

Taoist Eight Immortals - Eva Wong

The years passed. Lü Yen had taken the civil service examinations twice and failed each time. On his way to the capital for one last try, he stopped at an inn for the night. By now, Lü Yen's enthusiasm for a government career had diminished substantially. He sat at a table, ordered wine, and sighed as he drank. After a few mouthfuls of wine, he heard a voice behind him say, "No need to sigh and drink by yourself. Tell me what's on your mind."

Lü Yen turned and saw a man smiling at him. The stranger was dressed in a short tunic open down to his waist to reveal a tuft of hair on his chest. The legs of his pants were rolled up; he had straw sandals on his feet; his hair was tied into two knots on the sides of his head; and in his hand was a large fan.

The man fascinated Lü Yen. He walked over, sat down at the stranger's table, and told him of his disappointment at not being able to serve his country. At the end of his story, Yen added, "I am ready to leave the world of fame and fortune and devote my life to cultivating the Tao."

The strange man then said, "My name is Chungli Ch'uan. I am also called the Hermit of the Cloud Chamber. Would you like to follow me into the mountains and learn about the Tao?"

That night, Lü Yen slept with his head on the pillow and dreamed that he had passed the civil service examinations and had become a high-ranking official. He was appointed chief minister in the emperor's court; he married and had many children and grandchildren; and he was respected by all. Then the dream took an ugly turn. Lü Yen saw himself embroiled in court intrigues. Ministers jealous of Yen's relationship with the emperor framed him for treason, and his entire family was arrested. First, all his male children and grandchildren were executed. Then, his family shrine was destroyed. Finally, he was exiled to the frontier, where he died, far from his surviving relatives.

Lü Yen woke up from his nightmare trembling and covered with sweat. Quickly, he ran out of his room to look for Ch'uan, who was sitting at a table having his morning tea. When he saw Yen, he said, "In one night, you have lived through twenty years of your life."

"Then you knew about my dream?" asked Lü Yen.

The Taoist replied, "You achieved your goals in your dream, but you also lost everything. Gains and losses are illusions of the mortal realm. Only those who can see through illusions are capable of transcending them."

"Take me with you into the mountains," said Lü Yen. "From now on fame, riches, and social prestige are nothing to me."

Chungli Ch'uan congratulated him, "You have awakened from your illusions—this is your first step to cultivating the Tao. However, before I can teach you the arts of longevity and immortality, you need to strengthen your foundations. Right now, your body is weak and your mind is cluttered. When you have built the proper foundations, I will come back to teach you."

Lü Yen thanked Ch'uan and they parted. Yen walked out of the inn and told himself, "From now on, I am no longer Lu Yen the scholar. I will take the name Lü Tung-pin (guest of the cavern), for now I understand I am but a visitor in this realm learning how to return to my original home."

Lü Tung-pin built a thatched hut and settled in the Chung-nan Mountains. He emptied his mind, strengthened his body, and lived the simple life of a hermit.

One day, Chungli Ch'uan appeared at the door of Tungpin's retreat and said, "I see that you have worked hard to cultivate your mind and body. Now you are ready to learn the Taoist arts. First, I'll teach you how to turn stones into gold."

Lü Tung-pin asked his teacher, "After the stones have been turned into gold, will they remain as gold forever?"

Ch'uan replied, "No. The gold nuggets will revert back to stones after three thousand years."

Tung-pin bowed to his teacher and said, "Our paths are different. You are meant to wander leisurely in the celestial lands. As for me, I will not enter the highest realm of immortality until I have helped all sentient beings return to the Tao."

Ch'uan bowed deeply to his former student and said, "Your deeds on behalf of the Tao will be far greater than mine." With that, he walked into a bank of fog and disappeared. Lu Tung-pin descended from his mountain retreat and wandered around the countryside, teaching all those who wanted to learn about the Tao.

Lü YEN lived from the end of the T'ang dynasty (618-906 CE) through the Five Dynasties (907-960 CE) and into the early part of the Sung (960-1279 CE). He was the teacher of Wang Ch'ungyang, the founder of the Northern Complete Reality School; Liu Hai-ch'an, the founder of the Southern Complete Reality School; and Chen Hsi-yi, the founder of the Earlier Heaven Limitless Way. His poetry and treatises on cultivating the Tao are collected in the Lü Tsu chün-shu (The Complete Works of Patriarch Lü).

Chungli Ch'uan grew up to be a strong and intelligent young man. The emperor was impressed with his demeanor and appointed him general.

Once, Ch'uan led a military excursion to the western borders of the Han empire, into a desert region called Turfan. The fierce warriors of the desert overcame his army, and, fleeing from his pursuers, Ch'uan was soon lost in a maze of canyons with steep walls. When night fell, he sat on a rock and pondered his fate.

"Am I destined to die here?" he asked himself.

"Not if you follow my advice," responded a voice in the darkness.

Chungli Ch'uan turned and saw a man dressed in rags and animal skins. Eagle and hawk feathers hung from his hair, and around his neck was a string of lion teeth. Ch'uan was at first apprehensive, but the man said, "General, I can take you to a place where you can be safe from your pursuers."

The stranger led Ch'uan through what seemed to be an endless labyrinth of deep valleys. Presently, they arrived at an oasis. The man stopped and said, "This is where the Celestial Lord of the East attained the Tao. You will be able to spend a night here in peace." Then he disappeared.

Chungli Ch'uan walked into the oasis and found a mansion. Not wanting to disturb its occupants, he stood at the entrance and waited. Soon a voice came from the courtyard: "That shaman must have led you here." The door opened, and the general saw an old man dressed in white deer hide standing in front of him. Before Ch'uan could greet him, the old man said loudly, "You must be Chungli Ch'uan, the general of the Han empire. You are welcome to stay here."

Chungli Ch'uan realized that the man was no ordinary mortal. He immediately fell to his knees and begged the old man to teach him the arts of immortality.

After three days, Ch'uan's host said to him, "I have taught you enough to get you started on the road to immortality. When the time comes, other teachers will appear and guide you further."

Thanking his teacher, Ch'uan left the mansion. At the mouth of the canyon, he turned to have a last look at the place that had changed his destiny. To his shock, both the mansion and the oasis had disappeared.

Chungli Ch'uan never returned to the capital. He traveled throughout the country and learned the arts of the Tao from

hermits and wandering sages. Eventually, he mastered the arts of immortality and ascended to the celestial realm. Chungli Ch'uan lived during the Han dynasty (206 BCE-219 CE) and was a general of the Han empire before he became a practitioner of the arts of immortality. In Kuangtung Province in southern China lived a well-to-do family by the name of Ho. This family had a daughter who was born with six golden hairs on her head.

When she was fourteen, Lady Ho dreamed that she met an immortal who told her, "If you eat the sands of the Cloud Mother River, your body will become light and you will live forever." Because the dream was so vivid, Lady Ho followed the instructions immediately.

