

Paul Crowe

***Chapters on Awakening to the Real: A Song Dynasty Classic of Inner Alchemy
Attributed to Zhang Boduan (ca. 983-1081)***

I. Zhang Boduan 張伯端

VERY LITTLE INFORMATION IS AVAILABLE concerning the details of Zhang Boduan's life. Most of the information provided here is taken from four hagiographic biographies found in the Taoist Canon.¹ The first, very brief, biography is included in the *Sandong qunxian lu*² TY1236, DZ992-995 (see *ce* 992, 2.9b-10a) which was compiled and edited by Chen Baoguang 陳葆光 in 1154. Chen was a *Zhengyi* 正一 Taoist Master at Jiangyin in present day Jiangsu. This collection of biographies was assembled by Chen in order to support his belief that with careful study and effort the achievement of transcendence could be attained by anyone and was not entirely predetermined by one's innate and naturally endowed aptitudes.³ Chen's biography provides no detail concerning the life of Zhang Boduan. Instead, very cursory comments are made concerning the content of the *Wuzhen pian*. The second, and longest of the biographies, is found in the *Lishi zhenxian tidao tongjian*⁴ TY295, DZ139-148 (see *ce* 148, 49.7b-11a). This collection of biographies, the largest in the Canon, was compiled and edited during the Yuan Dynasty (1260-

¹ Texts from the Taoist Canon (*Daozang*) will be cited using the system found in the *Daozang tiyao* (TY) and will include the fascicle number of the 1976 Shanghai reprint of the *Zhengtong Daozang* (DZ). These numbers will be provided only in the first reference to each work but are also included in the bibliography.

² Hereafter *Qunxian lu*.

³ *Qunxian lu*, 59.

⁴ Hereafter *Tongjian*.

1338) by the Taoist master Zhao Daoyi 趙道一 (fl. 1294-1307) who resided at Fouyun Shan 浮雲山 in present day Zhejiang.⁵ The third biography is included in Weng Baoguang's (fl. 1173) synopsis of the *Wuzhen pian*, entitled *Ziyang zhenren wuzhen pian zhizhi xiangshuo sansheng biyao*⁶ TY143, DZ64 (see 15a-16b). The biography of Zhang Boduan is included in a section of the above text which was added in 1337 as a supplement by the editor of the text, Dai Qizong 戴起宗 (fl. 1335-1337).⁷ The *Xiaoyao xujing*⁸ TY1452, DZ1081 contains the fourth biography (see 2.33a-34a). This very short work is comprised of only two chapters (*juan* 卷) and was edited by Hong Zicheng 洪自成,⁹ a Ming dynasty (1368-1644) Taoist master who was a native of Xindu 新都, now known as the city of Chengdu in the province of Sichuan.¹⁰ This work contains the biographies of sixty three Taoist Immortals beginning with Laozi and ending with Chang Sanfeng, the Taoist sage often claimed as the discoverer of *Taiji quan*.

The dates for Zhang Boduan's life are not clear and none of the four biographies provide a year of birth. Concerning the year of his death the *Tongjian* states:

⁵ Boltz, *Taoist Literature*, 56-59.

⁶ Hereafter *Sansheng biyao*.

⁷ Boltz, *Taoist Literature*, 317, n. 447.

⁸ Hereafter *Xujing*.

⁹ *Daozang tiyao* (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 1991), 1158.

¹⁰ *Daojiao da cidian* (Beijing: Huaxia chubanshe chubanshe, 1995), 749, s.v. 洪自成.

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On the fifteenth day of the third month of the *yuanfeng* 元豐 reign (1082) [he] sat down cross-legged and transforming, [he] quit the world. At the age of ninety-nine years [he was] delivered from the corpse.¹¹

The *Xujing* provides an almost identically phrased passage which gives the same date for Zhang's death. If one assumes that the ninety-nine year lifespan given in these texts is accurate, it would mean that Zhang was born in 983. Livia Kohn¹² appears to have taken this approach while Isabelle Robinet¹³ and Judith Boltz¹⁴ have taken the safer course of offering only a date for his death. Among contemporary Chinese sources the *Daozang tiyao*¹⁵ gives Zhang's dates as 984-1082 as does the *Daojiao da cidian*.¹⁶ The scholar and modern practitioner of Taoist inner alchemy (*neidan* 內丹), Wang Mu 王沐, claims Zhang's dates to be 983-1082.¹⁷

All of the biographical accounts are agreed that Zhang Boduan was a native of Tianta which is located approximately fifty kilometres inland from China's coastline in Zhejiang province.

¹¹ *Tongjian*, 49.10a. The phrase “delivered from the corpse” is a translation of *shijie* 尸解 a term referring to the transformation which takes place at death. The translation is taken from Isabelle Robinet “Metamorphosis and Deliverance from the Corpse in Taoism,” *History of Religions* 19 (1979): 57-66.

¹² Livia Kohn, *The Taoist Experience: An Anthology* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1993), 313.

¹³ Robinet, *Taoism*, 221.

¹⁴ Boltz, *Taoist Literature*, 173.

¹⁵ *Daozang tiyao*, 1223.

¹⁶ *Daojiao da cidian*, s.v. 張伯端, 582.

¹⁷ Wang Mu, *Wuzhen pian qianjie* [hereafter *Qianjie*] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju chubanshan, 1990), 1.

The *Tongjian*¹⁸ and the *Xujing*¹⁹ briefly allude to Zhang’s youth, stating that he was an avid scholar though they furnish no further details concerning the nature of his studies. The *Daozang tiyao* mentions that in his youth Zhang was a student of Confucian teachings and also made a cursory study of texts associated with all of the “three teachings” (*sanjiao* 三教) of Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism. In addition he studied astrology, healing-divination, astronomy, and geography.²⁰ This list is supplemented in the *Daojiao da cidian* with the addition of law, mathematics, medicine, and military strategy.²¹ Contrary to the above information, the *Sansheng biyao* appears to state that, prior to establishing his name, Zhang did not study and instead wandered freely about. It is possible that Dai Qizong incorrectly copied the phrase in question from whatever source document he was working with. The wording is very close to that found in the biography included in the earlier *Tongjian*. The two lines of text read as follows:

少無所不學浪跡雲水

[In his] youth there was nothing [he] did not study; [he] wandered freely [amid] clouds and rivers.²² (*Tongjian*, 49.7b)

少無名不學浪跡雲水

¹⁸ *Tongjian*, 49.7b

¹⁹ *Xujing*, 2.33a.

²⁰ *Daozang tiyao*, 1223.

²¹ *Daojiao da cidian*, s.v. 張伯端, 582. Wang Mu includes a comparable list in *Qianjie*, 2.

²² “Clouds and rivers” (*yunshui* 雲水) is a term which, by the Tang dyansty, was used to refer to a wandering monk or travelling Taoist master. *Ciyuan* (Beijing: Shangwuyin shuguan, 1987), 1811, s.v. 雲水.

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[In his] youth [when he was still] without a name (reputation) [he] did not stud
[but] wandered freely [amid] clouds and rivers. (*Sansheng biyao*, 15a)

Certainly the writer of the *Wuzhen pian* demonstrates a fairly accomplished level of literacy and a sound understanding of the *Yijing* as well as some knowledge of the constellations. Also, many direct quotations from and allusions to the *Daode jing* and the *Zhuangzi* are scattered throughout the alchemical portions of the text. A large section of the text also employs a wide range of Buddhist terminology and shows that the author had gained considerable insight into Chan Buddhist doctrine. Finally, references to various points and regions located on and inside the body demonstrate some familiarity with various anatomical and medical theories which were established long before and were current during the Song dynasty. It must therefore be concluded that the writer of this text was well educated and well read though it is possible also that Zhang waited until later in life to concentrate on matters of education as it is evident that he composed the *Wuzhen pian* in his later years (see below).

During his later life Zhang travelled extensively throughout various regions of China. The biographies provide no information on Zhang's early life, but focus instead on the period leading up to his meeting with an enlightened master and his subsequent composition of the *Wuzhen pian*. During the Zhiping 治平 reign of emperor Ying Zong 英宗 (1064-1067) Zhang served under a military official named Lu 陸²³ who was stationed at Guilin.²⁴ Subsequently their garrison (*zhen*

²³ Lu's name is given variously as Lu Longtu gong 陸龍圖公, Longtu Lu gong 龍圖陸公, Lu gong Longtu 陸公龍圖.

