

TRANSCENDENCE THROUGH ELIXIR INGESTION:  
A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF DU GUANGTING  
AND HUANG XIUFU

A Thesis

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## ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on the investigation of hagiographies written by late Tang and Five Dynasties' Daoist thinkers Du Guangting 杜光庭 and Huang Xiufu 黄休復 to analyze the development of elixir ingestion in late Tang and Five Dynasties' narratives regarding attaining transcendence. Their suggestion requires the preparation of personal virtue and the combination and intervention of other longevity techniques. This paper will examine how the ideas and practices of elixir ingestion are expressed in these two figures' works to reveal the process of achieving transcendence during this period.

Based on the analysis of Du Guangting and Huang Xiufu's hagiographies about elixir ingestion, I argue that both of them treat moral behavior as prerequisite in the process of being transcendent and suggest contemporary transcendence seekers to do good deeds before elixir ingestion. In addition, Du Guangting and Huang Xiufu are also influenced by Tang Daoist ideas about how to attain transcendence. They combine elixir ingestion with other longevity techniques to complicate the practice of being transcendent and create their own practical systems to attain transcendence.

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

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## *Introduction*

Contemporary historians of Daoism have long accepted the view, produced in the thirteenth century by self-described practitioners of “internal alchemy” (*neidan* 内丹), that internal alchemy arose in the Tang and triumphed over what they denigrated as “external alchemy” (*waidan* 外丹). In the thirteenth century, “internal alchemy” emerged as a distinct category that focused on the refinement of pneuma (*lianqi* 煉氣) to attain transcendence, in contrast with “external alchemy,” which was defined as a technique of becoming transcendent through elixir ingestion. In order to explain the decline of external alchemy and the ascension of internal alchemy, historians made reasonable inference based on pre-thirteenth century textual evidence. Fabrizio Pregadio traces back the intellectual origin of internal alchemy and expresses the close relation between meditation and elixir ingestion in Daoist Canons before the sixth century. Moreover, he argues that the emergence of *Zhouyi cantongqi* 周易參同契 (The Kinship of the Three, in Accordance with the Book of Changes) in the Tang period changed the interest of Daoist theorists from emphasizing ritual practices to cosmological principles, and represented the beginning of the era of internal alchemy.<sup>1</sup> Li Ping finds many texts about refining pneuma created in the Tang period and uses these texts as evidence to argue the decline of interest on elixir ingestion in textual

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<sup>1</sup> Fabrizio Pregadio, *Great Clarity: Daoism and Alchemy in Early Medieval China* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 2006), 216-223.

creation.<sup>2</sup> While pneuma cultivation did eventually displace elixir ingestion as the dominant approach to attaining transcendence among Daoist adepts, this thesis will show that the projection of that transition to the Tang is not supported by critical evidence. On the contrary, through the analysis of hagiographies created by Du Guangting and Huang Xiufu, we can see that both of them make adjustments to the practice of elixir ingestion in the process of becoming transcendent. At least from the evidence of Du Guangting and Huang Xiufu, we see elixir ingestion did not experience distinct decline after the Tang, but instead developed into new forms and retained its vitality in real practice.

Many earlier scholars tried to find persuasive explanations for why the transition from external alchemy to internal alchemy happened in the Tang period. Some of them, like Wang Weiming, focused on the political and social changes of the times to interpret this transformation as coming from beyond the Daoist domain.<sup>3</sup> Others, like Yang Lihua, are concerned with the self-reflections and intellectual debates within the Tang Daoist organizations.<sup>4</sup> Although these scholars generally ignored the development of Daoist practice in the late Tang and Five Dynasties (907—979), circumstances have improved in recent decades and scholar do not just pay attention only to intellectual history, but also to concrete practice of transcendent-seekers during this period. Li Ping focuses on the practices of non-elite adepts during this period and shows us individual reasons, which were ignored by previous scholars, to explain the rise of

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<sup>2</sup> Li Ping, “*Wantang wudai xiudao yanjiu bianqian*” (Ph.D. thesis, Tsinghua University, 2010), 141-154.

<sup>3</sup> Wang Weiming, “Shi-lun Tang-dai dao-jiao wai-dan shu de shi-su liu-bian,” *Journal of Southwest University for Nationalities* 2003 (2), 4-6.

<sup>4</sup> Yang Lihua, *Niming de ping jie: nei dan guan nian xia dao jiao chang sheng ji shu de kai zhan* (Beijing: Peking University publishing, 2002), 4-17.

internal alchemy in the Song period.<sup>5</sup> However, Li's narrative does not escape the anachronistic recognition of internal alchemy as an anachronistic category in the late Tang and Five Dynasties. It misleads him in his choices of materials, leading him to only concentrate on the narratives related to the concepts of refining the pneuma and, as a consequence, establishes a linear connection between these concepts and later internal alchemy. In fact, he reiterates the same argument made by previous scholars to support the decline of elixir ingestion after the Tang. Under the shadow of internal alchemy, the ideas and practices of elixir ingestion in the late Tang and Five Dynasties have remained an unexplored domain in academic research.

To the contrary, a closer examination of materials from the late Tang and Five Dynasties reveals that interests in elixir production and ingestion persisted through the era, and were tied to the goals of salvation in new ways and through new methods. Through the examination of hagiographies written by Du Guangting and Huang Xiufu, we can actually reveal their interests in elixir ingestion during this time and see how they explain the practices of elixir ingestion in different ways. I will mainly divide my thesis into three parts to develop my argument and analysis.

In the first part, I will briefly introduce the historical background and contents of Du Guangting's hagiographic compilation *Xianzhuan shiyi* 仙傳拾遺 (*Restoration of Omissions in Immortals' Lives*) and Huang Xiufu's *Miscellaneous Records* (*biji* 筆記), *Maoting kehua* 茅亭客話 (*The Conversation with Guests in the Thatched Pavilion*). Both works contain abundant records about transcendence seekers in the late Tang and

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<sup>5</sup> Li Ping, "Wantang wudai xiudao yanjiu bianqian", 141-154.

Five Dynasties. In all of these hagiographies, Du Guangting and Huang Xiufu give special attention to the topic of elixir ingestion, which provides us with many valuable materials to analyze the practices and ideas of elixir ingestion during this period.

In the next part, I will illustrate how Du Guangting and Huang Xiufu focus on the ideas of personal virtue and merit accumulation to construct their narratives of elixir ingestion. It is noteworthy that both of them consider moral behaviors as an important aspect of preparation necessary for achieving transcendent transformation. Through the investigation of other contemporary resources, Du Guangting and Huang Xiufu's emphasis on virtue's role in elixir ingestion is affected by the political influence and hostile attitude of elites caused by incidences of elixir poisoning in the late Tang period.

