FORTUNE AND THE BODY: PHYSIOGNOMY IN MING CHINA

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ABSTRACT
This thesis explores the cosmology of physiognomy—a method of telling fortune by inspecting the body and the material world—and its social reception in China in the Ming period. This is accomplished through the analysis of extant manuals as well as stories of fortune-tellers' practices. I focus on the Ming dynasty, because of their richness of historical evidence and the distinctive features of physiognomy developed in these periods, but also take materials about the Song inherited in the Ming in my analysis. The manuals and the anecdotal evidence on its social practices and practitioners show that during the Song and Ming period Chinese physiognomy became more systematic. Chinese Physiognomists also inspected the material world beyond the human body, and used the human body as a paradigm for the inspections in which the whole material world is seen as 'homological' to the body. One of the most representative examples of using this body paradigm to examine material objects is the physiognomy of written characters. In the manuals that deals specifically with the human body, the body is seen as a bridge between society and the cosmos. In this cosmology the human body represents the 'totality' of human existence and social life. Because social life is expressed on the body, someone's fortune can be predicted by examining the body. Different numerological as well as cosmological systems after the Song were subsumed into physiognomy and the body and the cosmos came to be linked in the manuals in a more sophisticated way than before. However, fortune is not seen as totally fixed. Moral cultivation can alter the body and thereby change someone's fortune. The body is seen in physiognomy as both physical and moral. As a technique, physiognomy is not only systematically theorized in the manuals but also highly socialized. Physiognomy was practiced by very diverse groups of people across various religious and social communities including Buddhist monks, Daoist priests, local literati, and so on. Although a popular technique, which was also linked to many different kinds of medical and religious traditions, physiognomy was still contested, and people with different social backgrounds and personal experiences held different views on it.

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Chronology of Chinese Dynasties

(Years of dynasties are not be provided in the main text)

Shang 1600-1050 BCE
Western Zhou 1050-771 BCE
Eastern Zhou 770-255BCE
Qin 221-206 BCE
Western Han 206 BCE-9CE
Xin 9-23CE
Eastern Han 25-220CE
Three Kingdoms (*Sanguo*) 220-280CE
Western Jin 265-316 CE
Eastern Jin 317-420 CE
Northern and Southern Dynasties (*Nanbei chao*) 420-589CE
Sui 589-618 CE
Tang 618-907 CE
Five Dynasties (*Wudai*) 907-960 CE
Song 960-1279 CE
Yuan 1279-1368 CE
Ming 1368-1644 CE
Qing 1644-1912 CE

Introduction

When Śākyamuni was born, his father, King Śuddhodana Gautama summoned all the diviners and physiognomists in his kingdom to predict the future of his cherished prince. These physiognomists checked the body of the prince and they were startled by the thirty-two sublime marks of his body. They told the king that this prince would become either a king ruling the universe or a sage leading numerous sentient beings to liberation. His body was the proof. Each of the thirty-two sublime marks was the result of the accumulation of a kind of good karma in Buddha's past lives. When the Buddha later told this story to his disciples, he said that this had always been the case for all the Buddhas in the past.[1] This story was probably one of the most representative pieces of evidence for the belief that the human body can be an index of a person's past and future. A similar way of thinking also existed in China. This part of the sutra of Buddha's sublime body marks is included in a late Ming physiognomy manual, suggesting that this story of Buddha's physiognomy originated from India was taken as one of the important guidelines in Ming physiognomy.[2] In the Chinese translation of this story, the word *xiangshi* 相師, the 'Master of Inspection', was used to describe the persons who inspected Buddha's body. Traditional Chinese physiognomy, translated as the 'Technique of Inspection' (*xiangshu* 相術), was a method of predicting fortune by inspecting people's bodily traits. The Master of Inspection was thus used to describe those who practice for a living in Chinese texts. Clearly to the translators, what appeared in the story was so similar to physiognomy in China, that this name could be used meaningfully to refer to these people in the sutra.

[1] See the Dīrgha Āgama Sutra (*Chang ahan jing*), *juan* 1, 5-6.

[2] See *Shuijing shenxiang*, *juan* 2, 2-4.

As one of the numerous types of traditional Chinese divination, the divinatory practice of physiognomy has been frequently recorded in official historiography, encyclopedic books, and personal diaries and so on since early China. Traditionally categorized as a particular branch of Chinese divinatory as well as a technological system known as 'Techniques and Methods' (*fangshu* 方術), physiognomy was not simply a divinatory profession but also a way of understanding human life and even the universe.[3] Warring States intellectual-teacher Xunzi 荀子 already discussed/criticized physiognomy, mentioning that physiognomy was a frequently seen technique at that time, .[4] Excavated Western Han texts contain some physiognomy manuals on animals, military objects, and houses, which means that in the early periods, physiognomy was not limited to the inspection of human beings.[5] From the Western Han dynasty onwards, physiognomic manuals (*xiangshu* 相書) were included in bibliographic catalogues which usually go back to the palace library collections.[6] Some of the physiognomic manuals were preserved in these imperial collections, but also circulated among scholars, literati, diviners and the Technicians[7] (方士 *fangshi*) on a local scale outside the central court. In many cases, the connections between a person's physiology, personality, and future, which were seen as an emblematic way of thinking in physiognomy, appeared as an explanation of a person's fate. In early historiographical works like the *Shiji* 史記 and *Sanguo zhi* 三國志, records of the life of an ancient king, emperor or empress, or other famous figures sometimes

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[3] See Lisa Raphals, *Divination and Prediction in Early China and Ancient Greece*, 94-98.

[4] See *Xunzi*, *Feixiang*, 46. In Chapter I there is a more illustrative introduction of physiognomy in early periods where this text is analyzed.

[5] See Lisa Raphals, 'Self, Cosmos, and Agency in Early China,' 167-184.

[6] See *Hanshu*, *Yiwen zhi*, 221. Also see Naitō Torajirō, *Shina shigaku shi*, 106-107. Also see Li Ling, *Zhongguo fangshu zhengkao*, 64. Also *Lantai wanjuan*, 173-201.

[7] Those who practiced numerological techniques like physiognomy and geomancy.

contain physiognomic descriptions of that figure's distinctive facial or bodily features.[8] Late records from the Tang dynasty onwards offer a considerable amount of information about how physiognomy itself was practiced, witnessed and even used as an effective political as well as social strategy on many occasions.

The popularity of physiognomy in China was accompanied by many sophisticated systems of cosmology and numerology. The physiognomic conceptualizations of the body and the concepts of fortune were part of a worldview shared in various other kinds of knowledge including medicine, ritual, and astrology. On this premise, therefore, this study of the history and culture of Chinese physiognomy during the Ming period focuses on the conceptualization of the body in this practice, and how the relationship between the body and fortune was expressed technically. This study, apart from introducing Ming physiognomy materials for further studies on this topic and instigating important themes in these materials, serves two main purposes: one is to relate the cosmology and social perception of physiognomy in the Ming period to the larger intellectual as well as religious milieu at that time, and to see how physiognomy as a fortune-telling technique interacted with different social communities, thoughts, and traditions at that time. Physiognomy in Ming China was represented and perceived as a highly professional and technical enterprise, but it was not an exclusive isolated technique. Physiognomic theories and practices interacted with different intellectual, religious, and technical spheres in the Ming. We shall see how physiognomy linked to these spheres in the analysis of our texts. In other words, this study contributes to the social and intellectual history of Ming China via the investigation into physiognomy. Our next question would be:

[8] See Wang Shucai, 'Shilun *Sanguo zhi* renwu waimao miaoxie de shenceng yuyi,' 54-56, and Jiang Jun & Zhang Yuchun, 'Shiji renwu rongmao pinping yu renwuxing xingxiang leixing hua chuyi,' 45-49.

what is this physiognomic worldview shared in Ming intellectual discourses and many other historical texts? The other purpose of this study is to interpret the concept of the 'physiognomic body' in its cultural and historical context through the investigation into various key theories and concepts in the Ming physiognomy manuals.

The conceptual dichotomy between human bodies' social/cultural dimension and natural/physical dimension has long been discussed and developed in the Euro-American context, yet it has not been systematically addressed in the study of traditional Chinese society. I will not go into great detail about the discussion of the original argument of this issue in my study, but wish to show how the conceptualization of the physiognomic body in Ming China transcends this dichotomy between the social body and the physical body to an extent that the physiognomic body is totalized, seen as a unity of the two bodies. This alternative view in Ming physiognomy in China assimilate a person's social existence and somatic existence, and in this sense assimilate a person's physiology, social life, and cosmic orders. In other words, the social body and the physical body are seen as exactly the same in Ming physiognomy manuals, so that this modern dichotomy does not apply at all to the physiognomic body. Such a view is rooted in the emphasis on the sameness between the human body and the world exhibited in Ming physiognomy manuals, and this view is related to a larger intellectual as well as philosophical development from late Song to Ming dynasty. This study provides a detailed analysis of the theoretical/cosmological discourse of physiognomy in this context.

The Social Context of Ming Physiognomy

This study mainly focuses on physiognomy in Ming China, but also pays attention to the

continuity of physiognomy in China from the Song to the Ming. Such a long period of time does not necessarily mean that there was no continuity in the development of physiognomy. That is to say, despite the fact that what was regarded as physiognomy and who was considered a physiognomist varied in different dynastic and social conditions, there are evidentiary materials that show a continuity between physiognomy in the Song and Ming, and even early Qing. Certainly, the way in which some kinds of Song physiognomic theories and techniques were inherited in the Ming reflects Ming physiognomy's own historical and cultural uniqueness, and this study will focus on how Ming physiognomic texts ascribe this tradition to its Song predecessors.

Wang Jingbo argues that from the comparisons of the categorization and collection of physiognomic manuals in the imperial libraries of the Tang and Song, one can clearly see a tendency for physiognomic theories to become more and more intricate, schematic and complex during the Song.[9] In fact, not only physiognomy but also medical practice entered a phase of systematic and comprehensive development and was influenced by the contemporary intellectual and cosmological changes during the Song-Ming period.[10] There is not enough extant Song physiognomy manuals for us to verify the exact period of this postulated 'transition', but we will see that Ming physiognomy manuals certainly reflect huge differences from Dunhuang manuscripts. Ming physiognomic manuals during the period under discussion to study developed new features that can be barely seen . Most of the extant physiognomic manuals are generally believed to have been produced and compiled from the late Ming and early Qing period, apart from the texts discovered at Mawangdui and

[9] See Wang Jingbo, 'Tang Song xiangshu de zhulu yu zhonglei,' 103-107.
[10] See Jia Dedao, *Zhongguo yixue shilue*, 139-208.

Dunhuang. Despite the dearth of material of this tradition before the Song, we can still see from the extant texts that Ming manuals represent or construct a significant leap on the development of physiognomy. Many of those texts compiled or recompiled in the Ming are still ascribed to the famous physiognomists or divination masters in the Song period, revealing a strong desire to legitimize new developments in the old age of the tradition.

In fact, Ming scholars and social elites are quite famous for their strong interest in the Song; they hankered after the reconstruction of the sinic tradition after the Mongol regime collapsed and a new 'sinic' dynasty started.[11] In terms of physiognomy, the compilation and editing of previous physiognomy manuals led to a boom in physiognomy books in the mid-late Ming in local society. From anecdotal writings of the period (from the Song to the Ming), we can see physiognomists are recorded as being active in society and interacting with social elites, and sometimes even the emperor himself at court, regardless of their so-called ethnic background. Stories of physiognomists in the Song display many similarities to the stories from the Yuan and Ming periods in terms of how and by whom the techniques were conducted, received and transmitted. In fact, Song anthologies of anecdotal writings were mainly collected and recompiled during the Ming dynasty; they were important received texts to Ming literati. We should not be surprised to see that similarities of the narrative structures in these stories from Song to Ming may actually have reflected their Ming editors' perspectives.

From the Song dynasty onwards, a relatively large scale of social mobility became possible via the imperial examination system (*keju* 科舉), and 'previous marginalized communities established new elite families, without reference to their class origins'.[12] This examination

[11] See Hok-Lam Chan, 'The "Song" dynasty legacy,' 91-133.
[12] See Smith, Bol, Adler and Wyatt, *Sung Dynasty Uses of the I Ching*, 4, and Nicolas Tackett, *The Destruction of*

system changed the social structure in China and the reproduction of social elites in a fundamental way, and this system was further developed, and put into large-scale practice in the Ming dynasty.[13] It was in the Ming dynasty that this Song invention was truly institutionalized and became the most influential system in Chinese society. On the one hand, while the examination system enhanced social mobility to some level, it also stimulated the need for physiognomy as well as other forms of divination as strategies to deal with the sense of insecurity entailed by this social mobility—as one might go up as much as down.[14] People's interest in fortune-telling and other mantic practices did not decline in the later periods.[15] On the other hand, there were many intellectuals who became professional physiognomists as a way to earn a living, after they failed the exam, as well as successful officials who used physiognomy as a method of judging and discerning their inferiors or superiors, and this can be seen in the stories of some early Ming official-physiognomists. This thesis will focus on new changes in Ming physiognomy represented in physiognomy texts and stories about its practices. Lu Zhiji argues that the Song-Ming transition in the history of Chinese fortune-telling is the most innovative and constructive phase for Chinese divination, and the Qing period is a time when the legacy of Song-Ming transition was deepened, implying that most of the important innovations of Chinese divination from the Tang onwards actually occurred during the Song-Ming transition.[16] My evidence at least shows that the Ming period is decisive

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the Medieval Chinese Aristocracy, 231-234.

[13] See Ho Ping-ti, *The Ladder of Success in Imperial China*, 92-165. For its modern influence, see Fang Ning, 'Keju zhi yu xiandai wenguan zhidu,' 66-69.

[14] See Liao Hsien-Huei, 'Exploring weal and,' 347-395, also see Benjamin Elman, *A Cultural History of Civil Examinations in Late Imperial China*, 295-370. Zhu Pingyi, Jianjun He, and Lisa Raphals have similar conclusion that divination in general has the function of appeasing the pressures of facing an uncertain and mobile life in early Chinese society, see *Handai de xiangren shu*, 147-160, 'The body in the politics and society of early China,' 24, and 'Self, Cosmos, and Agency in Early China,' 167-184.

[15] See Denis C. Twitchett and Frederick W. Mote, *Cambridge History of China* 8, 888-890.

[16] See Lu Zhiji, *Zhongguo mingli xue shi*, 1-17.

in making traditional Chinese physiognomy the way it was in the Qing period, transforming and systematizing physiognomy. The contribution of Qing physiognomy practitioners and theorists to the development cannot be ignored, but they are mainly based on the important innovations in the Ming period, which will be the main period this study focuses on. The question here is that to what extent are these developments of physiognomy in the Ming 'innovative' and why they are decisive?

Previous Literature

Although a significant practice, Chinese physiognomy has remained a lacuna in Chinese historiography, including the history of mantic techniques. Meanwhile, it not only matters for our understanding of Chinese history and culture, but also to our study of the way in which human beings understand their bodies and society in general. There have been attempts to collect more materials on physiognomy, most of which, however, remain fairly introductory in nature and fail to show in detail the conceptual framework of Chinese physiognomy.

Early Chinese physiognomy seem to have received more academic attention than its successors. The most famous work is perhaps Taiwanese scholar Zhu Pingyi's 祝平一 book on the history of physiognomy in the Western and Eastern Han dynasties.[17] His study not only contains a huge quantity of texts from early Chinese historiography and scholarly writings, but also tackles the topic from anthropological and sociological perspectives in order to understand the dynamics of physiognomy as a theoretical framework of the body, a social institution, a type of ritual economy, and part of people's sociality. In his research he points out

[17] See Zhu Pingyi, *Handai de xiangren shu*, 1-22 for a general introduction.

the connection between the emergence of physiognomy and its particular social conditions, and how the prevalence of physiognomy in return shaped society. Zhu argues that physiognomy related the body to the distinctive social conditions of the Han, specifically the Eastern Han, and concludes that this relationship is best regarded as a strategy to deal with more volatile life and political circumstances, ultimately diffusing into other aspects of Chinese culture.

This inspiring work has served as an excellent point of departure for my own research. My study follows Zhu's narrative method in reconstructing the historical and theoretical discourse of Ming physiognomy. Zhu's work contains to three parts: the first two chapters are dedicated to a brief introduction of physiognomy before the Han, and previous research on this topic. In the third chapter he examines how physiognomy was conceptualized in Han dynasty's intellectual context and how physiognomy in the Han theorized the body.[18] In this part, he initially takes the history of Chinese physiognomy as a history of ideas, trying to reconstruct a Han physiognomic 'cosmology' (*yuzhou guan* 宇宙觀) based on scattered material. Later two chapters discuss the social reception of physiognomy during the Western and Eastern Han periods, including the stories of physiognomy and early Chinese intellectuals' receptions and criticism of it.[19] Zhu examines the stories of physiognomists recorded in historical writings and interprets the social dynamic of Han physiognomy represented in these texts. Zhu argues that physiognomy was also a social and technical practice in Chinese history, and that as important as its theories are, they are not the whole story of its history.[20]

[18] See *ibid*, 51-108.
[19] See *ibid*, 109-180.
[20] See *ibid*, 5.

Physiognomy is a technique, which means that its theory and cosmology were put in use rather than only transmitted as ideas. In this sense, practitioners and recipients of physiognomy matters in fully understanding physiognomy as a 'technique'. In this sense, records of its social practices and how people perceived this technique matter equally to its cosmology. In this way, the cosmology and theoretical legitimization of physiognomy within physiognomy manuals were complicated and problematized in social practices represented in different historical texts, and so is physiognomy's historical context. This study follows Zhu's narrative structure and combines the cosmology of Ming physiognomy represented in the manuals and how it was received in the stories of physiognomy together as the subject of my investigation. However, Zhu's work still falls into the methodological trick of using very late Ming physiognomy manuals to explain early Han physiognomy, without establishing a sensible idea of what physiognomy was in later periods, especially in the Ming. My study will show that certain textual connections between Ming physiognomy theories and early Chinese philosophical and medical classics actually only appeared in the Ming manuals and were constructed in the Ming. Therefore, the adoption of early classics in Ming manuals was not a good piece of evidence of the 'consistency' of physiognomy throughout Chinese history, but an example of Ming physiognomy's own historical particularity.

A third of Jianjun He's doctoral thesis at University of Oregon is also dedicated to early Chinese physiognomy. He put received texts of the stories of physiognomy from the Waring States period to Han dynasty into a broader political context of the body in early China, in which he argues that the body was conceptualized and used as an important tool for political

debates and affairs.[21] Again, He argues that physiognomy in early Chinese historical texts was both an important 'technique' of reading the political nature of the physical body, and at the same time a 'philosophy' of politics via the paradigm of the body.[22] Therefore, it was both practiced and contemplated in a social and historical milieu. He particularly accentuates the significance of understanding the early Chinese physiognomic body in relation to the imperial cosmology of the body in early China, and the conceptual relationships between physiognomy and the intellectual discourse of the body. This is certainly a valuable methodological tool for this study of the cosmology of Ming physiognomy, to relate concepts and cosmological frameworks to the broader Ming intellectual and social landscape. Yet one methodological difficulty He faces is that his reconstruction of early Chinese physiognomic 'philosophy' is based on early historian's account of physiognomy. The validity of this reconstruction should be put into question in that these accounts are not physiognomy 'manuals' and do not directly represent the theorization of physiognomy from the inside but only shows what historians and literati wanted to show and were able to understand about this technique. It is undeniable that these accounts do reflect important information about how the practice of physiognomy was perceived by the authors of them and relevant recipients. However, physiognomy in early China lacks sufficient material to show how physiognomy was theorized. Ming physiognomy has a different story. There are both abundant physiognomy manuals and records of its practice preserved in the Ming to show the connections and distance between physiognomy's theorization and perception. Chapter IV of my study shows that the social dynamic and 'technicality' represented in this kind of accounts in the Ming and certain received texts of the

[21] See Jianjun He, 'The body in the politics and society of early China,' 8-80.
[22] See *ibid*.

Song have a more complicated relationship with physiognomic 'theories' and cosmologies. These two types of materials of course share accordance with each other, since some important physiognomic elements in the manual should have been important to physiognomists, but they also have discrepancies. This means that these two types of materials, the account of physiognomy and the manual of physiognomy, are not the same and should not be equated with one another. More nuanced analysis is needed to distinguish these two types of materials.

Wang Renxiang's 王仁祥 work on the philosophical origin of Chinese physiognomy in various Han and pre-Han texts shows how the physiognomic connection between the body and fate served an indispensable part of the contemporary discourse on and ideal of sagehood, although he argues that physiognomy as a divinatory technique was still questioned and rejected by early Chinese literati.[23] Lisa Raphals also has certain scattered comments on her comparative study between early Chinese and Greek divination, in which she argues that different divinatory ideas and practices in different cultures and geographic areas are the keyholes for us to understand complex social dynamics of human beings.[24] She distinguishes early Chinese 'mantic' practices and Greek 'divination', arguing that different from the Greek system which often stress divine interventions in influencing the future, the Chinese system put human beings in a natural 'cosmic' system and calculates the future according to its natural course.[25] She claims that early Chinese physiognomy materials contain no systematic ways of understanding the body and the material world and say 'little about method'.[26] They are only straightforward tips of inspections. In his well-known studies of excavated Western and

[23] See Wang Renxiang, *Renlun shijian qiyuan de xueshu shi kaocha* (*weijin yiqian*), 1-30.
[24] See Lisa Raphals, *Divination and Prediction in Early China and Ancient Greece*, 14-15.
[25] See *ibid*, 128.
[26] See *ibid*, 144.

Eastern Han *fangshu* manuscripts and taxonomy of early Chinese libraries Li Ling 李零 has focused on how physiognomy was categorized by literati and elites and how this reflects scholarly perceptions of physiognomy in early China.[27] This is very useful in our discussion of the physiognomy of things in Chapter I, but Li Ling's work still remains descriptive and lacks a clearer theoretical scheme.

