

Literature Review of Gehong's Academic Thought in China

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Abstract: In order to discuss the current research status of Ge Hong's academic thought in China from a global perspective, this paper carries out a review of the literature on Ge Hong's academic thought in China from 1980 to 2022. With "Ge Hong" and "Academic thought" as the main topics, the literatures collected in CNKI database from January 1, 1980 to December 31, 2022 were searched, and 500 literatures were analyzed by Cite Space.6.1.R1 software. The study of Ge Hong's academic thought mainly focuses on the fields of "Taoism", "health", "immortal Taoism", "Luofu Mountain" and "Confucianism"; With the development of time, new research hotspots such as "Taoist medicine" have been formed. Ge Hong's academic thought researchers are mainly distributed in major universities. Overall, the research field of Chinese Ge Hong's academic thought is extensive, and the atmosphere of cooperative research among many scholars and institutions has not been fully formed.

Keywords: Ge Hong; Gehong's Academic Thought; Cite Space; Knowledge Mapping

1. Introduction

Ge Hong was a famous thinker, traditional Chinese medicine practitioner, health scholar, historian, and founder of Taoist immortality in the Jin Dynasty of China. Born into a declining noble family of the Eastern Jin Dynasty, he experienced a fall in family fortunes during his youth and grew up farming and reading. Under extremely difficult living conditions, he studied classics, history, and various philosophies extensively, delved into military strategies, and excelled in martial arts. Against the backdrop of turbulent times, he made military achievements in quelling

rebellions, eventually being appointed as "General of Fubo" and later bestowed the title of "Marquis within the Passes." Living through troubled times and hindered by his less prominent family background and challenging official career, Ge Hong could not fulfill his political ambitions of governing the country and bringing peace. Consequently, he turned to writing and self-cultivation. Ge Hong was a man of extensive learning; historically, he was praised as unmatched in Jiangdong, worthy of national history. His academic thoughts are distributed across his various research fields, reflecting his profound scholarly cultivation and extraordinary historical insight. In developing his academic ideology, Ge Hong particularly focused on summarizing the profound historical issues of his time, exploring the critical inheritance and development of the Confucian governance theory system. Innovatively, he integrated the normative standards of Confucianism into the secular Daoist theory system, which was acceptable to ordinary social classes. Gradually, he formed a comprehensive ideological theory system, including the principles of "loyalty and filial piety," "promoting good and eliminating evil," and "valuing rites," thus being gradually accepted by the ruling class, nobility, and scholars of the time, and eventually having the opportunity to become a political tool for national governance[1-3]. Besides theoretical exploration in national governance and peacekeeping at the institutional level, Ge Hong also sought unique paths in practical health and wellness, achieving notable success in preparing alchemy, dietary therapy, and breath control practices, with numerous publications [4,5].

To discuss the current state of research on Ge Hong's academic thoughts from a global perspective, this study proposes to conduct a

knowledge map visualization analysis of published papers on Ge Hong's academic thoughts over more than 40 years (from January 1, 1980, to December 31, 2022), clarifying research hotspots, sorting out development trends, and providing a valuable theoretical reference and lessons for subsequent related research.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1 Literature Search

The search was conducted in the CNKI database for Chinese journal articles with the keywords "Ge Hong" AND "academic thoughts," covering the period from January 1, 1980, to December 31, 2022. A total of 500 qualified papers were selected.

2.2 Statistical Methods

Cite Space 6.1.R.1 software was used for keyword analysis, keyword clustering,

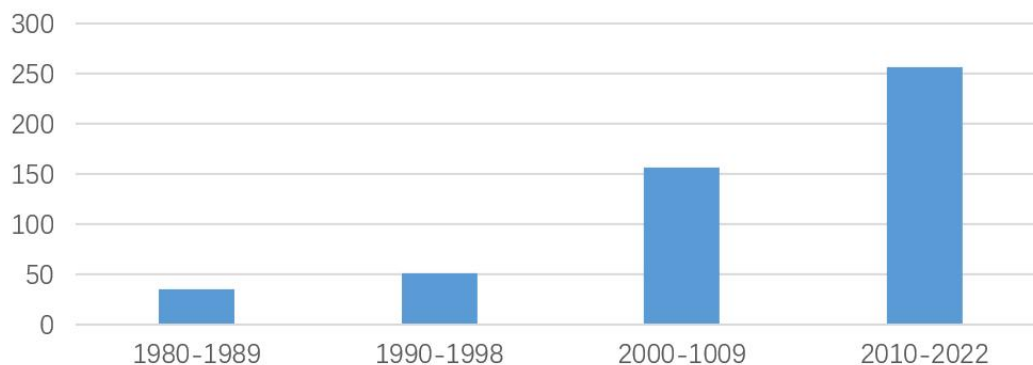


Figure 1. Distribution of Publications on Ge Hong's Academic Thoughts from 1980 to 2022

