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# Introduction

The body always move; your food always reduce.  
Moving, never reach extremes; reducing, never get to naught.  
Eliminate fat and heavy things; control all salt and sour tastes.  
Diminish thoughts and worries; lessen joy and anger.  
Get out of hectic rushing; watch out for sexual exhaustion.  
Do this always—and you'll see results!  
—Master Blue Ox (*Yangxing yanming lu* 1.10b)

Daoism is special among the world's religions in that it places particular emphasis on body cultivation for spiritual attainment. This peculiarity is due to the traditional Chinese conception of the body as joined with the greater universe through the medium of a vital energy known as *qi* 氣.

*Qi* is the concrete aspect of Dao, the material root power of the universe, the basic stuff of nature. In ancient sources it is associated with mist, fog, and moving clouds. The character for *qi* as it appears in the oracle bones of the Shang dynasty (1766-1122 B.C.E.) consists of two parts: an image of someone eating and grain in a pot. Combined, these parts signal *qi* as the quality which nourishes, warms, transforms, and rises. *Qi* is, therefore, the life force in the human body and the basis of all physical vitality, found foremost in the air we breathe and in the foods we eat. This means that dietary practices are at the very core of the Daoist undertaking. They form an essential way toward being healthy in the world, living for an extended period, and transcending to the ultimate state of immortality.

## Healing, Longevity, and Immortality

Daoists and medical writers in Chinese history have formulated the cosmology of the body in many different terms and established numerous theories of how exactly the various parts and aspects function and work together. While it will be the exciting task of future research to explore their work and understand their circumstances and different histories, it is possible to summarize the fundamental tenets of the Chinese vision to present a general framework of Daoist cultivation practice, un-

derstanding fully well that this is an approximation and does not claim to show it as an immutable system of either theory or practice.

Thus, generally traditional Daoist and medical thinkers agree that there is only one *qi*, just as there is only one Dao. Many understand it to come in two forms: a basic primordial or prenatal *qi* that is inborn and connects us to the cosmos and the Dao; and a secondary, earthly or postnatal *qi* that is replenished by breathing, food, as well as social and sexual contact and helps the body survive in everyday life. Both forms of *qi* are necessary and interact constantly with each other, so that primordial *qi* is lost as and when earthly *qi* is insufficient, and enhancing earthly *qi* is no longer necessary when primordial *qi* is complete (as in the case of the embryo in the womb). Once people are born, they start this interchange of the two dimensions of *qi* and soon start losing their primordial *qi*, especially through interaction with the world on the basis of passions and desires, sensory exchanges, and intellectual distinction.

As people lose their primordial *qi*, they begin to decline and eventually die. Should they lose it at a rather rapid or unbalanced rate, they experience a weakening of their defenses which grows into minor symptoms that may lead to acute or chronic conditions. Just as sickness is therefore a form of *qi*-loss, so healing is the replenishing of *qi* with medical means such as dietary therapy or food cures as well as drugs, herbs, acupuncture, massages, and various other means at the physician's disposal.

Longevity, next, comes in as and when people have become aware of their contribution to internal imbalances and take their healing into their own hands. Being initially helped by medical means, then developing a life-style more congruent with their energetic needs, they attain a state of good health. However, they do not stop there but proceed to increase their primordial *qi* to and even above the level they had at birth. To do so, they follow specific dietary principles as well as work with breathing, healing exercises (*daoyin* 導引), self-massages, sexual control, and meditations—practiced to a large extent today under the name of qigong 氣功 (see Kohn 1989; 2006; 2008a; Cohen 1997). Applied regularly and systematically, these methods ensure not only an extension of natural life expectancy but often lead to increased vigor and youthfulness.

