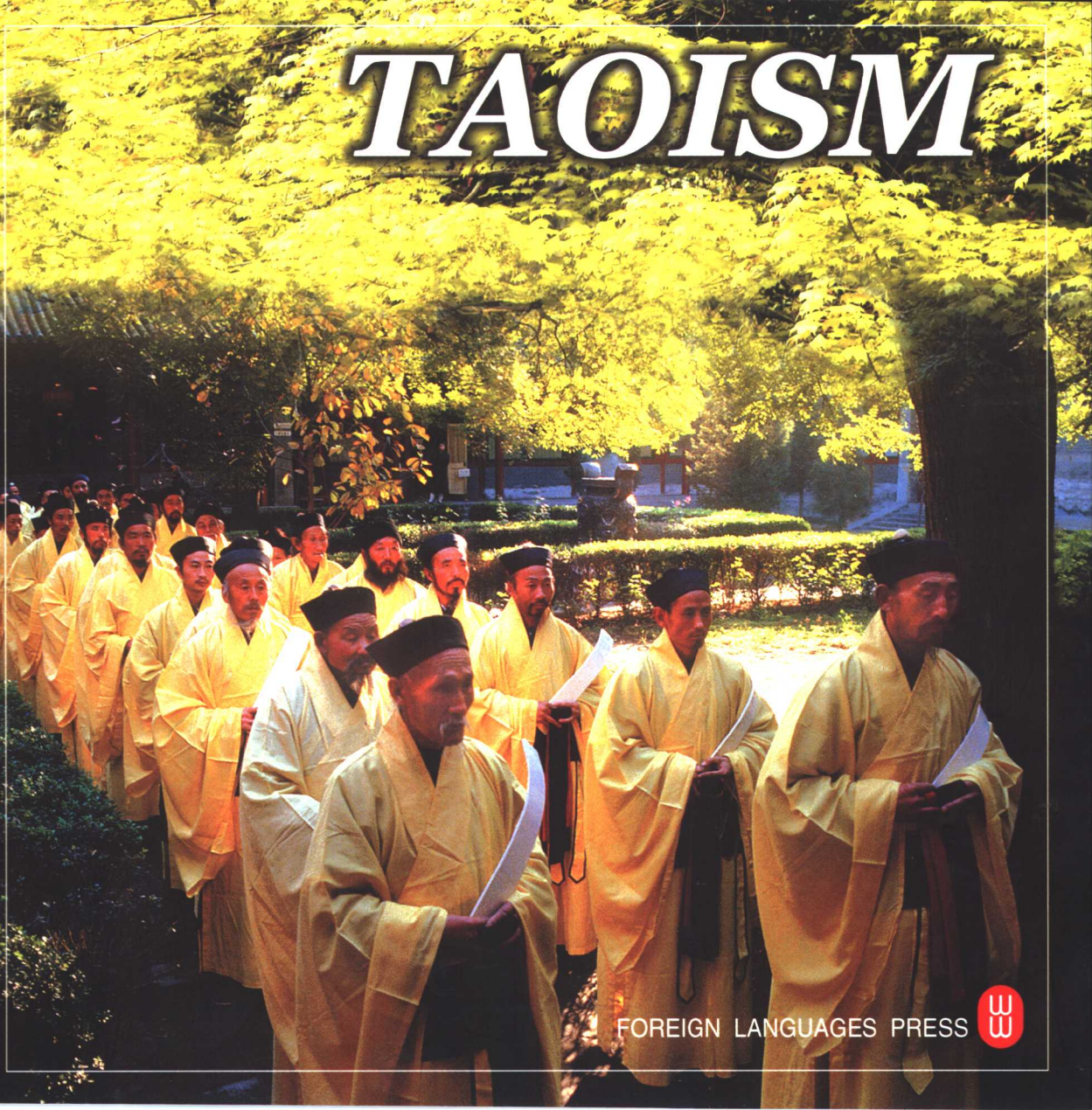




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CHINA



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# Main Taoist Festivals and Grand Ceremonies

Taoist Festival	Lunar Date	Taoist Ceremony
Birthday of Jade Emperor	9th of the first month	Grand Ceremony for Blessings
Lantern Festival	15th of the first month	Grand Ceremony for Blessings
Birthday of Master Qiu	19th of the first month	Grand Ceremony for Blessings
Supreme Purity Festival	15th of the second month	Grand Ceremony for Blessings
Qingming Festival	4th or 5th of the fourth month	Grand Ceremony for the Deceased
Birthday of Master Lü	14th of the fourth month	Grand Ceremony for Blessings
Lofty Purity Festival	Summer Solstice	Grand Ceremony for Blessings
Zhongyuan Festival	15th of the seventh month	Grand Ceremonies for Blessings during the Day and for the Deceased at Night
Nine-Emperor Festival	9th of the ninth month	Grand Ceremony for Blessings
Minsuila Festival	1st of the tenth month	Grand Ceremony for the Deceased
Xiayuan Festival	15th of the tenth month	Grand Ceremony for Blessings
Precious Purity Festival	Winter Solstice	Grand Ceremony for Blessings





# TAOISM



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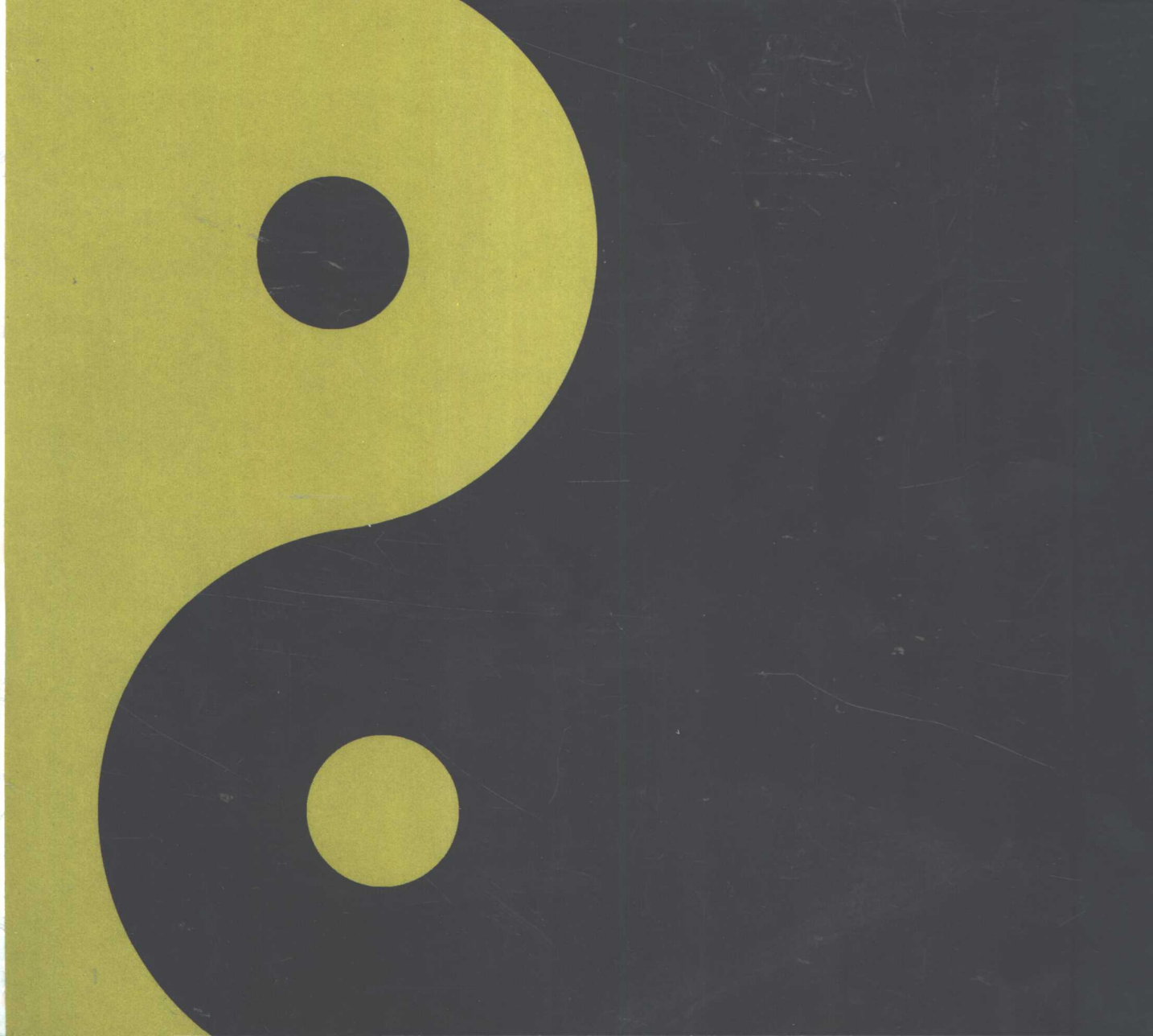
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# TAOISM

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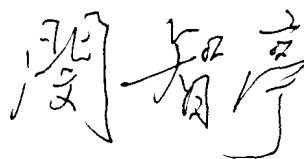
ii. Main Taoist Festivals and Grand Ceremonies

# Preface

Taoism regards Tao, or the Way, as its ultimate belief. The "Tao" that we believe in is fundamentally the "void" or nothingness yet encompassing everything. Therefore, we always advocate the spirit of tolerance. In this world exist many cultures and religions, large in number and distinct in nature. We believe that these distinctions do not necessarily lead to conflict. Taoism advocates the Tao's way in accordance with the law of Nature. Although Nature may be composed of very different species, it goes on in a harmonious and systematic way. As long as we can tolerate each other and respect each other's beliefs, values and lifestyles, we will be able to live in harmony with each other.

To cultivate in people a sense of tolerance and harmony, Taoism advocates the spirit of "universal love." "Universal love" is to maintain a benevolent loving heart towards all people, be their family members or strangers, the great or the humble. Taoism calls for people to feel happy about the wellbeing of others, sympathize with others in suffering, help those in danger, support those in need, and feel joyous over others' gains and sorrowful for their losses just as we do over our own gains and losses. If every one of us cherish a loving heart, is there any conflict in the world that cannot be resolved?

Today, the Taoist Association of China, at the request of the Foreign Languages Press, has compiled this album of *Taoism* for people overseas. This is a worthwhile endeavor to spread Taoist culture and promote exchange and dialogue between Taoism and other cultures and religions in the world. I am honored to write the preface for such an album.



Min Zhiting

Director of the Taoist Association of China

# A General Introduction to Taoism in China

Taoism is an indigenous traditional religion of China. It is generally believed that Taoist organizations were formally established 1,900 years ago by Celestial Master Zhang Daoling during the reign (AD 126-144) of Emperor Shundi of the Eastern Han Dynasty. However, the original sources of Taoist doctrines can be traced back to the Spring and Autumn Period and the Warring States Period (770-221 BC). Thus there is the common reference to the "Three Ancestors" that alludes to the Yellow Emperor, Lao Zi and Celestial Master Zhang.

The ideological system of Taoism covers a wide range of contents. Generally speaking, it evolved into a religious culture by basing itself on ancient religious beliefs in China around the worship of heaven and ancestors, as well as Taoist theories and beliefs regarding immortality arising during the Spring and Autumn Period and the Warring States Period. It has also absorbed ethical ideas from Confucianism and folk religious customs.

The core of Taoism is, of course, Tao (the Way), which is beyond description. It is said that Tao is the origin of the universe, the basis of all existing things, the law governing their development and change, and the ultimate god of Taoism. The concept of Virtue (De) is closely related to Tao. *Dao De Jing* relates, "All respect Tao yet value Virtue." Virtue has different connotations. One common explanation is that Virtue is the specific manifestation of Tao in specific things.

Taoists regard Tao and Virtue as the general principles of their beliefs and behavior. They should not only cultivate Tao but also accumulate Virtue. Therefore, both Tao and Virtue serve as the basis of Taoist doctrines. Derived from the foundation of Tao and Virtue are a whole set of principles, including non-



action, non-passion and non-desire, non-struggle, and the pursuit of simplicity and truth.

Taoists believe in both Tao as well as in deities and immortals. "Gods" in Taoism refer to the Celestial Worthy of Primordial Beginning, the Celestial Worthy of Numinous Treasure and the Celestial Worthy of the Way and Its Virtue, the Jade Emperor and the Great Emperor of Zhenwu, who were born before heaven and earth separated; while "immortals" refer to humans who were born after heaven and earth separated and transformed into deities, becoming immortals through cultivating Tao. Among them are Celestial Master Zhang and Lü Chongyang. From the Taoist perspective, both gods and immortals are symbols of Tao. There exists a hierarchy of gods and immortals in Taoism. At the top of the hierarchy are the gods of the highest ranks the Celestial Worthy of Primordial Beginning, the Celestial Worthy of Numinous Treasure and the Celestial Worthy of the Way and Its Virtue, who are the embodiment of Tao or may be said to be the Tao itself. Below them are the gods of the lower ranks, who are entrusted with responsibilities according to their attainments in Tao and Virtue. The highest among them is the Jade Emperor, followed by the four major deities and other celestial beings. The Jade Emperor is the highest ruler of the universe. Different deities and immortals have different responsibilities. Among the most popularly known are the celestial beings in charge of wind, rain, thunder, lightning, water and fire, the God of Wealth, the Kitchen God, the God of the Town and the God of the Land.

Taoism believes that the universe contains 36 heavens above and 36 hells below. The highest heaven is called Ta-luo Heaven. The next three heavens are the Realm of Absolute Purity; the four heavens after that are the Four Brahmas; while the rest of the 28 heavens include the Immaterial Realm (four heavens), the Material Realm (18 heavens), and the Realm of Desire (six heavens).

