

Chinese Tourism: TAOISM

Written by Yin Zhihua



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Written by Yin Zhihua

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A Tang Dynasty picture of Lao Zi by Wu Daozi.



The Diagram of the Supreme Ultimate (*Taiji Tu*), a symbol of Taoism.



A Song Dynasty statue of the Supreme Master Lao Zi in Quanzhou, Fujian Province.



The Three Pristine Ones,
the most venerable gods
of the Taoist religion.

▶
The Jade Emperor is the
venerable god who rules
the whole universe like the
emperor of the human
world and is second only
to the Three Pristine Ones.



Mount Taishan.

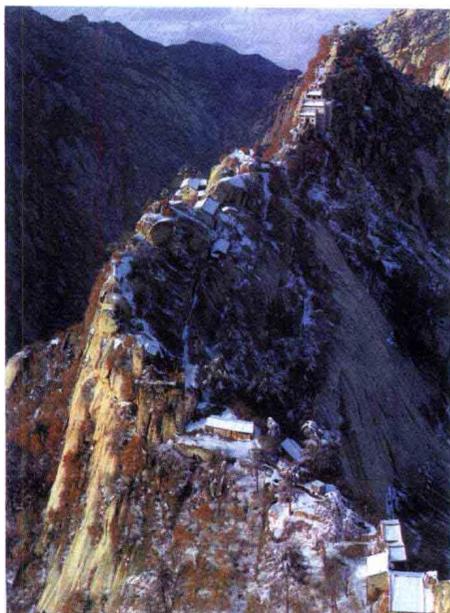


“The Perfect Man Changchun Goes for a Walk.”



The Azure Cloud Temple (Bixia Ci) on Mount Taishan.

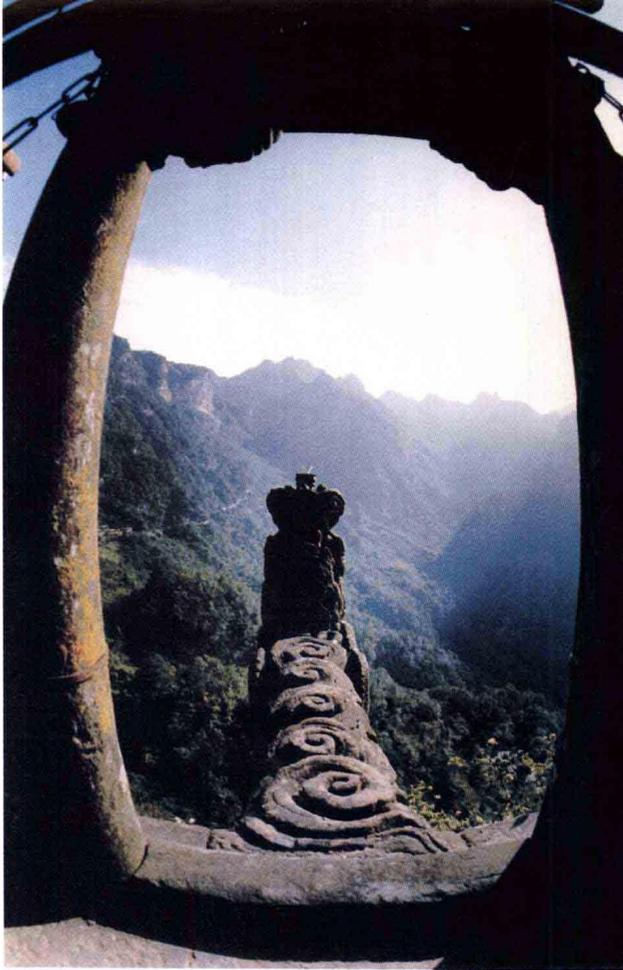
Mount Huashan.



The Southern Rock Palace (Nanyan Gong) on Mount Wudang.



Dragon Head Incense
on Mount Wudang.



Practicing Taijiquan.

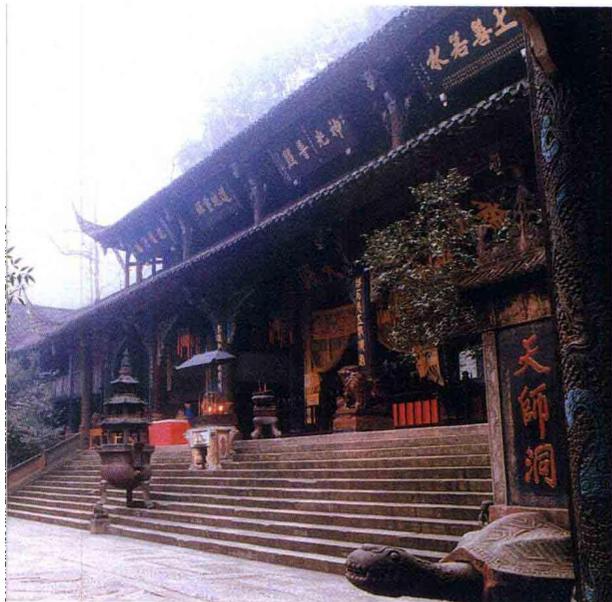




Playing Chinese chess.



The ordination altar of Beijing's White Cloud Temple (Baiyun Guan).



Celestial Master Cave (Tianshi Dong) on Mount Qingcheng (Qingcheng Shan, Green City Mountain).



Taoist meditation.

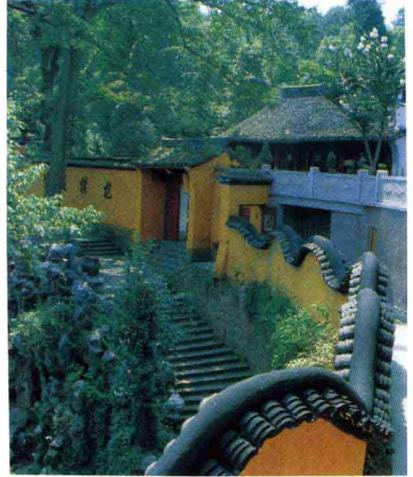
The Great Ritual Offering of All-Embracing Heaven (Luotian Dajiao).





The Eight Trigrams Pavilion of Chengdu's Green Goat Palace (Qingyang Gong).

Bao Pu (Embracing Simplicity) Taoist Temple in Hangzhou.



“Worshipping the Primeval Lords,” a mural in Eternal Happiness Palace (Yongle Gong) in Ruicheng, Shanxi Province.



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PREFACE

Taoism (also known as Daoism, or the Way of Nature) is an indigenous ancient Chinese religion and is deeply ingrained in Chinese civilization. Being naturalistic, beneficial to people, full of compassion and love, Taoism has survived and remained influential up until today. In a time of cultural diversity and economic globalization, cultural exchanges promote mutual understanding and communication between different groups of people. Communication between people of different faiths increases tolerance and friendship among human beings. This is in line with the “benevolence and harmony” that Taoism advocates. We hope that everyone will display the generosity advocated by Taoism to open their arms to diverse cultures and absorb the best of other civilizations in order to broaden their own intellectual horizons. People with different cultural backgrounds, while maintaining their own culture, which is extremely important, may assimilate a wide range of other cultures to push forward healthy human progress and the sustained development of the world. The world’s attention has been attracted by profound Taoist philosophy, its concept of total spontaneity (or following the way of naturalness), its tenet of harmony of man with nature, and its enterprising spirit of life. The *Tao Te Ching* (*Dao De Jing* 道德经), or *Classic of the Way and Its Virtue*, or *The Book of Lao Zi*, has been translated into many languages and circulated among people of different races. Taoist culture glitters with its unique light of wisdom in the international convergence of cultures.

Taoism puts particular emphasis on the importance of human beings and life. The Taoist canon involves many philosophical notions, such as the code

of conduct of following the way of naturalness, the philosophy of life of benevolence and harmony, the broadmindedness of maintaining vacuity, the theory of remaining quiet and tranquil, the concept of embracing simplicity and observing plainness, the creed in life of cherishing thriftiness and restraining extravagance, the idea of cultivating both one's character and life, and the wisdom of harmony of man with nature (or oneness between heaven and man). The essential value of Taoism, therefore, lies in its wisdom to help people survive and appropriately handle the various problems in their lives in order to live better or even perfect lives.

What Taoists cherish and pursue is a happy divine kingdom in heaven as well as a beautiful natural haven on earth. While dreaming about the kingdom of heaven, they are devoted to building such an earthly haven. But what is an ideal haven in the minds of Taoists? In a broad sense, they want to turn the whole world into a natural, quiet and beautiful paradise on earth. In a narrow sense, they strive to build premises where Taoism is taught and practiced in such havens. Those places are what Taoists call *dongtian fudi* (洞天福地) or “grotto heavens and blissful realms.”

Building and managing the “grotto heavens and blissful realms” are concrete acts to put Taoists' ideas into practice. These acts indicate their love of life, their quest for a better living environment and their profound understanding of life and nature. To them, the “grotto heavens and blissful realms” are paradise in the human world, places of splendor, places where heaven and earth meet and where the immortal world communicates with the mortal world, places where immortals gather, places for Taoists to cultivate themselves, places where Taoism manifests itself and things are let to run their own course. Li Bo, a Tang Dynasty poet, wrote in one of his poems:

*I dwell among green hills and someone asks me why,
My mind carefree, I smile and give him no reply.
Peace blossoms fallen on the running stream pass by,
This place has a unique beauty characteristic not of the world beneath the sky.*

This is a description of the “grotto heavens and blissful realms” in verse form.

The “grotto heavens and blissful realms” can be found on many famous mountains in China, such as the five sacred mountains (Mount Hengshan in Hunan Province, Mount Hengshan in Shanxi Province, Mount Huashan in Shaanxi Province, Mount Songshan in Henan Province and Mount Taishan in Shandong Province), as well as Mount Wudang, Mount Qingcheng, Mount Lushan, Mount Laoshan and Mount Wuyi. As the saying goes, “It is not the height of those mountain that counts. It is the immortals living there that make them famous.” Many Taoist tales and legendary figures have added much charm and mystery to those mountains. Those Taoist “grotto heavens and blissful realms” that have been built and improved for thousands of years have now become sites of tourist interest as well. Most of them are under state protection as renowned scenic spots. Of those mountains, mounts Taishan and Wudang have been included on the UNESCO World Cultural Heritage list.

On those renowned mountains, Taoists have built temples and monasteries for the purpose of Tao worship and self-cultivation and to provide accommodation for Taoist priests. This is also an important manifestation of the Taoist ideal of an “earthly paradise.” When designing a temple or a monastery building, architects gave much thought to the harmony between the structure and the terrain to reflect their concepts of “going along with nature” and “recovering simplicity and going back to nature.” During construction, they ingeniously made the best use of the surroundings. Structures were usually built harmoniously along mountain slopes. When there was a waterway, they built a bridge. When there was an elevation, they built a pavilion. When there was a cave, they built a temple. The composition of a complex could be flexible, and the building materials were all locally produced. Therefore, a number of ingeniously designed and splendid halls and monasteries came into being, and the environment was well preserved while the Taoist temples and monasteries

looked magnificent and sacred in tranquil surroundings.

On the whole, those Taoist temples and monasteries on the well-known mountains show a good integration between nature and human culture, between religion and philosophy. They have not only provided ideal retreats for Taoist hermits but also kept away the world of vanity. If you have the opportunity to visit those mountains, you may feel enlightened spiritually, as well as enjoying the landscape.

At the request of the Foreign Languages Press, Mr. Yin Zhihua of the Chinese Taoist Association's research department has written this book, which gives a detailed and vivid description of famous Taoist sites as well as a brief introduction to Taoism. It also discusses what Taoist culture could contribute to modern society. It is rich in content and is highly readable. The author invited me to write some comments on this work, so I have written the above lines, which may also serve as the preface.

Zhang Jiyu

Member of the Standing Committee of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, and vice-chairman of the Chinese Taoist Association

January 24, 2000

I. A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO TAOISM

1. Taoism, Past and Present

Taoism, an indigenous traditional Chinese religion, dates back to some 1,800 years ago when Master Zhang Daoling of the Eastern Han Dynasty (AD 25-220) formally organized a religious Taoist group. In the long years of its evolution, Taoism had a profound influence politically, economically, culturally and ideologically in ancient Chinese society and it is still functioning today. Its large collection of scriptures and documentation accumulated over the years, its architecture, sculptures and stone carvings are important parts of China's cultural legacy. Taoism, Confucianism and Buddhism have been the three main pillars of traditional Chinese culture. The great writer Lu Xun said, "The roots of China are entirely to be found in Taoism... Reading history from this point of view, many problems can be solved easily." So what kind of religion is Taoism? Let us first have a look at its history.

(1) The Founding of Taoism During the Eastern Han Dynasty

During Emperor Shundi's reign (126-144) in the Eastern Han Dynasty, Zhang Ling (reverentially known among Taoists as Zhang Daoling), a native of Fengyi in the Kingdom of Pei (present-day Fengxian County, Jiangsu Province), went and settled on Singing Crane Mountain (Mount Heming, in present-day Dayi County, Sichuan Province). He claimed that he had been imparted the "Mighty Commonwealth of the Orthodox Oneness" (*Zhengyi Meng Wei* 正一盟威) by Supreme Master Lao Zi (Lao Tzu) and he began producing and circulating books advocating Tao. His teachings centered on the summoning of deities, magic incantations and the subduing of ghosts, as well as breathing exercises, *daoyin* (导引 — traditional Chinese body-building exercises that combine breathing control, body and limb movements,

concentration of the mind, local massage, etc), sex techniques, and alchemy to make immortality pills. People all came and held him up as a master and soon he had more than a thousand disciples. Zhang established a hierarchical system and appointed a few libationers (*jijiu* 祭酒) to supervise the disciples and popularize Tao among ordinary people. Zhang later established 24 religious districts (*zhi* 治) in ancient Sichuan and formed a very large Taoist sect. The Taoist followers called him Celestial Master, and his branch of teaching was called Celestial Master Taoism. It was said that anyone who wanted to join this sect had to pay five pecks of rice to show his piety, so this Taoist tradition was also known as Five Pecks of Rice Taoism.

Zhang Ling passed Tao on to his son Zhang Heng, and Zhang Heng passed it on to his son Zhang Lu. Zhang Lu styled himself the Sovereign of Masters. Newcomers were called “spirit subordinates.” Those who had practiced Tao for quite a long time and were very devoted were given the title “libationer.” Any libationer able to gather a large following was given the title “District Head Great Libationer.” Zhang Lu asked libationers to supervise the masses of followers. A hierarchically organized system on the order of a theocracy was practiced in Hanzhong and lasted for almost 30 years. According to historical records, Zhang Lu adopted a relaxed policy that was beneficial to the people, and the people led easy and comfortable lives. Zhang Lu requested that all libationers build houses of charity by the roadside to offer cooked rice and meat to travelers. Anyone who violated the law would be forgiven three times but would be punished for a fourth offense. The slaughtering of animals was prohibited during certain spring and autumn months. Zhang Lu told people that, if someone made a minor mistake, he should build a road as long as one hundred steps so that his sin would be purged. He taught people to be trustworthy and to resort to no falsehoods. Anyone who committed an offense should voluntarily confess and write three letters of repentance – one to be placed on a mountaintop for the Heavenly Official; one to be buried underground for the Earthly Official; and one to be thrown into the water for the Water Official. This was known as *sanguan shoushu* (三官手书), “handwritten letters to the three officials.”

In the 20th year of the reign of Jian’an (AD 215), Cao Cao led his powerful forces and attacked Hanzhong, so Zhang Lu had to give up the

town. As Cao Cao occupied Hanzhong, Zhang Lu and many of his followers fled north. As a result, Celestial Master Taoism was brought to the Central Plains in the Yellow River Valley. After the country was unified and came under the rule of the Jin Dynasty (265-420), this belief system spread further to coastal areas in the southeast and then to the whole country.

Shortly after the establishment of Celestial Master Taoism by Zhang Ling, Supreme Peace Taoism (Taiping Dao 太平道) rose in Julu of Hebei Province during the reign of Lingdi (168-189) of the Han Dynasty. By the first year of the reign of Zhongping (AD 184), Zhang Jiao, the head of the sect, started an uprising by making use of religious Supreme Peace Taoism. This is known historically as the famous Yellow Turban Uprising. It was suppressed and defeated in the end. Zhang Jiao became ill and died and his younger brother was killed in battle. Supreme Truth Taoism then began to fade away.

(2) Taoism During the Wei, Jin, and Southern and Northern Dynasties

During the Wei Kingdom period (220-265), Celestial Master Taoism was suppressed and it declined. However, as Zhang Lu and his disciples moved north, Celestial Master Taoism began to be revived in the regions where Supreme Peace Taoism had once been practiced. It then spread throughout the country. During the Western Jin period (265-316) and the Eastern Jin (317-420), some powerful families and scholars started to believe in Taoism. A number of renowned Taoists appeared, such as those in the Wang family in Langya (the famous calligrapher Wang Xizhi was a devout Taoist), the Xiao family in Lanling, both in southern China; the Cui family in Qinghe, and the Wei family in Jingzhao, both in northern China. Taoism, which had started from the classes at the grassroots, now penetrated the upper class and eventually became an integral part of the spiritual life of the ruling class.

As more and more scholars turned to Taoism, the Taoists' educational level was thus enhanced. As a result, a vast body of Taoist scriptures was created to challenge Buddhism from India. As the Taoist scriptures spread, three new Taoist sects came into being – namely, the High Purity (Shangqing 上清), the Numinous Treasure (Lingbao 灵宝) and the Three August Ones (Sanhuang 三皇) sects.

The High Purity sect esteemed the High Purity scriptures, with its princi-

pal scriptural source being the *Perfect Book of the Great Grotto of the High Purity* (Shangqing Dadong Zhenjing 上清大洞真经). These scriptures were said to have been bestowed by deities, so authenticity of the editions and scripts was emphasized. The sect's primary religious activity was copying the scriptures. This sect believed that the only way to attain the truth was to have both the form and spirit of the scriptures existing eternally in one's mind.

The Numinous Treasure sect revered the Numinous Treasure scriptures, with its principal scriptural source being the *Book of the Five Talismans of the Numinous Treasure* (Lingbao Wufu Jing 灵宝五符经). Its followers believed that the texts of those scriptures had originally been formed by the movement of air and clouds before the formation of heaven and earth. Therefore, those scripts mostly remained unknown to human beings. This tradition emphasized that a person must not only cultivate himself to become immortal but also help others to do good deeds and attain Tao and eventually ascend to heaven as well.

The Three August Ones sect worshiped the Three August Ones scriptures, with the *Writs of the Three August Ones* (Sanhuang Wen 三皇文) being its principal scriptural source. This sect laid emphasis on the summoning of ghosts and it passed around books of prophecy in a secretive manner. Of all the Taoist sects, this sect was the most mystical and therefore its spread remained limited.



Kou Qianzhi.

During the Southern and Northern Dynasties (420-589), the two senior Taoist priests Kou Qianzhi and Lu Xiuqing each reformed Celestial Master Taoism and enabled it to develop further.

During the Northern Wei Dynasty (386-557), Kou Qianzhi came down from Mount Songshan, after having lived there as a recluse for seven years. Assisted by Cui Hao, a high-ranking official of the imperial court,

Kou was accepted and held in high esteem by Emperor Taiwu. Using his position as the emperor's teacher, he abolished some existing rules of Celestial Master Taoism, enacted ordinances, established rituals, and replaced the unaccompanied chanting of scriptures with the chanting of scriptures to musical accompaniment. Celestial Master Taoism as reformed in this way by Kou Qianzhi is known historically as New Celestial Master Taoism.

During the Southern Dynasties' Song period (420-479), Taoist priest Lu Xiuqing put forward a plan to reform Celestial Master Taoism. The plan included organizational shake-up, the consolidation of the three annual assemblies system, the sorting-out of registers, the strengthening of the administration of "household records" (the registration of those who had joined the sect), the banning of Taoist clergy becoming government officials, improvements to the system of promotion within the sect, etc. Celestial Master Taoism as reformed in this way by Lu Xiuqing is known historically as Southern Celestial Master Taoism. So the New Celestial Master Taoism created by Kou Qianzhi is known historically as Northern Celestial Master Taoism.

Later on, Tao Hongjing, a disciple of Lu Xiuqing, founded the Mount Maoshan school (part of the High Purity sect), which had a far-reaching influence on the development of Taoism in later generations. Disappointed with his official career, Tao Hongjing went up Mount Maoshan at the age of 36 and lived as a hermit. However, he was very concerned with politics and often made proposals to the rulers, thus earning himself the name Prime Minister on the Mountain. Due to his hard work propagating the High Purity doctrines, he enjoyed a high reputation and had a large following even among high-ranking officials. Tao Hongjing's Mount Maoshan school then became a de facto center of the High Purity sect.



Tao Hongjing.

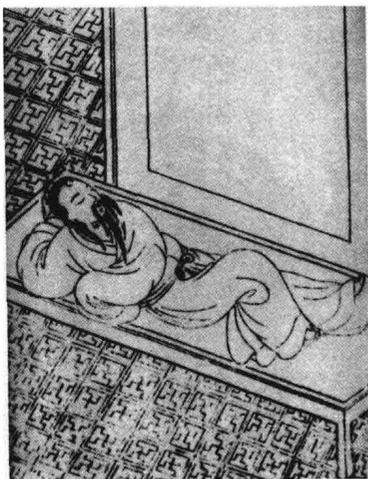
(3) Taoism in the Sui, Tang and Five Dynasties Period

In AD 589, the Sui Dynasty (581-618) unified China. Different schools of Taoism then began a process of integration. The Mount Maoshan school, which had evolved from the High Purity sect, became a dominant school in the south of the country and began to spread to the north. As both Buddhism and Taoism were practiced during the Sui Dynasty, Taoism developed rapidly, which paved the way for this religion to reach its zenith during the Tang Dynasty (618-907).

Li Yuan, founder of the Tang Dynasty, made much use of public beliefs in Taoism in the struggle to overthrow the Sui Dynasty. When he assumed the throne, he announced that Lao Zi, the founder of Taoism, was his ancestor (Lao Zi's family name being Li and his given name Er). Except Wu Zetian, all the Tang emperors venerated Taoism. In this period, the influence of Taoism began to spread abroad, and several neighboring countries began to practice the Taoist religion too. During the Tang period, Taoist schools integrated further. The Mount Maoshan school, which was already the mainstream of Taoist belief, was good at absorbing the advantages of other schools. By the time of the reign of Emperor Xuanzong, Sima Chengzhen had become the head of this school. The Mount Maoshan school prospered in the regions around mounts Songshan and Wangwu

in the north and around mounts Tiantai (in Zhejiang Province) and Hengshan (in Hunan Province) in the south.

Another important Taoist school in the Tang Dynasty was Louguan Taoism or the Lookout Tower tradition, which was based on Louguan Terrace or the Lookout Tower Platform on Mount Zhongnan in Shaanxi Province. It was said that, during the Zhou Dynasty (c. 1,100 BC-221 BC), Yin Xi, the border official at Hangu Pass, built an observatory from where he could watch the constellations, hence the name Louguan (lookout tower or



Sima Chengzhen.

observatory). It was said that, one day, Lao Zi was heading west from Hangu Pass. On that day, Yin Xi noticed that a purple cloud was coming his way. He realized that a sage would be passing. So he waited at the entrance to the pass. Sure enough, the great sage Lao Zi arrived. On learning that Lao Zi wanted to live like a hermit, Yin Xi asked the sage to write something for later generations. So Lao Zi wrote the *Tao Te Ching* of 5,000 Chinese characters. Later, Yin Xi followed Lao Zi into the Western Regions. So Yin Xi was venerated as the founder of Louguan Taoism. However, by the end of the Eastern Jin Dynasty (423-452), the followers of this school were limited in number and had little impact on society. But the school flourished during the Sui and Tang dynasties. It grew quickly in the early Tang with the backing of the imperial court. But, after the An-Shi rebellion (led by An Lushan and Shi Siming) during Emperor Xuanzong's Tianbao reign period (742-755), Louguan Taoism declined and it was incorporated into Complete Perfection Taoism (Quanzhen Dao 全真道) during the Yuan Dynasty (1279-1368).

The most influential development of Taoism during the Five Dynasties period (907-960) on later Taoism was the rise of the so-called inner alchemy created by Zhongli Quan and Lü Dongbin. What is inner alchemy? Put simply, it compares the human body to an oven. Essential matter or *jing* (精) can be transformed into vital breath by refining it in the "oven." Vital breath or *qi* (气) can be transformed into a form of spirit called the sacred embryo (*shengtai* 圣胎) by refining it. By refining that spirit, one can return to emptiness and finally revert to the infinite, leaving one's body and becoming immortal. This spirit was also called the golden elixir. Complete Perfection Taoists and all later alchemists working to produce the golden elixir esteemed Zhongli Quan and Lü Dongbin as the patriarchs of this school. There are many legends about those two men. But they are rarely mentioned in historical documents, so we know little about their real lives. The practice of the art of inner alchemy became the most popular and most important activity of Taoism and was developed by people such as Shi Jianwu, Peng Xiao, Chen Tuan and especially Zhang Boduan, who wrote *On Realizing Perfection* (Wuzhen Pian 悟真篇) during the Northern Song Dynasty (960-1127).

(4) Taoism During the Song, Jin and Yuan Dynasties

More schools of Taoism came into being during the period of the Song, Jin and Yuan dynasties (960-1368). Taoism entered a new phase of development.

During the Northern Song Dynasty (960-1127), the Mount Maoshan school was still in a dominant position, and its lineage was very clear. The main new schools that appeared in this period were the Heavenly Heart (Tianxin) and Divine Heaven (Shenxiao) sects.

During the Southern Song Dynasty (1127-1279), Taoism was dominated by the sects collectively known as the Talisman of the Three Mountains (mounts Longhu, Maoshan and Gezao). Furthermore, new sects such as Shenxiao, Donghua and Qingwei were also active during this period.

The emperors of the Southern Song Dynasty held the Celestial Master Taoism of Mount Longhu (Dragon and Tiger Mountain) in great esteem. In addition to investing large sums in the construction of the Temple of High Purity on Mount Longhu, they showed great respect for the Celestial Master. As a special favor, Emperor Lizong (who reigned from 1224 to 1264) appointed Celestial Master Zhang Lin leader of all the Talismans of the Three Mountains sects. Celestial Master Zhang of Mount Longhu then became a very prominent figure among Taoists.

The Mount Maoshan school produced 15 generations of patriarchs. But, with the exception of Patriarch Jiang Zongying, none of them is known to have written any books. This shows that, in terms of the development of religious thought, this tradition had been declining since its golden age during the Sui and Tang dynasties. During the Southern Song, the Mount Maoshan school lost its leading position, which was taken over by Celestial Master Taoism based on Mount Longhu. The Gezao sect grew out of the Numinous Treasure sect. Priests of this sect were active among the people and none was ever received by the imperial court. Therefore, this sect's influence and position were inferior to those of the Mount Longhu and Mount Maoshan sects at that time.

Apart from a variety of old and new Talisman sects, there were also the Pure Brightness sect, and the Southern Line Golden Elixir sect during the Southern Song Dynasty.

The Pure Brightness sect had its origins in the worship of Xu Xun. It was centered on Mount Xishan (西山, West Mountain) in Nanchang, Jiangxi Province. The story of Xu Xun subduing a dragon began to circulate during the Tang Dynasty and the man became a legendary figure. During the Northern Song, the rulers did their utmost to promote him as a model of filial piety and of loyalty to the throne. During the early Southern Song, contradictions between different ethnic groups grew sharper, and fighting between them brought calamity to the

people. The Taoist priest He Zhengong of the Solemn Jade Longevity Temple (Yulong Wanshou Gong 玉隆万寿宫) on Mount Xishan announced that Xu Xun would descend onto the mountain and would use the secret methods of the Numinous Treasure and Pure Brightness sects to help 500 devotees attain Tao and to bring peace and happiness to the people. But Pure Brightness Taoism did not last long and soon fell into oblivion. Later on, the Taoist priest Liu Yu tried to revive this sect of Taoism during the Yuan Dynasty.

The Northern Song and Southern Song dynasties witnessed the great prosperity of the practice of the art of inner alchemy. The Southern Line Golden Elixir sect of the Southern Song period was its principal representative. This sect regarded Zhang Boduan of the Northern Song as its founder and his work *On Realizing Perfection* was its theoretical basis. During this period, this Taoist tradition was passed from Zhang Boduan to Shi Tai, to Xue Daoguang, to Chen Nan and then to Bai Yuchan. It was handed down through a single line of descent up to Bai Yuchan. Bai began to hand down the tradition to many of his disciples, and so a Taoist sect was formed. He advocated that Taoist followers should live in secular society and live at home with their families.

The Supreme Oneness (Taiyi), Great Tao (Dadao) and Complete Perfection (Quanzhen) doctrines ultimately became the main forms of Taoism during the Jin Dynasty (1115-1234). The Supreme Oneness doctrine lasted for about 200 years and eventually, by the end of the Yuan Dynasty, it had been incorporated into the Orthodox Oneness (Zhengyi) tradition. The Great Tao doctrine declined toward the end of the Yuan and was also incorporated into the Orthodox Oneness tradition.

The founder of the Complete Perfection doctrine was Wang Zhe, who styled himself Master Chongyang. He was a native of Xianyang in Shaanxi Province. He claimed that he had met an immor-



Wang Chongyang.

tal who taught him the truth of Taoism in the fourth year of the reign of Emperor Zhenglong (1159). He then left home and went to Mount Zhongnan to live as a recluse in a cave, which he called the “tomb of the living dead.” To prevent people from disturbing him, he pretended to be a lunatic. In 1167, he burnt down his own thatched hut and went to Shandong Peninsula, where he started the Complete Perfection sect. He had seven principal disciples – namely, Ma Yu, Tan Chudian, Liu Chuxuan, Qiu Chuji, Wang Chuyi, Hao Datong and Sun Bu’er – who became the sect’s backbone in its development. They came to be known as the Seven Perfect Ones. In 1170, Wang Zhe died, and Ma Yu took over as leader of the sect. The other six preached in Shandong, Hebei, Shaanxi and Henan provinces, further promoting the sect’s influence among the people.

In the Yuan Dynasty, the Complete Perfection and Orthodox Oneness traditions became the two major Taoist schools.

After Qiu Chuji became the fifth head of Complete Perfection Taoism, this tradition had a powerful influence among the people. The three powers of Southern Song, Jin and Mongolia, which had been hostile toward one another, tried hard to win over this tradition. During



Qiu Chuji.

the period from 1213 to 1221, they each sent envoys to Qiu and invited him to visit their land. At that time, the Jin was on the verge of collapse, the Southern Song was very weak, and only Mongolia was rising. So Qiu made an important decision to go to meet Genghis Khan, who was busy conquering the Western Regions. Though Qiu was already 73 by then, he led 18 disciples and set off from Shandong in 1219. After more than two years of hard travel through sandstorms and heavy snow, he reached the barracks of the Mongolian forces at the foot of the Great Snow Mountains (the Hindu

Kush in present-day Afghanistan) in 1222. Genghis Khan was most pleased and received Qiu three times and had long talks with him. He asked Qiu about how to administer a country and how to keep fit. Qiu gave detailed replies. Genghis Khan held him in high esteem and gave him the title Immortal Qiu. As the Mongolian cavalry wantonly killed anyone in its way, Qiu advised Genghis Khan time and again that the Heavenly Way treasured life and hated to see people killed. It was the will of heaven that the killing stop and people's lives be protected. Qiu also said, "If you want to rule the country, you must not kill those who are innocent so that you will not lose the people's hearts." Genghis Khan fully agreed. In 1224, Qiu returned to Yanjing (present-day Beijing) and was invited to live in the Tianchang Temple (later called the Changchun Gong or Eternal Spring Palace and now the White Cloud Temple) and became a leading Taoist figure in the north. His resident temple, the Eternal Spring Palace, thus became a center of Taoist activity. Qiu died in 1227 and Yin Zhiping took over as the patriarch of Complete Perfection Taoism. Complete Perfection Taoism produced many renowned Taoist priests in its heyday. But, as the saying goes, "A tall tree catches the wind." The great influence of Complete Perfection Taoism worried the Yuan Dynasty rulers and, as a result, Buddhism was shown more favor. During the two important debates between Buddhists and Taoists held in 1258 and 1281, the Taoists were defeated. The book *Taoist Canon* (Daozang 道藏) was burnt, and the growth in membership was restricted. Taoist ceremonial prayers were prohibited. These were telling blows to Complete Perfection Taoism, whose heyday came to an end.

The Orthodox Oneness tradition based on Mount Longhu was a development of the Celestial Master tradition, into which was incorporated the Talisman traditions over long years of evolution. It has remained active to this day since it was formed in the mid to late Yuan Dynasty. This tradition was established when Zhang Yucai, the 38th descendant of Zhang Ling, was bestowed with the title of "the Patriarch of the Orthodox Oneness Tradition" by Emperor Chengzong in 1304, the eighth year of the Dade era during the Yuan Dynasty. As early as the late Southern Song Dynasty, the Celestial Master sect established good relations with the rulers of the Yuan regime. Just before he conquered the Southern Song, Kublai Khan, the first emperor of the Yuan Dynasty, followed the ex-

ample of his predecessor Genghis Khan's reverential treatment of Qiu Chuji, by sending a special envoy to Mount Longhu to obtain a lucky talisman from Zhang Keda, the 35th descendant of the first Celestial Master. Zhang predicted that the Yuan would rule the whole country in 20 years. After the fall of the Southern Song, Kublai invited the 36th Celestial Master, Zhang Zongyan, the son of Master Zhang Keda, to the imperial court. Zhang Zongyan was given a silver seal that entitled him to control Taoist affairs in the south. The following year, Master Zhang Zongyan was granted the title Taoist Perfect Man. In the official document entitled *Rules* (Zhi 制), the Yuan emperor gave Zhang Zongyan the title 36th-Generation Celestial Master Since the Han Dynasty, which showed that the imperial house had recognized the title Celestial Master. Previously, although the descendants of Zhang Lin used to call themselves Celestial Master, a title that was also popularly used in the rest of society, the government had never recognized the title. It was the first Yuan Dynasty emperor who began the tradition of calling Zhang Lin's descendants Celestial Master. Since it had been decreed that Zhang Zongyan lead the Taoists in the south, the Orthodox Oneness sect and the Complete Perfection sect became the standard-bearers of Taoism in the south and north respectively. The Talisman sects and also the followers of Complete Perfection Taoism in the south rallied around the Orthodox Oneness tradition.

On the whole, it can be said with certainty that the period of the Song, Jin and Yuan dynasties was a most important turning point in the history of Taoism's development. The two great traditions, the Orthodox Oneness and Complete Perfection, gradually took shape. This laid the foundation for the further development and geographical distribution of Taoism during the Ming and Qing dynasties and even in the present time.

(5) Taoism During the Ming and Qing Dynasties and the Republic of China Period

After the founding of the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), Zhu Yuanzhang, the first Ming emperor, adopted a policy to both make use of and control religion in order to safeguard his rule as the country's sole dominant power. As a result, Taoism began to decline.

Comparatively speaking, the Ming rulers favored the Orthodox Oneness tradition more than the Complete Perfection tradition. The former enjoyed a higher political status than the latter. Zhu Yuanzhang believed that

the sole purpose of the meditation practiced by the Complete Perfection sect was the meditation itself whereas the Orthodox Oneness tradition upheld human relationships and stressed social customs, which had played an important role in social stability. For this reason, he supported the Orthodox Oneness tradition.

From the middle of the Ming Dynasty, some problems prevalent in the Orthodox Oneness sect – undeveloped religious teachings and practices, as well as the sect’s estrangement from the country’s rulers – shook its position among the upper classes. It was only quietly spread among the lower classes of society, and part of the tradition merged with local customs. The Orthodox Oneness tradition never saw any further development after that.

One of the influential Taoist figures during the Ming Dynasty was a man called Zhang Sanfeng. Zhang cultivated Tao on Mount Zhongnan and was given the key to perfection by the Perfect Man of the Fire Dragon. Winter or summer, he wore only one single coat. He ate once every few days or even every few months. He traveled widely and, when he was in Baoji one day, so the legend goes, he said that his life would end that day. He wrote a eulogy and died. But after his body was put into a coffin, he became alive again. Then he traveled to Sichuan. He was a man of great talent and wide knowledge. He was humorous, unrestrained, and fond of writing poems. He behaved like an immortal. After hearing of his reputation, Emperor Chengzu of the Ming Dynasty had a meeting with him. The emperor said, “I would like to learn about Tao. What is the most enjoyable way?” Zhang replied, “Having a good appetite and smooth bowel movements is the most enjoyable way.” The emperor regarded the reply as disrespectful to him and wanted to kill Zhang. But, at that point, the man disappeared all of a sudden. A few days later, Emperor Chengzu felt uncomfortable. He was unable to eat and suffered from constipation. Then he realized that what Zhang Sanfeng had said was correct. Before long, Zhang met an envoy of the emperor on a road and asked the envoy to take a few Chinese alpine rushes to the emperor. The emperor had them boiled into a broth, which he gulped down as Zhang suggested. All his troubles disappeared instantly. He was deeply touched and had great admiration for Zhang. He sent people out to look for Zhang but without success. As Zhang had once lived in Mount Wudang as a hermit, the imperial court began to build monasteries on this mountain. Taoism on Mount Wudang then began

to flourish. Taoists in the Complete Perfection sect, with the exception of Zhang Sanfeng, were neither summoned to the imperial court nor given respectable titles by the imperial house. This made Taoist priests in the Complete Perfection sect concentrate their study on inner alchemy.

The rulers of the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) believed in Tibetan Buddhism. They had little knowledge of Taoism and therefore did not support nor even restricted the development of Taoism. The early Qing emperors followed Ming rulers and adopted a policy of protecting Taoism because of the need to win over the Han Chinese. But from Emperor Qianlong's reign onwards, Qing rulers began to impose stricter control over Taoism, leading to its decreased political influence and stagnant organizational development.

Complete Perfection Taoism remained in obscurity during the Ming Dynasty. However, after the establishment of the Qing, the Longmen (Dragon Gate) sect (a branch of Complete Perfection Taoism founded by Qiu Chuji) began to be revived as a number of highly renowned Taoists appeared. During the early Qing, Wang Changyue, the seventh patriarch, adopted remedial commandments as the main measures to revamp the Dragon Gate sect and introduced an open initiation system. This won the support of the Qing imperial house. During three such initiations in the White Cloud Temple, around one thousand people joined the sect. Because of the influence of those Taoists with great reputations, the Dragon Gate sect remains one of the most important branches of Taoism today.

During the century between the first Opium War (1840-42) and the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, China underwent a period of political chaos and the Chinese people suffered greatly from war and lived in great poverty. Taoist structures in renowned mountains fell into disrepair and many Taoists left their temples. As a result, Taoism became more closely tied to ordinary people's daily lives. Early during the Republic of China, to become established in modern society, Taoists tried to imitate the practice in Western countries by forming a national organization to protect their own interests. In 1912, a nationwide organization known as the Central Taoist Association was established in the White Cloud Temple in Beijing, with the Complete Perfection tradition as its backbone. At the same time, Zhang Yuanxu, the 62nd Celestial Master, set up the Taoist Federation of the Republic of China in Shanghai, with the Orthodox Oneness tradition

as its backbone. Both organizations were rather loosely organized and no activities of great significance were recorded.

(6) Contemporary Taoism

Since the People's Republic of China was founded, the government has carried out a policy of freedom of religious belief. In 1957, China's Taoist circles convened their first national congress in Beijing and, as a result, the Chinese Taoist Association was born and Yue Chongdai was elected its chairman. During the "Cultural Revolution" (1966-76), freedom of religious belief was tampered with and Taoist activities were suspended. It was not until 1978 when the Third Plenary Session of the Communist Party of China's 11th Central Committee was held that the policy of freedom of religious belief resumed, which enabled Taoism to develop in a healthy way.

After China adopted its reform and opening-up policy in 1979, Chinese Taoists resumed the Complete Perfection tradition's initiation ceremony and the Orthodox Oneness tradition's talisman transmission rules. Large-scale religious activities are also held, such as the Great Ritual Offering of All-Embracing Heaven. China's Taoist community has established the China Taoist College and the Shanghai Taoist College to train large numbers of young and middle-aged priests; established academic institutions such as the China Taoist Culture Research Institute and convened several forums on Taoist culture; founded journals such as *Chinese Taoism*, *Shanghai Taoism*, *Shaanxi Taoism* and *Fujian Taoism* and published a number of books on Taoism. Much emphasis is given to the collection and study of Taoist classics. The *Chinese Taoist Canon* is now being compiled. Efforts have been made to inherit and discover Taoist music and Taoist music troupes organized to performed both inside and outside China. Taoists are encouraged to engage in producing goods and providing services to strive to be self-supporting. They uphold the tradition of "benefiting society and people" and concern themselves with the public good. They plant trees, protect woods, build bridges, repair roads, open medical clinics, donate money and goods to people in disaster-stricken areas, raise funds to run schools, and so on. In 1993, the sum of one million yuan collected at the Great Ritual Offering of All-Embracing Heaven was donated in its entirety to the Hope Project to help schoolchildren in remote areas. Five million yuan was donated in 1998 to people in flood-hit areas.

Some 1,500 Taoist monasteries have been approved by governments at the county level and above for Taoists to carry out religious activities. There are about 20,000 resident Taoist priests of the Complete Perfection tradition and tens of thousands of Taoist priests of the Orthodox Oneness tradition, in addition to countless numbers of Taoist followers throughout the whole country. The ancient Taoist religion has now entered the 21st century with a brand-new look.

2. Major Taoist Scriptures

In the course of Chinese Taoism's development over more than 1,800 years, a large number of Taoist works has appeared. The existing *Taoist Canon of the Zhengtong Era* (Zhengtong Daozang 正统道藏) is basically a collection of such works. Those works cover a wide range of topics, including not only Taoist doctrines, rules and regulations, commandments, and procedures for self-cultivation and ceremonies but also precious writings concerning ancient Chinese philosophy, literature, medicine, health care, chemistry, music and geography. They enable people to know about Taoism and provide them with a treasure trove of Chinese culture.

(1) *Taoist Canon (Daozang 道藏)*

The *Taoist Canon* is an anthology of Taoist works, collected and compiled in a certain order and with certain guidelines. A photo-offset copy of the Ming Dynasty edition of the *Taoist Canon* was published jointly by the Cultural Relics Publishing House, Shanghai Bookstore and Tianjin Ancient Books Publishing House in 1988. In 1996, sponsored by the Chinese Taoist Association, a group of specialists was organized to collate, punctuate and supplement the Ming Dynasty edition of the *Taoist Canon* and their work was published in 2000 under the title *Chinese Taoist Canon (Zhonghua Daozang 中华道藏)*.

(2) *Tao Te Ching (Daode Jing 道德经)*

Taoists believe that Lao Zi is an incarnation of the Supreme Master, so his *Tao Te Ching* is regarded as the Taoist bible. The book is written in the form of philosophical verses. Its main ideas are that Tao is the source of the evolution or transmutation of everything in the cosmos; that the law of the universe is to be natural and not interfere or, in other words, let things take their own course; that the highest form of benevolence is weakness

and never fighting for any personal gain; and that a person should follow Tao, have a peaceful mind and refrain from interfering (doing nothing).

(3) *Book of Salvation (Duren Jing 度人经)*

This work's full title is the *Lofly and Sublime Book of the Limitless Salvation of the Supreme Pervasive Mystery and Numinous Treasure* (Taishang Dongxuan Lingbao Wuliang Duren Shangpin Miaojing 太上洞玄灵宝无量度人上品妙经). It contains stories about the Primeval Lord of Heaven giving lectures on scripture. Its advocacy of fasting and the chanting of scriptures, its advice that people be benevolent and then be "delivered from their corpses" have had a great influence on later followers of the Taoist religion. In this work, the Primeval Lord of Heaven is regarded as the supreme god and is worshipped by Taoist believers. This work was later considered the most important among all Taoist scriptures. Therefore, it is the first work in the *Taoist Canon of the Zhengtong Era*.

(4) *Book of Supreme Peace (Taiping Jing 太平经)*

This 170-*juan** work was written by Han Dynasty Taoists. Covering a wide range, it focuses mainly on how to bring about a peaceful society and harmony between man and nature. It advocates divine retribution and proposes methods to achieve longevity, become immortal, exorcise evil spirits and cure diseases.

(5) *Perfect Book of the Great Grotto of the High Purity (Shangqing Dadong Zhenjing 上清大洞真经)*

The High Purity tradition regards this work as the most important Taoist book. It contains 39 chapters in verse form, involving the visualizing of a spirit's descent to certain positions in the practitioner's body, the silent reading of incantations, the visualizing of a spirit and calling of its name, and praying for its protection. If a Taoist recites the book one chapter after another and practices the concentrated contemplation of 39 gods, each god will descend to one of his organs. The person for whom the spirits thus care will be kept from death and will ascend to heaven.

