
*The Chamber of the
Spirit Is the
Pivot of the Elixir*

The chamber of the spirit is the pivot of the elixir. It is the mother and father of all minerals. It is the secret residence of cinnabar and mercury.

PRIMARY COMMENTARY

The chamber of the spirit is the pivot of the elixir.

The chamber of the spirit is patterned after ch'ien (sky) and k'un (earth). It can gather the essence of the sun and moon to make the golden nectar of the sacred elixir. Therefore it is called the pivot of the elixir. The *Tsan-tung-chi* (Triplex Unity) says, "Ch'ien and k'un stand at the gateway of change."

It is the mother and father of all minerals.

The true lead was there before sky and earth were born. It is the father who created all things and the mother who nourished them. Therefore it is called the mother and father of all minerals. The *Tsan-tung-chi* says, "It is the mother and father of all the hexagrams."

It is the secret residence of cinnabar and mercury.

Cinnabar and mercury originally do not have form or substance. They are hidden within the true lead. They emerge in the chamber of the spirit only when they receive the pure essence of the sun. Therefore the chamber of the spirit is called the secret residence of cinnabar and mercury.

SECONDARY COMMENTARY

In the beginning, the Great Ultimate (t'ai-chi) transformed the primordial vapor into sky and earth, separated yin from yang, and created the sun and the moon. Humanity was placed in the middle, between sky and earth. Thus the Three Domains (celestial, terrestrial, and humanity) came into existence. It is said that of all creatures, humanity has the gift of intelligence. Therefore it can be the leader of the ten thousand things.

In the ancient times, people easily lived for a hundred or a thousand years. However, since the times of the Yellow Emperor, the human life span has shortened considerably. This is because people are no longer connected with the movement of the primordial vapor. As a result, they die or are injured. Sky and earth, however, can exist for millennia because they are continually nourished by the greatness of the pure and original vapor. Following the cycle of the four seasons, they create and dissolve the five elements and move naturally in their paths. The wise ones of old observed the pattern of the skies and understood the movement of the stars. They merged with the primordial vapor of nature and used it to nourish their bodies. Therefore their longevity was like that of the sky and the earth. Today people are different. The young ones crave sensual pleasure before the energy in their blood is fully developed. The old ones lose energy in their blood and are weakened by illnesses associated with aging. When they recognize their problems, it is too late. Only those who know how to preserve themselves will live a long life.

The enlightened ones were in harmony with changes in the

sky and the earth. They built the furnace and set up the cauldron to make the sacred medicine. When old people take this medicine, generative energy will be collected, the spirit will be gathered, and they will return to the vitality of youth. When young people take this medicine, they will attain immortality. The sage Chen-i likened the cultivation of the sacred elixir to the creation of sky and earth. The process can be described by the metaphors of change. The foundations of the Great Elixir are built on the roots of the earth. The method of making the Great Elixir is coded in the reverse movement of ch'ien and k'un. The application of fire and water is patterned after the trigrams li (fire) and k'an (water). Punishment and reward are given during the times of mao and yu.

Steal the numerics of movement from the four seasons and hold them in the palm of your hand. Use the workings of yin stillness and yang movement to create winter and summer. Yin gives birth to the fire star of the Red Raven constellation and yang creates the Mysterious Void. In movement, the lower component of the hexagram k'un is transformed on the ninth day of the lunar month. In stillness, ch'ien returns to the lower component of the hexagram on the sixth day. This is *the* key to cultivating the elixir.

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

Mao and yu are times when water is accumulated and fire is stopped. During this time, the alchemical catalysts are not applied, so that the ingredients can be "bathed" or "soaked" in the standing vapor. The extent to which the ingredients can benefit from the "soaking" depends on the effects of yang and yin fires applied in the other periods of the firing process. This is why mao and yu are referred to as the times when punishment and rewards are given. If the yin and yang fires are regulated correctly, the practitioner will be rewarded with success. If the fires are applied incorrectly, the practitioner will meet with failure (or punishment). Figures 5 and 7 in the introduction show when mao and yu occur in the firing process.