Ta-luo Heaven is wherein dwells the Celestial Worthy of Primordial Beginning, the Celestial Worthy of Numinous Treasure and the Celestial Worthy of the Way and Its Virtue; the Realm of Absolute Purity is the abode of nine grades of saints, realized beings and immortals. Those in the Four Brahmas are free of the pain of life and death; those in the Immaterial Realm enjoy longevity but are not free from the pain of life and death; while the people in the Realm of Desire experience all manner of desire as well as pain.

The 36 hells are the netherworld where the souls of the deceased dwell. Taoism believes that the deceased will be judged by the Ten Kings of the netherworld. A benevolent person will be reincarnated, while an evil-doer will be subject to punishment in these hells.

Taoism also believes that, among the famous mountains of the earth, there are 10 Big Taoist Caves, 36 Small Taoist Caves and 72 Promised Lands, which serve as the abodes of immortals. Among the four seas, there are 10 continents and three islands, where immortals take rest and the divine grass grows. It is believed that if one eats this grass, one will become immortal. In Chinese history, the First Emperor of the Qin Dynasty and Emperor Wudi of the Han Dynasty sent people to look for these fairy islands off the sea in hopes of obtaining those elixirs.

The highest ideal of a Taoist is to acquire immortality. To achieve this goal, one must practice Taoism both inside and outside one's physical existence. Inner practice involves physical and breathing exercises, concentrated contemplation, and the taking of elixirs. Later, this type of practice gradually came down to refining the interior elixirs (*neidan*). The basic principle of this practice is still to cultivate the self both spiritually and physically. External practice involves doing good deeds and helping others so as to acquire more merit and virtue. If one succeeds in both aspects, one could enter the world of immortals.

The books that record Taoist doctrines are referred to as the Taoist scriptures. There were different kinds of Taoist scriptures compiled at different moments in history, all under the title of the *Taoist Canon*. The earliest *Taoist Canon* appeared during the Tang Dynasty, followed by other editions compiled during the Song, Jin, Yuan and Ming dynasties. Extant today are two editions respectively compiled during the reign of Zhengtong and the reign of Wangli of the Ming Dynasty, hence the names: *Zhengtong Taoist Canon* and *Wanli Supplementary Taoist Canon*. The decree from a Yuan-dynasty emperor to burn *Taoist Canon* resulted in the loss of a great number of Taoist doctrines. Today, the Taoist Association of China is making efforts to recompile an anthology of Taoist doctrines, entitled *China's Taoist Canon*.

The *Dao De Jing* by Lao Zi is Taoism's principal and most important canon. Other canons include *Book of Secret Revelations*, *Book of Purity and Quietness*, *Book of the Lower Elixir Field*, *Book of Divine*

*Deliverance*, and *Can Tong Qi*.

Many schools of Taoism were formed throughout history. During the Han Dynasty, there arose Tianshi Taoism and Taiping Taoism; during the Wei and Jin Period, there were the Shangqing Sect, the Lingbao Sect, and the Sanhuang Sect; the Song, Jin and Yuan dynasties saw Quanzhen Taoism, Taiyi Taoism, Zhenda Taoism, and Jinming Taoism. Historical fusion brought many different sects together, from which two important sects, the Zhengyi Sect (evolved from Tianshi Taoism) and Quanzhen Taoism (founded by Wang Chongyang), finally developed. Today's Taoist followers belong to either of these two sects. The Zhengyi Sect is popular mainly in Jiangxi, Jiangsu, Shanghai and Fujian provinces, while Quanzhen Taoism flourishes in other parts of China. There is no difference in basic beliefs between the two sects, with the only differences lying in their norms and regulations. Quanzhen Taoism, for example, requires its followers to be vegetarians, remain single and live in temples, while the Zhengyi Sect has no such regulations at all.

Sites for Taoist activities are called Taoist Palaces (*gong*) or temples (*guan*). Taoists in the early days preferred to build their temples in wild but serene mountains and forests. With the spread of Taoism, more and more temples were built in urban areas. Each of them came to enshrine a great number of statues of deities and immortals. Taoists lived in the temples, practicing Tao and conducting sacred rites. Ordinary believers frequented these places to burn joss sticks and worship the gods. These temples were open to visitors, too. On the birthdays of the main gods and immortals, grand services were held in the temples, attracting a steady flow of people who came to offer incense sticks and to pray for blessings. Some temples also sponsored fairs, which brought together the worship of gods with recreational and trading activities, to produce lively festivities.

Taoism, during its time-honored history of development, has exerted far-reaching influences on China's philosophy, literature, arts, medicine and science. What merits special attention is its great contribution to ancient Chinese medicine and chemistry. A folk saying goes, "Nine out of 10 Taoists are doctors." Taoists' pursuit of longevity and health resulted in many Taoists excelling in medicine. Some renowned senior Taoists, like Ge Hong of the Jin Dynasty, Tao Hongjing of the Southern and Northern Dynasties and Sun

Simiao of the Tang Dynasty, were all well-known doctors and pharmacists. Taoists of early times attached great importance to minerals, mainly lead, mercury, sulfur, gold, and silver, from which they believed elixirs could be made. They had hoped that these elixirs could free them from the terrors of death. Of course, no immortality pills were ever achieved, but during this process they discovered certain chemical phenomena, which they recorded. Their records thus became the most valuable documents in ancient Chinese chemistry. Joseph Needham, historian of science, wrote in his *Science and Civilization in China*: "Many of the most attractive elements of the Chinese character derive from Taoism. China without Taoism would be a tree of which some of its deepest roots had perished." What is worth mentioning here is that gunpowder, one of China's four great inventions, was actually invented by Taoists during their attempts to create elixirs.

Taoist culture has long permeated the everyday life of ordinary Chinese people since it exerted great influences on social customs in ancient China and on the shaping of national consciousness. The venerated Lu Xun, the great Chinese writer, once said, "China is rooted in Taoism." Taoism has played an important role in the making of traditional Chinese culture. To know it is to possess a key to a better understanding of traditional Chinese culture.

Today, as one of the five major religions (Taoism, Buddhism, Islam, Protestantism, and Roman Catholicism) in China, Taoism has a great number of followers. There are more than 1,600 temples and more than 25,000 Taoist priests of the Quanzhen Taoism and the Zhengyi Sect. The number of ordinary believers is almost impossible to assess.

Taoism has also found its way to other parts of the world. Taoist methods of keeping fit and healthy, as well as the Taoist concept of harmonious coexistence between humans and nature, have claimed a great deal of attention. Taoism is attracting the interest of an increasing number of people worldwide.

The emblem of Taoism is the Taiji symbol, or diagram of the cosmological scheme, comprised of a circle with an S-shaped line dividing the white (*yang*) and black (*yin*) halves.



## I. The Beliefs of Taoism, and Its Deities and Immortals

The supreme belief of Taoism is "Tao" ('the Way'), which is indescribable and beyond human perception and understanding. "Tao" is believed to be the origin of the universe, the basis of the existence of all creatures, and the laws of development and change ruling all creatures. "Tao" sublimates into the *qi* (vital energy or breath), and gathers to form the Three Purities, i.e., the Celestial Worthy of Primordial Beginning or Jade Purity, the Celestial Worthy of Numinous Treasure or Highest Purity, and the Celestial Worthy of the Way and Its Virtue or Supreme Purity. Below the Three Purities, the emanations of Tao, are a mass of deities such as the Jade Emperor, the Four Heavenly Emperors and the Five Emperors of the Five Directions, and the immortals who humans can become through self-cultivation. Deities and immortals, models in achieving Tao, make it their duty to teach and redeem all creatures, and are therefore worshiped by the Taoism followers.

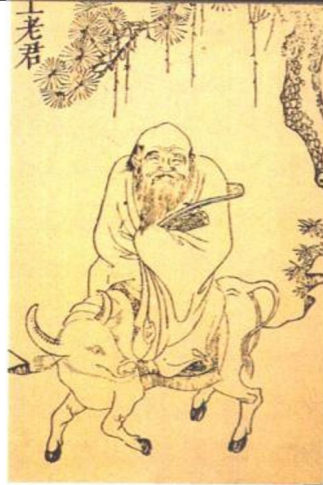
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A painting of Lao Zi. ►

Lao Zi.

According to Taoism, Lao Zi was the incarnation of Supreme Purity. It is said that he was once a historiographer of the Zhou Dynasty (c.1100-221 BC), who resigned his post to journey westward when he saw that the dynasty was in decline. At Hangu Pass, Yin Xi, the commander of the pass, aware that he was a sage, asked him to write a book to teach the "Tao". Lao Zi wrote a two-volume book, known to later generations as *Dao De Jing* (*Canon of the Tao and Its Virtue*). The book is the foremost Taoist scripture, with Lao Zi being recognized as the originator of Taoism.



A stele depicting Lao Zi. ►

This image of Lao Zi was from a painting by Wu Daozi, a famous Tang-dynasty artist. The stele bears praise to Lao Zi, written by the Emperor Xuanzong and the great calligrapher Yan Zhenqing of the Tang Dynasty (AD 618-907). The stele was carved during the Song Dynasty (AD 960-1279).







A statue of Lao Zi, in Quanzhou, Fujian Province, carved during the Song Dynasty.



The Celestial Worthy of  
Numinous Treasure



The Celestial Worthy of  
Primordial Beginning



The Celestial Worthy of the  
Way and Its Virtue

#### The Three Purities.

The Three Purities were the supreme Taoist deities: the Celestial Worthy of Primordial Beginning, the Celestial Worthy of Numinous Treasure, and the Celestial Worthy of the Way and Its Virtue. They rule over the highest three celestial realms of Jade Purity, Highest Purity, and Great Purity. According to Taoism, they are emanations of Tao, omnipresent and supreme.





Jade Emperor.

The Jade Emperor is believed to be the highest deity ruling the universe, lower only to the Three Purities, parallel to the emperor in the human world.



Taoist Divinities in Pilgrimage.

Taoism is polytheism. Its deities include divinities in heaven, the gods of mountains, rivers and land, and immortals. This painting shows a section of a scene of Taoist divinities having an audience with the Jade Emperor.





Birthday celebration for the Queen Mother of the West.

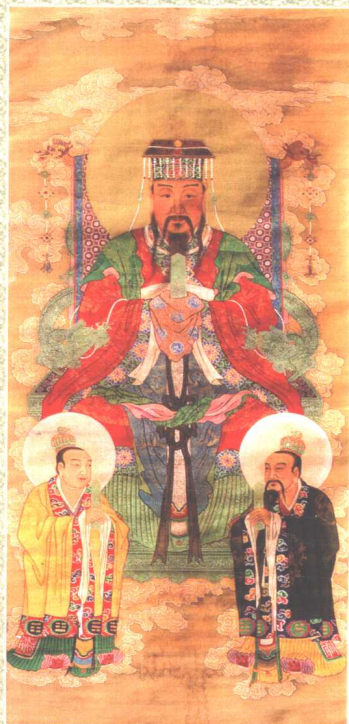
The Queen Mother of the West is believed to be the highest goddess in Taoism. On her birthday, which is said to be on the third day of the third lunar month, all divinities and immortals come to her Feast of Peaches for a celebration.







Gouchen, a celestial emperor representing the constellation surrounding the Polar Star



Ziwei, Emperor of the North Polar Star



Great Emperor of Longevity of the South Polar Star



Houtu, the Earth Goddess

The Four Heavenly Emperors.

The Four Heavenly Emperors are Gouchen, a celestial emperor representing the constellation surrounding the Polar Star; Ziwei, Emperor of the North Polar Star; the Great Emperor of Longevity of the South Polar Star; and Houtu, the Earth Goddess. They assist Jade Emperor in ruling the universe.





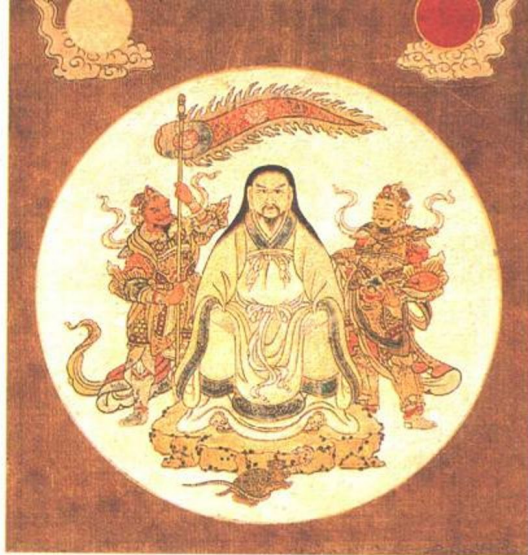
**The Three Divine Officials on a Tour of Inspection.**

The three divine officials are the Official of Heaven, the Official of Earth, and the Official of Water. It is said that the Official of Heaven bestows blessings, the Official of Earth pardons sins, and the Official of Water eliminates disasters. They make tours to inspect good and evil, and to protect all creatures.



The Great Emperor Zhenwu,  
the Perfected Warrior.

A heavenly god of the northern  
hemisphere. Ancient Chinese  
civilization harmonized the  
four directions with four  
spiritual beings. The tortoise  
and snake, corresponding with  
the north, were the symbol of  
the Great Emperor Zhenwu.



A bronze statue of Xuanwu (or  
Zhenwu, a tortoise entwined by a  
snake) on Mount Wudang. ►



The Taoist God of Mercy.  
A heavenly god believed to deliver  
people from all manner of troubles and  
sufferings. It is said that he answers to  
prayers or to the calling of his name.





A relief of the three star-gods of Happiness, Rank and Affluence and Longevity.







