

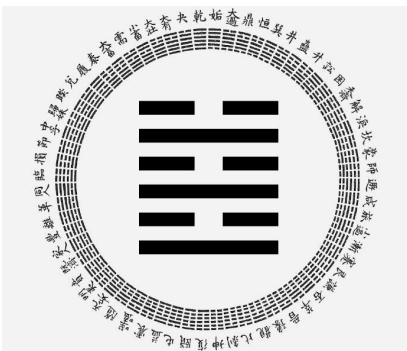
Dao Roots of Ch'an/Zen | Shinto Roots of Ceremonial Tea

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with Gerow Reece and Cain "Caiyam" Carroll

Yijing Hexagram 63: Water over Fire

Water over Fire is an ancient symbol of alchemical transformation (the Yijing was written circa 1000 BCE). Imagine a beautifully crafted pot (the body) sitting atop a well-tended fire (awareness-light turned within). The interaction of the fire and water is one of "cooking the perfect soup," as it were. This is an image used by mystical traditions the world over. One recalls the story of Rumi's chickpea, a metaphor for the process of spiritual maturation which, as it turns out, entails a bit of time in hot waters :)



Dao (道): Nature-itself, the nameless constant, means literally "way or "path". Laozi uses it in a much larger sense of "the way things are" suggesting the unknowable totality all processed in Nature.

Fire and Water as Yin-Yang

At the very root of the Way of Tao is the observation of polarity. Ancient sages simply noticed that the entire phenomenal world—from plants to planets to thoughts—operates through the interplay of complementary opposites. They called these two *yin* and *yang*. "Yin" simply means the shady side of the hill, while "yang" means the sunny side. The root of the phenomenal world, Yin-Yang is the alternation that we experience within Dao.

"Yang transforms and yin conserves. Yang and yin manifest as movement and rest. Yang moves to its utmost, then rests. Yin rests to its utmost, then moves. Therefore, yin rests within yang and yang moves within yin. The two are inseparably interwoven. It is like this -- as a single unit -- that they are one with Dao." - **Chu Hsi** (11th century CE)



De (德): Self-nature, the unique virtue of any being-thing.

Mother (母): An image of Dao (pervasive reality) as naturally giving birth to and sustaining/nurturing *de* (differentiated beings/things).

Heaven and Earth (天地): Duality, the dual world in which transformation takes place. The “parents” of all phenomena.

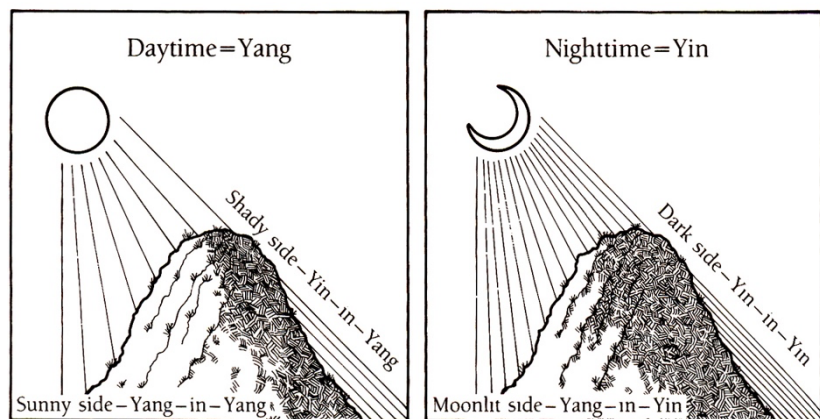
Jing (精): Essence. The aspect of reality that appears as seemingly stable form. In human embodiment, this is the flesh and bones, tissues and fluids..

Qi (氣): Energy. The rhythmic unfolding of time; the aspect of embodiment that manifests as movement and change (relatedness). The character depicts a wind that carries seeds.

Shen (神): Spirit. A being’s “countenance” or the radiance that arises from the relationship of jing and qi, the totality of one’s embodiment, another word for de (self-nature).

Wuwei (無為): The central theme of the Daodejing. Life without compulsive agenda or contrivance. Often mistranslated as “non-action,” wuwei implies action without self-reference. For further study, see the Daodejing chapters 2, 37, 48.