Yang Exits and Yin Enters

Yang exits and yin enters. They flow and light up the two directions. Three is their number, and they are patterned after water and fire.

PRIMARY COMMENTARY

Yang exits and yin enters. They flow and light up the two directions.

Yang is born in the hour of tzu. Emerging from the earth, it waxes through the hours of ch'ou, yin, mao, ch'en, and reaches its zenith at ssu. Therefore the essence of the sun in the Green Dragon is brightest in the east. Yin comes in the hour of wu and enters the earth. It waxes through the hours of wei, shen, yu, hsü, and reaches its zenith at hai. Therefore the essence of the moon in the White Tiger is brightest in the west.

Three is their number, and they are patterned after water and fire.

The Green Dragon and the White Tiger are formed from the hot vapor of the Red Raven. Therefore it is said that there are three entities. In the process of making the Great Elixir, no substances other than the true lead, the chamber of the spirit, water, and fire are used.

SECONDARY COMMENTARY

In cultivating the golden nectar of the sacred elixir, we must know which medicines are needed to build the foundations. Next we need to attend to the heating and cooling. The ascent of yang and the descent of yin correspond to the times of tzu and wu. The coming and going of the sun and moon occur at mao and yu. Use k'an and li to regulate the fire so that the dragon and tiger can become husband and wife. Return the essence of the sun to the empty hollow of the moon and cinnabar will form within the lead. Play with the Red Raven in the palace of li and mercury will emerge in the cinnabar. Gold is feeling and mercury is inner nature. When feeling and inner nature embrace, husband and wife are joined, and the golden nectar will naturally be created. Feeling and inner nature do not exist outside the human body. In the same manner, cinnabar and mercury live inside the lead. Like feelings and inner nature, cinnabar, mercury, and lead are a part of us. They are not unnatural substances.

Observe and understand the pattern of the rising and setting of the sun and the moon and the coming and going of yin and yang in the earth and the sky. The essences of ch'ien and k'un are often gathered in the mountains of the feet of the bird. The ancestor of the Great Medicine and the root of the Golden Elixir are deep inside the mysterious underworld.

The sun has three luminosities and the moon has three phases. When the sun and moon rise in the east, they illuminate the west. The true vapor of the best metal in the White Tiger of the west will enter the mysterious underworld and be transformed into the wu of the numeric six. When the sun and moon set in the west, they illuminate the east. The true vapor of the best wood of the Green Dragon in the east will enter the mysterious underworld and be transformed into the chi of the numeric six. When the sun and moon are in the center of the sky, they illuminate the north. The true vapor of the best fire of the Red Raven will enter the mysterious underworld. Earth will be created and transformed into black lead, which will dwell for-

ever in the primal darkness as the root of all things. (See figure 9 for a summary of these relationships.)

The immortal Wei Po-yang says, "The sun hides its virtue and dulls its colors. The moon sends its virtue by giving light. When the sun is receptive and the moon nurtures, the body will not be injured." Know that the one true original vapor is the

