An alternative study of Chinese history: Two Daoist temples

Joan Lorraine Mann

University of Nevada, Las Vegas

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AN ALTERNATIVE STUDY OF CHINESE
HISTORY: TWO DAOIST TEMPLES

by

Joan Lorraine Mann

Bachelor of Arts
San Jose State University
1979

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirement for the

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Joan Lorraine Mann

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Two Daoist Temples"

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Examination Committee Chair

Dean of the Graduate College

Examination Committee Member

Examination Committee Member

Graduate College Faculty Representative
ABSTRACT

An Alternative Study of Chinese History:
Two Daoist Temples

by

Joan Lorraine Mann

Dr. Sue Fawn Chung, Examination Committee Chair
Associate Professor of History
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

The Daoist temple is a largely overlooked feature in the study of the history of China. The temple has been an important component of Chinese history since the *Zhou* dynasty, beginning in the Spring and Autumn period and continuing into the Warring States period. It is Daoism that made immortals of mortal Chinese war heroes, emperors, leaders, and ancestors. It is these celestials and immortals, found only in a Chinese Daoist temple that can so successfully relate the history of the common man in China. The Chinese have venerated these Daoist celestials and immortals to the status of “gods,” and it is these gods that are honored today in every Daoist temple in China and America. Many Daoist rituals developed as early as the eleventh century are still being practiced daily, with subtle variations, in a Daoist temple in Shanghai, China and a Daoist temple

---

1 The Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods in Chinese history (770-221 B.C.) were a time of upheaval and turbulence. The Eastern *Zhou* dynasty is divided into two historical periods; the Spring and Autumn period, 740-476 B.C. and the Warring States period, 475-221 B.C. For more information on this era in Chinese history see Michael Loewe and Edward L. Shaughnessy, *The Cambridge History of Ancient China: From the Origins of Civilization to 221 B.C.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).
in Marysville, California.

This thesis is an examination of the historical, social and religious reasons and motivations behind the longevity of the Chinese Daoist temple, including its rituals and its deities, and the role each temple plays in the history of the community it serves. The temples chosen for this study were selected because of their contemporary status. They are the Baiyunguan (White Cloud) Temple in Shanghai, China and the Bok Kai Temple in Marysville, California. The historical significance of these two temples and their deities is investigated by using an interdisciplinary approach that includes but is not limited to, anthropology, architectural studies, history, philosophy, science, and sociology. Also important to this interdisciplinary approach is the work of scholars of Chinese religion, specifically Daoism.

Results of this investigation of two active Chinese Daoist temples located on opposite sides of the world shows how it is possible to trace the history of the Chinese people by examining their beliefs in hero gods and deities, and the roles these deities played in the downfall of imperial China. Research on the Chinese Daoist temple in America will address Chinese immigration, and allude to reasons behind the difficulty of the Chinese in America to assimilate and acculturate.

This study also looks at the problems, and successes, of the Baiyunguan Temple and the Bok Kai Temple as they enter the current century. Since the founding of the People’s Republic of China, Daoism has been under the protection of Chinese law with the goal of perpetuating and developing Daoist traditions. This includes opening Daoist temples to tourism, which although bringing the temple additional exposure, creates issues that
attach themselves to tourism such as maintaining the integrity of the temple while supporting its maintenance and environmental concerns. Another problem is the declining Daoist population. Daoist in China are once again returning to the temple, but in America in a small California town the decline of a Chinese population is a real concern. However, recent preservation and restoration efforts are giving both temples the historic recognition they deserve.

This research looks at how the Baiyunguan Temple and the Bok Kai Temple have been able to survive for over one hundred years, and will suggest what the future outlook is for these two testaments to China's civilization and culture and to its 5000 year-old history.

Fig. 1

*Bok Kai Temple*

Fig. 2

*"Old" Baiyunguan Temple*

Photo by Joan L. Mann

Photo by Joan L. Mann
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CHRONOLOGY OF CHINESE HISTORY

1600 BC ...................................................... SHANG Dynasty (to c. 1050 BC)
1050 BC ...................................................... ZHOU Dynasty (to 256 BC)
770 BC ...................................................... Eastern ZHOU Dynasty (to 256 BC)

* Spring and Autumn Period (to 481 BC)
  Emergence of the Daoist school of philosophy:
  writings of Laozi and Zhuangzi; emphasis on
  man’s relationship to nature and the universe,
  and harmony with the “Way”; underlying forces
  of the universe manifested in the principles of
  “Yin” (female) and “Yang” (male) and their
  interaction in all natural phenomena.

c. 479 BC ...................................................... Death of Confucius
403 BC ...................................................... Warring States Period (to 221 BC)
286 BC ...................................................... Death of Zhuangzi (b. 396 BC)
221 BC ...................................................... QIN Dynasty unifies China
  First Emperor undertakes massive projects (to 210 BC)
213 BC ...................................................... Burning of Confucian books
206 BC ...................................................... HAN Dynasty (to AD 220)
212 ...................................................... Emperor Wudi succeeds to throne (to 87 BC)
c. 85 BC ...................................................... Court Historian Sima Qian completes Historical Records
AD 9 ...................................................... Wang Mang usurps throne; founds XIN Dynasty (25)
25 ...................................................... Eastern HAN Dynasty (to 230)
105 ...................................................... Paper is first mentioned
184 ...................................................... Rebellion of the “Yellow Turbans”
220 ...................................................... Age of Division (to 589); Three Kingdoms Period (to 265)
265 ...................................................... Western JIN Dynasty (to 316), reunites China in 280
317 ...................................................... Eastern JIN Dynasty, beginning of division of North and South (to 589)
589 ...................................................... Reunification of China by SUI Dynasty (581-618)
609 ...................................................... Construction of Grand Canal completed
618 ...................................................... TANG Dynasty (to 907)
713 ...................................................... Death of 6th Patriarch of Chan Buddhism
843 ...................................................... Suppression of Buddhism (to 845)
907 ...................................................... Five Dynasties Period (to 960)
960 ...................................................... SONG Dynasty (to 1276); Northern SONG Dynasty (to 1126)
1127 ...................................................... Southern SONG Dynasty in South China (to 1276)
1215 ...................................................... Mongols seize most of North China
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DEFINITION OF TERMS

Translating from Chinese to English is a difficult task and always requires careful choices on the part of the translator. It is important to note here that in the Chinese language a Chinese character often has multiple meanings, so when translating Chinese into English the meaning can often become too specific or too narrow. The writer of this thesis chose, for example, that when translating the names of Daoist temples and deities to opt for a direct translation into English if it was plausible and helpful to the reader. If the English translation was not plausible, the author has used the correct translation, or at least one that does not mislead. Also, while Dao, Daoist, and Daoism are now the accepted pinyin spellings of these terms, the older spellings of Tao, Taoist and Taoism are used when referring to the proper names of publications and organizations that retain the Wade-Giles Romanization. However, when materials are used from foreign language publications in China, the author has accepted and used those printed spellings rather than English interpretations.
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PREFACE

This study is the result of a childhood love of China, and all things Chinese. Maybe it is because my father returned from his sea duties with gifts from exotic ports in China, or maybe it was because of the articles I read, or the photographs I saw in a magazine of Madame Chiang Kai-shek, taken when she spoke to the United States Senate in 1943.\(^1\)

Whatever it was, my love of China and all things Chinese has never been sated, nor has it abated. The more I came to learn about this foreign country with its 5000 year-old history, the more I wanted to know. I wanted to understand what it would be like to live in China, in a country with such a long and storied history. I wanted to learn to eat with chopsticks, and to speak that rapid-fire sing-song language. But most of all I wanted to learn as much as I could about the history of China, its people, its arts, its literature, and its poetry. I found that I was a “round-eye” who wanted to experience what it would be like to be Chinese. I never dreamed how complicated it would be to understand this beautiful and country, its foreign culture and its people.

My research introduced me to the Chinese who had migrated to America during the early 1800s. It told me how the Chinese lived in places called Chinatowns that were in

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\(^1\) In an article in *Time* Magazine in 1943 Mme. Chiang Kai-shek’s address to the United States Senate was described in the following way: “The Senators watched in curious silence as Madame Chiang walked down the aisle of the Senate Chamber. They saw a still face with big dark eyes. They saw a slim, straight figure in a black Chinese gown with here a tiny splash of jade, and there a black sequin’s understated sparkle. ‘Goddamn it’ said one grizzled congressman, ‘I never saw anything like it.’"
reality just a slice of the life each had known back in China. It told me about the many un

unspeakable hardships that the Chinese who migrated to America had to endure. I learned what I had never been taught in any history class; that the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 that isolated so many Chinese from their families and their homeland was the first time America had ever prevented someone from another country from entering.\(^{2}\) I also learned about the San Francisco Cubic Air Tax Ordinance that was imposed in 1870.\(^{3}\) This ordinance was written and directed specifically toward the Chinese, who usually had many members of their extended family living together in one room. This ordinance tax was written so that the Chinese were taxed on the very air they breathed. From my perspective the Chinese I knew were American to their core, and I never realized what their ancestors had endured, or how they had managed to survive under unspeakable conditions. I never considered Chinese religion and its gods, and most importantly I never knew there was such a thing a Daoist temple.

I first became aware of the important role of the temple in Chinese culture while doing research on the lives of three great Chinese philosophers; Confucius, Mencius, and

\(^{2}\) The Chinese Exclusion Act was passed on May 6, 1882 when the American government for the first time passed restrictive legislation pertaining to the Chinese after thirty years of open immigration from China. In 1943 repeal of the Exclusion Act allowed a quota system of 105 Chinese per year. For more information on anti-Chinese legislation see Andrew Gyory, *Closing the Gate: Race, Politics, and the Chinese Exclusion Act* (University of North Carolina Press, 1998).

\(^{3}\) The Cubic Air Ordinance of 1870 prohibited the rental of rooms with less than 500 cubic feet of air per person. Aimed specifically at the Chinese, this ordinance lasted three years and was not voided by the County Court of San Francisco until 1873.
Laozi. In my ensuing reading and research I found that the Chinese Daoist temple has endured through the reigns of fifteen imperial dynasties. It would also endure the rebellion that established the Republic of China, and the upheaval in 1949 that created the People’s Republic of China that ultimately became the Chinese communist government. The fact that the Daoist temple still endures today is testament to its historical and cultural significance.

Throughout Chinese history the Daoist temple has been transplanted to sites wherever the Chinese have settled, becoming the center for their activities. Because of this longevity the Chinese Daoist temple is one of the foundations of Chinese culture and an important backbone of Chinese society. Without the continuation of the Daoist temple it is possible that we in the West would have no proof that China indeed is capable of passing down to future generations its long and important history.

My introduction to the Daoist temple in America came about in a unsuspecting way. My instructor introduced me to the Bok Kai Temple, located in Marysville, as one of the important historic Chinese buildings in California. The Bok Kai Temple had

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4 Three of the most important Chinese philosophers in Chinese history are Confucius, who was a thinker, a political figure and an educator; Mencius, who like Confucius concerned himself with political theory and political practices; and Laozi, the one from whom philosophical Daoism traces its origins. The name “Laozi” literally means “old man” or “old master”. In many Daoist temples Laozi is revered as one of the most important deities.

5 The People’s Republic of China (PRC) was established in 1949 when the First Plenary Session of the Chinese People’s Political Consultation Conference named Mao Zedong as Chairman. This conference was the forerunner of the current Communist PRC in China.

6 In 2001 the Bok Kai Temple was included in the list of the “11 Most Endangered Properties in the United States”, designated by the National Trust for Historic Preservation.
recently been awarded inclusion into the prestigious National Register of Historic Places. I, a native northern Californian, never knew there was a Chinese temple in Marysville and so my saga began.

In the summer of 2003 I visited four of the most well-known Chinese Daoist temples in Northern California. I arranged for my visits ahead of time, and this allowed for an in-depth tour at each site. I visited the Bok Kai Temple in Marysville where I viewed the deity Bok Kai, the Oroville Chinese Temple maintained by the City of Oroville that displays Daoist, Confucian, and Buddhist deities, the Temple of Kwan tai (Guan di) in Mendocino where the deity Guan di holds the place of honor, and the Weaverville Chinese Temple, (Joss House) located in the Trinity Mountains of northern California and maintained by the California Park Service, where Guan di is also the most important deity. I was amazed at the amount of Chinese history each temple represented, and the many different facets of Chinese history that each temple had experienced. I was equally excited about the depth of knowledge of the site stewards who related to me wonderful temple histories. I began to realize here was a history about the Chinese in California that had never been told; a history about the everyday life of Chinese immigrants as seen through the eyes of the Daoist temple.

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7 The deity Bok Kai is know as the “Water God” in the Daoist pantheon. He is sometimes called the “North Star God.”

8 The deity Guan di is known as the God of War” in the Daoist pantheon. He is sometimes referred to as the “God of Literature.” A “Joss House” is another name used for a Chinese association house or temple. The word Joss originates from the Portuguese word “deos” and is loosely defined as “god”. The word “joss” is a mixture of Chinese pidgin and English.
In 2004-2005 I arranged to go to China for a year to continue my research on the history of the Daoist temple. In Shanghai a temple suggested to me as a good research subject surprised me, because I found that I had to discern whether it was Daoist, Buddhist, or Confucian. After I had made my decision to make the Baiyunguan Temple my research subject I was surprised to learn that the temple had recently been selected for preservation activities by Shanghai City government.9

During a research trip to Beijing I also had the privilege of visiting the original White Cloud Temple which is home not only to the Chinese Daoist College but also the home of the China Daoist Association.10

As my study of the temples took me deeper and deeper into Daoism, the only philosophy/religion/ folk-religion indigenous to China, I found myself having to make some important decisions. Was the religion itself going to be the most important component of my research, or would it be the temples? Although the two are inextricably entwined, in the end I chose the Chinese temple and its deities as the connecting point between the history of China and the Chinese people, and with this as my mantra I decided that the Baiyunguan Temple in Shanghai and Bok Kai Temple in Marysville, California, both slated for preservation activities, were not only excellent research subjects, but examples of this important connection.

9 Shanghai Daily Star, (unknown author; no byline) December, 2005, 8.

10 The Daoist College is located in the White Cloud Temple in Beijing. On the author's visit it was learned that the Daoist College is China's first institution of higher learning devoted to the study of Daoism. Religious courses account for about seventy percent of the total curriculum. The China Daoist Association was founded in 1957. The Association headquarters are located within the buildings of the White Cloud Temple in Beijing.
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I would like to express my gratitude to the members of my committee, Dr. Andrew Kirk, Dr. Louisa McDonald, and Dr. David Wrobel. To my committee chair Dr. Sue Fawn Chung, a special thank you for your constant guidance and support.

