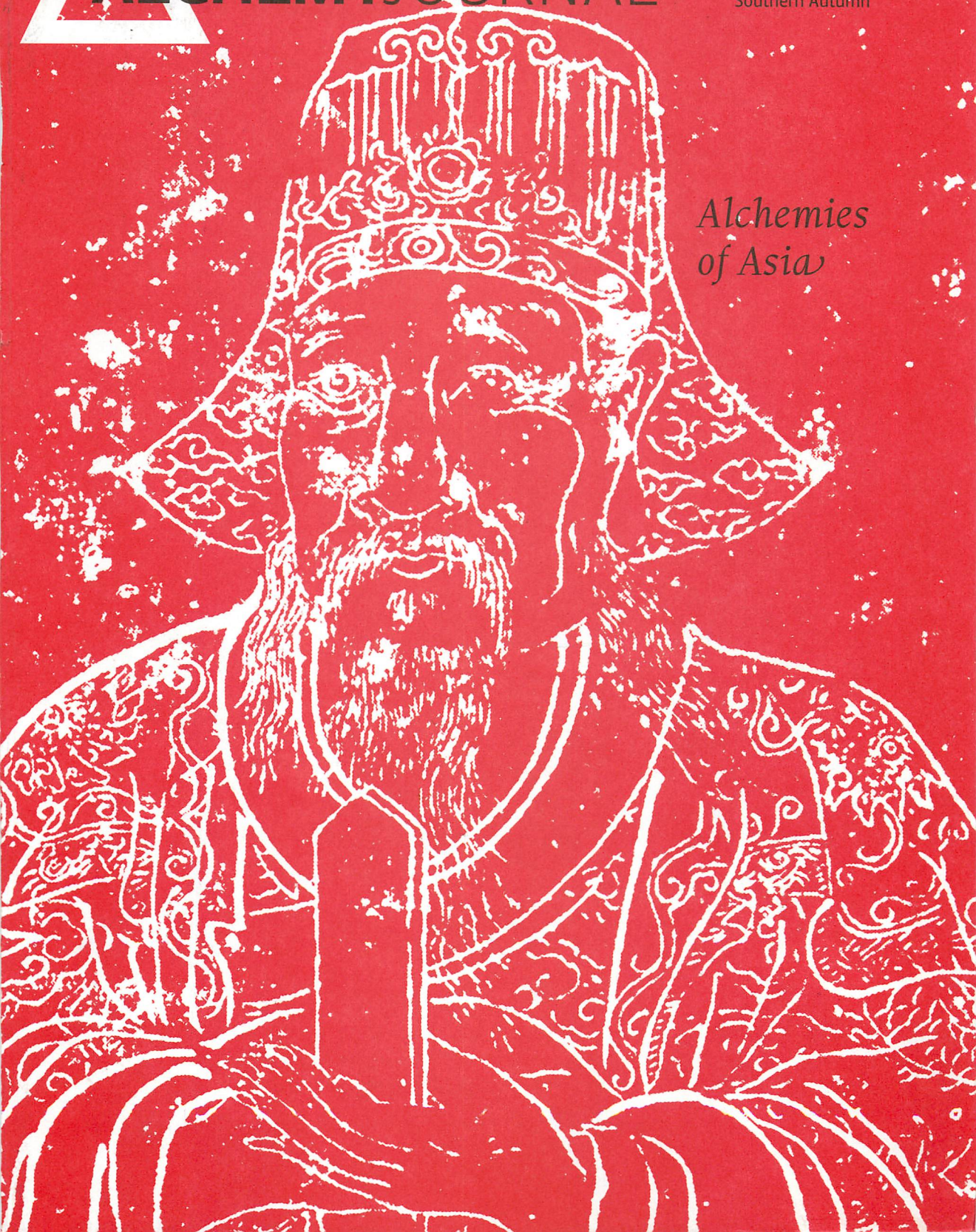


ALCHEMYJOURNAL

Vol. 11 No. 1
Northern Spring
Southern Autumn

*Alchemies
of Asia*



Alchemy Journal

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Vale Hans Schimmer (1924-2009)

It is with a heavy heart that I announce the death of Hans Schimmer. He died on 28 December 2009 from complications of pneumonia, in Vienna. Hans was one of the driving forces in reorganising and expanding the Alchemy Guild during the 1970s. Hans considered himself a *parachemist* and tried to demonstrate spiritual principles in chemical experiments. His unique approach has influenced many practicing alchemists in both Europe and the United States.

Hans was my friend and mentor, and he fit the description of 'scholar and gentleman' better than anyone I ever met. His intelligence and cultured background was immediately apparent upon meeting him, but you soon realised that his true distinguishing traits included his deep integrity and the nearly perfect refinement of his temperament.

Hans was never a man of worldly ambitions and he preferred to work quietly in the background on a one-to-one basis, rather than in group workshops or through published materials. Still, he was one of the most influential and dedicated alchemists of our times. The gold that he made is carried hidden inside his students, who are spreading it throughout the world in many different ways.

Hans often joked that the Vienna winters were going to kill him someday, and it is a little ironic that a harsh Vienna winter was what first brought us together. When I was a student there, I got very sick with pneumonia. I was living alone in a tiny, damp basement room and was too weak to prepare meals or even keep the small

kerosene heater burning. When Hans found out, he insisted that I move in with him and wife, Anna, to convalesce.

Unfortunately, by the time I moved in, Hans had also developed pneumonia, and his wife ended up taking care of both of us. As it turned out, though, those two weeks that I spent recovering from pneumonia were among the happiest in my life. Neither one of us had the energy to do anything but lay back and discuss alchemy. We were so weak that we would drift in and out of consciousness without the other knowing, and our talks continued in our dreams and actually

augmented our waking conversations. Our ideas came to life in our dreams, and we would spend the next day expanding our understanding based upon insights and images from those wonderfully powerful dream experiences. What a strange way to study alchemy!

One of Hans' pet peeves was that he hated the German phrase "Auf Wiedersehen" (i.e. "Until we see each other again"). He felt that it was trite and dry and even a little rude, kind of like saying "Later!" in America today. Never once did I hear him utter that ubiquitous German expression. Instead, Hans would softly say, "Alles Gute" meaning "I wish you the best." He looked you right in the eye when he said it, and he always meant it.

So, "Alles Gute" to you, Hans, my dear old friend. I continue to learn from you in my dreams. ▲

Dennis William Hauck





ALCHEMYJOURNAL

Alchemy Journal

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www.alchemyguild.org

Limited edition of 750 copies

Alchemy Journal

ISSN 1836-1587 (Print)

ISSN 1836-1595 (Online)

Vol.11 No.1 Northern Spring / Southern Autumn

The *Alchemy Journal* is devoted to the Divine Art, Celestial Agriculture, the Mother of all Science and Wisdom, the ancient Art of Transformation: the Great Work as known by many names. Since 2000 the *Alchemy Journal* has published an eclectic array of material, both scholarly and personal, logical and emotional, practical and spiritual, everyday and occult, including essays, articles, poetry, visual art, interviews, and summaries of operative alchemical processes, along with book and website reviews, sources and resources, and the latest conference, lecture and workshop announcements. The *Alchemy Journal* is published by Salamander and Sons for the International Alchemy Guild.

Editor Paul Hardacre

Graphic Designer Marissa Newell

Printer Santipab Pack-Print

Advertising Enquiries Paul Hardacre

Deadline for Submissions

As arranged with the editor. Content submitted or commissioned subject to editing. Full submission guidelines at www.alchemyjournal.com/submissions.htm

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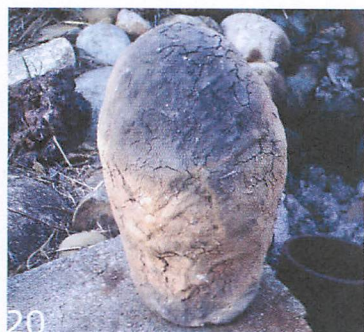
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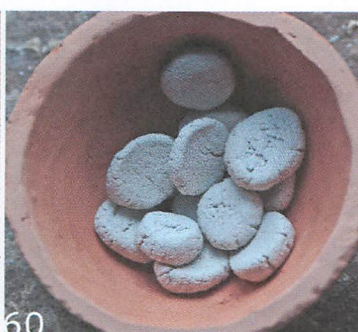
Portrait of the *Chinese Paracelsus*, Ko Hung (or Ge Hong, and also known by the pseudonym Pao-p'u-tzŭ, 283-343 A.D.), the greatest of Chinese alchemical writers, on a stone tablet.



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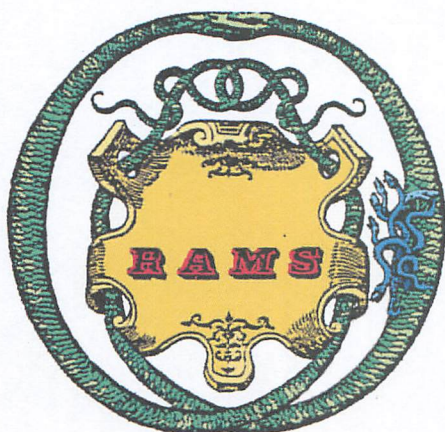
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FROM THE FIRE

Ko Hung (also known as Ge Hong or Pao-p'u-tzü), regarded by many as the most famous and prolific of Chinese alchemical writers, and often considered as *the Chinese Paracelsus*, once wrote that the Taoist alchemical adept considers “a peerage as an execution cauldron, a seal of office as a mourning dress, gold and jade as dirt, a splendid hall as a prison. How different from those pseudo-alchemists who, clenching their fists, mouth empty phrases and wait for good luck, or who lead a leisurely life in a gorgeous room, endowed with countless grants, appointed to high office, and still are discontented with their power and wealth.” More than 1,000 years later, Philippus Aureolus Theophrastus Bombastus von Hohenheim, called Paracelsus, railed against the so-called learned doctors of his time with a sentiment reminiscent of his long-passed Chinese counterpart: “[These] cushion-sitters, without a sledge, carriage or wagon cannot go outside the gates and know not with their art how to get to a shoe-maker’s for a pair of shoes except on an ass and for a ducat ... fashioned as they are in the world of my times, they like neither to travel nor to learn. To this the people bring them by continually giving them more money, although they know nothing. When they notice that the peasants know not how a physician should be, they stay in the chimney-corner, seat themselves in the midst of books, and ride thus in the Ship of Fools.” He continued, that “Those who sit in the chimney-corner eat partridges and those who pursue the arts eat milk-soup. The corner-trumpeters wear chains and silk; the wanderers can scarcely pay for ticking. Those within the walls have it cold or warm according to their wishes; those in the arts, were it not for a tree, would have no shade.” In excess of ten centuries earlier, Ko Hung had elaborated methods leading to *immortality* (or *hsien-hood*); methods which “... depend on extending love to all things that creep and crawl, so that nothing that breathes may be harmed,” with this

love extended “... to the very frontiers of the universe and to view others as we do ourselves.” Similarly, love formed the foundation of medicine, according to the *stormy petrel* of the art, Paracelsus: “There are two kinds of physicians – those who work for love, and those who work for their own profit. They are both known by their works; the true and just physician is known by his love and by his unfailing love for his neighbour. The unjust physicians are known by their transgressions against the commandment; for they reap, although they have not sown, and they are like ravening wolves; they reap because they want to reap, in order to increase their profit, and they are heedless of the commandment of love.” And so the textual dialogue continues across centuries and is able to be traced between Paracelsus and his Chinese counterpart; between these and other representatives of the so-called *East and West*; the *Oriental* and the *Occidental*; the Sun which is *rising* and that which is *setting* below the horizon. In the aforementioned example of the interconnectedness of Asian and European alchemies, Paracelsus could just as rightly be referred to as *the Swiss Ko Hung* – yet, this is not so. Why this is the case is well beyond the limited scope of this introductory note, but the core subject – that is, the similarities and disparities, overlaps and oppositions, influences and synergies of *Asian* and *non-Asian* alchemies – underpins and informs the thematic engagement of this special issue of the *Alchemy Journal*. Authors equally fascinated by Asian alchemy as one subset of the broader alchemical paradigm have kindly contributed to this issue, and are deserving of our thanks. As seems to be inherent with a modest publication that appears but twice per year and with a limited number of pages, the works of many more authors have been held for later publication – a sure sign of the strong interest in the alchemies of Asia. ▲

Paul Hardacre
Editor



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FEATURE

Morphogenesis and plant signature: the Tao of connectedness

DR. JOSEF MARGRAF





New responsibility for old spagyrics

Today's dramatic decline of natural ecosystems is particularly fast and destructive in tropical countries. Factors contributing to this decline include the fact that there are many more species in warm, humid climates in the first place, and that economy-driven local development is in a hurry to catch up with global trends. In such a situation, where officially designated institutions alone can no longer stem the tide of environmental decline, responsibilities are increasingly being woven into corporate identities, and more private initiatives are taking on a role beyond the scope of their daily business.

It is in this realm of novel approaches where the ancient art of spagyrics can make a substantial contribution to species protection. Only 'useful' species have a sure chance of surviving the destructive trends that industrial monocultures are imposing upon tropical landscapes. However, with the help of spagyrics, even unknown and traditionally under-utilised species can become 'useful' towards products for new emerging markets. With increasing trade potential new types of forest farming systems are created, combining protection with production in a way that allows entire ecosystems to be conserved. Such ecosystems not only allow the sustainable harvest of a multitude of novel crops, but also contribute ecosystem services such as carbon dioxide sequestration, water retention, biodiversity protection, and soil conservation, to the benefit of the entire society.

While conventional science and old fashioned companies still follow the dictates of trade, limited by national protective regulations and scientific dogma, others have never succumbed to this or have reached a stage of development in which they look back fondly in acknowledgment of their own roots. In the French cosmetics industry, for example, most early cosmetic products were derived from the alchemical knowledge of the industry founders. A few tradition-oriented (and, in these

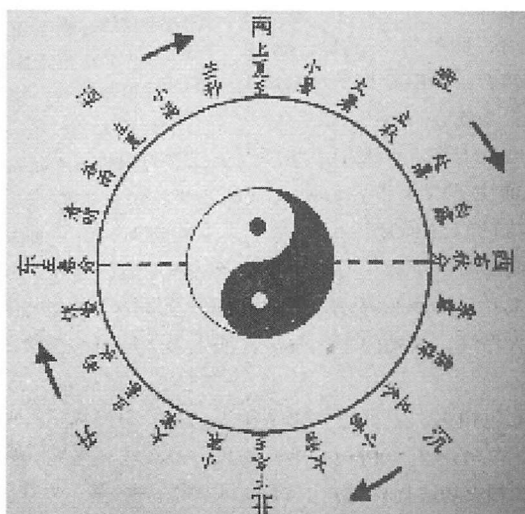
instances, anthroposophical-oriented) companies like WALA (Warmth-Ash-Light-Ash) and Weleda have maintained production protocols in line with the *logos* of alchemy.

But times are changing and there is an increasing worldwide unease with the chemistry that governs our daily life. This unease is particularly strong among health conscious people, organic farming communities, and those of us who have experienced the side effects of pesticide treated food or single compound medicine. Today it is all too common that a 'food product' in the supermarket contains a long list of stabilisers, emulsifiers, softeners, colouring agents, fungicides, and fillers that make conscious people hesitate to ingest it.

Spagyrics and the Tao

Spagyric products are multi-compound: this makes them similar to traditional Chinese medicine formulas which understand life as governed by qi forces and the yin and yang perpetual changes. Chinese alchemy is rooted in the yin and yang dualistic concept. But, in spite of its bipolar appearance, there is an even more fundamental trinity underlying the philosophy. This trinity points towards the same principles of life as the triangular essences of Western alchemy: the spirit, salt and soul. Let us compare.

In the beginning there was one. From this came two and three. Two and three were polar: yin and yang. As they came from one they were the energetic expressions of the creative force, perpetually changing into each other and, through change, evolving. However, their changes needed to be controlled by some higher consciousness. Looking closer at the yin and yang symbol it is evident that its dynamic form is kept in place by a circle. This circle represents the first idea – the *prima materia*, the *word*, the origin of duality, the source of creation yet also the limitation of creative expression. The creative source was first, then yang, then yin – three essentials for a start into life and the universe as we know it.



“Spagyric products are multi-compound: this makes them similar to traditional Chinese medicine formulas which understand life as governed by qi forces and the yin and yang perpetual changes.”

Old Chinese description of yin and yang. Note the circular flow shown by the arrows, and the outer circular boundary indicating the life-giving Tao.

The Chinese *Book of Changes*, *I Ching*, translates the ever-changing yin and yang dynamics into manageable advice for emperors and commoners alike. The general philosophy is that in an ever-changing world, he who does not change too, will perish. The book symbolises yin with a broken line, and yang with a solid line. The basic instruction is in three such lines, but two triagrams are needed to form the final message.

The philosophy behind the *I Ching* is best described by Wing in his competent and intuitive translation:

“The *I Ching*, actually, is a philosophical system based upon higher mathematics and principles of quantum physics. It consists of sixty-four hexagrams (six-line structures) that are made up of two kinds of lines: strong solid lines — and yielding broken lines —. The sixty-four hexagrams display every possible combination of these lines when taking six at a time ($2^6 = 64$). Each of the sixty-four hexagrams is accompanied by ancient texts and commentaries. These texts refer to 64 archetypal human situations – along with thousands of variations caused by changing lines.”

“The hexagrams of the *I Ching* are arranged in two sequences. The eleventh century arrangement known as the Hsi Sequence was the very

arrangement that led the seventeenth century father of calculus, Goffried Wilhelm Leibniz, to the discovery of a functioning binary system. A Jesuit priest in China at the time, Father Joachim Bouvet, showed this sequence to Leibniz, who was astonished to discover that if you substitute 0 for each solid line and 1 for each broken line – and then take the hexagrams in order, reading upward on each – you get the sequence 000000, 000001, 000010, 000011, and so forth. This is none other than the binary notification for numbers 0 through 63! The uncovering of such a binary code allowed Leibniz to change the path of mathematics for all time.”

And in a footnote:

“This is the same mathematical system that is the basis of all computer languages. Furthermore, since the powers of 2 seem to manifest in all physical and natural structures, it is not surprising that Chinese scholars have been able to apply the sixty-four hexagrams to nearly everything – from crystalline structures, to DNA, to the movements of the galaxies.”

The question of the origin of creation is deeply connected to the search for meaning in life. All of us have come across these essential questions like ‘How did it all start?’ and ‘What is the meaning of it all?’ The Taoist classic, naming the

“The creation of the universe and the inherent meaning of life must hide in these first three essentials, of which the first gives rise to yin and yang, the elemental polar basis of existence and transmutation of form.”

unthinkable the *Tao* – just to enable our talking about it – explains the origin in these words:

“The ancient sage says: ‘The Tao has no form. It gives life to heaven and earth. The Tao is void of emotions. It moves the sun and the moon. The Tao is nameless. It nourishes all things.’”

Interpretations of this short text from old Chinese abound. Towards our understanding of alchemy it is worth noting that the nameless thing that created the universe shows neither form nor emotion. Hence, it is not energy in the physical scientific sense that we are – or were, during the writing of the ancient text – aware of. Yet it nourishes all things, even moves the Sun and the Moon, and – most importantly – gives life.

Life – the *concept* of life – is understood via different definitions, each with their own limitations, during different ages and scientific epochs. The ancient sages had a much wider alchemical concept of life than today’s biology. To them, not only animals but stones, minerals, the planets, and the heavens were alive, and their changes and transmutations, and the influences of each upon each other, were proof.

The creation of the universe and the inherent meaning of life must hide in these first three essentials, of which the first gives rise to yin and yang, the elemental polar basis of existence and transmutation of form. Western and Arabian alchemists illustrated the interdependence of the three essentials as a triangle. In their own language they named the three corners the spirit, salt and soul. To this day alchemical preparations separate substances and plants into these three essentials, purify them, and recombine them to new *life*. For those alchemists who

understood that this very same process – the separation, purification and re-combination of the three essentials – is also an internal process within themselves, immortality was a possible outcome (or so the stories say). Hence, a closer look at these three essentials and their interconnectedness may be worthwhile.

With reference to figure 1, you may want to consider the three points of the triangle, reading anti-clockwise of the three essentials and their equivalents. By doing so you will see well known concepts of the trinity, Taoism and alchemy, along with new quantum physical expressions of the same philosophical, circular conclusions.

Eventually it dawns that there seems a surprisingly consistent *feedback* from the intentional, emotional and spiritual expressions of life *back* to the creative force itself. If this observation is correct, it follows that we may have substantial influence upon the design of our own presence.

This influence is described in the morphogenetic field hypothesis of Sheldrake as *habitual*. We – and every expression of life before us – have left forms of habitual manifestations which are still present. The more often the forms were repeated, the stronger the presence of their morphogenetic fields. Through these fields, evolution is guided. This hypothesis offers valid additional mechanisms for the creation of complex forms and functions in biology, and also for ecosystems, as we will see later.

These morphogenetic fields have no perceivable boundaries, nor are their speeds limited. They represent forces other than, or differently connected to, electromagnetic and related fields.

I Spirit
 II Tao
 III Consciousness
 IV Father
 V Sun
 VI Stillness
 VII Field, Matrix
 VIII Concept
 IX Void
 X Creativity
 XI God
 XII Morphogenetic Field

I Salt
 II Yang
 III Form
 IV Son
 V Moon
 VI Sound
 VII Energy
 VIII Matter
 IX Body
 X Universe
 XI Creation
 XII Ecosystem

Soul I
 Yin II
 Experience III
 Holy Spirit IV
 Earth V
 Symphony VI
 Intention VII
 Feedback VIII
 Emotion IX
 Life X
 Prayer XI
 Connectedness XII

Figure 1: The three essentials in various expressions of philosophies and hypothesis. Jumping between the philosophies is encouraged in order to find a personal way to create a flow of meaningful connectedness between the concepts.

Spagyrics, species, and ecosystems

Originally derived from the Greek *oikos* by the German biologist Ernst Haeckel in 1866 as the *comprehensive science of the relationship of organisms to the environment*, ecology was soon after taught by Eugenius Warming as a university course in Denmark. However, ecology did not really take off well as an established science for another century. Its way of considering natural phenomena more comprehensively was against the scientific trend of dissecting details for what was then considered a deeper understanding of Nature. Ecology looks the other way, trying to understand the larger picture.

Ecology came into scientific fashion via H.T. Odum during the period of the 1970s until the 1990s. During this time ecological societies were established, the number of ecological publications increased, and European universities were catching up with the ecological schools of thought from the United States. In his later years H.T. Odum reached an understanding of ecosystems which curiously looked beyond the mechanistic and energy-driven models which had themselves given rise to an entirely new field of science known as cybernetics.

Together with D.M. Scienceman, Odum developed the controversial concept of *emergy* or *energy memory*. Odum started to consider ecosystems as having been formed by the use of various forms of energy in the past: "*Emergy* is a measure of energy used in the past and thus is different from a measure of energy now." This way Odum approached the observable evolution of self-organisation in open systems. His *principle of maximum empower*, however, has not been verified by conventional science.

Simultaneously during the 1990s, the British biologist Rupert Sheldrake formulated his hypothesis on the existence of morphogenetic fields. He calls Nature *habitual* or *habit forming* and proposes that, via such habit forming, Nature maintains a memory. This memory or habit is part of a morphic field. Morphic fields

contribute to the genesis of form. This highly controversial hypothesis fits well into the alchemical world view.

Morphogenesis: creative evolution of systems

In the sequential logic of Sheldrake's hypothesis of morphogenetic fields, ecosystems are the next system of complexity of morphic units. He writes:

"In addition to the type of energetic causation known from physics, and in addition to the causation due to the structures of known physical fields, a further type of causation is responsible for the forms of all morphic units (subatomic particles, atoms, molecules, crystals, quasi-crystalline aggregates, organelles, cells, tissues, organs, organisms)."

Ecosystems, comprised of species, are the morphic unit of next higher order. Within the logic of Sheldrake, his words still carry the substantial meaning for the definition of an ecosystem. First, his general hypothesis:

"Formative causation depends on *morphic fields*, structures with morphogenetic effects on material systems. Each kind of morphic unit has its own characteristic morphic field."

Taking Sheldrake's hypothesis to the next higher order of ecosystems and species interaction, we may then phrase it as follows:

"The formative causation of ecosystems depends on species. Species are complex structures with morphogenetic field effects on other species and systems. Each kind of ecosystem has its own morphic field, which is of higher order than the sum of morphic fields of species connected to the ecosystem."

In the picture of the unusual orchid flower of *Sunipia cirrhata*, the resemblance of the flower to a large hymenoptera wasp is very striking. During morning the flowers of *Sunipia cirrhata* also emit a honey aroma, in spite of the flowers not producing any honey. I have not yet been able to observe the pollination mechanism of this

rare orchid. My guess is that it attracts a hornet species, which is predating on honey gathering bees and wasps. The hornet gets attracted by the strong honey aroma, and when seeing the colours and shapes of another hymenoptera which does not move, they consider it easy prey and try to catch it. Their attack is made at a specific angle from above and behind the prey; an attack which avoids the sting of the prey and makes it easy for the hornet to kill the bee or wasp. This violent action triggers the release of the pollen and fixes it onto the hornet, which releases it again through another mechanism when trying to repeat the attack with a second *Sunipia cirrhata* orchid flower.

As *Sunipia cirrhata* orchids have only one pollen per flower, it is not very likely that the mechanism is a result of trial and error over long spans of evolutionary time – it either works right after the creative invention, or the species dies out. Under such circumstances, couldn't there – in addition to genetic information and evolution – be a third mechanism in place, which uses the morphic field of the hornet as a guiding plan for the formation of flower tissue in the orchid?

If this hypothesis is within the realm of possibility it could be tested by finding more examples in which two entirely different species within one ecosystem influence each other's design of the material system, or in which at least one species is adapting to the morphic field of the other. In fact there are more visible examples, particularly among orchids, in which the signature of insects are obvious. Their visibility makes it easy for us to recognise the phenotypical expressions as signatures. But how about non-visible expressions of morphic fields such as scent, physiological processes, electromagnetic radiation, trophic interdependences within a food chain, and the cycles of decomposition, behaviour, migration, competition, water retention, utilisation of light, adaptation to shade, protection against diseases and pests, and the manifold mechanisms that keep



The orchid species *Sunipia cirrhata* from the Bulang Mountains of Southern Yunnan's Xishuangbanna.

an ecosystem functional and which may show only during situations of environmental stress?

As ecosystems, particularly in tropical areas, are made of thousands of species, tightly interconnected morphic fields may form chains of connected information or a multi-dimensional matrix. Taken together, ecosystems may design habitual units which create and perpetuate the very internal rules which keep them stable.

Such multi-faceted connectedness has been expressed as fractal connectedness. In their book *Ecological Design*, Sim Van der Ryn and Stuart Cowan describe it:

"In contrast with the standard forms of Euclidean geometry, fractal forms facilitate the flow of energy and materials across multiple scales."

Can, in the case of the orchid flower, the material expression from the hornet have been transferred to the orchid's genetic information in charge of facilitating the flow of material across the fauna-flora scale? If yes, how is this accomplished? Is information energy in any known definition? Among all the possibilities available to our knowledge today, Sheldrake's hypothesis of morphogenetic fields seems the more 'convenient' mechanism. At least, neither genetics nor

evolution can give satisfying answers, and electromagnetic fields require some sort of purpose to arrive at complex structures that cross such vastly different life forms as plants and animals. Pollination is hardly a driving force for an electromagnetic field impulse between species.

To close the gap in communication between species at such high level of complexity, my suggestion is to come back to the trigram. The hypothesis that I wish to bring forward is that there is a feedback mechanism, which sends *intentions* – like the understandable wish of an orchid to get pollinated – to a creative *master plan*. This creative multi-dimensional field creates resonance with existing fractals and triggers their materialisation within the genetic and morphic environment of phylogenetic changes. If the changes are successfully leading to more vitality, the feedback of the species is confirming the habit forming morphic field, stabilising the pollination mechanism in the case of the orchid. If it is not successful, the feedback is not stabilising the morphic fields and the change disappears. The difference to conventional Darwinian evolution is that the choice for the change is not random or Gauss-distributed but in resonance with existing fractal concepts, and that the change is not gradually evolving but instantly complete.