There has no systematic study on the development of physiognomy in China in later periods. In the West, the earliest academic work that talked about Chinese physiognomy after the Tang was done by the American anthropologist William Lessa published in his monograph *Chinese Body Divination*. This work is limited by its selection of materials, its theoretical justification and its historical purview, not to mention the author's lack of fundamental knowledge of Chinese history. It is simply a general analysis of a particular physiognomy manual: *The Compendium of Divine Physiognomy* (*Shenxiang quanbian* 神相全編). He also makes the rather suspect argument that traditional Chinese physiognomy is derived from Mesopotamian physiognomy.[28] Richard Smith also devotes a chapter of his book *Fortune-tellers and Philosophers*: *Divination in Traditional Chinese Society* to discussing the theory and principles of Chinese physiognomy in the *Compendium*.[29] Yet both William Lessa and Richard Smith fall into the easy conclusion that the nature of Chinese physiognomy is that the body was a conveyer of Chinese people's understanding of past society. Chinese physiognomy to them is merely a language Chinese people used to explain what society was. Be as it may, these works lack an analysis in depth of the reason why the body is symbolic in telling people's social

27 See Li Ling, *Lantai wanjuan,* 195-200, and *Zhongguo fangshu zhengkao*, 64.
28 See William A Lessa, *Chinese Body Divination*, 187.
29 See Richard Smith, *Fortune-tellers and Philosophers*, 185-204.

life, and how this symbolism of the body is theoretically justified in the manuals.

Other works on the topic have focused on different aspects of physiognomy from the Tang onwards, such as Catherine Despeux's discussion of the manuals found at Dunhuang, which points out the relationship between medical prognosis and the mantic prediction in physiognomy.[30] Similar claims have been made in Bernard Cygler's study of diagnosis in traditional Chinese medicine.[31] Yet their problem falls into the lack of nuanced and comprehensive study of the relationship between traditional medical knowledge and knowledge of physiognomy. In the Ming case, despite the overlaps and cosmological common grounds of new medical innovations and physiognomy, physiognomy and Chinese medicine are different in their way of interpreting the body. Marc Kalinowski in his study of the aspects of Tang literati's social life reflected in Dunhuang physiognomy manuscripts show that physiognomy was something local literati and officials learnt and practiced.[32] His work is helpful for this study to trace back certain features of later physiognomy practice to the Tang dynasty, but it is only a case study with limited extant material to establish any historical context of Tang physiognomy. Zheng Binglin 鄭炳林 and Wang Jingbo 王晶波 have collected and annotated the physiognomic manuals found at Dunhuang, which has proven to be a very helpful reference which allowed this study to compare later physiognomic manuals with those of the Tang dynasty. From Livia Kohn has also examined the differentiation of physiognomic traditions after the Song dynasty in her article on the study of the *Compendium*, yet this is still a case study rather than a systematic investigation into Ming physiognomy.[33]

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30 Catherin Despeux, 'From prognosis to diagnosis of illness in Tang China,' 176-205.

31 See Bernard Cygler, *Le visage en médecine traditionnelle chinoise*, 38-43.

32 See his 'Mantic texts in their cultural context,' 109-133.

33 See See Livia Kohn, 'A textbook of physiognomy,' 227-258.

Some works in mainland China on the study of physiognomy remain in the realm of introductory literature rather than academic analysis. The chronological study of Chinese physiognomy by Chen Xingren 陳興仁 is one of the most comprehensive works. Yet his work is more of a collection of materials than analysis. The same can be said about Xie Lujun's 謝陸軍 book of Chinese physiognomy, which republishes older articles by the author on Chinese mysticism.[34] His book is hardly academic since he quotes no secondary academic work in any language in his analysis of Chinese physiognomy and simply reviewed certain important manuals and stories in Chinese history without a historical or philosophical reflection on them. Yet in my view, there has not yet been any comprehensive and satisfactory study of the extant manuals and the formation, practice and transmission of physiognomy, particularly in the Song or Ming China. We do have some smaller scale studies of individual aspects. Zhang Rongmin 張榮明 briefly studied the use of physiognomy and its effects on Chinese society throughout history in his book about Chinese *fangshu*, yet in his trans-contextual and trans-periodical work he ignores possible changes in the technique of physiognomy and this work is too brief to be considered a penetrating study.[35] Gong Baoli 宮寶利 in his study on the sociology of divination in Ming and Qing society focuses on the negative effect of physiognomy, along with scholarly criticisms of it, and draws the conclusion that divination is nothing more than a psychological fraud in a society full of 'superstitions'.[36] Such moralising comments, however, contribute little to our understanding and we will attempt to avoid them here as much as possible.

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[34] See Xie Lujun, *Zhongguo gudai xiangshu*.
[35] See Zhang Rongming, *Zhongguo gudai minjian fangshu*, 1-9.
[36] See Gong Baoli, *Shushu huodong yu mingqing shehui*, 56-73, 257-298.

Sources and Methodology

In order to comprehensively understand Chinese physiognomy, the different methods writers have adopted to theories physiognomy in the manuals cannot be overlooked. Again, most of the extant manuals were published or republished during the Ming and early Qing dynasties. A few of the manuals were considered the products of the Song but are only available in their Ming editions. How the body is conceptualized in these Ming manuals? How fortune is explained through the interpretation of the body? Why the body can reflect fortune? Many questions should be answered to fully understand the conceptual context reflected in Ming physiognomy manuals. This study treats Ming physiognomy manuals initially as writings of thoughts and theories for this technique and studies the cultural and theoretical concepts of Ming physiognomy in its particular historical context. I intend to conduct a 'cultural interpretation' or 'anthropological reading' on these texts to fully exhibit the complex and rich content of the Ming manuals.[37] My initial concentrations are the unique and systematic relationship between cosmos, the human body, and society represented in the manuals.

Previously in Elisabeth Hsu's study of the historical development of the concept the Five Phases (or the Five Agents) (*wuxing* 五行) in different editions of Chinese medical classics from Han dynasty to modern period, she applies a similar approach in reading medical texts.[38] While tracing the genealogy of important medical concepts in Chinese history and

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[37] Which is a method that has also been used in interpreting early Chinese texts, see Keightley, *The Ancestral Landscape*, 7-9, and Sterckx, *The Animal and the Daemon in Early China*, whose whole work is dedicated to interpret early Chinese texts in response to certain anthropological issues.

[38] See Hsu, 'The biological in the cultural,' 91-126.

representing the historical particularities of them in texts from different periods, she also includes an 'anthropological reading' of these ideas in history in order to show the overall continuity and intellectual landscapes in Chinese medical history. This is the approach I use in my study as well. Although the development of Chinese physiognomy is a historically contingent process, physiognomy also has its own body of theory. In other words, the cosmology expressed in the Ming manuals is a distinctive reflection of the way people contemplated human existence in their historical as well as cultural reality. Therefore, we cannot separate Chinese physiognomy from other sociological, anthropological and philosophical debates relevant to our topic. Hsu shows that in the body cosmology of medical classics, the body-enveloped-by-skin is understood as connected to and constantly interacting with the external world, such as seasonal changes. She describes this relationship as 'body ecologic', suggesting that the body in Chinese medical theories is not simply taken as a text for social performances, nor a pure physical entity that does not participate into human beings' social lives.[39] The body should be regarded as a unity of its different dimensions, the internal and the external, the social and the physical, and an ecological process crossing different boundaries. She uses the genealogical accumulation of the cosmological as well as conceptual framework in Chinese medical texts not only to challenge the theoretical narrative of the body in modern scholarship, but also to establish a 'conceptual history' for medical thoughts.

Similar perspective of understanding the body is also found in Ming physiognomy manuals. The natural philosophy of Chinese physiognomy also challenges many of the modern theoretical assumptions like symbolism, the dichotomy between the social body and

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[39] See Hsu, *ibid*.

the physical body, and notions of personhood. What is vital here is people's perception and interpretation of the two central concepts in physiognomy, '*ming*' (命) and '*xiang*' (相), which can be roughly translated as 'fortune' or 'life' (命) and 'inspection' or 'appearance' (相). If the body ecologic entails the constant interactions between the body and the rest of the world, physiognomic theories goes a step forward arguing that they not only interacts, but are essentially the same. In this study I propose a 'body homology'/'physiognomic homology' based on Hsu's approach of body ecologic, a homology that again differs from the linguistic and structuralist understanding of the body and homology. This body homology in Ming physiognomic texts interweaves a master narrative for Ming physiognomy and elaborates why the body unifies the cosmos, society and individual human beings.

Re-defining homology in social and cultural studies is a topic also recently proposed by the anthropologist William Matthews.[40] In his study of the cosmology of the *Book of Changes* (*Yijing* 易經) divination and its modern interpretations in China, he points out that in the Chinese divination context, at least in modern diviners' interpretations of ancient classics, there is a way of understanding the 'sameness' between ostensibly different things with same origins:

> The terminology is borrowed from evolutionary biology…in which "analogy" is used to refer to resemblance between organisms based on functional convergence from distinct phylogenetic origins (a bird's wing, for example, is analogous to a dragonfly's wing); "homology," in contrast, refers to characteristics derived from a common phylogenetic origin that may or may not demonstrate functional convergence (such as a bird's wing and a human arm). Transposing this terminology to correlative systems, Analogical systems identify resonant features between disparate entities (entities that "go together" in the Lévi-Straussian sense), whereas Homological systems identify causal relationships underlying the fractal recurrence of patterns. Analogical pairs are necessarily ontologically discontinuous, whereas Homological pairs are predicated on ontological

[40] See his 'Ontology with Chinese characteristics,' 265-285.

continuity. This does not preclude Homologist systems from creating additional systems of correspondence based on analogy—but such systems constitute a problem of taxonomy rather than ontology, existing on a different scale from "modes of identification." Here, the phylogenetic example is again instructive; on the scale of comparative locomotor anatomy, the dragonfly is distinct in kind from the bird and human, but zooming out to the scale of all life forms, we find that all share a common origin and are, as such, of a common substance, and that their wings, while evolving along distinct phylogenetic paths and developing according to different ontogenetic processes, on a more fundamental level are governed by common principles of genetics, chemistry, and physics. The relevance of correlation to questions of ontology all depends on where the tree is cut, as this determines whether the correlated phenomena ultimately stem from one or several origins. Analogy is thus only 'a result or a consequence'…until hypotheses of a single-origin, self-generating cosmos are taken seriously in the development of cosmological ideas; beyond this point, what were once Analogical resemblances, already obscured by myths of "a presumption of either original wholeness or pre-relatedness that has been fractured", become Homological reflections of what is perceived to be the true continuity of the universe.[41]

Matthews argues that this 'Homologism' differs from a structuralist and linguistic definition of homology or 'sameness' in that it is not about how 'ontologically different things' are represented as the same, but how ostensibly different things are essentially the same. Although the continuity of the universe in modern *Yijing* cosmology assimilates Chinese cosmology and the so-called 'Western science' in Matthews' study, a way to make sense of the unities behind seemingly heterogeneous worldviews and practices in contemporary China, it is inspiring for us to reflect on physiognomy in Ming China. We will see in Chapter II that why the body is seen as cosmic and a manifestation of people's fortune is because the body, just like things and natural phenomena, is defined as homological to the universe and people's social life. The physiognomic homology in Ming China centralizes the cosmic substance qi as a 'homological' substance. The homology here goes beyond a structuralist and institutionalist sense, which defines homology as a status of similarities between an organic system and its

[41] See *ibid*, 277-278.

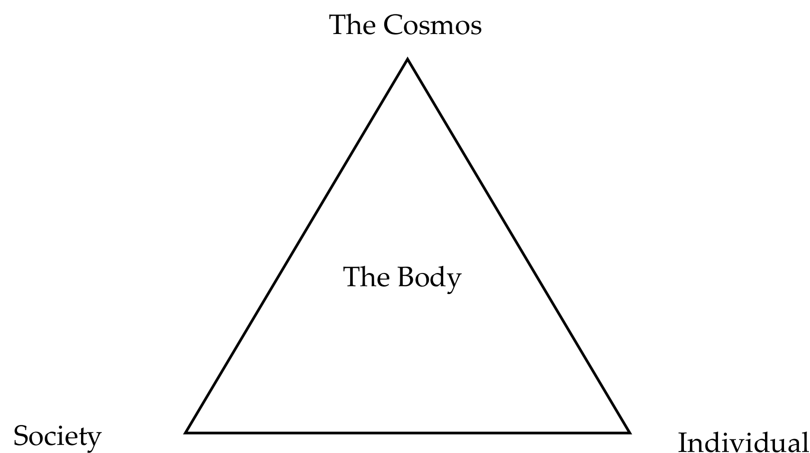
sub-systems in their structures and morphological features.[42] In an anthropological as well as cosmological sense, homology refers to a morphological/structural 'resemblance' between different fields, social practices, and concepts.[43] Yet the body homology in physiognomy that I use here describes resemblances between the body as a sub-cosmos or microcosm and the cosmos as a whole, and their 'oneness' means that the cosmos, the human body, society, and the myriad things are essentially the same. This physiognomic cosmology even takes a step further claiming that the body just like everything else is not only a continuation of the universe, but also works exactly the same with the universe. In other words, unlike Matthews' Homologism, the body is not even reflected itself as different from the cosmos, but manifests itself as exactly the same in terms of its energetic composition and morphology. Only that this kind of 'sameness' should be observed from a physiognomic angle. I propose a 'wave-and-current' label to help us understand the logic of Ming physiognomy in Chapter I.

Physiognomy applies cosmological knowledge of the body to explain the relationship between the human physique and human sociality for the purpose of predicting people's futures. What we see in the manuals and the stories are attempts to elucidate patterns as well as fluctuations in the future, and to find causes behind the contingency of human beings' social lives from a cosmic and somatic viewpoint. In the physiognomic understanding of social life and society, every event that occurs in daily life is corporeal in the sense that it is pre-manifested on our bodies in accordance with the dynamic of the cosmos, and the body is seen as the source of social occurrences. Nathan Sivin shows that in an early Han cosmology, the cosmos, state, and the body are represented as connected and interdependent, the body and

[42] See Wagner, 'What is "Homology Thinking" and what is it for?,' 3–8.
[43] See Yingyao Wang, 'Homology and isomorphism,' 348-370.

state as microcosms replicate rules and patterns of the universe, and this replica can be interpreted numerologically.[44] Ming physiognomy embraced the return of this classical model during the Ming dynasty and further developed into a somatic cosmology in which the body is the course of a person's sociality. Sivin's model of early Chinese cosmology, the cosmos, the state, and the body, although connected and 'naturally' resembles each other, seems to suggest that the state comes first as an imitation of the universe, and the body is a replica of both the cosmos and the state. Ming physiognomy follows a different logic, seeing the body as the totality of an individual's and sometimes even a community's sociality.

The physiognomic body is a social entity, which means that physiognomy has a unique way of understanding society, and where social life comes from. The body lies in the middle between the cosmos, society, and individual persons as the platform for their interaction. In particular, the body is the source of social hierarchy and social ethics rather than a simple textual representation of them. The relationship between individual and society is hence corporeal; society is, in the end, the social relations of each of its members generated by their bodies:



[44] See Nathan Sivin, 'State, cosmos, and body in the last three centuries B. C.', 5-37.

Table 1 The Relationship between the Cosmos, the Body, society and Human Individuals.

The body is conceptualized as a reflection of human society and the totality of individual existence. All its physiological features are considered the provenance of different social stratifications and social situations on macro and micro levels, and this is the point where Ming physiognomy differs from the early Chinese cosmology model Sivin established. The body is the ensemble of each person's social relations in different times and spaces and manifested in the present. These social relations include familial relations, gender relations, occupation, social status, wealth, and so on. Therefore, the social, ethical, political and economic aspects of the ideas of *ming* and *xiang* in Ming manuals are all expressed through the body, or in more modern terms as somatic rather than social or physical. We shall see in the Chinese physiognomic interpretation of fortune how it is perceived as something revealed and prefigured by the body, rather than the empirical causality which we are used to, in other words, the causality in which one action is seen to directly cause another.

That is to say, according to our common sense, fortune is always an '*a posteriori* result of a series of necessary events or actions', whereas, in physiognomy, it is a series of movements displayed on the body in advance.[45] Yet the body is not entirely a passive screen where fortune is shown, but the conduit through which cosmic power is transformed into a human fortune. This is what I call the 'body homology' in physiognomy. I define the particular strategy used in the Ming manuals as the 'spatialization of time'. Both material things and the human body are seen as a unity of the past, present, and future. In this way fortune can be read from them.

[45] For the logic of fortune, see Giovanni da Col, 'Introduction: Natural philosophies of fortune, ' 1-23.

This unity is realized through assimilating time and space, treating time of a person and his or her bodily space as the same. Therefore, this homology does not only unify the cosmos and the body, but also the body's own time and space. We will see how this body homology transcends the structuralist and linguistic sense of homology and actually sees the body, sociality, and the cosmos as essentially the same, and how this sameness is reflected in physiognomic predictions. Because human sociality and futures in society are explained as extensions of the body, they are open to active changes and manipulation, since the body can be changed and cultivated. We will also see how the variety of different forms of self-cultivation can become effective methods to change a fortune that initially seemed to be fixed. To understand these social relations, we should move into the physiognomic way of differentiating and categorizing different types of bodies and body parts. We will see in our discussion how Chinese physiognomy brings our understanding of the relationship between human physicality and human sociality into question.

At the same time, Ming physiognomy manuals was also produced in particular historical contexts and circumstances. The conceptual framework mentioned before is indeed a specific viewpoint, a 'cosmology' through which human existence is explained, but it is also a cosmology in history. Therefore, these manuals should also be read in light of the social and cultural conditions in the time when they were generated. On the one hand, various discussions and themes in previous dynasties are continued in the Ming manuals, and on the other, these manuals possess features and content that only appear in the Ming. Many of these historically specific features belong to a broader repertoire of cosmology, philosophy, religious discourse, and medical theories in the Ming society. In this sense, Ming physiognomy manuals

should not be read alone but be examined in relation to these new phenomena. Ming physiognomy is part of Ming history. In particular, the ecological/homological view between human beings and the cosmos is also frequently reiterated in Neo-Confucian writings from the Song onwards, and literati constantly adopt prognostication terms to express their own philosophy. We will see how Ming physiognomy became part of the Ming intellectual history and how different ideas in different fields interplayed with each other.

In addition, the textual scrutiny of the manuals also includes an examination of their style as well as the particular literary genre that is used in these writings. We shall see how the recorded esoteric verses and lyrics contain explanations of the physiognomic cosmology, and distinctive conception of the body, in reflection of an otherwise lost oral tradition. Meanwhile, as a branch of the *fangshu* system, physiognomy, particularly its theorization, should be evaluated in relation to other traditional Chinese techniques and cosmological concepts, such as medical diagnosis, the hexagram system (*gua* 卦), the Five Phases, and so on, particularly those that were furthered developed or reiterated in the Ming intellectual world. Furthermore, the authorship of the text and the mutual influence between physiognomy and other religious cultures in China displayed by the manuals also deserve our close attention.

Apart from the extant Ming physiognomic manuals which are the main source of this study, it is necessary for us to look into the historical records of physiognomists to comprehend the social history of this technique. In the 'miscellaneous notes' (*biji* 筆記), anecdotal writings (*xiaoshuo* 小說), and local histories, many encounters and interactions between physiognomists and local merchants, travelling examinees, scholars, and officials have been recorded. More stories of similar content can be found in encyclopedias compiled in the Song

and Ming period (*leishu* 類書). Moreover, records of famous physiognomists or people who were considered adepts of physiognomy are found in official histories as well. Among these different types of texts, miscellaneous notes and encyclopedias compiled by scholars and literati for commercial as well as personal purposes are particularly valuable. Because of the Song and Ming literati's interests in 'trivial' things and their desire to collect and accumulate miscellaneous knowledge through personal writing and editing, and the development of printing techniques and a widening market for printed books, many important aspects of the practice of physiognomy have been preserved.[46] My aim in studying the stories of physiognomists is twofold. It is necessary to investigate into texts reflecting the reception of physiognomists. Their identity, their ways of communication, and their relationships with society around them are documented in these anecdotal materials and received by the authors as such. These texts reflect how literati perceived physiognomy and how certain aspects of physiognomy were received and understood by them. The second aspect lies in the details of the performance of physiognomy in these stories. Numerous aspects that cannot be found in the physiognomic manuals—for example, the transmission of the technique from a master to a student and the relationship between a person's countenance (*mianxiang* 面相) and a person's bone patterns (*gufa* 骨法)—can be read from these stories. This means that the stories of physiognomists can be regarded as a supplementary or even independent source for our study on how physiognomy was received and perceived by its audiences. Discrepancies and consistencies between Ming manuals and stories shows the interactions between different perspectives on physiognomy in the Ming. As mentioned before, physiognomy is not only a

[46] For the information of miscellaneous writing and publication, see Cong Ellen Zhang, 'To be "erudite in miscellaneous knowledge",' 45-71, and Benjamin Elman, 'Collecting and classifying,' 131-157.

cosmology, a theory or philosophy, it is also a technique, a practiced skill at the same time. Therefore, the manuals tell nothing about the reception of its practice in different social and historical contexts, and the accounts of physiognomists are certainly not physiognomists' own legitimization of this technique. Each kind of material are essential in representing physiognomy as a 'technique' but should be studied with more nuanced perspectives.

