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"TAKING FORM IN RESPONSE TO STIMULUS": RECENT PUBLICATIONS IN TAOIST STUDIES – A FIELD IN MOTION

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KOHN, Livia: *A Source Book in Chinese Longevity*. St. Petersburg FL: Three Pines Press, 2012. Pp. 290 + 8. ISBN 978-1-931483-22-3 (pbk); ISBN 978-1-105-55628-9 (ebk).

PREGADIO, Fabrizio: *The Seal of the Unity of the Three* [Vol. 1]: *A Study and Translation of the* Cantong qi, *The Source of the Taoist Way of the Golden Elixir*. Mountain View CA: Golden Elixir Press, 2011. Pp. xiii + 244 + 61. ISBN 978-0-9843082-7-9 (hbk); ISBN 978-0-9843082-8-6 (pbk).

PREGADIO, Fabrizio: *The Seal of the Unity of the Three.* Vol. 2: *Bibliographic Studies on the* Cantong qi: *Commentaries, Essays, and Related Works*. Mountain View CA: Golden Elixir Press, 2011 (2012). Pp. viii pp. + 198 + 67. ISBN 978-0-9843082-9-3 (pbk).

RAZ, Gil. *The Emergence of Daoism: Creation of Tradition.* London and New York: Routledge, 2012. Pp. 287 + 5. ISBN 978-0-415-77849-7 (hbk); ISBN 978-0-203-58374-6 (ebk).

1 A Crisis in Taoist Studies?

For a considerable part of its brief history, the field of Taoist studies has been driven by the motor of a colossal endeavor initiated by Kristofer Schipper in 1976. This undertaking, known as the "Tao-Tsang project," aspired to provide a short abstract and basic bibliographic information for each of the 1487 texts in the Ming dynasty edition of the Taoist Canon, the 1444–1445 *Zhengtong Daozang* 正統道藏 and its 1607 supplement. Its scope was to produce a comprehensive guide to the most authoritative corpus of Taoist canonical literature. In

2007, after more than 30 years of collaborative efforts, the results were published in the three volumes of Schipper and Franciscus Verellen's *The Taoist Canon: A Historical Companion to the* Daozang (Chicago). The work was very well received and has taken its due place in the pantheon of indispensable sinological reference works. But it is a mere drop in an ocean of work that remains to be done in the study of Taoism.[1]

Yet, despite these broad horizons, Taoist studies have been perceived by some to be in a state of crisis since the *Companion* was published. Now that its textual core has been exposed, Taoism has lost some of its appeal as an object of investigation – goes the argument, and what discoveries remain to be made are but adjuncts to the monumental and field-defining ones of the "Tao-Tsang project." As a result, more recent scholars of Taoism have felt the need to venture outside the traditional confines of the field in order to revitalize it. Theoretical considerations (sometimes, but not always, grounded in academic fads) have become increasingly relevant to Taoist studies, as have approaches that go beyond mere textual analysis. The latter are increasingly informed by anthropological, ethnographical, and historical perspectives of course, but also those of literature, sociology, cultural studies, and even cognitive science. As a result, recently trained Taoist scholars are markedly transdisciplinary. The fact that Taoism may be approached from a plurality of methodological standpoints is in fact testimony to its complexity and the almost inexhaustible amount of insights that it offers.

The *Companion* and other seminal reference works, such as *The Encyclopedia of Taoism*,[2] that have recently appeared are indeed priceless additions in the Taoist scholars' arsenal of investigation, but by no means do they constitute concluding bookends to an entire field. The three recent works that are the focus of this review article are clear evidence of Taoist studies' dynamic growth and constant re-definition of its boundaries. There were a number of other publica-

1 Similar indexes and annotated catalogues of Taoist materials in Chinese (see for instance, REN Jiyu 任繼愈 and ZHONG Zhaopeng 鍾肇鵬 (eds.): *Daozang tiyao* 道藏提要. Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 1991; or the more recent ZHU Yueli 朱越利: *Daozang fenlei jieti* 道藏分類解題. Beijing: Huaxia chubanshe, 1996) have in fact, stimulated Taoist studies in China, Taiwan, and Japan, as confirmed by the exponential increase in monographs, edited volumes and articles on Taoism; see for instance the voluminous list of publications compiled in the annual "Catalogue of Books and Articles Related to Taoism" ("Dōkyō kankei chosho ronbun mokuroku 道教關係著書論文目錄") published in *Tōhō shūkyō* 東方宗教.

2 PREGADIO, Fabrizio (ed.): *The Encyclopedia of Taoism*. Routledge, 2008.

tions that could have been selected to illustrate this point, but the present three are of particular interest because they showcase how "traditional" Taoist studies – the more philologically inclined variety – re-invents itself and reaches out to new audiences. Gil Raz's *The Emergence of Daoism: Creation of Tradition,* Fabrizio Pregadio's two volume *The Seal of the Unity of the Three*, and Livia Kohn's *Sources of Chinese Longevity* can be plotted along a trajectory that goes from writings that cater to an exclusively academic and specialized readership on one end, to writings that tend to a more general and not necessarily academic public on the other. By publishing along both ends of this spectrum and anywhere in between, scholars of Taoism manage to successfully balance multiple interests: they cast a wide net to attract a broader category of readers and potential future scholars, while ensuring, through high-quality critical translations and textual analyses, that academic standards are respected and key issues in research are pursued. Below, three works that can be situated along three different points on this spectrum will be considered in light of the responses that they can offer to claims of a purported "impasse" in Taoist studies.

Moreover, despite the fact that all three works are, as highlighted above, primarily philological in their approach, they chiefly rely on new readings of previously translated sources. This attests to the layered complexity of texts in the Taoist Canon, but also to the capacity of Taoist studies – even its most traditional sub-currents – to constantly renew itself and remain highly relevant with, if need be, minimal input from new materials.[3] This is to say nothing of the hundreds of texts that remain untranslated and unexamined. The purported crisis in Taoist studies lies more in external institutional failures to recognize the continued relevance of the field than in the field itself.

