



Difference of Body Treatments in Buddhism and Daoism of China

Ruihui Han^{1*}

¹Humanities School, Jinan University, Zhuhai, Guangdong Province, China.

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ABSTRACT

Asceticism is popular in some religions. Religion believes the supernatural strength or substance exist, and ordinarily, spirit is more important than body, therefore generally body is looked down on compared with spirit in many religions. In ancient China, there were many recordings about the self-inflicted religious practices, among which Buddhism is obvious. However, Chinese Daoism has totally different opinions on the treatment of body with many religions in the world. The opinions on body of the two different religions represent the different aspects of Chinese culture. In this paper, the different opinions of Buddhism and Daoism are investigated. Buddhism and Daoism both exert the deep influence on Chinese culture. On this basis, the paper discussed Chinese folk culture about body.

Keywords: Asceticism; self-infliction; Buddhism; Daoism; body; Chinese culture.

1. INTRODUCTION

Body is the basis of human being existence. Therefore, if one wants to understand religions,

he or she should understand the treatment of body in the religions. Most of the religions were imported from the other nations in China except Daoism. Among the imported religions,

*Corresponding author: E-mail: hanruihuih@hotmail.com;

Buddhism was the most important religion in ancient China. The treatments of body of the two kinds of religions were different. In Buddhism stories, there were many protagonists who sacrificed their bodies or part of their bodies because of their Buddhism belief. However, there were no such stories in Daoism. On the contrary, the stories in Daoism often dealt with how to maintain the intactness and health of body, or in most of the cases, Daoism stories often tell about how protagonists get the eternity.

Both Daoism and Buddhism are important religions. Such two kinds of religions paralleled with each other in the development in ancient Chinese history, that is, such two kinds of religions coexisted in ancient Chinese history as the main religions. In history, such two kinds of religions, along with the Confucian school, were conflicts with each other in the doctrine. Some of their doctrines were totally different, however, in most of the ancient Chinese history, they coexisted harmonically with together, without violent conflicts except for the doctrines. From the stories of Daoism and Buddhism, the treatments of body were totally different. The past thirty years have seen many works dealt with the treatments of body in the different religions. Nevertheless, most of the studies in the field have only focused on the treatment of body in the separate religion.

To date, there has no clear explanation about body treatment attitudes in Buddhism and Daoism in ancient China. This paper gives a detailed account of the different treatment of bodies in Buddhism and Daoism and the reasons for that, providing a new insight about Daoism and Buddhism in China.

The paper begins by the account of the origins of Buddhism and Daoism. In the next section, it will discuss the asceticism and corresponding reasons in Buddhism. The following section will give an account of the Daoism attitude toward body and investigate the corresponding reasons. Daoism development was mainly in the folk of ancient China, in which time Daoism was frequently oppressed by the authorities, thus the following section of the paper will discuss Daoism in the perspective of folk and authority attitudes. Based on the discussion above, the last section will discuss the relationship of authority, religion and asceticism in ancient China history.

1.1 The Origins of Buddhism and Daoism in China History

Buddhism was introduced into China from India during the later half of the 3rd century, but the monks were said to be driven away soon. Buddhism was heard by the Han nationality for the first time during the Han dynasty in China, but it had few followers in that time.

The fundamental tenet of Buddhism can be divided into two parts. The first part is about the retribution. Buddhism believes that the good deeds can get the good retribution, and the bad deeds will incur the treacherous fate. Another is about the explanation of the world, among which the eternal cycle of birth and death is attractive. Buddhism believes that human being's soul will exist in afterlife. The soul will return to the world in different life form according to what the subject does before the death. If the one does the good deeds, he or she would return to the world with the good fortune after the death. On the contrary, the bad deeds will incur the treacherous fortune after death. From this tenet, it would find that Buddhism values the condition of afterlife.

In some dynasties, Buddhism was advocated by Chinese emperors, even some emperors became Buddhism monks, for example, the Liangwu emperor in 6th century. With the help of the emperors, Buddhism got prosperous in many dynasties, although there were some emperors opposed to Buddhism, which would make Buddhism decline soon in little time [1]. Buddhism were influenced a lot by the politics of China. When the emperors advocated it, it would developed fast. However, when it was opposed by the emperors, it would soon decline [1]. Therefore it can be concluded that Buddhism in ancient China was combined with the official power.