In the final part, I will analyze the relationship between Du Guangting and Huang Xiufu's practical systems of elixir ingestion and Tang Daoist ideas of being transcendent. In a sense, Du Guangting and Huang Xiufu inherit the Tang cultivated idea that the transcendence can be achieved through diversified paths. Through the intervention of other longevity techniques in the process of elixir ingestion, Du Guangting and Huang Xiufu, like their Tang precursors, complicate the practice of being transcendent and create their path to the transcendence.

Contrary to the earlier scholars' marginal interests on the practice of elixir ingestion, this thesis will mainly analyze the practice of elixir ingestion in Du Guangting and Huang Xiufu's hagiographies to demonstrate that in the late Tang and Five Dynasties, transcendence through elixir ingestion continued to be accepted as a major practice among contemporary Daoist thinkers, challenging the conventional view of the decline

of elixirs after the Tang.

## *Research Methodology*

The late Tang period was regarded as an important period for the transformation from elixir ingestion to internal alchemy. There is a large number of new Daoist scriptures involved many similar concerns regarding the important role of pneuma cultivation in attaining transcendence, which were also emphasized by later internal alchemical schools.<sup>6</sup> Li Ping pays attention to the flourishing of refinement of pneuma in the late Tang Daoist theories of attaining transcendence, and considers these texts on refining pneuma as the origins of internal alchemy.<sup>7</sup> Both Kohn and Li consider that the flourishing of new Daoist scriptures in the late Tang period resulted in the decline of elixir ingestion. While many new methods and theories of attaining transcendence emerged in the late Tang period, we cannot say that the emergence of these new theories on attaining transcendence, based on the investigation of new Daoist scriptures at this time, reflected a change in practice among the late Tang transcendence seekers. In other words, there is a gap between the actual practice at the time and the information provided by Daoist scriptures.

The gap between actual practices and written scriptures certainly exists because we do not know whether the spreading of the new scriptures and theories were widely accepted by late Tang adepts. We need to realize that the amount of textual materials available to us is far beyond what ancient people could obtain. Though we have noticed

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<sup>6</sup> Livia Kohn and Russell Kirkland, "Daoism in the Tang (618-907)," in *Daoism Handbook*, ed. Livia Kohn (Boston: Brill, 2000), 339-383.

<sup>7</sup> Li Ping, "*Wantang wudai xiudao yanjiu bianqian*," 168.

the emergence of many new Daoist scriptures in the late Tang period, it was impossible for the Tang people to attain as much information as we can. If you ask a Chinese person who the most famous Tang poet is, I believe most people will answer Li Bo 李白 or Du Fu 杜甫. However, from our examination of Tang manuscripts unearthed in Dunhuang 敦煌, it is obvious that people living in Dunhuang during the Tang period had a completely different answer to this question.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, we must rely on other materials to understand the real practices and lives of late Tang and Five Dynasties transcendence seekers.

Fortunately, the information from hagiographies and miscellaneous records allow us insight into more details about the actual historical practices of transcendence in the late Tang and Five Dynasties. Compared with instructional narratives in Daoist scriptures, hagiographies provide us with more information about transcendence seekers' backgrounds, the concrete ways of achieving transcendence, and taboos in the process of doing such. Moreover, through the comparison of different hagiographies written by different authors, we can also reveal the authors' concern on particular practice during the same period and see how different authors construct their narratives on the same practice and same transcendent figure. It is from the investigation of late Tang and Five Dynasties' hagiographies, I demonstrate that during this period, the practice of elixir ingestion was still accepted by adepts and Daoist thinkers, like Du Guangting and Huang Xiufu, and did not experience a distinct decline. Moreover, miscellaneous records offer us many observations and evaluations of elixir ingestion

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<sup>8</sup> Stephen Owen, "The Manuscript Legacy of the Tang: The Case of Literature," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, 62.2 (2007), 295-297.

and the practice of attaining transcendence from different perspectives. These records on elixir ingestion and creation also give us some valuable references to think about the changes and developments of elixir ingestion in the late Tang and Five Dynasties. Through my investigation and comparison of hagiographies created by Du Guangting and Huang Xiufu, both of them were late Tang and Five Dynasties' writers, I realized that on the practical level, the decline of elixir ingestion did not experience a complete decline in the late Tang and Five Dynasties. On the contrary, the practice of elixir ingestion still maintained great vitality and a new conceptual relationship between transcendence and elixir ingestion was made by Daoist theorists to adapt to the new environment.

## Du Guangting's *Xianzhuan shiyi*

*Xianzhuan shiyi* 仙傳拾遺 (*Collection of Scattered Biographies of Transcendents*) is the least well-known of three hagiographies compiled by Du Guangting. Unlike Du's famous works, *Wangshi shenxian zhuan* 王氏神仙傳 (*Biographies of the Immortals of the Wang Clan*) and *Yongcheng jixianlu* 壩城集仙錄 (*The Records of the Immortals Gathered in the Walled City*), *Xianzhuan shiyi* was scattered and partly lost during the chaos of the Yuan-Ming transition.<sup>9</sup> Since the work stopped circulating after the early Ming period, most of extant content in this book is in the fragments preserved in the massive Northern Song collection, *Taiping guangji* 太平廣記 (*The Extensive Records of the Taiping Era*), and in the Southern Song's *Sandong Qunxianlu* 三洞群仙錄 (*The Records of the Immortals in Three Caves*). According to Li Jianguo's study, the original *Xianzhuan shiyi* had forty volumes, containing 429 entries. Thanks to previous generations of scholars who compiled the extant stories from *Taiping guangji* and *Sandong Qunxianlu*, we now have almost 120 narratives credibly traceable to Du's lost book.<sup>10</sup>

If we investigate Du's hagiography collections, three features are noteworthy. First, *Yongcheng jixianlu* and *Wangshi shenxianzhuan* have a clear theme and standard in collected materials, the former focusing on the female transcendents in all periods, and

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<sup>9</sup> Luo Zhengming, "Tang wudai daojiao xiaoshuo yanjiu" (Ph.D. thesis, Fudan University, 2003), 132-133.

<sup>10</sup> Li Jianguo, *Tang wudai zhiguan chuanqi xu lu* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2017), 1137-1152.

the latter concentrating on any transcendents surnamed Wang. In contrast, the figures and themes of *Xianzhuan shiyi*'s hagiographies have no apparent organizing principle beyond the pursuit of transcendence. Second, *Xianzhuan shiyi* puts more emphasis on the figures who transcended in the Tang period, especially after the mid-Tang. In almost half of the extant stories, there is no clear source of information that can be found in other Tang literature. Luo Zhengming suggests that Du was inspired by contemporary oral legends of new transcendents and created his hagiographies based on these oral materials. Third, in those entries that recount lives of pre-Tang transcendents, Du's narratives focus on the activities of these transcendents in the Tang period. In his book, Du is concerned more with as yet unrecorded transcendent stories from the Tang, and not repeating earlier legends of transcendents. It seems that he was not trying to save those transcendents from the stream of history, who had already been forgotten in the tides of time, but was trying to record the new developments of those continuous traditions of transcendents in the Tang period. Therefore, I think that Du Guangting's guiding purpose was to preserve the legends of transcendents, which circulated during his time, after the mid-ninth century, no matter whether they were new or old figures, based on oral tradition or written texts. Through these hagiographies, it is possible for us to reveal some general features of the path to transcendence, through what kind of techniques were used and how the relationship between transcendence and practices of adepts which Du constructed.

