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The Seal of the Unity of the Three

Vol. I — A Study and Translation of the *Cantong qi*,
the Source of the Taoist Way of the Golden Elixir

Fabrizio Pregadio

324 pp.

Golden Elixir Press, 2011

ISBN 978-0-9843082-8-6

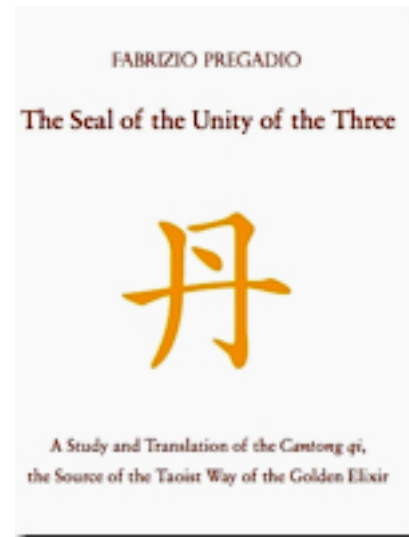
Paperback, US\$24.95 (list price)

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“The *Cantong qi* is the forefather of the scriptures on the Elixir of all times. Its words are ancient and profound, arcane and subtle. No one can fathom their meaning.” Thus begins a preface found in one of the commentaries to the *Cantong qi*, or *Seal of the Unity of the Three*. This statement expresses several significant features of the *Cantong qi*: the charm of its verses, the depth of its discourse, its enigmatic language, and its intimate relation to the Taoist alchemical traditions.

Under an allusive poetical language and thick layers of images and symbols, the *Cantong qi* hides the exposition of a doctrine that inspired a large number of commentaries and other works.

Neidan (Internal Alchemy) is the legacy that has shaped the dominant image and understanding of the *Cantong qi* in China, by placing this work at the origins of its teachings and practices. In addition to this one, there has been, within the Taoist tradition, a second, less well-known way of reading the text. This reading takes account of a point that is reflected in the title of the *Cantong qi*, is



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stated more than once in its verses, and is often discussed by its commentators — the *Cantong qi* is concerned not with one, but with three major subjects: Cosmology (the system of the *Book of Changes*), Taoism (the way of “non-doing”), and Alchemy, and joins them to one another in a single, unique doctrine.

In addition to a complete translation of the *Cantong qi*, this book—the fruit of more than 20 years of work—contains explanations of each of its sections, notes on many of its verses, and a detailed introduction to its history and doctrines.

Volumes 1 and 2 of The Seal of the Unity of the Three can be purchased separately.

From *The Seal of the Unity of the Three*

Qian and Kun, Kan and Li

“Qian ☰ and Kun ☷ are the door and the gate of change,”
the father and the mother of all hexagrams.
Kan ☵ and Li ☲ are the inner and the outer walls,
they spin the hub and align the axle.
Female and male, these four trigrams
function as a bellows and its nozzles.

Sections 1–17 of Book 1 are devoted to cosmology. The constant conjunction of Qian and Kun, the active and the passive principles, gives birth to all phenomena in the world of change. Therefore Qian and Kun are “the door and the gate” through which change arises, and “the father and the mother” of all emblems that represent change. As they join with

one another, Qian ☰ entrusts his generative potential to Kun and, in doing so, becomes Li ☲; Kun ☷ receives the essence of Qian to bring it to fruition and, in doing so, becomes Kan ☵. Since Kan and Li embrace Qian and Kun, represented by the respective inner lines, they provide “inner and outer walls” to Qian and Kun: the Yin principle (☷) harbors True Yang (—), and the Yang principle (☰) harbors True Yin (--).

If the two sets of walls are shaped as joined semicircles, they form a wheel (see fig. 3). The central hub is the emptiness from which existence comes forth; the axle passing through the hub is Qian and Kun, which hold the wheels in position; and the wheels with their spokes are the compass of space and the cycles of time governed by Kan and Li. The *Daode jing* (Book of the Way and its Virtue)

Continues on next page

Online Selections

Book Preview

[Preview of *The Seal of the Unity of the Three*](#), containing translations of 9 sections, with notes (PDF, 28 pp., free download)

Selections

Book 1, Section 1: [Qian and Kun, Kan and Li](#)

Book 1, Section 18: [Nourishing Inner Nature](#)

Book 1, Section 22: [The Principles of Alchemy](#)

Book 2, Section 68: [The Lovely Maid and the Yellow Sprout](#)

Essays

[The Title of the *Cantong qi*](#) (PDF, 5 pp., free download)

[The Alchemical Model of the *Cantong qi*](#)

[Two Biographies of Wei Boyang](#)

uses the same images to illustrate the operation (or “function,” *yong*) of emptiness at the center of the cosmos: “Thirty spokes share one hub: wherein there is nothing lies the function of a carriage. . . . Therefore in what is there lies the benefit; in what is not there lies the function” (*Daode jing*, 11).

