “tye-shahng-low-chuhn,” or Lord Lao the Most High). In his vision, the Lord Lao bestowed on him the power of the Celestial Masters through the law of the *Orthodox One* (*Zhengyi*). The Celestial Masters would lead the “chosen people” back to an era of great peace as describing in the text, *Taiping jing* (*Classic of Great Peace*, pronounced “tye-ping-jing”). Upon his revelation, Zhang Daoling founded Way of the Celestial Master (*Tianshi dao*), the first school of religious Taoism.

Under the Way of the Celestial Masters, a structured leadership of priests developed. The priests or Celestial Masters were in charge of overseeing small communities or parishes. It was their duty to perform ritual ceremonies to cure the illness of their parishioners and their ancestors. The Celestial Master performed petitions and composed talismans to cure these illnesses. It was believed that illness was a form of punishment for the evil deeds of a parishioner or his/her ancestors. The Way of the Celestial Master is also referred to as the Way of the Five Pecks of Rice (*Wudoumi dao*, pronounced “woo-doh-mee-dow”). This is because, each household was required to contribute a tax of five pecks of rice to their local parish in return for their services.

The Way of the Celestial Masters emigrated to the south when the Western Jin dynasty fell to foreign rule in 317 ce. When they arrived at Nanjing, the Celestial Masters came into conflict with the existing indigenous beliefs. These beliefs were ingeniously absorbed into the Way of the Celestial Masters through the revelations of Yang Xi. In 346 ce, Yang Xi claimed he was visited by perfected beings (*zhenren*, pronounced “juhn-ruhn”) from the sacred mountains of Maoshan from whom he received the Highest Clarity Scriptures (*Shangqing jing*). The scripture incorporated the mystical beliefs of the south including *fangshi* (magicians), geomancy, talismans, and the search for longevity through alchemy.

In the 397 CE, Ge Chaofu composed a second scripture, the *Lingbao jing* (*Classic of the Sacred Jewel or Numinous Treasures Scriptures*) that would further transform religious Taoism. Ge Chaofu was a descendent of the famous Ge family of the south who were well-established *fangshi* (magicians) and practitioners of alchemy. These scriptures were the first to integrate Mahayana Buddhist theology and practices into Taoism. The scripture promoted concepts such as universal salvation and karmic merit (*gongfu*, pronounced “goong-foo”).

The great influence of Buddhism on religious Taoism would eventually lead to a major reform movement during the Southern Song dynasty (1127–1279). This movement was founded by Wang Zhe (1113–1170, pronounced “wahng-je”), a military officer trained in the Confucian philosophy who received a vision from the immortals Lu Dongbin (pronounced “lew-doong-bin”) and Zhongli Quan (pronounced “joong-lee-chuan”) in 1159. It was from this vision, that Wang Zhe unified the Three Teachings (*san jiao*, pronounced san-jyow)—Zen Buddhism, Confucianism, and Taoism—under a single Taoist theology and formed the School of Complete Realization (*Quanzhen*, pronounced “chwan-juhn”). The school adopted texts from these teachings including the Buddhist Heart Sutra (*Xin Jing*, pronounced “shin-jing”), the Confucian *Classic of Filial Piety* (*Xiao Jing*, pronounced “shyow-jing”), and the *Classic of the Way and its Power* (*Daode Jing*). The school emphasized the Zen Buddhism monasticism, Confucian ethics, and the Taoist belief and practice of inner alchemy (*neidan*, pronounced “nay-dahn”).

From these beginnings, religious Taoism would play a pivotal role in China’s history. It legitimized the ancient beliefs and practices indigenous to China and over the centuries, ingeniously blended these concepts with the political and philosophical teachings of Confucianism, and the foreign theology of Buddhism. Taoism would suffer, however, in the past century due to Chinese reform movements such as the “May Fourth Movement” in 1917 and the “New Life Movement” in the 1920’s. Labeled as a religion of aberrant superstition, Taoist sanctuaries were either converted into public or government buildings, or simply destroyed. The Cultural Revolution (1964–1974) served as the climax of the persecution of Taoism in China.

Despite all of these hardships, Taoism has persevered and a revival of the religion is emerging in mainland China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong. The religion is especially strong in Taiwan where the 63rd Celestial Master has lived since 1949. Although certain Taoist rituals remain prohibited in mainland China, the arts and traditions of Taoism continue to be celebrated at local festivals. This resurgence of Taoism has also inspired a move to restore damaged Taoist temples. It is within these temples, that an array of Taoist religious arts is being recovered. These magnificent arts record not only the political, cultural, and artistic history of ancient China, they also exhibit the tremendous impact religious Taoism has had on the world in the present day.

Taoism and Politics

The political role of Taoism in Chinese history makes an interesting contrast with that of one of China's other main teachings, Confucianism. Confucianism, with its emphasis on the social order, was most closely associated with the imperial government; Taoism, on the other hand, was embraced fervently by the common people. While Confucianism and Taoism had an ambivalent relationship throughout China's history, both played a role in the imperial government. Eventually, in the lives of the imperial personnel, Confucianism and Taoism came to complement each other: Confucianism was the primary philosophy applied to civil government, but it was religious Taoism that governed the personal and spiritual lives of many imperial families.

Taoism appealed to all levels of ancient Chinese society, but it was the common people who were especially drawn to it. From the very beginning, Taoism has enjoyed an almost rebel-like status. Unlike the elitist and aristocratic rituals associated with Confucianism, Taoism promoted self-cultivation and autonomy. Both philosophies encouraged the search for harmony, but they differed in their teachings on how to attain it. Taoism criticized the Chinese feudal society and taught that an ideal ruler is one who governs with *wu wei* (non-interference).

To demonstrate the “foolishness” of rituals, Taoists refer to a famous encounter recorded in Sima Qian's *Shiji (Records of the Historian)* in which Confucius travels to Zhou to ask Laozi advice on the rites.

I have heard that a good merchant fills his storehouses but appears to have nothing; a true gentleman is overflowing with virtue but looks as if he was a fool. Give up your prideful airs and your manifold desires, get rid of your stiff deportment and your lascivious thoughts. All these do you no good at all. I have nothing else to tell you.

(—*Shiji*, ch. 63)

While Taoists interpret this event as an example of Laozi's higher status to Confucius, Confucianists interpret it as an example of Confucius' humble nature and desire to pursue knowledge.

The very nature of Taoism—its enigmatic teachings and its promotion of less government involvement—lent it great popularity among the people of China. By the time that Taoism emerged as a religion, it had even become the inspiration for civil revolt. For instance, not long after the founding of the first school of Taoism, a millenarian movement called the Rebellion of the Yellow Turbans (its members wore yellow turbans) erupted in 182 CE. Led by Zhuang Jue (pronounced “jwahng-jwe”), the movement held similar ideology as the Way of the Celestial Masters in that they also believed Laozi also known as the Yellow Venerable Lord (Huang Lao chun, pronounced “hwahn-low-chun”) would return to restore the Great Peace. The coming of the messiah, however, was predicted to arrive in 184 CE. The immediacy of the movement led to massive peasant rebellions throughout eastern China. This movement, also known as the Way of Great Peace (*Taiping dao*), was eventually destroyed by the Han army, yet not before significantly weakening the government.

The rising power of Taoism did not go by unnoticed by the imperial authorities. In fact, during several dynasties religious Taoism enjoyed imperial patronage, thereby giving the imperial families power in both the spiritual and earthly realm. Despite their involvement with the government, religious Taoism continued to maintain its independence as a powerful entity. Instead of the religion relying on the power of the government, it was the imperial authorities that depended upon religious Taoism to strengthen their political status among the masses. The independent nature of the Taoist religion however, has often led

it to precarious political positions. Ironically, the prediction of the coming of a Great Peace (*Taiping*, pronounced “tye-ping”) both inspired revolutionary uprisings and also attracted emperors who wished to claim ancestorship to Laozi. It was under emperors such as these that Taoism benefited greatly from imperial power and patronage

The Arts of Taoism

Taoism has revealed a complex and enchanting realm of visual art works. These works transport the viewer into the cosmos, inhabited by a pantheon of immortals and deities. The arts, especially calligraphy, hold a very sacred place in the Taoist religion. According to the *Shangqing scriptures* (*Highest Clarity*), writing or calligraphy existed before the creation of the world. The calligraphy known as “cloud script” emerged as “rays of light” from the primordial Tao. The act of calligraphy or painting itself is seen as spiritual. Taoism has profoundly influenced the principles and techniques of Chinese painting. To this day, brushpainters abide by Xie He’s (pronounced “shyeh-huh”) *Six Laws of Painting* (600s). Xie He explains how a painting should reflect the artist’s “breath-resonance.” This is the emanation of the artist’s *qi* (pronounced “chee”) through the body and transferred into each brushstroke. It is not surprising then that many great Chinese painters were Taoist including the Ni Zan (1306–1374, pronounced “nee-zahn”) whose family belonged to the Orthodox Unity (Zengyi) school of religious Taoism.

Not only have the arts of Taoism articulated the history and teachings of the Tao, they have enlightened the world to an art aesthetic that is uniquely Taoist. From austere brush and ink landscape painting to the highly stylized and colorful paintings of the immortals, the arts of Taoism encompass a full range of artistic styles. Taoist art has also recorded the history of science in China. These include stone rubbings of star charts and wood block prints of botanical manuals. Perhaps the greatest contribution of Taoist art is that it gives life to a world of the Tao. That which is “dark and obscure, vast and open.”



Confucius: Life, Teachings and Legacy

Confucius was a teacher who lived during the Eastern Zhou dynasty (771–221 bce) His ideas and those of his followers profoundly influenced the course of East Asian politics and society. Confucianism refers not only to the teachings of Confucius and his followers but also to the various institutions and practices that were established in his name from the Han dynasty (206 bce–220 ce) onward. Confucian beliefs and practices are often discussed alongside those of Laozi and Taoism, and are included in this packet on Taoism for the purposes of comparison.

Life of Confucius

“Confucius” is the Latin rendering of the Chinese name Kongfuzi, coined by the Jesuit missionary Matteo Ricci, who lived in China in the late 1500s. Kongfuzi means “Master Kong.” Confucius’s original surname was Kong. His personal name was Qiu. Since the Confucius is the name by which he has come to be known in Western languages, it is used hereafter.

Some scholars debate whether Confucius ever lived. His traditional dates, however, are from 551–479 BCE. He was born at Qufu in the state of Lu in present-day Shandong province. His father was governor of the town of Zou, but died when Confucius was three. Confucius was born into a lower aristocratic military class, but because of his father’s death, he grew up in relative poverty. These early hardships may have contributed to his love of learning and self-improvement.

Confucius’s education included archery, horse and chariot riding, music and poetry, hunting and fishing. As a young man, he married and had a son and daughter. He held various jobs as overseer of state granaries, grazing lands and cattle.

Confucius lived during the latter half of the Zhou dynasty—referred to as Eastern Zhou, since the capital had moved east from the original Zhou capital at Xi’an to a location near the present-day city of Luoyang. The Zhou had overtaken the Shang dynasty in the mid-11th century BCE, but had fled east in 771 BCE when attacked by foreign invaders. By the time of Confucius, Zhou dynastic power was in decline. China was divided into numerous states that were controlled by local lords, who often fought with each other. This was a feudal world, where land-holding, hereditary status, and military prowess were the keys to power. Confucius tried to offer advice to the rulers of these local states, but met with little success. Although he was employed briefly as a magistrate, he spent most of his life wandering and teaching. In this way, he hoped to inspire aristocratic young men to bring about social and political change.

Confucius taught in small groups, using a conversational style. He wanted his students to think for themselves, to examine their own assumptions and beliefs (as in the Socratic method of ancient Greece). Confucius urged scholarship, study, and self-discipline. He wanted his students to be upright, courteous, model citizens who would be effective in government positions. He wanted them to have respect for rituals and to have compassion for other people.

Legend has it that Confucius taught as many as 3,000 students, but only 22 are mentioned in the Analects, a collection of sayings attributed to Confucius. One of his pupils, Yan Hui, was singled out by Confucius as a model of the qualities he admired.

Confucius's later life was filled with bitter disappointments. Both his son, and his favorite pupil, Yan Hui, died young. For thirteen years, he lived as an exile from his home state. Rulers ignored his advice, or else he was given minor positions with little impact on state affairs. It would be several hundred years before Confucius's ideas were formally adopted.

Traditional Beliefs at the time of Confucius and Laozi

Many of the beliefs and practices that would have been familiar to Confucius and Laozi were already centuries old by their lifetimes. Both men were responding to the uncertainty of their times and incorporated different aspects of long-held traditions and beliefs into their teachings.

The ancient Chinese, like all ancient peoples, observed patterns in the world around them—the passage of seasons, night and day, the movement of the stars, and so on—and tied the welfare of humanity to the laws of nature. They believed that deities or natural forces governed the world, sometimes conferring blessings and at other times bringing punishments. Kings and their ruling families could act on behalf of humanity by offering sacrifices at auspicious times, attempting to forecast the future, placating natural forces and the ancestors and thereby averting disasters.

Various names were given to this supreme power. Shang divination records on oracle bones refer to *Shang Di*. Akin to a great spirit, prime mover, and principal ancestor, *Shang Di* was not anthropomorphic (human form) but formless. During the subsequent Zhou dynasty, *Shang Di* evolved into or was replaced by the concept called tian. *Tian* literally means “sky,” but it encompasses the will of a supreme power, the cosmic or natural order of things, and the changing of the seasons and passage of time. In essence, *Tian* means both heaven and sky. The Zhou gave tian a moral dimension by explaining their defeat of the Shang in terms of the “mandate of heaven.” As long as rulers upheld the will of the people and carried out the proper rites, heaven “mandated” their right to rule. This meant that the ruling dynasty had a moral responsibility to represent the will of the people and needed to act in ways that ensured the continued favor of heaven. *It was these moral actions on the part of the ruler—acting on behalf of the people in order to preserve the will of heaven and the cosmos—that preoccupied the teachings of both Laozi and Confucius.*

Both Laozi and Confucius advocated the ways of nature and the cosmos. Confucius' emphasis, however, was on the social realm. Laozi and his followers advised against righteous moralizing that would lead, they felt, to more problems. They suggested minimal intervention and doing nothing that interfered with the ways of nature. Confucius, by contrast, respected traditional hierarchies and emphasized the importance of ritual. He wanted to create an elevated class of gentlemen that could be trained to lead by example. Both Confucius and Laozi advised steadfastness and moral courage.

Another common belief in ancient times (and continuing throughout Chinese history) was the belief in a realm of spirits, unseen but very real, coexisting with the world of the living. In this dimension are the souls of the departed ancestors, as well as malevolent and benevolent spirits that can cause harm or bring blessings. Archaeological evidence suggests that the world of the spirits and ancestors was of great concern to the ancient Chinese long before the time of Confucius. Worship of ancestors was essential to the continuation of the family line. Ancestors were offered ritual offerings of food and wine at specified days of the week and the year. Ancestors were the direct link to heaven. They could be petitioned or appeased when necessary. They could help interpret events in the earthly realm. Failure to observe the proper sacrificial offerings after death could result in angry spirits. Numerous practices evolved through the centuries to deal with the spirit world, including charms, exorcisms, the use of gongs and firecrackers, the burning of incense, fasting and so on.

How did Confucius and Laozi respond to matters of death, afterlife and the world of spirits? The followers of Laozi became interested in extending human life through elixirs of immortality and other techniques. Confucius, on the other hand, was concerned with the importance of rituals (*li*) in maintaining relationships with the ancestors. Rituals to Confucius were, even more importantly, the vehicles through which social harmony was exercised and maintained because they kept the human realm in harmony with the natural and spiritual realm. Ritual defined the civilized person.

Confucian Ideas and Principles

What exactly did Confucius teach? The sayings attributed to Confucius and Laozi have been interpreted in many different ways, partly because there are no equivalent terms in English for some of the Chinese terms that we encounter. These terms are imbued with historical and cultural meanings thousands of years old and are not easy to translate. Furthermore, English terms come with their own cultural and historical associations and meanings, further complicating matters.

Though Confucius urged his followers to study and honor various classic texts (the Books of Songs, Rites, History—see Confucian classics, below), his teachings are most directly revealed in the *Analects* (*Lunyu*), a selection of conversations between Confucius and his disciples. Scholars have identified some of the following ideas that crop up repeatedly in the book.

1) Upholding past traditions

Confucius believed that he was upholding tradition, and he drew inspiration from the past. Confucius felt that much of the present disorder and corruption was the result of selfish actions and a neglect of past traditions and past behaviors. He drew attention to various cultural heroes from the past. These included the so-called founders of Chinese culture: Fuxi (Ox Tamer), Shennong (Divine Farmer), and Huangdi (Yellow Emperor); the Five Emperors, who oversaw a golden age of model government; Yu, honored for controlling the floods (a common problem in China); and the founding kings of the Zhou dynasty. Wen and Wu's brother the Duke of Zhou were held up as model rulers; the Duke of Zhou was especially admired by Confucius for his loyalty and devotion to ritual. Confucius believed people should model their behavior on these past rulers.

2) Morality

The heroes of the past behaved virtuously and governed with a sense of morality. Confucius wanted men to improve themselves, to become the best type of person they could be. Virtue (de) or moral power was conferred by heaven. It could persuade others and transform the world. Order and morality went hand in hand.

According to Confucius, morality should not be pursued in anticipation of a reward, but for its own sake. An individual needed courage, but not the type of courage that led to conquest and domination of others. Courage had to be in the service of morality. That way, one could be called virtuous.

3) Social relationships

People do not act alone, but in the company of others. Humans are social beings. If they wish to live in harmony, said Confucius, they need to develop consideration for others (reciprocity or shu). This led to his famous rule: "What you do not want done to yourself, do not do to others."

If people were to be more considerate towards each other, they also needed to understand proper relationships. One must also be loyal (*zhong*) to one's superiors. Confucius upheld what is known as the Five Relationships. These Five Relationships were (according to Mencius, the most famous follower of Confucius):

- child to parent
- minister to ruler
- spouse to spouse
- younger to older sibling
- friend to friend

4) Values

At the core of Confucius's teachings were three values. These were

a. *ren* (pronounced like "jen"): humaneness, a feeling of humanity towards others.



The Chinese character for *ren* is made up of two parts the left shows a person; the right is the number two, meaning a person with others

This term has also been interpreted as "goodness" and "exemplary humanity."

b. *xiao* ("she-ow"): filial piety, stemming from respect for parents, the bond between parent and child



The character is made up an old man supported underneath by a young man

In ancient China, men were expected to produce male heirs. These heirs were responsible for overseeing their parents' funerals, observing mourning periods, and continuing sacrifices to the parents as ancestors.

c. *li* ("lee"): awareness of ritual, from highest levels of society to the individual confirms relationships, even after death. Governs all aspects of life.



This character is made up of (left side) the character for prognostication (divining or altar) and (on the right side) the character for ritual vessel

Confucius stressed that rituals were not an end in themselves; they should be accompanied by genuine feelings of reverence and respect. Ritual realizes the feelings and customs that motivate it.

Political action was not always necessary. For most people, honoring one's parents and observing the rituals with proper feelings was enough to contribute to the social order. In other words, people could change the world through their own actions, they did not have to participate in government to effect change.

5) The cultivation of the “gentleman”

Confucius advised his followers to cultivate themselves and enjoy learning. A life devoted to self-improvement would contribute to the social order. To lead society, he envisioned an educated type of “gentleman” who could lead by moral example and offer sage advice to rulers.

Confucius believed that rulers needed the help of virtuous persons whose position was not based on hereditary status, but on the cultivation of the moral power (*de*) described above. He referred to these as *junzi*. This term is usually translated as “gentleman” or “superior man” or “noble man.”

The actions of the gentleman were contrasted with those of the lesser man. For example, the gentleman “practices what he preaches,” he “understands what is right” and “makes demands on himself” whereas the inferior man “understands what is profitable” and “makes demands on others.”

The original meaning of *junzi* may have been “son of a lord” implying a level of status, but Confucius’s use of the term implies that he was more interested in the qualities of such a person than their assumed position in society. Confucius’s teachings were directed to his disciples, and he likely considered them to be potential *junzi*.

6) The Confucian Classics

Confucius mentioned certain texts that he felt were essential in cultivating the values he upheld. These “Confucian classics” were formally identified during the Han dynasty (206 bce—220 ce) and formed the basis of curriculum in Chinese schools up until the nineteenth century. They were:

- The *Book of History (Shu Jing)*: records of early dynasties
- The *Book of Songs (Shi Jing)*: a collection of lyric poems
- The *Book of Ritual (Li Ji)*: on proper ritual behavior
- The *Book of Changes (Yi Jing)*: diagrams and interpretations for use in prognostications (*note also the influence of this book also on Taoism)
- The *Spring and Autumn Annals (Chun Qiu)*: annals of Confucius’s home state of Lu
- a sixth book—the *Classic of Music (Yue Jing)*—has been lost since the Han dynasty

Four books were written after Confucius’s lifetime that interpreted his teachings and helped spread his influence. These were:

- the *Doctrine of the Mean*, possibly written by the grandson of Confucius or another scholar; emphasizing the relationship between cosmos and humanity
- the *Great Learning*, an interpretation of Confucius’s moral and political views, which affirmed the importance of cultivating the morality of the individual and the ruler

- the *Mencius* (or *Book of Mencius*), a further explanation of Confucius’s teachings, emphasizing the inherent goodness of people (see also below)
- the *Analects* (mentioned earlier), a compilation of the sayings of Confucius and his disciples, in several editions, emphasizing the cultivation of the gentleman, human-heartedness and respect for ritual and social relationships.

Further classics were added later, such as the *Classic of Filial Piety*.

Following Confucius

The two most important followers of Confucius were Mencius (*Mengzi*, about 372–289 BCE) and Xun Zi (pronounced “shun-ts’uh,” about 310–215 BCE). They amplified and clarified the teachings of Confucius:

- Mencius argued for the restoration of moral order, despite the escalation of warfare and authoritarian rule that he saw growing around him
- Mencius believed in the innate goodness of people. While they have basic needs for shelter, food and clothing, people also have “natural tendencies” or sympathies towards rightness and wisdom that can be cultivated; he uses the example of a child falling in a well, saying that any onlooker would naturally want to save the child.
- Xun Zi had a more sober view of humanity than Mencius. He visited the Qin court just before it defeated the Zhou dynasty in 256 BCE, and deplored its harsh use of Legalist policies that emphasized terrorizing and punishing people. Perhaps because of this experience, Xun Zi favored the restoration of a meritocracy with values firmly grounded in Confucian ritual. He felt that man’s inherently evil nature could be addressed through proper ritual and learning.

Suppression of scholars under the First Emperor (legend has it that as many as 460 scholars were buried alive), and the burning of texts, led to revival of Confucian ideas during the Han dynasty and the establishment of the first Confucian academy under the Emperor Wu in 124 BCE. Within the century, three thousand students were enrolled in schools throughout local districts and a pattern had begun training scholars for positions in the government bureaucracy.

After the Han dynasty (2nd century CE), China fell into a period of disorder. China was divided into northern and southern dynasties. Over the next few centuries, Buddhism, a foreign religion, grew in popularity along with religious Taoism.

Confucianism remained the predominant political and moral philosophy of China throughout this time. Yet it began to be affected by Buddhist and Taoist beliefs (with their greater concerns for spiritual and cosmological matters), and in the Song dynasty (960–1279 CE) Confucianism was greatly revitalized. Among the chief advocates of this revitalization and reinterpretation of Confucianism was Zhu Xi (1130–1200) and (during the Ming dynasty) Wang Yangming (1472–1529). Neo-Confucianism addressed the interconnectedness of what was called principle (*li*—not the same *li* as ritual) and vital matter (*qi*). Human beings had to reclaim their original good nature through introspection, much like Buddhist and Taoist meditation. In this way, they could reconnect with their original principle, that is at one with the cosmos. Neo-Confucianism was the prevalent philosophy in China through the nineteenth century, and was influential in Korea and Japan.

Examination systems

The establishment of a canon of Confucian texts spurred the development of an examination system as a way to select candidates for government service positions. This system continued with only a few disruptions until 1905.

Candidates for the examinations were at first recruited by recommendation, and drawn exclusively from the aristocratic class. Theoretically at least, the system was open to anyone who could read and write, master the classics, and endure the highly competitive examinations. Only a small percentage passed, and repeated attempts were common.

Three levels were established that separated plain learners from the well educated and the extremely learned. The first level examinations (*xiucaai*) were held throughout China at the local level. The second level examinations (*juren*) were held every third year at the provincial capital. The third level examinations (*jinshi*) were held after the second, but in the capital. *Jinshi* graduates were virtually assured a good position in the government.

Candidates in the later imperial examinations were tested on their knowledge of the Confucian classics as interpreted by Neo-Confucianism, but they were also asked to write essays commenting on government policies and actions.

The Confucian examination system contributed to a merit-based ruling elite, displacing the earlier hereditary clan rule. However, the continuing emphasis on moral and literary knowledge in modern times came at the expense of scientific and technical knowledge. Confucianism encouraged an extreme conservatism and distrust of outsiders. It discouraged scientific inquiry and Western thought and technology. These were undoubtedly factors in China's inability to fend off foreign incursions in the 19th and 20th centuries.

The Legacy of Confucius

Today, East-Asian civilization is often referred to in the popular media and by Western historians as a “Confucian-based civilization.” It is said that Confucian family values and work ethics have contributed to the growth of Asian economies. Some Asian leaders have stretched the analogy even further by suggesting that Confucianism means that the individual supports the state—the opposite of the rule of law in the West that supports the rights of the individual to strike out on their own. Still others claim that Confucian values lead to political acquiescence or an over-emphasis on following ritual and tradition.

As we have seen, Confucius did not invent such things as “ancestor worship” and “family values” in China, but he did reinforce existing practices that he felt would contribute to morality and social cohesion. Yet it seems certain he would have questioned the association of his name with authoritarian regimes.

Confucius's emphasis on learning and self-cultivation undoubtedly reinforced a culture of literacy (at least for the educated classes) and helped establish the idea of education as a means to advancement in society.

Confucius's love of poetry, literature, and other art forms paved the way for the development of a scholar class, who were expected to pursue writing, poetry, and painting on a nonprofessional basis as a sign of personal cultivation and moral character.

The fact that scholars continue to interpret his work in many different ways attests to Confucius's ability to raise important, meaningful questions worth considering even 2500 years after his death.