²⁴ *Tongjian*, 49.10a.

鎮)²⁵ was moved and Zhang followed Lu to Chengdu in Sichuan. The *Sansheng biyao*²⁶ mentions that Zhang was given the title of Military Commissioner (*jiedu zhizhi shi* 節度制直使)²⁷ and acted as a Consultant (*canyi* 參議)²⁸ to the Military Commission (*anfu si* 安撫司).²⁹ According to the *Tongjian* and the *Xiaoyao xujing*, it was at this time that Zhang is said to have met a master, Liu Haichan 劉海蟾, and received Liu's teachings concerning inner alchemy.³⁰ The *Sansheng biyao* does not mention the name of Zhang's teacher. It says only that in 1069 (*jiyou sui* 己酉歲) Zhang met an extraordinary person (*yiren* 異人) who transmitted to him the secrets of the fire phase (*huohou zhi bi* 火候之秘).³¹ It is unlikely that Zhang actually met Liu Haichan, who has frequently been the object of mythical lore in a similar manner to the Taoist immortals Lü Dongbin 呂洞賓 and Zhongli Quan 鐘離權. Judith Boltz notes that during the early fourteenth

²⁵ Charles O. Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles in Imperial China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1985), 121 / 371. In references to Hucker, the page number is given first and the individual reference number second.

²⁶ *Sansheng biyao*, 15a.

²⁷ Hucker, *Official Titles*, 156 / 949. Within this title, *jiedu* 節度 is a prefix attached to many important titles but especially to that of Military Commissioner (*jiedu shi* 節度使). See 144 / 772.

²⁸ Hucker, *Official Titles*, 518 / 6881.

²⁹ Hucker, *Official Titles*, 104 / 18.

³⁰ *Tongjian*, 49.7b; *Xiaoyao xujing*, 2.33a. The teachings received by Zhang are referred to in both of these texts by the phrase “the fire phase of the golden fluid returned elixir” (*jinyi huandan huohou* 金液還丹火候).

³¹ *Sansheng biyao*, 15a.

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century, approximately the time during which the *Tongjian* and the *Xiaoyao xujing* were being written,

. . . a number of texts came to assert that it was Liu [Haichan] who conveyed the teachings of the venerable Chung-li Ch'uan and Lü Yen to Wang Che in the North and to Chang Po-tuan in the South. A claim such as this was no doubt extremely useful to textual codifiers who sought to find a common origin for syncretic traditions of diverse provenance.³²

Following Lu's death (no date is provided) Zhang moved north to Shanxi province where he became associated with one Chuhou 處厚 in Hedong. After an undetermined period of time Chuhou received a summons and just before he departed Zhang gave him a copy of the *Wuzhen pian* asking him to disseminate the work.³³ According to the *Tongjian*,³⁴ Zhang then embarked upon his return journey and died in 1082, during the *yuanfeng* 元豐 reign of emperor Shen Zong.

The above details exhaust the information found in the four canonical biographies describing the life of Zhang Boduan. There is, however, one story found in the *Gujin tushu jicheng* (The Imperial Encyclopedia) (see note 35 below) concerning Zhang's entry into the Tao which bears mentioning. The details are very vague: It seems that, after having achieved official status, Zhang one day saw a servant girl taking a fish and mistakenly believed her to be stealing it. He reported the incident and the girl was flogged. While in a state of anger and indignation, and presumably shame, she killed herself. Somehow Zhang came to realize his error and as a result felt

³² Boltz, *Taoist Literature.*, 173. There is an obvious difficulty involved in asserting this line of transmission. The dates for Wangzhe are 1112-1170 while those of Zhang Boduan are 903-1082.

³³ *Xujing*, 2.34a; *Tongjian*, 49.10a.

³⁴ *Tongjian*, 49.10a.

deep regret and was compelled to enter the Tao. The following poem is added to describe

Zhang's realization of the inequities associated with his official status:

Carrying the official's pen for forty years,
right, right, wrong, wrong countless [times over].
A single household well fed and clothed, a thousand households of resentment;
half a generation honoured and esteemed, one hundred generations at fault.
Purple tassels and gold insignias, now are all gone;
straw sandals and bamboo cane, naturally wandering afar.
People ask me the way to Penglai
[it is] clouds in the green mountains, the moon in the sky.³⁵

According to the first line of this poem, Zhang must have been at least in his early sixties before he entered the Tao. The story goes on to describe Zhang's banishment to the frontier.³⁶ It is said that Zhang was banished because he committed the crime of intentionally burning official documents (*huofen wenshu li* 火焚文書律).³⁷ Presumably this is where the biographies begin their account of his stationing in the garrisons at Guilin and Chengdu.

II. The Southern Lineage

Zhang Boduan is traditionally considered the second patriarch of the Southern Lineage (*Nanzong* 南宗) of Taoism.³⁸ The Southern Lineage refers to a sect of Taoism which employs

³⁵ This poem and the story can be found in section 18 (*Shenyi*) of the *Gujin tushu jicheng* (Imperial Catalogue) under Arts and Sciences (*Bowu*).

³⁶ Zhang's banishment to the frontier is also mentioned in the *Tongjian*, 49.13a.

³⁷ *Tongjian*, 14.13a.

³⁸ The Southern Lineage is also designated the *Quanzhen Nanzong* 全真南宗 though when and how this came to be is not clear. It appears to have occurred after the Mongols conquered China and the practitioners from the Northern and Southern lineages began to interact. These

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inner alchemy as the principle means for spiritual cultivation. Zhang's teachings, and the lineage with which he is associated, are defined in relation to (that is differentiated from) the Northern School *Beizong* 北宗) which is identified with the Complete Reality (*Quanzhen* 全真) movement founded by Wang Zhongyang 王重陽 (1112-1170). The designation "Southern Lineage" seems to be one which was applied some time after the death of Zhang Boduan.

Nowhere in his writings does Zhang refer to his teachings using the term *Nanzong*. Judith Boltz refers to this designation of Zhang's teaching as the "ex post facto Nan-tsung."³⁹ There is good reason to suppose that the Southern Lineage is indeed ex post facto. The lineage associated with the teachings of Zhang Boduan appears to be a response to, and an imitation of, the lineage associated with the Complete Reality school with its Five Patriarchs (*wu zu* 五祖) and Seven Perfected (*qi zhenren* 七真人). The Southern Lineage also claimed five patriarchs: Zhang Boduan, Shi Tai 石泰 (fl. 1106), Xue Daoguang 薛道光 (fl. 1120), Chen Nan 陳楠 (fl. 1212), and Bai Yuchan 白玉蟾 (fl. 1216). The seven masters of the Southern Lineage are constituted through the addition of Liu Yongnian 劉永年, a disciple of Zhang Boduan and Peng Si 彭耜, a disciple of Bai Yuchan⁴⁰ to the above list of five patriarchs. Commenting on the *Nanzong* "school" associated with Zhang Boduan, Isabelle Robinet states:

observations are taken from comments on the first draft of this chapter made by Stephen Eskildsen.

³⁹ Boltz, *Taoist Literature*, 173.

⁴⁰ Tao-chung Yao, *Ch'üan-chen: A New Taoist Sect in North China During the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries* (Ph.D. diss., University of Arizona, 1980), 178-179.

Unlike the Quanzhen school, this group established no contact with centers of power. Most of its masters wandered around the country, and despite the group's claims to go back to Zhang Boduan, nothing that could be called a real school developed before the time of Chen Nan and Bo Yuchan (fl. 1209-1224), especially after the latter became a grand master of the thunder ritual.⁴¹

In addition to the influence brought to bear by the awareness of the *Quanzhen* school, it would be reasonable to suppose that the importance of lineage to the Chan tradition may also have had some impact on those who deemed it necessary to provide a more stable representation of the teachings associated with Zhang Boduan. At various times throughout the history of Taoism there have been examples of responses to Buddhism which have given shape to various aspects of Taoist tradition. Examples of this are discussed by Ōfuchi Ninji in his well known paper on the formation and organization of the Taoist Canon.⁴²

III. Sources of Zhang's Thought

Looking past the "ex post facto" establishment of Zhang Boduan as a patriarch within a lineage it is evident that he drew upon a broad cross section of ideas. Zhang's place within Taoism can, to some extent, be determined by considering the various streams of thought which he drew upon in formulating his inner alchemical theory. The ideas employed by Zhang go back to the Warring States period (403-222) and end with ideas expressed in the Tang and Song dynasties by teachers in the Chan Buddhist tradition.

