

Master Xu Yun (虚云法师) 1952-53—in His 113th Year

# MASTER XU YUN AND HIS RELATIONSHIP WITH DAOISM

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*'If all methods are good for practice and if you find one which suits you, practice it; but you should never praise one method and vilify another, thereby giving rise to discrimination. The most important thing is sila (discipline) which should be strictly observed.'*

—Master Xu Yun, Shanghai, 1952

**M**aster Xu Yun exclusively practiced Daoism for at least three years of his life before becoming a fully ordained Ch'an Buddhist monk (Bhikshu). As a child brought up to be a Confucian scholar, and as a son of a government official (whose family was originally from Hunan province), such study and training was not uncommon for a person of his social standing. Although Xu Yun expressed a dislike for the Daoist instruction he received (but otherwise diligently practiced), his

step-mother (formerly Madam Wang—and later Bhikshuni Miao Jin) records that he had an equal dislike for the Confucian Classics, and much preferred the Buddhist teachings. This choice was compounded by the fact that he would not eat meat even as a young child. However, the Daoist instruction Xu Yun received at home, can be interpreted as constituting a firm foundation for the stringent Buddhist meditational practice that was yet to come in his long life.

He studied the Daoist technique of developing prenatal qi (*Xian Tian*). This is also known somewhat cryptically in English as the cultivation of 'Earlier Heaven', or 'Earlier Divine-sky'. It is the Daoist technique of uniting spirit (*shen*) with essence (*jing*) and energy (*qi*), through seated meditation, holding various postures whilst standing, and the performing of a number of



'qigong' techniques—all developed through the process of breathing deeply and fully into the lower abdomen and pelvic girdle areas. When successfully practiced, a rarefied psychological and physical frequency of existence is achieved whereby the breath appears to 'cease', and is described as such in many Daoist texts. However, in reality the breath only appears to 'cease', as it has become so subtle in function that it's in and out operation can be hardly observed.

In the prenatal condition there is breathing, but its function is radically transformed from that of ordinary and undeveloped breathing. In this state, qi energy has become so refined in its integrative manifestation, that it is believed by Daoists to have returned to the pure and non-dual state that exists just prior to the conception process in the womb—a process that sees the 'splitting' of qi energy into dualistic existence consisting of the endless interplay between the sensory organ and sensed object. The Xian Tian method literally 'returns' the Daoist practitioner to an earlier and purified state of being—hence 'Earlier Divine-sky', or 'Non-dualistic Existence'. As to whether Master Xu Yun achieved this state is not known, but from his biography he states that even after meditating regularly for three years, he still suffered from feelings of pins and needles in his legs—which within Daoist practice is taken as a sign of poor qi circulation in the legs. Whatever Xu Yun's opinions were regarding Daoist practice, and the effectiveness of its premise, nevertheless, it is also true that Daoist practice was his first structured experience of spiritual training.

Xu Yun's disciple—Charles Luk (1898-1978)—not only trained within the Ch'an Buddhist tradition as taught by Xu Yun, but also diligently trained in the Qianfeng Daoist tradition as developed by Master Zhao Bichen (1860-1942). As an example of his adaptability and broad-minded approach, Charles Luk also trained in the Phowa technique of Tibetan Buddhism under the guidance of a Mongolian Lama. The interesting point about the Qianfeng Daoist tradition is that not only is it a branch of the Quanzhen Dao School, but it is also heavily influenced by the Ch'an method. This is because a number of its past Daoist masters were in fact also Ch'an Buddhist monks. This is true for the Quanzhen main-branch, and its Qianfeng off-shoot (founded by Zhao Bichen). Although Xu Yun was 20 years

old when Zhao Bichen was born—both men were contemporaries—with Xu Yun outliving Zhao Bichen by 17 years. As Charles Luk also sought Xu Yun's valuable advice and guidance with regard to all self-cultivation matters, it is very likely that Xu Yun knew of Zhao Bichen's Qianfeng Daoist method, and gave his approval for Charles Luk to practice it.

