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Sommario/riassunto	One of the most magnificent and enduring themes in Chinese painting history can be found depicted in Daoist temples from the local village up to the very capital, viz., the paintings of the Heavenly Court (chaoyuan tu). Surprisingly, its images have remained largely unstudied in Western scholarship. Drawing on a comparative study of four complete sets of wall paintings dating back to the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries (the oldest examples), and their related images, painting criticism, stele inscriptions, and Daoist ritual manuals, the author offers the first comprehensive study of the historical development, iconography, ritual context, methods of mural design,

and the personalisations made by patrons of the four Heavenly Court paintings.

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