



The Taoist Body

Kristofer Schipper

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The ancient system of thought known as Taoism remains today the least well known of the world's great religions and one of the most inaccessible aspects of Chinese culture. This is in large part because Western thought clings to the notion of the separation of matter and spirit, body and soul. Taoism refuses this dualism and considers the body's perfection as essential as the soul's redemption is to Christianity.

Kristofer Schipper's elegant and lucid introduction to the traditions of Taoism and the masters who transmit them will reward all those interested in China and in religions. The result of over twenty-five years of research, including eight years of fieldwork in China, Schipper's book retraces, step by step, the way that leads from Chinese shamanism and traditional village life to the physical Tending Life techniques, which in turn lead to the mysticism of Lao Tzu and Chuang Tzu. Schipper shows the fundamental unity underlying all aspects of Taoism as Taoism considers itself to be. The social body—the community, the village, the land—corresponds in all aspects to the physical body in Taoism. In both of them the survival of humanity is decided here and now. "My destiny is within me, not in Heaven!"

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