

Form School Perspective on Global Environmental Concerns

Saving our planet, restoring the earth, and living in harmony with nature have been cornerstones of the environmental movement. Indeed, the myriads of environmental issues we are currently dealing with have become an urgent world concern in modern times. From a Feng Shui perspective, many of the problems that have developed since the beginning of the Industrial Revolution have been a result of the Western paradigm of the relationship between nature and humanity.

With the Enlightenment, people came to see themselves as being at the center of the universe, and started to regard nature as something that simply belonged to them. It became common to believe that man could conquer the world and nature was something to be worked and shaped to fit human needs and desires.

Even today, we continue to believe that because we "own the land" we can make holes through mountains, build dams across rivers, or develop cities wherever we desire, even on a flood plain.

Even though we call our planet "Mother Earth," we dominate and control her as though she were a wayward child, not a respected Mother. We are a species that have an average life span of less than a century. To think we can own or control something with billions of years of history is, to say the least, a dangerous notion.

As we have come to realize the damage we have done, we can see that we have, so to speak, been abusing our "mother." We should be aware that this abuse has actually threatened our own living quality and survival. Mostly motivated by self-preservation, we want to make up for this and restore Mother Earth to what she was.

We want to do something for the Earth, but do we really know what Earth needs? Does she really enjoy or approve of our new "positive interference"? If we do whatever we desire to the Earth while still thinking we are at the center of the universe, we are sticking to the old paradigm that created the current problem in the first place. This skewed vision of the relationship between nature and humanity is what led to the problem to begin with, which means that if we try to solve it based on the same skewed vision, we might make the same mistakes in a different but equally unhelpful direction.

If the old paradigm is so problematic, what principle should guide us in repairing the damage we have done to our planet? We need to re-assess and re-examine our understanding and attitude towards nature. We must realize human beings are

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part of nature, just as fish, frogs, or deer are a part of nature. We are neither separate from, nor above nature. We are transient passengers on this planet. We do not and cannot own the Earth. The renowned American Indian, Chief Seattle, said it well in his speech, *"The land does not belong to us, we belong to the land; the rivers are our brothers, the water's gurgle is the voice of our father's father. How can one sell the air and the blue sky?"*

Living in harmony with nature, is in a way similar to living in harmony with people. To be friends with and to live in harmony with others, we need to understand their personalities, desires, temperaments, character, and strength as well as their weaknesses. We have to be sensitive to their feelings and respect who they are. This is the first step toward developing a cordial relationship.

Most of us have a relatively good understanding of how to get along with others, yet often we don't act in the same manner when dealing with nature. For instance, when we visit someone's home, we know enough to ask for permission to enter or to do something -but do we ask permission from the land? We build dams, highways, and cities to fit our purposes, but we hardly ever imagine consulting with the land.

You may ask "How do we consult with the land?" or ask for permission from it? The simplest answer is: have you ever tried to ask? You might be amazed at the kind of information you will receive if you ask sincerely from your heart.

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At times we build cities in flood plains, or houses on steep slopes, going against natural principles. For a few decades there may be no problem, but a single big flood can destroy a whole city. We call this a natural disaster, but nature never has disasters. Nature just makes adjustments in its process of continuous change. Such disasters are due to our own actions and choices, so we must endure the consequences.

For years and decades, humanity has lacked respect and sensitivity to the land. Though it may seem that our need for survival is a legitimate excuse for such destruction, we can always survive with what is already provided to us. Heaven is generous; it is not necessary to ruin and destroy in order to survive.

What really fuels the destruction is the bottomless reservoir of human desire, ignorance, and ego. Everything we need has been provided, yet instead of learning to recognize, receive, and accept, what persists is the need to consume even more. This is all due to the lack of sensitivity and the inability to understand, see, and appreciate what is already there.

There is an inherent value and purpose in every part of this vast planet. If the information exists in everything, then all things are encoded with messages: a place to build a home, a place to cultivate, a place where water can flow, and a place where natural things remain undisturbed. This coding has an almost sacred quality; it carries an extra imperative that it is not to be violated. Yet the human-centered paradigm has totally ignored this.

A master sculptor does not impose a design on any random piece of rock. To create a specific design, he may search for months to find the right piece –as though each rock has a spirit embedded in it, and the job of the artist is to bring it to life. Similarly, a piece of wood may look ordinary and nondescript, but a master artist would be able to find a unique energy within the piece, to help its form manifest. What is true for a piece of rock or wood is also true for the larger landscape in which we live. Mountains, rivers, and plains have specific energy forms and spirits: specific patterns of Chi-Energy flow and Information.

