

ELSLEY ZEITLYN LECTURE
ON CHINESE ARCHAEOLOGY AND CULTURE

The Origins of Chinese Mountain Painting: Evidence from Archaeology

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Introduction

MOUNTAINOUS LANDSCAPES, with massive crags and narrow fissures between rocks, through which water spouts, are among the principal subjects of paintings in China (Fig. 1).¹ This paper addresses the question, why, in the first place, were these subjects chosen? I shall be concerned, in the main, with developments made during the Qin (221–207 BC) and Han dynasties (206 BC–AD 220), from the third century BC onwards. But the paper will also explore the ways in which the conditions prevailing in the Qin and Han periods moulded some aspects of the later Chinese practice.² Mountain painting was and is a rich tradition in

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¹ I am grateful for comments from Craig Clunas, Robert Harrist, Lothar Ledderose, and Julia Murray. I have also benefited from discussions with Michael Puett and Maggie Bickford.

² In this paper, I treat those areas of the landmass that we today call China that at the periods described employed written Chinese and thus signified some commitment to an identifiable cultural complex. Obviously there was a wide variety of use of the notions of the cosmos and of landscape over the time period described. While I here employ the general term mountain painting to describe a major category of Chinese painting, this should not obscure the fact that over time, this category was put to a very wide variety of objectives. Good examples of the deployment of landscape painting in contexts that one would describe as social or even political are discussed in Celia Carrington Reily, 'Tung Ch'i-ch'ang's Life', in Wai-kam Ho and Judith G. Smith (eds.), *The Century of Tung Ch'i-ch'ang 1555–1636*, 2 vols. (Seattle and London, 1992), vol. 2, pp. 385–457; see also, Craig Clunas, 'Artist and Subject in Ming Dynasty China' Aspects of Art Lecture given at the British Academy, 3 Nov. 1999, *Proceedings of the British Academy* 105



Figure 1. *Early Spring*, by Guo Xi (c.1000–c.1090), signed and dated 1072. Hanging scroll, ink and colour on silk. Courtesy of the National Palace Museum, Taipei.

China, and its aesthetic qualities and social purposes varied over time. These developments will not be discussed here.

My principal claim is that the ways in which the Chinese from the Han period onwards viewed the cosmos determined their choice of mountains as a major subject for painted images. Much of this paper will discuss attitudes to the cosmos and the aesthetic consequences of these views. I shall be concerned with the whole range of ideas about the universe and not simply with depictions or models of mountains as representing one part of the cosmos, a topic covered by others.³ An investigation of ideas about the cosmos as a whole (rather than of the role of mountains in the cosmos) is fundamental. It should, in my view, precede other issues that have sometimes been treated as central to the origins of landscape painting, namely a general evocation of nature in the post-Han period, seen also in poetry, and the use of mountains to present the qualities of an upright virtuous man. This paper will not tackle the large question of the links with Daoism, as these developed after the choice of mountains as a subject had been made. Nor am I concerned with the detailed graphic features that were appropriated for the first landscape paintings.⁴ Michael Sullivan and others have extensively discussed these.⁵ All were important

(2000), pp. 43–72, especially p. 51. A further example appears in Wang Lu's paintings of Mount Hua. This physician set out to give a record of the Sacred Mountain from his own experience. Yet in so doing he chose a topic peculiarly Chinese and employed the format of a record of a place, related to the concept of mapping that I shall discuss later in the paper, see Kathlyn M. Liscomb, *Learning from Mount Hua. A Chinese Physician's Illustrated Travel Record and Painting Theory* (Cambridge, 1993). Yet in the West landscape was not the 'natural' choice for images with a social or political message. Thus even here the question of why landscapes? is pertinent.

³ Lothar Ledderose, 'The Earthly Paradise: Religious Elements in Chinese Landscape Art', in Susan Bush and Christian Murck (eds.), *Theories of the Arts in China* (Princeton, 1983), pp. 165–83 provides the foundation for any discussion of the origins of mountain paintings in terms of depictions of aspects of the cosmos. Ledderose, following Rolf Stein, concentrates on one aspect of the cosmos in particular, the mountain, rather than the cosmos as a whole, see Rolf Stein, *The World in Miniature, Container Gardens and Dwellings in Far Eastern Religious Thought*, trans. Phyllis Brookes (Stanford, 1990). The notion of sacredness with respect to mountains occurs in many later instances, see for example pilgrimage sites on mountains: James Cahill, 'Huang Shan Paintings as Pilgrimage Pictures', in Susan Naquin and Chün-fang Yu (eds.), *Pilgrims and Sacred Sites in China* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, Oxford, 1992), pp. 246–92.

⁴ General cosmological considerations are usually acknowledged, but not examined. Instead other factors are foregrounded as in Wen Fong, *Beyond Representation, Chinese Painting and Calligraphy, 8th–14th century* (New Haven and London, 1992), p. 71.

⁵ Michael Sullivan, *The Birth of Landscape Painting in China* (1962). Early writers and artists in the post-Han period are often cited for their comments on technique, but they, like their predecessors, seem to have been preoccupied with the main sacred mountains and other cosmological aspects of landscape, see Susan Bush and Hsio-yen Shih, *Early Chinese Texts on Painting* (Cambridge, Mass., 1985), pp. 32–9.

factors, but they were dependent upon a choice made in the first place for reasons to do with an overall understanding of the cosmos.⁶

I shall start, however, with an account of one of the most significant early surviving examples of a mountainous landscape, which embellishes a representation of a screen in the tomb of the military governor Wang Chuzhi (Fig. 2).⁷ This painting is of great interest because, not only is it a full landscape painting mounted as a screen, it is, also, in its original context, a tomb provided as an eternal residence for the afterlife.⁸ In ancient China, life and death were parts of a single continuum. A tomb presents, therefore, not just a view of the afterlife, but also a commentary on daily life.

Wang Chuzhi died in 923 AD and was buried at Quyang in Hebei province. The tomb comprises two rooms, with side niches in the front chamber (Fig. 3). Unusually, the two chambers were originally separated by a dividing wall on which the landscape painting appears. Robbers breaking through the wall to climb from one room to the other damaged the painting. A wide painted brown border to the landscape indicates a wooden frame and shows us that the screen as a piece of furniture is also a representation. Although the painting is incomplete, we can still see two large rocky promontories, divided by a channel, that draw our eyes towards a broad sweep of water, with a further promontory of land in the distance.

The position of the screen is significant. It is placed as if it were a three-dimensional barrier between two rooms. In a building it would have been possible to go around such a screen to get into the rear room. In this painted tomb, rather surprisingly, the way is blocked.⁹ However, it seems likely, as I shall elaborate below, that as tombs were thought actually to provide the deceased with all that they picture, people of the time may have thought that, in the afterlife, a similar free-standing screen would be present in the tomb occupant's dwelling.

⁶ For a quite different view of the origins of mountain painting, see Martin Powers, 'When is a Landscape like a Body?', in Wen-hsin Yeh (ed.), *Landscape, Culture and Power in Chinese Society* (China Research Monograph no. 49, Berkeley, 1998), pp. 1–22.

⁷ For the archaeological report, see *Wudai Wang Chuzhi mu* (Beijing, 1998). It might be possible to explore the Daoist connotations of the mountain painting. However, while an important theme, I will not take up this topic in the present article.

⁸ For a discussion of the function of tombs as residences, see Jessica Rawson, 'The Power of Images: the Model Universe of the First Emperor and its Legacy', *Historical Research*, 75, no. 188 (May 2002), pp. 123–54.

⁹ Few other tombs with several rooms show similar impediments. The painted screen might suggest that some other contemporary tombs had screens made of perishable materials.

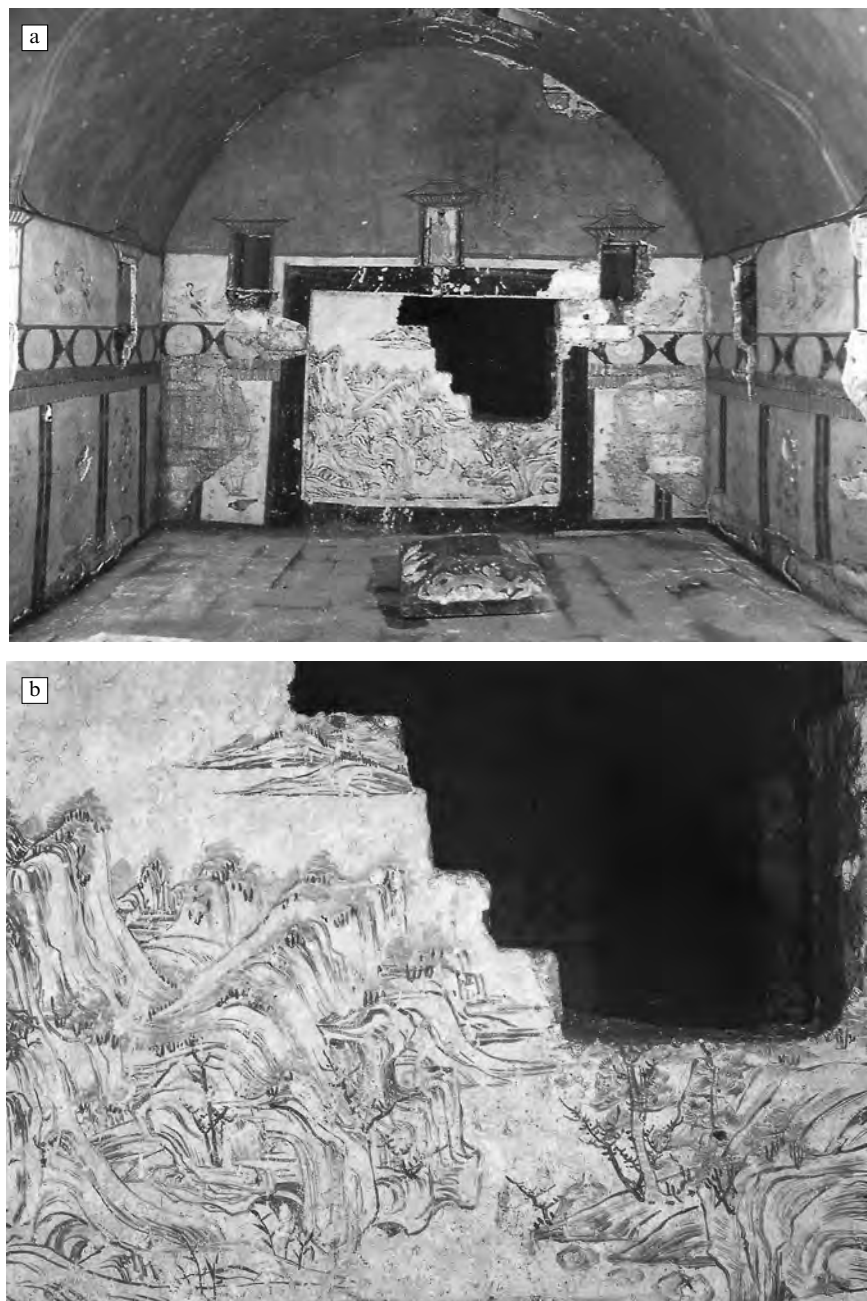


Figure 2. (a) View of the front room of the tomb of the military governor, Wang Chuzhi (d. 923 AD), with (b) a representation of a screen painted with a landscape on the rear wall. After Hebei Sheng wenwu yanjiusuo (*et al.*) *Wudai Wang Chuizhi mu*, Beijing, 1998, pl. 13:2.

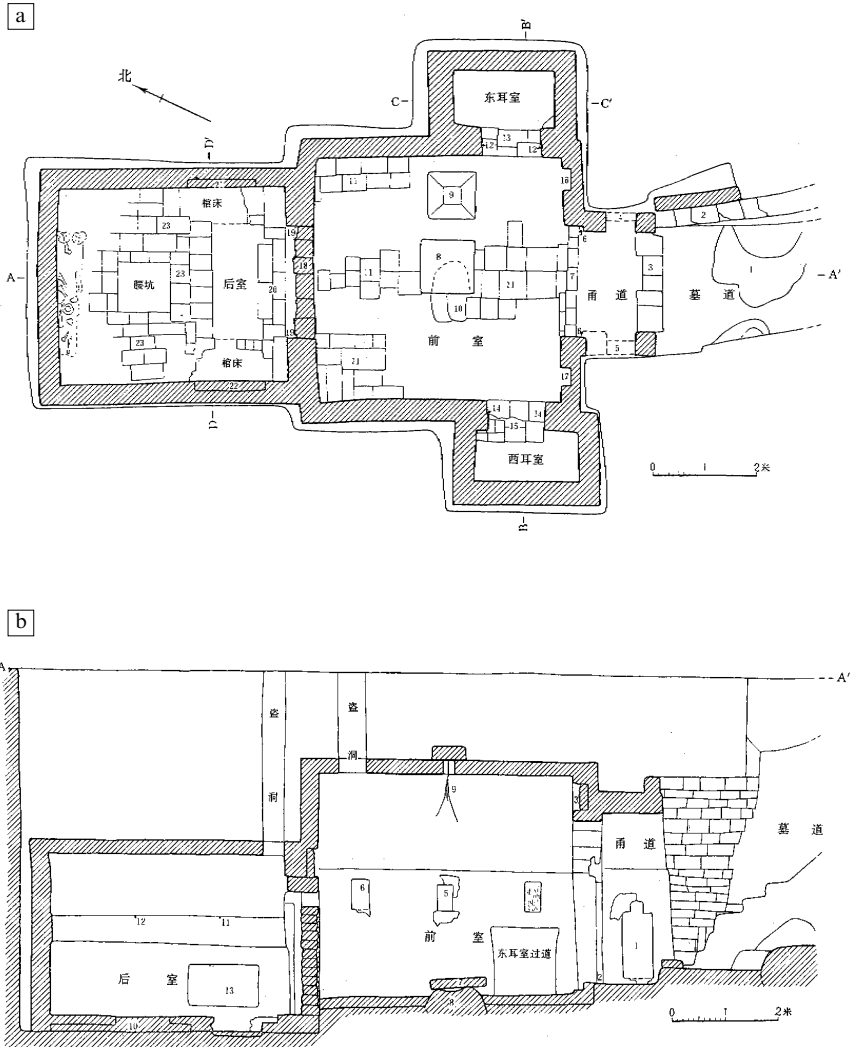


Figure 3. (a) Plan and (b) section of the tomb of Wang Chuzhi. After *Wudai Wang Chuzhi mu*, fig. 31:1, 2.

