

Notes on Mao Shan- Sacred mountain in Jiangsu province

The Lady of Highest Primordial appeared to emperor Wudi (r. 140-87 B.C.) together with the Queen Mother of the West. She was a teacher of the three Mao brothers, Han-era figures who gave their names to Mao Shan and are seen as patriarchs of the Highest Purity scriptures. Mao Shan later became the focus of Daoist revelations to the visionary Yang Xi (AD 364–370).

Yang Xi was visited by a group of perfected immortals (*zhenren*) from the heaven of Shangqing (Supreme Purity), who gave him a new set of scriptures and instructions on the coming apocalypse, during which the good were to take refuge in luminous caverns beneath such sacred mountains as Mao Shan. A revival of the Highest Purity (Shangqing) sect at Mao Shan near Nanjing was led by Yang Xizhan (r. 1101-24) at the end of the Northern Song Dynasty. The four saints were worshiped as demon-suppressing deities in the Great Rites of Youthful Incipience (Tongchu da fa) founded by Yang.

The Mao Shan revelations incorporated elements of [Buddhism](#) into Daoist thought and proposed reforms of [Daoism](#), including rejection of its sexual rites in favour of a spiritualized union with a celestial partner. The sacred texts of this school were revealed to Yang Hsi between 364 and 370 by several deities whose master was Lady Wei, who had been dead for thirty years. Yang Hsi transmitted them to the Xu family, from where they were disseminated widely among aristocratic circles in the south of China. About the middle of the 5th century a group of hermits honored by the emperor practiced the teachings of the texts in Mao Shan. After Ku Huan (ca. 420-ca.483), the first historian and biographer of the school, Tao Hong-ching (456-536) a friend and protege of the Emperor Wu of the Liang, assembled and classified his texts and edited the Cheng-gao which recounted the revelations to Yang Hsi.

During the Liang Dynasty (502-557) Wudi was a patron of the Taoist alchemist Tao, Hong-ching. The emperor founded a monastery on Mt. Mao for Tao to continue his alchemical experiments. Such was the success of the school that apocryphal texts appeared between the end of the 4th and the end of the 6th centuries, but which bore elements of a spirit of different origin from Ling-bao and the Celestial Masters.

In the 6th century the Wu-shang pi yao, an important encyclopedia commissioned by Wu of the Chou, made up the most important part of the Shang-ch'ing texts, just like the great imperial encyclopedia, the T'ai-p'ing yu-lan, which was finished in 983. From the 6th to the 10th centuries the school was considered to be the most spiritually and hierarchically elevated school within Taoism. Its patriarchs Wang Yuan-chih (d.635) Pan Shih-cheng (d.694) and Sima Cheng-chen (647-735) were protected by the emperor whom they initiated and who built temples for them. The poet Li Po (701-62) was initiated into its texts. The school had considerable importance over literati and the development of Taoism. Numerous

hymns, meditations, and ideas from this school were included in the liturgy, for example in the Yu-t'ang ta-fa (1120). Towards the 13th and 14th centuries it lost its importance. Nevertheless its 45th patriarch Liu Ta-pin (ca.1317-1328) wrote a preface to a monumental monograph about Mao Shan (probably written by Chang I, 1279-1350) which traced the history of the school.