

**Zeitschrift:** Asiatische Studien : Zeitschrift der Schweizerischen Asiengesellschaft = Études asiatiques : revue de la Société Suisse-Asie  
**Herausgeber:** Schweizerische Asiengesellschaft  
**Band:** 38 (1984)  
**Heft:** 1

**Artikel:** Chinese research into Daoism after the cultural revolution  
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**DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-146698>

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# CHINESE RESEARCH INTO DAOISM AFTER THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION

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New Chinese attempts at research into Daoism are part of the general process of revitalizing academic research, and of rediscovering traditional research topics. While the number of recent articles on Daoist subjects is impressive, their scientific approach is not much different from earlier studies published before and during the Cultural Revolution, when Daoism was never accepted as a phenomenon in its own right. Daoist sources are still analysed from a great distance – the questions raised do not stem from developments inside the religion but from two different anti-religious positions, which prevent scholars from objectively accepting Daoism as the phenomenon of great historical relevance it really was. One position is that of the traditional, more or less Confucian oriented scholar, who contemptuously looks down on most aspects of Daoism as if they did not merit his attention. This explains why many of the texts and personages figuring in contemporary research are those which were always considered acceptable Daoist contributions to Chinese general culture, and which are consequently fairly well known and already part of the intelligentsia's common heritage. The other position is that of certain self-declared Marxist scholars, in a narrow-minded search for only those events of the past which made historical development progress. Their interest in Daoism is strictly limited to the few instances in which Daoist ideology was linked with movements of social upheaval. From both positions scholars take only a very limited interest in Daoist subjects, and they are in particular not concerned with the more obscure Daoist scriptures, which were hitherto widely ignored, although they contain important information about the real state of ancient Daoism and are viewed as a great challenge by scholars in Japan and in the West. There is also hardly any concern with the religion's manifestations other than «Daoist thought», and there is consequently no concern with living Daoism or with living customs which were at one time linked with Daoism.

I shall in the following introduce some works published (with a few exceptions) up to the end of 1981 and report on some work in progress. Although the material is far from complete it is coherent enough so that it could well be representative. My information is mainly based on books and periodicals available to foreigners at the Beijing Library at the end of

1981<sup>1</sup> and on brief interviews with Wang Ming, Chen Guofu and Ren Jiyu, conducted by Suzanne Cahill, presently at the Smithsonian Institution, and myself in summer 1981. Articles will be introduced according to the chronological order of their subjects. I will deal with articles on Pre-Han philosophy (*daojia* 道家) as well as with the work on Daoism proper. This is justified, among other reasons, by the way Chinese scholars derive their methods of approach towards Daoist texts from the questions raised concerning the old *daojia*.

The main concern of earlier Post-Liberation studies on Daoism were the texts *Laozi* and *Zhuangzi*. Judging from the material included in the Index to Major National Newspapers and Periodicals from 1956 to 1965 only about 10% of articles in the field of *daojia* and *daojiao* 道教 were not about the *Laozi* and the *Zhuangzi*.<sup>2</sup> Work on these texts has again been taken up. In 1982 Tang Yijie, professor in the history of philosophy department of Beijing University gave a lecture course on the *Laozi*, which is said to have been very popular among students. This seems to reflect a new trend.

Wang Ming, head of the philosophy section of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, has written a short biography of Lao Dan, in which he returns to a well known focus of all Post-Liberation research into the *Laozi*. Considering the staleness of the problem it does not seem relevant that after some discussion the author finally decides on the epitheta «representative of the decadent slaveowner class» and «idealist».<sup>3</sup> This conclusion is in line with the fact that he dates the text as from the early Zhanguo Period, for which he gives linguistic reasons, for instance the reference to «a thousand war carriages» in describing a large state as opposed to the figure «ten thousand» used in later texts. Wang Ming also assumes that

1 Compare also the short bibliography *Shijie zongjiao ziliao* (ed.) 世界宗教资料 (Material on World Religions), *Guonei baokan vouguan zongjiao wenji bufen wenzhang mulu suoyin* 国内报刊有关宗教问题部分文章目录索引 (Classified Index to Chinese Newspapers and Periodicals of some articles concerning Problems of Religion), *Shijie zongjiao ziliao* 1981, 2, pp. 58–65.

2 Cf. Shanghai shi baokan tushuguan (ed.) 上海市报刊图书馆 (Shanghai Municipal Library for Newspapers and Periodicals), *Quanguo zhuyao baokan ziliao suoyin* 全国主要报刊资料索引 (Index to Major National Newspapers and Periodicals), Shanghai 1955–65. I did not see the volume covering 1955 publications.

3 For this discussion cf. R. P. Kramers, «Die Lao-tzu-Diskussionen in der chinesischen Volksrepublik», *Asiatische Studien* XXII, 1968, pp. 31–67.

the archivist Lao Dan was in fact the author of the text and thereby thinks he is adding additional justification for a very early dating of the text. The scholastic character of Wang Ming's approach is intensified by the fact that he relies heavily on the authority of Qing Dynasty philologists.<sup>4</sup> The quarterly «The Social Sciences' Battlefront», published in Jilin, contains another attempt at Lao Tan's biography. The author Gao Heng, who had previously worked on the Mawangdui fragments<sup>5</sup> tries to identify Lao Dan (also called Lao Boyang) with an official named Lao Yangzi, who according to the *Zuozhuan* was put to death in 539 B.C. Gao's arguments are highly speculative. He insists that Lao Yangzi did not really perish but escaped execution, moved between countries and fled from Zhou to Lu and finally to Qin. On the basis of this reconstruction the author attempts to show how Lao Dan's personal experiences are represented in the *Laozi*, and that the text's attitude is therefore sceptical as well as basically progressive.<sup>6</sup> I have paraphrased both articles, which base the interpretation of an ancient text on its totally fictitious author, rather extensively in order to give an idea of how unconcerned some Chinese scholars seem to be with general sinological knowledge, as for instance laid out in A. Waley's comments on authorship in Ancient China.<sup>7</sup>

In analysing the *Laozi* most scholars aim at a direct, unambiguous evaluation of the text and consequently still see the need to label it as either «materialist» or «idealist». Their arguments seem shallow and unprecise, even if followed up more carefully than I intend to do here. In an article by Jia Shunxian and Zhao Liwen in the rather pretentious quarterly «Studies in the History of Chinese Philosophy», published in Tianjin and Beijing, it is pointed out that the *Laozi* is idealist because the term Dao as used in the text cannot be identified with the term «breath»

4 Wang Ming 王明, «Lao Dan» 老聃, *Zhongguo gudai zhuming zhaxuejia pingzhuan* 中国古代著名哲学家评传 (Critical Biographies of Famous Ancient Chinese Philosophers), Beijing 1981, pp. 75–107.

