


WRITTEN ON
AWAKENING
TO REALITY

The Wu Zhen Bian of Zhang Botuan

Translated
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“Every morn' just in your own home,
Day by day, just know you know nothing!”

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PREFACE

*Myself - I was guest at Green-City Mountain,
No-one spits on Green-City ground.
I was in love with Old-Fellow Mountain
My 'Red Steps' came close to its secrets...
West of Old Fellow's Temple, a beautiful air hangs
I follow the clouds, intending to shelter at the peak -
There lies the Yellow Seed which sweeps away old age!
I catch sight of it...its face crusted ice and snow...*

Poem by Tu Fu

As you come to the west of the Sichuan plain, about forty miles from the provincial capital of Zhengdu, where the Himalayas tumble down into China, you reach 'Green-City Mountain'.

In the autumn of 1986, I was fortunate to visit this renowned centre of Taoism. For near on 2,000 years it has had a magical pull on all those seeking to escape the toils of this world, and also, from this area, hailed that 'old fellow' whom Zhang Boduan was supposed to have met when he entered the town of Zhengdu, accompanying the General Lu in 1069 AD.

Much surrounding Boduan's life is legend - and perhaps must remain so, even after the scholars have brought their skills to bear upon the records of that era - but all biographies agree that it was in a chance encounter of Boduan's, when he was well over eighty years old, that the seed for writing the Essay on Awakening to the Truth (Wu Zhen P'ien) was born.

In his own (reputed) introduction Boduan records their meeting:

"...for the first time my true intent, perhaps or even more likely my reverential attitude towards him, influenced the Realised Fellow to impart to me the Medicine of the Golden Elixir and the secret of Timing its Firing.

His words, they could be said to 'point to the current, so I understood the source.'

He hinted at one thing and I understand a hundred! The fogs opened up, the sun shone through! The dust wiped clean off the mirror! It was as if all alchemical books I had ever read suddenly agreed together!"

We now know that this magnificent 'Old Fellow' came from Green-City Mountain - Boduan's very first commentator Weng Pao-kuang says as much. But whether he really was the famous Liu Hai-ch'an - celebrated Taoist of former times, founder of the 'Southern School' and disciple in the Art of Immortality - we cannot say for sure. Boduan never alludes to him by name.

Another interesting point raises itself here. If the accepted date of Boduan's birth (984 AD.) is taken as correct this would make him around eighty-five at the meeting, and over ninety when he wrote *Awakening to the Truth*. Even with a lee-way of ten years this is still a magnificent achievement! I am inclined to doubt the chronologies¹. Albeit writing in Chinese with its abbreviated grammar, and especially in one of the 'grass-scripts', requires less

muscle-force than one could ever imagine. The *Tao-te Ching*, arguably the most influential book in the East, was written according to legend in a single night!

Of my own visit to the Green City, there is little to say. The whole mountain is in effect a group of hills akin to the gentler fells of our Lake District or north Exmoor coast - very wooded, and often quite damp with mists. They are far, but not too far, from the provincial capital (and much less so now that a modern highway is under construction). Most striking, as on all Chinese holy mountains, they are covered in beautifully-made pathways and stone steps thronged at weekends with people, yet still retaining half-a-dozen inhabited Taoist temples with their roots back in the Tang Dynasty and beyond (see frontispiece). I left feeling I had glimpsed something very old...yet close to my own experience. Perhaps this involved a tussle between the 'hsing' and 'ming', 'nature' and 'life', of which later writers made so much!

The Tu Fu poem I append here to the preface is revealing. It is the first recorded visit to the Mountain², written in 761 AD. Firstly it stresses that air of fascination which hangs about the Alchemical Art - an energy biochemical changing within the body rather than purely without in the retort. 'Red Steps' are literally 'Elixial Steps', referring to the red mercuric oxide so beloved by those attempting to fabricate gold. The poem also emphasises encounter, that is, an intimate experience, a transmission or 'pointing-towards' occurrence - such as that recorded by Boduan above. Lastly, like so much that is

best in Chinese culture, it lands us squarely in the natural world, the world of elements - clouds, mists, mountains and snow, etc.

Bear these few points in mind when reading the poems that follow: discard evaluative theory, abstract reasoning, long trains of thought - they are simply missing the boat! As Boduan himself says, see the tenth stanza of *Western River Moon*.) Prepare to humble yourself, to be glad for a glimpse of Boduan's intended meaning, you may receive an insight into the workings of Life Itself, the Secret Sagehood...

I have translated Zhang Boduan's magnum opus, a work of great delicate beauty - very Chinese - with a minimum of interpretation and later commentary³. This surely must be the basis upon which one can build a gradual understanding of the origins and development of this unique school of Taoist Internal Alchemy (even this is a misnomer - the train of thought has affinities with Ch'an Buddhism, ancestor of Japanese Zen, and Boduan's biographies read like those of any Ch'an Buddhist)⁴.

The Chinese intended internal alchemy to be a quest for immortality, see for instance Joseph Needham's *Science and Civilisation in China* to which I am grossly indebted. Perhaps we may not find immortality credible. Yet remove the shackles of space and time as present-day Modern Physics would do and we find eternity here, as Blake put it...'in an hour'...or as Confucius said nearly two-thousand years earlier when speaking of religious sacrifice - "If you knew that, you could govern the Empire as easily as flipping your palm!"⁵.

I offer this work of simple scholarship to all my friends, if them may find time to read it and ponder its insights.

Notes:

1. Dealing with such a fanciful subject as Alchemy, the ability to cut through to the bone is vital. As with every School there is what the Master said and did - and what others would have liked him to say and do.
2. The Yellow Emperor himself is held to have named this Green City as 'Old-Fellow Mountain'. It does not take very much imagination to see this as the mountain on which he encountered Taoist Recluse Master Kuang Ch'eng. See my introduction to Cantong Qi (the Ts'an T'ung Chi). Also the original source in book Chuang Tzu. Legend also ascribes this story to nearby Mount Omei.
3. These are included in the Appendix along with a rather interesting biography, in effect a parable showing Boduan's philosophy in contradistinction to Buddhism, and an earlier poem - the Four-Hundred Character Essay on the Golden Elixir - also by Boduan. This is the only other work we can be sure came from his pen. It has the mark of a younger man.

4. See Hussein's valuable summary in *Sung Biographies*, Vol.1, p.26ff.
5. *Analects*, III.9.

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

The main idea behind Zhang Boduan's writings is that of awakening us to our true nature, ie. 'Life's precious jewel'. Later commentators were to distinguish between our Nature (*hsing*) and our Destiny (*ming*) see especially the story of his life and encounter with a Buddhist monk included in the Hagiography of Immortals (see Appendix), but this kind of distinction is foreign to his work.

Our true nature is something uncomplicated, near at hand, to be discovered, who we really are, something going on all the time, to be grasped in an instant - so akin to the Ch'an Buddhist *wu* (Japanese *satori*), as the title *Wu Zhen P'ien* or "On Awakening to Reality" illustrates.

This never involves us in the "puffin' 'n blowin'" of Taoist respiratory exercises, nor the "muck 'n mess" of the alchemical bench. Neither is this true alchemy primarily concerned with body-fluids (blood, semen, saliva, vital-energy, etc.) - but here we are close to the truth.

No, what Boduan strives to help us awaken to is something more alive and subtle, almost philosophical, partly grasped in a seemingly sudden flash of understanding and truly enlightenment- he strictly abjures both physiological and chemical alchemy.