Signatures: expressions of morphic resonance

There is no waste in time or in life for evolutionary changes. Ecosystems, which waste their energy and risk their species through Darwinian mechanisms of waging the war of selecting the fittest, seem meagerly equipped to cope with change. And change is inevitable and a constant throughout Earth's history – be it global alterations of climate, sudden impacts of meteorites or events along geological fault lines, or be it just the daily threat of diseases, predation, weather changes, and aging. Particularly for long-lived organisms – like trees and like ourselves – coping

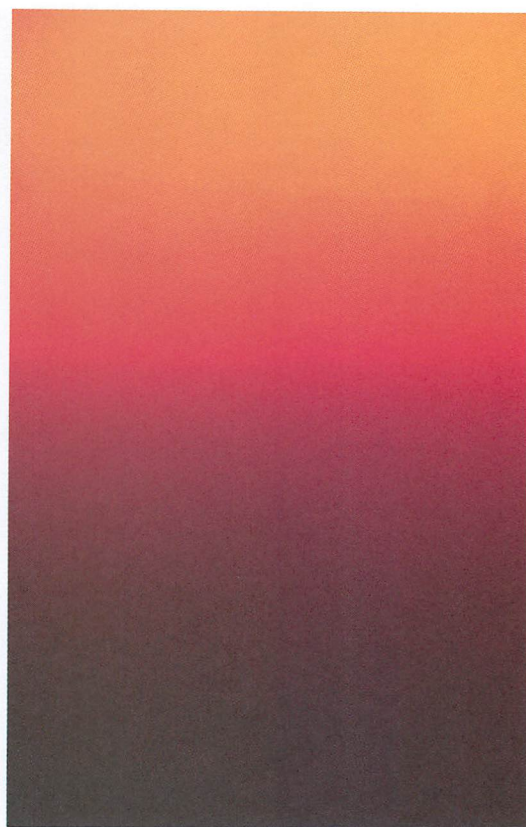
with the gradual changes caused by aging and avoiding their potential for allowing diseases to appear is a daily effort. This is where the signatures of plants come into play.

Imagine a tree that lives in a swampy habitat. Naturally, it has to cope with the ill effects of humidity during its entire life time. Consequently, for the tree to reach a few hundred years of age, it must know how to cope with dampness, fungus infections, water-logged root systems, aquatic nematodes, and maybe with some specific chemical hazards of the swamp it lives in.

If we now consider that the tree is part of a morphic field – a field which the tree draws from and also feeds back into – then there is more to the medicine than we can possibly extract chemically and physically from the species. It is the morphic information – the *field* – that we could connect ourselves to, and via this connection we could possibly trigger healing reactions from within our human body.

To capture the morphic resonance of plants, in addition to their chemical components, spagyrics could be an answer. The protocols developed by Paracelsus, detailing how to make an *arcana* or a single species elixir, seem designed to maintain the *spiritual* connectedness of the plant after converting it into a medicinally active substance. This connectedness is more than energetic resonance. It may be a morphic field that is stabilised in the watery milieu of the *arcana* or elixir. It may even be possible to transfer it homeopathically to diluted media.

An interesting plant for spagyric work in Yunnan is the golden lotus banana (*Musella lasiocarpa*), also known as the Chinese dwarf banana. It is endemic to Yunnan and is likely a distant relative of the elephant hip banana (*Ensete glaucum*). Its natural habitat is unknown, but I assume that it is the steep cliffs along the major rivers that flow down from the Tibetan Plateau. My assumption is grounded in the facts that *Musella* cannot tolerate shading, can grow in very



Left: The golden lotus banana (*Musella lasiocarpa*) opens a petal of its magnificent flower every day. The flower can last for an entire year; right: The colours of an elixir made from the golden lotus banana (*Musella lasiocarpa*). Note the formation of strata, which develop after 12 months of exposure to planetary influences.

poor soils, and are very resistant to desiccation during the dry season, almost like a cactus.

The plant receives its outstanding beauty from a lotus shaped flower of hundreds of gold coloured petals. It is a sacred plant in Buddhism, sometimes referred to as the *thousand petalled lotus*. Every day a petal opens and gives access for bees and sunbirds to pollen and honey. The flower often lasts for an entire year upon the short – usually less than one metre tall – trunk.

In the philosophy of signatures, the golden lotus banana connects to the Sun with its golden flower. It supports longevity and lasting beauty by the endurance of its beautiful appearance. It invigorates yang forces via its association with the Sun, and it nourishes yin by its feminine

shapes and its water and nutrient retaining body. It is a giving, heart opening plant as it feeds bees and small birds with honey throughout an entire year.

All of these wonderful characteristics of the golden lotus banana are offered in one of the harshest environments – the steep, windy, soil-less, nutrient-poor, lonely, remote, and dangerous cliffs of the Upper Mekong and Honghe Rivers. Hence there is a deeper layer of signature, signaling unconditional help in very difficult situations during one's lifetime.

Practical work

The protocol that we have standardised for our TianZi Biodiversity Centre is a modification of



Left: The red tincture is made from dragon's blood, the root wood of *Dracaena cochinchinensis*, which defends itself against the intrusion of fungus through a red resin; right: golden lotus banana (*Musella lasiocarpa*) fermenting in glass jars.

the WALA and Weleda processes, adapted to the open air conditions of tropical Xishuangbanna. Always, two glass vessels are filled with a mix of plant parts, spring water and mountain honey, to which brewer's yeast is added. When fermentation is completed, the spirit contained within one glass vessel is transferred to the soul from the second glass vessel. All organic matter is calcined and the salt is allowed to reunite with the spirit and soul for at least 12 months.

We keep signatures intact as much as possible. Contrary to common practice, I keep the bottles untouched after conjunction to allow for the separate maturation of naturally emerging structures and stratifications. Only after one year of development under the full influence of planetary constellations do I regularly mix the strata

to achieve a final uniform product. This mixing process may well take another 12 months.

When an elixir or *arcanum* is completed, it is tested both by personal experiment and by a laboratory in Europe. We are mainly working with endangered orchid species, wild gingers and wild bananas, aralias, and many tropical tree species, with the goal to save them from extinction due to the rapid conversion of natural landscapes into industrial monocultures. It is worth noting that orchids have been used for millennia in traditional Chinese medicine, and only lately is science acknowledging their immense usefulness for many medicinal purposes.

We grow our orchids in Rainforestation Farming systems, so named as the technology combines forestry and agriculture for

“The protocols developed by Paracelsus, detailing how to make an *arcanum* or a single species elixir, seem designed to maintain the *spiritual* connectedness of the plant after converting it into a medicinally active substance. This connectedness is more than energetic resonance.”

sustainable farming in tropical areas. The technology encompasses 20 years of research and development, was initiated in the Philippines and is now extended to Indonesia, Sri Lanka and China. Within the Rainforestation Farming technology, epiphytic orchids play a key role because their ecologically friendly farming system is tree canopies. Orchids therefore allow us to first reforest an area and then add orchids to the trees, creating optimal conditions for a large diversity of forest flora and fauna to share the same ecosystem.

Our approach surely rows against the current of mainstream development. We therefore welcome the readers' interest in sharing, improving and joining our concept. ▲

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DR. JOSEF MARGRAF (1953–2010) studied biology and tropical agriculture at the University of Hohenheim in Stuttgart. After researching the limnology of temporary freshwater lakes in Sardinia and the ecology of the Ifugao rice terraces in the Philippines, he founded the publishing house Margraf Tropical Scientific Books, which focuses upon natural sciences of tropical countries. Later he joined the German Technical Development Agency to guide a long term ecology project on an island in the Philippines. After an assignment period with the European Delegation in Beijing, in charge of forestry and biodiversity, he resigned from official duties and together with his wife, Minguo, started a private initiative for nature protection in Yunnan. He lived with his wife and two daughters in Xishuangbanna as the scientific adviser of the TianZi Biodiversity Research & Development Centre, which he and his wife founded. The TianZi Centre manages (and co-manages, with other responsible companies) more than 300 square kilometres of tropical land under the Rainforestation Farming concept. The TianZi Centre welcomes scientific and trade cooperations from all countries and offers seminars, eco-holidays and entrepreneurship. More about TianZi – which stands for ‘Seeds of Heaven ... and beyond’ – at www.biodiversitycentre.com. This article is, in part, a modified version of the manuscript for the book, *Ecosystems: the nature of connectedness*, to be released in both English and Chinese languages during 2010.

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Metallic medicines of Indian alchemy

ROBERT ALLEN BARTLETT

History of Indian alchemy

The history of Indian alchemy is linked with ancient Vedic scriptures which are arguably the most ancient writings that we have. Dates for their origination are still under debate and range from 17,000 B.C. to 3000 B.C. Tradition asserts that they existed for quite a few generations as an oral heritage before anything was written down.

There were four Vedic texts: the *Rigveda*, *Yajurveda*, *Samaveda*, and *Atharvaveda*. The first three Vedas give details of ceremonies and rituals for honouring the gods and goddesses. The fourth Veda – the *Atharvaveda* – dealt more with personal attainments of health, wealth and happiness. It is filled with magic and sorcery, incantations to bring out the healing powers of stones and plants. Although popular, the *Atharvaveda*

was considered by many to constitute *dark arts*. The *Atharvaveda* is also largely responsible for the development of *ayurveda* or the *science of life* which forms the core of Indian medicine.

According to tradition, the Vedic scriptures were of divine origin, received by seers and transmitted by poetic verse to humans in the most remote past. As legend goes, there are two main traditions regarding the transmission of this science of life and the lines of descent through generations of disciples. Brahma, the Creator, was first to perceive *ayurveda*. He later taught it to Daksha Prajapati, who in turn taught the Ashvin Twins who became known as the Divine Healers. The Ashvin Twins later taught Indra, king of the gods. From here the tradition separates into two main lines.

In one line, Indra teaches Dhanvantari who later teaches disciples, among whom was Sushrut. He wrote *Sushruta Samhita* which presented all of the medical knowledge that he received, with special emphasis upon surgical methods.

The second line of the tradition is that Indra taught Bharadvaja who later taught one of his disciples, Atreya. Among Atreya's disciples was Charaka who later wrote *Charaka Samhita*, which presented the medical teachings with emphasis upon preparations of medicines and drugs. This happened somewhere around 600 or 700 B.C. – the exact dates are unclear. Both of the *Samhitas* form the core texts of ayurveda.

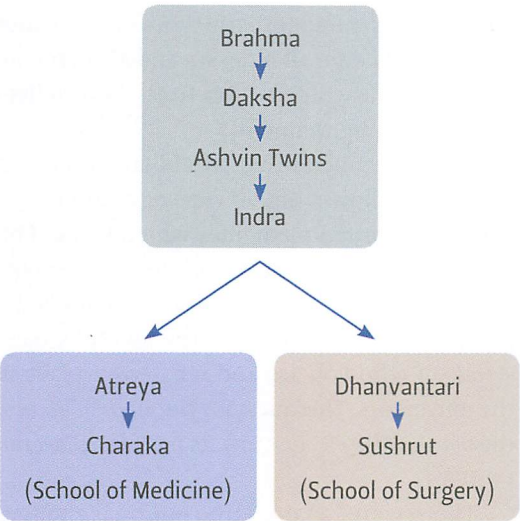


Figure 1: The transmission of ayurveda and the lines of descent through generations of disciples

The Vedic scripts mention the use of gold, silver, copper, and iron for medicinal purposes, as well as certain gems, but do not provide much detail as to how these metals and gems are to be prepared and administered. *Charaka Samhita* and *Sushruta Samhita* supply a little more detail: they develop a few minerals for internal uses, such as iron, as well as caustic materials for use in surgeries. Most of these preparations are for external uses, but the interest and development in metallic medicines is apparent.

One important concept that we will come to later is the term *rasa*. In the Vedic scripts, as well as in *Charaka* and *Sushruta Samhitas*, *rasa* is mentioned as being the life sap or the nutritive plasma of the body, whichever body that is – be it plant, mineral or animal.

By about 300 B.C., the *Charaka* and *Sushruta Samhita* texts had become mutilated and scattered. Two important figures at that time were Nagarjuna, highly respected as the father of Indian alchemy, and Vagbhata, who collected the scattered fragments of the *Samhitas* as well as additional knowledge into a work entitled *Ashtang Hridayam Samhita*. *Ashtang Hridayam Samhita* became the third core text of ayurveda. In the writings of both Nagarjuna and Vagbhata, work with metal and mineral preparations is much more developed and gaining importance as experience with their power to heal has improved over time.

A testament to the metallurgical skills during this time, referred to as the Vedic Period, is the iron pillar of Delhi, India. This iron pillar is a little over 20 feet tall and weighs about 6 tonnes and, although it has been standing out in the weather since 600 A.D., it shows very little signs of corroding – in fact, it has been dubbed the ‘rustless wonder’. Some believe that this pillar was constructed using iron prepared by alchemical methods of the time.

The time of 800 A.D. to 1100 A.D. was a transitional period. Work with metallic medicines increased substantially and their effectiveness was now considered to be far above the effectiveness of common herbal drugs. In fact, medicine at the time became classified into three parts:

1. *demonic medicine*, which dealt largely with invasive or surgical methods;
2. *human medicine*, which consisted of the common herbal preparations easily available to all; and
3. *divine medicine*, including mineral and metallic medicines which required special knowledge to correctly prepare.

From 1000 A.D. onward, metallic medicine became much more widespread. During the 9th century one writer, Govinda Bagavatpada, composed a text called *Rasa Hridaya Tantra*, wherein he specifically mentions two types of medicine: medicine designed to heal people, and medicine designed to heal metals. These medicines were later classified as *deha siddhi* (for perfecting people) and *loha siddhi* (for perfecting metals). Metals were to be cured with different classes of drugs, just as the human body would be cured. By using the proper drugs, metals could be cured of their defects and thus made into superior medicines or elevated into noble metals. Later writers followed this distinction of *deha siddhi* and *loha siddhi*, and so it became part of the alchemical tradition. Around this time, the caliphs of Arabia had many of the Indian texts translated into Arabic. Accordingly this information filtered into the Middle East and ultimately into the European alchemical traditions.

Two other important writers during this time were Vrinda (900 A.D.) and Chakrapani (1060 A.D.). Both wrote texts dealing with metallic elements in both *deha siddhi* and *loha siddhi*. The progress and success of metallic medicines, after generations of experience, becomes apparent. The texts clearly explain the apparatus to be used and give clear instructions regarding the processing of different metals, minerals and gems for medical or alchemical uses.

By 1100 A.D. to 1300 A.D. (also called the Tantric Period) there were various political and religious changes going on. During this time the use of mercury became very prominent. Mercury had been known since Vedic times, though not used as a medicine. But at this time, mercury became the centrepiece of Indian alchemy – it was considered to be the root and source of all other metals and minerals. Mercury became known as *rasa*, the life sap, and now equated with the semen of the god Shiva and thus the generative force of the universe. The science of mercury became known as *rasa shastra* and this

term later designated Indian alchemy in general. Mercury was considered to act as a catalyst to all other metallic or herbal preparations, and had the ability to penetrate deeply into all materials – so mercury was a key medicinal element used by itself or as part of a formulation. During this period the use of metallic medicines and their preparations starts to proliferate. Part of the reason for this being that, during the Tantric Period, there was a move toward an individual religious experience. The Tantric Period taught that all people could attain *salvation while still alive* and that this was possible by performing certain rites and ceremonies and via the use of specially prepared medicines. A great deal of interest was poured into the types of medicines which would cure all illnesses and also prolong life so that one would be able to attain the blissful state of enlightenment.

To create a body that would last in perfect health and allow a higher type of awareness to manifest required medicines which worked on subtle, as well as physical, realities. You become enlightened while you are still alive in this body, perfectly preserved and healthy and fully conscious of who you are and what your place in the universe is. This quest for the *elixir of life* and the *powder of projection* saw its peak here around 1400 A.D.

There were, again, large political changes happening in the country following foreign invasions. A lot of people were executed, dispersed or exiled from the country; schools and temples were destroyed. Interest in metallic medicines had a shift in focus towards a goal of creating superior agents for the relief of human suffering. This became what was known as the Iatro-Chemical Period and is considered to have run from about 1400 A.D. until 1600 A.D. During this period all of the previous work with metallic medicines became coalesced and pointed towards developing superior medicines to heal diseases. These medicines not only address the body,

Classification of Materials	
I. Minerals	Primary Secondary Common
II. Metals	Pure Dirty Mixed
III. Gems	Precious Semi-precious Common
IV. Calcium Compounds	Shells Coral Feathers, etc.
V. Poisons	Stable Mobile Artificial

Figure 2: Rasa shastra materials classification

but also the subtle principles that precede the structure of the body.

One important text of this period was *Rasa Ratna Samuccaya* which was written around 1350 A.D. and became a sourcebook of alchemical knowledge until that time. After 1600 A.D. there were more changes within the country: the caste system became more pronounced at this time, and the upper class considered physical labour to be below them and that such would contaminate them. With regard to alchemical works, a lot of the intellectual input was no longer there, and tasks were relegated to artisans to prepare various materials from a recipe. Alchemy slowly began to stagnate and then, by the 1800s, India became part of the British Empire. Under British domination modern medicine and science were introduced to India; the old ways were neglected and practiced only in remote villages.

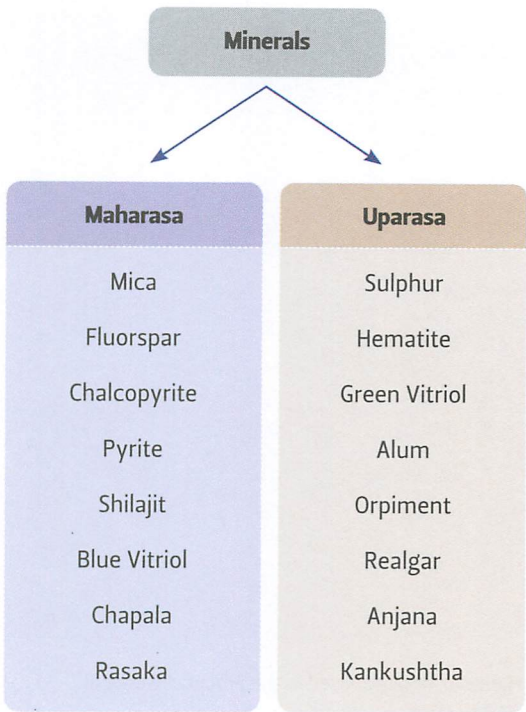


Figure 3: Minerals utilised in the practical works of rasa shastra

Today alchemy is making a comeback in India, as it is in the West. Worldwide there is a growing interest in metallic preparations available through ayurvedic medicine. However, many countries have restricted access to them and imports are not available in some countries, due mainly to concerns over heavy metal presence in the metallic medicines. The controversy around the metallic medicines presents an opportunity to look into these materials and the procedures behind making them. Hopefully this will provide some insight into the difficulty of resolving that controversy.

Classification of substances

In the practical works of rasa shastra, materials are classified into five main groups, each containing sub-groups, as shown in Figure 2.

The most important minerals used in the rasa shastra preparations are shown in Figure 3.

Metals

- Gold
- Silver
- Copper
- Iron
- Red Iron Oxide
- Tin
- Lead
- Zinc
- Bronze
- Brass

Figure 4: Metals utilised in the practical works of rasa shastra

The metals employed by Indian alchemists are shown in Figure 4.

The materials were considered to have certain imperfections that needed to be removed, and these were called *doshas*. There were three main types of *dosha* associated with minerals and metals. The first were called *naisargic doshas* and these were defects of Nature associated with the specific material. The second type were called *yougic doshas* and these were defects added for commercial purposes, such as adding lead or mercury to a gold or silver alloy in order to increase weight and make it appear to be more valuable. The third type were *kanchuka doshas* imparted by the mountain, earth and water where the metals were obtained – defects derived from the environment and include natural waste products from animal, vegetable and mineral activities of the area. Each of these *doshas* associated with a mineral or metal had to be removed by various processes, which we will examine later.

Drug Groups for Processing Minerals and Metals

- Salts
- Alkalis
- Sour Drugs
- Bitter Drugs
- Sweet Drugs
- Milks
- Latexes
- Urines
- Cow Products
- Oils
- Melting Drugs

Figure 5: Drug groups for processing minerals and metals

Another class of materials used in rasa shastra includes groups of drugs to be used in treating the subject mineral or metal. Figure 5 lists the general classes of drug materials which were used to remove defects and assist conversion of the material into a medicine.

According to theory, desired qualities of a substance could be enhanced and undesirable qualities removed by treating the substance with a proper selection of drugs. The treatments were aimed at transforming the five elemental constitution of the subject. Such treated materials would then provide medicines effective on both the physical and subtle levels of man or metals.

Processes

There are many processes developed in the science of rasa shastra which mirror those of Western alchemy, but also many which are unique to the Indian system. The processes can be quite laborious, yet employ elegantly simple apparatus and materials.

General Purification

Nirvapa

Heating metal strips and quenching in liquids

Repeat 7 times for each liquid:

- Sesame oil
- Buttermilk
- Cow's urine
- Kanji / rice vinegar
- Decoction of kulattha

Avapa

Mixing materials into molten metal

Dhalana

Molten metal poured into a liquid

Figure 6: General purification processes for converting materials into medicines

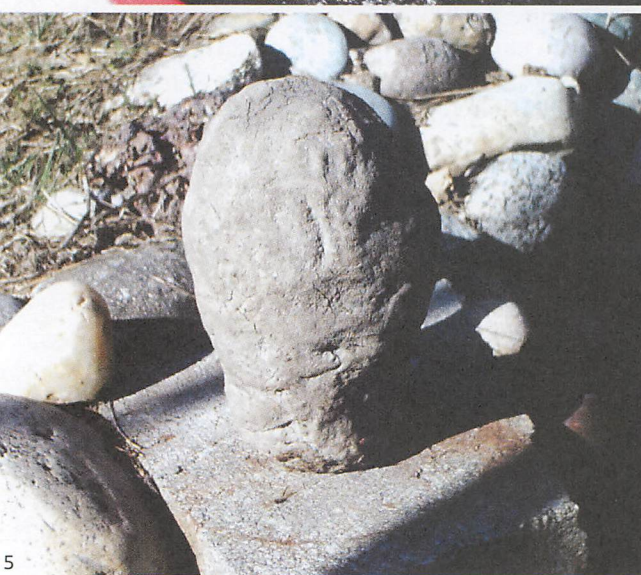
One of the main processes involves the grinding or trituration to extremely fine particles. This often takes place with numerous herbal extracts used to counterbalance particular imperfections or *doshas* in the subject. Some of the guiding principles for deciding which drugs to use follow the same rules as ayurvedic medicine. A simple rule of thumb is that *like increases like* while *opposites balance*. For example, a mineral which possesses excessive fire qualities would be cooled with drugs of a cooling nature. Excessive earthy qualities would be treated with volatile drugs. In addition, the use of fire would counter the earthy qualities predominant in the mineral realm. Extensive grinding would supply impact force associated with aerial qualities.

Each material would first undergo purification specific to its nature; this was known as *shodhan*. Indian alchemists were adamant about performing these initial purifications because they were well acquainted with the toxic nature of raw minerals and metals. An imperfect material could

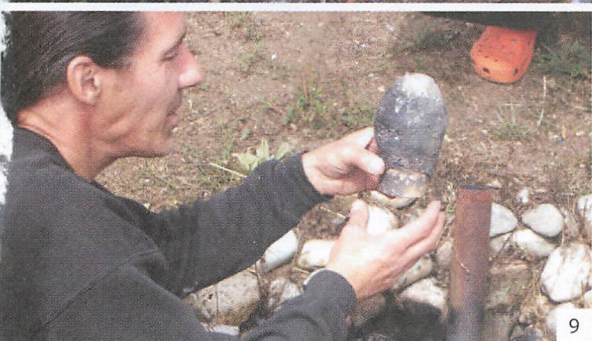
cause more medical problems than they were meant to cure. In practice there are two main processes for converting materials into medicines. The first one mentioned already is *shodhan*, and the second, *maran*, is described as *killing* the metal or the toxic metallic nature of the material. The process of *shodhan* involved a number of sub-processes or routines. A few of the most common methods are shown in Figure 6.

The general purification of metals would include heating thin strips of the metal until very hot and then quenching in various liquids, in a specific order, as shown in Figure 6. Another process for low melting point metals like zinc, lead or tin involves melting the metal and then slowly adding powdered herbs or other drugs and stirring until an ash-like solid is produced. Another method, *dhalana*, is performed by melting the metal and pouring it into another specified liquid.

The processes of *shodhan* were said to affect the following types of changes:



(1) Part of the *shodhan* of zinc; (2) *Shodhan* of zinc complete; (3) Calcined zinc ground to paste; (4) Dried cakes of zinc paste; (5) Zinc cakes sealed in crucible; (6) *Gajaputa* firing pit



(7) *Gajaputa* ready to fire; (8) *Gajaputa* on fire; (9) Retrieval of crucible; (10) Crucible after firing; (11) Zinc cakes after fourth firing; (12) Completed zinc *bhasma* after seventh firing; (13) Fine powder of final zinc *bhasma*

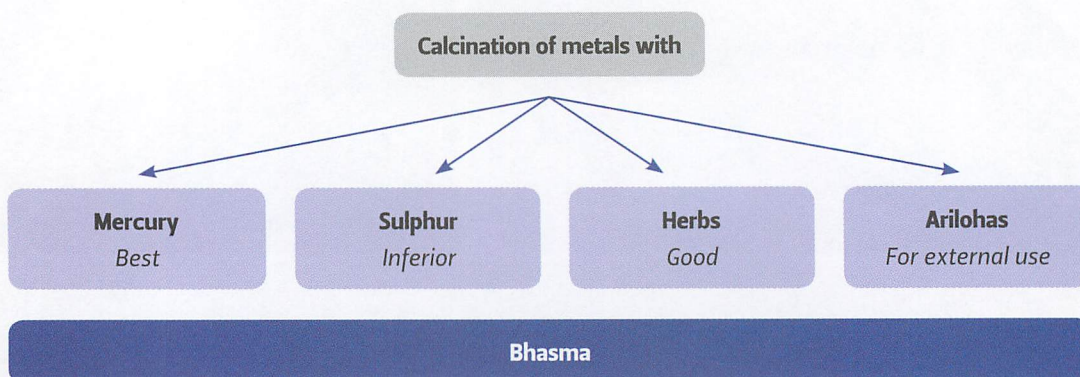


Figure 7: Calcination methods associated with the process of *maran*

1. the substance becomes more brittle (making grinding easier), reduces its hardness and its cohesive nature;
2. conversion into organo-metallic complexes;
3. toxic substances were boiled or steamed for days in order to reduce or eliminate any toxic effect in the final medicine;
4. balancing the *doshas* and *gunas* by treating with similars (in order to increase desired qualities) or with opposites (to decrease unwanted qualities);
5. extraneous materials are removed from the subject.

This was considered the purification of the subject matter. It is contrary to what we would normally consider the purification of a substance. Today, we would normally remove any foreign substances until we are left with a chemically purified matter. In *rasa shastra*, other substances are added to cause changes within the matter at the atomic, molecular and non-material levels.

There are two levels of *shodhan* which most materials would undergo. The first is called *samanya*, which is a general purification applied to a similar class of materials. The second is called *vishesh shodhan*, which is a material-specific purification. Each material would receive a general purification followed by the more specific

purification recommended for that individual material, and there are usually a number of process options. Gold would have to undergo a different type of purification compared to copper or lead. Each had a specific process designed to remove imperfections in that specific substance. These processes were developed over centuries of trial and error. Much of the theory, or *the why behind the how*, is currently lost, but there are ongoing studies trying to recover this valuable information.

After the *shodhan* of a material was complete, it was ready for the *maran* process, which was the killing of the toxic metallic nature and creating of the actual medicine. This process was designed to bring the substance into a state which was more compatible with the human system.

Most metallic medicines were reduced to a fine powder state called *bhasma*. *Bhasma* means *an ash*, and the metals or minerals were processed by fire and grinding in such a way as to reduce them to this fine, powdered state. There is another method where materials were not exposed to fire and this is called a *pisti*. Some gems and certain minerals could be reduced to power simply by grinding with specific liquids over a period of time. *Pisti* tend to have more of a cooling effect than the *bhasmas* which are prepared in the fire.

In the process of *maran* the subject material is usually heated in sealed containers a specified number of times. There are several methods employed in this calcination as shown in Figure 7.