To Dr. Wrobel I want to say thank you for teaching me the importance of historiography, and to Dr. Kirk for teaching me what it means to be a Public Historian. To Dr. McDonald I owe a debt of eternal gratitude. I also want to give special thanks to Dr. Zhuang for his help in translating Chinese terms used in this thesis. I want to say a very special thank you to Dr. Sun Hong, Professor of Physics at Shanghai Jiao Tong University. Dr. Sun was especially enlightening on how to better understand Chinese history and culture from a Chinese point of view. Throughout our many meetings, and because of his thoughtful insights and understanding of Chinese culture, I learned to understand and appreciate the beliefs and rituals that play such an important part of daily life for the Chinese people, whether they live in America or China. To Kitty in Shanghai, thank you for all the translations. To Janet, thanks for making those many temple trips with me during our teaching year in China. To Alan, I will always remember your words of wisdom. To Michelle, special thanks for being my friend and travel companion on our research trips. Your advice and unerring understanding of what I was trying to accomplish helped me tremendously during the development of this thesis. Last but not least, I want to thank my family, Jason, Liz, Keith, Murray, Jeannette and Blake, Christopher and Mackenzie for taking the time out of their busy lives to listen to the
reading and re-reading of my many rewrites. Their excellent layman’s suggestions and insights gave me not only new avenues to pursue, but the encouragement and support I needed to continue my research and writing. They were my inspiration, and their patience with me throughout this process was never-ending. To each one I owe an eternal debt of gratitude.

This thesis is dedicated to all of you. Without each one of you, this thesis would never have come to fruition.
...We put thirty spokes together and call it a wheel; but it is on the space where there is nothing that the usefulness of the wheel depends.

We turn clay to make a vessel; but it is on the space where there is nothing that the usefulness of the vessel depends.

We pierce doors and windows to make a house; And it is on these spaces where there is nothing that the usefulness of the house depends.

Therefore just as we take advantage of what is, we should recognize the usefulness of what is not...

Lao Zi, *Tao Te Ching*, Chapt. 11.
CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Beginnings

It is impossible to speak with certainty about the events of five thousand or more years ago and when tracing the origin of the Daoist temple in China, only rough conclusions can be drawn. Although there are authentic records of early Chinese Daoism, it is not known exactly where and when the first Daoist temple was erected or how the Daoist temple survived throughout the ever-changing dynamics of fifteen imperial dynasties. What is known is that the Daoist temple today is still an active entity in both in China and America, recording its history and addressing concerns in its constituency while performing the rites and rituals developed thousands of years ago.

Daoism, a major religion of the Chinese people, was brought to America during the mid 19th century by Chinese workers who had migrated to find their fortunes during the California gold rush. Daoism, one of the intellectual pillars of traditional Chinese culture, has always been the chosen religion of the common man in China. Wherever Chinese settled and worked in America, a community was established and a Daoist temple building came into being. That building was known as a guan, (a watchtower) or a miao or miu, (a temple). The natural surrounding of the Daoist building was referred to

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1 See “Chronology of Chinese History” at the beginning of this thesis.
as a tai (terrace) or a yuan (a courtyard). Daoists believe that the celestial and immortal deities they brought with them from China to America must be housed in one of these buildings so they could be closer to the heavens. They firmly believed the deities placed in these buildings would protect them from the evils they faced in their everyday lives in their new country of America. Even in China, Emperor Wu di, the seventh emperor of the Han dynasty (141 B.C – 78 B.C.) believed immortal deities must have a home close to heaven. When he was told by Daoist priests that the deities he honored liked to live in high places, he ordered the construction of the Feilian guan, the tallest temple to be built during his reign, in the city of Xi’an, China. From these beginnings, the term guan has come to be used in the names of many Daoist temples.

Why is the Chinese Daoist temple such an important part of the history of the Chinese community? In both China and America the Daoist temple is erected not just as a place to practice a belief, but rather as the place to attend to the overall needs of those in the Chinese community. Deities representing Daoist celestials and immortals chosen for inclusion in each temple can go far in explaining the history of the community including family connections to deities or immortals, births, deaths, floods, famines, wars, or any other event that occurred during their lifetime. Understanding these deities goes far in explaining what needs a particular community faced during the different periods in their history.

For further information on early Chinese architecture see the book by Fu Xinian, Chinese Architecture (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002) with descriptions of the Han Dynasty, including Emperor Wu(di), who is said to have built the highest building in the city of Xian.
history as well as about the hopes and fears they had about their future. When we understand the importance of the Daoist temple in the everyday life of the Chinese we can better clarify why it was the Daoist temple that found its way to America from China during the time of the California gold rush. We will also better understand how the Daoist temple is still telling the history of the Chinese people in both China and America.

**Purpose of this Study**

The goal of this study is to convey the history that can be told from by researching a Daoist temple. As Daoism is a unique Chinese religion, with characteristics and practices clearly distinct from Confucianism and Buddhism, so its temples are unique in their function and purpose. China's history tells us that the country was always in a prolonged state of flux that was interrupted by periods of stability and peace. When the ways of old China were first tested by the activities of Western powers during the early 1800's who were eager to establish a foothold in the trade mecca of China the result was that Western powers moved in and forcibly leased parts of China, mostly along its coastline.\(^3\) By the 1840's and after the Opium War (1839-1842), there were the Germans in Qingdao, the French and British in Shanghai, the British in Guangdong, and Hong Kong, and the Portuguese in Macao. For the Chinese, this led to a loss of status (face) and a general atmosphere of insecurity. It was during this time that many Chinese turned to the deities in the Daoist temple for help and protection. Throughout this period Daoism and its

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\(^3\) Henrietta Harrison, *Inventing the Nation: China* (London: Oxford University Press, 2001). Harrison's descriptions of the Opium Wars as the beginnings of new periods in Chinese history are thoroughly and thoughtfully explained. 59-65
temples would have a difficult time as western missionaries debunked their traditional religious myths and legends, and belief in their celestial gods was being toppled. However, with its tenets of longevity and martial practices Daoism would manage to continue to flourish on a smaller scale, and often in secrecy, throughout its period of instability.  

During the Cultural Revolution (1966-1969) and beyond when the Chinese were encouraged to do away with all remnants of traditional culture and religion, many Daoist deities and artifacts as well as many of the temple buildings were destroyed. With the death of *Mao Zedong* in 1976, and under the new leadership of *Deng Xiaoping* and the Four Modernizations plan, China would begin to reopen and the way would be paved for the rebirth of Daoism. Since 1980, all religious organizations and practices as well as the academic study of religion have undergone a revival in China. Daoism is practiced openly and is once again the religion of the common man and the Chinese Daoist temple is once again flourishing, undergoing modernizations and adaptations in accordance with the needs of its communities.

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4 An example of this secrecy is found with the “Yellow Turbans,” a Chinese secret society that was founded during the 2nd century. This peasant group is believed to have been Daoist in inspiration, as they wore yellow headdresses signifying their association with the elements of “earth” which they believed could overthrow the “fire” (red) element represented the *Han* who were excessively taxing the peasants.

5 After *Mao Zedong*’s death in 1976, *Deng Xiaoping* became the Chinese leader in 1977. He would institute the Four Modernizations Plan which included the modernization of China’s agricultural, industry, science and technology, and the military.
Thesis Structure

Chapter One examines the purpose this thesis, its structure and its methodology and historiography. It also discusses the two Daoist temples, one in Shanghai, China and one in Marysville, California. Chapter Two provides an overview of Daoism in China and a discussion of the ancient Daoist deities, rituals, and temples. Chapter Three researches the Baiyunguan Temple in Shanghai, China, its physical appearance and design, and its important deities and daily rites and rituals. It also discusses the importance of the Baiyunguan Temple to its community, and its adaptation in communist China. The Daoist temple is looked at through the lens of tourism and preservation efforts, and what the temple means as a lesson in cultural heritage. The research done for Chapter Four focuses on the Bok Kai temple, its physical appearance and design, its deities and gods, and the importance of the annual festival in the community -- the Bomb Day celebration. It looks at the problems and solutions of preservation issues surrounding this temple, and it investigates the Bok Kai as a lesson in the cultural history of those Chinese who came to America during the gold rush and settled in the City of Marysville. Chapter Five illuminates the importance of the Daoist temple in ancient Chinese history, and its successful evolution into the present. It looks at the contributions made by the Daoist temple to cultural heritage of China and it makes future predictions about the fate of the Chinese Daoist temple.
Historiography

Early on most western-centric approaches about China and the Chinese people were enhanced by the popular writings in the 1860s and 1870's of both Mark Twain and Bret Harte, who did not see the Chinese immigrants in America in the context of an already existing culture. Their fictionalized accounts of the Chinese experience influenced other writers who then produced a new series of hostile stereotypes, and soon the world of the evil Fu Manchu was born. America's images of China were also enhanced by popular magazines of the late 19th and early 20th century such as Puck, and Harper’s Weekly. The translations of Ezra Pound in 1915 that are found in his poetic explorations into Chinese history that were attempts to synthesize Eastern and Western culture and connect past and was also misleading. In 1930 the American public was strongly influenced by Pearl Buck’s detailed attempts to portray Chinese rural life that only added more stereotypes to what was thought to be Chinese reality. The outcome in America was that any assessment of China, and the Chinese people, always drew on this kind of

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7 See Robert McClellan, The Heathen Chinese: A Study of American Attitudes Toward China, 1890-1905 (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1971) or Feng Lan, Ezra Pound and Confucianism (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005) and Ezra Pound’s translations (and omissions) in his writings of Chinese poetry that often contained misleading images that contributed America’s misunderstanding of both China and the Chinese. Pearl Buck, The Good Earth, (1931), as the daughter of missionaries to China, grew up in a Chinese farming community of mostly Chinese peasants. Buck would use these Chinese peasants as the foundation for the characters in her literary works. As America grew up reading these kinds of materials, it became more and more difficult for the American public to separate the true Chinese who lived in both America and China from the Chinese portrayed in these books.
imagination or stereotype.

As Grant Hardy points out in his article about *Ssu-Ma Ch'ien* (*Sima Qian*) in *History and Theory*, most academic writing about China presupposed distinctions that have been used in the rise of Western historical writing such as myth vs. history and chronicle vs. history that is written and arranged chronologically and with a documentary basis.*

*Ssu-ma*, Hardy says, initiated a new way of recounting Chinese history by presenting in His chapters particular subjects such as annals, chronicles, treatises and biographies in order to portray his view of the Chinese world by using the narrative. *Ssu-Ma's* histories, which are really at odds with Western modes of history, are the most important historical source for information about the events and characters in imperial China that Chinese historians use today.

Paul A. Cohen on the other hand, in *Discovering History in China*, suggests the historical framework most influential among American historians writing about China in the 1950's and 1960's was either the impact-response approach or the tradition-modernity approach, with the imperialism approach coming later in the 1960's.^ All of these western frameworks created a much more scattered picture of Chinese history than *Ssu-Ma's* *Records of the Grand Historian*, because most of the Chinese histories written in the West were written chronologically, as dynastic history.

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Asian religious history did not fare much better. Scholars such as Edward Said, and later Larry Wortzel, were more intent on probing the social and economic roots of popular behavior and religion by comparing them to Marxist or Marxist influenced frameworks. Approaches to Chinese history and religion became heavily burdened with Western-centric assumptions that distorted past Chinese reality. As the study of Chinese religion slowly became an integral part of the study of Chinese history, Daniel Overmeyer and Susan Naquin would treat the religious beliefs of their subjects with the utmost seriousness when they saw religious beliefs playing a primary role in people’s lives.

Beginning in the 1970’s and 1980’s, the study of Chinese popular cultural history rather than elite historical culture became another avenue of writing about Chinese history as evidenced in works such as those edited by David Johnson, Andrew J. Nathan, and Evelyn S. Rawski. Topics were dealt with that had never before been looked at in Chinese popular culture; subjects as diverse as Shanghai prostitutes, rickshaw pullers, and even wartime propaganda. As the study of Chinese popular culture gained


12 See David Johnson, Andrew J. Nathan, and Evelyn J. Rawski, eds. Popular Culture in Late Imperial China (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 117.

13 Ibid, 222
acceptance, one trend that soon stood out was its inevitable attachment to the study of Chinese religion. Anthropologists who had been studying Chinese folk religion for many years began to write about symbolic forms of anthropological study. This can be seen in the writings of Prasenjit Duara, and James Hevia. Duara wrote about the Chinese God of War Guan di,¹⁴ (also known as Guan Yu,) where he discovered the importance of the use of the cultural symbols he had found embedded in important Chinese myths. Hevia's work centers more on the realms of ceremony and ritual present in the ancient Chinese courts, and he uses the Macartney visit of 1793 in an effort to understand the importance of ceremony and ritual in dealings with the Chinese.¹⁵

There is an important premise here that needs to be explained. In any field of historical inquiry, the intellectual and cultural areas in which a historian works are constantly undergoing a process of development and redevelopment. As knowledge is accumulated and archival and other sources of data previously unknown are uncovered, the historian may feel the need to present someone else's writing as a confirmation of their current study. The study of Chinese Daoism falls into this category.

There are many writings both old and new on Daoism, and new perspectives are being gained daily as easier access to Daoist documents becomes available. However, no


¹⁵ In the book by James Hevia, Cherishing Men from Afar: Qing Guest Ritual and the Macartney Embassy of 1793 (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1995) he relates the story of how Lord George Mccartney, who was King George Ill's foreign emissary to China, refused to perform the ritual of prostrating himself full-length on the ground before the Chinese emperor thus endangering further relations between the two countries. 1-3.
in-depth study of the Daoist temple is currently available although references to "temples" can be found in almost all forms of Chinese narrative. As this author was unable to locate any specific studies to act as a confirmation of this study, the conclusions drawn in this thesis could not be arrived upon by using either a Chinese or western form of historical writing as the norm. It was only after focusing on the picture of the Daoist temple as being historically static and yet in a state of flux throughout its long history that the author could focus on a historiography rooted in Chinese culture, but transported in situ into the historical experience of the American West.

This study owes a great deal to the information provided by some of the most noted experts in the field of Daoism such as Livia Kohn, Kristofer Shipper, and Isabelle Robinet, all of whose works are available in English.\(^\text{16}\) Also important to this study are publications by the China Daoist Association, the Shanghai Daoist Association, and interviews with Chinese Daoists made available to the author in China. Without gaining this underlying knowledge of Daoism the research that was needed to develop the study of the Daoist temple would not have been possible.

