

# 1.Daoism

## 2.Philosophy and Practice in Daily Living

### 3. 15<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Daoist Studies

**Eastover Estate and Eco-Village, Lenox, Mass.**

**23-26 June, 2022**

Daoist teachings are highly relevant for daily living. Philosophical concepts in this context include ethical guidelines and virtues, ways of looking at the world, modes of balancing or counteracting dominant values, opening visions of a more fluid and relaxed lifestyle, and so on.

In terms of practice, Daoists provide numerous methods of enhancing health and prolonging life, remaining calm in the face of adversity, going with the flow, harmonizing living space through Fengshui, purifying and sanctifying affairs in ritual, and many other ways of bringing life to its fullest expression.

This conference, the first in-person gathering since the pandemic, explores just how Daoist ideas and techniques can improve and enhance daily living in the world today and how they have impacted life in various historical circumstances.

## **Thursday, June 23**

Afternoon      Arrival

6:30 pm        Dinner

7:30 pm        Keynote

**Lonny Jarrett**

11 point

## **Friday, June 24**

7 am            Morning Qigong

8 am            Breakfast

9 am            **Workshop**

## **Scott Park Phillips—Born to Spin: How the Daoist God Nezha Became the Internal Martial Art of Baguazhang**

11am            **Panel 1: Practical Learning**

### **Ronald C. Smith and Antonio M. Carmone—Shadows of Mawangdui, Animating the *Daoyintu***

Over two-thousand years ago, a medical library that included a silk manuscript with forty-four images of exercise and healing practices, called *Daoyintu*, was sealed in a tomb in Mawangdui, Hunan. *Daoyin*, meaning “guiding and pulling,” is an ancient health and wellness practice, the forerunner of the modern practice of qigong. Tu means chart or map. When discovered, in 1973, the silk had deteriorated so that, in some cases, only partial images and instructions remained. Reconstructed by experts, the images provide a shadowy view of ancient health and wellness techniques influenced by the medical and magical concepts of the time. In this presentation we introduce our forthcoming book, *Shadows of Mawangdui*, where we have created a detailed practitioners manual that interprets the *Daoyintu* and offers insights into the physical, energetic, and spiritual experience the images inspire.

### **David Hessler—Learning from a Master**

I became a student of Master Meng Zhiling 孟至岭, 21<sup>st</sup> generation disciple of the Longmen Sect of the Quanzhen order of Daoism, in 2013. Prior to that time I had searched for a teacher who could guide me on the path of following Dao since 2007—engaging in various convoluted adventures. Master Meng is that rare Daoist who lived as a hermit for ten years in the northern mountains of China and then “came down the mountain” at the request of the Chinese Daoist Association to train a new generation of Daoists. He is currently the Abbot of White Cloud Temple (Baiyun guan) in Beijing and head of the Daoist College. During this presentation, I explain some of the techniques and ideas I learned during conversations with Master Meng and share parts of an extended interview I conducted with him in December 2019 to January of 2020.

### **Jonathan Bricklin**

12:30            Lunch

2 pm            **Workshop**

### **Shifu Michael Rinaldini—The Path of the Immortals (Chong Mai Qigong)**

In this workshop we will practice a simple set of six qigong movements, leading the practitioner to a deep place of stillness. Thus, they find themselves at the portal to Anterior Heaven (Pre-Heaven). The Chong Mai Qigong form was inspired by the late Daoist scholar Monica Esposito's book, *Facets of Qing Daoism*. Here she mentions an ancient doctrine, “One can in a flash realize the genuine principle of inner alchemy” (p.174). Working to open and transform the extraordinary energetic vessels, Professor Esposito says, “For that reason, it is officially labeled the path of the immortals” (p. 176). An introduction to *zuowang* meditation will follow the practice of Chong Mai Qigong, the practice of aligning the indwelling *qi* of the Dao (Breath) with our center (Dao, God, etc.), which purifies the heart-mind.