On the other hand, with regard to Daoist philosophy in general, Charles Luk adhered to Xu Yun's opinion (common within Chinese Buddhist thinking), that the highest aim of Daoist enlightenment through effective self-cultivation, is not considered the highest level attainable within Buddhist thinking. It is interesting to consider that within the Qianfeng tradition, this perceived barrier between Daoist and Buddhist thought might well have been transcended. As history stands, Xu Yun demonstrates through his Dharma-teaching that he has an ample understanding of Daoism, and that he expresses this understanding through a distinctly 'Buddhist' mind-set. Generally speaking, even Daoist Immortals are considered 'lacking' in spiritual attainment, and are often 'saved' from their ignorant state by the Ch'an Buddhist method! This obvious bias aside, an examination of Xu Yun's personal history and lectures demonstrates that he in fact had a life long association with the Daoist path.

Master Xu Yun (1840-1959) was a very famous and well respected Ch'an Buddhist monk whose long life of 120 years spanned China's imperialist age, its dalliance with Western-style democracy, and finally its embracing of Marxist-Leninism, under the Communist regime initiated by the revolutionary forces led by Mao Zedong, and fully established as the de facto political and social force in China in 1949. If this was not remarkable enough, in the early to mid-1950's, Xu Yun played a prominent role in the direction this new regime would take (with regards to the official attitude towards Buddhism) following the re-establishment of the Chinese Buddhist Association in Beijing in 1952-53—a meeting Xu Yun's attendance was formerly requested by the government. At this time, a group of Chinese Buddhist monks wanted to petition the government into establishing by law, the abandonment of the Vinaya—or the Buddhist extensive moral discipline established by the Buddha thousands of years ago in ancient India, a discipline which



all ordained Buddhist monks and nuns had to follow throughout their lives. At the very least, this code of conduct required celibacy, and all had to follow a vegetarian diet, amongst many other requirements.

If this group of monks had been successful in their endeavours, Chinese Buddhism would have altered into a state very similar to that existing in modern Japan, where ordained monks and nuns only differ from lay-people in attire, as they routinely marry, eat meat, and drink alcohol whilst wearing robes for a living. Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai (both of whom were present at this meeting), deferred the matter to Xu Yun—which is a measure of the respect and high esteem Xu Yun was held in within modern China—even by Communist revolutionaries!

Xu Yun quietly listen to the monks and then banged his hand down on the table and exclaimed that Buddhism in China is nothing without the requirement of its monks and nuns to follow the strict rules of the Vinaya. According to Chinese language reports of the incident, Zhou Enlai looked at Mao Zedong—who nodded his approval of Xu Yun's statement—and the matter was legally settled. Chinese Buddhism in the modern age would not take the path of degradation, and would not follow the example of Japan, a country whose Buddhist monastics had abandoned Indian spiritual reality many centuries earlier. For Xu Yun, 'sila', or 'morality' was not just for the monks and nuns, but also for the laity—whom he considered just as able to realize enlightenment as those living a fully ordained existence. Without bodily control and behavior modification, it is seldom possible to 'still' the mind, (as the central principle of Ch'an Buddhism demands), either instantaneously, or over-time. If there is no physical discipline, there is no stillness of mind—this is why Xu Yun described the abandoning of physical discipline as the 'end' of Buddhism.

The maintaining of physical discipline in the Buddhist sense, is a form of what is known in China today as 'qigong' (氣功), or to use the much older name—'daoyin' (導引). Qigong is the cultivation of inner energy (*qi*) through directed willpower and effort (*gong*), whilst daoyin is the practice of 'directing' and 'leading' (*dao*) inner energy (*qi*), whilst 'yin' is the wilful process of 'pulling' the inner energy (*qi*) through the body and causing it to flow to all areas without hin-

drance. Both terms are similar and used interchangeably with a modern preference for qigong in popular literature, and daoyin in literature of a more ancient origination.