In the last few decades many aspects of Daoism have been finding their way into the American culture. One of these Daoist practices is the popular *feng shui*, which is a way

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\(^{16}\) Livia Kohn is Professor of Religion and East Asian Studies at Boston University. She has writes extensively on Daoism. See *Early Chinese Mysticism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 1992); *The Taoist Experience* (Albany: State University of New York Press 1993); *God of the Dao* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press 1998) and *Daoism and Chinese Culture* (Cambridge: Three Pines Press 2001). Also see Kristofer Shipper, *The Taoist Body* (Berkeley: University of California Press 1994). This is a translated work from 1982 that was the first overall account of Daoism in almost twenty years that provided a comprehensive guide to Daoism. Also see Isabelle Robinet's translated work *Taoist Meditation* (Albany: SUNY 1993)
of placing buildings, houses and furniture to create the most harmonious flow of qi to ensure maximum harmony and good luck.\textsuperscript{17} Although Daoists have practiced feng shui for thousands of years, it is only recently that feng shui in America is recognized as a Daoist ritual. A useful look at how to practice feng shui is the book by Lillian Too, Chinese Wisdom: Spiritual Magic for Everyday Living.\textsuperscript{18}

The Temples

The investigation of historical resources can be done in many ways, but the boundaries used between the types of sources the historian finds may be difficult to overcome. This was one of the major hurdles found in doing research on Daoist temples. One example of this kind of problem deals with artifact sources. Most are not available to the general public in a Daoist temple. Artifacts such as the temple gong and drum are available for viewing but not available for touch, examination, or photos. In most cases, the taking of photographs is usually not allowed anywhere inside a Daoist temple.

In the case of the Baiyunguan Temple in Shanghai which contains the statues of over twenty deities, this was a major problem. Occasionally a special visit to the temple could be arranged through the caretaker, but a Chinese interpreter is needed because neither

\textsuperscript{17} "Qi" is believed to be the dragon's cosmic breath that swirls around the environment and pervades every place in the universe. The Chinese believe that all physical skills that deal with the environment, human endurance and creativity, describe the importance of this life force. Qi must never be blocked in the home and it should be allowed to flow from room to room or it is believed the luck of the family will deteriorate.

\textsuperscript{18} Feng shui, the literal meaning is "wind and water." Feng shui practice is dependent upon an understanding of how the five elements, earth, wood, water, metal, and fire interact with each other. Good feng shui is believed to create a positive, auspicious environment that is conducive to harmony and balance.
the priests nor Daoist devotees would speak to a foreigner about temple deities. If and
when permission was granted to ask questions, an interpreter was used to ask the specific
questions. It soon became obvious, in most cases, the answers to questions were
often becoming filtered by the personal bias of the interpreter.

Fortunately Bok Kai Temple sources were more abundant, and were found in the form
of printed materials such as former studies that included the temple, newspaper articles,
or updates written regarding preservation activities surrounding the Bok Kai Temple.
However, in this temple as in the one in Shanghai, investigation and inspection of
the deities and artifacts is not allowed, and no photographs may be taken inside the
temple.\footnote{19} At the Bok Kai Temple persons wishing to visit the temple for tours or
worship must first call for a reservation time, as the temple is not open at all hours.

Shanghai, China

Shanghai is one of the most important historical cities in China, although by Chinese
standards it is relatively new, founded in the 10\textsuperscript{th} century. It was during the Tang and
Song dynasties that the Shanghai area first became populated and economically
prosperous. By the time of the Ming and Qing dynasties it had reached new heights and
after 1830, as a major trade city to western countries, it became an important seaport.
Even before the fall of the Qing dynasty the walled Old Chinese City in the heart of the
Shanghai Nantao region that had been a market town for many generations contributed to

\footnote{19} The author, in the summer of 2007, was accorded permission to take photographs during a
special National Trust for Historic Preservation visit and tour of the temple.
Shanghai’s reputation as the largest port city in China opened to the outside world. This
epicenter was of a mixture of both Chinese and western culture that still exists today.

It was only after the Treaty of *Nanjing* between Britain and China in 1842, at the
conclusion of the Opium War, that the old walled city of Shanghai agreed to open its
doors to foreigners. Before that time a Daoist temple was never seen or visited by
anyone other than the Chinese. As foreigners were not allowed or encouraged to enter
the walled Old Chinese City, Europeans and Americans carved out the land around the
outside of the old walled city and it was here they would build and establish their foreign
concessions. Today, what is left of the Old Chinese City and remnants of its wall
have become an important stop on any tourist itinerary in Shanghai. When the
Shanghai City government decided to relocate the old *Baiyunguan* Temple, it was
placed not far from a remnant of the old city wall, close to busy *YuYuan* Garden and
Market.

In the early 20th century the *Baiyunguan* Temple slumped into gradual decline

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20 Opium War 1839-1842. In 1839 the *Qing* court sent an imperial commissioner to *Guangzhou*
to compel the British to stop bringing opium to China. The commissioner had to force them
westerners to surrender their opium by barricading them inside their factories. The British then
launched attacks on the southeast coast of China in retaliation. By 1842 the *Qing* were forced to
agree to the Treaty of *Nanjing*, which had provisions for extraterritoriality, indemnity, and tariffs.
An excellent discussion of the Treaty of Nanjing can be found in Peter Ward Fay’s, *The Opium
War, 1840-1842: Barbarians in the Celestial Empire in the Early Part of the Nineteenth Century*,

21 *YuYuan* Garden and Market is located not far from the tourist shopping area on *Nanjing* Road.
The governor of *Sichuan* created this Garden of Joy (*YuYuan*) for his father in the 16th century.
Some of the land was later sold to guilds of merchants, destroyed and then rebuilt and today is a
popular destination for tourists.
and during the Cultural Revolution (1966-1969) the temple suffered major damage when some of the original paintings and books were destroyed. However, at the time of the relocation of the Baiyunguan in 2004, most of the statues of the temple deities were undergoing a “facelift” and by the middle of 2005 most had been restored to their original state.

Interestingly, as early as 1989 and after Mao Zedong’s death and the opening up of China, the Chinese government allowed the following article to be published in the local newspaper about the Baiyunguan Daoist Temple:

“During the chaotic years between the end of the Qing dynasty and the Republic of China the Baiyunguan (White Cloud) Temple was depressed day by day and its management got in disorder. After the liberation the purity of a Daoist temple was restored to the White Cloud Temple. But during the “Cultural Revolution” the temple was once again damaged, and most of its scriptures, paintings and calligraphies collected were destroyed. After 1978, the Daoist nature of the White Cloud Temple resumed, and all kinds of religious activities were again conducted smoothly.22

Other than a few newspaper articles it is almost impossible to find primary documents pertaining to the old Baiyunguan Temple that was once located within the walled Old Chinese City. The only source available in 2004-2005 was the Shanghai Daily, the local Shanghai newspaper as it was a source for articles that discussed Shanghai city laws and ordinances. The records themselves are not available to the general public and certainly not available to foreigners. As many of these reports were written only in the Chinese edition of the newspaper, a translator was often necessary for exact

22 China Daily Mail, (newspaper article, no byline), May, 1989.
Daoism had its beginning in Shanghai during the Yuan dynasty (1271-1368) and according to the Songjiang Government Record, built its first temple to honor the founder of the Quanzhen branch of Daoism. During the next five hundred years of the temple’s existence it would have no role of importance in Daoism. Then in 1886 the temple was renovated and restructured to accommodate the eight thousand scrolls of the Daoist Canon purchased from Beijing’s White Cloud Temple. The Baiyunguan Temple would then became the center for religious Daoism in southern China, where today it is home to the Shanghai Daoist Association, the Shanghai Daoist school, and the home of the Shanghai Daoist publications.

Marysville, California

The first discovery of gold was made on January 24, 1848 by James Marshall at the site of John Sutter’s sawmill on the American River not far from Marysville. After the

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23 Several professors in the English and Foreign Language Department at Shanghai University who are involved in the teaching of English were very helpful to this author in interpreting the meanings of the documents.

24 The Songjiang Government Record (no date could be traced) contains the records of the Shanghai People’s Municipal Government. References to these records are available only through the local newspaper, The Shanghai Daily. See June, 1986. Further information about the different forms of Daoism can be found in Taoism, (Beijing: Foreign Language Press, 2000). This book describes different schools of Daoism practiced throughout Chinese history. It notes that during the Han dynasty the Taiping (Taiping Rebellion 1850) and Tianshi form of Daoism developed. These forms later merged to become the Quanzhen branch of Daoism, now the most popular branch in China.
gold discovery, Chinese immigrants joined the ranks of gold seekers who came to California from all over the world. When the Chinese settled in Marysville, not far from the site of the discovery of gold at Sutter’s Mill, they brought with them their religion, customs, myths and deities. By 1854 they built the Bok Kai Temple to house their deities and honor their gods. The City of Marysville developed on the north bank of the Yuba River just above the junction with the Feather River, where ferry boats brought passengers from the port in San Francisco about 125 miles away. As the foothills of the Sierra Nevada Mountains are only about 20 miles from Marysville, when the gold rush began the north bank of the Yuba River became a jumping-off point for both cargo and miners rushing to the gold mines. By 1850 Marysville became one of the largest cities in California with a population of over 8000.\(^{25}\) (Fig. 3) By the 1860s Marysville was the home of a significant Chinese community, and many of those who reside there today are the descendants of the gold miners and rail workers who were drawn to Marysville in those early days. The Chinese would make up almost a quarter of the Marysville population and they lived in what was considered, after San Francisco, the second largest Chinatown in California. Marysville’s Chinatown was bounded by Elm Street and First Street, “C” and Front Streets and the levees of the Yuba River. The gold miners converged to Marysville’s’ Chinatown whenever they took a break from their mining. There they found not only entertainment and gambling, but a Daoist temple where they

### Table 1
Population Figures, from Federal Censuses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>City of Marysville</th>
<th>All of Yuba County</th>
<th>Sutter County</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Chinese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1850</td>
<td>??</td>
<td>8,000 est.</td>
<td>2,100 est.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1852</td>
<td>??</td>
<td>??</td>
<td>??</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1860</td>
<td>7,281</td>
<td>4,740</td>
<td>1,781</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1870</td>
<td>1,417</td>
<td>4,738</td>
<td>2,337</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1880</td>
<td>1,040</td>
<td>4,321</td>
<td>2,146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1890</td>
<td>478</td>
<td>3,991</td>
<td>974</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1900</td>
<td>483</td>
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<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>12,324</td>
<td>167</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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1. Numbers are from original U.S. government census publications.

2. The number of Chinese in Marysville for 1860 is the recount of the original manuscript census by Chan (1984: 300).

3. These figures include Japanese, India, other races with the Chinese; but the figures reported for the county are Chinese only and most are from Marysville.

*2. Sucheng Chan reviewed the original census documents for 1860, 1870, and 1880 in order to identify the occupations for the Chinese in Marysville. See This Bittersweet Soil: The Chinese in California Agriculture, 1860-1910 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986).
could pay honor to their ancestors and ask for help and protection in their pursuit of wealth as they worked in the California gold fields so far from their homeland.

Current residents of Marysville remember that the first Bok Kai Temple was located on Champlain Street which is a street no longer found on the Sanborn Fire Map of Marysville during this period. (Fig.4) Tradition says the first temple was destroyed in a flood in Marysville around 1866. A more auspicious location was later found for the building of the present temple in 1886. The current Bok Kai Temple is now located on the rear of the lot located on the southeast corner of First and “D” Streets where its entrance directly faces a bank of the Yuba River levee that is approximately twenty feet high.

Today, where there were once thousands of Chinese in Marysville, only a handful remain. Most of the Chinese population began to disappear after WWII when many of the Chinese left in search of jobs. One of the elders, who moved to Marysville in 1937, remembers when everyone knew everyone in Marysville’s Chinatown and there was an active Chinese school and basketball team. Many of the older Chinese residents who still live in Marysville say it is “sad now around Chinatown” where there once were booming opera houses, gambling dens, and benevolent associations that were a bustle of activity.

The rising Chinese anti-sentiment in the American West created difficulties for the Chinese in Marysville and their quest for citizenship in the last half of the 19th century was an uphill struggle against federal and state laws. These federal and state laws and ordinances being passed that targeted the Asian population in America resulted in making
* Note "Joss" House location directly above this text.
many of the Marysville Chinese ineligible for citizenship and thus from owning land.\(^{26}\) Although the due process and equal protection clauses of the U.S. Constitution's Fourteenth Amendment provided the basis for a great many Chinese aliens to seek help in the courts for the violation of their personal and property rights, the denial of citizenship stood as a ban to their integration into the American political community and civil society. Until 1943, when the right to naturalization was granted to Chinese aliens as part of a gesture to America's China ally in the war against Japan, immigrant Chinese were officially non-existent in America's hierarchy of races.

One such California law in 1878 ruled all Chinese ineligible for naturalization, or the granting of citizenship to any Chinese.\(^{27}\) In the early part of the 20\(^{th}\) century laws were still being passed that placed restrictions on the right of Asians to lease or own land.\(^{28}\) The passage of anti-Asian laws combined with economic decline contributed to the departure of most of the Chinese in Marysville, many of whom relocated to places such as Sacramento and San Francisco for work.

Although there are many written histories about Marysville found in local historic society archives the oral histories conducted by this author proved to be the most

\(^{26}\) In 1882 the first Chinese Exclusion Act was passed; See (22 Stat. 58, 1882).

\(^{27}\) In 1878 the Federal Circuit Court in San Francisco ruled that Chinese are ineligible for naturalization: (\textit{Ah Yup}, 1 F. Case 223 C.D.C. Cal. 1878).

\(^{28}\) The Alien Land Law of 1913 (also known as the Webb-Heney Bill) stated that California law had the right to deny any aliens ineligible for citizenship the right to own land. "Aliens ineligible to citizenship" meant Chinese and Japanese aliens, since they were the ones who were ineligible for naturalization under U.S. immigration laws.
important part of the Marysville research. However, the State of California also has abundant resources about Marysville that can be viewed both in state documents and on the internet. The Chinese Historical Society of America, with offices located in San Francisco, also has a variety of materials available about the history of Marysville.

