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道教宗教性語言的語標成分：南台灣兩座宮廟的個案研究

doi:10.6720/SCR.201305_(1).0005

華人宗教研究, (1), 2013

Studies in Chinese Religions, (1), 2013

作者/Author：姜寶龍(Paul Allen Jackson)

頁數/Page：135-173

出版日期/Publication Date：2013/05

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Logographic Elements of Daoist Religious Language: A Case Study of Two Temples in Southern Taiwan¹

Paul Allen Jackson

Arizona State University (ASU) PHD candidate

Abstract

This article presents data on two religious sociolects, or *religiolects*, of two Daoist temples in southern Taiwan: the Daode yuan 道德院 (“Sanctuary of the Way and the Virtue”) and the Baozhong yimin miao 褒忠義民廟 (“Temple of the Dutiful, Commended for Loyalty”). The language communities of these two temples employ language varieties based on complex interactions between Modern Standard Chinese, Daigi, and Hakka, as influenced by the backgrounds, locations, and functions of the temples and the communities of functionaries and practitioners. The data presented consists of a series of single logographs, collected from 2011 to 2012 during the course of fieldwork, and are those which the author can reasonably determine that community members perceive to be religiously significant, and distinct from nonreligious language. Since human beings make choices about their language use, and this language use has an effect on thought and action, this data demonstrates that as every syllable is associated with meaning, meanings get caught up in a network of associations with other meanings from surrounding, associated, or remembered logographs.

¹ I am much indebted to Swanger Timothy (Arizona State University) for his insightful comments. All errors are, of course, my own.

These associations, in turn, form a complex network of conceptions, and can reveal new relationships of thought relative to religious conceptions.

Keywords: Daoism, Daoist Language, Taiwanese Religion, Religious Language, Languages of Taiwan, Linguistic Anthropology, Logographs, Characters

1. Introduction

Festivals held by temples of Sinitic religions such as Daoism and Buddhism in Taiwan are notoriously vivacious, stunning the observer with a pleasant, percussive din of traditional instruments, vast volumes of scriptural chanting, clouds of incense, and colorful displays of religious art and devotional theatrics. In 2009, at one such festival on the offshore island of Xiao Liuqiu 小琉球, having had little exposure to Sinitic languages other than Modern Standard Chinese (MSC), I was having a difficult time following an address by the representative of a temple group to a throng of practitioners. With typical Taiwanese friendliness and willingness to help visitors, some practitioners noticed my growing difficulties and began filling me in. In short order, practitioners began talking over one another, superimposing different translations and interpretations of the address. When asked about the discrepancies, a practitioner offered, “Well, the meaning is difficult to get across in the same way; the words have a different *flavor*, and some don’t have a corresponding equivalent in Mandarin. But, don’t worry, we’re giving you the gist of it.”

The study of Sinitic religion, from the point of view of the discipline of Religious Studies, has a rich history of developed study in many academic domains, such as social history, anthropology, psychology, and textual studies. However, there has traditionally been less of a focus on the linguistic approach as a coherent, self-encompassed discipline from which to engage Sinitic religion. While doctrines, ideas, and practices as examined by other fields are certainly and justifiably perceived as core elements of any system of religiosity, one of the most salient features of religion is the manner in which those doctrines, ideas, and practices manifest themselves and are spread to the world at large. Indeed, for religion, a cultural system so prominent, deep-rooted, advanced, and nearly omnipresent in the history of human civilization, existence as it is currently meaningful is only viable as a result of the efficacy of its modes of transmission. The process of cultural transmission, the spread of knowledge and behavior systems between populations (or generations), is actuated and mediated, among

a number of other ways, by linguistic paradigms.² Language, as presented below, is not a system of differing cyphers (individual ‘languages’ or ‘dialects’) which have a one-to-one, isometric relationship with one another and with some underlying, pure, meaning. Instead, the process of translation, of transference between languages involves acts of interpretation and alteration, even the most subtle of which may cause wide deviations in meaning, and therefore religious thought and practice. Focusing on the language choices and modalities employed by certain social groups, this paper is intended to present some initial findings relative to elements of complex language systems of Daoist religious communities in Kaohsiung 高雄, southern Taiwan 臺灣.

Taiwanese religious practice is one that enjoys a very multilingual environment; practitioners have access to, with ranging degrees of fluency to two or more of the languages among Modern Standard Chinese, Daigi 臺語, Hakka, English (as an international business language, and Japanese (among the very elderly, unless as, with English, as a business language). In particular, the presence of Sinitic languages, in competition with Austronesian languages of the aboriginal peoples who settled the island far before the Sinitic peoples, is particularly strong. I have selected to narrow my focus to Daoism because of its enmeshment with Sinitic civilization, of which Taiwan is an inheritor and participant. Daoism is among the world’s most well-known, influential, and culturally productive; the religious traditions of southern Taiwan are no exception to this tradition.

In order to examine deviations in meaning, this paper examines semantic groups from southern Taiwanese religious lexicon, in particular frequently occurring lexical units, with single corresponding logographs, which appeared in language used in religious situations in two Daoist temples in Kaohsiung, southern Taiwan, during a period of fieldwork by the author in the fall of 2011 and the spring of 2012. The Daoism in Taiwan which this paper focuses on is generally centered on either temple-bound activity or on practices localized around semiprofessional functionaries, and involves (among other things): participation in ritual and festivals, mantic practices, generation of good will from deities, requests for favors, engaging of religious scripture, and charitable works.

² K. Smith, M. L. Kalish, T. L. Griffiths, and S. Lewandowsky, “Cultural transmission and the evolution of human behaviour,” *Phil. Trans. R. Soc. B* (2008) 363, 3469–3476.

The data used in this paper was collected from ritual and instructive use of language by functionaries on temple grounds. This data set will be sorted into semantic categories, which reveal focal points of concern in the linguistic communities of these temples, on the assumption that there is a relationship between frequent appearance in a linguistic corpus and salience of concern (either generated or demonstrated) for concepts, in a religious domain, to the practitioners. That is to say, the more something comes up in speech, the more someone can be thought of as mentally engaging it. The semantic categories form networks of associated terms, the use of which activates and reinforces pathways of thought within their semantic fields. In different Sinitic languages, individual lexical items may have different semantic relationships, be related by sound to different oral representations. Different lexical items may also enjoy different relationships to written logographs (which themselves have semantic elements and ‘genetic’ relationships with one another).³ In addition, the particular religiocultural situation may give rise to idiosyncratic semantic fields. The relationships between lexical items, their sounds, their visual representations, and the semantic categories they find themselves in, and related lexical items they call to the practitioners’ minds deserve further consideration and study.

For the language community at hand, the semantic content of language, made evident through folk understandings as well as formal etymological analyses of logographs, is of particular religious importance, owing to the connection between the nature of writing and natural patterns of vivified pneuma supported by the subtle force of the Dao itself. In MSC, the very word for culture, *wen* 文, fundamentally denotes ‘patterns’ and is intimately linked to literacy (in fact, it is also used to mean ‘language’). The logograph for scripture or classical text, *jing* 經, exploits a textual metaphor (the fundamental meaning of *jing*, as in *Daodejing* 道德經 is the ‘warp’ of a woven textile), such that scriptures are understood to form the mainstays of very fabric of reality. Han dynasty *wei* 緯 texts employ a similar metaphor (the ‘weft’ of a woven textile) to denote supplementary material to fill out the fabric of reality; these weft texts

³ This may be by imagined genealogy, folk history, etymological study, and more, all enmeshed in complex systems of lexical understanding by actual users of the language. For an example of Sinitic logograph genealogy, see R. Harbaugh, *Chinese Characters: A Genealogy and Dictionary*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).

are prophecies and mythical, esoteric interpretations of the classics.⁴ Texts and the written word itself are both imbued with and governed by the natural patterns of the *qi* that reflect the operation of the Dao. In this way, the cosmos and textuality itself, as both written and spoken language (as spoken language is but a controlled emanation of *qi* as human breath), are closely interrelated.⁵

When we use language, we make choices. We choose how to build sentences, what words to use, what inflection and timing to utter them, and more. We attempt to get those around us to enter our own worldview through our language. We negotiate relationships with those who interact with us linguistically, fashioning and refashioning identity with every utterance.⁶

In other words, human beings make choices about their language use, and in turn this language use has some kind of effect on thought and action relative to the real world.

