In the formulation of a religious tradition, great attention is paid to the narration of the lives of the protagonists of the religion, both mortal and divine, the patriarchs and other individuals credited with the articulation and transmission of the tradition. For it is the lives of these personages that are as keystones in the edifice of the religion and witness the interweaving of the divine and the mundane. In many ways the Record of Occultists (Xuan pin lu; lit. Categorized Record of the Occult) is one of Daoism’s analogues to the various Lives of Saints in the Western tradition; and it is a good representative of the hagiographic genre, being inspirational but not homiletic, instructive but not arcane, entertaining but not frivolous.

China has a rich tradition of biographical compilation, both secular and religious. Huijiao’s (497–554) Lives of Eminent Monks (Gaosen g zhuan), the preeminent Buddhist example, greatly influenced religious hagiography, but Daoist hagiography is not entirely derivative, drawing also from Han and later traditions of compiling records of extraordinary people and strange events. Daoist hagiographical compilations proliferated as the Daoist religion pervaded Chinese society in a general sense and as sectarian movements and schools established their own particular traditions. Some hagiographies recount the life of one or more of the saints associated with particular cults, while others are collective accounts of a more general or comprehensive nature. One hagiography, compiled in the 1120s and called simply A History of Transcendents, supposedly contained accounts of 50,000 persons.

The Record of Occultists is a compilation of hagiographical notices of 144 adepts celebrated in the Daoist tradition, from early times through the Song (the latest entry is for the early thirteenth century). It was compiled by Zhang Yu (ca. 1280–ca. 1350), whose preface to the work is dated October 1, 1335. The notices are grouped within a general chronological framework according to dynasty and are categorized under eleven designative headings: Daoist Virtue (Dao de pin); Daoists (Dao pin); Daoist Political Influence (Dao quan pin); Daoist Transformative Influ-
ence (Dao hua pin); Daoist Scholarship (Dao ru pin); Daoist Arts (Dao shu pin);
Daoist Reclusion (Dao yin pin); Daoist Obscurity (Dao mo pin); Daoist Eloquence
(Dao yan pin); Daoist Nature (Dao zhi pin); and Daoist Efflorescence (Dao hua pin).
While all of the entries concern persons of the Daoist persuasion, those in
the category of Daoists (Dao pin) generally were particularly notable for their
religious achievements.

The accounts are derived primarily from earlier hagiographical works, as well
as from the standard histories. The inspirational work would have been directed
to a wide audience and read also by initiates and scholars. The notices primarily
concern men whose names and exploits would have been common knowledge
to the general literate populace, as well as to the educated elite and adherents to
the Daoist religion; many would have been known through oral legend as well.
The work is found in the Daoist canon (HY 780), although it also achieved in­
dependent transmission for a time; it has an entry in the imperial catalogue com­
piled between 1773 and 1782 under the patronage of the Qianlong emperor
(which says that there were accounts of 135 adepts in ten categories), but it was
not included into the imperial collection itself.

Zhang Yu (also known as Zhang Tianyu) became a Daoist priest in his twen­
ties, going to live at Mount Mao in Juqu (modern Jurong, Jiangsu). He chose for
himself the appellation Unofficial Historian of Juqu (juqu waishi), regarding his
work on chronicling his chosen place of residence as his greatest achievement;
still, he was acclaimed during his own time and later for his poetry and, espe­
cially, for his calligraphy. In addition to the Record of Occultists, he also compiled
a Gazetteer of Maoshan (Maoshan zhi); his many other writings in prose and po­
yetry were collected after his death and published in an independently circulated
collection.

Zhang Yu explains in his preface to the Record of Occultists that he was moved
by the summary of the Daoist school written by the historian Sima Tan (180–ca.
110 B.C.E.) to record the lives of Daoist exemplars from past to present, as a
demonstration of their discernible presence in the world. Chosen for inclusion in
his Record were those adepts of the Way who, in his view, best exemplified the
tradition of Laozi, the patriarch of Daoism. As he reasoned that the highest form
of veneration for the pater familias of a tradition would be a record of his legacy,
he did not include Laozi himself in his hagiographical compilation. As Laozi was
"the one most consummate in the occult" (xuan zu zhe), Zhang titled his work
History of the Occult (Xuan shi); it is not known when the title was changed to the
Categorized Record of the Occult. The word translated as "occult" has the basic
meaning of black or very deep purple, with the common extended meanings of
"dark, profound, abstruse"; it generally refers to the arcane unfathomable Mystery.
Due to a taboo on the character xuan, the near homophone with analogous mean­
ing yuan often was used as replacement; thus the Xuan pin lu sometimes is referred
to as the Yuan pin lu.

Zhang Yu envisioned his hagiographical compilation as a testimonial to follow­
ers of the Way of Laozi, and biographies in the Record of Occultists display the full compass of adepts in the Dao, the Way. Accordingly, not only mortals-cum-divinities, priests, visionaries, and adepts of particular Daoist religious traditions are included, but also men whose lives exemplify the general secular precepts of pre-imperial "Daoist" texts. Thus we find biographies of Zhang Ling, the founder of the Five Pecks of Rice sect and First Patriarch of the Tianshi (Supernal Preceptor or Celestial Master) sect and the Zhengyi tradition, and of the Three Lords Mao, deities associated with Mount Mao. Yet we also find biographies of such diverse personalities as Zhuangzi (Zhuang Zhou), Tao Qian (Tao Yuanming), Li Bai, and a large number of medieval practitioners of reclusion. As the compiler's predilection and religious affiliation favored the traditions associated with Mount Mao, it is not surprising that a number of entries concern the Shangqing (Highest Clarity) tradition centered around Mount Mao.

Hagiographies are by nature not purely historical recounts of lives; the portrayal of individuals generally is subservient to the purport of the religious biographer, and aspects of the lives of individuals, especially in collective hagiographies, are selected as exemplifications of the tradition to which they belong. But while hagiographical accounts are by no means comprehensive biographies, often the compiler includes information that is not found in other, more traditional, sources. Some entries in the Record of Occultists are brief and ostensibly factual, while others are relatively lengthy and spiced with anecdote. In the sampling of entries chosen for inclusion below are accounts of adepts of the occult in both the religious and secular traditions of the Dao; sixteen accounts in eight of Zhang Yu's categories have been included.

Translations from the Xuan pin lu are according to the text established by Yan Yiping, as found in his Daojiao yanjiu ziliao, di yi ji (Taipei: Yiwen yinshuguan, 1974), with reference to the text in the Daozang (HY 780).

Further Reading

ACCOUNTS OF DAOIST ADEPTS, FROM THE RECORD OF OCCULTISTS (XUAN PIN LU)

THE ZHOU DYNASTY (ca. 1027–256 B.C.E.)

Daoist Virtue (Dao de pin)

Yin Xi was a grandee of Zhou. Adept at alchemical disciplines, he often ingested pure quintessence; concealing his innate virtue and refining his outward conduct, none of his time recognized his true nature. When Laozi traveled west, Xi noticed the aura [that preceded him] and knew that a perfected man was about to pass by. Recognizing one with the appropriate attributes, Xi blocked his passage and as a result came upon Laozi. Laozi for his part also recognized Xi as being uncommon and wrote for him The Way and Its Power (i.e., Dao de jing) in two fascicles, which he bestowed on him. Later Yin Xi went together with Laozi to the Land of the Flowing Sands (the great western desert), where he ingested the fruit of the Great Overcomer (either sesame or, perhaps, cannabis), and none know what became of him.

Xi also wrote a book in nine fascicles, which he called Master Yin of the Pass. Liu Xiang (77–6 B.C.E.) opined that the book was heterogeneous in nature, towering and tortuous, broad and boundless, highly expansive; yet as it contained patterns and norms [for conduct], it brought people to be dispassionate and calm and did not bring them to be wild. The Zhuangzi also quotes the following from the book: “He cleaves not to subjectivity, so form and materiality are manifest of themselves. In action he is as water, when still he is as a mirror; he is as an echo in his response [to externals]. He is indifferent as if oblivious, quiescent as if placid. Ones in concert with him find harmony; ones who would gain from him lose. He never places himself in precedence of others, but always follows them.” What is described is the unbounded great Perfected Man of the past. Yin Xi originally had the epithet Master Wenshi.

