

清整道教：中古道教思想、知识与技术的转型

Purging and Putting Daoism in Order: The Religious Transformation of Daoist Thought, Knowledge and Techniques at Mediaeval China

Some scholars think that the emergence of the Way of the Five Pecks of Rice and the Way of Great Peace at the end of the Latter Han signals the rise of early religious Daoism. At that time in Chinese society, there occurred many phenomena related to the Daoist religion, like the worship of Laozi (老子), the publication of the *Taiping qingling shu* (太平清领书), the compilation of the *Xiang'er zhu* (想尔注), etc. The Daoist religion also rose amidst a background of social upheaval during this period. Another point of view pays special attention to the compilation of Daoist classics, the establishment of rules and disciplines, the elaboration of certain intellectual positions and the creation of a genealogy of deities since the Wei-Jin period. In this light Kou Qianzhi (寇谦之)'s religious reforms in the north and the activities of Ge Hong (葛洪), Lu Xiuqing (陆修静) and Tao Hongjing (陶弘景) in the south are seen as signs the religion was rising. The first of these views emphasizes the decisive role played by the social changes and notes the way in which shamanistic techniques since the Qin were sorted out. The second viewpoint looks at the reordering of Daoism since the Wei as confirming the emergence of religious Daoism. It stresses the rational path followed by a religion when it is adjusted, elevated and reordered. I personally am inclined to accept the second view. I will discuss the religious transformation of Daoism, a process which lasted from the Han to the Wei-Jin period, then to the Northern and Southern Dynasties.

According to "Shi Lao zhi" of the *Weishu* (《魏书·释老志》), the Most High Lord Lao once descended on Songshan (嵩山), the Central Sacred Mountain, and gave the *Yunzhong yinsong xinke shi jie* (《云中音诵新科诫》) to Kou Qianzhi, the Northern Wei (北魏) Daoist, asking him to purge and reorder Daoism. The words "purge" and "reordering" neatly characterize the history of religious Daoism from the end of the second to the end of the sixth century.

I

Among archaeological finds of the past half century are certain cultural artifacts from the Latter Han on which are inscribed what appears to be incantations of later Daoism. This includes archaeological finds such as the evil-dispelling bottles, as well as Daoist talismans. The

incantations and talismans express the hope that supernatural powers will ward off evil and protect one's progeny, and they bear a direct link to shamanistic techniques of ancient China. The thought and knowledge systems of the Latter Han—a period generally viewed as preceding the emergence of religious Daoism—inherited the traditions of ancient esoteric beliefs and paved the way for popular Daoist knowledge and techniques in the use of medicine, incantations, curses and seals. We are compelled to move beyond the usual, simplistic view of the rise of religious Daoism, and seek its origins from a much a broader scope of knowledge and techniques. In this manner we can ascertain its role in the religious transformation of Daoism in later times.

In his *Handai de wuzhe* (〈汉代的巫者〉), Lin Fushi (林富士) describes, at length, the shamanistic activities in the Han period. His research reveals that in the historical period prior to the emergence of religious Daoism the shamans and technical experts served to: (a) communicate with deities and ghosts (during rites for conjuring deities, séances, divinatory sessions, and sacrificial rituals); (b) prevent or ward off disasters by performing certain rites; (c) dispel or cure diseases; (d) curse one's enemies at wartime; (e) pray for rain and sunshine, or against rain and flooding; (f) bring misfortune on those whom one hates by cursing them; (g) pray for childbirth; and (h) make arrangements for funerals and burials, comfort the dead and ensure good fortune for the living. Besides these, it is likely they taught secret sexual techniques, as well as methods for extending life and conserving energy. Scholars have concluded that the shamans and technical experts in the Latter Han can be divided roughly into three categories: (a) diviners, fortune-tellers and astrologers, who relied on the classics and the apocrypha (like Wei Boyang (魏伯阳), the author of the *Zhouyi cantongqi* (〈周易参同契〉)); (b) social activists at the end of the Latter Han, from Gan Ji (干吉), author of the *Taiping qinglingshu* (〈太平清领书〉), to Zhang Jiao (张角) and Zhang Xiu (张修), who constituted one branch of the burgeoning Daoist religion; and (c) experts on longevity techniques, in a tradition stretching from Zuo Yuanfang (左元放) to Ge Hong (葛洪). In the Wei-Jin period that followed, even in the Six Dynasties, these three types of people continued to take part in Daoist religious activities and were a unifying force. Their beliefs, knowledge and techniques paved the way for the emergence of religious Daoism. They also forged its core beliefs, that is, the pursuit of immortality and happiness.

