

MASTER ZHAO MING WANG (B. 1966)

Family Inheritor of the Qianfeng Daoist Tradition

**INTERVIEW, RESEARCH & TRANSLATION
BY ADRIAN CHAN-WYLES**

(Translator's Note: Daoist Master Zhao Ming Wang (赵明旺) [b. 1966] is a contemporary neidan practitioner living and teaching in Beijing, China. His system of qi cultivation has evolved from the Quanzhen (Complete Reality) School of Daoism, through its Longmen (Dragon Gate) branch. Grand Master Zhao Bichen (1840-1962) was a student of many eminent Daoist masters, (which included a number of Buddhists and Confucians) and amassed an impressive body of spiritual developmental material. This knowledge and wisdom formed the theoretical foundation of Zhao Bichen's school known as the Qianfeng Xiantian Pai (千峰先天派). This is the Daoist School that the modern-day Master Zhao Ming Wang has inherited and continues to teach to anyone with a sincere wish to learn. The following interview is the culmination of a process that has lasted several months. During that time many pages of notes have been accumulated, and thousands of Chinese words translated. Master Zhao's explanations are always very clear and concise. Where required, I have supplemented Master Zhao's answers with indepth background research.)

ACW: Master Zhao Ming Wang, thank you for agreeing to be interviewed for *Qi: The Journal of Traditional Eastern Health & Fitness*.

Master Zhao Ming Wang: It is important for the survival of Daoism that a worldwide recognition and understanding is cultivated of authentic Daoist teaching both inside and outside of China, and that practitioners and translators are able to correctly convey spiritual and developmental concepts from one language (i.e. Chinese) into another (i.e. English). I am aware of your articles in English about my great grandfather Zhao Bichen (赵避尘) [1860-1942] and his key student Niu Jin Bao (牛金宝 [1915-1988]). This interview is an important step in this process and I would like to thank the *Qi Journal* for presenting this valuable opportunity.

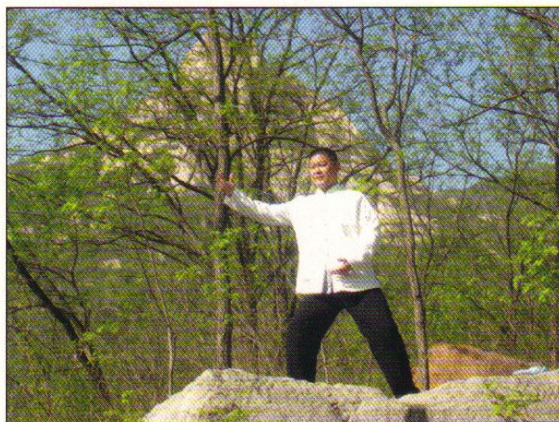
ACW: Where are you from? Where is the Qianfeng tradition based in modern China?

Master Zhao: The Zhao family is from Yang Fang village, situated in Changping District, which is roughly 50 km north of the city of Beijing. The Qianfeng School of Daoist cultivation has been based in Beijing since the days of my great grandfather Zhao Bichen. Beijing has not only been the capital of China for centuries, but also of many progressive developmental schools.

ACW: Can you explain your Daoist lineage? It is my understanding that you hold two important Daoist lineages and that it is your lifelong task to preserve these practices and teach them throughout the world.

Master Zhao Ming Wang: I have inherited the body of knowledge that comprises the Zhao family neidan tradition, (or those cultivational practices passed on from one generation to next), and I am also the lineage holder of the Qianfeng ascetic Daoist tradition, which I have inherited from my great grandfather Zhao Bichen. To be specific, my great grandfather Zhao Bichen was the 11th generation descendent of the Longmen (龙门—Dragon Gate) School of Daoism, as well as being the founder of the Qianfeng (Thousand Peaks) school. I am the 14th generation inheritor of the Longmen School and my lineage name is Fu Ming. I am also the 3rd generation inheritor of the Qianfeng Xiantian School (千峰先天派), or 'Thousand Peaks Earlier Divine Sky School', which passes on the Daoist method of Xingming Shuangxiu (性命双修).

In the old days Beijing was the centre of much cultural exchange and progressive thinking, and the Grand Master Zhao Bichen was very much a part of this developmental process. The fam-



Qi Cultivation in the Qianfeng School

ily tradition and the ascetic Daoist tradition are distinct but related lineages.

