



## On the Significance of the Poetry of Talking About Celestial Beings in Wei, Jin, Southern and Northern Dynasties for Researching Daoist (Taoist) History

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### Abstract

There were poems of talking about celestial beings in Wei, Jin, Southern and Northern Dynasties (220-589 A. D.). These poems formed an important part of the poetic culture in that time. This kind of poetry originated before Han dynasty, such as Qu Yuan's *Li Sao*, *Travel* and other works which described the life and environment of celestial beings. In Wei, Jin, Southern and Northern Dynasties, the poetry had the well development and was rich in content, which contained a lot of historical material about Daoism. However, in the past academic research, scholars have not fully used the poetry of Wei, Jin, Southern and Northern Dynasties to research Daoism. As historical material of Wei, Jin, Southern and Northern Dynasties, these poems show the "worship trend for Daoism", "Daoist rituals", "Daoist meditation" and "Daoist metaphors", and provide material for relevant special research. However, at the same time, due to the special art form of the poetry, these poems may be obscure, difficult to understand, exaggerated and falsely describing things. All of these disadvantages led scholars restrict the use of these poems in the historical study of Daoism.

**Key words:** Wei, Jin, Southern and Northern Dynasties; Poems of talking about celestial beings; Significance of historical material

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### INTRODUCTION

After Qin and Han Dynasties, China began to have hundreds of years of wars and disorders, and the dynasties were changed frequently. In this period of time, there appeared Wei, Jin, Southern and Northern Dynasties. In this historical stage, on the one hand, the average human life expectancy was greatly shortened because of war, separation, plague, flood and drought disasters; on the other hand, the high society enjoyed voluptuous vogue. Royals and the bureaucrats indulged pleasure, and people's lofty ideals were mercilessly stifled. This situation had become a hotbed for the growth of the poetry of talking about celestial beings.

"The poetry of talking about celestial beings" was a special part of the poetry culture in Wei, Jin, Southern and Northern Dynasties. We can define it as literary works, in which, the poets talked about misanthropic recluses, visiting celestial beings or Daoists, traveling fairyland, alchemy, taking medicines and other content. It originated from lyrics before Han Dynasty, such as Qu Yuan's *Li Sao*, *Travel* and other works which described the life and environment of celestial beings, and the poetry had a well development later. In Wei, Jin, Southern and Northern Dynasties, not only Daoists wrote poems of talking about celestial beings, but also bureaucratic literates joined the writing of the poetry to talk about celestial beings. In China, the first literary anthology, "Anthology" compiled by Xiao Tong in Liang Dynasty classified the poetry as a separate genre of literature that shows the people at that time had given considerable affirmation and attention to the poems of talking about celestial beings.

Culture is a product of social history. The poems of talking about celestial beings as a cultural phenomenon show political, economic, cultural and other all-round factors of Wei, Jin, Southern and Northern Dynasties. Researching these poems will help the study of Daoism history in that same period. The writing of this paper can contribute to the study.

## 1. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE POETRY AS HISTORICAL MATERIAL

### 1.1 Providing Historical Material for the Research of the “Worship Trend for Daoism”

First of all, in that period, many people wrote poems of talking about celestial beings and it shows the existence of a “worship trend for Daoism”. These poets included emperors and royals, such as Cao Cao, Cao Pi, Xiao Yan, Xiao Tong, etc; bureaucratic nobles, such as Shen Yue, Shi Chong, He Shao etc; literati, such as Wang Xizhi, Cao Zhi, Jiang Yan, Yu Xin etc.; hermits and alchemists, such as Ji Kang, Ruan Ji, Ge Hong, Tao Hongjing, etc. How many did the poems or the poets have in Wei, Jin, Southern and Northern Dynasties? There are no statistics because it happened a long time ago. However, some scholars have gotten at least 109 representative poets and their nearly 400 poems from that period of time (Zhong, 1994). It is enough to show the “worship trend of Daoism.”

