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Daoist Clepsydra-Meditation

*Late Medieval Quánzhēn Monasticism
and Communal Meditation*

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During the late medieval period of Chinese history, specifically during the Yuán 元 dynasty (1279-1368), Quánzhēn 全真 (Complete Perfection) Daoist monastics began practicing a form of communal meditation called *zuòbō* 坐鉢/坐鉢 (lit., “sitting bowl”), here translated as “clepsydra-meditation”. Within the context of Quánzhēn monastic life, Quánzhēn adepts utilized a sinking-bowl water-clock as a time-measuring device for religious praxis.

In this chapter, I discuss late medieval Quánzhēn monasticism, the Quánzhēn sinking bowl-clepsydra as a monastic implement and ritual object, the clepsydra hall and clepsydra retreat, as well as the actual practice of clepsydra-meditation. For this, I analyze and provide selected translations of the two primary late medieval Quánzhēn monastic manuals, namely, the late thirteenth or early fourteenth century *Quánzhēn qīngguī* 全真清規 (Pure Regulations of Complete Perfection; DZ 1235) by Lù Dào Hé 陸道和 (Tōngxuán 通玄 [Pervading Mystery]; fl. 1280-1360?), and the anonymous, fourteenth century *Quánzhēn zuòbō jiéfǎ* 全真坐鉢捷法 (Practical

Methods for the Sinking Bowl-Clepsydra from Complete Perfection; DZ 1229).¹

With respect to the comparative study of meditation, the late medieval Quánzhēn Daoist materials draw our attention to various dimensions of religious praxis. Clepsydra-meditation was a communal monastic practice: During the winter clepsydra retreat, Quánzhēn monastics gathered around a sinking bowl-clepsydra to practice intensive meditation for one hundred days. These details reveal the importance of context for meditation practice. Clepsydra-meditation was not simply a technique; it was a complete aesthetic and religious experience. We may thus imagine the overall setting of meditative praxis; in the case of Quánzhēn clepsydra-meditation, we must locate it within the larger parameters of Daoist monastic life, which consisted of precept study and application, adherence to monastic regulations, spiritual direction, study, liturgical performance and scripture recitation, work duty, and so forth. By extension, we may consider whether a given practice is solitary, communal, or a combination of both. We may also reflect on the relative accessibility, distribution, and inclusivity of a given practice. For whom is the practice intended? In a parallel manner, the Quánzhēn materials inspire us to consider the importance of community and place for religious praxis. This includes corresponding opportunities for training and spiritual guidance under community elders as well as the influence of place. How might a given place, a mountain hermitage for example, deepen one's meditation practice? The Quánzhēn use of a particular ritual implement, the sinking bowl-clepsydra, also brings the physical and material dimensions of meditation into high relief. We need to consider the place and function of material culture in religious praxis. What kinds of art and objects inform and are utilized during meditation practice? Are there unique aesthetics to different types of meditation? Moreover, the Quánzhēn materials, like tradition-specific methods more generally, reveal meditation as lived religiosity. It is a spiritual discipline rooted in a more encompassing way of life. As the following pages document, there was a Daoist worldview and conception of

¹ Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are my own. Catalogue numbers for Daoist collections follow Komjathy, 2002.

time that informed the practice of Quánzhēn clepsydra-meditation. Do different practitioners engender different realities and inhabit different cosmoses? In sum, I would suggest that the comparative study of meditation, what is emerging as the interdisciplinary field of Contemplative Studies, needs to consider meditation from a comprehensive and integrated perspective. This includes the multifaceted religious dimensions of meditative praxis.

Late Medieval Quánzhēn Monasticism

Quánzhēn 全真 (Complete Perfection) Daoism began as a local religious community characterized by asceticism, alchemical praxis, and mystical experience (see Komjathy, 2007). In its early phases of organization and institutionalization, Quánzhēn became first a regional religious movement and then a monastic order with national distribution. On the level of institutional history, each of the first-generation adherents, the direct disciples of Wáng Zhé 王嘉 (Chóngyáng 重陽 [Redoubled Yang]; 1113-1170), contributed to the growth of Quánzhēn as a religious movement and subsequent monastic order. With Shǎnxī 陝西 (Shaanxi) and Shāndōng 山東 as the early centers of religious activity, they trained their own disciples; guided lay believers; formed working relationships with local magistrates; secured patronage from all segments of the Chinese population; built and renovated hermitages and temples; and became increasingly recognized by imperial courts. Primarily under the direction of Qiū Chǔjī 丘處機 (Chángchūn 長春 [Perpetual Spring]; 1148-1227), the third patriarch and successor of Mǎ Yù 馬鈺 (Dānyáng 丹陽 [Elixir Yang]; 1123-1184) as national leader, and his disciples, the second-generation Quánzhēn adherents, Quánzhēn became a nation-wide monastic order with increasing diversity with respect to demographics, doctrine and training models. This growth and transformation benefited greatly from Qiū's famous westward journey to meet Chinggis Qan (Genghis Khan; ca. 1162-1227; r. 1206-1227) during the years of 1220 to 1223. Qiū was accompanied by nineteen select disciples, including individuals who would play a major role in the growth and flourishing of the Quánzhēn monastic order. The meeting, actually a series of

meetings, occurred in the Hindu Kush (near present-day Kabul, Afghanistan) and resulted in the Qan granting Qiū, and the Quánzhēn order by extension, *de facto* control of the whole of northern China's monastic communities, Buddhists included.² Upon his return to northern China in 1223, Qiū was installed as abbot of the newly-restored Tiāncháng guàn 天長觀 (Monastery of Celestial Perpetuity), which was later renamed Chángchūn gōng 長春宮 (Palace of Perpetual Spring) and then Báiyún guàn 白雲觀 (White Cloud Monastery) (see Koyanagi, 1934; Marsone, 1999; Lǐ, 2003; also Yoshioka, 1979).³ During the last four years of Qiū's life, Quánzhēn was transformed from a regional religious movement to a nationwide monastic order, growing enormously in membership. Qiū continued to follow the pattern established by Wáng Chóngyáng, Mǎ Dānyáng, and Wáng Chǔyī 王處一 (Yùnyáng 玉陽 [Jade Yang]; 1142-1217), that is, meeting halls for lay patrons in support of hermitages and monasteries. We know that while residing in Tiāncháng guàn, Qiū Chángchūn was involved in the establishment of eight associations, all affiliated with Tiāncháng guàn (see *Xīyóu jì*, DZ 1429: 2.16a; Komjathy, 2007: 58). All of these events occurred during the Jurchen-Jīn 金 dynasty (1115-1234) and Southern Sòng 宋 dynasty (1127-1279), and within the foreign-controlled northern regions of China.

A pivotal moment in Quánzhēn history of course corresponds to the death of Qiū Chángchūn, the last first-generation adherent, in 1227. Qiū was succeeded as Quánzhēn Patriarch and national reli-

² This resulted in an influx of Buddhist monks into the Quánzhēn order and in Quánzhēn gaining control of some Buddhist temples, though how many were occupied remains debated. While more research needs to be conducted, there was clearly cross-pollination between Quánzhēn and Chán Buddhism. For example, members of the Quánzhēn monastic order adopted dimensions of Chán Buddhism, including monastery layout, monastic structure, and monastic rules. A natural comparison would be between the *Quánzhēn qīngguī* and the *Chányuán qīngguī* 禪院清規 (Pure Regulations for Chan Monasteries). On the latter see Foulk, 1987; Yifa, 2002. My preliminary comparison revealed few similarities.