Analysis of publication data indicates that, since the 21st century, with Chinese scholars' increased focus on the study of excellent traditional culture, specialized research on Ge Hong's academic thoughts has become a major theme and focus. Scholars in related disciplines such as history, folklore, culture, and traditional ethnic sports have been conducting in-depth research, yielding a wealth of results.

3.2 Author Characteristics and Co-occurrence Network

The analysis shows that the author co-occurrence network comprises 322 nodes and 121 links, with a network density of 0.0017. Among the 500 papers analyzed, there were 601 authors forming 209 collaborative groups. Table 1 indicates that scholars Li Gang from Sichuan University and Ding Hongwu

emergent term analysis, and co-occurrence analysis of authors and institutions.

3. Results and Analysis

3.1 Distribution of Annual Publications

Since the first paper, "A Brief Discussion on the Early Taoist Theories of Life, Death, and the Spirit" by scholar Tang Yijie from the Philosophy Department of Peking University, published in the first issue of "Philosophical Research" in 1981, research on Ge Hong's academic thoughts began to attract scholars' attention, with intermittent publications thereafter. Until the 1990s, the field exhibited a steady state, with annual publication numbers hovering around five papers. Entering the 21st century, the research interest in Ge Hong's academic thoughts has increased, with more than 150 papers published in the first decade and the trend continuing, accumulating over 250 papers to date (see Figure 1).

from Northwest Normal University are tied for the first place as the most prolific contributors in the field of Ge Hong's academic thought research in China, each with six publications. The top ten scholars have published between three to five papers each.

To quantitatively analyze the distribution of each scholar's publications in the field of Ge Hong's academic thought research in China and the impact of the number of publications on the scholar community, this study aims to select core authors. It adopts a common bibliometric formula, with the minimum publication number for a core author set at $N=0.749*\sqrt{N_{pmax}}$ (where N_{pmax} is the highest productivity of an author) [6], resulting in a minimum core author publication count of one paper. The calculations indicate that due to the low number of publications by the most prolific author, the criteria for selecting core

authors are too low, failing to identify the true core authors. This suggests that the field of Ge Hong's academic thought research in China has not yet formed a substantial core group of authors, and the concentration and richness of scholarly achievements in this field urgently need to be improved. As the most productive author in the field of Ge Hong's academic thought research in China, scholar Ding Hongwu focuses on how to organize and evaluate Ge Hong's works since the Jin and Tang dynasties under a new academic context, especially the historical evaluation of Ge Hong's works, which often exhibit certain degrees of bias and limitation; the author innovatively suggests stepping out of the single historical discipline research paradigm, re-evaluating Ge Hong, a multi-disciplinary cultural giant, from a multi-faceted and interdisciplinary perspective [7].

Table 1. Ranking of Authors in Ge Hong's Academic Thought Research from 1980 to 2022

Publication Ranking	Author Name	Number of Publications	Percentage of Total Publications (%)
1	Li Gang	6	1.2
2	Ding Hongwu	6	1.2
3	Gai Jianmin	5	1.0
4	Yuan Lang	4	0.8
5	Sun Yiping	4	0.8
6	Liu Lingdi	4	0.8
7	Xie Qiang	3	0.6
8	Jiang Zhenhua	3	0.6
9	Xiao Hongyan	3	0.6
10	Xiong Tiejun	3	0.6

Collaborative research among domestic scholars in related fields is not optimistic, with only a few scholars publishing collaborative research results, mainly between Jiang Zhenhua and Duan Zuqing, Li Dexing and Wang Lei, Wang Hongwu, Xie Qiang, and Zhang Delin. The joint research of Jiang Zhenhua and Duan Zuqing focused on the historical origins of Ge Hong's academic thought and the construction method of its theoretical system's ideological content, using the many poems and writings of the Seven Sages of the Bamboo Grove as the research theme, discussing their profound impact on

many health and life extension practitioners since the Wei and Jin dynasties, and providing spiritual guidance and encouragement in specific health and life extension paths[8].