⁴¹ Robinet, *Taoism*, 224-225.

⁴² Ninji Ōfuchi, "The Formation of the Taoist Canon," in *Facets of Taoism: Essays in Chinese Religion*, ed. Holmes Welch and Anna Seidel (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), 253-261.

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The *Wuzhen pian* contains many references to the *Daode jing*. There are at least seventeen obvious examples of this in the *Wuzhen pian*. It is apparent that the *Zhuangzi* is also a significant influence, especially in the later sections of the text. The manner in which Zhang employs the references to the *Daode jing* and the *Zhuangzi* are quite different. The quotations from and allusions to the *Daode jing* are always tied very directly to various specific technical aspects of inner alchemical theory being described. It is entirely likely that Zhang was aware of how such references would add authority to his own ideas and also that they would serve to emphasize the long history of the inner alchemical way of cultivation. This obviously does not negate the likelihood that Zhang believed in all sincerity that the *Daode jing* did indeed contain references to a kind of inner alchemical cultivation.⁴³ The influence of the *Zhuangzi*, on the otherhand, is brought to bear in a more subtle way—subtle for at least two reasons: Firstly, because much of the thought expressed in the *Zhuangzi* resonates strongly with ideas found in Chan texts, and thus it becomes difficult to detect where the *Zhuangzi* ends and Chan doctrine begins. Ideas which come to mind here are those of spontaneity or non-intentionality and also of the strong tendency to dispense with all oppositions such as good and evil in the conventional

⁴³ Kristofer Schipper has argued that there are grounds for considering references to the governance of the state in the *Daode jing* as a metaphor for the governance of the body. He draws attention to the existence of many early commentaries which read the text in this way and which provide analyses of its meaning which sound very similar to ideas found in the fully developed inner alchemical texts of the Song dynasty. He is critical of the exclusive attention garnered by the more “philosophical” commentaries most famously represented by that of Wang Bi (226-249) whom he notes was not a Taoist. Kristofer Schipper, *The Taoist Body*, trans. Karen Duval (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 187-195. Isabella Robinet also warns against disregarding commentarial traditions which view the *Daode jing* as containing references to longevity practices. Robinet *Taoism*, 29-30.

moral sphere. Secondly, the statements which echo the *Zhuangzi* are not as obvious as they are not used to shed light on the more technical dimensions of inner alchemy in the way that those from the *Daode jing* are. Instead they serve to inform the underlying attitude of the adept, an attitude which assumes the place of a necessary foundation.

In addition to the *Daode jing* and the *Zhuangzi*, Zhang Boduan drew upon the symbols of the *Yijing* and the eight trigrams of the *bagua* 八卦 as well as the system of the five phases (*wu xing* 五行) and the dynamic interaction between *yin* 陰 and *yang* 陽, all of which were employed during the Han dynasty to formulate various cosmogonic and cosmological accounts. While the theories of the five phases and the symbols of the *Yijing* and the *bagua* predate the Han, it was during the former Han that the machinations of the *fangshi* 方士, literally, the masters or scholars of prescriptions, brought these various strains of thought together in a way which would provide some of the key conceptual devices to be employed centuries later by the developers of inner alchemy. The *fangshi* were certainly preoccupied with the quest for longevity and even materia immortality as the famous account of Li Shaoqun (fl. -133) and his advice to the first emperor of the Han attests:

Li Shao-ch'ün then advised the emperor, "If you sacrifice to the fireplace you can call the spirits to you, and if the spirits come you can transform cinnabar into gold. Using this gold, you may make drinking and eating vessels which will prolong the years of your life. With prolonged life you may visit the immortals who live on the island of P'eng-lai in the middle of the sea. If you visit them and perform the Feng and Shan sacrifices, you will never die. This is what the Yellow Emperor did."⁴⁴

⁴⁴ Burton Watson, *Records of the Grand Historian of China: The Shih chi of Ssu-Ma Ch'ien*, vol. 2 *The Age of Emperor Wu 140 to circa 100 B.C.* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961), 39.

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In this brief passage the currents of religious activity, practical operative alchemy, and the health of the human body all converge. Whether or not this was the very first example of such a confluence, it demonstrates the early existence of a foundation which was a precursor to the evolution of methods of external alchemy (*waidan* 外丹), many of which were described in the *Baopuzi* of Ge Hong (284-364). It was these methods of external alchemy which provided the metaphorical language employed by the inner alchemists of the Tang and Song dynasties. The operative alchemist's stove (*lu* 爐) and tripod (*ding* 鼎) became associated with various regions of the body while the herbs, base metals, and chemicals which were used to generate an elixir for ingestion became equated with various forms of *qi* 氣 in the adept's body. The three forms of medicine (*san yao* 三藥), the three jewels (*san bao* 三寶), or the three primes (*san yuan* 三元) became equated with essence (*jing* 精), *qi*, and spirit (*shen* 神) all of which are permutations of the basic *qi*, each one being in a more rarefied state.

In Sima Qian's account of the *fangshi*, Li Shaojun, part of the mystique associated with this individual was his abilities at prognostication. An important part of the *fangshi*'s repertoire was an understanding of divinatory methods and the calendrical cycles which underlay the passage of time. A natural extension of such concerns was a knowledge of astronomy. The result of the *fangshi*'s interest in prognostication was an intersection of theories concerning both space and time. This merging of interests provided a second conceptual schema for the external and later the internal alchemist. The hexagrams and trigrams of the *Yijing* provide both the basic syntax for the expression of alchemical ideas and a schema for mapping and regulating the process. The alchemical process involves knowing the appropriate time for movement or for stillness, for

emerging or retiring. The alchemist must also be fully apprised of the various regions of the inner universe and the ways in which they are interrelated.

The next significant source of influence on the *Wuzhen pian* is a text entitled the *Zhouyi cantongqi* (Hereafter *Cantong qi*) TY996, DZ623. This text is attributed to Wei Boyang, described by Robinet as “a legendary immortal who supposedly lived in the second century A.D.”⁴⁵ While there are references to a work of the same title which date back to the Han dynasty it is considered very unlikely that this is the same text which is today preserved in a number of editions in the Taoist Canon.⁴⁶ The *Cantong qi*, which has been interpreted as a work on both inner and outer alchemy, is full of symbolism found in later inner alchemical texts including the *Wuzhen pian*. The outer alchemist, the alchemist who was preoccupied with the manufacture of a substance which would confer longevity or even immortality, employed heat to change basic ingredients into an elixir of immortality. With the use of fire came the need to regulate the intensity of the heat which was generated. Throughout twelve double hours of the day the intensity of the heat had to be carefully increased until the peak was reached at the hour of *si* 巳 (9am-11am) then, through the rest of the day, the heat was gradually lowered until the hour of *hai* 亥 (9pm-11pm). These fluctuations of heat through the day can be mapped onto twelve

⁴⁵ Robinet, *Taoism*, 220. Fabrizio Pregadio agrees with Robinet on this point. Fabrizio Pregadio, “The Representations of Time in the *Zhouyi cantong qi*,” *Cahiers d’Extrême-Asie* 8 (1995): 168.

⁴⁶ Further details concerning the various recensions of the *Cantong qi* can be found in the appendix entitled “Historical notes on the *Cantong qi*” included at the end of the following article: Pregadio, “Time in the *Zhouyi Cantong qi*,” 168-171.