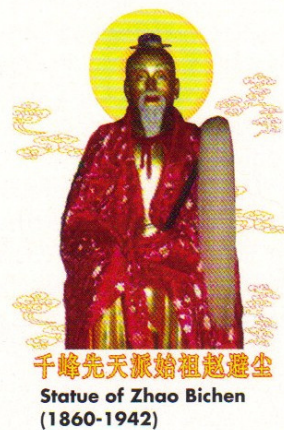
ACW: I understand that within the Daoist tradition it is often considered something of a taboo for a father to transmit a Daoist lineage to a son. Could you elaborate on this distinction and explain why this is, and how the Qianfeng tradition has been affected by this idea?

Master Zhao Ming Wang: There are actually two traditions of neidan cultivation—the family practice, and the ascetic Daoist practice. In the former one is married and living in society whilst in the latter, one is celibate and lives in remote areas away from society. The Qianfeng School is essentially an ascetic Daoist lineage with strict rules forbidding a father transmitting the lineage to a son.

The reason for this restriction is due to various ascetic Daoist lineages historically advocating celibacy, and living apart from society as a means of refining qi energy and attaining immortality, without the usual distractions associated with everyday existence.

Grand Master Zhao Bichen, of course, eventually got married and my grandfather, Zhao Feng Xian, was his third son. Zhao Bichen could not formally adopt his son into the Qianfeng ascetic Daoist lineage himself, (as he was no longer a celibate ascetic), but rather asked his first disciple—Wu Wen Huan (吴文焕) [Daoist name 'Xuan Yang Zi'—玄阳子], a doctor from Hebei province—to transmit the ascetic Daoist Qianfeng lineage, to my grandfather Zhao Feng Xian, on his behalf. With regard to myself, my grandfather asked Master Niu Sheng Xian to transmit the Qianfeng lineage to me.

This is how the ascetic Daoist lineage of Qianfeng has become directly associated with the Zhao family of Yang Fang village, and explains how the two pathways of neidan practice have become integrated through our family tradition.



千峰先天派始祖趙道塵
Statue of Zhao Bichen
(1860-1942)

ACW: Who was your main teacher in the Yang Fang village? I understand that you have been instructed in the Qianfeng family Daoist art since a very young age.

Master Zhao Ming Wang: Yes, this is correct. From an early age I spent virtually all my time with my (paternal) grandfather Zhao Feng Xian (赵风贤). He was a master of Qianfeng Daoism and as the son of Zhao Bichen, had learnt directly from him. Grand Master Zhao Bichen passed away in 1942, and so all my knowledge of him comes directly from my grandfather and teacher—Master Zhao Feng Xian. He would spend hours telling me about his father Zhao Bichen, continuously telling and re-telling all the old inspirational stories about him. It was during this time that I received extensive training in the Qianfeng teaching of Xingming Shuangxiu (Combined Mind-Body Essential Cultivation). Grand Master Zhao Bichen met one of his most influential masters—Liao Kong—in 1885.

Zhao Bichen received the essence of Daoism from Liao Kong and this transmission effectively created the Qianfeng tradition. In 1920, Liao Kong came to Beijing to give Zhao Bichen official permission to teach and openly receive students. This may be considered a very significant event as it marks the founding of the Qianfeng School. At this time, my great grandfather Zhao Bichen was 60 years old and was at the peak of his psychological and physical power. This can be attested to by the fact that just one year later, at the age of 61, Zhao Bichen had another son—my grandfather Zhao Feng Xian. His birth followed directly after Liao Kong's advice to ensure that the Qianfeng tradition be preserved within the Zhao family as a treasure to be passed on from one generation to the next. Zhao Bichen had many Daoist masters and studied self-cultivation over a very broad area. He learnt many different techniques, and the supporting philosophy that had given birth to them. Through the influence of Master Liao Kong, all this learning became highly focused and specialised—this is the Qianfeng tradition which Zhao Bichen handed to Zhao Feng Xian.

Zhao Feng Xian learnt this system in its entirety and passed it on to me—Zhao Ming Wang—making me the official 3rd generation inheritor of the Qianfeng Daoist lineage. Grand Master Zhao Bichen gathered the scattered (but very valuable) traditional Daoist teachings together so that they could be preserved for future generations to ben-

efit from. We learn this system and pass it on out of respect for the efforts made on our behalf by Zhao Bichen.

