

Background: Qingjingjing, *The Scripture on Clarity and Silence* and the Humingjing, *The Scripture for protecting life*.

The Scripture on Clarity and Silence (fully named the 太上老君說常清靜妙經 Taishang Laojun shuo chang qingjing miaojing, *The Marvelous Scripture of Constant Clarity and Silence as revealed by the Highest Elder Lord*) holds a prominent place in the 全真 Quanzhen (Complete Reality) School of Daoism¹. Despite its attribution to the 3rd century AD scholar Ge Xuan (an ancestor of the 4th century Confucian/Daoist alchemist Ge Hong²) it is usually thought of as a Tang dynasty (618-907) text, although the existence of an earlier text with the same name is debated. It was given a honourific first position at the beginning of the *benwen* 本文 (root texts) division of the Dongshen 洞神 (Cavern Spirit) section in the Daoist Canon Daozang. At least seven commentaries are found in the Daozang, the earliest by Du Guangting, of the Northern Heavenly Master Lineage³. Most commentaries stem from the Southern School of Inner Alchemy during the Song Dynasty, including one purportedly with comments by Sima Chengzhen and revised by Bai Yuchan⁴.

Leaving the inner alchemical interpretations aside, the scripture discusses basic Daoist cosmology (with an emphasis on the dualistic nature of being), followed by the importance of clearing the mind of thoughts and stilling desires. This in its turn is followed by a short Laozi, Zhuangzi and Buddhist inspired ontology of being and not being, a warning of what happens when the mind is not purified and a brief historical/mythological summary of the origin of the scripture.

The Scripture for Protecting Life (太上洞玄靈寶昇玄消災護命妙經 Taishang Dongxuan Lingbao Shengxuan xiaozai huming miaojing, *The Marvelous Numinous Treasure Scripture from the Cave of Mystery of the Most High Elevation to Mystery, which Protects Life and Averts Disaster*) is 100-200 years older than the *Clarity and Silence*. Its main concern is presenting a method (through

¹ 王重陽 Wang Chongyang, the founder of the Complete reality school, stressed the importance of three scriptures, the Daodejing (Book of the Dao and inner power), the 心經 Xinjing (Heart Sutra) and the 孝經 Xiaojing (the Scripture of Filial Piety).

² 葛玄 Ge Xuan, 葛洪 Ge Hong.

³ It's unlikely 杜光庭 Du Guangting is the true author of the commentary attributed to him. See: Schipper and Verellen, *The Taoist Canon*, p.332.

⁴ 司馬承禎 Sima Chengzhen, 白玉蟾 Bai Yuchan

meditation or philosophical deliberation, but mostly by recitation of the scripture⁵) for personal salvation and it does this with the vocabulary and tools of the Chongxuan/Mādhyamika⁶ schools while showing influence of and even quotations from the Xinjing, *Heart Sutra*⁷.

The Chongxuan (Twofold Mystery) School of Daoism enjoyed popularity during the seventh and eight centuries in intellectual circles interested in Daoism and Buddhism. It employed a philosophy based jointly on Mahāyāna Buddhist Mādhyamika (Middle Doctrine)-thought and Laozi-thought and made frequent use of the tetra lemma, 四句 *siju*⁸ reasoning in four steps: a statement is true (everything exists), false (nothing exists⁹), true and false (everything exist and does not exist at the same time), not true and not false (nothing exist and nothing does not exist) The purpose of this was to come to an understanding of “form is emptiness, emptiness is form” as the Heart Sutra puts it, and to get there one has to empty the mind.

Qingjing, Clarity and Silence, is a prerequisite for discovering the true reality and can be achieved by eradicating desires and thoughts that are produced by experiences of the senses (the way we communicate with being) and furthered by insight meditation or observation (觀 *guan*)¹⁰.

In the case of an inner alchemical interpretation of emptiness, the person is emptied out to make space for the original spirit that naturally will appear in emptiness and non-doing. This is the return to the origin that the Daodejing already

⁵ This applies equally to the Scripture of Clarity and Silence, that is one of the most widely recited texts in Daoism.

⁶ 重玄 Chongxuan, Twofold Mystery, named after a sentence from the first chapter of the Daodejing: 玄之又玄 *xuan zhi you xuan*, mysterious and even more mysterious, or, the mystery within the mystery, here being interpreted by the Chongxuan masters as (the first mystery) detachment of being and non-being (emptiness and form, unity) to (the mystery within the mystery) the transcendence of these and all concepts including that of subject and object (oblivion).

中論 Zhonglun, Middle Doctrine or 中觀 Zhongguan, Middle View, Mādhyamika.

⁷ 般若波羅蜜多心經 Bore boluomiduo xinjing (Prajñāpāramitāhṛdaya), The Heart Sutra of Perfected Wisdom)

⁸ The Mādhyamika teachings and the use of the (much older) tetra lemma were established and popularized by Nagarjuna (龍樹 Longshu, ca. 150–250) and gained acceptance in China through the 5th century translations of Kumārajīva (鳩摩羅什 Jiumoluoshi) and his disciple Sengzhao 僧肇.

⁹ Form is empty (空 *kong*; *śūnyatā* in Sanskrit) because all of its manifestations depend on conditions for their origination and therefore lack inherent existence.

¹⁰ Daoist and Buddhist definitions of 觀 *guan* are not the same. In Buddhist terms *guan* refers to *vipaśyanā*, contemplation or insight mediation (into the true nature of existence and non-existence). In Daoist terms *guan* means observation and this can include observing and visualizing the movements of qi, deities in body and the workings of the inner landscape of the body.

speaks about, the yang spirit will be completed which leads to immortality and/or alignment/response with the Dao¹¹.

The commentary under responsibility of Master Min Zhiting says: “When people can cut off their emotions, get rid of their lust, banish their desires, forget to think and pacify their shen/soul, then the Six Desires will automatically be eliminated and can’t exist any longer....If there are no trespasses of the three karma’s¹² the mind will remain in the body and it will not be possible to look inside the realm of the mind from outside the body, there will not be a mind. When there is no mind to observe, then there is nothing to be used, nothing to cultivate. Then you will have reached the Dao of the Clarity and Stillness.”

¹¹ This is a gross simplification of course, but it does shed some light on the difference in emphasis between the Mādhyamika/Chongxuan and internal alchemy interpretations of these scriptures.

¹² 三業 *Sanye*, the karmic trespasses of the body, the mouth and the mind.