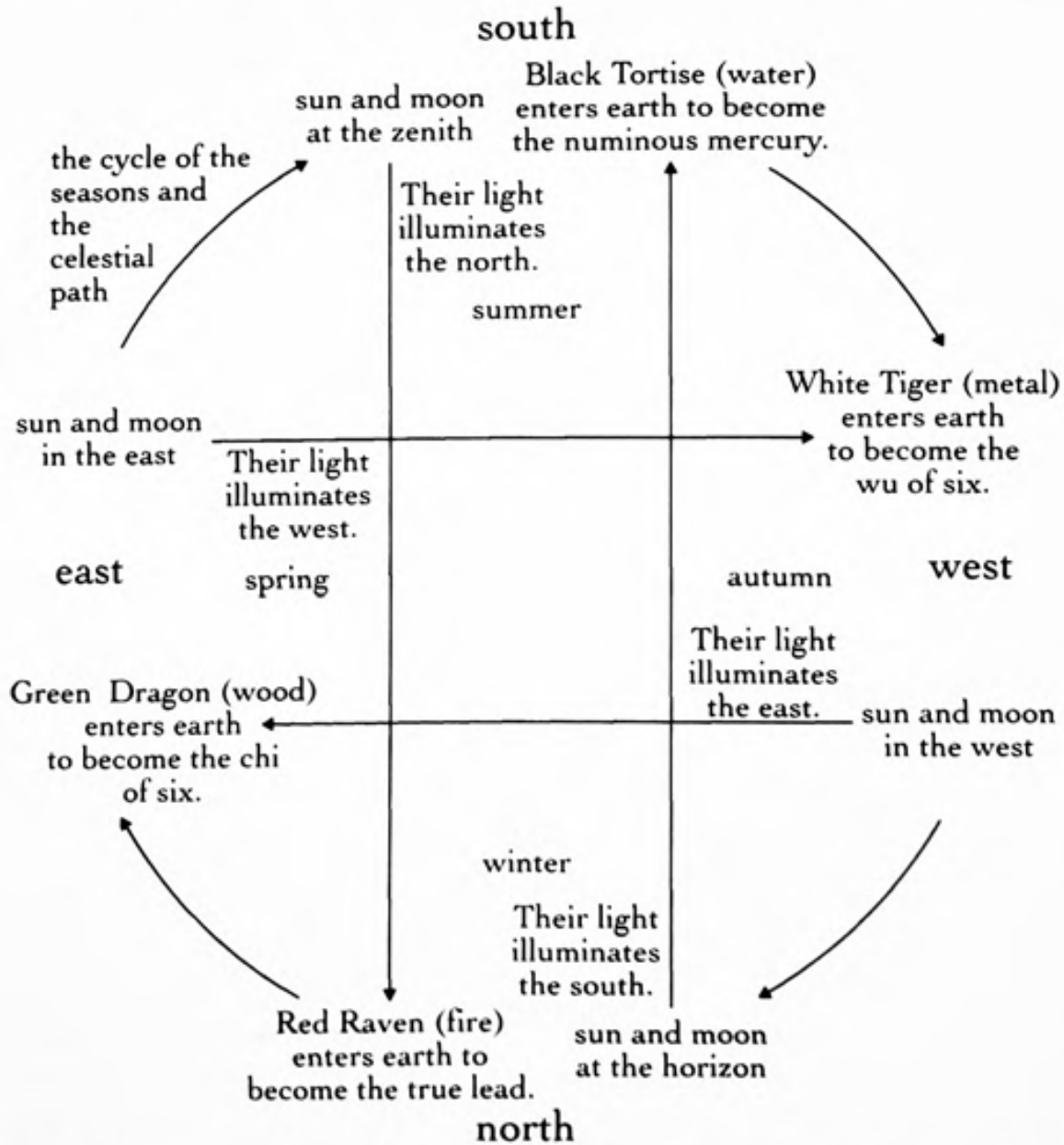


Figure 9. The positions of the sun and moon and their relationships to the creation of the alchemical catalysts (Red Raven and Black Tortoise) and the transformations of the alchemical ingredients (Green Dragon and White Tiger). The references to the Black Tortoise and the positions of the sun and moon are missing in the text and are reconstructed here.

creator of the earth and the sky. The wise ones of old understood that the sacred substance is hidden (in the sun and the moon). They formulated methods based on the pattern of changes and gathered the father and mother of the medicine. They patterned the chamber of the spirit after ch'ien and k'un and constructed the cauldron to resemble a bird's foot. They regulated the fire according to the cycles of the four seasons and returned metal and water to their origin. They did everything according to the principles of nature. They applied yang fire to return the essence to the sun and circulated yin fire to attract the soul of the moon. In this way, they directed the true vapor of the Three Domains back to the golden cauldron. They instilled supreme harmony into the four opposites and brought them together in the mysterious depths. Copulating in the undifferentiated chaos, they built the roots and foundations until the elixir was complete. Following the natural principles of change, they initiated the transformations.

