ABSTRACT

Lu Xiangshan was a prominent philosopher of the Song Dynasty. Both he and Wang Yangming of the Ming Dynasty were regarded as the representative figures of "Xin Xue" in the realm of Neo-Confucianism which had evolved in the Song dynasty.

The influx of Buddhism and Taoism since the Wei-Jin period gave rise to a fusion of thoughts. However, sensing that their dominance was being usurped, Confucianists in the Song dynasty worked at reviving Confucianism. Thus, this led to the introduction of a reformed school of thought which is now called Neo-Confucianism. Although it is evident that there was massive interaction between the different schools of thought, most Neo-Confucianists strongly denied their affiliation with Buddhism and Taoism. The factional approach to learning had caused some thinkers like Lu Xiangshan to be criticized by his fellow Neo-Confucianists for exhibiting strong Chan Buddhist inclination. Many modern scholars have conducted research in this area to verify the validity of these criticisms. Their approaches usually start with an *a priori* definition of Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism. Thereafter, comparisons would be made between the three parties to determine whether Lu’s thinking is indeed inclined towards Buddhism or Taoism. In the end, most modern scholars believed that the essence of Lu Xiangshan’s philosophy is still firmly rooted in Confucianism.

Amidst these discussions, it is observed that not much emphasis has been placed on the viewpoint of Lu Xiangshan himself. In this dissertation, I will attempt to reveal
Lu's personal opinion towards the doctrines of Buddhism and Taoism and to discuss how he differentiated his own learning from these two schools. This will be examined in the light of his own ideas, which is the contributory factor towards his understanding of Buddhism and Taoism.

This dissertation will focus primarily on what Lu had to say about the key differences between Confucianism and Buddhism and Taoism. I shall argue that although he maintained that the teachings of Buddhism and Taoism were unorthodox, he felt that Confucian scholars should not hurl abuses at the other two parties without any in-depth knowledge and discretion. What he proposed was for the scholars to reexamine their own morality and spiritual cultivation, so as to find out if they have departed from the Way of the sages.