4 pm            **Workshop**

### **Dawn Li—Integrated Qi-Healing: Music, Poetry, and Movement**

Self-healing through group qigong practice has proved to be powerful. It can be made even more potent when we integrate chants, music, songs, and poetry into the practice. This leads participants creatively to connect with cosmic healing energy and activate each person's own inner medicine. The workshop has three parts. 1. Connecting with Heaven and Earth: Through slow breathing, chants, and simple movements, we open ourselves to the flow of energy in the universe. We learn to stand tall, connecting with the sky and the earth. We gather yuan qi, the source of creation for vibrant life. 2. Activating Inner Medicine for Healing: Through the popular qigong routine of the Eight Brocades (Baduanjin), we use the ancient Chinese meridian medicine to ease our chronic pains and hurts. Our breathing follows energy channels to massage our core, spine, chest, and legs in eight stretching movements. Poetry and music accompany the movements. 3. Living the Symphony of Harmony: After realigning our body, mind, and spirit, we synchronize our energy with qi dance, free flowing movements originating from within. Chants and music accompany the movements.

6:00 pm      Dinner

7:30 pm      Evening Session

### **Mark Saltveit—Daoist Stand-up Comedy**

## **Saturday, June 25**

7 am          Morning Qigong

8 am          Breakfast

9 am          **Workshop**

### **Ronald C. Smith and Antonio M. Carmone—*Daoyintu* Exercises: Bringing the Mawangdui Silk Scroll to Life**

The two-thousand-year-old Mawangdui silk scroll is one of the most enigmatic medical manuscripts found in the family tomb of the Marquis of Dai. Significantly damaged, many of the forty-four images depicted are unclear with names and supporting details missing. Twenty years ago, we were taught a version of daoyin exercises by our tai chi teacher, Madam Hu Yang. We wrote down her version faithfully and in later years practiced and taught the techniques, to eventually compile a book about them. This workshop presents selected physical movements with their names in actual practice. It introduces the guiding and pulling technique we learned to enhance energetic and healing processes, matching as closely as possible what may have been used at the time the images were created. Through mindful preparation and ritual, we will explore the energetic and spiritual depth of the exercises and realize their potential for personal wellness regimes.

11am          **Panel 1: Philosophical Perspectives**

### **Roy Porat—Philosophical Counter Intuitiveness: Ming 明, Tong 通 and Why Using Clarity Is Not Always the Best Option**

This talk will present the counter intuitive thesis according to which *ming*— and the image of light in general – carried negative connotations in the early stages of the Daoist tradition, in line with the general

Daoist sympathy toward darkness and obscurity, but in sharp contrast with the common reading of the term in the past two millennia.

I start by reviewing previous study regarding the absence of *ming* in the *Guodian Laozi*, which suggests that proto-Laozian philosophy was characterized by a much "darker" terminology than its later counterpart; I will then move to show how the suggested "negative" reading of *ming* may resolve some of the textual problems posed by the *Qiwulun* 齊物論, and the way this reading may reflect on our understanding of the Zhuangzian notion of Oneness. Finally, I will discuss the interesting relationship between *ming* and *tong*, and show how the contrast between them may reveal a hidden connection between certain parts of the *Zhuangzi*, the *Laozi* and the *Huainanzi*, which according to my suggestion were all influenced by the earlier, "dark" stratum of the Daoist tradition.

**Larson Di Fiori—Rule by the Perceptiveness of Spirit: How the “Jie Lao” Chapter of the *Hanfeizi* Uses Quotations of Parallels with the *Laozi* to Link the Cultivation of *Shen* with Rulership.**

The twentieth chapter of the *Hanfeizi*, entitled “Jie Lao,” might be considered an early commentary on the *Laozi* because of its extensive use of quotations of passages parallel with the *Laozi* in conjunction with discursive passages. The theme of “Jie Lao” is appropriate rulership, and it argues for the subordination of both laws and what might traditionally be called Confucian principles to a ruler who has gained exceptional perceptiveness through the cultivation of *shen*, a term sometimes translated as “spirit.” *Shen* in this case is something that gathers when a person is quiet and still, and the higher the concentration, the greater the perceptiveness. Framed in this way, the cultivation of *shen* becomes the primary task of rulers, and a value to be promoted in their states, so that even common people will be encouraged to cultivate *shen*. This paper will explore how “Jie Lao” fits into a larger, roughly contemporaneous discussion of the importance of cultivating *shen* and how “Jie Lao” draws in that discussion to create its own vision of society.