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hexagrams which describe the sine-like fluctuations in the intensity of the heat by means of the movement of the broken and solid lines through the hexagrams. These hexagrams are: *fu* 復, *lin* 臨, *tai* 泰, *dazhuang* 大壯, *guai* 夬, *qian* 乾, *gou* 姤, *dun* 遯, *pi* 否, *guan* 觀, *bo* 剝, and *kun* 坤. Starting with *fu*, which corresponds with the hour *zi* 子 (11pm-1am), there is one solid line at the bottom of the hexagram. Through the following hours one solid line is added (always from the bottom up) until the hexagram becomes pure *yang* at the hour of *si* 巳. During the noon hours of *wu* 午 (11am-1pm) *yin* returns with one broken line appearing at the bottom of the *fu* 復 hexagram. The cycle then moves to completion as the *yin* lines gradually build from the bottom until the hexagram becomes pure *yin* during the hours of *hai* 亥 after which the whole cycle begins anew. The *Cantong qi* employs this correlation of the above twelve hexagrams with the hours of the day to describe the regulation of the alchemists fire.⁴⁷ In the *Wuzhen pian* this system of correspondences is employed for the purpose of describing the fluctuations of *yin* and *yang* within the body of the adept. The last two lines of the following passage are a typical example of how the twelve hexagrams are used to describe the alchemical process:

The red dragon and the black tiger [belong to] the west and east [respectively];
the four signs coalesce at the centre which is *wu ji*;

[The process of] *fu* and *gou* is able, from this point, to be carried out;
[as for] the golden elixir who says its work cannot be completed.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ The *Cantong qi* is comprised of 90 *zhang* 章 and the sections dealing specifically with these correlations include *zhang* 49-60.

⁴⁸ *Wuzhen pian*, 27.12b. Many more examples can be found in the text and have been described in the annotation to the translation which follows.

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Fu and *gou*, mentioned above, represent the re-emergence of *yang* and the re-emergence of *yin* respectively and these stages are related directly to the formation of the golden elixir being created inside the adept and which will confer on him or her a state of transcendence and awakening as well as robust health.

The cycle described above corresponds directly with the movement of the sun through the day but the *Cantong qi* also makes use of the moon's movement to describe fluctuations in terms of months rather than hours.⁴⁹ It is important to note that the two systems (monthly and hourly) are based on twelve divisions. This allows the alchemist to view his work as a way of compressing time. What the alchemist did with his stove (*lu* 鑪) and cauldron or reaction vessel (*ding* 鼎) was essentially to reproduce a pure substance out of base ingredients which would normally take centuries to form in the earth. Then, by ingesting the final product the alchemist would reap the benefit of the thousands of years which inhered in the elixir.⁵⁰ References to the cycles of the moon abound in the *Wuzhen pian* and are used in a manner parallel to that of the diurnal cycle.

Other features of inner alchemical language that have been borrowed from the *Cantong qi* are summarized as follows by Robinet:

The basic trigrams are personalized: the father, the mother, the sons, and the daughters and are then associated with the Five Agents and their various characteristics. They are also the basic materials that provide the authors of inner alchemy with their rich font of images and symbols: the toad of the sun, the hare of the moon, the cauldron and the furnace in the shape of a crescent moon, the yellow

⁴⁹ The sections dealing with the phases of the moon and their correspondence with the hexagrams are found in *zhang* 13-15 and 46-48 of the *Cantong qi*.

⁵⁰ These ideas are detailed in Nathan Sivin, "The Theoretical background of Elixir Alchemy," *Isis* 67 (1976) 513-527.

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sprout, the chariot of the river, the black mercury that contains the golden flower, and so on.⁵¹

With the exception of the last two terms, all of these symbols from the *Cantong qi* have been incorporated into the description of the inner alchemical process found in the *Wuzhen pian*. In addition the *Cantong qi* also employs references to the dragon and the tiger which, in the *Wuzhen pian*, are used to symbolize the interaction between the trigrams *kan* and *li*. It is within these trigrams that pure *yang* and pure *yin* are to be found. The coming together of the dragon and tiger symbolize reunion, a reunion that represents a movement back through the cosmogonic unfolding described in chapter 42 of the *Daode jing* to the time when there was unity rather than division:

The white tiger of the western mountain goes mad;
the green dragon of the eastern sea cannot stand it.

The two animals grasp [each other in a] battle to the death,
[and thus] are transmuted into a single lump of purple-gold frost.⁵²

Examples of references to the dragon and the tiger are found in *zhang* 29 and 40 of the *Cantong qi*. However, not having made a close study of this difficult text, it would be premature to attempt an account of how they function within it. In general terms, the *Wuzhen pian* is indebted to the *Cantong qi* for much of its symbolic vocabulary, including the terms of external alchemy and the system of mutual dependence and influence represented by the Five Phases, and also for the

⁵¹ Isabelle Robinet, "Original Contributions of Neidan," in *Taoist Meditation and Longevity Techniques*, ed. Livia Kohn (Ann Arbor: Center for Chinese Studies The University of Michigan, 1989), 303.

⁵² *Wuzhen pian*, 27.13b

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manner in which different time-scales are correlated and then paired with the movement of *yin* and *yang* through the hexagrams of the *Yijing*.

The final major stream of thought evident in the *Wuzhen pian* is that of Chan Buddhism. The function of Chan doctrine within the text is, in part, comparable to that of the *Zhuangzi* insofar as one of its primary purposes is to describe the attitude of non-attachment required by the adept who undertakes the process of inner alchemy. The Buddhist material constitutes roughly one third of the text and is explicitly Chan Buddhist. There is also a very clear line of division between the more technical alchemical material comprising the first two thirds of the text and the Buddhist material in the remaining third. The alchemical section of the text contains only scattered examples of Buddhist terminology and there is little evidence of any attempt on the part of Zhang Boduan to integrate the two. In addition to its passive, descriptive function, the Buddhist material provides a means by which the adept can free his or her mind from the confines of conventional assumptions regarding a fixed, personal identity existing relative to an objective, essentially real world as it is experienced through the senses. A definite link is understood to obtain between the realization of these non-conventional truths and the adept's ability to enter into a state of deep concentration in meditation. For the purposes of inner alchemy it is the unhindered true mind which allows the adept to gain access to the depth of concentration required to set in motion the events described in the first two thirds of the text. While it is obvious to the reader that the Buddhist section of the text is clearly separated from that containing the alchemical theory, they do share this common purpose. Both parts contribute in their own way to shake the adept's faith in both conventional truths, and the usefulness of language to provide the kind of insight needed

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to propel the subject through the course of internally generated alchemical events. The difference lies not so much in function as in form.

The language of inner alchemy serves both to communicate and to frustrate. By combining these functions the reader or listener is drawn into a universe of discourse which, on the surface, appears to contain its own internal integrity and meaning only to find that there is no explicit resolution to the story being told. After having become hopelessly ensnared the adept is perhaps pushed over the linguistic edge into a more intuitive mode of comprehension. Isabelle Robinet paraphrases the explanation of the *Quanzhen* master and second patriarch Danyangzi 丹陽子(1123-1183) who sheds light on this function of inner alchemical discourse:

He [Danyang zi] went on to emphasize that alchemy is nothing but metaphors. In summary he said that *neidan* is nothing really new except that it uses a special language that aims at disrupting ordinary thinking by tearing apart the hardened knots, the solid barriers. Eventually this language will soften the mind in exactly the same way as the body has been relaxed previously by the various techniques of respiration.⁵³

It is evident that while the symbol-laden language of inner alchemy appears very different from that of Chan Buddhism they do indeed share a common purpose: the freeing of the mind from conventional modes of thought.

In concluding this section it should be mentioned that there are many other texts within the vast corpus of inner alchemical material which have, no doubt, contributed to the shaping of ideas found in the *Wuzhen pian*, which Judith Boltz describes as a “watershed in Taoist contemplative

⁵³ Robinet, “Original Contributions of Neidan,” 302. Unfortunately Robinet does not provide a reference for this paraphrasing of Danyang zi’s thoughts.

literature.”⁵⁴ There are many important texts from the Tang dynasty through the Five Dynasties period (907-960) which must have had a strong influence on Zhang Boduan’s thoughts. The list of texts would have to include works such as the *Yinfujing* TY121, DZ57 of which there are several editions in the Taoist Canon; the *Jiuyao xinyinjing* TY224, DZ112; and the *Ruyao jing*, found in chapter 37 of the *Xiuzhen shishu*. A project which is long overdue would be the writing of a history which traces the development of inner alchemy from its earliest phases—represented perhaps in the *Cantong qi*—through to the present.