2. The Temples: DDY and YMM

The data collected comes from the language users of the communities of two temples in Kaohsiung, a major metropolis in southern Taiwan. The two temples selected are the Daode Yuan 道德院 (Sanctuary of the Way and the Virtue) and the Baozhong Yimin Miao 褒忠義民廟 (Temple of the Dutiful, Commended for Loyalty).

The Daode Yuan was built in 1960 in its current location, on the lower slope of small mountainous hills, on the shore of Golden Lion Lake 金獅湖, on land acquired via donations accumulated since 1955, under the direction of Guo Cangying 郭藏應 (an Orthodox Unity 正一 priest). In 1966, the temple received a sizeable land donation, upon which were built large temple halls. By

⁴ Cf. Stephen Bokenkamp, "Time After Time: Taoist Apocalyptic History and the Founding of the Tang Dynasty," *Asia Minor* (third series) 7 (1994): 59–88. Cf. also Pan Chen, *Gu chenwei yantao ji qi shulu jieti* 古讖緯研討及其書錄解題 [*Studies and Bibliographic Notes on the Ancient Apocryphal Texts*] (Taipei: Guoli bianyiguan, 1993), and Yoshiko Kamitsuka, *Rikuchō dokyō shisō no kenkyū* 六朝道教思想の研究 [*Studies on Taoist thought in the Six Dynasties*] (Tokyo: Sōbunsha, 1999).

⁵ Paul Jackson, "Ideas in Daoism Relative to Ecology and the Environment." Manuscript submitted for publication: 13.

⁶ Joan Kelly Hall, *Teaching and Researching Language and Culture* (2nd edition) (New York: Pearson ESL, 2011), 16.

1984, the temple built additional flanking and rear buildings and towers, which constitute its current form. The Daode Yuan, a large temple complex for the dense urban area it is built in, is constructed on more than 1,400 *ping* (roughly 50,500 square feet), and houses the School of the Perfected Lotus of the Grand Monad 太乙真蓮宗 (founded in this same temple in 1976). Religious functionaries at this temple are of two varieties. The first consists of the resident Daoist priestesses 女道士 (sometimes called ‘nuns’), who engage in Orthodox Unity ritual practices at the temple (especially in terms of public ritual functions), while performing Complete Perfection 全真 self-cultivation practices in private. The temple has no male functionaries. The second consists of volunteers of the temple’s religious assistance organization; these ever-present volunteers maintain the temple grounds and perform operations associated with the pragmatic upkeep of the temple, such as cooking, handling donations, moving goods to and from the temple grounds, setting up public festivals, and cleaning.⁷ This temple is very active in providing material and spiritual relief for the needy, hosting or participating in large-scale public rituals and festivals, and education of the populace in Daoist spiritual concepts and practices. The temple maintains relationships, fostered by exchanges of donations and mutual visitation by functionaries, with temples all over Taiwan, in mainland China, and Japan.

The Kaohsiung Baozhong Yimin Miao has its origins in 1947, when the original temple (of which the Kaohsiung location founded is a branch) donated incense and banners to Lin Rangcai 林讓才, a devotee, in order to found a religious center directly opposite the Kaohsiung central train station. The original temple was commissioned by Qianlong 乾隆, emperor of the Qing 清 dynasty (r. 1736–95 CE), to recognize those Hakka that fought and died defending the emperor’s sovereignty during uprisings in Taiwan. The Kaohsiung center was to service the Hakka populations in the area that had settled or traveled there from the traditional Hakka centers of Taoyuan 桃園, Hsinchu 新竹, and Miaoli 苗栗. Five years later, three temple buildings collectively called the Baozhong Pavilion 褒忠亭 were constructed on the center’s east face. As their environs prospered and became too crowded, they elected to move the

⁷ Wanli Ho, “Daoist Nuns in Taiwan: A Case Study of the Daode yuan,” *Journal of Daoist Studies* 2 (2009): 137-164 (140).

temple to its current location to the northeast near the intersection of Dachang 大昌 and Juemin 覺民 roads in the Sanmin district 三民區. In 1978, the temple as it exists today was constructed. Though smaller than the Daode Yuan, the Yimin Miao is nonetheless a large temple, with one main building constructed around a central courtyard. This temple is of greatest interest to the Hakka populations in the Kaohsiung area, but readily accepts and services others as well. This temple houses one kind of religious functionary: members of the temple organizing committee, comprised of elders who are responsible for running the temple in all senses. The committee brings in outside specialists to perform or assist in performing the various yearly ritual functions, hosted by the temple, which require ordained functionaries. Committee members do participate in ritual performance.

I selected the Daode Yuan and the Yimin Miao because of their presence at intersections between major languages in a strongly multilingual region. Taiwan hosts Modern Standard Chinese, Daigi, Hakka, English, and some Japanese as major languages in use by the overwhelming majority of the populace, many having comfortable ability, at least passively, in two or three of those languages. On top of that, there is a small original substrate of Austronesian and Tai-Kradai languages over which at least Daigi is layered, and which is undergoing a preservation and revitalization process.⁸ Practitioners and functionaries at the Daode Yuan favor Daigi, while those at the Yimin Miao utilize Hakka and Daigi, neither being the language of government and education, and therefore power, but both being important languages of identity, tradition, cultural affinity, and social cohesion. Kaohsiung, the city that hosts these two temples, is the largest metropolis in southern Taiwan, whose people are more apt to use the Daigi language than counterparts in northern cities. The complexity of the linguistic situation on the ground, the richness of the linguistic choices, the complexity of the linguistic boundaries, makes the Daode Yuan and Yimin Miao amenable to the study of the interaction between social elements of religion and language, and as such are good locations to find religious vocabulary.

⁸ Toru Sakai 酒井亨,〈探求 HŌ-LŌ 台語中間Ė 非漢語語詞—羅馬字寫書寫法Ė 正當性〉, (台灣羅馬字教學 KAP 研究國際學術研討會, 2002.)

3. Methodology

This data was gathered from the religious functionaries described above in the Two Kaohsiung temples, the Daode Yuan and the Baozhong Yimin Miao over a period of ten months, from 2011 to 2012. The data set consisted of a bounded set of religious lexical items in the Daigi, Hakka, and MSC languages used by practitioners of the temples described above. The religious terms presented here are monosyllabic; this is due to the greater tendency in Daigi for monosyllabic words and the connection between oral religious language and the textual substrate they are drawn from (as scriptures are largely written in premodern Literary Chinese, which is heavily monosyllabic). The lexical items I focus on are those which I can reasonably determine that Daode Yuan and Yimin Miao community members perceive to be marked or unusual in some way, relative to nonreligious language. Following Keane, the peculiar or marked forms and uses of language that I call religious are “constructed in such a way as to suggest, often in only the most implicit ways, that they involve entities or modes of agency that are considered by practitioners to be consequentially distinct from more ‘ordinary’ experience or situated across some sort of ontological divide from something understood as a more everyday ‘here and now’.” By ‘ontological divide,’ I also mean that practitioners understand the difference to be a qualitative one, as between kinds of things, rather than, for example, simple spatial distance. I also focus on special semantic ranges of those lexical items.⁹

My data set was drawn from oral language used in two situations by religious functionaries: in ritual and in didactic situations. I define functionaries as religious specialists who “produce” religious activity rather than merely “consume” it (the latter being *practitioners*), and have described them above. I have selected functionaries because these persons have the most frequent contact with religious language use, but are not generally raised in a situation in which there is no divide between religious and nonreligious language use (i.e., they generally acquire a general language first, then later in life receive accretions which form a religiolect). The practitioners may have too casual a contact with religiolects to fully course in the language variety instead of merely receiving its partial influence. Greater fluency in the religiolect results in more opportunity to

⁹ Webb Keane, “Language and Religion,” in *A Companion to Linguistic Anthropology*, edited by Alessandro Duranti (eISBN: 9781405144308, 2005).

display the phonetic and lexical features I am looking for as data. Ritual situations I will define according to Bell's spectrum definition of ritual-like activities: those activities with high degrees of formalism, traditionalism, invariance, rule-governance, sacral symbolism, and performance.¹⁰ Didactic situations are those in which functionaries advise or instruct nonfunctionaries in any capacity. The rationale for selecting these two situations is that these are situations with the highest degree of religious language use, and the two assume different interlocutors, which is important for comparative purposes.