"I wish to remain single and devote the rest of my life to cultivating the Tao," she told her parents. Her father was not pleased when he heard this. He had planned to marry her off to a rich man and relented only when her mother reminded him, "Do you remember that our daughter was born with six strands of golden hair? She's no ordinary woman and we should respect her wishes."

Lady Ho continued to live with her parents, but often she would disappear into the mountains to gather herbs and minerals. Her gait was so swift that she could leave at sunrise, travel for hundreds of miles, and return home at sunset with fruit for her mother.

After her parents passed away, Lady Ho retreated into the mountains and abstained from grains completely. In winter she could sleep on ice and not be chilled; in summer she was not bothered by the heat. Scholars who came to challenge her understanding of Taoism were silenced and awed by her knowledge and breadth of learning.

The guards found Lady Ho and related the empress's wishes to her. "The empress has heard of your abilities and desires to see an immortal," they said.

But Lady Ho knew what was in the empress's mind. "The arts of immortality are not meant to be abused by those who are selfish and power-hungry," she said to herself. So one night, when the company was just a few days' walk from the capital, she slipped away.

When the guards returned empty-handed, the empress flew into a rage and shouted, "You incompetent fools! Go and put up posters offering a large reward to anyone who can give me information of Lady Ho's whereabouts."

One time, the empress received reports of Lady Ho flying up to the sky on the outskirts of the capital. When the imperial guards arrived, the immortal was nowhere to be seen.

Ho Hsien-Ku lived during the T'ang dynasty (618-906 CE) and is regarded by many as the patron of female Taoist practitioners.

Chang Kuo was a master of magic and divination. Because he always appeared as an old man, he was called Chang Kuo Lao, meaning "Chang Kuo the Old Man."

Kuo had a white mule, a magical animal that could travel thousands of miles a day. When he did not need the mule, he would command the animal to step onto a piece of paper. The mule would be transformed into a picture, and Chang Kuo would fold up the paper and put it in a small box. When he needed the mule, he would unfold the paper, and the animal would reappear, ready for him to ride.

When the emperor agreed, Fa-shan said, "Chang Kuo was originally a bat spirit. He attained human form by absorbing the essences of the sun and the moon." The diviner tried to continue, but no words came from his mouth. Moments later, Fa-shan fell to the ground and died.

Shocked, the emperor immediately took off his crown and his shoes, went down on his knees, and begged the lords of heaven to save his diviner.

A year later, the emperor tried to invite Chang Kuo back to the palace. However, when the imperial messenger arrived at Kuo's retreat, the master stopped his breath and died. Weeping, Kuo's assistant lit the funeral candles and put his master's body in a coffin.

After the emissary had gone, the lid of the casket flew open. The assistant peeked in and, to his shock, found that Kuo's body had disappeared.

When news of Chang Kuo's "disappearance" reached the capital, the emperor ordered a shrine to be built on Mount Heng to honor the bat-spirit immortal.

Chang Kuo Lao lived during the T'ang dynasty (618-906 CE). He wrote a treatise on astrology titled Chang Kuo Lao hsing-tsung (Chang Kuo Lao's Astrological System). This system of celestial divination is still used widely by Chinese seers today.

T'ieh-kuai means "Iron Crutch," and Li got this nickname in an extraordinary way. He was an adept in the arts of longevity and spirit travel; it is said he learned them directly from Lao Tzu himself. Tall, handsome, and charismatic, Li was proud of his good looks and youthful vitality, which he maintained as a result of his practice.

One day, Li was invited to a gathering of immortals on Mount Hua. Before he sent out his spirit, he told his servant, "I will be leaving my body for seven days. Make sure that nothing happens to it while my spirit is gone. If I don't wake up after sunset on the seventh day, you can burn my body, gather your belongings, and go home." With that, he closed his eyes, laid down, and sent his spirit to Mount Hua.

Six days passed, and Li had not returned. On the morning of the seventh day, the servant received a message from his brother, telling him that their mother was severely ill and would die soon. Li's servant was caught in a dilemma. "I need to go home and see my mother before she dies," he said to himself. "But the master told me to watch over his body for seven days." He fretted for a long time and then decided, "Today is the seventh day and my master has not returned. It probably won't matter whether I burn the body now or wait till after sunset."

The servant built a pyre, placed Li's body on it, and set the wood on fire. After making sure that the body was burned to ashes, he packed his belongings and went home.

That evening at sunset, Li's spirit returned. When he saw the funeral pyre outside his house, he sighed and said, "It is the will of heaven."

At that time, Li had not attained immortality and still needed a human shell to complete his cultivation. Fluttering around the town, his spirit found a beggar who had just died. The beggar was crippled and ugly, and, under normal circumstances, Li would have been too vain to choose so grotesque a shell. But he was desperate. If his spirit did not enter a body soon, he would lose his chance to complete his cultivation. So Li's spirit hastily entered the body of the crippled beggar. From that time on, Li appeared as a crippled beggar leaning on an iron crutch.

Not much is known about T'ieh-Kuai Li except that he lived during the T'ang dynasty (618-906 CE).

Han Hsiang was the nephew of the great scholar Han Yü. Although learned in the classics and talented at poetry and music, Hsiang had no intentions of entering the government.

While most young men of his age were busy studying the civil service examinations, Han Hsiang was wandering around the mountains playing his flute and writing poet One time, while climbing up Mount Hua, Hsiang met the immortal Lü Tung-pin. Knowing the young poet was destined to become an immortal, Tung-pin taught Hsiang the arts of longevity

and magic.

In the capital, Hsiang's uncle Han Yü was worried over his nephew's lack of interest in the government. One day, he called Hsiang to him and said, "It is your duty to use your talent to serve the emperor. You should stop drifting around and start preparing for the imperial examinations."

Hsiang replied, "Our paths are different. You are destined to be famous in the realm of mortals and I am meant to escape the dust of the world." He waved his hand and a flask of wine and two cups appeared on the table.

Han Yü spent several years at the frontier. Then, as Han Hsiang had predicted, an imperial messenger arrived to invite Yü back to the capital. "The charges against you have been dropped," said the emissary. "You are to return and be promoted."

Han Yü returned to the capital to serve his emperor. He would eventually become one of the greatest poets, essayists, and scholars of China. Han Hsiang attained immortality, sought out his old friend Lüng-pin, and joined the company of the Eight Immortals.

Han Hsiang lived during the T'ang dynasty (618-906 CE). His uncle, Han Yu, was one of the Eight Great Scholars of the T'ang and Sung dynasties.

No one knows where Lan Ts'ai-ho came from. The legends say that he was always dressed in colorful rags, had flowers in his hair, and carried a three-foot-long branch that he used as a walking stick. Sometimes he would dress as a male and sometimes as a female. He wore only one shoe; the other foot was always bare. In summer he would stuff cotton and wool into his clothing; in winter he would lie naked on the ice and blow hot breath from his mouth.

