

**The True Realm of Vision:
The Visualization of Inner Alchemy in Yuan *Shanshui* Painting**

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Abstract

This dissertation re-examines the role Daoism plays in Chinese pictorial art, especially the relationship between Daoist inner alchemical (*neidan*, 內丹) visuality and the art of *shanshuihua* 山水畫 (the painting of mountains and waters, often referred as “Chinese Landscape painting”), by focusing on Yuan dynasty (1279-1368) Daoist Huang Gongwang 黃公望 (1269-1354) as well as his circle of fellow Daoist literati. By analyzing Huang’s paintings’ resemblance with inner alchemical graphs from the Daoist Canon and inner alchemical literary sources, this dissertation argues that Huang’s later paintings can be read as different stages of inner alchemical transformative process. Huang has transformed his inner alchemical vision into *shanshuihua* and used *shanshuihua* as a proper vehicle to access to the truth and reality of Dao. Consequently, Huang Gongwang’s inner alchemical visual expression set new paradigm for his protégés as well as the following generations. Inner alchemical *shanshuihua* exists as a genre, a tradition that goes beyond the scope of Huang Gongwang. It is also the project’s purpose to bring awareness to this unique genre of painting: inner alchemical *shanshuihua* 內丹山水畫.

By examining the often-overlooked alchemical connotation of *shanshuihua*, this study will add to our understanding of the *zhen* 真 (truth, the “really real”) of landscape as well as bodily representation. *Zhen* points us to a higher realm of existence, the ultimate reality of Dao. Inner alchemical *shanshuihua* exhibits the true realm through the agency of *shanshui*, creating a unified image of the macrocosm and microcosm. By doing so, it breaks down the constant confrontation and opposition between the “I” and the cosmos.

Furthermore, it will also push us to reconsider the conventional boundary between graph and painting, as well as the function and agency of painting in religious context. Inner alchemical *shanshuihua* could potentially have the same function as a typical Daoist bodily graph, and work as a record of knowledge, a mode of transmission, and even a teaching aid. This project also reinforces the significance of religious ideals in deciphering the symbolic meaning of *shanshuihua*.

Table of Contents

1. Introduction	1
1.1 General Introduction	1
1.2 Methodology and Key Essentials	3
1.3 Translation and Tradition	5
1.4 The Studies of Yuan Dynasty <i>Shanshuihua</i>	11
1.5 Inner Alchemy and Quanzhen Daoism in the Yuan	15
1.6 Inner Alchemical <i>Shanshuihua</i> and the field of Daoist Art	24
1.7 Structure and Chapters	33
2. Redefining <i>Shanshui</i> and Human Body in the Daoist Context	36
2.1 The Concept of <i>zhen</i>	40
2.1.1 The concept of <i>zhen</i> in Daoist classics	40
2.1.2 The concept of <i>zhen</i> in Quanzhen Daoism	47
2.1.3 The paradoxical framework of <i>zhen</i>	50
2.2 The Daoist Body	53
2.2.1 Daoist Mode of Perception	53
2.2.2 The Archetype and Anxiety of Daoist Body	57
2.3 <i>Shanshui</i> as Intermediary Between Body and Dao	61
2.3.1 <i>Shanshui</i> as the Paradigm of Dao	61
2.3.2 Corporeal Affinity Between Human and <i>Shanshui</i>	62
2.3.3 Dissolving the Border Between Body and <i>Shanshui</i> : The Inner Landscape	70
2.3.4 Immortality as “Moving into the Mountain”	72
2.3 Conclusion	77
3. Mapping the Inner Landscape	79
3.1 The Sacred Landscape	80
3.1.1 Mountain Kunlun and Jade Capitoline	80
3.1.2 The Altar	94
3.1.3 The Grotto-Heavens	100
3.2 Inner Alchemical Visuality	102
3.2.1 Representative Inner Alchemical Charts	106
3.2.2 Symbols and Metaphors	111
3.2.3 Space and Time in Inner Alchemical Body	113
3.2.4 The Inner Alchemical Time	119
3.2.5 Three Stages and The Inverted Path	121
3.2.6 The Cycle of Yin and Yang	129
3.3 Concluding Remarks	133
4. Transforming Inner Alchemical Vision into <i>Shanshuihua</i>	134
4.1 The Greatly Foolish Daoist	135
4.2 [Re]view of <i>Sunny after Sudden Snow</i>	145
4.3 [Re]view of <i>Nine Peaks after Snow</i>	156
4.4 [Re]view of <i>Stony Cliff at Heavenly Pond</i>	163
4.5 Conclusion	173
5. “As One”	175

5. 1 The Inner Alchemical Path	176
5. 2 The Visualized Realm	192
5. 3 Conclusion	201
6. Concluding Remark	203

Introduction

“[One must take] the body as the mountain-stream to discover it. The significant aspects of the mountain and water will then be apparent.”

蓋身即山川而取之，則山水之意度見矣。

-- Guo Xi 郭熙(1279-1368)

*Shanshui jue*¹ 山水訣 (*Mountains and Waters Treatise*)

1. General Introduction

This dissertation re-examines the role Daoism² plays in Chinese pictorial art, especially the relationship between Daoist inner alchemical (*neidan*, 內丹) visuality and the art of *shanshuihua* 山水畫 (the painting of mountains and waters, often referred as “Chinese Landscape painting”), by focusing on Yuan dynasty(1279-1368) Daoist Huang Gongwang 黃公望 (1269-1354) as well as his circle of fellow Daoist literati. By analyzing Huang’s paintings’ resemblance with inner alchemical graphs from the Daoist Canon and inner alchemical literary sources, this dissertation argues that Huang’s later paintings can be read as different stages of inner alchemical transformative process. Huang has transformed his inner alchemical vision into *shanshuihua* and used *shanshuihua* as a proper vehicle to access to the truth and reality of Dao. Consequently, Huang Gongwang’s inner alchemical visual

¹ Guo Si, *Lin Quan Gao Zhi* 林泉高致 (Lofty Record of Forests and Streams). Beijing, Zhong Guo Guang Bo Dian Shi Chu Ban She, 2013.p6

² This dissertation will not distinguish the so-called “philosophical Daoism” from “religious Daoism”. I believe such distinction is unnecessary and futile. I agree with Poul Andersen that Daoism is not conceived by the Chinese as either a philosophy or a religion, but as a “way” (*dao* 道) and as a “teaching” (*jiao* 教), which includes both thoughts, beliefs and “methods” (*fa* 法). See Poul Andersen, *The Paradox of Being: Truth, Identity, and Images in Daoism*. Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Asia Center, 2019.p1

expression set new paradigm for his protégés as well as the following generations. Huang's fellow literati repeated some of the same visual tropes in their own paintings, as do subsequent generations of painters. Meanwhile, they created new inner alchemical visual language and constantly expand the repertoire. Inner alchemical *shanshuihua* exists as a genre, a tradition that goes beyond the scope of Huang Gongwang, as well as the Yuan literati circle. It is also the project's purpose to bring awareness to this unique genre of painting: inner alchemical *shanshuihua* 內丹山水畫.

By examining the often-overlooked alchemical connotation of *shanshuihua*, this study will add to our understanding of the *zhen* 真 (truth, the “really real”) of landscape as well as bodily representation. *Zhen* points us to a higher realm of existence, the ultimate reality of Dao. Inner alchemical *shanshuihua* exhibits the true realm through the agency of *shanshui*, creating a unified image of the macrocosm and microcosm. By doing so, it breaks down the constant confrontation and opposition between the “I” and the cosmos. This genre of painting will deepen our understanding of the Chinese concept of the unity of humanity and nature, of how such knowledge is transformed, synthesized, and adopted in Daoist visual tradition.

Furthermore, it will also push us to reconsider the conventional boundary between graph and painting, as well as the function and agency of painting in religious context. Inner alchemical *shanshuihua* could potentially have the same function as a typical Daoist bodily graph, and work as a record of knowledge, a mode of transmission, a mnemonic device a visual translation of a text, and even a teaching aid. This project also reinforces the significance of religious ideals in deciphering the symbolic meaning of *shanshuihua*.

2. Methodology and Key Essentials

“In these days of specialized research and detailed, objective analysis, it seems atavistic to return to issues such as time, space, void, structure, mimesis, and polarity when discussing Chinese painting. Basic research can continue for a long time, since the field of Chinese painting is virtually inexhaustible. But without a critical frame of reference, this process may eventually result in nothing more than a pool of carefully gathered data, justifiable on its own terms but perhaps less and less intelligible.”

--*The Fallacy of a Spatial Approach in Chinese Painting*³, Ju Hsi Chou

This somewhat bitter comment brings out a thorny aspect in the field of Chinese art history, if not Chinese studies in general. No matter how many art discourses and theories there were in the long Chinese history, the modern field of art history “did not naturally grow in that tradition”, as Wu Hung remarks.⁴ It is an “universal” and modern discipline whose root can be traced back to the aesthetics and philosophical construction of Hegel. Consequently, concepts and theories such as image, representation, iconography, formalism, and perspective used in Chinese art history are “loanwords” borrowed from western languages. Although these words appear to be universal and neutral, they have limitations when it comes to an alternate culture, especially a culture that does not comply with the rules of perspective (be that linear-perspective or multifocal perspective). We would immediately

³ Chou Ju-Hsi, “The Fallacy of a Spatial Approach in Chinese Painting” in Ju-Hsi Chou, et al. *Silent Poetry: Chinese Paintings from the Collection of the Cleveland Museum of Art*. Cleveland, Oh, Cleveland Museum of Art, New Haven, Ct, 2015.p1

⁴ Wu Hung, “The Sixty-Eighth A. W. Mellon Lectures in the Fine Arts End as Beginning: Chinese Art and Dynastic.” *YouTube*, 20 June 2019, www.youtube.com/watch?v=saeVbmf56II. Accessed 30 Aug. 2021.

feel the awkwardness were we try to apply traditional Chinese concepts such as “*qi*” 氣⁵ to impressionist paintings. It is not that we cannot use the scope of *qi* to understand Monet’s subtle change of light and shade – I am sure we can develop some self-contained discourses accordingly – it is whether such understanding can bring out the true meaning of this image. I am also not suggesting that we should replace all these modern/western concepts with indigenous language, after all art history is a transcultural discipline. Nevertheless, we need to acknowledge the necessity to introduce indigenous Chinese concepts into general art historical discourse.⁶

In this dissertation I would like to combine modern art historical methodologies with traditional and indigenous Chinese concepts and correlative thinking. I will compare *shanshuihua* with inner alchemical graphs and literary sources from the *Zhengtong Daozang* 正統道藏⁷(Daoist Canon under the Zhengtong reign) for a careful iconographical study, and then continue to examine the social-cultural influences and values that the artist condensed into one work, consciously or not, and reveal the underlying principles that form the basic attitude of a work. But aside that, I will also try to address the abstract Chinese concepts and

⁵ *Qi* is the vital energy circulating both in the human body and in the atmosphere. The concept of *qi* allows everything to be ontologically connected and transformable, therefore breaking the binary opposition between body and mind, spirit and matters.

⁶ It somehow related to a deeper question: whether language should be “globalized” and how should we resolve difficulties found in transcultural dialogues. For an extensive discussion on the current situation and challenge of Chinese art historical studies, please refer to Jerome Silbergeld’s article “Where does it come from? Where does it go? – The past and future of Chinese Art History” in Wu Hung, and Weiqi Guo. *Shi Jie. 3, Hai Wai Zhongguo Yi Shu Shi Yan Jiu* 世界3, 海外中國藝術史研究 (*World. 3, Research on Chinese Art History: A Western Perspective*) Shanghai, Shanghai Ren Min Chu Ban She, 2020.p234

⁷ The Zhengtong Daozang (hereby referred to as *DZ*) was printed under the Zhengtong (1436-1449) reign in 1445. It is one of the most authoritative collections of Daoist texts, graphs, charts, maps, talismans and so on. This dissertation also benefits greatly from Schipper, Kristofer. *The Taoist Canon: A Historical Companion to the Daozang / I from Antiquity to the Middle Ages*. Vol 1-3. Chicago, Univ. Of Chicago Press, 2004-2005. The work number follows the title concordance of Kristofer Schipper, and Yaoting Chen. *Daozang Suoyin: Wu Zhong Banben Daozang Tongjian*. Shanghai, Shanghai Shudian, 1996.

the logic applied to Daoist visuality, such as correlative thinking, the principle of yin and yang, the unity of the exterior and interior, and so on.

In the analysis of paintings, I will avoid squeezing the painting into one single narrative box just to make it fit for the “whole picture”. Every work is complex. As complexity emerges from the overall framework for interpretation, we should be expecting conflicts and paradoxes along the way. The theme of a painting does not always agree with its form, style or medium. While sometimes discrepancy leads to major findings or breakthrough, in other cases we need to accept the fact that “paradox and contradiction are distinguishing elements in human history”.⁸

3. Translation and Tradition

In this thesis, I will use the transliterated term *shanshuihua* to refer to this genre of painting. Although “landscape painting” might seem more straightforward, yet the phrase is only derivatively what *shanshuihua* means. The meaning, connotation and history of these two terms are significantly different. To assume *shanshuihua* equals to the genre of landscape art runs the risk of overlooking its indigenous intellectual history and cultural roots.

In the Western tradition, landscape art emerged as an independent genre in the 16th century in the Netherlands. Simon Schama informs us that the word *landscape* entered the English language as a Dutch import at the end of 16th century, and the Dutch word *landschap* tells us as much: it “signified a unit of human occupation, indeed a jurisdiction, as much as anything that might be a pleasing object of depiction.”⁹ The human design and use of the

⁸ Duberman, Martin “Review of *The South and Sectional Conflict* by David M. Potter,”. *New York Times*, January 12. 1969.

⁹ Schama, Simon. *Landscape and Memory*. London Harper Perennial, 2004.p10

landscape lie in the root of seventeenth century Dutch landscape painting, which is regarded the most traditional subject of landscape aesthetics. Although the article “Landscape Painting” in *The Oxford Companion to Western Art* distinguishes the two traditions by saying that Chinese landscape painting “is closely bound up with an almost mystic reverence for the powers of nature” while in the Western (Roman) painting, “nature is depicted as unified scene and enjoyed for its own sake”,¹⁰ contemporary discussions of landscape art are likely to be contentious. This is especially true considering the economic and colonial/imperial operation over the aesthetic idealization of landscape. W.J.T. Mitchell alerts us those “hard facts” embedded in idealized settings.¹¹ Take Dutch landscape art pioneer Meindert Hobbema’s painting *A Woody Landscape* (figure 1.1) as an example: at first glance the painting presents a picturesque summer scene in the countryside, and the idyllic walk of the farmers and billowing cumulus clouds seem to suggest a carefree life. However, this painting did not necessarily reflect the reality of these farmers whose life depends on the woodland. The lush green trees dominating the center of the image are not just natural beauties but are important economic resources. In other words, the idyllic pastoral life this painting suggests is largely an imaginary projection. The vision is only appealing to those who are unaware of the actual living conditions of the farmers and who are likely to romanticize a seemingly “easier” lifestyle.

Nevertheless, I am not suggesting that the genre of landscape art has an inevitable “dark side”, nor that the representation of natural beauty is nothing but a cover – which is

¹⁰ Brigstocke, Hugh. *The Oxford Companion to Western Art*. Oxford; New York, Oxford University Press, 2001.

¹¹ Mitchell, W.J.T. *Landscape and Power*. Chicago, Ill. Univ. Of Chicago Press, 1994. p12

absolutely not the case. However, it is without doubt that the context for the discussions of landscape art of the West is very much related to modernity, and such framework is quite different from *shanshuihua*. But there is a growing consensus between two traditions that landscape should be treated as a theoretical object, and even an agent of power. It is a cultural medium that exerts power over people, as W.J.T. Mitchell eloquently puts it: “It (landscape) naturalizes a cultural and social construction, representing an artificial world as if it were simply given and inevitable, and it also makes that representation operational by interpellating its beholder in some more or less determinate relation to its givenness.”¹²



Figure 1.1. Meindert Hobbema, *A Woody Landscape*, 1665, Oil on oak. 60.4 x 84.3 cm

On the other hand, the transliterated term *shanshuihua* will also help to preserve the dynamic interaction between *shan* 山 (mountain) and *shui* 水 (water). Although *shan* and *shui* represent a whole series of binary oppositions such as yang vs. yin, stability vs. fluidity, they are not exclusive opposites. Each side implies the other. They echo each other through the endless variation of forms. *Shanshui* as a compound can be traced back to as early as 4th

¹² Mitchell, W.J.T. 1994, p2.

century in Zong Bing's 宗炳(375-443) *Hua shanshui xu* 畫山水序 (*Introduction to Painting Mountain and Water*). It is the earliest extant theoretical formulation that has come down to us. In this short essay, Zong Bing remarks that “Sages model themselves on the Dao through their spirits and the virtuous comprehend this. Mountain and water display the beauty of the Dao through their forms and the benevolent delight in this”夫聖人以神法道，而賢者通；山水以形媚道，而仁者樂。¹³ Without going into a complex analysis, here suffice it to say that the meaning of *shanshui* had already been philosophized. Another treatise in *Songshu* 宋書 (*Book of the Song*) records how Zong Bing appreciates *shanshuihua*: “All I do now is purify my heart and contemplate the Dao by wandering in the paintings from my bed”唯當澄懷觀道，臥以遊之。¹⁴ The spirit of imaginatively entering the painting and wandering around has never divorced from *shanshuihua* ever since, if not earlier.

Shanshui motifs first appeared in Chinese figural paintings as background from the Han dynasty onwards. It had evolved into an independent genre by the late Tang dynasty (618-907). Proceeding from the early founders of the monumental landscape style – Jing Hao 荆浩 (c. 855-915), Guan Tong 關仝 (fl. mid 10th), Dong Yuan 董源 (d.962), Ju Ran 巨然 (b.962) of the Five Dynasties period (907-960), *shanshuihua* reached full development in the Song (960-1279) and Yuan, and continued to develop all the way through the present. It remains as one the most potent sources of inspiration for contemporary artists. The modern style of

¹³ Zong Bing, et al. *Hua Shan Shui Xu* 畫山水序. Beijing, Ren Min Mei Shu Chu Ban She, 2016.p5

¹⁴ Shen Yue, ed. *Book of Song*, Volume 93, Biographies 53: Hermits. For an extensive discussion on Zong Bing, see Susan Bush, “Tsong Ping’s Essay on Painting Landscape and the “Landscape Buddhism” of Mount Lu” in Bush, Susan, et al. *Theories of the Arts in China*. Princeton, N.J., Princeton University Press, 1983.p132-164. Lim Chyehong also provides a complete translation of *Hua shanshui xu* in her dissertation. See Lim Chyehong, [Re]viewing the Chinese Landscape: Imaging the Body [In]visible in Shanshuihua. Ph.D. diss., University of New South Wales, Australia. 2011

shanshuihua incorporated different traditions from around the world and transformed this genre into a multi-cultural and multi-medium artform. For example, artist Xia Xiaowan 夏小萬(1959 --) creates layers of 2D paintings on multiple thin transparent layers of glass to give the original *shanshuihua* a 3D effect (figure 1.2). Applying this spatial method to ancient painting, he is able to interpret the imaginary space between natural elements and more importantly, restore the viewer experience amid mountains and waters, the experience of “you” 遊(wander) as mentioned earlier. The viewer is able to “walk” in the painting: from the nearby trees all the way to the distant mountains and to examine the various appearances of mountains from different angles. Xia Xiaowan’s work is also an example showing us how the spirit of the *shanshuihua* continues to influence the aesthetic discourses of present day.



Figure 1.2. Xia Xiaowan, Snow Mountains in the Style of Juran.
Plexiglass, 176 X 97 X 83cm, 2008, Long Museum.¹⁵

¹⁵ The picture on the left is accessed through Long Museum website (<http://www.thelongmuseum.org/en/>). The one on the right is taken by me.

This recognition somehow brings us back to the beginning question: how is *shanshuihua* different from Western landscape painting? Aside from the usual comparison between formats (scrolls vs. paintings), material (ink/color vs. oil/acrylic/watercolor), medium (paper/silk vs. canvas), Ju Hsi Chou summarized the difference from four aspects: three dimensions versus four, windows versus journey, viewing versus traveling, space box versus continuum¹⁶. That is to say, the inbuilt mode of viewing the handscroll and hanging scroll – the gesture of slowly unfolding and unveiling – make time an indispensable characteristic for *shanshuihua*. This sequential aspect is alien to the three-dimension geometry-centered spatial art of perspective: “Space in Chinese painting functions as a measure of time, and vice versa”.¹⁷ Furthermore, contrary to the Western tradition that painting is a view through a window, the proper way to enjoy a *shanshuihua* is to take on a journey – the space in a *shanshuihua* is to be personally covered, traversed, and trodden, in addition to being seen. Last but not the least, the Western space box of the perspective system offers its viewer a gestalt underlined with a basic geometry. Since the gestalt is a priori, it sweeps up all and make the whole image either in a moment, or in eternity, so that an artist’s perception can be shared by many. On the other hand, the continuum of space and time of the scrolls is flexible and elastic, shifting and winding, experiential and concrete: time can either encompass space or yield to space and then reabsorb it. To use Chou’s metaphor: the continuum of a Chinese scroll painting is skin to a dragon of space and time, zigzagging its way through the unknown void. We will come back to these significant characteristics of Chinese *shanshuihua* in the following chapters.

¹⁶ Chou, 2015, p3

¹⁷ Chou, 2015, p3

4. The Studies of Yuan Dynasty *Shanshuihua*

For a long time in art historical studies, Yuan (1279-1368) painting has been regarded as the most revolutionary art in Chinese history. Max Loehr calls the third quarter of the thirteenth century “a break so profound as none before or after that time”¹⁸ in the history of Chinese painting. James Cahill regards Yuan as a significant period of cultural creativity and reformation, as crucial as the Renaissance to the study of European painting.¹⁹ According to these mid twentieth-century scholars, *shanshuihua* reached unprecedented monumentality and transcendence in the Song (960-1279) and Yuan in the hands of literati painters, a revered social class of education and self-cultivation. While *shanshuihua* of the Song attained the furthest point it was ever to reach in the direction of objective representation, the concern for resemblance declined once arriving at the peak of realism. Literati painters turned away from objective representation and were, in their constant endeavor, exploring new dimensions of *shanshui* motifs and paradigms. Su Shi 蘇軾(1037-1101) speaks of mountains and waters as something “though they have no constant form, nevertheless have an enduring pattern”²⁰ 雖無常形，而有常理. Therefore, for the literati, to paint is not to imitate the external form of a particular reality, but to grasp the intrinsic principle that makes the mountains or waters. In relation to this conscious and deliberate “retreat from likeness”, the theme of painting in the Yuan shifted from objective representation to the artist’s individual expression (*yanzhi* 言志). Accordingly, the purpose of *shanshuihua* is not so much an expression of its time and

¹⁸ Loehr, Max. *Chinese Painting after Sung*. New Haven, Yale University Art Gallery, 1968.p1

¹⁹ Cahill, James. *Hills beyond a River: Chinese Painting of the Yuan dynasty, 1279-1368*. New York, Weatherhill, 1976.p3

²⁰ Jullien, François, *The Great Image has no form, On the Nonobject through Painting*, trans. by Jane Maria Todd, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009, p123

ideological moral order as an individual response to reorient and rediscover their identity. This is especially true under the reign of the Mongol “invaders”, for literati are usually Song loyalists and ethnic Han who resisted foreign rule and used painting as a device to vent their deeply rooted psychological disposition. Therefore, as Fang Wen concluded, Zhao Mengfu 趙孟頫 (1254-1322), the “Four Great Masters of the Yuan”²¹ and other high-minded literati painters permanently altered the nature of pictorial art in China.²² By emphasizing the cultivation of the self, literati painting became for the artist the vehicle for moral and cultural survival. The Yuan revolution thus transferred painting from mere craftsmanship to lofty literati self-expression, from a broad range of subject to the unshakable status of *shanshuihua* as the “only” proper artistic theme, from mimetic representation of nature to calligraphically constructed naturalness, and from objectivity to subjectivity.

This is a compelling narrative about the Yuan painting, especially that it adds a heroic and noble glow to the literati. But this overly simple narrative structure centered on literati individual expression and foreign political impact make us ponder whether this is the whole story about Yuan art. Is “individual expression” a unique Yuan phenomenon in painting? Are literati truly the center of Yuan art? Is there a clear border between the Song and Yuan painting traditions? (Does art come in chapters?) Are court painters and literati so distinct groups that there was no cross in between? Are there other visual elements and art mediums left unnoticed? And even for the literati themselves, are the diversity and the richness of their paintings all be considered a “response” towards social upheaval and political turmoil?

²¹ Huang Gongwang 黃公望(1269-1354), Ni Zan 倪瓚(1301-1374), Wang Meng 王蒙(1308-1385), Wu Zhen 吳鎮(1280-1354)

²² Fang, Wen C. *Beyond Representation: Chinese Painting and Calligraphy 8th - 14th Century*. New York, Ny, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1992, p431

With these questions in mind, a new generation of scholars began to question the legitimacy of the so-called “Yuan revolution”, of whether there was such a drastic moment. Vol.37 of *Ars Orientalis* (2009) titled “New Direction in Yuan Painting” published ten papers attacking the problems of historical interpretation of Yuan painting, including Robert E. Harrist’s “I Don’t Believe in the Literati but I Miss them”, Richard Vinograd’s “De-centering Yuan Painting” and Maxwell K. Hearn’s “Shifting Paradigms in Yuan Literati Art: The Case of the Li-Guo Tradition”.²³ These scholars are trying to reveal a more complex picture of Yuan paintings. In this academic revision, Jerome Silbergeld questions the impact-response model²⁴ that has been transplanted to the understanding of Chinese art history. He writes:

“It is a central fact that many of those who created and shaped the American academic tradition as we know it today brought this teaching to American shores direct from China as partisans in the War Against Japan, as Chinese emigres from a land beset by barbarous politics, revolution and anti-intellectual forces redolent of the Yuan period, or as Americans sent there as liberators...They mapped their own experience of displacement onto the rhetoric of both Yuan and early Qing *yimin* (leftover subject, 遺民) painting and helped elevate anti-Mongol and anti-Manchu loyalist painters to new heights of popularity.”²⁵

²³ *Ars Orientalis*. Vol. 37, “Current Direction in Yuan Painting”, Freer Gallery of Art, The Smithsonian Institution and Department of the History of Art, University of Michigan, 2009.

²⁴ This theory holds that what China had done was a response to the West, a very similar model to what the literati of the Yuan had been doing was a response to the foreign Mongol rule. See John King Fairbank, et al. *China’s Response to the West: A Documentary Survey 1839-1923*. Cambridge (Mass.); London, Harvard University Press, Cop, 1982. Silbergeld argues that “concept of radical revolution as a systematic rejection of past values and forms was not native to dynastic China”. See Silbergeld, Jerome “The Yuan ‘Revolutionary’ Picnic: Feasting on the Fruits of Song (A Historiographic Menu)”. In *Ars Orientalis* Vol. 37, 2009. p17

²⁵ Silbergeld, 2009, p24

This is not to say that literati of the Yuan were not influenced by the Mongol reign, but to let us be aware of the possible “magnifying glass” that has elevated the status of anti-Mongol nature of Yuan paintings. Now, more than half-century later, as we enter an era of “complexity and nuance, wary of the single cause or simple view, postcolonial in outlook (if not post-postcolonial) and alert to the seductive role of class privilege”²⁶, we need to remove the magnifying glass and cautiously think of the dynamic and diverse artistic motivations behind Yuan paintings. Furthermore, Richard Vinograd believes that Yuan painting as an art historiographic construct and as a field of study should be de-centered along multiple axes – of chronology, of media, of geography, and the expanded field of visual culture.²⁷ Again, the de-centering of Yuan literati paintings does not mean that they should be devalued or ignored, or replaced by these new Mongol/court/regional-centered narratives, as “much of the recent focus on alternative arenas of painting, for example, has been more relational than oppositional to earlier concerns”²⁸, but once again reminds us the continental contexts and multilayered cultural arenas of Yuan paintings.

Inspired by the renewed perspective on Yuan painting, this project tries to probe deeper into historical sources and examine the role religious transformative practice plays in *shanshuihua*. As we will see in the following chapters, many significant religious symbols and information are overlooked in the previous analysis of Yuan *shanshuihua*. What has been formerly considered a “response” towards social upheaval and political turmoil is not the dominating factor in many paintings. Furthermore, incorporating inner alchemical graphs and

²⁶ Silbergeld, 2009, p24

²⁷ Vinograd, Richard. “De-centering Yuan Painting”. In *Ars Orientalis* Vol. 37, 2009, p204

²⁸ Vinograd, 2009, p207

charts into this study will move us to a broader consideration of Yuan visual culture. Just as Vinograd argues that visibility studies direct our attention above and below the level of the object and its perception to the social values, attitudes, and institutions in which practices of looking were embedded, and to the psychological realms of looking invested with desire and fantasy,²⁹ these visual graphs will reveal a more intrinsic and substantial side of *shanshuihua*.

5. Inner Alchemy and Quanzhen Daoism in the Yuan

Inner alchemy is at the center of Quanzhen Daoism. We can find its sprouts in much earlier scriptures, yet it is until the establishment of Quanzhen Daoism onward that inner alchemy has gained wide acceptance among Daoists and established itself as the major and orthodox practice for nourishing life. The growth of Quanzhen Daoism and inner alchemy had greatly enhanced the development of Daoist visual representation of body.³⁰

To understand the influence of Quanzhen in the Yuan society, we need to put its development into historical and social perspective. Although the establishment of Quanzhen started from a small cottage, yet as Pierre Marsone remarks, this small group of ascetics became a great order and most powerful religious movement in China within fifty years.³¹ It is noticeable that the number of Quanzhen Daoists in the Jin-Yuan period is much higher than any other dynasty. Quanzhen Daoism has permeated almost every section of the Yuan dynasty and continued to shape the religious and cultural landscape of Chinese society ever

²⁹ Vinograd, 2009, p204

³⁰ Again, this is not to say that only Quanzhen Daoists practice inner alchemy. Various Daoist lineages or schools practice visualization and so on. Inner alchemy is never an exclusive Quanzhen practice. However, it is Quanzhen Daoism that promoted inner alchemy as the orthodox practice and greatly enhanced its development. In a similar vein, inner alchemy visibility is also not only limited to Quanzhen Daoism.

³¹ Marsone, Pierre. "Accounts of the Foundation of the Quanzhen Movement: A Hagiographic Treatment of History", in *Journal of Chinese Religions* 29, 2001, p95

since. The historical context will offer us insights into the practicality and efficacy of this religious movement.

The word “*quanzhen*” 全真 (Complete Realization) firstly appeared in Chapter Daozhi 盜跖 (Robber Zhi) of *Zhuangzi*, which could be understood as the completion of original and ontological authenticity of nature. Later in 1167, after Wang Chongyang, the founder of Quanzhen, arrived in Ninghai 寧海³², he established a hermitage called the Quanzhen 全真庵 (Hermitage of Complete Realization), which eventually became the name of Wang’s religious system.

Quanzhen scholar Louis Komjathy divided the history of Quanzhen movement into six major phases³³: formative (1159-1166), incipient organized (1167-1170), organized (1171-1222) expansive (1222-1280), resurgent (1281-1911) and modern (1911 onwards).³⁴ The fast

³² Now located in the Mouping District of Yantai City in Shandong Province.

³³ Komjathy, Louis. *Cultivating Perfection: Mysticism and Self-Transformation in Early Quanzhen Daoism*, Leiden: Brill, 2007, 33-62

³⁴ The six phrases can be roughly summarized as follows: 1) **Formative**: the seclusion and spiritual determination of Wang Chongyang (1113-1170) in Shaanxi. Allegedly, he encountered immortals and received secret teachings in 1159-1160. He spent three years inside the tomb enclosure and engaged in ascetic practices, practicing internal alchemy. 2) **Incipient organized**: Wang began travelling eastward toward Shandong province in 1167. A group of convinced and dedicated disciples forming around Wang Chongyang 1167-1169: the first-generation seven disciples³⁴. With the assistance of both formal disciples and lay patrons, Wang began to establish meeting halls or associations. Formal leadership passed to Ma Danyang 馬丹陽 (1123-1183) after Wang’s death in 1170. 3) **Organized**: Quanzhen diffused throughout different geographical regions in northern China, under the leadership of Ma Danyang, Wang Chuyi 王處一 (1142-1217), and Qiu Chiji 丘處機 (1143-1227). Quanzhen commences at this point as an identifiable religious movement, with a distinct sense of religious identity. Quanzhen leaders had increasing contact with imperial households and courts, culminating in Qiu Chiji’s meeting with Chinggis Qan (Genghis Khan, r. 1206-1227) in 1222. 4) **Expansive**: Chinggis Qan granting Qiu control of the whole of north China’s organized religious communities. Quanzhen was transformed from semi-autonomous ascetic communities and a form of proto-monasticism into institutionalized monasticism. It continued to grow during the years 1222 to 1280. By the late thirteenth century there was some 4,000 Quanzhen sacred sites and 20,000 monks and nuns. 5) **Resurgent**: Quanzhen was devastated after a number of anti-Daoist edicts were issued under Qubilai Qan (Khubilai Khan, r.1260-1294), culminating in the burning and destruction of Daoist texts, textual collections, and printing blocks in 1281. It continued to exist into the Ming dynasty, but its place of supremacy was replaced by the Zhengyi tradition. The period of

development of Quanzhen in its formative phase and the expansive phase in the Yuan can attribute to four aspects: the attraction of the doctrine; undertaking social responsibilities; the Mongol Imperial Endorsement; and the power of visual device in facilitating the religion's acceptance.

Firstly, the teaching of Quanzhen was wide open to Confucian or Buddhist thought. Although this perception often leads to the misunderstanding of Quanzhen as the “Buddho- Daoism”, or even “bastardized Buddhism”, the early teachings of Quanzhen did incorporate Buddhist terminologies, such as *fashen* 法身 (the body beyond the body).³⁵ The borrowing of Buddhist terminologies and concepts derived from Wang Chongyang's belief that the three teachings are essentially “one”.³⁶ In other words, despite all their differences, Wang believes that the three teachings are interconnected and mutually influenced. Under such mentality, his incorporation of Buddhism and Confucianism concepts and doctrines might be an unconscious choice.³⁷

The shared usage of terms opened dialogue and negotiated space on the religious landscape. People of various belief or intentions could associate themselves with different

resurgence begins in the Qing dynasty, when the Longmen branch of Quanzhen was formally established by Wang Changyue 王常月 (1522-1680).⁶ **Modern:** The modern development of Quanzhen parallels with the end of Chinese imperial rule in 1911, including the near-catastrophic devastation during the Cultural revolution. Longmen gained recognition by the government as the official form of organized Daoism in mainland China. Quanzhen temples and monasteries are currently being build or restored. The Longmen tradition has spread worldwide.

³⁵ *Fashen*, also known as the dharmakaya, is one of the three bodies of a buddha. It is also referred as the “true body”. See Guang Xing. *Concept of the Buddha: Its Evolution from Early Buddhism to the Trikaya Theory*. Routledge, 2010.

³⁶ This is not to agree with the dismissal of Quanzhen as “Buddho-Daoism”. I argue that there was no comprehensive division of the belief system in traditional China. In other words, it is an illusion, and even a colonial idea, to impose a neat division among Confucianism, Buddhism and Daoism. This is especially true for the common believers, who tend to mix models of religious practice in their life.

³⁷ However, it is obvious that Wang prioritized the Daoist transformative path over Buddhist or Confucian choices. Therefore, it is also plausible to understand the incorporation as rhetorical and religious strategies.

aspects of the system. Radical believers of Buddhism and Confucianism are also able to discuss and communicate with Quanzhen Daoism. It is through these “strategies”, be it a conscious choice or not, that the early Quanzhen established a common ground with Confucianism and Buddhism.

Another major attraction of Quanzhen in the tumultuous years of political transition is its advocacy. As Stephen Eskildsen demonstrates: “The cultivation of inner peace and virtuous action lay at the heart of early Quanzhen Daoism.”³⁸ Wang Chongyang emphasized a path of mental discipline and a simple and straightforward morality. Wang encourages his followers to focus on recovering “original truth” [*benlai zhen* 本來真], the authentic nature of the human being endowed by the ontological Dao. The path is a dual cultivation of “true merit” 真功 and “true deeds” 真行. The true merit is the action of clearing one’s mind and stabilizing one’s will in order to preserve the spirit and embrace the origin and guard the Dao. Such practice provides alternative access to what might be considered as the exclusive privilege of the monks.³⁹ It was especially powerful and helpful in the tumultuous years of political transition. The true deeds are related to secular duties: to cultivate benevolence and accumulate virtue, by relieving the poor and rescuing those who suffer. For the follower, by interacting with others humbly and selflessly in virtuous actions, he/she was thought to “increase one’s store of merits and deeds and consequently to move farther along toward the

³⁸ Eskildsen, Stephen. *The Teaching and Practices of the Early Quanzhen Taoist Masters*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004, p23

³⁹ However, the degree of the mental asceticism varies. The utmost clear and pure mind requires rigorous renunciation of worldly affairs and duties. The first-generation disciples of Quanzhen, for example, were asked to abandon their families, possessions and worldly pursuits. Any association would be regarded as the disturbance to the tranquility of the mind. In this vein, the mental training could be indeed demanding. However, Wang Chongyang’s methodology for the lay followers seems rather lenient and relaxed. He did not ask them for complete and permanent disengagement from the secular world but advocated daily practice of mental discipline as a general beneficial way of life.

recovery of her or his Real Nature”⁴⁰. For the general recipients of those charitable deeds, this will certainly spread the reputation for Quanzhen and increase its popularity and attraction.

Secondly, as a national religious institution, Quanzhen was active in social movements. Wang Jinping, in her recently published book, *In the Wake of the Mongols: The Making of a New Social Order in North China, 1200-1600*, focuses on Quanzhen’s undertaking of accommodating literati, promoting women’s activities, and building a national monastic network centered by the Palace of Eternal Joy in Shaanxi. Quanzhen’s patronage for literati is especially pertinent to this project. Quanzhen provided physical shelter for the destitute and homeless literati and exempted them from labor service and taxation. Through the giant project of editing and printing Daoist canon, the Quanzhen order in the first half of the thirteenth century affected “almost every scholar in north China”.⁴¹ With the suspension of the imperial civil examination after 1234, Confucian scholars were not able to pursue their usual journey to become government officials or teachers. In contrast, working in the Daoist canon project and becoming a Quanzhen Daoist guaranteed immediate freedom, a privilege extended from Chiggis Khan’s edicts to Qiu Chuji, and provided the scholars with adequate income. As Wang pointed out, the Quanzhen social and monastic networks at the time functioned as a new mechanism for generating and redistributing wealth, which provided literati with new means of acquiring a living⁴². By doing so, in a period of postwar turmoil,

⁴⁰ Eskildsen, 2004, p32

⁴¹ In 1237, Quanzhen master Song Defang (1183-1247) and his disciple Qin Zhi’an (1188-1244) started the project of carving woodblocks to print a new Daoist canon, later known as the *Treasured Canon of Mysterious Capital* 玄都寶藏. The project then became an important way for Song and Qin to expand Quanzhen institutions in southern Shanxi as well as to recruit former Jin literati. Twenty-seven branch offices were established in Shanxi province, nine in neighboring Shaanxi province, and five in Henan province.

⁴² Wang, Jinping. *In the Wake of the Mongols: The Making of a New Social Order in North China 1200-1600*. Harvard University Asia Center, 2020, p79

Quanzhen lineage managed to provide literati ways to keep their dignity intact and realize their intellectual values. Like many scholars of the time, Huang Gongwang's way to officialdom was severely limited. In the year 1329, at the age of 61, he withdrew from public and joined Quanzhen Daoism. His close literati and Daoist friends including Ni Zan 倪瓚 (1301-1374), Wang Meng 王蒙(1308-1385), and Yang Weizhen 楊維禎(1296-1370) were all related to Quanzhen.

Quanzhen Daoism also tried to negotiate a plan to resolve the tensions between Confucian social norms and Quanzhen ideas in education and daily life, as many literati who joined the monastic life worried that they could not make sacrificial offerings to their ancestors or fulfill their obligation to produce an heir. Quanzhen literati scholars came up with the plan of “entrusting religious communities to take care of a family's ancestral graveyard”⁴³ by transforming one's property into a Daoist hermitage and asking his disciples to live there. Furthermore, Quanzhen also managed to provide women space to assume significant roles in public arenas. They enjoyed “unprecedented freedom” in communicating and working with males.

Another significant aspect Wang brings out is Quanzhen's national monastic network. Formed by abbeys, convents, and hermitages in cities, towns, and villages across China, it is significant in promoting the new Daoism. Quanzhen Daoist monks and nuns all participated in building the infrastructure, which took physical form in Quanzhen temples and steles erected throughout north China during the thirteenth century⁴⁴. This monastic networked was

⁴³ Wang, 2020, p84

⁴⁴ The steles later became the primary source for institutional history. There are over 600 extant Quanzhen inscriptions of the Jin and Yuan periods that survived either as the original stele, in rubbings, or in edited form.

centered on the Palace of Eternal Joy, a national Quanzhen pilgrimage center. Lay associations were organized for worshipping Lü Dongbin and building monasteries. Quanzhen clergy were invited to take charge of hermitages in smaller institutions. Through such national monastic network, large institutions provided their common followers with material, ideological and organizational support while smaller institutions interacted with lay associations to expand the influence of Quanzhen Daoism to the masses. This network, in some way, took on some quasi-governmental functions.

Thirdly, Quanzhen Daoism developed into a full-fledged monastic order under the leadership of Qiu Chuji. Using Vincent Goossaert's words, it was not before Qiu Chuji's leadership that the Quanzhen order managed to "acquire an institutional charisma, automatically shared by all members regardless of their personal relation to the founding patriarchs"⁴⁵.

Quanzhen's widespread influence and strong organization attracted the attention of Chinggis Qan who invited Qiu for a visit at his itinerant court in 1219⁴⁶. Qiu's forthright and honest speech impressed the Mongol ruler, who honored him with the title Spirit Immortal.⁴⁷ In 1227 Genghis Khan decreed that all priests and persons of religion in his empire were to be under Qiu's control and that his jurisdiction over the Daoist community was to be

⁴⁵ Goossaert, Vincent. "The Invention of an Order: Collective Identity in Thirteenth-Century Quanzhen Taoism." *Journal of Chinese Religions* 29: 111-38, 2001, p113

⁴⁶ The meeting eventually happened in 1222.

⁴⁷ Aware of the notorious reputation of Mongolian army for its ruthless killing and the sufferings of the majority commoners, Qiu insisted going to meet Genghis Khan and advising him on virtuous behavior. Even though he was supposed to satisfy the emperor's pursuit for the medicine of immortality, he honestly explained there was no such secret medicine and the pathway to immortality lay in a harmonious relationship with the heaven. As heaven would not approve of massive killing, the son of the heaven should also follow the Dao and bring mercy to his people. Qiu also advised Chinggis Qan to stop the killing and preserve the ancient civilization of China during their meetings. These 12 in-depth conversations were documented in the book *Xuan Feng Qing Hui Lu* 玄風慶會錄.

absolute. It is a remarkable deed for there was no Daoist before or since has ever had such power. Chinggis Qan also ordered some of the former imperial garden grounds were given to Qiu for the foundation of a Daoist Monastery, which became the famous White Clouds Monastery 白雲觀 that exists to this day.

Although this powerful political endorsement did not last long, for Chinggis Qan and Qiu died in the same year of 1227, the Mongol imperial support had laid significant foundation for Quanzhen's expansive phase. The religious institution enjoyed tax exemption and emission of labor service. Furthermore, the Quanzhen church gained the "unusual right to issue ordinations"⁴⁸, a right that had been reserved for the state since the Tang dynasty. One only needed to be a disciple of Qiu to regain one's freedom. What is more, the Mongol rulers also gave Quanzhen leaders the privilege of granting monastic plaque themselves, a right that had also been reserved for the government. These policies are key element in transforming Quanzhen from a semiautonomous ascetic religious movement into a systematically institutionalized monastic order.

As a result, by the late thirteenth century, there were some 4,000 Quanzhen sacred sites and 20,000 monks and nuns.⁴⁹

Last but not the least, ever from the founder Wang Chongyang, the Quanzhen masters were aware of the importance of visual devices. Wang himself used paintings of skeletons (and sometimes also marionette puppets) to instruct disciples the ephemeral existence of physical reality (figure 1.3).

⁴⁸ Wang, 2020, p67

⁴⁹ Goossaert, 2001, p114-118



Figure 1.3 Wang Chongyang holding a picture of a skeleton in front of his disciples to instruct the nature of an illusory life. North wall of the Hall of Redoubled Yang, Temple of Eternal Joy. Yuan dynasty, fourteenth century. Wall painting. Ruicheng, Shanxi. With detail

Art historian Jing Anning demonstrates the power of visual device in facilitating Quanzhen's acceptance through the examination of two mediums: mural paintings and operas.⁵⁰ For example, the mural paintings in the Hall of Pure Yang (Chunyang dian 純陽殿) depicts 52 episodes of the Lü Dongbin's⁵¹ 呂洞賓(798-880) life beginning with his auspicious birth and enlightenment with his legendary master Zhongli Quan 鍾離權(168-256)and continuing with miraculous tales about his travels and conversion of others. The new iconography of Lü represented in these episodes is remarkably different from the slovenly

⁵⁰ See Jing, Anning. *Daojiao Quanzhen pai gongguan, zaoxiang yu zushi* (Temples, Images, and Patriarchs of the Complete Realization School of Daoism) Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2012; and Jing, Anning. *The Water God's Temple of the Guangsheng Monastery: Cosmic Function of Art, Ritual, and Theater*. Leiden: Brill, 2002

⁵¹ Allegedly, Wang Chongyang received revelations from Lü, who instructed him to leave Shanxi and go to the east where he successfully converts the famous seven disciples who later turn the Quanzhen movement into the leading religious order in north China. Members of Quanzhen also took the responsibility of restoring and reconstructing Yongle gong 永樂宮(Palace of Eternal Joy), a major temple dedicated to Lü Dongbin, and converted this local temple into a Quanzhen sacred site by the end of thirteenth century.

and unkempt version of the Song dynasty, which gives the impression of a noble, scholarly-mannered Daoist master. It is without doubt that this new iconography of Lü reflected the agendas of the Quanzhen religious movement and the mentalities of its patrons. They as many of the masters of the Quanzhen movement came from gentry families, they would like to maintain good relationship with scholar-officials. Furthermore, the image of a compassionate immortal as the patriarch of the Quanzhen movement has gained Quanzhen immense popularity especially among lay followers. Similarly, operas share the same logic in constructing the image and imagination of the deity through their performative and enactive nature. As Jing points out, the Palace of Eternal Joy offered ample room for theatrical performance: a stage was part of the Gate of the Limitless Ultimate. Artisans who made popular prints often watched dramatic performances as a source of inspiration for their work⁵². Katz further points out that “the interaction between dramatic performances and temple art also worked the other way around, with actors assuming poses on stage identical to those in images or paintings worshiped in temples”⁵³. In other words, Yuan drama has made great contribution to the establishment of Quanzhen’s iconography and enhancing its popularity among all walks of life. It is worthy highlighting that Huang Gongwang used to write Yuan opera himself.