Take the Tao, the Way, the Process as beginning. From here arise Yin and Yang, two, which divide into four, which divide into eight trigrams (three-line diagrams) which divide into sixty-four hexagrams (six line diagrams) and thus signify all ten-thousand

happenings and things. This creed can be read in any traditional Taoist text. This is our so-called mortal world. Our chance in this life, upon meeting a teacher, is to return this process - to revert to our source, to recapture the One. It is a felt ecstasy with All.

Weighty Lead (our solid nature) has to recapture flighty Mercury (the rapid passage of our mind as life-energy). Fire is born out of Wood as crackling life - we have to 'pluck the wood out of the fire'!

Water is born from Metal (as dew adheres to a metal sheet or mirror left out at night, or as a stream is contained by its solid earthen banks) - we have to 'pluck the gold right out of the water!' Gold and metal are synonymous.

All this is to take place under the watchful eye of Yellow Dame Earth, match-maker and go-between in the spiritual marriage. And the whole process has to be tempered, by watching the shifting of Yin and Yang, and timing the firing of the Elixir. Awaiting the birth of our enlightenment or awakening.

The task is illustrated in the natural world around us - the passage of the seasons, the behaviour of animals, the passing of the solstices and equinoxes, the waning and waxing of the moon, stars, and planets, the coming and going of day and night. This is Stone-age science, preserved as Taoist wisdom. Herein lies the clue to our true oneness with Nature, we can never separate from the rhythm of the cosmos and natural world. Accepting this we finally truly understand and may represent ourselves. Man and woman kind are one with Nature. Nature goes through changes but there is a pattern and regularity, of sorts, to these changes.

As we steal the clue to Nature's workings, as we prise open her secret treasure, indeed then we stand ready. It is dawn, at the Northern Gate - holding back our fabulous steeds; we are ready to soar into the morning of eternity...

Written On Awakening to Reality

DO NOT SEARCH AMONG CONFUSING PATHWAYS

Do not search for the Great Way
Among Confusing Pathways
To turn your back on the best you can do -
What sort of man are you then?
A Hundred Years - an Eternity -
All but sparks struck off a stone!
Your whole life a bubble,
Borne briefly on the water!

Seeking what you can gain -
Honour and Recognition
You pay no need to the figure you cut,
Hidden, sad and weak.
Heap up a mass of gold,
It may equal Mount Yo
But when Death Himself wins you over
What do you have then?

In your search for The Way, do not give yourself over to the Confusing Pathways of this world. Your whole life is so brief, a spark struck off a stone; a galloping white horse glimpsed through a crack; a swallow flown into a warm hall, knowing life for an instance. You are a foaming bubble, borne briefly on the waters of life!

When Death himself wins you over, what do you have to show? Honours, fame, gold, treasures? None will last. You may hoard a mass of gold, as high as a mountain; but the figure you cut will surely be hidden, sad and weak.

Man's Life, although it spans
A stretch of some Hundred Years,
Whether it is long or ends in early death,
One can never fore-know.
Yesterday in front of my Hall,
Feasting and partying:
Today alone in my room,
Torn apart by grief!

Play down a wife and fortune -
Nor do you need a Master -
To permit the Crime of Possession
Is only to cheat yourself.
If you do not search for the Great Medicine
You struggle to glimpse it,
And once glimpsed and not worked at,
This is crass stupidity!

Although life stretches for some Hundred Years, it passes in an instant. It is but a Burning House, battered by the fires of desire. We cannot know how long it will last. We cannot exit too soon! One moment feasting and partying, the next torn apart by bitter grief.

Of all transgressions, the Crime of Possession is the worst - valuing material things, or other people, a wife, a husband, a fortune, a Master. There is nothing for it but to search for the Great Medicine. And once you have glimpsed it, not to work at it is crass stupidity!

A Study of Fairyhood must be
A Study of natural Fairyhood
Since the Golden Elixir itself
Is quite evidently real.
When the Two Materials assemble,
What you feel and what you are unite -
The Cycle of Five coiled entirely
Together as Dragon and Tiger:

At their Origin relying on the Soil,
There as Go-between,
Enabling Husband and Wife
To protect their happy home together,
Awaiting only the Task's completion -
Dawn at the Northern Gate,
Nine Times the clouds layered with Red Rays of light,
We hold back our fabulous Luan...

It is all around in the natural world. The tender dusk, the beautiful dawn, an unfolding flower, the soaking mist, a snowfall, the moon rise. Two Materials are involved in this delicate process - the central lines of Kan and Li; the one originating essence, the other originating spirit. When what we feel and are meld together, body and mind become as Tumbling Dragon and Tiger - Wood and Fire, Gold and Water amixed.

Praise be to the Soil! Dear Kun-mother, woman, Dark Female! She stands as Go-between, protecting our happy home. The Elixir born, dawn breaks at the Northern Gate of Kan, the sun rises on a chilly dawn - its first warm rays blessing our cold bodies; the clouds blazing, the sandals on our feet strong. Hold back your fabulous steeds . . . it does not bode well to release too soon.

The Rule is the Truth is the Truth
But strangely there is always more to say -
say -
It comes down to Me alone
Being different to other people:
I may know how to turn on their heads
The family of Water and Fire. But who else?
Who recognises the Current of the Age
And can rearrange Host and Guest?

If you wish to retain the Mercury
In the Gold Caldron lining it red
First find the Sunken Silver under
The surface of the White-Jade Pond.
The Merit of the Sages is to circulate
The Fire and before midday
A Wheel of Sunlight appears –
Immersed in a Dark Pool.

Yes. True Reality is the natural world; and it represents work on the Elixir. But I am different to other people. Nobody knows what I know. Who else understands how to turn on their heads the family of Water and Fire? The Current of the Age flows outward - I turn its flow back inward. Guest made Host; Host made Guest; I would rather play Host than Guest.

The Mercury in the Golden Caldron is easily lost. It is the spiritual fire, the quick-silver mind, always moving. Above all, dive down for the Sunken Silver at the bottom of the White-Jade Pond. This silver treasure is hidden and sunken - and as Host does not move. Drive the Fire ceaselessly down and down! Soon a Wheel of Light appears within the Belly's Pool. The Morning Sun annuls all terrors. Body and mind settled and quiet.

The Tiger frisks, the Dragon soars,
Stirring rough waves and waters
And at the centre-point is begotten
A Pearl quite dark...
As berries borne on branches
At the end of the season come ripe
A Child nestles in the Womb.
How could this happen any other way?

North to South, to their Natural Origin,
Flutter the trigrams' images,
Dawn to Dusk, timing the Firing,
One with the Pivoting Sky.
You must know that this Great Secret
Dwells also in the Marketplace.
Why should you protect its Stillness
Alone there in the Hills!

At this moment essence and spirit, body and mind intertwine, stirring rough waves and waters. Tiger and Dragon, husband and wife, in a marriage of Tumultuous Confusion beget a Dark Pearl, shining without quite shining. As trees bear fruit, as an infant-child is born, so new life comes. This is the Truth. Altogether natural and marvellous!

Kan-son and Li-daughter, Qian-father and Kun-mother; North and South flutter their images. Dawn to Dusk, Dusk to Dawn; day and night, the Yang declines, the Yin is born, the Yin exhausted, the Yang returns; this is timing the Firing, which is one with the Pivoting Sky. This Great Secret can be found anywhere; by anyone, anytime, anyplace. Why need you protect it there in the Hills!

All people themselves possess
The Medicine of Long-Life,
And yet they follow Confusing Pathways,
Shaken to-and-fro.
At the fall of Sweet Dew -
Heaven and earth conjoin,
And a Yellow Shoot appears
Where Water and Fire entwine.