Ts'ai-ho had no home. He wandered around the towns and villages entertaining people and never stayed in one place for more than a month. His favorite haunts were restaurants and wine shops, where he would drink and entertain the patrons with songs about life in the immortal lands. But Ts'ai-ho's favorite audiences were the children and the elderly who gathered at the street corners to hear him sing.

Whenever Ts'ai-ho was given coins for his performance, he would tie them to a string and drag them behind him as he walked. If he lost his money, he was not concerned. If he had money left after paying for his food and drinks, he would give it to the poor.

One day, while eating and drinking on the terrace of a restaurant, Lan Ts'ai-ho heard the music of reeds and pipes. When a crane flew down from the sky and landed on his table, he knew it was time for him to leave for the immortal realm. He jumped onto the crane's back, threw his shoe and sash on the ground, and flew up to the sky. When the people in the street tried to pick up his belongings, both the shoe and the sash vanished.

While wandering around in the immortal lands, Lan Ts'ai-ho met Lu Tung-pin and Chungli Ch'uan. Taken by Ts'ai-ho's carefree manner and beautiful voice, the two elder immortals invited the youth to travel with them to visit the famous mountains and lakes of the celestial realm.

Lan Ts'ai-ho lived during the Five Dynasties (907-960 CE). Not much is known about him except that he was a street entertainer and was famous for his beautiful singing voice.

Ts'ao was a brother of the queen mother and the kuo-chiu (maternal uncle) of the emperor. However, despite being born into nobility, he was not interested in politics and power. His younger brother, on the other hand, was ruthless and cruel and used his royal connections to obtain land, jewels, and even other men's wives.

When Ts'ao failed to steer his brother away from his unethical ways, he said to himself, "There is nothing left for me to do in the palace." He left the capital, went into the woods, and devoted his life to cultivating the Tao.

One day, the immortals Lü Tung-pin and Chungli Ch'uan happened to walk by Ts'ao's retreat.

Lü Tung-pin called out, "I've heard that you had given up the life of a prince to cultivate the Tao. Tell me, where's the Tao that you are cultivating?"

Ts'ao pointed to the sky.

Immortal Lu then said, "And where's heaven?"

Ts'ao pointed to his heart.

Immortal Chungli Ch'uan clapped his hands and exclaimed, "Well said. The way of the Tao is the way of heaven and the way of heaven is in your heart. You have seen your original nature."

The three men laughed together. Lü Tung-pin and Chungli Ch'uan then invited Ts'ao to travel with them to the immortal realm.

Ts'ao Kuo-Chiu lived during the early part of the Sung dynasty (960-1279 CE). Not much is known about him except that he shunned nobility and devoted his life to studying the Tao.

Sung T'ai-tsung heeded Chen Hsi-yi's words and named Chen-tsung as his heir.

One summer, on the fifteenth day of the seventh month, Chen Hsi-yi said to his students, "It is time for me to journey to Mount Omei in the west." His students understood that their teacher meant it was time for him to leave the earthly realm, so they purified the room with incense and lit two tall candles. Hsi-yi sat on his bed in meditation posture, placed his palm on top of his head, and sent his spirit to the immortal realm. At that time, he was 118 years old.

Chen Hsi-Yi lived from the end of the T'ang dynasty (618-906 CE), through the era of the Five Dynasties (907-960 CE), and into the early part of the Sung (960-1279 CE). He is acknowledged as the father of modern ch'i-kung and wrote important treatises on Taoist cosmology, divination, meditation, and calisthenics. He was the founding patriarch of the School of Taoism known as the Earlier Heaven Limitless Way.

Chuang Tzu lived during the latter part of the Chou dynasty (1122-221 BCE) in the feudal state of Ch'u. He is reputed to be the primary author of the Taoist classic Chuang Tzu.

Fan Li and Hsi Shih lived in the latter part of the Chou dynasty (1122-221 BCE). Fan Li was a minister in the state of Yüeh during a time when the feudal states of the Chou empire had become semiautonomous kingdoms. He is also revered as the patron of entrepreneurs in southern China.

Kuang-ch'eng Tzu said, "The Tao is intangible and formless. You cannot hear it or see it. However, if you focus your spirit, it will emerge within you. Empty your heart and still your mind. Preserve your generative energy and do not strain your body. Follow these teachings and you will live a long life."

Huang Ti, or the Yellow Emperor, lived in the legendary times of ancient China before written history. He is regarded as the wisest of all Chinese rulers and is credited with uniting the tribes into a nation, building the first cities, and giving China a written language and a numerical system.

One time, a young scholar named Kung Chung-ni came to the library to ask Li Erh about an obscure ritual. (Kung Chung-ni would later be known as Kung Tzu, or Confucius.) After answering the young man's questions, Li Erh told him, "You need to file down your sharpness and put away your sword of ambition. The great sage often appears dull and dim-witted, and those with true learning do not display their knowledge."

Years later, Chung-ni would recall this meeting and say, "Birds soar above the earth; fishes swim to the depths of the

oceans; and tigers run the great expanse of the plains. But who can predict the behavior of dragons? Sometimes they fly among the clouds and sometimes they tunnel beneath the earth. Lao Tzu [the Old One] must have been a dragon. You could catch a glimpse of his wisdom, but if you tried to grasp it, it was gone."

Lao Tzu lived during the latter part of the Chou dynasty (1122-221 BCE) in the feudal state of Ch'u. He is regarded as the founder of the philosophy of Taoism and the author of the Taoist classic, the *Tao-te-ching*.

That night, Liu prepared a feast to honor the eight Taoists. During the dinner, one of the old men stood up and said to the prince, "We see that you are sincere in your pursuit of the Tao. Each of us has a specialty that he can teach you. One of us can command the elements, make rain, and change the course of rivers. Another can move mountains, tame wild beasts, and summon spirits and ghosts. Another can hide the movement of armies and make them appear at different places at the same time. Another cannot be harmed by fire, water, or weapons. Another can create and craft anything he wants—animals, plants, or inanimate objects. Another can see impending disasters and is skilled in the arts of longevity and immortality. Another can transform dirt into gold and lead into silver. Still another can fly in the sky and tunnel beneath the earth. Of these skills, which would you like to learn?"

An replied, "All I wish is to be able to predict catastrophes and live a happy and long life."

Liu An spent nine years learning from the old men and eventually succeeded in making the pill of immortality. However, on the day that he completed his apprenticeship, his son was killed accidentally by one of the emperor's secretaries during a sword-fighting practice session. Fearing that the lord of Huai-nan would sentence him to death, the secretary told the emperor that Liu An was plotting a rebellion.

Liu An heeded the advice of his teachers immediately. He went to his laboratory, took a pill from the cauldron, and swallowed it. In his hurry to leave the palace, An knocked the cauldron onto its side and scattered the remaining little red pills over the floor. Before the pills could be picked up by the servants, they were eaten by the cats and dogs in the household.

