

Center for Daoist Studies 道學中心 (CDS) Approach to Daoist Studies*

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- Daoism (Taoism) is a unified, albeit complex and diverse religious tradition. It is the **Tradition of the Dao** (*dàotǒng* 道統), with Dào 道 (Tao/Way) being the sacred and ultimate concern of Daoists and Daoist communities.
- **Classical Daoism** existed historically, and this name should be used as a replacement for the inaccurate and outdated Orientalist construction (fiction) of ~~philosophical Daoism~~. Classical Daoism is best understood as a contemplative and mystical movement, emphasizing apophatic and quietistic (emptiness-/stillness-based) meditation aimed at mystical union with the Dao.
- The **lineal view** of the Daoist tradition is the most accurate, convincing, and viable, recognizing that Daoism began, at least in germinal form, in the Warring States period (480-222 BCE) around 300 BCE. This view, more fully articulated in Louis Komjathy's *The Daoist Tradition* (2013) and related publications, encourages one to explore connective strands throughout the tradition.
- Louis Komjathy's *Title Index to Daoist Collections* (2002), "Title Index to the *Zhonghua daoang*" (2014), and more recent *Supplements to Title Index to Daoist Collections* (STIDC; 2022) supply standardized numbering systems for citing Daoist textual collections.
- It is important and in fact essential to engage in the comparative and cross-cultural study of religion in order to develop a more sophisticated theoretical and methodological approach to Daoism. This is an approach informed by and informing **Religious Studies**.
- A more **inclusive, equitable and collaborative model of scholarship** is possible. This involves reading broadly, engaging and citing relevant scholarship, and rejecting the larger factionalism of mainstream and conventional Daoist Studies, especially as represented and practiced by members of The Sinological Mafia (TSM; a.k.a. "Strickmannians"), their associates, and their minions. One distinguishing feature of the CDS approach is the comprehensive, dynamic and radical characteristics of its **bibliographies**.
- Daoism is a **living and lived indigenous Chinese and now global religious tradition**, characterized by multiculturalism, multiethnicity, and even multilingualism. This involves recognizing the potential contributions of Daoist adherents and affiliates, beyond the Orientalist guise and gaze, for gaining a deeper and more sophisticated understanding of the tradition, including **scholar-practitioner approaches** (SPA) and **critical adherent discourse** (CAD).
- Engagement with Daoism is not a self-evident given, whether as ethnographic encounter, historical artifact, lived participation, Orientalist object, popular construction, or textual reconstruction. Thus, it is essential to be informed about/by not only Daoist Studies as such, but also **intellectual history and cultural studies**, with specific attention to contexts of reception and interpretive legacies.

* The accompanying list also is referred to as the "Eight Non-Negotiables" (ENN), formerly "Seven Non-Negotiables" (SNN), of New Daoist Studies (NDS).