6. Inner Alchemical *Shanshuihua* and the field of Daoist Art

The inner alchemical body charts in the form of natural landscape make us ponder the

⁵² Bo Songnian, *Zhongguo nianhua shi*, Shenyang: Liaoniang meishu chubenshe, 1986

⁵³ Katz, Paul. *Images of the Immortal*, Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2000, p140

border between human body and landscape. The connection between *shanshuihua* and inner alchemy visuality has been made before by few scholars, but only on a general level. Shih-shan Susan Huang compares the *Chart of the Rise and Fall of Yin and Yang* 體象陰陽升降圖 (Figure 1.4) with eleventh-century painter Fan Kuan 范寬's (fl.1023-31) monumental *shanshuihua Xishan xinglü* 谿山行旅 (*Travelers among Mountains and Streams*) (Figure 1.5). They are similar in terms of strongly vertical and frontal composition; they both invite the viewers to “undertake a mental and visual journey through complicated landscape constructions”⁵⁴. Stephen Little also points out that the “inner principle” resonating in Fan Kuan's painting as a reflection of the “concept of cosmic order that is essentially Daoist in origin”⁵⁵.

⁵⁴ Huang, Shih-Shan Susan *Picturing the True Form: Daoist Visual Culture in Traditional China*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012, p81

⁵⁵ Little, Stephen “Taoist Art” in *Daoism Handbook*, edited by Livia Kohn. Leiden: Brill, 2000, p722

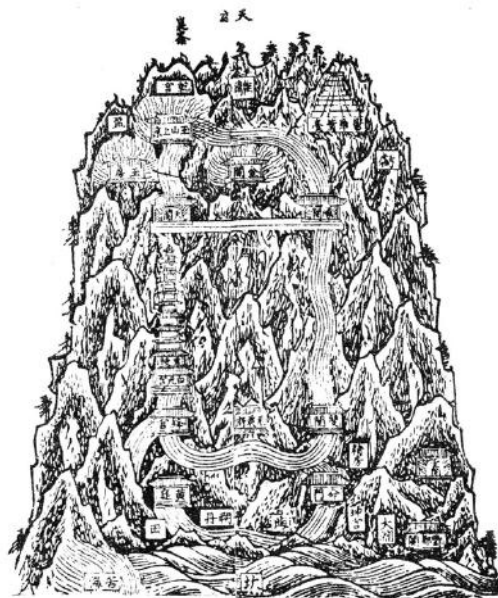


Figure 1.4

Map of Rise and Fall of Yin and Yang in the Human Body
tixiang yinyang shengjiangtu 體象陰陽升降圖 (ca 1226)
 presented to Emperor Lizong by Xiao Yingsou

(DZ 90)



Figure 1.5

Fan Kuan, *Travelers among Mountains and Streams*
 Northern Song dynasty, ca. 1000
 Hanging scroll, Ink and light color on silk.

206.3 X 103.3 cm

On a more concrete level, Little has suggested that Wen Boren's 文伯仁 (1502-1575) handscroll *Spring Dawn at the Elixir Terrace* 丹台春曉圖 (Figure 1.6) is an allegory of inner alchemy is corroborated by the presence of an attached colophon in cursive script, written by the late Ming artist and dramatist Xu Wei 徐渭 (1521-1593), in the classical language of inner alchemy, in which the component aspects of the vital energies (*qi*) within the human body are directed toward the creation of the inner elixir.⁵⁶

⁵⁶ Little, 2000, p350-351



Figure 1.6 Wen Boren, *Spring Dawn at the Elixir Terrace* 丹台春曉圖. Ming dynasty, 16th century. Handscroll; ink and light colors on paper. 30.1 x 124.8cm. National Palace Museum, Taipei. Detail

Additionally, by comparing the graphs and illustrations from Daoist Canon with Huang Gongwang's *Sunny after Sudden Snow* 快雪時晴圖, Susan Huang claims that the painting is of significant inner alchemical connotation.⁵⁷ The two elements from the painting – the usual red sun and the cliff in the shape of a platform – are iconic visual language in inner alchemy. While the red sun represents the spirit of pure yang, the platform could either be Palace of Muddy Pellet located in the head or the practitioner himself. Therefore, the cliff facing the red sun (Figure 1.8) could be compared to an illustration of breathing exercise from *Wushang santian yutang zhengzong gaoben neijing yushu* 無上三天玉堂正宗高奔內景玉書 (Precious Text of Flying High in the Inner Landscape, from the Correct Tradition of the Jade Hall of the Supreme Three Heavens) (Figure 1.7). The contrast between red sun and a snowy scene is also extremely rare in the landscape painting tradition. However, such contrast appears as a constant metaphor in inner alchemy, referring to the interaction between yin and yang.

⁵⁷ Huang, Shih-Shan Susan. "Xie zhenshan zhixing: cong 'Shanshuitu' 'Shanshui hua' tan Daojiao shanshuiguan zhi shijue xingsu" 寫真山之形：從「山水圖」、「山水畫」談道教山水觀之視覺型塑, *Gugong xueshu jikan* 故宮學術季刊 31.4 .2014, p121-204.



Figure 1.7 Illustration from *Wushang santian yutang zhengzong gaoben neijing yushu*⁵⁸



Figure 1.8 Huang Gongwang, *Sunny After Snow* Hand Scroll, ink and colors on paper, 29.7 x 104.6 cm, Palace Museum, Beijing, detail.

Pertinent to the discussion of inner alchemy visuality and *shanshuihua* are two recent dissertations: Lim Chye Hong's *[Re]viewing the Chinese Landscape: Imaging the Body [In]visible in Shanshuihua*⁵⁹ and Anna Hennessey's "Chinese Images of Body and Landscape: Visualization and Representation in the Religious Experience of Medieval China"⁶⁰. Lim examines the cultural construction of landscape through the lens of bodily consciousness. She argues the body had been 'naturalized' within the landscape as a palimpsest, and hence *shanshuihua* should be understood as a creative transformative process that is inevitably bound up with the body rather than just as an image. However, her argument is situated in a rather Confucian context and left a Daoist body unexplored. Although there are quite a few similarities between the Daoist and Confucian ontological framework, yet the transformation practice of the body is uniquely Daoist. Hennessey explores graphic representations of the body of the Song-Yuan period that often depict the

⁵⁸ DZ 221

⁵⁹ Lim Chyehong, *[Re]viewing the Chinese Landscape: Imaging the Body [In]visible in Shanshuihua*. Ph.D. diss., University of New South Wales, Australia. 2011

⁶⁰ Hennessey, Anna. "Chinese Images of Body and Landscape: Visualization and Representation in the Religious Experience of Medieval China." Ph.D. diss., University of California, Santa Barbara. 2011

human body microcosmically with an inner landscape. She argues that, established in the Song period, the development of the Daoist visual representation of body was historically woven with the growth of Quanzhen Daoism and inner alchemy. As the practice of inner alchemy focuses on the visualization of internal landscape, a virtual microcosm of the external cosmos that is manifest in the Daoist body, human bodies and natural landscapes are identified as representative of one another. Therefore, material representation of landscape became a powerful visual tool connecting the spheres of body, natural world, cosmos, imagery, and mental world through visualization. The space of the body also became integral to an understanding of the natural world. Hennessey's research is quite valuable in terms of bridging the inner microcosm with the material representation of landscape. Her dissertation echoes some of the inquiries of this project. But since her primary focus is Daoist bodies graphs of the Song-Yuan period, rather than *shanshuihua*, she left the inner alchemical *shanshuihua* unexplored.

Deciphering the alchemical representation in *shanshuihua* can be quite challenging for it demands substantial knowledge of inner alchemy, including its visual representation and metaphors in the alchemical transformative process. As the inner alchemical visual language is significantly obtrusive and symbolic, its fusion with *shanshuihua* is often left unnoticed or misunderstood. Therefore, an otherwise rich and metaphoric *shanshuihu* with alchemical connotation would be taken simply as a pictorial art of the nature and leave the "truth" of *shanshui* unexamined. On the other hand, it is exciting to examine the familiar paintings with fresh eyes: Are there any other inner alchemical visual elements in *shanshuihua*? Does the painter borrow inner alchemical visual elements to decorate the narrative of the landscape, or

does he transform his inner alchemical vision to reshape the cosmos? What are the functions of these paintings? Have these inner alchemical visual elements become new tropes for the following generations? Is there a repertoire for us to access the truth of inner alchemical *shanshuihua*? These are the questions to be examined in this dissertation.

Meanwhile, broadly speaking, recent breakthrough in this field helps us get a better understanding of the unique qualities of Daoist art. It has been more than twenty years since Stephen Little said that the study of Chinese Daoist art was in its infancy.⁶¹ That was especially true compared to the fruitful Chinese Buddhist art studies. By that time, the field of Daoist art was a relatively recent phenomenon in academia, and many of the works were not recognized as being Daoist.⁶² Even they were, many existed in what Little called a kind of “artistic limbo”, their true meaning and significance unrecognized. Facing this new field, scholars were figuring out approaches to study Daoist art as one of a kind, as well as proper ways to categorize the enormous amount of art materials.

⁶¹ ‘Daoist Art’ in Kohn, Livia. *Daoism Handbook*. Leiden, E.J. Brill, 2000, p709

⁶² Around the same time, Little and Shawn Eichman’s book *Taoism and the Arts of China* was published, in conjunction with the exhibition “Taoism and the Arts of China” organized by the Art Institute of Chicago from November 4, 2000, to January 7, 2001. The exhibition was divided into three parts: the formation of the Daoist tradition, the Daoist church and the Daoist renaissance. The first part focuses Laozi, Daoist cosmology and Daoist sacred mountains and cults of the immortals. The second part explores religious Daoism from its beginnings, the ritual and the pantheon. The last part encompasses a wide range of content: from Daoism, popular religion, to female and male saints; from inner alchemy and its symbolism to the sacred landscape. The book follows the same structure as the exhibition, with additional four papers on Daoist art: Little on Daoism and the arts of China; Nancy Shatzman Steinhardt on Daoist architecture; Wu Hung on early Daoist art; and Patricia Ebrey on art at the court of Song Huizong. In a way, the book speaks of the field itself: the content are mostly introductions; the classification was rather rough and preliminary; and it is hard to tell whether there was a consistent or systematic logic or framework behind the compilation of this book. Nevertheless, it mentions many important topics and issues that have become the thread of future studies.

Over the years we have seen the gradual growth and expansion of the field. Scholars like Lennert Gesterkamp, Anning Jing, Patricia Karetzky, Shih-shan Susan Huang, Julia Murray, Francesca Bray have greatly enriched the width and depth of Daoist art. Many of these works limit their discussion to a single art medium or theme. Although such strategy is understandable and even necessary for a new field, yet it is hard to get a glimpse of the field as a whole. That being said, Susan Huang's book *Picturing the True Form – Daoist Visual Culture in Traditional China* published in 2012 is ground-breaking in many ways. Even though the book is essentially an encyclopedia – and the depth and richness of many topics have been compromised – but with an unprecedented level of analysis and meticulous attention to detail, Huang presents new material and methodology on how Daoist art should be studied as one of a kind and differentiated from that of Buddhism.⁶³

In Huang's book, "Daoist art" has been replaced by "Daoist Visual Culture". The latter suggests Huang's agenda to incorporate a broader range of materials into the study of Daoist art, including the image-text and illustrations in the Daoist Canon. Meanwhile, she incorporates scholarship on Buddhism and European religious art and consistently situates the text-image studies within a wider comparative framework. By doing this, she enlarges the scope of Daoist art studies and make us think whether the former binary between *tu* (graph) and *hua* has fooled our eyes in the past. Huang's effort echoes a broad scholar interest on redefining the conventional border between *tu* and *hua*, for which *hua* seems to be subjective,

⁶³ This book offers a systematic survey of Daoist visual culture in various media from the tenth through thirteenth century with references to both earlier and later times. Huang identifies this period as a "renaissance of Daoism", a time when the majority of visual and textual sources were produced or compiled. Unlike the three parts of *Taoism and the Arts of China*, the book is structured into two parts: the first three chapters as the "inner" and the last three as the "outer". The inner part surveys the esoteric Daoist images associated with meditation, visualization, and breathing practices while the outer part examines the exoteric Daoist work, such as liturgical paintings, ritual performance and the material culture and spatial design of Daoist ritual space.

allusive, metaphoric operations and *tu* is the down-to-earth, factual operations.⁶⁴ These extensive research pushes us to reconsider where “decorative” or “aesthetical” illustration ends and “technical” or “functional” illustration begins. That is to say, a graph could potentially be a piece of art while a painting could have the same illustrative or instructive function as a graph. The discussion of inner alchemical *shanshuihua* in this project has been greatly inspired by these fruitful discussions.

Huang’s another significant contribution is her endeavor to put various Daoist art materials under the unique theme “true form”(zhenxing 真形). The concept “true form” is central to this book as well as the understanding of Daoist visual culture. It underlines the visual and ideological principles of Daoist practice and visibility. True form denotes the original nature something has that is unified with the ontological Dao. Since Dao is amorphous and could be manifested in various forms of *qi*, the inner and invisible “true form” could also “multiplies itself in myriad forms, media, time and space”⁶⁵, “from mental images, visualization pictures, bodily and cosmic charts, to ritual materials, ritual space and performance”⁶⁶. Therefore, true form could apply to various objects such as a deity, an icon, a mountain, a purified self, an internal organ or a talisman. Daoist adepts are encouraged to access its efficacy via meditation and visualization. In other words, true form is not static, but entails an active process of manifestation and realization.

Pertinent to this concept, Huang raised three outstanding modes characterizing the proliferation of Daoist images: aniconic, immaterial/invisible, and ephemeral. These visual

⁶⁴ See Bray, Francesca, et al. *Graphics and Text in the Production of Technical Knowledge in China: The Warp and the Weft*. Leiden, The Netherlands; Boston, Brill, 2007.

⁶⁵ Huang, 2012, p342

⁶⁶ Huang, 2012, p342

qualities let us reconsider “materiality” in Daoist images. As Huang demonstrated: “The immaterial true form is born from the formless Dao, then is embodied in material forms through the multiple charts copied in Daoist scriptures, and eventually goes back to the ineffable and invisible realm in the ritual”⁶⁷. That is to see, instead of thinking materiality as concrete and static, we should view materiality as a process in Daoist visual culture. This perspective corresponds to the ideological thinking regarding *qi* as prominent in the theorization of Daoist image making. True form, for example, entails “interactive, multisensory and transmedia experiences that involve constant changing, reshaping and mirroring”⁶⁸. Situating in a religious context, “material ephemerality” is also directly linked to religious efficacy. This feature of Daoism visual culture challenges scholars to consider Daoist images from a holistic perspective and as a dynamic process.

To put it into a nutshell, the “true form” is the representation of a higher and more sacred reality, a reality beyond the domain of our normal visual logic. In this project, we shall see how *shanshui* is used to represent the true form of the body.

7. Structure and Chapters

This dissertation is divided into four chapters, preceded by an introduction, and followed by a conclusion. Chapter 2 “Redefining *Shanshui* and human body in the Daoist Context” addresses the correlation between *shanshuihua* and body from a Daoist perspective. Whilst the body-landscape correlation is not unfamiliar to the field – body, viewed as the

⁶⁷ Huang, 2012, p186

⁶⁸ Huang, 2012, p342

microcosm, resonates with the rhythm and patterns of the cosmos, there has been relatively little examination of this correlation within the specific context of *shanshuihua* – even fewer in terms of the Daoist body and *shanshuihua*. I argue that the body is not invisible in *shanshuihua*– it is ever-present through the agency of the *shanshui*. The connection between the body of mountain and the body of human beings is not only spiritual, but more importantly corporeal/ontological⁶⁹. Through the reciprocity between bodies, the mountain and human are able to exchange knowledge that is only accessible via bodies. Furthermore, as human bodies and natural landscapes are identified as representative of one another, *Shanshui* offers a solution to solve the Daoist anxiety over the physical limitations of the body. As the powerful and redemptive mediation between human beings and the Dao, *shanshui* breaks down the constant confrontation and opposition between the “I” and the cosmos and reactivate one’s primordial dependency on nature. *Shanshuihua*, in this vein, transcends the body and provides access to the truth and reality of the Dao.

Chapter 3 “Mapping the Inner Landscape” examines the particular iconography used to represent Daoist sacred space and human body. The first part traces the image of Daoist sacred mountain, Jade Capitoline, altar, path, and grotto-heaven back to their original sources in the Daoist canon and discusses how such iconography can be used both externally and

⁶⁹ The concept of Dao is central in Daoism. It is the ontological substance as well as the prevailing principle. Dao, as the ontological substance, is the origin of non-being (*wu* 無) and being (*you* 有). Non-being is the origin of heaven and earth while being is the mother of all things. Since Dao is unknown, what we can actually perceive is the manifestation of Dao. Non-being is the beginning of everything including being. Being is the mother of everything in terms of individualization. Dao itself is not non-being but the origin of non-being, the fundamental nature of being and non-being.

Since Dao gives birth to the “Oneness” in which the nature and the human are united, in other words, the nature and human beings are united in their ontological entity – the Dao, nature and human beings are analogically related to each other for they have the same origin, essence and structure. That is what I mean by saying “the body of mountain and the body of human beings is not only spiritual, but more importantly corporeal/ontological”.

internally as body metaphors. The second part illustrates the inner-chemical images and metaphors and discusses how the transformative process of inner alchemy can be represented in *shanshuihua*.

Chapter 4 “Transforming Inner Alchemical Vision into *Shanshuihua*” first analyze the inner alchemical connotation embedded in Huang Gongwang’s later period paintings including *Nine Peaks after Snow* 九峰雪霽圖 and *Sunny After Snow* 快雪時晴圖. By analyzing these paintings’ resemblance with inner alchemical graphs and literary sources from the Daoist Canon, this chapter explains the particular iconography incorporated into the *shanshuihua* symbolizing the various stages and processes of Daoist inner alchemy practice. Such illustration demonstrates that Huang’s *shanshuihua* are not reproduction or imitation of a particular kind of nature. Instead, these paintings are the embodiment of his inner alchemical vision.

Chapter 5 will continue explore the inner alchemical visual language Huang Gongwang’s fellow literati used in their paintings, including Sun Junze 孫君澤 and Lu Guang 陸廣, as well as the following generation, used in their paintings, to expose a larger repertoire of inner alchemical expression in *shanshuihua*.

The final concluding remark will reflect some broader questions regarding the “truth” of *shanshuihua* in the Daoist context and discuss how such truth will influence the way we enjoy *shanshuihua*.

2.

Redefining *Shanshui* and Human Body in the Daoist Context

What is called the inner realm? It is the realm of the body. The real image is the furnace within my body, which contains heaven and earth, sun and moon, stars, wind and clouds, the milky way, mountains, rivers, grass and wood. Heaven is [associated with] *qian* hexagram, [with] gold; it is the canopy situating above the myriad of things; and it is therefore the lung of the inner realm. The stars, sun and moon and so on, are the upper burner⁷⁰ of the inner realm, it is the measure system of the blood circulation. The Great Void mysterious realm above is where the lucid *qi* coagulates; below the mysterious realm is where the turbid *qi* unites and separates. The division between the lucid upper part and the turbid lower part is the middle burner, and it is the separation between the thorax and the abdomen. The area above the separation is translucent and the down below is filthy. The Five mountains and the mountain ranges are the head; the valley is the mouth and nose; the wellspring is the saliva and the food and the drink; the river running to the sea is [similar to] the food and drink coagulates in the springhead; the cloud and rain generated from the mountain and stream is the hair.

吾於是宜知夫內境真象焉。內境者何也？身之境也。真象者，吾身之爐，其中有天地、日月、星辰、風雲、河漢、山嶽、江河、草木焉。天者，乾也，金也，華蓋也，處於萬象之上，是為內境之肺者也。星辰日月之輸者，是為內境之上焦，榮衛流行之度者也。太虛玄界之上清氣凝集焉，玄界之下濁氣聚散焉，上下清濁之分是為內境之中焦，羅隔者也。羅隔之上，清爭之域也；羅隔之下，穢濁之境也。五嶽群山者，首也；澗谷者，口也、鼻也；泉源者，津液也，飲食也；江河奔大海者，飲食聚於水穀之府也；雲雨生山川者，毛髮也。⁷¹

-- *Daoshu* 道樞 (*Pivot of the Dao*), Zeng Zao 曾慥 (–1155)

⁷⁰ Upper burner is a concept in traditional Chinese medicine. It is the upper part of the so called *sanjiao* (Triple burner), one of the six *fu* organs within the human body. It is essential to the free movement of the *qi*. The upper burner relates to organs the thorax and the breathing function. The middle burner relates to the organs above the stomach and digestion. The lower burner relates to the organs lower down in the abdomen and the urogenital or gynaecological function. According to *Huangdi neijing* (*Yellow Emperor's Classic of Internal Medicine*), the upper burner acts like a mist, the middle like foam, the lower like a swamp.

⁷¹ DZ 1017

The absence of the body has been a constant inquiry in the study of Chinese art. Why— John Hay asks in his article “*The Body Invisible in Chinese Art*” – does the body seem to be almost invisible in a figurative tradition that flourished for over two thousand years? Why does *shanshuihua*, the pre-eminent art form in China, appear to exemplify an absence of the body? While the nude seems to be the starting point for Western bodily perceptions, a human body in the anatomical sense is absent in Chinese art traditions.⁷² In *shanshuihua*, we see small human figures amidst the immense nature – contrasted by the grandeur of the universe, human presence seems humble. However, we do not see the volume and structure of the human body. How should we understand such “absence”?

Hay answers these questions firstly by explaining that the ‘invisibility’ is not an absence, but the West’s *inability* to recognize bodies presented utilizing non-Western artistic indicators. A Chinese body was dispersed through metaphors locating it in the natural world by transformational resonance and brushwork that embodied the cosmic-human reality of *qi*, or energy. He further demonstrates that the Chinese term for visceral system *zangxiang* 臟象 (visceral image) appear to have incorporated a perception that the universe is a process of self-imaging – a cosmological key in *Yijing* 易經 (*The Book of Change*). *Zangxiang* are not anatomical organs. It represents the processing, storage, and distribution of vital *qi* associated with the substances. On such ground he concludes:

“All phenomena are images generated by an autonomous process out of potentiality. As an ontological foundation, this must have profoundly affected the account of man’s world at

⁷² The role of *shanshuihua* in Chinese art has been compared many times with that of the nude in the West. William Watson believed that they both are a theme “unvarying in itself but made the vehicle of infinite nuances of vision and feeling”. (William Watson, *Style in the Arts of China*, Maryland: Penguin Books, 1974, p83)

both general and specific levels. Consciousness in this world, is a process of participation rather than of objectively seeing. In this context, the notion of “the representation of the body” may be descriptive rather than analytical. It was “a representation” rather than an “object”, but a representation given in the very genes of the universe itself, and hence as objective as one might ever hope to get.”⁷³

Hay’s definition of “the representation of the body” invites us to think of body in a more macrocosmic dimension. The gestures of natural objects can be read as dispositions of the human body. A bending pine tree is symbolic of a dignified salute. Therefore, in order to *see*, one must have the ability to recognize body in Chinese artistic indicators. Hay’s points are insightful but far from being sufficient. In his understanding, the body is only present through anthropomorphizing natural objects.

Susan Huang addressed this question from a Daoist angle. By linking the inner alchemical visual interpretation of body with the newly established art of *shanshuihua*, she raised the concept *neijing* 内景 (inner landscape), believing it an exclusive Daoist contribution to Chinese *shanshuihua*, as she says:

“Daoist painters have made tremendous contributions to Chinese landscape painting, elevating it to the art of inner landscape. This may be inspired by the Daoist use of landscape as an esoteric symbol of the inner body in internal alchemy, compounded by the timeless veneration of mountains in Daoist sacred geography and cosmology.”⁷⁴

⁷³ John Hay, “The Body Invisible in Chinese Art” in *Body, Subject, and Power in China*, eds. Tani Barlow and Angela Zito. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994, p77

⁷⁴ Susan Huang “Daoist Visual Culture” in Lagerwey, John.ed. *Modern Chinese Religion. 1,2, Song-Liao-Jin-Yuan (960-1368 AD)*; Vol. 2. Leiden, Brill, 2015, p1049-1050

By “inner landscape”, Huang refers to the inner alchemical vision that the interior of the human body is a microcosm. As Zeng Zao elaborates in the opening quote, the inner realm is the realm of the body, which contains natural phenomenon of the macrocosm. The body of human beings as the microcosm is analogous to the macrocosmic body of the universe. The goal of the inner alchemy is to join the “natural ingredients” in a symbolic crucible and purify them in the fires of a symbolic furnace in the body. In this vein, *shanshui* is not just ontologically connected with the human body, it becomes the body.

Huang’s demonstration touches upon a deeper question on the truth of the body: what is the true and real (*zhen*) body in Daoism? Is there a body beyond the anatomical body? How could one access the truth or ultimate real via body? The way we perceive our body is, to a great extent, the result of our intellectual recognition of our existential beings. In other words, the forms of human body cannot be separated from the cultural body that produces it. In order to *see*, we not only need to recognize body in Chinese artistic indicators, but also get to the bottom of the body logic – of how it is formed and of its mechanism.

This chapter will first address the question related to *zhen* as it is critical to our understanding of the “true realm of vision”. I would like to clarify the connotation of *zhen* and explain how the concept of *zhen* will be explored in this dissertation. Next, this chapter will discuss the correlation between *shanshui* and body from a Daoist perspective. Whilst the body-landscape correlation is not unfamiliar to the field -- body, viewed as the microcosm, resonates with the rhythm and patterns of the cosmos, there has been relatively little examination of this correlation within the specific context of *shanshuihua* – even fewer in terms of the Daoist body and *shanshuihua*. I try to argue that the body is not invisible in

shanshuihua– it is ever-present through the agency of the *shanshui*. The connection between the body of mountain and the body of human beings is not only spiritual, but more importantly corporeal/ontological. Through the reciprocity between bodies, the mountain and human are able to exchange knowledge that is only accessible via bodies.

Furthermore, as human bodies and natural landscapes are identified as representative of one another, *shanshui* offers a solution to solve the Daoist anxiety over the physical limitations of the body. As the powerful and redemptive mediation between human beings and the Dao, *shanshui* breaks down the constant confrontation and opposition between the “I” and the cosmos and reactivates one’s primordial dependency on nature. *Shanshuihua*, in this vein, transcends the body and provides access to the truth and reality of the Dao.

2.1 The Concept of *zhen*

Before we go on addressing other issues, there are two urgent questions regarding “the true realm of vision” in Daoism. First, how do the Daoists access the true realm of vision? Second, what is, after all, the true realm? In other words, what does the Daoism consider to be true or real? If the title of this dissertation is suggesting that reading *shanshuihua* merely as *shanshuihua* shies away from the true realm, how could one eventually see the ultimate truth or reality? In order to answer these questions, we need to examine the concept of *zhen* in the Daoist context.

2.1.1 The concept of *zhen* in Daoist classics

The quest for the truth, or the really real is framed as the pursuit of *zhen* in Daoism. The attribution of *zhen* cannot be separated from the ontological Dao. In fact, as Poul Andersen puts it, the ontology based on the quality of *zhen*, “true reality”, is a defining feature of Daoism not encountered outside contexts that are understood to be Daoist.⁷⁵ The ultimate goal of Daoist practice is named as *yudao hezhen* 与道合真 (to attain true reality with the Dao).

Zhen, in its modern and secular sense, is often used to describe a state or an object that is in accordance with the actual state of affairs, as opposite to “false” “fake” or “untrue”.⁷⁶ As a noun, the term also refers to natural disposition and the true nature, e.g. *fanpu guizhen* 返璞歸真 (return to original purity and simplicity). Compared to the modern and secular meaning, the usage of *zhen* in Daoism is rather versatile. The earliest appearance of *zhen* can be found in *Laozi*.⁷⁷ It first appeared as the quality of Dao. Chapter 21 of *Laozi*, in describing the unfathomable formless Dao, it goes: “As a thing the way is, shadowy and indistinct. ...Dim and dark, yet within it is an essence. This essence is quite genuine⁷⁸, and within it is something that can be tested.”⁷⁹ (道之為物／唯恍唯惚……窈兮冥兮／其中有精／其精甚真／其中有信⁸⁰). Within the dim and dark chaos, the essence of the Dao appears to be “quite genuine” or “more real” (*shenzhen* 甚真). The comparative verb *shen* signifies a

⁷⁵ Poul Andersen, *The Paradox of Being: Truth, Identity, and Images in Daoism*. Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Asia Center, 2019.p8

⁷⁶ On such basis, the meaning of term is extended to an exact copy of something, such as *xiezhen* 寫真(portrait) or *chuanzhen* 傳真(fax).

⁷⁷ It is worthy pointing out that this character is rarely found in texts prior to *Laozi*, including the *Analects* and *Mencius*.

⁷⁸ Here D.C Lau translates *zhen* as “genuine”. Citing this passage does not mean that I agree with his translation. We will discuss the translation of *zhen* shortly after in this chapter.

⁷⁹ Lau, D.C. (tr.), *Dao de jing*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1980, p26

⁸⁰ Chen Guying, and Laozi. *Laozi jin zhu jin yi*.老子今注今譯, Beijing: Shangwu yinshu guan, 2003.p156

reality that goes beyond our perceived notion of mundane reality. Dao is therefore the ultimate reality. Furthermore, *Laozi* suggests that *zhen* needs to be cultivated. According to Chapter 54, “What is firmly rooted cannot be pulled out; What is tightly held in the arms will not slip loose; Through this the offering of sacrifice by descendants will never come to an end. Cultivate it in your body, and its virtue will be genuine; Cultivate it in the family, and its virtue will be more than sufficient”⁸¹ (善建不拔/善抱者不脫/子孫以祭祀不輟/修之於身/其德乃真/修之於家/其德乃餘.⁸²) That is to say, one’s inner potency (*de* 德) can only be real by cultivating the Dao in his body.

In *Zhuangzi* the concept of *zhen* becomes much clearer. The most straightforward definition of *zhen* comes from Chapter Yufu 漁父 (The Old Fisherman) of the Miscellaneous Chapters, when Confucius looked ashamed and asked what is *zhen*, the stranger answered:

“By ‘the Truth’(*zhen*) I mean purity and sincerity in their highest degree. He who lacks purity and sincerity cannot move others. ...When a man has the Truth within himself, his spirit may move among external things. That is why the Truth is to be prized! ...Rites are something created by the vulgar men of the world; the Truth is that which is received from Heaven. By nature it is the way it is and cannot be changed. Therefore, the sage patterns himself on Heaven, prizes the Truth, and does not allow himself to be cramped by the vulgar. The stupid man does the opposite of this. He is unable to pattern himself on Heaven and instead frets over human concerns.”⁸³

⁸¹ Lau, D.C. (tr.), *Dao de jing*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1980, 26. p61

⁸² Chen Guying, and Laozi. *Laozi jin zhu jin yi*.老子今注今譯, Beijing: Shangwu yinshu guan, 2003.p271

⁸³ Burton Watson, Trans., *The Complete Works of Zhuangzi*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2013, p276

客曰：「真者，精誠之至也。不精不誠，不能動人……真在內者，神動於外，是所以貴真也……禮者，世俗之所為也；真者，所以受於天也，自然不可易也。故聖人法天貴真，不拘於俗。愚者反此，不能法天而恤於人。」⁸⁴

This passage pinpointed the significance of *zhen*. First, in the bigger picture, *zhen* is that which is received from Heaven. It is the way it is and cannot be changed. *Tian* 天 (heaven), as the productive power of the natural world, endowed human beings with the most genuinely natural form of existence possible. In this sense, *zhen* is the truest state of the cosmos that refuses any artificial differentiation and categorization and can only move spontaneously according to its inner tendency. On the other hand, Daoists wish to return to such state upon their mortal death. *Zhuangzi* refers to such return as “going back to one’s trueness” 反其真⁸⁵. However, it should be noted that only a transformed human being could return to the ontological state of the universe. The death of the ordinary human beings does not bring such result, which again reaffirms the point that the journey of *zhen* is essentially a process of self-transformation.⁸⁶

Secondly, following the abovementioned point, *zhen*, as the most genuinely natural form of existence endowed by heaven, is the true essence and utmost purity contained within the human being. *Zhen*, within the human being, in the existential level means that it does not only exist in spiritual form, but also in physical form. However, once the existential creature

⁸⁴ Chen Guying, and Zhuangzi. *Zhuangzi jin zhu jin yi*. 莊子今注今譯. Beijing: Shangwu yinshu guan, 2007, p944-945

⁸⁵ Ibid. p227

⁸⁶ *Zhuangzi* tells the “return” through Master Sanghu’s death, who was apparently a realized being. (He could “climb up to heaven and wander in the mists, roam the infinite, and forget life forever and forever” (能登天遊霧，撓挑無極，相忘以生，無所終窮 Ibid. p227). David Chai helps us better understand the process of return by introducing the horizontal reversal and the vertical reversal. Horizontal return, as he demonstrates, is the “unremarkable” of the two, representing the ontic reintegration of being into the One. This is what would happen after the death of the unrealized human beings. For those realized just as Master Sanghu, return refers to the vertical assimilation of the One with Dao. (David Chai, *Zhuangzi and the Becoming of Nothingness*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 2019, p25-26)

loses its alignment with heavenly principles “Dao”, and disturbs its tranquility with overwhelming desires and worldly affairs, the true essence is being consumed and can eventually be depleted, as *Zhuangzi* says “by laboring his mind and toiling his body, he is imperiling his trueness” 苦心勞形以危其真⁸⁷. In other words, *zhen*, as well as *zhenren*, is not simply a conceptualized idea. *Zhuangzi* has advocated in multiple times that we should “be diligent in cultivating one’s body, careful to guard the trueness” 謹修而身，慎守其真⁸⁸ and “preserve our trueness” 葆真. Therefore, he provides a substantial number of suggestions on the cultivation of *zhen* through both spiritual and physical practice. The chief principle, to guard one’s true nature as the unspoiled and uncarved jade and maintain the unperturbed state of mind is align with the concept of *wuwei* 無為 (non-action). This does not mean that one is not allowed to perform any kind of action, but to suggest that one should train the motions and intentions in himself so that it could spontaneously move another in the direction of the Dao. His practice methods, such as “fastening the heart” 心齋 and “sitting and forgetting” 坐忘, all provide solutions in order to accomplish such agenda. Here it is noticeable that to express one’s most genuine spontaneous emotion is not contradictory to preserve one’s *zhen*. That is because *Zhuangzi* is not suggesting that a heart should get whatever it wants in our modern sense. The prerequisite for the heart-mind in the *Zhuangzi* context is not to fulfill its every desire but to remain uninterrupted and tranquil, as well as keeping simple and unadorned in his nature. One must remove desires, purposes, redundant wisdom, and conceptual knowledge from his mind to let his most genuine nature flow spontaneously in the direction of the Dao. Needless to say, the *Zhuangzian* conception

⁸⁷ Ibid.p937

⁸⁸ Ibid. p944

“preserving the true essence” has a profound and lasting influence on the theoretical structure of inner alchemical practice. The description of the realized being, such as the breath method, has been adopted into meditative practice.

Thirdly, as to human beings, *zhen* also refers to the ability to act in utmost sincerity with one’s heart-mind, and to express the most genuine spontaneous emotion. That is to say, *zhen* as an inner essence can also be expressed or perceived externally. One should not force himself to any kind of emotions or quibble over the exact ritual to be followed. Rather, one should let their inner dispositions manifest naturally and spontaneously. In other words, *zhen* sets the conditions for the “healthy” flourishing of the heart-mind. This point, which is further interpreted as “be true to oneself”, seems to identity with the maxims of our modern age.

On a deeper level, this passage situates *zhen* within a dichotomy between *tian* 天 (heaven) and *ren* 人 (human). The sage patterns himself of heaven and prioritizes *zhen* while the stupid frets over human concerns. Heaven in this sense, signifies the principles of the utmost natural and spontaneous dispositions, while human concerns stand for artificially contrived ethics and conventions.⁸⁹

Furthermore, much associated with the term *zhen*, *Zhuangzi* introduces the consummate exemplar “*zhenren*” 真人 (realized/true being). The realized/true being, is someone that models the pattern of the heaven and earth, remains in harmony with the

⁸⁹ This dichotomy is more directly presented as *zhen* and *wei* 偽 (“What does the Way rely upon, that we have true and false?” ⁸⁹ 道惡乎隱而有真偽? See Watson, 2013, p9). Here Waston’s translation of *zhen* and *wei* as “true” and “false” could be problematic. While *wei* has a sense of being contrived and artificial, *zhen* has the sense of what rises naturally from the way things are in their innermost nature, without any interference, redirection, or artifice. In this vein, the closest English translation should be “genuine” and “artificial”.

undifferentiated unity, knows no artificial limits and could preserve his true nature. There are several attributions of *zhenren* that worth attention. Firstly, he is unattached from human circumstances – be that success or failure, life, or death. Secondly, he could not be harmed by natural environment, untouched by heat and cold. Thirdly, his biological habits differ from the common people. Last but not the least, he does not favor mind over the Dao, nor the human over the heaven.⁹⁰

Admittedly, there are strict prerequisites for the realized being. He must be simple and unadorned in his nature and remain uninterrupted and tranquil in his heart-mind. He must remove desires, purposes, redundant wisdom, and conceptual knowledge from his mind in order to dissolve the “self”. Once he became the true agent of the heaven, his “supernatural” power does not seem inexplicable anymore, for his action is the action of heaven, his breath is the breath of the cosmos. Most importantly, he has reached a perfect balance between heaven and human beings. It is through him the inexplicable knowledge of the Dao become perceivable to human beings. He conveys the true knowledge, but true knowledge is only part of him. His character and capacity to go beyond social norms and ordinary domains are all proof of him having attained the true principles of the Dao. *Zhenren* thus became the label of ultimate attainment in later Daoist tradition.

To conclude, in *Laozi* and *Zhuangzi*, *zhen* could be understood as “true/truth” “really real/reality” and “genuine/genuineness”.⁹¹ However, could we equal *zhen* with a semantic

⁹⁰ For a detailed description of *zhenren*, see Chapter Dazongshi 大宗師(The Great and Venerable Teacher) in *Zhuangzi*.

⁹¹ Accordingly, the translation of the critical term *zhen* has gone through intriguing phases. (This is not to say that scholars have reached a consensus on the translation of *zhen*. The phases do not stand for a linear development. The many translations of *zhen* still coexist and the translation of this critical term remains in

concept of “truth”? Can we attain *zhen* the same way we obtain knowledge? What is the difference between human reality and the ultimate reality of Dao? We will come back to these questions later in this chapter.

2.1.2 The concept of *zhen* in Quanzhen Daoism

After occurring surprisingly sixty-six times in *Zhuangzi*⁹², *zhen* became a popular word pervasive in Daoist classics as well as other texts. By late Han dynasty, the *Shuowen* lexicon (circa 100 C.E.) classified *zhen* 真 under the radical bi 匕 and defines *zhen* as “the immortals undergoing physical transformation and ascending to heaven” (僊人變形而登天也).⁹³ Its etymological component bi 匕 which means *hua* 化(to transform) suggests *zhen* is conceived as fundamentally **transformational**. This definition points *zhen* to an ongoing process of change and transformation. Although at this point the meaning of *zhen* is not necessarily

debate.) *Zhen* was first translated as “true and real” (Henri Maspero, Isabelle Robinet), then as “genuine” or “authentic” (Roger Ames, Daniel Coyle), and as “perfected” (Kristofer Schipper 1965, Michel Strickmann, Livia Kohn, Louis Komjathy 2007) or as “realized” (Stephen Eskildsen 2004, Paul Katz 1999), to the most creative “*zhenuine*” (Hans-Georg Moeller and Paul J.D’Ambrosio 2017), and most recently back home as “true and real” (Poul Andersen 2019). Accordingly, *zhenren* 真人 could be translated as “True Man” (Burton 1968) “Perfected being” “Authentic/Genuine person” and *zhenzhi* 真知 as “True/Authentic/Genuine knowledge” or “Realized/Perfected knowledge”. Even though textual sources of *zhen* (classical texts like *Laozi* and *Zhuangzi*, medieval Daoist scriptures, Quanzhen writings, to name a few) that scholars based on may vary, it is fair to say that every translation choice, to a certain degree, reflects the scholar’s own academic agenda. Indeed, the difficulty of translating *zhen* lies in its versatile usage and rich variety of meanings developed in a long-time span. With its meaning in constant transformation, imposing a singular translation can be problematic and limiting. For example, *Zhen* in the ethical sense of “authenticity” and “sincerity” does not offer us an explanation on why *ren* 仁(benevolence) can hurt one’s *zhen*, nor why death marks one’s return to his *zhen*, not to mention why maintaining *zhen* requires bodily practice. Therefore, it is my belief that the definition and translation of *zhen* should be considered according to context.

⁹² Of the sixty-six occurrences in *Zhuangzi*, *zhen* appears nineteen times in the Inner Chapters, eighteen times in the Outer Chapters and twenty-nine times in the Miscellaneous Chapters.

⁹³ Coyle, Daniel. “On the *Zhenren*” in Ames, Roger T, ed. *Wandering at Ease in Zhuangzi*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998, 198

religious, yet from the period of the Han to the Six Dynasties, notions and practice associated with the transformational *zhen* became central to Daoist religious tradition. As Daniel Coyle notes, “*zhen* took on a more religious significance, becoming one of the linchpins of Daoism. Movements of alchemy, life-prolonging techniques, and the quest for ‘immortality’ flourished.”⁹⁴ When it comes to Quanzhen Daoism, attaining *zhen* becomes the religious regime of the lineage.

The meaning of *zhen* in this religious movement remains in debate. Scholars who render *zhen* as “authenticity” like Marsone argues that “perfected” or “perfection” is more of a transposition or an interpretation than a translation. “Perfection” implicates the successful end of a process: it is an achievement while *zhen* has the opposite meaning -- it is an original and ontological authenticity of nature which has not been corrupted by the process of creation or by the passions, as Wang Chongyang clearly speaks of the “original authenticity” (*benlai zhen* 本來真). Thus, the *zhenren* are the “authentic persons” who have returned to authenticity through asceticism⁹⁵. Komjathy argued against Marsone, asserting that the adept does not become “authentic” through Quanzhen religious praxis, but becomes alchemically transformed and perfected. *Zhen* therefore refers to becoming “perfected,” to the attainment of a condition of “perfection,” that is, complete alchemical transformation that results in immortality or transcendence. From the macrocosmic perspective, the Dao is *zhen*, “Perfection” or “Reality,” “perfect” in the sense of being without flaws, complete in its own suchness, as well as unified and integrated. In terms of the microcosmic aspect, specifically

⁹⁴ Coyle, 1998, p205

⁹⁵ Pierre Marsone, “Accounts of the Foundation of the Quanzhen Movement: A Hagiographic Treatment of History” in *Journal of Chinese Religions*, vol. 29, 2001, p95

as referring to the Daoist adept, *zhen* refers to “a shift in ontological condition attained through religious praxis and alchemical transformation”⁹⁶.

Central to these two arguments is whether to regard *zhen* as “authentic state of Dao” or “the attainment of perfected condition”. Marsone takes the transformational process essentially as a way of return – return to the original and ontological authenticity of the Dao. On the other hand, Komjathy takes it as a developmental process oriented for a higher level of existence. But to use Komjathy’s own word, isn’t this higher level of existence points us back to Dao – what he calls “the perfected reality” – the source of our all beings? And isn’t inner alchemy essentially a reverted journey back to the Dao? I agree with neither Marsone nor Komjathy on their translation of *zhen*. As far as I am concerned, it is best translated as “realized/realization”, which not only brings out the process of transformation, but also hints its ontological root in the Dao – to realize that the real is already there in the beginning. While “authenticity” cannot demonstrate the experience of transformation, “perfection” is simply wrong. The idea of “perfection” as the goal of practice or “practice makes perfection” is never intended in Daoism. The attainment of immortality or transcendence is not to become perfected, but to “constitute oneself as a manifestation and a being of truth”.⁹⁷

Nevertheless, despite their disagreement, we could see that scholars generally agree that *zhen* in the Quanzhen context, is a transformative process through asceticism and inner alchemical cultivation. *Zhen* is the goal of Quanzhen transformative practice. Adepts who completed the progress of alchemical refinement and transformation can attain such ontological condition. In this sense, *zhen* is synonymous with xian 仙 (“immortality”).