A Selection of Quotes from the Analects:

(Quotations from de Bary, Bloom: *Sources of Chinese Civilization*, 2nd ed., vol. 1
New York: Columbia University Press, 1999.)

- 1:6 “A young man is to be filial within his family and respectful outside it. He is to be earnest and faithful, overflowing in his love for living beings and intimate with those who are humane.”
- 2:1 “One who governs through virtue may be compared to the polestar, which occupies its place while the host of others pay homage to it.”
- 2:3 “Lead them [society] by means of regulations and keep order among them through punishments, and the people will evade them and will lack any sense of shame. Lead them through moral force [de] and keep order among them through rites [li] and they will have a sense of shame and will also correct themselves.”
- 2:5 “When one's parents are alive, one serves them in accordance with the rites; when they are dead, one buries them in accordance with the rites and sacrifices to them in accordance with the rites.”
- 2:17 “When you know something, to know that you know it. When you do not know, to know that you do not know it. This is knowledge.”
- 3:4 “In rites, it is better to be sparing than to be excessive. In mourning, it is better to express grief than to emphasize formalities.”
- 4:6 “I have not seen one who loved humaneness, nor one who hated inhumanity. One who loved humaneness would value nothing more highly. One who hated inhumanity would be humane so as not to allow inhumanity to affect his person. Is there someone whose strength has for the space of a single day been devoted to humaneness? I have not seen one whose strength was insufficient. It may have happened, but I have not seen it.”
- 4:16 “The whole person is concerned with rightness; the small person is concerned with profit.”
- 6:20 “One who is humane first does what is difficult and only thereafter concerns himself with success.”
- 7:19 “I am not one who was born with knowledge; I am one who loves the past and is diligent in seeking it.”
- 9:17 “I have never seen anyone who loved virtue [de] as much as he loved beauty [se].”
- 12:1 “Through mastering oneself and returning to ritual one becomes humane. If for a single day one can master oneself and return to ritual, the whole world will return to humaneness.”

- 12:7 (on government) “Sufficient food, sufficient military force, the confidence of the people.” (Asked if one could dispense with one of these, the Master replied,) “Get rid of the military.”
- 12:11 “Let the ruler be a ruler; the minister, a minister; the father, a father; the son, a son.”
- 12:19 “In conducting your government, why use killing? If you, sir, want goodness, the people will be good. The virtue of the noble person is like the wind, and the virtue of small people is like grass. When the wind blows over the grass, the grass must bend.”
- 14:29 “The noble person is ashamed if his words exceed his actions.”
- 15:23 “Is there one word that one can act upon throughout the course of one’s life?” The Master said, “Reciprocity [*shu*]*—what* you would not want for yourself, do not do to others.”
- 15:38 “In education, there should be no class distinctions.”
- 16:8 “The noble person has three objects of awe: he is in awe of the ordinances of Heaven [*tianming**—*also means “mandate of heaven”]; he is in awe of the great man and he is in awe of the words of the sage. The small man, not knowing the ordinances of Heaven, is not in awe of them; he is disrespectful towards great men; and he ridicules the words of the sages.”
- 16:9 “Those who are born knowing it are of the highest kind; the next are those who come to know it through study; and then those who learn through painful exertion. Finally there are those who, despite painful exertion, do not learn; these are the lowest among the people.”

Themes in Taoism

Taoist Cosmology

In the Taoist cosmology, all things in the universe originated from the primordial Tao. From the stillness and emptiness of the Tao a pure energy (*qi*, pronounced “chee”) spontaneously emerged, forming a state of primordial chaos (*hundun*, pronounced “huhn-duhn”). Gradually, this swirling mass of energy separated into two complementary opposing forces known as yin and yang (pronounced “yahng”). All things in the universe are made up of pure energy (*qi*) and are an expression of yin and yang. For instance, the symbol of yin is the tiger-female, darkness, and receptive. The symbol of yang is the dragon-male, light, and strength. It is the interaction and transformation of yin and yang that perpetuate the movement of the universe. Yin and yang are dependent on one another and in fact, all things are expressions of both elements. For example, once a subject has reached its apex of yin, it naturally transforms itself into its opposite of yang. The taiji symbol (supreme ultimate, pronounced “tye-gee”), commonly known as the yin and yang symbol, describes this circular relationship. The taiji symbol replaced the tiger and dragon (symbols of yin and yang) in the Song dynasty (960–1279). Since this time, it has remained a popular descriptive icon for the Tao.

While religious Taoism was the first to articulate Taoist cosmology, the fundamental concepts originated from ancient Chinese shamanism. Dating from the Western Zhou dynasty (1050–771 BCE), the yin and yang were mapped into eight trigrams known as the bagua. These trigrams show the fluctuation of yin and yang, symbolized by combinations of three broken and unbroken lines. The Prior Heaven (Xiantian, pronounced “shyan-dyan”) and the Later Heaven (Houtian, pronounced “hoh-dian”) are the two bagua that make up the sixty-four hexagrams (multiple combinations of the eight trigrams) of the ancient divination text, the Changes of Zhou (Zhou yi, pronounced “joe-yee”). This text was used as a manual in the arts of divination to predict the transformations of yin and yang and thus the happenings of the universe. This text is the earliest known version of the *Yi Jing* (*I Ching* or *Book of Changes*, pronounced “yee-jing”).

Yin and yang are also expressed in the Taoist cosmological concept of the five elements (wuxing, pronounced “woo-shing”). This is based on both the transformations of yin and yang as well as the theory of correspondences (all things are related to one another). The five elements are wood, fire, earth, metal, and water. Again, all of these elements transform into one another in a circular fashion. Understanding how these elements change is a skill acquired by ancient diviners.

The practice of divination extended into many areas including celestial (position of the stars) and terrestrial (landscape) divination. Celestial divination is the “reading” and of the constellations to foretell the patterns of yin and yang in the universe. The Dipper (Beidou, pronounced “bay-doh,” or Ursa Major) is the most important star in Taoism and is the focus of many Taoist rituals. The Dipper, which is located midway between the moon (yin) and the sun (yang), is seen as a symbol of the separateness and union of these two elements. Divination proceedings often correspond to the change in position of the dipper “handle” in the sky. This is an indicator of the most effective moment for divination.

Terrestrial divination (*fengshui*, pronounced “fuhng-shway”) is the arrangement of buildings in respect to the landscape. The goal of fengshui is to live in harmony with one’s natural environment. The term fengshui is itself an example of yin and yang and translates into wind-water. Fengshui diviners apply the theory of five elements and bagua (pronounced “bah-gwah”) to locate an area that contains good *qi* (energy). It is based on the belief that good or bad *qi* in a location will effect the livelihood of its inhabitants. The

qi within a building is equally important to that of the surrounding environment. For this reason, *feng-shui* practitioners use a geomantic compass to foretell the flow of *qi* of a building based on the floor plan. This ancient divination practice is becoming increasingly popular today in both East Asian and Western countries.

Mountains and Landscapes

From ancient times to the present, mountains have had special meaning in Chinese culture. Taoism has its own special meanings for mountains. As Taoism developed over centuries, it built on earlier beliefs about mountains and contributed its own understanding. Indeed, it is often difficult to separate Taoist ideas about mountains from what might simply be general Chinese beliefs. In Taoism, mountains are magical, almost sacred places. Indeed the word *sacred* is used to refer to particular mountains, like the “Five Sacred Mountains.” But the use of “sacred” is perhaps not quite an adequate way of understanding such mountains. Mountains are places of extraordinary vitality and energy; they are full and perfect expressions of the forever changing permutations of the Great Way, or Tao. The energy of the Tao, or *qi* (pronounced “chee”), obtains particularly refined and powerful concentration in certain mountains. In ancient China, five mountains were identified as such; these became the Five Sacred Mountains, marking north, south, east, west, and center. There are many, many other special mountains, like Wudang (pronounced “woo-dahng”) Mountain, the home of the Perfected Warrior, Zhenwu, one of the most important gods of Taoism (see slide #16). Mountains, with their special *qi*, illuminate the magical operation of the complementary forces of the Tao, yin and yang. Mountains join the heavens with the earth, and serve as the gateway that allows humans to traverse the universe, from the earthly and earthbound, to the heavenly and transcendent. Mountains are where immortals dwell, and where the magical *lingzhi* (pronounced ling-jr) mushroom that bestows immortality grows. Special mountains have many caves or grottoes, sometimes called “cavern-heavens” or *dongtian* (pronounced “doong-tyen”; *dong* means cave and *tian* means heaven). These cavern-heavens are portals to the heavens and to wondrous paradises of immortal existence. Many tales record how wanderers discovered utopian lands at the other ends of caves.

Mountains have special significance in religious Taoism. They were the destinations of Taoists priests who traveled to sacred peaks such as Mount Tai Shan in eastern China for meditation. They were also the places where ritual ceremonies were performed. The Taoist altar itself was visualized as a mountain that officiating priests “ascended” when conducting religious rites. Incense burners, the central object of ritual altars, were similarly viewed as a miniature mountain. They were often sculpted in the shape of sacred peaks. These “mountains” glowed from within, gently emitting clouds of rising *qi* (energy).

In Chinese, the word “landscape” refers to mountains. The Chinese word that we translate as “landscape” literally means “mountains” and “water” or “rivers.” Indeed, this is what the subject of landscape imagery in China is: mountains and water, water in the form of rivers, streams, waterfalls, clouds, and mist. The notion of “mountains and water” also reflects the important balance of yin and yang that is the Tao and the Tao of mountains. The hard, upward thrusting force of the mountain expresses the dynamic and assertive, or yang, character of the Tao in nature; whereas the downward flow of water, the fluid almost intangible character of water, clouds, and mist constitute the yielding, nonassertive, or yin, aspect of the Tao in nature.

From early in Taoist history, Taoist temples were built in precarious places on important mountains, and such sanctuaries often appear as part of the conventional vocabulary of Chinese landscape painting.

Gods and Goddesses

Taoism is a remarkably inclusive religion, which has incorporated elements ranging from folk and regional beliefs to international religions such as Buddhism. Partly for this reason, the Taoist pantheon of gods and immortals swelled over the years. At the same time, its deities remain on some level manifestations of the basic Taoist principles laid down in the earliest Taoist writings. Deities gave a human face to abstract, formless principles such as the all-encompassing Tao. They also provided a focal point for the worshipper.

Taoism's elaborate hierarchy ranged from historical figures who came to be regarded as immortals, to high-ranking gods, to figures such as the Yellow Emperor (*Huangdi*, pronounced “hwanhg-dee”), and the Queen Mother of the West (*Xiwangmu*, pronounced “shee-wang-moo”), who have some of the qualities of immortals and some of the qualities of deities.

Early Taoism was often referred to as “the teachings of the Yellow Emperor and Laozi” or “the teachings of Laozi and *Zhuangzi*”. The Yellow Emperor was one of the legendary rulers and founders of Chinese civilization, who invented wheeled vehicles, ships, the calendar and the compass. The Queen Mother of the West (*Xiwangmu*) was well established by the Han dynasty (221 BCE–206 CE) as a Goddess who presided over an immortal kingdom on Kunlun mountain, to the far west of China. She continued to be worshipped during the Tang dynasty as a champion of women and the personification of yin. In her orchards were the peaches of immortality that ripened every 3,000 years.

Other goddesses figure prominently in the Taoist pantheon. These deities personify the essence of the yin force—the feminine aspect of the world. Along with the Queen Mother of the West, the Sovereign of the Clouds of Dawn, the Dipper Mother (see slide # 15) the Earth Goddess and the Empress of Heaven (*Mazu*, pronounced “mah-joo”) acted as patron deities of women, and continue to be worshipped in China today.



Blessings for Long Life
Yuan Dynasty (1260–1368)
Hanging scroll. National Palace Museum, Taipei.
The goddess Xiwangmu and an attendant holding a tray of peaches.

The highest gods of religious Taoism developed from the second to the sixth centuries CE and were consolidated into a well-defined pantheon by the Tang dynasty (618–906 CE). With names such as “Celestial Worthy” or “Emperor”, they hold court in celestial paradises and govern a complex hierarchy of lesser gods. Among these higher gods are the Three Purities (one of whom is the deified Laozi) and Three Officials governing Heaven, Earth, and Water. The formation of Taoism as a religion can be traced to the late Han (2nd century CE) when Laozi began to be worshipped as a god. A vision of the deified Laozi was seen by Zhang Daoling, who organized followers into the first Taoist organization called the Way of the Celestial Masters.

Zhenwu (pronounced “jun-woo”) stands out as an example of a Taoist deity who changed several times through Chinese history. In ancient times, he was known as Xuanwu, the Dark Warrior, a symbol of the north. He was represented by a tortoise entwined by a snake. He was believed to be skilled in healing and exorcism. During the Northern Song dynasty (960–1126 CE) he was transformed into a Taoist god known as the Perfected Warrior. In 1304, during the Yuan dynasty, he was granted the title Emperor. The third Ming dynasty (1368–1644 CE) emperor Yongle was devoted to Zhenwu, and elevated the god to protector of the state and the imperial family. Special temples for him were built and he was even incorporated into the Buddhist pantheon.

The second category of Taoist deities were human beings who, through cultivation, alchemy, or other means, purified themselves of moral imperfections and were given posts in the celestial hierarchy, often “ascending to the heavens in broad daylight” in front of their communities. Technically, the possibility of attaining immortality was, and still is, open to anyone who diligently pursues various techniques such as inner alchemy, physical training or exemplary behavior.

How do these various deities appear in the arts? In paintings and on altars, male and female divinities array themselves in an orderly fashion, ranked in an elaborate hierarchy of differing levels, each with his or her particular responsibilities and attributes. In such instances, the gods are imagined and depicted as courtly figures, dressed in beautiful and elaborate robes and headdresses or in the gleaming ceremonial armor of the supreme warrior. The gods and goddesses perform like rulers, ministers, generals and government officers and in the Taoist imagination, their world works much like an elaborate bureaucracy, with its proper rules, procedures and exchange of documents.

Though the pantheon of gods and goddesses resembles the world of humankind, and though these divinities assume human form, they are but emanations and expressions—forms—of the constantly changing world of the Tao or Great Way. And as such, gods and goddesses are seen to embody various qualities of the Way and its perpetual unfolding. Some may embody the heavenly realm of the Tao in its supreme perfection and refinement. Others may express the magic and power of the Tao in its own spontaneous generation, the creative force that brings about the metamorphosis that is the life of human beings and of nature. It is important to remember that the gods and goddesses of religious Taoism are ultimately less important than the Tao itself. Taoism has no supreme being, only the fertile and powerful rhythm of change itself—the Tao.



Taoist Official of Heaven (detail)
Southern Song dynasty, first half 12th century
Hanging scroll. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston
One of three judges of human fate sits at a table surrounded by attendants; a vision of earthly bureaucracy in the realm of the gods.

Immortals

Becoming an immortal was one of the principal goals of a Taoist—though this goal by no means defines Taoism. The idea of immortality is a difficult one, and it changes in meaning during the history of Taoism. For some, immortality meant actual physical immortality, for others, a kind of immortality after death. In many cases, immortality meant a kind of complex union of a transformed body and spirit that resulted from the assiduous practice of spiritual and physical disciplines that often included moral and ethical integrity. The Taoist seeker of immortality might practice various methods of meditation and concentration, various forms of inner visualization and imagining; there might be special forms of gymnastics and exercise, breathing exercises, dietary restrictions, and special rituals and potions. These, it was hoped, would lead to perfect union and harmony with the Tao and its powerful transformations. The Tao undergoes perpetual motion and change, and the immortal lives forever in supreme union with these changes.

In Taoist writings, the immortal lives in the heavens or in mountain paradises (see also section on mountains in this packet). Mountain paradises are often depicted in art as the dwelling places of immortals; indeed the Chinese character for immortal is made up of two parts: one that means “person” and the other that means “mountains.” Immortals are light and airy beings and often appear in elegant court robes floating through the heavens above mountains or riding atop dragons or phoenixes. In early Chinese funerary arts, the presence of immortals and other magical creatures brought auspicious powers that helped fend off malevolent forces, protecting the spirit of the deceased.

Perhaps the most famous group of Immortals is the so-called “Eight Immortals” (Baxian, pronounced “bah-shyen”). These were figures that developed independently until the 12th century, when they were canonized as a group. There are many legends about each of the Immortals, and each can be said to represent a different condition in life such as youth, age, poverty, wealth and so on. Eight is a particularly auspicious number and even today many Chinese think of eight as a number of good fortune. The popularity of the Eight Immortals is partly due to their colorful and varied appearance. These are playful, bois-

terous characters who fight, make themselves invisible, indulge in drinking. They have become patrons of certain trades, and are even seen in advertisements. Along with the three Star Gods (see slide # 14) and the Buddhist figure of Guanyin, they are the most popular seen deities in Chinese shops. (see separate list of Eight Immortals, and slide #17)

Another group of figures who achieve a status not unlike immortals includes the various sages. These are often scholars or artists who reject the artificiality of human society, adopting natural forms of behavior such as living in seclusion on mountains or retreating to bamboo forests. Among these are the “Four Sages of Mount Shang,” who lived entirely on mushrooms, and the “Seven Sages of the Bamboo Grove,” who met in the countryside to indulge their love of music, poetry, and drinking. Sages combine Confucian virtues of self-restraint and humility and follow the Taoist ways of nature. They are often depicted in the arts.



Eight Immortals, the Three Stars and the Queen Mother of the West at the Turquoise Pond (detail)

Qing dynasty, Qianlong reign (1736-95)

Hanging scroll on kesi silk tapestry

Asian Art Museum, Avery Brundage Collection

shown: He Xiangu, one of the Eight Immortals

Taoist Ritual

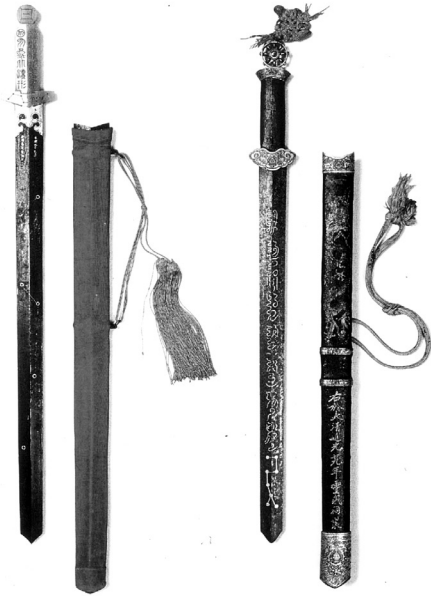
Communities, families, and individuals communicate with Taoist divinities through rituals. Unlike the rituals of the Roman Catholic Mass, the Jewish Sabbath, or the Islamic calls to prayer, many, if not most important Taoist rituals are performed on an “as-needed” basis. However, there are rituals that are performed regularly, such as those connected with annual renewal in the celebration of the New Year. There are two major categories of Taoist ritual, for example, those rituals for the living (*jiao*, pronounced “jyow”), and those for the dead (*zhai*, pronounced “jye”). Rituals for the living are performed to ensure prosperity, guarantee harvests, cure and prevent illness, or exorcise evil. Rituals for the dead serve to benefit not only the living members of a family or community but also their ancestors. Such rituals work to ensure the proper release of a deceased’s spirit and his or her ascent into the celestial paradises. The rituals often involve fasting, the presentation of offerings, and the confession of transgressions, in the hopes that any merit gained might transfer to the deceased and incline the heavenly divinities to hear the participant’s requests.

Rituals may be performed for an entire community, for a family, or for an individual person. Often a ritual performance is specially commissioned in response to a particular situation, such as family illness, or the start of a new venture. Some of the most important Taoist rituals bring about the renewal of a community's vitality and energy. Such rituals might be performed when a new temple is built, at the beginning of a new year, or, in earlier times, at the beginning of a new 60-year cycle. In traditional China, large spans of time were measured in cycles of 60 years: after 60 years a new cycle would begin. Appropriately, Taoist temples would plan, organize, raise funds, and administer a major ritual event involving the contributions and participation of important members of the community. The ceremonies might last anywhere from three to five days and entail the summoning of divinities, the recitation of Taoist writings, rites of purification and of exorcism, and ceremonial offerings. A Taoist priest or priests would administer such rituals, and through them, the community would renew its vital balance and its full and hopeful harmony with the Tao.

Smaller or individual rituals might last from one to several hours and might take place at a family home or at the home of the Taoist priest. In some cases, a ritual altar or shrine might be set up outdoors in a place deemed appropriate and suitable for the particular situation and for the particular ritual. Taoism is all about harmonizing oneself with the infinite and ongoing permutations of the Tao, so that Taoist rituals are flexible and adaptable, ready to respond to the needs and demands of the moment, of the individual, or of the community.

The central figure in any Taoist ritual is the priest (*daoshi*, pronounced “dow-shr”) who petitions the gods on behalf of the community. From the late Han dynasty (221 BCE–206 CE) on, both men and women could be ordained into the Taoist clergy. Female followers of both Taoism and Buddhism could also become nuns.

Taoist rituals are like theatrical performances, incorporating music, words and dance. One dance performed by the priest follows the patterns of the stars of the Northern Dipper (Ursa Major, the Big Dipper). Garments are a crucial part of the ceremony. When the priest dons his robe, cap, and shoes, he begins the ceremonial process, assuming a new guise and acquiring a new persona (see slide #10). This transformation of his body and appearance removes him from his day-to-day self and allows him to enter into the powerful and extraordinary realm of the Tao. Ceremonial swords are also an important part of the Taoist priest's ritual paraphernalia. Special swords were thought to contain the cosmic energy of the Tao. Their ornamentation endowed special strength and power. During rituals, Taoist priests brandished them, sometimes tracing magic patterns, or talismans in the air.



Taoist Ritual Swords

both Ming dynasty

Left: from Yongle reign, dated 1403, Right: from Hongzhi reign, dated 1500
Staatliches Museum für Volkerkunde, Munich

Talismans are sacred images or diagrams that are believed to represent the primordial energies that appeared at the inception of the world. Talismans can be worn, painted on the body, placed on the front door or over the doorway of a house, they could be burned and their ashes ingested. They are used as protective devices, to cure illnesses or to reverse curses. They can be used to purify the location for ceremonies. Some talismans include the eight trigrams (bagua, pronounced “bah-gwah”) symbol surrounding the taiji (yin- yang) symbol.

Taoist temples are not easy to distinguish from buildings devoted to Buddhism, Confucianism and other religious structures. Few have survived from before the Ming dynasty (1368–1644 CE). Religious buildings are generally built with the same timber frame construction techniques, and from the outside, there is often little to indicate a specific religious affiliation. Temples resemble palaces, with buildings set around various courtyards. There are principal halls containing the images of the primary deities associated with the temple site, as well as subsidiary halls. In many cases, older buildings have been incorporated into larger, newer complexes. Taoist altars, like Buddhist altars, contain images of deities, either in the form of paintings or statues.

The arrangement of Taoist altars varies according to the specific sect, but some features remain the same. There is usually an image of a deity (or group of deities, such as the Three Worthies) in front of which are stands holding various offerings, lamps, candles and an incense burner. Offerings might include fruit, rice and tea. The smoke rising from the burning of incense sticks symbolizes the connection of the earthly and spiritual realms. Here, the priest or practitioner invokes the god to assist the worshipper in the resolution of some difficulty or obstacle, or to seek comfort or success in personal undertakings. (See also slide # 9).

Taoist Alchemy

The quest for the Golden Elixir, also known as the pill of immortality, has its origins in the legends of ancient China. It is said that the Queen Mother of the West (Xiwangmu, pronounced “shee-wahng-moo”) gave the mythical archer Yi the pill of immortality. It was his wife Chang E, however, who ingested the pill after having stolen it from her husband. She was transformed into an immortal and flew to the moon where she made her residence. By the time Taoism emerged in China, the search for the pill of immortality was already ingrained in the popular culture. In Taoism, immortality was seen as the ultimate goal of a person’s existence. Transforming those individuals who had attained union with the Tao into celestial beings.

In Taoism, immortality was pursued in two ancient traditions: external alchemy (*waidan*, pronounced “way-dahn”) and inner alchemy (*neidan*, pronounced “nay-dahn”). External alchemy was the transformation of minerals and herbs into a pill of immortality. Ingredients such as cinnabar, gold, and mercury were placed on a furnace where they would be transmuted by the heat (yang) and rising vapor (yin) into the magical elixir. During the Warring States period, magicians called *fangshi* were the earliest practitioners of the arts of longevity. Emperors such as Qin Shihangdi, the First Emperor of China, were especially eager to achieve immortality and called upon *fangshi* for their expertise.

A succession of emperors and nobility would practice external alchemy despite the numerous deaths due to toxic ingestion of the pills. It was near the end of the Tang dynasty (618–906) that practitioners of longevity became disillusioned with external alchemy and turned inward to find the Golden Elixir. Interestingly enough, external alchemy led to many scientific discoveries including the invention of gunpowder or “fire medicine” (*huoyao*, pronounced “hwo-yow”). It is ironic that, this accidental “medicinal” discovery would become the elixir of unforeseen destruction rather than that of eternal harmony.

In internal alchemy, the pill of immortality was no longer a literal pill. It was a cosmic pill that could be created within the human body through meditation and visualization. Although internal alchemy dates back to the same era as external alchemy, it had been less popular compared to the “quickness” found in its counterpart. In internal alchemy, the human body is visualized as a microcosm of the universe—inhabited by all of the elements of the cosmos. Just as the universe is propelled by yin and yang, so is the human body. In Taoism, it is believed that at birth, an individual is one with the Tao. As one grows older, however, the energy of the Tao begins to separate into three regions of the body; below the navel, the heart, and between the eyebrows. It is the gradual loss of these energies that lead to illness and death. By unifying elements of yin and yang within the body, these energies will be recovered.

Inner alchemists used various methods to achieve inner body harmony. Some schools of inner alchemy believed that physical and mental well being should precede or be concurrently practiced with meditation and visualization. Many of the techniques used by these schools are popular today. These include qi gong (*ch’i kung*, pronounced “chee-gong”) that combines breathing, meditation, and yoga exercises and *taiji quan* (*tai chi chuan*, pronounced “tye-jee-chuan”), an internal martial arts that teaches slow, continuous, and controlled movements. A preventative medical treatment that is also based on the concepts of inner alchemy is acupuncture (*zhenfa*, pronounced “juhn-fah”).