3.3 Institutional Characteristics

Table 2. Co-occurrence Network of Authors in Ge Hong's Academic Thought Research from 1980 to 2022

Publication Ranking	Institution Name	Number of Publications	Percentage of Total Publications (%)
1	Taoism and Religious Culture Research Institute, Sichuan University	23	4.6
	Shandong University	20	4.0
2	Nanjing University	14	2.8
3	Northwest Normal University	12	2.4
4	East China Normal University	9	1.8
5	Central China Normal University	8	1.6
6	Hunan Normal University	6	1.2
7	Minzu University of China	6	1.2
8	Nanjing University of Chinese Medicine	5	1.0
9	Nankai University	5	1.0
10	Southwest University	5	1.0

Table 2 shows that, in terms of the number of published research results, the Taoism and Religious Culture Research Institute of Sichuan University leads all research structures with 23 publications, accounting for 20.4% of the total output of the top ten research institutions. With its rich research output, the Taoism and Religious Culture Research Institute of Sichuan University rightfully becomes the academic high ground for Ge Hong's academic thought research in

China at this stage. The main researchers of this institute, such as Gai Jianmin, focus on the primitive world view in Ge Hong's health and wellness academic thoughts, characterized by modern scientific features, including observational, experimental, cognitive, and logical thinking methodologies for exploring natural laws [9, 10]. These precious legacies, tested through practice, not only promoted the continuous optimization of Chinese traditional culture during the historical development of China but also continue to influence the cultural development of contemporary China. They even inspired the scientist Tu Youyou in the medical field to discover Artemisinin for treating malaria, saving millions of lives worldwide, especially in the underdeveloped countries of the South. The achievements of ancient Chinese medicine have been highly recognized and affirmed globally, for which Tu Youyou was awarded the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine.

Following closely are research outputs from institutions like Shandong University, Nanjing University, and Northwest Normal University, forming the main group of Ge Hong's academic thought research institutions in China. Among them, researcher Li Yancang from Shandong University explored how Ge Hong transformed and advocated governance concepts and methods acceptable to the ruling class within the classical Yi studies [11]. He systematically optimized governance thoughts on monarchical rule, criminal law, etc., and highlighted Confucian secular concepts such as contentment in poverty, facilitation, and good and evil, comprehensively improving and enhancing his ideological system for governing the country and bringing peace, thereby demonstrating affinity with the ruling class and ultimately achieving the upper-level transformation of his academic ideological system.

Quantitative data analysis of joint research on Ge Hong's academic thoughts among different institutions shows: The collaboration network consists of 460 nodes with 171 connecting lines, resulting in a network density of 0.0019. Comprehensive analysis suggests that the exchange and collaborative research outcomes among Ge Hong's academic thought research institutions in China need further improvement and enhancement. Further analysis of the

distribution of the top ten institutions conducting Ge Hong's academic thought research revealed that compared to the Southwest, Central China, East China, Northwest, and North China, there were no related research outcomes from institutions in the Northeast region. Analysis of the current joint research situation on Ge Hong's academic thoughts reveals that, centered around the Taoism and Religious Culture Research Institute of Sichuan University, a research consortium has been initially formed, including the Taoism Research Center of Central China Normal University, Jiangxi Normal University, Sichuan Academy of Social Sciences, and Sichuan Provincial Aesthetics Society.

3.4 Keyword Analysis

The keyword data analysis of Ge Hong's academic thought research conducted by various research institutions from 1950 to 2022 shows that the keyword "Taoism," first appearing in 1983, leads with 126 occurrences, far ahead of all other keywords. The following keywords "health cultivation," "Taoist immortality," "Luofu Mountain," "Confucianism," "Buddhism," "Tao Hongjing," and "philosophical thought" collectively form the top ten keywords in the field of Ge Hong's academic thought research (see Tables 3 and 4).

Table 3. Ranking of High-Frequency Keywords in Ge Hong's Academic Thought Research from 1980 to 2023

Rank	Keyword	Frequency	Centrality	Year of Appearance
1	Ge Hong	126	0.44	1983
2	Taoism	123	0.59	1983
3	Health Cultivation	19	0.03	1983
4	Taoist Immortality	18	0.15	1995
5	Health Thought	12	0.03	1986
6	Luofu Mountain	11	0.03	1992
7	Confucianism	8	0.01	1986
8	Buddhism	5	0.00	1986
9	Tao Hongjing	5	0.01	1986
10	Philosophical Thought	4	0.02	2003