⁹⁶ Komjathy, 2007, p16

⁹⁷ Andersen, 2019, p67

2.1.3 The paradoxical framework of *zhen*

According to the above analysis, we notice the paradoxical nature of *zhen*. It points us to a higher realm of existence, a transcended reality – the reality of Dao. But meanwhile, this transcended reality, beyond our mundane reality or the semantic notion of truth, is also the source and unity underlying all levels of existence. However, the reality of Dao is non-reality. It is formless and therefore cannot be measured. As David Chai puts it, the non-presence of Dao makes the presence of the myriad things all the more real and yet, said authenticity lies with the creative possibilities of primal nothingness.⁹⁸

Poul Andersen eloquently addresses the paradoxical framework of *zhen* in his book *The Paradox of Being: Truth, Identity, and Images in Daoism*. He shows that the concept of *zhen*, which he translated as “true, real, true and real, true reality or realized (when referring to deified human being”,⁹⁹ posits being as a paradox anchored in the inexistent Dao.¹⁰⁰ As Dao is already self-contradictory in nature – the ways that cannot be spoken, the great image has no form, acting through no-action, its only eternal *zhen* (truth and reality) is its inexistence. Therefore, to be a Daoist is to seek *zhen* in the original, indiscernible, and unspeakable (thus

⁹⁸ David Chai, *Zhuangzi and the Becoming of Nothingness*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 2019, p142

⁹⁹ Andersen, 2019, p110

¹⁰⁰ By embracing the paradox of *zhen*, Andersen moves beyond the conventional dichotomy between “truth” and “real” in western philosophical tradition. But for others, it seems problematic to bridge them in a Daoist tradition, especially that “truth” in its western philosophical root implicates an epistemological framework that is categorically different from Daoism. Ames and Hall point out that the Western “what” question have resulted in a catalog of facts and principles that assist one in taking an inventory of the world about us, and the Chinese “where” question led to a search for the right path, the appropriate models of conduct to lead one along the path, the “way” that life is to be lived, and where to stand. (Ames and Hall, 1998. p103) In this vein, truth in the West, “is a knowledge of *what* is real and what represents that reality”, while for the Chinese, truth, as a knowledge of the way, is a kind of “know-how”. Unlike the former, it is not abstract, representational, nor discursive; rather, it is concrete, performative and participatory. But I suppose they will all agree that *zhen* in Daoism is not to be known, but to be experienced, embodied and cultivated.

abnormal) source of life. For Andersen, “authentic human existence as a subject consists of being an exception to social reality: it is a kind of ontological subtraction or extraction that gives access to the real truth of the situation in a form of “ex-istence” which is closer to inexistence than to conventional being.”¹⁰¹ To put it in a more palpable way, in order to seek *zhen*, human beings must give up his own subjective agency in order to open room for the truth of Dao. Andersen’s point echoes with Graham’s view that only through such ontological subtraction or extraction that energies strange to human being and higher than his own enter from outside, the agent of his actions is no longer the man but Heaven working through him, yet paradoxically in discovering a deeper self he becomes for the first time truly the agent.¹⁰²

Different from Graham, Andersen stresses the importance of rituals as engines translating human beings into *zhen*. He believes that ritual efficacy depends on the personal inner cultivation of the officiating priest, and the external images that are addressed in ritual acquire divine presence only through the transference of divine reality from within the body of the priest. Therefore, the significance of the inner cultivation of the priest cannot be overstressed. However, the process of inner transformation is conceived as self-referential. That is to say, truth is obtained through transformation of the subject in itself. The divine beings that populate the priest (or our) bodies “are thought of both as being formed out of the basic ‘life forces’ that animate the body of a person, and as true and real beings that transcend all such substance matter”¹⁰³. We are seeking in ourselves the ultimate truth that are not only the

¹⁰¹ Ibid, 2019, 6

¹⁰² A.C.Graham, *Chuang-Tzu, The Inner Chapters*, London: Unwin Hyman Limited, 1989. p69

¹⁰³ Andersen, 2019, p72

source of our beings but also transcend our existence. Therefore, through the crucial activity of visualization and “actualization” (*cun*), “the Daoist will eventually realize that one of these divine beings is, indeed, him- or herself. I use the term ‘realize’ here in its dual meaning of ‘becoming aware that something is the case’ and ‘making something be the case’ ”.¹⁰⁴

Although Andersen devotes his theory to the analysis of Daoist rituals and ritual images¹⁰⁵, it is also applicable to inner alchemy and inner alchemical *shanshuihua*. The difference is that the visualization in inner alchemical practice focuses on the internal landscape, a virtual microcosm of the external cosmos that is manifest in the Daoist body. In this process, human bodies and natural landscapes are identified as representative of one another. The adepts are expected to see a combined image in which the cosmic body and human body are orchestrated into a unified rhythm – the true realm of vision. The cosmic body is the human body, and the vital energy roams in between heaven and earth the same way it circulates within the human body. The space and structure of the natural world became integral to an understanding of the human body. The material representation of the natural world – the *shanshui*, hence becomes a powerful visual tool connecting the spheres of body, natural world, cosmos, and mental world. The externalization of the inner alchemical progress in the likeness of the macrocosm manifests the divine identity of the practitioners. For them, the ultimate reality is not the actualities of everyday life, but the vision they acquire through inner alchemical practice.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, p174

¹⁰⁵ Such as “true writs” that signify only themselves.

2.2 The Daoist Body

“The reason I have great trouble is that I have a body. When I no longer have a body, what trouble have I?”¹⁰⁶

吾所以有大患者，為吾有身，及吾無身，吾有何患？

-- *Laozi*, Chapter XIII

2.2.1 Daoist Mode of Perception

The theoretical principles of the body can be traced back to Daoist foundational classics, *Laozi* and *Zhuangzi*. My intention is not to provide a systematic analysis of the Daoist body – which has already been done by many scholars, but to answer the question related to “seeing”.¹⁰⁷ How can we see the Daoist body, if not treating the body merely as an object? How can we approach the *zhen* (truth) of the body? We hence first need to address the Daoist mode of perception.

Mark Meulenbeld and Rur-bin Yang’s analysis of “visceral knowledge” and “corporeal knowledge” are quite central to our question related to the body. Meulenbeld, in dialogue with the Phenomenology of Martin Heidegger, Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Hubert Dreyfus, and certainly the theories articulated in the classical writings of *Zhuangzi*, offers us a critical review of the Daoist Modes of Perception. The first is to “view a thing as if it were a

¹⁰⁶ Lau, D.C. (tr.), *Dao de jing*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1980, p17

¹⁰⁷ See works by Sommer, Deborah. “Concepts of the Body in the *Zhuangzi*”, in Victor Mair, ed., *Experimental Essays on Zhuangzi*, Dunedin: Three Pines Press, 2010, pp212-228; Ames, Roger T. “The Meaning of Body in Classical Chinese Philosophy”, in *Self as Body in Asian Theory and Practice*, edited by Thomas P. Kauslis, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993, pp157-77. Despeux, Catherine. “Visual Representations of the Body in Chinese Medical and Daoist Texts from the Song to the Qing Period (Tenth to Nineteenth Century).” *Asian Medicine: Tradition and Modernity* 1, pp10-52. 2005.

completely external and autonomous object in itself”¹⁰⁸. similar to our idea of “objective” perception. The second mode emerges within the ensuing field of registered, divine shape, focusing on reconstituting the presences already available in graphic form. The third mode, which breaks through both the autonomous objectivity of the first mode, and the subjected individuality of divine shapes in the second mode, “articulates the fact of an umbilical connection between perceiver and perceived, construing the reconstitution of divine forces as a regeneration of presences always already latent within oneself”¹⁰⁹. The third mode is especially noteworthy for it “realizes” the Daoist notion of the equivalence of worldly creatures, of existence as a form of being that shares a cosmic connection between all things. In this vein, the macro-cosmos is inherently connected with the micro-cosmos; the worldly things with bodily things; and physical things with “non-physical” phenomena such as time, space, spirit and so on.

The third mode echoes with the theory of perception of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, developed on the basis of Martin Heidegger’s Phenomenology. From the vantage point of the body, this theory opposes the intellectualist reduction of perception to a mere mental process and situates perception against the background of human body. In this sense, “knowledge is not merely isolated in the brain, knowing is also an active process of the living body as a being in the world;” “meaning thus resides not only in our mind, but also in the physical world occupied by the body”¹¹⁰. Extending this strand of thinking to the butterfly story, Meulenbeld argues that the butterfly serves as evidence that humans contain within

¹⁰⁸ Meulenbeld, Mark. “Daoist Modes of Perception: “Registering” the Living Manifestations of Sire Thunder, and why Zhuang Zi is relevant.” *Daoism: Religion, History and Society* 道教研究學報 8. (Dec. 2016), 39

¹⁰⁹ Meulenbeld, 2016, p41

¹¹⁰ Meulenbeld, 2016, p43

themselves true knowledge of being an entirely different entity. “Perhaps,” he marks, “this is to be called ‘visceral knowledge’”.¹¹¹ But here we must point out, the knowledge is possible only through the relational concept of “transformation” (化 *hua*). In other words, it is in the transformative process –not in the logic or theory -- that the true knowledge becomes manifest, and the ground for transformation lies in the primordial connection – *qi* – that exists between things on a concretely physical level, as well as spiritual level. In a nutshell, only through the transformative process – by letting go of regular vision and transcending awareness of human form – can one attain recognition of the “true” being of things.

In a similar vein, Rur-bin Yang discloses the inseparable connection between Zhuangzi’s view of the corporeal self and his metaphysics by analyzing the hidden corporeal components described in Zhuangzi’s Dao-embodiment experiences. In other words, the true knowledge is only possible through the transformative process of bodily cultivation. True knowledge is not something isolated in the brain, rather, it is the result of merging one’s body with mind, mind with *qi*, and *qi* with the ultimate cosmic authority Dao. Yang divides the Dao-embodiment experiences into four stages. Firstly, the perception and rationality – the most basic preconditions for the production of “objects” –disintegrate. One must dissolve his “limbs and body” 墮肢體 “perception and intellect” 黜聰明 “form and understanding” 離形去知. Second, the personal identity of the empirical self unravels. The concept of “self” is no longer present, which in Zhuangzi’s word is rendered as “forgetting self” 忘己 or “losing myself” 喪我. After these two stages of dissolving personal identity of one’s empirical self, the present consciousness of the seeker of Dao is situated at a higher and more authentic

¹¹¹ Meulenbeld, 2016, p47

level. ““True in the realness of knowledge, not one to go searching for reasons’真其實知，不以故自持 – this points to the fact that this type of authentic consciousness is no longer subject to the influence of the operational modes of one’s former consciousness, but rather constitutes a kind of direct awareness that can thoroughly reflect the whole in a single moment”.¹¹² The last stage, following the emergence of authentic knowledge, one is able to join in great unity with the “Great Thoroughfare”大通, with no distinction between body and mind, subjective and objective, the conscious and the unconscious (matter) for they naturally merge into a single entity.

Next, Yang identifies the corporeal elements in the transformative experience. It starts with the transformation of sense organs. Again, drawing from Merleau-Ponty’s philosophy of body “Man is a permanent sensorium commune”, Yang believes that in order to attain to the realm of free-and-easy non-dependence, one must stand on the foundation of synesthesia and thoroughly break through the determinate functions of the sense organs, “allowing all sensations to meld into one whole and be fully integrated by the vital energy. Only after one lost his “empirical self” could there truly be an ‘I’”. After the sense organs are transformed, the Daoist cultivation practice is applied to the entire body and let the body to be permeated by the vital energy *qi*. After the entire body is vital-energized, the distinction between subject and object, inner and outer dissolves, the circulation of the mind’s vital energy has no inner or outer body to distinguish so one could “wander” free (*you* 遊), and the mind fully

¹¹² Yang, Rur-Bin. “From ‘Merging the Body with the Mind’ to ‘Wandering in Unitary Qi’: A Discussion of Zhuangzi’s Realm of the True Man and Its Corporeal Basis” in *Hiding the World in the World*, Scott Cook ed. Albany: State University of New York Press. 1998. p91

embodies the inexhaustible. This is also the point one reached the highest limits the term *body* can bear.

Meulenbeld and Yang enlighten us on how true knowledge could be obtained through bodily transformation. In other words, bodily process plays a key role in realizing a higher and more authentic level, be that of a process of ritual or a process of self-cultivation. Such understanding provides significant theoretical underpinnings for later Daoism bodily practice.

2.2.2 The Archetype and Anxiety of Daoist Body

Understanding body holds a critical position in realizing the truth of being, now it is time to turn to a more detailed description of the Daoist body. Although the macrocosm-microcosm correlation between the cosmos and body is relatively well known, it is still worthwhile to examine the mythical cosmogonic story of Pan Gu 盤古.

Yunji qiqian 雲笈七籤 (Seven Tablets in a Cloudy Satchel), the miniature Daoist Canon¹¹³ of the Song dynasty, recorded such account:

When the primordial breath burgeoned forth, the heaven and earth divided and formed the trigrams *qian* and *kun*, *yin* and *yang* came into force by dividing. It was then [that] the primordial breath engendered the central harmony which is none other than man. It gave birth to Pan Gu, who, at his death, transformed his body. His respiration yielded the clouds and the wind, his voice the thunder, his limbs the four extremities of the world, his left eye the sun, his right eye the moon, his internal organs the five peaks, his blood the rivers, his veins the earth, his muscle the soil, his hair the stars, his skin the grass and wood, his teeth the metal

¹¹³ It is an anthology of the (1016) Daoist Canon, which records many early Daoist text. Compared to the Ming Daoist Canon, it is miniature in size.

and stone, his marrow the jewels and jades, his sweat the rain. All the worms he carried, roused by the wind, metamorphosed into humans.¹¹⁴

洎乎元氣蒙鴻，萌芽茲始，遂分天地，肇立乾坤，啟陰感陽，分布元氣，乃孕中和，是為人矣。首生盤古，垂死化身，氣成風雲，聲為雷霆，左眼為日，右眼為月，四肢五體為四極五嶽，血液為江河，筋脈為地裡，肌肉為田土，發鬣為星辰，皮毛為草木，齒骨為金石，精髓為珠玉，汗流為雨澤。身之諸蟲，因風所感，化為黎。¹¹⁵

The body of the primordial giant Pan Gu transformed his body into the natural phenomenon. The death of his body marks the differentiation of the undivided cosmic unity. Although such myth is not unprecedented in other civilizations¹¹⁶, yet in Chinese culture the links were made systematic and tight through the system of yin/yang and five elements, where the body parts are associated with different elements and formed an organic whole. It is noticeable that the Pan Gu myth gives a detailed description of how the giant, as the first-born human being, transformed into nature, but uses very limited word to describe the birth of other human beings – they were just trivial worms that Pan Gu carried.

There is an apparent division between Pan Gu and other human beings. Pan Gu, born out of the harmonious interaction between the primordial yin and yang *qi*, is the ideal form of human beings, or the “superman”. He is not limited by the physical body. In this sense, Pan Gu is close to what Zhuangzi calls the *zhenren* 真人, who is able to “go into water and not

¹¹⁴ Jean Lévi, “The Body: The Daoists’ Coat of Arms,” in *Fragments for a History of the Human Body*, eds. Michel Feher; with Ramona Naddaff and Nadia Tazi, New York, NY: Urzone, Inc., 1989, p109

¹¹⁵ *Yunji qijian*, DZ 1032

¹¹⁶ Such as in ancient Mesopotamia, in ancient Iraq, in ancient Greek, and “Ymir” in Norse mythology.

get wet, enter fire and not be burned”¹¹⁷. Zhuangzi has made many differentiations between the *zhenren* and ordinary human beings, for instance, a *zhenren* breathes through his heels whereas the ordinary man breathes through his throat¹¹⁸. That is to say, the difference between Pan Gu or the *zhenren* and the ordinary is not only spiritual but also corporeal. The former is able to break through the determinate functions of the body parts and allow the body to meld into one whole and be fully integrated by the vital *qi*.

For the Daoists, nothing seems to be more limiting than the physical body. The body marks the boundary of human being and separate him/her from the natural flow of the cosmos. As Yuan Daoist Zhang Ziqiong 张紫琼¹¹⁹ said:

Heaven and human beings are originally [formed] by one homogenous *qi*,

It is the form and body [of the human beings] that stand in between them.

Cultivate until one’s form and spirit are deeply united.

Then [one] will realize that form is true emptiness.

天人一氣本來同，為有形骸礙不通。

煉到形神冥合處，方知色相即真空。¹²⁰

The physical body is eventually to be discarded and transcended. Lao Zi’s famous saying “the reason I have great trouble is that I have a body. When I no longer have a body, what

¹¹⁷ *Zhuangzi: Basic Writings*, trans. by Burton Watson, New York: Columbia University Press. 2013, p77-78

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.* 2013, p77-78

¹¹⁹ Birth and death date unknown.

¹²⁰ *Xingming guizhi* 性命圭旨 [Principles of the tablets on the innate nature and the vital force]

trouble have I?”¹²¹ echoes the anxiety with body. In a similar vein, Zhuangzi advocates that in the process of Dao-embodiment, firstly one must dissolve one’s limbs and body to disintegrate perception and rationality, as mentioned above. Here Zhuangzi discards the limbs not to disable the body, but to stress how the physical body could stand as an obstacle in arriving at a state of equivalence (tong) with the Dao. In inner alchemical practice -- which turns the whole body into a laboratory to produce the elixir, the physiological function of the body parts is the least important compared to the emblematic functions of the body. Catherine Despeux summarizes such phenomenon by saying “It is certainly surprising to find that, even in medical sources, the physiological, biological, and anatomical descriptions are not as detailed as one would expect. . . . As for the Daoists, they have considered the body in its practical ends, in its uses, developing all kinds of body techniques that intend to liberate the individual from the constraints of the physical body, and consequently to entrust a major role to the symbolic body”.¹²²

Now it becomes clear that for the Daoists, the body is a paradoxical complex. On the one hand, it is the field of life and contains the true form of the symbolic body. On the other hand, the limitation of the physical body has become the source of Daoist anxiety for it imposes the constant confrontation and opposition between the “I” and the cosmos. François Jullien used to say that “China is not haunted by that hidden God. It has no interest in deciphering the Promise nor has it been anxious about Lack”¹²³. However, China – at least the Daoist -- is very anxious about the scission with nature – the matrix, the ontological entity.

¹²¹ *Lao Tzu*, trans. by D.C. Lau, New York: Penguin Books, 1963, p17

¹²² Despeux, “Le corps, champ spatio- temporel, souche d’identité.” *L’Homme* 137, p87–88

¹²³ Jullien, François, *The Great Image has no form, On the Nonobject through Painting*, trans. by Jane Maria Todd, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009, p102

The scission is seen as the root of danger, affliction and anxiety. Therefore, how to reconnect the opposition and reactivate one's primordial dependency on nature become the locus of the transcendent quest.

2.3 *Shanshui* as Intermediary Between Body and Dao

2.3.1 *Shanshui* as the Paradigm of Dao

What does *shanshui* mean to a Daoist literati artist? It relates to the artist's view of nature, cosmology, and worldview. In other words, *shanshuhua* is not only about representing mountains and waters, but it also exhibits the way the artist views the world.

Even though human beings are the most advanced living creatures in the world, Daoists consider the natural and unspoiled *shanshui* closer to the Dao. Clifford Geertz demonstrates that the common sense as a mode of "seeing" accepts the world, its objects and its processes as being just what they seem to be; while the religious perspective moves beyond the actualities of everyday life and seeks for the ultimate reality – the "really real".¹²⁴ In the Daoist tradition, the question is framed as the pursuit of *zhen* 真 (trueness; true and real). Unlike the Confucian stress on righteousness and ritual, *zhen* is given priority in terms of the hierarchy of values in the Daoist context.

Zhen is important to our understanding of *shanshui* as it can refer to both the beginning and the end of the cosmological cycle. In the bigger picture, *zhen* is that which is received from Heaven. It is the way it is and cannot be changed. *Tian* 天 (heaven), as the productive power of the natural world, endowed human beings with the most genuinely natural form of

¹²⁴ Geertz, Clifford. "Religion as a Cultural System." in *Anthropological Approaches to the Study of Religion*, edited by Michael Banton. *ASA Monographs 3*. London: Tavistock Publications. 1966. Pp. 1–46

existence possible. In this sense, *zhen* is the most genuine state of the cosmos that refuses any artificial differentiation and categorization and can only move spontaneously according to its inner tendency. *Zhen* points us to a higher realm of existence, a transcended reality. But meanwhile, this transcended reality, beyond our mundane reality or the semantic notion of truth, is also the source and unity underlying all levels of existence. *Shanshui* as something unspoiled and uncarved, in such context sets a paradigm model of *zhen* for the human beings. While the human beings are constantly consuming their essence, *shanshui* is able to maintain its most genuinely natural form. It is the manifestation of the Dao, the effective and redemptive mediation that connects man to the Dao. *Shanshuihua*, in this vein, provides access to the truth and reality of Dao.

2.3.2 Corporeal Affinity Between Human and *Shanshui*

The significance of *shanshui* also lies in the Daoist view of existence as a form of being that shares a cosmic connection between all things. In this vein, the macro-cosmos is inherently connected with the micro-cosmos; the worldly things with bodily things; and physical things with “non-physical” phenomena such as time, space, spirit and so on. The body of human beings as the microcosm is analogous to the macrocosmic body of the universe.

Therefore, for the Daoists, the attraction of *shanshui* is not only spiritual, but more importantly corporeal/ontological. That is to say, there is a homogeneous connection between the body of mountain and the body of human beings engrained in Chinese tradition. In fact, compared to other natural landscape, the mountain-water compound shares the most resemblances with human beings in terms of body composition and structure. The Northern

Song painter Guo Xi 郭熙 (fl. 1060s) captures this resemblance in his famous treatise *Shanshui jue* 山水訣 (*The Significance of Landscape*), in which he describes the mountain as a living, organic cosmic body:

Mountain has water as blood, foliage as hair, mist and clouds as its spirit and character. Thus, a mountain is said to gain its life through water, its external beauty through vegetation, and its elegant charm through mist and clouds. Water has the mountain as its face, huts and pavilions as eyes and eyebrows, and anglers as its soul.

山以水為血脈，以草木為毛髮，以煙雲為神彩，故山得水而活，得草木而華，得煙雲秀媚。水以山為面，以亭樹/榭為眉目，以漁釣為精神。¹²⁵

There are high mountains and low mountains. The arteries of the high mountain run low. Its limbs spread wide; its feet are powerful and solid. Ridgelines of creviced peaks and rounded crests crowd together and interweave in unbroken gleaming links. Such is a high mountain. Thus, this type of high mountain is called not solitary, and called not reclining. The arteries of [a] low mountain run high. Its head summit comes halfway down, merging straight into its neck. The base is broad spread, and earthen mounds erupt in profusion. It extends deep down into the earth, none can measure how far. Such is a low mountain...Such are the configurations of mountains and water.

山有高有下。高者血脈在下，其肩股開張，其腳狀厚，巒岫岡勢陪擁相勾連。映帶不絕，此高山也。故知如是高山謂之不孤，謂知不仆。下者血脈在上，其巔定半落，項領相攀，根基龐大，堆阜臃腫，直不深插，可測其淺深，此淺山也...此山水之體裁也。¹²⁶

¹²⁵ Guo Xi, *Linquan gaozhi*, Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2010, p35

¹²⁶ Guo Xi, 2010, p37

The mountain as an organic cosmic body encompasses rocks, rivers, grass and trees, soil and so on. They are the bones, veins, hair, and flesh to the mountain. Through the reciprocity between bodies, the mountain and human are able to exchange knowledge that is only accessible through bodies (“embodied knowledge”).

The corporeal affinity between mountain and human body might be best exhibited through the concept of *dong* 洞. *Dong*, as an empty space or a natural void, echoes with the source of Dao – a deep and murky great void or emptiness. The void is the realm of nothingness, or “non-being”. In other words, the Dao is the unmanifested void or emptiness. For it is uncreated and unmanifested, it harbors endless potential and will not die. The image of the void therefore possesses the features of the Dao. *Dong*, in this sense, suggests a cosmological beginning.

The concept of the *da dong* (Great Grotto 大洞) was also adopted in medieval religious Daoism. It lies at the heart of Upper Clarity cosmology, a tradition from the fourth century onwards. In the mysterious cosmic process, human beings and the celestial realm fuse together through the vast void of the Great Grotto. The *Preface to the Upper Clarity Perfect Scripture of the Great Grotto* (*Shangqing dadong zhenjing xu* 上清大洞真經序) demonstrates the Great Grotto as such:

The Dao is born from nothingness, secretly harboring a multitude of numinous powers, which no one can fathom. Spirits condense in the void, marvelously transforming in myriad ways without bounds. In the darkest depths, there is an essence, serene and stable, which

shines out light. This great mystery is infinite, reaching across the void, preserving stillness.

This is called the “Great Grotto.”¹²⁷

夫道生於無，潛眾靈而莫測。神凝於虛，妙萬變而無方。杳冥有精，而泰定發光。
太玄無際，而致虛守靜。是之謂大洞者歟。¹²⁸

In this passage the Great Grotto is identified with the “the great mystery”. It is the harbor of Dao, boundless and limitless. Moreover, we find new dimensions of the Great Grotto: it is the source of spirits (*shen* 神) and essence (*jing* 精). That is to say, the purest form of spirit and essence is born and located in the empty void of the Great Grotto. The void of nothingness is indeed the source of “being”, from which the creation of myriad things has emerged. This quality reminds us another popular image in *Daode jing* – the valley (*gu* 谷). Hans-Georg Moeller demonstrates that the valley – the open void of the mountain – possesses the positive quality of fertility.¹²⁹ The valley is a negative form (compared to the “full” mountains that surround it) and is mere potential (a potential that has not yet materialized). But due to its emptiness and featurelessness, it guarantees its inexhaustibility and constant fertility. A couple of similar images – “a negative, merely potential, and imperishable void”¹³⁰ – share the same characteristics with the valley, including the grotto.

Following the macrocosmic-microcosmic model, we should notice that *dong* is not just a geographical or cosmological concept, it also exists within the human body. One of the

¹²⁷ Miller, James. *The Way of Highest Clarity: Nature, Vision and Revelation in Medieval China*. Magdalena, Nm, Three Pines Press, 2008, p53

¹²⁸ *DZ* 6

¹²⁹ Hans-Georg Möller. *The Philosophy of the Daodejing*. New York, Columbia Univ. Press, 2006, p28

¹³⁰ Möller.2006, p10

earliest examples of the esoteric hagiography (*neizhuan* 內傳), the “Esoteric Hagiography of the Perfected Being of Purple Solarity” (*Ziyang zhenrenneizhuan* 紫陽真人內傳) provides a detailed account on different dimensions of the *dong*. This text records the spiritual journey and of Zhou Yishan 周義山 (b. 80 BCE), of the methods he used to become a Perfected being. The text reads:

“The [part of] heaven [where there is] nothing is called space. The [part of] a mountain [where there is] nothing is called a grotto. The [part of] a human [body where there is] nothing is called a [grotto] chamber. The empty spaces in the mountains and organs of the body are called grotto courts. The empty spaces in human heads are called grotto chambers. This is how the perfected take up residence in the heavens, the mountains and human beings. When they enter the place of nothingness, a grain of rice could contain Mt. Penglai, and embrace the sixfold harmony [of the cosmos], yet heaven and earth would not be able to contain them. Only those who meditate on and visualize the perfected, preserve the three palaces¹³¹, have an audience with the one spirit and make an effort to meditate on them, will definitely be able to see Lord Wuying, the White Prime Lord and the Yellow Venerable Lord¹³² in their grotto chamber. The chariot of clouds with a canopy of feathers will then come and they will become perfected persons.”¹³³

「天無謂之空。山無謂之洞。人無謂之房也。山腹中空虛是謂洞庭。人頭中空虛是謂洞房。是以真人處天，處山，處人。入無間以黍米容蓬萊山，包括六合，天地不

¹³¹ The three cinnabar fields within the human body.

¹³² The three Prime Lords who function as intermediaries, enabling the adept to ascend to heaven.

¹³³ DZ 303

能載焉。唯精思存真,守三宮,朝一神,勤若念之,必見無英,白元,黃老在洞房焉。
雲車羽蓋既來,便成真人。」¹³⁴

From the above passage we could see that grotto exists in heaven, mountain and human head. *Dong* suggests simultaneously primordial cosmological grottos, grottos in a mountain, and within the human body. The grotto chamber in the human head is the residence of the spirits. It is noticeable that the human body is again compared to the body of the mountains, attesting to the former argument about corporeal affinity.

The passage tells us that a Perfected being is able to walk freely in these empty spaces. The real question implicated here seems to be how to reach the state of the Perfected Being. James Miller explains that since the perfected dwell in vacuity, they are able to forge the connections between the emptiness of outer space and the emptiness of the inner space of mountains and brains.¹³⁵ Miller's explanation seems to suggest that the emptiness in heaven, mountain and human head should not be simply taken as "void of the space". It is rather an ontological condition that precedes the materialization of things. Only the perfected beings could dwell in these empty grottos for they are able to withdraw from the physical back to their source in the great void or emptiness. This understanding aligns with the following passage from *Annotations to the Scripture for the Salvation from Distress* (Taishang dongxuan lingbao tianzun shuo jinku miaojing zhujie 太上洞玄靈寶天尊說救苦妙經註解) by Dongyang zi 洞陽子過:

¹³⁴ Miller, 2009, p152-153

¹³⁵ Miller, 2009, p152

Dong (cavern or grotto) is *tong* 通 (to “connect/penetrate/communicate”). It is connected with heaven and earth. Spirits and immortals secretly commute in between these grottos. Under heaven, there are ten greater grotto-heavens and thirty-six lesser grotto-heavens dwell in the great boundless void, and they are all interlinked. Only the immortals and sages who assemble to forms and disassemble into *qi* are able to go through the void without obstacles. Therefore, the sage [understands the patterns of things] afar from various parts of things and nearby from his own body. Within the human body there are also grotto-heavens. There are nine palaces in the head. Counting the empty heaven above, there are ten greater grotto-heavens in total. The spine has twenty-four sections and [the throat] has twelve-stories. There are thirty-six lesser grotto-heavens in total. They connect with the nine heavens of the Muddy Palace above and the nine places of the Caudal Pass down below. True *qi* secretly commutes in between these grottos. Therefore, the stage operates the polar stars in utmost emptiness and silence. Their spirit communicates with the *qi* of the grotto-heavens and the heaven above. That is so called the rising and descending of the three palaces. They go up and down and it is infinite.

洞者通也，上通於天，下通於地，中有神仙，幽相往來。天下十大洞、三十六小洞，居乎太虛磅礴之中，莫不洞洞相通，惟仙聖聚則成形，散則為氣，自然往來虛通，而無窒礙。是以聖人遠取諸物，近取諸身。則人一身之中，亦有洞者。頭有九宮，上有寥天，共為十大洞天；柱骨二十四節，共十二重樓，共三十六洞。上通泥丸之九天，

下徹尾閭之九地，中有真炁幽相往來。是以聖人於虛極靜篤之中，斡轉璇璣，神通炁洞，上與天通，所謂三宮昇降，上下往來，無窮者也。¹³⁶

This passage adopts the ten greater grotto-heavens and the thirty-six lesser grotto-heavens system that was organized in the Tang Dynasty by Sima Chengzhen 司馬承禎 (647-735) and Du Guangting 杜光庭(850-933) into the human body. Just as the geographical grotto-heavens are interconnected, the grottos within the human body are also interlinked. Yet the author reminds us that only the immortals and sages are able to go through these places freely. That is because they are able to transform between form and formless and attain an all-pervading (*tong*) unity with the Dao. However, for the ordinary human beings, the physical body stands in between them and the *datong* 大通 (Great Throughfare).

In other words, although the great voids exist within the human body and preserve the spirit and essence of the primordial Dao, they are not able to communicate freely with each other. The grottos within the body are blocked. Hence the lived body is not able to merge with the vital energies of the outer cosmos. As Miller eloquently puts it: “For the Daoists, the goal of cultivation is not so much liberation from the world, that is, the realm of phenomenal experience; but rather dissolving the boundaries between the lived body and its lived environment. To put it more bluntly, **the goal is not transcendence, but translucence**, that is to say the body thoroughly pervading and being pervaded by the world.”¹³⁷

¹³⁶ DZ 399

¹³⁷ Callicott, J Baird. and James Mcrae. *Environmental Philosophy in Asian Traditions of Thought*. Albany, Ny, State University Of New York Press, 2015, p234

To put it in a nutshell, due to the close corporeal/ontological affinity between the body of mountain and the body of human beings, human bodies and *shanshui* are identified as representative of one another. This correlation was made systematic and tight through the system of yin/yang and five elements, as well as inner alchemical practice. The body is not invisible in *shanshuihua*— it is ever-present through the agency of the *shanshui*.

2.3.3 Dissolving the Border Between Body and *Shanshui*: The Inner Landscape

The first step of translucence is the ability to see. The Daoist cultivation practice “*cun*” 存 is often translated as “to visualize”.¹³⁸ It is the backbone of Daoist meditation practice from the medieval period. *Cun* also refers to “cause to exist” as well as “to maintain [the existence]”. Visualization is thus a practice that actualizes the presence of the deities or inner landscape according to painted or textually described icons through concentration and imagination. The interaction with the divine stimulates and increases energy of the body, bringing improvement to both physical and spiritual conditions, and unclogging the blockage between grottos. The eventual goal of visualization is to see the inner and outer dimension as one “内外如一”.

Even though the correlation between body and nature goes way back in Chinese philosophy and aesthetic discourses, the visual representation of mountain as/inside body is an inner alchemical invention. Since macrocosm is inherently connected with the microcosm, and the process of inner alchemy imitates the circulation of the *qi* between heaven and earth, natural landscape seems to be the perfect medium to illustrate the inner operation of the body.

¹³⁸ See Livia Kohn “Cun” in Fabrizio Pregadio ed. *The Encyclopedia of Taoism* Volume 1, Oxford: Routledge, 2008, p287-289

From the Song-Yuan period, graphic representations of the body often depict the human body microcosmically with an inner landscape. As mentioned earlier, the appearance and popularity of these body graphs cannot be separated from the rise of Quanzhen Daoism, a Daoist religious movement with a nuanced understanding of the human condition and the path of self-cultivation and transformation, with their primary model of spiritual realization centered on inner alchemical practice and religious regime of attaining *zhen*. Anna Hennessey argues that just as internalization in the form of internal alchemy was becoming a focal component of Daoism, externalization in the form of alchemical representation was also rising as a tool through which this process of internalizing the religious experience could be actualized¹³⁹. In other words, as the practice of inner alchemy focuses on the visualization of internal landscape, a virtual microcosm of the external cosmos that is manifest in the Daoist body, human bodies and natural landscapes are identified as representative of one another. Therefore, material representation of landscape became a powerful visual tool connecting the spheres of body, natural world, cosmos, imagery and mental world through visualization. The space of the body also became integral to an understanding of the natural world. We can see such representation of the body from “Chart of the Rise and Fall of Yin and Yang, Image of the Body” (*Ti xiang yin yang shengjiang tu* 體象陰陽升降圖)(Figure 2.1). This bodily chart depicts circular movement of the *qi* on the mountain, symbolizing the breath circulating in the circuit of two meridians of the body.

The inner alchemical body charts in the form of natural landscape make us ponder the border between human body and landscape. Since human bodies and natural landscapes are

¹³⁹ Anna Hennessey. 2011, p16

identified as representative of one another, we wonder whether the visual representation of body take place in *shanshuihua* in a concrete level. Furthermore, if a mountain can stand for human body or body parts, and *shanshuihua* in its nature embodies the element of time, can *shanshuihua* become the field of life or transformative progress? These are the central questions to be examined in the next few chapters.

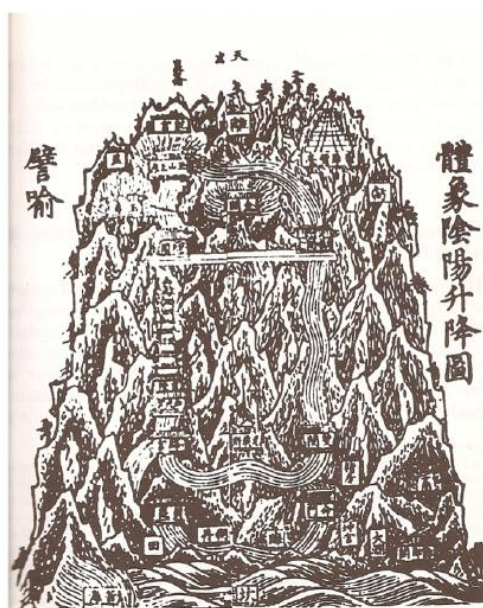


Figure 2.1

Map of Rise and Fall of Yin and Yang in the Human Body
tixiang yinyang shengjiangtu 體象陰陽升降圖 (ca 1226)
 presented to Emperor Lizong by Xiao Yingsou
 (DZ 90), 8a-b

2.3.4 Immortality as “Moving into the Mountain” 仙，迁入山也。

Last but not the least, the Daoist obsession with mountains does not only lie in theoretical dimensions, but also in real life practice. According to *Shiming* 釋名 (Explanation of names) (200 CE), *xian* 仙 (immortality) means “moving into the mountains”. (仙，遷也，遷入山也)¹⁴⁰

¹⁴⁰ Liu Xi, “Shi zhangyou” in *Shiming*. Accessed through Ctext: <https://ctext.org/library.pl?if=gb&file=77388&page=54#n40557>

Daoists go into the mountains by means of esoteric talisman, magic mirrors, and ritual dance steps.¹⁴¹ Once in the mountains, they rely on herbs, mushrooms, mineral elixirs, physiological meditations to replenish their vital energy. Franciscus Verellen defines mountain as a place of initiation: a numinous but powerfully hostile place in which ordinary, sedentary humans, the men and women of the cultivated plains, could scarcely hope to survive.¹⁴² The Daoists, however, not intimidated by the mysterious and the unknown, are always willing to go into the mountains and seek the grotto heavens and the blessed land (*dongtian fudi* 洞天福地) – the quintessence of the mountain.¹⁴³ How should we understand this constant drive? Can those places guarantee transcendence? The following story from *Shuyi ji* 述異記 (Records of Strange Things) might enlighten us:

During the Jin Dynasty, Wang Jin from Xin'an Country was chopping wood at Stone Chamber Mountain. He saw several youths playing the game of Go and singing. Zhi stopped to listen. The youths gave an item to Zhi, which was similar to a jujube core. Zhi kept it in his mouth and felt no hunger. A moment later, the youths said: "Why are you not going?" Zhi stood up and saw the axe had completely rotted. When he returned, there was no one from his time.

信安郡石室山，晉時王質伐木，至見童子數人，棋而歌，質因聽之。童子以一物與質，如棗核，質含之不覺饑。俄頃，童子謂曰：何不去？質起，視斧柯爛盡，既歸，無復時人。¹⁴⁴

¹⁴¹ Verellen, Franciscus. "The beyond Within: Grotto-Heavens (Dongtian) in Taoist Ritual and Cosmology." *Cahiers d'Extrême-Asie*, vol. 8, no. 1, 1995, p268

¹⁴² Verellen, 1995, p268

¹⁴³ Also see Raz, Gil. "Daoist Sacred Geography" in Lagerwey, John, and Lü Pengzhi. *Early Chinese Religion. Part Two, the Period of Division (220-589 AD)*. Leiden, Brill, 2019.p1409-1452

¹⁴⁴ Fang Ren. *Shu Yi Ji*. Beijing, Beijing Zhenben Technology Co. Ltd, 2019, p53

-- Ren Fang 任昉, *Shuyi ji* 述異記 (Records of Strange Things)



Figure 2.2. Mount Lanke. Quzhou, Zhejiang Province¹⁴⁵

The tale recorded in *Shuyi ji* – often referred to as the *guanqi lanke* 觀棋爛柯 (watching chess while the axe rotted) is not unfamiliar to many. Due to its broad reception, the mountain where the story happened was renamed Lanke mountain. In its current location, huge chess pieces are placed under the stone arch to commemorate the legendary encounter. The late Tang court Daoist Du Guangting (850-933) labeled Mount Lanke as the Eighth Grotto-Heaven of Turquoise Clouds.

The story is rather short, yet it is worth savoring. The theme of going into mountain and encountering immortals is one of the most popular topics in tradition literature and remains as the biggest appeal in mountain imagination. After all, the character *xian* 仙 (immortal) cannot be separated from its component *shan* 山 (mountain). However, in this tale, Wang Zhi was

¹⁴⁵ “Lanke Mountain Legend.” *Quzhou.chinadaily.com.cn*, quzhou.chinadaily.com.cn/2018-11/26/c_293748.htm. Accessed 3 May. 2021.

not consciously looking for the immortals. He was not even a conventional literati-scholar seeking refuge in the mountains. Nevertheless, he is a curious man, drawn to the youths by the board game and their singing. The game of Go is no ordinary game for the Daoists. *Xijing zaji* 西京雜記 (*Miscellaneous Records of the Western Capital*), attributed to the famous Daoist Ge Hong 葛洪 (283-343), denotes that “those who are good at the principle [of Go], are good enough to aid the teaching of the saints” 精其理者，足以大裨聖教¹⁴⁶. The strategy of Go sometimes is even compared to the art of administering a country.

The most interesting part of the story is that the youths did not seem quite surprised at Zhi's presence, but they certainly knew Zhi was no immortal for they asked him later “why are you not going”. The youths gave Zhi a jujube core to keep him away from being hungry. Jujube is considered the food of the immortals. *Shiyi ji* 拾遺記 (*Record of the Forgotten tales*) records that Queen Mother of the West used to serve Lao Zi and Yin Xi jujube.¹⁴⁷ It is also the food Daoists have during *bigu* 辟穀 (avoiding grains) fasting. Here it is noticeable that the youths gave Zhi a jujube core, rather than a juicy jujube with full flesh. Daoist often contains the jujube core in the mouth to stimulate saliva flow. In inner alchemical practice, the mouth is often referred to as the Flowery Pond (*huachi* 華池) while the liquor of the mouth is called Nectar Spring (*liquan* 醴泉), or the Jade Secretions (*yujin* 玉津). Daoist Tao Hongjing said in *Yangxing yanming lu* 養性延命錄 (*Records on Preserving One's Nature and Lengthening Life*) that “Drinking at the Jade Spring, we can live longer and eliminate disease”.¹⁴⁸ The saliva, or liquor, the jujube core stimulates would eventually help to nourish

¹⁴⁶ Ge Hong, and Zhou Tianyou. *Xi Jing Za Ji*. Xi'an: San Qin Chu Ban She, 2006.

¹⁴⁷ Wang Jia, and Qi Xiao. *Shiyi Ji*. Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1981.

¹⁴⁸ *DZ* 1032, 32. 16a

the cinnabar field, the main areas the adept concentrates during his/her breathing or visualizing exercises.

The rotted axe shows us that time was still passing in the cave. However, the axe was experiencing a different length of time from Wang Zhi. Thanks to the jujube core, Zhi was able to share a “being in the present” with the immortals. He was experiencing the immortal’s perception of time in the grotto – things happened within a moment (*e’qing* 俄頃). But for the axe, many years have passed by. There is a saying related to this story -- “only one day one has been in the grotto, while outside millennia have passed” 山中方一日，世上已千年. But it seems that the real question is whether time is still relevant in the grotto heaven -- does the place slow down the aging process, or does it represent an ever-present permanence or eternity that transcends our normal sense of time? After all, entering the grotto heaven does not guarantee transcendence – but eating the jujube core does.

The grotto-heavens do not guarantee transcendence. The adepts must find their own “jujube core” to transcend their physical body. Nevertheless, the grotto heavens contain passages to the Dao, and the journey through the grottos is a journey beyond our world. The word *dong* 洞, as Verellen eloquently summarized, has the meaning to “penetrate” or “communicate”, both physically and intellectually: the grotto is a place of transcendental passage, of revelation, and interconnected with other supernatural realms.¹⁴⁹ The mountain is a place of life -- “the locus of sustenance and transcendence”¹⁵⁰.

It is noticeable that the symbolic significance of mountain and “entering the mountain” is further carried into Daoist liturgy. Zhang Wanfu 張萬福, an eminent Tang dynasty liturgist,

¹⁴⁹ Verellen, 1995, p271

¹⁵⁰ Raz, 2019, p1409

indicates that “the most excellent way to establish the altar is to avail oneself of a grotto among the Great mountains; failing that, a secluded and solitary place will be acceptable”.¹⁵¹ In current Daoist practice, even though the altar is often set in doors and far away from the mountain, the Daoist priest still needs to perform the rite of going into the mountain, as Schipper describes it:

“The Daoist altar is itself a mountain. An enclosed space, secret and covered. To enter this place of retreat in order to perform the rites is called, in the language of the *daoshi*: to go into the mountain. Standing in the center, before the Golden Gate, the officiating priest can be said to be standing at the foot of a sacred mountain, the dwelling of the gods. This multi-level mountain – the altar – is located around the officiating priest rather than the priest being on the altar: he is in the mountain, the Space of the Dao.”¹⁵²

Therefore, for the Daoists, *shanshui* is meaningful in multiple layers. As the representative of the cosmic body, it embodies the will of the Dao. It is a place of initiation, the space of the Dao. It shares a corporeal affinity with the human body and becomes a powerful visual tool connecting the spheres of body and cosmos. It can also represent the inner landscape of the body. In inner alchemical *shanshuihua*, *shanshui* often functions in multiple levels. The exterior and the interior fuse under the single agency of *shanshui*, exhibiting a world that is essentially one and the same.

2.4 Conclusion

Targeting on the question “why is body invisible in *shanshuihua*”, this chapter tries to address the theoretical correlation between body and *shanshui* in the Daoist context. In order

¹⁵¹ Verellen, 1995, p280

¹⁵² Schipper, Kristofer. *The Taoist Body*. Berkeley, Calif., University of California Press, 2002, p91-92

to answer that, I recapture the Daoist perception of body and *shanshui*. Since the Daoists rejects any representational theory of knowledge that demands a fixed reality to which an idea can correspond, knowledge is not knowledge of an objective world; rather it is fundamentally experiential and perspectival. Knowing is a dynamic process of experiencing and “penetrating”.