Outline of the Thesis

The Conceptualization of the Body and the Material World in Chinese History

Chapter I deals with one key question, the conceptualization of physiognomy in Chinese history. What are the key concepts in Chinese physiognomy and what are the overlaps between the conceptual framework of physiognomy and other knowledge systems? What was the overall narrative of the body in Chinese medical and cosmological classics? We shall first briefly look at the key concepts related to the body culture in traditional China, especially in medical traditions, and see how the body is defined as homologically the same with the universe in this cosmology. Moreover, it is also important for us to look at how physiognomy was understood and categorized in Chinese history. Was physiognomy only about the body like its Western counterparts? What were the vital debates in physiognomy throughout history? I give a brief review of the historical development of physiognomy in China by answering these two questions. In particular, it is important to see how physiognomy was not only perceived as a technique of the body, but also a way to interpret the material world. The connection between the human body and the material world in physiognomy stands out during this particular time period. In many academic works, physiognomy in China has been

regarded as a form of technique about and only about the body in light of its Western counterpart. Since Aristotle's time, physiognomy in the West has been recognized as the skill of analyzing a person's character according to their physiological attributes.[47] Similar ways of understanding the body can be found in traditional Chinese physiognomy as well. Chinese physiognomy is a technique of telling people's nature and fortune according to the physicality of their bodies. Mark Csikszentmihalyi points out that already in early China, physiognomy was regarded as a way to inspect the physical evidence of a person's ethical self-cultivation in the Classicist (*ru* 儒) tradition, especially in Mengzi's writing.[48]

However, a close look at the categorization of physiognomy manuals, of the early ones and subsequent development during the Song and Ming periods, shows that the scope of inspection in Chinese physiognomy goes beyond the human body. Lisa Raphals notices that although from its origin, Chinese physiognomy was comprehended as a technique to inspect the body of a human being for the purpose of self-cognition and fortune-telling, in fact, it was also applied to the inspection of various other things, such as stones, animals, military equipment, and so forth.[49] What we call *xiangshu* 相術 today, or 'the Technique of Inspection', therefore was much more than telling the fortune of people but extended to the entire material realm around them. As Chen Xingren argues, this kind of technique was fundamentally based on the notion of *xiang* 相, which means both inspection and appearance.[50] From the categorization of physiognomy manuals in imperial catalogues and private collections, we see that textually, there existed an independent branch of Chinese physiognomy that pays its

47 See James. W. Redfield, *Comparative Physiognomy or Resemblances between Men and Animals*, 13-21.
48 See Mark Csikszentmihalyi, *Material Virtue,* 101-141.
49 See Lisa Raphals, 'Thirteen ways of looking at the self in early China,' 315-336.
50 See Chen Xingren, *Shenmi de xiangshu*, 4-6.

attention to something more than the human body. Chinese physiognomy was embedded in a broad cosmological background. The body was only one of the many different subjects for this complex skill of inspection, which also extended to personal belongings, animals, houses—later on known more specifically as geomancy (*fengshui* 風水) —and even natural phenomena. These branches of physiognomy can be referred to as the 'physiognomy of things' (*xiangwu* 相物), to distinguish them from the physiognomy of human bodies.[51] We can see from the scattered records and manuals of the physiognomy of things that it was a technique in many ways similar to body physiognomy, and takes the human body as a pivotal paradigm in explaining the material world. Therefore, the physiognomy of things was innately connected with the physiognomy of people to tell their fortune. The translation of *xiangshu* as 'physiognomy' overlooks the much broader semantic range of the original term which goes far beyond the human body. Although I will continue using the term 'physiognomy' to translate *xiangshu* because of its evident similarities, we have to be aware of different ranges of Chinese physiognomy from its Western counterpart.

We shall see in this chapter that the physiognomy of things was a mixture of the inspection of things for their own sake and in regard to their owners. The quality of an object and the status of a natural phenomenon were significant concerns, such as the health condition of a cow as livestock, or the fertility of a piece of farmland. Moreover, it was also one of the major concerns in the physiognomy of things to see how things and natural phenomena could reflect the fortunes of people connected to them. The status of things is rarely considered entirely detached from the human world. Particularly since the Song onwards, along with the scholarly

[51] See Ye Li, See *Airizhai congchao, juan* 5, 212-214, and Zhu Pingyi, *Handai de xiangren shu*, 51-62.

interest in 'investigating things' (*gewu* 格物), writings on the physiognomy of things tend to relate the material world to human society in a very schematic cosmology. In this divinatory technique, things are regarded as manifestations of the grand movement of the universe, and the same in their origin and their composition. Physiognomists could therefore use material things to interpret information underlying this movement that would normally be recondite to others. I define this cosmology as the 'spatialization of time' in a physiognomic homology, in which temporal movement of the universe are 'spatialized' as the space and spatial features of a material thing, which also includes the physical qualities of it (spatial in a lot of cases means tangible and three-dimensional at the same time).

More importantly, the human body provided a vital framework in the inspection of things. This is particularly obvious in the physiognomy of written characters (*xiangzi* 相字), a technique to predict a person's future via the scrutiny of written characters or words. Written characters are considered not only as a microcosm but also as replicas of the body of the writer as well as an extension of it. That is to say, a written word not only provided possible linguistic information, but also displayed the somatic conditions of the writer, both of which the physiognomist could attempt to decode. According to many theories of calligraphy after the Tang, the qi[52] of a person is transmitted to his or her writings on the paper and remains in the bodily configuration of the character.[53] Similar theories can be found in many Ming and Qing manuals of character physiognomy. This specific example indicates that the body and the external world are seen to be in a process of mutual definition by physiognomy; not only is

[52] As a word that is already included in the *Oxford English Dictionary*, it is not italicised. The same goes with the terms yin and yang.
[53] See Xiong Bingming, *Zhongguo shufa lilun tixi*, 16-19.

the body perceived in reference to social as well as cosmic coordinates, but also society and the cosmos in return are understood in terms of the body. This aspect of mutual definition is pivotal for us to comprehend the logic of body physiognomy. The body is a material system that is open to the cosmos and it is this aspect that makes it a meaning system to physiognomists. Palpable substances are always exchanged and circulated from the body to the external world and *vice versa*. Such a homological constitution of the body and the cosmos is the exact reason why the body and the universe should be understood as paradigms meaningful to each other. This is also recognized in the connection between the inspection of qi in physiognomy and the inspection of qi in Chinese geomancy, as well as weather divination (*wangqi* 望氣).[54] The physiognomy of written characters serves as a representative example to show why the body was understood as the totality of human existence and how does the totality meaningful in indexing a person's fortune.

This chapter also contains introductory discussions of the key concepts in physiognomy, concepts both the physiognomy of things and human body physiognomy are based on. How were concepts like qi, pulse, the Five Phases understood in traditional Chinese cosmology? This chapter introduces salient concepts that help us making sense of the cosmology recorded in the physiognomy manuals, and gives a brief review on the development of the conceptualization of the body in Chinese history. From the conceptualization of the body to the conceptualization of the material world, the key point here is that a kind of thought addressing the ultimate "sameness" between human beings and the cosmos returned into

[54] For the technique of *wangqi*, see Huang Yilong, 'The evolution and decline of the ancient Chinese practice of watching for the ethers,' 82-106, and Hong Weizhong, 'Han weijin nanbei chao "wangqi" qianlun,' 122-125.

Ming dynasty's intellectual, religious, and medical tradition, and this is vital in our understanding of the Ming manuals. What stands in the center here is the rise of qi cosmology in the Ming, that is shown in people's understanding of material objects, the human body, and the dynamic of the cosmos.

Cosmos, Fortune and the Body in Physiognomy Manuals

In Chapter II, we discuss manuals of body physiognomy in the Ming. In the manuals or the theorization of physiognomy, the cosmological explanation of the relationship between fortune and the body seems to be the primary means of legitimation for this technique. Most of the Ming manuals list cosmological explanations of the physiognomic body at the very beginning of their texts. The cosmos, society and individual human beings are related to this physiognomic relationship in which the body is a manifestation of the world as well as a part of it. Just like the physiognomy of things, a physiognomic homology also applies to the human body. Without understanding the overall 'natural philosophy' of Chinese physiognomy in the Ming manuals, we will not be able to grasp the gist of this technique.

In the Ming manuals, the changeable human life in relation to the mysterious power and movement of the universe beyond human effort is emphasized. Physiognomy as a type of divination essentially concentrates more on ways of inspecting and predicting change in life and the world. The body, in this way, is seen as an index of change, being individualistic, social and cosmic simultaneously. Human being's life 'time' is also 'spatialized' into a person's bodily space. That is to say, the body is the unity of a person's self, society, and the cosmos, and at the same time the source of a person's sociality, and the miniature of the grand cosmic order. Mary

Douglas points out that it is almost universal in human culture that the body is regarded and used as a medium to understand the world and self.[55] The understanding of the body and society/cosmos as mutually defining each other endows human physiology and bodily gestures with social as well as cosmological meanings as if they are a 'micro-society' or 'microcosm'. In return, society and the cosmos are perceived as an organic human body and thus receive legitimation as a 'natural' configuration. In this way, social control and the natural symbols of the body are bonded together through cosmology.[56]

Indeed, this view is extremely helpful in understanding Chinese physiognomy. The analogous and metaphorical parallelism between society and the body, since Durkheim and Mauss, has been predominant in elucidating the bodily 'microcosm' found in many cultures.[57] Yet it is in fact not the whole picture of the conceptualization of the bodily 'microcosm' of Chinese physiognomy. George Conger in his analysis of the historical development of the European idea of a bodily microcosm shows that in pre-Platonic Greek culture, the parallelism between the body and the cosmos was rooted in the material and energetic connections between the human body and the world, unlike what structuralism suggest.[58] The processes of inhalation and exhalation were seen as ways to exchange energy between the body and the universe, which then explained why the body possessed similar structures, configurations and dynamics to the universe.[59] Something similar can be said about the knowledge represented in these Chinese physiognomy manuals. Because the body is created and nourished by the

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[55] See Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger*, 141-160.
[56] See Mary Douglas, *Natural Symbols*, 71-91.
[57] See Emile Durkheim and Marcel Mauss, *Primitive Classification*, 3-10.
[58] See George Perrigo Conger, *Theories of Macrocosms and Microcosms in the History of Philosophy*, 1-6.
[59] Clearly the phenomenological tradition of explaining the body is also present even today in the west, see Bryan Turner, *The Body and Society*, 15-16.

elemental power of the Five Phases and the qi of the universe, whose circulation and movement cause the change of the world and society, therefore the principles in charge of the movement of qi and Five Phases in the external world are also applicable to the human body. As a result, the constitution and changes of the human body also reveal the changes of the world. The physiognomy manuals encompass a type of social classification in which animals, material objects and geographic landscapes are categorized into two groups with immanent social as well as divinatory properties, such as the noble (*gui* 貴) and auspicious (*ji* 吉) ones, and the mean (*jian* 賤) and ominous (*xiong* 凶) ones. By virtue of this connection between the world and the body, the somatic features resembling any external signs in the material world indicate the naturalness of social stratification.

Similar ideas to this way of thinking can be found in the medical theories in China that have historically dominated prognosis and diagnosis, healing and nourishing. The significance of many parts of the body is frequently attributed to their importance in medical theories. In fact, the diagnostic criteria of medical practices have been adopted to distinguish whether or not a specific physiological attribute of a person's body was auspicious ever since the early imperial period of China.[60] The overlaps between physiognomy and traditional medicine went beyond the surface. The body in this way was considered to receive substantial influence from the external world, and the body became a source of good fortune. By examining the the body represented in physiognomy texts, especially focusing on how Chinese medical terms such as blood (*xue* 血), qi 氣, and the spirit (*shen* 神) as vital constitutive fluid and energy of a person's body are linked to the idea of fortune, we shall see that health was thus not only a

[60] See Vivienne Lo, '*Huangdi hama jing*,' 61-99.

part of a person's fortune but a mirror of it in physiognomy theories.

Since the microcosm of the body and the macrocosm are not actually 'parallel', but open to and connected with each other, therefore the movement of qi itself is treated as the progress of an individual's life through time. Hence the circulation of qi throughout a person's body reflected the undulations of a person's life. The inspection technique by and large depends on the reading of the quality of qi in a particular position of a person's face in correspondence with a person's age.[61] In essence, this is a solid evidence of the strategy of 'spatializing time'. A person's face is divided into one hundred small areas, and each area stands for one particular year of a person's whole life. Distinctive attributes in each area indicate the fortune of a person in a particular year, and if a person's age surpasses one hundred, one should go back to the initial area for the prognostication of the next round of life. The topology of fortune on a person's body is realized not only through deciphering the meaning of a person's physiological features, but also through the orientation of time in a person's physiological space. The morphological aspects of the body, generated by the energetic flow of the world, are an index of the possible patterns of movement which represent a person's course of life. The idea of 'fortune' is thus established in these manuals on one hand as the actual fluctuation of a person's life, and on the other hand as spatialized human fate on the body. Yet it is less prone to be the idea of fortune as chances or probabilities of an individual like many anthropologists suggest, but a pattern of the movement of personal time in correspondence with the universe.[62] We shall see how the ostensibly individual-oriented idea of fortune or luck was actually a form of social relation and collective power.

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[61] See 'Liunian yunqi buwei ge,' in *Shenxiang quanbian*, *juan* 1, 5.
[62] See Giovanni da Col and Caroline Humphrey, 'Introduction: Subject of luck,' 1-18.

Society, Fortune, and the Body in Physiognomy Manuals

In Chapter III, we shall see how society was perceived in the technical understanding of the relationship between someone's fortune and the body in the Ming physiognomy manuals. What is more pertinent to the idea of 'fortune' in physiognomy is the role of society and the intimate relationship between social realities, the body, and individual personhood. As a continuum of bodily cosmology, physiognomy in these manuals has its own interpretation of the stratification of society for the natural legitimacy of social realities. In other words, if time is spatialized in the body, then how do specific points and occurences in time correspond to features in bodily space? If the cosmos and the body are homological, then as a part of the cosmos, how could society be seen as homological to the body? Fundamentally, the auspicious and ominous signs on a person's body are directly ascribed to the nobility or baseness of a person's fortune. From a physiognomic point of view, social hierarchy, no matter how fluid it could be in its own domain, is predestined and manifested in the somatic dimension of its individual members. The body is the totality of human existence and human sociality is simply the product of it. The same can be said about social divisions as well. Whether one would rise in power or end up as an impoverished peasant is not considered something within a person's own control. The situation of a person's life in a particular time and space is fixed, to some extent, by a person's own bodily reality formed by cosmic power and the external conditions brought about by cosmic power. Thus people's selves are not independent and autonomous but always attached to external forces, or even determined in mysterious and intangible ways. This can be found in the physiognomic representation of domestic orders and fortunes. A

man's body is not only the reflection of his own fortune but also the fortune of his father, his son, his wives and his belongings. A woman's body is known to likewise reflect these things. Even after a person's death, a person's fortune is still partly inherited by a person's descendants and revealed on their bodies. The power play, or the ethical and political aspects of death, is reinforced not only on a ritualistic and mental level but on a bodily level.[63]

Should we then call physiognomy an extreme version of social 'embodiment'? This term remains suspicious here since, in Chinese physiognomy, the body is not merely a passive subject, the recipient of radiating social realities. Instead, sociality is seen as an extension of the body in the manuals. Any changes in a person's body may influence a person's fortune, and thus the result of a person's social reality. Hence bodily change becomes an important factor in a person's genuinely 'predestined' future. Meanwhile, another contradiction seems to be more frequently mentioned in the manuals: the lack of conformity between a person's virtue (*de* 德) or true heart (*xin* 心) and a person's fortune. Salient to the bodily manifestation of social ethics, the connections between a person's virtue and a person's fortune are rather vague. Although it has been considered and discussed since early China, many physiognomic manuals hold an elusive attitude towards the question of whether a virtuous person will have a fortunate life or not.[64] Some of the manuals briefly mention that virtue matters more than fortune in physiognomy or virtue and fortune are in a direct correlation with each other without any cogent explanation. It is mostly in the manuals of physiognomic theories and practices in the Ming and Qing dynasties that we can see more elucidation of the link between

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[63] About the power play around death, see Maurice Bloch and Jonathan Parry, *Death and the Regeneration of Life*, 1-45.
[64] See Mark Csikszentmihalyi, *Material Virtue*, 101-141.

virtue and fortune, and how they were connected to a broader intellectual discourse of virtue and human life.

However, most of the physiognomic theories do mention, from a different angle, that exceptional virtuous sages normally possess bizarre or peculiar appearances that do not fit with normal principles of physiognomy. Zhu Pingyi discusses this phenomenon as 'the unobservable appearance of sages' (*shengren buxiang* 聖人不相) in his study of physiognomy in the Han dynasty.[65] Along with this belief, there was a concept of the inapplicability of normal physiognomic rules to celestial beings (*shenxian* 神仙), which is not found in physiognomy before the Song.[66] These two kinds of inapplicability of physiognomic rules entail a belief in the existence of exceptional beings beyond society, based on either exceptional virtue or exceptional physiology. Are these the same in physiognomy?

Physiognomic theories in these manuals also show preferences regarding physical beauty. A noble and admirable appearance implies a combination of auspicious and beautiful features, particularly in the physiognomy of women; the ideal look of an auspicious wife always involves a certain kind of feminine beauty. Moreover, gender divisions and gender conceptions in physiognomy result from very distinctive features of the female body and the auspicious woman as a good and loyal wife, a fertile mother and one that can bring good luck to her husband. These rules associate the physicality of the female body with the social situations women could be in. Again, in terms of the existential condition of femaleness, a woman's fortune and her life do not stand alone but are bonded to those who have strong social relations with her. This concrete formation of social relations on a person's body goes beyond the

[65] See Zhu Pingyi, *Handai de xiangren shu*, 77-95.
[66] See Li Jiakai, 'Xiangshu zhongde shouxiang yu shenxian zhi xiang,' 45-77.

boundaries of a specific time, space, and individuality. Therefore, a person's body can be said to be the epitome of a person's entire existence. A person's entire existence in time and space is also determined by a person's social relations. Sociality lies in the body. The caution in physiognomy manuals on bodily signs of death then does not simply denote a fear of death, but also an acute awareness of the transformation of life from person to something else.

Physiognomists and their Techniques: Socialization of Physiognomy in the Ming

Chapter IV deals with the social history of physiognomy in Ming China represented by literary sources. Stories of occupational physiognomists (*xiangshi* 相士 or *xiangren* 相人), religious figures who were good at physiognomy and officials who were interested in physiognomy are widely seen in miscellaneous notes and other historical records. It was since the Song that a relatively large amount of private writings by literati has been preserved. Although the majority of these stories still centers on the life of people in a higher social position, we start to find scattered descriptions of the activities of physiognomists outside the court, the capital city, and the so-called 'elite' community. These stories contain rich information about how physiognomy was performed in different social interactions. As mentioned previously, physiognomy was defined as a technique of inspection in traditional China, a technique that on one hand possesses its own cosmology and theories, and on the other hand is performed by its practitioners to their audiences. Therefore, without an examination of how physiognomy was performed and received in society, we miss the narratives that depict physiognomy as a technique. In order to understand how physiognomists' performances were recorded, comprehended and 'constructed' in Ming literati's writings and local histories, we cannot

exclude similar records of physiognomy in the Song. Song records already show many new traits of narrating physiognomy stories that Ming stories inherited, and most of the so-called 'Song' records are in fact Ming texts. Almost all of the collections of Song anecdotal writings we have today are Ming editions. They are stories about the Song, but edited, compiled, and printed or reprinted in the Ming. Moreover, many Ming literati perceived and commented on physiognomy based on their readings of these Song stories. Stories of physiognomy in the Song were received literature in the Ming and well integrated in the Ming discourse of physiognomy. Therefore, we should always be aware of the existence of the 'Song' physiognomy in these Ming collections.

A proper understanding of the social dynamics of physiognomic practice must begin with the identification of the way in which physiognomists were identified and classified in the specific Ming narrative. The distinction that is commonly made in our sources between a physiognomist who took bodily fortune-telling as an occupation and a literatus who was good at physiognomy is of particular importance. The group which was considered to be 'professional physiognomists' consisted of Buddhist monks, Daoist priests, travelling Technicians (*fangshi* 方士), Persons of the Way (*daoren* 道人), as well as people who were simply labelled as 'physiognomists'. More interestingly, there were also people who were ennobled or bestowed with official posts at court because of their physiognomy, and who then cast a profound influence on court politics as officials.[67] The complexity of the identity of physiognomists again, confirms the picture of a technique that was not preserved by a single group of people at all but open.

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[67] See the story of Yuan Zhongche in *Ming Shi*, *Fangji*, 7642.

The next topic would be how physiognomists interacted with the recipients of their prophecies and explanations. Seemingly, those who received physiognomic prophecy would initially doubt its reliability but later be convinced by its efficacy. Stories of physiognomy in the Ming (not exclusively about the Ming) contain the author or story-teller's perspective on the performance of this technique. Some skeptical literati also heavily criticized physiognomy after witnessing the practice, arguing that it was nothing more than a psychological trick or fraud.[68] Psychologically speaking, the practice of physiognomy was indeed a game of trust and suspicion, and a socio-psychological strategy to cope with the contingency of future life from the questioner's view point. An important context was the uncertain process of striving to become an official by means of the examination system. After the demise of the aristocratic system, how to find the most suitable person for a post from the pool of candidates became an urgent issue for the imperial state. It also became the main venue for moving upward in society. The examiners in this system were considered not clairvoyant enough to see through a person, nor could it reveal the fortune of a person. This was perhaps why many rulers and officials turned to physiognomy for help. On the physiognomists' side, the highly selective information provided by them was a reflection of their concerns as well. The use of euphemism and indirectness in telling misfortune sometimes stemmed from fear of the questioner's sulky temper. The vague expressions used in predicting good fortune showed the limited willingness and ability of physiognomists to reveal fate. The social dynamic between physiognomists and their audiences matters in our understanding of how physiognomy as a technique was performed.

[68] See Gong Baoli, *Shushu huodong yu mingqing shehui*, 73-78.

Yet more than socio-psychological interaction, the practice of physiognomy contains other components that can only be explained from cosmological, and technical angles. Many stories show that in text the practice of physiognomic prediction went far beyond what physiognomic manuals describe. There appear to have been more delicate aspects of this technique that could only be transmitted between a master and a student in a secret manner, which we might qualify as esoteric in the sense that they would be revealed only in a specific ritual context. That is to say, the textualized knowledge of the manuals does not cover/include the whole repertoire of this technique. Moreover, in the practice as depicted in the external records, different ideas, emphases and means of inspections are depicted, which are not always congruent with the manuals. There were even contradictions and discrepancies between different physiognomists' techniques. As such, we should not simply assume that the technique, moving from theory to practice in the texts, from one school to another, and even within the same physiognomist's practices, always remained the same.