I adopted qualitative methods to collect my data; most frequently, I engaged in participant observation in order to collect the lexical data, while also being able to record natural language and ritual language during public rituals. To obtain naturally-occurring language, I sought out data that was spontaneously produced, wherein the language reflected what the speaker says rather than what they think they would say, reacted to a natural situation rather than a contrived one, had real-world consequences, and was generally rich in pragmatic structures.

As for the participant-observation paradigm, I attempted to become immersed in the social context of the temple community. To achieve this goal, I aimed to be involved in the community for a lengthy period of time and take on a role in the community, in order to gain background knowledge and form relationships of trust. The key strategy followed to be a successful participant-observer was to free myself as much as possible from the filter of my own cultural experiences, which requires cultural relativism, knowledge about possible cultural differences, and sensitivity and objectivity in perceiving others.

As with any methodology, there were disadvantages to the kind of data collected. First, natural speech in the required parameters did not occur often. As proficiency of the speaker is difficult to control, applying the proper heuristic system to determine what lexical items were "religious" was also time-consuming and difficult. The collection and analysis of the data was time-consuming, and thus opportunities to obtain more data were lost. In addition, the use of recording equipment may have been intrusive, causing modifications of speech patterns in recorded speech. This is the famous "observer's paradox": when humans are being observed, they may be incapable

¹⁰ Catherine Bell, *Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009): 138-170.

or unwilling to produce natural data. One way to mitigate this problem was to redirect the informants' attention to reduce their self-consciousness during direct interaction. Every attempt was made to record data unobtrusively, mostly by handwritten annotations. Finally, pragmatic necessity in light of this perception of instruction in addition to restrictions on recording equipment required reliance on imperfect human memory. Most of these disadvantages were mitigated simply by investing more time in collecting and processing the data, but it must be noted that more work remains to be done in this area; what is here presented is simply the result of preliminary observations and analysis.

4. Religious Language

Religion, as we are well aware, is a perilous word, laden with baggage, delineated with shifting, hazy boundaries, and sensitive to cultural context. For the purposes of this paper, it is enough to say that religion is any socially organized pattern of beliefs and practices concerning ultimate meaning that assumes the existence of the supernatural, or that which is of ultimate concern, as determined by the sociocultural context.

Religious language is, simply put, language used to bind a community together as they pursue culturally-specific ultimate concerns in relations with the supernatural. However, religious language must be understood as a social language variety, or *sociolect*. A *sociolect* is an accumulation of interconnected idiolects, a group-dependent set of similarities in language usage. This implies that the sociolect "...share[s] more similarities within a group than between groups".¹¹ The sociolect forms an operational subunit, a language within a language, in a putative inventory of linguistic tools available to any one speaker. These subunits might be thought of as domain-specific sublanguages that are related to many others through common parentage and recognizably similar form, yet remain distinct in lexical inventory, formulaic structures, construction of dispositions, patterns of usage, and historical development.

Religious language use involves one's heightened awareness of language along with heightened awareness of that which one may consider religious, and so it offers scholars insight into that awareness and its linguistic and, by

¹¹ Max Louwerse, "Semantic Variation in Idiolect and Sociolect: Corpus Linguistic Evidence from Literary Texts," *Computers and the Humanities* 38 (2004): 207-221 (208)..

extension, conceptual and social consequences. These consequences are integral to shaping the details of one's religious worldviews, and can serve to highlight how speakers of different languages bring deviations in conceptual and social expectations to bear when attempting to form a common ground with members outside of the religious community. Given that "the semiotic properties of religious language commonly help make present what would otherwise, in the course of ordinary experience, be absent or imperceptible, or make that absence presupposable by virtue of the special means used to overcome it," one may come to understand religious language varieties (*religiolects*) as a special category of sociolect.¹² In this sense, a religiolect is a sociolect structured around a religious community, the language of which bears properties inherent to the religious system of that community. That is to say, if the religious system of the community is esoteric, then the religiolect itself will be, in terms of such elements as pragmatics and semantics, oriented toward the hidden meanings behind otherwise interpretable units. The field of religious studies at present treats language as peripheral to, or at best symptomatic of, religious thought and practice. In this paper, language is a creating and mediating force for religious thought and practice, such that religion and language are inextricably interdependent.

5. Sinitic Religions and Daoism in Taiwan

This paper concerns Daoism, a Sinitic religion, in southern Taiwan. Religion in the Sinitic civilizations is often presented as a canonical example of the differences in the understanding of the category of "religion" in different parts of the world. The notion of religion in the so-called Western civilizations bears with it particular concepts that construct it, such as prophetic founding figures, sacred texts as fonts of legitimacy and doctrine, commitment to monoreligiosity, focus on individual relationship to religion, emphasis on monotheism, emphasis on the afterlife, central authorities whose role it is to interpret and thereby change the transmitted traditions, and conceptual space reserved for credence in the religious system. On the other hand, Sinitic religion is described as pragmatic, focused on this-worldly benefits, amorphous or

¹² Webb Keane, "The evidence of the senses and the materiality of religion," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 14, s1 (April 2008): S110–S127 (S120).

decentralized, “superstitious”, collectivistic, polytheistic, and focused on practice without a proportional regard to understanding the ostensible reasons, doctrines, or philosophies behind said practice. Of course, many of these can be said to be born of popular understandings of religion and broad civilization-level differences, both promulgated by groups with specific agendas and contextualized according to particular historical circumstances (such as European Christian missionaries or Chinese Confucian scholars) that were at odds with what might be termed the academic enterprise of modern scholarship: ideally, one that attempts to find objective truths, complex realities, and systems of knowledge for the benefit of all mankind. For example, calling Sinitic religion “orthopraxic” is surely a simplification, given that the notion of belief is central to accepting a topic as a legitimate subject of discourse in the first place.¹³ Similarly, calling Western religion “orthodoxic” implies that one does not change one’s behavior much in light of the teachings of one’s religious system, instead conceptualized religious belief in the domain of the mind alone.

The very idea of “religion” is one that, as Asad points out, is bound up as a historical product of discursive processes, and this is one that is strongly tied to language communities. The Latin *religio* gives a snapshot of an early point along the historical discursive process: the strong, venerative binds which tie the living to the dead in a relationship of awe and honor.¹⁴ This idea of veneration gives rise to, and transforms, many “Western” notions of religion, notions that did not develop in the same way in the Sinitic civilization. Perhaps it is better to say that “religion” in China can be thought of in terms of conceptual analogues to religions of the Indo-European language communities, but one that is not commensurate in many ways.

In examining the language of religion in the modern West versus medieval

¹³ That is to say, one has to have certain baseline assumptions about the world in order to accept certain practices as possible. On the subject of Pu Songling’s 蒲松齡 (1640-1715) *Liaozhai zhiyi* 聊齋志異, for example, the reception of the work centered “on the very issue of belief, namely the legitimacy of ghosts as a subject matter of discourse.” As a work that centers on the supernatural and assumes a religious thought system as a basis for accepting the work, it is closely tied to religious thought. Luo Hui, “The Ghost of *Liaozhai*: Pu Songling’s Ghostlore and its History of Reception” (Ph.D. diss., University of Toronto, 2009), 15.

¹⁴ Often one sees *religio* interpreted as “to bind anew” from *re-* “again” and *ligare* “to bind”; however, *re-* also functioned as an intensifier, as with *remanere* “to remain (situated)”, from *re-* + *manere* (“to stay”). Therefore, I interpret *religio* as “strongly bind”.

China, for example, one finds that the metaphors used to talk about religion contain language which, subtly but powerfully, contains implications concerning how one thinks about religion, and the assumptions underlying our systems of thought.¹⁵ Something as seemingly innocuous as metaphorizing religion as an organic entity (when speaking of the “growth” of a religious tradition, for example, carries, if unlooked-for, nigh-unfelt implications: we “...imagine them not only as entities, but as entities of particular kinds: autonomous agents going about the business of fulfilling their developmental teleology; living beings that completely transform ingested substances into parts of themselves unrecognizable from other parts; and clearly demarcated, sharply bounded, and holistically and functionally hyperorganized life-forms, every component of which shares the same fundamental essence as every other part.”¹⁶ In times of early contact between the European and Sinitic civilizations, the imposition of categories such as “god(s)”, “beliefs”, and “prayer” onto what Europeans observed as Sinitic religion, caused later generations of indigenes to *adopt* those concepts as “religious”, rather than being reflective of native conceptualization and mental demarcations.¹⁷

Sinitic religion is described by Goossaert as: “all-encompassing, not exclusive. It embraces all forms of religious practice, whether personal (meditation, salvation techniques, body techniques including martial arts, access to knowledge and revelation through possession and spirit-writing) or group (worship of local saints or ancestors, death rituals), which are all grounded in Chinese cosmology. It includes ancient sacrificial religion, Confucianism which continued it, Taoism and Buddhism, as well as the sectarian movements that were formed later. The most common form was the worshipping community with a temple, dedicated to a local saint: this kind of community was not Confucian, Buddhist or Taoist but linked to all three. Chinese religion existed but did not have a name because it did not have an overarching church structure or dogmatic authority. It brought together all forms of China’s religious life,

¹⁵ Robert Ford Campany, “On the Very Idea of Religions (in the modern West and in Early Medieval China),” *History of Religions* 42 (2003): 287-319 (289).

