

Tracing the Contours of Daoism in North America

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ABSTRACT: Utilizing an interpretive model based on “family resemblances,” this paper provides a survey of Daoist teachers and organizations in North America, giving particular attention to those individuals who fall on the “close relations” (Daoist priests, lineage holders) side of the spectrum. The paper first discusses the question of identity with respect to American Daoists. The author advocates the principle of self-identification as an initial methodology, with the additional distinction of Daoist adherents (birthright and convert) and sympathizers. Next, the paper discusses Daoist teachers and organizations in North America via two primary chartological methods: (1) a chronological discussion of the social history of Daoism in North America; and (2) an interpretive framework centering on three models, namely, literati, communal or ritual, and self-cultivation. The author emphasizes that the predominant model in American Daoism centers on self-cultivation, focusing particularly on personal health and healing.*

In New York City’s Chinatown, a Chinese Daoist priest performs a Dipper Ceremony for community purification and welfare. Scholars and practitioners of Daoism meet on a secluded island in the Puget Sound to discuss the history and contemporary practice of Daoist cultivation. In San Francisco, a Euro-American Daoist initiate practices sitting-in-forgetfulness (*zuowang*) meditation after reading a precept handbook. Daoist practitioners take classes on Daoist history and literature at a neighborhood cultivation center in Seattle. Somewhere in Colorado, a group of British Daoist priests ordained in China teach a *daoyin* (gymnastics, lit., “guiding and stretching”) practice called the Eight Sectioned Brocade (*baduan jin*). Elderly Chinese immigrant women chant incantations (*zhou*) before an altar to the Jade Emperor, Guanyin, and

Nova Religio: The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions, Volume 8, Issue 2, pages 5–27, ISSN 1092-6690 (print), 1541-8480 (electronic). © 2004 by The Regents of the University of California. All rights reserved. Send requests for permission to reprint to: Rights and Permissions, University of California Press, Journals Division, 2000 Center Street, Suite 303, Berkeley, CA 94704-1223.

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Ancestor Lü in Toronto's Chinatown. A middle-aged scholar of Daoism translates ancient Daoist scriptures at a research university. In Vancouver, a group of Chinese Daoist priests performs a funeral service. At a Daoist school in San Diego, students learn Qigong and meditation practices based on a system of internal alchemy (*neidan*).¹ In a rural Vermont café, two young Euro-American women read and discuss chapter fifty-six of the *Daode jing* (*Tao Te Ching*). In a suburb near Chicago, a Chinese American teacher gives meditation instructions based on the *Huangting jing* (Scripture on the Yellow Court).

What these diverse practices, individual and communal, urban and rural, have in common is that they are part of the landscape of Daoism in North America, of the emergent religion of "American" or "Western Daoism."² In addition, there are many other cultural borrowings, adaptations, and appropriations occurring within American society with regard to Daoism. Daoist cosmology and philosophy is part of teaching instructions given at various Taiji quan (T'ai Chi Ch'üan) and Qigong (Ch'i Kung) centers throughout the United States. The *Daode jing* has become the prototype for numerous American appropriations, including the immensely popular *The Tao of Pooh* by Benjamin Hoff (1982). New Age discourse communities and advocates of Perennial Philosophy identify and interpret Daoist texts as part of a "universal wisdom tradition."³

Such phenomena have varying degrees of connection (family resemblances) with the tradition(s) of Chinese Daoism.⁴ Here I am concentrating on Daoist teachers and organizations in North America, with particular emphasis on the United States, from a socio-historical and textual perspective, and at times utilizing insights gleaned from field research and interviews with Daoist teachers and their students.⁵ I locate those teachers and organizations along a spectrum based on family resemblances, ranging from "close relations" (Daoist priests, lineage holders) to "distant relations" ("Pooh-bear Taoists;" i.e., followers/practitioners/adherents of *The Tao of Pooh*).⁶ In this paper, I draw particular attention to the "close relations" end of the spectrum. This paper will show that there are individuals in North America who claim to be Daoist priests or lineage holders and organizations associated with them that identify themselves as Daoist communities. In addition, these teachers and groups most frequently emphasize a self-cultivation model, understanding and representing Daoism in terms of health and healing. Daoism in North America may, in turn, be understood as an emergent American religion.

IDENTIFYING DAOISTS IN NORTH AMERICA

Throughout the development of Daoist Studies, various attempts have been made to define criteria for those who qualify as "Daoists" or for what constitutes "Daoism."⁷ For the purposes of the present paper, I adopt the principle of self-identification: that is, anyone who identifies

himself or herself as a Daoist is a Daoist. Given our current understanding of Daoism in North America, we must begin by documenting and studying those teachers and organizations that *identify themselves* as Daoist. Regardless of whether or not such claims are historically accurate or justifiable (which in many cases I believe they are), they are nonetheless part of the *transmission* of Daoism currently occurring in North America. My initial methodology, and the methodology that I am advocating here, involves accepting self-identification as the criterion for being a Daoist teacher or organization.⁸

It may be helpful to consider the issue of identity in Buddhism in America.⁹ In an article on the subject, Jan Nattier presents the example of a student who reads a book on Zen by Alan Watts and then claims to be a Buddhist. Nattier asks if he should be included within the scope of Buddhism in America. She in turn argues that there are dangers involved in both uncritical inclusiveness and arbitrary (or sectarian) exclusiveness, to use Nattier's phrases.¹⁰ In my view, the former disrespects the tradition involved; it is political in the sense that it implicitly condones appropriation and commercialization, which often exploit the original tradition as well as disempower and disenfranchise the representatives of that tradition. In addition, this stance can easily lead to an impoverishment of a given religious tradition; the traditional worldviews and practices become so mingled with other agendas that it is impossible to gain a clear historical understanding. However, exclusiveness, whether arbitrary or not, seems more problematic, in that the historian too soon comes to resemble a sectarian spokesperson. In the case of Daoist Studies, this is evident in the views of Michael Saso and Michel Strickmann and their subsequent influence on the field.

Returning to the issue of religious identity, Charles Prebish has argued as follows:

If we define a Buddhist as someone who says "I am a Buddhist," when questioned about "his [*sic*] most important pursuit," we not only abandon our attachment to a ritual formulary that is neither workable nor widely followed, but we also provide more than a modicum of freedom for the American Buddhist groups—a freedom in which they can develop a procedure that is consistent with their own self-image and mission In other words, what appears initially as an outrageous definition of Buddhist affiliation serves the double purpose of providing a new standard and a simple method of professing Buddhist commitment while at the same time imposing a renewed sense of seriousness on all Buddhist groups.¹¹

While Prebish's statements resemble my own methodological strategy in the present paper, they also pose a number of problems with regard to Daoism in North America. First, Buddhism in America is much more of a tradition-based phenomenon than its Daoist counterpart. It would

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seem that a greater percentage of people identifying themselves as Buddhists have direct instruction from and experience with ordained or initiated Buddhist teachers, whether immigrant teachers or their dharma successors. In the case of Daoism, North American popular discourse assumes that the distinction between philosophical Daoism and religious Daoism is true, as well as that the former is “real” Daoism. Thus, a greater percentage of Daoists in North America would identify themselves as Daoists simply because they find certain popular publications meaningful, and these individuals and groups would, in turn, have very little historical connection to the larger Chinese Daoist tradition.¹²

Nonetheless, I am adopting and advocating an initial stance of inclusiveness. Extending Prebish’s notion, one might employ the criterion of a Daoist as someone for whom being a Daoist is his or her “most important pursuit.” Verification of this would require extensive fieldwork and interviews. As a final point concerning Daoist identity, again drawing from the study of Buddhism in America, I would distinguish between Daoist adherents, *birthright* (usually ethnic Chinese) and *convert* (usually Euro-American; the majority of North American Daoists),¹³ and Daoist sympathizers (consisting of a much more diverse cultural, religious, and ethnic spectrum). Drawing upon Thomas Tweed, Euro-American Daoist *adherents* are those Americans of European heritage who identify themselves as Daoists or those for whom other reliable evidence exists that suggests they think of themselves in this way. Those who are attracted to Daoism but do not embrace it fully or exclusively may be referred to as *sympathizers*, generally using the term *sympathizer* for those individuals who “confess” that they are attracted to Daoism.¹⁴ In the present paper, I focus my attention on Daoist *adherents*, specifically those on the *close relations* (ordained priests, lineage successors) side of the spectrum. These are the practitioners and teachers who identify themselves as Daoists and who, in addition, claim to have some type of connection with the larger Chinese Daoist tradition.

