

The
Yellow Court Scripture

Volume Four

Links to Internal Alchemy

by

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Contents

Acknowledgments	iv
Introduction: Historical Development	1
Part One: Early Presentations	
1. The <i>Daoshu</i>	15
2. The Zhong-Lü Documents	30
3. The Hundred Questions	47
4. Yellow Court Practice	76
5. The Text Revisited	96
Part Two: The Commentary	
6. Complete Perfection	125
7. Liu Chuxuan	139
8. Verses 1 to 12	159
9. Verses 13 to 24	187
10. Verses 25 to 36	223
Bibliography	255
Index	277

Acknowledgments

This book continues the project on the *Huangting jing*, following the translation of the two primary versions with their main commentaries (2023), the discussion and translation of key texts that serve as precursors and successors (2024), and an edited volume that presents on textual, historical, and comparative aspects (2025). It seeks to elucidate the cultural and historical developments of the *Huangting jing* in relation to internal alchemy, focusing first on texts contained in a 12th-century collection and then on a commentary by one of the Seven Perfected of Complete Perfection.

The work would not have been possible without the continued support of the academic community, notably Fabrizio Pregadio's recent *Dictionary of Taoist Internal Alchemy* and other analytical works as well as the many studies on Song alchemy and the early development of Complete Perfection. It also benefited from personal help by Fabrizio Pregadio at the Friedrich-Alexander-Universität in Erlangen-Nürnberg, Guo Wu at the Center for Judaic and Inter-Religious Studies of Shandong University in Jinan, Patricia Radder of Brill Publishers in Leiden, Robin Wang at Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles, and—quite essentially—Brent Christopher Wulf of the Beijing Chinese Medical Center in Santa Monica. I am deeply indebted to them all.

Part One

Early Presentations

Chapter One

The *Daoshu*

The most important collection that contains a plethora of sources on internal alchemy in the Northern Song and also presents the *Huangting jing* in its context is the *Daoshu* 道樞 (Pivot of Dao, DZ 1017) by the scholar-official Zeng Zao 曾慥 (d. 1155), aka Duanbo 端伯, Daoist name Zhiyouzi 至游子 (Master of Utmost Wandering). Born in Jinjiang 晉江 (Fujian), he was an official under Emperor Gaozong (r. 1127-1162), serving first as Secretarial Court Gentleman (*shangshu lang* 尚書郎), then as Compiler (*xiuzuan* 修纂) at the Imperial Archives, which gave him extensive access to a wealth of documents and books. Two years before his death, he became prefect of Luzhou 廬州 (Jiangxi) and worked as compiler at the Pavilion for Aiding Learning (Youwen dian 右文殿), a section of the Imperial Library.¹

Zeng Zao is mainly known for his literary works. His poems are recorded in various collections, including the *Songshi jishi* 宋詩紀事 (Recorded Matters of Song Poetry, ch. 48), the *Songwen jishi* 宋文紀事 (Recorded Matters of Song Literature, ch. 65), and the *Quansong ci* 全宋詞 (Complete Song Poems (Miyazawa 2002, 10-12).

Besides poetry and lyrics, his claim to fame is the compilation of the *Leishuo* 類說 (Classified Accounts), a literary collection following in the footsteps of the great Song encyclopedias *Taiping Guangji* 太平廣記 (Extensive Records of the Taiping Era, dat. 978) and *Taiping Yulan* 太平御覽 (Imperial Encyclopedia of the Taiping Era, dat. 983), compiled in the late 10th century under imperial auspices. Dated to 1136, the *Leishuo* in its sixty chapters presents an anthology of stories, novelettes, and excerpts drawn from over two hundred sources dating from the Han to the Song periods. With a somewhat more Daoist outlook than the earlier encyclopedias, its topics include immortality, medicine, literature, geomancy, and popular tales (Miyazawa 2002, 374). Still, it is listed among “miscellaneous literature” in the standardizing catalog of Chinese classical works, the Qing-dynasty *Siku quan-shu zongmu tiyao* 四庫全書總目提要 (Comprehensive Catalog of the Complete Books Contained in the Four Storehouses, ch. 123, Zibu 33, Zajia 7) (2002, 68).

Another Daoist collection by Zeng Zao is his *Jixian zhuan* 集仙傳 (Biographies of Assembled Immortals), which he completed late in life (dat. 1151).

¹ Baldrian-Hussein in Pregadio 2008, 329; Boltz 1987, 231-34; Miyazawa 2002, 4-5.

Consisting of twelve chapters, it was lost early and survives only in citations in the *Shuofu* 說郛 (Outskirts of Literature) (Baldrian-Hussein in Pregadio 2008, 330). The *Zhizhai shulu jieti* 直齋書錄解題 (Commented Library Catalog of the Zhizhai Studio), a private bibliography by the collector Chen Zhensun 陳振孫 (ca. 1183-1262), describes it as presenting the biographies of 162 immortals (Miyazawa 2002, 69).

