

## **Landmarks in the World of Change**

Like all ancient traditions, the World of Change is an animate or living world peopled with gods and goddesses, spirits and ghosts, heroes and helpers and demons. It is full of shrines, altars and places of close encounter with these gods and spirits. This symbolic world, woven into the divinatory tradition of *Change*, is more than a vanished and foreign past. It shows us a deep tradition, the basic ways our imagination, our soul, works.

### **The Landscape of Change**

The landscape of Change grew out northern China and its frontier regions and is directly reflected in many of the figures or hexagrams. This is a world of wide plains (Figures 26, 34) bounded and divided by mountains (Figures 51, 33), with arching skies where the weather comes sudden and violent (Figures 51, 30, 9). It is a land of extreme contrasts, cut by great rivers (Figure 29), dense thickets and fertile marshes (Figure 58) that drain into the Nine Rivers. There are farms and fields, village clusters (Figure 37), fortified cities (Figure 45), great palaces, tombs and towers (Figures 19, 20). The areas of culture are surrounded and divided by dense brush, wild rivers and rugged mountains inhabited by wild animals, nomads, outlaws and barbarians, tribal groups apart from the civilizing movement of the plains peoples. This world was a civilized island in a sea of barbarians, with permeable boundaries that allowed a constant fertile interchange with the worlds outside the borders (Figures 56, 38). The entire landscape is dotted with ancestral temples (Figure 18), tombs (Figure 19), grave mounds, Earth Altars (Figure 2), hidden mountain shrines (Figures 10, 33) and River-Mountain festival sites (Figure 31) that were an image of paradise.

### **The Shape of the Turtle**

The sacred shape of this world was the form of *Linggui*, the Numinous Turtle that provided one of its main oracles. This sacred cosmos also reflects the shape of the human heart (*xin*).

The *Fu-sang* or Sun Tree from which the Ten Suns rise (Figure 35) lies to the east; in the far west the *Ruo* or Moon Tree on which they set (Figure 36). Each tree has a pool at its base in which the Mothers bathe the suns and the moons. Beneath the earth are the underground Ghost River (Figure 29) and the Yellow Springs that connect the two trees and make them one, the World Tree or Bushy Mulberry (Figures 3, 12). Above is Sky, Heaven (Figure 1) and the Great Bear or Dipper (Figure 55), the court of *Shang Di*, the Lord Above who gives the fates and his court of Royal Ancestors.

The flat, square Earth (Figure 2) is spread between the round Heaven (1) and the underworld waters (29), extending to the Four Sides or Directions (*si fang*), Hidden Lands from which spirits enter the human world and home of mysterious bird-headed wind spirits of the winds with power over rain, weather and harvest.

### **The World Tree and the Axis Mundi**

The Great Sacrifice (Figure 11) performed to the Four Sides was also performed to The Mountain or Peak (*Yue*) and The River (*He*). These sites go back to Neolithic times as cult centers. The Mountain was also known as the capital of Yu the Great (Figures 8, 39, and 50), who tamed the waters, brought forth the land and forged the first bronze vessels, the Nine *Ding*. It is reflected in the sacred mountains throughout the landscape (Figures 11, 33, and 52).

The Four Hidden Lands and the square earth (Figure 2) revolve around an axis that connects Heaven, Earth and the rushing Ghost River beneath (Figure 29). This ceremonial axis is a World Tree (Figure 3) or *axis mundi*, a zone of absolute reality where there is perfect access to the spirit world. It can be established or invoked at any site where the high ritual or divination is performed, particularly through the use of the bronze sacrificial vessels (Figure 50) or at the monumental Royal Tombs, gates to the Ancestors and the High Lord.

This center of the world is where the dead rest in peace and receive the great offerings, the place from which their blessings flow.