(6) *Book of Purity and Tranquillity (Qingjing Jing 清静经)*

It is said that Lao Zi once expounded his teachings to the Queen Mother

* A traditional thread-bound volume, usually containing a much shorter text than a volume in modern book publishing.

of the West when he traveled to Guitai in western China. What he said was recorded by some deities and was obtained by a man called Ge Xuan, who then circulated the scripture in the human world. Though rather short, the work is rich in content. It first states that the Great Tao, which is shapeless, nameless and devoid of feelings, has the function of giving birth to heaven and earth, of operating the sun and the moon, and of keeping things alive. Tao can be classified as pure and murky, active and inactive. Purity is the source of murkiness. Inactivity is the basis of activity. A person who often attains purity and inactivity will be in harmony with heaven and earth. A man who wants to attain purity and inactivity must purify his mind and expel his desires. The daily chanting of this scripture is one of the important tasks of Taoist priests.

(7) *Book of the Seal of the Heart (Xinyin Jing 心印经)*

This scripture's full title is *Sublime Book of the Seal of the Heart of the Lofty Jade Emperor* (Gaoshang Yuhuang Xinyin Miaojing 高上玉皇心印妙经). It has 50 lines of verses containing 200 characters. It expounds the theory and methods of Taoist alchemy. The book first of all points out that essential matter (*jing* 精), vital breath (*qi* 炁 or 气) and the spirit (*shen* 神) are the three best ingredients for the alchemical transformation known as internal alchemy (*neidan* 内丹) within the human body. Then it goes on to describe one's state of mind in the course of internal alchemy, which is "impalpable and incommensurable." Alchemists should follow the principle of "gathering what one does not have and preserving what one has." Then the elixir of immortality is ready. Through a mixture, the elixir will be produced after one hundred days of being tempered in an oven. Twelve years later, one can attain Tao and ascend to heaven. Taoists believe that the *Book of Purity and Tranquility* focuses on work of a spiritual nature, while the *Book of the Seal of the Heart* focuses on the life of the body. The two scriptures are combined to form the great Taoist Way of cultivating both one's character and life.

(8) *Book of the Yellow Court (Huangting Jing 黄庭经)*

This work can be divided into the *Jade Book of the Outer Landscape of the Yellow Court* (Huangting Waijing Yujing 黄庭外景玉经) and the *Jade Book of the Inner Landscape of the Yellow Court* (Huangting Neijing Yujing 黄庭内景玉经), both monographs on the preservation of health and the cultivation of immortality. The *Outer Landscape* mainly describes fetal breathing,

swallowing, inner contemplation, the ingesting of vital breath, the concentrated contemplation of the spirits of one's own internal organs, the consolidation of vitality, and so on. The *Inner Landscape* puts forward the theory of three elixir fields – namely, the upper elixir field in the brain, the middle elixir field in the heart and the lower elixir field in the Gate of Life (*mingmen* 命门) between the two kidneys. It also says that every one of a human being's internal organs has spirit (*shen*). Meditating on such spirit within one's body will make a person immortal. Many calligraphers and writers in history were avid readers of the *Book of the Yellow Court*. Some wrote down lines from the book, and others wrote forewords for it. The story of the great calligrapher Wang Xizhi exchanging his handwritten version of the *Book of the Yellow Court* for some geese has been widely circulated for generations.

(9) *Kinship of the Three and the Book of Changes* (Zhouyi Cantongqi 周易参同契)

This work was written by Wei Boyang of the Eastern Han Dynasty. With more than 6,000 characters in total, it is basically in the form of rhyming verse, each line having four or five characters, along with a number of short and long prose writings. It emphasizes a combination of the principles set forth in the *Book of Changes* (*Yijing* 易经), the Huang-Lao tradition (the school of the Yellow Emperor and Lao Zi) and the theory of alchemy. It is the earliest Taoist work on alchemy and has been known to later generations of Taoists as the “eternal master book of elixir scriptures.”

(10) *Perfect Man Sun: Essential Prescriptions for Emergencies Worth a Thousand Pieces of Gold* (Sun Zhenren: Beiji Qianjin Yaofang 孙真人备急千金要方)

This work, usually known as the *Essential Prescriptions Worth a Thousand Pieces of Gold* (Qianjin Yaofang 千金要方), was written by Sun Simiao, a Tang Dynasty Taoist. It contains 30 *juan* overall, covering internal organs, acupuncture, the pulse, dietotherapy as well as prescriptions for emergencies, development of character, etc. It is a colossal work of ancient Chinese medicine. The author stresses medical ethics and the importance of medicine being simple, compatible and effective. He gives particular attention to gynecology and pediatrics, the combination of health preservation and disease treatment, the combination of acupuncture and medicinal concoction,

and dietotherapy. This work was a great contribution to Chinese pharmacology, and later generations regarded Sun Simiao as a “king of medicine.”

(11) *Folios on the Vibrant Responses of the Most High (Taishang Ganying Pian 太上感应篇)*

It is unknown who wrote this work and when. It was first circulated among the people and was given attention by the government during the Southern Song Dynasty. Emperor Lizong of the Dynasty wrote an inscription of eight Chinese characters at the very beginning of the work, saying: “Do no evil and practice everything good.” More and more people in later generations wrote prefaces or annotations, which further expanded the influence of this work. It was even circulated in Japan and Korea.

The author says in the book: There is no way that leads to fortune or misfortune. It is man himself who decides. Retribution for evil or good sticks like a shadow to an object. There is a god who keeps a record of all the evil deeds done by human beings. At the time of *gengshen* (Heavenly Stem 7, Earthly Branch 9), he will report them to the governor of heaven and the magistrate of hell, telling them the crimes of evildoers. It is on the basis of his report that a man’s life or death and fortune or misfortune are determined. Anyone who wants to live a long or happy life must do good deeds.

The work has a list of provisions defining evil and good, which is supposed to be used as a standard for people to follow.

(12) *Fifteen Essays by Wang Chongyang on the Establishment of the Complete Perfection Teaching (Chongyang Lijiao Shiwu Lun 重阳立教十五论)*

This work is a collection of quotations from Wang Chongyang compiled by his disciples. Though containing just over a thousand characters in total, it is concise but profound in meaning. It reveals the basic belief of the Complete Perfection tradition, that is, “the spirit that is cultivated does not die.” According to the author, the basic means to attain this goal is to refine one’s inner alchemy. The book also specifies the code for Taoist priests in self-cultivation: suffering in order to benefit others. It also advocates its basis for the religion: combining three traditions into one. So this work set out the guiding principles of the Complete Perfection tradition and therefore is a guideline for all followers of this tradition.

3. Basic Taoist Beliefs

Taoist philosophy is very rich. However, it can be boiled down to some basic beliefs. All of Taoist philosophy is actually based on those beliefs.

(1) Tao Is Fundamental to the Cosmos

The Taoist religion is so named because Tao or “the Way” is regarded as the religion’s central tenet. Taoism maintains that Tao is the essence of the universe, as well as the law of the evolution and change of everything and anything. Tao contains everything and is omnipresent. The *Book of Purity and Tranquillity* says: “The Great Tao has no form; it brings forth and raises heaven and earth. The Great Tao has no feelings; it regulates the course of the sun and the moon. The Great Tao has no name; it raises and nourishes the myriad beings.” *On the Mysterious Matrix* (Xuangang Lun 玄纲论) says: “Tao is rooted in a void, is the cause of the universe, the essence of divinity, and the origin of heaven and earth... It is on the basis of Tao that all beings survive and the Five Elements are formed.” Tao contains everything in the world, both material and spiritual.

When the Taoist religion was first established, it regarded the Supreme Master (Lao Zi) as the incarnation of Tao. According to *Xiang'er's Commentary on "The Book of Lao Zi"* (Laozi Xiang'er Zhu 老子想尔注), Tao “is air when dispersed, becomes the Supreme Master when concentrated, often inhabiting Mount Kunlun. It can be called emptiness or nature or be nameless. They are all the same.” The supreme gods of Taoism are the Three Pristine Ones – namely, Primeval Lord of Heaven of the Jade Purity, the Heavenly Lord of Numinous Treasure of the High Purity, and the Supreme Master of the Supreme Purity. Though they have different names, they refer to the same thing, which is the incarnation of Tao.

(2) “Tao in Me Is Te”

“Te” (or De 德, “virtue”) and “Tao” (or Dao 道, “the Way”) have formed the core of the Taoist canons. “Tao” is the internal law of things while “Te,” the “power of Tao,” is the concrete expression of Tao in things. Chapter 51 of the *Tao Te Ching* says: “Tao begets all beings, and Te fosters them. Substance gives them physical forms, and environment completes them. Therefore, all beings venerate Tao and honor Te.” This defines

the relationship between “Tao” and “Te” as that between “begetting all beings” and “fostering them.” Therefore, it is generally believed that “Te” means the merits, actions and demonstrations of Tao. From the perspective of human life, Tao refers to man’s virtue and good deeds. Therefore, Taoist scriptures say, “Tao in me is Te.” Here, the “Te” is the manifestation of Tao. A person may feel at ease if he does good deeds and accumulates virtue. When he feels at ease, he has attained Tao. Taoism regards the principle of “being benevolent and benefiting others, accumulating beneficence and virtue” as a precondition for Taoists’ self-cultivation. Taoist scriptures say, “The foundation of longevity is based solely on benevolence.” Only a man who has a noble spirit and done many good deeds can cultivate himself enough to become a deity.

(3) Life and Tao Combine into One Integrated Cultivation of Character and Life

Taoism stresses the value of life and teaches people to treasure and enjoy life. It believes that, by practicing the “integrated cultivation of character and life,” one can attain longevity and immortality. *Xiang'er's Commentary on “The Book of Lao Zi”* says, “Life is another form of Tao.” Here, “life” (*sheng* 生) means growth, existence and survival, which are all manifestations of Tao. Tao gives birth to all beings. Tao goes together with life. Life and Tao protect each other. The two can be combined in one, and neither can be separated from the other. This is the basic belief of Taoism.

Taoism maintains that a person’s life span is independent of the mandate of heaven. According to *The Book of Western Ascension* (*Xisheng Jing* 西升经), “My life relies on me, not on heaven or earth.” The *Tortoise-Shell Inscriptions* (*Guijia Wen* 龟甲文) quoted in the *Inner Book of Master Baopu* (*Baopuzi Neipian* 抱朴子内篇) says, “My life relies on me, not on heaven. When I turn into a golden elixir, I will live for millions of years.” As long as one is able to cultivate Tao and preserve his health, to settle his essence and consolidate his body, he will have longevity, attain Tao and become a deity. The basic principle for cultivation is the integrated cultivation of character and life. The cultivation of character refers to the cultivation of one’s nature and morality. The cultivation of life refers to the cultivation of one’s bodily life. The standard for the cultivation of character is learning and cultivating the morality prescribed by Tao, remaining tranquil and complying with nature, being supple and weak and never fighting for any

personal gain, expelling any selfish desire, slighting fame and gain, and not being troubled by secular material needs, so as to be engrossed in cultivation. At the same time, one must do good deeds, help others and accumulate one's merits. The cultivation of one's bodily life means primarily the preservation of one's essential matter, vital breath and spirit, keeping fit and living a long life by practicing *daoyin* (bodybuilding exercises), the visualization of keeping in oneness, and discoursing on sitting in oblivion (seated meditation), embryonic breathing and outer and inner alchemy. Taoism teaches that one's bodily life may be extended through cultivation, that one's spiritual life may be distilled and one may eventually reach the stage of being immortal.

(4) Spontaneity and Non-interference

The *Tao Te Ching* says, "Man follows the way of earth. Earth follows the way of heaven. Heaven follows the way of Tao, and Tao follows the way of spontaneity." The "spontaneity" or "naturalness" (*ziran* 自然) refers to the status of things being spontaneous with no interference from outside elements. This spontaneity is the most important feature of Taoism. Whether in nature or human society, everything has to follow Tao or follow its own nature. It should never be changed by outside forces. But how is this spontaneity to be realized instead of being opposed? The method put forward by Taoism is "non-interference" or "non-action" (*wuwei* 无为). "Non-interference" does not mean taking a passive approach or doing nothing at all. Rather, it means following spontaneity without mixing in any of one's own subjective thinking or selfishness. One must follow the intrinsic nature and law of development of all beings, taking appropriate action in response to objective conditions in order to act in the manner of "non-action." *Heshang Gong's Commentary on "The Book of Lao Zi"* (Laozi Heshang Gong Zhu 老子河上公注) says, "Where non-interference is followed, Tao benefits one's spirit in the case of the treatment of one's body; it benefits the people in the case of rule over a country." So "non-interference" serves as a principle in cultivating one's mind and in conducting oneself in society, and also as a political standard in ruling a country.

In the philosophy of life, "non-interference" means the absence of steadfastness, or not to act recklessly in disregard of social reality. Encouragement is given to thoroughly relishing the law of the cosmos and, with this as the basis, to taking appropriate action in order to attain a life of

wisdom and peace. In personal cultivation, in light of the principle of “non-interference” one should not do it blindly. Instead, one should adhere to calmness and spontaneity, concentrate one’s mind and adjust one’s breathing. After a long period of time, one is bound to attain a relaxed mind and rhythmic breathing. In social politics, a ruler should follow the law of heaven, the nature of earth and the wishes of the people. Things should be done spontaneously and not for personal gain. The worthy and the great all have their roles to play. This is the way to achieve non-interference when ruling a country.

(5) Remaining Tranquil and Restraining Desire

Tranquillity is the nature of Taoism. *Xiang'er's Commentary on "The Book of Lao Zi"* says, “Tao has very often no desires and enjoys tranquillity. Therefore, it may regulate heaven and earth.” So a devotee of Taoism must first of all learn to be tranquil and know tranquillity and regards tranquillity as a standard for his actions. Only then will he be able to attain Tao. The *Book of Purity and Tranquillity* says, “Always be tranquil, and heaven and earth will return to the primordial.” But what kind of cultivation may enable a person to attain such tranquillity? The core principle is to reduce selfishness and have few desires. Fame, wealth and sensuality continually arouse one’s desire. If one is unable to treat such desire lightly, how can he keep a calm mind? So Taoist scriptures say, “Having desires will harm one’s life. Having no desires enables one to achieve Tao.”

A follower of Taoism must regard tranquillity and the possession of few desires as standards for his actions, and have a correct attitude toward secular fame, wealth and sensuality. One must never try to pursue them through extreme acts and must never have inordinate desires. Taoism teaches that the value of a man’s life is measured by the enhancement of the environment in which that life exists. By expanding the “individual” (ego) to the “collective” (popular ego of the cosmos), the “individual” may become one with the whole cosmos. In the course of awakening to the “collective,” the “individual” —in other words, selfish desire— will naturally be restrained. The reason that a sage is able to reduce selfishness and have few desires, to manifest plainness and embrace simplicity, is that he has attained the supreme spiritual stage of “being alive together with heaven and earth, being one with all beings.”

(6) The Soft and Weak Do Not Compete with Others

The *Tao Te Ching* says that “Weakness is the function of Tao.” Lao Zi said, “Nothing in the world is softer and weaker than water, but no force can compare with it in attacking the hard and strong... the soft can overcome the hard and the weak can overcome the strong... When alive, man is soft and tender. After death, he is hard and stiff. All things like grass and trees are soft and tender when alive, whereas they become withered and dried when dead...” So he concluded that “the hard and stiff are companions of death, whereas the soft and tender are companions of life.” Being soft and weak does not mean being cowardly but being resilient. Assertiveness and arrogance should be avoided. In this way, one may better protect oneself.

If a person keeps to being soft and weak, he will not compete with others. Non-competition means not competing with others in being in the fore, not striving for fame and gain, not striving to be right. The *Tao Te Ching* says, “The Tao of the sage acts for others but never competes with them,” and “it is only because he does not compete that the world cannot compete with him.” Refraining from competition does not mean giving up or becoming depressed but, rather, it meant having high aspirations, not being engrossed in personal gain and loss, and winning others’ admiration by virtue of non-competition. To those cultivating Tao in particular, only when a person has no heart for competition can he attain tranquillity and be in compliance with Tao.

(7) Divine Retribution

Taoism teaches that there is a god who specializes in administering human beings’ merits and demerits. The god has a close-knit organization with countless subordinates to watch and record everyone’s acts. Everyone has within himself a god known as Three Cadavers (Sanshi 三尸), who records the person’s merits and demerits. This god ascends to heaven on the day of *gengshen* every year to report the person’s merits and demerits. Another god is the Kitchen God, who lives in the kitchen of each household. He too goes to heaven to report the right and wrong of the household. A person’s words, deeds and even whims will be unable to escape the supervision of the gods. And a person will be punished or rewarded according to the record of his merits and demerits. One’s life will be shortened for minor sins. If a person has committed serious sins, misfortune will befall him or even his life will be taken

away. On the other hand, a man who has done good deeds will have his life extended. Retribution is extremely strict, and it will be meted out either in this life or the next.

(8) Prayer Rites for Bringing Fortune and Avoiding Misfortune

Taoism believes that man and deity is mutually interacted. When a person is unable to solve his problems by himself, he will pray to the gods for help. There are various forms of prayer, including *zhaijiao* ritual offerings, repentance, the recital of scriptures and *fulu* incantation.

Zhaijiao (齋醮) is a kind of sacrificial ceremony with prayers to the gods for blessings or help. *Zhai* in Chinese means a pious ceremony or a retreat, while *jiao* means offerings such as fruit presented to the gods. The ceremony is rather complicated. It imitates the ceremony used to greet an emperor or dignitary or present a missive to an emperor. There are Golden Talisman *Zhai* for the emperor to pray for the safety and peace of a country; Jade Talisman *Zhai* for nobles and Yellow Talisman *Zhai* for commoners. The *zhaijiao* ceremony is a very popular Taoist activity.

Repentance means asking the gods for forgiveness for sins committed. There is also a specially designed ceremony for this activity.

Fulu is a kind of secret method for praying to the gods. *Fu* is a kind of mysterious pictographic sign. Together with incantations, it functions as a sign to summon the gods. *Lu* refers to the secret names of the gods. According to Taoism, if a person builds up an altar and brandishes a sword while reciting incantations and painting talismans, he can summon the gods, command ghosts and realize his aims by exploiting their divine strength.

By using these methods, one may realize four types of goals: One, the removal of a calamity, for example, curing a disease; two, seeking happiness, for example, seeking an offspring, an official post, long life, or safety for one's household; three, expiating sins for the dead so that the deceased will be able to be released from the darkness of hell and ascend to heaven; four, repenting for one's mistakes in order to achieve mental equilibrium.

The content of Taoist belief is very rich. Its core is achieving immortality. All other tenets are centered on this core thought, the realization of one's ultimate goal.

II. TAOIST CULTURE AND CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY

In the long years of its evolution, Taoism has accumulated rich ideological and cultural conceptions, many of which are crystallizations of human wisdom for survival. In the social crisis of contemporary science and technology, some scientists with humanistic insight have discovered ancient Taoist conceptions and have developed great interest in them. Quite a number of scholars have delved into Taoist culture to discover its significance to today's society. They believe that some issues on which Taoism focuses have something in common with what people face today, such as problems of human life, society and the environment. The Taoist approaches to solving those problems have shed much light for the people of today. Here, we would like to expound three aspects of this issue — namely, the Taoist spirit of truthfulness, the Taoist attitude toward life, and the Taoist awareness of environmental protection.

1. The Taoist Spirit of Truthfulness

Taoism, together with Confucianism and Buddhism, is one of the important parts of traditional Chinese culture. But for a long period of time, Confucianism was in a dominant position, so Taoism was not given the attention it deserved. In the minds of some people, Taoism was nothing more than some kind of sorcery, with the doodling of strange signs, the chanting of incantations, etc. So they concluded that Taoism was merely a lesser religion. This is of course a very biased view. Once you have delved into Taoist culture, you will find that it has multiple-level concepts with a variety of content. Despite certain superficial phenomena, it is based on profound beliefs and a spirit of truthfulness that is powerful enough to stir the soul. It is this spirit of truthfulness that has enabled Taoism to survive

despite all the ups and downs in its history and it still exists today.

(1) The Spirit of Treasuring Life

Generally speaking, religions often draw people's attention to the netherworld and have designed various plans for souls to be rescued or to ascend to heaven after death. They pay little attention to the quality of practical life or to how life can be extended. But Taoism is quite different. It emphasizes reality, human life and the physical body and it actively explores how to lengthen human life. The second part of the *Great Appendix to the Book of Changes* (Zhouyi · Xici Xia 周易 · 系辞下), an ancient text from the early part of China's Qin Dynasty, says, "The greatest virtue in heaven and on earth is life." Taoism has inherited such a notion. Zhang Daoling, the founder of the Taoist religion, said in his work *Xiang'er's Commentary on "The Book of Lao Zi"* that "life" (*sheng*), "Tao," "heaven" and "earth" were the four ultimate greats in the cosmos. He said that "life" was "another form of Tao" and an important manifestation of Tao. A famous Taoist priest named Tao Hongjing said in the beginning of his work *Extracts on Nourishing Spiritual Nature and Prolonging Life* (Yangxing Yanminglu 养性延命录), "Filled with breath and containing a soul, man is most precious," and "the reason a man is precious is that he has life." The *Book of Esoteric Explications of the Three Heavens* (三天内解经) says, "A dead king is not as precious as a live mouse." Such a contrast was used to emphasize the importance of life. Therefore, the *Book of Supreme Peace* expounds, "What one should always do is take delight in concentrating on longevity."

Taoism teaches that the reason life is so important is that a person can have only one life. "Everyone has one life, which will never be reborn," says the *Book of Supreme Peace*. So Taoists oppose regarding life as the victim of secular desire, oppose trading life for fame and gain, and oppose blindly subjecting life to man-made political logic.

(2) The Spirit of Self-Reliance

Taoism has a resounding slogan: "My life is in my own hands, not heaven's." The length of one's life is not determined by heaven but is in one's own hands. Taoism teaches the firm belief that man is able to overcome natural hazards and enable his life to grow from weak to strong and from death to life and ultimately to become immortal through active cultivation. It opposes the attitude of non-action or apathy toward death. It

admits that “there is life, so there must be death,” but regards this as one result of the course of natural evolution. However, such a course of evolution can be reversed and death can be avoided through one’s initiative. A famous Taoist tenet says, “If you go along with it, you will remain a man. If you go against it, you will become a deity.” For centuries, generations of Taoists have striven to experiment again and again and to practice outer alchemy and inner alchemy in the quest to achieve the goal of immortality. Of course, no one has ever seen anyone who has become immortal. However, such a spirit of exploration is admirable. It shows man’s strong wish not to give in to fate. It encourages people to use every possible means to explore the secret of aging in life and not simply repeat the experience described by the phrase “there is life, so there must be death.” It is precisely because of Taoist priests’ resistance to death that the development of ancient Chinese medicine, the science of health preservation, chemistry and other natural sciences was pushed forward. Academics both inside and outside China have admitted that Taoism made a tremendous contribution to ancient Chinese science.

(3) The Spirit of Upholding Virtue

Taoism lays great stress on a person’s moral development and regards virtue as an important benchmark for measuring a person. It teaches that only those who have attained virtue may be able to cultivate themselves into becoming immortal. The *Inner Book of Master Baopu* says, “Anyone who longs to become immortal should have attained the virtues of loyalty, filial piety, kindness, spontaneity, benevolence and trustworthiness. Anyone who has not cultivated his virtue but only practiced necromancy will not achieve immortality.” Holding virtue in high esteem and emphasizing the teaching of ethics are important features of Taoism. The *Book of Supreme Peace* says, “A deity is one who never does evil. If each treasures his life, this is evidence of benevolence.” *Xiang’er’s Commentary on “The Book of Lao Zi”* says that anyone who wishes to become immortal “must cultivate himself in a myriad of ways and do a myriad of good deeds.” In short, “Benevolence is the only basis for attaining immortality.”

To teach people to renounce anything wicked and to do good deeds, Taoist priests have written many popular and easily understandable books to advise people to do good. Books such as the *Folios on the Vibrant Responses of the Most High*, the *Book of Hidden Virtues of Imperial Sovereign*

Wenchang (Wenchang Dijun Yinzhifen 文昌帝君阴骘文) and the *Perfect Book of Enlightenment of Sainly Imperial Sovereign Guan Yu* (Guan Sheng Dijun Jue Shi Zhen Jing 关圣帝君觉世真经) have had a great impact among the people.

(4) The Spirit of Helping People and Society

Though Taoism pursues the cultivation of individuals to become immortal, it never pits the “human way” (*rendao* 人道) against the “way of the immortals” (*xiandao* 仙道). Instead, it adheres to the principle of “internal and external integrated cultivation”: internal cultivation to keep fit and attain longevity, and external cultivation to help people and society. The Eastern Jin Taoist priest Ge Hong said, “To a Taoist priest, the supreme merit is rescuing people from disaster and preventing them from dying in vain... Taking divine elixirs is useless without doing sufficient good deeds.” This notion was quoted and emphasized time and again by later generations. Lu Xiujing said in his *General Taoist Rituals* (Daomen Kelüe 道门科略), “If a person has helped people beneath heaven, helped those in distress and aided those in peril, he will be able to attain three lives.” Zhang Boduan said in his *On Realizing Perfection* (Wuzhen Pian 悟真篇), “A man who has exceeded 800 acts of cultivating virtue and done more than 3,000 hidden acts of merit in total... will begin to comply with the wishes of the deities.” The Pure Brightness sect maintains that “attaining the Skills of Pure Brightness lies in equity among all things.” The Complete Perfection tradition formed during the Jin and Yuan dynasties divides things into two aspects as far as practice is concerned — that is, internal “perfect power” and external “perfect acts.” “Perfect power” means human nature and the cultivation of inner alchemy. “Perfect acts” means preaching Tao and helping people. Apparently, the basis for a person becoming immortal is the unification of perfect power and perfect acts, and the accumulation of one’s merits. This has always been a fundamental tenet of Taoism.

An important manifestation of the Taoist spirit of helping people and society is that Taoist leaders would go at critical moments to save people from suffering and to alleviate the loss and damage caused to them by disasters. One of the best examples is that of Qiu Chuji traveling west to see Genghis Khan and advise him not to kill people and to exempt northern China from taxes. Xiao Fudao, the fourth leader of the Supreme Oneness tradition and Du Daojian of the Mount Maoshan tra-

dition also made use of their reputations and did a lot to stop the victors from killing innocent people during the chaotic years of the Southern Song, Jin and Yuan dynasties.

Another manifestation of the Taoist spirit of helping people and society is the offering of medical treatment to people to cure diseases. The art of healing is closely connected to health preservation, so Taoists have always attached great importance to it. The best-known Taoist pharmacists are Ge Hong of the Eastern Jin Dynasty, Tao Hongjing of the Liang period of the Southern Dynasties and Sun Simao of the Tang Dynasty, who made great contributions to the development of Chinese medicine. Ordinary Taoist priests also learned some basic knowledge about medicine and played a very important role in curing people's diseases in ancient China's countryside.

(5) The Spirit of Tolerance

In traditional Chinese culture, Taoism has been open and tolerant academically. This can be proved by the thoughts of Ge Hong, a famous Taoist theorist during the Eastern Jin Dynasty. Ge was an avid reader while still a boy and read all sorts of books from the classics of various early schools of thought to short essays and articles. While advocating Taoism, he also held Confucianism in high esteem. He also said that the thought of the classics must never be ignored.

Taoism has not only absorbed nourishment from indigenous culture but also adopted an open and modest attitude toward Buddhism from ancient India. It has learned from foreign culture and integrated the best of that culture into Taoism. For instance, the *Book of Divine Incantations of the Supreme Pervasive Abyss* (Taishang Dongyuan Shenzhou Jing 太上洞渊神咒经) absorbed the Buddhist concept of Prajna, and the *Book of Salvation* (Duren Jing 度人经) adopted the concepts of Triloka (the Three Realms) and retribution. The *Book of Original Time* (Benji Jing 本际经) says that all laws are empty and irregular and that everything is the result of retribution for things done in the past. The *Book of Concentration and Contemplation of the Pervasive Mysterious Numinous Treasure* (Dongxuan Lingbao Dingguan Jing 洞玄灵宝定观经) reformed the theory of motionlessness and contemplation. The Taoist Twofold Mystery school made use of the Buddhist theory of Madhyama-pratipada (Middle Way). All this indicates that Taoism has been open to other cultures. Such an active embracing of other cultures enabled Taoism to progress unremittingly.

Of course, there were forces in Taoist circles whose attitude toward other cultures was one of repulsion. Debates with Buddhism occurred from time to time. But these happened only in circumstances where there was a conflict of interest. However, this was never the mainstream of Taoism. The mainstream of Taoism maintains that Buddhism, Confucianism and Taoism are three branches of the same source and that the three beliefs should be merged into one.

It is because of the five basic spirits listed above that the Taoist religion has continuously developed over the long years of history and has always had a vibrant life.

2. Taoist Attitude Toward Life

Taoism values human beings and life and opposes the practice of being cut off from society for the sake of cultivation. Taoists have always believed that the “way of immortals” cannot be separated from the “human way.” The latter is the basis of the former. Only when a person has performed well his duty to society, has been useful to society and has a noble spirit can he cultivate himself to become immortal. What is important for a Taoist devotee is to implement the Taoist spirit and wisdom in life and to cultivate, exercise and understand Taoism within the life of society. A person must not separate himself from everyday life yet one must have lofty ideas. Therefore, Taoism has formed a unique attitude toward life, which guides people to a proper handling of the problems arising in daily life and toward accomplishing a perfect life.

(1) Acting According to the Principle of Going Along with Nature

Going along with nature means judging a situation, following the intrinsic nature of things and never doing anything against that nature. A person, whether a leader or a man in the street, will achieve success only when he complies with the situation and the minds of the people and when he follows the laws of nature and society. Otherwise, his actions would be reckless or blind and would lead only to failure, no matter how much effort had been made. The Taoist principle of going along with nature is a result of profound observation of the universe and social history. It always shines with the light of wisdom.

(2) Adopting an Approach of Benevolence and Harmony

Man lives in a community and is subject to various social relationships. If the life of a community is orderly and harmonious, an individual person may have a fine life. But how should one handle those social relationships? Taoism maintains that everyone should have a heart of benevolence, should be kind and friendly to others, should delight in others' successes, be sympathetic to others' misery, and give help to those in need. One should have a peaceful heart and live in harmony with others. "Do not kill, do no harm, do not be envious, do not be jealous, do not be lustful, do no steal, do not be greedy, do not be covetous, do not hate. When writing, do not use flowery language. When speaking, do not use rude words" (*Book of Salvation*). The Taoist ideal status of human relations is described in verse as follows: "Equal and benevolent, people of different lineages should be of one family" (*Book of Salvation*). If everyone follows Taoist teachings, the world is bound to be peaceful and calm.

(3) Upholding Frugality and Simplicity, Opposing Extravagance and Waste

It is Taoist tradition to uphold frugality and simplicity and to oppose extravagance and waste. However, many people nowadays think that it is great to flaunt one's wealth and that it is miserly to be frugal. Such concepts have greatly jeopardized social morals. As a result, the idea of "keeping up with the Joneses" is in vogue and, because of this, some people are deep in debt. Some even resort to theft and robbery or graft and the acceptance of bribes in order to lead an extravagant life. If this trend continues to grow, the consequences will be unthinkable. Therefore, it is necessary that the ancient teaching about frugality and waste should still not be ignored in a modern society; that the Taoist ideas of upholding frugality and simplicity and of opposing extravagance and waste should continuously be fostered; and that there should be more spiritual pursuits but less luxurious indulgence.

(4) A Calm and Peaceful Mentality

The life for which Taoists long is a life of art. One should live in a poetic way in a poetic place, free of cares and content with one's lot in life. Taoism guides people into looking forward to the vast and infinite heaven and earth, nature and history instead of indulging in short-lived minor problems such as gain or loss, honor or disgrace. This requires a calm and peace-

ful mentality. Taoism maintains that one should slight fame and gain and be content with what one possesses and that a person must not take what does not belong to him and must take on whatever challenges come before him. One should not delight in material wealth nor worry when in poverty. One should not be restless over personal desires or depressed because of personal failure but constantly seek noble aspirations. Such Taoist conceptions may be able to give people guidance to help them face the turbulence of life with calm minds and dauntlessly face and bear unavoidable setbacks and suffering. Mental equilibrium will render a person a healthy life. Whether successful or not in life, one will be assured a contented life on earth.

(5) Embracing Simplicity and Sticking to Truthfulness

The concept of “embracing simplicity and sticking to truthfulness” means preserving one’s pure and simple nature and opposing the distortion and alienation of human nature. It also means being honest, speaking truth, not fawning upon one’s superiors or bullying one’s subordinates, not resorting to fraud or falsehood. It means maintaining one’s moral ethics instead of being dragged along, not being fickle or capricious, and being honest with people instead of being affected or hypocritical. So “embracing simplicity and sticking to truthfulness” is the convergence of a variety of moral ethics. Only by “embracing simplicity and sticking to truthfulness” can the world get rid of artificial obstacles between people and achieve harmonious environment, give people an environment in which they can play their roles better, and promote the orderly development of society.

(6) Cultivation of both Character and Life

As the economy develops and living standards improve, people pay more and more attention to health. The craze for *qigong* breathing exercises indicates that people long to keep fit and have long lives. The complete system of Taoist concepts of health preservation, with its variety of feasible methods, is worth earnest study by the people of today. Taoism has raised the principle of the integrated cultivation of character and life on the basis of the concept of the unification of form and spirit. This means keeping fit through physical exercise and purifying one’s mind through the cultivation of one’s moral character. This is completely different from the Western method that stresses healthy food and physical exercise. The Taoist method of health preservation is a method involving the entire cultivation of one’s

life, through which can be realized the highest aspirations of the “oneness of heaven and man” or “being at one with Tao.” The Taoist cultivation of both character and life is still very significant for the people of today if they are to have healthy bodies and healthy minds. The Taoist cultivation of life covers most of the *qigong* methods spread in present-day society. The Taoist cultivation of character is a method of psychological control, very similar to the psychological therapy of modern medicine. In a commercial society, competition is fierce, people suffer from stress or anxiety, and the number of psychological patients keeps increasing. If the Taoist mind-control method could be adopted, it may alleviate people’s stress and anxiety and enable them to maintain a sound mental state.

(7) Sense of Responsibility for Helping Society and People

In the Taoist classic *Book of Salvation*, there is the saying: “Divine Tao values life and endlessly delivers human beings.” Taoism requires its followers to take responsibility not only for “delivering” themselves but also for “delivering” other people. There are many ways to deliver others, such as influencing other people through one’s own morality and actions, using one’s own ability to help others, using one’s own knowledge to teach others, and using one’s own religious cultivation to serve the public. Only by actively serving society will one have complete and perfect merits and then be able to become immortal.

In short, the Taoist attitude toward life is enlightening to the people of today for a correct understanding of oneself and the value of life, for the correct handling of relationships with other people and society, and for creating a fine life.

3. Taoism and Environmental Protection

The *Book of Supreme Peace*, one of the earliest classics of Taoism, expounds the theory of the “oneness of heaven and man” and maintains that man and nature must coexist in harmony. Therefore, Taoists have always been aware of environmental protection.

Taoism teaches that heaven, earth and all beings have been created by Tao. So all things with a form contain Tao. All beings have the right to develop their own nature, which is given by Tao. Human beings must not randomly kill other living beings and impede them from realizing their own

value. The universe evolves without cease. Man, as a part of the universe, should fight for a more harmonious universe and not snuff out the vitality of the universe by destroying all beings.

Taoism teaches that the Tao of heaven, or the Heavenly Way, must not interfere with others and must let all beings be their natural selves. Man should abide by the Heavenly Way and must not randomly interfere with the objective progress of nature. To implement the principle of non-interference toward a myriad of beings, Taoism advocates the contemplation of all beings from the point of view of Tao, not from that of oneself. The contemplation of all beings from the point of view of Tao means, in fact, the contemplation of all beings from the perspective of the whole universe. In this way, one may clearly see the chain of different beings in the ecosystem, as well as their roles. Human actions must comply with the laws of the ecosystem to enable myriad beings to be preserved and to evolve in a complete, stable and perfect environment. If beings are contemplated from the point of view of oneself, then this contemplation will very often be based on one's own subjective interests, which will often lead to actions that interfere with nature. Modern science has proved that nature operates on the basis of its own laws. The Taoist conceptions of non-interference, of minimizing human interference in nature, and of trusting all beings capable of looking after themselves are very profound.

Taoism teaches that the survival of mankind cannot be separated from a harmonious and peaceful natural environment. The *Book of Supreme Peace* says, "The life of mankind lies with heaven and earth. So mankind must first have a peaceful heaven and earth, then it may win eternal peace." In many Taoist commandments, there are many specific stipulations on environmental protection. To protect animals, Taoist commandments strictly forbid killing. Taoism does not deal with this concept in a broad sense but has laid down detailed rules. The 95th rule in the *One Hundred and Eighty Commandments of the Supreme Master* (Laojun Shuo Yibaibashi Jie 老君说一百八十戒) provides that "Hibernating insects under the ground must not be disturbed in winter." The 97th rule stipulates, "It is prohibited to climb up a tree to poke a bird nest or break bird eggs." The 98th rule says, "Birds and beasts must not be caged." The 112th rule of the *Commandments for Middle Perfection* (Zhongji Jie 中极戒) says, "One must not pour hot water onto the ground that might kill insects." All this indicates that great care was given

to wildlife when those commandments were formulated.

Apart from the killing of living things, Taoism also opposes the scaring or maltreating of animals. Taoism has also devised some rules for protecting plants, soil, and water resources. What is worth noting is that the *Book of Supreme Peace* stipulates that the criterion for evaluating the wealth of human society is the number of surviving species in the world. It says, "So-called wealth means that there is a shortage of nothing. For the world, wealth means that all beings under heaven grow naturally and nothing is lacking. In remote ancient times, there was every kind of creature and this could be called wealth. In middle ancient times, the number of species had fallen somewhat and this should be called preliminary poverty. Now there are fewer and fewer species, and the world has lapsed into great poverty." This concept of wealth and poverty being determined by the number of existing species is most significant.

As discussed above, under the guidance of the ecological concept of the "oneness of heaven and man," Taoism has profoundly expounded the relationship between man and nature and has formulated a number of measures to protect the environment. This deserves to be considered and utilized by the people of today. Of course, during the entire ancient period from the birth of Taoism to its heyday, damage to the environment was not a serious problem. Naturally, Taoist awareness of ecological protection remained instinctive and simple. But it is believed that valuable Taoist concepts can be enhanced through modern science or complement modern science to become new ecological concepts that can meet the needs of the age.

III. BASICS OF THE TAOIST RELIGION

1. Appellations of Taoists

Professional practitioners of Taoism are generally called Taoist priests (*daoshi* 道士 or *daoren* 道人). In ancient times, because Taoist priests wore yellow headdresses, they were often called *huangguan* (黄冠, yellow headdresses). Female Taoist priests were called *nü huangguan* (女黄冠, women yellow headdresses), which was very often shortened to *nüguan*. Today, male Taoist priests are normally called *qiandao* (乾道, heaven Tao), while female Taoist priests are called *kundao* (坤道, earth Tao). Lay people also call female Taoist priests *daogu* (道姑, Tao priestess). Legend has it that Taoist priests are able to grow feathered wings and fly to heaven through cultivation, so Taoist priests are also called *yushi* (羽士) or *yuke* (羽客), which both mean a person with feathered wings.

Taoist priests with supreme ability were revered as Lofty Taoist (*gaodao* 高道), Lofty Perfect One (*gaozhen* 高真), Lofty Master (*gaoshi* 高士) or Great Master (*dashi* 大师). Many Lofty Taoists in history were bestowed with such titles as Patriarch (*xiansheng* 先生), Perfect One or Perfect Immortal (*zhenren* 真人) and Celestial Master (*tianshi* 天师) by emperors.

Disciples who have just joined a Taoist monastery are called *daotong* (道童, Tao boy). A *daotong* may become a Taoist priest only when he has formally become a master's apprentice. Today, the Taoist religion can be divided into two schools – namely, the Complete Perfection tradition and the Orthodox Oneness tradition. Hence there are Complete Perfection Taoist priests and Orthodox Oneness Taoist priests. Taoist priests who live among the people holding Taoist rituals and practicing Taoism among them are called *sanju daoshi* (散居道士, scattered Taoist priests).

When a person enters the religion, he keeps his surname but adopts a

new given name for himself as a religious name. Such a name is usually made up of two characters. The first is selected from a book of words in chronological order from the tradition to which he belongs and the second character is given by his master with reference to Taoist doctrine. Apart from this name, one may also have another Taoist title, such as two characters followed by *zi* 子 (master).

There is a set of rules concerning the management of Taoist monasteries. Taoist priests have different posts in this administrative hierarchy and each has his or her duties. Basically they are:

- (1) The abbot or *fangzhang* (方丈), the governor of a monastery who is responsible for preaching, the transmission of commandments, and the salvation of his disciples. The abbot, who is elected by all the Taoist priests of the monastery, must be a scrupulous man with a high reputation and great wisdom and he must have undergone the Great Commandments for the Illumination of the Three Altars. The criteria for the selection of an abbot are strictly adhered to, and the monastery would rather go without an abbot than pick someone who is not up to the standard;
- (2) The superintendent or *jianyuan* (监院), also known as the manager or *dangjia* (当家), who is responsible for managing all the administrative affairs of a monastery;
- (3) The assistant manager or *duguan* (都管), who assists the superintendent in taking care of the monastery's affairs;
- (4) The speaker or *dujiang* (都讲), who preaches scripture;
- (5) The mess manager or *duchu* (都厨), who is in charge of the monastery's canteen;
- (6) The hall master or *dianzhu* (殿主), who looks after all the buildings and related matters; and
- (7) The receptionist or *zhike* (知客), who receives visitors or visits by fellow Taoist priests from other monasteries.

Ceremonies are often held in a monastery and the one who plays the major role on such occasions is called the high priest (*gaogong* 高功). Those who chant scriptures and play ritual instruments are called scripture masters (*jingshi* 经师).

Among themselves, Taoist priests call one another Tao friend (*daoyou* 道友) or elder brother (*dao-xiong* 道兄 or *shixiong* 师兄). This is done among both male and female priests, regardless of age.

Lay people may call a Taoist priest Tao elder (*dao-zhang* 道长) or immortal elder (*xian-zhang* 仙长). If you want to ask the surname of a Taoist priest, you may say, “Could you Tao elder please tell me your immortal name (*dao-zhang xian xing* 道长仙姓)?” If you want to know his given name, you can ask, “May I know your respected name (*Shang Xia* 上下)?” If you want to know to which school he or she belongs, you may ask about his “immortal sect” (*xian pai* 仙派).

A lay Taoist is called *jushi* (居士) or *xinshi* (信士).

2. Taoist Attire

The attire of a Taoist may be divided into four parts: hat, headdress, robe and footwear.

(1) Taoist Hats

The main types of Taoist hat are the *bunyuan jin*, *zhuangzi jin*, *chunyang jin*, *xiaoyao jin* and *yizi jin*.

The *bunyuan jin* (混元巾, Vortical Primodality hat), also known as the *guan jin* (冠巾), is hemispherical in shape, with a hard surface and a hole in the top, through which a pigtail can be pulled through. It is the most formal Taoist hat.

The *zhuangzi jin* (庄子巾, Master Zhuang hat), also known as the *nanhua jin* (南华巾), is a hat with a round rim and a sloping front. The top is flat and neat. In the middle of the front, there is an article called *maozheng* (帽正, literally “headgear upright”) mostly made of jade, which is used to determine if the hat is being worn properly.

The Chunyang hat (纯阳巾), also known as the Huayang hat (华阳巾), Ziyang hat (紫阳巾), Jiuyang hat (九阳巾) or Jiuliang hat (九梁巾), is a hat with a round rim and a sloping front. The top is flat and neat. The upper part of the front has nine vertical ridges. It also has a *maozheng* in the middle of the front. Taoist priests of the Orthodox Oneness tradition usually wear this kind of hat.

The *xiaoyao jin* (逍遥巾, carefree hat) is a cloth wrapping for the hair bun and adorned with a streamer on either side. It is a favorite with young

Taoists, for it makes them look free and elegant when they walk about.

The *yizi jin* (一字巾, one-character hat) is a sash for tying up the hair, with a *maozheng* on each side. The two *maozheng* are buckled up to make the *yizi jin* hat.

(2) Taoist Headdresses

Taoist headdresses, mostly made of wood, are worn on the occasion of religious activities. The main types are the *huang guan*, *wuyue guan*, *xing guan*, *lianhua guan* and *wulao guan*.