Daoism's development, however, was not combined with the official power in ancient China. Daoism is a native religion in China. It appeared in Han dynasty, but its source of thought could be traced to the period before Qin dynasty. Compared with Qin dynasty, Han dynasty had more developed productivity and greater national power, but there still was the irreconcilable conflict between the landlords and the peasants. The conflicts were so violent that the royalty in Han dynasty was in danger. In such condition, some intellectuals claimed some omens that would predict the collapse of the Han power. So Hanai emperor in that times wanted to resort to

the gods and ghosts to stabilize his domination. With the confusion of society and the panic of the dominators, divination studies (Chen wei) appeared. The Confucian intellectual Dong Zhongshu established his precursor of divination studies by predicting the disaster through yin-yang and five elements [2]. In ancient China, the darker and more chaotic in society, the more dangers the dominators felt, the more possibility that they would resort to the divination studies.

Before the appearance of Daoism in Chinese history, there was the worship for the supernatural beings. Daoism originated from Han dynasty. The persons who worked on the witchcraft had high social status. Dong Zhongshu wanted to establish Confucian school as one kind of religion, but his elaboration failed because that the Confucian school did not believe in supernatural beings. However, he combined the Confucian thoughts and yin-yang and five elements theories. Thus, the Confucian school had the features of divination. But his intention of reforming Confucian school to religion failed in the process, because according to the doctrines of Confucian school, one should not discuss about gods, ghosts and other kinds of mysterious matters [3]. However, Daoism as a kind of religion grew up from Daoism school on the basis of Lao Zi and Zhuang Zi's thoughts in that time.

The basic tenet of Daoism is based on Tao Teh King. The tenet calls on valuing the morality and respect the Dao (the fundamental rule of the world), treasuring the life and harmony, staying in the simple and calm, trying to improve both body and mind.

It is believed by some people that Chinese Daoism was the result of the influence of Indian Buddhism. In fact, the appearance of Daoism was not because of the influence of Buddhism. In Qin dynasty, there was the witchcraft about the supernatural beings. In Western Han dynasty, Ganzhong combined the belief in supernatural beings and divination studies to edit the books about the divination, and that became the origin Daoism, but in the end, Gan Zhong and others were killed because they were regarded as spreading rumors. However, Daoism was spread in the folk continually. Buddhism was introduced into China during the period of Han Ming emperor, which was after Gan Zhong period. So the origin of Chinese Daoism was not influenced by Buddhism [4].

Since Daoism and Buddhism has the different origins, Daoism and Buddhism represented the different cultures from the beginning.

2. BUDDHISM ASCETICISM AND ITS CORRESPONDING REASONS

2.1 Buddhism Asceticism

In some classic books of Buddhism, the self-infliction of body was recorded in detail and was seen as a kind of the honor or achievement of the monks. The most famous story about the self-infliction was recorded in Buddhism books in India. It told that the one of the king's sons saw a tigress and her children were starving when the prince was travelling. He was so sympathetic with the tigers that he sacrificed his body to feed the tigers. The story first appeared in the Indian Buddhism books, however, it was also spread widely in China [5]. In some of Chinese artistic works, the story was well represented. Donation (bu shi) is one of the religious practices of Buddhism. The monks would donate money or work for the receivers. In the Bodhisattva Dichi Classic, it is recorded: "That the Bodhisattva sacrifices her own body is the practice of body donation (nei shi).....No matter the blood, flesh, bones, or muscles and brain, all those should be donated in any needing conditions" [6]. Taisho Tripitaka. Taipei: In the deeds of the founder of Buddhism, Sakyamuni, there were many religious donations of self-infliction. The most famous of those was the sacrificed his own body to feed the tigers [6].

It is interesting that the self-inflicted donation appeared more and more in Chinese Buddhism recordings. For example, in *Eminent Monks' Biography* (gao seng zhuan), it was recorded that one monk named Tan Cheng went to the tigers' place to be eaten by the tigers in order to cease the tiger disaster. Some monks regretted that they had not serve their body for donation, and one of them named Shao Duli, who had attempted to sacrifice his body to feed the tigers for several times, made clear to his disciples on his deathbed that his body should be burned after his death [7]. The monk named Shi Zhixuan asked his disciples split his body into half. One half should be put to feed the fishes, and the other half should be feed the beasts and birds [8]. Of course, there were some eminent monks really donated their bodies to feed tigers, and that was praised [8]. In China, Tibetan area was influenced by Buddhism greatly, and the Tibetan

celestial burial custom was influenced by such Buddhism practice [9].