DAOIST TEACHERS AND ORGANIZATIONS IN NORTH AMERICA

Daoism in North America may be mapped according to a number of distinct but complementary criteria. My primary cartographical method is twofold. First, as this is a preliminary and pioneering study, I will provide a tentative chronological discussion of the social history of Daoism in North America. Second, I employ Livia Kohn’s helpful categorization of the Chinese Daoist tradition, as developed in her *Daoism and Chinese Culture*. Kohn distinguishes between three types of organizations and practice models: (1) literati, (2) communal, and (3) self-cultivation.¹⁵ Literati Daoists are members of an educated elite who emphasize Daoist ideas, usually relating to classical texts such as the *Daode jing* and

Zhuangzi, which they use to create meaning in their own lives and often to influence the larger society. Communal Daoists have a ritual or liturgical orientation, including priestly hierarchies, formal initiations, regular rituals, and prayers to the gods. Self-cultivation Daoists focus on personal health, longevity, peace of mind, and “immortality.”¹⁶ It should be emphasized that these are “ideal types,” and living Daoists often combine various aspects of the Daoist tradition in diverse and innovative ways. Daoist teachers and organizations in North America also fall along a spectrum from *close relations* to *distant relations*. Here I concentrate on the former. In combination with this emphasis on connections and continuities with Chinese Daoism, I will discuss such individuals and groups in terms of birthright and convert, i.e., Chinese immigrant and Euro-American teachers, respectively.¹⁷

From a socio-historical and anthropological point of view, Daoism in North America is poorly documented and almost completely unknown.¹⁸ We currently know next to nothing about a Daoist presence in North America for the first one hundred years of Chinese immigration, from 1849 to 1950. I do not know of any individual or teacher in North America who identified himself or herself as a Daoist during this time period. One possible exception is the Daoist representative at the World Parliament of Religions held in Chicago in 1893 where a talk on Daoism was given, later published anonymously as “Taoism, a Prize Essay.”¹⁹ The speaker and author are unknown, and a number of conjectures are possible. From my perspective, the least likely is that the person was an ordained or lineage-based Daoist. Based on the tone and content, it also seems unlikely that the person considered himself to be a Daoist.

Although I will generally refrain from discussing Qigong and Taiji quan (Yin-Yang Boxing) teachers and organizations, it is important to recognize the influence that they have had and are having on the transmission of Daoism to North America. The study of Daoism in North America from an ethnographic or anthropological perspective is also complicated by the fact that many of these teachers and organizations claim to be Daoist or use the term Daoist in their self-references.²⁰

One early example is DA LIU (1904–2000), who began his study of Taiji quan under SUN Lutang (1862–1932), the founder of Sun style, before traveling to China’s southwest provinces, where he studied with a number of teachers and became a practitioner of Yang style.²¹ Following World War II Da Liu came to the United States and began teaching Taiji quan classes in New York City. During the late 1950s and early 1960s, Da Liu made several television appearances, and his story, together with information about Taiji quan, appeared in many newspapers and magazines, including the *New York Herald-Tribune*, *Newsweek* (which credited him with introducing Taiji quan to the United States),²² *Vogue*, *Mademoiselle*, *McCall’s*, and *Children’s Day*.²³ He later taught at

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Columbia University's Teachers College, The Cathedral School of St. John the Divine, and the Riverside Church.²⁴ He also became president of the T'ai Chi Ch'üan Society of New York. Da Liu wrote a number of books on Daoist practices, including the *Taoist Health Exercise Book* (1974), *The Tao of Health and Longevity* (1978), and *The Tao and Chinese Culture* (1979). On the back cover of *The Tao and Chinese Culture*, Da Liu is described as "a practitioner and teacher of Taoism for over fifty years." In the book's preface, Da Liu claimed that his task, "has been guided by the conviction that if the ideas and practices of Taoism are presented as faithfully as possible, the wisdom contained in them will naturally become apparent and their benefits will gradually achieve widespread recognition."²⁵ In addition to being recognized as a Taiji quan teacher, then, Da Liu has identified himself as well as the worldview and techniques that he teaches as Daoist. Da Liu clearly falls within a self-cultivation model, emphasizing the practice of Taiji quan as a method of self-development and as a way to personal well-being. He is also representative of a more general phenomenon: Qigong and Taiji quan teachers identifying what they do as Daoist.

Early History

Many of the first self-identified Daoists in North America were Chinese immigrants, principally from Taiwan and Hong Kong. Some had fled from mainland China after the Communist takeover in 1949. It seems that the earliest identifiable and self-identified Daoist priest, whether Chinese or non-Chinese, in North America is Share K. LEW (b. 1918).²⁶ LEW was born in Guangdong province, north of Guangzhou. As an orphan, he was taken in by a wandering monk from Wong Lung Kwan (Huanglong guan; Yellow Dragon Monastery). Eventually he was taken to this monastery in the Luofu shan (Mount Luofu) area. After an apprenticeship of several years of menial labor, he was initiated and taught a variety of Daoist practices, including Daoist health and longevity techniques. This Daoist system is called Tao Ahn Pai (Daodan pai; Daoist Elixir sect), an internal alchemy system claiming Lü Dongbin as its founder.²⁷ ShareLew lived and studied at Wong Lung Kwan for thirteen years. He left the monastery in 1948, shortly before the Communist revolution and moved to San Francisco, where he stayed within the Chinese community for several years studying Gongfu (Kung Fu) with his uncle LEW Ben. In 1959, Share LEW accepted his first non-Chinese student and in 1970 began to teach Qigong to non-Chinese students. In that year, he and the late Khigh DHIEGH (Kenneth Dickerson, 1910–1991),²⁸ a television actor, formed the Taoist Sanctuary in Los Angeles (now based in San Diego). This was "the first Taoist religious organization to receive federal status as a church."²⁹ In 1979, Share Lew moved to San Diego, where he still resides, seeing people for health appointments, teaching small or

private classes, and traveling to teach his students in workshops around the United States. Share Lew's Tao Ahn Pai system emphasizes self-cultivation, personal health, and alchemical transformation. However, as Lew was trained at a Daoist monastery, he also has at least a foundational knowledge concerning Daoist ritual. This was in evidence when he performed the opening ritual for the first altar at Xuanji guan (Temple of the Mysterious Pivot, see below) in full Daoist robes.³⁰

It also seems that Share Lew gave Daoist ordination to a number of his students, as a recent workshop flyer for Tom McCombs shows him dressed in Daoist robes. Another one of his students, Jeff Nagel of the Golden Dragon Tao Health Association, is a staple on the American Qigong/Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) workshop circuit.³¹

The Taoist Sanctuary, now the Taoist Sanctuary of San Diego, is "dedicated to the preservation and dissemination of information on traditional Chinese healing and martial arts."³² It is a non-profit organization focusing on the teaching of Taiji quan, Qigong, Daoist meditation, Daoist philosophy, and traditional Chinese healing methods. According to its website, the school is directed by Bill Helm who is said to be a Daoist priest, Chinese medical practitioner, and martial artist. The Taoist Sanctuary of San Diego also publishes an online newsletter entitled "Thunder Under Heaven" (begun in autumn of 2000).³³ The original Taoist Sanctuary has now become the Taoist Institute of Los Angeles. The new Taoist Institute was established by Carl Totton, another self-identified Daoist priest.³⁴ The institute offers instruction, guidance, and practice in a variety of Daoist and Chan (Zen) Buddhist practices and precepts, including Chinese philosophy and religion, the *Yijing*, Qigong, Chinese internal yoga and meditation, internal martial arts, and Chinese medicine. Individual and group classes, workshops, as well as seminars are frequently offered and are open to the general public. These various students of Share Lew and the related Lew-inspired organizations embrace and propagate an understanding of Daoism in terms of self-cultivation, emphasizing health and healing.