Qian, Kun, Kan, and Li are also compared to a bellows and its nozzles. The bellows (Qian and Kun) is empty, but sends forth its breath through the nozzles (Kan and Li). This image too alludes to a passage in the *Daode jing*, which refers to the empty center that brings about existence saying: “The space between Heaven and Earth — is it not like a bellows? As empty, it is never exhausted; as it moves, it continues to pour” (*Daode jing*, 5).

1. “*Qian and Kun are the door and the gate of change.*” This sentence is an almost literal quotation from the “Appended Sayings” of the

Book of Changes: “Qian and Kun are indeed the door and the gate of change!” (B.5; see Wilhelm, 343).

2. *The father and the mother of all hexagrams.* Compare *Book of Changes*, “Explanation of the Trigrams”: “Qian is Heaven, therefore he is called the father. Kun is Earth, therefore she is called the mother” (sec. 9; see Wilhelm, 274). See also the “Commentary on the Judgement” on the hexagrams Qian (no. 1) and Kun (no. 2): “Great indeed is Qian, the Origin! The ten thousand things owe their beginning to him . . . Perfect indeed is Kun, the Origin! The ten thousand things owe their birth to her” (see Wilhelm, 370 and 386).

3. *Kan and Li are the inner and the outer walls.* In the trigrams Kan ☵ and Li ☲, the lower lines are the “inner wall,” and the upper lines are the “outer wall.” The central lines respectively belong to Qian ☰ and Kun ☷.

Readers' Reviews

“[Pregadio] offers a glimpse of the painstaking detective work required to produce a high quality translation. . . . He faithfully translates the *Can Tong Qi* into readable English without sacrificing the richness of the original. . . . Fabrizio Pregadio's translation of the *Zhou Yi Can Tong Qi* is a remarkable contribution to those interested in the study of Taoism and Internal Alchemy. Very few of the old texts have been translated into English, let alone with such high quality.” — *Shawn Cartwright, Traditional Chinese Culture Institute International.*

“[This book] has already opened my eyes to things that I would not have appreciated before.” — *Email from a Reader.*



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The Seal of the Unity of the Three

Vol. 2 — Bibliographic Studies on the *Cantong qi*: Commentaries, Essays, and Related Works

Fabrizio Pregadio



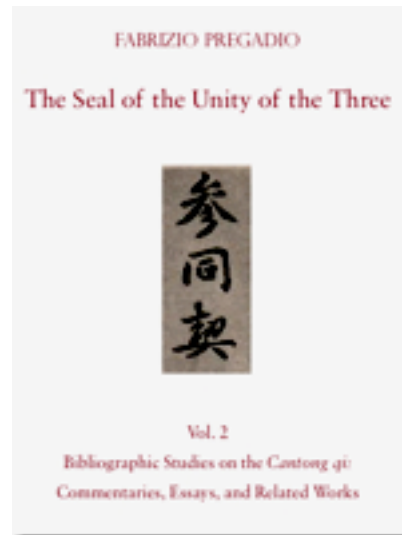
278 pp.

Golden Elixir Press, 2012

ISBN 978-0-9843082-9-3

Paperback, US\$23.95 (list price)

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In addition to Taoist masters and adepts, the *Cantong qi* has also attracted the attention of philosophers, cosmologists, poets, literati, calligraphers, philologists, and bibliophiles. Thirty-eight commentaries written through the end of the nineteenth century are extant, and dozens of texts found in the Taoist Canon and elsewhere are related to it. The present book is the most complete guide to this vast literature available in any language.