Metals can be calcined with mercury, which was considered the best way; or with select herbs, which is next best method, and finally with sulphur, which was considered to be inferior. Although the use of sulphur in the calcination of metals was considered to produce inferior medicines, it could always be counted upon when other processing drugs were unavailable.

20 different types are described in the texts; each one for a different purpose.

Typical materials for making crucibles include clay, soil, ash, jute fibre, charcoal, cow dung, calcined sea shells, iron rust, and earth-worm soil. These materials would be measured out and then ground to a fine paste, formed into various crucible shapes and finally fired prior to use. The crucible itself was to remove certain types of imperfection in the subject. The crucible not only aided the reactions taking place – it also added certain trace elements and would absorb unwanted matter.

“There is an entire science to just understanding the crucibles and liners and their part in this whole process of creating the different types of medicines.”

In fact the texts state that “there is no such elephant of a metal that cannot be killed by the lion of sulphur.” A final group of calcining aids was known as *arilohas*. These aids are rarely used as their end products are still toxic and suitable for external uses only.

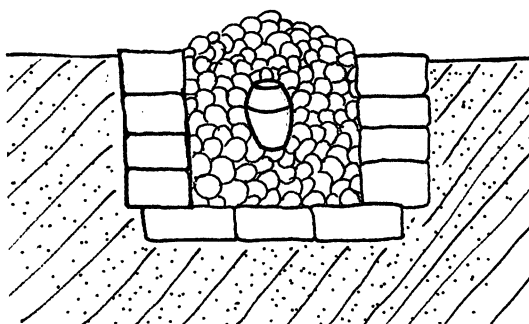
In the general *maran* process, a metal which has gone through the *shodhan* would be ground to a paste with herbal decoctions. The grinding may take several days. Grinding continued until dryness, and the cycle of wetting and grinding repeated a specified number of times. This was known as *bhavana* or *impregnation*. The final ground paste was formed into small cakes and dried in the sunlight. Once dried, the cakes were sealed into crucibles using cloth strips smeared with clay. This package was dried and then exposed to fire under certain conditions.

The crucibles themselves were held to take part in the purification and were called *mushas*. The term came to mean *crucible* in general, with a crucible described as *that which helps to eliminate defects or impurities*. There were many different types of crucible developed – more than

In addition to the crucibles themselves there were certain liners, formed by drug pastes of herbs and minerals, which were used to coat the inside of the crucible and adjust the reaction by creating acidic or alkaline conditions. The liners also adjust the heat resistance and porosity of the crucible and provide a mechanism for adding other reactants to the mix during the heating process in a sort of time-release method. There is an entire science to just understanding the crucibles and liners and their part in this whole process of creating the different types of medicines.

Furnaces

In *rasa shastra* various furnaces, called *putas*, are used to provide a specified amount of heat in order to accomplish a specific purpose. Furnaces are generally pits of various sizes dug into the ground. The amount of heat was controlled by the size of the furnace. For example, *mahaputa*, the largest furnace, is a cube of about 44 inches on each side. The next largest furnace, *gajaputa*, is a 22 inch cube.



Puta furnace

These pits would be filled about two thirds full with dried cow dung cakes as fuel. The material to be processed, which was now dried and sealed inside the crucibles, would be placed on top of this cow dung and the pit filled with more cow dung. Once ignited, the cow dung cakes would burn down and cool naturally. This supplied a certain quantum of heat energy required to cause changes in the subject. Generally, temperatures up to about 700 degrees Celsius were reached, and the time would vary from half an hour to two hours at maximum temperature before they were allowed to cool naturally.

Once fired, the clay seal was broken and the material removed. The fired material would then be processed again, so it would go through the *bhavana* process of grinding with specific herbal decoctions until dryness several times before again forming into small cakes. The cakes were dried in the sunlight and sealed in the crucible with strips of cloth, dried and again fired in the *puta* of the specified size. This process of firing and grinding would be repeated a number of times – sometimes four or five cycles, although 21 cycles is a number that was used often. Some materials would require in excess of 100 such firings. Mica, for instance, was considered to be *ambrosial* after it was fired 1,000 times. A great deal of time and energy is required to prepare these materials correctly.

The texts of rasa shastra are clear in specifying

the type of *puta* system and number of cycles. Cow dung was the main fuel; rice patty cakes and charcoal were also used for other types of material and desired temperatures. All of these factors are designed to control the amount of heat energy and the maximum temperature that the material was subject to.

The texts are very precise about how to prepare each material and provide information that if the methods aren't followed you can expect to have any number of bad effects. The authors were evidently well aware of the problems arising from the inappropriate processing of materials. Shortcuts were not an option. Materials had to go through specific procedures in order to bring out their medicinal nature and eliminate their toxic qualities.

After processing this way, the metals were considered to be no longer toxic to the human body, even though chemical analysis may show that they contain mercury, lead or other heavy metals. At this point, the metals are considered to be compatible with the human body and have only medicinal qualities. The toxic qualities, which were due to the defects and imperfections of the metals, were removed in the processing and now the metal was in a state useful for medicine and/or alchemy.

The advantages of the metallic medicines include that they act quickly – often as soon as ingested. They are tasteless (a big plus compared to many herbal formulations) and they require small doses, generally in the range of 5 mg to 200 mg. Toxic side effects are eliminated and the medicines have a long shelf life.

There is an increasing worldwide interest in these metallic medicines, with scientific and medical studies taking place in many countries. The importance of correct processing according to tradition plays a major part in validating their effectiveness. The government of India is making a great effort to insure consistency and repeatability in their preparation, but there are still those who would take short cuts. Such short

“Shortcuts were not an option. Materials had to go through specific procedures in order to bring out their medicinal nature and eliminate their toxic qualities.”

cuts damage the process of validation and feed the fires of controversy.

There is something strangely compelling about working with these materials and methods. The practical alchemist can easily learn to prepare his or her own metallic medicines and thus know the complete history of its creation. Simple technology involving a lot of labour, these metallic medicines are works of art and a labour of love with a 5,000 year history. ▲

ROBERT ALLEN BARTLETT grew up in the San Jose area and has had his own alchemical laboratory since the age of twelve. Eventually, he found his way to Frater Albertus Spagyricus and Paracelsus College in Salt Lake City,

Utah. There he completed the seven levels and, at the urging of Frater, completed his degree in chemistry at Boise State. Upon completion of his studies, he became the Chief Chemist at Paralab, the commercial offshoot of the Paracelsus College. He occupied this position until Albertus' death, when both the college and the lab dissolved. He has since written two books, *Real Alchemy* and *The Way of the Crucible*. He teaches classes in the Seattle area and online through Flamel College, and has recently developed a teaching relationship with a naturopathic college, Bastyr University, of Bothel. This article has been condensed from a presentation given at the 2009 International Alchemy Convention held in Los Angeles, California, and is a preview of a forthcoming book on the subject.

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A Short Stroll to Eternity: Taoism, Alchemy and Immortality

JEANNIE RADCLIFFE

The search for immortality is an important aspect of Taoist philosophy. By achieving a perfect balance, it was thought that one would be able to preserve the body and live for a much longer time than was normal. Alchemy also integrates this concept through the search for a tincture containing the regenerative essence of the universe. By ingesting such a product one would be restored to youthfulness and preserved in that state for hundreds of years. In China, Taoism and alchemy have been intertwined since the earliest records of the Han Dynasty. The relative continuity of information regarding both Taoism and alchemy enables us to get an overview of how the search for immortality evolved and developed over hundreds of years.

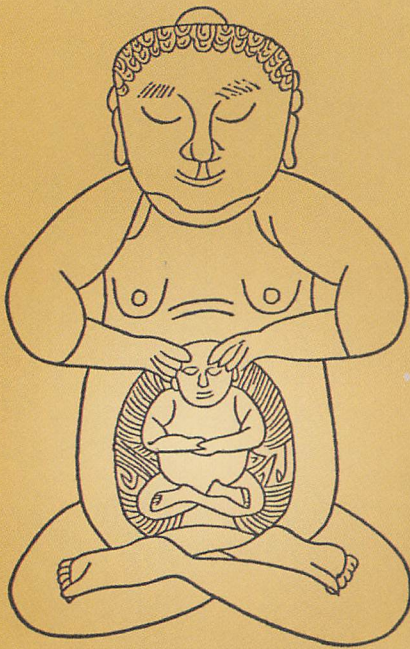
Historically, there were Eight Immortals – not necessarily always the same ones – who had taken various substances and used different methods to achieve immortality. These substances ingested included pine nuts, alcoholic beverages, jade, mica, cinnabar, and the Philosopher's Stone. Magical processes were also utilised. In fact, the method of achieving immortality was as individual as the personalities involved. The changeover from physical to immortal form seems to have always involved the death of the sage. This expiration varied as a process from the gradual to violently sudden, depending upon the substance. Despite the risks

involved, the search for immortality continued to retain its allure.

Chang Tao Ling, the first Taoist pope, was born during the reign of the emperor Kuang Wu Ti about 35 A.D. Chang shunned imperial service and lived in the mountains to the west of China, pursuing the study of alchemy, and where he is said to have received a mystic treatise from the hands of Lao Tzu which enabled him to complete the Elixir of Life. The Chinese believed certain substances like gold and jade, if ingested, could transfer some of their qualities of longevity to the human physical form. At first it was thought that by eating off plates of gold, or those gilded with arsenic and quicksilver, one could imbibe a particular energy. However, over time it became obvious to the sages that this did not have the desired effect and they noted that certain substances had the opposite effect than was intended. These observations gradually evolved into a train of thought focused upon creating substances which could bring about a transformation within the body itself. The idea of potable or drinkable gold was already in existence in China by the end of the 3rd century B.C., as was the idea of making gold and silver from other materials.

The emphasis of Taoist practice was to abide by a system of training that would change the way of thinking and reacting to the world; a system in alignment with the forces of Nature.





The immortal embryo

This was achieved via meditation and contemplation and a separation of oneself from the world of mundane existence and the associated waste of energy that shortened one's life.

Inner alchemy or *nei dan* was practiced in isolation, and practitioners used the control of bodily energy to extend their life span. Sperm retention practices, menstrual control, breathing exercises, and strict dietary regimes along with meditation were all part of the inner alchemist's repertoire. The body was seen as a furnace where different energies were purified and raised to a point of focused perfection before ascending to the realms of the Immortals. Inner alchemy was associated with the preservation of chi or energy. On an alchemical level, chi or the activating principle was seen, analogically, as a type of mercury. Texts dealing with this topic closely followed certain principles associated with the laws of Nature. *Nei dan* itself involved the generation of a mystical body which would be a vehicle to carry the soul to immortality.

As Kohn states in *God of the Dao: Lord Lao in History and Myth*, "Inner alchemy (*Nei Dan*) has been the leading form of Taoist practice since the Song, when it was formulated by the Southern School (Nanzong). Represented by the masters Liu Cao (fl.1031 A.D.) and Zhang Boduan (d. 1082 A.D.), the Southern School continued the tradition of operative alchemy, adding to it interior forms of meditation and the Tang practice of observation. Inner alchemy in Taoist practice creates an immortal embryo in a process described in terms of external alchemy and the dynamics of *Yijing*. The embryo then becomes the carrier of the adept's external life and undertakes excursions into the heavens. Like the alchemical techniques of old, the new inner alchemical practices tended to be associated with more practically orientated sages or more accessible sages such as Lu Dongbin. However, the few texts that do mention Lord Lao as their source clearly join the new alchemical practices with the tradition of purity and tranquillity."

In the case of *wei dan* or outer alchemy, various operations were performed upon substances such as gold, mercury, lead, arsenic, and jade. These operations were based upon extensive cyclic sublimations within the concept of yin-yang, four humours and the five elements. Probably more than anything else, the ideas of sublimation and transformation were at the crux of the alchemists' task. The goal was to produce artificial gold, which at one stage was considered superior to natural gold. The concept of making gold for profit seems not to be a part of the Taoist alchemical philosophy.

The Master Who Embraces Simplicity (Wang Ch'ung-yang) says of alchemy that it is a symbolic means to accomplish, within a few days, the cosmic process of returning to the True. By participating in a ritual manner in the laboratory transformations, the adept goes through a period of gestation, after which the alchemist is reborn. After successive circulations *the divine child is purified and is born into the inner life*, whilst

the sage's external life is supposed to continue indefinitely.

The effects of some of the alchemical preparations included an initial increase in energy and potency, along with hallucinations and heightened sensorial powers. Over time, due to the accumulation of the toxic substances, these effects gradually wore off and – with the alchemist even more debilitated – decreased mental capacities, paralysis and ulcers emerged as symptoms. Whoever made and ingested these elixirs were slowly but surely committing suicide. The actual preparation of the mercury is in itself quite toxic, with quicksilver giving off poi-

Wei dan or outer alchemy involved the manipulation of various substances to produce an elixir that would preserve the physical body long beyond the natural life span. One of these substances, the transmutation nine times reversed of cinnabar elixir, was popular among courtiers and was considered an important aspect of Taoist practice. The absolute toxicity of these substances can hardly have contributed to longevity. Many alchemists were reluctant to take any elixir, particularly if they had received it from someone else. The symptoms of cinnabar poisoning were well known and described, and this led to antidotes being developed which alleviated some

“The Master Who Embraces Simplicity (Wang Ch’ung–yang) says of alchemy that it is a symbolic means to accomplish, within a few days, the cosmic process of returning to the True.”

sonous fumes and being absorbed via contact.

There are examples of someone choosing to die, such as did Wang Ch’ung–yang who got seriously ill in order to discourage the superficial and worthless adept he’d acquired; he recovered long enough to pass on his words, some poems and then died aged forty years old. Here was someone who considered that whilst vegetable preparations and other practices could prolong life, only through alchemy could one gain complete immortality.

The failure of the powder could be blamed upon any number of reasons. The process being performed at an unfavourable time of day, the wrong dosage, facing the wrong direction or having performed any of the many operations wrongly, or the usage of impure ingredients – all would be considered as contributing to the failure. With the institutionalisation of Taoism during the Tang Dynasty (618–907 A.D.), anyone who worked their way to the highest initiation by completing all of the teachings and practices was taken in a carriage to the Western mountains, never to return.

of the symptoms. Popularly these antidotes were called *stones* and included preparations perhaps made by the spagyric technique which involves the *fixing of the essence* of a plant or mineral into solid form. One author, who had studied the effects of experimenting with a remedy popular with the imperial court and scholars, called *Eat Cold Powder*, gave himself ten years to live, but others who had ingested it even less time.

Laboratory alchemy was unable to be practiced by most due to the cost of materials and the difficulty associated with finding a reputable master who could steer one through the maze and lift the veils shrouding the mystery. Over time, the metaphors of inner alchemy as used by the Taoist sages borrowed heavily from the symbolic language of practical alchemy: this occurred around the 11th century. The consumption of alchemical tinctures declined in favour as the more fantastic claims for various products were discredited. It became positively dangerous to boast of having any sort of medicine and for it then not to work. Any type of commercial behaviour was abhorred by the sages. Their work

consisted in combining the inner and outer work in an effort to understand the way of the universe as it manifested in Nature and the world around them. By observing Nature through reflection upon the work in the laboratory, the alchemist was able to manipulate the substances into ever more subtle gradations. Imperial decrees about aurification ensured that those involved became even more secretive, many moving further out to the fringes of society, away from prying eyes, closer to the source of the products, and also closer to the Immortals.

Nei dan was not always practiced in conjunction with *wei dan*, yet both had connections within the Taoist spiritual practices. In Taoism, the perfection of the process is the aim and the goal. As the alchemist works, they are mediating the pure Tao. The Way to Immortality is manifesting in that moment and becomes fixed in the tincture that is then able to be ingested.

There is still much debate as to whether immortality is a literal or metaphorical concept. The concept of immortality is deeply ingrained in Chinese society. Ancestor worship reflects an innate concept of immortality since ancestors are those who have passed on, yet still live on in a similar but reversed hierarchy to the living. Gods, ancestors, demons, and ghosts all have a kind of immortality. It is the deeds that one does when alive that determines the placement of one in the hierarchy of the afterlife. By ingesting various purified substances and the raising of one's energy, perhaps the sages were not so much seeking a literal immortality but a more rarefied place in the already established hierarchy of the afterlife. ▲

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JEANNIE RADCLIFFE has been a student of the Great Work for more than thirty years. As the Administrator of the Paracelsus College for twenty years, she teaches regular classes in the vegetable, mineral and animal realms of alchemy, while continuing her own practical alchemical research. A writer, poet and psychological astrologer with a degree in anthropology, she has recently published her second book of poetry. Her passion for history is amply catered for within the study of alchemy, and Chinese alchemy with its long tradition of practical work and inner alchemy has much to offer the Western scholar.

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The Tao of Tarot: The Magician

CHRISTINA BJERGO

The alchemy-tarot-qigong interconnection

Designed under the instruction of A.E. Waite, an author of magic, divination and alchemy and member of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, the Waite tarot cards are known for their sacred universal symbolism. They are considered universal because their wisdom supercedes cultural boundaries and religious demarcations. The tarot is commonly viewed as a form of divination. When understood as a body-focused alchemical means to soul work, the tarot is also a potent practice for greater health, happiness and spiritual illumination. With greater understanding of Chinese medicine theory and Asian symbolism, we gain insight into the deepest card meanings.

The word *tarot* is derived from *rota* meaning *revolving wheel* and *tota* meaning *total*. Each card in a tarot deck represents a movement or position of the wheel. The tarot cards offer an inner exploration of the cycles of life and the seasons of the soul. The spiral journey is a method of ego purification through the rotating yin-yang wheel, reflecting the process of death leading to rebirth. Ultimately, the circular pathway of the tarot takes each of us inward to the center of ourselves, to the totality of our being, which is



the source of all healing. Within the central hub of the wheel we find our innate wholeness and transcend our sense of being separate and fragmented from everything within and around us.

The tarot images create a visual depiction of the Taoist *I Ching*, a guidebook detailing the infinite intelligence, called the Tao, which underlies Nature's fluctuations. The idea that predictability and constancy underlie life's changes is of primary significance. When understood and followed, the synchronistic flow of the Tao through tarot cards leads to individual, family, community, and global harmony and peace.

In Eastern traditions the spiral is internally cultivated within the body. In Tantric Hinduism and the Buddhism of Asia, the spiral is synonymous with the potent transformative properties of the *kundalini*, the coiled serpent energy that can be awakened for spiritual ascension. The spiral is also a symbol of unity in China since ancient times. To qigong practitioners and those aware of the mystical roots of Asian medicine, the spiral is the whirling void of the life force energy called central *qi* which unifies Heaven and Earth and everything in existence. Working to build and refine *qi* through body-minded practice is what qigong is about. Through our efforts we can lighten our bodies and mind, accessing an intuitive wisdom that prompts us towards being authentic and fulfilled.

The major *arcana* of the tarot are the original 22 picture cards. *Arcana* is typically defined as secret or hidden knowledge; the secret of Nature that traditional alchemists sought and a secret or mysterious remedy or elixir of immortality. Hidden to the untrained eye within the cards, particularly the original 22, are secrets to obtaining youthfulness, long life and abundance – the goals sought after by alchemists and spiritual seekers of past and present. The alchemical transformation process is depicted as the ouroboros: the dragon serpent biting its own tail. The revolving wheel of the ouroboros is the Wheel of Fortune of the tarot, leading us back to

our spiritual beginnings. This important Taoist symbol represents the cyclical nature of immortal life, the balance of destruction and creation forces leading to transcendental unity.

Obtaining the elixir of immortality has been a spiritual goal since the beginning of human culture. Hero myths and stories concerning the quest for the Holy Grail and the promise of spiritual enlightenment abound around the world and reflect the process of inner alchemy. Alchemy has definable roots in early shamanic cultures, then was recorded and popularised in early Egypt and China. Alchemy later spread through Hellenistic Greece, early Islam and mediæval Europe. The alchemical arts influenced Judeo-Christian spiritual development and continue to do so in contemporary times. Individuals in search of *gnosis* or self knowledge practice spiritual transformation through inner work. By removing ignorance and self-imposed barriers (known as *karma* in the East), alchemists ultimately achieve self realisation, the ultimate goal of the human soul. To know the self is, in essence, to know God. And when we know God we have accessed the golden gates of Heaven and returned to Paradise; what the Taoists referred to as the Realm of the Immortals.

Chinese Taoist alchemists primarily used inner cultivation techniques of qigong to find eternity and restore order to the world around them. Combining body movement, intention, meditation, breath work, and sound healing, qigong as a meditative practice facilitated the union of left and right brain and intellectual and intuitive faculties. The Taoists showed that through body-oriented spiritual exercise, the infinite within creation is accessible. Cleansing the filters of the self, the divine light of consciousness shines uninterrupted.

The Taoist legends of the Eight Immortals show that spiritual rebirth is possible for people of all ages, genders and social status. Historic individuals are known to have achieved immortality and entered the Realm of the Immortals upon

“Listening to dream guidance and observing Nature leads to awareness and understanding of the subtle energy system of the body.”

death. Alchemical ascension is glimpsed within the Christian *Bible* as well. Within Corinthians, the dead can be made incorruptible and mortals obtain immortality and go to heaven following Jesus' example. Empowering methods for obtaining salvation may have been forgotten or suppressed by strict communist and orthodox ideologies, yet alchemical knowledge survives today.

Taoism as a philosophy is the foundation of contemporary traditional Chinese medicine. Listening to dream guidance and observing Nature leads to awareness and understanding of the subtle energy system of the body. Anyone can dream the universal themes of the alchemical process, particularly when they cultivate healthy energy flow within. Wherever you live and whatever your struggles, alchemical motifs like those of the tarot cards appear in dreams to guide you. The body-focused process of alchemical transformation is now resurfacing to help many overcome individual and collective difficulties during this unique period in history. When we have a practice like qigong to go beyond the ego mind, we enhance our objective alchemical dreaming.

Psychologist and renowned dream worker Carl Jung believed that the alchemists had discovered the unconscious. Alchemists in general place great importance on dream cultivation as well as the development of intuition. Everything operates by divine order and has underlying meaning. With nothing happening by accident, we exist in a synchronistic dream world; the hidden world of God. Dreaming, whether by day or night, is a means of tapping into this unseen reality. Dreams are written down and analysed by alchemists for

their spiritual insight. Examining the appropriate symbolism within the cards adds a critical dimension to the spiritual significance of dreaming as one of the tarot's sacred teachings.

The Magician

The Magician card carries the Roman numeral I. One in Chinese numerology is a symbol of unity. Confucius said that we combine yin and yang to return to the Tao. It is through unity that we activate the whirling emptiness of spiraling central *qi* in qigong and reunite with the transcendental. Defined simply, yin is the feminine qualities of dark, moist and cool and is likened to the shady side of the mountain, while yang is represented by the masculine qualities of light, dry and warm and is the sunny side of the mountain. Chinese theory teaches that we need a balance of yang and yin – masculine and feminine, conscious and unconscious, outward and inward, upward and downward – for health, stability and harmonious existence. And unity, like central *qi*, was represented in ancient Chinese artwork by the image of the spiral.¹

The primary energy channel of the human body is called the central channel (*chong mai*). It is the most important energy channel of the body² and of focus in qigong cultivation techniques. The central channel is located between and connects with the governing vessel (*root of all yang*) along the spine and the conception vessel (*root of all yin*) along the anterior midline. These two energy channels combine to create another revolving wheel called the *microcosmic orbit* around the body. The central channel is a vehicle for uniting yin and yang and going beyond duality in order to activate the central *qi*'s spiraling transcendent force within humanity and our planet.

The central channel is also the energetic pathway connecting the three internal treasures (or *dan tian*) of the body. This internal trinity is found in the centres of the lower abdomen, chest and head. Harmonised and aligned

through qigong, the three *dan tian* create an *elixir field*. This clue remains from ancient times in Chinese medicine theory as well as the tarot, that the cycle of life and ordinary reality can be transcended and eternal life achieved through regular mindfulness practices like qigong. The central channel is the vertical alignment with infinite spirit, as symbolised by the crystal wand and the number 1 of The Magician card.

As Lao Tzu affirmed, the first step in spiritual practice is to return to emptiness.³ Through body-focused practices such as qigong we withdraw from an external world focus and empty the mind. With increased attention on the body, the ego's grasp loosens and receptivity to spiritual insight arises. Imagery guidance becomes clearer the more one practices. This inner awareness or dreaming, what Lao Tzu referred to as One, ultimately leads one back to the Tao or transcendental awareness.

"The spiral serpent around the body of the magician emphasises the same thing. Soul work begins with the body and can be advanced through qigong practices."

The Magician card of the tarot highlights the importance of the body in spiritual work. Here the spiral as a snake biting its tail (the ouroboros) is draped around the magician's waist. In Chinese medicine, the belt channel (*dai mai*) is an energetic pathway encircling the waist like a belt. This energy channel modulates the vertical flow of life force energy in the body and connects the physical (lower *dan tian*) with the emotional-spiritual (middle and upper *dan tian*) of our nature. It is interesting that Western gnostics, who utilised Eastern body practices for their spiritual development, often tied sacred cords around their waste to symbolise the union of

body and spirit. Paintings of Mother Mary herself have shown her removing and gifting a belt-like cord to humanity during the Assumption when her body and soul reunite with God in Heaven. As with Taoist thought, we each have the potential to transcend earthly existence and find the golden secret of all life – reunion with the transcendental. The spiral serpent around the body of the magician emphasises the same thing. Soul work begins with the body and can be advanced through qigong practices. Through the cultivation of central *qi* we can ascend the spiral staircase to Heaven and find *the Way* home.

Alchemical magic

In the Waite Magician card, the right hand is held up high and is holding what looks like a double terminated crystal, while the left hand is held close to Earth and pointing downward with the index finger. Crystals and the colour white reflect the element of metal in Chinese theory and represent the direction of the West. Metal is the time of late afternoon when the Sun sets and descends below the horizon. It is also the season of autumn when the leaves fall from the trees to Earth. The downward descent of these energies is represented by the celestial tiger in qigong theory. The black and white striped tiger represents the descent of divine knowledge into physical form, as well as the balance of yin and yang forces.

The yin quality of The Magician card is reinforced by the downward-pointed index finger. By this gesture, the magician directs the energies of the large intestine, which flows through this finger, downward. The large intestine is a metal organ whose function is to release the impure from the body. This is the benevolent predatory nature also associated with the celestial tiger. The importance of cleansing the body through death and rebirth is the alchemical process for biological, psychological and spiritual growth. This is shown in The Magician card with the use of white lilies. This flower is associated with death and funerals. However, lilies are only

found upon the ground in this tarot card. Death is only a construct of our earthly reality. Intentionally missing amongst the flowers above, the eternal aspect of the soul and our spiritual reality is also affirmed.

Autumn is also the time of harvest, when we receive from the spiraling cornucopia of Nature's bounty. The downward yin, thus, also represents the manifestation or the stepping down of Source (non-being) into physical form (being) leading to all of creation or what Lao Tzu referred to as *the ten thousand things*. Manifestation is a creative and fertile process as seen by the flowering red roses. Growing both above and below, the blooming roses demonstrate the link established by the magician between the transcendent reality above and the immanent reality below. In so doing, the omnipotence of the eternal Tao can be channeled down to earthly reality in order to transform the mundane.

The Magician is someone aware of the mystical workings of existence. We are all involved in creating our physical experience. However, creating life experiences without awareness is most common. Science is finding that we attract to ourselves those situations and people that reflect what we believe, think and feel. "Where the mind goes, the *qi* follows," is how we express this concept in qigong. A low density internal state will attract lower vibrational experiences of struggle, dis-ease and distress. Higher vibrational beliefs, thoughts and emotions attract harmony, health and bliss into our lives. It is not a matter of luck. If we want to attract constructively, we need to clear the negative subconscious programming held within the physical body and judgments from the conscious mind. Knowing this, we can choose to take greater responsibility for our lives. Working with central *qi*, we can transform our base metals (destructive tendencies) into alchemical gold (higher self). Little by little, we can clear out the accumulated toxins that bog down the energy flow of the body and wake up to our conscious involvement in creation.

