'NATURAL' AND 'SYMBOLIC' ENERGY OF MOUNTAINS

by

DINO GILBERT HAAK

B.A., University of Hawaii at Manoa, 1992

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL SATISFACTION OF

THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS

in

THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

(Department of Geography)

We accept this thesis as conforming

to the required standard

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

July 1998

© Dino Gilbert Haak, 1998
In presenting this thesis in partial fulfilment of the requirements for an advanced degree at the University of British Columbia, I agree that the Library shall make it freely available for reference and study. I further agree that permission for extensive copying of this thesis for scholarly purposes may be granted by the head of my department or by his or her representatives. It is understood that copying or publication of this thesis for financial gain shall not be allowed without my written permission.

Department of Geography

The University of British Columbia
Vancouver, Canada

Date 07/17/1998

DE-6 (2/88)
Abstract

All over the world, mountains are considered to be extraordinary places. Why is this? In this thesis I will examine the proposition that mountains are extraordinary places because they display levels of 'natural energy' which are different from the levels of 'natural energy' found in lowlands and other landscape features. This high level of natural energy has been recognized by many people and is evident in the myths, lore, and belief systems of cultures around the world. Many mountains have been regarded as sacred as a result of observations of increased levels of 'natural' energy in a particular mountain landscape; all sacred mountains have 'symbolic energy' as well as 'natural energy'.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract ........................................................................................................... ii

List of Figures................................................................................................. vi

Chapter I  'Natural' and 'Symbolic' Energy............................................. 1

1.1 Introduction ......................................................................................... 1
1.2 'Natural and 'Symbolic Energy of Mountains................................. 2
1.3 Natural Energy and Mountains......................................................... 5
1.4 Navajo Mountains............................................................................. 10
1.5 The Navajo Nilch'i and Mountains.................................................... 11
1.6 Life-giving Powers of the Navajo Mountains................................. 13
1.7 Sacred Mountains in China............................................................... 16
1.8 Examples of interpretations of Natural Energy around the World..... 21

Chapter II  Physical Manifestations of Natural Energy on Mountains...... 25

2.1 Gravity ............................................................................................... 26
2.2 Volcanic Activity................................................................................ 28
2.3 Sounds on Mountains....................................................................... 29
2.4 Climatological Phenomena............................................................... 31
2.5 Other Climatological Phenomena:
  The Mountain Glory............................................................................. 32
2.6 Friction.............................................................................................. 35

Chapter III  Psychic-Energetic Aspects of Natural Energy...................... 37

3.1 Natural energy and the mind.............................................................. 38
3.2 "Psychic Radiation"........................................................................... 41
Chapter IV Symbolic Energy

4.1 Physical and Symbolic Influence of the Mountain Environment
4.2 Visual Effects
4.3 Climbers' Reports
4.4 Mountains Symbolize the Point of Connection between Earth and Heaven
4.5 The Symbolic Connection of Chinese Mountains and Stars
4.6 Mountains Symbolize a Connection to the Divine
4.7 Mountains are seen as Symbols of a Culture's Religious Beliefs
4.8 Mountains as a Symbolic Centre
4.9 Universal Ideas about a Cosmic Sacred Mountain
4.10 Mountains are associated with Death and Burial
4.11 Mountains are Symbols for Life, Birth, and Creation
4.12 Mountains Symbolize Human Beings
4.13 Pilgrims

Chapter V Natural Energy that can be Felt

Chapter VI Strange phenomena

6.1 Unexplained Light Phenomena
6.2 Extraordinary Climatological Oddities
6.3 Mountains are Places of UFO Sightings
List of Figures

1. Adams Peak .....................................................98
2. Mount Everest ..................................................99
3. Kailas ..........................................................100
4. Mount Kenya ....................................................101
5. Kilimanjaro ......................................................102
6. Mount Rainier ...................................................103
7. Wutai-Shan ......................................................104
Chapter I: 'Natural' and 'Symbolic' Energy

1.1 Introduction

Mountains are places of increased energy. They are more than lifeless landscape features, as they emit energies that can influence people. 'Natural Energy' is physical (it can be heard, seen, and felt) as well as psychical (it can be perceived by mind and intuition). It influences the area on and around a mountain physically (e.g. forces of gravity, strange phenomena etc.) as well as psychically (reports of strange sensations, feelings, visions, divine beings). The physical and psychical nature of mountains and the symbols they represent for an individual (or a culture) influences the psyche of an individual (or culture) and can therefore increase the personal energy level in an individual (or culture).

'Symbolic energy' binds the physical and the psychical aspects of natural energy. Sacred mountains may serve as powerful symbols to entire cultures, yet any mountain could be of symbolical significance to an individual or culture. The mountaineer, for example, feels the symbolic energy of the mountain as he prepares for his ascent. He is obsessed with the mountain, his only goal is to reach the summit. As he begins his climb his focal point is the summit. In a way he draws energy from the summit which symbolizes the quest, the goal, and the achievement. It is the symbolical energy of the mountain that
draws the mountaineer, it fills him with energy and dulls the pain and hardship of the ascent.

The symbolic energy of mountains also makes the Hindu pilgrim circumnavigate Mount Kailas on his knees, it makes Japanese Buddhist monks ritually climb Mount Fuji, or Native American shamans conduct their purification rites on mountains.

1.2 'Natural' and 'Symbolic' Energy of Mountains

Physical forces on mountains can be measured as energy: forces of gravity, climatological phenomena, electromagnetic energy, and seismic activity. Psychic forces can be felt by certain individuals and their existence has been incorporated into the mythology of societies familiar with a mountain. Psychic energy cannot be measured scientifically, yet there are a number of reports from around the world that describe the 'psychic emanations' coming from certain mountains.

The combination of physical and psychic energies has been described and named by cultures and philosophers around the world. Commonly the descriptions of this energy mention a so called "life-force" that permeates all things. Different cultures have different names for this energy. In China for example it is called ch'i (qi in the modern rominization), in India brahma, yet
for this thesis I shall use the term 'natural energy'. Mountains, as places of increased natural energy, are places that are imbued with more 'life-force' than other landscape features. This force is physical as well as psychic or spiritual: The spiritual nature of this energy is often said to bring about physical energetic phenomena on the mountain. Most cultures seem to have a term that describes an existing 'energetic life-force', yet only a few cultures, we might call them mountain-loving cultures, seem to directly link this life-force to mountains.

In *The Pilgrim's Guide to Planet Earth*, Hazrat Inayat Khan nicely sums up this perception of mountains:

Every mountain has a spirit. The geologic history, vegetation and human activities participate, but foremost is the living presence which illuminates the surrounding space...some [of these mountains] are holy mountains which exude power and a light to those who care to look...[they] are a purifying force. Like fire, they should be approached with caution and respect. They are magnets, spiritual force fields which draw to them those of suitable substance. As with divinity, we grow towards mountains by the attraction of similarity. The places of power draw the energetic. The heights call to those who would ascend. (Khan 1974:70-71)

In addition to their inherent levels of physical and psychic energy, mountains serve as powerful symbols for cultures and individuals around the world. Sacred mountains may serve as powerful cultural symbols as 'centres of the world' and a physical connection to the divine. Yet any mountain could be of symbolical

---

1 For a detailed description of the perception of 'natural energy' around the world, read section 1.8 Examples of Interpretations of 'Natural Energy' around the World.
significance to an individual or culture. The power of their symbolism can have an energetic effect on a culture and individuals. For example, many devoted Hindu pilgrims have developed the strength to circumambulate Mount Kailas in India. The circumambulation is accomplished through very challenging terrain, but many pilgrims have reportedly crawled around the mountain on their knees! The powerful symbolism of the divine, being represented by the mountain, gave these people the energy and will-power to accomplish their pilgrimage. Mountain symbolism does not necessarily have to be of a divine nature. Take the case of the mountaineer who prepares years ahead for the ascent of a particular mountain. The mountain symbolizes for him a personal goal, the peak is the final destination to be reached, the ultimate goal. Symbolic energy is not measurable scientifically, yet certain mountains, such as Mount Kailas, or Mount Fuji, can become symbols that energize even entire cultures.

Around the world mountains play a significant role for many cultures for various reasons. In China, the worship of great mountains as the embodiments of mysterious power was one of the major elements of the Chinese State religion (Munakata 1991:2). Emperors prayed to these mountains from the early Zhou to the end of the Qing dynasties in order to ensure the prosperity of the state (Munakata 1991:2).

Numerous cultures have a particular mountain (or mountains) which they consider sacred, or, which at least occupies an important place in their folklore or mythology. For example,
Fuji-san is an important mountain for the Japanese, so is Kailas for Hindu believers, Adams Peak or Samanala for the Ceylonese, and Omei Shan and Wutai Shan for the Chinese. Mountains that are considered sacred and mythologically significant probably have been given this classification because of certain cultural or physical events that have taken place on or in the vicinity of a mountain (such as volcanic eruptions). All mountains share similarities in their energies, yet there are certain sacred mountains with extraordinarily strong levels of natural energy.

1.3 Natural Energy and Mountains

John Jerome writes that "the flatlands are dead; it is all over for them. Where there is zero declination, where the slope stops, where erosion slows down to a stagnant, meandering trickle, there the earth feels worn out. Worn down to the sea level, the lowest common denominator, the ultimate dull average. How weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable indeed, the uses of such a world." (Jerome 1978:259) While Jerome's view on the 'lifelessness' of the lowlands may seem exaggerated--natural energy, in my opinion exists in every landscape feature of this planet--there is evidence that mountain environments are places of increased energy; mountain environments do seem to be more 'alive' than the flatlands. There are a number of conflicting theories about the
connection between natural energy and mountains. Sahra Rossbach, a Western feng-shui practitioner who has written numerous books about *ch'i* [or natural energy], argues that "*ch'i* determines the height of mountains, the quality of blooms, the extent of potential fulfillment... and while all things—hills, streams, trees, humans, stones—inhale *ch'i*, they also exhale it, thus affecting each other." (Rossbach 1983:21)

Much of Rossbach's book relies on quotations from feng-shui master Lin Yun. Lin Yun offers an explanation why mountains are places of increased natural energy. He believes that "*ch'i* spirals around and around in the earth, ever changing, sometimes 'exhaling', toward the crust, sometimes 'inhaling' towards its depth, always pulsating" and manifesting itself in landscape features such as high mountains, a deep ravine, or a desert." (Rossbach 1983:21) Lin Yun says that in course of its turning, *ch'i* may rise near the earth's surface, creating mountains. Or it may expand so strongly that it may erupt into a volcano, in order to finally escape. For example, if *ch'i* recedes too far in the earth's crust, the land will be dry desert-like and flat (Rossbach 1983:24). From Lin Yun's description of *ch'i*, one can conclude that mountainous areas and mountains themselves seem to be places of high natural energy. However, Lin Yun's theory does not take into consideration that one can find a multitude of mountains in desert areas. Hong-Key Yoon, a Korean scholar researching the history and nature of Korean feng shui, points out that some Korean geomancers believe that certain mountains can actually lack
vital energy. These mountains are usually barren. A mountain which has vital energy harbors dense vegetation and plenty of wildlife (Yoon 1976:43).

According to Lin Yun's suggestions, the higher the mountains, the higher must be the ch'i of a place. Interestingly, on high mountains one can usually experience more forceful display of energy, whether it be gravitational or climatological energy. John Jerome reports that while 75 percent of the radiant energy from the sun penetrates the earth's atmosphere to 6,000 feet, only about 60 percent makes it to sea level. There is much greater insolation—the amount of the sun's energy absorbed by the ground—at altitude (Jerome 1978:135-136).

Yet the height of a mountain does not seem to reflect the level of ch'i as a rule. Yoon writes that in Korean geomancy mountains are believed to deliver vital energy to an auspicious place and to store the energy (Yoong 1976:29). Yet, according to Yoong, single standing "independent mountains" do not have a great amount of vital energy (Yoong:45). To Yoong, the transmission of vital energy is entirely dependent upon the shape of the entire mountain range (Yoong 1976:29).

Paul Devereux (1992) offers a more scientific explanation for increased levels of natural energy of mountains and other landscape features. He believes that "places of power" (p.24) are in close proximity to geological faulting (p.26). He believes that at places where tectonic or seismic activity has cracked the earth's crust, and where different blocks of rock abut one
another, there are often variations of magnetic and electrical properties (p.27). Mountainous areas are often places of increased seismic and tectonic activity, yet Devereux's theory would also explain why increased natural energy can also be found in other low altitude landscape features such as faults or bodies of waters like lakes or reservoirs.

A number of authors mention the 'power' of sacred mountains. Lama Anagarika Govinda, a Western practitioner of Tibetan Buddhism, believes that the power of sacred mountains "is so great and yet so subtle that people...will undergo untold hardships... in their explicable urge to approach and worship the center of this sacred power." (Govinda 1970:197) However, Govinda does not define 'power'; it seems to me that he is mostly referring to the power of mountains as symbols. Yet in his book there is no mention of any form of 'natural energy' as the source of this power.

In his extensive study of sacred mountains, Sacred Mountains of the World (1990), Edwin Bernbaum acknowledges that people have traditionally revered mountains as places of 'sacred power'. He repeatedly mentions these "powers" inherent in sacred mountains (Bernbaum 1990: xiii). Sacred mountains are an "expression of 'ultimate power' and reality" (Bernbaum 1990:xxii); they have a "special power to evoke the sacred in the unknown." (p.xviii) About the Himalayas Bernbaum writes that they "are mountains of great power and beauty [which] can make itself felt in profound and mysterious ways." (p.22) The peak of the east on the Chinese
sacred mountain Tai Shan is "endowed with the power of dawn, the mountain was also regarded as the source and shaper of life." (Bernbaum 1990:32) Gladstonbury Tor is seen as a "mysterious source of primordial power and knowledge" and people walking on and around Gladstonbury Tor have reported "profound experiences of power and awakening." (p.120) He writes that the mountains of Africa [Mount Kenya and Kilimanjaro] have been considered the "living embodiments of divine power." (p.141) Many view Mount Shasta as a "magnet of cosmic forces, a sacred centre of psychic and spiritual powers." (p.150) The Maori regarded mountains as places of awesome power" and they regarded the fiery energy of volcanoes on the North Island (e.g, Mount Ngauruhoe) with the mana, or sacred power (pp.197-198) Sacred mountains in general, "function as centres of the world, acting as pivots of cosmic order and supernatural power." (p.206) The San Francisco peaks are places of "particular power and sanctity." (p.214) However, Bernbaum concludes:

Mountains are no more sacred than any other feature of the landscape, but because of their natural tendency to inspire a sense of wonder and awe, they disclose this reality more easily. Having glimpsed it through the view of a mountain, we can find it elsewhere, through other places, other symbols. (Bernbaum 1990: 256)

In his book Bernbaum does not fully define what he means by 'power'. It seems that to him, 'power', on one hand, is indicated by a feeling of awe triggered by majesty of a mountain's appearance or by the view from the top of a mountain. In his
remarks on p.256 one can see that Bernbaum bases the reason why mountains are sacred on their physical appearance and the emotions they trigger in the observer as well as in the climber. He touches upon the idea of 'symbolic energy' as he refers to mountains as places that draw pilgrims. He does not in any way mention the possibility of there being an actual physical, psychic, and spiritual force [natural energy] inherent in mountains that may be the source of these extraordinary powers.