The *huang guan* (黃冠, yellow headdress) is in the shape of a crescent. It has a pair of holes in the lower rim, through which a wooden hairpin goes to fix the hat to the bun of the hair. Taoist priests of the Complete Perfection tradition often wear this kind of headdress.

The *wuyue guan* (五岳冠, five-mountain headdress) is shaped like an upside-down cone and there is a picture of five mountains carved on the front. Only those who have undergone the Great Commandments for the Illumination of the Three Altars are allowed the honor of wearing this kind of headdress.

The *xing guan* (星冠, star headdress), also known as the *wudou guan* (五斗冠, five stars headdress), is shaped like an upside-down cone with a picture of the constellations in five points – north, south, east, west and center. Taoist priests wear this kind of headdress when holding ceremonies to pay homage to the stars.

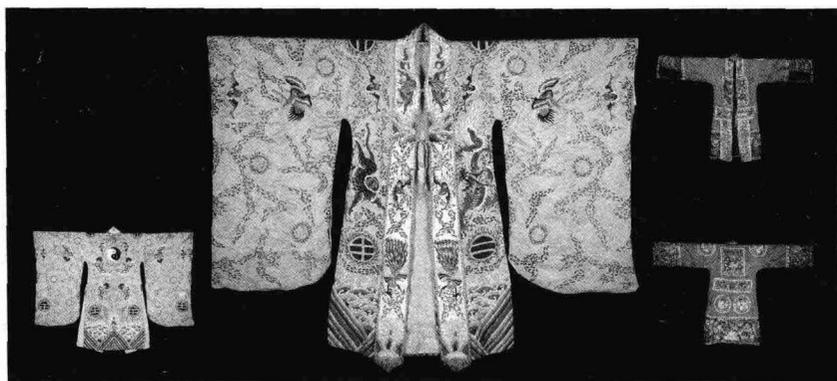
The *lianhua guan* (蓮花冠, lotus-blossom headdress) is shaped like a lotus flower with the head of a *ruyi* (如意, an S-shaped wand made of jade, symbolizing good fortune) planted on it. A high priest would wear this kind of headdress for Taoist rituals.

The *wulao guan* (五老冠, five elders headdress) has no top and has five lotus-flower petals with five elderly deities painted on them. On both sides of the headdress, two belts dangle down, their ends resembling swords.

(3) Taoist Robes

Taoist robes can be divided into the great robe, ordination robe and ritual robe, among others.

The great robe is blue in color with a wide front and it goes down to the ankle. Its sleeves are about 1.4 *chi* (47 centimeters) wide and also reach to the ankle. This is the most common robe worn by Taoist priests.



Ritual robes.

The ordination robe is yellow in color with a wide front and it goes down to the ankle. Its sleeves are about 2.4 *chi* (80 centimeters) wide and also reach to the ankle. Only those Taoist priests who have gone through the ordination ritual may wear this kind of robe.

The ritual robe is a front-buttoned robe with a mixture of colors. The bottom hem of the robe reaches the shin. It is embroidered with all sorts of auspicious patterns such as stars, the sun, the moon, the Eight Trigrams, pagodas, dragons, cranes and Chinese unicorns, with golden and silver-colored threads. Only high priests may wear ritual robes during grand religious ceremonies.

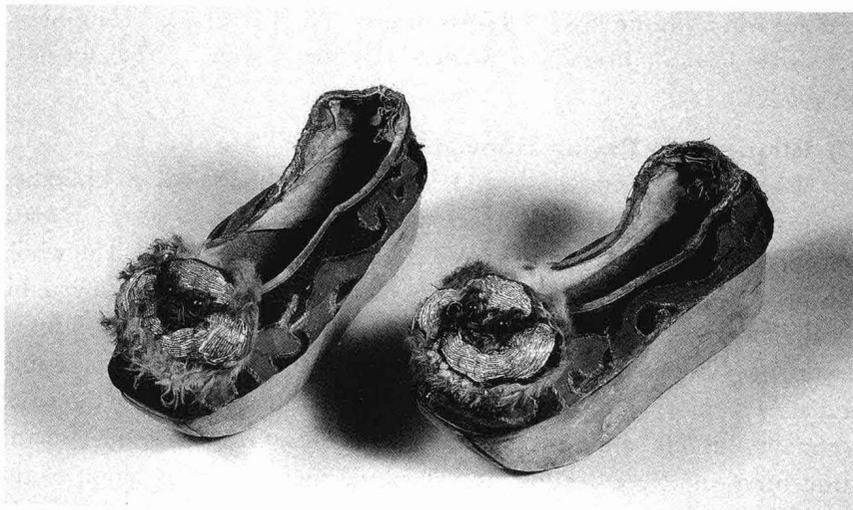
(4) Taoist Footwear

All Taoist priests wear cloth shoes, including round-opening shoes, twin-face shoes and cloud shoes.

Round-opening shoes (*yuankou xie* 圆口鞋) are black shoes but their uppers are cut in a round shape. They are everyday footwears of Taoist priests.

Two-face shoes (*shuanglian xie* 双脸鞋) are similar to round-opening or *yuankou* shoes but have a ridge in the middle of the front upper dividing the shoe into two parts, hence the name. These shoes are worn on formal occasions.

Cloud shoes (*yun lu* 云履), also known as court shoes (*chao xie* 朝鞋), have thick soles and their uppers are decorated with cloud patterns. They



Court shoes (*chao xie*).

are worn by high priests during grand ceremonies.

Taoist priests usually wear long white cloth socks, which are held up with garters a little below the knee.

Taoist priests' attire has, by and large, preserved the traditional style, although there have been slight changes as society progressed.

3. Taoist Etiquette

Here are brief descriptions of the main aspects of Taoist etiquette when meeting people or at ceremonies to offer sacrifices to gods.

(1) When Meeting People

When two Taoist priests meet, they make a gesture of greeting such as holding up their joined hands in front of their chest or they bow toward each other while cordially saying the word "mercy" (*cibei* 慈悲). Here, "mercy" is simply a word of greeting to show politeness.

Lay people meeting a Taoist priest may make a gesture of greeting such as holding up their joined hands in front of their chest or bowing toward the priest while courteously and respectfully saying "Lord of Boundless Heaven." These words in fact constitute a sacred title in the Taoist religion

and are often on the lips of Taoist priests. The full title is “Happiness-bestowing Lord of Boundless Heaven” (Fu Sheng Wuliang Tianzun 福生无量天尊).

(2) Etiquette for Paying Homage to Gods

When paying homage to a god, a Taoist priest may hold up his joined hands in front of his chest or make a bow. If he wants to show his great sincerity, he may go down on his knees to kowtow to the god. The whole process is like this: 1) the priest stands in front of a kneeling cushion with his toes pointed outward and with a distance of two to three inches (5 to 7.6 centimeters) between his heels; 2) while bowing, the priest raises his hands and joins them when they come up to the level of his stomach; 3) the priest withdraws his left hand to cover his heart (a sign of respect to the god and concentration of one’s mind, as a flustered mental state is taboo to the religion) as he kneels down, putting his right hand on the cushion to support his body; when he is properly on his knees, he puts his left hand on the back of his right hand; 4) the priest lies prone and knocks his head against the back of his hands; 5) he lifts his head, puts his left hand over his heart again and, with the help of his right hand, slowly stands up on his feet; then holds up his hands again, ready to repeat the whole process. The whole process should be carried out three times. After that, the priest should stand up and put his joined hands over the upper part of his stomach, which Taoists refer to as embracing the Supreme Ultimate (*huaibao Taiji* 怀抱太极). Then, he makes another gesture by raising his joined hands in front of his chest and leaves the cushion.

One very popular way of paying homage to gods is to burn incense. Taoist devotees believe that the incense smoke will carry a message to a god and then the god will bless the devotee. When presenting incense, one should hold three sticks of lit incense and bow before a statue or picture of a god, while making a wish in one’s heart. Then he uses the left hand to put the incense in the incense burner. If there is a flame when the incense is lit, do not blow it out but put it out by shaking the incense sticks. Normally, one must not walk about in the temple proper while holding burning incense. If one wants to pay homage to several gods, one should not light one lot of incense at a time. One should walk to the statue of the first god and light three joss sticks. After making obeisance, one should place the sticks in the

burner. Then he walks to another statue and light another three sticks. When he walks to the last statue, he lights the remaining sticks and then places all of them in the burner.

If you want to worship a god at home, you may buy a small statue of the god and, after a Taoist priest has blessed it, put it in a shrine at home. The shrine must be clean and usually it must not be installed in a bedroom.

4. Taoist Festivals

Most Taoist festivals mark the birthdays of gods or traditional folk festivals. On such occasions, all Taoist monasteries hold rituals to pray for blessings or to expiate the souls of the dead. The following are some major Taoist festivals.

(1) Birthday of the Three Pristine Ones

The most venerable gods of the Taoist religion are the Three Pristine Ones, namely, the Primeval Lord of Heaven, Heavenly Lord of Numinous Treasure, and the Heavenly Lord of Tao and Its Virtue (that is, the Supreme Master Lao Zi). The Primeval Lord of Heaven lives in the Jade Purity sacred realm in the Thirty-fifth Heaven (Pristine Subtlety Heaven); the Heavenly Lord of Numinous Treasure lives in the High Purity sacred realm in the 34th Heaven (Beyond Yu Heaven); and the Heavenly Lord of Tao and Its Virtue lives in the Supreme Purity sacred realm in the Thirty-third Heaven (Great Red Heaven). Together, their realms are called the Sacred Realms of the Three Pristine Ones.

The Primeval Lord of Heaven symbolizes the first Great Century of the preliminary division of Yin and Yang in the Age of Primordial Chaos, and his birthday fell on the winter solstice, a time when the revival of all beings begins.

The Heavenly Lord of Numinous Treasure symbolizes the second Great Century of the clear division between Yin and Yang in the Age of Preliminary Purity of Primordial Chaos, and his birthday fell on the summer solstice, a time when all beings are in their prime.

The Heavenly Lord of Tao and Its Virtue symbolizes the third Great Century, when heaven and earth were formed and all beings grew in prosperity. The Heavenly Lord of Tao and Its Virtue (the Supreme Master)

refers to Lao Zi. Taoists believe that Lao Zi was born on the 15th day of the second month in the ninth year of Wuding's reign during the Yin (Shang) Dynasty (c. 1,245 BC), and so Lao Zi's birthday is celebrated on the 15th day of the second lunar month.

Taoism maintains that, although the Three Pristine Ones have different names, they essentially share the same root and are all incarnations of Tao. Therefore, on the winter and summer solstices and on the 15th day of the second lunar month, Taoist devotees hold grand ceremonies to pay homage to the three gods for their infinite merits in forming heaven and earth and in raising all beings.

(2) Jade Emperor's Birthday

The Jade Emperor is an incarnation of the Primeval Lord of Heaven and lives in the All-Embracing Heaven Hall of the Heavenly Golden Palace. A stately looking god, he rules all the heavens, all the gods and the whole universe. He is the one who wields supreme power.

Four Heavenly Emperors assist the Jade Emperor in ruling the universe. They are the Great Heavenly Emperor of the Highest Palace of Polaris, who helps the Jade Emperor administer the North Pole, South Pole, heaven, earth and humankind as well as the military affairs of the human world; the Great Emperor of the Middle Heaven North Pole Star of Purple Subtlety, who helps the Jade Emperor administer all constellations and the four seasons; the Imperial Earth God Who Receives and Follows Heavenly Laws, who helps the Jade Emperor administer Yin and Yang, birth, the growth of all beings, and all mountains and rivers; and the Great South Pole Emperor of Longevity, who helps the Jade Emperor summon gods to assist the poor and suffering.

The Jade Emperor's birthday falls on the ninth day of the first lunar month. All gods in heaven and on earth gather for a celebration on his birthday. Therefore, Taoist monasteries hold grand ceremonies and Taoist priests chant scriptures and pray for prosperity for the country and a peaceful life for the people, for good weather and a bumper harvest. Each monastery, its entrance gate wide open, is full of commotion and the smoke of incense lingers all around.

On the 25th day of the 12th lunar month, the Jade Emperor conducts an inspection tour to find out how things are going in the human world in order to mete out rewards and punishments. Taoists hold grand ceremo-

nies at midnight when that day begins to greet the arrival of the Jade Emperor. From that day until the ninth day of the first lunar month, his birthday, the Jade Emperor tours the human world. He returns to his Heavenly Palace on the afternoon of the last day. Naturally, Taoists gather again for a ceremony to see him off.

(3) Triple Origin Festivals

After Yin and Yang were first divided and heaven and earth were formed, the Heavenly Official, Earthly Official and Water Official were appointed to manage heaven, the earth and water. As the three officials came into being from the upper, middle and lower origins of true vital breath (*zhenqi* 真气), they are therefore also known as the Triple Origin. It is believed that, apart from their fundamental functions, the Heavenly Official also gives people blessings, the Earthly Official pardons people's sins, and the Water Official eradicates people's troubles. They also keep a register of every man and woman and determine whether they live or die. So they descend to the human world to inspect people's merits and demerits and decide on the length of their lives, with the Heavenly Official descending on the 15th day of the first lunar month, the Earthly Official on the 15th day of the 7th lunar month and the Water Official on the 15th day of the 10th lunar month. On each of these three days, Taoists hold ceremonies to celebrate the arrival of the three gods, hence the Triple Origin festivals. Of these, the Upper Origin Festival and the Middle Origin Festival have now become traditional festivals for the Chinese people. The Upper Origin Festival is what laymen call the Lantern Festival. It is the climax of the lunar New Year celebrations. During the day, people perform dragon dances and light firecrackers and, at night, watch fireworks and lanterns, hold parties, and so on. In the Middle Origin Festival, the Earthly Official pardons people's sins. So Taoist priests hold rituals to deliver the dead, offering sacrifices to hungry ghosts to help alleviate their suffering and return to the human world. It is not uncommon to see people burning funereal paper money, offering sacrifices to their ancestors.

(4) Five *La* Festivals

La (腊) refers to the holding of ceremonies to offer sacrifices to the gods. The Taoist religion created five *la* festivals on the basis of the ancient *la* day (*la ri* 腊日, day of winter sacrifice) on which people offered sacri-

fices to their ancestors and all the gods. The heavenly *la* (*tian la* 天腊) falls on the first day of the first lunar month, on which day the Five Emperors determine the length of a newborn baby's life. The earthly *la* (*di la* 地腊) falls on the fifth day of the fifth lunar month, on which day the Five Emperors determine a newborn baby's official posts and whether the baby will be strong or weak in flesh and blood. The *la* of Tao and its virtue (*daode la* 道德腊) falls on the seventh day of the seventh lunar month, on which day the Five Emperors determine whether a newborn baby's skeleton will be strong or weak. The people's harvest *la* (*minsui la* 民岁腊) falls on the first day of the 10th lunar month, on which day the Five Emperors determine a newborn baby's future wealth and official status. The nobility *la* (*wanghou la* 王侯腊) falls on the eighth day of the 12th lunar month, on which day the Five Emperors determine a newborn baby's future position and places of residence in different periods. As the heavenly *la* happens to fall on the Chinese New Year's Day, it is the grandest of the five festivals. On that day, Taoist priests traditionally hold ceremonies to offer sacrifices to heaven and their ancestors and to pray for fortune and a long life.

(5) Birthday of the Great Emperor of the Sacred Mountain of the East

The Great Emperor of the Sacred Mountain of the East that Taoists worship is the god that the common people originally worshiped as the God of Mount Taishan of the East. People used to believe that the spirits of all the deceased would go and live on Mount Taishan and that the God of Mount Taishan was the supreme ruler of all the spirits in the netherworld. The status of the God of Mount Taishan then continued to rise and he finally became the Great Emperor of the Sacred Mountain of the East. The netherworld under his rule has 75 boards in charge of keeping registers on the lives and deaths of human beings, rewarding the good and punishing evildoers. In the early days, the ceremony to offer sacrifices to the Great Emperor of the Sacred Mountain of the East was held only on Mount Taishan. As Chinese emperors of various dynasties held him in great esteem, temples in honor of the Sacred Mountain of the East were built throughout the country. It is believed that the birthday of the Great Emperor of the Sacred Mountain of the East fell on the 28th day of the third lunar month so, on that day, Taoist monasteries hold grand ceremonies to celebrate and visitors swarm Taoist monasteries to join the excitement.

(6) Birthday of the Great Perfect Warrior Emperor

The Great Perfect Warrior Emperor is the god that people used to worship as the Mysterious Warrior of the North. The name “Mysterious Warrior” was changed to “Perfect Warrior” in the era of Auspicious Talismans of the Great Mean (Dazhong Xiangfu 大中祥符) (1008-1016) during the reign of the Song Dynasty Emperor Zhenzong because the word *xuan* (玄, mysterious) had been used by the emperor’s royal forefather Zhao Xuanlang and he did not like the word to be used in another person’s name. After the Song Dynasty, the practice of worshiping the Mysterious Warrior God grew more and more popular and his status was greatly enhanced. He was then revered as the Great Perfect Warrior Emperor or the Highest Emperor of the Mysterious Heaven. He was said to have cultivated himself in Mount Wudang, so Emperor Chengzu of the Ming Dynasty sent Marquis Zhangxing to lead more than 200,000 soldiers to Mount Wudang in 1412 to build Taoist monasteries, and worship of the Great Perfect Warrior Emperor reached its heyday. The birthday of the Great Perfect Warrior Emperor falls on the third day of the third lunar month.

(7) Imperial Sovereign Wenchang’s Birthday

Imperial Sovereign Wenchang has been worshiped by both religious clergy and laymen. He is in charge of the official positions of scholars. He is also known as the Imperial Sovereign of Zitong. According to Taoist scriptures, Wenchang took the form of a man called Zhang Yazhi and was born in Zitong County in the State of Shu (in present-day Sichuan) during the late Western Jin Dynasty. During one period, a plague ravaged the area. One night, Zhang Yazhi dreamed that a god gave him the *Perfect Book of the Great Grotto* and some talismanic figures. With those, he eliminated the plague and rescued numerous people. He later descended to the human world several times and often took the form of a scholar who then became an official. Being upright and clean, he was very popular among the people. So the Jade Emperor bestowed the title of Imperial Sovereign Wenchang on him and asked him to take charge of officials’ salaries. Therefore, in the old days, scholars showed particular respect to Wenchang. During the Yuan and Ming dynasties and afterward, many buildings were built and given such names as Wenchang Palace, Wenchang Hall and Wenchang Pavilion. The *Book of Hidden Virtues of Imperial Sovereign Wenchang* is a renowned Taoist classic that advises people to be kindhearted. According to Taoism,

Wenchang's birthday fell on the third day of the second lunar month. In the old days, Taoist followers would gather on that day for celebrations, which became common practice later on.

(8) Birthday of Saintly Imperial Sovereign Guan Yu

Saintly Imperial Sovereign Guan Yu refers to the famous general Guan Yu of the Kingdom of Shu during the Three Kingdoms period. Guan Yu became a god after his death because of his loyalty. In the old days, Guan Yu was worshiped by all sectors of society, who believed that he was a god with the greatest of ability. The man in the street believed that Guan Yu was a great god who was able to disperse evil and protect people with his integrity and candid disposition. Scholars worshiped him as a model of morality because of his loyalty and uprightness. Military men worshiped him as a god of war because of his dauntlessness and ability in battle. Merchants worshiped him as a god of wealth because of his trustworthiness. During the Ming and Qing dynasties, temples to Lord Guan Yu could be seen throughout the country. Guan's birthday fell on the 13th day of the fifth lunar month. It is also believed that he became a god on the 13th day of the ninth lunar month. If it rained on those days, people would say it was Duke Guan's "knife-sharpening rain."

(9) Celestial Master Zhang's Birthday

Celestial Master Zhang refers to Zhang Daoling of the Han Dynasty. He was born on the 15th day of the first lunar month in the 10th year of the Jianwu era (AD 34) of Emperor Guangwu's reign during the Eastern Han Dynasty. He began to learn Confucianism while he was still small and was well versed in the five Confucian classics. Later on, he found them of no benefit to achieving longevity and so began to study how to lengthen one's life. He learned the art of the Yellow Emperor's Nine Cauldron Alchemy and started to temper an elixir on Yunjin (Cloud-Pattern Brocade) Mountain in Jiangxi Province. When the elixir was formed, a dragon and tiger appeared. So the name of the mountain was changed to Longhu (Dragon and Tiger) Mountain. On learning that the people of Shu (present-day Sichuan) were simple and honest and easy to teach, he went to Shu in the west and began cultivating himself on Singing Crane Mountain (Mount Heming). There, the Supreme Master (Lao Zi) told him of the Mighty Commonwealth of the Orthodox Oneness. Zhang began to preach this to the com-

mon people and he founded the Celestial Master tradition, which is still active today. His birthday happened to fall on the 15th day of the first lunar month, the Upper Origin Festival. Grand celebrations are held in Taoist monasteries on this occasion.

(10) Birthdays of the Three Perfect Sovereign Mao Brothers

The Three Perfect Sovereign Mao Brothers refer to three brothers from the Han Dynasty named Mao Ying, Mao Gu and Mao Zhong, who attained Tao and became immortal. Mao Ying left home at the age of 18 and cultivated himself on Mount Hengshan in Shanxi Province. After 20 years, he attained Tao and returned home. Later he lived as a hermit on Mount Juju in the Yangtze River Valley. People inhabiting in the vicinity greatly benefited from his mastery of Tao because they were no longer troubled by floods, droughts, plagues, locusts, and so on. So they called the mountain Mount Maoshan (茅山). His younger brothers Mao Gu and Mao Zhong were both high-ranking officials at that time. On learning that their brother had attained Tao and become immortal, they resigned and joined Mao Ying. Mao Ying taught them how to cultivate themselves and what to eat and they too became immortal. Later, Mao Ying was appointed the Perfect Sovereign of the Supreme Origin and Controller of Destinies of the Sacred Mountain of the East, Mao Gu became Perfect Sovereign Mao, High Official of the Imperial Court and Ruler of Wealth, and Mao Zhong was appointed the Perfect Sovereign and Protector of Life. They came to be known as the Three Perfect Sovereign Mao Brothers. The *Investigations into the Divine* (*Soushenji* 搜神记) says that the birthdays of the three Mao brothers all fell on the 18th day of the third lunar month. Therefore, a temple fair is held each year on Mount Maoshan from the 24th day of the 12th lunar month, the day for sending off the Kitchen God, to the 18th day of the third lunar month. Endless pilgrims and Taoist followers would come from all parts of the country.

(11) Birthday of Patriarch Lü

Patriarch Lü refers to Lü Dongbin, one of the famous Eight Immortals. Legend has it that he often comes to the human world and brings those who are fortunate to heaven. Many legends about him have been circulated among the people, on whom Lü has had a great influence. He once taught the Great Way to Wang Chongyang, so Lü is regarded as a patriarch of the

Complete Perfection tradition founded by Wang Chongyang. On the occasion of his birthday, on the 14th day of the fourth lunar month, Taoist monasteries would hold celebratory ceremonies and pray for the fortune and longevity of the people.

(12) Patriarch Chongyang's Birthday

Patriarch Chongyang refers to Wang Chongyang. It is said that he met Lü Dongbin in the town of Ganhe when he was 48 and that he was taught secrets. Then he lived as a hermit and cultivated himself for years in his hometown. Later he went to Shandong to preach and founded the Complete Perfection tradition. His birthday falls on the 22nd day of the 12th lunar month.

(13) Birthday of Patriarch Qiu

Patriarch Qiu refers to Qiu Chuji, also known as Changchunzi. He was one of Wang Chongyang's disciples. He founded the Dragon Gate school of the Complete Perfection tradition and had a big following among later generations. His birthday falls on the 19th day of the first lunar month. The Yanjiu Festival used to be held in Beijing in the past in memory of Patriarch Qiu. In those days, the temple fair held at Beijing's White Cloud Monastery lasted from the first to the 19th day of the first lunar month. It was said that deities would descend to the monastery on the night of the 18th day in the form of visitors, beggars or maybe Taoist priests. Anyone who saw such deities would enjoy immense happiness.

IV. FAMOUS TAOIST MOUNTAINS, CAVERNS, TEMPLES AND FAIRYLANDS

1. The Emergence and Development of Famous Taoist Mountains

As early as the Warring States Period (475-221 BC), there was a rumor among alchemists in the states of Yan and Qi that there were three fairy mountains in the Bohai Sea – Penglai, Fangzhang and Yingzhou – where there were immortals, elixirs of life, white fowl and other animals, and palaces built of gold and silver. Spurred on by alchemists, kings Wei and Xuan of Qi, King Zhao of Yan and Emperor Qinshihuang of the Qin Dynasty and Emperor Wudi of the Han Dynasty – ordered naval expeditions to find the mountains, which all ended in failure. Taoists continued to believe that there were sacred mountains in the sea, and there arose the Taoist theory of “Ten Continents and Three Islands.”

The Ten Continents are:

- (1) Zuzhou, in the middle of the East Sea, covering an area of 500 square *li* (125 square kilometers), where there are immortal herbs;
- (2) Yingzhou, in the middle of the East Sea, covering an area of 4,000 square *li* (1,000 square kilometers), which contains glossy ganoderma mushrooms of immortality, jade stones, a spring of sweet water that brings longevity to the drinker, immortals similar to the people of southeastern China in terms of customs, and mountains and rivers similar to those in China;
- (3) Xuanzhou, a hilly place in the middle of the North Sea, covering an area of 1,200 square *li* (300 square kilometers), and teeming with

gold and jade herbs;

- (4) Yanzhou, in the middle of the South Sea, covering an area of 2,000 square *li* (500 square kilometers), where there is a leopard-like animal born of the wind, whose brain, when eaten together with chrysanthemums, makes a person live for 500 years, and where there is the Fire Forest Mountain, on which there lives a mouse-like “firelight animal” whose fur can be woven into a cloth called “fire-rinsed cloth”;
- (5) Changzhou, in the middle of the South Sea, covering an area of 5,000 square *li* (1,250 square kilometers), where everything can be found: hills, rivers, tall trees, herbs of immortality, elixirs, sweet water, and jade blossoms. There is a Purple Palace, a resort for immortals and fairies;
- (6) Yuanzhou, in the middle of the North Sea, covering an area of 3,000 square *li* (750 square kilometers), where there are five herbs of immortality and streams of sweet water that give the drinker a long life;
- (7) Liuzhou, in the middle of the West Sea, covering an area of 3,000 square *li* (750 square kilometers), covered with hills and streams, where the rocks can be made into sharp, shining swords that cut jade easily;
- (8) Shengzhou, in the middle of the East Sea, covering an area of 2,500 square *li* (625 square kilometers), where the weather is mild all year round, and where glossy ganoderma mushrooms grow and thousands of immortals live;
- (9) Fenglinzhou, in the middle of the West Sea, covering an area of 1,500 square *li* (375 square kilometers), and surrounded by vast, impassable water in which even a feather sinks, where there are phoenixes and Chinese unicorns, hills, streams, ponds, lakes, and magic medicine;
- (10) Jukuzhou, in the middle of the West Sea, covering an area of 3,000 square *li* (750 square kilometers), where there are many immortals living in innumerable palaces, various strange animals, and a mountain that looks like a man and bird and so is called Renniaoshan (人鸟山, Man-Bird Mountain). The mountain is covered with trees of returned souls that make horrible sounds like the bellowing of cattle and whose roots, processed into pills, will revive a dead person.

The Three Islands are:

- (1) Kunlun, which towers high in the middle of the Western Regions surrounded by water, and contains springs of sweet water, Jasper Lake and strange birds and animals, and is ruled by the Queen Mother of the West;
- (2) Pengqiu Hillock (or Penglai Mountain), on the northeastern shore of the East Sea, which has a high mountain like Kunlun in the center and is the place where the Emperor of Heaven rules the universe;
- (3) Fangzhang, a square area in the middle of the East Sea, where thousands of immortals unwilling to ascend to heaven farm and grow glossy ganoderma mushrooms of immortality.

Except for Mount Kunlun and the three fairy mountains, the Ten Continents and Three Islands are all inaccessible, being in the middle of the seas. Taoists cultivating themselves in mountains were impressed and inspired by the magnificent scenery, grotesque peaks, mysterious caverns and marvelous changes of scenery and, associating these with ancient legends and myths, they imagined that there were “dwellings of immortals” connected with heaven, where one could be blessed and cultivate himself to become immortal. Taoists believed that such dwellings included 10 Greater Grotto Heavens, 36 Lesser Grotto Heavens and 72 Blissful Realms. Through history, many Taoists built palaces and temples and cultivated themselves in those places, leaving many traces of cultural interest, historical relics and legends. Today, most of these places have become tourist sites.

The Ten Greater Grotto Heavens are:

- (1) The Mount Wangwu Grotto, located in the border area covering today's Yuanqu and Yangcheng in Shanxi Province and Jiyuan in Henan Province;
- (2) The Mount Weiyu Grotto in the present-day city of Huangyan in Zhejiang Province;
- (3) The Mount Xicheng Grotto in the present-day city of Chongzhou in Sichuan Province;
- (4) The Mount Xixuan Grotto in the present-day city of Ankang in Shaanxi Province;

- (5) The Mount Qingcheng Grotto in the present-day city of Dujiangyan in Sichuan Province;
- (6) The Mount Chicheng Grotto in present-day Tiantai County in Zhejiang Province;
- (7) The Mount Luofu Grotto in today's Boluo County in Guangdong Province;
- (8) The Mount Juqu Grotto in the present-day city of Jurong in Jiangsu Province;
- (9) The Mount Linwu Grotto at the mouth of Dongting Lake in Hunan Province; and
- (10) The Mount Kuocang Grotto in today's Xianju County in Zhejiang Province.

The Thirty-six Lesser Grotto Heavens are:

- (1) The Mount Huotong Grotto in today's Xiapu County in Fujian Province;
- (2) The Mount Taishan Grotto in today's Tai'an County in Shandong Province;
- (3) The Mount Hengshan Grotto in the present-day city of Hengyang in Hunan Province;
- (4) The Mount Huashan Grotto in today's Huayin County in Shaanxi Province;
- (5) The Mount Hengshan Grotto in today's Hunyuan County in Shanxi Province;
- (6) The Mount Songshan Grotto in today's Dengfeng County in Henan Province;
- (7) The Mount Emei Grotto in the present-day city of Emeishan in Sichuan Province;
- (8) The Mount Lushan Grotto in the present-day city of Jiujiang in Jiangxi Province;
- (9) The Mount Siming Grotto in the present-day city of Ningbo in Zhejiang Province;
- (10) The Mount Guiji Grotto in the present-day city of Shaoxing in Zhejiang Province;
- (11) The Mount Taibai Grotto in the border area between the counties of Meixian and Taibai in Shaanxi Province;

- (12) The Mount Xishan Grotto in the present-day city of Nanchang in Jiangxi Province;
- (13) The Mount Xiaowei Grotto in today's Liling County in Hunan Province;
- (14) The Mount Qianshan Grotto in today's Qianshan County in Anhui Province;
- (15) The Mount Guigu Grotto in today's Guixi County in Jiangxi Province;
- (16) The Mount Wuyi Grotto in the present-day city of Wuyishan in Fujian Province;
- (17) The Mount Yusi Grotto in today's Yongxin County in Jiangxi Province;
- (18) The Mount Huagai Grotto in the present-day city of Wenzhou in Zhejiang Province;
- (19) The Mount Gaizhu Grotto in the present-day city of Huangyan in Zhejiang Province;
- (20) The Mount Duqiao Grotto in today's Rongxian County in Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region;
- (21) The Mount Baishi Grotto in today's Yulin County in Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region;
- (22) The Mount Julou Grotto in today's Beiliu County in Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region;
- (23) The Mount Jiuyi Grotto in today's Ningyuan County in Hunan Province;
- (24) The Mount Dongyang Grotto in today's Liuyang County in Hunan Province;
- (25) The Mount Mufu Grotto in the border areas between today's Hunan, Hubei and Jiangxi provinces;
- (26) The Mount Dayou Grotto in today's Yuanling County in Hunan Province;
- (27) The Mount Jinting Grotto in today's Shengxian County in Zhejiang Province;
- (28) The Mount Magu Grotto in today's Nancheng County in Jiangxi Province;
- (29) The Mount Xiandu Grotto in today's Jinyun County in Zhejiang Province;

- (30) The Mount Qingtian Grotto in today's Qingtian County in Zhejiang Province;
- (31) The Mount Zhongshan Grotto in the present-day city of Nanjing in Jiangsu Province;
- (32) The Mount Liangchang Grotto in the present-day city of Jurong in Jiangsu Province;
- (33) The Mount Zigai Grotto in today's Dangyang County in Hubei Province;
- (34) The Mount Tianmu Grotto in today's Yuhang County in Zhejiang Province;
- (35) The Mount Taoyuan Grotto in today's Taoyuan County in Hunan Province; and
- (36) The Mount Jinhua Grotto in today's Jinhua County in Zhejiang Province.

The Seventy-two Blissful Realms are:

- (1) Mount Difei, or Mount Maoshan, in the present-day city of Jurong in Jiangsu Province;
- (2) Mount Gaizhu in the present-day city of Quzhou in Zhejiang Province;
- (3) Mount Xianke in today's Yongjia County in Zhejiang Province;
- (4) The Eastern Source of Immortals (东仙源, Dongxianyuan) in the present-day city of Huangyan in Zhejiang Province;
- (5) The Western Source of Immortals (西仙源, Xixianyuan) in the present-day city of Huangyan in Zhejiang Province;
- (6) Mount Nantian in today's Qingtian County in Zhejiang Province;
- (7) Mount Yulu, whose location is unknown;
- (8) Mount Qingyu, whose location is unknown;
- (9) The Yumu Grotto in today's Yongxin County in Jiangxi Province;
- (10) The Danxia Grotto in today's Nancheng County in Jiangxi Province;
- (11) Junshan Islet (君山, Sovereign Mountain) in the middle of Dongting Lake in Hunan Province;
- (12) Daruo Rock in today's Yongjia County in Zhejiang Province;
- (13) The Jiao Source (Jiaoyuan 焦源) in today's Jianyang County in Fujian Province;
- (14) Lingxu (灵墟, Numinous Ruins) in today's Tiantai County in

Zhejiang Province;

- (15) Wozhou Islet in today's Shengxian County in Zhejiang Province;
- (16) Tianlao Ridge in today's Shengxian County in Zhejiang Province;
- (17) Ruoye Stream in the present-day city of Shaoxing in Zhejiang Province;
- (18) Mount Jinting in today's Shengxian County in Zhejiang Province;
- (19) Mount Qingyuan in today's Qingyuan County in Guangdong Province;
- (20) Mount Anshan in today's Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region;
- (21) Mount Maling, known today as Suxianling, in the present-day city of Chenzhou in Hunan Province;
- (22) Mount Eyang in today's Changsha County in Hunan Province;
- (23) The Dongzhen Ruins in today's Changsha County in Hunan Province;
- (24) Qingyu Altar on today's Mount Hengshan in Hunan Province;
- (25) Guangtian Altar, west of Mount Hengshan in Hunan Province;
- (26) The Dongling Source, west of Mount Hengshan in Hunan Province;
- (27) Mount Donggong in today's Zhenghe County in Fujian Province;
- (28) Mount Taoshan, known today as Mount Xianyan, in Rui'an County in Zhejiang Province;
- (29) Sanhuang Well in today's Pingyang County in Zhejiang Province;
- (30) Mount Lanke in today's Quxian County in Zhejiang Province;
- (31) Lexi Stream, in today's Jianyang County in Fujian Province;
- (32) Mount Longhu in today's Guixi County in Jiangxi Province;
- (33) Mount Sanling in the present-day city of Shangrao in Jiangxi Province;
- (34) Quanyuan (泉源, Source of Springs), in today's Boluo County in Guangdong Province;
- (35) Mount Jinjing in today's Ningdu County in Jiangxi Province;
- (36) Mount Gezao in today's Qingjiang County in Jiangxi Province;
- (37) Mount Shifeng in today's Fengcheng County in Jiangxi Province;
- (38) Mount Xiaoyao in the present-day city of Nanchang in Jiangxi Province;
- (39) The Dongbai Source in today's Fengxin County in Jiangxi Province;
- (40) Mount Bochi in today's Huai'an County in Jiangsu Province;
- (41) Mount Lunshan in today's Dantu County in Jiangsu Province;
- (42) Maogong Altar in today's Wuxian County in Jiangsu Province;

- (43) Mount Jilong in today's Hexian County in Anhui Province;
- (44) Mount Tongbai in today's Tongbai County in Henan Province;
- (45) Mount Pingdu in today's Fengdu County in Sichuan Province;
- (46) Mount Lüluo in today's Taoyuan County in Hunan Province;
- (47) Mount Huxi in today's Pengze County in Jiangxi Province;
- (48) Mount Zhanglong in today's Liling County in Hunan Province;
- (49) Mount Baofu in today's Lianshan County in Guangdong Province;
- (50) Mount Damian in the present-day city of Dujiangyan in Sichuan Province;
- (51) Mount Yuanchen in today's Duchang County in Jiangxi Province;
- (52) Mount Mati (Matishan 马蹄山, Horse's Hoof Mountain) in today's Boyang County in Jiangxi Province;
- (53) Mount Deshan in the present-day city of Changde in Hunan Province;
- (54) Mount Gaoxilanshui (高溪蓝水山, High Stream and Blue Water Mountain) in today's Lantian County in Shaanxi Province;
- (55) Lanshui (蓝水, Blue River) in today's Lantian County in Shaanxi Province;
- (56) Mount Yufeng (玉峰, Jade Summit) in the present-day city of Xi'an in Shaanxi Province;
- (57) Mount Tianzhu in today's Lin'an County in Zhejiang Province;
- (58) Mount Shanggu in today's Shangxian County in Shaanxi Province;
- (59) Zhanggong Grotto in the present-day city of Yixing in Jiangsu Province;
- (60) Mount Sima Hui in today's Tiantai County in Zhejiang Province;
- (61) Mount Changzai in today's Zouping County in Shanxi Province;
- (62) Mount Zhongtiao in the southwest of today's Shanxi Province;
- (63) The Jiaohu Yucheng Grotto in today's Yao'an County in Yunnan Province;
- (64) Mount Mianzhu in today's Mianzhu County in Sichuan Province;
- (65) Lushui River (泸水, Lushui) in today's Sichuan Province;
- (66) Mount Ganshan in the south of today's Guizhou Province;
- (67) Mount Huangshan in the present-day city of Guanghan in Sichuan Province;
- (68) Mount Jincheng in today's Xinning County in Hunan Province;
- (69) The Cloudy Mountain (Yunshan 云山) in today's Wugang County

- in Hunan Province;
- (70) Mount Beimang in the present-day city of Luoyang in Henan Province;
- (71) Mount Lushan in today's Lianjiang County in Fujian Province; and
- (72) Mount Donghai (东海山, East Sea Mountain), known today as Mount Yuntai, in the city of Lianyungang in Jiangsu Province.

These Taoist grotto heavens and blissful realms include many famous mountains around China, most of which are national scenic and historical sites. The Taoists who lived there in seclusion through history did their best to protect the forests, rare birds, animals, flowers and herbs, leaving many splendid scenic places for today's tourists.

2. The Origin and Development of Taoist Palaces and Temples

In the early years of Taoism, most Taoists cultivated themselves on mountains, living alone in caves or in simple crude huts contiguous to them. During the Southern and Northern Dynasties, when the rulers believed in Taoism, imperial families and aristocrats built houses for Taoists and these gradually became larger and more artistic and were called *guan* (馆) or *guàn* (观) (temples). Some of the temples were built on mountains and some in large cities, so the Taoists' places for cultivation extended to cities. In the Tang Dynasty, as the imperial family gave energetic support to Taoism, Taoists' residences were built like imperial palaces and were called *gongguan* (宫观, palaces). Since then, these names have been used for the large houses where Taoists cultivate themselves and hold sacrificial rites.

Taoist palaces and temples were built according to set rules. Palaces and temples differ in size and layout but they have something in common, which is that they are generally composed of two parts: a larger main building for offering sacrifices to immortals, and simpler subsidiary buildings that serve as Taoists' residences. The main building consists of one or two main halls in a dominant position. After the Tang and Song dynasties, the Hall of the Three Pristine Ones became the main hall. Other important halls included those of the Jade Emperor and of the Four Heavenly Ministers. In some palaces and temples, the main hall houses the immortal to whom the palace

or temple is dedicated. For example, the main halls of Taoist palaces and temples on Mount Wudang house the Northern God, the other immortals being less important.

Taoist palaces and temples got their names for different reasons. Some were named according to Taoist doctrine, such as Temple of Constant Tao (Changdao Guan 常道观). Some were named to show their distance from worldliness, such as White Cloud Temple (Baiyun Guan 白云观). Some were named after Taoist gods, such as Jade Purity Palace (Yuqing Gong 玉清宫), High Purity Palace (Shangqing Gong 上清宫), Supreme Purity Palace (Taiqing Gong 太清宫) and Jade Emperor Temple (Yuhuang Guan 玉皇观). Some were named after other deities, such as Supreme Oneness Palace (Taiyi Gong 太一宫), Purple Subtlety Palace (Ziwei Gong 紫微宫), Wenchang Palace (Wenchang Gong 文昌宫), Perfect Warrior Temple (Zhenwu Miao 真武庙) and Temple to the Primordial Lady of the Azure Cloud (Bixia Yuanjun Ci 碧霞元君祠); some after Taoist priestly titles, such as Chunyang Palace (Chunyang Gong 纯阳宫), Chongyang Palace (Chongyang Gong 重阳宫) and Changchun Palace (Changchun Gong 长春宫); some after the places where they are located, such as Tongbai Palace (Tongbai Gong 桐柏宫) and Longquan Temple (Longquan Guan 龙泉观); and some after historical legends, such as Iron Pillar Palace (Tiezhū Gong 铁柱宫), Butter and Wine Temple (Sulao Guan 酥醪观), Nine Immortals Temple (Jiuxian Guan 九仙观), Two Immortals Temple (Erxian Guan 二仙观) and Yellow Court Temple (Huangting Guan 黄庭观). There are more than can be listed here. There are many such temples and palaces with the same names and they are distinguished from one another by adding the location to the name. For example, White Cloud Temple could be the Beijing White Cloud Temple, the Shanghai White Cloud Temple, the Lanzhou White Cloud Temple or White Cloud Temple on the White Cloud Mountain in Jiaxian County, Shaanxi Province.

Innumerable Taoist palaces and temples were built throughout history but only a small proportion of them are extant today. They are valuable works of ancient Chinese architecture that provide rare materials for the study of that architecture's building methods and art. They also contain a lot of cultural relics and works of art, which are also rare materials for the study of archeology and art. Moreover, they are valuable tourist resources today.

3. Seeking Traces of Immortals on China's Five Sacred Mountains

One of the poems by the great poet Li Bai (Li Po) goes:

*Of the long trips to the Five Sacred Mountains I make light,
All my life I have loved to visit famous height*

In ancient times, Taoist priests resided on the Five Sacred Mountains – Mount Taishan in the east, Mount Huashan in the west, Mount Songshan in the center, Mount Hengshan in the south, and Mount Hengshan in the north. They built palaces and temples there, giving the mountains a divine atmosphere. Therefore the five famous mountains are all sacred lands of Taoism.

(1) Mount Taishan in the East

Mount Taishan (泰山), also known as Daizong (岱宗) or Mount Daishan (岱山), is the most famous of the five mountains. Located in the middle of Shandong Province, it covers an area of more than 400 square kilometers, extending into the boundaries of Jinan, Changqing, Licheng and Tai'an. Taoists regard it as the ancestral mountain.

The God of Mount Taishan was originally called the Official Sovereign of Mount Taishan (Taishan Fujun 泰山府君) and is also known as “Great and Benevolent Saintly Emperor of the Sacred Mountain of the East Equaling Heaven” (Dongyue Tianqi Dasheng Ren Shengdi 东岳天齐大生仁圣帝) or the “Great Emperor of the Sacred Mountain of the East” (Dongyue Dadi 东岳大帝). According to Taoist scriptures, he “has the power to judge between good and evil in both the human world and spirit world, including all government departments and mountains, to punish the treacherous and the evil, and to register those who die and those who are born; and, incarnated as the Great Emperor of the Four Mountains and Four Skies, he tends all beings in the six directions [north, south, east, west, heaven or up, and the earth or down].” This shows how high a position the God of Mount Taishan has in Taoism. According to folk mythology, Mount Taishan is the destination of all ghosts, and the God of Mount Taishan is the supreme governor of the netherworld. In folk tales, the God of Mount Taishan is the leader of all deities, is called Yuanchanglong, rides a black dragon and often wears a dark blue robe and green cap and carries a seal

saying “activate the Yang” (tong yang 通阳). In ancient times, there were East Mountain temples everywhere, most of which were attended by Taoists. On the 28th day of the third lunar month, which is said to be the birthday of the Great Emperor of the Sacred Mountain of the East, people in different areas would hold grand celebrations at those temples and pray for happiness and prosperity.