Manifesting conscientiously, we avoid creating for the sake of the ego. The ego will be overly attached to a desired result and will not understand the big picture of what is best for the situation. Personal will in conflict with divine will leads to dissatisfaction and creates negative *karma*. Working in harmony with the Tao, on the other hand, is the making of miracles. Being empty of attachments and fears, we remain neutral like the direction and facial expression of the magician in this card. Channeling the transcendental through our hearts, we focus this energy towards the situation at hand. Aligning our God-self, we know that whatever the outcome, it is of the highest wisdom and benefit. Miracles are about letting go and letting pure consciousness flow. The wisdom of The Magician card is knowing that magic ultimately comes from within. **Δ**

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Asian wellness practitioner, international teacher and author, **CHRISTINA BJERGO** founded Qigong Dreaming and is a Qigong Grand Master of Sacred Serpent Spiral Qigong. Her personal dream odyssey led her to qigong and the tarot as potent alchemical tools for transcending obstacles and initiating personal and planetary rebirth. Dreams were the inspiration for her book, *The Tao of Tarot: "The Way" to Health, Happiness and Spiritual Illumination through Qigong Dreaming*. She concludes that the tarot, dream work and qigong are all interconnected soul practices that prompt us along the spiral stairway to Heaven. For upcoming classes and more information, or to see an image of the Waite-Rider tarot card, The Magician, visit www.taooftarot.com



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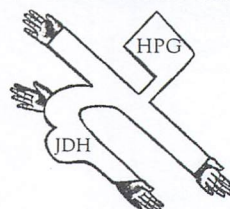
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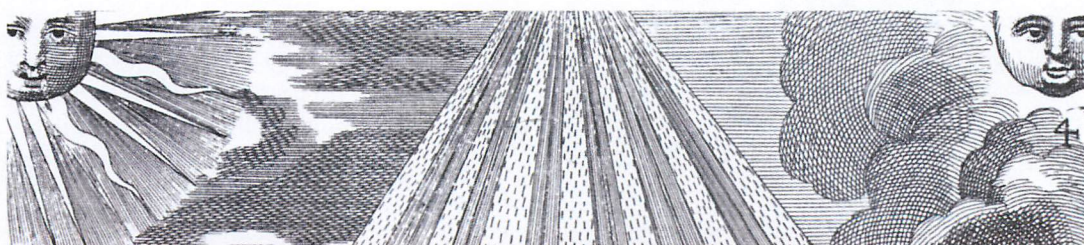


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The Alchemy and the Ecstasy

MAJA D'AOUST

The alchemy of India, so often overlooked by Westerners, provides a vital decryption of the global alchemical cipher. It can be said that each culture, era and individual which alchemy has passed through expresses a different aspect of its teachings and potentiality, so to omit any one amalgamation of it would be a disservice. To see all of the intricate coils of alchemy's serpentine union with humanity, we must include the practices of the East. India provides a missing link, alluded to but never explicitly explained in the European alchemical texts, which provides the key to unlocking the true goal of the *Magnum Opus*. The omitted ingredient in the alchemical formulae, so obscure and obtuse, becomes crystallised upon inspection of the yogic material; it is the preparation of the flesh and blood of the living alchemist performing the procedure.

"... one of the constituents of the alchemical formula exists only within the nature of man himself, without which his chemicals will not combine, and though he spend his life and fortune in chemical experimentation, he will not produce the desired end. The paramount reason why the material scientist is incapable of duplicating achievements of the mediæval alchemists – although he follow every step carefully and

Left: Copyright © Sera Timms www.deerandunicorn.com

accurately – is that the subtle element which comes out of the nature of the illuminated and regenerated alchemical philosopher is missing in his experimentation.”¹

Yoga is alchemy. Alchemy is yoga. Bold statements to those who have only peered through the alchemical lens of the European alchemists, but upon investigation of the Indian traditions, we see that the two are one and the same; an endeavor to rejoin what was separated. Yoga and alchemy are, at their very core, the unification of the opposites – the *mysterium conjunctio* – the reunification of the masculine and feminine into a perfect, unbreakable circle. They are the never-ending ouroboros who shows us that the goal and the source are one and the same. There is nothing more tantric than the pursuit of alchemy, and I wish that there existed a singular word that could mean *yoga-alchemy-tantra* joined into one cylindrical syllable to express this.

It is very difficult to study and discuss things such as yoga and alchemy, for inherently we must create some sort of definition and articulation of what exactly is included in these activities. But when we are discussing activities that, according to origin legends, were taught to mankind over æons of time through different cultures and languages by serpents from the sky, these definitions are anything but definite.

To find out what something is, it is helpful to look at where it comes from. Alchemy is no exception, but because its origins are so outlandish, this could possibly be a more difficult task than the process of turning lead into gold itself. The word alchemy means *from Egypt*, and usually this is its accepted location of inception. It is important to remember, however, that this name was given to a set of practices by the Arabs who discovered it when they invaded Egypt. This does not really provide proof that alchemy comes from Egypt, simply that it was there when the Arabs came in and discovered it. For the Arabs who confiscated the materials from Egypt, that was its origin, this is true.

But let us not close our minds into isolating the practices of alchemy to a singular origin and a singular country on account of a name given to a process by invading zealots. In fact there is no small amount of information recounting that alchemy may have originated in China.² Instead we may break open our heads and investigate the magical nature of the practices themselves, and see them pervading many cultures across the globe, in order to start to uncover the message that all this information is trying to communicate to us.

It is possible to time travel and try to judge the origins of alchemy by the earliest written records of the alchemical process. Although, personally, I would not say that this is accurate either. For within the earliest written records of alchemy, it is stated that its story begins from serpents, fallen angels, messengers, rishis, star beings, and otherworldly entities that communicate the information to mankind through fire and intercourse.³ Alchemy comes to Egypt through Poimandres, the great serpent who appears to Hermes in a pillar of fire. It comes to India from the rishi Angiras who fell from the sky. Nagarjuna learns alchemy in Kashmir from the serpents, or *nagas*, who whisper it in his ear. Tonpa Shenrab receives it in the form of the fifth Veda which falls from the skies. Mircea Eliade in his research points out that alchemy is related to shamanism and extends into pre-history.⁴ In my own mind it seems that alchemy really is a set of techniques which have been used by shamans across the globe which became isolated, specialised, refined, and specified by different cultures and individuals until they came through Europe and turned into the quest for gold through chemistry as it is known today.

How then can we define alchemy in terms of a delineation of practices and techniques? Alchemy can best be described as a set of techniques to be actively performed, the main goal of which is to achieve a unification of the opposites.⁵ This unification ultimately joins



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the practitioner with the primordial force from which they came.

“The secret content of the Hermetic vessel is the original chaos from which the world was created”⁶

It is through this definition, alchemy’s ultimate goal of unification, and the realisation that the transformative substance is God itself, that we can start to tie it into the fabric of India and yoga.

The word yoga means literally *to join together*, as in the yoking of a cart to an ox, and means a *conjunction*. If we add the most popular type of yoga in the West, *hatha*, we see in the words

themselves their alchemical nature. The word *hatha* means *Sun-Moon*, so that the words *hatha yoga* mean the *joining together of the Sun and Moon*, which is the essence of the *mysterium conjunctio* – the alchemical wedding – and the end aim of alchemy.

“The word *Hatha* also has a deeper esoteric significance. Thus its two component syllables, *ha* and *tha* are frequently explained as standing for the microcosmic sun and moon while *yoga* is the union between these two psychoenergetic principles.”⁷

Hatha yoga, as it is known and in this alchemical context, originates from a special group of yogis known for their alchemical abilities – the *nath siddhas*.⁸ A *siddha* is a name used to describe someone who has mastered a *siddhi*, literally translated as an achievement, and essentially meaning a magical superpower.⁹ The *siddhas* of India were eminently accomplished in alchemy and had the ability to perform magical feats such as the transmutation of elements by way of the *siddhis* that were obtained using tantric yoga techniques.¹⁰

The *siddhis* which the *siddha* alchemist may achieve have been described thusly:

1. *Anima* – the ability to become as minute as an atom;
2. *Mahima* – the ability to expand infinitely;
3. *Lahima* – levitation or the ability to float through the air;
4. *Garima* – the ability to reach everywhere, to transmigrate into other bodies;
5. *Prakamya* – the ability to overcome natural obstacles or the freedom of will, to be in all things, omnipervasive;
6. *Isitva* – the ability to dominate over the entire creation, to be everywhere and omnipresent;
7. *Pratti or Kamavasayiva* – the ability of attaining everything desired or to attain a stage of desirelessness.¹¹

It is very interesting to juxtapose this list next to a European list of the goal of the alchemists:

“The alchemical process was consumed and transubstantiated in the flesh. The yogi was, in essence, a walking *transmutator* who had performed the Eucharist within.”

1. The preparation of a compound named *elixir*, *magisterium* medicine, or Philosopher's Stone, which possessed the property of transmuting the base metals into gold and silver, and of performing many other marvelous operations;
2. The creation of *homunculi*, or living beings, of which many wonderful but incredible tales are told;
3. The preparation of the *alkahest* or universal solvent, which dissolved every substance which was immersed in it;
4. *Palingenesis*, or the restoration of a plant from its ashes (had they succeeded in this, they would have hoped to be able to raise the dead);
5. The preparation of *spiritus mundi*, a mystical substance possessing many powers, the principal of which was its capacity to dissolve gold;
6. The extraction of the *quintessence* or active principle from all substances;
7. The preparation of *aurum potabile*, liquid gold, a sovereign remedy, because gold being itself perfect could produce perfection in the human frame.¹²

There are many who believe that the goal of the performance of alchemy is to produce the Philosopher's Stone, which can then be utilised to transmute substances and invoke immortality to its user. This is probably one of the biggest tragedies in the alchemical tradition throughout European countries. In yoga, it is not the acquisition of a magical ability or even immortality that is the goal, but rather the moment of conjunction or union with the source of all matter.¹³ It is the unleashing of the essence of the *prima*

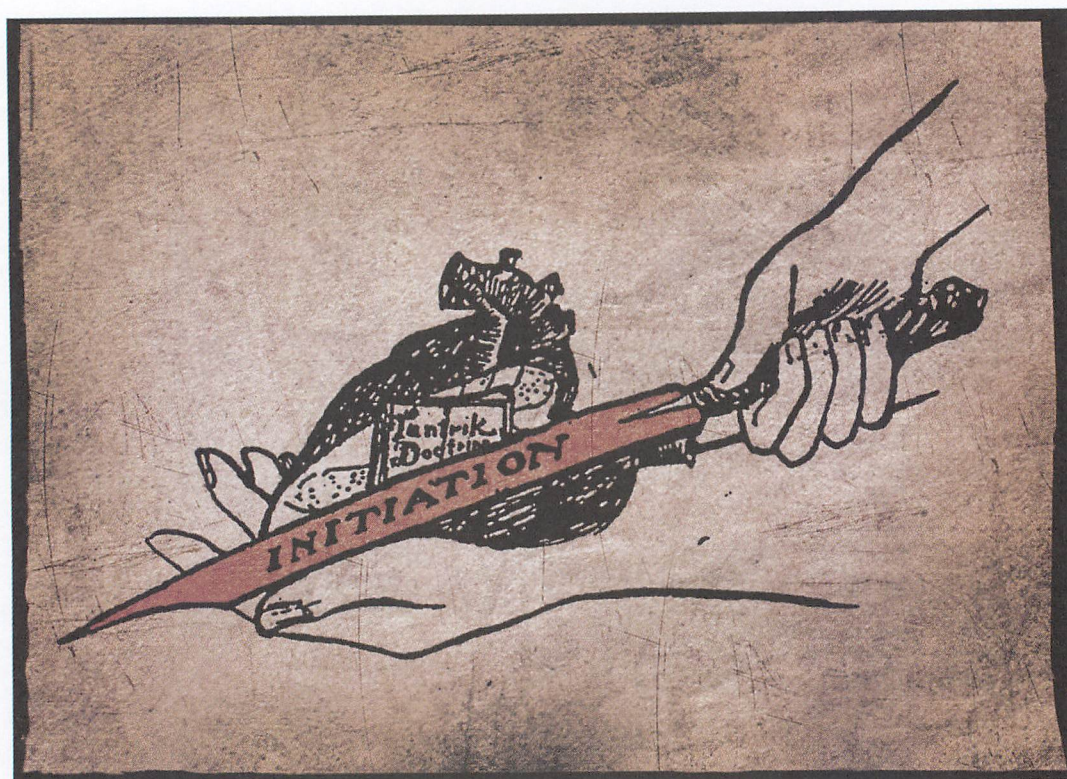
materia into your heart in order to allow spirit and flesh to exist simultaneously and intertwined. Magical powers may result from this, but are in no way the goal. This concept is stated most brilliantly by the Indian philosopher and poet Rabindranath Tagore in his relation of the story of the Philosopher's Stone.¹⁴

If we are to be narrow-minded and define alchemy, as many dictionaries would, only as the process of the transmutation of lead into gold, it deserves no small amount of attention that yogis throughout the history of India have been described as being able to accomplish just that with no more effort than the wave of a hand.¹⁵ The difference between the yogi who performs this task and the European alchemist is that the yogi has no laboratory or equipment – instead, he executes it within his own body. The Mercury and Sulphur were ingested, eaten – not mixed in external vessels. The alchemical process was consumed and transubstantiated in the flesh. The yogi was, in essence, a walking *transmutator* who had performed the Eucharist within.

This transmutational ability is illustrated in many of the tales of the tantrikas who could turn their own bodily fluids into gold. This is brilliantly visually portrayed in Alejandro Jodorowsky's film *The Holy Mountain* in the scene where the alchemist makes gold from excrement.

Often utilising his own urine or faeces, the tantric *siddha* understood that even the seemingly filthiest substances on Earth were as pure as gold.

“Like the sun which dries up everything, or like fire, which consumes everything, so the yogin enjoys everything but is not stained by sin. Like the wind, which touches everything,



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or like space, which is everywhere, or like those immersing themselves completely in rivers, the yogin is always pure.”¹⁶

The *Siva Samhita* and the *Yogataiva Upanishad* state that a yogin can make gold from any metal by rubbing it with his own excrement and urine. This might seem grotesque, but even in European alchemical texts, the Philosopher’s Stone is often described using words that are fairly faecal,¹⁷ and instructions for its preparation often include scatological ingredients.¹⁸ Tantric ritual practices involving faeces, urine and blood are found throughout the tomes of the Western alchemists. One need only examine the instructions laid out by Paracelsus for the formation of an homunculus to see how very tantric this procedure is.

For the tantric *siddha*, the body became the Stone. Flesh was made impermeable and

immortal by performing alchemy. The yogi was transformed on a molecular level into the *diamond body*. The concept of the *diamond body* became most elaborated in the tantra of Tibet, known as Vajrayana. Vajrayana translates literally into *diamond vehicle* or *diamond body*. The proper preservation of the body was the mechanism of the alchemy of the East, and through these practices the ultimate goal was achieved.

The goal of these practices was to make the body incorruptible¹⁹ and as impenetrable as an Hermetic vessel. To turn the flesh into something which nothing could affect – not time, not space, not age, not even death itself.

“At length the body is compelled to resign itself to, and obey, the union of the two that are united (soul and spirit). That is the wondrous transformation of the philosophers, of body into spirit, and of the latter into body ... Make the

“Alchemy becomes tantric when we start to realise that the purpose of this unification of the opposites is to unleash God through material existence by unifying male and female principles.”

unyielding body tractable, so that by the excellence of the spirit coming together with the soul it becomes a most stable body ready to endure all trials. For gold is tried in the fire.”²⁰

Alchemy becomes tantric when we start to realise that the purpose of this unification of the opposites is to unleash God through material existence by unifying male and female principles. More importantly, that the existence it is referring to is us, as in our bodies. Thus also are the aims of tantra, to unleash the metaphysical through the physical and unite them in an unending circle.

But then comes the problem of what we mean by tantric, for what exactly does tantrism entail? Here we meet with the same and connected problem of defining alchemy and yoga, and we are dealing with a different translation of the one universal mystery of spirit's relationship to matter. The word tantra may be translated to mean *weave together continuously*. This connotes the idea of a beginning-less, endless loom constantly weaving together, much like the process which DNA undergoes in our bodies.

Many would argue that alchemy, yoga and even shamanism have their origins in tantrism, but here is a discourse that covers thousands of works of scholars from around the world. The one thing that perhaps scholars cannot deny is the severe ancientness of tantric practices. To attempt to explain the concept of tantra cannot be performed within the confines of this article, so I must state it simply and generally and hope to be forgiven. Tantrism is a form of worship that is panentheistic like many types of paganism,²¹ and which has many forms, sects, practices,

and texts extending over thousands of years and countries. I like to define tantra as an exploration for God in the physical world through sacrificial ecstatic ritual, whether this be done by immersion (left hand path) or abstention (right hand path).

Tantra is akin to the views of the pagans that God permeates the world, and that the physical contains God as much as the Heavens. This panentheistic view was actually removed from yoga at the advent of the *Yoga Sutras* of Patanjali because Patanjali expressly differentiates the world and the soul (or higher self) as two separate entities, much like Descartes did in the West. True older forms of yoga, however, are panentheistic, as well as neo-yoga philosophers such as Sri Aurobindo and other post-classical yoga scholars. This panentheistic dogma of tantra reads exactly like the Emerald Tablet of Hermes, and specifically relates to the alchemical adage: *as above, so below*. For if God was in Heaven, he also was on Earth;

“If the divine is everywhere, as the Tantric adepts affirm, it must also be present in and as the body”²²

The rites and rituals of tantra, like alchemy and yoga, are based upon a unification of the opposites, Shiva and Shakti, and specifically the reintegration of the feminine principle into the world.

“It is very difficult to define or even generalise about Tantrism. What can usefully be said is that the pivot of most Tantric schools is the idea of Shakti, the feminine principle of cosmic existence, the goddess ... the rediscovery of the feminine principle was accompanied by a

“Sex is basically an alchemical performance of unification of the two opposites, male and female, and the culmination of the *mysterium conjunctio* when performed with conscious intention.”

reappraisal of the human body and bodily existence in general which widely have a negative significance in the non-Tantric traditions.”²³

True tantra, in essence, is the complete sacrifice of the self to God through unification of the opposites. This involves every part of the body being abandoned and offered to be filled with God. The majority of tantric techniques, as in the actual rites and rituals performed, are ecstatic and involve the conscious entrance into rapture. This is something that many people can never grasp when they see the practices of the tantrikas delineated which seem indulgent, sexually perverse or grotesque; that each one of these horrifying actions is done to unify the adept with God by reconciling light and darkness within himself, through sacrifice. This concept is perhaps best illustrated through the image of the Chhinnamasta goddess who decapitates herself that others may feed from her blood.²⁴ It may seem counterintuitive, but in order to overcome a demon in tantra, you must willingly offer yourself to it wholly and completely. This is a literal offering made of what is your most corporeal possession: your body. We can see examples of this throughout shamanism in all its forms,²⁵ and one of my own personal favorite examples is that of a dakini²⁶ ritual performed by Tibetan tantric shamans.

“Visualise thyself as the wrathful Dakini, that thou strippest the hide from thy body, and spreadest it out so that it covereth the third-void universe, and upon it heapest all thy bones and flesh. Then, when the malignant spirits are in the midst of enjoying the feast, imagine that the wrathful Dakini taketh the hide and rolleth it

up ... and dasheth it down forcibly, reducing it and all its contents to a mass of bony and fleshy pulp, upon which many mentally-produced wild beasts feed.”²⁷

It is in the spirit of this sacrifice that the tantric sexual ecstatic techniques are utilised. The use of sex is the most notorious of tantric practices and many people have the misconception that the tantrika engages in sex for lascivious purposes. Far from being indulgent abandonment, as may be perceived by the onlooker, tantric sexuality is a purely concentrated enactment of unification. Sex is basically an alchemical performance of unification of the two opposites, male and female, and the culmination of the *mysterium conjunctio* when performed with conscious intention.

“The parallels between Tantra, Ayurveda and Alchemy all have their origin in a philosophy that conceptualises the universe in sexual or erotic terms, as the creation of Shiva and Shakti. In mediæval Indic Alchemy, the sexual fluid of the Goddess was equated with mica, her menstrual blood with sulphur. Together with Shiva’s semen, in the form of Mercury, it was supposed to produce Gold.”²⁸

Sex is really a form of the *prima materia* – the primordial origin – since it is through sex that we are created. It is through sex we may also be reunited with our source.

This sexual unification is shown throughout Western alchemy but is always considered metaphorical and not literal. The hermaphrodite – male and female combined into one figure – is one of the most traditional symbols of the alchemical process. In the West, the hermaphrodite was



only something that occurred with the unification of metals, not our own bodies.²⁹ But the history of this unified androgyn must never be forgotten as a representation of our own frames joined in unison in the act of creation. The hermaphrodite is seen everywhere in yogic and Vedic traditions. A form of Shiva is even depicted as the hermaphrodite, known as the Ardhanari. In tantra, the hermaphrodite is considered the ultimate accomplishment of the task of yoga, and is literally an expression of enlightenment.

"The neuter (hermaphrodite) state of monistic existence, which is the result of the union of Siva and Shakti, is revealed of itself without any separate worship thereof. The attributeless aspect which is the fruit of all sadhana, and in which, at the conclusion of all sadhana, the worshipper sinks and loses himself cannot be attained while sadhana continues. It is attained by the great Siddhi known as nirvana."³⁰

Tantric alchemy was so disgusting to the European alchemist perhaps because of the disassociation with the body and the largely Christian consideration of the physical world as sinful. Christian alchemists could not endure the thought that their bodies might lead them to God, particularly through the dreadful act of fornication. Indian yoga and tantric alchemy went underground due to the simple fact that our bodies were filthy.

"According to most spiritual traditions the desire for worldly pleasures is incompatible with the spiritual quest. You can have the treasures of this world, they say, or the treasure of the spiritual world but not both ... The Tantric approach to life avoids this painful dilemma by taking the whole person into account – our human as well as our spiritual nature. The literal meaning of Tantra is 'to weave, to expand, to spread' and according to the Tantric adepts, we can achieve

“The alchemist is the *elixir vitæ* who heals by homeopathic contagion. But this is not his aim – it is simply a byproduct of his enlightened state of being, and is accomplished through the *siddhis* which he has attained through ecstatic tantric techniques.”

true and everlasting fulfillment only when all the threads of the fabric of life are woven according to the pattern designated by nature.”³¹

With this intensely intimate connection of alchemy to the body, we begin to unravel the mystery of alchemy’s relationship to healing practices throughout India, China and Europe. The most famous alchemists, after all, were healers of disease – from the shamans, to the *siddhas* of Tamil, to the Taoist alchemists who developed Chinese medicine, to Paracelsus who helped form modern medicine as we know it today. Because the Eastern alchemists truly incorporated the transmutation of the body in their practice it is no surprise that they were able to cure disease. If the goal of the alchemical body is incorruptibility, it cannot be permeated by disease.

“The Siddhas know how to preserve the body through light rays, sound waves and medicine. The technique of the preservation of the body is called *kaya-sadhana*. It is an attempt to attain a perfected body. In short, one who has obtained the power of dematerialising and spiritualising the body and knows how to transmute the corruptible physical into the incorruptible super-physical basis of life is a Siddha. A Siddha attains and possesses an eternal spiritual body called *divya-deha* and is able to finally break out of the karmic cycle and attain deliverance from Space-time.”³²

The ability to heal is a result of the accomplishment of the alchemical body, just as transmutation is. Therefore, the other most sought

after goal of alchemy in Europe – the *elixir vitae*³³ – is, for the Easterners, like the Philosopher’s Stone, simply a byproduct of undergoing the physical alchemical process in their quest for unification with God.

It is clearly obvious in much of the written texts of the European alchemists that they knew that their own bodies were the missing key to the alchemical operation, but I believe it was too unsavoury for the majority of individuals in Christian cultures to truly understand, as evidenced in the enigmatic language used to attempt to convey this truth in the manuscripts. We see hints and allusions to this fact throughout the Western texts, but *never* are the actual techniques revealed as to how to accomplish this feat as they are so simply explained in the Indian alchemical material.³⁴ This physical realisation was kept so hidden, out of a general fear of its implications, and caused alchemy in the West to degenerate to a purely chemical action, removed not only from the alchemist but from the Creator, and confined within a laboratory isolated from Nature herself.

I believe that if the alchemists of Europe had free access to the myriad ecstatic techniques of yoga utilised in India, we may have seen the tradition grow in humanity to alter our consciousness as a species. The free discourse and development of alchemy in mankind could be what unleashes forever the consciousness of our true potentiality. But instead it became stymied, defiled and perverted due to a taboo assigned to it. The few European alchemists who were able

to include themselves – using meditative techniques and usually abstention, or experiences of rapture resulting as a consequence from their activities – were able to accomplish the task which the Indians did so openly and unfettered. What if other European alchemists had been able to consciously, and specifically, accomplish this without reservation?

This is what Indian alchemy has to offer: an explicit, ungarbled extremely specific modality to develop that missing ingredient to complete the alchemical operation in the West – the alchemist's body itself.

“For in the individual was hidden that substance of celestial nature known to very few, the incorrupt medicament.”³⁵

The practices within yoga and tantra make the alchemist's flesh the Philosopher's Stone (the diamond) and, as a result, he transmutes all that he touches.

“The *philosopher's stone* is really the *philosophical stone*, for philosophy is truly likened to a magic jewel whose touch transmutes base substances into priceless gems like itself. Wisdom is the alchemist's *powder of projection* which transforms many thousand times its own weight of gross ignorance into the precious substance of enlightenment.”³⁶

The alchemist is the *elixir vitæ* who heals by homeopathic contagion. But this is not his aim – it is simply a byproduct of his enlightened state of being, and is accomplished through the *siddhis* which he has attained through ecstatic tantric techniques.

In the East, the alchemistries of India and China are focused not only upon performing alchemy, but rather *becoming* alchemy, as a way to unify with God. Perhaps we, the alchemists of today, may remedy the mistakes of separation of the past and *coagula* all the aspects of alchemy in different cultures, weaving them tantrically together in a loom that will result in a unified alchemical operation to invade the minds, bodies and souls of us all. ▲

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10 For some great biographical stories of the alchemical *siddhas*, I like: Abhayadatta (translated by Robinson, J.B.). *Buddha's Lions: the Lives of the Eighty Four Siddhas*. Dharma Publishing. 1979.

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12 Brown, J.C. *History of Chemistry*. In Hall, M.P. *The Secret Teachings of All Ages: An Encyclopedic Outline of Masonic, Hermetic, Qabbalistic and Rosicrucian Symbolical Philosophy* (Reader's Edition). Tarcher: New York, 2003:502.

13 Although the history of the alchemical tradition in India is certainly littered with those seeking only the ability to create gold, as in Europe (even the purest of the goldmakers may fall victim to its glitter).

14 In this tale, Tagore tells of a student who seeks out a guru and finds him on a river bank. He asks the

teacher if he has discovered the Philosopher's Stone. The guru replies that he did indeed and that he threw it over into the mud. Upon hearing this, the student begins digging frantically through the mud only to pause and realise that if the guru had no interest in the Philosopher's Stone and threw it away, there must be something far more valuable which he learned in the process of obtaining it.

15 For example, Nagarjuna, Nagabodhi, Boganathar, and all the nath *siddhas*.

16 Kula-Arnava Tantra (9.76-77).

17 See Jung, C.G. *Psychology and Alchemy*. The Collected Works, Volume 12. Routledge: London, 1980.

18 See Waite, A.E. (editor). *The Hermetic and Alchemical Writings of Aureolus Philippus Theophrastus Bombast, of Hohenheim, called Paracelsus the Great*. (In Two Volumes). Shambhala Publications: Boulder, Colorado, 1976.

19 I like to note that the word *corrupt* comes from the French *coeur*, meaning heart, and *rupture*, so that its literal meaning is *heartbroken*, or *ruptured heart*. The heart of the alchemist is then transformed into an unbreakable diamond.

20 Dorn, G. In Jung, C.G. *Mysterium Coniunctionis*. Bollingen / Pantheon Books: New York, 1963:481.

21 I like to compare tantrism to paganism because its decline is very similar to the pagans of Egypt. Hinduism took over areas where tantra was practiced, and tantric practices were absorbed into other religions like Hinduism and Buddhism in much the same way that pagan rituals were absorbed into Christianity, first in Egypt and then throughout Europe and the northern regions of Scandinavia.

22 Feuerstein, G. *Tantra: The Path of Ecstasy*. Shambhala Publications: Boston, 1998:224.

23 Feuerstein, G. *The Shambhala Encyclopedia of Yoga*. Shambhala Publications: Boston, 1997:304.

24 Many of the tantric *siddhas* decapitated themselves to end their lives in sacrifice – Nagarjuna himself being the most famous example.