The Text

Zeng Zao's *Daoshu* does not provide a specific date, but internal evidence suggests that it was completed around the same time as the *Jixian zhuan* (Pregadio and Skar 2000, 477). An extensive assembly of Daoist works, it today consists of forty-two chapters (*juan* 卷) and 118 sections (*pian* 篇), presenting a total of 108 different titles (see Table 1 below).² The *Zhizhai shulu jieti* notes that it comprised 122 sections in had twenty chapters (12.349; Loon 1984, 154; Miyazawa 2002, 78). In other words, when seen in the Song, it contained almost the same number of sections as found in later edition in the *Daozang*, but did not have the same chapter division.

Another, closely related work is known as the *Zhiyouzi*, matching Zeng Zao's Daoist appellation. Consisting of two chapters, it comprises the first twenty-five sections or seven chapters of the *Daoshu* and is described variously in Qing bibliographies (Baldrian-Hussein in Pregadio 2008, 330). Quite possibly, it was a first version of the *Daoshu* that happened to be transmitted separately. Alternatively, it was a Ming-dynasty redaction of the initial, more philosophical parts of the *Daoshu*—a possibility considered more likely by modern scholars (Miyazawa 2002, 71).

The title of the work, moreover, goes back to the *Zhuangzi*, which speaks of the “pivot of Dao” or “hinge of the Way” in conjunction with the tendency to divide reality in this and that. It says,

Everything has its “that,” everything has its “this.” From the point of view of “that” you cannot see it, but through understanding you can know it. So I say, “that” comes out of “this” and “this” depends on “that” - which is to say that “this” and “that” give birth to each other. . . . A state in which “this” and “that” no longer find their opposites is called the hinge of the Way. When the hinge is fitted into the socket, it can respond

² For discussions, see Baldrian-Hussein 1984; Boltz 1987, 231-34; Qing 1988, 2:163; Ren and Zhong 1991, 756; Pregadio and Skar 2000, 477; Miyazawa 2002, 88-114. An index was compiled by Miyazawa, Mugitani, and Jin 2002.

endlessly. Its “right” then is a single endlessness and its “wrong” too is a single endlessness. (ch. 2; Watson 1968, 39)

Guo Xiang 郭象 (d. 312), the main commentator on the text, explains that “hinge” or “pivot” is the “essential center” (*yao* 要), the “mysterious ultimate” (*xuanji* 玄極), a place from which one can respond to all things and roam in “the realm of spontaneous freedom and natural so-being” (Miyazawa 2002, 72). It is a key concept dear to all forms of Daoism: opening to Dao and resting in its pivot means placing oneself in the quiet, silent center of all, thereby gaining the ability to flow freely and respond to the fullest.³

The “core point in the center of the continuous ebb and flow, give and take of complementary opposites” (Merton 1969, 30), the pivot of Dao is like the gnomon of antiquity, that is, a vertical pole at the center of the world where no shadow falls on midsummer day. Both gnomon and the pivot of Dao stood for the center of space and time, marking the hub of the cosmic wheel, the still and empty core around which all activities revolve (Moeller 2004, 104, 129). Adopting this position, Daoists overcome the duality of being and non-being and reach a state of vibrant aliveness that comes with a strong affirmation of the world (Lee 2011, 9). They let go of “this” and “that,” that is, any artificial distinctions of reality and appearances, oneness and differences, truth and error, life and death and open themselves fully to a state of flow, freedom, and unlimited openness.⁴

The choice of this title for his work, therefore, suggests that Zeng Zao saw himself as an heir to the vision of the *Zhuangzi*. This is also borne out by his choice of Daoist appellation, Zhiyouzi, which combines two key terms of the ancient classic, *zhile* 至樂 and *xiaoyao you* 逍遙游, i.e., perfect happiness and free and easy wandering (Miyazawa 2002, 73). More specifically and in close relation to the idea of the pivot of Dao, perfect happiness is a state that goes beyond the limits of personal needs, instincts, and inherent tendencies, leading to full freedom, independence and non-reliance. Free and easy wandering, on the other hand, can be defined as the ultimate way to live: without concern for external rewards, in spontaneity, and with total commitment to the activity at hand (Kohn 2014, 27, 149).

However, Zeng Zao goes beyond the *Zhuangzi*. While he notes that, in the course of compiling his great work, he closely read the *Zhuangzi*, he also says that he gained much insight from Buddhist sources. He thus came to see commonalities between Zhuangzi’s “sitting in oblivion” (*zuowang* 坐忘) and Bodhiharma’s “wall gazing” (*biguan* 壁觀) and found a close match between

³ Fox 1996, 64; 2003, 215; Xie 2000, 476.

⁴ Shang 2002, 241; Fried 2012, 434; Kohn 2014, 91.

Zhuangzi's "stability of cosmic peace" (*taiding* 泰定; see Kohn 2010b, 110-11) and Buddhist wisdom (*hui* 慧) in that they both related to the deepest original nature of the person—a more psychological reading of the pivot of Dao (*Daoshu* #7; Miyazawa 2002, 73).