The Three Star-gods of Happiness, Rank and Affluence, and Longevity. The triad is composed of the three Taoist gods Tianguan, Wenchang and Shouxing. Tianguan bestows blessings, Wenchang grants official titles, and Shouxing grants years of life. They are popular gods among the common Chinese people. ▲



The Old Man of the Southern Celestial Pole.  
The Old Man of the Southern Celestial Pole, also known as Shouxing, is a symbol of long life. He is highly celebrated among the common Chinese people.



The God of the Land



The God of the Town

The God of the Town and the God of the Land.

The God of the Town is the guardian of towns and cities, while the God of the Land is the guardian of villages. In Taoist rituals, Taoist priests invite deities through the God of the Town, and send them off through the God of the Land.



Xie Bi'an and Fan Wujia.

These two marshals  
under the God of the  
Town are escorting  
criminals.



Xie Bi'an



Fan Wujia.



The Four Immortals  
Celebrating a Birthday.  
This Ming-dynasty  
painting portrays the  
refined demeanor of the  
four immortals.



A relief of the Eight Immortals  
crossing the sea. The Eight  
Immortals are: Zhongli Quan, Lü  
Dongbin, Zhang Guolao, Cao  
Guojiu, Li Tieguai, Han Xiangzi, Lan  
Caihe, and He Xiangyu. They are  
models of achieving immortality  
through self-cultivation.

Riding the Dragon.

The dragon is a divine creature  
worshiped by Taoists. This painting,  
dating back to the Southern Song  
Dynasty, presents a scene of someone  
achieving immortality and ascending  
to Heaven.



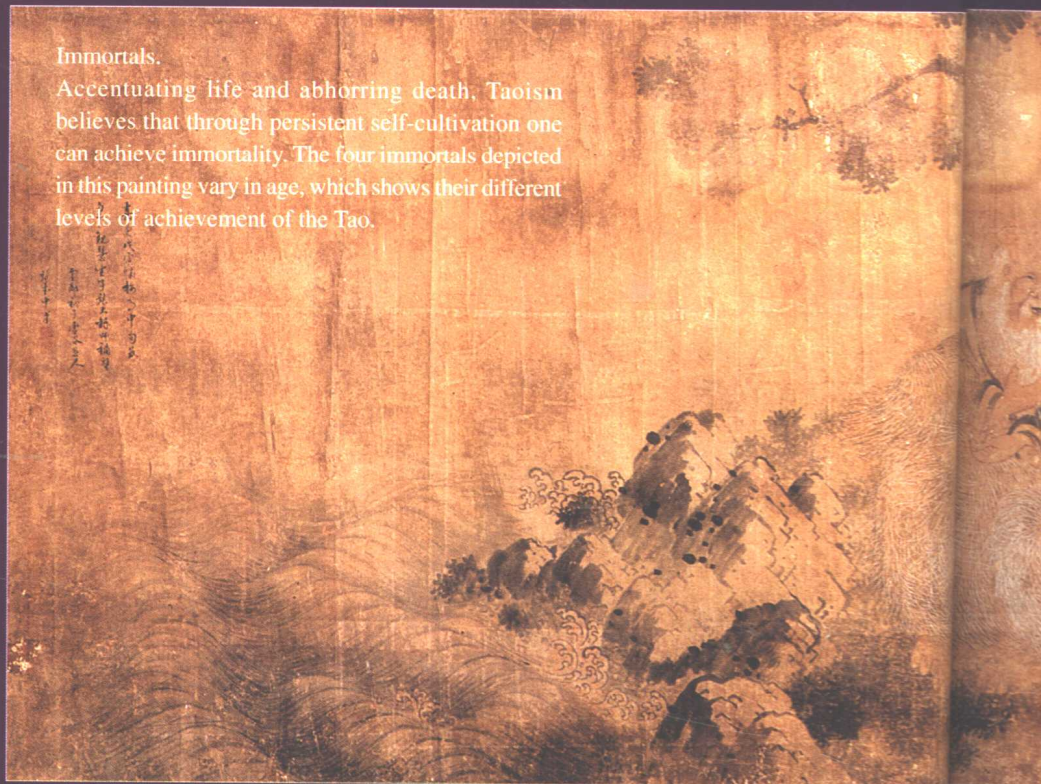




Celestial Master Zhang.  
Celestial Master Zhang, or  
Zhang Daoling, is one of the  
founders of Taoist religion.

### Immortals.

Accentuating life and abhorring death, Taoism believes that through persistent self-cultivation one can achieve immortality. The four immortals depicted in this painting vary in age, which shows their different levels of achievement of the Tao.





Perfect man (Zhenren) Qiu Changchun on His Travels.

Perfect man Changchun, also known as Qiu Chuji, is the founder of the Longmen Group of the Quanzhen Sect of Taoism. During the chaos of war at the end of the Jin Dynasty and the beginning of the Yuan Dynasty, he traveled a long way to the Western Regions to visit Genghis Khan, admonishing him against killing innocent people.





## II. Taoist Priests, Taoist Rituals, and the Life of Taoists

Taoist priests gather together for morning and evening prayers each day. They hold prayer rituals to give blessings on the birthdays of deities or on festivals, and conduct rituals to expiate the sins of the dead on the Festival of Pure Brightness and the Festival of Spirits of the Dead. Such rituals can also be held at the request of followers. Unveiling ceremonies are held when a monastery is completed. Taoist priests also hold large-scale rituals, such as the Grand Universe Ceremony, to pray for prosperity and peace in the nation, good weather for crops, and world peace. Besides conducting rituals, Taoist priests are mainly engaged in self-cultivation.



The Abbot Wang Changyue of the White Cloud Temple in the early years of the Qing Dynasty.



Taoist priests of the Quanzhen Sect.



#### Taoist Priests

Taoism is divided into the Quanzhen and Zhengyi sects. The Quanzhen Sect has stricter taboos and regulations, and the priests are required to live in monasteries, and forbidden to marry or to eat meat. The Zhengyi Sect stresses personal cultivation, and the priests may live at home or in monasteries, and are allowed to marry and to eat meat when it is not a fasting period.

Taoist priests of the Zhengyi Sect.





A prayer gathering on Mount Wudang.





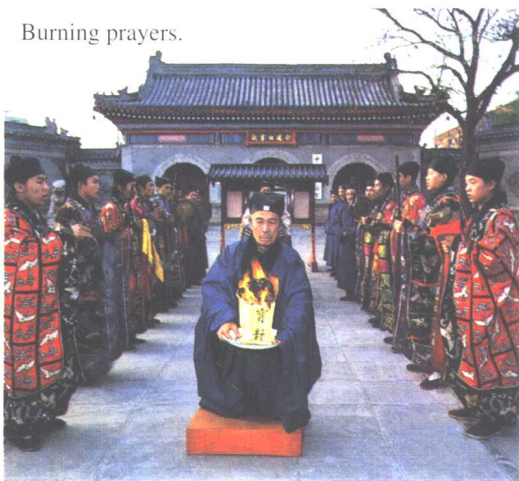
### Taoist Rituals

Each Taoist Ritual has certain procedures and contents. During a ritual, Taoist priests and masters all wear ceremonial dress, use various musical instruments and ritual articles according to the forms of the ritual, say prayers, and summon deities and guardians.





Burning prayers.



Burning incense.



The site of a ritual.

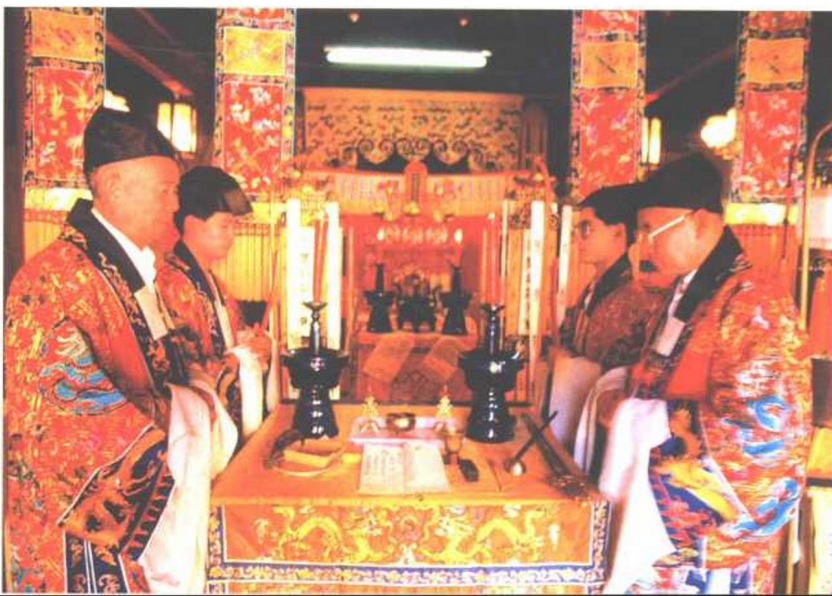
The Opening  
Ceremony.



The Grand Universe Ceremony.

The Grand Universe Ceremony is held to pray for prosperity and peace in the nation, good weather for crops, and world peace. It is usually initiated by a community or several Taoist monasteries. The solemn ceremony lasts for three, five or seven days.

Chanting  
Prayers.







A repentance ritual  
with Taoist nuns.



A ritual for delivering  
the soul of the deceased.





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聖  
達  
妙  
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間  
妙  
道  
妙



Chanting prayers and  
repentance.

入真門秉真心參透真玄真自在

福生無量天尊



A senior master is walking  
along the form of the Plough.



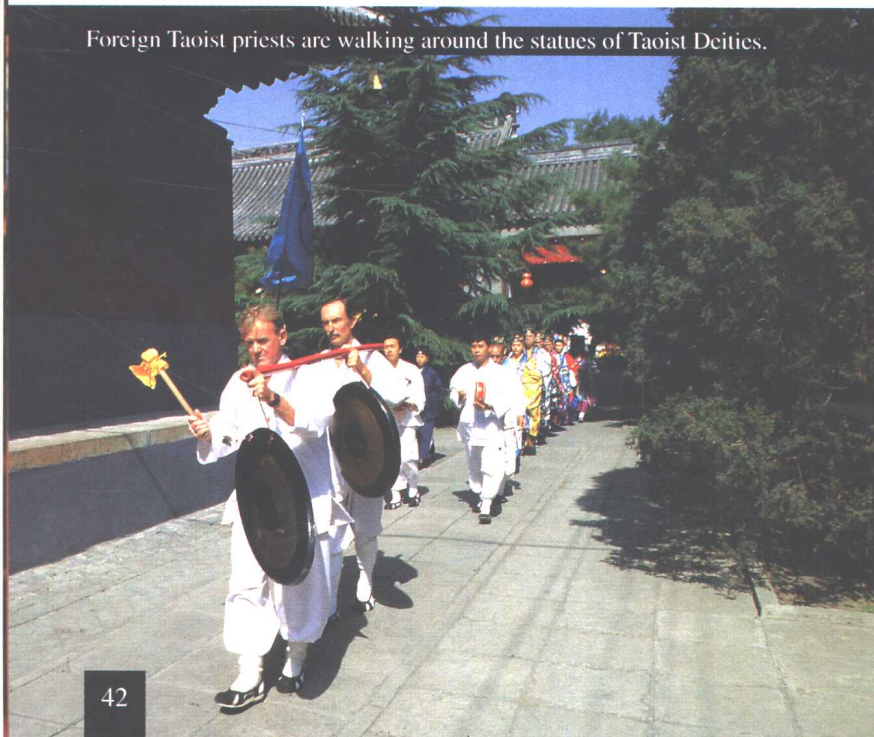


Senior Master Jiang Zhilin purifying the altar.





A "Flower Scattering" ritual by Taoist nuns from Hong Kong.



Foreign Taoist priests are walking around the statues of Taoist Deities.




The ceremony to send off deities at the conclusion of the Grand Universe Ceremony.







A large group of Taoist disciples, mostly men with beards, are walking in a single file line through a lush garden. They are all wearing traditional yellow Taoist robes and black hats. The garden is filled with green trees and bushes, and the sunlight filters through the leaves, creating a warm, golden glow. In the background, a traditional Chinese building with a tiled roof is visible. The disciples are walking towards the right side of the frame, and their line recedes into the distance.

Taoist disciples entering the altar  
one after the other.

#### Taoist Initiation

Initiation is a solemn ritual of the Quanzhen Sect of Taoism. A reputable priest (Master of Initiation) teaches principles and regulations to Taoist disciples, explains the significance of abiding by the principles and regulations, and demonstrates the rituals and ceremonies according to the principles and regulations. After education and examination, the Taoist disciples receive their credentials, then practice self-cultivation according to Taoist principles and seek immortality.





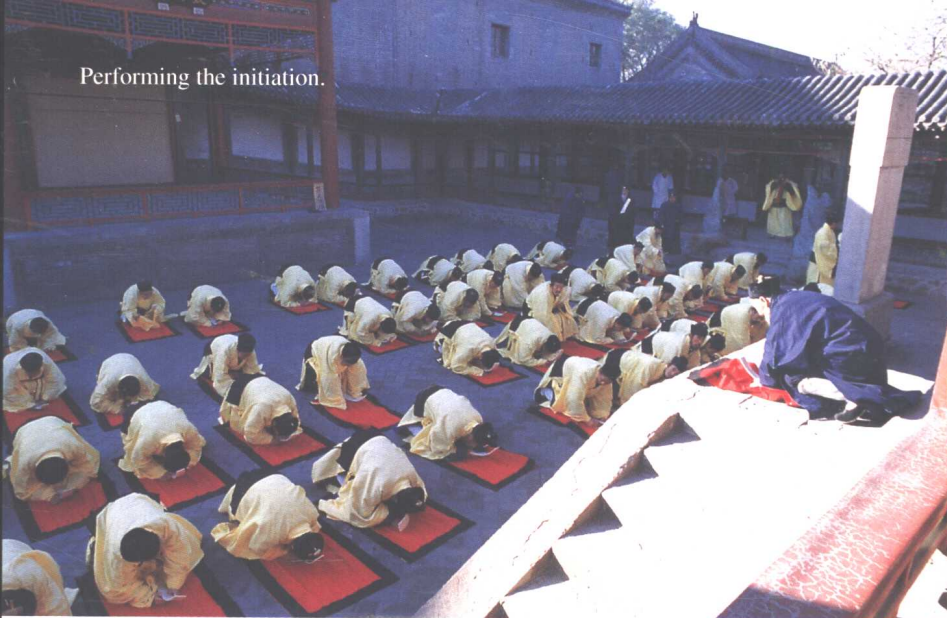
Taoist disciples paying respects to the Abbot and the Eight Masters.