In other words, the true knowledge can only be obtained through a transformative process during which “body” plays a crucial part. However, the limitation of the physical body often becomes the obstacle of this transformative process and imposes the constant confrontation and opposition between the “I” and the cosmos. *Shanshui*, on the other hand, is more advanced ontologically and sets a paradigm model of *zhen* for the human beings, as something unspoiled and uncarved. It is the manifestation of the Dao, the effective and redemptive mediation that connects man to the Dao. For the Daoists, the ultimate purpose of *shanshuihua* is not about presenting a vivid depiction of certain real or idealized locations, but to explore a more advanced mode of “being-in-the-world”, a mode which overcome the physical limitations of the human body.

Human body is not invisible in *shanshuihua*, it is ever-present through the agency of the *shanshui*. In the Daoist context, especially with the rise of inner alchemical practice, images of *shanshui* invite the viewers to undertake a mental and visual journey through complicated landscape constructions. Comparing to the straightforward inner alchemical bodily charts mentioned earlier, the representation of body/bodily process in *shanshuihua* are less obvious and more subtle. In the next few chapters, we will discuss how this genre of painting will permanently change the way we perceive *shanshuihua*.

3.

Mapping the Inner Landscape

The ones who are good at drawing could be good at reciting and savoring the taste [of the poetry]. The ones who are good at composing [poetry] of things has no difficulty conveying the image [of things]. This is similar to the way of the school of alchemy cultivating forms. They also use outer alchemy to symbolize the image of inner alchemy, and what is called the successful result of outer alchemy is the successful result of inner alchemy.

故長於揮灑者可資吟味，資妙於賦物者易於傳寫。即如丹家煉形之道，亦是假外丹以徵內象，所謂外丹成即內丹成也。

-- Shen Zongqian 沈宗騫(1736-1820)

*Jiezhou xuehua bian*¹⁵³芥舟學畫編, 1781

This chapter examines the particular iconography used to represent Daoist sacred space and the human body. The first part traces the images of Daoist sacred mountain, Jade Capitoline, altar, and grotto-heaven back to their original sources in the Daoist canon and explains how these images are constructed and transmitted, as well as their inherent principle and meaning. Built on that, it will further discuss how these iconographies are used both externally and internally as body metaphors. The second part dives deep into inner alchemical visuality and demonstrates the iconic inner-alchemical images and metaphors, as well as logics and principles. It will also illustrate how the inner alchemical

¹⁵³ Shen Zongqian, *A Collection of Jiezhou's Paintings for Learners*, 1781

transformative process can be represented in *shanshuihua*. Just as the quote says, inner alchemists borrow metaphors from outer alchemy, this also applies to the visual language of outer and inner landscape.

3.1 The Sacred Landscape

3.1.1 Mountain Kunlun and Jade Capitoline

An extensive description of Mount Kunlun¹⁵⁴ goes back to *Shizhou ji* 十洲記 (*Record of the ten island continents*), traditionally attributed to Dongfang Shuo 東方朔 (154-93 B.C.). It purports to be a geographic book containing the record of ten continents, three immortal islands¹⁵⁵ and Mount Kunlun. But because of all the immortals, magical plants and elixirs it recorded and other Shangqing doctrines it incorporated, it was put into the Daoist category and became a significant part of Daoist cosmographical imagination. In the text, Mount Kunlun, as the adobe of Queen Mother of the West, is an *axis mundi* in the celestial realm. It describes the lofty role of the mountain as follows:

Mount Kunlun is where the Queen Mother of the West governs, and the place where the celestial officials, immortals and spirits belong. Above it communes with the original *qi* of Jade-cog and Armil (*xuanji* 璇璣, the first four stars of the Northern Dipper), and it spreads [its power] through the Five Constants and the Jade Balance (*yuheng* 玉衡, the fifth star of the Northern Dipper). It puts to order the Nine Heavens and adjusts [the balance of] Yin and

¹⁵⁴ Mount Kunlun has been discussed by various scholars. See Lillian Lan-Ying Tseng. *Picturing Heaven Early China*. Cambridge, Harvard University Asia Center, 2011. Wu Hung, “Xiwang Mu, the Queen Mother of the West,” *Orientalism* (April 1987), 24-33.

¹⁵⁵ The three islands are Fangzhang, Fusang, and Pengqiu.

Yang. All rare and outstanding articles and creatures are found here; the celestial beings crowd in and cannot all be counted. This mountain is the root and axle of heaven and earth, the mainstay and handle of ten thousand measures

西王母之所治也，真官仙靈之所宗。上通璇璣，元氣流布，五常玉衡。理九天而調陰陽，品物群生，稀奇特出，皆在於此。天人濟濟，不可具記。此乃天地之根紐，萬度之綱柄矣¹⁵⁶

From the above text we can tell that Mount Kunlun, as the axle connecting heaven and earth, is an earthly terrain but is sacred above all. It is a fertile land and the locus of sustenance and transcendence. Since the power of Mount Kunlun spreads through the cosmos, it is a vertical axis representing a path of ascension, and it is the most-desired space for human beings who wish to move beyond this current microcosmic realm and achieve immortality. More importantly, *Shizhou ji* describes Mount Kunlun in the shape of a hanging bowl (*yanpen* 偃盆), wide at the top and narrow at the bottom. It has three corners pointing north, west and east, and therefore is called the Mount Kunlun Triangle (*kunlunshan sanjiao* 崑崙山三角). The text has exerted widespread influence and this shape of Mount Kunlun has become the pictorial convention of Daoist sacred mountains. Later literary sources made *yaochi* 瑤池 (Turquoise Pond) an essential part of Kunlun¹⁵⁷.

Therefore, a mountain rising from the sea, wide at top and narrow at bottom, with lofty edifices or a pond on top, becomes the iconic visual presentation for Daoist paradise and a

¹⁵⁶ *Shizhou ji*, 11a-b

¹⁵⁷ In Liezi's brief retelling of the tale, King Mu climbs to the summit of Kunlun, where he gazes at Huangdi's palace and raises a memorial mound, then he visits Xiwang who gives a banquet for him by the Turquoise Pond (Graham 1960,64)

symbol for transcendence. The richly illustrated twelfth-century visualization practice book *Wushang santian yutang zhengzong gaoben neijing yushu* 無上三天玉堂正宗高奔內景玉書 (Precious Text of Flying High in the Inner Landscape, from the Correct Tradition of the Jade Hall of the Supreme Three Heavens) depicts scenes of adept perching on a Kunlun shaped rock in waves of water (figure 3.1, a-b). The text urges the adepts to contemplating his/her body as Mount Kunlun. The purpose of these meditative practice is to attain immortality through inner transformation and circulation.

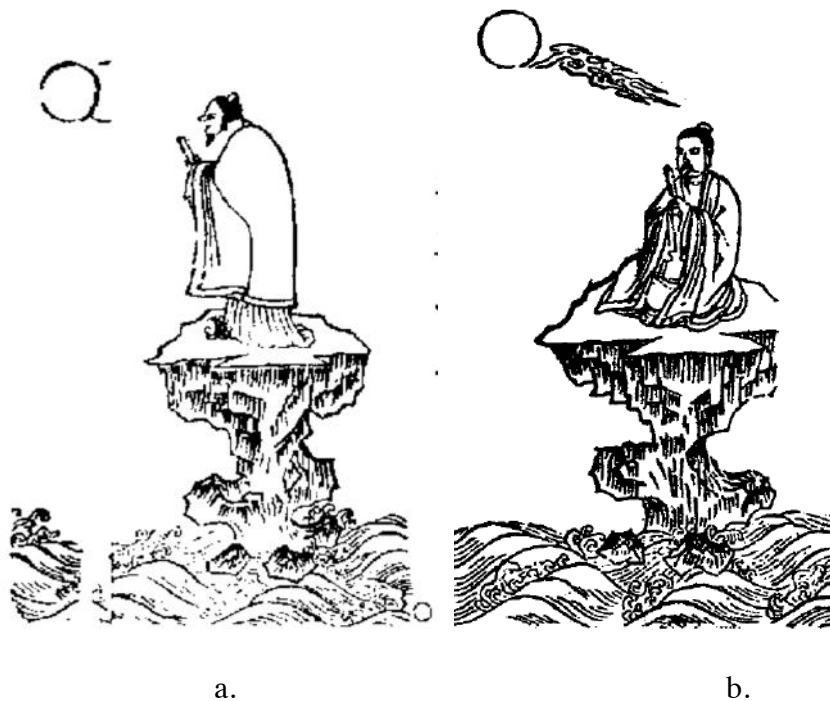


Figure 3.1. *Precious Text of Flying High in the Inner Landscape, from the Correct Tradition of the Jade Hall of the Supreme Three Heavens*. Ming dynasty, dated 1445. Woodblock print. Ink on paper. DZ 221.

The image of Mount Kunlun was then absorbed into Lingbao 靈寶 cosmology around the fourth century. The *Scripture of Salvation* 度人經,¹⁵⁸ which was placed first in the Ming

¹⁵⁸ The Scriptures of Salvation is one of the most prominent scriptures of the Lingbao tradition. It is compiled around the fourth century. See Kristofer Schipper, “Lingbao wuliang duren shangpin miaojing” in Schipper,

Daoist canon and is still recited in Daoist liturgy, had envisioned a celestial realm “Grand Veil Heaven” 大羅天 circling a majestic mountain, the Jade Capitoline mountain of the mystic capital 玄都玉京山. While Mounq Kunlun is the center of the earthly terrain, the Jade Capitoline is the center of the celestial realm. In the text, the Jade Capitoline mountain and the edifice on top *yuluo xiaotai* 鬱羅蕭台 (Noble and Solemn Terrace of Grand Veil Heaven) is located “at the highest limits, with nothing above” 上极无上 and “most celestial among the heavens” 天中之天¹⁵⁹. Another way to map the terrain is described by *Yunji qiqian* 雲笈七籤 (*Seven Slips from a Cloudy Satchel*), which cites the *Scripture of Jade Capitoline Mountain* claiming the Jade Capitoline mountain is the apex of the Grand Veil Heaven, and on the mountain top, there is Seven Treasures City 七寶城. In the City there is Seven Treasures Palace 七寶宮. In the Palace there is Seven Treasures Mysterious Terrace 七寶玄臺. The Grand Veil Heaven hence is considered to be the highest layer of Daoist heavens, and higher than the realm of Mount Kunlun. Although the composition and design detail of the palace vary in different literary sources, yet the vertical placement of the celestial building on top of a mountain amid the sea is the typical visual language for the Grand Veil Heaven, the abode of Jade Capitoline Mountain and the Noble and Solemn Terrace.

Such description is reflected in many Daoist visual sources. The fifteenth century Illustration of *Scripture of Salvation* depicts a multistoried palace at the center of a bowl-shaped mountain flanked by mysterious animals and four groups of celestial beings (figure

Kristofer. *The Taoist Canon: A Historical Companion to the Daozang / 1 from Antiquity to the Middle Ages*. Chicago, Univ. Of Chicago Press, 2005. p214-215

¹⁵⁹ Bokenkamp, Bokenkamp, Stephen R, and Peter S Nickerson. *Early Daoist Scriptures*. Berkeley, University of California Press, 1999, p416

3.2). The name “Jade Capitoline the Greatest Mountain” (*yushan shangjing* 玉山上京) and “Noble and Solemn Terrace of Grand Veil Heaven” (*yuluo xiaotai* 鬱羅蕭台) were marked on the top. Similar patterns appear in *Sancai dingwei tu* 三才定位圖 (Illustrated Pantheon of the Three Spheres), showing thirty-two celestial palaces surrounding the Mountain of Jade Capitoline (figure 3.3).



Figure 3.2. Illustration of Scripture of Salvation (*Duren jing* 度人經), 1406, Taiwan Palace Museum

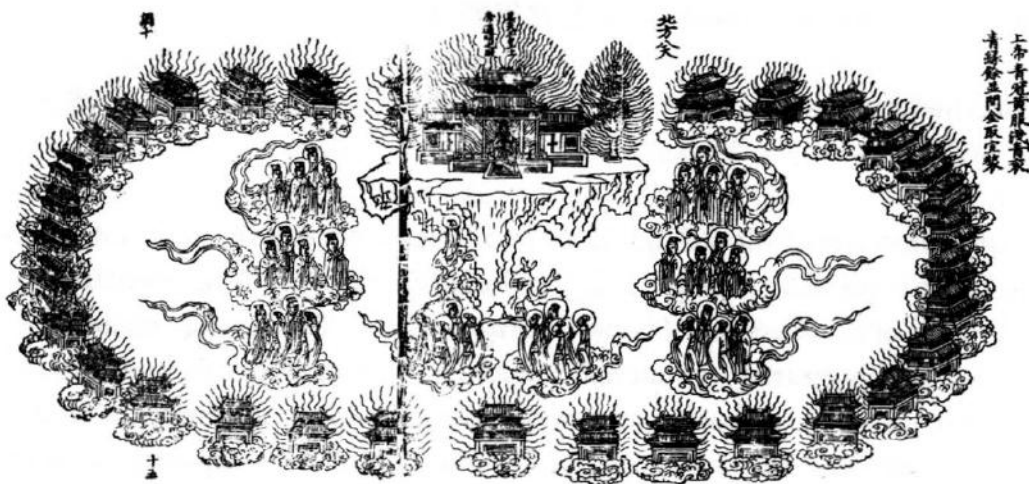


Figure 3.3. Thirty-two heavens surrounding the Mountain of Jade Capital in a circle, from Illustrated Pantheon of the Three Spheres, detail. (*Sancai dingwei tu* 三才定位圖, DZ 155)

The image of Jade Capitoline Mountain and the Noble and Solemn Terrace not only exist in illustrations, but also in various mediums such as mural paintings and Daoist textiles. The mural of the Temple of Eternal Joy in Shanxi exhibits an interesting scene where the female attendants carried fans in a Daoist ritual (figure 3.4). The fans, as part of the standard ritual paraphernalia, is embellished with the image of radiating celestial palace on top of the mountain (figure 3.5). Compared to the aforementioned illustrations, these two fan images are more simplified and symmetrical. The groups of celestial beings are replaced by sun and moon, the yin and yang in Daoist cosmology. The essential elements of the highest heaven are retained: waves of sea, bowl-shaped mountain, vertical placement of the celestial palace. These fans are considered efficacious objects and used as the priests' performing tools in the salvation ritual. On the surface, these mural fans are the most direct revelation of the Daoist heaven. On a deeper level, we could consider the agency of these objects and the potential efficacy or power they asserted. We will come back to this topic later in this chapter.



Figure 3.4. Female attendants carrying fans in a Daoist ritual. Temple of Eternal Joy. Yuan dynasty, fourteenth century. Wall painting. Ruicheng, Shanxi.



Figure 3.5. a-b Detail of the Fan. Temple of Eternal Joy. Yuan dynasty, fourteenth century. Wall painting. Ruicheng, Shanxi.

Interestingly enough, just as the image of Jade Capitoline Mountain and the Noble and Solemn Terrace becomes the paradigmatic model for a macrocosmic heaven, it also appears in the microcosmic body charts as part of the brain. In 1226 CE, Xiao Yingsou 蕭應叟, a ritual master of Southern Song period (1127-1279 CE) presented Emperor Lizong (1205-1264) an image called *Illustrated Rise and Fall of Yin and Yang in the Human Body* (Tixiang yinyang shengjiangtu 體象陰陽升降圖) (figure 3.6a), as part of his commentary to the *Scripture of Salvation*. His purpose is to advocate inner alchemy. This image is also the oldest extant alchemical representation of the body in the form of a mountain. It exhibits the inner circulation within the human body. On top of the mountain, which symbolizes the head area, we see mountain and building marked as “Jade Capitoline the Greatest Mountain” (*yushan shangjing* 玉山上京) and “Noble and Solemn Terrace of Grand Veil Heaven” (*yuluo xiaotai* 鬱羅蕭台) (figure 3.6b). They signify sites in the brain where the energies are

collected, blended, and refined¹⁶⁰. Similar icons appear in Yuan Daoist Chen Zhixu's 陳志虛 (1290-ca.1368) *Image of the body of Primordial Qi* (*Yuanqi tixiang tu* 元氣體象圖) (figure 3.7) and *Chart of the Inner Landscape* (*Neijingtu* 內經圖) (figure 3.8). In these charts, the drawings of the Noble and Solemn Terrace are even more abstract than before. The lavishly embellished celestial palace is burned down to a triangle.

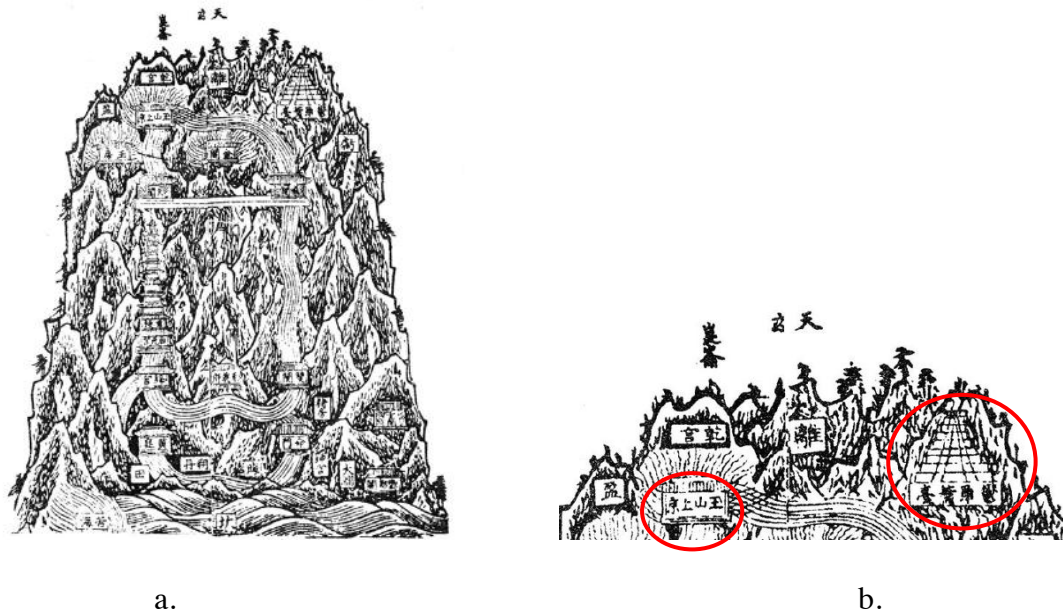


Figure 3.6 *Map of Rise and Fall of Yin and Yang in the Human Body* *tixiang yinyang shengjiangtu* 體象陰陽升降圖 (ca 1226), presented to Emperor Lizong by Xiao Yingsou, (DZ 90), 8a-b, with detail



Figure 3.7

Detail. *Image of the body of Primordial Qi*



Figure 3.8

Detail. *Chart of the Inner Landscape*

¹⁶⁰ Huang, 2012. p83

Not only the Jade Capitoline and Terrace are important loci in inner alchemical circulation, in some meditative practice, the adepts are encouraged to visualize the body transforming into the Jade Capitoline Mountain. Lu Shizhong's illustration (figure 3.9) depicts such practice: while the transformation happens, Lord Lao is receiving adepts in audience inside the Jade Hall.



Figure 3.9. Visualization of *Paying Homage to the Jade Hall and the Primordial Qi*, from *Great Rites of the Jade Hall*, detail.

From the above analysis, we can tell that the bowl-shaped mountain is quite versatile. It can represent the earthly *axis mundi* Mount Kunlun, the celestial heaven Jade Capitoline, a human figure, as well as the human brain. It is a sacred space that is either macrocosmically manifest in, or microcosmically encapsulated within, the human body. In either scenario, because of the immortality-bestowing properties of the sacred mountain, it becomes a symbol of ascent and transcendence, a place possessing existential value. Furthermore, the wide platform on top of the mountain is a place of communication. Human beings climbed to the

top of the mountain to visit the celestial beings: King Mu visited Queen Mother of the West; divine administrators travel from all directions to visit the Jade Emperor; adepts pay homage to Lord Lao... In other words, it is where the mundane (or lesser divine) meets the sacred. The space contains an opening by which passage from one cosmic realm to another is made possible. Communication is expressed around this cosmic axis. In the richly illustrated hagiography *Xu taishi zhenjun tu zhen* 許太史真君圖傳 (*Illustrated Life of the Grand Astrologer Xu*), the genuine person Xu Xun, who is said to have risen up to Heaven in 291AD, performed an offering of Thanksgiving at a sacred grotto in the mountains after successfully attaining the elixir (figure 3.10). The ritual is performed on a mountain which recalls the pictorial convention of Mount Kunlun or Mount Jade Capitoline. On the platform there is a three-tiered altar, with an incense burner on top. The structure of the altar bears out the Daoist vision of a cosmic hierarchy presided over by the Three Clarities. The smoke symbolizes communication with the celestial realms.



Figure 3.10. *The Illustrated Hagiography of Xu Zhenjun*, detail. *Daozhang*. Ming dynasty, dated 1445.

Woodblock print, ink on paper

The iconography of the sacred mountain does not only exist in Daoist *tu* 圖, but also in *shanshuihua*. The majestic peak depicted in Huang Gongwang's *Nine Peaks After Snow* bears a great amount of resemblance to Mount Kunlun/ Jade Capitoline. Comparing to the aforementioned images (figure 3.11), not only do the peaks have identical shape – narrow in the bottom, wide on the top, they also both arise from the river and have eroded banks. The triangle top also reminds us of the Noble and Solemn Terrace in the inner alchemical body charts (figure 3.12).

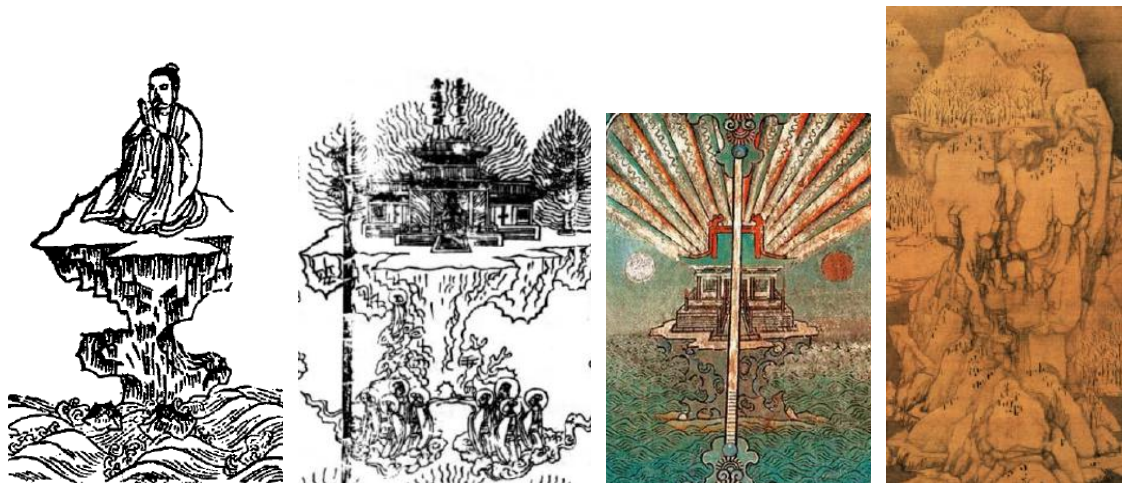


Figure 3.11. Comparison between Jade Capitoline the Greatest Mountain with Huang Gongwang's Mountain in *Nine Peaks After Snow*

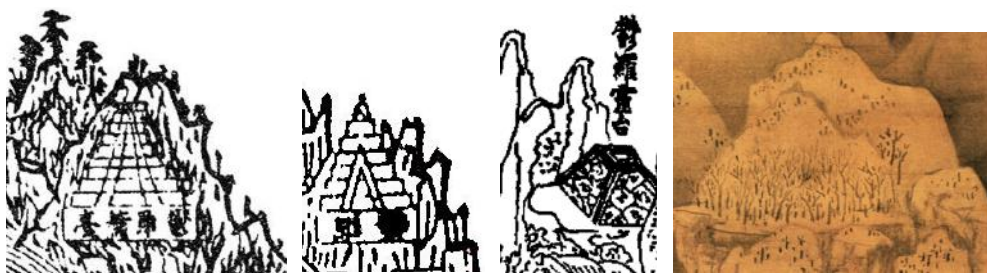


Figure 3.12. Comparison between Noble and Solemn Terrace with Huang Gongwang's peak top

A lesser dramatic form of the sacred mountain seems to be more popular in *shanshuihua*. Although it still carries out the pictorial convention – vertically rising from the water; eroded cliff; bowl-shaped – it often hides half of its volume amid other mountains, as

we could see from Wang Ximeng's 王希孟 *A Thousand Li of Rivers and Mountains* (*Qian li Jiangshan tu* 千里江山圖), Wang Meng's 王蒙 *Ge Zhichuan Moving to the Mountains* (*Ge Zhichuan yiju*, 葛稚川移居), Huang Gongwang's *Stony Cliff at Heavenly Pond* (*Tianchi shibi tu* 天池石壁圖) and Lu Guang's 陸廣 (C. 1300-After 1371) *Spring Dawn at the Cinnabar Terrace* (*Dantai chunxiao tu* 丹臺春曉圖) (figure 3.13, a-d) .



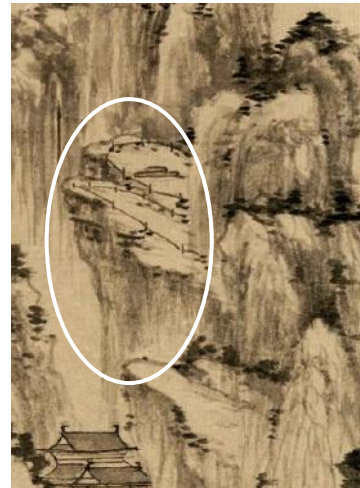
a



b



c



d

Figure 3.13.

These aforementioned paintings have one thing in common: either the theme, colophon or the identity of the painters suggests Daoist relevance. For example, the first painting *A Thousand Li of Rivers and Mountains*, composed under Emperor Huizong's endorsement, is one of the most applauded blue-green *shanshuihua* (*qinglü shanshui* 青綠山水) in Chinese history. Painted in azurite blue and malachite green and outlined in gold, the pigments allegedly incorporated minerals that were used in alchemical practices. Therefore, this genre of painting embodied the paradisiacal realms associated with the search for an elixir of immortality. This echoes the findings of recent scholarship who contests the traditional view that this painting represents the sublimated *shanshui* of the great Song empire and essentially is a political tribute. Rather, as Tan Shengguang argues, this painting depicts the Daoist sacred landscape and grotto-heavens¹⁶¹. Similarly, the second image depicts the East Jin Daoist Ge Hong 葛洪 (283 - 343) and family when he retreated from office and moved to Mount Luofu to cultivate the elixir.

It is noticeable that these ascending platforms often appear to be quite inaccessible with the peaks being drastically steep and stony. The road leading to the platform also does not seem to be quite “inviting”, not to mention that in most scenarios one cannot find a travelable route. It is as if the road to the platform was already a test, and the ascending platforms could only be reached by those who are deeply cultivated. In Victor Turner's language, the route is the rite of passage towards transformation. One must pass many tests in this liminal stage in order to stand at the threshold of the celestial realm. Daoist priest Fang Congyi's 方從義 (1302-1393) two paintings *The High, High Pavilion* (*Gao gao ting tu*, 高高亭圖) (figure 3.14)

¹⁶¹ Tan Shengguang 谈晟广, “Songdai qinglv shanshuihua zhong de daojiao jingguan zhi ‘Qianli Jiangshan tu’” 宋代青绿山水画中的道教景观之《千里江山图》 in *Hua kan*. Volume 7, 2020

and *Rowing by Mount Wuyi* (*Wuyi fangzhao tu*, 武夷放棹圖) (figure 3.15), and Qiu Ying's 仇英(1494-1552) *Towers and Pavilions in Mountains of the Immortals* (*Xianshan louge tu*, 仙山樓閣圖) (figure 3.16) are the perfect examples demonstrating the difficulty of these heavenly routes.



Figure 3.14
The High, High Pavilion



Figure 3.15
Rowing by Mount Wuyi

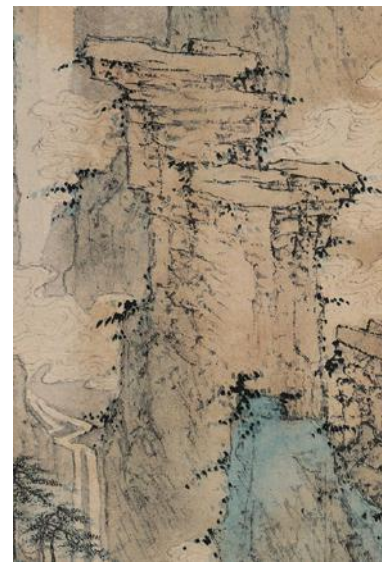


Figure 3.16
Towers and Pavilions in Mountains of the Immortals

To conclude, a mountain rising from the sea, wide at top and narrow at bottom, with lofty edifices or a pond on top, is an iconic visual presentation for Daoist sacred mountains and paradise. It is also used in inner alchemical charts to symbolize the head or the adept's body. When this iconography appears in *shanshuihua*, it becomes an emblem of transcendence. It can either represent the platform of ascension or the platform of cultivation (usually a place to produce the elixir). Whether it is a platform inside or outside the body depends on the context of the painting.

3.1.2 The Altar

The platforms of these mountains are usually high up in the sky, surrounded by a luxuriant grove of trees and running streams. Although some of the platforms remain empty on top, yet others feature the placement of the altar (figure 3.17, a-d).¹⁶²

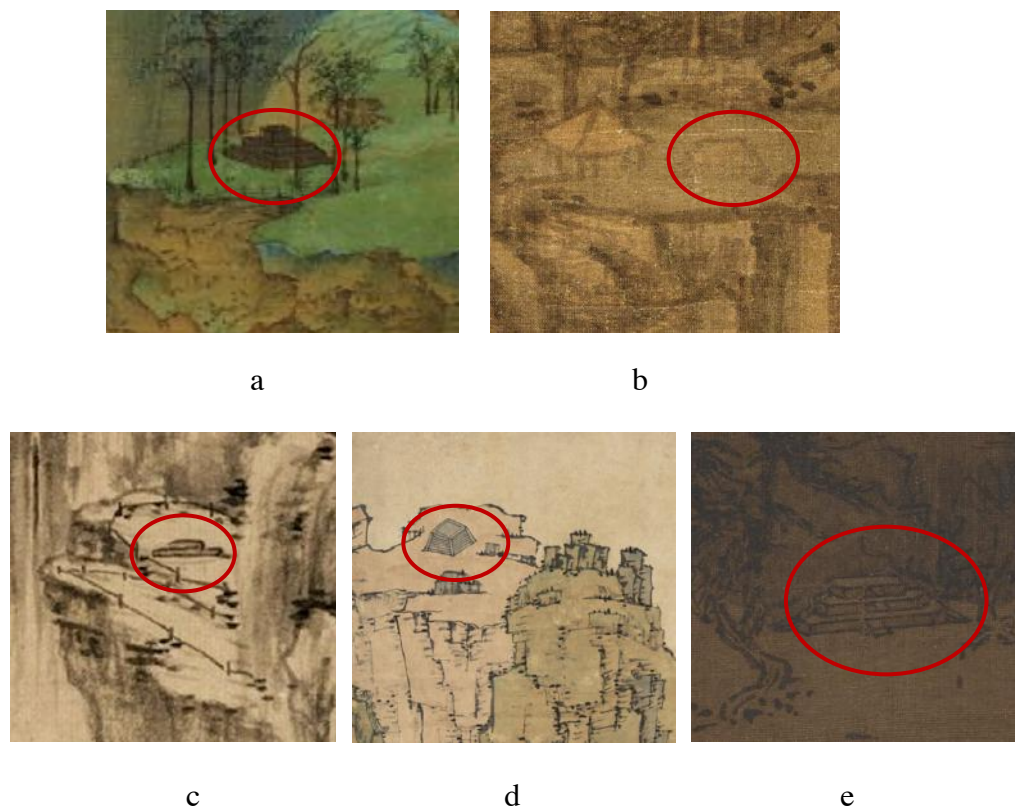


Figure 3. 17. Detail of the altar.

An altar constitutes the most significant part of Daoist ritual space. It is the center of Daoist sacred space in liturgical performances. A typical Daoist altar consists of either two or three tiers. The twelfth-century *Established Order of Daoism* (*Daomen dingzhi* 道門定制) preserved an image of a three-tiered altar from the Tang dynasty (figure 3.18), one of the

¹⁶² For more reference on the altar, see Tan Shengguang 谈晟广, “Songdai qinglv shanshuihua zhong de daojiao jingguan zhi ‘Qianli Jiangshan tu’” 宋代青绿山水画中的道教景观之《千里江山图》 in *Hua kan*. Volume 7, 2020; Tao, Jin. “解密中美元首茶叙背后的那幅古画：洞天福地与道教艺术_翻书党_澎湃新闻-the Paper.” www.thepaper.cn, 13 Nov. 2017, www.thepaper.cn/newsDetail_forward_1861685. Accessed 2 June. 2021

oldest extant altar images. The bottom tier of the altar is marked by twelve earthly branches representing twelve earthly doors. The middle octagon is decorated with wooden placards of the eight trigrams. Three tables displaying memorials and liturgical procedures are placed on the top tier. This image is also one of the earliest to include images of god on top of the altar. Jiao Bingzhen's (active C. 1689-1726) (figure 3.19) lavishly colored hanging scroll *Daoist Ritual at the Imperial Court* also offers us a vivid example of how the altar was constructed and consecrated. It is noticeable that the table on the top tier is decorated with cloth that has a mountain pattern on it.

Schipper remarks that the Daoist altar is itself a mountain. It is meant to be put in the open air, preferably on top of a mountain. A substantial number of studies have demonstrated that the visuality of the altar symbolizes a combination of time cycles and a model of the universe¹⁶³. We can tell that the altar is coded with Daoist universal principles and paradigms. It is a miniature of the cosmos and at the same time, a sacred space that the Daoist priests make appeal or communicate with the celestial beings.

Although the decorations of the altar vary in time, and more ritual artifacts such as Daoist statues or images, lamps, tablets are added to the space, yet the logic of the altar remains the same. As Huang concludes, as a whole the altar is a microcosmic symbol of the tripartite division of Heaven, Earth, and Water, which mimics the shape of a mountain, thus linking it to the celestial abode of the Mountain of Jade Capitoline.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶³ Huang, 2012, p192; Schipper 2002, p189; Lagerwey, John. *Taoist Ritual in Chinese Society and History*. New York, Macmillan, 1987.p25-48

¹⁶⁴ Huang, 2012, p193

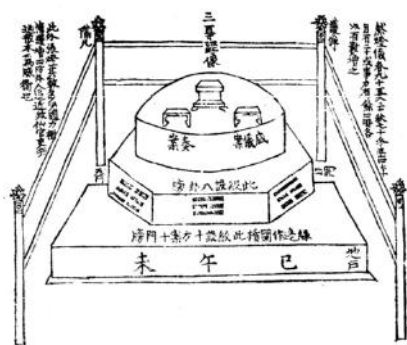


Figure 3.18. *Daomen dingzhi*



Figure 3.19. Jiao Bingzhen. *Daoist Ritual at the Imperial Court*

On the other hand, we should be aware of the close proximity between the altar and the alchemical furnace. The 12th century laboratory alchemy guidebook *Danfang Xuzhi* 丹房須知 (*Requisite Knowledge for the Alchemical Laboratory*) provides a number of specifications on how should an altar be erected. The text denotes that the altar was in fact the alchemical furnace (*lu* 爐) (figure 3.20), also called the Platform of the Elixir (*dantai* 丹臺). The altar should be made of clean and solid soil, which, located inside mountain caves, has never been stepped on by human beings. The taste of the soil should not be salty or bitter. Several openings are made on all sides of the altar to facilitate the firing process. The tripod should be placed on top.¹⁶⁵ *Li Xigu Cultivating the Elixir* (*Li Xigu liandan tu* 李晞古煉丹圖) (figure 3.21), attributed to Li Tang 李唐 (1066 - 1150), exhibits a similar altar-surface with a number of openings.

¹⁶⁵ Wu Wu 吴悞, *Danfang xuzhi*, DZ 900, preface dated 1163

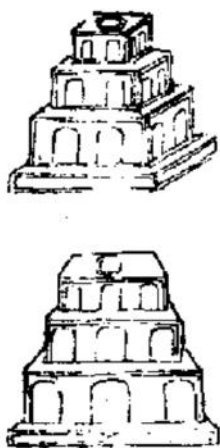


Figure 3.20
The alchemical altar (DZ 900 5b).
Ming reprint of 1598.



Figure 3.21
Li Xigu, Cultivating the Elixir

Since the discourse of inner alchemy remains closely related with laboratory alchemy, and the furnace-tripod system is transposed within the human body, the altar-furnace also appears in inner alchemical illustrations. In fact, the three-tiered altar plays a central role in the Qing dynasty copy of *Illustration of the Sealed Verification of the Golden Elixir of the Reverted Cinnabar*¹⁶⁶ (*Jinye huandan yinzheng tu* 金液還丹印證圖) (prefaced 1218) (figure 3. 22).¹⁶⁷ This handscroll depicts the inner alchemical process from beginning to end, and each illustration is accompanied by a poem. As a whole, it shows how the undifferentiated oneness – the Dao – diffused into the multiplicity of the world and how inner alchemy reversed such process and returned to the undifferentiated whole. The first image titled *zhidu* 制度 (“systematization”) exhibits an altar in front of the temple, the poem reads:

The altar is established to represent heaven, earth and human beings.

¹⁶⁶ The original version is painted black and white on woodblock and prefaced 1218. The Qing dynasty copy is a colored version.

The nine palaces and eight trigrams are arranged accordingly around the altar.

The hanging mirror exorcises the demons and monsters up and down.

The swords are placed at the four corners of the altar to suppress the spirits.

壇築三層天地人，九宮八卦布令勻。鏡懸上下祛精恠，劍列方隅鎮鬼神。¹⁶⁸

The altar, embellished with cosmological and temporal symbols, is seen as the miniature of the cosmos. Its sacredness is well guarded and defended by exorcistic artifacts. It shows the actual ritual procedure before refining an elixir. The second image depicts the meditator sitting on the altar, flanked by two supportive beings and dragon/tiger – a typical inner alchemical symbol of yin and yang. The third image *muyu* 沐浴 (“purification”) shows an infant hovering on clouds that rise from a tripod on the altar, an emblem of the accomplished golden elixir.

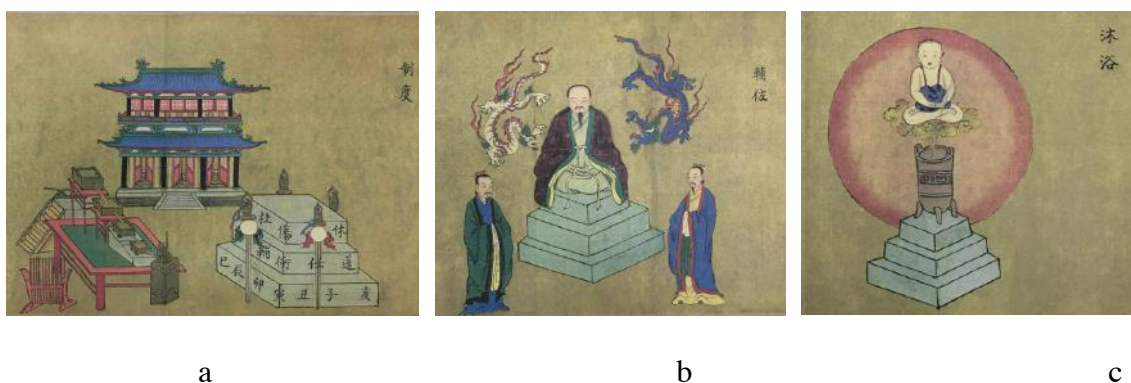


Figure 3.22. *Illustration of the Sealed Verification of the Golden Elixir of the Reverted Cinnabar*, Qing dynasty, 17th/18th centuries, handscroll; ink and colors on silk, White Cloud Monastery, Beijing

¹⁶⁸ Longmei zi 龍眉子, *Jinye huandan yinzheng tu* 金液還丹印證圖 [Illustrations of the return of the liquified gold to the cinnabar field], preface of 1218. DZ 151.

It is also notable that some painters directly adopt the word *dantai* 丹臺 (Platform of the Elixir/Cinnabar Platform) rather than *tan* 壇 (altar) as the name of their *shanshuihua*, suggesting a closer relationship with alchemical practice rather than Daoist ritual, such as Lu Guang's 陸廣 (C. 1300-After 1371) *Spring Dawn at the Cinnabar Platform* 丹臺春曉圖 (figure 3.23) and He Yuan's 何遠 (mid-17th century) *Eternal Spring on Cinnabar Platform* 丹臺春永 (figure 3.24). Although it is generally acknowledged that these two paintings are associated with alchemy and immortality, yet the cinnabar platforms are often taken as laboratory alchemical furnace. However, these cinnabar platforms do not seem accessible at all. In the next chapters we will see how these images represent the inner landscape.



Figure 3.23
Lu Guang,
Spring Dawn at the Cinnabar Platform



Figure 3.24
He Yuan,
Eternal Spring on Cinnabar Platform

From the above we can detect several layers of what an altar means in inner alchemy. As the miniature of the cosmos, it encompasses three dimensions of the universe, suggesting an

existential hierarchy. The vertical axis is a constant reminder for human beings who wish to attain realization in order to move beyond this current microcosmic realm and to engage with the grand macrocosmic order. Secondly, when the mediator sits on the altar, the elevated platform becomes an extension of the human body. In other words, the body and the altar form a laboratory compound for compounding the elixir. Last but not the least, the altar could also be seen as the furnace within the alchemical body. The furnace-tripod constitutes one of the “three essentials” of the alchemical work and could respectively represent different things at different alchemical stages. Once again, the altar is either macrocosmically manifest in, or microcosmically encapsulated within, the human body.

3.1.3 The Grotto-Heavens

Grotto-heavens is a popular theme in *shanshuihua*. As mentioned in Chapter 1, grotto-heaven is a unique geo-religious phenomenon in Daoism.¹⁶⁹ As the quintessence of the mountain, it is a place of transcendental passage, of revelation, and interconnected with other supernatural realms. The image of the grotto-heaven -- an empty space or a natural void -- possesses the features of the Dao and suggests a cosmological beginning. Because of its emptiness and featurelessness, it guarantees inexhaustibility and constant fertility.

The representation of grotto-heaven has multiple meanings in *shanshuihua*. Firstly, they are the adobe of the immortals (figure 3.25 – 3.26). Secondly, the space is conceived as a

¹⁶⁹ The motif of grotto-heaven is a vast topic that I cannot fully discuss here. Among these fruitful studies, Tan Shengguang’s “Songdai qinglv shanshuihua zhong de daojiao jingguan zhi ‘Qiushan jiangse’” 宋代青绿山水画中的道教景观之《秋山江色》 in *Hua kan*. Volume 6, 2020 discusses the potential of grotto-heaven as inner landscape, which is particularly related to this project.

place of revelation. Revealing only part of its interior, like *Shan Yi Waiting for Appointment* (figure 3.27) and Dai Jin's 戴進(1388-1462) *Seeking Dao in the Grotto-heavens* (*Dongtian wendao tu* 洞天問道圖) (figure 3.28), grotto heaven becomes the visible gate of a transcendental realm. Last but not least, it is also the solitary place to practice meditation, visualization and alchemy (figure 3.29-3.31).



Figure 3.25
Zhao Yong, *Yudong quanxiantu*, detail



Figure 3.26
Qiu Ying, *Taoyuan xianjing tu*, detail

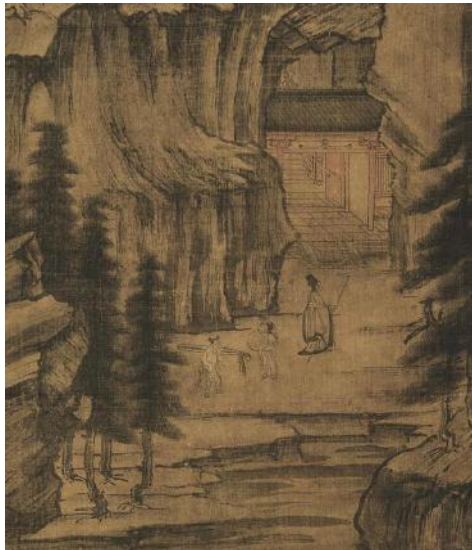


Figure 3.27. A man entering the mountain
Shenshan qihui tu, detail.

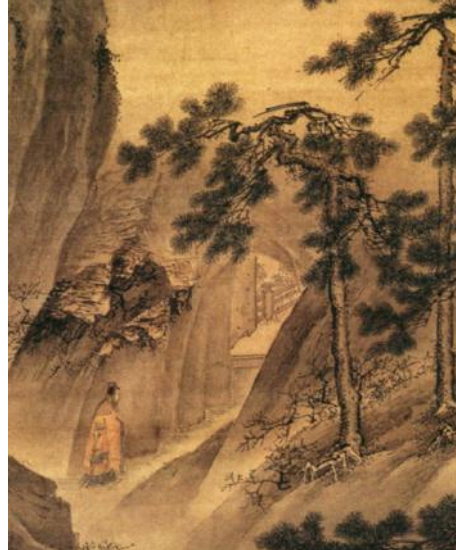


Figure 3.28. A man entering the grotto-heaven.
Dai Jin, *Dongtian wendao tu*, detail.



Figure 3.29



Figure 3.30



Figure 3.31

Wu Li, *Qingyun donghe tu*,detail Shen Zongqian, *Chunyang liandan tu*,detail Li Xigu, *Liandan tu*,detail

However, as we notice that grotto-heaven is not just a geographical or cosmological concept, it also exists within the human body, we might need to reconsider the potential meaning of the grotto-heaven, especially when no figure/alchemical tripod is present. We need to ask, can the grotto-heaven refer to the grotto space within the human body? Can it symbolize the gate through which the lived body is able to merge with the vital energies of the outer cosmos? Grotto-heaven as part of the inner landscape is an understudied topic.