IV. The Text

There are several editions of the *Wuzhen pian* included in the Taoist Canon and they vary considerably in length. The excerpt included here is taken from the opening section of the longest edition in the Canon, which includes a substantial section of Chan Buddhist material. It is found in the anonymously compiled collectaneum, *Xiuzhen shishu* (Ten Compilations on the Cultivation of Perfection) (TY262, DZ122-131).⁵⁵ The date of compilation for this Taoist encyclopedia has not been determined; however Judith Boltz notes that the latest collections of writings included date to the mid-thirteenth century.⁵⁶ The *Wuzhen pian* comprises chapters (*juan* 卷) 26 through 30 of the *Xiuzhen shishu*. The brief section included here is untitled. It contains sixteen heptasyllabic verses which exhort readers to cultivate themselves according to the way of the golden elixir

⁵⁴ Boltz, *Taoist Literature*, 174.

⁵⁵ This is Judith Boltz’s translation of the title. Boltz, *Taoist Literature*, 234.

⁵⁶ Boltz, *Taoist Literature*, 236.

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(*jindan* 金丹). The significance of the number sixteen is explained by a brief note placed under the section title in another edition of the text.⁵⁷ It states (employing a metaphor from operative alchemy) that this is done in order to represent the mixing together of two equal quantities of eight “ounces” each to make a total of sixteen “ounces” or one “pound” (*jin* 斤).⁵⁸ This is an allusion to the uniting of lead and mercury in operative alchemy, employed as a metaphor for the balanced union of *yin* and *yang* within the body of the inner alchemical adept. In this opening section of the text the emphasis is not on the specifics of the inner alchemical method but rather on compelling the reader to wake up to his or her circumstances and to the potential for change which the text describes. The reader is also alerted to the fact that everyone has the necessary ingredients for effecting the changes of inner alchemy within their own body. Thus there is no need to go in search of herbs or minerals. The second concern is the establishment of an identity for the way of the golden elixir over and against all of the heterodox methods to demonstrate that “among all the marvels of perfection [it] is the most true.”⁵⁹ The author describes a number of specific practices which should not be mistaken for the way of the golden elixir. These include techniques for regulating respiration, fasting, operative alchemy, and celibacy.⁶⁰ This brief opening

⁵⁷ *Ziyang zhenren wuzhen pian zhushu* [hereafter *Zhushu*] (TY141, DZ61-62), 1.1a.

⁵⁸ One *jin*, comprised of sixteen “ounces,” is equal to 1.3 pounds or 0.5897 kilograms.

⁵⁹ *Wuzhen pian*, 26.11b

⁶⁰ These “other” ways of cultivation are listed in verses eight and fifteen. *Wuzhen pian*, 26.20a-21a; 26.30a-32a. Concerning celibacy, a practice advocated by the *Quanzhen* sect, the text actually refers only to divorcing one’s wife, which is seen as unproductive. All it achieves is the separation of *yin* and *yang*. *Wuzhen pian*, 26.30b

section of the *Wuzhen pian* contains sufficient symbolic references to the inner alchemical process to provide the reader with a general sense of the complex and occasionally frustrating nature of the language employed throughout the text. Detailed explanations of specific terms have been avoided in this general introduction but are included in the annotation of the translated text which follows.

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1. [If you] do not seek the great way to leave the path of delusion,
although [you] maintain virtue and ability are [you] a worthy man?

One hundred years⁶¹ is the flash of a spark;
a whole lifetime is a fleeting bubble.

Simply coveting profit and favour, seeking honour and fame,
not caring for the body and suffering the distress and decay of ignorance.

Let me ask, if [you] piled up gold as high as a mountain peak,
at the end of [your] life⁶² could [you] pay enough to prevent death from coming?
2. Although the [regular] span of human life is one hundred years,

⁶¹ The period of one hundred years was widely held to be the limit of the normal span of life. See the second stanza below.

⁶² This reading of *wu chang* 無常 is taken from Wang Mu, *Qianjie*, 2, n.10. *Wu chang ca* also be employed as a Buddhist term referring to the doctrine of impermanence. Soothill and Hodous, *Chinese Buddhist Terms*, 378, s.v. 無常.

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[one has] no foreknowledge concerning longevity or premature death, failure or success.

Yesterday [you] rode [your] horse along the street,

today [you are] already a sleeping corpse in a coffin.

[Your] wife and property all abandoned, no [longer] your possessions;

[your] sinful karma will go into effect; it will be difficult for you to cheat it.

[If you] do not search for the great medicine how will [you] be able to encounter it?

To encounter it but fail to refine it is stupid and foolhardy.

3. [If you are going to] study immortality then it must be celestial immortality,⁶³

[which] alone is the most superior doctrine of the golden elixir.

When the two things⁶⁴ come together [then the] emotions and inner nature coalesce,

the dragon and tiger⁶⁵ entwine where the five phases become complete.

⁶³ There are a number of classes of immortals such as, for example: celestial immortals (*tian xian* 天仙), earthly immortals (*di xian* 地仙), spirit immortals (*shen xian* 神仙), human immortals (*ren xian* 人仙), and ghostly immortals (*gui xian* 鬼仙). The celestial immortal being the highest among them. *Daojiao da cidian*, 182, s.v. 天仙. An alternate classification including three types can be found in the *Discussions of Immortals* (*Lun xian* 論仙) section of the *Baopuzi neipian* TY 1175, DZ 868.

⁶⁴ The commentary alludes to the two trigrams *kan* 坎 and *li* 離 of the eight trigrams (*ba gua* 八卦) as the “two things.” *Kan* is said to be water while *li* is fire. A central motif in inner alchemy is the union of opposites and these two trigrams are frequently used to describe this union within the alchemist’s body. *Wuzhen pian*, 26.10b-11a. In all cases the hexagrams will be referred to in *Hanyu Pinyin* and will not be translated. Translating the term may cause a second reading or allusion to be ignored. Instead, explanations concerning the use of each hexagram in its specific context will be provided in the footnotes.

⁶⁵ The tiger and dragon are referred to frequently in this text. The tiger represents true yang (*zhen yang* 真陽) while the dragon represents true yin (*zhen yin* 真陰). They also represent

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From the beginning rely upon *jueji*⁶⁶ to be the matchmaker;

then cause the husband and wife to be calm and joyous.

Simply wait until the work is completed [then] pay court to the Northern Palace;⁶⁷

amidst the brightness in nine rose-coloured clouds [you will] ride the auspicious *luan* bird.

4. This method, among all the marvels of perfection, is the most true;

everything accords with me alone being different from others.⁶⁸

I am aware of inversion [which] proceeds from *li* and *kan*;

who recognizes that [their] floating and sinking⁶⁹ establish host and guest?⁷⁰

the trigrams *kan* and *li*. These mythical animals are often described as being brought together, which is another way of describing the exchange of the central lines of *kan* and *li* in order to generate the trigrams *qian* and *kun*.

⁶⁶ *Wu* 戊 and *ji* 己 refer to the fifth and sixth of the ten celestial stems (*tian gan* 天干) which, in combination, correspond to the earth phase which occupies the central position. The centre is the place where *kan* and *li* are joined.

⁶⁷ No mention of the “northern palace” is made in the commentary, however, the *Ziyang zhenren wuzhen pian jiangyi* [hereafter *Jiangyi*] TY146, DZ66, renders “northern palace” (*bei que* 北闕) as “jade palace” (*yu que* 玉闕). This term is defined as the dwelling of an immortal in the *Daojiao wenhua cidian* (Shanghai: Jiangsu guji chubanshe, 1992), 1205, s.v. 玉闕. Isabelle Robinet has translated this term as “Northern Gate” (Porte du Nord) see Isabelle Robinet, *Introduction à l'alchimie intérieure taoïste De l'unité et de la multiplicité* (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1995), 206.

⁶⁸ This phrase appears to echo the end of chapter 20 of the *Daode jing* as found in Lau, *Tao Te Ching*, 31: “I alone am foolish and uncouth. / I alone am different from others / and value being fed by the mother.”

⁶⁹ This line is describing the interchange between the trigrams *kan* and *li* in the later heaven eight trigrams. *Kan*, which is paired with water and true lead, normally sinks, while *li*, which is paired with fire and true mercury, would normally rise. This describes the natural state of

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[If one] wishes to retain the mercury within the vermilion⁷¹ in the golden cauldron,

then the silver in the water of the jade pool⁷² [must first be caused to] descend.

The work of the spirit and the circulation of the fire does not require a whole evening [before the] single orb of the sun manifests, emerging from the deep pool.⁷³

affairs which leads to aging and death. The alchemist seeks to invert this process (*dian dao* 顛倒); hence fire must sink and water must rise which can also be understood as the exchange between *kan* and *li*. *Zhushi, shang*, 9b-10a.