1.4 Navajo Mountains

The Navajo Indians, for example, firmly believe that their mountains have extraordinary powers. Their sacred mountains take on a highly symbolic role and play an important part in Navajo religion and mythology. McPherson claims that "although a mountain is to many only an inanimate mass of earth and rock existing in a physical realm, Navajo myths teach of its mythical creation, its spiritual powers, and its purpose in relation to people." (McPherson 1992:7)

McPherson writes that for the Navajo, "mountains have human qualities and personalities, based on the spiritual forms that live within (McPherson 1992:16). The concept of increased natural or 'holy' energy in connection to mountains is a major aspect of the Navajo religious belief system. Reichard writes
about a member of the Navajo tribe who says that "these [sacred] mountains are our father and our mother. We came from them: we depend on them...Each mountain is a person. The water-courses are their veins and arteries. The water in them is their life as our blood is to our bodies." (Reichard 1983:20)

Reichard says that to the Navajo "the mountains are fastened and covered with elements that represent the natural phenomena; their colors are associated with the precious stones; they have bird, plant, and sound symbols; they are inhabited by Holy People. The mountains represent parts of the earth's body- heart, skull, breast, and internal organs- and like the body of an earth person, they have the power of motion, given them by nilch'i or Holy Wind (Reichard 1983:21).

1.5 The Navajo Nilch'i and Mountains

The Navajo sacred mountains are believed to be animated by life-force called nilch'i (Griffin-Pierce 1992:92). This life-force nilch'i, or also referred to by the Navajo as the 'Holy Wind' suffuses all of nature; it gives life, thought, speech, and the power of motion to all living things and serves as the means of communication between all elements of the living world (McNeley 1981:1).

As Trudy Griffin-Pierce points out, the Holy Wind exists as an underlying element that unifies beings and phenomena.
Animals, landscape features, clouds, stars share the unifying element of the Wind, which exists within all of them (Griffin-Pierce 1992:72), there being only one Wind which is the source of life, movement, and behaviour (McNeley 1981:50-51). Rather than being an independent spiritual agency that resides within the individual, like the Western notion of soul, Holy Wind is a single entity that exists everywhere and in which all living things participate (McNeley 1981:52-53).

McPherson writes about the concept of nilch'i that it is "one of the most powerful forces that communicates between the elements of nature...a spiritual essence that pervades nature...One of its main functions is to give life and motion to plants, animals, and objects in the universe"...[Nilch'i] communicates between the holy beings and their creations- the plants, animals, rocks, and the like." (McPherson 1992:46)

In their essay "Navajo Earth and Sky and the Celestial Life-Force", Rik Pinxten and Ingrid Van Dooren write that all the Navaho Sacred Mountains have this force or Wind inside them and as the result of an agreement between the ancestors and the earth and Sky at the dawn of this world, both Earth [mountains] and Sun [Sky] keep giving force to living beings on a continuous and daily basis (Pinxten and Van Dooren 1983:103).

McNeley writes that the Winds, also seen as "the four directions", are closely associated on earth's surface with the cardinally placed phenomena of light and the principal mountains bordering the Navajo world. From these four directions Wind gives
the means of life, movements, thoughts, and the communication to
the natural forms of this world including Earth, Sky, Moon,
animals and plants, and to Earth Surface People including the
Navajo. Natural phenomena are therefore considered to be alive,
no less than the people of this world, and able to communicate
with others (McNeley 1981:31).

1.6 Life-giving Powers of Navajo Mountains

The idea of an "inner form" of mountains is an interesting
aspect of Navajo religion. Reichard writes about the 'inner form'
of Navaho mountains, as "something that lies inside and stabilizes
them." (Reichard 1983:452)

The four sacred mountains of the Navajo provide a home for
the gods (Sandner 1979:196). Sandner writes about an "inner form"
of the mountain which exists in addition to the obvious outer
physical form of the mountain (Sandner 1979:197).

McNeley talks more directly about the 'inner form' of
mountains than Sandner does: "Wind came to the Peoples living
there from the mists of light existing in the cardinal directions
and that these mists also contained inner forms likened to human
forms which were the breathing means of the mountains situated in
the four directions... what had been the mists of light in the
underworlds were...changed by First Man and the other planners of this world into the light phenomena as they are now conceived by the Navajo (McNeley 1981:18-19). McNeley relates that the inner forms of the phenomena of light and mountains associated with the cardinal directions are conceived to have been endowed with powers of great significance for the human life to be subsequently created on earth's surface. These phenomena of light are believed to have creative and life-giving powers (McNeley 1981:20-21). McNeley provides an explanation as to why certain landscape features are considered sacred by the Navajo. The Navajo believe that origins of all the powers within earth and their working together bring blessings to things placed on her surface (McNeley 1981:23-24).

A Navajo poem relayed by Leland C.Wyman, praises the "sacred powers" of the Dark Mountain, and mentions "sun-rays" within the Blue Mountain. Both mountains are part of the four sacred mountains of the Navajos (Wyman 1975:36).

McPherson compares this power to electricity. "When used properly, it powers lights, heats stoves, runs machinery, and protects people from harm." (McPherson 1992:73) He goes on to say that "if improper conductors are used, or incorrect voltage is applied, the abusers are shocked or destroyed. The sacred forces are responsive to correct intent and procedure...improper use of supernatural power may result both in physical and supernatural harm, since the two are inseparable." (McPherson 1992:73)
This example from the Navajo shows how the concept of natural energy on mountains is incorporated into a cultural belief system. For the Navajo, mountains are a central spiritual and mythological focus. This comes as no surprise, since the Navajo territory is bordered by mountains in all four cardinal directions. To the Navajo, mountains are of mythological importance, and they are symbolically linked to the process of creation. Holy people are believed to live in and on the mountains, and the 'spiritual' power of mountains can be utilized by human beings.

As we have seen, the Navajo believe in a power, 'nilch'i', that permeates all that is. This power animates all living things, including mountains, other landscape features and the stars. The Navajo are an example of a people who have not only acknowledged the existence of a so called 'life-force', they have directly linked it to mountains as places of increased levels of natural energy. Even though in other cultures the connection between natural energy and mountains may not be as pronounced as in the Navajo culture, the natural energy of mountains has been described by sages and philosophers around the world.
1.7 Sacred Mountains in China

Chinese believe that cosmic and magical forces are most powerfully concentrated in sacred mountains (Sullivan 1955:300). The sanctity of sacred mountains is a product of the Chinese belief that the "cosmic forces, the energy, harmony and ceaseless renewal of the Universe, are in some way made manifest in them" (Sullivan 1955:300):

For in popular belief, the mountain is the body of the cosmic being, the rocks its bones, the water the blood that gushes through its veins, the trees and grasses its hair, the clouds and the mist the vapour of its breath- the cosmic breath (ch'i)-or "cloud-breath" (yun-ch'i)-which is the visible manifestation of the very essence of life. (Sullivan 1955:300)

Sullivan concludes that "whether looked at from the point of view of the metaphysician, the alchemist, the poet or painter, [mountains are] the living, breathing embodiment of the live-principle, of the Tao [Dao]" (Sullivan 1955:309) with the forms of nature, the mountains, streams and clouds being the outward, visible manifestation of the Dao. The concept that certain mountains radiate the essence of life is a common one in many essays on this subject. Take for example, Paul W. Kroll's essay on Tai Shan. Kroll examines the possible meanings of the words tai and shan. Tai could be "womb" or "gestator," and shan which usually means "mountain" may also mean "diffuser" (as in "diffuser of vital breath"), but it can also mean "generant" (Kroll 1983:229). To Kroll, this verifies, at least lexicographically, the idea that mountains were considered places of "nascent life", or places of animation. To Sullivan, "the Taoist believes that
the mists that gather in the valleys, the wisps of clouds that
drift up the face of a precipice, are indeed the ch'i [qi] made
visible, the exhalations, as it were, of the living mountain."
(Sullivan 1955:303)

Siegbert Hummels, while also finding that mountains were
places of origin, also found that mountains are places where the
dead return (Hummels 1971). In the classical Chinese collection
of mountain myths Shan Hai Jing: The History of Mountains and Seas
one can find the mythological descriptions of what are here called
the Southern Mountains [Nan Shan], the Western Mountains [Xi
Shan], the Northern Mountains [Bei Shan], the Eastern Mountains
[Dong Shan], and the Central Mountains [Zhong Shan] (P'o Kuo,
1985). One can see that, for the Chinese, the concept of life and
death is an essential part of a sacred mountain: almost all of the
mountains mentioned in this text bear dangerous man-eating
creatures, and, at the same time, they host medicinal and healing
plants as well as animals and birds whose meat, when eaten, can
cure a variety of diseases and thus give life.

I could better understand this dual function of sacred
mountains in Chinese myth—functioning as both progenitors and
terminators—when I read Paul Kroll's essay on Tai Shan.
Compared with other sacred mountains, Kroll reports, Tai Shan was
considered to possess a greater amount of life-giving quality.
Kroll explains that Tai Shan is associated with the incipience of
all creatures. And since Tai Shan possesses this great amount of
life-giving qualities, it is appropriate that the souls of the
newly dead return to this location in order to be animated (Kroll 1983:229). Tai Shan, as the Eastern Sacred Peak, is also associated with springtime, since in the traditional system of wu-hsing correspondences, the East symbolically correlates with the springtime (Kroll 1983:230). Springtime is generally associated with renewal, rebirth, and 'life' altogether.

Not only are Chinese sacred mountains seen as the givers of new life and the receivers of the newly dead, they are also considered to be the dwelling places of immortals (Hummel 1971). Among Taoists, all mountains are equally suitable as abodes for fairies and immortals. "The sure indication that the mountain harbours immortals and fairies is the presence of the rare and fabulous chih [zhi], or ling-chih [lingzhi](spirit fungus)", which supposedly grows high on its slopes (Sullivan 1955:306). In ancient Chinese mythology, lingzhi represents a group of plants which "if properly gathered and prepared, will yield the drugs that confer immortality or magic powers" (Sullivan 1955:306).

The idea of superior immortal beings in sacred mountains is expressed by the medieval monarch Li Longji, who wrote that "the rocky mountains concealed within their rocky frames the terrestrial headquarters of...sublime and perfected human beings, the Realized Persons of the Heavens of Highest Clarity (shang-ch'ing chen-jen [Shangqing Zhenren])--the Taoist divinities who were the lords behind the stars above and the true superintendents of the holy mountains." (Kroll 1983:236-237 footnote 53)
According to Kroll, mountains play the role of intermediaries between humans and deities (Kroll 1983:226). "The sacred mountain, rising from the ground into the sky is, quite literally, a locus of contact between the powers of heaven and those of Earth." (Kroll 1983:226) Ergo, a mountain can be considered a meeting place between gods and humans because of the physical characteristic of a mountain—its height literally places it closer to heaven than localities of a lower elevation.

One can see that the place of the deities is not only close to the top of the mountain, but that they actually dwell on, or, better, in the mountain. In fact, all Chinese sacred mountains that I have read about seem to be the home of not only one, but several deities. Naquin and Yu (1992) refer to an ancient story which stresses the aspects of immortality and the divine. In Chinese lore, the "Queen Mother of the West" is said to be dwelling "in the distant Western reaches of the known world," in the mountains we call Kunlun. Somewhere in the Kunlun, which soar to over 7700 meters (25,000 feet), is said to be "a critical link between human and heavenly realms, a magical place where there was access to immortality" (Naquin and Yu 1992:13), because of the presence of a goddess in the mountain. Any mountain had the potential of being the dwelling place of certain gods, and thus a passage to another sphere, and therefore seems to have been potentially sacred (Naquin and Yu 1992:13). This includes smaller mountains as well. Ge Hong, an early 4th century philosopher proclaimed that "no matter whether the mountain is great or small,
gods and numinous spirits are found without fail therein." (Naquin and Yu 1992:13)

Chinese consider that mountains are such powerful places, that, in approaching a mountain, one had to be especially careful and considerate. "By at least the Eastern Chou [Zhou] period, mountains...formed one of the symbolic grids that defined the empire. "One had to follow strict protocols as to the proper time and proper behaviour for entering a mountain." (Naquin and Yu 1992:13) The rules of this "proper behavior" are embodied in the feng and shan rituals performed by monarchs on the Five Sacred Daoist Marchmounts, but especially on Tai Shan (Munakata 1991:4-5). These rituals were "announcements to Heaven and Earth that the sovereign had successfully fulfilled his regnal charge." (Kroll 1983:225) According to Kroll, a total of seventy-two rulers of ancient days have carried out these sacrifices, demonstrating the important role of mountains as protectors of the state. Sullivan, however, observes that by medieval times only Tai Shan still received the imperial adoration (Sullivan 1955:301).

In his book Pacing the Void, Edward Schafer points out that Chinese priests and poets never neglected those "sacred powers that showed themselves to human eyes as concentrated light."(Schafer 1977:3) The light phenomena--like the Wenshu lights of Mt. Omei--which, in my opinion may very well be a visible manifestation of the increased natural energy or ch'i, have been observed on a number of sacred Chinese mountains.
1.8 Examples of Interpretations of 'Natural Energy' around the World

In ancient times, people believed the world and everything in it was inhabited by an indefinable quality that infused and animated all life. Many cultures, religions and philosophers have described an energy which flows freely among all animate and inanimate matter on earth and in the universe. This energy was known as 'cosmic current', breath, air, energy, spirit, soul, *prana* to the Hindus, *spiritus* to Roman Catholics, *pneuma* to the Greeks, *ruah* to the Hebrews, and *ch'i* to the Chinese (Thompson 1997 1992:49, Rossbach 1983:2).

Philosophers have pondered the existence of an all permeating energy. For example, Wilhelm Reich has called it orgone energy, and in the past few decades the scientific term 'bio-energy' has come to our attention. The Chinese term *ch'i* describes a life force or energy, that "ripples water, creates mountains, breathes life into plants, trees, and humans, and propels man along a life course...man feels and is affected by *ch'i*, though he may not know it (Rossbach 1983:5).

In his book, *Pyramid Power*, G. Pat Flanagan provides the reader with a history of the energy he calls "life-energy." He points out that various cultures have known and described this energy for thousands of years. The Egyptians called it Ga-llama. This term, according to Flanagan, is believed to go back 142,000 years (Flanagan 1973:3). He also lists the Tibetan term *tumo*.
(universal life energy), the Hawaiian term mana, Paracelsus' 'quintessence', and Baron Karl von Reichenbach's 'od' or 'odic force'. Other names to describe this "life-energy" are 'mitogenic rays', coined by Dr. Alexander Gurvich, a Russian scientist in the late 1930's, and 'bioplasma', a term used by Semion Davidovich Kirlian, a Soviet electrician, in 1939. Kirlian managed to photograph 'bioplasma' radiating from humans and other living things such as leaves (Flanagan 1973:3). According to Flanagan, various researchers agree on certain aspects of this bioplasmic energy: It can be reflected, refracted, polarized, and combined with other energies. But the aspect that is most important for my thesis, is that bioplasmic energy can create similar effects to magnetism, electricity, heat, and luminous radiations, but is itself none of these (Flanagan 1973: 21). The aspect of magnetism, electricity, and luminous radiations in connection with mountains will become clear later on in this thesis.