### Huang Xiufu's *Maoting kehua*

There is no doubt that *Xianzhuan shiyi* offers us many tales to think about the changes and developments of Daoist ideas on the process of transcendence after the mid-ninth century, but we should still always be aware that any historical data is restricted by its literary genre and the author's individual position. In this way, to avoid drawing arbitrary conclusions from just one type of material, it is necessary for us to investigate other types of materials written in the Five Dynasties, rather than only concentrating on Du Guangting's hagiographies.

*Maoting kehua* 茅亭客話 (*The Conversation with Guests in the Thatched Pavilion*) makes for a strong complement to *Xianzhuan shiyi*. Compared with Du Guangting's high political influence and achievements in Daoist rituals and practices, Huang Xiufu, the author of *Maoting kehua*, was merely a regional Daoist adept living in late tenth century Sichuan. *Maoting kehua* is a miscellaneous record that not only contains many political records of Later Shu kingdom (934—966), which was one of the Ten Kingdoms during the Five Dynasties and located in present Sichuan province, but also has many biographies of Daoist priests and hagiographies of Later Shu figures in the tenth century Sichuan region. Compared with *Xianzhuan shiyi*, which is a huge compilation of hagiographies, *Maoting kehua* is a relatively diverse text, involving many kinds of materials related to political and religious conditions in the late Five Dynasties.

As for author Huang Xiufu, we have no other resources related to his life. Based on the information of his interactions with contemporary Daoist adepts and literati, he was a Daoist adept who lived in the late tenth century and early eleventh century. In his book, Daoist hagiographies and records about his interactions with other Later Shu Daoist adepts occupy more than half the content of this book.

In *Maoting kehua*, there are nine records, Cheng Junyou 程君友, Yong Dao 雍道, Wang Ke 王客, Tao Shazi 淘沙子, Zhang Pingyun 張平雲, Ding Yuanhe 丁元和, Wang Taimiao 王太廟, Gou Sheng 勾生, Li Haiyang 黎海陽, which conform to the basic features of Daoist hagiography wherein the protagonist realizes his transformation from an ordinary person to a transcendent or a transcendent shows a miracle to a person.<sup>11</sup> Through these nine hagiographies, we can uncover Huang Xiufu's individual concerns with achieving transcendence, those being the techniques of elixir ingestion and release from the corpse (*shijie* 屍解). In six of Huang Xiufu's nine hagiographies, his particular preference toward elixir ingestion is apparent, especially in the hagiography of Li Haiyang 黎海陽, which is also the longest and most valuable tale for analyzing Huang's thoughts on achieving transcendence.<sup>12</sup> The tale of Li Haiyang tells us of Li's magical encounter with a ghost transcendent who later instructs him in mysterious practices of elixir ingestion and other esoteric techniques. In addition to this tale, Huang Xiufu's religious commentary and biographies of Daoist priests in his *Maoting kehua* also contain valuable information allowing us to investigate both his own thoughts and the state of Daoist thought and practice in Five Dynasties' Sichuan.

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<sup>11</sup> Huang Xiufu, *Maoting kehua*, in *Quan Song biji* 2 (Zhengzhou: Daxiang chubanshe, 2006), vol.1, 487-493.

<sup>12</sup> Huang Xiufu, *Maoting kehua*, 493.

### *The Concern of Personal Virtue*

If we carefully examine the hagiographies appearing in *Xianzhuan shiyi*, Du Guangting's personal preference for elixir ingestion and creation is a remarkable phenomenon. Contrary to other compilations of hagiographies created by Du Guangting, his *Xianzhuan shiyi* includes more accounts of the ingestion of mysterious drugs and elixirs than other macrobiotic techniques. Du Guangting endows elixir ingestion with the new meaning. He adds the intervention of individual virtue as an essential requirement before elixir ingestion and emphasize its connection with attaining transcendence. He repeatedly points out the importance of merit (*gong* 功) and virtue (*de* 德) in the process of attaining transcendence and constructs a relationship between the elixir and good deeds. Based on his explanation, the elixir's efficacy, which causes the transformation of transcendents, can only be achieved through merit and virtue accumulation.

From Du Gaungting's point of view, the elixir which grants transcendent transformation is a reward for individual good behaviors. In the hagiography about transcendent seeker Chen Huixu 陈惠虚, the transcendent Old Zhang told Chen that "The amassing of merit and accumulation of virtue, and the ascension of the fleshly

body to Heaven reside in the persistent establishment of one's will” 積功累德，肉身昇天，在於立志堅久。<sup>13</sup> The following passage also makes merit accumulation a precondition for the practices of internal cultivation and elixir ingestion succeeding:

It is by extending goodness to others and returning evil to one's own person, that one accumulates virtue. It is by [treating] merit as untrivial and by establishing it unremittingly, and in [treating] transgression as unimportant and its removal as the priority, that one accumulates merit. Being so, afterwards, internal practice will be full, and external elixir will reach its upmost, and you may immediately attain the Dao.

善推於人，不善歸諸身，所以積德也；功不在小，立之無怠，過不在大，去而不貳，所以積功也。然後內行充而外丹至，可以冀道於彷彿耳。<sup>14</sup>

Huang Xiufu also emphasizes merit accumulation as the precondition of transcendence, but compared to Du Guangting who was vague about what would constitute merit-accumulating behavior. Huang Xiufu fleshes out a number of clear examples. His writing followed a similar concentration on individual virtues in his hagiographies, though not directly using terms like *de* or *gong*. In his depiction of people who successfully created elixirs and completed transcendent transformation, Huang Xiufu introduced their good behaviors and implied a potential connection between elixir acquisition and the individual's moral character. In the beginning paragraph of Chen Junyou's 程君友 case, Huang Xiufu depicted the good deeds made by Chen and his being kind in nature, which led to his later encounter with a transcendent and acquiring of elixir, as the passage says:

As a person, [Chen Junyou] was humble and simple in character, and his nature was compassionate and benevolent. When he saw animals while walking, he would step aside to let them pass because he did not want to startle them. He was taciturn and seldom talked with other people. When he was in his sixties, if he saw hermits or Daoist priests gathered together, he would respect them by paying their porters. If they had packages, he would carry them on his back, no matter

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<sup>13</sup> Du Guangting, *Xianzhuan shiyi*, in *Taiping guangji*, ed. Li Fang (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2013), vol. 55, 1299.

