

Let's start examining the content of the Essence Cleansing Scripture chapter.

洗髓经篇

Essence Cleansing Scripture Chapter

The whole chapter is only eleven pages long. This initial page contains a Table of Contents which describes four different versions (from different sources). We will use the translated Table of Contents as a road map for our efforts.

洗 髓 经 篇

简介

相传印度达摩祖师将《易筋》和《洗髓》二经帖藏于河南嵩山少林寺其面壁之处，在修缮洞壁时，偶然发现《易筋》《洗髓》二经书，后者被慧可祖师收藏，云游四方时带走，前者留存于少林寺内，而能广为流传。

《易筋洗髓二经》（友竹山房藏版，黄竹斋稿本）中洗髓经之目录

总意 元始钟气篇 四大假合篇 凡圣同归篇 物我一致篇 行住坐卧篇 洗髓还原篇 洗髓经跋

《易筋经》（本街藏版，宋少保岳鹏举鉴定）中洗髓经之目录

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《秘本洗髓经》（述古堂钱遵王藏书）之目录

翻译洗髓经意序 翻译洗髓经总义 元始钟气篇第一 四大假合篇第二 凡圣同归篇第三 物我一致篇第四 行住立坐卧睡篇第五 洗髓还原篇第六 翻译经义后跋 退火法 内运周天火候歌（易筋内壮口诀） 服药十锦丸方 五生丸方 五成丸方 十全丸方 便方

The section begins with a brief introduction.

简介

相传印度达摩祖师将《易筋》和《洗髓》二经帖藏于河南嵩山少林寺其面壁之处,在修缮洞壁时,偶然发现《易筋》《洗髓》二经书,后者被慧可祖师收藏时带走,前者留存于少,云游四方林寺内,而能广为流传。

Brief Introduction

According to legend, Bodhidharma put the Muscle Changing Scripture (Yi Jin Jing) and the Essence Cleansing Scripture (Xi Sui Jing) in his meditation cave in the Shaolin Temple of Shongshan Mountain, Hunan Province.

During a renovation to a cave wall, the two scriptures were accidentally discovered. The latter was taken by Huike (the successor of Bodhidharma) into his collection and traveled with him in his journey around China. The former was preserved within the Shaolin Temple and become known to the public.

《易筋洗髓二经》

(友竹山房藏版,黄竹斋稿本) {ks - Version 1}

Muscle Changing and Essence Cleansing Scriptures (From the Collection of You Zhu Shan Fang, handwritten by Dr. Huang Zhuzhai) (yl - Dr. Huang Zhuzhai (1886-1960), a famous Traditional Chinese Medicine practitioner)

中洗髓经之目录

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Sinners and Saints Reach the Same Goal chapter

原我一致篇

Source (of life) and Self/Ego Show No Difference chapter

行住坐卧篇

Walking, Standing, Sitting, Laying-In, Every State chapter

洗髓还原篇

Washing Essence to Restore to Original State chapter

洗髓经跋

Cleansing Essence Scripture postscript

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《易筋经》(本衙藏版, 宋少保岳鹏举鉴定)

《Muscle Changing Scripture》(A Print of Benya collection, verified by Yue fei(1103–1142), a famous Chinese general of the Song Dynasty.)
{ks - Version 2}

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翻譯經義后跋

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《秘本洗髓經》〔述古堂錢遵王藏書〕之目錄

The Secrete Collection of Xi Sui Jing (from the collection of Qian Zun's Shu Gu Tang Collection) {ks - Version 3}

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内运周天火候歌

Song of the Inner Circulation Process

(易筋内壮口诀)

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{ks - Version 4}

服药十锦丸方

Prescription of Shi Jin Wan (Pellet Made of Ten Materials)

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Prescription of Wu Cheng Wan (Pellet Made of Five Processed Materials)

十全九方便方

Prescription of Perfect Pellet Method

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What we find as we look into the rest of the Essence Cleansing Chapter is that:

1. The First Version is complete,
2. The Second Version is complete,
3. The Third Version contains the Annealing section only,
4. The Fourth Version contains the formulas for the prescriptions described in the Table of Contents.

