The Tradition and Evolution of Traditional Culture: A Contemporary Interpretation of the Qianfeng School's *Daojia Yangshenggong* for *Taiyi Jinhua Zongzhi*'s Objective

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HOW TO CITE:
Siu Kwai Yeung, Hai Xia Zhao, Yingying Zhao (2026). The Tradition and Evolution of Traditional Culture: A Contemporary Interpretation of the Qianfeng School's Daojia Yangshenggong for Taiyi Jinhua Zongzhi's Objective. International Journal of Special Education, 41(3s), 237-248.

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ABSTRACT:
Culture must be transmitted and evolved, which is a universal characteristic of all cultures globally. Taoist Neidan, a significant aspect of Chinese culture, is no different. Taiyi Jinhua Zongzhi 太乙金華宗旨(The Secret of Golden Flower) is likely a creation of the Longmen school of Taoist Neidan (內丹學, Inner Alchemy methods) during the Qing Dynasty. It was introduced to Europe by German missionary Richard Wilhelm, and became an inspiration for Carl Jung's study on the collective unconsciousness. By now the book has been translated into many languages and known around the world. The book proposes a unique methodology of Taoist cultivation, including (cultivate) first inner nature, then life (kidney), keep the mind in "tianxin 天心 (the heavenly heart)", and "hui guang shou zhong 回光守中" (reverse the light and keep to the center). The methodology in the book had remained esoteric. However, it constantly needs to be inherited and developed by later generations, and kept up with the times. During 1911 to 1949, the 11th grandmaster Zhao Bichen of Longmen School inherited the methodology and established Qianfeng Xiantian Sect. His third-generation disciple Niu Shengxian, a contemporary representative of Taoist Neidan and author of The Exercise of Taoist Regimen, inherited and advanced the cultivation technique of Taiyi Jinhua Zongzhi with a contemporary approach. He translated the book and its methodology into colloquial Chinese, as well as specifying some of the acupoints for practice and summarizing the cultivation practice into a 13-step exercise. To adapt to contemporary demands, he supported the idea that practitioners should be allowed to marry and have children, a practice that was initially prohibited by the Quanzhen School and author of Taiyi Jinhua Zongzhi. Certainly, one of the drawbacks of this book on Taoist health maintenance is that it does not include interdisciplinary theories like modern physiology, biology, or physics in its explanations.

Keywords: Taiyi Jinhua Zongzhi; Taoist Longmen School; Practice of Neidan Qianfeng method; Niu Shengxian; Daojia Yangshenggong (Exercise of Taoist Regimen)

1. Introduction

The world is full of diverse ethnic cultures. The history of many of them is really lengthy. For a variety of causes, they have been produced and transmitted down to the present day. More than 5,000 years of Chinese culture have been continuously practiced in China, making it the only continuous culture in the world. One significant aspect of Chinese culture is its ongoing evolution throughout the previous 5,000 years. Taoism and Confucianism are significant aspects of traditional Chinese culture. Because the primary goal of national and state development varies over history, so do the nation's and state's choices and understandings of traditional culture, as well as the mindset, approach, and methodology of cultural inheritance. For instance, the nation's concept and demands for traditional culture are very different in a period focused on the revolutionary struggle to gain power and in an era focused on the establishment and growth of power. Confucianism and Taoism typically support the mindset and methodology of "reating traditional culture with discrimination and inheriting it with abandonment" while examining Chinese history. A more proactive, constructive, and thoughtful cultural activity is inheritance. It takes a lot of work to learn from the object; inheritance is not something that can happen naturally. In addition to being dynamic, learning is a process of sublimation, whereby all currently used textual forms and contents are transformed into useful, modern values. Drawing is linked to excavation and interpretation, and it also means to assimilate via effort. More emphasis is placed on the modern significance of exceptional traditional culture in relation to excavation and elaboration. Excavation and elaboration are the focus of cultural artifacts and practice between the subject- object interaction of the relationship; the meaning is not a fixed, unchanging object, but rather varies as the presentation's observational perspective changes. The fact that, during the process of cultural transmission, interpretation constructively transforms the original phrases, propositions, or ideas of ancient cultures into another positive meaning, expanding their meaning and applicability to suit the needs of contemporary times, rather than focusing on the superficial meaning of ancient texts or the author's original intention, further demonstrates the dynamic nature of interpretation.