<sup>14</sup> Du Guangting, *Xianzhuan shiyi*, 1321.

how far they were going. If someone offered him money, he would decline it without a backward glance.

人質鄙樸而性慈仁。行見禽獸常下道迴避，不欲驚之。寡訥少與人交言。年六十許，凡見山人道士聚，得備負之直，以接奉之。凡有行李者即與之負擔，無遠近。或遺其錢即不顧而迴。<sup>15</sup>

It is clear that both Du Guangting and Huang Xiufu added moral elements in the process of acquiring elixir as a prerequisite of transcendence. In fact, the emphasis on merits and virtues was not only advocated by Du Guangting and Huang Xiufu in their hagiographies, but also emerged in many other narratives of transcendence written in the late Tang and Five Dynasties' periods. Besides the conditions of attaining transcendence mentioned in Du Guangting and Huang Xiufu's hagiographies, in which merit accumulation was a key requirement for acquiring elixir, another type of hagiography containing moral elements highlighted that the final salvation was the direct result of an individual's good behaviors and there was no need for adepts to rely on other techniques. In Shen Fen's 沈汾 famous compilation of hagiographies *Xu xian zhuan* 續仙傳 (*Immortals' Biographies, Continued*), the Korean Daoist adept Kim Ka-gi 金可記(c. Jin Keji), with the help of his good deeds, finally accessed the state of transcendence:

[Kim Ka-gi] was longing for his home country and crossed the sea and left [Tang]. Soon he returned, donned Daoist garb, secluded himself on Zhongnan Mountain and devoted himself to acts of hidden virtue. When people sought something from him, there were none whom he refused. He was focused and industrious in his work. People could not tease him..... In the twelfth month of the eleventh year of the Dazhong reign (859 C.E), Kim Ka-gi suddenly submitted a memorial to [Emperor Xuanzong] saying "I have received an edict from the Jade emperor and was appointed as assistant minister of Yingwen tai. In the 25<sup>th</sup> day of next second month, I will ascend to the heaven."

思歸本國，航海而去。複來，衣道服，卻入終南，務行陰德。人有所求，無阻者。精勤為事，人不可諧也.....大中十一年十二月，忽上表言：臣奉

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<sup>15</sup> Huang Xiufu, *Maoting kehua*, 490.

玉皇詔，為英文台侍郎，明年二月二十五日當上升。<sup>16</sup>

In another case from the late Tang and Five Dynasties' anonymous *Dengxia xiantan* 燈下閒談 (*Gossip Under the Lamp*), the path to becoming transcendent even extended to normal people who were not Daoist priests, yet had remarkable records of good deeds:

The feathered transcendent said “Li Jue who lived in the Yangzi County in Huainan province. Your family worked as grain sellers for three generations. Your mind never forgot the *Dao*. Now your hidden merits had met the required values and can ascend to the heaven. [Now] the supreme emperor descended the golden talisman inscribed in golden characters to reveal it to all under heaven.”.....Several months later, Li Jue ascended to Heaven in broad daylight. 羽衣曰：淮南道揚子縣李珣，三代販舂糠粃，心不忘道，陰功數滿，運偶升天，上帝遂降金符金字，預示上下...未數月，其人白日沖天。<sup>17</sup>

No matter the method of attaining transcendence under discussion, whether requiring elixir ingestion or not, using merit accumulation as a substitution for transcendent transformation was a consistent feature in the late Tang and Five Dynasties literary works. Penny Benjamin has argued that personal virtue was a major issue in the Song Daoist schools, but not a necessary requirement or step of preparation in the process of being transcendent before the Song period.<sup>18</sup> However, from the investigation of hagiographies written by Du Guangting and Huang Xiufu, it is obvious that moral behavior had already received growing attention of the late Tang and Five Dynasties' Daoist thinker. Then what could be the potential reasons for Du Guangting and Huang Xiufu's constant concerns on moral behaviors during this period, which reshaped the relationship between elixir ingestion and achieving transcendence? In other words, why did the traditional model of transcendence being realized directly

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<sup>16</sup> Shen Fen, *Xu xian zhuan* in *Daozang* (Beijing: Huaxia chubanshe, 2004), vol.45, 413.

<sup>17</sup> Anonymity, *Dengxia xiantan*, in *Shiyuan congshu*, ed. Zhang Junheng (Wuxing Zhang shi ke ben, 1913-1917), vol.1,11.

<sup>18</sup> Benjamin Penny, “Immortality and Transcendence,” in *Daoism Handbook*, ed. Livia Kohn (Boston: Brill, 2000), 109.

through elixir ingestion need moral behaviors as an integral part of transcendence?

### *Admonishment and Historical Lessons*

To think about why the moralization became a general concern in the late Tang and Five Dynasties' writings about attaining transcendence, we must inevitably turn to investigating the potential reasons which shaped this idea during that time. Though Du Guangting did not explain why merits and virtues were the essential factors in the process of acquiring elixir, he by contrast pointed out the invalid practices of acquiring elixir to reinforce the idea of merits accumulation. In other words, he showed us situations in which people who had chance to acquire elixir but lacked good behavior, thereby admonishing transcendence seekers neglecting the importance of individual behaviors and hoping for shortcuts in the process of transcendence. Based on his explanation, the success of final salvation largely depended on self-cultivation, but not

on other external forces. In the passage about transcendence seeker Cuichengzi 崔成子, Cui criticizes a man who intends to steal his elixir, saying:

The Dao lies in the accumulation of merit and the piling up of [good] acts, and virtue toward sentient beings. Being so, afterwards the divine elixir can be completed and a Perfected Master can be encountered. You have never done any portion of a good [act], but embraced malicious practices and want to steal my “Cloud Plump” and “Divine Onion” medicines with the hope of transcending worldly existence. Would that not be difficult?

道在積功累行，德及含識。然後神丹可成，真師可遇。子無毫分之善，懷殘毒之行，竊我雲腴神薤之藥，而欲度世，不亦難乎？<sup>19</sup>

In another hagiography, Du Guangting alluded to the shortage of qualified transcendence seekers during his time, with many examples of people who were sanctimonious, only engaging in superficial practice. Besides his sarcasm toward these people, Du Guangting also foregrounds the conditions required for an eligible transcendence-seeker:

The crowd laughed at [this old elixir seller], saying, “If your cycle elixir [a kind of elixir which can attain transcendence] can achieve immortality and help people ascend to the heaven, why are you still so gaunt like this and do not take it for yourself?” The old man responded, “My elixir is only just finished, and it is fitting that I use it to help other people achieve salvation [and thereby accumulate my own] merit. I have not helped enough people to achieve salvation, and the transcendence-seekers are hard to find. This is why I cannot take this elixir and ascend toward the heaven by myself.” The crowd asked him, “All people in this world hope to achieve longevity and immortality. They sincerely aspire to prolong their life-span. Why you say it is hard to find transcendent-seekers?” The old man answered, “People all have an intention to prefer the *Dao* but cannot keep cultivating. It is difficult to find people who are able to prefer the Dao and also to cultivate themselves with no fading vigor and diligent and persistent pursuit, who are not seduced by music and lust, deluded by fame and profit, confused by luxury, led astray by gossip, [yet] remaining true to their original aspiration like stone and gold.”