Land usage should be based on how we can work together with nature so that our purposes fit with the natural attributes of the land, rather than violently imposing our often-ignorant desires. Most of all, we need to treat all of nature as a living entity instead of just a physical mass.

As discussed throughout this book, everything in its entirety is composed of three basic manifestations: Matter, Chi-Energy, and Information. A river is not just a body of water; it is a living entity that has Chi-Energy and carries Information. A mountain is more than a big pile of soil and rock: it is alive. This shift of our perception could enable us to treat all of nature with a different, more respectful attitude.

As the world surges into the new millennium, the rate of change continues accelerating. Technological advances bring forth amenities at such a fast pace. At the same time our

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lives are getting busier so we often lack time to enjoy these amenities. The pursuit of economic growth and the drive toward ever-increasing consumption are leading to global environmental problems. We have seen damage to the ozone layer, mineral-depleted farmland, polluted rivers, degraded air quality, land ravaged by mining, and more.

Now many people are becoming more conscious and aware of the issues we are facing. Visionaries from all parts of the world and with varied backgrounds have started grassroots movements for alternative modes of life. Romantic idealists responding to the crisis brought on by industrial development promote many of these alternative lifestyles. However, to really affect change we need to address the problem in a far more fundamental way and not simply to revise certain surface phenomena. Otherwise we may simply swing like a pendulum from one extreme to another.

As stated in Chapter 1, Feng Shui in its most general term, Kan-Yu, provides the fundamental re-orientation that can help us see a way out of the unproductive cycle. This cycle contains and limits the usual attempt to solve the problems caused by modern attitudes. The ultimate value of Feng Shui in today's world is to enable us to come to terms with our world and its problems and move beyond them, without running away into a dream of an ideal past.

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In conclusion, to bring forth change, we need to:

1. Recognize that we are just part of nature.

We do not own nature, nor are we at the center of nature. Our role is not to rule over, but to participate in the natural world and obey Natural Laws.

2. Treat and respect everything in nature as living entities.

Rocks, soil, and water, are as much alive as plants and animals. They also play their parts, and we should recognize ourselves as being part of their community. We should respect our partners in the natural community for the sake of our mutual survival.

3. Follow nature's patterns.

Seek balance and harmony with nature. Recognize that everything has a purpose, and that each purpose plays a vital role in seeking balance and harmony.

4. Recognize that we have what we need.

The world has enough to meet the needs of all. As a species, we have what we need. We can come to see how this is true as we can learn to tell the difference between our excessive desires and our actual needs. Human desire can become limitless, these unlimited desires are false desires, in the sense that they go far beyond what is necessary.

5. Recognize that as we are in nature, nature is in us.

To restore the balance with nature, we need to restore our own balance; to purify the world we need to first purify our hearts.

This all boils down to the core concept of Feng Shui: "In harmony with nature; in tune with the heart." We are at our best when we are living in accordance with the natural order.

It is as simple yet profound change in paradigm –not to a new paradigm, but as a recovery of the ancient understanding of nature and human life. This change, this return, is one on which the future of our species and our planet depend upon.