The screen has another function. It is the setting against which the tablet for the tomb inscription and its cover are to be seen (Figs. 2a, 4). These lie in front. The truncated pyramid-shaped cover displays the

animals of the directions on its four sides, which surround the name and titles of Wang Chuzhi at the centre. At the same time, this inscription cover places Wang Chuzhi at the centre of a miniature universe defined by the directional creatures and also sets him in front of the rocky landscape of the screen.¹⁰ In life, emperors, religious masters and members of the elite usually sat in front of screens when giving audience to their juniors. Two early Han period (second century BC) tombs have brought to light fragments of screens, one of which is illustrated below (Fig. 15), and many other Han tombs show depictions of them.¹¹ Screens, embellished with mountainous landscapes, dragons, or scenes with the sun and moon, were not in themselves paintings to be contemplated, but, as other authorities have suggested, miniature universes against which or within which powerful individuals were to be viewed. The route by which these relationships came about will form one of the main subjects of this paper.

The role of the landscape at the back of the front room as the setting for Wang Chuzhi is given a cosmological dimension by the overall decoration of the room. This was turned into a miniature universe by the presence of the sun and moon, the constellations and the Milky Way on the arched ceiling (Fig. 5).¹² Below the ceiling is a series of small towers, each of which originally displayed a carved stone human figure (some now missing) accompanied by a creature (Fig. 6). These are the so-called zodiac figures.¹³ Between the towers, cranes and clouds fill the sky.¹⁴ Tomb chambers decorated with the heavenly bodies, zodiac images, and cranes and clouds have a long history. These seem to have been intended to inscribe the residences for the deceased into a universe of their own that would guarantee permanence on a cosmic scale. In this context the mountains on the screen are another component of this cosmos.

¹⁰ For a discussion of epitaph covers as miniature universes, see Zhao Chao, 'Shi qionglongding mushi yu fudouxing muzhi, jiantan gudai muzang zhong "xiang tiandi" de sixiang', *Wenwu*, 1999.5, pp. 77–84.

¹¹ For the second screen see the tomb of the King of Nanyue at Canton in which a set of fittings survive, *Xi Han Nanyue Wang mu*, 2 vols. (Beijing, 1991), vol. 2, colour pls. 28–9.

¹² The sun and moon and constellations are mentioned in connection with the tomb of the First Emperor of Qin, Burton Watson, *Records of the Grand Historian*, Qin Dynasty (Hong Kong, 1993), p. 63. They occur in many decorated Han tombs and in excellent examples in the Northern Wei period, see especially *Xi'an Jiaotong Daxue Xi Han bihuamu* (Xi'an, 1991), p. 25 and *Wenwu*, 1974.12, pp. 56–60.

¹³ The zodiac and its representation are discussed in Judy Chungwa Ho, 'The Twelve Calendrical Animals in Tang tombs' in George Kuwayama (ed.), *Ancient Mortuary Traditions of China, Papers on Chinese Ceramic Funerary Sculptures* (Los Angeles, 1991), pp. 60–83.

¹⁴ Cranes and clouds are represented in the early eighth century tomb of the Princess Yongtai, see *Wenwu*, 1964.1, pp. 7–33, fig. 9.



Figure 4. Cover of the tablet of Wang Chuzhi. After *Wudai Wang Chuzhi mu*, pl. 60.

Rather than leave future events in this universe to chance, decoration of the lower part of the front room and its side niches provides a benign setting for daily life. The walls carry depictions of screens that display flowering bushes or plants with butterflies and birds (Fig. 7). Many of these plants are tree peonies, whose connotations were, from Tang times, abundance in the sense of both riches and fertility.¹⁵ The excavators designate others as roses.¹⁶ The blossoms, birds, and insects indicate that the scenes are those of spring and summer. For a third-century BC text, the *Lǚ shi chun qiu*, indicates that particular blooms and the coming of birds signal spring and summer. To these comments, other texts add insects and worms.¹⁷ In life, paintings of the four seasons would have been placed on screens or walls of houses, and seasonal paintings have continued in use

¹⁵ For an assemblage of texts on peonies, see Li Shutong, 'Tangren xiai mudankao', *Da ling zazhi* vol. 1, no. 2 (1967), pp. 42–66.

¹⁶ As the Chinese note that roses bloom in most months of the year, they are regarded as providing an 'eternal spring'.

¹⁷ John Knoblock and Jeffrey Riegel, *The Annals of Lü Buwei, A Complete Translation and Study* (Stanford, 2000), see especially Books 1–3, pp. 59–115.

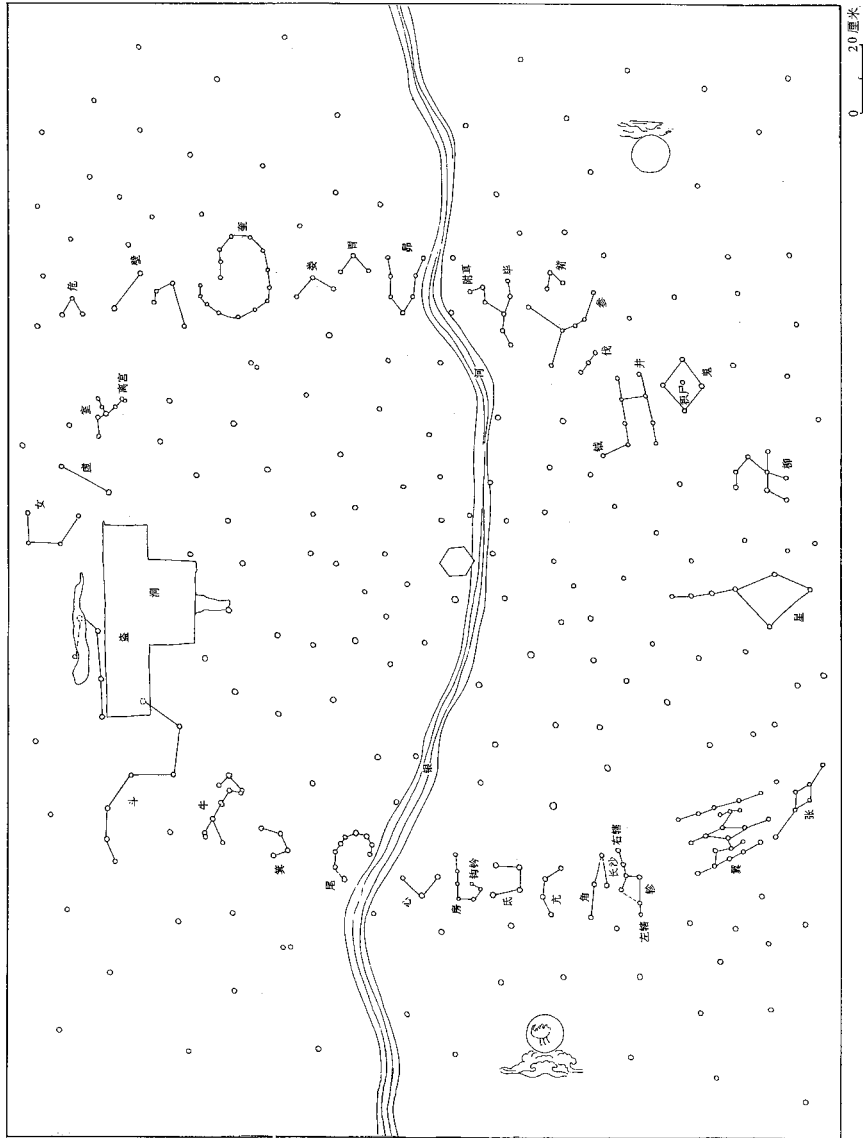


Figure 5. Drawing of the ceiling of the tomb of Wang Chuzhi showing the stars, the lunar lodges, the sun and the moon and the Milky Way. After *Wudai Wang Chuzhi mu*, fig. 8.

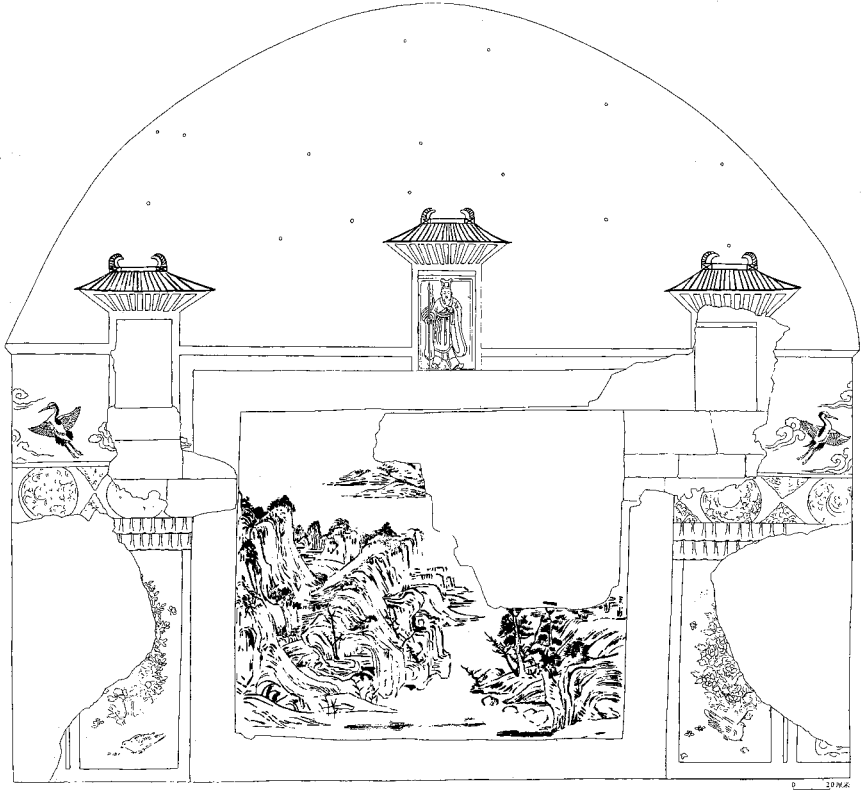


Figure 6. Drawing of the rear wall of the front room of the tomb of Wang Chuzhi showing towers with zodiac figures above the painted screen of Figure 2. After *Wudai Wang Chuzhi mu*, fig. 7.

down to the present day.¹⁸ Painted screens in tombs may have emphasised spring and summer to ensure that the tomb occupant enjoyed their benefits. After all, who would choose winter, if they could choose spring? We can argue in this way on the basis of some of the other screen panels in the tomb. These present figures of serving women and male attendants. As stories of mysteries and marvels dating from the sixth to tenth century indicate, servants represented in tombs, be they portrayed by tomb figures or by paintings, were thought, in at least some contexts, to serve the same function as living servants. Tales of unusual events of this time contain many stories which show that tomb figures and paintings

¹⁸ See, for example, Wen Zhenheng's 'Calendar for Displaying Scrolls', discussed by Craig Clunas, *Pictures and Visuality in Modern China* (1997), pp. 57–8.