The self-inflicted violence was very cruel. There were still other kinds of self-infliction manners, for example, burning the arm, burning the finger, or burning themselves to death. Such suicide would be the great ceremony sometimes. There would be many audiences, and when the cruel suicide was committed, the audiences would be moved by the ceremony, so they would be more loyal to Buddhism and donate more money to the temple. In 460 A.D., the monk Shi Huiyi prepared to commit suicide for Buddhism. Then he began to eat only hemp wheat. Two years later, he ate only perilla oil and pomander. Such special food was beneficial to the self-burning but made him very weak. He insisted to burn himself even Xiaowu emperor persuaded him not to committed suicide. In one morning, he prepared a huge pot full of oil, dressing lots of clothes, and immersed himself in the oil. Then he leaned against a little bed with a long hat on his head, putting the oil in the huge hat. The audience gathering around him became more and more at such time. Soon it became the visual feast and great ceremony to some extent. Of course, there were many people persuaded him to stop such action, but he refused. He grasped the lighted and burned himself. Suddenly he was swallowed by the huge violent blaze. The audience were moved greatly, and Buddhism was advertised forcefully [7]. Such suicide ceremony was very popular in ancient Chinese history. After the suicide, the donated treasures, money or belongings from the generous audience would be as huge as a little hill [7]. The audience were moved by such loyal religious action, so they became great generous to donate for Buddhism. On the other hand, the audience believed that they would gain the happiness through the donation for good karma [10]. The remains and relics of the monks after the self-burning would often become the holy articles to be consecrated [10].

Although self-burning ceremony is cruel, Buddhism literature tends to describe it beautifully. That meant the society in that times had much appreciation for such action. For example, it was described that one huge star fell into the smoke and then flew into the sky when the monk Shi Huishao burned himself. Three days after his death, his prediction came true that two phoenix trees grew up in the site where he burned himself [11]. It was also recorded that when the monk Shi Sengqing committed suicide for Buddhism, the cloud gathered and rain dropped down like tears. Soon the sky became

enlightened and clear with something like Chinese Dragon flew to the sky [11]. It was obvious that the authors were using the praising words to describe the extremely cruel action. From the description, we would find that the self-inflicted action was encouraged and praised by such authors of Buddhism literature.

Too many suicide of the monks would decrease the population, so in the condition that the temple was dominated by the government, the monks should apply to the government for burning themselves. Sometimes, the government would not agree them to burn themselves. Being refused for several times, some monks would burn themselves in private to prevent that the temple where he lived be involved with their suicide and sanctioned by the government.

2.2 Reasons for Buddhism Asceticism

Asceticism is very popular in many religions in the world, and there are different reasons for such asceticism. Buddhism, especially Mahayana, emphasizes the kindness and goodness for all the world, however, Buddhism has many cruel self-infliction activities toward the monks. That seems paradoxical. The self-infliction activity of Buddhism has many reasons.

First, the self-infliction and asceticism of Buddhism is because of the Samsara theory. Before Buddhism appeared in India, the Samsara theory had been very popular. In the period of Veda (about 1500BC-700BC), there was the imagination of the after-death world, and that was combined with the Samsara theory [12]. India *Upanishad* believed that the Samsara happened in life and death. The one would returned to the world after death, however, the condition of the next life would be decided by what he or she did in previous life [13]. Buddhism critically inherited the thoughts of the previous doctrine.

Buddhism asserted that Samsara obeyed the Karma law. Buddhism regarded that all phenomena in the world was created by the Karma caused by the conscious creatures. Karma was the fundamental reason for anything, and it also became the natural law in Buddhism ethics. Karma could be explained as the activity of all the creatures that had consciousness [14].

The Samsara theory of Buddhism emphasizes the cause and effect. The goodness and evil in the subject's deeds would affect the condition of the subject in the next world. The life in the next

world would have six retributions: Hell, evil ghost, domestic animal, Asura, human and heaven. Those are the six different categories of lives, and they also represented the different spaces that the lives lived in. Many religions have the concepts of heaven and hell, and those compose the general thought system in religions, and they are also the ethic philosophy presupposition of religion. The Samsara theory and Karma are the ethic notion of Buddhism [14].

It is mentionable that the Samsara concept of Buddhism is different from the notion of retributive justice in pre-Qin dynasty of China. There was the retributive justice notion in Confucian school. The typical discourse that expressed the notion was in *The Book of Changes*: “the family that does goodness must have more fortune, and the family that does the evils must have more misfortune.” (Book of Change Kun Wenyan) The Confucian school's notion of retributive justice is based on the unit of the family, however, Buddhism's Samsara theory insists the individual activity. Buddhism believed that the father's deeds would not cause the retribution for the son and vice versa [15]. Besides, Buddhism Samsara contains the retribution in the different worlds, but the retributive justice is confined in the current world.