When the emperor's soldiers arrived at Liu An's palace, he was nowhere to be found. The officer questioned the townspeople, who told him, "We saw the lord of Huai-nan floating up to the sky with cats and dogs flying up behind him." Liu An, also known as Huai-nan Tzu, lived during the early part of the Han dynasty (206 BCE-219 CE). His court was a haven for Taoist alchemists, diviners, and magicians. He is reputed to have recorded and collected the teachings of his Taoist retainers into a classic titled *Huai-nan Tzu*.

Ssu-Ma Ch'eng-Chen lived during the T'ang dynasty (618-906 CE) and is regarded as one of the greatest patriarchs of the Shang-ch'ing School of Taoism. He wrote many treatises on meditation and is responsible for introducing the technique of insight meditation (or internal gazing) into Taoist practice.

With the help of the royal endowment, T'ao Hung-ching finally succeeded in making the pill of immortality. At the time, he was seventy years old, but his complexion resembled that of a youth. He took the pill, expecting to ascend to immortality. Nothing happened. At first, he thought the pill was defective, but when one of his students ingested the pill and flew off to the immortal realm, he was bewildered. When the student returned after a sojourn in the celestial lands, Hung-ching said to him, "Next time when you visit the immortal realm, please ask the guardians why I could not attain immortality."

Several days later, the student visited the celestial lands again and returned with this message from the lords of heaven: "T'ao Hung-ching is not allowed to enter the immortal lands at this time because he has killed many insects and worms while searching for the ingredients for the pill. Therefore, he must wait another twelve years in the mortal realm before he can become an immortal."

T'ao Hung-ching took the message to heart. For the next twelve years, he abstained from meat and was careful not to step on insects and worms.

T'ao Hung-Ching lived during the period of the Six Dynasties (420-589 CE) and is regarded as one of the greatest patriarchs of the Shang-ch'ing School of Taoism. Adept at all aspects of the Taoist arts, he wrote over eighty treatises on topics that included alchemy, meditation, metallurgy, astronomy, geography, military strategy, divination, and medicine.

Lao Tzu replied, "I have many names, for I have appeared in many incarnations. I have taught the Yellow Emperor as well as the kings Yao, Shun, and Yu. In my current incarnation I am named Li Erh."

That night, Wen Shih honored Lao Tzu with a feast. After the banquet, he prostrated himself before the sage and formally asked to be accepted as a student. Lao Tzu stayed in the border town for a hundred days and taught Wen Shih the arts of the Tao.

When it was time for his teacher to leave, Wen Shih declared, "I would like to accompany you on your journey and serve you."

Lao Tzu refused, saying, "Although your roots are deep, you are not ready to climb with me to the clouds or fly to the four directions. You have a good understanding of the teachings, but you are still lacking in experience. When you can merge with the natural way, go to Szechwan and look for a blue ox. The ox will show you where to find me." He then dictated a book of five thousand words to his student. This book was the *Tao-te-ching*.

When Wen Shih stepped into the mansion, the child was transformed into Lao Tzu. Thousands of rays of golden light emanated from his body, and a purple aura glowed around his head. A canopy emerged from the ground, and inside the pavilion was a seat surrounded by lotus flowers.

The old man walked to the chair, sat down, and said to Wen Shih, "When I left you, you were but a novice who aspired to cultivate the Tao. Today, I see a man with the air of an immortal. Your spirit has journeyed to the purple chamber of the Celestial Palace; you have merged with the North Star; and your name has been entered into the roster of the immortals." When Lao Tzu finished speaking, the room was suddenly filled with celestial messengers and immortals. Wen Shih stepped onto a cloud and was escorted into the immortal realm by the personal attendants of the highest lords of heaven. Wen Shih, also known as Wen Tzu, lived in the latter part of the Chou dynasty (1122-221 BCE). He is reputed to be the first student of Lao Tzu and is the author of the Taoist classic *Wen Tzu*.

Chang Tao-ling stood over seven feet tall and had bushy eyebrows, a large round forehead, and a hawk-beak nose. On the sole of his right foot were seven black dots arranged in the pattern of the seven stars of the Big Dipper. He had long, powerful arms that came down to his knees, and he walked with the strength of a tiger and the speed of a dragon.

Chang Tao-ling was exceptionally intelligent. At seven, he understood the teachings of Lao Tzu's *Tao-te-ching*. By twelve, he had mastered the *I-ching* and the classics of divination. As a young man, Tao-ling served his community as a provincial administrator, but he continued to study the arts of the Tao.

Tao-ling left his cave and traveled throughout the river valleys and mountains of Szechwan. On one of his journeys he met Lao Tzu, who taught him how to fly to the stars and tunnel under the earth. When Lao Tzu departed, he gave his pupil a scroll of talismans that had the power to heal the sick and a magic sword that could drive away malevolent spirits.

As time went on, Chang Tao-ling's skill in the arts of sorcery matured. Soon he could make himself invisible or change

himself into any shape he wished. He could hear and see over great distances and could call down rain and snow. He could heal the sick and drive away evil spirits. His fame spread far and wide, and people called him the Celestial Teacher, for they believed that he was an immortal from the celestial realm.

Chang Tao-Ling lived during the latter part of the Han dynasty (206 BCE-219 CE). He founded the School of Taoism known as T'ien-shih Tao (the Celestial Teachers' Way) and is regarded as the father of organized religious Taoism.

Fei Chang-fang suddenly realized that the weeks that he had spent in the immortal realm were equivalent to fifteen years in the realm of mortals.

Fei Chang-fang traveled throughout the countryside healing the sick and driving out evil spirits. He dispensed medicine from his gourd, exorcised ghosts, and helped towns and villages ward off floods and droughts.

Fei Chang-Fang lived during the latter part of the Han dynasty (206 BCE-219 CE) and is regarded as the patron of healers and herbalists. Huan Ching's visit to the shrines has become a cultural tradition of China. Today, it is still customary for many Chinese to spend a day in the mountains on the ninth day of the ninth lunar month.

Kiang Tzu-Ya lived from the end of the Shang dynasty (1766-1122 BCE) to the beginning of the Chou dynasty (1122-221 BCE). He was Duke Chi's principal adviser during the latter's campaign against Shang Ts'ou and became the chief minister of the Chou dynasty when Chi was made emperor. Tzu-ya's treatise on strategy and tactics, Kiang T'ai-kung ping fa (Master Kiang's Art of War), is considered one of the greatest classics of military strategy.

Tso Chi lived during the latter part of the Han dynasty (206 BCE-219 CE) when Ts'ao Ts'ao was the chief minister and the power behind the throne. Ts'ao Ts'ao's son, Ts'ao Pei, eventually deposed the Han emperor and founded the Wei dynasty (220-265 CE).