But these people, with their knowledge and techniques, were not in the mainstream of Confucian society at the time, and they came under severe criticism by the elite, the Han government and bureaucrats. When Liu Gen (刘根), a Latter Han expert in the technical arts, retreated to the mountains, many people came to study under him. The provincial head, Shi Qi (史祈), issued an order prohibiting this. When Di Wulun (第五伦) was a government official at Kuaiji (会稽), he strictly forbade lewd sacrifices, arresting shamans in the name of the government. In an effort to control the shamans, Song Jun (宋均) established schools and prohibited unorthodox sacrifices in Chenyang (辰阳) and Jiujiang (九江). After arriving at Yuzhang (豫章), Luan Ba (栾巴) sought to control irrational shamanistic practices by preaching rationalism. This illustrates how knowledge and techniques about the pursuit of immortality, and

communication with spirits, were discredited in mainstream society. At the time of Emperors Shun (顺帝) and Huan (桓帝), Gong Chong (宫崇) and Xiang Kai (襄楷) twice submitted the *Taiping qingling shu* (太平清领书) to the throne, but the former was stigmatized as “evil and wild” by the government, while the latter was condemned by the President of the Board of State for spreading scandals and then imprisoned in Luoyang (洛阳).

II

However, beginning from the mid-second century, owing to epidemics and other factors, many practitioners of the technical arts, who used talismans, incantations and meditation to cure diseases, appeared in groups in western Sichuan (西川) and Eastern China. They established some of the first religious communities. According to legend, Zhang Ling (张陵) founded the 24 administrative zones, and Zhang Jiao (张角) the 36 divisions. They also compiled and confirmed the Daoist classics. Zhang Xiu (张修) allowed Daoist devotees to study the *Laozi* (老子) under the tutelage of libationers. Early Daoist works like the *Taipingjing* (太平经), the *Laozi xiang'er zhu* (老子想尔注), the *Zhouyi cantongqi* (周易参同契) and the *Qian'erbai guanyi* (千二百官仪) appeared in succession. The discipline to be followed by believers was more or less set. For example, Zhang Jiao (张角) “advised patients to bow their heads and ruminate on their faults;” Zhang Xiu (张修) required them to “ponder their faults in a quiet room;” Zhang Lu (张鲁) asked devotees who had committed minor faults to mend short stretches of roads and ordered them to “abstain from killing in accordance with the monthly and seasonal cycles.” But none of these could change Daoism’s marginal status in society, and for a long time Daoist organizations, classics, discipline and activities were looked down upon by the majority of people in the higher echelons and criticized by most intellectuals.

From the end of the Latter Han to the Wei-Jin era, the criticisms coming from within the Daoist groups were also increasingly severe. Ge Hong (葛洪) ’s *Baopuzi neipian* (抱朴子内篇) took such a position, reflecting the wholehearted concern among devotees to improve the cultural character of Daoism. The *Taishang dongyuan shenzhoujing* (太上洞渊神咒经), compiled at about the same time as the *Baopuzi*, also notes that people since Han times did not have any religious beliefs, nor did Daoist priests carry out their duties. Thus, the ordinary folk did not know about the Dao, Daoist discipline or classics, they simply upheld naturalness. These remarks register an intention to reorder the religion. A little later, the *Santian neijiejing* (三天内解经), which appeared in the south during the early Liu-Song period, vehemently attacked as unorthodox the methods used by the shamans and technical experts to appease the deities. The aim of such attacks was of course to affirm one’s orthodoxy.