ACW: Thank you for your very interesting answer. You received the Qianfeng transmission from your grandfather Zhao Feng Xian, did he teach anyone else during his lifetime?

Master Zhao Ming Wang: Yes. My grandfather Zhao Feng Xian transmitted Qianfeng lineage to three other disciples (outside the Zhao family) during his lifetime; one disciple was from the northeast of China—Changchun city—in Jilin province, another disciple was from Renqiu city in Hebei province (north China), and a third disciple was from the far-southern Ping Dong County of Taiwan. However, my grandfather taught me the inner principles of Xingming Shuangxiu (Combined Mind-Body Essential Cultivation), as well as secret Daoist teachings that are only passed on by word of mouth. This was a very traditional training and transmission of sacred knowledge.

ACW: Master Zhao—you are the only contemporary lineage inheritor of the Qianfeng School of Daoist cultivation, can you explain the circumstances behind the actual transmission of the lineage to yourself?

Master Zhao Ming Wang: Yes. Shortly before my grandfather—Zhao Feng Xian—passed away, he summoned me into his presence and with tears in his eyes stated:

"The Zhao family Daoist tradition I now pass on to you. You must study well and uphold the family tradition. The Zhao family lineage now places all its hope in your ability to preserve and transmit the teachings of Grand Master Zhao Bichen. In this way you will ensure that the future is great and bright for the Zhao family lineage. You are now the Grand Master of the Zhao family lineage of Daoist cultivation and I give you Grand Master Zhao Bichen's book entitled 'Combined Mind-Body Essential Cultivation Manual' (Xingming Shuangxiu Gongfa Shoushu) and entrust you to preserve (and treasure) its teachings and pass them on."

Coupled with transmission I received from Master Niu Sheng Xian—this how I became the 3rd generation inheritor of the Qianfeng School of Daoist cultivation as founded by Grand Master Zhao Bichen and passed on within the Zhao family.



From left: Niu Jin Bao, Zhao Feng Xian, Zhao Bichen, Zhao Kui Yi, Liao Kong

ACW: When it comes time to transmit the Qianfeng Daoist lineage to the next generation of the Zhao family, how will the process be carried-out?

Master Zhao Ming Wang: It is my intention to follow the traditional practice of requesting a qualified disciple (external to the Zhao family), to formally transmit the Qianfeng Daoist School lineage to the next generation of the Zhao family. This course of action maintains the Qianfeng rules as passed on by Master Liao Kong to Master Zhao Bichen, whilst also preserving the progressive and advanced thinking of Zhao Bichen and his vision of transmitting neidan teachings without restriction to the people of the world. This is a matter of traditional procedure adapted to the needs of a modern world.

ACW: When the Daoist lineages are transmitted, and permission to teach formally granted, what is the nature of the spiritual transmission? In other words, what is the vehicle of transmission?

Master Zhao Ming Wang: In 1920, Master Liao Kong met Grand Master Zhao Bichen in Beijing and formally transmitted the lineage of the Qianfeng School to him. Later, Zhao Bichen would transmit this lineage to his fully developed disciples. My grandfather Zhao Feng Xian, received this transmission from an external disciple, and I received it from my grandfather because I am not his son, and not subject to the father-son transmission taboo. What is transmitted is the 'Tian Ming' (天命), or 'Divine Sky Com-

mand'. This is the ability to teach the highest spiritual truth because the qi energy is permanently and completely refined, so that what is above is integrated with what is below and all is in divine order. Only someone who has attained immortality and longevity is considered fully developed in the Qianfeng School, and a potential candidate for Tian Ming transmission. Someone who possesses the Tian Ming has the ability (and the authority) to teach and bring order and harmony to the world.

ACW: Master Zhao what is the specific developmental background of the Qianfeng School of Daoist cultivation? From the biographies available of Zhao Bichen it is clear that he was prepared to preserve ancient teachings by adapting them to modern circumstance. Indeed, the Western scholar Vincent Goossaert refers to Zhao Bichen as a 'new type' of Daoist master.