Second, in the content of the poetry of talking about celestial beings, poets from each social class were familiar with Daoist allusions, such as Cao Zhi’s Talking about Celestial Beings, which had fifteen sentences, and each sentence contained Daoist legends, such as “Xiang E”, “Wang Qiao”, “Yu Shu” etc.. These images also repeatedly appeared in other poets’ poems in that period. It clearly illustrates that Daoist culture and education were an important content and a comment focus at least in these social classes. In the poems, the poets mainly talked about respecting celestial beings, visiting celestial beings, asking for longevity, alchemy, taking special medicines etc and the poets also discussed Daoist views of value. These poems’ content is around Daoism. It was a direct result of Daoist influence, thus it shows the “worship trend for Daoism” in that period of time.

### 1.2 Providing Historical Material for the Research of “Daoist Rituals”

Daoism has a religious property and it has mysterious and complicated religious rules and rituals. However, with the development of thousands of years, these religious rituals have changed. To understand the Daoist rituals in a particular historical period, will need to find the original material in the historical period. In addition to the *Daoist Literature* which is a Daoist classics’ collection, the poems of talking about celestial beings are also good references.

The poems as historical material were generally written by the Daoists, alchemists, nobles or officials who had been in Daoist religious ceremonies, so the words are very persuasive, such as Zheng Daozhao’s *In Laicheng East Three Miles, I and My Disciples Went to Qingyang Mountain’s Tai Ji Hill to Sweep a Stone Altar and Wrote a Poem*:

I like clear mountains recently. Look at the moon, and open a “Jing field”. At the east peak, there is a blue smoke temple. A white cloud hall is on the top of the west hill. In the red

sun balcony, overlook the distance. Watch the Xuanling cliff glow. The high altar is surrounded by mountains. There is the light in the front. Gods dwell on the high heaven. Dance with blown gowns. Call of three or four friends. Fly to a house in the rainbow. We walk on stones. Sing Daoist songs. The open valley echoes musical instruments sound. The aroma of incense winds and floats. Cold air cools the singing. Our sounds are around the pine trees. I am in the east of China. Get the work to manage the Qi place. Have a temporarily idle now and travel here. Talk on the “Book of Filial Piety” under the rock. At a spring side, discuss Lao Zi and Zhuang Zi. Hear deep righteousness from long articles. My disciples go to the forest mountain. I am glad when I review my work. The light illuminates the serene place. I do the thing which I like to do. Don’t say that I am covering up. (Lu, 1983, p.2206)

The poet Zheng Daozhao was an official who had Daoist thoughts. In the governmental affairs, he emphasized “Govern by doing nothing that goes against nature”, especially in his later years. At the time, he was a high rank official and the head of a Daoist group. He and his “disciples” went up the mountain to build a stone altar and do the “Jing field”. The “Jing field” was a religious ceremony conducted by the north sect of Daoism in the collective practice. This poem of Zheng Daozhao well described the scenes and the prevailing collective practice.

The poem consists of thirty sentences. The first eighteen sentences are the first part, which describes the realistic situation of opening the “Jing field” on the top of the mountain. The poet and his disciples went up the mountain to build a stone altar and do the “Jing field” ceremony. The altar was surrounded by the scenery: the east peak, the top of the west hill, and the red sun balcony. The Xuan Ling cliff was wonderful. The altar was surrounded by mysterious atmosphere and it connected with the Milky Way where gods dwell on. All of the believers gathered on the altar to religiously practice as if accompanied by celestial beings’ graceful dance. The believers saw celestial beings went to the top of the “Jing field” ceremony in the rosy clouds. The celestial beings listened to the Daoists singing, which resounded through the valley. The wind blew the top of the mountain and the aroma of incense floated. The songs and the aroma were spread over the top of the “Jing field” ceremony in the pine trees.