About the Author

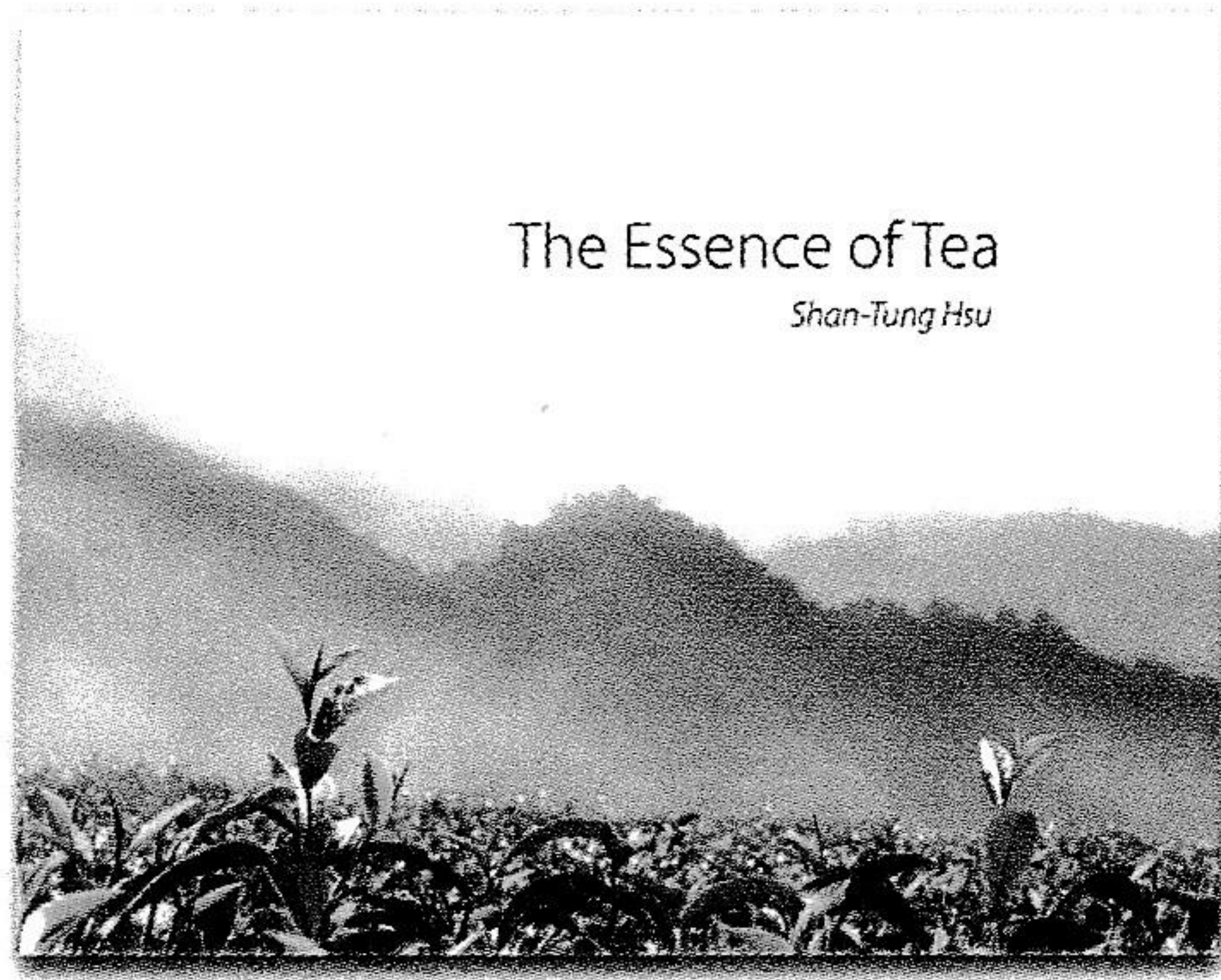
Shan-Tung Hsu was born and raised in Taiwan. He grew up in a family with a tradition of working with natural energy and a strong connection to traditional Chinese philosophy. As an undergraduate, he majored in Forestry at National Taiwan University in Taipei. He then went to the University of Washington, in Seattle where he earned a Ph.D. in Natural Resources, for research in Fiber Science. In 1989, he found the Blue Mountain Feng Shui Institute.

Dr. Hsu currently teaches and lectures worldwide on matters of spatial and environmental design in accord with natural principles. In his teaching, he blends his training in Western science, ancient Chinese philosophy, and Taoist and Buddhist meditation with the energy work of Qigong and Taiji Chuan, along with decades of experience in Feng Shui.