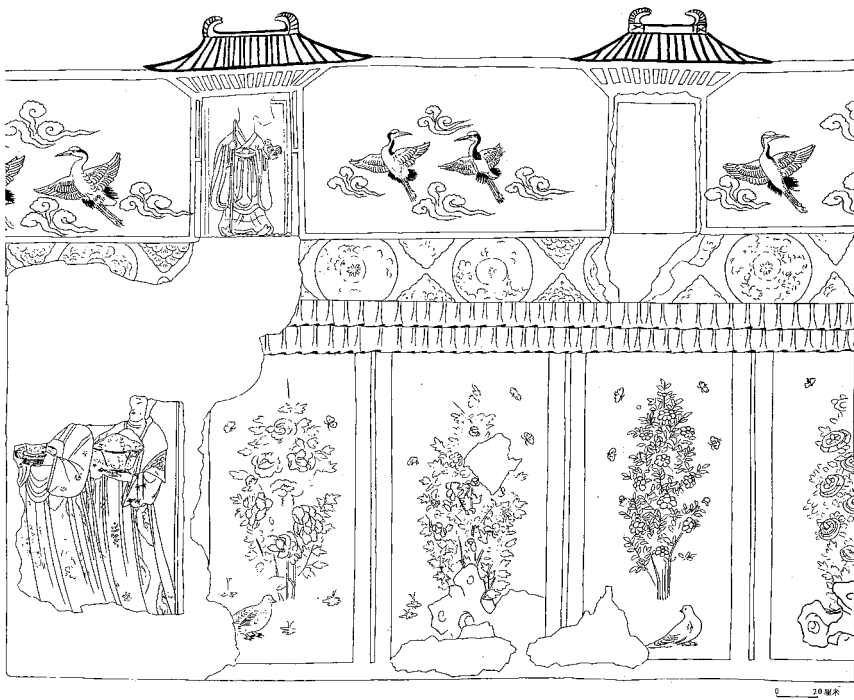


Figure 7. Drawing of the west wall of the front room of the tomb of Wang Chuzhi. After *Wudai Wang Chuzhi mu*, fig. 5.

had agency, that they could act as their subjects did.¹⁹ Similarly the representations of screens painted with flowers, perhaps, provided spring and summer.

Further efforts were made to ensure prosperity for the tomb owner, by illustrating the necessary accessories for rank and status in the two side niches. In one of these are painted some of Wang Chuzhi's possessions (Fig. 8). These include an official hat, itself a sign of the rank that Wang expected to hold. Earlier tombs often held seals giving the title of the tomb owner, so that he would be accorded proper respect in the society of the afterlife. In addition, a mirror box on a stand (mirrors were always prized and were protective against evil spirits), a flask and a number of

¹⁹ See especially stories discussed by Glen Dudbridge, *Religious Experience and Lay Society in T'ang China, A Reading of Tai Fu's Kuang-I chi* (Cambridge, 1995), Appendix, nos. 4, 11, 119, 138, 158, 159, 161, 169. For a story about a painting which 'came to life', see Wu Hung, *The Double Screen, Medium and Representation in Chinese Painting* (1996), p. 104.



Figure 8. Side niche in the front room of the tomb of Wang Chuzhi showing his hat and other possessions on a stand in front of a landscape painting. After *Wudai Wang Chuzhi mu*, pl. 18.

other boxes in silver or silver inlaid lacquer appear on a shelf or a chest. Behind the chest is another landscape painting, a further suggestion of status. The niche for Wang's wife (or concubine) displays a similar piece of furniture, with her personal objects on it, behind which is a depiction of peonies. Both niches may also have held actual objects, which have been robbed. Here the artefacts stand for their owners and the status that they hoped to attain or to maintain in the afterlife. The front room thus provided a universe and perpetual prosperity for a high-ranking official life.

The rear chamber behind the screen corresponds to the private room of a house. It too is decorated, not just with paintings, but also with representations of paintings in large wooden frames. Unfortunately these are much damaged. They would appear to show scenes more intimate than that of the large screen at the entrance to the rear room. A large rock, bamboo, and birds are the subjects of one on a side wall (Fig. 9). At the rear of the room are peonies and rocks with other flowering plants. As in the front room, the pictures probably provide what they depict, namely

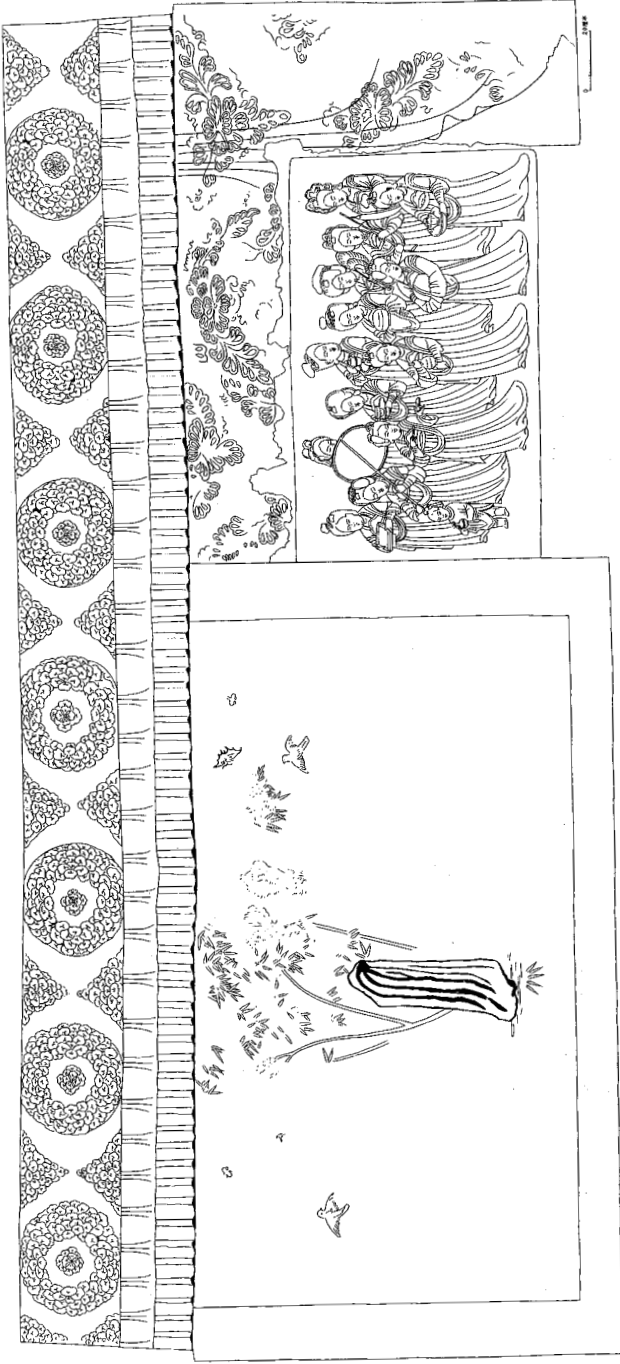


Figure 9. Drawing of the rear room showing a painting of a garden with a rock, plants and birds and a scene of serving women revealed by a curtain drawn back. After *Wudai Wang Chuzhi mu*, fig. 18.

here a garden.²⁰ Curtains are drawn back to reveal exceptionally fine stone carvings of a group of servants and of a group of female musicians who offer a life of pleasure.

This arrangement of a formal reception room with a rear private room had been common in Chinese tombs for over a thousand years. However, garden settings had only been in vogue from the fifth or sixth centuries.²¹ In Tang tombs, gardens presented on screens usually had elegant women as their subjects. By the tenth century, these pictures of women had disappeared. In areas of north China dominated by the Liao (907–1125), pictures with birds and flowers seem to have been especially popular.²² Perhaps the Quyang tomb, situated near the Liao area, took its subjects from there.²³ A fashion for landscape paintings on screens was established by the Tang period (AD 618–906), as an example from a tomb in Shaanxi province illustrates (Fig. 10).

The Wang Chuzhi screen is especially interesting for the many roles it seems to fulfil. The screen provided the setting for Wang in his official role, as recorded in the tomb inscription and the title engraved on the cover, but it was placed within a wider cosmological framework described by the heavenly bodies and the zodiac. The picture of the mountains was not, it seems, solely for aesthetic appreciation, but established a perpetual physical environment for an individual, so that what was depicted in the image accrued to the individual. Dress and badges of rank achieve very similar effects.

It may also have been the case that the screen had here a further function; that is, it offered more than a straightforward transition between the formal reception room and the private garden. Here, is, perhaps, a reference to the ideas set out by the poet, Tao Yuanming (AD 365–427), in the *The Peach-blossom Spring*. This composition describes the way in which passage through a crack in the rocks brought a simple fisherman into a world described as an agricultural idyll.²⁴ Wang Chuzhi's screen may have indicated that it was through a passage between great mountains provided

²⁰ For a discussion of the role of gardens as a form of paradise, see Lothar Ledderose, 'The Earthly Paradise: Religious Elements in Chinese Landscape Art'.

²¹ See discussions by Ellen Laing on the origins of flower painting, 'The Development of Flower Depiction and the Origin of the Bird-and-Flower Genre in Chinese Art', *Bulletin of the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities*, no. 64 (1992), pp. 180–223; 'A Survey of Liao Dynasty Bird-and-Flower Painting', *Journal of Sung and Yuan Studies*, 24 (1994), pp. 57–99.

²² Ellen Laing, 'A Survey of Liao Dynasty Bird-and-Flower Painting'.

²³ See especially *Wenwu*, 1979.6, pp. 22–32, and *Xuanhua Liaomu bishua* (Beijing, 2001).

²⁴ Stephen Owen, *An Anthology of Chinese Literature, Beginnings to 1911* (New York and London, 1996), pp. 309–10.



Figure 10. Detail of a mountainous landscape on two panels from a representation of a larger screen in a tomb of the Tang period at Fuping xian in Shaanxi province. After *Kaogu yu wenwu* 1997.4, pp. 8–11, inside back cover.

in the screen that one could reach a place of perpetual happiness in a hidden garden.

I shall take this screen painting as an exemplar of early large-scale mountainous landscapes, such as Guo Xi's *Early Spring*, in the National Palace Museum, Taiwan (Fig. 1). While today such paintings are mounted as hanging scrolls, it is generally accepted that some, if not the majority, were intended to embellish screens. A second important category of landscape painting appeared at the same time, the hand scroll. Although this paper will not follow the question of the smaller descriptive paintings in much detail, these too are related to the theme of the present discussion.²⁵ Many enable the viewer to locate himself or herself within a complex landscape, for they often provide a route through a narrative in time or a route through a region or location in space, along both of which the viewer can travel as the scroll unrolls.²⁶

²⁵ Horizontal scrolls, like the vertical format paintings that are the subject of the paper, shared with them a mapping character. In the case of the handscrolls this seems to have come about because the smaller scale paintings developed out of narrative texts. The stories of filial piety, or the lives of the Buddha are prime examples. Events in these stories had locations. Just as a written narrative would be set out horizontally on a narrow sheet of silk, or on a wall, so too would a picture series with the same content. Julia Murray, 'Buddhism and Early Narrative Illustration in China', *Archives of Asian Art*, 48 (1995), pp. 17–31. The illustrations of stories of filial piety on sixth-century stone sarcophagi from Luoyang make up comparable examples, Eugene Wang, 'Coffins and Confucianism—The Northern Wei Sarcophagus in The Minneapolis Institute of Arts', *Orientalism*, June 1999, pp. 56–64. Here different episodes or stories have small landscape settings. Like the inscribed mountains, cartouches mark the points where inscriptions guided the reader of the picture on what to think. Another example is a sarcophagus with a scene of miraculous creatures that has a small landscape on the left-hand side, *Kaogu*, 1980.3, pp. 229–41; *Zhongguo huaxiangshi quanji* (Beijing, 2000), no. 56. It may simply be chance that, as the coffin areas were the same format as scrolls of silk, the illustrations were presented in a horizontal sequence. On the other hand, the two formats may have been interrelated. By being carved on a coffin, the tomb occupant was being provided with the content of the scenes. Many later paintings are also topographical in character; see Shen Zhou (1427–1509) *Famous Sights of Wu*, in the Nelson-Atkins Museum, Kansas City, Kiyohiko Munakata, *Sacred Mountains in Chinese Art* (Urbana and Chicago, 1990), no. 11. See also Craig Clunas, *Pictures and Visuality*, pp. 80–2.

²⁶ The writings attributed to the renowned painter Gu Kaizhi (c.345–406) are often quoted to discuss the certain painting techniques that seem to refer to a handscroll. He appears to be concerned with offering a detailed topographical setting of the Cloud Terrace Mountain to present the then renowned Daoist, Zhang Daoling and his disciples. Gu's account of his painting reads like a guide to a particular topography: 'I will make five or six purple boulders like firm clouds, which, buttressing a ridge, mount it and ascend. I will cause the ridge's momentum to writhe and coil and, like a dragon, embrace a peak to ascend vertically. Below it I will make piled-up ridges and cause them to appear to ascend in a congealed mass. There will be another peak, which is of rock. It towers up, confronting its eastern neighbours. The western side of this peak will connect with a westward oriented, cinnabar red cliff, below which will be placed a steep mountain gorge . . .' Susan Bush and Hsio-yen Shih (eds.), *Early Chinese Texts on Painting*, pp. 34–5. See also Kiyohiko Munakata, *Sacred Mountains*, pp. 37–40. The famous fourth- to fifth-century writer, Zong Bing, described painting as a means to travel among the Sacred Mountains from a distant

Concepts of the Universe

Within the Chinese cosmos, mountains were aspects of the earth, just as the sun, moon, and stars were features of the heavens. It was the nature of the ways in which this cosmos was viewed as a totality that stimulated the choice of mountains as subjects of models, paintings, and decorative motifs.