While he has this in common with Tang-dynasty works on Daoist cultivation, Zeng Zao also uses the term "pivot of Dao" in relation to internal alchemy. For example, in his presentation of the *Yinfu jing* 陰符經 (Scripture of Hidden Correspondences, DZ 31),⁵ he uses the expression to describe the rhythmic rise and fall of yin and yang (#9). In the *Yuzhi pian* 玉芝篇 (Jade Mushrooms, #13), he speaks of Dao as the "root of chaos prime, the pivot of heaven and earth" (#13), and in the first part of his selection of the *Cantong qi* 參同契 (The Seal of the Unity of the Three, DZ 999; trl. Pregadio 2011), he applies the phrase "pivot of Dao" to the alignment of water and metal in the alchemical process (#103) (Miyakawa 2002, 74). Last but not least, a yet different precursor to the use of the term "pivot" in the title of a Daoist compendium is the *Daojiao yishu* 道教義樞 (Pivot of Meaning of the Daoist Teaching, DZ 1129), by Meng Anpai 孟安排 of the 7th century (2002, 75; see also Sunayama 1990).

Section Structure

The arrangement of the *Daoshu* follows an orderly pattern, with sections in the first part being quite short while later sections are longer. Covering a period from the Wei-Jin to the Song, it begins with philosophical and cosmological discussions that present well-known Daoist classics along with more obscure treatises, and ending with core texts of internal alchemy (Ren and Zhong 1991, 756). Its range of subjects in addition covers visualization, meditation, breathing methods, healing exercises, sexual cultivation, and external alchemy (Ren 1990, 517; Miyazawa 2002, 79). The length of sections varies greatly: in some cases, a single text is spread out over three sections; in others, as many as eight sections are contained in a single chapter.

That said, the first section, called "Xuanzhou" 玄軸 (Axle of the Mystery), is a discussion of Dao and other key principles by several legendary or semi-legendary figures. Following this, there are materials from classical texts of the

⁵ An important classic of medieval Daoism, this short but powerful work has been translated in Balfour 1804; Legge 1891; Rand 1980; Reiter 1984; Cleary 1991; Komjathy 2008; Pregadio 2009a, ch. 2. With commentary it appears in Acker 2006; Komjathy 2013, ch. 5; Li 2027. For discussions, see Rand 1979; Miyakawa 1984; Reiter 1984; Li 1995; Xiao 1996; Pregadio and Skar 2000, 474; Reiter in Schipper and Verellen 2004, 320-21; Robinet in Pregadio 2008, 1173-74; Eskildsen 2026, 215-16.

middle period, sometimes called by their proper titles, sometimes by key topics they contain (Qing 1988, 2:136):

#2: Tan Qiao's 譚峭 (10th c.) *Huashu* 化書 (Book of Transformations, DZ 1044, DZ 1478; see Andersen 1991, 127-31);

#3-5: Sima Chengzhen's 司馬承禎 (647-735) *Zuowang lun* 坐忘論 (Sitting in Oblivion, DZ 1036; trl. Kohn 2010b);

#9: Li Quan's 李筌 (8th c.) *Yinfu jing* (see note 5 above);

#10: the 5th-century *Xisheng jing* 西昇經 (Scripture of Western Ascension, DZ 666, DZ 726; trl. Kohn 2007);

#11: Wu Yun's 吳筠 (d. 778) *Zongxuan xiansheng xuangang lun* 宗玄先生玄綱論 (Essay on the Mystery Network, by the Elder Who Honors Mystery, DZ 1052; trl. DeMeyer 2006).

The eighth section, in contrast, consists of a criticism of sexual practices authored by Zeng Zao himself (Baldrian-Hussein in Pregadio 2008, 330).

Other sections may have been placed in a certain order because of a common word in the title so that those with the word “questions” (#15-18) appear next to each other as do those with the term “golden” (#40-43) and also ones that contain the term “perfection” (#65-71) (2008, 330). A yet different ordering principle is numerological, so that sections #91 to #102 all have a numeral in the title and follow the order from one to nine. The very last portion of the work (#107-118), moreover, is thematically centered and focuses on longer treatises of internal alchemy, further supplementing its collection of the most important documents of the time. In addition, the *Daoshu* also contains some early works that are not otherwise found in Daoist sources, most importantly the *Riyue xuanshu lun* 日月玄樞論 (Mystery Pivot of the Sun and the Moon, #86) by the Tang erudite Liu Zhigu 李知古. A precursor of the dominant trends of the Song, it appears in the *Quan Tangwen* 全唐文 (Complete Tang Works; 334.12a-21a) and reads the *Cantong qi* as a work of inner cultivation and provides a first framework of the later system (Chen 1975, 439; Miyazawa 2002, 80).

Generally, the *Daoshu* does not present complete and pristine versions of established materials, but tends toward summaries that may also include portions of other texts and commentaries, notably by Zeng Zao, who also adds several four-character lines of personal commentary—explanations or summaries—to each section (listed in Miyazawa 2002, 82-87). As Farzeen Baldrian-Hussein says, “Zeng’s own addition to the anthology consists of two rhyming couplets placed at the head of each section to summarize its content, some essays, and comments occasionally interspersed in the main body of a text” (2008, 331). She also notes that “his method was not always accurate as some texts were paraphrased, arbitrarily abridged, or wrongly copied.”