The book is divided into two main parts. Part 1 contains a catalogue of extant and lost commentaries, essays, and related texts, listing altogether about 150 works with systematic details on their authors, editions, and reprints. Part 2 contains a survey of the textual tradition of the *Cantong qi*, focused on the composition and contents of about 40 major texts. A final index of authors, editors, titles, and editions facilitates the use of the book.

Main Contents

Introduction
Part I: Bibliographic Catalogue
Part II: Commentaries, Essays, and
Related Works
Appendixes
Index of Names, Titles, and Editions

*Volumes 1 and 2 of The Seal of the Unity
of the Three can be purchased separately.*

Foundations of Internal Alchemy

The Taoist Practice of Neidan

Wang Mu

Edited and translated by Fabrizio Pregadio

viii + 144 pages

Golden Elixir Press, 2011

ISBN 978-0-9843082-5-5

Paperback, US\$16.95 (list price)

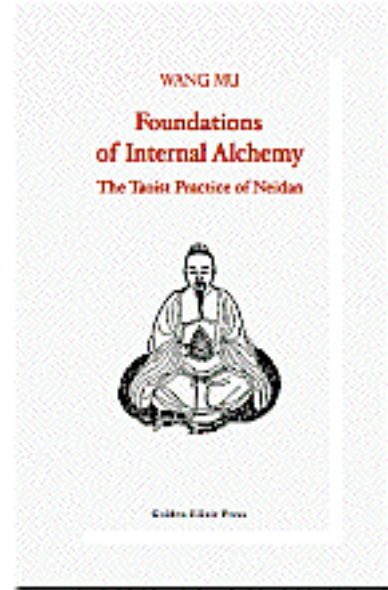
PDF, US\$9.95 (list price)

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Originally written for a Chinese audience, this book provides an exceptionally clear description of the practice of Internal Alchemy. The author clarifies several relevant terms and notions, including those of Essence, Breath, and Spirit; the Cinnabar Fields; the “Fire Times”; and the “Embryo of Sainthood.” While the book is based on the system of the *Wuzhen pian* (Awakening to Reality), it is enriched by about two hundred quotations from Taoist texts.

About the Author

Wang Mu (1908-1992) was a renowned Chinese master of Neidan, held in high regard both by practitioners and by Chinese scholars of the Taoist tradition. He is the author of a valuable annotated edition of the *Wuzhen pian* (Awakening to Reality, one of the major classics of Neidan) and of several essays on Taoism and Taoist alchemy.



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“... after reading about half of Foundations I can say I have never met a clearer and more useful book in this very difficult and intricate field.” — A Reader

Main Contents

1. The Basis: Essence and Spirit
2. The Four Stages
3. “Laying Out the Foundations”
4. Refining Essence into Breath
5. Refining Breath into Spirit
6. Refining Spirit and Returning to Emptiness
7. Conclusion



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From *Foundations of Internal Alchemy*

Laying the Foundations

The expression "laying the foundations" is a metaphor often used in the alchemical texts. To build a house, one must first lay the foundations. Only when the foundations are stable and firm is it possible to set pillars and beams in place, and arrange bricks and tiles. Refining the Internal Elixir is based on the same principle.

The alchemical practice, however, is concerned with the human body. At the initial stage of the Neidan process, therefore, one should first replenish the basic constituents of the body, so that they conform to the requirements of the practice. Only then is it possible to undertake the stages of alchemical refinement proper. Until the basic constituents do not conform to those requirements, the body's functions should be restored and augmented by means of inner practices, so that Essence, Breath, and Spirit can reach a state of abundance. All this pertains to the stage of "laying the foundations."

Taoism deems Essence, Breath, and Spirit to be the major components of life, and the alchemical texts call them the Three Treasures (*sanbao*). If the Three Treasures are healthy and flourishing, the body is strong; if they are drained and depleted, illnesses develop. When the alchemical texts speak of refining the Elixir, they actually mean refining the Three Treasures. Chen Zhixu (1290-ca. 1368) says in his *Jindan dayao* (Great Essentials of the Golden Elixir):

Essence, Breath, and Spirit affect one another. When they follow the course, they form the human being; when they invert the course, they form the Elixir.

What is the meaning of "following the course"? "The One generates the Two, the Two generate the Three, the Three generate the ten thousand things" (*Daode jing*, sec. 42). Therefore Emptiness transmutes itself into Spirit, Spirit transmutes itself into



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Breath, Breath transmutes itself into Essence, Essence transmutes itself into form, and form becomes the human being.