In the poem, since “I am in the east of China”, the next twelve sentences are the second part, which mainly describes the author’s personal ideal and feelings. After the poet got the post to manage the Qi place, his ideal was in accordance with the theory of Huangdi and Lao Zi to govern local politics and to be inaction and generous, not giving severe punishment. After his work, he climbed the Tai Ji hill, built the altar and did the “Jing field” ceremony, namely, “Travel to here.” Under the rock, or by the spring side, they talked about the “Book of Filial Piety” and discussed Lao Zi and Zhuang Zi. They talked about something mysterious. In the end of the poem, he used “The light illuminates the serene place” to echo the “Jing field” ceremony. He showed his own interest, namely,

"I do the thing which I like to do. Don't say that I am covering up." It shows that the poet love Daoism and it is his nature, rather than the pursuit of fashion and "covering up". This good poem reflects the differences between the north and the south Daoist practice habits to a certain extent. The southern Shangqing sect paid attention to the importance of individual and the "quiet room" practice, so some differences in the northern and the southern Daoist religious rituals can be seen from the poem.

Zhou Hongrang had a poem, *A Poem for Praying Five Mountains' Graphics and Text in the Spring Night*:

A sumptuous banquet in the quiet night, the moon lights on the top of the apricot altar. The aroma of incense goes out everywhere, and the light color is very clear. The five mountains make the dragon move, and the wind pipe sounds fly over these places. Close eyes to dream gods and want to be a celestial being. Recommend the sumptuous banquet to gods, sweet scented osmanthus wine goes far away. I am happy and proud, and pour wine to recall my life. (Ibid, p.2464)

The "Five Mountains' Graphics and Text" was mentioned by *The Emperor Han Wudi Biography*: "The emperor sees the king's mother's towel bookcase, there is a small towel book in a purple pocket..... The king's mother said to him: These are true shapes of the five mountains." (Gu, 1985, p.6) Then Zhou Hongrang got the "Five Mountains' Graphics and Text", so he treated it as treasure and set a ritual altar for "praying". The "praying" was a special Daoist ritual, called "Jiao", namely, setting an altar for worship and praying for the whole happiness. The poet used six lines to describe the special rituals: in the dead of night, the moon was hanging high, and the moonlight flooded the apricot altar to make it particularly clear in the night. The poet offered a table full of sacrifices. Accompanied by the aroma of incense, the poet went into meditation, as if saw celestial beings to pass by and heard the wind pipe sounds. Under this kind of mysterious atmosphere, he dreamed he became a celestial being. He was praying piously to hope gods to enjoy the sacrifices prepared by him, so he could let himself be leisure and obtained a blessing from the gods. The poem has a detailed description about the Daoist "praying" and is a reference for researching the operation of the "praying" in that historical period.

Cao Zhi's *Gui Zhi Shu Xing* (Lu, 1983, p.445) described that celestial beings talked about theories. The whole poem's description came from real life. Cao Zhi's *Gui Zhi Shu Xing* and relevant parts of the *Zhen Gao* compiled by Tao Hongjing show a picture of very popular Daoist preaching ceremony in that society.

There are also some poems which give some information about the specific requirements of the Daoist rituals at that time, such as Xiao Cha's *Chen Wei Shi*: "The box is glistening. Threads of the buster are lighting. Talking about wonderful principles need to kill cattle?" (Ibid, p.1758) On the surface, the poet condemned killing cattle for making a duster which was used in the sermon.

However, it also reflected a specific requirement for the Daoist preaching ceremony at that time, namely, the host needed to take a duster which was used in talking about Daoist principles or explaining the meaning. A duster was made by animal hair and hemp tied into a bundle, and an ivory or wood long handle. The duster was also used for dust removal or repelling mosquitoes, also known as the "whisk". At the time, the action of killing cattle for making dusters had so many, thus the poet condemned the action. It shows that people were in pursuit of a mysterious sermon with the host taking a whisk.