Immortality, third, raises the practices to a yet higher level. To attain it, people have to transform all their *qi* into primordial *qi* and proceed to increasingly refine it to even subtler levels. This finer *qi* will eventually

turn into pure spirit (*shen* 神), with which practitioners increasingly identify to become spirit-people and immortals. The practice that leads there involves intensive meditation and trance training as well as more radical forms of diet and other longevity practices. Immortality implies the overcoming of the natural tendencies of the body and its transformation into a different kind of energetic constellation. The result is a bypassing of death so that the end of the body has no impact on the continuation of the spirit-person. It also leads to the attainment of magical powers and eventually to residence in the heavens and paradises of the immortals.

Chinese longevity and dietary practices, as first described in manuscripts of the second century B.C.E. (see Harper 1998; Lo 2010), occupy a middle ground in this system. They stand between healing and immortality and are usefully applied on either level. Although essential as medical techniques and in health improvement, they also play an important role in Daoism, but with some modifications. For example, diets on the medical and health levels involve moderation in food intake as well as overall life-style as well as the conscious use of inherent food qualities such as warming, cooling, sinking, or rising to balance seasonal climates, geographical variations, and personal tendencies—either working in harmony with them or using food to counteract their tendencies and alleviate their impact. Practitioners are encouraged to avoid excess eating and heavy foods, to eat properly cooked meals in small portions, and to be mentally calm and consciously aware as they eat. As they are conscientious in their practice, their *qi* continues to become stronger and they need ever less food, until—in immortality practice—they can cut out all main staples and replace food first by herbal and mineral concoctions, then by the conscious intake of *qi* through breath. This technique is called “avoiding grain” (*bigu* 辟穀) and is still undertaken today.

Similarly, healing exercises, self-massages, and breathing techniques serve to stretch and loosen muscles, stimulate the circulation, and aid the smooth flow of *qi* in the body. They are never strenuous, but change in nature as people proceed from healing to longevity and immortality levels, becoming more cosmic in pattern and more counter-intuitive. Breathing for health and long life thus involves inhaling all the way to the diaphragm, which expands as one inhales. Breathing for immortality, on the other hand, may lead to something called “reversed breathing,” which uses the diaphragm the opposite way, contracting it on inhalation. The practice leads eventually to a method called “embryo respiration”

(*taixi* 胎息), in which no obvious breath enters or leaves the nostrils. Instead, practitioners absorb *qi* through their entire body and circulate it within.

Sexual techniques, too, are used on all levels, first with a partner, later internally in celibate solo practice. In all cases, adepts experience sexual stimulation but then, instead losing it through orgasm, revert the rising *qi* of arousal, commonly called essence (*jing* 精), and move it up along the spine with the help of meditation and massages. This is called “reverting the semen to nourish the brain” and is supposed to have strong life-extending effects. In more technical Daoist practice of later centuries, it might even lead to the gestation of an immortal embryo (see Wile 1992; Kohn and Wang 2009).

## Balancing Qi

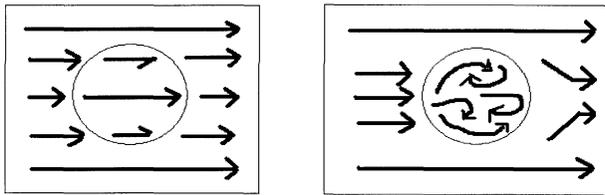
Before one attains any of these higher stages, though, one has to lay the groundwork. It consists largely of balancing *qi*. Chinese medical textbook may discuss *qi* in terms of quantity, since having more indicates a stronger metabolic function. This, however, does not mean that health or longevity are a byproduct of storing large quantities of *qi*. More commonly they note that there is a normal or healthy amount of *qi* in every person, and health manifests in its balance and harmony, its moderation and smoothness of flow. The texts envision this flow as a complex system of waterways with the “Ocean of Qi” (Qihai 氣海) in the abdomen; rivers of *qi* flowing through the upper torso, arms, and legs; springs of *qi* reaching to the wrists and ankles; and wells of *qi* in the fingers and toes. Even a small spot in this complex system can influence the whole, so that overall balance and smoothness are the general goal.