2 A "Specialist" Work

The Emergence of Daoism: Creation of Tradition, comparatively speaking, offers the highest proportion of newly translated materials, among which, a considerable part stem from the author's highly regarded doctoral work on the

3 A case in point, the seemingly endless number of studies on, or translations of the *Laozi* 老子 (or *Daode jing* 道德經) or *Zhuangzi* 莊子 that are published every year in Chinese, Japanese, and perhaps less so, in Western languages; whether or not these should be considered a subfield of "Chinese philosophy" or Taoist studies is a question that will have to be addressed elsewhere.

Array of the Five Talismans (Taishang lingbao wufu xu 太上靈寶五符序; CT 318).[4] That being said, Raz's first monograph presents a substantially different perspective than his dissertation. *The Emergence of Daoism* remains a resolutely text based analysis, one that is closest to the "specialist" end of the spectrum in terms of target audience. Yet, it moves beyond the pale of the strictly philological; although it incorporates numerous translations from a multiplicity of canonical Taoist sources, its outlook is firmly socio-historical.

Concisely put, Raz traces the emergence of institutional Taoism through a detailed overview of the intricate relationship between Celestial Master Taoism (Tianshidao 天師道) and the traditions or currents that determined its contours during the early medieval period (3rd to 7th centuries). This endeavor raises the question of definition: if we are to identify the emergence of Taoism, what would constitute its defining features? Is there even such a thing as a unitary Taoism? Raz, as many before him, attempts to answer these thorny questions in the substantial introduction (1–37), and he comes up with a number of insights. Taoism should not be understood in terms of philosophical versus religious currents (7), nor should it be too closely identified with textual corpora such as Shangqing 上清 (Highest Clarity) and Lingbao 靈寶 (Numinous Treasure) for these do not represent actual social units (3, 15–16). Rather, Taoism should be imagined as non-unitary "communities of practice," "an assemblage of intersecting textual and ritual lineages with a set of shared core beliefs or attitudes which formed a commonality as opposed to other traditions such as Buddhism, on the one hand, and the practices of common religion, on the other" (4). Precisely because they inherited more from the latter than they did from the former, these communities of practice were adamant about distancing themselves from the shamanic (*wu* 巫), immortality, *fangshi* 方士, or local cults that constituted the "common religion." In constructing his analytical category, Raz also reviews some of the more prevalent understandings of Taoism – including Michel Strickmann's Zhang Daoling 張道陵 centered definition – but he ultimately advocates moving beyond them (while absorbing some of their most redeeming elements) and towards a polythetic definition.[5]

4 RAZ, Gil: "Creation of Tradition: The Five Talismans of the Numinous Treasure and the Formation of Early Daoism." Ph.D. diss., Indiana University, 2004.

5 Raz also considers Stephen BOKENKAMP's views on the category of "Taoism," as expounded in his *Early Daoist Scriptures* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997: 12). Another definition reviewed is that of LIU Yi 劉屹 which, in addition to emphasizing the development of a personified Dao, also distinguishes between "scriptural Taoism" (*jingjiao daojiao* 經教道教) and "technical Taoism" (*daoshu daojiao* 道術道教); see his *Jingtian yu*

The polythetic definition of Taoism is inherently dynamic, lacking orthodoxy or orthopraxy. Most importantly, it leaves room for variation in the criteria that identify a "Taoist" group without requiring that all criteria be met in order to define that group as such (18). Raz proposes five points that, in loose association, would serve to identify a Taoist community of practice: 1) a view of the Dao as an overarching and effective force; 2) that can be approached by humans through ritual means (towards achieving transcendence); 3) that are, in turn, protected through strict transmission lineages; 4) and replace sacrificial means of communication with typically bureaucratic ones; 5) in a quest for transcendence that incorporates an eschatological vision (to differentiate from earlier traditions of longevity seekers) (18). Subsequently, the author furnishes "an episodic history of Daoism" that, although discerning and very welcome, focuses heavily on the Celestial Masters. Are we to understand that, after supplying such an inclusive definition of Taoism that celebrates diversity and heterogeneity, it is, in the end, only in this specific constellation of communities that we may find emergence of a Taoist tradition?

In "Immortality cults and cults of immortals" (38–90), Raz pursues his investigation of the communal practices (rather than the texts or the individuals) from which Celestial Master Taoism emerged. Through the prism of stele inscriptions, he scrutinizes four levels of *fangshi* derived networks of practitioners, beginning with local traditions accreted around an individual, in this case the "small cultic association" that developed around the figure of Fei Zhi 肥致 (48–67). The cults devoted to Tang Gongfang 唐公房 (67–80), Wangzi Qiao 王子喬 (80–86), and Laozi (86–88), as they appear in their stele inscriptions, reflect the features of regional, general, and universal cultic levels respectively. In negotiating their own identities, emerging Taoist communities absorbed motifs and many distinct features from all of these cultic scopes into a larger hierarchic superstructure. By accomplishing this, they benefited from much of the prestige associated with cultic lineages, but they also occasioned an erasure of locality and a diminishing emphasis on accomplished individuals in favor of inclusive universal practices.

In contrast to the "internal debates" examined in the previous chapter, "Blood rites and "pure covenants" (91–126) looks at "external debates" in the synthesis of the Taoist tradition – in other words, *exclusionary* practices designed to solidify self-identity. As in various incarnations of the "common

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chongdao: zhonggu daojiao xingcheng de sixiangshi beijing zhiyi 敬天與崇道：中古道教形成的思想史背景之一, Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2005.

religion," lineages of practice were crucial notions to Taoist communities. However, the habitual sacrificial pledges or "blood oath" (*xuemeng* 血盟) used to authenticate an esoteric transmission were an unmistakable point of divergence. These, the Taoists argued, were reserved for deviant spirits, while only the "pure covenant" (*qingyue* 清約) of the Celestial Masters was addressed to the "insubstantial vapors" of the Dao (101–102). As gleaned from the *Array of Five Talismans of the Numinous Treasure* (Lingbao wufu xu), for a time, offerings of silk bolts, and more permanently, the burning of talismans, ensured the transition from a sacrificial cultic system to a completely new ritual framework. Departing from Schipper, who insists on the preservation of sacrificial elements in this new framework (consummation by fire being one of them), Raz convincingly argues that the rupture was complete (112–126).