5 Cf. Gao Heng 高亨 and Chi Xizhao 池晓朝, «Shitan Mawangdui Han mu zhong de boshu 'Laozi'» 试谈马王堆汉墓中的帛书“老子” (Notes on the Silk Manuscript of the *Laozi* Discovered in the Han Tomb at Mawangdui), *Wenwu* 1974, 11, pp. 1–7.

6 Gao Heng 高亨, «Guanyu Laozi de jige wenti» 关于老子的几个问题 (Some Problems concerning Laozi), *Shehui kexue zhanxian* 1979, 1, pp. 35–39.

7 Cf. A. Waley, *The Way and its Power*, London 1968, pp. 101 ff.

(qi 氣).<sup>8</sup> The same quarterly carries an article by Yang Liuqiao, who compares the *Yijing* commentaries with the *Laozi* to pose the invariable question concerning their philosophical truth. According to his analysis, these «comprehensive philosophical systems», as he calls them, differ in that the *Yijing* commentators' world view is materialist, while that of the *Laozi* is idealist.<sup>9</sup> Chen Jinsheng (also in «Studies in the History of Chinese Philosophy») briefly describes Laozi's chapter 21 and concludes that the author is a dialectician, playing the same role as Friedrich Engels determined for dialecticians in Ancient Greece.<sup>10</sup> Tang Yao has written an article on Laozi's attitude towards military matters. He says that more than 10 of the *Laozi*'s 81 chapters deal directly with military matters, and that almost 20 approach them from a philosophical point of view. According to his final analysis Laozi's military philosophy is an outcome of his reactionary approach towards history, which is based on a world view of objective idealism.<sup>11</sup> An article by Zhang Liwen, written in 1962 and reproduced with alterations in 1978 deals extensively with the text's central terms to document its idealist outlook.<sup>12</sup>

Considering this sad state of the field, a brief article by the Buddhist scholar Ren Jiyu, in which he critically analyzes contemporary Chinese research into the Laozi, deserves great attention. Ren Jiyu's remarks are quite frank. He seemingly intends them to be programmatic for future research into the history of thought, and his position as head of the De-

- 8 Jia Shunxian 贾顺先 and Zhao Liwen 赵理文, «Lüelun Laozi de Dao» 略论老子的道 (A Brief Discussion of Laozi's «Dao»), *Zhongguo zhexueshi yanjiu* 1981, 3, pp. 31–35.
- 9 Yang Liuqiao 杨柳桥, «'Yizhuan' yu 'Laozi' – Woguo Xian Qin zhexue sixiang liang da tixi» “易传”与“老子”-我国先秦哲学思想两大体系 (The *Yijing* Commentaries and the *Laozi* – two Comprehensive Systems of Philosophical Thought of Pre-Qin China), *Zhongguo zhexueshi yanjiu* 1981, 1, pp. 5–13.
- 10 Chen Jinsheng 陈金生, «'Laozi' di ershiyi zhang de jieshi» “老子”第二十一章的解释 (Explanation of *Laozi* Chapter 21), *Zhongguo zhexueshi yanjiu* 1981, 3, pp. 107–109.
- 11 Tang Yao 唐尧, «'Laozi' binglüe gaishu» “老子”兵略概述 (An Outline of Military Strategy in the *Laozi*), *Zhexue yanjiu bianjibu* (ed.) 哲学研究编辑部 (Editorial Board of *Zhexue yanjiu*), *Zhongguo zhexueshi wenji* 中国哲学史文集 (Articles on Chinese History of Philosophy), Jilin 1979, pp. 31–61. Tang's analysis of the *Laozi* is not new, compare e.g. Zhai Qing 翟青, «'Laozi' shi yibu bingshu» “老子”是一部兵书 (The *Laozi* as a Military Text), *Xuexi yu pipan* 1974, 10, pp. 3–9.
- 12 Zhang Liwen 张立文, «Lüelun Laozi» 略论老子 (Brief Account of Laozi), *Zhexue yanjiu bianjibu* (ed.), *Zhongguo zhexueshi wenji* (cf. note 11), pp. 62–87.

partment for Religion at the Academy of Social Sciences makes them even more important. He contends that present-day research into the *Laozi* is only a repetition of the old Pre-Cultural-Revolution contest between one faction labelling the *Laozi* idealist and another labelling the text materialist, and that by such methods research was deadlocked with no breakthrough in sight. In a sarcastic manner he describes his own past research into the matter. In 1963 he had labelled the text materialist, and in 1973 idealist. He now considers both conclusions as unconvincing and sees the need to introduce new research methods. As one example he mentions that attention should be paid to the style in which a text is composed. The *Laozi*, being poetry, is naturally full of metaphors, which has led many interpreters astray who did not bother to reflect on the specific language of this book. There is also the regional cultural background which, according to Ren Jiyu, deserves attention. He explains that during the Chunqiu and Zhanguo Periods China consisted of at least four different cultural regions and that the use of metaphors was particularly common in the state of Chu, where the *Laozi*, the *Zhuangzi* and the *Chuci* originated. Ren Jiyu also warns against generalizations and stresses that modern interpreters of ancient texts should rely on the meaning terms and concepts commonly carried at the time a text was written. To exemplify this the author explains that in ancient Chu the term *Dao* was never used to describe «material substance». He concludes his remarks with a thesis which is new in the context of Chinese academic efforts, namely that a philosopher's merit should be judged by his historic contribution rather than by labelling him materialist or idealist.<sup>13</sup>