Within Chinese Buddhism, the concept of ancient Indian moral discipline (Sanskrit: 'sila') is written with the Chinese ideogram '戒' (*jie4*). This character is formed using the right-hand particle '戈' (*ge1*) which denotes a spear or lance, and the left-hand particle '升' (*gong3*) which signifies two-hands carrying an object. When combined together to form the ideogram '戒' (*jie4*), the narrow martial meaning becomes that of 'warning', 'defending', 'warding-off', 'admonishing' and 'guarding'. In the broader sense, this ideogram represents 'abstaining', 'caution', 'refraining', 'giving-up', 'avoidance', and 'vow', etc. When presented as '戒律' (*jie4lu4*)—lit: 'give-up law'—the concept of 'precepts' is formed, or that of Buddhist monastic and lay moral discipline. This discipline is designed to 'guard' the mind from disturbances through behavior modification which is designed to first reduce, and then remove all tensions, agitations, conflicts, contradictions, paradoxes, and perplexities in the mind and body—whilst actively preventing such manic energy from ever arising again. The Vinaya discipline (and its lay counter-part), is in reality an exercise in quietening, controlling, directing, optimizing, and enhancing the inner life-force (*qi*), so that the mind, body and spiritual essence, cease to be three separate and distinct entities, and fully unite into an all-embracing totality of awareness (i.e. Buddhist enlightenment).

Within Daoist terms, Buddhist 'sila' equates primarily with the practice of 'neidan' (內丹), or 'inner field of cultivation' practice. This is because not only is the inner energy (*qi*) quietened and directed, (i.e. 'free-flowing') within Buddhist self-cultivation, but prior to a major enlightenment experience, a practitioner has to 'gather' the *qi* to create a strong 'inner potential' that is then triggered by the words or actions of an enlightened master, so that the layer of obscuring and deluded thought is ripped apart, revealing the all-embracing and empty mind ground. Without this gathering of *qi* energy, the Ch'an School would have no effective method and cease to exist. The use of the *gong an* or *hua tou* methods by Ch'an practitioners is designed solely to gather and build the inner



energy potential for the final breakthrough, or achievement of the permanent 'turning' of the mind from the deluded to the enlightened state. In the old days, the somewhat 'artificial' methods of *gong an* and *hua tou* were not needed, as masters easily 'turned' minds with their every word or action, but in modern times the mind is assailed on all sides by an array of distractions that would have been unimaginable a thousand years ago in China. The new methods are needed to perform exactly the same function of qi gathering, directing, strengthening, and breaking through delusion. It is the cultivation of qi that unites Chinese Buddhist and Daoist methodologies, and what follows is an assessment of Master Xu Yun's association with the Daoist religion as recorded in his autobiography *'Empty Cloud'* as translated by Charles Luk into English.

In his youth, Master Xu Yun had a strict Confucian upbringing suitable for a son of a local government official. His days were disciplined and structured, and evolved around the study of Chinese classical texts and the Confucian Canon. He was being prepared through education to take the imperial exams, and spend his life as a scholar-official. When he was 11 years old (1850-51), his grandmother died and Xu Yun met for the first time, Buddhist monks who were officiating at her funeral. Interestingly, this was not the only Buddhist influence in his otherwise Confucian upbringing, as his biography states that his family library contained a number of books on Buddhism—including the story of the 'Fragrant Mountain', as well as the story of Avalokitesvara's attainment of enlightenment.

In the year of his grandmother's death, Xu Yun accompanied his uncle to Nanyue, where they visited numerous Buddhist temples. Xu Yun felt a strong karmic connection with these places and only reluctantly agreed to return home. However, upon reaching 14 years of age (in 1853-54), Xu Yun's father learned of his intention to leave home and join the Buddhist Sangha. Thinking that this was a phase that he would grow-out of, Xu Yun's father—Xiao Yu Tang—engaged a Daoist teacher at the family home to teach Xu Yun self-cultivation techniques. Charles Luk—in his English translation of Xu Yun's biography, has this to say about the incident:

*'My father discovered that I wanted to leave home to join the Sangha and in order to keep me, he engaged a Daoist called Wang to teach me Daoist practices*

*at home. The teacher gave me Daoist books to read and also taught me the Daoist 'inner' and 'outer' yogas (Nei-gong and Wai-gong in Daoism). I did not like the teaching but dared not reveal my unfavourable opinion of it. That winter the period of mourning for my grandmother ended and after entrusting my uncle with the care of my education, my father returned alone to Fujian.'* (*Empty Cloud*: Translated by Charles Luk—Page 2—Element Books, 1988)

The original Chinese language version of this extract reads:

*'父窺予有出塵志。欲因勢利導。留於家中。請一位先天大道王先生。教在家修行法。令看各種道書。及教內外氣功。心弗善也。然又不敢言。冬父服闋。付予屬叔父管教。自往福建。佐廈門關事。'*