Today many practitioners believe that quicksilver can be made into the Golden Elixir and ordinary lead can be used to drive the waterwheel. They mislead the future generations by confusing the false and the real. They try all kinds of techniques and achieve nothing at the end of their lives. They do not know that mercury is embodied in red cinnabar and that it emerges only when heat is applied. Mundane quicksilver can never be transformed into golden nectar. These practitioners do not know that the true golden nectar is made from the natural vapors of the sky and earth and the pure essences of yin and yang. Within the yin essence of the moon is the substance (red cinnabar) that is the ruler of yin. It resides in the Central Palace. Hidden in wu and chi, it is the father and mother of all medicines. How ridiculous it is to consider quicksilver and common metals found in the mountains and marshes as the father and mother of the sacred medicine! The sacred medicine is a treasure that can save the world and give us longevity. It is the ancestor of all things in the earth and sky, and it is not something easily recognizable by ordinary people. Practitioners today try to create the golden nectar with ordinary substances.

This is because they have misunderstood the teachings of the ancient sages. If the Golden Elixir could be made with mundane substances, then it would be very easy to produce it. The ancient sages spoke of lead and mercury symbolically, but people nowadays misunderstand the meaning. They take ordinary red cinnabar for the true lead and quicksilver for mercury. They mistake the false for the real and are confused about the nature of things. This is why they fail miserably in their search for longevity. What I have disclosed about how true lead is created is based on the classics passed down by the teachers. They are not words spoken casually to mislead future students. Let those who want to follow the Tao pay attention!

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

The waterwheel is the Microcosmic Orbit, the circuit of energy that runs from the base of the spine up to the head, down through the palate of the mouth, and back to the tailbone.

Control Comes from the Ruler

Control comes from the ruler. The warrior puts down rebellions. The scholar exercises softness. The element earth flourishes in all four seasons. When the best earth is in command, it will take the sword to conquer adversities and protect the four directions.

PRIMARY COMMENTARY

Control comes from the ruler. The warrior puts down rebellions. The scholar exercises softness.

To control is to direct. The ruler issues commands to the forces in the four directions. The warrior is the fast hot fire. The scholar is the slow warm fire. When the golden cauldron is strong and firm, the chamber of the spirit is secure. In the beginning, initiate the warm fire in a clockwise direction to collect the harmonious yang vapor into the chamber of the cauldron. Apply fast fire in the final stage, and the golden nectar will flow out in a counterclockwise direction. The palace of k'un acts as a container. It keeps the essence inside, allowing the transformations to be completed. Like a ruler who is prepared to quell a rebellion before disorder breaks loose, we need to take the necessary precautions so that nothing can escape outside.

The element earth flourishes in all four seasons. When the best earth is in command, it will take the sword to conquer adversities and protect the four directions.

The best earth is the true earth of wu and chi. It is also the true lead. True lead can gather the vapor of harmony and return it to the Central Palace. If the vapors of the Green Dragon, White Tiger, Red Raven, and Black Tortoise are not nourished by the true earth, the golden nectar will never materialize. Earth occupies the Central Palace. Therefore it is called the supreme ruler. The vapor of harmony is born in the four seasons and is present in all things. The chamber of the spirit is the ruler of the vapor of harmony. It flourishes in all four seasons and can gather the essences of the sun and moon into the cauldron and prevent them from dissipating. The *Tsan-tung-chi* says, "Earth flourishes in the four seasons and permeates the beginning and the end."

SECONDARY COMMENTARY

The supreme ruler is the one who governs the world. Internally, he promotes virtue and culture. Externally, he exercises military caution. His laws are based on those of the Three Kings. The hundred provinces of his kingdom are provided for. The five grains are planted in accordance with the seasons. The country is peaceful and prosperous and the vapor of harmony flourishes. The ancient ones patterned their methods of creating the golden nectar of the sacred elixir on the principles of governing a country. First they built the chamber of the spirit. Next they enclosed the fetus in the chamber of the spirit. Then they surrounded the fetus with the golden cauldron. Outside the golden cauldron they placed the hearth. Each item was prepared meticulously so that the essence of the golden nectar could grow.