Table 4. High-Frequency Keyword Clusters in Ge Hong's Academic Thought Research from 1980 to 2022

No.	size	silhouette	Mean(year)	Top Terms(LSI)
0	80	0.956	2012	(13.36) Confucianism; (10.78) Confucian; (10.78) Buddhism; (10.34) Talismans; (10.34) Ethical Norms
1	75	0.931	2009	(20.68) Health Thought; (18.87) Ge Hong; (12.92) Thought; (12.85) Aesthetics; (10.78) Method
2	38	0.877	1995	(13.36) Philosophical Thought; (10.53) Taoist Immortality; (10.34) Wei-Jin Period; (10.34) Concept of Change; (10.34) Nature and Universe
3	38	0.969	2000	(13.36) Immortality; (10.75) Aesthetics; (10.34) Longevity; (10.34) Aesthetic Thought; (10.34) Daozang
4	35	0.941	2003	(10.34) Early Taoism; (9.27) Luofu Mountain; (8.34) Lingnan; (8.34) Legends; (8.34) Folk Taoism
5	27	0.917	2004	(13.36) Zhuangzi; (10.75) Daoism; (10.34) Mohism; (10.34) Zhuangzi (text); (10.34) Embryonic Breathing
6	26	0.874	2011	(8.34) Dissemination; (8.34) Six Dynasties; (7.17) Medicine; (6.34) Religion; (5.17) Hangzhou
7	24	0.955	2007	(10.34) Aristocratization; (10.34) Shangqing Texts; (10.34) Shangqing Sect; (10.34) Eastern Jin and Southern Dynasties; (8.34) Southern Dynasties
8	13	0.988	1985	(7.17) Golden Elixir; (5.17) Golden Elixir Taoism; (5.17) Thought; (5.17) Bao Jingyan; (5.17) Anarchism
9	12	0.986	2010	(10.75) Medicine; (10.34) Sun Simiao; (10.34) Taoist Medicine; (5.17) Treatment; (5.17) Thought

To further observe the characteristics of keyword clustering in Ge Hong's academic thought research, and to deeply analyze the focus and attention of researchers in this field, the LIR statistical algorithm was used to analyze the keywords of Ge Hong's academic thought research. The results show that the top ten keyword clusters include: Taoism, Ge Hong, Baopuzi, Luofu Mountain, Daoism, Religion, Aristocratization, Golden Elixir Taoism, Sun Simiao, Literature, clearly revealing the main focus areas and research themes of researchers in this field in China. Analyzing the temporal trajectory of keywords in Ge Hong's academic thought research reveals some clear trends (see Figure 2).

Before the year 2000, the main research areas were concentrated on "Golden Elixir Taoism" and "Taoist Immortality." Between 2000 and 2020, keywords such as "Confucianism," "Health Cultivation," "Taoist Culture," and "Luofu Mountain" were added. After entering 2020, researchers of Ge Hong's academic thoughts expanded into the new field of "Taoist Medicine," which continues to this day. Observing the historical evolution of keywords in Ge Hong's academic thought research in China, it is undoubtedly a path of continuous inheritance and development of innovative research, thus keeping the research outcomes of Ge Hong's academic thoughts ever-evolving and enduringly fresh.

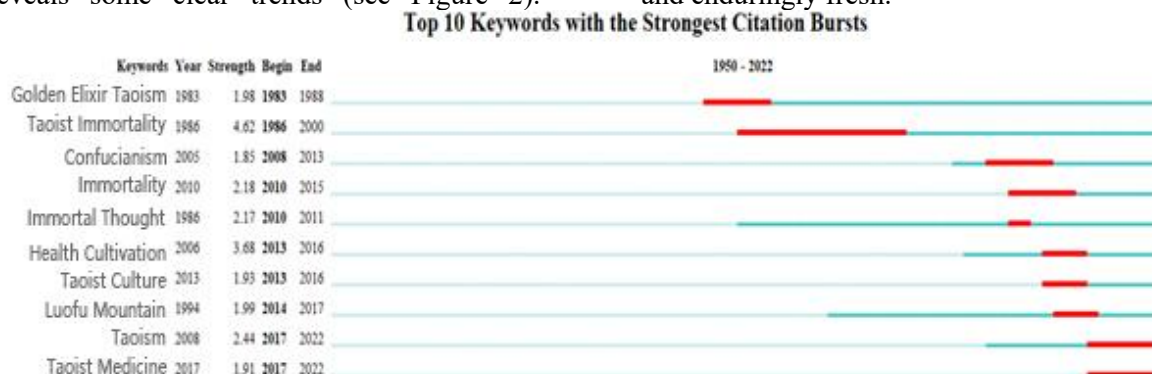


Figure 2. Keyword Emergence Map of Ge Hong's Academic Thought Research Literature from 1980 to 2022