Recent work on the *Zhuangzi* is no more sophisticated than that on the *Laozi*, and seems to be based on the same hasty generalizations. Wang Xinghua of Nankai University looks into the text's relativism, names it subjective idealism and concludes that in a feudal society this contains an aspect of individual freedom which can be used in antifeudal struggle.<sup>14</sup>

- 13 Ren Jiyu 任继愈, «Laozi yanjiu de fangfa wenti» 老子研究的方法问题 (Methodological Problems of Research on *Laozi*), *Zhongguo zhexueshi yanjiu* 1981, 1, pp. 2-4.
- 14 Wang Xinghua 王兴华, «Xiangduizhuyi shi Zhuangzi zhexue sixiang de hexin» 相对主义是庄子哲学思想的核心 (Relativism is the Core of the Philosophical Thought of *Zhuangzi*), *Zhexue yanjiu* 1981, 3, pp. 67-74. The same subject is taken up in an article I did not see by Feng Qi 冯契, «Dui Zhuangzi de xiangduizhuyi zuo yidian fenxi» 对庄子的相对主义作一点分析 (Some Analysis of *Zhuangzi*'s Relativism), *Xueshu yuekan* 1980, 9.

Another evaluation using similar arguments is put forward by Zhang Songru and Zhao Ming, who contend that even after the Qin and Han Dynasty the relativism of the *Zhuangzi* was often used by progressive thinkers to criticize existing social conditions. The authors also praise the *Zhuangzi*'s theory of knowledge, because, as they argue, its approach is rather inductive, starting from the observation of things at hand.<sup>15</sup>

A controversy on the authenticity of Guo Xiang's preface to the *Zhuangzi* is on a different level. It is conducted in discussion with Japanese publications on the subject and includes some philological detail.<sup>16</sup>

The sinological approach towards new material is, as it seems, largely preconditioned by the generalizations pronounced in discussing established topics of research and does not take any clues from the material in question. Therefore Ge Rongjin in an article on the Mawangdui fragments is concerned with the question of their being materialist or not and discusses their social relevance, without presenting much information on the internal coherence of these newly discovered texts. He points out that there is a difference between the *Laozi* and the fragments in the way they define Dao and non-action (*wuwei*), and that this difference is due to the fact that the fragments represent the interest of the newly rising class of landowners. His arguments lack conviction because the reader does not understand the context of the quotations presented.<sup>17</sup> In no way does he go beyond the discussions from the last phase of the Cultural Revolution when the fragments were first presented to the sinological public.<sup>18</sup>

- 15 Zhang Songru 張松如 and Zhao Ming 赵明, «Zhuangzi zhexue chutan» 庄子哲学初探 (A Preliminary Study of Zhuangzi's Philosophy), *Zhongguo zhexueshi yanjiu* 1981, 7, pp. 36–42.
- 16 Wang Liqi 王利器, «'Zhuangzi' Guo Xiang xu de zhenwei wenti» 庄子郭象序的真伪问题 (The Problem of the Authenticity of Guo Xiang's Preface to the *Zhuangzi*), *Zhexue yanjiu* 1978, 9. Yu Dunkang 余敦康, «Guanyu 'Zhuangzi' Guo Xiang xu de zhenwei wenti – yu Wang Liqi xiansheng shangqüe» 关于“庄子”郭象序的真伪问题 – 与王利器先生商榷 (Concerning the Problem of the Authenticity of Guo Xiang's Preface to the *Zhuangzi* – a Discussion with Wang Liqi), *Zhexue yanjiu* 1979, 1, pp. 73–76.
- 17 Ge Rongjin 葛荣晋, «Shilun 'Huang Lao boshu' de Dao he wuwei sixiang» 试论“黄老帛书”的道和无为思想 («Dao» and «wuwei» in the Huang-Lao Silk Manuscripts) *Zhongguo zhexueshi yanjiu* 1981, 3, pp. 47–53.
- 18 Cf. Cheng Wu 程武, «Han chu Huang Lao sixiang he Fajia luxian – du Changsha Mawangdui san hao Han mu chutu boshu zhaji» 汉初黄老思想和法家

Zhong Zhaopeng, vice-member of the Department for Religion at the Academy of Social Sciences, takes a much broader look at the appearance and development of Huang-Lao philosophy. His work is useful, in that much material is represented. Firstly he describes what he sees as the origins of the Huang-Lao School – how the figure of Huangdi, the Yellow Emperor, was absorbed by various philosophers and how towards the end of the Zhanguo Period the Huang-Lao School originated as a particular school of thought, a process not coinciding by chance with the formation of the Eclectic School. The Huang-Lao School borrowed, as the author tries to prove, from all schools, but mainly from the Daoists and the Legalists, and thus created an ideology which represented the interests of the lower strata of the class of landowners, who at that time, as contemporary Chinese historiography sees it, were on their way to power. Secondly the author attempts to re-date the Mawangdui Huang-Lao fragments, contesting Tang Lan's thesis, who had proposed the beginning of the 4th century as the date of their origin, arguing that according to the historian Sima Qian, the Legalist philosopher Shen Buhai (who died in 337 B.C.) was a disciple of the Huang-Lao School.<sup>19</sup> Zhong points out that this remark by Sima Qian is not reliable because the historian personally adhered to the Huang-Lao School and therefore overestimated its influence and originality. Zhong claims instead quite convincingly that for reasons of style as well as content the Mawangdui texts can only derive from the third century B.C., that is from the end of the Zhanguo Period. Thirdly he mentions their philosophical content, which he sees as dominated by the term *daofa* («Dao and law»), *dao* being the abstract principle and *fa* its concrete manifestation in society and politics. Fourthly the author

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(Huang-Lao Thought at the Beginning of the

Han Dynasty and the Legalist Line – Report on the Silk Manuscripts Discovered in the Third Han Tomb at Mawangdui near Changsha), *Wenwu* 1974, 10, pp. 43–52.