What is interesting is that whilst working to present an authoritative English narrative that Westerners could study and successfully learn from, Charles Luk gives the name of the Daoist teacher as 'Wang', but omits to mention his lay or monastic status, or the school of Daoism he represented. This is because Charles Luk did not want to over-burden the average reader with unfamiliar technical terms at the time of his initial translation work (from 1959 onwards). The Daoist teacher is in fact referred to as 'Mr. Wang' (王先生—*Wang Xian Sheng*), implying that he is a lay-Daoist practitioner, and that the self-cultivation technique he taught Xu Yun was 'Earlier Divine Sky Great Way' (先天大道—*Xian Tian Da Dao*). However, as Xu Yun states that he studied a number of distinctly 'Daoist' books (道書—*Dao Shu*) whilst practicing at home, this method should not be confused with the Chinese folk religion often referred to 'Single Penetrating Way' (一貫道—*Yi Guan Dao*), which is also sometimes called by the same name as Mr. Wang's method—'Earlier Divine Sky Great Way' (先天大道—*Xian Tian Da Dao*). This can be further ascertained by the fact that Xu Yun spent three years studying 'internal and external energy cultivation' (內外氣功—*Nei Wai Qi Gong*) with Mr. Wang, and no mention is made of the eclectic teachings usually associated with *Yi Guan Dao* practice. Xu Yun states that despite this length of time he spent studying the techniques of Daoist energy (*qi*) self-cultivation with Mr. Wang, he did not like this method. However, three years is a substantial amount of time spent studying Daoist scripture and physical exercise regimes—which almost certainly would have included



martial arts practice of one type or another. This may explain why later in his life, Xu Yun was able to teach Ch'an Buddhism whilst sometimes making authoritative references to Daoist concepts and deities, etc.

In his 17th year (1856-57) Xu Yun states:

*'I had been studying Daoism at home for the last three years but realized that the teaching I had been given failed to reach the ultimate pattern. Although I felt as if I were sitting on a mat of needles, I kept up a pretence of doing everything to make my uncle happy, working in the house to escape his watchful eye.'* (Empty Cloud: Translated by Charles Luk—Page 2—Element Books, 1988)

The original Chinese language version of this extract reads in part:

‘予在家讀道書三年。認為非極則事。’

What Charles Luk translates as ‘ultimate pattern’ is conveyed in the Chinese text as ‘non-ridgepole’ (非極—*Fei Ji*). Whereas ‘非’ (*fei1*) simply means ‘non’, or sometimes ‘not’ (*fei1*), the ideogram ‘極’ (*ji2*) is often presented as ‘太極’ (*Tai Ji*), or ‘Grand Ridgepole’, an ancient Chinese concept appearing in the commentary sections of the *Yijing* (易經), or ‘Book of Changes’. This denotes a perfect centralized balance that spreads out and permeates all things without exception that then exists in a state of perfect harmony and tranquillity. This is the achievement of the ‘ultimate pattern’ of perfect enlightenment and awareness. Xu Yun appears to be saying that the Daoist teachings as he experienced them as a young man, did not achieve this state of perfect balance, and that as a consequence, he remained in the deluded state of duality. Finally, when he was in his 19<sup>th</sup> year of life (1858-59) Master Xu Yun left home (with his cousin Fu Guo) and went to live on Mount Gu (situated in Fuzhou) where his head was shaved by the old monk Chang Kai, and where he was taken as a disciple of Master Miao Lian. This was the beginning of his 101 years of following the Dharma.

In his 49th year (1888-89) Xu Yun states:

*'In the first month, I left the Bao-guang Monastery and journeyed to the Provincial capital of Chengdu. There, I paid reverence at the Hall of Wen-shu (Manjusri) in Zhao-jue Monastery, Cao-dang Monastery and Qing-yang Temple. Thence, passing through Hua-yang and Shuang-liu I headed south and came to Meishan and Hungya Prefectures, walking on until*

*I reached the foot of Mount Emei. From the Jiu-lao Cave at Fu-hu Temple (where Zhao Gong-ming formerly stayed to practice Daoism), I climbed the Jin-ding Peak of Mount Emei, where I offered incense.* (Empty Cloud: Translated by Charles Luk—Pages 28-29—Element Books, 1988)