25 As expounded in Eliade, M. *Shamanism, Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy*. Princeton University Press: New Jersey, 2004.

26 Dakini is my own given middle name.

27 Evans-Wentz, W.Y. *Tibetan Yoga and Secret Doctrines*. Oxford University Press: Oxford, 1967:311-312 and 330-331.

28 Feuerstein, G. *Tantra: The Path of Ecstasy*. Shambhala Publications: Boston, 1998:233.

29 Even though we are all hermaphrodites in embryonic form until one of the gonads drops and develops.

30 Avalon, A. *Principles of Tantra*. Ganesh & Co. 1952:384.

31 Tigunait, P.R. *Tantra Unveiled: Seducing the Forces of Matter and Spirit*. Himalayan Institute Press. 2009.

32 Ganapathy, T.N. *The Yoga of Siddha Boganthar*, Volume 1. Babaji's Kriya Yoga Publications, Inc. 2003:5.

33 The elixir of life produced by alchemists in Europe, India and China.

34 For some specifics on the techniques used, see the work of White, D.G. *The Alchemical Body: Siddha Traditions in Medieval India*. University of Chicago Press: Chicago, 1996 and White, D.G. *The Kiss of the Yogini*. University of Chicago Press: Chicago, 2003.

35 Dorn, G. In Jung, C.G. *Mysterium Coniunctionis*. Bollingen / Pantheon Books: New York, 1963:475.

36 Hall, M.P. *The Secret Teachings of All Ages: An Encyclopedic Outline of Masonic, Hermetic, Qabbalistic and Rosicrucian Symbolical Philosophy* (Reader's Edition). Tarcher: New York, 2003:305.

MAJA D'AOUST'S interest in alchemy and the esoteric sciences spans her entire lifetime. After completing her bachelor's degree in biochemistry, she studied oriental medicine and acupuncture and later earned her master's degree in transformational psychology, with a focus upon shamanism, the *I Ching* and ancestors in her thesis work. Maja writes articles on alchemy and magic and is the co-author of the book *The Secret Source* and co-hosts the radio show 'Expanding Mind' with Erik Davis. She lectures occasionally on mysterious topics at the Philosophical Research Society and the Besant Lodge in Los Angeles, California, where she resides. More at www.godismyboyfriend.com

The Cult of Burmese Alchemy

DR. MAUNG HTIN AUNG

The growth of alchemy

India seems to have been the first centre of alchemic experiments. From India, alchemy spread westwards to the Arabs, the Egyptians and the Greeks, later to the mediæval Europeans, eastwards to Burma and farther east to China. By the 5th century A.D. alchemy was being practised in China and in Burma. The great period of alchemy in the world as a whole was roughly between the 5th century A.D. and the 16th century, when its popularity waned with the dawn of modern science. In Burma the great period of alchemy was roughly between the 5th century A.D. and the 11th century, and it became almost a religious cult by itself. But in the 11th century its popularity waned with the introduction of Buddhism into the country, for Buddhism frowned upon alchemy. Thus, after the 11th century alchemy started to decay, and although the cult has never completely died out (even at the present day some indulge in alchemic experiments), it has long ceased to be in any way a rival to Buddhism.

The alchemist's goal

Alchemy in Burma is known as *aggiya*, meaning *the work with fire*. Work with fire is indeed the essence of alchemy, for the alchemist endeavours to transmute metals by means of fire. This endeavour to transmute base metals into precious metals is not peculiar to the Burmese alchemist

and was the common heritage of alchemists all over the world. But Burmese alchemy has as its background a deeper philosophy – a philosophy so deep and developed at one time that it was almost a religion. The endeavour *to turn lead into silver and brass into gold* is to the Burmese alchemist merely a first step towards a great goal, namely to discover by further experiment the *stone of live metal*, or the *stone of live mercury*, which is the Burmese equivalent of the Philosopher's Stone in European alchemy. Again, the *stone of live metal* itself is not the final goal. The final goal is to attain, after more experiment, a superhuman body and an eternal youth.

After considerable effort the first stage is reached by the Burmese alchemist, when he is able to transmute base metals into precious metals. Using the results of the first stage of his experiments he continues with metals and metal compounds until he has evolved the *stone of live metal*. The possessor of this stone can fly in the air, or dive not only under water, but underground. He cannot be wounded as long as he has this stone on his body, that is, in his mouth, under his hair-knot, in his hands, or under his armpits. He will be free from fatigue and disease. However, the body of the possessor of the stone is still just a human body, and the superhuman powers described above do not really belong to him but only to the stone, which by mere touch can turn *lead into silver and brass into gold*. To

“The majority of the Burmese Buddhists frown upon alchemic experiments as a wanton waste of time, and look upon the alchemist as a seeker after gold and after sensual pleasures.”

obtain these powers, the possessor of the stone does not have to be the actual discoverer of the stone. Thus, when an alchemist has discovered the *stone of live metal*, he exposes himself to the danger of being robbed of it by evil spirits or jealous magicians. Burmese folklore is full of stories about this stone. The Chronicles mention the case of an Indian prince who came flying every day to the kingdom of Pagan from his kingdom in Bengal to pay court to a Burmese princess; he was not an alchemist, but he had somehow obtained possession of a *stone of live metal*, and with this stone in his mouth he was able to fly in the air.

The alchemist, however, does not rest on his laurels after obtaining the stone. He continues his experiments, using the stone. The aim of these experiments is to discover certain metal compounds which will make his body superhuman. The third stage is reached when the required metal compounds are evolved. In order to make his body superhuman the alchemist cannot just swallow these metal compounds as one swallows medicine. They must be absorbed in his body. For this, he must first swallow the compounds, when his body will become as if dead. Then he must remain buried in the Earth for a full seven days. This *temporary death* of his body will become permanent if he is exposed to the air during the seven day period. Moreover, during this period he will be entirely helpless and at the mercy of his enemies, namely evil spirits and magicians. Evil spirits will be on the lookout for him out of sheer jealousy and malice, but the magicians wish to eat his body, not only because it is very tasty and smells like the choicest perfume, but also because by eating it, they will come to possess superhuman strength. The Chronicles

mention two heroes of the kingdom of Thaton who acquired prodigious strength after they ate the body of an alchemist, which they were cooking for their master, a monk-magician.

Therefore, when the alchemist has discovered the right metal compounds, the first task before him is to search for a faithful pupil who will bury him in the forest, away from human beings, who will scare away evil spirits and magicians, and who will watch over the spot under which the alchemist lies buried. When the faithful pupil has been found the alchemist makes him dig a hole in the ground and, on entering it, the alchemist will swallow the metal compounds. Then the hole is filled up, and seven days later the alchemist of his own accord and in great joy jumps out of it, for he has become a *zawgyi*, a fully-developed alchemist. All the supernatural qualities of the *stone of live metal* are now possessed by him in his supernatural body. As he no longer needs the stone he gives it to his pupil as a reward for services rendered, and as a farewell gift. He will then enter the forest and come back to the abode of human beings very seldom, if at all. As the alchemist's body has become superhuman he can wander at will, flying in the air or travelling underground; physical fatigue is no longer known to him and his body needs no further nourishment. His body will remain youthful until he dies, and death will come to him only after thousands of years. In fact, before Buddhism, with its doctrine of the impermanence of all compounded things, influenced the Burmese mind, it was believed that the *fully-developed alchemist* would live forever with his eternally youthful body. But even though Buddhism has influenced Burmese alchemic beliefs and the followers of the alchemic cult admit that

death will come to all, including the *successful* alchemist, they still maintain that when death comes to him, it will come without the decay and disease of his body.

The alchemist's philosophy

The above is a summary of the Burmese beliefs connected with alchemy. But what is the basic philosophy behind all these beliefs in the cult of alchemy? Burmese alchemy tries to solve the tragic problem of human life, why youth has to pass and man has to die. All men feel at one time or another the dark mood of despair when they say with Omar Khayyam,

Alas, that Spring should vanish with
the Rose,

That Youth's sweet-scented Manuscript
should close!

Burmese alchemy aims at achieving an eternally youthful body, and thus to create a beauty that never fades, and a youth that never dies.

But is the *successful* alchemist happy after achieving his heart's desire? On the whole he is happy, but he also has his own troubles. His is an intensely lonely life. He does not have to eat, but occasionally he eats fruit, as he cannot eat meat because of its smell. Therefore, it follows that he cannot stay with human beings for more than a few minutes, as they are eaters of meat and smell too much for him. However, he is not a hermit or an ascetic, and in his youthful strength and vigour he does not have to mortify his flesh. Instead, he gives full play to his senses. He has endeavoured to obtain an eternally youthful body, so as to enjoy forever the pleasures of the flesh. He wants love, but as a human woman, being a meat-eater, smells too much, he cannot approach her and has to console himself with substitutes. On the slopes of the Himalayas there are trees whose fruits have exactly the size and shape of the average human maiden, and by his alchemic power the alchemist puts some sort of *life* into them, so that the fruits become animated. He makes love to them

with enthusiasm and zest, but unfortunately, as they are but fruit, they soon get crushed and become of no use to him. Moreover, this kind of fruit tree is not very common even on the slopes of the Himalayas, and so the alchemists are often fighting and quarrelling with each other as there are not enough fruit-maidens to go round.

But perhaps this belief regarding the fruit-maidens originated in the anti-alchemist propaganda which prevailed after the coming of Buddhism. The majority of the Burmese Buddhists frown upon alchemic experiments as a wanton waste of time, and look upon the alchemist as a seeker after gold and after sensual pleasures. In reply, those who still believe in alchemy will maintain that the alchemist wants to live for thousands of years, not because he wants the pleasures of youth, but because he wants to be alive when the next Buddha appears on this Earth, so that he may worship him and attain the eternal bliss of *Nibbana*. To meet this defence, anti-alchemists will say that when the next Buddha appears after many thousands of years, the alchemist will have lost all sense of time and will be so busy quarrelling over his fruit-maidens that he will not remember to go and worship the Buddha. But all these arguments and counter-arguments seem to be afterthoughts, and the solitary but tranquil life of a *zawgyi* must have appealed to many an ascetic and scholar. Thus, we find the great Burmese dramatist, U Kyin U describing with sympathy and understanding this ideal of a *zawgyi*:

"At last I have achieved what I desired. I have obtained the *stone of live metal*, and I have also become a *zawgyi*. My stone can turn lead into silver, brass into gold. I have eaten that compound of alchemy, which makes me above nature, above this earthliness. I cannot be hit by bullets and bombs, and swords and spears wound me not at all ... I can be king. But what care I for worldly power? Make way, make way, I wish to leave the abode of human beings and retire to the forest.

I have reached a lovely part of the forest. Look at the flower stems, look at the waterfall. Here is a streamlet, there is a little pond. Here pebbles, and silvery sand. Green moss covers that rock, green water flows silently down that stone. The heat of the noonday sun has no effect on the peaceful place. Short trees and tall trees, big trees and small trees, they stand side by side. This tree clings to its lover, that tree is defiant. This bush looks inviting, this bamboo looks charming. The place under that tree is smooth-lawned. Did some fairy play there before I came and disturbed and frightened it away? What a peaceful place! A poet can live here forever writing verses on this beauty!"

The four elements

I shall now endeavour to explain the scientific theory behind Burmese alchemic experiments. The whole universe is believed to be made up of four basic elements: earth, fire, water, and air. Therefore, all things on Earth, whether organic or mineral, also have these four elements. The human body, too, is made up of these elements. But behind these four elements there is an essential matter which is not subjected to decay or change. Things decay only because of the four elements, and if the essential matter can be purified of the four elements, it will be preserved from change and decay. The aim of alchemic experiments is to obtain that essence which is in all metals, and then introduce that essence into the human body, which will thus become free from the four elements, an immortal and eternally youthful body.

The nine metals

The Burmese alchemist knows nine metals and twelve metals compounds. The nine metals are classified as *females* and the twelve metal compounds are classified as *males*. The alchemist feels that just as in the universe *perfection* can be obtained only through as the union of female and male, so the essential matter in all metals

can be obtained only through the union of female metals with male metal compounds. The following metals are used: lead, tin, antimony, zinc, copper, silver, gold, iron, mercury.

The first five metals are considered to be base metals, and the next two, silver and gold, are noble metals. The base metals can be transmuted into silver and gold. Iron and mercury are considered to be neither base nor noble. Therefore, to the alchemist, either iron or mercury must be the basic metal on which experiments with other metals will be made, and either in iron or in mercury the *stone of live metal* will be obtained. Therefore, alchemists have been classified into two categories: *those who work on iron* and *those who work on mercury*. In the alchemy of all other countries mercury alone is considered to be the most important metal, but the Burmese consider iron to be as important as mercury in their alchemic experiments. The Burmese alchemists consider that there are one hundred and sixty-seven varieties of iron, and they are familiar with steel.

The twelve metal compounds

The following metal compounds are used: sulphur, alum, salt, nitrate, borax, sal ammoniac, camphor, lime, soda ash, arsenic, arsenic sulphide, mercuric sulphide. Sulphur is neither a metal nor a compound according to modern scientific terminology, and some of the above compounds are not metals at all. But the Burmese word *dat* is a rather comprehensive term, and although the nearest English equivalent will be *metal* it covers chemicals also.

The two lists given above do not contain any vegetable products, but Burmese alchemy also uses herbs and roots in the experiments with metals.

Burmese alchemic code

The Burmese physician and craftsman are often accused of being very selfish persons who consider their knowledge and their experience to be *trade secrets* and who therefore will not communicate their discoveries to others. The Burmese

alchemist is also accused of the same fault. But the accusation is unfair. As in the case of the mediæval European Trade Guilds, the Burmese physician, the Burmese alchemist and the Burmese craftsman will keep their *art* secret from outsiders, but they will freely circulate their *secrets* within their own professions.

With regard to the Burmese alchemist, there is a considerable body of literature on the subject of alchemy, but these writings are in code. Alchemists were never persecuted, as were the Ari monks, but the practice of alchemy was frowned upon by the new Buddhism of Anawrahta, and the alchemist became a social outcast. Therefore, after the 11th century, the Burmese alchemists conducted their experiments in secret, but they communicated with each other regarding their experiments and discoveries. Many secret formulae were passed from hand to hand. Unfortunately, the alchemists could not organise themselves into a nation-wide group, and instead grouped themselves into different schools. Each school wrote down its discoveries in its own code. The code was a simple one, and the metals and metal compounds were given nicknames or secret names such as the *lion*, the *tiger*, the *wife with many children*, the *wife with no children*, the *wife with many husbands*, the *mouse*, the *white cat*. The nicknames were used by all schools but applied to different metals. Thus, whereas one school would refer to gold as the *big eagle*, another would refer to it as the *lion*. Therefore, by the 15th or 16th century, much of the energy of the Burmese alchemist was wasted in attempting to decipher the secret alchemic formulae.

The development of Burmese alchemy

One reason why alchemy flourished so much in Burma in the early centuries was the richness of the country in minerals, and all the *metals* and *metal compounds* were easily procurable in the country. All the same, alchemy has always been an expensive pursuit. Before Anawrahta, the kings themselves were patrons of alchemy,

and Burmese folk tales tell of instances when royal treasuries became empty through kings financing alchemic experiments made by monks. Therefore, another reason for the decay of alchemy after the 11th century was the withdrawal of royal patronage. Before the 11th century the practising alchemists were generally Ari monks, but thereafter the practising alchemists were usually astrologers, physicians, gold and silversmiths, and scholars. These professional men were not very rich, and they endeavoured to make alchemy pay by using it in their professional work. Astrologers and physicians sold lumps of metal from their alchemic laboratories as charms and amulets, or positive cures for certain diseases. Scholars wrote plays, poems and treatises on alchemy. Gold and silversmiths benefited directly from their knowledge of metals.

Some have regretted that whereas in Europe, alchemy developed into modern chemistry, in Burma alchemy has always been a superstitious practice. This view is not quite correct. Burmese alchemy did result in some important chemical discoveries, but Burmese chemistry was completely overwhelmed when Western chemistry suddenly came into the country after the British conquest. So the early Burmese alchemist was not a mere charlatan or an impostor. Of all the religious cults that existed in Burma before the advent of Buddhism, alchemy was the noblest, for Burmese alchemy aimed at a conquest of Nature, and to discover for humanity a way to preserve the human body in its vigour and beauty. ▲

DR. MAUNG HTIN AUNG (1909–1978) was an author and scholar of Burmese history and culture. He was educated at both Cambridge and Oxford Universities, and was Rector of Rangoon University during the period 1946 to 1958. He wrote several important works on Burmese history and culture, in both Burmese and English languages, including *Burmese Drama*, *Burmese Folk-Tales*, *Folk Elements in Burmese Buddhism*, *Burmese Monk's Tales*, and *A History of Burma*, among others. This article is extracted from *Folk Elements in Burmese Buddhism*.

Rasa Shastra: The Art of Vedic Alchemy

ANDREW MASON

The Vedic civilisation, like so many ancient cultures, had a deep understanding of alchemy and was able to efficiently integrate the practice into an already broad medical knowledge of herbal and surgical healing techniques.

As more of Asia began to adopt the teachings of Buddha, the practice of surgery began to fall into decline. What emerged in its place was a medicinal system combining the instant, radical effects of surgery with the healing properties of herbal medicine. The eventual compromise was *rasa shastra*, a system that effectively combined the practice of both into one self-contained system of healing.

It is true to say that the ancient Vedic texts represent some of the most concise and readily available on the subject of medical alchemy, although I suspect that there are many older writings on this fascinating subject that remain firmly under lock and key, far from curious eyes.

What is rasa shastra?

Rasa shastra is, quite simply, medical alchemy. Using a bewildering array of metals, minerals and gemstones, highly medicinal compounds are manufactured for the purpose of healing, life extension and the manufacture of gold.

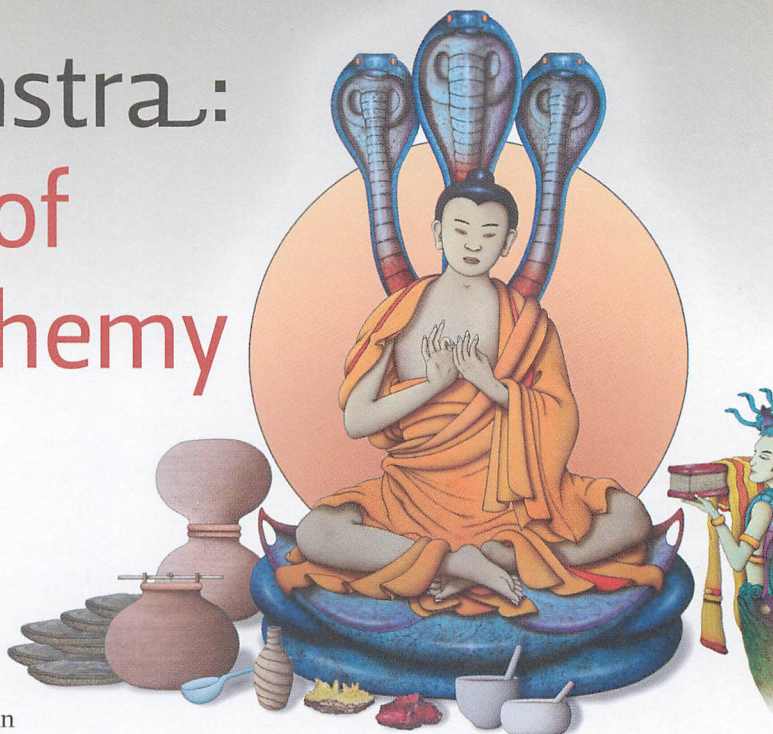


Figure 1: Nagajuna, the father of rasa shastra

As the Vedic sciences already boasted an impressive array of metaphysical and non-metaphysical sciences (such as medicine, astrology, yoga, philosophy, metallurgy, and mantra), the addition of alchemy found fertile ground in a culture of these high technological advancements.

The word *rasa* in Vedic terminology is used to describe many things including *juice*, *taste* and *essence*, but in the context of rasa shastra it is used to describe *mercury* or *quicksilver* (liquid metal), and in conjunction with the word *shastra* (meaning *knowledge* or *science*), the term *rasa shastra* would literally translate as *the science of mercury*.

There are two main concepts of rasa shastra, namely *loha siddhi* and *deha siddhi*. *Loha siddhi* refers to transforming *loha* (iron) into gold, and *deha siddhi* refers to transforming *the human body* into gold (i.e. making it young, strong and

attractive). The underlying aim of these practices was neither superficial nor materialistic, but to establish a harmonious, prosperous and peaceful society. Of these two concepts of alchemy, the *rasa shastra* that is practised today focuses mainly upon *deha siddhi*, that which deals with the processing of metals, minerals and gemstones into highly potent medicines.

Figure 1 shows an artist's impression of Nagajuna depicted with his alchemical equipment and resting in the coils of a giant three-headed serpent. The figure to his right is a *naga* deity holding his alchemical treatises and slowly descending back into the *naga* realm.

Where did *rasa shastra* come from?

Nagajuna is considered to be the father of *rasa shastra*, although tracking him down to an exact historical period is difficult. An important alchemical text called the *Rasendra Mangal* emerged around the 7th to 8th century and claimed to be authored by Nagajuna. However, as it was the common practice of students to carry the name of their master, it seems almost certain that this Nagajuna was another disciple in a long lineage of masters bearing that auspicious name.

All that is really known about the Nagajuna is that he was born some 400 years after Buddha in Bedha (South India), and was the son of a wealthy Brahmin (priestly class). Although suffering some serious health problems during youth, he was able to gain strength by the use of medicines, mantra and service to the gods – it is said that he practised the mantra of the tantric deity Amityayus. This mantra is said to give long life and through its practise he was reputed to have lived more than 600 years. This extraordinary lifespan has been argued by some to explain his re-emergence at various points during history.

As an adult Nagajuna became a deeply spiritual individual and was gifted in the art of poetry and writing (he ultimately became the founder of the Madhyamika School of Buddhism, often referred to as *the middle way*). During his travelling years he was said to have learnt the art of alchemy – specifically the transmutation of base metals and rocks into gold – from a mysterious monk who lived on a remote island. The story goes on to say that he practised alchemy in order to save his own monastery (Nalander Monastery) from famine, with the gold being used to buy food to feed his brother monks.

No tale of Nagajuna would be complete without mentioning his encounter with the snake people, the *nagas* (hence his own name *Naga Juna*). The *naga* realm was deep within the Earth and strictly forbidden to humans, but having won their favour Nagajuna was granted passage into their world where he would recite poetry for the king of the *nagas*. *Naga* folk were expert in the art of metal craft and gemmology,

so here again we get a tantalising insight into where Nagajuna may have acquired some of his wisdom about the use of minerals, metals and gemstones in alchemical processes.

In India today Nagajuna is generally accepted as being the oldest link to practical alchemy; his early works detailing the use of mercury (also called *parada*) as a medicine are still in print and form the basis of most subsequent texts on *rasa shastra*.

Other ancient references to the use of *rasa shastra* materials include the *Caraka Samhita* (approximately 1500 B.C.) which mentions the use of gold, silver, iron, copper, and bitumen as having great therapeutic value. Caraka himself was a travelling physician whose collection of *samhitas* (writings) were eventually compiled into the collective works of *ayurvedic*

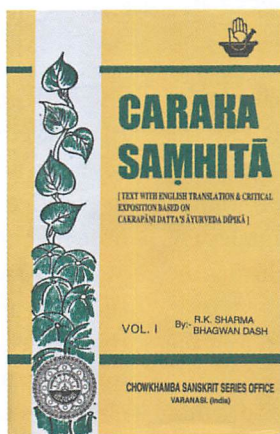


Figure 2: The *Caraka Samhita*

Tree of Rasa Shastra

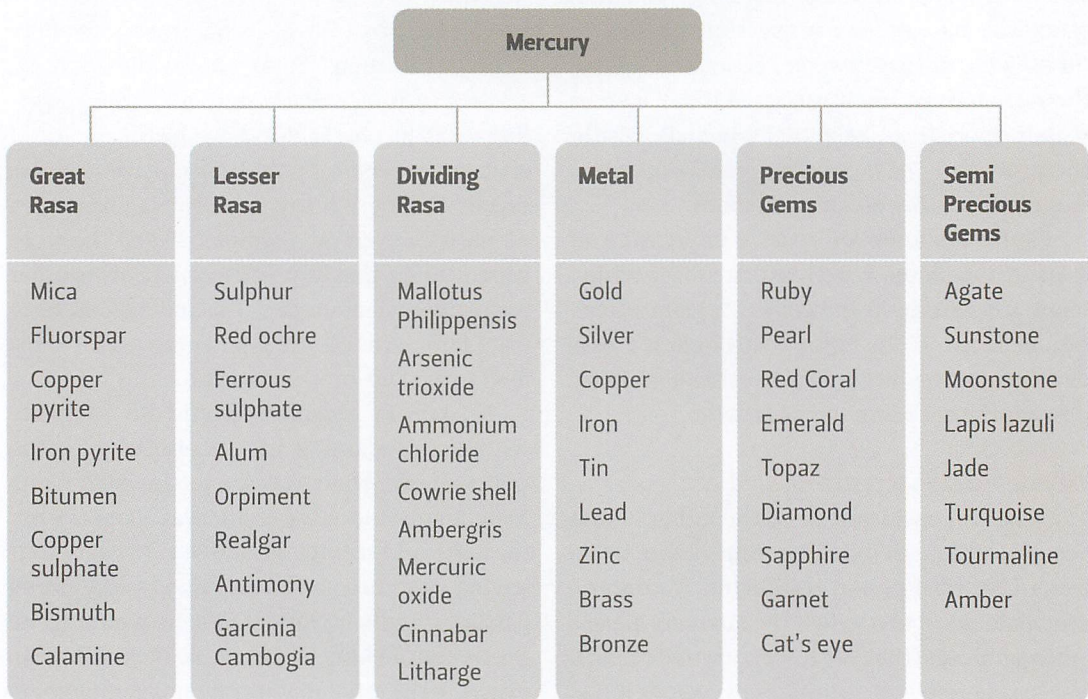


Figure 3: The tree of rasa shastra

medicine. These texts remain the mainstay of ayurvedic doctors and students to this day. The quote below is taken from Volume 3 of the *Caraka Samhita*, and details the use of *shilajit* (bitumen extracted from the rocks of the Himalayas). This precious substance is collected during the summer months near the bedrock where warming sunlight causes the *shilajit* to ooze from the crevices of the mountains.

“Shilajit should be immersed into a hot decoction of drugs that are prescribed for the alleviation and aggravation of doshas (constitutional humours) and after being absorbed should again be immersed. This process should be repeated 7 times. Shilajit is then mixed with the powder of Loha (iron) and administered with milk. This elixir is for long life and happiness; it prevents ageing, disease and produces sturdiness of the body.”

The concept of rasayana

In ayurvedic literature there is a term called *rasayana* which is used to describe substances or practices that not only extend life, but also impart youthfulness and physical regeneration. Many ayurvedic formulas claim to regenerate the body and bring strength and endurance to the tissues, but it is here in the lists of these formulas that the presence of rasa medicines is quite prevalent.

Mercury and many other rasa base materials are seen to have miraculous properties for both extending life and bestowing superhuman powers. Regular ingestion of correctly prepared mercury was said to transmute the bodily tissues, making them impervious to the ravages of time. Gold is prized as destroying infectious disease and cat's eye (chrysoberyl) gives enhanced psychic ability and increases one's intelligence.

Categorising rasa shastra materials

As can be seen in Figure 3, mercury – above all other rasa materials – is elevated to the head of the tree of rasa shastra. This placement shows its unequalled excellence in the science of Vedic alchemy. As mercuric sulphide forms the base of the strongest rasa medicines, it is only natural that it gains this auspicious placement.

It is thought that the layout of the rasa shastra tree in Figure 3 reflects the effectiveness of each material to combine with purified mercury, i.e. *great rasa* would include materials with higher medicinal benefits in combinations with mercury than, say, *lesser rasa*.

The list in Figure 3 is far from exhaustive; there are many other compounds and materials that can be used as rasa medicines, and these include asbestos, magnetite, limestone, cuttlefish bone, etc. These additional materials are also considered to have highly potent effects when prepared using alchemical principles.

Rules for the making of alchemical compounds

It would be impossible to relate the complexities of this science in a few short paragraphs, so therefore we will concentrate upon one or two key processes, in order to give the reader some grounding in the basic principles of rasa medicine preparation.