Another relevant element in the recorded practice of physiognomy is the economic exchange between physiognomists and the questioners. As mentioned above, many physiognomists made an occupation out of their practices. Offering cash was what many questioners did after receiving their prognostications. Yet this was only one form of economic exchange in the business of physiognomy. During their interaction with literati, physiognomists also received written poems and calligraphy, which were equally valuable payments for their efficacious techniques as money.[69] This strongly resembles a form of gift exchange economy rather than a direct profit-oriented exchange. Certainly, reciprocity was not

[69] See Luo Zongtao, 'Songdai shiren zeng xiangshi shi tantao,' 203-232.

only realized by money, gifts or offering official posts. Sometimes physiognomists could see the promising future of an apparently abject or inferior person by recognizing their auspicious physiology. They rendered these people money or help on the stipulation that once they achieved success, these people should pay back the favor they had received. In a few extreme cases, physiognomists themselves did not even consider profit as their main concern. One particular story in *The Record of the Listener* shows that if the physiognomist felt it necessary, he would approach people with promising prospects and offer them help with no explicit expectation of something in return.[70] This complex form of economy, I believe, indicates that we to look at beyond the context of 'profit-oriented exchange'. It is a form of economic exchange steeped in a more complex mode in which the symbolic capital of physiognomists played an important role in the economic exchange between them and their clients.

This chapter also deals with the transmission of physiognomic knowledge, in which the textuality of the manuals stands out. Were these texts regarded as the only authority for knowledge, and was physiognomy perceived as a text-based technique? If not, why bother to make texts in the first place? And under what conditions were they composed and transmitted? These questions should be discussed in terms of how a particular physiognomy manual was compiled, printed, preserved, and transmitted. Because most extant texts from our period of investigation were put down into writing, or at least published, in the Ming period, it is extant texts from this era that stand at the center of our understanding of the conceptualization of physiognomy in this chapter, and we shall see why Ming manuals are vital in understanding physiognomy in the Song-Ming transition.

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[70] See 'Jingshi pinshi xiang,' in *Yijian zhi*, *sanzhi ji*, *juan* 1, 1310.

Chapter I

The Conceptualization of the Body and the Material World in Chinese History

Before we enter the discussion of the cosmology and theorization of the body in the Ming physiognomy manuals, it is important to briefly look at how the body was conceptualized in traditional China in different cosmological, religious, and medical contexts, especially in the Ming dynasty. Concepts like qi, the pulse, and the Five Phases are constantly mentioned in the Ming manuals and incorporated into this system. These key concepts matter to how Chinese physiognomy should be conceptualized in general, and how the Chinese physiognomic body represented in the Ming manuals should be understood. Early Chinese medical and cosmological texts tend to see the human body as a replica of the universe, sharing the same morphological structure and energetic composition with the cosmos.[71] I intend to show that in this cosmology, the human body is not something ostensibly similar to the cosmos but innate different, but seen as essentially the 'same' with the cosmos, made of the same process and substance with the whole universe. It is a kind of 'homology', not a kind of homology that highlights symbolic or analogous similarities between two genetically different things like the cases in understanding ancient Greek or medieval European body discourse, but a kind of homology in which two ostensibly different things are seen as innately the same and united, such as the body and the cosmos.[72] Therefore, the numerological system used to explain the

[71] See Vivienne Lo, 'Crossing the *Neiguan* "Inner Pass",' 15-65. Also Mark Lewis, *Construction of Space in Early China*, 16-73.
[72] For an analysis of this symbolic or analogous logic, see Alex Wayman, 'The human body as microcosm in

pattern of cosmic movements is also applicable to the body. Human beings' mind and physical existence are unified by qi in the body, which is at the same time cosmic.[73] In an early Chinese medical context, the mind is somatic and energetic as a part of qi movement in the body, and can be observed via a numerological lens. This repertoire of the body represented in early Chinese medical and cosmological texts were reiterated and further developed in the Ming dynasty, as we shall see in Chapter II and III. Before we enter the discussion of the physiognomy manuals, we have to briefly look at the intellectual and cosmological framework of the knowledge of the body in Chinese history.

There have been certain intellectual as well as social discussions on physiognomy throughout Chinese history as well. One key issue is the categorization and conceptualization of physiognomy. As an inspection technique, it was perceived differently in different dynasties and periods of China, and it is necessary for us to briefly review the historical development of the discourses and debates on physiognomy. The philosophical, cosmological, and technical discourse of the body in traditional China, especially its development during the Ming dynasty, is not limited to the understanding of the body itself, but also adopted into people's understanding of the material world in general. In this sense, physiognomy as a theoretical as well as practical tool for inspection, analysis, and prediction was certainly not only conceptualized as only applicable to the human body. The conceptualization of physiognomy in traditional China also involved a unique branch of techniques that inspect material objects, animals, and natural phenomena to tell people's fortune. In other words, there has been a type of physiognomy of 'things' in Chinese history. In a Japanese edition of the *Compendium* the

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India, Greek cosmology, and sixteenth-century Europe,' 172-190.

[73] See Lloyd and Sivin, *The Way and the Word*, 214-225.

compiler mentioned at the beginning that animals, plants, stones, and all the things in the world could be the subject of physiognomic principles.[74] Unlike the general or 'scientific' inspection of things, we shall see that physiognomists could tell people's fortunes by examining things they possess, things surrounding them, and even things that physiognomists encountered themselves. Accordingly, this particular kind of physiognomy can be regarded as an overlap between general skills of examining things and divination. On the one hand it required fortune-tellers to inspect things based on their material conditions and their unique loci in specific times and space, and on the other hand, things were considered items in ever-changing relationships with their environments. In other words, from a physiognomist's point of view, a person's fortune could be manifested by a specific object in a specific time and space. Again, we will look at the larger cosmology and practice of Chinese physiognomy through the manuals of the physiognomy of 'things', and use anecdotes of object-reading fortune-tellers as complementary material to see how things were understood and conceptualized in this cosmology.

In order to understand the way in which physiognomy was conceptualized in China, especially in the Ming, we have to first identify what Chinese physiognomy of things were, and then what kind of subjects physiognomists in traditional China inspected and how they examined different things to tell people's fortunes. Second, how did physiognomy of things become an independent physiognomic branch in mid-late imperial China, in contrast to the categorization of this technique in early China? Thirdly and most importantly, what were the theoretical connections between the physiognomy of things and that of human beings? There

[74] See *Shenxiang quanbian zhengyi*, 4.

appears to be a strong focus on the numerological features of things as reflections of a person's fortune. My aim in this chapter is to show that physiognomy did not really distinguish between the material and symbolic dimensions of things in the first place. An interpretation always takes into account the material form of a specific thing, such as its quality or texture, as well as its symbolic meanings. This focus can be easily concluded as the antithesis to the contradiction of the materiality of things *vis-a-vis* the symbolism of things, which indicates the two scholarly understandings of material culture in general.

Therefore, a rigid separation between the physical condition of things and their symbolic meanings is not helpful in understanding Chinese physiognomy of things, a separation that would also not work well in understanding the physiognomic body. Just like the human body, things are unities of their social and physical existence as well, so that a modern division between the two is not applicable to this physiognomic framework. The demarcation between the material conditions of things and their social-cultural meaning and the concomitant tendency to reduce things exclusively to symbols is highly problematic.[75] Instead, we will see in the physiognomy of different things that the materiality, social-cultural meanings of things, and relationship between things, human beings and their environment, or in other words the loci of things in a particular time and space, should be integrated into one coherent interpretation. Craig Clunas points out that in the Ming context, material things were regarded as visual indexes of the changes of the world, which could be related to physiognomy. By this, he seems to mean that material things directly pointed to things such as power and greatness, rather than indicating them in any more hidden, symbolic way that would still require

[75] See Bruno Latour, 'On interobjectivity,' 228-245.

decoding. A dragon does not represent power, but it is power. The brightness of light itself is the visual quality of good politics in a state. He also stresses that this kind of 'visuality' of things should not be detached from the perceptible physical qualities of things. Things are not just pictures or words with meanings, but have a texture, substance, lustre and other material dimensions and influence, and reveal the cosmic changes and social patterns in human beings' daily lives.[76] This indicates that social orders manifested by people's understandings of material objects are also part of the material world. A visual index that links social orders and natural orders is originated from the 'sameness' of these two orders.

As Ingold suggests, material objects and natural phenomena should never be considered as disparate from human beings' social world and social orders.[77] Social interpretations of things human beings 'constructed' never goes beyond this material as well as social world, and these interpretations are well rooted in the potentials of things to be social. He writes:

> Considered as a constituent of the material world, a stone is indeed both a lump of matter that can be analyzed for its physical properties and an object whose significance is drawn from its incorporation into the context of human affairs…in the world of materials, humans figure as much within the context for stones as do stones within the context for humans. And these contexts, far from lying on disparate levels of being, respectively social and natural, are established as overlapping regions of the same world.[78]

Therefore, human beings' social realm and the material/natural world are innately the same, manifested as two phases of the same spectrum of the world. The social is the material in this context. In this sense, the material world could have the potential serve as a visual or perceptible index of human beings' social life. Something material is simultaneously social.

[76] See Craig Clunas, *Empire of Great Brightness*, 12-19.
[77] See Tim Ingold, *Being Alive*, 19-32.
[78] See *ibid*, 31.

Although in a divinatory context, Song and Ming texts of physiognomy of various things show a similar understanding of the unity between the cosmos and society in material things. In the Ming edition of a text on the physiognomy of houses, a house is conceptualized as the pivot of cosmic yin-yang qi (*yinyang zhi shuniu* 陰陽之樞紐), and a physical track and mold of human beings' orders (*renlun zhi guimo* 人倫之軌模).[79] That is to say, the house as a material structure and a residential space for human beings is an index of both cosmic orders and social orders. A house is made by human beings, and it is made according to the social needs and domestic structures in human beings' lives. At the same time, it comes from the cosmos and is in the cosmos. A house is an object that emerges in the constant flow of cosmic movement. Thus in this text, the house is also a product of the cosmic qi, the same energy that generates the cosmos and the human body, and anything made of qi belongs to the same order of the grand cosmic movement. Because of the 'homological' relationship between human beings' social order, the status particular material objects like a house, and the cosmic order, material objects are not symbolic representations of people's future. When we say rose symbolizes romantic love, rose is not love. But when this Ming text applies Chinese cosmological and numerological tools to examine a house for predictions, fortune is there in the house, in the location of walls, shape of yards, quality of soil, and qi of this domestic space.[80] Temporal and social orders of human life is 'spatialized' in particular objects this cosmology.

Specific things emerging from the flux of the material world are evidence of movement and change rather than merely static symbols that do not affect the material world. We will see that this is particularly evident in many Ming manuals, where the technique is subsumed into

[79] See *Huangdi zhaijing*, *juan* 1, 1.
[80] See *ibid*, 3-4.

a systematic cosmology of homology and transformation. Both the symbolic facets and the physical facets of things were regarded as useful indexes of the codes of the moving world. In other words, physiognomists regarded material things as part of the movements of the world, from which they could detect the direction that the future would take. Even the symbolic aspects of things are explained in an energetic/cosmic homology. The material dimension of things and their social/cultural dimensions are unified by a logic of 'the spatialization of time' in order to explain why these things can tell their owner's future. This is a technical framework that is also used to explain the connections between the human body and fortune in other manuals. We will see show this logic is reflected in these physiognomy manuals and take the 'spatialization of time' in the physiognomy of things as a start for our discussion.

One outstanding example which testifies this notion is a type of thing physiognomy called the physiognomy of characters (*xiangzi* 相字) first seen in the Song, also known as Dissection of Characters (*chaizi* 拆字).[81] From manuals and stories about this type of technique, we will find that fortune-tellers did not clearly distinguish between characters as carriers of meanings and characters materialized on a writing surface as calligraphy. More often than not they tended to blur the boundaries between these two seemingly heterogeneous attributes of a character and to concentrate on both the semantic aspect and the tangible physical features of a character as one. This differentiation between the linguistic meaning of a character and its material representation is less stressed in the manuals. In this chapter, we will see how a unique feature of Chinese calligraphy as a process rather than a static object is reflected in the physiognomy of characters. In the stories of this technique, the original act of writing is still

[81] Chaizi is generally known as a philological and rhetorical device in classical Chinese, but it was also used specifically to refer to the physiognomy of characters, see *Taoan mengyi*, *juan* 5, 7.

tangibly visible in the end-product, and within the product, the tension and fluidity of the previous writing process are still present. As a result, we will see that Chinese calligraphy is not actually a fixed object, but reflects the process of writing and to some extent the status of the body of the writer in this context. A Chinese literatus would not only appreciate words in calligraphy, but also take the writings as a map for reconstructing the positions, gestures, bodily movements, mood, and mentality of the calligrapher when he or she was writing it.[82] Calligraphy is not an independent, isolated and static object, a material form of language, but a reflection of movement. Thus calligraphy blurs the boundary between the meaning of language and its material representation.

Therefore, to understand the physiognomy of things in China we have to go back to what we discussed before, to the understanding of the material world as time and space, a world that is always in motion and a world where social and natural orders are unified. If we can take things as part of this grand movement of the material world and the reflection of time rather than being motionless and reducible, then why could process not be understood as a 'thing'? In my study of the practice of character physiognomy, fortune-tellers often focused on the process, both semantically and materialistically, of how a Chinese character was written on paper, and how this could then be evaluated as hidden information on a person's fortune. In such a practice, both the semantic meaning of a character and its different parts, the style and the way they were produced on the paper are relevant. It is also because of the fact that calligraphy is a 'process-as-thing', that fortune-tellers could actually read a person's fortune out of it. We will see that a physiognomist would use the body as a reference for dissecting

[82] See Lothar Ledderose, *Mi Fu and the Classical Tradition of Chinese Calligraphy*, 29, and Stephen Little, 'Chinese Calligraphy,' 372-403.

characters, which means that because characters can reflect the calligrapher's body conditions, characters themselves can be understood as the manifestation of his or her body in the flow of time, which again means that it is important for use to relate to the repertoire of the body in traditional China to physiognomy. Another element of character physiognomy is its emphasis on the interchangeability of text and image. One of the attributes of Chinese writing, in the work of both literati and religious specialists, is the fact that written words and paintings are not clearly separated.[83]

Huang shows that Daoist talisman and chart writings in Tang and Song dynasty already challenged the 'text-image' dichotomy.[84] In this context of religious writing, sacred texts and characters are represented as both words and pictures at the same time, and these text-pictures should not only be read but also visualized in one's mind and even performed. Cosmic qi permeates in these texts whose forms and morphology function as tracks and vessels of energy flows. The power of written words does not only reside in its semantic meanings; words are not only abstract symbols. A written text is a material object, which contains meaningful words but also delivers these meanings in material/energetic forms, and in this way, the graphic morphology, tangible qualities, and energetic constitution of written words/texts are also part of what they manifest. A text is a material/cosmic thing just like a house or a stone. Physiognomy of characters in Song and Ming periods shares similar view in understanding written characters. Written characters and texts were not only regarded as representations that reconciles the text-image dichotomy, but also as powerful things composed of cosmic energy. In this chapter, I will show how written characters were analyzed as cosmic things and an

[83] See Craig Clunas, *Oxford History of Art*, 135-152. Shih-shan Susan Huang, *Picturing the True Form*, 135-180.

[84] See Susan Shih-shan Huang, 'Daoist visual culture,' 929-1050.

index of fortune. Therefore, we will see that when physiognomists 'reading' a thing for fortune-telling, it seems that they were not 'reading' a thing as a text signifying the meaning of fortune, they were examining/feeling fortune residing in this object with their bodily senses, because even a written text itself was regarded as a tangible object, an extension of life and fortune.

That is to say, the linguistic, textual, imagery, and all other perceptible aspects of a written character compose a written character as the 'visual/perceptible index' of a person's future. This index is not only a text, a signifier of a person's fortune, but also seen as a part, an extension of a person's time. Written characters and other material things are part of the movement or process of cosmic movements, which means that they not only represent the pattern of the cosmos, but also a part of it. Written characters are people's fortune. Therefore, physiognomists are reading information about the past and future of a persons out of material things and the human body, they are not reading them like we read a text, trying to map out meanings behind words. They are reading the material world like reading waves in an ocean to know more about a bigger current. A current is composed of numerous waves, one after another, and each wave can be seen as a 'micro' current, possessing all the features a current has on a micro level. A wave and a current are innately the same; they are flows of water, made of moving liquid. Their sameness not only lies in their similar visual structures, but also in what they are made of, a homology beyond structures and functions. When studying a current, its waves are important indexes of its movement pattern. The 'time' of a current, its future movement, can be read from the 'space' of its waves, their location, morphological structure, temperature, and so on. One can hardly say that waves of a current are a textual representation

of the real thing, that waves are only a 'story' of the future of a current, for waves are this current. In the logic of physiognomy represented in these manuals, the human body, material artefacts, written characters, and even natural phenomena are seen as important 'waves' in the 'current' of cosmic change, and hence relevant future can be predicted.

Conceptualization of the Body in Traditional Chinese Cosmology

The idea of the human body as a micro-cosmos in traditional China is not limited to physiognomy theories, but a fundamental part of traditional worldview. Since the Western Han dynasty, the body has been perceived as a micro-cosmic system in constant energetic exchange with the outer world, and body parts correlated with elements in the cosmos.[85] Vivienne Lo and Li Jianmin point out that in the Western Han manuscripts excavated at Mawangdui 馬王堆 and Zhangjiashan 張家山, we already see efforts to adjust a person's bodily movements in accordance with cosmic changes for medical treatment, indicating that bodily orders and cosmic orders are in resonance with each other.[86] Similar resonance was developed in later Inner Alchemy (*neidan* 內丹) practices as well, where different hexagram symbols (*gua* 卦), the Five Phases, and calendric movements of the universe were connected to the viscera and physiological changes.[87] In other words, regarding the body as a miniature of the universe is not unique to physiognomy, but common to the Chinese cosmology of the body throughout history, with more complex developments in later periods, especially after

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[85] See Geoffrey Lloyd and Nathan Sivin, *The Way and the Word*, 218-226, also see Mark Lewis, *Construction of Space in Early China*, 37-60.

[86] See Vivienne Lo and Li Jianmin, 'Manuscripts, received texts and the healing arts,' 367-391. Also see Elizabeth Hsu, *Pulse Diagnosis in Early Chinese Medicine*, 29-44.

[87] See Isabelle Robinet, *The World Upside Down*, 54-66.

the Song. Thus we might see the cosmos in this sense as 'somatic', having direct connections with the body and physiology.

In the philosophical and cosmological text *Wenzi* 文子, which was later transformed into a Daoist scripture, there is already a sophisticated way of conceptualizing the body cosmologically. In its chapter on the cultivation techniques called 'The Nine Protections' (*Jiushou* 九守)[88], the human body is described as a micro-cosmos with different natural phenomena happening inside, and the most sophisticated consequence of cosmic change:

> A human being rises from the changes of heaven and earth…After the torso is completed, five viscera start to form. The liver controls the eyes. The kidneys control the ears. Spleen controls the tongue. The lungs control the nose. The gallbladder controls the mouth. The outside is the exterior, and the inside is the interior. The circular head resembles heaven, and the square feet resemble earth. Heaven possesses four seasons, the Five Phases, nine directions, and three hundred and sixty days. A human being has four limbs, five viscera, nine apertures, and three hundred and sixty joints. Heaven has wind, rain, frigidity and warmth, and a human being takes the [same phenomena] from [emotions like] happiness and anger. The gallbladder is a cloud. The lungs are qi. The spleen is wind. The kidneys are rain. The liver is thunder, and a human being resembles heaven and earth. The heart is the master [of us]. The eyes and ears are the sun and moon, and blood and qi are wind and rain. If the sun and the moon lose their order, the eclipse devouring the light, wind and rain come at an inopportune time, destroying and damaging, causing disasters, and the five stars lose their order, then the provinces and states will be affected.
> 人受天地變化而生…形骸已成，五藏乃形，肝主目，腎主耳，脾主舌，肺主鼻，膽主口，外為表，中為裡，頭員法天，足方象地，天有四時、五行、九解、三百六十日，人有四支、五藏、九竅、三百六十節。天有風雨寒暑，人有取與喜怒，膽為雲，肺為氣，脾為風，腎為雨，肝為雷，人與天地相類，而心為之主。耳目者日月也，血氣者風雨也，日月失行，薄蝕無光，風雨非時，毀折生災，五星失行，州國受其殃。'[89]

Here the body is described as a cosmos in a certain kind of temporal and spatial order. It is also a state in which natural phenomena are included, which means that the body is also like a political structure susceptible to physical influences. In this chapter of *Wenzi*, a somatic

[88] Which is explained in the later Ming editions as Ten Protections (*shishou*, 十守), see *Wenzi zuanyi*, *juan* 3, 2.
[89] See *Wenzi zuanyi*, *juan* 3, 10-11.

replication of the cosmos means that natural phenomena also occur within the body, and bodily phenomena follow the same rules as natural ones. Numerological correspondences between the body and the cosmos are evidence of how such rules are applied to the body. In other words, the body is a miniature of the cosmos, and the cosmos is an expansion of the body. Many texts originating from early China explain similarities between the body and the cosmos in terms of their common material origins, since we come from the cosmos, and are formed by its elements. Thus both cultivational techniques and techniques of body inspection share very similar views.