The chapter on "Talismans: the power of inscription" (127–176) returns to an "internal debate" in the emergence of a Taoist tradition, this time surrounding the notion of talismans (*fu* 符) – one that was first broached in the previous chapter's discussion of sacrifice. In the first part of this very rich and informative chapter, Raz stresses the parent notions of "true shape" (*zhenxing* 真形) and "true name" (*zhenming* 真名) as ingredient to the efficacy of talismans (139, and 143–148). Unfortunately, the concept of efficacy is never properly problematized – it must have had considerably different connotations in medieval China – but it remains a defining component of inscription (130–133). Raz notes that this efficacy functions according to the mechanisms of a) "iconic" signification and b) recognizability. In a perceptive turn, he argues that it is precisely the inaccessibility of talismans in mundane linguistic terms and their self-referential symbolism (they do not obey any orthographic or syntactic rules nor do they represent anything other than themselves) that lend them their efficacy (128–129, 139–143). This perspective is elaborated upon in the second part of the chapter, which turns to the cosmic nature of talismans. Their graphs are illegible and their symbolism circular because, according to scriptures such as the *Array of Five Talismans of the Numinous Treasure*, talismans are considered actual "manifestations of cosmic power" (149). The "true names" and "true forms" denoted by the talismans are inscribed in a primordial generative script that emerged from the unitary Dao. Thus, concludes Raz, as the cosmos materializes through successive scriptural states, the talismans written in this cosmogonic script, and the Taoist scriptures that were rendered in a derivative script are "perceived as literally inscribing the world" (176).

"The Yellow and the Red: Controversies over sexual practice" (177–209) traces another "internal debate" that in the end, turned "external," as a rejection

of certain rites involving ritual coitus were marked off, like blood oaths, as quintessentially non-Taoist.[6] The author underscores the fact that despite superficial resemblances, "the Yellow and the Red" (*huangchi* 黃赤)[7] or the "merging pneumas" (*heqi* 合氣) initiatory rites that were integral to early Celestial Master communities, were in fact distinct in nature and scope from the early Chinese "arts of the bedchamber" (*fangzhong shu* 房中術) that typically fell under the purview of "nourishing life" (*yangsheng* 養生) self-cultivation (186). Despite this, when vitriolic opprobrium befell the early Celestial Masters, they attempted to reform their initiatory rites to distance themselves even further from sexual cultivation techniques as they appeared in the [*Shaman*] *Zidu's Scripture* ([*Wu*] *Zidu jing* [巫]子都經), for instance. In their amended form, the Celestial Master sexual initiatory rites were no longer aimed at ritually matching registers of deities. Rather, their restated purpose was the generation of spiritually perfected "seed people" (*zhongmin* 種民) that would repopulate the earth in a post-apocalyptic utopia. Indeed, with this soteriological aim in mind, the *Initiation Rite of the Yellow Book* (Tianshang huangshu qiling 天上黃書契令) prescribes ritualized intercourse to obtain "release from the web and net" (*jietuo luowang* 解脫羅網) of mundane existence and create a homunculus, a divine embryonic "seed person" (186–202). Whether these rites were understood to produce an embryo in male practitioners (or in both male and female practitioners), or whether they were taken more literally, as a ritual way of engaging in actual reproduction, remains unclear. Nonetheless, in the texts of the Lingbao (Numinous Treasure) and especially the Shangqing (Highest Clarity) corpora,[8]

6 The second half of this chapter overlaps with Raz's earlier "The Way of the Yellow and the Red: Re-examining the Sexual Initiation Rite of Celestial Master Daoism," *Nan Nü* (2008): 86–120.

7 RAZ, 189–191, proposes a few interpretations as to the meaning of this term on the basis of textual examples, eventually settling on the explanation that "yellow" and "red" refer to registers of spirit-generals that initiates receive during the rite. Another, possible interpretation may point towards a sub-category of meditations that focus on the generation of a perfected "embryo"; in this context, yellow would refer to "the father" (identified with the Yellow Court and the outer part of the lower cinnabar field [*dantian* 丹田]) and the color red, to the embryo (identified with the innermost part of the lower cinnabar field); see for instance, *Assorted Discourses on Cultivating True Essence and Principle* (Xiu zhenjing yiza lun 修真精義雜論; CT 277) 6a, translated in KOHN, Livia: *A Source Book of Chinese Longevity*, 220.

8 Shangqing texts were particularly vehement in their attacks on Celestial Master sexual practices. Raz astutely speculates that although their practices, including the generation of an inner embryo, were quite similar in some respects, the Shangqing viewed the ideal body

the damage was already done; the Celestial Masters were irrevocably associated with the inferior practices of the Yellow and the Red (202–209).[9]

In "Creating Orthodoxy" (210–256), Raz recounts the circumstances of 5th century systemization efforts undertaken by Lu Xiujing 陸修靜 (406–477 CE) in a bid to establish a state-recognized Taoist orthodoxy. This endeavor, possibly inspired by Kou Qianzhi's 寇謙之 (365–448 CE) success among the ruling class of the Northern Wei (386–535 CE), largely consisted of formulating historical narratives (213–224) and, most importantly, canon construction (224–232). The prototypical Taoist Canon presented to the court in 437 CE consisted of Three Caverns (*sandong* 三洞), one for Shangqing scriptures, another for Lingbao materials, and a third for Sanhuang 三皇 (Three Sovereigns) documents. Although a fair amount of their rites were incorporated into each of the three corpora (see esp. 228–232), the Celestial Masters were not awarded their own place in the canon on the pretense that their texts (according to Lingbao codifiers) and practices were derived form earlier and thus imperfect Lingbao revelations (218, 250). Raz provides a thorough and much needed account of how Lu Xiujing devised the schema of the Three Caverns and then legitimized it on the basis of Sanhuang cosmology, on the one hand, and Lingbao cosmogonic narratives, on the other.[10] Responding to their exclusion and to the challenges of Lingbao codifiers, the Celestial Masters initiated reforms. They integrated *zhai* 齋 (purification) rites and even adopted a soteriological discourse inspired from the bodhisattva ideal, implicitly emulating Lingbao sources while explicitly criticizing them (232–245). Raz proposes that Lu Xiujing's earlier unsuccessful attempt at creating a reformed Celestial Master ecclesia[11] led him to believe that that particular community operated on an obsolete model and would be best reformulated through an absorption and rearticulation in the Lingbao liturgy (214, 254). Ranked at the top of the Three Caverns, the Shangqing revelations and their meditations were addressed to individual practitioners in a quest for self-cultivation. Lingbao texts on the other hand, were less complex in terms of

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as a closed system. As a result, there was no need for a partner, and therefore, for actual coitus, in the pursuit of transcendence (208–209).