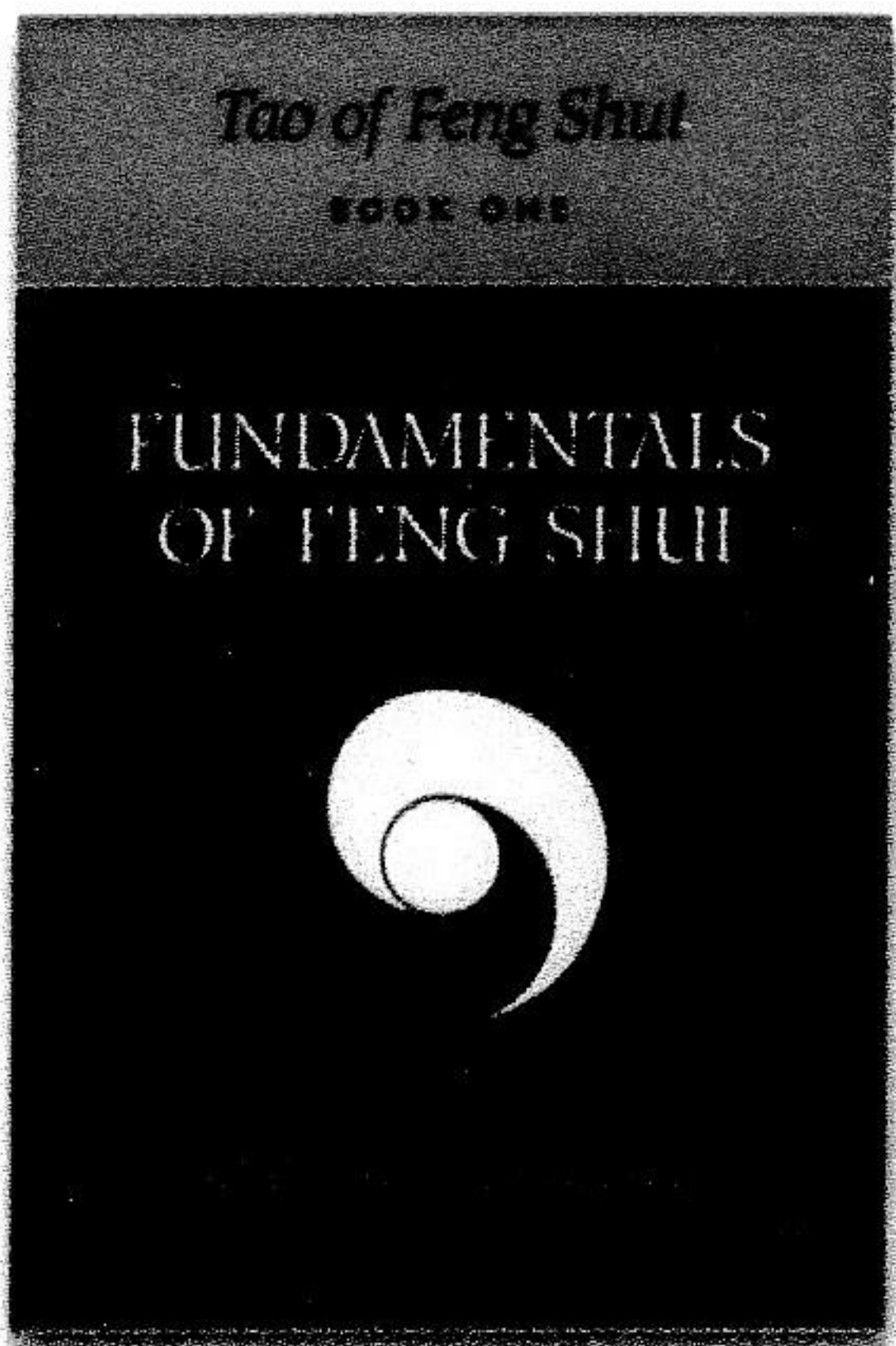
Dr. Hsu currently lives in Seattle, Washington USA