Human life is the accumulation of *qi*; death is its dispersal. After receiving a core potential of primordial *qi* at birth, people throughout life need to sustain it. They do so by drawing postnatal *qi* into the body from air and food, as well as from other people through sexual, emotional, and social interaction. But they also lose *qi* through breathing bad air, overburdening their bodies with food and drink, and getting involved in negative emotions and excessive sexual or social interactions.

To balance *qi*, it is thus best to breathe deeply and eat moderately in accordance with the seasons, to move smoothly, exercise without exertion, and match activities to the body’s needs. This is how one keeps harmo-

ny, maintains health, and achieves long life. Health in the vision of Chinese medicine and Daoism is thus more than the absence of symptoms: it is the presence of strong vitality and of a smooth, harmonious, and active flow of *qi*, a state known as “proper *qi*” (*zhengqi* 正氣).

Its opposite is “wayward *qi*” (*xieqi* 邪氣), *qi* that has lost the harmonious pattern of flow and no longer supports the dynamic forces of change. Whereas proper *qi* moves in a steady, harmonious rhythm and effects daily renewal, helping health and long life, wayward *qi* is disorderly and dysfunctional, creating change that violates the normal order. When it becomes dominant, the *qi*-flow can turn upon itself and deplete the body’s resources. Then the person no longer operates as part of a universal system and is not in tune with the basic life force. Waywardness typically appears when *qi* begins to move either too fast or too slow, is excessive or depleted, or creates rushes or obstructions. It disturbs the regular flow and causes ailments.



More specifically, *qi* can become excessive through outside influences such as too much heat or cold or through inside patterns such as too much emotion or stimulation. Excessive *qi* can be moving too fast or be very sluggish, as in the case of excessive dampness. Whatever the case, from a universal perspective there is no additional or new *qi* created, but localized disharmonies have arisen because the *qi*-flow has become excessive and thus harmful. Still, even describing it in this way we are thinking in terms of *qi* as an energetic substance, which it really is not. A better way of expression would be to say that the process itself of turning hot or angry is *qi*, that the way things move and change is what constitutes our being *qi*.

Similarly, *qi* can be in depletion. This may mean that there is a tense flow of *qi* due to nervousness or anxiety, or that the volume and density of *qi* have decreased, which is the case in serious prolonged illness. However, more commonly it means that the *qi* activity level is lower, that its flow is not quite up to standard, that there is less than normal concentration of *qi* in one or the other body part. In the same vein, perfection of *qi* means

the optimal functioning of *qi* in the body, while control of *qi* means the power to consciously guide the energetic process.

That is to say, healing is the correction of *qi*-flow from a deviant or wayward pattern back to a harmonious or correct flow, matching the rhythm of Dao, creating well-being in the person, and aiding social interactions. Longevity is the enhancement and strengthening of the proper flow of *qi*, allowing people to fully go along with all the movements of Dao in order to enjoy health, retain vigor, and live long and successful lives. Immortality, finally, is the move toward Dao as the creative power at the center of the universe, the transformation of proper, healthy, and harmonious *qi* into the subtler levels of cosmic power, into a mysterious and ineffable state of being that goes far beyond the natural world. Eating and drinking are at the very center of this *qi*-work, an essential way of relating to nature and society, a key method of helping or hurting the body's internal systems and thus either enhancing or diminishing health, long life, and immortality.

## Moderation

The foundation of balancing *qi* and eating to one's best advantage is a peaceful and harmonious life (Huang 2007, 40). From early on, and well into today (e.g., Liu 1990), books on longevity, of both aristocratic and Daoist origin, specify how to go about it. They tend to begin with mental attitudes.