There used to be many Taoist temples on Mount Taishan. Today, the main building complexes still extant are Dai Temple (Mount Taishan Temple) and the Azure Cloud Temple.

Dai Temple (Dai Miao 岱庙) is in northwest Tai'an, covering a total area of 96,000 square meters. Historically, it is where emperors held grand ceremonies to confer religious titles and sacrificial ceremonies on the God of Mount Taishan. Along the north-south axis, the buildings are higher in the north and lower in the south. Facing a stretch of plain and surrounded by a wall that is 10 meters high and about 1.5 kilometers long, the red-walled, yellow-tiled temple is in magnificent unity with Mount Taishan towering behind it.

A visitor to the temple first arrives at Yaocan Pavilion (Yaocan Ting 遥参亭, Paying-Homage-at-a-Distance Pavilion), which stands outside Zhengyang Gate (Zhengyang Men 正阳门, South-Facing Gate) and has five bays. Outside Yaocan Gate in front of the pavilion, there is the stone Yaocan Arch, to the south of which is Shuanglong Pond (Shuanglong Chi 双龙池, Double Dragon Pond) with a pair of stone carved dragon heads in it, one in the northeast and the other in the southwest, which serve to let water in and out. In ancient times, emperors would hold a simple ritual in the pavilion prior to the formal grand sacrificial ceremony in the temple.

Walking out of Yaocan Pavilion by the North Gate, the visitor arrives at Dai Temple Arch, which has beams and pillars covered with relief sculptures. With magnificent form and exquisite carving, it is a treasure of Qing Dynasty carved stone architecture. To the north is the temple itself. Entering the courtyard by Zhengyang Gate, the visitor arrives at Peitian Gate, to the left of which is Linghou Hall, for offering sacrifices to Tang Chen, Ge Yong and Zhou Wu, Zhou Dynasty officials whose duty was to remonstrate with the emperor; and to the right is Taiwai Hall, for offering sacrifices to Du Cong, Duke Fen of the Tang Dynasty. In the eastern courtyard stand five cypresses allegedly planted by Emperor Wudi of the Han

Dynasty while he was conferring titles. There is a dead Chinese scholar tree in the western courtyard, inside which people of later times planted another Chinese scholar tree. The two trees are known as “Tang Chinese scholar tree embracing its young” (*tang huai bao zi* 唐槐抱子).

The next is Ren’an Gate (Ren’an Men 仁安门, Benevolent Peace Gate), built in 1338 during the Yuan Dynasty for offering sacrifices to two immortals, the Heavenly Deaf Immortal and the Earthly Dumb Immortal. On either side of Ren’an Gate are the Eastern and Western Divine Gates. To the east of the Eastern Divine Gate, there used to be the Hall of the Three Perfect Sovereign Mao Brothers (San Mao Zhenjun Dian 三茅真君殿), which was renamed Zhubi Pavilion (Zhubi Ting 驻蹕亭, Emperor’s Stopover Pavilion) during Emperor Qianlong’s reign (1736-95) in the Qing Dynasty. Consisting of a gate decorated with festoons, a ceremonial gate, the main gate, the main hall and wing rooms, the pavilion served as a resting place for Qing emperors and their ministers when they were offering sacrifices to the God of Mount Taishan. The main hall houses the “three treasures to guard the mountain” that Emperor Qianlong gave while worshipping the God of Mount Taishan: a pair of agalloch eaglewood lions, the Jade of Coolness, and a yellow-blue glazed gourd-shaped porcelain vase. There is a legend about how the gourd-shaped vase became a treasure to guard the mountain. It is said that there was a cave beneath a cascade at the foot of Shanzi (Fan) Cliff on Mount Taishan. Among the various flowers and herbs growing in the cave was a gourd with purple vines, which bore a yellow dioecious gourd. It was said that the gourd could be used as a key to open the gate at Shanzi Cliff and take the treasures buried in Mount Taishan. Unfortunately, someone picked the gourd before it had ripened, and the gate was never opened.

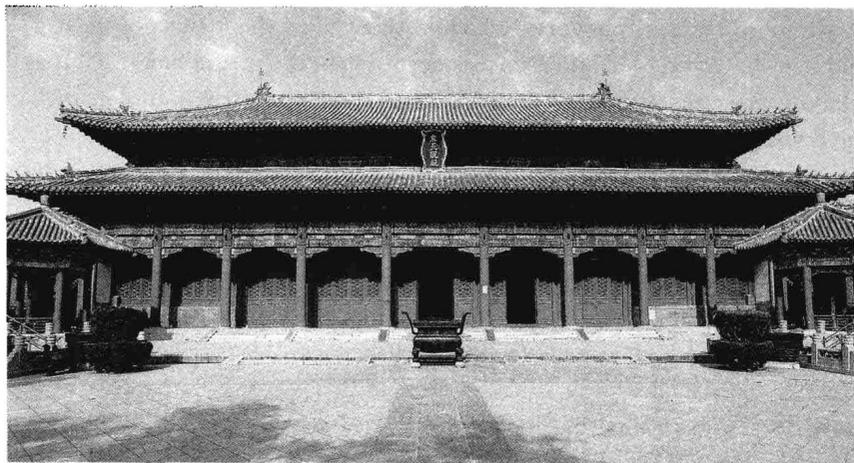
Inside Ren’an Gate is another courtyard, in which there is Gelao (Senior Minister) Pond with nine exquisite stones in it. There is another stone called the Fusang stone on a square terrace. There is a local custom where a visitor, blindfolded, walks around the stone clockwise three times and counter-clockwise three times and then tries to reach the Guzhong cypress in the north. This custom is called “feeling for happiness.” It is believed that anyone who finds a small hole in the cypress in this way will be happy forever. More often than not, people lose their sense of direction, so the stone is also called the Stone of Confusion.

North of the Guzhong cypress is Tiankuang Hall (Tiankuang Dian 天

祝殿, Heavenly Bestowal Hall). It is said that, during the Northern Song Dynasty, on the sixth day of the sixth lunar month in 1008, a “heavenly book” descended on Mount Taishan. The following year, Emperor Zhenzong had Tiankuang Hall built on Mount Taishan to express his gratitude to heaven. This is the temple’s main hall, where emperors after the Song Dynasty used to offer sacrifices to the God of Mount Taishan. Tiankuang Hall is one of the three most famous palace buildings in China, the other two being the Hall of Supreme Harmony (Taihe Dian 太和殿) in Beijing’s Forbidden City (Palace Museum), and the Hall of Great Accomplishment (Dacheng Dian 大成殿) in the Confucius Temple in Qufu. The nine-bay hall covers an area of over 2,600 square meters. It has double eaves with eight angles, colorful painted corbel brackets, yellow glazed tiles, eight bright red pilasters, and wind chimes hanging from the four corners of the eaves. In the center of the hall is a big shrine containing a statue of the God of Mount Taishan. The hall’s east, west and north walls bear the famous mural “God of Mount Taishan Setting Off for Home,” which vividly depicts an entire inspection tour by the God of Mount Taishan.

The queen’s chamber, the bedroom of the wife of the God of Mount Taishan, lies north of Tiankuang Hall. The main chamber has five bays, with side chambers on the left and right that have three bays each.

In the southeast corner inside the temple’s North Gate stands a gilded



Tiankuang Hall (Tiankuang Dian, Heavenly Bestowal Hall) on Mount Taishan.

bronze pavilion, called Gold Tower. It was cast in 1613 during the Ming Dynasty. In the southwest corner stands an iron pagoda built in 1533 during the Ming Dynasty. It had 13 stories originally but today has only four stories because of damage during wars.

Azure Cloud Temple (Bixia Ci 碧霞祠) stands on top of Mount Taishan between Heaven Street (Tian Jie 天街) and Daguan Peak (Daguan Feng 大观峰, Big Temple Peak), with Guanxing Terrace (Guanxing Tai 观星台, Star-Gazing Terrace) in the west, Xianren Bridge (Xianren Qiao 仙人桥, Immortal Bridge) in the east, and Shizi Peak (Shizi Feng 狮子峰, Lion Peak) in the south. The Jade Emperor Summit (Yuhuang Ding 玉皇顶) towers over the temple. In 1983, the State Council included the temple on its list of 21 national key Taoist palaces and temples.

Covering an area of more than 3,900 square meters, the Azure Cloud Temple, a representative Taoist temple, is a magnificent ancient alpine architectural complex consisting of 12 large buildings. The complex is symmetrical along the axis that extends from the Screen Wall, the Southern Divine Gate and the main gate to the Incense Pavilion. It is higher in the north and lower in the south, undulating in a strictly defined layout, manifesting the high architectural standards of ancient China.

The temple's main hall, colorfully decorated with paintings and carvings, has a golden-colored exterior that shines in the sun. The shrine in the center



The Azure Cloud Temple (Bixia Ci) on Mount Taishan.

of the hall contains a gilded bronze seated statue of the Goddess of Mount Taishan, serene and graceful, wearing a phoenix coronet and an embroidered tasseled cape.

The Primordial Lady of the Azure Cloud (Bixia Yuanjun 碧霞元君) is a Taoist goddess and is said to be the daughter of the God of Mount Taishan. Emperor Zhenzong of the Song Dynasty gave her the title Heavenly Immortal Jade Maiden Primordial Lady of the Azure Cloud (Tianxian Yunü Bixia Yuanjun 天仙玉女碧霞元君). According to Taoist scriptures, she was an incarnation of the Big Dipper of the Western Sky and became an immortal after cultivating herself on Mount Taishan. The Jade Emperor appointed her general of the heavenly army of mountains and an observer of the good and evil in the human world. In folktales, the Primordial Lady of the Azure Cloud was able to protect and bless all beings, especially women and children, and to answer any prayer. Every year even today, more than a million pilgrims and tourists climb Mount Taishan to worship the goddess and pray for her blessings.

The side hall east of the main hall is for offering sacrifices to the Goddess of Eyesight (Yanguang Niangniang 眼光娘娘), and the side hall to the west for offering sacrifices to the Child-Giving Goddess (Songzi Niangniang 送子娘娘). The Goddess of Eyesight is said to be able to treat various diseases, keep people's eyes sharp and their minds clear, and give people good health. The Child-Giving Goddess is said to be in charge of people's reproduction. A pilgrim will get a plaster baby in the hall, wrap it in a piece of red cloth and take it home to put in a secret corner of the bed. This is believed to be an effective way to get a baby from the goddess.

Incense Pavilion, between the east and west side halls, is for offering sacrifices to the Primordial Lady of the Azure Cloud. In feudal times, the main hall was open only to emperors and ministers but the common people were allowed to pray to the goddess in this pavilion.

Thanks to its beautiful natural scenery and rich religious and cultural resources, UNESCO inscribed Mount Taishan on its World Cultural Heritage List in 1987.

(2) Mount Huashan in the West

Mount Huashan (华山) in the west, south of Huayin County in Shaanxi Province, is where the fourth of the Thirty-six Lesser Grotto Heavens is located. Its main peak rising as high as 1,997 meters above sea level, Mount

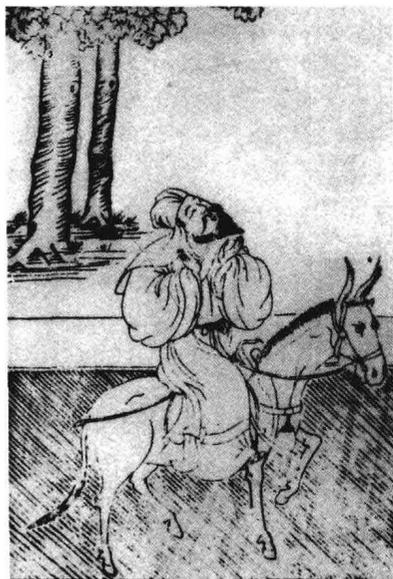
Huashan among the Five Sacred Mountains is second only to Mount Hengshan in the north in height, and it is the steepest of the five mountains and allegedly even of all the mountains in China.

The development and thriving of Mount Huashan have had much to do with the development of Chinese Taoist culture. A well-known Taoist mountain since ancient times, Mount Huashan still has a lot of Taoist relics today. It can be said that the two most striking features of Mount Huashan are the grotesque, precipitous natural landscape and the long-standing Taoist sites.

It is said that Lao Zi, the founder of Taoism, once stayed on Mount Huashan and that he used a plough to open up a dangerous length of path up the northern peak called the Supreme Master's Ploughed Ditch. Today, one can still see the oven he once used to make immortality pills on Mount Huashan's southern peak. It is said that Lao Zi went from Mount Huashan to Zhouzi County in Shaanxi and taught the *Tao Te Ching* to Yin Xi at Louguan Terrace (Lookout Tower Platform).

Through history, many Taoists have lived as recluses on Mount Huashan, the best-known of whom was Chen Tuan of the 10th century.

Chen Tuan, also known as Tunan or Fuyaozi, is said to have been born in a mysterious way. The legend goes that a fisherman once caught in his net a round object wrapped in a purple robe. Taking it home, he had hardly started to cook it to eat when suddenly there was deafening thunder and a dazzling light. The fisherman was scared and threw the object on the ground. Then the purple robe was torn and a baby broke out from inside. He was named Chen Tuan (literally "rolling into a ball"). He read many books on history and philosophy when he was young, and later gave up his quest for a political career and toured mountains and rivers. It is said that



Chen Tuan.



The first movement on the Chen Tuan chart of bodybuilding exercises.

he could sleep for three years on end without waking. He once slept on Mount Huashan for several months and moss grew all over him. A passing woodsman found him and, thinking he was dead, dug a hole to bury him. As the woodsman carried Chen Tuan on his shoulder, Chen Tuan woke up and, rubbing his eyes, said, "Who has disturbed my sweet dream?"

There were constant wars during the Five Dynasties Period (907-960) and Chen Tuan, though living in reclusion on the mountain, was concerned with the outside world and kept an eye on the changing situation. One day, he came out from the mountain on the back of a donkey. In the town of Huayin, he heard that Zhao Kuangyin had become emperor. Chen Tuan was so enraptured that he fell off the donkey. Asked why he was so excited, he replied, "We have peace in the country at last!"

The main Taoist temples still extant on Mount Huashan include Xiyue (Sacred Mountain of the West) Temple and Yuquan (Jade Spring) Monastery at the foot of the mountain, and Dongdao (East Side) Monastery, Zhenyue (Mountain Guardian) Palace, Yunü (Jade Maiden) Temple and Cuiyun (Blue Cloud) Palace. Of these, Yuquan Monastery, Dongdao Monastery and Zhenyue Palace are key national Taoist temples.

Xiyue Temple (Xiyue Miao 西岳庙, Sacred Mountain of the West Temple), also known as Huayue Temple (Mount Huashan Temple), is located about 2.7 kilometers east of Huayin County and is where ancient emperors used to offer sacrifices to Mount Huashan. It was built during Wudi's reign (140-87 BC) in the Han Dynasty and underwent a lot of damage and reconstruction. Today's Xiyue Temple was built in the style of the palaces in Beijing from the Ming and Qing dynasties, hence it is famed as a "miniature imperial palace." The main gate, called Haoling Gate, is shielded by a screen with a carving of nine dragons, and flanked by a pair of iron

flagpoles. Opposite the gate stands Five Phoenixes Tower. The tower has five adjacent arches and a base of white marble. The single Chinese hip-and-gable roof, supported by 12 thick stone pillars, resembles the Chinese character *shan* (山, mountain). Set off by the subsidiary buildings on its sides, the tower looks magnificent. The inside gate, Lingxing Gate, is an ingenious work of architectural art in that the *dou* (斗, blocks) of the *dougong* (斗拱, bucket arches) are not set at the ends of the longitudinal *gong* (拱, bow-shaped arcs) but are hooked up with one another to form an S shape called *ruyi*, which symbolizes good fortune. In the middle of the lever arm are nine exquisitely carved dragon heads, rising up with their bulging eyes staring into the sky, guarding the gate for the God of Mount Huashan from different directions. On the west of Lingxing Gate stands a large rock, about one meter high, one meter long and five meters wide, which is called the Rock of the Five Sacred Mountains. In fact, it is the remains of the “first stele under heaven,” put up in the 12th year of Emperor Xuanzong’s reign (724) during the Tang Dynasty. The original stele, tall and majestic, bore an inscription of 738 characters in the calligraphy of Emperor Xuanzong’s handwriting. Unfortunately, it is now broken. But the flying apsaras (heavenly



The main gate of Xiyue Temple (Xiyue Miao, Sacred Mountain of the West Temple) on Mount Huashan.

nymphs) in relief and the round sculptures of warriors in gold armor can still be seen clearly.

Yuquan Monastery (Yuquan Yuan 玉泉院, Jade Spring Monastery), sitting at the entrance to the valley of Mount Huashan, is said to be the place where Chen Tuan cultivated himself as a recluse. With the shade of tall trees, a spring, rocks, magnificent buildings and meandering verandas, the monastery has the best scenery at the foot of Mount Huashan. The spring is believed to have the same source as the Jade Well on the mountain summit's Zhenyue Palace. Yuquan Monastery was named after the spring with its clear, sweet water. The main building of Yuquan Monastery, Xiyi Temple, is a quadrangle courtyard. The Hall of Master Chen Tuan, the main hall in the courtyard, houses a statue of Chen Tuan. The hall's eastern and western wings, with dark blue bricks and tiles and little decoration, are for accommodation and for receiving guests. The architectural structures in the western part of Yuquan Monastery include a meandering veranda, a stone boat, Wuyou (Carefree) Pavilion, Hanqing (Embracing Purity) Hall, Xiyi (Vacuous Quietness) Grotto, and Shansun (Aromatic Plant) Pavilion. Shansun Pavilion, standing on a large rock, is said to have been built by Chen Tuan, and the Wuyou Tree (Wuyou Shu 无忧树, Free-of-Worry Tree) is also alleged to have been planted by Chen Tuan. In Xiyi Grotto, there is a Song Dynasty stone statue of Chen Tuan in the reclining position, which is exquisitely carved and lifelike. In the eastern part of the monastery lies the tomb of Hua Tuo, a famous surgeon of the Three Kingdoms Period.

The landscape design and architectural structures in Yuquan Monastery made full use of the beautiful natural environment. As the monastery sits by the mountain and a stream, the trickling spring can be heard there and the mountain shrouded in thick mist can be seen towering up from the monastery windows, as well as elegant bamboo standing by rocks, pavilions, terraces and side rooms unevenly arranged, and meandering verandas. The whole scene is full of tasteful artistry.

Dongdao Monastery, originally called Nine Heavens Palace (Jiutian Gong 九天宫), is located at Qingkeping. It was named Dongdao (meaning "east side") because it is east of the Qingke Bridge. Built during Emperor Kangxi's reign (1662-1722) in the Qing Dynasty, the west-facing monastery is relatively small in size, with a three-bay main hall where the Mysterious Maiden of the Nine Heavens (Jiutian Xuannü 九天玄女) is enshrined. In

the bamboo garden south of the monastery, visitors can part the bamboo leaves and look southward to vaguely see the Baiyun (白云, White Cloud), Meihua (梅花, Plum Flower), Xuehua (雪花, Snowflake) and Shuilian (水帘, Water Curtain) caves which, together, are called Lesser Penglai Fairyland.

Zhenyue Palace, originally called Upper Palace (Shang Gong 上宫), sits in a valley between the Yunü (Jade Maiden), Lianhua (Lotus Flower) and Luoyan (Landing Goose) peaks. The dark shade of old pine trees and the entangled wild vines in the valley give an impression of tranquillity, seclusion and coolness. The Jade Well in front of the palace is about 30 meters deep. It is said that a thousand-leave white lotus once grew in the well and that one who ate it could live a long life and even become an immortal. In the main hall of this magnificent palace is enshrined the Great Emperor of the Sacred Mountain of the West (Xiyue Dadi 西岳大帝). To the west of this hall is the King of Medicine's Grotto, where the King of Medicine is enshrined.

With its numerous historical and cultural sites and popular fairytales, Mount Huashan has an eternal charm.

(3) Mount Songshan in the Center

Mount Songshan (Songshan 嵩山) is located in Dengfeng County in Henan Province in central China. With Taishi and Shaoshi peaks, this very famous mountain in the Central Plains towers magnificently, with the Yellow River to the north and the Yingshui River to the south.

The God of Mount Songshan was given the title "Middle Heaven King" (Tianzhongwang 天中王) by Empress Wu Zetian of the Tang Dynasty. Unlike the ancient emperors, who always conferred titles on Mount Taishan, Empress Wu Zetian visited Mount Songshan and gave it the title of "Divine Mountain" (Shenyue 神岳). She also renamed the counties in which Mount Songshan was located, changing the name of Songyang County to Dengfeng (登封, conferring titles) and the name of Yangcheng to Gaocheng (告成, success) to indicate that she had successfully conferred a title on Mount Songshan and had the country under her control. In 1982, a roll of gold strips was found in a crack between rocks on the top of Junji Peak. It was shown to have been thrown by Empress Wu Zetian when she was worshipping the God of Mount Songshan. At 36.3 centimeters long and weighing 247 grams, this valuable cultural relic is inscribed with 63 characters written in double strokes.

According to Taoism, among the abodes of immortals and ideal places

for self-cultivation, Mount Songshan is the sixth of the 36 Lesser Grotto Heavens. Among the many remnants of Taoism, the earliest was left by Crown Prince Jin, son of King Ling of Zhou (r.571 BC-545 BC), who was taken to Mount Songshan by a Taoist called Master Fuqiu. Today, there is Fuqiu Peak in the eastern part of Mount Songshan's Taishi Peak, and Zi Jin Peak (Zi Jin Feng 子晋峰, Prince Jin Peak) in the western part. The Sui and Tang dynasties saw Taoism flourish on Mount Songshan. Many noted Taoists lived and cultivated themselves there, such as Pan Shizheng, Sima Chengzhen and Li Hanguang, founding masters of the High Purity sect. Taoism on Mount Songshan gradually declined during the Ming and Qing dynasties.

There used to be many Taoist palaces and monasteries on Mount Songshan but today only Zhongyue Temple still remains.

Zhongyue Temple (Zhongyue Miao 中岳庙, Sacred Mountain of the Center Temple) is located below Huanggai Peak at the southern foothills of Mount Songshan's Taishi Peak. It was first built in the Qin Dynasty (221-206 BC) and originally known as Taishi Temple. Today's temple buildings, covering an area of more than 100,000 square meters, were rebuilt during Emperor Qianlong's reign in the Qing Dynasty. The central axis, a flagged pathway 700 meters long, extends from the front gate, Zhonghua Gate, in the south to the rear gate of Yushu (Imperial Calligraphy) Tower in the north, passing Yaocan Pavilion, Tianzhong Pavilion, Peitian Zuozhen, House, Chongsheng Gate, Huasan Gate, Junji Gate, Songgao Junji House, Great Hall of the Central Mountain, Royal Bedchamber, and Yushu Tower. The east and west wings of the temple consist of the Taiwei (Supreme Commander), Huoshen (Fire God), Zushi (Supreme Master), Xiaolou (Little Tower) and Shenzhou (Divine Land) palaces, Longwang (Dragon King) Hall, and other buildings, each of which has a small separate courtyard. The temple has a reputation as a home of relics with 330 old cypresses, 100 stone steles, sacred *ding* tripods, and iron warriors.

To the rear of Tianzhong Pavilion is a cypress grove arranged in an orderly fashion. In the courtyard inside Chongsheng Gate stand two quadrangular pavilions, one on the east side and the other on the west. The western pavilion houses a stele with no inscription, so it is called the Inscriptionless Stele Pavilion (Wuzibei Ting 无字碑亭). The eastern pavilion, called the Ancient Divine Storehouse Pavilion (Gushenku Ting 古神库亭),

is surrounded by four august-looking iron warriors, each more than 2.5 meters in height. It is said that they are monuments depicting the four Taoists who joined the army to fight against Jin (金) invaders during the Song Dynasty. The story goes that, during the last years of the Northern Song Dynasty, the army of the Kingdom of Jin invaded from the north. On hearing the news, four strapping Taoists from Zhongyue Temple could not concentrate on their self-cultivation. They left the head of the temple and their fellow Taoist priests, and joined the troops of General Yue Fei. They distinguished themselves time and again on the battlefield and eventually laid down their lives in battle. The commanding general of their unit wrote to Zhongyue Temple: "The four Taoists of Zhongyue Temple dedicated their lives to their country. The mountains and rivers have witnessed their noble spirit. It is as if they were made of iron." Therefore the temple head and its senior Taoists declared that four iron statues should stand at the four sides of the Ancient Divine Storehouse Pavilion as monuments to the four Taoists in order to inspire patriotism among all the Taoists of the temple.

North from Tiantai Terrace, is a walkway shaped like a ribbon hanging down and with carvings of a coiled dragon, two dragons playing with a pearl, and a flock of cranes playing among lotus flowers. This leads to steps up to a three-meter-high stone platform before the visitor reaches Zhongyue Temple's main hall, Junji Hall. It is the largest building in the entire temple and even on Mount Songshan. The hall is nine bays across and five bays deep. It has a yellow double-eaved glazed-tile roof with a Chinese hipped roof on top of that. The rafters, bucket arches, beams, crossbeams and ceiling are all covered with Hexu (和玺) palatial architecture paintings of the highest class from the Qing Dynasty. The ceiling is decorated with a flying dragon, and the floor is paved with polished dark blue flagstones. A statue of the Great Emperor of the Sacred Mountain of the Center stands five meters tall at the shrine in the middle of the hall, flanked by statues of his valiant generals Fang Bi and Fang Xiang holding battle-axes. In the 14th year of the Ming Emperor Chongzhen's reign (1641), the hall was destroyed in a fire. It was rebuilt in the 10th year of the Qing Emperor Shunzhi's reign (1653). In 1941, it was damaged as a result of bombings by Japanese invaders. Since the founding of New China in 1949, the hall has been repaired many times. Today it looks more magnificent than before.

At the southern foot of Mount Songshan, there are several palaces

where emperors could live during temporary stays there. They include Huanggai Pavilion (Huanggai Ting 黄盖亭, Yellow Canopy Pavilion), which gives a full view of the tranquil and beautiful Zhongyue Temple.

(4) Mount Hengshan in the South

Mount Hengshan (Hengshan 衡山), in the middle of Hunan Province, is the most beautiful of the Five Sacred Mountains. It is characterized by towering peaks, picturesque scenery and a tranquil environment and is rich in cultural relics. Comprising 72 peaks, it stretches for 400 kilometers, starting from Huiyan Peak (Huiyan Feng 回雁峰, Wild Goose Return Peak) and ending with Yuelu Peak (Yuelu Shan 岳麓山, Mountain Deer Peak), the highest peak being Zhu Rong Peak (Zhu Rong Feng 祝融峰). Standing on the summit and looking into the distance, the visitor has an awesome view of the silky smooth Xiangjiang River meandering in the east, the dragon-like undulating Five Ridges in the south, the screen-like towering Xuefeng Mountains in the west, and the vast, misty Dongting Lake in the north.

Mount Hengshan has been a sacred Taoist site since ancient times. The Great Temple of the Southern Mountain (Nanyue Damiao 南岳大庙), situated at the southern foot of Mount Hengshan, is the largest and most magnificent on the mountain and also the largest and best-preserved ancient complex in southern China. Covering an area of 98,500 square meters and with a total floor space of 25,800 square meters, it is composed of nine rows of buildings with four courtyards along the central axis, eight monasteries on the east side and eight temples on the west side. The orderly layout and beautifully decorated buildings are rich in Chinese style.

In the fourth row is Imperial Stele Pavilion (Yubei Ting 御碑亭), which houses an imperial stele inscribed with the words “Record of Repairs to the Great Temple of the Southern Mountain” and erected during the Qing Emperor Kangxi’s reign. The pavilion’s architraves bear 200 examples of the ancient Chinese seal character *shou* (寿), meaning “longevity,” implying that Mount Hengshan is a mountain of longevity. So Mount Hengshan is referred to in the Chinese idiom “may you live as long as the southern mountain” (*shou bi nanshan* 寿比南山), which is often used to wish people a long life on their birthday.

In the seventh row is the Sainly Emperor Hall (Shengdi Dian 圣帝殿), also called the Main Hall or the Great Hall. Standing 24 meters high, it has a richly decorated interior, upturned double eaves, and colorfully painted clay

statues. The 72 stone pillars inside and outside the hall symbolize the 72 peaks of Mount Hengshan. On a stand in the hall is a 6.3-meter-high seated statue of the Great Emperor of the Sacred Mountain of the South, flanked by standing statues of his six ministers: Zhongzai, the minister of heaven; Situ, the minister of the earth; Zongbo, the minister of spring; Sima, the minister of summer; Sikou, the minister of autumn; and Sikong, the minister of winter. On either side of the hall is also a statue of General Jin Wu. The stone railing around the hall is decorated with 144 white marble plates with relief carvings on both sides of birds, animals and rare herbs and flowers, as well as scenes from fairy tales. The carvings are beautiful, graceful and ingenious.

One major feature of the carvings in the Great Temple of the Southern Mountain is that there are lots of dragon images. Carvings of dragons can be found everywhere around the temple: on beams and pillars in the halls, eaves, stairways, plinth stones, stands, gate frames, bracket arches, and the ends of roof ridges. A survey showed that there are more than 800 dragon carvings around the temple. They derive from the ancient legend of 800 flood dragons (mythical creatures capable of invoking storms and floods) guarding Mount Hengshan. The legend says that, in remote times, a man called Zhu Rong lived on Mount Hengshan and taught people how to use fire and rear animals. The people held him in high esteem. To prevent the kindling from being extinguished, he buried it beneath Mount Hengshan. What he did not expect was that, after he died and became a deity, the kindling burned and turned Mount Hengshan into a sea of fire. In response to a request from the God of Mount Hengshan, who lived on the summit of Zhu Rong Peak, the Dragon King immediately summoned clouds and poured rain over the mountain, only to find the water boiled due to the high temperature, causing the local people more suffering. The alarmed Dragon King hastily sent 800 capable flood dragons to make a channel between the South Sea and Mount Hengshan, thus extinguishing the fire. Later, the Dragon King stationed flood dragons in the pools and springs around Mount Hengshan. In summer, the dragons extinguished the heavenly fire underground with cool water. In winter, they let the heavenly fire rise gently to thaw the ice and snow on the ground. Since then, the springs and pools around Mount Hengshan have made the place warm in winter and cool in summer, and all the plants and animals there have thrived. To express their appreciation of the 800 flood dragons, the local people carved their images

all over the Great Temple of the Southern Mountain.

There were once many Taoist palaces and monasteries on Mount Hengshan, but most of them have been destroyed. The Nine Immortals Temple, which was more than 1,000 years old, was demolished and submerged by a reservoir. The eight monasteries on the east side of the Great Temple of the Southern Mountain are now in ruins and overgrown with grass. The Yellow Court Temple, once an altar used by Madam Wei Huacun during the Jin (晋) Dynasty (265-420), now provides accommodation to local farmers. Other sites have changed hands, such as Xuandu Monastery, Zushi Hall and Purple Bamboo Grove. In 1978, some Taoists went to live on Mount Hengshan and rebuild the temples. After 20 years of hard work, a network of Taoist buildings has been formed, which extends from the summit to the foot of the mountain. The restoration of Taoist temples has provided sites for Taoist activities and, more importantly, improved the facilities for Mount Hengshan's sightseeing area, as well as restoring the mountain's long-standing Taoist tradition.

(5) Mount Hengshan in the North

Mount Hengshan (Hengshan 恒山), also known as Mount Changshan (Changshan 常山), straddles the border between Shanxi and Hebei provinces. It is reputed to be the "most famous mountain beyond the Great Wall." Its main peak, Xuanyue Peak (Xuanyue Feng 玄岳峰, Mysterious Mountain Peak) or Tianfeng Ridge (Tianfeng Ling 天峰岭, Heavenly Peak Ridge), rises 2,017 meters above sea level, making it the highest of the Five Sacred Mountains.

According to Taoism, Mount Hengshan is the fifth of the 36 Lesser Grotto Heavens and is known as the General Mysterious Grotto Heaven (Zongxuan Dongtian 总玄洞天). Zhang Guolao, a Tang Dynasty Taoist and one of the legendary Eight Immortals, once lived there as a recluse. Today, there is a ridge called Guolao Ridge with naturally formed zigzag stone paths, along which is a line of round holes like the prints of a donkey's hooves. The depths of the prints vary, some being one or two inches and some three or four inches. It is said that they were the traces Zhang Guolao left while going in and out of Mount Hengshan mounted backward on his donkey.

Most sites of interest on Mount Hengshan are on Xuanyue Peak. The path leading up to the peak's summit is lined with temples, monasteries, towers and pavilions shaded with green pine trees and cypresses. There are beautiful herbs and flowers, and grotesque rocks and deep caves associated

with many legends. The scenery is really endless.

Feishi Cave (Feishi Ku 飞石窟, Flying Rock Cave) on Feishi Peak has a very romantic legend attached to it. It is a large, naturally formed cave with a north-facing courtyard-like area of about 200 square meters. It is said that, over 4,000 years ago, the legendary emperor Shun once arrived on Mount Hengshan during an inspection tour. Suddenly a magic stone fell from that part of Feishi Peak onto the ground before Shun. Five years later, on an inspection tour Shun was stopped by snow in Quyang in Hebei Province and he had to offer the God of Mount Hengshan sacrifices from a distance. To his surprise, the magical stone flew to Quyang. The Han Emperor Xuandi, believing in the legend, followed Shun's example and went to Quyang in 61 BC to offer sacrifices to the God of Mount Hengshan. Later emperors followed suit. In the Ming Dynasty, the temple on Mount Hengshan's main peak in Hunyuan was designated the Upper Temple of the Northern Mountain (Beiyue Shangmiao 北岳上庙), and the Beiyue (Sacred Mountain of the North) Temple in Quyang was designated the Lower Temple of the Northern Mountain (Beiyue Xiamiao 北岳下庙). In both of them, sacrificial ceremonies could be held to the God of Mount Hengshan.

Below the eastern wall of Feishi Cave is the ancient Beiyue Temple, which was first built in 435 during the Northern Wei Dynasty. It underwent repeated damage and rebuilding before being transformed in 1501 during the Ming Emperor Xiaozong's reign into a palace for the royal couple to sleep. Enshrined in the main hall are the Great Emperor of the Sacred Mountain of the North and his wife. There is a cave on the southern side hall of the palace, called Huanyuan Cave, which is dark, cold and unfathomably deep and is believed to lead to the East Sea. North of the palace is the Madam Earth God Temple. South of Feishi Cave, surrounded by clouds and luxuriant plants as if in a fairyland, stands a small pavilion, which, according to legend, was where the madam got dressed.

Along the path beyond the palace is Baiyun Hall (Baiyun Tang 白云堂, White Cloud Hall), also called Jieguan Pavilion (Jieguan Ting 接官亭, Receiving Officials Pavilion), which has a courtyard and used to be an inn for officials. On its east side stands Xuanjing Pavilion (Xuanjing Ting 玄井亭, Deep Wells Pavilion), which houses two ancient wells. The one in the north has sweet water, while the one in the south has bitter-tasting water.

Below the cliff halfway up the Hengzong Peak is a 103-step staircase that

leads to Hengzong Hall, the main temple on Mount Hengshan. Also called Zhenyuan Hall or Yuanling Hall, the temple was built in 1501 and houses a gilded statue of the Great Emperor of the Sacred Mountain of the North in a sitting position, flanked on either side by four ministers and four generals. In front of the Drum Tower stands a chicken-shaped grayish-green rock which, when tapped by a stone, gives out a sound as of the crow of a rooster, earning for the rock the name "Cockcrow Heralding Dawn."

Northwest of Hengzong Hall is a cliff called Huixian (Immortals Meeting) Cliff. Halfway up the cliff is a sunk-in platform, on which stands the Huixian Hall. Three bays across and two bays deep, the hall houses a lifelike carving depicting the meeting of immortals from various caves. Huixian Hall is built at the highest point of Mount Hengshan, from which visitors can command a wonderful view with cloud-capped peaks looming below and pleasant breeze blowing above.

4. The Three Great Mountains of the Orthodox Oneness Sect

Historically, there have been three main branches of Talismans and Registers Taoism: the Orthodox Oneness sect, the High Purity sect and the Numinous Treasure sect. Their principal mountains are Longhu, Maoshan and Gezao respectively. In the eighth year of the Dade period of the Yuan Dynasty (1304), Emperor Chengzong made Zhang Yucai the 38th Celestial Master and patriarch of the Orthodox Oneness sect, in charge of the Talismans of the Three Mountains (Longhu, Maoshan and Gezao). From then on, the three biggest Talisman sects in the south were all part of the Orthodox Oneness tradition, and the three mountains therefore became the Orthodox Oneness sect's three great mountains.

(1) Mount Longhu

Mount Longhu (Longhushan 龙虎山, Dragon and Tiger Mountain) is in Guixi County, 20 kilometers south of the city of Yingtan in Jiangxi Province. It is where Zhang Daoling, the first Celestial Master, originally began to cultivate himself and make immortality pills, so it is the ancestral home of Orthodox Oneness Taoism. Mount Longhu has a beautiful view and strange mirages and it is said that its shape is like that of Mount Wuyi

and its soul is like that of Guilin. It is the 32nd blissful realm among Taoism's Grotto Heavens and Blissful Realms.

During the time that Taoism prospered in the Mount Longhu area, 10 Taoist palaces, 81 Taoist temples, 50 Taoist hermitages and 10 Taoist nunneries were built successively. It can therefore be seen that Taoism was flourishing then. Since the Han Dynasty, many of the buildings have been severely damaged due to natural calamities and other factors, so that what can be seen now is mainly a wild area in which none of the buildings are recognizable, leaving only the Celestial Masters Mansion still in fairly good condition.

Celestial Masters Mansion (Tianshi Fu 天师府) is known in full as Mansion of the Celestial Masters Descended from the Han Dynasty (Si Han Tianshi Fu 嗣汉天师府) and is also called Great Perfect Man Mansion (Dazhenren Fu 大真人府). It is in the center of Shangqing Town and is a place where every generation of Celestial Master lived and offered sacrifices to gods. The mansion was first built during the Song Dynasty, while



The Eight Trigrams Gate of Glossy Ganoderma Garden (Lingzhi Yuan) at the Celestial Master Mansion (Tianshi Fu) on Mount Longhu (Dragon and Tiger Mountain) in Jiangxi Province.

most of the buildings that can now be seen were rebuilt in the Qing Dynasty. The whole mansion complex covers 42,000 square meters, of which 14,000 square meters are land occupied by buildings. The mansion is located in the north and faces south. Taken together with the Mansion Gate, the Second Gate (Er Men 二门) and the private house as the central axis, the Jade Emperor Hall, the Celestial Masters Hall, the Hall of Mysterious Altars (Xuantan Dian 玄坛殿), the Bureau of Magical Talismans (Falü Ju 法箓局), the Office of Retired Officials (Tiju Shu 提举署), and the Ancestral Altar of All Skills (Wanfa Zongtan 万法宗坛) and so on were built so that the temples and royal buildings were fused into one unit.

Entering Shangqing Town and stepping into the big yard with a red wall, the visitor can see the imposing Mansion Gate. Hanging from the two doorposts in the middle at the front, there is an antithetical couplet with gold writing on a black background that says: "There are immortal guests in Unicorn Hall; the prime minister's home is on Mount Longhu."

Through the Mansion Gate, a wide 10-meter-long cobblestone path leads directly to the Second Gate. The Hall of Mysterious Altars, rebuilt in 1998, is at the eastern side of this path. The deity worshiped there is Zhao Gongming, the God of Wealth. Long ago, Celestial Masters used to hold small-scale religious ceremonies in the hall. At the western side of the path are the Bureau of Magical Talismans and the Office of Retired Officials, which were rebuilt in 1998. The Office of Retired Officials is where Celestial Master Zhang dealt with the everyday routine of Taoism. There are *tidian* (提点) and *tiju* (提举) officials in the office and they were divided into six ranks. Their work was to help Celestial Master Zhang deal with the daily tasks of Taoism.

One hundred and twenty steps from the Mansion Gate, there is the Second Gate, which was first built in the fourth year of Emperor Tongzhi's reign in the Qing Dynasty (1865) and has been rebuilt recently. There are red walls and green tiles, with flying animals on the top of the gate. Painted on the doors are six pictures with three pairs of door gods: Qin Qiong, Yuchi Gong, Yang Lin, Luo Cheng, Cheng Yaojin and Shan Xiongxin. There is a vertical board above the middle door with three characters in gold: "chi ling zhi" (敕灵旨). A pair of antithetical couplets is on the front columns. The couplet above says, "As Tao rises, dragons and tigers are vanquished," and the one below says, "Deep virtue ghosts and gods admire." Eighteen kinds

of weapons are lined up on two sides, providing an awesome air.

A yard comes into sight after the visitor passes through the Second Gate. More than 10 camphor trees with luxuriant foliage around which people can just get their arms make this yard very exuberant. Two valuable things that are kept here are a Yuan Dynasty bronze bell weighing 4,500 kilograms and a stone tablet with an inscription in the handwriting of the Yuan Dynasty calligrapher Zhao Mengfu. In the middle of the path between the Second Gate and the main hall, there is a nine-meter-deep well called Magic Spring Well, said to have been dug by the famous Southern Song Dynasty Taoist priest Bai Yuchan at the Celestial Master's order.

Moving "nine times nine" or 81 steps, the visitor then comes to the Jade Emperor Hall. It was initially a large room where the Celestial Master would give instructions in the magic arts of Taoism and where Taoist priests would chant sutras. The hall covers about 500 square meters and is the biggest building in the Celestial Masters Mansion. In the middle of the hall is a statue of the Jade Emperor that is about 9.9 meters high, accompanied by statues of 12 heavenly generals on either of the east and west sides.

The private residence is at the back of the Jade Emperor Hall. It is where the Celestial Masters lived in times past. With its green bricks and gray tiles, its flag stone-paved floor, wooden corridor, rich interior decorations, and decorated courtyard, the ancient palace's architectural style makes it a sight to behold.

The antechamber of the residence was initially a guest area and was also called Three Provinces Hall (referring to Celestial Master Zhang's Du Province, Perfect Master Xu's Tai Province and Fairy Graybeard Ge's Xuan Province). It was used for meetings held in the Celestial Masters Mansion. It was first built during the Ming Dynasty and rebuilt during the Qing Dynasty and then it was named Celestial Masters Hall in 1985. There are five statues of gods in the hall, the middle one being Zhang Daoling, the patriarch of the Celestial Masters. On the east side is Zhang Jixian, the 30th Celestial Master who is described in *Outlaws of the Marsh (Water Margin)*, and on the west side is Zhang Yuchu, the 43rd Celestial Master who is described in the *Taoist Canon of the Zhengtong Era* compiled in the Ming Dynasty. The two statues standing with a sword and a seal in hand before Zhang Daoling are his disciples Wang Chang and Zhao Sheng.

There are three golden boards on the crossbeam, which is supported

by the biggest column in the middle of the Celestial Masters Hall. The middle one was given by Yuan Shikai in the third year of the Republic of China (1914) as a gift to the 62nd Celestial Master Zhang Yuanxu. It says “Taoism accords with Kongtong,” which means that Celestial Masters Taoism accords with the principles for life expressed by Guang Chengzi to the legendary Yellow Emperor on Mount Kongtong in Gansu Province. The board on the east says “renowned descendant of divine beings,” which is a reference to Celestial Master Zhang as a descendant of the god Zhang Liang. The western one says “na jia zhou cheng (纳甲周呈),” which means that the Celestial Masters Mansion is filled with the Taoist talismans that coordinate the Eight Trigrams, the Ten Heavenly Stems, the Five Elements and the Five Directions.

At the hall door is a huge old drum-shaped natural emerald-green rock that has a surface area of about one square meter. It is called the “meeting and seeing-off stone” due to the legend that it is where every generation of Celestial Master met and sent off his guests. It is also called the “Supreme Ultimate Stone” because it has a natural goldfish-style pattern like an irregular Diagram of the Supreme Ultimate (a circle with an S-shaped dividing line between light and dark).

