CHINESE RELIGION

AN
ANTHOLOGY
OF SOURCES

Deborah Sommer

New York Oxford
OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS
1995

Oxford University Press

Athens Auckland Bangkok Bombay
Calcutta Capetown Dar es Salaam Delhi
Florence Hong Kong Istanbul Karachi
Kuala Lumpur Madras Madrid Melbourne
Mexico City Nairobi Paris Singapore
Taipei Tokyo Toronto

and associated companies in Berlin Ibadan

Copyright © 1995 by Oxford University Press, Inc.

Published by Oxford University Press. Inc. 198 Madison Avenue, New York, New York 10016-4314 Oxford is a registered trademark of Oxford University Press, Inc.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of Oxford University Press.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publications Data
Chinese religion: an anthology of sources
edited by Deborah Sommer.
p. cm. Translated from Chinese
ISBN 0-19-508894-8.—ISBN 0-19-508895-0-12000.
1. China—Religion—History—Sources.
2. Philosophy, Chinese—History—Sources.
BL1802.C5477 1995
299'.51—de20 94-7557

Pages xix-xxv are an extension of the copyright page

Meditations on the Body

Contemplative techniques introduced from India combined with native Chinese practices for developing the forces within the body. The two traditions are combined in unknown proportions in the Secret Instructions of the Holy Lord on the Scripture of Great Peace (T'ai-p'ing sheng-chün pi-chih), a work that perhaps contains elements of earlier, now lost, Chinese texts from the late first century B.C.E. Some of the content of the Instructions might then predate the arrival of Buddhism, but the extant version of the Instructions dates only to the late sixth century and has probably been greatly influenced by the foreign teaching.

Underlying this selection from the *Instructions* is the fundamental belief in the essential continuity between the self and the larger universe, a worldview expressed earlier, for example, in the *Great Learning*, which also emphasized peace. The method for actualizing that continuity in the *Instructions* is somewhat different, however, and involves the cultivation of essences and energy, or vital force (ch'i), within the body and advocates the use of chemical and herbal substances to assist in that cultivation. The distribution of energies within the body had been described as early as the *Tso chuan*, when Tzu-ch'an explained the wraith of Po-yu; he did not, however, suggest how one might utilize those energies to enhance long life or develop foreknowledge.

The projection of the *Great Learning* was a stepwise extension from the self to the outer world, but the *Instructions* adopts a numerical correlative perspective that associates the macrocosm of the four seasons and Five Agents, or Five Elements, with the microcosm of the inner body. Communication is effected by "gods" who dwell within the body and travel freely between the self and the outside world. For Confucius, in contrast, communication with the world beyond the body was actualized through the values of humanity and virtue. In the *Instructions*, sacrifices to the spirits of heaven, earth, land and grain, and mountains and rivers, once the prerogative only of the enfeoffed lords of the Chou

dynasty, have now become internalized forces that are accessible to anyone from any social class.

Like the *Hsiin Tzu* and the "Centrality and Equilibrium," the *Instructions* assumes the possibility of a triadic relationship between human beings, heaven, and earth, but it places much more emphasis on the notion of oneness or wholeness evidenced in the *Tao-te ching;* Hsün Tzu, on the other hand, had insisted on discrete differences between the three. And while Mencius was able to guide his vital energy, the *Instructions* posits a unitary primordial energy that gives rise to things. Reverence toward the ancestors, who are now perceived as mere expressions of the yin force and do not rank with the perfected, is given less priority than the development of the self through inwardly focused contemplative practices. The lights perceived within the body recall the pure brightness of virtue engendered by the focusing of the will in presacrificial vigils of the *Book of Rites*, but those vigils had encouraged eidetic visions; the envisioning of inner lights in the *Instructions*, however, is completely aniconic. The extent to which these envisioning exercises are derived from Buddhism is unclear, but such practices are common to many schools of Buddhist thought.

O

ar ro sp en

sp ess thr wh

> ing dia wh for of

bri

To har leaves as jumper on an an bod

greate will By arouther will

To p

you

Selection from the Secret Instructions of the Holy Lord on the Scripture of Great Peace

The Holy Lord said:

The three energies together are unified in the One. There is essence, there is spirit, and there is energy. These three are originally one. They are founded in heaven and earth and form the root of all human energy. Human beings receive spirit from heaven, essence from earth, and energy from the middle harmony of heaven and earth. Joined together they are the One. Thus spirit moves by riding along on energy, while essence resides in the middle between them. The three support each other and form an integrated whole.