### 1.3 Provide Historical Material for the Daoist Practice

Daoist practice actually is the daily lives of the people who believe Taoism. Every day, a Daoist's life is a kind of practice in the secular world according to the doctrine of Taoism. The practice is a manifestation of his pursuit of "longevity". In addition to a variety of classic books of the "Daoist Literature", we can also find many traces of the methods and scenes of the practice from the poems of talking about celestial beings.

In some poets' description, Daoists usually had a poor life, such as Xiao Lun's *Look for Huan Qingyuan but Do Not See Him*: "There are many mountains in Jingmen. Some poor families live in the clouds. If not for Daoist reclusion, can who bear with the frost and dew?" (Ibid, p.1790) The poet wanted to find Huan Qingyuan who was a student of Tao Hongjing in the mountains, but his residence was among the rolling hills. Those Jingmen's simple houses were in the clouds and pricked toward the sky. The environment was natural. The poet could not find Huan Qingyuan. Naturally, enduring the erosion of frost and rain in the mountains was for becoming a celestial being. The poet had full of admiration for Huan Qingyuan's strong will and firm belief of becoming a celestial being. Huan Qingyuan was a student of Tao Hongjing, and also was a typical representative of Shangqing sect of Daoism. This poem reflects the humble life of the southern Shangqing Daoist to some extent and also is a reference material for studying on Shangqing Daoists' spirit.

At that time, poets often talked about medicines which related to Daoist daily practice. There were many poems of talking about medicines, such as Yu Chan's *Pick Herbal Medicines*, Wu Jun's *Pick Herbal Medicines in Da Bu Mountain*, Bo Daoyou's *Pick Herbal Medicines on Ling Peak and Write a Poem* ((Ibid, p.873, 1719, 1088, 1758), and many poems of Guo Pu and Ji Kang.

Taoism emphasized refining medicines and Daoists often had the research experience on medicines, such as the famous Daoist Ge Hong, Tao Hongjing and so on, who also were famous doctors in the history, so picking herbal medicines was an important part in their usual practice. In addition to the Daoists, people who liked Taoism also picked herbal medicines day: On the one hand, they were

for their own practice; on the other hand, they wanted to be close to nature and breathe the immortal air. Such as Wu Jun's *Pick Herbal Medicines in Da Bu Mountain*:

I was in the north side of the mountain, picking mountain flax along a mountain stream. Nine stems reflect sunlight and three leaves blossom long. Possibly eliminate the suffering from worry and keep youth. Time can not stop, and my age is getting older. How to go to Kunlun Mountain? There are Sanzhu trees there. Sanzhu trees begin to have fruits, and red leaves are above the red platform. Being like a white phoenix lung and a blue Dragon embryo. The celestial Han Zhong and the prince can be born in every dynasty. If you want to meet celestial beings, go to Penglai. (Ibid, p.1555)

The poet's description started from picking herbal medicines in the mountain. The mountain natural scenery let the poet inadvertently go into meditation. The poet wanted to pick the elixir to eliminate anxiety and melancholy and make him younger. He also wanted to go to Kunlun, the red platform and Penglai. It reflects a Daoist's life attitude. And such as Yu Chan's *Pick Herbal Medicines*:

Pick herbal medicines on the top of Ling Shan Mountain. Climb Jiu Yi with some people. Chalcedony hang on the rock, Ganoderma lucidum grow in the green valley. The cold cloud beads drop, and honey flashes. Fresh scenery has ice face, and mysterious air rises to the sky. The rays shine on ageratum, and the rainbow is uneven. Longevity has the extreme, and hibiscus flowers are there.

The poem not only tells that the poet picked herbal medicines in Jiu Yi Mountain (a famous blessed spot in Taoism), but also shows several medicines which the people most like at that time—chalcedony, Ganoderma lucidum and honey.