9 The author speculates that this may have been one of the reasons why Celestial Masters materials were not originally included in the earliest Taoist canon, discussed in the final chapter of the book (209).

10 As evidenced in the *Inner Explanations of the Three Heavens* (*Santian neijie jing* 三天內解經).

11 See *Master Lu's Abridged Codes for the Taoist Community* (Lu xiansheng daomen kelue陸先生道門科略).

praxis, but they were more accessible: geared towards adepts who were primarily interested in the salvation of all human kind, their systematization was not only undertaken to replace the outmoded Celestial Masters, but more importantly, it was articulated to pose a credible threat to Buddhism and dislodge it from its place of privilege among ruling and elite classes in early medieval China.

This particular reading of the emergence of Taoist "orthodoxy" sheds some much needed light on one of the most obscure yet pivotal periods in the development of Taoism. Raz pulls off a tour de force with a very nuanced account of the various socio-historical factors at play in the formation of the Taoist tradition. *The Emergence of Daoism* presents a compelling account of the Celestial Master's contribution in the formulation of a Taoist identity. However, comparatively moderate historical materialists may wonder if there could have been more shades of grey in such a stark dialectical account that pits competing entities against each other and highlights exclusionary policies. Raz does present a silver lining to the displacement of the Celestial Masters by Lingbao codifiers in the "Afterword in lieu of conclusion" (257–265). This is where he describes the redemption of the Celestial Masters through the addition of the Four Supplements (*sifu* 四輔) to the Three Caverns as early as the late 6th century. Among the four new categories appended to the Taoist Canon figured that of the Orthodox Unity (Zhengyi 正一), which amounted to an imposing corpus of Celestial Masters scriptures. Nonetheless, one wonders if the tensions between advocates of different corpora were as conflictual as depicted. Adepts during the Six Dynasties (220–581 CE) could undertake Shangqing meditations individually, but when they engaged in communal rituals, the social dimension of Taoist practice, so to speak, they relied on the Lingbao liturgy. As for the actual performance of Lingbao rituals, it was the quasi-exclusive purview of the hitherto only recognized class of Taoist clerics, the Celestial Masters. Even the Southern local traditions that were not absorbed into the Shangqing and Lingbao codifications were given a place in the Sanhuang or "Penetrating Divinity" (*dongsheng* 洞神) cavern of the incipient canon. One could argue that the emergence of organized institutional Taoism in the 4th to 6th centuries was just as much about accommodation, integration and consensus between different groups than it was about competition and exclusion. But this remains a matter of perspective.

As a whole, *The Emergence of Daoism: Creation of Tradition* is an erudite and laudable contribution to the field. It deploys sophisticated arguments that will have the greatest impact on readers with specialized knowledge of Taoism.[12]

3 A "Generalist" Work

Livia Kohn's *A Source Book in Chinese Longevity* can be placed on the opposite end of the Taoist studies readership spectrum. Published by her own independent academic press, this title presents translated excerpts with short introductions geared towards readers with a general knowledge of Chinese religions and Taoism, and, apparently, an active interest in practicing its longevity techniques.

In the "Introduction" (1–12), Kohn posits her Chinese longevity practices as an alternative to the Western pursuit of longevity and literal immortality (through life-style adjustments and bio-medical engineering) in which the body must be disciplined and its limitations forcefully overcome (1–2). Conversely, in Chinese traditions, practitioners work *with* the body to achieve an extended lifespan. As a microcosm, the human body harbors the Dao, and so there is no need to transcend it in order to attain divine communion as in agonistic Western models (2–3). What is more, the author confirms that despite their adherence to a different cultural logic, Chinese traditions of longevity and their operative principles are fully conversant with [and thus validated by] modern scientific paradigms: the concept of *qi* 氣 (or "pneuma") for example, closely matches some of the phenomena described in quantum physics (4,12). From the number of generalizations and binary oppositions established in the opening pages, readers are made clearly aware of the intended audience. The introduction sometimes takes on overt tones of marketing. Contemporary practitioners, we are told, "follow a variety of preventative medical or longevity techniques – including moderation, diet, exercise, self-massages, breathing and medications – to absorb their *qi* exchange with the environment and cultivate its inner flow (see Kohn 1989). The practice ensures the full realization of people's natural life expectancy in health and vigor. It often leads to an increase in years, a youthful

12 Although *The Emergence of Daoism: Creation of Tradition* is a technical study, its publisher's vast distribution network makes it readily available to a general readership as well. However, the pricing is less than democratic. With individual and institutional consumers investing so heavily in such a purchase, the press should be held to a higher standard of editorial quality in its products.

appearance, and continued strength and enjoyment of life" (7). Unfortunately, despite their advertised compatibility with modern science, no experimental verifications are cited in support these claims. "Bypassing death" through a separation of the physical body and the "spirit person" is also mentioned, matter-of-factly, as a result of these practices, without, it appears, any social or historical contextualization (7–8).

Each of the thirteen chapters in *A Sourcebook of Chinese Longevity* is arranged around one or a series of translated excerpts from sources on Chinese longevity. Chapters are typically composed of two parts: first, a brief introduction to a text or section of a text that presents longevity practices, including some historical contextualization; second, a translation of the relevant passage(s). Many of these have been previously translated in scholarly articles or monographs, but Kohn's rendering has the advantage of offering a chronological survey of longevity methods from the 4th century BCE *Zhuangzi* 莊子 to the Qing dynasty (1644–1912 CE) *Descriptive Notes on Women's Alchemy* (Nüdan tiyao 女丹提要). As far as I could tell, the author supplies no definition of what exactly constitutes a longevity practice – the vague Chinese term that is presented as an equivalent, *yangsheng* 養生, literally "nourishing life," is equally left unexplained.[13] Nonetheless, as each chapter centers on a distinct sub-genre of longevity practice, readers may gain a clearer understanding of what this category constitutes by glancing at the table of contents.