The Well-frog must deny
There exists the Dragon's lair,
The Wattled Quail struggles
To understand a Phoenix's nest
As the Elixir simmers by itself
Gold piles up in your Room,
What need you to study herbology
Or the boiling up of grasses!¹

¹ Anyone can possess the Medicine of Long-Life. At the fall of the Sweet Dew, the sky kisses the earth. The Yellow Shoot, the first sign of life, the Hidden Dragon, now emerge into the field; the dawn mists clear, the rains pour down upon the earth, the warmth of the sun draws up new life. Now the Young Folks of the village go out into the fields, laughing and singing.

Why do small people follow such Confusing Pathways? The Frog in the Well sees no further than the sky above its head; the Small Quail cannot even raise herself up a foot from the ground. Heaven and Earth are stuck and blocked up. If they would only let all alone. The Elixir simmers by itself - and Gold piles up in your Room. How could this happen any other way?

Ten-thousand Scrolls of Fairy Books
And Sayings - all the same!
The Golden Elixir has only
One Root and Foundation:
It depends upon a Perfect Substance
Begat at Kun,
Sown at the Home of Qian
In friendship and warm affection.

Nothing uncanny here
But the Secret of Life which I divulge.
It follows that the Scholars themselves
Are to blame for being misled..
If someone clearly gets to grips
With the Meaning in this poem
Immediately he stands in view
Of the Most Honourable Three Pure Ones, above.

All the ten-thousand Scrolls of Fairy Books and Sayings are stating exactly the same thing. That the Golden Elixir has only one Root and Foundation. It depends upon the True Lead, the Sunken Silver, begat at Kun, sown at the home of Chien; strong and firm, grown within the woman's belly in friendship and warm affection. Then the family is One.

This is all quite ordinary, it happens every day. The common people acknowledge it without knowing it. There is nothing uncanny here, but simply the Secret of Life which is being divulged. The cleverest writers and scholars are to blame for their own misfortunes. Once you get to grips with this poem, immediately you realise the truth and stand in view of the Most Honourable Three Pure Ones, who honour you above.

THE GIRLCHILD DONS HER DARKGREEN CLOAK

The Girlchild dons her Darkgreen Cloak
Her Young Lord throws on his Plain Silk
Chemise,

What they see, cannot be used -

What they find useful, cannot be seen.

In flurried confusion, they find each other

In dark obscurity, transforming -

In a flash! Flames fly up!

A truly-realised Person is born...

The secret of the Golden Elixir may be summed up in a few words - 'closeness without disrespect'. The Medicine is reconstituted through the arranged marriage of the Sun and Moon, Yin and Yang. The Girlchild of Li, the true Mercury, dons her Darkgreen Cloak and the Wood is plucked out the Fire. Her Young Lord of Kan, the true Lead, throws on his Plain Silk Chemise and the Yellow Gold is extracted out the Water. This dual process can happen anywhere, nowhere, here and there, willy-nilly; it can hardly be foreseen, planned for, or thought out.

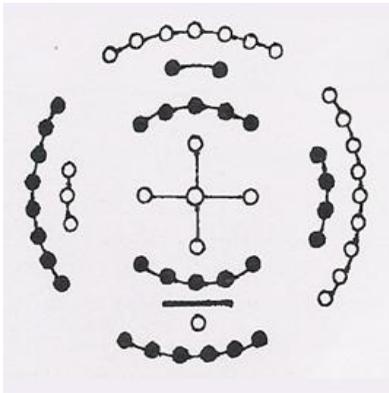
What these children find useful is something they cannot ordinarily see: the Inner-world of spirit and seed. What they ordinarily see, is something they cannot make use of: the Outer-world of corrupt desire. As the girl and boy get ready for marriage, the proper ceremony must take place. In 'flurried confusion', wood and fire meet up and in 'dark obscurity', the Gold is formed. In a flash, a Vision is born; flames fly up and a true Person is realised. Thus, in an instant, we regain our birthright.

.....

..... hue. At the very beginning, Gold and Water are both contained in each other as something pure white - then they are returned to the Earthenware Pot and get the earthly energy which is yellow.

All plants and trees Zheng comments: A common father and mother's energy, yield to it and it forms a man. This is what is meant by the usual way of things. A spiritual father and mother's energy, reverse it and complete the Elixir. Thus it is named: the True Source. To 'turn back' to this means a man turns back to a woman, a woman turns back to a man - if you do get a true teacher what benefit is there in such recklessness!

If you cannot recognise Lu (Wilderness Master) says: Yin and Yang turned topsy-turvey, mean Yang within Yin and Yin within Yang. A Lotus born blazing within a Fire, water within Fire,



within Yin there is Yang. Within destruction, there is Life.

The White Tiger is the Golden Essence. White is a metaphor for something with substance. The Tiger is a metaphor for that which it is difficult to subdue.

The Golden Essence is originally something in our own home. But once born it travels to other homes. Now pay close attention, use your strength to drag it back to return...the medicine shaped like the moon, like a pearl...gain the Medicine and then follow the rule of 'warmly caring' for it. Settle the mind, quieten the breath; just employ the natural process. This is all.

The Three Fives as One Zhen says: The Cycle of Five all have the numbers they are *born* with and the numbers they *complete* with. Gently smelt them to complete them as solid and real. Then their use is as complete numbers. Nine restored (Gold), seven coming back (Fire), eight returned (Wood) and six remaining (Water). (See *Hetu* diagram above).

If you cannot recognise Tai quotes a famous poem, Mr Supreme White's 'Song on Smashing Superstition':

*To circulate the breath-energy is not the Way,
The body's fluids are not the Magical Water.
To guard the thoughts is not the Way,
You cannot eat a picture of a cake!
Sexual practices are not the Way
When the seed has gone, life passes...
The newly-born foetus is not the Way,
What is dirty and unclean is never True Energy.
To stop your meals is not the Way,
Starvation injures one's stomach and spleen.
To abstain from killing is not the Way,
One's food is without stimulating flavours.
To abstain from sex is not the way,
Yin and Yang will then lose their source.
So then what is the Way?*

*Great Unity holding to himself the True Breath,
The Breath enjoined and yet not enlivened,
Rising and Falling like Heaven and Earth.
The Two Materials united with each other,
Arising themselves from the Primal Beginning.
The Mild Maiden and Young Child paired off
Complete Already and Yet Not ((Hexagram 63 and 64).*

Fundamentally there is True Yin and Yang, Husband and Wife together with one aim, and for this reason they must not be separated apart.

The Sole Yang how is he to do things? ...A determined man cannot discuss this truth; in an abyss let him hide away its deep significance! The Cycle of Five not let to go on as they want to, the Tiger born from out the Water, the Cycle of Five crafted topsy-turvey, the Dragon coming out the Fire.

Weng comments: The True Lead is the energy of our spiritual father and sacred mother (see three stanzas earlier).

Ten-thousand Scrolls of Fairy Books Tai quotes from *The Mirror of the Medicine* (an old Taoist tract,)... 'begat at Kun, the outer medicine. Planted in Qian, the Inner Medicine'. The place of Kun is the southwest, where Gold and Water are born and complete.

Five-Word Stanzas

The Girl-Child dons Lu (Wilderness Master) comments: The Young Girl-Child...this is Wood, Mercury. The Yang Lord.. this is Water, Metal. Yin and Yang one together, this and that, take on the form and substance of the not-yet-exposed energy, join together in dark obscurity and flurried confusion...once form and substance are shown, they are post-natal and may not be used!