³ This temple in Yānjīng 燕京 (present-day Běijīng 北京) would become the primary monastic headquarters of the Quánzhēn order and its Lóngmén 龍門 (Dragon Gate) lineage from this historical moment into the contemporary period.

gious leader by his disciple Yīn Zhìpíng 尹志平 (Qīnghé 清和 [Clear Harmony]; 1169-1251), who in turn transferred leadership to Lǐ Zhìcháng 李志常 (Zhēncháng 真常 [Perfect Constancy]; 1193-1256), another one of Qiū's direct disciples, in 1238.⁴ With the help of other second-generation Quánzhēn luminaries, such as Wáng Zhìjīn 王志瑾 (Qīyún 棲雲 [Perched-in-Clouds]; 1178-1263) and Sòng Défāng 宋德方 (Pīyún 披雲 [Wrapped-in-Clouds]; 1183-1247), the Quánzhēn monastic order became a nationwide religious movement with large numbers of adherents, both monastic and lay. Quánzhēn continued to gain power and increase in membership during the years of 1222 to 1280, partially due to its attraction as the primary tax-exempt religious institution during the Mongol-Yuán dynasty (1279-1368).⁵ Quánzhēn monasteries and temples were established throughout northern China and its clerical membership grew, so that by the late thirteenth century there were some 4,000 Quánzhēn sacred sites and 20,000 monks and nuns (Goossaert, 2001: 114-18).⁶ However, Buddho-Daoist court debates were held in 1258 and 1281, the loss of which by the Daoist side resulted in a series of anti-Daoist edicts by Qubilai Qan (Khubilai Khan; Emperor Shìzǔ 世祖; r. 1260-1294) of the Mongol-Yuán dynasty.

⁴ For lineage charts of the early Quánzhēn movement and first six patriarchs see Komjathy, 2007: 378-81. On the second- and third-generations see Rén, 2001: 2.728; Lǐ, 2003: 460-61.

⁵ Various dates are given for the establishment of the Yuán dynasty, but it was in 1279 that the Southern Sòng was finally defeated and the Mongols gained control of the whole of China. The Mongol-Yuán dynasty was the first non-Chinese ruled dynasty to have nationwide control. Although such historical patterns date back to the Toba-Wèi 魏 dynasty (386-534), the Mongols set a precedent for national rule of the indigenous Chinese population by a foreign people that prepared the way for the Manchu-Qīng 清 dynasty (1644-1911). Interestingly, the Manchus were the later descendants of the Jurchens.

⁶ Like Daoist monasticism more generally (see Kohn, 1997; 2003; 2004a; Reiter, 1998), Quánzhēn monasticism is understudied. The most comprehensive study is Vincent Goossaert's dissertation (1997; see also Zhèng, 1995), and one hopes that it will eventually be revised and published. Some important work on late imperial and early modern Quánzhēn has also appeared in print. See Hackmann, 1920; 1931; Yoshioka, 1979; Esposito, 1993; 2000; 2001; 2004; Goossaert, 2004; 2007; Liu, 2004a; 2004b; Komjathy, 2008; 2009. On modern Quánzhēn monasticism see Herrou, 2005.

This culminated in the burning and destruction of Daoist texts, textual collections, and printing blocks in 1281 (only the *Dàodé jīng* 道德經 was to be spared) (see Yao, 1980; Zhèng, 1995; Goossaert, 2001). Although devastating at the time, these events did not prevent Quánzhēn's long-term development as a monastic order. "In fact, it had already gained recognition as an 'orthodox,' valuable part of Taoist religious tradition, and secured its place in the institutional and ideological construction of Taoism as an ascetic order devoted to both individual self-cultivation and communal disciplines" (Goossaert and Katz, 2001: 92). Quánzhēn temple construction and restoration continued throughout the Yuán dynasty, and the commission and erection of steles remained fairly constant from 1230 through 1350 (Goossaert, 1997: 11). Moreover, in 1310 Emperor Wǔzōng 武宗 (r. 1308-1311) bestowed honorary posthumous titles on major Quánzhēn figures (see *Jīnlián xiàngzhuàn* 金蓮像傳, DZ 174: 3b-9a).

The thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries were thus the height of early Quánzhēn monasticism, that is, the monastic order that developed under the leadership of Qiū Chángchūn and his disciples and that became the dominant form of Daoist monasticism during the Yuán dynasty.⁷ In its late medieval monastic expression, Quánzhēn adherence and practice represented the institutionalization of its earlier ascetic and eremitic commitments. This included incorporating rows of meditation hermitages in monastic architectural layout, instituting ordination rituals and a standardized lineage-based name system, and developing monastic regulations (Goossaert, 1997: 113-342; 2001). During the Yuán dynasty, Quánzhēn Daoists, both monks and nuns, thus entered a more fully developed ordination process and monastic system. This involved living in formal monasteries and temples with a regimented schedule that included ethical guidelines and monastic regulations, soli-

⁷ It was during this period of Chinese history that Quánzhēn incorporated more adherents of the so-called Southern School (Nánzōng 南宗) of internal alchemy as well as more features derived from Chán Buddhism. These and other dimensions of intra- and interreligious interaction deserve further study.

tary and communal meditation, as well as communal ritual.⁸ The early Quánzhēn emphasis on abstinence from the Four Hindrances (alcohol, sex, wealth, and anger) also became codified in monastic rules, which incorporated a shift towards vegetarianism.⁹ Quietistic meditation and internal alchemy remained the primary forms of meditation, though the Quánzhēn monastic communities also adopted a form of communal meditation centering on the bowl-clepsydra (discussed below).

With respect to the present chapter on Quánzhēn clepsydra-meditation, which was a communal monastic practice, a number of noteworthy features of late medieval Quánzhēn monasticism deserve note. These details come from the only extant Yuán-dynasty Quánzhēn monastic manuals, namely, the late thirteenth or early fourteenth century *Pure Regulations of Complete Perfection* and the fourteenth century *Practical Methods for the Bowl-Clepsydra*

⁸ A thorough study of early Quánzhēn ritual has yet to be undertaken. Preliminary research indicates that members of the early Quánzhēn religious community accepted liturgical performance as relevant to Daoist religious life. Having been trained by unnamed, non-Quánzhēn Daoists, they performed and participated in the two primary forms of Daoist ritual, namely, *zhāi* 齋-purification and *jiào* 醮-offering rites. Mature Quánzhēn ritual accepted the standardized form of *Língbǎo* 靈寶 (Numinous Treasure) Daoist ritual, but also quickly incorporated much of the major new, late medieval ritual and exorcistic traditions, such as *Tiānxīn* 天心 (Celestial Heart), *Wǔléi* 五雷 (Five Thunder), and so forth. See Tsui, 1991: 26-27; Goossaert, 1997: 162-68; 2001; Eskildsen, 2004: 171-93. Unfortunately, there are no early or late medieval Quánzhēn ritual and liturgical manuals. See Schipper and Verellen, 2004. Information on earlier Quánzhēn ritual must be gleaned from stele inscriptions and hagiographies. The only relatively early Quánzhēn liturgical works are a simple birthday celebration for Zhōnglí Quán and Lǚ Dòngbīn (*Jīndān dàyào xiānpài* 金丹大要仙派, DZ 1070: 3a-10b; trl. Eskildsen, 1989: 395-408) and a brief salvation-through-sublimation (*liàndù* 煉度) rite (*Dàofǎ huìyuán* 道法會元, DZ 1220: j. 210).