To pursue long life you must love energy, venerate spirit, and value essence. Human beings originally come from the energy of primordial chaos. This energy brings forth essence, which in turn gives birth to spirit. Spirit brings forth light. People are also based on the energy of yin and yang. As this energy revolves it brings forth essence. Essence in turn revolves and becomes spirit. Spirit revolves and light is born.

To pursue long life you must guard energy and harmonize spirit and essence. Never let them leave your body, but continue to think of them as joined in one. With prolonged practice your perception will become finer and subtler. Quite naturally you will be able to see within your body. The physical body will become gradually lighter, the essence more brilliant, and the light more concentrated. In your mind you will feel greatly restful, delighted and full of joy. You will go along with the energy of Great Peace. By then cultivating yourself, you can turn around and go along with all without. Within there will be perfect longevity; without there will be perfect accordance with the order of the universe. Without the exertion of any muscle you naturally attain Great Peace.

To practice guarding the light of the One, when you have not yet attained concentration, just sit

quietly with your eyes closed. There is no light seen in the inner eye.

Practice guarding the One like this for a long time and a brilliant light will arise. In the radiance of this light you can see all the four directions. Following it you can travel far. Using it, you can examine your person and body with penetration. The host of spirits will assemble. Thus you can transform your physical body into pure spirit.

The practice of guarding the light of the One is the root of long life. With it, you can control the myriad spirits and go beyond all through the brilliant gateway of light.

Practice guarding the One and concentrate on the light. It will first arise like fire. Be careful not to let it slip! The light will initially be red; with prolonged practice it will turn white. After another long stretch, it will be green. As you penetrate these lights, they will come nearer and nearer and eventually merge into one brilliance. Nothing is not illumined within; the hundred diseases are driven out. Guard it and never slacken! You will go beyond the world and ascend to heaven!

In guarding the light of the One, you may see a light as bright as the rising sun. This is a brilliance as strong as that of the sun at noon.

In guarding the light of the One, you may see a light entirely green. When this green is pure, it is the light of lesser yang.

In guarding the light of the One, you may see a light entirely red, just like fire. This is a sign of transcendence.

In guarding the light of the One, you may see a light entirely yellow. When this develops a greenish tinge, it is the light of central harmony. This is a potent remedy of the Tao.

In guarding the light of the One, you may see a light entirely white. When this is as clear as flowing water, it is the light of lesser yin.

In guarding the light of the One, you may see a light entirely black. When this shimmers like deep water, it is the light of greater yin.

In guarding the light of the One, you may see your own abdomen pervaded by light while the four directions are utterly in darkness. This

om

asen,

or

had Ible

hat l as

ven :m-

ess the

of to

but

is the light of great harmony, the Tao of great accordance.

In guarding the light of the One, you may perceive utter darkness without and total blackness within. There is nothing to hold on to, nothing to see. This is the light of human disease, disorder, and nervousness. Take medicines and drugs to remedy this, then try to see any of the seven lights described above. To do so proceed in the following way:

- Focus on primordial energy and non-action by meditating on your body without the One. Just imagine your body as pervaded by a white light. When the flourishing energy within is quite shapeless, there is nothing that is not done, nothing that is not known.
- Practice emptiness, nonbeing, and spontaneity by concentrating on the center of the body. There will be a white radiance both above and below, pure like jade without the smallest flaw. This is the image of primordial energy and non-action.
- 3. Count and measure in deep meditation all of your body, from top to toe. The distinctions between the five fingers, the exact nature of your physical body within and without think of them as never constant. This meditation follows emptiness and nonbeing.
- 4. Meditate on the gods residing in the five orbs and observe how they come and go. Carefully watch their movements. If you can put their activities into words, you can predict your good and bad fortune. This practice follows counting and measuring.
- 5. The Great God of the Tao: Let the gods emerge from your body and mingle with the five agents and four seasons. The green, yel-

- low, white, and black will thus equally come to be stored within. The gods emerge and enter, come and go freely as divine officials of the five agents and four seasons. Use them to subdue the hundred evil [demons].
- The Spirits of Sensuous Attractions: Let the gods burrow deep and rout them out from the soil. The God of the Tao urges them all toward positive efforts; still they remain half-evil.
- 7. The Administration of Earth: These are the deities of heaven and earth, the four seasons, soil and grain, mountains and rivers. Worship and offer sacrifices to them all. They will let you pass through all obstacles. You can traverse wherever you wish. Evil and false [demons] will be destroyed and can never resurface.
- 8. Foreign Gods: These are strange and alien. Their ways cannot be controlled. They make people talk foolish things. Sometimes they are similar to the perfected; sometimes they are more like evil [demons].
- The Ancestors: They are of pure yin quality and do not belong among the perfected. They are just ordinary ghosts and spirits.

