

Handbooks for Daoist Practice

by Louis Komjathy

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www.daoistcenter.org/Handbooks.html

Until recently Daoist texts, apart from *Laozi* and *Zhuangzi*, have received very little attention from Daoist practitioners in the West. We are finally beginning to appreciate the scale and the depth of the Daoist teachings that can be found in lesser-known texts. English translations of these have been appearing in the West gradually over the years, due to the development of academic interest in Daoism. Laudable as this work is, it does present difficulties for the practitioner as the majority of scholars, with a few exceptions, have no background in Daoist cultivation. Their work relies mainly on written sources and very little research has been done with living practitioners in China, or even in the West. Consequently the vocabulary used, although linguistically correct, can be uneven and may disrupt the tone of the text, distorting the view of it for the cultivator.

Scriptures are threads that connect the Daoist practitioner to the Dao and the community of adepts who have gone before. From the practitioner's point of view, they are manuals that contain principles and guidelines for nourishing our internal process. The method of internal cultivation is implicit in them but is only fully revealed through intimacy with, and participation in, the text.

Louis Komjathy's *Handbooks for Daoist Practice* have been crafted solely for the use and development of Daoist practitioners. Each text has been carefully selected so that together they present a clear view of Daoist cultivation. They emphasise how this view has developed organically from the early scriptures of *Inward Training (Neiye)* and *The Book of Venerable Masters (Laozi)*, right through to *Redoubled Yang's Fifteen Discourses*, a later text of the twelfth century. Also included is the *Yellow Thearch's Basic Questions*, which contributes to this view through introducing physical and mental hygiene.

In the introduction to each of the nine translations Louis highlights the key terms and concepts and the various ways in which they are used in the texts. He



shows how they have evolved and expanded, shaping the subsequent texts and, like a thread, linking them together.

Handbooks for Daoist Practice consists of the following nine texts:

Inward Training (*Neiye*)

The Book of Venerable Masters (*Laozi*)

Yellow Thearch's Basic Questions (*Huangdi suwen*)

Scripture on Clarity and Stillness (*Qingjing jing*)

Scriptural Statutes of Lord Lao (*Laojun jinglü*)

Scripture for Daily Internal Practice (*Nei riyong jing*)

Scripture on the Hidden Talisman (*Yinfu jing*)

Redoubled Yang's Fifteen Discourses (*Chongyang shiwu lun*)

Book of Master Celestial Seclusion (*Tianyinzi*)

The set also contains a separate booklet with an introduction to significant aspects of Daoist history, the development of the Daoist tradition, principles of Daoist practice and the importance of scriptural study.

When I was ordained at my temple in China, the first text I was asked to study was the Scripture on Clarity and Stillness and, since that time, it has been a constant companion. Reading these translations has been an enriching experience for me. They have clarity and evenness of presentation and in them I feel I hear the true voice of the text. I'm very grateful to Louis for making this series of translations available to us.

Shi Jing

To order *Handbooks for Daoist Practice* please contact Louis Komjathy at komjathy@daoistcenter.org