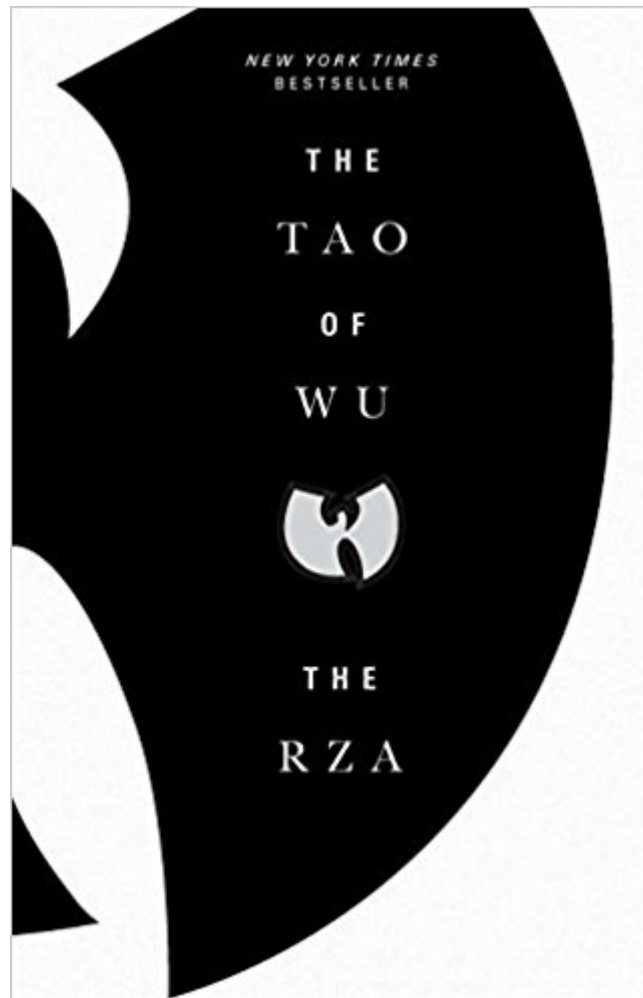


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The Tao Of Wu



Synopsis

The RZA, founder of the Wu-Tang Clan, imparts the lessons he's learned on his journey from the Staten Island projects to international superstardom. A devout student of knowledge in every form in which he's found it, he distills here the wisdom he's acquired into seven "pillars," each based on a formative event in his life—from the moment he first heard the call of hip-hop to the death of his cousin and Clan-mate, Russell Jones, aka ODB. Delivered in RZA's unmistakable style, at once surprising, profound, and provocative, *The Tao of Wu* is a spiritual memoir the world has never seen before, and will never see again. A nonfiction Siddhartha for the hip-hop generation from the author of *The Wu-Tang Manual*, it will enlighten, entertain, and inspire.

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Customer Reviews

Originally posted on my blog, Hip Hop Is Read (Oct. 13, 2009): On "Uzi (Pinky Ring)" from the Iron Flag album, The RZA said something about a "Wu Library". Was this what he had in mind? Behind the allure of their esoteric lyricism and imagery, there's vast depth behind the Wu-Tang Clan's interest in kung fu films, chess and comic books, as well as their ties to the Five-Percent Nation, Eastern philosophy and the boroughs of New York from which they hail. There's nothing kitschy about these now hipster-standard cultural elements that were once an avant-garde, new angle to the hip hop world and, especially, mainstream America. If textbook rules applied, the Wu-Tang Clan would have either dissolved into the depths of underground obscurity or retooled their image to satisfy commercial norms. Through The RZA's vision, however, the Clan held steadfast to their