Yin Gui’s byname was Gongdu; a man of Taiyuan [in Shanxi], he was Wenshi’s [i.e., Yin Xi’s] nephew. He was broadly learned in the Five Classics, and especially astute in astrological charts and apocrypha; he ultimately passed down various Daoist scriptures in over a hundred fascicles. He often ingested cakes of deer bamboo. At first, when Wenshi met Laozi at the Hangu Pass (a strategic pass in Henan) during the time of the Zhou kings Kang and Zhao (ca. eleventh century B.C.E.), he (Yin Gui) constructed a rustic storied edifice at Mount Zhongnan (southwest of modern Xi’an, Shaanxi) in which to reside. When King Mu (ca. early tenth century B.C.E.) renovated his rustic edifice, reconstructing it into a storied academy in order to host men possessing the Way, Gongdu subsequently cultivated [his person] and refined [his arts] in this place along with the practitioner of reclusion Du Chong. Attaining the Way, he (Yin Gui) was deified as Perfected One of the Great Harmony (Taihe zhenren).
Du Chong of the capital city Hao (southwest of modern Xi'an) had the byname Xuanyi (Mysterious and Disengaged). When he heard that Wenshi (Yin Xi) had ascended to the realm of the Perfected during the year dingsi of King Zhao (ca. 964 B.C.E.), he studied the Way, abiding in the occult in a numinous lodging. At this time there were five recondite disengaged persons who arrived from afar, all of whom were receded in silence to vacuity and the ultramundane, whose arcane techniques and cultivated manners were lofty and pristine, who were engrossed to abstraction in their Daoist arts, who together promulgated the principle of “nonaggrandizement of oneself.” King Mu had an academy constructed and a memorial temple set up for them, and he installed Chong as Daoist mentor there. When he was over 120 years old, he attained the Way and ascended; he was given the epithet Perfected One of the Great Ultimate (Taiji zhenren).

THE QIN DYNASTY (221–207 B.C.E.)

Daoists (Dao pin)

Guo Sizhao (third century B.C.E.) was a man from the state of Yan (central Hebei). Sizhao was the eldest of four brothers, all of whom attained the Way. He resided at Leiping Mountain in Huayang [i.e., at Mount Mao in Jiangsu], planting trees of the five fruits. This land was suitable also for planting the small sour apple, of which it is said, “the small sour apple of the Land of Fortune is good for ridding calamity and pestilence.” In front of his residence Sizhao constructed a banked pool. Often he alighted a small skiff to sport about in, and each time he would strike the gunnels and sing [the following four poems]:

The clear pool is skirted by numinous peaks,
The deep forest dense with green vegetation.
A dark crane soars over the remote outlands:
We exchange words and I go out free and easy.
Drumming the gunnels I ride a divine swell;
Kowtowing, I wish for a morning breeze.
Not yet free of my worldly form,
I'll amble freely in the hills and forests.

I loose my spirit beyond the Highest Heaven;
Practiced in the Way, I keep perfection intact.
I then fold these magic phoenix wings
And tuck away my floriate dragon scales.
My bit of a heart soars aloft,
But below all is windblown, all dirt and dust.
I look with pity on the short-lived mole cricket:
Who'll finish you beneath a cart's wheel?
Roaming the void I descend a flying whirlwind,  
And magically pace the formless realm.  
As round moonlight glows in dawn’s blush,  
The Nine-headed Phoenix chants at the morning sun.  
Waving its pinions, it screens the Heavenly Ford;  
Overspreading the mists, it soars in variegated clouds.  
I then come to the eaves of the Grand Tenuity stars,  
And decant this Golden Pear Potion.  
Ambling about beyond the Mystic Frontier,  
Neither am I incarnate, nor am I deceased.  
Harnessing a gust, I dance in divine nebulae;  
Splitting roseate mists, I gird the Nine Suns.  
The August One on High keeps pace in his dragon-drawn conveyance,  
And now I reach the Northern Floriate Chamber.  
The Divine Tiger penetrates the Carnelian Forest;  
Wind and clouds blend into one.  
I open apart the gates to the Profound Extramundane;  
Magically transformed, I mystically extinguish my traces.

After obtaining the Way, Sizhao ascended to fill Zuo the Transcendent Lord’s (Zuo Ci) position at the Ninth [Celestial] Palace and concurrently served as Attendant in Charge of Outings at the [Celestial] Jade Pavilion. During the Xuanhe reign of the Song (on September 12, 1124), an imperial edict proclaimed, “The Three Primordial Forces are obscurely numinous and thus cannot be fathomed by names or words. The myriad gods are consolidated in their transformations, and it is unavailing to seek to determine them through discussion. All are ranked in order in the Highest Perfection and are truly extensively arrayed in the Paramount Way. Guo the Perfected One, Gentleman-in-Attendance at the [Celestial] Jade Pavilion, in merit is commensurate to the Ten Supremacies, and in position is ranged in the Ninth [Celestial] Palace. Clenching numinous jade pendants he already is sallying in flight in the Ne-Plus-Ultra. Bracing the Floriate Matinal Baldachin, he acts as General Attendant for the Sovereign of Vacuity. As he now is in great eminence in the Primal Administration, it is fitting that he greatly prosper under an illustrious appellation. Hitherto he has attained to his rank and will forever further the Glorious [Celestial] Design. It is permitted to grant him the special [posthumous] title of Perfected One of the [Celestial] Grand Tenuity Who Hides His Brilliance (Taiwei baoguang zhenren).

THE WESTERN HAN DYNASTY (206 B.C.E.-25 C.E.)

Daoist Political Influence (Dao quan pin)

Zhang Liang (d. 187 B.C.E.) was styled Zifang; his ancestors were men of the state of Han (in southern Shanxi). When [the state of] Qin destroyed Han,
Liang sought to use his patrimony to engage a retainer to assassinate the King of Qin (later to be known as the First August Emperor of China) to avenge Han, on the grounds that his (Liang's) family had served as Grand Councilor in Han for five reigns. Liang once studied ritual in Huaiyang (in eastern Henan); going east he met with the Lord of Canghai, from whom he gained the employ of a mighty bravo who fashioned an iron mallet weighing 120 catties. When the King of Qin traveled east and arrived at Boliangsha (near modern Kaifeng, Henan), Liang and his retainer attacked in ambush the King of Qin but mistakenly struck an attendant's vehicle. The King of Qin became enraged and sought out the offenders with great urgency. Liang then changed his name and escaped in hiding to Xiapi (southeast of Xuzhou, Jiangsu).

Liang once was ambling complacently on a bridge at Xiapi. There an elderly man dressed in homespun came to where Liang was standing and deliberately dropped his slipper over the bridge. Turning to Liang he said, "Budding lad, go down and fetch my slipper." Liang was astounded and wished to strike him, but he stifled his anger and went down to fetch the slipper, following which he presented it on his knees. The elderly one accepted it with his foot and said, "The budding lad can be instructed. Five days hence at the peak of dawn you shall meet with me here." Liang was perplexed on account of this but knelt, saying, "I consent." Liang went at the peak of dawn on the fifth day, but the elderly one was there first and said in anger, "Why is it that you've arrived after I?" Five days later Liang went at cockcrow; but the elderly one again was there first, and once again said in anger, "Why is it that you've arrived after I?" Five days later Liang went at midnight. After a short time the elderly one also came and, being pleased, said, "It ought to be like this." He took out a book in one fascicle, saying, "Read this and you will be a teacher to kings. Ten years hence you will prosper. In the thirteenth year you, budding lad, will see me north of the Ji River: the yellow stone at the foot of Gucheng Mountain (southwest of Jinan, Shandong) will be none other than me." Thereupon he left and was not to be seen. In the dawn light Liang looked at the elderly man's book: it was The Patriarch's [Lu Shang's] Military Arts. Liang consequently found the book extraordinary and studied it assiduously.