The first chapter, "Nourishing Body and Self" (13–29) examines Warring States (475–221 BCE) and Han dynasty (206 BCE–220 CE) accounts of "nourishing life" techniques from the *Zhuangzi*, the "Inward Training" ("Neiye" 內業) chapter of the *Guanzi* 管子, the *Verses and Sayings of the Master on the River* (Heshang gong zhangju 河上公章句), as well as the *Guiding* Qi (Xingqi 行氣) dodecagonal jade block text and the *Stretch Book* (Yinshu 引書) manuscript from Zhangjiashan 張家山. The translations are straightforward, unburdened by footnotes, characters, and the other overbearing hallmarks of academic literature. As a result, the reader's eye rests on different details than it would in technical translations, providing a more lucid portrait of how different practices fit together as pieces in the puzzle of Chinese longevity.

13 One of the Shangqing scriptures examined in chapter 4 does supplies a definition that includes many of the methods represented in the table of contents to Kohn's book. This text describes "the main branches of longevity in terms of sexual, dietary, and qi-guiding practices […]" (77). Nonetheless, visualizations, massages, and chanting, for instance, although traditionally identified as "nourishing life" techniques, would be left out according to this definition.

Chapters 2, 3, and 4, continue where the first left off to tackle Six Dynasties sources. "Moderation and Self-Control" (30–45) contains requisitely brief introductory comments, and translated passages from two "nourishing life" texts associated with Ge Hong 葛洪 (283–343) along with some excerpts from the *Long Life Compendium* (Yangsheng yaoji 養生要集). "Chants, Visualizations, and Self-Massages" (46–75) surveys Shangqing longevity methods, notably offering the first English-language translation of the *Queen Mother of the West's Scripture on Treasuring the Spirit in Daily Living* (Xiwang mu baoshen qiju jing 西王母寶身起居經). In her introduction to the text, Kohn stresses that adepts who practice its techniques do so "less to transform the body than to develop and enhance their relation to various deities, both outside in the greater universe and deep within the body" (50). This is an important point to keep in mind, namely, that many adepts of longevity practices were not aiming at prolonging their lifespan. Rather, longevity was a by-product of attaining other ends, including the improved capacity to communicate with supramundane entities. This signals that we should be mindful of the lens through which we sometimes look at longevity practitioners, one which produces an image of them as being preoccupied with perfecting their bodies and extending their lifespans through regimens of "healthy" living or "bio-spiritual" cultivation – two thoroughly modern (not to mention Western) concerns. Chapter 4, "Matching, Guiding, and Eating *Qi*" (74–94) looks more closely at Shangqing approaches to working with *qi*. It contains another original translation, this time of the *Wondrous Record of the Golden Casket on the Spirit Immortals' Practice of Eating Qi* (Shenxian shiqi jin'gui miaolu 神仙食氣金櫃妙錄).

Chapter 5 looks at "Healing Exercises" from the perspective of another Six Dynasties source, the *Great Clarity Scripture on Healing Exercises and Nourishing Life* (Taiqing daoyin yangsheng jing 太清導引養生經). Rendering *daoyin* 導引 (lit. "guiding and pulling,") as "healing exercises" instead of the usual "gymnastics" or "calisthenics," might raise a few eyebrows, but it is not an inaccurate interpretation. *Daoyin* exercises, which often involved regulated breathing, were indeed geared towards increasing longevity and overall health just as much as they were considered to be quasi-exorcistic, demon dispelling choreographies. During the medieval period, they were formally incorporated into medical treatises such as the *Treatise on the Origin and Symptoms of Diseases* (Zhubing yuanhou lun 諸病源候論) as therapies for specific afflictions. Unfortunately, in an effort to streamline the introductory descriptions to texts and focus on translations, Kohn leaves out what could have been very germane information on the medicalization of *daoyin*. Oversimplifying the

picture for the benefit of general audiences can sometimes have the opposite effect of muddling the readers' understanding of the topic.

Chapter 6, "Eating for Long Life" (117–137), considers a handful of medieval sources that discuss *qi* augmenting dietary prescriptions. These advocate eating in accordance with temporal cycles, consuming supplements, or doing away altogether with conventional foodstuffs (*bigu* 辟穀).[14] "The Gods over Your Shoulder" (138–139) continues to explore the medical dimension of longevity methods by presenting some of the work of Sun Simiao 孫思邈 (581?–682), a celebrated physician and renowned King of Medicine (Yaowang 藥王). The excerpts revolve around ways of keeping the spirit officials of the celestial hierarchy happy. In so doing, practitioners ensure that the spirits do not dock life-capital through instigating illness.

The next two chapters, "Nourishing Inner Nature" (160–176) and "Balancing Body, Food, and Sex" (177–203) center on the mid-Tang *On Nourishing Inner Nature and Extending Life* (Yanxing yanming lu 養性延命錄), the earliest comprehensive formulation of *yangsheng* concepts and methods.[15] Elaborated in considerable part on the basis of Sun Simiao's writings, the text is divided into six sections.[16] The preface and the first section, on general concepts, are translated in Chapter 8. Sections two through six, respectively concerning diet, taboos, *qi* absorption, healing exercises (*daoyin*) and massages, and the always popular topic of sexual hygiene, are translated in Chapter 9. Together, the two chapters provide a complete translation of the text along with a clear and representative overview of what practices fell under the purview of longevity in medieval China.[17]

14 An interesting segment also advises those who should experience "a sudden burst of *qi* leaving the body from the lower orifices at an unexpected time" on the dangers of not letting it escape in a suitable way (135). Truly, *yangsheng* manuals contain valuable advice that still applies to the contemporary social situations and lifestyles: a dietary prescription from a *medieval* text recommends some bland "sliced bread" (!) (*dan gaibing* 淡鈣餅) for lunch … "as long as it isn't too hot" [burnt toast?] (133).