Ko Hsüan learned his magic from Tso Chi. Hsüan could make stone statues walk; he could talk to butterflies and grasshoppers and get them to dance; and he could grow vegetables in winter and create ice in summer.

Ks Hsüan lived during the period of the Three Kingdoms (220-265 CE). He collected and edited the Ling-pao (Sacred Spirit) Scriptures, which are the earliest texts of the Taoist canon.

Mah Ku was an extraordinary woman. From the time she was a child, she could imitate the calls of every animal and bird. She could jump up walls, walk on rafters, and climb trees. She was so silent and stealthy that she often gave the impression of being in several places at once.

While fleeing from her father, Mah Ku met an immortal who taught her the arts of magic and immortality. After she completed her apprenticeship, she returned to her village. There, on a stone bridge in front of a crowd of people, she flew up to the sky. The people of her town named that bridge Immortal's Bridge, in honor of the young woman's courage and integrity. There is no information as to when Mah Ku lived.

T'ai-hsüan Nü was married to a man who did not love her. Soon after she gave birth to a son, her husband died. One day, T'ai-hsüan Nü met a diviner in the marketplace who told her, "You and your son will not live long." When she heard this, she did not panic. Calmly and methodically, she began to study and practice the arts of immortality. After a few years, she stopped aging. When her son had a family of his own, she retreated to the mountains, built a hut, and began to gather minerals to make the elixir of immortality.

As her cultivation progressed, T'ai-hsüan Nü was able to sleep on the ice in winter and not be chilled, enter the water and not get wet, sit in a fire and not be burned, and be at different places at the same time.

Tai-hsüan Nü lived to be over two hundred years old. Her complexion was always that of a young woman and her hair was smooth and black. One day, her students heard children's voices coming from their teacher's room. When they pushed open the door, they saw T'ai-hsüan Nü flying up to the sky accompanied by a group of immortals. There is no information as to when and where T'ai-hsüan Nü lived.

While wandering in the forest, Kuang-chen met the female immortal Ho Hsien-ku, who taught her magic and the arts, of immortality. While Kuang-chen was having dinner with her hosts, she heard someone call her name. She excused herself, went outside, and found three old men standing on a cloud. Immediately she summoned a giant toad, stepped onto its back, and flew to meet the three immortals. Delighted, the three old men took her on a tour of the famous mountains and lakes.

Flying over the Kun-lun Mountains, one of the immortals said to T'ang Kuang-chen, "Would you like to transcend the mundane and enter the sacred, shed your shell and become an immortal? Or would you rather keep your body and remain in the mortal realm?"

Kuang-chen swallowed the pill. From that time on, she was immune to heat, cold, hunger, and thirst. She returned to her village to care for her aging mother and lived what appeared to be a normal life. After her mother passed away, T'ang Kuang-chen received an invitation from the celestial lords. She summoned the giant toad, got onto its back, and rode off to the immortal realm.

T'ang Kuang-Chen lived during the Sung dynasty (960-1279 CE). It is said that she learned the arts of female internal alchemy from Immortal Ho Hsien-ku, the patron of female Taoist cultivation. Kuang-chen wrote poems to document her spiritual experiences, and these writings are considered some of the finest expositions on female Taoist learning.

When Tung-fang Shuo was twenty-two years old, he wrote a letter to Wu-ti, the Han emperor. In the letter, he explained, "I was orphaned at an early age and was brought up by my brother. I mastered the classics when I was twelve. At fifteen, I became an expert in the martial arts. At sixteen I became a master poet and memorized twenty thousand lines of song. At nineteen, I mastered the science of warfare and the art of diplomacy. Now, at twenty-two, I stand head and shoulders above everyone. My body is strong and graceful. My mind is agile and cunning. I am honest and trustworthy, brave and honorable. I am someone whom your majesty should have in your service!"

The emperor finally understood. He sighed and said, "In the eighteen years that Tung-fang Shuo was with me, I did not even know that he was a sky immortal. What a pity!"

Tung-Fang Shuo lived during the early part of the Han dynasty (206 BCE-219 CE) and served in the court of the emperor Wu Ti.

Chang Chung lived from the end of the Yuan dynasty (1271-1368 CE) to the early Ming (1368-1644 CE). He helps Chu Yuan chang defeat the Mongols and establish the Ming dynasty.

Ch'ing Wu learned the Taoist arts from P'eng Tsu (P'eng the Ancient One), who was rumored to have discovered an elixir of immortality and to have lived for over a thousand years.

Living on Mount Hua, Ch'ing Wu saw that clouds and mists gathered only in certain places. He also noticed that animals and birds frequented some parts of the mountain more than others. One day, following the flight path of a crane, he climbed through a cleft in the rock and found a secluded valley. At the mouth of the valley was a round boulder, and in a pool sheltered by the boulder was a group of cranes.

As Ch'ing Wu approached them, the birds changed into human form. The crane that Ch'ing Wu had followed came toward him and said, "We are crane immortals, and we have waited for you for a long time. The lords of heaven have

chosen you to be the keeper of the knowledge of the land and its power. Therefore, we will teach you how to recognize the flow of energy in the land and how to select grave sites that will make kings and sages out of the descendants of those who are buried there."

Ch'ing Wu lived during the early Han dynasty (206 BCE-219 CE) and is considered by many to be the father of the art of k'an yu (or feng-shui).

Sun Chung lived during the late Han dynasty. His son Sun Chien is regarded as the founder of the Wu dynasty in the era of the Three Kingdoms (220-265 CE). The Three Kingdoms were Wei, founded by Ts'ao Ts'ao's son Ts'ao Pei; Shu, founded by Lui Pei; and Wu, founded by Sun Chien.

Chou Tien was born into a poor family. At fourteen, he came seriously ill; when he recovered, he had lost his memory and became a beggar. Wandering around the marketplace, he would shout, "Peace will come to the nation." Whenever a new government official took office, Chou Tien would pay him a visit and say, "I bring news of good times." Chou Tien divined this and said, "Don't waste your time and effort trying to kill me. I cannot be harmed by fire, water, or weapons."

The emperor did not believe him. "Tie up the madman's hands and feet and throw him into the cauldron," Yüan chang instructed his guards. "And make sure the fire underneath is hot."

After an hour or so, Chou Tien stood up inside the pot and smiled; he was neither burned nor scalded. Yüan-chang then ordered his men to cover the cauldron with a heavy lid. "This will kill him for sure," said the emperor. "No one can survive being cooked for several hours."

The hours passed. There was no movement or noise inside the pot, so Chu Yüan-chang thought the diviner was finally dead. He opened the cauldron, looked inside, and saw Chou Tien sleeping like an infant. The emperor dropped the lid in shock. Chou Tien woke up, yawned, and said, "What was that noise that disturbed my sleep?" Chou Tien helped Chu Yüan-chang end the Yüan dynasty (1271-1368 CE) of the Mongols and establish the Ming dynasty (1368-1644 CE).