1. Purification

All materials – be they metal, gemstone or mineral – must first be purified to remove their toxic components. This does not mean that all substances are toxic, but complex compounds have various effects, both positive and negative, upon a living system like the human body. Through painstaking analysis and experimentation the ancients were able to deduce how to best prepare each material for assimilation, whilst retaining the bulk of the effective components and discarding those parts which produced detrimental effects.

“Mercury and many other rasa base materials are seen to have miraculous properties for both extending life and bestowing superhuman powers. Regular ingestion of correctly prepared mercury was said to transmute the bodily tissues, making them impervious to the ravages of time.”

After being scrupulously cleaned in salt water (i.e. rock salt and warm water), the selected material is reduced to a fine powder by the use of an iron pestle and mortar, and then sieved through a fine cloth to remove any obvious contaminants. As many of these materials are hard to powder, this first stage of the operation is often the most physically demanding. Careful attention must be maintained throughout this initial stage as unwanted debris or contaminants can be virtually impossible to remove later.

2. Making *cakrika* (discs)

Cakrika means *disc*, and the next stage prior to calcination (strong heating) is to reduce the selected material into small disc-like shapes. Most often a small amount of powdered material is mixed with a liquid medium and stirred into a sticky paste. This pliable mass can then be formed into a *cakrika*. The most commonly used mediums are milk, aloe vera gel, cow’s urine, and lime juice. It seems incredible that cow’s urine would be used, but it has extraordinary anti-bacterial properties and strong medicinal benefits when collected fresh from the animal.

“In both India and Sri Lanka they will sometimes use the dirt from an abandoned termite nest, as this macerated mud is particularly pliable and well suited to the job of sealing crucibles.”

To enable the heating process to be effective, the surface area of the prepared material needs to be increased. *Cakrika* carefully placed into a flat-bottom crucible enables heat to fully penetrate, facilitating the release of contaminants in the form of both physical particles and toxic gases. Figure 4 shows a *cakrika* formed by hand. This particular *cakrika* is made from cinnabar (mercuric sulphide).

The next stage is to seal the crucible (called a *sharaava*, see Figure 5). This is achieved by placing two crucible lids together and binding them with cloth coated in wet clay. This coated cloth is then wound tightly around the seam of the two lids and allowed to dry. This process is usually repeated seven times in total, forming a thick barrier or seal of dried clay and cloth. In both India and Sri Lanka they will sometimes use the dirt from an abandoned termite nest, as this macerated mud is particularly pliable and well suited to the job of sealing crucibles.

3. *Put*a (burning pit)

The next stage of the preparation is called *puta* (*puta* means *to envelop*). A *puta* is quite simply an earthen pit filled with cow dung cakes and ignited (see Figures 6, 7 and 8). It turns out that the cow has an integral part to play in the whole alchemical process, providing many resources for the purification of *rasa* medicine.

The *puta* of specific dimension is dug into the Earth and filled with dried cow dung cakes. These

cakes are made abundantly in India and can be bought on most street corners (see Figure 7).

The crucible is carefully placed on top of the now heaped cow dung cakes, and then covered in a secondary layer of additional cow dung cakes. When ignited, the cakes will take several hours to burn down to ash. The crucible is left in the ashes for 24 hours or until the ash becomes cool. The internal temperature of a *puta* operates in excess of 1,000 degrees Celsius. As there is no thermostat on a *puta*, the size and amount of cow dung cakes are used to slightly regulate its burning duration. Note that the maximum heat output of a *puta* is similar, regardless of size. It is the size of the *puta* that governs the sustained level of the heating process

Figure 8 shows an example of a *puta* at work – two crucibles are obscured below the mass of 800 cow dung cakes.

In Figure 9, a crucible is retrieved from the ashes of the *puta* and carefully opened. Inside, its contents will have undergone an alchemical treatment, gently modifying the atomic structure of the *cakrika* inside.

The *cakrika* are removed from the crucible and carefully ground in a mortar until they have been re-ground into a fine powder. Sometimes a single *puta* treatment can radically alter the composition and colour of the material. At other times it can be a slow and tedious process of remaking *cakrika* and reheating them again and again, until the material shows a sign of change.

There are qualitative guidelines to the manufacture of *rasa* preparations. The ancients became extremely proficient at alchemical conversion and developed techniques that further empowered their formulae's effects and required less processing to arrive at a suitable level of purification. Qualitative tests of preparations include specific colour changes, taste, texture, and lightness (purity) of material.

Most of the low toxicity *rasa* materials require about 3–4 *puta* treatments to complete, with

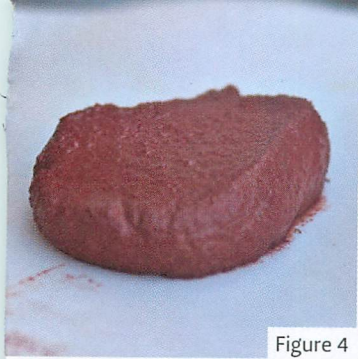


Figure 4

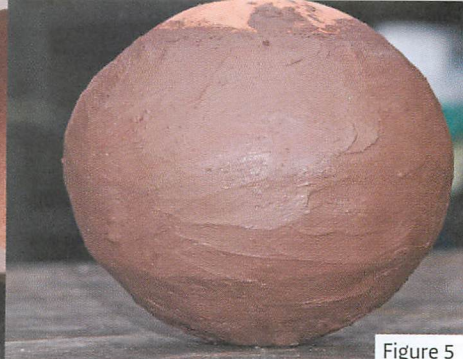


Figure 5



Figure 6



Figure 7



Figure 8

Figure 4: Cinnabar cakrika;
Figure 5: Sharaava;
Figure 6: Puta;
Figure 7: Dried cow dung cakes;
Figure 8: Puta at work;
Figure 9: Sharaava retrieval



Figure 9

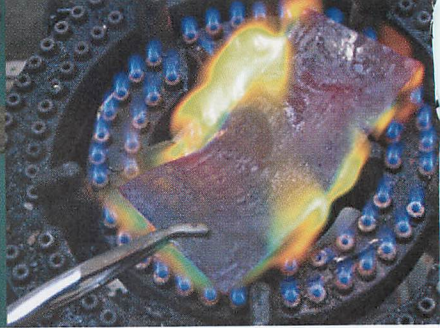
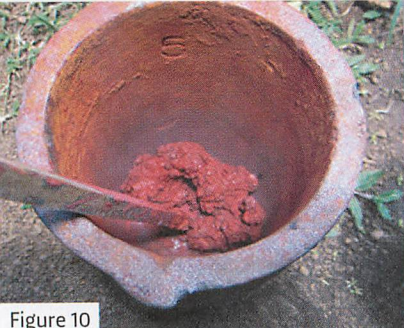


Figure 10



Figure 11



Figure 12



Figure 13

Figure 10: Iron (left), arsenic (centre), and copper (right), undergoing various stages of purification and incineration;
Figure 11: Mercury during purification;
Figure 12: Arsenic during initial processing;
Figure 13: Sharaava of calcinated sea shells

appropriate *cakrika* making in-between. Heavily toxic materials, like metals and some gemstones, will require 10–15 *puta* to render them safe for human consumption.

Exceptions to the above include materials like mica and iron which require a greater amount of *puta* for their conversion. Both iron and mica require somewhere around 25–50 *puta* treatments to render them safe for medicinal usage.

After reading the above outline of preparation procedure, you can appreciate that some of these medicines literally take years to produce.

Figure 10: Iron (left), arsenic (centre) and copper (right) undergoing various stages of purification and incineration.

4. Ash (*bhasma*)

After all calcination is complete, the end result is an ash called *bhasma*. This highly prized end product can be directly administered, or combined with other *bhasma* and herbal compounds to complete an array of different traditional rasa shastra formulae.

Bhasma is usually a light grey, white or a red coloured powder. *Bhasma* made from minerals, metals and gemstones has no shelf life – in fact, the older the *bhasma* the more potent it becomes.

Why use rasa medicine?

Some of the benefits of rasa shastra medicine include that:

1. only a small dosage is required;
2. treatment periods are very short;
3. rasa medicine has an indefinite shelf life;
4. rasa medicine is tasteless and easy to administer;
5. rasa medicines are easily combined with other ingredients;
6. rasa medicine is fast acting, and beneficial effects can be seen within hours of administering;
7. rasa medicine is easily transportable and not affected by extremities of heat and cold;
8. potency of rasa medicine increases with age (i.e. over time).

“*Bhasma* made from minerals, metals and gemstones has no shelf life – in fact, the older the *bhasma* the more potent it becomes.”

Figure 11 shows mercury during its purification treatment – at this stage it is being washed in vinegar after being ground with garlic juice.

Figure 12 shows yellow arsenic during its initial processing stage – this batch has just been boiled in the juice of ash pumpkin.

Figure 13 shows a crucible full of calcinated sea shells after being heated in a *puta* for 24 hours – the seal of mud and cloth has been partially removed.

Effects and uses

Now for the most interesting and hotly debated subject – what are these medicines actually used for?

Generally speaking, rasa medicine is not used for common complaints like cough, colds and sore throats, as there are already many herbal compounds that act with great efficiency upon these mundane complaints. Rasa medicine is most effective when tasked with the treatment of long term diseases like asthma, diabetes, heart disease, irritable bowel syndrome, arthritis, and most other complicated ailments that are becoming so common place in the West. Rasa medicine is particularly famed for its ability to regenerate and restore functionality to an impaired or diseased organ. As mentioned previously, rasa medicine is described as a *rasayana* which means that its action is more about rejuvenation.

Anupana

The word *anupana* means *vehicle* or *carrier* and is used to describe a supporting substance taken alongside a particular rasa medicine. These carriers are seen to help direct each medicine to the

“Rasa medicine is particularly famed for its ability to regenerate and restore functionality to an impaired or diseased organ.”

root of an aliment. *Anupana* substances include aloe gel, butter, ghee (clarified butter), milk, honey, and warm water.

Each *anupana* has its own specific action or quality – some are heating, some are cooling, and some have a special affinity with a particular bodily organ or tissue. Honey is heating in nature yet easy to digest, due to the fact that bees have already partially digested this material prior to its harvesting. Honey has a cleaning and scraping effect which helps to dislodge and break up phlegm in the body. If rasa medicine is mixed with honey it takes on a synergistic effect which enhances the active qualities of both components. When the medicine and *anupana* enter the body together, their potency is increased and they are able to target specific regions of the body with greater effect.

Ghee is another favoured *anupana* of rasa medicines, having both warming properties as well as heat regulating effects (ghee simultaneously nourishes digestive fire and soothes the mucosa of the digestive tract). Rasa medicines combined with ghee enable their full assimilation into the gastrointestinal tract. It is believed that a coating of ghee oil allows minute particles of rasa to slip between the body's tissues (a kind of ultra-fine biological lubricant), therefore penetrating individual cellular membranes.

The art of picking the right *anupana* in combination with a specific rasa medicine is crucial to obtaining the cure of a disease. Indeed, there have even been debates amongst rasa experts regarding the exact role of both of these elements in the curative process. It would seem

that both are crucial and have their part to play in the final analysis.

Usage

In India, China and Sri Lanka there are no restrictions placed upon the use of rasa preparations, so they can be prescribed by most medical practitioners who have some experience in their administering, dosage and recommended *anupana*.

Unfortunately, historical usage and effectiveness do not automatically make it acceptable or viable to Western thinking, which prefers detailed scientific data and double blind trials. To date, the process of rasa shastra validation continues in both Europe and America. However, these studies are still in their infancy and are regarded with highly sceptical eyes.

The issue of safety

Over the past few years the issue of safety has been raised regarding the use of rasa medicines in the West. As recently as 2008 a random study was conducted by the *Journal of the American Medical Association* which produced a fairly damning report about some rasa and non-rasa medicines being highly toxic. The results of these findings can still be found via internet searches and are quite frightening to read. In fairness to these reports, they did highlight a significant degree of poor manufacturing standards from certain (not all) companies, as well as high levels of contamination in products not even claimed to be rasa medicine. Having read the above synopsis of the complex procedures needed to manufacture a purified medicine, it's not hard to imagine that unscrupulous manufacturers give in to temptation and skip certain procedures, hoping to increase their financial yields.

One final noteworthy inclusion is the lesser known fact that, to some degree, rasa base ingredients (in an un-purified state) are already being used by Western *allopathic* medicine, although their usage is seldom highlighted, unless under extreme duress. These materials include:

Trisenox – the trade name for arsenic trioxide and currently an ingredient of some chemotherapy drugs;

Thiomersal or mentholated mercury – currently used as a preservative in the formulation of vaccines including those for hepatitis B, influenza, Japanese encephalitis, and rabies (note that this material was systematically removed from many childhood vaccines after 1999, due to its possible link with autism in younger children);

Gold injections – favoured in the use of advanced arthritic conditions in a colloidal form of the metal;

Silver – still used as an anti-bacterial agent (also in colloidal preparations);

Ferric chloride – currently used in the purification of household drinking water;

Iron compounds – still prescribed for pregnancy and conditions of blood anaemia.

The use of marine shells and fish bones are still – nutritionally – an excellent source of absorbable dietary calcium.

Summing up

I would like to stress that the whole concept of rasa shastra here introduced to the reader is an informational piece only. I personally do not encourage or condone the use of this system of

medicine or its remedies.

Having a strong interest in the Vedic sciences, I first came across this work about five years ago and was lucky enough to see it in practice whilst studying in Sri Lanka. What intrigued me greatly was its preferred use for a bewildering variety of serious health conditions.

I watch with great interest as the knowledge of rasa shastra seems to spread globally with each passing year. As our issues of declining health become more prevalent in the West, it will be interesting to see if this ancient science might not have some part to play in the cures of the 22nd century. Only time will tell! ▲

ANDREW MASON currently lives and works in the south of England. Having completed his study and training as an ayurvedic practitioner, he has now focused his energies upon the manufacturing and practical applications of rasa medicines. To date he has produced a series of three CDROM volumes detailing these alchemical techniques. Each of the three volumes gives a unique glimpse into the ancient practice of alchemical medicine rarely seen outside of Asia, and is presented in a slide show format with high quality photographic images and easy-to-follow text and graphics. For more information about this work please contact Andrew via info@neterapublishing.com or visit his website www.neterapublishing.com

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FEATURE

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Nei Dan Gong Jiao Gongshi Wushang



The Nine Supreme Inner Alchemy Formulas of Grand Master One Cloud:

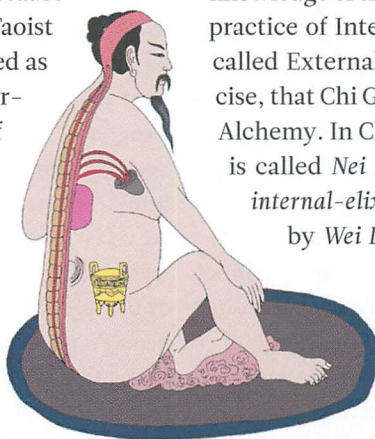
The Way of the Tao and Basis of the Universal Tao System

GRAND MASTER MANTAK CHIA & MAGISTER MUNDUS CONCENTRATUS

This article discusses the Nine Supreme Inner Alchemy Formulas, which Taoist Master Mantak Chia learned from Grand Master One Cloud. These Nine Formulas together form the basis of the Universal Tao System, which leads us, step by step, on the Way of returning to the Tao and reuniting with it. The Nine Formulas include Microcosmic Orbit, Taoist Sexual Alchemy, Fusion I, II and III, Lesser Kan and Li, Greater Kan and Li, Greatest Kan and Li, Sealing of the Five Senses, the Congress of Heaven and Earth, and finally, the Reunion of Human and Tao.

Formerly these practices were known as the *Seven Inner Alchemy Formulas*, because the Microcosmic Orbit and the Taoist Sexual Alchemy had been treated as separate practices. Yet to understand the Supreme Alchemy of the Reunion of Human and Tao, which is the Final Opus in this Great Alchemical Work, the Microcosmic Orbit and the Sexual Alchemy Practice must be included into *One Supreme Inner Alchemy Formula*, yielding *Nine Formulas of Supreme Inner Alchemy*. Only through a correct way of understanding can our practice lead to fruition. This means that we must view these Nine Formulas together as the Way, and understand how they connect to the Way of the Tao itself.

To understand the Supreme Inner Alchemy of the Reunion of Human and Tao, means to know the Way. To know the Way, one needs to know the positions of Heaven and Earth, like a man who goes out to hike in the forest uses a compass and map. To perform the Supreme Inner Alchemy, we likewise need a map of our *inner* time and space, and an *inner* compass. We must know about the internal centres, organs, channels, hormonal glands – that is, we must know the landscape and the energy points of the



Inner Body. This knowledge is called the Inner Feng Shui, and the inner maps are provided, step by step, in each of the Formulas. Going through each of these Formulas, one gets ready to understand the Feng Shui of the Inner Brain and the alchemy of developing the inner compass.

The first Formula, Microcosmic Orbit, provides the Inner Feng Shui of the body's North-South Axis and the Heaven and Earth Polarity, the Yin and Yang each flowing in their natural direction, from which the Microcosmic is the result. Thus each consecutive Formula of One Cloud's Supreme Alchemy introduces a more complete map of the Inner Body. When the knowledge of the Inner Feng Shui, learned in the practice of Internal Alchemy, is applied to so-called External Practices, like Chi Gong exercise, that Chi Gong Practice also becomes Inner Alchemy. In Chinese language, Inner Alchemy is called *Nei Dan Gong*, 內丹工, which spells *internal-elixir-skill* and as such is contrasted by *Wei Dan Gong* or *external-elixir-skill*.

The term External Alchemy (*Wei Dan Gong*) is normally used for material or physical things, like Chinese medicine, Chi Gong exercise and martial arts, but each of these can

become Internal as well, if the wisdom gained from the Inner Alchemical Work is applied to the Outer Alchemical Work.

In the Universal Tao System, the difference between Internal and External Alchemy is transcended, and replaced by a multi-dimensional view of things, where different levels are observed and experienced at the same time. For this reason the Universal Tao System is sometimes referred to as *Multi-Dimensional Body Work*. This is true for all the formulas, but once we enter the realm of Spiritual Alchemy, 內丹術 (*Nèi Dān Shù*), the boundaries of Inner and Outer are utterly transcended, as our practice, our exercise, whatever we do, takes part in our (Re) union with the Tao. The higher Inner Alchemy

Formulas, which traditionally were practised in caves, are taught at Tao Garden in a complete darkness environment, which has been specially created to facilitate the teaching and practice of higher level Taoist Alchemical Meditation. In Taoist tradition, darkness is not seen as something negative, but as the very source of existence. Like in modern astrophysics, the *Dark Matter* or *Wu Chi* permeates the Universe and verily is the Door to All Wonders, since it is the Womb of the Mysterious Female, which gives birth to all things.

In Taoist tradition it is said that at the *original split* of the Tao into Yin and Yang, the harmonising influence of the *Three Pure Ones* already initiates the *Return to the Source*. In the numerology of Taoism, the number three manifests as the Cosmic Force, which permeates the Universe as the Presence of Universal Love and makes Yin and Yang stick together, creating Heaven and Earth, the Five Elements, the Human Being, and all else that exists in the World. Answering the call of Universal Love, One Cloud's Supreme Inner Alchemy Formulas lead us, step by step, on our Way back into the Tao, achieving the Alchemical Marriages of Heaven and Earth, the Five Elements, Fire and Water, Spirit and Matter, Inner and Outer, Time and Eternity, finally to attain to the Ninth Formula, the Reunion of Human and Tao, which unifies the other eight Formulas into the One Supreme (Inner) Alchemy Formula.

The First Supreme Inner Alchemy Formula: The Microcosmic Orbit, the Inner Feng Shui which connects Heaven, Man and Earth

天 tiān Heaven, 人 rén Human, 地 dì Earth

One Cloud's First Formula of Supreme Inner Alchemy involves the Three Treasures – Heaven, Human and Earth – and their cosmic relationship. It teaches practitioners the first level of the Inner Feng Shui, the Microcosmic Orbit – an Inner Alchemy Practice in which the practitioners

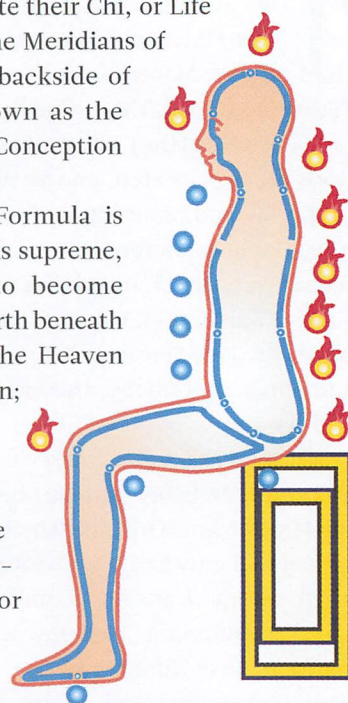
learn to circulate their Chi, or Life Force, along the Meridians of the front and backside of the body, known as the Governor and Conception Meridians.

This First Formula is as simple as it is supreme, teaching us to become aware of the Earth beneath our feet and the Heaven above our Crown;

to place the tip of our tongue on the roof of the palate, to connect the Major Yang and Yin Vessels of the Body. Then

we relax our mind and focus our attention downward into the body. As our mind relaxes, the Chi or bio-electric energy can flow down from the head (Yang = red) to connect into the Yin Vessel at the tip of the tongue (Yin = blue). After some practice the flowing down of the Chi can be felt clearly in the forehead and tasted on the tongue, first a tingling sensation like touching a battery. This is followed by the distinctly sweet tasting saliva, the Inner Alchemical Nectar, which is produced as the Chi flows down from the pineal gland into the Conception Vessel, activating all the glands of the endocrine system.

The Microcosmic Orbit continues to flow down from the Throat Centre to the Heart, Solar Plexus, Navel, and Sexual Centre. From the perineum, it connects to the Yang Vessel at the tail and sacrum bones, flowing up along the spine back up to the Crown, completing one round of this Microcosmic Orbit. The perineum also connects to the soles of the feet through the leg channels, completing the Earth route. The Earth Force enters the leg channels at the beginning of



the Kidney Meridian, in a point (K1) at the centre of the sole of the foot, called *Bubbling Springs*. Our microcosmic relationship with the Earth is such that what we bring to Earth must bounce back to us. Through the Internal Practice of Chi Gong postures, it is possible to raise our awareness to the Chi particles as they are bubbling up from the Earth. Such practices are taught along with the First Formula, as the Microcosmic Orbit is applied to Chi Gong practice, and students first learn to circulate and store the energy in their own body (Iron Shirt Chi Gong I) and later to absorb energy from outside and to discharge energy.

Relating Inner and Outer Feng Shui

The Inner Alchemical Microcosmos (of the body), in relation to the Outer Alchemical Macrocosmos, defines the placement and axis of the body, the Heaven and Earth Poles, the Up and Down and the North and South. Now as soon as we start to move the body, the axis shifts and thus East, West and the intermediate corners come into play. With these Eight Directions and the Zenith and the Nadir (the Up and Down), there are ten Macrocosmic dimensions to which the Microcosmos of the body relates. Being in movement, the body exchanges energy with the Forces of the Ten Directions, and through harmonising the body's movements with this natural flow of energy (Chi), the Practice of Tai Chi Chuan is born.

The Formula of the Microcosmic Orbit thus teaches us the secret that the Human is one of the Three Treasures: Heaven, Earth and Human. It teaches us about the Union of Heaven and Earth, and their relation to the Human, who physically, mentally and spiritually has been born from the Alchemical Marriage of Father Heaven

and Mother Earth. The Human Body is a Microcosmic reflection of the Macrocosmos, as can be seen from the upright stature of a human being: the crown of the head connects to the Heaven, and the feet connect to the Earth. In Taoism it is said that *what comes down to Earth, has to go up to Heaven, and what comes up to Heaven, has to go back to Earth*.

In the human body, this *Great Heavenly Cycle* is reflected in the *Small Heavenly Cycle*, or Microcosmic Orbit. The Way up to Heaven (the Mountain) naturally corresponds with the spine, and the back side of the head, and the Way down to Earth (the Valley) with the front side of the body. The back side of the body is hard (Yang) and the front side is soft (Yin). According to their nature,

it is natural for the Yang to flow up, and for the Yin to flow down; hence the Yin gathered to create Earth, and the Yang to create Heaven. The Inner Feng Shui of this Formula teaches the Governor and Conception Vessels and the Stations, or Points, along the vessels through which the Microcosmic Orbit travels. It also teaches how to connect through the Crown with the Source, following the lead-light to the North Star and the Big Dipper and beyond, into the Birth of the Universe from the Wu Chi. This Formula thus prepares the student for the spiritual practices of the next Formulas. Auxiliary practices like the Inner Smile and the Six Healing Sounds are taught as part of the First Formula, because they help the Microcosmic to flow, and to refine

and cultivate our Inner Elixir, our 內丹 *Nei Tan*.

Understanding the Way of Tao

The First Formula taught us to understand the Feng Shui of Heaven and Earth, the Macrocosmic Cycle of Yin and Yang, and its appearance in the human as the Microcosmic Orbit. To

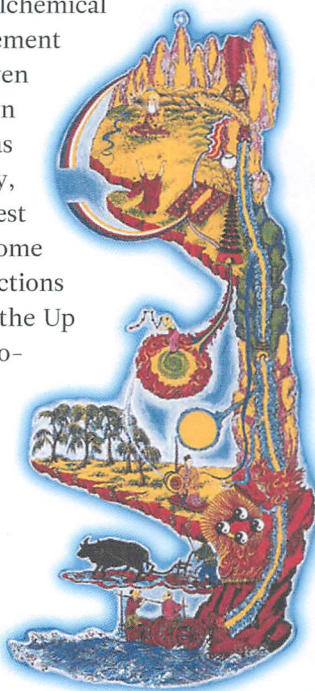


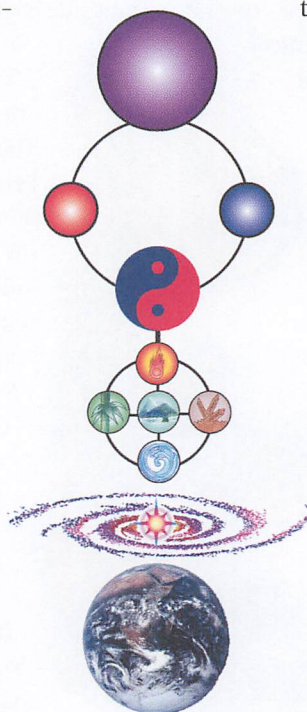


Figure 1: The TAO gives rise to the complete universe

understand the following Formulas, we need a basic understanding of Taoist cosmology and the ontology of the Yin and the Yang, the origin of the Five Elements and their dynamics. Luckily, the Nine Supreme Inner Alchemy Formulas faithfully follow the Way of the Tao and that means that we just need to follow the *Tao Teh Ching*, how from having created the One, the TAO gives rise to the complete universe (see Figure 1).

When Wu Chi, the Primordial Deep, the Womb of the Mysterious Mother, became pregnant of itself and from its fullness created the One, from the One was created its other, the Two, and so Yin and Yang came into being. And as the Two created the Three, Universal Love was introduced between the Yin and the Yang, which makes one Yin and one Yang, or one Yang and one Yin, and even two of the same, Yin or Yang, stick together. Thus, at Creation, the *Three Pure Ones* arose, that is the Heavenly Force, the Earth Force and the Cosmic Force. The Cosmic Force pervades the Universe as the presence of Universal Love,

creates and maintains galaxies, stars, planets, and is drawn in by the Sun and the Moon to draw the energy of myriad galaxies into the energy field of the planet Earth.