- 19 Cf. Tang Lan 唐兰, «'Huangdi si jing' chutan» “黄帝内经”初探 (A Preliminary Study of The Yellow Emperor's Four Scriptures), *Wenwu* 1974, 10, pp. 48–52 and Tang Lan, «Mawangdui chutu 'Laozi' yi benjuan qian gu yishu de yanjiu - jian lun qi yu Han chu Ru Fa douzheng de guanxi» 马王堆出土“老子”乙本卷前古佚书的研究 - 兼论其与汉初儒法斗争的关系 (The Old Fragments before Text B of the Laozi Discovered at Mawangdui and a Discussion of their Relation to the Struggle between Confucianists and Legalists at the Beginning of the Han Dynasty), Mawangdui Han mu boshu zhengli xiaozu (ed.) 马王堆汉墓帛书 整理小组 (Team for Collating the Silk Manuscripts from the Han Tombs at Mawangdui), *Jingfa* 经法, Beijing 1976, pp. 149–166, esp. p. 154ff.



looks into the Han Dynasty transformation of the Huang-Lao School. He compiles a useful list of its adherents, describes its brief role in politics and finally its transformation which began, as he explains, under Emperor Wu, when its political role was terminated. From then on, as Zhong sees it, the Huang-Lao philosophy became the creed of eremites and practitioners striving for longevity and of the unruly peasant masses, while losing its hold on the ruling class.<sup>20</sup>

In another article on this subject, Zhang Weihua, Professor at Shandong University and author of several books, amongst them a book on Emperor Wu of the Western Han Dynasty, restricts his analysis to the manifestation of Huang-Lao philosophy during the Western Han. His material is strictly limited. He refuses for instance to consider theses put forward in the *Huainanzi* because he holds the text to be too eclectic. The text he mainly relies on is Sima Tan's Report on the Six Schools (*liujia yaozhi*), which the author claims to follow in describing the terms emptiness (*xu* 虚), adaptability (*yin* 因) and quietude (*jing* 静) as characteristic features of Huang-Lao thought. Although his analysis attempts to establish systematic rather than historical credibility – he does not explain the development of terms – he adds a brief postscript on the historical relevance of the Huang-Lao School, where he concludes that it was not worth much in its own right but that it served a purpose when during the first sixty years of the Han Dynasty the suffering, impoverished population needed rest and peace to allow for economic consolidation.<sup>21</sup> This conclusion is not new, but follows among others Fan Wenlan's analysis.<sup>22</sup>

The continuation of Post-Liberation Daoist research is particularly apparent in the almost constant attention paid to the text *Taiping jing* which was dealt with by scholars of the late fifties<sup>23</sup> and during the Cultural Revolution<sup>24</sup>, and which is still a main topic of research. There is

20 Zhong Zhaopeng 钟肇鹏, «Lun Huang Lao zhi xue» 论黄老之学 (The Huang-Lao School), *Shijie zongjiao yanjiu* 1981, 2, pp. 75–98.

21 Zhang Weihua 张维华, «Xi Han chunian Huang Lao zhengzhi sixiang» 西汉初年黄老政治思想 (Huang-Lao Political Thought during the First Years of the Western Han Dynasty), *Zhongguo shehui kexue* 1981, 5, pp. 199–208.

22 Cf. Fan Wenlan 范文澜, *Zhongguo tongshi jianbian* 中国通史简编 (Abridged Edition of a General History of China), Beijing 1949, Vol. 2, p. 36.

23 Cf. J.P. Harrison, *The Communists and Chinese Peasant Rebellions*, London 1970, p. 147.

24 Cf. Xin Feng 辛风, «Dong Han monian laodong renmin de fan Kong douzheng» 东汉末年劳动人民的反孔斗争 (The Struggle of the Working

no other Daoist religious scripture which has attracted similar interest. This attention is opposed to the role the scripture played in the historical development of Daoism, where for a long time it remained marginal and was accepted among the sacred writings of Daoism only several centuries after its original composition. So Chinese contemporary interest in this book is obviously not based on any interest in Daoism, but rather on ancient peasant uprisings with which the *Taiping jing* has been linked by historians in China as well as by some scholars in Japan and in the West. Additional attraction lies in the text's modern sounding title, which can, among other renderings, be translated as «Scripture on All Encompassing Equality».

The most useful recent contribution to *Taiping jing* studies is the reprint of Wang Ming's 1960 edition of the text. The editor has added a brief postface to the reprint in which he mentions that minor revisions in punctuation, textual comments and the titles of paragraphs were undertaken, and that the appendix was enlarged by two new quotations.<sup>25</sup> He also refers to his article from 1965 on the Dunhuang fragment of the *Taiping jing*<sup>26</sup>, and explains that he could not fully make use of the fragment because the layout of the 1960 edition was not to be changed. He particularly regrets that the subtitles to chapters *ding* 丁 and *wu* 戊, contained in the fragment but missing from the *Daozang* text, could not be amalgamated into the reprint. When I asked Wang Ming in an interview whether there were any more revisions of the text he would have liked to add if it had not been for keeping the old layout, he said there were not, disregarding the fact that the text as it stands contains many passages which are far from clear.

Qing Xitai of the Sichuan Institute for Daoist Research published several articles on the *Taiping jing*. His method of analysis is similar to the way Chinese scholars approach the *Laozi*. In an ahistorical manner he reads certain statements in the text from a point of view he considers to be modern Marxist, and simply judges their progressiveness and back-

People against Confucius during the Last Years of the Eastern Han Dynasty), Beijing daxue lishixi (ed.) 北京大学历史系 (History Department of Beijing University), *Zhongguo gudaishi lunwen xuanbian* 中国古代史论文选编 (Selected Articles on Ancient Chinese History), Beijing 1974, pp. 246–249.

25 Wang Ming 王明 (ed.), *Taiping jing hejiao* 太平经合校 (Critical Edition of the *Taiping jing*), 2nd. ed. Beijing 1979, p. 748.