眾笑謂之曰：「既還丹可致不死長生升天，何憔悴若此而不自恤邪？」「吾此丹初熟，合度人立功，度人未滿，求仙者難得。吾不能自服便飛長沖天耳。」眾問曰：「舉世之人皆願長生不死，延年益壽，人盡有心，何言求仙者難得也？」叟曰：「人皆有心好道而不能修行，能好道復能修行，精神不

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<sup>19</sup> Chen Baoguang, *Sandong qunxian lu in Daozang* (Beijing: Huaxia chubanshe, 2004), vol. 46, 368.

退，勤久其事，不被聲色所誘，名利所惑，奢華所亂，是非所牽，初心不變，如金如石者，難也。」<sup>20</sup>

It is significant that the connotation of Du Guangting's hagiographies denoted a particular underlining of good behaviors and Du Guangting warned transcendence seekers that the correct way to achieve transcendence must rely on individual moral effort.

In order to highlight the importance of self-cultivation, Huang Xiufu also provided us with more detailed information of what would happen if people rely on external force to acquire elixir. If elixir was not acquired through self-cultivation and good behavior, it was just a poison that resulted in death rather than transcendence. In the case of Wang Taimiao 王太廟, Wang took the elixir that belonged to a tavern owner who had hidden good virtue and finally failed to prove the effect of elixir in the presence of Later Shu emperor. In explaining the failure of Wang, Huang Xiufu comments, “Among those who do not cultivate the Dao, it is rare to find one with the arts of transcendence. If [one of these rare people] does acquire [arts of transcendence], they will attract calamities” 未有不修道而希仙藝者，苟或得之，必招其禍。<sup>21</sup> Therefore, Huang Xiufu contributed the effect of elixir to the performance of good behavior. In another story, the transcendent tells the future Daoist priest Li Haiyang 黎海阳 the story of Chief Minister Wei Gao's 韦皋(745—805) death, which was caused by elixir ingestion:

I [the transcendent] casually observed [Wei Gao's] behavior for three years. Then the emperor sent a monk to go to Shu region to monitor Secretariat Director [Wei Gao]. At first they talked about ideas of suffering and emptiness. Later, they began to talk about matters of smelting alchemy. Wei Gao tried his prescriptions one by one and they all succeeded. In these three years, Wei Gao respected him sincerely. One day the monk explained to Wei Gao the method for reverted elixir

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<sup>20</sup> Du Guangting, *Yongcheng jixian lu* in *Daozang* (Beijing: Huaxia chubanshe, 2004), vol.45, 212.

<sup>21</sup> Huang Xiufu, *Maoting kehua*, 493.

and retaining youth and Wei Gao accepted it with more respect. Afterwards the elixir was finished, Wei Gao fasted and ingested it. In the beginning, Wei Gao felt his vital energy and numen getting brighter. His appetite exceeded his usual level. Then the monk left Wei. In the late spring of the twentieth year of the Zhenyuan reign, Wei died from the elixir's toxicity.

皇觀三年，又遣僧行勤入蜀伺察中令。初以談議苦空，後說燒煉點化之事。中令歷試，一一皆驗。凡三年，中令甚誠敬之。或一日說還丹延駐之法，中令愈加景奉。後煉丹既成，中令齋戒餌之。初覺神氣清爽，嗜好倍常。僧遂辭去。至貞元二十年暮春，藥毒發而薨。<sup>22</sup>

In this story Huang Xiufu attributes Wei Gao's death to his hope of being transcendent being wrongly pinned on other people. Huang Xiufu used Wei Gao's death as an admonishment to those people who intended to find a shortcut in the process of achieving transcendence. In other words, he endorsed self-cultivation and individual behavior as crucial to achieving final salvation.

In general, both Du Guangting and Huang Xiufu took the stance that transcendence through elixir ingestion cannot be realized without the precondition of self-cultivation and merit accumulation, even if a transcendence seeker was fortunate enough to acquire elixir in some way. It can be said that Du Guangting and Huang Xiufu rejected the traditional explanation that transcendence can be realized directly through elixir ingestion. Since the promise of achieving transcendence was the practical basis of elixir ingestion, this idea actually enhanced the fanaticism of elixir ingestion among growing groups of transcendence seekers, both in the Tang and preceding periods.<sup>23</sup> However, Kirkland Russell finds that after the An Lushan rebellion, official records and literati sources show relatively hostile attitudes to certain Daoist figures, especially to those who know alchemical techniques.<sup>24</sup> Though we cannot say that Daoist ideas and

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 505.

<sup>23</sup> Fabrizio Pregadio. *Great Clarity: Daoism and Alchemy in Early Medieval China* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 2006), 8-10.

<sup>24</sup> Russell Kirkland, "Dimensions of Tang Taoism: The State of the Field at the End of the Millennium." *Tang*

practices began to lose support after the An Lushan rebellion, the developing circumstance of Daoist groups were certainly changing because the practice of elixir ingestion was not entirely irresponsible for the political chaos after the ninth century. According to Barrett Timothy's statistics, the causes of five emperors' death in the ninth century were directly or indirectly from elixirs ingestion. Xianzong 獻宗 (805–820), Wuzong 武宗 (840–846) and Xuanzong 宣宗 (846–859) died after ingesting elixirs. The death of Muzong 穆宗 (820–824) and Jingzong 敬宗 (824–824) was possibly due to elixir poisoning.<sup>25</sup> Therefore, political figures and literati living in the ninth century had ample reason to attribute the dynasty's failure to those Daoist frauds and elixir ingestion.

In the Five Dynasties, the hostile circumstance towards elixir ingestion persisted. We can find more and more textual evidences and records from *biji* showed continued hostile attitudes towards elixir and led to elixir ingestion being less accepted in the views of many contemporary educated people. Wang Renyu (王仁裕, 880–956), who once held an official position in the Former Shu kingdom (907-925) and later served in the courts of the Later Tang (923 – 936) and Later Jin Dynasties (936 – 947), complained about the terrible social impacts caused by the blind pursuit of elixir. In his *Wangshi wenjian lu* 王氏聞見錄 (*The Record of Things Seen and Heard by Wang*), Wang Renyu mentioned a famous alchemical fraud by the name of Wen Chuzhi 文處子 in Hanzhong 漢中, the northern region of present Sichuan province:

There was a recipe master whose surname was Wen living in Hanzhong. He

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*Studies* Vol. 1997, Issue 15-16, 97.