The Ancestral Altar of All Skills is west of the private residence and is connected to the *sibeyuan* courtyard in the first area. The altar is the most sacred altar for performing the magic arts, a place where all the gods gathered together, and a symbol that Celestial Master Zhang Daoling is in charge of all Taoist matters under heaven. Historically, there were four altars of four sects: the Mysterious Altar of Orthodox Oneness on Mount Longhu in Jiangxi Province; the Ritual Altar of High Purity on Mount Maoshan in Jiangsu Province; the Mysterious Altar of Numinous Treasure on Mount Gezao in Jiangxi Province; and the Lineage Altar of Pure Brightness on the Western Mountain in Nanchang in Jiangxi Province. During the Yuan Dynasty, the emperor granted the title of Master of the Orthodox Oneness Teaching to the 38th Celestial Master Zhang Yucai, who led the Talisman sect of Taoism. The Mysterious Altar of Orthodox Oneness on Mount Longhu then changed its name to the Ancestral Altar of All Skills.

The whole Celestial Masters Mansion is on a grand scale and it has a primitive simplicity and elegance. So the mansion is praised with the words “There is no place like it in the west, and it is the first one in the south.”

(2) Mount Maoshan

Mount Maoshan is in the southwest of Jiangsu Province. Its original name was Mount Juqu and it was also known as Mount Difei. It is the eighth of Taoism's Ten Greater Grotto Heavens and the first of the Seventy-two Blissful Realms. It is said that there were three brothers here during Emperor Jingdi's reign (157-141 BC) in the Western Han Dynasty: Mao Ying, Mao Gu and Mao Zhong. The brothers practiced austerity and cured people's illnesses and they eventually all attained the Way and became immortals. To commemorate them, later generations changed the mountain's name from Mount Juqu to Three Maos Mountain (Sanmaoshan 三茅山) and this was shortened to Mount Maoshan.

The Taoist palaces and courtyards on Mount Maoshan became famous as the "first under heaven," for there were 257 sites with buildings running to a total of well over 5,000 bays when the mountain was flourishing. The devastation caused by war and other human destruction



Elder Mao Peak (Da Mao Feng) of Mount Maoshan as depicted in the "Record of Mount Maoshan" during the Qing Emperor Kangxi's reign.



"Mao Ying, Mao Gu and Mao Zhong Attain the Way and Become Immortals."

over the years later meant that only dilapidated walls could be seen. Fortunately, after the Third Plenary Session of the Chinese Communist Party's 11th Central Committee, the government allocated funding, renovated the Nine Heavens Palace and Primordial Talisman Palace and built a winding mountain highway that leads directly to Elder Mao Peak (Da Mao Feng 大茅峰).

Myriad Blessings Palace of the Nine Heavens (Jiuxiao Wanfu Gong 九霄万福宫) is on top of Elder Mao Peak, the Mount Maoshan's highest peak, and is known as Top Palace (Ding Gong 顶宫) for short. The palace comprises four rows of buildings that have been built from the foot to the top of the mountain.

In the first row is the Hall of the Divine General (Lingguan Dian 灵官殿). The Divine General, a Taoist guardian god, is worshiped here.

In the second row is the Library of Scriptures (Cangjing Lou 藏经楼). It has two levels made entirely of brick and wood. The bottom floor is now used to keep religious artifacts and handicraft items. The top floor is the office of the Mount Maoshan Taoist Association. In the north part of the building's top floor, there is a room on both the east and west sides. The eastern room is the Precious Canon Storehouse (Baozang Ku 宝藏库), which is a place where Taoist followers on a pilgrimage to the mountain's temples can burn incense. The western room is Kanli Temple (Kanli Gong 坎离宫, Water Trigram-Fire Trigram Temple). Under the west wall of Kanli Temple, there is a pond, the water of which is so clear that you can see to the bottom and which never goes dry at any time of year. According to a legend, a divine dragon often swims in the pond, which has been called Heavenly Pond (Tian Chi 天池). Standing at the south of the pond is a giant "dragon wall" that is 19 meters long and six meters high, with nine different flood dragons soaring above vast waves and between clouds. Two dragons under the wall poke their heads up out of the water's surface as if coming out of the pond.

In the third row of the Primeval Treasure Hall (Taiyuan Baodian 太元宝殿) is the main building of the Nine Heavens Palace, where Taoist priests chant scriptures mornings and evenings and where large-scale everyday religious activities are held. The hall's round door is made of white carved marble, and the hall roof is covered with green tube-shaped tiles. In the middle on each of the two roof ridges is an orange-colored pot-

tery gourd and the ridge tops are adorned with zoomorphic ornaments. The hall interior is brightly lit with high-hanging lanterns. There is a thorough range of bells, drums, *qing* stone chimes (percussion instruments) and *ding* cooking vessels. Narrow and heavy curtains complement each other, joss sticks and candles burn day and night, and the candles here are bright the whole year round. At the front of the altar, statues of the Three Perfect Sovereign Mao Brothers are worshiped: Mao Ying is in the middle with a *ruyi* (S-shaped scepter) in his arms; Mao Gu and Mao Zhong stand on either side holding jade *gui* (圭, ceremonial tapering tablets) in their hands. Others in attendance in this hall are the four supreme commanders Ma, Wen, Zhao and Yue and four *gongcao* (功曹, Officers of Merit) for the year, month, day and hour. A Taoist divine island is carved at the back of the altar where the statues of the three Mao brothers are. On the island, the Taoist Holy Man of Compassionate Salvation is floating on the surface of the sea. Above the sea, the Primeval Lord of Heaven, the Heavenly Lord of Numinous Treasure, the Supreme Master, the Jade Emperor and another 28 immortals gather in the clouds. Each one of them has a different appearance and expression, and the carvings of them all have a high artistic value. Two gods are also worshiped behind the palace. In the east, there is the local god of the land, Liu Fu. In the west is the God of Wealth, Zhao Gongming. Between the east and west, there are 45 stone memorial tables with carvings of Mount Maoshan immortals and every generation of celestial being to have attained the Way. All these are important materials for studying the history of Taoism on Mount Maoshan.

The main buildings in the fourth row are the Rising Platform (Shengbiao Tai 升表台) and the Hall of the Two Sages. The Rising Platform is also called the Ascent-to-Heaven Platform (Feisheng Tai 飞升台) because it is said that, from there, Mao Ying ascended to heaven riding a crane. It is two meters high with an area of nine square meters on the surface, which is covered with green stones. When you look down from the top of the platform on the gentle night of the Mid-Autumn Festival, the misty scenery and hazy view will make you feel that you are in heaven and that there is no mountain higher.

The Hall of the Two Sages is located behind the Ascent-to-Heaven Platform, where the parents of the three Mao brothers are worshiped. The

Child-Giving Goddess and the Goddess of Eyesight are worshiped at their statues on either side of the shrines.

There are newly built imitations of ancient towers on two sides of the Hall of the Two Sages. The eastern tower is used as a Taoist house and guest area. The western tower is called Leisurely Cloud Tower (Yiyun Lou 怡云楼), in which are displayed the precious Mountain Guardian Four Treasures. The four treasures are a jade seal, jade *gui* tablet, jade talisman and inkstone, which have all been handed down from the Song Dynasty. The jade seal is carved from Heshi jade with seal characters cut in relief, saying “jiu laoxian doujun yin” (九老仙都君印, seal of nine old immortal sovereigns of all). The jade *gui* tablet is naturally smooth and transparent, the pattern on top being like a flying bat and the bottom pattern being like ranges of mountains. The *gui* tablet can also change color according to the different seasons. The jade talisman is white and has a solid quality. It is known as the Heart Guardian Talisman and also has an intaglio engraving of six seal characters, saying “he ming tiandi ri chi” (合明天帝日敕, bestowed by the Celestial Emperor). It is said that gods will guard a person only if he carries this talisman with him. The inkstone, called a *bayan* (哈砚) or *beyan* (呵砚), is made of jade and is a rectangle 11 centimeters long and three centimeters wide. Large drops of water appear on the inkstone when anyone breathes on it. It produces a red color now when a writing brush is dipped into it. There is a fish pattern on the inkstone, and the fish seems to be alive when the inkstone is put in water.

Premodial Talisman Perfect Tranquillity Palace (Yuanfu Wanning Gong 元符万宁宫), located at the foot of Jijin Peak, was initially a place for storing Taoist seals so it is also known by the shorter name Seal Palace (Yin Gong 印宫). The palace has 13 Taoist hermitages but not all of them have been repaired yet.

Following the repairs to the ancient buildings on Mount Maoshan and the rejuvenation of the Taoist movement, the Mount Maoshan Temple Fair is undergoing a revival after an interruption of many years. The temple fair takes place from the 24th day of the 12th lunar month until the 18th day of the third lunar month the following year. At each year's fair, Taoist priests perform Taoist rites for pilgrims and tourists. The Taoist rites consist of morning rites, afternoon rites and evening

rites. The priests read scripture, clean the altar and invite, welcome and find places for the gods in the morning rites; submit memorials in the afternoon rites; and bid farewell to the gods in the evening rites. The purpose of performing Taoist rites is to pray for good fortune and to redeem lost souls by making offerings. People should abstain from eating meat and drinking alcohol and should have taken a bath three days beforehand or else the gods will find fault with them. When people return home, they must bring back two treasures. One is an incense stick to get good fortune when they return to their hometown (the pronunciation of *xiang* 乡 meaning hometown and *xiang* 香 meaning incense being the same in Chinese). The other is a golden elixir basket. There are altogether 29 such baskets, which are shaped like ordinary baskets and are each like a goose egg in size. The middle one represents the patriarch's cauldron for making immortality pills and the other 28 in a circle around it represent the Twenty-eight Constellations. After being invited home, the two treasures must be hung on top of a kitchen range until the day for seeing off the Kitchen God on the 24th day of the 12th lunar month. They are then incinerated together.

The Mount Maoshan Temple Fair lasts for three months and there are plenty of activities. It is not only somewhere for Taoist followers to hold religious activities but also a tourist destination for all travelers.

(3) Mount Gezao

Mount Gezao (Gezaoshan 閻皂山, Black Pavilion Mountain), located in the southeast of Zhangshu City in Jiangxi Province, has 99 peaks and stretches for more than 100 kilometers. It is regarded as the Thirty-sixth Blissful Realm.

Mount Gezao is the ancestral mountain of Taoism's Numinous Treasure sect. The Taoist priests of the Numinous Treasure sect believe that Ge Xuan, their sect's founder, set up an oven to make immortality pills in Woyun Nunnery, which is on an eastern peak of Mount Gezao. Then he found the Way (Tao) and ascended to heaven from there.

The time when Mount Gezao flourished was during the Song Dynasty when lots of Taoist priests went there to cultivate themselves. Later it was frequented less and less. After being burned by fairly heavy fires, the mountain had been at a low ebb since the early period of the Qing Dynasty.

Recently, with the support of the local government, many Taoist

sites of historical interest and scenic beauty on Mount Gezao have been undergoing repairs and are beginning to take shape, such as the Temple for the Worship of Perfection (Chongzhen Gong 崇真宫), the main gate, Bridge for Receiving Immortals (Jiexian Qiao 接仙桥), Singing Water Pavilion (Mingshui Ting 鸣水亭), Singing Water Bridge (Mingshui Qiao 鸣水桥), Pool for Freeing Captive Animals (Fangsheng Chi 放生池), Garden of One Hundred Flowers (Baihua Yuan 百花园) and Well for Making Immortality Pills (Liandan Jing 炼丹井). It is to be hoped that this “ancestral home” of the Numinous Treasure sect will recover the elegance it once had.

5. The Three Large Ancestral Palaces of the Complete Perfection Sect

The Complete Perfection sect was founded during the Jin Dynasty (1115-1234) by Wang Chongyang, who was born in Huxian County in Shaanxi Province. Huxian is the location of the Chongyang Longevity Palace (Chongyang Wanshou Gong 重阳万寿宫). It is said that Wang Chongyang learned the Taoist rites from Lü Dongbin, alias Chunyang, a native of Yongle Town in the city of Ruicheng in Shanxi Province. Yongle is the location of the Great Chunyang Longevity Palace (Da Chunyang Wanshou Gong 大纯阳万寿宫), generally known as Yongle (Eternal Happiness) Palace (Yongle Gong 永乐宫). Qiu Chuji, a disciple of Wang Chongyang, founded the Dragon Gate school of the Complete Perfection tradition, had numerous disciples from later generations, and exerted great influence. Qiu Chuji used to be the abbot of the White Cloud Temple in Beijing and was buried there after his death. Therefore, later generations called Yongle Palace, Chongyang Palace and White Cloud Temple the three great ancestral palaces of the Complete Perfection sect.

(1) Yongle Palace in Ruicheng

Yongle Palace was originally in the town of Yongle in Ruicheng County in Shanxi Province. When work was being done on the Three Gate Gorge (Sanmenxia) construction project on the Yellow River in 1959, the palace was within the area to be submerged so all the buildings were moved to the village of Longquan three kilometers north of the county town to be restored and preserved. It is said that Lü Dongbin was born in Yongle

Town on the 14th day of the fourth lunar month in the 14th year of the Zhenyuan reign period of the Tang Dynasty (789), so people of the late Song Dynasty built the Master Lü Memorial Shrine (Lü Gong Ci 吕公祠) to offer sacrifices to him. After the rise of Complete Perfection Taoism during the Jin Dynasty, Lü Dongbin was venerated as one of its founders, and the Master Lü Memorial Shrine was expanded into a proper Taoist temple. It was rebuilt in the second year of the reign of Yuan Dynasty Emperor Dingzong (Güyük Khan) (1247), during which time it was enlarged into four halls and given the name Great Chunyang Longevity Palace. The huge project of producing all the murals, which had taken more than 100 years, was completed in the 18th year of the Zhizheng reign period (1358). As it was built in the town of Yongle, it was generally called Yongle Palace.

Along Yongle Palace's central axis are five main buildings – the palace gate, the Dragon and Tiger Hall (also called the Gate of the Infinite), the Hall of the Three Pristine Ones (also called the Hall of the Infinite), Chunyang Hall and Chongyang Hall. The palace gate was built during the Qing Dynasty, and the other buildings during the Yuan Dynasty. Thirty steles of different dynasties are on display in a spacious and high corridor built on both sides of the courtyard between the palace gate and the Dragon and Tiger Hall. They give an account of the process by which Yongle Palace was built and of the content of the murals. None of the four halls has a window. Apart from the gates, there are just walls, which are covered with magnificent and exquisite murals. The murals occupy an area of more than 1,000 square meters, a scale so large that it is rarely seen in the rest of the country. The Dragon and Tiger Hall and the Hall of the Three Pristine Ones feature paintings of figures, while Chunyang and Chongyang halls have series of pictures that tell stories.

The Dragon and Tiger Hall has a primitive simplicity. In the hall, there used to be large, tall sculptures of the Black Dragon and White Tiger, two Stellar Sovereigns, unfortunately these have been destroyed. All that is extant now is the murals of the 26 heavenly spirits that guard the immortals' world, including the door gods Shentu and Yulei, heavenly warriors and local gods.

The Hall of the Three Pristine Ones, the largest hall in Yongle Palace, is seven bays wide and four bays deep. There is a spacious platform in front of the hall. The roof of the hall is decorated with ceramic owls' tails, and

exquisite immortals or animals. There are shrines in the hall to worship the Primeval Lord of Heaven of the Jade Purity, the Heavenly Lord of Numinous Treasure of the High Purity, and the Heavenly Lord of Tao and Its Virtue of the Supreme Purity. The hall's walls are covered with "Worshipping the Primeval Lords," a mural of more than 400 square meters. There are large portraits of the Jade Emperor, the South Pole, the Eastern Extremity, the Purple Subtlety Constellation, the Great Heavenly Emperor Gou Chen, the God of Earth, the Lord of Wood and the Golden Mother, dressed as eight emperors and empresses and arranged as if they were worshipping the Three Pristine Ones. The immortals stand in reverent postures, surrounded by celestial clouds, with great momentum in the fresco. The painting depicts 286 deities, led by the Black Dragon and White Tiger stellar sovereigns on each side of the south wall, and they are all arranged symmetrically. The figures in the painting are colorful and varied in their postures, such as the well-rounded and dignified emperors and goddesses, the strong, bold and powerful warriors, the gentle, cultivated and reverent immortals, and the beautiful, pure and innocent golden boy and jade girl.



The disk-shaped caisson ceiling of the Hall of the Three Pristine Ones in Eternal Happiness Palace (Yongle Gong) in Ruicheng, Shanxi Province.

The whole work is characterized by bold and smooth lines, gorgeous and deep colors, great size and exquisite skill.

The Chunyang Hall mural “A Manifestation of the Transformations in Imperial Sovereign Chunyang’s Fairyland” reflects Lü Dongbin’s experience of cultivating himself to become an immortal. It consists of a series of 52 paintings, each of which has a title that briefly describes the content. Although its theme is Taoism, it also reflects the various scenes from the society of that time, such as mountains, rivers, fields, cities and towns, shops, residential housing, the local authorities and peddling. The horizontal scroll painting “The Eight Immortals Crossing the Sea” on the lintel on the north wall depicts a lively scene of the eight immortals crossing the sea to attend the Grand Peach Banquet, each immortal showing his or her special prowess. The painting “Zhongli Quan and Lü Dongbin Discussing the Way” at the back door of the hall vividly depicts Zhong giving Lü guidance in his Taoist studies to become an immortal. The painter has put the figures in a quiet and secluded environment, surrounded by pine trees, emerald green stones, a waterfall and exotic flowers. Master and disciple are sitting sideways opposite each other. The long-bearded Zhongli Quan, his chest exposed, is having a pleasant conversation with Lü Dongbin, who is listening attentively and modestly. The bold and lively work is a rare top-quality portrait from ancient China.

The murals in Chongyang Hall consist of a series of 49 paintings, depicting the experience of Wang Chongyang’s birth, his self-cultivation according to Taoist doctrine, his attaining the highest state of spiritual enlightenment, and the salvation of the seven Complete Perfection masters. Connected by mountains, stones, clouds and trees, the different paintings look like a landscape painting at first glance but a careful examination shows them to be a series of complete biographical portraits. It is a pity that many of the murals in Chongyang Hall have been damaged, with approximately one-third having become indistinct.

The murals of Yongle Palace were painted by unknown folk craftsmen but, with their intelligence and wisdom, they left a world-level art treasure-house for later generations.

(2) Chongyang Palace in Huxian

Chongyang Palace is in Zu’an Town, Huxian County, Shaanxi Province. It is an ancestral palace of Complete Perfection Taoism. The site was origi-

nally called Liujiang Village and was where Wang Chongyang, the founder of Complete Perfection Taoism, built a shelter to cultivate himself and where he had his bones buried later. It was renamed Zu'an (祖庵 Founder's Hut) after Complete Perfection Taoism became popular.

Wang Chongyang was born in 1112, the second year of the Zhenghe reign period of the Song Dynasty Emperor Huizong. His original name being Wang Zhe, he styled himself Zhiming and his Taoist name was Chongyangzi or Master Chong Yang. He was born into a rich and powerful family in the city of Xianyang in Shaanxi Province and later moved to the village of Liujiang. From childhood, he studied literature and practiced martial arts. After unsuccessfully sitting the imperial examinations for literary and military candidates, he ignored worldly affairs. In 1159, the fourth year of the Jin Dynasty's Zhenglong reign period, Wang Chongyang met an immortal (allegedly Lü Dongbin) in the town of Ganhe, who taught him magic codes for cultivation. Wang Chongyang pretended to be mad and styled himself Wang Haifeng ("Madman Wang") to avoid being disturbed by others. Later he dug a four-meter-deep cave, which he called the "tomb of the living dead," in the village of Nanshi at the foot of Mount Zhongnan. He lived there secretly for two years, engrossed in cultivating his inner alchemy. In 1176, the seventh year of the Dading reign period, he burned his shelter. When his neighbors came to fight the fire, he danced madly, crying out: "I have worked hard in Liujiang Village for several years as the dust in the shelter became thick day after day. Suddenly the true fire has burned the shelter to return it to the Supreme Lord. I suggest you do not be gloomy about it, and I am deeply remorseful. Nothing is left but ashes. I will not travel here again for I know the way to immortality." Asked why, he replied: "Someone will rebuild this shelter in three years' time." Taking his leave of his friends and relatives, Wang Chongyang went afar to Shandong to spread Taoism. He left a self-portrait before he went, on which he wrote: "You will understand my origin and destination simply by turning your head without moving a single step." Together with his disciples Ma Yu, Tan Chuduan, Liu Chuxuan, Qiu Chuji, Wang Chuyi, Hao Datong and Sun Bu'er (whom later generations called the seven masters of Complete Perfection) in Shandong, Wang Chongyang developed a new religious sect called Complete Perfection, which advocated *zhengong* or "true merit" and *zhenxing* or

“true deeds.” The former referred to the cultivation of a person’s disposition and to exercises to benefit the internal organs. The latter referred to the implementation of his ideals to save people. Wang Chongyang opposed sectarian bias and advocated the integration of Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism. Assimilating the Buddhist monastic system, he made it a requirement that Complete Perfection Taoist priests must live in monasteries, strictly observing the sacred rules of the religious order and neither marrying nor eating meat. He ascended to heaven and became an immortal at the age of 58 in 1170, the 10th year of the Dading reign period.

The disciples buried his coffin in the village of Liujiang after Wang Chongyang passed away and they rebuilt his former residence. In 1185, the 25th year of the Dading reign period, Qiu Chuji took charge of building a Taoist temple on the site of Wang’s former residence. It was rebuilt and granted the title Numinous Emptiness Temple (Lingxu Guan 灵虚观) during the Cheng’an reign period (1196-1200) of the Jin Dynasty Emperor Zhangzong. It was renamed Chongyang Palace in 1238, the 10th year of Emperor Taizong’s reign of the Yuan Dynasty, and the court conferred on it the title Chongyang Longevity Palace in 1245, the fourth year of the reign of Töregene Khâtûn (Empress Naimazhen). The large-scale buildings included palaces, temples, towers and pavilions with more than 5,000 rooms, in which nearly 10,000 Taoists lived. It is a matter of regret, however, that most of its buildings fell into disrepair and became damaged when Taoism declined during the Ming and Qing dynasties. Luckily, quite a few tablet inscriptions have been preserved. More than 10 exhibition rooms for tablet inscriptions have been built since liberation in 1949, including one room called the Ancestral Hut Stele Forest, which houses a collection of 13 valuable stone tablets.

Chongyang Palace has been gradually restored over the past few years. The palace’s great hall, bell tower, drum tower, Hall of the Divine General and Hall of the Seven Perfect Ones have already been rebuilt and, as a result, the “ancestral palace” has begun to take shape. Chongyang Palace will surely be fully restored in the near future and regain its former elegance.

(3) White Cloud Temple in Beijing

White Cloud Temple (Baiyun Guan) in Beijing is the ancestral temple of Complete Perfection Taoism’s Dragon Gate sect. It built up a great reputa-



Wang Changyue, the abbot (*fangzhang*) of the White Cloud Temple in Beijing during the early Qing Dynasty.

tion as the first monastery of Complete Perfection Taoism. Since the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, many national Taoist organizations — such as the Chinese Taoist Association, the Chinese Institute of Taoist Studies, and the Chinese Institute of Taoist Culture — have been established in White Cloud Temple, which is held in great esteem by Taoists.

Situated west of Xibianmen in Beijing, White Cloud Temple grew out of the Tang Dynasty's Temple of Heavenly Eternity. According to records, Tang Emperor Xuanzong built the temple to show his respect for Taoism and to offer sacrifices to Lao Zi. The temple's white marble statue of a seated Lao Zi is said to be from the Tang Dynasty. In 1160, the fifth year of the Jin Dynasty's Zhenglong reign period, the Temple

of Heavenly Eternity was almost completely burnt down in a fire. The temple was later rebuilt and renamed the Palace of the Supreme Ultimate (Taiji Gong 太極宮).

During the early Yuan Dynasty, Qiu Chuji (whose Taoist name was Changchunzi) went to meet Genghis Khan (also known as Emperor Taizu) in the Great Snow Mountain in the Western Regions. Qiu then returned east to Yanjing (present-day Beijing) and was allowed to live in the Palace of the Supreme Ultimate. The shabby temple was full of rubble, so the Perfect Man Changchun (Qiu) ordered his disciple Wang Zhijin to take charge of reconstruction. After three years, the temple's buildings took on an entirely new look. In 1227, the 22nd year of Genghis Khan's reign, the Perfect Man Changchun died there, and Genghis Khan issued an imperial edict to rename the Palace of the Supreme Ultimate and call it Changchun (Eternal

Spring) Palace (Changchun Gong 长春宫). The following year, Yin Zhiping, an outstanding disciple of the Perfect Man Changchun, set up a lower courtyard in the east of Changchun Temple to bury the immortal's remains and on this built the Hall of Mildness (Chushun Tang 处顺堂). The original temple fell into decline at the end of the Yuan Dynasty due to the wars over the years. It was rebuilt during the early Ming Dynasty with the Hall of Mildness at its center and renamed White Cloud Temple.

The main buildings of White Cloud Temple are divided into the central, eastern and western sections and the rear courtyard. They are grand in scale but compact in layout.

The central section's starting point is the screen wall facing the temple. There then come a decorated archway, ornamental columns, the main gate, Wofeng (Stuffy) Bridge, the Hall of the Divine General, the bell and drum towers, the Hall of the Three Officials, the Hall of the Gods of Wealth, the Hall of the Jade Emperor, the Hall of Salvation from Misery, the Hall of the King of Medicine, the Hall of Ancient Disciplines (Laolü Tang 老律堂), the Hall of Patriarch Qiu, and the Hall of the Three Pristine Ones and Four Heavenly Ministers.

The Screen Wall is located in front of the temple, facing the decorated archway, and is inlaid with the four Chinese characters *wangu changchun* (万古长春, "eternal spring through the ages") inscribed with vigorous strokes by Zhao Mengfu, a great calligrapher of the Yuan Dynasty.



The decorated archway of Beijing's White Cloud Temple.

The decorated archway was originally called Lingxing Gate (Lattice Star Gate) and was where the temple's Taoists would observe the stars and meteorological phenomena. It later developed into the present archway, losing its original function as a place for observing weather phenomena. The seven-story hip-style temple with four pillars was built in 1443, the eighth year of Emperor Zhengtong's reign during the Ming Dynasty.

The main gate is a stone arch with three entrances that symbolize the Triloka or Three Realms (the Realm of Desire, the Realm of Form, and the Realm of Formlessness). Entering the temple gate represents jumping out of the Three Realms and entering the mountain retreat of the immortals. The gate's stone exterior has carved patterns of floating clouds, white cranes and flowers, with exquisite shapes and simple and vigorous engraving skill. The palm-sized stone monkey hidden among the relief sculptures on the east side of the central entrance has been made shiny by visitors touching



Wofeng (Stuffy) Bridge and the Hall of the Divine General (Lingguan Dian) at Beijing's White Cloud Temple.

them. An old Beijing saying goes: “The immortals disappeared without trace, leaving only the stone monkeys in the temple.” The monkeys became an incarnation of an immortal, so visitors touch them for luck. There are three small stone monkeys hidden in different places in the temple, they are difficult to find without looking hard, giving rise to the saying, “The three monkeys do not meet each other.”

The Hall of the Divine General is for worshiping Taoist guardian god Divine General Wang. A Ming Dynasty wooden sculpture approximately 1.2 meters high, rational in proportion and exquisite in shape, looks fierce and valiant with its red face, curly beard and glaring eyes. The general gestures with the fingers of his left hand while doing incantations and he holds a whip in his right hand. Portraits of Zhao Gongming and Ma Sheng hang on the hall’s east wall while, on the west wall, there are portraits of Wen Qiong and Yue Fei, making up all four Taoist guardian generals.

The Hall of the Three Officials is for worshiping the Three Officials. The Heavenly Official could bless people, the Earthly Official could pardon people, and the Water Official could relieve people from misfortune, according to legend.

The Hall of the Gods of Wealth is for worshiping the Three Gods of Wealth. Bi Gan, the Civil God of Wealth, is in the middle; on the left is Zhao Gongming, the Military God of Wealth; and on the right is Guan Yu, another Military God of Wealth. The loyal and upright Bi Gan was the uncle of King Zhou of the Yin Dynasty and often used blunt words to remonstrate with the dissolute and cruel king. The irritated King Zhou had Bi Gan’s heart ripped out. Bi Gan managed to stay alive even though he had no heart, because he had taken an elixir given to him by Jiang Ziya. Because he had no heart, Bi Gan was neither prejudiced nor selfish, so people could be fair while buying and selling, cheating neither the old nor the young. Therefore, he was enshrined and worshiped as a God of Wealth.

Zhao Gongming, also called General Zhao Gong, was conferred by the Primeval Lord of Heaven with the title of Perfect Sovereign of the Orthodox Oneness Dragon and Tiger Mysterious Altar. He led the four gods in charge of soliciting wealth, bringing in treasure, accepting valuables and making profits. Therefore, he became a God of Wealth enshrined and worshiped by the common people.

Guan Yu, also called Saintly Imperial Sovereign Guan, was widely wor-

shipped by the people. He was a universal god with a wide jurisdiction under his control, and the image of him as a God of Wealth was only one of his images.

The Hall of the Jade Emperor is for worshipping the Jade Emperor. It has a Ming Dynasty wooden statue of about 1.8 meters high. The emperor is wearing a Jiuzhang monastic habit and a pearl crown with 12 lines of jade ornaments hanging both at the front and back. He is holding a jade tablet and sitting up straight in a dragon chair.

The Hall of Salvation from Misery is for worshipping the Heavenly Lord of Salvation from Misery. He is shown riding a nine-headed lion and holding a bottle containing sweet dew in his left hand and a double-edged sword in his right hand. According to Taoist scriptures, the Heavenly Lord is an infinitely merciful god specially in charge of saving those sinking into hell.

The Hall of the King of Medicine is for worshipping Sun Simiao, a famous Tang Dynasty Taoist and medical expert who wrote many works, including *Essential Prescriptions Worth a Thousand Pieces of Gold* and *Additions to the Essential Prescriptions Worth a Thousand Pieces of Gold* and who was respectfully called the King of Medicine by later generations. The painting on the hall walls depicts Sun Simiao curing a dragon and a tiger. Legend has it that, when a little dragon transformed itself into a snake while going out of the sea to have some fun, a child injured it. Giving the child some money for the dragon, Sun Simiao cured it and then put it in the grass. The little dragon told the whole story to the Dragon King after returning to the Dragon Palace. The Dragon King sent one of his followers to invite Sun Simiao to the Dragon Palace to give him a lot of money and treasure but Sun



Sun Simiao.

declined. Later the Dragon King gave him several medical works. He concentrated on studying them and eventually became the King of Medicine. His medical skill was so superb that even tigers deep in the mountains knew about him. A tiger once blocked Sun's path as he was collecting medicinal ingredients in a mountain. Sun asked: "Are you going to eat me?" Shaking its head, the tiger opened its mouth. Kneeling down, Sun found a big ulcer there. So he put an iron ring in the tiger's mouth and put his hands inside to apply some medicine.

The Hall of Ancient Disciplines, originally called the Hall of the Seven Perfect Ones, is for worshiping the Seven Perfect Ones of Complete Perfection Taoism — that is, the seven disciples of Wang Chongyang, the sect's founder. Qiu Chuji sits in the middle, with Liu Chuxian, Tan Chuduan and Ma Yu on the left and Wang Chuyi, Hao Datong and Sun Bu'er on the right. The eminent Taoist Wang Changyue in the Qing Dynasty used to give lectures on Taoist doctrine and teach religious discipline here, attracting a great number of disciples from both north and south of the Yangtze River. The mysterious sect was greatly boosted as a result. To commemorate these grand occasions, later generations renamed the Hall of the Seven Perfect Ones, calling it the Hall of Ancient Disciplines. The temple's Taoists hold religious activities in the hall, which has a large floor space. They chant scriptures here every morning and evening and set out altars for fasting services.

The Hall of Patriarch Qiu is for worshiping Qiu Chuji, known as Perfect Man Changchun, the founder of Complete Perfection Taoism's Dragon Gate sect. In the middle of the hall, there is a huge begging bowl carved from the roots of an ancient tree, said to have been bestowed by the Qing Dynasty Emperor Qianlong. Legend has it that when in straitened circumstances Taoists in the temple could carry the bowl to the imperial palace to beg alms from the imperial household. Qiu Chuji's remains are buried beneath the bowl.

The Hall of the Three Pristine Ones and Four Heavenly Ministers is a two-story building. The top floor is for worshiping the Three Pristine Ones, while the bottom floor is for worshiping the Four Heavenly Ministers. There are statues of the Three Pristine Ones, each more than two meters high, from the Ming Dynasty's Xuande reign period (1426-35). They look extraordinarily serene and grand yet simple and

unsophisticated, with the colors still as bright as they originally were. The Four Heavenly Ministers assisting the Jade Emperor are the Great Emperor of the Highest Palace of Polaris, the South Pole Great Emperor of Longevity, the Great Emperor of the Central Heaven Pole Star of Purple Subtlety, and the Imperial God of Earth. These clay statues from the mid-Qing Dynasty are all 1.5 meters high, with gold lacquer and asphalt powder. The gilded bronze incense burner in the courtyard in front of the hall was cast during the Ming Dynasty's Jiajing reign period (1522-66). The burner is simple and vigorous in shape and is cast with exquisite patterns of clouds and 43 gold dragons all over its body.

The Divine *Te*, the Memorial Temple, the Hall of the Eight Immortals, the Hall of Patriarch Lü, the Hall of the Primordial Sovereign, Wenchang Hall, and Primordial Time Hall (Yuanchen Hall) are distributed in White Cloud Temple's western section.

The Divine *Te* is a bronze animal strongly resembling a steed and is the first thing that can be seen after entering the western courtyard. A close examination shows it actually has a mule's body, donkey's face, horse's ears and ox's hooves. It is called a *te* (特), which is said to be a divine animal with magical skills. It is said that, if someone feels unwell, the illness will go away if they touch themselves and the same part of the animal's body.

The Memorial Temple was built in 1706, the 45th year of the Qing Dynasty Emperor Kangxi's reign. It is for worshipping a seated statue of Wang Changyue, the seventh-generation master of Complete Perfection Taoism's Dragon Gate sect. Wang's remains are buried under the hall. The walls of the chambers on the east and west are inlaid with stone inscriptions from the *Tao Te Ching* (*Classic of the Way and Its Virtue*) and the *Book of Secret Correspondences* (Yinfu Jing 阴符经) in the handwriting of the Yuan Dynasty calligrapher Zhao Mengfu. These are the treasures of White Cloud Temple.

The Hall of the Primordial Sovereign is for worshipping Taoist goddesses. In the middle sits a statue of the Heavenly Immortal Saintly Mother, the Primordial Lady of the Azure Cloud. On the left are the Goddess of Midwifery and the Child-giving Goddess and on the right are the Goddess of Eyesight and the Goddess of Smallpox. In the past, women worried most about sterility, difficult childbirth, babies' illnesses such as smallpox and eye disease, dying young and becoming disabled.

The four goddesses in charge of such matters attract a large number of pilgrims.

Wenchang Hall is for worshipping the Imperial Sovereign Wenchang (also called the Imperial Sovereign of Zitong), who is in charge of the official ranks won by successful candidates in the imperial examinations and also of officials' salaries in the human world. On either side, he is accompanied by Confucius, the founder of Confucianism, and the Confucian master Zhu Xi.

Primordial Time Hall (Yuanchen Hall) is commonly known as the Hall of the Sixty-Year Cycle. It is for worshipping the gods of the 60-year cycle and the Primordial Sovereign of the Big Dipper. The 60-year cycle derives from the ancient Chinese chronological system based on the Ten Heavenly Stems and Twelve Earthly Branches. The gods of the 60-year cycle, the Sixty Constellations, each year take turns to be in charge of matters for that particular year. Each person's year god (or Supreme Year Star) is the god who was on duty in the year that person was born. Each of the gods has his own title. It is said that if a person worships his or her annual god and offers sacrifices to him, the god will bless and protect that person, subduing a variety of evil spirits and bringing very favorable auspices.

The temple halls in White Cloud Temple's eastern section had their statues of gods destroyed long ago but the halls now serve as the offices of the Chinese Taoist Association and as living quarters for the Taoists.

A quiet, beautiful and elegant garden called the Cloud-Gathering Garden (Yunji Yuan 云集园) is in White Cloud Temple's backyard. It is also called Lesser Penglai Fairyland. In the center are the Taoist Disciplinary Altar and the Cloud-Gathering Mountain House (Yunji Shan Fang 云集山房). The former is an altar of Complete Perfection Taoism for passing on the Great Commandments of the Three Altars (the Commandments of Elementary Perfection, the Commandments of the Middle Ultimate, and the Commandments of the Heavenly Immortals). The Cloud-Gathering Mountain House is a place for the sect's masters to expound on Taoist texts to disciples who have been initiated into Taoist priesthood. In 1989, White Cloud Temple held its first initiation ceremony for new monks of the Complete Perfection tradition since the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949 and it was an



Chanting scriptures.

unprecedentedly grand occasion.

The ancient White Cloud Temple has now become famous in Beijing for its historical relics. The bustling temple fair held each Spring Festival is always crowded with visitors. The temple has become an important window to help people understand China's Taoist culture and traditional folk customs.

6. Longevity Palace, Ancestral Temple of the Pure Brightness Sect

Longevity Palace, whose full name is Yulong Longevity Palace (Yulong Wanshou Gong 玉隆万寿宫), is on the West Mountain or Mount Xishan (also called Xiaoyao Shan or Carefree Mountain 逍遥山), more than 30 kilometers southwest of the city of Nanchang in Jiangxi Province. It is the ancestral temple of the Jingming or Pure Brightness sect.

Xu Xun, who styled himself Jingzhi, was born during the Eastern Jin Dynasty (317-420). He was worshipped as the founder of the Pure Bright-

ness sect. His ancestral home was in Xuchang in Henan Province but the entire family moved south to Nanchang in Jiangxi Province at the end of the Han Dynasty to avoid the chaos caused by war. According to Taoist records, Xu Xun made a living by hunting when he was young. One day, he went into the mountains and shot a pregnant deer. The doe gave birth, licked her baby and then died. Moved with compassion, Xu decided to stop hunting and started to concentrate on studying Taoism. Hearing that Wu Meng had mastered Taoist doctrines, he formally acknowledged Wu as his master to learn all the skills from him. Recommended for his filial piety and moral record, Xu took up the post of magistrate of Jingyang County in Sichuan Province in 280, the first year of the Taikang reign period of the Jin Dynasty. He later gave up his post and went back east. He went to the West Mountain region of Nanchang with Wu Meng to preach the principle of filial piety. It is said that the group of followers numbered hundreds of people and there were 12 key members, whom later generations called the Twelve Perfect Sovereigns. According to Taoist legend, Xu Xun's "entire family, even including his chickens and dogs, flew up to heaven" on the 15th day of the eighth lunar month in the year 374, the second year of the Eastern Jin Dynasty's Ningkang reign period. It is said that Xu Xun passed on the teachings of the Pure Brightness tradition of loyalty and filial piety to He Zhengong after Xu was born a second time early in the Southern Song Dynasty. Expounded and propagated by Liu Yu, Huang Yuanji and others during the Yuan Dynasty, the teachings became the basis of the influential Pure Brightness sect, which advocated "honesty, sincerity, loyalty and filial piety" to help people become immortal. As a result, the Longevity Palace near Nanchang became the Pure Brightness sect's ancestral temple and the West Mountain became its ancestral mountain.

Legend has it that people from Xu Xun's area built the Immortal Xu Temple there to honor his memory after he ascended to heaven. The Song Dynasty Emperor Huizong dreamt that Xu Xun had subdued demons to cure the emperor's disease between 7 a.m. and 9 a.m. on the first day of the fifth lunar month in 1116, the sixth year of the Zhenghe reign period. The emperor then ordered that the word "longevity" be added to the name Yulong Palace, and he had the temple rebuilt based on the style of the luxury Chongfu (Sublime Fortune) Palace in Xijing, the Western

Capital (Chang'an). The temple went through many disasters and was later seriously damaged.

The present Longevity Palace, filled with incense smoke curling upward, looks solemn and awe-inspiring, with newly installed walls, and resplendent and magnificent halls such as Brilliance Hall, the Hall of Mother Shen, the Hall of the Three Pristine Ones, the Hall of the Three Officials, and the Hall of Lord Guan Yu. A statue of Xu Xun has been enshrined for worship in Brilliance Hall, with the two immortals Hu and Zhan, and the 12 Great Perfect Men standing on either side. The Jade Emperor conferred on Xu Xun the title Envoy of Brilliance after Xu ascended to heaven, hence the hall's name. Built on a broad platform, the hall is five bays wide and three bays deep. It is surrounded by winding corridors and it is covered on top by a double-eaved roof of colorful glazed tiles.

Outside Longevity Palace are nine narrow-shaped hillocks known as the "nine dragons paying tribute." Eight are covered with thick greenery, and the remaining one has loess and a disarray of stones but no plants. It is said that, when the nine flood dragons came to worship Xu Xun, one of them plotted to rebel. Flying into a rage, Xu Xun skinned the dragon, leaving it bare. Later, he made immortality pills on its back. According to local people, some stones can be found on the mountain that make an echoing noise if they have been shaken by heavy rainfall. These are called "echo stones" and are said to be the remains of the immortality pills made by Xu Xun. Numerous religious believers have been attracted to the mountain to look for these stones.

7. Tongbai Palace, Ancestral Temple of the Southern Lineage

Tongbai Palace (Tongbai Gong 桐柏宮, the Palace of Tung and Cypress Trees) is located on Mount Tiantai (Heavenly Terrace Mountain) in Zhejiang Province. Zhang Boduan, the founder of the Southern Lineage of Golden Elixir Taoism and a native of Tiantai, used to practice Taoism in Tongbai Palace. Therefore, later generations revered it as the ancestral temple of the Southern Lineage.

The Southern Lineage of the Golden Elixir sect, a Taoist Inner Alchemy sect that took shape during the Southern Song Dynasty (1127-

1279), originated in the regions south of the Yangtze River in contrast with Complete Perfection Taoism's origins in north China, hence the Southern Lineage's name. Zhang Boduan of the Northern Song Dynasty (960-1127) was regarded as the school's founder. The doctrines were passed in a single line of descent from Zhang Boduan to Shi Tai, to Xue Daoguang, to Chen Nan and to Bai Yuchan. Zhang Boduan was also called Yongcheng and his literary name was Pingshu and his Taoist monastic name Ziyang. He liked eating fish when he was a government official. One day, his servant sent him his meal while he was working at the local authority. His colleagues hid his favorite fish to play a joke on him. Failing to find the fish, he suspected that the servant had stolen it. The servant eventually hanged himself, dying without having been cleared of the mistaken charge. Several days later, worms suddenly fell from a beam in the local authority building. They were maggots that had grown out of the rotten fish hidden there. Too late for regrets, Zhang Boduan realized that he must have handled quite a few similar unjust cases at the local authority, so he composed this poem:

Writing indictments or appeals for 40 years, I have experienced numerous rights and wrongs.

My family has enough to eat and wear, but thousands of others are resentful.

The faults of my official career of half a lifetime will influence a hundred generations.

Giving up the purple ribbon and golden medal, I wander leisurely in straw sandals and with an iron stick.

When asked where immortals live, I replied they are in green mountains with the moon and clouds on the mountainside.

Having composed the poem, he burned all the records. He was accused of the crime of burning documents and exiled to the area south of the Five Ridges. He later became an assistant to Lu Shen, a native of Guilin and a Grand Secretary of the Dragon Diagram Hall. Zhang Boduan followed Lu Shen when Lu was transferred to Chengdu, where Zhang met an unusual person who taught him the pithy formula for golden elixirs. In accordance with this, Zhang wrote *On Realizing Perfection*. This work and *Kinship of the Three* and *the Book of Changes* by Wei Boyang of the Han Dynasty are regarded as the most important classics of the Inner Alchemy school. Zhang Boduan roamed about after obtaining the magic formula.

He returned to Tiantai in his later years and lived a life of seclusion in Tongbai Palace. Therefore, later generations regarded this temple as the ancestral palace of the Southern Lineage.

Tongbai Palace grew out of Tongbai Temple (Tongbai Guan 桐柏观), which was built in AD 239, the second year of the State of Wu's Chiuwei reign period. According to historical records, Sun Quan, the sovereign of the State of Wu, built Tongbai Temple on the eastern side of Mount Tiantai and ordered Ge Xuan to live there. It was renamed Tongbai Palace during the Kaiping reign period (907-11) of the Later Liang Dynasty, one of the Five Dynasties. During the Tang and Song dynasties, Tiantai Taoism became the most popular Taoist sect, and Tongbai Palace became a Taoist center in the southeast area. Distinguished people gathered there and it was dubbed a "home of immortals."