26 Wang Ming 王明, «'Taiping jing' mulu kao» 太平经目录考 (Analysis of the *Taiping jing* Table of Contents), *Wenshi* 1965, 4, pp. 19–34.

wardness, their right and wrong, by their conformity to the respective Marxist theses. Not surprisingly he comes to the same conclusions which scholars had reached before him<sup>27</sup>, namely that the text contains correct as well as false opinions, that it is consequently not uniform, and that several authors were involved in its production. Following ancient Chinese practice he names them Yu Ji and Bo He.<sup>28</sup> With so much said about the text in general, the author deals with its specific aspects. In an article on the philosophical thought of the *Taiping jing* the following topics are considered by the author: 1. The original breath (*yuanqi* 元氣), *Dao* and One: the text's understanding of these terms depended on the «primitive materialism» expressed in the *Laozi*. 2. The relation between body and spirit: at this point the text is contradictory, according to Qing, in that it claims on the one hand that matter (*qi*) determines the spirit and on the other hand that spirit (*qingshen*) exists separate from the body, which, following Engels, was totally false. 3. The theory of knowledge: the text rightly stressed the role of learning. 4. The dialectical method: the text stressed unity as opposed to contradiction, which Qing claimed was false. I have listed these four points to suggest that Qing Xitai's bluntly formalist methods of analysis do not tackle the specific contents of the text. He treats for instance the relationship between «body» and «spirit» without considering that it is based on popular second century medical theories (according to which sickness is derived from guilt) and he deals with the text's «theory of knowledge» (an inappropriate term in the context) without relating it to the concept of revelation, which is basic to the *Taiping jing* as it is to other missionary writings.<sup>29</sup> Another article by Qing Xitai is concerned with «utopian thought» in the *Taiping jing*. The starting point is that the *Taiping jing* contains the hopes and demands of the peasant masses and in particular the ideological equipment of the Yellow Turban Rebellion. In this respect the text is seen in succession to Mohist

27 Cf. Xiong Deji 熊德基, «'Taiping jing' de zuozhe he sixiang ji qi yu Huangjin he Tianshidao de guanxi» «*太平经*的作者和思想及其与黄中和天师道的关系» (Author and Thought of the *Taiping jing* and its Relation to the Yellow Turbans and the Way of the Celestial Master), *Lishi yanjiu* 1964, 4, pp. 8–46, esp. pp. 8 ff.

28 Qing Xitai 卿希泰, «Shilun 'Taiping jing' de wutuobang sixiang» 试论《太平经》的乌托邦思想 (Tentative Remarks on Utopian Thought in the *Taiping jing*), *Shehui kexue yanjiu* 1980, 2, pp. 94–99, esp. p. 94.

29 Qing Xitai 卿希泰, «'Taiping jing' de zhexue sixiang» 《太平经》的哲学思想 (Philosophical Thought in the *Taiping jing*), *Sichuan Shiyuan xuebao* (*zhe she* [Philosophy and Social Science Division]) 1980, 1, pp. 9–13.

thought.<sup>30</sup> Following these assertions the author attempts to demonstrate that the text contains demands for equality among men and similar aims, by quoting isolated statements, and yet the quotations do not seem to prove the author's point of view. There is for instance one passage in which equality and unity among men are propagated with the sole aim of better securing the ruler's position.<sup>31</sup> Max Kaltenmark has, I feel, conclusively shown, that the ideal society of the *Taiping jing* is hierarchically structured.<sup>32</sup> Qing's article about the doctrine in the *Taiping jing* on how to treat subordinates properly seems to contradict his thesis about the text's concern with equality among men. He explains how the text demands that the officials' talent and capability should regularly be examined to safeguard administrative efficiency, and concludes that under the historical conditions of second century China such demands made sense. He does not mention the fact that such demands were common postulates among political critics of the Eastern Han period.<sup>33</sup>

Feng Dawen's treatment of the text is more diversified, although his starting point is similar. He also claims that the *Taiping jing* expresses the ideology of second century peasant rebels and from this he concludes that organised Daoism originated as a heterodox movement among the lower strata of society. To prove this he attempts to compare the ideology of the *Taiping ching* with that of orthodox Daoism. For this comparison, he chooses among other texts Wei Boyang's *Zhouyi cantongji*, which Chinese sinology sees as contemporary to a 2nd century A.D. *Taiping jing*. He sees the main difference in that orthodox Daoism stresses social immobility and the priority of the world beyond, while the *Taiping jing* develops a programme on how to change this mundane world for the better. Notwithstanding the text's heterodox alignment, Feng also detects a more conservative tendency in it, which he sees as related to the thought of Dong Zhongshu. So the text presents itself as contradictory, which leads the author to the well-known conclusion that it was not written at one pe-

30 Qing Xitai, see above note 28, pp. 98f.

31 Qing Xitai, see above note 28, p. 98, cf. *Taiping jing hejiao* (see above note 25) p. 683, line 4f.

32 Cf. M. Kaltenmark, «The Ideology of the *T'ai-p'ing ching*», A. Seidel and H. Welch (eds.), *Facets of Taoism*, New Haven and London 1979, pp. 19–45, esp. pp. 31 ff.