⁷⁰ Ordinarily, *kan* would be the guest, by virtue of its being associated with sinking, while *li* would be the host because it is associated with rising or floating. This is the constant or ordinary way (*chang dao* 常道). The alchemist seeks to reverse these appellations, making *li* the guest by causing it to sink and making *kan* the host by causing it to rise. *Zhushi, shang*, 9b-10a; *Wuzhen pian*, 26.11b-12a. See also the very clear explanation provided by Wang Mu in *Qianjie*, 6, n.6.

⁷¹ In this context vermilion (*zhu* 朱) refers to vermilion sand (*zhu sha* 朱砂), an outer alchemical term synonymous with elixir-sand or cinnabar (*dan sha* 丹砂), which in more conventional chemical nomenclature signifies red mercuric sulfide. Wong Shiu Hon, Comp., *Daozang danyao yiming suoyin* (Taipei: Xuesheng shuju, 1989), 50. (Note: *The Concise Oxford Dictionary*, 7th ed., s.v. cinnabar, lists the term ‘vermilion’ as a synonym for cinnabar.)

⁷² The jade pool (*yu chi* 玉池) has a number of possible meanings. For example the *Xiuzhen shishu jindan dacheng ji* [hereafter *Dacheng ji*] TY262, DZ123 (see the section entitled *Jin dan wen da* 金丹問答) states clearly that “jade pool” refers to the mouth. Wang Mu disagrees, stating firmly that in this context jade pool should not be understood as referring to the mouth but rather to the trigram *kan*. Wang Mu, *Qian Jie*, 7, n.9. The commentary of Weng Baoguang in *Zhushu*, 2.10b-11a, which pairs the trigram *li* with the cauldron and *kan* with the jade pool appears to support Wang’s observation. Furthermore, within this couplet the cauldron and the jade pool do appear to be functioning as a mutually dependent pair.

⁷³ “Deep pool” (*shen tan* 深潭) does not refer to the jade pool described above. Rather it refers to the upper elixir field (*shang dantian* 上丹田). The *Daojiao da cidian*, 893, s.v. 深潭, lists sixty-six synonyms for this term including mud-ball palace (*ni wan gong* 泥丸宮), flowing-pearl palace (*liu qiu gong* 流球宮), and mysterious palace (*xuan gong* 玄宮).

5. The tiger dances; the dragon mounts the wind and waves;

the principal seat of the true centre⁷⁴ generates the mysterious pearl.⁷⁵

Fruit produced on the branch will, in time, ripen;

could the baby in the womb⁷⁶ be any different?

South and north accord with the Source [through] inversion of the signs of the trigrams;⁷⁷

at daybreak and dusk the fire phases [of the adept's body] accord with the celestial axis.⁷⁸

⁷⁴ This four character phrase (*zhong yang zheng wei* 中央正位) refers to the lower elixir field (*xia dantian* 下丹田). The commentary describes the lower elixir field as being three inches below the umbilicus. *Wuzhen pian*, 26.13b. Ye Shibiao uses the synonym, “centra palace” (*zhong gong* 中宮) to refer to the lower elixir field. *Wuzhen pian*, 13a. A discussion of the elixir fields (translated by Joseph Needham as “regions of vital heat”) can be found in Needham, *Science and Civilisation*, vol. 5.5, 38-39.

⁷⁵ The mysterious pear is a synonym for the “baby boy” (*yinger* 嬰兒) or the “golden fluid recycled elixir” (*Jinye huandan* 金液還丹).

⁷⁶ This phrase refers back to the “mysterious pearl” mentioned above, employing the metaphor of the baby boy which has been conceived internally by the alchemical adept through a process of the reunion or copulation of opposites.

⁷⁷ North and south are the directions of the trigrams *kan* and *li* in the later heave (*houtian* 後天) arrangement of the eight trigrams, and *kun* and *qian* in the earlier heave (*xiantian* 先天) arrangement. Through the inversion or exchange of the centre lines of *kan* and *li* these two trigrams are transformed into *qian* in the south and *kun* in the north, which “accords with” the earlier heaven configuration and thus, with the original state of being.

⁷⁸ This term almost certainly refers to the first of the seven stars in the Northern Bushel (*bei dou* 北斗) which is part of the circumpolar constellation, Ursa Major. This term is intended to emphasize the importance of matching the microcosmic rhythms within the adept's body with those of the macrocosm. The waxing and waning of the moon and the transition from day to night, both of which were conceived of as fluctuations of *yin* and *yang*, appear frequently in inner alchemical literature as macrocosmic parallels to fluctuations of *yin* and *yang* in the human body. The Northern Bushel appears to the observer to rotate diurnally and annually. Its rotation was taken as a parallel to the circulation of *qi* in the body. Needham, *Science and Civilisation*, vol. 5.5, 59, n.b.

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[You]must be able to understand this great mystery [while] dwelling in the chaotic marke
place;

what need is there [to retreat] deep into the mountains to preserve peaceful solitude

6. All people have [within them] the medicine of long life;

[yet,] self assured, stupid, and deluded, [they] vainly toss it away.

When the sweet dew descends⁷⁹ heaven and earth unite;

[at the] place where the yellow sprouts⁸⁰ grow, *kan* and *li* interact.

The well frog⁸¹ responds saying there is no dragon's lair;

how can the quail on the fence know that there is a phoenix nest?

[Once the] elixir is cooked, the roo⁸² is filled with gold;

⁷⁹ According to the commentary of Xue Daoguang, “sweet dew” (*ganlu* 甘露) and “yellow sprouts” (*huang ya* 黃芽), which appears in the next line of the text, both refer to the golden elixir. The commentary of Lu Ziyue found in the same text agrees that both terms are names for the medicine (*yao* 藥), which is, of course, a common synonym for the golden elixir. *Sanzhu*, 1.20a-21a.

⁸⁰ References to yellow recur frequently in the text. Yellow is paired with the earth phase and the centre, the place at which opposites are brought together to form a unity. In this couplet the union of heave and earth is mentioned as is the interaction of the trigrams *kan* and *li*. The connection between these two lines is that, due to their interaction, the centra lines of *kan* and *li* (pure *yin* and pure *yang*) are exchanged and the resulting trigrams are *qian* and *kun* known as heaven and earth.

⁸¹ This may be an allusion to a famous phrase in the *Zhuangzi*: “Jo of the North Sea said, ‘You can’ discuss the ocea with a well frog—he’s limited by the space he lives in.’” Watson, *Chuang Tzu*, 175.

⁸² Wang Mu, *Qianjie*, 12, n.15 claims that this term refers to the elixir cavity (*dankong* 丹穴), however Yuan Gongfu states that “room” (屋) refers to the body (體) as does Ye Shibiao.

why bother seeking herbs and learning how to cook water mallows.

7. It is important to be aware of the place which is the well-spring of the medicine; simply put, its home place is in the southwest.⁸³

When it happens that lead is produced from *gui*⁸⁴ [you] must quickly gather it up; whenever the moon is full⁸⁵ gold will be far away and [you will] not be able to taste it.

Wuzhen pian, 26.16b

- ⁸³ In the later heaven arrangement of the eight trigrams the direction southwest is occupied by the trigram *kun* which corresponds with the earth phase. An illustration of both the early and later heaven arrangements of the eight trigrams and their various correlates is provided in Needham, *Science and Civilisation*, vol. 5.5, 50-51.
- ⁸⁴ *Gui* 癸, the tenth of the celestial stems (*tian gan* 天干), corresponds to the direction north and, when paired with *ren* (壬), corresponds with the water phase. The *Daojiao da cidian*, 815, s.v. 鉛遇癸生, includes an entry describing the relationship between these two terms and the four character phrase, *qian yu gui sheng* 鉛遇癸生, which occurs in this line of the *Wuzhen pian*. A partial translation of the entry follows: “Lead is a term representing the water of the kidneys. This water can be divided into two kinds: The kidney water of the earlier heaven inner nature known as *ren* 壬 water; this water is clear and light. The kidney water of the later heaven known as *gui* 癸 water; this water is murky and heavy. *Ren* water is stored within *gui* water; without the production of *gui* water *ren* water will not manifest and true lead will not be seen.” The entry goes on to explain that half a pound (*ban jin* 半斤) of each type of water is necessary. It is at the time that both types of water are in balance within the body that earlier and later heaven are said to interact. (One *jin*, comprised of sixteen “ounces,” is equal to 1.3 pounds or 0.5897 kilograms.)
- ⁸⁵ The waxing and waning of the moon is an image used to describe the rising and falling or advancing and retreating of *yin* and *yang* within the body throughout the diurnal cycle. The full moon represents the peak of *yang* and would correspond to noon (*wu* 午) (11am-1pm). This might, at first glance, appear to be a positive moment in the cycle. Needham points out, however, that the hours of *zi* 子 and *wu* mark “moments of instability and change-over.” Needham, *Science and Civilisation*, vol. 5.5, 70. Thus, the passage warns that this would be an inopportune time to take advantage of the precious gold which has been generated.

