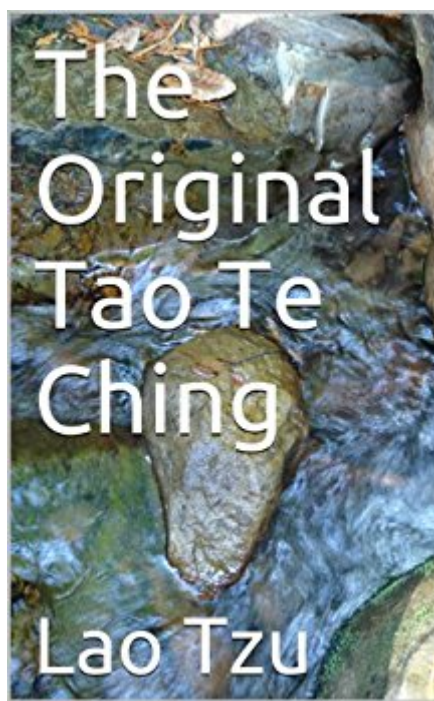


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The Original Tao Te Ching



Synopsis

The Tao Te Ching is one of the most beloved books of Eastern wisdom. It is ascribed to Lao Tzu, a Master Lao, identified as Lao Tan, an archivist of the Chou dynasty in pre-imperial China. The book was reorganized several centuries later, and thousands of commentaries were written on it. Ancient versions discovered in the twentieth century follow the old order as confirmed by the earliest extant commentary, Interpreting Lao, written by the famous philosopher Han Fei in the third century BC. The present translation is based on these ancient texts.

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Customer Reviews

Tao Te Ching is ancient, now a couple of millenia in print. Stephen Mitchell has not translated this classic, but rather has paraphrased it -- as he admits in the Foreward. But he is a Zen student of a couple of decades and has good insight into the Zen of the Tao (Zen Buddhism is Buddhism heavily dosed with Taoism). Mitchell's version of the Tao Te Ching is very, even extremely, modern.

Perhaps to the point of being "politically correct." However, he does have a way with words and this is a very readable version of the Tao. To show how modern it is, let's take an example and compare his version of the beginning of chapter 46 with two other versions:- Mitchell "When a country is in

harmony with the Tao, the factories make trucks and tractors. When a country goes counter to the Tao, warheads are stockpiled outside the cities." - Victor Mair "When the Way prevails under heaven, swift horses are relegated to fertilizing fields. When the Way does not prevail under heaven, war-horses breed in the suburbs." - Addiss & Lombardo "With TAO under heaven Stray horses fertilize the fields. Without TAO under heaven, Warhorses are bred at the frontier." Obviously, there were no factories, trucks, tractors, or warheads in ancient China. So, Mitchell is providing a modern interpretation of the Tao Te Ching, while Mair as well as Addiss & Lombardo are closer to a literal translation (which is not possible however, because the Chinese language and the English language are so completely different from one another.) None of this is to find fault with Stephen Mitchell. This is just to say that his book cannot be definitive, because it is less literal and not really a translation.

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