Zhao Gong Ming (趙公明) Astride his Tiger

Xu Yun is referring to Zhao Gong Ming (趙公明) who is famous in China as a deity of wealth and is known by a number of other names. Zhao Gong Ming is a character often associated with a military bearing (hence his rank of ‘Marshal’), who is believed to have been a real person who lived toward the end of the Shang Dynasty (1783-1122 BCE). Despite his public service, it is also recorded in various places that he spent time living as a hermit communing with the cycles of nature. He was eventually killed by an arrow whilst defending the Shang Dynasty from collapse, and was then promoted (due to his virtue) into the pantheon of the five gods of wealth as the official in charge of the Ministry of Wealth. This pantheon consists of five gods with each representing a geographical cardinal point—as the head of this ‘ministry’ Zhao Gong Ming occupies the all-important and powerful central position. This is why the other four gods of wealth are considered Zhao Gong Ming’s subordinates within the ‘Ministry of Wealth’. For Zhao Gong Ming, the term ‘wealth’ is not used here to refer to riches acquired through the exercise of blatant greed, but rather to the concept that as a virtuous and pure person, (and as someone who has refined his qi energy through self-cultivation), wherever he goes only good things happen around him, and to people associated with him, or who pray to him. Due to his loyalty, bravery, virtue, and commitment to

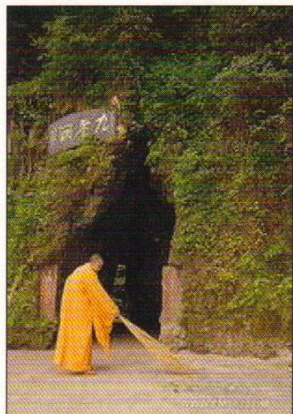


self-cultivation, Zhao Gong Ming was eventually absorbed into the Daoist pantheon, and is today associated primarily with the celebration of Chinese New Year in the popular imagination, with his birthday falling on the 5<sup>th</sup> day of the first lunar month of each year.

Zhao Gong Ming's story appears to be a mixture of many narratives all of which require a careful historical analysis. However, in 1888-89, whilst travelling through China's southwest province of Sichuan, Xu Yun records that Zhao Gong Ming's Daoist self-cultivation occurred in the Jiu Lao Cave (九老洞—*Jiu Lao Dong*) at Fu Hu Temple (伏虎寺—*Fu Hu Si*)—which is situated at the foot of Mount Emei (峨眉山—*E Mei Shan*). A typical description of Jiu Lao (or 'nine old') Cave from Chinese sources is as follows:

‘九老洞位于九老峰下，下临黑龙潭，洞口呈“人”字形，全长约1500米，高约4米，洞口与洞底高差84米，是峨眉山最大的天然溶洞。全称九老仙人洞，相传它是仙人聚会的洞府，许多神仙故事，给它蒙上了一层扑朔迷离的神奇色彩。洞位于仙峰寺右侧山腰，藤萝倒植，下临绝壁。又说这里是道教财神赵公明修炼洞府，里面有一张石床，相传为赵公明当年用过遗物。洞内黝黑阴森湿润，能直立行走的通道仅120米，往前岔洞交错，深邃神秘，未探明前，人多不敢入内。’

This place is referred to as being associated with the Daoist God of Wealth (道教财神—*Dao Jia Cai Shen*) and being 'Zhao Gong Ming's Cultivation Cave House' (赵公明修炼洞府—*Zhao Gong Ming Xiu Lian Dong Fu*). It is located at the foot of Mount Emei's 'Nine Old Peak' (九老峰—*Jiu Lao Feng*), and overlooks the 'Black Dragon Deep Pool' (黑龙潭—*Hei Long Tan*). This cave is 1500 metres in length, and is about 4 metres high.



Entrance to Jiu Lao Cave (九老洞)

The entrance of the cave is around 84 metres up from ground level, and is considered one of Mount Emei's largest natural caves. The interior contains hieroglyphs representing early forms of human writing, as well as a stone bed believed to have been used by Zhao Gong

Ming. This place has been associated with many stories of supernatural beings, fairies, and Daoist Immortals (神仙—*Shen Xian*) for thousands of years in China, probably due to the many different and bewildering colors seen in the interior that appear magical to observers. Half way up the mountain on the right side is located the 'Immortal Peak Temple' (仙峰寺—*Xian Feng Si*) which nestles amongst cultivated vines situated beneath a cliff. According to legend, the Emperor Xuan Yuan (轩辕皇帝—*Xuan Yuan Huang Di*) met nine Daoist Immortals in the vicinity, and this is how the peak of Mount Emei (as well as the cave) got its name. The cave is dark and wet, and an individual can only walk upright for about 120 metres. Beyond this point the layout of the cave is not known as people have generally been too afraid to explore further.