A book on Neidan 內丹 of the Quanzhen school of Taoism during the Qing Dynasty, *Taiyi Jinhua Zongzhi* went on to become a world- renowned work. It makes original suggestions for Neidan's practice. China is pushing for "great health" in the hopes that all of its citizens will live long, healthy lives. Mr. Niu Shengxian, a modern Neidan practitioner, has creatively created the Neidan of *Taiyi Jinhua Zongzhi* in a modern language. Mr. Niu's *Daojia Yangshenggong* (*Exercise of Taoist Regimen*) is worth studying from the viewpoints of Chinese culture, Taoism, and Neidan because it traces the development of *Taiyi Jinhua Zongzhi*, which is significant for cultural inheritance and also helpful for the advancement of Taoist Neidan practice.

2. The Basic Ideas of *Taiyi Jinhua Zongzhi*

This section discusses the meaning of the title, author, and key points of the *Taiyi Jinhua Zongzhi.*

It first discusses the significance of the book's title. *Taiyi Jinhua Zongzhi* explains "Taiyi" as "what's the highest called 太乙者，無上之謂也" (Wang 1994: 57). First of all, it is about the meaning of the title of this book. The *Taiyi Jinhua Zongzhi* explains that "Taiyi" means "Supreme". It says that there is nothing greater and higher than Taiyi, that is, Taiyi is the highest level, it is the essence of metaphysics, the supreme essence. Taiyi is an extremely important concept in the pre-Qin and Han Dynasties (Yang 2023: 121-122). Taiyi, also known as Tianyi 天一, is the "Yang God", the "Heavenly God", and the "Primordial God". The second is the meaning of Jinhua 金華. *Taiyi Jinhua*

Zongzhi explains Jinhua as "Light 金華即光也", "the Golden Pill 金丹" (Wang 1994:57-58). Carl Jung (1875-1961) refers to it as "mandala" (Wang 1994: 43). The third is the meaning of Zongzhi 宗旨. Zongzhi means purpose, under which methods and techniques may also be given.

Secondly, we will talk about authors. There are some opinions on the authorship of the book in the academia: According to certain Chinese academics, including Zhou Deliang 周德良, *Taiyi Jinhua Zongzhi* was written by Lü Dongbin 呂洞賓 (796-1016), and it is an important piece of Taoist scripture anthologized in *Daozang Jiyao* 道藏輯要 (*Essentials of Taoist Canon*) (Zhou 1992: 65-66). The reason why scholars have such a view is that, In *Taiyi Jinhua Zongzhi*, "His Reverence Lü said" (Lüzu yue 呂祖曰) is repeatedly mentioned. For example, the first chapter "Tianxin"天心 (heavenly heart) starts with a quote "His Reverence Lü said: Tao, nature is". It is therefore reasonable to think the book as work by Lü Dongbin.

The second theory was advanced by the German scholar Richard Wilhelm (1873–1930), who thought that the book was passed down orally, in writing, and finally through printing during the Qianlong era of the Qing Dynasty from a covert religious organization in China. The block-printed edition compiled by Taoist priest Huizhenzi 慧真子 can trace back to 17th century. Lü Dongbin, on the other hand, is the creator of the book's earliest text (Carl et al. 2016: 75). Yuasa Yasuo in general shares the same view as Richard Wilhelm (Wang 1994: 44), which is also consistent with how the ancient books are circulated and compiled during Pre-Qin Era and Han Dynasty, that's to say, it would take a lengthy period for a book to be finally compiled and printed. Another support to Richard's view is that the book mainly pertains to the words and deeds of the founder and pioneer of the Taoist sect that holds in possession of the book (Yang 2021: 199-217). Yuria Mori pointed out that the *Taiyi Jinhua Zongzhi* is a practical manual designed specifically for Qing Dynasty literati (scholars and officials), aiming to help them integrate internal alchemy into their daily lives (Yuria 2025: 550). Esposito Monica (1962-2011) pointed out *Taiyi Jinhua Zongzhi* is certainly not the product of a single tradition but rather that of various local traditions, schools and sects, all of which apparently worshipped the immortal Lü Dongbin (Esposito 1998: 109). It is evident that *Taiyi Jinhua Zongzhi* is a book on Neidan methods written by Taoist priests during the Qing Dynasty.

Finally it briefly discuss the key points in this book. The book is divided into 13 chapters, emphasizing on instructing people on how to distinguish between "Tianxin 天心" (heavenly heart) and "Xiashixin 下識心" (known heart), and between "Yuanshen 元神" (primordial spirit) and "Shishen 識神" (known spirit). The book also instructs people on how to cultivate and restore the "primordial spirit" to its proper place, and how to suppress the "known spirit" so that it wouldn't act unruly. Furthermore, the book instructs people on how to apply the method of "Samatha" (Zhiguanfa 止觀法) to suppress challenges such as "stupor" and "listlessness" along the way of achieving the "cultivation of both wisdom and concentration" (Wang 1994:5-6).