Speaking of inspections of different body dimensions in both physiognomy and medical diagnosis, one specific and significant dimension of the body in traditional Chinese medical and physiological knowledge is the pulse (*mai* 脈), and its extension, body channels (*jing* 經). Chinese conceptualizations of the pulse are perhaps the most commonly seen in Chinese medical texts and are regarded as one of the most ancient medical inventions in China.[90] In the Ming period, physician and herbalist Li Shizhen 李時珍 (1518-1593) said:

> …both the study of disease and the study of medicine in this world take the understanding of the pulse as their priority.
> 世之醫病兩家，咸以脈为首務。[91]

According to the *The Catalogue of the Primary Texts in Chinese Medicine* (*Zhongguo zhongyi guji zongmu* 中國中醫古籍總目) published in Shanghai in 2007, almost a third of extant manuals in this catalogue are about the study of *mai* and body channels.[92] Large volumes of

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[90] Which started from the early Western Han period, see Elizabeht Hsu, *Pulse Diagnosis in Early Chinese Medicine*, 26-28.
[91] See his *Binhu maixue*, 9.
[92] See *Zhongguo zhongyi guji zongmu*.

preserved texts on this particular topic show the importance of the pulse in medical practice. Paul Unschuld argues that based on archaeological and historical evidence, the idea of the pulse as a unit of a systematic organic body and its energy flows—qi—must have appeared in early China, where the concept of an organized and systematic cosmos, political state and somatic structure was then linked to it.[93] In the excavated texts from the Western Han tomb at Mawangdui 馬王堆, we already see efforts to use the concept of *mai* in a numerological context as the flowing channels for bodily qi in 'nourishing life' (*yangsheng* 養生) practices.[94] In the *Inner Canon*, the pulse, *mai*, is defined as part of a microcosmic bodily system:

> …when sages establish the rules of numbers, they must be in accordance with heaven and earth. The patterns of the stars are in heaven, and the watercourses are on earth. Thus there are channels and pulses on the human body…
> …夫聖人之起度數，必應於天地，天有宿度，地有經水，人有經脈…[95]
>
> There are twelve major watercourses on earth, and twelve major pulse channels on the human body. There are springs and channels on earth, and there is protecting qi in the human body.
> 地有十二經水，人有十二經脈，地有泉脈，人有衛氣。[96]
>
> …channels and pulses circulate endlessly. Their orders tally with heaven, and their tempos tally with earth. Thus when the celestial bodies lose their order, and watercourses on earth lose their tempo, rivers will flood; plants cannot sprout; the five grains cannot grow; roads and streets cannot open; people stop communicating; they gather in allies and live in towns; they are separated and confined in different places. The blood and qi are like this, and the reason is mentioned above. Thus the pulse of blood and the nourishing qi flow circulate endlessly, in accordance with the order of the stars and the rules of the watercourse.
> 經脈留行不止，與天同度，與地同紀，故天宿失度，日月薄蝕。地經失紀，水道流溢，草蓂

[93] See Paul Unschuld, *Medicine in China*, 73-82.
[94] See Vivienne Lo, 'The influence of nurturing life culture on the development of Western Han acumoxa therapy,' 19-50.
[95] See *Huangdi neijing*, *Suwen*, *juan* 8, 149. Here in Paul Unschuld's translation he refers *sudu* as lunar lodges and annual solar degrees in heaven, yet I translate this phrase literally as patterns of the stars. Also Unschuld translates *jing* as vessels, indicating the replacibility between the English physiological term vessel and Chinese *jing*. To avoid any confusion, I choose to translate *jing* as channels. See Paul Unschuld, et al., *Huang di nei jing su wen*, 448.
[96] See *Huangdi neijing*, *Lingshu*, *juan* 10, 15. Here I refer to Paul Unschuld's translation of the term *weiqi* as 'protecting qi'. See *Huang di nei jing ling shu*, 644.

不成，五穀不植，經路不通，民不往來，巷聚邑居，別離異處，血氣猶然，則言其故。 夫血脈榮衛，周流不休，上應星宿，下應經數。[97]

The pulse is, according to this canonical medical text, the fundamental proof that the body and the cosmos share the same material foundations and similar morphological structures. This means that the resemblance between the body and the cosmos is not merely linguistic, but energetic. The body is energetically homological to the universe. The microcosm of the body is the product or result of the energetic movement of the universe, as well as a part of it. The microcosm of the body is also influenced by movements of the universe. Numbers of human pulses are sacred numbers of the universe, and in this sense orders, numbers, and structures of pulses represent the course of cosmic movements, similar to physiognomy. Li Jianmin argues that this transformation of the understanding of the medical body from a demonological framework to a correlative and systematic microcosm was largely completed in the Western Han dynasty but may have occurred in the Warring States period in a particular social context.[98] Kuriyama Shigehisa, in his analysis of early Chinese medical treatises, concludes that the Chinese idea of *mai* is highly inclusive and does not only refer to any vessels for tangible or visible fluid in the body.[99] It is a palpable mechanism that connects and organizes different body parts. *Mai* is a combination of the pulse, the blood vessels, the movement of yin and yang energy, and other forms of energy and fluid flow in the body. Kuriyama stresses the palpability, visibility, and qualities of the pulse as central to what it can express about the whole body. By touching the six points on the two wrists, *cun* 寸, *guan* 關, and *chi* 尺, physicians are able to illustrate the pattern of a patient's bodily conditions and

[97] See *Huangdi neijing*, *Lingshu*, *juan* 12, 15.
[98] See Li Jianmin, *Faxian gumai*, 40-97.
[99] See Kuriyama Shigehisa, *The Expressiveness of the Body*, 17-60.

deeper reasons for diseases. In other words, the pulse expresses the body.

Goldschmidt points out that it was from the early Song dynasty that these early classical theories of the body were reinvestigated and systematically developed, along with the growth of a strong intellectual interest in medical theories.[100] Miranda Brown in her study of inventions in Ming medical literature shows how classical body theories, as well as ancient medical figures, became attractive to both physicians and intellectuals at that time.[101] They tried to popularize their innovations in cosmological theories and medicine under the ancient pioneers' names and use the classical framework for their discussion of the body. We definitely see this tendency in physiognomy manuals as well. In fact, one of the most conspicuous features of later physiognomy texts absent in the manuals before the Song consists of the constant quotations from so-called classical philosophical texts and the fusion of physiognomy and classical philosophical ideas. Many late Ming physiognomy manuals contain passages illustrating fundamental principles of human physiology similar to the classical framework. In *The Divine Physiognomy of the Water Reflections* (*Shuijing shenxiang* 水鏡神相), the text delineates the human body as a simulation of the macro-world, its physiological features as replicas of different phenomena in the world:

> Heaven is a macro-heaven, and a human being is a micro-heaven. Humans receive the qi of yin and yang, resembling the appearance of heaven and the earth, and are nourished by the Five Phases; humans are the most intelligent among the myriad creatures. The head resembles heaven. The eyes resemble the sun and the moon. The voice resembles thunder and lightning. The blood and body channels resemble rivers. Bones and joints resemble ores and mines. Nose and forehead resemble mountains. The hair resembles trees and plants. Hence heaven should be high and circular. Earth should be square and heavy. The sun and the moon should be bright. Thunder and lightning should shock far. Rivers should be moist and flowing. Ores and mines should be solid. Mountains should be

[100] See Asaf Goldschmidt, *The Evolution of Chinese Medicine*, 19-40.

[101] See Miranda Brown, *The Art of Medicine in Early China*, 21-63.

precipitous. Trees and plants should be elegant. This is a general theory.
天為一大天，人為一小天……人稟陰陽之氣，肖天地之形，受五行之資，為萬物最靈者也。頭象天，眼象日月，聲象雷霆，血脈象江河，骨節象金石，鼻額象山岳，毫髮象草木。故天欲高圓，地欲方厚，日月欲光明，雷霆欲遠震，江河欲潤，金石欲堅，山岳欲峻，草木欲秀，此概論也。[102]

This macro-micro cosmos link between the body and universe seems to go beyond a traditional European sense that the body is an image-textual replica of the world.[103] As we have seen above, the human body does resemble the cosmos in their similar morphological features and temporal-spatial structures, yet the macrocosm and the microcosm are not regarded as two parallel and dualistic entities but generated by the same cosmic power. The generative power of qi represented in early Chinese philosophical texts as the fundamental power of the formation of the cosmos and the body is formless, flexible, constantly moving and transformative. For example, in the early Han cosmology book *Huainan zi* 淮南子, qi is defined as the provenance of all the forms (*xing* 形) and the spirit (*shen* 神) of the cosmos and human body.[104] The same text also claims that the spirit is the most essential aspect of the human body, and the most refined form of qi. The spirit in the *Inner Canon* and other medical and cosmological texts is explained as a refined form of qi, the fundamental somatic 'vitality' that makes a person's mind and physiology possible.[105] The spirit is understood in early classics together with the 'essence' (*jing* 精) of viscera in the body, both of which are refined forms of qi.[106] Despeux argues that in the early cosmological texts, the spirit, *shen*, refers to a

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[102] See *Shuijing shenxiang*, *juan* 2, 4. Very similar text is also seen in *Shenxiang quanbian*, *juan* 2, 27, and *Mayi shenxiang*, *juan* 3, 8.
[103] Which is often seen in the anthropology of religion, see Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Anthropology in Theological Perspective*, 27-34.
[104] See *Huainan zi*, *yuandao xun*, 82-90.
[105] See *Science and Civilisation in China: Volume 6, Biology and Biological Technology, Part 6, Medicine*, 95-96.
[106] See Catherine Despeux, 'Jing, Qi, Shen,' 562-563. Also See Robert Campany, *To Live as Long as Heaven and Earth*, 18-19.

singular life force and the ultimate vitality inside the body, whereas the essence, *jing*, refers to the refined qi the five viscera receive from external nourishment and keeps inside the organs.[107] The spirit and the essence are two most important elements in early Chinese qi cosmology and the qi-based body. Li Jianmin argues that from the late Warring States period to early Western Han dynasty, qi cosmology became numerological and cosmological; qi started to be understood as multi-faceted and categorized into yin and yang qi and qi of the Five Phases within a numerological framework.[108] Qi cosmology in early China influenced both medical practices and divinatory technique like physiognomy since they share the same cosmological common ground and in many cases the distinction between medical diagnosis and divination was not clear.[109]

Yin-yang and Five Phases cosmology as the paradigm of categorizing qi, pulses and concrete bodily features in both medicine and physiognomy first appeared in the Eastern Zhou dynasty. It is a system that categorizes the movement of the cosmos into five different phases: Water (*shui* 水), Fire (*huo* 火), Wood (*mu* 木), Earth (*tu* 土), and Metal (*jin* 金). Derived from the late Shang dynasty cosmology of the Four Directions (*sifang* 四方), this yin-yang and Five Phases cosmology was initially used to describe the geographic features of the Zhou territory and political predictions.[110] Later in the Warring States period, the Five Phases cosmology started to be schematized and entered many different areas including divination, astro-calendrical theories, medicine, and even influenced how new regimes legitimized themselves.[111] One of the most representative examples is the Western Han dynasty edition of

[107] See Despeux, *ibid*.
[108] Li Jianmin, *Faxian gumai*, 149-191.
[109] See Donald Harper, 'Physicians and diviners,' 91-110.
[110] See Wang Aihe, *Cosmology and Political Culture in Early China*, 75-129.
[111] See Liu Junhong, *Shenmi de wuxing*, 66-71.

a Warring States text '*Grand Rules*' (*Hongfan* 洪範), which states that apart from the virtuous conduct and ritualistic propriety of a state, the cosmic power of the Five Phases also influences the its stability and even existence; this can be detected via divination.[112] It was at this stage that Five Phases cosmology began to interact with new numerological as well as mantic systems and gradually became part of the qi cosmology, where the Five Phases system was used to describe the processes of qi movement and transformation and the interactions between the two kinds of primal power of the cosmos and human life, yin and yang, and later this cosmology was absorbed into religious Daoism.[113]

The second-high time for its systematization, at least according to extant historiography, occurred during the Song dynasty. Starting from the Song we see that Five Phases cosmology became an indispensable part of the Chinese divination system and established not only as one of the most fundamental codes for divinatory practice, but also started to become part of the Song and Ming intellectuals' way of understanding the world.[114] Elisabeth Hsu shows that the Five Phases cosmology became a heuristic and conceptual device for Ming elite physicians to express a body ecology in new medical discourses, in which the body is linked to a broader and complex cosmic panorama.[115] This body ecology/ecologic suggests that the human body and the environment around it should be seen as interrelated mutually influential. Sivin concludes that the yin-yang and Five Phases cosmology unifies the natural/cosmic power and human being's social ethics and suggests that social ethics have a corporeal and energetic

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[112] See *Hongfan*, 2-7.

[113] See Donald Harper, 'Ying Yang and Five Phases,' 860-866. Also Nathan Sivin, *Medicine, Philosophy and Religion in Ancient China*, IV 6.

[114] See Benjamin Elman, 'Native Traditions of Natural Studies during the Ming-Qing Transition, 1600-1800,' 7-38.

[115] See Hsu, 'The biological in the cultural,' 91-126.

dimension, so that seemingly abstract social ethics and virtue can be perceived in tangible and concrete forms.[116] This unity of the cosmos and human sociality in the human body and the corporeality of the world means that the body and the cosmos are not parallel replicas to each other, or only resemble each other on a metaphorical level, but are essentially the same and connected, just like the metaphor between waves and current in the ocean.

Elite/literati physicians in the Ming dynasty began to show their interests in Daoist practices, Chan Buddhism and Neo-Confucian thoughts, resulting in using relevant numerological as well as cosmological frameworks in explaining important medical terms and ideals such as qi and giving them more metaphysical meanings.[117] The cosmic-numerological body system represented in the *Inner Canon* and other classical texts were re-established as an authoritative framework for the discussion of the body, medicine, and other techniques by Ming intellectuals and literati who were also medicine practitioners.[118] They reiterated the importance of traditional numerology and cosmology such as the system of the *Book of Changes*, the *Inner Canon*, the Five Phases, and even divination in understanding the mechanism of the body and its relationship with the external world, the cosmos.[119] In this trend, the discourse of certain techniques, such as medicine and geomancy, were highly 'philosophized' and linked to classical texts and thoughts. These classical frameworks in understanding the body, society, natural phenomena, and the cosmos were put into a new lens of qi cosmology developed from the Song dynasty and continued in the Ming.[120] This new qi cosmology occurred in the Song

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[116] See *Medicine, Philosophy and Religion in Ancient China*, IV 6.
[117] See Leslie de Vries, 'The Authentic Person as ideal for the late Ming dynasty physician,' 63-82.
[118] See Zhu Pingyi, 'Yaoyi busi bing, fodu youyuan ren: Ming qing de yiliao shichang, yixue zhishi yu yibing guanxi,' 1-50.
[119] See Wang Wenjing, 'Mingdai de ruyi,' 35-57.
[120] See John Makeham, 'Introduction,' 9-43, and Du Xinhao, 'Qilun yu yidao,' 23-30.

and further developed in the Ming again stresses the 'sameness' between the myriad things and the cosmos, and highlight the cosmogonic aspect of qi as the primary and fundamental power that generates human beings and the rest of the world, a view that is frequently seen in early Chinese cosmology texts.[121]

Ming physiognomy manuals received such a change as well, and was part of this broader qi cosmology in the Ming dynasty. We shall discuss these new features in Chapter II and III. In the Ming edition of a physiognomy manual *Yuguan zhaoshen ju* 玉管照神局, it says at the very beginning that the process of creating life was unstoppable, with the 'primal qi' (*yuanqi* 元氣) itself blowing and life created like blowing hot wind to potters on a potter's wheel to make them shape. Animals, plants and the myriad of things (*wanwu* 萬物) were formed in different looks, and it was only human beings that reflected these various images on their bodies.[122] Thus the body is a homological replica of the universe; energetic dimensions of the body are the same as those of the whole universe. This representation of the body as an energetic microcosm is perhaps different from the famous Swiss philosopher and Physiognomist Johnann Kasper Lavater's (1741-1801) conclusion of European physiognomy tradition which sees the body as an image of the moral spiritual composition of a person's self, and a graphic and morphological reproduction of divinity.[123] Lavater's implication is that the body is something inferior to the soul and self, a imagery representation of the internal existence of a person, and essentially heterogeneous to divinity. Yet in the Ming physiognomy manuals, the human body is seen as ontologically the same with the universe, since they are

[121] See Liu Youming, 'Ming qing rujia ziran qi benlun de zhexue dianfan,' 1-36.
[122] See *Yuguan zhaoshen ju*, *juan shang*, 10.
[123] See Joan K. Stemmler, 'The physiognomical portraits of Johann Caspar Lavater,' 151-168.

both generated by the same primary power qi, and their structures and mechanism are the same.

In other words, somatic power and vitality in the body is not an inferior representation of a person's mind nor an opposition of an ideal spiritual universe, but the very origin of it. Since the human body is a replication of the cosmos, auspicious and ideal features of a person's body are those that physically resemble their prototypes in nature. The more the eyes look like the actual sun and moon the better. Because the human body is composed by the qi of yin and yang, and shaped by the force of the Five Phases, this most refined form of being in principle should look like a copy of the whole world. In the *Physiognomy of Master Liuzhuang* (*Liuzhuang xiangfa* 柳莊相法), the weal and woe of life reflected on the body are referred to as natural disasters like floods or thunderstorms, since the body is the miniature of the cosmos.[124] This is a view not only applied to interpret the human body but extended to the whole world, a physiognomic cosmology for everything. However, as we shall see, the human body stands in the very center of this qi cosmology and serves as an important (perhaps most important) paradigm in comprehending the material world.

Physiognomy in Chinese History: A Review

In a book called *Airizhai congchao* 愛日齋叢抄 written by Ye Li 葉𧍧, a retired scholar of the late Song dynasty, the author mentioned the existence of *xiangwu* 相物, the physiognomy of things, and its relation to human physiognomy. In his words, 'the physiognomy of humans is

[124] See *Liuzhuang xiangfa*, 12.

ancient, and so is that of things (*wu* 物)'.[125] Yet in his list of the manuals of the physiognomy of things, he first mentioned several 'scriptures (*jing* 經)' about the inspection of animals, and then material and inanimate things such as official scepters, *hu* 笏. He first quoted a sentence from a late Warring States compilation *The Spring and Autumn Annals of Mr Lü* (*Lüshi chunqiu* 呂氏春秋). It mentions that there had been physiognomists in ancient times who could inspect horses. Each of them was specialized in inspecting different parts of a horse. According to Ye Li, 'The contents of *The Bibliographical Section of the West Capital* (*Xidu yiwen* 西都藝文), included human physiognomy, sword and sabre physiognomy and the physiognomy of the six domestic animals (*liuchu* 六畜). The principle of inspecting bone patterns in human and domestic animal physiognomy mentioned by Ban Mengjian 班孟堅 [the Eastern Han dynasty historian Ban Gu] is to measure the appearance of things in order to get their sound and qi, their nobility and baseness, and their good and bad fortune. The gist of this technique is just like that.'[126]

This book *The Bibliographical Section of the West Capital* is also known as *Treatise on Skills and Literature of the History of Han* (*Hanshu yiwen zhi* 漢書藝文志),which contains a catalogue of various titles of books from the Western Han imperial library.[127] In the *Treaties*, physiognomy books are categorized as 'Methods of Morphology' (*xingfa* 形法), and defined as a technique that predicts human being's nobility and baseness, weal and woe (*guijian jixiong* 貴賤吉凶) by inspecting the morphological features, sound, and qi of geographic landscapes, cities and architectures, the human body and that of domestic animals, and material things

125 See *Airizhai congchao, juan* 5, 212-214.
126 See Ye Li, *ibid*.
127 See Hulsewé, '*Han shu*,' 129-136.

like swords.[128] This definition has two key points. First, physiognomy is defined as a technique of inspection. The subject of its inspection is rather broad, from landscapes in nature to human beings' and domestic animals' bodies, almost everything can be physiognomically inspected (*xiang* 相). The term *xing*, or morphology, does only refer to the forms, structures, and any other morphological features visible to human beings, but also related to the inspection of qi. The author later in the same passage explained that the most subtle and refined part of this technique is to understand the relationship between qi and *xing* of different things, and they are like two sides of one coin. The second key point is that physiognomy, despite its all-encompassing scope, is a technique that predicts human being and human society's future. Therefore, it is in the end a divinatory skill. This is why Ban Gu put it under the category of 'Numerological Skills' (*shushu* 数术), right after astrology and tortoise shell oracles. Physiognomists do not, according to this definition, observe human beings and the material world neutrally or 'scientifically', but try to grasp patterns of the movement of human life, and relate this pattern to a broader natural and cosmic order. The ultimate purpose of this technique is to examine the cosmological 'nobility and baseness, weal and woe' in human beings' life.

Later During the Sui and Tang period, this manner of categorizing physiognomy was inherited. In the *History of Sui* (*Suishu* 隋書), physiognomy manuals of the human body, houses, and domestic animals are put right after geomantic books in the catalogue of imperial library.[129] However, there are more geomantic books mentioned than the *Treatise* and geomancy seems to be represented as an independent technique rather than included in the

[128] See *Hanshu*, *Yiwenzhi*, *xingfa*, 221.
[129] See *Suishu*, *Jingji zhi*, 1039.

section of physiognomy. In both the *Old History of Tang* (*Jiu tangshu* 舊唐書) and *New History of Tang* (*Xin tangshu* 新唐書), all the manauls of animal physiognomy are put together with books on agricultural techniques, and those on the physiognomy of tombs and houses are put together with books on geography and geomancy.[130] This means that during the Sui and Tang period, at least from the perspective of categorizing books in the imperial library, the physiognomy of animals and houses were separated from human physiognomy and were perceived as different techniques belonging to different knowledge systems. Further in the History of the Song, manuals of human physiognomy, physiognomy of animals, houses, tombs, and material items, physiognomy of wind and rain, and geomancy books are listed together and mixed up again.[131]

It is also for the first time that we see new subjects of physiognomic inspections appear in texts, including written characters, lantern, pillows, the sound of human beings' bones, and so on. The term '*xiangwu*', physiognomy of things, as the name of an independent category of physiognomy is only found in Ye Li's writing. The Song encyclopedia the Imperial Readers of the Taiping Era (*Taiping yulan* 太平御覽) contain stories of both human physiognomy and physiognomy of material things like jade scepter in its 'Physiognomy' (*xiang* 相) section, indicating that there are two kinds of physiognomy, that of human beings and that of things.[132] Another Song encyclopedia the *Comprehensive Record* (*Tongzhi* 通志) listed seventy-three book titles designated to the 'Method of Physiognomy' (*xiangfa* 相法), sixty-four of which are on the physiognomy of the human body and nine of which are about the physiognomy of material

[130] See *Jiu tangshu*, *juan* 47, *Jingji zhi*, 2035, 2044, and *Xin tangshu*, *juan* 59, *Jingji zhi*, 1557.
[131] See *Songshi*, *juan* 206, *Yiwen zhi*, 5252-5255.
[132] See *Taiping yulan*, *xiang*, 1743-1744.

artefacts like seals or written characters.[133] There are certain subjects of inspection that have not been seen in previous historical records before the Song, such as written characters. Moreover, for the first time we see that human physiognomy is divided into bone physiognomy and color and qi physiognomy in these Song catalogues, suggesting that more books are designated to more specific inspections of the human body.