Living at Pixia, Liang acted as a trustworthy knight. He used [the book's strategies] in his persuasions to the Lord of Pei, Liu Bang (247–195 B.C.E.), who was pleased and constantly made use of his strategies, eventually winning the whole empire. Liang later followed Emperor Gao (Liu Bang) when he made his capital in Guanzhong (Within the Pass; referring here to Chang'an). As he was by constitution often ailing, Liang practiced yogic stretching and did not eat grain; closing his gate, he did not go out for more than a year. When the emperor wished to set aside the heir designate and set up in his place Ruyi the King of Zhao, his son by the Lady Ji, Empress Lu consulted with Liang. Liang accordingly occasioned the appearance of the [reclusive] Four Elderly Gentlemen of the Shangluo Mountains (to the southeast of the capital), who accompanied the heir designate as wine-attendants [at a banquet for his father the
emperor]. When the banquet was finished, that the emperor in the end did not replace the heir designate was due to the influence of Liang's strategy of sum-moning the Four Gentlemen.

Liang subsequently declared, "My family served the Han state for generations. When Han was about to be destroyed, I did not begrudge the sum of ten thousand in gold to avenge Han. Now with my three-inch tongue I am teacher to an emperor, have entitlement of ten thousand households, and am ranked among the lords. This is the utmost for the common-clothed, and for me, Liang, it is sufficient. I wish to rid myself of mundane affairs and go roaming in the company of [the Transcendent] Master Red Pine." He then took to studying the Way, wishing to float up [into transcendency]. When he demised he was given the posthumous appellation Lord of Cultured Accomplishment (Wencheng hou).

Initially Liang had met the elderly man of Pixia, and thirteen years later, when he accompanied Emperor Gao north across the Ji, he indeed did find the yellow stone at the base of Gucheng Mountain, which he took and worshipped as a treasure. When Liang died, the yellow stone was buried together with him. Each time one ascends his tumulus for the summer and winter sacrificial offerings, the yellow stone also is worshiped. The Temple of Celestial Bequeathal in Chenliu Prefecture is the locus for his (Liang's) worship; during the Zhenghe reign of the Song (1111–1118) he was granted the [posthumous] title Perfected One Who Ascends into Vacuity (Lingxu zhenren).

**Daoist Arts (Dao shu pin)**

Yan Zun (first century B.C.E.), styled Junping (Lordly and Imperturbable), was a man of Shu (Sichuan). Of refined nature, he was tranquil and unperturbed. His scholarly endeavors were particularly sublime; he was specialized and expert in the Great [Classic of] Changes and gave himself freely to [the writings] of Laozi and Zhuangzi. He regularly divined with stalls in the Chengdu market, maintaining that "One who divines has a lowly profession, yet is able thereby to benefit the multitudes. When there is a query about something perverse and unjust, then I address its advantages and harm according to divination with milfoil and tortoise. What I say to sons concerns filiality, to brothers I speak of deference, and to servitors loyalty. Each according to his particular circumstances, I direct them in the way of goodness, and already more than half have followed my words." He but in a day assessed for several persons, and when he had obtained a hundred cash, being sufficient for his self-maintenance, then he would close his stall, hang his curtain, and give instruction on the Laozi. He read widely, there being nothing he did not know thoroughly. Drawing on the ideas of Laozi and Zhuang Zhou (Zhuangzi), he wrote books totaling more than one hundred thousand words. Yang Xiong (53 B.C.E.–18 C.E.) when young went to study with him, and most of what he acquired concerned Jun-ping's Daoist [teachings].

In Shu there was a certain wealthy man named Luo Chong. He asked Jun-
jing, "For what reason does m'lord not serve in office?" Junping replied, "I've not the means to start off." When Chong collected for Junping a cart and horse, clothing and food, Junping replied, "I'm simply ailing; it's not that I am lacking. I have a surfeit and you, sir, not enough. How could it be that your insufficiency could contribute to my surplus?" Chong said, "I've got ten thousand in gold and you are lacking even a picul-weight. Now you say you've got a surfeit—is that not erroneous?" Junping replied, "Not so. I stayed previously in your home. When people should have turned in, still you hustled and bustled without rest. Morning and night you are all ahurry, never ever having enough. Now I divine for a profession; I don't even get out of bed, yet money arrives by itself. I still have several hundreds, with dust on it an inch thick, and do not know what to do with it. Is this not my having a surfeit and you not enough?" Chong was greatly mortified. Junping said with a sigh, "What increases my goods harms my spirit; what makes my reputation destroys my self." In the end he did not serve.

Over ninety years old, he died still in his profession. The people of Shu respected and loved him, and to the present they still praise him. There is a shrine to him at Mianju Prefecture in Hanzhou (northeast of Chengdu, Sichuan). During the Shaoxing reign of the Song (1131–1162), Junping was granted the [posthumous] title Sublime and Penetrating Perfected One (Miaotong zhenren).

(Original commentary: He originally was surnamed Zhuang; during the time of the Han emperors Zhang and He [75–144] when Ban Gu [32–92] was compiling the History of the Han, as a taboo on the personal name of Emperor Ming [Liu Zhuang; r. 57–75], he [Ban Gu] changed it to Yan. The characters Zhuang and Yan have likewise been interchangeable throughout the ages, therefore Lao-Zhuang [i.e., the school of Laozi and Zhuangzi] also is called Lao-Yan. Gushenzi [of the Tang] said, "Junping was born during the middle period of the Western Han; when Wang Mang usurped the throne [January 10, 9 C.E.], he [Junping] forthwith hid in seclusion, fearing to join [Wang Mang]. He assumedly was a Perfected One of a former age.")

Daoists (Dao pin)
The Three Lords Mao. The Elder Lord was named Ying, styled Shushen, the Second Lord was named Gu, styled Jiwei, and the Younger Lord named Zhong, styled Sihe; they were from Nanguan in Xianyang (to the south of Chang'an). The Elder Lord was born in the year bingshen, the fifth year of the Zhongyuan reign of the Han emperor Jing (145 B.C.E.); his two brothers were born in the years wuxu (143 B.C.E.) and gengzi (141 B.C.E.). When the Elder Lord was eighteen, he abandoned his family and took leave of his relations, entering into the Heng Mountains (the northern sacred peak, in northeastern Shanxi), where he read the The Classic on the Way and Its Power (Dao de jing) and the [Great] Treatise of the Zhou [Classic of] Changes (Zhou Yi zhuan), seeking the Way through refined contemplation. Later he went to Xicheng (south of Chang'an
at modern Ankang Prefecture, Shaanxi), where he was graced by a visitation by Lord Wang, Chief of the Perfected, who entrusted him with overseeing [religious] vestments, books, charts, and registers. Subsequently he attained the Way and became a disciple of the Chief of the Perfected. Mao Ying returned home; at the time he was forty-nine. He could rise the dead and return life; his father and mother in their hearts thought him peculiar. He served his parents through the end of the mourning period [following their deaths], altogether remaining at home fifty-three years.

The Second Lord was nominated as Filial and Incorrupt (a category in the imperial recommendatory system) during the reign of Emperor Jing (sic; r. 157–141 B.C.E.) and in the inaugural year of the Yuanshuo reign (128 B.C.E.) was selected [in the category] Worthy and Excellent, taking office as Court Attendant for Miscellaneous Uses. In the second year of the Zhenghe reign (91 B.C.E.) he was transferred to Grand Mentor of the Heir Designate, and during the inaugural year of the Yuanfeng reign (80 B.C.E.) he was appointed as Governor of Wuwei (in Gansu), Commandant in Charge of Obliterating the Barbarians.

The Younger Lord when young gained renown through his principled conduct, living in reclusion in the Huayin Mountains (near Hua Shan, east of Chang'an in Shaanxi). During the third year of the Jianyuan reign of Emperor Wu (sic; 138 B.C.E.) he was nominated [in the category of] Straightforward and Upright but did not go. Moving to the state of Liang (at Shangqiu, in eastern Henan), he was retained as King Xiao's Superior Guest. During the second year of the Dijie reign of Emperor Yuan (68 B.C.E.) he was promoted to Prefect of Luoyang and transferred to [the post of] Commandant of Xicheng, Governor of Shangjun (northern Shaanxi). When Emperor Yuan ascended the throne (early in 48 B.C.E.), he was appointed as Fivefold Experienced Grandee and transferred to Governor of Xihe (on the northeastern border of Shaanxi, adjacent to Inner Mongolia).

