Dedication

This translation is dedicated to
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太上老君内觀經

Tăishāng Lăojūn Nèiguānjīng

Tăishāng Lăojūn: Classic of Internal Contemplation

Nèiguānjīng (DZ 641) was probably written during early Táng-dynasty and has been very influential among Shāngqīng (上清) tradition. The author of this work remains unknown. The fact that the text uses older organ-spirit correspondences (where for example Jīng instead of Zhǐ is the spirit connected to the kidneys) might indicate even earlier origin. Fragments of these old associations can be found for example in Huángdí (bāshìyì) Nànjīng which mentions seven shēns and Jīng in the kidneys. In most medical books of the age already listed the five shēn under their current places. However some other Shāngqīng texts of the era used these older associations too.

The text itself shares many similarities with Indian Saññāpattāna Sutta and might been born from Buddhist influences that streamed to China during Táng-dynasty.

Just like many other Shāngqīng texts the Nèiguānjīng concentrates on inner principles/divinities within ones own being and utilizes contemplation and meditation for enlightenment. Compared to many other texts of inner alchemy Nèiguānjīng is exceptionally systematic and easy to understand.

Current translation tries to honor the Chinese expressions which can be bit hard to read sometimes. Some of the terms like Shēn, Lìng, Hūn and Pō are left untranslated. There are no proper terms in English language and the terms are more or less explained in course of the text. Some terms has been translated literally even when the literal translation might not be the best. Xīn (word for heart in Chinese) is a good example. In Chinese the heart has also meaning mind. In English the heart is used sometimes in similar way (ie. “what's on your heart?”). For sake of consistency the heart is translated in same way during the translation even at the places where word mind would have been more accurate and more readable. Many ambiguous terms have gone through translation to ease the reading even when losing much of the descriptive value of the original term. In these cases the pinyin transliliteration is also given to ease comparing the translation to other texts.

Mikael Ikivesi

According the legends the origin of Nèiguānjīng lies with Tăishāng Lăojūn (太上老君). Tăishāng Lăojūn is one of the deities called Sānquīng (三清) or Three Pure Ones. World knows his human form as Lăozǐ (老子) or Lao Tze.
Lǎojūn said:

In intercourse Heaven and Earth mix [their] essences\(^1\)
Yīn and Yáng mingle and change
10 000 beings have their birth
And inherit their positions
As part of unity of Ling\(^2\) and Dao

When father and mother have intercourse the human being has its beginning

During the first month in womb the essences and blood concentrate
During the second month fetus-form will develop from the embryo
During the third month the Yángshēn forms three Hūns
And begins to move and live
During the fourth month Yīnling forms seven Pòs to slow and cool the form\(^3\)
During the fifth month five phases divide to Zàngs and pacify [their] Shēns
During the sixth month six laws fix Fū-organs to nourish the Ling
During the seventh month seven essences open [their] orifices to Bright light\(^4\)
During the eighth month the eight luminous Shēn\(^5\) can descend true Ling
During the ninth month from the Palace room\(^6\) the threads extend to manage the essence
During the tenth month Qì is sufficient and 10 000 forms\(^7\) are ready
Original harmony nourishes without interruption

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1. Jing
2. Ling could be translated as The Great Spirit or Divine
3. Xīng
4. Guāngmíng
5. Bìjīngshēn. Description of these months has been copied to many later texts but this Bìjīngshēn has been replaced with Yuānshēn (元神).
6. Gōngshí
7. Xuàng
Highest divinity in the head is called Niwánjūn\(^1\)
It gathers all the Shēns
Studying life one understands Shēn
In human it is Hūn
Fate\(^2\) resides in the Heart
[As it] receives origin of life
Flowerless\(^3\) resides at the left
It regulates three Hūn
White origin\(^4\) resides at the right
It restrains seven Pò
Peachchild\(^5\) resides at the navel
It protects the root of essence
Like the whole is composed of hundreds parts
Life is [sum of] hundreds Shēns
In same way the whole embodiment\(^6\) is full of Shēns without an empty spot
Original qì\(^7\) enters the nose flowing to Niwán\(^8\)
As result there is Spiritual Brightness\(^9\)
And form is strong and peaceful
Movement and stillness depend on Heart
Therefore it is said life has its cause in burning [of Heart]
I [used] inner contemplation [on] its parts\(^10\)