3. The Unique Cultivation Methodology of *Taiyi Jinhua Zongzhi*

Taiyi Jinhua Zongzhi is a book on the Neidan of the Quanzhen school of Taoism in the Qing Dynasty. Many Chinese and foreign scholars have combined theoretical knowledge from different disciplines to explore the study of Neidan from different perspectives, at different levels, and on different topics. Some of the more famous scholars, such as Prof. Lu Xichen 呂錫琛 of China, combined the study of Nei dan with

psychology, while Japanese scholar Koyanagi Jikita (1870-1940) and American Livia Kohn (1956-) studied in detail the ideas of cultivation, the significance of Neidan for health, and the influence of Neidan on the growth and change of life and spirituality. Elliot Cohen from the UK studied the positive significance of Neidan on post-humanistic psychology. French scholars Kristofer M. Schipper (1934-2021) and Vincent Goossaert have also made outstanding contributions (Chen and Lu 2010:179-181).

This article is concerned with *Taiyi Jinhua Zongzhi*. First, let's briefly review the history of the study of *Taiyi Jinhua Zongzhi*.

On the methodology of cultivation in the *Taiyi Jinhua Zongzhi*, Lai Zongxian, in "his Examinations on the Evolution of the Image of the Doctrine in *Taiyi Jinhua Zongzhi*", puts forward methods such as "reverse the light and keep to the center", "reverse the light and regulate the breath", "reverse the light and shine it inward" and "reserve the inner nature in the cave of qi (energy)" (Lai 2006: 95). Xiao Jinming points out that Wang Chongyang 王重陽 had already defined the method of "reversing the light and keeping to the center", which was picked up by *Taiyi Jinhua Zongzhi* as a legacy (Xiao 2009: 193-237). Zhang Yan, in his Theoretical Exploration of the Taoist Alchemy of Elixir in *Taiyi Jinhua Zongzhi*, discuss the metaphysical significance of light, and the idea of ontology, effort and realm based on light (Zhang 2008: 54-57). Lai Xisan, in his "On the View of Inner nature, Body and Soul in *Taiyi Jinhua Zongzhi*—the Experience of Compatibility of the Cultivation of Body and Heart with Qi and Light of Neidan School", gives a thorough discussion of the idea of ontology, effort and realm in *Taiyi Jinhua Zongzhi*, while touching the religious experience of Neidan School, the realm of compatibility of body and heart concerning Qi and light in particular (Lai 2008: 101- 103, 105-143).

Interdisciplinary discussion is also made. For example, Yuan Kangjiu, in his "On the Relationship between the Neuron and the Light in *Taiyi Jinhua Zongzhi*", analyses the relationship between the effort of "reversing the light" and the neurons in the brain (Yuan 2007: 85-96). Han Jingya, in her "The Common Points of the Method of Reversing the Light in *Taiyi Jinhua Zongzhi* and hypnotism", discusses the theory behind the both and elaborates several commonalities and discrepancies (Han 2024).

Secondly, the three most significant and distinctive features of *Taiyi Jinhua Zongzhi* are discussed below.

The first feature is the assertion of first inner nature then life, that's to say, cultivate first the inner nature (mind) then cultivate the life (kidney, vitality). *Taiyi Jinhua Zongzhi* belongs to Quanzhen School of Taoism, and Quanzhen School asserts the dual cultivation of inner nature and life. However, the different sects within the School have varied opinions in which should have the priority. *Taiyi Jinhua Zongzhi* asserts the priority of cultivation of inner nature to achieve the dual cultivation of inner nature and life. It's said in *Taiyi Jinhua Zongzhi* that "Instead of reaching the goal with one transcending step, the secret of cultivating the gold pill always goes through action to approach the state of non-action. The method in this book directly pertains to the exercise of cultivating inner nature without resorting to other ways. Thus, it is good. 丹訣總假有為而臻無為，非一超直入之旨。所傳宗旨，直提性功，不落第二法門，所以為妙。"(Wang 1994: 57) The statement "directly pertains to the exercise of inner nature without resorting to other ways 直提性功，不落第二法門" shows the book's advocate of Inner nature first and non-action through action. In fact, "inner nature" is emphasized many times in the book. For example, when instructing the people who practice the exercise on building a good basis, the book says: "It takes a hundred days to build the basis, as was instructed by His

Reverence. None of the words of His Reverence fails to find resonance from people. None of the words of His Reverence fails to find resonance from those who practice. This is the philosophy of philosophy that cannot be interpretated. Understanding only comes when the inner nature is seen (Wang 1994: 124)."