Also quoting from the *Candong Qi*: The one energy first born...the medicine still young in flurried confusion - as if there, as if not - yet within there is something happening, white snow falling out of emptiness (this image is also in the *Four-Hundred Word Essay* of Boduan, contained in the Appendix).

Four-Line Stanzas

Take first Qian and Kun Weng comments: Qian and Kun are an illustration of the Caldron Vessel. The Sun and Moon (Crow and Rabbit) are a metaphor for the Medicine.

Qian and Kun are the true Dragon and True Tiger. The Sun and Moon form the two bows of the energy of the Moon.

The Yellow Way lies within the Central Palace, the place where the Golden Elixir forms.

Still the Furnace Weng comments: Generally the Two Energies join together and completely transform. This the Way of the Golden Elixir...beginning with Nothingness from which is born

Being, returning with Being from which is born Nothingness.
Without form, still it can change. Thus it changes inexhaustibly -
the key to the secret of Life!

Cease Muddling Zheng says: On Western River, see the Moon's
splendour shining clear. This is the Crescent-Shaped Furnace.

T'ao goes on...within the furnace there is the energy of total
Yang, this is a tool for smelting the Medicine. The Cantong
Qisays: The White Tiger leads out in glory...().

This is it! It ebbs and flows within, advancing and retreating.
Yourself you have the heaven-sent fire-timing!. What need is
there for coal or twigs, puffing or blowing!

Within the Crescent-Shaped Furnace Weng comments; The
Crescent-Shaped Yin Furnace has a Jade Pistil of Yang energy
within. The first bow (of the moon) of the the White Tiger's
Energy!

The Red Sand Yang Caldron has the Yin Energy of the
Mercury (Silvery Water) within. The first bow of the Green
Dragon's Energy!

T'ao goes on: The Yellow Shoot is the energy emitted from the
Yellow Centre.

To 'swallow saliva' Tao comments: The True Lead is the
Medicine, your True Strain (stock, seed, cf. Western River Moon,
first stanza), born out of emptiness, emerging, creative.

Blend as one Weng says: Gentleman Fairy uses the West as the direction of Gold (Metal), and the River as the essence of Water...gleaming at the end of the day on the river, illustrating Tiger and Dragon uniting to produce an Elixir.

Not Yet Smelted: Weng says: In general, the True Lead is Mother Energy. My own True Energy is Son Energy. How could they not be similar?

Tao quotes from the *Ts'an T'ung Ch'i*: 'Similar kinds of things comply with one another' ().

In using Lead Lu (Deep Void) comments: Someone asked Weng to comment on...Lead and Mercury...he replied: 'Lead enters into Mercury, daily see it diminishing. Thus Mercury's energy is gradually greater and Lead's energy gradually scattered - an illustration would be steaming rice. The rice gradually swells and the water dries up, the mystery of Dividing-Up'. ('Dividing-up' - literally 'extract and add-on, extract from lead and add on mercury').

Empty the Mind T'ao comments: To recall the mind means to understand the Mind, to see into One's nature.

First smelt the Lead to solidify the belly, quite of itself then the Elixir boils and the Energy of the Golden Essence is unadulterated and abundant! One-hundred joints all in order!

Later on embrace the one to empty the Mind, then Nature and Life are both cultivated. Form and spirit, all mysterious!

Here is the significance of Gentleman Fairy's instruction for Man firstly to cultivate his Life and later to cultivate his Nature.

In my Dream T'ao comments: 'To smelt Lead and Mercury' - these three characters are capable of embracing the whole meaning of the Wu Zhen P'ien!

The Path is born Lu (Deep Void) points out the sources: The Book of Change (*I Ching*) says, Change is the Great Ultimate (the Tai-chi), and this produces two Images (Yin and Yang). Laozi says: Heaven, Earth, the ten-thousand things all come from Being... cf. *Tao-te Ching*, 20).

Kan's lightning explodes Lu (Wilderness Master) says: K'an's lightning combines Water and Fire. Gold and Water lie in Kun's direction (southwest)...the sweetness produced is proof of the Elixir's maturity.

Cf. *Ts'an T'ung Ch'i*: 'as gold dust enters the five organs within...()' for the origin of this phrase.

Yet supposing The 'use of Earth', is to complete these elements of the Cycle of Five. Two (Fire's number of 'birth') plus five (Earth) equals seven - Fire's number of completion. Four (Metal's number of 'birth') plus five equals nine - Metal's number of completion.(Translator's note).

cf. stanza 11 in Seven-Word Stanzas.

The Sun Dwells Lu (Deep Void) says: The Sun is in the position of the Great Yang, Li a woman dwells there. The Moon is in the position of the Greater Yin, K'an a male dwells there. In such a way, topsy-turvey, they exchange places.

T'ao says: Further there are a number of sayings concerning topsy-turviness. There is the topsy-turviness of Yin and Yang, Earth above Heaven. There is topsy-turviness of K'an and Li, midnight to the south and midday to the north. There is the topsy-turviness of Lead and Mercury, Gold born from the Moon, Wood relying on Gold to harmonise. There is the topsy-turviness of the Cycle of Five, if you desire to retain the Red Mercury, first lower down the mercury. There is the topsy-turviness of Host and Guest, from outside arrives the Host, dwelling in your own family is the Guest.

Thus understand the circling of Qian and Kun, reversed to bestow the power of creation!

Inherit within ourselves, we have the Way. Do not seize upon the learned - those that chatter on wildly!

Topsy-turviness: cf. stanza 13, Seven-Word Stanzas.

Take then the solid centre Lu (Wilderness Master) comments: Within the centre of K'an is the Yang line of Qian. Qian stirs and falls into Kun to complete K'an. Qian taken away from becomes Li. The method of cultivating and smelting (discipline) should be to select the single Yang from within K'an and return it to restore

Li, to return the Pure Yang. Then the affair of cultivating the Elixir is complete.

Zhen says: The previous verse took male Yin and female Yang as topsy-turvey. This verse takes Yin able to transform Yang as topsy-turvey. So within topsy-turviness is further topsy-turviness, namely the Mysterious Art of the Returning Elixir!

Hidden Dragon: see Book of Change (*I Ching*, Hexagram 1, 1st line).

Zhen's *Dragon* Weng comments: Mercury is the Zhen Dragon belonging to Wood. Wood produces Fire, this is the easy-going way of things. As Red Sand belongs to Fire and Li, Mercury coming out from within the Sand is Fire turned back to produce Wood. Thus it says 'as children begetting their Mother.'

Lead is the Dui Tiger belong to Gold. Gold produces Water, this is the easy-going every-day way of things. As Black Lead belongs to Water and K'an, Silver being born from within the Lead, is Water turned back to produce Gold. Thus 'as children begetting their Mother'.

This shows the Art of turning the Cycle of Fire topsy-turvey. cf. *Ts'an T'ung Ch'i*the Gold is Mother of Water...etc.().

With the Moon Lu (Deep Void) comments: The Mystery lies in 'just' and 'soon', these two characters. This verse's meaning and value lies in knowing the moment to pluck the Medicine...the Cantong Qihua formerly used the Moon as illustrator. ().

On Hua-Yi Mountain-peak Lu (Wilderness Master) comments: K'an above and Li below, moved in order to be blended within, this is the meaning. Then Dragon and Tiger are in love with each other as husband and wife, at the Yellow Centre. The Dame is a term for an older woman who thus shows no jealousy and can act as match-maker. Screaming and moaning is the sound of Yin and Yang arriving together, the stirring of the life-force.