However, given his elevated status as erudite Imperial Compiler, it seems fair to assume that any changes made to originals were intentional, reflecting the particular viewpoints and interests of the time.

Thus, for example, the section called *Zhen'gao pian* 真誥篇 (Declarations of the Perfected, #19) after the famous Highest Clarity collection by the patriarch Tao Hongjing 陶弘景 (456-536), in its first part is taken from the *Dengzhen yinjue* 登真隱訣 (Secret Instructions on the Ascent to the Perfected, DZ 421) by the same author rather than using the longer version from the original *Zhen'gao* (DZ 1016, 13.13b-14a), revealing an intimate knowledge of the literature and a tendency toward precision and brevity. Then again, the later part is a shortened version of the *Zhen'gao* (9.3ab), but it also includes some commentary materials from the *Dengzhen yinjue*, indicating a desire for enhanced clarity. This also holds true for the version of the *Cantong qi* (#107-09), which does not represent the original itself but presents commentary material and related texts. Then again, the presentation of the *Zuowang lun* is very close to the text in the version of its inscription, dated to 829, but it also includes citations from closely related texts of the same environment.⁶

Awakening to Perfection

The dominant vision of internal alchemy in the *Daoshu* reflects the *Cantong qi* and focuses strongly on energy transformation, naming yin and yang forces differently as the process unfolds. The most important document in this context is the *Wuzhen pian* 悟真篇 (Awakening to Perfection, DZ 263, ch. 26-30; *Daoshu* #67, trl. Pregadio 2009b), by Zhang Boduan 張伯端 (987-1082).

Also known by the courtesy name Pingshu 平叔 and the Daoist title Ziyang zhenren 紫陽真人 (Perfected of Purple Yang), he was born

in a family of minor officials in Tiantai 天臺 (Zhejiang). After receiving an excellent education, he passed the official examination and set out on a career as a civil servant. From an early age, he was deeply concerned with



⁶ Kohn 2010b, 62; Miyazawa 1988a; 2002, 81, 122-35.

cosmological speculation and self-cultivation. As he says in a preface the *Wuzhen pian* cited in one of its commentary editions:

From early childhood, I was fond of Dao and actively pursued the scriptures and writings of the three teachings as well as the fields of law, mathematics, medicine, divination, military strategy, astronomy, geography, and the prognostication of good and bad fortune. I investigated them all with full dedication and in great detail. Especially the method of the Golden Elixir I studied exhaustively, reading all the various scriptures related to it as well as relevant songs, poems, treatises, and discussions by various authors.⁷

While enjoying his erudition, Zhang in his career encountered various ups and downs. Thus, at one point he got entangled in court intrigue and was banished to a remote area in the south, from where he eventually made his way to Sichuan. This is documented in a preface to yet another commentary edition of the *Wuzhen pian*, by the official Lu Sicheng 陸思誠, dated to 1161 to 1173 (Wang 2019).

Master Zhang became embroiled in some affair and was demoted to serve as a minor secretary in Guangnan 廣南. During the reign period Zhiping [1064–1067], my grandfather, Lu Shen 陸誥 [1022–1070], courtesy name Longtu 龍圖, was army commander of Guilin 桂林. Zhang came to serve on his staff and went along with him each time he was transferred to a different post.⁸

Thus, when Lu Shen was appointed governor of Sichuan and took up residence in Chengdu in 1069, Zhang went with him. There he met a perfected from whom he received oral instructions on the concoction of the internal elixir. This perfected was later identified as Liu Haichan 劉海蟾 (fl. 1031), originally called Liu Cao 劉操, aka Xuanying 玄英. He is first mentioned in several collections of miscellaneous notes (*biji* 筆記) as a second-generation disciple of the early Song immortal Chen Tuan 陳搏 (d. 989), aka Xiyi xian-

⁷ *Ziyang zhenren Wuzhen pian zhushu* 紫陽真人悟真篇注疏 (Commentary and Supplementary Explanation of the *Wuzhen pian* by the Perfected of Purple Yang, DZ 141, 2:914–15), compiled by Weng Baoguang 翁葆光 (fl. 1173). See Wang 2019.

⁸ *Ziyang zhenren Wuzhen pian sanzhu* 紫陽真人悟真篇三注 (Three Commentaries to the *Wuzhen pian* by the Perfected of Purple Yang, DZ 142).

sheng 希夷先生 (Master of the Invisible and Inaudible), to whom many works and techniques were attributed later.⁹

For example, Peng Si 彭耜 in his *Daode jing* commentary (DZ 709) cites the *Gaodao zhuan* 高道傳 (Biographies of Eminent Daoists) which notes that Zhang Wumeng 張無夢 (fl. 985-1065), a disciple of Chen Tuan and teacher of the highly esteemed Daoist master and prolific commentator Chen Jingyuan 陳景元 (1025-1094; Boltz 1987, 204), formed a friendship with Liu Haichan, placing him into this lineage and thus also linking Zhang Boduan to this eminent group (Zhu 2009, 292). Other tales tell of Liu's high standing among the supernatural, so that, for example, He Wei 何蘊 in his *Chunzhu jiwen* 春渚紀聞 (Recorded Hearsay from a Waterside in Spring) describes him as showing disrespect in a temple to the Black Killer (Heisha 黑煞) without incurring any punishment (ch. 3; Zhu 2009, 293).