The Eight Immortals

The Eight Immortals (*Baxian*, pronounced “bah-shyen”) are among the most popular figures in Chinese mythology. They appear frequently in the Chinese decorative arts, and the tales associated with them are well-known in Chinese culture.

The Eight Immortals are based, at least in part, on historical figures. They represent a cross-section of humanity, at different stages and conditions of life, and from different eras. Each represents a different virtue and has come to patronize different professions. The Eight immortals can be recognized by their different appearances and attributes.

Below is a listing of the Eight Immortals, followed by a more detailed telling of several of their stories. Names are given in both Pinyin and Wade-Giles spellings:



Zhongli Quan (Chung-li Ch’uan, pronounced “joong-lee-chwahn”)

considered to be the leader of the group, can be recognized by his pot belly and the fan he carries that makes the dead come to life. He represents military personnel.



Zhang Guolao (Chang Kuo-lao, pronounced “jahng-gwo-lao”)

carries a bamboo fish drum with metal beaters. He rides a magic donkey, which he keeps folded in his pocket when not in use. The donkey returns to full size when he blows water on it. He represents the old.



Lu Dongbin (Lu Tung-pin, pronounced “lew-doong-bin”)

a dignified figure with a sword across his back, holding a fly-whisk, a symbol of being able to fly through the air and walk on clouds. He represents scholars, merchants.



Cao Guojiu (Ts’ao Kuo-chiu, pronounced “tsow-gwoh-jyo”)

a bearded nobleman, brother-in-law to an emperor, who became a recluse after his release from a charge of complicity in murder. He carries a jade tablet which can become a pair of clappers. He represents the nobility.



Li Tieguai (Li T’ieh-kuai, pronounced “lee-tyeh-gwye”)

a crippled beggar or emaciated figure, leaning on a crutch who carries a gourd filled with magic herbs. Li’s youthful body was prematurely cremated, and his soul inhabited the body of a beggar. He represents doctors, the poor and the sick.



Han Xiangzi (Han Hsiang-tzu, pronounced “hahn-shyeng-dz”)

nephew of the famous poet Han Yu (8th century), born into a scholarly family, carries or plays a flute. He represents musicians.



Lan Caihe (Lan Ts'ai-ho, pronounced “lan-tsye-huh”)

sometimes represented as a boy, sometimes as a girl, carries a basket of flowers and is the patron deity of florists.



He Xiangnu (Ho Hsien-ku, pronounced “huh-shyen-goo”)

a Chinese Cinderella whom the immortals rescued from her wicked step-mother. She carries a ladle or a lotus blossom. She represents unmarried girls.

All eight immortals, along with the Three Star Gods and the Queen Mother of the West are seen in slide # 17. See if your students can identify who's who.

Stories of Three Immortals:

Lu Dongbin

Lu Dongbin was a well-known historical person. He was born in 755 CE in the northwest province of Shanxi. As a member of an official family he was encouraged in his education so that he could become an official himself. Lu was not a good student and had to work hard to pass the exams.

How did such a man become an immortal? The story goes that one day when he was in the capital city of Chang'an (now called Xi'an) he went into a wine shop where the immortal Zhongli Quan was heating the wine using his magic fan to keep the fire going. Suddenly Lu dropped off to sleep and dreamed.

In his dream he saw himself becoming a successful official, gradually rising to the highest rank. He watched himself living an increasingly prosperous life with a growing family of children and grandchildren. Then something bad happened. He saw himself exiled to a distant province and his family executed. He wandered aimlessly, sighing with grief, when, as suddenly as he had dropped off to sleep, he awoke.

Even though all this had passed before him in an instant, it made a deep impression. He realized the emptiness of the life he was following and burned with desire to join the Way of the Immortals, to be like nature--not clinging to pride or possessions. Following Zhongli Quan to the Heling Mountains, he became initiated into the divine mysteries and became an immortal. With his "cloud sweeper" fly-whisk he could walk on clouds and with the magic "devil-slaying sword" given to him by the powerful fire dragon, he became a skillful swordsman.

Li Tieguai (Li of the Iron Crutch)

Li Tieguai was a handsome young man born to a noble family. He spent most of his time meditating, studying the philosophy and practicing the techniques of immortality. Some say he was taught by Laozi, the ancient founder of Taoism, an old Chinese religion. One day, after he had reached immortality, Li told his disciple that he was going to leave his body to visit Laozi at the sacred mountain, Huashan. He said, "watch over my body while I'm gone and let no evil spirits enter it, and if I do not return in seven days, burn it." Li then sat in meditation, went into a trance, and his spirit flew off to Huashan, leaving his body an empty shell.

All went well for six days until the disciple received word that his mother was dying. Being a good son, he was distraught. He thought, "I cannot leave my master's body un-protected, but I must go to my mother's bedside." Reluctantly, he cremated the body a day early and left for home.

When Li's spirit returned, he found his body reduced to a pile of ashes. Looking anxiously around for another body, the spirit found the recently dead body of a crippled beggar and hastily entered it. "Oh my, what have I done, this body feels awful, and looks worse. My eyes are too big, my back is bent, and I have too much hair! Laozi," he called, "get me out of here." "You'll be fine; just remember you are immortal," Laozi answered, "Here is a golden band to hold back your hair and this iron crutch will help you walk." So the immortal Li Tieguai- Li of the iron crutch- roamed the country, healing people with the magic herbs he carried in his bottle-gourd.

He Xiangnu

He Xiangnu was a shy, delicate girl who lived at the time of Empress Wu (684-705 CE). She was different from other girls of her day. She liked it best when she was all alone walking in the mountains around her home in southern China. Some stories say her parents forced her to stay at home and work, which made her very unhappy. When you see her with a strainer instead of a lotus blossom in her hand, she is this unhappy girl. Then she was rescued by an immortal. Her lotus blossom is a symbol of the open-hearted joy she felt when she was set free.

In another story she dwelt in the Mother-of-Pearl Mountains and was allowed to roam free. She knew where each flower grew and when each fruit was ripe for picking. Her companions were the animals, birds and even bugs; she came to know the ways of these creatures well.

One night in her dreams a spirit came to visit her saying, "If you powder and eat one of the special rocks which are found in your mountains, you will be able to fly through the air and reach distant peaks." She thanked the spirit and did as she was told. Sure enough, she began to feel lighter and lighter. She could leap from rock to rock and fly to distant peaks. She brought fruit and herbs to her aging mother, but gradually realized that she herself had no need to eat at all. One day Lu Dongbin met her while she gathered herbs, gave her a peach of immortality, and welcomed her into the ranks of the immortals.

The Empress Wu heard of her magic powers and summoned her to court. He Xiangnu started off for the capital but disappeared along the way. Thereafter, she was glimpsed by people from time to time with the lotus in her hand.

Slide Descriptions

Before viewing the following slides of Taoist art with your students, you may wish to begin by introducing China and the key concepts of Taoism. The following are some suggestions on how to introduce these concepts to your students as well as suggestions on how to encourage art inquiry in the classroom.

Procedures

Introduce China to your students. Begin your exploration of China by asking your students “What do you know about China?” Can you find it on a world map? Have you seen the yin-yang ideogram? Have you ever eaten Chinese food? Have you been to San Francisco’s Chinatown? Have you seen the Chinese dragon dance? Are you familiar with any Chinese customs?

- Read the essays that introduce each theme (see Concepts of Taoism) and the information on the slides. Either read them beforehand and share the information with your students as you look at the images or read them with your students after looking at the images.
- Together with your students, look closely at the slides and illustrations using the strategies in *Looking at Art Together*.
- Involve students in the classroom activities.

Looking at Art Together

- When looking at each image, ask questions to direct and slow down the looking. Knowledge means most to a learner when it is discovered through the learner’s own efforts.
- Ask open-ended questions whose answers could be found in the work of art itself. For further discussion suggestions, look at the Discussion sections in the *Suggested Activities for the Classroom*. They embrace a wide variety of responses, and invite everyone to offer ideas and join in the discussion.
- Generate discussion by listening and responding to each other’s questions and observations. Acknowledge the students’ responses by repeating them. Accept all responses as long as they are grounded in the artwork. Let the group discussion sort out the “truth.” Acknowledge agreements and disagreements.
- Relate what students are seeing to what they already know, so that they can develop a connection to the artwork.
- Comparing two different works of art can be useful in learning to look.
- Before you begin to ask the looking questions, give students time to look closely and think about an image that they may never have seen before.
- At the end of your discussion, take note of all you have discovered together.
- Encourage your students to write down any questions they may have about the object. Have them find out the answers to their questions.

Slide #1



Laozi on an Ox, mid 1500s
By Zhang Lu (approx. 1490–1563)
China, Ming dynasty (1368–1644)
Hanging scroll; ink on paper
National Palace Museum, Taipei

1) Who is the sage depicted in this painting?

This is a painting of the famous sage Laozi. Very little is known about his life. What we know is greatly based on the writings of Sima Qian in the *Shiji* (*Records of the Historian*) dated 104 BCE. Laozi is believed to have lived in the 6th century BCE during the Eastern Zhou dynasty (770–356 BCE). He was a librarian (archivist) in the court of Zhou. Upon predicting the decline of the dynasty, he decided to leave the country. He traveled westward, riding on an ox and accompanied by a young servant. When he reached the western frontier pass at Hangu, he was stopped by Yin Xi, the frontier guardsman. The guardsman recognized Laozi to be a great sage and requested of him, “Since you are going to retire from this world, I beg you to endeavor to write a book for us.” Upon his request, Laozi wrote the teachings of the Tao in the *Daode jing*, the central text of the philosophy and religion of Taoism. He then left the country, after which, no one knows what became of him. Laozi was deified when religious Taoism was established in the Han dynasty.

2) Who is the artist? How does the artist “tell” you the figure in the painting is Laozi?

Zhang Lu, a leading master of the Zhe School of painting, painted this delicate and thoughtful rendition of Laozi. He was a professional painter during the Ming dynasty whose art works frequently depicted Taoist themes. Although Zhang Lu came from an aristocratic upbringing and married into the imperial family, his lifestyle was humble as that of a “city hermit.”

Zhang Lu lets his audience know that the figure in the painting is Laozi by including several “clues.” The painting depicts an elderly man whose age and scholar’s clothing indicate he is a great sage. The figure is riding an ox and is holding a scroll in his right hand. This scroll would be the *Daode jing*.

3) What kind of mood does the artist paint in this artwork?

The expression on Laozi’s face is one of peaceful contemplation. Instead of appearing weary from a long journey, Laozi displays an inner energy that is indicative of his oneness with the Tao. This is shown by his upward gaze. He observes a bat flying in front of him with an almost amused fascination. The bat is a traditional Chinese symbol of good fortune. This little creature symbolizes the harmony of nature, the central teaching of Taoism.

4) What kind of mediums does the artist use?

This painting is done with traditional Chinese brush (*bi*) and ink (*mo*). It is different from Western painting. Because the paper (*xuan zhi*) is very absorbent, the painter must apply the permanent black ink with great precision and confidence. Zhang Lu uses quick, dry brushstrokes in the clothing to suggest movement. Notice how he uses wet brushstrokes to paint the ox’s fur. As a result, the texture of the fur appears soft and thick, especially in the neck area of the ox.

Slide #2



Portrait of Confucius

Ink rubbing of a stele, portrait by Wu Tao Tzu
(note: not in the exhibition, *Taoism and the Arts of China*)

1) Who is depicted here?

This is a portrait of Confucius, based on a work by the Tang dynasty artist Wu Daozi. Confucius was a teacher who lived from 550–479 BCE during the Eastern Zhou dynasty in the state of Lu. There are no surviving images of Confucius from his lifetime, so this is an imaginary portrait. The characters at the top say (from right to left) “portrait of the great teacher Kongzi standing.” The characters below say “teacher and compiler of classic (works) that will last for thousands of years.” Kongzi means “master Kong”. Confucius’ real name was Kong (surname) Qiu, but his name was rendered in Latin as Confucius by the 16th century Jesuit missionary to China, Matteo Ricci.

2) How was this portrait made?

The original portrait was carved on a stone stele or memorial stone. A rubbing was made of it by placing paper over the stone and lightly pounding ink over the paper. Stone steles were placed in temples and other buildings to be used like a library. Making rubbings was like making photocopies today—a way to reproduce images and text for wider circulation. Rubbings are still made of stone carvings and monuments today.

3) What did Confucius teach?

Confucius lived in a time of political upheaval. He believed rulers should follow the example of past rulers, especially the earlier Zhou dynasty rulers, and conduct themselves in a morally upright manner. He did not have much success in the political realm, and devoted his life to teaching. Confucius upheld past traditions, including respect for rituals, classical texts, and respect for one's superiors, beginning with one's own parents. He taught humanity and consideration for others, and believed that, through education, a class of gentlemen could advise local rulers and kings to be virtuous and lead by example rather than by force.

4) What is Confucianism?

Confucianism includes the followers, beliefs, and institutions that arose after the death of Confucius, including commentaries on the teachings of Confucius, the identification of key texts, ideas about rituals and filial piety, and the academies and examination systems that were established in the Han dynasty (221 BCE–206 CE) through which scholars filled the ranks of the civil service. Confucianism has more to do with social values and governing than it does with spiritual matters, although an emphasis on rituals and ancestors upheld some of the ancient religious practices prevalent during the lifetime of Confucius. Confucianism is often referred to along with Buddhism and Taoism as one of the three great philosophical/religious traditions in China.

5) What does Confucius have to do with Laozi and Taoism?

Confucius and Laozi were traditionally thought to be contemporaries. Both were disillusioned by the political realm. They apparently met on one occasion. Laozi and his followers were sometimes critical of Confucius and his followers, claiming that too much attention was being paid to righteous behavior and rituals. Laozi advised against any actions that were contrary to the ways of nature. Both writers offered advice to rulers of their time. Both writers used terms such as “tao” (the way) and “wu-wei” (non-action) and made analogies to the ways of nature in their teachings. The teachings of Confucius and Laozi can be seen as complementary, influencing different aspects of ancient Chinese traditions.

Slide #3



Diagram of the Supreme Ultimate,
from the Compendium of Diagrams, 1623
By Zhang Huang (1527–1608)
China, Ming dynasty, Tianqi reign (1621–1627)
Woodblock-printed book; ink on paper
The University of Chicago Library, East Asian Collection

1) What does the symbol mean? What are its origins?

This is a taiji diagram (supreme ultimate), commonly known as the yin-yang symbol. It was first used in the beginning of the Song dynasty (960–1279). The creation of the symbol is attributed to the Taoist Chen Tuan (906–989), an author of many books on inner alchemy (neidan). Before this time, the combination of a tiger (yin) and dragon (yang) symbolized yin and yang. (see slide #4). It shows the interaction and union of yin and yang; the two complementary opposing forces that propel the universe. In Taoism, all things in the universe are seen in terms of yin and yang. For instance, yin is female, dark, responding, and the tiger. Yang is male, light, assertive, and the dragon. Taoists also believe that all things in the universe contain both yin and yang. Notice that within the swirling teardrops of yin and yang there are small dots of the opposite element. The symbol represents the harmony of universe as found in the Tao.

2) This artwork is the first image in the woodblock printed book *The Compendium of Diagrams*. What kind of book was it? Who compiled it?

The *Compendium of Diagrams* was a book of cosmology, geography, and human life. It consists of 127 chapters and was compiled by Zhang Huang in the Wanli reign (1573–1620) of the Ming dynasty. His student, Wang Shanglie, oversaw the printing of the book that was published in 1613.

3) This book was made by a technique called woodblock printing. How did Chinese artists make a woodblock print?

Chinese woodblock prints were made from blocks of wood such as pear (*li*), jujube (*zao*), and boxwood (*huangyang*). The softness or hardness of a wood determined if it would be good for carving either images or text. For example, boxwood is soft and therefore good for carving text. The artist begins by painting an image on “rice paper” (*xuan zhi*) using black ink (*mo*). The painted image is then placed face down onto the wood that had been painted with a thin layer of rice paste. Using a flat palm-fiber brush, the image is pressed and transferred. The paper is lifted off and the artist can begin carving. Finally, the wood block is brushed with a layer of ink and a sheet of paper is placed on top. The artist gently rubs the top of the paper until the ink is transferred. The paper is then lifted revealing a woodblock-print of the artist’s work. In this artwork, the artist carved the image in relief. This means that the negative space or area around the image was carved out.

Slide #4



Two panels from a Sarcophagus: Tiger and Dragon, approx. 500–524
China, Northern Wei dynasty (386–534)
Limestone with traces of pigment and gilding
Private Collection

1) These two magnificent panels come from a sarcophagus from the Northern Wei dynasty (386–534). What is being displayed on them?

The sarcophagus panel located at the top of the slide depicts a female figure holding a fan in her right hand and riding a tiger that flies through swirling clouds. On either side of the mystical animal are celestial beings that hold fans and blossoming lotus flowers. The lotus flower is a symbol of purity. Amid this entourage are bear-headed creatures that seem to emerge from the clouds themselves. The sarcophagus panel located at the bottom of the slide is filled with similar imagery. On this panel, however, it shows a male figure holding a fan in his left hand and riding a dragon.

The combination of tiger and dragon in Chinese art dates back to the Bronze age. Their presence together symbolizes yin (female, tiger, west) and yang (male, dragon, east). In the Song dynasty, another symbol of yin and yang was created. This was the taiji diagram, commonly known as the yin-yang symbol.

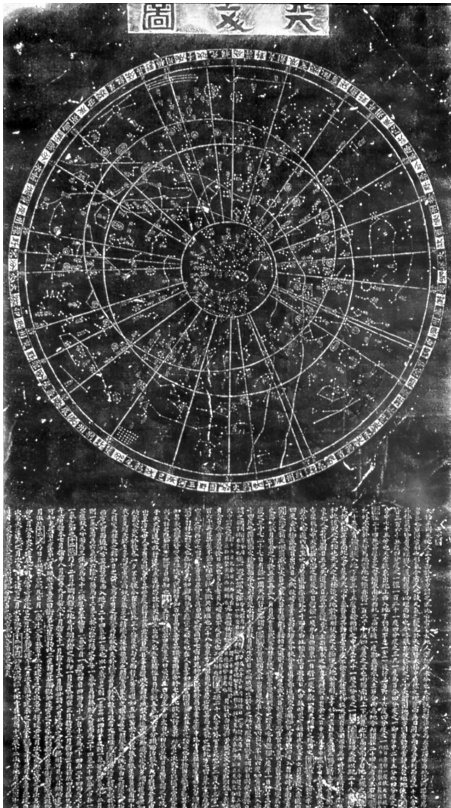
2) Do these designs hold special significance to the deceased?

The tiger and dragon designs are especially significant in the context of burial art. Tombs were considered a place of transition between the “earthly” world and the afterlife. It was believed that an individual who had attained the Tao (harmony with nature) would transition into the afterworld and become immortal. Immortality in this case means eternal existence in the celestial realm.

3) What kind of material was the sarcophagus carved from? What techniques were used?

The panels are made from gray limestone, which were painted and gilded with gold or silver leaf. Unfortunately, the pigment and gilding have degraded over time. The sarcophagi were both carved in relief (the figures are raised or come forward from the background). Another technique used was intaglio (designs incised or cut into the surface). For example, intaglio was used to create stripe designs in the chest of the tiger.

Slide #5



Star Chart, 1247

Ink rubbing of a stele at the Confucian temple, Suzhou, Jiangsu province

China, Southern Song dynasty 1127–1279

Hanging scroll; ink on paper

Stone Carving Museum, Suzhou

1) The Chinese characters at the top of this ink rubbing translate “Chart of the Celestial Patterns” (Tianwen tu). What celestial patterns are depicted in this star chart?

This star chart encompasses the celestial northern hemisphere as well as part of the southern sky, depicting 1,436 stars. The chart centers around the Pole Star and Northern Dipper (Ursa Major or Beidou). Radiating from this central region are lines that extend to the celestial equator. These lines indicate the boundaries of the 28 constellations also known as the Lunar Mansions. The spiral located approximately midway between the central region and the celestial equator is the path of the moon through the Lunar Mansions.

2) This rubbing is from a stele found at a Confucian temple. What makes this artwork Taoist?

All of the constellations are shown revolving around the Pole Star and the Northern Dipper. These are the most important stars in Taoism. The Dipper acts as a mid point between the moon (yin) and sun (yang) and represents the union of the forces of yin and yang. In Taoism, all things in the universe correspond to each other. This places special significance on the stars, each of which has their counterpart on

earth. For instance, each star corresponds to a city and province. The heavens are also the residences of Taoist deities. The theory of correspondence is stated in the text located in the lower portion of the rubbing.

3) This star chart was mapped by Huang Shang in 1193 during the Southern Song dynasty and was engraved into a stone stele by Wang Zhiqian in 1247. The image that you see in the slide is an ink rubbing of the stele. How was the rubbing made?

Rubbings were an early form of printing and were an economical way to print books (as opposed to hand copying). Rubbings were made by laying a moist paper on top of a stone stele. It was then gently pressed onto the entire surface of the stone. In this way, the paper would mold slightly into the shape of the incised image. After the paper was dry, stuffed pads were used to apply ink to the paper. The non-inked areas are the sections engraved into the stone.

Slide #6



Mountain-shaped Censor, 113 BCE
From the tomb of Liu Sheng at Lingshan, Mancheng, Hebei province
China, Western Han dynasty (206–209 CE)
Bronze with gold inlay
Hebei Provincial Museum Shijiazhuang

1) This bronze incense burner is molded into a shape of a mountain. Look carefully among the numerous peaks that make up the mountain. What do you see?

Living within this mythical landscape are celestial beings (immortals) and mystical animals. They emerge from behind the peaks of the mountain, half way hidden by layers of wave-like peaks. These delicate figures and creatures may be difficult to locate. They are sculpted with the same ornate gold inlay and curvaceous style as the mountain that they inhabit.

2) Where was this object found?

This mountain-shaped incense burner (*boshanlu*) was found in the burial chamber of Prince Liu Sheng of Zhongsheng in the Western Han dynasty (206 BCE–209 CE). Objects found in the burial chamber were considered the prince's most treasured possessions.

3) Why is this artwork considered Taoist?

In Taoism, mountains are considered sacred—where the energy of the Tao or qi (pronounced: chee) is the most refined and concentrated. Cavern heavens (*dongtian*) or grottoes found in the mountains served as portals between the earthly and celestial realm. The holes of the incense burner may represent enclaves such as these. Sacred mountains were also the homes of the immortals. *Zhuangzi* describes the land of the immortals in the following passage of the *Zhuangzi*:

“On distant mountain of Ku-yeh live divine beings.... They mount clouds of *qi* and ride winged dragons to wander beyond the Four Seas.”

4) Why does it have special significance in the context of tomb art?

The incense burner played a key role in Taoist rituals. In the present day, it continues to be a crucial part of Taoist ritual in honoring the deceased. The burning of incense represents the refinement and transition of an individual's *qi* (energy). The rising smoke of the burning incense represents the ascent of an individual's *qi* up to the heavens. The rising smoke of the mountain-shaped incense burner would have created a stunning effect—the mountain peaks cloaked with soft billowing clouds of fragrance.

5) How was this object made?

The bronze incense burner was cast in three separate parts. These include the top (peak of the mountain), the bowl, and the base and stem. The entire piece is masterfully decorated with inlaid gold wires.

Slide #7



Festival of the Peaches of Longevity, 1600–1500

China, Ming dynasty,

Handscroll; ink, colors, and gold on silk

The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, Gift of the Herman R. and Helen Sutherland Foundation Fund

1) This painting depicts the place of Queen Mother of the West (Xiwangmu) on the sacred mountain of Kunlun. How does the artist “tell” you that this utopia belongs to her?

According to Taoist mythology, the Queen Mother of the West is the guardian of the Celestial realm. Individuals who wish to attain immortality must be approved by the Queen before passing into the celestial paradise. The Queen’s western paradise is recognizable by her large peach orchard. It is said that the peaches bestow the gift of immortality on those who eat them. Every three thousand years the peach trees blossom and the Queen Mother of the West hosts a celebration for the immortals. On the bottom right of the painting you will see the gate to enter the western paradise. Just past the gate is a large orchard filled with the pink-orange dots of ripe peaches that are being picked by a group of young children and adolescents. To the left of the painting are the immortals that observe the festivities from the terraces of the Queen’s palace.

2) How does the artist convey the celestial nature of the sacred Mount Kunlun?

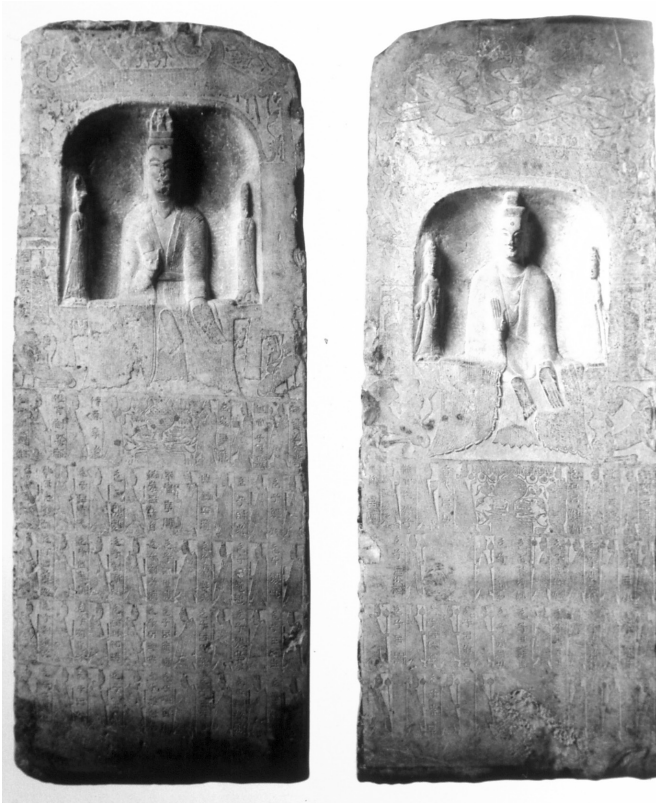
The artist's use of color is one of the most striking features of this painting. The luminescent blue-green mountains, highlighted with gold pigment, create the illusion that these towering mountains are glowing from within. It is as if these mountains are breathing energy (*qi*). Notice how the artist uses saturated gold at the base of the mountains and between the mountain ridges to convey this quality of illumination.

Artists during the Ming dynasty often used blue-green pigments in their paintings to imitate the style of earlier Tang dynasty paintings.