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1. Mud pall ruler
2. Sīning
3. Wūyíng - Also translated as Barren one, Petalless or Leafless.
4. Bāiyuān
5. Tāohuí
6. Shēn means embodiment or being. Term is usually translated simply as body.
7. Yuānqī
8. Niwán
9. Shēnming. Result of Yuānqī flowing to Niwán is Spiritual Brightness or clear consciousness.
10. This sentence can be seen also mean that this: "gives the inner contemplation its meaning and role".
The Heart is the royal residence and master of whole embodiment
The Heart can imprison or [when] regulated keep form and spirit free depravity
From the Heart follows Shén that transforms and changes without measures
Therefore it is without fixed shape

Thus five Zàng hide five Shén
[Three] Hǔn in Liver
[Seven] Pò in Lungs
Jīng in Kidneys
Zhi in Spleen
And Shén in Heart
Each having its own name according their dwellings

The Heart [belongs to] Fire and South direction
[It is] Essence of Sun¹
Ruler of Fire
Above it is Mars²
Below it corresponds to Heart
Color is red
It has threefold petals like lotus flower
Spiritual Brightness depends on tranquility and calmness [of mind]
[Spiritual Brightness] is honorary title [of the Heart-Shén]
This Shén is not blue-green nor yellow, not big nor small
Not short nor long, not curved nor straight
Not soft nor hard, not thick nor slim, not round nor square
It transforms and changes without limits
Blending Yin and Yang
[In its] huge embrace are the Heaven and Earth³
Delicately gathering [all] hair-like rays
When it is regulate then it is upright
When let loose it is mad
[While it is] pure and clean then there is life
[While it is] dirty and impatient then there is death

¹. Tài yáng
². Ying hóu
³. Heaven and Earth means cosmos or whole world.
Enlightenment illuminates eight directions¹ darkness deceits into one direction
If one can be empty and quiet the life and Dao are naturally eternal
Forever protect Non-action² and the embodiment³ flourishes

Because [Dao] has no shape it cannot be named
Suffering and blessing, success and failure are all from it!
Therefore [in the past] the saints set rulers and statesman having
Understanding of rewards and punishments
Placed officials and bureaucrats to establish laws and measures for
Righteousness in order to teach people
Because the human disasters are hidden only in their own Hearts
If Hearts are clean and empty 10 000 sufferings are not born
When [Heart] is unsettled and unrestrained life dies
And sinks to hating Dao
All this is because of the Heart

It is deceptive to miss, hate or love⁴, receive or let go, avoid or to be attracted
[By them one] get caught and bind slowly, coiling and wrapping itself
Turning and sitting in bondage without being able to release and escape
Thus arriving to ones death just like an ox or horse when caught in soft mud
Move and get more tangled without being able to release by themself and die
Human is just the same:
When born the Shén is originally pure, calm, clear and natural without medley
Later receiving [things] the form get polluted from six emotions
Eyes greedy for colors, ears fatigued from sounds, mouth indulged from taste
Nose receiving fragrances, Yi⁵ following health and praises
And body desiring fatness and easiness
From this comes the unsettled and unrestrained [Heart] that cannot itself wake⁶

The saint with compassionate teachings gave instructions to change this by
Internally contemplating ones own being [and thus] purifying ones Heart

¹. Eight directions mean entire universe, all dimensions and times.
². Wéiwéi
³. Shén
⁴. Āi means to love, to like and an affection. In the text term is used to express sentimental liking, loving
and clinging instead of real love and compassion. These kind of emotions are seen as forms of attachment.
⁵. Wake in a spiritual sense. In Japanise this is called Satori. Satori means sudden enlightenment or awakening
when one sees things as they are.
⁶. Here Yi could be translated to mind as used in common language (ie. thoughts, affections and hopes).
Lǎojūn said:

Examine and contemplate your embodiment\(^1\)
From emptiness without center comes causes and reasons
Steering and gathering essence and concentrating Qi
Riding with lotus the Shén descends\(^2\)
Mixing and combining to receive life

Laws of Heaven reflect on Earth
Inhale Yīn - exhale Yáng
Sort out confusion in five phases
To resonate four seasons
Eyes are Sun and Moon
Hair like constellations and planets
Eyebrows are like magnificent canopy
Head is like mount Kūnlún
Lined around are imperial watchtowers
Resting place of Essence-spirit\(^3\) is in the center of 10 000 things
Highest in human is the Ling
[When] nature and fate join in Dao
Man is like fallen in love with it

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1. Shĕn
2. Some versions have 象雲降神 translating as: “Riding with karma the Shén descends”.
3. Jīngshĕn
Internally contemplate this embodiment
Meditate human being as just offering of wine
And be free of self glorification
[As it only] deceives and pollutes everything
[If] earth is not clean it stinks
Filth and impurity confuses form and Shén