Another Chinese immigrant Daoist practitioner focusing of self-cultivation was MOY Lin-shin (1931–1998). "Master Moy" was born in Taishan county, Guangdong. He moved to Hong Kong in 1948 or 1949. There he trained at the Yuen Yuen Institute, which was established by monks from Sanyuan gong (Three Primes Palace) in Guangzhou, which traces its lineage to the Longmen (Dragon Gate) sect of Quanzhen (Complete Perfection) Daoism. At some point, it seems that he was ordained, as many of the leaflets from his organization describe him as a Daoist monk, and as he ordained a number of members of his future organizations.³⁵ Moy immigrated to Canada in 1970 and began teaching in a small studio in downtown Toronto, where he also lived. He taught Gongfu as well as a martial arts-oriented style of Taiji quan. Later, he softened the style and called it "Taoist Tai Chi."³⁶ Eventually, Moy Lin-shin

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founded the Taoist Tai Chi Society (TTCS, Daojia Taiji quan she) in Toronto, which was renamed the International Taoist Tai Chi Society in 1990.³⁷ He and his students bought a permanent center and registered TTCS as a charitable organization.

Fung Loy Kok (Daojiao Penglai ge, Penglai Daoist Pavilion) is the religious arm of the Moy organization. According to a leaflet entitled "History of the Fung Loy Kok International Centre,"³⁸ the Fung Loy Kok Temple (FLK), now referred to as the International Centre of the Fung Loy Kok Institute of Taoism, was first established in 1985 in rented premises in Toronto's old Chinatown. Fung Loy Kok purchased this property in 1988, and by October 1991 the organization had raised sufficient funds to pay off the initial mortgage. The International Taoist Tai Chi Society, its visible public counterpart, is now one of the largest non-profit Taiji quan/Daoist organizations in the world, with classes in 437 cities worldwide.³⁹ In addition to the founding center in Toronto, two major branches of TTCS/FLK exist in Tallahassee, Florida and Denver, Colorado. This organization is also in the process of completing construction of the Taoist Retreat Centre, a temple compound outside of metropolitan Toronto. The main activities of these various centers are the practice of Moy's Taoist Tai Chi system and chanting at the temple. (The conventional architectural arrangement of TTCS/FLK buildings includes a reception room and practice studio on the ground floor, and a temple dedicated to the Jade Emperor, Guanyin, and Lü Dongbin on a higher floor.) These practices are often separate, with a larger percentage of Euro-Americans practicing Taiji quan and a larger percentage of ethnic Chinese, predominantly elderly Chinese immigrant women, practicing chanting.⁴⁰ The community practice of chanting at FLK points towards a ritual dimension in addition to the self-cultivation model of TTCS evident in its emphasis on the practice of Taoist Tai Chi for health and healing.

The founder of the TTCS/FLK Denver branch, Eva WONG (b. 1951)—a prolific translator of Daoist texts—has become one of the most recognizable Daoist "teachers" (via her writings) in North America.⁴¹ Wong severed her ties to this organization when Moy died in 1998, however.⁴² She currently lives somewhere near Denver, where she continues her research and writing as a recluse. Wong is one of the few lineage-based female Daoist teachers in North America.

In addition to Moy Lin-shin and the Taoist Tai Chi Society/Fung Loy Kok, two other early and highly visible Daoist teachers and organizations stand out: Ni Hua-ching and the Integral Way and Mantak CHIA and Healing Tao. Both of these individuals and their related communities follow a self-cultivation model, emphasizing health and healing in terms of qi or subtle breath.

In the mid-1970s, a group of Euro-Americans in Los Angeles involved with the Taoist Sanctuary became interested in learning more about

Daoism than what was available in the United States at the time. One member of the group, Mark Johnson (now of the Tai Chi for Health Institute, Mill Valley, California) was living in Taiwan and went searching for a Daoist master. In November of 1976 he brought back Ni Hua-ching.⁴³ According to the cover of his book, "Master Ni"

is heir to the wisdom and experience transmitted through an unbroken succession of seventy-four generations of Taoist Masters dating back to the Han Dynasty (216 B.C.). As a young boy he was chosen to study with Taoist Masters in the high mountains of mainland China. After more than thirty-one years of intensive training he was fully acknowledged and empowered as a true Master of traditional Taoist disciplines including all aspects of Taoist science and metaphysics. In Taiwan, for twenty-eight years, Master Ni has taught and practiced such Taoist arts as T'ai Chi Ch'uan, Kung Fu, Taoist meditation, Internal Alchemy, acupuncture and herbal medicine.⁴⁴

Ni's autobiographical accounts are an ever-changing series of vague generalizations.⁴⁵ One is unable to determine even the most basic information: date and place of birth, his Daoist teachers' names and lineages, his associations in Taiwan, and so on.⁴⁶ Based on the above description, Ni would have been about 64 years old when he arrived in the United States in 1976, but the pictures of him on the back of his first publications (1979) show him as a man in his 40s.⁴⁷ By my calculations, this means that Ni Hua-ching would have been born around 1931.

Nonetheless, Ni Hua-ching and his organizations are central features of the Daoist landscape in North America. After his immigration, Ni began teaching Daoist cultivation techniques in the form of an ongoing seminar called the College of Tao. He also dedicated a small shrine in his home, known as The Shrine of the Eternal Breath of Tao, which consists of paintings of the Three Pure Ones,⁴⁸ surrounded by protective deities and a portrait of Ni Hua-ching's mother and father.⁴⁹ Ni's private acupuncture clinic was known as the Union of Tao and Man. In January 1989, the Yo San University of Traditional Chinese Medicine was established under Ni's direction. This is a non-profit educational institution and accredited degree-granting college. According to the website, the school is named after Ni Yo-san (1879–1968), Ni Hua-ching's father, who was born in Pengyang province in northern China in 1879.⁵⁰ Other Ni-sponsored or related organizations include the Universal Society of the Integral Way (USIW), Seven Stars Communications, and Traditions of Tao, to name a few.⁵¹ Seven Stars Communications is responsible for publishing Ni Hua-ching's many books, formerly under the imprint of The Shrine of the Eternal Breath of Tao.⁵² In addition, his two sons, Daoshing Ni and Maoshing Ni (known as Dao and Mao), whom he left in Taiwan, have moved to Los Angeles. Together they run a private TCM practice named Tao of Wellness as well as the Yo San University,

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with Daoshing Ni as president and Maoshing Ni as vice president. In 2000, Ni Hua-ching formally transferred power to his son Maoshing.

Mantak CHIA (b. 1944) was born in Thailand to Chinese parents. After being taught basic Buddhist meditation at the age of six, Chia met and studied with his first Taiji quan teacher, a certain Master LU.⁵³ Later, when he was a student in Hong Kong, a classmate named CHENG Sue-sue introduced him to his first Daoist teacher, Yi Eng (Yiyun, One Cloud). At this point, he began serious Daoist training. From Yi Eng, Chia learned various Daoist cultivation methods, including the Microcosmic Orbit, Fusion of the Five Elements, and internal alchemy. "It was Yi Eng who authorized Master Chia to teach and heal."⁵⁴ Mantak Chia's biography goes on to list a variety of other teachers including MUI Yimwattana, CHENG Yao-lun, and PAN Yu. Eventually, using his knowledge of Daoism combined with other disciplines, Mantak Chia began formulating and teaching the Healing Tao System. He established the Natural Healing Center in Thailand, and five years later he moved to New York. There he opened the Healing Tao Center in 1979. Since then, Healing Tao centers have opened in many other locations throughout North America, Europe, and Asia. In addition, Mantak Chia has published numerous books under the imprint of Healing Tao Books. At some point, Chia moved back to Thailand, where he currently lives and teaches at the Tao Garden Health Resort and runs a new variation of the Healing Tao System called Universal Tao.⁵⁵

Healing Tao USA continues to thrive and expand under the leadership of Michael Winn (b. 1951), who has also been president of the National Qigong Association (NQA). Healing Tao USA is now a private educational trust in the process of filing for non-profit 501c(3) status. It operates Healing Tao University at the Jeronimo Center (New York) and the Healing Tao USA website and fulfillment center.⁵⁶ According to its website, "Healing Tao USA advocates using the spiritual sciences of the Tao for managing the Life Force" through the practice of Qigong (which includes the traditional Chinese internal martial arts) and *neigong* (which includes internal alchemy and other forms of meditation). The Healing Tao System contains a systematized internal alchemy set, which may represent a distinctively American form of *neidan*. In its present form, the Healing Tao System involves a wide range of certifications.⁵⁷ These various practices are combined in different ways, one according to Mantak Chia and one according to Michael Winn.