"Understanding upon seeing the inner nature" stresses the importance of "seeing the inner nature", as in "惟見性無還，見見之時，見非是見，則見性亦還矣"(Wang 1994: 127) "seeing the inner nature" is not seeing in a common sense but indicates reflecting, as in "見明心性" and "reverse the light and shine it inward".

Taiyi Jinhua Zongzhi's advocate of the cultivation of life through the cultivation of inner nature, that's to say, the idea of "first inner nature then life", stands different from the idea of "first life then inner nature", and the method of Zhonglü Taoism in Selections of Zhonglü Taosim and Lingbao Methods.

The second feature is the assertion to keep the mind with "tianxin 天心" (heavenly heart). "Tianxin 天心", or "zuqiao 祖竅" (ancestral pore), is the glabellum area between the eyes, to which *Taiyi Jinhua Zongzhi* pays attention in particular. The book quotes Huangting Scripture, saying: "a spot of field and a tiny house can heal the life. Tiny house, face is. A spot of field on the face, then what else can it be but tianxin 天心 Such a tiny spot can boast the beauty of lush garden and divine palace, where dwells the most ethereal deity." "Confucians call it 'xuzhong 虛中' (void middle), Buddhists call it 'lingtai 靈台' (inner nature platform), Taoists call it 'zutu 祖土' (ancestral field), 'huangting 黃庭' (yellow courtyard), 'xuanguan 玄關' (black gateway), 'xiantianqiao 先天竅' (primordial pore). Tianxin is like a residence, while light resides" (Wang 1994:57-58) In Chinese, a house of a square chi (Chinese foot) means the face, while a spot (between the eyes) of a square chi (Chinese inch) means tianxin, which is said to be the dwelling place of the primordial spirit, as well as the congenital light and light of the thing-in-itself. In this place are buildings of jade and rare flora, which shows the high esteem the places enjoys. In Xiaoyao Jue (Sutra of Insouciance), the eighth chapter of Taiyi Jinhua Zongzhi, tianxin is described as "this is the ancestral pore where spirit dwells, where all the congenital converge" (Wang 1994: 106) indicating tianxin is where the congenital qi gathers. It also elaborates on how yuanshen works: "within the center it works, and two eyes are the key" (Wang 1994: 105), referring to zuqiao where yuanshen operates.

The third feature is the assertion of "reversing the light and keep to the center", that's to say, the method of reversion, as in "the exercise of revering the light is all through the method of reversion" (Wang 1994: 57), which is the primary method of cultivation in *Taiyi Jinhua Zongzhi*. "Keeping to the center" is also known as "keeping to the one" or "keeping to the spirit", or more specifically, "keeping to the pore". The "center" here refers to tianxin in the congenital pore.

In specific, the practice of the method of "reversing the light" requires the trio of "action through non-action", "emptying the heart" and "approaching nothingness". It's said in *Taiyi Jinhua Zongzhi* that "The pinnacle of the great Tao is no other than 'action through non- action'. 大道之要，不外'無為而為'四字。" (Wang 1994: 105) The achievement of "action through non-action" can prevent the fall into "reckless emptiness and lifeless nothingness" (Wang 1994:105). It's also said in the book that "The entire exercise is no other than 'emptying the heart', which shall be sufficient" (Wang 1994: 107), and "Our way through 'approaching nothingness' completes the exercise of inner nature and life (Wang 1994: 107)." It's can

be drawn that "emptying the heart" and "approaching nothingness" are crucial methods of cultivation, in fact, these two terms share the same meaning.

Moreover, when practicing the exercise of "reversing the light", laymen will fall into a state of stupor and listlessness. For this *Taiyi Jinhua Zongzhi* has the solution, the method of "regulating the breath": "reversing the light while regulating the breath, this method is all through the ear-light. There is the eye-light, and there is the ear-light. The converged light of external sun and moon, eye- light is. The converged essence of internal sun and moon, ear-light is. 回光□之調息，此法全用耳光。一是目光，一是耳光。目光者， 外日月交光也；耳光者，内日月交精也。" (Wang 1994:82) The action of breathing is closely connected to heart, and it is often accompanied by fanciful thoughts to the point that a whim may rise with each breath. To solve this problem, *Taiyi Jinhua Zongzhi* proposes the method of "placating the heart and regulating the breath": repeatedly counting from one to ten. This breath- counting can rein in "the heart like a scampering monkey and the mind like a galloping horse", to achieve an accord between the heart and breath (Wang 1994: 90). Therefore, "reversing the light" should be practiced with regulating the breath, and regulating the breath should be through the exercise of ear-light, which is the seed (essence) of the converged internal ying and yang, the fruit of light. On the other hand, the eye-light is the product of the converged external yin and yang, that's to say, the eyes (Wang 1994:85).