Second, Buddhism separates spirit from body. Buddhism believed human being is composed by skandha, which is also called five accumulations. Skandha is composed by five factors. One is the rupa-skandha, which is material. Another four factors are all spiritual. The five factors caused body and emotion of human being. However, in the process, the illusion also happened, and the suffering then followed [16]. Buddhism believed that the suffering of human being would happen in all the process of life, for example, illness, aging, death, the unavoidability to meet with the hated ones, the unavoidability to depart with the one loved, the dissatisfaction of the desires and others [17]. But human being tend to be obsessed with the happiness, so on the basis of that, the greediness, hatred and stupidity grow up. Human being should get rid of the secular desire in order to avoid suffering.

Since spirit is prior to body in Buddhism opinion, body is deemed to serve spirit. So in the practice of Buddhism, the self-infliction is inevitable. In the early development of Buddhism in China, there were many descriptions of self-inflicted practice in Buddhism practice. However, after the appearance of Zen in China, the self-inflicted

practice in Buddhism became rare, and the treatment of body after death also changed in general. Before Zen, the cremation, water burial or feeding the animal with body were very popular in Buddhism. Because the monks believed that the destroying of body was helpful for the subject to become Buddha. Before Buddhism was introduced to China, the Chinese tended to preserve body after death in general. However, after Buddhism was introduced to China, with the consciousness of hell and Samsara, the custom of burial changed in China [18]. Before Zen in China, Buddhism monks treated their bodies rigorously in many aspects of living, such as diet, sleep and sanitation. Besides, some of the monks sometimes would burn their own fingers, arms or even burn themselves to death, in order to achieve the good Buddhism practice.

After Zen appeared in China, such activity in Chinese Buddhism decreased. The change became more obvious after the famous monk Hui Neng established the Southern Zen and advocated that the opinions of that mind was the Buddha and that one should not be obsessed with the mind and Buddha. On such basis, Buddhism practice became loose, so body was no longer suffered from the self-infliction [19].

Zen's opinion and Daoism school's thoughts are very similar. The slight difference between them is mainly about linguistic description [20]. The thoughts of Lao Zi and Zhuang Zi compose the main doctrine of Daoism. So we would learn that Zen's effect on Buddhism monks was almost the same as Daoism did. Therefore, the change of the treatment for body in Buddhism was because of the influence of Daoism school thoughts.

3. DAOISM ATTITUDE TOWARDS BODY AND THE CORRESPONDING REASONS

3.1 Daoism Attitude towards Body and its Difference from that in Buddhism

Since Daoism changed the attitude toward body in Buddhism as mentioned above, it is interesting to discuss the treatment of body in Daoism and its difference from that in Buddhism. Chinese Daoism was different from Buddhism in the aspect of treatment of body. Daoism was a kind of religion valuing life. Buddhism is said as valued life, however, there were still self-infliction activities in Buddhism. It connotes that Buddhism

is not a kind of religion that valued all the life in the world.

One important goal of Daoism is to pursue the immortality. In order to attain the goal, Daoism pay much attention to calm the nerves and keep body healthy. They try to exercise both body and spirit. As Daoism regarded, body and spirit are combined with each other, and the life and Dao are also integrated with each other [21]. So Daoism does not advocate the activity to harm body. With the goal of immortality, Daoism has done much research. It believes that anyone can be immortal if he or she learns and practice of the Dao [21]. Internal dan (nei dan) and external dan (wai dan) are the main ways to achieve the immortality in Daoism. External dan means that the medicine that produced by the mineral material and herbal medicine. The early Daoism believed that the ordinary medicine would prolong the life time, but could not make people forever, however, the immortality could be achieved by eating external dan [22]. The main ingredients of external dan were mercuric sulfide, realgar and arsenic sulfide etc. All those ingredients were contained in cinnabar [23]. Some spagirists believed that the gold could make people become immortal because gold has great metal stability. So they insisted putting the gold into the ingredients of the external dan (Bao Pu Zi. Jin Dan). It was obvious that such external dan contained the heavy metals, so it was harmful to human body. The poisoning cases caused by the heavy metals happened in royal court and the minister groups of Tang dynasty regularly. For example, after Emperor Wuzong of Tang and Emperor Xuanzong of Tang ate such external dan submitted by the spagirists, they died painfully soon. Even so, there were still many emperors and ministers were wild about eating the external dan in the pursuit for immortality. The zeal and encouragement for external dan inspired Chinese discovered the method of producing gunpowder [23].

Internal dan was described very mysteriously in Daoism classics, but generally, internal dan was one kind of ancient qigong, which could improve the health. Daoism believed that in the producing process of internal dan, people should regarded the human body as the stove, the primordial spirit as the fire, the vitality as the medicine [24]. In the classic works *Studying about the Tiny Matters* (Emperor Tang Xuan. Tong Wei Jue) in Tang dynasty, the author believed that qi could produce internal dan, and the medicine could produce the external dan. Both kinds of dan

could improve the health and life of human being (Emperor Tang Xuan. Tong Wei Jue).