At this time, the Second Lord had been appointed Chamberlain for the Imperial Insignia, and the brothers were to go together [to the capital] to take up office. Several hundred men of their district turned out to send them off [with a ceremony invoking luck on their journey]. The Elder Lord addressed the guests, "I may not be serving as high-salaried Minister or Grand Council to the state, yet I in turn am to have a posting among the divine gods. I have been selected by the Celestial Thearch (tianqi) to fill the position of Supreme Minister of the Eastern Sacred Peak, Lord Director of Destiny of the Huolin Mountains (in southeastern Fujian), to control initiates in the study of the Way, and to oversee the registers of the living and the dead in Wu and Yue [i.e., the southeast]. This is an important rank in the divine offices of the Ancestral Masters of the Superior Perfected Ones. On the third day of the fourth month of the coming year I am to ascend aloft; will you or will you not, m'lords, be able to come to pay respects as you are today? If it happens that you are reduced in number, a reduction in expenses nevertheless is not permitted, for it is
necessary for you to have the wherewithal to provide offerings and accommodate me."

At the appointed time, welcoming [divine] officers did in fact descend, and Lord Mao left parting instructions to his ancestral clan. He addressed the sons and young men of the district, saying, "At this moment I take my leave and temporarily will stop in the mountains of Juqu [i.e., Mount Mao], east of the Yangzi River. Although [my brothers] Jiwei and Sihe shall perceive matters late, they are certain to be capable of personal regrets; they will forsake office and abandon their emolument in order to come and seek me out." When his words were finished, he took his leave of the people of the temporal world and departed. This most likely was in the year dingchou, the fifth year of the Chu-yuan reign of Emperor Yuan (44 B.C.E.), when Lord Mao was 102 years old.

The two younger brothers were in their postings, but when they heard that their elder brother had become a divine Transcendent in broad day, they each abandoned their office and returned home. On the sixth day of the third month of year renwu, the fifth year of the Yongguang reign (39 B.C.E.), they crossed the [Yangzi] River south, seeking their brother in the Eastern Mountains. When they saw him, they shed tears in sadness and joy. The Elder Lord addressed his brothers, saying, "How late has come your illumination." Thereupon he bestowed on them divine powder and extramundane formulas to carry them across [to the other world], and they both became Perfected Ones, having jurisdiction over the caverns at Juqu Mountain [i.e., Mount Mao], the Heavens of the Golden Altar, and Huayang. He then styled the Second Lord as Divine Lord Who Adjudges the Registers (Dinglu shenjun), and the Younger Lord as Transcendent Lord Who Ensures Fate (Baoming xianjun); these both are heavenly ranks.

Coming to the year gengshen, the second year of the Yuanshou reign of Emperor Ai (1 B.C.E.), the Elder Lord was 145 years old. On the eighteenth day of the eighth month of this year he received the text of the Jade Slate of the Nine Bestowals [for achieved merit] and was transferred to assume duties over the Department of the Jade Grotto of the Vermilion Citadel, in the post of Perfected One of the Vermilion Inception, Supreme Minister of the Eastern Sacred Peak, Supreme Perfected One Who Directs Destiny (Siming shangzhen Dongyue shangqing Chiyuan zhenren). He announced to his brothers, "I now am leaving for intendant functionary responsibilities and will not be able to have frequent contact with you; I must serve for one year, after which I will once again come to this mountain. The eighteenth day of the third month and the second day of the twelfth month are arranged for my mentor Lord Chief of the Perfected (Zongzhenjun) and the Vermilion Perfected One of the Southern Sacred Peak and the Grand Vacuity (Nanyue Taixu Chizhenren) to journey here to appear at the locale of my two brothers, for the purpose of registering you and making your acquaintance. Those who are devoted to the Way will wait for me on this day and I shall personally make accommodations for them, for they can give instruction to the unenlightened."
With this, the two [younger] Lords remained behind, having jurisdiction over the interior of the caverns at Mount Mao, at the entrances of which they erected a temple and other structures. They brought the Way to the myriad things [of the phenomenal world], spread nurture to the world of nature, accorded benignity to the birds and beasts, and all things assumed their endowed character. There were divine attestations of good and bad fortune; crime and evil were certain to be discerned. As the immanent principle effused, the esoteric teaching became widely diffuse.

Then it was that wind and rain were timely, the five grains fully ripened; illness and pestilence did not arise, violence and harmfulness were not practiced, within the realm there were no disasters or calamities, and the cities were without criminals or troops. Patriarchs and elders sung and intoned,

Mount Mao connects to Jinling,
The rivers and lakes belong to the coastal flows.
The three divinities are borne on white swans;
Each rules a single mountain.
They summon rains to water dry paddies,
And land and field also soften again.
Wives and children all are safe in their rooms,
And we have no worry even till a hundred.
White swans have soared in the azure heavens;
When again will they come a’roaming?

When the Three Lords departed, they each once rode a white swan and alighted on three locations in the mountains. There were people who witnessed this, therefore it has come out in song. Further, in accordance with the locations where the swans alighted, they differentiated the mountains of Juqu into three mountains called Elder Lord Mao, Second Lord Mao, and Younger Lord Mao. But to speak in general terms, they actually are a single mountain in Juqu [i.e., Mao Shan], for which there are no variant names.

THE EASTERN HAN DYNASTY (25–220 C.E.)

Daoists (Dao pin)
Zhang Ling (34–156; original commentary: Daoist books give him the honorary name Zhang Daoling), styled Fu (Supporter), was a man of the Han dynasty who hailed from Feng Prefecture in the state of Pei (in the northwestern tip of Jiangsu) but was born on Tianmu Mountain in Yuhang (Zhejiang). Originally a student at the Imperial Academy who extensively studied the Five [Confucian] Classics, later in life he sighed, “This is of no benefit to one’s longevity.” He then took up studying the Yellow Thearch’s Cinnabar [Alchemical] Classic of the Nine Tripods (Huangdi jiu ding dan jing) and performed alchemical trans-
mutations on Fanyang Mountain (just northeast of Chengdu, Sichuan). Subsequently he discovered an occult book in a stone chamber on Mount Song (the Central Sacred Peak, Henan).

At this time the Middle Kingdom was disrupted in chaos, and the Han was coming to its downfall. Realizing that the Civil Way had fallen into desuetude and was no longer sufficient in alleviating danger and coming to the assistance of the world, he retired into seclusion in Yuhang for ten years. He then entered Shu (Sichuan) along with his disciples, where the common people came in unison to serve him as their teacher. He made it his practice to transform people through honesty and modesty, kindheartedness and compassion, and did not favor the use of punishments and penalties. He directed the ill and ailing to give a self-confession of the sins and transgressions they had committed throughout their entire lives and to give a sacred declaration before the gods, entering into a covenant binding their bodily death. Thus all reformed evil and followed goodness. He opened up salty springs [for refining salt] to benefit the common folk and drove away the great snakes.

He combatted demons, and twenty-four of them in defeat assumed the twenty-four [preternatural] administrative offices; he rid the people of Shu of bane. In sum, he was fully proficient in the art of controlling the destiny of the many spirits of the peaks and mountains, while his meritorious virtue was equally manifest. He was given the appellation Supernal Preceptor (or Celestial Master, Tianshi). His disciples Wang Zhang and Zhao Sheng had particular attainments in his Way.

_Daoist Reclusion_ (Dao yin pin)

Liang Hong (pre-24–post-80 C.e.), styled Boluan (Elder Simurgh), was a man from Pingling in Fufeng (to the west of Chang’an). As his family was poor, he herded swine within the Shanglin Imperial Hunting Preserve. He once mistakenly left a fire unattended and it spread to another’s hut. Hong repaid him fully in swine. When the proprietor still considered it insufficient, Hong was willing to work it off personally in residence.