During the Yongzheng reign period (1723-35) of the Qing Dynasty, local officials in Zhejiang Province were ordered to rebuild Tongbai Palace. Grand in scale, the rebuilt palace had five halls along its central route — the Hall of the Divine General, the Hall of the Perfect Warrior, the Imperial Stele Pavilion, the Main Hall, and the Purple Sun Tower. To the east of the Main Hall is the Hall of the Supreme Ultimate, which is for worshipping the old immortal Ge. To the west is the Hall of the Righthand Assistant, which is for worshipping Crown Prince Jin, son of King Ling of Zhou. In its heyday, Tongbai Palace had more than 100 rooms. Due to the unstable political situation during the Qing Dynasty's Xianfeng and Tongzhi reign periods (1851-74), Taoists led difficult lives, wandering all over. The number of places where Taoist rites were performed declined.

When the Japanese invaded Zhejiang Province during the War of Resistance Against Japan, they suspected that Chinese troops were stationed in Tongbai Palace and they sent planes to wantonly bomb the palace. As a result, the Main Hall and almost all of the adjacent temples were destroyed. However, of most regret was that the Library of Scriptures was destroyed, along with its collection of the original Ming Dynasty block-printed edition of the *Taoist Canon of the Zhengtong Era*. Just over 10 Taoist followers in the palace survived the disaster, including the old Taoist Wu Zhiyuan, who took charge of all its affairs to guarantee the ancestral palace's survival.

Tongbai Palace was inundated in 1958 when the Tongbai Reservoir was being built. The Taoists moved to Singing Crane Palace in front of the

original palace and Singing Crane Palace was renamed Tongbai Palace to commemorate the Southern Lineage's ancestral palace. At present, the palace has just over 10 old single-story buildings, a situation that bears no relation to the Southern Lineage's ancestral temple. Elite figures from all sectors of society are expected to combine their wisdom and efforts to rebuild Tongbai Palace so that the Southern Lineage's historic ancestral temple will blossom once again.

8. The Yellow Emperor Studies Taoism on Mount Kongtong

Mount Kongtong is west of the city of Pingliang in Gansu Province and is where, according to legend, the Yellow Emperor studied Taoism under Guangchengzi. It is said that, after the Yellow Emperor defeated Chi You, he heard that Guangchengzi was living in seclusion on Mount Kongtong and was skilled in Taoist cultivation. The Yellow Emperor then went on a special trip to ask Guangchengzi for advice on the major principles of self-cultivation. Guangchengzi told him: "The essence of perfect Tao is profound and obscure while the extremity of perfect Tao is dim and silent. Do not listen and do not look. If you keep your spirit in quietude, you will keep your body in perfect order. If you keep silent and calm, and refrain from toiling your body or wasting your energy, you will be able to live a long life." (*The Book of Zhuang Zi*, Chapter 11). He also gave the Yellow Emperor a volume of the *Book of Spontaneity*. The Yellow Emperor ascended into heaven and became one of the Five Heavenly Emperors after attaining Tao. He occupied the central position, taking charge of everything. He was worshiped as the remote ancestor of Taoism, so Mount Kongtong was dubbed the "first mountain of Taoism."

There are very many large ancient temples on Mount Kongtong. Legend has it that Taoists started to build palaces for cultivation during the Qin and Han dynasties (221 BC to AD 220). Taoism flourished on the mountain during the Wei, Jin, and Southern and Northern Dynasties (220-589). During the Ming Dynasty's Wanli reign period (1573-1619), the emperor ordered the construction of Taoist temples according to the size and shape of those on Mount Wudang. Mount Kongtong became the largest site of Taoist monasteries in northwestern China. There are now 15 Taoist temples still



Mount Kongtong in Gansu Province.

extant on the mountain, of which three are occupied by Taoists. The Mount Kongtong Taoist Association was established in 1990.

The largest temple on Mount Kongtong is the Palace of Supreme Harmony, also called Huangcheng. It is now managed by Taoists. Based on the contours of the mountain, the temple's halls are apparently scattered about but they are properly spaced. Its major halls include the Hall of the Perfect Warrior, the Hall of the Jade Emperor, the Hall of the Supreme Master, the Hall of the Three Officials, the Hall of the Grand White Star, the Hall of Patriarchs, and the Hall of the King of Medicine. Most of these were built during the Ming Dynasty. There are vivid Ming Dynasty engravings of curled-up dragons on the bluestone path on the slope up to the Hall of the Perfect Warrior. In the middle of nine pillars engraved with curled-up dragons, there is a shrine with a baldachin for worshipping at a gilded statue of the Great Perfect Warrior Emperor. The Supreme Master, the Perfect One Yin Xi, and Xu Jia are worshiped in the Hall of the Supreme Master. "The Eighty-one Transformations of the Supreme Master," a Ming Dynasty painting of 60 square meters, on the wall depicts the story of the Supreme Master's birth, the popularization of Taoism, and the cultivation of people from all parts of the country.

The Palace of Descendants and the Cave of Three Religions are the two other sites managed by Taoists. Worshiped in the Palace of Descen-

dants are Taoist goddesses such as the Primordial Lady of the Azure Cloud, the Child-giving Goddess, the Goddess of Midwifery, and the Wet Nurse Goddess. Worshiped in the Cave of Three Religions, a building in the style of a cave dwelling, are the Supreme Master, Sakyamuni and Confucius, symbolizing the integration of Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism.

The Stairway to Heaven is the only pass to Mount Kongtong. The stone gorge route rises steeply and is very winding. The ancients laid 378 stone steps on the steep cliffs where no path is available, and this section is more than 80 meters long and 2.5 meters wide. Tourists have to hold onto the iron chains between the stone pillars on each side of the steps to climb the stairs.

One distinctive feature of Mount Kongtong is that caves can be found all over it. Of these, the Black Crane Cave on the Eastern Tower's jutting cliff is characterized by the strongest legendary flavor. It is said that the black crane was originally the servant boy in front of Guangchengzi's throne. The boy, going against the immortals' regulations, fell in love with a servant girl of the Dragon Palace when he was sent to get some top-quality wine. Irritated, Guangchengzi turned the boy into a black crane and threw him into the stone cave. The black crane has lived there in seclusion since then, with continuous feelings of love and hatred, only hovering outside the cave occasionally when the rain has stopped and the sky is clearing up with a gentle breeze.

All the ancient strategists vied for the magical Mount Kongtong, which is in a strategic location in northwestern China and difficult of access, towering over three passes and giving control over five plains. Now it has become a scenic spot in eastern Gansu Province, where the number of pilgrims and visitors increases with each passing day.

9. Purple-Cloud-from-the-East Lookout Tower

The Purple-Cloud-from-the-East Lookout Tower (Ziqidonglai Louguantai 紫气东来楼观台) is at the foot of Mount Zhongnan (Zhongnan Shan 终南山), 25 kilometers southeast of Zhouzhi County town in Shaanxi Province.

Mount Zhongnan (终南) is also known as Mount Taiyi, Mount Difei, Mount Zhongnan (中南) and Mount Zhounan and is known for short as

Mount Nanshan or the Southern Mountain. It is part of the Qinling range, the Zhongshan section starting in Wugong County in the west and reaching Lantian County in the east. Mount Zhongshan's green peaks rise higher and higher and its secluded and beautiful views have earned it such accolades as "capital of the immortals," the "best grotto heaven," and the "first blissful realm under heaven." Its main peak, in Zhouzhi County, is 2,604 meters above sea level.

Mount Zhongnan is one of the birthplaces of Taoism. Legend has it that, during the reign of King Kang of Zhou (1026-1000 BC), the astrologist Yin Xi, who was the Hangu Pass keeper, built a straw tower on Mount Zhongnan to observe the constellations and clouds every day. One day, he suddenly caught sight of a purple cloud coming from the east and an auspicious star moving west. He had a sense of foreboding that a sage would travel through the pass, so he waited there. Soon after came an old man wearing colorful clothes and riding a black ox. It was Lao Zi, who was traveling west through Shaanxi. Yin Xi quickly invited Lao Zi to the tower, saluted the sage and asked him to expound on the scriptures and to write a book. Lao Zi lectured him on the 5,000-word *Tao Te Ching* (*Classic of the Way and its Virtue*) on the high hillock to the south of the tower, and then floated off. It is said that Lao Zi expounded on Taoist texts on the Lookout Tower's Platform for Expounding Scripture. After Taoism came into being, Lao Zi was worshiped as its founder, Yin Xi as Perfect Man Wenshi and the *Tao Te Ching* as a cardinal classic text.

After Yin Xi established the Lookout Tower, various buildings were built on Mount Zhongnan during different dynasties, finally leading to the formation of a whole group of buildings centering on the Platform for Expounding Scripture.

The Platform for Expounding Scripture has four major halls — the Lao Zi Temple, the Hall of the Big Dipper, the Hall of Salvation from Misery, and the Hall of the Divine General. A carved stone dragon-head tap in the Highest Good Pond (Shangshan Chi 上善池), the spring-water pond not far west of the gate, pours out water all year round. Legend has it that in 1283, during the second year of the Zhiyuan reign period of the Yuan Dynasty, an incurable pestilence attacked the Zhouzhi area, killing numerous people. Zhang Zhijian, the Lookout Tower's supervisor, heard the words of the Supreme Master in a dream one night: "I have made pills and

hidden them in the spring under the stone plate in front of the monastery gate. The spring can cure people of the disease.” Supervisor Zhang ordered young Taoists to look for the pills in front of the gate and, as expected, they dug out a spring under the stone plate to the west. People from far and near eventually had their illness cured with the water. On his surprise at hearing this story during a visit, Zhao Mengfu, a member of the Imperial Academy, asked for paper and a writing brush to write the pond’s name in three large Chinese characters, taking the name from the line “The highest good is like that of water” (*shang shan ruo shui* 上善若水) found in the *Tao Te Ching* (Chapter 8). Nowadays, pilgrims still strive during each temple fair to drink the water to eliminate disease and prolong life.

It is said that the Eight Trigrams-shaped elixir oven on the lofty peak south of the Platform for Expounding Scripture was used by Lao Zi to make immortality pills. He used to forge iron and temper it in the Revering Heaven Pool southeast of the platform. Qizhen Pavilion (Qizhen Ting 栖真亭) close to the pond is where the sage nourished his true nature. Lao Zi lectured his disciple Xu Jia at the Transforming Woman Spring (Huanü Quan 化女泉) to the west of the platform. Legend has it that, on his journey west, Lao Zi used magic to transform a skeleton into a handsome young man called Xu Jia. After reaching Hangu Pass, Lao Zi transformed sweet grass into a beautiful lady to test Xu Jia. Failing to resist the temptation, Xu Jia was about to act when the sage pointed at him and turned Xu Jia back into a skeleton. Luckily, Yin Xi interceded on behalf of Xu Jia. Lao Zi transformed the bones into Xu Jia again and angrily touched the ground with his walking stick. The beauty then turned into a clear spring, whose water can still be drunk today.

The ruins of the Ancestral Sage Palace (Zongsheng Gong 宗圣宫) are situated one kilometer north of the Platform for Expounding Scripture. When one looks at the ruins from the platform, the first things to greet one’s eyes are nine luxuriant and hardy thousand-year-old cypresses, which local people respectfully call the “nine venerable trees of the Lookout Tower.” The tree to which Lao Zi tied his ox is called the “cypress for tying up the ox” and underneath there is a carved stone ox from the Yuan Dynasty.

Quite a few valuable inscriptions have been collected in the tower, such as “Tablet Records of the Ancestral Sage Palace of the Great Tang Dynasty” written by Ouyang Xun, and “The First Mountain” by Mi Fei of the Song

Dynasty. Of course, the most famous is the inscription of the *Tao Te Ching* on the Liangtong tablet, whose bold, vigorous and splendid characters look like flowers from a distance, with a style somewhere between that of the inscriptions on drum-shaped stone blocks from the Warring States Period (475-221 BC) and the ancient *dazhuan* greater seal script current in the Zhou Dynasty (circa 1100-221 BC). Later generations called the tablet the “tablet of the plum-blossom seal characters.” The seven rarely used characters on each side of the tablet, which are not recorded in common dictionaries, are said to form the Supreme Master’s 14-character formula for health preservation and to mean: “The medicine for prolonging life is extracted from the jade oven; the pills for lengthening one’s life are made in the correct way.”

According to ancients, “Mount Zhongnan is the most beautiful of the 120 rivers and mountains in the Central Shaanxi Plain, while the Lookout Tower is the best scenic spot on the thousand-*li* Mount Zhongnan covered by downy greenery.” The Lookout Tower has attracted a lot of believers and visitors from ancient to modern times with its long Taoist history, moving fairy stories and legends, and numerous ruins.

10. Singing Crane Mountain — the Birthplace of Taoism

Singing Crane Mountain (Heming Shan 鹤鸣山), also called Singing Swan Mountain (Huming Shan 鹄鸣山), is in the village of Sanfeng in Heming Town, Dayi County in Sichuan Province. It is similar to a crane in shape, as if a stone crane were hidden inside it, or a red-crowned crane perching on it, hence the name. According to historical records, Zhang Daoling studied Taoism on Singing Crane Mountain during the Eastern Han Dynasty Emperor Shundi’s reign (AD 126-144). The Supreme Master descended into the world to teach Zhang Daoling Taoist tenets and named him a Celestial Master. Zhang Daoling then wrote a 24-chapter Taoist book, founded Five Pecks of Rice Taoism, and preached his religion in Sichuan. Therefore, Singing Crane Mountain became the birthplace of Taoism. Many famous Taoists used to lead secluded lives on the mountain, such as Du Guangting of the late Tang Dynasty, Chen Tuan of the Five Dynasties and early Song Dynasty, and Zhang Sanfeng of the Ming Dynasty, leaving behind a great number of famous historical sites.

Surrounded by water on the east, west and north, and facing Chengdu Plain in the south, Singing Crane Mountain is covered with green pines and cypresses and is unsurpassed in its magnificence, with beautiful scenery. The pavilion on the east at the mouth of the mountain is called Jieyuan Pavilion (Jieyuan Ting 解元亭). (During the Ming and Qing dynasties, the *jieyuan* was the scholar who won first place in the provincial imperial examinations.) Legend has it that, after failing to obtain any scholarly honor or official rank, a *jieyuan* scholar surnamed Wang realized the truth and went up to the mountain. He provided funds to build a pavilion called the Crane-Watching Tower to give himself calm. Later generations called the pavilion Jieyuan Pavilion because a *jieyuan* scholar built it. The Temple to the Three Officials stands under the pavilion. The Three Officials are the Heavenly Official, Earthly Official, and Water Official. The Heavenly Official was said to be able to bless people, the Earthly Official to absolve people from guilt, and the Water Official to relieve people from disaster.

After Bidding Farewell to Immortal Bridge, there is a huge tablet by the roadside, engraved with the three big characters *Diyi Shan* (第一山 First Mountain) written by Mi Fei, a Song Dynasty calligrapher. The vigorous, bold and unconstrained characters are unique in style. Climbing the stairs along the walls of Wenchang Palace, you will reach the Palace of High Purity — that is, the ancient Singing Crane Temple, which was first built in the Eastern Han Dynasty, rebuilt in the Song Dynasty, and expanded during the Yuan and Ming dynasties. It is said to be where the Supreme Master descended and where the Celestial Master received a Taoist talisman. The palace's main hall is a Ming Dynasty building with a complete bucket-arch (*dougong*) timber structure and there is a golden statue to worship the Supreme Master. The stone strip inlaid at the edge of the steps in front of the hall is inscribed with "Staying Overnight on Singing Crane Mountain," a *qiliu* poem by the patriotic poet Lu You. (A *qiliu* poem is an eight-line poem with seven characters to a line and a strict tonal pattern and rhyme scheme.) The Pavilion to Welcome Immortals is several hundred meters behind the Hall of the Supreme Master. It is said that in 1404, the second year of the Yongle reign period of the Ming Dynasty, the emperor ordered an envoy called Wu Boli to invite Zhang Sanfeng to court, holding an imperial edict. Not wishing to become an official, Zhang Sanfeng went off with a swagger. Later generations built a pavilion there to offer sacrifices to Perfect Man

Sanfeng. The ancient cypress on the cliff behind the pavilion is said to have been planted by Zhang Sanfeng. Legend has it that a pair of black cranes used to perch on the fourth branch at the top of the tree, standing firmly on one foot despite the wind and rain. Later, when someone wanted to shoot the cranes, they left without a trace and never returned to perch on the tree. The magnificent Three Sages Palace was rebuilt on the site of the Pavilion to Welcome Immortals. In the palace, there are shrines for the worship of the Supreme Master, Patriarch Lü Chunyang and Perfect Man Zhang Sanfeng.

Many beautiful and touching stories about Singing Crane Mountain have been circulated among the people. It is said that a crane might be seen on the mountain's Singing Crane Stone by rubbing the stone. However, only sincere people can see a crane by rubbing the stone. According to another legend, when tea from a kind of tea plant on the mountain is infused, the steam rises in the shape of a crane, and the tea has a good color, smell and taste. It is also said that there was a stone crane bred by the best of heaven and earth and that it did not ordinarily sing. Every time it sang, an immortal would fly up to heaven. People are always enchanted by these stories.

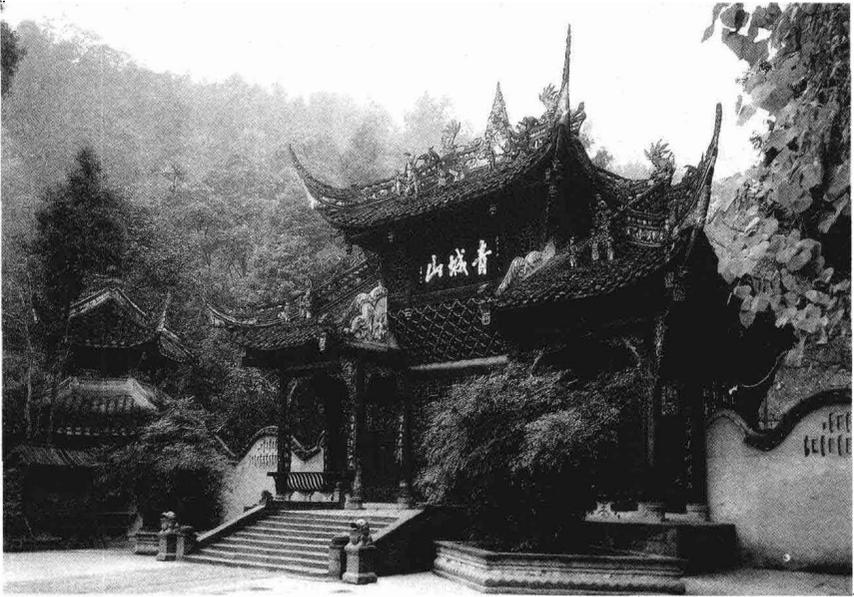
11. The Celestial Master Preaches His Religion on Mount Qingcheng

Mount Qingcheng (Qingcheng Shan 青城山, Green City Mountain) lies 15 kilometers southwest of the city of Dujiangyan in Sichuan Province, back to back with the snowcapped Western Mountain and overlooking a vast expanse of fertile farmland in Chengdu. Covered with verdant and evergreen plants and surrounded by peaks, the mountain is shaped like a city, hence its name. Characterized by towering ancient trees, green vines that block out the sun, with crisscrossing ravines and gullies and unfathomable grotesque peaks, the mountain looks extraordinarily deep and quiet, so it has enjoyed a great reputation as the "most secluded green city in the world." The fifth of Taoism's Ten Greater Grotto Heavens, it has been called the Nine-Chamber Grotto Heaven of Precious Immortality (Baoxian Jiushi Dongtian 宝仙九室洞天).

Mount Qingcheng is one of the birthplaces of Taoism. During the Eastern Han Dynasty (AD 25-220), Celestial Master Zhang Daoling founded Taoism on Singing Crane Mountain in today's Sichuan Province and preached his religion mainly on the neighboring Mount Qingcheng. Taoism devel-

oped vigorously for a thousand years after the Han Dynasty. Mount Qingcheng's palaces and temples have been kept basically intact since being rebuilt during the Qing Dynasty. The buildings mainly include Jianfu Palace (Jianfu Gong 建福宫, Establishing Happiness Palace), the Temple of Eternal Tao, the Hall of Patriarchs, the Palace of High Purity, and the Pavilion of the Supreme Master.

Jianfu Palace lies below Mount Qingcheng's Zhangren Peak (Zhangren Feng 丈人峰, Elder's Peak). It was first built in 730, the 18th year of the Kaiyuan reign period of the Tang Dynasty, and was originally called the Elder's Temple (Zhangren Ci 丈人祠). The names of both the peak and the temple came from the legend of Master Ningfeng, the Elder of the Five Sacred Mountains. Legend has it that Ningfeng, an official in charge of producing pottery during the Yellow Emperor's reign, lived in seclusion on Mount Qingcheng's Northern Rock after attaining Tao. Learning this, the Yellow Emperor went there to seek advice from Ningfeng and received the *Book of the Risen Dragon* (Longqiao Jing 龙跷经) from him. After reading it, the Yellow Emperor was able to travel to the remotest areas of the



The main gate on Mount Qingcheng (Qingcheng Shan, Green City Mountain).

earth on a cloud or dragon. So he had a tower built and ceremoniously gave Ningfeng the title of Elder of the Five Sacred Mountains, allowing him to command the mountains.

Jianfu Palace was rebuilt in 1888, the 14th year of Guangxu's reign of the Qing Dynasty, making it into the palace known today. The three Chinese characters for the palace name on the upper part of the door lintel were written in 1940 by Lin Sen, the president under the National Government. The palace now has three lines of temples. The temple at the front has a shrine for the worship of the Jin Dynasty's Fan Changsheng, the Heavenly and Terrestrial Elder Master of the Four Seasons and Eight Solar Terms. In the main hall is worshiped Elder of the Five Sacred Mountains Perfect Sovereign Ningfeng and Du Guangting. The temple at the back is for worshipping the Supreme Master, the Imperial Sovereign Donghua, and Patriarch Wang Chongyang. Hanging on the pillars of the rear temple is a 394-word antithetical couplet poem, which is one of Mount Qingcheng's cultural wonders.

Climbing the stairs away from Jianfu Palace, the visitor passes the Rain Pavilion, the Natural Pavilion, the Shelter of Happiness, and the Pavilion Leading to Victory, and eventually reaches the Natural Painting Archway. Situated on the ridge of Dragon Dwelling Peak (Longju Shan 龙居山), the archway is a ten-cornered Qing Dynasty pavilion with a double-eaved roof. Towering over the long stone steps, the magnificent archway occupies the gap between the two peaks, forming an outstanding view from halfway up the mountain. Ahead in the distance can be seen the Dragon Dwelling, Celestial Granary (Tiancang 天仓) and Celestial Primodium (Qianyuan 乾元) peaks covered with layers of luxuriant green plants. Close by can be seen egrets playing with water, with birds chirping on the mountain for long periods, as if it were all a natural painting.

Walking up from the Natural Painting Archway, the visitor will reach the Temple of Eternal Tao (Changdao Guan 常道观) after passing Encountering Immortality Cliff (Yuxian Ya 遇仙崖). The cave behind the temple, in which Celestial Master Zhang Daoling used to live, is generally known as the Celestial Master's Grotto. The temple's main buildings include the Hall of the Three Pristine Ones, the Yellow Emperor Temple, and the Hall of the Three August Ones.

The Hall of the Three Pristine Ones (Sanqing Dian 三清殿) is the main hall of the Temple of Eternal Tao and was rebuilt in 1923. Here, there are

shrines for the worship of the Three Pristine Ones, who are the supreme Taoist gods — the Primeval Lord of Heaven of the Jade Purity, the Heavenly Lord of Numinous Treasure of the High Purity, and the Heavenly Lord of Tao and Its Virtue of the Supreme Purity.

The Yellow Emperor Temple is behind the Hall of the Three Pristine Ones and was first built during the Sui Dynasty (581-618). It is the oldest building in the Temple of Eternal Tao, with a gilded statue of the Yellow Emperor Xuanyuan for worship.

A walk further on from the Yellow Emperor Temple leads to the Hall of the Three August Ones. There is a shrine with three stone statues, each a meter high, of Fuxi, Shennong (the Divine Farmer) and the Yellow Emperor in seated positions. The statues were made in 723, the 11th year of the Kaiyuan reign period of the Tang Dynasty. Fuxi holds a painting of the Eight Trigrams, while Shennong carries a branch of a herbal plant, thus vividly illustrating the legends “Fuxi produces a painting of the Eight Trigrams” and “Shennong tastes a hundred herbs.” They both have curly hair and beards and are wearing short capes and aprons woven with tree leaves. The legendary Yellow Emperor is wearing an emperor’s robe and crown and he looks like an emperor of later generations. The stone tablet with inscriptions in the calligraphy of the Tang Dynasty Emperor Xuanzong, in front of the divine throne, is a rare cultural relic from that dynasty.

A further walk up the stone steps leads to Patriarch Peng Peak (Pengzu Feng 彭祖峰), Mount Qingcheng’s first peak. The famous Palace of High Purity stands on the peak’s eastern slope. The palace was first built in the Jin Dynasty (265-420) and the existing building originates from when the palace was rebuilt during the late Qing Dynasty and early on during the Republic of China period. At the cave-like stone-pile palace gate are three large characters reading Shangqing Gong (上清宫 Palace of High Purity), written by Chiang Kai-shek. On the sides are the two parts of a couplet by Yu Youren (1879-1964). Walking further up the stone steps brings the visitor to the Hall of the Three Pristine Ones. A winding corridor leads to the Hall of the Jade Emperor, in which there is a shrine to the Supreme Master Lao Zi, Patriarch Lü Chunyang and Patriarch Zhang Sanfeng. In front of the southern building on the west side of the hall are the Twin Wells, which are said to have been dug at the time of the Former Shu kingdom (907-932) during the period of the Five Dynasties and Ten States. One of the Twin Wells is

square and the other is round; one symbolizes man and the other symbolizes woman. The water in the two wells shares the same source but one well has clear water while the other has muddy water. On the eastern side of the hall, there is a long promenade that stretches to the Civil and Military Hall, where Confucius and Guan Yu are worshiped. Under the shrine is an exquisite relief sculpture of nine dragons. On each side of the shrine, there are painted stone carvings of the Queen Mother of the West, Fairy Ma Gu, Patriarch Zhang Sanfeng and Madam Pistil produced by Zhang Daqian (1899-1983). Down from the Civil and Military Hall to the east lies Ma Gu Pool, which is said to be where Ma Gu washed the pills she refined. The everlasting pool is like a crescent of only a few feet in both depth and width. On top of the peak is the Supreme Master's Pavilion with a newly sculpted stone statue of Lao Zi riding a black ox.

Mount Qingcheng has enjoyed a reputation not only for its beautiful scenery and many palaces and temples but also its precious resources. Using traditional Taoist secret recipes, the Taoists living on Mount Qingcheng have used the nutritious fruit and plants collected on the mountain to make the "four unique products" of Qingcheng — Grotto-Heaven Milk Wine, Grotto-Heaven Tribute Tea, stewed chicken with ginkgo, and Taoist pickled vegetables. When you are enjoying Mount Qingcheng's scenery, don't forget to try the "four unique products."

12. Mount Wudang

Mount Wudang (Wudang Shan 武当山), in the city of Danjiangkou in Hubei Province, is also known as Mount Taihe (Taihe Shan 太和山, Mountain of Supreme Harmony) and the Mysterious Mountain (Xuan Yue 玄岳). To its west is the Qinling mountain range, and to its south the Greater Shennongjia mountain range. To the east, it extends to the Hanjiang River Plain and to its northeast is Nanyang Basin. A climb from the northern base of Mount Wudang first provides a view of the roaring Hanjiang River and then, after a turn toward the south, of the magnificent Yangtze River. Mount Wudang covers more than 800 *li* and has 72 peaks, 36 cliffs and 24 ravines. Its magnificent Taoist palaces and temples attract tourists and Taoist believers from all over China.

There are disputes over the origin of Mount Wudang's name. Some

scholars maintain that Wudang (Wudàng 武当) sounds like *wudan* (wùdàn 巫丹, meaning “witch pill” or “wizard pill”) and that it must therefore have some bearing on ancient place names such as Wu Shan (巫山, Witch Mountain) and Dan Shui (丹水, Pill River). Another explanation began to become popular during the Song Dynasty. Mount Wudang had evolved into a Taoist center for the Great Perfect Warrior Emperor (Zhenwu Dadi 真武大帝). People worshiped the Perfect Warrior so much that they thought: “No one is qualified to be the god of this great mountain except the Perfect Warrior.” Through a combination of the characters *wu* (武, meaning “military,” “powerful” or “warrior”) with *dang* (当, meaning “qualified” or “appropriate”), the name Wudang was born and was then handed down from generation to generation.

The Perfect Warrior (Zhenwu) was originally called the Mysterious Warrior (Xuanwu 玄武). Xuanwu was the collective name of the northern seven of the Twenty-eight Constellations. The constellation looks like a combination of a tortoise and a snake. The Perfect Warrior, Black Dragon, White Tiger and Red Phoenix are the four gods that guard the four compass points. During Emperor Zhenzong’s Dazhong Xiangfu reign period (1008-1016) in the Song Dynasty, the name Mysterious Warrior (Xuanwu) was changed to Perfect Warrior (Zhenwu) to avoid using the character *xuan*, which appeared in the given name of Zhao Xuanlang, the founder of the Song Dynasty. The

Great Perfect Warrior Emperor was regarded as a god to protect the dynasty during the Song, Yuan and Ming dynasties and later regarded as a majestic, intrepid god with superpowers who kept guard in the north. The life story of the Great Perfect Warrior Emperor recorded in Taoist books says that he was born in the Heavenly Palace of Non-Desire in the All-Embracing Realm, the son of the



The Mysterious Warrior God (Xuanwu Shen).

King of the Pure Bliss Realm and the Empress of Virtuous Victory. The queen dreamt she had swallowed the sun and was found to be pregnant after she woke up. Fourteen months later, she gave birth to a little prince. After the little prince grew up, he left his royal family to go to Mount Wudang to cultivate Tao. After 42 years of self-discipline, he attained immortality. At the orders of the Jade Emperor, he was given the post of Supreme Mystery to guard the north and became the Great Perfect Warrior Emperor.

The Taoism of Mount Wudang has a long history. In the Ming Dynasty, Mount Wudang had the most magnificent palaces and temples and the biggest religious group. It was honored as the “first famous mountain under heaven.” The past 500 years have seen Mount Wudang have its ups and downs. Now all that is still left is six *gong* or palaces (Purple Heaven, Supreme Harmony, Golden Hall, Southern Rock, Encountering Perfection, and Jade Emptiness), two *guan* temples (Renewing Perfection and Primordial Harmony), and a few other buildings such as the Needle-Sharpening Well (Mozhen Jing 磨针井) and the Mysterious Mountain Gate (Xuanyue Men 玄岳门).

A walk along the mountain path up to the foot of Unfurled Flag Peak (Zhanqi Feng 展旗峰) brings into view the biggest and most intact palace extant on Mount Wudang — Purple Heaven Palace (Zixiao Gong 紫霄



The stove on Mount Wudang for making immortality pills.

宫). It is said that the Purple Primordial Sovereign, the divine patriarch of Jade Purity, once asked the Great Perfect Warrior Emperor to cultivate Tao on Mount Wudang when the immortal was teaching the emperor the Upper Way of Infinity. The Great Perfect Warrior Emperor chose the peak rising up to Purple Heaven. From then on, the palace has been called Purple Heaven Palace. The palace is one of China's key Taoist temples and is where the Mount Wudang Taoist Association is based.

The Purple Heaven Palace was built in 1413, the 11th year of the reign of the Ming Dynasty Emperor Yongle. It consists of four halls — Dragon and Tiger Hall (Longhu Dian 龙虎殿), Ten Directions Hall (Shifang Tang 十方堂), Purple Heaven Hall (Zixiao Dian 紫霄殿) and Parents Hall (Fumu Dian 父母殿). In Purple Heaven Hall, the palace's main hall, there is a shrine on a pedestal with stone carvings. The shrine is decorated with vivid dragon and phoenix ornaments and there are various Ming Dynasty gilded copper statues of an elderly, middle-aged and young Perfect Warrior in civilian and military dress. Moreover, 28 statues of the Great Perfect Warrior Emperor in various sizes are enshrined on the western and eastern sides of the hall. In the middle of the hall hang four precious lanterns given by the emperor. The two “cycas in bloom” lanterns — decorated with dragons, phoenixes, flowers, leaves and peacocks — are the only examples of their kind in China and have been officially recognized as national treasures. In addition, the precious *ding* vessel, scent bottle, candlestick and kerosene lanterns were all given by the emperor. In the middle of the hall, there is a work of art on display. It is a model of Mount Wudang being lifted by six dragon kings and was made in 1616, the 44th year of the Ming Dynasty Emperor Wanli's reign. In the western side of the hall, there stands an “echoing magical China fir,” also known as the blessed China fir, which makes an echoing sound when it is knocked. It is said that it had been planned to use the fir wood as the crossbeam of Purple Heaven Hall but that the wood turned out to be of no use because the carpenter mistakenly cut it five inches too short. The fir sobbed to the Great Perfect Warrior Emperor. Then the Great Perfect Warrior Emperor looked into the matter and discovered that, if the wood had been used as the crossbeam, the chanting of scripture would have reverberated and lingered in the air for three days. The Great Perfect Warrior Emperor felt he had to deify the fir and enshrine it on the western

side of the hall to warn later generations not to neglect talented people. Behind Purple Heaven Hall is Parents Hall, where there is a shrine to the Great Perfect Warrior Emperor's parents, the King of the Pure Bliss Realm (Great Emperor of Brilliant Perfection) and the Empress of Virtuous Victory. It used to be a place where people prayed to have children and so is also known as the Hall of One Hundred Children.

After climbing to the top of Heavenly Pillar Peak (Tianzhu Feng 天柱峰), the visitor can see a group of buildings rising in front of the peaks and alongside some water. This is the famous Palace of Supreme Harmony (Taihe Gong 太和宫), which was built in 1416, the 14th year of the Ming Dynasty Emperor Yongle's reign. The emperor gave the palace a horizontal board on which were written the Chinese characters for "Great Mountain Palace of Supreme Harmony" (Dayue Taihe Gong 大岳太和宫). At that time, the palace had only 78 rooms but the number increased to 520 during the Ming Dynasty Emperor Jiajing's reign (1522-66). Those that still survive include the main hall, Worship Hall, Bell and Drum Tower, and Copper Hall. The Hall of Supreme Harmony, which is the main hall, has a shrine with a copper statue of the Great Perfect Warrior Emperor. To the south of the Hall of Supreme Harmony is Small Lotus Peak (Xiaolian Feng 小莲峰), on top of which stands Rotating Display Hall (Zhuanzhan Dian 转展殿), in which the small and exquisite Copper Hall is preserved. Copper Hall was built in 1307, the 11th year of the Yuan Dynasty's Dade reign period. It is the oldest copper building still surviving in China. Designed in the Xuanshan (double-pitched roof) style, it is 2.9 meters high. It was built section by section, so it can easily be taken apart and reassembled. Each section has characters carved on it. There are various artistic small copper statues in the hall.

Behind the Palace of Supreme Harmony is the imperial palace wall, which was built in 1423, the 21st year of the Ming Dynasty Emperor Yongle's reign. The wall is 3.5 meters high and 1,500 meters long. It encloses Heavenly Pillar Peak. The wall is made of huge stones, each weighing about 500 kilograms. It has four heavenly gates, three of which face cliffs. Only the southern gate is passable. On both sides of the promenade are 12 divine steel whips, each weighing 50 kilograms. It is said that, if worshipers are not devout when they pray, Divine General Wang will punish them with the divine whips. Beyond the promenade, a climb over the dangerous Jiulian



The palace wall on Mount Wudang.

Deng path and an ascent to the top of Heavenly Pillar Peak lead to the well-known Golden Hall, which stands on the area of 20 or so square meters on the top part of the peak.

Together with statues of gods, an incense-burner table and sacrificial vessels, the structure of the Golden Hall (Jin Dian 金殿) was carried to Mount Wudang after being completed in Beijing. With a total weight of 90 tons, a height of 5.5 meters, a width of 5.8 meters and a depth of 4.2 meters, the Golden Hall is a gilded copper structure. In the middle is a shrine with a gilded copper statue of the Great Perfect Warrior Emperor, which is 1.8 meters high and weighs around 10 tons. The Great Perfect Warrior Emperor wears an emperor's robe over a suit of armor, with untied hair and bare feet. He looks very solemn and powerful. The Water and Fire Generals, holding flags and swords, solemnly stand in awe separately in the two wing rooms. There is also the handsome Golden Boy holding some treasure and the beautiful Jade Maiden carrying an album in both hands. (Each is an attendant to a god or goddess.) Under the incense-burner table are the Tortoise and Snake Generals. The Snake General has its head raised and is twisting its body round the Tortoise General. From the hall ceiling hangs a precious gilded copper bead, which is said to be the "wind-shelter bead" that keeps away the wind and lets the hall's divine lantern stay lit eternally.

The Golden Hall is still shining after more than 500 years of enduring the wind, rain, thunder and lightning. It is like a brilliant pearl among China's ancient copper structures. More than 70 peaks in a variety of forms come into view when the visitor stands on Heavenly Pillar Peak. Standing on the top, tourists will feel like immortals.

Wudang Inner School Boxing, which originated on Mount Wudang, is already known in China and abroad, as are the mountain's natural scenery and majestic ancient buildings. It is said that the renowned Taoist Zhang Sanfeng founded Wudang Inner School Boxing. One day, Zhang Sanfeng was meditating in a thatched hut when he suddenly heard a magpie chirping. Looking outside, he saw a magpie on the branch of a tree in the courtyard. The magpie was focusing on a snake lying on the ground. The snake raised its head and looked up at the magpie. After a while, the magpie threw itself at the snake and pecked at it. The snake dodged the attack by moving its head unflappably. As he watched this, Zhang Sanfeng wondered why the ferocious magpie could not beat the soft snake. Then he watched them again and found that the snake could dodge the magpie's attacks because it knew how to use quietness to defeat movement and use softness to defeat firmness, which was precisely the philosophy of Lao Zi's *Tao Te Ching*. Imitating the fight between the magpie and the snake and incorporating the meditation of Taoism's Mysterious Gate sect, Zhang Sanfeng created a special kind of boxing based on the theory of using quietness to defeat movement and of using softness to defeat firmness. Because this kind of boxing originated on Mount Wudang, it was called Wudang Boxing and, because it emphasizes inner cultivation, people also call it Wudang Inner School Boxing. Forms of Wudang Inner School Boxing practiced nowadays include the popular *tai chi chuan* or *taijiquan* shadow boxing, *xingyiquan* or "mental form" boxing, *dachengquan* or "great achievement" boxing, and Wudang fencing.

UNESCO has added Mount Wudang to its World Cultural Heritage List.

13. Mount Laoshan, a Fairyland by the East Sea

Mount Laoshan (崂山) was known in ancient times by the names Laoshan (劳山), Laoshan (牢山), Mount Futang and Mount Aoshan. It is located in the southwest of the Shandong Peninsula, to the east of Qingdao.

The main peak is called Gigantic Peak (Ju Feng 巨峰) or Lao Peak (Lao Ding 崂顶) and has an altitude of around 1,100 meters. With a plain behind it and the sea in front, Mount Laoshan is lofty, sheer, magnificent and picturesque. It is no wonder that ancient people said: "Mount Taishan rises into the clouds but it is inferior to Mount Laoshan by the East Sea."

Mount Laoshan has enjoyed a reputation as a "residence of immortals and a dwelling place of spirits." It is said that there were once nine palaces (*gong*), eight Taoist temples (*guan*) and 72 hermitages (*an* 庵) on Mount Laoshan when Taoism was at its peak there. But now little has survived other than the Palace of Supreme Purity, the Palace of High Purity, the Palace of Supreme Peace, the Magnificent Tower Palace, and the Bright Clouds Grotto (Mingxia Dong 明霞洞).

The Palace of Supreme Purity (Taiqing Gong 太清宫), also called the Lower Palace, lies beside the Lower Palace Bay (Xiagong Wan 下宫湾) in the southeastern part of Mount Laoshan, with the mighty sea in front of it and seven peaks behind it. With pleasant weather, it has been honored by being described as a "little Jiangnan," referring to the area south of the Yangtze River.

The Palace of Supreme Purity consists of three courtyards and halls with a total of more than 150 bays. Each courtyard has a wall and a gate. The southeastern courtyard is the Hall of the Three Officials, inside which there are the heavenly, earthly and water officials, as well as statues of the Great Perfect Warrior Emperor and the Thunder God. In the courtyard blossom crape myrtles, ginkgoes, peonies, camellias, and so on. In the front courtyard of the main hall in particular, there are two camellia shrubs, with one producing red blossoms and the other white. Before the arrival of spring, the two camellias are in full bloom for three months. It is said that the Taoist Zhang Sanfeng took the two camellias to this site from an island during the Ming Dynasty Emperor Yongle's reign. A red peony and the white camellia in the courtyard are said to be the incarnations of the two girls Xiangyu (Fragrant Jade) and Jiangxue (Crimson Snow) described in the story "Fragrant Jade" in Pu Songling's book *Strange Stories from Make-Do Studio*.

A walk along the flagstone path after an exit through the west gate of the Hall of the Three Officials leads to the central courtyard, the Hall of the Three Pristine Ones. Here, there are statues of the Primeval Lord of Heaven,

the Heavenly Lord of Numinous Treasure, and the Heavenly Lord of Tao and Its Virtue. At the east side of the hall gate is an elm that grew during the Tang Dynasty. Its trunk is twisted like a dragon's head, so it is called the Dragon's Head Elm. Below the steps by the west side of the gate, there is a spring called the Spring of Sacred Water. The sweet and refreshing spring never goes dry during a drought, nor does it overflow during a flood. It is Mount Laoshan's best-known spring.

West of the Hall of the Three Pristine Ones is the Hall of the Three August Ones, where there are statues of Fuxi (a legendary Chinese ruler who taught people how to fish, hunt and raise livestock), Shennong (the Divine Farmer or the Red Emperor, a legendary ruler supposed to have introduced agriculture and herbal medicine to ancient China) and the Yellow Emperor. On the hall gate is a couplet carved in the calligraphic style of seal characters, being a quotation from Lao Zi's *Tao Te Ching*: "When the world has Tao, war horses are used in farming; when the world lacks Tao, even mares in foal have to serve in battle." In the courtyard in front of the hall, there grows a cypress that is more than 2,000 years old and is said to have been planted by Zhang Lianfu, the founder of the Palace of Supreme Purity. Twisted around the cypress is a trumpet vine as thick as the mouth of a bowl. People call this an "ancient cypress twisted by a dragon." There is a three-meter-tall parasitic gallnut on the cypress, along with the trumpet vine, the three forming a trio that has gained a reputation as a "wonder of Mount Laoshan."

The Magnificent Tower Palace (Hualou Gong 华楼宫) is on a precipitous northwestern peak of Mount Laoshan, with picturesque scenery. To its south is the Magnificent Tower Mountain (Hualou Shan 华楼山) and to its north is the Mount Laoshan Reservoir. The peak where it is located is rocky with four sides that are steep cliffs but the top is flat like a platform. The peak is like a high tower, so the mountain is called Magnificent Tower Mountain. On the peak are carved the words "the most famous mountain by the sea." It has a reputation for being "Mount Laoshan's most grotesque peak." The Magnificent Tower Palace was built in 1325, the second year of the Yuan Dynasty's Taiding reign period. It includes the Hall of the Supreme Master, the Hall of the Jade Emperor and the Hall of Lord Guan, each of which has three rooms. In front of the palace grow two large ginkgo trees. East of the palace, there is a mountain with a flat peak. One

legend says that this is where fairy maidens get washed and dressed, so the mountain is called Washing and Dressing Tower (Shuxi Lou 梳洗楼). Behind the palace is the Golden Juice Spring, one of Mount Laoshan's famous springs. On the hillside northwest of the palace, there is a hole with a diameter of two meters and this is said to be where the Jade Emperor's daughter bathes, so it is called the Jade Maiden's Bathtub (Yunü Pen 玉女盆). West of the Jade Maiden's Bathtub is the Mountain of Rising Mist (Lingyan Gu 凌烟固), which has a flat top and a dozen or so natural hollows shaped like basins, bowls or spoons. At the southern foot of the mountain is a cave where the Yuan Dynasty Taoist Liu Zhijian is buried. Beside the cave is a tablet on which is inscribed his experience of cultivating the Way. Of all the Taoist temples and palaces on Mount Laoshan, the Magnificent Tower Palace has the biggest collection of carved stones kept as very important documents for research into the mountain's Taoist history.

Mount Laoshan is a wonderful summer resort, with lush vegetation, a rich variety of trees and flowers, moderate rainfall and a temperate climate. Visitors to Mount Laoshan can listen to the tide, enjoy the sunrise, wander among the palaces and temples, and visit Taoists, from whom they can learn a lot.