3.2 Inner Alchemical Visuality

This section will explore the system of inner alchemical visuality. But before we start, it should be noted that the tradition of inner alchemy does not follow a single path. Various sources of inner alchemy have different understanding of body form and nature, which makes it difficult to get a generic description of an alchemical body. Both Komjathy and Pregadio warned that overlooking these differences of various inner alchemical traditions would

“combine elements pertaining to different views of Neidan but do not reflect any of them”.¹⁷⁰

Therefore, instead of picturing a generic alchemical body, I will focus on the characteristics and logics that applied to inner alchemical visuality. We will soon find that such visuality is a synthesis of multiple models and principles that cannot be fully discussed here. For the purpose of this dissertation, I will emphasize the visual contents that centered in the Yuan Quanzhen school and relates to *shanshuihua*.

The history of inner alchemy could be traced back to the second century AD, to the scripture of *Laozi zhongjing* 老子中經 (Central Scripture of Laozi) and *Huangting jing* 黃庭經 (Scripture of the Yellow Court). We could even find its sprouts in much earlier scriptures such as *Neiye* 內業 (Inward Training). Yet it is from the Tang Dynasty (618CE-907CE) and Song Dynasty (960CE-1297CE) onward that inner alchemy has gained wide acceptance among Daoists and established itself as the major and orthodox practice for nourishing life and achieving Dao within one’s own body. From this point of view, on one hand, the practice of inner alchemy belongs to the general tradition of Daoist meditation. It is the ripe fruit of this constant evolving tradition. On the other hand, differentiated from the primitive meditation practice of early Daoism and meditative Daoism, inner alchemy stands out for its distinct characteristics and fully developed cosmological system. Robinet summarized four characteristics of this innovation that made inner alchemy categorically distinctive:

1. a concern for training, both mental and physiological, with the mental aspect often tending to predominate;

¹⁷⁰ Pregadio, Fabrizio. “The Alchemical Body in Daoism.” *Journal of Daoist Studies*, vol. 14, no. 1, 2021, p. 99–127

2. a synthesizing tendency bringing together various Daoist elements (breathing exercises, visualization, alchemy), certain Buddhist speculations and methods, and references to Confucian texts;
3. a systematized use of the trigrams and hexagrams of the Book of Change, already used metaphorically in laboratory alchemy and ritual
4. references to chemical practices, of a purely metaphorical nature, following an interiorized interpretation we have already seen in less developed form in the Shangqing school.¹⁷¹

Pregadio further describes the innovation as follows: “The new Waidan (External Alchemy) and Neidan (Inner Alchemy) texts associate the elixir and its ingredients with cosmological principles, and systematically ground the alchemical process in patterns of emblems that include Yin and Yang, the Five agents, the trigrams and hexagrams of the Book of Changes, the Celestial Stems and the Earthly Branches, the twelve pitchpipes, the twenty-eight lunar mansions and so forth.”¹⁷² What Pregadio is saying is that there is a shift of emphasis in inner alchemy from the Tang period and Song period onward, in parallel with the rise of prominence of the classic *Zhouyi cantong qi* 周易參同契 (The Kinship of the Three, in Accordance with the Book of Changes), altering from the worlds of deities and demons to the impersonal principles which regulate the functioning of the cosmos and the human being. Thus, Pregadio concludes that the main feature that distinguishes inner alchemy from earlier

¹⁷¹ Isabella Robinet, Translated by Phyllis Brooks, *Under the Song and the Yuan: Interior Alchemy*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997, P217

¹⁷² Fabrizio Pregadio, *Early Daoist Meditation and the origins of inner alchemy*, in *Daoism in History: essays in Honor of Liu Ts'un-Yan*, Oxon: Routledge, 2006, P123

traditions is the replacement of a codified system (the pantheon of inner gods) with another codified system (correlative cosmology) both to construe the relation of human being to the Dao and to frame the stages of one's practice.¹⁷³

Representations of the inner alchemical body were rarely found prior to the Song dynasty (960-1279), but the Song period clearly marks a turning point in the graphic representation of the body as in graphic representation (*tu*) in general. As Catherine Despeux elaborates, from the Song onward, visual imagery comes to play a more significant role, not only as a record of knowledge, but also as a teaching aid, a mode of transmission, a mnemonic device, a visual translation of a text and a representation of a certain reality.¹⁷⁴ Just as internalization in the form of internal alchemy was becoming a focal component of Daoism, externalization in the form of alchemical representation was also rising as a tool through which this process of internalizing the religious experience could be actualized¹⁷⁵. Huang further demonstrates that, thanks to this new wave of “visual internal alchemy,” new genres of images emerged: with one genre bridging religion and medicine, revealing not only the inner organs but also the metaphysical mechanism of inner energies, and the other one linking the Daoist visual interpretation of cosmic body with the newly established art of *shanshuihua* current in the Song period.¹⁷⁶ The visual representation of body also formed a

¹⁷³ Fabrizio Pregadio, *Early Daoist Meditation and the origins of inner alchemy*, in *Daoism in History: essays in Honor of Liu Ts'un-Yan*, Oxon: Routledge, 2006, p123

¹⁷⁴ Catherine Despeux, “Visual Representations of the Body in Chinese Medical and Daoist Texts from the Song to the Qing Period (Tenth to Nineteenth Century).” *Asian Medicine: Tradition and Modernity* 1: 10-52. 2005, p47

¹⁷⁵ Anna Hennessey. “Chinese Images of Body and Landscape: Visualization and Representation in the Religious Experience of Medieval China.” Ph.D. diss., University of California, Santa Barbara. 2011, p16

¹⁷⁶ Huang, 2012, p88

contrast to the esoteric images of body gods and starry travel otherwise prominent in the tradition.

It is notable that in these body charts, we constantly encounter the visual metaphor of mountain, water, animals and architectural edifices. Even though the correlation between body and nature goes way back in Chinese philosophy and aesthetic discourses, the visual representation of mountain as/inside body is an inner alchemical invention.

3.2.1 Representative Inner Alchemical Charts

These body-mountain charts could be roughly divided into two categories: representation of body in the form of a mountain, and landscape within the human body. There are three representations of the body in the form of a mountain extant: “Chart of the Rise and Fall of Yin and Yang, Image of the Body” (*Ti xiang yin yang shengjiang tu* 體象陰陽升降圖) (Figure 3.32), “Image of the body of Original Qi” (*Yuanqi tixiang tu* 元氣體象圖)(Figure 3.33), and a representation of the *Daoyuan yiqi* 道元一氣 by Cao Yuanbai 曹元白(Figure 3.34).

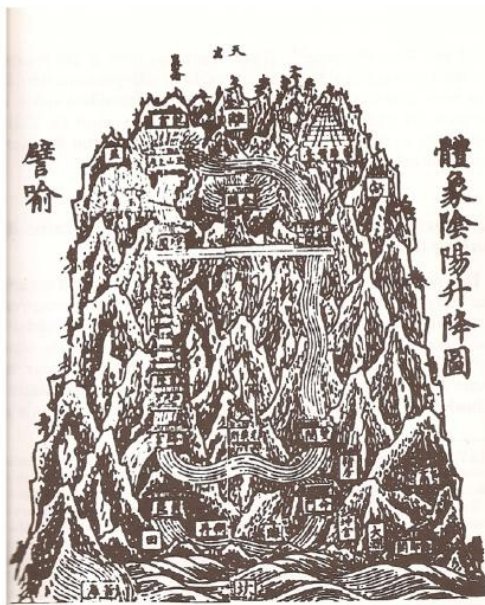


Figure 3.32

Map of Rise and Fall of Yin and Yang in the Human Body
tixiang yinyang shengjiangtu 體象陰陽升降圖 (ca 1226)
 presented to Emperor Lizong by Xiao Yingsou
 (DZ 90), 8a-b



Figure 3.33

“Chart Depicting the Body of Primordial Breath
Yuanqi tixiang tu 元氣體象圖 (early 14th CE.)
Shangyangzi jindan dayao tu
 (DZ 1068), 3a-b



Figure 3.34

Image of the body as a mountain showing alchemical processes
Form Daoyuan yiqi 道元一氣 by Cao Yuanbai 曹元白, late 16th century

Taking Figure 4, the oldest extant alchemical representation of the body in the form of a mountain, as an example. It was presented to Emperor Lizong 理宗 (1205-1264) in 1226 CE, by the ritual master Xiao Yingsou 蕭應叟, along with an important Lingbao 靈寶 (Numinous Treasure) scripture known as *wuliang duren shangpin miaojing neiyi* 元始無量度人上品妙經內義 (*Inner Cultivation of the Wondrous Scripture of the Upper Chapters on Limitless Salvation*), advocating the practice of inner alchemy. This image is rather straightforward in terms of inner alchemical expression. The bottom of the picture is marked as *kan* 坎, the trigram for water; and the top of the mountain is noted as *li* 離, the trigram for fire. The circular path is clearly denoted, symbolizing the breath circulating in the circuit of two meridians of the body. The names of the main alchemical sites are contained in cartouches. Although it is marked as “metaphor” in the left column of the image, this image seems quite palpable for those who understands the terms of inner alchemy. Therefore, it suggests that Daoists, or alchemists, are the primary audience for such illustration.

As for the second category – landscape within the human body, the most representative charts are *Neijing tu* 內經圖 (*Chart of Inner Landscape*) (Figure 3.35) and *Xiuzhen tu* 修真圖 (*Chart for the Cultivation of the Truth*) (Figure 3.36).

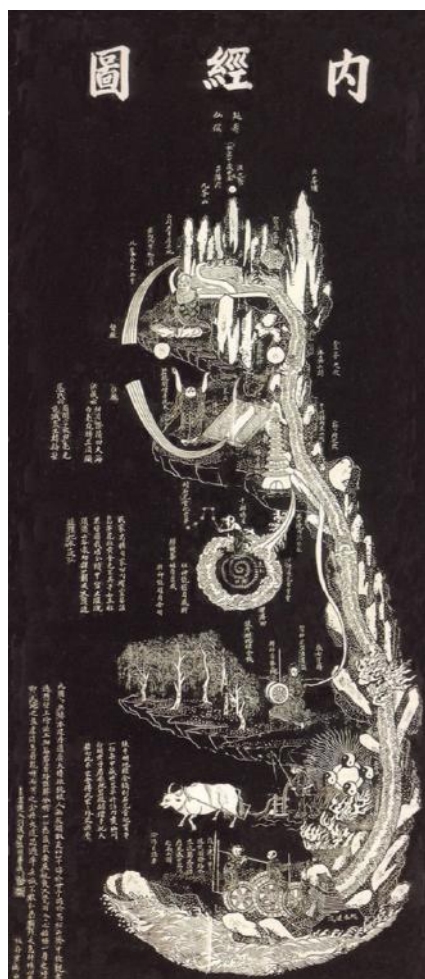


Figure 3.37 Chart of Inner Landscape.
Rubbing, Personal Collection of Louis Komjathy,
Acquired at Baiyun guan 2012

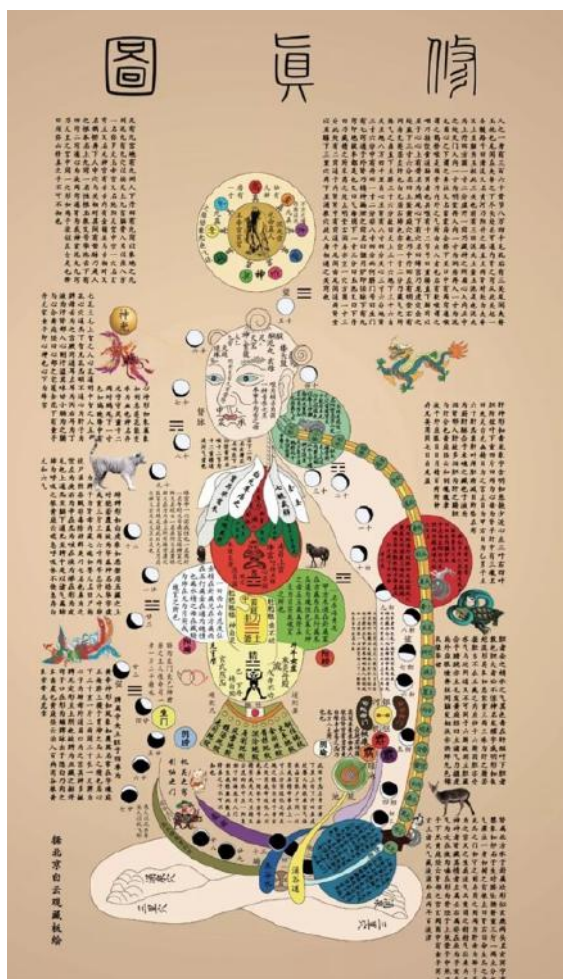


Figure 3.36 The Chart for the Cultivation of the Truth
White Cloud Temple.

Neijingtu, as Komjathy argues, is a body actualized through Daoist alchemical praxis¹⁷⁷.

One's body is the cosmos, and the cosmos is one's body. Through the refinement of inner alchemical practice, the adept's existence become cosmicized. Here again, we could reaffirm

¹⁷⁷ Komjathy, Louis "Mapping the Daoist Body, Part Two: The Text of the *Neijing tu*." *Journal of Daoist Studies*, 2. 2009, 64-108. Komjathy has provided a detailed analysis of *Neijing tu*. To put it into context, the original painting of the *Neijing tu* was most likely produced within the Ruyi Studio 如意館, the Qing imperial art academy. This painting was seen by Liu Chengyin 劉誠印 (d. 1894), a Longmen monk and chief eunuch to Empress Dowager Cixi 慈禧 (1835-1908) who commissioned the engraving the *Neijing tu* stele in 1886. The stele was later inlaid in the monastic compound of White Cloud Temple with another Liu-commissioned stele depicting the Daoist body, namely, the *Xiuzhen tu*.

that what lies at the core of bodily representations in the form of mountains or landscapes, is the connection between human being and its ontological root – the macrocosm, the One, the Dao.

Speaking from the perspective of a Daoist adept, Komjathy further points out that the diagram as a whole can be seen to depict the Daoist alchemical practice of reversal in combination with the Micro-cosmic Orbit method. The aspiring adept must turn inward through meditative praxis to realize a return to psychosomatic and cosmological integration.

In a similar vein, Despeux has examined the *Xiuzhen tu* (Figure 3.36) extensively in her book *Taoism and Self Knowledge*.¹⁷⁸ As the name of the chart suggests, this chart serves as illustration for the cultivation of *zhen*. Even though the place and the date of creation of the original *Chart for Cultivation of the Truth* remains uncertain, it is without doubt that it was associated with Dragon Gate lineage of Quanzhen Lineage.

This chart appears slightly different from the abovementioned *Neijing tu* in the sense that it resembles more of an anatomical body than features of the landscape. But once again, it is not drawn according to visual reality, but as a cosmological place and a sacred area. Despeux deciphered three layers of the chart. Firstly, it is a chart of body and its main sites for alchemical transmutations. This refers to the cosmological body becoming a spatial-temporal area in which the various alchemical operations will take place during meditation. Secondly, it is a chart of body as a sacred world of paradise and hells, with its different palaces and divinities. Thirdly, the inscriptions, texts and pictograms evoking the main

¹⁷⁸ Despeux, Catherine, and J E E Pettit. *Taoism and Self Knowledge: The Chart for the Cultivation of Perfection (Xiuzhen Tu)*. Leiden; Boston, Ma, Brill, 2019

processes of internal alchemy and the processes related to the thunder rites. This chart, combining inner meditation, visualizations and rituals in the inner world is indeed a Daoist vision of the transcended reality.

From the above charts, we can see the visual representation of inner alchemy blends in patterns of cosmological emblems, laboratory alchemy, Daoist deities¹⁷⁹, Buddhist terms, and other metaphorical images such as landscape, animals, human figures, buildings and so on. Since symbolism is widely used in inner alchemy sources, images like furnace, tripod, tiger, dragon, streams, bridges carry specific meanings according to different texts¹⁸⁰. But the true difficulty is not to decipher the meaning of these images, but to understand the dynamics between them and how these images, through the interplay of *wuxing* and yin and yang, contribute to the whole alchemical process. Whenever we look at inner alchemical graphs or images, we are looking at (part of) a transformative process. It is not only spatial, but temporal.

3.2.2 Symbols and Metaphors

¹⁷⁹ Although the general over-arching structure of inner alchemy moved on from the pantheon of inner gods, it still borrows terms from earlier meditative practice. For example, *jing* (Essence) is also called ‘White-haired old man’ 白頭老子 and *shen* (Spirit) ‘Woman in Green Attire’ 青衣女子.

¹⁸⁰ The reason of using such an allusive and obscure language firstly lies in the Daoist tradition of an anonymous and meticulous way of transmission. Inner alchemical scriptures that contain the true skills often are deemed as ‘revealing the secret of the heaven’. In the preface of *Wuzhen Pian*, Zhang Boduan confessed that he had tried to divulge alchemical teachings to the public three times. However, his behavior had brought him “heavenly punishment” three times. As a result, Zhang Boduan sealed his teachings in the book, which was written in a tremendously allusive and obscure language.

Another difficulty to decipher inner alchemy visuality lies in the fluidity of metaphors. The following table¹⁸¹ (figure 3.37) will show us how many metaphors can be used to designate *jing* and *shen*, the two out of three essential ingredients that will form the golden elixir:

<p><i>jing</i> 精 (essence)</p>	<p><i>kan</i> 坎(trigram of water), <i>geng</i> 庚(the seventh of the heavenly stems), metal, 4 and 9 represent the magnetic west, the tiger, <i>zhenqian</i> 真鉛(the true lead), <i>baixue</i> 白雪(the white snow), <i>jinye</i> 金液(the golden liquid), <i>shuihu</i> 水虎(the water tiger), <i>beifangheche</i> 北方河車(the northern river chariot) <i>kanwuyuejing</i> 坎戊月精(the essence of moon at <i>kan</i> position (north) and <i>wu</i>, the fifth of the heavenly stems, earth), ... </p>
<p><i>shen</i> 神 (spirit)</p>	<p><i>li</i> 離(trigram of fire), <i>jia</i> 甲(the first of the heavenly stems), 3 and 8 represent the magnetic east, the dragon, <i>zhengong</i> 真汞(the true mercury), <i>huangya</i> 黃芽(the yellow sprout), <i>yuye</i> 玉液,(the jade liquid), <i>huolong</i> 火龍(the fire dragon), <i>taiyangliuzhu</i> 太陽流珠(the flowing pearl from the sun), <i>lijiriguang</i> 離己日光(the sunlight at <i>li</i> position (south) and <i>ji</i>, the sixth of the heavenly stems, earth), ... </p>

Figure.3.37 Chart of Inner Alchemical Symbols

Even for more concrete concept, such as the spine, the metaphors can go on and on. In one of the three texts Huang Gongwang transmitted, *Baoyi zi sanfeng laoren danjue* 抱一子三峰老人丹訣 (*Alchemical Instructions of the Old Man Three Peaks, the Master Holding*

¹⁸¹ The chart is summarized based on the “inner alchemy” section in Lagerwey, John. *Modern Chinese Religion. 1,2, Song-Liao-Jin-Yuan (960-1368 AD)*; Vol. 2. Leiden, Brill, 2015, p1134-1159

the One), it says: “The Caudal Pass cavity (bottom of the spine) is also called the tiger and the dragon, path of Cao Stream, nine successive bronze drums, three fork bone, water chariot bone, the gate of the sea of breath, the summit which leads to heaven, the ladder for heavenly ascension.”¹⁸² As a result, there appear to be different images representing the Caudal Pass. It can be an actual pass along the line of the mountain (figure 3.38), or a metal cauldron bearing nine orifices (figure 3.39). On the other hand, the true meaning of these metaphorical images can also be fluid. Snow could represent essence, or the liquid contained in the fire of the heart, or the mixture of authentic *qi* and saliva, or true yin and so on. For each case, specification and contextualization are needed in order to understand the connotation of the image.



Figure 3.38
Caudal Pass in *Neijingtu*



Figure 3.39
Caudal Pass in *Baoyi zi sanfeng laoren danjue*. DZ 281

3.2.3 Space and Time in Inner Alchemical Body

Sangong santian sanguan 三宮三田 Three Palace, Three Cinnabar Fields

In inner alchemy, the upper Cinnabar Field, the middle Cinnabar Field and the lower Cinnabar Field within the human body each represents Heaven, the Central and Earth. The lower Cinnabar Field, namely the *huangting* 黃庭 (Yellow Court)¹⁸³, is the seat of Essence,

¹⁸² DZ 281

¹⁸³ In some sources, the Yellow Court represents the Middle Cinnabar Field.

located 1.3 inches below the navel. The middle Cinnabar Field, which is also called *jiangong* 絳宮 (Crimson Palace) is located at the center of the chest and is the seat of Breath. The upper Cinnabar Field, seat of the Spirit, located in the brain region, is also known as *niwan* 泥丸 (Muddy Pellet) or *qiangong* 乾宮 (Palace of Qian) (Figure 3.40-41). Pregadio suggests the three Cinnabar Fields establish a tripartite division of inner space that corresponds to other threefold motives in the Taoist pantheon and cosmology. Although the proportion varies, it is not difficult to locate the tripartite division as the three Cinnabar Fields are markers of the space of the frontal body.

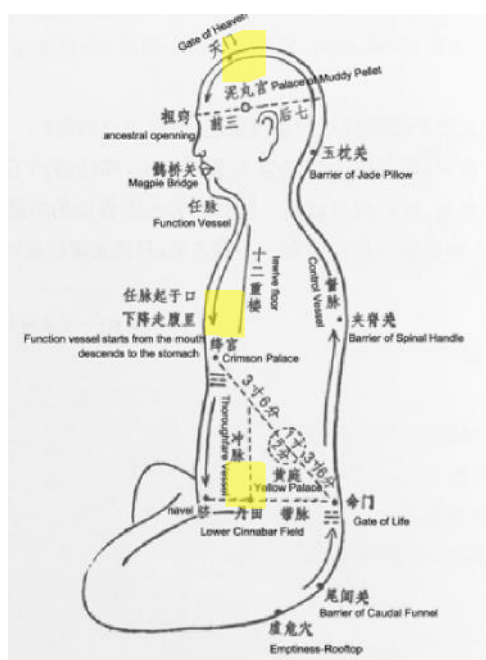


Figure 3.40 Three Passes in Alchemical Body¹⁸⁴

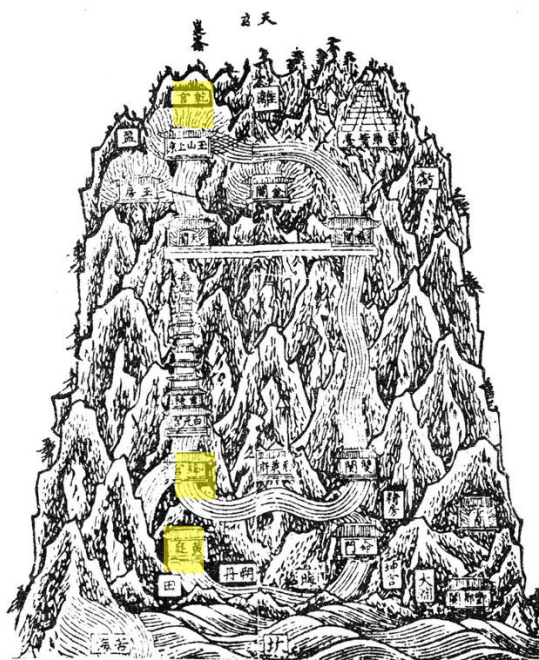


Figure 3.41 Three Palaces in
Chart of the Rise and Fall of Yin and Yang

¹⁸⁴ Mu Wang, and Fabrizio Pregadio. *Foundations of Internal Alchemy: The Taoist Practice of Neidan*. Mountain View, Calif., Golden Elixir Press, 2011, p56

Alchemical Instructions of the Old Man Three Peaks, the Master Holding the One places particular emphasis on the lower Cinnabar field. It says:

[The lower Cinnabar Field] is the chamber to nourish the sacred embryo, and it is the furnace and stove to cultivate the great medicine: the golden elixir. Human being has five viscera, and each has an essence. The five essences all gather in the lower Cinnabar Field.

此是養聖胎之房，鍊金丹大藥之鑪竈也。人有五臟，各有一精，五精皆聚在下丹田。

185

The lower Cinnabar Field is a self-sufficient place. It is the grotto-heaven of the immortals and sages. There are true yin and true yang in the lower Cinnabar Field. The golden essence weighs one *jin*¹⁸⁶, and it is the mother of immortality. The one who learns the Dao would lose himself if he does not settle his heart and will in the lower Cinnabar Field, just like a baby would desolate without a mother.

且下丹田者，此是自己產出，仙聖洞天福地也。下丹田內有真陰真陽，金精重一斤，此是神仙之母。學道之士，若不在下丹田內安心定意者，如嬰兒無母自荒也，似迷人失路自迷也。¹⁸⁷

We can see from the above that the lower Cinnabar Field is extremely significant in terms of producing the embryo of the elixir. It is the womb that gives birth to the formless body – the body that triumphs over the alchemical body. This quality of fertility reminds us

¹⁸⁵ DZ 281

¹⁸⁶ Approximately 626g.

¹⁸⁷ DZ 281

the *dong* we discussed in Chapter 1 – the void or a negative form that guarantees inexhaustibility and constant fertility. Furthermore, since the kidneys are located in the lower Cinnabar Field and are represented by *kan*, the trigram of water, the Cinnabar Field is often associated with water. It is also referred as the “dragon pond”龍池, “phoenix pond”鳳池, “sea of *qi*”氣海, “flowery pond”華池 and so on. Consequently, the visual representation of the lower Cinnabar field is often a combination of mountain – especially valley (the open void of the mountain) – and water (Figure 3.42-43).

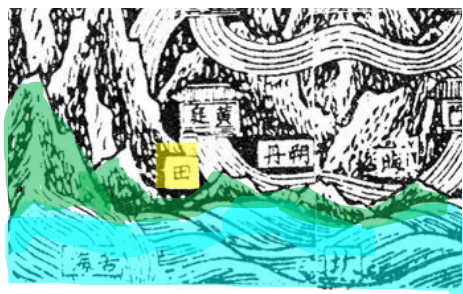


Figure 3.42 Lower Cinnabar Field in
Chart of the Rise and Fall of Yin and Yang.

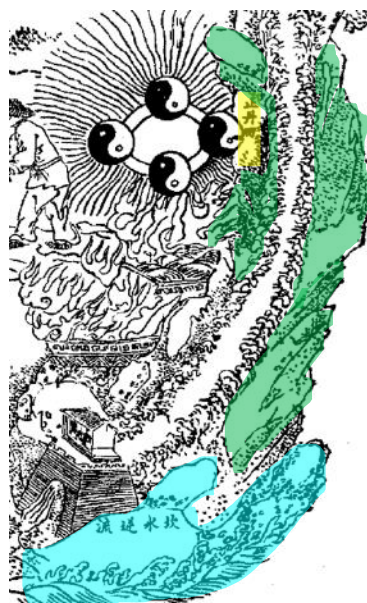


Figure 3.43 Lower Cinnabar Field in
Chart of Inner Landscape

Three Passes

On the back of the body, there are three *guan*關 (pass/barriers) along the line of the spine. The bottom pass is *weilü*尾閭(caudal pass), sometimes called barrier of the phoenix 鳳凰之關. The middle pass is called the double pass 雙關, or the Lulu 轆轤 (pulley) pass; and under the occiput is the pass named *yuzhen*玉枕 (jade pillow), which is the entry of the

head, the Jade Capital 玉京 (Figure 3.44-45). These three passes are difficult barriers in the *dumai* 督脈 (Control Vessel). The practitioner needs to clear the barriers for the *qi* to circulate through the body.

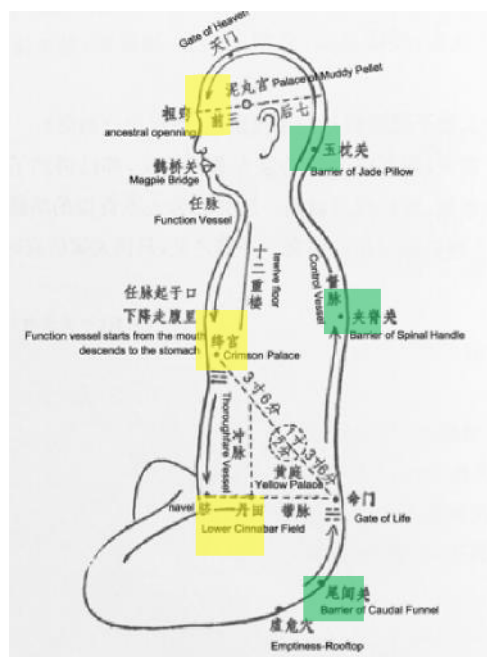


Figure 3.44 Three Passes in
Alchemical Body

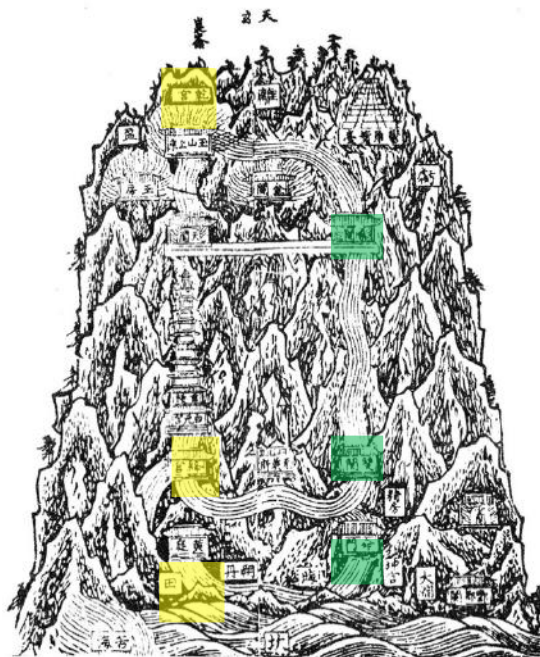


Figure 3.45 Three Passes in
Chart of the Rise and Fall of Yin and Yang

In simpler version, the contour of the body is eliminated. The human body is represented by dots and small circle with characters on it. The dots form the line of the spine, and the three passes are marked along the line. The *Chart on the Accomplishment by the union of the water and the spirit in the three cinnabar fields* (Figure 3.46) shows us a mirrored image of the human body, with the *youbaihu* 右白虎 (Right white tiger) on the left and *zuoqing* 左青龍 (Left azure dragon) on the right. Unlike the aforementioned graphs, this chart combines

alchemical body with anatomical body. The middle part of the body depicts *wuzang* 五臟 (five viscera)¹⁸⁸ and *liufu* 六腑 (six receptacles).



Figure 3.46. Three Passes in *Chart on the Accomplishment by the union of the water and the spirit in the three cinnabar fields*, Dadan Zhizhi (DZ 244), 1.5a

It is interesting to note that some *shanshuihua* reflect the structure of the three passes.

The Yuan painter Dai Chun's *Mount Kuanglu* 匡廬圖 (figure 3.47) depicts a path winding up the precipitous cliff. Along the cliff there are three buildings whose location and shape resemble that of the *Map of Rise and Fall of Yin and Yang in the Human Body* (figure 3.48).

Mount Kuanglu, with *lu* 廬 (cottage) being interchangeable with *lu* 爐 (furnace), has long been associated with alchemical practice.¹⁸⁹ In a similar vein, Kun Can's 髭殘 (1612-1674) *Green*

¹⁸⁸ According to *Huangdi neijing*, the five viscera include lung, liver, kidney, heart and spleen. The six receptacles include the triple burner, the gall, the larger intestine, the small intestine, and the urinary bladder.

¹⁸⁹ The signature peak in *Mount Kuanglu* resembles the shape of an incense burner, and thereby named Peak Xianglu 香爐山 (Incense Burner Peak). One of Li Bai's 李白 poem reads "sunlight illuminates Incense Burner Peak, kindling violet smoke" 日照香爐生紫煙, suggesting the mountain's long association with transcendence and immortality,

Mountains Rising to the Sky 蒼翠凌天圖 (figure 3.49) depicts a path ascending from the foothills. The three passes locate along the path in a similar proportion to the *Chart of Inner Landscape* (figure 3.50). On the lower left part, a scholar is sitting in the cottage and contemplating the scenery. The colophon reads: “Being seated in front of the scenery, I attune my mind to the mystery of nature”. Judging from the scholar’s position, he might not be able to get a good view of the winding mountain ridge. The paranormal view of the mountain more likely arises from his inner vision. Many of Kun Can’s paintings exhibit unusual inner alchemical characters, and we will come back to his paintings in Chapter 4.



Figure 3.47



Figure 3.48 Map of



Figure 3.49



Figure 3.50 Chart of

Mount Kuanglu. Rise and Fall of Yin and Yang Green Mountains Rising to the Sky. Inner Landscape

3.2.4 The Inner Alchemical Time

Other than the correlation of space, there is also a miniature in the time sequence. In Inner alchemy, the macrocosmic time sequence is represented by the “firing process”. Below is the chart of twelve ‘sovereign hexagrams’ 十二壁卦 (figure 3.51) depicting the rise and decline of the Yang principle in a day (or a year). Accordingly, during the process of inner cultivation, fire is progressively increased in the first half of the circuit, reaching its optimal status in the upper Cinnabar Field, then gradually decreased in the second half of the circuit, and finally extinguished in the lower Cinnabar Field. This process can also be depicted through the motion of the moon (figure 3.52). Huang Gongwang’s *Baoyi hansan bijue* also contains a similar drawing preceding a paragraph entitled “Essential Principles of the Fire Phasing.”¹⁹⁰(figure 3.53)



Figure. 3.51 sovereign hexagrams representing the fire process

¹⁹⁰ This “mirror” comprises seven elements: 1) the twenty-eight constellations, 2) the twenty-four articulations of a year, 3) the characters indicating the thirty days of a lunar month, 4) the drawing of the thirty phases of the moon, 5) the twelve hexagrams, 6) the names of these hexagrams, 7) a central circle. For a detailed discussion, see Despeux pp227-234.

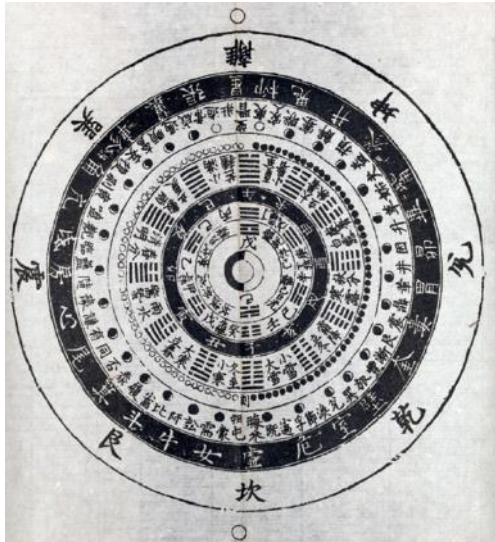


Figure 3.52 Drawing of the fire phasing of the spiritual mirror for the return

Yuanshi wuliang duren shangpin miaojing neiyi (DZ 90), 9a-b



Figure 3.53 *Baoyi hansan bijue* DZ 576

3.2.5 Three Stages and The Inverted Path

The teeming creatures all return to their separate roots/ Returning to one's roots is known as stillness / This is what is meant by returning to one's destiny.

夫物芸芸，各復歸其根。歸根曰靜，靜曰復命。

-- *Lao Zi*, Chapter 16¹⁹¹

The concept of *ni* 逆 (inversion) is central to the logic of inner alchemical practice. As the ordinary path of life can only lead to aging and death, the reverted path will return the person to his cosmological root and achieve immortality. The concept of “return” is engrained in the genes of Daoism from the beginning, as *Lao Zi* advocates that it is one's destiny to return to one's roots. The process of inversion is best summarized by Chen Zhixu 陳致虛¹⁹² (1290 -- 1368) in *Jindan dayao* 金丹大要 (Great Essentials of the Golden Elixir):

¹⁹¹ Lau, D.C. (tr.), *Dao de jing*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1980, p41

¹⁹² The leading figure who united the northern and southern lineage of Quanzhen Daoism in the Yuan.

“Essence, Breath, and Spirit affect one another. When they follow the course, they form the human beings; when they invert the course, they form the elixir. What is the meaning of ‘following the course’ (*shun* 順)? “The one generates the Two, the Two generates the Three, the Three generates the ten thousand things.” Therefore, emptiness transmutes itself into Spirit, Spirit transmutes itself into Breath, Breath transmutes itself into Essence, Essence transmutes itself into form, and form becomes the human being.

What is the meaning of ‘inverting the course’ (*ni* 逆)? The ten thousand things hold the Three, the Three return to the Two, the Two return to the One. Those who know this Way look after their Spirit and guard their corporeal form. They nourish the corporeal form to refine the Essence, accumulate the Essence to transmute it into Breath, refine the Breath to merge it with Spirit, and refine the Spirit to revert to Emptiness. Then the golden elixir is achieved.”¹⁹³

“神氣精三物相感，順則成人，逆則生丹。何謂順？一生二，二生三，三生萬物，故虛化神，神化氣，氣化精，精化形，形乃成人。何謂逆？萬物含三，三歸二，二歸一。知此道者，怡神守形，養形鍊精，積精化氣，鍊氣合神，鍊神還虛，金丹乃成。

We can decipher several important messages from this paragraph. Firstly, the basic ingredients of inner alchemy are *jing* 精 (Essence), *qi* 氣 (Breath) and *shen* 神 (Spirit) ¹⁹⁴.

¹⁹³ *Jindan dayao* (Great Essentials of the Golden Elixir), Chapter 4

¹⁹⁴ Essence represents the life germ contained in the Dao. Thus, it is the foundation of human life. In alchemical text, Daoism considers Essence to be the ‘mother of the elixir’. Once the Essence is replenished and abundant, it could provide the body with flourishing and vigorous life force and prevent the body from aging and weakening. Breath, on the other hand, is “positioned between essence and spirit and therefore at the intersection point between matter and mind”¹⁹⁴. The practitioners must harmonize their breath to enter a state of quiescence. In the later stages Breath plays an important role in transforming the external Medicine. Lastly, Spirit is the ruler of inner cultivation. For a more detailed analysis of these three treasures, please refer to *Jing, qi, shen*, P562, in *The Encyclopedia of Taoism* Volume 2, edited by Fabrizio Pregadio, Oxford: Routledge, 2008, P562

They are three major components of life. In alchemical terms they are also called ‘Three Treasures’ 三寶 or ‘Three Origins’ 三元, indicating their close connections and significance in the practice. The coagulation and coalescence of the Three Treasures form the Medicine 藥, or the embryo of the elixir. Spirit is the headquarter of life, ruling and controlling the whole alchemical process; Essence is the carrier of life and has a nourishing function and Breath is a dynamic force and has a transforming function. It is also noticeable that although Essence, Breath and Spirit is divided into three categories and the replenishment practice varies, ultimately the Three Treasures are one single entity and cooperate with one another.

Human beings are born with the three ingredients, but the normal process of life can only exhaust these pristine treasures day by day. Therefore, one must replenish the original Essence, original Breath and original Spirit before cultivating the elixir. This preparation stage is often referred as laying the foundation 築基. This foundational work could not be skipped, otherwise there would be no ingredients to cultivate the elixir, just as Zhang Boduan says:

“Swallowing saliva and ingesting breath are human actions;

Only when you have the Medicine can you form and transform.

If in the tripod there is no true seed,

It is like using water and fire to boil an empty pot.”¹⁹⁵

咽津納氣是人行，有藥方能造化生，鼎內若無真種子，猶將水火煮空鑪。

¹⁹⁵ Zhang Boduan, *Awakening to Reality*, translated by Fabrizio Pregadio, Mountain View: Golden Elixir Press, 2009

Secondly, there are three stages in the reverted path: “refining the Essence to transmute it into Breath”鍊精化氣, “refining Breath to transmute it into Spirit”鍊氣化神 and “refining Spirit to return to Emptiness”鍊神還虛.¹⁹⁶ By reverting the formative sequence of the Dao, this process intends to reunite with the ontological root. Chen’s demonstration is accompanied by a reversed *taiji* diagram on the left, contrary to Zhou Dunyi’s classical *taiji* diagram on the right (figure 3.54). The diagram is drawn vertically and composed of circles and texts. It illustrates the alchemical process happened within the human body, but the contour of a human body is not shown in this diagram.

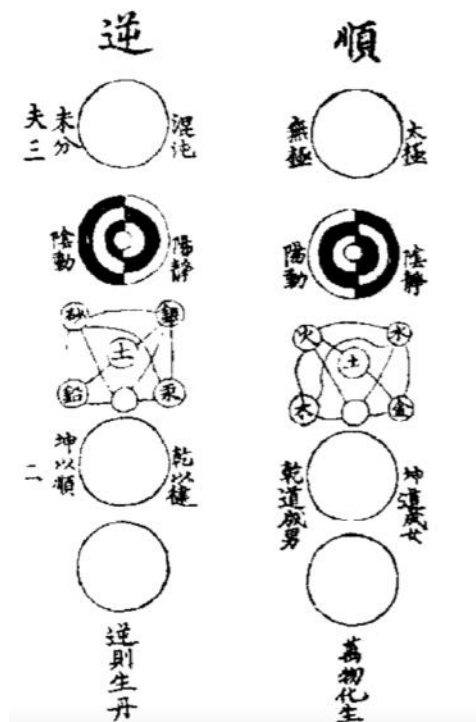


Figure 3.54 “Chart of the normal or reversal reading of the Great Ultimate” (*Taiji*

shunni tu 太極順逆圖). Shangyangzi jindan dayao tu (DZ 1068), 3a

¹⁹⁶ In some alchemical resources such as *Awakening to Reality*, the stage of replenishing the original Essence, original Breath and original Spirit is counted as an additional stage.

In the first stage, refining Essence to transmute it into Breath, original Essence is collected in the lower Cinnabar field and transported by the River Chariot¹⁹⁷. It ascends from the Caudal Pass, through the Double Pass, to the Palace of Muddy Pellet and then descending through the Magpie Bridge¹⁹⁸, the twelve-storied pagoda¹⁹⁹ and the middle Cinnabar Field, to the lower Cinnabar Field. This circuit is called the Lesser Celestial Circuit 小周天. In the foundational stage, the Lesser Celestial Circuit is used to clear the Control and Function vessels so that the Breath could circulate through the body. The illustration *The Ascension and Descension of Yin and Yang of Original Breath from Beginning to the End* 元炁始終陰陽升降之圖 (figure 3.55) accompanying Huang Gongwang's *Alchemical Instructions of the Old Man Three Peaks, the Master Holding the One* demonstrates the path of Lesser Celestial Circuit as such:

¹⁹⁷ Water of the spleen.

¹⁹⁸ Alchemists believe that the Control Vessel and the Function Vessel are disconnected in the human body. The supposed connection place is called "Magpie Bridge". The upper Magpie Bridge is the tongue, and the lower Magpie Bridge is the Yin Heel Cavity. When Essence is transformed to the Glabella, the practitioner should immediately stick his tongue to the upper jaw, making a bridge for Essence to across.

¹⁹⁹ Trachea.

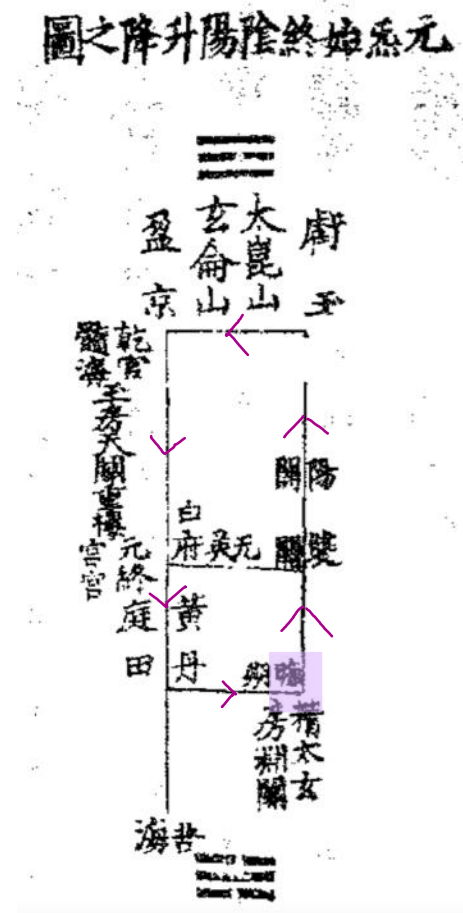


Figure 3.55 *The Ascension and Descension of Yin and Yang of Original Breath from Beginning to the End.*

DZ 281

As the normal breath often starts from the head and circulate from top to bottom, the reverted path starts from the bottom of the backbone (here referred to as the Chamber of the Essence 精房). In the normal case, the replenished essence will give birth to an external being while in reversion, it gives birth to the inner Great Medicine. After this stage, the original Essence is coalesced with the Breath stored in the lower Cinnabar Field and will be transmuted to a Breath made of the unity of Essence and Breath. The second stage is completed— the Three has returned to the Two.

In the second stage “refining the Breath to transmute it into Spirit”, the Greater Celestial Circuit replaces the Lesser Celestial Circuit: the lower Cinnabar Field becomes

the small furnace while the middle Cinnabar Field becomes the small tripod. Breath starts to move between the two Cinnabar Fields. The mind and the thoughts now are bathing 沐浴 in the steamy and misty true Breath. Gradually the Breath starts to disappear, transmuting into Spirit while the mind enters the state of subtle silence. After a seven-days “entering the enclosure” 入還, the mother of the elixir gives birth to the Embryo of Sainthood/Immortality 聖胎, which is often represented by the image of the child floating on the clouds above the furnace (figure 3. 56).