To sum up, the assertions of first inner nature then life, keep the mind to "tianxin" and "reversing the light and keeping to the center" is the most characteristic cultivation method in *Taiyi Jinhua Zongzhi.*

4. *DaojiaYangshenggong* As Interpretation and Development of *Taiyi Jinhua Zongzhi*

First, a brief introduction of Qianfeng school and its reference to the cultivation method in *Taiyi Jinhua Zongzhi.*

Taiyi Jinhua Zongzhi is revered as a canon of Longmen School and has significantly influenced Longmen School, Dandao study and cultivation method. Qianfeng School, founded during China's Republican Era, has absorbed the methods of cultivation in *Taiyi Jinhua Zongzhi*. The formal name of Qianfeng School is Qinfeng Xiantian (congenital) School, is a Neidan (inner alchemy) school of Quanzhen Taoism. It was founded by Zhao Bichen (1860-1942) from Changping, Beijing in 1928. Zhao Bichen, whose Taoist monastic name is Yizi, also known as Shun Yi Zi and Elder Qianfeng, was once a disciple of the 20th generation grandmaster Liu Mingrui (1839-1933) of the Namo School, the 10th generation zen master Liao Ran and Liao Kong of Longmen School, and the Wuliu Sect of Longmen School. He authored *Guidance of the Sutra of Inner nature and Life*, which remains a classic piece of literature of the Qingjing method of Beizong (Northern) Neidan School (Fu 2008: 31-33). Lao Ran and Liao Kong taught Zhao Bichen the Bichen Exercise, and instructed him to found the Qianfeng School before he departed, saying: "You have lived 35 years without any child. You should fulfill your destiny and have children. You should teach your children the exercise and extend their bloodlines, so that they can help those in need" (Xi 2021: 37). Zhao Bichen and the early masters of Longmen School all practiced devoutly the cultivation methods of Longmen School, including those in *Taiyi Jinhua Zongzhi*. The practice of Longmen School required preserve the yang (yang Qi) and eliminate the yin (yin Qi) to attain to the state of pure yang. Their cultivation methods are directly derived from those in *Taiyi Jinhua Zongzhi*. Based on this, the second generation leader of Longmen School called Qianfeng School "originates from the Dandao system of Longmen School of Quanzhen Taoism." (Xi 2021: 18) After the founding of Qianfeng School, the clandestine model of "instruction outside the School" in Longmen School of

Quanzhen Taoism was broken, and the idea of "valuing people and life" was adopted so that the number of disciples grew to several thousands, among whom were famous names such as Zhang Zhizhong (1890-1969), Zhang Xueliang (1901-2001), Qi Baishi (1864-1957), and Cai Yuanpei (1868-1940)—evidence of its significant influence on society (Xi 2021:18).

Secondly, it discusses Niu Shengxian and *Daojia Yangshenggong* (*Exercise of Taoist egimen*).

Niu Shengxian (1938-), was born in Qinghe County, Hebei Province in 1938. He studied Xingyi, Bagua, and other innovated martial art of sword and boxing with Li Tianji (1914-1996) for more than 30 years. He was the chief of Li Tainji's research team of Taiji martial art of sword and boxing, and the most accomplished among the disciples. He also studied the martial art of "xingyi stance, bagua waist, taiji grappling" with Yang Fengxiang, who was also known as "iron arms" and a disciple of Sun-style inner wushu boxing (Niu). Niu Jinbao (1915-1988), father of Niu Shengxian, was a disciple of Zhao Bichen. Niu Shengxian studied the practice of Neidan cultivation with his father, and this made him practically a second-generation disciple of Zhao Bichen. He was highly achieved in the exercise of Naidan, xingyi, bagua,and taiji, and once chief coach of the Tui Shou (Taiji hand maneuver) team in Beijing. He authored Exercise of Taoist Regimen, which is a summary of the essentials of the Naidan cultivation by Zhao Bichen and Qianfeng School, and a representative of modern Neidan study with its accessible interpretation.

Third, The modern interpretation of the three unique methods in *Taiyi Jinhua Zongzhi* by *Daojia Yangshenggong*.

China's traditional classics are all written in Classical Chinese, to some degrees challenging to the contemporary readers. Niu Shengxian interprets with modern colloquial Chinese the cultivation methods in *Taiyi Jinhua Zongzhi*, including the specific acupoints, the courses of Qi, and a 13-step exercise. By doing so, he has significantly promoted and popularized the cultivation method in modern times.