Meetings with members of the Friends of the Bok Kai Temple organization and the Maryville Chinese community produced oral histories and a few personal written letters and documents that were important to the study of the temple.
CHAPTER TWO

DAOISM

Daoism and its Temples

The study of Daoism is useful in helping to understand the history of Chinese spirituality, as it is the only religion to have adopted the spiritual traditions of early China. The practice of Daoism has always been consistent with the ancient Chinese beliefs that include not only the worship of nature, but the importance of ancestral worship. From paintings to literature, Daoist images of sublime realms and the immortals that inhabit them have been an important part of Chinese history. Wherever Chinese have chosen to settle, it is these images that are passed down from generation to generation. The result is many of these traditions have become widespread, and Daoism has evolved into many common practices that are used today in the execution of Chinese customs.

“Religious” Daoism in China was officially born in the 2nd century B.C. during the Han Dynasty, though its doctrine and patterns of thought can be traced back many centuries before the Christian era. The teachings of Laozi and Zhuangzi had an immense impact on Chinese culture during this time, and this impact was only matched by the writings of Confucius.

Zhaungzi was an influential Chinese philosopher who lived around the 4th century during the Warring States Period. The Daoist book Zhuangzi that is named after the philosopher says, “although life is limited the amount of things to know is unlimited.”
Zhaungzi believes a person is presupposed to their own Dao (Way), preordained by a separate past. Laozi, who is traditionally regarded as the founder of Daoism, in later Daoist tradition came to be seen as a personification of Dao. The story of Laozi has taken on strong religious overtones since the Han dynasty, and as Daoism took root it was Laozi that came to be recognized as a "god". This belief resulted in the formation of the Way of the Celestial Master, the first organized religious Daoist sect, where Laozi is believed to have taken on various guises to initiate the faithful in the "Way." Religious Daoism believes that Laozi did not disappear after writing the Dao de jing, but rather traveled to India to reveal the Dao.¹

Daoism enjoyed its most prosperous period in China from the 7th to the 14th century, and along with Confucianism and Buddhism, is considered to be one of the three ideological pillars of medieval China. After the 15th century the mutual influences between these three ideologies began to increase, thus blurring the distinctions between them. Today many Chinese believe in both Buddhism and Daoism and there are many common practices incorporating the values and concepts from both traditions as well as from Confucianism.

The number of Daoist temples and worshippers throughout the world that are purely Daoist has decreased in modern times, but the influence of Daoism on Chinese culture

¹ For more information on Zhaungzi and Laozi see Derek Bryce, Wisdom of the Daoist Masters (New York: St John's University Press, 1961).
has remained a profound part of family life.² The Daoist temple has become not only a place of worship, but a place that offers the protection and practice of Chinese cultural beliefs. It is argued here that the cultural rites and rituals practiced in the Daoist temple constitute a representation of Chinese history that has heretofore been overlooked by many historians in the study of Chinese history.

In temple worship, many of the traditions and doctrines of Daoism have been handed down through the generations by those who worked the land; the peasants. The origin of temple worship is directly related to agricultural activities in ancient China because in ancient times the harvests were heavily dependent on the changing natural environment. For the Chinese farmer, every kind of natural phenomenon was linked to a deity, who in turn linked the natural changes to the spiritual world. If an abundant harvest came, it was a reward from the deities of the natural world; if there was a poor harvest, it was a punishment from the spiritual world. Since the weather had such a powerful influence on farming, the sky and its “heavenly” realms came to be seen as omnipotent. Because of this vital influence on all agricultural activities, other natural elements came to be worshipped such as the moon, the stars, the rivers, the lakes, and the wind and the thunder.

At its founding, Daoism incorporated many of these local influences and deities into

² According to Chinese scholar Zheng Tianxing, as of 1989 there were 31 million Daoist believers that attend more than 600 Daoist temples in China, and approximately 25,000 believers and 54 Daoist temples in North America. For more information see Tianxing Zheng’s pamphlet, *Occidental Daoist Studies and the Spread of Daoism*, (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1989), 208.
its practices and beliefs. The ancestral worship so predominant in Chinese tradition came about because in ancient China people had no way to prevent droughts, floods, and famines. This necessitated the uniting of clans under the leadership of a powerful ruler who came to be viewed as the hero-god. Since many of these hero-gods were considered "ancestors," the hero-god became instrumental in the foundation of the Chinese tradition of ancestral worship. Legendary Chinese hero-gods ancestors such as Fuxi, the Three August Ones, and the Five August Emperors are early examples of these hero-gods.³

Daoism drew from many ancient folk beliefs, including the ancient treatises on immortal doctrines such as yin-yang and the five-elements theories of earth, fire, water, metal and air.⁴ Other ancient doctrines of Daoism came to include astrology, medicine, metallurgy, the calendar, aesthetics, theology, anthropology, and the cultivation of the body in the form of tai qi.⁵ Historically, Daoist philosophy and religion experienced its first prosperous period during the Tang Dynasty (618-907) when it became not only the religion of the common people, but the religion of the ruling class. Under the powerful patronage of Tang emperors during this period, Daoist scholars were ordered to compile a


⁴ The Daoist concepts of yin and yang and the Five Elements define the world's mutually supportive and destructive activities. Daoist believe that everything in the universe falls into one of five categories; earth, metal, water, wood, and fire, and that each of these elements has a yin or yang aspect. Daoism has always looked more to science than the divine to explain the interactions of nature's forces.

⁵ Tai qi can be defined as a physical exercise that resembles graceful, ritualistic dancing. One of the most important aspects of tai qi is its ability to enhance one's physical energy development.
complete set of Daoist scriptures. It would be these scriptures that became the *Exquisite Compendium Of Three Insights*. During the *Song* Dynasty Daoism experienced its second period of expansion and promotion when the *Song* emperors ordered the officials at all local government locations to search for any missing Daoist scrolls. It is believed that more than 7000 Daoist scrolls were collected during the *Tang* and *Song* dynasties. By the late 1800s, when foreign forces invaded Beijing, most of the printing blocks for the Daoist scrolls were destroyed. Only one set of the Daoist scriptures from the *Ming* Dynasty that had been hidden and preserved at the White Cloud Daoist temple in Beijing survived. In 1923 Chinese Daoist scholars, using these texts, began a program of reprinting these reserved texts. When they finished in 1936, they asked the *Hanfenlou* Bookstore in Shanghai to reprint 350 sets, each with 1120 volumes. This *Hanfenlou* edition of the Daoist Texts is now available all over the world, where it is known as the Daoist Canon. Familiar classics such as the *Dao de jing*, *Zhuangzi*, the *Book of Divine Deliverance*, *Classic of Pure Quiet* and the *Basic Index of Compilation of Important Books* are all included in this collection. An important Daoist discovery also took place during the *Qing* Dynasty when the ancient Daoist scrolls were found in

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6 Wang Yi’e, *Daoism in China* (Beijing: China Intercontinental Press 2004) gives an excellent explanation about how the *Exquisite Compendium of Three Insights* were developed. These texts are believed to be revelations received from Daoist deities, 142-145.

7 Ibid, 135.

Cave # 179 at the Mogao Caves at Dunhuang, located in western China. These scrolls, known today as the Dunhuang Daoist Scriptures, were hand written and are said to date from the 6th to the 10th century. Many of these scrolls later were reported stolen from China, first by British explorer Aurel Stein in 1907, and then by Frenchman Paul Pelliot and Russian Pyotr Koslov, and finally by a Japanese, Zuicho Tachibana. Today, through the joint efforts of the Chinese government and many overseas friends of China, a small number of these priceless scrolls have been returned and have been preserved at the Dunhuang caves.

The Daoist temple is an important part of the daily life of a Chinese community because Daoism taught the Chinese people that the spirit world pervades all aspects of their lives. The Chinese believe they must use the Daoist incantations to help to treat an illness, to pass a school examination, to ask for a prosperous and healthy year, and to give thanks to the spirits for the prosperous and healthy year that has just passed. As Daoism is concerned with spirits such as gods, ghosts, and ancestors, and many ghosts are believed to have been neglected ancestors. The more important ancestors and many

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9 Cave # 17 of the Dunhuang caves is popularly known as the “Library Cave”. It was discovered by a Daoist priest in 1900.

10 The Dunhuang caves compromise one of the world’s richest stores of Chinese Buddhist art. Dunhuang was a key station on the “Silk Road” and served a hub of cultural exchange between China and the West in ancient times. The Research Institute of Dunhuang Relics is still examining and recording the contents of all 492 caves and grottos. For further information on this amazing treasure see: The Main Points of the Mongao Grottos, a guidebook printed by the Gansu People’s Fine Arts Publishing House in 2004.

11 Ibid, 142.
historic figures are believed to have attained prominence and become gods because they performed good deeds during their lifetime, and after death their family did not neglect them and gave many offerings to the deities in the temple.

One example of this is the deity Guan Yu (Guan di), the Daoist God of War. As recounted in Romance of the Three Kingdoms, a historical novel based on the turbulent years at the end of the Han Dynasty, Guan Yu started life as a mortal; a vendor of soybean curd. After his heroic actions involving the rescue of a harassed lady and the killing of a tax inspector, he got a taste for battle and began his famous military career.\footnote{See Luo Guanzhong, Romance of The Three Kingdoms, one of the four great classical novels of Chinese literature, written in the 14th century.}

His bravery is legendary, and because he died defending China's legal issues, he became the Daoist God of War as well as Literature. Guan Yu is the main deity in many Daoist temples today. Chinese deities can have real or imaginary biographies that record their dates and deeds as mortals, and both the greater and lesser gods of the Chinese pantheon will vary considerably depending on their local or regional deities. Those with biographies such as Guan Yu enjoy great popularity with the Chinese people.

Though the worship of gods and ancestors in China is traditionally a pragmatic search for divine help in the pursuit of material ends, sometimes the effigies of the gods and their spirit tablets are destroyed if the spirits failed to help the petitioners.

The Daoist temple itself is the place that is used for the veneration of gods and ancestors. This veneration often involves prayer, offerings of food and incense, and the
burning of “spirit money.” Daoist Gods are also venerated using representations such as the posters of door gods which flank shops or house doors during festivals and celebrations. Most of the rituals related to ancestor worship take place in the Daoist temple. This involves offering food and prayers to a family’s ancestral spirits in order to receive ancestral assistance, but also to prevent the ancestors from degenerating into hungry ghosts. The ritual offerings by family members are believed to ensure an ancestors’ ascension to heaven after death. If these offerings are not done in the temple, it is believed the ancestor will return as a vengeful ghost.

Ancestor worship is divided into two forms; the domestic worship of ancestors from the most recent generations whose names are written above the family altar, and the worship of the clan ancestors from important lineages whose names are inscribed on tablets in the clan’s ancestral hall. This latter worship often involves the assembling of clan elders at the temple, especially at the annual veneration ceremony, where roasted pigs are offered to the ancestors. During this ceremony, five or six generations after death the names of the oldest ancestors will be dropped from the family and the family list of ancestors rewritten after a new death.

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13 Over 2,000 years ago Chinese invented and perfected the art of making paper. Spirit money is actually the paper they use to communicate with gods and goddesses in other worlds. The paper can be folded, cut, or painted to look like any object that might be needed in the other world. For many Chinese paper is sacred, especially when it is burned to transform messages to the spirit world.

Importance of Temple Design

Early Daoist temples are believed to have been buildings that were made of thatch and wood. Physical ruins of these early temples have never been found because the building materials used were more vulnerable to weathering and fires as well as being subjected to decomposition over time. The only record that early Daoist temples existed can be found by reading Chinese characters inscribed on stone tablets and mountain rocks located in Daoist mountain retreats. Many of these inscriptions are found on Mount Huangshan and Mount Qiyunshan in the Anhui Province of China, known to have been the places where ancient Daoists "hermits" lived.

The original use of the Daoist temple was for family ancestor worship, so the general term of "temple" has always been used by the Chinese to describe a religious building where families can come together to worship. The traditional process for the building of a Daoist temple for worship can be described in the following way. "When constructing a Daoist temple, one must wait until believers and disciples, carrying axes, have entered from the True Dragon gate at the back and taken up positions in the north-west. Only after it has been seen that all inhabitants of the place have left is work started. In the left hand, one holds a six-foot-long rule, and in the right hand an axe. First the main columns are measured, next the corner column on the left side. Thereafter the distance just to the exterior of the temple gate is measured. The men are then told to start making the first column stile at the right side. Always, when constructing the ancestral hall which serves
as the family temple, a Sanmen is made at the front. Then follow the corridors to the east and the west, and next comes the main hall. Behind the main hall the bright tower and tea pavilion are situated and behind the pavilion is the rear hall. When making the joinery, one starts from the Sanmen and ends with the rear hall. Moreover, the rear hall, the main hall and the corridors and triple gate may increase only gradually in height, just as do sons and grandsons know their rank and does not the younger aspire to the elders place. In the middle part of the rear hall no doors need be made, as it is inside that the gods and ancestors are worshipped.

The important emphasis on the bilateral symmetry of the temple signifies balance; the balance between mind and nature that is so important in Daoism. However, the layout and ritual spaces inside and outside of many Daoist temples may also use a central-axis layout, with a gate to enter, and rooms that will function as a main hall, a “sleeping” hall, and a “washing and dressing” hall. These rooms are surrounded by east and west corridors. Both the Bok Kai Temple and the Baiyunguan Temple are constructed on the

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15 The sanmen is another term used to describe the “Great Hall”, in Chinese Daoist temple construction.


central-axis theme with an external gateway door and a main room that houses a pantheon of deities. The priests and caretaker quarters will usually occupy the outer corridors. The spatial progress in a temple is always from front to back with the main altar assigned principally to the deity for which the temple is named. Side partitions on the right and left are usually reserved for other, less important gods. Geomancy concepts are also important in temple construction and the use of certain colors, numbers and the cardinal directions reflect the Daoist belief in cosmic harmony.

Generally speaking, Daoist temple architecture usually follows the commoners' style while Buddhist architecture follows the imperial style. In the Daoist temple the main deity is located in the main hall in contrast to the Buddhist temple where the Bodhisattva is located in a front hall, followed by the great hall that houses the statues of the Buddhas.