Because these names may stand for slightly different manifestations of the same energy, I decided to use the overall term 'natural energy' in this thesis. 'Natural energy' encompasses both physical and psychic energies, with both interacting in every possible way (Rossbach 1983:3). It unites mind and matter (Rossbach 1983:25). Rossbach has an explanation for this concept. She relates that in Chinese the character ch'i has two meanings, one cosmic and one human. According to her, human ch'i includes breath, aura, manner, and energy with the two types being far from separate. Human ch'i is strongly influenced
by the *ch'i* of **heaven** [psychic] and **earth** [physical] (Rossbach 1983:23).

Reich talks about an energy which he calls 'orgone energy'. He believes that orgone energy is a primordial energy, which is universally existent, all-permeating. It is the origin of all energy and the origin of all matter. It is the biological energy in living beings, and the origin of the galactic systems of the universe (Reich 1973:50). Reich writes that orgone energy can be demonstrated wherever man is capable of directly observing nature, since it is present everywhere (Reich 1973:142). Accordingly, it penetrates everything, though at varying rates of speed. Reich believes that orgone energy merges organic and inorganic nature into one (Reich 1973:143). According to him, this cosmic orgone energy "is God", and it stands for spiritual energy, and ether. Reich believes that ether is universal, it is the source of all existence, it is the basis of consciousness, it is the origin of all matter and energy (Reich 1973:145).

The Chinese saw a magical link between man and the landscape: Nature reacts to any change and that reaction resounds in man. Sarah Rossbach writes that [the Chinese] "saw the world and themselves as part of a sacred metabolic system. Everything pulsed with life and everything depended on everything else." She writes that the Chinese felt they shared a faith with the earth. When it was healthy they thrived, when it was disturbed, they suffered (Rossbach 1983:8).
Jens M. Moeller, a German geomancer, for example, also believes that the 'earth spirit' pulsates through the landscape, similar to the energy pulsating through the human body. He therefore believes that there is a natural relationship between the energy flow in humans and the energy within the earth, which enables humans to intuitively know the energy of a place. Moeller even goes further and suggests that humans could therefore be able to influence and harmonize the flow of earth energy with the use of willpower and imagination (Moeller 1991:39).

Hong-key Yoon, a Korean cultural geographer (with a Ph.D from U.C., Berkeley), takes this idea even further. In his opinion, nature manifests benefits only through association with people. He writes that the basic idea of geomancy is that the vital energy which brings auspiciousness is available to humans only through particular auspicious places. Auspicious places are places where the 'natural energy' works positive for humans. These energetic places may not necessarily be sacred places. A house could be build on an energetically auspicious site, yet the site may not be sacred. However, energetic sites have traditionally been sought for religiously significant places such as shrines or churches.
CHAPTER II: Physical Manifestations of Natural Energy on Mountains

Let us now take a look at the physical manifestations of natural energy on mountains. Angel Thompson lists the factors that can influence and affect ch'i or 'natural energy' in a place or object. An object's form, shape, reflection, shadow, color, or pattern of a place or object can affect the inherent ch'i. Ch'i is also transmitted through media: sound, light, heat, electricity, and weather conditions such as temperature, moisture, wind, thunder, lightning, rain, and snow (Thompson 1997:53). Mountains display most of the factors listed by Thompson in a very special way. They can have a unique form or shape. Mountains can produce enormous shadows, and the reflection of sunlight can create extraordinary colors, a very good example being the famous Alpenglühen of the Alps. With the setting sun reflecting on the mountains, the Alps can take on beautiful deep, red colors. Therefore the term Alpenglühen, which means "the glowing of the Alps". Mountains can create interesting sound effects such as echoes or very loud sounds such as thundering avalanches or rock-slides. On higher mountains the level of ultra-violet radiation increases, which produces a more glaring lighting for the human observer. Another factor that Thompson mentions is heat, which can be found on volcanoes in the form of lava flows, steam, hot springs etc. Wind, rain, thunder and lightning can be much more forceful on mountains than in the lowlands. In fact,
thunderstorms on mountains are very dangerous; hikers and most mountain climbers fear to be on a mountain when a thunderstorm hits. Higher mountains can have year round snow coverage.

Let us now take a closer look at the major energetic forces that distinguish mountains from the lowlands.

2.1 Gravity

John Jerome writes that "the forces that build mountains seem quirky, chancy, totally accidental; the forces that pull those mountains down are absolutely dependable." (Jerome 1978: 87) Gravity is a form of energy and it can be felt anywhere on this planet. Mountains, however, are the one landscape feature on this earth in which the effects of gravity are the most noticeable. The dramatic effects of gravity distinguish mountains from lowlands and valleys.

Due to the physical nature of mountains, the products of the force of gravity can be seen on every mountain one way or another. Gravity is a form of energy which influences the overall energy flow on mountains, including what I am calling 'natural energy'. For example, gravity can be felt as well as seen; it is responsible for the hard work one has to put in to reach the top of a mountain.

---

2 See Tuan 1971: pp.5-7 for a detailed summary of the effects of gravity and altitude on human beings.
Gravity is responsible for many dangerous conditions which can only be encountered on mountains. Anyone venturing up higher on the slopes of mountains is subject to violent products of the force of gravity; falling rocks, rock slides, avalanches, cliffs and crevasses all pose a considerable danger. Rock slides and avalanches can kill hikers, hunters, and worshippers and destroy whole villages. They display a frightening force, flattening whole areas of forest, killing everything in their path. Cliffs and crevasses are a considerable danger, especially in bad weather, where one can easily misjudge one's position and fall to one's death. The force of gravity on the steeper slopes of mountains must have made a tremendous emotional impact on people in early times, as it still does today. Especially avalanche chutes, for that reason, were considered by some cultures to be ruled by certain gods or goddesses.

G. Pat Flanagan relates what he calls the ether theory. He believes that gravity is produced by etheric pressure, whereas electric and magnetic forces are the result of the movement of ether in "whirls and eddies" (Flanagan 1973:60). Flanagan dedicates a whole long chapter of his book to this ether theory. In my opinion, even though he bases his arguments on scientific findings of modern physics, Flanagan's argument seems far-stretched and hypothetical in some places. However, he brings up an important point, and that is that gravity and electric and magnetic forces are manifestations of 'natural energy' (Flanagan
2.2 Volcanic Activity

Volcanic activity can be seen as a manifestation of increased natural energy. It comes as no surprise to us to learn from Lin Yun that volcanoes are places where ch'i pulsates closest to the earth surface. They are highly energetic places, and the abundance of ch'i is being displayed during an eruption and local seismic activity. Apart from the dangers associated with gravity, the energy released during volcanic activity can be a constant threat. The energy release during a volcanic eruption is tremendous and the force of an eruption can devastate entire areas, flowing lava burning everything in its path. An eruption is accompanied by earthquakes, and the falling ash can darken the sky for several weeks. On the other hand, volcanic areas are usually subject to more or less continuous seismic activities; hot-pools and warm caves could make these areas just as appealing to people as it could frighten them away from these areas.

The Pacific Northwest of North America, for example, is an area of seismic activity and has an abundance of volcanoes. In the recent geological history of this region many eruptions have taken place and these events have been incorporated into native
stories. Many native American legends deal with volcanic eruptions.

Mount Baker (Kulshan) once got so mad that a big piece fell off and slid way down the mountain. This made a big fire and lots of noise. Kulshan became black all over. The waters in the rivers became black and warm. Fish came floating down the rivers cooked. Lots of Indians and animals fled. Next year most of them went back again. Since then Kulshan has never been mad. (Clark 1953:8)

This Indian story about the eruption of Mount Baker clearly describes the degree of devastation. Volcanic eruptions create and destroy mountains, and because of their high level of natural energy, many recently active volcanoes around the world are sacred mountains: Mt. Fuji in Japan, Mt. Rainier in Washington State, USA, Mount Shasta in California, etc. are sacred mountains.

2.3 Sounds on Mountains

Ch'i is transmitted by sound (Thompson 1997:53). According to Angel Thompson, a place filled with sounds indicates a higher amount of ch'i. In all literature dealing with practical feng shui, one can find mention of the use of sound-producing applications, such as chimes, bells, and fountains in order to increase the amount of ch'i in a house or room that is lacking in

---

3See Clark (1953:8) regarding an eruption of Mount Baker; Clark (1958:17) regarding a possible eruption of the Three Sisters, Costello (1895:167) regarding Mount Rainier and Mount Hood.

Mountains magnify the effects of sound: It can be extremely quiet on a mountain, but tremendous noises can be heard there as well. Mountains can amplify or reproduce quite peculiar sounds, often resulting in weird echoes: the sound of thunder, falling rocks, rock slides, and avalanches can bounce back from cliff to cliff. This can produce truly frightening sonic effects. Quite possibly these 'unearthly' sounds may have contributed to the belief that gods or spirits or demons inhabit certain mountains.

I can talk from my own experience when it comes to thunderous sounds of mountains: Whenever I heard the sound of an avalanche in my hometown in the Bavarian Alps, it had a strange effect on me. The sound is so deep and overpowering, almost like an explosion, that you cannot help but experience a feeling of awe as well as uneasiness. The thundering noises of avalanches or rock slides must have always impressed all humans.

A number of creation stories of the Pacific Northwest Indians mention strange noises associated with mountains. For example, William Coffer, an anthropologist studying Northwest American Indians, writes about spirits who live on top of mountains and whose voices can be heard at all times (Coffer 1978:75). Edward S. Curtis mentions a vision quest where a youth seeking a vision on top of a mountain reports that "...it was not quiet there on the mountain-top. I heard sounds in the grass, strange noises in the air." (Curtis 1914:217) Joaquin Miller describes the sounds
that can be heard on Mount Shasta: "Sometimes you hear the most unearthly noises even a mile from the little crater, as you ascend, and when you approach, a tumult like a thousand canyons with whistles of as many keys..." (Miller 1982:236) From the Nootka of Vancouver island we learn of an even stranger phenomenon:

High on the mountains in caves were the especially strange and powerful supernatural Quartz Crystals, hina, swaying back and forth while emitting a weird humming sound. They could fall like meteors from the sky, landing like lightning bolts. These were the small crystals that most important chiefs had as hereditary treasures to be displayed at ceremonies (Arima 1983:9)

Mueller (1955:29) mentions that the Kwakiutl had a similar belief in mysterious quartz rocks.

Again, mountains are seen as extraordinary places because they display physical phenomena in a more powerful way than they are experienced in the lowlands. Often these natural physical phenomena have been culturally interpreted as supernatural situations and have been interpreted to be sign of mountain spirits and the divine.

2.4 Climatological Phenomena

Climatological phenomena are a form of energy. Especially thunder and lightning display an impressive release of energy. On mountains, the weather can change quickly and thunderstorms or snowstorms can make ascending or descending a mountain a life-
threatening endeavor. For example, sudden unexpected drops in temperature, sudden and heavy snowfall or increased wind velocity have claimed the lives of many climbers.

And if there is excessive rain in the mountains, creeks and rivers on their slopes carry too much water and flooding—often flash flooding—can be the result.

Not only do mountains have more extreme weather than do nearby lowlands, higher mountains possess several different climate zones from bottom to top. Especially in low latitudes, when climbing a high mountain, one may pass through climate zones ranging from the tropics to the polar regions. The higher one ventures onto a mountain the more out of the ordinary and highly charged with natural energy the climate and landscape appear to be. With the increase of altitude wind velocities increase as well. And usually temperatures fall with altitude; hikers from the lowlands are often confronted with sudden blizzards, thunderstorms, and unexpected changes in temperature.

2.5 Other Climatological Phenomena: The Mountain Glory

A phenomena called 'the glory' has been repeatedly observed on mountains. A glory is a meteorological phenomenon; a person sees a gigantic image of his or her own reflection. One has the impression of looking into a mirror of enormous dimensions.
Dolores LaChapelle (1978) lists examples of areas around the world where the phenomenon of a glory is known, and where it has been incorporated into the religious belief system. LaChapelle refers to a written account of the Abbot of Chieh Yin Tien at Mount Omei in China, who writes about "a huge round bright circle, floating across the mountain, full of strange colors, gathering into splendour." This phenomenon he calls "Buddha's Glory". LaChapelle states that the history of Mount Omei is closely intertwined with this vision, which was first recorded in the reign of Ming Ti (58-75 A.D.), (LaChapelle 1978:11). Adams Peak in Sri Lanka, which is sacred to four religions has a similar phenomenon called "Shadow of the Peak" (LaChapelle 1978:11).

LaChapelle refers to a story of an English climber who saw a glory phenomenon on a mountain called Brocken in Central Germany, which is referred to as the "Spectre of the Brocken" (LaChapelle 1978:11). The fact that this phenomenon occurs on a mountain such as the Brocken is remarkable, since it is a mountain of very low altitude. The Brocken, however, is the mystical mountain in German folklore where witches meet at the annual Walpurgisnacht on the first day of May. The author mentions a number of reported observations of glories on other mountains, including the Matterhorn in Switzerland, the Grand Canyon, and Ben Nevis in Scotland.

LaChapelle believes that in the New World, the small circular arc of a rainbow shown over the head of a figure in American
Indian visionary drawings, actually stands for a glory (LaChapelle 1978:12).

LaChapelle writes about an incident in 1971, when she herself experienced the phenomenon of a glory while hiking the 7,900 feet high Mount Olympus in the Olympic Mountains. While reaching the summit of the mountain, she suddenly saw what appeared to be a "giant shadowy figure surrounded by all the glory of three circular rainbows" (LaChapelle 1978:10). She describes the figure as gigantic, three miles high. LaChapelle believes that the phenomenon of a glory could be the origin of certain religious visions as well as the underlying reason for the tradition of haloes around the heads of saints.

Many cultures associate mountains with spirits and the divine. Most scholars would conclude that is due to the physical appearance of mountains, their impressive display of climatological and sonic effects, which has let to associating mountains with the divine. Yet natural energy, as mentioned in the mythologies of various cultures and described by philosophers, is not exclusively physical. If mountains have an increased level of natural energy, one would expect to find mention of a psychic or spiritual energy in mountain mythologies. In the following chapters I will explore some of the existing reports of the existence of non-physical energy on mountains.
2.6 Friction

Physical aspects of natural energy such as gravity and climatology are very obvious and commonly observed, but there are other, less obvious sources of physical energy in mountains. For example, on mountains, after precipitation, water runs from the summit down into the mountain and through its interior. Mountains have many internal cracks and cisterns as well as external creeks and wells. These water courses will eventually form rivers. Flowing water rubbing on rocks creates friction which turns into energy (Otto 1983: 13). The difference between rivers in valleys and rivers on and in mountains is that the friction and energy a valley-river creates is confined to the relatively narrow ribbon of land the river covers. On mountains, on the other hand, numerous creeks and streams sieve through the interior and down the slopes of a mountain creating friction and energy in a more profound manner. Georg Otto argues that the energy created by this type of friction radiates "straight up" from the places of friction. On a plain surface, this energy would radiate in a ninety degree angle from the source of friction (Otto 1983: 15). On a mountain, with all its various angles of surface, the energy may radiate in all possible directions.