While many of the relevant cosmological notions may have originated long before the Han, ideas especially pertinent to this discussion occur in texts of the late Warring States period in the fourth and third centuries BC and were formalised during the Han (206 BC–AD 220). The systematic way in which this cosmos came to be presented, and the prominent position these ideas achieved, were part of a wider change in ritual and burial.²⁷ The salient feature of this universe was its strongly systematic, geometric structure. But while the cosmos can be described as what appears to be a single system, in practice, theorists writing about the universe took features from many regions and from several schools of thought and moulded them into an apparent unity.

In some texts crossed cords were said to quarter the heavens, and these quarters were subdivided by what are traditionally called hooks. Other alignments, or divisions, within the overall geometric pattern were

place, thereby embarking on a tradition that was to endure down to the present day in China. I am indebted to Craig Clunas for this observation and for comments on the relationship of this category of painting with maps, Craig Clunas, *Pictures and Visuality*, p. 83. On the issue of travelling in spirit, see the example of Mi Fu (1051–1107), mentioned by John Hay, *Kernels of Energy, Bones of Earth: The Rock in Chinese Art* (New York, 1985). Paintings of the seventh and eighth century attributed to Wang Wei (c.699–761) and Lu Hung (c.713–42) are also described as recording scenes in a topographical manner, Wen Fong, *Beyond Representation*, p. 73. Compare Robert Harrist, *Painting and Private Life in Eleventh-Century China: Mountain Villa by Li Gonglin* (Princeton, 1998).

²⁷ For an important and up to date discussion of the ways in which the notions about the cosmos discussed in this paper came to prominence, see Michael Puett, *To Become a God Cosmology, Sacrifice and Self-Divinization in Early China*. Harvard-Yenching Institute Monographs Series 57 (Cambridge, Mass., 2002). Puett indicates the ways in which correlative cosmology and its associated ideas were gradually brought together and discusses the time at which they gained dominance. These new forms of philosophical idea accompanied major changes in both burial practice and ritual, see Jessica Rawson, 'Eternal Palaces of the Western Han: A New View of the Universe', *Artibus Asiae*, 59, no. 1/2 (1999), pp. 5–58 and Jessica Rawson, 'Ritual Vessel Changes in the Warring States, Qin and Han Periods' in *Regional Culture, Religion and Arts before the Seventh Century, Papers from the Third International Conference on Sinology, History Section* (Taipei, 2002), pp. 1–56. Substantial changes in philosophical outlook, belief, ritual practice and burial effectively make a major break or change from the beliefs, practices, and burial systems of earlier centuries. There were, in consequence, major changes in artefact type and in pictorial tradition.

provided by the four directions, marked by four creatures: dragon, tiger, bird, and tortoise, around which a snake is coiled. Both space and time were divided into twelve parts, originally designated by the twelve 'branches', characters, known from at least the latter half of the Shang period (c.1200–c.1050 BC). The branches were combined in pairs with ten further characters, or 'stems', to make a cycle of sixty. Although the animals we know as the zodiac creatures are named in texts of the late Warring States, only in the fifth and sixth centuries AD were they frequently represented, sometimes in place of the characters of the branches, sometimes alongside them. These spatial-temporal divisions formed the basic structure of a grand cosmic map.²⁸

We can find diagrams of this structure on what are, traditionally, called TLV mirrors, typical of the middle Han period, late second century BC to first century AD. The circular disc of the mirror back presents the heavens, the inner square the earth (Fig. 11). Within a heavy border are angular geometric markings. The Vs at the inner edge of the circle are the hooks, and the Ts and Ls, from which the mirror takes its English name, mark the points where the crossing cords meet the edge of the heavens and the boundary of the earth. Four pairs of bosses outside the square central field are eight pillars supporting the heavens. The square frame of the earth contains twelve bosses marking the twelve hourly or monthly divisions, each named by one of the branches. In Wang Chuzhi's tomb the square chamber, surrounded by the zodiac figures, marks the earth; a rounded roof indicates the dome of the sky.

Superimposed on, or, indeed, added to this geometric framework were the heavenly bodies. The sun and moon inevitably figured. The twenty-eight constellations, through which the moon was seen to pass, and, therefore, known as the lunar lodges, were depicted from at least the fifth century BC. The heavens were given another dimension by dividing the skies into five or nine fields, often treated as palaces. For the heavens were

²⁸ For discussions of cosmological ideas relevant to the whole section, see John Major, 'The Five Phases, Magic Squares and Schematic Cosmography', in *Explorations in Early Chinese Cosmology*, ed. Henry Rosemont, Jr. (*Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, Thematic Studies, 50/2, Chicago, 1984), pp. 133–66; A. C. Graham, *Yin-yang and the Nature of Correlative Thinking* (Occasional Paper and Monograph Series iv, The Institute of East Asian Philosophies, Singapore, 1986) and id., *Disputers of the Tao: Philosophical Argument in Ancient China* (La Salle, Illinois, 1989), pt. 4; John S. Major, *Heaven and Earth in Early Han Thought, Chapters Three, Four, and Five of the Huainanzi* (Albany, 1993); Donald Harper, 'Warring States Natural Philosophy and Occult Thought', in Michael Loewe and Edward L. Shaughnessy (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Ancient China, From the Origins of Civilization to 221 B.C.* (Cambridge, 1999), pp. 813–84; Aihe Wang, *Cosmology and Political Culture in Early China* (Cambridge, 2000).



Figure 11. Bronze mirror back of the type known as a TLV mirror. Han dynasty, first century BC to first century AD. Author's photograph.

thought to provide the framework on which human organisation was based.²⁹

Texts describe the various deities who were thought to function in these heavenly realms, but at no time were they thought to be the prime movers of the universe. Instead, the ancient Chinese explained the universe in terms of the *dao*. *Qi*, which we might translate as 'energy', and the complementary forces of *yin* and *yang* were thought to give rise to the seasons and to all the phenomena of the universe, known as the 'Ten Thousand Things'. 'Accordingly, the *Yin* and *Yang* are the primary organizational principle of Heaven and Earth and the four seasons are the

²⁹ Sun Xiaochun and Jacob Kistemaker, *The Chinese Sky During the Han, Constellating Stars and Society* (Leiden, 1997), chap. 5.

primary pattern of *Yin* and *Yang*.³⁰ The ‘five elements’, or ‘five processes’, earth, metal, wood, fire, and water, which represent five cosmic phases in the Chinese account of the universe, played an important role in transformation and change. The pairs of *yin* and *yang*, the fours of seasons, time and space, the fives of directions and the phases, gave rise to a systematic account of all phenomena in what is known as correlative thinking. Early Han texts applied this correlative system to the heavens, the earth and to human affairs.³¹ An attention to a pattern meant that natural phenomena were observed with meticulous care, most especially the calendrical cycle and the movement of the stars. Human affairs were matched closely to these. Other less regular natural phenomena, droughts, storms, comets, and the appearance of strange creatures were treated as omens, by which fluctuations in the system, which might destabilise society or threaten individuals, could be predicted.³² Thus a correlation between heavenly and earthly events was entertained, together with a view of heaven causing events outside the normal cycle.

Thus far we have noted a universe that worked systematically without the intervention of spirits or deities, except on rare occasions. To balance the heavens, various accounts were given of the earth, presented in the Han period also in a semi-geometric form. The earth, as mentioned, was envisaged as square and, like the heavens, was subdivided by a grid into nine squares, sometimes designated as nine provinces or nine continents. Two constant features of the earth were the myriad things produced by the four seasons and the mountains, which formed, indeed, a link between heaven and earth.

The mountains were fitted into the directional geometry and, indeed, became some of its most salient landmarks. In the area that today would be described as central China, five Sacred Mountains were the most important, namely Taishan in the East, Huashan in the West, Hengshan in the north and another Hengshan in the south, and Songshan at the centre. This formal, directional composition of the mountains systematised cults and beliefs in mountain spirits going back many centuries in

³⁰ W. Allen Rickett, *Guanzi, Political, Economic, and Philosophical Essays from Early China, a Study and Translation*, 2 vols. (Princeton, 1985, 1998), vol. 2, p. 111.

³¹ Marc Kalinowski, ‘The *Xingde* Texts from Mawangdui’, trans. Phyllis Brooks, *Early China*, vol. 23–4 (1998–9), pp. 125–202; Marc Kalinowski, *Cosmologie et divination dans La Chine ancienne, le Compendium des cinq agents (Wuxing dayi VIe siècle)* (Paris, 1991).

³² For example, see A. F. P. Hulswé, ‘Watching the Vapours: an Ancient Chinese Technique of Prognostication’, *Nachrichten der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Natur- und Volkerkunde Ostasiens*, cxxv (1979), pp. 40–9; Michael Loewe, *Divination, Mythology and Monarchy in Han China* (Cambridge, 1994), chap. 9.

all probability.³³ The continued offerings of rites to mountains indicate the traces of local religions and practices. The ancient poetry in the *Book of Songs* refers to mountains as intermediaries with heaven:

Lofty is the sacred mountain
Grandly it reaches to heaven.³⁴

And a number of Warring States and Han texts talk of ‘mountains [that] stand up as if they were the companions of heaven’.³⁵ In an attempt to give further regularity to these attitudes to mountains, the Han assimilated them in a bureaucratic structure. The famous history by Sima Qian, known as the *Shi ji* (written about 100 BC) describes such mountains and notes others as ranking as ministers.³⁶ The choice of bureaucratic titles seems to indicate a need to give a recognisable order to ancient landmarks, whose original significances may have become submerged.

Another, rather separate, tradition added an interest in immortality to the power of mountains. Two particular areas, Kunlun, in the west and the islands in the eastern sea recur in texts, in models, and in paintings. Kunlun was known as the home of the Queen Mother of the West, a deity much revered in the Han period, whose cult was associated with immortality.³⁷ But as important as the specific attributes was the location of Kunlun in the west, where the sun appeared to set. To the east, where the sun rose, were the immortal islands of Penglai, Fangzhang, and Yingzhou, crowned with mountains, where herbs that would confer immortality might be found.³⁸ These islands were sought in vain by missions despatched by the First Emperor (221–210 BC) and by the great Han

³³ See divination records in Shang period oracle texts, David Keightley, *The Ancestral Landscape, Time, Space, and Community in Late Shang China* (Berkeley, 2000), pp. 113–16. For later Han period references to such cults, see Burton Watson (trans.), *Records of the Grand Historian of China Translated from the Shi ji of Ssu-ma Ch'ien*, 2 vols. (New York and London, 1961), vol. 2, p. 16.

³⁴ From the *Shi jing*, Mao no. 259, Waley number 137, see Arthur Waley, *The Book of Songs* (1937), p. 133 for a variant translation.

³⁵ *Zuo Zhuan*, Duke Huan 22 year, see James Legge, *The Chinese Classics, Volume V, The Ch'un Tseu with The Tso Chuen* (Taipei reprint, no date), p. 103.

³⁶ Burton Watson (trans.), *Records of the Grand Historian of China*, vol. 2, p. 28.

³⁷ Riccardo Francasso, ‘Holy Mothers of Ancient China: A New Approach to the His-wang-mu Problem’, *T'oung Pao*, 74 (1988), pp. 1–46; see also Wu Hung, ‘Mapping Early Taoist Art: The Visual Culture of Wudoumi Dao’, in Stephen Little, *Taoism and the Arts of China* (Berkeley, 2000), pp. 77–93.

³⁸ These mountains were described from at least the third century BC, and are mentioned by the philosopher Liezi, as cited by Wolfgang Bauer, *China and the Search for Happiness, Recurring Themes in Four Thousand Years of Chinese Cultural History*, trans. Michael Shaw (New York, 1976), p. 97. Kiyohiko Munakata, *Sacred Mountains*, pp. 3–34.

emperor Wudi (140–87 BC), both of whom were obsessed by the search to avoid death.³⁹ It is important to note that the immortals were not to be viewed as agents who made the universe function.

Additional notions or lore on mountains accrued during the post-Han period. The broad group of religious adherents known as Daoists believed one could find cavern heavens, (a technical term for Daoist paradises) in these mountains also.⁴⁰ And this notion was given a firm literary base in the lyrical account of the *Peach-Blossom Spring* by Tao Yuanming, already mentioned. The notion that it was possible to pass through a fissure between two crags or rocks and discover lands that might be described as paradises remained a recurrent theme in literature and painting. But it would be wrong to think that paradise was elsewhere, it was a place within the universe, which could be found, provided one followed the correct route. The garden in the rear room of Wang Chuzhi's tomb was, perhaps, a form of paradise.⁴¹

These diverse accounts, which attributed cosmological and spiritual roles to mountains, indicate that no one source explains the salience of mountains in Chinese culture. The drawing together of many different regional traditions, not once in the third to second century BC, but several times over the following centuries, probably provided a rich, but by no means unified, view of mountains.⁴²

The Chinese description of the cosmos, and the role of mountains within it, can usefully be compared with parallel but entirely different views elaborated in the Mediterranean region in the ancient and medieval periods. Here gods of various kinds were believed to be major forces in the universe. They were powerful figures, who created the heavens and the earth, who placed the stars in the sky, and who brought humans into being. They also determined the passages of the sun and moon, the passing of the seasons, the moods of the sea, and the fertility of the earth. Of course in different regions and at different times, these gods had different qualities and roles. However, peoples in many areas—ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia, Classical Greece, and

³⁹ Burton Watson (trans.), *Records of the Grand Historian: Qin Dynasty* (Hong Kong and New York, 1993), p. 49.

