

There were two early Taoist regional movements that began simultaneously during the second and early third centuries. One was Zhang Jiao's Taiping Dao which flourished in the east and had hundreds of thousands of followers.

The other early sect to appear during the late Eastern Han dynasty was Wudoumi Dao [five pecks of rice Taoism], also called Orthodox Unity (Zhengyi), Tianshi Dao [Way of the Celestial Masters] or Gui Dao [Ghost Tao]. It was started by the enlightenment of a man named Zhang Ling in the area of Shu [present day Sichuan] and spread to southern Shaanxi.

According to the Celestial Masters movement, Laozi transmitted the teachings to Zhang Ling (Zhang Daoling), the founder of the Celestial Masters movement in the Eastern Han Dynasty (25-220). This religious tradition was later claimed as the origin of the orthodox Taoist church and Zhang Ling, or Chang Tao ling, was made the First Celestial Master of this tradition. His son and grandson would hold this title in later years.

The communal school of the Celestial Masters and the monastic group of Complete Perfection are the only two surviving forms of formal Taoism today [Kohn 1993 p.7]. Taoism as an organized religion began in A.D.142 with the revelation of the Tao by Taishang laojun, the Highest Venerable Lord, the personification of the Tao, to Zhang Daoling. He became the first Celestial Master and founder of the first organized Taoist school which was called Orthodox Unity. The sixty-fourth Celestial Master resides in Taiwan today.

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Quotes from the Catalog

Zhang Ling – the founder of Wudoumi; served as the magistrate of Jiang Zhou before going to Sichuan. At the moment when Zhang Ling attained immortality in Shu, he saw a multitude of heavenly beings arriving with dragons and tigers. Later a headquarters of the Celestial Masters Taoism was founded by Zhang Ling's great-grandson at the Dragon and Tiger Mountain. The *Genealogy of Celestial Master Zhang* (Zhang Tianshi shijia) is one of the most important texts about this type of Taoism. It claims that this mountain was so named because a dragon and tiger emerged when Zhang Ling succeeded in making the Divine Elixir of Nine Heavens in this place. Taoist deities are often portrayed as riding tigers and dragons or being accompanied by them.

According to several texts, Zhang Ling established a series of Taoist centers called “the twenty-four zhi”. Zhang and his successors may have also elaborated on this system with secondary centers. In Zhang's time the Wudoumi Tao Headquarters was Yangping Zhi at present day Pengxian northwest of Chengdu. Zhang Ling's son Zhang Heng practiced Taoism at this location and “ascended to immortality” (sheng xian) on Yangping Shan in A.D. 179. He became the second Celestial Master. Zhang Heng was offered the title Langzhong (Gentleman of the Interior) by the government.

But it was Zhang Lu, the third Celestial Master, Zhang Ling's grandson, who fully integrated the organization of Wudoumi Tao with the region's civil administration. According to the record of the Three Kingdoms (Sanguo Zhi), Zhang Lu replaced local officials with Taoist priests which was a reform welcomed by the common people. *The record of the Three Kingdoms* serves as Zhang Lu's biography.

It states that

from the late second to the early third century, Zhang Lu became the supreme ruler in this region[present day Sichuan] and expanded his power to present-day southern Shaanxi. After taking over Hanzhong, he assumed the title, Shi Jun (Master-ruler), and taught people Ghost Tao. For some thirty years he ruled the region majestically. Unable to subjugate him the central government was forced to offer him titles, such as General of Subjugating Barbarians. After the fall of the Han Dynasty, Zhang Lu's followers proposed to make him king of Hanzhong, but he refused.

He was finally defeated by Cao Cao in 215 A.D. after his army met Cao Cao's Buddhist army; however, he still was left with a fiefdom and a noble title. Using the best available source material, it can be said that Zhang Lu established the first Taoist regime in Chinese history.