33 Qing Xitai 卿希泰, «'Taiping jing' de zhi ren shan ren sixiang qianxi» 「太平经」的知人善任思想浅析 (Simple Analysis of the *Taiping jing's* Thoughts on how to Employ Men), *Sixiang zhanxian* 1979, 2, pp. 43–47. Cf. Ch'en Ch'i-yün, *Hsün Yüeh and the Mind of Late Han China*, Princeton 1980, pp. 129f. and *Shenjian* 申鑑, ed. *Sibu congkan* 2, 2b.

riod by one author. Feng Dawen's attempt to distinguish the text from other tendencies in Daoism I find useful. His arguments are convincing (and were put forward in previous studies<sup>34</sup>) in the realm of social history, while the quotations he chooses to define the role of dialectics and materialism in the text's natural philosophy do not seem specific enough to prove his point.<sup>35</sup>

Wei Qipeng, editor of the Journal of Sichuan University, in his article on the *Taiping jing* and Eastern Han medicine, takes up a subject of great relevance, if one considers that most early believers in Daoism turned to this new religion to be protected from and cured of diseases. The *Taiping jing* deals, as Wei Qipeng says, with magical techniques, pharmacy, acupuncture and the doctrine of nourishing life (*yang sheng* 養生) by a quietist style of life and breathing exercises.<sup>36</sup> An article by Tang Yijie on the problem of life and death, spirit and body in early Daoism is also largely based on material from the *Taiping jing*. By the term «early Daoism» the author understands Daoism before the Nanbeichao Period. He accepts the slogan of Daoism's concern with life as opposed to Buddhism's concern with death, and sees the Daoist concept of corporeal longevity as linked with the Daoist understanding of the relation between spirit and body.<sup>37</sup>

I have found only one article which deals with the social and political reality of early Daoism rather than with its ideological aspect. It was written by the Cao Cao scholar Chen Shoushi, published posthumously, and deals with Cao Cao's reaction to the Way of the Celestial Master. Chen's results conform with previous estimates of Cao Cao, in particular from the

34 Cf. Hou Wailu 侯外庐, *Zhongguo lidai datong lixiang 中国历代大同理想* (The Great Unity Ideal throughout Chinese History), Beijing 1959: pp. 14ff.

35 Feng Dawen 冯达文, «'Taiping jing' pouxi – jian tan 'Taiping jing' yu Dong Han monian nongmin qiyi de ruogan sixiang guanxi» 太平经'剖析—兼谈太平经与东汉末年农民起义的若干思想关系. (Analysis of the Taiping jing and Discussion of Some Ideological Links between the Taiping jing and Late Eastern Han Peasant Uprisings), *Zhongshan Daxue xuebao* 1980, 3, pp. 1–12.

36 Wei Qipeng 魏启鹏, «'Taiping jing' yu Dong Han yixue» 太平经"与东汉医学 (The Taiping jing and Eastern Han Medicine), *Shijie zongjiao yanjiu* 1981, 1, p. 101–109.

37 Tang Yijie 汤一介, «Lüelun zaoqi Daojiao guanyu shengsi, shenxing wenti de lilun» 略论早期道教关于生死、神形问题的理论 (A Brief Sketch of Early Daoist Theories concerning the Problem of Life and Death and of Spirit and Form), *Zhexue yanjiu* 1981, 1, pp. 50–59.

Cultural Revolution.<sup>38</sup> He insists that Cao Cao favoured the Daoists not for any ideological reasons, but because they organised a peasant movement which fought against the big landowners who were also Cao Cao's enemies. The author also sees links between Cao Cao's redistribution of land and the Daoist movement's social programme.<sup>39</sup>

Work on Han Dynasty Daoism is, as it seems to me, hampered by the scholars' antihistorical and antiphilological approach towards source material the dates and origins of which are so far not clarified, and by concentrating on the ideological aspect of developments, while so much of Daoism's factual presence remains vague. There is also the problem that some scholars deal with Daoist material without seeing it in a Daoist religious context. This tendency is even continued in work on topics more closely linked to the mainstream of Daoist historical development than the *Taiping jing*. Thus there are several articles which introduce central texts and personages of the Daoist Religion without shedding any new light on their intricacies. The most important contribution stems again from Wang Ming, who edited the Inner Chapters of the *Baopuzi*, with careful textual criticism and a terminological commentary. In his short preface he points out how closely early theology is linked to proto-science and that this link is particularly obvious in the *Baopuzi*. He considers the text valuable for two reasons, firstly because it gives an account of the history of early Daoism and secondly because it reaches new scientific results. There is a copious appendix with additional material, in particular a list of quotations not to be found in the transmitted text.<sup>40</sup> Qing Xitai writes on Ge Hong's longevity doctrine and tries to define this doctrine's position in the ideological development of Daoism. He concludes that Ge Hong's doctrine is much more directed towards this world than the esoteric teachings of earlier Daoists and that this also explains why Ge Hong borrowed more Confucian and other non-Daoist concepts.<sup>41</sup> With these

38 Cf. B. Kandel, «New Interpretations of the Han Dynasty Published during the Pi-Lin Pi-Kong Campaign», *Modern China* 1978, 1, pp. 91–120, esp. pp. 111f.

39 Chen Shoushi 陈守实, «Cao Cao yu Tianshidao» 曹操与天师道 (Cao Cao and the Way of the Celestial Master), *Zhongguoshi yanjiu* 1979, 3, pp. 81–90.

40 Wang Ming 王明 (ed.), *Baopuzi neibian jiaoshi* (Collation and Commentary of the Inner Chapters of the *Baopuzi*), Beijing 1980. 抱朴子内篇校释

41 Qing Xitai 卿希泰, «Cong Ge Hong lun Ru Dao guanxi kan Shenxian Daojiao lilun de tedian he benzhi» 从葛洪论儒道关系看神仙道教理论的特点和本质 (Theoretical Characteristics of Longevity Daoism as Seen from Ge Hong's Discussion of the Relation between Confucianism and Daoism), *Shijie zongjiao yanjiu* 1981, 1, pp. 110–115.

conclusions Qing does not seem to go beyond Hou Wailu's account of Ge Hong's thought.<sup>42</sup>

Wang Ming's article on Tao Hongjing is mainly concerned with the Daoist's scientific work, which is listed and introduced in detail. Besides, Tao Hongjing is labelled an adherent of religious idealism, who remained loyal to his class background in serving the feudal state, and who was outstanding in his amalgamation of Buddhist and Confucian doctrines with Daoism.<sup>43</sup> Liu Lin, Professor for History at Sichuan University, has published an article in *Lishi yanjiu* on the Nanbeichao Period reform of Daoism which is more ambitious. Historical connections are reconstructed and evaluated. And yet his findings do not seem to be more original than those of Qing Xitai and Wang Ming. The author describes the well-known process<sup>44</sup> by which in the Post-Han Period Daoist popular creeds were turned into an official religion which served the interests of the feudal state. He uses the common arguments, listing the Han Dynasty «Daoist» peasant rebellions, Post-Han definitions of religious rules, the substitution of old texts (he does not say which) by the new Lingbao and Shangqing scriptures, and finally organisational reforms such as the foundation of monasteries.<sup>45</sup>