Thus, for example, Sun Simiao 孫思邈 (581-682), the famous physician, Daoist, and alchemist of the early Tang dynasty, in his *Zhenzhong ji* 枕中記 (Pillowbook Record, DZ 837)<sup>1</sup> specifies that one should maintain a serene state of mind by cultivating an attitude of awe and care. He refers to the fourth-century *Shenxian shiqi jin'gui miaolu* 神仙食氣金櫃妙錄 (Wondrous Record of the Golden Casket on the Spirit Immortals' Practice of Eating Qi, DZ 836) to define this as "the gateway of life and death, the key to rites and good teaching, the cause of existing and perishing, the root of good and bad fortune, as well as the prime source of all auspicious and inauspicious conditions" (14b).

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<sup>1</sup> □ Texts in the Daoist canon, abbreviated DZ, are cited according to Komjathy 2002; Schipper and Verellen 2004.

If awe and care are lost, “the mind will be confused and not cultivated, the body will be hectic and not at peace, the spirit will be scattered, the *qi* will go beyond all bounds, and will and intention will be deluded” (14b). This condition, which we now call “stress,” is the ultimate antithesis to health and long life. Awe and care combat it effectively since they are the basis of moral action and virtuous thoughts. They provide great benefit. As Sun says:

One who is able to realize awe and care is safe from harm by dragons when traveling on water and cannot be hurt by tigers or rhinoceroses when traveling on land. Weapons cannot wound him nor can contagious diseases infect him. Slander cannot destroy his good name nor the poisonous stings of insects do him harm. (Sivin 1968, 118; Engelhardt 1989, 281)

To live in this mental serenity of awe and care, moreover, one should practice moderation in all aspects of life and avoid overindulgence in food and drink as well as in other sensual and sexual pleasures.

Many longevity texts in the middle ages place a great emphasis on moderation.<sup>2</sup> They frequently express it in the format of twelve things to do only a “little” bit at a time. They are:

Think little, reflect little, laugh little, speak little, enjoy little, anger little, delight little, mourn little, like little, dislike little, engage little, deal little.

If you think much, the spirit will disperse.

If you reflect much, the heart will be labored.

If you laugh much, the organs and viscera will soar up.

If you speak much, the Ocean of *Qi* will be empty and vacant.

If you enjoy much, gall and bladder will take in outside wind.

If you get angry much, the fascia will push the blood around.

If you delight much, the spirit and heart will be deviant and unsettled.

If you mourn much, the hair and whiskers will dry and wither.

If you like much, the will and *qi* will be overloaded.

If you dislike much, essence and power race off and soar away.

If you engage yourself much, the muscles and *qi*-channels will be tense and nervous.

If you deal much, wisdom and worry will all be confused.

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<sup>2</sup> □ It plays also a key role in Xi Kang’s 嵇康 *Yangsheng lun* 養生論 (On Nourishing Life). See Henricks 1983.

All these attack people's lives worse than axes and spears; they diminish people's destiny worse than wolves and wolverines.<sup>3</sup>

In other words, harmony with Dao manifests itself in mental stability and physical wellness, and any form of agitation or sickness indicates a decline in one's alignment with the forces of nature. Various mental activities and strong emotions harm key psychological forces and thus bring about a diminishing of *qi*, which takes one further away from the Dao and reduces life. As the fourth-century *Yangsheng yaoji* 養生要集 (Long Life Compendium) by the aristocrat and official Zhang Zhan 張湛, best known as commentator to the Daoist philosophical text *Liezi* 列子 (Book of Master Lie; trl. Graham 1960), says: "Dao is *qi*. By preserving *qi* you can attain Dao, and through attaining Dao you can live long. Spirit is essence. By preserving essence you can reach spirit brightness, and once you have spirit brightness, you can live long" (*Ishinpō* 23.17ab; Stein 1999, 172).<sup>4</sup>

Along the same lines, the *Baopuzi yangsheng lun* 抱朴子養生論 (Nourishing Life According to the Master Who Embraces Simplicity, DZ 842) has a set of six exhortations to release mental strain and sensory involvement. It says:

1. Let go of fame and profit.
2. Limit sights and sounds.
3. Moderate wealth and possessions.
4. Lessen smells and tastes.
5. Eliminate lies and falsehood.
6. Avoid jealousy and envy. (1b)

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<sup>3</sup> □ The version translated here appears in the fourth-century *Yangsheng yaoji* (which survives in fragments and citations), as cited in chapter 29 of the *Ishinpō* 醫心方 (Essential Medical Methods), a key Japanese collection of longevity sources, dated to 984 (Stein 1999, 170-71). It is also found in the Daoist sources *Baopuzi yangsheng lun* (DZ 842), 1b-2a and the *Shenxian shiqi jin'gui lu* 16a. In the environment of Sun Simiao, it is cited as from the *Xiaoyou jing* 小有經 (Scripture of Lesser Existence) in *Yangxing yanming lu* 養性延命錄 (On Nourishing Inner Nature and Extending Life, DZ 838), 1.5b.

<sup>4</sup> □ The *Yangxing yanming lu* similarly notes: "Life is the foundation of spirit; the body is its tool. If you use spirit a lot, it will be exhausted; if you exert the body a lot, it will perish" (pref.1a). For more on the *Yangsheng yaoji*, see Sakade 1986b, 10; Kohn 2008, 64-65.

While all these ensure mental stability and calm in social interaction and the professional life, the texts also recommend concrete measures of physical moderation. Thus, citing the ancient immortal Pengzu 彭祖, the *Yangsheng yaoji* points out that heavy clothing and thick comforters, spicy foods and heavy meats, sexual attraction and alluring women, melodious voices and enticing sounds, wild hunting and exciting outings, as well as all strife for success and ambition will inevitably lead to a weakening of the body and thus cause a reduction in life expectancy (Stein 1999, 178; also in *Yangxing yanming lu* 1.10b-11a). It says:

The method of nourishing long life consists mainly in not doing harm to oneself. Keep warm in winter and cool in summer, and never lose your harmony with the four seasons—that is how you can align yourself with the body. Do not allow sensuous beauty, provocative postures, easy leisure, and enticing entertainments to incite yearnings and desires—that is how you come to connect to spirit. (*Ishinpō* 23.3a; Stein 1999, 169)

In terms of diet, it recommends that practitioners avoid specific combinations of food, such as anything hot and cold, sweet and raw, or more specifically wheat and oats, onions and honey, celery and pig's liver, dried ginger and rabbit (Stein 1999, 200-04). They should use alcohol sparingly, boil water before drinking, and take care not to gulp down cold drinks when hot. The text also has specific recipes for beneficial food combinations, descriptions of the qualities and healing properties of herbs and food stuffs, as well as a series of instructions for pregnancy (1999, 208-10). In many cases, it provides remedies for certain conditions, notably stomach and digestive problems, including cramps, flatulence, constipation, and diarrhea (1999, 226-28).

Even in the middle ages, therefore, working with *qi* was seen very much in terms of food regulation. Medicinal diets served as the foundation of healthy living, extended life expectancy, and the attainment of immortality. Daoist dietetics, deeply embedded in Chinese culture and the medical tradition, thus always begin with food cures and the harmonization of eating. Only after the body has achieved balance and harmony can the transformation to higher levels begin.

## Kinds of Food

Certain foods are more conducive to these higher levels than others, as various kinds of nutrition will enhance different characteristics and thus be favored by different species in nature. This notion is part of the general Chinese tradition, and already the *Kongzi jiayu* 孔子家語 (Kong Family Annals) of the first century C.E. says:

Those who feed on water swim well and withstand cold.  
 Those who feed on wood are strong but undisciplined.  
 Those who feed on plants are good at walking but foolish.  
 Those who feed on the mulberry are graceful and enterprising.  
 Those who feed on meat are brave.  
 Those who feed on *qi* are pure and long-lived.  
 Those who feed on grains attain superior intelligence.  
 Those who do not feed become divine and immortal.  
 (Despeux 2007, 28)<sup>5</sup>