We might presume that the categorization of physiognomy experienced certain historical changes in China. Early Chinese catalogues show that the scope of physiognomy incorporates all kinds of inspection techniques, including geomancy, geographic observations, examining domestic animals, and human physiognomy. Later certain techniques were perceived as independent from physiognomy, and physiognomy exclusively meant human physiognomy. The physiognomy of material artefacts was brought back to the system of physiognomy again in the Song, as we can see in Ye Li's comments. Some Song scholars were certainly influenced by the classical Han system when categorizing and conceptualizing physiognomy texts. Chen Zhensun 陳振孫 (1183-1262) directly used the categorization in the *Treatise* on the physiognomy books he collected, and geomancy books, human physiognomy manuals, and animal physiognomy manuals are all classified as 'Methods of Morphology' just like the *Treatise*.[134] We shall see in our study how physiognomy was perceived and theorized from the late Song onwards, and what are the new developments in physiognomy in the Ming. Sources on physiognomy before the Song is very scarce, which makes it difficult for use to make any substantial chronological comparisons. Yet it is important for use to see that at least in the case of book cataloging, certain nuanced differences point at different ways in which physiognomy

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133 See *Tongzhi, Yiwen lue*, *juan* 6, 247-248.
134 See *Zhizhai shulu jieti*, *juan* 12, 369-381.

was conceptualized in different periods of Chinese history.

Wang Renxiang in his study of early Chinese literati's tradition of 'Distinguishing and Judging Figures' (*shijian* 識鑒), a method of evaluating other literati's virtue, literary work, and manners from late Han to Northern and Southern Dynasties period, mentions that physiognomy was regarded to have nothing to do with *shijian*, but only treated as a trivial trick of fortune-telling by literati at that time.[135] In other words, early Chinese physiognomy classified as a branch of 'Method and Technique' (*fangshu* 方術) in the classical knowledge system in China was perceived as a technical way of understanding people's fortune reflected on the body and had nothing to do with the inspection and comprehension of people's virtue and virtuous cultivation. In the earliest record of physiognomy in the *Zuozhuan*, we already see records of physiognomy practice applied to predict fortunes of young aristocrats. The Court Historian Shufu was sent by the Zhou court to attend the funeral of the king of Lu. The Prince Duke Mu was told that the Historian Shufu was good at physiognomy, and asked him to inspect his two sons. Shufu said that his son Gu will look after his life for a long time, and his son Nan will bury him after he dies, which means that Nan will outlive Gu. Because Gu has a plump chin, his descendants will spread in the kingdom of Lu.[136] Shufu's prediction was proven accurate according to the texts. Early records show that during the Spring and Autumn period physiognomy was used in political consultancy, and the prediction of disease and longevity of the aristocrats. Many Han records also show the same tendency of physiognomy focusing on the practical and material aspect of human life.[137] This lack of interest in the

[135] See *Renlun shijian qiyuan de xueshu shi kaocha*, 7.
[136] See *Zuozhuan*, *Wengong yuannian*, 350.
[137] See Zhu Pingyi, *Handai de xiangren shu*,

virtuous aspect of human existence became the reason why the early Confucianist philosopher Xunzi strongly criticized physiognomy. He said:

> …the physiognomy of the external forms is not as important as evaluating the heart,[138] and evaluating the heart is not as important as selecting the methodology. The external form cannot overcome the heart, and the heart cannot overcome the methodology. When methodology is correct and the heart is in accord with it, then though a man's external form is physiognomized as evil, since his heart and method are good, nothing will hinder his becoming a gentleman…
> 相形不如論心，論心不如擇術。形不勝心，心不勝術。術正而心順之，則形相雖惡而心術善，無害為君子也。[139]

Xunzi's idea is that the right way to cultivate virtue and one's hear is more vital than relying on fortune-telling to know what a person's real fate is. In his eyes, physiognomy is about examining the external forms of the body, not the inner virtue, and it is only used to predict worldly aspects of the future. Yet many anecdotal records after the Han dynasty shows that virtuous and noble conducts did change people's physiognomy and fate, we just lack materials before the Ming to see how physiognomy theories explain the link between virtue, the body, and fortune.[140] Stories of physiognomists in early China and later during the Northern and Southern Dynasties and the Tang only display how they and their techniques were received and perceived by literati and their clients, not showing how physiognomy theorized and legitimized its own technique. Tang physiognomy manuscripts found in Dunhuang are also replete with practical information on the connections between certainly bodily features and

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[138] Here my translation is based on John Knoblock's classical translation of Xunzi, but I insist that the term *xin* 心 should not be translated as 'mind' as he did, since as we have seen earlier, *xin* is both the heart organ and a person's mental and virtuous status. The distinction between the physical organ and one's mind simply does not exist in a traditional Chinese context. For his translation, see *Xunzi: A Translation and Study of the Complete Works*, 203.
[139] See *Xunzi*, *Feixiang*, 46.
[140] See 'Songqian zhiguai xiaoshuo zhong xiangshu xushi zhi wenhua yiyun yu yishu tese,' 168-173. This article has a full list of this kind of stories in records before the Song dynasty.

what kind of fortune these features indicate.[141] What is missing is the explanation of why the body can reflect fortune in early materials. Details of how physiognomy was practiced are also missing from the recorded stories of physiognomists from Han to Tang dynasty, and we only see stories of physiognomy occurred in high officials' and aristocrats' lives.[142] Some Buddhist ideas and practices also influenced the way in which physiognomy was received during the Tang dynasty, with stories showing that Buddhist monks also practiced physiognomy at that time.[143] Yet again, there is no evident material to show that physiognomy theories had absorbed Buddhist concepts and thoughts during the Tang period.

This is certainly not the case with physiognomy after the Song. As we shall see in this study, Song anecdotal writings are already full of more detailed descriptions of how physiognomists explained their technique, along with more stories of physiognomists' interactions with people from various social strata. The same with Ming literati's records on physiognomists' stories. More importantly, it was during the Ming dynasty that most of the extant physiognomy manuals were produced, collected, and preserved. From the Ming physiognomy manuals, we finally see with abundant material that how physiognomy was theorized and how certain questions and doubts on the discrepancy of this technique were explained by its theorization and legitimization. This is one of the purposes of this study, to see how certain continued intellectual and social discourses on physiognomy are systematically and even 'philosophically' responded by the Ming physiognomy manuals, texts that are edited and kept by Ming literati but no doubt represent physiognomy's own justification of itself. We also get

[141] See *Dunhuang xieben xiangshu jiaolu yanjiu* for the transcriptions of Dunhuang physiognomy manuals.
[142] See *Handai de xiangren shu*, 23-26, and Zhang Shuxue, 'Tangdai xiangshu kao,' 53-54.
[143] See Wang Jingbo, 'Xiangshu qiyuan yu zhongguo gudai mingyun guan,' 120-124.

to see how physiognomy theories absorbed and 'digested' Buddhist and Daoist concepts and themes into its own system. This is also the value of Ming physiognomy manuals. These compendious and detailed texts differ from their rare predecessors, containing discussions on physiognomic cosmology and technique that we would not have seen otherwise in any stories of physiognomists. Ming dynasty is unique in this sense for the study of physiognomy.

The Physiognomy of Things and the Perception of the Material World

One could easily assume that the traditional Chinese physiognomy of things, *xiangwu*, denotes the technique of inspecting inanimate things. After all, the most frequently used translation for the term *wu* 物 would be 'object'. Yet, a close look at the etymological origin and semantic range of the character *wu* 物 in the classical language, along with an examination of the practice of *xiangwu* techniques in history, suggests that in fact, the notion of *wu* does not map very well on the word 'object'. I will therefore leave the term untranslated for want of a better equivalent in English. In the technique of *xiangwu*, the semantic field that is covered by *wu* actually includes the entire material world apart from human beings. In this conceptualization of the material world, there are no clear distinctions between animate and inanimate things, or between fixed objects and phenomena. In other words, *xiangwu*, directly translated as the physiognomy of things, is actually a skill that allows people to inspect the material world in its utmost variety. This is more explicit and sophisticated in the ways of understanding the material world after the Song.

As Ye Li pointed out during the Han and before, animals were regarded as *wu*. In fact, the character of *wu* 物 was seen as closely related to animals in early China, , as illustrated by the

following definition given by Xu Shen 許慎 (30-124) in his etymological work *Shuowen jiezi* 說文解字:

> *Wu*: [It means] the myriad of beings (*wanwu* 萬物). The ox is a big being. The numerology of heaven and earth is originated from [the ritual of] leading an ox. Thus this character follows the radical ox, *niu* 牛.
> 物,萬物也。牛為大物,天地之數起於牽牛,故從牛。[144]

Roel Sterckx points out that the explanation in *Shuowen jiezi* draws an analogy between the concept of *wu* as 'the denominator of indeterminate "things" and the physicality of an ox, encompassing and big in size.'[145] He also notices that the cosmological aspect of 'leading an ox' is compared with the meaning of *wu* as 'phenomena' in general. Perhaps Xu Shen's conceptualization of *wu* was derived from a much earlier use of the term to refer to the animals sacrificed in ancestor worship and rituals.[146] The Qing scholar Duan Yucai 段玉裁(1735-1815), in his commentary on the *Shuowen,* pointed out that what Xu Shen meant by 'leading an ox' was probably not an actual ox but the constellation the Ox (*niu* 牛) in the sky as the first star sign of the new year according to the Zhou calendar, which might be related to the worship of ox.[147] Yet his commentary on *wu* as 'the myriad of beings' obviously incorporated entities and phenomena in the material world, no matter whether it was in the natural or social sphere, in this one single character. A similar interpretation can be found in the chapter 'The Achievement of Life' (*Dasheng* 達生) in the *Zhuangzi* 莊子: 'What is *wu* is what has appearances, an image, sound and colors.'[148]

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[144] See *Shuowen jiezi*, *juan* 2, 30. The original meaning of 'leading the ox' is actually quite uncertain here and requires further clarification in future research.
[145] See Roel Sterckx, *The Animal and Daemon in Early China*, 17-18.
[146] See Roel Sterckx, *ibid*. Carole Morgan's monography also discusses the cosmological signifacne of leading and ox ploughing farm land, see *Le Tableau du Bœuf du Printemps*, 48-92.
[147] See *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, *juan* 2, 53.
[148] See *Zhuangzi*, *Dasheng*, 114-115.

Another salient and important aspect of the notion of *wu* in early texts lies in the visibility of the material world, the ability to be seen by a human being. In other words, what can be called *wu* in this context lies in its potential to be seen by human beings, and the nature of human beings and the nature of *wu* are always seen as mutual reflections. This idea is present in a historical record preserved in the *Zuozhuan* 左傳, dated to 722 BC. It is titled 'Count Zhangxi Remonstrating on Seeing Fish' (*Zangxibo jian guanyu* 臧僖伯諫觀魚). In this text, Count Zhangxi warned the king that it was his duty to collect and classify different things only for the purpose of revealing their expressions (*yizhang wucai* 以章物采). This duty of the king was also called 'to *wu*' (i.e. using *wu* as a verb meaning to collect and classify things) and was a vital component of the maintenance of the appropriate social as well as cosmological order, according to the text.[149] Li Youguang argues that from the philosophy of *wu* in the Guodian 郭店 Warring States bamboo strips onwards, early Chinese thinking stressed the visibility of *wu* as the revelation of the world to human beings. This is the same with Jean Geaney's conclusion that in early Chinese texts, *wu* not only refers to aural and visible things, but also to visibility itself, a quality of being able to be seen.[150] In Franklin Perkins detailed study of the meaning of *wu* in pre-Han texts, he points out that the idea of visibility in the term *wu* also indicates human being's action of unifying the multiple things in the universe and classifying and measuring their diverse appearances through grasping their same, homogeneous nature, their 'oneness'.[151]

These interpretations of the character *wu* show that unlike certain types of received

[149] See *Zuozhuan*, *yingong wunian*, 41.
[150] See Jean Geaney, *Language as Bodily Practice in Early China*, 249-250.
[151] See Franklin Perkins, 'What is a Thing (wu)?' 54-68.

perception of nature and the material world, the early Chinese concept of *wu* meant all kinds of different things, beings and phenomena without distinguishing between the animate and inanimate. We can probably conclude that on a semantic level, the range of *wu* is closer to the idea of the myriad things. In both Western and Eastern Han cosmologies, the myriad things are considered natural signs and omens in response to human affairs.[152] Everything surrounding a human being can be referred to as *wu*, including the environment. This also suggests that in terms of *wu*, ostensibly static and fixed objects, seemingly activated and animate things, and phenomena in motion are the same in their fundamental nature, as Perkins shows. Again in both the *Laozi* 老子 and *Zhuangzi*, a form of transformation of *wu* called *hua* 化 is mentioned, indicating that the myriad phenomena in this world are undergoing constant transformations. According to these texts, a sage king should always be able to capture and maintain the principles of such a transformation, the Way (*dao* 道).[153] All the *wu* in this material world have a kind of interchangeability and are innately linked by qi, which functions as a tangible mediator as well as the fundamental material from which the world has been generated. This qi is pivotal in this transformation since it is the change of qi that transforms one thing into another.[154]

In a later linguistic book called *Jade Chapters* (*Yupian* 玉篇), compiled by Gu Yewang 顧野王 (519-581), the character *wu* is defined as everything that exists between heaven and earth, and the chapter of The Achievement of Life in *Zhuangzi* is then quoted.[155] *Wu* is also explained here as 'affairs' or 'events' (*shi* 事). It is hard to find a consistent intellectual discourse on the

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[152] See Tiziana Lippiello, *Auspicious Omens and Miracles*, 25-66.
[153] See *Daode jing*, 21, and *Zhuangzi*, *Dasheng*, 114-115.
[154] See Lin Dehong, 'Zhongguo gudai guanyu wu de zhexue,' 11-16.
[155] See *Yupian*, *juan* 3, 20.

concept of *wu* during the Tang dynasty due to the lack of references. The texts in which *wu* is most frequently mentioned and explained are the series of commentaries on Confucian classics written by Kong Yingda. In the early Tang imperial scholar Kong Yingda's 孔穎達 (547-648) commentary on the *Book of Changes*, *The Correct Meaning of the Zhou Changes* (*Zhouyi Zhengyi* 周易正义), he directly translated *wu* in the original text as the myriad things, and claimed that the system of the *Book of Changes* expresses the phenomena of the myriad things and the principles of their changes.[156] Kong highlighted the concept of *wu* as an all-encompassing category of all entities with 'forms' (*xing* 形), which comes from the movement and interactions between heavenly and earthly qi.[157] Kong later categorized *wu* into two groups, the animate *wu* (*dongwu* 動物), which comes from heavenly qi and contains a soul-like sentiment (*ling* 靈), and vegetal *wu* (*zhiwu* 植物)，which comes from earthly qi and is not aware of itself and the world.[158] This is his illustration on two categories of wu in an early Chinese ritual manual the *Rites of Zhou* (*Zhouli* 周禮).[159] In the *Rites of Zhou*, the animate *wu* refers to what we know as animals, and the vegetal *wu* refers to various kinds of corps. Kong did not carry on to explain what these two groups actually include, but stressed that because the heavenly and earthly qi constantly interact with each other, these two kinds of *wu* also resonate with and transform into each other, and the wisdom of the *Book of Changes* lies in its grasp of the essential principle of the never-ending changes. In the examples he gave in the same passage, the scope of *wu* is certainly broader than that in the *Rites of Zhou*, including mountains, musical instruments, ambers, and so on.

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[156] See *Zhouyi zhengyi*, *juan* 1, 1-2.
[157] See *Zhouyi zhengyi*, *juan* 1, 8.
[158] See *Zhouyi zhengyi*, *juan* 1, 20-21.
[159] See *Zhouli*, *diguan situ*, *juan* 10, 287.

The idea of *wu* was further developed in the Song intellectual context as a particular historical phenomenon. Hoyt Cleveland Tillman argues that although innately inconsistent, there was a tendency in Neo-Confucianism thought in the Song and Ming period to put *wu* in a metaphysical and ethical context. In such a context, arguments were made about whether *wu* were the right place for one to search for the principles of the world and supreme morality.[160] In this cosmology, where things were regarded as the immediate products of cosmic forces as part of the supreme morality, things were always perceived in relation to human beings. Therefore, the concept of the Investigation of Things, or *gewu* 格物, was a pursuit of understanding human beings and their relationship with the universe by the means of inspecting the material world.[161] The Northern Song scholar and fortune-teller Shao Yong 邵雍 (1011-1077) in his interpretation on the philosophy and divination technique of the *Book of Changes*, Shao explicitly stated that everything including heaven and earth is *wu*, and human beings are a kind of *wu* as well, the most superior one and the only kind who can comprehensively observe and analyze other kinds of *wu* to understand the orders of the cosmos and themselves.[162] Shao stressed that his systematic numerological tool derived from the divinatory technique in the *Book of Changes* was an effective way of observing *wu* and predict human affairs; *wu* is an important and spontaneous (*ziran* 自然) index of the past, present, and future.[163] Although it is not certain to what extent this intellectual tendency influenced Chinese society at that time, we can see a clear connection between this view and the previously predominant conceptualization of the material world that related human affairs

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[160] See Hoyt Cleveland Tillman, 'The idea and the reality of the "thing" during the Sung,' 68-82.
[161] See Xu Doudou, 'Cong shiwu zhili dao gewu zhishan,' 22-24, and Shi Lanrong, 'Zhu Xi yu Wang Yangming gewushuo tanxi,' 139-141. Also see Benjamin Elman, *On Their Own Terms*, 117-118.
[162] See *Huangji jingshi shu*, *guanwu neipian* 1, 1-6.
[163] See Peter Bol, 'On Shao Yong's method for observing things,' 287-299.

to the movement of the natural world. Yamada Keiji points out that particularly in the Southern Song philosopher Zhu Xi's 朱熹 (1130-1200) later natural philosophy, although one can see interpretations and explanations of the natural world that resemble early modern scientific thinking in Europe, the main focus of his writings was still on how humanity could be understood and reflected through our comprehension of the natural world.[164] In Zhu Xi's philosophy, he takes *wu* as entities that are both material and responsive to human being's spiritual and moral cultivations at the same time.[165]

Ming followers of those Song Neo-Confucian masters also tried to revive the 'Investigation of Things' tradition, and to establish encyclopedic understandings of the material world from a Neo-Confucian perspective, in which *wu* is understood as things, social and natural phenomena, and affairs.[166] The famous Ming Neo-Confucian master Wang Yangming 王阳明（1472-1529）even went extreme by suggesting that to investigate into things is to know our body-mind responses to the world we encounter.[167] This Neo-Confucian philosophical interpretation of *wu* went along with local literati's discourse of connoisseurship and knowledge of practical techniques, in which the term *wu* does cover the meaning of specific 'artefacts', including animals and artificial objects.[168] Most of the texts of physiognomy of things before the Ming dynasty we study in this chapter are collected and compiled in Ming encyclopedia and were received texts in the Ming. Ming literati's interests in the miscellaneous things are reflected in their compilations and commentaries of these texts of physiognomy of things. *Wu* in the categorization in these texts, as we shall see, can be things, natural and social

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164 See Yamada Keiji, *Shushi no shizengaku*, 1-10.
165 See Dong Weiguo, 'Gewu zhizhi jiqi xinxing lun yihan,' 39-46.
166 See Elman, 'Collecting and Classifying,' 131-157.
167 See Philip Ivanhoe, *Readings from the Lu-Wang School of Neo-Confucianism*, 108.
168 See Craig Clunas, *Superfluous Things*, 78.

phenomena, certain affairs in life, and the 'lens' through with different kinds of *wu* were observed and analyzed in these manuals is numerological and cosmological. Therefore, in this chapter, the technique of '*xiangwu*' will still be translated as the physiognomy of things, we should be aware of what *wu* refers to in its cultural and historical context.

With this extended understanding of the notion of *wu*, we shall begin our analysis of the practice of *xiangwu* in the next section, to see how the mutual reflection between human beings and things was processed in this technique and how the futures of both things and human beings were deciphered by physiognomists.

The Physiognomy of Animate Things

In Ye Li's comment on *xiangwu*, one finds an evident emphasis on shapes and appearances of things. The direct manifestation of the auspiciousness of a thing lies in its material conditions, including shapes, but also the sound and the condition of qi. Among these material features, some of them may be visible to all of us, while some of them only to special categories of people. Li Ling concludes that Chinese physiognomy as a technique centralizes the external configurations of material things, and thus it is called 'Method of Morphology'.[169] This, he argues, indicates the existence of plenty of overlap between the physiognomy of things and many other traditional techniques, and shows how the less well-known physiognomy of things was actually part of a much larger and widely-accepted cultural practice. He categorizes the physiognomy books listed in the *Treatise* into four categories. The first one is geomantic physiognomy, which includes *fengshui* techniques and ancient geography. The second one is the physiognomy of animate things including the human body and six domestic animals. The

[169] See Li Ling, *Zhongguo fangshu zhengkao*, 64.

third one is the physiognomy of inanimate things including swords and clothes, and the fourth one is closely related to farming and crop planting, the physiognomy of farmland and silkworms. The manuals of physiognomy appearing in later periods also roughly fall within these four categories. However, Li Ling's categorization, although unquestionably covering the content of Chinese physiognomy, does not explain the different purposes of Chinese physiognomy in predicting the future, and also contains too much overlap between different categories.

We should be aware that despite the fact that Chinese physiognomy is essentially a technique to predict the future of material things and their owners, by inspecting their qualities based on their material conditions, more distinctions could be made. On the whole, we could say that there are three types of purposes in Chinese physiognomy: one is to tell a thing's future for its own sake. Another one is to tell people's future based on the material and spatial conditions of a thing. The third one, which partially overlaps with the previous two, is to examine the good and bad qualities of a thing or a place. However, these three purposes are not kept distinct in the manuals, nor in the received performance as recorded in other types of sources; they cross over into each other and may be present simultaneously. On another level, based on Ye Li's comment, the content of Chinese physiognomy can be divided into that of the human body, and that of things. Within the category of things, there are animate and inanimate ones. Despite this further refinement, Li Ling's categorization certainly highlights the significant relationship between physiognomy and agriculture and the incorporation of geomancy and ancient geography into physiognomy. Indeed, physiognomy and agricultural techniques in ancient China are mutually inclusive in terms of their ultimate goals, for they are

both concerned with the successful reproduction of food and family. Moreover, with a close look at the techniques of inspection in Chinese geomancy, it is not difficult for us to see that physiognomy techniques and Chinese geomancy have many elements in common, which will be illustrated in the next section.