Carefully contemplate things and ego¹
What is distant²
What is close³
Protect Dao [to obtain] eternal life
Be virtuous and preserve genuine
World is just stupid tasks and errands
[People just] follow it to bitterness and exhaustion

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¹ Wǒ (我), term is rarely used in the classics. It is used to mean ego as an entity that arises and controls the body.
² Shū also means unknown, hard to grasp and thin.
³ Qin also means important, heavy and familiar.
Lǎojūn said:

Dao provides our role and it is known as fate¹
[From this] naturally [follows] our qualities and form
[And that] we call Nature²
This [Nature] assigns beings [their proper places]
We call this Heart
In Heart resides the memory³
We call it intention⁴
When intention manifests we call it will⁵
Will used without ignorance is called wisdom⁶
Wisdom about 10 000 beings is called intelligence⁷
[The spirits/influences that] move and direct are called [three] Hún
[The spirits/influences that] still and cool are called [seven] Pó
[That which] flows and moves in bones and flesh we call blood
[That which] protects Shén and nourish Qi is called essence
Qi [that is] fast and quick, is known as [nourishing] róngqi
Qi [that is] turbid and slow is known as [defensive] wèiqi
[That which] collects and binds together 100 shèn is known as embodiment
10 000 images becoming whole visible [body] known as form
Mass that itself blocks [everything] is called matter⁸
Look and manners that can be imitated is substance/style⁹
[The whole composed of] big and small parts is called body¹⁰
The whole that can be thought but not measured is called Shén
The distant that is echoed through these transformations is called Líng
Qi coming and entering the embodiment is called life
Shén leaving from embodiment is called death
Therefore opening to life is called to Dao

¹ Ming is usually translated as life, fate or destiny.
² Xìng
³ Yì (意)
⁴ Yì (意)
⁵ Zhi (智)
⁶ Zhi (智)
⁷ Huí (惠) means literally intelligence, but might be better translated here as true wisdom.
⁸ Zhi (智)
⁹ Ti (體)
¹⁰ Qi (氣)
Wings transforms [one] to Spirit-immortal. Man cannot eternally preserve Dao. Because he cannot use inner contemplation on his Heart, life is not eternal so use Dao to maintain it. Life and death follows from following Dao and losing Dao. [When] life and life dies, [loose] Dao and Dao loses. We call this Heart. Transforms and changes without limits. Therefore teaching man to cultivate Dao. Also to cultivate Heart. Teaching man to cultivate Heart is also to cultivate Dao.
Lǎojūn said:

People therefe, lost and unrestrained, hate Dao
[They] sink and become lost into dregs and filth
Along with six emotions rises deceits
[This] gives birth to six conditioned consciousness¹
Six conditioned consciousness [brings] difference and distinction
Attachment and binding, hate and love
Going and coming, receiving and letting go
Lusts, bonds, pains and worries
And thus Dao is forever lost

So contemplate six conditioned consciousness that create six desires
From where do the desires arise?
The desires rise from conditioned consciousness
From where the conditioned consciousness rises?
The conditioned consciousness naturally rises from desires
Distorted thoughts turn everything around
And life [becomes under] conditioned consciousness

It is said of natural² and non-action³ that [one must] first be empty and tranquil
Original⁴ is free from conditioned consciousness
Having conditioned consciousness [means] separating and differentiating
It gives rise to all abnormal states of consciousness⁵
Abnormal consciousness only multiply until there are troubles and madness
Expanding and spreading they lie and bind
Unsettled and unrestrained [they] give birth to death
And Dao is lost forever

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¹ Word is sometimes translated as consciousness. The character 體 means perception, knowledge, understanding, opinion and view. Six conditioned consciousness or modes of perception are colored ways of seeing and understanding the world and understand it through ones opinions.

² Zìrán

³ Wùwèi

⁴ Yuán

⁵ Xièjiān.
Man always wishes for life but cannot be empty in Heart
Man always wishes for death but cannot maintain his Shen
Or wishing to become fat without eating properly.

1. Shunmung

Therefore it is said: Life and death belongs to form and not to the Dao.

So it is said that life and death both have birth and death.

Laozi said:

Dao has no birth or death but forms have birth and death.

Form has life because of losing its Dao.

So constant maintaining of Dao results in freedom from death.

Human can maintain life by maintaining Dao.