What is the meaning of "inverting the course"? The ten thousand things hold the Three, the Three return to the Two, the Two return to the One. Those who know this Way look after their Spirit and guard their corporeal form. They nourish the corporeal form to refine the Essence, accumulate the Essence to transmute it into Breath, refine the Breath to merge it with Spirit, and refine the Spirit to revert to Emptiness. Then the Golden Elixir is achieved.

In his commentary to *Awakening to Reality* (*Wuzhen pian*), Weng Baoguang (fl. 1173) writes:

Essence can generate Breath, and Breath can generate Spirit; to strengthen and protect oneself, nothing is more important than this. Those who devote themselves to Nourishing Life (*yangsheng*) treasure in the first place their Essence. If the Essence is full, Breath is strong; if the Breath is strong, Spirit flourishes; if the Spirit flourishes, the body is healthy and there are few illnesses. Internally, the five viscera bloom; externally, the skin becomes smooth. One's complexion is luminous, and one's ears and eyes are sharp and bright.

In the two passages quoted above, Chen Zhixu explains Essence, Breath, and Spirit in terms of their sequence in "following the course" and "inverting the course." Weng Baoguang, instead, explains them as the basic components of existence. But beyond these differences, at the stage of "laying the foundations" there are two tasks: the first is preserving the state of Essence and Breath; the second is replenishing their shortage. When Essence is abundant, when Breath is full, and when Spirit is flourishing, this stage of the practice is concluded.

The World Upside Down

Essays on Taoist Internal Alchemy

Isabelle Robinet

Edited and translated by Fabrizio Pregadio

viii + 129 pp.

Golden Elixir Press, 2011

ISBN 978-0-9843082-6-2

Paperback, US\$15.95 (list price)

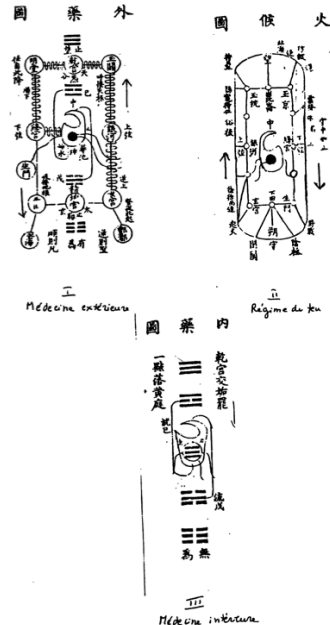
PDF, US\$9.95 (list price)

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This book contains four essays on Internal Alchemy by Isabelle Robinet, translated here for the first time into English. The essays are concerned with the alchemical principle of “inversion”; the rhetorical and linguistic devices used by alchemists to “give form to the Formless by the word, and thus manifest the authentic and absolute Dao”; the symbolic function of numbers in Taoism and in Internal Alchemy; and the original meanings of the terms “External Elixir” and “Internal Elixir.”

Main Contents

1. The World Upside Down in Taoist Internal Alchemy
2. The Alchemical Language, or the Effort to Say the Contradictory
3. Role and Meaning of Numbers in Taoist Cosmology and Alchemy
4. On the Meaning of the Terms *Waidan* and *Neidan*



Alchemical diagrams, with captions in Isabelle Robinet's handwriting



About the Author

Isabelle Robinet (1932-2000) was one of the most important Western scholars of Taoism. Her work dealt with several major topics: the *Laozi* and the *Zhuangzi* with their commentaries; the Shangqing (Highest Clarity) school of Taoism; Neidan (Internal Alchemy); and Taoist thought and cosmology. Her publications in English include *Taoist Meditation: The Mao-shan Tradition of Great Purity* (SUNY Press, 1993) and *Taoism: Growth of a Religion* (Stanford UP, 1997).



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From *The World Upside Down*

Internal alchemy, or Neidan, is a technique of enlightenment whose earliest extant written records date from the eighth century. It appeals both to rationality, which gives order to the world, and to what transcends rationality: the unspeakable, the Totality. Its main tools are the trigrams of the *Yijing* (Book of Changes) and a number of key metaphors, some of which are alchemical in nature, whence the name, “internal alchemy.”