Later he returned to his district, where the influential families admired his lofty integrity and many wished to marry him to their daughters. Hong refused them all and did not marry. The Meng family of the same commandery had a daughter who physically was fat and ugly and with dark skin, who was powerful enough to lift a stone mortar. Mates had been selected, but she would not marry, and her years had reached thirty. When her parents asked her reason, the daughter said, “I wish to get a worthy such as Liang Boluan.” Hong heard of this and asked to marry her. The woman endeavored to make homespun clothing and hemp sandals [for her trousseau], and for weaving made a chest and utensils for spinning and reeling.

At the nuptials, she entered his gates adorned for the first time with cosmetics. For seven days Hong gave no response. His wife then knelt next to the bed and implored him, saying, “This humble one has heard that you, master,
have lofty principles, and straightaway dismissed several [prospective] brides. Your wife also has rebuffed numerous men. Now that I have been selected, could I dare not ask what I have done wrong?” Hong said, “I sought someone who dressed in a greatcoat of fur and coarse attire, one together with whom I could seclude myself in the deep mountains. But now your clothes are of fine silk damask and you have applied cosmetic powder and kohl. How could this be what I wished for?” His wife said, “It was simply to observe my master’s will. Your wife certainly has attire for dwelling in seclusion.” She then changed her coiffure to a coiled bun, donned homespun clothing, and presented herself ready for manual labor. Hong was greatly pleased and said, “This verily is the wife of Liang Hong, capable of attending to me.” He gave her the style Deyao (Virtuous Brilliance).

Together they entered into the Baling mountains [to the east of Chang’an] and made their living plowing and weaving. He recited the *Odes* and *Documents* and strummed the zither for his own amusement. He looked up to and admired the Lofty Gentlemen of former ages and composed eulogies for twenty-four of these men dating since the Four Hoaryheads [who once appeared at the court at the behest of Zhang Liang].

Because they passed through the capital going east out of the pass, he composed the “Song with Five Ai!s,” which went:

I climb Beimang Hill,
Ai!
And gaze back on the capital,
Ai!
The palace lodges loom loftily,
Ai!
The weary toil of the people,
Ai!
On and on, forever lasting,
Ai!

The Xianzong emperor (r. 57-75) heard of it and censured him; he searched for Hong but did not catch him. Hong then changed his cognomen to Yunqi, his name to Yao, and his style to Houguang (Fine Brightness) and resided with his wife and children in the vicinity of Qi and Lu (modern Shandong).

He then left again, heading for Wu [in Jiangsu]. There he affiliated himself with the great householder Gao Botong, dwelling on the veranda and hiring out as a grain-huller. Each time he returned home and his wife presented his meal, she did not venture to lift her gaze in the presence of Hong, raising the food tray level with her eyebrows [while kneeling in respect]. Botong espied this and, finding it peculiar, said, “If that hireling can cause his wife to respect him like that, then he is no ordinary man.” So, straightaway he lodged him in his home. When Hong became ill and in distress, he notified his host, “Take care not to allow my children to hold to funerary practices and return me
home." When Hong came to his end, Botong and others chose a burial spot for him alongside the tomb of [the local hero] Yaoli of Wu. All said, "Yaoli was a man of distinction, while Boluan was pure and lofty. It should be that they be near one another." Hong's friend was Gao Hui.

**Daoists (Dao pin)**

Wei Boyang (second century C.E.) was a man of Wu (Jiangsu). Originally the scion of an esteemed family, as he by nature was fond of Daoist arts, he was not willing to serve in official capacity. He lived complacently, nurturing his spirit. No one of his time understood his doings, simply saying that he took care of people and nurtured his person. He entered the mountains and prepared divine cinnabar. When it was concocted he ingested it; he died but returned to life. As he departed into transcendency along with his disciple surnamed Yu, he met a woodcutter and sent along in a handwritten letter his departing words to the people of his district and to his two [other] disciples.

Boyang produced the [Arcane Essentials of the] Correlative Categories of the Five Phases in the "Consonance of the Three" (Cantongqi wuxing xianglei [biyao]) in three rolls altogether, where his doctrine is derivative of the Zhou [Classic of] Changes (Zhou Yi). In fact, he appropriated the Lines and Images [of the Classic of Changes] in discussion of the principles of alchemy par excellence; yet people of the profane world are not learned in alchemical affairs and often explain his book in terms of yin and yang, which greatly misses its purport. I [the compiler of this writing] comment: As for the book Consonance of the Three, the great Confucians Zhu Yuanhui (Zhu Xi, 1130–1200) and Cai Yuan-ding (1135–1198) both deeply grasped its significance and often addressed it in their discussions and treatises. If one does not understand with penetration the profound purport of the Changes and the Laozi, then one will not be able to apprehend it.

**THE JIN DYNASTY (266-420)**

**Daoist Scholarship (Dao ru)**

Huangfu Mi (215–282), styled Shi'an (Gentlemanly and Peaceful) and having the name Jing (Tranquil) as a child, was a man of Anding (northwest of Chang'an, in eastern Gansu). He was the great-grandson of Defender-in-chief Huangfu Song of the Han. At age twenty he was not fond of study, but later he went to receive instruction from Xi Tan, a man of his district. As he lived in poverty, he carried the Classics with him when he went farming. He subsequently comprehensively mastered the words of the classical writings and the hundred schools. He was steeped in quietude with few desires and early on held lofty and elevated aspirations; he considered composition and exegesis as his vocation. He gave himself the appellation Master Mystical and Serene
(Xuanyan xiansheng) and composed discourses on “Ritual and Music” and “Sagehood and Perfection.” Later, he was afflicted with the malady arthritis, but his hands would not abandon the [written] rolls.

When someone urged him to cultivate a reputation and expand his relations, Mi composed a “Discourse on Abiding in the Mystery” (“Shouxuan lun”) in response to him, in which he wrote, “Poverty is the constant state of the scholar; humbleness is the true nature of the Way.” He subsequently did not serve in office. He abandoned himself with pleasure in the writings of antiquity, forgetting his malady and forgetting to take sustenance; people of his time referred to him as “abandoned to books.” Someone admonished him for being excessively diligent, and that his energy and spirit would soon be depleted. Mi said, “If in the morning one hears of the Way, in the evening it is alright to die. How much the more as the allotment and determination of the longevity or brevity of one’s life is hung from Heaven!”

He was nominated [in the imperial recommendatory system category] Filial and Incorrupt and was summoned to appointment by the Counsellor-in-chief, and further was nominated [in the category] Worthy and Excellent, Straightforward and Upright, but he did not once accede. When he personally memorialized to borrow books from Emperor Wu (r. 266–290), the emperor sent to him a cart full of books [as a gift]. Although emaciated and afflicted, he opened and examined them without fatigue. He was repeatedly summoned [to court], but to the end he did not serve. He demised in the second (sic) year of the Taikang reign (281; official sources give the year of his death as 282). The books he wrote, Annals of the Generations of Emperors and Kings (Diwang shiji) and the accounts of Lofty Gentlemen (Gaoshi), Disengaged Gentlemen (Yishi), and Illustrious Women (Lienü), all were acclaimed in his age.

THE HISTORY OF THE SOUTH (here: 420–589)

Daoists (Dao pin)
Tao Hongjing (452–536), styled Tongming, was a man of Moling (just outside the capital Jinling, modern Nanjing, Jiangsu). At age ten, when he obtained Ge Hong’s (ca. 283–ca. 343) Lives of Divine Transcendents (Shenxian zhuan) and read it, he said to someone, “When I look up at the azure-hued clouds and gaze at the white sun, I don’t feel that they are distant.” His expression and bearing were radiant and refined, with bright eyes and wide brow, slender body, long forehead, and high ears. On his right knee there were several tens of black spots forming a design of seven star-clusters. He read more than ten thousand rolls of books, and if there was a single thing about which he was not knowledgeable, he considered it a deep shame. He was skilled at the zither and chess, and practiced in cursive and official script.