Flat roofs are uncommon and gabled roofs are almost always present in traditional Chinese architecture. The roof ridge that forms the temple roof is constructed with a main central ridge and two decorative slope ridges. Each of these ridges contain eave tiles carved with lifelike imagery involving themes pertaining to Chinese literature, mythology, nature, auspicious phrases, folklore, and family names. Large beasts such as dragons are sometimes placed on the tops of the eaves, as they are believed to offer protection to the temple. (Fig. 5 & 5-A) Eave tiles, when seen together can form a history book that tells not only about the natural scenery around the temple but more importantly tells the story of the humanities, political science and economics of the temple community. There is an exhibit in the Beijing Museum of Ancient Ceramic Civilization, where a collection of more than 400 of these kinds of eave tiles can be seen.
Fig. 5

Roof tiles of "old" Baiyunguan Temple

Fig. 5-A

Dragon roof tiles

Photo by Joan L. Mann
As an expression of the people’s social and cultural background, the Daoist temple is seen as a palpable symbol of Chinese cultural history. The Chinese built important public buildings such as temples not only to express their identity and status, but just as importantly, they counted on their temples to relate their family histories to the new generations.

The Daoist temple in America also played several social and recreational roles. It became a place where Chinese immigrants could meet and discuss their problems and formulate rules and regulations for their protection against outsiders, especially during the early days of the California gold rush. The Daoist temple was also a place to fulfill their religious needs and obligations, and to practice filial piety. The Daoist temples became the official headquarters of the Chinese in America where it often functioned as a Chinese court, a bank, and even a post office. Many times a Chinese school was part of the temple. The Daoist temple in America became not only an organization of political power and authority, but a place through which to carry out this power. From the beginning of its existence in America the Daoist temple in America was not just some special architecturally styled building, but a building with monumental meaning. The historical events related to the temple as well as the actual location and placement of a Daoist temple building are important considerations when defining the temple in the context of its history.

The *Bok Kai* Temple in America and the *Baiyunguan* Temple in China are both examples of how historical inquiry provides information about both past and present Chinese history.
Temple Rituals

Many Daoist temples in America do not have resident priests, and are generally managed by a “board of directors.” This can be an elaborate hierarchy of wealthy members, or a few interested and concerned temple members. The day-to-day affairs of the temple were, and still are, usually handled by a custodian who may often receive small remunerations for his work. The custodian takes care of everything in the temple from sweeping the floors and writing receipts for contributions to preparing the requisite ritual objects for a rite to be performed. Sometimes the temple custodian is responsible for placing and matching the oracle slips that are drawn during divination rituals.\footnote{\textsuperscript{18}}

In the Daoist temple the deity that sits on the main altar of the temple is considered to be the “provider” of the temple.\footnote{\textsuperscript{19}} Usually found standing below and to the sides of this deity on the left and right are two important generals who are there to protect the deity. It is believed that the gods who reside in the temple were all once living persons who, during their lifetime, performed enduring acts of merit on behalf of China and its people and who, after their death, received a commendation from the High Heaven. These personages are installed as sages or “gods” so their importance would be recognized and remembered.\footnote{\textsuperscript{20}}

\footnote{\textsuperscript{18}} The “custodian” of the temple is found in all active Daoist temples. In China custodial duties include cleaning, cooking, and the maintenance of all altars in the temple. In America, the custodian of the temple was often the only one who could disseminate the Daoist teachings after the Exclusion Act of 1892 eliminated the entry of Daoist priests from China.

\footnote{\textsuperscript{19}} The deity that has the place of honor on the main altar in a temple is considered to be the highest deity, and presides over all temple activities.

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Temple offerings and the burning of incense to honor these deities is performed every morning and evening, where the offerings often include not only food and fruits but also “spirit money.” The Daoist who perform these rituals and rites every day believe their veneration to the deities will help them to find the “Way,” and that the “spirit money” which they use for a specific purpose such as their offering to a particular deity, will appease the gods and their ancestors.\footnote{1}

Letter papers and bamboo sticks are also used in the daily rituals held in the temple. The letter papers are often small, colorful strips of paper that from ancient times has always contained sacred verses for chanting. The bamboo strips are shaken to help expel ghosts and gods, as well as to tell fortunes. These bamboo strips also have inscriptions written on their top section. When the strips are shaken and dropped to the floor they split into two parts which can later be rejoined again to form a single strip. During this ritual each person drops a bamboo strip, breaks it apart and then retains one part of it. When the parts are later rejoined, they are then regarded as being the verification of the identity of the whole. This important ancient rite, known in early China as the identification tally rite\footnote{1} traces its early use and the rituals that accompany it back to


\footnote{21} Daoism is based on the idea that behind all material things and all the changes in the world lies one fundamental, universal principle that is called the “Way”. An excellent reference book is \textit{Taoism and the Arts of China} by Stephen Little et al. (Chicago: Art Institute of Chicago and Berkeley, Ca.: University of California Press, 2000).
early Daoist beginnings. Today however, the bamboo strips are used mostly for divination. The divination is done by gently shaking a cylindrical case which has an open end until a strip with a number falls out. Its number is then checked against a corresponding number answer which is often found on colored slips of paper hanging on the temple wall.

**Major Daoist Deities**

According to the *Handbook of Daoism*, all Daoist deities are classified into eight groups based on their origins. A list of these classifications follows, as well as a short description of some of the deities that are commonly found in the Daoist temple.

Classifications: 1) Those that evolved from the nature worship of various clans in ancient China; 2) Those that evolved from ancestor or hero worship; 3) Those of the five sacred Mountains and the four sacred rivers; 4) Those of heaven, earth, the four directions, and the towns and villages that came into being during the middle of the *Han* and *Tang*

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22 Michael Loewe, *Records of Han Administration* (Cambridge University Press 1967) has a good discussion about tallies. On page 112 he talks about a bamboo strip which is described as *fu*, he believes the term was used to describe a simple document giving authority to travel, much like our present-day passports and visas.

23 See photo in Appendix II, “spirit papers.”


25 In Daoist culture the Five Sacred Mountains are considered to be Mount *Tai* in Shandong, one of the most sacred mountain, Mount *Heng* in Hunan Province where *Laozi* once traveled, Mount *Hua*, the most dangerous mountain in China, Mount *Huang* in Shanxi Province where Ming Dynasty emperors worshiped, and Mount *Song*, in Henan Province, visited by Emperor *Wu* of the *Han* Dynasty.
dynasties; 5) The Three Pure Ones, who came into being during an unspecified period in Chinese history; 6) The deities absorbed from Buddhism; 7) The local folk and trade deities were taken from various areas and nationalities throughout China; and, 8) The founders, great masters, and immortals who gained eternal life and godlike powers through self-cultivation. Some of the most important deities in the Daoist pantheon are described below:

**Jade Emperor** - The Jade Emperor is believed to be the highest ruler in the Daoist heavens. Usually depicted sitting on a throne, he can be recognized by his impassive face that is obscured by strings of pearls hanging from the brim of his hat. He sometimes holds a pointed slab of jade in his hands as his symbol of authority. (Fig. 6)

**The Three Pure Ones** - These are the highest deities in all of Daoism. While the Jade Emperor rules the heavenly hierarchy the Three Pure Ones are believed to be so lofty they transcend the entire hierarchy. When standing together in the temple the one in the middle is the Primordial Heavenly Worthy; to his right (as you face them) is the Luminous Treasure Heavenly Worthy; to his left is the Supreme Way Heavenly Worthy. The Three Pure Ones are believed to be representative of three energies called jing, qi, and shen. These are the energies that are cultivated in all Daoist meditations. (Fig. 7)

**Laozi** - He is perhaps the most famous of all Daoist deities. According to Daoist

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26 The three major energies in Daoist meditations are jing, which is believed to determine the basic constitution and contain elements of strength and vitality. Jīng is said to be determined at birth and cannot be changed. Qi, has already been described in footnote 27. Shen is believed to be the energy that deals with the soul.
legend, he was an older contemporary of Confucius who was born as the “old master” in the 4th century B.C. It is believed he actually came from a minor aristocratic family, and through his studies developed a system of Daoist mysticism and philosophy. He would eventually reject society and is purported to have ridden off to the West on an ox. During his journey he was asked to write down his teachings, and his words are said to comprise the *Dao de jing*. (Fig. 8)

_Huang di_ - The Yellow Emperor. He is seen as the ancestor of the Chinese people and the master of esoteric wisdom. *Huang di* is credited with the development of Chinese writing, the Chinese calendar, music, mathematics, and the arts of healing techniques. (Fig. 9)

_Guan Yu_ - (Also known as *Guan di*.) He is commonly known in the west as the God of War. (Fig 10) He is the object of the second most prevalent Daoist cult in China, just behind *Guan Yin*. He was a highly decorated military general during the Three Kingdoms period. Guan Yu is regarded as a strong and able military officer who possesses an outstanding degree of loyalty to China. Despite his military abilities he was killed in battle, after which he immediately became revered as an immortal. *Guan Yu* is typically depicted as a large man with a long beard. His face is stern and is sometimes depicted as being red. In the temple he is often flanked by his assistants and protectors, General *Zhou Cang*, and the white-faced General *Guan Ping*. *Guan Yu* always holds a long-handled double-edged sword. He is venerated by those concerned with loyalty, military affairs, commerce, and giving birth to sons. He is also known for exorcising bad spirits. Emphasis is placed on his veneration because of the more admirable aspects of
his martial life: loyalty, trustworthiness, integrity, intelligence, and bravery. Because of his reputation for loyalty he is the patron saint of policeman, the law, and even gangsters as he often shows forgiveness. Because of Guan Yu’s interest in history and literature (he is frequently depicted reading a copy of the *Spring and Autumn Annals*), he is sometimes known as the God of Literature. (Fig. 10-A)

*Guan Yin* – She is known as “The Healer of the Cries of the World,” and is undoubtedly the most popular of all Chinese deities. China was once littered with temples dedicated to *Guan Yin*, as she is often worshipped by both Buddhists and Daoist. *Guan Yin* has been depicted at times as a man, but the female image has proven to be more popular since the *Song* Dynasty. She is usually depicted as a young woman wearing a lace or brocade robe and carrying a willow branch in her right hand and a vase in her left hand. She is regarded as a savior from all types of misfortune as well as one who upholds justice for the needy. She is also regarded as the god who bestows children to infertile women. (Fig. 11)

*Cai shen*, the very popular *God of Wealth* (Fig. 12) is believed to have once been the superintendent-general of the ghosts in the service of the *Jade Emperor*. He is usually portrayed as a happy god, but he is sometimes found dressed in a black robe and black armor and riding a fierce black tiger. (Fig. 12-A) He is believed to possess the power to help with business endeavors, and is considered very capable in all financial matters. Other popular deities seen when visiting a Daoist temple might include the *God of the Literati*, who rides a white donkey and is aided by two boys, one deaf and one dumb. It
is believed the *God of the Literati* also helps to control the outcome of examinations, so his affairs are said to always remain highly secret.

Daoist deities, gods and immortals are always found, traveling throughout Chinese history, living in a boundless universe. In ancient China it was taken for granted that these deities ruled over everything as they absorbed the essence of Heaven and Earth. These deities are in reality, the embodiment of the ideal of the ancient Chinese people, to be blessed by its gods. Understanding the deities, gods and immortals the Chinese people venerate will go far in understanding Chinese civilization. Though the Chinese live in many places throughout the world, traditional ethnic Chinese maintain common beliefs in their deities, and these beliefs have shaped their daily activities. Chinese culture is rich in history, and still today that culture is highly esteemed by the worshippers of a Chinese-based religion such as Daoism.

It is probably correct to say here that most young Chinese today may not believe in the gods and deities of their fathers, but they are seen more and more in the Daoist temples, especially during examination times. It may be that this new generation of Chinese, especially in Shanghai, are coming to value the Daoist temple and its deities as tangible evidence not only of the history of their religion, but as evidence of their culture as Chinese people.
Fig. 6
The Jade Emperor

Fig. 7
The Three Pure Ones

Fig. 8

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Laozi

Fig. 9
Huang di

Fig. 10
Guan Yu

Fig. 10-A
Gen. Zhou Cang, Guan Yu with annals, Gen Guan Ping
Fig 11
Guan Yin

Photo by Joan L. Metz
Fig. 12
God of Wealth

Photo by Joan L. Mann

Fig. 12-A
Cai Shen  God of Wealth

Photo by Joan L. Mann
CHAPTER THREE

THE BAIYUNGUAN TEMPLE IN SHANGHAI, CHINA

Design

The old Baiyunguan Temple in Shanghai, China was moved about two miles north of its original site in 2005 and the following is an excerpt from the Shanghai Daily Magazine, April 27, 2004:1 Because of this move, the following section of this thesis focusing on the Baiyunguan Temple layout will contain descriptions of both the “old” and the new Baiyunguan temple. Although the floor plans of the temples remain very similar, the new temple is in the courtyard style and has two stories instead of one.

...the Baiyunguan Daoist Temple which was built in 1882 will move two kilometers north to its original site on Xilinhou Road in Nanshi District. The new site is next to the three-story Dajinge Pavilion which was erected beside the Shanghai old city wall during the Ming dynasty. Having more than 120 years of history, the Baiyunguan temple is the most famous Daoist building in Shanghai...the site of the old Baiyunguan temple will be razed to make way for new roads with easy access to the world exposition site. City officials said the structure of the new temple will be the same as the old one; a typical southern China style courtyard building...the final move should take place in early 2005...

The Baiyunguan relocation on December 26, 2005 consisted of only the contents from

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1 The Shanghai Daily Magazine is a weekly insert publication in the city of Shanghai. The article of April 27, 2004 was the first article to appear that recognized the upcoming move of the Baiyunguan Temple.
the inside of the temple being relocated, while the old temple structure was left for the wrecking crews. The “old” Baiyunguan (White Cloud) Temple was located on Back Xinlin Street at the former Western Gate of the Shanghai Old City wall. (Fig. 13) and was the home of the Shanghai Daoist Association. The new Baiyunguan Temple is located nearer to the former North Gate, and is the home of the Shanghai Daoist Association as well as the location of its publications.

The following information about the deities in the Baiyunguan Temple were obtained in interviews by the author (with an interpreter), of several of the caretakers of both the old and new temples.

The Baiyunguan Temple was founded by Daoist Wang Mingzhen, a member of the Daoist Xianzhen Temple in Hangzhou, in the 13th year of the Qing dynasty (1874). The temple was known as the “Hall of the Thundering Patriarch.” Later that temple also had to be relocated due to the expansion of the roads around it. In 1886 Abbot Xu Zhichen rebuilt the Hall of the Thunder Patriarch and expanded the Hall of the Big Dipper as well as the dining room and the guest rooms. In 1888 Xu went to Beijing where, assisted by government officials and Abbot Gao Rending of the Beijing White Cloud Temple, he is said to have bought over 8000 volumes of the Ming version of the Daoist Canon, on the condition that the Hall of the Thunder Patriarch would be changed to the “Haishang White Cloud (Baiyunguan) Temple.” The Baiyunguan then became one of the most prestigious temples in southeastern China. The 8000 volumes of the Daoist Canon are now housed safely in the Shanghai Library.
*Note the gates located in old Shanghai city wall in directions of North, South, East, and West. With North being at the top of the map, it is believed the Old Baiyunguan was located at the West gate on the left.