A less market-oriented and more traditionally-organized Daoist community in North America is the American Taoist & Buddhist Association (Meiguo daojiao fojiao lianhe xiehui).⁵⁸ Located in New York City's Chinatown,⁵⁹ the American Taoist & Buddhist Association (ATBA) was chartered in 1979 and was incorporated in the state of New York. The association operates the North Pole Gold Temple (Beiji jindian) and Temple of Transcendental Wisdom (Panruo yuan), which consists of

two altars, one to a diverse Buddhist pantheon and the other to a Daoist one. These combined temples provide members and the surrounding community with a variety of rites and services, performing religious ceremonies and cosmic renewal (*jiao*) rituals.⁶⁰ The association also offers intensive Daoist training with classes and seminars given regularly.⁶¹ In addition, the association is committed to community outreach and charity, including a free Sunday vegetarian lunch for those in need.

The American Taoist & Buddhist Association is under the directorship of Hsien Yuen (Xuan Yuan): “Heir to the wisdom and tradition as transmitted through an unbroken succession of the Lümen sect, he is fully empowered as a true Master of traditional Taoist disciplines, including all aspects of Taoist science and metaphysics.”⁶² Originally born in mainland China, “Master Hsien” emigrated from Taiwan, where he received ordination as a Daoist priest, to the United States at an unknown date. He teaches and has written a book on Elixir Cauldron Sitting Meditation (*danding dazuo*; *danding chanzuo*),⁶³ a complete internal alchemy system, and is one of the few American Daoists, priest or otherwise, who claims to have direct communication with immortals and deities.⁶⁴ Some of these include Yuanshi tianzun (Celestial Worthy of Original Beginnings), Yaochi jinmu (Golden Mother of the Turquoise Pond), Yuhuang dadi (Great Sovereign Jade Emperor), Xuantian shangdi (High Emperor of the Mysterious Heaven), and Nanji xianweng (Immortal Sage of the Southern Polestar).⁶⁵ Unlike the other teachers and organizations discussed thus far, Hsien Yuen and ATBA clearly advocate and represent a ritual model. This centers on Hsien Yuen’s standing in a Chinese immigrant community as a Daoist priest, who is capable, through cosmic renewal (*jiao*) and purification (*zhai*) rites, of ensuring family and community harmony and well-being.⁶⁶

A number of other Daoist teachers in North America have received training from Hsien Yuen. While some of these individuals have asked me not to mention their names or organizations, one noteworthy figure is Jeffrey YUEN. Although involved with ATBA early on, Yuen also comes from a Daoist family lineage through his grandfather. Born in New York City, he identifies his lineage as the Yuqing (Jade Purity) school. He is an ordained Daoist priest and is Chairman of the Eastern United States Taoist Association.⁶⁷ Yuen is also Academic Dean of the Acupuncture Program at the Swedish Institute and President of the International T’ai Chi Institute, both in New York City. In addition, he travels to various TCM schools, teaching the Chinese medical classics and Chinese medicine from a Daoist perspective.

Recent Developments

While Moy Lin-shin, Ni Hua-ching, Mantak Chia and their related organizations have been the most visible early examples of Daoism in

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North America, another presence has recently come to the fore. This is the Euro-American convert and ordained Daoist priest LIU Ming (formerly Charles Belyea, Lao Ge [Elder Brother]).⁶⁸ Born in Boston in 1947, Liu Ming began his study of meditation in 1966, which included work with Chinese, Tibetan, and Japanese teachers. After spending twelve years studying and practicing with several Tibetan lamas, all associated with Dzogchen (Great Perfection),⁶⁹ Liu Ming (then Charles Belyea) was ordained as a Buddhist monk in Taiwan. Taken by his patron to visit many of Taiwan's retreat hermitages, he eventually met and apprenticed with several Daoist masters, including the patriarch of a family lineage that traces its origins to the Han dynasty.⁷⁰ From this teacher, he received Daoist ordination and succession to the Liu Daoist family lineage. This transmission occurred in Taiwan in 1978. After completing a one-year solitary meditation retreat in 1981, Liu Ming began teaching Daoism in seminars and meditation retreats throughout California. With Steven Tainer, he founded the Da Yuen Circle of Yogic Taoism, a group composed partially of Dzogchen students. The group met and trained primarily in intensive *daoyin* and meditation retreats. After helping to found the Five Branches Institute of Traditional Chinese Medicine in Santa Cruz in 1984, he established Orthodox Daoism in America (ODA) in 1986.⁷¹ As of 1995, Liu Ming ceased his involvement with Five Branches and in that year began investiture training for a select group of ODA students. Through a specifically designed ordination curriculum, he trained and eventually gave the first level (of nine) ordination to three Santa Cruz-based members of ODA in 2000.⁷² As of 2000, Liu Ming established and tended to the needs of three Daoist parishes: Santa Cruz (ODA's headquarters), San Francisco, and Seattle. In the summer of 2001, Liu Ming moved to Seattle, Washington, where he began teaching out of his home and collaborating with the Taoist Studies Institute (see below). This relationship formally ended in October 2002, around the time when the Santa Cruz parish was absorbed into the San Francisco parish, which is the current seat of Orthodox Daoism in America.⁷³

Members of ODA engage in a variety of practices, including hygiene customs, precept and scripture study, meditation, longevity techniques, and dietetics. According to its newsletter, *Frost Bell*, ODA

views Daoism as a personal and collective religious practice, not merely a group of philosophical ideas or yogas. We believe that practicing, observant members may choose from the rich possibilities of two main streams of spiritual involvement: (1) the personal practice of alchemical meditation (in the Chinese Shangqing or Supreme Clarity tradition) or (2) the collective practice of ritual (in the Tianshi or Celestial Master tradition). Both of these personal spiritual choices are traditionally informed by study, practice, and religious hygiene observances in daily life.⁷⁴

Liu Ming as a teacher and ODA as an organization manifest qualities from each of the three models utilized in the present study. The literati dimension is present in their concern for reading and interpreting traditional Daoist scriptures and their interest in Chinese aesthetics.⁷⁵ With regard to self-cultivation, *zuowang* (lit., sitting and forgetting) meditation and dietetics are central to ODA's prescribed system of Daoist practice. Finally, the ritual dimension is evident in some of Liu Ming's and ODA's other concerns: altar maintenance, astro-geomancy, tea ceremony, wearing Daoist robes and top-knots, and formal naming ceremonies.

Another Daoist organization in North America that exhibits traits from each of the three models is the Taoist Studies Institute (TSI, Meiguo daojiao xueyuan) in Seattle, Washington. TSI was founded in 1992 by a number of people interested in deepening their understanding and practice of the Daoist tradition. Originating in predecessor organizations such as the Xuangu Taoist Research Association (founded in 1982) and the Northwest School of Internal Arts (founded in 1988), both under the direction of Harrison Moretz (Mo Chenghua), TSI is a not-for-profit educational organization dedicated to fostering the Daoist tradition through cultivation, education and the arts.⁷⁶ The school offers and emphasizes a diverse and wide-ranging curriculum, including Chinese language, Chinese medicine, Daoist literature, Fengshui, internal alchemy, Taiji quan, and Qigong. The Taoist Studies Institute is also the teaching arm of Xuanji guan (Temple of the Mysterious Pivot), an altar dedicated to the Three Pure Ones.

The current director of the Taoist Studies Institute and one of its founding members is Harrison Moretz. Born in Indianapolis, Indiana in 1952, Moretz has been studying Chinese culture and language, Daoist cultivation, and internal martial arts for thirty years, with teachers in mainland China, Taiwan, and the United States.⁷⁷ He has studied with Chinese Daoist teachers connected with Longmen (Dragon Gate), Huashan (Mount Hua), and Wudang shan (Mount Wudang) traditions. In the summer of 2001, Harrison Moretz and the Taoist Studies Institute formed an alliance with Liu Ming and Orthodox Daoism in America. With the advice and assistance of various community members, Moretz and Liu Ming began renovating the altar at the Taoist Studies Institute to become a formal and active Daoist altar (*daotan*).⁷⁸ While this collaboration formally ended in October 2002, the Taoist Studies Institute continued the renovation, with an altar opening ceremony scheduled to occur sometime in 2004.⁷⁹ TSI offers classes that focus on self-cultivation, which includes the practice of Taiji quan and Qigong for personal health and martial prowess. Aspects of the literati model are evident in scripture study, classes on Chinese aesthetics, and Moretz's dedicated practice of the *guqin* (Chinese zither). Finally, the ritual dimension is most clearly present in the small group of community members who

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meet on certain calendrically important days to chant Longmen incantations (*zhou*) and practice group meditation.