distinctiveness and stormed through the industry with a divide and conquer strategy. RZA's new book, *The Tao of Wu*, discusses the various steps and influences that paved his road to success (in music and in life), the roadblocks that tested his discipline, and the jewels of knowledge he's gathered along the way. Loaded with the terminology and precepts of *The Universal Language*, *The Tao of Wu* is definitely intended for Wu-Tang fans and folks familiar with the concepts of the Five-Percenter; but anybody with an interest in music and the game of life, eccentric as RZA's story may seem, can glean much from *The Tao of Wu*. As the book's jacket suggests, *The Tao of Wu* bares resemblance to Hermann Hesse's cult classic *Siddhartha*. RZA's tales, much like those of the young *Siddhartha*, are framed as a coming of age story with key parables and glimpses of enlightenment. RZA's narrative, of course, is nonfictional; thus *The Tao of Wu* is part Wu-Tang fact book and, mostly, part memoir. RZA retraces the roots that led him to music and philosophy all the way back to his early years. It was his days as a child in North Carolina after all - with his Mother Goose rhyme-reciting uncle Hollis - that cultivated the inspiration behind the Gravediggaz and 6 Feet Deep. Even the most well-versed of Wu-Tang fans will appreciate *The Tao of Wu*'s trove of never-before-told tales. RZA digs deep into Supreme Mathematics and the sutras of Buddhist scripture, establishing his pillars of wisdom; he equates the historic destruction of the Shaolin monastery with the 1996 flood that wrecked his 36 Chambers studio in Staten Island (a.k.a. Shaolin), an incident that caused Ghostface's *Iron Man* album to sound different from *Only Built 4 Cuban Linx* and *Liquid Swords* (a fact that never occurred to me until I read this book); he recounts both the weapons charge case he faced and Method Man's near-death experience, both of which could have easily wiped out the Wu-Tang Clan from existence; he picks out various hip hop phrases like "get in where you fit in" and "it's all good" and traces their Buddhist origins (seriously). RZA even cites Malcolm Gladwell's '10,000 Hour Rule', the point at which mastery in any field is presumably attained, and identifies the moment when he reached this peak in his quest to perfect his production skills. *The Wu-Tang Manual*, The RZA's previous book and first in this series of Wu-literature, was a valuable collection of facts - a primer on the foundation of the Clan. *The Tao of Wu*, however, goes deeper into the brain of The RZA and as such is a more absorbing reading experience. If you liked *The Wu-Tang Manual*, you'll really enjoy The RZA's follow-up. (Even Cornel West gives it a thumbs-up!) *The Tao of Wu* is written in a conversational style that's both easy to digest but difficult to put down. It's a light read, but the more spiritual-based aspects of the book may take you some time to reflect. The section on Ol' Dirty Bastard's passing was particularly stirring. In reading *The Tao of Wu*, I gained a better appreciation for RZA's work - specifically the depth of his lyricism. And if you ever had a doubt as to why The RZA, aside from being the Wu-Tang Clan's chief producer, is

heralded as the group's leader, The Tao of Wu will make that unmistakably clear. I highly recommend The Tao of Wu to Wu-Tang fans and the uninitiated alike. Bong, bong!

RZA...What can you say about the zig zag ziggala. One of the all time great minds in hop-hop. One thing that really sets him apart he never hesitates to state his business and mind. Even when what he has done was not "in style" he makes people rethink what in style is. He is always on another plane. It will be a while before any MC in hip-hop could put down some text like this. MC's and producers on his level are so so rare. Think how empty hip-hop is today. You could break down 97% of rappers flows in a paragraph. You can fill volumes with the science of the Wu. This book sheds light on concepts, ideas, and the background of the Wu that any fan will appreciate. People that think rap has no redeeming value this book would be an eye opener. I thought I was a die hard Wu fan but I was learning new things on almost every page. A must have for anyone from true to the wu or new to the wu. This will change more then how you think about hip hop. R.I.P. ODB

I have been an avid fan of the RZA and his compadres in the Wu Tang Clan for about fifteen years and he has never ceased to impress me both with his creativity and unique insight, an insight he has gained by living through hard years and a vision he has possessed since his early days. This book is a spoken version of his raps throughout his career. For those who are not huge rap fans and have a bit of a hard time with the intensity that comes across on Wu Tang albums this book serves as a comparable alternative. It reads in a way that makes you imagine you are sitting in a coffee shop with the RZA and asking him what makes up the essence of his being, as well as what inspired him and his peeps to create the awesome material that they have been putting on vinyl for almost two decades. He comes across as a very accessible, modest and friendly person and has the ability to relate on a very basic human level. He successfully fuses African American with East Asian, whether in the realm of life, death, mystic concepts, or pop culture references. He is also distinctly American in the sense that he embodies one of our greatest qualities, that of molding various cultures together to form a new cultural hybrid. I sincerely hope I get the opportunity to chat with him one day and strongly recommend this book to people of all walks of life.

RZA kind of drove me crazy as I was reading this. The book was well-written, and I learned a lot about Wu Tang (I'm a big fan), but the narrator was very pretentious. I recommend this book to any Wu fans, though I implore you to read with caution and don't let RZA tell you how you're supposed to think.

RZA gives us a little bit of the Wu history, much of his own personal history, and plenty of deep, religious, life lessons that reveal even more about who he is. I couldn't put the Tao down, as it is written well and gave me much to think about in my own life. The Tao of Wu is probably one of the best books that I have found to explain the logic of the Kingdom of Gods and Earths aka The 5% nation, and made my skepticism subside since I was once a cynic due to so many acts out of New York being about it. Who knew that RZA had so much going on? And who knew that he was so close to the members of the Wu prior to them dropping 36 Chambers and changing the Hip Hop landscape. So much of this was written from the heart that I felt like the man was next to me telling me the stories. I would highly recommend this book to fans of Wutang, or anyone interested in theology from an unbiased place. It is a book I intend to reread the next time that I find myself in a negative place.

Entertaining and a look into a unique value system and life, but ultimately, the value system is flawed. RZA focuses strongly on numbers and shows simple math tricks to explain the importance of those numbers, but similar simple tricks can be applied to any number, allowing for the teller to describe any number as significant as it suits his needs.

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