To act in wuwei is to be inseparable from Dao.



“Wu-wei is a foundational assumption shaping ancient Chinese intellectual culture; and as Ch’an is integral to that culture, wu-wei is also a foundational assumption shaping Ch’an/Zen practice.”

- David Hinton, *China Root: Taoism, Ch’an, and Original Zen*

Ziran (自然): Suchness. “The way things are,” Nature experienced as self-arising and self-resolving. For study, see the Daodejing chapters 25 and 51.

Dao, the Mother, and Ch’an/Zen’s Feminine Origin

Daodejing: Chapter 52 (translation by Liu Ming)

There is a Mother that gestates all under Heaven.
To experience the Mother is to observe her children.

Embrace the children and you return to the Mother!
This is called going "beyond birth and death."
I close the channels and shut the gates;

My qi is collected.
I open the channels to interact;
My qi flows outward.

In either case,
To see the subtle is clarity.
To be gentle is true strength.
The union of clarity and true strength is natural light.
This is called practicing the always-so.

Ch'an was born out of what might be described as a nuanced sensibility of the absurdity of the human condition. This was the gift of Zhuangzi (alternatively Chuang Tzu) to Indian Buddhism in China.

- **Mu Soeng**

Trust in Mind: The Rebellion of Chinese Zen

Equivalent Terms

Buddhism: Self-nature, buddha-nature, original nature, dharma-nature
"Seeing self-nature, our nature sees itself"

Daoism: Self-nature, dao-nature, innate nature

Bodhidharma

When Buddhism came from India to China, the character *Dao* (道) was used as a translation of the Sanskrit words *Dharma* and *Bodhi*. This was partly because Buddhism was viewed as a foreign version of Daoism. Hence, Bodhidharma, in his Bloodstream Sermon, says "Dao is Zen." The Daodejing, Chapter 4, line reads, "Dao is neither empty or full. Deep like the ancestor of the ten thousand things. A dark, abiding presence."

From Bodhidharma's sermons:

Bodhidharma: "In India, the twenty-seven patriarchs only transmitted the imprint of awareness. And the only reason I have come to China is to transmit the instantaneous teaching of Mahayana: Awareness is buddha. I don't talk about precepts, devotions, or

ascetic practices...Once you recognize your moving, miraculously aware nature, yours is the mind of buddhas. "

Bodhidharma: "If you don't see your own miraculously aware nature, you will never find a buddha even if you break your body into atoms. The buddha is your real body, your original mind."

Chuang Tzu: Inner Chapters: "Not making distinctions but dwelling on that which is unchanging is called clear vision."

Bodhidharma: "Our mortal nature is our buddha-nature. Beyond this nature, there's no buddha. The buddha is our nature. There's no buddha besides this nature. And there's no nature besides this buddha."

Bodhidharma: "The Way (Dao) is basically perfect. It doesn't require perfecting. The Way has no form or sound. It's subtle and hard to perceive. It's like when you drink water; you know how hot or cold it is, but you can't explain this to others. Of that which only a tathagata knows people and gods are unaware."

Daodejing (Chapter 14): As to this one, its sky is not bright and its night not dark. Ceaselessly creating countless forms, ceaselessly returning to formlessness. Call it the "formless form." Its image is without substance, call it shadowy chaos.

Bodhidharma: "If you see your nature, you don't need to read sutras or invoke buddhas. Erudition and knowledge are only for pointing to the mind. Once you see your mind, why pay attention to doctrines?"

Chuang Tzu: Inner Chapters: "You understand how to act from knowledge, but you have not yet seen how to act from non-knowing. Look at empty space. It is in emptiness that light is born."

Bodhidharma: "Once you see your nature, all attachments end. Awareness isn't hidden. But you can only find it right now. It's only now".

Chuang Tzu: Inner Chapters: "Forget time; forget distinction. Enjoy the infinite; rest in it."

Selected verses of the Xinxinming ("Trust in Mind"), one of the most beloved texts in the Ch'an/Zen tradition (600 CE) with some resonate verses from the Daodejing.

Xinxinming: "If you don't live the Dao, you fall into assertion or denial: asserting that the world is real you are blind to its deeper reality;

denying that the world is real you are blind to the selflessness of all things.”