4. Discussion

4.1 There is Significant Room for

Improvement in Collaboration within Ge Hong's Academic Thought Research

Due to the largely isolated nature of scholars and institutions in the field of Ge Hong's

academic thought research, there has not been a stable atmosphere of cooperation between researchers and institutions. This inevitably prevents the complementary advantages of different research institutions from being fully utilized, resulting in the need for improved quantity and quality of research outcomes in this field. The core group of authors has not been able to form a scale advantage, and there is significant room for growth in the number of publications by the main core authors. Only the Taoism and Religious Culture Research Institute of Sichuan University and Shandong University have a relatively rich number of publications, while other major research institutions have relatively modest outcomes. As one of the few examples of collaboration between researchers and institutions, such as the cooperation between Jiang Zhenhua and Duan Zuqing, and the collaboration between the Taoism and Religious Culture Research Institute of Sichuan University with several institutions including Central China Normal University, it will become a fresh stream in the joint research field of Ge Hong's academic thoughts in China. It will play a leading and driving role for a considerable period in the future, helping to break down the barriers that hinder communication and collaboration between different researchers and institutions, and opening up new prospects for cooperative research in this field.

4.2 The Hotspots of Ge Hong's Academic Thought Research Focus on "Taoism," "Health Cultivation," "Taoist Immortality," "Luofu Mountain," "Confucianism," "Baopuzi," and Other Areas

Ge Hong, as a landmark thinker bridging the past and future in Chinese history, has a broad and profound academic thought system covering many disciplinary fields, with keywords extending to social governance, traditional Chinese medicine, health cultivation, alchemy, history, folklore, and religion. The theoretical achievements in his academic thoughts are mainly concentrated in works represented by "Baopuzi External Chapters." His epoch-making practical innovative achievements are primarily reflected in traditional Chinese medical writings like "Baopuzi Internal Chapters," especially the records of the therapeutic effects

of a series of traditional Chinese medicines, various fitness exercises, breathing and qi circulation methods, and many technical routes for alchemy refining, all of which are innovative attempts in the construction process of his academic thought system. The analysis of this study indicates that a series of influential academic papers generated around the hotspots of Ge Hong's academic thought research have already formed a relatively stable core research area.

Having forsaken his official career, Ge Hong did not lose his broad aspiration to benefit the world. In his later years, he consistently dedicated himself to medical practice, health cultivation, and the exploration of immortality. Especially during his time in Luofu Mountain, relying on his profound knowledge of traditional Chinese medicine, he wrote extensively and used locally available medicinal plants to alleviate the ailments of the local people. Ultimately, he achieved great virtue and success in his cultivation, attaining immortality and becoming a founder of ancient Chinese Taoist immortality. This study also analyzed academic achievements related to health cultivation, traditional Chinese medicine, Luofu Mountain, and other research hotspots in Ge Hong's academic thoughts. Since the 1980s, numerous scholars have persistently conducted series of studies, gradually systematizing and modernizing the research outcomes, and pointing to a new direction for subsequent research in the Ge Hong field. An encouraging phenomenon discovered in this study is that entering the 2020s, with the deepening of the Healthy China strategy, the research on Taoism and medical health has gradually taken center stage in the Ge Hong research field, indicating that modern medical scientific research methods have been organically integrated with traditional historical research. It also suggests that Ge Hong's thought system, as a treasure of China's excellent traditional culture, will exert a greater health-promoting effect through its organic integration with modern science.

5. Conclusion

In summary, contemporary Chinese research on Ge Hong's academic thoughts began in the 1980s. Through the relentless efforts of generations of scholars, remarkable results have been achieved, gradually forming a core

research area focused on "Taoism," "Health Cultivation," "Taoist Immortality," "Luofu Mountain," "Confucianism," and "Baopuzi." To more completely and systematically inherit and develop the theoretical system of Ge Hong's academic thoughts, it is necessary for domestic researchers and institutions in this field to establish closer ties, share research resources, further strengthen the research team, and improve the level and quality of research. This will lay the talent foundation for the inheritance and development of Ge Hong's academic thought system and contribute to the inheritance of China's excellent traditional culture.

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