We will begin by presenting the translations of the First Version starting with the Overall Ideas section.

洗髓经（北魏·达摩著）

作者：西竺达摩祖师著 西竺圣僧般刺密谛译义 济一
子金溪传金铨校
时间：清·道光三年

总意

如是我闻时，佛告须菩提。易筋功已竟，方可事于斯。此名静夜功，不碍人间事。白日任匆匆，务忙衣与食。运水及搬柴，送尿与送屎。抵暮见明星，然灯照暗室。晚夕功课毕，将息临卧具。大众咸酣寝，忘却生与死。明者独微醒，黑夜暗修持。抚髀叹今夕，过了少一日。无常迅速身，同少水鱼头。然而如何救，福慧须两足。四思未能答，四缘未能离。四智未现前，三身未归一。默观法界中，四生三有备。六根六尘连，五蕴并三途。天人阿修罗，六道各异趣。二谛未能融，六度未能具。见见非是见，无明未能息。道眼未精明，眉毛未落地。如何知见离，得了涅槃意。若能见非见，见所不能及。蜎角大千界，瞻眼纳须弥。昏昏醉梦间，光阴两俱失。流浪于生死，苦海无边际。如来大慈悲，演此为洗髓。须从易筋后，每于夜静时，两目内含光，鼻中微运息。腹中竟空虚，正宜纳清煦。朔望及两弦，二分并二至。子午守静功，卯酉温沐浴。一切惟心造，炼神竟还虚。静中常醒醒，莫被睡魔拘。夜夜长如此，日日续行持。惟冀能容纳，饱食非所宜。谦和护保身，虚风宜紧避。借假可修真，四大须保固。柔弱可持身，暴戾灾害逼。渡河须用筏，到岸方弃之。造化生成理，从微而至著。一言透天机，渐进细寻思。久久自圆满，未可一蹴至。成功有定限，三

年九载余。容纳在一纪，决不逾此期。心空身自化，随意任所之。一切无挂碍，圆通观自在。隐显度众生，弹指超无始。专报四重恩，永灭三涂苦。后人得此经，受持可奉行。择人相授受，叮咛视莫轻。

洗髓经 (北魏·达摩著)

作者: 西竺达摩祖师著 西竺圣僧般刺密谛译义 济一子金溪传金铨校

Essence Cleansing Scripture (Written by Bodhidharma of the North Wei Dynasty)
Writer: Bodhidharma (India)

Translated and interpreted by Pramiti (India)

Proofread and edited by Fu Jinshuan (Ji Yi Zi), a native of Jinxi in Jiangxi Province of China

Time: Third year of Emperor Dao Guang's Reign (1823)

总意

Overall Ideas

1) 如是我闻时, 佛告须菩提。

I record the words,
said by the Buddha to Subhuti:

2) 易筋功已竟,方可事于斯。

Only when you mastered the Muscle Changing Scripture,
you can begin this practice.

3) 此名静夜功, 不碍人间事。

Its name is Quiet Evening Exercise,
and it will not hinder your life in the daytime.

4) 白日任匆匆, 务忙衣与食。

You are busy everyday
with getting clothing and food.

5) 运水及搬柴, 送尿与送屎。

You spend everyday in the earthly affairs such as carrying water, cutting woods,
emptying the chamber pot.

6) 抵暮见明星, 然灯照暗室。

When night comes and the star appears at sky,
light a lamp to illuminate the dark room.

7) 晚夕功课毕, 将息临卧具。

Once you finish your nightly exercises,
get ready to rest in bed.

8) 大众咸酣寝, 忘却生与死。

Everyone is sleeping,
forgetting life and death.

9) 明者独微醒, 黑夜暗修持。

While the enlightened one is awake alone,
silently cultivating himself in the dark night.

10) 抚髀叹今夕, 过了少一日。

He pats his thigh,
sighing that another day of his life is lost with the passage of the day.

11) 无常迅速身, 同少水鱼头。

Uncertainty comes very fast,
one is like a fish in a drying pond.