More historical records, such as the *Songshi* 宋史 (History of the Song Dynasty, ch. 462) show Liu Haichan as a specialist in nourishing life who traveled widely to famous mountains, in some cases leaving poetic inscriptions behind, and engaged in poetic exchanges with various officials, such as Zhen Qizhen 甄棲真 (d. 1022; Zhu 2009, 293-94). That is to say, he overall matches the profile of a learned lesser official with a great interest in personal cultivation, quite like Zhang Boduan.

The latter, after receiving instructions on internal cultivation, set about the practice with full determination and serious dedication. He succeeded and duly felt that he could not keep silent about the wondrous methods. Therefore, he set out to compile the information into a set of poems he named *Wuzhen pian*, which he completed in 1075.

In the meantime, Lu Shen died in 1070, and Zhang was sent to Qinlong 秦隴 (Gansu), where he served under Ma Mo 馬默 (fl. 1064-1100). When Ma was recalled to the capital, Zhang gave him the *Wuzhen pian* and asked him to circulate it. Zhang later accompanied Ma to Yunnan where he died in 1082, having turned increasingly to Chan Buddhism as claimed in the postface by

⁹ Chen Tuan is a key figure in legends surrounding early internal alchemy, being especially known for his "sleep practice," that is, a reclining trance during which he would travel widely through the spirit world (Knaul 1981, 37-38; Kohn 2001a, 17; Zhu 2009, 292; Eskildsen 2026, 247). In addition, he is also credited with the original form of the *Taiji tu* 太極圖 (Diagram of the Great Ultimate), formally explained and made famous by the 11th-century thinker Zhou Dunyi 周頓頤 (1017-1073). See Fung and Bodde 1952, 2:440; Knaul 1981, 36-38; Kohn 2001, 17; Komjathy 2024.

Liu Fengzhen 劉奉真 to yet another edition of the *Wuzhen pian* (Wang 2019).¹⁰

Miracles continued after his death. For example, his ashes upon cremation revealed an unusually large number of concentrated relics. In his honor, a bridge in Tiantai village was renamed Wuzhen qiao 悟真橋 (Bridge of Awakening to Perfection) in 1196, and in the following year his house there was declared a monument. It later became the site of a shrine dedicated to him.¹¹

The biographical data on Zhang Boduan reinforce the understanding of the social setting in which internal alchemy took shape. They show that the key protagonists were well-educated local officials or spiritual eccentrics, who often traveled widely and came into contact with a large variety of people. Their prime medium of expression, moreover, was poetry, using verse both in public places and written collections to give expression to their particular take on life and world.

The *Wuzhen pian*, which is well-known and has been frequently translated,¹² divides into three parts: sixteen poems written in stanzas of eight lines with five characters each; sixty-four poems in stanzas of four lines in seven-word meter; a group of eighteen poems, written in different meters and divided into three sets, each number symbolizing cosmological aspects of internal alchemy (Pregadio 2009, 3).

Its core teaching—and the central endeavor of internal alchemy at this stage of its development—is the reversal of the cosmogonic process from the one to the many, pre-creation to post-creation, unconditioned to conditioned existence, perfect yang to yin-yang, and so on (Pregadio 2009, 6-7). It describes this reversal, which ultimately leads to longevity and contentment on earth and a continued transcendent life in the heavens, in terms of isolating, circulating, and refining the core energies of the bodymind. These, moreover, are expressed in dynamic pairs called yang and yin, dragon and tiger, lead and mercury, sun and moon, fire and water, as well as the trigrams Li and Kan.

¹⁰ *Wuzhen pian zhushi* 悟真篇注釋 (Commentary and Exegesis to the *Wuzhen pian*, DZ 145)

¹¹ Baldrian-Hussein in Pregadio 2008, 1220-22; Pregadio and Skar 2000, 470.

¹² The text appears first in full in the *Xiuzhen shishu* (chs. 26-30) and abbreviated in the *Daoshu* 道樞 (Pivot of Dao, DZ 1017; #67; Miyazawa 1988b; 2002, 153-73), but there are also many later commentary editions (Qiu 1989; Baldrian-Hussein in Pregadio 2008, 1082-83). It is translated in full in Davis and Chao 1939; Cleary 1987; and partially in Kohn 1993, 313-19; Robinet 1995, 197-254; Crowe 2000; Pregadio 2009b. Discussions appear in Wong 1978; Boltz 1987, 174; Yan 1992; Pregadio and Skar 2000, 476; Baldrian-Hussein in Schipper and Verellen 2004, 816-17; Eskildsen 2026, 23-34.

Among the internal organs—still understood in terms of the five phases, which are less prominent in the system—they are the heart and the kidneys.