15 "Nourishing inner nature" (*yanxing* 養性) is often used as synonym for "nourishing life" (*yangsheng* 養生), as are the terms "nourishing the physical body" (*yangxing* 養形), "nourishing the person/self" (*yangshen* 養身), "nourishing the will" (*yangzhi* 養志), and "nourishing the mind" (*yangxin* 養心). Kohn notes that these terms are semantically similar to "longevity" (*shou* 壽), "long life" (*changsheng* 長生), or "not dying" (*busi* 不死) (3).

16 Tao Hongjing 陶弘景 (456–536) is also suspected to have been a figure of import in the compilation of the text.

17 In his 2006 Master's Thesis, "Cultivating Body, Cultivating Self: A Critical Translation and History of the Tang Dynasty *Yangxing yanming lu* 養性延命錄 (Records of Cultivating

The chapters on "The Medical Dimension" (204–229) and "Advanced Breathing" (230–250) probe two Tang dynasty sources on *qi* absorption. The first, *How to Absorb* Qi *and Penetrate [Ultimate] Meaning* (Fuqi jingyi lun 服氣精義論) was authored by Sima Chengzhen 司馬承禎 (647–735). As its breathing and visualization methods heavily rely on the correlative paradigms of classical Chinese medicine (as elaborated in the *Inner Classic of the Yellow Emperor* [Huangdi neijing 黃帝內經]), Kohn relies on the source to illustrate the "medical dimension" of longevity practices. The text notably contains a fascinating method involving the use of pitch pipes to massage acupressure points and extract pathogenic *qi* (226–27). The second document is a lesser known *qi* absorption manual, *Master Huanzhen's Instructions on How to Absorb Internal* Qi (Huanzhen xiansheng fu neiqi juefa 幻真先生服內氣訣法). In its attempt to systematize breathing techniques, it paraphrases and sometimes duplicates certain sections from materials examined in other chapters (5, 6, and 9), but the text still supplies a valuable and detailed exposition of *qi* based longevity practices during the Tang.

The last two chapters of *A Source Book in Chinese Longevity* offer a brief survey of internal alchemy as it relates to longevity methods. Although these are nominally separate and distinct systems of practice, Kohn presumably juxtaposes them to stress how internal alchemy, especially prominent during the Song dynasty (960–1279), may have constituted a later extension of its *yangsheng* predecessor. Chapter 12, "Internal Alchemy" (251–262), reproduces a few sample meditations from a series of alchemical sources including an intriguing passage on "burning the body" (*fenshen* 焚身) from "The Eight Brocades" ("Baduan jin" 八段錦) sequence of the 13th century *Ten Books on Cultivating Perfection* (Xiuzhen shishu 修真十書). As the title indicates, the final chapter of Kohn's book, "Women's Practices" (263–274), concentrates more pointedly on sources of "female alchemy" (*nüdan* 女丹) dating from the 18th and 19th centuries.[18] These typically involve efforts towards stopping the menses (or

Nature and Extending Life)," Michael STANLEY-BAKER produced an impressive translation of the source in addition to problematizing the term *yangsheng* with respect to the concepts of longevity and immortality.

18 Kohn and a handful of other scholars have previously completed substantial research on this subject; see for instance, KOHN, Livia: *Monastic Life in Medieval Daoism: A Cross-Cultural Perspective.* Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2003; DESPEUX, Catherine: *Immortelles de la Chine ancienne. Taoïsme et alchimie feminine.* Puiseaux: Pardès, 1990; and VALUSSI, Elena: "Female Alchemy: An Introduction." In: KOHN, Livia and Robin R. WANG (eds.):

"decapitating the red dragon" [*duan honglong* 斷紅龍]) and reducing the mammary mass – in other words, transforming a woman's physique into that of a man's. Perhaps in order to spare the sensibilities of prospective women adepts, Kohn prefers to frame the resolutely patriarchal tradition of female alchemy in a language that is more palatable to modern aspiring practitioners:

> The practice summarily known as "decapitating the red dragon" [...] match[es] the goal of Daoists to return to the state of primordial nonbeing. In modern biomedical terms, this has to do with hormonal changes and neuro-endocrinology, notably the disruption of the pulsating release of LH at the hypothalamus which inhibits the positive estrogen feedback, an increased production of hypothalamic ß-endorphins, and the release of the hormone ocytocine (see Requena 2012). It [that is, female alchemy] also increases the output of melatonin, well known for its age-retarding properties, due to its antioxidant action, inhibition of platelet aggregation, and heart protection. The practice thus contributes actively to the nourishing of women's vitality at all stages of life.[19]

This excerpt is unequivocally scientistic, but just as other passages in *A Source Book of Chinese Longevity* speak of cultivating "energetic awareness" (253), or dissert on the awkwardness elicited by certain medieval Chinese materials that combine "deep emotional suggestions" with "highly mundane" or "weird and superstitious" directional and temporal taboos (178). In addressing a broader, largely Western audience composed, likely in significant proportion, of "seekers", Kohn skillfully interweaves the modernist discourses of a) "science", b) "New Age" spiritualism, and c) Orientalism. The imposition of such narratives on longevity materials, which adhere to radically different epistemological orders, is a calculated choice to target a specific demographic. Numerous generalist works on Taoism render content more accessible by simply stripping away some of the more obfuscating details without reframing the sources to meet a readership's expectations. Nonetheless, it should be underlined (and applauded) that Kohn's stance is deliberate. Other publications, including strictly scholarly ones, often articulate scientistic, spiritualist, or Orientalist perspectives unwittingly, by virtue of their larger field's imbrication in such discourses, or sometimes, that of the authors themselves.[20] *A Source Book in Chinese Longe-*

Internal Alchemy: Self, Society, and the Quest for Immortality, 142–64, Magdalena, NM: Three Pines Press, 2009.