In addition to use herbal medicines in the medical aspect, the Daoists picked herbal medicines mainly to provide raw material for alchemy, which was also main lessons for people who liked Taoism. At that time, not only alchemists joined this event, some pious bureaucrats and nobles also joined the event. Tao Hongjing exited the government into mountains to seek Taoism and alchemy. Jiang Yan's *Give Alchemy and Official Aide Yin*: "in Gao traveled Kuaiji. His spirit changed and has not returned. He was gone and had his consideration. He wanted to be younger. Human body's consciousness is brilliant, and the knowledge has no limitation." Just test the *Can Tong Qi*. Golden stove refine the elixir. Give up your love life, no longer consider enjoyment. The jade plate can be rolled after cutting, and pearl core is not big. Such as the bright moon, the light stream reflects the time flowing. When the medicine is ready, fragrant air gives a Daoist the time. (Ibid, p.1613, 22192, 1981)

The poet's friend went to Kuaiji for alchemy and wanted to become a celestial being. The poet made reasonable imagination about his friend and also expressed his expectation and blessing. The poet Jiang Yan, the official aide Yin and other bureaucratic scholars were keen

on the elixir. This kind of life and interest of the Southern Dynasty bureaucratic scholars was vividly reflected in the poem. Other poets' works, such as Shen Yue's *Thank Mr. Hua Yangtao*, Huan Fakai's *At the Beginning of Entering the Mountain*, and Yu Jianwu's *To Mr. Zhou* (Ibid, p.1096), reflect the same custom and provide the basis for researching the ancient Daoists' practice.

There are many poetic lines to reflect another custom of the Daoist practice at that time – the pair practices of a man and a woman. The most typical example is Ge Hong's *Survival by Two Mountains* come from *Bao Pu Zi-Wei Zhi*. In the beginning of the poem, the poet explained the title, and introduced that "Two Mountains" did not referred to a China Daoist legend, "Hua, Huo, Song, Dai" mountains, but to human body's "Taiyuan Mountain" and "Long Valley Mountain". According to Daoist allusions, the male and female genitals designate as "Taiyuan Mountain" and "Long Valley Mountain". So the poet wrote the poem to talk about the Daoist pair practices of a man and a woman for pursuit of longevity. The poem depicts peculiar changes of the man's and the woman's physiology and psychology, and thinks that "If you can do it, your life is as long as a pine tree life." Although the poet overstated the actual effect of the pair practices of a man and a woman, he also mentioned "fools, who practice it, will die". The poet thought that it was a kind of serious practice way, and people's indiscriminate use would lead to death. The poet expressed an objective attitude for the concept of health here. Yang Xi's *Zhong Zhen You Dai Wu Dai Six Poems* (Ibid, p.456) describes female immortal love stories, which give the Daoism custom a powerful proof. Because these love stories occurred in the celestial places and in fact are fictional, the creation inspiration could only come from the stories of Daoists, nuns, witches and wizards of the real world. It shows that the pair practices of a man and a woman became a common practice in the society at that time.

#### 1.4 Provide Historical Material for Researching the "Daoist Images"

Daoist images are an important carrier of the Daoist culture. Taoism contains the culture, doctrine, aesthetic, etc, which are concentrated in the Daoist images. If the study of Daoist image is not in place, it will hinder the understanding of the whole Daoist culture and origin.

Chi Songzi and Wang Ziqiao were the most common images of celestial beings in the poetry of Wei, Jin, Southern and Northern Dynasties. Such as Cao Zhi's *Immortals*: "Have changes like Chi Songzi and Wang Ziqiao, and climb up Mount Dinghu" (Ibid, p.456), Ji Kang's *Four Lines for My Scholar Brother Going into the Army from the Sixteenth of the Eighteen Chapters*: "With Chi Songzi and Wang Ziqiao, tour places hand in hand" (Ibid, p.482), Ruan Ji's *The Thirteenth Poem in Thirteen Poems of Singing from My Heart*: "How can you know Chi Songzi and Wang Ziqiao to get nutrition from