Master Zhao Ming Wang: This is correct. My ancestor Zhao Bichen very much believed in the effectiveness of traditional methods, but also in adapting and developing those methods to different or new circumstances. Zhao Bichen gathered



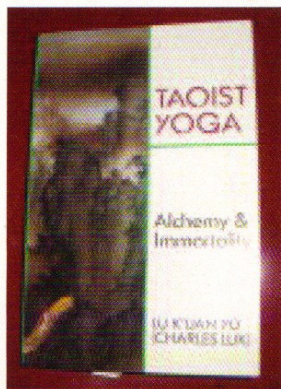
Rare Photograph of Master Zhao Bichen

together the true Daoist teachings and passed them on. In the Daoist schools of China there is the method known as the 'Xingming Shuangxiu Wai Lian Mi Chuan Gong Fa' (性命双修外炼秘传功法—Combined Mind-Body Essential Cultivation and Refinement Secret Transmission Exercise Law). This Daoist method is taught in the lineage of the Long Men (Dragon Gate) branch of the Quan Zhen (全真—Complete Truth) School, in which our school—the Qianfeng Xiantian Pai (千峰先天派—Thousand Peaks Earlier Divine Sky School) originates. He systematically investigated the many Daoist teachings regarding good health and long life, and eventually compiled the Xiantian Shuangxiu Wai Lian Gong Fa Shi Ba Shi (性命双修外炼功法十八式—Eighteen Methods of Combined Mind-Body Essential Cultivation Exercise Law).

In 1933 Zhao Bichen published a manual of Daoist self-development meditational techniques entitled the Xingming Fajue Mingzhi (性命法诀明旨—Secret Cultivation of Essential Nature and Eternal Life). An English translation of this book has become very famous in the West where it is known as 'Taoist Yoga' and was compiled by the well known Chinese Buddhist translator Charles Luk (1898-1978). It is my understanding that Charles Luk made this translation because he had trained in my great grandfather's Qianfeng School, and wanted to spread the teaching into the West. Today, this lineage is still practiced in the UK, and the book Taoist Yoga has inspired many other people across the world.

The Xingming Fajue Mingzhi continues to be a very important and useful book both inside and outside of China today, and its importance should not be understated. It is very popular amongst lay-people who wish to practice 'neidan shu' (内丹术) whilst living in ordinary circumstances

and going about their daily business. The Xingming Fajue Mingzhi is arranged around 16 levels, or stages of progression, through which a Daoist student must travel, so that the ultimate goal—'immortality' (仙—Xian)—which Western scholars have previously translated



Charles Luk —Taoist Yoga

as 'transcendence', and 'enlightenment'—can be attained. Each stage has an associated illustration and explanation, and the entire system of development is explained through Zhao Bichen's answers to the recorded questions of his students. In 1934 Zhao Bichen published another of his books entitled the Weisheng Shengli Xue Mingzhi (Clear Explanations of Hygiene and Physiology—衛生生理學明指), a text that elaborates on the terminology found in the Xingming Fajue Mingzhi. This book is also known in the West as it was translated into French by the scholar Catherine Despeux in 1979. Although a traditionalist by nature, my great grandfather Zhao Bichen was also progressive and forward thinking. Our Qianfeng tradition is in reality an adaptation of an old and valid system of Chinese developmental medicine, which has been made relevant to modern social conditions.

This is a system of mind and body development that has its roots in the culture of ancient China, but which has survived into modern times. Great thinkers like Zhao Bichen (and others), have been able to adjust the old teachings to changing times, without diminishing the effectiveness of the ancient techniques. To achieve this, a scholar must train their mind to become equally aware of the validity of the past, and the realities of the present time. This means that a scholar must pursue a path of self-development whereby he or she becomes familiar with the greatest possible array of different systems of thinking, so that parallels can be identified and utilised in the transformational process. The Qianfeng tradition is an old path practiced in modern times with no contradiction. Zhao Bichen, through his advanced educational attitude, respected the past and the present equally.

ACW: I would like to enquire about Master Zhao Bichen's attitude toward the West. He lived during a tumultuous time in Chinese history that saw the rise of Western imperialism in China, the collapse of the ancient Chinese imperial system, the establishment of the Republican era, and the invasion of China by imperial Japanese forces. How did Zhao Bichen respond to these events, and how did these experiences mould his ideas and attitudes?