T'ao comments: Hua-Yo in the West is the location of the White Tiger. The Yang within the Yin of the K'an trigram is called the Male Tiger. The meaning is - on the mountain-peak above K'an properly dwells.

Fu-Sang lies in the Eastern Ocean, the location of the Green Dragon. The Yin within the Yang of the Li trigram is called the female Dragon. The implication is that at the bottom of the seas, Li is in a position below K'an. The Cantong Qisays: Yin is above and Yang hurries below. ().

Just as Zheng comments: The Tiger as a rule injures people, one must consider how to subdue it. The Dragon worries people and they run away. One must consider how to humble it. The Cantong Qisays: The ear, eye, mouth - these Three Jewels...they roam wide, yet guard a proper compass within. ().

When you approach the furnace to pluck the medicine, you must not use your hands to grope for it but take hold of it directly.

Po-tuan's reputed teacher, Liu Hai-shan () has a poem:

*My left hand seizes the Green Dragon's head,
My right hand pulls out the White Tiger by his tail!
The moment I pop them into my mouth -
I find them something so sweet...*

Red Dragon and Black Tiger Weng comments: The Red Dragon, Black Tiger are the Mercury within the Sand, and the Silver within the Lead.

T'ao goes on: The Dragon comes out from the Fire. The Green Dragon re-named the Red Dragon. The Tiger is born out of Water. The White Tiger re-named the Black Tiger. Merely Dragon and Tiger, Red and Black, four characters, already you have Four Images complete! Restored and Encounter (hexagrams 24, 44), their revolving function - the ten-moons of the Fire's Work.

Now first watch Zheng says: In the Way of the Golden Elixir, first you need to discipline yourself, to cause the spirit to be whole and the energy full. So the emotions do not stir, the Five Robbers not cause disorder, the Six senses totally clear...taking the body as the State, the vital energy is the people of the state, the vital energy undisturbed means the people remain secure...discipline the self, expel the harm done by the Five Robbers, foremost value your vitality and care for your energy, later you can battle to overcome and gain the energy of the pre-natal Natural Truth. Our Fairy Teacher takes the battle as a metaphor, to cause Man to dread it and be on the alert.

Zhen says: Heaven has Five Robbers. Observe them and flourish. This is all from the Yin Fu Book (see Appendix, the *Shadowy Tally*). An old commentator on this book says: The Five Natures are harmful to the body, this is not the book's meaning. In general the alchemists rob the key to their workings and use them in reverse...originally they desired to observe nature's Five Robbers, and know the Cycle of Five in production and control. Truly this is the main meaning of seeking the Elixir.

Look down on earth to secure the people then you can lay a foundation for the labour of disciplining the self.

In practice a General T'ao comments: This verse carries on the meaning of the last verse. If you want to approach the Furnace to pluck the Medicine, you should discipline yourself until you are pure. Then body and mind once broadly settled, you can lower your hand! Beware of lightly opposing your forces!

He goes on: Myself, I am the Host and the other is the Guest. This is the usual way of things. Now we reverse Guest and Host. At once the Dragon breathes out and the Tiger breathes in. Host and Guest two names, topsy-turvy, Yin and Yang, reversed to bestow the Mystery of Creation, the Secret of Plucking the Medicine.

Fire is born out of Wood Lu (Wilderness Master) says: The Sages showed how Fire issues forth and used Water to regulate it. Then the Fire could do no harm.

T'ao comments: The significance of this verse originally came from the Yin Fu Book (see Appendix, the *Shadowy Tally*), using it to commend to us the mystery of Water and Gold! Li Hui-hsiang says that Fire is a metaphor for the passions, and Wood a metaphor for the Mind's flowers (thoughts). The Mind's flowers produce passions. Thus the Way of the Golden Elixir lies only in controlling and subduing the Mind's flowers as Host. To extinguish Fire one only needs to use Water, to fell a tree (Wood) one needs to use metal (an axe)...

Duke Gold originally Li comments: The Golden Duke is the True Lead. Mild Maiden Mercury is the True Mercury. Fire lies in the Li-South, the child of Wood and Mercury. Kun is Dui-West, at its elbow...Kun's body was originally empty, in the beginning without Lead or Mercury. Because she lay with Qian she then received a spark of spiritual Fire - and began to change to K'an. Within K'an is a single spark of Extreme Yang, it is called the Duke Gold, but also Mild Maiden Mercury. Thus the Golden Duke was originally a child of the Eastern Troupe given over...to board for his needs. (cf. third line of stanza 13 in the Seven-Word Stanzas).

Mild Maiden Mercury Li comments: Mild Maiden Mercury and Duke Gold first knotted together within the moat of Kun-Earth as the image of a single speck of light from the moon. This light travels at first, on the third day, in the west...from without

substance is born substance, transformed into a grain of the Golden Elixir.

Even though you remember Lu (Wilderness Master) says: although you remember True Lead and Mercury, if you do not understand the Timing of the Firing, the saintly Foetus goes unformed. How indeed?

Ch'ou says: These next twelve verses all discuss the Timing of the Firing.

The Classic on 'Combining Similars' Zheng says: There is the outer Fire-Timing, and there is the inner Fire-Timing. The Cantong Qisays: on the third day, the moon appears. This is the outer Fire-Timing. It also says:...only settle the mind and breathe naturally. This is the inner Fire-Timing.

The Eighth Month Lu (Deep Void) relates: Fifteen is an image of Gold and Water's energy being sufficient. The third day is an image of the Medicine of Gold and Water still being new. If the energy is insufficient then the Water is not produced.

T'ao says: This verse's meaning lies in timing the plucking of the Medicine. As the single Yang has just begun, it is fitting to advance the Fire.

Just when the Single Yang T'ao relates: This verse carries on the above discussion. A single Yang has just stirred - now is the time to create the Elixir. 'As seen through curtains' means as through

the lowered eyelids. When you get to work the spiritual light shines out penetrating the curtains.

When the Great Medicine is produced then receive the energy. Although it happens easily, it is a time for warmly caring for it. When full you should cleanse in order to 'guard 'gainst perils'. Protect the frontier against anxieties and dangers.

As the Yang peaks Lu (Wilderness Master) comments: The Dark Pearl is an image of the Medicine. The Medicine cannot give birth of itself, it must be influenced by the Yang energy - then gradually it is produced. From being minute it becomes obvious. The Yang peaks then the Yin disperses. In ten moons its destiny complete, the Great Elixir fully formed!

T'ao quotes Gentleman Crane in the Woods:

*One line hard and one line yielding,
One moment mild, one moment fierce.
That year the Fire Timing began a little child..
Zhen's thunder sounds! Now spirits and devils start away!*

Just after the First Bow of the Moon Weng says:...the circulating of the Fire's gentle warmth, dividing out the times for cleansing in order to complete the Golden Fluid Returned Elixir, entirely depends upon the advance and retreat, and Dividing-Out, of the *Shadowy Tally* and Yang Fire.

The *Shadowy Tally* is literally the Yin Tally, the title of the *Yin Fu* classic, given in the Appendix (translator's note). On the 'shadowly tally' book see also a few stanzas earlier.

Just now the Eldest Son Weng comments: Zhen is the eldest son, the Green Dragon - wine is something Yin. Dui is the youngest daughter, the White Tiger - flowers are a something Yang. The Young Beauty is the Mild Maiden, meaning the Mercurial Fire. The student who cultivates the Elixir, urges the Dragon to arrive and seize upon the Tiger.