We should note, in particular, that there was criticism of religious groups from within Daoism itself. Early Daoist groups often imitated the government and the militia in controlling their members. The 36 divisions and the title of General as used by the Way of the Five Pecks of

Rice, and the 24 administrative zones and the title of Libationer as used by the Way of Great Peace, aided in the groups' expansion and aroused the suspicions of secular political authorities. For example, according to "*Zhouzha zhuan*" of the *Jinshu* (晋书. 周札传), the Daoist priest Li Babai (李八百) conferred on Daoist officials the rank titles of the secular government. In a society where secular authorities had ultimate control, this was a dangerous practice. Later, the Buddhists Dao'an (道安) and Zhenluan (甄鸾) hinted at this problem in the *Erjiao lun* and *Xiaodao lun*, in an attempt to alert the government to it. Consequently, beginning with Kou Qianzhi (寇谦之), the Daoists initiated the change from a part-governmental, part-military organization into one that was purely religious or devotional. The *Laojun yinsongjie jing* (老君音诵诫经), a spurious work probably authored by Kou but attributed to the Most High Lord Lao, ruthlessly criticized behavior that ran counter to mainstream politics, ideology and ethics.

The subservience of religion to mainstream political ideology was unavoidable under the unique social conditions of ancient China. Since Confucianism provided the basic knowledge and principles essential for those interested in pursuing an official career, it served as a vehicle of power for the upper class. That being the case, other knowledge and techniques became marginalized. Thus religious Daoism had to be restructured and re-ordered. There was not only pressure from mainstream thought for it to give rational justification, but also a need for it to legitimize itself in religious terms. The reasons are simple. First, the religious knowledge and techniques that were a part of social life might already have become systematized on an intellectual basis, but they had not been clearly justified in theory. Second, the technical experts and Daoists might be knowledgeable, but they did not yet have the legal status bestowed by institutions. Third, Daoist religious activities were influential in secular society. In spite of popular support, however, they were not sanctified by any strong ethical and moral standards. Because of the deeply entrenched human longing for transcendence, longevity and happiness, Daoism had a hold on believers, but it had to consider how it could assume the form of a religion. How could its knowledge and techniques be made reasonable, its organizational forms legalized, and its ethical laws sanctified?

III

Although religious Daoism is said to have begun with the Way of the Five Pecks of Rice and the Way of the Great Peace, these two groups in fact had chaotic organizations; their knowledge and techniques were also a jumbled mess. In particular, their antagonistic stance created obstacles as religious Daoism struggled to lead an open existence. Because of its link to traditional shamanistic traditions, Daoism later came under the criticism of not just the Confucians, but also the Buddhists, among other groups. From very early on, Daoist devotees had continually examined these criticisms. Kou Qianzhi (寇谦之) harshly censured the three deceptive methods of the Zhangs, suggesting that they were inherited from the shamans and technical experts. The first of these was

the sale of official posts; the second was the encouragement of *heqi* (合气) techniques (which focus on sexual intercourse between Daoist believers); the third was the system whereby Celestial Masters' titles were passed on from fathers to sons. Because of these, the religion was entangled in secular, mercenary interests. It lost its purity, violated customary ethics in ancient China, and thus had difficulty surviving.

In 415, Kou Qianzhi claimed that he received the *Yunzhong yinsong xinke zhi jie* (云中音诵新科之誡) directly from Lord Lao. With the support of Emperor Taiwu (魏太武帝), he transmitted the deity's wish that Daoism be purged and reordered, that the three deceptive methods be stamped out. Later, the Southern Daoist Lu Xiuqing (陆修静), in his *Dongxuan lingbao wuganwen* (洞玄灵宝五感文), expressed a similar wish to reform Daoism. In the winter of 453, he retreated to the mountains to perform propitiatory rites with his disciples, strengthening their resolve through ascetic practices, hoping thereby to receive heavenly favors. At the same time, he proposed that sacrifices involving wine and meat be abolished, that the practice of obtaining monetary contributions from believers be stopped, and that the ordinary people be exhorted to adhere to the principles of benevolence, filiality, respect and tolerance.

