

Sexuality in Daoism

Ying Yang Harmony and Female Gender

Daoist cosmology and sexuality

- Both Daoist cosmology and its theory of sexuality are based on the central concept of Dao, expanded through the Qi and fulfilled in the interaction between the polaristic powers of Yin and Yang.
- Dao is the symbol or metaphor of the source of the universe; it is the mother of heaven and earth, with a motionless, formless feature.
- Dao is the mysterious female, for it gives birth to all creature and human beings.

Dao and Female

- Through the metaphors of the mother, the female, water and valley, Dao is undoubtedly associated with feminine features such as softness and tranquillity.
- Although the flexibility and femininity of Dao does not mean weakness in any usual sense.
- Rather, 'The female always overcomes the male by tranquillity' (chapter 61 of Dao de jing)

Daodejing 6 Translated by D.C. Lau

- The spirit of the valley never dies.
- It is called the subtle and profound female.
- The gate of the subtle and the profound female is the root of heaven and earth. It is the continuous and seems to be always existing.
- Use it and you will never wear it out

Daodejing: Resource for feminist thinking

(Karyn Lai in Journal of Chinese Philosophy June 2000)

Concept	Reference	Function/ principle
Buzheng: Non-contending or Non-assertive	Chapter 8	Water does not contend; the best is like water, benefiting all things
Jing: Quiet or still	Chapter 16	To return to stillness and quiet is to return to Dao
	Chapter 61	The female, in being still, takes the power position
Ruo: Weak and Rou: Soft	Chapter 36	The soft and the weak overcome the hard and the strong
	Chapter 43	The soft overcomes the hard; this is the advantage of taking no action
	Chapter 76	The soft and the weak are superior, or take the higher position
	Chapter 78	There is nothing softer and weaker than water; the weak overcomes the strong and the soft overcomes the hard
To take the lower position	Chapter 61	The female, in being tranquil, takes the lower position
	Chapter 66	The great rivers and seas are kings of all mountain streams because they stay below them; in order to be the superior of the people, one must place oneself below them

Sexual Techniques

- Daoist sexual techniques are ancient as the other physical practices and were also discussed in early manuscripts excavated from Han Dynasty tombs.
- Daoist sexual skills form an integral part of Daoist practice, both individual and communal, and especially the Celestial masters have been frequently attacked for their allegedly orgiastic practice of Harmonizing the energies, a form of ritual intercourse.

History of Sexual Techniques

- According to the mythology, sexual techniques were first taught by a celestial lady called the plain Maiden (素女) to the Yellow Emperor (黄帝)。
- The major sexual classic of China is called 素女经 (*The Classic of Plain Maiden*)
- Many other manuals followed in its footsteps, specifying not only various postures and methods of arousal, but also including warnings about health hazards and remedial uses of intercourse.
- Sexual practices have thus formed an important aspect of both the medical and religious traditions.

The Aim of Sexual Techniques in Daoism

- In Daoism, the aim of sexual techniques is to revert the 'essence' to support the body instead of flowing out and being lost.
- Sexual arousal, and thus intercourse, in this context serves to activate the essence that lies hidden deep in the body and bring it to the surface.
- Only when essence is tangible can it be revered, can by sheer concentration and pressure applied at the right moment, the valuable substance be used to further long life.

Reversal of Sexual energy in inner alchemy practice

- In the more meditational practices of inner alchemy, the reversal of sexual energy is undertaken in meditative fashion and without the involvement of a partner.
- Method differ for men and women.
- Daoist nuns in particular report in contemporary age that with a help of breast massages and meditational circulation of essence, they stopped menstruating and developed heightened levels of vigour and wellbeing. And can live for a long age.

Introduction to Sexual Techniques

- This is a text contained in '*Essential Medical Methods*' published by Renmin Weisheng Publishing Company in Beijing at 1955.
- 1977, John Chang: *The Tao of Love and Sex: The Ancient Way of Ecstasy* (Wildwood house)
- 1983, 謝明德 (Mantak Chia) : *Awaken Healing Energy Through the Tao: The Taoist Secret of Circulating Internal Power* (Healing Dao Press)
- 1984 Mantak Chia & Michael Winn: *Daoist Secrets of Love: Cultivating Male Sexual Energy*)
- 1985, *Taoist Way to Transform Stress to Vitality*
- 1986, *Chi Self-Massage: The Taoist Way of Rejuvenation*
- 1987 Mantak Chia & Maneewan Chia: *Healing Love through the Tao: Cultivating Females Sexual Energy*

Purpose of Daoist Sexuality

- Daoist sexuality is not merely a attitude towards gender, marriage and family, but more importantly, a kind of practice having a close association with the Daoist understanding of the cosmos and life .
- 1. Sex is a practice to enable one to follow the Way of Heaven and Earth, i.e. through the microcosmic intercourse of man and woman one participates in the macrocosmic harmony of the universe.
- 2. Sex is the way to cultivate one's own nature and vitality (xing and ming), i.e. through sexual practices one attain health and long life.
- 3. Sex is the way of harmonizing husband and wife, and by this descendents are generated.