The first type of the physiognomy of things we shall discuss here is the physiognomy of animals. Two distinctive attributes are revealed in the representation of such a technique. One is the similarity between animal physiognomy and human physiognomy. The other is the inspection of animals, which is usually linked to human affairs. One of the most representative examples of animal physiognomy in early China is the excavated text *Bo Le's Manual of Horse Physiognomy* (*Bo Le xiangma jing* 伯樂相馬經) found in the Mawangdui 馬王堆 tomb in Hubei province, dating back to the early Western Han period. The title of this text indicates that the technique was ascribed to the legendary master of horse physiognomy Bo Le during the Spring and Autumn period (770 -476 BC).[170] Although this text written on silk is replete with archaic terms and expressions, we can still reconstruct its main characteristics.

This silk text contains approximately 5200 characters written in the Han Clerical Script style (*lishu* 隸書).[171] Relatively speaking, this is a quite long text in comparison with other excavated texts and extant animal physiognomy manuals. In this text, the author is most concerned with distinguishing a good horse (*liangma* 良馬) from mediocre horses. The focus on the physicality of horses as the vital criterion is reflected by the emphasis on anatomical layers of a horse body such as its sinews (*jin* 筋), bones (*gu* 骨), flesh (*rou* 肉) and joints (*jie* 節). A horse's body is divided into yin and yang sides, and a good horse's body should be

[170] See *Zhuangzi*, *Mati*, 57; *Lüshi chunqiu*, *Guanbiao*, 274, and *Liezi*, *Shuofu*, 95.
[171] For the full text of this manual, see '*Xiangma Jing* shiwen,' 17-22.

balanced on both sides, along with a balance between five colors and five qi. The quality and nature of many parts of a horse's body are depicted by using analogies, especially in light of organs and limbs of other animals such as a rabbit's head (*tutou* 兔頭) and eagle's neck (*yingjing* 鷹頸), or things like jade and fire.

One can conclude that the immediate purpose of this text is to provide a guidance on finding healthy and fast horses. Yet between the lines, there is also a tendency to fit this immediate purpose into a grander political and moral context. At the very beginning of the text, it says that Bo Le only inspected 'horses for gentlemen' (*junzi zhima* 君子之馬). A good horse should also be able to bring its owner good fortune and avoid bad fortune (*keyi chifu, keyi taoxiong* 可以馳福，可以逃凶). The author also mentioned that two of the best types of good horses were the 'kingdom horse' (*guoma* 國馬), horses that could serve the kingdom, and the 'heavenly horse' (*tianma* 天馬). The analogy between hunting on horseback, the speed of a horse and regulating 'all under heaven' (*tianxia* 天下) also appears to relate horse physiognomy to human affairs. The analogy goes like this:

> If [the length of the shoulder] is one *cun*, then [the rider] can catch a deer. If it is two *cun*, [the rider] can catch a moose. If it is three *cun*, then [the rider] can shoot a crow. If it is four *cun* long, the rider can regulate all under heaven.[172]

Xie Chengxia argues that the text overall shows that ideas from the School of War (*Bingjia* 兵家) in the Warring States were integrated into horse physiognomy at that time, and elements from the Yin Yang School (*Yinyang jia* 陰陽家) and the School of War indicate that horse physiognomy was *de facto* a kind of *fangshu*.[173] Although in Western scholarship of early

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[172] See '*Xiangma Jing* shiwen,' 17. *Cun* here is kept untranslated because the exact length of this unit is unknown.

[173] See Xie Chengxia, 'Guanyu Changsha Mangwangdui hanmu boshu Xiangmajing de tantao,' 23-26.

Chinese thought, the idea of separate 'schools' has been abandoned, we can learn from Xie's comment that the physiognomy manuals also deal with issues such as war or changes in the cosmos. Furthermore, the *fangshu* system was a system of theories and practices of different types of medical treatment, body knowledge, divination, prediction and astrology.[174] Xie also believes that this text is only one chapter of a longer manual of horse physiognomy that went much further back in time and may also be the source of the *Horse Physiognomy Manua*l (*Xiangma Jing* 相馬經) in the agricultural handbook *Qimin Yaoshu* (齊民要術) of the Northern Wei (386-557), because of the similar sentences and comments appearing in the latter. Along with the features mentioned above, there was another indispensable element of horse physiognomy, which was the relationship between horses and the environment. The author mentions repeatedly that good horses can be found in several particular kinds of environment. Robert E. Harrist, Jr concludes that what displayed in this manual is an early Chinese conceptualization of the horse body as a platform for people to understand the cosmos and natural processes.[175]

From this brief analysis of a horse physiognomy manual in early China, we can recognize a feature in the conceptualization of animals to put animals and human beings in a relationship of mutual influences, although this text lacks the numerological complexity of later Song and Ming texts. Anthropological theories of animal-human relationships offer us a heuristic approach to interpret the internal logic of Chinese animal physiognomy. The latest transition of understandings of animal-human relationships in the context of social-cultural construction suggests that animals are constructed by us as the bearers of human culture, while on the other

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[174] See Li Ling, *Lantai wanjuan*, 173-201.
[175] See Robert E. Harrist, Jr, 'The legacy of Bole,' 135-156.

hand, they are also active agents in human-animal relationships.[176] That is to say, from hunter-gathering traditions to the domestication of animals, animals are participants in human activity and constantly transform our understanding of the world and ourselves.[177] Going back to the early Chinese perception of horses, they were sometimes regarded as important symbols of the fertility of land and the legitimacy of a new regime, and it has also been proposed that the medical term *mai*, the channels of the human body, was originally derived from veterinary knowledge of horses.[178] There was also a long-established tradition of comparing the sage with the 'thousand *li* horse' (*qianli ma* 千里馬) because of the similar nature and behaviors they possessed and the strong connection they shared.[179] Reflected in this physiognomy text, the physiological aspects of a horse are ultimately linked to human ethics and human activity, and horses are seen as an actual part of, or at least the visualization of, the grand movement of heaven. Yet as an early text, it does not contain any systematic cosmology that allows people to numerologically inspect a horse, nor does it contain any philosophical framework like later texts to see human beings, things, and the cosmos as a homological 'one'.

Later texts on animal physiognomy have a more systematic way of illustrating this mutual manifestation. *The Manual of Ox Physiognomy* (*Xiangniu jing* 相牛經) recorded in the *History of the Sui* mentions in its advice for inspecting physiological attributes that 'if there is untidy hair on the forehead, then the ox will impair its owner and it is inauspicious'.[180] Song and Ming texts perhaps contain more cosmological elements than texts from any other period. In *The*

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[176] See Molly Mullin, 'Animal and Anthropology,' 387-393.
[177] See Tim Ingold, *The Perception of the Environment*, 61-88.
[178] See Roel Sterckx, 'An ancient Chinese horse ritual,' 47-79. Izushi Sengen, *Shina shinwa densetsu no kenkyu*, 193-218. For horse and *mai*, see Li Jianmin, *Faxian guma,* 142-144.
[179] For the conclusion of this traditional analogy, see *Pinyi shengma ji*, *Maji xu*, 1. *Li* here is kept untranslated because the exact length of this unit is unknown.
[180] See *Xiangniu jing*, 559.

Manual of Crane Physiognomy (*Xianghe jing* 相鶴經) compiled by the Ming scholar Zhou Lüjing 周履靖, all the physiological attributes of a crane are ascribed to its nature as 'a yang bird that is hovering in the yin and nourishes itself with the qi of gold and the essence of Fire'.[181] Five Phases and Eight Trigram numerology is applied to explain the physiology of cranes. Its elegant life style makes it the 'fine hooved creatures (*qiji* 騏驥) of a celestial being', and if 'a sage is on the throne then [a crane] will fly around the capital city with a phoenix'. Similar ideas about the causal links between birds and natural as well as social phenomena can be found in *Shi Kuang's Manual of Birds* (*Shi Kuang qinjing* 師曠禽經), a manual attributed to Zhang Hua 張華(232-300).[182] This manual is often seen in anthologies compiled by Ming scholars and the earliest version we have is a Ming one.[183] Animals are related to the nobility and baseness in human society, and certain animals embodies a Neo-Confucian sagehood ideal.

The Manual of Crickets (*Cuzhi jing* 促織經), written by the famous late Song official Jia Sidao 賈似道(1213-1275), explicitly expressed that the cricket should be 'cherished by gentlemen' (*junzi zhi hao* 君子之好) because of its pure nature resembling humanity and its bodily reflection of the balance of yin and yang, motion and stillness.[184] Crickets, according to Jia, are the products of the transformation of the killing qi of autumn (*susha zhi qi* 肅殺之氣), and thus the fundamental way to find fine crickets is to look for them at an appropriate time and place when the qi and the cosmos are in harmony. Good-looking and healthy crickets also reflects the good fortune of their owners. Jia tried to trace his technique to an anonymous cricket keeper and named this technique 'the inspection of little insects' demeanor' (*chonger zhi*

[181] See *Xianghe jing*, 10.
[182] See *Shi Kuang qinjing*, 14.
[183] The *Shuofu* edition used here.
[184] See *Cuzhi jing*, 2-98.

fengjian 蟲兒之風監). The term he adopted to describe such a technique, 'the inspection of the demeanor' (*fengjian* 風鑒), is a term normally used in human physiognomy, and it was often believed to be from the famous Daoist master Chen Tuan, like many human physiognomy books.[185] This indicates that in Jia's mind, the physiognomy of human beings and that of crickets were essentially homogeneous skills.

One of the more extreme examples in the received texts from the Song and Ming periods that shows a homology between animal physiology and human affairs is *The Manual of Tortoises* (*Guijing* 龜經), included in the late Yuan and early Ming anthology of miscellaneous notes *Shuofu* 說郛. Its author is unknown. This manual directly relates the physiological features and behavior of tortoises to the symbolic divination system of Eight Trigrams and Six Lines (*bagua liuyao* 八卦六爻), the numerological system of the Heavenly Stems and Earthly Branches (*tiangan dizhi* 天干地支), seasonal movements, and the Five Phases.[186] This numerological complexity sets plenty of barriers to our understanding of the text. However, we can still recognize that in this manual the tortoise is regarded entirely as a cosmological creature whose physicality and movement are highly informative for the observer in judging the auspiciousness (*xiongji* 凶吉) of their questions. There are approximately 48 cases mentioned in which every particular kind of appearance or gesture of a tortoise corresponds with the inauspicious (*xiong*) or auspicious (*ji*) aspects of a prediction. Yet it is not surprising that this manual somehow deifies the tortoise and sees its body as a microcosm with prognostic functions, since the tortoise has always been considered a divine animal and even a deity, not to mention the important function of tortoise carapaces in traditional mantic

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[185] See Livia Kohn, 'Mirror of Auras,' 215-256, and 'A text book of physiognomy,' 227-258.

[186] See *Guijing*, 621-624.

rituals.[187] A similar example worth mentioning is the *Scripture on the Discernment of a Hundred Oddities* (*Baiguai duanjing* 百怪斷經) also included in *Shuofu*. In this manual, animal behaviors, like crows' calls, along with their locations at specific times and places, which are innately numerological in the Chinese divination tradition, are put into a complex system of prognostication.[188]

The physiognomy of animate things in ancient China, despite differing in many aspects over time, possessed a kind of internal logic. This logic can be summarized as two trends: first, a tendency to understand animate things in relation to human affairs and see animate things as manifestations of human life and the overall movement of the cosmos; and second, inspections of the physiology of animate things and their relationships with the environment are subsumed into a broad divination system. The spatial order and bodily features of animate things are also temporal orders and social orders, in which fortune and human affairs are incorporated. In other word, lineal time is transformed into an animal's physical space; the spatial structure and physical features of an animal in a specific time and space are indicators as well as generators of a relevant person's future. Lineal time is in this sense seen as physical and spatial. We shall see how this logic is also present in the inspection of inanimate things.

The Physiognomy of Inanimate Things

We have seen in the previous section how animate things are conceptualized in physiognomy manuals and encompassed into a broader political as well as cosmological repertoire. This section mainly deals with the category of 'inanimate things' as considered in physiognomy

[187] See Li Ling, *Zhongguo fangshu zhengkao*, 48; Liu Yujian, *Zhongguo gudai guibu wenhua*, 5-18.
[188] See *Baiguai duanjing* in *Shuofu*, *juan* 109, 5044-5048.

manuals and records of its social practice. There are two types of inanimate things that I will discuss in this part; the first is concrete material things, and the second is natural phenomena. As mentioned above, the Chinese notion of *wu* is multi-vocal in nature, which means that the technique of inspection, *xiang*, is applicable to various kinds of entities apart from human beings. In this way, both material things and natural phenomena can be inspected and accordingly human beings' futures predicted.

Before we enter the discussion of inanimate things in Chinese physiognomy, it is necessary to take a further look at two topics salient to our discussion. The first one is the categorization of the subject of this section, namely inanimate things. It is widely accepted that the dichotomy between animate and inanimate things in human cognition recurs in many different human cultures. Yet the initial discussion and definition of the term 'animism' proposed by E. B. Tylor in the late 19th century has long been criticized as a reductionist and simplistic way in which to analyze the prevalence of certain beliefs in traditional societies outside the Western world. In his discussion of the beliefs in and customs surrounding animating things and personifying objects, Tylor set up a clear boundary between the 'modern' way of thinking and the 'primitive' way of thinking.[189] He believed that the 'modern' ability to distinguish between animate and inanimate things is a result of social evolution, whereas, in traditional society, the human or demonic spirit is believed to be capable of possessing material things and ascribe animating power to them. The fundamental logic of his theory of animism has been attacked by many scholars since then, and there thus emerged a tendency to see animism as an alternative way of thinking rather than as a phase of social evolution, a way of thinking that allows human

[189] See EB Tylor, *Primitive Culture* 1, 377-453.

beings to construct social relationships between people, society and the material world.[190] John Kieshnick points out that in a Chinese context, no matter what people call it, this kind of 'animism', especially in relation to Chinese Buddhism, was indeed a matter of the 'perception' of things rather than an undeveloped mentality.[191] That is to say, not only will the animist way of thinking not necessarily evolve into a scientific one in the Western sense, but its validity also mainly lies in indigenous people's sensible logic derived from their observation and comprehension of things. What is pertinent here, regardless of the complexity of animism in an academic context, is that the category of 'inanimate things' in this section refers to a type of thing that is inorganic, inanimate only to a modern mind, and that this term is adopted merely for the sake of cultural translation. However, in this section, what is discussed is exactly the opposite of the conceptualization of 'inanimate things' in the modern mind: in Chinese physiognomy of inanimate things, material things in particular, these things are considered animate and even anthropomorphic.

Another relevant topic is the fervently disputed question in the study of material culture and contemporary social science: whether the material things are merely symbols or have agency of their own. The core of this question lies in two latent perspectives through which we conceptualize material things in human culture. On the one hand, people see things as recipients of human beings' constructions, or in other words, symbols, and on the other people see things as autonomous entities influencing and transforming human culture and ways of life.[192] That is to say, some scholars take things as the manifestation of human values and social

[190] See Nurit Bird-David, 'Animism Revisited,' 67-91.
[191] See John Kieschnik, *The Impact of Buddhism on Chinese Material Culture*, 24-29.
[192] See Rebecca Empson, 'The danger of excess,' 117-132.

norms, reflected and analogized into things, whereas others believe that things in themselves already make up people's social values and norms.[193] In our discussion of the Chinese physiognomy of things, we will see that material things are seen as symbolic and active simultaneously, as it is the case in other human cultures as well.[194] The reason why material things' future can be read, and the future of a human being reflected on it can be read is also that, in this technique, material things possess these two attributes at the same time.

We can also find evidence showing congruence in the inner logic of the physiognomy of inanimate things and that of animate things. This suggests that the mentality behind the physiognomy of inanimate things, or perhaps the physiognomy of things in general, is similar to what Christopher Tilley defines as 'the metaphorical way of thinking'.[195] In his sense, the metaphorical way of thinking, far from a simple rhetorical device, actually underlies the human comprehension of the world and cannot be replaced by literal thinking. Moreover, this is a way of thinking that stresses the relatedness of human beings to the external world and to their own bodies, through perceptions of differences and similarities between things. That is to say, things are not only the bearers of metaphors, but they make up metaphors, offering society unique methods of cognition that a literal language cannot achieve. Thus, such a feature transcends the linguistic sense of metaphor and enters into the sphere of perception and mutual relatedness. In light of this perspective, we shall see how material things and even natural phenomena are conceptualized and analogized with human affairs and why they can be analogized. Furthermore, the physiognomy of things during the Song and Ming periods

[193] For the former theory, see Daniel Miller, *Stuff* and *Materiality*. For the latter one, see Bruno Latour, *On the Modern Cult of Factish Gods*, 1-66.
[194] See Carl Knappett, 'Animacy, Agency, and Personhood,' 11-34.
[195] See Christopher Tilley, *Metaphor and Material Culture*, 7-17.

also contains certain kinds of logic that go further than 'metaphor'. The reason why this metaphorical way of thinking is considered valid in predicting the future is the fact that everything in the universe is essentially the same, and in constant transformation according to our texts. Things, human beings, and the cosmos were believed to be composed of the same energy and in the same cosmic order. This homological viewpoint of understanding things is considered the root for inspections of the material world.[196]

A good example to start with is an anecdote recorded by the Song scholar Hong Mai 洪邁 (1123-1201) in his collection of anecdotes *The Record of the Listener* (*Yijian zhi* 夷堅志). In the story 'A Man from Yihuang Inspects A Ship' (*Yihuang ren xiang chuan* 宜黃人相船)[197], an anonymous physiognomist is invited to inspect a newly built ship, a technique regarded as a common practice transmitted through the paternal lineage of the physiognomist.[198] Upon inspection, the physiognomist found that the ship had a very inauspicious shape and he made the following comment:

> This is a female ship, but its body is male. The board is like a spear standing high in the middle. Its appearance has been completed, and theoretically it is inauspicious. Legal issues will arise and calamities will fall upon the owner.
> 此為雌船，而體得雄。一板如矛，嶄焉居中。其相既成，在法當凶。官事且起，災於主翁。

Later in the story, what he said indeed came true and although the owner wanted to make amendments, the physiognomist suggested that the future had been decided and nothing could change it. First, the ship's mast was broken during a journey, and then the crew accidentally replaced the mast with a divine tree. Because of the killing of such a divine tree,

[196] Also see William Matthews, 'Ontology with Chinese characteristics,' 265-285.
[197] Yihuang, a prefecture in Jiangxi province.
[198] See *Yijian zhi*, *ding zhi*, 602.

the owner of the ship became a victim of theft, mistakenly harmed a local official and was banished to a garrison in a remote place in Shaowu. Here, the physiognomist saw the ship as an abnormal human body whose transsexual physiology was a sign of inauspiciousness. The male-genital-like board on a female ship's body was the only evidence that the physiognomist gave. How he could recognize that the ship's body was female with abnormal male parts remains unknown.

One possible explanation is that perhaps the material of the ship contained a female-like attribute or power, whereas the shape of the ship was like a male body. Anthropological studies of the close relationship between human beings and ships or canoes in seafaring societies provide us with a helpful reference for our understanding of the physiognomist's technique. On the Wala island of Melanisia, people's lives are closely bound up with canoes, and a canoe is believed to possess an anthropomorphic body. Moreover, boats as animate things possess gender distinctions as well, and gender distinctions between boats symbolize or even define the gender roles of their owners in human communities.[199] Judging from this case, it is not difficult for us to imagine that in a place like Jiangxi where water transportation is still predominant today, ships and people could be tightly bonded in daily life. Although we lack sufficient information to map out the theoretical foundations of the physiogomist's inspection of the ship in question, we can still see two layers in his conclusion. On the one hand, the abnormal shape of the ship's body brought misfortune to its owner, and on the other, its symbolic meanings could be read by a specialist. In addition, the belief in the transformation of the body of an inanimate thing into animate human-like creature is not rare in Chinese

[199] See Christopher Tilley, 'The metaphorical transformations of Wala canoes,' 27-56.

divination systems, and as we shall see references to the body are often used in the physiognomy of characters as well. Thus it is not surprising that in the physiognomy of ships, a relationship was established between human body and ship.

In *Baopu zi* 抱朴子, a book of cosmology, celestial beings, alchemy and medicine written in the Eastern Jin dynasty by a polymath and Daoist master called Ge Hong 葛洪 (284-363), there is an example of the use of a mirror as a tool of exorcism. This is premised on the belief that 'the elders of the myriad things, whose essence can always form an avatar in human shape, often test people by dazzling their eyes, and are only unable to change their true forms in a mirror', which means that only a mirror can reflect the true form of this kind of daemons.[200] Various recently-excavated manuals of exorcism from the early imperial period also prove that such a belief already existed long before Ge Hong.[201] We can find abundant stories of how inanimate things, after a long time in the wild or under strange circumstances, transform into anthropomorphic daemons in the 'inauspicious item' (*xiongqi* 凶器) chapter of the early Song encyclopaedia *Taiping guangji* (太平廣記) as well, indicating that such a belief had been carried on throughout time.[202] Material things are never stable and fixed in these cases. These so-called inanimate things are always in a volatile situation where they can actively transform themselves under the right circumstances or in a different time and space. Along with the idea that material things have the ability to be animated, things could cross boundaries between life and death, which was part of the reason why in many imperial tombs in China, a multitude of items were buried with the coffin. It was to ensure the grave owner would be able to

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[200] See *Baopu zi*, *Dengshe*, 312-313.

[201] See Li Ling, *Fangshu*, 55; Poo Mu-chou, *In Search of Personal Welfare*, 79-82.