The Tao of guarding the One applied in antiquity as much as today. There have always been various kinds of people guarding the One. Those of highest wisdom guard it and go beyond the world. Those of medium wisdom guard it and become emperors and kings, faithful servants and virtuous officials. People of lesser talents practice it and are free from joy and anger. Through it, all under heaven is entirely free from bad things.

The Way of the Taoist Tradition of Perfect Truth

The Way of the Taoist tradition of Perfect Truth (Ch'üan-chen), also called Perfect Reality or Complete Clarity, is outlined in these precepts for followers. This tradition looked to Wang Che (1112–1170) as its founder, a man also known by his religious name of Wang Ch'ung-yang, or Master Wang of Developed Yang. From Shensi Province in northern China, Wang studied Confucian texts in his youth and initially aspired to a career in the military; he eventually became a mountain recluse, practiced Buddhism for a time, and finally became a master of the Tao (tao-shih). He journeyed eastward to Shantung Province and there gained many disciples; one of them, Ch'iu Ch'ang-ch'un (1148–1227), attracted the notice of Genghis Khan.

Wang's teaching of Perfect Truth was a synthesis of several traditions, and his followers were enjoined to read not only the Tao-te ching but also Buddhist literature on the perfection of wisdom (Prajñāpāramitā literature), as well as the Classic of Filial Piety (Hsiao ching), a Han compilation. That mixture of ideas is reflected in these fifteen precepts. Although the ideas of nature and destiny (the mandate) are from Confucian teachings, the injunction to leave the family for a cloistered life would seem to transgress the Confucian ideal of filial piety, which enjoins people to remain at home and care for their parents until their death. Yet one does not actually leave the mundane world: one leave's only the mundane mind behind on an inner spiritual journey. While the goal of spiritual development is to become a sage, it is to become a sage who is in, but not of, this world. Some of the vocabulary of the precepts is borrowed from Buddhism, for example, the three realms and the middle path of love without attachment. Older ideas of the alchemical transformation of the body have been interpreted figuratively, and the new agent of metamorphosis is meditation.

nat many de development de la development development de la development development de la development development

ecausion, and is the fucius lies in the interval.

ded. 🏽

praccudent nyone naracsays

do so serve there ill be now, How life,

nder-? If nere, at is hing

"Master Ch'ung-yang's Fifteen Precepts for Establishing the Teaching"

On the Cloistered Life

All those who choose to leave their families and homes should join a Taoist monastery, for it is a place where the body may find rest. Where the body rests, the mind also will gradually find peace; the spirit and the vital energy will be harmonized, and entry into the Way (Tao) will be attained.

In all action there should be no overexertion, for when there is overexertion, the vital energy is damaged. On the other hand, when there is total inaction, the blood and vital energy become sluggish. Thus a mean should be sought between activity and passivity, for only in this way can one cherish what is permanent and be at ease with one's lot. This is the way to the correct cloistered life:

On Cloud-like Wandering

There are two kinds of wandering. One involves observing the wonders of mountains and waters; lingering over the colors of flowers and trees; admiring the splendor of cities and the architecture of temples; or simply enjoying a visit with relatives and friends. However, in this type of wandering the mind is constantly possessed by things, so this is merely an empty, outward wandering. In fact, one can travel the world over and see the myriad sights, walk millions of miles and exhaust one's body, only in the end to confuse one's mind and weaken one's vital energy without having gained a thing.

In contrast, the other type of wandering, cloud-like wandering, is like a pilgrimage into one's own nature and destiny in search of their darkest, innermost mysteries. To do this one may have to climb fearsome mountain heights to seek instruction from some knowledgeable teacher or cross tumultuous rivers to inquire tirelessly after the Way. Yet if one can find that solitary word which can trigger enlightenment, one will have awakened in oneself perfect illu-

mination; then the great matters of life and death will become magnificent, and one will become a master of the Perfect Truth. This is true cloud-like wandering.

On Book-Learning

In learning from books, one who merely grasps onto the literal sense of words will only confuse his eyes. If one can intuit the true meaning behind the words and bring one's heart into harmony with it, then the books themselves can be discarded. One must therefore first attain an understanding of meanings and locate the principles behind them; then one should discard the principle and internalize the meaning into one's heart. When the meaning is understood, then the mind will withdraw from externals, and in time will naturally become responsive to reality. The light of the mind will overflow, the spirit of wisdom will become active, and no problem will be insolvable.