the Taisu?" (Ibid, p.496) In the poems of talking about celestial beings, almost all of them talk about these two celestial beings' images. The first volume of "Celestial Being Biography" recorded: "Chi Songzi, a rainmaker in Shennong times, ate Shuiyu to teach Shennong and could enter the fire. He often went to Kunlun Mountain and often lived in Xiwangmu's stone rooms. He went up and down with wind and rain. Emperor Yan's girl chased him, and also became a celestial being gone with him"; Wang Ziqiao, the Prince Jin of King Ling of Zhou Dynasty, was good at blowing Sheng and imitated phoenix sound. He traveled to Yi and Luo, and Daoist Fu Qiu Gong brought him to Songgao Mountain. After more than thirty years, he saw Huan Liang and said: Tell my family, to meet me on the top of Goushi Hill on July 7<sup>th</sup>. At the appointed time, He rode on a white crane to stay on the top of Goushi Hill. People could see him but not touch him. He waved his hand and thanked the people. After a few days, he left." (Wang, 2007, p.1, 65) Later, Chi Songzi and Wang Ziqiao gradually became synonymous with "longevity", which is an eternal theme of Taoism.

The other common images are Xiwangmu, Dongwangfu, Hanzhong, Xianmengao, Peng Zu, Xuanyuanshi, Jiang Fei, Jiuhuaanfei, Kua Fu, Xia Hou and so on. These images appeared in the poems of talking about celestial beings repeatedly that expresses the social atmosphere at that time, namely the pursuit of free from time and space constraints, the pursuit of free from social etiquette and the pursuit of free from age and death to expect an eternity of life. In the poems, there are many female celestial being images and these female celestial beings may have love with mortals. It reflects the freedom of Daoist culture for men or women love at that time. The poems also talk about the Daoist pair practice of a man and a woman.

In addition to the immortal images described by the ancient books, there were some images which were not related with allusions, such as the "Sanlaogong" mentioned by Cao Cao's *Qiu Hu Xing*: "Are there Sanlaogong to come by my side?" (Lu, 1983, p.345) and the "celestial children" mentioned by Cao Pi's *Fold Willow*: "There is a high tree in Xishan Mountain, and people do not know its height. There are two celestial children, who do not drink or eat." (Ibid, p.421) These images of the poems came from ancient Chinese mythology, history books, and Taoism classics, and also were closer to the life states of ordinary mortals. In the poems, people became celestial beings that were palpable things.

Plant and animal images of wonderland also often appeared in the poems of talking about celestial beings. There are some poems of talking about animals, such as Cao Zhi's *Travel*: "A fish is as large as Quling, and passes waves to come by. A celestial turtle wears Fangzhang, and the hill is steep." (Ibid, p.434) Cao Zhi's *Fairy*: "A jade

tree grows along the road, and a white tiger was caught in the door hinge." (Ibid, p.499), Ruan Ji's *The Twenty-first Poem in Eighty-two Poems of Singing from My Heart*: "There is a black crane in the clouds, and it is noble with sounding aloud." (Ibid, p.564) and Fu Xuan's *Baizi flies in the clouds*: "The crane has five Qi, and the turtle is sustained by its four legs. Drive the flying dragon." (Ibid, p.584) These poems mention "A celestial turtle", "a white tiger", "a black crane", and "the flying dragon", which were celestial pets. There also are some poems of talking about plants, such as Ruan Ji's *The Forty-fifth Poem in Eighty-two Poems of Singing from My Heart*: "The orchid can not be worn. Who does the alkanet grow for?", Cheng Gongsui's *Fairy Poem*: "Go into Huayinshan Mountain from the west, and look for Ganoderma Lucidum" (Ibid, p.866), Guo Pu's *The Eighth Poem of Talking about Immortals*: "The sun rises in the east, and the Fusang is very high." (Li, 2006) In these poems, the poets mentioned "The orchid", "the alkanet", "Ganoderma Lucidum", "the Fusang" and other immortal plants. Some scholars have researched prototypes of these images and have found that these prototypes of these images come from the Chinese primitive totems.<sup>13</sup> Through researching Daoist images and Chinese primitive totems, we can further research the relationship between the origin of Taoism and the primitive religion.