A Russian Immigrant Priest

Thus far, I have described Daoism in North America in terms of Chinese immigrant teachers, their organizations, and their Euro-American students, as well as Euro-American Daoist teachers and organizations. As a final note, I would like to balance this picture somewhat through mention of a Russian immigrant named Alex Anatole. A Daoist convert, "Master Anatole" was born in Moscow, Russia where for twenty years he studied with Luyang TAI, a medical doctor and high-level martial artist. Under Luyang Tai, Anatole learned Daoism, Gongfu, Qigong, and Daoist healing techniques and meditation. In 1966, Luyang Tai and Alex Anatole founded the first Daoist temple and seminary in Moscow.⁸⁰ At some point, it seems that Alex Anatole received ordination as he claims to be a Daoist priest. In the late 1970s, Anatole immigrated to the United States where he established the New England Center of Tao, located outside of Boston, Massachusetts. This organization was eventually renamed the Center of Traditional Taoist Studies (CTTS), which is a non-profit religious organization established to promote traditional Daoist studies.⁸¹ The center offers classes in Daoist religion, philosophy, Qigong, and martial arts. The first floor of the center is a martial arts studio, while the renovated second floor contains a Daoist temple with a large collection of Daoist artwork.⁸² In 1994, the Center of Traditional Taoist Studies formed alliances with Baiyun guan (White Cloud Temple) in Shanghai as well as with Shanghai University and Longhua hospital. CTTS generally falls within a self-cultivation model of Daoism, with Qigong and martial arts training for personal health and martial prowess being supplemented by an interest in the *Daode jing* as a philosophical text.

PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

In this paper, I have focused on those teachers who identify themselves as Daoist priests or lineage successors in combination with the organizations that they have established or with which they are associated. A more exhaustive socio-historical and anthropological account of Daoism in North America would have to consider numerous other teachers and organizations as well as the individual members of these organizations.⁸³ There are a few other elements of Daoism in North America that deserve mention, however.

First, one of the only Westerners to receive formal Daoist ordination was an American, Michael Saso, a Daoist scholar-practitioner and former

professor at the University of Hawaii.⁸⁴ Saso has been highly influential in determining the ways in which Daoist practitioners in North America understand Daoism, specifically his views on orthodoxy/heterodoxy and the necessity of receiving registers (*lu*).⁸⁵ Saso believes “Daoist” refers only to Daoist priests (*daoshi*), a view that has influenced both Liu Ming of Orthodox Daoism in America and Brock Silvers of the Taoist Restoration Society.⁸⁶ Second, two Euro-American Daoist nuns founded the first Western language journal dedicated exclusively to Daoist Studies. *Taoist Resources* (1988–1997) eventually became an academic journal edited by noteworthy scholars in the field. In 1998 it was absorbed into the *Journal of Chinese Religions*.⁸⁷ *The Empty Vessel* (begun in 1993) is a more popular Daoist journal edited by Solala Towler and published by the Abode of the Eternal Tao.⁸⁸

Finally, in addition to presses dedicated primarily to self-publication (Healing Tao Books, Seven Stars Communication, Abode of the Eternal Tao), there is a new academic press dedicated to publishing works on Daoism. This is Three Pines Press under the editorship of Livia Kohn (Boston University) and Harold Roth (Brown University).

This discussion has shown that there is a Daoist presence in North America. In particular, there are teachers and organizations here that identify themselves as Daoist *and* have some connection to the larger Chinese Daoist tradition. These groups include priests, lineage-holders, and committed practitioners who are generally Chinese immigrants or Euro-American converts. Such teachers and their related organizations may be charted in terms of three primary models, namely, literati, ritual, and self-cultivation. By far, the predominant model in North America centers on self-cultivation, specifically on health and healing. The dominance of health and self-improvement practices in American Daoism, in contrast to a soteriological or ritualistic orientation, suggests modification and innovation: that is, American Daoism as a health and fitness movement may be largely determined by Euro-American concerns and demands.

This study reveals a number of trends. At the present time, the landscape of Daoism in North America is dominated by male teachers who tend to have primary control over their organizations. American Daoism is patriarchal and hierarchical. Furthermore, Daoism in North America tends to emphasize and teach systems based on health and healing.⁸⁹ This is obvious both in the actual practices advocated and in the association of various teachers with schools of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM). The connection between Daoism and health in North America finds its culmination in the establishment of Yo San University of Traditional Chinese Medicine (Los Angeles) by Ni Hua-ching and his sons; and Liu Ming’s (then Charles Belyea) involvement in the founding of Five Branches Institute of Traditional Chinese Medicine (Santa Cruz). Similarly, the most visible practices and the primary means of

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financial support are Taiji quan and Qigong. Field observations confirm that the majority of prospective students come via either the study of TCM or the search for personal health. Finally, I have observed that a ritual model tends to exist in Chinese immigrant communities, particularly as found in North America's major Chinatowns. In contrast, a self-cultivation or self-help model is most attractive to Euro-American converts and sympathizers.

ENDNOTES

* An earlier version of this paper was presented under the title "Daoism in North America: A Preliminary Inquiry" at the Daoism and Tantra Conference, Boston University, 19–21 April 2002. I am grateful to Livia Kohn, Stephen Prothero, and Elijah Siegler for their comments on earlier drafts. I have also benefited from the suggestions of the anonymous reviewers of *Nova Religio*.

¹ On internal alchemy see Fabrizio Pregadio and Lowell Skar, "Inner Alchemy (*Neidan*)," in *Daoism Handbook*, ed. Livia Kohn (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 464–97.

² In the present paper, when I speak of "American Daoism" I mean Daoism *in* America and nothing more.

³ The study of Daoism in North America may, in turn, proceed in at least four distinct but complementary directions: (1) intellectual history, including cultural and literary influences and adaptations; (2) textual studies, including analysis of Daoist literature written in North America; (3) ethnographic and anthropological field research; and (4) social history. At the present time, only the first has received any significant consideration. See, for example, Steven Bradbury, "The American Conquest of Philosophical Taoism," in *Translation East and West*, ed. Cornelia N. Moore and Lucy Lower (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1992), 29–41; Jonathan Herman, *I and Tao: Martin Buber's Encounter with Chuang Tzu* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996); Julia M. Hardy, "Influential Western Interpretations of the *Tao-te-ching*," in *Lao-tzu and the Tao-te-ching*, ed. Livia Kohn and Michael LaFargue (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), 165–88; and J. J. Clarke, *The Tao of the West: Western Transformations of Taoist Thought* (London: Routledge, 2000). For critical responses to Clarke's *The Tao of the West* see *Religious Studies Review* 28, no. 4 (October 2002), which is a special issue dedicated exclusively to reviews of this book.

⁴ Beyond the field of Daoist Studies, the Daoist tradition is, generally speaking, poorly understood. There are numerous misconceptions that continue to dominate and be perpetuated. While some of these are addressed in this paper, various publications are available to the interested reader, including Russell Kirkland, "The Historical Contours of Taoism in China: Thoughts on Issues of Classification and Terminology," *Journal of Chinese Religions* 25 (1997): 57–82; Louis Komjathy, "Changing Perspectives on the Daoist Tradition," *Religious Studies Review* 28, no. 4 (October 2002): 327–34; and Livia Kohn, *Daoism and Chinese Culture* (Cambridge, Mass.: Three Pines Press, 2001).

⁵ A more complete study of Daoism in North America would have to include extensive ethnographic interviews with members of the various Daoist organizations. This would enable one to determine both the individual understanding of Daoist lifeways *within* the same group and to discern the degree to which idealized models of belief and practice correspond to anthropological realities.