For Daoism, even coition technique and medicine was also regarded as one way to improve the health and prolong life, even get immortal. In *The biography of the Immortals* (Lie Xian Zhuan), the author told the story about Mr. Rong Cheng (Rong Cheng Gong), who was the teacher of Yellow Emperor, and the King Mu of Zhou. Mr. Rong Cheng conduct King Mu of Zhou about the coition techniques. After practiced the coition techniques, King Mu of Zhou's white hair became black and his non-teeth mouth grew up new teeth [25]. There were many other legends about how the human being prolonged their lives or got immortal in ancient times, especially in the period of Yin and Zhou dynasties. That indicated ancient Chinese had noticed the effect of coition on the health of human being and how to make use of coition for health. After Daoism appeared in China, Daoism absorbed the coition techniques and medicine. Daoism believed that suppressing the sensual passion did harm to human health, and on the other hand, acolasia would also was also harmful to health. In Daoism, the coition technique and medicine evolved to a systematically theory. Most of the group of Daoism believed that the coition technique and medicine was one way to get immortal, but in the late period of Daoism, such way to get immortal was rebuked and abandoned gradually, and the theory of it stopped evolving accordingly [26]. Daoism coition technique and medicine contained much sexology knowledge. It was meaningful in the aspects of sexual health and sexual therapy [26]. From the attention of Daoism to sexual arts we would find that Daoism is not a ascetic religion, and that is in contrast to Buddhism. The sexual art was so popular in middle and late Tang dynasty that it even influenced the love poems, in which more description of sexual activity appeared [27].

There were many other regimen methods in Daoism, for example, the clicking teeth technique. Ancient Chinese noticed the health of teeth was related to age and life quality, so some doctors studied the teeth and developed the clicking teeth technique (Kouchi shu). Clicking teeth technique was firstly the method for the health of teeth. Later, it was absorbed into Daoism. Daoism regarded the clicking teeth method as a kind of regimen method. With the development of Daoism, clicking teeth also became its religious rites, which had the divine meaning [28].

Besides, refraining from eating grains (bi gu) was one kind of practice of Daoism to achieve immortal. Superficially it would be regarded as a kind of asceticism, however, it was in fact the method for improve health and prolong life. In the process, the practitioner ate only herbal medicine, mineral substance. Sometimes the practitioner would only drink water, or even only inhale the air, refusing eating anything. The refraining from eating grains has scientific reason. It is proved that many diseases happened are related to too much excrement staying in body. So the refraining from eating grains in short period with the scientific guide would improve the health [29].

The swallowing saliva method (Yanjin shu), keeping spirit method (shoushen shu) etc were also the regimen methods in Daoism. All those regimen methods originated from the folk and were absorbed by Daoism after the appearance in Wei, Jin, Southern and Northern Dynasties. Taijiquan, as a traditional Chinese Kongfu, also derived from Daoism regimen, Yin-yang theory and martial art [30]. The breathing technique, movement style and theory of relaxation etc of Daoism all influenced Taijiquan.

Daoism theorized the regimen methods and made them more systematical. In Sui and Tang dynasties, the regimen methods in Daoism were deemed as advanced, so they were welcomed and popular in the folk again [31].

From discussion above, we would find that the attitude toward body in Daoism was totally different from that in Buddhism. To some extent, their different attitudes were at two different extremes. Buddhism monks would take all kinds of measures to injury or destroy body, however, Daoism seemed to protect body and maintain the health in any possible ways.

3.2 The Origin of Daoism's Attitude toward Body in the Perspective of Chinese Culture

In order to investigate the difference of treatments of body in Buddhism and Daoism, we should discuss the reasons for the treatment of body in Daoism.

Daoism originated from the witchcraft of the folk, of which Lao Zi and Zhuang Zi's thoughts are the main doctrine. In Lao Zi's *Tao The King*, the word *body* appears for 23 times, and the central concept Dao appears for 73 times. From the frequency of occurrences of the two words, we

would find that Lao Zi valued body greatly. Lao Zi believed that body was the necessary condition for success. Many words represent Lao Zi's opinion about body, for example, "The Sage rules by emptying their hearts and filling their bellies, weakening their intelligence." (Lao Zi, Chapter 3). "... the sage seeks to satisfy (the craving of) the belly, and not the (insatiable longing of) the eyes. He puts from him the latter, and prefers to seek the former." (Lao Zi, Chapter 12) From the discussion of Lao Zi about body, we would find that Lao Zi put body at the first important place.