Master Zhou Ming Wang: Zhao Bichen was born and brought-up in Beijing, the capital of China. Many of the political, social, and cultural



Master Zhao Bichen above the Thousand Peaks

changes you describe as tumultuous, occurred first in Beijing. Even within the old imperial system, changes of emperor often led to changes of official policy that swept outward across the city and into the country. The people of Beijing have been used to change for many generations and this has created a great ability that simultaneously accepts change whilst facilitating adaptation to its presence. In a sense, the psychology of Beijing is one of a heightened state of prepared readiness to encounter the new. This is an important aspect of the Qianfeng tradition, which has enabled it as a Chinese tradition to appeal to those living outside of China in a meaningful way.

This attitude stems from Zhao Bichen himself, who advocated the exploring and experiencing of new ideas before developing a judgement about them. It should be understood that my great grandfather Zhao Bichen only became a full-time Daoist practitioner in his 60's—before that time, he lived in society as an ordinary being, who got married and had children. At this time he integrated his Daoist practice with everyday life which included working as a minor official in

the salt administration, and later as a merchant. Although some Daoist traditions do not encourage marriage, one of Zhao Bichen's teachers—Master Liao Kong—was of the opinion that to get married and produce sons was an important act of filial piety that could not be ignored.

If the passing on of generational qi was not achieved, then Master Liao Kong believed that immortality could not be achieved—this is why Zhao Bichen got married, and aimed his teaching primarily towards the laity. However, he was not opposed to monastic practice, and saw the validity of both modes of development.

Zhao Bichen was in many ways a traditionalist—as he respected the past—and although he did look toward the West for inspiration, he was also a patriot of China. He was fascinated with Western systems of logic that seek to order the thoughts in the mind toward a specific subject of enquiry. In this regard Zhao Bichen was particularly interested in Western science, medicine and anatomy, and made a thorough study of these subjects.

This body of knowledge may well have influenced his formulation of Qianfeng as a distinct tradition, allowing for what was seen as a 'foreign' system of thinking at the time, to influence Chinese theorising and ultimately integrate with traditional Daoist thinking. However, it must be made clear that Zhao Bichen, although open minded, still believed that traditional Daoist mind and body cultivation techniques were very effective in their own right, and that they were based upon an ancient Chinese science that had developed separately from that found in the West. This reflects the traditional foundation of the Qianfeng School—with its roots deep in the soil of Chinese ingenuity, whilst its outer appearance adapts to prevailing circumstance.

Even this 'adaption' finds its expression in old Chinese texts such as the Daodejing (道德經) and the Yijing (易經), amongst many others, and allows for the engagement of other cultures. Even Japanese scholars—such as Yokote Yutaka—have made a study of my great grandfather's teachings. Zhao Bichen reached out to the West in many ways, and I think he had a profound interest in Western things. This is why the Qianfeng School encourages people from all over the world to study its teachings, thus preserving and perpetuating Zhao Bichen's advanced and progressive attitudes.

ACW: The Qianfeng neidan tradition has seated (meditational) practices, as well as various qigong and martial routines. It is an all round system of mind and body development. How has the Qianfeng tradition established such an all encompassing approach to self-cultivation?

Master Zhao Ming Wang: People should understand that in China—even modern China—self-developmental techniques premised upon daily practice are part of the psychological fabric of the Chinese people. It is not unusual for people to practice an exercise that suits them on a daily basis as a means to retain psychological and physical health. From this perspective the Qianfeng tradition is a specific reflection of a broader Chinese cultural habit. Zhao Bichen was brought up in a village that was full of many different spiritual practices. This was a diverse psychological and physical environment that gave much scope and opportunity for training in various cultivational arts.

When young, Zhao Bichen was often ill as a child, and when he was around 15 years old, it was his mother who took him to a village Daoist by the name of Liu Ming Ru—a very well respected and eminent neidan practitioner of the Quanzhen School. Master Liu cured him of his ailments and accepted him as a student. This was Zhao Bichen's introduction into formal Daoist training. After this, he became a student of Liu Yun Pu (also in the village), who was himself a renowned martial artist and doctor. Liu Yun Pu taught his Daoist techniques openly and was well known for his generous nature. Village self-defence has been a Chinese tradition for thousands of years, but the fighting styles employed in this training, although designed to protect an individual from attack, have a much more profound and deeper meaning. Yes, on the surface the movements of these arts have an obvious martial application, blocking a kick or punch, tripping or throwing an opponent, punching an assailant, etc, but the physical movements have another function. Martial arts training strengthen and build strong muscles and bones.