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⁶ While there are problems with statistics for Daoists in North America, they may number in the 10,000s, if that. See <<http://www.adherents.com>>, accessed 1 July 2004. This translates to about .01 percent of the population. Nonetheless, Daoists are becoming a more visible and influential part of that religiously pluralistic landscape.

⁷ For an overview see Kirkland, "The Historical Contours of Taoism in China." For recent developments see Livia Kohn and Harold Roth, eds., *Daoist Identity: History, Lineage, and Ritual* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2002). Contemporary American Daoists have also attempted to assign parameters to the use of "Daoist." In this respect, LIU Ming of Orthodox Daoism in America (ODA) and Brock Silvers of the Taoist Restoration Society (TRS) stand out. See especially Liu Ming, "Daoist Cultivation: Traditional Models and Contemporary Practices," part 1, *Frost Bell: The Newsletter of Orthodox Daoism in America* (Summer 2001): 1, 4–7 and part 2, *Frost Bell* (Autumn 2001): 1, 4–7.

⁸ As a historian of Daoism, especially the Chinese tradition of Daoism, and *as an educator*, I cannot accept self-identification as the *sole* criterion for membership in a given religion. If we speak about Daoism, for instance, we assume that some kind of *tradition* is involved. If this category is simply what *self-identified* Daoists tell us it is, then the category of Daoism becomes historically useless and sociologically irrelevant. Thus, the principle of "self-identification" should be our beginning point, not our end point.

⁹ Throughout this article, I draw insights and perspectives from the study of Buddhism in America. There are obvious parallels, and the study of Buddhism in America is fairly developed. The first publications appeared in the late 1970s. In addition, similar patterns appear in each: Asian immigrant teachers, Western converts, and so on. The study of Chinese Buddhism in America is especially relevant, as most of the first generation Daoist teachers in North America are Chinese immigrants.

¹⁰ Jan Nattier, "Who Is a Buddhist? Charting the Landscape of Buddhist America," in *The Faces of Buddhism in America*, ed. Charles S. Prebish and Kenneth K. Tanaka (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 183–95.

¹¹ Charles S. Prebish, *American Buddhism* (North Scituate, Mass.: Duxbury Press, 1979), 188.

¹² For a contemporary American group whose formation is based on such cultural influences see Western Reform Taoist Congregation at <<http://www.wrt.org>>, accessed 1 July 2004, and <<http://www.westernreformaotism.org>>, accessed 1 July 2004.

¹³ The distinction between birthright and convert adherents was first formulated by Stephen Prothero. In the next years, we can expect to encounter birthright Daoists from a variety of non-Chinese ethnic groups and many more convert Daoists who are not Euro-Americans.

¹⁴ Thomas A. Tweed, *The American Encounter with Buddhism, 1844–1912: Victorian Culture and the Limits of Dissent* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), 39–47; and idem, "Who Is a Buddhist? Night-Stand Buddhists and Other Creatures," in *Westward Dharma*, ed. Charles S. Prebish and Martin Baumann (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 17–33.

¹⁵ It should be made clear that "communal Daoists" are ritual Daoists. I make this clarification because many "self-cultivation types," whether in China or North America, undertake their training in community settings.

¹⁶ See Kohn, *Daoism and Chinese Culture*, 5–6. In her brief discussion of Daoism in the United States Kohn distinguishes between three groups: 1) ritual lineages; 2) self-cultivation schools; and 3) self-improvement groups, 198–202.

¹⁷ For personal names, I follow the method utilized by the individual in question; some keep the traditional Chinese order of last name first (e.g., LIU Ming), while others have adopted the American convention (e.g., Share K. LEW). For greater clarity, I have placed the last name in "small caps" at its first appearance in the main text and at every appearance in footnotes.

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¹⁸ Before recent research by Elijah Siegler of the College of Charleston and myself, academic discussions of Daoism in North America most frequently have been either footnotes and/or dismissive comments about its inauthenticity. See Russell Kirkland, "Varieties of Taoism in Ancient China: A Preliminary Comparison of Themes in the *Nei Yeh* and Other Taoist Classics," *Taoist Resources* 7, no. 2 (1997): 76, n. 10; Norman Girardot's comments in Isabelle Robinet, *Taoist Meditation: The Mao-shan Tradition of Great Purity* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993), xix; and Stephen Bokenkamp, *Early Daoist Scriptures* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 24, n. 5. Although he has since modified his earlier position, Girardot's initial views are strange given his involvement with the American Taoist & Buddhist Association of New York (see below) as early as 1986. The skeptical perspective was also represented by Terry Kleeman of the University of Colorado, Boulder during a review panel at the Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Religion in Denver, Colorado in 2001 where he commented, "there are no Daoists in America." At the time of this writing, Elijah Siegler has completed "The Dao of America: The History and Practice of American Daoism" (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Santa Barbara, 2003). Julia Hardy of Muhlenberg College is also working on a book on the same topic for the Columbia Contemporary American Religion Series. A brief discussion may be found in Kohn, *Daoism and Chinese Culture*, 198–202. The only book-length discussion to date is a general audience book: Solala Towler, *A Gathering of Cranes: Bringing the Tao to the West* (Eugene, Ore.: Abode of the Eternal Tao, 1996).

¹⁹ This article was reprinted in Richard Seager, *The Dawn of Religious Pluralism: Voices from the World's Parliament of Religions, 1893* (LaSalle, Ill.: Open Court Press, 1993), 361–63.

²⁰ From a historical perspective, there are many misconceptions concerning Daoism, the origins and history of which remain to be studied. Although Taiji quan, Qigong, and Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) have some historical connection with Daoism, they are not, of themselves, Daoist in origin or in practice. Such a widespread misunderstanding, which prevails in both popular and academic discourse, includes the purely mythological identification of the Daoist ZHANG Sanfeng (Chang San Feng) as the originator of Taiji quan and the (later) association of Taiji quan with the Daoist sacred mountain of Wudang shan (Mount Wudang [Wu Tang], Hubei province).

²¹ Birth dates and death dates are supplied whenever known.

²² The history of Taiji quan and Qigong in North America remains unclear today. Some of the earliest English-language books on Qigong and Taiji quan include Lily SIOU, *Ch'i Kung: The Art of Mastering the Unseen Life Force* (Honolulu: Lily Siou's School of The Six Chinese Arts, 1973); Sophia Delza, *T'ai Chi Ch'uan: Body and Mind in Harmony*. (New Canton, Ohio: Good News Publishers, 1961); and Edward Maisel, *T'ai Chi for Health* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1963).

²³ Da LIU, *The Tao of Health and Longevity* (New York: Paragon House, 1991[1978]), xiv.

²⁴ From the homepage of the Rochester T'ai Chi Ch'uan Center <<http://rtccc.hypermart.net/news>>, accessed 15 March 2003, defunct 1 July 2004.

²⁵ Da LIU, *The Tao and Chinese Culture* (New York: Schocken Books, 1979), vi.

²⁶ The present biographical description comes from Amy Kinder, "Profile: Master Share K. Lew." *The Jade Dragon* 2, no. 2 (1993). Kinder uses Cantonese transliterations throughout her brief article, so I have generally followed her usage while including Mandarin in parentheses.

²⁷ This is based on Share LEW's autobiographical account. The system of Tao Ahn Pai is frequently synonymous with internal alchemy in general. LÜ Dongbin (b. 798?) is generally recognized as one of the first patriarchs of alchemy and as one of the most famous immortals.

²⁸ Khigh DHIEGH was an American of English, Egyptian, and Sudanese descent who made his living playing "Oriental" villains on film and television, most notably the Red Chinese agent Wo Fat on Hawaii Five-O. See <<http://www.mjg.net/fiveo>>, accessed 1 July 2004;

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<<http://www.hawaiiive0.org>>, and especially <<http://www.hawaiiive0.org/Cast%20Members/WoFat.html>>, accessed 1 July 2004. Dhiegh also published a number of books on the *Yijing* (Classic of Changes). I am grateful to Elijah Siegler for most of this information. Siegler has also made the following point: "The fact that [Khigh DHEIGH] was not Chinese, but played one on TV, suggests a performative element in being a Daoist master from the beginning," in "Teaching American Taoism," paper presented at the American Academy of Religion, Nashville, Tennessee, November 2000. I would go even further and say that the Orientalist fascination with exoticism has led to the view that Chineseness is equivalent to authenticity. In the case of Khigh DHEIGH, playing a Chinese Daoist priest led to greater authority than being an American Daoist priest of English, Sudanese, and Egyptian background.