The Daoists' advocacy of self-restraint shows their wish to identify with mainstream ethical standards. In fact, right from the very beginning Daoism was bred in the ethical soil of ancient China. Traditional morals had been accepted as part of Daoism for a long time, and they figured prominently in the early classics. For instance, in the *Taiping jing* (太平经), the *Laozi xiang'er zhu* (老子想尔注) and the writings of Ge Hong, the idea that the one pursuing the Dao should first practice virtue was affirmed. The *Taiping jing* lays out stringent rules for the observance of traditional ethics, saying that there are deities in heaven who examine the errors committed by men and watch over their behavior on a daily basis. Ge Hong said that "one should begin by practicing filiality, loyalty, harmony, obedience, humaneness and trust if one wishes to attain immortality." He believed that "without meritorious acts, one cannot become an immortal even by practicing the technical arts." He even said that the deities who oversee human vices, evaluate good and evil acts, and allot life-spans accordingly. Such views were supported by members of the intelligentsia who became Daoists, and in the process of its transformation into a religion which lasted up to the sixth century, Daoism gradually created a relatively strict and well-defined order, manifested in a set of rules that governed organized religious activities and devotional life.

The basic approach taken by the Daoists at the time was to regulate their religious activities. According to Chapter 8 of the *Taishang dongyuan shenzhou jing* (太上洞玄灵宝经), Daoist priests should be saviors in secular society, successfully passing on their knowledge and techniques. They needed authority to accomplish this task, yet chaos and corruption within the ranks of Daoists often deprived them of this authority. For this reason, purging and reordering became necessary, and rules had to be established. Books like the *Dongxuan lingbao sandong fengdao kejie yingshi* (洞玄灵宝三洞奉道科戒营始) appeared one after another, with stipulations concerning Daoist rites and activities—even the building of houses and statues. These

books lay down clear rules on the daily life of Daoist priests and nuns including modes of dress and diet, as well as behavior inside their own dwellings. They also defined how one should proselytize, burn incense, light the beacon, read, give a sermon, teach one's students, observe a fast, lead a pious life, etc. All this gave religious Daoism a strict set of rules by which it could gradually distinguish itself from folk shamanism and from the three rules of the Zhangs of days past. The older devotional practices were dubbed "Old Rules of Six Days," while the new ones were called "New Rules of the Three Days."

Along such a line of thinking, Daoism established its own order. In the process of being transformed into a religion, Daoism was purified, becoming a religious group with strict rules. Also, by repositioning itself and adopting a new posture, Daoism was able to move into the mainstream and become an accepted ideology.

IV

The second phenomenon we notice in this series of developments is the Daoists' creation of complete genealogies of deities and ghosts. It was based on the ancient Chinese cosmological framework, and accomplished by reordering the ancient symbolic system. The genealogies have a clear cosmological basis and a moral orientation; they provide a symbolic system whereby the Daoists can re-order the human realm.

Early Daoist believers also worshiped many deities besides Laozi (老子). This demonstrates the lack of a comprehensive cosmology where genealogical relationships are not clearly delineated. Even though, since the time of the *Taiping jing* (太平经), many imaginative possibilities were considered in the attempt to construct a symbolic system for worship, at least by the fourth century the Daoist system of sacrificial rites remained complicated and chaotic. However, if the objects of worship exist in such a confusing state that devotees can make obeisance to any deity or ghost they chance upon, there is emotional disorientation as well. Other than serving practical needs (like praying for the deities' help), the religion falls short of being a body of solid truths that uplift the spirit. The random worship and the overlapping of sacrificial rites might easily cause mainstream society to be alarmed and take prohibitive action.