Daodejing (Chapter 62): “Dao is like a hidden spring within all beings-things. It is a treasure for those who cultivate Dao, and a refuge for those who disregard it.”

Xinxinming: “The more you think about these matters, the farther you are from the truth; step aside from all thinking and there is nowhere you can't go.”

Chuang Tsu: Inner Chapters: “We cling to our own point of view, as though everything depended on it. And yet our opinions have no permanence: Like autumn and winter they gradually pass away.”

Xinxinming: “Returning to the root, you find the meaning; chasing appearances, you lose their source.”

Daodejing (Chapter 52): “There is a Mother that gestates all under Heaven. To experience the Mother is to observe her children. Embrace the children and you return to the Mother.

This is called going “beyond birth and death.”

Tung Ssu-ching's (13th Century Daoist master) comment: “People are born when they receive breath. Breath is their mother. And spirit dwells in their breath. When children care for their mother, their breaths become one and their spirits become still.”

Xinxinming: “At the moment of profound insight, you transcend both appearance and emptiness. Don't keep searching for the truth, just let go of your opinions. For the mind in harmony with Dao, all selfishness disappears with not even a trace of self-doubt; you can trust the universe completely. All at once you are free with nothing left to hold on to, all is empty brilliant perfect in its own being.”

Chuang Tzu: Inner Chapters: “If there is no other, there is no I. If there is no I, there is no one to perceive. This is close to the truth, but we don't know why. There must be some primal force, but we cannot discover any proof. I believe it acts, but I cannot see it. I can feel it, but it has no form.”

Xinxinming: “In all the world of things as they are, there is no self no non-self. If you want to describe its essence, the best you can say is “not two”; in this “not two” nothing is separate, and nothing in the world is excluded. The enlightened of all times and places have entered into this truth; in it there is no gain or loss. One instant is ten thousand years; there is no here, no there; infinity is right before your eyes.”

Xinxinming: “The tiny is as large as the vast when objective boundaries have vanished; the vast is as small as the tiny when you don't have external limits. Being is an aspect of

non-being; non-being is no different from being: until you understand this truth you won't see anything clearly."

Chuang Tsu: Inner Chapters: "When there is no more separation between 'this' and 'that,' it is called the still-point of Dao. At the still-point in the center of the circle, one can see the infinite in all things. Right is infinite; wrong is also infinite. Therefore it is said, 'Behold the light beyond right and wrong.'"

Xinxinming: "One is all, all is one; when you realize this what reason for holiness or wisdom? The mind of absolute trust is beyond all thought, all striving, is perfectly at peace, for in it there is no yesterday no today no tomorrow."

Daodejing (Chapter 19): "Get rid of wisdom and reason and people will live a hundred times better. Get rid of kindness and justice and people once more will return to love and obey. Get rid of cleverness and profit and thieves will cease to exist."

The Daoist notion that intuitive insight surpasses rational analysis found a strong echo in the Prajnaparamita sutras of Indian Mahayana, and it is said that 'when Daoist naturalism met Indian Mahayana metaphysics, the result was Ch'an/Zen.'

- Mu Soeng

Shinto Roots of Tea

Chado, in which a person entertains guests, is actually a ritual that has been systematized through inheriting in the strictest form the Shinto rituals in which persons entertain *kami* (deities).

- Uesugi Chisato (1923-2010)

Shinto chief priest and college president

It is undeniable that Shinto has its roots in the spiritual life of the Jomon period, the Neolithic period in Japan dating back more than 10,000 years. It is thought that Shinto developed closely with rice cultivation in the Yayoi period from about 500 to 300 BCE. That cultivation depended on weather conditions so rites and festivals to pray to and thank the *kami* (deities) for good harvests were important.

Those Japanese also sensed and recognized a natural power surpassing human power, a magical power and sacredness in natural phenomena, such as wind, rain and thunder, and in such natural objects as rocks, waterfalls, trees, mountains and animals. They feared, respected, worshiped them as *kami*.