Thus one should diligently cultivate the inner self, never letting one's mind run wild, lest one lose his Nature and Destiny. If one cannot fully comprehend the true meanings of books, and only tries to read more and more, one will end up merely jabbering away before others, seeking to show off one's meager talent. This will not only be detrimental to one's self-cultivation but it may do harm to one's spirit and vital energy. In short, no matter how many books one reads, they will be of no avail in attaining the Way. To understand fully the deep meaning of books, one must incorporate them into one's mind.

Ž,

*

14

On the Art of Medicine

Herbs are the treasures of the hills and the waters, the essence of the grass and the trees. Among the various herbs there are those which are warm and those which are cold; properly used, they can help in supplying elements to or eliminating them from the body. There are active and less active medicines, those that work externally and internally. Therefore people who know thoroughly the power of herbs can save lives, while those who do not will only do further harm to the body. Therefore the man of the Way

should not pursue it further because it will of no use in the attainment of the Way and even be detrimental to his accumulation of the way. This is because those who pride themeways in such knowledge crave after worldly wods, and do not cultivate the Truth. They will you for such transgression either in this life or next. The Perfect Truth Taoist must pay weed to this.

death

come

loud-

rasps

ıfuse

ning

into

can

ttain

the

card

into

od.

als,

e to

the

no

ner

ne

lly

nd

nd

ng

ot

ut

On Residence and Covering

seeping in the open air would violate the sun and the moon, therefore some simple thatched sovering is necessary. However, it is not the bit of the superior man to live in great halls and lavish palaces, because to cut down the wees that would be necessary for the building such grand residences would be like cutting the arteries of the earth or cutting the veins of man. Such deeds would only add to one's superficial external merits while actually damaging one's inner credits. It would be like drawing a picture of a cake to ward off hunger or piling up snow for a meal-much ado and nothing gained. Thus the Perfect Truth Taoist will daily seek out the palace hall within his own body and avoid the mundane mind which seeks to build lavish external residences. The man of wisdom will scrutinize and comprehend this principle.

On Companionship

A Taoist should find true friends who can help each other in times of illness and take care of each other's burials at death. However he must observe the character of a person before making friends with him. Do not commit oneself to friendship and then investigate the person's character. Love makes the heart cling to things and should therefore be avoided. On the other hand, if there is no love, human feelings will be strained. To love and yet not to become attached to love—this is the middle path one should follow.

There are three dimensions of compatibility and three of incompatibility. The three dimen-

sions of compatibility are an understanding mind, the possession of wisdom, and an intensity of aspiration. Inability to understand the external world, lack of wisdom accompanied by foolish acts, and lack of high aspiration accompanied by a quarrelsome nature are the three dimensions of incompatibility. The principle of establishing oneself lies in the grand monastic community. The choice of a companion should be motivated by an appreciation of the loftiness of a person's mind and not by mere feelings or external appearance.

On Sitting in Meditation

Sitting in meditation which consists only of the act of closing the eyes and seating oneself in an upright position is only a pretense. The true way of sitting in meditation is to have the mind as immovable as Mount T'ai all the hours of the day, whether walking, resting, sitting, or reclining. The four doors of the eyes, ears, mouth, and nose should be so pacified that no external sight can be let in to intrude upon the inner self. If ever an impure or wandering thought arises, it will no longer be true quiet sitting. For the person who is an accomplished meditator, even though his body may still reside within this dusty world, his name will already be registered in the ranks of the immortals or free spirits (hsien) and there will be no need for him to travel to far-off places to seek them out; within his body the nature of the sage and the virtuous man will already be present. Through years of practice, a person by his own efforts can liberate his spirit from the shell of his body and send it soaring to the heights. A single session of meditation, when completed, will allow a person to rove through all the corners of the universe.

On Pacification of the Mind

There are two minds. One is quiet and unmoving, dark and silent, not reflecting on any of the myriad things. It is deep and subtle, makes no distinction between inner and outer, and contains not a single wandering thought. The other mind is that mind which, because it is in contact with external forms, will be dragged into all kinds of

thoughts, pushed into seeking out beginnings and ends—a totally restless and confused mind. This confused mind must be eliminated. If one allows it to rule, then the Way and its power will be damaged, and one's Nature and Destiny will come to harm. Hearing, seeing, and conscious thoughts should be eliminated from all activities, from walking, resting, sitting, or reclining.

On Nurturing One's Nature

The art of cultivating one's Nature is like that of playing on the strings of a musical instrument: too great a force can break the string, while too weak a pull will not produce any sound; one must find the perfect mean to produce the perfect note. The art of nurturing one's Nature is also like forging a sword: too much steel will make the sword too brittle while too much tin will make it too malleable. In training one's Nature, this principle must be recognized. When it is properly implemented, one can master one's Nature at will.