Below is a discussion of the modern interpretation of the three unique cultivation methods in *Taiyi Jinhua Zongzhi*.

First, Dual cultivation of inner nature and life (first inner nature then life).

Niu Shengxian first focuses on the interpretation of "xing 性" (inner nature) and "ming命" (life). The idea of inner nature and life in traditional Chinese philosophy vary with time, school, and philosopher. The idea in Taoism is different from that in Confucianism and Neo-Confucianism of Song and Ming Dynasty. Therefore, it is no rare incident to interpretate inner nature and life with the idea or concept from Confucianism or Neo-Confucianism, for a lack of familiarity with the Taoist scriptures. This will lead to misunderstanding of the idea of spirt and life of Longmen School and in *Taiyi Jinhua Zongzhi*, and cultivation with incorrect notion will result in negative effects on health. Niu Shengxian clarifies that "xing 性" (inner nature) dwells in the brain and acts as the highest commander. Inner nature pertains to mind and consciousness: "Inner nature is heart, heart is li (ligua 離卦, sign of fire in bagua 八卦), and li is fire". Fire has the propensity of going upward, thus, "inner nature is fit to soar". Human brain generates thousands of thoughts that changes every minute beyond control. On the other hand, "ming 命" (life) is essence (sperm), especially the primordial essence (sperm unaffected by consciousness) (Niu 1998:21-22).

Niu Shengxian also offers explanation of the assertion of dual cultivation of inner nature and life by Neidan School. *Taiyi Jinhua Zongzhi* advocates the cultivation of inner nature first, an idea adopted by Zhao Bichen, who said: "To practice the cultivation of inner nature and life, one must cultivate the inner nature first (Niu 1998: 32)." Niu

Shengxian also follows this instruction, and points out that beginning from sitting in meditation, one should be able to "keep the heart from running away, keep the mind to where it dwells, attain to state of nothingness and stillness—such is the cultivation of inner nature 心不外馳，神不離舍，至虛極 ，守靜篤，這即是修性". "The dual cultivation of inner nature and life commences with that of inner nature 性命雙修是先從修性入手" (Niu 1998:23), and only through the cultivation of inner nature, "can the inner nature be cultivated into a state of being round and radiant like an autumn moon. 將這個性修得圓陀陀、光灼灼，明如秋月，才算煉性性圓 (Niu 1998: 22)。" "Inner nature cultivation in the cultivation of inner nature and life actually encompasses life cultivation. When the stillness reaches the acme, the yang stirs with Qi, which is life that stirs. Inner nature cultivation is to rein in the heart when heart stirs, while cultivation of life is to rein in the qi when qi stirs and rein in the jing (essence) when "jing" stirs. 性命雙修的修性，實際命在其中，當靜極而動一陽炁發即是命動，心動收心是修性；炁動收炁，精動收精是修命 (Niu 1998: 48)。" Niu Shengxian also asserts that the cultivation of inner nature starts with that of heart, as the exercise of inner nature with that of heart (Niu 1998:57).

Secondly, Keep the mind to "Zuoqiao 祖竅".

Adopting the ideas in *Taiyi Jinhua Zonghi* and *Guidance of the Sutra of Inner nature and Life*, places much importance on the function of "zuqiao". In *Guidance of the Sutra of Inner nature and Life,* Zhao Bichen only refers to it as "It locates where the spirit returns" (Xi 2021: 31), without indicating a specific location. Niu Shengxian categorically place "zuqiao 祖竅" in between the eyes, calling it "the one pore that has not been recorded by scriptures and kept secret by generations of masters"—it is the secret of Neidan School for thousands of years. It is "the gateway to Xuanguan, and the pathway to enlighten the heart and see the inner nature; the post on which the heart like a scampering monkey and mind like a galloping horse are tided, and the stepping stairs to longevity (Niu 1998: 35)." By specifying the location of this acupoint, Niu Shengxian makes a significant contribution to the promotion of Dandao School of Taoism.