Daoist emphasis on

Complementarity rather than Confrontation of Sex

- Another interesting difference we noted in Chinese as compared with Japanese erotic pictures, which sheds a great deal of light on different sex attitudes that underlie these pictorial representations, concerns the fact that in Chinese erotic are one finds not infrequently the man entreating the women to have sexual intercourse with him.
- In contrast to this, female reticence or resistance is overcome in Japanese erotic art by male aggressiveness, sometimes to the point of forceful intercourse, and rape is a very rare subject matter in China erotica.
- Phyllis and Eberhard Kronhausen: *Erotic Art*, P.243

Two different Daoist Sexual Practices

- 1. The Art of the bedchamber (房中术), which is an art mainly dealing with techniques of sex including how to manage correctly one's sexual and energetic resources (for healing purpose).
- 2. Paired cultivation of yin and yang(阴阳双修), which is a practice of inner alchemy in which sexual techniques are used to accomplish alchemical transformation (for alchemy cultivation purpose).

Relationship in historical context

- There was little real connection between Daoism and the art of bedchamber in the early stage of the development of Sex techniques.
- The arts of bedchamber appeared earlier in history, however, these practices are not well known in China outside Daoist circle.
- In later stage, the arts and practices were held to be responsible for the corruption of traditional sexual morality and therefore strongly opposed by the orthodox Confucianism.
- This is the reason why so few texts concerning the so called arts of bedchamber survived during the last two imperial dynasties.
- But in *Book of Former Han Dynasty*, 8 books is listed in the title of Arts of chamber or uniting yin and yang

Relationship in historical context

- Although the earliest extant texts already show a special focus on Daoist approaches to physical and mental hygiene and on Daoist understanding of human sexuality as a way to immortality, the arts of bedchamber were not explicitly associated with Daoist religion until the end of the Han dynasty when a religio-military movement called 'the Dao of the Five Bushels of rice' used the arts as ceremonial means to atone for one's sins and to usher in the Great Peace in the human world.
- In the time of Ge Hong (283-363), more than ten schools had been active which either taught the use of the sexual arts to cure injury or attack illness, or to search out how to strengthen the yang by absorbing yin or how to achieve longevity or immortality through harmonizing yin and yang.

History of Paired cultivation of Yin and Yang

- Strictly speaking, this skill as a specifically Daoist way of cultivation did not fully developed until after Inner Alchemy Daoist was firmly established in the Song Dynasty. Although its ideas and practices can be traced to a much earlier age.
- Wei Boyang 魏伯阳(155-221) 周易参同契 Zhouyi Cantong Qi (*The Kingship of the Tree*)
- Zhang Boduan 张伯端 (983-1082) 悟真篇 (*Awakening to Reality*)
- Applying the principle of the inner alchemy to sex, the Daoist believed that the golden elixir within each of the practitioners could not be made unless by a total harmony of yin and yang through properly controlled intercourse, which enable each of the partners to gather generative energy from transmuting jing (semen/blood) first into qi and then into shen.
- During the Tang period, paired cultivation was considered of significance to human longevity, as shown in the discussion of 'mutual immortality both for men and women' in Sun Simiao's *Priceless Prescriptions* (千金方), chapter 83,
- In Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) Daoists departed from solo cultivation practice, start to progadate paired cultivation within the married couple.
- Lu Xixing (1520-1606): 'we must know that the qi in man and woman comes from the dame taiji or the Great Ultimate, in which the essence of yin and yang are mutually stored in each other's body. Therefore it is impossible to practice single cultivation'

Sexual Techniques

- Use on all levels (Medical Healing, Longevity and Immortality),
- first with a partner, later celibately and within the practitioner self.
- In all levels sexual stimulation is experienced but then the rising of arousal (essence) is reversed upward along the spine with the help of meditation and massage instead of being lost through ejaculation or menstruation.
- -----Reverting essence to nourish the brain.