As these forces interact and become more subtle, they merge productively into the yellow sprout (*huangya* 黃芽), which grows into the great medicine (*dayao* 大藥), and eventually leads to the creation of the golden elixir (*jindan* 金丹) and the emergence of the baby boy (*yinger* 嬰兒), the spiritual alter ego of the practitioner—all terms at the core of internal alchemy (see Pregadio 2025) and also found in other early poems, but not present in the *Huangting jing*. The entire system, moreover, is strongly oriented toward energetic refinement. Thus, the term *shen* 神 for “spirit” or “god” is used largely in reference to a subtle form of vital energy rather than to specific body gods that should be envisioned and maintained. Similarly, figures such as White Prime (Baiyuan 白元), the spirit of the lungs, is reinterpreted as “the perfect *qi* of the lungs” (*Huangting pian*). In other words, the fundamental outlook of internal alchemy, at least in its early maturity, represents a significantly different paradigm from the core vision of the *Huangting jing*.

Compounding the Medicine

This feature is also evident in a precursor of the *Wuzhen pian*, the 10th-century *Ruyao jing* 入藥鏡 (Mirror for Compounding the Medicine, *Daoshu* #112-13),¹³ which comes in two major versions that have little to do with each other but were separately given a similar title and attributed to a master of the same last name. The first, most prominent and accepted as standard, is edited in the Daoist Canon (DZ 135). It is a short poem of 246 characters, divided into eighty-two three-character lines that are arranged in twenty verses of four lines each plus two concluding lines at the end. In outlook, it is quite similar to the *Wuzhen pian* as it focuses on the transformation of two core energies, described in terms of sun and moon, water and fire, various combinations of trigrams, as well as lead and mercury, dragon and tiger. For example,

Lead-dragon ascends,
Mercury-tiger sinks down—
Push these two along,
But never let them run wild.

¹³ Discussed in Wang JY 1987, 234; Boltz 1987, 234; Pregadio and Skar 2000, 475; Baldrian-Hussein in Schipper and Verellen 2004, 843-45; Skar in Pregadio 2008, 823. A Ming-dynasty commentary, translated by Fabrizio Pregadio, appears in Wang J. 2013.

Eventually the process leads to the creation of the immortal embryo and an enhanced empowerment of the person, followed by the ability to engage in spirit travel throughout the greater universe:

When the embryo first comes together,
See your root destiny.
When at the end it leaves the womb,
See all in the four directions.

The text is attributed to the Sichuan master Cui Xifan 崔希范 (ca. 880-940) and goes back to the Five Dynasties. Like the *Wuzhen pian*, its first complete edition is found in the *Xiuzhen shishu* (13.1a-9b), contained in the *Jindan dacheng ji* 金丹大成集 (Great Compendium on the Golden Elixir) with a commentary by Xiao Tingzhi 蕭廷芝 (fl. 1260). The text in the Daoist Canon provides an annotation by Wang Jie 王玠 (fl. 1310), who reads it in terms of breath control, *qi*-guiding, and fire phasing.¹⁴

Much like other early texts of internal alchemy, it is composed in verse and starts out by deploring the shortness of human life while promoting the internal refinement of the great medicine to affect the transformation of personal energies into purer and higher patterns. It describes these patterns in terms of yin-and-yang interactions and expresses them as alchemical agents such as lead and mercury, cosmic figures such as dragon and tiger, as well as *Yijing* trigrams such as Kan and Li, that is, water and fire.¹⁵ As these forces revolve through the body and intermingle with each other, getting increasingly sublimated and refined, they give rise to a mysterious pearl that in turn forms the immortal embryo, a subtler, purer, and more perfect energetic constellation of the adept in his or her new spiritual dimension.

The second major version of the text (*Xiuzhen shishu* 21.6b-9b), too, seeks a higher dimension of life. Also dated to 940 and attributed to Cui Xifan, it is called *Tianyuan ruyao jing* 天元入藥鏡. Written in prose, it reads like a

¹⁴ Prior to this, it seems, the *Ruyao jing* goes back to a Tang alchemical poem in five-character lines, possibly supplemented with prose explanations by the alchemist Cui Xuanzhen 崔玄真 of Minshan 岷山 (Sichuan) who lived in the mid-8th century. Known fully as the *Jinbi qiantong ruyao huojing ji* 金碧潛通入藥火鏡記 (Record of the Fire Mirror on Compounding the Medicine with Gold and Turquoise Submerging and Connecting), it is mentioned variously but has not survived (Baldrian-Hussein in Schipper and Verellen 2004, 844).

¹⁵ The trigrams Kan and Li represent water and fire as well as the kidneys and heart. The law of inversion links them with male and female, respectively, represented by their inner lines (Pregadio 2025, 134-35).

classical work on nourishing life as it expounds on the dangers of sensory indulgence and enticements of wealth and rank while emphasizing the relationship between vital essence, *qi*, and spirit. These are to be cultivated and refined through meditation and stillness of the heart-mind. As the text says,

These three—essence, *qi*, and spirit—will transform if the heart-mind does not move. On the outside forgetting the physical form and inside nourishing the spirit: this is called the road of ascent to perfection.