⁹ My preliminary research indicates that vegetarianism was not universally adopted or advocated in the early Quánzhēn community. This would make sense in terms of geography, as seafood is one of the primary forms of sustenance in Shāndōng. Of the first-generation adherents, it seems that Mǎ Dānyáng and Qiū Chángchūn were the most committed to vegetarianism as an expression of wisdom and compassion.

mentioned at the beginning of this essay.¹⁰ The former may be read as an attempt to ensure the preservation of the inner world, the lived religiosity and communal experience, of the Quánzhēn monastic institution. Based on its content, one can surmise that it is meant to be a prescriptive model for late medieval Quánzhēn monastic life. The text provides some glimpses into the informing concerns, communal organization and institutional structures of earlier Quánzhēn monasticism. Consisting of thirteen primary divisions, the *Pure Regulations of Complete Perfection* emphasizes the importance of the following: discernment concerning who is admitted into the monastic order; novices' spiritual direction under community elders; monastic structures (hierarchical ordering based on seniority) and protocol, including rules; as well as meditation-based training, including clepsydra retreats (5ab; discussed below). The *Pure Regulations of Complete Perfection* also provides an outline of a standard, daily monastic schedule:¹¹

| | |
|-----------|--------------------------------|
| 3am-5am: | Wake-up |
| 5am-7am: | Morning meal |
| 7am-9am: | Group meditation ¹² |
| 9am-11am: | Individual meditation |
| 11am-1pm: | Noon meal |
| 1pm-3pm: | Group meditation |
| 3pm-5pm: | Individual meditation |
| 5pm-7pm: | Formal lecture or interviews |
| 7pm-9pm: | Group meditation and tea |
| 9pm-11pm: | Individual meditation |
| 11pm-1am: | Scripture recitation |
| 1am-3am: | Personal time |

¹⁰ Complete, annotated translations of both of these texts are included in my *The Way of Complete Perfection: A Quanzhen Daoist Anthology* (Komjathy, 2013a), which is an anthology of Quánzhēn texts in English translation.

¹¹ DZ 1235: 6a; cf. Yifa, 2004: 39; Welch, 1967: 427.

¹² Yao (1980: 91; 2000: 589) translates *hùnzuò* 混坐 (lit., "mixed sitting") as "group meditation", while Goossaert (1997: 274) translates it as "méditation non stricte". While both are viable, the overall context suggests that this is a compulsory, communal meditation period. The other double-hours reserved for meditation would be a personal or voluntary training period. In either case, there are three periods of communal meditation and three periods of private, individual practice.

Taken as a whole, the *Pure Regulations of Complete Perfection* thus provides a fairly comprehensive model of Quánzhēn monastic life,¹³ though the degree to which it is representative of daily life in late medieval Daoist monasteries deserves more research. In contrast, and as analyzed below, the *Practical Methods for the Bowl-Clepsydra* is a much more concentrated work, focusing on the specifics of the construction and utilization of a bowl-clepsydra for the winter meditation retreat.

Chinese and Quánzhēn Clepsydras

A *clepsydra* (Grk.: "water thief"), or water-clock, is a device that uses the flow of water under gravity to measure time. Water flows either into or out of a vessel, and the height of the water in the vessel is a one-to-one function of time from the beginning of the flow.

Various types of clepsydres have been employed as time-measuring devices. The most common ones have been the "outflow clepsydra", which measures time by the height of the water in a vessel out of which water flows, and the "inflow clepsydra", which measures time by the height of the water in a vessel into which water flows. Both the simple outflow clepsydra and the simple inflow clepsydra have a certain deficiency: the flow-rate of water from a vessel depends on the height of the water in the vessel, and this rate changes as the vessel drains. That is, the water flow is not constant.

In China, clepsydres were among the earliest time-measuring devices, where they were most often referred to as "drip-vessels" (*lòuhú* 漏壺) or "graduated drippers" (*kèlòu* 刻漏; *lòukè* 漏刻). The earliest kind of Chinese clepsydra was the outflow type, and this continued in occasional or parallel use with other types of water-clocks down to relatively late times. From the beginning of the Early Hàn dynasty (206 BCE - 8 CE) onwards, however, the inflow

¹³ Although beyond the confines of the present study, the reader should remember that clepsydra-meditation took place within the larger context of Quánzhēn monastic life. This included precept study and application, adherence to monastic regulations, spiritual direction, study, liturgical performance and scripture recitation, work duty, and so forth. On earlier Daoist monasticism see Kohn, 1997; 2003; 2004a; Reiter, 1998.

type, with an indicator-rod borne on a float, came into general use (Needham et al., 1959: 315-16; 1960: 85). At first there was only a single reservoir, but it was soon understood that the falling pressure-head in this vessel greatly slowed the time-keeping as the reservoir emptied.

Throughout the centuries two principal methods were used to avoid this difficulty, including both poly-vascular (multi-vessel) and overflow tank types of clepsydra. A hybrid combination of these methods was also employed.¹⁴ In the former, one or more compensating tanks were placed between the reservoir and the inflow receiver. In the latter, an overflow or constant-level tank was inserted in the series. It seems that most of the Chinese clepsydras used an indicator-rod (*tiānfóu* 天浮) attached to a float. Here the inflow receiver had a small hole in its top through which the indicator-rod gradually rose as the water filled the vessel and the float maintained its buoyancy on the surface of the water. Interestingly, one of the oldest extant clepsydras is a poly-vascular inflow type, complete with float indicator-rod, constructed in 1316. This clepsydra is roughly contemporaneous with the Quánzhēn practice of clepsydra meditation. In the case of this representative poly-vascular inflow clepsydra, the indicator rod contains the names of the double-hours. Sòng dynasty (960-1279) sources in turn list the following types of clepsydras:

1. Inflow float and indicator-rod clepsydra (*fóujiàn* 浮箭; *fóulòu* 浮漏);
 2. Sinking indicator-rod, i.e. outflow clepsydra (*chénjiàn* 沈箭; *xiàlòu* 下漏)
 3. Steelyard clepsydra, with balance and weights (*chēnglòu* 稱漏; *quánhéng lòu* 權衡漏)
 4. "Unresting" or "continuous" (water-) wheel clepsydra (*bùxi lóu* 不息漏; *lúnlòu* 輪漏)
- (Needham et al., 1959: 318-19; 1960: 25, 90, n. 5)¹⁵

¹⁴ Illustrations of these and similar clepsydras may be found in Needham et al., 1959: 316; 1960: 86.

¹⁵ For discussions of the history of Chinese time-measuring devices see Needham et al., 1959: 284-390; 1960; 1965: 435-546. On Chinese clepsydras in particular see Maspero, 1939; Needham et al., 1959: 313-29; 1960: 85-94; 1965: 466-80;

Another, less well-known and only occasionally used type of water-clock was the "sinking bowl-clepsydra". In this type of clepsydra, a bowl with a hole in it is placed on the surface of water. The bowl slowly fills and eventually sinks. The duration of its floating (or sinking) is taken as a unit of time, and the size of the hole could be adjusted to increase or decrease the duration of time. Needham et al. (1959: 315, n. h; see also *ibid.*: 325, n. c; *idem* 1960: 85, n. 4) mentions a sinking bowl-clepsydra either designed or utilized by the Buddhist monk Huiyuǎn 慧遠 (334-416). This type of clepsydra consisted of a series of lotus-shaped bowls arranged to sink one after another during the twelve double-hours. The sinking bowl-clepsydra is clearly a simpler type of water-clock, easily constructed, transported, and reproduced.

The sinking-bowl type of clepsydra was the one utilized in Yuán-dynasty Quánzhēn monasticism, and Quánzhēn monks had a detailed technical understanding of this device. In fact, the technical information documented in the *Practical Methods for the Bowl-Clepsydra* suggests that Quánzhēn Daoists made significant discoveries through experiential testing, observation and refinement. The *Practical Methods for the Bowl-Clepsydra* provides precise instructions on the production of a sinking bowl-clepsydra (*zuòbō* 坐鉢/坐鉢). Here *zuòbō*, literally, "sitting-bowl", first and foremost refers to a sinking bowl-clepsydra, that is, a small bowl with a hole in it that is placed in a larger bowl filled with water. We might refer to this type of Quánzhēn water-clock as the "paired-bowl clepsydra", and it is important to remember that the Quánzhēn water-clock was a "bowl-clepsydra".

Huá, 1991. For some basic information on clepsydras in Christian monasticism see Agamben, 2012: 18-22.