¹⁶ Campany, “On the Very Idea of Religions (in the modern West and in Early Medieval China),”: 287-319 (296).

¹⁷ Lizhu Fan 范麗珠, “西方宗教理論下中國宗教研究的困境”, *Journal of Nanjing University (Philosophy, Humanities, and Social Sciences)* 2009, 2: 92-101 (96).

with the exception of certain religions of foreign origin which, because they required exclusive membership and claimed a monopoly of the truth, could not be included: these were the three monotheisms, Islam, Judaism and Christianity.”¹⁸ The kinds of incongruities between religious concepts in our language communities, as demonstrated above, renders even more important the linguistic approach to religious studies. The languages used to engage Sinitic religions, even though they be within the sphere of the Sinitic language families, nonetheless create systematic incommensurabilities in proportion to the differences between the languages themselves. While the differences in the Indo-European languages and the Sinitic languages may give rise to greater differences in conceptions of religion, the smaller differences between Sinitic languages are nonetheless perilous in the fact that the differences are assumed to be so small as to be irrelevant or even nonexistent. However, even small initial deviations at a point of origin can lead to large deviations at the target.

The import of the above lies in the unfortunate relegation of a vast swath of religious practice in the Sinitic civilization to categories of miscellanea with such names as “popular religion”, “folk religion” or “Chinese religion” when these systems of religiosity do not conform to a stereotypically “Western” conception of single, bounded religious traditions with central authorities, original and unchanging scriptures, orthodox beliefs and practices, and founding figures.¹⁹ The terms have, in some cases, of course, filtered into the consciousness of the very practitioners of those traditions; considering oneself a practitioner of a stigmatized religion is to stigmatize the self. In the populations observed in this study, at least, there appeared to be a strong sense of self-identification with Daoism, even though the religious traditions in question may traditionally be classified by scholars as popular religion; the sense appears to be that unless a Sinitic religious tradition is explicitly Buddhist, it is Daoist. I follow this emic notion of religion in my interpretation of the religiosity I have

¹⁸ Vincent Goossaert, “The Concept of Religion in China and the West,” *Diogenes* 205 (2005): 13–20 (13–14).

¹⁹ Consigning these religious traditions to a catch-all vessel of miscellanea has a series of unintended negative consequences. In these terms are implied fragmentation, the lack of power that comes with decentralization, a lack of historical grounding and connection to tradition, lack of educated and elite tradition to sustain the intellectual life of the tradition, inferiority to “single” religious traditions commonly in the roll of “world religions”, a lack of identity, and many more.

encountered.

While necessarily oversimplifying, it will suffice to say that Daoism is a complex of religious traditions that originated in China, and which has ties to Sinitic philosophy and intellectual epistemology from the infancy of Sinitic civilization. In populations of adherents to Sinitic religious traditions in southern Taiwan, Daoism is closely related to, even conflatable with, Sinitic popular religion (as understood by scholars): the innumerable so-called shamanistic traditions, mediumistic traditions, and folk traditions that either blend the religions mentioned above or do not neatly fit into those categories

Daoism is a rich and vibrant religion that is practiced today in various forms, but one that also has been around for many centuries. For the purpose of this study, I take the position that Daoism began as a religious movement in 142 CE with the Tianshi Dao 天師道, and was based on a number of intellectual and philosophical traditions that had been in accretion in the Sinitic civilization prior to that point. However, Daoism has since spread and intermingled with Sinitic culture to such an extent that “Daoism” is no longer necessarily restricted to the descendants of Tianshi Dao; thus, a great number of folk religious systems in China might well be classified as Daoist based on iconography, popular perception, content and presentation of scriptures, philosophical standpoint concerning the Dao, and other criteria. In other words, I take the stance that Sinitic religion that is not expressly and solely Buddhist, Muslim, or Christian can at least reasonably, if not accurately, be called “Daoist”. In this paper, I distance myself from the notion that the “popular religious behavior” in the Sinitic civilization is not real or pure “Daoism”, and that Daoism is restricted to a) an elite, or b) a specialized group of religious functionaries, such as the *daoshi* 道士 living in a specialized religious complex, or those that have received registers. This point is, of course, arguable; perhaps it is just as useful to call Daoism by the name “Sinitic religion” and leave it at that, though in this text Daoism is instead subsumed into the category of Sinitic religion.

Daoism in Taiwan is generally centered on either temple-bound activity or on practices localized around itinerant, semiprofessional functionaries. In the first case, which is the focus of this paper, temples (*gong* 宮, *guan* 觀, *dian* 殿, *yuan* 院, *ci* 祠) serve as the primary and immovable locus of practice. Temples house a principal *shen* 神(deity, divinity) and a number of ancillary deities, some nearly equal in stature to the main one. Temple organizations, generally

comprised of elders and volunteers, maintain the temple, invite or keep on the premises religious functionaries, organize events, and manage religious practice by the practitioners. Practitioners come to the temple to engage in veneration (*baibai* 拜拜) through offering incense, burning of representative spirit money, donation of actual currency, or donations of concrete objects such as fruit or pre-made offering baskets. Practitioners often include requests for some boon, or to turn aside some ill circumstance; particular deities have certain domains as their own province; e.g. those that seek to pass the college entrance exams would be especially solicitous towards Wenchang 文昌, while those having trouble conceiving may call on Zhusheng Niangniang 註生娘娘. One may come to have a blessing ceremony performed (such as on one's vehicle, to avoid accidents, or on one's own person, to stave off illness). In addition, one finds divinatory practices: casting divination blocks (*ba-bueh* or *zhi jiao* 擲筊) and drawing divination stalks (*qian* 籤), both aimed at providing advice on how to proceed with thorny issues. Finally, there are regular festivals and rituals, often celebrating the birthdates or anniversaries of installation of the deities in the temples, or to have the deities emerge in a ritual process to emulate an inspection tour of the territory over which they have jurisdiction. During this time, temple organizations arrange for other temple groups and lay practitioners to visit and participate in the festivities, often in the form of ritual visitation by other deities accompanied by ceremonial flair and music from the social imagination of the imperial eras, mass offerings, scriptural chanting, fireworks, and feasting. It is in this local context that the religious language described below will be found.

6. Data

1. 一	9. 丙	17. 二	25. 伏
2. 丁	10. 中	18. 五	26. 伯
3. 七	11. 丹	19. 亥	27. 位
4. 三	12. 主	20. 亮	28. 使
5. 上	13. 乘	21. 人	29. 侍
6. 下	14. 乙	22. 仁	30. 侯
7. 丑	15. 九	23. 仙	31. 保
8. 世	16. 乞	24. 令	32. 修