12) 然而如何救, 福慧须两足。

However, how can we save ourselves?
We have to have enough wisdom and blessedness.

13) 四思未能答, 四缘未能离。

[ks- *What can be done when*] One hasn't been able to respond to the Four Thoughts₁ (that turn the Mind from Samsara)₁, or to give up the Four Causes₂ (that prevent Arhats from knowing certain things)₂.

14) 四智未现前, 三身未归一。

[ks- *What can be done when*] One hasn't been able to manifest the Four Wisdoms of the Buddha₃, or to unite the Threefold Body of the Buddha₄.

15) 默观法界中, 四生三有备。

When one uses silent meditative insight, (one sees) all creatures are born in one of the four ways₅ and dwell in one of the three worlds₆.

16) 六根六尘连, 五蕴并三途。

[ks - *One uses*] The Six Roots of Sensation (eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind) plus the Six Gunas (sight, sound, smell, taste, touch, and ideas),
[ks - and] the Five Aggregates₇ with the Three Methods₈.

17) 天人阿修罗, 六道各异趣。

[*ks - One finds that*] Devas and men, Asuras/Malevolent Spirits are different because they belong to the six realms₉.

18) 二谛未能融, 六度未能见。

[*ks - What can be done when*] One hasn't been able to blend the two essences₁₀,
or to discern the Six Paramitas₁₁.

19) 见见非是见, 无明未能息。

[*ks - When one is*] Seeing without discerning,
one isn't able to stop their ignorance.

20) 道眼未精明, 眉毛未落地。

One hasn't attained (through cultivation) the Eye which sees Buddha-truth,
one still relies on his (physical) eyes to make judgement.

21) 如何知见离, 得了涅槃意。

How to give up depending on one's eyes or other feelings,
and to understand nirvana.

22) 若能见非见, 见所不能及。

If one can see the truth of things the eyes cannot see,
one can see everything.

23) 蜗角大千界, 瞻眼纳须弥。

One can see the infinite in the ear of a snail,
and receives the sight of Mount Meru₁₂ by simply opening one's
eyes.

24) 昏昏醉梦间, 光阴两俱失。

People live as if asleep, drunk or dreamy,
Days and nights slip away in this way.

25) 流浪于生死, 苦海无边际。

They wander the realm of mortality, homeless,
in the sea of bitterness which knows no bounds.

26) 如来大慈悲, 演此为洗髓。

The Tathagata of great compassion and mercy,
gives the world this Essence Cleansing Scripture.

27) 须从易筋后, 每于夜静时。

One needs to practice Essence Cleansing every quiet night,
only after one masters the Muscle Changing Scripture.

28) 两目内含光, 鼻中微运息。

[*ks - One needs to*] Conceal the light inside one's eyes,
and breathe gently.

29) 腹中竟空虚, 正宜纳清煦。

When your stomach is empty,
it is a good time to absorb the clear energy.

30) 朔望及两弦, 二分并二至。

In the first day, last day and the middle day of the month in the lunar
calendar,
and at the day of Vernal Equinox, autumnal equinox, Summer Sol-
stice and Winter Solstice,

31) 子午守静功, 卯酉温沐浴。

we should guard our peaceful state during 11pm-1am and
11am-1pm and massage ourselves to become warm during 5 am to
7 am and 5pm to 7pm.

32) 一切惟心造, 炼神竟还虚。

Everything is a creation of the mind,
refine your spirit into the state of emptiness.

33) 静中常醒醒, 莫被睡魔拘。

Stay awake while in quietness,
don't be caught by the demon of sleepiness.

34) 夜夜长如此, 日日续行持。

Every night
and every day practice in this way.

35) 惟冀能容纳, 饱食非所宜。

Only hope to be able to hold (onto the practice),
so, don't eat too much.

36) 谦和护保身, 虚风宜紧避。

One needs to guard the body with modesty,
and stay away from harmful elements in nature.

37) 借假可修真, 四大须保固。

Seek truth with the help of this impermanent body,
preserve and maintain the body which is made of the four elements
(water, air, fire, earth).

38) 柔弱可持身, 暴戾灾害逼。

One is safe if one conducts himself with softness,
one is at risk if one is angry and crude.

