

Some Important Female Daoists/Daoist Women*

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Xīwángmǔ 西王母 (Queen Mother of the West; mythological/divine). Also known as Yáochí jīnmǔ 瑤池金母 (Golden Mother of the Turquoise Pond). Ancient Chinese goddess and matriarch-empress of Mount Kūnlún 崑崙, the western immortal realm and terrestrial paradise. Especially associated with the peaches of immortality (*xiāntáo* 仙桃). Her standard iconography in turn includes a peach-headress.

Nǚyǔ 女媧 (Woman Yu; ca. 300 BCE). Also referred to as “female recluse,” “Feminine Self-reliance,” and “Woman Crookback.” Appears in chapter 6 of the *Zhuāngzi* 莊子 (Book of Master Zhuang). The only known senior female teacher of the inner cultivation lineages of classical Daoism. The gender of her disciple Bǔliángyǐ 卜梁倚 (Divining Beam-Support) is indeterminable.

Yù Jiāng 玉姜 (Jade Jiang; ca. 3rd c. BCE?). More commonly known as Máonǚ 毛女 (Hairy Lady). Renowned early female immortal, who also later became associated with Huàshān 華山 (Mount Hua; Huàyīn, Shānxī) and with the Daoist mountain recluse and immortal Chén Tuán 陳搏 (Xīyí 希夷 [Infinitesimal Subtlety]; d. 989). As Máonǚ, her standard iconography includes a hair-covered body and pine-tree branch.

Mágū 麻姑 (Hemp Maiden; 1st c. CE?). Renowned early female immortal. Often depicted as accompanied by a divine deer as her companion-animal.

Dàomǔ 道母 (Mother of the Dao; mythological/divine). Also known as Lǐmǔ 李母 (Mother Li). The mother of the equally legendary Lǎozǐ 老子 (“Master Lao”; trad. dat. 6th c. BCE), whose “original name” was Lǐ Ěr 李耳 and who was eventually deified as Lǎojūn 老君 (Lord Lao). Dàomǔ emerged in the Later Han dynasty (23-220 CE) and became especially revered during the Tang dynasty (618-907), as both royal houses linked themselves to the Lǐ family. Her name should not be understood as the mother of the Dao in the sense giving birth to the Dao itself, but rather to Lǎozǐ as the personal, divinized manifestation of the Dao.

Wèi Huácún 魏華存 (251-334). Also known as “Lady Wei.” Early female Tiānshī 天師 (Celestial Master) libationer (*jìjiǔ* 祭酒). Later became identified as one of the Perfected (*zhēnrén* 真人) who bestowed the early Shàngqīng 上清 (Highest Clarity) revelations. As she was said to have gone into seclusion and realized the Dao on Héngshān 衡山 (Mount Heng; Héngyáng, Húnán), often venerated as the patron-saint of that mountain. As such, referred to as Nányuè fūrén 南嶽夫人 (Lady of the Southern Marchmount).

* The list is chronological. Some of these individuals are mythological and divine. We have included them in order to point towards a more complex, multi-dimensional and potential Daoist “matrilineal sub-tradition.”

Táo Kēdòu 陶科斗 (d. 362). Wife of Xǔ Mì 許謚 (303-376) and matriarchal ancestor of Táo Hóngjǐng 陶弘景 (Tōngmíng 通明 [Pervasive Illumination]; 456-536). Key inspiration behind and source-point of the original Shàngqīng 上清 (Highest Clarity) revelations.

Jīnxiān 金仙 (Golden Immortal; 689-732). Also known as Princess Xīchéng 西城. Tang dynasty princess and ordained Daoist priestess. Among twenty-eight such royal princesses to receive Daoist ordination. Eighth daughter of Emperor Ruìzōng 睿宗 (r. 684-690; r. 710-712).

Yùzhēn 玉真 (Jade Perfected; 691-762). Also known as Princess Lóngchāng 隆昌. Tang dynasty princess and ordained Daoist priestess. Among twenty-eight such royal princesses to receive Daoist ordination. Ninth daughter of Emperor Ruìzōng 睿宗 (r. 684-690; r. 710-712).

Hé Xiāngū 何仙姑 (Immortal Lady He; fl. 707-710?). Possibly legendary Daoist immortal first identified during the Tang dynasty (618-907). Became incorporated as the only female member of the Eight Immortals (*bāxiān* 八仙) from the Yuan dynasty (1279-1368) forward. Her standard iconography includes a large ladle, usually containing immortal mushrooms, peaches, and pine branches, which may resemble a parasol. Sometimes includes a lotus flower.

Liǔ Mòrán 柳默然 (773-840). Relatively unknown Tang dynasty (618-907) Daoist priestess, who attained the highest ordination rank. Involved in the transmission of the *Zuòwàng lùn* 坐忘論 (Discourse on Sitting-in-Forgetfulness; DZ 1036; ZH 992).

Hú Yīn 胡愔 (Xiànsù 見素 [Appearing Plain]; fl. 840s). Relatively unknown Tang dynasty (618-907) ordained Daoist priestess as well as Chinese medical physician and theorist. She is especially noteworthy for composing a work on Daoist longevity techniques and medical theory titled *Huángtíng nèijǐng wǔzàng liùfǔ bǔxiè tú* 黃庭內景五臟六腑補瀉圖 (Illustrations of the Tonification and Purgation of the Five Yin-Organs and Six Yang-Organs According to the *Huángtíng nèijǐng* [Inner View of the Yellow Court]; DZ 432; ZH 907).

Zǔ Shū 祖舒 (fl. 889-904). Ordained Tang dynasty (618-907) priestess who became identified as the founding matriarch of the Qīngwēi 清微 (Pure Tenuity) movement. The latter became one of the major new Daoist ritual movements during the late Southern Song dynasty (1127-1279).

Cáo Wényì 曹文逸 (fl. 1119-1125). Originally named Cáo Dào chōng 曹道冲. Honored as the first women to engage in internal alchemy (*nèidān* 內丹). Also renowned poet associated with Luófú shān 羅浮山 (Mount Luofu; Bólúō, Guǎngdōng). Composed the *Dàdào gē* 大道歌 (Song of the Great Dao), which is extant in two DZ editions. Also apparently wrote lost commentaries on a variety of Daoist texts, including the *Xīshēng jīng* 西昇經 (Scripture on the Western Ascension; DZ 666; ZH 493).

Sūn Bùèr 孫不二 (Qīngjìng 清靜 [Clear Stillness]; 1119-1183), one of the so-called Seven Perfected (*qīzhēn* 七真) and the only senior female member of the early Quánzhēn 全真 (Complete Perfection) movement. Later identified as the founder of Qīngjìng pài 清靜派 (Clarity-and-Stillness Lineage), a female lineage of Quánzhēn. Also revered as one of the founding matriarchs of female alchemy (*nǚdān* 女丹) and Kūndào 坤道 (Women's Way) more generally.