The name of the Fu Hu Temple (伏虎寺—*Fu Hu Si*) [mentioned by Master Xu Yun] translates as 'Crouching Tiger Temple', but it is also known as 'Crouching Tiger Ch'an Monastery' (伏虎禅院—*Fu Hu Ch'an Yuan*), 'Spirit Dragon Hall' (神龙堂—*Shen Long Tang*), and 'Tiger Brook Vihara' (虎溪精舍—*Hu Xi Jing She*). It is located in the foothills of Emei Mountain and is situated next to the large 'Serve the Country Temple' (报国寺—*Bao Guo Si*). It was originally built in the Tang Dynasty, its name was 'Spirit Dragon Hall'—which continued to be used into the time of the Song Dynasty. In the Ming Dynasty the temple was destroyed, and then rebuilt during the 8<sup>th</sup> year of the reign of the Qing Dynasty Emperor known as 'Shunzhi' (顺治)—i.e. around 1650-51. After this reconstruction, it was renamed 'Tiger Brook Vihara'. The area was known to be dangerous due to its tiger population, but the monks persevered and managed to reconstruct the temple, and thus the tiger threat diminished. This is why the temple is also called 'Crouching Tiger'—as the tigers appeared to submit to the presence of humans in the area. The Qing Emperor Kangxi (康熙) visited the Fu Hu Temple and inscribed the following three characters '離垢園' (*Li Gou Yuan*), which translate as 'Away Dirt Garden', or 'Garden of Purification'.



The temple Fu Hu Temple (伏虎寺) Name Plaque



buildings are typical of the established Chinese Buddhist style of architecture. The entrance gate is central to the over-all design and structure, which contains a 'Maitreya Hall' (彌勒殿—*Mi Le Dian*), a 'Bodhi Hall' (菩提殿—*Pu Ti Dian*), the 'Great Heroic Treasure Hall' (大雄寶殿—*Da Xiong Bao Dian*), the 'Five Hundred Arhant Hall' (五百羅漢堂—*Wu Bai Luo Han Tang*), an 'Imperial Library' (*Yu Shu Lou*), a 'Meditation Room' (禪房—*Ch'an Fang*) and a 'monk's Residence' (僧舍—*Seng She*). In 1935, Jiang Jie Shi (蔣介石) asked for advice from the Fu Hu Temple masters. What is interesting about the nearby Bao Guo Temple is that it was designed to both accommodate and facilitate the joint study of Confucian, Daoist, and Buddhist philosophy.

**Ch'an Week Retreat: Jade Buddha Monastery, Shanghai, (1953). Xu Yun taught on the 7<sup>th</sup> Day;**

'Lu Dong-bin, alias Shun-yang, a native of Jing-chuan, was one of the famous group of eight immortals. Towards the end of the Tang Dynasty, he stood thrice for the scholar's examination but failed each time. Being disheartened, he did not return home, and one day he met by chance in a wine-shop at Chang-an an immortal named Zhong-Li-chuan who taught him the method of lengthening his span of life indefinitely. Lu Dong-bin practiced the method with great success and could even become invisible and fly in the air at will over the country. One day he paid a flying visit to the Hai Hui Monastery on Lu Shan Mountain. In its bell tower he wrote on the wall:



**Daoist Immortal—Lu Tong Bin**  
(呂洞賓)

*After a day of leisure when the body is at ease,  
The six organs now in harmony, announce that all  
is well.  
With a gem in the pubic region there's no need to  
search for truth,  
When mindless of surroundings, there's no need for  
Chan.*

Sometime later, as he was crossing the Huang-long Mountain, he beheld in the sky purple clouds shaped like an umbrella. Guess-

ing that there must be some extraordinary person (in the monastery there), he entered. It happened at the same time that in the monastery, after beating the drum, Chan Master Huang-long was ascending to his seat (to expound the Dharma). Lu Dong-bin followed the monks and entered the hall to listen to the teaching.