⁴⁰ Stephen Little, *Taoism*, p. 17; Franciscus Verellen, 'The Beyond Within: Grotto-Heavens (*Dongtian*) in Taoist Ritual and Cosmology' *Cahiers d'Extrême Asie*, 8 (1995), pp. 265–90.

⁴¹ This is the central theme in Lothar Ledderose's discussion, Lothar Ledderose, 'The Earthly Paradise: Religious Elements in Chinese Landscape Art'.

⁴² See for example, James Robson, 'The Polymorphous Space of the Southern Marchmont [Nanyue], An Introduction to Nanyue's Religious History and Preliminary Notes on Buddhist-Daoist Interaction', *Cahiers d'Extrême-Asie*, 8 (1995), pp. 221–64.

Rome—all developed views of gods that attributed to them human-like appearances and qualities. Moreover, the ways in which the heavens, the earth, and the universe overall moved and were given life were consequences, not just of a single god, but in many cases also of a community of gods. Their social interactions and relationships, their loves and battles, influenced each other, the natural phenomena and the lives of humans.⁴³

If these gods in the Mediterranean region were much like humans, humans could, it appears, affect them. People prayed to them, of course, and made images. The more like people the gods and their images appeared to be, the easier it probably was to imagine interaction with them. There is evidence for many of the ancient societies and even for quite a period in the Middle Ages and later, that people did not always or even usually distinguish between the image and the god. It was, therefore, important that the images were correctly made.⁴⁴ The gods could be encountered by meeting with them, as with people, in their buildings, that is, in their temples or churches. The worshipper, therefore, engaged or met their gods in an architectural setting. This combination determined the character not only of what was later called art, but also every sort of Western ornament and design.⁴⁵

Such human-like interactions were very different from the abstract system by which the Chinese universe of the Han period and later was thought to move. The Chinese instead of reaching for a social understanding of the lives of the gods through narratives of different types, sought an understanding of the universe through its phenomena. In place of the search for relationships with the gods in the Mediterranean, in ancient China, people interrogated the universe by observation, divination, and by locating themselves appropriately within the larger system, not only in space but also in time. To secure the benefits of the system,

⁴³ As Geoffrey Lloyd has argued, the notion of the Fates spinning and weaving and so determining human lives interpreted the cosmos in a social framework. Geoffrey E. R. Lloyd, *Polarity and Analogy. Two Types of Argumentation in Early Greek Thought*, (Cambridge, 1966, reprinted London, 1987, 1992), pp. 192–4.

⁴⁴ Again, as Geoffrey Lloyd has argued, humans make use of resemblance in attempts ‘to control or influence certain objects by manipulating other objects that resemble them.’ Geoffrey Lloyd, *Polarity and Analogy*, p. 178. Behind this explanation lie ideas about sympathetic magic, see Robert A. Hinde, ‘A Biologist Looks at Anthropology’, *Man*, NS 26 (1991), pp. 583–608.

⁴⁵ Discussion of Western art and architecture has tended to separate figural art from its framing, leading to difficulties in defining what the ornament derived from this architectural framing should be called. It seems best to treat both subject and frame as part of the same work. Further the ornament derived from architecture then can be seen as a distinctive feature of Western art and not as a universal category.

people had to be correctly placed within it. The question of position referred literally to orientation in space, but also to position in a social context, and to proper observance of the correct time, i.e. to what was appropriate for particular seasons or occasions. Tables of information, maps, and diagrams were essential tools, to work out how to achieve these positions, and to these we now turn.

Images, maps and mapping

Before we can develop a perspective on the steps by which mountainous landscapes became so firmly embedded in the Chinese artistic canon, further ideas need to be examined. These are the ways in which position in relation to the universe could be envisaged and the implications of the terms for ‘representation’ or ‘image’ within the Chinese vocabulary.

A universe with a highly geometric structure that worked to a clearly recognisable system seems to have required a response that matched this sense of ordered space and time. We have evidence of just such a response from both transmitted texts and from some excavated diagrams dating to the Han period. The *Lǚ shi chun qiu*, a philosophical text of the third century BC, followed by the ordinances for the months in the *Yue ling*, in the ritual text, the *Li ji*, suggest that it is possible to give clear instructions on how the ruler should behave, what he should wear, where he should reside and what he should eat in each month of the year to ensure the proper regulation of human affairs.⁴⁶ This account is matched by a divination diagram found in the second-century BC tomb 3 at Mawangdui, at Changsha in Hunan province.⁴⁷ Both texts and diagrams confirm the suggestion that position in space and time was all-important. From this observation we can also conclude that mapping a person, most especially the ruler, into a space according to a set time-table was one way to achieve congruency with the universe.

While most of the surviving diagrams are highly schematic, we will, in the next section, deal with the actual landscape, with models, and with pictures. Therefore, we have to ask whether there was any difference between the actual landscape and a picture and consider whether they were, in effect, interchangeable. This latter possibility is essential for the present argument.

⁴⁶ John Knoblock and Jeffrey Riegel, *The Annals of Lǚ Buwei*, see especially Books 1–3, pp. 59–115.

⁴⁷ Aihe Wang, *Cosmology and Political Culture in Early China*, p. 121, fig. 3.4.

In recent years, and most especially following the writings of David Hall and Roger Ames, the ways in which images in China were understood have become lively issues.⁴⁸ While for a present-day Westerner, a separation between the image and the thing imaged remains obvious, in most instances, there was in early China no such distance. By making a picture or model, the thing imaged was created for its creator or owner. Discussion of this view has centred on the word *xiang*, or ‘image’.⁴⁹ In the Han period this term was used both for the eternal features of the cosmos revealed by the heavens and for models and pictures. In effect a continuum of use and sense of *xiang* in these different contexts seems to have related the notion of the eternal images closely to specific ones. Han texts, such as the *Shi ji*, show that, at that period, the image, *xiang*, had the effects or agency of the thing imaged.⁵⁰ The practical effects of this approach to images is seen most clearly in the tomb figures filling the burials of the First Emperor and his successors. The terracotta warriors, standing in serried ranks in large trenches adjacent to the great tomb, were not inert representations of an army; they were to function as an army, which in the afterlife would fight for and defend the Emperor. While today it may seem difficult for us to experience such a point of view, this assimilation of the subject of the image to the image was and still is quite common across the world.⁵¹

This same identity between image and thing imaged is evident in many other cases also—for example the pictures of the sun, moon and stars on the domes of the tomb interiors made the structures into universes for the First Emperor, for many members of the elite and for Wang Chuzhi. What is more, Classical Chinese was often used in such a way as to make no distinction between the image and the thing imaged.⁵² In addition, in early periods, and to a large extent down to the present day, the image in

⁴⁸ David L. Hall and Roger T. Ames, *Anticipating China, Thinking Through the Narratives of Chinese and Western Culture* (Albany, 1995), pp. 216–25, see also Craig Clunas, *Pictures and Visuality*, pp. 102–11.

⁴⁹ See Willard Peterson, ‘Making Connections: “Commentary on the Attached Verbalizations” of the *Book of Changes*’, *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, 42.1 (1982), pp. 67–116.

⁵⁰ Jessica Rawson, ‘The Power of Images: the Model Universe of the First Emperor and its Legacy’.

⁵¹ The central work in this discussion is Hans Belting, *Likeness and Presence, A History of the Image before the Era of Art*, trans. E. Jephcott (Chicago and London, 1994); see also Susan Verdi Webster, *Art and Ritual in Golden-Age Spain, Sevillian Confraternities and the Processional Sculpture of Holy Week* (Princeton, 1998), pp. 186–7.

⁵² This feature of Classical Chinese is apparent in Sima Qian’s description of the interior of the First Emperor’s tomb, as he supposed it to be, see *Shi ji*, (Beijing, 1969), vol. 1, p. 265 and Burton Watson, *Qin Dynasty*, p. 63.

China, having essentially the characteristics of the thing imaged, functions like the thing. The late Han writer, Wang Chong, writing about the capacity of the clay dragons to bring rain, is despite his renowned scepticism, one of the major exponents of this view.⁵³

Pictures of the so-called door gods, employed still today at New Year, are thought literally to keep out evil demons.⁵⁴ The door gods are only one type of example in a wide category of pictures and signs, used in Chinese buildings of all periods as auspicious images, to bring good luck. Pictures of the seasons, of extraordinary creatures sent by the heavens, such as dragons, the palaces of the immortals, and images as puns about advancement and success, are all examples that were thought to influence the lives of their owners. It was and is this capacity of an image to function that is especially significant.

Given that this paper has just argued, that in the Chinese context, images of deities were not likely to be the subjects chosen as having important roles within the universe, other categories of images or pictures need to be sought. We find that the Chinese made models, maps and pictures of the earth as a whole, including its most salient and powerful features, the mountains. And if such images were correctly made, they seem to have been thought to have been efficacious.⁵⁵

The images or models were not to be contemplated, but, like the images described above, they were functional. The way that they functioned was for the main protagonist to place himself within the actual landscape, within the model or in relation to the image and, in this way, to engage with or to make use of the landscape mapped or imaged to reach desired destinations or to acquire associations of power and authority. It was only possible to do this if the main protagonist was positioned correctly in relation to the most powerful mountains, such as the Sacred Mountain of the East, Taishan.

I shall describe three different categories. First of all the inscription of actual landscape with texts gave specific locations a defined context within the universe and offered their associations to the main protagonist; the inscriptions made a generic place a particular one with given associations. Secondly, models in three dimensions in parks and tomb mounds made landscapes to be entered and exploited. From these evolved smaller

⁵³ Michael Loewe, *Divination, Mythology and Monarchy in Han China*, chap. 7.

⁵⁴ Mary H. Fong, 'The Iconography of the Popular Gods of Happiness, Emoluments, and Longevity (Fu Lu Shou)', *Artibus Asiae*, 44, no. 2 (1993), pp. 159–99.

⁵⁵ Diagrams that incorporated graphs as the signs for mountains were, for example, regarded as highly efficacious. Stephen Little, *Taoism*, no. 137.

models in the form of gardens and miniature gardens in trays. Third, pictures in tombs located the tomb occupant in relation to the mountains. Similar images are to be found in Buddhist cave temples. From this third category emerged the screen painting that also placed the main protagonist in relation to mountains, but in this last case the associations of the mountains, rather than the actual physical mountain, were generally implied.

The control of landscape

The first historically attested attempt of a ruler to place himself, forever, within and amongst the great mountains of his realms is found in the progress of the First Emperor around his domain. Sima Qian describes this progress and the inscriptions carved on the mountains. In doing this, the Emperor was literally recording his position in his domain in perpetuity.⁵⁶

Political and military activity may have been one of the principal motives for this action. The interstate rivalry and the unification of the states in the late third century seem likely to have been some of the stimuli that led to the Emperor's desire to claim his dominion in the most literal form possible. In addition, military and bureaucratic needs may have led to a concern with understanding the landscape and its inhabitants. We have abundant textual evidence that the educated Chinese of the third to second century BC were also conscious of the physically diverse topography surrounding them. Several important Han texts, most especially the *Huai nan zi*, compiled by Liu An (? 179–122 BC) and the *Shan hai jing* (*The Classic of Mountains and Seas*) give geographical accounts.⁵⁷ They contain long passages with specific information on direction, distance, physical features and the relationship of one place to another. And both texts, in keeping with the notions already mentioned, feature mountains. That this world included, what we would call, the natural, but also the supernatural, is evident from these accounts. There was, in the eyes of the authors, no distinction between them; except that, they probably viewed what we, today, would describe as supernatural

⁵⁶ Martin Kern, *The Stele Inscriptions of Ch'in Shih-huang, Text and Ritual in Early Chinese Imperial Representation* (American Oriental Series, vol. 85, New Haven, 2000).

⁵⁷ John Major, *Heaven and Earth*, pp. 158–9; Anne Birrell (trans.), *The Classic of Mountains and Seas* (1999).

locations and creatures as more dangerous or more auspicious than the general run of phenomena.