He had not yet been capped (at age twenty) when [the future] Emperor Gao of the Qi (Xiao Daocheng, 427–482), then acting as Grand Councilor, brought
him in as Reader-in-waiting; he was selected as Master Audience Attendant, and often he was relied on for age-old matters [of etiquette]. As his family was poor, he sought appointment as his district’s Magistrate, but he did not get his wish. In the tenth year of the Yongming reign (492) he shed his court attire, hanging it on the Shenwu Gate, and submitted a memorial resigning from his emolument; it was decreed that he be so allowed. He was bestowed bundled silks, and it was ordered that the jurisdiction where he resided monthly provide him fifty catties of China root and two sheng (at that time about six liters) of white honey to accommodate his macrobiotic ingestions. When he was to set off, dukes and ministers sent him off [with a ceremony invoking luck on his journey] at the Zhenglǔ Pavilion; it was said by all that “Through the Song and the Qi dynasties, never has there been anything like this.”

Thereupon he went to stay at Juqu Mountain in Jurong (i.e., Mount Mao, about a day’s ride from the capital), where he established a center for learning in the mountains. He gave himself the appellation Huayang’s Dweller-in-Retirement (Huayang yinju), and he used Yinju instead of his name on correspondence in the mortal world. Earlier, he had received instruction on [Daoist] talismans, charts, and scriptures from [the Daoist master] Sun Youyue of Dongyang and had traveled extensively throughout the various famous mountains south of the [Yangzi] River, searching after the various traces of perfection of Yang (Yang Xi, 330–386) and the Xus (Xu Mi, 303–373, and his son Hui, 341–ca. 370). Once he told his disciples, “I have seen the vermilion gates and vast edifices [of the imperial palace], yet even though I know of their resplendence and pleasures, I have no wish in my heart to go. Yet after gazing at the high cliffs and viewing the great lowlands, knowing these it is hard to stay put, and straightaway I constantly wish to go to them. Moreover, during the Yongming reign I sought after emolument and promptly knew I was mistaken; if not so, then how could I be doing what I’m doing now?”

As a person, the Master was flexible and accommodating, modest and respectful; he understood intuitively when to issue forth [into the public world] and when to stay put. His mind was like a shiny mirror, and he comprehended things as soon as he encountered them. His words were never tedious or confused, and what he did say was invariably illuminating.

At the beginning of the Yongyuan reign (499), he further constructed a three-tiered pavilion, his disciples and guests living below him, and forthwith severed relations with the mundane. He especially loved the wind in the pines and listened to its reverberations with pleasure. At times he would tramp alone the stream-laden ridges, and those who saw him from afar thought he was a transcendent-immortal. By nature he was fond of composition and exegesis, and esteemed the peculiar and exceptional. He was particularly proficient in yinyang and the Five Phases; in augury according to the winds; in astrological reckoning; in the topology of mountains and waters; in the production of things of all types; in medical arts and pharmacology; in the consecration of rulers and the succession of the years. He once fashioned an armillary sphere some three
feet tall in which the Earth was at the center and the heavens rotated while the Earth stood still; it was operated by a mechanism and completely corresponded with the heavens. He said that it was something necessary for cultivation in the Daoist way.

He deeply respected how Zhang Liang had conducted himself, saying that he was peerless among the worthies of the past. At the end of the Qi (ca. early 502), he prophesied: “Water, sword-blade, and wood form the character liang (bridge).” When the armies of [Xiao Yan (464–549), the future] Emperor Wu of the Liang reached Xincheng (just outside of the capital), he (Tao Hongjing) sent his disciple Dai Mengzhi to use the quickest route to memorialize [the prophecy]. When he heard of deliberations about the succession to the throne, the Master cited a number of specialists in diagram prognostication, who all had formulated the character liang, and had his disciple present these [to the court]. The emperor earlier had had associations with Tao, and when he took the throne his grace and courtesy were all the more generous.

The Master had already obtained sacred talismans and secret formularies; each time his marvelous elixirs were suspended [due to lack of ingredients] after repeated compounding, the emperor provided him medicinal substances. Moreover, as there were confirmatory verifications when he (the emperor) ingested the Sublimated Elixir that Tao had concocted, he increasingly honored and respected him. When he obtained writings submitted by Tao, he burned incense and received them with reverence. When the emperor had him compile a chronology, he (Tao) added a vermilion mark by the year jisi, which in truth was the third year of the Taiqing reign (549; the year in which the emperor would demise).

The emperor summoned him by handwritten decree and bestowed on him a deerskin headcovering (as worn by men in reclusion), and in response Tao but painted two bovines: one bovine was loosed free among the water plants, one wore a gold bridle and had a person holding its halter, driving it along with a staff. The emperor laughed, saying, “There is nothing this man will not do. As he wishes to imitate a tortoise dragging his tail [in the mud] (as in the example Zhuangzi had used for freedom from engagement in the government), how could there be reason for presuming he could be brought in [to serve]?” On great affairs of state, the emperor always first consulted with him, and in the space of a month there often were a number of letters exchanged; people of the time referred to him as Grand Councilor Mid the Mountains (Shanzhong zaixiang).

In the fourth year of the Tianjian reign (505), he moved his residence to the stream on the east of Accumulated Gold Ridge (Jijin shan, between the Greater and the Middle of the three Mount Mao peaks), in order to practice the highest Daoist arts. After living in reclusion some forty-odd years, when his years had passed eighty he still had a robust appearance. Books about transcendent-immortals say, “Those whose eyes are square have a thousand years of longevity.” In the Master’s later years, one eye at times was square.
As he was profoundly versed in arcane arts, he had foreknowledge that the imperial sovereignty of the Liang was soon to be overturned; he composed a prophetic poem, which went:

Yifu gave reign to his unrestrained behavior;
Pingshu but sat discoursing on the void.
How would they answer at Zhaoyang Hall,
When it transformed into a Shanyu’s palace?

(Yifu is Wang Yan [256–311], a free soul and participant in arcane repartee who paid more attention to self-interest than the common good when in office; he was captured and put to death by a conquering chieftain. Pingshu is He Yan [ca. 190–249], a dandy given to dissipation, also known for his arcane discourse; when in office he placed his cohorts, all devotees to “pure conversation,” in positions of power, and was executed when the clique to which he belonged fell. Shanyu refers to a non-Chinese chieftain.)

He secreted the poem in a trunk, and only after his departure due to transformation (i.e., death) did his disciples take it out. At the end of the Datong reign (ca. 544–546), scholars in office vied in discussion of arcane reasoning and did not prepare in military affairs. When Hou Jing usurped (at the end of 551), he indeed situated himself in the Zhaoyang Hall.

Foretelling the date, Tao knew in advance the day of his own demise and composed a “Composition Announcing My Departure.” He died in the second year of the Datong reign (536) at eighty-one years of age (eighty by Western reckoning). He was granted [posthumously] the rank of Palace Attendant Grandee and was conferred the posthumous title Master Undefiled and Unsullied (Zhenbai xiansheng). A book he authored, Document on the Mountain World (i.e., monasteries; Shanshi shu), amounted to several hundreds of rolls, and disciples who received his instruction numbered more than three thousand.

His nephew Tao Yi wrote a Record of the Essential Activities of Huayang’s Dweller-in-Retirement Master Tao (Huayang yinju Tao xiansheng benqi lu). Xie Yue (of the Liang?) of Wuxing wrote a Concise Life of Master Tao (Tao xiansheng xiaozhuan). Li Bo (of the Tang) wrote a Life of Mao Shan’s Master Undefiled and Unsullied of the Liang (Liang Maoshan Zhenbai xiansheng zhuan). Jia Song (of the Tang) wrote a Priviled Biography of Tao the Perfected One, Supervisor of Waterways at Penglai (the Blessed Isles) (Penglai dushuijian Tao zhenren neizhuan). And during the Xuanhe reign [of the Song] (on September 12, 1124), there was the “[Imperial] Declaration Granting [Posthumous] Entitlement as the Perfected One Who Reverences the Mystery and Furthers the Teachings” (Feng zongyuan [i.e., zongxuan] yijiao zhenren gao).