<sup>25</sup> Timothy Barrett, *Taoism Under the Tang: Religion and Empire During the Golden Age of Chinese History* (London: Wellsweep Press, 1996), 78-79.

always visited the noble families in Sichuan and sold elixirs for business. But people interested in elixir making were all fooled by him. There was a rich merchant called Li Shiwu. He accumulated great fortune, but he was deluded by Wen and exhausted all his possessions within three years.....Another victim was a general of the Shu who stationed his army in Hanzhong.

有處子姓文，不記姓名，居漢中。常游兩蜀候伯之門，以燒煉為業，但留意於爐火者，鹹為所欺。有富商李十五者，積貨甚多，為文所惑，三年之內，家財罄空....又有蜀中大將屯兵漢中者，亦為所惑。<sup>26</sup>

The Later Shu (934–965) official He Guangyuan 何光远 also noted a similar condition during his time. Like the case of Wen Chuzi mentioned by Wang Renyu, He Guangyuan recorded the case of Yang Xun 楊勛, who was also a notorious alchemical fraud, and revealed his apparent contempt for those kinds of people:

During the period of the former Shu kingdom, there was a man called Yang Xun who was Yang Qianlang's uncle and his penname is Pushe. He could ask for the reverted elixir from heaven and the elixir would immediately descend. He could also summon the female deity, the Dark Maid of the Nine Heavens and later Lady of Earth. They all went to bed with him and left after spending night. When one of his legs was broken, he was captured and executed in the west market. His medicine and arts were not proved effective. His corpse stunk and made onlookers laugh at him.

王蜀有楊遷郎叔楊勛者，自號僕射，能於空中請自然還丹，其丹立降。又能召九天玄女、後土夫人悉入簾帷，經宿而去。及折其一足，西市斬之，藥亦無征，術亦無驗，屍骸臭穢，觀者笑焉。<sup>27</sup>

Clearly, Wang Renyu and He Guangyuan intended to admonish their contemporaries for being fooled by the tricks of questionable alchemists. However, in addition to directly criticizing this phenomenon, Wang Renyu also reluctantly conceded the irresistible attraction of elixir ingestion which lured people into easily falling into frauds' traps. This anxiety is expressed in another case of elixir fraud:

When Chang'an was not destroyed by wars, there was a Daoist arts man who claimed to know the wonders of cinnabar. Though he looked like a young man, he claimed to be three hundred years old. People in Chang'an deeply admired him. They brought money to seek his cinnabar and disorderly asking its effect,

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<sup>26</sup> Wang Renyu, *Wangshi Wenjian lu* in *Wudai shishu huibian* (Hangzhou: Hangzhou Chubanshe, 2004), vol.10, 5835.

<sup>27</sup> He Guangyuan, *Jian jie lu* in *Wudai shishu huibian* (Hangzhou: Hangzhou Chubanshe, 2004), vol.10, 6122.

which made his house crowded like a market...People who like the arts are all deceived by him, like cheating the child.

長安完盛之時，有一道術人，稱得丹砂之妙，顏如弱冠，自言三百餘歲。京都人甚慕之，至於輸貨求丹，橫經請益者，門如市肆.....好道術者，受其誑惑，如欺嬰孩矣。<sup>28</sup>

From these observations in the late Tang and Five Dynasties, we can see that contemporary literati and officials living in Southern kingdoms were critical of traditional patterns of ingesting elixir and were sensitive to the troubles caused by alchemical frauds. Without any limitation imposed on practice, elixir ingestion was easily abused by laymen.

Therefore, though Du Guangting and Huang Xiufu did not clearly explain their endorsement of moral accumulation as a key point of preparation before the ingestion of elixir, the political impacts and the hostile attitude of elites caused by elixir ingestion in the late Tang period were unavoidable problems to the Daoist thinkers of the time. It appears that the construction of an intimate relationship between elixir ingestion and individual behaviors in the process of achieving transcendence actually played a role in restricting the improper usage of elixir and in reconciling the hostility of social elites who had negative impressions and memories regarding the horrible effects of uncontrollable elixir ingestion. From this perspective, Du Guangting and Huang Xiufu's concentration on moral behavior can be considered as a proactive response of Daoist groups to the doubts of elixir's efficacy raised in the Tang period.

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<sup>28</sup> Wang Renyu, *Yutang Xianhua in Wudai shishu huibian* (Hangzhou: Hangzhou Chubanshe, 2004), vol.4, 5630.

### *The Combination of Elixir Ingestion and Longevity Techniques*

One of the main preoccupations of Du Guangting and Huang Xiufu is restoring the prestige of elixir ingestion among their contemporaries. Moral behavior provides a convenient solution to further refine the preparation of being transcendent. Then, how did Du and Huang consider the concrete practice of elixir ingestion in order to rid it of its negative reputation and create a new path toward transcendence? In addition to the intervention of merit accumulation, both of them also advocated the intervention of other longevity techniques in the process of transcendent transformation to refine and complicate the practice of elixir ingestion. According to this model, the transcendent state was the result of the coaction of many macrobiotic techniques, which complicated the process of achieving transcendence and assigned different functions to elixir ingestion and other techniques. It is noteworthy that the idea of complementary

functions of different longevity techniques in the process of achieving transcendence actually can be found throughout the Tang Daoist texts and many famous Tang Daoist thinkers advocated an integrated exercise system in actual practice. Sima Chengzhen 司马承祯 (647–735) is a representative figure of this integrated system.<sup>29</sup> In his *Fuqi jingyi lun* 服氣精義論 (*Discourse on the Essential Meaning of the Absorption of Qi*), Sima Chengzhen focuses on a gradual method to transform ordinary adepts to transcendent beings. In his view, all longevity techniques have to support each other, being arranged in different combinations to meet the specific needs of transcendent seekers.<sup>30</sup> The technique practiced in the early stage plays a role as part of the preparation of advanced practice and the transcendence can only be attained after the fulfillment of all stages.

The combinations of macrobiotic techniques were not always fixed. However, normally, there is a clear distinction between longevity and transcendence made by Daoist thinkers who advocated this integrated system. As Engelhardt Ute has argued, compared with physicians who use longevity techniques to restore a balanced state of health, Daoist practitioners use the same techniques as their first step to transform their mortal body.<sup>31</sup> In other words, to achieve final transcendence, maintenance of health is always the primary concern for Daoist thinkers. Based on the examination of hagiographies in *Xianzhuan shiyi*, Du Guangting introduced a similar gradual path to achieving transcendence and considered elixir ingestion and pneuma refinement to be

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<sup>29</sup> Livia Kohn and Russell Kirkland, “Daoism in the Tang (618-907),” 347.

<sup>30</sup> Ute Engelhardt, “Longevity Techniques and Chinese Medicine,” in *Daoism Handbook*, ed. Livia Kohn (Boston: Brill, 2000), 93.