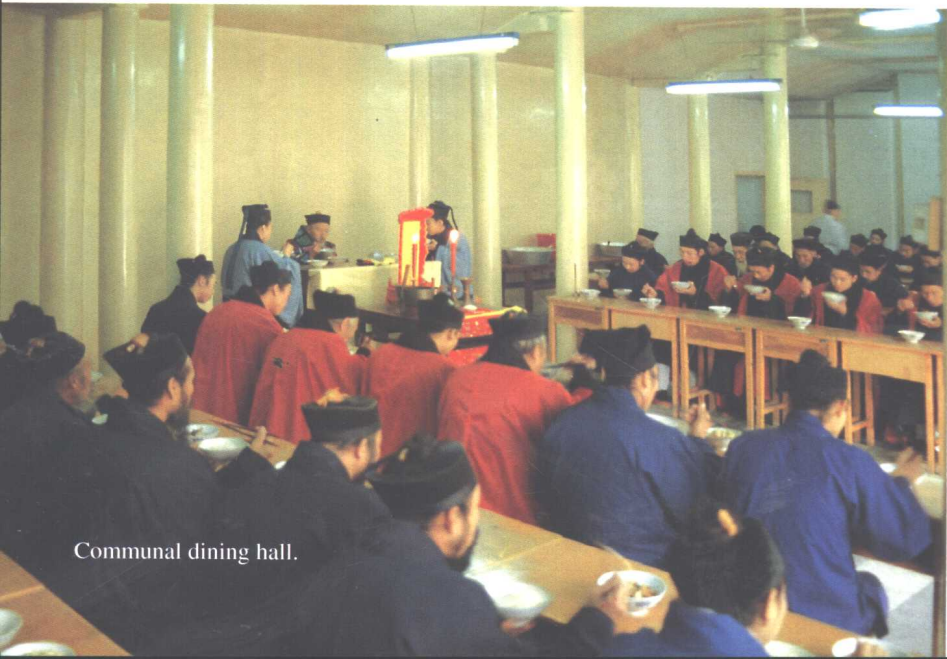
Initiation and credential conferment.



Performing the initiation.



Communal dining hall.



Performing the ceremony.









The eight masters officiating at the credential conferring ceremony.

Taoist disciples awaiting the Initiation Supervising Master to explain the sculpture in the Jade Emperor Hall.



The Conferring of Credentials.

The Conferring of Credentials is a solemn ceremony of the Taoist Zhengyi Sect, where senior masters (Credential-conferring Masters) confer credentials to Taoist disciples. Having received the credentials, Taoist disciples practice self-cultivation through the levels of the Zhengyi Sect, redeeming others as well as themselves.



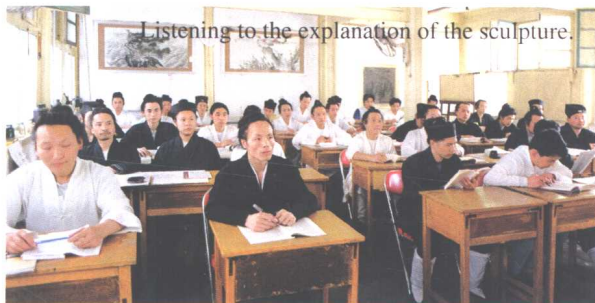
The Master of Initiation officiating at an initiation ceremony.



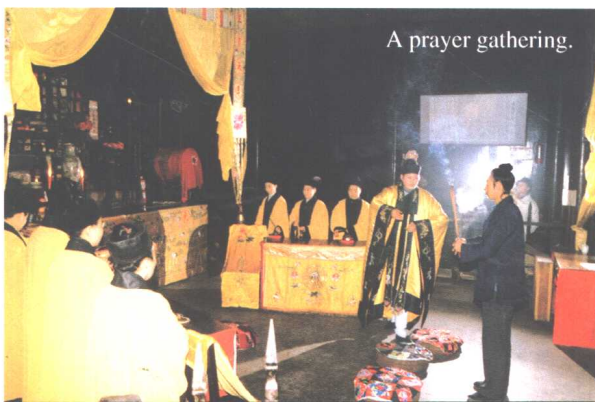
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Chanting prayers.

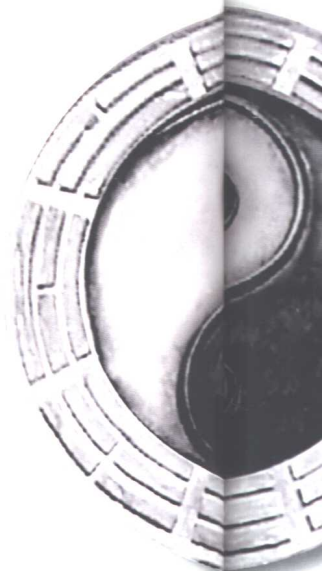


Listening to the explanation of the sculpture.



A prayer gathering.

## Life of Taoists







Meditating on the Tao.



Playing the zither.



Playing weiqi or go.



Practicing calligraphy.



The pagoda tomb of Zang Tui, a Taoist priest said to have ascended to heaven and become immortal on Mount Wudang.





### III. Taoist Musical Instruments and Ritual Articles

During various Taoist rituals, certain musical instruments and ritual articles are used. Seen most often are Taoist vestments such as the ritual robes and headdress; musical instruments such as drums, bells and chime stones; exorcism articles such as swords, seals and talismans; incense burner tables, scrolls and streamers, etc. The major ritual articles are swords, seals and talismans.



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The Celestial Master's sword in and out its sheath.

The sword is also known as the Sword of the Seven Stars, as it bears the carved image of the seven stars of the Northern Dipper. Said to have magical powers of exorcism, it is one of the three treasures of Celestial Master Zhang, one of the founders of religious Taoism.



A peach-wood sword.

### Seals and Tablets

These articles represent the authority of a deity or a celestial master. During a ritual, the Taoist priest uses them to beckon the wind or rain, summon deities and celestial generals, exorcise evil, subdue demons and monsters, and redeem the spirits of the dead.



A "mother and son" seal bearing the symbols of the Eight Immortals.

a. An aerial view of the top of the seal.

b. The seal can be disassembled into a larger ("mother") seal and a smaller ("son") one.







A seal with the words of  
Celestial Master.





e



f



a



b



c



d

A tablet bearing images of two deities on the front and the back respectively.

a. The image of Marshal Yin.

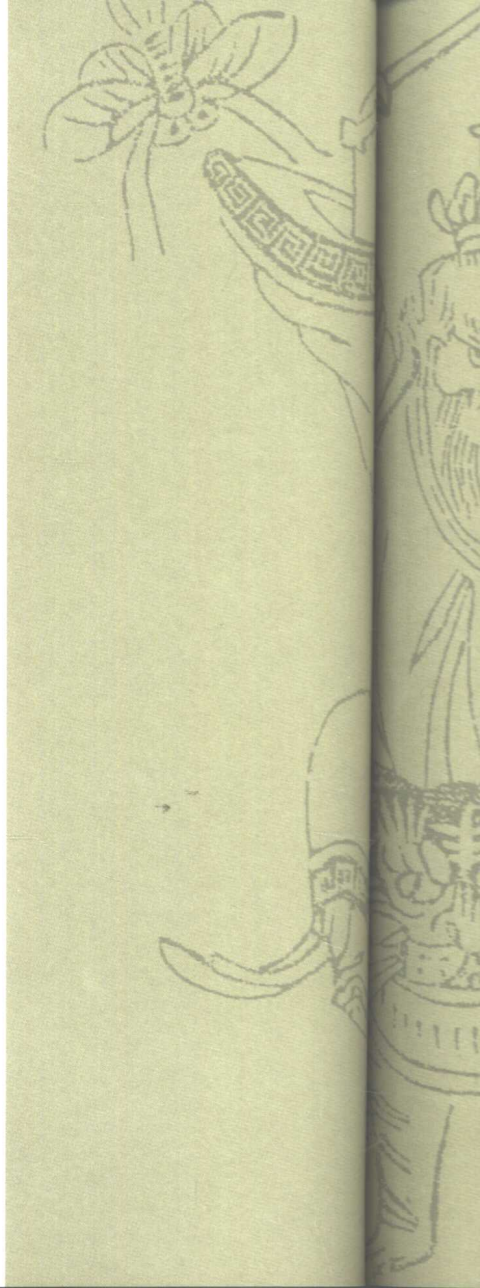
c. The image of Wang Lingguan.

e. The top of the tablet.

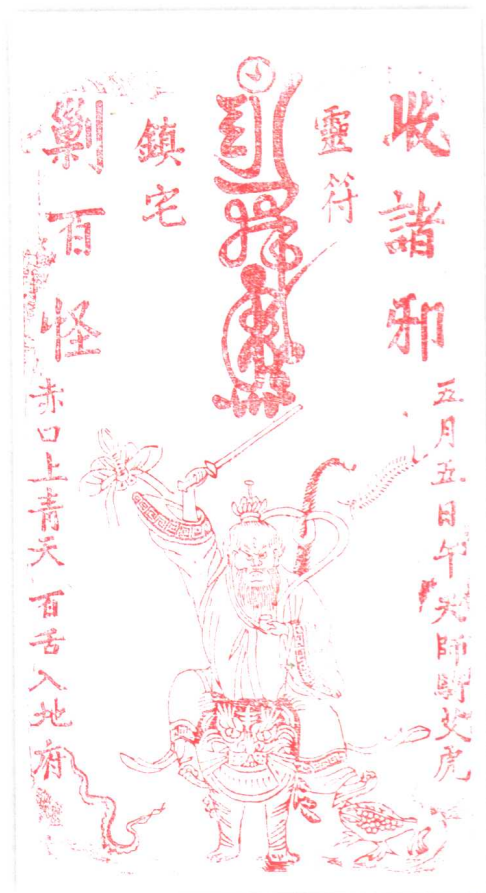
b. The left side of the tablet.

d. The right side of the tablet.

f. The bottom of the tablet.







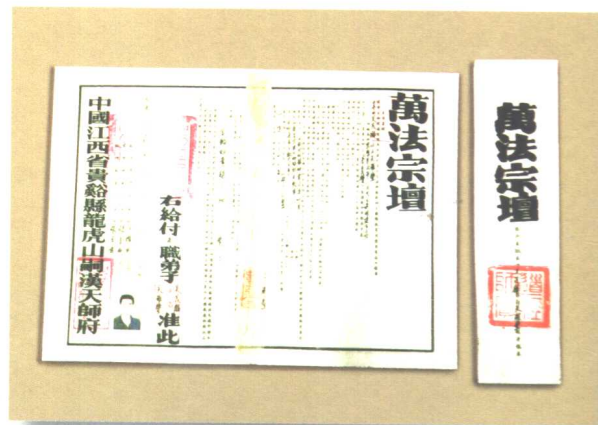
The handed down Celestial Master's house-guarding charm.

It is used to safeguard houses, exorcise evil, and subdue demons and monsters.

An initiation card of the Taoist Quanzhen Sect.



A ritual table.



A credential of the Taoist Zhengyi Sect.





Taoist ritual rods.

Taoist documents, sculptures, jade tablet and bowl.





A drum, a repentance bell, and  
a gong.



A feather fan.



A chime stone, a wooden clapper, and a hand bell.



A whisk.



Taoist Vestments. ►

Taoist priests usually wear blue or dark blue robes (or white ones in summer). During a ritual, they wear different ritual robes according to the roles they play.

A repentance robe.

This is the robe worn by a senior master during prayer or repentance gatherings. A purple robe is worn at prayer rituals, while a yellow robe is worn at soul-delivering rituals. The robe is embroidered with images such as dragons, tigers, cranes and immortals.







A Taoist ritual robe.  
Taoists wear this style of robe at  
prayer or repentance gatherings, or  
at rituals.





A senior master's robe.

This is a robe worn by a senior master during rituals. Senior masters of the highest rank wear yellow robes, while other senior masters wear dark blue or red. The robe, when spread, is square in shape, symbolizing the four directions of the universe.





此為乾隆皇帝御用之朝服，現藏於北京故宮博物院。此件朝服為乾隆皇帝御用之朝服，現藏於北京故宮博物院。此件朝服為乾隆皇帝御用之朝服，現藏於北京故宮博物院。



A netted headdress and a gold Taoist cap.  
Taoist priests wear netted headdresses at rituals. Senior masters wear gold Taoist caps.



Taoist ritual boots.  
Senior masters wear this type of boots at grand ceremonies.





A scroll and streamers bearing cloud and dragon patterns.




## IV. Taoist *Gongfu* and Alchemy

Accentuating life and abhorring death, Taoism believes that one can achieve immortality through self-cultivation. The Taoists both created and adopted many methods of self-cultivation, such as sitting motionless, concentrating of the mind, promoting the flow of *qi*, breathing, combining of controlled breathing and physical exercises, and practicing martial arts (*gongfu*). Most traditional Chinese methods of health preservation, including *qigong*, martial arts and traditional Chinese medicine, have links with Taoism. It is said that *taijiquan* (Chinese shadow boxing) was invented by Zhang Sanfeng, a Taoist priest of Mount Wudang. Ancient Chinese Taoists were also enthusiastic alchemists, who attempted to produce immortality pills by smelting minerals such as aluminum and mercury. The experiments in alchemy, though irrational from a modern viewpoint, greatly promoted advances in science and technology in ancient China, including the production of gunpowder and ancient chemistry.