The words of the “Declaration” are: “We are recipient of the great mandate of the Jeweled Heavens and retain the precious register of the Primordial Kalpa (or Original Primogenitor). We now shall elaborate and diffuse the divine tidings, develop and promote transformation through the Way. We shall explain
subtle words by the supreme teachings and shall commend extended destiny among the ranks of the Perfected. Supervisor of Waterways at Penglai, Tao the Dweller-in-Retirement galvanized his worldly acts in the net of renown, cleansed his rarefied nature among the splendid towers [of state]. He had divine associations and was free of encumbrances; his worldly legacy nonetheless was as a Councilor mid the mountains. His sincerity moved [the gods] to quick recognition, and he was granted transcendent-immortality out on the oceans [at the Blessed Isles]. When We consider the incomparability of his virtuous repute, how could the sublime sanctuary [of Our dominion] venture to disregard it? Would that he accrue the honor of an illustrious [posthumous] appellation, to forever intermediate blessings for all that has life.”

THE TANG DYNASTY (618–907)

Daoist Efflorescence (Dao hua)

Wu Yun (d. 778), styled Zhenjie, was a man of Huayin Prefecture in Huazhou (just north of Mount Hua in eastern Shaanxi). When young he mastered the classics and was adept at composing writings; he was selected for the Advanced Scholar [examination] but did not place. By nature he was lofty and pure and had no patience for popular vogue. He went to Mount Song (the Central Sacred Peak, Henan), and affiliating himself with Revered Master Pan (Pan Shizheng, 585–682) he became a Daoist priest focusing on the Zhengyi ways. He painstakingly delved assiduously [into his master’s teachings] and subsequently fully comprehended his arts. During the Kaiyuan reign (713–741) he traveled south to Jinling (modern Nanjing, Jiangsu), seeking after the Way at Mount Mao. After some time he traveled to the Tiantai Mountains (in eastern Zhejiang), where he went to gaze over the blue reaches of the sea and sported in pleasure with scholars of repute.

His writings and verse made their way to the capital, and when the Xuanzong Emperor (r. 712–756) heard of his reputation, he dispatched someone to summon him [to court]. When he arrived, he was beckoned to the Datong Hall, where [the emperor] was greatly pleased upon speaking with him. He was ordered [to the posting] Expectant Official at the Hanlin Academy. On one occasion, when he was asked about Daoist arts, he replied, “As for the quintessence of Daoist arts, there is nothing comparable to the five thousand words [of the Laozi]. The various other writings and versifications are prolix verbiage and simply waste writing paper.” When further asked about the matters of divine transcendency and [alchemical] cultivation and refinement, he answered, “These are matters for people in the wilds. One must pursue them through skillful practice for years on end; they are not what should be asked about by the ruler of men.” Each time Yun expounded, it always concerned preeminent doctrines and worldly duties; he gave indirect criticism with subtle words, and the Son of Heaven held him in high regard. He was bestowed the
appellation Master Who Reverences the Mystery (Zongyuan [i.e., Zongxuan] xiansheng).

During the Tianbao reign (742–756), when Li Linfu (d. 752) and Yang Guozhong (d. 756) held authority, the mainstays of government were unraveling by the day. Yun sought insistently to return to Mount Song; he memorialized repeatedly [to be so allowed] but was not permitted. Finally [the emperor] decreed that a Daoist seminary be separately established [for him] at the Peak Monastery (on Mount Song). Just prior to the revolt of [An] Lushan (at the end of 755), Yun sought to return to Mount Mao and was so permitted. As it turned out, there were great vicissitudes in the central plains, and there were many bandits in the area between the Yangzi and Huai rivers (i.e., Anhui and Jiangsu), so he traveled [south]east to the Tiantai Mountains and the Shan locale (in eastern Zhejiang), where he enjoyed an extramundane association with Li Bai (699–762) and Kong Chaofu (d. 784).

Yun’s collected writings are in twenty rolls, with a preface by Quan Deyu (759–818). His “Three Fascicles on the Mainstay of the Mystery” (“Xuangang sanpian”) and “Discourse on ‘Divine Transcendency Can Be Learned’” (“Shenxian ke xue lun”) were acclaimed by scholars of penetrating understanding. When Yun was in the Hanlin Academy, he was especially favored. Gao Lishi (684–762) was partial to Buddhism and consequently once berated Yun in front of the emperor; Yun then inexorably pursued the extramundane. So it was that his phraseology and reasoning were magnificent and profound, and his literary talent shone forth. Each time he composed a fascicle of writing, people would vie to repeat and copy it. One [whose writings] could be on a par even with Li Bai’s sublime unrestraint and Du Fu’s (712–770) majestic elegance: would that not be but Yun?

THE SONG DYNASTY (960–1279)

Daoists (Dao pin)

Chen Tuan (872–989), styled Tunan, was a man from Qiao Commandery (in the northwestern corner of Anhui). When young he was playing by the Guo River (in Anhui) when [the divine] Lady Dressed in Green (Qingyi yu) held him in her arms and suckled him, saying, “This will cause you to forever be without cravings and desire.” His intelligence and brilliance surpassed others. During the Changxing reign of the [Later or Southern] Tang (930–933) he was nominated as Advanced Scholar, however he failed [the examination]. He departed into seclusion in the Wudang Mountains (in northwestern Hubei), where he abstained from eating grains and practiced [yogic] breathing. He composed eighty-one stanzas of poetry, which he named “Fascicle Aiming at the Mystery” (“Zhi xuan pian”). The Mingzong emperor of the Later Tang (r. 926–933) gave him the title Pure and Vacuous Scholar-at-Home (Qingxu chush).
Shortly thereafter he moved to the Cloud Pavilion Temple at Mount Hua (the western sacred peak, east of Chang'an in Shaanxi), where he often would close his door and lie down, not rising for months at a time. The Shizong emperor of the [Later] Zhou (r. 954–959) summoned him to the Forbidden Quarters [of the imperial palace]; he (the emperor) found him authentic upon examination. At the close of the Xiande reign (954–959), Tunan mounted a white mule and was about to enter the eastern capital when he heard that the Taizu emperor of the Song (r. 960–976) had ascended the throne. He laughed loudly, saying, “The empire now is stable.” When he was summoned to court during the [first years of the Taiping xingguo] reign (976–984) of the Taizong emperor (r. 976–997), Tunan expressed the following words: “I, your servant, have a nature like that of an ape or a bird, and my mind is similar to dead ashes. I understand neither the shallow nor the deep points of ‘humanity’ and ‘right conduct’; how could I comprehend what is appropriate or inappropriate of ritual and decorum? I break off lotus [leaves] for my clothing, and peel off bamboo skin for my cap. My body is covered by black hairs, and my feet lack [even] straw slippers. If I were to approach the railing and steps [of the palace], this would give occasion to ridiculing Your sagely wisdom.”

Taizong again dispatched the Palace Receptionist to make certain of having him accede, and moreover conferred on him a poem, which went:

Once past in a former reign, you left the white clouds;
Later on you vanished away, sought without a trace.
Now at present should you deem, to follow this summons to court,
The Three Peaks one and all, I beg to bestow on you.