A healthy body is efficient in resisting an enemy attack. However, it must be understood that martial arts training in its basic form cultivates energy by taking the essential inner qi energy and directing it to the outside of the body—that is toward the external structures. This is why the Xingming Shuangxiu cultivation method of

Qianfeng Daoism redresses these imbalances and re-directs the qi energy back into the interior of the body so that both inner and outer are developed equally. The refinement of essential qi energy is where both activities complement one another. The experience of this training process leads to self-healing, and often motivates practitioners to become doctors so that the suffering of others can be alleviated—this is the application of Daoist compassion toward the broader society and the world.

ACW: Grand Master Zhao Bichen refers to his School as 'Qianfeng' (千峰), or 'Thousand Peaks'. Why did he choose this name and what is its significance?

Master Zhao Ming Wang: Master Liu Ming Ru built a temple named Tao Yuan Guan (桃园观), or 'Peach Garden Temple', situated on the Qianfeng Mountain (千峰山), Changping County, in 1868. The other name for this temple is Ga La (旮沓), or 'Out of the Way Corner'. When Zhao Bichen was a boy he was taken to this place to train with Master Liu Ming Ru—this is where his illnesses were cured through the practice of Xingming Shuangxiu (Combined Mind-Body Essential Cultivation). Zhao Bichen, despite training with many other masters, never forgot the remote beauty of this place. When he received Quanzhen (Longmen) School lineage transmission from Master Liao Kong in 1920, Zhao Bichen named his school after the Qianfeng Mountain area due to his innate connection with this sacred place. This explanation may be added to the fact that Zhao Bichen wanted to teach everyone neidan techniques and the 'thousand peaks' represent the multitude of the people.

ACW: The practice of 'neidan' (内丹) is central to Daoist cultivation and practice. Can you explain its origin and purpose?

Zhao Ming Wang: Neidan are a set of exercises that vary from one Daoist tradition to the next, that are designed to work through the cultivation of inner (内—Nei), developmental medicine (丹—Dan). This internal medicine cultivation makes use of the Three Treasures (三寶—San Bao), which are Jing (精), Qi (氣), and Shen (神). From a historical point of view, these practices are believed to date back to the time of the Yellow Emperor (2697-2597BCE), and are represented in the various Daoyin (導引) and Qigong (氣功) exercises. In the Qianfeng tradition, for example, neidan can

be practiced in such away so that the mind (shen) is calmed through seated meditation, whilst regulating the breath (qi), and settling the body (jing). Qi circulation is enhanced by removing physical and psychological blockages in the mind and body, so that qi can flow to the centre of every inner organ without hindrance.

The mind, of course, is linked to the nervous system (which are both included in shen), so that by calming the mind, qi can be directed by the will, with ease throughout the system. By building concentration and relaxation, the mind and physical structures are strengthened by a stronger (and greatly refined) circulation of qi within (and around) the living organism. Neidan builds awareness and sensitivity so that an ever deepening level of insight is developed within the practitioner. This culminates in universal awareness and a unification of jing, qi, and shen.

Neidan is essentially the cultivation of qi—this is the doorway to all advanced development. Zhao Bichen was taught by Master Liao Kong that at the highest level of neidan attainment, the practitioner realises a ‘return to nothingness’, so that an all-embracing presence is achieved within and throughout empty space. The mind becomes still and all movement ceases—this is called ‘hibernating dragon’. All previous manifestations and transformations (such as riding dragons and storks, walking on the sun, or playing with the moon) return to this emptiness. Qi is no longer wasted and shen (mind) and body/environment (jing) are in perpetual harmony. There is a complete serenity of being which must be maintained until the falling away of the body (at death). This is the practice of longevity and the attainment of immortality.

ACW: What is the relationship between Chinese Buddhism and Daoism? Although there have been incidences throughout Chinese history of different emperors preferring one religion over the other, and acknowledging that sometimes Daoist and Buddhist schools are openly antagonistic to one another’s teachings, how does the Qianfeng tradition approach this subject?