Keeping peace and tranquility of mind (a Taoist  
*gongfu* of sitting still and breathing).





The magic *gongfu* of  
lifting oneself with two  
fingers (an internal  
exercise).

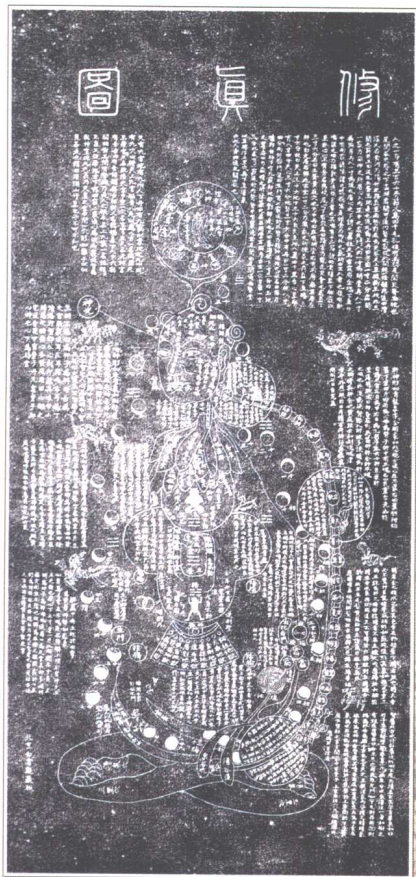




Sword-fighting on top of a mountain  
(swordsmanship).

Pushing hands with empty  
step (*taijiquan*).





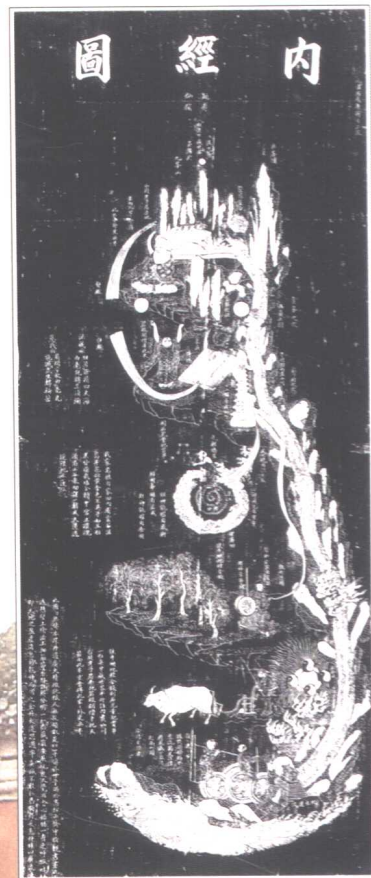
An illustration of the way of self-cultivation.

The alchemical burner of Ge Hong at the ancient Chongxu Taoist Temple on Mount Luofu. ▶





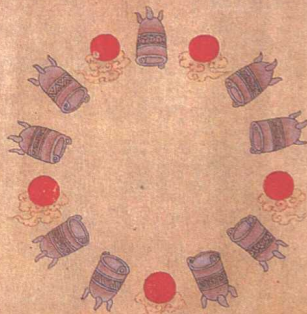
An illustration of the inner channels.



◀ An alchemical burner  
on Mount Wudang.

李得黃孝在掌中 急吞切莫厭勿為  
 滿身陰汞烟飛漢 一得陽鉛舍入囊  
 春戀星珠兒見母 和諧無異兆逢雄  
 精動火候無令失 十月胎圓壽不窮

九鼎



金丹秘術絕凡人 六百篇將九道名  
 帝禹範來森始師 軒皇鑄就道方成  
 選時須合丹家法 用後無令厭物腥  
 節使候時週復始 煉成龍物自來迎

進火



鍾天 二二二二二  
 洗枯 二二二二二  
 呂仲 二二二二二

抱元

朝朝金鼎飛炎烟 氣足河車運上天  
 甘露偏空滋萬葉 靈泉一派泥長川  
 猶如雀卵團團大 間似隋珠顆顆圓  
 龍子脫胎丹入口 此身已是陸行仙



金液

煉丹本是一年功 兩月都銀粟住工  
 先過上元時便止 鷄達七月半為終  
 早鐘水湧因差過 兩順風調為適中  
 刑德既加宜沐浴 傾危斷不到吾宗



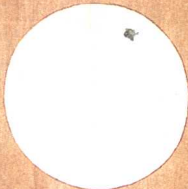
朝元

功足丹成子脫胎 且逃換面逐輪迴  
 色身雖已堅難壞 慧照當從定裏開  
 念念覺圓無一物 頭頭顯露絕纖埃  
 九年面壁成何事 隻發根塵任去來



形神俱妙道為徒 性命雙圓合太產  
 寶詔降時騰鶴馭 王書拜後駕龍輦  
 仙官烜赫誰論貴 濁世煎焚且免居  
 積德勤求終有遇 問君何事獨躊躇

還元



南非南弓東非東 一靈妙有素圓通  
 賢惡本自無分別 九聖何嘗有異同  
 認亦作朱成性習 呼娘為母熟機鋒  
 有為一切皆非實 悟取真源空不空



壇築三層天地人  
鏡懸上下柱精恆  
萬步登時三界蕭  
叮嚀刻漏無差誤

九宮八卦布令  
劍列方隅鎮鬼神  
星呈指處百魔宵  
片斷工夫萬載春

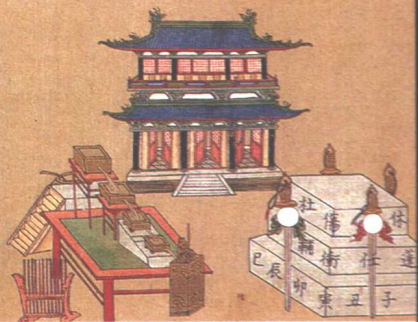
補位



補錫同聲不可無  
魁星坐鎮當先主  
審定鼎鉉龍虎躍  
中間首尾須明取

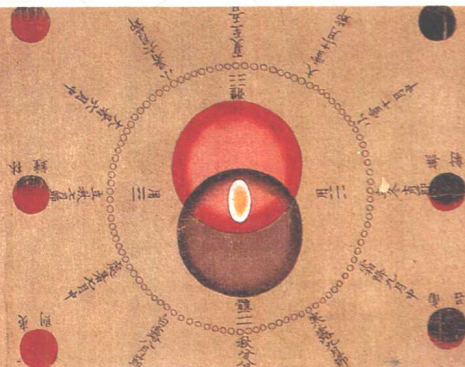
三人一志互相接  
籌藉鋪機貴火接  
精調氣候武文催  
全仗善徒仔細排

印證圖內法象九章  
服丹



呼應陰陽宜點點  
陽文二百二十六  
刻漏不差時節應  
交矣大業長紅蓮

退火



午時百四十四星  
馴致聖冰從始始  
一般作用唯增減  
減火退符天地靜

此是陰符退火程  
欲藏品物至坤盈  
二氣分張見舞榮  
此蒙二卦稟生成

抽添



一四進火一四陽  
陰陽和氣隨日或  
龍虎盤旋射降光  
陽氣集氣一時昌

An illustration of making elixirs.



## V. Sacred Mountains, Taoist Palaces and Temples

Taoists venerate sacred mountains, wherein they believe deities and immortals dwell, and which also provide tranquil environments ideal for their self-cultivation. Therefore, early Taoist priests lived on sacred mountains. Later, some Taoist priests accepted appointments at the imperial court, and lived in temples built for them, at the orders of the emperors, in cities. With the development and flourishing of Taoism, many large sites of Taoist activity were built in sacred mountains and cities, some of which are called "palaces" because of their palatial dimensions.





The Temple of Princess Aurora.



Mount Tai (in Shandong Province).

Mount Tai has been regarded as a sacred mountain from ancient times, reputed as the First Mount in the World. It is said that the Great Emperor of the Eastern Mountain, the God of Mount Tai, rules over people's life, death and fortunes; and that his daughter Princess Aurora protects women and children.





The South Gate to Heaven and the Ladder to Heaven.





The Hall of Heavenly Gifts in the Temple to the God of Mount Tai, on Mount Tai.



Murals in the Temple to the God of Mount Tai in Mount Tai.



The North Peak of Mount Hua.

Mount Hua (in Shaanxi Province). As a saying goes, "There is only one path up Mount Hua from ancient times." Mount Hua is known for its magnificence and steepness. The legendary Taoist Priest Chen Tuan of the 10th century lived a reclusive life here.





The gate of the Temple of Mount Hua.



The Magic Axe in Mount Hua, said to have been used by Chenxiang to cut the mountain to rescue his mother.



The Forbidden City on Mount Wudang.

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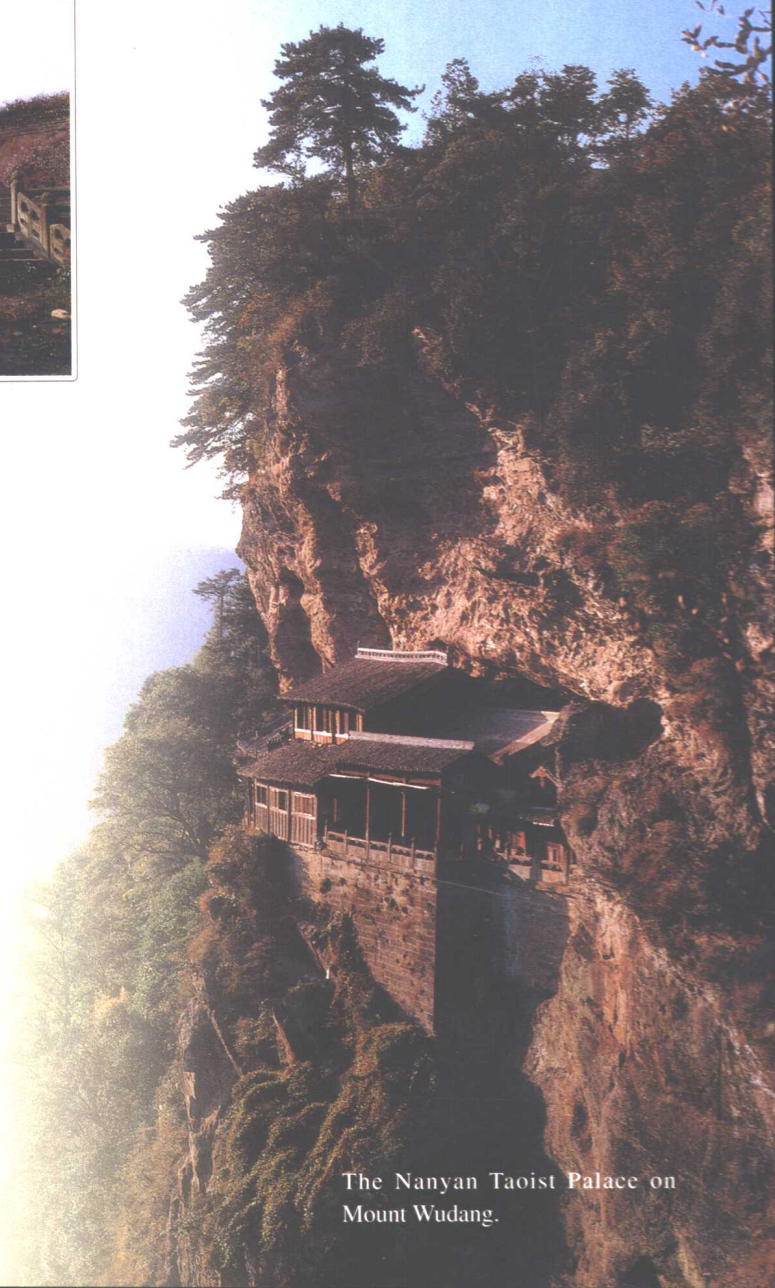




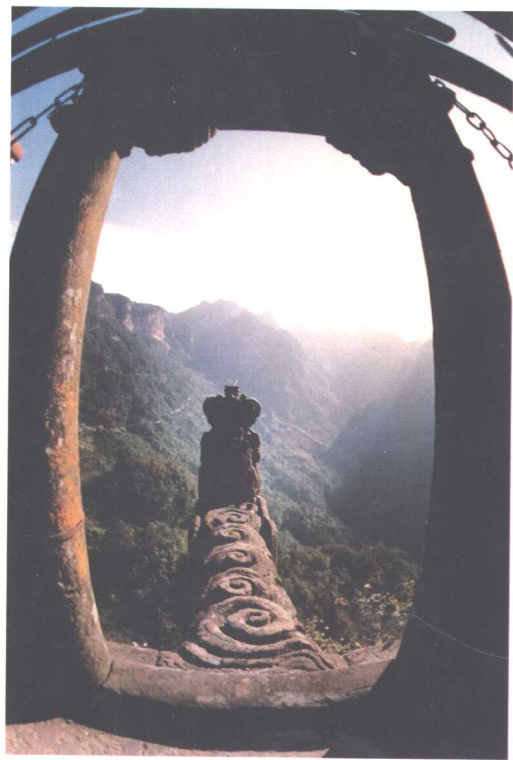
The ruins of the arch gate of the Yuxu Taoist Palace on Mount Wudang.

Mount Wudang (in Hubei Province).

Mount Wudang is said to be the place where the Great Emperor Zhenwu achieved Tao and ascended Heaven. It is also the place where the famous Taoist priest Zhang Sanfeng practiced self-cultivation. Wudang swordsmanship and *taijiquan* have long been famous around the country.