Figure 3.56 The Child in Internal Alchemy. *Jinye huandan yinzheng tu*²⁰⁰

Finally, when it comes to the last stage, refining the Spirit to transmute it into Emptiness, the Embryo in the lower Cinnabar Field would be moved to the Upper Cinnabar Field, where true Yang seats. Embracing the true Yang Spirit, one has opened himself to Gate of Heaven, to the Emptiness of Dao. As Despeux explains, in this stage, the transformation of the adept undergoes a “renaissance” where a miniature replica of

²⁰⁰ Longmei zi 龍眉子, *Jinye huandan yinzheng tu* 金液還丹印證圖 [Illustrations of the return of the liquified gold to the cinnabar field], preface of 1218. *DZ* 151.

his being in the form of light called *yangshen* is formed in the body. Once completed, this replica is born via the top of the head (figure 3.57). In the following illustration, the miniature replica floating on a cloud emanating from his head. The accompanied text reads “body of the void and emptiness” 虛無之體 and “connected with sun and moon” 日月相通, with the crow in the sun and the hare in the moon. *Yangshen*, being the body of the void and emptiness, is no longer limited by the physical body and even the alchemical body. The transformed being is able to travel freely between heaven and earth.



Figure 3.57. *Shangqing taixuan jiu yang tu* (DZ 154), 5a-b. Late twelfth century.

In between the three stages, we notice two ascension paths (figure 3.58). One follows the spine (the purple line), and the other moves from the lower Cinnabar Field to the Middle Cinnabar Field, and then to the Upper Cinnabar Field (the orange line). While the first path is often depicted as an ascending mountain ridge in inner alchemical graphs, the second path has more variations. The cinnabar fields can be represented as structures (palaces, chambers,

temples), fields, mountain valley/peak and so on, and they do not need to be represented as the same thing. The combination is therefore endless.

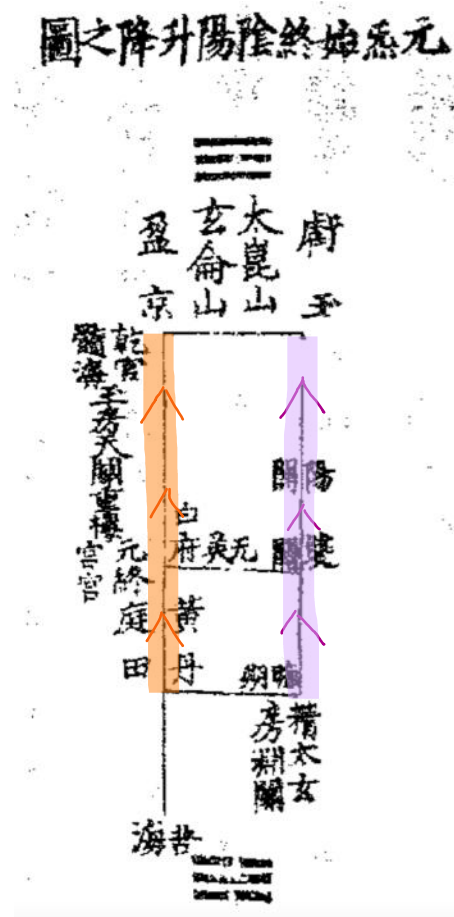


Figure 3.58

3.2.6 The Cycle of Yin and Yang

The visuality of inner alchemy is also grounded in cosmological patterns of emblems that include Yin and Yang, the Five agents, the trigrams and hexagrams and so forth. When Dao gives birth to yin and yang, the two forces begin to interact with each other. *Qian* 乾 (pristine Yang) constantly bestows its essence to *kun* 坤 (pristine Yin), and *kun* brings it to generation, as the male brings his essence to the female and the female gives birth to new lives. Due to the constant joining of yin and yang, *qian* 乾 becomes *li* 離, and has in itself

the true yin while *kun* ☷ becomes *kan* 坎 ☵, and has it itself the true Yang. What inner alchemy practitioners seek is to return to the oneness in the Dao, the pure yang state. Thus, they need to invert this course to exchange the lines so that the pristine *qian* and *kun* could be restored. Once *qian* and *kun* are restored, the elixir is generated, which brings oneself back to the fundamental nature of the Dao. Huang Gongwang's *Secret Instructions on Holding the One and Encasing the Three* contains a graph called "A Golden Cicada Casting off its Skin, Graph of the Heavenly Immortal" (figure 3.59), illustrating the nature of the inner alchemical process.



Figure 3.59. A Golden Cicada Casting off its Skin, Graph of the Heavenly Immortal.DZ 576

In the system of eight trigrams, *kan* stands for water while *li* stands for fire. Since in the creation cycle of five elements, wood creates fire and metal creates water, *kan* is associated with water and metal, and *li* is associated with fire and wood. Using the theory of macrocosm and microcosm, just as *qian* (heaven) resides above and *kun* (earth) is located below, *li* is

located in the upper Cinnabar Field while *kan* is in the lower Cinnabar Field. As a result, true yin and true yang are constantly separated. Thus, in inner alchemy practice, *li* should be moved downward and *kan* upward for the rejoining of true yin and true yang (the Lesser Celestial Circuit). In between, the medium for the conjunction of true yin and true yang is the central soil, for soil is the neutral state that embraces both yin and yang. Thus, the five elements return to three (water/metal, fire/wood, soil), and then three returns to the One. When the five elements are joined as a whole, embracing the balance of Yin and Yang, the elixir is generated. The cycle of yin and yang is illustrated in the *Graph of the Obscure Female* (figure 3. 60). The cycle can repeat endless times until they are united into the oneness of Dao.



Figure 3.60. Graph of the Obscure Female (*xuanpin* 玄牝). *Jindan dacheng ji*,

in *Xiuzhen Shishu* 修真十書. (DZ 263)

Since yin and yang is the major cosmological principle in the universe, their associations can be endless. In inner alchemy visuality, they are often represented by female and male (figure 3. 61), tiger and dragon (figure 3.62), moon and sun, toad and hare (figure 3.63),

mercury and lead, yellow sprout and white snow and so forth. Many of these images have been subtly adopted in poems and paintings, and blend in with other contents, uplifting the bar to unveil the true meaning.



Figure 3.61. Illustration of the Sealed Verification of the Golden Elixir of the Reverted Cinnabar Qing dynasty, White Cloud Monastery



Figure 3.62 Dragon and tiger as alchemical symbols (1068 8a). Ming reprint of 1598.



Figure 3.63. Light of the lunar toad, *Yuqing jinsi qinghua biven jinbao neilian danjue* (DZ 240), 2.13a. 玉清金笱青華秘文金寶內煉丹訣²⁰¹

²⁰¹ According to Despeux, (2019) the light of the toad is the light of the true yang. The moon is a metaphor for the primordial nature. Water is a metaphor for the *kan*. The moon is a symbol for the primordial like a shooting star, appears while the nature of the substantial body disappears. The primordial yang, or the true nature, arises,

3.3 Concluding Remarks

In this chapter we examined the iconography used to represent Daoist sacred space and inner alchemical body. These iconographies seem to have a dual function: they can both represent the outer and inner landscape. Built on that, we further explore the inner alchemical paths -- the Lesser Celestial Circuit and the Greater Celestial Circuit -- and cycle of yin and yang. In the following chapters, we will see how these iconographies, paths and cycles are further adopted in *shanshuihua* and make mountains a transcendental place.

Meanwhile, as the conventional way to engage with *shanshuihua* hanging scroll is from bottom to top, or from right to left if it were a handscroll, the inner alchemical graphs may suggest a different travel path to the landscape painting. It can be circular, or reversal. In some stages, Daoists travel not to reach the summit, but to collect “essentials” and transport vital energies.

like the full moon appearing when the clouds dissipate, or the sun appearing when the fog evaporates. At that precise moment, appear the signs of the production of the elixir.

4

Transforming Inner Alchemical Vision into *Shanshuihua*

My blurred version is as dim as [the blind] Zhang Ji²⁰²

Not able to distinguish flowers from the *Xuanpu* Garden.²⁰³

老眼堪憐似張籍，看花縣圃欠分明²⁰⁴

-- Huang Gongwang

By analyzing Huang Gongwang's (1269-1354) later period paintings including *Sunny After Snow* 快雪時晴圖, *Nine Peaks after Snow* 九峰雪霽圖, and *Stony Cliff at Heavenly Pond* 天池石壁圖, this chapter argues that Huang Gongwang's later paintings can be read as different stages of the inner alchemical transformative process. By demonstrating the particular inner alchemical iconography and principle incorporated into *shanshuihua*, this chapter tries to show that Huang's *shanshuihua* is not reproduction or imitation of a particular kind of nature. Instead, these paintings are the embodiment of his inner alchemical vision. Huang Gongwang, as a Daoist literati painter, has transformed his inner alchemical vision into *shanshuihua* and used art as a proper vehicle to access to the truth and reality of Dao.

²⁰² Zhang Ji (766-830), a blind Tang dynasty poet and scholar.

²⁰³ *Xuanpu* (Hanging Garden), a mythological garden in the Daoist paradise. For an interesting discussion on *xuanpu*, see Jeongsoo Shin, "From Paradise to Garden: The Construction of Peng Lai and Xuanpu" in *Journal of Daoist Studies*, Volume 4, University of Hawai'i Press, p1-31.

²⁰⁴ Huang Gongwang's inscription to Ni Zan's painting "*The Six Gentlemen*" (1345).

4.1 The Greatly Foolish Daoist

Huang Gongwang 黄公望 (1269-1354), style name Zijiu 子久 and sobriquets Dachi Daoren 大痴道人 (The Greatly Foolish Daoist) and Yifeng Daoren 一峰道人 (Daoist of One Peak), is the widely acknowledged painter in his generation and beyond. In 2011, when the two pieces of his painting *Dwelling in the Fuchun Mountains* were reunited for the first time in the National Palace Museum since their separation more than three and a half centuries ago, the exhibition attracted more than 840,000 visitors and remained as one of the most popular art shows ever since. Huang Gongwang, as the head of the acknowledged “Four Masters” of Yuan period, stands at a pivotal midpoint between such ancient masters as Dong Yuan 董源 (934-962) and Ju Ran 巨然 (fl. 10 CE) in the Five Dynasties period and Shen Zhou 沈周 (1427-1509), Dong Qichang 董其昌 (1555-1636), and the Four Wangs of the Ming and Qing dynasties. Huang supplanted many earlier artists as the favored model for later *shanshuihua* painters.

Originally named Lu Jian 陸堅, Huang was born in Changshu city, Jiangsu Province in the year 1269. According to the Yuan dynasty anthology *Ghost Notes* 錄鬼簿, his parents died when he was seven years old.²⁰⁵ Huang was then adopted by Huang Le 黃樂 of Yongjia 永嘉, Zhejiang Province. The prestigious Huang family always wanted a son, and therefore named him Zijiu (子久), meaning “long desiring a son”. Huang was no disappointment to his new family. He passed a child prodigy examination at the age of 12 and since then was renowned for his talent. However, Huang Gongwang’s life never seems to be a smooth journey. He was born in a time of great warfare and political turmoil. At that time,

²⁰⁵ Zhong Sicheng, *Lugui Bu*. 1330.

the Southern Song dynasty was painstakingly defending against the invasion of the Mongols and the country was in dire straits. The incapacity and corruption of the Southern Song government only made the situation worse and eventually the dynasty fell into an irreparable abyss. In 1271, Kublai Khan proclaimed himself Emperor of China and declared the establishment of the Yuan dynasty. Like many scholars of the time, Huang's way to officialdom was severely limited because of the Mongol rulers had suspended the civil examination for that particular period of time. When he finally gained a position as a secretary in the metropolitan Censorate, he was unfortunately involved in the slander case of a minister, Zhang Lüe 張闓. He was sentenced to jail in the year 1315, accused of tax irregularities. Ironically, it was the same year that Emperor Renzong of the Yuan dynasty decided to reopen the civil examination. Although we have no idea how Huang Gongwang perceived such irony, his flame of aspiration for officialdom went out. After he served his time in prison, he made a living by divination between the areas of Hangzhou and Suzhou. In the year 1329, at the age of 61, he withdrew from public life and joined Quanzhen Daoism. Ever since then, Huang had lived in seclusion in the mountain areas of Fuchun²⁰⁶. He was a renowned practitioner of inner alchemy whose teachings are recorded in the Daoist Canon. There are three inner alchemy treatises in the Daoist Canon associated with him: *Secret Instructions on Holding the One and Encasing the Three* 抱一守三訣²⁰⁷; *Straightforward Directions on Quanzhen by Sir Paper Boat* 紙舟先生全真直指²⁰⁸; and *Alchemical Instructions of the Old Man Three Peaks, the Master Holding the One* 抱一子三峰老人丹訣

²⁰⁶ It is located in the current Fuyang District, Hangzhou City, Zhejiang Province.

²⁰⁷ *DZ*, 576

²⁰⁸ *DZ*, 242

²⁰⁹. Huang received his teachings from Daoist Jin Zhiyang 金志揚 (1276-1336). According to *Lishi zhenxian tidao tongjian* 歷世真仙體道通鑒 (*Comprehensive Mirror of Perfected Immortals and Those Who Embodied the Dao through the Ages*) compiled by the Yuan Daoist Zhao Daoyi 趙道一 (1279-1368), the line of transmission within Quanzhen Daoism (from the Patriarch to Huang Gongwang) can be roughly summarized as follow (figure 4.1):

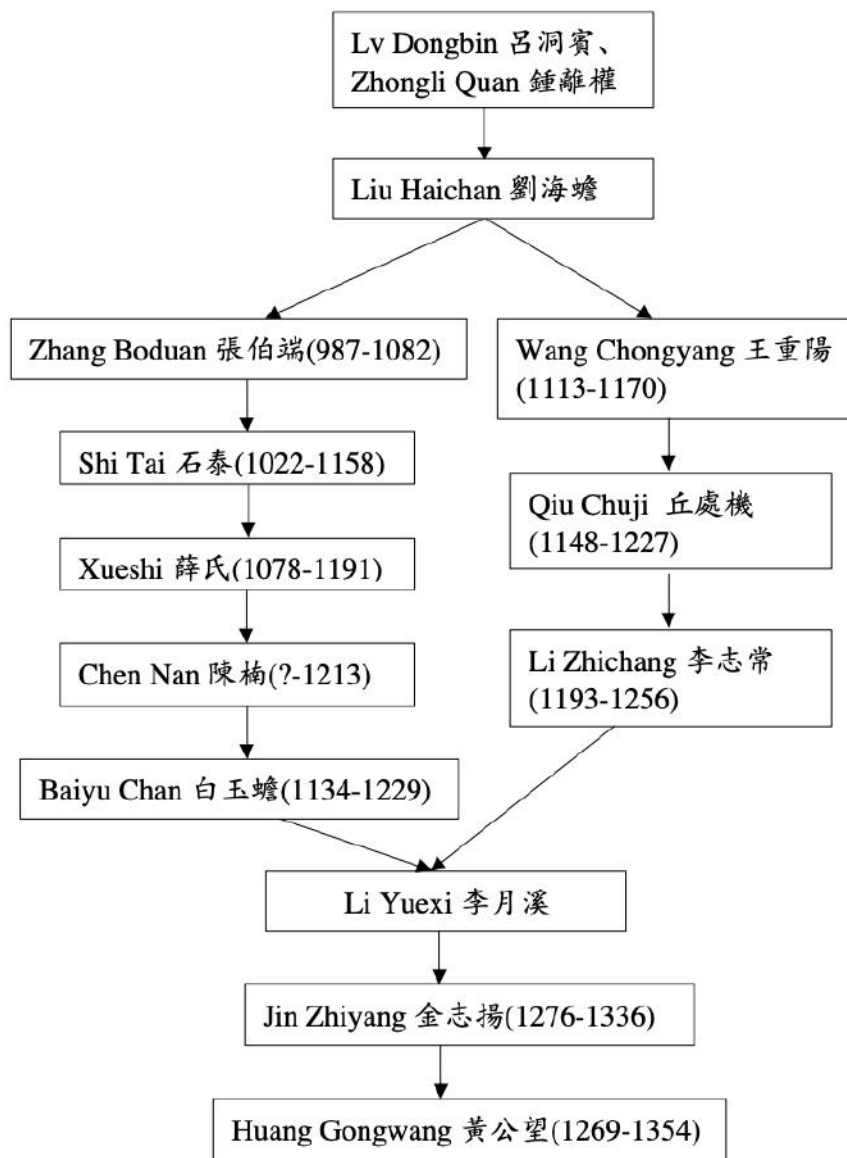


Figure 4.1.

²⁰⁹ DZ, 281

This table can only roughly represent how the teaching has been transmitted, while in reality the situation was much more complicated and lots of the Daoists mentioned above crossed paths with each other. However, we can see that Huang Gongwang has been influenced by both the Southern lineage and Northern lineage. Since Huang only transmitted three short inner alchemical treatises, this significant information will help us better understand Huang's inner alchemical background knowledge.

Despite the fact that Huang Gongwang had lived in seclusion for many years, he still enjoyed a high-quality social life. As Xie Bo's charts show (figure 4.2-4.3), Huang's acquaintances include high-level officials (Yan Fu, Xu Yan, Zhang Lv), significant literati/painters (Zhao Mengfu, Wang Meng, Ni Zan), as well as established Daoists (Zhang Yu, Fang Congyi, Jin Pengtou). Since the Mongol reign has barred educated Chinese from civil service exam, these disenfranchised literati frequently gather in their estates and bequeath each other their paintings, poems and inscriptions. Huang Gongwang formed a particular strong tie with Ni Zan and Zhang Yu 張雨(1277-1348), both Daoists and painters.²¹⁰ The quoted poem in the beginning of this chapter is Huang's inscription on Ni Zan's painting. Since Huang and his friends share similar religious and philosophical background, the paintings, poems and inscriptions they share with each other often "speak" in riddles and metaphors. For example, in the quoted lines, Huang says his blurred eyes make him not able to distinguish ordinary flowers from heaven gardens, but Ni Zan certainly knew

²¹⁰ For an extensive analysis on Huang's literati circle, see Augustin, Birgitta "Modern Views on Old Histories: Zhang Yu's and Huang Gongwang's Encounter with Qian Xuan" in *Arts Asiatiques*, Vol. 67. 2012, p63-76; Halperin, Mark. "Explaining Perfection: Quanzhen and Thirteenth-century Chinese Literati" in *T'oung Pao* Vol.104. 2018, p572-625. Also Xie Bo, *Huazhi shang de Daojing* 畫紙上的道境, Chengdu: Sichuan renmin chubanshe, 2018, p179-203

it was Huang's metaphorical and joking way to say that he had transformed his "otherworldly" vision to the mundane.

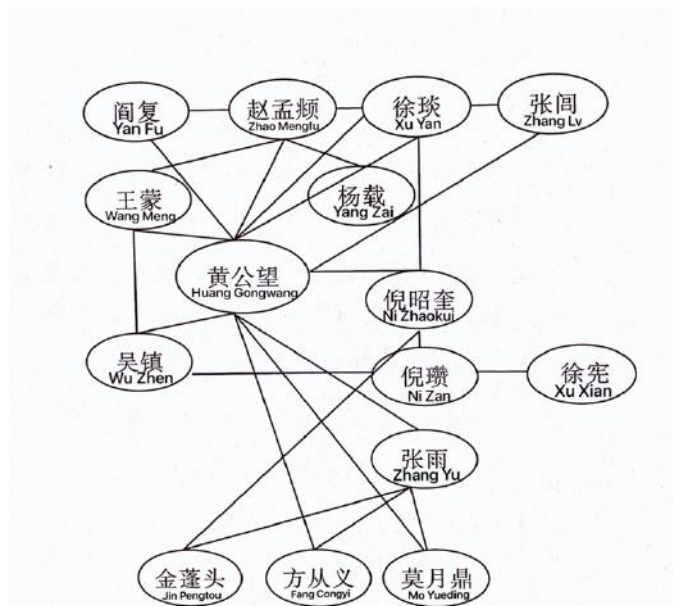


Figure 4.2. Huang Gongwang's primary social network²¹¹

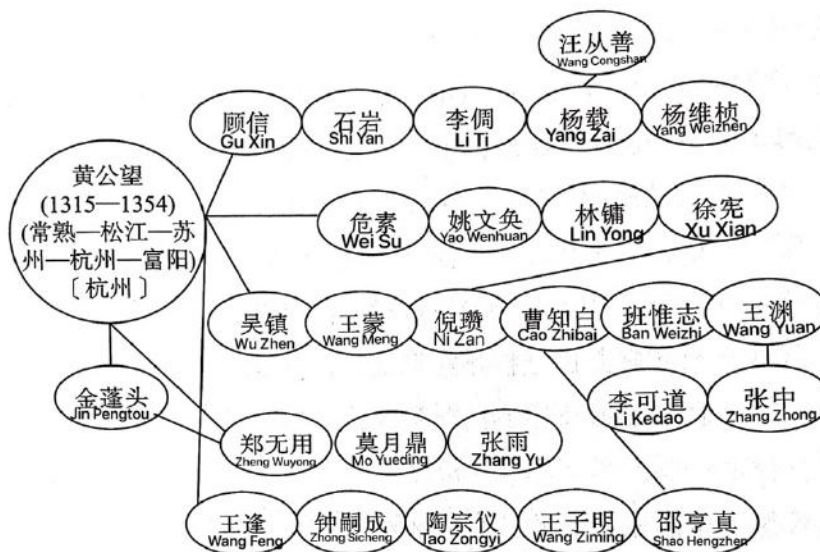


Figure 4.3. Huang Gongwang's social relations (1315-1354)²¹²

²¹¹ Xie Bo, 2018, p190. *Pinyin* added for clarification.

²¹² Xie Bo, 2018, p189

It is also notable that Huang has his own special way to experience *shanshui*. Li Rihua 李日華(1565-1635) records Huang's unexpected and almost mystical behavior in this way:

Huang Zijiū spent all days only sitting in barren mountains, rocks, bushes, and canyons, looking absent-minded, and people cannot guess why he was being like that. He also went to where the Mao lake meets the sea to see the rapid torrent and rumbling wave. Although there was a sudden storm, monsters in the river sobbing, yet he did not pay any attention.

黃子久終日只在荒山亂石叢木深筱中坐，意態忽忽，人不測其為何。又每往泖中通海處看急流轟浪，雖風雨驟至，水怪悲詫而不顧。²¹³

Yu Yi 魚翼 tells another unusual story about Huang's moonlit night journey:

He used to row a boat on a moonlit night, all the way through the west city gate and proceed by the [lines of] the mountain. By the end of the mountain, he reached the lake bridge. He used a long rope to tie a wine bottle to the bottom of the boat. When he returned and rowed the boat to the tomb of princess of Qi country, he pulled the rope to fetch the bottle. The rope was broken, and Huang clapped his hands and laughed, his voice oscillated the mountain valley.

嘗於月夜，棹孤舟，出西郭門，循山而行，山盡抵湖橋，以長繩系酒瓶於船尾，返舟行至齊女墓下，牽繩取瓶，繩斷，撫掌大笑，聲振山谷。²¹⁴

We can see from the above anecdotes that Huang Gongwang formed a deep, meaningful, almost obsessive relationship with *shanshui*. He goes into the mountains and streams as if going back to the matrix of universe. *Shanshui* is not the scary nor frightening *other* in the eyes of Huang Gongwang, but somewhere he belongs to.

²¹³ Li Rihua, *Zhu lan hua ying* 竹嬾畫媵.

²¹⁴ Yu Yi (Qing), *Haiyu huayuan lue* 海虞畫苑略.

Over the centuries, scholars have paid great attention to Huang's art historical significance, including his painting manner, style and formal construction, and how these features have been reworked by artists, generation after generation. James Cahill identified Huang Gongwang as the artist who "most decisively altered the course of landscape painting, creating models that would have a profound effect on landscapists of later centuries."²¹⁵ "Huang seems to have disassembled the visible world and rebuilt it on new, more dynamic, more intelligible patterns."²¹⁶ Zhu Liangzhi 朱良志 used to compare reading Huang Gongwang's painting to listening to Bach: "Its strict order, its intricate internal logic, and its revelation of the mystery of heaven and man are like a magnificent symphony reflecting the fate of the times and the agony of life."²¹⁷ He characterizes Huang's painting as "mysterious" 神秘 and "turbid" 渾. Besides that, Huang is often praised for his unprecedented ability to execute the fine border between control and spontaneity, achieving a formal complexity analogous to the natural order.

John Hay's dissertation *Huang Kung-Wang's Dwelling in the Fu-chun Mountains: The Dimensions of a landscape*²¹⁸, examines the philosophical foundation of Huang's painting, arguing that Huang's work reflected a structure creative of both man and nature. The dichotomy between man and nature is only secondary, but the primary reality is that man and

²¹⁵ James Cahill, "The Yuan Dynasty" in *Three Thousand Years of Chinese Painting*, ed. by Yang Xin, Richard M. Barnhart, et. al. Yale University Press, 1997, p. 167.

²¹⁶ James Cahill. *Hills Beyond a River: Chinese Paintings of the Yuan Dynasty, 1279-1368*. New York: Weatherhill. 1976, p111

²¹⁷ Zhu Liangzhi, *Nan Hua Shi Liu Guan* 南画十六观(*Sixteen Views on Chinese Literati Paintings*) Beijing, Bei Jing Da Xue Chu Ban She, 2013. p21-30

²¹⁸ A John Hay. *Huang Kung-Wang's "Dwelling in the Fu-Ch'un Mountains" : Dimensions of a Landscape*. Ann Arbor, Mich., University Microfilms International Publisher, 1997.

nature are the same, both a product of human consciousness. Hay gave careful consideration to Huang's Daoist identity and his philosophical undertone, but he did not expand on his religious practice and how that might affect his work of art.

In recent decades, Shih Shouqian and Susan Huang first raised that Huang's paintings is of significant inner alchemical connotation. Huang argues that many of Huang Gongwang's *shanshuihua* should be reexamined from the religious perspective by linking the paintings to his personal Daoist experiences.²¹⁹

Huang's insight inspires Daoist scholars such as Lennert Gesterkamp and Xie Bo to reexamine Huang Gongwang's work in terms of inner landscape. In 2017, Gesterkamp gave a lecture in Chinese Academy of Fine Arts, titled "*Huang Gongwang's 'Dwelling in the Funchun Mountains' as a Daoist Inner Landscape*". In this lecture, he argued that the landscape in this painting symbolizes the various stages and processes of Daoist inner alchemy, which Huang's friend and fellow-disciple undoubtedly was able to understand.²²⁰ For example, the twelve pine trees carefully arranged in the right frontal corner of the painting can be read as the twelve-story tower, symbolizing the human trachea. In a similar vein, Gesterkamp reads Wang Ximeng's *A Thousand Miles of Streams and Rivers* 千里江山图 as depicting a story of Daoist self-cultivation. He argues that the pictorial elements such entering the mountain, seeking a master, crossing the bridge, receiving training and ordination in a monastery, meditating at a grotto-heaven, entering the Gate of Heaven and so on are guideposts for the viewer to embark on a transformative journey. This journey

²¹⁹ Huang, 2014, p121-204

²²⁰ Gesterkamp believes that the title of this painting is a much later addition and culled from the first line of Huang Gongwang's inscription.

includes mundane and transcendental world but does not necessarily represent the inner landscape. Nevertheless, inner alchemical transformation is included in the journey, for the river chariot 河車 (figure 4.4) is a typical inner alchemical metaphor symbolizing the transportation of the spleen water (figure 4.5).



Figure 4.4. The River Chariot
in *A Thousand Miles of Streams and Rivers*



Figure 4.5 The River Chariot in
Chart of the Inner Landscape (right)

Compared to Gesterkamp's lecture, Xie Bo offers a more thorough inspection of Huang's painting in her book *The Visualization of Daoist Elysium: Huang Gongwang and His Dwelling in the Fuchun Mountains*²²¹. Built on Susan Huang's concept of inner landscape, Xie forwards an idea of "Visualization of Daoist Elysium". She believes that Huang's *shanshuihua* is essentially an exteriorization of his ideal *shanshui*, which is a mixture of inner alchemical landscape with Daoist sacred iconography and cosmology. Unlike Gesterkamp, Xie does not divide the painting into stages, nor provide a consistent narrative on the whole painting. Her strategy is to explore a diverse connection between inner "Elysium" and

²²¹ This book is published in Chinese titled *Huazhi shang de Daojing* 畫紙上的道境, Chengdu: Sichuan renmin chubanshe, 2018

shanshuihua, including inner alchemical iconography, artist's choice of style and construction, the transmission of the painting and so on. Although Xie's compilation of materials and evidence are extremely rich and valuable, her argument lacks focus and thereby not persuasive. The book is also weakened by arguments that seem self-justifying.

Comparing to the tremendous scholar efforts devoted to *Dwelling in the Fuchun Mountains*, Huang Gongwang's other later paintings are understudied. Although they exhibit unusual characteristics, yet they are often interpreted as a "drastic" representation of real-life scenery. The true meaning of these painting is suppressed so that they can fit into a traditional narrative framework. In this chapter I will argue that the four paintings *Nine Peaks after Snow* 九峰雪霽圖, *Sunny After Snow* 快雪時晴圖, *Stony Cliff at Heavenly Pond* 天池石壁圖, and *Nine Pearly Peaks in Green* 九峰珠翠圖 can be read as different stages of inner alchemical transformative process (figure 4.6). To avoid misunderstanding, I am not saying that we should always couple inner alchemy with Huang's *shanshuihua*, nor that every painting from Huang Gongwang has inner alchemical connotation. It is also not my intention to demarcate a fundamental boundary between the inner and outer realm of *shanshuihua*, nor between the presence and absence of the body. As we shall see, Huang's work often blurs the boundary between the inner and the outer, creating a realm that is ontologically united and is essentially one and the same.

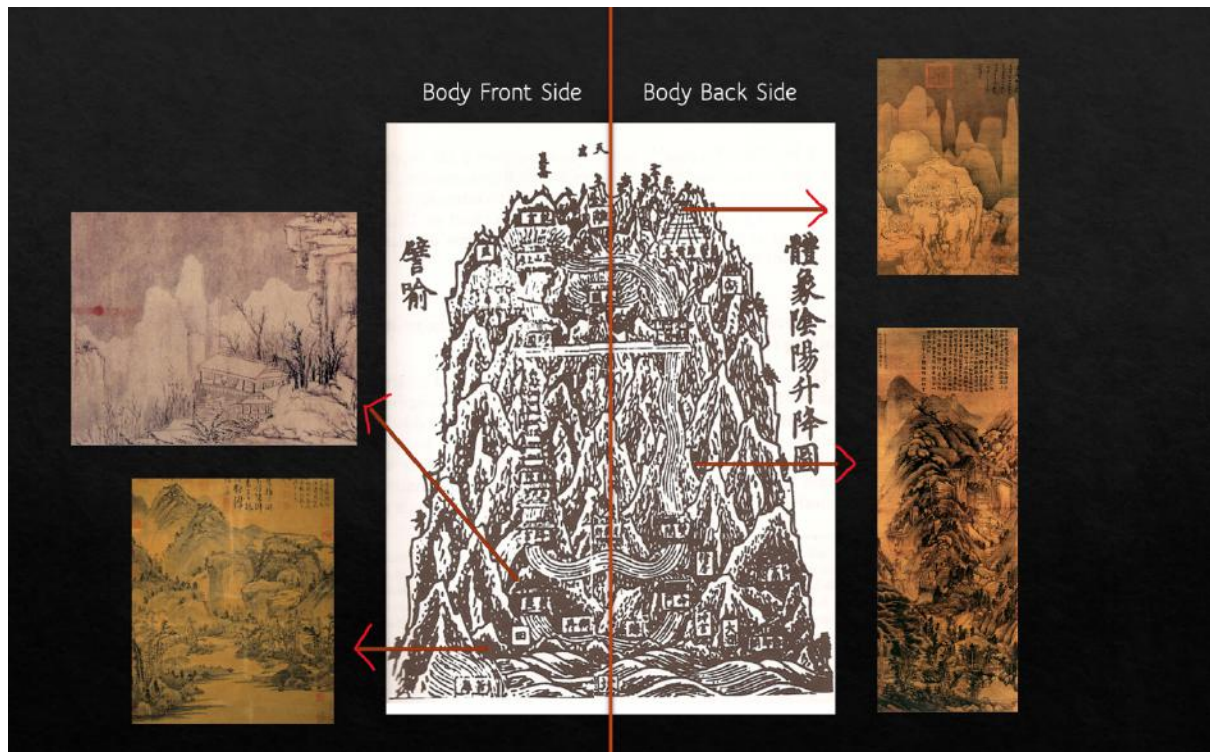


Figure 4.6

Huang Gongwang's works as different stages of inner alchemical transformative process

4.2 [Re]view of *Sunny after Sudden Snow*

Figure 4.7 Huang Gongwang, *Sunny After Snow*

Hand Scroll, ink and colors on paper, 29.7 x 104.6 cm, Palace Museum, Beijing

This handscroll presents a translucent sunny scene after snow (Figure 4.7). In the right foreground, voluminous cliffs loom over the viewer. The towering cliffs are sheer and rocky,

bleak and fierce, yet on the top or side of the cliffs there are platforms with gentle slope. The cliffs are limned with light, half-dry strokes and painted with plain wrinkles. Clusters of trees stand between cliffs, with branches reaching out, echoing one another. The trees are painted with heavy and half-wet ink. The lines are sketchy but vigorous. Several thatched cottages are hidden behind the trees. The highest cottage located on the middle lower ground of the painting seems to be religious space. Within its confined space there are a tripod on the table and a lotus cauldron. No human figures are represented in the image.

In the left middle-ground, similar peaks jut into the sky. They appear to be even more barren and desolate. The lines are sketchier than that of the foreground. In between the mountains are the trees summarily sketched with simple, almost “careless” dots.

A red sun arises above the snowy, almost uninhabited peaks in the far background. The peaks are framed with soft, dilute lines and minimal shading. Their drastic geometric, distinctive shape are continuous with uneven heights. The whiteness of the snow mountains is contrasted to the light-inked sky above. Such presentation of mountain is quite different from the mountains in *Dwelling in the Fuchun Mountains* or *Stony Cliff at Heavenly Pond*. It immerses the viewer inexorably in the snowy realm and propels him/her to admire the tranquility, serenity and sacredness of the otherworldly terrain. The similar kind of presentation appears also in *Nine Peaks After Snow*, but even more drastic and majestic. It is one of Huang Gongwang’s greatest abilities to construct grand mountains with extremely soft lines and at the same time allow these distinctively shaped peaks to have a stable structure. Instead of following the tradition of Fan Kuan who sublimates the mountains with strong shading and multiple strong-inked lines, Huang’s drastic geometrical mountains limned with

pure and sheer lines are more of Li Cheng's style, yet the extent of abstraction achieved in Huang's works is unprecedented and phenomenal, almost in a way "modern", as Cahill puts it: "By means of this relentless subordination of variety, detail, individual characterization in the parts of his picture, Huang Gongwang is able to achieve, within an essential simplicity and clarity of design, a formal complexity that had been unknown in Chinese painting since the Northern Song period."²²²

The red sun arising above the mountains and its glow catch the eyes of observers. It is noticeable that the appearance of a full bright red sun is extremely rare in Chinese literati landscape painting, especially in the Yuan. However, it often appears in inner alchemical visual repertoire signifying the pure yang spirit. The unusual red sun hence becomes the key for scholars to decipher the true meaning of this painting. As mentioned earlier, Susan Huang is ground-breaking by comparing *Sunny after Sudden Snow* with the graphs and illustrations from *Inner Precious Text of Flying High in the Inner Landscape from the Correct Tradition of the Jade Hall* 無上三天玉堂正宗高奔內景玉書. She claims that the painting is of significant inner alchemical connotation. The two elements from the painting – the unusual red sun and the cliff in the shape of a platform – are iconic visual language in inner alchemy. While the red sun represents the spirit of pure yang, the platform could either be Palace of Muddy Pellet located in the head or the practitioner himself. Therefore, the cliff facing the red sun could be compared to an illustration of breathing exercise from the Daoist Canon (Figure 4.8). As mentioned earlier, the contrast between red sun and a snowy scene is also extremely rare in the landscape painting tradition. However, such contrast appears as a constant metaphor in inner

²²² Cahill. 1976, p111

alchemy, referring to the interaction between yin and yang.



Figure 4.8

Illustration from *Wushang santian yutang zhengzong gaoben neijing yushu*²²³



Figure 4.9

Detail from *Sunny After Snow*

Built on Huang's analysis, I would suggest that the cottage located on the middle lower ground of the painting (Figure 4.9) is also of paramount importance. One of the three treatise associated with Huang Gongwang *Secret Instructions on Holding the One and Encasing the Three* offers us some insights into this space. The text mentions a numinous space --*shenshi* 神室 (“the Spirit Room”) as “the pivot of the elixir” within the human body:

The Spirit room is where the elixir comes from, as well as the place it is cultivated.

Classic of Tiger and Dragon says that the Spirit Room is the pivot of the elixir. Human body is filled with viscera, and there is not much space left. Only the Spirit Room is empty. Its size is like a room that could hold people, and an empty utensil that could hold things.

Human beings take the Sea of Marrow(brain) as sky and the Essence Room as earth. Yin *qi* and Yang *qi* rise and descend in between. The Spirit room is located between heaven and earth, with Yellow Court on the top and the Origin of the Barrier underneath.

²²³ DZ 221

神室者，丹之所由，斯而修也。《龍虎經》曰：神室者，丹之樞紐。夫人之一身，臟腑室塞，無些縫罅，惟神室空虛，方寸如室之空能容人，如器之空能容物。

夫人以髓海為天，精房為地，陰陽二炁升降行乎其中矣。其神室在天地之中，上有黃庭，下有關元。²²⁴

A Poem inscribed to a 13th century Daoist body chart, Chart of the Rise and Fall of Yin and Yang (*Ti xiang yin yang shengjiang tu* 體象陰陽升降圖) (figure 4.10) would facilitate our understanding of the Spirit room. It says:

The body contains Heaven and Earth, the Furnace and the Stove. Central Palace is the cauldron. Outside of the body is a great void. The Qian Palace is the Sea of Marrow, the Kun Palace is the Room of Essence, the Spirit Room is the Elixir Cauldron. These are called the Three Palaces.

此身為天地爐竈，中宮為鼎，身外乃太虛。
乾宮髓海，坤宮精房，神室丹鼎，名曰三宮。²²⁵

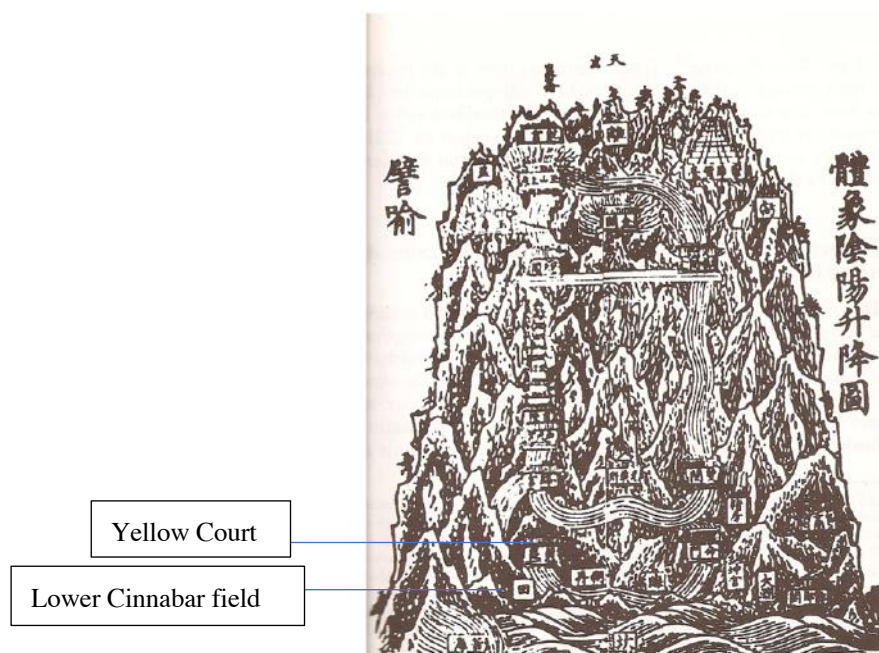


Figure 4.10

Map of Rise and Fall of Yin and Yang in the Human Body

²²⁴ DZ, 576

²²⁵ DZ, 90, 8a-b

tixiang yinyang shengjiangtu 體象陰陽升降圖 (ca 1226)
presented to Emperor Lizong by Xiao Yingsou, DZ 90, 8a-b²²⁶

Zhang Boduan, the patriarch of the Southern lineage of Quanzhen Daoism, also speaks of the Spirit Room in his *Yuqing Jinsi qinghua miwen jinbao neilian danjue* (玉清金笥青華秘文金寶內鍊丹訣, The Rhyme of Internal Alchemy of Green Magnificent Secret Script Golden Treasure of the Jade Green Golden Basket), denoting :

“The Spirit Room is where the Original Spirit resides. People are aware of the creation of the Original Spirit, which is clearly revealed, yet they do not know the Room has no master. Then why is it called a room? [This is because] although there is no master, the embryo of the master is kept in the room.”

神室者，元神所居之室，是也。人知立艱鄂之造化，顯然彰露矣！抑不知有室而無主人，何取其為室哉！然主人雖無，而主人之胎，亦在乎一室之中矣！

--- 张伯端 《玉清金笥青華秘文金寶內鍊丹訣》²²⁷

From the above we could discern several features of the Spirit Room. Firstly, it is a small and empty space within the human body. Secondly, it is located between Yellow Court and the Origin of the Barrier, somewhere in between the terrain of middle Cinnabar field and the lower Cinnabar field. Most importantly, it is where the alchemical reaction takes place – the womb for the metaphorical “embryo”. As mentioned earlier, central to the inner alchemical transformation is the concept of a reversed process returning to the fundamental

²²⁶ This image is rather straightforward in terms of inner alchemical expression. The bottom of the picture is marked as *kan*, the trigram for water; and the top of the mountain is noted as *li*, the trigram for fire. The circular path is clearly denoted, symbolizing the breath circulating in the circuit of two meridians of the body. The names of the main alchemical sites are contained in cartouches.

²²⁷ DZ 240

order of the cosmos – the Dao, through the refinement and circulation of *qi* (vital life force). The practitioners are not only asked to consider the body as the microcosm, but also to turn their body into an alchemical furnace for compounding the elixir, namely the pure yang spirit. The physical body thus becomes a support for the metaphorical body now containing the ingredients, the tripod, the furnace, and even the fire— which in turn opens the gate to transcendent “true” body. The metaphorical compounding is in fact the conjunction of Yin and Yang represented as the conjunction of the Lead (Yin holding True Yang) and Mercury (Yang holding True Yin) in the lower cinnabar field. In other words, the Spirit Room is the virtual reaction vessel for the amalgam of Mercury and Lead, which is emblematic of the true Yang and true Yin. In the final stage of inner alchemical transformation, when the *qi* is replenished, the Lead, the Mercury, and the *shen* (spirit) are all present, and the internal elixir is attained.

These being said, if we put *Sunny After Snow* and a human torso in proportion (figure 4.11), we will find that the temple in the painting is located in a similar position to the lower cinnabar field (the top of the mountain being the head).



Figure 4. 11 Comparison between Sunny After Snow and human torso

As we can see, the cottage is a quite confined space (figure 4.12) – identical to the features of the Spirit Room. In the room, mists arise from the tripod on the altar. This scene echoes the typical iconography of the inner alchemical tripod and a baby (figure 4.13), signifying the birth of the embryo.



Figure 4.12 Detail of the Room.



Figure 4.13 The Child in Internal Alchemy.

*Jinye huandan yinzheng tu*²²⁸

The object standing behind the table seems more intriguing (figure 4.14). It seems like a lotus seat, but a closer examination of the object would tell us something else. It looks like a round tripod or cauldron with lotus on it. The petal of the lotus is quite vivid. It almost seems like a lotus is blossoming from the cauldron.



Figure 4.14 Detail of the lotus cauldron

²²⁸ Longmei zi 龍眉子, *Jinye huandan yinzheng tu* 金液還丹印證圖 [Illustrations of the return of the liquified gold to the cinnabar field], preface of 1218. DZ 151.

Although there is no archaeological evidence explaining what it is, yet the combination of a cauldron and lotus has a specific meaning in inner alchemy resource. Two lines from Lv Dongbin's poem *Dadan zhizhige* 大丹直指歌 (Ode of the Straightforward Directions on the Great Elixir) reads:

The Yellow Mother²²⁹ designed thousands of strategies, [as a result] the golden tripod blossoms into a lotus.

黃婆設盡千般計，金鼎開成一朵蓮。²³⁰

Here the lotus is an emblem for the elixir. “The golden tripod blossoms into a lotus” symbolizes that the human body has successfully cultivated the elixir. Zhang Boduan also writes:

If you do not comprehend that within the Mystery there is an inversion and then again an inversion, how can you know that you can plant the lotus within the fire?

不識玄中顛倒顛，爭知火裏好栽蓮。²³¹

Dong Dening 董德寧 further annotates: “Lotus cannot be planted in the fire; how can men get pregnant? The principle of cultivation is the mystery within the mystery, wonder within the wonder. By reverting yin and yang and inverting the creation and transformation, men are able to breed an embryo and generate the elixir. This is similar to planting the lotus in the fire and getting the seeds.”²³²

²²⁹ Inner alchemy believes that the saliva of the spleen could nourish the other viscera, and the spleen is thereby called the “mother”. Since the spleen is associated with earth and the yellow color and is thus referred to as the yellow mother.