19 KOHN, Livia: *A Source Book in Chinese Longevity*, 228.

20 For an enlightening perspective on the constitution of the discipline of religious studies on Judeo-Christian liberal ideological foundations, see FITZGERALD, Timothy: *The Ideology of Religious Studies*, New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000. For a more

vity ends with a principally English-language bibliography (275–290) and an index of key terms (291–298).

4 The Middle Path

If Gil Raz's *The Emergence of Daoism* and Livia Kohn's *A Source Book in Chinese Longevity* are situated towards opposite ends of a continuum that goes from highly technical specialist works to general audience works, the *The Seal of the Unity of the Three* fits somewhere in the middle (slightly leaning, perhaps, to the side of specialist works). Fabrizio Pregadio's work is a sterling example of the reinvigorated type of "traditional" Taoist scholarship: this study takes the shape of a definitive critical translation of the *Zhouyi cantong qi* 周易參同契 (The Seal of the Unity of the Three, in Accordance with the *Book of Changes*), yet it is still sensitive to the expectations of non-specialist readers – without sacrificing academic rigor.

The *Cantong qi* has been translated a number of times, but this most recent effort is by far the most erudite attempt. As we learn, erudition need not imply an overbearing scholarly apparatus. In the preface, Pregadio explains that most of the historical, textual, and bibliographic findings have been stripped away in favor of a lean translation work. He promises a more technical study of the *Cantong qi* will be published subsequently with an academic press (xii). The fact these two volumes came out with Pregadio's own Golden Elixir Press was undoubtedly decisive in giving the work its appealing hybrid shape: with full executive control over the editing process, the author was able to combine the best elements of both worlds (the specialist's and the non-specialist's) without having to worry about publishing niches and profitability.

The introduction to the first volume, *The Seal of the Unity of the Three: A Study and Translation of the* Cantong qi, *The Source of the Taoist Way of the Golden Elixir*, does a superb job of debunking many of the misconceptions about the *Cantong qi*. First and foremost, despite it being presented as such, it is emphatically not a Later Han (25–220 CE) Neidan 內丹 (Internal Alchemy) text by the pen of Wei Boyang 魏伯陽. It was merely incorporated into the Neidan tradition *ex post facto*, around the 8th century. In actuality, the *Cantong qi* is a

nuanced, and equally enlightening perspective, see MCCUCHEON, Russell T.: *Manufacturing Religion. The Discourse of Sui Generis Religion and the Politics of Nostalgia*, New York and Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1997.

composite text made up of three distinct layers (hence the title), each one with different doctrinal emphases, produced by different figures at different times.

The textual history of the *Cantong qi* is rather intricate – Pregadio devotes pages 5 to 36 of his introduction to elucidating it – but it can be summarized in the following way: there may have been a work titled *Cantong qi* during the Han but it is not the version that survived and became known as the *Cantong qi* from the medieval period onward. The earliest portions of the surviving text appear to be the ones devoted to cosmological speculation. They stem from the exegetical traditions tied to the *Book of Changes* (Yijing 易經) and the so-called Confucian apocrypha (*weishu* 緯書; lit. "weft texts") but date from post-Han commentators, probably from the late third to fifth centuries. The cosmological layer discusses the relation between the Dao, humans, and the cosmos by relying on various emblems or sets of emblems including the trigrams from the *Book of Changes*, the Five Agents (*wuxing* 五行), or Yin 陰 and Yang 陽. The second layer concerns Taoism. It disserts on the superior virtue of non-doing (*wuwei* 無為) and the accomplishment of the True Person (*zhenren* 真人). The Taoist sections copiously refer to the *Zhuangzi* and the *Laozi* 老子 (*Daode jing* 道德經); they are grounded in Han dynasty understandings of Taoism, but were not composed before the end of the 4th century. Finally, the third layer of the *Cantong qi* addresses alchemical practice. In a departure from earlier models, it combines a number of cosmological systems, stressing the correlation between body, cosmos, and Dao in a pronounced internalization of alchemical processes. Although this approach to alchemy emerged sometime in the late 5th century, it did not become influential until the 7th or 8th centuries. Thus, the alchemical portions of the *Cantong qi* could have been written any time between the 5th and the 8th centuries. Overall, the *terminus post quem* for the text in its received form is situated around 450 CE, but it most likely dates from one or two centuries later (27). Pregadio closes his introduction with an overview of the general themes in the cosmological, Taoist, and alchemical portions of the text.

The *Cantong qi* is divided into three "books" (*pian* 篇) unrelated to the thematic layers. For the reader's convenience, Pregadio has additionally assigned titles for each of the individual sections (88 in total) into which he subdivides the text on the basis of subject matter and rhyming patterns. The translation itself (69–126), rendered in verse form, is fluid and highly readable.[21]

21 Pregadio relies on the version of the text preserved in Chen Zhixu's 陳致虛 (1290–1343) *Commentary and Explication of the Cantong qi* (Zhouyi cantong qi zhujie 周易參同契注

Annotations to the text are preserved in a separate segment of the book (129–229). These are organized by section and provide a line-by-line explication of some of the more hermetic themes and notions referred to in the *Cantong qi*. Inquisitive readers will gain much insight into the text from these, but the translation is smooth enough that even their more casual homologues can read its verses without consulting the "Notes". Those with an avid interest in the various discrepancies between the multiple redactions of the *Cantong qi* will find solace in the "Textual Notes" (233–244). Again, these are isolated from the translation so as to not burden general or incidental readers with unnecessary information.

The first volume of *The Seal of the Unity of the Three* concludes with some helpful back matter, including a series of "Tables and Figures" (247–260) chiefly pertaining to cosmological sequences, "Two Biographies of Wei Boyang" (263–265),[22] and the eminently useful reproduction of the "Chinese Text" (269–285) based on Chen Zhixu's 陳致虛 (1290–1343) recension, complete with a list of the translator's emendations (266–268). A helpful "Index of Main Subjects" (286–294), a "Glossary of Chinese Characters" (295–301), and a bibliography of "Works Quoted" (303–308) conclude the first volume.

The second volume of the *The Seal of the Unity of the Three*, subtitled *Bibliographic Studies on the* Cantong qi: *Commentaries, Essays, and Related Works* is a collection of materials that are primarily of interest to specialists of medieval Taoism. One imagines that many of the textual and especially bibliographic details that Pregadio elected to leave out of the first volume (which, it should be noted, was not originally intended and issued as a the first in a set) were collected, organized and published one year after the initial part of the study.