Li Bincheng, assistant member of the section on history of the Academy of Social Sciences dedicates an article to the struggle between Buddhists and Daoists during the Tang Dynasty, describing in particular the discussions which were officially arranged for representatives of both creeds. As reasons for these debates he lists the religions' fight for official recognition, for social recognition, for financial support and also factious rivalry inside both creeds. Although by formal standards most discussions were won by the Buddhists, because they knew more about logic, were more widely read and used advanced argumentative techniques, the offi-

42 Cf. Hou Wailu 侯外庐 e.a., *Zhongguo sixiang tongshi* 中国思想通史 (General History of Chinese Thought), Beijing 1957, Vol. 3, pp. 263 ff.

43 Wang Ming 王明, «Lun Tao Hongjing» 论陶弘景 (Tao Hongjing), *Shijie zongjiao yanjiu* 1981, 1, pp. 10-21.

44 Cf. Chen Yinke 陈寅恪, «Tianshidao yu binhai diyu zhi guanxi» 天师道与滨海地域之关系 (The Way of the Celestial Master and its Relation to the Coastal Areas), *Zhongyang yanjiuyuan, Lishi yuyan yanjiusuo jikan* 1934, III, 4.

45 Liu Lin 刘琳, «Lun Dong Jin Nanbeichao Daojiao de biange yu fazhan» 论东晋南北朝道教的变革与发展 (Changes and Development in Daoism during the Eastern Jin and the Nanbeichao Period), *Lishi yanjiu* 1981, 5, pp. 110-130.

cials in charge, who were personally uninterested in either religion, tended for political reasons to protect Daoism and control Buddhism.<sup>46</sup>

Neither are the topics and methods of contemporary Daoist research new, nor are the results very relevant, and yet the strong emphasis laid on this research is new and impressive. Thus the first monograph on Daoism to be published in the People's Republic (except for re-editions of earlier, Pre-Liberation works like Chen Guofu's book on the origin of the *Daozang*<sup>47</sup>) came out in 1981. It is the first volume of an outline of the history of Daoist thought, written in Sichuan by Qing Xitai. In his introduction the author explains what he sees as a reason for the new emphasis on China's old native religion. He explains that from a Marxist point of view the contribution of Daoism to the historical development of feudal China's superstructure is of great relevance, in particular because Daoism is China's only native religion.<sup>48</sup> Consequently he sees the historical aspect of the religion as his main concern – this is how the religion's origin, growth and development were linked to socio-economic conditions. Unfortunately, though, the author does not seem to keep this approach in mind, and the body of his work is «Marxist» only to the degree that well-known quotations by Marx and Engels are occasionally put forward, for instance Friedrich Engels' well-worn remarks on the role religion may play in peasant movements.<sup>49</sup> On the other hand the author sticks to certain prejudices well established among scholars of Daoism. He widely ignores Daoist sources for historiographic purposes, because he considers them useless, arguing that being religious writings they are necessarily unreliable. His selection of topics is based on recent Chinese historical concern rather than on Daoism as a subject. There is for instance little consideration of Shangqing Daoism, while much room is given to Sun En. All through his book he interprets Daoist texts without giving much attention to problems of their date, authorship and textual purity. His interpretation is based on philosophical rather than religious considerations. So he continually poses the question of Daoist contributions towards a theory of knowledge

46 Li Bincheng 李斌成, «Tangdai Fo Dao zhi zheng yanjiu» 唐代佛道之争研究 (The Controversy between Buddhism and Daoism in the Tang Dynasty), *Shijie zongjiao yanjiu* 1981, 2, pp. 99–108.

47 Cf. Chen Guofu 陈国符, *Daozang yuanliu kao* 道藏源流考 (The Origin of the Daozang), Beijing 1963.

48 Qing Xitai 卿希泰, *Zhongguo Daojiao sixiangshi gang* 中国道教思想史纲 (Outline of a History of Chinese Daoist Thought), Chengdu 1981, p. 27.

49 Qing Xitai, op.cit., pp. 166f.



and towards the definition of general terms like «Dao» and «One». Therefore his results are not particularly relevant for describing the historical development of Daoist thought, which was much more influenced by problems of missionary work, ritual and longevity techniques than by discussions of broad philosophical terms. Considering all these general objections it is obvious that there are many passages in which I do not agree with the author's representation. It does for instance not seem well balanced for the author to stress early Daoism's ideological links with Mohism<sup>50</sup>, while not even mentioning its relation to Legalism, or that the Xiang Er Commentary is not at all introduced although there is a long description of the origins of the Way of the Celestial Master. It should also be mentioned that Qing does not refer to and does not even seem to make use of Chen Guofu's basic work on the origins of the *Daozang*, which covers a period of Daoist development similar to that dealt with by Qing Xitai.