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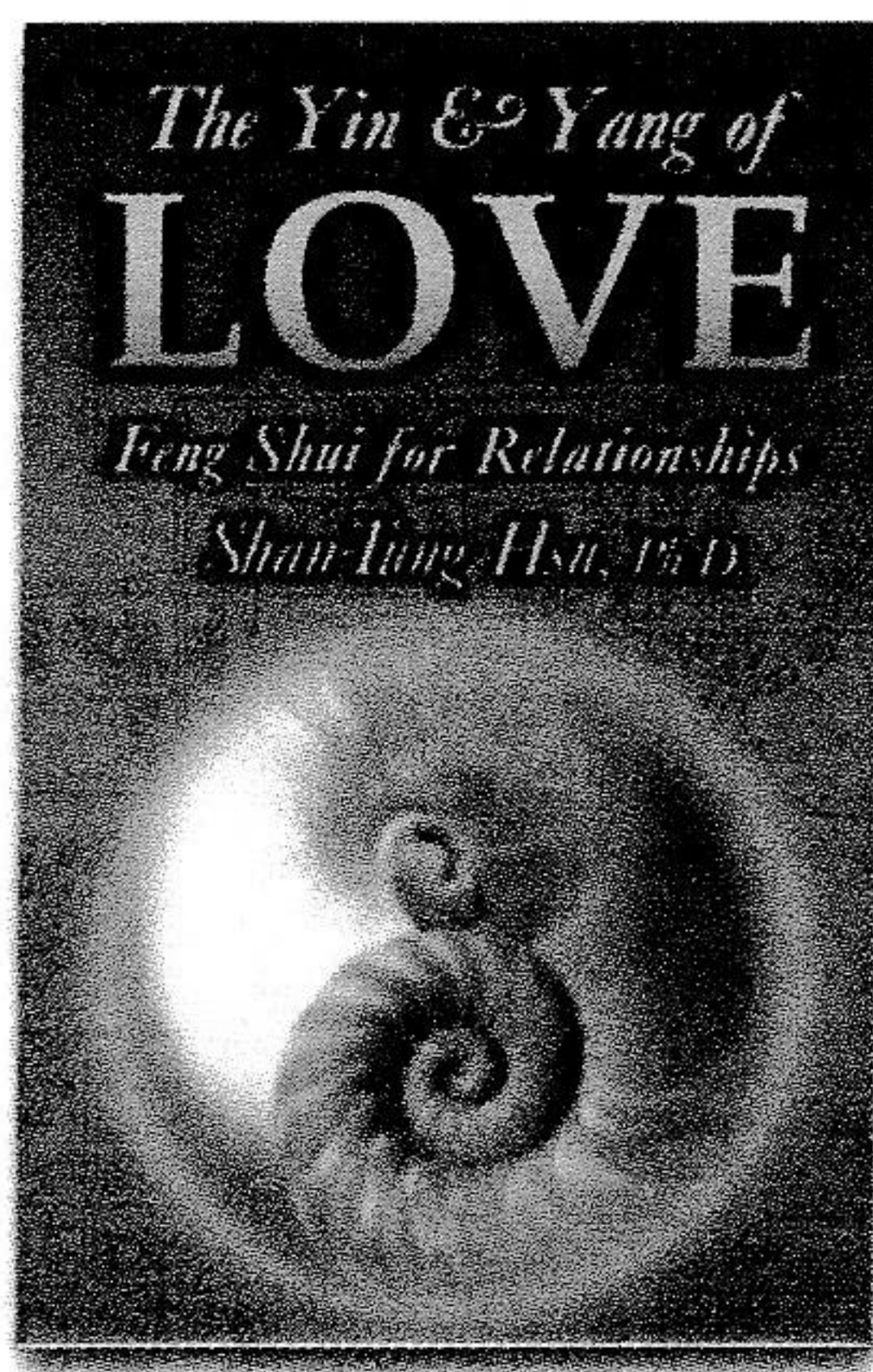
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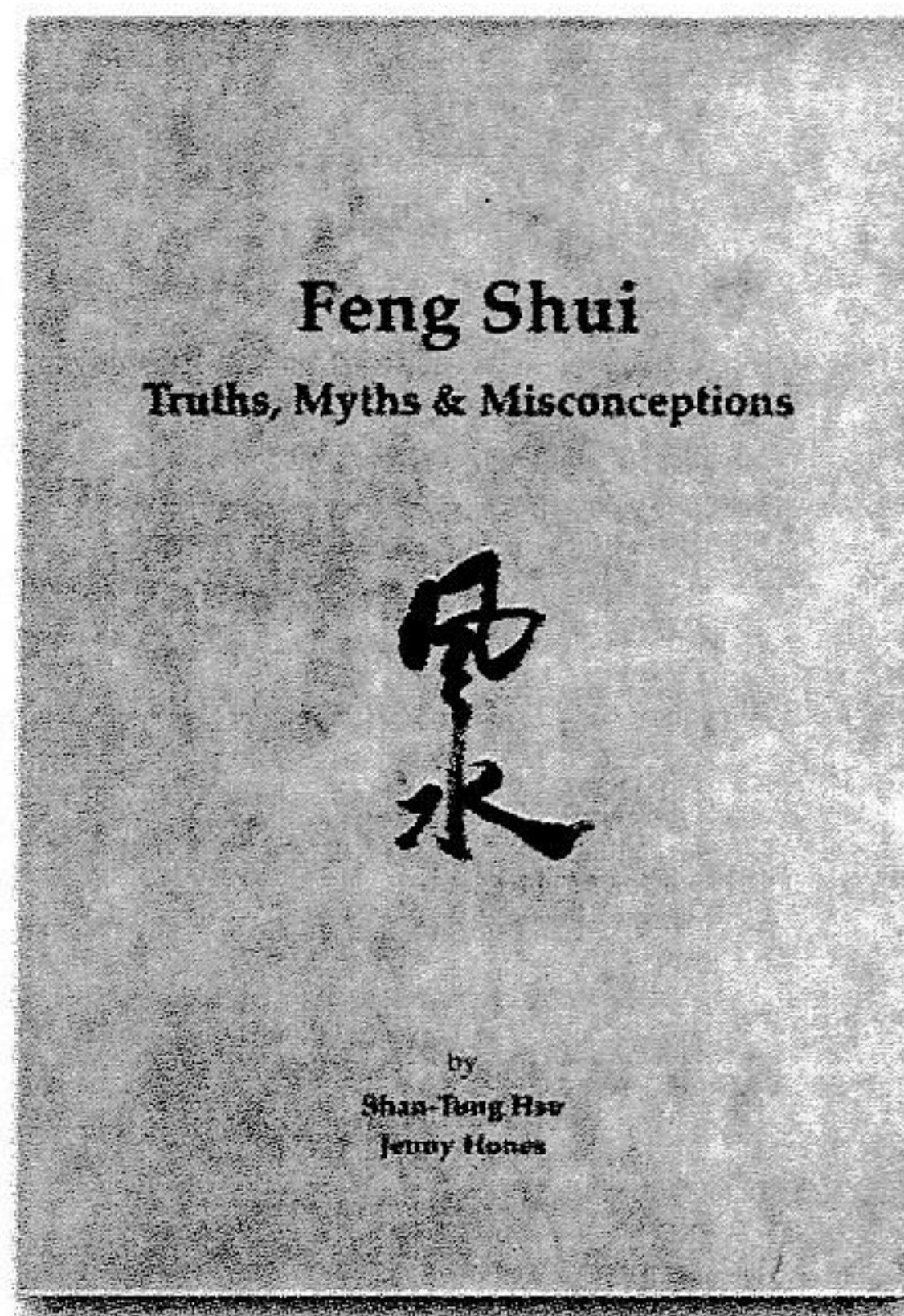