Lao Zi believed that all the universe is derived from Dao, and it is the symbol of Dao. He said: "The Tao produced One; One produced Two; Two produced Three; Three produced All things. All things leave behind them the Obscurity (out of which they have come), and go forward to embrace the Brightness (into which they have emerged), while they are harmonised by the Breath of Vacancy" [32]. So body is also the representation of Dao. Human being should treat body according to Dao. However, in Lao Zi's opinion, Dao is very mysterious, but in the universe, water is the existence most like Dao. "The highest good is like that of water. The goodness of water is that it benefits the ten thousand creatures; yet itself does not scramble, but is content with the places that all men disdain. It is this that makes water so near to the Way. And if men think the ground the best place for building a house upon, If among thoughts they value those that are profound, If in friendship they value gentleness, In words, truth; in government, good order; In deeds, effectiveness; in actions, timeliness" [33]. According to the discussion above, we can conclude that the principle for treating body should be like water with goodness.

Zhuang Zi's thoughts also are the origin of Daoism, so we can conclude that Zhuang Zi's principle for treating body influenced Daoism. Zhuang Zi said: "If one understands the nature and human's activities, one reaches the climax of the knowledge. Understanding the activities of nature indicates the one knows that the matter is come from the nature. Understanding the human's activities and exploring the unknown in previous basis and dying naturally are the most achievement of knowledge (Zhuang Zi, Da Zong Shi). Zhuang Zi believed that if one could not die naturally, his or her life would not be fortune. The ones that died abnormally included the small potatoes died for economic benefit, the

gentleman died for honor, the senior official died for family, the sage died for the country (Zhuang Zi, Piano Mu). In Zhuang Zi's opinion, all those way of death were not idealistic. Zhuang Zi's opinion about the ways of death was different from that of Confucian school. He believed "If the one respects the life, he or she will not get his or her body hurt or damaged no matter in the condition of rich and honor, or poverty and humiliation." (Zhuang Zi, Rang Wang) He even believed that "The two arms of human being are more important than the world." (Zhuang Zi, Za Pian). From the analysis above, we would find that Zhuang Zi valued body and life more than any other existence.

There were many other schools which had the positive opinions about body in pre-Qin dynasty, from which positive attitude towards body grew up, and with which Daoism appeared in the almost same period. Eclectics school and military school were another two important schools in pre-Qin dynasty history.

Eclectics school, existed in the period from the end of Warring States to the beginning of Han dynasty, widely collected the excellent thoughts of different schools. Eclectics school believed that the sage should put the life first (Lv Shi Chun Qiu, Gui Sheng). The school believed that the life was more important than country (Lv Shi Chun Qiu, Bu Qin). Body was valued more than the status of emperor, the wealth of the whole world. If one put the life and body first, he or she would keep good health state, no matter in the case of wealth or poverty (Lv Shi Chun Qiu, Shen Wei). Just like Zhuang Zi classified the different ways of death, Eclectics school also ranked the different ways of living. Eclectics school believed that lived naturally in the world was the best, and lived less naturally was better, death was worse, depressing the lives was the worst. (Lv Shi Chun Qiu, Gui Sheng) The school explained the different ways of living next. Living naturally meant that the six kinds of desires could be satisfied, and living less naturally meant that the six kinds of desires were satisfied partly. The more damage to life, the less dignity of life. The death meant the one had no consciousness and returned to the state before birth. Depressing the livestock meant that the six kinds of desires were not satisfied. On the contrary, one had to yield and get the humiliation (Lv Shi Chun Qiu, Gui Sheng). Eclectics school's thoughts were drawn from the many other school in pre-Qin dynasty, so the Eclectics school's thought would be the representative of pre-Qin school in general. Thus,

we can conclude that the opinion of ancient Chinese about body and life would be valued positively in pre-Qin dynasty on the whole.

In pre-Qin period, the military strategist school focused on the war which is bloody and cruel, but in the doctrine of military strategist school in pre-Qin dynasty in China, the life and body were regarded as the top priority. The strategists opposed the indiscriminate killing. *Master Sun's Art of War* believed that "the best policy in war is to thwart the enemy's strategy. The second best is to disrupt his alliances through diplomatic means. The third best is to attack his army in the field. The worst policy of all is to attack walled cities", "to fight a hundred battles and win each and every one of them is not the wisest thing to do. To break the enemy's resistance without fighting is." (Sun Bin. Sun Zi Bing Fa. Attack Planning).