<sup>31</sup> Ute Engelhardt, “Longevity Techniques and Chinese Medicine,” 100.

complementary methods. However, Du Guangting also argued that there is a difference between elixir for transcendence transformation and elixir for the first stage of achieving transcendence. Du Guangting used the term divine elixir (*shendan* 神丹) to refer specifically to the elixir which is acquired through merits accumulation and can cause the transformation into a transcendent being.<sup>32</sup> On the other hand, what he called elixir pills (*danhua* 丹華) in his hagiography were more like medicines for health maintenance. In fact, Ge Hong 葛洪 (283–343), in his *Baopuzi* 抱朴子 (*The Master Who Embraces Simplicity*) had categorized medicines for longevity purpose into various grades according to their efficacy.<sup>33</sup> Through the distinction of two kinds of elixirs, Du Guangting drew a line between longevity and transcendence in his integrated system of achieving transcendence. Still, in the dialogue between Chen Huixu and Old Zhang, having heard Chen’s question about studying transcendence, Old Zhang answers him:

[Huixu] asked, “What gate should one enter in order to study transcendence?” Old Zhang said, “Internally, you should preserve your spirit and refine your pneuma (*qi*). Externally, you should take elixir pills (*danhua*). [However,] transformation to transcendence [requires] the power of divine elixir.  
又問曰：「學仙以何門而入」？張老曰：「內以保神鍊氣，外以服餌丹華，變化為仙，神丹之力也。」<sup>34</sup>

Here Du Guangting divided the entrance to studying transcendence into “internal” and “external” and treated these two kinds of practices as complementary practices. It is clear that in the view of Du Guangting, final transformation is exclusive to particular elixir and transcendence should be achieved through a step by step process of different

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<sup>32</sup> Du Guangting, *Xianzhuan shiyi*, 368, 1299.

<sup>33</sup> Benjamin Penny, “Immortality and Transcendence,” in *Daoism Handbook*, ed. Livia Kohn (Boston: Brill, 2000), 114.

<sup>34</sup> Du Guangting, *Xianzhuan shiyi*, 1299.

macrobiotic techniques.

However, the model of technique combinations appearing in Huang Xiufu's hagiographies differ from Du Guangting's. Though Huang Xiufu also realized the difference between longevity and transcendence, Huang did not consider that the gap between longevity and transcendence was unbridgeable. Compared with the gradual way of being transcendent advocated by Du Guangting and other Tang Daoist thinkers, Huang Xiufu provided a more direct approach. In contrast with the elixir for health maintenance as the first stage in Du Guangting's exercise system, Huang Xiufu argued that through the intervention of heating techniques, even mineral medicines could change their efficacy and become medicine for transcendent transformation. It is in the case of Li Haiyang that Huang Xiufu implied the adept can attain enlightenment of *dao* through the ingestion of water and realgar elixir refined by fire:

I had heard that the great [best] elixir is reverted elixir in nine cycles, which cannot be made without "divine water" (lead) and "flowery pool" (mercury). The next elixirs are smelted mica and realgar. If you take them, although they cannot help you ride the clouds harnessed to a phoenix, and enslave ghosts and spirits, they can still expel one hundred diseases and increase your lifespan. I acquired a method to smelt realgar elixir. I ingested it from age twenty to age forty and acquire its effect. If you cultivate it with fire and ingest it with water, you can hope to come close to the Way.

所聞者上藥有九轉還丹，不離乎神水華池；其次有雲母雄黃，服之雖不乘雲駕鳳，役使鬼神，亦可祛除百病，補益壽年。某得煉雄黃之法。自二十歲服至四十歲獲其藥力。苟再以火養就以水吞，可冀道於仿佛。<sup>35</sup>

In this passage, though Huang Xiufu also divided elixirs into different levels, distinguishing elixirs that can achieve transcendence from those having no transformative power, he proceeds to introduce a method to improve the efficacy of inferior medicine, relying on the heating of the mineral and ingestion of water. The

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<sup>35</sup> Huang Xiufu, *Maoting kehua*, 505.

reverted elixir in nine cycles (*jiuzhuan huandan* 九轉還丹) recommended by Huang Xiufu as the best elixir was actually the most famous transcendent medicine and the lead-mercury theory was also the most superior model of elixir making in the Tang period.<sup>36</sup> However, besides the particular ingredients preferred by Tang Daoist practitioners, Tang alchemists were also concerned with preparations used as intermediate stage in the compounding of elixir, which included heating. Pregadio Fabrizio has argued that Tang alchemists considered “fire times” as having special rhythms to reveal the cosmological process and this is why they used the heating cycle of the elixir to bring minerals to perfection.<sup>37</sup> In other words, heating, in the realm of elixir compounding, refers to a process of refining, which transforms ingredients to a superior level. For Huang Xiufu, the heating of the realgar medicine can change its nature as a longevity drug and upgrade it to the level of transcendent medicine. In *Danlun juezhi Xinjian* 丹論訣旨心鑑 (*The discourse and essential formular of elixir*) written by Five Dynasties Daoist priest Zhang Yuande 张元德 and *Zhouyi cantongqi*, Zhang also emphasized the role of heating and argued that the interaction of water and fire was an important step in the process of elixir making and ingestion, having influence on the effect of elixirs.<sup>38</sup>

The combinations of techniques and interventions mentioned by Du Guangting and Huang Xiufu were not random choices, but intellectual heritages passed from the Tang Daoist ideas of achieving transcendence. Since the Tang dynasty, the paths to

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<sup>36</sup> Fabrizio Pregadio, “Elixirs and Alchemy,” in *Daoism Handbook*, ed. Livia Kohn (Boston: Brill, 2000), 175.

<sup>37</sup> Fabrizio Pregadio, “The Representation of Time in the *Zhouyi cantong qi*.” *Cahiers d'Extrême-Asie* 8, (1995), 160-164.

<sup>38</sup> Zhang Yuande, *Danlun juezhi xinjian* in *Daozang*, vol.19 (Beijing: Huaxia chubanshe, 2004), 192.

transcendence were not exclusive to any methods or figures. Moreover, Tang transcendence seekers had more integrated visions, which made the practices and preparations toward being transcendent become more complicated than in previous times. In the beginning stage of studying transcendence, Du Guangting not only emphasized the importance of elixir ingestion, but also focused on the refinement of pneuma. The flourishing practice of refining pneuma by many Tang Daoist adepts was a noteworthy phenomenon and a large number of new Daoist texts about the refinement of pneuma also appeared during this period. Li Ping has observed that after the mid-Tang, one of the greatest changes of late Tang Daoism was the appearance of large number of theories and practices about ingesting pneuma (*fu qi* 服氣). Traditionally, in the pre-Tang period, the practice of ingesting pneuma was considered as macrobiotic hygiene rather than as a way to realize salvation. However, ingesting pneuma underwent a theoretical transition in the Tang period and was upgraded to a practice of achieving transcendence.<sup>39</sup> According to Sima Chengzhen's *Fuqi jingyi lun*, the attainment of the transcendence consists of the perfection of pneuma.<sup>40</sup> Other late Tang Daoist texts, like those of Du Guangting, highlighted the importance of the combination of pneuma and elixir ingestion in preserving human life and maintaining health. As *Tongyou jue* 通幽诀 (*Instructions for Penetrating Obscurity*) says:

The pneuma has the capacity to preserve vitality, hence it is called the internal elixir. Medicines have the capacity to fortify the [mortal] body (*xing*), hence it is called the external elixir. For ingesting to lengthen one's life, nothing surpasses external and internal elixirs.

