CHAPTER TEN

TWENTY FOUR DIFFICULT PROBLEMS

Problem 1

Whether mountains or waters face or turn their backs indicates being without feeling or having feeling. Was it the purpose of the great method of ancient nodes to prevent people from falling into error?

The Reply

For mountains, access to water is the front and, therefore, not having access to water is the back. Vegetation is the front and that which is coarse rock is the back. Moisture is the front and dryness the back. Brightness is the front and darkness the back. Where the configurational force approaches is the front and where it departs the back. What is even and solid is the front and that which is steep and collapsing the back. Where there is a commanding situation is the front and where there is a losing situation is the back.

To sum up, in an area of mountains and rivers there must be a mountain which is the tallest and most exalted and which is dominant. This is called the ancestral mountain. In terms of the direction of this mountain, even though there are branches from each of the eight directions, more are certain to emerge at the face of the major configurational force; the mountain subsides and rises again, breaks off and reconnects, but is certain to face water at the front and follow it so that they hasten forward together. Where qi focuses, the form must swerve and there is interaction with the water; all others rush back along with the configurational force of the mountain. This is a clear sign that there is access to water.

If the configurational force turns, the lines of the rocks must turn. The rocks are the bones of the mountains. Thus the Classic says, “The configurational force of a mountain is the original bones. The configurational force of the land is the original veins”.1 When one knows the origin of its begin-

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1 The classic referred to here is the Book of Burial Rooted in Antiquity of Guo Pu although in this the earth rather than the land is mentioned before the mountain. See JDBS, p. 1L.
ning, one is able to claim its end. Is it not that the end is where the front exists?

Ancient men said that the mountains under heaven are such that they follow the flow of water. Where the mountain faces (the node), the water also faces it. This can be understood without the need to speak of it.

Ancient men said that for a mountain which has the advantage of luxuriant qi one treats the luxuriance as the front. Luxuriance has been described as the spirit of a mountain. Without a keen intelligence one will not be able to understand this. Without understanding this, it would be futile to speak of facing and turning away from (the node). If there are no special indications of facing or turning away from (the node), it is difficult to speak of their subtlety. Thus, the more one faces it the larger the end must be and if one turns from it when it is close by, even though there is some gain, it must be minute.

While two brothers may rule separate states of relatively equal power, abroad they will necessarily be in opposition. There must be a significant difference between the powers of the subject and the ruler so that when together in one location, the noble and the inferior are differentiated. Although they have their positions, the feeling in the end is to protect the ruler which requires the application of power.

How does this come about? The distribution of the amounts of basic elements is unequal. The nature of mountains and rivers is also like this. Understand this and the true and false can be distinguished, the large and small differentiated and the auspicious and inauspicious determined.

**Problem 2**

In the departure and approach of a dragon there are many breakings off and prostrations, which people of this world have succeeded in studying. The masters of these times have pointed out that coming and going is not fixed. In seeking to generalise, how does one begin?

**The Reply**

Passing water is what stops the approaching dragon. The Classic says that the external qi turns at an angle, the internal qi stops and thus vital qi becomes water. To turn at an angle refers to obstructed movement. If mountains, ridges and mounds pile up in an unbroken line, as there is a sustained wavering and stumbling form, there is no need for investigation to know that the approach has stopped.