Alchemy begins with a binary structure made of two complementary and antagonistic terms: pure Yin and pure Yang. However, their binary structure admits complexity with two other mixed terms, born from the union of the first two: Yin containing Yang, and Yang containing Yin. A neutral term, the Center, is beyond the conjunction and the disjunction of the other two.

The principle consists in ordering the world by means of multiple and complex reference points built on the basis of these initial data and of a multi-layered structure. Here lies the rationality of alchemy, in the sense of providing order and intelligibility. However, being a didactic technique oriented toward mysticism, alchemy also involves the denial of its own system. This denial is achieved by several means: the reminder that silence is the foundation of the word; the continuous evocation of Unity, which merges and abolishes all reference points; the adoption of a fundamentally metaphoric language that must be surpassed; the continuous disruptions in the continuity of discourse; the use of images that play at several levels and operate in one direction and in the opposite direction, and are related to one another until they are all unified; the ellipsis that handles two different entities as equivalent; the reciprocal

encasement of all images, so that “the child generates its mother” and the contained is the container; the multiplicity of facets, times, and reference points superimposed above another, which counteracts the fragmentation wrought by rational analysis.

Therefore the alchemists use a highly structured language, but transgress it by introducing a negation of their own system, and by expressing, through a system of reciprocal encasements, a duality absorbed into Unity, a rationality traversed by irrationality. The language of alchemy is a language that attempts to say the contradictory.

One facet of this system is the theme of the “world upside down.”

Look at the gate of death as the gate of life,
Do not take the gate of life to be the gate of death.
The one who knows the mechanism of death and sees
the reversal
Begins to understand that the good is born within the
evil.

(*Wuzhen pian*, “Jueju,” poem no. 62.)

The Sun at the West, the Moon at the East. Heaven is Earth, Earth is Heaven. This symbolizes the growth and union of Yin and Yang, the reversal [of the course] of the five agents. (*Ziyang zhenren wuzhen pian zhushu*, 8.13b)

“Reversal” (*diandao*) is one of the basic principles of internal alchemy. This principle takes many forms and is applied in different ways. To obtain the Golden Elixir—the equivalent of the Philosopher’s Stone—one should go through several reversals. According to a sentence often quoted in the texts, “Those who go in the ordinary sense give birth to human beings; those who go backward find immortality.”

Awakening to Reality

The “Regulated Verses” of the *Wuzhen pian*, a Taoist Classic of Internal Alchemy

Fabrizio Pregadio

viii + 102 pages

Golden Elixir Press, 2009

ISBN: 978-0-9843082-1-7

Paperback, US\$15.95 (list price)

PDF, US\$9.95 (list price)

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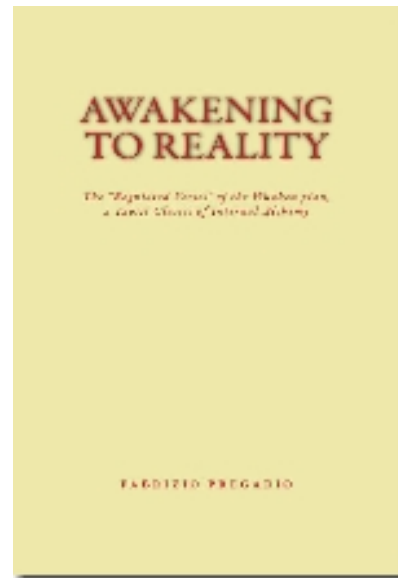
Awakening to Reality (*Wuzhen pian*) is one of the most important and best-known Taoist alchemical texts. Written in the eleventh century, it describes in a poetical form, and in a typically cryptic and allusive language, several facets of Neidan, or internal alchemy. This book presents the first part of the text, consisting of sixteen poems, which contain a concise but comprehensive exposition of Neidan. In addition to notes that clarify the meaning of the more obscure points, the book also contains selections from a commentary dating from the late eighteenth century, which is distinguished by the use of a lucid and plain language.