Studying Dao, then, means to “remain profoundly calm in emptiness and serenity, advancing every further into the realm of clarity and purity.” The only connection to the processes of internal alchemy is metaphorical: “Essence and *qi* resemble lead and mercury and the trigrams Kan and Li are water and fire,” even though the text ends with a diagram that shows the trigrams with Li at the top and Kan at the bottom, and notes the movements of the yin-tiger reverting as it arises from the position of Kan while the yang-dragon is primordial and emerges to move toward Li.

In other words, while the standard version focuses centrally on elixir reversion (*huandan* 還丹), the *Tianyuan ruyao jing* centers on nourishing life (*yangsheng* 養生) with only minor alchemical references. The two are representative of key trends within internal alchemy at the time, also called the “alchemical” and “quietistic” models (Komjathy 2007, 21), similarly reflected in the versions of the *Ruyao jing* contained in the *Daoshu*. Zeng Zao presents first a text that emphasizes nourishing life (#112), then one that outlines elixir reversion (#113). He links them through the understanding that the work was originally a manual on sexual practices reinterpreted in alchemical terms (3.4a, 6b). Both texts here are longer and different in wording from those in the Daoist Canon, yet they too claim a connection to Cui Xifan. In addition, they express rather similar ideas, which again documents the popularity of the work throughout the Song and Yuan and the importance of both approaches to immortality (Baldrian-Hussein in Schipper and Verellen 2004, 844).

Table 1
 Chapters and Sections of the *Daoshu*¹⁶

No	J.	Pg	<i>Pian</i>	篇	English Translation
1	1	1a	Xuanzhou	玄軸	Axle of the Mystery
2		8a	Wuhua (-12a)	五化	Five Transformations
3	2	1a	Zuowang shang	坐忘上	Sitting in Oblivion, 1
4		4a	Zuowang zhong	坐忘中	Sitting in Oblivion, 2
5		6b	Zuowang xia (-8a)	坐忘下	Sitting in Oblivion, 3
6	3	1a	Jiyao	集要	Collected Essentials
7		2b	Suijin	碎金	Shattered Gold
8		4b	Rong Cheng	容成	Master Rongcheng
9		7b	Yinfu (-14a)	陰符	Hidden Correspondences
10	4	1a	Xisheng	西昇	Western Ascension
11		3a	Neide	內德	Inner Virtue
12		4b	Xuancang	玄綱	Mainstays of the Mystery
13		7a	Yuzhi (-25a)	玉芝	Jade Mushrooms
14	5	1a	Zhoutian	周天	Heavenly Circuit
15		3b	Huangdi wen	黃帝問	Yellow Emperor Questions
16		5a	Xuanyuan wen	軒轅問	Xuanyuan's Questions
17		7a	Baiwen (-22a)	百問	Hundred Questions
18	6	1a	Xubai wen	虛白問	Xubai's Questions
19		5b	Zhen'gao (-13a)	真誥	Declarations of Perfected
20	7	1a	Huangting	黃庭	Yellow Court
21		11b	Taiji	太極	The Great Ultimate
22		13a	Huohou	火候	Fire Phasing
23		13b	Shuihuo	水火	Water and Fire
24		15a	Kan-Li	坎離	Kan and Li Trigrams
25		16a	Jiageng (-20a)	甲庚	<i>Jia</i> and <i>Geng</i> Stems
26	8	1a	Kunlun	崑崙	Mount Kunlun
27		2b	Fuqi	服氣	Absorbing Qi
28		4a	Fuwu	服霧	Absorbing Mist
29		4b	Neijing	內景	Inner Lights
30		11b	Waijing (-16a)	外景	Outer Lights
31	9	1a	Shenjing	神景	Spirit Lights
32		3b	Shunsheng	順生	Flowing with Life
33		5b	Pingdu	平都	Leveling All
34		13a	Lianjing	煉精	Refining Essence
35		13b	Chunyang (-14b)	純陽	Pure Yang
36	10	1a	Huayang	華陽	Flowery Yang
37		7b	Guantian	觀天	Observing Heaven

16 For a section list, with people's names and titles mentioned, see Miyazawa 2002, 88-114, followed by a list of passages introduced with "The scripture says" (2002, 114-20).