3) The painting shows numerous celestial beings enjoying the festivities, yet the focus of the painting seems to be nature. Why? How does the artist emphasize nature?

Nature is considered the ultimate expression of the Tao—spontaneous, full of energy (*qi*), and in a constant state of transformation. Although immortals are divine individuals of great importance, the power of nature has precedence. The artist shows this using both scale and composition. The immortals are shown as tiny figures with the majority of them located near the base of the painting. In contrast, these figures are enveloped by a panorama of mountains that rise to the top of the painting, thereby showing the supreme power of nature.

Slide #8



Stele with the Deified Laozi and Shakyamuni Buddha, 517
China, Northern Wei dynasty, 386–534
Limestone
Forest of Stelae (Beilin) Museum, Xi'an

1) This slide show the opposite sides of a stele (stone monument). Who are the main figures carved in either side of the stele?

The image on the left depicts the deified Laozi. He is recognizable by several iconographic (symbolic) clues. Laozi wears a Taoist cap, holds a fan in his right hand, and dons a moustache and a triangular beard. The image on the right is the back of the stele and depicts the Buddha. He similarly has several iconographic clues such as the *urna* (cranial bump), *usnisa* (mark in the center of his forehead), and the positioning of his hands in *abhaya mudra* (absence of fear).

2) These two figures look very similar. How are they similar?

From a distance, these images appear almost identical. In both cases, the central figure is flanked by two smaller figures on either side. The figures are dressed similarly and both holds their right hand raised and left hand positioned downward. Below each niche is a carving of an incense burner and rows of inscriptions next to the images of donors.

3) What is the significance of their similarity?

Taoism became an organized religion in the later part of the Han dynasty (206 BCE–220C CE). This was approximately the same time that the foreign religion of Buddhism was introduced into China from India. The stele exhibits how Taoism adapted features of the Buddhist religion. In fact, in its early stages in China, Buddhism was essentially viewed as a foreign version of the indigenous religion of Taoism. The Buddhist iconography was especially appealing to Taoists who did not have religious images prior to the Han dynasty. The imitation of Buddhist art is demonstrated by the “borrowing” of two small figures that traditionally flank either side of the Buddha. The are bodhisattvas (persons who have detained their stay on earth to help others achieve enlightenment). Taoist imagery incorporates this concept, making the figures on either side of Laozi immortals. On similar steles of this time, the two figures are identified as Yin Xi the guardian of Hangu Pass and Zhang Daoling the individual attributed with founding religious Taoism.

4) How are the two sides of the stele different?

Upon closer inspection, there are quite a few differences between the two sides of the stele. As noted above, the central figures are Laozi and the Buddha. The majority of donors listed on both sides of the stele are Taoist either by name or association. The top sections on both sides of the stele also show different carving. Above the arch of Laozi’s niche is the roof of a pavilion that is decorated with owl’s tail finials. This is quite different from the top section of the stele of the Buddha. Surrounding the arch of Buddha’s niche is a flaming mandorla from which the heads of celestial beings peek out from behind.

Slide #9



Inner Courtyard of a Taoist Temple
located in Tainan, Taiwan
photographed by Mark DeFraeye

1) What is shown here?

This picture shows an altar and inner courtyard at the Jade Emperor temple in Tainan in southern Taiwan. The photograph was taken by Belgian photographer Mark DeFraeye. Religious Taoism is quite prevalent in Taiwan. Taoism did not suffer the same restrictions and persecutions in Taiwan as it did in mainland China in recent decades.

The most important object seen here is the large incense burner. It usually dominates the front section of a temple. There are also candles and food offerings on the altar table.

A small gate prevents people from entering through the main doors—one always enters using the side doors. On the two doors can be seen the door gods, traditional figures dressed in military costume that protect the entrances to a variety of traditional buildings in China.

2) Why is the incense burner important?

The burning of incense is common to many religious practices around the world. The offering of incense to gods, ghosts, and ancestors in a temple is the most basic of devotional acts in all Chinese religions. The first thing a visitor does upon entering the temple is to burn incense (in the form of sticks) and bow before the gods, starting with three sticks for the lord of Heaven or the Jade Emperor. These are placed facing away from the temple towards heaven. The smoke from the incense is believed to connect the world of the living to the heavens above. There is usually an inner and an outer altar in each temple. The altar itself—the raised platform and the incense burner in particular—symbolically represents a mountain. Early incense burners were shaped like mountains, the abode of the immortals (see slide #6).

3) What other ritual objects or offerings are involved?

Besides incense, food offerings and candles, paper objects (sometimes paper money) are sometimes burned as part of a ritual. Various techniques are used to ward off evil spirits—for example, the use of special images called talismans, or setting off firecrackers or brandishing of the sword by the priest. Priests also recite sacred texts.

4) What happens in a Taoist temple?

Priests conduct both private rituals and public ceremonies. Priests can be male or female. Priests oversee funeral services, and go wherever they are needed to conduct purification ceremonies or exorcisms. Some rituals, including ancestor rites, can take place at home altars. One large ceremony called a jiao involves a whole community and can last up to three days. A jiao might be conducted to consecrate a new temple, or to observe local festivities on the yearly calendar. Large ceremonies such as this take place both inside and outside the temple.

5) Who is the Jade Emperor?

The Jade Emperor became popular during the Song dynasty (960–1279 CE), and his image is often seen in Taoist temples. He is Lord of Heaven, a chief of all the gods in popular Chinese religion. Temples are usually dedicated to a principle deity, but images of other deities can be found as well.

Slide #10



Taoist Priest's Robe, mid 1800s
Qing dynasty (1644–1911) Embroidered silk tapestry
Minneapolis Institute of Arts, The John R. Van Derlip Fund

1) What is this object?

This is a robe worn by a Taoist priest, seen from the back. It dates from the mid-19th century (during the Qing dynasty—see next slide description), and is now in the collections of the Minneapolis Institute of Arts. It is richly decorated with Taoist symbols. It would be worn when the priest (*daoshi*) conducts rituals.

2) What are the various decorations on the robe?

The principal image seen on the robe is the crane. There are five cranes seen here, each inside a roundel. In the crane's beak are mushrooms and a sprig of bamboo. Cranes have the ability to transcend, or fly up to the heavens. Since priests intercede between heaven and earth, this is a potent symbol. Cranes are also associated with longevity. Mushrooms are associated with the elixirs of immortality.

In the center of the back of the robe is a tower, and on either side of the tower are dragons. Surrounding the dragons are the twenty-eight lunar mansions (see slide #5). Just above these can be seen two roundels

symbolizing the sun and the moon. A yin-yang symbol can be seen on the collar of the robe. On the sleeves are the eight trigrams made of broken and unbroken lines (symbols used for divination from the *Yi Jing* or Book of Changes). Dragons chasing flaming pearls emerge from the primordial waters at the bottom of the robe. Dragons are symbols of yang energy, associated with rain and thunder. They are also imperial symbols, and are often seen on the famous dragon robes worn by members of the imperial family during the Qing dynasty.

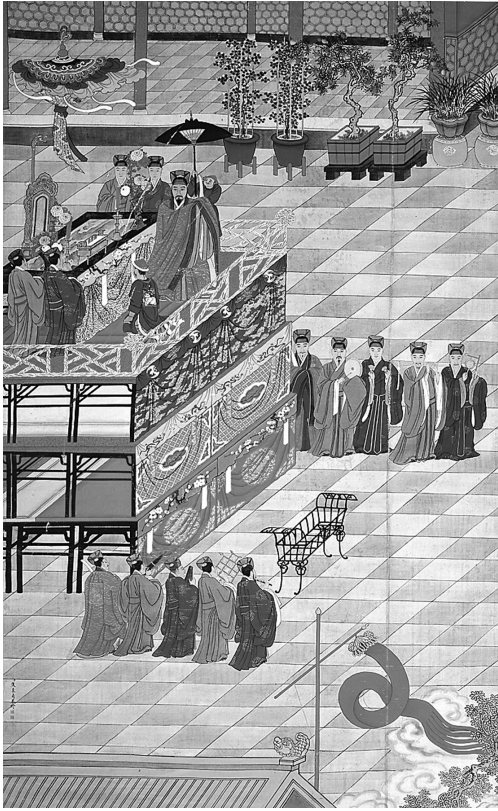
3) How was this robe made?

This kind of robe is called a silk tapestry weave. It is made of silk on a red ground, and decorated using embroidery. Tapestry weave technique allows the weaver to change the weft color as often as needed, making it possible to build up many colors in the weave. Weft threads are normally the same thread that runs from one end of the weave to the other.

4) What effect does wearing the robe have?

The robe helps the Taoist priest enter into a role as principal agent by which individuals, families and communities commune with the heavens and with spirits and ancestors. Whether reciting, dancing, waving a sword, the costume helps focus attention on the wearer and his (or her) actions. It enhances the performance aspect of the ritual. The various symbols on the robe speak to the rich traditions of Taoism, as well as its many magical and transformative powers.

Slide #11



Taoist Ritual at the Imperial Court, approx. 1723–1726

by Jiao Bingzhen (active approx. 1689–1726)

Qing dynasty (1644–1911)

Hanging scroll; ink and colors on silk

Arthur Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.

Purchase--Smithsonian Collections Acquisitions Program, and Partial Gift of Richard G Pritzlaff.

1) What is going on in this painting?

The catalogue *Taoism and the Arts of China* describes the subject as follows:

“This hanging scroll shows a Taoist ritual being performed in a courtyard, on a three-tiered altar made of stacked tables. On top of the altar a young man, the patron of the ceremony, kneels in front of a table, while the Taoist priest officiating stands to his right under a parasol. An unscripted plaque, perhaps a symbol of the principal deity to whom the ritual is directed, stands on the table, and the table is covered by a canopy, a traditional symbol of the heavens. On the ground to either side of the altar, musicians play wind and percussion instruments to accompany the ceremony.” (catalogue entry by Shawn Eichman)

2) What kind of ceremony is this?

It is believed that this scene depicts a nephew of the emperor Yongzheng undergoing a fast ritual for the benefit of his sick father. By publicly fasting, it is hoped that the accrued merits will be transferred to the sick person. Such a ritual might also have been performed for the benefit of the soul of a deceased relative.

The tiled floor and potted plants and trees suggest that this ceremony probably took place in the courtyard of an imperial residence rather than a temple. The stacked tables may have been used as a substitute for a raised earth platform or stone platform found in a temple. Taoist altars can be constructed in a variety of settings and are often assembled or dismantled based on the specific ritual purposes needed.

Note the long robe worn by the Taoist priest (see previous slide description) and the badge on the outer garment of the kneeling nephew that indicates his rank. Note also the standard ritual objects on the altar such as the candlesticks and incense burner.

3) Who was the emperor Yongzheng?

Emperor Yongzheng reigned from 1723–1735, at the height of the Qing dynasty. The Qing dynasty was founded in 1644 by foreign Manchus from the north. They established rule over the Han Chinese. This empire would expand to its greatest extent during the reign of the following Qianlong Emperor (1736–1795). The Qing imperial rulers were active supporters of Tibetan Buddhism, but this painting indicates that they also patronized Taoist rituals.

Slide # 12



Ordination scroll of Empress Zhang, dated 1493
Ming dynasty, Hongzhi reign (1488–1505)
Handscroll; ink, colors, and gold on paper
San Diego Museum of Art, Gift of Mr. and Mrs. John Jeffers.

1) What is depicted here?

This image is a detail from a very long scroll (2,743 centimeters long, about one quarter of the length of football field) showing the Ming dynasty Empress Zhang floating in the clouds, accompanied by an entourage of attendants. The empress is the main figure on the right. Her portrait was painted on a separate piece of paper and then pasted on this part of the scroll. Along the edge of the scroll are alternating black, white, green, red and blue dragons.

2) What is the function of this scroll?

This is a scroll given to the Empress indicating that she was ordained as a Taoist priest in 1493. It is in effect both a painted record of her accomplishment and a certificate. Since it was not intended for display, it has been well preserved and is in excellent condition.

The various texts on the scroll (not seen in this detail) indicate that numerous scriptures, lists of gods' names and talismans were transmitted to the Empress, and that the Celestial Hierarchy (in heaven) grant

her license to perform rituals as well as long life and good fortune. The Empress had assumed the position of *zhenren*, meaning “realized being.”

The scroll depicts fifty gods and immortals. Included is the Celestial Master (like the high priest of one of the sects of Taoism) by the name of Zhang Xuanqing who oversaw the ordination and wrote the main inscription on the scroll. Also included among the figures are Zhang Daoling, founder of the Celestial Masters sect, as well as other notable gods and immortals.

3) Who was Empress Zhang?

The Empress was born in Xingji, about a hundred miles south of Beijing. She married Zhu Youtang in 1487, a year before he began his reign as the Hongzhi Emperor. She had two sons. The second died shortly after childbirth. The first (born in 1491) ascended the throne in 1506 as the Zhengde Emperor, with the Empress serving as Dowager (widow of the deceased emperor—effectively in charge). She outlived her son (Zhengde) and died in 1541.

4) What is the significance of this scroll?

This scroll, like the previous slide of a hanging scroll, documents court interaction with Taoism at the highest level during the Ming dynasty, a tradition that is not often noted in official histories of China. It also serves to remind us that women could become priests. In the case of Empress Zhang, it places her on the same spiritual level as the gods.

Slide #13



Celestial Worthy of Primordial Beginnings, late 1400s–early 1500s
Ming dynasty (1368–1644)
Glazed stoneware
Tsui Art Foundation, Hong Kong

1) Who is this figure?

This figure represents the Celestial Worthy of Primordial Beginning. He is one of the three main gods of Religious Taoism called the Three Purities (*Sanjing*) or Three Pure Ones that rule the cosmos from the highest heavens. His title might also be translated as The Heavenly Elder of the Primeval Origins or the Heavenly Worthy of Primordial Being. All these titles allude to the deity's primordial position—he existed before creation, brought the Earth into existence, and brought forth the Taoist scriptures so that they would be intelligible to humanity. He is considered to be the highest of the Three Purities.

2) Who are the other two Purities?

The other two Pure Ones are the Celestial Worthy of Numinous Treasure and the Celestial Worthy of the Way and its Power. The latter deity is the deified Laozi. The Three Purities most often appear together in paintings or as sculptures in temples or temporary Taoist altars. The three deities are abstract figures—divine emanations of the Tao, in contrast to the lesser gods and immortals who are either based on historical persons or local deities that have been incorporated into religious Taoism.

3) How did the Three Purities develop as Taoist deities?

The Three Purities developed out of several traditions in Taoism, beginning around the fourth or fifth century CE. They are the result of combining several beliefs that all had three-part divisions. These included the Three Purities (Jade Purity, Highest Purity, and Great Purity), the Three Heavens (Santian) and the Three Caverns (Sandong). The Three Caverns refers to the scriptures of the three leading schools of Taoism. Three is an important number because according to Taoist cosmology, the Way (Tao) gave rise to one, then two, then three, then three multiplied itself three times to form nine heavens, which combined with four directions, resulted in a total of thirty-six heavens.

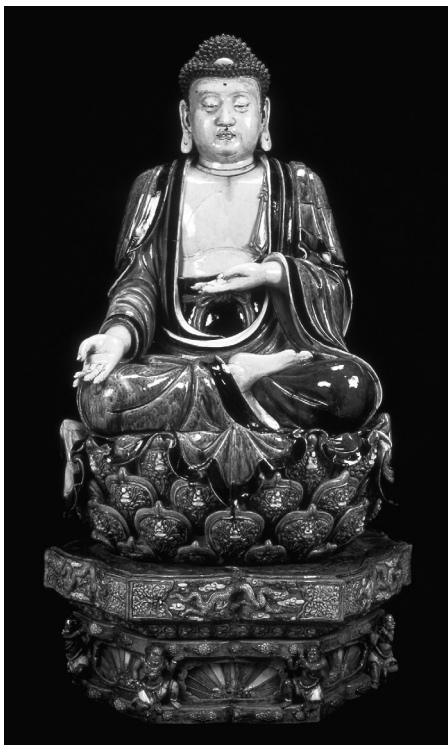
The three-part doctrines were combined as part of religious Taoism's attempts to form a single, coherent system. Thus, for example, the Celestial Worth of Primordial Beginnings incorporated the doctrines of Jade Purity, the Highest Heaven and the Cavern of Perfection scriptures.

Another factor in the formation of a supreme trinity in the Taoist pantheon was the influence of Buddhism, with its pantheon of many Buddhas and saintly figures known as Bodhisattvas. The Three Purities are not unlike the supreme Buddhas—cosmic Buddhas that have existed for all time and preside over many worlds. The hand gestures on this figure are similar to those found on Buddhist figures.

4) How was this statue made?

This statue was made in parts. Each part was fired and glazed separately and then assembled. It is made of stoneware, a high-fired ceramic. The bright, multicolored glazes were widely used during the Ming dynasty.

This statue is similar in style to a Ming-dynasty figure of the Buddha in the collections of the Asian Art Museum.



Seated Buddha
Ming dynasty. 1400's–1500's
Stoneware with polychrome glaze
Avery Brundage Collection
Asian Art Museum of San Francisco

Slide #14



The Star-lords of Good Fortune, Emolument and Longevity, dated 1454
Ming dynasty, Jingtai reign (1450–1456)
Hanging scroll; ink, colors, and gold on silk
Musée National des Arts Asiatiques Guimet, Paris

1) Who is depicted here?

The catalogue *Taoism and the Arts of China* describes the subject as follows:

“... the scroll depicts a triad that has enjoyed great popularity from the fifteenth century onward: the gods known as Fuxing (Good Fortune Star), Luxing (Emolument *Star), and Shouxing (Longevity Star). Of the three gods, the most ancient is (appropriately) Shouxing (or God of Longevity), shown at the upper left as an old man with white hair... all three gods wear the official caps and hold the tablets of Taoist priests. Accompanying them is a smaller attendant, who holds a small parasol with banners aloft. This group is shown against a background of clouds...(the title) is inscribed in gold in standard script characters along the right border. At the top right, also in gold, is the date (1454) , and an ink inscription at the lower left records the names of the officials who commissioned this painting.” (catalogue entry written by Stephen Little) (*note- “emolument” means high salary, profit, advantage or gain).

2) What is the significance of these Three Gods?

The Three Star Gods—sometimes referred to as Fu, Lu, and Shou (or Fook, Look, and Shou in Cantonese)—are auspicious gods associated with the desire for happiness, wealth, and long life. They are not Taoist deities, per se, but popular gods who have been incorporated into Religious Taoism. Along with the Eight Immortals, they are among the most popular images in Chinese culture, and can often be found in Chinese homes, or in tourist shops, usually made of porcelain.



Fu usually carries a *ruyi* scepter (a ceremonial wand, one end of which looks like the fungus of immortality). Lu sometimes carries a small boy, and is revered as a bestower of sons and grandsons. Shou is the most recognizable figure, with his high forehead, white hair and eyebrows, yellow robe, and holding a peach in his hand. These is the same peach of immortality that we encounter with the Queen Mother of the West (see slide # 17). Shou has a long history dating back to the First Emperor of the Qin dynasty (221–207 BCE). His identity corresponds to the star *Canopus*, found in constellation identified by the Chinese as *Hu*.

3) What is the significance of this painting?

The painting is significant in that it is one of the earliest depictions of the Star Gods in a painting commissioned by members of the courtly official class. The three Star Gods are not mentioned in the Taoist canon (*Daozang*) published about a decade before this painting was made. Clearly, the patrons of this work felt at ease incorporating popular deities outside the ‘official’ or “orthodox” Taoism into their religious practices.

Slide #15



The Dipper Mother, 1700–1800
China, Qing dynasty (1644–1911)
Dehua porcelain
Asian Art Museum of San Francisco
The Avery Brundage Collection

1) Who is this female deity?

This is a porcelain sculpture of the Dipper Mother (Doumu), also known as the Bushel Mother. According to her mythical biography, the Dipper Mother gave birth to nine lotus buds while bathing in the Pool of Warm Jade and Golden Lotuses. These lotus buds transformed into stars that inhabit the heavens. Seven of these stars make up the Northern Dipper (Ursa Major or Beidou). The Dipper Mother is recognized as the patron of practitioners of internal alchemy (*neidan*) and the controller of life and death. She is also known for her compassion and ability to heal the sick.

2) What are the origins of the Dipper Mother?

She is a Taoist goddess of Hindu origin. Her name in Sanskrit, romanized in Chinese, is Molizhi tian. Her eighteen arms reveal her Hindu origins, a feature known to Indian gods. They hold various weapons and vessels, and the mudra of compassion (sacred gesture). Other indicating features include her third eye and Buddhist crown. The Dipper Mother's Taoist features include the moon (yin) and sun (yang) that she carries in either hand. The combination of these two symbols represent the Tao—the union of yin and yang.

3) What kind of medium did the artist use to make this sculpture?

This sculpture is made of dehua porcelain also known as *blanc de Chine*. It is a fine white porcelain clay (*baizu*) that is often coated with a clear glaze. Because the clay is so fine, artists are able to model and engrave intricate designs.

Slide #16



Zhenwu, Supreme Emperor of the Dark Heaven, 1400–1600
Ming dynasty (1368–1644)
Bronze with traces of pigments
The British Museum, London, Given by Messrs. Yamanaka.

1) Who is this figure?

This is a statue of Zhenwu (“zh’en woo”), the Perfected Warrior, a Taoist deity. It is one of the largest statues of Zhenwu outside of China (from the collections of the British Museum, London). It is made of bronze with traces of pigments.

2) Describe some of the details on this statue.

The catalogue *Taoism and the Arts of China* describes the statue as follows:

“Zhenwu sits in a dignified posture befitting his status as a celestial emperor, reflecting the title he received in 1304: Supreme Emperor of the Dark Heaven, Primal Sage, and Benevolent Majesty.... The god’s long hair is combed straight back and falls to his waist. He wears armor under his robe, with a dragon emblazoned on his breastplate. His feet are bare. He forms a sacred gesture with the two front fingers of his left hand, while his right hand rests in his lap. His eyes were originally inlaid. The armor and robe reveal traces of

lacquer and gilding; elsewhere there are traces of pigment on the surface. Zhenwu's robe is decorated in front with a five-clawed dragon; the hem is decorated with clouds in low relief." (catalogue entry written by Stephen Little)

3) What is the mythology behind Zhenwu?

Zhenwu is a martial figure, given extraordinary powers, a protector of Taoism, the emperor and the nation against demons and malevolent forces. Zhenwu is "perfected" in the sense that he is a fully realized being, perfected in his harmony with the constantly changing power of the Great Way, or Tao. His residence and seat of power is Mount Wudang ("woo-dahng") and his association with this important and magical mountain endows him with the special power that Taoism attributes to such mountains. Zhenwu is also lord and commander of the north.

In ancient China, Zhenwu was called Xuanwu ("shwan-woo"), the Dark Warrior or Dark Lord, and was depicted in images as a tortoise with a snake coiled around it. According to legend, Zhenwu was sent by the Lord of the Heavens to battle an uprising of demonic kings. These evil kings turned the energies of yin and yang to their advantage, causing them to appear as a giant tortoise and snake, but they were no match for Zhenwu's perfection and were subdued and became his attendants.



Section of a Sarcophagus with Xuanwu
Northern Wei Dynasty, early 6th century
Limestone
Private Collection

When Zhenwu returned to the heavens, the Lord of the Heavens alerted Zhenwu to the continued prevalence of malevolent powers in the universe, and Zhenwu then vowed to eradicate every demonic power until none remained.

Zhenwu reached a peak of influence and popularity during the Ming dynasty, when this statue was made. The Yongle emperor (reigned 1403–1424) credited Zhenwu with assisting his usurpation of the throne. He also proclaimed that Zhenwu was a transformation of Laozi. The emperor had temples dedicated to Zhenwu built on Mount Wudang and in the Forbidden City. Imperial patronage of Zhenwu continued through the remainder of the Ming dynasty.

Zhenwu is a fascinating example of a Taoist deity whose meaning and patronage evolved over the centuries.

Slide #17



The Eight Immortals, the Three Stars, and the Queen Mother of the West at the Turquoise Pond
Qing dynasty, Qianlong reign (1736–1795)
Hanging scroll; ink and colors on kesi silk tapestry
Asian Art Museum of San Francisco, The Avery Brundage Collection.

1) What is going on in this scene?

This silk tapestry depicts the ‘Peach Banquet’ held at the Turquoise Pond (*Yao Chi*) within the paradise home of the Queen Mother of the West in the Kunlun Mountains. A group of deities and immortals walk across a stone bridge and assemble on a terrace to greet the Queen Mother as she approaches on a phoenix.

2) How can each figure be identified?

Each figure can be identified by their iconography—the traditional images or symbols associated with that figure.

1. The Queen Mother of the West (*Xi Wangmu*: “she-wang-moo”) descends in the upper left on a phoenix, carrying one of her peaches. These are the peaches which take three thousand years to blossom. (see slide #7) She is accompanied by two jade maidens.

The Queen Mother rules over the direction of the west and represents the yin energy. Her kingdom is a mountain paradise where the immortals dwell.

2. The Three Star Gods assemble closest to the Queen Mother on the terrace. At the back is Lu (*Luxing*), the God of Rank and Profit, dressed as an official in robe of brocade and a jade encrusted belt. Below him to the left, with a prominent forehead, is Shou (*Shouxing* or *Shoulao*), the God of Longevity, who appears as a benevolent old man. He holds a staff and a peach of immortality. Below Lu to the right is Fu (Fuxing), the God of Blessings and Happiness. (see also slide # 14)
3. The Eight Immortals are as follows (in descending order from top to bottom in the picture): (for complete descriptions, see separate section on “The Eight Immortals”
 - Zhongli Quan is the leader of the group. He is dressed casually and his large belly pushes out of his partially open robe. He carries a fan, which he uses to bring the dead back to life.
 - Lu Dongbin is a dignified figure carrying a sword on his back. (see next slide)
 - Lan Caihe is a strolling singer (can be male or female), carrying a basket of flowers
 - Cao Guojiu is a nobleman (with his hands raised) who carries jade tablets that he uses like castanets (tied to his waist)
 - Zhang Guolao, an old man, carries a tubular drum made of bamboo
 - Facing toward the viewer is the one female immortal, He Xiangyu. She carries a lotus blossom, on which is perched a monkey. She holds a fungus that attracts a crane, symbol of longevity.
 - Han Xiangzi is a youthful figure playing a flute.
 - Li Tieguai was a young man whose soul inhabits the body of a beggar. He carries an iron crutch and a double gourd on his back. He is followed by a deer, another symbol of longevity.