Military activity required maps. The earliest surviving example dates to the third to second centuries BC.⁵⁸ Records in the *Shi ji* and the *Hou Han shu*, or *Later Han History*, also refer to maps used for military operations.⁵⁹ A concern with territory for military use may have been one of the conditions that gave rise to a sense that this same territory could be exploited for other reasons. It also seems that terminology later used for landscape painting was first used in relation to maps. As Lothar Ledderose has remarked with respect to the growth of landscape painting as a genre ‘since the term *shanchuan* appears in connection with the term *dixing*, topography of the country, and *tudi*, territory, it may refer to map-like drawing. It is recorded of the painter Lie Yi (Qin), that he painted the Five Sacred Mountains, *wuyue*, the Four Great Rivers, *sidu*, and the various fiefs, *lietu*. This may suggest that map drawing was one of the roots of landscape painting.’⁶⁰ A close relationship between maps and models and pictures of landscape was inevitable in that all of them were intended to map, that is, to create, images of places by including reference to known geographic features.

The texts written on mountains attributed to the First Emperor, however, make it clear that it was neither disinterested scientific discovery nor military need that inspired his concern with mountains. He seems to have wished literally to inscribe himself within what he believed to have been earlier progresses. The later books of the historical text, the *Shang shu*, written about a century or so before the First Emperor’s conquest, describe the legendary Emperor Shun as accepting the abdication of his predecessor Yao and then proceeding to offer sacrifices to the four great mountains or *yue* as they are often termed.⁶¹ In addition, the *Shang shu* notes how the legendary Emperor Yu marked out the nine provinces. And

⁵⁸ Ancient Map Research Team of the Chinese Academy of Surveying and Mapping, *China in Ancient and Modern Maps* (1998), pp. 20–7.

⁵⁹ For various anecdotes about maps and mapping see the story of the attempted assassination by Jing Ke, which involves a map. So eager was the First Emperor to get hold of the map that he put himself in danger, Burton Watson, *Qin Dynasty*, pp. 174–5. See also the story in the *Hou Han shu*, in which General Ma Yuan (14 BC–AD 49) used rice to build a model of a part of the territory, with mountains and hills. Into this he drew with his finger the various routes that the emperor’s armies should take (*Hou Han shu*, Beijing, 1971, 24.834).

⁶⁰ Lothar Ledderose, ‘Subject Matter in Early Chinese Painting Criticism’, *Oriental Art*, NS 19 (Spring 1973), pp. 69–83, fn. 64.

⁶¹ Terry Kleeman, ‘Mountain Deities in China: The Domestication of the Mountain God and the Subjugation of the Margins’, *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 114, no. 2 (1994), pp. 226–38.

the Qin Emperor's inscriptions name places celebrated in the accounts of Yu's ritual acts. By incorporating the actual places where Yu is said to have performed rituals in his progress and by recording them in his texts, the Qin Emperor was making his claim to legitimate succession to power in a landscape already revered in terms of the lives of Shun and Yu.⁶²

From the First Emperor's activities stemmed a long tradition that endures to this day. President Jiang Zemin has had his own name and title inscribed on a mountainside near Beijing. These inscriptions make immediate for the viewer particular claims or associations.⁶³ These may be no more than a name, or they may be a long text. In many instances, the inscriptions on the sacred mountains, most especially on Taishan, name places as celestial gates or bridges to heaven, thus drawing attention to the mountain as a link between the heavens and the earth.⁶⁴

The Emperor Wudi (140–87 BC) adopted other methods of inscription to particularise a landscape. He celebrated the great Feng-Shan sacrifices at Taishan, to which were brought a multitude of fine beasts and birds.⁶⁵ For the period of the rituals these transformed the mountain into a site of auspicious revelation by heaven, for the appearance of miraculously fine creatures was an accepted sign of the approval of heaven. Like the First Emperor, Han Wudi ensured that the landscape would support his aspirations.

A third and later example of this type of transformation is illustrated by the Cloud Peak at Laizhou in present-day Shandong province. The inscriptions still surviving on it are attributed to Zheng Daozhao, who came to the region as an official in AD 510. The lower inscriptions describe his ascent of the peak with Daoist colleagues, as discussed by Robert Harrist, whose translation I cite:⁶⁶

Stirring our will we visit . . . and roam
Aiming to ascend the cloudy heights
Lifting our robes, we leave the regional . . .
Slowing our steps, we enter a misty realm
Growing moss . . . path arduous

⁶² Martin Kern, *The Stele Inscriptions of Ch'in Shih-huang*, pp. 114–16.

⁶³ See for example Robert Harrist's comments that names inscribed on the summit of a mountain 'complete[s] a transformation of the mountain into a representation of a supernatural realm', Robert Harrist, 'Writing, Landscape, and Representation in Sixth-Century China: Reading Cloud Peak Mountain' (forthcoming).

⁶⁴ Edouard Chavannes, *Le T'ai Chan, Essai de Monographie d'un Culte Chinois* (Paris, 1910).

⁶⁵ Burton Watson, *Records of the Grand Historian*, vol. 2, p. 59.

⁶⁶ Robert Harrist, 'Writing, Landscape, and Representation in Sixth-Century China: Reading Cloud Peak Mountain'.

Among soaring peaks the road presses near the stars
 Where rosy banners shine. . . .
 Phoenix chariots follow among the crimson wisps.
 Opening our lapels, we meet the Nine Sages. . . .

At the top the mountain are the names of various immortals: 'Anqi drives a dragon and rests on Penglai; Fuqiu pilots a goose; Red Pine pilots the Sun and Moon and Xianmen rides the sun and rests on Kunlun.' These inscriptions thus also locate the Cloud Peak in a wider spatial-temporal universe, whose directions are marked by references to the great mountains east and west, and across which move the heavenly bodies.

In all these three examples, the physical relationship of the main protagonist is not in doubt, as the landscape was entered and inscribed, and the individuals concerned were surrounded by and incorporated in the mountain scenery, with specific references to the powers of heaven and to the presence of immortals. Later visitors to these places could identify with these events in the light of the inscriptions that they found there.

Models as tombs and parks

Mountains could be visited, but they could also be brought to the court. All Emperors and high-ranking members of the elite were buried under artificial mounds or even in great hills and mountains. From at least the fifth century BC, and perhaps earlier, tomb mounds were placed over major burials. It has been suggested that this practice was borrowed from Siberia or Central Asia.⁶⁷ What the initial purpose was, we do not know. However, by the third to second century BC, it is evident that a tomb under a large mountain was equivalent to a dwelling in a mountain. For the mound over the tomb of the First Emperor is so described in the *Shi ji*.⁶⁸ The tomb is surrounded by a whole complex of deposits, providing an army, an armoury, chariots, unusual animals, models of actors, and bodies of servants and members of the court. Inside the tomb, recorded in a famous passage by Sima Qian, were said to be palaces and towers, with the sun and the moon.⁶⁹ At one and the same time, this complex was a map of the universe and, in being such a map or model, it was also an

⁶⁷ Robert L. Thorp, *The Mortuary Art and Architecture of Early Imperial China*, unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Kansas, 1979, p. 44.

⁶⁸ Burton Watson, *Qin Dynasty*, p. 64.

⁶⁹ Burton Watson, *Qin Dynasty*, p. 63.

actual universe for the afterlife, following the argument that the image and the thing imaged merged.

We know that mounds and mountains were analogues because, while most emperors were buried under mounds near the capital, minor princes of the Han Imperial House were buried in vast chambered tombs, like palaces, within small limestone hills in eastern China.⁷⁰ In later centuries also, especially during the Tang period, mountain ranges were enlisted as the homes for the emperors in their afterlife. An immense mountain, now known as the Zhaoling, was chosen as the burial site for the Tang Emperor Taizong (AD 627–49) (Fig. 12). He is surrounded in death, as in life, by his wives, concubines, and members of his court. This mountain is mapped with court hierarchies and the Imperial family relationships. But in place of the figural sculptures that might have been used in the Mediterranean region, the relationships are celebrated spatially, by positions on the mountainside marked by inscribed stele naming the individuals and describing their ranks and achievements. Later dynasties, by and large, reverted to artificial mounds constructed on the Yellow River plain.

While these tomb retreats survive in large measure intact, the parks for which the Qin and Han emperors are famous are primarily known from texts, either from the histories, or from the *fu*, or rhapsodies.⁷¹ Great peaks and cliffs feature in both. As several authorities have discussed, these parks were microcosms of the universe: ‘the symbolic quality of the park as a mandala of the universe was also apparent in the orderly arrangement of the components. Animals were placed in different quarters of the park depending on their place of origin. The vegetation was planted according to the same principles, and even the rivers are said to have frozen only in the northern, not in the southern part.’⁷² All these parks might present mountains of the different directions, or specific mountains, such as Kunlun, or even more particularly the mountains on the Immortal Islands in the Eastern Sea. In 104 BC, Han Wudi had a lake, with these islands represented in it, constructed behind the principal hall of the Jianzhang Palace. Lush vegetation, rare plants, and fine metals and

⁷⁰ The use of actual mountains for a large number of members of the Imperial Liu family, perhaps as many as several hundred over the period of the four hundred years of the Han, indicates the seriousness with which the Han Imperial family viewed the need to be buried in a mountain. Many Liu family members were in addition supplied with jade suits. These practices marked a sharp change from those of the previous centuries, see Jessica Rawson, ‘Eternal Palaces of the Western Han: A New View of the Universe’.

⁷¹ The most renowned is the rhapsody on *The Great Forest, the Shanglin Park* by Sima Xiangru, Burton Watson, *Records of the Grand Historian*, vol. 2, pp. 308–19.

⁷² Lothar Ledderose, ‘The Earthly Paradise: Religious Elements in Chinese Art’, p. 166.



Figure 12. The Zhaoling, tomb of Tang Taizong (AD 627–49). Author's photograph.

stones enhanced the analogy between the islands in the lake and the islands in the sea.⁷³ This model was the forerunner of many later screen paintings showing these islands.

It is sometimes suggested that such parks and lakes were made as the sites for religious rituals, but they were, it seems, intended as sites in themselves that had the qualities of the originals; that is, they were by their very equivalence with the immortal islands expected to provide features of the originals. Like the tomb mounds and tomb pictures, this landscape had a distinct function. It was to enable the Emperor to meet the immortals. It was not a pleasure park to gaze at, but a universe to inhabit.

While the Imperial parks are the most obvious examples of universes that incorporated mountains, buildings too might present high peaks in their construction. The Hall of Numinous Brilliance in Lu is, from the very outset of the long rhapsody by Wang Yanshou, compared with the precipitous heaven-reaching peaks of the Kunlun range.⁷⁴ By entering the Hall,

⁷³ Lothar Ledderose, 'The Earthly Paradise: Religious Elements in Chinese Art', pp. 168–9.

⁷⁴ David Knechtges (trans.) Wen Xuan, *or Selections of Refined Literature by Xiao Tong*, vol. 2 (Princeton, 1987), pp. 265–6.

the participant in the ceremonies of court was engaging with the great mountain itself.⁷⁵

Several authorities have discussed smaller models that were made in later centuries. These, like the larger scale parks, were treated as equivalent to the actual mountains. A ninth-century story translated by Rolf Stein illustrates this well:

Xuan Jie, a Daoist who came to court wanted to return to the Eastern Sea and insistently ask the emperor for permission to do this. The latter would not agree. There was, in the palace, a wooden sculpture representing the Three Mountains of the Sea [the Isles of the Blessed: Penglai, Fangzhang and Yingzhou]. It was painted, decorated, and studded with pearls and pieces of jade. At the New Year, the emperor went to contemplate it along with Xuan Jie. Pointing his finger at the island of Penglai, he said, 'Unless one is a higher immortal, it isn't possible to reach this region.' Xuan Jie laughed and said, 'These three islands are only a foot high. No one could claim that they are difficult to reach. I do not have much power, but I will try to arrange a visit for Your Majesty so that you can inspect the beauty and ugliness of apparitions there.' Immediately he jumped into the air and *became smaller and smaller*. Then, suddenly, he entered by one of the gold and silver gates. The group called after him in vain; he was not seen again.⁷⁶

Such models, while included here in connection with parks, belonged to a long tradition initiated by Han period incense burners in the shape of mountain peaks.⁷⁷ Many of these seem to rise above a tumultuous sea and may, therefore, have represented Penglai. A later, and perhaps more secular, tradition was taken up by miniature gardens in trays and by gardens embellished with rocks, both large and small.⁷⁸ These gardens, which carry associations of the lands of the immortals, explain the use of garden imagery in the rear chamber of Wang Chuzhi's tomb.

Tomb and cave temple interiors

The very earliest surviving pictures of mountains occur within tombs. There are three contexts. The first, and arguably the earliest, is as the

⁷⁵ Even better known as an analogue of the universe is the structure known as the Ming Tang, recently fully discussed by Mark Lewis. This structure according to Han period texts incorporated a grid of rooms, each to be inhabited by the Emperor for a month in the year. Mark Lewis' study is still in progress. For an early study of the Ming Tang, see William E. Soothill, *The Hall of Light, A Study of Chinese Kingship* (1951).

⁷⁶ Rolf Stein, *The World in Miniature*, pp. 52–3, quoting from Su E, *Duyang zhibian* in *Baihai* B.6a.

⁷⁷ Susan Erickson, 'Boshanlu—Mountain Censers of the Western Han Period: A Typological and Iconological Analysis', *Archives of Asian Art*, 45 (1992), pp. 6–28.