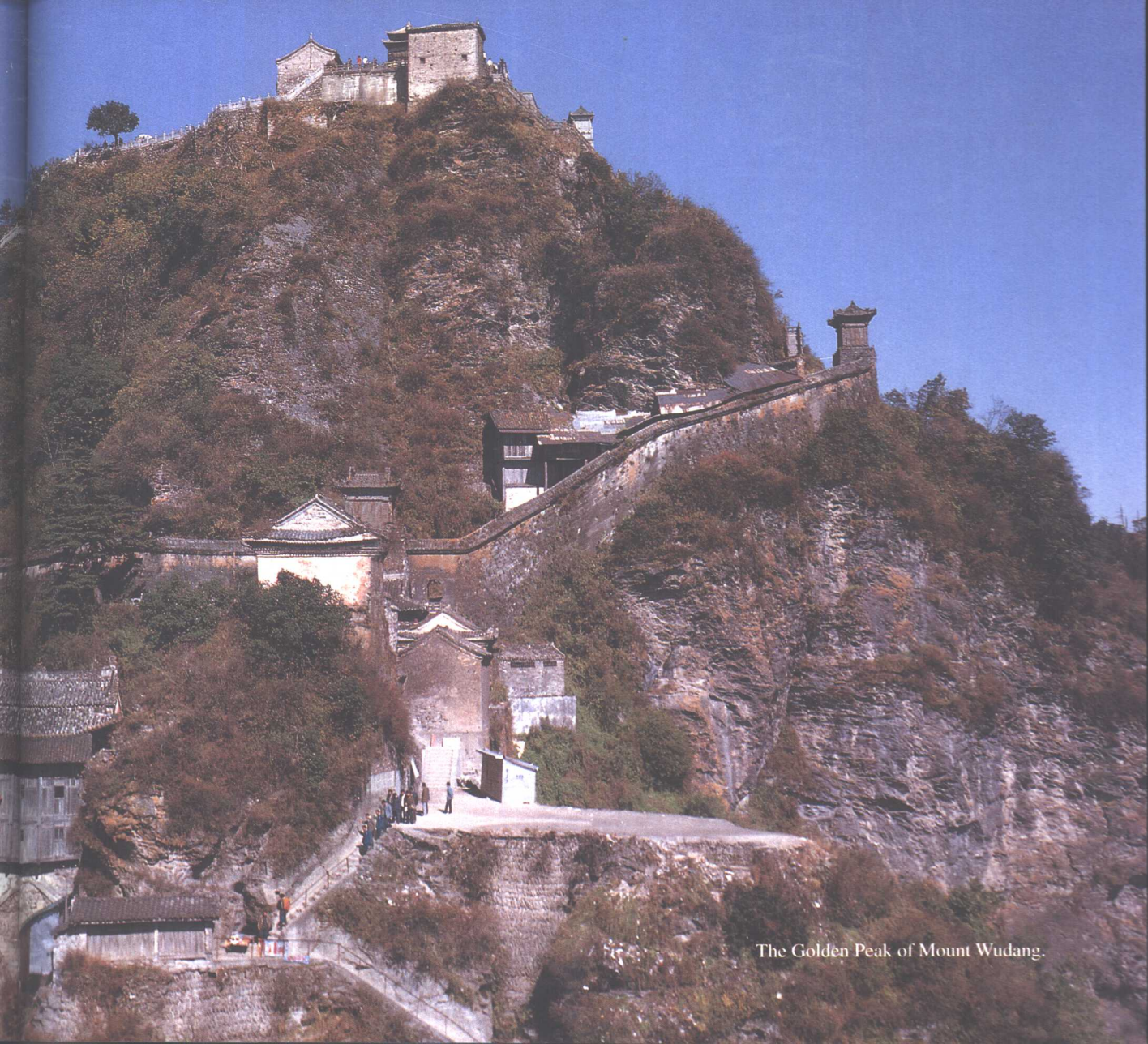
The Nanyan Taoist Palace on Mount Wudang.



The Dragon-head Incense Burner  
on Mount Wudang.

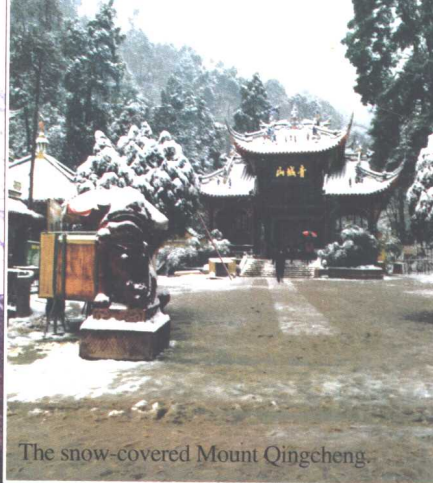




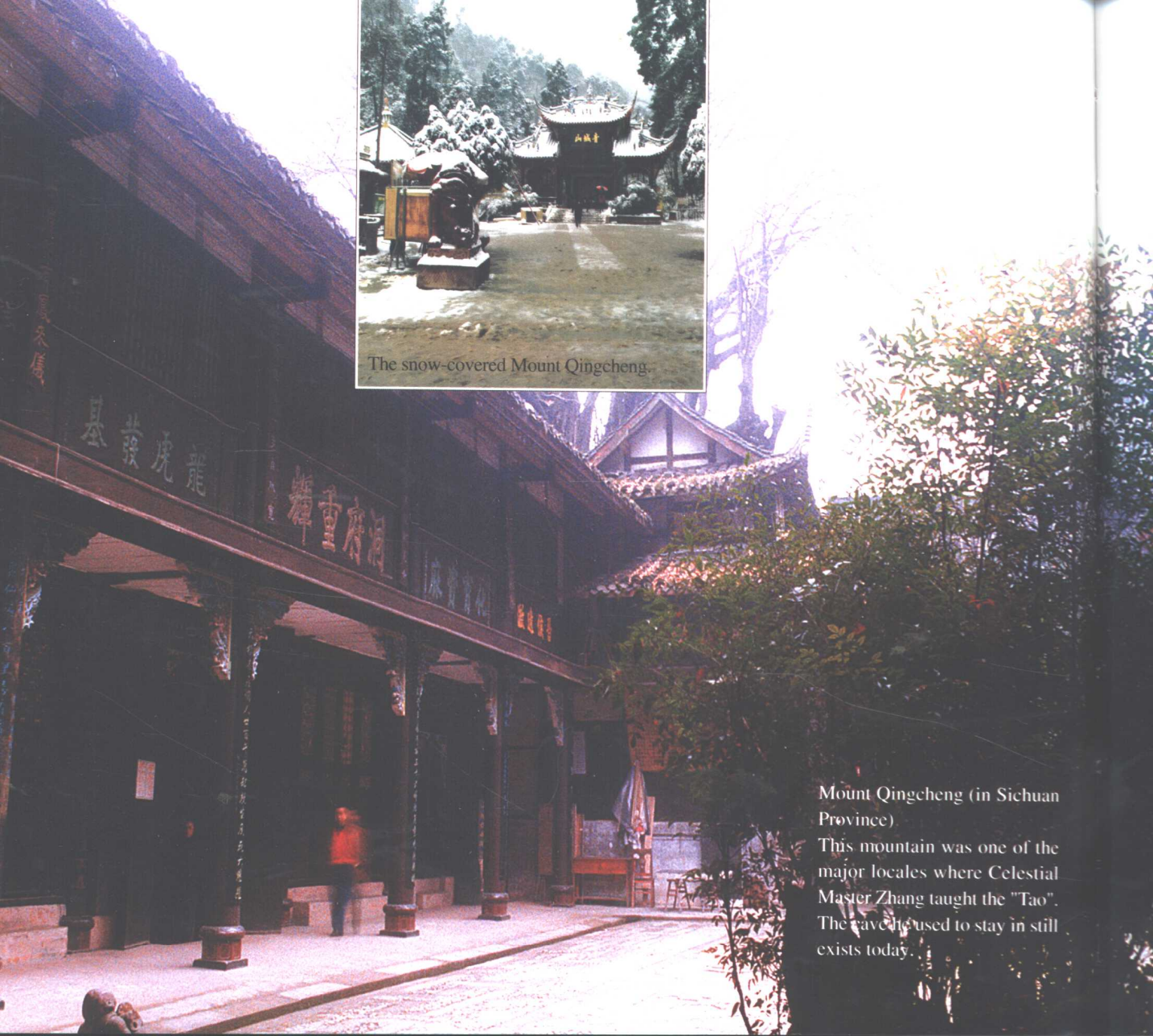


The Golden Peak of Mount Wudang.





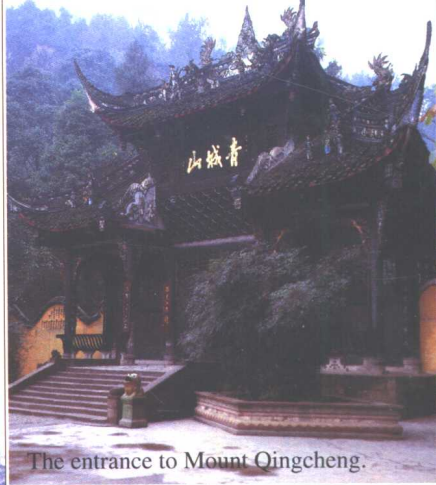
The snow-covered Mount Qingcheng.



Mount Qingcheng (in Sichuan Province)

This mountain was one of the major locales where Celestial Master Zhang taught the "Tao". The cave he used to stay in still exists today.





The entrance to Mount Qingcheng.



The Cave of the Celestial Master on Mount Qingcheng.





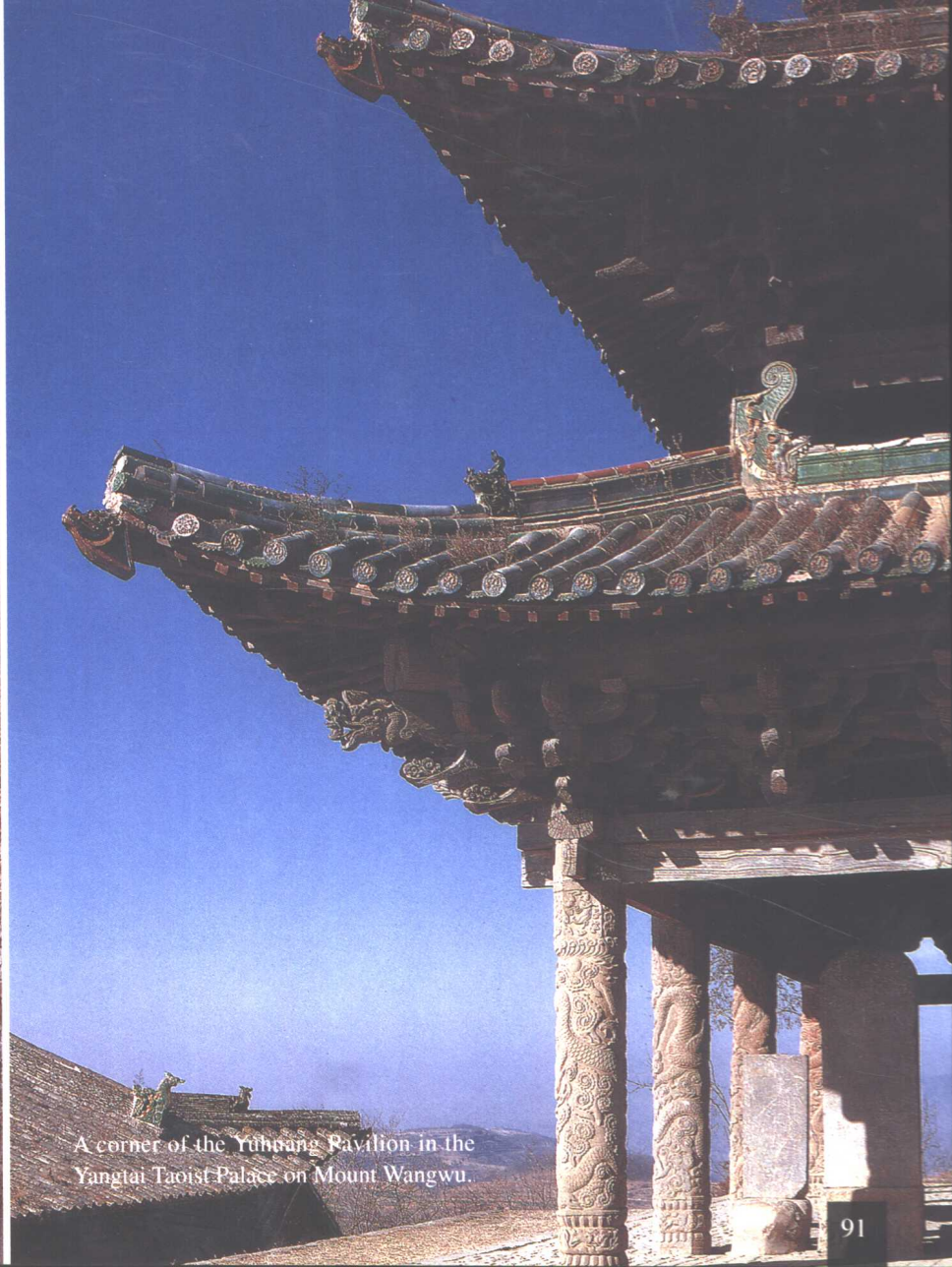
The interior of Daluosanjing  
Hall in the Yangtai Taoist  
Palace on Mount Wangwu.



A photograph showing the interior of a traditional Chinese building. Two prominent wooden pillars are visible, both intricately carved with a continuous dragon or cloud pattern. The lighting is warm, with a bright light source visible through an opening in the background, creating a strong contrast and highlighting the texture of the wood.