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[You must] send it back to the earth cauldron⁸⁶ and securely seal it up;

next put in the flowing pearl;⁸⁷ together they are a suitable match.

The weight of the medicine is one *jin* [which] must [be comprised of] two times eight⁸⁸

[ounces];⁸⁹

adjust the fire phases [in order to] support *yin* and *yang*.

8. Stop refining the three yellows and the four spirits;⁹⁰

[even] if [you] search through the multitude of medicines, still none are real.

⁸⁶ “Earth cauldron” (*tufu* 土釜) refers to the lower elixir field (*xia dantian* 下丹田). *Daojiao wenhua cidian*, 751, s.v. 土釜. This accords with the commentary of Weng Baoguang in which “elixir field” is used to refer to the earth cauldron. *Wuzhen pian*, 26.19a. [Note: in the *Wuzhen pian* Weng Baoguang is referred to as Wu Mingzi. For the sake of simplicity, I refer to him only by the name Weng Baoguang.]

⁸⁷ Xue Daoguang equates the flowing pearl (*liu qiu* 流球) with mercury. *Sanzhu*, 1.23a, 24a. “Flowing pearl” is one of 42 synonyms for mercury listed in *Daozang danyao yiming suoyin* [hereafter *Daozang danyao*] (Taiwan : Taiwan Xuesheng Shuju, 1989), 275-280/2346.

⁸⁸ The two eights refer to the ingredients lead and mercury, which must be used in equal portions by the inner alchemist. The two eights also refer to the lunar quarters when the moon is half in darkness and half in light and *yin* and *yang* are momentarily balanced. Needham, *Science and Civilisation*, vol. 5.5, 57-59.

⁸⁹ This line echoes the equal amounts (half a pound each) of the two types of water described in footnote 84.

⁹⁰ The “three yellows” (*san huang* 三黃) and the “four spirits” (*si shen* 四神) refer to various chemical agents and raw materials employed by outer elixir (*waidan* 外丹) practitioners. The three yellows are orpiment (*cihuang* 雌黃), disulphide of arsenic also known as realgar (*xionghuang* 雄黃) which is arsenic disulphide, and sulphur (*liuhuang* 硫黃). *Daozang danyao*, 42/0373, 349/2896, 174/1514. The four spirits are cinnabar (*zhusha* 朱砂), mercury (*shuiyin* 水銀) (also a synonym for cinnabar), lead (*qian* 鉛), and potassium nitrate, also known as saltpetre (*xiao* 硝). *Danyao*, 50/0437, 277/2362, 219/1915, 341/2846.

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When *yin* and *yang* obtain their proper categories, they return to mutual interaction;

the two eights being properly suited are naturally harmoniously joined.

The sun glows red at the bottom of the pool and *yin* mysteriously disappears;

the moon over the mountain top is white and the medicine flourishes anew.⁹¹

[My] contemporaries must recognize true lead and mercury;

[these] are not ordinary sand and mercury

9. Do not take hold of the solitary *yin* in order to have *yang*

to simply cultivate the one thing only perpetuates weakness.⁹²

Labouring the body [by practising] massage and gymnastics,⁹³ these are not the way;

refining the *qi*⁹⁴ and swallowing morning clouds,⁹⁵ both are madness.

⁹¹ Weng Baoguang explains that the imagery in these two lines describes the two principal ingredients of the inner alchemist: lead and mercury. The commentary explains that the redness of the sun at the bottom of the pool is *yang* within *yin* and the whiteness of the moon over the mountain top is *yin* within *yang*. *Zhushu*, 3.5b

⁹² The commentaries provide no specific explanation for these two lines of text. It seems reasonable to conclude that they are an amplification of the point made in the previous stanza: that two ingredients, lead and mercury, are necessary. Lead and mercury are paired with two of the eight trigrams, *kan* and *li* respectively; the alchemist must facilitate the exchange of the two central lines of these two trigrams which are pure *yin* and pure *yang*. By doing this the alchemist is able to reconfigure the later heaven arrangement of the eight trigrams to generate the earlier heaven arrangement. This can only be accomplished if both the single *yin* line and the single *yang* line are removed from each trigram and replaced in the other. This view of the text is in agreement with the explanation found in Wang Mu, *Qianjie*, 16, n.1.

⁹³ “Massage” and “gymnastics” are represented here by the paired characters (*an* 按) and (*yin* 引) which here stand for massage (*anmo* 按摩) and gymnastics (*taoyin* 道引).

⁹⁴ A variety of practices associated with breathing exercises and the consumption of medicinal

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[Even if they] search [their] whole lives for the secret of lead and mercury;
when [will they] be able to witness the descent of the dragon and tiger
[I] exhort you to carefully ascertain the place where the self is born;
reverting to the root, returning to the origin, this is the superior medicine.

10. Grasp well the true lead⁹⁶ and search attentively;

do not allow time to slip by

Instead make the earthly *po* soul seize the vermilion mercury;

so the heavenly *hun* soul spontaneously governs watery gold.⁹⁷

It may be said that when the Tao is exalted the dragon and tiger will yield;

[one] can say that [when] virtue is taken seriously the ghosts and spirits [will be] respectful.

substances are referred to by “refining the *qi*” (*lianqi* 煉氣). *Daojiao wenhua cidian*, 818, s.v. 煉氣法.

⁹⁵ This refers to a method of directing the *qi*. *Xia* 霞 could perhaps be translated simply as mist or vapour, however this practice involves specifically inhaling the dawn mists. It is at this time that the red and yellow *qi* of the sun begins to emerge. *Wenhua cidian*, 823, s.v. 餐霞.

⁹⁶ “True lead” represents *yang* within *yin* and according to the five phases is referred to as metal within water. *Daojiao da cidian*, 792-793, s.v. 真鉛. “True lead” (*zhen qian* 真鉛) is also listed as one of thirty six synonyms for the outer medicine (*waiyao* 外藥) listed in Weng Baoguang’s detailed study of the *Wuzhen pian*, *Ziyang zhenren wuzhen pian zhizhi xiangshuo sancheng biyao* [hereafter *Sancheng biyao*], DZ64, TY143, 31b-32a.

⁹⁷ Yuan Gongfu explains that these phrases are describing *yin* searching for *yang* and *yang* searching for *yin*. *Wuzhen pian*, 26.15a. This is consistent with Weng Baoguang’s categorization of inner alchemical terminology according to *yin* and *yang*. He classifies the *po* souls as *yin* and mercury as *yang*, and the *hun* souls as *yang* and gold as *yin*. *Sancheng biyao*, 25b-27a. A more detailed explanation of these two lines is provided by Weng Baoguang. *Zhushu*, 3.4a-5a.

[If you] yourself comprehend [this way of achieving] long life equal to heaven and earth;

[then] annoyance and grief will have no way to continue stirring up the mind.

11. It is not difficult to search for the yellow sprouts and white snow;⁹⁸

those who have ability must rely upon the profundity of virtuous conduct.

The four signs⁹⁹ and the five phases completely rely upon earth;¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ Yellow sprouts (*huang ya* 黃芽) and white snow (*bai xue* 白雪) are different names for lead and mercury. Wang Mu, *Qianjie*, 20, n.1. Wang cites the *Xiuzhen shishu* as his source and provides a quotation. Unfortunately he does not provided a more specific reference. The *Daojiao da cidian*, 397, s.v. 白雪, is in agreement with Wang's observation. There is also an entry in the *Jindan wenda* section of the *Dacheng ji*, 10.7a which lists "horse teeth" and "white snow" among the terms used to refer to lead and mercury. "Horse teeth" is a "cover name" for "yellow sprouts." Needham, *Science and Civilisation*, vol. 5.5, 213.