Saxon Bronze Sinking bowl-clepsydra. Source: Science Museum, South Kensington, United Kingdom¹⁶

The small bowl gradually fills with water and sinks. *Zuòbō* secondarily refers to a specific type of Quánzhēn meditation practice that involves group meditation in which a sinking bowl-clepsydra is utilized. In this respect, it may refer to “clepsydra-meditation”, or “meditation-with-the-bowl”. Here the bowl in question is the clepsydra, rather than a monk’s individual eating bowl.¹⁷

¹⁶ Unfortunately, I have not been able to locate a Chinese sinking bowl-clepsydra. The present example is a replica of the original bronze bowl (ca. 800 CE) found in a bog in County Antrim, Northern Ireland. It is of the type which was employed by the Ancient Britons, probably under the influence of the Druids, for measuring intervals of time. The bowl has a small hole in the bottom, and in use it was placed on the surface of water, which slowly leaked into it until, after a certain interval of time, the bowl sank. The interval was the unit of time; in the case of this bowl, approximately one hour. <http://www.sciencemuseum.org.uk/images/1063/10327397.aspx>. Accessed on June 1, 2013. I am grateful to the Science Museum/Science & Society Picture Library for permission to use the image.

¹⁷ The extra-canonical *Qīngguī xuánmiào* 清規玄妙 (Pure Regulations of Mysterious Wonder; ZW 361), of unknown provenance, identifies Seven Treasures (*qībǎo* 七寶), or material possessions of late imperial monastics: rush mat, robe, bowl, palm-leaf hat, palm-leaf fan, satchel, and staff (10.598). A

In order to ensure accurate time-keeping, the Quánzhēn sinking bowl-clepsydra had to adhere to exact measurements. According to the *Practical Methods for the Bowl-Clepsydra*, copper (*tóng* 銅) is the best material for making the containers. The use of copper for the bowls probably developed for three principal reasons: first, it was readily available; second, it is easily worked and formed into the desired shape, as copper is fairly ductile and malleable; and finally, it has a relatively high degree of resistance to corrosion, as the oxidized layer that occurs through the interaction of water and air stops further, bulk corrosion in copper. For the larger water container, the main guideline is that it is large enough to store an appropriate amount of water and to incorporate the actual sinking bowl-clepsydra. The size and weight of the small, sinking-bowl should be as follows: “The small one must weigh five *liàng* and must be three *cùn* and four *fēn* in height. The bottom surface should be four *cùn* and seven *fēn* in width. The top and bottom should [thus] be four [*cùn*] when measured perpendicularly” (DZ 1229: 1b). The text in turn advises one to use fifty Tàipíng 太平 (Great Peace) coins for determining the weight. Converting these ancient Chinese measurements into those utilized in common Western usage, the sinking bowl-clepsydra should weigh about 8.5 ounces, or 240 grams. It should be about 3.4 inches high and about 4.7 inches wide at the base. By metric standards, this would be about 8.6 centimeters high and 11.9 centimeters wide.¹⁸ The text in turn instructs one to drill a small hole, about the size of a needle eyelet, into the center of the base of the sinking bowl-clepsydra. When this bowl is placed into the larger water container, the water

misreading of *zuobo* might assume that it meant some form of meditation that utilized an individual monk’s bowl.

¹⁸ These technical specifics on the size and weight are somewhat perplexing because the *Practical Methods for the Bowl-Clepsydra* suggests that the corresponding sinking bowl-clepsydra measures time according to two primary time divisions: from *mǎo* 卯 (5am-7am; early morning) to *yǒu* 酉 (5pm and 7pm; early evening), and from *yǒu* to *mǎo*. If this were the case, the clepsydra hole would need to be quite small because the vessel is so small itself. However, such a device would have the advantage of easy portability. One can also imagine a bowl-clepsydra that measures a specific practice duration rather than abstract “time”.

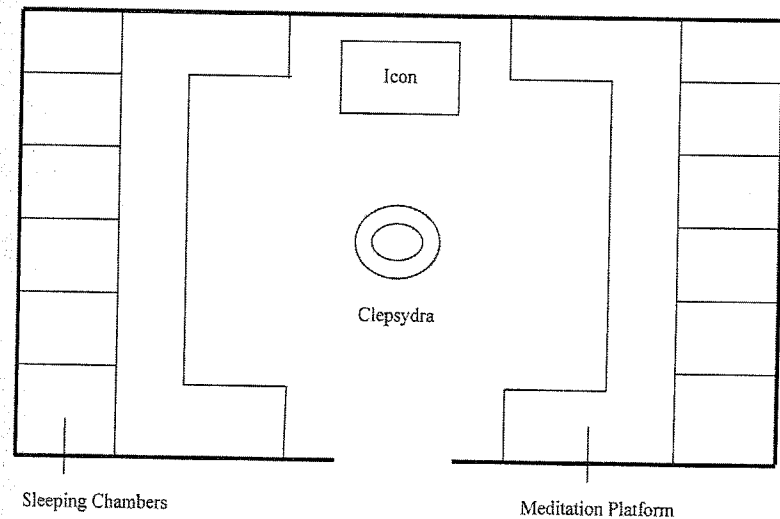
begins to move through the small hole, and the sinking bowl-clepsydra begins to fill and sink.¹⁹

The Clepsydra Hall and Clepsydra Retreat

As mentioned, Quánzhēn clepsydra-meditation was a communal, monastic practice. For this reason, we should have some knowledge of the architectural layout and social context of the practice. Based on extant historical sources, it appears that at least some Quánzhēn monasteries contained a clepsydra hall (*bōtáng* 鉢堂), sometimes appearing as an enclosure hall (*huántáng* 環堂), and held annual winter clepsydra retreats, also referred to as *zuòbō* 坐鉢. The clepsydra hall was either a separate residence for itinerant monks and employed for communal meditation or a meditation hall specifically modified for the winter retreat. Based on our Quánzhēn texts and roughly contemporaneous sources, we may, following Goossaert (1997: 227; *Tàiqīng yuècè*, DZ 1483: 5.3b-4a; cf. Welch, 1967: 49), reconstruct the layout as follows:²⁰

¹⁹ In the future, one can envision a project to reconstruct the Quánzhēn sinking bowl-clepsydra. This process could be assisted by consultation with the collective memory of indigenous peoples who continue to use such time-measuring devices. For example, Hermann Diels reported that a North African tribe utilized such a clepsydra as a type of hour-glass for the control of irrigation-water sluices into the twentieth century (Needham et al., 1959: 315, n. h).

²⁰ Sometimes the order of seniority and corresponding monastic hall positions follow the twelve terrestrial branches, beginning with *zǐ* 子 and ending with *hài* 亥.



Approximation of a Late Medieval Quánzhēn Clepsydra Hall

The Quánzhēn clepsydra hall was thus a meditation hall organized around the sinking bowl-clepsydra, which was located in its center. The monastic community gathered around the ritual object as a time-keeping device for communal meditation. Monastics sat around the perimeter of the hall, most likely facing inward as one dimension of the practice involved contemplating the clepsydra as a material and symbolic object.

According to the *Pure Regulations of Complete Perfection* (DZ 1235: 5ab), certain Quánzhēn Daoist monasteries held winter clepsydra retreats. Such retreats began on the first day of the tenth lunar month and extended through the winter solstice and the lunar New Year until ten days into the first lunar month. During this time, monastics engaged in intensive meditation practice for one hundred days.²¹ Clepsydra-meditation was thus a communal meditation re-

²¹ In this way, the clepsydra retreat may be seen as an institutionalization of the earlier Quánzhēn ascetic and eremitic practice of "meditation enclosure" (*huándǔ* 環堵), which often involved periods of meditative seclusion for one hundred days. On the latter see Goossaert, 1997: 171-219; 1999; Komjathy, 2007: 157-66. On the former, see Goossaert, 1997: 253-58; 2001.

treat practiced from roughly the beginning of winter through to the beginning of spring (by traditional Chinese reckoning). In this way, it parallels the winter Chán (Zen) meditation retreat (Jpn.: *ango* 安居; also *sesshin* 接心/攝心), which is in turn modeled on the traditional Indian rain retreat (Pali: *vasso*; Skt.: *varṣā*). In the Chinese case, the retreat moves through the apex of *yīn* and the initial growth of *yáng* (winter solstice) and the lunar New Year (a moment of both completion and new beginnings), and culminates with the increasing ascendancy of *yáng* in the beginning of spring. The latter is associated with the first node of the Wood phase, *lichūn* 立春 (“spring begins”), and symbolizes new life. The *Pure Regulations of Complete Perfection* in turn informs us that the clepsydra retreat involves periods of movement and stillness, that is, walking and seated meditation practice. During the periods of movement, monastics were permitted to engage in ordinary or leisurely activities, but during the periods of stillness, strict meditative discipline was required. As monastics practiced communal meditation in rows, a bowl-master (*zhǔbō* 主鉢/主鉢) would walk around on patrol in the style of Chán communal meditation.