**Ch'an Master Huang Long Hui Nan** (黃龍慧南禪師) [1002-1069]

Huang-long said to the assembly: 'Today there is here a plagiarist of my Dharma; the monk (i.e., I) will not expound it.' Thereupon, Lu Dong-bin came forward and paid obeisance to the Master, saying, 'I wish to ask the Venerable Master the meaning of these lines:

*'A grain of corn contains the Universe:  
The hills and rivers fill a small cooking-pot.'*

Huang-long scolded him and said: 'What a corpse-guarding devil you are.' Lu Dong-bin retorted: 'But my gourd holds the immortality-giving medicine.' Huang-long said: 'Even if you succeed in living 80,000 eons, you will not escape from falling into the dead void.'

Forgetting all about the fortitude advocated in his own line: "When mindless of surroundings there's no need for Chan".

Lu Dong-bin burned with anger and threw his sword at Huang-long. Huang-long pointed his finger at the sword which fell to the ground and which the thrower could not get back. With deep remorse, Lu Dong-bin knelt upon his knees and inquired about the Buddhadharma. Huang-long asked: "Let aside the line: 'The hills and rivers fill a small cooking-pot'—about which I do not ask you anything. Now what is the meaning of 'A grain of corn contains the Universe'?" Upon hearing this question, Lu Dong-bin instantaneously realized the profound (Chan) meaning. Then, he chanted the following repentance-poem:

*I throw away my gourd and smash my lute.  
In future I'll not cherish gold in mercury.  
Now that I have met (the master Huang-long),  
I have realized my wrong use of the mind.*



*This is the story of an immortal's return to and reliance on the Triple Gem and his entry into the monastery (Sangharama) as a guardian of the Dharma. Lu Dong-bin was also responsible for reviving the Daoist Sect at the time and was its Fifth (Dao) Patriarch in the North. The Daoist Zi-yang also realized the mind after reading the (Buddhist) collection 'Zu-Ying-ji' and became the Fifth (Dao) Patriarch in the South. Thus the Dao faith was revived thanks to the Chan Sect.' (Empty Cloud: Translated by Charles Luk—Pages 185-187—Element Books, 1988)*

The original Chinese language version of this extract reads

「八仙會上的呂洞賓。別號純陽。京川人。唐末三舉不第。無心歸家。偶於長安酒肆。遇鍾離權。授以延命之術。洞賓依法修行。後來乃飛騰自在。雲遊天下。一日至廬山海會寺。在鐘樓壁上書四句偈云。『一日清閒自在身。六神和合報平安。丹田有寶休問道。對境無心莫問禪。』未幾道經黃龍山。睹紫雲成蓋。疑有異人。乃入謁。值黃龍繫鼓陞座。呂遂隨眾入堂聽法。黃龍曰。『今日有人竊法。老僧不說。』洞賓出而禮拜。問曰。『請問和尚。如何是一粒粟中藏世界。半升鐺內煮山川。』黃龍罵曰。『這守屍鬼。』洞賓曰。『爭奈囊中自有長生不死藥。』黃龍曰。『饒經八萬劫。未免落空亡。』洞賓忘了對境無心莫問禪的功夫。大發瞋心。飛劍斬黃龍。黃龍以手一指。其劍落地。不能取得。洞賓禮拜悔過。請問佛法。黃龍曰。『半升鐺內煮山川。即不問。如何是一粒粟中藏世界。』洞賓於言下頓契玄旨。乃述偈懺曰。『棄卻瓢囊繫碎琴。從今不戀汞中金。自從一見黃龍後。始覺當年錯用心。』此是仙人歸依三寶。求入伽藍為護法的一例。道教在洞賓之手亦大興起來。為北五祖。紫陽真人。又是闡祖英集。而明心地的南五祖。故此道教亦是為佛教宗門所續啟。」