Other special items such as swords, mirrors and precious stones were also worshiped for their spiritual, magical powers. Since the chiefs of clans and other highly valued persons were widely respected, that respect developed into worship of their purified souls as kami after they died. We can say that respect for and worship of the life force in nature and ancestors became the essence of spiritual practice.

This became identified as "Shinto" 神 (*kami*/deity) 道 (way) in contrast to "Butsudo" 仏 (Buddha) 道 (way) as Buddhism spread throughout Japan in the 5th and 6th centuries.

Later during a time of Shinto resurgence in the 18th century, a less "Chinese" style term was forwarded: "Kannagara no Michi," 神ながらの道: as the kami wish; like the kami; the kami's thusness.

Other terms:

Jinja 神社 shrine: place of worship in Shinto

(Ise) *Jingu* 神宮 a major shrine

Tera 寺 temple: Buddhist practice/worship center.

Basic Shinto virtues: pure, clear, correct, honest and familial

Harae: purification—by ritual or by water

A few of the countless deities:

Izanagi and Izanami

Amaterasu: universe, sun

Tsukuyomi: night, moon

Susano-o: sea, storms

Meanwhile, let us have a sip of tea. The afternoon glow is brightening the bamboo, the fountains are bubbling with delight, the sighing of the pines is heard in our kettle. Let us dream of evanescence and linger in the beautiful foolishness of things.

- **Okakura Kakuzō**, *The Book of Tea*

Japanese Tea Vocabulary

Cha no yu 茶の湯 (tea's hot water) ceremonial tea

Chado 茶道: the Way of Tea

Roji: area around the pathway to the tea hut

Tsukubai: water basin for cleansing hands and heart/mind

Cha-shitsu: tea house/hut/room

Tokonoma: alcove/focal center in the *cha-shitsu*

Cha-dogu: tea utensils:

cha-wan: tea bowl

cha-ki: tea container

cha-shaku: tea scoop

cha-sen: tea whisk

kama: iron kettle

mizusashi: cold water container

fukusa: silk cloth used to purify (restore, vitalize) the *cha-ki* and *cha-shaku*.

Temae: a set procedure for offering tea

Aware: sense of dismay at observed transience especially in nature. E.g. falling petals.

Yugen: mysterious, vague, subtle, profoundly deep, moving impression/feelings

Sabi: 錆 rust, tarnish; 淋 desolate dreary 寂び: beauty from age or use

Wabi: 侘び: rustic, simple, accidental yet refined

Important Figures in the History of Japanese Ceremonial Tea

Ikkyū (1394-1481)

Shukō (1423-1502)

Jō-ō (1502-1555)

Sen no Rikyū (1522-1591)

Originally, the Japanese words wabi and sabi had quite different meanings. Sabi originally meant 'chill', 'lean' or 'withered'. Wabi originally meant the misery of living alone in nature, away from society... Around the 14th century, the meanings of both words began to evolve in the direction of more positive aesthetic values.

- Leonard Koren

Kokoro no Fumi (Letter of the Heart) by Shukō

In the Way of Tea, nothing will hinder you more than immodesty and the heart's attachment to self. Begrudging masters of the Way and looking down on beginners is superficial and wasteful. One should rather seek the least word of those wise in the Way and endeavour to guide beginners as far as possible.

Of the utmost importance for this Way is dissolving the boundaries between Japanese and foreign art objects. One must attend to this with care.

Further, these days those inexperienced in the Way are quick to take up Bizen and Shigaraki wares, claiming an advanced and deepened understanding of the 'chilled

and withered' aesthetics they embody. All the while the elite Tea community mocks these eager yet presumptuous hopefuls, creating a disgraceful state of affairs.

An aesthetic sensibility for the 'chill and withered' means acquiring fine pieces with a view to knowing their savour in the marrow-bone. Then from the heart's ground one advances and deepens so that all after becomes chill and lean. It is here that one truly uncovers beauty that moves.

When one does not yet fully understand the beauty of things, it is crucial that one does not adopt commonly held views without scrutiny. However cultivated one's manner, a painful self-awareness of one's shortcomings is crucial. Remember that self-assertion and attachment are obstructions. Yet the Way is unattainable if there is no self-esteem at all. A dictum of the Way states: "Become heart's master, not heart-mastered".

Sources: Inspiration and quotes

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