Master Zhao Ming Wang: The Qianfeng tradition has always maintained a good relationship with Chinese Buddhism in general, particularly the Ch’an tradition. Charles Luk—who translated Zhao Bichen’s neidan text—was himself a prominent and well known Ch’an Buddhist

and disciple of Xu Yun (1840-1959). Master Liao Kong—whom I mentioned earlier—was a Buddhist master and Daoist practitioner in the Quanzhen School. Zhao Bichen respected him very much. This attitude of respect toward Buddhism may be taken as the official Qianfeng policy on this matter, and I shall explain why. Buddhism and Daoism are interlinked. Buddhist teaching is designed to acquire a very advanced state of mind and body—this is enlightenment. Within the Daoist School much effort is needed to cultivate qi (energy) and refine the mind and body. Both systems rely on a great self-effort to achieve transformation and acquire a healthy mind and body.

The important thing to remember is that throughout China’s history, there has been Buddhists (both lay and monastic) who have simultaneously practiced Buddhist meditation and Daoist cultivation techniques without any contradiction or conflict. Whatever method one employs for self-development, it is important to remember that it is the same qi (energy) that is being cultivated. At one time (in 1895), Zhao Bichen spent time at the Jin Shan Ch’an Buddhist Temple (金山禪寺) situated in Jiangsu province (where he originally met Master Liao Kong), so you can see the close relationship between Buddhism and Qianfeng Daoism.

ACW: It is obvious that in modern China the Qianfeng tradition is open to anyone who wants to train in effective Daoist cultivational techniques. This broad and welcoming approach to the spread of authentic Daoist technique has its roots in the system established by Zhao Bichen. In other words, it appears to very much reflect his character. What can you say about the type of people Zhao Bichen attracted and accepted as students and disciples?

Master Zhao Ming Wang: In the post-1911 Republican era it was very much a case of modernisation across the board. Many of the old ways regarding secret societies, oaths, instruction by disembodied spirits, an emphasis only on monastic training, clannishness, and gender bias, etc, were all viewed as out of date by Zhao Bichen. He felt that the more appropriate way to guarantee the survival of authentic Daoist neidan techniques was by throwing the doors of the training hall wide open and thereby increasing the numbers of people receiving instruction in the school.

This is exactly what he did. He had disciples from all walks of life, including couples, women, businessmen, merchants, soldiers, and even opera singers. Zhao Bichen encouraged anyone to train in Qianfeng Daoism—even the elderly. He believed that practitioners should spend more time on specific self-cultivation training, and less time pursuing superstitious ritual and practices designed to produce positive merit. Although Zhao Bichen encouraged a broad appeal for Qianfeng teachings amongst the people, it should be remembered the higher teachings of the Qianfeng tradition involve retiring to a quiet place and engaging in intensive meditation—usually assisted by a dedicated attendant. Zhao Bichen certainly popularised Daoist cultivation techniques, that is true, but at no time did he water-down the teachings, far from it. He possessed the ability to explain complex terminology in a manner that ordinary people could understand and apply to their self-cultivation practice, this why his students came from a very broad cross-section of society.

ACW: Master Zhao, do you have any experience, or can you give an example of how Daoist cultivation techniques have been used effectively within the context of the modern world?

Master Zhao Ming Wang: Certainly, I can. From 1998—2001, I worked as the Drug Ward Director of the Beijing Drug Rehabilitation Centre. During this time I used traditional Daoist self-cultivation techniques, coupled with traditional Chinese medicine, as a form of all round therapy and treatment. This worked very well and assisted many people to cure themselves from the habit of drug addiction. This is a practical demonstration of how ancient Daoist techniques can be of specific use even in the most modern of societies, to assist the established medical profession to treat and cure patients.

It is a matter of adapting to new circumstances, coupled with the ability to integrate old wisdom with new knowledge. Today, many people practice qi refinement and cultivation exercises (炼功—Lian Gong), and refrain from eating grain (辟谷—Bi Gu) for 10 days at a time as a means to develop the mind and body, but in reality it is the long term practice of the authentic Daoist practice of Xingming Shuangxiu that is required to improve all round health in the practitioner. It is important to remember that each individual



Master Zhao Ming Wang with International Student Ebele Zuidema

must spend a lifetime dedicated to training in Daoist qi cultivational techniques if true development is to occur. This training requires a respectful state of mind that is thankful toward the true masters of the past, and which carefully studies, practices, and passes on the authentic Daoist developmental techniques in modern times. If a practitioner does not have a sincere mind and heart, and does not seek the advice of a genuine master, how can the true teaching be transmitted?