3) When and why was this hanging scroll made?

This silk tapestry hanging scroll was made during the reign of the Qianlong emperor (reigned 1736–1795) during the Qing dynasty. The Qing, which was the last imperial dynasty of China before the founding of the Republic in 1911. Qianlong was an enthusiastic patron of the arts. Weavings such as this were probably given as gifts—possibly imperial birthday gifts—at the court. Filled with images of immortality and longevity, such a gift would bestow many blessings on its recipient.

Slide #18



The Taoist Immortal Lu Dongbin, late 1200s–early 1300s
Yuan dynasty (1279–1368) Hanging scroll; ink and colors on silk
The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, Purchase; Nelson Trust

1) Who is depicted here?

This is an image of one of the Eight Immortals (*Baxian*) known as Lu Dongbin. He is shown here in light brown robe tied with a black sash. He wears a pale blue hat, and on his right side, he carries a small gourd and tucked beneath his robe, a long sword.

2) How did Lu Dongbin become an immortal?

Lu Dongbin is believed to have lived during the Tang dynasty (618-906 CE) and first became popular during the succeeding Song dynasty. His story was first published as a drama during the Yuan dynasty (1276–1368 CE) when this painting was made. At that time, the Mongols ruled China.

One story relates how Lu Dongbin met Zhongli Quan, leader of the immortals and the two went to a tavern for a drink. Dongbin fell asleep and had a dream that he was living a highly successful life, achieving high positions in the government, marrying twice, having many offspring. In his dream he attained the position of prime minister, but all of a sudden, he was scandalized by a crime. He was separated from

his family and was left stranded in the mountains in a snowstorm. Dongbin awoke, and realized, with the help of the immortal Master, that life itself is a dream, from which the enlightened awake. He then joined the Master and sought the arts of immortality.

3) What function does Lu Dongbin fulfill as an immortal?

Each immortal's attributes tells us something about their function. Lu Dongbin is a renowned swordsman, able to perform many feats of magic. He is also an expert on Inner Alchemy (see separate section in background materials) and the arts of divination and exorcism. Among his many associations are patron saint of merchants, barbers, pharmacists, ink makers and scholars.

4) How has the artist depicted Lu Dongbin?

The artist (unknown) has painted the image of Lu Dongbin on silk, using mostly lines. His cap and lower garments flow gently in the breeze, probably a reference to the fact that Lu Dongbin often floats through the air. His facial features, beard and fingers are all delicately rendered. Despite his full figure and dignified posture, we sense Lu Dongbin's concentrated energy, his ability to spring into action at any moment using his sword.

Slide #19

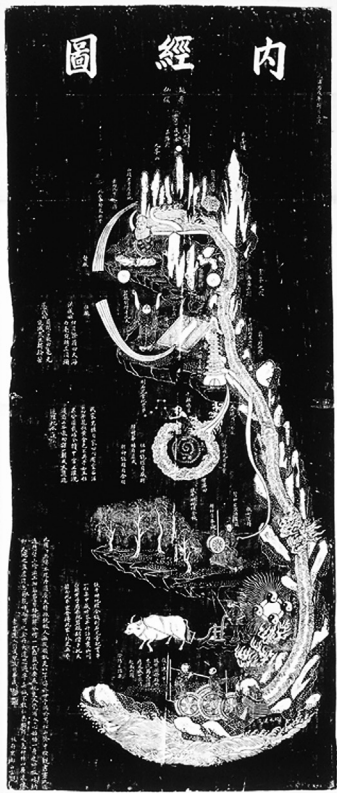


Illustration of Inner Circulation, 1800–1900
China, Qing dynasty (1644–1911)
Ink rubbing; ink on paper
Richard Roesnblum Family Collection,
Newton Center, Massachusetts

1) There are many things going on in this ink rubbing called the *Illustration of Inner Circulation*. Stand back and look at the overall picture. Do you notice a familiar image?

This is a diagram of the inner workings of the human body as seen by a Taoist alchemist. The oval section at the top of the figure is the head. The thick cord that runs vertical down the right side of the picture is the spinal cord. The areas filled with activity symbolize different organs in the body.

2) This is not a medical illustration of a body. Why are there people, animals, planets, rivers, mountains, and stars inside the body?

In Taoism, it is believed that all things in the universe correspond to each other. For instance, every organ in the body is connected with something else located in the cosmos. In this diagram, the body is a grand landscape. The cranium comprises of nine mountain peaks from which a waterfall of “spirit water” streams downward along a mountainous ravine that forms the spinal cord. The heart is represented by Herd Boy (the personification of a star) who holds the Northern Dipper in his hands. If you look closely at the cranium you will see the sun and the moon, two circles where the eyes might be.

In the theory of correspondence, the human body relates not only to the cosmos, but also to the deities that live within it. Notice the white-haired elderly man meditating in the cranium. His robe is ornamented with the character for long life (shou). This individual may represent Shoulao, the God of Longevity. He is recognizable by his elongated cranium.

3) What is happening? What does it mean?

Everything in the diagram represents elements of yin and yang. The interaction of yin and yang are what make the body and the universe work. In the case of the body, the interaction of yin (water, girl) and yang (fire, boy) make up its system of inner circulation. Taoists who practiced inner alchemy believed that the Golden Elixir or pill of immortality could be created by unifying the elements of yin and yang within the body. Notice how the fire (yang) and water (yin) combine in the area where the stomach might be. This area is called the cinnabar field and the four interlinked taiji symbols represent the formation of the Golden Elixir.

4) Where is this rubbing from?

This rubbing was taken from a carved wooden tablet once located in the White Cloud Monastery (Baiyun Guan) of the Complete Reality or Quanzhen sect of Taoism. It was commissioned by Liu Chengyin who based the carving on an image he had seen at Tall Pine Mountain (Gaoson Shan). The carving, which is now lost, was completed in 1886.

Slide #20



Seeking the Tao in the Autumn Mountains, 1100–1000

By Juran (approx. 960–980)

China, Northern Song dynasty (960–1126)

Hanging scroll; ink on silk

National Palace Museum

1) Nestled within the ravine of this majestic landscape is a thatched dwelling. Inside you can see two figures sitting on the ground. How does the scale of the figures relate to the scale of the landscape? Why do you think the artist does this?

The tiny scale of the figures located in the lower third of the scroll is in great contrast to the grand scale of the mountains that rise behind them. The artist does this intentionally to show the humble presence of the figures in relation to the strength and energy-spirit exhibited by the natural landscape. Mountains held special meaning to Taoists who believed that they embodied the power of the universe.

2) In Taoism, the location of dwellings in relation to the surrounding landscape was very important. It was based on the belief that the land was alive with *qi* or energy. The *qi* in a location could either positively or negatively affect the livelihood of its inhabitants. The art of finding these locations is called *feng shui*. How do you think the dwelling in this painting might exhibit good *feng shui*?

The dwelling in this painting is an example of good feng shui because its location is considered to be in harmony with nature. The mountains represent the assertive, cosmic force of yang, and the meandering stream represents the yielding, cosmic force of yin. The dwelling benefits from the flow of energy *qi* produced from the interaction of these two elements. Rounded mountain ridges, placed in a triangular formation are believed to be especially beneficial and protective locations for dwellings. An analogy for an ideal location is that of a “Chinese-style armchair with high back, left and right arms, and a low, open front.” Can you see the “arm chair” in this painting?

3) The artist of this painting was a Buddhist monk named Juran who painted during the 10th century. Why would a Buddhist monk title his painting *Seeking the Tao in the Autumn Mountains*?

The term Tao literally means “way” or “path.” The concept of “seeking the tao” was one shared by many Chinese teachings including Buddhism. In addition, when Buddhism was introduced into China it was incorporated into the indigenous beliefs of Taoism. In this respect, Buddhism and Taoism share many commonalities, especially their reverence for nature.

The Northern Song dynasty witnessed the beginning of monumental landscape painting in which towering mountains and flowing streams became important subjects for artists.

Taoism and the Arts of China: Mountains and Landscapes

Suggested Activities for the Middle School Classroom

Title: Save the Earth

Students research how nature is viewed in Taoism and find stories on nature and the earth from around the world. Then students write down a list of environmental problems, research the problems, and write a magazine article. Finally, students think about what would be the perfect environment for the earth and write a story that details how they would show their respect for the earth and help save the environment.

Grade:

Middle School

Art Object(s):

- Slide #6 *Mountain-Shaped Censer*
- Slide #7 *Festival of the Peaches of Longevity*
- Slide #20 *Seeking the Tao in the Autumn Mountains*

Subject Area:

English Language Arts, Fine Arts, and Social Science

Materials:

- slide descriptions of the images mentioned above
- *Themes in Taoism: Mountains and Landscapes*
- a slide projector
- suggested book(s):

Collard, Sneed B., and Action for Nature. *Acting for Nature: What Young People around the World Have Done to Protect the Environment*. Carl Dennis Buell, illus. 2000: Heyday.

Elder, John, and Hertha D. Wong. *Family of Earth and Sky: Indigenous Tales of Nature from around the World*. 1994: Beacon.

MacDonald, Margaret Read. *Earth Care: World Folktales to Talk About*. Zobra Anasazi, illus. 1999: Linnnet.

Discussion:

- Look at the slides #6, #7, and #20 with the class. Ask them:
What do you see? Whom do you see?
What are they doing?
How are they dressed and what are they holding? What does this tell you?
Where is the scene taking place? What do you see that makes you say that?
What season is it? How can you tell?
What colors, shapes, and lines do you see? What kind of patterns do you see?
What do you think the objects are made of? How do you know?
How do you think these objects were used? What leads you to believe that?

Activity:

- Have students research how nature is viewed in Taoism. Have them consider the following questions:

Is nature considered to be sacred?

How does a Chinese landscape painting capture this idea?

How are mountains seen in Taoism?

Discuss their findings.

- Ask students to think about cultures that consider nature, especially mountains, as sacred. Have students find stories or myths about nature and the earth from around the world. Encourage students to take turns in reading the stories out loud in class. As they read these stories, ask students why these stories were created. Next, discuss the stories and the meanings behind them.

- Next, have students consider the following questions:

Do people around the world still treat nature as being sacred?

What has happened to the environment over time?

What kind of air, water, and ground problems do human beings face today?

Have students write down a list of environmental problems. Ask students to share their lists with the class.

Taoism and the Arts of China: Mountains and Landscapes

Suggested Activities for the High School Classroom

Title: A Poem about Nature

Students read a Chinese poem on nature and write their own poem.

Grade:

High School

Art Object(s):

- Slide #6 *Mountain-Shaped Censer*
- Slide #7 *Festival of the Peaches of Longevity*
- Slide #20 *Seeking the Tao in the Autumn Mountains*

Subject Area:

English Language Arts and Fine Arts

Materials:

- slide descriptions of the images mentioned above
- *Themes in Taoism: Mountains and Landscapes*
- a slide projector

Discussion:

- Look at the slides #6, #7, and #20 with the class. Ask them:
What do you see? Whom do you see?
What are they doing?
How are they dressed and what are they holding? What does this tell you?
Where is the scene taking place? What do you see that makes you say that?
What season is it? How can you tell?
What colors, shapes, and lines do you see? What kind of patterns do you see?
What do you think the objects are made of? How do you know?
How do you think these objects were used? What leads you to believe that?

Then, encourage students to write down any questions they may have about these images. Have students read about these images.

Activity:

- Read the poem below by Li Bo, a famous Tang dynasty poet.

Dialogue in the Mountains

You ask me why I lodge in these emerald hills;
I laugh, don't answer—my heart is at peace.
Peach blossoms and flowing waters
go off to mysterious dark,
And there is another world,
not of mortal men.

—Li Bo (From Steven Owen's *The Great Age of Chinese Poetry: The High Tang*, p.136)

- Ask students:
What kind of a landscape is Li Bo describing?
What does Li Bo mean by the second line? Why is his “heart at peace”?
What is “mysterious” and “dark”?
What is this other world that is “not of mortal men”?

Keeping these questions in mind, have students write down their interpretation of this poem by Li Bo. Encourage students to share their interpretations.

- Ask students to choose one of the above objects and make a list of details that they can see in that object’s landscape. Then, ask them to imagine that they have entered the landscape. Have them consider the following questions as they continue their imaginary journey into the landscape:

What natural or man-made things do you see?
Which part of the landscape will you explore?
How do you feel standing under the soaring peaks?
What sounds do you hear, smells do you detect, and textures do you feel?
Will you meet someone?

Addressing these questions and asking what they might experience when they imagine walking into one of the landscapes, have students write a poem on the theme of nature using their list of details. Encourage students to use adjectives to describe the place and to create similes using “like” or “as” to show something special about the landscape.

Taoism and the Arts of China: Gods and Goddesses

Suggested Activities for the Middle School Classroom

Title: Talking with the Gods

Students create a dialogue between Mother Dipper and Zhenwu on how each defines yin and yang. Next, separate the class into groups. Students then make a list of masculine and feminine characteristics. As a group, students discuss and present each other's observations on the two sexes and the responses of Mother Dipper and Zhenwu.

Grade:

Middle School

Art Object(s):

- Slide #98 *The Dipper Mother*
- Slide #104 *Zhenwu, Supreme Emperor of the Dark Heaven*

Subject Area:

English Language Arts and Visual Arts

Materials:

- slide descriptions of the images mentioned above
- *Themes in Taosim: Gods and Goddesses*
- a slide projector

Discussion:

- Look carefully at the slides #98 and #104 with the class. Ask students:
What do you see? Whom do you see?
What are they doing?
How are they dressed and what are they holding? What does this tell you?
What kinds of materials were used in these objects?

Discuss answers to these questions.

- Ask students to compare and contrast the image to the images. Have them think about the personalities of Mother Dipper and Zhenwu, their clothing, posture, and attributes. Discuss the similarities and differences.

Activity:

- Encourage students to write down any questions they may have about these two objects. Have students read about these two Taoist deities. Ask students:
What is the deities' position in Taoism? What are the deities' functions?

Discuss the answers to these questions.

- Explain the concepts of yin and yang. Ask students:
Is there anything yang about Mother Dipper and anything yin about Zhenwu?
- Ask students to create a dialogue between Mother Dipper and Zhenwu on how each defines yin and yang. Have students write down their responses.

- Separate the class into groups. Then ask students to make a list of masculine and feminine characteristics. Have them present their lists to the class as a group. Ask the other groups if they agree or disagree with each other's observations about the two sexes and the responses of Bixia Yuanjun and Zhenwu.
- Using this list and the following questions, open up the discussion to the class.
Are women and men always either yin or yang? Or are they both?
What does the idea of yin and yang say about human relationships?

Taoism and the Arts of China: Gods and Goddesses

Suggested Activities for the High School Classroom

Title: Yin and Yang

Students read a passage from the *Daode jing* (pronounced: dow-duh-jing) on yin energy and write an essay on the concepts of yin and yang in relation to the position of women in Taoism. Then students read selections from *The Joy Luck Club* and discuss the roles of women that are encountered in this novel. Finally, students design a visual motif that interprets their idea of yin and yang.

Grade:

High School

Art Object(s):

- Slide #98 *The Dipper Mother*
- Slide #104 *Zhenwu, Supreme Emperor of the Dark Heaven*

Subject Area:

English Language Arts, Social Science, and Visual Arts

Materials:

- slide descriptions on the images mentioned above
- *Themes in Taoism: Gods and Goddesses*
- suggested book(s):

Sanders, Tao Tao Liu. *Dragons Gods & Spirits from Chinese Mythology*. Johnny Pau, illus. New York: Peter Bedrick Books, 1980.

Tan, Amy. *The Joy Luck Club*. New York: Vintage Contemporaries, Vintage Books, A Division of Random House, Inc. 1989.

- the Internet:
www.chinapage.com
www.chcp.org

Discussion:

- Look carefully at the slide #98 and #104 with the class. Ask students to compare and contrast the two images by asking the following questions:
What do you see?
What are they doing?
How are they dressed and what are they holding? What does this tell you?
Where are these scenes taking place? What do you see that makes you say that?

Have them think about Mother Dipper's and Zhenwu's personalities, their clothing, posture, and attributes. Discuss the similarities and differences.

Activity:

- Have students read the passage below from the *Daodejing*, where the Tao is described in the following manner:

The Valley Spirit [i.e., the Tao] never dies.
It is named the Mysterious Female.
And the Doorway of the Mysterious Female
Is the base from which Heaven and Earth sprang.
It is there within us all the while:
Draw upon it as you will, it never runs dry.
—from *Daodejing*, chapter 6

- Having read the above poem, ask students:
What is yin?
What is your interpretation of the relationship between yin and yang?

Discuss the answers to these questions.

- Have students read about these three Taoist deities. Ask students:
What is their position in Taoism?
What are the functions of the female deities in comparison to the embodiment of the yang force Zhenwu?
Is there anything yang about Mother Dipper, and anything yin about Zhenwu?
Are men and women only yang and only yin?
Does the idea of yin and yang reflect gender equality?
What does the idea of yin and yang say about human relationships?

Discuss the answers to these questions.

- Next, ask students to write an essay on yin and yang in relation to the position of women in Taoism.
- Then, have students read selections from *The Joy Luck Club*. Discuss the roles of women that are encountered in this novel. Using examples from the book discuss the position of women in China as described in this book.
- Finally, have students design a visual symbol that interprets their idea of yin and yang. Have them think about the color and shape of their motif. Encourage them to share their designs with the class and explain the meaning behind them.

Taoism and the Arts of China: Immortals

Suggested Activities for the Middle School Classroom

Title: The Eight Immortals and Their Adventures!

Students read a story about each of the Eight Immortals. In their assigned groups, they create a story about one of the Eight Immortals and write a script for a short play about their immortal.

Grade:

Middle School

Art Object(s):

- Slide # 12 *Ordination Scroll of Empress Zhang*
- Slide #17 *The Eight Immortals, the Three Stars, and the Queen Mother of the West at the Turquoise Pond*
- Slide #18 *The Taoist Immortal Lu Dongbin*

Subject Area:

English Language Arts and Visual Arts

Materials:

- slide description of the image mentioned above
- *Themes in Taoism: Immortals*
- *Stories of the Eight Immortals*
- a slide projector
- suggested book(s):

Ho, Kwok Man and Joanne O'Brien, trans. and ed. *The Eight Immortals of Taoism: Legends and Fables of Popular Taoism*. New York: A Meridian Book, 1990.

- paper, pencils, erasers

Discussion:

- Look carefully at slides # 12, #17, and #18 with the class. Ask students:
What do you see? Whom do you see? What are they doing?
How are they dressed and what are they holding? What does this tell you?
Where is the scene taking place? What do you see that makes you say that?
Which season is it? How can you tell? What time of day is it? Why?
What colors, shapes, and lines do you see? What kind of patterns do you see?
From what point of view do we, as viewers, see the scene?
How would you describe the composition in this artwork?
How does the artist use proportion?
What just happened, what is going on now, and what will happen next?
What kind of materials do you think were used in the artwork?
How do you think it was used? What leads you to believe that?
How do you think the artist moved while creating this artwork?
What kind of tools do you think the artist used? How can you tell?
If you could walk into the image, where would you explore? What sounds might you hear? What smells might you detect?

Have students describe the image in as much detail as possible. Discuss the answers to the above questions. Encourage students to write down any questions they may have about this image. Have students read about this image.

Activity:

- Have students read a story about each of the Eight Immortals. Discuss the stories that they read considering the characters, the plot, the settings, and the meanings behind each story.
- Divide the class into eight groups. Assign one immortal to each group and have students create a story about their assigned immortal. Have them write a script for a short play. Ask students to assign a character to each person in the group. Have them think about the setting, plot, characters, costumes, and music for their play.
- Expand on this activity by encouraging students to share their scripts and ideas with the other groups. Have students combine the eight scripts and create a larger play on “The Eight Immortals and Their Adventures.” Encourage students to perform their play in class.

Taoism and the Arts of China: Immortals

Suggested Activities for the High School Classroom

Title: The Hanging Scroll of Immortality

Students create a hanging scroll that depicts their definition of immortality.

Art Object(s):

- Slide #1 *Laozi on an Ox*
- Slide #7 *Festival of the Peaches (handscroll)*
- Slide #20 *Seeking the Tao in the Autumn Mountains*

Grade:

High School

Subject Area:

English Language Arts and Visual Arts

Materials:

- Slide descriptions on the above images
- *Themes in Taoism: Immortals and Nature in Art: Chinese Brushpainting*
- a slide projector
- photocopies of the writing sheets of the Chinese character “Immortal” and “Longevity”
- suggested book(s):

Williams, C. A. S. *Outlines of Chinese Symbols and Art Motives*. New York: Dover Publications, 1976.

- construction paper 12 x18 inches
- craft paper, brushes, black ink, glue, gold paint, paper towels, mixing trays, water cups, scraps of paper, wooden dowels, string

Discussion:

- Look carefully at slides # 1, #7, and #20 of the hanging scroll with the class.

Ask students:

What do you see? Whom do you see?

What are they doing?

How are they dressed and what are they holding? What does this tell you?

Where is the scene taking place? What do you see that makes you say that?

Which season is it? How can you tell? What time of day is it? Why?

What colors, shapes, and lines do you see? What kind of patterns do you see?

From what point of view do we, as viewers, see the scene?

How would you describe the composition in this artwork?

How does the artist use proportion?

What just happened, what is going on now, and what will happen next?

What kind of materials do you think were used in the artwork?

How do you think it was used? What leads you to believe that?

How do you think the artist moved while creating this artwork?

What kind of tools do you think the artist used? How can you tell?

Discuss the answers to these questions. Identify the elements of a Chinese landscape painting. Explain their symbolic significance. Encourage students to write down any questions they may have about this image. Have students read about this image. Discuss with students the difference in composition, perspective, color, material, and format between a Chinese landscape painting and a Western landscape painting.

Activity:

- Have students create their visual concept of immortality by using the Chinese symbols for longevity and immortality and the Chinese characters “Longevity” and “Immortal.”
- First ask students to brush gold tempera paint (diluted in water) as a wash across their piece of construction paper. While it dries, have them practice writing the Chinese characters “Longevity” and “Immortal” on scraps of paper by following the brushstroke order that appears on the photocopies. Next, ask students to create three gradations of gray with the black ink and water. Then, using the Chinese motifs that symbolize longevity and immortality, have them paint their own concept of immortality. Encourage students to use the paper vertically and not horizontally. Then, when the painting has dried, ask them to try out their new-found skills in writing Chinese on their painting of immortality.
- Now, have students glue their painting to a large piece of craft paper to represent the rich embroidered borders found on hanging scrolls. Remember that the top border should be larger than the bottom borders. The side borders should be equal in size and thinner than the bottom border.
- Have them attach two wooden dowels to the top and bottom of the scroll. Using glue, ask students to wrap the edges of the craft paper around the dowels. The width of the dowels should be longer than the construction paper. Have students tie a string to the jutting out parts of the top dowel in order to hang the scroll.
- Display the hanging scrolls in the classroom and discuss the designs.

Taoism and the Arts of China: Ritual Arts

Suggested Activities for the Middle School Classroom

Title: My Mini Taoist Robe

Students create a mini-robe and decorate it with shapes that are on the Taoist robe.

Grade:

Middle School

Art Object:

- Slide #10 *Taoist Priest's Robe*

Subject Area:

English Language Arts, Visual Arts, and Math

Materials:

- slide description of the image mentioned above
- *Themes in Taoism: Ritual Arts*
- a slide projector
- white construction paper 11 x 18 inches, colored construction paper, rulers, scissors, tempera paint, brushes, watercups, paper towels, mixing trays, colored pencils, colored markers, glue, dowels, hooks

Discussion:

- Look carefully at slide #10 of the robe with the class. Ask students:
What do you see?
What colors, shapes, and lines do you see?
What kind of patterns do you see? What kinds of animals and plants do you see?
Who would have worn this robe? For what kind of an occasion would it have been worn? When do you wear special clothing?
How do you think the texture of this object might feel?
What kind of materials do you think were used to make this robe? How do you know?
What kind of tools do you think were used to make this robe? How can you tell?

Have students describe the object in as much detail as possible. Discuss the answers to the above questions.

- Discuss with students the definition of a ritual. Ask students:
What kind of daily rituals do you observe?
What is the difference between daily rituals and religious or cultural rituals?
What rituals are observed in your community?
Are there rituals that people from California observe together?
Are there rituals in which people from all over the United States participate?

Discuss the answers to the above questions. Read the information on Taoist rituals and share it with your students.

Activity:

- The dimensions of the actual robe are 53_ x 74_ inches. Using a 1:5 scale reproduction of the actual robe, have students calculate the length and height of their mini-robe by dividing the actual dimensions by 5. Have students use two pieces of white construction paper to create their robe. Then, using the calculated length and height, cut the pattern of the front of the robe with one piece of paper. Then, have them cut out the pattern of the back of the robe with another piece of white paper.
- Ask students to choose a background color of any hue and to paint their mini-robos with tempera paints. While the robes dry, ask them to think of the shapes and images they saw on the *Taoist Priest's Robe* that they would like to have on theirs. Ask them to cut out shapes with the different colored construction paper.
- After the paint dries, they can attach the front and the back of their mini-robe at the top and the sides with glue. Remind students to leave a hole at the top center for the neck. Then, they can glue the cutouts of auspicious motifs on the front and the back of their robes. Using colored pencils and markers, they can enhance their designs on the front and the back.
- Discuss the designs on the mini-robos.

Taoism and the Arts of China: Ritual Arts

Suggested Activities for the High School Classroom

Title: Looking at the Heavens

Students research the Big Dipper's movement across the night sky during each season. They create four charts of the northern night sky with its constellations for each season and create four more charts that depict the constellations in the southern night sky for each season.

Grade:

High School

Art Object:

- Slide #5 *Star Chart*

Subject Area:

English Language Arts, Visual Arts, and Science

Materials:

- slide description of the image mentioned above
- *Themes of Taoism: Cosmology*
- suggested book(s):

Cooper, Heather. *D.K. Space Encyclopedia*. New York: DK Publishing, Inc., 1999.

Lippincott, Kristen. *DK Eyewitness Science Astronomy*. New York: DK Publishing, Inc, 1994.