On Aligning the Five Primal Energies

The Five Primal Energies are found in the Middle Hall. The Three Primal Energies are located at the top of the head. If the two are harmonized, then, beginning with the Green Dragon and the White Tiger [the supreme Yin-Yang pair], the ten thousand gods in the body will be arranged in perfect harmony. When this is accomplished, then the energy in the hundred veins will flow smoothly. Cinnabar [symbol for Nature] and mercury [symbol for Destiny] will coalesce into a unity. The body of the adept may still be within the realm of men, but the spirit is already roving in the universe.

On the Union of Nature and Destiny

Nature is spirit. Destiny is material energy. When Nature is supported by Destiny it is like a bird buoyed up and carried along by the wind—flying freely with little effort. Whatever one wills to be, one can be. This is the meaning in the line from the Classic of the Shadowy Talismans: "The bird is controlled by the air."

The Perfect Truth Taoist must treasure this line and not reveal its message casually to the uninitiated. The gods themselves will chide the person who disobeys this instruction. The search for the hidden meaning of Nature and mind is the basic motif of the art of self-cultivation. This must be remembered at all times.

On the Path of the Sage

In order to enter the path of the sage, one must accumulate patiently, over the course of many years, merit-actions and true practices. Men of high understanding, men of virtue, and men who have attained insight may all become sages. In attaining sagehood, the body of the person may still be in one room, but his nature will already be encompassing the world. The various sages in the various Heavens will protect him, and the free spirits and immortals in the highest realm of the Non-Ultimate will be around him. His name will be registered in the Hall of the Immortals, and he will be ranked among the free spirits. Although his bodily form is in the world of dust, his mind will have transcended all corporal things.

On Transcending the Three Realms

The Three Realms refer to the realms of desire, form, and formlessness. The mind that has free itself from all impure or random thoughts will have transcended the first realm of desire. The mind that is no longer tied to the perception of objects in the object-realm will have transcended the realm of form. The mind that no longer fixed upon emptiness will further transcend the realm of formlessness. The spirit of the mass who transcends all three of these realms will be in the realm of the immortals. His Nature will abide forever in the realm of Jade-like Purity.

On Cultivating the Body of the Law

The Body of the Law is formless form. It is neither empty nor full. It has neither front no back and is neither high nor low, long nor show. When it is functioning, there is nothing it does not penetrate. When it is withdrawn into itself it is obscure and leaves no trace; it must be

nis line uninitiperson rch for is the

many Men of on who ges. In n may lready sages nd the realm

n. His nmorfree world l cor-

esire, freed will The

nded ger is d the man ll be will ty.

w
It is
nor
nort.
does
self,
t be

cultivated in order to attain the true Way. If the cultivation is great, the merit will be great; if the cultivation is small, the merit will be small. One should not wish to return to it, nor should one be attached to this world of things. One must allow Nature to follow its own course.

On Leaving the Mundane World

Leaving the mundane world is not leaving the body; it is leaving behind the mundane mind.

Consider the analogy of the lotus; although rooted in the mud, it blossoms pure and white into the clear air. The man who attains the Way, although corporally abiding in the world, may flourish through his mind in the realm of sages. Those people who presently seek after non-death or escape from the world do not know this true principle and commit the greatest folly.

The words of these fifteen precepts are for our disciples of aspiration. Examine them carefully!

A Woman Adept Attains the Way

The historical Wang Che, or Wang Ch'ung-yang, of the Perfect Truth Taoist tradition had seven particularly developed disciples called the Seven Perfected. Extensive hagiographies of their lives appeared even in the Sung and Yüan (1279–1368) dynasties, and their biographies became the basis of the folk novel Seven Taoist Masters, which dates to perhaps the early sixteenth century. The selection from Seven Taoist Masters here recounts the spiritual attainments of Sun Pu-erh (1119–1183), the only woman of the Seven Perfected. Her religious name, Pu-erh, means literally "not two," and suggests both a philosophical understanding of the nuances of multiplicity and unity as well as an unwavering, unified focus of purpose. Historical references allude to her skills as a poet, and she purportedly developed many followers in the city of Lo-yang, the ancient capital of China located along the Yellow River. A work titled The Codified Sayings of the Primordial Goddess Sun Pu-erh (Sun Pu-erh Yüan-chün fa-yü), a text of uncertain provenance that describes meditation practices for women, may perhaps be the work of her disciples.