14. Mount Wuyi, Where Immortals Are Reborn

Located in northwestern Fujian Province, Mount Wuyi (Wuyi Shan 武夷山) straddles the border area between Fujian and Jiangxi provinces. It is a famous tourist destination in China. Taoists regard it as the 16th Grotto Heaven, the Grotto Heaven of Ascending to Perfection and Original Transformation (Shengzhen Yuanhua Zhi Tian 升真元化之天). Mount Wuyi is popular with tourists thanks to its towering and graceful mountains and its deep and serene pools. It has been described as the "most marvelous and beautiful mountain in southeastern China." One poem about Mount Wuyi says: "The three-times-three beautiful water is as clear as jade, / The six-times-six grotesque peaks rise up to the sky." The "three-times-three beautiful water" is the Nine Bends Brook that begins at Mount Sanbao and reaches Mount Wuyi, meandering through the mountain for about 20 *li* (10 kilometers). The "six-times-six grotesque peaks" refer to the 36 peaks that include Great King Peak (Dawang Feng 大王峰), Jade Maiden Peak (Yunü

Feng 玉女峰), Holding Bamboo Shoots Peak (Jiesun Feng 接笋峰), and Visiting Heaven Peak (Tianyou Feng 天游峰). The groups of peaks have various forms. Some are lofty, some grand and others graceful, and there are too many to visit. Apart from those mentioned above, there are other scenic spots, such as 72 grottoes and 99 cliffs. The reflections of the peaks and cliffs amid the brook's green ripples make the natural scene even more beautiful.

The mountain spirit of Mount Wuyi is Sovereign Wuyi. It is said that Mount Wuyi is the dwelling place of earthly immortals. After they achieve perfect virtue by cultivating themselves, all earthly immortals should go to Mount Wuyi to be assessed before they can be reborn as heavenly immortals. Therefore, Sovereign Wuyi is regarded as the god that governs all the earthly immortals.

Historically, there were 99 Taoist temples on Mount Wuyi. Most of them have been destroyed and now only Wuyi Palace and Arcadia Grotto (Taoyuan Dong 桃源洞; literally "Peace Spring Grotto") survive.

In Wuyi Palace, there is the Hall of the Three Pristine Ones. Behind the hall stands the Divine Way Stele, which was carved in 1179, the sixth year of Emperor Xiaozong's Chunxi reign period during the Southern Song Dynasty. There is a pavilion on both the east and west side of the hall. Beyond the temple's main gate is a white marble archway. The whole structure shines majestically. It is recorded that farmland was granted to the temple in every dynasty since the Tang, so that the total amount exceeded an amazing 11,000 *mu* (733 hectares). It is no wonder that ancient people said, "The famous Mount Wuyi is the greatest in the world, and the scale and beauty of Wuyi Palace are also the world's greatest." However, Wuyi Palace is no longer how it used to look because it has been damaged by many disasters.

The serene Arcadia Grotto was originally called Lesser Arcadia (Xiaotaoyuan 小桃源; literally "Lesser Peach Spring"). Its very deep entrance is formed by two cliffs leaning against each other. It is flat inside, with an area of about 20 *mu* (1 $\frac{1}{3}$ hectares). It is encircled by mountains. Anyone who goes inside and looks back cannot see the way out, so people thought it was an arcadia and gave it the name Little Arcadia. Inside the cave, there is the Hall of the Three Pristine Ones, the Hall of the Three August Ones and the Primordial Sovereign, and the Hall of the Perfect Warrior. Nowadays, several Taoists cultivate the Way here.

Mount Wuyi has luxuriant vegetation, beautiful mountains and tranquil places by the water, making it a paradise on earth and a wonderful place for Taoists to cultivate the Way.

15. Mount Luofu, Where Ge Hong Refined Elixirs

Situated on the banks of the Dongjiang (东江, East River) northwest of Boluo County in Guangdong Province, Mount Luofu (Luofu Shan 罗浮山) is the seventh grotto heaven, the Grotto Heaven of Vermilion Brightness and Shining Perfection (Zhuming Yaozhen Dongtian 朱明耀真洞天). It is also the 34th blissful realm, the Springhead Blissful Realm (Quanyuan Fudi 泉源福地). Also known as East Firewood Mountain (Dongqiao Shan 东樵山), it is the counterpart of West Firewood Mountain (Xiqiao Shan 西樵山) in the city of Nanhai. The two are reputed to be the “two best-known mountains in southern Guangdong.”

Mount Luofu is said to have been a dwelling place for immortals since antiquity. Many legends about this “Fairy Island in the South Sea” have been passed down, attracting lots of scholars and Taoist priests to visit the mountain or live there in seclusion during different dynasties. In the Eastern Jin Dynasty (317-420), the renowned Taoist Ge Hong once refined elixirs there. Ge Hong, also known as Zhichuan (稚川, Young River), was from Jurong in Danyang (in today’s Jiangsu Province). He wrote the book *The Master Who Embraces Simplicity* (Baopuzi 抱朴子) and is famous as a Taoist theorist, medical scientist and alchemist. The “Biography of Ge Hong,” the 72nd *juan* of the *History of the Jin Dynasty*, records that Ge Hong in his later years heard that elixir-refining sand was produced in Jiaozhi (Chiaochih). He went there to collect some materials. Later, he stopped at Guangzhou and was asked to stay by Deng Yue the regional inspector. Then he stayed on Mount Luofu to refine elixirs until he was 81 and became immortal.

Since the Ming and Qing dynasties, most of the temples on Mount Luofu have been destroyed, with only five Taoist temples (*guan* 观) and five monasteries (*si* 寺) remaining. The five temples are the Temple of Emptiness (Chongxu Guan 冲虚观), the Temple of Shortcake and Wine (Sulao Guan 酥醪观), the Temple of the Nine Heavens (Jiutian Guan 九天观), the White Crane Temple (Baihe Guan 白鹤观), and the Yellow Dragon Temple (Huanglong Guan 黄龙观). Of these, the State Council has in-

cluded the Temple of Emptiness on its list of key Chinese temples.

The lofty and splendid Temple of Emptiness stands next to a steep cliff at the eastern foot of Mount Luofu and alongside White Lotus Lake (Bailian Hu 白莲湖).

In front of the Temple of Emptiness, there is a stone bridge called the Bridge of Meeting an Immortal (Huixian Qiao 会仙桥), which is said to have been built by Su Dongpo, the Song Dynasty writer and artist. At that time, Su was the head of Huizhou Prefecture. One day, he visited Mount Luofu. When he reached the bridge on his way back home, it had been damaged. He was wondering how to get home when an old man appeared. Su Dongpo got some bamboo measuring one *chi* from him but thought it was too short to be used. (One *chi* is a third of a meter.) The old man immediately made for the bamboo to grow to reach the bank, and the bridge was joined to the bank in no time. The old man had disappeared before Su Dongpo could thank him. To commemorate the immortal, Su Dongpo rebuilt the bridge and named it the Bridge of Meeting an Immortal.

The Temple of Emptiness has five halls. They are the Hall of the Divine General, the Hall of the Three Pristine Ones, the Hall of Great Immortal Huang, the Hall of Patriarch Lü, and the Hall of Immortal Ge. There are other outbuildings with more than 100 rooms.

The Hall of the Three Pristine Ones is the main hall and was rebuilt during the Qing Dynasty Emperor Guangxu's reign (1875-1908). There are shrines to the Lordly Spirit of the Three Pristine Ones and to the four perfect sovereigns Zhang Daoling, Ge Xuan, Xu Xun and Sa Shoujian. On two sides of the hall, exquisite shrines have been set up. On the east side, there is a shrine to the Heavenly Lord of Universal Transformation Whose Voice of Thunder Resonates with the Origin of the Nine Heavens, with a shrine to the Heavenly Lord of Supreme Oneness and Salvation from Misery on the west side. The whole hall is decorated and painted splendidly and magnificently.

The Hall of Great Immortal Huang has a shrine to Huang Yeren, a disciple of Ge Hong. It is said that Huang refined elixirs with his master Ge Hong on Mount Luofu. One day, he went out on some business. When he returned, his master had become immortal. Later Huang found that an elixir had been left between two stone pillars. He ate it and became an earthly immortal who stayed in this world. He shuttled around from moun-

tain to mountain and cured people of disease. Many people in southeastern China offer sacrifices to him.

In the Temple of Emptiness, there are many relics relating to Ge Hong. In the eastern part of the Hall of the Three Pristine Ones is the Well of Longevity, from which Ge Hong fetched water for refining elixirs. The water in the well stays two meters deep all year round and the well never dries. It is said that anyone who drinks the well's water will have a long life. One story says that one *dou* of rice is equivalent to one *dou* (about 10 liters) of the well's water. The water in the well is really cool, with a pleasant flavor. According to scientific tests, the water contains 14 elements of benefit to human health. It is no wonder that people call it the Well of Longevity.

At the back of the Immortal Ge Temple is an elixir-refining stove built by Ge Hong. Beside it, there used to be the four characters *Ge Hong Danzao* (葛洪丹灶, Ge Hong's Elixir-Refining Stove) written by Su Dongpo, but they can no longer be seen. The present four characters read *Zhichuan Danzao* (稚川丹灶, Zhichuan's Elixir-Refining Stove) and were written by Wu Hong, the superintendent in charge of training in Guangdong Province during the Qing Dynasty Emperor Qianlong's reign (1736-95). Above the elixir-refining stove stands a gourd-shaped three-legged vessel known as the Weiji Stove, in the middle of which is a rotating handle. The top of the stove is in the shape of an exquisite lotus leaf.

Facing the Temple of Emptiness is an octagonal pool, which was Ge Hong's Pool for Washing Herbs. Ge Hong often collected herbs for people, and this pool was where he washed the herbs. After collecting and sorting out a wide range of folk remedies, Ge Hong compiled the medical book *Prescriptions for Emergencies*.

Not far from the Pool for Washing Herbs is the Dongpo Pavilion, which is on the former site of the Dongpo Mountain Home. After the renowned poet and Taoist Su Dongpo was demoted and sent to Huizhou, he built the Dongpo Mountain Home on Mount Luofu and grew herbs in the garden. He admired Ge Hong so much that, in a poem written for his son Su Guo, he wrote: "Dongpo's teacher is the Master Who Embraces Simplicity (Ge Hong). / In a previous existence, we have exchanged sincere feelings."

The Grotto Heaven of Vermilion Brightness behind the Temple of Emptiness is said to be where Ge Hong perfected his virtue and became an

immortal. Bai Yuchan, a famous Song Dynasty Taoist, once cultivated himself and preached Taoism there. Located in a deep valley at the foot of Mount Luofu, the cave is a paradise-like tranquillity, with murmuring streams.

A visit to Mount Luofu helps people leave earthly concerns behind.

16. Heaven-made Beautiful Mount Qiyun

Mount Qiyun (Qiyun Shan 齐云山, Cloud-Reaching Mountain), located near Yanqian Town, 15 kilometers west of Xiuning County in Anhui Province, is so named because there is a huge rock on its summit that rears high into the sky. The mountain is always enveloped in clouds and mist, so it is also known as the White Mountain (Bai Yue 白岳). The scenic area ranges from White Mountain Peak in the east to Longevity Hill (Wanshou Shan 万寿山) in the west, stretching for a distance of 15 kilometers and covering 110 square kilometers.

Mount Qiyun is one of the most famous Taoist mountains in the country. Taoism thrived in this region as far back as the Ming Dynasty. Taoists in this area always sought teachers and pursued their studies on Mount Wudang. Consequently, most of the palaces, temples, Taoist rules and disciplines on Mount Qiyun followed the example of those on Mount Wudang. Mount Wudang is also known as Supreme Harmony (Taihe), while Mount Qiyun is also known as Central Harmony (Zhonghe 中和). Thus, the ancients referred to Mount Qiyun as the “Lesser Mount Wudang south of the Yangtze River.”

In the late Ming Dynasty, the practice of Taoist rites gradually declined on Mount Qiyun. In the early days of the Republic of China, repairs began on Mount Qiyun. After the foundation of the People’s Republic of China, the people’s government carried out a full-scale renovation of the mountain. Unfortunately, it suffered unprecedented damage during the “Cultural Revolution” (1966-76). The Mount Qiyun Taoist Association and the relevant departments of the area’s local government are currently raising funds to rebuild some palaces and temples.

To get to Mount Qiyun, the visitor can start from the ancient town at the foot of the mountain, cross the Ancient Dengfeng Bridge with its simple and graceful design, walk along a mountain pass, and then arrive first of all at the Terrace for Watching the Immortal (Wangxian Tai 望仙台). Accord-

ing to legend, the Taoist Lingyi, who cultivated himself in the Temple of Grotto Heavens and Blissful Realms, was enlightened here by Iron-Crutch Li (Tieguai Li 铁拐李) and thus ascended to heaven and became an immortal. Lingyi's disciple, who was not free from human desire and passion and who had had insufficient practice, had to wait here for the immortal's enlightenment. Thus later generations called this place the Terrace for Watching the Immortal and built the Pavilion for Watching the Immortal on it. With a bird's-eye view from the platform, the visitor can see a vast expanse of the pretty and charming River Hengjiang (Heng Jiang 横江) winding at the foot of the mountain, with a majestic and grand bridge crossing the river like a dragon lying on the waves. Nearby are beautiful farmsteads that are a feast for the eyes, along with irregularly arranged houses with smoke curling up from kitchen chimneys. In the distance, one peak rises after another and there is a wild profusion of vegetation. Looking to the west, the visitor can see the tree-clad Moonlight Street of the town looming in the mist.

Going west past the Crag Where Immortals Dwell (Qizhen Yan 栖真岩), Martyrs Crag (Zhonglie Yan 忠烈岩) and Longevity Cliff (Shouzi Ya 寿字崖) leads to the First Gate to Heaven. It is said that the Highest Emperor of the Mysterious Heaven and Ksitigarbha (Earth Treasury King, a bodhisattva) both took a liking to this fairyland and wanted to climb Mount Qiyun, so they fought each other using their magical powers. In the confusion, the Highest Emperor of the Mysterious Heaven kicked open the Gate to Heaven and left a footprint on it. Looked at from the side, the Gate to Heaven appears more like an elephant with its long drooping trunk, so the First Gate to Heaven is also called Elephant-Trunk Crag. After climbing up the Heavenly Ladder, passing through the Second Gate to Heaven and the Third Gate to Heaven, visitors can see Moonlight Street (Yuehua Jie 月华街), whose name derives from its design. Simple and stately houses built in the Anhui Province style, with Taoist courtyards and houses ingeniously arranged among them, stand against the mountain to form a crescent. The Supreme Simplicity Palace of the Mysterious Heaven is the most majestic of all the street's palaces and temples.

After leaving Moonlight Street, the visitor comes to the Jade Emptiness Palace (Yuxu Gong 玉虚宫) at the foot of Purple Cloud Peak (Zixiao Feng 紫霄峰). In front of the palace stand three stone memorial arches with exquisite relief sculptures of divine birds and animals. In the palace,

sacrifices are offered to the Highest Emperor of the Mysterious Heaven. Vivid murals in the palace tell the story of how the emperor was born into the world and how he subdued demons and monsters to help the people. On the east wall is *Stele Inscription About the Mysterious Emperor on Purple Cloud Cliff* written by Tang Yin, a famous Ming Dynasty writer, which silently tells of the prosperity and magnificence of the Jade Emptiness Palace in those days.

From ancient to modern times, Mount Qiyun has attracted numerous writers, poets and devout Taoists with its beautiful, rare and wonderful scenery. Some visitors were so moved by the scenery that they composed poems and wrote inscriptions, which were then recorded on steles. As these accumulated day after day and month after month, precious historical and cultural relics in the form of inscriptions on steles and precipices were left for Mount Qiyun. Only 462 of these inscriptions still exist. The inscriptions were spread like stars all over the mountain, mostly near Arhat Cave, Purple Cloud Cliff and Stone Bridge Crag. The oldest stele inscriptions are those made during the Northern Song Dynasty Emperor Dagan's reign (1107-10) and during the Southern Song Dynasty Emperor Shaoxi's reign (1190-94). The inscriptions made during the Ming and Qing dynasties account for about 80 percent of the total. Particularly breathtaking and astonishing inscriptions are those carved on precipices with phrases such as "heaven-made wonderful beauty," "peak that towers magnificently over others" and "unprecedented wonder."

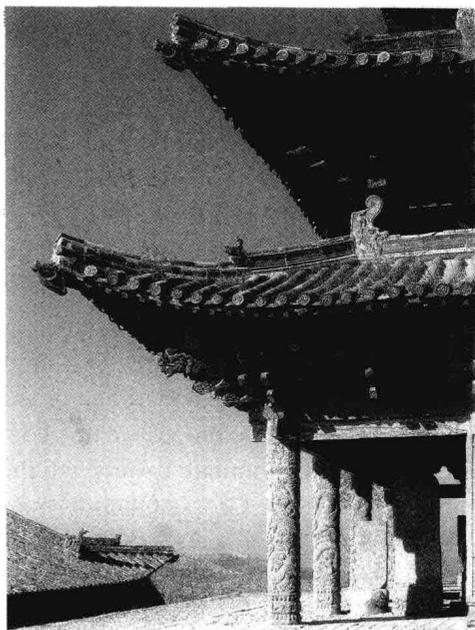
The uniquely charming Mount Qiyun, the Yellow Mountain (Huang Shan 黄山) and Mount Jiuhua (Jiuhua Shan 九华山, Nine Blossoms Mountain) add to one another's radiance and beauty. Mount Qiyun has become a resplendent pearl in southern Anhui Province's scenic areas.

17. Mount Wangwu, the First Grotto Heaven

Mount Wangwu (Wangwu Shan 王屋山) is in the northwest of the city of Jiyuan in Henan Province. In the famous story "The Foolish Old Man Who Removed the Mountains," the two mountains that the Foolish Old Man wanted to remove were Mount Taihang and Mount Wangwu. The Mount Wangwu grotto is the first of Taoism's Ten Greater Grotto Heavens. As for the origin of its name, one explanation says: "There is a deep cave in

the mountain that is like a king's palace, so it was called Wangwu (king's house)." Another explanation says: "The mountain has three layers, just like a house (*wu* 屋), which is how it got its name." On top of the mountain's main peak is a stone altar where the legendary Yellow Emperor offered sacrifices to gods. It is said that the Mysterious Maiden of the Nine Heavens and the Queen Mother of the West were moved by the Yellow Emperor's sincerity and went down to impart to him the *Book of the Divine Elixir of the Nine Cauldrons* (Jiuding Shendan Jing 九鼎神丹经) and the *Discourse on Secret Correspondences* (Yinfu Ce 阴符策). The Yellow Emperor then used these to defeat the tribal leader Chi You. Mount Wangwu is thus also known as the Heavenly Altar Mountain (Tiantan Shan 天坛山).

It is difficult to verify when Taoism spread on Mount Wangwu. Taoism thrived on Mount Wangwu during the Tang Dynasty, when many Taoists lived and cultivated themselves there. Sima Chengzhen was the most famous of them. Sima Chengzhen, who styled himself Ziwei, was born into an official's family. He went to Mount Songshan at the age of 21 and formally acknowledged Pan Shizheng as his master to learn Taoist doctrine. Later he lived in seclusion on Mount Tiantai (Heavenly Terrace Mountain) and went by the Taoist monastic name of Baiyunzi (Master White Cloud). In 711 AD, the second year of the Tang Dynasty Emperor Ruizong's Jingyuan reign period, he was summoned to the imperial palace. Emperor Ruizong inquired about the art of Yin and Yang and the administration of a country, and then gave Sima Chengzhen a valuable *qin* (a zither-like instrument) and an embroi-



A corner of the Pavilion of the Jade Emperor in Yangtai (Solar Platform) Palace on Mount Wangwu in Henan Province.

dered shawl as a gift. When Sima Chengzhen was about to return to Mount Tiantai, Lu Zangyong – who was then a high-ranking official but who used to be a Taoist living in seclusion on Mount Zhongnan – pointed at Mount Zhongnan and asked: “This mountain has plenty of beautiful scenery. Why would you go back to Mount Tiantai?” Sima Chengzhen answered: “From what I have observed, it is just a shortcut to high office.” Lu Zangyong looked ashamed when he heard this. This story spread among the people, and the phrase “Zhongnan shortcut” became an idiom. In 721, the ninth year of the Tang Dynasty’s Kaiyuan reign period, Emperor Xuanzong sent an emissary to summon Sima Chengzhen to the capital (Chang’an, today’s Xi’an). The emperor then accepted the Taoist records in person and gave Sima Chengzhen a handsome gift. In the 15th year of the Kaiyuan reign period, Emperor Xuanzong again summoned Sima Chengzhen to the capital and ordered him to set up Solar Platform Palace (Yangtai Gong 阳台宫) on Mount Wangwu as an imperial residence. Taoism then began to flourish on Mount Wangwu, and the mountain became a center of Taoist activity in northern China. However, Taoism gradually declined in the Ming and Qing dynasties, so most palaces and temples on Mount Wangwu were deserted.

Mount Wangwu boasts three big Taoist temples: the Solar Platform Palace, Pristine Emptiness Palace (Qingxu Gong 清虚宫) and Purple Subtlety Palace (Ziwei Gong 紫微宫).

The Solar Platform Palace is the most influential and best-preserved of the three temples. It stands on a hillock called “Red Phoenix Facing the Sun” (Danfeng Zhaoyang 丹凤朝阳) in front of the Peak of Overwhelming Glory (Huagai Feng 华盖峰) on the southern side of the Heavenly Altar Mountain (Tiantan Shan), and so the temple is called the Solar Platform Palace. The hillock’s name comes from the terrain: behind it, the Heavenly Altar Mountain towers like the head of the phoenix; opposite it, the Ridge of Nine Glossy Ganoderma Mushrooms (Jiuzhi Ling 九芝岭) spreads like the tail; and the Solar Platform Palace is right on the back of this golden phoenix. When tourists stand on the platform at the front of the palace and clap their hands, the echo sounds like birds singing, so the terrace is called the Phoenix Singing Platform (Fengming Tai 凤鸣台). The existing Solar Platform Palace was built during the Ming Dynasty. Its principal buildings are the Hall of the Three Pristine Ones and the Pavilion

of the Jade Emperor, both on the central axis. The Hall of the Three Pristine Ones is a five-room building with a single-eaved gable and hip roof. It was repaired in the Ming Dynasty but its major beams and bracket set have survived since the Song Dynasty. Under the colored bracket set stand 30 vertical and horizontal stone pillars, carved with exquisite and vivid pictures such as “Coiled Dragon and Phoenix,” “The Eight Immortals Crossing the Sea,” “Altar of the Wind God, Rain God, Thunder God and Lightning God” and “Lord Yellow Stone (Huangshi Gong) and Zhang Liang.” In the covered corridor stand 20 Ming Dynasty stone peripheral columns, carved with lifelike relief sculptures such as the cloud dragon sweeping along the grass, a hundred birds paying homage to the phoenix, and Su Wu* tending sheep. The Solar Platform Palace also boasts old trees, including a thousand-year-old pipal that is said to have been planted by Sima Chengzhen and Princess Yuzhen.

Built in the Tang Dynasty, the Purple Subtlety Palace has been expanded and renovated by later generations. It is now the biggest of Mount Wangwu’s temples and palaces and it has many exquisite and magnificent buildings. After conducting an on-site investigation in 1931, the famous architect Liang Sicheng said he considered the palace a pearl of ancient Chinese architecture. Unfortunately, the palace was damaged in the decade of turmoil that was the “Cultural Revolution” of 1966-76 and now all that remains of it is a mass of broken walls. However, more than 30 ancient steles are still preserved in the courtyard, the most precious of which is a stele with Chinese and Mongolian inscriptions made by order of a Yuan Dynasty emperor. Opposite the Purple Subtlety Palace stands an old ginkgo with luxuriant foliage and spreading branches. The tree is nourished by the Spring that Doesn’t Age (Bulao Quan 不老泉) and is said to be more than 2,000 years old. One of China’s five most famous ginkgoes, it is 9 meters in circumference and 4.5 meters tall, so it is called the “seven-rake eight-turn tree” (*qilou baguai zhang* 七楼八拐杖) (symbolizing its long circumference).

On Mount Wangwu is the famous Numinous Capital Temple (Lingdu

* Su Wu (139-60 BC), a Han Dynasty official, was sent by the court on a mission to Xiongnu and detained in today’s Lake Baikal region tending sheep for 19 years without submission. He has been known ever since as a symbol of national integrity.

Guan 灵都观), which was built by Tang Emperor Xuanzong for his younger sister, Princess Yuzhen. The temple's extant buildings are the Tower of the Jade Emperor and a theater building, which are not the Tang Dynasty originals but buildings from the Qing Dynasty. In the temple are some steles from the Tang to the Yuan dynasties that are still well preserved. One is a carved stone with "A Detailed Record of Princess Yuzhen Being Enlightened on the Altar" inscribed by Emperor Xuanzong in the official script (*lishu*) style. This stele was made in the second year of Emperor Xuanzong's Tianbao reign period (AD 743). It features an article composed by the Taoist Cai Wei and inscribed by the official Xiao Cheng. The calligraphy on this stele enjoys the reputation of being the best example of Tang Dynasty running script (*xingshu*).

Also on Mount Wangwu is the grave of Sun Simiao, the King of Medicine. Sun Simiao was a famous Taoist and doctor in the Tang Dynasty. Although he was from Yaoxian County in Shaanxi Province, he liked to visit famous mountains and great rivers. In his late years, he lived in seclusion on Mount Wangwu, gathering medicinal herbs and practicing medicine, and the local people spoke highly of him.

At the foot of the Heavenly Altar Pinnacle, Mount Wangwu's main peak, sits the Queen Mother of the West's Grotto. The cave is famous as "the First Grotto Heaven" and is also known as the Lesser Fairyland of Pristine Emptiness. The cave lies at the foot of the Hanging Hairpin Peak (Chuzhan Feng 垂簪峰). It is said that the cave may lead to Jasper Lake (where the Queen Mother of the West lives) and that it was where the Queen Mother cultivated herself. About one *li* (half a kilometer) west of the cave is an isolated peak called Numinous Mountain (Ling Shan 灵山), which rises abruptly. Seven natural caves stretch around and halfway up the mountain. They intersect with each other and link up to form nine junctions and six natural stone gates. Since one cave lies inside another or links with another one, all crisscrossing like streets and lanes, this outstanding Chinese cave landscape is commonly known as the "48 streets." It is warm in winter and cool in summer inside the caves. They are also well ventilated and lit, so Taoists have always used them as places where they can live in seclusion.

With its natural beauty, long Taoist history and touching fairy tales, the ancient Mount Wangwu welcomes tourists from China and abroad.

18. Heaven-made Cave of Immortals on Mount Lushan

Winding through Jiangxi Province, Mount Lushan (Lu Shan 庐山) is south of the Yangtze River and west of Poyang Lake. In ancient times, Mount Lushan was known as Kuanglu (匡庐) or Mount Kuangshan. It is said that, during the Zhou Dynasty King Weilie's reign in the fourth century BC, a man named Kuang Su (called Kuang Yu or Kuang Xu in some books) built a hut on the summit to wholeheartedly give himself up to austere religious discipline. The king invited him several times to take up an official post but Kuang refused and eventually moved to some remote mountains. The royal emissary searched for him for a long time and finally found the hut (*lu* 庐) where Kuang had been living. But Kuang had ascended to heaven and become immortal. This is the origin of Mount Lushan's name.

Mount Lushan has a long history. As early as the Three Kingdoms period (AD 220-280), the prestigious Taoist Dong Feng lived in seclusion at the foot of Mount Lushan's Prajna Peak. (*Prajna* is Sanskrit for "wisdom.") With consummate medical skill, he saved patients by treating their illness. He asked for nothing in return except that those cured of a serious disease plant five apricot trees and those cured of a minor disease plant just one tree. A dozen years passed in this way until there were more than 100,000 apricot trees on the mountain, growing luxuriantly into woods. Rare birds and animals all came to play. When the apricot season arrived, Dong Feng set up huts to store the fruit. Anyone who wanted to buy apricots had to give grain in exchange. The buyer would carry out this exchange unsupervised. However, if anyone was so greedy as to exchange a large amount of apricots for a small amount of grain, a tiger would come out of the woods to stop him. Dong Feng used all the grain to give relief to the poor and suffering. Dong Feng lived for nearly 100 years and, after his death, people set up a building to commemorate him, calling it the Dong Feng Hall (Dong Feng Guan 董奉馆). The story of his good deeds getting apricots planted spread among the people. Later, people described those with consummate medical skills as "enjoying fame throughout the apricot woods." Stores selling traditional Chinese medicine would hang horizontal boards inscribed with the words "warm spring in the apricot woods."

At the time of the Song Dynasty (420-479), one of the Southern

Dynasties, the eminent Taoist Lu Xiujing lived in seclusion on Mount Lushan. He was important in the development of early Taoism and made significant contributions to reorganizing Taoist associations, improving *zhaijiao* Taoist rites, and to sorting out and classifying Taoist scriptures.

It is said that when Lu Xiujing lived on Mount Lushan, he got along quite well with Hui Yuan, a monk from the Eastern Forest Monastery (Donglin Si 东林寺). Hui Yuan did not usually “come out of the mountain or go into the secular world.” When he saw guests out of the monastery, he never crossed the bridge over Tiger Stream in front of the monastery. Lu Xiujing and Tao Yuanming, who lived on Yujing Peak at the southern foot of Mount Lushan, once called on Hui Yuan together. They discussed universal truths in a pleasant and friendly atmosphere. When Hui Yuan saw them out, he crossed the stream without realizing. The tiger he had raised then gave a warning roar, and the three men looked at each other and smiled. This is the widely circulated story “Three People Smile at Tiger Stream,” which has been passed down from generation to generation.

The Taoist palaces and temples on Mount Lushan have experienced life's ups and downs and only a few are left. The only well-preserved temple is the Fairy Cave Temple (Xianren Dong Daoyuan 仙人洞道院). Located northwest of Cool Ridge (another name of Mt. Lushan), the Fairy Cave is the result of natural weathering. The cave is three *zhang* (10 meters) deep and more than two *zhang* ($6\frac{2}{3}$ meters) high. It is said that Lü Dongbin cultivated himself and attained enlightenment in this cave. Now, the temple has Chunyang Hall for offering sacrifices to Lü Dongbin and Laojun Hall for offering sacrifices to the Supreme Master Lao Zi. Inside the cave are engravings of important figures from the past. Also of interest are the One-Drop Spring, where water drops from a slit between some rocks, and Ming Dynasty engravings of the Heavenly Spring Cave, the Spring of Tranquillity and Goodness, and the Heavenly Grotto Jade Water. North of the cave is a path known as Immortal Road (Xianren Lu 仙人路). Some Chinese characters have been carved into the cliff next to the path, saying things such as “The Sky on the Mountain,” “Cloudy Sea,” “Traveling Immortal Rock” and “Pavilion of Visiting Immortals.” At the gate in the west of the cave are the three Chinese characters Xianren Dong (仙人洞, Fairy Cave), carved in the Song Dynasty. The precipice in front of the cave has a protruding rock that looks like a toad, while the cliff has a pine tree next to a

rock, on which is carved “looking far into the wind and clouds.” In 1961, Chairman Mao visited this place and then wrote this poem:

*Amid the growing shades of dusk stand sturdy pines,
Riotous clouds sweep past, swift and tranquil.
Nature has excelled herself in the Fairy Cave,
On perilous peaks dwells beauty in her infinite variety.*

19. Mount Qianshan (Thousand Hills), a Sacred Place in the Northeast

Mount Qianshan (千山, Thousand Hills), previously known as Mount Qianhua and Mount Jicui, is also called the Thousand-Lotus Mountain (Qianduolianhua Shan 千朵莲花山). It is located 20 kilometers southeast of the city of Anshan in Northeast China's Liaoning Province. According to legend, when Nü Wa (a legendary goddess) was melting down stones to repair the sky in ancient times, through her carelessness one stone fell on Liaoning Province and became the Thousand-Lotus Mountain, today's Mount Qianshan.

Since the Sui and Tang dynasties, Qianshan has gradually become a Chinese sacred place. It is well known for its “nine palaces,” “eight Taoist temples” and “12 thatched hermitages,” of which the best-known is the Taoist Temple of Infinity (Wuliang Guan 无量观).

The Temple of Infinity was originally called Beamless Temple (Wuliang Guan 无梁观). It was built in 1667, the sixth year of the Qing Dynasty's Kangxi reign period. Its main buildings include the West Pavilion, Pavilion of the Jade Emperor, Hall of the Supreme Master, Hall of the Three Officials, and Merciful Cloud Hall.

The West Pavilion is the Temple of Infinity's most beautiful building. Inside, there is Hall of Compassionate Salvation (Cihang Dian 慈航殿) for offering sacrifices to the Taoist of Compassionate Salvation, the Goddess of Eyesight, and the Child-giving Goddess. The hall is where all of the temple's Taoists gather each morning and evening to chant scriptures and perform religious duties and also to hold important Taoist ceremonies.

If you go out through the West Pavilion's south gate and then pass through an archway, you will see a splendidly decorated bell tower standing

among luxuriant woods, whether shining in the light of the setting sun or bathing in the rays of the morning sun. It looks like an imperial palace in heaven or a castle in the air, making for a unique scene on Qianshan.

The Pavilion of the Jade Emperor is built on the top of a tremendous standing rock. It is the tallest and oldest building in the Temple of Infinity. The Pavilion of the Jade Emperor is built with no wood. The entire pavilion is built with bricks and tiles, so it was called the Beamless Temple. As time went by, the name evolved into Temple of Infinity (a homophonous name in Chinese). Inside is a shrine with a statue of the Jade Emperor.

Another famous Taoist palace is the Five Dragons Palace (Wulong Gong 五龙宫). It is in the middle of Mount Qianshan and is surrounded by five continuous, high, beautiful and precipitous mountain summits of various shapes. These summits are to the north, south and west and stop suddenly just before an isolated peak, like five dragons dancing and playing with a pearl. The Five Dragons Palace was first built in 1738, the third year of the Qing Dynasty's Qianlong reign period, and has been renovated and expanded several times. Now it consists of the Hall of the Supreme Master, Hall of the Three Officials, Hall of the Perfect Warrior, Hall of Compassionate Salvation, and Hall of the Divine General. The Hall of the Supreme Master is the biggest and was built in modern times. Inside this hall is a clay statue of the Supreme Master that is 6.5 meters high. On the wall is a painting depicting the Supreme Master's 81 transformations. Outside the hall stands a precious copper *ding* cooking cauldron. When the sunlight shines through the rift between the mountain peaks and between the pine trees, the hall and the cauldron shine with thousands of colorful rays of light.

There is a big incense burner in the Five Dragons Palace courtyard. It is exquisitely made of black jade and can withstand not only high temperatures but also freezing conditions. The melodious sound it makes when struck is the same as that produced by metal objects.

Near the Five Dragons Palace lies a large stone, 10 meters long. The front part of the stone is high up and the rear part is low down, so that half of it is underground. It is shaped like an ox lying down and chewing the cud, so the stone is called the Recumbent Ox Stone. Close to the "belly" of this "recumbent ox" is a well in the shape of a half-moon, known as the Crescent Moon Well. The well is more than 10 meters deep and the water is so sweet that it is rated the best on Mount Qianshan.

20. Mount Weibao, a Southwestern Mountain for Taoist Rites

Mount Weibao (Weibao Shan 巍宝山) is about 10 kilometers southeast of the Weishan Yi and Hui Autonomous County in Yunnan Province. It was called Mount Weishan (Towering Mountain) in ancient times due to its high peaks, which tower over other mountains. In the early Qing Dynasty, there were always red lights darting about on the mountain as spring was moving into summer and these lights did not go away even on rainy days. Local people referred to this phenomenon as a “dragon playing with a pearl” and so Mount Weishan got the name Mount Weibao (Towering Treasure Mountain).

It is said that Taoism spread in the Mount Weibao area at the end of the Eastern Han Dynasty. According to local legend, the Supreme Master Lao Zi once descended from heaven to Mount Weibao in order to enlighten Xinuluo (Sinulo), the founder of what would become Nanzhao (the “Southern Kingdom”). The Hall of the Supreme Master was later set up to worship the Supreme Master. It is said that Lü Dongbin (Master Lü Chunyang) also went to Mount Weibao once, and there are still many folk tales about his preaching in this region.

The Hall of the Mountain Inspector is the main hall on Mount Weibao. The hall’s name derives from the legend that the Supreme Master once conferred the title of Lord Mountain Inspector on Xinuluo. The hall is in a more remote area of Mount Weibao, where Xinuluo once farmed. The hall’s statue of Xinuluo is one *zhang* ($3\frac{1}{3}$ meters) high. He wears a golden hat, a robe embroidered with nine dragons, a jade belt and a pair of cloud-embroidered shoes, as befits the dignity of the Nanzhao king. A couplet hangs on the two sides of the hall gate, saying: “This precious mountain records his traces; in the old days, he frequently tapped his jade stick and then 13 generations inherited his accomplishments one after another. The famous mountain presents a wonderful scene, and fortunately his statue is still here so that generation after generation can look up to it with respect.” People of the Yi minority hold ceremonies in the Hall of the Mountain Inspector twice a year to offer sacrifices to their ancestors. One ceremony is held from the 14th to the 16th day of the first lunar month. The other is held on the 14th day of the ninth lunar month, which is said to be Xinuluo’s birthday.

The Eternal Spring Cave Taoist Temple (Changchun Dong Daoguan 长春洞道观), built during the Kangxi reign period (AD 1662-1722), is hidden among ancient forests remote on the mountain. Its exquisite murals and carvings have made it widely known. The temple comprises a front hall, a main hall, wing rooms, and a garden. The main hall is majestic and magnificent, with two lifelike gilded dragons coiling around pillars on two sides. The gate has many delicate carvings on it, while the ceiling has 48 beautiful paintings on a diverse range of Taoist themes, such as a picture of the four imperial sovereigns, a picture of an immortals' banquet, a picture of the Three August Ones, and a picture of nine dragons. An octagonal sunken panel in the center of the temple ceiling has paintings of the Eight Trigrams, with a lifelike carving of a dragon winding its way among clouds and water.

On the west wall of the Cultured Dragon Pavilion (Wenlong Ting 文龙亭) in Wenchang Palace, there is a mural of Yi minority people playing musical instruments, painted in 1759, the 24th year of the Qing Dynasty's Qianlong reign period. It is about 1.2 meters long and has been painted in black, red, yellow, reddish brown and blue. The upper part is clear and intact while the lower is rather indistinct because of water stains. In the mural, range upon range of mountains can be seen in the far distance, while closer to the viewer is a lawn with a green pine, under which people in ethnic clothes are dancing and singing. They have formed a circle with three people inside it, two playing the *sheng* (a reed-pipe wind instrument) and one playing the *dizi* bamboo flute. The people around them are dancing hand in hand, showing a strong sense of rhythm. This mural vividly illustrates the traditional songfests of local Yi minority people from more than 200 years ago. It is one of the most precious cultural relics in the Mount Weibao area.

The temples and halls that still exist on Mount Weibao reflect in their design the ethnic and local features of ancient buildings constructed by ethnic minorities in the border areas. The hall murals not only have strong local features from Yunnan Province's border regions but also apply the art of Beijing-style colored drawing.

In the Qing Dynasty's Kangxi reign period, local people started to hold fortnight-long temple fairs on Mount Weibao from the 1st to the 15th day of the second lunar month. The Mount Weibao temple fairs have been revived in recent years. The mountain's traditional *dongjing* concerts and tra-

ditional Yi songfests have also been restored. *Dongjing* (洞经, “cave scripture”) music is a kind of Taoist music with beautiful lyrics and tunes and no lack of local ethnic flavor. When the music is played among Mount Weibao’s green trees, fragrant flowers and towering temples, it sounds like music from heaven. The Mount Weibao *Dongjing* Band once made a recording for China National Radio. The last three days of the temple fair are the busiest time for Mount Weibao’s singing concert. The concert, with its strong ethnic flavor, has helped the temple fair greatly expand and has made the mountain more famous.

21. Renowned Taoist Temples in Cities

(1) White Cloud Temple and City God Temple in Shanghai

(a) White Cloud Temple

The White Cloud Temple (Baiyun Guan 白云观) is on Xilin Houlu Street in Shanghai’s Laoximen district. It is a temple of Complete Perfection Taoism and is now where the Shanghai Taoist Association is based.

Complete Perfection Taoism spread in Shanghai approximately during the Yuan Dynasty. According to the *Annals of Songjiang Prefecture*, the Changchun (Eternal Spring) Taoist Temple was built in Louxian County in 1306, the 10th year of the Yuan Dynasty’s Dade reign period. The temple was called Changchun in memory of Qiu Chuji, also known as Changchunzi, the patriarch of Complete Perfection Taoism’s Dragon Gate sect. It was not until 1874, the 13th year of the Qing Dynasty’s Tongzhi reign period, that Wang Mingzhen, a Taoist from Hangzhou’s Temple of Manifest Perfection (Xianzhen Guan 显真观), built a Complete Perfection Taoist temple called the Hall of the Thunder Patriarch near Chaoyang Lou (Sunny Tower) in Xinqiao (New Bridge) outside Shanghai’s North Gate (nearby today’s Zhejiang Road and Beihai Road). In 1882, the eighth year of the Qing Dynasty’s Guangxu reign period, the Hall of the Thunder Patriarch had to be moved because the roads were being expanded. The temple’s then abbot Xu Zhicheng, with the help of the local gentry, bought the present site of the White Cloud Temple and rebuilt the Hall of the Thunder Patriarch. In 1888, the 14th year of the Guangxu reign period, Xu Zhicheng went to Beijing and obtained the more than 8000 *juan* of the Ming Dynasty edition of the *Taoist Canon* from that city’s White Cloud

Temple on condition that the Hall of the Thunder Patriarch change its name to Haishang White Cloud Temple, meaning the subordinate temple in Shanghai to Beijing's White Cloud Temple. The Shanghai temple then came under the discipline of Beijing's White Cloud Temple and gradually established itself as one of Complete Perfection Taoism's Temples of the Ten Directions, becoming a prestigious temple of this tradition in south-eastern China.

In 1893, the 19th year of the Guangxu reign period, with the financial aid of people such as Chen Runfu, chairman of the Shanghai Chamber of Commerce, the Taoists of Shanghai's White Cloud Temple expanded the temple area to 14 *mu* (a little short of a hectare) by adding the Hall of the Three Pristine Ones, the Hall of Patriarch Lü and the Hall of Patriarch Qiu.

In 1894, the 20th year of the Guangxu reign period, Shanghai customs confiscated seven gilded copper statues made in the Ming Dynasty. These had been stolen to be sold abroad. Chen Runfu, as a backer of the White Cloud Temple, suggested that Taoist statues should be maintained by a Taoist temple, so the seven statues were moved to the Hall of the Three Pristine Ones, unconditionally. One of the seven statues is of Taoist Master Zhang and another is of Master Xu. Both have dignified expressions and kindly faces, and the statues are exquisitely made. The other five statues are of Heavenly Generals, also with dignified expressions. The statues are exquisitely crafted and regarded as of top quality.

(b) City God Temple

The worship of town or city gods began during the Southern and Northern Dynasties and became popular in the Tang and Song dynasties. In ancient legends, people who had lived upright lives would become gods after their death. Some such people were made heavenly gods and others were made town or city gods to bless and protect a particular region.

Shanghai's City God Temple (Chenghuang Miao 城隍庙) was originally called Golden Hill Temple (Jinshan Miao 金山庙). It was used for offering sacrifices to Huo Guang, a senior general in the Han Dynasty, and so it was also called the Huo Guang Memorial Temple. During the Ming Dynasty's Yongle reign period (1403-24), it was rebuilt as the City God Temple by the then county magistrate Zhang Shouyue for offering sacrifices to the City God Qin Yubo.

Qin Yubo, who styled himself Jingrong, was a seventh-generation descendant of Qin Shaoyou, an academician of Longtu (Dragon Picture) Pavilion during the Song Dynasty. Qin Yubo was born in approximately 1295, the first year of the Yuan Dynasty's Chengzong reign period. During the Zhizheng reign period (1341-68), he was a *jìnshi* (进士, a successful candidate in the highest-level civil service examination). He was remarkably wise and achieved significant results in bringing the sea under control. After his death, he was buried in Shanghai's Changshou (Longevity) neighborhood alongside his wife, whose surname was Chu. When Ming Emperor Taizu heard about Qin Yubo's death, he immediately conferred on Qin the title of Shanghai City God.