Judging by the list of contributors Qing Xitai is also responsible for articles on Daoism in Ren Jiyu's Dictionary of Religion, published in 1982. These articles consist mainly of quotations, for terminology entries taken from the *Yunqi qiqian*, for persons' entries taken from historical and certain Daoist sources, without interpretative analysis or reconstruction. They are useful, although less presentation of original material and more conclusions might have been more convenient to the reader of a dictionary meant for the general public.<sup>51</sup>

Another draft of Daoist history was presented by Tang Yijie in his lectures at Beijing University in winter 1981/82 where he dealt with certain questions of Daoist development from the Han Dynasty to the age of Tao Hongjing. Similarly to Qing Xitai he restricts his account to problems of ideological history, totally excluding the religion's institutional and practical aspect. His topics were: 1. Introduction to the *Daozang*, 2. Original Daoism and the *Taiping jing*, 3. The three great reformers of the Jin and Nanbeichao Period, Ge Hong, Kou Qianzhi, Tao Hongjing, 4. Conflict and harmony between Buddhism and Daoism during the Jin and Nanbeichao Period, 5. Early Daoism's analysis of the term «breath» (*qi*). In defining Daoism's social background he suggests that Western Han Daoism was in fact an upper class phenomenon and that only during the Eastern

50 Qing Xitai, op.cit., p. 49. He refers to Zhang Taiyan 章太炎 as a reference for this thesis.

51 Ren Jiyu 任继愈, *Zongjiao cidian 宗教词典* (Dictionary of Religion), Shanghai 1982.

Han period elements of the religion were used by the dissatisfied lower strata of society to further their aims. Thus Daoism's ideological roots were to be found in syncretist Han Confucianism. Tang's attitude towards contemporary Chinese Daoist research was highly negative. He particularly deplored the lack of textual analysis and the procedure by which scholars first approach a subject by listing certain Marxist theses, and only as a second step search for textual evidence to back them up. He did not mention any intention to publish the script of his very well-attended series of lectures.<sup>52</sup>

What general perspectives are there for Daoist research in contemporary China? The following remarks are based on the material paraphrased above and on interviews conducted in 1981. So at the time of writing (end of 1982) they may already be slightly out of date. It is obvious that research on Daoism is encouraged. There are three centres of this research whose functions differ widely: 1. The Department of Religion in Beijing's Academy of Social Sciences, 2. The Institute for Daoist Research at Sichuan University in Chengdu, 3. The China Daoist Association with its headquarters in the Baiyunguan in Beijing. Although this Association also has various organisational and administrative functions, it sees research into Daoism as its main task.<sup>53</sup> The chances for success in this self-declared role must be evaluated in the light of the Pre-Cultural Revolution activities of the Daoist Association which then published the Journal *Daoxie huikan*.<sup>54</sup> The main scholarly achievement of this journal consisted no doubt in translations from the works of Joseph Needham.<sup>55</sup> Other articles on Daoist history and Daoist dogma were hardly scholarly – they were relevant as self-representation of contemporary Daoism but unreliable as an introduction to the historical religion.<sup>56</sup> There was no attempt to introduce any material taken from living Daoism. So it is dubious whether the Association's present plans, which include field research and

52 Tang Yijie 汤一介, *Daojiao shi yanjiu zhuanji* 道教史研究专题 (Special Topics of Research into Daoist History), unpublished.

53 Cf. B. Kandel, «A Visit to the China Taoist Association», *Society for the Study of Chinese Religions Bulletin* 8, 1980, pp. 1–4, esp. p. 3.

54 *Daoxie huikan* 道协会刊 Vol. 1 to vol. 3, 1962–1963.

55 Li Yuese 李约瑟 (Joseph Needham), «Daojia yu Daojiao» 道家与道教 (Daojia and Daojiao), *Daoxie huikan* 2, 1963, pp. 56–91 and 3, 1963, pp. 71 ff.

56 Cf. for instance Zhongguo Daojiao Xiehui yanjiushi 中国道教协会研究室 (The Research Team of the China Daoist Association), «Daojiao zhishi lei bian chuji» 道教知识类编初集 (A First Glossary of Daoist Knowledge), *Daoxie huikan* 2, 1963, pp. 1–56.

the conservation of oral traditions<sup>57</sup>, will be realized. The Sichuan Institute has a certain propagandistic appeal, being situated close to the cradle of early Daoism. It is extremely well staffed by ten full time researchers, whose main project is to contribute the section on Daoism to the new Chinese Encyclopedia.<sup>58</sup> Qing Xitai's outline of the history of Daoist thought is the most important work which has so far come out of the Institute. Researchers at the Department of Religion in the Academy of Social Sciences are working on several texts, among them the *Wunengzi*, and on an index to the *Daozang*. Their work is directed by the Buddhist scholar Ren Jiyu, whose interest in Daoism, following his own words, is centred on those aspects which also involve Buddhism. It seems that there is no cooperation with the Department of Philosophy headed by Wang Ming, who is for instance not among the contributors to Ren Jiyu's Dictionary of Religion and who independently mentioned the *Wunengzi* as one of his research projects. There is also no cooperation with Chen Guofu, the only contemporary Chinese Daoist scholar of world acclaim, who teaches petrochemistry in Tianjin and has little opportunity to continue work on Daoist history. There is scientific exchange between Ren Jiyu's institute in Beijing, and the Sichuan Institute, but none between them and the China Daoist Association, because, as Ren Jiyu put it, the Association's approach was too different.<sup>59</sup>

From all this it does not seem as if the organisational set-up of Daoist studies guarantees the best results possible. The direction of research is influenced by individual interest rather than by any coordinated effort to cope with hitherto unknown fields of Daoist presence in Chinese history. This individual interest takes its orientation from Post-Liberation Chinese research. Although Chinese and foreign scholars have met and worked together it seems very difficult to detect any traits of foreign influence in Chinese Daoist scholarship. Daoism's religious past and possibly its presence is still shunned, in spite of well-founded foreign interest in its manifestations, and the tendency remains to treat Daoism as if it had never been anything but a changing system of ideas.

57 Cf. B. Kandel, op.cit. (note 53) p. 3.

58 Zhongguo da baike quanshu zongbianji weiyuanhui 中国大百科全书  
总编辑委员会 (General Editorial Committee of the Great  
Chinese Encyclopedia), *Zhongguo da baike quanshu*. The first volume, Beijing and  
Shanghai 1980, is on astronomy, as in most Chinese pre-modern encyclopedias.

59 The Association's approach is quite obvious in Chen Yingning's article on the *Taiping jing*, which does not even mention Wang Ming's modern edition of the text, cf. Chen Yingning 陈樱宁, «Taiping jing de qianyin yu houguo» 太平经的前因与后果 (Cause and Effect of the *Taiping jing*), *Daoxie huikan* 1, 1962, pp. 50-79.