In the novel, each of the Seven Perfected has a particular spiritual obstacle, and Sun Pu-erh's is intellectualism. She realizes this in a conversation with her "brother," Ma Tan-yang, who is actually her spouse; upon embarking on a search for the Way, Sun and Ma have renounced sexual desire but still live together in a platonic relationship. Sun goes again to her teacher, Wang Ch'ung-yang, who gives her further instructions on three different options for spiritual development. In the secret vocabulary of internal alchemy, he describes the meditation practices for making the human body a virtual alchemical crucible for generating spiritual powers. When she realizes that the highest path is blocked off to her because of her female nature, she defaces herself, flees her spouse, and heads for Lo-yang. Even sacrificing her physical beauty does not protect her from the advances of Chang San and Li Ssu (fictive names that

are the equivalent of "Smith and Jones" in English), which she fends off with magical powers.

The proportions of historical fact and fictional embellishment in this selection from the *Seven Taoist Masters* are unknown; nevertheless, the special problems Sun Pu-erh confronts because she is a woman do not conflict with the universal experiences of women in any culture. Alone of all the Seven Perfected, Sun Pu-erh is the only one who radically immolates herself physically before achieving the Tao, which suggests the unique difficulties women encountered in religious practice.

Sun

bad

wgh wat

epi

ALT1

lers. adge

South South States South States

strate

sure Sally

word in

an ic Sh

Selection from Seven Taoist Masters

with

ction

lems

ersal

ving

ious

Pu-erh felt as if she had awakened from a dream. Everything now seemed clear. She whed and said to Ma Tan-yang, "Brother, if for your help I would have remained in the epths of illusion and ruined myself. Usually I more intelligent in dealing with daily matbut when it comes to learning Taoist knowlsige you surpass me by far." Ma Tan-yang said, is not because I grasp the instructions of our eacher better, but because for a long time you sissed your mind to learning new things. You sought you had learned all there was to learn. Your intelligence became an obstacle to your raining. Learning is limitless. Not many can sally grasp this idea." Sun Pu-erh thanked Ma **an-yang and said, "From now on I shall be mamble and learn whatever there is to learn." Ma Tan-yang returned to his room, happy that Sun Pu-erh had realized her mistakes and was now ready to progress again.

A few days later Ma Tan-yang prepared to attend the birthday celebration of an aunt in a searby town. He asked Sun Pu-erh to accompany him, but she pleaded sick and said she could not make the journey. So Ma Tan-yang packed the gifts, loaded them on a mule, and set out alone.

Sun Pu-erh sat in her room and thought once more about Ma Tan-yang's words. She especially remembered his saying that she had lost her motivation to learn. Left alone in the mansion, she thought things through. Ma Tan-yang would be away for a few days, and the servants were busy. This would be a good opportunity for her to go to Wang Ch'ung-yang and humbly ask for instructions.

She went to the meditation hall and found Wang Ch'ung-yang sitting quietly in meditation. She knelt at the doorway and said respectfully, "Sir, your student Sun Pu-erh has been stupid and did not appreciate your teachings. Now that Ma Tan-yang has explained everything to me, I am ashamed of myself and what I have done. I

would like to ask for forgiveness and hope and you will instruct me again." She bowed several times. Wang Ch'ung-yang beckoned in and said, "You may stand up now. I shall describe to you three vehicles of the Taoist path. Listen well and then tell me which vehicle you aspire toward. Those who seek that Tao are nonattached to life and death. The heart is void of form and free from dust. There are no thoughts or feelings that tie one to the material plane. Their being is like the bright moon in a cloudless sky. With the spark of original nature they intuit the mystery of heaven and earth. They understand the principles behind the union of yin and yang, and, using the methods of internal alchemy, they return to the void and emerge with the Tao. They are at one with the sun and moon, they age with the heaven and earth and achieve the highest rank of immortality in heaven. This is the Great Vehicle. It is the fastest and the most direct path to immortality. Those who cultivate the Middle Vehicle observe the festivals of the gods and immortals with veneration, chant regularly the names of the gods and refrain from meat on designated vegetarian days. By immersing themselves in chanting, they purify the heart and let the original nature shine. In due time their spirit ascends to the heavens, and they become immortals of the middle rank. Those who cultivate the Lower Vehicle do good deeds, and by so doing their original nature is prevented from being tainted. They are contented and are at peace with themselves, living a long and healthy life. In due time, when they have accumulated enough good works, they will ascend to heaven and become immortals of the lower ranks." Wang Ch'ungyang finished speaking, smiled, and asked Sun Pu-erh, "To which vehicle do you aspire?" Sun Pu-erh replied, "Your student aspires to the Great Vehicle." Wang Ch'ung-yang said, "You have ambitious aspirations, but I don't know whether you have the discipline and perseverance to pursue that path." Sun Pu-erh said, "Sir, my aspirations are not ambitious, but my will is strong. I am willing to sacrifice everything to attain the Great Vehicle."