Moreover, Niu Shengxian clarifies the phenomenon of "sanhua 三花". He contends that through practicing cultivation, especially after building the basis for a hundred days and having the full reserve of "jing" and Qi, one can see the phenomenon of "sanhua三花(Jinghua 精花, Qihua 炁花 and Shenhua 神花, literally flower of essence, flower of energy and flower of spirit) converges with the autumn moon". The "autumn moon" here indicates "Xuangaun 玄關" (grand gate). According to Niu Shengxian, "xuangan玄關 and zuqiao 祖竅 have been the secrets among Taoists that is only passed down from one to another (Niu 1998: 36)." As for xuanguan 玄關, Niu Shengxian elaborates that xuanguan 玄關 is the "one light ring" that appears in meditation, also known as huiguan 慧光 (light of wisdom), shenguang 神光 (light of spirit), and lingguang 靈光 (light of soul) (Niu 1998: 37). When one practices the seventh step of the exercise, he will be free from ailments and full of jing, Qi and sheng (essence, energy and spirit). The three flowers will then converge before the eyes like a moon in wax—this is xuanguan 玄關 (Niu 1998: 68). He further distinguishes between white xuanguan 玄關 and blood xuanguan 玄關 that the former is the wholesome one (Niu 1998: 69).

Niu Shengxian also explains why one should keep the mind in zuqiao 祖竅 when practice. He elaborates that the essence of the "five zang" viscera converge to the eyes. The

white of the eyes pertains to lungs, the dark to liver, the pupils to kidney, the inner corners to heart, the outer corners to spleen. The eyes are windows of heart, assuming complicated and crucial tasks in the process of cultivation, such as inspect and shine inward, reverse the light and shine it inward, the major and minor circle of qi, all of which depends on the eyes to achieve the expected outcome (Niu 1998: 26). Zuqiao enjoys a place of great importance since it holds the area between the eyes, which makes it the "sovereign" of not only the eyes but the entire body.

Third, the assertion of "reversing the light and keeping to the center", or the method of reversion.

Zhao Bichen, Niu Shengxian's grandmaster, inherits the "method of reversion" in *Taiyi Jinhua Zongzhi*, and further argues that "what's procreated is jing, and what's reversed is primordial Qi (Xi 2021: 35)." Procreation here means the ejaculation of sperm. When the sperm is full, instead of ejaculating it, one can reserve it with the method of reversion, and through cultivation, convey its essence to the brain, thus generating primordial Qi. Niu Shengxian follows this idea and points out this method of reversion is one that reverse the law of human body. The presence of this method of reversion is significant during the practice, for example, when practicing, one should first concentrate the heart (the consciousness in charge of thinking) between the eyes and keep it from running away, so as to "rein in the heart when heart stirs, rein in the qi 炁 when qi 炁 stirs, rein in the jing 精 when jing 精 stirs, rein in the shen神 when shen神 soars, that's to say, to take back what the body naturally gives away by the method of reversion for one's disposal (Niu 1998: 27)." In this way, the cultivation can gradually progress.

5. Niu Shengxian's Development of the Cultivation Technique of *Taiyi Jinhua Zongzhi*

Niu Shengxian's modern interpretation of the *Taiyi Jinhua Zongzhi* has two main aspects.

Firstly, he divided the practice into thirteen steps. With the cultivation of Dandao School, *Taiyi Jinhua Zongzhi* proposes methods like "reversing the light" and "keeping to the center". It also mentions that the highest state of cultivation is to be one with Tao, thus transcending life and death in samsara and becoming the "gold immortal who possesses the six awareness" (Wang 1994:69).

However, the book doesn't elaborate on how a mortal man can become the gold immortal. *DaojiaYangshenggong*, on the other hand, gives the specifics of cultivation for those who practice to achieve the major circle of Qi (The book goes no further since the authorities of Mainland China reject the existence of gods and immortals).

Niu Shengxian proposes an exercise of 13 steps: the first step, rein in the heart (consciousness, brain) and seek stillness; the second step, rein in the qi and tame the dragon (referring to water); then set the stove (referring to dantian 丹田) and erect the caldron (a camber in the brain where the primordial spirit dwells); the third step, unblock the meridians and channels; the fourth step, minor circle of qi; the fifth step, the method of combing Jin 金 element and Mu 木 element with outer Huo 火element; the sixth step, the advance of yang 陽 (referring to yang Qi 陽氣) and the retreat of yin陰 (referring to yin Qi 陰氣) in the circle of qi between the period of mao 卯 and you 酉; the seventh step, the method of combing the Qi 炁 of dragon and tiger and rein in the light; the eighth step, retreat to the cave of qi 炁; the ninth step, the method of the major circle of qi with Di zhong 蒂踵 breathing technique; the tenth step, the method of enhancing the jing 精 and guard the gate; the eleventh step, the generation of the light of

white toad in the empty chamber (referring to the body's emission of light on account of abundant jing 精, qi 炁 and shen 神); the twelfth step, the sight of six visions upon the completing the cultivation of sarira; the thirteenth step, achieve the major circle of Qi 炁. However, only a handful in the history have completed all thirteen steps (Niu 1998: 32-68).