38		9b	Guankong	觀空	Observing Emptiness
39		10b	Taiqing	太清	Great Clarity
40		11b	Jindan (-13b)	金丹	The Golden Elixir
41	11	1a	Nijin	泥金	Mud Gold
42		9b	Jinbi (-15a)	金碧	Gold and Blue
43	12	1a	Huanjin	還金	Reverting Gold
44		1b	Huanyuan shang	還元上	Reverting to Origin, 1
45		4a	Huanyuan xia	還元下	Reverting to Origin, 2
46		6b	Yutai	玉壺	Jade Terrace
47		8b-	Dadan (-15a)	大丹	Great Elixir
48	13	1a	Zhixuan	指玄	Pointing to the Mystery
49		4b	Guigen	歸根	Returning to the Root
50		6b	Hongmeng	鴻濛	Vast Openness
51		9b	Huxi	呼吸	Breathing
52		11b	Zhenzhong	枕中	Inside the Pillow
53		13a	Neixiang (-13b)	內想	Inner Imagination
54	14	1a	Xinjing	心鏡	Mirror of the Mind
55		8b	Taixi (-13a)	胎息	Embryo Respiration
56	15	1a	Shengtai	聖胎	Sagely Embryo
57		7a	Yuanqi	元氣	Primordial <i>Qi</i>
58		8a	Xuema	血脈	Blood and Vessels
59		10a	Diaoqi (-13a)	調氣	Balancing <i>Qi</i>
60	16	1a	Lingyuan	靈源	Numinous Source
61		2a	Zhongyuan	中源	Central Source
62		4a	Zhonghuang (-14a)	中黃	Central Yellow
63	17	1a	Yunhuo	運火	Circulating Fire
64		2b	Hunyuan (-15a)	混元	Chaos Prime
65	18	1a	Qizhen	契真	Matching Perfection
66		7b	Xiuzhen	修真	Cultivating Perfection
67		9b	Wuzhen (-13b)	悟真	Awakening to Perfection
68	19	1a	Dongzhen	洞真	Pervading Perfection
69		3b	Chongzhen	崇真	Venerating Perfection
70		4b	Fanzhen	返真	Reverting to Perfection
71		9a	Xiuzhen (-22a)	修真	Cultivating Perfection
72	20	1a	Zhenyi neidan	真一內丹	Great One Internal Elixir
73		2a	Huandan cantong	還丹參同	Reverted Elixir Concord
74		6b	Jindan mingjing -11a	金丹明鏡	Gold Elixir Bright Mirror
75	21	1a	Dahuan jindan	大還金丹	Great Revert Gold Elixir
76		2a	Jinshu yujian	金書玉鑑	Golden Book Jade Mirror
77		9a	Xiuzhen yaojue -11a	修真要訣	Core of Cultivating Perfect
78	22	1a	Xiulian jindan	修煉金丹	Refining the Golden Elixir
79		6b	Jinye huandan (-9b)	金液還丹	Golden Fluid Revert Elixir
80	23	1a	Jindan nijin	金丹泥金	Golden Elixir Mud Gold
81		7b	Jinxuan basu (-15a)	金玄八素	Gold Myst Eight Simplex
82	24	1a	Jinbi longhu	金碧龍虎	Gold Blue, Dragon Tiger

83		2a	Jiuzhuan jindan -19a	九轉金丹	Ninefold Golden Elixir
84	25	1a	Zhouhou sancheng	肘後三成	Three Accomplishments by Pulling Back the Elbows
85		11b	Zhunyi xici (-22b)	准易擊辭	<i>Yijing</i> Judgments
86	26	1a	Riyue xuanshu	日月玄樞	Mystery Pivot, Sun Moon
87		6b	Jiuzhen yushu (-12b)	九真玉書	Nine Perfection Jade Book
88	27	1a	Jinye longhu	金液龍虎	Golden Fluid Dragon Tiger
89		4a	Taibai huandan -13a	太白還丹	Great White Revert Elixir
90	28	1a	Taiqing yangsheng shang	太清養生上	Nourishing Life with Great Clarity, 1
91		12a	Taiqing yangsheng xia (-24b)	太清養生下	Nourishing Life with Great Clarity, 2
92	29	1a	Shangqing jinbi	上清金碧	Highest Clarity Gold Blue
93		3b	Jinhu qiangong -19b	金虎鉛汞	Gold Tiger, Lead Mercury
94	30	1a	Qiangong wuxing	鉛汞五行	Lead Mercury, Five Phases
95		3a	Zhenyi	真一	Perfect Oneness
96		6a	Zhengyi	正一	Right One
97		7a	Erguan	二關	Two Passes
98		8a	Sanyuan	三元	Three Primes
99		10b	Sanzhu	三住	Three Pillars
100		11b	Sishen	四神	Four Spirits
101		13b	Wujie	五戒	Five Precepts
102		14b	Wuxing	五行	Five Phases
103		17a	Qishen (-17b)	七神	Seven Spirits
104	31	1a	Qifan	七反	Seven Returns
105		2a	Baqiong	八瓊	Eight Jaspers
106		5a	Jiuxian (-13b)	九仙	Nine Ways to Immortality
107	32	1a	Cantong shang	參同上	Concordance of Three, 1
108	33	1a	Cantong zhong	參同中	Concordance of Three, 2
109	34	1a	Cantong xia	參同下	Concordance of Three, 3
110	35	1a	Zhongmiao	眾妙	Host of Wonders
111	36	1a	Da huandan	大還丹	Great Reversion of Elixir
112	37	1a	Ruyao jing shang	入藥鏡上	Mirror of Medicine, 1
113		12b	Ruyao jing zhong	入藥鏡中	Mirror of Medicine, 2
114	38	1a	Huizhen	會真	Encountering Perfected
115	39	1a	Chuandao shang	傳道上	Transmission of Dao, 1
116	40	1a	Chuandao zhong	傳道中	Transmission of Dao, 2
117	41	1a	Chuandao xia	傳道下	Transmission of Dao, 3
118	42	1a	Lingbao	靈寶	Numinous Treasure