In the poems of talking about celestial beings, there are a lot of images of celestial places and celestial methods, such as Kunlun Mountain, Penglai Island, Gold and Silver Platform, Yumen, Wuyue Mountains, etc. and the eating method, the guiding Qi method, the sex skills, the flying method and so on. In the poems of talking about celestial beings of Wei, Jin, Southern and Northern Dynasties, there are a lot of these images, which provide historical references for the study of Daoist images.

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## 2. THE LIMITATIONS OF THE POEMS AS THE HISTORICAL MATERIAL

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### 2.1 The Words Are Obscure and Difficult to Be Understood

In summary, the value of the poetry as the historical material is quite rich. However, why has it not received the attention it deserves so far? It is a very important reason that the poetry has the special creation method. The main part of the poetry has a "mystique". As mentioned above, the poetry uses a variety of Daoist images to enrich its content. On the one hand, these images came from the distant ancient books even myths and legends, if a person is lack of knowledge of Daoist culture, He is difficult to understand the profound meaning contained in the poetry. On the other hand, Taoism culture is to maintain its mysterious sense as a religion, and these poems were written by poets using some metaphors, such as "the

Arctic” refers to the kidney, the “Mingtang” refers to the human brain, “Jiang Gong” refers to the human heart, “canopy” refers to the human lung, and even “Xuan Zhi”, “jade” refer to the human organs. This metaphor series is full of mystery, visualization and hazy colors. If someone has no relevant background knowledge, he is impossible to understand. The poetry of talking about immortals of Wei, Jin, Southern and Northern Dynasties history is not easy to be used in research.

## 2.2 The Poetry’s Description Often Is Exaggerated and the References Have Some Problems

Poetry is a special literary genre. It is short and pithy, and also is mixed with facts and imagination. In order to highlight the illusory feelings of human beings meeting celestial beings and the temptation of longevity come from people becoming Daoists, the poets often wrote those imagined scenes with hyperbole, so the poetry as historical material has some problems, such as the false and exaggerated content.

The false and exaggerated content often appears in a variety of celestial method topics, such as the most popular “eating method” which was regarded as a shortcut to longevity in that time, described as Cao Pi’s *Fold Willow*: “Give me a pill which has glorious colors. After four or five days, my body grows wings.” (Lu, 1983, p.393), Cao Zhi’s “*Dragon*”: “Taught me to take the medicine, which is nutrition for my brain. My age will like gold in forever being young.” (Ibid, p.421) and Shen Yue’s *Red Pine Valley*: “Like to get the pill and grow wings immediately.” (Ibid, p.1638) There were poems that talk about the popular guiding Qi method, such as Yu Chan’s *Poem*: “Train my shape to get rid of vulgar people’s shapes, and drift to fly in the clouds.” (Ibid, p.876). There also were poems that talk about the sex skills which help people’s longevity, such as Ge Hong’s “Two Surviving Celestial Beings”: “The person has a special skill, so he goes back to young age. If you can do it, your life is as long as the

pine tree life” and “The person knows Taoism, so he does not fade. Take Huang Jing, so fly in the sky.”<sup>1</sup> These lines depict the celestial methods as mysterious methods. These practice methods did have certain medical effects from a certain perspective. However, in Daoist medicine, their reference value should be reduced accordingly after the so exaggerated and flashy description.

Overall, the poetry of talking about celestial beings as a special style of poetry, its historical function has not been brought into full play. In addition to the part mentioned by the author, the poetry also talks about Daoist medicine, Daoist arts, Daoist construction, the relationship of Buddhism, Confucianism and Taoism, etc of Wei, Jin, Southern and Northern Dynasties. The poetry also has the value for researching these subjects. On the one hand, we need to vigorously develop its function as historical material, on the other hand, to avoid its functional limitations and weaknesses.

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<sup>1</sup> Ge, H. (Jin Dynasty). “Baopuzi”. Volume six. The Jingming Edition of Siku Series(p.29).