

Ts'ui Fang, a Forgotten 11th-Century Chinese Alchemist

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To Doctor Joseph Needham, Fellow of the Royal Society and of the British Academy, Master of Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge, in commemoration of his visit to Japan as Visiting Professor at the Jimbun Kagaku Kenkyūsho, and Kuala Lumpur to give a public lecture on alchemy at the University of Malaya in the summer of 1971.

Old Chinese alchemists sought to compound
Elixirs giving immortality,
For with this gift, they thought, is also found
A highly prized and rare facility—
To fly at will, visit the distant moon
And planets—beyond the cerulean sky
Our modern science has brought to us a boon:
We need no secret alchemy to fly,
And borne on metal wings you come to us
To know more of the ancient sciences here,
Great Medicine, in particular, to discuss—
All this without the dark Arts of the seer.
There lived and worked eight centuries ago,
To the north of the scenic Tung-t'ing lake,
An alchemist whose scanty writings show
Relationships as close as we can make
Between the recipes of the alchemist
And medical prescriptions of the sort
Familiar to the Chinese doctor's list.
Little of him the records can report,
What we have gleaned is in this document:
Which, to the Master of Caius we present.

Chinese alchemy was in its golden age between the 4th and the 8th century, from the Chin to the T'ang dynasty, as seen from the richness of alchemical writings during this time, the lucid style employed therein as opposed to the

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