39) 渡河须用筏, 到岸方弃之。

One uses a raft to cross the river,
one gives up the raft only when one reaches the other shore.

40) 造化生成理, 从微而至著。

To generate Inner Essence (Li),
follow and accumulate the nearly invisible things first.

41) 一言透天机, 渐进细寻思。

One sentence passes through the universe's truth,
think this over as you progress step by step.

42) 久久自圓滿, 未可一蹴至。

After a long time, one will attain perfection naturally,
this does not happen quickly.

43) 成功有定限, 三年九載余。

Success will come in time;
it may take 3 to 9 years.

44) 容納在一紀, 決不逾此期。

This will not take more than 12 years.

45) 心空身自化, 殖意任所之。

When one's heart/mind is empty,
one's body can naturally transform.

46) 一切無掛碍, 圓通觀自在。

One will not be worried by anything,
and, with the wisdom of Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara,
one will penetrate the nature of all things and receive ultimate freedom.

47) 隐显度众生, 弹指超无始。

One can help others cross the sea of this moral life either
by appearing or not appearing,
one's existence will also surpass time.

48) 专报四重恩, 永灭三涂苦。

One will specifically pay back the Four Kindnesses¹³,
and forever get rid of the pains of the Three Ways¹⁴.

49) 后人得此经, 受持可奉行。

In the future,
those who receive this scripture should follow its teachings.

50) 择人相授受, 叮咛视莫轻。

One needs to choose carefully who they are going to teach,
don't be careless.

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Here's the translation of the whole first section:

## Overall Ideas

- 1) I record the words,  
said by the Buddha to Subhuti:
- 2) Only when you mastered the Muscle Changing Scripture,  
you can begin this practice.
- 3) Its name is Quiet Evening Exercise,  
and it will not hinder your life in the daytime.
- 4) You are busy everyday  
with getting clothing and food.
- 5) You spend everyday in the earthly affairs such as carrying water, cut-  
ting woods,  
emptying the chamber pot.
- 6) When night comes and the star appears at sky,  
light a lamp to illuminate the dark room.
- 7) Once you finish your nightly exercises,  
get ready to rest in bed.
- 8) Everyone is sleeping,  
forgetting life and death.
- 9) While the enlightened one is awake alone,  
silently cultivating himself in the dark night.
- 10) He pats his thigh,  
sighing that another day of his life is lost with the passage of the day.

- 11) Uncertainty comes very fast,  
one is like a fish in a drying pond.
- 12) However, how can we save ourselves?  
We have to have enough wisdom and blessedness.
- 13) [*ks- What can be done when*] One hasn't been able to respond to the Four Thoughts<sub>1</sub> (that turn the Mind from Samsara),  
or to give up the Four Causes<sub>2</sub> (that prevent Arhats from knowing certain things).

1 {The Four Thoughts that turn the mind from Samsara: 1) a free and well favored human birth; 2) Impermanence; 3) Karma; 4) the suffering of Samsara}

2 {The Four Causes that prevent Arhats from knowing certain things: 1) They lack knowledge about distant locations; 2) They also lack knowledge about distant times; 3) they do not know the infinity of results that spring from an infinite number of causes; 4) They lack knowledge of the [Buddha](#)'s many qualities}

- 14) [*ks- What can be done when*] One hasn't been able to manifest the Four Wisdoms of the Buddha<sub>3</sub>,  
or to unite the Threefold Body of the Buddha<sub>4</sub>.

3 {The Four Wisdoms of the Buddha are: 1) great mirror wisdom; 2) wisdom of equality; 3) profound observing wisdom; 4) perfecting wisdom}

4 {The Threefold Body of the Buddha is the Trikaya: 1) the Dharmakaya or Truth Body; 2) the Sambhoghakaya or the Body of Mutual Enjoyment; 3) the Nirmanakaya or the Created Body}

- 15) When one uses silent meditative insight,  
(one sees) all creatures are born in one of the four ways<sub>5</sub> and dwell in one of the three worlds<sub>6</sub>.