氣能存生，內丹也。藥能固形，外丹也。服餌長生，莫過於內外丹。<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Li Ping, "Wantang wudai xiudao yanjiu bianqian", 181.

<sup>40</sup> Livia Kohn and Russell Kirkland, "Daoism in the Tang (618–907)," 361.

<sup>41</sup> Anonymity, *Tong you jue* in *Daozang*, vol.18 (Beijing: Huaxia chubanshe, 2004), 607.

Based on the explanation of elixir and pneuma's role in this passage, human vitality (*sheng*) was seen as distinct from one's physical form (*xing*), and ingesting medicine and pneuma are actually responsible for two interdependent parts which related to human longevity.

Although Du Guangting and Huang Xiufu had clear distinctions on how to achieve transcendence through elixir ingestion, both of them treated drug therapies as the final way to achieve transcendence and no other methods were mentioned. However, ideas of being transcendent had already been pursued in many different ways in the Tang dynasty and elixir ingestion was not the only choice for many other transcendence seekers. Interestingly, no matter what kinds of methods towards transcendence were being pursued, most Tang and Five Dynasties' Daoist thinkers basically persisted in a similar integrated system in actual practice, meaning they would accept a gradual model and begin their practices from the emphasis on the health maintenance to the transcendent transformation. In other words, it is the arrangement of practices in the process of being transcendent which constituted the basic differences among late Tang and Five Dynasties' figures. In Du Guangting's hagiographies, the elixir ingestion is the key to the attainment of transcendence. However, in another hagiography about transcendence seeker Ding Huang 丁皇 from Five Dynasties hagiographies compilation *Yi xian zhuan* 疑仙傳 (*The Hagiographies of Possible Transcendents*), the elixir was arranged in the field of longevity techniques and it can help one attain longevity, but not full transcendence. The art of controlling pneuma was placed on a higher stage than elixir ingestion and became the key to attaining transcendence:

Some people continued to ask him, “You have obtained the numenous elixir. Why are you not a transcendent?” Ding Huang responded, “Though I have obtained the way of longevity, I do not know the way of controlling the pneuma and how to soar into the sky. Therefore, I cannot ascend to be transcendent.

或又問曰：君既得靈丹，何不為仙也？皇曰：我雖得長生之道，而且不得乘虛禦氣之道，固不能升仙也。<sup>42</sup>

Both as a way of maintaining health and achieving transcendence, the arrangements of elixir ingestion in the process of being transcendent in late Tang and Five Dynasties’ hagiographies were likely personal choices and represent a diversified aspect of the ideas of transcendence attainment in this period.

### *Conclusion*

In his broad research on Chinese alchemical techniques and concepts, Joseph Needham observed that the hostile attitude towards elixir ingestion and compounding was a later phenomenon and most narratives of disagreement with elixir’s efficacy in the practice of achieving transcendence appeared after the Yuan period (1271 – 1368).<sup>43</sup> However, based on the investigation of late Tang and Five Dynasties’ Daoist and literary materials, the voices of hostility emerged at least as early as in the late Tang period. The

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<sup>42</sup> Yinfu Yujian, *Yi xian zhuan* in *Daozang* (Beijing: Huaxia chuban she, 2004), vol. 45, 437.

<sup>43</sup> Needham, Joseph, Ho Ping-Yu and Lu Gwei-djen. *Science and Civilisation in China, Volume 5 Chemistry and Chemical Technology, Part 3: Spagyric Discovery and Invention: Historical Survey, from Cinnabar Elixirs to Synthetic Insulin* (Cambridge University Press, 1976), 35, 218.

death of several late Tang emperors caused by elixir ingestion was a profound political lesson to Chinese elites and even affected later generations' views on elixir ingestion as an authoritative and reliable practice to attain transcendence. Under an atmosphere of suspicion and criticism, late Tang and Five Dynasties' Daoist thinkers did not choose to abandon the somewhat discredited elixir ingestion. On the contrary, through readjusting the preparation and prerequisites of elixir ingestion, and adding the intervention of other longevity techniques to complicate the process of elixir ingestion and compounding, Daoist thinkers enriched the connotation of elixir to renew its vitality and restore its credit in this new socio-political environment.

As we can see from Du Guangting and Huang Xiufu's hagiographies on elixir ingestion, in late Tang and Five Dynasties, personal virtue became an important prerequisite for acquiring elixir and a necessary step of preparation before elixir ingestion. Their concentration on merit accumulation and moral behaviors were also seen in other contemporary hagiographies and literary records, appearing to be a common idea during this time. Moreover, Huang Xiufu and Du Guangting also took advantage of other longevity techniques, which flourished in the Tang period, to create a practical system for achieving transcendence and transform elixir ingestion from a single practice to a step of this integrated systems. Du Guangting followed a gradual path toward transcendence, as was advocated by famous Tang Daoist thinkers like Sima Chengzhen and created a practical system beginning from macrobiotic practices to transcendent transformation. From his idea, being transcendent was exclusive to the ingestion of divine elixir, which triggers the transformation from the mortal state to the

transcendent state. However, Huang Xiufu offered more choices and presented reaching transcendence as easier than Du Guangting's process. For Huang Xiufu, though he admitted that there existed an innate difference between the effects of different elixirs and mineral drugs, suggested relying on heating techniques can improve the efficacy of mineral drugs, upgrading longevity medicines to the same level of transcendence granting elixirs. The combination and intervention of longevity techniques in the practices of elixir ingestion, in fact, varied from person to person during the Tang period, and there was no clear practical consensus on how to achieve transcendence, or through what kinds of techniques. The appearances of new Daoist theories and fashions of attaining transcendence in the Tang period enriched individual choices in the later period. This multiplicity of combined techniques in achieving transcendence echoed with that which Livia Kohn called the flexibility of spiritual practice in Daoism. In Daoist tradition, the diversity of techniques offered adepts, in all time periods, a path to innovate their own combinations to fulfill their specific needs.<sup>44</sup>

Therefore, I argue that the conventional opinion of elixir ingestion being replaced by internal alchemy in achieving transcendence after the Tang period is problematic and simplifies the complexity of methods of transcendence in Daoist history. It is clear that in the theory and practice of attaining transcendence, elixir ingestion did not experience a drastic decline after the Tang period, but kept its vitality and developed into new forms to meet the challenge in the late Tang period.

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<sup>44</sup> Livia Kohn, *Daoism and Chinese culture*, 132.

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