Main Contents

1. Introduction
2. Translation
3. Selections from Liu Yiming's
Commentary
4. Textual Notes



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“A fine and delicate work of translation.” — A Reader



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About the Author

Fabrizio Pregadio has taught at the University of Venice (1996-97), the Technical University of Berlin (1998-2001), and Stanford University (2001-08). He is the author of *Great Clarity: Daoism and Alchemy in Early Medieval China* (Stanford University Press, 2006) and the editor of the *Encyclopedia of Taoism* (Routledge, 2008)

From *Awakening to Reality*

Poem 3

If you study immortality,
you should study celestial immortality:
only the Golden Elixir
is the highest principle.
When the two things meet,
emotions and nature join one another;
where the five agents are whole,
Dragon and Tiger coil.

Rely in the first place on *wu* and *ji*
that act as go-betweens,
then let husband and wife
join together and rejoice.
Just wait until your work is achieved
to have audience at the Northern Portal,
and in the radiance of a ninefold mist
you will ride a soaring phoenix.

Poem 7

You should know that the source of the stream,
the place where the Medicine is born,
is just at the southwest —
that is its native village.
When Lead meets the birth of *gui*,
quickly you should collect it:
if Metal goes past the full moon,
it is not fit to be savored.

Send it back to the earthenware crucible,
seal it tightly,
then add the Flowing Pearl,
so that they are match for one another.
For the Medicine to weigh one pound
the Two Eights are needed;
regulate the fire times
relying on Yin and Yang.

Poem 4

This is the method of wondrous Reality
within Reality,
where I depend on myself, alone
and different from all others.
I know for myself how to invert,
starting from Li and Kan:
who else can comprehend the floating and the sinking,
and determine the host and the guest?

If in the Golden Tripod you want to detain
the Mercury within the Vermilion,
first from the Jade Pond send down
the Silver within the Water.
The cycling of fire in the spiritual work
before the light of dawn
will cause the whole wheel of the Moon to appear
in the Deep Pool.

Poem 14

Three, Five, One —
all is in these three words;
but truly rare are those who understand them
in past and present times.
East is 3, South is 2,
together they make 5;
North is 1, West is 4,
they are the same.

Wu and *ji* dwell on their own,
their birth number is 5;
when the three families see one another,
the Infant coalesces.
The Infant is the One
holding True Breath;
in ten months the embryo is complete —
this is the foundation for entering sainthood.

The Book of the Nine Elixirs

An Early Chinese Alchemical Text

Translated and annotated by Fabrizio Pregadio

36 pages

Golden Elixir Press, 2011

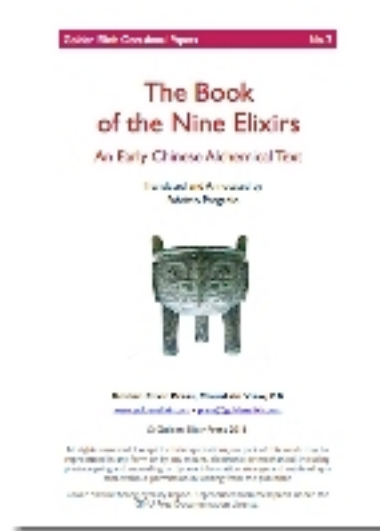
PDF, US\$4.95 (list price)

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The *Book of the Nine Elixirs* (Jiudan jing) is the main extant text of the Great Clarity (Taiqing), the earliest identifiable tradition of Chinese alchemy. It describes the preparation of nine elixirs, paying particular attention to the ritual context and its sequence. The main stages are the transmission from master to disciple, the establishment of the ritual area, the choice of an auspicious time, the compounding of the elixir, its offering to the gods, and its ingestion. It is this entire process, and not only the compounding of the elixirs, that constitutes the alchemical practice.

From *The Book of the Nine Elixirs*

When you want to compound the Divine Elixirs you should dwell in the depths of a mountain, in a wide moorland, or in a place deserted and uninhabited for endless miles. If you compound them among other people you should stay behind thick, high walls, so that nothing can be seen between the inside and the outside. Your companions should not number more than two or three. First undertake the purification practices for seven days, and increase your purity with ablutions and the five fragrances. Do not pass by filth and dirt, or by houses where mourning is being observed, or by houses inhabited by women of the age of marriage. . . . When you compound the Divine Medicines, beware of intercourse with common and dull people. Do not let the envious, those who talk too much, and those who do not have faith in this Way hear or know about it. If they do, the compounding of the Divine Medicines would not be successful.



This PDF contains a complete translation of the Book of the Nine Elixirs, with a detailed commentary.