²³⁰ *Quan tang shi*. Volume 859

²³¹ Zhang Boduan, *Wuzhen pian*. DZ263

²³² Dong Dening, *Wuzhen pian zhengyi*, 悟真篇正義

Accordingly, “lotus within the fire” becomes a standard metaphor in inner alchemy.²³³

Lotus naturally grows in water, just as men naturally cannot give birth. By inverting yin (water) with yang (fire), as well as the natural process, inner alchemists are able to grow lotus in fire and men are able to give birth to the immortal embryo. Although we cannot tell whether there is fire in the cauldron in *Sunny after Snow*, yet we can see the lotus blossoming above the cauldron. Therefore, the cottage in *Sunny after Snow* can be read as an area in between the Cinnabar fields, and the interior symbolizes the moment that the elixir is successfully generated.

Therefore, I propose two hypotheses for this painting. In the first case, as Susan Huang denoted, the painting could be read as the practice of *cunsi* 存思 (visualization) (figure 4.15). Huang Gongwang, or a potential inner alchemy practitioner, is in the temple contemplating his/her body as Mount Kunlun “存自身為崑崙” (the peak in the shape of the platform), and then “sees sunlight from the top of Mount Kunlun, the golden light of the dazzling sun shines over me” (從崑崙頂上望見日光，耀日中金光射我²³⁴). In this vein, the central peak becomes the externalized embodiment of an inner alchemical practitioner. Through the practice of visualization, the practitioner actively participates in the external world by reimagining his/her body as part of the wider landscape. For the practitioner himself,

²³³ In the second chapter of *Journey to the West*, the master revealed the secret of immortality to Sun Wukong, saying: “The moon contains a Jade Rabbit, the sun a Golden Crow, The Tortoise and the Snake are always intertwined. Always intertwined, then life and nature are firm, and one can plant golden lotus in fire. Grasp all the Five Elements and turn them upside down, and when you are successful you can become a Buddha, or an Immortal.” (月藏玉兔日藏烏，自有龜蛇相盤結。相盤結，性命堅，卻能火裏種金蓮。攢簇五行顛倒用，功完隨作佛和仙) Aside from all the alchemical metaphors, the master is telling Sun to revert yin and yang to generate the elixir (the lotus).

²³⁴ *Inner Vision of Flying to the Sun with the Dragon on Fire in the Yang Grotto* 無上三天玉堂正宗高奔內景玉書 DZ 221.

such intentional actualization of the consciousness leads to a higher awareness of the Dao and brings about inner purity and mental tranquility. This image hence becomes an illustration, or even a teaching aid, for the practitioners to gain knowledge of this otherwise invisible process. Such materialization could also make us ponder on the agency of the painting, on how it acts upon its surrounding world and produces meaning through encounters across time. This is to say, although it is an object of the past, it could be forever alive through its encounter with the present.

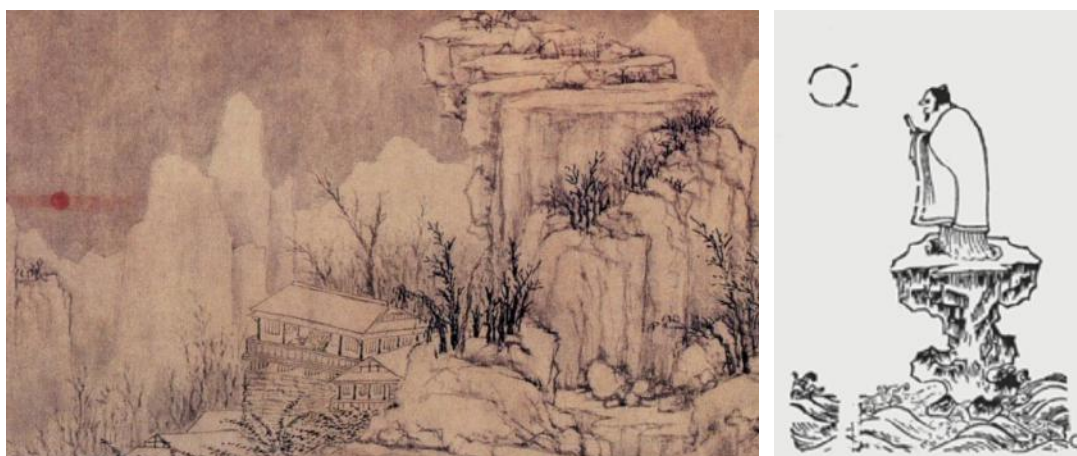


Figure 4.15 *Sunny After Snow* as the practice of *cunsi*

In the second case, the painting is the depiction of the inner landscape. Everything unfolds in front of us – the sun, the snowy peaks, the temple, the trees – is nothing but metaphorical part or process of the body. The central peak could be seen as the head, and the temple would be the Spirit Room located in between the lower and the middle cinnabar field. The redness of the sun symbolizes lead while the whiteness of the snow symbolizes mercury. The descending sun and the towering snow peaks indicate the interaction between Yin and Yang (figure 15). It is the moment of the attainment of the elixir. In this vein, this painting could be understood as the visualization of the first stage of inner alchemical transformation:

the birth of the elixir. The inner alchemical body is depicted as a natural landscape with snowy peaks, watercourses and other features that correspond to specific internal loci or to “flows of energy.” There is no boundary between the external and the internal landscape as they melt into one via the embodiment of the body.

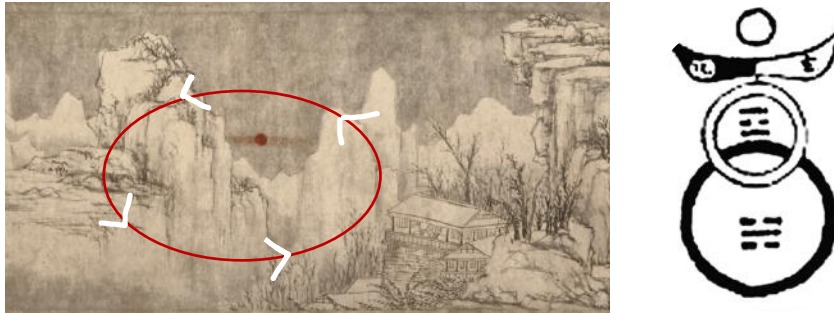


Figure 4.16 Comparison of the cycle of yin and yang between *Sunny After Snow* and *Xuanpin tu*

4.3 [Re]view of *Nine Peaks after Snow*

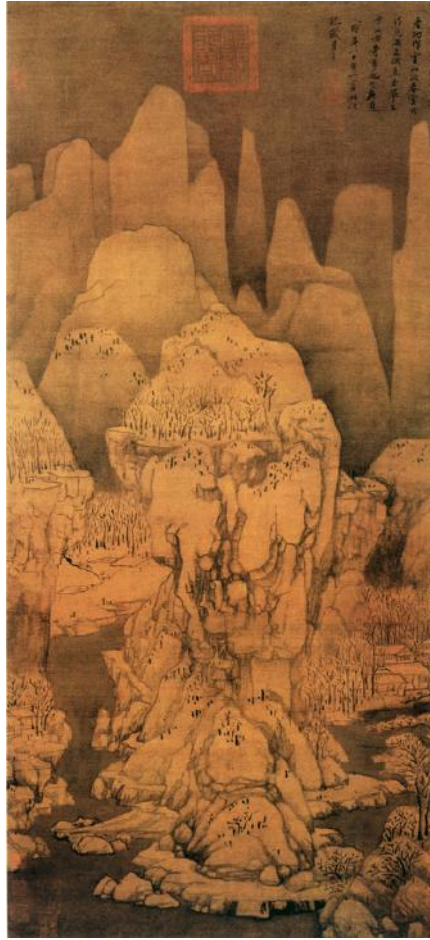


Figure 4.17

Huang Gongwang *Nine Peaks After Snow*
 Hanging scroll, ink on paper, 117 x 55.5 cm,
 Palace Museum, Beijing, 1349

Compared to *Sunny After Snow*, *Nine Peaks After Snow* (Figure 4.17) is a hanging scroll in larger scale. In the lower foreground, the majestic central peak occupies two third of the image. On top of the peak, again we see a gentle sloped platform. A dark river circulates around the peak and disappears into the far mountains. Rocks in various shapes, clusters of withered trees and the houses hidden inside in the close range deepen the diversity of the picture, enriching the layers of the painting. The winding and undulating mountains behind the central peak are connected with the distant mountain. The contours of the stone are drawn with dry brush, the edge of the slope is slightly dyed with ochre. The strokes of the trees and

houses are as sketchy as *Sunny After Sudden Snow*. The trees and branches in the snow mountain are almost randomly dyed or dotted. These strokes are in a way quite “calligraphic”, from which one could see the heritage of Huang’s teacher, Zhao Mengfu. It is noted that the strokes of this image are even simpler and more unified than that of *Sunny After Sudden Snow*, which still exhibits some kind of variety in the presentation of trees. It is as if Huang deliberately cut off the variety of strokes and shading to achieve a profound simplicity.

The lofty nine snowy peaks in the background stand out like pieces of jade. They are the reason that this image was renamed *Nine Peaks After Snow*. Some of the peaks are like a sword piercing the sky and some of them are like solid pillars with a flat top, towering to the sky. The strokes of the contours of the drastic geometric mountains are quite concise. Here Huang again used diluted ink. The body of the snowy peaks are left blank. The inked sky above and river beneath further reinforce the whiteness of the snow mountains, creating a desolate, solemn, and transparent atmospherics. These snowy peaks are ever-present but distant at the same time, almost unreachable for worldly creatures. Again, there is no figure depicted in this image.

On the right corner of this image, Huang Gongwang inscribed: “In the first month of spring in the ninth year of the reign of Emperor Zhizheng, I painted snow mountains for Yangong 彦功²³⁵. The snow was quite heavy in that spring. It snowed for two or three times, and only stopped until I finished this painting. It is miraculous. A Greatly Foolish Daoist (I) was then eighty-one years old. I wrote this to record the time.” This painting was painted in

²³⁵ Ban Weizhi 班惟志, style name Yangong. Calligrapher, Yuan drama composer.

the last few years of Huang's life. From the inscription we could tell that Huang believes that there is a miraculous connection between the snow he painted and the snow in real life. It is as if through his hands, the virtual image became an active agent, capable of acting upon its surrounding world.

This painting has been generally considered as an exceptional translucent snowy scene over the dramatic mountains. Scholars often view this painting as a depiction of the nine mountains in Songjiang, Zhejiang Province, while in fact, the actual mountains are small-scale hills no more than 90 meters in height. Therefore, it would take a lot of strengths for one to argue that the image is a "dramatic presentation" of the nine hills. On the other hand, "nine peaks" would ring a bell for the inner alchemists who are familiar with *Chart of Inner Landscape*, in which the nine peaks on top of the skull are given the caption "Nine-Peak Mountain" 九峰山. The number nine, as the biggest of the single digit, is often considered the largest number and symbolizes the highest power and eternity. In fact, the similarity not only lies in the name but also in the shape. The nine peaks in this painting displays astounding resemblance with the nine peaks of the inner alchemical image *Chart of Inner Landscape* (Figure 4.18).

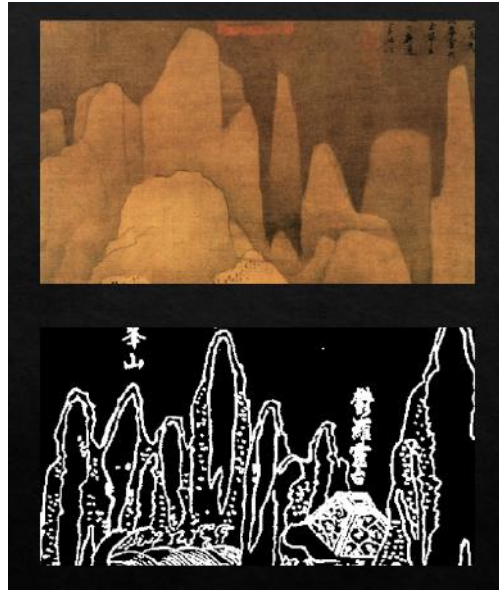


Figure 4.18

Nine Peaks After Snow vs Chart of Inner Landscape

David Wang suggests that in the *Chart of Inner Landscape*, the water at the foot of the mountain maybe identified as the Yellow River, of which Mount Kunlun is also known as the origin.²³⁶ He further comments that “this upper skull region epitomizes the blissful primordial paradise before civilization, for which the nostalgic philosophical Daoists yearned”.²³⁷ (Figure 4.19). This is to say, the Muddy Pellet is not only alchemically important, but also cosmologically significant. According to the inscription on the *Chart for Cultivation of the Truth*: “Heaven has nine palaces and earth has nine provinces. In the human body, the lower cinnabar field comprises nine orifices, which are the image of the nine provinces on earth. The Muddy Pellet Palace (in the head) has nine cavities 穴 corresponding to the nine heavenly palaces.”²³⁸ Therefore, we see multiple layers of connotation of the nine peaks: as the inaccessible natural wonders, the *axis mundi* (cosmic

²³⁶ David The-Yu Wang, “Nei Jing Tu”, A Daoist Diagram of the Internal Circulation of Man, in *The Journal of the Walters Art Gallery*, Vol. 49/50 (1991/1992), p145

²³⁷ David, p146

²³⁸ 天有九宮，地有九州。人之下丹田有九竅，以象地之九州。泥丸有九穴，以按天上九宮。

axis/center), the nine cavities of the human body, as well as the blissful primordial paradise: the nine heavenly palaces. Earth, human, heaven fuse under the single agency of the nine peaks, bringing out a unified image of the macrocosms and microcosmos.

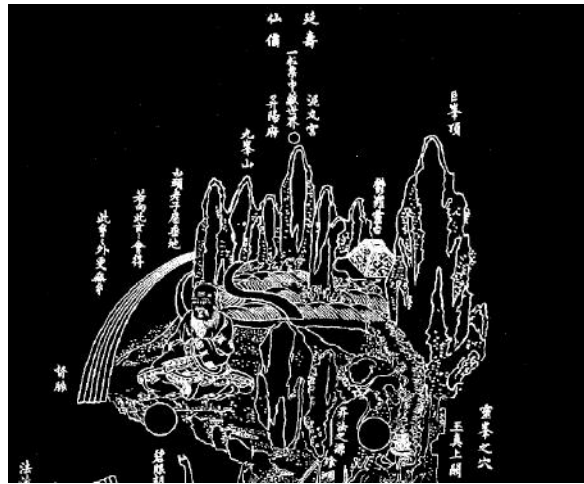


Figure 4.19

The central peak with a platform on the top and slightly narrow in the middle, is quite similar to what we have seen in *Sunny After Sudden Snow* (Figure 4.20). In fact, it is a prominent feature of Huang's painting and appears again in *Visiting Dai on the Shan Stream* (Figure 4.21) and *A Water House in Seclusion* (Figure 4.22).



Figure 4.20
Platform Cliff from
Sunny After Sudden Snow



Figure 4.21
Platform Cliff from
Visiting Dai on the Shan Stream.



Figure 4.22
Platform Cliff from
A Water House in Seclusion

We will find more astounding similarities if we compare the central peak (Figure 4.23) with the iconography of Jade Capoline the Greatest Mountain.



Figure 4.23 Comparison between Jade Capoline the Greatest Mountain with Huang Gongwang's Mountain

Not only do the peaks have identical shape – narrow in the middle, flat on the top, they all rise from the river. Furthermore, there is a triangle on the top of the peak. As discussed in Chapter 2, the icon of Noble and Solemn Terrace of Grand Veil Heaven (*yuluo xiaotai* 鬱羅蕭台) gradually become more and more abstract and sketchy (figure 4.24). The lavishly embellished celestial palace is burned down to a triangle or a ladder-shaped object. We do not know whether Huang Gongwang was inspired by the image of the Noble and Solemn Terrace of Grand Veil Heaven, or the contemplating disciple dwelling on the platform, in either case, the triangle top brings the central peak closer to a transcendental realm.



Figure 4.24. Comparison between Noble and Solemn Terrace with Huang Gongwang's peak top
(*Image of the body of Primordial Qi, Chart of the Inner Landscape*)

Therefore, I would like to venture the opinion that this painting represents the inner alchemical process in the Muddy Pellet. It could represent the stage that after Essence was collected and transported by the River Chariot through the three passes of the spine, it ascends to the Palace of Muddy Pellet. After that, it will descend to the lower Cinnabar Field and will be further refined. It could also represent the last stage: refining the Spirit to transmute it into Emptiness. The Embryo in the lower Cinnabar Field would be moved to the Upper Cinnabar Field, where true yang seats. Embracing the True Yang Spirit, one has opened himself to Gate of Heaven, to the Emptiness of Dao. Considering the desolate, solemn, and transparent atmospherics of the painting, it is most likely that the painting represents the last stage.

4.4 [Re]view of *Stony Cliff at Heavenly Pond*

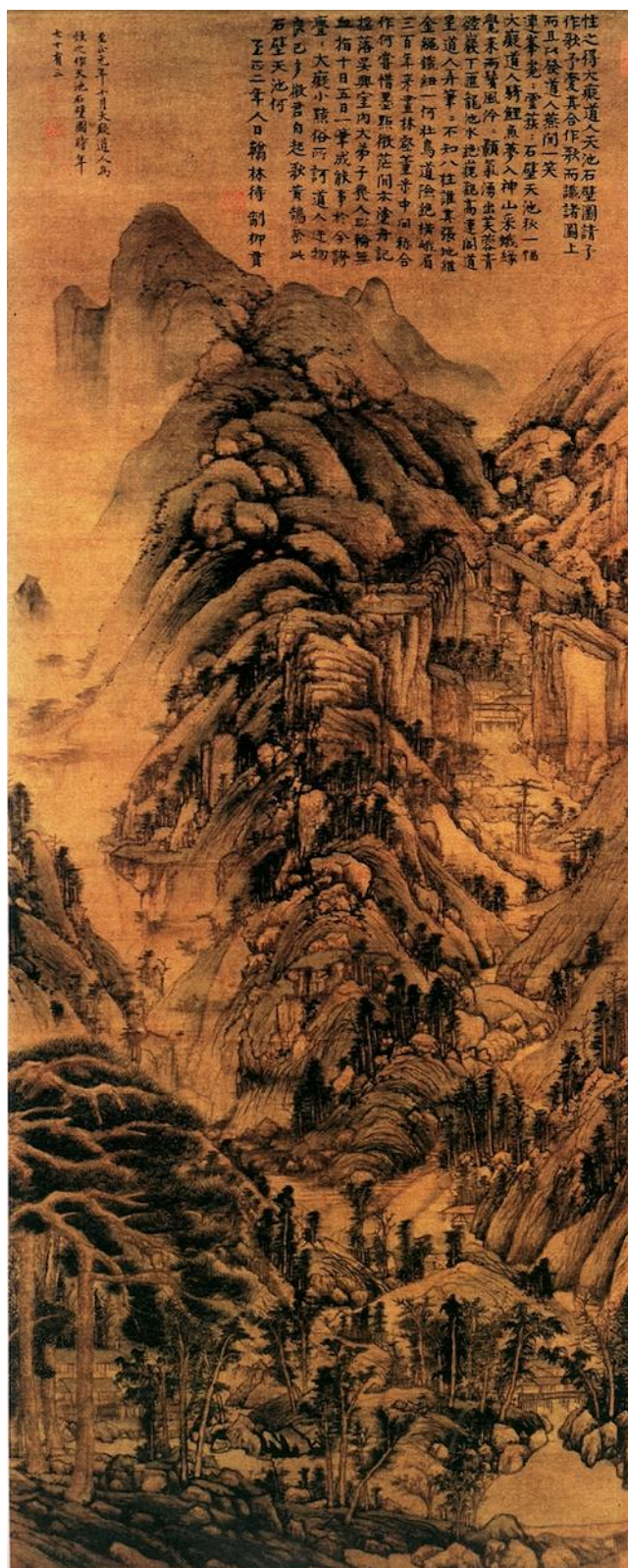


Figure 4.25 Huang Gongwang *Stony Cliff at Heavenly Pond*
Hanging scroll, color on silk, 139.4 x 57.3 cm,
Palace Museum, Beijing, 1341

The title of this hanging scroll (figure 4.25) is taken from Huang Gongwang's inscription on the top left corner: "In the tenth month of the first year of the Zhizheng Reign (1341), I, the Greatly Foolish Daoist, compose *Stony Cliff at Heavenly Pond* for Xingzhi 性之. I was then seventy-three years old." There is no record showing who Xingzhi is, but the stony cliff and heavenly pond are typical views of Mount Tianchi (heavenly pond), located in Wu county, west of the current Suzhou city. Contrary to the towering mountain ridge represented in the hanging scroll, the highest altitude of Mount Tianchi is only 169 meters.

The composition of the hanging scroll mainly adopt the high distance view (*gaoyuan* 高遠) and the deep distance view (*shenyuan* 深遠). On the bottom, small hills are surrounded by wandering stream and luxuriant greens. On the left corner, three giant tall pines loom over the viewer, a typical symbol of longevity. Several thatched huts, built above the water, hide in between the woods. The small hills are drawn in layers, using long hemp-fiber strokes. The soil appears thick and moist, corresponding to what Huang's theory that "painting has its own geomancy".²³⁹ In the bottom near front, the pine needles, the barks, and branches are carefully depicted and colored with light crimson and blackish green.

From middle ground to the top, a majestic stony mountain ridge dominating the center of the image. It goes all the way to the clouds following a slight wave line. The mountain ridge is drawn in sketchier and longer hemp-fiber strokes. The greens embellishing the mountain become more and more abstract from bottom to the top. The way Huang represented this mountain ridge follows what he calls "the true form of the mountain":

²³⁹ Huang Gongwang, *Xieshan shuijue* 寫山水訣. "李成画坡脚，须要数层，取其湿厚。米元章论李光丞后代有几孙昌盛，果出为官者最多，画亦有风水存焉"

“The tops of mountains must bend and droop, twist and interchange; the ridges leading to them must all follow [the same movements]. This is the way of animating them. The mass peaks seem to bow respectfully to one another; the myriad trees follow one another like troops led by a great general, majestically, as if irresistible. To capture this is to depict the true forms of mountains.”²⁴⁰

山頭要折搭轉換，山脈皆順，此活法也。眾峰如相揖遜，萬樹相從，
如大軍領卒，森然有不可犯之色，此寫真山之形也。²⁴¹

Using this method, Huang presented the viewer a majestic mountain ridge that is powerful, animated, dominating, and leading. It soars directly to the sky and its body eventually disappears amidst the clouds. The disposition (*shi* 勢) of the mountain is unyielding and almost unstoppable, guiding the viewer to a journey of ascension. However, in reality, the disposition of Mount Tianchi seems rather gentle (Figure 4.26). It gradually sweeps down to the ground.

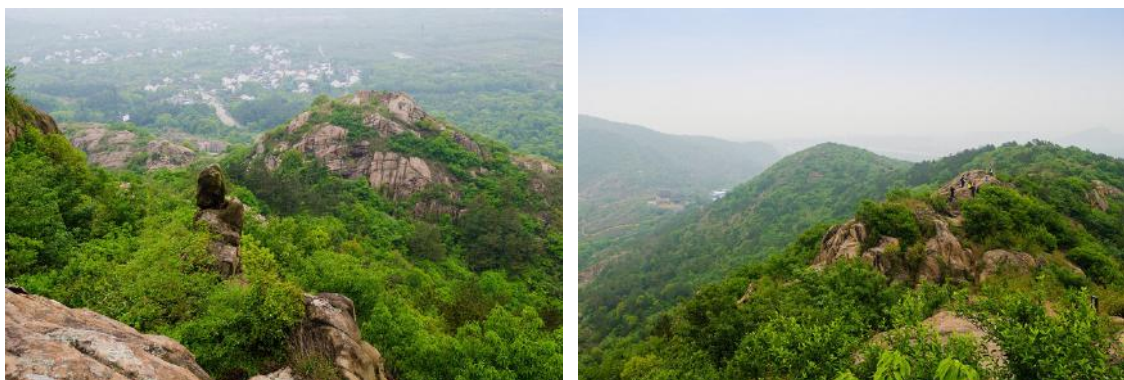


Figure 4.26. Mount Tianchi. Internet Picture²⁴²

In the hanging scroll, halfway up the mountain, we see a familiar element in Huang’s paintings: a platform that is wide on top and narrow at the bottom. On the platform there is a

²⁴⁰ Cahill, 1976, p18

²⁴¹ Huang Gongwang, *Xieshan shuijue*

²⁴² https://bbs.zol.com.cn/dcbbs/d33984_4987.html

pavilion and a three-tier altar (figure 4.27). To the right of the ridge, streams run from the top of the mountain, passing through the buildings and stony cliff, all the way down to village in the bottom right corner (figure 4.28).



Figure 4.2 detail of the altar

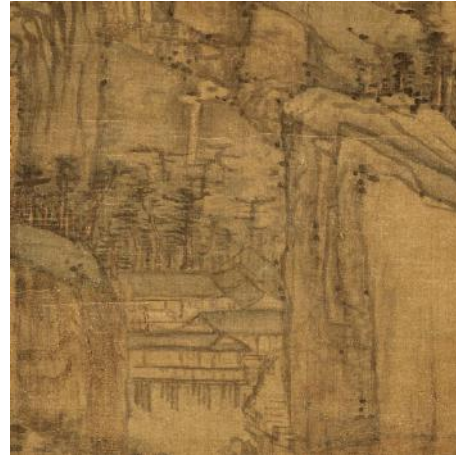


Figure 4.28 detail of the stony cliff

As mentioned earlier, Huang's image exhibit different characters from Mount Tianchi. Although it is possible that Huang recreated the landscape in a drastic way, yet many clues point the image to a different direction. Firstly, the mountain ridge appears similar to the shape of the human spine. In fact, in his alchemical treatises, the transportation of the essence along the spine has been compared to mountain-climbing: "To replenish the Palace of Muddy Pellet with essence, so one can return to Mount Jape Capitoline." It is also intriguing to note that the texture and shape of the stones in Mount Tianchi look identical to the human spine (figure 4. 29-4. 30). We do not know whether that is where Huang got his inspiration from, but again we see an inseparable connection between the outer and inner *shanshui*. This also reaffirm the argument that Huang is not replacing the outer landscape with the inner, but to see these two as essentially one.



Figure 4.29 Mount Tianchi (Internet Picture)

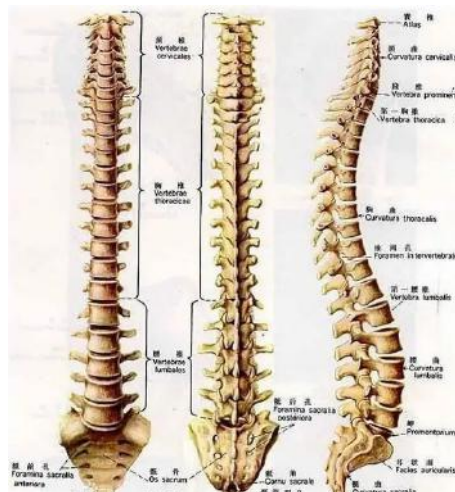


Figure 4.30 Human Spine (Internet Picture)

Furthermore, *Alchemical Instructions of the Old Man Three Peaks, the Master Holding the One* describes the spine as follows: The bone of the Caudal Cavity is like a metal cauldron with nine orifices on it. The interior and exterior are connected. There are three paths along the spine: one in the middle, the other two by the side. The ascending path goes all the way up to the Muddy Pellet, descend to the lower Cinnabar Field, and then again pass the caudal pass. The second path descends from the Muddy Pellet and follow the same road as the first path. In between the Muddy Pellet and the Caudal Cavity is the circulation path of yin and yang. There are three passes in the spine, the Caudal Cavity is called the Lower Pass, [possessing] three vertebrae. The twenty-first vertebrae is called the Middle Pass. From the middle pass, the upper three vertebrae all the way up to the Muddy Pellet is called the Upper Pass. These are the names of the three passes.

尾閭穴骨樣如金鼎，上有九竅，內外相通，脊骨中間，脊骨兩傍，共有三條徑路。衝直至頂門泥丸宮，從泥丸宮降下復至下丹田，下丹田復運過尾閭穴，此是從後上升之路徑。二泥丸宮此是從前下降之路徑，泥丸宮、尾閭穴二處，是陰陽升降之路徑也。人脊骨上下有三關，尾閭穴名曰下關，有三節，從下關第三節數至第十八節處，名曰中

關。又從中關第十八節處，數至玉枕關，及上大椎三節，直至泥丸宮，名曰上關。此是三關之名也。²⁴³

Although in this hanging scroll, there are no clear signs of the three passes, yet the rhythm of the rolling hills – layer by layer – appear similar to the multiple vertebrae in human's vertebral column (figure 4.31). We can even see the shape of the coccyx (figure 4.32). Furthermore, the wavering mountain ridge is quite identical to the path in the *Chart of Inner Landscape*(figure 4.33), rising all the way to Summit of the Great Peak 颶風頂 in the head area. The most obvious inner alchemical hint would be the altar on the platform halfway up the mountain. The altar is either macrocosmically manifest in, or microcosmically encapsulated within, the human body. The altar could be seen as the furnace within the alchemical body or an extension of the human body.



Figure 4.31

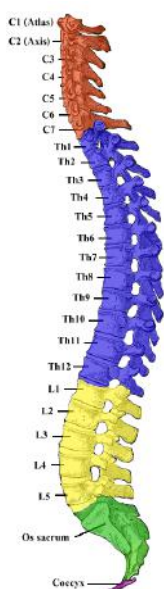
Spine in *Stony Cliff*

Figure 4.32

Spine (Wikipedia picture)

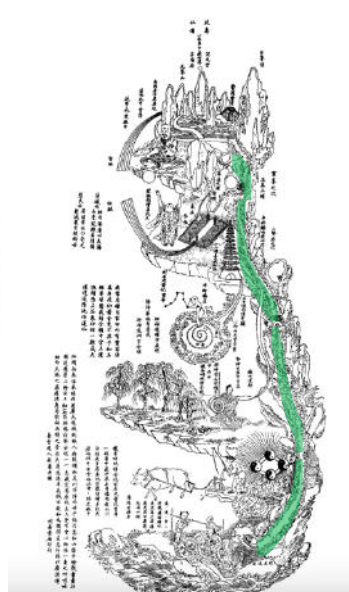


Figure 4.33

Chart of Inner Landscape

It is also notable that the streams run from the top of the mountain to the heavenly pond, and several buildings bridge the water. In inner alchemy, when Essence is transformed to the head, it will produce saliva, a key element to nurture the elixir. The saliva is often referred to as *jinye* 金液 (Golden Fluid), *yulu* 玉露 (Jade Dew) or *tianlu* 天露 (Heavenly Dew). The center of the mouth, where the saliva accumulates, is called the “Jade Pond”, “Dragon Pond” or “Heavenly Pond”. The practitioner should then stick his tongue to the upper jaw, making a bridge for the Essence to across. The bridge will further stimulate the production of saliva, which is then swallowed and transported through the twelve-storied pagoda (the trachea) to the lower Cinnabar Field to nurture the embryo of the elixir (figure 4.34). Back to the painting, we see a similar structure: stream (saliva) running down from the mountain top (head) to the pond (mouth), passing a bridge (bridge-building), all the way down to the lower part (figure 4.35).

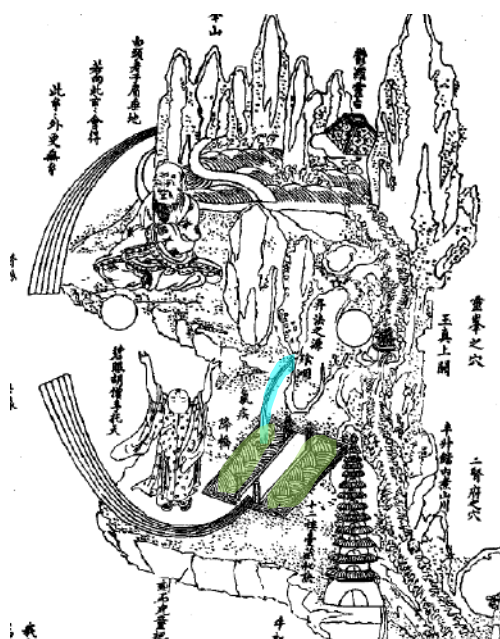


Figure 4.34

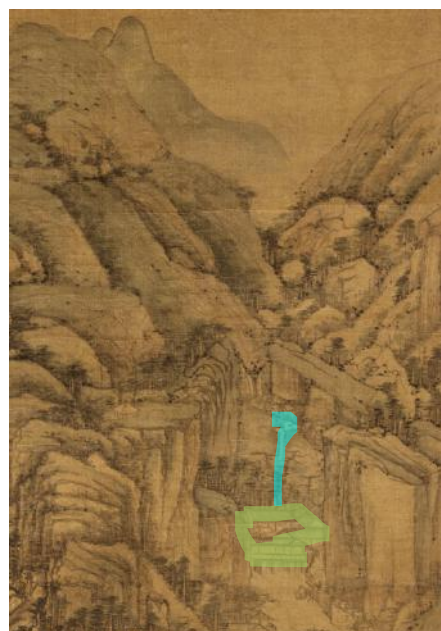
Streams and Pond in *Chart of Inner Landscape*

Figure 4.35

Streams and Pond in *Stony Cliff*

Secondly, the poem inscribed to *Stony Cliff at Heavenly Pond* by the Yuan Royal Academy scholar Liu Guan 柳貫 (1270-1342) is also worth savoring. He explains that Xingzhi invites him to write a verse on this painting, so he composes the poem to make the Daoist laugh. He did not specify who the Daoist is, so there is large possibility that Xingzhi was also a Daoist. The first part of the poem reads:

Tall, rolling peaks surrounded by cumulus clouds.

The stony wall and heavenly pond [compose] an autumn picture

In his dream, the Greatly Foolish Daoist rides a carp and enters a sacred mountain to collect malachite [pigment]

When he wakes up, he feels the chill wind at his temples

The bright *qi* pours out lotus green

The water of the dragon pond converges in the deep and hollow valley

The mountain is so grand that its peak connects with the Star of Gedao

連峯崑崙雲簇簇，石壁天池秋一幅。大癡道人騎鯉魚，夢入神山采蛾綠。
覺來兩鬢風冷冷，顛氣湧出芙蓉青。窟巖下匯龍池水，巍觀高連閣道星。

This part of the poem has an interesting design. The first and last two lines both refer to the same scenery – the peaks, the stony cliff and heavenly pond, yet they are written in a very different way. The first two line offers a depiction that seems natural and objective. But the last two lines transform the ordinary into the miraculous. The rolling peaks are not just tall, they now connect with the stars; the stony cliff and pond become a deep valley and pond of dragon. It is obvious that the transformed image closely resembles Huang's painting. In other words, Huang has transformed his vision into the natural scenery and recreated Mount

Tianchi. Liu Guan attributes this miraculous transformation to Huang's magical dream. In the dream, Huang went into a sacred mountain riding a carp, an iconic image of ascension in Daoist culture. When he woke up, he can still feel the chilly wind. The line "the bright *qi* pours out lotus green" is especially intriguing. *Furong qing* 芙蓉青 (lotus green) is not a common expression in Yuan literary sources, and it is most likely that Liu Guan refers to green lotus, not the color of lotus green. The line then can be understood as a green lotus appear in the bright white autumn sky. A green lotus is an auspicious symbol in Daoism. Wang Changling 王昌齡(698-757) used to write: "Old man Heshang rides an old boat, he only uses green lotus to cultivate the elixir."²⁴⁴ 河上老人坐古槎, 合丹只用青蓮花. It is uncertain whether the green lotus in Liu Guan's poem has inner alchemical meaning, but here suffice it to say that the lotus is a transcendental symbol. Huang's dream of ascension inspires him to see the extraordinary. In between the dream – the experience of ascension, Huang's vision of Mount Tianchi has been transformed and elevated. Therefore, *Stony Cliff and Heavenly Pond* is not a representation of the realistic *shanshui*, but a creation of Huang's transformed vision.

Therefore, I argue that *Stony Cliff and Heavenly Pond* represents the Lesser Celestial Circuit in inner alchemy. In this stage, Essence surges to the Palace of Muddy Pellet through the three passes, pass across the Magpie Bridge, descends through the Function Vessel and finally arrives at the lower Cinnabar Field. By doing that, this circuit connect the Control Vessel and Function Vessel. As this stage is the foundational, this painting should be painted

²⁴⁴ *Quan tang shi*, Volume 143. The whole poem "Ode of the old man Heshang" 河上老人歌 reads: "Old man Heshang rides an old boat/He only uses green lotus to cultivate the elixir/Now he [looks] like forty but was actually eighty/He says the ocean was his home.河上老人坐古槎/合丹只用青蓮花/至今八十如四十口道滄溟是我家".

much earlier than *Sunny After Sudden Snow* or *Nine Peaks after Snow*. Coincidentally or not, the painting was painted eight years earlier than the two.

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter demonstrates that Huang Gongwang's later paintings can be read as different stages of the inner alchemical transformative process (in chronological order). *Stony Cliff at Heavenly Pond* represents the Lesser Celestial Circuit in the foundational stage of inner alchemy. *Sunny After Sudden Snow* could be understood as the visualization of the first stage of inner alchemical transformation: the birth of the elixir. *Nine Peaks after Snow* represents the last stage: refining the Spirit to transmute it into Emptiness. These paintings blur the boundary between the inner and the outer landscape. Nature, human body, and celestial heaven fuse under the single agency of *shanshui*. What seems more significant than identifying the inner alchemical connotation of Huang's painting is recognizing that Huang Gongwang creates a unified image of the macrocosms and microcosmos, representing a realm that is ontologically united and is essentially one and the same.

Other than these three paintings, Huang Gongwang's *Nine Pearly Peaks in Green* 九珠峰翠圖, *A Water House in Seclusion* 水閣清幽圖, *Searching for the Dao on the Cinnabar Cliff* 丹崖玉樹圖 also exhibit inner alchemical characters. For example, the composition of *Nine Pearly Peaks in Green* (figure 4.36) – mountain valley and river – resembles the typical iconography of the lower Cinnabar field; “pearl” is another name for elixir; the signature platform reappeared in this painting; Qian Long's inscription hints the “transportation of the

original *qi*” 運以元氣... We will leave these paintings for a more thorough inspection in the future.

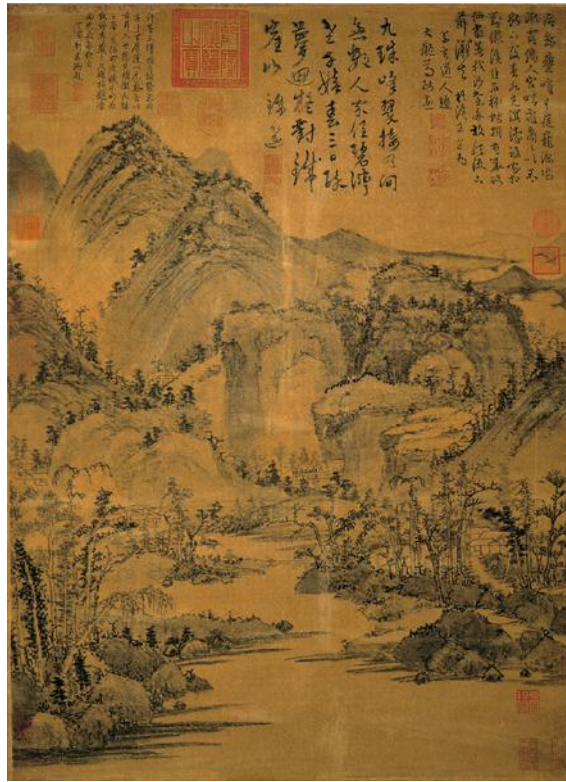


Figure 4.36. 九峰珠翠圖 *Nine Pearly Peaks in Green* 1347
Hanging scroll, ink and colors on paper, 79.6 x 58.5 cm, Palace Museum, Taipei

5

“As One” 如一

In Chapter 4, we have examined how Huang Gongwang transmitted his inner alchemical vision into *shanshuihua* and seamlessly wove the inner landscape of the body into the fabric of the cosmos. This inspires us to think whether Huang is the only Daoist literatus who has ever done so, and whether the combination of inner landscape and *shanshuihua* only exists in the Yuan. Furthermore, have these inner alchemical visual elements become paradigmatic motifs for the following generations? Is there a repertoire for us to access the *zhen* of inner alchemical *shanshuihua*?

In this chapter, we will examine two groups of inner alchemical *shanshuihua*: one representing the alchemical paths and one that embodies the visualized realm. Following the chronological order, we will firstly examine the works of Huang's contemporaries -- Lu Guang's 陸廣 (c. 1300-After 1371) *Spring Dawn at the Cinnabar Platform* 丹臺春曉圖 and Sun Junze's 孫君澤 (fl. 14th CE) untitled *shanshui*, and then move to literati's works in the Qing and Ming, including *The Thatched Hut of Dreaming of an Immortal* 夢仙草堂圖, attributed to Tang Yin 唐寅 (1470–1524) and Kun Can's 髡殘 (1612-1674) *Green Mountains Rising to the Sky* 蒼翠凌天圖 and *Layers of Rock and Piles of Ravine* 層岩疊壑圖. These works will show us how inner alchemical visuality has been passed down from generation to generation and continues to bring meaning to *shanshui*. It is worthy pointing out that these painters do not follow a particular lineage – they may have been influenced by Huang Gongwang, but no records show that they belong to a certain inner group. The

“sporadic” choice of paintings I selected for this chapter further confirms that inner alchemical *shanshuihua* exists as a genre, a tradition that goes beyond the scope of Huang Gongwang, as well as the Yuan literati circle.

5.1 The Inner Alchemical Path

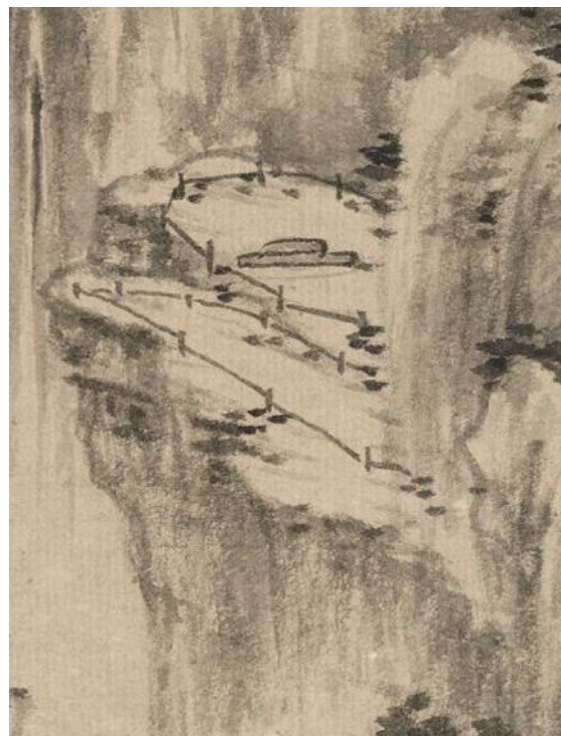


Figure 5.1. Lu Guang 陸廣 (C. 1300-After 1371) *Spring Dawn at the Cinnabar Platform* 丹臺春曉圖. Ming dynasty, c. 1369. Hanging scroll; ink on paper. 61.3cm x 26cm. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (with detail of the terrace)

Lu Guang's 陸廣 *Spring Dawn at the Cinnabar Platform* (Figure 5.1) depicts a Daoist temple and cinnabar platform nestled in a mountain ravine. This small hanging scroll starts from the rocks on the left bottom corner, winding through bridge, houses, temple, all the way to the elixir platform on the towering peaks. The strongly vertical and frontal composition is very similar to the Northern Song monumental *shanshuihua*, such as Fan Kuan's 范寬 (fl.1023-31) *Xishan xinglü* 谿山行旅 (Travelers among Mountains and Streams). Little points out that the “inner principle” resonating in Fan Kuan's painting is a reflection of the “concept of cosmic order that is essentially Daoist in origin”²⁴⁵. In this vein, the majestic mountain can be seen as the cosmic body embodied.

Other than that, the painting exhibits many inner alchemical characteristics. Firstly, its title directly adopts the word *dantai* 丹臺 (Platform of the Elixir/Cinnabar Platform) rather than *tan* 壇 (altar), suggesting a closer relationship with alchemical practice rather than Daoist ritual. The image of an elixir platform, as we analyzed in earlier chapters, is a typical expression of cinnabar field. Secondly, the colophon at the top the painting is written by the artist himself. He dedicated the painting to Daoist Boyu 伯颯 and recorded a poem explaining the background and atmosphere of the painting. The poem reads:

Ten years I stayed in guest houses, cut off from the dust and disorder [of the world]

On the river, returning home, I think of solitude

Jade vapors [*yu qi*] float in the Void, in the spring there is no rain

The elixir's glow emerges from the well, becoming clouds at dawn

²⁴⁵ Stephen Little, “Taoist Art” in *Daoism Handbook*, edited by Livia Kohn. Leiden: Brill, 2000, 722

In the wind, from time to time I lean on a dragon staff

Under the moon, [I hear] the Luan [bird] and sheng [pipes], sounds I haven't heard from a long time

Rejoicing, I face the old immortal, far away from family

Seated in their midst, we examine paintings and discuss literature.²⁴⁶

“十年客邸絕塵紛，江上歸來思不群。玉氣浮空春不雨，丹光出井曉成雲。風前龍杖時堪倚，月下鸞笙久不聞。幸對仙翁遠孫子，坐中觀畫又論文。”

Although little is known about the artist, yet the poem tells us that he has spent ten years away from the chaos of the world, and his friends and family. What did he do? He was with the old immortal. The “ten years”, “dragon staff” and immortal may refer to a story recorded in *Hou hanshu* 後漢書 (*Book of the later Han*) and *Taiping Guangji* 太平廣記 (Extensive records of the Taiping reign). Accordingly, after Han dynasty(202 BC–220 AD) Daoist Fei Changfang 費長房 learned the way from Immortal Sir Pot 壺公, the old immortal gave him a staff to ride back home. Changfang rode the staff and arrived at home in a fleeting moment. He estimated that he had been away from home for ten days, but in reality it had been ten years. He then tossed the staff into Gepo Lake, as instructed by the old immortal, and found that the staff was actually a dragon. After that, Changfang was capable of curing illness and exorcising demons.²⁴⁷ In his poem, Lu Guang may use this anecdote to tell his own transcendental experience – he spent years in isolation and quietude to seek the Dao. Upon his return, he saw jade vapor and elixir's glow in the sky – auspicious symbols of immortality

²⁴⁶ Little, 2000, p365

²⁴⁷ Minford, John, and Joseph S M Lau. *Classical Chinese Literature / Classical Chinese Literature*. New York, Columbia University Press; Hong Kong, 2000. P361-362

and transcendence. It can also be a metaphorical language saying that Lu Guang had made substantial achievements in his cultivation process. It is notable that “elixir from the well” is a typical alchemical phrase. In outer alchemy, alchemists need to use plenty of water to produce the elixir, therefore they need to find a well. After the elixir is produced, the well seems to gain similar numinous power in conferring longevity. This image is adopted into inner alchemy, in which the kidney water becomes the well. It contains *jing* 精(essence), one of the three essential materials to cultivate the elixir. The acclaimed Yuan scholar Wu Cheng 吳澄 (1249 – 1333) writes that “The elixir is made from the well. It is like a beautiful jade with color of the sun. It is made of the utmost yang *qi*. Knowing the name of the elixir, [one] will know the substance of the elixir... The outer is the view and image of the inner.”²⁴⁸ 丹出井中/玉質而日色/蓋至陽之氣所成/知丹之名則知丹之實矣...夫外者內之景象也. The jade vapor and elixir glow in Lu Guang’s poem may indicate the moment the elixir is about to be generated.