Wang Ch'ung-yang then said, "Those who cultivate the Tao must find a place that is conducive to training. Certain places are filled with power, and training at these power places will enhance one's progress. There is a power hidden in the city of Loyang, and the gods have ordained that an immortal will emerge from there. One need merely cultivate oneself there for ten to twelve years, and immortality will be attained. Are you willing to go?" Sun Pu-erh said, "I am willing to go anywhere if that is what is required to cultivate the Great Vehicle." Wang Ch'ung-yang looked at Sun Pu-erh and then shook his head. "You cannot go." Sun Pu-erh said, "I am willing to do anything. I am willing to die, if necessary." Wang Ch'ung-yang said, "Dying is a waste if it achieves no purpose. To simply throw your life away is to rob yourself of the chance to become an immortal. Loyang is more than a thousand miles away. You will meet with perils along the way. You will be the target of men who desire your beauty. They will rape you and molest you. And rather than be shamed, you would take your own life before they touch you. Now, is that not wasting your life to no purpose? Not only will you not achieve immortality but you will throw away what was given to you by Heaven. That is why I said you cannot go."

Sun Pu-erh left the meditation hall and went directly to the kitchen. Telling the servants to leave, she filled a wok with cooking oil, heated the oil until it was hot, and then poured in cold water. The oil sizzled, and sparks of hot liquid shot out of the wok. Sun Pu-erh closed her eyes and let the liquid hit her face, burning the skin in numerous places; even after healing, the burns would leave scars and marks all over her face. She then returned to Wang Ch'ung-yang and said, "Look at my ugly face. Now will you allow me to travel to Loyang?" Wang Ch'ungyang clapped his hands and said, "I have never seen one as determined as you are or willing to sacrifice so much. I did not come to Shantung Province in vain. You shall go to Loyang."

Wang Ch'ung-yang then taught Sun Pu-erh the methods of internal alchemy. He showed her how to immerse fire in water, how to unite yin and yang, and how to conceive and nourish the spirit. When he was satisfied that Sun Pu-erh remembered and understood the instructions, he said, "Remember, hide your knowledge. Do not let people know you are a seeker of the Tao. After you have finished the Great Alchemical Work, then you may reveal yourself and teach others. In the meantime, let your face heal. Do not even let your servants know of your plans. Leave as soon as you are ready. You need not come to say farewell to me. We shall meet again soon at the celebration of the ripening of the immortal peach."

C

ir

V

a

C

le

rc

g

m

C

C

A

Ĩа

he

34

of

li,

to

he

be

la

A

m

of

H

(h)

ya

331

CO

200

ea.

Ø.

(16)

mi

1472

102

20

453

200

22.3

lan.

dex

1

Sun Pu-erh thanked Wang Ch'ung-yang and left the meditation hall. On her way back to her room, she ran into a servant, who screamed when she saw the lady's face. When the servant recovered her wits, she asked Sun Pu-erh, "Lady, what has happened to your face?" Sun Pu-erh said, "I was cooking a snack for the teacher, and by mistake I added water to the cooking oil. I did not get out of the way in time, and the sizzling liquid shot into my face. It is nothing serious." Sun Pu-erh locked herself in her room for the next few days and reviewed Wang Ch'ung-yang's instructions.

When Ma Tan-yang returned home, the servants at once told him about his wife's accident in the kitchen. Ma Tan-yang went to Sun Puerh's room, saw her face, and consoled her. Gently he said, "You should have been more careful. Let the servants do the cooking. The lady of the house should not be working in the kitchen. Now your beautiful face is ruined with scars." Sun Pu-erh stared at Ma Tan-yang and cackled madly. "Are you the messenger of the Empress of Heaven? Have you come to invite me to attend the celebrations in heaven? If so, let's get going!" She opened the window and jumped out. Pretending to slip, she deliberately fell and lay on the ground, groaning. Ma Tanyang ran out, put his arms around her and helped her up. Sun Pu-erh laughed and cried like a mad woman. Ma Tan-yang escorted her back to her room and then went to Wang Ch'ung-yang.