Having no recourse, Tunan paid a visit to the palace towers capped in a Huayang headpiece, treading in straw slippers, with plumed vestments and hanging sash, and [in this his outfit of a Daoist priest] was ceremoniously given audience as a guest. He was conferred the appellation Master Imperceptible and Imperceivable (Xiyi xiansheng). He was sent to call at the Hall of the Secretariat, where an aide addressed the Grand Councillor Song Qi (917–996) and others, saying, “Tuan but perfects his person and does not concern himself with power or gain. He entered into Mount Hua for forty years, and his years are reckoned as nearing a hundred. As the empire is ordered and at peace, he therefore has come for an audience at court. This can well be kept in mind.” Qi and the others then asked of the Way of cultivating and nurturing, and Tunan replied, “The sagely emperor has physiognomic markings between his eyes and on his forehead (indicative of a great ruler of man). It is now just the time for lord and servant to harmonize their virtue and make plans for the rule. How could diligent practice of alchemical refinement add to this?” The scholars and grandees went to him daily begging for choice words, to which he always answered, “Do not dote long on sources of leisurely pleasures; do not again return to circumstances which fulfill your wishes.” Those who understood approved.
Tunan had vast understanding of the many classics and was particularly proficient in the study of the [Classic of Changes]. It seems that he passed his instruction down to his disciple Mu Xiu (979–1032); Xiu transmitted it to Li Zhicai (d. 1045), and Zhicai transmitted it to Master Kangjie, Shao Yong (1012–1077). Moreover, he passed on his “Diagram of the Ne-Plus-Ultra (or, Great Ultimate)” to Chong Fang (955–1015); Fang transmitted it to Mu Xiu, and Mu Xiu transmitted it to Master Lianxi, Zhou Maoshu (Zhou Dunyi, 1017–1073). By means of ancient numerological arts Tunan gave prognostications [as quick as] firing a crossbow. Whereas later they turned out to be so, the hearsay of the time was that he had a mantic mirror of human relations.

Earlier, when the Taizu emperor once went out incognito and was traipsing through the Chang'an market together with Zhao Zhongxian (Zhao Pu, 921–991), Tunan met him on the road and said, “Would you have a drink?” Taizu said, “I'd like to, with Single Classic Specialist Zhao along.” Tunan glanced at him (Zhao) obliquely, and said, “That’s also all right.” When they arrived at the tavern, Zhongxian, who suffered rheumatism of the foot, quickly went to sit on [the emperor's] right. Tunan reviled him, saying, “Just a little star in the Purple Tenuity Constellation (corresponding to the terrestrial imperial entourage)—dare you take the second best [seat]?” Zhongxian yielded, taking a seat of lesser importance [to that of Tunan].

When the Taizong emperor summoned Tunan, he directed him to pay audience to the [future heir designate and future] King of Shou (he was appointed King of Shou in 994, heir designate in 995). Tunan went to his door and returned, saying, “At the king's door the slaves and servants all are about to be assembled; why is it necessary for me go see the king?” Due to this, Taizong set his attentions on [the King of Shou, the future] Zhenzong emperor.

During the second year of the Duangong reign (989), Tunan foresaw his own death. He sent a memorial to that effect to the emperor, which read, “My great number of years are coming to their end; it shall not be possible to dote on my time with you, sagely emperor.” He instructed his disciple Jia Desheng to tunnel out a chamber of stone at Zhang Chao Valley (on Lotus Flower [Lianhua] Peak at Mount Hua), and when the chamber was completed, he demised (on August 25, 989). For months multicolored clouds hid the mountain vale without dispersing.

**Daoist Obscurity (Dao mo pin)**

Shuai Zilian (d. 980) was a farmer in the Heng Mountains (the Southern Sacred Peak, in eastern Hunan). He was dull-witted and simple, and not complaisant. Everyone called him Shuai the Ox. Late in life he entered the Temple of the Southern Sacred Peak as a Daoist priest. Southwest of the temple was the Pavilion of Purple Vacuity, an ancient altar to [the goddess] Lady Wei. Because it was desolate and lonesome, none of the Daoist priests was willing to stay there. Zilian alone was happy to inhabit it; as he was nothing but grave and silent, no one observed his doings.
As it was, he was sorely fond of wine and regularly lay drunk amid the mountain forest. He was oblivious of great wind and rain, and tigers and wolves crossed before him without inflicting harm. Thus it was that when Vice Minister of Rites Wang Gonghu came to his post as Governor of Changsha and under imperial decree went to pray at the Southern Sacred Peak and pay respects at the altar to the Lady Wei, Zilian was just then lying drunk, unable to rise. He looked straight at the minister and said, “This Daoist priest of the village loves wine; as I cannot always get some, when I do at once I straightaway get drunk.” The accompanying officials were incensed at him, but Lord Wang discerned that he was extraordinary and carried him home with him. For more than a month Zilian fell into silence, not speaking a word. Wang then sent him to return to the mountains, saying, “You, venerable teacher, conceal your luminescence but shine from within. This is what this old fellow did not fathom; it is appropriate that I should respectfully proffer poetry to you.” As it turned out, Wang forgot about this. One day when he was sleeping in the morning he dreamt that Zilian came to claim the poetry. So he then composed two quatrains, which he wrote on a panel and set up above his office. The many Daoist priests said in surprise, “How did Shuai the Ox rate this?”

On the twenty-seventh day of the sixth month of the fifth year of the Taiping xingga reign (August 10, 980), Zilian suddenly addressed the men of the temple, saying, “I am about to be off on a calling. The pavilion cannot be left unmanned, and you should quickly send someone to succeed me.” All were even more startled and said, “With the weather hot like this, where is Shuai the Ox off to?” They looked at him perplexedly and [discovered that] he was dead. At first they greatly marveled at him, saying, “So, Shuai the Ox knew the day of his death!” And they proceeded to bury him beneath the mountain peak.

Not long after, Shoudeng, a [Buddhist] monk of the Temple of the Southern Terrace, was returning from the eastern capital and encountered Zilian outside the Nanxun Gate. Zilian had a divine air about him, serenely uplifted. When Shoudeng asked why he had left the mountains, Zilian laughed, saying, “I’m simply traipsing in leisure,” and entrusted him with a letter to his cohorts in the mountains. When Deng returned home he learned that Zilian had died, and when he inspected the letter, it was [written] the day of his death. When his grave was opened, there was nothing but his walking stick and sandals.

Daoist Arts (Dao shu pin)

Liu Yongguang (ca. 1155–ca. 1224) was a man of Guixi in Xinzhou (modern Shangrao, northeastern Jiangxi). His appearance, strange and ancient, was swarthy. When he reached adulthood, he had no cause for renown. He went off to the Southern Sacred Peak (Heng Shan), and when he reached Linchuan Prefecture in Fuzhou (modern Fuzhou, Jiangxi), he met a man of the Way [i.e., a Daoist] on the road, who said he was Zhang Fuyuan and traveled on together with Yongguang. When traveling, Yongguang acted as Zhang’s porter; when camped, he cooked for Zhang. When they stopped over at Changsha (in
Hunan), Zhang addressed him, saying, “You have attended to me with diligence and to your utmost. Always when I was rude to you, in order to observe your reaction, you were reverent all the more. As now I am going on to Shu (Sichuan), I have a fascicle [of writings] to bestow on you; you should keep it secret.” He then departed. When Yongguang opened it for a look, it was the Book of [the Method of] the Five Thunders [for invoking rain] (Wu lei [fa] shu).

During the Qingyuan reign (1193–1200) there was drought in Quzhou (western Zhejiang). Commandery Governor Shen Zuoli dreamt one night of a black dragon coiled at the gates of the Temple to the City God, and when morning came he went to check it out: it was Yongguang lying there drunk. When he engaged Yongguang and charged him with invoking rain, it rained. The commandery reported the matter, and when Yongguang again invoked rain at court, it also rained. Yongguang was nearly forty in years and had not yet had occasion to be ordained as a Daoist priest. At this point, the emperor bestowed upon him cap and vestments and conferred the appellation Master Complaisant and Tranquil (Chongjing xiansheng).

The Ningzong emperor (r. 1194–1224) issued funds from the National Treasury on his behalf and entirely renovated and enlarged the Temple of the Highest Clarity. When the Lizong emperor took the throne (in 1224), Yongguang again was summoned. He said to the [imperial] emissary, “Return and memorialize to the Son of Heaven that for governing the empire the five thousand words of the [Classic on] the Way and Its Power are sufficient. If a rustic man of the mountain forests were to come [to court], how would that be to greater advantage?”

In the end he was transformed through liberation [from his body] in the Longhu Mountains (in northeastern Jiangxi). As for Zhang Fuyuan, the man he had met in the past, some say he was the Supernal Preceptor (Tianshi) of the Han [dynasty] [i.e., Zhiang Ling, or Zhang Daoling].