²⁹ Kinder, "Profile: Master Share K. Lew," 6.

³⁰ Field observations of the ceremony, winter 1994.

³¹ See <<http://members.aol.com/bagua64>>, accessed 1 July 2004. The use of "Tao" (instead of "Taoist" or "Daoist") is noteworthy here. Many of the relevant groups in North America choose to distance themselves from the religious or assumed institutional connotations of "Daoist." It seems that the use of "Tao" is intended to imply a more immediate or authentic connection to the pure/original source that Daoist religious groups have lost. The Pluralism Project once placed Daoist organizations in the category of "Tao Groups," although this misrepresentation has been corrected. See <<http://www.pluralism.org/directory/index.php>>, accessed 1 July 2004.

³² 4229 Park Blvd., San Diego, California 92103. See <<http://www.taoistsanctuary.org>>, accessed 1 July 2004.

³³ As most of the historical information in this essay comes from the organizations themselves, conclusions must be tentative. More research must be done on the teachers and organizations, as well as on the "lived experience," including style of organization, practices emphasized, group demographics, etc. Thus, at present my historical account must be taken as tentative.

³⁴ 10630 Burbank Blvd., North Hollywood, California 91601. See <<http://www.taoistinstitute.com>>, accessed 15 January 2002, but defunct on 1 July 2004.

³⁵ I do not have information on the members who were ordained, but it seems that initiation began in the early 1980s and ended in the late 1980s. One individual who went through this process is the Owl Clan Recluse, a frequent contributor to the Taoist Restoration Society's chatroom. See <<http://www.taorestore.org>>, accessed 1 July 2004. This website and its chatroom are an important source of information for the study of Daoism in North America. See also <<http://www.taoresource.com>>, accessed 1 July 2004; and <<http://members.boardhost.com/zentaoo00>>, accessed 15 March 2003, defunct 1 July 2004.

³⁶ Siegler, "Teaching American Taoism," 11. I am following the romanization used by the Taoist Tai Chi Society.

³⁷ Denver branch: 1060 Bannock Street, Denver, Colorado 80204; Tallahassee branch: 1310 N. Monroe St., Tallahassee, Florida 32303; Toronto branch: 1376 Bathurst St., Toronto, Ontario M5R 3J1. See <<http://www.taoist.org>>, accessed 1 July 2004.

³⁸ Most of my information on the Taoist Tai Chi Society and Fung Loy Kok Temple comes from leaflets collected and interviews conducted during my visit to the Denver branch on 19 November 2001.

³⁹ Taoist Tai Chi Society leaflets.

⁴⁰ Elijah Siegler, personal communication, 2 March 2001.

⁴¹ See, e.g., Eva Wong, *Cultivating Stillness: A Taoist Manual for Transforming Body and Mind* (Boston: Shambhala, 1992); idem, *The Shambhala Guide to Taoism* (Boston: Shambhala, 1997); and idem, *Teachings of the Tao* (Boston: Shambhala, 1997).

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⁴² To the best of my knowledge, Eva Wong was still connected with the Denver branch when she was invited to participate in the Taoism and Ecology Conference, Harvard University, 5–8 June 1998.

⁴³ Siegler, "Teaching American Taoism," 5.

⁴⁴ Ni Hua-ching, *Tao: The Subtle Universal Law and the Integral Way of Life* (Malibu, Calif.: The Shrine of the Eternal Breath of Tao, 1979), backcover.

⁴⁵ See also Ni Hua-ching, *Internal Alchemy: The Natural Way to Immortality* (Santa Monica, Calif.: The Shrine of the Eternal Breath of Tao, 1992), 249–50.

⁴⁶ In addition, Ni Hua-ching has recently become fairly reclusive, with limited private interviews being given in exchange for large sums of money.

⁴⁷ Ni, *Tao*, backcover. A chronological list of Ni's publications through 1992 may be found in the latter pages of Ni, *Internal Alchemy*.

⁴⁸ The Three Pure Ones (Sanqing) represent the three primordial energies that came into being when the Dao began the process of differentiation and often occupy the main altar in Longmen (Dragon Gate) temples. Depicted as three "gods" in the guise of ancient Chinese men, they are Yuanshi tianzun (Celestial Worthy of Original Beginnings), Lingbao tianzun (Celestial Worthy of Numinous Treasure), and Daode tianzun (Celestial Worthy of the Dao and Inner Power).

⁴⁹ This shrine is now located at Yo San University, behind a folding partition, in a second floor classroom. Siegler, "Teaching American Taoism," 8.

⁵⁰ See <<http://yosan.edu>>, accessed 1 July 2004. Discrepancies between the father's autobiography and his son's account raise questions about Ni Yo-san's actual lineage.

⁵¹ P.O. Box 1530, Santa Monica, California 90406. See <<http://www.usiw.org>>, accessed 1 July 2004.

⁵² This marks a major trend in Daoism in North America: the establishment of presses for self-publication. Both Ni Hua-ching and Mantak CHIA, the two most prolific Daoist teachers to date, have their own presses. Similarly, Orthodox Daoism in America (ODA) is in the process of starting its own press.

⁵³ This information comes from the biographical section on Mantak CHIA in Mantak CHIA and Maneewan CHIA, *Awaken Healing Light of the Tao* (Huntington, N.Y.: Healing Tao Books, 1993), xiii–xv.

⁵⁴ CHIA and CHIA, *Awaken Healing Light of the Tao*, xiii.

⁵⁵ See <<http://www.tao-garden.com>>, <<http://www.universal-tao.com>>, and <<http://www.multi-orgasmic.com>>, all accessed 1 July 2004.

⁵⁶ See <<http://www.healingtaousa.com>>, and <<http://www.healingdao.com>>, both accessed 1 July 2004.

⁵⁷ See <<http://www.healingdao.com>>. A study of the Healing Tao System may be found in Paulino Belamide, "Taoism and Healing in North America: The Healing Tao of Mantak Chia," *International Review of Chinese Religion and Philosophy* 5 (2000): 245–89.

⁵⁸ ATBA is one of the few Daoist organizations in North America that follows a ritual model in practice. It seems that this may be the result of market factors and/or demographics. That is, organizations catering to a Chinese immigrant population (i.e., in Chinatowns) may have the necessary support to maintain a ritual orientation. In contrast, a Euro-American clientele demands self-help practices. One group not covered in the present study is Ching Chung Taoist Association, a group with temples in San Francisco and Vancouver that are based in a predecessor organization, Ching Chung Koon (Qingsong guan, Azure Pine Temple), from Hong Kong. The priests of these temples perform rituals for the community, including funeral services and rites for consecrating new businesses.

⁵⁹ 81 Bowery Street, 3rd Floor, New York, New York 10002. The association is housed on the second floor of a somewhat dilapidated building. During my visit there 16 February 2002,

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I found that the organization identifies itself through a number of other names: Hunyuan xuanji tang (Hall of the Mysterious Pivot of the Primordial Origin) and Jueguang gong (Palace of Expansive Enlightenment).

⁶⁰ See Hsien Yuen, *The Taoism of Sage Religion: True Principle Great Tao, Transcendental Wisdom, and Supernatural Power* (New York: North Pole Gold Temple and Temple of Transcendental Wisdom, 1988), 136.

⁶¹ See Hsien Yuen, *The Taoism of Sage Religion: True Principle*, 140.

⁶² Hsien Yuen, *The Taoism of Sage Religion: True Principle*, 141. This quotation parallels the biographical description of Ni Hua-ching cited above.

⁶³ Hsien Yuen, *The Taoism of Sage Religion: Tan Ting Sitting Meditation—Disclosing the Highest Form of Taoism for the First Time in 60,000 Years* (New York: North Pole Gold Temple and Temple of Transcendental Wisdom, 1988).

⁶⁴ Also noteworthy in this respect are LU Sheng-yen, leader of the Purple Lotus Society and head priest of Ling Shen Ching Tze Temple (Redmond, Washington), and Reverend YAU of Ching Chung Taoist Association, who now lives in Hong Kong.