In ancient China, the politically powerful always sought to control the world of belief, as one can see from the records of the prohibition of lewd sacrifices. While an official at Jinan, Cao Cao (曹操), who took part in quelling the Yellow Turbans, once forbade ordinary folk from offering reckless sacrifices. His successor Cao Pi (曹丕) even issued an imperial order in 224 to the effect that "from now on, licentious sacrifices and shamans' words will be viewed as vile and sacrilegious." In the south, Sun Hao (孙皓) also proscribed all kinds of rituals not mentioned in the classics. After the change of dynasties, Emperor Wu of Jin (晋武帝) reaffirmed the prohibition rules of the preceding dynasty the first year he was on the throne (265). Governments often exhorted local officials to impose sanctions against religious activities not mentioned in the

classics. Perhaps it was in such a context that religious Daoism realized the importance of purging and reordering. From the fourth century on, Daoists proceeded to clean up the system of sacrifice and prayers offered to deities and ghosts. In Tao Hongjing (陶弘景) 's writings, from the *Zhengao* (真诰), the *Zhenling weiye tu* (真灵位业图), the *Duren jing* (度人经), the *Dongyuan shenzhou jing* (洞渊神咒经), to the *Wushang miyao* (无上秘要), the genealogy of Daoist deities and ghosts slowly but surely expanded, revealing the philosophical basis which motivated this cleansing.

The thought underlying this structure was the ancient Chinese people's imagination of the cosmos. For instance, the *Zhenzhong shu* (枕中书)—considered as the Daoist book of *Genesis*—mentions the Primordial Heavenly Emperor and the Primal Jade Maiden, as well as the East Heavenly Lord (东王公) and the Western Queen Mother (西王母) they gave birth to. The Earthly Lord was born of the Heavenly Lord, and he in turn begat the Human Lord. These are the highest deities in the Daoist genealogy of spirits. Behind them were beliefs about the origin of the cosmos and imaginary accounts of the Primal Chaos, the *liangyi* (两仪), and the triumvirate of Heaven, Earth and Man. By contrast, in the *Zhenling weiye tu* (真灵位业图), considered by later generations to be the first complete Daoist genealogy of the spiritual world, the core group is said to consist of the Primal Heavenly Lord, the Lord of the Mighty Dao, the Golden Gate Emperor of the Primal Chaos, the Most High Lord Lao (all of Heaven), Presidents of the Nine Palaces (九宫尚书), the Lord of Maoshan (中茅君, of Earth), and Emperor Fengdu (酆都大帝, of the nether realm in the north). Included in this genealogy are deities and ghosts, Heaven and Earth, and the divine and secular realms. The underlying intellectual and conceptual background that supports all of this is an evolving idea of time in the ancient world on one hand, and the bipolarities of deities vs. ghosts, life vs. death, and goodness vs. evil on the other. Symbolically, cosmic survival is pitted against destruction, and the universe is reincarnated over the course of time.

Another frame of reference was provided by ancient Chinese geographical conceptions and related legends and stories. Probably dating back to very early times are the legends about the ten continents and three islands. Even though the *Taiping jing* (太平经) had indicated that there were 81 regions and 11,000 kingdoms in the world, legends about the ten continents and three islands continued to be in popular in Daoist circles, especially in the Jiangnan region. Daoist immortals were often said to reside in these locales. But the *Wuyue zhenxing tuxu* (五岳真形图序), based on tales about Han Emperor Wu (汉武帝), the Queen Mother of the West (西王母), and Dongfang Shuo (东方朔), not only retells the stories of the ten continents and three islands but adds legends about the five sacred mountains. The *Wushang miyao* (无上秘要), a Northern Zhou text, even systematically allocates the Five-Color Ghost-Kings and the Five Hells (all placed under Emperor Fengdu) to the five mountains. At the same time, the stories of Grotto Heavens told in the geographical apocrypha since the Han are linked to mountains, islands and caverns in various parts of China. Imaginary geography is combined with actual geography, creating a spatial framework in which Daoist deities and ghosts find their places. Thus, religious Daoism slowly constructed a mysterious realm of immortals separate from, yet corresponding to, the realm of

men.

Behind the Daoist effort to give order to the genealogy of spirits, we see a wealth of ideas at work. First, there are ancient Chinese ideas pertaining to Heaven, Earth, time and organization which give a distinct pattern and a rational basis to the genealogy. Second, there are the accepted views on goodness and evil in ancient China. Religious Daoism gives hope (life) and despair (death) to two groups of people, and fantastic realms of deities and ghosts symbolically represent goodness (or life) and evil (or death). Religious Daoism thus made use of the imagined spiritual realm to uphold mainstream Confucian thought, purging the human order on the one hand and establishing its own ethics on the other.