I have not found scientific evidence that confirms energy abnormalities on and around certain mountains, but there is indirect evidence from an interesting study concerning dowsing. This study took place in Austria and Germany. Dowsing experts have long taught the idea that the energy produced by underground
wells can interfere with a person's well-being (Freiherr von Pohl 1978: pp.7-200; Otto 1983:20-257). If this disturbance carries on for a significant amount of time; e.g., if the well is located under a person's sleeping quarters, diseases and ailments such as cancer, poor eyesight, or inhibited growth in children can be the result (Freiherr von Pohl 1978; Otto 1983).

Georg Otto, a German geomancer, describes another form of friction associated with mountains. Many mountain ranges are segments of the earth's crust that have been pushed up by tectonic plate movement. The plate movement produces tension and friction, and since some mountain ranges—such as the Himalayas—are still growing, there is movement and friction which produces energy within the mountain (Otto 1983:13).

Dowsers claim that they can feel the energy created by underground wells. They describe this feeling as 'being charged or tingling' (Jürgens 1983:41; Graves 1984:44-45) Certain mountains may emit a great amount of energy caused by the friction of water.

---

4Gustaph Freiherr von Pohl's entire book Erdstrahlen als Krankheits- und Krebserreger is dedicated to the study of 'earth-radiation' and water friction influencing the human body. Gustaph Freiherr von Pohl is a renowned German dowser.
CHAPTER III: Psychic-energetic Aspects of Natural Energy

C.G. Jung directly addresses the dual nature of natural energy. He writes that "there are indications that physical energy and psychic energy may be but two aspects of one and the same underlying reality. If this turns out to be the case, then the world of matter will appear as, so to speak, a mirror-image of the world of spirit or of the psyche, and vice-versa." (Arcs in Parabola Magazine of August 1992:44; from Marie-Louise von Franz [1975], C.G. Jung, His Myth in our Time, William H. Kennedy, trs., C.G. Jung Foundation) In my opinion the "underlying reality" that Jung refers to is what I have been calling 'natural energy.' It is a life-force that transcends the physical and unites with the non-physical. Its manifestations can be perceived physically as well as psychically, mentally, and emotionally. The poet Dylan Thomas has described this force in one of his poems:

...the force that drives the water through the rocks
Drives my red blood, that dries the mouthing streams
Turns mine to wax.
And I am dumb to mouth unto my veins
How at the mountain spring the same mouth sucks...(excerpts from Dylan Thomas' "The force that through the green fuse drives the flower"; in Parabola Magazine Aug. 1992:63)

As the Western scientist uses a logical (left brain) empirical scientific approach to explain mountain phenomena, other cultures have interpreted these phenomena in a more intuitive manner (right brain).
In an interview "Dreaming the Beginning" published in *Parabola Magazine* of Summer 1993, Robert Lawler talks about Dreamtime of the Aborigines in Australia. He says that the Aborigines believe that "...the forms of earth hold an imprint, a residual energy of the forces which made them. We think the earth is permeated with mechanical energies--magnetism, gravity, nuclear--but the Aborigines say these are psychic, life-giving, conscious energies." (Lawler 1993:10)

Lawler talks about the Aborigines' concept of the Dreaming. The Dreaming is "like the unconscious, all-prevailing continuum that fills everything from the interior of an atom to the interior of the galaxies...(p.13); the Aborigines believe that everything has a Dreaming..."an inner consciousness which flows out of this vast original continuum. Sunlight, gravity, rocks, and trees—everything has a creative interiority...and in both humanity and nature, internal states move outward and manifest themselves as physical forms." (Lawler 1993:13) The Aborigines belief in a "creative interiority" matches the Navajo conception of the 'inner forms' of mountains.

3.1 Natural Energy and the Mind

As we have seen, natural energy is believed to be connected to the human psyche. H. Newton Wethered writes that "the tradition is shared by all peoples of every creed and race, that
all the holy places they reference have been enriched and vivified by the events enacted there. They believe from the bottoms of their souls that a place absorbs virtue, that it exerts an influence capable of being felt by all who are sufficiently receptive (Wethered 1947:161). Wethered writes that an accumulative process of acquired sanctity can take place on a spot which could be perceived by, and communicated to others (Wethered 1947:161). Following a positivistic approach, Nigel Pennick suggests that natural energy can be increased or even created by human minds. If a number of people believe in and consciously think about the power of a certain place, this place can be imbued with these powers.

Pennick tries to illuminate how humans can influence the energy of a site. However, Pennick's assertions cannot be proven. The idea of human influence on natural energy makes sense to me, but one cannot forget that the psychic aspects of natural energy are not scientifically measurable.

For example, Pennick claims that many churches, altars, and other holy places have been built on sites on which two or more lines of energy cross. Supposedly, some of these places are also located above underground wells with upward moving water (Pennick 1987:26). He asks the question whether the especially powerful lines of energy were there before the sacred building was erected or whether the "psychic energy" created in such a building actually created or drew these energies to a particular place. He concludes that the answer probably lies somewhere in between. He
believes that the energy lines had probably been there in the first place. Yet, he also suggests that certain buildings can create energy at a site. According to Pennick, however, it is not only the building, but the type of psychic energy created in a building that can change the energetic patterns of a place. Pennick writes about a chapel built on the campus of Churchill College in Cambridge, England. The chapel, which was constructed in the 1960s was not built according to geomantic principles. Pennick writes that people reported the energy inside the chapel to be "energetically lifeless" (Pennick 1987:27). However, after the first sermons were held at the chapel, the energy suddenly seemed to change. Something 'special' could be felt in the chapel. It seemed as if the energy had been refreshed and increased. Here Pennick is merely talking about his individual impressions and feelings rather than scientifically documented data. I agree that Pennick does not sufficiently support his path of thinking and that his mechanics of thought are somewhat obscure. Even though he could have been more specific in how, exactly, he reached his conclusions, his story nevertheless acknowledges a connection between the human psyche and the actual energy flow of a place.

The question arises whether a mountain which is believed to be sacred and full of 'supernatural' powers, has been imbued with these powers as a result of the focused attention and belief of an entire nation or culture. The mountain, so to say, has experienced an increase in natural or, in this case, psychic
energy (which is ultimately the same), because a number of people wholeheartedly believe that the mountain is the seat of a deity, or a place of supernatural events. It has been claimed that mountains are 'naturally' places of increased energy, but when people acknowledge these energies and focus their attention on the mountain, energies may actually increase well beyond the 'natural' level as a result of the sum of psychic energies coming from the believers.

3.2 "Psychic Radiation"

Psychic energy as part of natural energy cannot be scientifically measured. Yet, according to many reports and cultural beliefs, people have felt and experienced it in numerous ways. Evans-Wentz, for example, repeatedly reinforces the idea that certain mountains are the source of a certain kind of psychic radiation. He believes the Himalayas to be a place where the ancient rishis long dwelt, in the Himalayan Holy Land of the Hindus, the physical environment became so attuned to their psychic radiations that to this day it still emits potent, uplifting spiritual influences, just as a place which has been made radioactive by the presence of radium or by the explosions of an atomic bomb emits radiant energy of a destructive character. (Evans-Wentz 1981:42)

To Evans-Wentz, Mt.Omei as well as Cuchama are more than ordinary foci of terrestrial magnetism. Both mountains are "radionically and psychically potent" (Evans-Wentz 1981:42).
Evans-Wentz writes about the notion that psychic energy can be felt. Psychic energy, I believe, is of a very subtle nature and the privilege of actually perceiving psychic energy may be reserved to highly sensitive individuals, such as shamans or psychics. However, I also believe that in the mountain environment almost every person can experience for himself or herself subtle psychic energies:

1) The physical height of mountains elevates any climber above everyday problems and may open one's mind to different 'channels'. Even for the spiritual practitioner who is connected with the spirit-world during his duties as a healer, preacher, or soothsayer, climbing to the top of a mountain will take him away from normal social responsibilities. On top of a mountain he can find the solitude to gather new strength and insight. With his body removed from and elevated above the valley's settlements and their mundane responsibilities, the climber has a chance to elevate his mind and soul above ordinary everyday life.

2) The mountain environment with its inherent dangers also requires the climber to focus his mind and clear from his mind other presently non-important thoughts. On a mountain, one is often more subjected to the harsher elements of nature than one experiences in lower lying regions. One must be self-reliant or dependent on fellow climbers, for usually climbers are far from help. This was even more so in earlier times when there was no
mountain rescue, no cellular phones or radio, no emergency flares or flashlights.

3) The repetitious step by step ascent can move the climber into a state of meditation.

4) Changes of lighting and oxygen levels may influence a hiker's brain functions.

Louis Charpentier writes about these altered or awakened states of mind in humans (Charpentier 1972). His findings can be directly related to the ascent of a mountain. Charpentier believes that this awakening comes about by "inward grace [outward grace of the mountain view], by asceticism [mountain environments require climbers to carry only the essentials], by rhythmic and somatic spell [repetitious step by step locomotion], but a place apart has always been reserved for the awakening acquired by terrestrial action in places of pilgrimage...more sensitive than we to the actions and properties of the natural forces, the ancients knew such places better than we do and if we want to find them again we are reduced to searching among the clues they left, megaliths, dolmens or temples" (Charpentier 1972:26). Many reports about mountains taken from different cultures tell about the existence of strange beings and spirits that hikers have encountered during their ascent. One can also find the existence of mountain spirits in native lore around the world. The question
arises whether these visions are directly linked to an increased level of natural energy encouraged by the climbing situation, or whether they are the result of the various stages of altitude sickness.

Ron Mateus writes about the psychological effects of oxygen deprivation and talks about the commonly occurring symptoms of altitude sickness, where people may hear "bizarre noises" or have hallucinations of imaginary companions walking with them (Matous 1992:10-12). Other symptoms of this condition also include nausea and vomiting. Altitude sickness may have been responsible for many "fantastic" accounts that claim the existence of supernatural beings on the higher slopes of mountains.

Altitude sickness may have contributed to the fact that many cultures view mountains as being the abode of spirits, deities or demons, yet it does not explain why climbers have had similar experiences on low altitude mountains. As I have mentioned before, I believe that the effects of altitude can be seen as a substantial part of being in a mountain environment, yet it is not the only factor that enables climbers to have visions.
3.3 Mountain Spirits and Guardian Beings as Embodiments of Natural Energy.

This section will review beliefs that spirits and divine beings dwell on sacred mountains. Such beliefs, if they are to be believed, demonstrate that people have encountered deities or spirits while being on a sacred mountain. There are many examples in many societies and civilizations. For example, Moses received the tables of the law on Mount Sinai. Eliah communed with God on a mountain, Jesus delivered the Sermons on a mountain, and Mohammed received the verses of the Koran from Angel Gabriel on Mount Hera. We can find this all around the world.

According to Evans-Wentz, "mountains rising on high and merging into the invisible depths of space come to be looked upon as being the abodes of heavenly beings, the repositories of wisdom, and the founds of spiritual illumination." (Evans-Wentz 1981:39) Suryanarayan, for example writes about spirit beings that can be encountered on the Indian mountain Arunachala (Suryanarayan 1988:4). We also find examples of spirit beings on mountains in North America. Evans-Wentz generally talks about shining beings which the natives of the areas bordering Cuchama encountered on the mountain during visions, he does not go into detail though (Evans-Wentz 1981:26-27). These accounts give examples of spirits being incorporated into mythology and lore. These spirits are perpetuated through myth and religion from generation to generation, and people who follow the teachings will 'perceive' these beings, because they deeply believe in their existence. But
there are other accounts of people who while meditating have perceived transcendental beings. For example, in his book "The Holy Mountain" Bhagwan Shri Hamsa describes his pilgrimage to the most sacred peak of Hinduism, Mount Kailas. There, on the flanks of Kailas, as he meditated under extreme physical hardships, his master Lord dattatreya appeared before him, first 'mentally', but then the mental image changed into the seemingly real physical manifestation of the Master (Hamsa 1934:180ff).

In the Pacific Northwest, native Americans have incorporated a number of dangerous mountain spirits and ghosts into their belief system. Many of the ethnographies I have consulted for this paper give reference to human encounters, on mountains, with dangerous spirit beings or spirit powers. Various creation stories also mention these beings. Generally, these beings are reported to be ugly. They could be "head-less, mallard-like birds, birds with human faces" (Arima 1983:9), or they were "covered all over with hair, had peculiar eyes, were naked and often acted like crazy people." (Beckham, Toepel and Minor 1984:55) They could appear in the shape of snakes "that jumped into the openings of the body" or as dwarfs "who enticed people to their homes inside the mountain to dance." (Arima 1983:9) The Twana (who occupied the shores of the Hood Canal and the drainage of the Skokomish River) believed that these beings appear in the shape of oversized human beings with an odorless body which enables them to approach and hunt animals without being noticed (Suttles 1986:90). They can cause a person to fall unconscious or
to be demented (Beckham, Toepel and Minor 1984:55). According to Phillip Drucker, these beings "were the gods with whom human beings might come in contact, to their benefit or disaster" (Drucker 1965:84). These beings could serve as guardian spirits; 
"[they] could confer blessings, good fortune and even a measure of supernatural power on man." (Drucker 1965:84) The Shasta call them axaikis. To the Shasta they are as real as other aspects of the world, from "rocks and trees and wind and fire, to coyotes and humans5."(Renfro 1992:69) Mount Rainier has its own dangerous spirit: The Puget Sound Indians believe that there is a lake of fire on top of Mount Rainier. A mighty demon lives in this lake. "If someone reached the top, the demon will kill that person and throw him into the fiery lake." (Clark 1953:8)

Belief in a powerful spirit called the Thunderbird, which dwells on the top of mountains, can be found throughout the Pacific Northwest. According to some reports, as in a story mentioned by Cottie Burland, this powerful creature dwelled in a lake in the mountains (Burland 1985:42). The Thunderbird was believed to represent the spirit of storm: "The flapping of its wings caused the thunder, the flash of its eyes was the lightning." (Clark 1953:7-8) According to J.A. Costello, the Makahs and some other tribes invest the animal with a twofold character; human and bird-like (Costello 1895:53). Phillip

Drucker even reported that the Thunderbird kept reptile-like beings as pets, "as a man kept dogs." (Drucker 1965:84)6

3.4 Vision Quests: Places of Transformation

Pacific Northwest Native Americans actively sought mountains as vision catalysts. They used mountains as places of transformation; places where guardian spirits, who I like to think of as embodiments of natural energy, could be encountered during vision quests. These visions presumably served as journeys of spiritual transformation, in which an adolescent's way of perceiving the world could be changed into an adult's way. This transformation was especially significant for a soon-to-be shaman. The "birth" of a new, transformed spirit and understanding often took place on top of a mountain.