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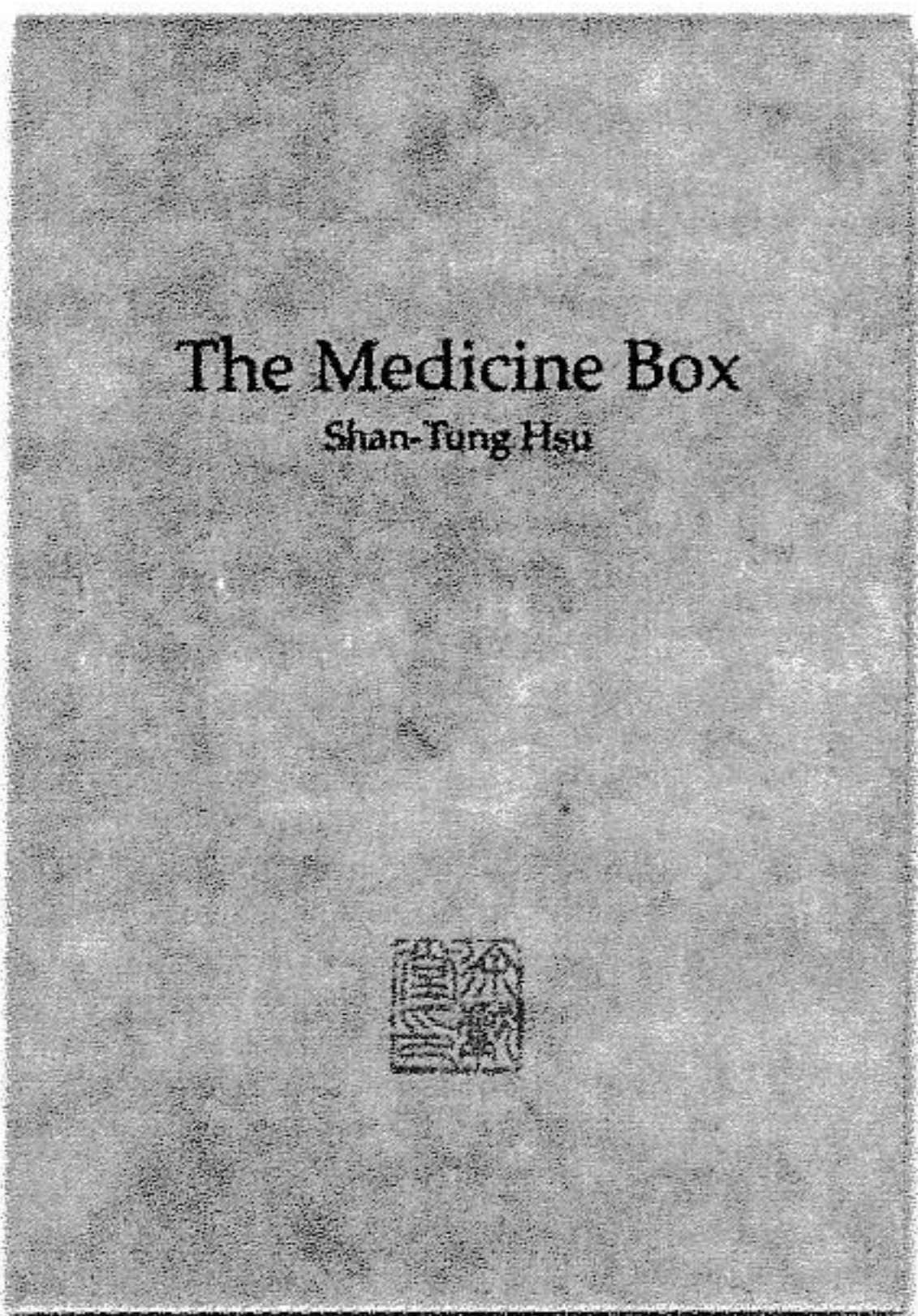
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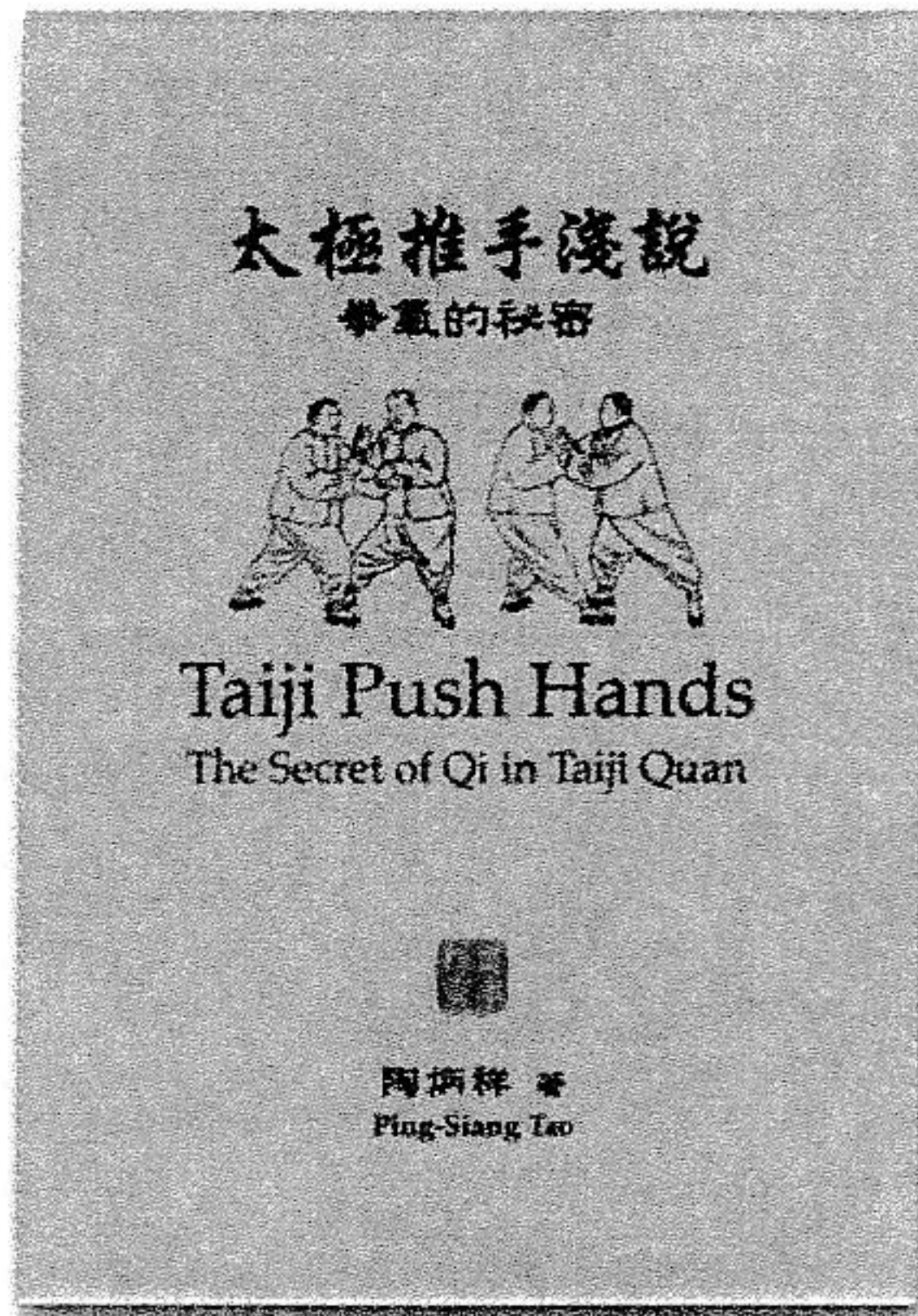