Chinese medicine picks up the same idea and classifies food into four categories that serve different aspects of individual health. As the *Huangdi neijing suwen* 黃帝內經素問 (The Yellow Emperor's Inner Classic: Simple Issues) says:

Poisonous drugs are good for attacking wayward *qi* while the five grains will nurture [proper *qi*]. The five kinds of fruit support it, the five kinds of meat increase it, and the five kinds of vegetables complete it. As you combine these food groups with proper regard for their specific nature and their unique tastes and ingest them regularly, you supplement essence and enhance *qi*. (22.4)

In addition to drugs, this divides food stuffs into the four groups of grain, fruit, meat, and vegetables, which each have a unique impact on

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<sup>5</sup> □ The same notion also appears in the *Huainanzi* 淮南子 (Book of the Prince of Huainan, DZ 1184; 7.8b). See Major 1993, 172; Campany 2005, 108. Later the idea is picked up in Ge Hong's *Baopuzi* 抱朴子 (Book of the Master Who Embraces Simplicity, DZ 1185; dat. ca. 320): "Those eating greens are good at walking but foolish; those eating meat are strong and brave; those eating grains are wise but don't live long; and those eating *qi* have spirits within who never die" (ch. 15; Ware 1966, 243-44; see also Mollier 2000, 76-77). He continues by saying that none of these food methods ever guarantees true transcendence but that the concoction of an alchemical elixir is essential.

the person's *qi*-flow and overall health. Each kind of food in this system is thus from the very beginning medically potent and seen in therapeutic terms, serving different aspects of the person and also different people within society.<sup>6</sup>

Daoists also classify foods, focusing even more consciously on their potency for health and immortality. Although one will encounter drinking Daoists today, many historical sources are adamantly against the consumption of meat and wine. The *Huangsu sishisi fangjing* 黃素四四方經 (Scripture of Forty-Four Methods of Yellow Simplicity), cited in the seventh-century encyclopedia *Sandong zhunang* 三洞朱囊 (Pearly Bag of the Three Caverns, DZ 1139), is one of the most radical:

The five kinds of meat are axes and hatchets that murder the organs. Wine and sex are inner and outer coffins that bury the body. Only if you eliminate the harm done by the axes, block the death represented by the coffins, and find inner restfulness can you walk on the path to long life and gradually follow the road to immortality. (4.5a)

Just as wine and meat are not conducive to advanced states, so different foodstuffs have varying effects and are consumed by different kinds of practitioners. As the ancient *Taiping jing* 太平經 (Scripture of Great Peace; see Hendrichske 2006), notes in its classification of immortals according to the foods they eat:

Question: The upper, middle, and lower [immortals] who attain the Dao and go beyond the world—what do they eat?

Answer: Those of the first level absorb wind and *qi*; those of the second level ingest medicinal flavors; those of the third level eat little, reducing what passes through their stomach and intestines. (Wang 1960, 716; Company 2005, 109)

This sets up the basic distinction of Daoist practitioners: those in the beginning stages eat vegetables and simple grains that are digested the normal way but support the balance of *qi*. More advanced folk practice a diet that involves the supplementation and increasing replacement of vegetables through concoctions or “herbal formulas” (*yao* 藥). Those who

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<sup>6</sup> □ This is also obvious in the Han manuscript *Wushier bingfang* 五十二病方 (52 Recipes for Diseases) which contains numerous concoctions that can just as easily be read as soup recipes (see Harper 1998; Engelhardt and Nögel 2009, 6).

work to achieve oneness with Dao and move closer to immortality, finally, eliminate all food and material intake and just live by absorbing *qi*, a method that reorganizes the internal system of the body and bypasses normal digestive processes (see Jackowicz 2006).