Each person was thought to have a guardian spirit which was revealed to them in a vision or dream. This vision was actively sought at secluded places such as the tops of mountains and by fasting and exercise (Howe 1979:177). The combination of fasting and exercising can be seen as preparations to enable the mind to enter into the meditative state necessary to be able to perceive subtle psychic energies.

6For further reference to the Thunderbird see Seaman (1967:31).
Especially if someone was chosen to become a shaman, he or she had to spend a certain amount of time alone in the wild, and particularly on top of mountains (Emmons 1991:375). Young men (and women) were send to the tops of certain mountains; they were told to fast and meditate, and finally they could attain strong healing powers. In a story relayed by Edward S. Curtis, a young Indian is asked to spend three days on top of a mountain, fast, and watch the sun move from the East to the West. During his last night on the mountain the adolescent has a vision in which he is visited by a certain spirit. This experience to him is like being born again, because his understanding of the world changes (Curtis 1914:211-221). Coffer, too, writes about an adolescent native American who is told by his grand-father to go to the mountains and climb the highest peak. There he finds a pure, cold stream, and after he drinks from the stream, he attains extraordinary healing powers. His life changes, and he is 'reborn' into a powerful healer (Coffer 1981:192)

Price writes about the Bighorn Mountains of Wyoming:

The Medicine Wheel and Mountain were and are used as a vision quest area by a number of tribes, and herein lies the great problem in allowing tourism or other types of multiple use of the area. The land base of a sacred site is the home or lodge of the spirit life that dwells within, in this case a mountain. The rulers of the universe reside here, not only the rulers of the physical elements but the spiritual elements as well. It is there where the offerings are taken, and the prayers that go with them are accepted or rejected. It is here that the prayers are answered. (Price 1994:261)

I believe that mountains were chosen as places of transformation for several reasons: Of course, the physical hardship of climbing a mountain and remaining at the summit for a few days made people focus their minds on survival, and climbing a mountain can be seen as a deep meditation where ordinary daily thought processes were subdued and the mind could be refreshed and 'reborn' during the experience. Furthermore, the solitude on top of a mountain helped people to focus without being distracted. Most importantly, however, I believe, that people chose mountains for their spirit quests because of the extraordinary inherent 'natural energy' in mountains.
CHAPTER IV: Symbolic Energy

Mountains display symbolic energy as well as increased levels of natural energy. Natural energy can be manifest physically (it can be perceived by the five senses, it can also be physically felt) as well as psychically (it can be felt, and it can be seen with one's eyes or mind). The increased level of natural energy may have contributed to fact that certain mountains are considered sacred. Sacred mountains may serve as powerful symbols to entire cultures, yet any mountain could be of symbolical significance to an individual or culture.

Yi-Fu Tuan (1974) believes that a symbol is a repository of meanings that have arisen out of the more profound experiences that have accumulated through time. He writes that "insofar as symbols depend on unique events they must consequently differ from individual to individual and culture to culture. Insofar as they originate in experiences shared by the bulk of mankind they have a world-wide character." (Yuan 1974:145) Mountains as natural phenomena are interpreted in similar ways by different people.

The common perception of sacred mountains is that they are merely ordinary places that serve as physical markers of cultural or religious belief. However, if these mountains are truly extraordinary places, this extraordinary aspect may not be perceivable for everybody, only for the believers of a particular religion or mythology. Mountains that are extraordinary places for local societies may or may not be truly physically extraordinary as compared to other mountains. Since a mountain is
often considered to be an extraordinary mountain to only a certain group of people, it is hard to determine whether this is because of cultural beliefs or whether we are dealing with a truly physically or energetically different mountain. In the eyes of a 'believer' in a mountain's sanctity, of course, the mountain is an extraordinary place.

From earliest times, places of worship and pilgrimage were frequently to be found on mountain tops. Places of worship were build on "artificial mountains", pyramid-like structures (Bauer 1988:92). In Europe, summits are marked by a large wooden cross, which stands for Christianity and the divine. For example, the people of Japan visualize Fuji-san as being an inverted fan, and they fondly think of the mountain as radiating a divinely protective influence over Japan (Evans-Wentz 1981:48). This is also the case with Hiei-san, situated northeast of Kyoto, and Koya-san, east of Osaka. According to Evans-Wentz, Koya-san, like Hiei-san, has always been recognized to be the abode of various deities of whom the chief was the Goddess Tango (Evans-Wentz 1981:50).

Arunachala, also called the 'Mountain of Light', a Himalayan mountain in Northern India, is believed to represent the Hindu god Shiva (Bernbaum 1990:75; Suryanarayan 1988:vi). Edwin Bernbaum writes that thousands of pilgrims come to this mountain each year in November to worship Shiva as a phallus of fire--a cosmic pillar of creative power. Bernbaum writes that the spiritual magnetism of this mountain is so great that Ramana Maharshi, one of the
greatest Indian sages of the twentieth century, spent his life meditating and preaching at his foot (Bernbaum 1990:75). The Indian poet Kalidas suggested that the Himalayas is not a mere wall constructed by nature. "It is ensouled by Divinity and it is the protector of India and her civilization, not only from the icy blasts blowing from the Arctic region, but also from the deadly and destructive incursion of invaders." (Sharma 1979:5)

William M. Shea writes that symbolic imagination mediates between feelings and the self-transcending operations of the human subject, between the organic and biological structure of the subject and the subject's intentional operations (Shea 1981:82). Symbols are "the tools of meaning which in history and community loom large and exercise huge power in the unification of heart and mind for action." (Shea 1981:82-83) Symbolic energy of a mountain signifies the energetic effect a mountain as symbol can have on a person or persons. This symbolic energy can be perceived culturally as well as individually. For example, as one mountain can be of religious symbolic importance to an entire culture, another mountain may have personal symbolic value, to a climber with the goal to reach its summit. Mountains can also become symbols to an entire country in a non-religious way. Mount Kenya and Kilimanjaro—with the end of colonialism in the middle of the twentieth century—have become symbols of the spirit of independence infusing the new nations of Africa. On the eve of the day of Kenya's independence from Great Britain, climbers lit
flares on top of Mount Kenya which "illuminated the mountain in a blaze of light." (Bernbaum 1990:141)

4.1 Physical and Symbolic Influence of the Mountain Environment

In my opinion, climbers 'seek' mountains as places where they can recharge their own physical, psychic, and even emotional energy levels. People climb on mountains to meditate, to seek visions and 'to be closer to the divine' (to seek divine energies). People conquer mountains to confirm their own physical and mental endurance, in order to return as a new, 'energetically recharged' person. In this section we will look at the various ways the mountain environment as well as the act of climbing a mountain can influence the energy level in a person.

4.2 Visual Effects

The view from a mountain can increase the 'natural energy' in a person who climbs it. Angel Thompson believes that with a view of 180 degrees and more, "strong ch'i floods the space" (Thompson 1996:53) and therefore a climber would experience the increased and uplifting energy felt on top of a mountain. When one reaches
the top of a mountain and looks in the valleys below, there is also a feeling of accomplishment, freedom, and tranquillity; one feels uplifted and elevated above the small problems of life below. Jerome believes that the perception of depth, a sense of scale, can itself have a drug like effect." (Jerome 1978:255) Jerome calls the visual perception of depth "a force that works on the mind to alter mood dramatically" (Jerome 1978:255) As Khan puts it: "The higher you climb, the farther you see. For pilgrims this has more than a physical meaning. You ascend to higher elevations, surpass the strata of human thought, and encounter the Universal on a basic level." (Khan 1974:71) This, in my opinion, not only applies to the religiously motivated pilgrim; any climber can experience this connection in one way or another.

For any climber or pilgrim it is fulfilling to have reached one's destination after a considerable amount of hardship and to be able to see the valley as a starting point from which one has begun one's quest. Thinking about his ascent of Mount Everest, Ahluwalia said "It is an ennobling, enriching experience to just look down from the summit of a mountain. You bow down and make your obeisance to whichever god you worship." (Ahluwalia 1987:71) The mountain climber's energy level is increased by the extensive view as well as by the successful completion of the task of climbing.
4.3 Climbers' Reports

There is obviously more to climbing a mountain than just the physical act of doing so. People can experience a whole array of feelings and emotions once they have reached the summit or higher altitudes of grand mountains. Matous asks himself where the climber's motivation, the ultimate source of their energy comes from, presuming that food, water, and oxygen are available. Matous concludes that will-power is the mountaineer's main driving force, "the energizer." (Matous 1992:12) The will to conquer a mountain, whether on a religious pilgrimage or on a mountaineering expedition is at least to some degree fueled by the symbolic energy connected to the mountain. For example, the Austrian mountaineer Reinhold Messner describes the feelings he experienced upon reaching the summit of Mount Everest: "...I am in a state of bright, clear consciousness, even if not fully aware of where I am...Everything that is, everything that I am, is now colored by the fact that I have reached this special place. The summit--for the time being at least--is the simple intuitive answer for the enigma of life." (Reinhold Messner [1979], Everest, London: Kaye and Ward) To him, the mountain took on the symbolic meaning of life itself.

But how can will-power energy be related to natural energy on mountains? As I have mentioned above, natural energy is not merely an outside energy influencing humans, natural energy is
connected to the human psyche. Mountains are not only releasing natural energy; as symbols they may produce—through the psyche—an increase of natural energy in the determined climber.

The summit is the focus of a climber's will-power, it becomes the symbol of achievement, destination, and focus. The summit, as a symbol, in a way provides him with the vital energy needed to reach it. Messner writes that "the only thing that lures me on is that little point ahead, where all the lines come together, the apex, the ultimate...It is as if the cortex of my brain were numb, as if only deeper inside my head there is something making the decisions for me...I am drawn on towards this farthest point as if it were some magnetic pole..." (Matous 1992:13)

As the successful climb to the summit may symbolize for the pilgrim a union with the deity of his religion, to the mountaineer it may symbolize the finding of his or her own self. [...] Khanna, a Hindu mountaineer who personifies both mountaineer and religious pilgrim, reports the feelings he and his companions had when they finally reached the summit of Mount Everest:

We found ourselves on the summit at last...It is not possible to describe in words what one feels at a time such as this. The feelings are too personal, run too deep within one, to find outward expression. We all felt a tremendous sense of achievement, pent up anxieties and apprehensions. We gave thanks to God for his grace in giving us this gift. Each in his own way, we offered our prayers of thanksgiving, offered our gratitude to this great yellow mountain, too, for letting us come to its sacred pinnacle. My sentimental soul chanted its song: 'Thou art the king of kings. We the underlings. We have wandered over thy pious abode, to pay our homage. (Khanna 1980:81)
One can see that on a mental and emotional level a climber can experience a tremendous surge of energy coming from his or her personal conquest of the mountain.

In the following report the climber describes the surge of natural energy as such: "A number of feelings surged through as I stood on the summit...the dominant was 'humility'." (Ahluwalia 1987:60) He goes on to say that "from this point, everything fell away. It was very cold, but suddenly the wind dropped, and I remember thinking--this is a special gift from the Goddess mother of the Earth..." (Ahluwalia 1987:60) He proclaims that climbing Everest "is not just a physical climb. The man who has been to the mountain-top will never be the same again. He gains immensely from the mountain. He becomes conscious in a special manner of his own smallness in this large universe." (Ahluwalia 1987:70) Again, here we can see that climbing a mountain can change a person's mindset. This 'altered' state of mind could facilitate a person's perception of subtle physical and psychic energies on a mountain. As featured in Parabola Magazine, Ella Bedonie, a Navajo woman, explains how repeatedly climbing to the top of the San Francisco Peaks had changed her grandfathers outlook on life. He had commented that "you feel very different at the top of the sacred mountain, very humble and grateful for your life." (Johnson 1988:44)

Ahluwalia seems to be a devoted follower of Hinduism; every climber does not so openly acknowledge the conquest to be a religious experience. Other mountain climbers who may experience
the feelings mentioned above will not necessarily consider the mountain sacred, but rather will see the process of climbing a mountain more as a tool for physical exercise and a feeling of accomplishment. But they still hold their 'mountain of conquest' special and symbolical, each in his or her own way. In order to climb a certain mountain they often prepare themselves emotionally and physically for years. This mountain, for the climber, can take on a mystical persona. The ascent to the summit can be seen as a pilgrimage that carries as a reward powerful feelings which often border on religious experiences. Ahluwalia writes that "once on the summit [of Everest] there is a sense of being connected with something beyond you. This curious sense of nearness to the infinite is what really sustained us in our final physical effort in climbing to the top of Everest." (Ahluwalia 1987:70)

Mircea Eliade writes that the symbolism of ascension has been used by mystics around the world to describe the uplifting of the soul and union with God (Eliade 1961:166). Eliade continues that "the traditions tell us of a mythical time when man was in direct communication with the heavenly gods: by climbing a mountain, a tree, or a liana..." (Eliade 1961:167) One fundamental shamanistic experience is that of the ascent into heaven: by means of the cosmic tree planted at the 'Centre of the World' the shaman enters into heaven where he meets the most high God (Eliade 1961:166).
As we have seen, a mountain, for a climber, can serve as a symbol for accomplishment, hope, endurance, and much more. Ahluwalia writes that "there is another summit. It is within yourself. It is in your own mind. Each man carries within himself his own mountain peak. He must climb it..." (Ahluwalia 1987:71). The physical act of climbing to the summit of a mountain outside is akin to the act of climbing the mountain within (Ahluwalia 1987:71). The internal summits are, perhaps, higher than Everest (Ahluwalia 1987:72). When asked the question 'why do people climb mountains?' Ahluwalia answered that "mountains are nature at its best. Their beauty and majesty pose a great challenge, and like many, I believe that mountains are a means of communion with God." (Ahluwalia 1987:69)

We have seen how mountains as symbols of goals, destination, or achievement can influence a mountaineer's or pilgrim's energy level. Mountains are held sacred in cultures around the world. At this point I believe it important to look at how the general physical attributes of mountains may have contributed to the belief that mountains are connected to the divine.
4.4 Mountains symbolize the Point of Connection between Earth and Heaven

Mountains are part of the earth's surface, they are made of rock. Mountains have either been created by the effects of plate tectonics, when two plates are pushed together, or they are the product of volcanic activity. In both cases, the earth's surface is elevated into higher layers of the earth's atmosphere. If one follows the traditional feng-shui reasoning regarding ch'i, one could conclude that the earth's ch'i is reaching its highest point in mountains, literally and on an energy level.

In most traditional belief systems and established religions, the sky or firmament is symbolically related to the 'heavens above.' Mountains are considered to be both the places where earth reaches furthest into the sky, and, symbolically the places where earth reaches into the realms of heaven. It is not surprising, therefore, that certain mountains are considered to be meeting places between heaven and earth, and certain mountains come to be seen as landmarks of the spirit world or the divine realm. On these mountains, humans can hike or climb into the presence of god or into the divine realms. However, there are often prohibitions against climbing even climbable sacred mountains; the sacred slope being reserved for priests. But even if some of these mountains are unclimbable for the average human being, worshippers who come to the base of these mountains are still reminded that one is in the presence of an important meeting place.
4.5 The Symbolic Connection of Chinese Mountains and Stars

In China, mountains are believed to be connected to the stars. The stars in the night-sky symbolize a connection to the divine that goes beyond the more obvious association of the stars and heaven [sky]. The Chinese belief that all mountains are sacred seems to be a very ancient one, a tradition that goes back to the dawn of history, long before the emergence of religious Taoism and the introduction of Buddhism (Wu 1992:65); mountain worship is a tradition that developed "centuries before the Buddhists and Taoists built their first temples on their slopes" (Sullivan 1955:300). Sullivan believes that in China a mountain is not considered sacred because of the fact that it reaches into the heavens (that would mean that every mountain should be sacred); certain mountains are sacred, because they are imbued with physical as well as spiritual power (Sullivan 1955:301).