Seeing his teacher, Ma Tan-yang said, "Sir, my wife has gone mad. She has lost her mind. She is talking nonsense, and she laughs and

cries for no reason." Wang Ch'ung-yang said,

If she is not mad, how can she become an

immortal?" Ma Tan-yang did not understand

Wang Ch'ung-yang's remark. He was about to

ask his teacher what it meant when Wang

Ch'ung-yang waved his hand and told him to

leave. Sadly, Ma Tan-yang went back to his

getting Ma Tan-yang and everyone else in the

mansion to leave her alone. She reviewed Wang

Ch'ung-yang's instructions repeatedly until she

could perform them naturally and effortlessly.

A month passed, and Sun Pu-erh looked at her

face in the mirror. Scars and pockmarks dotted

her face. Since she had not combed her hair for

a month, she was no longer the beautiful wife

of a wealthy merchant. Sun Pu-erh was de-

lighted. She was now ready to make the journey

to Loyang. With a piece of charcoal she smeared

her face and her clothing. Looking like a mad

beggar-woman, she ran out into the living room,

laughed wildly, and rushed out the front door.

A servant tried to stop her, but she bit the girl

in the arm. Yelping in pain, the servant let go

of her. The other servants alerted Ma Tan-yang.

He hurried to the living room, but was told that

the lady had already left the house. Ma Tan-

yang and the servants searched the town and the

immediate countryside for Sun Pu-erh, but they

her, Sun Pu-erh had hidden herself inside a

haystack on a nearby farm. She heard the voices

of the servants and her husband and continued

Knowing that Ma Tan-yang would search for

could not find her.

Sun Pu-erh's pretended insanity succeeded in

rish the Pu-erh ons, he Do not e Tao. emical l teach al. Do plans. ed not

again

of the g and to her amed rvant ı-erh. ' Sun r the the t ime. It is lf in wed

dent Puher. ore The the vith

ser-

and the 'ite so, nd

ed ad er

1.

ιd

to conceal herself until it was dark. When everything was silent, she quietly slipped out and walked toward Loyang. Along the way, she slept in abandoned temples and caves. She obely tained her food from begging, and when people ınasked who she was, she acted insane and uttered nonsense. In this way, people left her alone, and eventually she arrived safely at Loyang.

In Loyang, Sun Pu-erh found shelter in an abandoned house. Daily she begged in the city. When people tried to communicate with her, she acted insane, and as time went on she became known as the "mad beggar-woman." Because of her ugly face and her madness, the townspeople left her alone and she was able to practice internal alchemy without distraction.

In the city of Loyang there were two wanderers of seedy character called Chang San and Li Ssu. They solicited every woman they saw, and they raped those who refused their company. One day the two men saw Sun Pu-erh begging on a street corner. They noticed that despite her rags and the scars on her face Sun Pu-erh was quite attractive. That night, when Chang San and Li Ssu were returning home from an evening at the brothels, it occurred to Chang San that they might finish their evening of fun with the mad beggar-woman. When he voiced his plan to Li Ssu, the latter said, "We cannot do that. Don't you know the saying 'Those who take advantage of mad people will meet with bad luck all their lives'?" Chang San said, "I don't care about the superstitious sayings of old women. I am not afraid of the gods of Heaven or earth. I am going to have some fun with that woman." Chang San strode ahead toward the abandoned house where Sun Pu-erh was living. Li Ssu followed behind apprehensively.

Just as the abandoned house came into view, ominous storm clouds gathered in the sky. Suddenly there was a flash of lightning and a loud crack of thunder. When Chang San and Li Ssu recovered from the deafening sound, they found that they were being struck by enormous hailstones. Since they were on the outskirts of town, they had to run a good distance before they could find shelter from the balls of ice. As they ran, Li Ssu said to his friend, "You should have listened to me. That was the wrath of Heaven coming down on us." Chang San cursed under his breath and tried to run faster, but he tripped over a pile of logs hidden by the tall grass and fell into a thorny bush. Bruised and bleeding, he got up and staggered toward the gates of the inner city.

By the time Chang San and Li Ssu reached the inner city, the sky had cleared and a bright moon shone. Chang San was bleeding badly. He had been pelted by enormous hailstones and cut by sharp thorns. Li Ssu, on the contrary,

had not received a single scratch. It appeared that only the small hailstones had struck him. Chang San finally sighed and said, "I am convinced. That mad woman cannot be touched." Li Ssu replied, "Now you know. I hope that you have learned your lesson well this time and will not try to bother her again." Chang San said, "The lesson was learned well. From now on I will not even walk in the direction of that abandoned house."

The next day Li Ssu related the incident to all his friends, and the story spread around the city. From then on in the town no one made fun of her when she begged or went near the abandoned house she was living in. Thus Sun Pu-erh was left in peace for the twelve years that she lived in Loyang.