At the season Weng comments: The second moon (the month of the hare) acts out its powers, the eighth moon (the month of the cock) acts out its penalties, this is the time when properly one cleanses, one must not increase the Fire but fear perils and dangers.

When the Yang arrives between Heaven and Earth, neither cold nor hot, but warming, so it acts as in hexagram 11 Flourishing (the second moon). Not to advance the timing of the Fire, means to wash and cleanse.

When the Yin energy arrives between Heaven and Earth, neither hot nor cold, but cooling, there it acts out the hexagram 12 Decline (the eighth moon). Do not advance the *Shadowy Tally*. Also it is said, wash and cleanse.

The Sun and Moon Lu (Wilderness Master) comments: When still, guard the frontier that a single thought does not arrive. The

Three Jewels (eyes, ears, mouth) closed up shut. When moving, do battle. The Dragon and Tiger cross sword-tips, topsy-turvey, reverse-functioning!

Just when Lu (Deep Void) comments: *Decline* and *Flourishing* (hexagrams 11 and 12) have just entwined, so pluck the Medicine. *Innocence* and *Sprouting Forth* (hexagrams 3 and 4), these two hexagrams describe the passage and circulation of the Fire.

T'ao says: Each day two hexagrams, so each month sixty hexagrams, in ten months six-hundred hexagrams. It is merely this!

Within the Hexagram Weng says: The hexagrams are there as the trap and hoofprints of the Fire. (A bamboo fish-trap, a horse's hoofprints. When you have the fish you throw away the trap; when you find the horse, you no longer need the hoofprints.) The Cantong Qitakes Qian and Kun as the Caldron Vessel, K'an and Li to be the Medicinal ingredients and sixty hexagrams to be the timing of the Fire. All these are devised. Students should observe the trigrams' and hexagrams' images, then they can use them to understand and realise the timing of the Firing within the body. Then the trigrams, hexagrams and lines have no more use!

Heaven and Earth Zheng says: the tides arrive and there is fullness, the tides draw out and there is emptiness. This is the ebb and flow of Heaven and Earth. The moon swells up and there is fullness, the moon decreases and there is emptiness. This

is the filling and emptying of the Greater Yin. Spring donates and summer matures, autumn gathers up and winter commands respect. This is the filling and emptying of the Four Seasons. The energy shines out brightly and there is fullness, it declines and there is emptiness. This is the filling and emptying of the human body...the most important thing for man is to be able to use this ebb and flow. The student who first lowers his hand, foremost expels the Three Corpses and Six Thieves (senses). He disciplines and achieves a heart like a Great Clod! (see the Chuang Tzu) The Six senses totally clear - then you can enter into a room and smelt the Great Elixir!

Li comments: Fullness and emptiness time the smelting of the Medicine. Ebb and flow are the key to creating the Elixir.

T'ao quotes from the *Ts'an T'ung Ch'i*: The tokens in the sky advance and retreat, contract and extend out according to the time...().

If you want to find Within Man's body there is something totally void and totally magical! Constantly preserved and undying, it is that which is called the Dark Female.

So then the Dark Female is the human body's essential tool, the unseparated Supreme Ultimate (*tai-chi*) within which there is Yin and Yang. Thus it is called the Dark Female. The spiritual energy from here returns to its root. The Sun and Moon unite here. If man can rely on her establishment as foundation - then the Valley Spirit will never die. Such is the Dark Female!

The Valley Spirit is a term for the prenatal, empty and void, magical response - our very Nature! This is just so!

The Gateway to the Dark Female Lu (Wilderness Master) comments: The last verse merely spoke of the Dark Female. This verse describes its gate. Its rule is deeply mysterious. The gate is that place where Yin and Yang conjoin, come in and out, arrive and depart...if you are not told by word of mouth its whereabouts, it can never be guessed at.

T'ao says: The Gate to the Dark Female, is the place just where the Golden Raven seizes the Rabbit...the world thinks of ordinary mouth and nose breathing as the Dark Female in total error!

Different names but the same source Ch'ou says: This is a quotation from the first chapter of the *Tao-te Ching*.

Lu (Deep Void) comments: It inherits the meaning of the former verse, speaking on the Gateway of the Dark Female...understanding gain and loss. Weng said, 'follow the ordinary way of things and there is life and extinguishment. Reverse the usual way and there is the Way of the Elixir, constant magic and constant preservation!'

Protect life and perfect the body: cf. *Tao-te Ching* 39.

That it starts in Activity Tai says: There is the action of non-action, which divides the two Schools of Nature (*hsing*) and Life (*ming*). You must follow an order and work from it. From the

very beginning reach the middle, from the middle reach the end, knot the Elixir in a single hour, cherish the foetus ten moons, embrace the primal energy nine years - then you can be blend together with it and become one, returning to the Mystery of No-Form.

Those in the world muddlingly use the source of their own Nature as the Way. They are wasting being and grasping at non-Being. Recognise the root and arrive at your heaven-sent Nature! It is the Golden Elixir which is the Golden Elixir! How can you wholly break up the Great Tao of Nature and Life! Cf. *Tao-te Ching* 48.

Ch'ou goes on: The world only says the Way lies in non-action, and does not understand how achievement can begin in activity.

Black with White within T'ao comments: White is the Golden Essence. Black is Water taken as basis. Within black there is white. So it is produced as prenatal White Gold within K'an (water), the energy of the True Yang, the Mother of the Golden Elixir!

The Cantong Qisays: the loving mother cares for her offspring. ().

Amidst the Flurried Confusion Weng says: Observe the unseen, listen to the unheard. The energy of the True One, magical and without form! Master True Unity says: Nothingness, this is the

Dragon, the Mercurial energy. Being, this is the Tiger, the Lead energy.

At the moment T'ao says: Whenever a foetus is made in the usual way, it is shed and released below. The sagely foetus, when formed in reverse, is shed and released above. In ten moons the foetus is complete.

At the Pool of Flowers T'ao comments: The previous verse already has commended the shedding of the foetus, the task of spiritual transformation. This verse also commends a visit to the abode of the spiritual rulers, an affair such as 'the dawning of the primal'!

Lu (Wilderness Master) says: The Pool of Flowers is the place where the Medicine is born, somewhere totally quiet, where all is finished...just to pluck the Medicine, this is enough.

Seas, fields...the implication is of the vastness of geological time, seas in time become fields through erosion, hills are washed down to valleys (translator's note).

If you want to know Lu (Wilderness Master) says: A Medicine plucked from another home (or school) and planted in our own house and garden as seed. There it reaches full maturity - the mystery of self-nature. It does not take human effort!

Do not apply the Pretended Arts Tai says: The former verse talks to the 'self', thus it mentions 'you should'. This verse educates man in what it says. Thus it mentions 'another school'. So it is made the same kind, as one.

A glimpse of snowy hills Weng comments: Snowy hills are white, the colour of the West, an image of Gold. This is a single grain of the Golden Elixir, scented like the Oil of Buddhahood. Cooked and returning to the tan-tien (lower belly), created within the furnace...Chang Qian is male, the image of the Qian trigram, the True Mercury. Ma Ku is a young girl, the image of the Kun trigram, and the True Lead.

Chang Qian rides over the bridge of the Milky Way to meet the Spinning-girl constellation. This is a metaphor for Yin and Yang meeting and communicating together.

Chang Qian: a figure from the Han Dynasty biographies. Ma Ku was a renowned Fairy Girl Immortal. A sexual connotation is carried into the next verse (translator's note).