3.3 Separation between Body and Spirit and Asceticism

Buddhism admitted the separation of body and spirit, however, Daoism regards body and spirit could not be divided, so there is no self-infliction in Daoism. With this opinion, Daoism takes good care of both body and spirit, and believes it is the best religious practice.

In Lao Zi and Zhuang Zi's works, there is no description of the soul after human being death. Therefore it can be concluded that in Daoism's main doctrine, there is no the division between soul and body. Of course, Lao Zi's Dao was inspired by the thoughts about the soul in pre-Qin dynasty. However, Lao Zi reformed the thoughts about soul through philosophy. In the primitive thought, the nature was personified, but Lao Zi made the personificated soul transformed as nature. In Lao Zi's thoughts, there is no personificated soul or god, however, the function and existence just like soul are mentioned in Lao Zi's thought [34].

The pursuit for the eternity is one of the most important believes in Daoism [35]. The mortals are confined by the span of life time, and that becomes a regret, since there are many immortals transformed from mortals in Daoism legends, so the believers of Daoism want to get immortal by special religious practice. Body is valued greatly in the process. So in Daoism, there is no self-infliction toward body. In Daoism myths, there are many stories of the mortals got his or her both body and spirit eternal. There are

also much description about the garden of the immortals. The garden is often on the mountain. One of the most famous works that describe the immortals and their living space is Zhuang Zi's *Xiao Yao You*. In *Xiao Yao You*, Zhuang Zi describes the mountain Miao Gu She: "In Miao Gu She mountain, there are immortals living. Their skin is like the snow and ice. Their action is just like the virgin's. They do not eat the grain but the wind and dew. They drive the cloud and flying dragon outside the four season. They concentrate so that the plague does not happen and the crops got harvested every year". (Zhuang Zi *Xiao Yao You*). The stories of the immortals getting eternal are often composed by the follows: 1. birth of the protagonist, 2. meeting with the immortals, 3. getting immortal, 4. going to the wonderland [36]. Daoism believes that if one practices honestly and be kind to others, he or she would be immortal. On the contrary, if the one indulges in pleasure too much, he or she would not get immortal and die [36]. So we can find that Daoism focuses on the pursuit for the eternity. In order to get immortal, body should be treat well firstly.

The unique religious practice of Daoism represents the culture of China. Daoism originated in China, and has existed for thousands of years, so Daoism is the important factor in Chinese culture and represents Chinese culture. We would find that the Chinese culture pays great attention to body, and avoids the injury to body. The culture that is popular in the folk would be more alive. Daoism is popular in the folk, so Daoism is more alive and it represents the more essential characteristics of China.

4. THE POPULARITY OF DAOISM IN THE FOLK AND THE CORRESPONDING INFLUENCE OF TREATMENT OF BODY

The influence of Daoism on Buddhism changed the self-infliction in Buddhism, besides, Daoism was popular in the folk of China, although the authority oppressed Daoism frequently in history. The self-infliction popularity in Buddhism existed for a short period in Chinese history, and disappeared in the middle of Song dynasty with the popularity of Zen, which derived from Daoism.

As a thought system advocated by authority, Confucian suggested that one should give up his or her life when one needs to maintain Confucian morality and ethics, and there were numerous recordings about such cases in the national or

local chronicles in China,¹ however, Daoism doctrines were still popular in Chinese folk, and body was valued more important than any other matters.

The authority thought system, such as the Confucian, put body in the second, and the feudal morality in the first place. But on the contrary, Daoism put body in the first place and it spread in the folk widely in the folk. The Confucian and Buddhism were both supported by the Chinese authorities in most of the feudal period. However, Daoism seldom got the support from the authorities. On the contrary, it was deemed as hostile in the early developing period.² Without the support from the authorities, Daoism turned to the folk. Many kinds of folk-customs were also influenced by Daoism [37].

Therefore, it suggests that in the aspect of treatment of body, there was a split between the authorities and the folk. The Confucian and Buddhism put the morality at the most important role, however, Daoism deemed body as the most important matter. In Chinese history, there were many recordings about the self-infliction in the influence of Buddhism doctrine, just as the cases mentioned in *Sanctity and Self-Inflicted Violence in Chinese Religions: 1500-1700* [38], however, we could also find Daoism valued body as the most precious existence. In Daoism, to protect and maintain the health is critically important, for example, the Chinese medicine developed and qigong, a Chinese unique physical exercise, also developed.

The self-infliction on body seems advocated by the authorities in some periods. Buddhism, to some extent, belonged to authorities in the feudal period of China, for it was promoted by the official power in many dynasties in China, and it also allied with the intellectuals. The Confucian, as the legitimate thought system, also belonged to the authorities in feudal times of China. However, the emphasis on body existed in the folk in the same time.