At least some of this power seems to be coming from a connection between stars and mountains. Especially in Daoism, stars play an important role. Schafer writes about Daoist monks who are able to "draw on the energies of stars," and who lived in private establishments, which were misnamed 'Daoist monasteries' in English, 'misnamed' since their Chinese name is guan, which means 'watch-places' or 'observatories' (Schafer:227). Interestingly, the monks drew the energy of the stars from the tops of mountains.
On many of the sacred Chinese mountains I have looked at one can find reference to stars, star constellations, planets or celestial deities. On Tai Shan, for example, one can find the Monastery of the Mother Goddess of the Great Bear. On Tai Shan there are also two peaks whose names refer to the sun and the moon. The highest point on the western slopes of Tai Shan is called the Moon Contemplation Summit (Yangguan Feng) and it balances Tai Shan's Sun Contemplation Summit on the east. Baker explains that one of Tai Shan's peaks, the Moon Contemplation Peak, was the traditional site of the sacrifices made to heaven by the Han ruler Wudi in 110 B.C (Baker 1982:85).

Baker mentions a prayer to Tai Shan that Emperor Xianwen inscribed in A.D. 469. This prayer also refers to a connection between the sun, the moon, and the sacred mountain:

The Eastern Peak is the upright mountain, and it is the lofty peak. The virtue of T'ai Shan is like to that of Heaven, and therefore it is the source of all things in nature. It is associated with heaven and earth, with the sun and the moon and the seasons. (Baker:182)

These are only a few examples (where direct reference is given to celestial objects). There are, however, some characteristics that are shared by both mountains and stars. The ancient Chinese Classic Shan Hai Jing --a book that is dedicated to the legendary geography and wonders of ancient China-- describes the sacred mountain landscape of China. On the upper (and sometimes lower) reaches of almost every other mountain mentioned in the Shan Hai Jing one can find jade, precious stones and shiny metals, such as
the red metal *ch’ih chin* [chijin] and the white metal *pai chin* [baijin] (Alley 1965: 113, 122). For example on the Shizhe (stone person) Mountain, "precious jade and emeralds are common" (p.47). We find the same description for Yidi (depend emperor) Mountain (p.134), for Hunxi (entire dusk) Mountain, the Shao Yang (few bright) Mountain (p.53), just to mention a few examples. The reference to precious metals and gems does show how unique and 'precious' mountains were regarded by the Chinese.

Many names of mountains mentioned in the *Shan Hai Jing* refer to light and brightness, characteristics that are also attributed to stars. There is a Yang (bright) Mountain (Alley 1965:58) in the Northern Mountains as well as in the Central Mountains (p.90), where one can also find Yanghua (bright flower) Mountain (p.106). In the Central Mountains one can also find a Guang (gleam) Mountain (p.117), a Yu (jade) Mountain (p.118), and a Yuyang (corner bright) Mountain (p.123).

Most importantly, there seems to be direct connection between mountains, stars, and natural energy. In China, stars are said to be *ching* [jing] (embryonic, germinal essence, as often as they are said to be *ch’i* [qi] (energizing breath) (Schafer 1977:132). The relation between stars and mountains is emphasized by Schafer. Schafer mentions that for the Chinese, "the stars and planets were commonly thought to be made of the same elemental substance as precious stones...Jade connotes 'white, pure, translucent, mineral, noble, refined, magical' and so on...all of these flattering epithets belong equally to the stars." (Schafer
To me it seems to be an interesting coincidence that the tops of mountains and stars are said to be made of the same substance. This is not a surprising coincidence, since, as I have already pointed out, stars and mountains are especially important in the Daoist religion, and mountains are considered to be intermediaries between earth and sky, between humans and heaven.

4.6 Mountains symbolize a Connection to the Divine

Mountains can be seen on the far off horizon. Besides large trees, mountains and hills are the only natural features that can be seen on a distant horizon. Therefore mountains create a feeling of distance, yet their prominent silhouette on the horizon makes them appear closer than they really are. A mountain that dominates the landscape creates a feeling of omnipresence. It can be seen clearly; however, it remains distant, and it takes considerable effort to reach even its foot from a distant place. This omnipresence yet distance has a divine quality. Ahluwalia writes that by "glimpsing a peak in the distance, I get transported to another world. I experience a change within myself which can only be called mystical." (Ahluwalia 1987:69) The influence of a mountain goes so far that symbolic energy can be felt by just thinking about it. For example, Trebbe Johnson writes that "the Navajo does not even have to be in direct sight
of the sacred mountains to be ever mindful of their influence upon him." (Johnson 1988:44).

Mountains can therefore serve as reminders that there are higher forces that transcend the affairs everyday life. According to Lama Anagarika Govinda, these reminders are necessary for people to keep in touch with the divine. He writes that "in the dust-filled valleys and lowlands of our daily existence we have forgotten our connection with stars and suns; and so we need the presence of these mighty milestones and signposts to awaken us from the slumber of self-complacency..." (Evans-Wentz 1981: Foreword by Lama Anagarika Govinda pp.xxx-xxxi)

There are many aspects of mountains that in one way or the other relate them to the divine. The French author Rene Daumal was very fascinated with mountains throughout his life. His novel Mount Analogue, deals with a tall fictional mountain that is about to be 'conquered' by a group of scientists and mountain enthusiasts. Daumal philosophizes about "the Mountain" and mountains in general:

I had written in substance that in the mystic tradition the Mountain is the bond between Earth and Sky. Its solitary summit reaches the sphere of eternity, and its base spreads out in manifold foothills into the world of mortals. It is the way by which man can raise himself to the divine, and by which the divine reveals itself to man. The patriarchs and prophets of the Old Testament behold the Lord face to face in high places. For Moses it was Mount Sinai and Mount Nebu; in the New Testament it is the Mount of Olives and Golgotha. I went so far as to discover this ancient symbol of the mountain in the pyramidal constructions of Egypt and Chaldea... (Daumal 1959:41)
In this paragraph of his book Daumal points out a number of philosophical points about mountains that others have touched upon as well: Mountains hold earth and sky together; mountains represent the eternal and divine (in contrast the lowlands stand for the mortal and mundane). Mountains inspire religious leaders; and in the physical presence of a mountain, its majesty for many symbolizes durability.

4.7 Mountains are seen as Symbols of a Culture's Religious Beliefs

Due to the recognition of the symbolic connection of mountains to the divine many mountains are considered to be extraordinary and they serve as powerful symbols for a culture's religious or mythological beliefs. Mountains are places of increased natural energy and many cultures have designated certain mountains to be extraordinary. Many cultures associate mountains with the divine or the spirit world and have interpreted the extraordinary level of 'natural energy' of mountains as coming from a divine source. The next chapter will show how certain cultures have attributed a divine status to particular mountains. For example, in China, Mount Omei (as well as other sacred mountains) is believed to be the embodiment of the life-principle, of the Tao", with the forms of nature, the streams and clouds being the outward, visible manifestation of the Tao (Sullivan

67
1955:309). Mount Zion at the other end of Asia has symbolic significance in the Jewish and Christian religion. Cuchama, the sacred mountain of Native Americans in Southern California, can be found in sacred lore. And there is Mount Kailas, the sacred mountain in the Himalayas, which has important symbolic value in both Buddhism and Hinduism.

4.8 Mountains as a Symbolic Centre

In her book Die Welt der Symbole, Dorothea Forstner-Osb elaborates on the symbolical importance of mountains. She writes that many mythologies hold the 'holy mountain' as the center of the world, as a meeting point between earth and heaven. She believes that as a natural symbol 'the mountain' expresses the heights of divine thought (Forstner-Osb 1967:91-93).

The concept of mountains being symbols of the 'Centre' can be found in many cultures around the world. Even though many things can be considered a centre (e.g. the Indian Mandala, churches, one's house etc.), mountains and rocks are universal symbols of the Centre since they are the highest landscape features of a region.

Eliade writes that "every human being tends, even unconsciously, towards the Centre, and towards his own centre, where he can find integral reality-sacredness. This desire, so
deeply rooted in man, to find himself at the very heart of the real at the Centre of the World, the place of communication with Heaven." (Eliade 1961:54) The reports of mountaineers serve as fine examples of the common quest for one's own center. The mountain becomes the centre of the climber's focus, but it also serves as a symbol for 'the mountain inside', the centre of one's own being.

Mircea Eliade defines this symbolism of a centre as "as a place that is sacred above all." (Eliade 1961:39) All the Oriental civilizations—Mesopotamia, India, China etc. recognized certain places as the 'centre of the world' (Eliade 1961:39). The concept of a sacred and legendary mountain situated at the center of the world is widely distributed. For example in the Indian tradition this mountain is called Mount Meru, in Iran Haraberezaiti, in Norway Himingbjör, and in Palestine Mount Tabor and Mount Gerizim.

4.9 Universal Ideas about a Cosmic Sacred Mountain

A great number of people believe in the existence of a cosmic world mountain. In the Indian cosmo-mythology, for example, this cosmic mountain is called Mount Meru. In this context, Mircea Eliade writes that in several traditions the World Mountain symbolizes the cosmos, which is believed to be shaped
like a mountain whose "peak touches heaven: "above, where the Heavens are reunited, is the 'Centre of the World'." (Eliade 1985:110) The summit of this 'Cosmic Mountain' is considered the highest point on Earth, the navel of the Earth, and the point on which creation began (Eliade 1961:43).

In most instances, a particular mountain is chosen locally to represent the cosmic world mountain. The concept of the cosmic mountain is applied to real existing mountains and even hills. Clifford writes that "by means of their form and shape, or some other indefinable quality earthly objects symbolized or made present, the gods or their abodes. The image 'becomes' the reality. The cosmic mountain is an instance of this mode of thinking. The earthly mountain, even though it may be an insignificant hill, nonetheless because of its shape is 'the cosmic mountain." (Clifford: 6-7)

The idea of a universal cosmic sacred mountain as applied to an existing mountain can be found throughout the world. One explanation why certain mountains are sacred is that the mountain in question has been 'translated' into being or representing the central world mountain of myth or mythical teachings.

An example of a real existing mountain being perceived as a cosmic mountain is Israel's holy hill, Zion (Zion is also referred to as the 'Temple Rock'). According to Geoffrey Ashe (1977), Zion was the heart of Jerusalem and was often identified with it (Ashe 1977:96). Ashe comments that "topography, however, would

---

scarcely prepare us for Jewish belief, attested by rabbinical tradition in the Talmud, the Temple Rock is not only earth's centre but its highest point. This certainly introduces a fresh idea, and a bizarre one. Zion is plainly no Everest." (Ashe 1977:96) Ashe goes on to suggest that part of the explanation may be that the earth-disc or tebel was conceived as dome-shaped rather than flat. The centre of this disc was nearest heaven, and even though mountains at the rim might be taller, Zion, being at the center, was reaching further into the heavenly realms than any other place on earth (Ashe 1977:96). On the other hand, Ashe considers that Zion might also have acquired stature through being mystically identified with another, much higher one, which was not even in Palestine (Ashe 1977:96). Ashe asks himself,

Where then was this other mountain, paridisial, prototypal (at least to Zion), and supreme over all? We might guess that it was a Semitic version of a 'world mountain' which is familiar in independent legend over much of Asia. Its best known guise is the Mount Meru of Hinduism...Meru contained a paradise...and an abode of gods. Above its peak was the celestial pole, and the heavens rotated around it as a pivot. Iranian and other legends portray the same mountain. Among Buddhists it is usually called Sumeru. Sometimes it is said to have a temple on its summit—the hierocentric concept again. In some accounts the temple has a golden spire which we see as the Pole Star. (Ashe 1977:105)

When a mountain or hill is recognized to be a 'cosmic mountain', the particular mountain assumes the role of being the 'centre'. Mircea Eliade writes that the cosmic mountain whether it is looked at in a mythical context or whether it is identified with a real mountain, is always placed at the centre of the earth (Eliade 1986:110). Edwin Bernbaum confirms that
the image of a mountain as a centre is one of the most important and widespread. It appears as an axis linking together the three levels of the cosmos; heaven, earth and hell. Just as the center defines and orients the circle, this axis establishes the universe around it. As the link between heaven, earth and hell, it also acts as a conduit through which sacred energies, both divine and demonic, pass into the world we know. (Bernbaum 1988:14)

According to Eliade, in cultures that have the "conception of the three cosmic regions—Heaven, Earth, and Hell—the 'centre' constitutes the point of intersection of these regions." (Eliade 1961:40) It is here that the breakthrough onto another plane is possible, and at the same time communication between the three regions.

Notice that certain mountains are not only considered to emanate divine and spiritual energies, but they are associated with hell, so they are also believed to be the source of evil or demonic energies. They not only symbolize a bridge or meeting point between the earthly and the heavenly realms, they go much deeper: they connect heaven, earth and hell. Certain mountains are regarded as the place where spirits emerge, where the souls of the deceased find their temporary place of rest, and as places of purgatory as well.

Mircea Eliade also talks about the 'Centre' in relation to death and burial. He writes that all over the world one can find a version of the conception that the soul of the deceased ascends the pathways up a mountain, right up into heaven (Eliade 1961:49). For example, in Assyrian one expression of the word 'to die' is
'to clutch the mountain', and in Ural-Altaic belief, 'the road to death leads up a mountain' (Eliade 1961:49).

4.10 Mountains are associated with Death and Burial

One can find mountains as places of burial in many cultures around the world. I came across a number of native American stories in which mountains are associated with places where the souls of the deceased return after their body has died. In a story of the Cahuilla of California, the entrance to the residence of the spirits of the dead is made up of two mountains (Coffer 1981:217). In a creation story of the Klickitat Indians of Washington, the Great Spirit raised three mountains over the burial places of three important mythological chiefs (Loowit, Klickitat and Wy'east). Mount St. Helens, Mount Hood and Mount Adams, "the "Guardian Peaks of the Columbia" thus take on the role of giant grave-stones (Seaman 1967:66-67). George Thornton Emmons mentions another aspect that links mountains to places of burial. According to Emmons, the Tlingit cremated their dead. Shamans, however, were never cremated, but caves and rock-shelters far up the mountains were often selected as places of burial (Emmons 1991:280). Coffer writes about spirit voices of the deceased that can be heard on top of mountains (Coffer 1978:75).
The question arises whether or not this role of a burial site has anything to do with the amount of natural energy on mountains. There is evidence that this phenomenon may be linked to the level of natural energy on mountains.