V

The third phenomenon we notice in this long evolutionary process is the development of a systematic Daoist theology. Through this, the knowledge and technical arts which previously were secretly transmitted were substantiated and clearly explained. They became justified and were openly transmitted. At the same time, under the stimulus of Buddhism, Daoism underwent some revamping and established its own canonical system.

Even though, since the end of the Han, some ancient classics had been appropriated or rewritten by Daoists, new Daoist classics continued to be made known; for example, the *Taiping jing*, the *Xiang'er zhu*, the *Cantongqi* (《太平经》、《想尔注》、《参同契》), and so on. But actually it was in the Wei-Jin period that an abundance of Daoist classics was seen. “Xialan” in Ge Hong’s *Baopuzi* (抱朴子·遐览) may be viewed as the most complete bibliography of Daoist works before the Eastern Jin. Ge listed over 250 mid-fourth century Daoist books (in 1,100 volumes) that he had seen. From the titles of extant Wei-Jin Daoist texts we notice that, as far as sources and contents are concerned, there are three categories. First, works like the *Sunu jing*, the *Pengzu jing*, the *Rongcheng jing*, the *Huangting jing* (《素女经》、《彭祖经》、《容成经》、《黄庭经》) and other alchemical writings are conversant in traditional technical knowledge and arts. They contain knowledge pertaining to medicine, sexual intercourse and immortality, and describe the skills for attaining longevity and health. Second, works like the *SanHuang wen* (三皇文), *Zhengji jing* (正机经) and magical charts are produced in the context of traditional divinatory knowledge and techniques—including magical techniques that had been secretly transmitted. Third, works like the *Xisheng jing*, the *Huahu jing* and the *Shizhou ji* (《西升经》、《化胡经》、《十洲记》) deal with Daoist philosophy and legends. Based on ancient accounts circulated in the writings of philosophers and historians, they document Daoist thought and imagination about the cosmos.

However, given the chaotic circumstances surrounding Daoist works at the time—they were scattered in different regions, and different Daoists honored different classics—the need soon arose for giving some order to them. The reasons are simple. On one hand, Daoist works continued to multiply. On the other hand, they existed in a particularly confused and

undifferentiated state, and thus could hardly be received as sacred or canonical. But this did not mean one could remove or abandon all other Daoist titles and return to the *Laozi* (老子) and the *Zhuangzi* (庄子). Both these works are philosophical rather than theological. It was not easy to relate Lao-Zhuang learning to secular Daoist goals, neither could these two books be treated as basic classics. Therefore, when Daoism became a religion, it could not simply adopt Lao-Zhuang learning and ignore other religious knowledge and techniques. The question was: how could Daoist works on such knowledge and techniques be canonized or sanctified? In the fourth to the fifth century, Daoist texts underwent some large-scale reordering and consolidation, and were eventually classified into (a) the Cavernous Deities category (represented by the *Sanhuang wen* 三皇文 and *Wuyue zhenxing tu* 五岳真形图), (b) the Cavernous Mysteries category (the ancient *Lingbao jing* 灵宝经) and (c) the Upper Empyrean category (the *Dadong zhenjing* 大洞真经 and *Huangting jing* 黄庭经). In 471, Lu Xiujing (陆修静) was instructed by the emperor to put Daoist classics in order; he compiled the *Sandong jingshu mulu* (三洞经书目录). From then on Daoist books rested on a framework roughly comparable to that of Buddhism.

VI

In fact, there are two aspects to the development of Daoism as a religion. It was a sanctifying process, which included the establishment of rules and disciplines, the construction of a genealogy of spirits and the reordering of the classics. This was aimed at imbuing Daoism with a sacred, mysterious and philosophical quality that appealed to believers. It was also a secularizing process, which was intended to confirm the value of the religion in ordinary living. Only by combining the two processes was a complete transformation effected in the second to sixth centuries.