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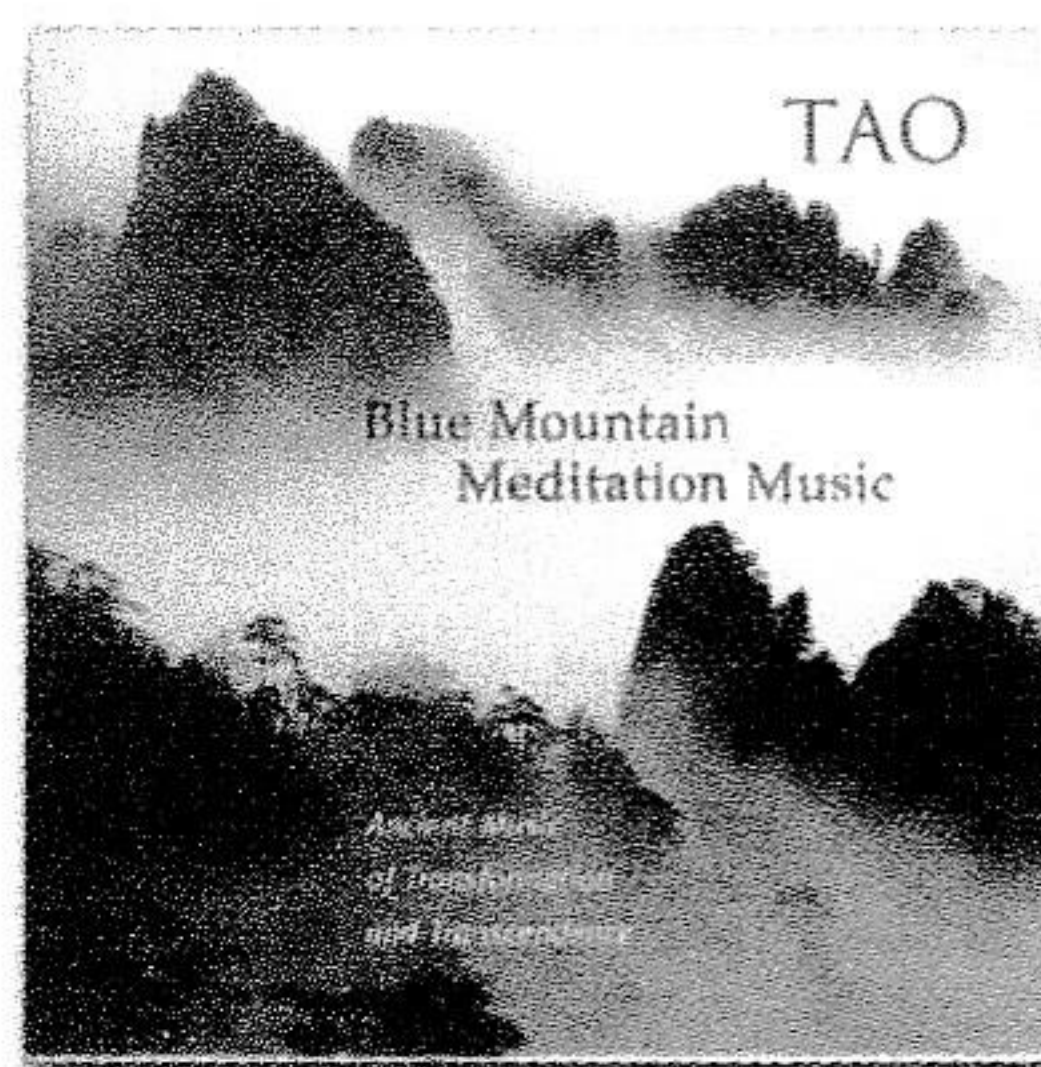
Feng Shui:
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The Medicine Box



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P.O. Box 15233, Seattle, WA 98115 USA • Tel: +1 206-523-3946

www.bluemountainfengshui.com • E-mail: shantunghsu@gmail.com