Permission to copy map given by Shanghai Library; Map believed to be dated from 1870.
In 1890 the first Abbot of the temple passed away and by 1893, funded by the Shanghai Chamber of Commerce, the temple was again enlarged to include the “Hall of the Three Pristine Ones.” The old Baiyunguan, at the time of the author’s visit, was a large hall divided into front and back parts. The middle line of the front part consisted of the Hall of the Thunder Patriarch and the library, and the eastern section consisted guest rooms and the Hall of Patriarch Qiu. The western section consisted of the dining room and the Hall of the Big Dipper. In the middle of the back part of the hall was the Great Hall of the Three Pristine Ones and in the southern section was Jiazi Hall. The northern section of the front part of the temple contained the Hall of the Four Heavenly Ministers.

The eastern hall in the back of the temple contained the Hall of Salvation from Misery, and the western line included the Hall of Patriarch Lu, the Jade Emperor Pavilion along with the Bells and Drums Pavilion.

The new Baiyunguan Temple is now located at the north gate of the old city wall of Shanghai, which is nearer to tourist venues such as YuYuan Garden and Market. Although the new Baiyunguan Temple has a larger interior due to its open courtyard, most of the deities have been placed in the same layout as the old temple, with the floor plan of the important “halls” remaining the same. (Fig 14.)

Deities

All of the deities in the Daoist pantheon are divided into three levels with those such as the Three Pristine Ones being the first level. This level is said to be only for the deities who are believed to have existed before heaven, and they are always found in a Daoist temple. An important deity in the Baiyunguan Temple is found in the Hall of the
*The Thunder Patriarch (Yellow Emperor) is located in the front. In the back section you will find the Three Pristine Ones and the Jade Emperor Pavilion. To the left and right are located all the lesser deities. In the new Baiyunguan, the center of the temple became a large courtyard where the incense burner is located. (See Baiyunguan Temple photo “Burning Joss Sticks” in Appendix II.)
Thunder Patriarch. He is the deity believed to immortalize the Yellow Emperor. It is said that he can confer life or death after his inspection and evaluation of his people. In the Big Dipper Hall is found the deity who is also believed to be a divine spirit. This deity usually appears as a female spirit, with three eyes, four heads and eight arms. Another deity is Patriarch Lu, who is considered to be the deity who will always help the needy. It is said that he gives wealth to the poor, and health to the diseased. It is believed that if anyone uses their power to bully the helpless, Patriarch Lu will punish them severely. Patriarch Lu is also credited with helping with inner alchemy. The other deity, Patriarch Qiu, is the deity who controls human anger and desires by keeping the mind and spirit on an even keel even when one is pursuing an eternal spirit.

Jiazi Hall, which is translated to mean “year” hall has two meanings for its devotees. The first one is that Jiazi Hall is the place to come to pray for coordination of mind, intention, and thought to ensure a smooth flow of internal energy and harmonize the body. The second more popular belief has to do with the sixty-year cycle, which in China is believed to be the full cycle of life. One must visit the year hall to ask for longevity.

The Hall of the Four Heavenly Ministers includes the Great Jade Emperor, the Middle Heaven Great Emperor of the North Pole Star of Purple Subtlety, the Great Heavenly Emperor of the Highest Palace of Polaris and the Imperial God of Earth. These four deities are believed to be in charge of all things in Heaven and Earth. They function under the direction of the Three Pristine Ones. The Great Jade Emperor is believed to be the master of the spirits, while the Middle Heaven Great Emperor of the North Pole Star
of Purple Subtlety is the master of all the stars in the heavens. The Great Heavenly Emperor of the Highest Palace of Polaris is the one to pray directly to because he is at the pivotal point of heaven.\textsuperscript{2} The Imperial God of Earth is considered to be the “center” for Heaven and Earth. The Heavenly Lord of Supreme Oneness is located in the Hall of Salvation from Misery. His role is to give help and relief to any cries for help. For those people who have led perfect Daoist lives it is believed he will be the one to lead them to their ascension into Immortality. This deity usually appears as a heavenly Lord who is riding on a lion.

The Jade Emperor is the Supreme God of Daoist religion. The Jade Emperor is the Ruler of Heaven and the Creator of the Universe. Even the human rulers of China were believed to be a manifestation of the Jade Emperor, and these earthly rulers were only given permission to rule by the Jade Emperor’s “Mandate of Heaven” provided they had told the Jade Emperor of their intentions. The Jade Ruler’s word is law and he is believed to rule all of Heaven and Earth with the help of a vast company of civil servants and bureaucrats at his beck and call.

\textbf{Rituals and Festivals}

The \textit{Baiyunguan} Temple in Shanghai is a temple of the Complete Perfection and as such, all of its rituals and festivals are held in that tradition.\textsuperscript{3} Since the temple is open

\textsuperscript{2} A photo essay of several of the Daoist deities in the \textit{Baiyunguan} Temple that are discussed in this section can be found at the back of this study in Appendix II.

\textsuperscript{3} For further information regarding the Complete Perfection Sect (School of Quanzhen), see the book by Livia Kohn, \textit{Daoism and Chinese Culture}, (Cambridge: Three Pines Press, 2001)154-167.
every day for worship, all festivals and celebrations occur on the dates of the Complete Perfection calendar in conjunction with the temple deities. One example is the holy birthday of the Big Dipper which is usually held on the 20th day of the sixth lunar month. On this day many Daoists perform rituals to pray for longevity, and for giving birth to sons.

At the Baiyunguan Temple, striking bells and beating drums are used for the everyday procedures that are done in temple life. Each day Daoist parishioners can be found sweeping the courtyard and halls before beginning their morning rituals. These rituals involve the burning of incense (joss sticks) in front of the altar, with the joss sticks always held by both hands while kneeling or bowing with respect. The number of joss sticks can vary from one to five, as one joss stick denotes all creation, together with heaven and earth. Rituals are done in accordance with certain dates on the Daoist calendar but may also be done on a daily basis for anyone honoring ancestors. Most daily rituals performed in the Baiyunguan Temple can be done by an ordinary person. At every Daoist festival, such as the sacred birthday of the Jade Emperor, or the Festival of the Three Pristine Ones, rituals are held inside the Baiyunguan temple where altars are set up for the recitation of scriptures for the celebration. During the grave-sweeping festival on the fifteenth day of the seventh lunar month, Daoist rituals are performed that are known as "paying debt to the solitary spirits." This festival is held to atone for the sins of the souls of the dead.

At certain rituals and festivals food may be set out as a sacrifice to the gods and the spirits of the departed. One such festival is known as the Qingming Festival, also known
as “grave sweeping” day. It is a day to remember and honor ancestors at their grave sites and both young and old go to pray at the grave sites and to sweep the tombs. The family will also make food offerings for their ancestors at the main altar in the Baiyun guan Temple. These rituals are very important to the Chinese people and some will go as far following the ancient tradition of putting a willow branch on the front door because they believe that a willow branch will help to chase away the evil ghosts that are believed to wander about during the Qingming Festival.

Another important Daoist festival is the Nine Emperor Gods Festival which is held to celebrate the return to earth of the Nine Emperor spirits (who are worshiped as one deity who is known as Mazu), the Daoist goddess of the sea and queen of heaven who is believed to represent the health, wealth and prosperity of all Daoist believers. This festival falls on the ninth day of the ninth moon when devotees come to the Baiyun guan Temple where a ceremony is held to invoke and welcome the Nine Emperors. Since these deities are believed to descend to earth through a waterway there are Daoist who will proceed to the banks of the Huangpu River, where they will burn incense and wait for the arrival of the deities. Heard at the Baiyun guan temple during this nine-day

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4 Qingming means clear and bright. It is the day for mourning the dead. It falls in early April and corresponds with the onset of warmer weather, the start of spring plowing, and family outings. Emperor Xuanzong of the Tang Dynasty declared that respects would be formally paid to the tombs of ancestors on the day of Qingming. This custom continues today. People visit their ancestors' graves where they will tidy up, remove weeds and sweep away leaves. This is why Qingming is also known as the Grave Sweeping Day.

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festival are the steady sound of prayer chants, and the ringing of the prayer bell.

One of the most important Daoist rituals that is held at the *Baiyunguan* temple is the Grand Universe Ceremony which is held every year in the spring to pray for prosperity and peace in the nation, good weather for crops, and for world peace.

### Communism and Community

Many of the 16 million people who now live in Shanghai are happy at having turned their backs on the old Communist way of life, and many once again practice religion without fear. Although they complain about traffic jams, overcrowded markets, and corruption it is a change from the past when they were worried about the watchful eyes of Communist Party officials. The Shanghai of today appears hardly Communist at all, and *Mao Zedong* is no longer being used only as the icon that created a classless society. Pictures and posters of *Mao* are still found all over Shanghai, mostly in taxi cabs and in restaurants, but this author was told this is only because *Mao* is being credited with uniting the China that the rest of the world sees today.

Interviews with those who would talk to this author about communism revealed an important fact; not all Chinese are top or mid-level communists. This author was told that there are approximately nine levels of communism in China today, and no one is required to belong to anything other than the lowest level.\(^5\) However, it was mentioned

\(^5\) Based on interviews with several Chinese people attending opening day at the new Baiyunguan Temple. They would only give answers to the questions asked if they were told they did not have to give their names.
that if one is a member of the CCP at only the lowest level one will probably not be considered for advancement in a chosen profession or regular job.

This "new" communist way of life in Shanghai has had a positive affect on the Baiyunguan Temple. There is almost no oversight of the rituals, rites and festivals that occur there daily. There is no communist flag that flies anywhere near the temple. The people who come to the Baiyunguan to pray no longer look over their shoulders to see who is watching. (During this author's visits to many temples throughout China, including the mosques in Urumqi in Zhejiang Province in the far west, a uniformed official was never sighted, although they were often seen near other tourist venues.)

On one visit to the Baiyunguan Temple a young priest told this author (through an interpreter) that "Daoism is more ideally placed than other religions to contribute to the harmony of Chinese society." He believes that because of the close relationship between Daoism and traditional Chinese culture, Daoism makes it easier for the common people to accept Daoism's doctrine of harmony. He went on to say that the difference between Daoism and Buddhism is that in Buddhism one cultivates oneself for the next life, but in Daoism one lives for this life.

The sect of Daoism to which this priest belongs does not require its followers to totally forsake their secular lives. He himself has a family and a son and he maintains close ties with the local community. He said that every year the Baiyunguan Temple provides support to needy students in the district, and that the members of the temple often visit local nursing homes for the elderly.
The priest went on to say that he had seen the positive effects Daoism had on people's lives. "Daoism does not try to convert more and more people for its own sake," he said, but "rather Daoism has a somewhat loose relationship with its followers." He explained that Daoists only come to the temple to seek harmony in their lives; harmony within themselves, harmony among people, harmony between people and society, and harmony between people and nature.6

As many of those in Shanghai who spoke to this author through an interpreter speak "shangganese", a dialect unique to their location and their love of their particular culture, so this young priest also spoke the local dialect. Community pride has come back to Shanghai, and communism does not appear to play any part in the language or the culture of those who live in Shanghai. Communism also does not appear to be a part of their everyday lives. The interview with the Daoist priest reminded this author that in the China of the 21st century, communism appears to remain only on the periphery of Chinese religious lives.

Preservation and Tourism

Unlike some of the more well known historic landmarks in China such as the Forbidden City in Beijing, the Baiyunguan Temple in Shanghai has always catered to the ordinary Chinese who lived in the neighborhood of the temple. After the move however tourism, which has become a large issue in the city of Shanghai, is also a large issue for the Baiyunguan Temple.

6 From an oral interview (with a translator) of a priest at the new Baiyunguan Temple in May, 2005.
Many of the religious temples in China, including the Baiyunguan Temple in Shanghai, now depend on the donations of visitors and tourists. The city of Shanghai seems to have taken this into consideration when it chose to move “old” Baiyunguan Temple from its small nondescript neighborhood to a site visited that is a venue on every tourist route. Although government funding paid for the move and some of the restoration of the deities, it is now up to the Shanghai Daoist Association and the members of the temple to pay for further restoration.

The “new” temple now receives visitors all day, every day from early in the morning to late at night. However, many times during these visitors come to the temple at a time the priests are performing daily rites. Tourist and locals alike buy incense to burn as they enter the temple, and sometimes take part in temple the rituals and rites. This appears to be another way of bringing donations to the temple. Some feel this kind of intrusion will eventually effect the performing of historic rituals that are such an important part of Daoism, as many locals want their family rites to be kept private. Some devotees are also concerned with the restoration of their deities, sometimes done in bright colors that make the deities look more like mannequins than gods. They believe that many of these new restorations are being done not for the temple, but for the satisfaction of the tourists. Only time will tell how all of these changes will affect the history of such an important temple.

After spending almost a year in researching the Baiyunguan this author believes that both the temple, and Daoism, will prevail. There are those who visit the temple every
day and adhere faithfully to their Daoist traditions, and there are the local "visitors" who just stop by to ask one of the deities for assistance, or to honor an ancestor. Although some of the regular devotees are getting older they are still the leaders in the temple and many of them believe that although the visitors money is important for the temple, the "old ways will always stay."  

A Lesson in Cultural History

The recent rapid development in tourism in China, as in America, has created the need for more in-depth knowledge about cultural history. People in China today are choosing to visit historic buildings and sites that will tell them more about their cultural history, and the Baiyunguan Temple has become one of these sites.