⁷⁸ Allusion to pavilions of the immortals is seen in many paintings and in actual gardens, including the garden at the rear of the Forbidden City.

setting for strange and marvellous animals, which are often winged. Tiny examples have been found on inlaid bronzes (Fig. 13),⁷⁹ larger ones on the walls of tomb interiors.⁸⁰ In many of these examples clouds and mountains are indistinguishable.⁸¹ These flat images have their three-dimensional counterparts in the incense burners just mentioned and in the tomb of a Han general, Huo Qubing, whose tomb mound was covered with creatures carved from immense stone blocks.⁸² In the second context, mountains suggest the lands of the Queen Mother of the West, who is often shown sitting on a mountain peak (Fig. 14). In the third, a series of hills is the lair of the much-feared *hu*, or non-Chinese peoples, whose terrain had to be crossed if the tomb occupant wished to visit the Queen Mother of the West.⁸³ These scenes were part of a complex of images that pictured or modelled all aspects of the afterlife deemed necessary to the tomb occupant: banquets, farming and expeditions were all included also.

Tomb images are important, not because they are flat images that can be looked at, but rather because they provided a setting for the tomb occupant. He or she did not view them. They exploited them as part of their universe. This functional relationship between the tomb structure with its decoration and the tomb occupant was intensified by changes in the structure of tombs following the fall of the Han. In place of the multi-chambered tombs of the Han, those of the succeeding centuries had fewer rooms, and these mirrored the universe more clearly than before. From at least the later Han period onwards, the principal tomb chamber was frequently domed and often painted with sun, moon, stars, and the Milky Way. It presented the circular heavens over the square plan of the room representing the earth. In a fourth- to fifth-century AD tomb at Jiuquan in Gansu province (Fig. 14),⁸⁴ at the rim of the dome, which provides the heavens, is a ring of mountains. These are the mountains that link heaven with the scenes of the earth and daily life on the lower

⁷⁹ Best known of these is the inlaid chariot fitting discussed by Wu Hung, 'The Sanpan Shan Chariot Ornament and the Xiangrui Design in Western Han Art', *Archives of Asian Art*, 37 (1984), pp. 38–59.

⁸⁰ Many examples are found in Eastern Han stone tombs, see *Shandong Han huaxiangshi xuanji* (Ji'nan, 1982), nos. 136, 537; *Shaanbei Handai huaxiangshi* (Xi'an, 1995), pp. 80–1, 194, 226–7.

⁸¹ Chu lacquer painting may underlie this relationship, *Chu qiqi yanjiu* (Hong Kong, 1991), no. 87, where animals emerge among cloud scrolls, see Max Loehr, 'The Fate of Ornament in Chinese Art', *Archives of Asian Art*, 21 (1967–1968), pp. 8–19.

⁸² Ann Paludan, *The Chinese Spirit Road, The Classical Tradition of Stone Tomb Statuary* (New Haven and London, 1991), pp. 15–27.

⁸³ *Yi'nan gu huaxiang shimu fajue baogao* (Nanjing, 1956), rubbing 1.

⁸⁴ *Wenwu*, 1979.6, pp. 1–17.

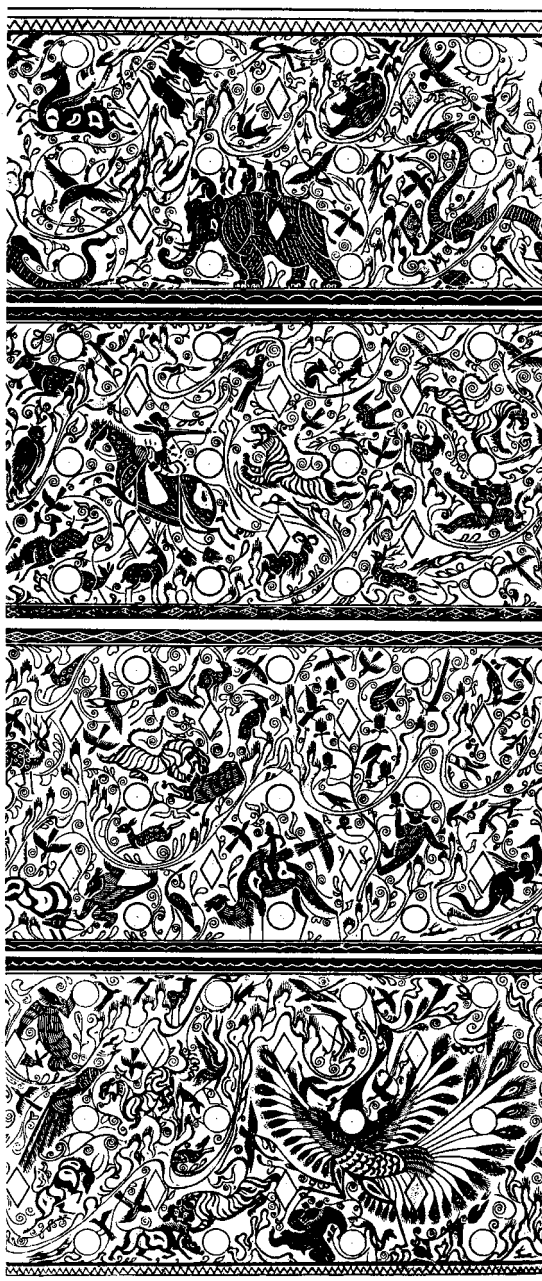


Figure 13. Drawing of scenes of animals amid a cloud like scroll that suggests a landscape inlaid on a bronze chariot fitting. From tomb M 122 at Ding xian in Hebei province. Height 26.6 cm. Western Han period, first century BC. After, *A Selection of Archaeological Finds of the People's Republic of China* (Beijing, 1976), no. 66.



Figure 14. Part of the domed ceiling showing the Queen Mother of the West seated on a peak above a mountain range dividing the heavens from the earth, in tomb 5 at Dingjiazha at Jiuquan in Gansu province. Fourth to fifth century AD. After *Jiuquan Shiliuguo mu bishu* (Beijing, 1989).

walls. Rising on a high peak is the Queen Mother, and riding among the clouds are the Heavenly Horse and a miraculous deer, as well as a small figure of an immortal, swept by the wind among the clouds. The physical structure combined with the painted images provided these aspects of the heavens and earth for the tomb occupant. Tomb pictures have later counterparts, a few of which will be mentioned below.

A direct parallel is provided in a cave temple, no. 249 at the Buddhist site at Dunhuang in Gansu.⁸⁵ An exactly similar division of the heavens and the earth is painted on the walls and the ceiling, with a row of mountains dividing the two spheres. In the heavens appear the deities of thunder and of the wind, who also occur much earlier in Han carved tomb reliefs. In place of the everyday world, the lower walls are decorated with Buddhist figures, as they might be manifested to believers. Here, a Buddhist universe was realised. As in the tomb, the positioning of a person in the temple in relation to a universe that surrounded him or her was important. In both tombs and cave temples, the main protagonist was

⁸⁵ *Chugokku Sekkutsu. Tōnkō Makkō-kutsu*, 5 vols. (Tokyo, 1981, et seq.), vol. 1, nos. 98–100.

placed squarely within a universe, in which mountains defined the boundary between the heavens and the earth. Thus the painted walls helped to map the individual into this universe.

Mountains as analogies in screen paintings

Screens in a palace, house or temple take up similar but distinctive functions. The mountains they present are no longer physically present. Instead the associations of the mountains accrue to the main protagonist seated in front of them. Some authorities have talked about the secular qualities of mountain painting. But mountains were painted on screens long before they can be said to have acquired a secular dimension.

The earliest surviving screen is from tomb M1 (second century BC) at Mawangdui, Changsha, in Hunan Province.⁸⁶ It carries a lively dragon, an auspicious creature, whose presence would ensure good fortune (Fig. 15). The woman who occupied the tomb was expected to sit in front of the screen to receive food and would not have been the main viewer of the dragon; her servants and relatives would have seen her against the background of the dragon. The woman was thus set in an auspicious context or space by the screen.

As Wu Hung has argued, screens make a boundary, and place the persons seated in front of them in a defined space shared by the subject of the painting on the screen.⁸⁷ Like the paintings on the walls of the Jiuquan tomb (Fig 14), they even create a territory for those seated in front of them. Paintings that were located on screens had thus a relationship with a person, physically placed in front of them. This spatial function of screens and the paintings on them relates them to the maps and charts of the cosmos mentioned in the first part of the paper. Many screens were painted in Han to Tang period tombs, but also importantly some surviving sixth-century screens carved in stone surround the couches on which the coffins, that is, the tomb occupant, would have been placed.

Several are exotic in character, depicting the lives of sixth-century Zoroastrians living in China. A particularly notable example, belonging to one Anjia (d. 579 AD), was recently excavated at Xi'an (Fig. 16).⁸⁸ It shows

⁸⁶ *Changsha Mawangdui yihao Hanmu*, 2 vols. (Beijing, 1973), vol. 1, p. 94, fig. 89.

⁸⁷ Wu Hung, *The Double Screen, Medium and Representation in Chinese Painting*, pp. 1–28. In addition to an important perspective on the function of screens in creating or defining space, Wu Hung's book provides interesting examples that complement items discussed here.

⁸⁸ *Wenwu*, 2001.1, pp. 4–26.

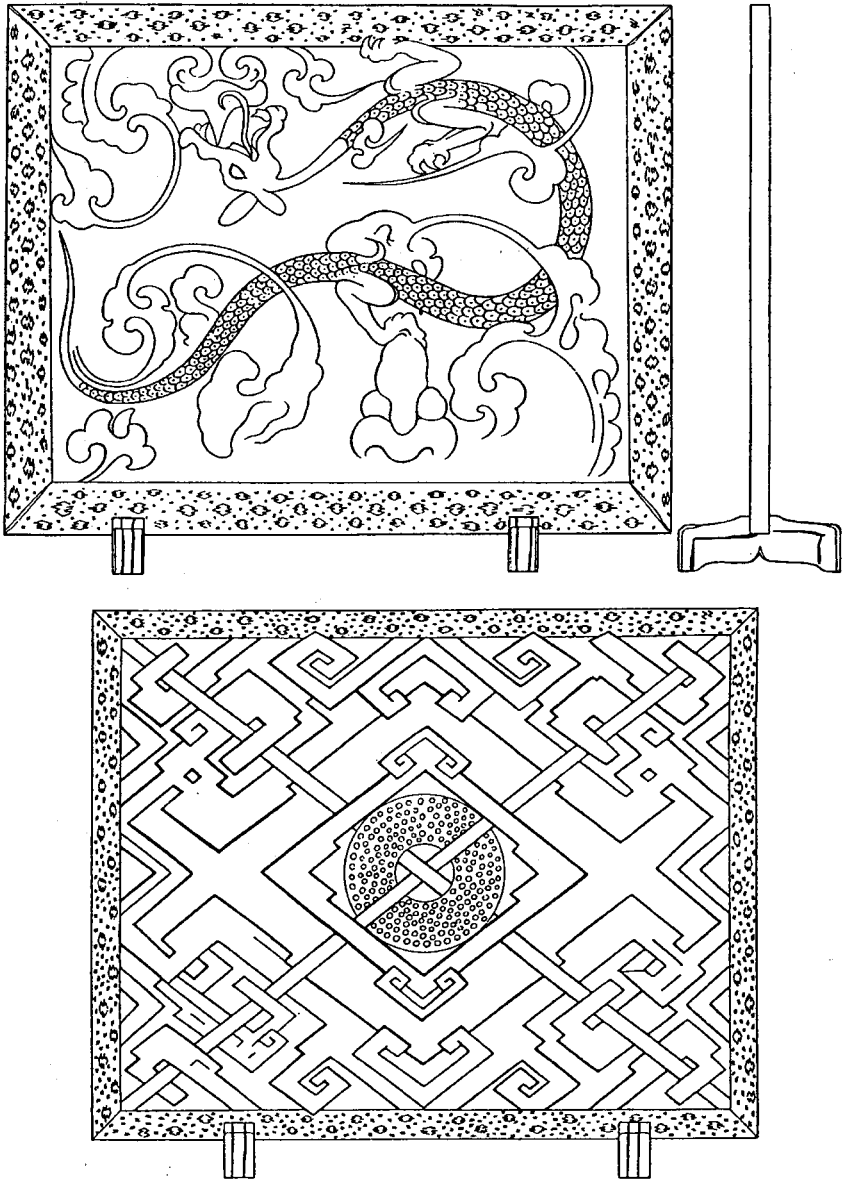


Figure 15. Drawing of a screen displaying a figure of a dragon on one side and a jade disc, an auspicious symbol, on the other. From the tomb of Lady Dai at Mawangdui, Changsha, Hunan province. Second century BC. After *Changsha Mawangdui yi hao Han mu*, 2 vols. (Beijing, 1973), vol. 1, p. 94, fig. 89.