If there are those who have fallen asleep, are nodding off, or shifting their bodies, the bowl-master first walks around on watch with the encouragement stick. He suspends the stick over the body of the adept who has fallen asleep. Then he strikes [the adept’s shoulders] three times and withdraws. Afterwards, [the offender] attentively takes hold of the encouragement stick, quietly gets up from his position, and begins inspecting the others. He is replaced in turn by the next offender. As long as the clepsydra-meditation has not yet ended, the bell has not yet sounded, and the “stillness” placard has not yet been substituted,²² one may not enter or leave, speak, or move without a reason. Anyone who does not abide by these regulations will be disciplined. (DZ 1235: 5ab; also 10a)

²² It seems that there was a “stillness placard” (*jìngpái* 靜牌) and a “movement placard” (*dòngpái* 動牌) which were hung respectively when meditation commenced and ended.

Here “encouragement stick” is my rendering of *xiāngbǎn* 香板, which literally means “incense [thus offering] board”. It corresponds to the “wake-up stick” (Jpn.: *keisaku* 警策; also *kyōsaku*) in Chán Buddhism. The encouragement stick, also referred to as “discipline stick”, is a thin, elongated and flat stick used to hit inattentive monastics on the shoulders during communal meditation. Although open to interpretation, I would suggest that it is not, principally, a form of punishment. Rather, it may be seen an act of compassion aimed at assisting awakening. This reading is supported by the identification of the patrolling monk with the disciplined monk and the subsequent exchange of positions: through a process of spiritual identification, each sees the other capable of spiritual awakening to their *Dào*-nature (*dàoxìng* 道性), their innate nature which is the *Dào*. Moreover, analyzing the practice in terms of the actual ritual implement as well as the somatic location of the strike and corresponding psychosomatic experiences, two additional points may be made. First, the encouragement stick was probably made out of relatively pliable wood.²³ It thus would have made a loud sound and created a stinging sensation when contacting with one’s skin and muscles. That is, the experience differs markedly, both in intention and action, from that of getting rapped on the knuckles by an old-school Catholic nun’s wooden ruler, an experience often projected onto the Chán experience by Westerners exposed to earlier forms of Catholic parochial school where corporeal punishment was the norm.²⁴ Second, the actual, rather than imagined, action targets a specific location on the upper shoulder, namely, the soft, muscular center of the shoulder blade. If analyzed anatomically and energetically, specifically from a Chinese medical

²³ Unfortunately, this point must be conjectural because the texts do not provide specific guidelines for materials and design. I had hoped to find clarification in contemporaneous Chán texts, but preliminary research suggests that the earliest Chán references to the *xiāngbǎn* date from the Míng and Qīng dynasties. T. Griffith Foulk (Sarah Lawrence College), Morten Schlütter (University of Iowa), pers. comm. In contemporary Zen Buddhism, there is a lighter, summer and a heavier, winter version of the wake-up stick. The former is intended to activate the corresponding point through lightweight robes, while the latter must penetrate heavy, winter robes.

²⁴ For a modern American account see Kapleau, 1989: 111-12, 152-53, 206-8.

perspective, we find that the strike hits an area that generally corresponds to three acupoints: Tiānzōng 天宗 (Celestial Gathering; SI-11; in the depression of the shoulder blade), Xīnshù 心俞 (Heart Shu-point; BL-15; about three inches laterally from the fifth vertebra), and/or Jiānjǐng 肩井 (Shoulder Well; GB 21; apex of the trapezius) (see Ellis et al., 1989). Briefly stated, Tiānzōng, the eleventh point on the small intestine meridian, is associated with the heart and is a major gathering place of qi. Xīnshù, the fifteenth point on the urinary bladder meridian, is the Shù 俞-point of the heart; these points indicate an “association point”, in this case an acupoint on the urinary bladder meridian associated with the heart. Jiānjǐng, the twenty-first point on the gall bladder meridian, is a Jiāohuì 交會-point, or the intersection point of various yáng meridians (foot shǎoyáng [gallbladder], hand shǎoyáng [triple warmer], foot yángmíng [stomach], and yáng-linking vessel).²⁵ Under my reading of the monastic and meditative use of the encouragement stick, it energetically activates the heart, associated with consciousness and spirit from a Chinese and Daoist perspective, as well as the entire organ-meridian system. It would be the equivalent of a moderate, but concentrated bioelectrical shock.

The *Practical Methods for the Bowl-Clepsydra* also provides important technical details concerning the use of the bowl-clepsydra. It advises practitioners to account for the waxing and waning of sunlight by adjusting the weight of the bowl-clepsydra; this was done by subtracting and adding coins as follows (lunar month/morning coins/evening coins): 1st/11/9; 2nd/10/10; 3rd/9/11; 4th/1/19; 5th/0/20; 6th/1/19; 7th/9/11; 8th/10/10; 9th/11/9; 10th/11/9; 11th/20/0; 12th/19/1.²⁶ This is especially interesting because it reveals a distinctive Daoist view of time. Here “time” is not the colossal hoax of clocks and calendars; it is a flexible and

²⁵ I am grateful to Kate Townsend of the Daoist Foundation and Center for Daoist Studies for her assistance in clarifying the specific associations of these points.

²⁶ These can be mapped with rough 24 seasonal node correspondences, beginning with Spring Begins (approx. February 5) and ending with Great Cold (approx. January 21). Note that the Chinese lunar year generally begins in late January or early February on the Gregorian/Western calendar; thus, the first lunar month tends to be +1 in relation to the Gregorian/Western calendar.

transformative cycle marked by seasonal and energetic shifts, especially in relation to the changing sunlight, or influence of yáng. Astronomically and cosmologically speaking, seasons result from the yearly revolution of the earth around the sun and the tilt of the earth’s axis relative to the elliptical plane of revolution. The effect of axis tilt is observable from the change in day-length and the altitude of the sun at noon (the culmination of the sun) over the duration of a year. The summer solstice (longest day of sunlight) is, in turn, when the north-pole is closest to the sun, while the winter solstice (shortest day of sunlight) corresponds to its farthest distance from the sun. During the equinoxes, the hours of daylight and night are equal. Considered comprehensively, the amount of sunlight begins to increase after winter solstice until it reaches its zenith at summer solstice (extreme yáng); and sunlight then begins to decrease until it reaches its nadir at winter solstice (extreme yīn). Generally speaking, in the central part of the northern hemisphere, where sections of China, Europe, and the United States are located, the sunrise and sunset times during 2013 are as follows:²⁷

²⁷ This data comes from the United States Naval Meteorology and Oceanography Command (USNO) and the United States National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). See <http://aa.usno.navy.mil> and <http://www.srrb.noaa.gov>. Accessed on June 1, 2013. I have used San Diego, California as the source location.