Everyone who practices the Xingming Shuangxiu method of the Qianfeng School must first cultivate the mind toward good and virtuous thoughts and intentions. In reality, those who have realised enlightenment live and die according to the Dao (道) without any deviation from the correct path. Regardless of one's circumstance in the world, if a genuine and sincere mind is cultivated, then the true Daoist path will be discovered.

ACW: What are your plans for the future development of the Qianfeng School in the contemporary world?

Master Zhao Ming Wang: Today, our school—the Qianfeng Xiantian Pai—is growing very well. There has been a steady increase of students coming to train in our school not only from within China, but also from abroad. Some of those training in the Qianfeng tradition, and who have a sincere and genuine mind, often request to become disciples. They honour the

master and respect the teachings of the Dao. It is my sincere intention to venerate the teachings of our predecessors, and transmit them to everyone without exception. This intention follows the teachings of the ancestral sages, who taught everyone regardless of whether they are rich or poor, providing they possessed a genuine mind and heart. In this way, everyone can learn the Qianfeng method of neidan without exception.

Zhao Bichen (and his brother Zhao Kuiyi) contributed much to the preservation and development of Daoist neidan knowledge. He used the various social networks that existed in Beijing during his lifetime to perpetuate his Daoist knowledge and wisdom amongst the people. He did this very successfully. In many ways the use of the internet to connect with people around the world is a development of this policy. The internet is very important to connect different people together and disseminate important information. Instruction by the written word can be effective for self-development providing there is correct guidance available—this is the basis of Daoist instructional manuals that could be copied and passed from one person to the next.

Many people in the past have made use of these manuals and achieved a great deal even without the presence of a master. Zhao Bichen had no trouble gaining access to masters, and it is recorded that he trained with over 30 in number—36 to be exact. They were not all exclusively Daoist, as he placed equal weight on learning from Buddhists and Confucians alike. This is because Daoism has permeated into the other philosophical systems to a remarkable degree. Master Liao Kong, for instance, was a Buddhist

monk who was the Abbot of a Buddhist temple on the outskirts of Beijing. It is interesting to note that as a Buddhist master, Liao Kong was a Daoist master of the Quanzhen tradition. This is why Zhao Bichen did not accept sectarian attitudes in the Qianfeng School. In the Qianfeng School, everyone, from whatever background, is invited to study the neidan techniques and attain longevity and immortality.

ACW: Master Zhao Ming Wang thank you for answering my questions. If people would like to contact you regarding the possibility of studying in the Qianfeng School, how can they contact you?

Master Zhao Ming Wang: Those interested in the Qianfeng system should contact me through email, and read my (Chinese Language) blog: Master Zhao Ming Wang's Traditional Chinese Daoist Health Blog (中国传统道家养生的博) http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_64e533c90100jgtr.html Master Zhao Ming Wang Email: tian3597@foxmail.com ■

©2012 Adrian Chan-Wyles (ShiDaDao). Adrian is an independent scholar (and published author) living in the UK. He has been a 'work scholar' for Dr. Rupert Sheldrake of Cambridge University, and holds a Philosophy of Mind Certificate from Oxford University. He is the custodian of The Richard Hunn Association for Ch'an Study (<http://wenshuchan-online.weebly.com>), and has written for *The Middle Way*—the journal of the Buddhist Society, London. He holds a PhD in (spiritual) Metaphysics, and writes extensively upon the subjects of Chinese history, philosophy, the paranormal and martial culture. As a Ch'an adept, he continues the lineage of master Xu Yun (1840-1959), as handed down to Charles Luk (1898-1978), and conveyed by Richard Hunn (1949-2006).



Song Dynasty painting in the Litang style illustrating the theme "Confucianism, Daoism and Buddhism are one". Depicts Daoist Lu Xiuqing (left), official Tao Yuanming (right) and Buddhist monk Huiyuan (center, founder of Pure Land) by the Tiger stream. The stream borders a zone infested by tigers that they just crossed without fear, engrossed as they were in their discussion. Realizing what they just did, they laugh together, hence the name of the picture, Three laughing men by the Tiger stream.

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