⁹⁹ Ye Shibiao explains that the "four signs" (*si xiang* 四象) refer to the green dragon, white tiger, and two sets of constellations: *zhuqiao* 朱雀 (vermilion bird) and *xuanwu* 玄武 (dark warrior). *Wuzhen pian*, 26.25a. Yuan Gongfu is in agreement with this explanation. *Wuzhen pian*, 25b. Robinet has chosen to translate "four signs" as the "four hexagrams" and adds in her annotation that the four hexagrams are *qian*, *kun*, *kan* and *li*. Robinet, *Introduction à l'alchimie*, 214. The four terms referred to by the above commentators correspond to the cardinal directions and to the fourth, eighth, eighteenth and twenty fifth lunar mansions (*xiu* 宿). These four positions also correspond exactly with the four hexagrams described by Robinet. A picture entitled *An Illustration of the Bright Mirror* (*Ming jing zhi tu* 明鏡之圖) provides a very helpful graphic representation of much of the correlated spacio-temporal terms employed in inner alchemy. See *Jindan dayao*, TY1056, DZ736-738, also see Needham, *Science and Civilization*, vol. 5.5, 56-57. A detailed discussion of the system of lunar mansions can be found in Needham, *Science and Civilization in China, Mathematics and the Sciences of the Heavens and the Earth*, vol. 3, 242-252.

¹⁰⁰ Earth is one of the five phases but it plays a role of great importance as it represents the centre. Thus, it is the site of interaction for the remaining four phases, which are paired with the cardinal directions and the four hexagrams mentioned above.

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the three primes¹⁰¹ and the eight trigrams, are they far from *ren*?¹⁰²

It is difficult for people to recognize the completely refined noumenal substance;

[once] all of the malignant *yin* spirits are dispersed the ghosts will not invade.

[Though I] desire to pass on to others these explanations of the mysterious,

[I] have not yet heard a sound from a single person who understands this.

12. The *yin* and *yang* of grasses and trees are indeed paired equally;

if one is lacking, [they] will not [become] fragrant.

[When] green leaves begin to open *yang* first leads;

next, [when] red flowers bloom, *yin* later follows.

[As for] the constant Tao, it is simply this which is used in daily life;

who understands reversion of the true source?

All of the gentlemen who declare that they study the Tao;

[and yet] do not recognize *yin* and *yang* should not laugh at [this].

¹⁰¹ Yuan Gongfu equates the “three primes” (*san yuan* 三元) with heaven, earth, and humanity. *Wuzhen pian*, 26.25b. It is difficult to understand how this interpretation fits into the present context. “Three originals” is also often used in inner alchemical texts to refer to essence (*jing* 精), *qi* 氣 and *shen* (spirit 神). These are the three “ingredients” of the inner alchemist in their pure, or original form prior to their degradation after birth. Needham, *Science and Civilisation*, vol. 5.5, 26. Robinet believes that this term is alluding to visualization practices employed during meditation. Robinet *Introduction à l'alchimie*, 215.

¹⁰² Weng Baoguang, (*Zhushu*, 3.1b), and Xue Daoguang, (*Sanzhu*, 2.8b) both equate *ren* (壬) with water. *Ren* is also the ninth of the celestial stems, it is paired with the element water and refers to the direction north. See footnote 84.

13. [If you] do not recognize the turning over of inversion within the mysterious,
how [can you] understand the careful cultivation of the lotus within fire ¹⁰³
Drag the white tiger back home for nourishment;
produce a bright pearl like the orb of the moon.
Gradually guard the medicine stove and observe the fire phases;
attentively observe the spirit and the breath and let them be natural.
[When] all *yin* has been entirely stripped away and the elixir has been completely prepared;
you leap from the cage of the mundane and live a long life of ten thousand years!
14. Three, five, one, all of these three numbers;¹⁰⁴
from ancient times to the present, those who understand [them] are truly rare.
East is three, south is two and together they make five;

¹⁰³ Needham offers the following explanation for this phrase: “This graphic phrase is yet one more example of the paradoxes of Yin-Yang theory, equivalent to saying that a male adept can produce a baby boy within himself.” Needham, *Science and Civilisation*, vol. 5.5, 92. This observation appears to accord with the commentary of Weng Baoguang. *Wuzhen pian*, 26.27a.

¹⁰⁴ Yuan Gongfu provides a list of terms which are correlated with the three numbers mentioned. Three corresponds with wood, the *li* woman (*li nü* 離女), and vermilion mercury (*zhu gong* 朱汞). One corresponds with water, the *kan* man (*kan nan* 坎男) and white metal (*bai jin* 白金). Five corresponds with earth, the central palace (*zhong gong* 中宮) and the sea of *wu ji* (*wu ji wei* 戊己位). *Wuzhen pian*, 26.29a. (Note: *Wu* and *ji* are the fifth and sixth of the celestial stems which when paired represent earth.) This information provided by Yuan Gongfu establishes a clear correlation between the numbers mentioned in the text and those of the *River Diagram* (*he tu* 河圖). Thus, the result is a description of *yin* and *yang*'s union at the centre.

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north is one , the direction west being four, completes it. ¹⁰⁵

The natural dwelling of *wuji* gives rise to the number five;

the mutual recognition of these three households ¹⁰⁶ forms the baby boy

[Thus] the baby boy is unified and embodies the true *qi*;

in ten months the foetus is complete; it is the foundation for entering the sacred.

15. If you do not recognize the true lead genuine ancestor;

employing the ten thousand kinds [of false methods will cause you to] employ effort in vain.

Divorcing [your] wife, [who is] dishonoured and banished, ¹⁰⁷ [will merely cause] *yin* and *yang* to separate;

follow the vain teaching of cutting off grains and [your] stomach will be empty.

Grasses, trees, gold and silver, all are dregs;

things such as morning clouds, and sun and moon ¹⁰⁸ are deceptions.

¹⁰⁵ The numbers and their corresponding directions match those pictured in the *River Diagram* and the sum of each line (five) represents the earth phase, the centre and unity.

¹⁰⁶ “Households” (*jia* 家) refers to pairs of correlated numbers in the *River Diagram*.

¹⁰⁷ Wang Mu notes that this line probably contains an error in the fourth character which should be “way” or “path” (*dao* 道) rather than “to banish” (*qian* 遣). Written this way the line would read: “the false way of divorcing your wife . . .” Wang Mu, *Qianjie*, 27, n.4. Wang Mu’s observation is based on a Qing dynasty commentary entitled *Wuzhen pian zhengyi*.

¹⁰⁸ Robinet’s translation of this passage refers to the practice of absorbing the light of the sun and moon. Robinet, *Introduction à l’alchimie*, 218. Wang Mu accounts for this reference to the sun and moon in the same way. Wang Mu, *Qianjie*, 28, n.9. A fairly detailed discussion of this technique is found in Needham, *Science and Civilisation*, vol. 5.5, 181-184.

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Furthermore, [you should] overlook spitting out and drawing in and concentrating the thoughts;

all of these various techniques are not the same as golden elixir activities.

16. The words of the ten thousand scrolls and scriptures of the immortals are all the same; the golden elixir, only this is the foundational teaching.

Rely upon that position of *kun* to enliven and complete the body;

plant it in the house of *qian*, the palace of mutual interaction.

Do not blame the intelligence bestowed by heaven for complete leaking out and exhaustion; all this is due to the complete delusion of students.

If people understand the meaning within these verses;

then [they] will immediately see the Three Pure Ones, the Most High Elders.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁹ The Three Pure Ones (*san qing* 三清) are Celestial Precious Lord (*Tianbao jun* 天寶君) also known as Celestial Lord of the Promordial Beginning (*Yuanshi tianjun* 元始天尊); Numinous Precious Lord (*Lingbao jun* 靈寶君) also known as Most High Lord Dao (*Taishang daojun* 太上道君) and Divine Precious Lord (*Shenbao jun* 神寶君) also known as Most High Lord Lao (*Taishang laojun* 太上老君). *Daojiao da cidian*, 74, s.v. 三清. Further discussion of these figures and their correlation with the three primary vitalities of the body (essence, *qi* and spirit) can be found in Kristofer Schipper, *The Taoist Body* (Berkeley University of California Press, 1993), 118-119.

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