| Node/Western Date ²⁸ | Sunrise | Solar Noon ²⁹ | Sunset | Hours of Daylight |
|---------------------------------|---------|--------------------------|--------|-------------------|
| Spring Begins: 2.4 | 7:39 | 12:48 | 17:58 | 10h19m |
| Rain Water: 2.18 | 7:23 | 12:48 | 18:14 | 10h51m |
| Excited Insects: 3.5 | 7:01 | 12:45 | 18:31 | 11h30m |
| Spring Equinox: 3.20 | 6:37 | 12:41 | 18:47 | 12h10m |
| Clear Brightness: 4.4 | 6:13 | 12:37 | 19:02 | 12h49m |
| Grain Rain: 4.20 | 5:49 | 12:33 | 19:18 | 13h29m |
| Summer Begins: 5.5 | 5:30 | 12:31 | 19:33 | 14h3m |
| Slight Fullness: 5.21 | 5:14 | 12:30 | 19:48 | 14h34m |
| Bearded Grain: 6.5 | 5:07 | 12:32 | 20:00 | 14h53m |
| Summer Solstice: 6.21 | 5:06 | 12:36 | 20:06 | 15h0m |
| Slight Heat: 7.7 | 5:13 | 12:39 | 20:05 | 14h52m |
| Major Heat: 7.22 | 5:25 | 12:40 | 19:57 | 14h32m |
| Autumn Begins: 8.7 | 5:39 | 12:40 | 19:41 | 14h2m |
| Limit of Heat: 8.23 | 5:54 | 12:36 | 19:19 | 13h25m |
| Pure Dew: 9.7 | 6:08 | 12:32 | 18:56 | 12h48m |
| Autumn Equinox: 9.23 | 6:23 | 12:26 | 18:29 | 12h6m |
| Cold Dew: 10.8 | 6:38 | 12:21 | 18:05 | 11h27m |
| Frost Descends: 10.23 | 6:53 | 12:18 | 17:43 | 10h50m |
| Winter Begins: 11.7 | 7:10 | 12:18 | 17:25 | 10h15m |
| Light Snow: 11.22 | 7:27 | 12:20 | 17:14 | 9h47m |
| Heavy Snow: 12.7 | 7:42 | 12:26 | 17:09 | 9h27m |
| Winter Solstice: 12.22 | 7:53 | 12:33 | 17:14 | 9h21m |
| Slight Cold: 1.5.14 | 7:56 | 12:39 | 17:24 | 9h28m |
| Major Cold: 1.20.14 | 7:51 | 12:45 | 17:40 | 9h49m |

Table 1. Changing sunlight during 2013.

This of course varies based upon one's relative proximity to the equator and north-pole/south-pole, or a given place's latitude. Examining this chart on a basic level in terms of the beginning of the seasons, we find the relational pattern of day and night with respect to the eight primary nodes: (1) Spring begins (10h19m of light; 13h41m of darkness); (2) Spring equinox (12h10m of light;

²⁸ The date follows the American convention of month followed by day.

²⁹ The solar noon is the apex of the sun, or the highest vertical point of the sun above a specific location. It is when the sun passes through the meridian (longitude) of the selected location.

11h50m of darkness); (3) Summer begins (14h3m of light; 9h57m of darkness); (4) Summer solstice (15h0m of light; 9h0m of darkness); (5) Autumn begins (14h2m of light; 9h58m of darkness); (6) Autumn equinox (12h6m of light; 11h54m of darkness); (7) Winter begins (10h15m of light; 13h45m of darkness); (8) Winter solstice (9h21m of light; 14h39m of darkness). As mentioned above, one adjusts the descent-rate of the sinking bowl-clepsydra by adding or subtracting coins. In terms of the eight nodes, one uses 11/9, 10/10, 1/19, 0/20, 11/9, 10/10, 19/1, 20/0, respectively. This reveals a clear tracking of shifts in sunlight patterns and cosmological being. The Quánzhēn Daoist guidelines and employment of the sinking bowl-clepsydra in turn reveals an accurate understanding of astronomy, mathematics, horology, hydrology, and metallurgy.

The text also maps the directions of sunrise and sunset (3b) and provides a chart of the lunar and solar phases (4a).

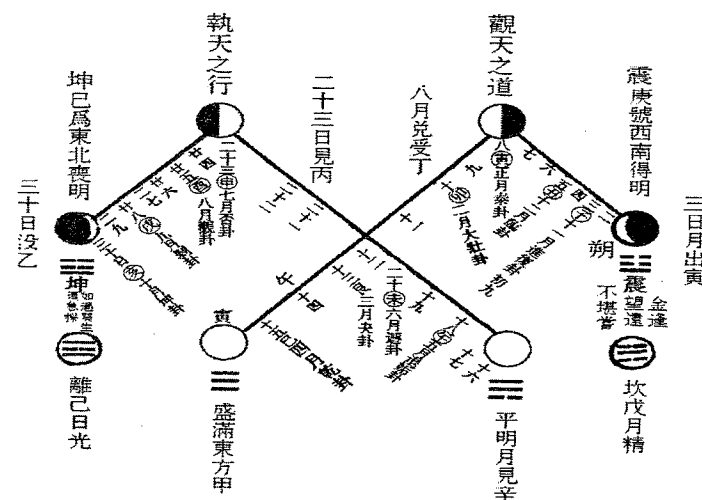


Chart of Perfected Ninefold Yang

The chart is framed by the opening lines of the anonymous, sixth-century *Yīnfú jīng* 陰符經 (Scripture on the Hidden Talisman; DZ 31; trans. Komjathy 2008, handbook 7), which here refers to

seasonal and cosmological attunement: "Observe the way of heaven; attend to the activities of heaven". This diagram generally depicts the moon phases from the new moon on the first day of the month, through to the full moon on the fifteenth, and ending with the final moment of the waning crescent on the thirtieth day.³⁰ This primary diagrammatic level is supplemented by the solar cycles mapped according to twelve hexagrams from the *Yijing* 易經 (Classic of Changes).

| | |
|--|---|
| Day 3: Zǐ 子: Fù-return ䷗: 11th month: Heavy Snow & Winter Solstice | Day 18: Wǔ 午: Gòu-meeting ䷔: 5th month: Bearded Grain & Summer Solstice |
| Day 5: Chǒu 丑: Lín-descent ䷒: 12th month: Slight Cold & Great Cold | Day 20: Wèi 未: Dùn-concealed ䷘: 6th month: Slight Heat & Great Heat |
| Day 8: Yīn 寅: Tài-peace ䷊: 1st month: Spring Begins & Rain Water | Day 23: Shēn 申: Pǐ-standstill ䷖: 7th month: Autumn Begins & Limit of Heat |
| Day 10: Mǎo 卯: Dàzhuàng-great form ䷌: 2nd month: Excited Insects & Spring Equinox | Day 25: Yǒu 酉: Guān-observation ䷓: 8th month: Pure Dew & Autumn Equinox |
| Day 13: Chén 辰: Guài-certainty ䷌: 3 rd month: Clear Brightness & Grain Rain | Day 28: Xū 戌: Bō-flayed ䷖: 9th month: Cold Dew & Frost Descends |
| Day 15: Sì 巳: Qián-heaven ䷗: 4th month: Summer Begins & Slight Fullness | Day 30: Hàì 亥: Kūn-earth ䷁: 10th month: Winter Begins and Slight Snow ³¹ |

Table 2. Solar cycles according to the twelve hexagrams.

³⁰ There are eight primary lunar phases: new moon, waxing crescent (right-side illuminated), first quarter, waxing gibbous, full moon, waning gibbous (right-side darkened), third quarter, waning crescent. The new moon and full moon are especially significant moments in Daoist practice.

³¹ These are hexagrams 24 (initial yáng), 19, 11, 34, 43, 1 (complete yáng), 44 (initial yīn), 33, 12, 20, 23, and 2 (complete yīn), respectively.

Beyond these highly technical aspects, we should also recognize the poetic and symbolic dimensions of the bowl-clepsydra as an object and in practice (see *Pure Regulations of Complete Perfection*, DZ 1235: 9a-11b). On the most basic level, the character *bō* 鉢 consists of *jīn* 金 ("metal") and *běn* 本 ("root"), which includes *mù* 木 ("wood").³² As an alchemical symbol, this character represents the joining of Metal (white tiger) and Wood (azure dragon), corresponding to the unification of *qì* and spirit through alchemical transformation. Similarly, the sinking of the bowl corresponds to concentrating on the lower elixir field (*dāntián* 丹田), the navel region, so that *qì* becomes stored. Just as the water of the larger container is displaced, so too the adept's *qì* circulates through the body's organ-meridian networks. Just as the smaller container fills with water and sinks to the bottom of the larger one, so too *qì* sinks into and becomes stored in the lower elixir field as the body's energetic center. One returns to the Root through alchemical forging and refinement.