So it is said if one can always be clear and tranquil in his Heart
When Dao naturally arrives at its residence.
When Spiritual Brightness enters within embodiment.
Life does not die.
Lǎo ān said:

Dao is obtained by Heart
The Heart is enlightened by Dao
From the enlightening of Heart follows the descending of Dao
From the descending of Dao follows the opening of the Heart

Spiritual Brightness within embodiment can be compared to fire of a oil lamp
Brightness follow from fire
Fire from burning
Burning from oil
And oil needs a bowl
[When these] four are used up how could the light come?
In same way light comes from shining of Shēn entrusted in the Heart
Water is because of form
And form is because of Dao
None of these enough alone
[Upon which] could light depend on?

Therefore it is said of Spiritual Brightness
[That by it] the eyes see
Ears hear
Intention knows
And Heart understands\(^1\)

[It is the facility] to differentiate things and laws
To understand whole composed of finest details
[All this is] because of the Shēn and its brightness

Therefore we speak of Spiritual Brightness\(^2\)

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1. 覚 jie is composed of studying and seeing or understanding. It means understanding, awarness, knowledge.
   The character is translated in Buddhist context as enlightenment, awakening and understanding.
2. Shên ming
Lǎojūn said:

It is said that the Empty Heart\(^1\) means letting go of the fullness
No-Heart\(^2\) means removing its contents
Settled Heart means making it non-moving
Peaceful Heart means action without fear
Tranquil Heart means making it non-confused
True Heart means action without evil
Pure Heart means action without impurity
Clear Heart means action without filth
All contents must be wiped out

[Thus one obtains] four [qualities of] consciousness:
[1] Heart has direction meaning freedom from returning and repetition
[2] Heart has peace meaning freedom from high and low
[3] Heart has brightness meaning freedom from darkness and concealed
[4] Heart is open meaning freedom from obstructions and hindrances
[Then] all starts shine naturally

[There are just] rought words to describe it with language
Rest needs to be imagined

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1. In following sentences the Heart must be remembered to mean mind also.
   The word Heart is kept for sake of consistency.
2. No-heart/mind is usually translated as no-thought or free of thoughts.
Lǎojūn said:

To know Dao is easy
To prove Dao is difficult
To prove Dao is easy
To walk Dao is difficult
To walk Dao is easy
To obtain Dao is difficult
To obtain Dao is easy
To maintain Dao is difficult
To maintain and not to lose is the only eternal existence
Laogian said:

Dao cannot be expressed by words, taught by words or obtained verbally.

Dao is always empty Heart and tranquil Shen.

Stupid who does not know his form:

Shen's Heart

Guard his will

And Shen becomes even more sad

He tembers his Heart

One turns his back to Dao by searching for Dao.
Lǎojiǔn said:

Nobility of Dao always maintained
Protecting the Shēn
Firming the root
Essence and Qī not scattered
Pure and clear do not separated
Form and Shēn united in Dao
Flying high to mount Kūnlún
Born in earlier Heaven
Maintained in later Heaven
Exiting and entering without division
Free from cause¹ and their doors²

Blowing Yīn
Warming Yáng
Regulate [seven] Pó
Capture [three] Hūn
Millions harvests with family
Tens of thousands years with offsprings
Are just yellow dust [of Earth]

[After] four [qualities of consciousness] have risen
[You'll] ride with sheep as true person³
To golden palace and jade chamber
Giving up the old and welcoming the new

¹. 由 Yōu means cause. This refers to karma.
². 门 Mén refers to "dividing passage" through which one comes and goes away.
   Freedom from doors means freedom from birth and death.
³. 合道 Fǔdào is to ride with sheep as true person.
Lǎojūn said:

Dao of Inner contemplation is tranquil Shén and settled Heart
Confused thoughts may not arise
Evil and deceitful may not invade
Secure embodiment from surrounding things
Close eyes and thoughts from searching outside [world]
Inwardly empty and serene
Shén and Dao are subtle and profound
External [world] hides 10 000 conditions
Internally observe unified Heart
Once truly shining and tranquil
All confusion will cease
[Even passing flow of] reflections and memories tied [together]
The deep root [remains] peaceful
Dwelling constantly in utmost clearness and certainty
Obscurities, hardness, mourning and worries forever gone
[One is] without knowing right or wrong
Lǎojūn said:

I was not [always] saint
But studied and obtained it
I’ searched Dao but could not catch it
Thousands of classics and tens of thousands of methods
In the end it was all about Heart

1. 我 Wǒ is ego-centered-I and wù (吾) in the beginning refers more to "real I".