The 13-step exercise in Exercise of Taoist provides a specified and systemized approach to *Taiyi Jinhua Zongzhi*, thus facilitating the path for those who would like to follow.

Secondly, Niu Shengxian proposed that marriage and procreation for those who practice: this is in line with Taoism and human nature.

Niu Jinbao, father of Niu Shengxian, is a disciple of Zhao Bichen. He is also known by his Taoist monastic names as Xuanjinzi and the author of *Xingming Shuangxiu Yangsheng Yanshou Fa* 性命雙修養生延壽法(*Method of Dual Cultivation of Inner Nature and Life as Regimen for Longevity*), with whom Niu Shengxian studies the methods of Qianfeng School (Niu 1998: 11). Since the founding of Longmen School by Zhao Daojian (1163-1221), the first grandmaster, there was only one successor for many generations, most of whom never got married. When Zhao Bichen become the 11th generation grandmaster, his masters Liao Ran and Liao Kong said to him: "Thou art layman, thus thou shalt bear children then practice the advanced exercise (Niu 1998: 10)." To promote the methods of cultivation, Niu Shengxian authors *DaojiaYangshenggong* and advocates, following Zhao Bichen's view, that "human concern and social laws should also be considered. We should procreate to give lasting prosperity to our nation" (Niu 1998: 50). He encourages those who practice to marriage and child-bearing for the prosperity of Chinese, which is his difference from his predecessors and his modern interpretation of the methods of cultivation.

6. Room for Further Improvement of *DaojiaYangshenggong*: Explaining Neidan With Contemporary Scientific Knowledge and Theories

Niu Shengxian's book explains in vernacular text the main features of Neidan in the *Taiyi Jinhua Zongzhi* and presents his own contemporary answers to the development of Neidan. All these are worthy of recognition. Nonetheless, there is a growing tendency in academic research that emphasizes the use of big data, interdisciplinary collaboration, cross-platform cooperation, and the processing of enormous volumes of data. Some of the key themes in the current academic research are how to examine and explain the traditional using many disciplines, ideas, and contemporary knowledge, as well as how to communicate between the traditional and the modern. The theories and knowledge of Taoism, including the art of Neidan, have their own set of words which are not easy to be understood and accepted by ordinary people. Some scholars hope to use the theories and knowledge of different disciplines to

explain them in order to promote the modernization of Taoism and internal alchemy. To demonstrate that Neidan is not incompatible with science, Lu Shunyi 呂純一(Dates of birth and death unknown, lived in the early twentieth century), for instance, suggested "Yuan Shi Zi"(Higgs Boson) to transcend the empirical electronics of Western science and provided a scientific explanation of the three steps of internal alchemy (Zhang 2001:36-38).

At present, if we want to modernize and internationalize Taoist Neidan, in addition to the theoretical knowledge mentioned above, biotechnology, behavioral psychology, exercise physiology, anatomy, genetic medicine, brain neuroscience and other scientific knowledge is also essential. Such as the internal alchemy of the "real air", should be the brain in the secretion of some health hormones and its internal organs and organs under the overall coordination of a

comprehensive approach. “Xuanguan”玄關 may be a kind of inhibition of the threshold nerve, and then drive the threshold nerve mechanism of the state description (Yuan 2009). In order to popularize the practice of *Taiyi Jinhua Zongzhi*, Niu Shengxian should make efforts to use theories and knowledge of contemporary interdisciplinary disciplines and explain them in vernacular language. In this way, the Neidan of *Taiyi Jinhua Zongzhi* will be more suitable for the changes of the times.

7. Conclusion

Taiyi Jinhua Zongzhi is a work of traditional Taoist Neidan 內丹 School of China. One of the book’s most striking feature is its unique methods of cultivation, including its assertions of first inner nature then life, keep the mind in “tianxin 天心”, “reversing the light and keeping to the center”. During China’s Republican Period, Zhao Bichen of Qianfeng School inherited this set of methods, and his disciple Niu Shengxian, a prominent figure of Internal Wushu Schools, authored *DaojiaYangshenggong*, interpreting the cultivation method in *Taiyi Jinhua Zongzhi* into modern colloquial Chinese to render clarity to many true meanings of Neidan 內丹. Moreover, he specified the cultivation methods in *Taiyi Jinhua Zongzhi* into a 13-step exercise. By doing so, Exercise of Taoist Regimen renders modern interpretation and innovation of *Taiyi Jinhua Zongzhi*, and contributes to the promotion of the cultivation of Neidan 內丹. The application of contemporary interdisciplinary theories and knowledge should be the way to go if we are to better develop the *Taiyi Jinhua Zongzhi* practice.

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