Master Xu Yun reveals that Lu Tong Bin's alias is 'Chun Yang' (純陽), or 'Pure Light'. This might also be construed as 'pure positive energy', as opposed to 'negative energy', or 'yin' (陰). This is an interesting use of conceptual deliverance by Xu Yun, as it hints at the presence of an 'imbalance'. From the Ch'an perspective, 'Yin and Yang' emerge from—and originate within—the empty mind ground that does not discriminate. In the opening line, Xu Yun sets the scene for what follows by preparing the mind of the audience. What follows, of course, is that the famous and powerful Daoist Immortal (Lu Tong Bin)—encounters a very able and enlightened

Ch'an master in the form of Huang Long—and in the process has his mind thoroughly and totally 'turned' so that he instantaneously realizes full enlightenment. This is despite the fact that he appears to already possess spiritual powers and longevity beyond what is considered normal. Not only this, but Xu Yun further suggests that the effectiveness of the Ch'an method served to breathe new life into the apparently 'ailing' Daoist School, by enlightening its Fifth Patriarch. An explanation of this thinking can be found in the notes that Charles Luk attached to this section of Xu Yun's biography, a selection of which reads:

*'The immortals practice Daoism and sit in meditation with crossed legs. Their aim is to achieve immortality by putting an end to all passions, but they still cling to the view of the reality of ego and things. They live in caves or on the tops of mountains and possess the art of becoming invisible. A Chinese bhiksu who is a friend of mine went to North China when he was still young. Hearing of an immortal there, he tried to locate him. After several unsuccessful attempts, he succeeded finally in meeting him. Kneeling upon his knees, my friend implored the immortal to give him instruction. The latter, however, refused, saying that the visitor was not of his line, i.e. Daoism. When the young man got up and raised his head, the immortal had disappeared and only a small sheet of paper was seen on the table with the word 'Good-bye' on it.'* (Empty Cloud: Translated by Charles Luk—Footnote 107, Page 196—Element Books, 1988)

*'In ancient times, Daoists in China claimed to be able to 'extract quicksilver by smelting cinnabar', i.e., they knew the method which enabled them to become immortals, or Rishis, in Sanskrit, whose existence was mentioned by the Buddha in the Surangama Sutra. Their meditation aimed at the production of a hut current pervading all parts of the body and successful meditators could send out their spirits to distant places.*

*They differed from Buddhists in that they held the conception of the reality of ego and of dharmas, and could not attain complete enlightenment. They used to wander in remote places, equipped with a gourd, a guitar and a 'divine' sword to protect themselves against demons. Today, adherents of the Daoist Sect are still found in great number of the Far East.'* (Empty Cloud: Translated by Charles Luk—Footnote 112, Page 197—Element Books, 1988)

These views appear to be a criticism of a gen-



erally accepted folk-Daoism that limited itself to imaginative and idyllic representations of spiritual freedom, but which did not seem to offer any practical advice regarding how to achieve the state of 'Immortality' itself. In part, this perception has to do with the institutional 'secrecy' surrounding exclusive Daoist lineages, the masters of which jealously guarded their teachings.

This attitude of retiring from the world and being hard to find, can be juxtaposed to the general Buddhist attitude of compassion for all beings, and the open sharing of effective meditative technique and rules of discipline. However, these typical Buddhist attitudes should not be viewed as 'anti-Daoist', as Daoism has had a very good relationship throughout history with its Buddhist cousin, and has contributed much to the integration of this originally 'Indian' teaching into Chinese culture. This positive relationship is further displayed by the fact that Charles Luk wrote two books containing Daoist instruction—'Taoist Yoga' (1970), and 'The Secrets of Chinese Meditation' (1964)—explaining his positive experience of Daoist training, and the experiences of others. Significant within this information is the fact that Charles Luk trained in the Qianfeng tradition of Daoism as conceived and taught by Master Zhao Bichen (1860-1942) of Beijing, and excelled in its method which is a combination of traditional Daoist thinking (as found within the Quanzhen School), and the developmental theory found within Ch'an Buddhist thinking.

Charles Luk taught the techniques Qianfeng Daoism (which he learned from Zhao Bichen

and one of his students called 'Chen'), together with Xu Yun's Ch'an method, to his key Western disciple Richard Hunn (1949-2006), who in turn freely passed on this valuable information to anyone who sincerely enquired. Daoist philosophy and Buddhist thinking can complement one another when approached in the right way, and Xu Yun was adamant that individuals should follow the path that best suits their individual needs, whilst not criticizing the paths of others. ■

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