The secularizing process had, in fact, existed from the very beginning; and this was consciously understood when men like Ge Hong reaffirmed the significance of religious beliefs and reevaluated the Daoist classics. In Chapter 8 of the *Baopuzi* (《抱朴子》), Daoism is said to be more than mere belief in Laozi and Zhuangzi. The latter is a far cry from the ideal of immortality as advocated by the Daoist religion. Here we see the difference between philosophical and religious Daoism. During the period in question, Daoism gradually made it clear that its ultimate ideal is not philosophical, but rather it was the pursuit of longevity. In other words, becoming an immortal is happiness and eternal life for all people. It is of the greatest priority. As Chapter 3 of this book tells the secular believer, the ultimate goal of men is to have worldly happiness and then eternal life. Philosophizing about the cosmos is one way of dealing intellectually with the issue of eternal life, but then what men really care about is life and happiness in this world. We know that the issues of life and death are everyone's concern and Daoism attracts believers primarily because it addresses these issues. In the secularizing process, crucial concepts slowly emerged in Daoism, among them the concepts of life, happiness and morality.

(1) The Daoist concept of life is known to all. One of the most popular Daoist classics of

later times, the *Duren jing* (度人经), notes in its first chapter that “immortality beliefs attach great value to life.” To value life is an idea that has been influential since Qin times, and the first and foremost concern of Daoism is life. At the beginning of his article *Daoist Studies in the First Few Centuries* (collected in *Taoism and the Chinese Religion*), Henri Maspero explicitly calls Daoism the religion that pursues immortality. The Japanese scholar Yoshioka Yoshitoyo, when writing the entry on Daoism for a World Religions series of books in the 1970s, entitles it *Daoism: the Aspiration for Immortality*. Unlike Buddhism, which places equal emphases on tranquility in the present life and happiness in the life beyond, Daoism focuses attention on the satisfaction acquired in this life. Also unlike Buddhism, which is more concerned with mental equilibrium and spiritual transcendence, Daoism promises its believers concrete results and practical gains. Thus it has extremely elaborate methods of physical and mental training, a set of mystical rites for communicating with deities, and ways of using medicine to nourish life. However, Daoist believers are also required to lead Daoist lives, paying attention to: (a) Daoist methods of cultivation which preserve vital energy and calm the nerves; (b) inner virtues as much as outward behavior, without either of which longevity is unattainable; and (c) reverence for ghosts and deities, the impartial judges of the unseen world who watch over human thought and behavior, determining human life-spans by counting virtues and vices. Of these three the second is the most important, since it alone is within man’s grasp. Only by complying with Daoist ethics can man be rewarded by deities and ghosts; only in this way can he attain peace of mind. Thus, in their pursuit of long life, man should begin by believing in Daoism and observing Daoist restraints. This argument is indeed effective because, to the ordinary Daoist believer, eternal life is the reward for obeying religious rules.

(2) Happiness has probably more significance in Daoist thought as understood by ordinary folk, who have a greater concern with life in the present. Not all people can understand eternal life. For the ordinary believer, immortality is a far-fetched, unrealizable ideal, and the practical benefits of this present life are worth more. Daoism promised everyone happiness, which during this period meant personal, family and clan safety, besides longevity. Next, it meant ample food and clothing, even affluence. Finally, it meant having a great number of descendants. This was a secular but universal ideal, as well as a deep-rooted, long-standing traditional Chinese concept.

This view of happiness, though apparently insignificant, was tremendously popular in ancient China. For the intellectual elite, it may have indeed been trivial. But we cannot dismiss it, because all popular thought is built on reasonable expectations at a level understood by the common people. In difficult times, men’s first priority is survival, in the context of which one, understandably, looks for security and sustenance. With these attained, men will naturally want their lives extended through their progeny. Religion promises this, and believers expect to be rewarded for their belief with happiness.

(3) Moral standards need to be observed if one wants protection from the deities and ghosts, and happiness in the present or eternal life. Generally speaking, the moral standards to be

observed are many. First, as far as personal character is concerned, one should be able to endure poverty, live a simple life, and remain upright, humble and free from desire. Second, in family or clan life, one should be filial and kind. Third, in social life, one should be trustworthy, courteous and properly behaved.