Chang Liang knew that Liu Pang would eventually become jealous and suspicious of those who had helped him overthrow the Ch'in dynasty. If Liang had refused a reward, he would have offended his emperor. On the other hand, if he had requested rich lands near the capital, he would be singled out as a competitor to the throne. Therefore, wisely and tactfully, Chang Liang asked for a poor region far from the capital, citing reasons that flattered the emperor.

Toward the end of his life, Liu Pang did indeed come to fear that his ministers and military commanders would overthrow him and begin to murder his closest advisers. Of those who had helped the emperor gain the throne, only Chang Liang did not suffer a violent death.

Huang-Shih Kung is a legendary figure from prehistoric China. He is the patron of diviners and feng-shui practitioners.

Chang Liang lived from the end of the Ch'in dynasty (221-207 BCE) to the early part of the Han dynasty (206 BCE-219 CE). He was chief adviser to Liu Pang and played a considerable role in ending the Ch'in dynasty and establishing that of the Han.

Kuei-ku Tzu was over a hundred years old when he settled in a place called Kuei-ku (Ghost Valley). It was to Ghost Valley that Sun Pin, the grandson of the great military strategist Sun Tzu, went to study strategy, tactics, and diplomacy. Soon, others also flocked to Ghost Valley to learn from this legendary teacher.

Sun Pin became the military adviser of the lord of Ch'i until a jealous rival kidnapped and tortured him. Crippled and left to die in the wilderness, he finally realized that the political arena was fraught with dangers. Pin was lucky to be rescued by a woodcutter who nursed him back to health. After Sun Pin had regained his strength, he returned to Ghost Valley and lived out the rest of his days as a hermit. Of all the famous political and military advisers of the era, he was the only one who did not die a violent death.

Kuei-Ku Tzu lived during the latter part of the Chou dynasty (1122-221 BCE) in the era known as the Warring States (475-221 BCE). His teachings on statecraft, military science, and divination are collected in a book titled Kuei-ku Tzu.

Kuo P'u was born and raised in a town named East River. When he was nine years old, he met a diviner named Kuo Kung. Seeing that the boy was destined to become a master of the arcane arts, the old man taught Kuo P'u the I-ching, the theories of yin and yang, the five elements, and the art of k'an-yu (feng-shui). K'an means "high places," or "mountains," and yu means "low places," or "valleys." Thus, k'an-yu is the art and science of reading the patterns of energy in the mountains and valleys.

His time drinking and writing poetry. Often, he would leave his home for weeks or even months to walk in the mountains or float down the rivers.

To most people, Kuo P'u was an eccentric who had no patience for social conventions. Only P'u's closest friends knew that he was a master diviner who could read omens in the sky, sea, and land. Thus, when he predicted that the town of East River would be sacked by bandits, his friends heeded his words: they sold their properties, packed up their goods, and left. A month later, the river overflowed its banks and flooded the city. While the soldiers from the garrison were off repairing the dams, robbers looted the town.

When Kuo P'u was about forty years old, he divined that he would soon die violently. From that day on, he locked himself in his study and wrote down his lifetime's research on divination, feng-shui, and the I-ching. Not long after P'u had completed his books, he offended the warlord Wang Tun and was executed.

Three days after the execution, Kuo P'u was seen eating and drinking at his favorite restaurant. When this was reported to Wang Tun, the warlord ordered that P'u's grave be opened and examined. In front of a large crowd of witnesses and curious onlookers, the examiners dug up the coffin and removed the lid. To the astonishment of everyone, the coffin was empty. It was only then that the people realized that Kuo P'u was a master of the arcane arts who was not only able to release his spirit just before death, but could "borrow" his body back now and then to walk in the earthly realm.

Kuo P'u lived during the Chin dynasty (265-420 CE). He was a diviner, geographer, astronomer, mythologist, and poet. His book on the selection of burial sites, titled Chuang-shu (The Burial Classic), is still widely studied by modern feng-shui practitioners.

The great poet Su Tung-po heard about Ling-su's talent and paid him a visit.

"I have a gift for you," said the poet, as he handed the child a book on divination. Ling-su flipped through the pages, closed the book, and recited the contents from memory.

Su Tung-po was shocked. He sighed and said, "Your intelligence far surpasses mine. Fame and fortune await you on the horizon."

Surprisingly, Ling-su said, "Whether you are a noble or a commoner, rich or poor, famous or unknown-at best you'll end up as a ghost. My destiny lies beyond this."

When Lin Ling-su was twelve, he met an immortal who taught him the arts of magic and divination. Within two years Ling-su had learned everything the Taoist could teach him. On parting, Ling-su's teacher told him, "You now have the power to command the elements, drive out evil spirits, and see into the future. Use your abilities to benefit others and do

not abuse your power. You will soon meet the emperor at the gates of the Celestial Palace. See that you advise him well."

The Sung emperor was a devout Taoist. One night, he traveled in spirit to the celestial realm to ask for an audience with the lords of heaven. At the gates of the Celestial Palace, he was met by an immortal who told him, "I have been sent by the lords of heaven to give you this message: listen to the advice of honest and virtuous ministers. Stay away from those who speak falsely. Only in this way can your kingdom be saved."

The priest responded, "You should meet Lin Ling-su." When Ling-su arrived at the palace, the emperor looked at him and inquired, "What are your abilities?"

Lin Ling-su replied, "I can travel to the celestial realm; I can predict the future of humanity; and I can intercede on behalf of the dead. Not long ago, we met in the celestial realm."

One night, Lin Ling-su looked up at the sky and saw the emperor's guardian star weakening while another star rose in the north. He sighed and said to himself, "It is written in the heavens. The emperor has lost his mandate to rule. A new ruler is rising to power in the north. There's nothing left for me to do."

The next morning, Lin Ling-su asked for permission to leave. Unable to retain him, the emperor thanked the Taoist for his service and gave him three hundred pounds of gold. When T'sai Ching, who had by then become the chief minister, discovered that Ling-su had received this great gift from the emperor, he told his personal guard, "Kill Ling-su and take his gold."

Ling-su divined T'sai Ching's evil intentions. He returned the three hundred pounds of gold to the emperor. The next day, when the assassins arrived at his retreat, the Taoist was nowhere to be found.

After leaving the capital, Lin Ling-su retreated into the mountains. There he gathered a group of students and taught them the arts of longevity. One day, he called his students together and said, "The country is about to be plunged into war. You should hide in the mountains and wait for the storm to pass. As for me, my time in the mortal realm is over, and I must return to where I originally came from."

Ling-su then sat in a meditation posture, closed his eyes, and sent his spirit to the celestial realm. Not long afterward, the Chin tribe invaded the Sung Empire from the north and captured the emperor. Eventually, this tribe was conquered by the Mongols, who swept south and brought an end to the Sung dynasty.