If you do not recognises T'ao says: The evil and true have separate pathways. They are a hairs-breadth apart! Here, closing the tail-gate and practising the 'arts of the bedchamber' are mistakes.

Land of the Yen-Fu Tree: India. Here it is used as a derogatory term (translator's note).

All Things as numerous T'ao says: This verse quotes the *Tao-te Ching*...Men find it difficult to understand, small people do not know the Way of True Constancy. Being based upon it, is returning to the root. cf. *Tao-te Ching*, 16.

The Smelter Ou T'ao says: This verse is all in metaphor. The Smelter Ou cast a sword, the Maiden Fairy attended to the furnace. 'Do No Evil' was the name of the sword. Gold and Water match yielding and firm.

Li says: one is golden, one fluid, one hard and one yielding.

Tap with Bamboo, summon the Tortoise Various Commentaries: Bamboo has a hollow heart, it responds without desire. The lute has a true sound, is sweet and not discordant. To tap and strum, is to seek the harmonious sound of Yin and Yang.

The Tortoise is the Black Tiger. The Phoenix is the Red Dragon.

A Medicine where Mutual Energies meet Lu (Wilderness Master) comments: The Way is that proceeding from which is the Way, pure and clear in essence. The Medicine is that proceeding from which is the Medicine, gain something of its kind and it is finished! If you seek something different, in vain you labour your heart.

Blazing Red! The Golden Elixir Weng comments: The Golden Elixial Great Medicine, when you set to work it takes no more than one hour! As soon as it is made it is swallowed down.

Zhang Boduan extended an original poem which goes -

*Blazing red the Golden Elixir is one day complete,
The Yellow Shoot cannot escape the Mercurial Pit!
If the work is not complete in three attempts
You open the furnace - flooded with light!*

Truly this is the same Tao!

In cultivating the Great Medicine Zheng quotes an old saying: 'My life is not from Heaven!', commenting: this is the mystery of the creation that lies deep within the self.

The Three Talents Lu (Deep Void) comments: This verse's meaning is originally from the *Yin Fu* book (see Appendix).

The Three Robbers once ordered, the Three Powers secure. Feed on the opportunity! All hundred joints in place, move when you see an opening! All change then secure.

The *Shadowy Tally* Lu (Deep Void) says: The Way of the Golden Elixir has been transmitted as one through countless ages, uniquely thus as Nature's secret workings...there is a saying 'your nature awakened within your own heart, your life bestowed upon you by a teacher'.

But a true teacher is difficult to find, he must have an all-encompassing wisdom and eyes that see the real world - then you can distinguish him...and you must have a willing and empty heart, otherwise you meet him and don't meet him!

Yen-Tzu, Min-Tzu: famous disciples of Confucius (translator's note).

Totally finish with the Monkey-Mind: T'ao comments: When the Elixir is finished then the mind is dead, the spirit alive! This is the Mind totally finished with - and desire also.

Not yet smelted the Returned Elixir T'ao comments: Once the Fire-Timing is complete, quickly, it is time to finish with the fire and guard the frontier. It will not stay for ever.

Besides if you do not know to halt at fullness then Mild Maiden Mercury slips away and the form of the Elixir is destroyed. This is what is meant by 'fire hides its sharp tip'.

Han Chung-li has a poem:

*The Elixir ripe - do not practice timing the firing,
To further time the firing will injure the Elixir.
Only protect it without loss -
Thirsty - then drink, hungry - then eat, tired - then sleep.*

Failure and good fortune Weng comments: Yang controls life so it mentions good fortune. Yang controls destruction so it mentions failure. Yin ebbs and Yang grows, Yang reaches an end

and Yin is born. They mutually rely and submit to each other, returning like shadow or echo - the one following the other.

This is the principle of the usual way of things. If you can reverse the workings of life and destruction and cultivate yourself - then in the instant taken to flip your hand you turn catastrophe to good fortune!

T'ao mentions that the *Tao-te Ching* and *Yin Fu* are behind the terms here. Cf. *Tao-te Ching*, 58.

The Ways of the Elixir Zheng says: Return to the commonplace to understand this great affair. How could it not be mixed up with the commonplace!

Soften your light: from *Tao-te Ching*, 4.

Moonlight on Western River

The Inner Medicine Weng comments: The Outer Medicine is the Golden Elixir created in the Two Eights Furnace - in not more than an hour is it complete. The Inner Medicine is the Golden Fluid Returned Elixir created within one's own body - you must wait ten moons for it to be complete. Then you can shed the foetus and perfect your sagehood.

The activities of the two Medicines are only slightly similar, in that they use the labour of the Timing of the Fire. Really they are remote from each other!

The White Tiger, the Original Period Lu (Wilderness Master) ambiguously comments: At sixteen (two eights), a young boy has his true semen. At fourteen (two sevens) a young girl has her first fall of menses.

Properly this is the first occasion. Is this the Original Period? Or is it not?

T'ao comments: This verse shows the value of the Spiritual Fluid Great Medicine. The first four lines indicate the source of the Great Medicine. The second four lines indicate the timing of the Great Medicine by the use of tokens (or tallies see the *Ts'an Tung Ch'i*, passim).

He further comments: The Great Medicinal Golden Elixir, its beginning lies in disciplining yourself, its latter state in advancing the Fire. In neither can you be a hairs-breadth out!

Current of the Age: see Seven-Word Stanzas, stanza 4.

For the 'highest good' passage, cf. *Tao-te Ching*, 8.

If you want the True Lead Weng comments: Your own kin are your own True Breath-Energy. Your True Energy relies on the True Lead to condense and bear the Golden Elixir. The Golden Elixir relies on your own Mercury for spiritual achievement. The Two Materials need each other...

T'ao comments: If not for the Lead the True Mercury would not submit. If not for the Fire the True Lead would not be produced. You must get at the True Lead to regulate the Mercury. You cannot separate from the pre-natal Qian Fire. Your own kith and kin are the pre-natal Qian Fire.

Two and Eight Lu (Wilderness Master) says: The Mercury within Li (the single open line in the middle), belongs to Yin. Thus it mentions Two and Eight, the Mild Maiden (even numbers). The Lead within K'an (the single solid line in the middle), belongs to Yang. Thus it mentions Nine and Three, the Young Lord (odd numbers).

Mercury then is the secretion of Wood. Lead is the essence of Gold. Gain the Earth as go-between. Three Natures joined in marriage...

T'ao comments: Gentleman Fire is the True Fire, which smelts the Elixir.

Weng and Lu both take the Kun-Lun to be the Ni-wan or Nirvana, literally the muddy pill, the Chinese term for the brain (translator's note).

Coming-back to Seven Lu (Deep Void) comments: Seven is the number of Fire (2 + 5), it is your own Mercury. This is something which very easily slips away. Coming back, means when exhausted it comes back to the root, transformed into Primal Essence.

Nine is the number of Gold (4 + 5). Restored, means from beyond it arrives back - Gold arrives back restored to its nature. The meaning of seven and nine is not based upon the passage of hours during the day. One must only recognise Wood, Fire, Gold and Water together all as one transforming Primal Essential Great Yang!

Zhen says: The blazing Fire refines the Gold. In perfecting the Elixir there is no more than a single taste of mercury - that is all - circulating around.

For the numbers, also see stanza 14, Seven-Word Stanzas.

Heaven and Earth Various Commentators: Heaven and Earth...*Decline* and *Flourishing* (Hexagrams 11, 12)...concern the plucking of the Medicine. Dawn and Dusk...*Innocence* and *Sprouting Forth*, speak of warmly caring for the Fire.