Figure 16. A stone screen, and detail, encircling coffin bed from the tomb of Anjia (d. AD 579), at Xi'an. After *Wenwu* 2001.1, pp. 4-26, fig. 13.

the future life of the tomb occupant amid landscapes, including some hunting scenes with hills in the background.⁸⁹ The screen would have surrounded Anjia's body and offered him his world. Another screen found at Tianshui in Gansu is in a more traditional Chinese style, though also supporting scenes in the afterlife of the tomb occupant.⁹⁰ Michelle Bambling has noted that the Tianshui couch was located so that the directions it presented corresponded with the actual orientation of the tomb, and the scenes unfolded on it from right to left and from Spring to Autumn.⁹¹ In other words, a universe carved in images, resulted in the deceased being surrounded by a world in which the seasons and the sun and the moon revolved eternally in the screen panels. The positions of the sun and moon are critical to our further discussion, as they indicate that screens not only presented place, but also time and, probably, the seasons. The tomb occupant was thus placed at the centre of a spatial-temporal universe.

While tombs provided universes for the afterlife, as already mentioned, the paintings in cave temples created a different kind of cosmos, namely a Buddhist one. At Dunhuang in Gansu, panelled screens that depicted scenes from the lives of the Buddha or miracles of the present and future Buddhas might surround figures of the Buddha and his attendants (Fig. 17).⁹² Like the screens from Xi'an and Tianshui described above, these pictures were directly relevant to the figures in front of them. For the contents of the scenes were narratives that illuminated aspects of Buddhist teaching and, thus, presented a universe that conformed with Buddhist scripture. In most cases, these events were set in a landscape. Or, instead, the main figures of the Buddha and Bodhisattvas, themselves, might be shown against a landscape, thus giving to them the associations of the mountains (Fig. 18). The associations of these mountains would be with the miraculous events that occurred in them and not with the great Sacred Mountains of the directions.

At this juncture, we see some sort of exchange between the literal and symbolic uses of the mountain landscapes. Paintings on screens in Buddhist contexts that show figures in landscape are in effect presentations of events in a given mountainous region; they are, therefore, similar

⁸⁹ On the whole tomb occupants in paintings and carvings in Han dynasty tombs are shown indoors. With changes that took place in the sixth century, more scenes set in landscape became current, see *Wenwu*, 2001.7, pp. 40–51.

⁹⁰ *Kaogu*, 1992.1, pp. 46–52.

⁹¹ Annette Juliano and Judith Lerner, *Monks and Merchants, Silk Road Treasures From Northwest China, Gansu and Ningxia, 4th–7th Century* (New York, 2001), pp. 304–9.

⁹² Zhao Qinglan, 'Mogaoku Turbo shiqi dongku kannei pingfenghua yanjiu', *Dunhuang yanjiu*, 1994.3, pp. 49–61.



Figure 17. Detail of the central niche of cave 112 at the caves of the Thousand Buddhas, Dunhuang, Gansu province, showing a Bodhisattva standing in front of a screen depicting landscape scenes. Tang period, Eighth to ninth century. After *Dunhuang shiku yishu* (Nanjing, 2000), vol. 57, cave 112.



Figure 18. The Water Moon Guanyin seated in front of a rocky mountain, in the Yulin caves at Anxi, Gansu province. Xixia period, thirteenth century. After *Gansu Anxi Yulinku* (Chengdu, 1999), p. 12.

to the scenes in the screens from sixth-century tombs (Fig. 16). When the principal figure of the Buddha or Bodhisattva was to be seen against the screen itself, rather than inside the landscape, the figure acquired the associations of that landscape and of the stories depicted within it (Fig.

18). Likewise screens in throne rooms of the Imperial palace offered the associations of landscape to the living emperors.

It is possible that many of the early surviving great mountains paintings, such as *Early Spring* by Guo Xi of the late eleventh-century (Fig. 1), were deployed in palace settings.⁹³ Reconstructions of the Jade Hall of the scholars of the Hanlin Academy of the Imperial palace during the eleventh century by Ogawa Hiromitsu, followed by Scarlett Jang, show the position of an Imperial throne in front of a screen, itself in turn in front of a wall painted with peaked mountains arising out of the sea.⁹⁴ The title, the Jade Hall, was part of an elaborate analogy. It referred to the palace of the same name, which was so named to allude to the jade halls in which deities were thought to live, as for example the Queen Mother of the West on Mount Kunlun. By analogy, the scholars of the Hanlin academy in their Jade Hall acquired associations with the immortals. The emperor, when visiting the Hall, would not have been a viewer; he would himself have been seen against the double backgrounds, in an enclosed space provided by the screen and then in the larger space of the whole hall. It is also probably pertinent that the mountain paintings in such halls did not exist in isolation. They were part of a larger composition that covered three sides of the room and extended into galleries.⁹⁵ The role of these paintings would seem to have been to position the emperor symbolically in a universe, using the paintings, with their allusions, to describe that universe.⁹⁶ The associations of the mountains were then connected with the emperor.

In this and other instances the references were often manifold. First of all, mountains as links between heaven and earth were analogous with the emperor, who likewise linked the empire and the heavens. Secondly, the height and eminence of the mountains were also qualities that accrued to

⁹³ While the surviving painting, *Early Spring*, may have been either a hanging scroll or a screen painting, it is recorded that Guo Xi also painted on walls, Susan Bush and Hsio-yen Shih, *Early Chinese Texts on Painting*, p. 122.

⁹⁴ Scarlett Jang, 'Realm of the Immortals: Paintings Decorating the Jade Hall of the Northern Song', *Ars Orientalis*, 22 (1992), pp. 81–96.

⁹⁵ Such complex compositions parallel the painted arrangements of tombs such as that of the Daoist master, Feng Daozhen. *Wenwu*, 1962.10, pp. 34–46. He was buried at Datong in Shanxi province in 1265. A fine landscape is painted along the north wall but importantly it extends either side onto the east and west walls, thus surrounding the coffin and placing Feng within the landscape itself. In addition paintings of cranes accompanied the landscape painting. Cranes and bamboo paintings also contributed to the composition in the Jade Hall.

⁹⁶ It was common to present deities such as the Buddha in front of mountains, see *Wenwu*, 2001.10, pp. 19–38, fig. 25.

him. And in the Jade Hall, representation of islands of the eastern seas suggested that the emperor was to be blessed by auspicious qualities of those islands.

When mountains were and are thus used as analogies and for their associations, they come close to Western notions of metaphor. Literary theorists have debated the question of whether the natural phenomena so favoured in China can be treated as metaphors. The earliest compilation of poems in the *Book of Songs*, the *Shi jing*, (c.600 BC), provided the basis on which analogies to match natural phenomena with human qualities was developed. It has been argued that, rather than describing the use of imagery of flowers, birds or mountains as metaphors, this early imagery can be interpreted as exploiting Chinese theories of category.⁹⁷ Thus the beauty of a young woman and the fragility of a prunus flower can be compared, because the flower and the young women belong to linked categories. Likewise, a sage, or a ruler, and a mountain were treated as comparable. The height and eminence of the mountain were used to illumine spiritual heights and eminence of a sage, a Buddhist deity or the emperor (Fig. 18).⁹⁸

This kind of analogy is presented by a mural painting in Jingxin temple (Fig. 19), which places a sage in front of a screen within a mountainous landscape. Of course, the painter could simply have set the sage in a landscape. But the screen surrounding the sage offers an extra dimension, that of spiritual authority. Placing the sage and the screen in a landscape, rather than in a building, or at court, adds a further association, that is, a separation from humdrum life, and with that separation is linked a purity or humility of spirit. This mountain-painted screen not only provides a setting, but also draws attention to several levels of meaning more clearly than the actual landscape alone could have done.

⁹⁷ For such accounts, see Pauline Yu, *The Reading of Imagery in the Chinese Poetic Tradition* (Princeton, 1987); Kiyohiko Munakata, 'Concepts of *Lei* and *Kan-lei* in Early Chinese Art Theory', in Susan Bush and Christian Murck (eds.), *Theories of the Arts in China*, pp. 105–31. This argument has been rather effectively countered by Stephen Bokenkamp, 'Chinese Metaphor Again: Reading—And Understanding—Imagery in the Chinese Poetic Tradition', *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 109, no. 2 (1989), pp. 211–21. Obviously a variety of views of imagery can be accepted. It is unlikely that Chinese use of analogies exactly parallels the European. In later literature, the term metaphor seems to be appropriate, see Haun Saussy, *The Problem of a Chinese Aesthetic* (Stanford, 1993).

⁹⁸ Hans Frankel discusses a poem by Meng Haoran (AD 689–740) which exploits such an analogy, Hans Frankel, 'The Contemplation of the Past in T'ang Poetry', in Arthur F. Wright and Denis Twitchett (eds.), *Perspectives on the T'ang* (New Haven and London, 1973), pp. 345–65.



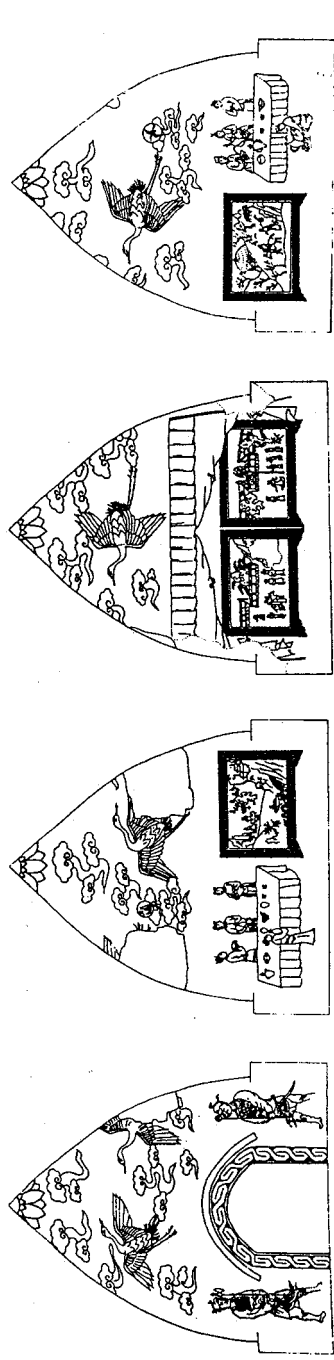
Figure 19. A sage seated in front of a screen depicting a landscape placed in a landscape. From the Jingxin temple in Taiigu county, Shanxi province. Qing dynasty, seventeenth to eighteenth century. After *Shanxi sijuan bishua* (Beijing, 1997), pl. 357.

While mountain paintings were, it seems, increasingly employed for their associations, these did not entirely oust the use of paintings in tombs to provide mountains in the afterlife. We have, indeed, evidence from many tombs of periods later than the tenth century (illustrated here, Fig. 2) that show that, in tombs, screen paintings provided the landscapes for the tomb occupant. A remarkable example is in a tomb of the Yuan dynasty (1279–1368) at Chifeng in Inner Mongolia. Here, the interior is painted to show the sun and moon and the familiar cranes and clouds on the ceiling, with servants at tables to provide food for the tomb occupant. Set up, as if among the tables, are painted screens with scenes in gardens or mountains, illustrating the life of the tomb occupant outside his dwelling (Fig. 20). Thus the screens enable the outside world to be included in the provisions in the tomb, and they would appear to make it possible for the tomb occupant to wander in the mountains in the after life. These screens parallel the mountain screen and garden in the rear room of the tomb of Wang Chuzhi, and they continue practices seen in the tomb of Anjia (Fig. 16).⁹⁹ Indeed the Chifeng tomb confirms that pictures of mountains had functions, that is to provide landscape, even as late as the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

The Chinese mountain painting tradition is, therefore, especially noteworthy on several counts. The paintings were not produced simply as aesthetic responses to the natural world. For they could not have come into existence without the prevailing acceptance, from the third or second centuries BC of a particular structure of the Chinese cosmos and of the possibility of assimilating earlier mountain cults within it. Claims that mountains were links between heaven and earth, or even the companions of heaven, were also necessary conditions. As important was the view that, in a tomb, an image of a mountain would function like the mountain, a view that clearly persisted even later than the Yuan period just mentioned (Fig. 20).

These ancient views had a continuous, if not always obvious, influence on later painting traditions. Mountains continued to be analogies for eminence of position and of spirit, and were so deployed in poetry as well as painting. They were also treated as sites of enlightenment and of contact with the spirit world. When mountains were depicted on screens, their associations were linked with the figures placed in front of them. In all

⁹⁹ Other closely related examples show the continued use of landscape painting with a literal function. A twelfth-century pair of tombs in Sichuan province has a landscape carving at the very rear of the coffin chambers, *Kaogu xuebao* 1985.3, pp. 383–402. The best preserved of the two examples shows mountains across a sea, presumably once more Penglai.



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Figure 20. Drawings of the interior of a Yuan period tomb, thirteenth to fourteenth century, at Chifeng in Inner Mongolia. After *Wenwu* 1992.2 pp. 24-7, fig. 3.

these contexts, the physical position of the main protagonist in front of the mountain (with his back to it) was a necessary condition to achieve the desired relationships. Early Chinese mountain paintings were not so much windows on a world, as a part of a map or diagram of the world working for the benefit of those fortunate enough to sit in front of them.