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|-------|--------|--------|--------|
| 33. 倫 | 68. 午 | 103. 器 | 138. 子 |
| 34. 傳 | 69. 南 | 104. 囑 | 139. 字 |
| 35. 像 | 70. 卜 | 105. 四 | 140. 存 |
| 36. 儀 | 71. 卯 | 106. 國 | 141. 孝 |
| 37. 元 | 72. 印 | 107. 園 | 142. 守 |
| 38. 先 | 73. 卷 | 108. 圖 | 143. 宗 |
| 39. 光 | 74. 卿 | 109. 團 | 144. 官 |
| 40. 兔 | 75. 原 | 110. 土 | 145. 定 |
| 41. 入 | 76. 受 | 111. 地 | 146. 宮 |
| 42. 內 | 77. 叢 | 112. 城 | 147. 宿 |
| 43. 全 | 78. 口 | 113. 基 | 148. 寅 |
| 44. 八 | 79. 古 | 114. 堂 | 149. 密 |
| 45. 公 | 80. 句 | 115. 報 | 150. 寶 |
| 46. 六 | 81. 召 | 116. 境 | 151. 封 |
| 47. 兵 | 82. 史 | 117. 壇 | 152. 將 |
| 48. 冊 | 83. 司 | 118. 士 | 153. 尉 |
| 49. 冥 | 84. 合 | 119. 壬 | 154. 尊 |
| 50. 准 | 85. 吉 | 120. 壽 | 155. 導 |
| 51. 凝 | 86. 同 | 121. 外 | 156. 少 |
| 52. 瀰 | 87. 名 | 122. 多 | 157. 居 |
| 53. 凰 | 88. 后 | 123. 大 | 158. 山 |
| 54. 出 | 89. 吏 | 124. 天 | 159. 崇 |
| 55. 列 | 90. 君 | 125. 太 | 160. 嵩 |
| 56. 初 | 91. 吟 | 126. 奉 | 161. 嶽 |
| 57. 利 | 92. 咨 | 127. 奏 | 162. 己 |
| 58. 制 | 93. 告 | 128. 奠 | 163. 巳 |
| 59. 劍 | 94. 命 | 129. 奧 | 164. 帝 |
| 60. 力 | 95. 和 | 130. 女 | 165. 師 |
| 61. 勸 | 96. 咒 | 131. 妖 | 166. 平 |
| 62. 勿 | 97. 品 | 132. 妙 | 167. 年 |
| 63. 化 | 98. 唯 | 133. 姆 | 168. 幸 |
| 64. 北 | 99. 問 | 134. 始 | 169. 幽 |
| 65. 十 | 100. 啓 | 135. 姑 | 170. 序 |
| 66. 千 | 101. 善 | 136. 威 | 171. 庚 |
| 67. 升 | 102. 嗣 | 137. 娘 | 172. 府 |

173. 度	208. 成	243. 景	278. 樞
174. 庭	209. 戒	244. 晶	279. 機
175. 廟	210. 房	245. 智	280. 檄
176. 廣	211. 所	246. 曄	281. 櫨
177. 延	212. 承	247. 嗽	282. 次
178. 弔	213. 拔	248. 暘	283. 欽
179. 弘	214. 招	249. 曄	284. 歌
180. 彝	215. 拜	250. 曝	285. 止
181. 形	216. 持	251. 曄	286. 正
182. 彩	217. 授	252. 曉	287. 步
183. 待	218. 掬	253. 曜	288. 歲
184. 後	219. 放	254. 曰	289. 殿
185. 御	220. 故	255. 曲	290. 母
186. 微	221. 救	256. 書	291. 毒
187. 德	222. 敕	257. 會	292. 民
188. 心	223. 教	258. 月	293. 氣
189. 志	224. 敬	259. 有	294. 水
190. 思	225. 文	260. 服	295. 永
191. 急	226. 斗	261. 朗	296. 求
192. 性	227. 方	262. 朝	297. 治
193. 怪	228. 日	263. 木	298. 法
194. 息	229. 旨	264. 未	299. 泚
195. 悟	230. 昂	265. 末	300. 注
196. 悲	231. 昇	266. 本	301. 洞
197. 惡	232. 昌	267. 朱	302. 洪
198. 想	233. 明	268. 杓	303. 流
199. 意	234. 吟	269. 東	304. 浮
200. 感	235. 星	270. 析	305. 海
201. 慈	236. 昭	271. 林	306. 消
202. 慧	237. 昱	272. 格	307. 淨
203. 慶	238. 曷	273. 梵	308. 淵
204. 應	239. 時	274. 森	309. 混
205. 懺	240. 哲	275. 極	310. 清
206. 戊	241. 晨	276. 標	311. 渡
207. 戌	242. 普	277. 樂	312. 涓

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|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| 313. 滉 | 348. 狂 | 383. 璫 | 418. 瘋 |
| 314. 滿 | 349. 狗 | 384. 瑯 | 419. 瘍 |
| 315. 漂 | 350. 猴 | 385. 璫 | 420. 瘡 |
| 316. 濟 | 351. 獄 | 386. 璇 | 421. 痼 |
| 317. 火 | 352. 獨 | 387. 璐 | 422. 痞 |
| 318. 災 | 353. 獻 | 388. 璫 | 423. 癰 |
| 319. 炁 | 354. 玄 | 389. 璫 | 424. 瘟 |
| 320. 炫 | 355. 玉 | 390. 璫 | 425. 痲 |
| 321. 炯 | 356. 王 | 391. 璫 | 426. 瘡 |
| 322. 炳 | 357. 均 | 392. 環 | 427. 瘡 |
| 323. 烈 | 358. 玟 | 393. 璫 | 428. 瘡 |
| 324. 赫 | 359. 玟 | 394. 璫 | 429. 瘡 |
| 325. 無 | 360. 玟 | 395. 璫 | 430. 瘡 |
| 326. 焦 | 361. 珂 | 396. 璫 | 431. 瘡 |
| 327. 然 | 362. 珍 | 397. 甲 | 432. 瘡 |
| 328. 輝 | 363. 琿 | 398. 申 | 433. 瘡 |
| 329. 煉 | 364. 琿 | 399. 疏 | 434. 瘡 |
| 330. 煌 | 365. 珙 | 400. 疚 | 435. 瘡 |
| 331. 煒 | 366. 珠 | 401. 疔 | 436. 瘡 |
| 332. 煜 | 367. 琿 | 402. 底 | 437. 瘡 |
| 333. 煥 | 368. 現 | 403. 疫 | 438. 瘋 |
| 334. 照 | 369. 璇 | 404. 疔 | 439. 瘡 |
| 335. 熠 | 370. 理 | 405. 疾 | 440. 癰 |
| 336. 頰 | 371. 琿 | 406. 病 | 441. 癰 |
| 337. 燃 | 372. 琛 | 407. 症 | 442. 癰 |
| 338. 熹 | 373. 琿 | 408. 瘡 | 443. 白 |
| 339. 燦 | 374. 琪 | 409. 瘡 | 444. 百 |
| 340. 爍 | 375. 琿 | 410. 痛 | 445. 皇 |
| 341. 爍 | 376. 琳 | 411. 痛 | 446. 咬 |
| 342. 爛 | 377. 琿 | 412. 瘍 | 447. 皓 |
| 343. 爵 | 378. 琿 | 413. 瘡 | 448. 皛 |
| 344. 父 | 379. 瑋 | 414. 瘡 | 449. 皛 |
| 345. 爺 | 380. 瑛 | 415. 瘡 | 450. 皛 |
| 346. 牛 | 381. 瑞 | 416. 痼 | 451. 目 |
| 347. 犯 | 382. 瑤 | 417. 瘡 | 452. 眞 |

453. 眾	488. 祭	523. 機	558. 索
454. 睟	489. 祐	524. 禩	559. 紫
455. 督	490. 祝	525. 禪	560. 終
456. 瞭	491. 侵	526. 禪	561. 結
457. 知	492. 振	527. 檜	562. 絡
458. 碑	493. 滅	528. 遂	563. 絢
459. 示	494. 禍	529. 禮	564. 網
460. 仍	495. 禱	530. 禮	565. 統
461. 祀	496. 祺	531. 禱	566. 絲
462. 祁	497. 禍	532. 禩	567. 經
463. 价	498. 裸	533. 襖	568. 維
464. 祇	499. 粹	534. 禰	569. 綱
465. 祈	500. 稜	535. 禩	570. 綵
466. 祉	501. 祿	536. 贊	571. 綸
467. 神	502. 稟	537. 禩	572. 縋
468. 祐	503. 禁	538. 秘	573. 緣
469. 祐	504. 禱	539. 稱	574. 編
470. 拔	505. 禪	540. 空	575. 緯
471. 附	506. 禰	541. 立	576. 練
472. 祖	507. 禩	542. 章	577. 縱
473. 祇	508. 禪	543. 童	578. 總
474. 祿	509. 禎	544. 符	579. 織
475. 祚	510. 福	545. 節	580. 繞
476. 祛	511. 禍	546. 篇	581. 繡
477. 祛	512. 祿	547. 籲	582. 繫
478. 祝	513. 禡	548. 粲	583. 繼
479. 神	514. 提	549. 精	584. 纂
480. 祠	515. 謀	550. 系	585. 續
481. 紫	516. 禩	551. 紀	586. 罪
482. 依	517. 禩	552. 約	587. 罰
483. 祥	518. 禩	553. 紋	588. 羅
484. 桃	519. 祭	554. 納	589. 羊
485. 株	520. 禡	555. 純	590. 群
486. 禡	521. 禡	556. 紙	591. 義
487. 拾	522. 禡	557. 素	592. 翁