Lin Ling-Su lived during the latter part of the Sung dynasty (960-1279 CE). It is said that he predicted the kidnapping of the Sung emperor and the fall of the dynasty.

Po-tuan had a friend who was a Zen Buddhist. The two men often met to meditate together and discuss Buddhist and Taoist philosophy. One day, the friend, whose Buddhist name was Hui-ting, went to Po-tuan's retreat and said, "I have mastered the technique of spirit travel. When I enter meditative stillness, I can send my spirit anywhere I want."

The two men sat on their meditation cushions, closed their eyes, and sent their spirits to the flower gardens of Yang county. When Po-tuan arrived, he found his friend already sitting on a bench. Hui-ting remarked, "I've already walked around the garden three times."

When Chang Po-tuan was about to shed his body and enter the immortal realm, he called his students together and said, "After I have gone, you should cremate my body." At ninety-nine years of age, he sent his spirit into the immortal realm. After the students cremated his body, they found among the ashes thousands of tiny fragments of bones that glowed with a golden hue.

Chang Po-Tuan lived during the early part of the Sung dynasty (960-1279 CE). He is one of the greatest exponents of the Southern Complete Reality School and is the author of the famous internal-alchemical classic Wu-chen p'ien (Understanding Reality). Chun-pao was a talented apprentice: by fourteen, he had mastered the Shaolin martial arts, as well as Zen meditation. However, despite these accomplishments, he felt that there was something missing in his training. Thus, at the age of fifteen, he decided to leave Shaolin to look for other teachers. As Chun-pao's cultivation progressed, his appearance changed. His head began to resemble that of a tortoise and his bones became as light as a crane's. His ears grew and his eyes shone with an inner glow. Summer and winter, he wore a hemp robe and straw sandals.

Chang Chun-pao visited many famous mountains where Taoist hermits had settled, but did not find a place to his liking. Once, when he was a guest at the Golden Altar Monastery, he fell asleep and did not wake up for a month. Thinking that he had passed away, his friends bought a casket and performed the funeral rites. Suddenly, Chun-pao sat up and demanded, "Why have you put me in a coffin?"

After this incident, he went to Szechwan and settled on Mount T'ai-ho. He built a hut in the shelter of an ancient grove and spent much of his time in meditation. By then, he was immune to hunger and thirst.

One day, Chang Chun-pao heard a commotion outside his retreat. He looked out of the window and saw a monkey and a snake fighting in front of his hut. As he watched the movements of the combatants, he saw that while the snake had the advantage of speed and flexibility, the monkey had the advantage of agility. "Each animal has its natural ability to defend itself," he observed. "If humans could learn the best of each animal's style of fighting and combine them into one form, what a powerful form of martial art that would be!"

For several years, Chun-pao worked hard to develop a martial art that combined the fighting abilities of various animals. However, after he had created a seemingly invincible fighting style, he still felt it was incomplete.

One day, while walking in the Wu-tang Mountains, Chang Chun-pao looked into a valley and saw leaves whipped into a spiral by the wind. He then looked at the sky and saw clouds swirling around the jagged peaks. Finally, he realized that the forces of the Tao far outweigh the abilities of animals and humans and said to himself, "The aim of the martial arts is not to subdue and conquer opposing forces but to dissolve, deflect, and absorb them."

Chang Chun-pao built a hermitage in the Wu-tang Mountains and began to develop another form of martial art, one based on neutralizing and transforming opposing forces. Using the principles of the Tao as manifested in nature, he called the method T'ai-Ch'i Ch'uan.

One day, while wandering around the mountains of Wutang, Chang Chun-pao saw a rock formation that resembled three peaks pointing up to the sky. Taken by the view, he said, "From now on, my name will be Chang San-feng (Three Peaks)."

Chang San-Feng lived from the end of the Yuan dynasty (1271-1368 CE) into the Ming dynasty (1368-1644 CE). He founded the Wu-tang sect, wrote numerous treatises on internal alchemy, and is considered by many to be the originator of T'ai-Chi Ch'uan.

Cheng Wei loved the Taoist alchemical arts and married a woman with similar interests. The couple built two laboratories in a quiet corner of their estate where, in their spare time, they would experiment with making the pill of immortality and turning mercury into gold.

Another time, Cheng Wei had worked all night in his laboratory trying to transform mercury into gold and had gotten no results. Returning to his room tired and disappointed, he happened to walk past his wife's laboratory. As he looked through the window, he saw something gleaming in her hands. Bursting into his wife's laboratory, Cheng Wei cried, "You

have had the secrets of making gold all this time and didn't tell me!"

His wife replied, "To succeed in the arts of alchemy, it must be in your destiny." She turned and walked away, leaving him angry and frustrated.

Cheng Wei tried to entice his wife with money and jewels, hoping that she would give him the formula. When she refused, he went to a friend and said, "My wife knows the formula for transforming mercury into gold and will not tell me. If you can figure out how to get the formula from her, I'll make sure you're rich for the rest of your life."

The friend came up with a plan: they would poison the woman and then threaten to withhold the antidote if she did not reveal the formula. However, Cheng Wei's wife discovered the plot. She confronted her husband and said to him, "The secrets of the Tao are transmitted only to the right person, even if you only meet him casually on the street. If the person is unsuitable, the Tao is not transmitted, even if refusal means death."

That evening, Cheng Wei's wife smeared mud over her face, feigned madness, and ran away from home naked. Her husband chased her to the edge of town, but she vanished into the night.

Later, the townspeople reported seeing a madwoman in shabby clothes flying up to the sky. Cheng Wei spent the rest of his life experimenting with making a pill of immortality and turning mercury into gold. He succeeded in neither.

Cheng Wei's wife lived during the latter part of the Han dynasty (206 BCE-219 CE). Not much is known about her except that her maiden name was Fang and she was an adept alchemist.

Ko Hung was attracted to the arts of immortality even when he was a child. His family was poor, so he had to collect branches and sell them as firewood in order to buy books and paper. Every evening, after his family had retired to bed, Ko Hung would stay up long into the night studying the classics of medicine, divination, and immortality.

He rarely spoke, did not receive guests, and was not interested in the bustle and excitement of town life. Daily, he studied the Taoist classics and the arts of longevity and immortality. When he had problems understanding a text, Hung would travel hundreds of miles to find a teacher to explain the teachings to him.

On one of his journeys, Ko Hung heard about an alchemist named Cheng Yin and traveled a thousand miles to I Yin's retreat to ask for instruction.

"I do not accept students," said Cheng Yin. "However, because you are sincere and willing to learn, I'll make an exception this time."

At the end of Hung's apprenticeship, Yin said to his student, "I have taught you everything I know. If you want to continue your studies, you should find a man named Pao Hsuan. He is the magistrate of the county of Nan Hai."

On their first meeting, Pao Hsuan was so impressed with Ko Hung that he not only accepted Hung as his student, but decided to make him his son-on-law.

