

## 6.3 Guarding of the One Meditation

### From the Scriptures of the Great Peace (32 – 7 BC)

The Scriptures of the Great Peace (太平經, Tàipíng Jīng or 太平清領書, Tàipíng qīng líng shū)<sup>1</sup> dates back to the Han dynasty (202 BC – AD 220). An early intact copy of the text dates to around 32 – 7 BC. The Scriptures refer to a set of Taoist sacred texts preserved in the *Daozang* (道藏), or Taoist canon, consisting of 170 volumes. The volumes cover the cosmology of Heaven and Earth, the Wu Xing, and cultivation methods for invoking and learning from the Immortals. The volumes include grimoires with instructions on how to cure diseases and exorcise demons. Its stated purpose was to reveal esoteric methods for ushering in an era of Great Peace.

Most notable in the Scriptures is the Guarding of the One meditation (守一冥想, Shǒu Yī míng xiǎng), the “One” a reference to the Tao. The meditation reunites the individual spirit with the Tao. According to the text, after the One divided into the Two, then Three and into the myriad things per Lao Tzu’s Tao Te Ching, the myriad things, which includes us, become more “matter” than “spirit” (which is sourced from the One). The more “matter” we become and the less “spirit” we are as bodies, the more prone to illness, pain, and suffering we are. Thus, the Taoist mystic’s objective is to reunite their “matter” with the “spirit” of the One. By reuniting with the One, which is the Tao, we can transcend mortality, suffering, and misfortune.

The purpose of the Guarding of the One meditation is to improve physical health and longevity. That objective is achieved through visualization of yourself integrating the Light of the five changing phases, which in turn fortifies and increases the power of your personal *qi*.

To start, you’ll need a room dedicated as your sacred space for spiritual cultivation. The space should be set up such that entering the room will be akin to entering a different realm or dimension. To achieve that, the space needs a fortified entrance (門戶, mén hù). Conceptualize this like a *torii*, a traditional Shinto gate found at the entrance of a shrine that symbolically marks the threshold between a mundane space and a sacred space. You’ll need to construct a threshold from a physical door so that it separates your sacred space from mundane space.

Then meditate in that space daily. Perform all of your rites and rituals there. Routine meditation and rites in that space further empowers it.

Instructions for the actual process of the Guarding of the One meditation begins with projecting a mirror image of yourself out of your physical body and being able to see that projected image of you as if looking at your own reflection in a mirror.

To achieve this, sit comfortably in meditation position with a neutral hand mudra, or hand positioning. Close your eyes, focus on your breathing, and when you feel grounded and centered, you are ready to project that mirror reflection of yourself out of your own body—your astral body.

Once your astral body is outside of your physical body, keep your gaze and focus on this astral body, this reflection of yourself. The text notes that in the beginning, this reflection may be hard to hold still in your mind’s eye and might come in and out of view, so you must guard it like tending to a fire that has just started so as not to let the flames

---

<sup>1</sup> “太平经 (Tàipíng Jīng), or Scriptures of the Great Peace (32 – 7 BC),” 古典文学网 (Classical Literature Network), accessed May 31, 2022, <http://www.cngdwx.com/xianqinlianghan/taipingjing/>.

disappear. Likewise, stay razor focused on that astral body reflection so that it doesn't flicker or vanish.

Visualize a numinous colorless yet brilliant light suddenly flashing from above and illuminating the room to the point of blinding. Once the flash subsides, the vision of your astral body, that reflection you are looking at, is red as the burning sun. The *qi* of Fire is imbuing your astral body with fortified powers of blooming and expanding, and your own Fire *qi* is amplified.

The red light around your astral body will then begin to turn white. The *qi* of Metal is imbuing your astral body with fortified powers of Metal *qi*. You are now increased in the powers to destroy, the powers of invincibility, and the power to conquer.

This white is also the yang of Heaven. Visualize your astral body now floating upward, climbing above and beyond the constellations and piercing through the veil into Heaven where it is all white. At all times you are seeing your astral body as if it were a reflection. Keep your focus anchored and strongly connected to that reflection.

Once your astral body reaches a white Heaven, the *qi* of divine yang is imbuing your astral body with fortified powers of Heaven. Then your body begins its descent. It returns to that room with you and then continues below the floor into the ground, able to move through the soil of the Earth where it is all black. Continue to keep your focus anchored and strongly connected to your reflection.

Once your astral body is deep below in the belly of the black Earth, the *qi* of divine yin imbues your astral body with the fortified powers of Earth. Then your body begins its ascend and return to your room.

You are now looking straight ahead at your astral body, this reflection. The reflection you are looking at shimmers blue like the clearest oceans. The *qi* of Water is fortifying your astral body and you feel your own Water *qi* amplified.

The blue light shifts to azure green. The green light blazes. You are being strengthened by the *qi* of Wood.

The azure green light is also called the Light of Central Harmony, and it is the most potent healing energy, able to repair the Tao and guard the Light of the One. Feel your astral body growing stronger and increasing in vitality from the azure green light.

The green light drives the hundred diseases out of your body. It is all-encompassing and omnipresent, expanding beyond the astral body, enveloping your physical body and everywhere within the walls of your sacred space.

Draw the astral body back in toward you so it reunites with your physical body. Then open your eyes. The Guarding of the One meditation is complete.

Over the centuries, different lineages of Taoist traditions have developed their own variations of the Guarding of the One meditation.

The Zheng Yi lineage during the Wei and Jin dynasties had a name for the god who guards the body. A Taoist practitioner of that lineage would connect to that god during the Guarding the One meditation. The Zheng Yi method also included having to fast for a hundred days and daily meditations of visualizing yourself reincarnating into different bodies and astral traveling through a palace of mirrors.

The Tian Shi and the Ling Bao traditions during the Eastern Jin would integrate their astral bodies with the *qi* of the sun, moon, and the five planets corresponding with the Wu Xing, "eating the *qi*" of these planets during meditation. And the Shangqing school of Taoist mystical practice believed there were twenty-four inner gods within the body ruled over by a holy trinity of sovereign gods. Their Guarding of the One meditation involved integration with each of the twenty-four inner gods.

After your experience with the Guarding of the One meditation, document that experience. You can also use the space provided below to take notes on how you might modify the given instructions to personalize your approach to the Guarding of the One meditation.

[illegible]