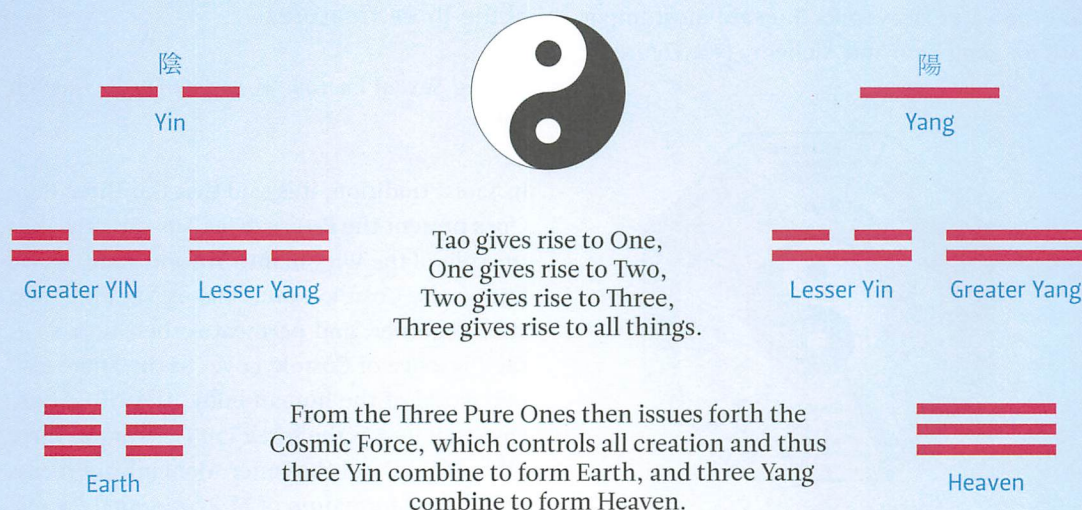


The Three Pure Ones control all creation and so three Yin lines combine to form Earth, and three Yang lines combine to form Heaven. As Father Heaven and Mother Earth unite, the Five Elements are born, and again the Three Pure Ones control the process of their manifestation. In Taoist tradition it is said that the Three Pure Ones control the Five Element Star, which shines Light of Five Colours, and in turn controls 400 billion galaxies. According to Taoist cosmology the Three Pure Ones further continue to steer things in Heaven as well as on Earth, ruling the myriad galaxies and our own galaxy, which centres around the Polar Star. The Three Pure Ones are

reflected in our body as the Three Elixir Fields or 丹田 Tan T'ien (Tan = Elixir, T'ien = Field): the lower (our root), middle (our abdomen) and higher (our chest and head), which corresponds to our existence as physical, mental and spiritual beings.

Three gives rise to all things

It means to say that all manifestation in the Universe comes as a triplicity



The *Cosmic Force*, giving rise to all things, initiates the Marriage of Heaven and Earth (Two giving rise to Three), which then leads to the Birth of the Five Elements and the Eight Directions:

The Gentle
☳
Wind, Wood

At the First Meeting of Father Heaven and Mother Earth, the Arousing issues from the Father, and Completion from the Mother.
Thus the Arousing (Thunder) is the First Son, and the Gentle (the Wind/ Wood) is the first Daughter.

The Arousing
☳
Thunder

The Clinging
☲
Fire

At the Second Meeting of Father Heaven and Mother Earth, Water issues from the Father, and Fire from the Mother.
Thus the Abysmal (Water) is the Middle Son, and the Clinging (Fire) is the Middle Daughter.

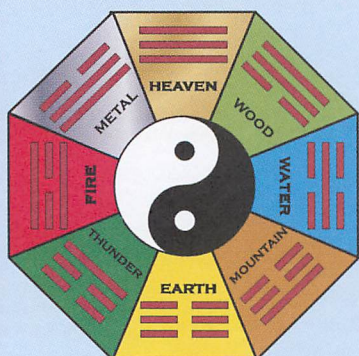
The Abysmal
☵
Water

The Rejoicing
☴
The Lake, Metal

At the Third Meeting of Father Heaven and Mother Earth, Stillness issues from the Father, and Rejoicing from the Mother.
Thus the Stillness (Mountain) is the Youngest Son, and the Rejoicing (the Lake, Metal) is the Youngest Daughter.

The Stillness
☶
The Mountain

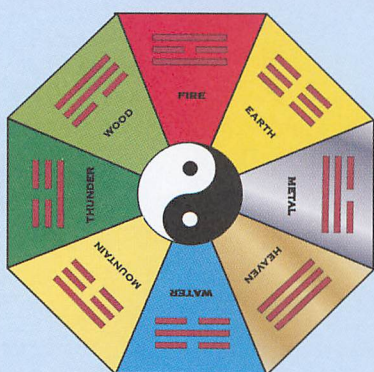
The Eight Trigrams can be attributed to the Eight Directions of the *Pa-Kua* in many ways, according to their Micro- and Macrocosmic dynamics. Of these, the Earlier Heaven *Pa-Kua* and the Later Heaven *Pa-Kua* are most important for Feng Shui and Alchemy (see Figure 2).



Earlier Heaven Pa-Kua
(Microcosmic Orbit)

The Earlier Heaven Pa-Kua, attributed to the legendary Fu Hsi, resembles the Eight Directions of the Globe.

The Later Heaven Pa-Kua is attributed to King Wen; it reflects the Feng Shui of the Inner Body, the organs and the seasons in the Directions.

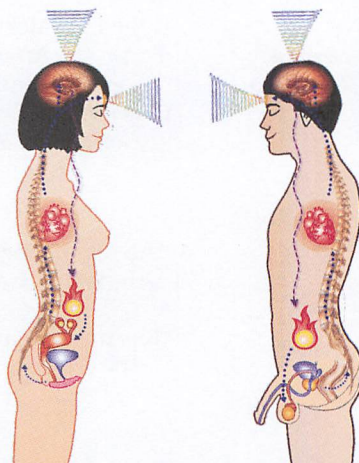


Later Heaven Pa-Kua
(Higher Inner Alchemy)

The Second Supreme Inner Alchemy Formula: Taoist Sexual Alchemy, which teaches the Inner Feng Shui of the Three Tan Tiens and the Supreme Inner Alchemy of the Three Treasures

精 jīng Sexual Energy, 氣 qì Life Force, 神 shén Spirit

In Taoist tradition, it is said that the Three Pure Ones present the *Return to the Tao*, directly after the split of the Wu Chi into Yin and Yang. As we know, the Cosmic Force makes Yin and Yang stick together, and permeates the Universe as the Presence of Cosmic Love. In the Microcosmic world of the human body, the Three Pure Ones manifest as the Three Tan Tiens or the Three Elixir Fields, and the Inner Alchemical Process of the Transformation of 精 jīng (Sexual Energy) into 氣 qì (Life Force), and Life Force into 神 shén (Spirit). As such, Taoist Sexual Alchemy is about the transformation of Material into Energy, and Energy into Spirit, and also about the transformation of Spirit into Energy and Matter, i.e. procreation – the creation of bodies.



The conception of a human being is like the coming together of the Three Forces – the Heavenly Force, the Earth Force and the Cosmic Force. When our parents come to Unite in Love, the

Figure 2: Earlier Heaven Pa-Kua and Later Heaven Pa-Kua

Yin and Yang orgasmic energies cross over and the Cosmic Force manifests as Universal Love, initiating the Way of Return to the Tao. At that moment, Creation is repeated and the Heaven and Earth Forces drawn together, mixing with the Hereditary Pre-natal Chi of the Ancestors, which is transmitted through the parents. This whirling spiral of cosmic forces uniting is called the Primordial Force.

From the moment of conception onwards, we continue to draw in Chi from external sources – from the Three Forces and the food which we receive from Nature.

At birth, we start to breathe the *Later Heavenly Breath*, as we take in energy from the cosmic elements. After birth, when the umbilical cord is cut, the Pre-natal Chi is stored with the Primordial Force

in the Lower Tan Tien, between the navel, Sexual Centre

and kidneys. It is called the *Original Chi* because, once we are born, we cannot replenish this energy any more and, as we mature, we start to lose more and more of it. Our Original Chi, or our Essence, 精 jīng, starts to leak out, first at the onset of puberty, through menstruation and childbirth in women, and ejaculation in men. Later, factors of ageing, unhealthy lifestyles and stress can further diminish our Original Force.

We can do nothing about this leakage of Life Force, unless we know how to practice and understand the Supreme Sexual Alchemy. This Opus divides into two Practices of Single Cultivation, Female and Male, which unite in their supreme accomplishment, the Dual Cultivation. Men learn to *Tame the White Stallion*, to control the loss of life force through (unnecessary) ejaculation and to transform the sexual energy

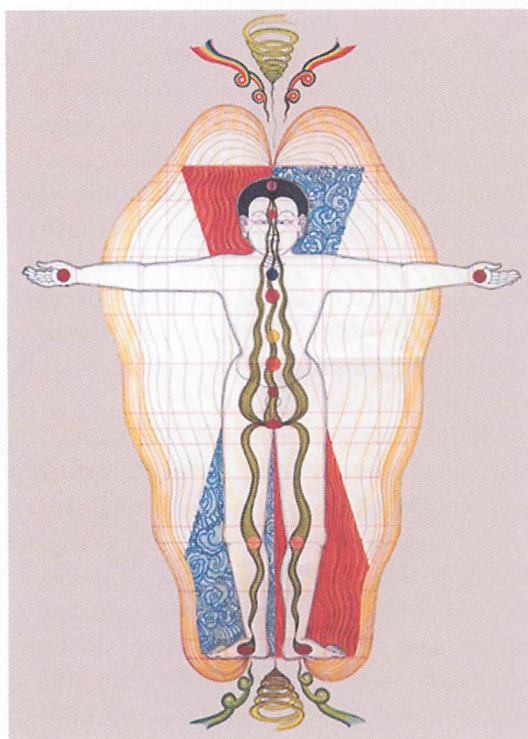
into Chi (life force) and then transform it up into Spirit. Women practice to *Slay the Red Dragon*, to control menstruation, transform the blood into (milk and milk into) Chi and likewise transform it up into Spirit. Through practices such as the Testicle Breathing and Power Lock (for men), the Ovarian Breathing and Orgasmic Upward Draw (for Women), Adepts are taught to draw up the jing, the Elixir, into the Microcosmic Orbit. Each station of the Orbit refines and transforms the Elixir, and thus the transformation into Life Force and Spirit is realised.

The Sexual Alchemy Practice, performed on the path of Supreme Inner Alchemy, is in fact a *spiritual* practice as well as a *physical* practice, since it activates and regenerates the Original Force, yielding the Elixir of Physical Immortality, and at the same time prepares the Immortal Foetus for the Spiritual Practice. The Elixir of Physical Immortality is further cultivated in physical practices like Chi Gong and Tai Chi, and the Immortal Foetus is nurtured and developed in the following Formula of One Cloud's Supreme Inner Alchemy.

The Third Supreme Inner Alchemy Formula: The Fusion of the Five Elements I, II and III, which teaches the Inner Feng Shui of the Five Elements and the Eight Forces, the Cauldron, the Channels and the Essences, and the Inner Alchemy of transforming the Negative into the Positive, to grow Virtue in the Elixir, purified and condensed into a Pearl

The Fusion introduces the dynamics of the Five Elements, which connect the Microcosmos of the body with the Elements, Energies and Directions of the Macrocosmos. This Formula teaches the Inner Feng Shui of establishing a Cauldron and forming the Pa-Kua, and the Inner Alchemy of transforming negative emotional qualities into neutral energy by fusing the Five Elemental Essences of the organs together, following the dynamics of their polarity. This





“The steaming process purifies the organs and helps us achieve emptiness; it also softens and clears the Thrusting Channel for our Embryo’s passage to the heart.”

Left: Thrusting Channels

means that Elements which would otherwise clash on grounds of their *opposite* dynamics are fused in the Inner Alchemical Cauldron, to yield the *super element*, the Virtuous Elixir called the Pearl. The Five Elemental Essences are drawn from the organs into collection points, and then spiralled into the spinning centres of the Four Pa-Kuas, one on each side of the Cauldron. These energies mix with and are transformed and protected by the Elemental Forces of Nature, the Planets and the Eight Primordial Forces. The Five Elemental Essences are transformed into a Pearl, from which are produced Virgin Children (Virtue Energies) and Protective Animals.

In the practices of Fusion II and III, the Inner Feng Shui of the Central Channel, the two Thrusting Channels, the Belt Channels, and the Psychic Channels are taught. Then the Inner Alchemical Practice of Circulating the Pearl through the Channels is introduced. The Central Channel runs from the Crown to the perineum,

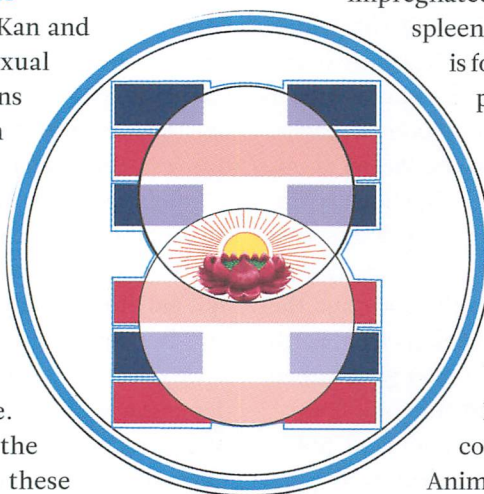
and passes right through the centre of the Cauldron which, for this Formula, is established at the Navel Centre. The two Thrusting Channels run parallel to the Central Channel on a line from the eye to the testicle or the ovary, both right and left. The Central Channel and Thrusting Channels can be used to quickly transport energy from the perineum to the Crown and vice versa, and they are used in the Higher Formulas of the Kan and Li, to move the Cauldron to the Higher Centres. The Belt Channels run all around the body and offer psychic protection, together with the Eight Psychic Channels, called the Bridge and Regulator Channels.

Once the Channels have been prepared, a special Pearl is produced in the Cauldron which can be brought through to the Central Channel into the Crown, from where it is projected *out* to form the Soul and Spirit Body. This Pearl contains the Seed for our Immortal Foetus, and must be impregnated with Essential Chi from

the liver, to yield the Soul Body. These practices are continued in the next three Formulas which entail transmutations of Water, Kan and Li, and Fire, taking place in the Cauldron at different locations in the body and at ever-higher intensity.

The Fourth Supreme Inner Alchemy Formula: the Lesser Enlightenment of Kan and Li, which teaches the Inner Feng Shui of reversing the positions of the Fire and Water Element in the body, the Alchemical Marriage and Cooking of the Elixir, and the Steaming of the Channels

Lesser Enlightenment of Kan and Li, in fact an Inner Sexual Alchemy practice, deepens the process of Reunion with the Primordial Force. It nourishes, raises and develops the Immortal Foetus, after its Alchemical Conception in the Sexual Alchemy and the Fusion practice has taken place. The heart stores part of the Primordial Force. When these two combine together, they will form a more complete force. This process establishes a powerful *steaming* effect in the Cauldron at the level of the Navel Centre. This steaming is used to cleanse, purify and strengthen the organs and brain to better attract the Primordial Force. Our Immortal Foetus is established in the Tan Tien. The Elixir of Immortality is prepared by reversing the usual sites of the Water and Fire Element in the body. Normally the Fire in the body is up, and the Water is down. Following their natural course, the Fire will flare up, and the Water will leak out and dry up. By placing the Fire under the Water and cooking the Elixir, this formula actually teaches us the Secret of the Fountain of Youth.



The Fifth Supreme Inner Alchemy Formula: the Greater Enlightenment of Kan and Li, which teaches the Inner Feng Shui of Establishing the Cauldron at the Solar Plexus and the Inner Alchemical Opus of drawing Energy from Macrocosmic Sources: Sun, Moon and Planets Alchemy

This Formula teaches a further Reunion with the Primordial Force. Another Cauldron is established at the Solar Plexus to draw on the Yin and the Yang forces of the Sun, Moon and planets, and to intensify the steaming process, begun in the Navel Cauldron. Our Immortal Foetus is impregnated with Earth Chi from the spleen, and our Spiritual Embryo is formed. The steaming process purifies the organs and helps us achieve emptiness; it also softens and clears the Thrusting Channel for our Embryo's passage to the heart. Since the forming of the Soul and Spirit Bodies is part of this Opus, other Immortal Practices such as Self Intercourse, Astral Flight, Domestic Animals, Virgin Children and the Twelve Channels, Gathering the Pill, and transferring the Consciousness to the Energy Body and Spiritual Body, are taught under this Formula.

The Sixth Supreme Inner Alchemy Formula: the Greatest Enlightenment of Kan and Li, which teaches the Inner Feng Shui of Establishing a Cauldron at the Heart Centre: Celestial, Soul and Spirit Alchemy

In this Opus the Cauldron is moved up to the Heart Centre, also known as the Middle Tan Tien. Again the reversal of the usual sites of Water and Fire, and the coupling of the Fire with the Water, by placing it under the Cauldron, will lead to a more intense cooking and steaming. The Spiritual

“Five colours blind the eyes.
Racing and hunting madden the
heart. Pursuing what is rare makes
action deceitful. The five flavours
dull the palate, the five
tones deafen the ears.”



Embryo is impregnated with the third essential Alchemical ingredient, 神 *shén* (*Spirit*), which resides in the Crystal Palace in the centre of the brain, thus receiving the influx of our Higher Consciousness or Spirit. If conditions are right, our Inner Child is born from the Womb of our heart in an ocean of bliss. The Soul Body is Yin, and the Spirit Body is Yang. The Soul Body serves as an earth cable, absorbing the Yang energy from the heavenly *wire* down into the body and the Cauldron. It also absorbs Yin energy from Earth in order to balance the Yang energy absorbed from the Heavenly bodies and our Spirit Body.

The Celestial and Stars, Soul and Spirit Alchemy belonging to this Formula is performed by manifesting the intention to connect to relevant Heavenly bodies, and attracting the Cosmic Primordial Forces needed for our Inner Alchemical processes, to the appropriate locations of our body. Thus the development of our Energy (Soul) and Spirit Body is furthered.

The Seventh Supreme Inner Alchemy Formula: the Sealing of the Five Senses, which teaches the Inner Feng Shui of Establishing the Cauldron at the Upper Tan Tien: the Inner Alchemy of Sealing the Five Senses, Star and Galaxy Alchemy

Another Cauldron is established at the mid-eyebrow point. It unifies the five shen – the five streams of personal consciousness that operate

through our senses – with the five Forces of the collective Stellar Self. These personal and stellar essences are fused in the Upper Tan Tien in the Cauldron at the mid-eyebrow point. The pure open space connecting the three Tan Tien Cauldrons (at the navel, heart and mid-eyebrow) is integrated. This stabilises the Celestial Axis. Profound peace and different spiritual qualities continuously manifest from this activated core and radiate sonically into our physical becoming. Our senses are the openings of the Spirit. If we constantly leak out and drain our Spirit, depletion will drive our Spirits out into the world, racing after new experiences and battling with others on the marketplace over what is rare to find, only to be left with more hunger. Their Spirit lost, emotions take up residence in our organs instead. Anger occupies the mansion of the Hun Spirits, and frustrates the liver; hate settles in the heart, restricting the shen and what may go wrong next, eats at the spleen and starves the Yi Spirit; sadness chases away the Po Spirits and depresses the lungs; fear distils itself in the kidneys, drying out the Zhi Spirits. Our original Spirit, shen, has only one last refuge: the brain. Given over to cunningness instead of truth, the heart then goes mad. As it says in the *Tao Te Ching*, “Five colours blind the eyes. Racing and hunting madden the heart. Pursuing what is rare makes action deceitful. The five flavours dull the palate, the five tones deafen the ears.”

The Eighth Supreme Inner Alchemy Formula: the Congress of Heaven and Earth

This practice integrates the Early Heaven or formless Self with the Later Heaven (Earth) physical Self. Here the Self identifies with two dimensions that co-exist and co-create: the *formless form* of our being and the *substantial form* of our becoming. These two polar dimensions of our greater Self engage in cosmic sex. They couple in order to re-open the portal to their Original State, or *Pre-Self*. This pre-state or Primordial Heaven is called *Hundun*, the primal chaos-unity that preceded the *Big Bang* of the cosmic egg cracking open. The Three Originals (San Yuan) of Heaven, Earth and Humanity are gathered in the three body Cauldrons as original jing, original qi and original shen. This three-tone harmonic chord is resonated with the fundamental or original tone of time and space. Consciousness then stabilises in the Axial Centre where our true multi-dimensional nature can now be embodied. This is symbolised by a tonal double vortex spinning faster than the speed of light within the void of space. Into this is fused our inner sage's immortal presence, the quintessence of humanity meditating in the centre of a spiritual black hole. We must enter this portal to complete our journey of Return to the Origin.

The Ninth Supreme Inner Alchemy Formula: the Reunion of Human and Tao

This stage is the integration of the eight previous levels of consciousness into the experience of living simultaneously in the present moment in all dimensions, from physical linear time to spirit's eternal time. This state cannot be fully known or defined conceptually for others. Perhaps it might be conceptualised as the experience of living fully in the Wu Chi, the Supreme Unknown.

This is the true achievement of the authentic or Immortal Self, a permanent state of grace known as *Wu Wei*, effortless action, or *spontaneous action without acting*. Creation (of the manifest) and Return to Formless Origin seamlessly

complete each other. Attainment of this ninth level is spontaneous, and happens when the inner will of our immortal sage within has reached complete alignment with the Tao. It usually occurs only by direct transmission from the Tao to the mature and receptive Adept, unless these Nine Supreme Inner Alchemy Formulas are practised together ... ▲

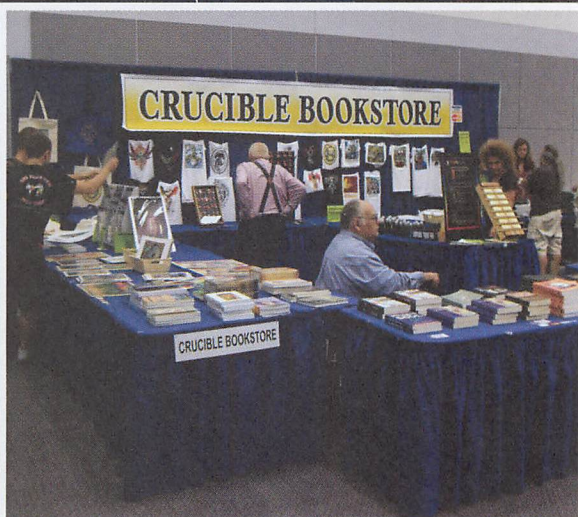
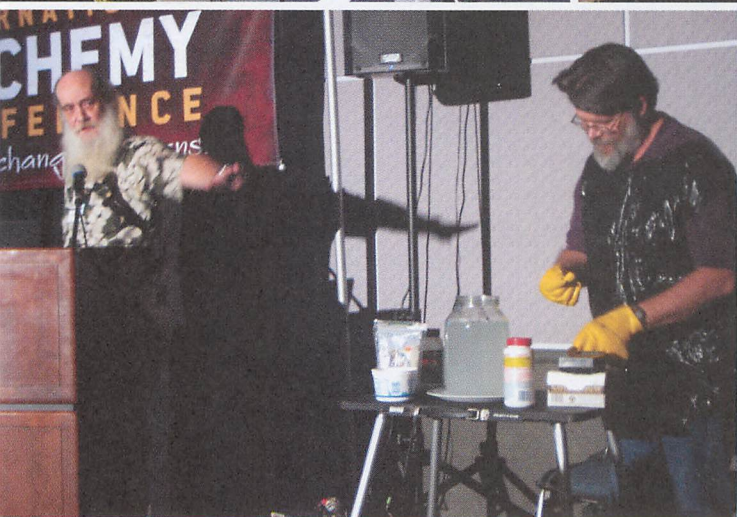
Born in Bangkok in 1944, **MASTER CHIA** learned *nang samadhi* or insight meditation from Buddhist Monks while still a boy of six years old. He pursued his spiritual studies for many years and studied tai chi chuan, aikido, kundalini yoga, Chinese medicine, and medical chi kung from a variety of teachers. Finally, in Hong Kong he met Master Yi Eng, who had acquired his knowledge of Taoist Inner Alchemy through 40 years of roaming the mountains, until he had been lucky and wise enough to meet with the White Cloud Hermit. It was Master Yi Eng who transmitted the Nine Formulas to Mantak Chia over a period of five years of hard practice. Master Chia says: "My master gave no initiation, no celebration, nothing at all – just pure practice." To find these Nine Supreme Formulas together is very rare, since it took many generations of masters to refine their amazing experiences into nine practical stages of inner alchemy.

MAGISTER MUNDUS CONCENTRATUS began as a student of the Western mysteries, notably templarism and qabalah. He then studied different forms of yoga and meditation with a variety of teachers, such as saswitha yoga, iyengar yoga, vāgyoga, and mantra yoga (which he first learned from Shyam Bhatnagar and Harish Yohāri in 1982, and later from the Brahmin Shri Tripāthi Vāgīśh Shāstri of Vārānasi). He met Master Mantak Chia in 1990 and became a student of Taoist Inner Alchemy. He also studied tantrayāna Buddhism with Tibetan monks and became a Theravada monk in 2002, when he was initiated by Thai monks into vipassana meditation. The Thai monks brought him to a cave where he spent four months in samadhi before starting a new life. He is currently living and teaching at Master Mantak Chia's home base, the Tao Garden Resort, when not travelling to learn and teach elsewhere in the world.

FEATURE

The International Alchemy Conference

DUANE SAARI



Left to Right: Golden Pyramid of Peace, Workshop by Dennis William Hawk, Workshop by Nance Carter, Crucible Bookstore

“The participants came from many walks of life, different countries and ranged in age from 20 to 80–somethings. They had one characteristic in common though: a desire to transform their lives and learn about the tools of transformation.”

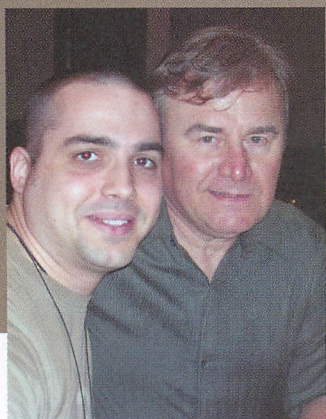
If you walk through the halls of the Los Angeles Convention Center (LACC) today and pause to listen carefully, you can still hear faint echoes of people talking excitedly about alchemy and transformation – punctuated with laughter, music and applause. The Third International Alchemy Conference left its imprint upon the LACC and the participants, presenters, exhibitors, and sponsors who came together for three days last October. Some say that it was a ‘coming out’ party; others believe it was a marriage. I say that it was an engagement, and I’ll tell you why.

As with all the parts of our lives that matter most, alchemy’s seven phases – calcination, dissolution, separation, conjunction, fermentation, distillation, and coagulation – apply to the Conference. Let’s see how.

All three past Alchemy Conferences were more than a conference focused upon information and presentations; they were gatherings. The participants came from many walks of life, different countries and ranged in age from 20 to 80–somethings. They had one characteristic in common though: a desire to transform their lives and learn about the tools of transformation. Many people have attended all three Conferences and see other participants as friends and colleagues. The Alchemy Conferences are also more than an annual event – they are a journey, over time, which enables and empowers us to grow and change together.

This journey began in Las Vegas with the first

two International Alchemy Conferences held in 2007 and 2008. These gatherings brought alchemists from around the world together for the first time in more than one hundred years. This was the period in which the International Alchemy Conference completed the first three phases: calcination, dissolution and separation. It was born in the fire of the desert with the help of a local community of interested and supportive people. After experiencing the cauldron of the first year and the dissolution of attempting to expand the focus of the Conference beyond traditional, practicing alchemists during the second, the decision was made to transform the Conference itself. As a result, separation happened next. Dennis William Hauck, founding Director and President of the International Alchemy Guild that had sponsored the first two Conferences, identified two of their essential qualities. One quality was that alchemy offers a powerful message of personal transformation for the modern world. The second quality was that the message of transformation was also being communicated by other disciplines and practices such as qabalah, astrology, Taoism, and quantum physics. Gudni Gudnason, founder of the Modern Mystery School that instructs students in these and other practices and a presenter at the first two Alchemy Conferences, had a similar vision. The two men decided to form a partnership of their organisations in order to create a Conference that would present these two essential qualities to the world.



“Dan Coaten, a practicing alchemist living in Iceland, conducted a workshop on *Gur or the Seed of Nature* ... the step-by-step process upon which his research into the production of Gur is based.”

Dan Coaten (left) and Dennis William Hauck (right)

And so, the Third International Alchemy Conference was born. An offer of marriage – the Marriage of the Sun and Moon during conjunction – was made between the two organizations, with a shared goal as stated in the Conference programme: “The goal of our work is to empower individuals with the highest level of spiritual growth, coupled with practical knowledge, so as to change our personal reality and thereby transform the world.”

Approximately 800 attendees, 40 presenters and 75 exhibitors from the United States and other countries such as England, Iceland, France, Thailand, India, Japan, Mexico, and Chile gathered in Los Angeles for three days: 23–25 October 2010.