As noted earlier, the Baiyunguan temple has a long history. Records indicate that as far back of the Yuan dynasty (1276) when the Complete Perfection Tradition of Daoism first spread to Shanghai, a building was erected to house Daoist deities. According to the Annals of the Songjiang Prefecture (Songjian is a district in the city of Shanghai) in the tenth year of the Yuan dynasty (1306) there was once a building known as the Changchun Daoist Temple. The temple was named in honor of Qiu Chuji, whose

7 A statement made by Mr. Zhao, who spoke passionately about his Baiyunguan Temple to this author in May, 2005.

8 Records of China Daoist Association 1947, written in Chinese and translated for this author.

9 Changchun was a trading town. It expanded rapidly because of its location at a junction between the South Manchurian Railroad and the Russian owned China Eastern Railroad which had branch lines extending from its center.
literary name was *Changchunzi*. He was believed to be the patriarch of the Dragon Gate Sect. In the first year of the *Zhizhi* era (1321) imperial historian *Yang Zai* wrote about the “Records of the *Changchun* Daoist Temple” where he mentioned that Abbot at the time was *Zheng Jun*, who was the son of General *Zheng* who guarded the city of *Guangling*, known today as the city of *Yangzhou*. During the following years no written accounts about the activities of the Complete Perfection Tradition in Shanghai have been found. However, Daoism must have continued to be practiced as the religion of the Chinese common man, because it would resurface during the *Qing* dynasty when Daoism was once again recorded in imperial court records. *Qing* emperor *Kang xi* would suggest that the Three Doctrines; Confucianism, Daoism and Buddhism were complementary, which gave Daoism new respect and legitimacy.

Daoist traditions are at the heart of *Baiyunguan* temple life in Shanghai. Today it is not just the tourists and locals who visits the temple, but entire families that come from all walks of life; a local musician accompanying his mother; or a well dressed young couple bringing their young son. The temple has become, since its move, the focus of Daoist city life by bringing together the whole Shanghai Daoist community in an effort to continue to regenerate a wider interest in Daoism. The Daoist Shanghai Association, with its close ties to the Chinese Daoist Association and Daoist College in Beijing, is

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10 *Qui Chuji* became a Daoist at the age of 19 and for the next thirteen years is said to have lived in caves and begged for food. He was called to the royal palace of the *Jin* Dynasty where he became a favorite of the emperor. He advocated that Daoist should lead an ascetic person life and benefit others by doing good deeds and cultivating their virtue. See Livia Kohn, *Daoism and Chinese Culture* (Cambridge: Three Pines Press, 2001), where she discusses the *Quanzhen* school of Daoism 154-167.
committed to maintaining the Daoist tradition way of life.¹¹

Religion in China has undergone a significant change since 1976, with the People's Republic of China now recognizing those belonging to the religions of Daoism and Buddhism. Literature from the Shanghai Daoist College indicates that the Constitution of People's Republic of China allows that any state or social organization or individuals cannot force citizens to not believe in religion and must not discriminate against anyone who has religious beliefs. In Shanghai today, anyone who spends time at the Baiyunguan Temple will come to appreciate the changes that have occurred in the religious values in China, and what it means not just to those in the local community but to the Chinese who visit from other parts of China as well as all over the world.

¹¹ The Dragon Gate Sect is part of the Complete Perfection Tradition and identifies closely with the simplicity and naturalness in Laozi's Daode jing as well as Zhuangzi's teaching of non-interference.
CHAPTER FOUR

THE BOK KAI TEMPLE

Design

The Bok Kai Temple building can be found on a 1885 Sanborn map describing the layout of the city of Marysville. The temple is located on the north bank of the Yuba River where the main entrance of the temple is facing south onto the river. The original plans of the structure appear to be identical to the building that now sits on the same site at the same location. The levee, which still separates the river from the temple, was originally the river bank and was level with the front of the temple. Over a period of time the levee has been reconstructed and the height has changed dramatically. Today the approach to the front doors of the temple is down a long flight of steps from the top of the levee.¹

The temple is a brick building approximately 65 x 40 feet in size and its walls are plastered white. It has a covered porch that extends approximately six feet on the south side. It has a double gabled roof covered in mission-style tiles. The front of the temple is divided into three parts, with the central doors painted red. The porch is covered by an overhanging roof which is held up by two wood columns, also painted red. Under the overhang is an important mural that was recently documented as having been painted by

¹ See Appendix III, second photo, at the back of this thesis.
someone who was an expert in the execution of Chinese painting. The mural extends under the temple eaves where it depicts vivid scenes of Chinese Culture.\(^2\) (Fig. 15)

On either side of the entrance doors are Chinese welcoming characters carved into the wood and painted gold on a red background. There is also a carved description over the temple door that reads *Bok Kai Miu*, which when loosely translated means “North God Riverbank Temple”. The temple’s central hall is entered by going up several steps from ground level. This hall is approximately 34 x 20 feet in size and contains two religious tablets situated in front of the center altar. (Fig. 16) The most important deity in this temple, the Daoist god *Bok Kai*, is translated to mean the God of the North or the Dark Northern Heaven god, which means heavenly protector of the floods.

**Deities**

In Chinese history and according to Chinese mythology, it is the egg *Pan Gu* who was the Creator of the Universe when he separated heaven and earth and made China one of the birthplaces of mankind.\(^3\) The Chinese people believe that *Pan Gu* then turned different parts of his body into the sun, moon and stars and also into mountains, rivers, soil, grass, trees, and the winds and clouds. With this as the premise for understanding

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\(^2\) A conservator from the Getty Conservation Institute in Los Angeles examined the fresco and he found that the quality and execution of the painting of the mural scenes was equal to the few Daoist paintings that can be found in American museum collections.

\(^3\) Myth of *Pan Gu* is an explanation that was offered by Daoist monks hundreds of years after *Laozi*. The myth says that the universe began as a cosmic egg, and then a god named *Pan Gu*, was born inside the egg and broke it into two halves. The upper half became the sky, the lower half became the earth. As the god grew taller, the sky and the earth grew thicker and were separated further, until finally when the god died, his body parts became different parts of the earth.
Fig. 15
Two views of *Bok Kai Temple Murals*
Fig. 16
Floor Plan of *Bok Kai* Temple

The deity *Bok Kai* sits on the altar directly below this text.

As you enter the *Bok Kai* Temple you must circle around the front altar to enter the main hall.
(See photo in Appendix III.)
much about the beginnings of Chinese history, it becomes easier to accept why the Chinese people put so much faith into their “gods.”

The main temple god in Marysville Bok Kai, according to Vivian-Lee Nyitray, is a most important deity whose name is a reference to Xuan ming, a god believed to be associated with water and the North. Xuan ming’s origins can be traced to the late Warring States period and the Han dynasty where the Dark Warrior is the ancient symbol of the North. Bok Kai, in Chinese history, is also known as God of Water Virtue, God of the North Stream, and God of the North Shore and Protector of the Floods. During the mid-15th century in China, Bok Kai became one of the more important gods in the Daoist pantheon and a temple was erected in his honor at the Imperial Palace in Beijing.

Bok Kai’s importance to the Chinese who lived in Marysville resulted from the city’s close proximity to the junction of two major rivers the Yuba and Feather Rivers. It became Bok Kai’s duty to protect Marysville and the surrounding areas from flooding. An example of the deep belief in the powers of Bok Kai are also be found in a temple that is dedicated to him in a high flood area of Lewiston, Idaho. Residents of Marysville have always credited Bok Kai with saving both the temple and Marysville from flooding. Although floods have often inundated parts of the neighboring city of Yuba City, Marysville has always been spared from any disastrous water damage.

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4 Stephen Little in *Taoism and the Arts of China*, (Chicago: The Art Institute of Chicago, 2000) has devoted an entire chapter to the Daoist deity Zhen wu. See Chapter 111.3

or loss that usually accompanies major flooding.

The deity *Bok Kai* is found inside the temple on an altar at the back of the great hall where he is the central "god." He is flanked by six other deities, with four sitting on either side of him on the central altar. These six gods are *Guan Yu*, the God of War and Literature. Of importance here is that *Guan Yu* (who is sometimes known as the Red-Faced Warrior) when found in most temples, is the presiding deity. In the Marysville temple he is relegated to a secondary position of honor because the powers of *Bok Kai* believed to control the movement of water is of primary importance in the lives of those who live in the community. Also on the altar is *Guan Yin*, who is believed to be the Healer of the Cries of the World and is more popularly known as the Goddess of Mercy. Next is a local deity known as *Erh-lang shen*; the deity who represents protection, and *T‘ien Hou* (Sing Moo) the deity who is believed to be the protector of any who travel by sea. There is a figure of *Hua Tuo*, (Wah Ho) representing the God of Medicine and Healing who sits on a separate altar to the left of *Bok Kai*. The deity *Hou Tu* (Hoo Gee) also sits on the altar. This deity is believed to be the patron saint of the soil and the deity who guides the spirits of the land and the grain and will bring peace and prosperity to those who work the land. Directly in front of *Bok Kai* there is a jade tablet believed to represent the Jade Emperor, the highest deity in the Daoist pantheon. *Cai Shen*, (Ts’ai Shen) the God of Wealth, sits on a table near the front of the great hall where offerings a given and incense is burned.

When the meanings of these deities so revered by the Marysville Chinese is understood for both their religious beliefs and cultural values, it allows the study of the
Daoist temple to give new and enlightening insights into the difficulties that surrounded the Marysville Chinese as they attempted assimilation and acculturation into American society, and culture.

**Festivals and Celebrations**

There are many reports in the early English newspapers in Marysville, such as the *Marysville Daily Appeal* and later the *Marysville Appeal Democrat*, about the many Chinese festivals and celebrations held at the *Bok Kai* Temple, although the Marysville Chinese community celebrates both public and private rites. Included in the private rites are celebrations such as “first month” rites, performed when a baby son becomes one month old; marriage rites; and sometimes funeral and burial rites. These private rites are usually conducted within the family home, so there are no public records of any of these events. However the Spring Festival Celebration, known to the locals as the Chinese New Year, is the most important holiday on the Chinese calendar. It was documented almost every year by Marysville’s local English newspapers. One newspaperman is believed to have been invited to join in the celebration, and he wrote the following description of the event in *The Marysville Appeal Democrat*:

...The residents of Chinatown were seen enjoying their New Year’s holiday yesterday. All businesses were suspended and they received callers during the day and dispensed gifts. The bill of fare at the merchants’ residences were elaborate. Bird’s nest soup, quail on toast and other delicacies were served. The cigars furnished were about on an equal footing with the candy. Opium was plentiful, and gambling was brisk...  

Other celebrations also take place throughout the year such as the Fifth-Month, Fifth-

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*Marysville Daily Appeal,* (no byline) January 27, 1865.
Day Festival known in China as the Dragon Boat Festival and associated with Daoist water spirits when yang is believed to reach its zenith, and the Hungry Ghosts Festival, when the orphaned souls of the underworld are believed to be released to roam the earth and search for food. The Bok Kai Temple organizes rites for these celebrations and performs rituals for the “feeding” of the hungry ghosts at the Marysville cemetery. Local families have been known to set out food for these hungry ghosts, and when they attend the rites at the Bok Kai temple they burn special offerings during the holiday.

One of the most important festivals held at the Bok Kai temple in Marysville is the celebration of “Bomb Day”, usually held in early to middle March. There are no records pinpointing exactly what year the Bomb Day celebration was initiated in Marysville but it is assumed by many in the community that the event must have been observed as far back as the original Bok Kai Temple.

Bomb Day derives its name from the shooting off of bombs which contain “good fortune” rings. This two-day celebration begins quietly with religious observances and the first day, and ends with the bombs and a parade featuring the Golden Dragon. This Marysville Chinese Dragon is said to be the first one brought to America sometime before the turn of the century. The dragon is more than 150 feet long, and requires approximately 100 people to carry it. The Marysville Chinese dragon was exhibited at

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7 The Dragon Boat Festival is a festival is originates from the taboo regarding evil days. The fifth month of the Chinese lunar calendar is traditionally considered an evil month, with the 5th of the month believed to be a particularly bad day.

8 See article in Marysville Daily Appeal, August 21, 1888, and February 21, 1911.
the World’s Fair in New York in 1939 and was last used in the 1937 parade in Marysville. Today Bomb Day has a newer and shorter dragon in its parade.

Bomb Day, according to the Chinese calendar, falls on the second day of the second month. The bomb throwing contest that give Bomb Day its name is held at the conclusion of the Dragon parade each year. The “bombs” are filled with tokens and prizes, and are shot into the air about 20 to 30 feet by placing them in a log that has a long fuse. As the bombs fall to the ground many in the crown fight hard to catch one of the bombs. It is believed that a person who catches a bomb is destined to have a year of good luck. Prior to the firing of the bombs the previous year’s bombs have been returned to the temple, and any new bombs must be registered with the keeper of the temple. All the winners proceeds in a procession to the temple, usually accompanied by the dancing lion.

As these festivals and celebrations ultimately came to include not only the Chinese from the Guangzhou (Canton) area of China but Chinese of all different ethnic backgrounds, efforts were made to build relationships not only between ethnic Chinese but also between the Marysville citizens. Paul Chace, in his 1992 dissertation states that the popular Chinese rites of the Bomb Day celebrations at the Bok Kai temple changed throughout the years from 1912-1946, due to the diversities that had developed.

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9 February 2nd, in China, is the day of the ascent of the dragon, a type of festival that is connected to celebrations to the God of the Earth.

10 Paul G. Chace, Giving Thanks: Chinese Rites in an American Community, (University of California Riverside, 1992).
within the unity of Chinese popular religion.\textsuperscript{11}

**Preservation Efforts and Community**

For the last ten years many different historical preservation organizations, as well as local governments and Marysville community groups, have tried to raise the money needed to preserve and restore the *Bok Kai* Temple. Most of the local community groups joined forces in 2001 to form the “Friends of the Marysville Bok Kai Temple” and a local Chinatown group was also formed to solicit assistance for upkeep and preservation of the temple from local benevolent associations and members in Marysville’s Chinatown. This group contacted association members as far away as Southern California and New York in their efforts to secure donations. Influential Chinese community members from Marysville also successfully lobbied San Francisco Chinatown’s Six Companies, a group of influential business leaders who pledged $250,000 for temple repairs and upkeep.\textsuperscript{12} Another San Francisco group known as “A Better Chinatown Tomorrow,” also raised money to help with the restoration of the temple.

Due in large part to the efforts of all of these organizations, the National Trust for Historic Preservation (NTHP) elected to include the *Bok Kai* Temple on its 2001 list of

\textsuperscript{11} Ibid. Chace writes that in Marysville the Chinese rites used during the Bomb Day Celebrations would come to be practiced with interpretive restraint because of the developing diversity of those engaged in the festival rites.

\textsuperscript{12} San Francisco’s Chinatown Six Companies is also known as the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association. Originally formed during the 1850s it is still was the most powerful organization in Chinatown and is authorized to speak on behalf the Chinese throughout the United States.
America’s Eleven Most Endangered Historic Places. The Western Office of the National Trust for Historic Preservation first opened its doors in San Francisco in 1977, and began its program of heritage preservation in 1989. Since that time the NTHP has been an important partner in the preservation of Bok Kai Temple. It is because of the efforts of this organization that this little-known temple, built almost 128 years ago, made its way onto a national list as recognition of the Bok Kai Temple’s significance.