5 {The Four Types of Birth: Womb, Egg, Moisture/Heat, Apparitional/Miraculous}

6 {The Three Realms (Triple Realm, Trailokya, Three Worlds): The realms of desire (our world), The realms of form (realms of the lesser deities), The realms of formlessness (realms of the higher deities)}

- 16) [*ks* - *One* uses] The Six Roots of Sensation (eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind) plus the Six Gunas (sight, sound, smell, taste, touch, and ideas),  
[*ks* - and] the Five Aggregates<sup>7</sup> with the Three Methods<sup>8</sup>.

7 {The Five Aggregates: Forms, Feelings, Perceptions, Mental Formations, Consciousness}

8 {The Three Methods (Essentials): As stated in the Sutra of the Great Prajna: To maintain mindfulness of supreme Bodhi (the mind of enlightenment); To center oneself on compassion; To learn the skillful means of emptiness (the wisdom of non-grasping or subtle intangibility)}

- 17) [*ks* - *One finds* that] Devas and men, Asuras/Malevolent Spirits are different because they belong to the six realms<sup>9</sup>.

9 {The Six Realms/Paths (of human existence): Devas, Man, Evil Spirits/Asuras, Animals, Hungry Souls, Those Damned in Hell}

- 18) [*ks* - *What can be done* when] One hasn't been able to blend the two essences<sup>10</sup>,  
or to discern the Six Paramitas<sup>11</sup>.

10 {From the Plum Village tradition: The Historical Dimension and The Ultimate Dimension; The Perception of Duality/Separateness and the Perception of Interbeing}

11 {The Six Paramitas: Charity; Keeping the Commandments; Patience in the face of insults; Energy and Advancement; Meditation; Wisdom}

- 19) [*ks* - *When one* is] Seeing without discerning,  
one isn't able to stop their ignorance.

- 20) One hasn't attained (through cultivation) the Eye which sees Buddha-truth,  
one still relies on his (physical) eyes to make judgement.



- 21) How to give up depending on one's eyes or other feelings,  
and to understand nirvana.
- 22) If one can see the truth of things the eyes cannot see,  
one can see everything.
- 23) One can see the infinite in the ear of a snail,  
and receives the sight of Mount Meru<sup>12</sup> by simply opening one's  
eyes.
- 12 {Mount Meru is a sacred mountain with five peaks in Hindu, Jain, and  
Buddhist cosmology; it is considered to be the center of all the physical,  
metaphysical, and spiritual universes.}
- 24) People live as if asleep, drunk or dreamy,  
Days and nights slip away in this way.
- 25) They wander the realm of mortality, homeless,  
in the sea of bitterness which knows no bounds.
- 26) The Tathagata of great compassion and mercy,  
gives the world this Essence Cleansing Scripture.
- 27) One needs to practice Essence Cleansing every quiet night,  
only after one masters the Muscle Changing Scripture.
- 28) [*ks - One needs to*] Conceal the light inside one's eyes,  
and breathe gently.
- 29) When your stomach is empty,  
it is a good time to absorb the clear energy.
- 30) In the first day, last day and the middle day of the month in the lunar  
calendar,  
and at the day of Vernal Equinox, autumnal equinox, Summer Sol-  
stice and Winter Solstice,

- 31) we should guard our peaceful state during 11pm-1am and 11am-1pm and massage ourselves to become warm during 5 am to 7 am and 5pm to 7pm.
- 32) Everything is a creation of the mind,  
refine your spirit into the state of emptiness.
- 33) Stay awake while in quietness,  
don't be caught by the demon of sleepiness.
- 34) Every night,  
and every day practice in this way.
- 35) Only hope to be able to hold (onto the practice),  
so, don't eat too much.
- 36) One needs to guard the body with modesty,  
and stay away from harmful elements in nature.
- 37) Seek truth with the help of this impermanent body,  
preserve and maintain the body which is made of the four elements  
(water, air, fire, earth).
- 38) One is safe if one conducts himself with softness,  
one is at risk if one is angry and crude.
- 39) One uses a raft to cross the river,  
one gives up the raft only when one reaches the other shore.
- 40) To generate Inner Essence (Li),  
follow and accumulate the nearly invisible things first.