Stott, Carole. *DK Eyewitness Explorers Night Sky*. New York: DK Publishing, Inc., 1997.

Thompson, C. E. *Glow in the Dark Constellations: A Field Guide for Young Stargazers*. New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1989.

- a slide projector
- black construction paper 12 x 18 inches, silver sequins, silver paper, silver paint, glue, pencils. Erasers, scissors, brushes, watercups, paper towels, scraps of paper, metallic gel pens

Discussion:

- Have students read about the image. Look carefully at slide #5 with the class. Ask them:

What do you see? Where do you think this is?

What do you think the dots and lines mean?

What do you think the Chinese characters say?

What materials do you think were used to make this artwork? Why do you think this?

Who do you think this artwork was made for? How do you think this artwork was used?

What else do you see?

Activity:

- This star chart shows the entire northern hemisphere and part of the southern sky up to fifty degrees south of the celestial equator. Within it is the Northern Dipper, or Big Dipper. Have students research Ursa Major addressing the following questions:

What is the Ursa Major?

What shape does the Big Dipper take?

Have you seen this shape in the night sky?

- Have students search for the Big Dipper on a clear night. Ask them:
What happens to it throughout the year?
What other constellations do you see in the northern night sky during each season?

Discuss their findings.

- Divide the class into four groups and assign a season to each group. Have students create four charts of the northern night sky showing the Big Dipper's movement during the four seasons. Ask students to include the shapes or designs of other constellations that can be seen in the northern night sky in each season. Next, create four more charts that depict the constellations in the southern sky for each season.
- Have students brush silver tempera paint diluted in water as a wash over their piece of black construction paper to give the effect of the Milky Way. While it dries, research the pattern or shape of the Big Dipper and the other constellations in the northern night sky during their assigned season. Together, on scraps of paper, practice drawing the Big Dipper and other constellations. Using dots and lines, ask students to create the constellations in the northern sky on the black construction paper. Have students use the sequins for the dots and cut the silver paper for the lines.
- Next, have students research the pattern or shapes of other constellations of the southern night sky for their assigned season. Create a chart for them using the same method.
- Display charts in class and discuss their findings.

Nature in Art Program: Chinese Brushpainting



The Education Department would like to express its appreciation for the contributions and dedication of the docents to the Nature in Art Program.

COVER IMAGE

Early Snow on a Lotus Pond, 1955

By Chao Shao-an

China

Handscroll, ink and colors on paper

Collection of Master Chao Shao-an, 1992.205

Nature in Art: Chinese Brushpainting

The brushpainting activity *Nature in Art: Chinese Brushpainting* is designed for students of all grade levels. It is adapted from our popular school tour program *Nature in Art: Chinese Brushpainting* at the Asian Art Museum–Chong-Moon Lee Center for Asian Art and Culture. For more information about this program and the art of Chinese brushpainting, please contact the Education Department of the Asian Art Museum.

The brushpainting activity *Learning the Art of Chinese Brushpainting: The Landscape* by Lampo Leong is intended as a guide for teachers. It includes detailed painting instructions in brushstroke and inking techniques.

Objectives:

Students will create a landscape painting using traditional Chinese brush and ink techniques and materials.

Art Object(s):

- Slide #1 *Laozi on an Ox*
- Slide #7 *Festival of the Peaches*
- Slide #20 *Seeking the Tao in the Autumn Mountains*

Materials

Chinese liquid black ink, Xuan paper (also known as “rice paper”), Small Hard _” Wolf’s Hair brush, newsprint, plastic containers, paper towels, and water.

Optional materials: Large Hard 1.5” Wolf’s Hair brush, and Large Soft 2” Sheep’s Hair brush. You may wish to use an inkstone and inkstick to demonstrate how to grind ink in the traditional manner. For classroom projects, however, liquid black ink is more efficient and easier for students to work with.

Discussion

- Look carefully at slides #1, #7, and #20 with the class. Ask students:

What do you see? What elements of nature and types of animals do you see?

What season do you think it is? Why?

What do you look at first in the picture? This is called the focus point.

What do you look at second in the picture? This is the second focus point. Chinese artists paint “jumping focus points” to keep the viewers eyes traveling through the painting.

Can you see a red seal on the painting? This can be the artist’s signature, the name of the art studio, or the owner of the painting. Are there many seals on the painting? This may mean that several collectors have owned it.

Look carefully at the brushstrokes. Where do you think is the start of the brushstroke?

Where does the artists paint quickly as compared to slowly?

Can you guess what a “fei bai” or flying white” brushstroke looks like?

Notice how the artists use different brushstrokes to convey textures in nature. Can you recognize the same brushstrokes used by different artists?

Procedure

1. Pre-painting exercise: Ask students to hold up their index and middle fingers. Have them imagine how the artist painted certain brushstrokes. Next, using their fingers, have them “trace” the brushstroke movements as if they were the painters.
2. Explain to students the kinds of materials used by brushpainters. If possible, demonstrate how liquid ink is made by gently grinding the inkstick with water on the inkstone.
3. Demonstrate and practice the following steps on newsprint with your students: 1) the correct way to hold the brush, 2) how to shape the brush against the edge of the water cup, 3) how to load the brush with ink, 4) how to experiment with pressure and speed, 5) how to paint by placing the paint brush at an angle, and 6) how to add water to produce different gradations of ink.
4. Encourage students to paint by moving their shoulders, arms, and hands as one unit. This may feel strange to students who are used to moving only their wrist when painting. Using newsprint, have the students practice the following brushstrokes:
 - Thin Lines: Using the tip of the brush, paint with little pressure.
 - Thick Lines: Apply pressure so that the brush hairs spread in width.
 - Varied Pressure: First apply heavy pressure, next gently lighten the pressure by lifting up the brush slightly, and then apply heavy pressure again. Repeat this varied pressure across the paper.
 - Orchid Leaves: Create a brushstroke in an arch shape. Begin with medium pressure and lighten the pressure midway up the stroke, apply medium pressure again, and then finish the stroke with a tapered end. It will look like an orchid leaf turning in the wind.
 - Split Brush: Dip the brush in water and then in ink. Take excess water out of the brush by pressing the side of the brush on newsprint. Press the brush hairs against the surface of a clean dish to create a broad fan shape. Using the brush in this fashion will create a split brush effect.
 - Mi Dots: Paint groupings of small oval dots to create texture in rocks
 - Inking Techniques: Place a little bit of black ink in a dish and dilute it with water to create a light gray. Wash the brush in clear water. Load the brush with the gray ink. Next, dip the tip of the brush in dark, black ink. As the black ink is absorbed into the brush, it becomes diluted with the light gray ink. Apply the brushstroke at an angle. Students will be pleasantly surprised to see the gradations of ink created in one brushstroke.
5. After students have practiced the different brushstroke techniques on newsprint, give each student a sheet of Xuan paper (also referred to as “rice paper”). Before students begin painting their landscape ask them the following questions:

Can you think of a place in nature that has special meaning to you?

Close your eyes and try and remember what it looks like.

Using your imagination, what might a perfect, peaceful place in nature look like? Everyone will imagine something different.

Using a very dry brush, have students sketch the general shape of their imagined landscape. Next, have them use different texture strokes to paint the subject matter. Students may want to copy the strokes found in a Chinese painting. Explain to students that “copying” in Chinese art is viewed as a form of respect. As a prerequisite to developing ones own art style, Chinese art students are expected to study and copy the style of a master artist.

Art tips

Before students begin to paint, remind them that Chinese black ink is permanent and will stain their clothing. It is also important that brushes be kept out of the water when they are not being used. In other words, no “floating brushes.” Explain to students that when brushes are left in the water, the glue that holds the brush hairs together begins to break down. This causes the brush hairs to fall out.

Discover the Art of the Chinese Brush

When executed with masterful technique, a single ink brushstroke is capable of conveying vitality, delicacy, and contemplation—the essence of Chinese philosophy and spirit. It is this “life force” or *qi* (pronounced chee) that the artist aspires to capture and express through brushpainting. Unlike European-trained artists, the Chinese artist does not try to create a realistic rendering of the external appearance of a subject, seeking instead to capture its inner spirit. Only after intently observing the subject matter in its natural state does the painter return to the studio to paint. The essence of the subject is retained in the artist’s imagination, and it is this image that is painted in a moment of spontaneous inspiration.

How do Chinese brushpainting masters create such an array of vibrant brushstrokes and ink washes? They begin by intently studying the techniques, elements, and principles of traditional brush and ink painting (*bi mo hua*).

Experience for yourself the art of brush-and-ink painting. Begin by learning how to hold the brush. Once you feel comfortable, experiment by applying varying degrees of pressure, speed, and moisture. Finally, create your own brushpainting masterpiece!



How to Hold a Brush

- Hold the brush midway up the handle. Place the handle on the inside of the index finger, supporting it on the opposite side with the tip of your thumb. The tips of the index and middle fingers rest on the top of the handle: the ring and pinkie fingers are placed behind. Leave an open space in the palm of the hand, allowing for a full range of movement. None of the fingers should touch the inside palm.
- To achieve a full range of brushstrokes, hold the brush in a gentle and relaxed manner. Your touch should be gentle enough that a tomato could be held in the cup of the hand without bruising its skin.

The Upright Brush

- Hold the brush upright and perpendicular to the paper. Apply varied speed and pressure to create a range from thin, delicate lines to wide, powerful strokes. For long, sweeping strokes, hold the brush higher up the handle. For detail work and shorter strokes, hold the brush closer to the brush hairs.



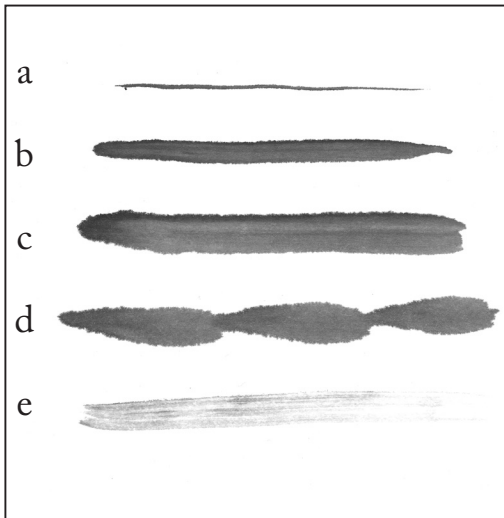


Inking Techniques

Traditional Chinese artists use a special black ink (*mo*) that is said to contain “infinite gradations of color.” This ink is made from a mixture of burnt pine soot and glue that is molded into an inkstick.

- A small amount of water is placed in the inkstone reservoir (the inkstone is commonly made of water-resistant rock such as slate). The inkstick is gently ground with the water in a circular motion to create a deep black liquid.
- The tip of a moist brush is dipped into the ink. As the ink is absorbed into the brush, the moisture that is already in the brush dilutes the ink and creates lighter gradations of ink further away from the tip.
- To use a side-ink technique, a brush is loaded with a light wash of ink. The brush is held in an oblique position and the sides of the brush are dipped with ink. This technique is used to paint subjects such as the lotus flower.



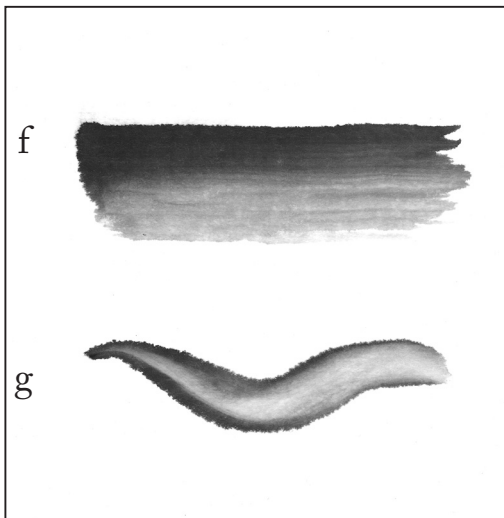


Brushstroke Examples

The following examples were painted with an upright brush.

- a) fast speed, light pressure
- b) medium speed, medium pressure
- c) slow speed, heavy pressure
- d) combination of light and heavy pressure
- e) “flying white” (*fei bai*): fast speed, little moisture

Notice how, by using different ink techniques, gradations of ink can be created within a single brushstroke.



- f) Load the tip of the brush with ink and create a brushstroke by holding the brush in an oblique position.
- g) Load the brush with a light wash of ink and dip opposite sides of the brush with dark ink. This is an example of a side-ink technique.

Learning the Art of Chinese Brushpainting: The Landscape



Illustrated by Lampo Leong
Instructions by Lampo Leong with Diane Wang

Learning the Art of Chinese Brushpainting: The Landscape

Illustrated by Lampo Leong

Instructions by Lampo Leong with Diane Wang



Illustration 1

Landscape

This painting illustrates **layering technique** (*jimofa*) and **variations of texture strokes** (*cunfa*), to achieve an illusion of depth and rock formations. The contrast between light and dark ink throughout the painting shows how an illusion of three-dimensions is achieved without resorting to light and shadow.

This is also a good exercise in portraying water by painting the space between the water. The attempt to paint negative space is central to the Taoist (Daoist) philosophy of brush painting.

The composition follows the “S” curve typical of Chinese paintings.

Illustration 1:

1. Use the large, hard brush to bring black ink into a new dish and dilute it with a small amount of water to create dark gray ink. Dry the brush well. Then dip the tip in the black ink.
2. Use the tip of the brush to outline the rock formation in the foreground. As you work, notice:
 - Strokes should have a definite beginning and end. They do not taper off into thin points.

- Use many short, angular strokes rather than trying to draw the contour in one long stroke.
 - These short strokes are not all done end to end. Rather, some cut in front of the other. Some strokes begin at the outer edge, defining some of that outer edge and then cutting into the interior.
 - The strokes should be decisive and energetic. Think about painting solid rock, a formation that was created in geologic upheaval and has stood for perhaps millions of years. Your stroke should be strong and deliberate to match the subject.
 - Use short strokes on the interior of the rock to give some sense of the rock's structure and a sense of the three dimensions.
 - The upper contour lines are done with the tip of the brush. The contour lines for the lower edges of the rock, for the outcroppings, are done differently. The strokes may begin with the tip of the brush, but then the brush is angled and the side used to complete the stroke.
 - Use short, crowded strokes to darken some areas so that the light areas, the outcroppings, stand out more.
3. Use the large, hard brush and undiluted black ink to draw the trees. Again, dry your brush well after loading it with ink so that you can achieve a dry stroke.
 4. As you paint the tree trunks and branches, notice that:
 - The tree trunks and branches are thicker at the bottom and slightly more narrow as they branch out.
 - Use many short strokes rather than trying to paint an entire trunk with one stroke.
 - There is a contrast between the sides of the trunks. Where one side may use a thick stroke, the other will use a thin stroke. If one side is very smooth and straight, the other side will be more uneven. If the stroke is wet on one side of the trunk, it may be dry on the other. The branches indicate the gesture of the overall tree. Notice the variations of height that create a flow.
 - Pay close attention to how the small branches and twigs are grouped on the branches. They are not evenly spaced. In some areas there will be groups of branches while elsewhere they will be more sparse. You should strive to achieve an organic effect and resist the impulse to create a simple pattern.
 5. Use the large, hard brush to add more water to the ink dish, making a light gray ink. Dry the brush thoroughly so that you can achieve a dry, gray stroke.
 6. Outline the rock formations in the background with dry, gray strokes. As you did before, use short strokes that cut into one another.
 7. As the lines of the rock formations approach the trees, it is important to leave some white space.
 8. In addition to the two large formations in the background, paint a small rock in between them. This



Illustration 2

Illustration 2:

1. Use the large hard brush to do the leaves. Dilute the ink to make a dark gray. You do not want the brush so wet that ink runs on the paper in an uncontrolled manner, but you do need wet ink in the brush. Use the tip of the somewhat wet brush to “dot” on the leaves of the trees. As you do so:
 - Be sure that the leaves are put on top of the branches and do not cover up the branches and twigs. Very few leaves are placed on the bottom side of the branches.
 - Notice how the leaves are grouped. They are most dense at the top of the canopies and more sparse at the link to the branches. Again, resist the impulse to make a regularized pattern and strive to make the groupings organic. Notice the overall relationship and flow of the trees.
 - You may vary the leaves with a lighter gray ink in places.
2. Next add texture to the rock formations in the foreground with medium gray ink. Use the side of the brush to create the so-called “Large Axe-cut” strokes. Use the side of the brush in a sliding motion to create planes of the rock. Shading with this kind of stroke is done on the underside of the outcroppings.
3. For textures on the background mountain use diluted gray ink, but be sure to dry the brush with the paper towel so that you can create a dry, textured stroke, called “Small Axe-cut.” These small, triangular strokes are done with the side of the brush’s tip in a gesture similar to making a checkmark. These strokes are used to create shading on the underside of the outcroppings.

4. Use one light tone of gray for all the texturing and shading. The darker areas accumulate more layers of the same light gray, rather than using darker ink. As you work, do not attempt to do everything with one layer. Develop the texture gradually, doing several layers. Take time to consider where you need the shading. As you approach the tree, leave some lighter space. However, the texturing should continue all the way down to the large rock in the foreground.
5. Notice that in each area, the pattern goes from dense texturing to more sparse. The texturing emerges from the contour strokes you did before. Some areas have more texturing to make them recede or project forward in the painting.
6. Use light gray ink and a daubing stroke to add the suggestion of trees at the top of rock formations in the background. These are dotted on with the side of the brush. Again notice that there is an area where they are dense, which then spreads out with more space between each tree.
7. To create the lake and beaches above the waterfall, pull the tip of the brush from left to right.
8. Use the light gray ink and a dry brush stroke to define the waterfall. Use a quick stroke made with the tip of the brush.
 - The white paper between your strokes is the water. Keep your eye on the white “water” as you paint the stroke.
 - Notice the relationship between the water and the edge of the mountain
 - The two streams of water are not identical. There is variation created with the placement of the strokes. One stream has more strokes than the other does.
 - Strokes for the waterfall are not uniformly thick.
9. For the mist, use very light gray ink, with the tip of the brush slightly darker. Rub the side of the brush to define the mist at the base of the waterfall left of the large rock in the foreground. The unpainted white space is the mist.



Illustration 3

Illustration 3:

1. Add more texture to rocks in the background so that central areas of the rock formations are emphasized and darker than they are at the edges.
2. To add a few birds to the scene, use the small, hard brush with undiluted ink. The birds are done with short, quick strokes from the body to the tip of the wing. Plan the placement and size of the birds. Do not have them all line up in a row with equal distance in between. The wings should be shown at different angles, depending on whether the birds are gliding or flapping.
3. Use a small, hard brush with a very dark ink to add grasses and a few fallen leaves to the rock formation in the foreground. Notice that in this painting the grasses are sprouting from the underside of the rock formations and pointing down.
4. Once again, you need to consider the grouping and placement of the grasses. Some blades will be longer than others. Some blades cross others. The blades of grass are not parallel, and in some places they are in clumps.



Illustration 4

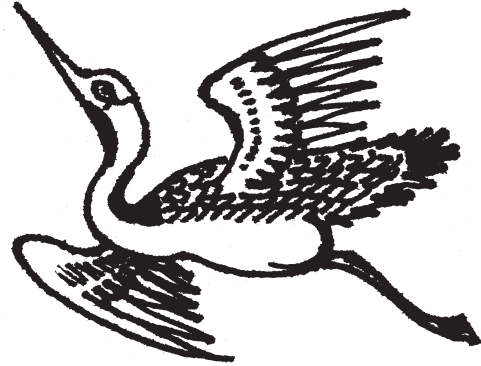
Illustration 4:

1. Load a large, hard brush with a very light gray ink. The brush will be slightly more wet than when you did the previous texturing.
2. With the large soft brush, add a very light ink wash to unify the background mountain and to bring out the mist.
3. Notice that each edge of the painting is treated differently. Some edges are darker and others fade to light mist.
4. The signature and seal are added to the lower right corner of this painting to give it balance.

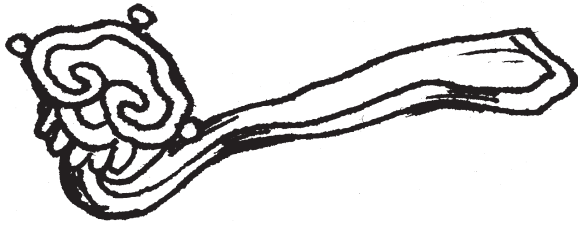
Taoist Images



Bagua



Crane



Ruyi scepter



Peaches of Immortality



Shoulao (the God of Longevity)



Dragon

Laozi and Confucius: Two Ancient Chinese Sages

Student Handout

Compare the following characteristics of Laozi and Confucius.

Characteristics	Laozi (Taoism)	Confucius
Biography		
Main Teachings and Texts		
Views on the ideal ruler		
Views on the ideal Person		
Views on Morality		
Views on Nature and the Cosmos		
Views on Life and Death		
Main Followers		
Influence on Chinese Society, Art, and Culture		

Chinese Dynasties

Shang dynasty: approx. 1600–1050 BCE

The Shang dynasty (pronounced: shahng, ah as in “ah-hah”) marks the first great flourishing of Bronze Age China. Much of what we know of this dynasty derives from archaeological evidence; from inscriptions on bone, which are China’s earliest examples of writing, used for divination ceremonies; and from the many ceremonial bronze vessels and jade implements found in archaeological digs, and in museums and private collections around the world. The Shang dynasty is the first dynasty in Chinese history for which we have actual historical (that is, written at the time) evidence.

Zhou dynasty: approx. 1050–256 BCE

The longest dynasty in Chinese history, the Zhou (pronounced: joe) was the great age of early Chinese philosophy: Confucius (approx. 550–478 BCE), Laozi (pronounced: lao-dz; the “i” is silent; approx. 6th century BCE?), who is partly a mythical figure, and *Zhuangzi* (pronounced: jwahng-dz; 329?-286? BCE;) date from this period. The Zhou kings, having conquered the Shang, established the Mandate of Heaven, a principle of governance that continues to resound in modern China. This mandate, bestowed by heaven (a kind of moral power, rather than a deity or being), stipulated governance by moral quality. Without this quality, a king would lose his authority to rule.

Qin dynasty: 221–207 BCE

In 221 BCE, China was unified by Qin Shi Huang Di (pronounced: chin-shr-hwahng-dee; the “i” in Shi is pronounced like “r” here), a king who became (through self-declaration) the first emperor of China. This period marks the beginning of imperial history (rule by emperors, rather than kings) in China. Qin (pronounced: chin) is the source for the English name “China.” The First Emperor established central rule, standardized weights, measures, coins, and the writing system. Some claim that it was his idea to create the Great Wall in 214 BCE to protect his country from invasions. He was a particular believer in the notion of immortality and is reported to have sent a ship of children off to find the legendary Islands of Immortals. He is also famous for his terracotta army—more than 7,000 life-size pottery soldiers were found buried outside the boundaries of his tomb in the early 1970s.

Han dynasty: 206 BCE–220 CE

A commoner, Liu Bang (pronounced: lyoe-bahng), became the first Han emperor. Confucianism and Taoism began to flourish under imperial sponsorship during this time, and Buddhism was introduced to China from India, brought by merchants along the Silk Roads. Trading in Chinese goods, especially silk, extended as far as Rome. The first half of the dynasty was a time of cultural and territorial expansion. Han dynasty China contributed much that had a lasting impact on Chinese culture: the civil service was developed; Sima Qian, (died approx. 90 BCE; pronounced: ss-mah-chyen) wrote the first history of China; and the first Chinese dictionary was compiled around 100 CE. Many of the ideas and events that became the foundations for Religious Taoism happened during the Han dynasty: notions of cosmos and immortality prevalent in the Han became part of Religious Taoism; Laozi was deified in this period; magicians and adepts of mysticism, called *fangshi* (pronounced: fahng-shr), whose practices contributed to the development of Religious Taoism, were active at the imperial court; and the early Taoist Celestial Master movement began in the 2nd century. Ultimately, Taoist-inspired rebellions brought about the collapse of the dynasty.

The Period of Disunity: 220--581 CE

After the collapse of the Han dynasty, a long period of disruption defines Chinese history until 589. During the Period of Disunity, the northern part of China was occupied and ruled by a succession of non-Chinese peoples, while the south was ruled by a succession of Chinese nobility, each striving to reclaim the old Chinese empire. Buddhism and Taoism were able to fill important human needs during the time of disruption, and the art of the period is marked by great Buddhist and Taoist imagery. During this period, the practice of translating Indian Buddhist texts into Chinese began. Taoist scriptures took their established forms, and Taoism developed into a national religion as emperors were first initiated into Taoism. Fa Xian (pronounced: fah-shyen), an important Chinese pilgrim, was the first to arrive in India, and he traveled to other Buddhist centers in Central Asia, Sri Lanka, and Indonesia. The great early Buddhist shrines in China date from this era.

Sui dynasty: 581–617 CE

The Sui dynasty (pronounced: sway) was first established in 581, but it did not unify China until 589. It was a short-lived dynasty, but it was important in laying the foundations of unity for the next dynasty, the Tang dynasty, one of the great periods in Chinese history. The first Sui emperor developed the Grand Canal System, which was a 1,790 kilometer network of waterways that enabled grain to be transported during famines. The second Sui emperor pursued an active foreign policy sending expeditions to Taiwan, and initiating diplomatic relationships with Japan.

Tang dynasty: 618–906 CE

In its heyday, Tang (pronounced: tahng, “ah” as in “ah hah!”) China was the largest and most powerful empire in the world, and its capital Chang’an (pronounced: chahng-ahn) was the world’s most cosmopolitan city. During the Sui and Tang dynasties, aristocratic power gradually declined and was replaced by professional bureaucrats who were recruited through civil service examinations. Tang power and influence were felt throughout Asia (Korea, Japan, Southeast Asia, Central Asia) and even made their way to the Middle East. The Tang dynasty was a period of great cultural fruition: new and foreign ideas contributed to a rich mixture of tradition; and many ideas from the West made their way into Tang China along the very active Silk Roads. Buddhism was the strongest of the foreign influences. When China began to suffer invasion by foreigners towards the end of the Tang, xenophobic feelings laid the blame for Tang troubles on foreigners, and Buddhism suffered its most serious imperial persecution in 845. Taoism flourished during this period and gained much imperial support. The Tang emperors believed themselves to have descended from Laozi.