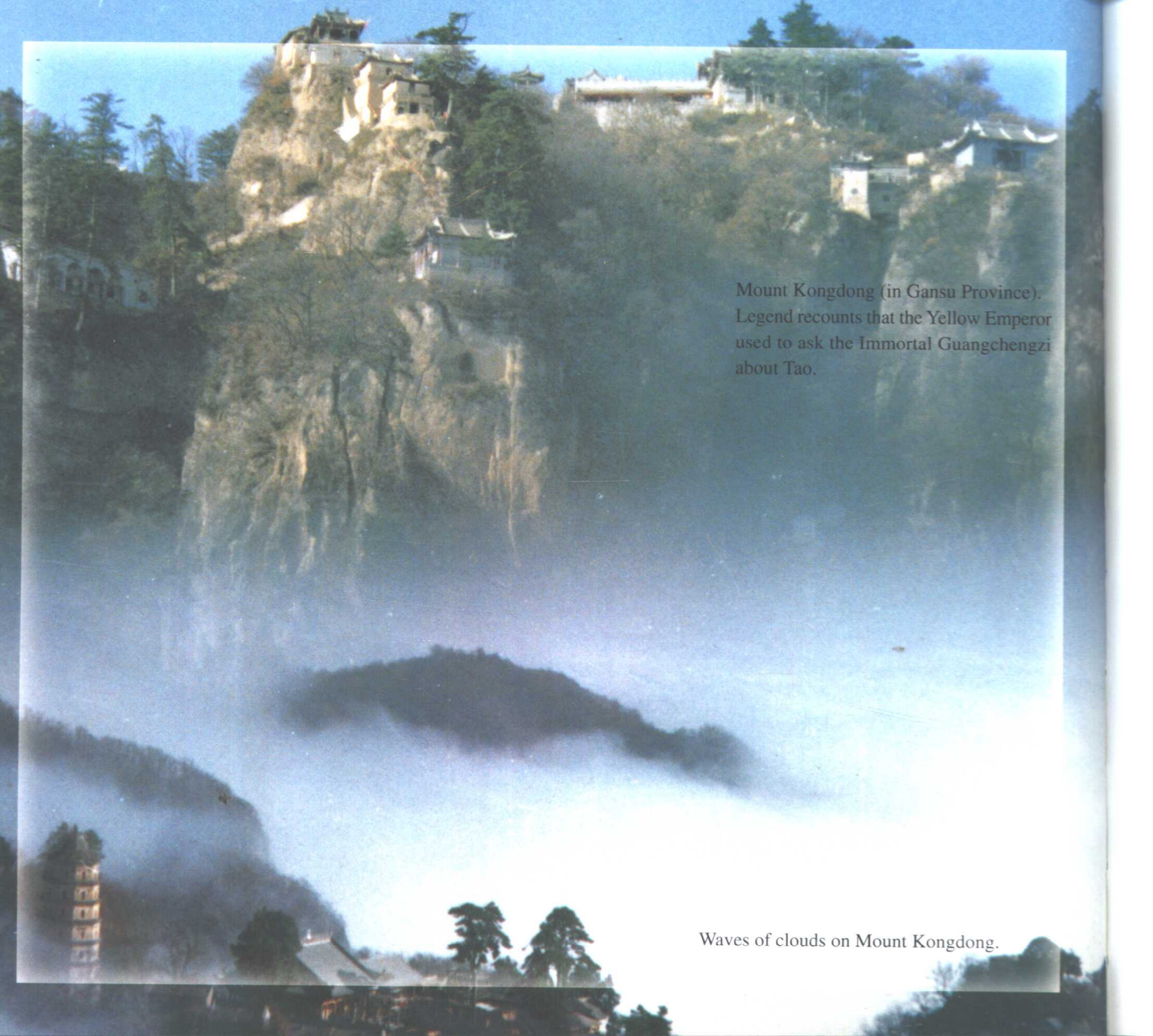
Mount Wangwu (in Henan Province).

Known as the "First Dwelling of Immortals" among the Taoists, the mountain used to be the place where many famous Taoist priests practiced self-cultivation.



A corner of the Yuhuang Pavilion in the Yangtai Taoist Palace on Mount Wangwu.

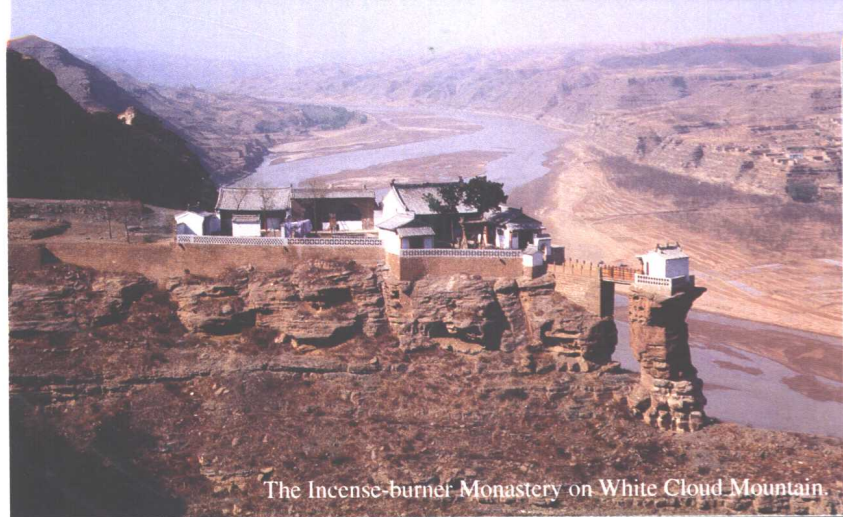




Mount Kongdong (in Gansu Province).  
Legend recounts that the Yellow Emperor  
used to ask the Immortal Guangchengzi  
about Tao.

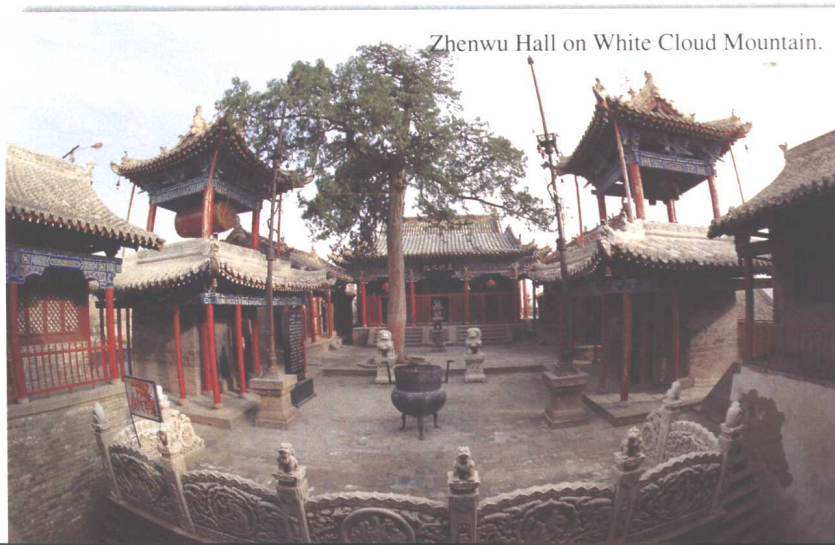
Waves of clouds on Mount Kongdong.



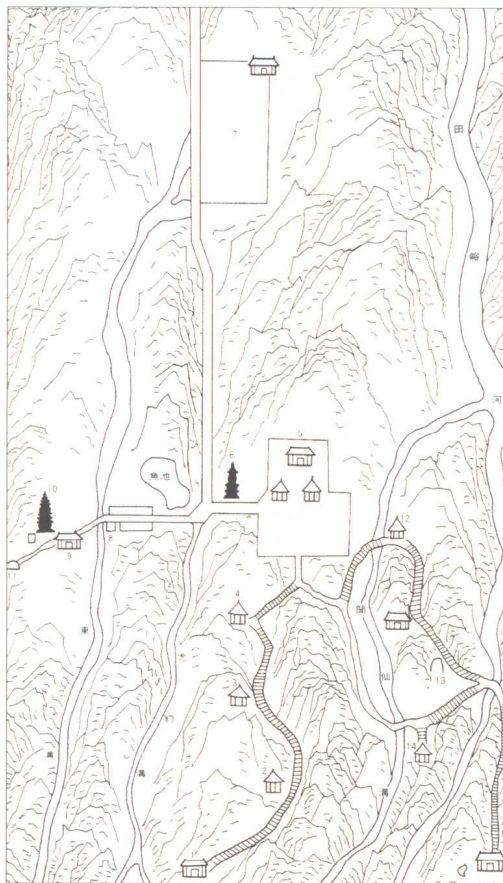


The Incense-burner Monastery on White Cloud Mountain.

White Cloud Mountain (in Shaanxi Province).  
This mountain boasts the largest Taoist monastery  
complex in northwest China.



Zhenwu Hall on White Cloud Mountain.



Layout of the Louguan Terrace on Mount Zhongnan

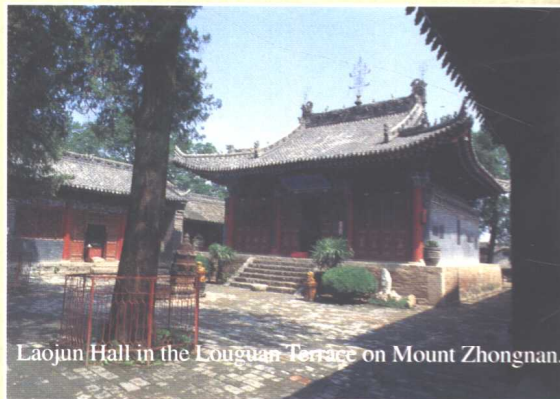
- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1 Furnace for making pills of immortality | 8 Conglin House                           |
| 2 Immortals-gathering Pavilion            | 9 Girl Spring                             |
| 3 Huaisu Pavilion                         | 10 Ancient Pagoda                         |
| 4 Pavilion for Welcoming the Sun          | 11 Tomb of Lao Zi                         |
| 5 Scripture-chanting Terrace              | 12 Pavilion of Listening to the Immortals |
| 6 Pagoda of Mantle and Alms Bowl          | 13 Cave of Master Lü                      |
| 7 Zongshen Taoist Palace                  | 14 Pavilion of Theophany                  |



The Chongyang Taoist Palace in Shaanxi Province got its name because Wang Chongyang, the founder of the Taoist Quanzhen Sect, used to practice self-cultivation here.

Mount Zhongnan (in Shaanxi Province).

It is said that, during the Zhou Dynasty, Yin Xi, head of Hangu Pass, used to observe the stars and the air from a thatched house that he built on the mountain. One day he saw a mass of purple air come from the east, and knew that a sage was crossing the pass. He then waited until he met Lao Zi. There still exists the Sculpture-Exposition Terrace, where Lao Zi once taught Yin Xi the *Dao De Jing*.



Laojun Hall in the Louguan Terrace on Mount Zhongnan.



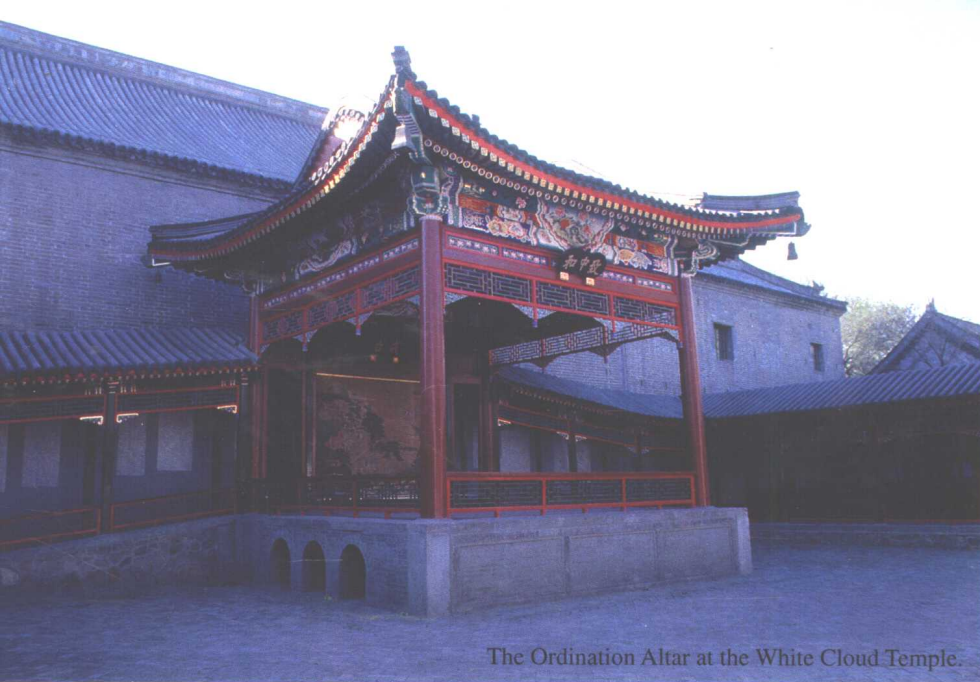


雙龍衛乾坤

八卦涵宇宙



The Eight-Diagram Gate of Lingzhi Garden at the Celestial Master's Residence on Dragon and Tiger Mountain, Jiangxi Province. The descendents of Celestial Master Zhang Daoling inherited his title and lived in the Celestial Master's Residence.