⁶⁵ Relevant material on Hsien Yuen and ATBA includes four issues of *The Great Tao* magazine, beginning with 1, no. 1 (Summer 1986) and ending with 1, no. 4 (Autumn 1987). Members of the advisory council for this magazine are also important in the present discussion; these are DENG Wen-yi (Chairman of the Taoist Society), Norman Girardot (Lehigh University), LU Xin-zu (24th generation Daoist priest of the Longmen sect), John Major (formerly of Dartmouth College), Michael Saso (formerly of University of Hawaii), and Jeffrey YUEN (Swedish Institute).

⁶⁶ There are also elements of self-cultivation in ATBA. While more advanced members have been taught the internal alchemy system mentioned above, it is unclear how common such transmission is.

⁶⁷ See Mitchel Chalek's interview with Jeffrey YUEN at the Acupuncture Society of New York (ASNY) website, <<http://www.asny.org/mts012.asp>>, accessed 1 July 2004.

⁶⁸ LIU Ming's rise in status within the landscape of Daoism in North America was, to a large degree, the result of a number of interviews published in the *Yoga Journal*, beginning in the 1990s, and ODA's publication of *Frost Bell*. See, for example, Holly Hammon, "Being Human Is Nothing Extraordinary: An Interview with Charles Belyea," *Yoga Journal* (May/June 1995): 72–75, 143–49. Charles Belyea legally changed his name to LIU Ming 10 December 1998.

⁶⁹ A fuller study of LIU Ming's Daoist system would have to address his long-standing connection with the Tibetan Buddhist tradition of Dzogchen. Much of what and how he teaches is at least partially influenced by that Tibetan tradition, including his association with Chogyam Trungpa (1939–1987).

⁷⁰ See Charles Belyea [LIU Ming] and Steven Tainer, *Dragon's Play: A New Taoist Transmission of the Complete Experience of Human Life* (Berkeley: Great Circle Lifeworks, 1991), 197.

⁷¹ P.O. Box 210375, San Francisco, California 94121. See <<http://www.orthodoxdaoism.org>>, defunct when accessed 1 July 2004. For current information on ODA see <<http://www.northstarmartialarts.com/oda>>, accessed 1 July 2004.

⁷² Interview with LIU Ming, Seattle, Washington, 23 July 2001.

⁷³ Based on field observations and informant interviews from June 2002 to March 2003.

⁷⁴ The final issue of *Frost Bell* was published in 2002; this was the Summer 2002 issue, with the feature article "Ritual as Personal Practice in Tantric Buddhism and Daoism" by LIU Ming.

⁷⁵ LIU Ming has composed a translation of the *Daode jing*, which includes his lengthy commentary from what he calls an orthodox Daoist perspective.

⁷⁶ 225 N. 70th St., Seattle, Washington 98103. See <<http://www.taoiststudiesinstitute.org>>, accessed 1 July 2004.

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⁷⁷ Harrison Moretz was also an early supporter of and teacher at the Northwest Institute of Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine (NIAOM), which went out of business in the summer of 2002. There Moretz taught classes on Qigong. This association provided much of the student base for TSI.

⁷⁸ Much of this information comes from an interview with Harrison Moretz, Seattle, Washington, 28 June 2001, as well as from my former participation in this Daoist community.

⁷⁹ An entire ethnographic account could be written on the process of establishing this altar, one of the first traditional Daoist altars in North America. As LIU Ming represents the Zhengyi (Orthodox Unity) tradition and Harrison Moretz is connected with the Longmen (Dragon Gate) sect, the issue of iconography and arrangement required extensive discussions. The establishment of the altar at Xuanji guan, called Sanqing dian (Shrine to the Three Pure Ones), is now being supported by the monks of Baiyun guan (White Cloud Monastery, Beijing).

⁸⁰ See <<http://www.tao.org/center/master>>, accessed 1 July 2004.

⁸¹ See <<http://www.tao.org>>, accessed 1 July 2004.

⁸² See <<http://www.tao.org/temple>>, accessed 1 July 2004. CTTS is actually a large private home in Weston, Massachusetts. During my visit there in May 2002, I was informed that visitors were not permitted without reservations, as the center was based on private membership. None of the Weston townspeople with whom I spoke knew that CTTS was there.

⁸³ Some of these would include the following: Lily SIOU (CHANG Yi Hsiang) and the Tai Hsuan Foundation (Honolulu, Hawaii); KWAN Sai-hung and DENG Ming-dao; the Ching Chung Taoist Association (San Francisco and Vancouver); Hyunmoon KIM and Sun Do (Berkeley and Seattle); Tzu Kuo SHIH (T.K. Shih) and the Wu Tang Ch'uan Association (Kingston, New York); Duane PANG, the Wah Kong Temple (Liliha, Hawaii), and the Ch'ing-ning Tao Yuan Taoist Center (Hawaii); the Genesee Valley Daoist Hermitage (Moscow, Idaho); Solala Towler and the Abode of the Eternal Tao (Eugene, Oregon); the Taoist Arts Center (New York, New York); Wu Jing-nuan, the Taoist Center, and the Taoist Health Institute (Washington, D.C.); Brock Silvers, the Taoist Restoration Society (TRS) (Honolulu, Hawaii), Sacred Mountain Press (Nederland, Colorado), and the U.S. Taoist Association; Ken Cohen (GAO Han), the Taoist Mountain Retreat, and Qigong Research and Practice Center (Nederland, Colorado); Chunyi LIN and Spring Forest Qigong (Minnetonka, Minnesota); Chungliang AI HUANG and the Living Tao Foundation (Urbana, Illinois); Stephen CHANG, the Foundation of Tao (San Francisco, California), and Tao University (New York, New York); GIA Fu-feng and the Stillpoint Taoist University (Wetmore, Colorado); B. K. Frantzis and Energy Arts (Fairfax, California); Terri Morgan and the Wudang Research Association (Boynton Beach, Florida); WU Baolin (Santa Monica, California); the Taoist Sanctuary (Tempe, Arizona); the Taoist Center (Oakland, California); the Taoist Temple (Hanford, California); the Taoist Resource Center (Burbank, California); Hsien Taoist Monastery (Aptos, California); Michael Rinaldi and the Daoist Medical Qigong Center (Sebastopol, California); and the Great River Taoist Center (Washington, D.C.). See Louis Komjathy, "Daoist Teachers in North America," <<http://www.daoistcenter.org/articles.htm>>, posted 15 September 2003, accessed 1 July 2004; idem, "Daoist Organizations in North America," <http://www.daoistcenter.org/articles.htm>, posted 15 September 2003, accessed 1 July 2004; and Siegler, "The Dao of America," 413–21. Information on Daoist teachers and organizations in North America can be sent to me at the following address: Louis Komjathy, Department of Religion, Pacific Lutheran University, Tacoma, Washington 98447-0003.

⁸⁴ See Michael Saso, *Taoism and the Rite of Cosmic Renewal* (Pullman: Washington State University Press, 1972); and idem, *The Teachings of Taoist Master Chuang* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978). Saso currently lives in Carmel, California, and conducts research in mainland China.

⁸⁵ "Registers" (*lu*) include lists of "spirits" to be summoned during related rituals; they are traditionally accompanied by oral instructions (*koujue*) to ensure efficacious invocation.

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⁸⁶ Recently, Sacred Mountain Press, under the direction of Brock Silvers, has republished Saso's *The Teachings of Taoist Master Chuang* under the title *Taoist Master Chuang* (Eldorado Springs, Colo.: Sacred Mountain Press, 2000). See <<http://www.smpress.com>> accessed 1 July 2004. It is also scheduled to publish a manual of Daoist practice, the forthcoming *The Taoist Manual: A Guide to Traditional Taoist Practice* by Brock Silvers.

⁸⁷ See Louis Komjathy, "Index to *Taoist Resources*," *Journal of Chinese Religions* 29 (2001): 233–42.

⁸⁸ See <<http://www.abodetao.com>>, accessed 1 July 2004.

⁸⁹ For a critical discussion of the ways in which Taiji quan, yoga, and other alternative practices become part of the American health and fitness movement see Kimberly Lau, *New Age Capitalism: Making Money East of Eden* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000).