The Five Dynasties Period: 906–960 CE

After the middle of the 8th century, Tang dynasty strength began to diminish. An internal rebellion, with support from foreign powers, weakened the power of the emperor in 755. The Tang dynasty collapsed in 906 and was followed by a quick succession of military rulers. Despite the instability of this period, it is known as the time when landscape as a theme began to establish its importance and dominance in Chinese painting; South China began to lead the country into economic and cultural refinement. Rice replaced millet as the staple crop. Lack of a good copper supply led to the brief use of iron coinage, and to “flying money”—a precursor of paper money that became legal in the following dynasty.

Song dynasty: 960–1279 CE (Northern Song: 960–1126 CE; Southern Song: 1127–1279 CE)

With the founding of the Song dynasty (pronounced: soong, “oo” as in “look”), China was once again reunited. The Song dynasty saw the class of educated gentlemen who constituted the government’s civil

service grow into a political and cultural power. Such gentlemen, educated in established literary, historical, and artistic traditions, ran the government bureaucracy and shaped an influential new artistic taste. The Song emperors were among the greatest imperial patrons of the arts in Chinese history. They became avid collectors of art and supported a painting academy. New forms of philosophical thought and religious practice developed as Confucianism reinvigorated itself with Buddhist and Taoist ideas. These new Confucian ideas and practices are called “Neo-Confucianism” by Western scholars. In Religious Taoism, inner alchemy, a form of Taoist inner meditation and self-cultivation, rose in importance. The Song Emperor Huizong (pronounced: hway-dzoong, “oo” as in “look”), who reigned from 1110–1125, believed he was an incarnation of a Taoist god and initiated a new movement in Taoism. During this period several other Taoist movements appeared, and popular deities were incorporated into Taoism. In Buddhism, Chan (Japanese Zen) Buddhism became an important cultural, philosophical, and religious force.

Yuan dynasty: 1260–1368

The Yuan dynasty (pronounced: yoo-ann) was a period of foreign occupation. Genghis Khan united the nomadic tribes of Mongolia on China’s northern border and began to push into China. By the end of the 13th century, the invading Mongols ruled an empire that stretched from what is now Poland to Korea, from Siberia to Vietnam, and included Persia as well as part of Arabia. European interest in China grew, and missionaries arrived for the first time. The Venetian Marco Polo worked for 17 years in the service of Emperor Kublai Khan, the grandson of Genghis Khan. The Muslim influence was also great, and Muslims contributed astronomical instruments and hydraulic engineering works. The Mongols (whose administration was bilingual, Mongolian and Chinese) preferred foreigners for government service.. The educated elites of the conquered Song dynasty were mistrusted and often treated as second-class citizens. Yet the Mongol occupation stimulated cultural growth, as educated Chinese looked back to China’s past for inspiration. This period gave birth to Chinese drama and theater (influenced by Taoism) and saw a new flourishing of painting and poetry. One of the great masters of Yuan dynasty painting, Huang Gongwang (pronounced: hwahng goong-wahng; “oo” as in “look”), seems to have been a devotee of Taoist ideas—he was a fortune teller, a specialist in Chinese medicine, and a devotee of Chinese geomancy, fengshui (pronounced: fuhng-shway). The Taoist Eight Immortals became popular during the Yuan dynasty, and the Quanzhen (pronounced: chwan-jen) or “Complete Realization” sect of Taoism rose in importance; it would eventually become the largest Taoist sect in China. A great Taoist temple with extraordinary painted murals, the Palace of Eternal Joy or Yongle Gong (pronounced: yoong-luh-goong, “oo” as in “look”), was built during this period.

Ming dynasty: 1368–1644 ce

With the Ming dynasty, China was once again returned to native rule. Tribute was received from Korea, Mongolia, Burma (present-day Myanmar), Siam (present-day Thailand), and Annam (present-day Vietnam). Six great maritime expeditions left China during this period, and one reached as far as the east coast of Africa. Art witnessed an exhilarating exploration of new ideas. While Yuan dynasty painting had been subdued and austere, Ming dynasty painting spoke again with great energy and vigor. Ming patronage of the porcelain industry at the city of Jingdezhen (pronounced: jing-duh-jen) greatly developed the industry. Some of the finest Chinese dramas and novels were written in this period. A number of Ming emperors were devotees of Taoism and were responsible for the sponsorship of Taoist temples, practices, and ideas. The Taoist god Zhenwu (pronounced: jen-woo) or “Perfected Warrior” became a national protector. A Taoist temple was erected to Zhenwu inside the Forbidden City at its northernmost courtyard. Ming emperors and empresses were initiated into Taoism and sponsored the renovation of Taoist sacred sites and reformed Taoist rituals. The early Ming energy was soon superseded by a powerful conservatism, echoed in efforts by the Confucian-dominated courts of the late Ming to close China off from the outside

world. The Great Wall dates from the late Ming dynasty. Nevertheless, the Portuguese landed in China in 1514, and China also began to trade with the Dutch in the seventeenth century. Jesuit priests entered Southern China and began missionary activities. Late Ming self-preoccupation was accompanied by corruption at the imperial court, ultimately leading to yet another foreign occupation.

Qing dynasty: 1644–1911 CE

The Manchus, foreigners from Manchuria, took advantage of Ming imperial weakness and occupied China. By the mid-18th century, Manchu China had established a protectorate in Tibet. In 1788, the Burmese began to send tribute; Taiwan was subdued in 1787–88; and in 1788–89, the Qing sent expeditions to Vietnam. In 1791–92, Manchu military prowess forced Nepalese acknowledgment of Qing overlordship. While the Manchu emperors adopted many aspects of Chinese culture and political philosophy, they also actively strove to retain their identity as Manchus. Official documents and pronouncements were bilingual. Nevertheless, traditional Chinese arts and culture continued to flourish, often with imperial sponsorship. Qing dynasty officials practiced Tibetan Buddhism, but they also sponsored Taoist rituals and maintained a Taoist temple in the Forbidden City. Much of surviving Chinese architecture dates from this period, and the great Palace Museum collections are the result of Qing imperial taste. During this period, China probably became the most populous country in the world—by the mid-18th century, there were more than 200 million Chinese. The Qing dynasty is also remembered for its often tragic encounters with the West. Missionaries had an important presence during this time, and eventually so did Western commercial interests and European colonial powers. This encounter of East and West often led to violence, such as the Opium Wars with the British (1840–42, and 1857–60), who insisted on the right to import opium into China. These conflicts contributed to the weakening of Qing rule that ultimately resulted in the Chinese Revolution in 1911 that established the first republic in Chinese history and ended its long dynastic history.

A Brief Guide to the Approximate Pronunciation of the Pinyin System for Spelling the Sounds of Chinese

The Chinese language is traditionally written with what we call “characters” rather than with a purely phonetic alphabet of symbols used to spell out sounds. Simply put, Chinese characters represent sounds that have meaning—words or parts of words--and many, though by no means all, had their origins as simple pictures. In modern Chinese, characters or parts of characters may represent either the meanings or the sounds of spoken words.

The same Chinese character may represent many different words, even some having opposite meanings. Some words are represented by more than one character; many words are made of characters combined in pairs. Generally, in Modern Chinese, one would need to know somewhere between 5,000 to 6,000 characters to read common publications. A specialist in a discipline would need to know more. Each character has its own pronunciation--the equivalent of a syllable--and many characters have different pronunciations in different contexts. Many characters share the same pronunciation. The sound “shi” (pronounced “shr”), for example, represents scores of different characters, each with different meanings (just as *deer* and *dear* are pronounced alike but have different meanings in English).

Given the graphic nature of written Chinese, Westerners have had to devise ways for spelling out the sounds of Chinese in languages based on the latin alphabet. Unfortunately, over the history of the Western encounter with China, several different spelling or transliterating systems have come into use, and not many of them were designed with the average English reader in mind. One of the most commonly used of the earlier systems is the Wade-Giles system. This system was in common use among specialists until quite recently and is still used today by many specialists in the field of Chinese studies (Sinology). This spelling system was the work of 19th-century British specialists: Minister Thomas Wade and Herbert Giles, the British Consul at Ningbo (pronounced ning-bwo). If you do any research on China, you will encounter many sources that use their spelling system. Wade-Giles is still the transliteration system preferred in Taiwan.

The spelling system currently used by many American newspapers and magazines and by the Asian Art Museum is the pinyin system. This Teacher Packet also uses the Pinyin system, with the exception of the word, “Tao.” “Tao” is the Wade-Giles spelling; the pinyin spelling is “Dao.” The museum has chosen to use the Wade-Giles spelling of this all-important word, because it has been accepted into English as an English word, and it appears in English dictionaries with the old spelling. (In much the same way, we refer to Kongzi as Confucius, based on established usage).

Pinyin is a spelling system developed in the 1950s by Chinese linguists in the People’s Republic of China. It was designed for Chinese use and is the standard system of the People’s Republic of China. It is not generally used in Taiwan, the island province where Chiang Kai-shek’s Nationalists fled the Communists in 1949. What follows is a rather simplified and brief sketch of English phonetic approximations of sounds spelled out by the pinyin system. Please keep in mind that the phonetic equivalents given here are merely approximations of the Chinese and are based on Mandarin pronunciation. If you wish to consult an extensive table for converting between the Wade-Giles and pinyin systems, you might have a look at the conversion table given in Appendix C (pp. 462–463) of *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of China*, New Edition, compiled by Brian Hook and Denis Twitchett published in 1991.

A Brief Guide to the Pinyin System

Chinese Vowels as spelled in the pinyin system are pronounced approximately in English as follows:

a “ah” as in “father,” not the “a” as in “can”

ai “i” as in “ice”

an “ahn” as in “John” “fan” is therefore not “fan” as in “electric fan”

ang “ahng”: thus “Tang” is not “Tang” as in the orange drink

ao “ow” as in “cow”

e “uh” as in “uh-huh”: the goddess Chang E is thus: “chahng-uh”

ei “ay” as in “bay”: Beijing is thus “bay-jing”

en “uhn” as in “bun”

eng “uhng” as in “bungle”

er “are” as in “they are”

ia “yah” not ee-ah, but “yah”

ian “yen,” like the word for Japanese money

iang “yahng”; pronounced as one syllable.

iao “yow”; pronounced as one syllable

ie “yeh”; pronounced as one syllable

in “yin” as in “yin-yang”

ing is pronounced pretty much as in English

iong “yoong,” “oo” as in “look;” pronounced as ONE syllable

iu “yo,” as in “Yo”

o “wo,” as in “Woe is me”; hence: “bo” is “bwo.”

ong “oong,” “oo” as in “look”

ou “oh,” as in “oh no”

u “oo” as in “goo,” thus “gu” is “goo”

uan “yoo-ann,” but pronounced as one syllable

ue “yoo-eh,” but pronounced as one syllable

ui “way,” No way!

un “uhn,” as in “under”

Some Problematic Consonants and Combinations:

c “ts”: thus “cao” is “tsao,” not “cow.”

ci “ts” as in “bats”

chi “chr” or “chur” as in “churl,” not “chee”

q like “ch”

qin “chin”

qiong “chyong”: “oo” as in “look,” pronounced as one syllable.

qiu “chyoo;” “iu” here is closer to “yo” pronounced as one syllable

qu “chü”; “u” here is like a French “u” or a German “ü.”
quan “chü-ann a French “u” and pronounced as one syllable

ri like “ir” in “girl,” the “i” is silent here.

si “ss” as in “hiss,” the “i” is silent here.

shi “shr” as in “shrug,” the “i” is silent here.

x “sh”

xi “shee”

xian “shyen,” pronounced as one syllable

xiang “shyahng,” pronounced as one syllable

xiong “shyoong,” “oo” as in “look;” pronounced as one syllable

xu “shü,” the “ü” is like a French “u” or a German “ü.”

xuan “shü-ann”; like a French “u” and pronounced as one syllable

z “dz” as in “adze”; “zao” is thus “dzow”

zh close to “j” as in “joseph”: the Zhou dynasty is thus the “joe” dynasty.

zi “dz” as in “adze”: here, the “i” is silent; thus Laozi is pronounced: “lao-dz”

Taoism and the Arts of China: Glossary

- Adept:** someone who is good at doing something. A Taoist adept is someone who has achieved a high level of mastery of Taoist knowledge and practice. The Taoist immortals are adepts who achieved spiritual perfection through self-cultivation and other perfected techniques.
- Aesthetics:** the study and philosophy of beauty, especially beauty in art.
- Afterlife:** the life that some believe happens after death.
- Alloys:** new metals produced by the fusion of two or more metals combined through melting under intense heat.
- Altar:** a table or flat, raised surface, the center of many religious ceremonies, used for ceremonial objects and for the presentation of offerings.
- Archaeological:** having to do with archaeology, the study of ancient societies (see following entry).
- Archaeologists:** people who study ancient societies through the examination of what remains of their cities, buildings, graves, tools, implements, writings, art, etc.
- Astrological:** having to do with the study of the magical influence of the movements of the stars, planets, and other heavenly bodies on people and events.
- Attunement:** the state of being in harmony with something
- Auspicious:** of or pertaining to good fortune or good luck.
- Auspicious number:** a number that will bring good luck.
- Bronze Age:** the era in the history of a culture when bronze first became a main material for tools and weapons. The Bronze Age in China lasts from about 1700 BCE to about the 3rd or 4th centuries BCE.
- Buddhism:** a major world religion, which spread rapidly from India to South and Southeast Asia, as well as to Central and East Asia, based on the teachings of Shakyamuni Gautama, a sixth century BCE prince. There are many forms of Buddhism. In its philosophical teachings, Buddhism seeks the liberation of the individual from the suffering that Buddhists believe is the normal condition of life.
- Bureaucracy:** in any government or institution, the complex network of managing and administering offices and officers. In early China, the Buddhist Hells were seen as a kind of bureaucracy.
- Calabash:** a large tropical fruit whose shell can be dried and used as a bowl. The Taoist calabash is a double-sphered gourd.
- Calligraphy:** the art of lettering, or in the case of Chinese, the art of writing Chinese characters. Calligraphy was recognized as an art form early in Chinese history. The earliest surviving essays on calligraphy may date to the 5th century CE, and two of the most famous calligraphers in Chinese history lived during the 4th century CE.
- Cardinal directions:** the four directions, north, south, east and west. In China, the cardinal directions start with south and on traditional maps, south, not north, is at the top. In addition to the four cardinal directions, Chinese traditionally regarded “center” as a fifth direction.
- Celestial Masters Taoism** (also called Heavenly Masters Taoism): the first formal Taoist religious organization, founded in the 2nd century CE (late Han dynasty), by a Taoist master named Zhang Daoling (pronounced: jahng dow ling). Celestial Masters Taoism was also called Five Bushels of Rice Taoism, because member families were required to contribute five bushels of rice (a valued commodity) to the organization every year.
- Ceramic:** clay that has been baked or fired at high temperature; any object made by that process.
- Ceremonial,** having to do with ceremonies (see following entry).
- Ceremonies:** formal or traditional set of repeatable roles, actions, clothing, words, and music used to mark and help define important social or religious functions.
- Chan Buddhism:** a form of Buddhism developed in China that borrows heavily from Taoism and also

to some extent, Confucianism. Said to have been brought to China by an Indian monk named Bodhidharma in the 6th century, Chan emerges as a school of Buddhism in the Tang dynasty (618–906) and achieves particular importance in the Southern Song dynasty, during the 12th and 13th centuries. It is known as Son Buddhism in Korea and Zen Buddhism in Japan.

Civil service: the government departments that manage the affairs of a country. The civil service was a particularly important political, cultural, and historical force in Chinese history from the Han dynasty up into the modern era.

Commission: a private or public request for an artist, musician, or writer to produce a work, composition, or piece, for which they are usually paid.

Confucius: Kongzi (pronounced: koong-dz, “oo” as in “look”), 551-479 BCE. Founder of Confucianism, Kongzi was born into a noble family. According to tradition, he wrote a number of works that became the basis of his teachings. His philosophy, which was first a political philosophy, concentrated on the harmonization of family and human relationships.

Confucianism: A philosophical practice that first emerged as a political philosophy based on the teachings of Confucius. Confucianism offered a model of rulership that emphasized the cultivation of the ruler’s moral quality. This moral quality entailed the correct and harmonious fulfillment of one’s family (extended family) relations. Later Confucianism of the Song dynasty incorporated a cosmological dimension to this basic moral practice. In this later, Neo-Confucianism (so called by Western scholars), one’s moral practice had cosmological implications. Confucianism has exerted and continues to exert great influence on Chinese culture and has had great impact in Korea and Japan.

Cosmological: having to do with cosmology (see below).

Cosmology: the science of or beliefs about the origin and structure of the universe, especially as studied in astronomy. In Chinese cosmology, the structure and operation of the universe included not only the heavens, but also the earth, and human beings. Cosmology here refers to how each of these realms works together and affects the others.

Cosmos: the whole universe, especially in a harmonious state. Cosmos often refers specifically to the stars, planets, galaxies, and outer space, as well as to space and time generally, but it is also often used to mean the universe, including the skies, the earth, nature, and human beings.

Courtly: of the court, the official place where a king and queen or emperor and empress live and work.

Crane: a tall water bird with a long neck and long legs. The crane has traditionally had special meanings in Chinese, Japanese, and Korean culture. In Taoism, the crane is the symbol of the immortal and of immortality.

Cultivation: the deliberate development and nurturing of a particular quality or skill. The cultivation of mind and body through various practices was an important part of Taoism.

Deify: to make into a god or goddess.

Deities: gods or goddesses

Divination: the process of receiving or gaining supernatural insight into the future. In Chinese divination, this insight is sometimes into one’s present circumstances and not necessarily into the future.

Divinities: gods and goddesses.

Devotee: someone devoted to a religious practice; a very religious person.

Dongtian: (pronounced: doong-tyen, “oo” as in “look”) literally “grotto heavens” or “cavern heavens,” dongtian may be the homes of mountain gods or of immortals. They are also joined to heavenly residences and are also thought to be self-contained worlds. They share in the power of mountains as places of particularly pure energy, and this vital energy is said to issue from them.

Dynasty: Chinese history is traditionally measured in dynasties. A dynasty identifies a period of rule by a particular clan or family. The names of the dynasties in Chinese history are not, nevertheless, family names, but names chosen by the rulers of the new dynasty.

Eight Trigrams: these are symbols of the cycle of yin and yang energy present in all things, according to early Chinese thinking. Each of the Eight Trigrams consists of 3 horizontal lines, each line representing either yin or yang energy. Yang energy was depicted as a continuous line; and yin energy by a broken line. The Eight Trigrams are not specific to Taoism, but were absorbed into Taoism as it became an organized religion. It is not certain when the idea for the Eight Trigrams came into being.

Elixir: a magical liquid or potion.

Emanations: power, light, energy or some other phenomenon that flows or emerges from something or someone.

Emperor: As opposed to a king, an emperor rules over many territories and kingdoms and thus supersedes a king in power and authority.

Exorcize evil: to force evil spirits to leave a place or someone's body by using special words and ceremonies.

Fan: a broad, thin, flat object that produces cooling air when waved. The circular fan mounted on a stick is native to China, while the folding fan was imported into China from Japan and Korea during the Ming dynasty (1368-1644).

Fasting: to eat little or no food for a period of time, especially for religious reasons.

Fengshui: (pronounced: fuhng-shway) literally, "wind and water," this refers to a Chinese form of geographical and architectural divination. Fengshui is a practice that helps determine the location and orientation of buildings and spaces within a building such that the energy that is believed to flow through these spaces obtains proper balance and harmony. Fengshui, which is still widely practiced is thought to help prevent illness and misfortune and in turn, ensure success and prosperity.

Five Sacred Mountains: According to Taoism, mountains are places in nature of particularly pure and magical energy. The Five Sacred Mountains, located along the Five Directions of north, south, east, west and center, were particularly special mountains. They occupy powerful places in the Taoist geographic universe. Each of the Five Sacred Mountains held important Taoist temples, built to communicate with the deities of these mountains. Immortals were also understood to inhabit these mountains, and one could hope to find on their slopes a magical mushroom or fungus that when eaten would bestow immortality. The sacred mountains are not single peaks, but are actually networks of peaks, cliffs, gorges, hills, ravines, etc.

Glazes: a glassy coating on the surface of a ceramic object. Glazes seal the clay, making it impervious to water, and add decorative color or texture.

Generative: of or pertaining to someone's or something's ability to produce something.

Geomancy: a form of divination that interprets the layout of geography and space. The Chinese version of this, called fengshui (pronounced: fuhng-shway), is less about divining the future than about arranging and designing places and buildings to produce the most auspicious conditions.

Handscroll: a painting or piece of calligraphy in the form of a horizontal scroll. Such scrolls were specifically intended for occasional viewing. They were brought out when one wished to view them and then rolled up and stored when finished. Like the hanging scroll, the handscroll format responds to and participates in the unfolding social situations of human culture. Handscrolls are designed for intimate viewing and generally only viewable by 2 or 3 people at most. These scrolls were viewed in the same way that Chinese was read, a section at a time, from right to left. Handscrolls varied considerably in length—some are quite short while others may extend to over 70 feet.

Hanging scroll: a painting or piece of calligraphy in the form of a scroll (roll) which is displayed by hanging it vertically from a wall or from the end of a pole held by an attendant. Such scrolls varied in height, depending on the height of the image and were suited to easy storage and display. Hanging scrolls were popular throughout China, Korea, and Japan. Scroll paintings were and are remounted every few decades (or when necessary) to repair any damage or wear and to help preserve the image. Two of the Chinese paintings in this teacher packet are hanging scrolls.

Headdresses: something worn on one's head as an adornment on a special occasion. Headdresses may be signs of high social standing or authority.

Heavenly: having to do with the heavens (see following entry):

Heavens: in Taoism and in Chinese culture generally, heaven refers to the sky or the celestial realm, the residence of the sun, moon, stars, etc. It is the complement of the earth; and in early Chinese cosmology, occupying the crucial place between the heavens and the earth were human beings. In religious Taoism, the heavens, along with mountains, and certain other places, became the residences of various deities and of special human beings called immortals. The heavens, especially in Confucianism, are not understood to have the qualities or characteristics of a human being or god. Instead, heaven was seen as a kind of abstract moral principle that bestowed rulers with the moral right to rule.

Immortals: in Taoism, immortals are people who have achieved perfect harmony and realization of the Tao. Having achieved such perfection they become immortal. One may become an immortal through various kinds of meditation or inner visualization, through special kinds of physical training and breathing, through the ingestion of special elixirs or potions, and through moral behavior. Taoist immortals may dwell in the heavens, in cave heavens (see *dongtian*) in mountains, or other magical paradises.

Immortality: living forever; in Taoism, a condition that one obtains through the achievement of perfect union with the Tao.

Incantations: special words or sounds spoken or chanted in the practice of magic.

Incarnation: the appearance or presence of something in the form of a human body; a personification; often one speaks of a supernatural being, like a god or goddess, having an incarnation.

Incense: a substance (or mixture of substances) that gives off powerful and pleasant aromas when burned. The burning of incense is an important part of the ceremonial practice of many religions and is central in Taoist ritual performances.

Initiated: formally or ceremonially admitted into membership.

Inscription: a written text added to a painting, sculpted image, or monument. In China, by the 12th century, it became customary to add written inscriptions to paintings. Inscriptions were often engraved on stone monuments for shrines, temples, and official buildings. Religious imagery frequently has dedicatory inscriptions. Inscriptions often identify the subject as portraits or the location of a landscape.

Inner Visualization: a form of Taoist spiritual and religious practice. Inner visualization directs and guides the practitioner's imagination and intuition to cause some kind of spiritual transformation. Inner visualization may involve a kind of imagined journey or the restructuring of the human body in the form of a mountain.

Iridescence: showing colors that seem to change in different lights, often with a kind of rainbow or Mother of Pearl effect; sometimes found on glass or metal objects after long burial underground.

Jade: a collective term applied to either of two minerals, nephrite and jadeite. In ancient China, the term for jade usually denoted only nephrite, though in actual use the word for jade could refer to any precious stone. The bright green mineral known as jadeite was imported into China beginning in the seventeenth or eighteenth century. Jades were highly valued by the early Chinese, and thought to possess life-preserving properties. Jade is too hard to carve and was, until modern times, worked laboriously with abrasives, making jade production a time and labor-consuming practice.

Jadeite: see the entry under Jade, above.

King: the male ruler of a territory or state.

Landscape: "Shanshui" (pronounced: shahn-shway) in Chinese, literally, "mountains," *shan*, and "water," *shui*. In early China, mountains and water (streams, rivers, mist, clouds, etc.), came to represent the essence of nature. Mountains were the active and upward energy, the yang energy of nature;

and water was the yielding and downward, or yin, energy. The two together constituted all of nature. By the 10th century, landscape became the most important theme for traditional Chinese painters, and remains so to this day.

Laozi: (pronounced: lao-dz) literally, “old master.” Laozi is traditionally assumed to be an actual historical person, considered the author of the earliest Taoist philosophical text, the *Daodejing* (also spelled *Tao Te Ching*; pronounced: dow-duh-jing). Many modern historians now believe that Laozi was more likely to have been several people, living in different times in early Chinese history, and that the *Daodejing* was compiled from various early texts and teachings. By the 2nd century CE, during the Han dynasty, Laozi became seen as a god and remains one of the most important gods in Religious Taoism.

Limestone: a type of rock that contains calcium.

Lingzhi: (pronounced: ling-jr) usually identified and depicted as a mushroom or rock or tree fungus, the lingzhi is a plant in Taoism thought to bestow immortality on anyone who ate it. The lingzhi was thought to grow on the legendary islands of immortals somewhere off the northeast coast of China or on magical or sacred mountains.

Lotus: a plant of the water lily family that grows in water or mud, which has many meanings. In Buddhism, the lotus emerges pure and beautiful from muddy waters, because it is a symbol of the true nature of beings, which remain unstained by the mud of the world. The plant also represents fecundity because of its many seeds. The lotus appears also in Taoist religious images, having been borrowed from Buddhism.

Malevolent forces: evil energy or powers, the opposite of auspicious forces.

Mandarin: a general term for the highest level of government official in imperial China. The word comes from the Portuguese, *mandar*, “to govern.” Mandarin also refers to standard spoken Chinese, a standard adopted in the early 20th century and based on the northern dialect spoken around the area of Beijing. It is called Mandarin because the language used by the Mandarins at this time was based on this northern dialect.

Martial: of or pertaining to war and fighting. The martial arts were an important part of some Taoist and Buddhist practice in China.