Quánzhēn Clepsydra-Meditation

As we have seen, *Quánzhēn* clepsydra-meditation was a form of communal and monastic Daoist meditation. *Quánzhēn* monastics practiced this form of meditation within the larger patterns of monastic life. According to our Yuán dynasty sources, this type of Daoist meditation utilized a sinking bowl-clepsydra, a water-filling bowl with a small hole in its center, as a time-keeping device. During the clepsydra retreat, which was a hundred-day winter retreat beginning on the first day of the tenth lunar month, monastics gathered together for intensive communal meditation. This occurred within a meditation hall, referred to as the clepsydra hall, in the center of which a clepsydra stand was placed. Monastics in turn gathered around and practiced seated meditation facing towards the centrally-located clepsydra. Our sources thus provide information on the actual ritual object, the architectural layout of at least some

³² The variant character *bō* 鉢 consists of *fōu* 缶 ("jar"; earthenware pottery) and *běn* 本. The former, which would have an Earth-phase association, might be taken as a symbol for the center, the lower elixir field, and stillness.

Quánzhēn Daoist monasteries, as well as the overall format of the winter clepsydra retreat. With these various details in place, we may now ask a more difficult question: what methods did Quánzhēn monastics employ during clepsydra-meditation?

It seems that “clepsydra-meditation” was the larger framework under which individual Quánzhēn monastics practiced various meditation techniques. That is, “clepsydra-meditation” refers to the use of a water-clock during meditation and to a specific framework of meditative discipline. It does not refer to a standardized and required method. According to the *Pure Regulations of Complete Perfection*, “Everyone practices quiet sitting (*jìngzuò* 靜坐) in accordance with the methods appropriate to his own accomplishment” (DZ 1235: 6a). It thus seems that individual monastics may have practiced different techniques suited to their specific spiritual needs and level. However, based on extant texts, it is unclear if a stage-based system was utilized. The texts suggest that Quánzhēn monastics practiced quiet sitting as well as internal alchemy (*nèidān* 內丹). Here I will provide a discussion, based on reasonable conjecture and informed hypotheses, of potential meditation methods utilized within the context of late medieval Quánzhēn Daoist monasticism.

We may begin by noting that the *Pure Regulations of Complete Perfection* suggests that stillness-based and emptiness-based meditation was the primary collective method (DZ 1235: 1b, 6b, 9a-11b). In keeping with classical and foundational Daoist meditation practice, this is a form of quietistic or apophatic meditation within which one enters a state of stillness and emptiness, allowing thoughts and emotions to dissipate naturally until one merges with the *Dào*. It is contentless, non-conceptual, and non-dualistic. With respect to the larger Daoist tradition, this practice receives a variety of technical names: *bàoyī* 抱一 (“embracing the One”), *jìngzuò* 靜坐 (“quiet sitting”), *rùjìng* 入靜 (“entering stillness”), *shǒuyī* 守一 (“guarding the One”), *xīnzhāi* 心齋 (“fasting of the heart-mind”), and *zuòwàng* 坐忘 (“sitting-in-forgetfulness”) (Kohn, 1987; 1989; Roth, 1991; 1997; 1999a; 1999b; Komjathy, 2013b). In the context of internal alchemy practice, or stage-based alchemical transformation, quiet sitting is often the initial and final method utilized.

According to the *Pure Regulations of Complete Perfection*,

Adepts who have the aspiration become affiliated with an illuminated teacher. In the morning they receive guidance, while in the evening they engage in ritual activity. They put what they hear into practice. They study the scriptures and classics. With reverence, they hold to the pure regulations. From morning to evening, they offer incense and light candles in respectful gratitude to the heavens and earth. They prostrate themselves before the sages and worthies, as well as serve their teachers and elders. They become accomplished throughout their various activities. They concentrate body and heart-mind by aligning the body and practicing quiet sitting.³³ They do not give rise to impure thoughts. Keeping the spinal column erect, [with the legs crossed in front of the body,] the right foot is placed underneath and the hands are joined in tranquil silence. The heart-mind remains unconcerned with the external, and the eyes remain closed. Sit for one to two watches. (DZ 1235: 1b)

In the context of Quánzhēn, quiet sitting, whether solitary or communal, was practiced under the guidance of a spiritual director, a community elder who had experience with the practice. It was not auto-didactic. In addition to emphasizing the importance of spiritual guidance from one’s master-father (*shīfu* 師父), elders (*dàozhǎng* 道長) and Companions of the *Dào* (*dàoyǒu* 道友) (see *ibid.*: 10b), this passage provides details on posture, principles, and duration of quiet sitting. The standard seated posture seems to resemble what is commonly referred to in a modern context as “modified Burmese posture”. This body-alignment parallels the half-lotus posture except that the feet and ankles remain on the mat/floor. The spine is erect, the crown-point is aligned with the perineum, and the shoulders are aligned with the hips. The *mudrā* (*shǒuyìn* 手印), or sacred hand gesture, in question is unclear, but the passage indicates that the “hands are joined”. This might refer

³³ “Quiet sitting” translates *jìngzuò* 靜坐, which also is rendered as “tranquil sitting”, “stillness meditation”, or “sitting-in-stillness”. The standard practice parallels “silent illumination” (*mòzhào* 默照) in the Cáodòng (Jpn.: Sōtō) 曹洞 lineage of Chán Buddhism. On the latter see Bielefeldt 1990; Leighton, 2000. Emphasis is placed on stillness and emptiness.

to the standard Buddhist *dhyāna* ("meditation") *mudrā*, in which the right hand is placed on top of the left with the thumb-tips touching and the hands resting on the lap or near the navel. Alternatively, the *mudrā* might be the Daoist *zǐwǔ* 子午 *mudrā*, which is often referred to as the *Tàijí* 太極 or *yīn-yáng* 陰陽 *mudrā* in contemporary Daoism. It is also the hand configuration used in modern Daoist bowing, but its historical development is currently unknown. The adept is also informed that the eyes should be shut, and one can reasonably assume that the tip of the tongue is touching the upper palate. Finally, the passage recommends sitting for "one to two watches", which would correspond to a period of two to four hours in the evening.

Later on in the *Pure Regulations of Complete Perfection*, one finds a section titled "Hymn of the Clepsydra Hall" (9a-11b). Here the Quánzhēn Daoist receives the following instruction on meditation practice:

The Way of Complete Perfection is the ocean; the heart-mind of immortal sagehood is the well-spring. At the center is the luminous Great Ultimate;³⁴ on the inside is the hidden gourd-heaven. Your expansive mind pervades the Center, which resembles a numinous abyss that surges forth. The center of the bowl penetrates the base,³⁵ causing the Spirit Water to ascend as saliva. If elevated luminosity abides, one must face the Sovereign at the center of Emptiness. If highest adeptness resides,³⁶ one must remain pliable when according with the Source. If you rest within the ripples, the heart-mind comes to resemble clear blue water. If you are still among the wind-blown waves, innate nature takes on the structure of the Gold Lotus. Unified aspiration is silent and unaffected. The three minds are purified and free from agitation.³⁷ If the water does not overflow, one is calm to the point of absorption. If you are tranquil, you can be complete.

³⁴ Great Ultimate translates *tàiji* 太極, literally, "great ridgepole". It refers to *yīn-yáng* interaction, and thus to the source of all differentiated identity.

³⁵ The author is moving back and forth between the dual meanings of *xīn* 心 as "heart-mind" and "center".

³⁶ An allusion to chapter 8 of the *Dàodé jīng*. See also chapters 15, 41, 65, and 68.