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9 Taoist Books on the Elixir



A Short Bibliography

23 pages

Golden Elixir Press, 2011

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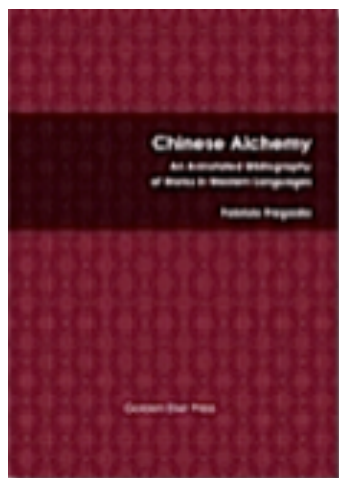
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This bibliography contains the main data on nine important original texts of Taoist alchemy. It includes two texts on Waidan (External Alchemy) and seven texts on Neidan (Internal Alchemy). In addition to their importance and renown, the selections concern texts for which at least one translation in a Western language is available.

Chinese Alchemy

An Annotated Bibliography of Works in Western Languages

Fabrizio Pregadio



50 pages

Golden Elixir Press, 2009

Paperback, US\$8.50 (list price)

PDF, US\$5.00 (list price)

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This bibliography contains about 300 titles of books and articles, with annotations on their contents. It was first published in the journal *Monumenta Serica* in 1996. In addition to minor changes, the present version contains a final section listing books and articles published between 1995 and early 2009.



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Hinduism and Buddhism

Ananda K. Coomaraswamy

x + 112 pages

Golden Elixir Press, 2011

ISBN 978-0-9843082-3-1

Paperback, US\$13.95 (list price)

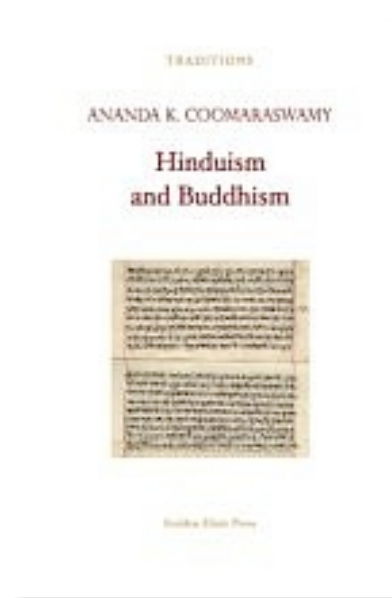
PDF, US\$8.95 (list price)

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First published in 1943, this outstanding book represents in many ways the most complete achievement of A.K. Coomaraswamy (1877-1947), one of the main modern representatives of the Hindu tradition. Displaying an unequaled mastery of Sanskrit, Pali, Greek, Latin, and medieval German and Italian sources, Coomaraswamy shows that “the Indian tradition is one of the forms of the *Philosophia Perennis*, and as such, embodies those universal truths to which no one people or age can make exclusive claim.”

About the Author

Ananda K. Coomaraswamy was born in 1877. After completing studies in Geology he soon became interested in the arts and crafts of his native Ceylon and India. In 1917 he moved to the USA where he became Keeper of Indian and Islamic Art at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, establishing a large collection of Oriental artifacts and presenting lectures on their symbolic and metaphysical meaning. From this period onwards Dr. Coomaraswamy began to compose his most profound works, by drawing on his unparalleled knowledge of the arts, crafts, mythologies, cultures, folklores, symbolisms, and religions of the East and the West. In 1947 his plans to retire to India and take on *sannyasa* (renunciation of the world) were cut short by his sudden and untimely death.



This edition incorporates corrections and additions that the Author contributed, shortly before his death, to the French translation of his work.



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From *Hinduism and Buddhism*

The sacred marriage, consummated in the heart, adumbrates the deepest of all mysteries. For this means both our death and beatific resurrection. The word to “marry” (*eko bhū*, become one) also means to “die,” just as in Greek, τελέω is to be perfected, to be married, or to die. When “Each is both,” no relation persists: and were it not for this beatitude (*ānanda*) there would be neither life nor gladness anywhere. All this implies that what we call the world-process and a creation is nothing but a game (*krīḍā, līlā, παιδιά, dolce gioco*) that the Spirit plays with itself, and as sunlight “plays” upon whatever it illuminates and quickens, although unaffected by its apparent contacts. We who play the game of life so desperately for temporal stakes might be playing at love with God for higher stakes—our selves, and his. We play against one another for possessions, who might be playing with the King who stakes his throne and what is his against our lives and all we are: a game in which the more is lost, the more is won.