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|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| 593. 耀 | 628. 規 | 663. 譜 | 698. 醺 |
| 594. 老 | 629. 視 | 664. 護 | 699. 釋 |
| 595. 耿 | 630. 觀 | 665. 變 | 700. 重 |
| 596. 聖 | 631. 解 | 666. 豬 | 701. 量 |
| 597. 聲 | 632. 言 | 667. 貢 | 702. 金 |
| 598. 胎 | 633. 訊 | 668. 貴 | 703. 鈔 |
| 599. 胙 | 634. 討 | 669. 貺 | 704. 銀 |
| 600. 腑 | 635. 訓 | 670. 賚 | 705. 銘 |
| 601. 臟 | 636. 託 | 671. 賜 | 706. 銓 |
| 602. 臣 | 637. 記 | 672. 賞 | 707. 錄 |
| 603. 自 | 638. 訣 | 673. 賢 | 708. 錦 |
| 604. 舉 | 639. 訪 | 674. 賦 | 709. 錫 |
| 605. 舊 | 640. 許 | 675. 贈 | 710. 鍊 |
| 606. 良 | 641. 詔 | 676. 赤 | 711. 鏡 |
| 607. 花 | 642. 詞 | 677. 車 | 712. 鑒 |
| 608. 苦 | 643. 詢 | 678. 輩 | 713. 鑠 |
| 609. 芮 | 644. 詩 | 679. 辛 | 714. 長 |
| 610. 華 | 645. 詳 | 680. 辯 | 715. 閃 |
| 611. 萬 | 646. 誓 | 681. 辰 | 716. 間 |
| 612. 落 | 647. 語 | 682. 述 | 717. 關 |
| 613. 蓂 | 648. 誠 | 683. 送 | 718. 降 |
| 614. 蓮 | 649. 誠 | 684. 通 | 719. 除 |
| 615. 薦 | 650. 誥 | 685. 進 | 720. 陰 |
| 616. 藏 | 651. 誦 | 686. 遊 | 721. 陽 |
| 617. 藥 | 652. 說 | 687. 運 | 722. 隆 |
| 618. 蘄 | 653. 調 | 688. 過 | 723. 隱 |
| 619. 虎 | 654. 談 | 689. 道 | 724. 隸 |
| 620. 虛 | 655. 請 | 690. 遠 | 725. 雄 |
| 621. 蛇 | 656. 論 | 691. 還 | 726. 集 |
| 622. 蠲 | 657. 諭 | 692. 郎 | 727. 雌 |
| 623. 行 | 658. 諸 | 693. 都 | 728. 雜 |
| 624. 衛 | 659. 謚 | 694. 酉 | 729. 雞 |
| 625. 補 | 660. 講 | 695. 酌 | 730. 離 |
| 626. 西 | 661. 謝 | 696. 酒 | 731. 雲 |
| 627. 要 | 662. 識 | 697. 酬 | 732. 雷 |

733. 霄	748. 顥	763. 魂	778. 魑
734. 霆	749. 風	764. 魑	779. 魘
735. 震	750. 飛	765. 魄	780. 魘
736. 霸	751. 養	766. 魅	781. 鯨
737. 靈	752. 饗	767. 魑	782. 鳳
738. 青	753. 首	768. 魑	783. 鶴
739. 靖	754. 香	769. 魑	784. 黑
740. 靜	755. 馬	770. 魑	785. 黃
741. 非	756. 體	771. 魑	786. 默
742. 音	757. 高	772. 魑	787. 鼎
743. 順	758. 鬼	773. 魑	788. 鼠
744. 頌	759. 彪	774. 魑	789. 齊
745. 頌	760. 魑	775. 魑	790. 齋
746. 領	761. 魑	776. 魔	791. 龍
747. 願	762. 魑	777. 魑	792. 龔

The lexical items presented above may be divided into a number of categorical domains. For the sake of expediency, each item is assigned to a single category, namely that which was encountered as most salient, semantically, in the life of that lexical item as a religious term during the period of participant observation. That is to say that these individual logographs often have different meanings, depending on the context of their use, but for sake of expediency I am placing them in a single category. This is a preliminary measure, and is not meant to exclude any logograph from other semantic domains.

Numerals: 一, 七, 三, 九, 二, 五, 八, 十, 千, 四, 百, 萬, 六

Horological/Calendrical: 丁, 丑, 丙, 乙, 亥, 午, 卯, 壬, 寅, 己, 巳, 庚, 戌, 戌, 甲, 申, 癸, 辛, 酉, 辰

Spatial: 上, 下, 中, 位, 內, 北, 南, 後, 外, 東, 次, 空, 虛, 西, 遠, 間

Environmental/Location: 世, 國, 園, 地, 城, 基, 堂, 境, 壇, 天, 宮, 居, 山, 嵩, 嶽, 府, 庭, 廟, 房, 所, 方, 林, 森, 極, 殿, 洞, 海, 淵, 滉, 獄, 碑, 祔, 祠, 桃, 滅, 莫, 都

in the Luminosity, Ritual, Benefit/Purity, and Harmful/Wrong categories. These items have been found as recited in more esoteric texts or explained in particular didactic situations which necessitated obscure examples. These infrequently found items are presented in **bold text**. All other examples emerged several times, though the presentation in the above fields does not segregate items by frequency. The categories themselves are not emic, but rather determined based on a perceived conceptual segregation of semantic ranges. However, the descriptions below represent my understanding of etic perceptions in the religious communities.

It appears evident that in the above context, *enumeration* is important. The **numerals** category bears lexical items for two major functions: hyperbolic enumeration and dogmatic listing. 萬 is salient in the former, which serves to give a grand scale to religiously salient objects, entities, time periods, and concepts without necessitating precision; these enhance a sense of awe. The others are used in lists of concepts, precepts, texts, virtues, decorations, ritual implements, and other items that require a greater degree of precision; they also are necessary in forming metaphorical relationships, as numerals that have isometric or mathematically evident relationships with one another may be metaphorically related.

The **horological/calendrical** category bears lexical items that show up in traditional date and time calculations, otherwise known as the Heavenly Stems and Earthly Branches (*tian gan di zhi* 天干地支) system. As the religious practices observed are performed according to the lunar calendar, and religious texts (being written in premodern styles) adopt the same system, these terms occur fairly frequently. In addition, one may observe that mantic practices necessitate the usage of this system.

The **spatial** category bears terms that describe location in space, whether it be relative to one another or to another point in space. These are especially important in determining ritual space and liminal areas, as well as being salient in discussions of sacred geography. Entering and exiting ritual space is of great importance in (for example) festivals, while relative directions (north, south, east, west, center) are also metaphorically important, as they can related to many other concepts via the Five Phases 五行 system.

The **environmental/location** category lists terms that describe loci in an

imagined sacred geography.²⁰ These can describe simple fixed locations, sacred places, or places that have taken on a sacred character. For Daoists, these include mountains, caverns, heavens, abysses, or natural areas such as forests. In addition, these terms describe temple structures, around and in which sacred space is constructed.

The **transformational** category contains items related to flux and change. Constant flux is a seminal concept in the religious traditions observed, as the changes in the *qi* of the cosmos, as set in motion by the Dao, constitute observable and religious reality. Medicinal processes are governed by attempting to understand change within the body; spiritual attainment is a process of controlled change; cosmogony itself is a process of change in fundamental forces.

The category of **motion** describes, mostly, verbs related to motion through physical space. In addition to such processes as astral journeys, motion into, through, and out of sacred spaces is a point of concern in religious behavior. Furthermore, many religious concepts are described in terms of metaphorical motion, as in *rumen* 入門 “entering [the] gate” → “beginning a spiritual practice as a novice”, or *duren* 渡人 “to ferry people [across]” → “to deliver people from harm”. Verticality is also important, as the loftiness of the heavens must be interacted with on a vertical basis; this includes such motions as flight, ascent, dropping, and descent.

The **grouping/comparison** category bears lexicon involved in discrimination: describing parts and wholes, groupings, naming, soleness, status as fundamental or peripheral, fullness, and the like. Items from this category are involved in creating conceptual communities, both in the literal sense of a religious body and in the metaphorical sense of discriminating mental constructs or ideas. Religious agents need to determine how they belong relative to other agents, and how religious thought and behavior coalesces into a single unit that may be thought of as their religious life.