³⁷ "Three minds" (*sānxīn* 三心) is a technical Buddhist term that designates consciousness of past, present and future. As a Daoist technical term, it may also designate the "three centers", the three elixir fields.

This is clepsydra-meditation for practicing concentration, of entering the chamber to cultivate accomplishment. Find the center within emptiness, and the grotto will be penetrated. Act in accordance with this real location in order to attain complete pervasion. Join heaven and earth within the half-*shēng* vessel.³⁸ Hide away your emotions and innate nature within the bowl-chamber. Fuse the ancestral *qì* of the mysterious origin. Rouse the perfect currents of the Grand Kalpa. (DZ 1235: 9ab)

The aspiring Daoist adept is also informed,

You must pacify your thoughts and purify your heart-mind, revert your emotions and return to your innate nature. In your activities, it is essential that your serenity is constant; in your eating and drinking, you must refrain from excess. When the uncontrolled heart-mind is extinguished, there is the silent illumination of original spirit. When the perfect breath is regulated, there is melded infusion of wisdom and life-destiny. When entering meditation, contain your radiance in darkened silence by means of an empty heart-mind (ibid.: 9b-10a).

And

Model yourself on the sages and immortals [who meditated] in darkened quietude and secret residence; emulate the Perfected [who resided] in meditation enclosures by means of abyss-like abiding. Attain this in calm stillness, enjoy this in quiet suchness, and investigate this in the bowl-chamber. Living in great monasteries with their arrayed rows or among enlightened individuals residing together is truly a rare opportunity and exceptional chance (ibid.: 10b).

These passages direct the aspiring Quánzhēn adept to focus on emptying and purifying the heart-mind of excess emotional and intellectual activity. From a Daoist perspective, the heart-mind (*xīn* 心) refers to both the physical heart and the psychosomatic center of oneself. In its habituated and conditioned state, the "ordinary heart-mind" (*súxīn* 俗心) is the source of agitation and turbidity

³⁸ Half-*shēng* 升 vessel is a symbolic name for the lower elixir field, the navel region.

(*dòngzhuó* 動濁); it is associated with mundane thoughts, desires, emotions, and concerns. In its realized and awakened state, the “awakened heart-mind” (*wùxīn* 悟心) is the source of clarity and stillness (*qīngjìng* 清靜); it is associated with one’s Dào-nature (*dàoxìng* 道性) and original spirit (*yuánshén* 元神). In the classical statement on the matter, Daoist quiet sitting involves “emptying the heart-mind and filling the belly” (*xū qí xīn* 虛其心, *shí qí fù* 實其腹; *Dàodé jīng*, ch. 3). From a Quánzhēn perspective, as one empties the heart-mind and stores qì in the lower elixir field (*dāntián* 丹田; also referred to as *hútiān* 壺天 [“gourd-heaven”]), two psychosomatic and energetic experiences occur: spiritual insight and divine radiance emerges in the heart-mind, and numinous qì infuses the entire body. These views are influenced by earlier Daoist scriptures such as the fourth-century BCE *Dàodé jīng* 道德經 (Scripture on the Dào and Inner Power), sixth-century CE *Yīnfú jīng* 陰符經 (Scripture on the Hidden Talisman; DZ 31), eighth-century *Qīngjìng jīng* 清靜經 (Scripture on Clarity and Stillness; DZ 620), as well as various alchemical treatises (see Komjathy, 2007).

The *Pure Regulations of Complete Perfection* emphasizes the importance of the heart-mind as the spiritual center, with its association with innate nature, purified consciousness, and spirit, through the use of a variety of technical terms: Scarlet Tower (*jiàngquè* 絳闕), Numinous Palace (*línggōng* 靈宮), and Empty Chamber (*xūshì* 虛室) (9b, 10b). Reconstructing the actual process of quiet sitting from the above passages, one empties and stills the heart-mind until only emptiness and stillness remains. One allows thoughts and emotions to dissipate until the numinous presence of the Dào fills one’s being. This is accomplished by concentrating on the lower elixir field, the lower abdomen or navel region. It is called “returning to the Source” (*guīgēn* 歸根). Such meditative praxis requires dedicated and prolonged practice, perhaps even a renunciant orientation and a monastic community. One passes through various stages: from major agitation and minor agitation, through minor stillness and major stillness, to meditative absorption. In this state of stabilized stillness, one realizes silence as one’s innate nature,

the center of one’s being which is the Dào. The text speaks of this as “suchness” (*zìrán* 自然), “absorption” (*dìng* 定), and “completion” (*chéng* 成). This is complete alignment and attunement with the Dào through meditative praxis, a meditative experience of mystical union with the Dào.

As mentioned, it seems that quiet sitting was the foundational and most common method utilized in Quánzhēn monasteries and during clepsydra-meditation. The emphasis on stillness- and emptiness-based meditation, or Daoist apophatic meditation, is confirmed by the fact that Quánzhēn monastics compiled a guide to meditation attributed to the founder of Quánzhēn Wáng Chóngyáng. Specifically, discourses 7, 8, 9 and 13 (3b-5b) of the *Chóngyáng lìjiào shíwǔ lùn* 重陽立教十五論 (Redoubled Yang’s Fifteen Discourses to Establish the Teachings; DZ 1233; abbr. *Chóngyáng shíwǔ lùn*, *Lìjiào shíwǔ lùn*, or *Shíwǔ lùn*) appear in the fourteenth-century *Qúnxiān yàoyǔ zuǎnji* 群仙要語纂集 (Collection of Essential Sayings from Various Immortals; DZ 1257: 2.2b-4a) (see Komjathy, 2008, handbook 8). The latter text is roughly contemporaneous with the *Pure Regulations of Complete Perfection* and *Practical Methods for the Bowl-Clepsydra*. Similarly, with respect to Quánzhēn internal alchemy practice, there is the *Dàdān zhízhǐ* 大丹直指 (Direct Pointers to the Great Elixir; DZ 244), an illustrated manual of stage-based *nèidān* practice attributed to the third Quánzhēn patriarch Qiū Chángchūn. Although there is no scholarly consensus on issues of dating and attribution, it appears that this text was compiled, based on earlier material, between the years of 1269 and 1310. This would make it either slightly earlier or roughly contemporaneous with our primary sources.³⁹ In a more comprehensive account of late medieval Quánzhēn monastic practice, these texts, in combination with a variety of other non-Quánzhēn materials, could inform a fuller appreciation of the diversity of Daoist meditation practice. Unfortunately, at present we do not have a clear sense of the distribution and circulation of these

³⁹ Annotated translations of both the *Chóngyáng lìjiào shíwǔ lùn* and the *Dàdān zhízhǐ* appear in my *The Way of Complete Perfection: A Quanzhen Daoist Anthology* (Komjathy, 2013a). This work includes introductions to the texts that address issues of dating and attribution.

texts, so it is impossible to know their degree of influence and application.

Reflections on the Bowl

On the first day of the tenth lunar month during the late medieval period of Daoist history, Quánzhēn monastics gathered together for the winter clepsydra retreat. As members of a monastic community, they practiced communal meditation for a period of one hundred days, roughly from the first winter node, *lìdōng* 立冬 (“winter begins”), through to the lunar New Year and first vernal node, *lìchūn* 立春 (“spring begins”). This helped to establish a cosmological and energetic orientation for the year: one practiced intensive meditation during winter, the time of deep yīn, associated with darkness, stillness, and silence, through the winter solstice, the zenith of yīn and initial return of yáng, until spring began, with its promise of new life, growth, activity, and flourishing. Quánzhēn monastics gathered in the clepsydra hall, a meditation hall oriented toward a centrally-located water-clock. As the sinking bowl-clepsydra filled with water and descended, the aspiring Quánzhēn adept also entered a state of deep stillness, an interior silence that matched the external darkness. They found the stillness at the center of their being, their innate nature which is the Dào manifested as sacred presence. If attentive, dedicated and consistent in their meditative discipline, they discovered that the bowl was simultaneously ritual object, monastic implement, communal orientation point, and interior chamber.