The vapor of supreme harmony brings things together. The ruler is the sacred mother in the Central Palace of the body. It holds the liquid pearl and prevents it from flying away. The

slow warm fire is used to initiate the process and the fast hot fire is used to complete it. It is in this way that the golden nectar is created. After Kung-sen successfully ascended to the immortal realm, we knew that the vapor of harmony comes from the best earth. It permeates the four seasons, embraces metal and water, harmonizes the liquid pearl, and is gradually transformed into the sacred medicine. The liquid pearl is a beautiful woman. It is elusive and does not stay in one place. Only the element earth can contain it and transform it. This is all part of the natural way of things.

TRANSLATOR'S NOTES

The golden nectar, which is the Golden Elixir of Immortality, flows in a counterclockwise direction. Its direction of flow should not be confused with the direction of movement of the yang fire (which is clockwise) and the yin fire (which is counterclockwise). The direction of flow of the golden nectar is said to be counterclockwise because the energy is directed back into the body. This is contrasted with the flow of mundane energy, which is clockwise, because mundane energy flows out of the body.

Wu and chi are celestial stems. Refer to the introduction for a discussion of their roles in the alchemical process. Also refer to the caption of figure 1 for a clarification between the wu of the celestial stem and the wu of the terrestrial branch.

The Three Kings were legendary rulers in ancient China.

The Numerics of K'an and Li Are One and Two

The numerics of k'an and li are one and two. They move exclusively between north and south. They occupy the highest place among the seventy-two minerals.

PRIMARY COMMENTARY

The numerics of k'an and li are one and two.

The numeric one of sky gives birth to water in k'an. Therefore water is governed by the numeric one. The numeric two of earth gives birth to fire in li. Therefore fire is governed by the numeric two.

They move exclusively between north and south.

North is where yin reaches its zenith. It is also where the vapor of yang first appears. Passing through tzu, ch'ou, yin, mao, ch'en, and ssu, it ends at the palace of the trigram sun. South is where yang reaches its zenith. It is also where the

vapor of yin first appears. Passing through wu, wei, shen, yu, hsü, and hai, it ends at the palace of the trigram ch'ien. The vapors of yin and yang emerge and disappear in wu and tzu. Therefore it is said that they move exclusively between north and south.

They occupy the highest place among the seventy-two minerals.

The vapor of the true lead was there before sky and earth came into existence. Its form, however, materialized only after sky and earth were separated. Therefore it occupies the highest position in the order of things and is the foundation of the elixir.

SECONDARY COMMENTARY

Today human efforts that are called "the secret and mysterious arts" are primarily involved with heating ordinary gold and refining silver to obtain the so-called treasures. These efforts have all come to nothing. Even if something is produced, the product is neither a rare treasure nor something that can prolong life or help humanity.

Practitioners nowadays do not know that life and inner nature are of utmost importance. They delude each other and do not understand the true principles. They do not know that the key to the Great Elixir and the production of the medicine lies in the interaction of the yin and yang energies. The alchemical treatises written by the immortals say, "In refining the treasures, one needs to be united with the subtle. In refining the subtle, one needs to be united with the numinous spirit. In refining the numinous spirit, one needs to be united with the sacred spirit. In refining the sacred spirit, one needs to be united with the Tao." These statements tell us how to distinguish a real elixir from a false one. They also show us the difference between a superficial and a deep understanding of the subtle principles. If you do not encounter the secret instructions of the enlightened ones, how can you know the complete truth and be liberated from the dust of the world?

The trigrams k'an and li symbolize water and fire. South and north are the locations where fire and water originate. Although fire and water have different qualities, the two come from the same origin. When divided, they have different properties. When united, their forms disappear and they become one. The enlightened ones knew that all these things are part of the natural order. They also knew that the union cannot be artificially engineered. Therefore they were able to compound the two substances and produce the highest treasure. Ingest this thing and you will attain longevity. The sky created two substances. These substances are the essences of the sun and moon and the bone and marrow of ch'ien and k'un. The *I Ching* says, "The sky gave us two phenomena and the sages made use of them."

The path of returning to the origin begins with action and ends with nonaction. Water and fire, k'an and li, rise and fall between south and north. Therefore, in the making of the elixir, they occupy the highest positions among the seventy-two minerals. If you know the principles of creation and dissolution in nature and understand the cycles of movement of the sun and moon, you will know the true nature of existence and nonexistence.