¹ For example, in *Xiangshan Local Chronicle*, many recordings about the ones, especially women, injured themselves when they tried to maintain the orthodox feudal morality.

² In Han dynasty, Daoism school thought could not correspond with the notion that the emperor had all the power under the sky. So Daoism school thought was replaced by the Confucian school. Then Daoism school developed in the folk and later became Daoism as a religion. Some rebellious in the feudal times were under the leadership of Daoism. (Yu Bin. *Taoism and Early Taoism in Han Dynasty*. Master Thesis. Chongqing Normal University. April, 2007. (in Chinese))

There were numerous praises about the self-infliction in Chinese chronicles, but that was mainly advocated by the authorities. Without the support of the authorities, Daoism developed smoothly in Chinese history, and demonstrated great vitality in the process. Therefore, it should not be concluded simply that Chinese tended to self-inflict on the influence of religion according to the numerous cases in chronicles of China. The attitude towards body on influence of popular religion in folk, Daoism, is positive generally.

5. AUTHORITY, RELIGION AND ASCETICISM IN ANCIENT CHINA HISTORY

Since Daoism was popular in folk, which means that Daoism was less popular in the authorities and the religions advocated by the authorities, it is interesting to investigate the relationship between religion, power and self-infliction. According the theory of Foucault, power and knowledge were involved with each other. In ancient China, Buddhism and Confucian were two important groups that were in cooperation with the ruling class. The knowledge was inherited effectively in the two groups. In some famous temples of ancient China, there were many huge libraries, which contained numerous books of the Confucian. Some emperors in ancient China even practiced as the monks or became the monks sometimes. Many famous poets were both the famous intellectuals and Buddhism believers, and their poems were influenced by Buddhism. Therefore, it can be concluded that the knowledge were spread and inherited in Buddhism and Confucian effectively. In the process, the ruling class was also involved, as the ruling class thought system was mainly about Confucian. Thus, the knowledge and power were combined with each other closely.

The self-inflicted activity of Buddhism and the Confucian was approved or even encouraged. Although the monks would commit suicide sometimes without the approval of the ruling class, the monks would commit suicide after they got the approval of the ruling class in general. That indicated that the self-infliction was beneficial to the ruling class. Even some rulers cheated for the wealth by the suicide committed by the monks.³ However, when the self-inflicted

³ For example, in *Shang Shu Gu Shi*, it was recorded that One general named Li Bao, wanted to raise money because his troop lacked provision. So he conspired with a monk. They proposed the monk claimed that he would burn himself

activity in Buddhism decreased the number of the laboring population, the ruling class would try to end the self-inflicted activity. From such situation, we would find that the self-infliction has relationship with the benefit of the ruling class.

There was also much self-inflicted activity in the Confucian, and that was also approved or encouraged by the ruling class, which could be found in the different chronicles in ancient China. The Confucian advocated the service for the ruling class, so the ruling class promote the spread of the Confucian school thoughts, even the ruling class chose the classics of Confucian school as the references of the examination for official career.

From discussion above, we would find that the power, religion and asceticism were all combined with each other. However, Daoism was outside of the circle, moreover, it tended to being aloof to the ruling class. In the early development period of Daoism, the ruling class and Daoism opposed each other. For Daoism, the power of ruling class was not beneficial in most of the time.

Compared to Buddhism, asceticism in Daoism was almost none.

6. CONCLUSION

As the main religions in China, Daoism and Buddhism are totally different from each other in the treatment of body. Buddhism tends to asceticism, but on the contrary, Daoism tries to maintain the health of body, or even wants to get the eternality of the health life. The unique treatment of body in Daoism has the unique Chinese cultural background, especially in pre-Qin period, there were many different schools that believed body should be put in the first place. Among those schools, Daoism school developed to a kind of religion in the later periods.

Daoism is popular in the folk and aloof to the official authorities in the ancient China. Additionally, Daoism and the corresponding treatment of body influenced a lot in ancient folk culture of China. Buddhism's treatment of body was caused partly by the official power, even sometimes the official power encouraged the abuse of body in Buddhism for political reasons. Different from Buddhism, Daoism did not

in order to move the audience to give their money out. In fact, they wanted the monk ignite fire and escape secretly. At last, Li Bao attained his goal, but the monk was dead because the escapeway was blocked and he could not escape in time.

separate body and spirit, deeming body and spirit is inseparable from each other, therefore body should not be abused. The different treatments of body in Daoism and Buddhism also reflected the conflict of the opinions of official authorities and the folk in ancient times to some extent.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Author has declared that no competing interests exist.

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