The **seeking/subjection** category involves lexical items related to placing oneself below another entity, at least nominally. For the religious communities involves, much religious activity is predicated on the notion that one may supplicate that which is above the self in order to achieve a benefit. These items

²⁰ “Imagined” is not a comment on the reality, or lack thereof, of the loci, but merely describes the focus of the loci, being that they exist in conceptual space.

include direct supplication lexicon, but also words of decorously giving to and receiving from one above, praying, and engaging in mantic practices.

Luminosity is a powerful category, due to the higher realms and their denizens being described as coursing in brilliant, vivid light; their counterparts in the demonic or ghostly realms are equally described as residing in dark places, where the absence of light appears to be clearly analogous to absence of positive divinity. Light has many ways to shine, flash, sparkle, effloresce, scintillate, irradiate, or glow, and are often semantically related to emanations of the sun and common fire.

Entity/divinity items describe the agents and beings that interact with one another and with religious practitioners in the observed communities. While the human being is the fundamental unit here, as other beings are defined by comparing them to humans, most of the terms mentioned in this category either address age, gender, or familial status. Femininity is highly salient, as are generational elders.

Principles/ideals addresses the ethical domain, or the concepts that affects one's conduct in the scope of one's religious life. Here, the emphasis lies in compliance, harmony, integration, compassion, wisdom, duty, uprightness, and sincerity. These ideals come to be a complex of attitudes and behaviors that begin by regulating religious life but then seep out into nonreligious life as well, inasmuch as such exists, according to the level of religious commitment of any particular member of the religious community.

The category of **command/control** governs the relations of those in a position of power with those with lesser power, and systems which govern causality. The religious systems observed are presented in terms of interaction with an analogue to a government bureaucracy; these interactions necessitate high-status entities condescending to confer favors, gifts, or blessings to those who make proper requests, to forbid and thus regulate the conduct of others, to issue commands to divine forces and other entities in order to ensure the proper operation of the cosmic system, and to command respect for the above capacities.

The category of **rank** contains elements that pertain to the status of entities, particularly those being interacted with by members of the religious communities (as opposed to the members themselves). These are terms from premodern imperial government and nobility ranking systems, given that the

divine bureaucracy is modeled after the government of the traditional Sinitic civilization.

Preservation/continuity items are closely related to tradition, in that they concern safeguarding modes of behavior and thought from one time period to another. Preservation is crucial, as the religious system of the communities is largely modeled after the premodern civilizations of the Sinitic cultural sphere. The concern with lineage ties to both preservation and legitimation, because reference to the archaic itself confers authority. The return to a prime state of cosmic inchoativity is a common theme in the Daoist traditions. Traditionalism is a common element in a number of large, culturally-embedded religious traditions such as Daoism.

The **ritual** category is one of the most salient, given that much of the more vivid activity at temples involves ritual practice. Ritual, as described above, include those activities with high degrees of formalism, traditionalism, invariance, rule-governance, sacral symbolism, and performance. Naturally, as one of the conditions for which religious language was to be sought out for the purposes of this study, ritual terms abound, though the majority of those listed here are infrequently used and quite rare. Material concerns with the proper carrying-out of the ritual gives rise to the more common usages.

The **temporal** category bears items concerned with two aspects of time: the marking of time and the focus on origins and inceptions. The passage of time is also critical for celebrating festivals as well as rituals that celebrate life events (for example, determination of a child's name after birth based on the birth time and date). As for origins, religious supremacy is assigned to that which is analogous to a return to the time of the beginning of the cosmos.

The **fauna** category contains terms of non-anthropomorphic entities, be they animals or supernatural beings such as dragons. Many of these terms come from the twelve calendrical zodiac animals, which are made present in mantic discourse and in veneration of birth-year divinities. Fauna are also mentioned in texts as controllers of natural forces or companions to high divinities, for example those involved in pulling vehicles of lofty gods.

The **visual/writing** category enumerates textual items, along with those that are simply images but not quite at the level of written language. This includes terms closely related to natural patterns, as written language itself is said to be derived from either the observation of nature or as a corrupted form of

celestial language which comes from cosmogonic times, when primal *qi* coalesced into divine logographs. Various kinds of scriptures and other documents figure heavily in this category, as well as individual units of language, such as phrases or logographs. In addition, this category bears terms of sight, which are involved in pattern or written language recognition. However, if a visual/writing term was found featured more prominently in ritual discourse than one involving writing divorced from ritual, it was placed in the ritual category.

Benefit/purity consists of terms involved in religious practice which seeks or can be aimed toward, the acquisition of fortune, glory, or wealth. A number of items in this category are rare terms for precious gems and other tangible items of wealth, though the category also includes longevity, luck, glory, accomplishment, blessings (a complex system of intangible capital which indirectly results in some kind of more visible capital), and tranquility.

The **force/action** category includes terms involved in directing the application of physical energy to some other entity or to the self. Martial action, prevalent due to the military origins of some deities and the command deities have of celestial troops which quell demonic forces, is well-represented here. Expelling, flowing, pouring, sending, or emitting are also frequently encountered, given references to the motion of *qi* and its various forms, in addition to the direct interactions between humanity and divinities.

Body parts category covers those terms involved in physical or spiritual (often indistinguishable from one another, depending on the understanding of the practitioner) components of the human body; these are especially important when the human body is thought of as an analogue to the cosmos. The *hun* cloudsouls and *po* whitesouls also appear frequently. In meditation discourse, one may be more likely to encounter *tai* 胎, fetus, while the terms for organs listed appear in connection with medicinal discourse.

The **oral/sound** category may be considered, in some sense, as a counterpart to the visual/writing category, in that most of the terms listed here are about oral communication and transmission of meaning-bearing sound (such as in song). Reporting speech is enormously important, because doctrines and concepts related in scriptures and by teachers (through word-of-mouth) must reference their origin and manner of transmission. Much of the basis of understanding religious thought and practice is predicated on oral/aural interaction. In addition, this includes terms of alchemical instructions involving

ingesting (e.g. 服藥, 服用).

Astral/atmospheric terms are important because of the role constellations and astral journeys have in the Daoist imaginaire. Deities reside in elaborate palaces in the starry heavens, and functionaries perform rituals to travel there, at least metaphorically. As light-bringing entities, the stars, sun, and moon are also related to exalted divine principles. Atmospheric terms include those involving changes in weather, particularly wind, thunder, lightning, as well as a term (*xiao* 霄) to describe the high reaches of the heavens in the purpureal glory.

The **Five Phases** is a vital category, limited to those terms for fundamental, yet constantly changing, forces or the observable universe: earth, wood, water, fire, and metal. Five Phases theory forms an intellectual foundation of all Daoist thought, and is behind metaphorical associations between a great many religious concepts.

Harmful/wrong terms describe that which is to be avoided in religious practice. These include demonic and evil entities or afflictions, and anything which causes more or less direct harm. A large number of these terms are rare terms for disease and particular ghostly or demonic entities. However, we also find concepts such as crime, transgression, warpedness, poison, and disaster. It is most important to avoid these calamities, in particular illnesses and the demons that bring about bad fortune.

Ontological/constitutive terms are used in metaphysical discourse, especially with regard to origins and makeup of the cosmos. These items delineate tension between existence and non-existence, presence, operation of reality, *qi, jing* 精 (essence), self-referentiality, and the duality between *yin* 陰 and *yang* 陽. These are essential in didactic situations.

Mental/immaterial items describe thought processes and mental practices as performed in a religious setting. Thinking, feeling, intent, enlightenment, character, happiness, knowledge, understanding, and desire are all thematic in pragmatic religious discourse, especially in terms of what practitioners aim to attain and methods to be used to attain it.

The category of **physical nature** lists terms used to describe the form of physical entities; these are quite frequent, as the religious practice observed is very much grounded in the domain of the physical world, instead of being largely focused on, for example, mental practices. Color, size, number, intensity, breadth, patterns, weight, and height are all frequently addressed in ritual

situations as well as in discussions of the constitution of celestial realms and their denizens.

Flora are not mentioned as often as might have been expected, and indeed are represented by the fewest examples of individual logographs. Most of the time, flora appear in situations that demonstrate the vitality of a place, or serves as decoration for a deity and the deity's accoutrements. Lotus flowers also appear, imagery borrowed from Buddhism to represent purity rising above the muck and mire of a mundane existence.