It is worthy highlighting that Lu Guang points out that he “examines paintings and discuss literature” with the old immortal. This makes us consider the function of painting in his cultivation process. Interestingly enough, in the same year he painted *Spring Dawn*, he inscribed a *shanshuihua* handscroll attributed to Yan Wengui 燕文貴 (967-1044) . In the poem he writes that “[I] brighten my eyes, as if suddenly I realized the [true] meaning of the painting” 眼明恍識圖中意.²⁴⁹ It seems that for Lu Guang, painting conveys certain meaning for the cultivated eyes, and it plays an important role in his transcendental experience.

²⁴⁸ Wu, Cheng. “Danshuo zeng Chen Jinghe” 丹說贈陳景和 in *Wu Wenzheng Ji*. Volume 6.“吳文正集：卷六 - 中國哲學書電子化計劃.” *Ctext.org*, ctext.org/wiki.pl?if=gb&chapter=232896. Accessed 2 Aug. 2021.

²⁴⁹ *Buddhist Temples amid Autumn Mountains* 秋山蕭寺圖 (Attributed to Yan Wengui), handscroll; ink and pale color on silk, 14th century, The Metropolitan Museum of Art. The inscription is also recorded in Bian Yongyu 卞永譽. *Shigu*

That this hanging scroll is an allegory of inner alchemy is further corroborated by the existence of a similar, less refined painting called *Enjoying Spring at the Cinnabar Platform* (Figure 5.2), also attributed to Lu Guang. Compared to *Spring Dawn at the Cinnabar Platform*, its composition is less balanced, and the strokes are sketchy. It might be an earlier and draft version of *Spring Dawn*. In this painting, Lu Guang once again inscribed a poem addressing inner alchemical concerns. The middle part of the poem reads:

After rain, the spring splashes jade liquor.

On the towering cliff, cool dew condensed at [my] retreat.

Which year will the elixir of Mount Goulou²⁵⁰ be endowed?

Celestial books and numinous talisman will be revealed today.

乳竇雨晴飛玉液/顛崖露冷濃松雲/丹砂勾漏何年受/瑤笈靈符此日開。²⁵¹

Tang shuhua huikao 式古堂書畫彙考 (Studies of calligraphy and painting from the Shigu Tang Studio). Preface dated 1682, juan 44 of painting section. Reprinted in *Zhongguo shuhua quanshu* 中國書畫全書 (Compendium of classical publications on Chi p'tg. & calligr.) Edited by Lu Fusheng 盧輔聖. Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1993–2000, vol. 2, pp. 696–99. The poem reads: The long wind blows over Lake Pengli (another name for Lake Poyang 鄱陽湖, a lake in northern Jiangxi Province) / Mountains surrounded by ethereal clouds rise in the sky/ Tianzhu (sky pillar) Peak faces toward the distant Jade Bamboo Shoot Peak/ [Peaks in the shape of] golden palm and lotus soar in the air/ There has been many painters in the history of Biansong (headquartered in modern Kaifeng, Henan)/ Who could compare to [Yan Wengui] when it comes to reveal the secret of the heaven?/ Lord Yan Wengui is rare in this world/ Dotting, dying, he is good at drawing beautiful things/[I] brighten my eyes, as if suddenly I realized the [true] meaning of the painting/In seclusion, he painted the ten thousand miles [of mountains and waters].長風吹船過彭蠡/縹緲雲巒轟天際/天柱峰回玉筍遙/金掌芙蓉半空起/汴宋先後多畫師/回斡天機誰比擬/燕侯文貴世罕得/點染清妍才擅美/斯圖拂拭雙眼明/幽討直須論萬裏。

²⁵⁰ Mount Goulou is located in the current Guangxi Province. According to *Biography of Ge Hong* in *Jinshu*, Ge Hong would rather be a magistrate in Mount Goulou (a place far away from the political center) to cultivate the elixir. Mount Goulou hence becomes a symbol for sacred mountain that endows elixir.

²⁵¹ The poem reads: The scenery of Jiangnan (“south of the river”, refers to area south of the lower reaches of the Yangtze River, one of the most prosperous regions in China) transcends the worldly existence/ The spirit of the peaks [dominating] the skyline is outstanding/ After rain, the spring splashes jade liquor/ On the towering cliff, cool dew condensed at [my] retreat/Which year will the elixir of Mount Goulou be endowed? / May I ask the crane who peacefully perches upon the pearl tree? / Dwelling in the picturesque mountain, [these secrets] will be revealed to us. 江南風物軼颺塵/天際曾峯意出羣/乳竇雨晴飛玉液/顛崖露冷濃松雲/丹砂勾漏何年受/瑤笈靈符此日開/借問安棲珠樹鶴/山居如畫箇中論。

Prince Hongli 弘曆 also inscribed a poem to this painting, revealing his reluctance towards inner alchemy:

The cottage deep in the mountain is the residence of the immortals

A leaf of small boat is docked at the cave mouth

Why bother to discuss the furnace and fire in terms of *kan* and *li*?

The elixir swells from the vibrant cloudy liquor

山深茅屋即仙家，一葉扁舟洞口拏。何必坎離論爐火，雲漿活活湧丹砂。²⁵²

While Lu Guang is wondering when will the elixir be generated, Hongli is rebutting the practice and arguing that nature is inherently transcendental. Nevertheless, despite the opposite attitudes, both poems seem to suggest that this painting is discussing inner alchemical practice.

²⁵² This poem is also recorded in *Shiqu Baoji* 石渠寶笈 (Collected Treasures of the Stony Moat).

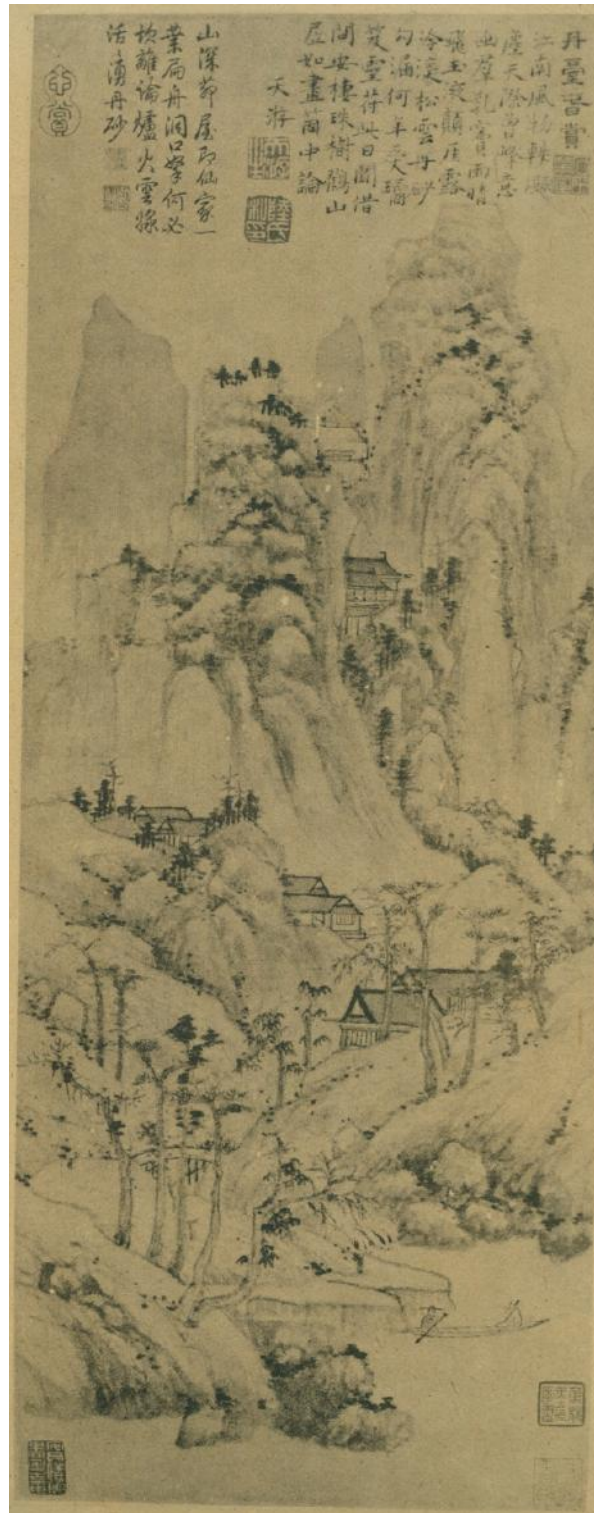


Figure. 5.2 Lu Guang, *Enjoying Spring at the Cinnabar Platform*

Back to the image of *Spring Dawn*, it embodies many inner alchemical visual metaphors. On the bottom left corner, there are seven trees carefully arranged on the river shore (Figure 3). Its arrangement resembles the seven stars of the Northern Dipper.

According to Qin Xiaolei, by the late period of Yuan, the Seven Star Junipers 七星檜 of the Zhidao 致道 (Achieving the Dao) Temple in Changshu have become a popular motif in poetry and painting.²⁵³ The seven ancient trees were perceived as the Norther Dipper, the most powerful constellation in Daoist cosmology. For instance, Wen Zhengming represents the seven junipers through gnarled forms and vigorous brushstrokes (Figure 5.4). The vision of the dragon-like trees give form to the unyielding spirit of nature, while at the same time unifying the rising and falling of yin and yang. In his inscription, he acknowledges that this painting was done after Zhao Mengfu, suggesting a longer tradition of the pattern of the seven junipers. The poem at the end of the scroll further denotes that the seven ancient trees were perceived as Daoist immortals and the seven stars of the Northern Dipper.²⁵⁴ The seven junipers also appear in Ni Zan's *Crane Grove* (Figure 5.5), a contemporary of Lu Guang. Ni Zan's painting was dedicated to Daoist Zhou Xuanchu 周玄初 (1328-?), who was used to be a priest at Zhidao Temple, and was famous for his extraordinary ability to summon the cranes. He once inscribed a poem on Zhou Xuanchu's portrait, praising his virtue and supreme power. The poem describes Zhou as:

His sword reflects the bright moon through jade and pearl trees.

His belt ornaments make tinkling sounds in the numinous wind of the Seven Star Junipers.²⁵⁵

²⁵³ Qin Xiaolei, "Yu yi zuo qiguan – Shen Zhou, Wen Zhengming bi xia de yushan guhui" 與邑作奇觀——沈周、文徵明筆下的虞山古檜 in *Gugong Bowuyuan yuankan*, 故宮博物院院刊 Volume 196. 2018.02. p63-79

²⁵⁴ See "Wen Zhengming, *The Seven Junipers*" in Little, 2020, p374

²⁵⁵ Little, 2020, p362

劍影拂三珠樹之朗月，佩聲鏘七星檜之靈風。²⁵⁶

Therefore, in *Crane Grove*, Ni Zan uses the seven junipers, the elixir platform, and the crane to represent Zhou Xuanchu and his temple. The seven trees in his painting are not ordinary trees, but trees with numinous power: they echo with the seven stars of the Northern Dipper. Although we have no records showing Lu Guang had seen Ni Zan's painting, but it is possible that the seven trees and elixir platform are popular Daoist symbols in the Yuan literati circle.

As the most powerful constellation in Daoist cosmology, the seven stars of the Northern dipper play a key role in inner alchemy (Figure 5.6). According to Zhang Sanfeng: “In the path of the cultivation of the truth, we must know the progression of the Northern Dipper around the North Star in order to reverse the process of transformations, to rotate around the axis of *qian* and *kun*, to clearly understand yin and yang, instead of letting the yin and yang play with us.”²⁵⁷ He further points that the North Star, the seventh star of the Northern Dipper, controls the handle of transformations and evolutions, and is the axis of the cycles of breaths. In inner alchemical practice, the adept needs to adjust their firing process based on the operation of the Northern dipper. Therefore, in alchemical body charts, the Northern Dipper often appears in the center. In the painting, Lu Guang is also stressing the importance of the “seven stars” by arranging the seven trees in the conspicuous foreground.

²⁵⁶ Ni Zan, *Qingbige quanji*, Volume 9.

²⁵⁷ Liu Yiming (1734–1821), *Xiuzhen biannan canzheng* 修真辯難參證 (Examination and resolution of the difficulties in the cultivation of the truth), ed. Min Yide 閔一得, p. 118.



Figure 5.3. Detail of the seven trees



Figure 5.4. Wen Zhengming, *The Seven Junipers*, 1532, handscroll, ink on paper.

The Honolulu Academy of Arts.



Figure 5.5 Ni Zan, *The Crane Grove*. c.1360/74. handscroll, ink on paper.

Beijing National Museum of Fine Arts



Figure 5.6 Visualizing the Norther Dipper

Shangqing jinque dijun wudou sanyi tujue, DZ 576

Furthermore, the location of buildings parallels with the three cinnabar fields (Figure 5.7). As mentioned in Chapter 2, there are two inner alchemical paths. One follows the spine, and the other moves from the lower Cinnabar Field to the Middle Cinnabar Field, and then to the Upper Cinnabar Field. The cinnabar fields can be represented as buildings (palaces, chambers, temples), fields, mountain valley/peak and so on, and they do not need to be represented as the same thing at the same time. In *Spring Dawn*, the houses in the peaceful riverbanks represents the lower Cinnabar field. The surroundings correspond to the iconography of the lower Cinnabar field -- a combination of mountain valley and water. The temples nestled in the mountain ravine symbolize the Middle Cinnabar Field, also known as the Crimson Palace. The elixir platform on the towering peak refers to the Upper Cinnabar Field. As the path ascends, the mountain becomes steeper and more precipitous, signifying the increased difficulty of the inner alchemical process.

To conclude, *Spring Dawn* not only reveals the cosmic body, but also the inner alchemical body. Upon his return, Lu Guang fuses the realistic *shanshui* with his transcendental state of mind, creating a unifying rhythm between the inner and outer. The painting conveys an optimistic atmosphere, which was often taken as Lu Guang's faith towards the establishment of the new Ming dynasty.²⁵⁸ However, based on the inscribed poems, the painting is more likely to express his thrill in his cultivation journey. Just as Fei Changfang attained realization upon his return, Lu Guang was also close to his alchemical

²⁵⁸ For example, Fong believes Lu Guang painted *Spring Dawn* in about 1369 for his Daoist friend Po-yung after he returned to Lake Tai area, and it celebrates the installation of the Ming dynasty. However, the inner alchemical connotation of this painting is not even slightly mentioned. (See Fong, 1992, p472.) Little, on the other hand, raises the possibility that it is likely the title of this painting refers not to the chemical refining of the elixir of immortality, but to inner alchemy, based on inscription. But Little did not provide any concrete analysis on such possibility. (Little, 2000, p365)

goal. It is also notable that we have not seen this ascension path in Huang Gongwang's works, and it is likely to be Lu Guang's original creation. Dong Qichang commented on this painting that "Lu Guang and Dong Youwen are both after Huang Gongwang. This painting shows what Lu Guang is particularly good at." (陸廣陸天遊徐幼文皆師黃子久/此圖尤天遊善者機也。) Apparently, Lu Guang has digested Huang's style well.

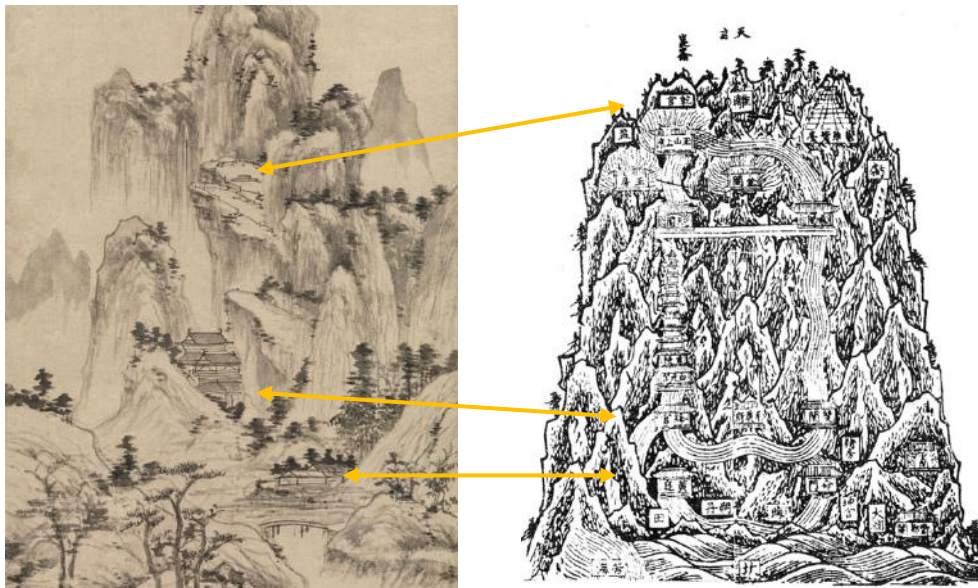


Figure. 5.7 Comparison Between Spring Dawn and *The Map of Rise and Fall of Yin and Yang*

But Huang Gongwang's ascension path did not vanish, and we see it repetitively in Kun Can's 髡殘 (1612 to after 1674) paintings. Although he is known as one of the famous Four Monk Masters in the early Qing dynasty, he is well versed in inner alchemy. As a painter and probably a practitioner, he was greatly influenced by Huang Gongwang and Wang Meng. Huang Gongwang's hanging-bowl platform and ascension path are repeated visual motifs in Kun Can's paintings. His three paintings *Green Mountains Rising to the Sky* 蒼翠凌天圖 (Figure 5.8), *Layers of Rock and Piles of Ravine* 層岩疊壑圖 (Figure 5.9) and

Building Cottage in the Green Mountain 蒼山結茅圖 (Figure 5.10) all exhibit the same composition. These paintings start from the streams on the bottom, rise through the dragon-like mountain ridge, with buildings denoting the passes, reach the mountain on top of the image – mountain in the shape of a hanging bowl, wide at top and narrow at bottom, and then splash down with the stream. It is almost needless to say how such composition recalls the structure of Huang Gongwang's *Stony Cliff at Heavenly Pond*. But Kun Can's paintings are more than copies. He digested the styles of the Yuan masters and assimilated additional inner alchemical visual language into his work. In his winding mountain ridges, we can see buildings whose location and shape match the three passes along the spine. In the right bottom corner of *Layers of Rock and Piles of Ravine*, we can see a practitioner meditating in a hollow grotto, and streams run beneath him in the shape of the *Taiji* graph. It matches the inner alchemical vision of *jinye huandan* 金液还丹 (return of the golden liquor to the cinnabar field). That is to say, when saliva is combined with the liquid of the lung, they form the nourishing golden liquor. When the golden liquor is transported to the lower cinnabar field, it can nourish the embryo of the elixir. The practitioner in the hollow grotto can be an emblem of the embryo. In one of the inscribed poems, Kun Can writes: "I would like to take the elixir, nestle here and grow old" 吾慾餌靈砂，巢居此中老. Furthermore, in these paintings, there is always a literati-scholar contemplating in his rustic cottage nestled among lofty pine trees at the base of the mountain. The dragon-like towering mountain in the background encircles the cottage as if the mountain were the matrix. On the other hand, the mountain seems to be an idiosyncratic vision emerged from the scholar's contemplation.



Figure 5.8

Green Mountains Rising to the Sky



Figure 5.9

Layers of Rock and Piles of Ravine



Figure 5.10

Building Cottage in the Green Mountain

We find more astounding resemblances comparing Kun Can's *Green Mountains Rising to the Sky* to the *Chart of Inner Landscape* that was painted by the Academy of Painting of Fulfilled Wishes (Ruyiguan 如意館) at the Qing Imperial Palace (Figure 5.11). They are not only similar in terms of the ascension path – begin at the base (torso), move up the spine and around the head, but also exhibit the same buildings (alchemical passes), streams (saliva/golden liquor), platform in the middle ground (the Middle Cinnabar Field). In the inscribed poem, Kun Can writes: “Being seated in front of the scenery, I attune my mind to the mystery of nature” 坐來諸境了,心事托天機, further suggesting a secret or mystery embedded in this painting.

It is also notable that Kun Can's paintings (mid-seventeenth century) are dated earlier than the earliest known engraving of *Chart of Inner Landscape* (1886). Daoist Liu Chengyin 劉誠印(d. 1894) who first discovered the chart inscribed: "This diagram has never been transmitted before. The fundamental reason for this is because the Way of the Elixir is vast and subtle, and there are obtuse people who do not have the ability to grasp it. Consequently, it rarely has been transmitted in the world."²⁵⁹ It seems there is a contradiction between "never been transmitted" 向無傳本 and "rarely been transmitted" 罕傳. Liu also did not tell who had hung this chart on the wall when he firstly encountered it.²⁶⁰ Nevertheless, given the Chart's resemblance to Kun Can's paintings, it is hard to regard the similarities a coincidence. If the Chart was indeed a later creation, was it inspired by Kun Can's work, or even Huang Gongwang's work? In Chapter 4, we have discussed the nine peaks in the Chart displays astounding resemblance with the nine peaks in Huang Gongwang's *Nine Peaks After Snow*. Based on these observations, can we infer the art history of *Chart of Inner Landscape*? It is not a work appeared from "nowhere", but an inner alchemical body chart that constantly absorbed and assimilated the visual elements presented by the practitioner-artists, and eventually becomes the grand synthesis of medical body, inner alchemical symbols,

²⁵⁹ Komjathy, Louis. "Mapping the Daoist Body, Part One: The *Neijing tu* in History." *Journal of Daoist Studies*, 1. 2008, p76-77

²⁶⁰ The original text is "予偶于高松山齋中檢觀書畫，此圖適懸壁上". Scholars have debated on the translation of *gaosong shanzhai* 高松山齋. Some take *gaosong shan* as a geographical location (Despeux 1994;2000; Eichman 2000) and possibly refer to Mount Song 嵩山; Liu Xun and Komjathy believe Gao Songshan most likely refers to Gao Rentong 高仁峒(1841-1907), a Daoist priest at White Cloud Temple and a close acquaintance of Liu ChengYin. But Gao Rentong's Daoist name was Shoushan 壽山, not Songshan. Komjathy's conjecture that *shou* and *song* are synonymous in Daoist cultivation context is over stretched. I think *gaosong shanzhai* should be understood as *shanzhai* (a study in the mountain) surrounded by *gaosong* (lofty pine trees). As we have seen from *The Thatched Hut of Dreaming of an Immortal* and Kun Can's several paintings, a scholar in a mountain study surrounded by tall pine trees is a popular motif in *shanshuihua*. More importantly, this scenery echoes with the view presented in the *Chart of Inner Landscape*. It forms an interesting interaction between the macrocosm and microcosm of the human body.

visualized scenery and *shanshui* element. It is also quite possible that, contrary to our preconceived idea, the paintings are in fact the precursors to the alchemical charts.

In this section we examined the alchemical paths represented in *shanshuihua*. These paintings unify the mountain – the cosmic body – with the inner alchemical body, creating a realm that is both “in this world” and “out of the world”. Following the paths of these paintings, we can see how the vital energy is circulated within the human body. In this way, the body becomes translucent for the practitioner. In the next section, we will discuss a different kind of inner alchemical *shanshuihua*, the one that embodies the visualized realm.

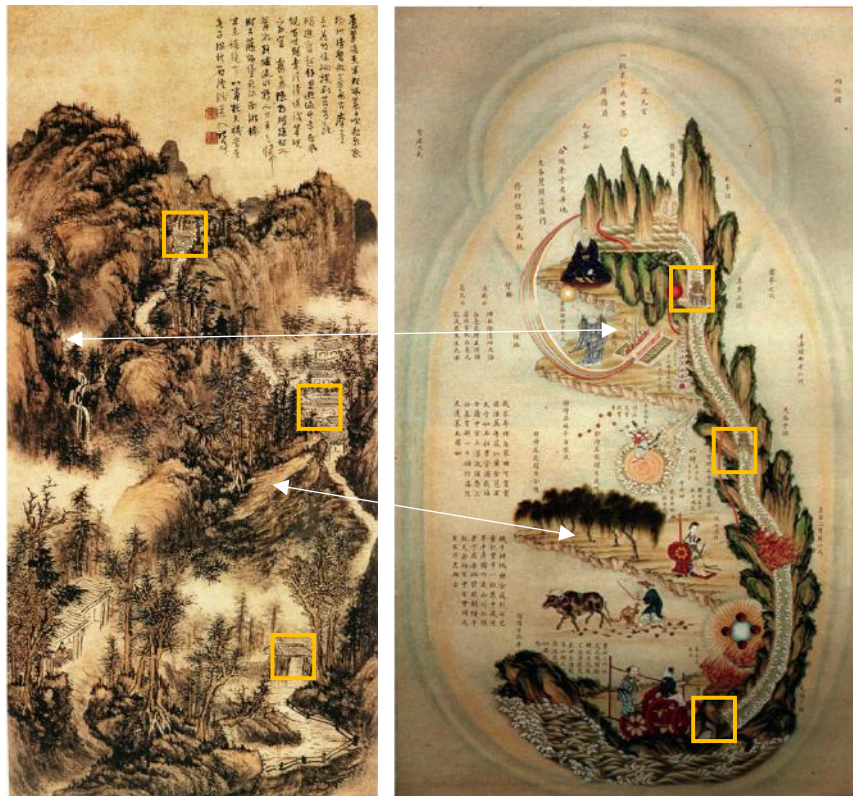


Figure. 5.11 Comparison Between Kun Can's *Green Mountains Rising to the Sky* and the *Chart of Inner Landscape*

5.2 The Visualized Realm



Figure 5.12. Title Unknown, Sun Junze 孫君澤 (fl. 14th century),
Color on Silk, hand scroll, 126.4 x 77.1cm

The composition of the Sun Junze's²⁶¹ untitled *shanshui* (Figure 5.12) recalls the signature “one-corner” structure of the Southern Song school painters Ma Yuan 馬遠 (1160-1225) and Xia Gui 夏圭 (fl.1180-1230). The painting is artfully squeezed into two corners, divided by the misty clouds. On the right corner, two men are bowing on the platform of the mountain. The main body of the mountain disappears in the clouds. Two majestic evergreen pine trees – classical symbol of longevity and immortality -- closely intertwine, stretching their branches to the sky. The root of the pine tree holds to the ground like the claw of the dragon. The dark and strong stones beneath the pine trees, drawn in ax-cut texture strokes – also in Ma Yuan's manner, hold the weight of the right corner. A Daoist adept dressed in white robe -- is bowing to the sun, and the younger boy behind him is paying respect to the

²⁶¹ The birth and death years of Sun Junze are unknown. He was born in Hangzhou, Zhejiang Province.

sun as well. A smaller pine tree echoes the majestic pine tree on the right, while at the same time points to the mountains on the other side. On the left corner, two towering peaks appear above the thick clouds. They are once again depicted in ax-cut texture strokes but in a sketchy way. A red sun shines above the mountains and radiates glorious lights over the clouds.

The red sun would now immediately ring a bell for us, as the emblem of the Yang spirit. This is especially true considering the gestures of the two figures bowing and paying respect to the sun, a typical meditative and visualization method in Daoist practice. The *Inner Vision of Bright Sunlight Radiating the Perfected* 明陽耀光赫真內景 from *Inner Vision of Flying to the Sun with the Dragon on Fire in the Yang Grotto* 無上三天玉堂正宗高奔內景玉書 reports such practice:

The master says: on the first day of every month, the adept [should] fast and sit in quietude. Snap the teeth thirty-six times. Visualize the body as Mount Kunlun, and see sunlight radiate from the peak. The golden light of the sun shines over me [the adept].

師曰學士於每月一日清齋靜坐/叩齒三十六通/存自己身從崑崙
頂上望見日光晃耀/日中金光射我²⁶²

Such practice is allegedly used to help the adepts practicing the elevation of yang *qi* within the body. Once the yang *qi* is elevated, the practitioner would supposedly experience the brightness and peace of the celestial world. After all, the goal of inner alchemy is to generate a refined pure yang spirit, leaving the heavy and turbid yin soul behind. The red sun, as the most extreme yang force, thus becomes a powerful object radiating positive and bright

²⁶² DZ 221

energy. The illustration accompanying this text provides a visualization of such inner landscape: a man stands on the platform of the mountain, bowing to the direction of sun. The composition and content of the illustration looks like a sketchy draft of Sun Junze's painting (Figure 5.13).

Back to Sun's painting, on the surface, it can be read as two practitioners bowing to the sun. However, it almost seems that the misty and dense clouds have deliberately divided the painting into two worlds: one is beneath the clouds and mundane, the other one is above the clouds and transcendental. Therefore, on a deeper level, the man in the painting is not only "observing" the remote sun over the peaks, but actively visualizing or actualizing his body as the peak and his yang spirit as the sun rising above his head. He is seeing what is visualized inside his body. In this way, the red sun shining over the towering peaks can be seen as a "double image": it refers to the actual scenery and by extension, the visualized inner landscape emanating from the man's mind. The actual sun might have triggered the man to practice visualization: by ingesting the energy of the sun, the man is able to elevate his inner "sun", the yang energy. As a result, the adept has achieved translucency: the boundaries between the lived body and its lived environment have dissolved, and he is able to see the body in its utter most translucency.



Figure. 5.13 Comparison between Sun's painting and the visualization practice

Similar to the composition of Sun Junze's work is *The Thatched Hut of Dreaming of an Immortal* (Figure 5.14) attributed to Tang Yin.²⁶³ This painting is sometimes referred to as the *Image of the Great Return* 大還圖. In the right bottom corner of the painting, again we see two majestic pines trees leaning to opposite directions. The dark and heavy mountain rocks depicted in ax-cut texture strokes provides the painting a solid foreground. Beneath the overhanging pine tree is a thatched hut. A scholar, wearing blue hat and white robe, is sleeping at his desk, cradling his head in his arms. At left, distant, and hazy mountains replace the solid landforms. An immortal in white robe is hovering in the sky and looking back to the sleeping scholar. The faraway mountain is colored in pale blue pigment, suggesting its transcendental quality. In this painting, the close and distant mountains, the sleeping scholar, and the immortal all echo with each other over a distance.

²⁶³ The authorship of this painting is still in debate. Scholars like James Cahill, Jiang Zhaoshen, Fu Shen and Lin Xiao tend to agree that the real author is not Tang Yin, and the order of the inscriptions was re-organized to conceal the identity of the real author. (See Fu Shen and Lin Xiao, "Fulier meishu guancang 'Mengxian caotang tu juan' zuozhe xinbian" 佛利爾美術館藏《夢仙草堂圖卷》作者新辨 in *Gugong wenwu yuekan* 故宮文物月刊, 2017.10;) Given these arguments, I will leave the identity of Tang Yin out of the analysis.



Figure 5.14. *The Thatched Hut of Dreaming of an Immortal* 夢仙草堂圖 Tang Yin (1470–1524), China, Ming dynasty, early 16th century, Handscroll; ink and color on paper, Purchase -- Charles Lang Freer Endowment, Freer Gallery of Art F1939.60

The colophon notes that the painting is dedicated to Sir Dongyuan 東原, mostly like to be Wang Dongyuan 汪東原 who follows Daoist practice of longevity. The colophon of the painting reads:

Leisurely at his hidden desk, pillowed on books he dozes 閒來隱几枕書眠

In his dream he enters that other world inside a pot 夢入壺中別有天

Seeming to take the appearance of [Sir] Unseen Unheard 彷彿希夷親面目

He can impart the true procedure of the Great Return 大還真訣得親傳

The poem tells the story of the painting. Wang Dongyuan enters a celestial realm when he is dozing in his hut. The immortal looks like Sir Xiyi (Unseen Unheard), who imparts the secret of Great Return to him. Sir Xiyi refers to Chen Tuan 陳搏, a Daoist sage, known as the “sleeping immortal”. He is credited with using sleeping as a method in inner alchemy practice and thereby referred to as Ancestral Teacher Xiyi 希夷祖師. After the prophetic

dream, Wang Dongyuan named his hut “The Thatched Hut of Dreaming of an Immortal”.

Therefore, the name of the painting can both refer to the hut and the dream.

However, the painting seems much more than the hut and the dream. “The Great Return” is the key concept in inner alchemy, denoting a person achieving immortality by returning to his cosmological root. It also denotes the last stage of inner alchemy: transmute the Spirit to emptiness. Further evidence that this painting is a metaphor of inner alchemy is provided by other inscriptions to this painting. The first inscription provides more background knowledge of this painting (Figure 5.15). It reads:

I heard you sir admire the immortals when you were young,

You often dream about the celestial beings.

It is not a coincidence that the three flowers unite above the head,

It is even more difficult to transmit the orifice of the [Mysterious] Pass

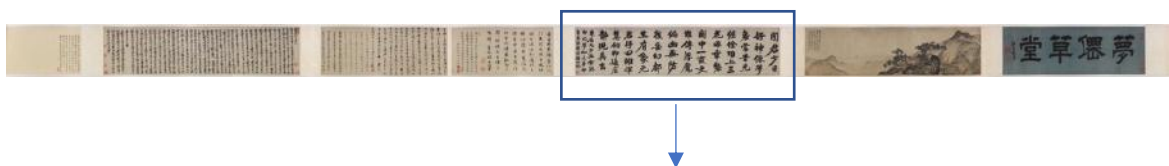
The drifting demons only appear after [one] is not guarded,

The delusional and illusional all born before an image.

If one gets to look back and wield the sword of wisdom,

One can realize the real/true mystery in the void and quietude.

聞君少日好神仙，夢裡常時見嵬仝，頂上三花非幸聚，關中一竅更難傳，浮魔偏出無防後，妄幻都生有象先，若得回頭揮慧劍，即通虛靜得真玄。



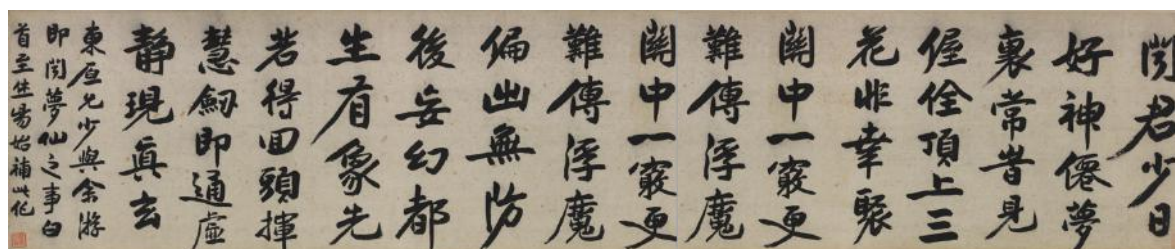


Figure. 5.15

The first two lines repeat Dong Yuan's admiration for immortals. However, the rest of the poem turns away from the dream and starts to discuss inner alchemical practice. The "three flowers" refer to Essence (the jade flower), Breath (the gold flower) and Spirit (the nine/yang flower), the three essential ingredients of the elixir. Yuan Daoist Xiao Tingzhi 蕭庭芝 answers a series questions about inner alchemical terms in *Jindan dacheng ji* 金丹大成集 (Collected works on the great accomplishment of the elixir). When asked about three flowers gathering above the head, he responds:

"Spirit, Breath and Essence compound and become one. The One Orifice of the Mysterious Pass is the cavity of Spirit, Breath, and Essence."

"问三花聚顶。答曰：神气精混而为一也。玄关一窍，乃神气精之穴也。"²⁶⁴

He further comments on the location of the one orifice of the mysterious pass:

"[The one orifice of the mysterious pass locates in] the head of human being. The skill is easy, but it is hard to put one's hand to find it. If one cannot meet the true master to touch his head and teach him, all become delusional."

²⁶⁴ In *Xiu zhen shi shu* 修真十書 (Ten Books of Cultivation the Truth), DZ 263

“問：玄關一竅正在何處？答曰：在人之首。功夫容易，下手的難尋。若不遇真師摩頂授記，皆妄為矣。”

From the above we can see that the third and fourth line of the poem also refer to the last alchemical stage when Spirit, Essence and Breath are coagulated into one and gather above the head, ready to return to emptiness. As mentioned in Chapter 3, in this stage, the transformation of the adept undergoes a “renaissance” where a miniature replica of his being in the form of light called *yangshen* 陽神 (Yang spirit) is formed via the top of the head. In the painting, the scholar and the immortal appear identical: they both wear same blue hat and same white robe (Figure 5.16). Therefore, the immortal is more than an immortal – he is most likely the perfected *yangshen* of the scholar.



Figure 5.16 Detail of the scholar and immortal

In this vein, Tang Yin’s scroll can be compared to the iconic alchemical illustration in *Shangqing taixuan jiuyang tu* (Figure 5.17). In this illustration, the miniature replica floating on a cloud emanates from the adept’s head. *Yangshen*, being the body of the void and

emptiness, is no longer limited by the physical body and even the alchemical body. The transformed being is now able to travel freely between heaven and earth. In Tang Yin's painting, the immortal flies over the clouds with ease (Figure 5.18).



Figure 5.17
Shangqing taixuan jiuyang tu (DZ 154),
 5a-b. Late twelfth century.



Figure. 5.18 Detail

It is also worth highlighting that the second part of the poem warns the adept that in the last stage of inner alchemical practice when *yangshen* is about to come out of one's body, there can be evil spirits and phantoms getting in the way. One needs to “look back and wield the sword of wisdom” to sweep away the delusions and illusions. This instruction echoes with the immortal's posture in the painting. He looks back at his human body with a hint of seriousness and melancholy, as if he were “checking” and saying goodbye.

Other inscriptions such as Xu Bingci's 徐丙次²⁶⁵ poem also suggests inner alchemical connotation. It writes “The great elixir of the ninefold revolution inherits the greatest happiness/Five thousand [words] of the *Daode jing* record the true teaching” 九轉靈丹承至

²⁶⁵ Birth and death date unknown.

樂，五千道德契真傳。We cannot dive into all the inscriptions here. Nevertheless, Seng Zishan's 僧子山²⁶⁶ comment captures the quintessence of these poems and verses. He says that “only if one uses the eyes of the Dao, one can see [the painting] through” 但以道眼勘破可也。This comment brings out an interesting dimension of inner alchemical *shanshuihua*: it can pass as an exquisite painting with high aesthetic value, but it has a deeper meaning that only the cultivated knows. In this way, the secret of the painting is safe within the groups of the insiders.

5.3 Conclusion

Now that we have examined the two groups of inner alchemical *shanshuihua*, ranging from Yuan dynasty to the Qing, we can see the creation and expansion of the inner alchemical visual repertoire. Inner alchemical *shanshuihua* did not vanish after Huang Gongwang, but it has been passed down from generation to generation and continue to shape the meaning to *shanshuihua*.

Doubtless, it can be extremely hard to decipher the hidden alchemical meaning of these paintings. Nevertheless, we could summarize some commonalities of the inner alchemical *shanshuihua*. Firstly, the painter is often a Daoist, or someone who is well-versed in Daoism. He is either familiar with inner alchemical visuality or a practitioner himself. Secondly, the colophon is informed by inner alchemy knowledge or metaphors, even though in a subtle and allusive way. Thirdly, the painting uses visual motifs that are characteristic in inner alchemy

²⁶⁶ No record found about Zeng Zishan.

such as Mount Kunlun, platform, altar/cinnabar platform, tripod/furnace – the ones we have summarized in Chapter 3.

Although these paintings pose an uncommon challenge to the audience, yet it conveys the *zhen* (real/truth) that has gradually lost in our modern eyes. In the final conclusion, we will reflect the “truth” of Daoist visuality.

6.

Concluding Remark

Zhen points us to a higher realm of existence, the ultimate reality of Dao. But meanwhile, this transcended reality, beyond our mundane reality or the semantic notion of truth, is also the source and unity underlying all levels of existence. *Shanshui* in such context sets a paradigm model of *zhen* for the human beings, as something unspoiled and uncarved. It is the manifestation of the Dao, the effective and redemptive mediation that connects man to the Dao. *Shanshuihua*, in this vein, provides access to the truth and reality of Dao as a proper vehicle. It is an organic whole that one could immerse himself in, an aggregation of the interactive animation of the components of the world. *Shanshui* is not the “other” but the manifestation of the absolute which encompasses human beings as well as the nature. As François Jullien eloquently puts it, *shanshuihua* thrusts our being back to its legitimate inductions, reestablishes its primordial connections and replenish vitality by immersing our being in these countless and constantly renewed circuits of energy.²⁶⁷

But the significance of inner alchemical *shanshuihua* is more than ontological. It shows us a vision that transcends the actualities of everyday life. However, it is not an image depicting the pure joy and magnificence of the paradise -- the realm *out* of this world. It is a picture *in* this world. None of the painters we have discussed in this dissertation has denied realistic *shanshui*, but see the *shanshui*, human and the cosmos essentially as one. The transcendence and even sacredness of inner alchemical *shanshuihua* come from the unity of

²⁶⁷ Jullien, François, *The Great Image has no form, On the Nonobject through Painting*, trans. by Jane Maria Todd, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009, p143

humanity and nature. Nature and humanity fuse under the single agency of the *shanshui*, creating a unified image of the macrocosms and microcosmos. *Shanshui*, as the living body of the universe, carries the will of the Dao. Meanwhile, mountains and streams are tucked into the human body, and the body is **ever-present** through the agency of the *shanshui*. In these paintings, we can see how the flow of energy (*qi*) is activated through the momentum of force (*shi*, 勢) of *shanshui*, and how the yin and yang energy are constantly in flux through the coalescence of the amorphous *qi*. Inner alchemical *shanshuihua* breaks down the constant confrontation and opposition between the “I” and the cosmos and reactivate one’s primordial dependency on nature. The “outer” and “inner” realm hence become inseparable. As we argued earlier, what seems more significant than identifying the inner alchemical connotation of these *shanshuihua* is recognizing that it is a unified image of the macrocosms and microcosmos, a realm that is ontologically united and is essentially one and the same. In this vein, inner alchemical *shanshuihua* is essentially a manifestation of *zhen*.

The meaning and function of inner alchemical *shanshuihua* is probably best illustrated by Daoist Liu Chengyin’s 劉誠印 colophon to the *Chart of the Inner Landscape*. He miraculously encountered the chart when he was examining paintings and calligraphies in a mountain study surrounded by pine trees. At first, he thought it was simply a *shanshuihua*. But after he observed the Chart for a long time, he said: “I began to realize that exhalation and inhalation (*huxi* 呼吸) as well as expelling and ingesting (*tuna* 吐納) of the human body are the waxing and waning as well as the ebb and flow of the cosmos. If you can divine and

gain insight into this, you will have progressed more than halfway on your inquiry into the great Way of the Golden Elixir.”²⁶⁸

Through his Daoist gaze, Liu syncretized his exhalation and inhalation with the dynamism of the cosmos. The world as lived and the world as “the ultimate real” fuse under the agency of *shanshui* and become the same world. Meanwhile, Liu’s experience brings out a significant function of inner alchemical *shanshuihua*: it could potentially have the same function as a typical Daoist bodily graph, and work as a record of knowledge, a mode of transmission, a mnemonic device a visual translation of a text, and even a teaching aid. As inner alchemical transformation is a long and difficult process, and there can be dangerous illusions and delusions, these inner alchemical *shanshuihua* are extremely valuable for the confused practitioners. This is especially true considering these paintings are often dedicated to a certain Daoist. The potential of inner alchemical *shanshuihua* as functional chart will also add to our reflection of the conventional binary between *tu* (graph) and *hua* (painting).

The underlying notion of human existence in harmony with nature is at the core of *shanshuihua*. Nevertheless, human figures are usually quite small in *shanshuihua*. It seems that the all-powerful forces of nature manifested by the grandeur of the monumental mountains do nothing but to humble the existence of human beings. But in inner alchemical *shanshuihua*, human existence is immense. His head is the towering peak, his saliva the splashing stream, and his spine the dragon-like ridge. Heaven and earth are within reach. When the boundary between body and cosmos is dissolved, the human is no longer limited by its physicality. It reminds us of the consummate exemplar “*zhenren*” in *Zhuangzi*, who

²⁶⁸ Louis Komjathy, “Mapping the Daoist Body, Part One: The *Neijing tu* in History.” *Journal of Daoist Studies*, 2. 2008, p77

models the pattern of the heaven and earth, remains in harmony with the undifferentiated unity and knows no artificial limits, all because he could preserve his true nature. In inner alchemical *shanshuihua*, human beings are not humbled or intimidated by the monumental mountains, and *shanshui* is no longer irrelevant of human presence. The human body is the mountain, and the mountain is the human body. The constant confrontation and opposition between the “I” and the cosmos have been demolished, and we see a realm of unity (between humanity and nature), of translucence, and of freedom.

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