* * *

Before we return to the Doctrine we must carefully guard ourselves from thinking that the Buddha attaches an absolute value to moral conduct. We must not, for example, suppose that because the means are partly ethical, Nirvāṇa is therefore an ethical state. So far from this, un-self-ishness, from the Indian point of view is an amoral state, in which no question of “altruism” can present itself,

liberation being as much from the notion of “others” as it is from the notion of “self”; and not in any sense a psychological state, but a liberation from all that is implied by the “psyche” in the word “psychology.”

* * *

Who then can be liberated and by whom and from what? It would be better to ask, with respect to this absolutely unconditional liberty, What is free now and nowever from the limitations that are presupposed by the very notion of individuality (*aham ca mama ca*, “I and mine”; *kartā’ham iti*, “I’ am a doer”)? Freedom is from one’s self, this “I,” and its affections.

* * *

It is altogether contrary to Buddhist, as it is to Vedantic doctrine to think of “ourselves” as wanderers in the fatally determined storm of the world’s flow (*samsāra*). “Our immortal Self” is anything but a “surviving personality.” It is not this man So-and-so that goes *home* and is lost to view, but the prodigal Self that recollects itself; and that having been many is now again one, and inscrutable, *Deus absconditus*. “No man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven,” and therefore “If any man would follow me, let him deny himself.” “The kingdom of God is for none but the thoroughly dead.” The realisation of Nirvāṇa is the “Flight of the Alone to the Alone.”

Letters from a Sufi Teacher

Shaikh Sharfuddin Maneri

Translated from the Persian by Baijnath Singh

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They asked Master Shibli, "Who is a Knower, and how is he to be distinguished?" He said, "He is deaf, dumb and blind." They replied, "These are the marks of an unbeliever." He rejoined: "The unbeliever is deaf to the voice of truth, dumb for the utterance of truth, and blind to the vision of truth; whereas the Knower is deaf, dumb and blind to all save Truth."

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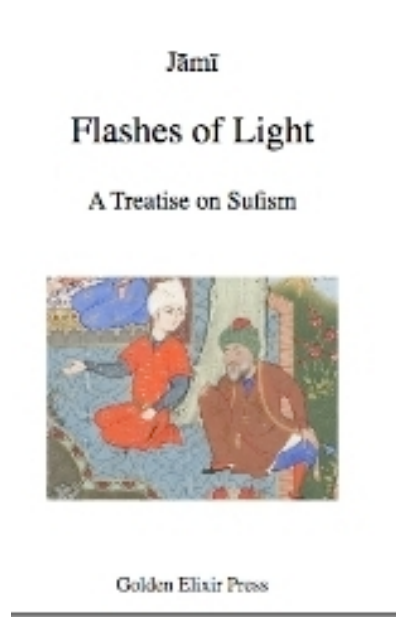
"And thus the manifestation which is a characteristic of Light is preceded by concealment; and concealment, by its very nature, has the priority over, and is antecedent to, manifestation; hence the concealed and the manifested are counted as first and second. . . . Glory be to Him who hides Himself by the manifestations of His light, and manifests Himself by drawing a veil over His face."

The real substance of everything always abides, though concealed in the inner depth of the Very Being, while its sensible properties are manifest to outward sense.

The Absolute does not exist without the relative, and the relative is not formulated without the Absolute; but the relative stands in need of the Absolute, while the Absolute has no need of the relative.



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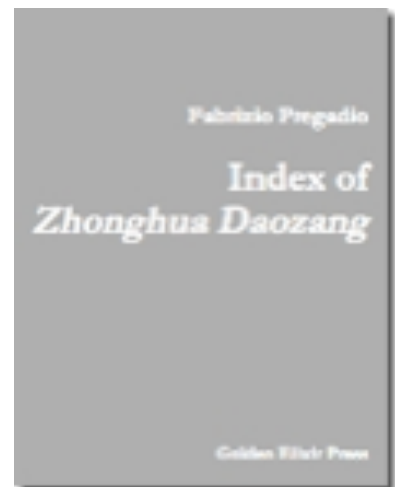
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