12:30            Lunch

2 pm            **Daoist Tea Ceremony, with Shifu Michael Rinaldini**

“Tea and Dao are One. Tea and Dao are Not Two.”

The sharing and drinking of tea is a cultivation practice in itself. It is a practice of internal alchemy whereby the qi of the Dao is transmitted between the tea host and the tea drinkers. All of this takes place within the universe of the Five Elements: Earth, Wood, Fire, Water, and Metal. Within the tea ceremony, the participants engage in casual conversation, often including the reading of tea poems. At the heart of the tea ceremony is the brewing of the tea in a special procedure called gongfu tea. We will drink a fully fermented (Dark) puerh tea, known for its rich flavors and plentiful health benefits. Shifu Michael makes no claims to be a tea master, he simply enjoys the taste of the tea, and engages tea as one of the ways of cultivating the Way.

3 pm            **Workshop**

**John Voigt—Qigong for Creativity in Music**

The most important thing in music is the use and communication of the Energy of Life—here called Qi (气 - 氣 - 炁). I like to call it “Daoist Energetics.” Without it any truly creative act is lifeless, academic, and weak. This session is planned as an enjoyable introduction to consciously and physically being made aware of, then directing, and eventually becoming one with this Creative Qi Energy. It will use various participatory techniques developed in my five years of leading qigong sessions at E. Shan Tang, a leading TCM herbal store in Boston. It will close with a group Jam Session using sounds, inherent movements, and imagery drawn from the Five Energetic Phases.

For more, see <https://web.archive.org/web/20160314152415/http://art-energy.org/>.  
<https://www.chinesemedicineliving.com/blog/happy-fun-qi-gong-part-1/>

4 pm

### **Panel 3: Comparative Dimensions**

#### **Bede Benjamin Bidlack—The Alchemy of Multiple Religious Belonging**

This paper will explore the possibilities and liabilities of Daoist-Christian voluntary hybridity (multiple religious belonging) in the American context. The presentation will begin with a very brief overview of Daoist and Christian identities and the concept of voluntary hybridity for the purpose of narrowing the scope of the present topic. The Daoist tradition under consideration is Daoist alchemy that maintains a lineage of transmission at the exclusion of other means of religious fulfillment, similar to Christian exclusive belonging. Next the paper will explore some benefits Christians may find in pursuing Daoist alchemy. It will also present the liabilities for both traditions when scholars and practitioners alike hastily move from similarities to equivalents, as in the case of identifying qi with the Holy Spirit. Finally, the paper briefly turns to Christian-Daoist identity. Although the author is unaware of any initiated Daoists seeing Christian belonging in the United States, he will argue that such a hybridity is already at work, even if involuntarily. The paper foregrounds the challenges of making a tradition like Daoist alchemy in America accessible to its largely Christian neighbors, as well as an invitation for American Daoism to offer its local genius to the Daoist worldview.

#### **Anne Harley—Daoism and Environmentalism in Performing Arts Education**

Operating at the intersection of embodied practice and critical thinking, performing arts education has a unique power to transform consciousness, and could be mobilized as students face environmental crises around the globe. Because of the frequent use of metaphors drawn from nature, and the decentering of humans within the natural environment, Daoist texts and traditions offer a unique opportunity to productively combine an examination of environmental, spiritual, and artistic practice in arts education. This presentation will include some strategies, examples, and recommendations for incorporation of Daoist materials into performing arts pedagogy.

6:00 pm      Dinner

7:30 pm      Evening Session

## **Sunday, June 26**

7 am          Morning Qigong

8 am          Breakfast

9 am          **Workshop**

#### **Denise L. Meyer—Sensing Hands and Loosening the Grip of Self**

Tui Shou is an essential component of taijiquan training, whether in pursuit of better health, martial prowess, or spiritual enlightenment. Two-person practice is valuable in providing a benchmark for one's technique, alignment, and centered awareness. In a safe and exploratory environment, practitioners will examine their own patterns of reaction, response, and the physical and mental habits driving them. This mirror to one's own psyche is a potent bridge to develop for self-awareness that bridges the practice of taijiquan with daily

life. Explore the explore the edges of self and the energetic connection to others through two-person sensing hands exercises.