This second tome is divided into two main parts, a bibliographic catalogue of works related to the *Cantong qi* and an annotated bibliography of the works that compose the textual tradition emerging from it. Part I is preceded by a brief preface (vii–viii) and an introduction (1–12). The latter surveys secondary literature and reference works dealing with the *Cantong qi*, organizing them into four categories: textual studies, transcriptions, studies of premodern editions, and modern annotated editions, translations and studies. Part I is an impressive bibliographic catalogue of 148 works, supplying critical details on authorship,

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解). Originally composed circa 1330, the only extant exemplar of the earliest known edition, dating from 1484, is now preserved in the Shanghai Library.

22 One from the 4th century *Biography of Divine Transcendants* (Shenxian zhuan 神仙傳), the other, considerably different, composed by PENG Xiao 彭曉 (d. 955) and preserved in the *Extensive Records of the Taiping Xingguo Era* (Taiping guangji 太平廣記) of 978.

dates, editions, reprints, and bibliographic records. It is divided into four chapters according to the type of material it covers: "Commentaries" (21–76); "Essays and Related Works" (77–90); "Lost Works" (91–102); and "Works Attributed to Wei Boyang" (103–105). The first chapter on commentaries is by far the most substantial and detailed. It lists 38 (out of 148) works and even provides reproductions of the title page or frontispiece for some of them.

Part II enumerates and discusses the textual tradition spawned by the *Cantong qi* from the 7th to the 19th centuries. It concentrates on roughly 40 essays and commentaries, thus providing a second, closer look at many of the sources examined in the first chapter of Part I on bibliographic data. Part II looks more closely at composition and content, additionally supplying secondary literature references for some of the most important entries. It is organized into four chapters. The first three, "Tang Dynasty and Five Dynasties" (111–130), "Song and Yuan Dynasties" (131–158), "Ming and Qing Dynasties" (159–184) structure the *Cantong qi*'s textual tradition chronologically. The final chapter of Part II, "The Ancient Text and its Commentaries" (185–197) considers the so-called *Ancient Text of the* Cantonq qi (Guwen *Cantong qi* 古文參同契) and its commentaries. The *Ancient Text* was a 16th century recension, presented as a much older ur-scripture that completely rearranged the composition of the text. More specifically, passages that were written in four-character verses were lumped together and isolated from passages that were written in five-character verses and those that were rendered in prose (*sanwen* 散文). Pregadio discusses the *Ancient Text* in volume I of the *Seal of the Unity of the Three* as well (especially 31–33). The first appendix of three, "The Three Books of the *Cantong qi*" (201–210), furnishes some welcome details to the corresponding sub-section of the introduction to the first volume (28–31). The second appendix covers "Main Indicators of Textual Filiation" (211–218), chiefly variants, by which the four principal recensions differ from each other. The last appendix duplicates the original "Chinese Text" of Chen Zhixu's version (217–232) as it appeared in the first volume. The second volume closes with an invaluable "Index of Names, Titles, and Editions" (233–250), and lastly, an exhaustive list of "Works Quoted" (251–267) to complete the one found in volume I.

Pregadio's translation and study of the *Cantong qi* is not only the most sophisticated to date in any Western language, it is also the first to bring out the text's three-tiered structure (pertaining to cosmology, Taoism, and alchemy) in such a convincing way. As a result, *The Seal of the Unity of the Three* accomplishes

nothing short of shattering a number of gross misconceptions surrounding Neidan while redefining the place of the *Cantong qi* in Chinese thought.

5 Concluding Comments

The three recent works that are the focus of this review article are clear evidence of the continued dynamic growth of Taoist studies and the constant redefinition of its boundaries. The field is increasingly heterogeneous and pleasantly devoid of any normative conception of what Taoist scholarship should be. This allows for a broad spectrum of works to be published and – as seen above – an even broader readership to benefit from the findings that the field has to offer. Most importantly, it allows for a genuine cross-fertilization of analytical approaches that more methodologically identitary disciplines are incapable of. Although still philological and consonant with more traditional conceptions of Taoist studies, the works under review each augmented their textual analysis with insights gained from complementary methodologies.

In *The Emergence of Daoism*, Gil Raz could not have brought out the importance of the interactions between the Celestial Masters and other groups in defining the emerging tradition of Taoism without a perspicacious socio-historical analysis. Similarly, in *A Source Book of Chinese Longevity*, Livia Kohn approaches her materials from a perspective that is strongly informed by the history of medicine.[23] As highlighted above, many longevity practices were valued for their therapeutic effects and included in canons of classical Chinese medicine. Finally, Fabrizio Pregadio's *The Seal of the Unity of the Three*, particularly the first volume, constitutes an intellectual history, or even an epistemological history of the notions (cosmological, Taoist, and alchemical) that are central to the *Cantong qi*'s doctrinal system.

23 In the introduction, she stresses that all longevity practices can, in actuality, be deployed on three levels of practice (1, 7–8). There are those who undertake them for the purpose of extending their lifespans, but also others who seek out immortality. Finally, there are those who attempt them for the sole purpose of healing ailments. Hence, longevity practices appear to be a teleological term since "immortality practices" and "healing practices" can be used to refer to the same methods. Indeed, the latter is used as the title of a chapter in Kohn's book.

Overall, these three works are representative of the rich tapestry that makes up Taoist studies, a mosaic of scholarship that "takes new forms in response to stimulus"[24] and will undoubtedly continue to do so for generations to come.

24 I borrow Gil Raz's translation of "*suigan yingwu* 隨感應物" as it appears in one of the titles under review, *The Emergence of Daoism: Creation of Tradition,* 221. The phrase appears in a passage from the *History of the Wei* (Weishu 魏書) 114.3048 that describes the origins of Taoism in the context of a description of Laozi 老子 ("千變萬化, 有德不得, 隨感應物, 厥迹無常"). Other possible translations would include "responding to things by following stimuli," or "responding to things instinctively."