In 2001 the Bok Kai Temple was featured on the History Channel in a special broadcast titled “America’s Most Endangered”, and in the July, 2001 issue of the Atlantic Monthly magazine a special insert was published, explaining the selection of the Bok Kai Temple as one of the eleven most endangered historic sites. In early 2007, a grant application by members of the Marysville Chinese Community Association was submitted to the State of California Council for Humanities Education (CCHE). In August of 2007 the grant was approved and money was made available to continue efforts in the preservation and restoration of the Bok Kai Temple.

A Lesson in Cultural Heritage

Over the past decade historians have been making greater efforts to recognize and

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13 The National Trust for Historic Preservation's Eleven Most Endangered Historic Places list was created in 1988. It is an opportunity to spotlight parts of America’s heritage that are threatened by neglect, deterioration, lack of maintenance, and insufficient funds.

14 The Atlantic Monthly is a magazine that began publication in November 1857 when it was known simply as The Atlantic (and used that shorter name on its masthead for a while in the 1980s and early 1990s). It is a general editorial magazine with content focusing on foreign affairs, politics, and the economy as well as cultural trends.
write about histories that concern cultural heritage. The recent rapid development of
world-wide tourism has created an added impetus to the need for in-depth knowledge
about the places people visit when they want to learn about their cultural heritage. The
general public in both America and China appear to have decided that in order to best
experience their cultural heritage, they will visit historic churches, temples, houses and
museums to view the artifacts of their culture.

The traditions of China have an unbroken history of over 5000 years and its cultural
heritage can be found in many locations such as the Mount Qingcheng in Sichuan
Province, which is one of the birthplaces of Daoism where, at one time, there were over
100 Daoist temples. Today more than two dozen of these important temples remain
intact and are open for visitation. Another historical site is the recently excavated tomb
in Xi’an of Emperor Qin and his Terracotta Army, which is now available for public
viewing. The culture and traditions of America are of a much shorter duration, yet a
beginning has been made with the preservation of places such as Mount Vernon, New
York and Williamsburg, Virginia.

One such historic building that relates the long cultural history is the Chinese in
America is the Daoist Temple in Marysville, California. The important cultural
significance of the temple is its continuous use by the early Chinese immigrants, and now
by Chinese-Americans, since its construction in 1886. The Bok Kai Temple is California
Historic Landmark # 889, and it contributes to a better understanding of the immigration
and transnationalism of those early Chinese to America. As one of the only temples
found that represents both popular and traditional Chinese culture, those who attended this temple have held on to their traditional ways.

Interestingly, these are the same Chinese who helped develop the American West in its early days. They came to work in the gold mines, and later helped to build the railroads. When mining activities diminished and the railroad construction was finished, many of the Chinese in Marysville worked to clear land for the present-day irrigation canals in California. They found work as local cooks and launderers and many went on to open their own restaurant or laundry. As farming was one of the big industries in the Marysville area, many Chinese worked on the farms as gardeners. These farms eventually came to supply produce to the many Chinese restaurants and markets throughout the West. The Chinese did what they could to acculturate, yet managed to maintain their own culture and traditions to pass down to future generations.

Marysville had a fairly large Chinese population between 1850 and 1900, especially in comparison to other towns in the area. In businesses, Marysville’s Chinatown at times ranked only second to San Francisco. According to a business directory of the Wells Fargo Bank, in 1878 Marysville’s Chinatown boasted over two dozen Chinese firms and by 1882 the Chinese businesses had nearly doubled in number.¹⁵ In addition to Chinese businesses, Marysville’s Chinatown also included the Suey Sing and Hop Sing Lodges, which are still in existence today.

¹⁵In 1875, Wells Fargo Offices in San Francisco produced bilingual merchant directories of the 1870s and 1881s that include a list of the Chinese firms in Marysville, California.
Chinese tourists from all over the world have visited the Bok Kai Temple including Dr. Sun Yat-sen, the founder and first provisional President of the Republic of China, and Kang Youwei who was one of the leaders of the Constitutional Monarchy movement in China from 1898-1911. The Bok Kai Temple is one of the last of its kind in the American West. It allows a temple visitor the unique opportunity of expanding their knowledge and enhancing their understanding of the religious and philosophical beliefs and cultural values of the Chinese who first immigrated to America, as well as a better understanding of the Chinese-Americans who live here today.

Historically the Bok Kai Temple has always reflected the fortunes of its community, and this has not changed. Today the declining temple population reflects the declining fortunes of Marysville itself. The town currently has only approximately 12,000 total residents, and it now designates itself as “Historic Marysville.” The historic Bok Kai temple that was founded before the passage of the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act that impacted the lives of so many immigrants, Chinatowns, and religions, is today one of the anchors that holds “Historic Marysville” together. The history of the Bok Kai Temple and its worshippers greatly affected the future of the later Marysville Chinese-American landscape, and it is heartening to know that there has been a shift in perceptions of the Bok Kai. Once an unwanted and misunderstood building, the Bok Kai Temple in Marysville, California is now being celebrated as a symbol of the “new” Chinese-American religious landscape.
CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

Illuminating the Past

An account of China's transformation from a dynastic empire to a modern nation-state, is told in many ways by the Daoist temple in China, and in America the temple and its deities have been particularly skilled at illuminating the Chinese cultural past. Many of the gods, deities, and immortals found in the Daoist temple describe the lives and times of Chinese mortals who took part in the creation and development of the universe, and it is these legendary figures that have come to represent China’s history of mankind.

In America, very little was ever "known" about a Chinese Daoist temple. There was never any lack of information from missionaries, or travelers and traders to China, who saw the temple as something foreign and exotic, but Americans had no other descriptions. Discussions and writings about China very seldom dealt with Chinese structures of any kind other than imperial palaces. What we in the west learned about a Chinese temple was a mix of fact and fiction, collected and recollected and then told and retold as truths. The Daoist temple and its deities tell an entirely different history.

For many Chinese, a temple is a living symbol endowed with meaning. It is the place to go to find harmony, happiness, prosperity, and guidance for an earthly life. A step through the doors of the Daoist temple, and a step over the spirit door, is a trip into a world like no other. The smells of incense burning, and seeing the deities that appear to
be looking directly into the mind and heart is an experience like no other. There is a feeling of peace, although all around it is hustle and bustle. The senses become overwhelmed with the sights, the smells, and most of all a sense of inspiration, and living emotion. It is implicitly understood that this is a place to satisfy deep, inner needs.

Although Chinese social and moral conduct was governed by in the past by Confucianism, a philosophy antagonistic to the concept of gods and spirits, Chinese religious beliefs have always been dominated by Daoism. Those legendary hero-gods found in the Daoist temple are the founders of Chinese culture, and the temple is built to house these founders who are so historically symbolic.

In ancient China the Daoist temple was a place to go when seeking order guidance, or order in daily life. This has not changed. The Daoist temple of today is still illuminated by the Daoist temple of the past.

Understanding the Present

Everyone today wants to be able to speak Mandarin. In America, the future appears to include being able to speak Chinese while in China everyone wants their children to learn both Mandarin and English. Today it is impossible to open an American newspaper without reading something about China. The more one reads, the more one understands that a history like China's requires more context than any article can supply.

Understanding China is more than speaking the language and studying the history. China is much more complex than that. Although it is widely believed that China's population is "Chinese," in fact there are over 56 ethnic races and creeds that make up
the composition of the Chinese people who now number almost 2 billion.\textsuperscript{16} Although not all ethnic groups practice Daoism, the number of active Daoist temples in China now number approximately 4500 and there are tens of thousands of Daoist priests and clerics.\textsuperscript{17} Daoism and its temples is an important influence on the daily life of most of the Chinese people because at its root it stems from the beliefs of many of the minority ethnic groups. It is believed that even the \textit{Uyghur} people, mostly living in \textit{Xinjiang}, originally built temples and practiced Daoism as their religion before adopting Islam.\textsuperscript{18}

Daoism and its temples have also found their way into other parts of the world. The Daoist concept of harmonious coexistence between humans and nature has become extremely important to the world of the 21\textsuperscript{st} century, and ongoing environmental issues have gone a long way in creating a new interest in Daoism and its temples. Daoist temples have always been built according to \textit{feng shui} theory, which places the temple in the most auspicious location in a nature setting. There is an old Chinese proverb that says: If there is harmony in the house, there will be order in the nation. If there is order in the nation, there will be peace in the world. This is the gift that Daoism and its temples have given the world--the opportunity to save an endangered environment and the opportunity for peaceful coexistence of all peoples.

\textsuperscript{16} These figures are from 2005, and come from published reports in Chinese newspapers including the \textit{Shanghai Daily} and the \textit{China Daily Mail}.

\textsuperscript{17} See Wang, Yi’e, \textit{Daoism in China} (Beijing: China Intercontinental Press 2004).

\textsuperscript{18} Ibid, 99.
Contributions

Throughout Chinese history Daoist temple culture has permeated the everyday life of ordinary Chinese people. It has, and continues to, exert its influence on many of the social customs in China where it often influenced the shaping of national consciousness. The Daoist temple has played an important role in the making of traditional Chinese culture, and to know and understand the Daoist temple is to better know and understand Chinese cultural history.

The Daoist temple has exerted far reaching influences on China's philosophy, literature, the arts, medicine and science. The Daoist pursuit of longevity and a healthy lifestyle has resulted in many of today's Daoist becoming doctors and pharmacists. This is because the Daoists in ancient China who had fled to the mountains to build their temples after they fell into disfavor with the imperial courts, experimented with making life giving elixirs from minerals. Daoists believe these special elixirs would eventually contribute to immortality. When the Daoists priests were once again in favor with the imperial courts they brought their directions for making the elixirs with them.

Both the Baiyunguan Temple in Shanghai and the Bok Kai Temple in Marysville, California have changed structurally during their lifetime, yet both of these the temples and their deities still convey the legends and beliefs so important in Daoism. Of special interest is that both of the temples have continued to evolve, along with their constituency, and have become a mirror image of the current evolving Chinese history. The more they are forced to change, the more they stay the same.
Both temples also have a multitude of deities whose origination goes back thousands of years, and these deities continue to be the focus of the spiritual aspirations of the Chinese people who pray there. The Daoist temple is a perfect example of the important complex links between Chinese cultural history, and the thought and ritual that are at the heart of Chinese society. Joseph Needham, a historian of science, wrote in *Science and Civilization in China* that “many of the most attractive elements of the Chinese character derive from Taoism...China without Taoism would be a tree of which some of its deepest roots had perished.”

**Future Predictions**

In some areas of China and America, Daoism, as an organized form of worship, is disappearing. There are no regular services, and priests are usually only seen at the funeral ritual of a wealthy person who was an important part of temple life and now needs the guidance of the Daoist deities.

In the temples this author researched the above was not the case. At both the *Bok Kai* Temple in America, and the *Baiyunguan* Temple in China, visitation to the temple for rituals and celebrations is on the rise. In Marysville, appointments to visit the temple by the Bay Area Chinese community have reached an all time high. It is not unusual to find an entire family visiting the temple to pay homage to its deities, and to give thanks for a prosperous year. In Shanghai the temple is always filled with temple members folding spirit papers or bringing and preparing food temple celebrations. There is noise in the

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temple, created by a hum of continuous activity that has not been seen in many years.

This author came to the conclusion that the Daoist temple, home to the many Daoist deities, immortals and hero-gods, will not disappear for a long time, if ever. Even in student circles in China it is not unusual to find real beliefs in the Daoist deities and immortals, much as was the case in ancient China. The Chinese will continue go to the Daoist temple to visit and pay homage to the immortals and deities they believe will help them with their everyday lives. They may go twice a week, or once a month, but they will go. Their belief in Daoist temple deities is not just a superstition or myth that will soon disappear; it is a part of their lives. The American Daoist temple and its deities are also a way of life for many Chinese-Americans. Those who had grown away from the Daoist temple are coming back because of their unwavering belief and understanding of their own Chinese cultural history.
APPENDIX I

PHOTO CREDITS


3. Copy of a United States Census Report located in archives at the University of California Davis

4. Copy of a 1921 Sanborn Fire Map from the University of California Davis Collection.


11. *Guan Yin* photo taken at the *Bok Kai* Temple in Marysville, California by Joan L. Mann, 2007.


13. Copy of map of Old Shanghai City Wall by permission of the Shanghai Library, Shanghai, China, 2004.


15. Two photos of the Chinese mural painting at the *Bok Kai* Temple in Marysville, California by Joan L. Mann, 2007.

16. Floor Plan of *Bok Kai* Temple.
APPENDIX II

PHOTO ESSAY: THE BAIYUNGUAN TEMPLE
SHANGHAI, CHINA

Photographs by Joan L. Mann

"Old" Baiyunguan Temple

Notice of temple closing
Directions to new temple

Notice of relocation of
Shanghai Daoist Assoc.

Old Shanghai City Wall

"New" Baiyunguan Temple

Opening of new Baiyunguan temple

Daoist priests
APPENDIX III

PHOTO ESSAY: THE BOK KAI TEMPLE
MARYSVILLE CALIFORNIA

Photographs by Joan L. Mann

Pavilion leading to Bok Kai Temple

Steps from levee to the front of temple

Entrance to main hall

Burning incense to Bok Kai

Paying respects

Food offerings
Tallie sticks

Central deity Bok Kai

Altar offerings

Giving Thanks
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VITA

Graduate College
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Joan Lorraine Mann

Home Address
5437 Cove Point Drive
Las Vegas, NV 89130

Degrees:
Associate of Arts, History, 1974
Seminole College

Bachelor of Arts, Public Relations, 1979
San Jose State University

Special Honors and Awards:
Outstanding Foreign Teacher Award, Shanghai University, 2004-2005.
Outstanding Academic English Advisor Award, Shanghai University, 2005.
Member: Psi Sigma Chapter of Phi Alpha Theta History Honor Society, UNLV 2003.
Member: Phi Kappa Phi National History Honor Society, 2007.

Publications:
“The History of Two Daoist Temples” Chinese Historical Society of America Press,
San Francisco, CA. Chinese America Special 20th Anniversary Issue, Branching
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Thesis Examination Committee:
Chairperson, Dr. Sue Fawn Chung, Ph. D.
Committee Member, Dr. Andrew Kirk, Ph. D.
Committee Member, Dr. David Wrobel, Ph. D.
Graduate Faculty Representative, Dr. Louisa McDonald, Ph. D.