In China, for example (according to feng-shui, the Chinese geomancy), burial sites should be chosen in places of auspicious energy. In China, many of these sites are located on or in the vicinity of mountains. A mountain is believed to be able to imbue a grave site with its auspicious energy. However, it is the placement of the grave in relation to the mountain, that makes its placement auspicious. The Chinese belief that the bones of a deceased person retain some of the energy of the deceased and they influence the family of the deceased and the environment of the grave-site. Since the bones have an influence on the descendants of the deceased (or tribe or community), it seems that one would choose a energized burial place to keep the energy alive.

Another good example are the Egyptian pyramids, which can be seen as artificial mountains. The pyramids were used as burial sites and their shape has been said to delay the process of decay and help preserve mummified bodies (Toth and Nielsen 1985:130-132). Toth and Nielsen write that "although the energies of the pyramid may, as yet, be inexplicable, there are some energies inside and surrounding the pyramid which are most certainly measurable." (Toth and Nielsen 1985:134) The authors claim that this has been done through the use of radiesthesia or dowsing rods. According to Toth and Nielsen, researchers have been able to
show that there is a helical vortex of energy emanating from the apex of the pyramid which actually expands in diameter as it rises higher and higher (Toth and Nielsen 1985:134).

4.11 Mountains as Symbols for Life, Birth, and Creation.

In many cultures mountains are the place or setting of creation stories. In the Pacific Northwest, for example, certain mountains, such as the big volcanic mountains of the Cascade Range—Rainier, Baker, Adams, Shasta and Hood—are considered to be powerful and sacred by many Northwest tribes. These mountains appear in native creation stories of the land and human kind.

There appear to be four different types of creation stories connecting humans and mountains. In the first type, mountains were created first, from which later all life emerged. For example, in a creation story of the Modocs of Northern California, the Great Chief created Mount Shasta first. After that "the sun melted snow and ice, which ran down the mountain and nourished plants and trees and finally turned into rivers." (Miller 1982:236) The plants and trees could then be used for food for the animals which in return were the food which enabled humans to exist and survive. Mountains are portrayed as sources of nourishment in this story.

---

9 Slightly different versions of this creation story of Mount Shasta can be found in Renfro (1992: 6-7), and Clark (1953:9-11).
William E. Coffer has described an example of the second type of creation stories, in which humans have been created by the spirits of mountains:

The gods and spirits of the Sacred Mountains created Man. He was made of all rains, springs, rivers, black clouds and sky. His feet were made of earth and his legs of lightning. White shell forms his knees and his body is white and yellow corn; his flesh is of daybreak, his hair darkness; his eyes are of the sun. (Coffer 1978:xiv)

In the third type of creation story (this story has been collected from the Yakima Indians of Eastern Washington), Coffer mentions another kind of connection between humans and mountains: both are created from the same substance. According to this story, humans and mountains are made of the same mud (Coffer 1978:74). Both mountains and humans are energized; humans and earth alike.

In the fourth type of creation story, which is more common than the third type, mountains used to be human beings (or semi-gods), but they were turned into mountains as a result of major events. Ella Clark recounts a creation story that deals with a battle between Mount Adams and Mount Hood. In this story the two mountains are portrayed as women. After a fierce battle, the women are turned into mountains, and the story concludes that now "life dwells in the mountain. Life is in the water flowing down from many caves and from fields of snow and ice." (Clark 1953:20) Clark recalls another story in which mountains are referred to as people. In this story, which deals with the creation of the
Olympic Range and Mount Rainier, *Tacobud*, a beautiful young girl slowly grew to become the giant mountain we call Mount Rainier, (Clark 1953:31).10

One can see that mountains are linked to human beings in many ways. One way or another, humans are able to associate themselves with mountains. In contrast to the ocean, which, in many cultures, is the origin of creation, mountains have a 'body', and therefore may be much more accessible to humans as symbols of creation and as a source of symbolic energy.

4.12 Mountains symbolize Human Beings

There is another symbolic connection between mountains and human beings. *Ch'i* pulses through humans as well as through mountains. A mountain has a life-span similar to that of a human, even though the lifetime of a mountain is so much longer than that of any biological life on this planet. Mountains grow like other living beings; as I have mentioned before, they either rise and grow due to the cataclysmic pressure of tectonic plates, or they are formed by repetitious lava flow and ash deposits. And, in the course of time, mountains can also grow old and even perish; they can fall apart due to the clawing forces of erosion. In his foreword to W.Y. Evans-Wentz's *Cuchama and Sacred Mountains*, Lama

---

10Other fourth type creation stories can be found in McCormick Collins (1974: 214), Gill and Sullivan (1992: 62), Clark (1953: 8), Stern (1934: 112).
Anagarika Govinda compares mountains to human beings. He writes that

He who can see the mountain in this [life-cycle] manner comes near to the life of the mountain, which is as intense as that of a human being. Mountains grow and decay, they breathe and pulsate with life. They attract and collect invisible energies from their surroundings: the energies from the air, of the water, of electricity and magnetism; they create winds, clouds, thunderstorms, rains, waterfalls, and rivers. They fill their surroundings with life and give shelter and food to innumerable living things. Such is the greatness of a mountain. (Lama Anagarika Govinda in Evans-Wentz 1981:xxx)

However, erosion of a mountain is usually a very slow process and normally during his or her life-time, a human can rarely observe the decay of a mountain. One might witness the occasional landslide, or a volcanic eruption that takes away part of a mountain's physical structure; but, in general, for humans, mountains represent something eternal, larger than life. For the human observer, mountains do not seem to change, mountains can be omnipresent on the horizon, they are visible from whichever direction one chooses to go. This firmness and durability, this 'never changing' presence of something majestic and greater than life triggers an emotional reaction in all who ponder it, it triggers awe or even humility as one reevaluates the importance of one's own life in the presence of a greater presence.
4.13 Pilgrims

For the pilgrim, the ascent can take on a highly religious symbolic meaning. Around the world, pilgrims flock to sacred mountains. Mount Kailas, Fuji-san, and the Chinese marchmounts are only a few examples. Many of the sacred mountains are directly connected with the belief of a particular religion. Yet, the question arises whether these mountains are more than just markers of cultural belief. Lama Anagarika Govinda directly addresses the 'natural energy' inherent in sacred mountains. He writes that "the power of such a [sacred] mountain is so great and yet so subtle that without compulsion pilgrims are drawn to the mountain from near and far, as if by the force of some invisible magnet, and they will undergo untold hardships and privations in their explicable urge to approach and worship the sacred spot. Nobody has conferred the title of sacredness upon such a mountain; by virtue of its own magnetic and psychic emanations the mountain is intuitively recognized to be sacred..." He continues that "if these qualities (consistency, harmony, and one-pointedness) are present in a mountain, we recognize it as a vessel of cosmic power, and we call it a sacred mountain" (Evans-Wentz 1981: Foreword by Lama Anagarika Govinda pp.xxix-xxx). In my opinion, symbolic energy is the main factor that attracts pilgrims to a mountain. Many pilgrims may feel the 'magnetic and psychic emanations,' but I believe that they are mainly drawn by the mountain symbolism and its inherent energy. As they reach their destination—whether it is the first view of the mountain, or
whether they actually climb it and reach its peak—pilgrims may experience the increased level of a mountain's natural energy. The pilgrims experience the mountain's natural energy and communicate their experiences to other believers. This increases the mountains' symbolic energy.
CHAPTER V: Natural Energy can be felt

Can 'natural energy' and symbolic energy be felt on a mountain? Symbolic energy is not actually an energy that is present on a mountain. However, as we have seen, it can be felt as an energy that draws a person to a mountain. The mountain serves as a catalyst to produce energies within a person. Both natural and symbolic energy reach especially high levels in mountains. We have seen that the psychic aspect of natural energy is of a more subtle nature and is mostly felt only by sensitive individuals. Physical energies are mostly manifested in visible and audible phenomena.

People have described the different feelings they experienced on mountains and the altered states of mind they found themselves in while climbing. In my opinion these altered states result when:
- a person experiences a surge of symbolic energy
- people pick up subtle 'psychic emanations'
- a person's mind and body is being influenced by the effects of altitude, physical exertion, mental focus, and repetitious 'meditative' body movements.

However, it seems that people have actually felt the physical aspects of natural energy (or a combination of both physical and psychic aspects). For example, LaChapelle writes that "there is
slight, but persisting evidence from myths and legends, and the experience from 'modern sensitives' that human beings can get in touch with some actual physical energy from the rocks."

(LaChapelle 1978:25) Paul Devereux writes that people who could feel these energies have described a sensation similar to an 'electric shock' when they stood in the vicinity of sacred places (Devereux 1992:25) We have seen this evidence in the myth and legends of the Navajo and other cultures around the world, yet neither LaChapelle nor Devereux list citations for the literature describing the experiences of the 'modern sensitives'.

In a lecture on "Electrostatic Fields and Brain/ Body/ Environment Interrelationships" delivered at the Rhine-Swandon Interdisciplinary Symposium, James Beal suggests that 'traditional' sensitives such as shamans may have felt the 'power of a place' because of factors that may have to do with the changes in the earth's local magnetic field causing changes in electrostatic field strength. These changes may also have something to do with negative ion concentrations. According to Beal, the shaman did not know these things, but he sensed them, in the "excited electro-chemical processes in his own nervous system". (LaChapelle 1978:25)

Francis Hitching believes that:

The power of stones has something to do with electromagnetism...It may have something to do with the unique qualities of quartz, which...seems to be constituent of every active stone. The molecular structure of quartz is spiral...It is also piezo-

---

11 see Beal, James B. (1974).
electric: That is, it expands slightly if given a slight charge of electricity. If placed under pressure— as it would be if charged while inside another stone— alternate edges of its prism give off positive and negative voltages on what can reach a dramatic scale: a force of 1,000 pounds applied on each face of a half-inch crystal of quartz creates 25,000 volts\textsuperscript{12}. (Hitching, Francis in LaChapelle 1978:25)

LaChapelle goes on to say that experienced rock climbers sometimes feel "certain very definite, but unexplainable\textsuperscript{13} effects." (LaChapelle 1978:26) She tells about an experience she has had while climbing in Canada. She claims that she could really feel the pressure generate inside the rocks pushing against one another, generating sufficient voltage for her body to sense it. This feeling prevented her from climbing a relatively easy chimney, which collapsed only a few minutes later (LaChapelle 1978:26).

\textsuperscript{12} see Hitching, Francis (1977).
\textsuperscript{13} The effects should not be 'unexplainable' for LaChapelle, since on p.25 of her book, she quoted James Beal who had clearly laid out an explanation.
CHAPTER VI: Strange phenomena

Most of the strange phenomena observed in the vicinity of sacred mountains have to do with extraordinary physical or climatological events. As we have seen in the last chapter, electromagnetism can play an important role in the mountain environment and can be experienced by sensitives. There are reports of phenomena that have not been explained and cannot be directly linked to separate physical or psychic energies. The importance of these phenomena in the context of this thesis is related to the fact that they only occur on mountains or occur so unusually frequently on mountains. There is no scientific way to measure whether or not these phenomena are manifestations of natural energy. Yet an abundance of 'natural energy' may be responsible for these phenomena. Most of the unexplained phenomena that have been witnessed to occur on mountains have taken place on sacred mountains.

Many extraordinary physical, climatological, and sonic events that can be experienced on mountains have natural explanations. Yet there are unexplained physical and climatological phenomena that have been reported on and around certain mountains, including sightings of spirits and UFOs. These phenomena have occurred most frequently on and in the vicinity of mountains that are considered sacred by a particular culture. The question arises whether these mountains are sacred because of their inherent energy or, on the
other hand, whether their increased energy creates or attracts these extraordinary phenomena.

It is very hard to determine whether some of these reports of strange phenomena are accurate accounts or are, unfortunately exaggerations of natural events. In the minds of some people, gods and spirits really exist on the mountain, a belief that might have been become part of a culture and then passed on from generation to generation. These gods and spirits may not have been initially perceived in a certain form or shape, but may have been merely translated from the 'unexplained'. The form, shapes or names of these deities or spirits evolved from the initial 'creation' to a socially acceptable, standard and concrete representation; they have been established as a 'real' and existing deity or spirit. With the identity of the spirit or deity established, a deep and devoted belief in a spirit or god will cause people to visually, auditorially, or emotionally perceive the spirit while they are in the vicinity of a sacred mountain. There is no doubt that believers actually experience the presence of a special force on sacred mountains or sacred places in general. But the question arises whether or not what they experience is actually real. I acknowledge that it is often difficult to scientifically distinguish between illusion and reality in anecdotal accounts, however, if we listen with open minds to accounts in which individuals have seen spirits, we may come to accept that a 'gift' of perceiving or communicating with
spirits on mountains is reserved to spiritually highly-evolved individuals such as priests, clairvoyants, or medicine-men.

6.1 Unexplained Light Phenomena

Wilhelm Reich had coined the term 'orgone energy' which, in my opinion, is similar to what I have called 'natural energy'. According to Wilhelm Reich, orgone energy can be seen as a form of light. He describes an experiment with people in a dark room, where after 15-30 min. of adaptation one could see "slow-moving fog-like formations...after some time, bluish-violet, strongly luminating light points appear [which then change to] rapid yellowish-white, lightning like streaks of light." (Reich 1973: 152) And in fact, there are a number of reports describing unexplained light phenomena on certain sacred mountains.

Suryanarayan writes about a strange phenomena he saw at the Indian mountain Arunachala. He believes that "the real greatness of Arunachala lies in its being the embodiment of jyoti (divine light) and in the fantasy and phantasmagoria of the Aurora of Arunachala. Suryanarayan explains that the profound secrets of Arunachala are "known only to rishis, sages, yogis and true devotees of Arunachaleswara and Apeeta Kuchamba." (Suryanarayan 1988:105)
Suryanarayan relates an incident that occurred to him in the vicinity of Arunachala. Earlier in the day a sage had told Suryanarayan that at about 4:45 AM that day the divine light (the jyoti) would be visible appearing on the mountain. Suryanarayan writes that "exactly at that time, the jyoti, appearing like a star (of the size of the moon) started twinkling slowly and zooming brightly for five to ten minutes from the top center of the Eastern block of the mountain facing the Ashram."

(Suryanarayan 1988:112)

Suryanarayan also reports that he saw seven streaks of bright light emerging one after the other from the peak while he gazed at the mountain during prayer (Suryanarayan 1988: 112). The 'Aurora of Arunachala' reportedly emerges "from the top of the mountain in a fantastic cluster of rays beaming to great heights in all directions" (Suryanarayan 1988:113).

There is also evidence of strange phenomena on sacred mountains in China. On Mt. Omei, which is located on the southwestern edge of the Red Basin, Szechwan Province, one can observe strange phenomena "which merit a more than purely mundane explanation." (Evans-Wentz 1981:42) Unfortunately, Evans-Wentz does not give a detailed account of the nature of these phenomena. The only reference he provides is a quotation from J.E. Blofeld's book The Jewel in the Lotus (1948), which describes mysterious 'Wenshu Lights' (or what Paul Devereux [1992] called 'Boddhisattva lights') which can be seen over Mt. Omei, as well as Mt. Wutai, and which are "probably magnetically produced, luminous spheres."
Evans-Wentz states that there are many other accounts of supernormal phenomena on these mountains. Mt. Omei and Mt. Wutai have both been credited with "having been the awakeners of saintliness during many millennia." (Evans-Wentz 1981:46) Unfortunately, Evans-Wentz does not provide more detailed information about the nature of these phenomena.