Meditation: refers to various exercises of mental concentration. Meditation may entail breathing or physical exercises, visualization, concentration on images, diagrams, words, or sounds, etc. The practice of meditation seeks to help practitioners understand the processes of their own consciousness and then redirect these processes in positively transforming ways. Various forms of meditation were and are crucial to Buddhism, as well as to Taoism. Contrary to popular belief, meditation does not engender a condition akin to blissful sleep. Rather, the meditative consciousness is both calm as well as supremely alert and aware.

Merit: to deserve or warrant something good in return for your good actions.

Metamorphosis: a process in which something changes into something else; the process of change itself. The Tao is such a process of metamorphosis; in the natural world the caterpillar metamorphoses into a butterfly.

Miniature: a small-scale version of something; often quite small.

Neolithic: New Stone Age; the latest period of Stone Age, which in China may have started about 10,000 years ago. During the Neolithic period, people began to settle in villages and make more sophisticated stone tools and weapons. The Neolithic marks the beginnings of agriculture.

Nephrite: one of the kinds of stone known as jade. Early Chinese jades are virtually all of nephrite. It was not until the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries that jadeite also came to be called “jade.” Nephrite is known for its creamier, warmer surface and color, as opposed to the brighter crystalline character of jadeite.

Nobility: a class of persons belonging to high rank, family, or social standing.

Numinous: having a spiritual, mysterious, or holy quality. The numinous is the opposite of the phenomenal, the world of actual physical phenomena. In Chinese philosophical and religious traditions, such as Taoism, the noumenal and phenomenal are not necessarily opposite or mutually exclusive. Indeed, the noumenal is understood to inhabit the phenomenal, or physical, which is in turn seen as the expression of the noumenal. In Chinese philosophy, the noumenal does not exist except in the world of material reality, and conversely, the world of material reality is nothing other than the expression of the noumenal.

Pagodas: generally, a Buddhist shrine marker in the form of a multistoried tower, common in China, Korea, and Japan. The pagoda (a word with Portuguese origins) originated in India as a sacred structure called a stupa. In India, a stupa started out as a kind of burial mound for royalty, which was then taken up by Buddhism to serve as a shrine. The stupa retained its mound shape, and some of its funerary associations, for the Buddhist stupa was often also a shrine for relics of the Buddha or of Buddhist saints. The stupa was also laid out as a cosmic diagram, with the mound of the stupa symbolizing the World Mountain, a universal mountain that joined the heavens and earth. When the Buddhist stupa idea reached China, Chinese Buddhists turned the stupa mound into a multistoried tower. Pagodas are usually associated with Buddhist shrines, but not exclusively. Pagodas were also, as were the Indian stupas, shrines that housed relics of the Buddha or of Buddhist saints. The relics were stored in special containers and buried in chambers dug beneath the foundation of the pagoda. Relics may also have been housed in the tall post that adorns the top of many Japanese pagodas.

Pantheon: all the gods of a particular religion, people, or nation.

Paradise: a perfect world of bliss and perfection, utterly absent of illness, death, or evil. The idea or possibility of paradise is important in Taoism, as well as in Chinese culture generally. There are many possible paradises in Taoism: the heavens, where the Taoist deities and many immortals dwell; the legendary region of the western mountains, governed by the immortal Queen Mother of the West; the Mountain Islands said to be off the northeast coast of China; the paradises that may be found in dongtian or cave heavens, or that may be found while wandering among the peaks and cliffs of the Five Sacred Mountains. Taoist paradises were envisioned as places of perfect bliss, where one dwell without end in a state of supreme union with the unfolding Tao. In painting, such worlds might be depicted as fantasies of mountains and streams, adorned with palaces and numerous paths for wandering. The mountains might appear in mineral blues and greens, suggesting mountains made of jade.

Paraphernalia: things, objects or implements, often small, that belong to someone, or are needed for a particular activity, such as a ritual. Taoist ritual paraphernalia would include the Taoist priest's robe, a ceremonial sword, an altar, and an incense burner, among other things.

Personifications: human forms assumed by a god or goddess or by an idea, concept, or value. Taoist gods are personifications of the Tao or Way and its unfolding. In the United States, justice is personified by a blindfolded woman holding a set of scales.

Phoenix: the use of this word in Chinese culture is misleading, though convenient. In China and Taoism, the word simply refers to a mythical bird. The Chinese phoenix has nothing at all to do with the phoenix of Western mythology, a bird that arises from the ashes of fire. The name "phoenix" when used in the Chinese context should not be mistaken for the red bird of the sun associated with the direction of the south. The phoenix instead refers to a different mythical bird that is often paired with the Chinese dragon. As such the phoenix is yin to the dragon's yang. During the Ming and Qing dynasties, the phoenix could symbolize the empress, while the dragon symbolized the emperor. In ancient Chinese lore, the "phoenix" would appear, though only on a special tree, called the wutong (pronounced: woo-toong) tree (pawlonia tree), and its appearance would bear testament to the peaceful and harmonious rule of a virtuous emperor.

- Pilgrim:** a religious devotee who makes a journey to visit various, often specifically sanctified, sacred or holy places.
- Pine trees:** various species of a tall evergreen trees with long, hard, sharp leaves, called needles, that do not fall off in winter and usually remain green. Pine trees hold special significance in Chinese culture. They are symbols of endurance and perseverance, and also of longevity and as such were common subjects of Chinese painting. Pine trees could symbolize the enduring Chinese scholar or educated gentleman, or they could symbolize Taoist immortality.
- Pinyin:** the system for spelling out the sounds of Chinese characters, developed by the mainland Chinese in the 1950s. It is currently the official mainland Chinese system, and is used by the Asian Art Museum and the Art Institute of Chicago, as well as by many Western magazines, newspapers, and journals.
- Porcelain:** a hard, dense, lustrous, translucent white, high-fired ceramic ware of low porosity and thus impervious to liquid. Porcelain makes a bright ringing tone when struck. Chinese porcelains are generally made of porcelain stone (a volcanic rock consisting principally of quartz) and kaolin (a white clay) fired to about 1300 degrees centigrade or higher. Chinese porcelains were so prized for their delicacy and beauty they were known as “white gold.”
- Pottery:** a nonscientific name for a particular type of high-shouldered ceramic vessel popular especially in China and Korea; a loosely used general term for ceramics other than porcelain.
- Priest:** someone who is specially trained and sanctified to perform religious duties and ceremonies. A priest is a mediator between the worldly and the spiritual or noumenal. In Taoist ritual, the priest serves as the medium through which the Taoist devotee communicates to gods, thereby hoping to tap into the power of the Tao.
- Purification:** in Taoism, purification is a ritual practice that removes evil from a place or person. Purification rituals would expunge a place of malevolent forces thus sanctifying the place and making it receptive to the auspicious powers of the Tao. Such rituals were an essential part of the Taoist ceremony.
- Qi:** (pronounced: chee) literally, “air,” “vapor,” or “breath,” a central concept in Taoism, Chinese medicine, and Chinese philosophy and art in general. Qi refers to the rhythmic energy that constitutes each and every thing: it is the fundamental energy and life of the Tao, and ultimately is not separate or distinct from the Tao. Thus all things are configurations of *qi* and all things are the Tao in its unfolding. This is a crucial principle that distinguishes *qi* and the Tao from things like the “force” in “Star Wars.” As characterized in the Star Wars movies, the force is a power separate from things, though it may move through things and empower them. It remains an external power. This is not true of *qi*. Qi is not external to any given thing, but is that very thing itself. In Taoism, energy and matter are one and the same, thus, according to Taoism, we are actually *qi* itself.
- Quanzhen Taoism:** (pronounced: chwan-jen) the “Complete Realization” School of Taoism. Quanzhen Taoism was founded in North China around 1160 CE by Wang Zhe (pronounced: wahng-juh). The word “quan” means: “whole,” “total,” “complete,” or “perfect”; “zhen” means: “truth,” or “spiritual realization.” Quanzhen Taoism combined the teachings and practices of Confucianism, Taoism, Buddhism, and its goal was to become an immortal through the attainment of perfect realization of the Tao in oneself. Quanzhen adepts practiced a strict monastic lifestyle, and encouraged women to join them. Quanzhen Taoism still survives today, though it is less popular than Celestial Masters Taoism. The major Taoist temple in Beijing today, the White Cloud Temple, is a Quanzhen temple.
- Recitation:** the act of speaking the words of a poem, work of literature, ritual text, etc., for an audience from memory.
- Reign titles:** Chinese emperors customarily gave the periods of their reign auspicious names. These are

called “reign titles.” In early imperial China, a single emperor might change reign titles during the course of his reign, but by the Ming and Qing dynasties, emperors identified themselves by a single reign title. Many of the familiar “names” for emperors, especially of the Ming and Qing dynasties, are not actually their names but are their reign titles.

Relic: an object of religious veneration identified with a saint or holy person, such as the nails of the cross upon which Jesus Christ was crucified, or the bones of a saint.

Religious Taoism: a term used to distinguish the philosophical tradition of Taoism from its form as an organized, institutionalized religion. In the West, Taoism is known primarily as a philosophical tradition, and indeed, Taoism is, in its history, first marked as a philosophy. Beginning in the 2nd century CE and by the 5th century CE, Taoism emerges as a religious as opposed to a philosophical practice. Certainly the two are not exclusive, but it is helpful to understand the differences between these two forms of Taoism. Religious Taoism adopts the earlier philosophical writings as part of its large corpus of religious scriptures. Religious Taoism, building on the earlier philosophical foundations, absorbs various ideas on cosmology, and various mystical and religious practices to create new ritual practices and new religious institutions. Religious Taoism established a priesthood, defined a canon of scriptures, imagined and depicted a pantheon of deities, and formulated a body of ritual practices, none of which was part of the early Taoist philosophical tradition.

Rites (also: Rituals): repeatable ceremonies, often formal, and often for religious purposes. Rites are social performances that communities attribute with transformative power. A wedding rite, for example, transforms two once separate individuals into a union. Taoist rituals are also thought to have transformative power, for, through the ritual performance of the priest, the power of the Tao, the power of change itself, is summoned and invoked.

Scabbard: a metal or leather cover for the blade of a knife or sword.

Scholarly gentleman: one of the ideals for men in traditional Chinese society. The word *scholarly* here refers to a mastery of writing, calligraphy, history, philosophy, literature, and the arts. While we generally locate scholars in colleges and universities, the Chinese scholarly gentleman generally sought service as a career officer in the imperial government, entering the pool of candidates for office by successfully passing a series of civil service exams that tested knowledge of the Chinese historical, literary, and philosophical classics. Many such scholarly gentlemen passed up opportunities for government service to “retire” to a life steeped in the cultivation of the arts. From the Song dynasty (960–1279) on, the class of scholarly gentlemen constituted the core of the state bureaucracy, and soon established what would become the boundaries of proper artistic taste and sensibility. Not only did these gentlemen run the government, they were the writers of Chinese literature, history, poetry, drama, and the tastemakers of Chinese painting and calligraphy.

Seals: in East Asia, these are emblematic impressions stamped on documents, paintings, and examples of calligraphy. Seal emblems may be carved in stone or ivory and seal impressions are always in red ink. On paintings or examples of calligraphy, seals show authorship, ownership, or general appreciation. The texts of seals were usually names, titles, studio names, or in the case of imperial seals, reign titles. There are cases when a seal bears a short text. The addition of seals, as well as of inscriptions, to paintings or works of calligraphy was quite acceptable, but there are instances when the accumulation of too many thoughtlessly placed seal impressions and inscriptions obscures the original work. Seals and inscriptions might be added to a work over the course of centuries, as the work passes from collector to collector and the study of such seals may reveal much about the history or pedigree of a work. Seal carving was considered to be a gentleman’s past time in China, and many modern Chinese artists still carve their own seals. Seals are usually square or rectangular, but may be round or oval in shape, and some are even quite fancifully shaped. The text of a seal may be red or left in reserve (that is, left as the white parts of the seal rather than the red). Seals were sometimes forged (as were inscriptions and signatures) to increase

the value of a painting or work of calligraphy, so the presence of a seal is not of itself a guarantee of authenticity.

Silk Roads (or Silk Road): the long and arduous routes by which silk traders, pilgrims, and others traveled east and west between China and the ancient Middle East. These routes are so named because silk, so identified with China and one of its most popular exports, travelled on them to the Mediterranean. These routes stretched from the ancient Chinese capital at Chang'an (modern Xi'an; pronounced: shee-ahn), across northwest China, into Central Asia, down to what is now Afghanistan and Pakistan, then into India and also westward towards the Middle East and the Mediterranean. The Silk Roads were certainly active as early as the Han dynasty (206 BCE–220 CE) and were quite active during the cosmopolitan Tang dynasty (618–906 CE). Buddhism made its way from India to China along these routes and Chinese Buddhist pilgrims also followed these paths back to India.

Shrine: a holy place or site often connected with a holy event or person. A shrine is the site of prayer and religious ceremony. In Buddhism, shrines are usually the site of a temple or monastery, and in Taoism shrines may be part of sacred mountains, or in towns and cities the place where a Taoist temple is located.

Spirit: A spirit may be the noumenal part of a life, that upon death is believed to live on in an afterlife. More philosophically, spirit may refer to the essential character or quality that defines what a thing or individual is or becomes. A spirit may also refer to a ghost.

Spirit stone: sometimes also called “scholar’s stone,” a type of stone believed to embody the same energy or *qi* of mountains. Such stones were collected by Chinese scholars, hence the designation “scholar’s stones.” There is a long history of the collecting and appreciation of such stones in China, going back to the Han dynasty (206 BCE–220 CE). Such stones are still collected today. The stones are often of limestone, but may be of other minerals, and were often found in lakes. The stones were particularly admired for their strange and eccentric shapes, and it was acceptable to enhance the character of a stone with a bit of judicious chiseling.

Symbol: an object, person, pattern, shape, etc., which stands for or represents an idea, person, culture, nation, etc.

Taiji: (pronounced: tie-jee, tie as in “bow tie”) literally, “the Supreme Ultimate,” this is the unity or singularity that produces all things and whose source is ultimately the Tao. In a sense, the Taiji represents the creative structure and process of the Tao. Many people know the Taiji as the yin and yang symbol. The Taiji is a great eternally turning circle, in which the complementary energies of yin and yang turn about each other. In this cycle of alternating energy, all things are produced. The familiar symbol of the Taiji did not come into existence until the Song dynasty (960–1279).

Tao: (pronounced: dow) literally a “way,” or “path.” The Chinese term tao may actually refer to many different “ways.” Confucianism is also a tao, as is Buddhism. The notion of the tao as a way or path suggests a principle common to many Chinese philosophies other than Taoism, that life and the universe are in their essence change itself. It is based on the belief that all things in the universe are propelled by opposite and complementary forces (see yin and yang). The Tao became the central focus and principle of Religious Taoism.

Taoism: may refer both to a philosophical system and an organized religion based on the idea of the Tao (see previous entry). Strictly speaking, the term Taoism refers to what becomes identified in the Han dynasty (206 BCE–220 CE) as a philosophical tradition, whereas the term Religious Taoism refers to what emerges in the 5th century as an organized religion. The philosophical tradition is based on the early texts, the *Tao Te Ching* (also spelled *Daodejing* and pronounced: dow-duh-jing) and the *Zhuangzi* (the teachings of Master Zhuang). Early Taoism was a political philosophy addressed to rulers that stressed a life of simplicity and naturalness, emphasizing the necessity of openness and flexibility of mind. It was argued that the tendency of the mind to define, discrimi-

nate, and objectify prevented one from fully participating in the spontaneous unfolding of the Tao.

Tao Te Ching (also spelled *Daodejing*, and pronounced: dow-duh-jing): the earliest known text of the Taoist tradition, it is said to have been authored by Laozi. The text, whose title may be translated as “The Classic of the Way and Its Power,” is a compilation of various writings collected over the course of generations. The text as it currently survives may have assumed its general form by the 3rd or 4th centuries BCE. Though now seen primarily as a philosophical treatise, the *Tao Te Ching* was most likely a document of political philosophy in competition with other such philosophies, such as Confucianism, that emerged during a period of great turmoil in early Chinese history. The *Tao Te Ching* comprises poetic passages, sayings, fragments of political treatises, and texts for recitation and served as the foundation for both the philosophical and religious traditions of Taoism. An extremely popular document in the West, it has been translated numerous times, even by people who know little Chinese, Stephen Mitchell and Ursula K. Le Guin among them.

Talismans: objects believed to have magic powers of protection. In Religious Taoism, talismans are written by Taoist priests and are forms of magical writing. Taoist talismans often resemble particularly strange and eccentric versions of Chinese calligraphy.

Tomb: a place where a dead person is buried or housed.

Transcendence: above, beyond, and independent of the material universe.

Transliterate: to represent the sounds of one language in the written forms of another.

Tribute: honor or homage paid to someone or something. Tribute in the form of goods and services was often paid by foreign visitors to the Chinese emperors.

Universe: all space, time, and existence, including the heavens, all the stars and planets, the earth, nature, and humankind.

Virtuous: behaving in an honest and moral way.

Wade-Giles system: an older system than *Pinyin* for transliterating, or spelling out the sounds of, Chinese characters in English. Older publications in English commonly used this system, and although *Pinyin* has become the most currently used system, some publications continue to use the Wade-Giles system.

Wood-block printing: a type of printing in which prints are made by pressing carved wooden blocks coated with ink onto paper. The flat surfaces of prepared wooden blocks are carved with the image or text to be printed. The image or text must be carved in reverse. The surface of the block is then inked and run through a press with paper. Wood block printing revolutionized the dissemination of writing in China, particularly in the Tang (618–906) and Song (960–1279) dynasties. Buddhist scriptures were the first to benefit from the new technology in Tang-dynasty China and during the Song dynasty all kinds of information and ideas were propagated through this technology.

Xenophobic: to be fearful or contemptuous of foreigners.

Yin and yang: one of the fundamental principles of Taoist philosophy, the idea of yin and yang predated Taoism. According to yin and yang philosophy, the relationship and alternating movement of yin and yang underlie the structure and workings of each and every thing in the universe. Yin and yang represent two different kinds of energy, two different points of view. Yin is described as yielding, passive, negative, dark, and female; yang is dynamic, assertive, positive, light, male. While the two energies are opposite, they are not opposite in the sense of a Western dialectic of absolute opposites, for yin and yang are transformative. Yin may become yang and yang may become yin. Indeed what is yang or yin can only be determined relative to a specific situation. Take the situation of a lecture, for example. Would the lecturer be yang or yin? Would the audience be yang or yin? We might claim that the active lecturer is yang and the audience, passively listening, is yin. But is the audience only passively listening? Or are they actively listening to

understand? Is the lecturer only actively lecturing, or is she also passively trying to discern whether her audience is understanding her ideas? In this situation, both audience and lecturer are simultaneously yin and yang, not in any absolute way one or the other. The behavior of yin and yang describes the structure of any event or thing; so that yin and yang philosophy may be said to describe the operation of the Tao in its alternating cycles of creation.

Further Resources on Taoism and China

Clarke, J.J. *The Tao of the West*. London: Routledge, 2000.

Clunas, Craig. *Art in China*. Oxford History of Art. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997. A good and informative social history of Chinese art.

Eberhard, Wolfram. *A Dictionary of Chinese Symbols: Hidden Symbols in Chinese Life and Thought*. Translated by G. L. Campbell. London & New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1983. Handy, clear, concise; with illustrations and now available in paperback.

Ebrey, Patricia Buckley. *The Cambridge Illustrated History of China*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996. The title says it all. Written by a thorough, reliable, well-reputed historian. Good pictures.

Ho, Kwok Man, and Joanne O'Brien. trans. and ed. *The Eight Immortals of Taoism: Legends and Fables of Popular Taoism*. New York: A Meridian Book, 1990.

Kohn, Livia and Michael La Fargue. *Lao-Tzu and the Tao-te-ching*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998.

Legeza, Laszlo. *Tao Magic: The Secret Language of Diagrams and Calligraphy*. London: Thames & Hudson, 1975. An interesting introduction, with lots of illustrations and examples, if you are interested in Taoist talismans.

Little, Stephen. *Realm of the Immortals: Daoism in the Arts of China*. Cleveland: The Cleveland Museum of Art, 1988. Short, illustrated catalogue of an exhibition at the Cleveland Museum, held from February 10-April 10, 1988.

_____. and Shawn Eichman. *Taoism and the Arts of China*. Chicago: The Art Institute of Chicago in Association with University of California Press, 2000.

Lopez, Donald S. Jr., ed. *Religions of China in Practice*. Princeton Readings in Religions. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996. A compilation of translated readings from diverse religious texts—Buddhist, Taoist, etc.—with numerous suggestions for further reading at the end of different sections. Excerpts range from ritual texts to records to scripture. Some fascinating material.

Overmeyer, Daniel L. *Religions of China: The World as a Living System*. Religious Traditions of the World series. San Francisco: Harper, 1986. A short and clearly written introduction.

Pas, Julian F. *Historical Dictionary of Taoism*. Historical Dictionaries of Religions, Philosophies, and Movements series. Lanham, Md. & London: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1998. A very handy dictionary, with a good introduction to Taoism, an extensive timeline and bibliography, but alas, no index.

Robinet, Isabelle. *Taoism: Growth of a Religion*. Phyllis Brooks, trans. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997.

Russell, Ching Yeung. *Moon Festival*. Honesdale, PA: Boyds Mills Press, 1997.

- Sanders, Tao Tao Liu. *Dragons Gods & Spirits from Chinese Mythology*. Illus. by Johnny Pau. New York: Peter Bedrick Books, 1980.
- Schafer, Edward H. *Pacing the Void: Tang Approaches to the Stars*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977. Information-packed volume, full of lore, myth, cross-cultural references, and discussions of references in poetry and literature.
- Schipper, Kristopher. *The Taoist Body*. Berkeley: University of California Berkeley Press, 1993
- Shaughnessy, Edward L., ed. *China: Empire and Civilization*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2000. Good overall introduction to Chinese culture.
- Stepanchuk, Carol, and Charles Wong. *Mooncakes and Hungry Ghosts: Festivals of China*. San Francisco: China Books & Periodicals, 1991. A brief, general introduction to some major Chinese festivals, with color photos and other illustrations.
- Sullivan, Michael. *The Arts of China*. 4th ed. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999. A clear and concise survey of Chinese art, from ceramics to painting, from prehistoric to modern times. A good balance to Craig Clunas's social history of Chinese art.
- Tan, Amy *The Moon Lady*. Illustrated by Gretchen Schields. New York: Macmillan, 1991.
- Thompson, Laurence G. 5th ed. *Chinese Religion: An Introduction*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, Thomson Learning, 1996.
- Kohn, Livia, ed. *The Taoist Experience: An Anthology*. SUNY Series in Chinese Philosophy and Culture. Albany: State University Press of New York, 1993. A substantial collection of excerpts of Taoist writings, by one of the major specialists in the field; for those who really want to pursue the subject.
- Ward, Barbara E., and Joan Law. *Chinese Festivals in Hong Kong*. The Guidebook Company, 1993. Lots of color photos with brief, introductory text. There is a short glossary at the back, but keep in mind that the Romanized Chinese names and terms are predominantly from Cantonese, so the spellings will differ from those in the teacher packet and in the museum.
- Williams, C. A. S. *Chinese Symbolism and Art Motifs*. 3d ed. Edited by Terence Barrow. Rutland, Vermont & Tokyo: Charles E. Tuttle Company, 1974. A handy and fairly comprehensive and extensive dictionary with illustrations; perhaps best used in conjunction with other such reference works like Wolfram Eberhard's excellent and concise *A Dictionary of Chinese Symbols*.
- Williams, Suzanne. *Made in China: Ideas and Inventions from Ancient China*. Berkeley: Pacific View Press, 1996.
- Wong, Eva. *The Shambala Guide to Taoism*. Boston: Shambala Publications, 1997.
- Xin, Yang, Li Yihua, and Xu Naixiang. *The Art of the Dragon*. Boston : Shambhala 1988.

Videos:

Among the White Clouds (15:43 min.)

This video includes discussions of two important forms of Chinese art—calligraphy and “Mountain and Water” paintings (landscapes). Linear movement and rhythm found in both calligraphy and painting are also applied briefly to a few examples of carved jade, bronze ware, and ceramics. Produced by the Art Institute of Chicago.

The Far-Off Journey (15 min.)

This video accompanies the exhibition Taoism and the Arts of China. Produced by the Art Institute of Chicago, 2000. Available for loan from the Education Department of the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco.

A Walk Through the Chinese Galleries (30 min.)

A video tour of highlights of the Asian Art Museum’s collection of Chinese art. Produced by the Asian Education Department of the Asian Art Museum—Chong-Moon Lee Center for Asian Art and Culture. Available for purchase or loan.

Resources on the Internet:

www.artic.edu (click on Student & Teacher)

www.chinapage.com

www.chcp.org

<http://peacock.tnjc.edu.tw/moon/moon-festival.html>

www.clas.ufl.edu/users/gthursby/taoism/

www.geocities.com/tokyo/palace/1757/taoism.htm

www.cmi.k12.il.us/Urbana/projects/AncientCiv/china.html

www.askasia.org/for_educators/fe_frame.htm

About the Presenters

LAMPO LEONG graduated from the Guangzhou Fine Arts Institute and received his M.F.A. from the California College of Arts and Crafts. He is currently teaching at San Francisco State University. Mr. Leong has had more than thirty solo shows and hundreds of international group exhibitions, including shows at the Macao Museum of Art, the Rosicrucian Egyptian Museum in San Jose, Pacific Heritage Museum in San Francisco, National Museum of Fine Arts in Beijing, and the Ethen Cohan Fine Arts in New York. His paintings have been widely collected by museums and corporate collections. Recently, his 26-foot-diameter calligraphic design for a granite medallion was selected by the San Francisco Art Commission for permanent installation in a new city park.

PATTI LI has competed as a member of the world-renowned Beijing Wushu Team for 15 years. She has the unique distinction of being the only person in China's history to have won six gold medals and a silver medal at the National Athletic Tournament, described as the "Chinese Olympics." From 1981–1984, Ms. Li became the Chinese Women's National All-Around Champion for three consecutive years in a row. She has toured internationally and was honored as a Wu Ying (black belt) wushu master. She also has the rare distinction of being honored as a Chinese national athlete. Patti Li currently resides in Berkeley, California where she has been teaching taiji quan, bagua zhang, wu shu, and qigong for more than twelve years.

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