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Bartholomew P. M. TSUI, *Taoist Tradition and Change: The Story of the Complete Perfection Sect in Hong Kong*. Hong Kong: Christian Study Centre on Chinese Religion and Culture, 1991.

This book, in three parts, traces the history of the Quanzhen 全真, or Complete Perfection, sect – first in its origins, then in its transmission to Hong Kong, and last in its present state. It is a valuable contribution to the field of Taoist studies, a must for anyone interested in Chinese religion and modern history.

In the first part, “Antecedents: The Complete Perfection Tradition,” the author refutes the theory of the nineteenth-century Confucian scholar Chen

Jiaoyou that the sect originated as a political movement of dissent against the invading Jin rulers and was only placed in a Taoist context because it was neither specifically Confucian nor Buddhist. Citing ample evidence both of biographical and doctrinal nature in regard to the early Quanzhen movement, the author shows that the sect was indeed Taoist from the beginning and ultimately traces back to an authentic religious experience.

The second part, "History of Transmission to Hong Kong," traces the transmission of the religion to Guangdong, especially to Mount Luofou, in the late seventeenth century, and to Hong Kong in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Three institutions and major leaders stand out in this context: the Pengying xianguan founded by Mai Xingjie, the Qingsong guan founded by He Qizhong, and the Wande zhishan she founded by Zeng Chengchi.

In the course of this transmission, however, the nature of the sect changed. Monasticism was no longer practiced, the concern with meditation and inner alchemy ceased, and instead the practice of spirit writing with the planchette and the performance of various rituals demanded by the public gained importance. The main link with the Quanzhen of earlier days since then has been the reverence for the immortal Lü Dongbin, or Chunyang, and the formal initiation of Taoists within the Longmen subset of the Quanzhen school, the branch that goes back to the fourth patriarch, Qiu Changchun. Some institutions also maintain the rule of vegetarianism, the regular recitation of scriptures in the morning and evening, and the exclusion of women from the main sanctuary.

The third part of the book, then, "Beliefs and Practices of the Complete Perfection Sect in Hong Kong," deals with the activities of temples and groups associated with the Quanzhen school in Hong Kong today. Religious scriptures, for example, are either taken from the ancient tradition or newly revealed by planchette. Rituals include confessions, services for the dead, and annual observances. Spirit writing especially occupies a central position. Many decisions are made only after consulting with Immortal Lü, and believers come to temples regularly to gain answers to questions and find healing from diseases.

While the book as a whole is very informative and makes use of certain relevant Western studies on Taoism (though not of the works of K. M. Schipper and J. Lagerwey on Taoist ritual), it is lacking in religion theory and is rather vague when it comes to comparing Quanzhen with other Taoist groups and/or non-Chinese religions. At several points in the work, for example, revelation and divine inspiration—either in a meditative trance or vision or through spirit writing with the planchette—appear as the central issue, the key point of origin and transmission of Taoism, not only of the Quanzhen sect but in general. The author asserts that the way of finding religious truths from the divine is typical for Taoism in general (p. 21) and that the behavior of people involved in such revelations is not unknown from other religious traditions (p. 23). Still, the nature of revelation is not defined in the terms of critical scholarship, nor are the differences within Taoism discussed. Is it possible that here we might have a defining characteristic that binds together all Taoist groups? Or is the concept of "revelation" so vague as not to be useful after all?

The same holds true for the phenomenon of healing. While mentioned time and again as a key element in the establishment and growth of Quanzhen cen-

ters in Guangdong and Hong Kong, the link to the early Celestial Masters and their emphasis on healing through prayer, talismans, and exorcistic rituals is not drawn, nor is the frequent importance of healing in cults and religious sects pointed out. Here again, a unifying bond among the various Taoist groups has been ignored—for the sake of presenting Taoism, and especially Quanzhen, as a religion without “unity of views” (p. 143).

Another puzzling point arises again in connection with the idea of revelation. The author describes some revelations in the recent past (e. g., p. 88) and refers to revealed texts among the sacred scriptures of current sects. At the same time, he casts serious doubt on the genuine quality of the planchette readings obtained. On the development of the Zhibao sect through He Qizhong, he says, for example: “He never let an opportunity slip up. . . . He immediately called his friends to form a charitable society. Any delay would have allowed Lü [the major donor to the sect] to change his mind. All these events were carefully orchestrated with appropriate messages from Lü Tsu [Dongbin]” (p. 108). Is this truly the “objective analysis” it claims to be? Or is it rather a hesitation in the face of overwhelmingly strange religious occurrences? A more comparative angle, a more thorough look at other traditions and the way scholars deal with such issues there, might have improved the presentation.

The same holds true for the discussion of the gradual growth of Quanzhen mythology (pp. 57–59). While not unreasonable, it is founded on generalities such as: “It is a common phenomenon found among religious traditions that they seek the guarantee to the efficacy of their teachings by assigning a divine revelation” (p. 57). And again, on the issue of syncretism: “When the selected elements are more or less successfully integrated into a whole, it is called syncretism. . . . If a teaching is essentially Taoist, it cannot be called a syncretism of the Three Teachings” (pp. 31–32). Here again, a more detailed discussion of the theoretical issues involved would be useful.

Still, the material presented in the book takes us a good step further in our knowledge of the concrete events that led from the foundation of Quanzhen, through Wang Chongyang in the twelfth century, to the various planchette cults and temples associated with that name in Hong Kong today. The material, moreover, is presented with exemplary clarity, using numerous sub-headings and organizing arguments in easily accessible, numbered paragraphs. For example, the author gives four definitions of Quanzhen (pp. 37–40), three periods in the history of the Pengying xianguan (p. 96), lists of Quanzhen patriarchs, lists of institutions in Hong Kong, and many other useful pieces of information, all clearly described and easy to access.

A point of regret in the presentation, however, is the large number of misprints and misspellings (e.g., “geneology” for “genealogy” [p. 24]; “lost” for “loss” [p. 189]) and the numerous errors in basic English grammar—mixing up tenses (e.g., p. 99), mismatching singulars and plurals, “all” and “every,” and the like. Moreover, there is no index, and the method of citing Taoist texts, though using the Harvard Yenching Index, is rather unusual.

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