

*Encyclopedia of Taoism*

Fabrizio Pregadio, ed. *Encyclopedia of Taoism*. London: Routledge, 2008. 2 vols: 1551 pp. \$300.00. Hardcover. ISBN: 9780700712007.

The editor of *Encyclopedia of Taoism*, Pregadio, states in his introduction that Taoism is often misunderstood; many people do not know whether Taoism is a philosophy, a religion, or a combination of the two. These volumes answer this question and many others. In the West, Taoism has often been portrayed in an almost mythical fashion and described in clichéd terms. Fabrizio Pregadio and his contributors remove the mystique that surrounds Taoism, and, in this two-volume set, inform the reader of the true nature of Taoism by explaining the history, tradition, and practice of Taoism in practical, scholarly terms.

The *Encyclopedia of Taoism* is intended for anyone with interest in the subject, including students, scholars, and the general public. In the instances in which background information is necessary for a better understanding of the subject, the reader may easily find information in other parts of the encyclopedia to fill in those knowledge gaps.

The introductory sections to these volumes are strong. Highlights include sections concerning conventions, format of the entries, and abbreviations and symbols. The reader is provided with information such as the order of names given for a personal or place name, cross-reference and related entries, and common abbreviations and symbols that relate to Taoism. The name feature will be especially useful to readers who are unfamiliar with the naming order in the Chinese language. A list of illustrations and tables are provided, along with a synoptic table of contents which groups terms and topics according to categories such as “The Taoist Universe,” “History and Forms of Religious Practice and Experience,” etc.

There are two sections to each volume. The first section is made up of essays of short, comprehensive entries on major themes and issues of Taoism. The second section is an A-Z list of entries. The first section provides broader information whereas the second provides more in-depth information on topics.

Along with a strong appendix of reference work there is a list of “Periods in Chinese History.” Another strength of these volumes are the Pinyin to Wade-Giles and Wade-Giles to Pinyin Conversion Tables. Taoist scholars are often inconsistent with the use of Chinese terms, using both Pinyin and Wade-Giles Romanization. All contributors to these volumes have attempted to be consistent with their Romanization in translation from Chinese to English. The conversion tables listed in these volumes provide a great reference to those with no knowledge of Chinese as well as those who are knowledgeable of Chinese.

In his introduction, the author states his desire to provide a comprehensive reference on Taoism. With the help of forty-six contributors who include many of the foremost experts in the field of Taoist studies, he has succeeded. Collectively they have authored 800 hundred entries in two volumes covering 1,551 pages. The depth of the entries and variety of subjects covered are impressive, creating a must-have reference for anyone interested in Taoism. All the main points of the tradition and history of Taoism are described. The actual practice of Taoism is presented throughout these volumes. Major works of Taoism are explored along side lesser- or little-known texts. Important people in the history and tradition of Taoism are profiled.

I highly recommend the purchase of *Encyclopedia of Taoism* by seminary and university libraries. This set is impressive for the depth of its entries and the scholars involved in the project.

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