When Ko Hung heard that Mount Lao Fao was rich in cinnabar and other alchemical ingredients, he went to the magistrate of that area and said, "I would be grateful if you could give me a minor post in a village near Mount Lao Fao."

The magistrate could not understand why the young man would want an assignment in a remote and mountainous area. "People with your abilities and background should apply for a post in a large city. No one will notice you in a small village," he protested.

Ko Hung replied, "I'm not interested in a career in the civil service. All I want is to live in an area where I can gather herbs and minerals to make the pill of immortality."

When Ko Hung was eighty-one years old, he wrote a letter to his friend Teng Yüeh saying, "I will be leaving soon to find teachers who can show me the path to immortality." Realizing that Hung was alluding to his departure from the mortal realm, Yüeh set out immediately for Mount Lao Fao, hoping to see his friend one more time.

Yüeh arrived at Ko Hung's retreat and found him sitting on the bed. Hung's eyes were closed, a golden glow radiated from his body, and a sweet fragrance filled the room. When Teng Yüeh saw green and red vapors floating around the cauldron, he realized that Hung had succeeded in making the Dragon-Tiger Elixir.

Teng Yüeh kept a vigil at his friend's home for three days. When the light and the fragrance had disappeared, he went to make arrangements to have Ko Hung buried. However, when Yüeh returned with the undertaker and a coffin, Hung's body was nowhere to be found.

Ko Hung lived during the latter part of the Chin dynasty (265-420 CE) and is regarded as one of the greatest alchemists of his time. His book, the *Pao p'u Tzu* (*The Sage Who Embraces Simplicity*), is still considered an authoritative text on the arts of longevity and immortality.

Yü-ch'an not only was adept at art, calligraphy, and poetry, but was also a scholar. By seven, he had memorized the major Confucian and Taoist classics, and he was proclaimed a child prodigy by the local examiners at twelve. However, despite his talent, Yü-ch'an was not interested in pursuing a career in the government. At sixteen, he left home and wandered around southern China, looking for teachers to instruct him in the arts of longevity and immortality.

After several years of traveling, Pai Yü-ch'an decided to settle on Mount Lao Fao. There, he met a Taoist named Chen Ni-wan who accepted him as a student. Yü-ch'an studied with Ni-wan for nine years. At the end of his apprenticeship, Ni-wan told him, "You are learning so fast that I thought something was unusual. Last night, I went to the celestial realm and discovered that you were once an immortal. Because you offended the lords of heaven with your drunken behavior, you were condemned to spend time in the mortal realm, where you are to redeem yourself by leading people to the Tao. I was sent to help you to return to the celestial realm. Now my work is done. Make good use of your time in the mortal lands."

One year, Pai Yü-ch'an decided to celebrate the Autumn Moon Festival by the river with his friends. The group was laughing, drinking, and making poetry when suddenly Pai Yü-ch'an stood up and jumped into the water. Just as his friends were about to dive in to save him, Yü-ch'an's head surfaced. He looked at his friends, shook his head, indicating that they were not to rescue him, and then disappeared into the depths of the river. Pai Yü-ch'an, like his teacher Chen Ni-wan, had chosen to shed his shell in the water when he sent his spirit to the immortal realm.

Pai Yü-Ch'an lived during the latter part of the Sung dynasty (960-1279 CE). He is the fifth patriarch of the Southern Complete Reality School. His writings on the arts of longevity and immortality are collected in the *Pai Yü-ch'an ch'üan-chi* (*The Collected Works of Pai Yü-ch'an*).

T'ai-yin Nü loved the Taoist arts of immortality from the time she was a child. When she could not find someone to instruct her, she said to herself, "I'll study by myself. If it is in my destiny, then someday I'll find a teacher." One morning, a man came to her shop to buy a flask of wine. Noticing that the woman who served him was well mannered and intelligent, he said, "You walk the path of the white tiger and snake; I walk the path of the green dragon and black tortoise. In this world, who can understand this?"

When T'ai-yin Nü heard this, she was delighted. She asked the man, "What is the numeric of the element earth?" He replied, "I don't know the numeric of the element earth, but south is three, north is five, east is nine, west is seven, and the center is one."

That evening during dinner, her guest said to her, "My name is T'ai-yang Tzu and I am a subordinate of the celestial

lords. I have drunk the water of the sacred light; I have ascended to the North Star; and my body has the five treasures. In acknowledging me as a virtuous man, you have become a part of my family."

T'ai-yang Tzu stayed at T'ai-yin Nü's retreat for several days and taught her the arts of immortality. Before he left, he told her, "Continue to practice your meditation. Fly to the stars to receive instructions from the celestial lords. They will let you know when the elixir is ready."

One day, T'ai-yin Nü saw a purple vapor rising from the cauldron. Intuitively she knew the elixir was ready. She poured it into a cup, drank it, and floated up to the sky. At that time, she was almost two hundred years old, but her appearance resembled that of a young woman.

T'ai-Yin Nü probably lived during the T'ang dynasty (618-906 CE). Not much else is known about her.

Wei Po-yang was a native of southeast China. Even as a child, he was attracted to the alchemical arts of immortality. At the age of eighteen, he went into the mountains, built a laboratory, and experimented with making the pill of immortality.

Wei Po-yang called his students together and said, "I think I have succeeded in making the pill of immortality, but before we take it, we should test it on the dog."

Po-yang opened the lid of the cauldron, took out one of the pills, and gave it to the dog. Minutes later, the dog fell over and stopped breathing. Wei Po-yang sighed and said, "It is the will of heaven."

When none of the students volunteered, Wei Po-yang said, "I will give it a try." After swallowing the pill, he too fell down and stopped breathing.

The two intelligent students said to each other, "Our teacher has died from this pill. It would be stupid for us to take it and die as well. After all, our goal is to attain immortality. If we can't become immortal, then we should go home." They went into the laboratory, gathered their belongings, and made their way down the mountain.

The dim-witted student stood and looked at the cauldron for a long time. Then he said to himself, "My teacher has always been a cautious man. He wouldn't take a pill that would kill him." Slowly, he reached into the cauldron, picked up a pill, and swallowed it. Then he sat on a rock and waited. Suddenly, Wei Po-yang stood up, laughed, and patted the student on his back. Moments later, the dog also stood up and ran to his master. Wei Po-yang soon began to feel weightless. When he took a step, he found himself floating up to the sky. Flying up close behind him were his student and the dog. The apprentices who had decided to leave their teacher spotted the three. The two students hurried back to the laboratory, but when they got there, the fire in the furnace was out and there was nothing left in the cauldron. Wei Po-Yang lived during the latter part of the Han dynasty (206 BCE-219 CE). He is regarded as the father of the alchemical arts of immortality and is the author of the first Taoist alchemical text, Tsan-tung-chi (Triplex Unity).