In his book *Secrets of Ancient and Sacred Places* (1992) Paul Devereux discusses the phenomena of what he calls "earth lights." According to Devereux, regions in the vicinity of geological faulting are known to host exotic light phenomena. He states that statistical studies have shown correlations between earth lights outbreaks and seismic activity (Devereux 1992:27). He continues that in addition to having electromagnetic properties, the lights seem to have characteristics that extend beyond known physics, such as unexplained changes of direction of the lights' movements. In some happenings--such as the light phenomena displayed in the hillsides near the Norwegian town of Hessdalen--the lights seemed to follow and respond to movements of witnesses (Devereux 1992:86). Devereux writes that these lights have been known to a great many traditional societies. The Australian Aborigines, for example, call them 'min min lights'; the Native people of West Africa call them *aku*, and to the Malaysians they are known as *pennangal* (p.28). Devereux also believes that there is evidence that such lights may be surrounded by energy fields that cause mind-change effects, and the lights may have been used for such
purposes (p.30). At this point, Devereux's assertions become less convincing, since he does not offer any sources that exemplify the use of these lights for 'mind-changing' purposes.

6.2 Extraordinary Climatological Oddities

Two sacred mountains of Japan, Mt. Kasuga and Mt. Wakakasuga, stand side by side just east of Todai-ji Temple on the eastern edge of the town of Nara. Strangely enough, though, Mt. Kasuga has never been burned in the recurring forest fires in this area. Wakakusa on the other hand is burned deliberately and ritually every year.

How can a mountain be resistant to forest fires, especially if they occur frequently in its locality? Evans-Wentz reports a similar phenomena in the sacred mountain Cuchama, which is located on the border between southern California and Mexico. It is the highest mountain of the extreme southwestern part of California, standing between the Pacific Ocean and the Imperial Valley. Cuchama is a very interesting and unique mountain to begin with; in past geological times Cuchama was an island. Strange occurrences take place on Cuchama. Evans-Wentz writes that

14Cuchama is a special mountain; many things about it are puzzling. The native Americans living in the proximity of the mountain tell ancient stories about a now extinct, primeval race which had supposedly lived on Cuchama mountain. This was a race of giants. And indeed, archaeologists found eight to nine feet tall mummies of this giant race wrapped in saffron-colored robes, as well as remnants of a "lost city of beehive shaped huts" (Evans-Wentz 1981: 25; footnote 32).
"lightning, although frequently striking round about Cuchama, has not, as yet, been known to strike Cuchama itself." (Evans-Wentz 1981:12-13) People living close to the mountain have never seen lightning actually strike the mountain (Evans-Wentz 1981:12-13). Evans-Wentz writes that according to the native Americans of this region, "the Thunder Gods protect the Exalted High Place [another name for Cuchama]." (Evans-Wentz 1981:12) Evans-Wentz believes that "this peculiar immunity of Cuchama may be due to a protective envelope of terrestrial magnetism, or to a psychic force, emanating from the sacred mountain, and akin to that associated with Mount Omei in China and with Mount Kailas in Tibet (Evans-Wentz 1981:12-13). However, incongruously on this fire-free mountain, there are many reports of sightings of strange lightning-balls rolling down the slopes of Cuchama: "More than once, different persons among us have seen a glowing ball of light appear on the peak and other sections of Cuchama. One person saw it suddenly appear on the peak, grow in intensity, and then roll down the ridge in a southerly direction until it passed out of sight into the valley." (Evans-Wentz 1981:12)

Other strange phenomena on this mountain are the winter-time congregations of migrating birds and butterflies on the summit of Cuchama. Flocks of birds and butterflies "seem to bathe gleefully in the mountain's magnetism; and unlike most human creatures, they are, perhaps, consciously responsive to its invisible inspiring influences." (Evans-Wentz 1981:13) Similar flocks of butterflies can be found on Mt. Adams in Ceylon. The butterflies appear in
large numbers on the mountain, but are considerably less
frequently found in the surrounding area (Evans-Wentz 1981:14)

6.3 Mountains as Places of UFO Sightings

Another strange phenomena associated with mountains are UFO
sightings, many of which have occurred in the vicinity of sacred
mountains. UFO sightings are reported frequently from the Altaic
mountains of Siberia (Ashe 1977:185-189), but the world-wide
phenomena of UFO sightings started on Mt. Rainier, a sacred
volcano east of Seattle, Washington. The "flying saucer epidemic"
is commonly said to have begun on 24 June 1947, when a businessman
named Kenneth Arnold, piloting his private aircraft near Mount
Rainier in the State of Washington, saw 'a chain of saucer-like
objects, flat like a pie-pan and reflecting the sun like a
mirror,' flying among the peaks. His report inaugurated the first
wave of sightings (Ashe 1977:183). If there actually exists a
different kind of electromagnetic energy on certain mountains, I
wonder if it may be possible that UFOs use this energy as fuel?
CHAPTER VII: Conclusion

This thesis has shown that mountains are extraordinary places, places of increased natural and symbolic energy. Even though there is only a small body of literature that directly addresses questions regarding the existence of natural energy and symbolic energy of mountains, one can find certain cultural ideas and beliefs that point to an increased level of energy on mountains. Especially in Navajo mythology one can find direct mention of a force or energy associated with mountains. However, the concept of natural energy can also be found in a number of other cultures and philosophies all over the world.

All mountains have increased levels of natural and symbolic energy. Certain phenomena observed exclusively on mountains and especially on sacred mountains seem to be caused by an abundance of these energies. Natural and symbolic energy are inherent in all landscape features. As Lawler relates, the forms of earth hold an imprint, a residual energy of the forces which made them (Lawler 1993:13). However, I strongly believe that--based on the reasons given in this thesis--mountains have higher levels of natural energy than other landscape features. In addition to the increased level, the natural energy of mountains is also much easier perceived by humans due to the following reasons: There is more display of what Lawler calls mechanical energies such as gravity and electromagnetism. The nature of the mountain environment allows people other than sensitive individuals or
shamans (who may detect it almost anywhere) to be able to experience different aspects of natural energy. The nature of the mountain environment which elevates the climber above everyday problems, its inherent dangers and diminished levels of oxygen, the meditative repetition of steps, the continuous focus on the ascent or survival, can bring the climber into an altered, meditative state of mind, which may allow him or her to perceive subtle energies he or she would not be able to perceive otherwise.

All mountains have an increased level of natural energy. However, certain mountains have been considered sacred because they display one or more of the following extraordinary aspects or phenomena:

-extraordinary physical aspects: e.g., Mount Fuji; Kailas; Mount Rainier (shape, height, single standing, etc.).
-extraordinary psychic aspects: They are used for vision quests; e.g., Bighorn Mountain.
-extraordinary phenomena: e.g., Cuchama (climatology); Mount Kasuga (never been burnt); Arunachala and Mount Omei (light phenomena).

These mountains 'stand out' in one way or another, and have either increased levels of natural energy with especially high levels of either physical energy, or psychical energy, or both, which increases their symbolic energy.
However, singular historical, physical, or climatological events may also have triggered the belief in a mountain's sanctity. As this belief became established in a culture, a people's belief in the reality of a mountain's powers and increased levels of inherent energy may have contributed to the increase of the actual level of natural energy. If a mountain becomes a symbol for the divine to an entire culture, it has gained in symbolical energy, which in return influences energy levels among its worshippers. Often the belief in a mountain's sanctity is rooted in such natural, physical, or climatological events that have been interpreted, by the 'believers,' to be extraordinary and divine.

All mountains are extraordinary places, whether in a climatological or a physical sense, or even in the sense that there is a different type of energy present on certain mountains. Even after we read about how and why these mountains are sacred or mythologically significant, the question remains whether these mountains are physically or energetically different from 'regular' mountains. The evidence of strange and unexplained phenomena that have been witnessed on and in the vicinity of these mountains make them extraordinary places and may have contributed to their becoming sacred in the first instance. Some of the accounts of strange phenomena on and around these sacred mountains may be tainted by cultural or religious interpretations of outstanding natural (or unnatural) events. I, however, strongly believe that many of the reported 'unexplained' phenomena
witnessed on sacred mountains are the result of increased natural energy.

Natural energy, I believe, may be a manifestation of an all-permeating divine force. Mountains are symbolically linked to the divine and as natural energy is believed to be of a divine source—as many cultures and philosophers have claimed—it finds its strongest expression in the mountain environment and symbolism. In his essay "Divine Energy" in Parabola Magazine of August, 1992, Father Symeon Burholt makes the connection between "God" and the concept of "divine energy;" he believes that divine energy is the natural expression, or abundance, of the divine being which is..."overflowing with power, goodness, love, life, and innumerable attributes." (Burholt 1992:38) Burholt writes that: "The world is radiant with God's presence, with divine energy. He is dynamically present in all things as their creator and all things participate in the divine energy to the extent that he acts upon them and they are patient to his touch." (Burholt 1992:39)

According to Burholt, if humans would fully open up to receive the divine energy "it is difficult to imagine" what would happen (Burholt 1992:40). In my opinion, the mountain climber can overcome tremendous obstacles on his ascent to the summit, because he is driven by determination and will. Will, I believe, if focused on a positive outcome, can be seen as an expression of divine energy. Maybe one cannot call the will-power of a climber necessarily 'divine', but it may be seen as what Bertrand Russell calls "energy of faith..."(Russell 1918); the faith that the
summit will be reached. John Stuart Mill believes that strong impulses are but another form of energy (Mill 1989:60).

With the summit extending into the heights of divine realms, mountains can very well be perceived as symbols of something like a Christ-figure (and I do not mean this exclusively in a Christian religious sense). The Christ-figure is the mediator between the human body, mind, soul and God, an expression of the divine powers in the form of a human being, or the appearance of God himself in a human body and the expression of the most intricate divine and eternal laws that many humans on this earth-plane can understand. In the same way, spiritually-awoken individuals can interpret certain mountains as mediators between earth's 'body' and earth-nature and the divine forces that have created this nature.

As the cultural geographer Yi-Fu Tuan suggests, "a symbol is a part to suggest a whole." (1974:23) To me, mountains, with their magnificence and omnipresence are a part of this planet's landscape that suggests the power, grandeur and yet simplicity of the universe and creation. More than a mere suggestion, being in the presence of mountains can stir up emotions of the most spiritual nature. Anybody who is willing to open up and experience the true essence of mountains—whether physically or philosophically—is given the opportunity to come one step closer to understanding the divine.
**Adams Peak, Sri Lanka**


Mount Everest, Nepal

Fig. 3. Kailas

Kailas, Tibet

Mount Kenya, Kenya

Kilimanjaro, Tanzania

Fig. 6. Mount Rainier

Mount Rainier, USA/ Washington

Fig. 7. Wutai-Shan

Wutai-Shan, China

Bibliography


106


Hamsa, Bhagwan Shri. *The Holy Mountain.* London: Faber and Faber Ltd, 1934


**Lawler, Robert.** *Dreaming the Beginning,* in *Parabola Magazine,* Volume XVIII, Number 2, May 1993, pp.11-18, 1993.


Appendix I

Mountains mentioned in this thesis:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Phenomena/ Manifestations of Natural Energy</th>
<th>Cultural and Mythological Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adams, Mount</td>
<td>USA, Oregon</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46°12'N 121°48'W</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adams Peak</td>
<td>Ceylon</td>
<td>flocks of butterflies</td>
<td>Site of the &quot;Footprint of Buddha&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6°49'N 80°30'E</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arunachala</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>Aurora of Arunachala</td>
<td>Seat of Shiva</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10°45'N 77°45'E</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baker, Mount</td>
<td>USA, Washington</td>
<td>UFO sightings</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48°46'N 121°48'W</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Big Horn Mountains</td>
<td>USA, Wyoming</td>
<td></td>
<td>Site of ancient Medicine Wheel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44°30'N 107°30'W</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brocken</td>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>glory</td>
<td>Meeting point for witches at Walpurgisnacht</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51°47'N 10°37'E</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cuchama</td>
<td>California/ Mexico</td>
<td>lightning-balls yet never hit by lightning</td>
<td>Exalted High Place protected by Thundegods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32°34'N 116°41'W</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Everest, Mount</td>
<td>Nepal</td>
<td></td>
<td>Seat of Goddess Miyolangsangma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27°59'N 95°26'E</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fuji-San</td>
<td>Japan</td>
<td></td>
<td>Seat of Goddess Tango</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35°23'N 138°42'E</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Phenomena/Manifestations of Natural Energy</td>
<td>Cultural and Mythological Significance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hiei-San</td>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>abode of deities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35°15'N 135°20'E</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hood, Mount</td>
<td>USA, Oregon</td>
<td>Dwelling Place of deities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45°22'N 121°41'E</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kailas</td>
<td>Tibet</td>
<td>Dwelling Place of God Shiva and Goddess Pavarti</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31°03'N 81°20'E</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kasuga-San</td>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>never been burnt by forest fires</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34°41'N 135°51'E</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kenya, Mount</td>
<td>Kenya</td>
<td>symbol of political independance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0°10'S 37°18'E</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kilimanjaro</td>
<td>Tanzania</td>
<td>symbol of political independance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3°02S 37°20'E</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Koya-San</td>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>abode of deities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34°15'N 135°30'E</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ngauruhoe</td>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>Seat of gods/ source of mana</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39°10'S 175°40'E</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Olympus, Mount</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>glory</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47°49'N 123°42'W</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Omei-Shan</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>terrestrial magnetism</td>
<td>embodiment of the Tao</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29°35'N 103°11'E</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rainier, Mount</td>
<td>USA, Washington</td>
<td>UFO sightings</td>
<td>inhabited by might demon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46°51'N 121°45'W</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Helens, Mount</td>
<td>USA, Washington</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46°11'N 122°11'W</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

117
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Phenomena/Manifestations of Natural Energy</th>
<th>Cultural and Mythological Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shasta, Mount</td>
<td>USA, California</td>
<td>psychic and spiritual powers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41°24'N 122°11'W</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tai Shan</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>Wenshu lights</td>
<td>&quot;source of all things in nature&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36°16N 117°05'E</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wutai Shan</td>
<td>China</td>
<td></td>
<td>main locus of Manjusri</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39°05'N 113°33'E</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Boddhisattva</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wakakasuga-San</td>
<td>Japan</td>
<td></td>
<td>burnt ritually every year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34°42'N 135°51'E</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zion</td>
<td>Israel</td>
<td></td>
<td>symbolizes aspects of Christianity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31°47'N 35°10'E</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Mountain Ranges:**
- Altaic Mountains - Siberia
- Alps - Central Europe
- Himalaya - Central Asia
- Olympic Mountains - USA, Washington

**Philosophical Mountains:**
- Haraberezaiti - Iran
  - fastened to the sky at the world centre
- Himingbjör - Norway
  - celestial mountain
- Meru - India
  - centre of the world the pole star below