Taoists of the Orthodox Oneness tradition have always been in charge of Shanghai's City God Temple. During the Ming and Qing dynasties, the major Taoist religious festivals in the temple were the "three inspection tours," the birthday of the City God on the 21st day of the second lunar month, and the birthday of the City God's wife on the 28th day of the third lunar month. It is said that the City God's three inspection tours began during Ming Emperor Taizu's reign (1368-98). In anger one time, Emperor Taizu killed a Shanghai man called Qian Hegao. Qian's blood became white and the corpse seemed to be still alive. Emperor Taizu was afraid that Qian would become a ferocious ghost. As preventive measures,



Shanghai's City God Temple (Chenghuang Miao).

he ordered that the whole country's town and city gods should help any ferocious ghosts and he also conferred on Qian Hegao the title of Head of Ghosts. Since Qian Hegao was from Shanghai, the Shanghai City God in particular had to obey the order scrupulously. The Shanghai City God's three inspection tours are on the Qingming (Pure Brightness) Festival on April 5, on the 15th day of the seventh lunar month, and on the first day of the 10th lunar month. On the Shanghai City God's birthday and on that of his wife, the usual practice of the temple's Taoists is to chant scriptures for the day.

Shanghai's City God Temple has far-reaching influence both in China and abroad. Many old Shanghaiese who have lived abroad for a long time have a strong desire to visit the City God Temple to recapture childhood memories: young women shoulder to shoulder in the crowd, row upon row of shops, the twisting and turning small bridges, gentle and melodious songs, a great variety of snacks, and incense smoke curling up from the temple halls.

(2) Eight Immortals Palace in Xi'an

The Eight Immortals Palace (Baxian Gong 八仙宫) was called the Eight Immortals Taoist Temple (Baxian An 八仙庵) in ancient times. It is located on Changle Fang (Eternal Happiness Lane) in the Dongguan district of Xi'an. It is said that the site was the location of Xingqing Palace during the Tang Dynasty. In the Jin and Yuan dynasties, the Complete Perfection doctrine prevailed. A large building was constructed here and called the Eight Immortals Temple. The temple had become a famous Taoist site by the Ming Dynasty.

The palace's main hall is the Eight Immortals Hall. On the gate hangs a horizontal board inscribed with Qing Emperor Guangxu's handwriting and saying "precious records passed on by immortals" (*baolu xian chuan* 宝篆仙传). Imperial Sovereign Donghua sits in the middle of the hall, with the Eight Immortals on either side. Taoist scriptures relate that Imperial Sovereign Donghua's name was originally Wang Xuanfu. He was the master of Zhongli Quan, one of the Eight Immortals, and was the leader of the Complete Perfection Northern Lineage's five patriarchs (Wang Xuanfu, Zhongli Quan, Lü Dongbin, Liu Haichan and Wang Chongyang). The Eight Immortals are all household names but few people would be able to give a clear outline of the true backgrounds of the eight.

Legends about the Eight Immortals began to spread in the Tang Dynasty but it was a long time before a final conclusion was reached as to whom the eight individuals were. It was not until Wu Yuantai wrote *Journey to the East, Where the Eight Immortals Came from* (Baxian Chuchu Dongyou Ji 八仙出处东游记) during the Ming Dynasty that the Eight Immortals were established as being Zhongli Quan, Lü Dongbin, Li Tieguai or Tieguai Li (Iron-Crutch Li), Zhang Guolao, Cao Guojiu (Royal Uncle Cao), Han Xiangzi, Lan Caihe, and He Xiangu (Fairy He).

Zhongli Quan, who styled himself Yunfang, was from Xianyang in Shaanxi Province. He lived during the late Tang Dynasty and the Five Dynasties. He used to call himself “Zhongli, the freest tramp under heaven” (*tianxia dousan han zhongli quan* 天下都散汉钟离权) and therefore people of later generations mistook his name as being Han Zhongli. He was a senior general in his early days. He once commanded his army on an expedition to a tribe in northwest China when suddenly there was thunder and lightning, and the sky became so dark that it was difficult for them to see where they were going. Zhongli Quan wandered away from his troops and got lost in a valley. He went up a steep mountain and met the supreme



A relief sculpture of “The Eight Immortals Crossing the Sea.”

immortal Wang Xuanfu, who gave him a golden elixir pill and told him some magic spells. These later helped Han Zhongli to attain enlightenment and become an immortal. In the Song Dynasty, he was given the title of True Yang Perfect Man (Zhengyang Zhenren 正阳真人).

Lü Dongbin was originally called Lü Yan and he was also known as Chunyangzi (Master Chunyang or Master Pure Yang). He twice sat and failed the highest-level civil-service recruitment examination during the Tang Dynasty's Wuzong reign period (841-846). On the way back home after his failure, he planned to visit Mount Huashan to relax. After resting in a tavern, he met a man with blue eyes and a long beard and talked with him. They both regretted not having known each other before. Then the long-bearded man went to cook their meal, while Lü Dongbin lay under the sun to rest. Without noticing, Lü Dongbin fell asleep and had a dream. In the dream, he excelled in the examination and later had many influential official posts. However, as the saying goes, something unexpected might happen at any time, and he was demoted to a low-ranking post south of the Yangtze River. On the way to his new job, he was unfortunate enough to run into a raging snowstorm. His servant and horses all died and he became friendless and helpless.

As Lü Dongbin sighed in his dream, he suddenly woke up. The long-bearded man said: "The dream you just had shows that it is not worth rejoicing in wealth and honor, while it is not worth worrying about poverty and humble origin. Without exception, everything in the world is a mere dream, from ancient times to the present. Wealth and honor are like an empty reputation and evil fire, gold and jewelry are merely worldly possessions, and your descendants are other people. When you cannot breathe, all these will disappear." Lü Dongbin suddenly became clear-minded. He then gave up his plan to studying Confucian classics and engage in politics to formally acknowledge Zhongli Quan as his master, concentrating on self-cultivation. He eventually attained enlightenment and became an immortal. It is said that the tavern where Lü Dongbin met Zhongli Quan was situated in front of the Eight Immortals Palace. To this day, there is a stone tablet at the east side of the *pailou* (decorated archway) in the Eight Immortals Palace. The middle of the tablet is inscribed with the words "Chang'an Tavern" and next to that, it says "The place where the Tang Dynasty's Lü Chunyang met Zhongli Quan and obtained enlightenment."

Iron-Crutch Li (Tieguai Li 铁拐李) was originally called Li Xuan and used to be handsome and highly esteemed. Once when his Yang spirit went out traveling, his students cremated Li's human body. Therefore, when Li's Yang spirit returned, it had no human body to which to attach itself. So, Li had to be reincarnated in the body of a man who had starved to death. Li consequently became an ugly man with disheveled hair and a dirty face, a bare belly and one lame leg. He always carried a big gourd on his back, and it was said this had been sent to him by an immortal. The gourd was full of a panacea that could drive out seasonal fevers and cure people.

Zhang Guolao (张果老, Elder Zhang Guo) was also known as the Master of Celestial Understanding or Gentleman of Pervasive Mystery (Tongxuan Xiansheng 通玄先生). He was famous in the Tang Dynasty for his skill in making immortality elixirs and his knowledge of how to stay healthy. People added Lao to his name to express their respect for him. It was said that his most obvious characteristic was that he often rode a white donkey backwards. After he reached his destination, he could change his donkey into a piece of paper that could be folded up and put in a box. Whenever he needed to ride the donkey, he would spray water on the paper donkey and it would become a living one.

Cao Guojiu, according to legend, was originally called Cao Jingxiu. He was a grandson of the Song Dynasty General Cao Bin and also one of Empress Dowager Cao's brothers. He was determined to practice Taoism and never admired glory or wealth. However, his brother always took advantage of their relationship with Empress Dowager Cao to do evil and did not accept Cao Guojiu's advice. Cao Guojiu was ashamed of his brother's deeds and did not want to associate with him, so he fled to a faraway mountain to concentrate on practicing Taoism. Later he encountered Zhongli Quan and Lü Dongbin, who taught him the Taoist arts and guided him into the immortal world.

Han Xiangzi is said to have been the grandnephew of the Tang Dynasty literary giant Han Yu. He was adept at playing the *xiao* (a vertical bamboo flute). Unconventional and unconstrained, he was excessively fond of drinking. However, he was more alert and resourceful than most people and also good at magical arts and transformations.

Lan Caihe was an itinerant Taoist who always wore a shabby gown of blue cloth and a belt of black wood. He would wear one shoe, with his

other foot bare. He carried clapper castanets to attract attention as he begged along busy streets. As he walked, he would sing: “Lan Caihe, how much can the world go through? The lifetime of beauty is that of trees in spring, and time flies by like a shuttle that has been thrown. The ancients who drifted through life will never come back, while more and more new people come into the world.” It is said that he was drinking in a tavern one day when he heard music and singing in the sky, then he suddenly ascended into heaven.

He Xiangmu (何仙姑, Fairy He) is the only female among the Eight Immortals. She was from Yunmuxe in the city of Zengcheng in Guangdong Province. When she was 15 years old, she dreamed that an immortal taught her to eat mother-of-pearl powder. From then on, she was as light as a swallow in flight and she climbed mountains every day to collect wild fruit for her elderly mother.

The Eight Immortals Palace is on the State Council list of China’s most important Taoist palaces and temples. It is not only a famous Taoist site but also one of the most prominent scenic and historic sites in Xi’an.

(3) Green Goat Palace in Chengdu

The Green Goat Palace (Qingyang Gong 青羊宫) is in a southwestern suburb of the city of Chengdu in Sichuan Province and is on the State Council list of China’s key Taoist palaces and temples.

The Green Goat Palace’s name is associated with Taoist legend. In the



Chengdu’s Green Goat Palace (Qingyang Gong).

Imperial Biography of the King of Shu by Yang Xiong of the Western Han Dynasty, Yang wrote: “Lao Zi wrote the *Tao Te Ching* for Yin Xi, the guardian at Hangu Pass. When Lao Zi left, he told Yin Xi, ‘After you have practiced Taoism for a thousand days, come to look for me in Qingyang (Green Goat) District in Chengdu.’” This gave rise to a legend, according to which Lao Zi had traveled west to Hangu Pass to teach Taoism to Yin Xi and then Lao Zi in reincarnated form met Yin Xi in Chengdu’s Qingyang District. It is said that, after Yin Xi respectfully saw off Lao Zi on his westward journey, he practiced Taoism for a thousand days and then went to Chengdu as they had agreed but found no district called Qingyang. Just when he was in this dilemma, he suddenly saw a boy leading a green goat. It turned out that, after Lao Zi had ascended into heaven, he again left Supreme Subtlety Palace (Taiwei Gong 太微宮) and was born into the family of a high-ranking official surnamed Li in the Kingdom of Shu. Before he was born into the Li family, Lao Zi ordered his green dragon to change into a goat. Yin Xi saw through the ploy and then followed the boy to the Li household, where he saw auspicious purple clouds floating over the houses of the Li family. Yin Xi went inside to make inquiries and found out that a baby boy had just been born. This baby was an incarnation of Lao Zi. Lao Zi revealed his original appearance, gave jade books and inscriptions on bronze to Yin Xi and conferred on him the title of Most High Perfect Man. Inspired by this legend, people later built a Taoist temple at the place where Yin Xi met the boy leading a green goat. They called it Green Goat Temple (Qingyang Guan 青羊观), which is today’s Green Goat Palace.

In the Hall of Original Chaos (Hunyuan Dian 混元殿), one of the Green Goat Palace’s major buildings, there is a shrine for worshipping the Patriarch of Original Chaos — that is, the Supreme Master Lao Zi. The title of Emperor of the Mysterious Origin (Xuanyuan Huangdi 玄元皇帝) was conferred on the Supreme Master during the Tang Dynasty. The title was changed to Emperor of Original Chaos (Hunyuan Huangdi 混元皇帝) during the Song Dynasty to avoid using any part of the name of Zhao Xuanlang, the founder of the Song Dynasty, because this was taboo. Later generations called him the Patriarch of Original Chaos (Hunyuan Zushi 混元祖师). In the shrine, the master has a kindly expression and elegant bearing and wears an Original Chaos Heaven and Earth ring. This ring signifies the chaotic state when heaven and earth had not yet been separated. As the

ring breaks, it becomes one, symbolizing the Patriarch separating heaven and earth. One generates two, when two forms of energy — Yin and Yang — come into being. Two generate three, which means the movement of Yin and Yang generates the harmony (*he* 和) of energy, and then there are the three powers Yin, Yang and Harmony. The three generates everything on earth, which means that Yin, Yang and Harmony are integrated into the whole world. When we meditate while observing the statue of the Supreme Master, we can understand that the universe's evolutionary rule is that "Tao produces the One; the One turns into the Two; the Two gives rise to the Three"; and the path to recover nature's original state is one where "Man follows the way of Earth; Earth follows the way of Heaven; Heaven follows the way of Tao; and Tao follows the way of spontaneity." Behind the Supreme Master is the Taoist of Compassionate Salvation, who sits upright on a lotus throne, spraying sweet dew to help people in distress and never failing to respond to any prayer.

Go further and you will see the Eight Trigrams Pavilion, one of the most distinctive buildings in the Green Goat Palace. The pavilion was built on a dais with double overhanging eaves that point skyward. The base of the dais has three layers: the lowest is square, the middle one octagonal, and the topmost round, symbolizing the Taoist theory: "Under the round dome of heaven lies the square earth; Yin and Yang depend on and generate each other; the Eight Trigrams integrate to generate the world." Eight pillars with winding dragons support the pavilion. The strong contrast in color between the pillars' black backgrounds, white clouds and golden dragons gives a vivid depiction of the dragons. There are 81 dragons carved on the pavilion and dais, representing Lao Zi's 81 transformations. One of the dragon pillars on the north side has a fist-like mark. It is said that a dragon absorbed the essence of heaven and earth and was revived one stormy night after the winding-dragon pillars had been completed. One night when it was about to fly away, a Taoist who happened to be around observing astronomical phenomena saw what it wanted to do, then punched it and pinned it to the pillar. The fist mark on the dragon can still be seen clearly. Opposite the eight pillars is a picture of the Eight Trigrams, accompanied by a Diagram of the Supreme Ultimate with relief sculptures of the 12 animals of the Chinese zodiac. The pavilion has a statue of Lao Zi riding a black ox. To the left and right of

the statue hangs a couplet that reads: “Ask who is riding the black ox, and a yellow crane will fly down from heaven.” In front of the statue hangs a horizontal board inscribed: “The supreme good is like water” (*shang shan ruo shui* 上善若水). This advises people to do what is good for the world and to strive for nothing, just as water does.

If you leave the Eight Trigrams Pavilion and go north, you will see the Green Goat Palace’s principal building, the Hall of the Three Pristine Ones. In the middle of the hall are shrines with gilded clay statues of the Three Pristine Ones (Primeval Lord of Heaven of the Jade Purity, Heavenly Lord of Numinous Treasure of the High Purity, and Heavenly Lord of Tao and Its Virtue of the Supreme Purity). The three altars are connected into one. On the east side of the hall, there is a big bell known as the Netherworld or World of Darkness to provide warnings to the populace. It was made during the Ming Dynasty and weighs more than 3,000 kilograms. On the west side of the hall is an echoing drum. Every day, the morning bell and evening drum sound to act as reminders for people.

In the Hall of the Three Pristine Ones are two famous divine animals — green goats made of copper. The one on the left has a unique appearance, with features from 12 animals — a rat’s ears, an ox’s nose, a tiger’s claws, a rabbit’s back, a dragon’s horns, a snake’s tail, a horse’s mouth, a goat’s beard, a monkey’s neck, a chicken’s eyes, a dog’s belly and a pig’s buttocks. It is said that this goat has magic powers: anyone who is sick will be cured if he or she touches the corresponding part of the goat’s body. It is also said that, if a woman wants a baby, she should “touch the cool belly with a warm hand.” As a result, many people come to touch the goat for good luck. The goat has been touched so frequently that it is as bright as pure gold and glistens in the sunlight. Since Chinese people believe that good things should be in pairs, a man surnamed Zhang from Chengdu had another copper goat cast during the Qing Dynasty’s Daoguang reign period (1821-50) and placed beside the first one, the two contrasting well with each other.

Also noteworthy is that a precious Taoist cultural relic is preserved in the Green Goat Palace. It is the Qing Dynasty printing plate with more than 13,000 cut blocks for the *Selections from the Taoist Canon* (Daozang Jiyao 道藏辑要). Legible characters are carved on both sides of the well-preserved plate of pear wood.

(4) Eternal Spring Temple in Wuhan

Eternal Spring Temple (Changchun Guan 长春观) is located outside the Great Eastern Gate of the Wuchang part of Wuhan City in Hubei Province. To its west is the Yellow Crane Tower and to its east the Mount Hongshan Pagoda, forming beautiful surroundings. The mountains in this region used to be covered with green pines, so the area was called the Island of Pines. It is recorded that Lao Zi was once invited by a disciple to meet the Five Elders at Lubu. Lao Zi did not stay in Echeng south of the Yangtze River but went west to the “island of tall pine trees,” a reference to this area. During Genghis Khan’s reign (1206-27) in the Yuan Dynasty, Qiu Chuji, the patriarch of Complete Perfection Taoism’s Dragon Gate sect, came here to build a Taoist temple. Later generations called it Eternal Spring Temple because Patriarch Qiu was also known as Changchunzi or Master of Eternal Spring. From then on, “Taoists gathered in well-known areas along the Yangtze River in Hubei.” Eternal Spring Temple became Hubei’s most famous Taoist monastery, attracting thousands of Taoists to its hundreds of rooms. In 1851, the first year of the Qing Dynasty’s Xianfeng reign period, Eternal Spring Temple was destroyed in war. In 1864, the third year of the Qing Dynasty’s Tongzhi reign period, He Hechun, the 16th-generation patriarch of Complete Perfection Taoism’s Dragon Gate sect, came here from Mount Wudang. He won people’s good graces by doing good deeds and also begged for alms so that he could rebuild Eternal Spring Temple in the Ming Dynasty style.

Eternal Spring Temple faces south and is situated against a hill. The whole temple rises tier after tier. The Hall of Supreme Purity is magnificently decorated on a large scale. The hall has an altar with a gilded statue for worshipping the Supreme Master Lao Zi. At his sides are statues of his two disciples, the Perfect Man of Nanhua (Zhuang Zi) and the Most High Perfect Man (Yin Xi). The hall has many murals, two of which are remarkable — “Lao Zi Going West Through Hangu Pass” and “Lao Zi Elaborating on the *Tao Te Ching*.”

Behind the Hall of Supreme Purity is the Hall of the Seven Perfect Ones, where there is a shrine for worshipping Complete Perfection Taoism’s Seven Perfect Ones, who are Wang Chongyang’s seven foremost disciples — Ma Yu, Tan Chuduan, Liu Chuxuan, Qiu Chuji, Hao Datong, Wang Chuyi and Sun Bu’er. They had made significant contributions to the popu-

larization and development of Complete Perfection Taoism and formed their own sects. The sect that has had the greatest influence on later generations and most Taoists is the Dragon Gate sect, which considers Qiu Chuji as its founder. The Hall of the Seven Perfect Ones is Eternal Spring Palace's main hall and a place where Taoists read scriptures every day and hold important religious ceremonies.

The tallest place in Eternal Spring Palace is the Hall of the Three August Ones, where the ancestors of the Chinese nation are worshiped: Taihao Fuxi, the Red Emperor Shennong, and the Yellow Emperor Xuanyuan. Since the Taoist religion is indigenous to China and has a strong national flavor, it always incorporates outstanding figures from Chinese history into its celestial system for later generations to pay their respects. This is the unique Taoist tradition of “deifying those who benefit the people.”

(5) Palace of Supreme Purity in Shenyang

The Palace of Supreme Purity (Taiqing Gong 太清宫) was originally called the Hall of the Three Doctrines. It is located on the street Xishuncheng Jie in Shenhe District, Shenyang, Liaoning Province. It is one of the biggest Taoist temples in northeast China and one of the most important Taoist temples in China as a whole. The Liaoning Province and Shenyang sections of the Taoist Association are based at the temple.

The Palace of Supreme Purity was first built by Guo Shouzhen in 1663, the second year of Emperor Kangxi's reign in the Qing Dynasty. Guo Shouzhen, also known as Zhixu and Jinyangzi, was the Taoist abbot at the Grotto of Eight Treasures and Cloud Light (Babao Yunguang Dong 八宝云光洞) on Mount Tiecha, known as Nine Peaks (Jiuding 九顶), in Benxi. In 1662, the first year of Emperor Kangxi's reign, people in Shenjing (today's Shenyang) suffered a drought. Wu Kuli, the general in charge of guarding Shenjing, asked Guo Shouzhen to pray for rain because Guo had a reputation for being a noble person who was excellent at kungfu and the magic arts. To people's astonishment, it really did begin to rain after Guo prayed, and the people were overjoyed. The general offered Guo a lot of money in return for his help but Guo refused to accept it. However, he asked the general to build a Taoist temple in northwest Shenjing, which became the Palace of Supreme Purity.

However, wars in every period greatly damaged the temple but it has been gradually renovated. Now it is like a paradise in a noisy street.

(6) Baopu Taoist Temple in Hangzhou

In Zhejiang Province, on the north bank of West Lake in Hangzhou, there is a hill known as Ge Ridge (Ge Ling 葛岭), named after Ge Hong, the famous Taoist of the Eastern Jin Dynasty (317-420) who cultivated himself there. It is said that Ge Hong quit his official post and began to travel. When he arrived at Lin'an (now Hangzhou) and saw to the west of the Precious Stone Mountain (Baoshi Shan 宝石山) a particularly beautiful hill rich in red jade, he thought it must be a good place to cultivate himself and refine elixirs. Therefore, he bought the land and set up a stove, then began to cultivate himself and refine elixirs. After Ge Hong settled there, he began to pick herbs to cure people's diseases free of charge. Moreover, he put the elixirs he refined in wells so that people who drank the wells' water would be free of disease. Furthermore, he cleared a path from the mountain to the outside world for people to use. For all the good deeds he had done, people built the Immortal Ge Ancestral Temple to commemorate him. But a fire sparked by fighting during the Yuan Dynasty (1279-1368) destroyed the temple. It was rebuilt during the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) and renamed Agate Mountain House. In the Qing Dynasty, it was renovated and renamed Baopu Taoist Temple (Baopu Daoyuan 抱朴道院) because Ge Hong's Taoist name was Baopuzi (抱朴子, the Master Who Embraces Simplicity). "Embracing simplicity" means keeping away from temptation and being pure and simple in nature.

Baopu Taoist Temple is now the headquarters of the Taoist Association in Hangzhou and it is one of China's most important Taoist temples. After Taoist activities returned to normal in 1982, it has been renovated and its relics have been well preserved.

(7) Profundity and Subtlety Temple in Suzhou

Located in central Suzhou, the Profundity and Subtlety Temple (Xuanmiao Guan 玄妙观) is as famous as Shanghai's City God Temple and Nanjing's Confucius Temple and is older than both of those. Historical records say that the Profundity and Subtlety Temple, originally called the True Ceremony Temple (Zhenqing Daoyuan 真庆道院), was first built in AD 276, the second year of the Xianning reign period in the Western Jin Dynasty. During the Yuan Dynasty, it was given its present name, which was taken from a section of *The Book of Lao Zi (Tao Te Ching)* that reads: "The deepest and most profound is the doorway to all subtleties."

After being renovated and expanded many times between the Tang and Qing dynasties, the Profundity and Subtlety Temple became the temple with the largest floor area in Jiangnan, the area south of the Yangtze River. During Emperor Chengzong's reign (1294-1307) in the Yuan Dynasty, the emperor recognized the temple as one of China's eight biggest Taoist temples. It later became so famous that the Qing Dynasty Emperor Qianlong once stayed there for a short time during his inspection tour in the south.

However, the temple went on to suffer extensive damage. Of the 10 halls to have survived until now, the Hall of the Three Pristine Ones is open for religious activities. The hall is the temple's main hall and was built in 1179, the sixth year of Emperor Chunxi's reign during the Southern Song Dynasty. It is nine bays wide and six bays deep and is the oldest example of a large temple hall in southern Jiangsu Province. Inside stands a dais with a shrine for worshiping Taoism's greatest deities, the Three Pristine Ones. The gilded statues are seven meters tall and are splendid examples of Song Dynasty religious sculpture.

In front of the Hall of the Three Pristine Ones is the Dingding Stone Balustrade, which is reputed to be the best balustrade in Suzhou. The balustrade was built during the Five Dynasties period (907-960) and comprises 38 pillars with lotus decorations, 30 hollow guardrails, 12 stone seats with relief sculptures, and 6 slanting guardrails. These enhance the beauty of the Hall of the Three Pristine Ones, with its yellow walls, black tiles and reddish-brown doors and lintels.

The Lao Zi stele was the most precious relic preserved in the Profundity and Subtlety Temple. On the stele was carved a portrait of Lao Zi by Wu Daozi, a famous Tang Dynasty painter, as well as an ode written by Emperor Xuanzong and inscribed by the renowned Tang Dynasty calligrapher Yan Zhenqing (708-784). The original stele was destroyed in the chaos of war, and a replica was made in 1225, the first year of the Southern Song Dynasty's Baoqing reign period, by the outstanding stonecutter Zhang Yundi. With its combination of the emperor's ode, exquisite calligraphy and a painter's masterpiece, it is known as the "three uniquenesses" stele.

On the east side of the Hall of the Three Pristine Ones stands the Fang Xiaoru Stele, one of China's four most renowned steles with no

inscriptions. It is 6.7 meters tall and 2.7 meters wide. It did in fact once have an inscription, an epigraph written by the Ming Dynasty official Fang Xiaoru, in which he recorded many historical events that took place in 1371, the fourth year of Hongwu's reign. Zhu Di, Prince of Yan, later usurped the throne from his nephew Zhu Yunwen and asked Fang Xiaoru to draft an imperial edict on his enthronement. But Fang refused, whereupon Zhu Di had Fang and all of his family executed. Zhu Di even had the inscription written by Fang eradicated after the official's death, so the Fang Xiaoru stele has no inscription.

The temple's Taoist music has also enjoyed great renown for a long time. It has absorbed folk music and been influenced by the Taoist music of the Celestial Masters tradition of the Dragon and Tiger Mountain (Mount Longhu) in Jiangxi Province. Its sound is deep, slow, pure, soft and noble, with the charm of court music.

(8) Triple Origin Palace and Chunyang Temple in Guangzhou

Triple Origin Palace (Sanyuan Gong 三元宫), a celebrated center of Taoism, is at the southern foot of Mount Yuexiu in Guangzhou. It is more than 1,600 years old. According to historical records, in 319, the second year of the Daxing reign period of the Eastern Jin Dynasty Emperor Yuandi, Governor Bao Jing of Nanhai, built a house at the foot of Mount Yuexiu for his daughter, Bao Gu, to practice Taoism and medicine. The house was therefore called the Yue Ridge Compound (Yuegang Yuan 越岗院). It was also known as the Northern Temple (Bei Miao 北庙) because of its location. In 1643, the 16th year of the Ming Dynasty Emperor Chongzhen's reign, it was renamed Triple Origin Palace.

Bao Jing, a devout Taoist, was accomplished in Confucian classics, astronomy and geography, leading the Jin Dynasty emperor to promote him to governor of Nanhai. In 323, the second year of Emperor Mingdi's Taining reign period, Bao Jing married his daughter off to his apprentice Ge Hong, who later went to Mount Luofu to refine pills and left his wife Bao Gu practicing medicine in the Yue Ridge Compound in Guangzhou. Bao Gu was adept at acupuncture, especially for curing warts and other growths. She cured a lot of people of such ailments by using a mixture of mountain spring water and wild mugwort in her acupuncture. After her death, the people in Guangzhou set up a statue for her in the Yue Ridge

Compound, where the Bao Gu Well and a stele inscribed with a chart of acupuncture points can still be seen.

Chunyang Temple is on Shuzhu Hill in the southern suburbs of Guangzhou. It started to be built in 1824, the fourth year of the Qing Dynasty Emperor Daoguang's reign, and construction finished in 1829.

(9) Supreme Master Cave Temple in Chongqing

The Supreme Master Cave Temple (Laojun Dong Daoguan 老君洞道观) was originally a place where the Orthodox Oneness sect performed its rites. It is in an enchanting location in Chongqing's Nan'an District, 2.5 kilometers from the city center.

During the Qing Dynasty Emperor Qianlong's reign (1736-95), Zhu Yipin, a disciple of the Dragon Gate sect of Beijing's White Cloud Temple, became the abbot of the Supreme Master Cave Temple. Therefore, it became a center of Complete Perfection Taoism. Many precious cultural relics are preserved in the temple, such as a Diagram of the Supreme Ultimate and a carving of the words "Temple of the Supreme Ultimate" (Taiji Gong 太极宫) in large characters in the middle of the gate, the delicately inscribed Five Dragons Stele, and a huge stone inscribed with the story of how the Taoist Master of Compassionate Salvation helped the needy. Among dozens of other carved stones, there is a stone inscribed "Like a dragon" (*you long* 犹龙), which was how Confucius praised Lao Zi, and there is a stone carved with the words "purple cloud from the east" (*ziqui dong lai* 紫气东来), which refers to when the Hangu Pass keeper Yin Xi met with Lao Zi on the latter's journey to the west.

22. Other Taoist Temples

(1) Two Kings Temple in Dujiangyan

The Two Kings Temple (Erwang Miao 二王庙) is one kilometer west of Dujiangyan City in Sichuan Province. There is a shrine to Li Bing and his son, who built the Dujiangyan Dam irrigation system during the Eastern Han Dynasty (AD 25-220).

(2) Original Sublimity Temple in Quanzhou

The Original Sublimity Temple is at Xinfukou in Dong Jie (East Street)

in Quanzhou in Fujian Province and is centuries old.

(3) Taoist Temple of the Stone and Bamboo Mountain in Fuqing

Located 10 kilometers west of Fuqing in Fujian Province, the Stone and Bamboo Mountain is renowned for its rare stones and beautiful bamboo. The Taoist Temple of the Stone and Bamboo Mountain (Shizhushan Daoyuan 石竹山道院) is perched on the cliff at the mountain's southern foothill.

(4) Palace of Supreme Purity and Supreme Master Terrace in Luyi

It is said in the *Records of the Historian* that Lao Zi was born in Qurenli in Kuxian County in the State of Chu in what is now Luyi County in Henan Province. Over the years, many palaces and temples were built in Luyi County but only the Palace of Supreme Purity (Taiqing Gong 太清宫) and Supreme Master Terrace (Laojun Tai 老君台) have survived.

The Palace of Supreme Purity was originally called Lao Zi Temple (Laozi Miao 老子庙) and is located on a hill five kilometers east of the county town.

Supreme Master Terrace, where Lao Zi cultivated the Way and became immortal, is in the northeast of the county town.

(5) Cloud and Spring Immortal Hall on Mount Xiqiao

Located on Mount Xiqiao in Nanhai in Guangdong Province, the Cloud and Spring Immortal Hall (Yunquan Xianguan 云泉仙馆) has a shrine to Lü Dongbin.

(6) Jade Spring Temple in Tianshui

Located at the foot of Mount Tianjing north of the city of Tianshui in Gansu Province, the Jade Spring Temple (Yuquan Guan 玉泉观) is several hundred years old. The sweet mountain spring water can supposedly cure diseases.

(7) Big Dipper Cave on Wild Goose Marsh Mountain

The Big Dipper Cave (Beidou Dong 北斗洞) is on the northern part of the Wild Goose Marsh Mountain (Yandang Shan 雁荡山) in Leqing in Zhejiang Province.

(8) Palace of King Yu on Mount Tushan

Mount Tushan (Tu Shan 涂山), also known as Mount Dangtu and the

Eastern Mountain, is in the western suburbs of Bengbu in Anhui Province and is the site of the ancient Kingdom of Tushan. It was also where King Yu the Great got married and where he held his first meeting with all the dukes. The Palace of King Yu (Yuwang Gong 禹王宮) is on the mountain's highest peak.

(9) White Cloud Temple on White Cloud Mountain

Located on the banks of the Yellow River five kilometers south of the Jiaxian county town in Shaanxi Province, the White Cloud Temple (Baiyun Guan 白云观) is one of the biggest Taoist temples on the Loess Plateau in northwestern China.

V. TAOISM IN HONG KONG, MACAO AND TAIWAN

Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan have been part of Chinese territory since ancient times. Taoism, one of the oldest religions in China, spread to Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan long ago and still influences the lives of people there.

1. Taoism in Hong Kong

Taoism was introduced to Hong Kong long ago because Hong Kong is not far from Guangdong's Mount Luofu, Taoism's Seventh Greater Grotto Heaven. The Hong Kong Taoist Association, one of the six major religious groupings in Hong Kong, was founded in June 1961. It has played a key role in propagating Taoism and communicating with religious groups on the Chinese mainland. The Hong Kong Taoist Association also does research on Taoism.

The main Taoist temples in Hong Kong are:

Yuen Yuen Institute (Yuan Xuan Xue Yuan 圆玄学院): This temple complex is located at Sam Dip Tam in Tsuen Wan in the New Territories on the Kowloon Peninsula. The institute's Chinese name is a reference to three religions, with Taoism at the center. In the name, *yuan* (圆, round) refers to Buddhism, *xuan* (玄, mystery) refers to Taoism and *xue* (学, study) refers to Confucianism. Taoist groups first came from the Temple of Emptiness on Mount Luofu, where there are shrines to the founders of the three religions. The institute's main hall is the Great Hall of the Three Religions, which has two floors. The top floor has shrines to the Heavenly Lord of Tao and Its Virtue of the Supreme Purity (Lao Zi), the Great Perfection and Sage Teacher (Confucius), and Sakyamuni Buddha, while the bottom floor has shrines to the sixty deities of the *jiazi* sixty-year cycle. The institute is the biggest place

in Hong Kong for practicing Taoism and it has Hong Kong's biggest Taoist library, with several ten thousand volumes of classics and information for research into the three religions.

Ching Chung Koon (Qingsong Guan 青松观, Evergreen Pine Temple): This temple's halls are in locations that include Tai Nan Street in Kowloon's Sham Shui Po District, Nathan Road, and Kei Lun Wai in Tuen Mun District. Its halls include the Great Hall of Chunyang and Assisting Transformation Palace (Yihua Gong 翊化宫), where there are shrines to Immortal Lü Chunyang (Lü Dongbin). In 1993, the temple sponsored a reconstruction of the ancient Yellow Dragon Temple on waste ground on Mount Luofu in Guangdong Province. To spread Taoism further, Evergreen Pine Temple has set up subsidiary Taoist temples in places such as the United States, Canada, Australia and Singapore.

Wong Tai Sin Temple (Huangdaxian Ci 黄大仙祠, Ancestral Temple of Great Immortal Huang): Also known as Sik Sik Yuen (Sese Yuan 啬色园), this temple is on the southern peak of Lion Rock (Sz Tsz Shan) in Kowloon's Chuk Yuen District. It has a shrine to Great Immortal Huang, who was born Huang Chuping (Wong Tso Hap in Cantonese) during the Eastern Jin Dynasty (317-420) and who became very famous in Hong Kong. The temple's Flying Phoenix Terrace is Hong Kong's only terrace cast entirely from copper and is allegedly Great Immortal Huang's last resting place. Now it has become the only scenic spot in northeast Hong Kong and attracts many Taoists and tourists.

2. Taoism in Macao

Taoism was introduced to Macao in the third century and developed greatly during the Song Dynasty. The most famous Taoist temple to have survived to this day is Ma Kok Miu or Ah Ma Temple (Mage Miao 妈阁庙, Temple of the Sea Goddess Mazu). Built in the Ming Dynasty in the southeast of peninsular Macao, it was originally called the Motherly Patriarch Pavilion (Mazu Ge 妈祖阁) or Heavenly Matriarch Temple (Tianhou Miao 天后庙). It has a shrine to the Heavenly Motherly Matriarch (Mazu). Inside stands a stone relief sculpture of the Chinese junk in which, according to legend, the Heavenly Matriarch set off from her hometown for Macao.

The other main Taoist temples in Macao are Lin Fung Temple, Lin Kai



Ma Kok Miu or Ah Ma Temple
(Mage Miao, Temple of the Sea Goddess Mazu) in Macao.

Miu (Lotus Stream Temple), Hong Kung Miu (Kanggong Miao 康公庙, Lord Kung Temple), and Tam Kung Miu.

Lin Fung Miu (Lianfeng Miao 莲峰庙, Lotus Peak Temple) was originally called the Heavenly Concubine Temple. Built during the Ming Dynasty, it is in Avenida do Almirante Lacerda and has a shrine to the Heavenly Matriarch Goddess Mazu.

Tam Kung Miu (Tangong Miao 谭公庙, Lord Tam Temple) is the most popular temple on Coloane Island. Built during the Qing Dynasty, it is at the end of Avenida de Cinco de Outubro.

The main Taoist groups in Macao are the Twofold Altar of Faith and Virtue, the Ancestral Altar of Faith and Virtue, and the Cloud and Spring Immortal Hall. There are also seven or eight Taoist temples of the Orthodox Oneness sect scattered around Macao, including the Wu Qingyun Taoist Temple and the Li Qi Taoist Temple.

3. Taoism in Taiwan

Those now living in Taiwan are mainly the families of immigrants from Fujian and Guangdong provinces on the Chinese mainland, except for a small number of people from the indigenous Gaoshan ethnic group. There

are more than 8,000 Taoist temples in Taiwan, most of which have shrines for worshipping the Supreme Goddess (Mazu or Matsu), the Highest Emperor of the Mysterious Northern Heaven (Great Perfect Warrior Emperor), and the Sainly Imperial Sovereign Guan Yu.

Taiwan Primary Temple of the Heavenly Altar (Taiwan Shoumiao Tiantan 台湾首庙天坛): Located in the city of Tainan, this has a shrine to the Jade Emperor. The shrine is made of stones taken from the Chinese mainland and it has simple but delicate carvings. On the principal column outside the main hall hangs a horizontal board inscribed with the Chinese character *yi* (一, one). This board is one of three renowned boards in Tainan with such a design.

Chihnan Temple (Zhinan Gong 指南宫, Temple of Guidance): Also known as the Immortal Duke Temple (Xiangong Miao 仙公庙), this is the biggest Taoist temple in Taipei. It is on Mount Chihnan in the Mucha area of Taipei's Wenshan District. The China Taoist Academy is now based there.

Chaotien Temple (Chaotian Gong 朝天宫, Turning-to-Heaven Palace): This is in Peikang in Yunlin County and has a shrine to the Heavenly Motherly Matriarch (Mazu), so it is also known as the Peikang Matsu Temple.



Chihnan Temple (Zhinan Gong, Temple of Guidance) in Taipei.

Inside is a well-preserved Mazu crown made during Emperor Kangxi's reign in the Qing Dynasty. The temple is Taiwan's most influential temple to Mazu.

Hsingtien Temple (Xingtian Gong 行天宮, Walking-in-Heaven Palace): Built in 1943, this temple is in Taipei's East Minchuan Road. Its main feature is a shrine to the Saintly Imperial Sovereign Guan. Lord Guan was reputed to be loyal and trustworthy and good at finance, so he is regarded as the God of Business.

Tainan Prefectural City God Temple (Tainan Fu Chenghuang Miao 台南府城隍廟): This is located at 133 Youth Road (Chingnien Road) in Tainan. Worship of town or city gods has been popular since the Tang Dynasty. A hierarchical system of gods was established during the Ming Dynasty, covering national, capital, prefectural, district and county levels. This temple in Tainan has a shrine to a prefectural city god.

Most Taoist priests in Taiwan belong to the Orthodox Oneness sect, while others adhere to the Complete Perfection sect, some to the Mount Wudang sect, and still others to the Mount Kongtong sect. The main Taoist organizations are the Taiwan Province Taoist Association and the Central Taoist Association of China.

Taiwan's Taoism has its roots on the Chinese mainland. In recent years, there has been much more interaction between believers in Taiwan and those on the mainland. Moreover, Taiwanese Taoist pilgrims often visit Taoist temples on the mainland and organize many Taoist activities that promote friendship between people on both sides of the Taiwan Straits.

VI. TAOISM ABROAD

Taoism has touched almost every country in the world as cultural exchanges have increased between China and other countries, added to the large numbers of overseas Chinese. After World War II, the study of Eastern philosophy and mythology became popular in the United States and Europe. The study of Taoism therefore became very popular, and many Taoist associations emerged abroad. Some foreigners even cultivate the Way in Taoist temples.

1. Taoism in East Asia

(1) Taoism in Japan

Taoist philosophy on longevity and macrobiotics were introduced to Japan early in the seventh century. The Taoist practice of “keeping watch on *gengshen* day” began to spread during Japan’s Heian period (794-1192). Taoists believe that people’s bodies contain three “grave worms” (*pengju*, *pengzhi* and *pengjiao*), which report to the Heavenly Court on people’s wrongdoing and thus shorten people’s lifespan when they are sound asleep on *gengshen* day. Therefore, to prevent the three grave worms from leaving their bodies, Taoists stay up on *gengshen* day.

In the 15th century, the Taoist essay *Folios on the Vibrant Responses of the Most High* was circulated in Japan. To this day, people in Japan’s Okinawa Prefecture still adhere to certain Taoist beliefs, such as keeping shrines to their kitchen god, the earth gods, the town god, the sea goddess Mazu,

* *Geng* 庚 is the seventh of the Ten Heavenly Stems, while *shen* 申 is the ninth of the Twelve Earthly Branches. The Ten Heavenly Stems and Twelve Earthly Branches are used in combination to designate years in the sixty-year *jiazi* cycle of traditional Chinese chronology and were formerly used to designate months, days and hours also. *Gengshen* is the 57th year.

and Lord Guan Yu.

Temples to Lord Guan Yu have been built by overseas Chinese in places such as Hakodate, Yokohama, Osaka, Kobe and Nagasaki, but many Taoist temples have been built by Japanese people. For example, there is Tama Taoist Temple on Mount Odake in western Tokyo.

(2) Taoism in Vietnam

Many Taoist temples have been built in Vietnam and those that have survived include Ngoc Son Temple (Jade Ancestral Mountain Temple), Quán Thánh Temple or Trần Vu Temple (Perfect Warrior Temple), and the Mysterious Heaven Temple, all three of which are in Hanoi. However, the temples mentioned have no Taoist clergy and no religious activities are held there now, so they are merely Taoist relics, from which we can see the influence of Chinese Taoism on Vietnam.

Overseas Chinese in Vietnam are concentrated in southern Vietnam's Ho Chi Minh City, where Chinese people have built many Taoist temples, such as Rice-Ear City Hall, Righteousness and Peace Hall, and the Celebratory Cloud Southern Academy. Unlike the Taoist temples in northern Vietnam, those in the south are still active, providing overseas Chinese with somewhere to carry out traditional Taoist activities.

(3) Taoism in Singapore

Chinese migrants took Taoism to Singapore. In the 19th century, there were no Taoist priests in charge of rites. Believers set up altars and temples and burnt incense to the gods by themselves in accordance with Chinese tradition.

The Thian Hock Keng temple (Tianfu Gong 天福宮, Palace of Heavenly Happiness), Singapore's most influential Taoist temple, has a shrine to the Heavenly Motherly Matriarch (Mazu). Migrants shipped a huge amount of material from China's Fujian Province for the temple, whose construction took 20 years. In 1973, the Singaporean government included the temple on its list of national historical relics.

Taoists from southern China began migrating to Singapore in the 1920s, setting up Taoist altars, managing Taoist temples and doing research into Taoism.

After Singapore became an independent state, Taoism began to be more unified and took on a more academic basis. The Singapore San Ching Tao-

ist Association was founded in Singapore in 1979. The Taoist Mission (Singapore) was founded in 1996 and has held three large-scale Taoist activities to date. Moreover, it is now preparing for starting an Institute of Research on Taoism to study Taoist ideology and the traditional culture.

Taoism is also very popular in other Southeast Asian countries such as Korea, Malaysia, Myanmar and Thailand.

2. Taoism in Europe and the United States

Taoism has spread in recent years to Europe and the United States. For example, the United States has a Taoist temple in Arizona, a Mazu temple in New York, the Center of Traditional Taoist Studies in Boston, the Che Kan Kok Temple (Zigen Ge 紫根阁, Purple Root Pavilion) in San Francisco, and a Supreme Mystery Taoist Temple in Hawaii. In Canada, there is the Fung Loy Kok Taoist Temple (Penglaige Daoguan 蓬莱阁道观) in Toronto. There are also Taoist groups in Britain, France and Australia.

Moreover, since the 1980s, several dozen students from Europe or the United States have come to China and researched Taoism at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences' Institute of World Religions in Beijing and Sichuan University's Institute of Religious Studies. More and more people throughout the world are understanding and accepting Chinese Taoism.