11 am           **Artistic Session**

**Dawn Li—Poetry Reading from “Song of a Lotus Leaf”**

Daoism is not just a philosophy or religion, but a way of life. Living in a country whose mainstream culture does not embrace Daoist way of life, can Dao still guide us? Dawn answers this question in her poetry book “Song of a Lotus Leaf.” Dawn became a student of Daoism in China in her twenties after experiencing Oneness when practicing qigong, then moved to the US, and experienced many struggles living among Americans for twenty five years. These struggles deepened her understanding of Dao. "Life is full of confusing shapes / until we've learned to / draw circles /from within ourselves — our own life force," she writes. Wisdom comes when we look inside to connect with the Dao within us. Just as a lotus leaf retains its freshness through constant self cleansing, Dawn sees our life as a continuous journey of self cultivation to stay true to Dao. That is the path towards harmony, or “the S / hidden in the middle between yin and yang.” In this poetry reading session, Dawn will select poems from each section of her book — suffering, creating, loving, seeing, and returning — to tell us her story of Dao awakening.

11:45 am       **Concluding Discussion**

12:30           Lunch

## **BIOGRAPHIES OF WORKSHOP LEADERS**

Antonio M. Carmone (b. 1940) is a retired Department of Defense Overseas School educator who began his martial arts journey 55 years ago, delving deeply into Oriental studies, qigong, and acupuncture as a continuing lifetime commitment.

Dawn Li, Ph.D., is an entrepreneur, educator and poet, with degrees in linguistics, comparative literature, and information systems from universities in the US and China. She has practiced tai chi, qigong, and meditation for over twenty years and has taught many classes and workshops, where she inspires learners to discover their own rhythm and tune in to their body’s wisdom and healing power, bringing in chants, music, poetry, and calligraphy.

Denise Meyer started studying Taiji twenty-five years ago, first with world push hands champion Stephen Watson, then with Chen Man Ching’s senior student, Maggie Newman. She has also been heavily influenced by work with Rick Barrett, Ken Van Sickle, Robert Mann, and Wei-Ming Chen. A classical saxophonist by training (Northwestern University) and founder and publisher of a boutique press (Eirini Press) focusing on nonduality, she has published books by Lawrence LeShan, Jonathan Bricklin, and others. She has worked in public relations and communications as an independent consultant and at Yale University for over twenty years. Her book, *Swimming in the Sea of Qi: The Taiji Path to Energetic and Spiritual Awareness* based on experiences of modern practitioners whose changes in body, mind and spirit are a window to the Dao will be published by Floating World Press.

Scott Park Phillips teaches traditional Chinese Martial Arts in a non-traditional way. His goal is to access the original intent of the creators of Chinese Internal Martial Arts to get at the core of their inspiration. He is the author of two books: *Possible Origins, Chinese Martial Arts, Theater and Religion*, and *Tai Chi*,

*Baguazhang and The Golden Elixir, Internal Martial Arts Before the Boxer Uprising*. He lives in Boulder, Colorado and has been teaching Children and Adults for over 30 years.

Michael Rinaldini (Shifu Lichangdao) is a Qigong Teacher, a 22<sup>nd</sup> generation Longmen priest, and the founder of the American Dragon Gate Lineage since 2003. He focuses on the Daoist arts of qigong, Zuowang meditation, Daoist scriptures, and solitary retreat practice. A high-level qigong teacher, he offers a 400-Hour Qigong Certification course and has authored five books on qigong and Daoist practices. His current writing project includes an integrated approach to contemplative Christianity and Daoist meditation. [www.qigongdragon.com](http://www.qigongdragon.com)

Ronald C. Smith (b. 1946), a retired U.S. Air Force colonel, has been exploring ancient Chinese health practices for over twenty years and sharing them with his taijiquan students.

John Voigt is the Editor of *Qi Encyclopedia*. He was taught qigong by Christopher Real (Rev. Fa Jun) and many other renowned masters. He writes extensively, contributing to numerous journals and publications. For more, see <http://qi-encyclopedia.com/?author=John-Voigt>.