Finally, the category of **color** contains those terms associated with the Five Phases, in addition to a variant to give premodern, traditional flavor to descriptions, the term for variegation (used in descriptions of the adornments of deities), and the color purple, a common sacred color in Daoism.

8. Conclusion: Thoughts on Daoism and Language

The above lexical items course in several paradigms: para-pragmatics, disjunctive topicals, and natural patterns. The first paradigm involves those items that at first glance do not appear to be religious, but instead reveal their religious character in context, such as verbs of motion, force/action, or grouping/comparison. These items, of course, have nonreligious lives in many other ways, but are appropriated by religious communities in characteristic ways. Ascent, for example, does not signify a simple upward motion, but rather comes to be associated with a complex of conceptual schemas borne from metaphorical motion to the exalted heavens. Similarly, grouping words are used to demarcate, often behind the veil of direct discourse, that which is valid for the community and that which is not, that which belongs and that which doesn't, and so, where a religiolect can be used as such and where other sociolects must hold instead. Disjunctive topicals are called 'disjunctive' because they situate the discourse beyond the 'ontological divide' between religious and nonreligious, such as that division is conceptualized. For example, ritual terms, divine entities, or terms of fortune and benefit all come to be restricted, largely, to religiolectal domains. As such, they form themselves into markers of specialized discourse. There is a powerful concern for the interplay between light and darkness (not a simple diametric opposition, either, but rather the observation of divinity in the moments of flux in the interaction between the two), as well as a strong concern

for sacred geography of the stars and skies, as well as the metaphorical relationships between the Five Phases, the colors of the observable cosmos, and other principles of concern to the thought and behavior of humanity.

Another of the concerns of Daoism is indeed a concern for patterns; a number of the lexical items above relate to patterns, such as the visual / writing, horological / calendrical, spatial, and temporal. The Dao itself, in the guise of a kind of celestial respiration, courses through, vivifies, and enervates all; the ebbs and flows of the Dao manifest themselves in all manner of natural patterns. Those with the capacity to interpret natural patterns (which is to say those whose wisdom, gnosis, or affinity to the natural order of the Dao enable them perceive its motions) are able to draw from them such information as legitimating signs to indicate the approval of the current rulers, how to proceed against inimical peoples, or if one is to bear male offspring. Sinitic logographs (also known as characters),²¹ according to tradition, are derived from these very patterns; it is easy to imagine how logographs could be compared to them. For some Daoist communities (such as the Lingbao 靈寶 [‘Numinous Treasure’] Daoists), the original *qi* 氣 that arose in the distant eons past when the cosmos were newly formed concretized to form celestial precursors to human written (i.e. Sinitic) language. Human scripts are, in fact, regarded as a devolution from this original pure script. Religious thought may be tied to the structure of logographs as representations of oral language (assuming that oral language may be said to be linked, in the literate speaker’s conceptualizations, to the logographs, and thus informs the production of the oral language).

As examples of religious linguistic phenomena in some currents of Daoism, one may find celestial script (*tianshu* 天書), jade characters (*yuzi* 玉字), and pseudo-Sanskrit (e.g. in the Lingbao scripture, *Taishang Dongxuan Lingbao Zhutian Neiyin Ziran Yuzi* 太上洞玄靈寶諸天內音自然玉字 The Inner Sounds of the Self-Created Jade Characters of all the various Heavens, of the Most High Penetratingly Mysterious Numinous Treasure). They are given ritualized use for negotiating relationships of power, and for use as apotropaic devices. Celestial script is the divine writing, modeled on the fundamental patterns of reality, of which Chinese characters are the mortal analogue. Jade Characters are the

²¹ The term “character” (from “[that which is] carved”), while very much in common use, fetishizes the decorative appearance of the written word in Sinitic languages. Logograph simply means “written image of the word”, and most accurately represents the *zi* 字.

primary form of celestial script in the Lingbao corpus; these characters coalesced from primal *qi* before the universe in its present form came into being, and their harmonic resonance was responsible for the creation of the universe. Pseudo-Sanskrit describes the seemingly nonsensical words that appeared after the influx of Buddhism into China whereby the Chinese attempted to exoticize, or render powerful, the written word by making language appear to be Brahmanic (Buddhist texts, in the early stages of their arrival in China, were transliterated more than translated, loading Buddhist texts with many strange-sounding Sinified Sanskrit terms). The above exemplify the tendency in Daoist religious language to recall the origins of the manifested universe as it pulsed into being through the action of the Dao; language is linked to these primal patterns through a chain of devolution from an original pure point to which Daoists ostensibly seek to return to.²²

The Sinitic logographic writing system is fairly rare among the world's extant written languages in that it uses components that convey both sound and meaning simultaneously, and in two dimensions, rather than using sound to convey meaning by attempting to solely represent a moment in the oral production of language. The semantic load of the logographs gives rise to a system of mutual correlations and representations between the logographs and the words they represent, instead of a more usual system whereby the oral language informs the written language unidirectionally. This interdependent system which, for the literate, connects semantic load-bearing graphic components to words causes a system of associations that would not otherwise have arisen. These associations relate logograph components into families. In addition to legitimate relationships between words that may not have otherwise been phonetically obvious, this system of relationships makes for all manner of folk etymologies, mantic associations, emotive impacts, and affective conjectures. These systems of associations reinforce the tendency of Sinitic speakers to think of language in terms of syllables, and therefore in terms of semantic logographs, rather than phonemes. In fact, it has been argued that "Chinese adults literate only in Chinese characters [can] not add or delete individual consonants in spoken Chinese words."²³ As speech is not conceived

²² Paul A Jackson, "Ideas in Daoism Relative to the Environment". In Meinert, Carmen (Ed.) *Nature, the Environment, and Climate Change in East Asia*. (2013).

²³ Read et al. "The ability to manipulate speech sounds depends on knowing alphabetic writing"

of as a sequence of discrete segments, which is indirectly but powerfully related to both sound and meaning (the aspects of language that we are normally aware of), the logographic conception of language is a natural recourse in the language processing of literate Sinitic speakers.²⁴ Though logographs do have phonetic components, the "...so-called phonetic radicals suggest phonemic segmentation only in a constrained and implicit way, as do rhyming words, speech errors, and minimal pairs. Exposure to such examples is evidently not sufficient for most people to develop a segmental conception of language that makes possible more explicit manipulations."²⁵ Parsing of language remains on the semantic syllable level; for religious language, the implications are powerful. Every syllable is associated with meaning, and meanings get caught up in a network of associations with other meanings from surrounding, associated, or remembered logographs, forming a complex network of conceptions, such as words with the same phonetic structure as those presented above. In the religious domain, these conceptions constantly reinforce and mutate one another in ways that are not obvious to those used to phonetic writing systems and phonemic segmentation. Closer attention to lexical items, in their particular mode of division and articulation, can reveal relationships of thought relative to religious conceptions which deserve greater study.

Cognition, 24 (1986): 31-44 (32).

²⁴ This references the concept of *phonemic segmentation*.

²⁵ Read et al. "The ability to manipulate speech sounds depends on knowing alphabetic writing" *Cognition*, 24 (1986): 31-44 (42).

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道教宗教性語言的語標成分： 南台灣兩座宮廟的個案研究

姜寶龍

亞利桑納州立大學博士候選人

摘要

這篇文章呈現來自位於南台灣道教宮廟：道德院以及褒忠義民廟，關於宗教性社會方言，或又稱宗教方言的兩份資料。這兩座宮廟屬於現代標準漢語，台語以及客家話的語言社群，因為受到背景、地點、宮廟的功能、以及公務員社群及實踐者社群之間複雜互動，而產生的語言多樣性。這份資料呈現從 2011 年至 2012 年田野調查期間，所蒐集到一系列語標中的內容，以及該語標的作者可以理性的決定該社群的成員，接收到的訊息是具有明顯的宗教意味，抑或是區別於非宗教語言。鑑於人們選擇他們語言的使用，而且這個語言的使用對於思想與行動會產生影響，這份資料呈現出當每一個音節與意義相結合時，意義便與來自於環境的其他意義所產生的網絡相結合，並且語標相連結，或是被記憶。接著，這些連結形成了一個概念的複雜網絡，而且能夠揭示出與宗教概念相關的新的思考關係。

關鍵字：道教，道教語言，臺灣宗教，宗教語言，臺灣的語言，語言人類學，語標，字體