Five exciting, major keynote presentations were held during the Conference, demonstrating the breadth of disciplines that are founded in part upon alchemical principles. Master Mantak Chia’s presentation about Taoism and his Universal Healing Tao system made the connection to this Far Eastern practice and inner alchemy. William Henry, an investigative mythologist, shared the results of his latest research into myths, Hermetic practices and cutting-edge modern science. One application of the power of human consciousness that is an integral part of the alchemical process was presented by Dr. Masaru Emoto, detailing the work that he has

done regarding the reaction of water to our conscious thoughts. Don Miguel Ruiz’s keynote also focused upon the power and change that is possible through the application of human intent and his Four Agreements or principles for life transformation. Dr. Alfredo Sfeir-Younis captured the essence of many other presentations during his concluding keynote that focused upon his work in the fields of human rights, peace and social justice – some of the characteristics of transformation in the world.

These keynotes were balanced by a series of stimulating presentations on the impact of alchemy in the world today, such as the alchemy of the soul from a Vedic perspective by Dr. Pradheep Chhalliyil; the nature of white gold and Ormus by Barry Carter and Don Nance; the alchemical gods of Egypt by Dr. Thom Cavalli; a spagyric philosophy of Nature by Micah Nilsson and Paul Bartscher, and Gary Stadler’s demonstration of alchemical distillation with working models of glassware used by mediæval alchemists. There were also presentations offered by the Directors of the International Alchemy Guild, the Modern Mystery School, members of the Conference planning committee, and other knowledgeable speakers.

Two were workshops on alchemical laboratory practice which deserve to be in the spotlight because such presentations are infrequent and

difficult to find. Dan Coaten, a practicing alchemist living in Iceland, conducted a workshop on *Gur* or *the Seed of Nature*. Dan showed the step-by-step process upon which his research into the production of *Gur* is based. *Gur* is obtained by the putrefaction of water and is said to contain the seeds of life for all three kingdoms of nature – that is, animal, vegetable and mineral. Participants were also treated to a discussion of Dan's lightning still, the process of eletro-distillation and the 4 x 3 x 4 fractional distillation technique adapted from *Aurea Catena Homeri* or *The Golden Chain of Homer*, used in his experiments. The second workshop was on advanced techniques of spagyrics offered by Robert Allen Bartlett, the former Chief Chemist at Paralab, the commercial offshoot of Paracelsus College. Robert, who studied and worked directly with Frater Albertus Spagyricus, demonstrated laboratory techniques and provided participants with formal instruction in this ancient alchemical process. These workshops, and others similar to them, are significant because Dan Coaten and Robert Allen Bartlett are preserving and advancing the practical knowledge upon which the alchemical principles that inform other disciplines are based.

So, you may ask, what was the result? Has the joining of opposites sought during conjunction been achieved? Not completely. However, much has been learned. How to forge a balance between traditional and modern alchemy and, more importantly, the combination of the two into something new, is much clearer now. Has the marriage of the Modern Mystery School and the International Alchemy Guild taken place? Not yet, but they are now formally engaged and a date has been set – 01-04 October 2010 – when the Fourth International Alchemy Conference will be held. You're invited to the ceremony.

Arrangements are already underway to plan and organise the Conference so that its structure and flow provides an exciting and memorable experience. There will be two streams of presentations flowing through this year's Conference.

One stream will emphasise modern alchemy and the many disciplines and practices in which it is manifested. The second stream will focus upon traditional alchemy and its major principles and practices that form the foundation for transformation and change. The two will be intertwined by stimulating keynotes from individuals representing both traditions. A call for speakers will soon be sent out. The expectation is that some of the presenters from last year who created excitement and energy will return, and that people with new ideas and more information to share will be part of this year's Conference. Another setting will be identified for the Conference, one that fully supports a relaxing and comfortable experience. Several potential locations are being considered that include a hotel with meeting rooms.

Come to the Fourth International Alchemy Conference and join the experience of learning about personal and world transformation, and the tools which can help to make powerful changes in your life happen. Come and be a part of the ongoing community that is forming at these gatherings and experience for yourself the unfolding of the miracle of alchemy in our lives.

Visit the Fourth International Alchemy Conference website www.alchemyconference.com for information, registration and updates. ▲

DUANE SAARI is an alchemist and member of the International Alchemy Guild. He conducts research into the history of alchemy as well as its techniques and symbolism, and presents workshops in Egypt and the United States on the application of alchemical principles to our everyday world. His current research is focused upon the ouroboros, one of the earliest symbols used by alchemists. The ouroboros represents the essence of what alchemy is and Duane uses his knowledge of this significant symbol to apply the principle of continuous creative renewal to the transformation of personal and organisational life. Read more about Duane's message on his blog www.ouroboros.com/blog or contact him via djsaari@ouroboroscycle.com

Muse

Secret of Immortality from *Hsi-yu chi* (or, *Journey to the West*)

You must completely grasp this important secret ...
Spare and cultivate the life forces ...
All is composed of semen, breath and spirit,
Be cautious; make them secure; stop all leakage.

Stop all leakage, preserve them in the body,
Accept my teachings and the Way will flourish ...
They remove evil desires, lead to purity.

They lead to purity, bright and lustrous,
You can face the Cinnabar Platform and enjoy the bright moon.
The moon holds the Jade Rabbit; the sun holds the Raven,
From there also the Tortoise and Snake, coiled together.

Coiled together, the life forces are strong,
You can plant the golden lotus in the midst of the fire.
Assemble the Five Phases; reverse them to use them,
This work complete, you can be a buddha or an immortal as you wish. ▲

From page 13 of *Hsi-yu chi* (or, *Journey to the West*) by Wu Ch'eng-en. Translated by Jennifer Oldstone-Moore.
First published in Taipei by Sheng-yang ch'u-pan she. 1988.



Left to right: The four heroes – Sūn Wùkōng, Xuánzàng (on the Dragon-Horse), Zhū Bājiè, and Shā Wùjīng.
Photograph by Rolf Müller.



Come learn and practice Taoist Supreme Inner Alchemy with Master Mantak Chia at

Tao Garden Health Spa & Resort in Chiang Mai, Thailand

Master Chia teaches the Supreme Inner Alchemy Formulas during the Summer and Winter Retreats, which are held at Tao Garden every year.

The higher Inner Alchemy Formulas, which traditionally were practiced in caves, are taught in a complete darkness environment, which has been specially created to facilitate the teaching and practice of higher level Taoist Alchemical Meditation. These Darkness Retreats are only taught during the Winter Retreats.

For more information about Master Chia's Winter Retreat 2010 visit
www.universal-tao.com/retreat/masterchia_retreats.html

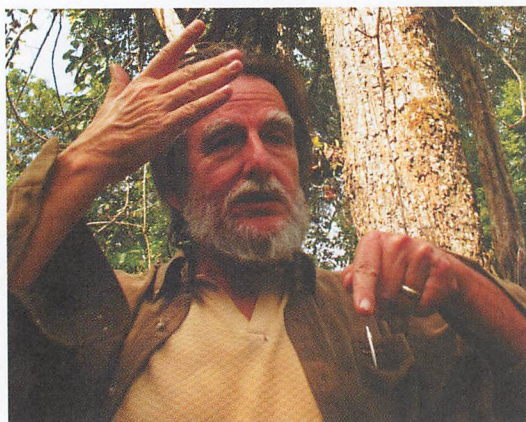


Nestled in upcountry Thailand, just outside the delightful city of Chiang Mai, is Tao Garden Health Spa & Resort, an oasis of dynamic healing practice, blending the most exciting new medical developments, as found in our medical clinic, with traditional Eastern healing arts, such as those found in our holistic spa. To stay in Tao Garden's Health Spa is to become engulfed in an abiding sense of wellbeing, to set upon a path of peace and inner exploration; a tranquil yet dynamic adventure of respite and healing.



Modern Magister

Dr. Josef Margraf [by Paul Hardacre]



In mid-May 2009, while Marissa and I worked away stuffing a small mountain of envelopes with subscribers' copies of the somewhat late 'alchemical feminine' themed issue of the *Alchemy Journal* (Vol.10 No.1), we noticed that one of our subscribers was listed as the TianZi Biodiversity Research & Development Centre, located in – of all places – Xishuangbanna, the tropical and autonomous prefecture of the Dai people in Yunnan Province, China. The name of the centre caught our attention as it reminded us both of the TianZi Health Food Restaurant, a heavenly little macrobiotic restaurant, tea garden and food store located in an otherwise unattractive part of downtown Chiang Mai, which we enjoyed as a place to while away a tranquil hour or two. Marissa suggested that the two entities must be somehow linked and, upon further investigation, it turned out to be the case: the rainforest farming centre in Xishuangbanna supplied produce for the restaurant in Chiang Mai, including puer tea, Yunnan forest green tea, orchid flower tea, burdock, gingers,

bananas, persimmon, tamarind, cherry apple, varieties of chili, lingonberry, buckwheat and other organic pseudocereals, honey harvested from natural sources, and oils of walnut, sesame, macadamia, and tea. An incredible array of rare and precious tropical rainforest and sub-tropical mountain forest plants was also generated at the Xishuangbanna centre, along with herbal medicines, natural cosmetics, essential oils and resins, and hydrosols. We noted that large and very striking traditional copper distillation apparatus, hand made to order, were also available from TianZi in Xishuangbanna and, given the relative proximity of the centre to our home in Chiang Mai, we resolved to establish contact with these neighbours of ours.

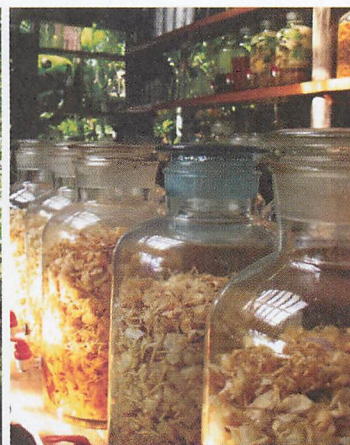
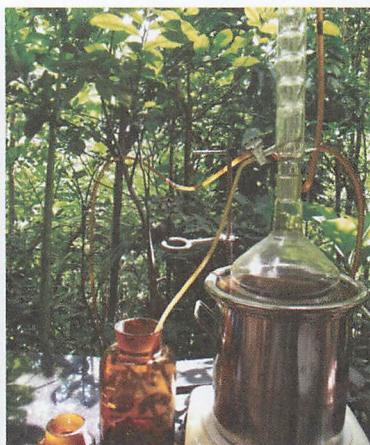
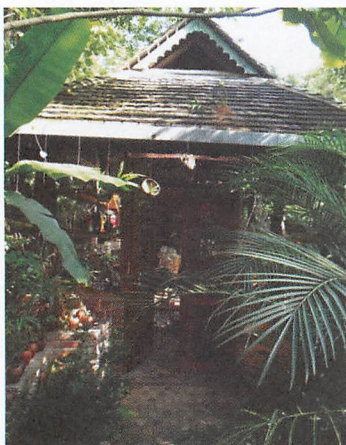
The year progressed: late May, Tajikistan; June, Turkey; August, Myanmar; September into October, another issue of the *Alchemy Journal* and the first book by Rubaphilos Salfluère published; late October, the Third International Alchemy Conference in Los Angeles; November, back to Thailand in a state of moderate exhaustion ... a dynamic year had worked to distract us from our expressed wish to contact these seemingly interesting folks at TianZi in Xishuangbanna. A little more than one week prior to closing the year with a pre-Christmas trip to family in Australia, I sent an introductory email detailing our publishing work and home laboratory, our desire to travel to Xishuangbanna to visit and experience TianZi – perhaps during February 2010, when already scheduled to be in nearby Kunming – and our request for somebody from TianZi to contribute an article towards this current 'alchemies of Asia' themed issue of the *Alchemy Journal*. Within two hours of my email, a response had arrived in

“To me, spagyrics and learning from signatures is a way of life, connecting the comprehensible with the invisible worlds, and simply a time apart from the daily management of our Centre. It has given me many hours of stillness for personal growth that I so much miss in Asia’s hectic ‘development’ ... When new products arise from spagyrics, our Centre and Nature benefit from it, making our approach ever more sustainable.”

my inbox, from a gentleman named Josef Margraf: “Your mail comes as a pleasant surprise to the remote place we are working in. I had always wondered why the *Alchemy Journal* was posted from Thailand. Now this mystery is solved.” He went on to state that we were welcome to visit, and to detail the various routes that could be taken in order to arrive at Xishuangbanna from northern Thailand, before explaining that “The focus of our work, as you may have seen on our web page, is the protection of the fast disappearing flora and fauna of our area. To accomplish this, we apply a protection and production concept, which I have studied for more than 20 years as a biologist, and which is now defined as the Rainforestation Farming system. In this system, every plant species takes on a useful function that is ultimately marketable ... One of the many options when working with plants without distinct history of use is to search their potential usefulness by starting from *signatures* and then develop *arcana*. In this sense, I work in the tradition of Paracelsus. The main difference is that the plants I mostly use are unknown to classical spagyrics. Therefore, every outcome is new and truly exciting.” Josef then elaborated that his laboratory “... is entirely adapted to local conditions. The most modern device I have is a temperature sensor to know when I have to stop distillation. Otherwise, everything is low-tech and designed for use in a village. During 2010 we are planning to gradually move our working and

living environment from Jinghong (600 metres above sea level) to the Bulang Mountains (1,600 metres above sea level). There we have a six square kilometre ‘BiodiversiTea Resort’ that we will slowly develop into an Ark for endangered species.” He closed his initial communiqué by indicating that he shared our feelings of geographical isolation and wished to discuss plant alchemy – particularly stones and *ens* – at length, and offered his best wishes and good energy for our work. Photographs of Josef’s laboratory – many of which have been featured in this issue of the *Alchemy Journal* – followed within 10 minutes. Josef seemed a kindred spirit, emanating warmth and fraternity, and left me and Marissa with a strong, and very positive, impression. It was an exciting prospect: a fellow operative alchemist, blending West and East, and so close, in neighbouring Yunnan!

Christmas and New Year came and went, during which we hosted Marissa’s father (his first visit to our Chiang Mai home since we moved abroad in early 2004) and spent a week with Thai and Hill Tribe traditional healers, herbalists, shamans, and magicians. Communication with Josef resumed in earnest during mid-January 2010, with discussions primarily focusing upon when Marissa and I could travel to Xishuangbanna, or when Josef could come to Chiang Mai. Although I was to be in China between 24 January and 08 February, and mostly in Yunnan Province, Marissa would not be able



to accompany me, and I would need to focus upon the consultancy that was taking me there. Josef mentioned that he was supposed to have travelled to Bangkok just prior to my email, but that he had cancelled due to the heavy workload at TianZi. It seemed as though we were circling each other; narrowly missing the opportunity to meet face-to-face and thus defy our isolated state. Josef indicated that he was due to speak at a freshwater conference in Bangkok in June 2010, and that such would provide him with an excellent excuse to visit us in Chiang Mai. It was 13 January and it seemed as though we would meet in due time, so we directed our dialogue to matters pertaining to Josef's article. Nine days later a document named 'Signatures' – presented within this issue as 'Morphogenesis and plant signature: the Tao of connectedness' – arrived in my email inbox. Josef explained some details of his work, addressed aspects related to the eventual presentation of the article, and signed off: "Thank you for having a look at my writing. I will be on travel for the entire next week and may be difficult to reach. My best wishes, Josef." These were the final words that Josef would share with me, in this physical plane.

On 30 January 2010, while in Kunming, I had emailed Josef. Travelling through Yunnan and Guangxi it had occurred to me that Josef would be perfect to be profiled as the Modern Magister of the 'alchemy of Asia' issue of the *Alchemy Journal*, and I wrote to him along these lines. A brief email followed soon after, written by one of the employees at TianZi, telling me that Josef had died in "a sudden but peaceful way" on 26 January 2010, and that his physical remains had been put to rest in the Bulang Mountains. Survived by his wife, Minguo Li Margraf, and two daughters, Linda and Wanda, he was just 56 years of age.

Long-time colleague and godfather to Josef's daughter Linda, Hans-Peter Paulenz, shared the following obituary:

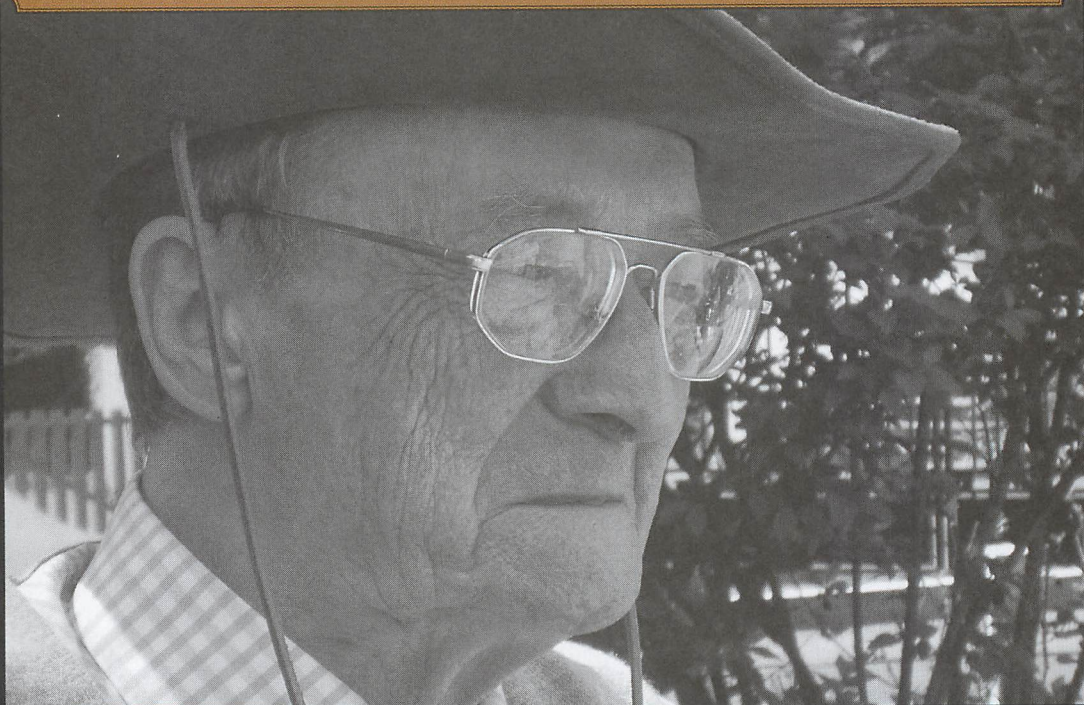
"Dr. Josef Margraf, Our beloved husband, father, son-in-law, brother-in-law,

our steadfast friend and visionary, our unique teacher and exemplary environmentalist, has suddenly and unexpectedly passed away, peacefully. From where he is now he will continue to watch over our lives, young and old: calmly, smiling, patiently, and ever understanding. He will want us to carry the torch from where he left it. Without him and without his constant gentle guidance this will be a most difficult task for us to do. Yet, in his memory, and to honour his great work, his tireless efforts and truly humane ideas, we will strive to continue – so that his dreams may one day come true, so that his legacy shall be fulfilled. May he rest in Peace and may his spirit stay forever with us. Minguo, Linda, Wanda, and all of us."

How Josef may have answered the seven Modern Magister questions will remain unknown, as will the results of our planned, but unrealised, meeting. And although the noble spirit, and important works, of Josef will continue to inspire and guide many – despite his physical absence – this note to those who are fortunate enough to make the acquaintance of an alchemical elder: do not take it for granted that our older brothers and sisters will be with us always, for it is certainly not the case. Seek them out now. Spend time with them today. Transcend your obligations to the mundane and create space to listen, question and learn. The experience of such individuals is worth more than gold, and their guidance is a gift from the Supreme Being. Do not miss the opportunity to work and share *in fraternity*, as I have in this instance. I can only echo the sages, who said: "Whatsoever thou resolvest to do, do it quickly. Defer not till the evening what the morning may accomplish."¹ Wise reader, heed these words. ▲

1 The Supreme Grand Lodge of the Ancient and Mystical Order Rosæ Crucis (A.M.O.R.C.). *Master Monograph, Temple Section*. Degree 10, Monograph 4. A.M.O.R.C.: San Jose, California.

Vale Jean Dubuis (1919-2010)



Born in 1919 in Oise County, France, 40 kilometres north of Paris, Jean Dubuis was unique in the circle of truth seekers: he was both a scientist and a genuine adept, alchemist and qabalist.

Scientist, Jean Dubuis was employed as an electronics engineer. His college studies had been interrupted by the German occupation of France during World War II and circumstance allowed him to work for several months in the atomic synthesis laboratory run by Frédéric Joliot-Curie, the nephew of Marie Curie. After the French Liberation, his path led him to work in radio-electricity companies, as they were called at that time. As Jean's career evolved he became an IBM engineer where he worked for more than 30 years, involved with the evolution of computers, from tubes to transistors to integrated circuits.

Adept, Jean Dubuis had an illuminating experience at the age of eight at Mont Saint-Michel where the existence of the invisible world was revealed to him. Slowly, he acquired the conviction and knowledge that the invisible world is the foundation for the visible one. After this finding, Jean incessantly tried to re-create his Mont Saint-Michel revelation by exploring texts of the ancients and submitting these to experimentation. Symbolism, qabalah and alchemy are all 'traditional' sciences that he studied and applied with a rigorous, prejudice-free method.

As a member of several esoteric philosophical groups, Jean first presented numerous lectures, forums and conferences on qabalah, especially on the structure of man and of the universe. Beginning in the early 1960s, Jean began publishing articles on these topics in the newsletters

of these groups in France and the U.S.A.

Jean strived to demonstrate in the laboratory the alchemical practice which he had previously studied theoretically. He succeeded and developed a plant alchemy course so that others could have the opportunity to experiment. In order to spread this teaching, in 1979 he created Les Philosophes de la Nature (LPN) – an association that he presided over and animated for 12 years. The Philosophes de la Nature published and distributed to its members the teachings of Jean in the guise of monthly monographs that included theoretical and practical exercises. The spagyric course was followed by a course on mineral alchemy, and there were additional courses offered in qabalah and general esotericism.

In parallel to the activities of the French association, Jean Dubuis continued his contacts with the U.S.A. In 1988 this led to the creation of the American association named The Philosophers of Nature (PoN). The lessons were translated into English and the association organised several well-attended seminars in the U.S.A. where Jean lectured and continued to share his knowledge.

After leading Les Philosophes de la Nature for 12 years, Jean transferred the management of the association to others in order to pursue new research, particularly in the field of mind machines. Results were shared with some members who had assisted in the trial phase of those experiments. Several years later, when Jean realised that the spirit of Les Philosophes de la Nature had been compromised and the fraternity and tolerance that previously animated the association had been rapidly lost, he decided to dissolve it.

Jean Dubuis never ceased to explore other paths that lead to initiation. He always maintained that the ultimate goal of alchemy and qabalah was progression on the path that leads to *self-consciousness*. In that spirit, initiation is the reconnection of conscious communications with upper levels of one's Being. This is

represented by those sephiroth above the material level (Malkuth), up to the Tiphereth level that Jean called the *Inner Master*. Acknowledging that these traditional paths are lengthy (and costly, in the case of alchemy), he continued to develop a set of ideas and methods that allows for much faster progress. Basing his teaching upon a modified version of the tree of the sephiroth, presented in the graphic symbol that Jean called *Portæ Lucis* (the supporting element to the meditation exercises offered in this new method of spiritual progress), this corpus was published in both French and English as *Experimental Treatise – The Experience of Eternity*.

Jean Dubuis passed away two weeks short of his 91st birthday and spent his last moments working and researching efficient techniques (especially via magnetic, auditory and visual stimuli to the brain) that would induce mental states allowing one to develop consciousness and out-of-body experiences. Although unfinished, the progress had been very promising. He used to say: "I know this is a path of the future. I do not know if I will be the one who will conclude this business but I know that some are on this path throughout the world. It will bring a tremendous social change when people realise that there is life without the body and all major religions will collapse because people will have direct perceptions of the other worlds and will be able to judge based upon knowledge, not faith." Perhaps, as for all great men, it was his unfinished Work. Perhaps, also, his findings were too early for this planet.

Jean will be missed by everyone who came into contact with him. His incredible teachings, as well as his personality – never judging others, never playing guru, always hinting or suggesting and never condemning others' behaviours – place him in the very small circle of true initiates who, throughout humanity's history, bore in secret the real title of Rose-Cross. ▲

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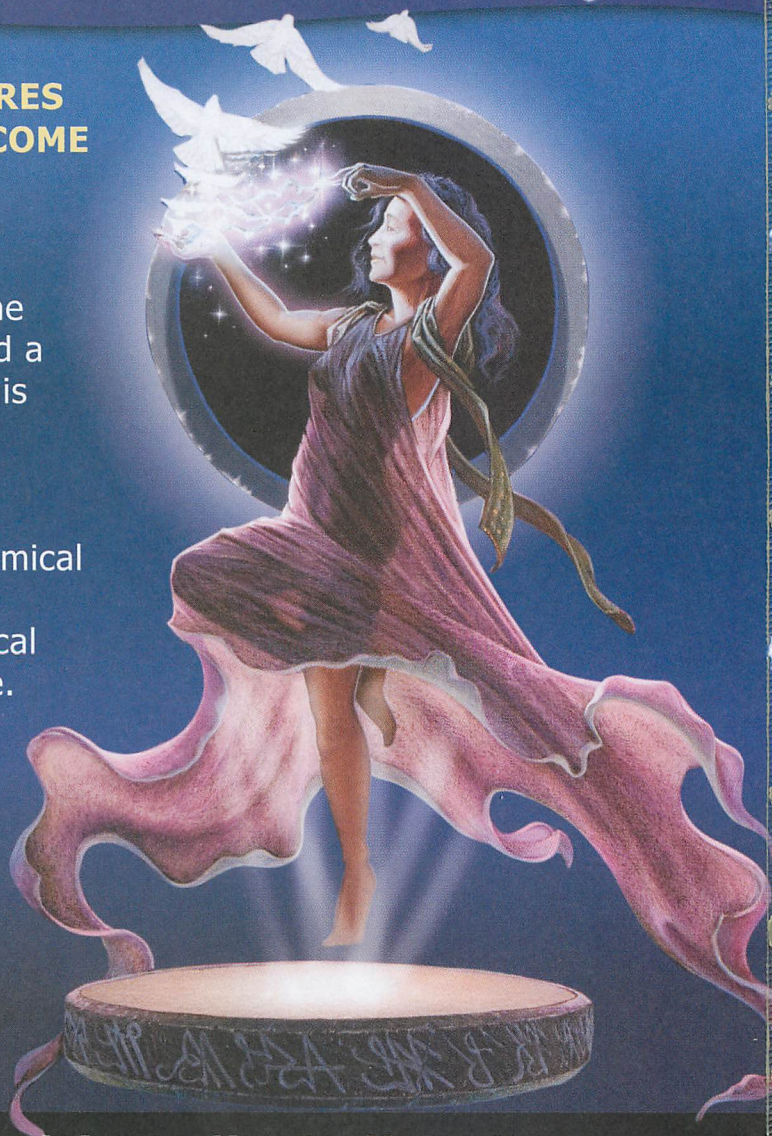
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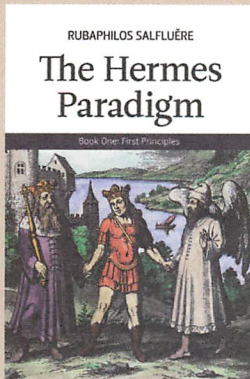


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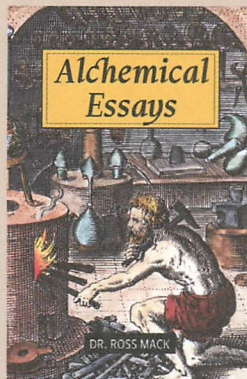


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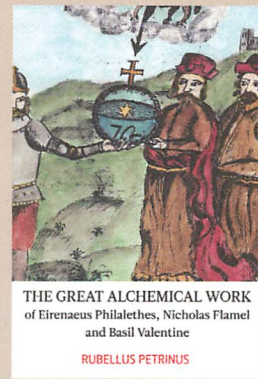
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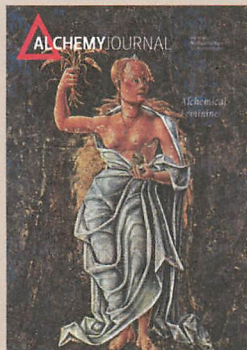
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