- 41) One sentence passes through the universe's truth,  
think this over as you progress step by step.
- 42) After a long time, one will attain perfection naturally,  
this does not happen quickly.
- 43) Success will come in time;  
it may take 3 to 9 years.
- 44) This will not take more than 12 years.
- 45) When one's heart/mind is empty,  
one's body can naturally transform.
- 46) One will not be worried by anything,  
and, with the wisdom of Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara,  
one will penetrate the nature of all things and receive ultimate freedom.
- 47) One can help others cross the sea of this moral life either  
by appearing or not appearing,  
one's existence will also surpass time.
- 48) One will specifically pay back the Four Kindnesses<sup>13</sup>,  
and forever get rid of the pains of the Three Ways<sup>14</sup>.
- <sup>13</sup> {The Four Kindnesses: your parents', every creature's, the nation's, and that of the Buddha, Monastics, and Buddhist Laws (The Three Jewels - The Buddha, The Sangha, The Dharma)}
- <sup>14</sup> {The Pain of the Three Ways: The Fire Way (Hell), The Blood Way (Animals), and the Blade Way (Hungry Ghosts)}
- 49) In the future,  
those who receive this scripture should follow its teachings.
- 50) One needs to choose carefully who they are going to teach,  
don't be careless.

My (ks) brief commentary:

The first seven lines place the practice of the Essence Cleansing Scripture within the context of everyday life.

Lines 8 through 12 highlight the problems of samsara and ask 'How can we save ourselves?'

Line 13 introduces the use of the Four Thoughts that Turn the Mind from Samsara.

The first Thought is the awareness of the benefit of being born as a human. As a human one has the opportunity to pursue a spiritual path as well as practice Qigong.

The second Thought is the awareness that we live in a state of impermanence. Everything about us can change. By following a spiritual life we can always improve.

The third Thought is the awareness that our actions have consequences. When we choose to act compassionately (with ourselves and others) we generate 'roots of goodness' as a result.

The fourth Thought is the awareness of the suffering caused by the samsara world. When we are embroiled in afflictive emotions we suffer. When we calm our desires our suffering diminishes.

Line 13 also introduces the Four Causes that Prevent Arhats from knowing certain things.

Arhats lack the fruits of a spiritual life and do not experience miraculous abilities.

Line 14 introduces the Four Wisdoms of the Buddha.

We need to develop the Wisdoms of the Buddha: the great mirror wisdom - the knowledge of that which is still and void, motionless; the wisdom of equality - the ability to face mind-defilements without attaching to them (via love or aversion); the profound observing wisdom - the ability to observe the sensory field without impulsive reactions; perfecting wisdom - the ability to focus attention on phenomena without falling into dualistic thinking (Interbeing).

Line 15 tells us about the benefits of developing meditative insight.

We can develop insight into the sources of life as well as the different 'types' of realms we live in: the desire realm, the form realm, and the formless realm.

In Line 16 we learn of the tools we can use to accomplish these insights.

Line 17 touches on the different beings we can encounter on our spiritual journey.

Line 18 emphasizes some additional tools that can help us on our spiritual journey.

The Two Essences refer to the two perceptions of the world we live in: the Historical Dimension is our everyday perception of the dualistic world; the Ultimate Dimension is the enlightened perception of the interconnectedness of everything - Interbeing.

The Six Paramitas are qualities that develop via our spiritual path.

Lines 19 through 23 expand on the progression from Historic Dimension to the Ultimate Dimension.

Lines 24 through 39 describe the steps of progressing on our spiritual journey.

Lines 40 and 41 are key instructions of Qigong.

Lines 42 through 48 explain about making progress on this spiritual path.

Line 49 is encouragement to follow the teachings of this scripture.

Line 50 is a warning to carefully choose which students are taught these lessons.

In the articles that follow, we will explore the instructions from the sections that followed this initial section. We will also examine the differences between Version 1 and Version 2. We will finish up with the translation of the Annealing section of Version 3 and the 'medicine' formulas in Version 4.