Circulating the Fire begins at *Sprouting Forth* and *Innocence* (Hexagrams 3, 4) and ceases at *Already Over* and *Not Over Yet* (Hexagrams 63, 64).

Tai Shang (unidentified) says: One should not further separate the limits of north, south, east and west. One should only look after their boundary against the first mistaken movement of thought. Fear your previous achievements, destroy them, again destroy them! Until you reach none whatsoever. Then you can achieve utterly the Mystery of the One...if you do not toil at this work the heart is never empty. Fear the loss of this Dark Pearl and Life's Jewel!

cf. *Tao-te Ching*, 48.

At the Winter Solstice Weng comments: At the Winter Solstice the primary Yang is born to *Restored* hexagram (Hexagram 24). Each thirty days a single Yang line is added on until one reaches the pure *Creative* (Hexagram 1). This is timing the Yang Fire. Yang reaches its extreme limit and Yin is born.

At the Summer Solstice, the single Yin is born in *Encounter* (Hexagram 44). Each thirty days a single Yin line is added until you reach the pure *Receptive* (Hexagram 2). This is timing the *Shadowy Tally*. Yin reaches its ultimate end and Yang is born.

The same applies to the cycle of moon-phases. The fifteen-day old Full Moon is purely Yang, tallying with the *Creative*.

During the day and night, a single Yang is born at Midnight, and so on it goes.

T'ao says: This verse speaks of the 'warm care' taken with the Fire Tokens...such as it says in the *Candong Qi*: spring and summer rely on a substance within ().

The several regulating sections all have the same significance, ie. the general tabulation of cycles, see the introduction to my translation of the *Candong Qi* (translator's note).

If you do not discriminate T'ao comments: Just when the Single Yang stirs, you understand dark and light in a flash! The Timing of the Firing cultivates the Elixir. This verse is meant to upbraid a deluded teacher and his heterodox teachings. There is nothing further profound.

Miss the Ferry: the 'ferry to salvation', cf. Buddhist Sutra, Prayna-paramita-hridaya (translator's note).

Virtuous Works of Self-Cultivation Lu (Deep Void) says: Love and hate oneself and all others the same, everyone and everything treated equally. Then without love, without hatred, nothing held back, nothing released - you can forget others, you can forget yourself, you can even forget forgetting - forgetting so that nothing is forgotten! This is the Ultimate Way indeed! What task is greater?

Chuang Tzu, the Taoist writer, has a chapter entitled 'Taking with Equal Regard' (translator's note).

Tiger, Rhinoceros, etc. - cf. *Tao-te Ching*, 50.

Luan-Chariot, Phoenix-cart - on which the Immortals, according to legend, ascended to heaven.

Herd-Boy and Spinning-Maid Weng comments: The Herd-Boy and Spinning-maid come together once each year (come close as constellations, they are both stars). The sun and moon join once each month. The tortoise and snake are a class of animals which coil around each other and help one another. All employ the Two Energies of Yin and Yang. This really is the root and foundation of the Great Tao...he quotes from the *Candong Qi*: The Cock cannot settle alone, the Hen cannot remain single.

The Elixir Lu (Deep Void) quotes a saying:

Smashed fragments in an empty void

Now the whole self lies exposed...

What words are these! In the olden days, truly-realised people narrated the truth, and went straight to reality...for example, 'beyond the body, there is a body'...and at once you climbed up to the regions of the Sages! It is not so difficult. The meaning in this saying is generally just this.

Li comments: Unborn means never extinguished. Since it is unborn it is undying. Undying, it is unborn. Unborn and undying, means eternal life.

T'ao comments: The very best fundamental ability of Man is to understand his Nature and know his own Life. That is what Gentleman Fairy Chang means by - once the Elixir is formed you must awaken to your own True Nature - namely you find proof of the Unborn!

Dragon Girl: She occurs most famously in the Lotus Sutra, Chapter 12. This chapter stresses that anyone, male or female, young or old, of any station, may reach salvation. Boduan's Buddhist leanings are here clearly revealed. In the following Four Line Stanzas he shows his concomitant distrust of any Buddhist meditational techniques (translator's note).

Four-Line Stanzas

Although you realise Lu (Deep Void) says: These stanzas are written to depreciate several other written poems. They exhort Man to doubly-cultivate both Nature (his self-nature) and Life. The practices of 'casting-off and on of a body', 'snatching a new body through rebirth', to 'focussing the mind, stopping the breath, meditation', etc. are all studies of the Lesser Vehicle. Thus our Gentleman Fairy censures them.

To snatch a new body Weng comments: The followers of these goals are merely the ghosts of disembodied spirits. he quotes the Tao Kuang (ancient classic entitled the Light of the Way) - To snatch a new body through Rebirth is to grasp after emptiness in vain! To subdue the Dragon and humble the Tiger is the Mystery of the Returned Elixir!

'Focus the Mind' Lu (Wilderness Master) comments: This speaks of the method of producing shadowy phantoms! It is the bitter toil of 'moving home when the room is old'. It is totally dissimilar to the Way of the Yang Spiritual Golden Elixir.

When the room is broken into: The body (room) is violated by spiritual techniques (translator's note).

The Buddhists teach people Zheng comments: Ultimate bliss never leaves and never arrives, unborn and unextinguished, straight away stir up the yoghurt of the Milky Way and pour it out as the Oil of Buddhahood to anoint your head! This is the Golden Elixir of the Buddhists!

Ultimate Bliss: it may suggest the 'Pure Land' School of Buddhism in which perpetual chanting of Buddha's name ensured rebirth in the Western Paradise. This also had its foundation in the Lotus Sutra. West = Gold. West = Dui = Joy, see the *I Ching* (translator's note).

Weng comments: An ancient song goes:

Every morn' just in your own home!

Day by day, you know you don't know!

T'ao comments: Gentleman Chang's very last verse returns to putting the Way right there in the regular everyday conversation. Thus we see that the Way itself lies within ourselves and must not be sought afar. The affair is easy and must not be sought through problems.

A P P E N D I X

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1. Main Text

Wu Zhen P'ien Essay on Awakening to Reality, AD.1075, by Zhang Boduan , an edition from AD.1711, by T'ao Su-sha containing selections from many of the following commentaries. This is an AD.1800 reprint contained in the Tao Yin Nei Wai Wu Ch'ung Pi Lu.

2. Traditional Chinese commentators on *Awakening to Reality*, mostly contained in the above.

Earliest Commentator:

Weng Pao-kuang () also known as Wu Ming Tzu (The Master Without A Name). Written 1173 AD. A direct disciple. A very clear and reliable commentator. Good.

Others close disciples:

Tai Tung-fu (), also called Tai Chi-tsang. Writing around 1335 AD. Yuan Dynasty. A close follower, writing around the same period.

Lu Tzu-yeh (), also called Lu Shu, known as Lu (Wilderness Master). Interpreted Boduan in a directly meditative sense, not philosophical. Not strictly true to the intended meaning. Yet somewhat enlightening.

Lu Qian-hsu (), known as Lu (Deep Void). Also meditative in tendency, followed Lu Tzu-yeh.

Zheng Shang-yang () or Shang Yang-tzu (Praising the Yang Master), a very famous author of the Yuan. Active in the 'Northern School'. Strictly celibate, emphasises self-development and discipline. Not following Boduan's intended meaning, but an interesting work allowing us to see how the poem was interpreted in later times.

Later commentators, less important:

Li Hui-hsiang (), Zhen Chiu-ying () and Ch'ou Chih-chi.

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