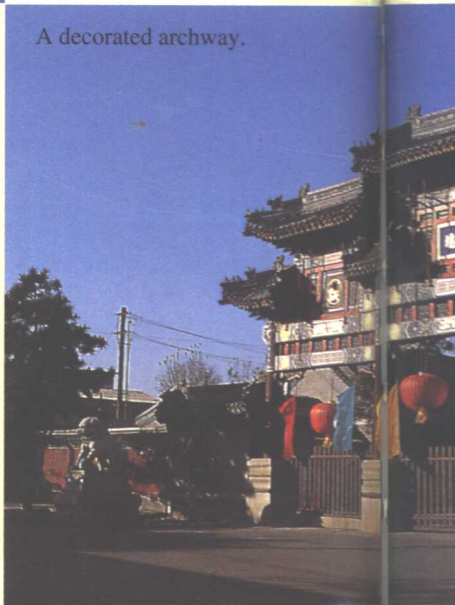
The Ordination Altar at the White Cloud Temple.

The White Cloud Temple (in Beijing).

The White Cloud Temple in Beijing was first built in the Tang Dynasty. Beginning with Qiu Chuji of the Yuan Dynasty, all the heads of the Quanzhen Sect have lived here, and as a result the temple became much better known. Today it houses the office of the Taoist Association of China.



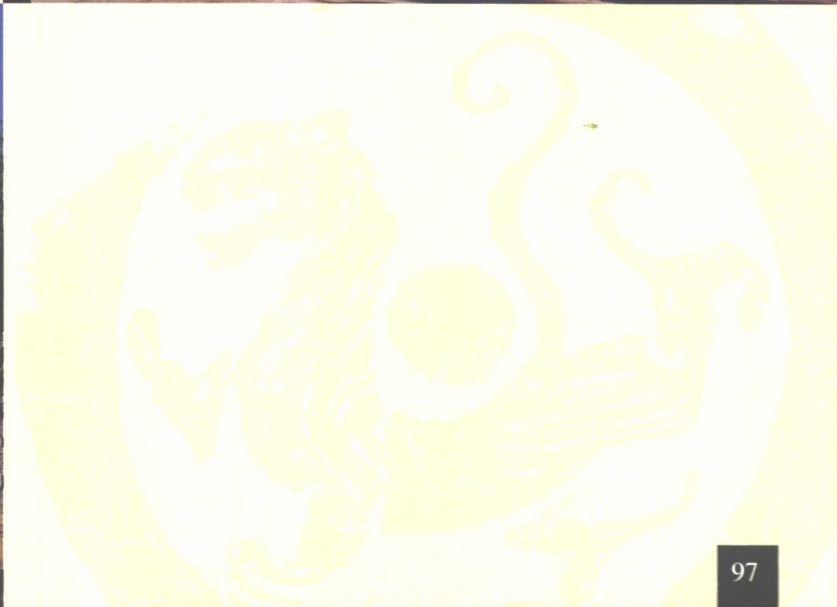
A decorated archway.







Wofeng Bridge and Lingguan Hall.



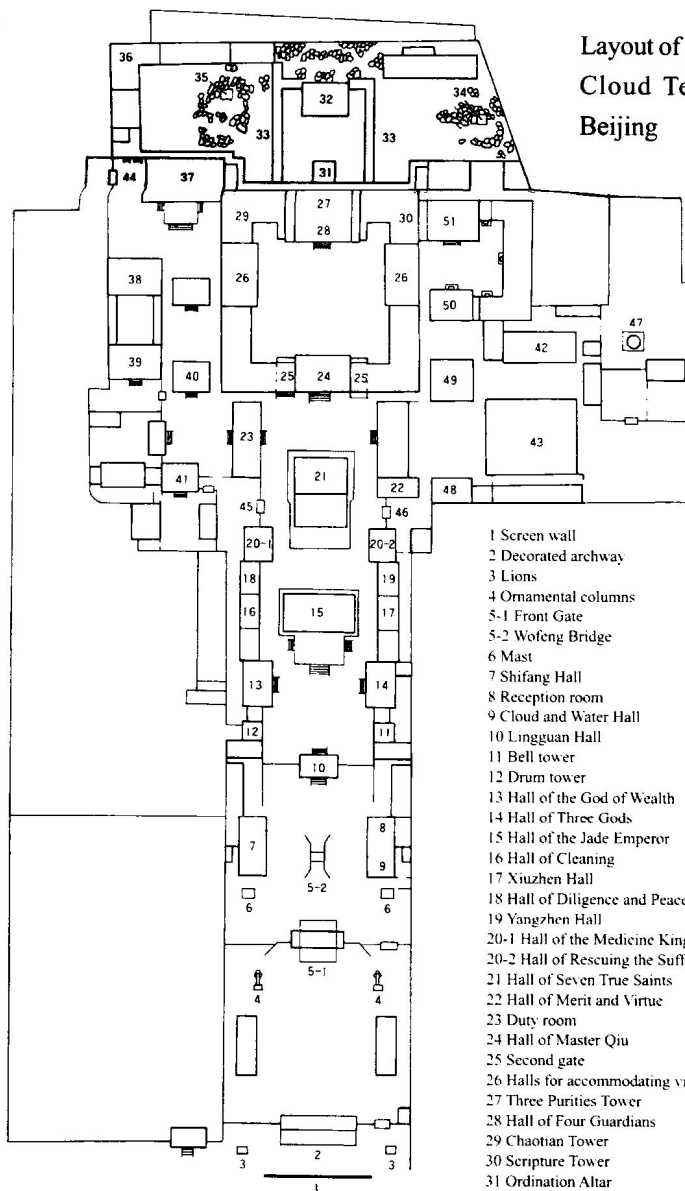
North

A painting of deities in the White Cloud Temple.

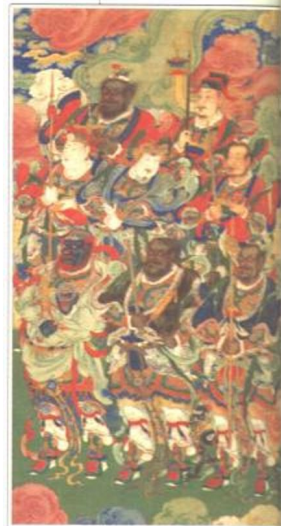


- 33 Long corridor
- 34 Friendly Crane Pavilion
- 35 Hall of Fragrance
- 36 Retreat Tower
- 37 Yuanchen Hall
- 38 Hall of Master L
- 39 Hall of Eight Immortals
- 40 Yuanjun Hall
- 41 Memorial Hall
- 42 Kitchen
- 43 Fasting room
- 44 Rear gate
- 45 Tufu Taoist Palace
- 46 Doufu Taoist Palace
- 47 Pagoda of Master Luo
- 48 Hall of Three Stars
- 48 Hall of Journey of Salvation
- 50 Zhenwu Hall
- 51 Leizu Hall

Layout of the White Cloud Temple in Beijing



- 1 Screen wall
- 2 Decorated archway
- 3 Lions
- 4 Ornamental columns
- 5-1 Front Gate
- 5-2 Wofeng Bridge
- 6 Mast
- 7 Shifang Hall
- 8 Reception room
- 9 Cloud and Water Hall
- 10 Lingguan Hall
- 11 Bell tower
- 12 Drum tower
- 13 Hall of the God of Wealth
- 14 Hall of Three Gods
- 15 Hall of the Jade Emperor
- 16 Hall of Cleaning
- 17 Xiuzhen Hall
- 18 Hall of Diligence and Peace
- 19 Yangzhen Hall
- 20-1 Hall of the Medicine King
- 20-2 Hall of Rescuing the Suffered
- 21 Hall of Seven True Saints
- 22 Hall of Merit and Virtue
- 23 Duty room
- 24 Hall of Master Qiu
- 25 Second gate
- 26 Halls for accommodating visiting guests
- 27 Three Purities Tower
- 28 Hall of Four Guardians
- 29 Chaotian Tower
- 30 Scripture Tower
- 31 Ordination Altar
- 32 Could-assembling House








The Black Goat Taoist Palace in Chengdu.

As legend recounts, Lao Zi parted with Yin Xi at Hangu Pass, saying he would be reborn at the market selling black goats three years later. Yin Xi arrived in Chengdu at the said time, and followed a boy leading a black goat to his home, where, as expected, he witnessed that Lao Zi was reborn. People of later generations built the Black Goat Taoist Palace to commemorate this story.



The Eight-trigram Pavilion at the Black Goat Taoist Palace.



The Baopu Temple in Hangzhou. It is said that Ge Hong (also known as Baopuzi), a well-known Taoist priest of the Jin Dynasty, used to make immortality pills here.





The Eight Immortals Taoist Palace in Xi'an.  
As legend has it, this used to be a wine shop in Chang'an (today's Xi'an) during the Tang Dynasty, where the Immortal Lü Dongbin met Zhong Liqian and achieved Tao.









A disc-shaped caisson ceiling in the Hall of the Three Purities at the Yongle Taoist Palace in Ruicheng, Shanxi Province. ▼



◀ "Worshipping Heaven," a mural in the Yongle Taoist Palace in Shanxi Province.

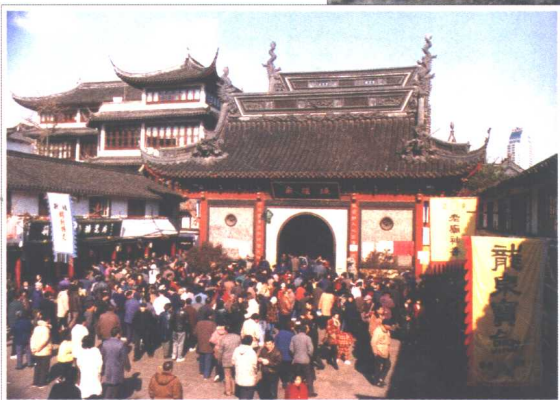
The Taoist murals in Yongle Palace are the largest in scale and best preserved of their kind in China today.



The Mazu Temple in Macao.

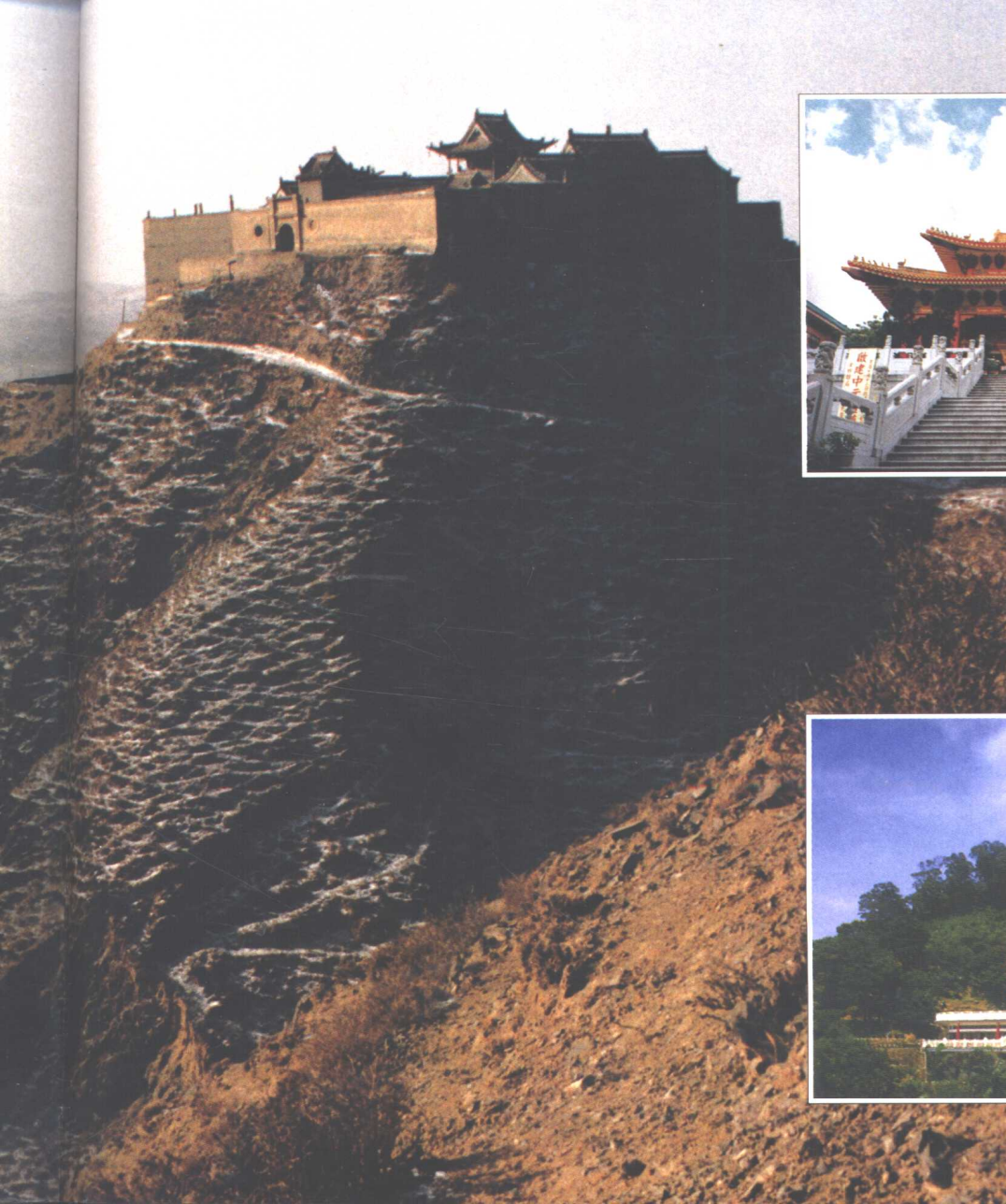


The Temple of the God of the Town in Shanghai.



The Laojuntai Temple of the Quanzhen Sect in the Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region.





The Fung Ying Seen Koon in  
Hong Kong.



The Zhinan Taoist Palace in  
Taipei.