In ancient China, morality and ethics were often the Confucians' intellectual forte. But the Daoists cleaned up the social order in ways that the Confucians could not. As the *Xiang'er zhu* puts it, Daoism "posits longevity as a reward for virtue, and death as a means of subjugating evil." Early in the Warring-States period, Mozi was worried that, given the Confucians' view of deities and ghosts ("respect them but keep at a distance") and their attitude to sacrificial rites ("worship deities as if they were in front of you"), men may have no fear at all when these no longer serve any function, thus causing unremitting spiritual degeneration. However, with reference to concepts of life vs. death, deities vs. ghosts and fortune vs. misfortune, Daoism affirms the consequences for virtue and vice, consequences affecting not just the individual but also his descendents. Many scholars have noticed the idea of a "baggage" in Daoism, as expressed in the *Yijing* dictum that "a virtuous family bequeaths prosperity to its descendents, whilst an un-virtuous one bequeaths misfortune." Although early religious Daoism did not have concepts of an individual's previous life and next life, it transferred rewards and punishments to descendents. This idea of bequeathing prosperity and misfortune is similar to that of Buddhist retributive justice.

VII

In its first chapter, the *Taishang dongyuan shenzhou jing* (太上洞渊神咒经) mentions the twilight era or the end of the world. According to some scholars, Six Dynasties Daoist belief in the end of the world originated partly from description of natural calendrical laws in the Han, and partly from the Buddhist concept of *kalpas*. In the chaotic social situation of the Six Dynasties, people came to imagine Heaven and Earth as being torn asunder, and epidemics going rampant. After the 420s (that is, the end of the Eastern Jin), eschatological views were popular. Daoists, pointing to the social chaos, talked of the destruction of the cosmos. For them, men continued to live in ignorance and, though still alive, were no more than living corpses. They predicted cataclysmic events in the near future, with all kinds of demons, ghosts and evil spirits coming to wreck people's lives. After the turbulent period, evil characters would be completely eradicated, and only men of virtue, under the guidance of Daoist deities, would take refuge in designated places, thereby escaping calamity. They saw a future world, which would be peaceful and inhabited by sages. As the seeds of the new world, these sages were called the Seed Men. Of course, only benevolent and law-abiding Daoists would be chosen to be Seed Men. According to "Shilao zhi" of the *Weishu* (《魏书释老志》), "It is extremely difficult to proselytize Daoism during the last *kalpa*. Men and women should be exhorted to build altars and temples, and to pray day and night. A strict father in the family can lead to merit being accumulated for ancestors.

Those who practice self-cultivation, alchemy, and longevity techniques will become Perfected Lords and Seed Men.”

In its never-ending sanctification process, Daoism confirmed its religious character. In the unending process of secularization, Daoism confirmed its “saving” function. It gradually became clear that, alongside the pursuit of eternal life beyond time was a responsibility toward society. Chapter 30 of the *Xianjian* (仙鑑) contains an account of the Daoist priest Niu Wenhou (牛文侯), who “taught Daoist devotees about loyalty and filiality in ways that they could accept; instructed them in the principles of reward (good fortune) and punishment (bad luck); and gave them talismans and magical figures so they could be protected.” Through the adoption of such an accommodating attitude toward the current ideology, Daoism was able to revamp religious rules and put the world in order. Niu Wenhou hoped that, under these circumstances, Daoism would eventually prosper.

Between the second and the sixth century, Daoism was transformed into a religion. Through the process of purging it gradually evolved into a mature and complete religious system. It must be noted, however, that this period also saw Buddhism’s eastward transmission and entry into the intellectual world of China. The transformation of Daoism as described here cannot but be affected by Buddhism. On one hand, Buddhism spurred the sanctification processes. Daoism found it necessary to establish a religious system, lay down strict rules of discipline, and adjusted its social position. On the other hand, Buddhism aroused the latent ethnocentrism in Daoism, which, as it responded to the Buddhist challenge, affirmed the notion of the nation-state and became the indigenous religion of China, in an effort to curb the Buddhist expansion. We will discuss this in the next few sections.