The same system is also, in some more detail, presented in the *Laozi shuo Fashi jinjie jing* 老子說法食禁戒經 (Prohibitions and Precepts on Ceremonial Food as Revealed by Laozi), a Tang-dynasty manual of Daoist food rules found among Dunhuang manuscripts (P. 2447). It notes that “in high antiquity, people ate only primordial *qi* and managed to live for millions of years,” and states categorically that the highest form of eating—after not eating at all—is living on *qi*.

Beyond that, however, the text ranks different kinds of food, adding the omnivore or “see food” diet at the bottom, adding grains and mushrooms above the vegetable category, and redefining “herbal formulas” in terms of minerals:

Eating everything is not as good as eating vegetables. Eating vegetables is not as good as eating grains. Eating grains is not as good as eating mushrooms and excrescences.<sup>7</sup> Eating mushrooms and excrescences is not as good as eating gold and jade.<sup>8</sup> Eating gold and jade is not as good as eating primordial *qi*. Eating primordial *qi* is not as good as not eating at all. By not eating at all, even though Heaven and Earth may collapse, one will survive forever. (Kohn 2004b, 124-25)

Following this, the text specifies five basic kinds of food in more detail: *qi*, herbal formulas, grain, fruits, and vegetables. *Qi* as a form of nourishment, it states, consists of practicing “healing exercises and embryo respiration, expelling the old and taking in the new, and generally harmonizing the body with the help of the six breaths,” forms of exhalation that match individual organs and are today known as the Six Healing Sounds (see Despeux 2006; Chia and Chia 1993). Herbal formulas, second, include both minerals and plant products. They replace ordinary nourishment and serve to “harmonize blood and body fluids, preserve

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<sup>7</sup> □ The term *zhi* 芝 refers to mushrooms in general as well as to the fungus growing on the sides of trees (Stuart 1976, 271). *Ying* 營 means “splendor” and can also refer to “excrescences,” another non-cultivated natural product.

<sup>8</sup> □ Gold and jade, or metals and minerals, are at the base of the immortal elixir as described in the *Baopuzi* (Ware 1966; Huang 2008a).

and nourish body and spirit, calm the spirit soul and settle the will, and in general expel all wind and dampness, thus greatly enhancing life and extending old age" (Kohn 2004b, 125).

Next, the text defines grains as including "corn, millet, hemp, wheat, wild and cultivated rice, as well as various kinds of beans." It acknowledges that they can be useful for strengthening the inner organs, enhancing *qi*, and in general helping to harmonize the body. The last two food groups are fruits and vegetables, which should all be eaten in appropriate portions and well prepared. All these kinds of food make up what the text calls "ceremonial food" (*zhaishi* 齋食) i.e., food eaten in Daoist institutions at the main meal of the day, usually held shortly before noon as part of a major ceremony that also includes scripture readings and the formal sharing of merits with the donors, the gods, and all beings.

Eating in the Daoist environment thus involves all kinds of foods used in Chinese dietetics, joining it in its exclusion of dairy products and cold foods, such as ice cream or sodas popular in the West. It follows the same principles as Chinese dietary therapy, selecting food combinations and cooking methods to balance the individual's *qi* both in terms of personal tendencies and geographical or seasonal variants. Also like Chinese dietetics, Daoist cooking uses herbs and spices, selected for their qualities as much as for their taste, and emphasizes life-style basics, such as serenity of mind and moderation in sensory and culinary experiences.

While building on a solid base of traditional Chinese dietetics and medicinal foods, Daoist eating also has its own peculiarities. For one, it favors the use of more subtle herbs and avoids highly heat-producing agents, such as garlic and onions. For another, it sees its goal as reaching beyond health and long life to a state of energetic and meditative transformation described as immortality. To this end, it encourages practitioners to reduce and eventually eliminate the ingestion of grains, replacing them increasingly with medicinal concoctions and breathing techniques. Ultimately Daoist eating becomes non-eating, the pure absorption of *qi* in accordance with the greater universe, the attainment of oneness with Dao and a subtler, more spiritual form of self-identity.