TRANSLATOR'S NOTES

In Taoist cosmology, the five elements—water, fire, wood, metal, and earth—are each associated with a pair of numbers. Water is associated with the numbers one and six, fire with two and seven, wood with three and eight, metal with four and nine, and earth with five and ten. These are the numerics of pre-creation. They describe the original state of things before creation. Sky and earth are the agents of creation. Sky is associated with odd numbers and earth with even numbers. Odd numbers represent the power of initiation necessary to start life. Even numbers represent the power of nourishment necessary to complete life. Thus, when sky and earth created the elements, the numeric one of sky generated water and the numeric six of

earth completed it. The numeric seven of sky generated fire and the numeric two of earth completed it. The author of the Primary Commentary assumed that readers were familiar with Taoist cosmology; therefore the functions of the odd and even numerics in creation were not described completely and were simply referred to as "the numeric one giving birth to water and the numeric two giving birth to fire."

Note that in the Primary Commentary, the author is discussing the waxing and waning of the yang and yin fires in the twelve segments of the day (see figures 5 and 7).

Hardness and Softness Embrace

Hardness and softness embrace. Yin and yang follow their natural tendencies. Metal and fire perform their duties. Metal and water accept each other. Female and male become one. Everything functions in an orderly way.

PRIMARY COMMENTARY

Hardness and softness embrace. Yin and yang follow their natural tendencies.

The yang of ch'ien is hard. The yin of k'un is soft. When they embrace, the chamber of the spirit will emerge. This allows the natural vapors of yin and yang and the essences of the sun and moon to be gathered into the golden womb to make the elixir. Thus the *Tsan-tung-chi* says, "The hardness of ch'ien and the softness of k'un embrace and copulate."

Metal and fire perform their functions. Metal and water accept each other.

Externally, water and fire strengthen each other. Internally, metal and water copulate. The wood of mercury gives birth to

the body of the Green Dragon, and the essence of metal nourishes the fetus of the White Tiger. The bright sprouts bloom, but metal and wood retain their form. After metal and water have copulated in the chamber of the spirit for a period of time, the sacred water will be born inside the mother's womb and the elixir will emerge. Mother and child hold on to each other in tenderness and are nourished by metal and water.

Female and male become one. Everything functions in an orderly way.

Female and male are the Green Dragon and the White Tiger respectively. They are also the moon and the sun, yin and yang, k'an and li, wife and husband, water and fire, and woman and man. When female and male copulate, generative energy and vapor are produced. If everything functions properly, the desired results will occur naturally.

SECONDARY COMMENTARY

Male is associated with the trigram li, the symbol of the Great Yang of the sun. Female is associated with the trigram k'an, the symbol of the Great Yin of the moon. When sun and moon copulate, metal and water are created. Feeling and inner nature accept each other because they are a natural pair. No other ingredients are needed. Using ordinary substances to create the sacred medicine would go against the natural way.

When a young male reaches puberty and a young female becomes sexually productive, feelings of attraction will develop between them. This is part of the natural order of things. Therefore it is not surprising that the ancient sages compared the making of the Great Elixir to human procreation. Cinnabar and mercury lie in the body of lead. They emerge when lead is excited by water and fire. Therefore they are not external substances. The fetus in the womb is created by the interaction of water and fire. It is also a substance in the body. The ancient people knew that these substances are like feeling and inner nature. Neither can exist without the other. Therefore they col-

lected the essences of the dragon and the tiger and circulated the vapors of metal and water to produce the supreme medicine.

The Tao consists of yin and yang. If this were not a part of the natural order of things, the two would not exist together. For example, when male and female copulate, the procreative energies will interact and transformations will occur. The human fetus is not produced by external substances. Similarly, the sacred medicine, which is made from li and k'an, does not contain substances foreign to the body. Refining the true essences of the sun and moon to produce the golden nectar is like creating the human fetus in the sexual union of man and woman. The only difference is that the former is the way of the immortals and the latter is the way of mortals. The enlightened ones used this analogy because they feared that future students would not understand the true meaning (of the Golden Elixir). As for the meaning of the other symbols, you should be able to deduce them yourselves.