[202] See *Taiping guangji*, *Jingguai*, *juan* 5, 67-77.

continue to use them in the underworld.[203]

As both Appadurai and Kopytoff propose, things have person-like attributes and their own life phases, or in other words, they possess autonomy and agency in different cultural contexts.[204] The belief in the animation of seemingly inanimate things mentioned above can be seen as a focus on the agency of things that enables them to actively influence human life. A manual called *A Scripture on the Physiognomy of Seashells* (*Xiangbei jing* 相貝經), included in the late Yuan and early Ming encyclopedia *Shuofu*, ascribed to a legendary Western Han pearl merchant called Zhu Zhong 朱仲, records several different types of bizarre seashells, their appearances and their varying capabilities to influence human beings.[205] The shells from a place called *Daqin* 大秦, as big as wheels, can improve people's sight, whereas the 'washed shells' (*zhuobei* 濯貝) can make people easily frightened, and should be kept away from children. The 'licentious shell' (*yongbei* 醟貝) can make a woman promiscuous and children foolish, and the 'entrusted shell' (*weibei* 委貝) is able to strengthen people's ambitions and subjugate ghosts if a person carries it at night. This clearly shows that to some extent, things can reflect people's fortunes for the physiognomists, because things such as seashells contain the power to bring certain kinds of fortune or misfortune to their owners. They are not simply considered the extension of a person's self but as an integral component of it.

On the other hand, along with the agency of things to influence and alter people's lives, there are symbolic aspects of things highlighted in the physiognomy of inanimate things. One distinctive example comes from the relatively abundant records on the physiognomy of *hu* 笏

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203 Also see Zhao Ruicai, *Tangshi yu minsu guanxi yanjiu*, 524-559. Also Robert Company, *To Live as Long as Heaven and Earth*, 1-12.
204 See Arjun Appadurai, *The Social Life of Things*, 3-64.
205 See *Xiangbei jing*, 89.

scepters. The *hu* scepter is also called the 'hand board' (*shouban* 手板), which was a long and thin board held by officials at court in traditional China. It is also used in Daoist rituals by specialists as an instrument to summon celestial officials and show respect to them.[206] Some of them could be made of jade, others could be made of ivory, stone or bamboo. Scholars hold different ideas on the origin of the *hu* scepter. Zhang Shaofeng points out that in early China the bamboo *hu* scepter was used as a notebook where important records were inscribed, and then gradually transformed into a ritual item for literati to show respect to the emperor, symbolizing the bureaucratic hierarchy.[207] Cheng Jinzao believes that in fact *hu* and another ritual item called *dagui* 大圭 in archaic times referred to the same thing. Before they were used as ritual items at court, they may have functioned as stone rulers for the measurement of lands.[208] What these authors agree on is that in latter periods, the *hu* scepter was mainly used as the materialization of the power of an emperor towards his subordinates, and of distinctions in the bureaucratic hierarchy, along with officials' garments and other accessories bestowed by the emperor.

Perhaps the close relationship between the *hu* scepter and power was indeed the origin of the physiognomy of *hu*. In the 'Manual of Hand Board Physiognomy' (*Xiang shouban jing* 相手板經) included in *Shuofu*, the technique is said to have originated from the first Western Han Prime Minister Xiao He 蕭何.[209] The exact origin of this text is unknown but the only version we have today is the Song version. In this manual, the body of the *hu* board is first depicted as a microcosm where the Five Phases, the four seasons (*sishi* 四時), eight calendric divisions

206 See Tian Chengyang, 'Daojiao de faqi,' 36-37.
207 See Zhang Shaofeng, 'Huban liuyuan kao,' 73-75.
208 See Cheng Jinzao, 'Shihu,' 29-33.
209 See *Xiang shouban jing*, 591.

(*bajie* 八節), and twenty-four solar terms (*ershi si shi* 二十四時) can be located. Further, it provides the reader with the auspicious materiality of the board, which is a proper length and width, a narrow and thin head and a wide and thick bottom, a flat and smooth body, a clean and complete shape, and so on. Then, the symbolic system of the board is explained as follows: the body from the head to the bottom symbolizes the political hierarchy from the emperor to his subordinates and also the domestic hierarchy from the owner's parents to his wives, descendants, servants and property.

This symbolic system is also linked to the cosmological elements of the Five Phases and Twelve Double-Hours (*wuxing shier shi* 五行十二時). In other words, the material conditions of the board decide what kind of fortune the *hu* scepter can reflect or bring to its owner, whereas the symbolic division of the board body indicates the target or recipient of such a fortune. In this numerological understanding of things, we see a strategy of 'the spatialization of time'. Lineal time of cosmic movement and personal life is transformed into the structure physical space of different artefacts or animals. In other words, lineal time is 'spatialized', and different sections on a time line are put into different directions and areas of a space; time is spatialized. The tangible material qualities of a scepter go along with its 'symbolic' structures in telling specific aspects of a person's future. A scepter's 'symbolic' or textual qualities are not the only source of reflecting fortune, but a part of this object's 'cosmic' composition. Also a scepter is regarded not as a fixed object detached from the environment but connected with its specific locus in a time and space marked by the Five Phases and Twelve Double-Hours. A scepter just like the body is ecologic. What the scepter can tell is not only the fortune of its owner but also the future of the people and even things that are related to the owner. To read

these codified meanings and information from the board, one should focus on both the symbolic aspects of the board and its material conditions. Furthermore, the *hu* scepter, as a ritual item at court, was already symbolic itself, referring to a person's overall official status. Many stories recorded in Tang and Song historical and anecdotal writings about the practice of the technique confirm that before physiognomists began examining scepters, their intimate relationship with political affairs was already seen as a strong indication of a client's fortune.[210]

In terms of the relationship between things and environment, a particular kind of physiognomy specifically reveals the complex overlap between physiognomy and Chinese geomancy: the physiognomy of tombs. From early on, the inspection of the environment, especially human domiciles, which was later known as *fengshui* 風水, was actually categorized as physiognomy. The Song collection of miscellaneous notes *Chunzhu jiwen* 春渚紀聞 mentions a famous tomb physiognomist Zhang Guiling 張鬼靈, whose given name literally means 'efficacious ghost'.[211] He was good at telling the futures of families by inspecting their family tombs and their environments, especially the mountains and water sites around them. He could also inspect a tomb by looking only at paintings of the real site. His technique was recorded as the 'Physiognomy of Tombs' (*xiangmu* 相墓). This technique was generally believed to be derived from the Western Jin scholar and geomancer Guo Pu 郭璞 (276-324), who was regarded as the author of the famous manual *Book on Burials* (*Zang Shu* 葬書). At the beginning of the Inner Chapter (*Nei pian* 内篇) of this book he pointed out that both the land and human body were formed by the fundamental element of the cosmos, qi. He continued to

[210] See Longshizhao xianghu in *Jutan lu*, *juan shang*, 33-37 and several other stories in the *xiang* chapter in *Taiping guangji*, 112-120.
[211] See Zhang Guiling xiangmu shu in *Chunzhu jiwen*, *juan* 2, 467-468.

claim that the birth and death of human beings were the consequences of the movement of the five qi in a landscape.[212] Qi can respond (*ganying* 感應) to everything, even to ghosts, such that a proper burial is a way to control such a spontaneous response. Movements of qi would be weakened by the blow of wind and flow of water; thus one of the most important methods of tomb land inspection is to see whether the geographical appearance of a place can 'assemble the wind and water' in order to condense qi or not. The Ming geomancy and house physiognomy manual the *House Canon of the Yellow Emperor* (*Huangdi zhaijing* 黃帝宅經) mentioned before follows a similar logic. A house is a unity of cosmic orders and social orders, and its spatial structure as well as physical/energetic qualities can be understood as a temporal order showing the past, present, and future of the family residing in.[213] A house as a tangible index of fortune is homological to both the cosmos and human beings' social lives, both of which are the products of qi movement as well. As a result, the numerological system of interpreting and predicting cosmic movements can be used to understand a house and fortunes it tells. The house is also a human body, as the body is also the consequence of qi movement and a manifestation of it. The homology between the house and the body also indicates that both of them are ecologic to each other and to external cosmic power. The human body and the house mutually influence each other and form a qi order that together generate and index fortune.[214] Mountains, winds, and water around a house are also subsumed into this qi order, whose power can also index as well as influence human beings' social lives.

This emphasis on wind and water reminds us of a particular type of physiognomy with

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[212] See *Zang shu*, 21-26.
[213] See *Huangdi zhaijing*, *juan* 1, 13-19.
[214] See *ibid*.

scant records but an ancient tradition: the physiognomy of wind (*xiangfeng* 相風). In the Song encyclopaedia *Taiping yulan* 太平御覽, wind physiognomy is described as an archaic tradition. *The Verse of Wind Physiognomy* (*Xiangfeng fu* 相風賦) included in this encyclopaedia ascribed to Zheng Xuan 鄭玄 (127-200), an Eastern Han scholar, defines the technique of wind physiognomy as a way to understand the limits of nature, and the way of heaven, by observing the auspiciousness and inauspiciousness of the wind.[215] The text also mentions that winds and clouds could respond to qi so that they reflected the virtues of peace and purity. In fact, an early official in the Eastern Zhou period who was in charge of 'wind reading' was also the official in charge of music, implying that wind inspection and court music in early China had the same origin.[216] Huang Yinong points out that in late imperial China, although it was harshly criticised by some scholars, inspection of winds and qi in the sky still played a very important role in court ritual and the making of official almanacs.[217]

A later anecdote in the Song anthology *Yijian zhi*, titled 'Old Man Yu Inspects People' (*Yuweng xiangren* 俞翁相人) indicates again that the physiognomy of natural phenomena was conducted in light of the system of numerology and the Five Phases in a way that was similar to the physiognomy of animate things.[218] In this way, by inspecting natural phenomena and the meanings codified in them one could foresee the future of people related to them. To physiognomists, natural phenomena such as the flow of water or sound of music in a market place were on the one hand the reflection of the cosmos and on the other hand an extension of

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[215] See 'Xiangfeng' in *Taiping yulan*, *Tianbu* 9, 47-48.
[216] See Erica Fox Brindley, *Music, Cosmology and the Politics of Harmony in Early China*, 69-72 and Jiang Kongyang, *Xianqin yinyue meixue sixiang lungao*, 38-40.
[217] See Huang Yinong, 'The evolution and decline of the ancient Chinese practice of watching for the ethers,' 82-106.
[218] See *Yijianzhi*, *jia zhi*, 76.

the human world.

In conclusion, the physiognomy of inanimate things manifests two kinds of attitude towards material things. One is to see them as powerful agents and potentially living things that can influence people's lives. The other is to see them as extensions of the cosmos, or space and time, and of their owner's lives. These views also highlight a homological relationship between human life, things and the environment around them, which stretches the boundaries of physiognomy techniques to a broader range than merely a technique for inspecting living creatures. The spatial structure and physical qualities of an object and the pattern of its temporal movement in human beings' social lives are assimilated. A spatial order is a temporal order. Moreover, material objects are not only understood as texts and symbols but also as tangible physical and energetic beings; their seemingly symbolic and textual dimension is only a part of their homological relationship with the universe. In the next section, another particular kind of thing physiognomy will be discussed, the physiognomy of characters. This technique became widely spread in the late imperial period as well, and is therefore well documented. Our analysis in the following section will focus on how handwriting is conceptualized in this technique, and how calligraphy represents a person's fortune in a similar logic.

The Physiognomy of Characters as a Bodily and Cosmic Process

Calligraphy and the Power of Writing

Before we enter the discussion of the seemingly peculiar technique of character physiognomy,

it is necessary for us to briefly mention some salient aspects of the Chinese writing system. The fundamental medium of character physiognomy consists of hand-written characters by a particular person, and this is closely tied up with Chinese theories of writing. The earliest Chinese writing is found in the context of archaic divination practices of the Shang period. By inscribing questions and possible answers on animal bones and carapaces, the Shang diviners burn bones to communicate with their own gods and ancestors. Scholars interpret early usage of written words as designed for recording results of religious and ritualistic communications.[219] Even in the succeeding Zhou period, which retained most of the Shang characters, the custom of reproducing characters on bronze paraphernalia of sacrificial rituals for ancestors and heaven show a use of written words in recording communications with magical powers.[220] Texts of historical records and prayers in rituals expressed and reinforced the political potency of the ruling house, along with its ritual potency, to its subordinates, as well as the political linkage between them.[221] This suggests that in early China, written characters were regarded as powerful political as well as religious entities. Furthermore, since the Western Han dynasty, educated people believed that the sage Cang Jie 倉頡, a court official of the legendary Yellow Emperor (*Huangdi* 黃帝), had invented writing based on his observation of the principle of the universe.[222]

A kind of belief in the communicative power of written words was also seen in Daoist

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[219] See David N. Keightley, *The Ancestral Landscape* for the general context of Shang writing and the ritual use of writing. See Adam Smith, 'The evidence for scribal training at Anyang,' 173-205.

[220] The characters were inscribed in a mould, so strictly speaking they were not directly inscribed on the bronze objects in question.

[221] See Lothar von Falkenhauen, 'The royal audience and its reflections in Western Zhou bronze inscriptions,' and Li Feng, 'Literacy and the social contexts of writing in the Western Zhou,' in *Writing & Literacy in Early China*, 239-301. For an illustration of the relationship between ancestor worship and writing in the Zhou, see Edward L. Shaughnessy, *Sources of Western Zhou History*, 175-182.

[222] For the legend of Cang Jie, see Kaitsuka Shigeki, *Chugoku no kanji* in *Nihongo no sekai* 3, 4-9. Also see Shih-shan Susan Huang, *Picturing the True Form*, 154-164.

talisman writing, the copying of Buddhist scriptures and the consecration of auspicious characters as a popular religious practice in later periods, suggesting that written words are powerful entities that could cross boundaries between the human world and the world of magical beings.[223] Also the use of writing in rituals and religious practices in traditional China was related to another essential element of Chinese writing: the interchangeability between text and image. In Daoist talisman (*fu* 符) writings, written words are regarded as visual/energetic representations of its content as well as an abstraction of particular religious meanings.[224] A talisman is conceptualized in Daoist rituals as a microcosm, a replica of the universe and visualization of the celestial power and the Five Phases, and their forms are considered a way to concentrate the energy of the cosmos and connect it to the human sphere or human body.[225] John Lagerwey points out that in such a ritual, writing is seen as the exteriorization of the deities, with the lines written on a talisman considered the natural configuration of energy.[226] In fact, imitation of nature is often believed to be one aspect of the archaic use of Chinese characters. It is said in a second century dictionary that the legendary inventor of characters Cang Jie, a man with four eyes, observed the movement of heaven and earth, and based the characters on the patterns of birds' footprints.[227] In the theoretical work on calligraphy *Propensities of Four Writing Styles* (*Siti shushi* 四體書勢), written by the Western Jin scholar Wei Heng 衛恆 (?-291), the author used a series of analogies to describe how the Yellow Emperor's officials created characters by observing and mimicking tensions and

[223] Tseng Yuho, *A History of Chinese Calligraphy*, 79-96; Kensho Hirano, 'Buddhism Manuscript,' 123-127.
[224] See Tseng Yuho, *ibid*. and Shih-shan Susan Huang, *ibid*, 231-239, 262-277.
[225] See Stephen Little, *Taoism and the Arts of China*, 201-207.
[226] See John Lagerwey, *Taoist Ritual in Chinese Society and History*, 152.
[227] See Xu Shen, *Shuowen jiezi*, 314. Also see Zhu Renfu, *Zhongguo gudai shufa shi*, 1-18.

motions in natural phenomena.[228] The growth of trees and grass, the movements of birds and fish, the fluctuation of mountain bridges and so on were considered the archetypes of Chinese characters. In this view, Chinese written characters are seen as a morphological replica of nature. Thus it is not surprising to see that in the later period, similar body skills and aesthetic frameworks in writing and painting were interlinked; a lot of great calligraphers were prominent painters as well and vice versa.[229]

However, the two features of Chinese calligraphy mentioned above indicate that the attitude towards writing and the way to conduct it were not as stable and coherent in Chinese history as one might nowadays assume. Although writing was a necessary skill and an inevitable part of training for aristocrats and literati in traditional China, it was only in the Eastern Han dynasty and after that calligraphy gradually transformed into a flexible form of art and a method of self-expression and self-cultivation among social elites.[230] Before it emerged as a form of art and functioned as the subject of aesthetic appreciation, it was merely a kind of exclusive skill possessed by writing specialists.[231] Yet Lothar Ledderose suggests that this important transition of calligraphy did not occur *ex nihilo* but was actually intertwined with contemporary Daoist practices and self-cultivation.[232] That is to say, the transition of calligraphy into form of art never deviated too far from beliefs in the magico-religious power of characters. This may explain why in the latter period, the concept of qi, the basic form of energy that composes both the universe and human body, was also applied to the construction

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[228] See *Siti shushi*, 553-557.
[229] See Ch'en Chih-Mai, *Chinese Calligrapher and their Art*, 258-268.
[230] See Yujiro Nakata, 'The Masterpieces of Wang Xizhi and Wang Xianzhi,' 116-119.
[231] See Arthur Witteveen, 'The rise of calligraphy as an art,' 19-26.
[232] See Lothar Ledderose, 'Some Daoist elements in the calligraphy of the Six Dynasties,' 246-278.

of calligraphic styles.[233] Therefore, a written character was usually seen as a replica of the human body in an appropriate space and a piece of calligraphic work was regarded as the continuum of the qi of the calligrapher.[234] In this way, the seemingly static characters written on paper actually represent the process of writing. The physical status of a written character is also a status of time. When appreciating Chinese calligraphy, one should not take each character as independent but always see the writing as a whole, feeling the motions and tensions underlying in the arrangement of the columns and imagining the mental status as well as bodily conditions of the calligrapher when he or she was writing. In other words, its beauty lies in the intensity and harmony of its qi and how it is seen to reflect the process of writing as an extension of the calligrapher's body and self.

In the next section of the discussion of character physiognomy, we will see how the analogy of the body in calligraphy is constructed and applied in physiognomy techniques and how the specialist inspects people's written words to tell their future.

The Physiognomy of Characters

The Song scholar Ye Li confirmed that the ancient technique of character physiognomy (*xiangzi fa* 相字法) was transmitted along with other types of physiognomy techniques. In fact, this method of telling people's fortunes by inspecting a random character or characters that someone writes can be called by different names as well, such as 'fathoming characters' (*cezi* 測字) and 'dissecting characters' (*chaizi* 拆字). Unlike its counterpart, the physiognomy of

[233] For the relationship between *qi* and writing, see Sheng Kuanchung, 'Aesthetic practice and spirituality,' 33-38.

[234] See Jean Long, *The Art of Chinese Calligraphy*, 33-47.

things, which can be traced back to earlier traditions, character physiognomy did not appear as an independent category in the catalogue of royal library collection until the Sui 隋 dynasty (589-618).[235] In the educational text *Precepts of the Yan Family* (*Yanshi jiaxun* 顏氏家訓) written by the scholar Yan Zhitui 顏之推 (531-595) in the late sixth century, it is mentioned that character physiognomy was already a prevalent custom (*liusu* 流俗) at that time.[236] In Song Chuanyin and Yang Chang's definitive work on the methodology and practices of character physiognomy, they attribute the origin of *xiangzi* to the Eastern Han dynasty eschatological use (*chenwei* 讖緯) of Chinese characters.[237] Likewise, Anna Seidel argues that the emergence of Daoist talismans was intertwined with late Eastern Han apocrypha (*chenwei*) as well.[238] However, both Song and Yang agree that the emergence of a systematic and independent technique of character physiognomy - in other words, the time of its maturation - took place in the Sui and Tang dynasties.

Character physiognomy is a technique to predict the future of a person via examining the characters a person writes spontaneously, in terms of their semantic meanings, composition and how they are written on the paper—their calligraphic style and the material conditions of the ink and brush. Therefore, it is not completely illogical for us to assume that it underwent its formative development when Chinese calligraphy itself also gradually grew into an independent and complex form of art. From the manuals of character physiognomy, we can see that the mutual influences between physiognomy theories of Chinese characters and Chinese calligraphic theories are profound. Most extant manuals were written or compiled

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235 See *Tongzhi ershi lue*, *Yiwen lue*, *juan* 6, 248 and *Suishu*, *Jingjizhi*, *zibu*, *Wuxing*, 1032.
236 See *Yanshi jiaxun*, 39.
237 See Song Chuanyin and Yang Chang, *Shenmi de cezi*, 8-19.
238 See Anna Seidel, 'Imperial treasures and Taoist sacraments,' 292-371.

during the late Ming and early Qing dynasty, although some of them are claimed to be summaries of older theories. However, despite the fact that the manuals were written and transmitted during the late imperial period, it is possible for us to see how, as self-claimed summaries, these theories interacted with preceding and contemporary calligraphic theories and broader cosmologies in Chinese divination systems.

Song and Yang and Richard J. Smith's analysis of the methodology of character physiognomy, point out the significance of intrinsic linguistic aspects of Chinese characters.[239] Indeed, in one of the most popular manuals composed in the late Ming or early Qing dynasty by the famous character physiognomist Cheng Xing 程省, *Esoteric Documents on Fathoming Characters* (*Cezi midie* 测字秘牒), the author first introduced ten different methods to dissect characters for precise prognostication. This text was not composed to illustrate the philosophical as well as cosmological principles underlying the technique, but instead, to serve as a guide for the practical application of this technique. Most of the ten methods are explained to teach the reader to play with the flexibility of radicals and overall semantic meanings of different characters. By adding a new radical to a character, or changing the radical of a character, or disassembling a character into a group of simpler characters, a physiognomist should be able to play with plausible meanings of both characters and radicals in order to construct a fluent and precise prediction. Beyond the literal meanings of a character and radicals, which in many cases are simpler characters themselves, characters are also treated as images. In the 'Six Methods of Mind Transformation' (*xinyi liufa* 心易六法), the relationship between the shape of a character as an image, or in other words, the pictographic attribute of

[239] See Song Chuanyin and Yang Chang, *ibid*, 9-66 and Richard J. Smith, *Fortune-tellers and Philosophers*, 201-204.

a character, and the shapes of actual things is established.

Moreover, the association between different characters in terms of the similarities of meanings and shapes is mentioned as a criterion of understanding the associations between characters and between characters and human beings. The reason why these methods can be used to comprehensively investigate a character is that they are able to show the concealed relationship between a character and the people it is attached to, or even to a specific environment they live in. This kind of intricate relationship between characters, along with the perceived relationship between characters and the cosmos, shows that characters are understood as visual as well as linguistic indexes of the world. Social orders and cosmic orders are in this way unified and even 'assimilated' in a character. This is why the author emphasized that the core of a character is its *ge* 格, its mysterious structure manifested both in its literal meaning and its shape. To understand the complete *ge* of a character one needs to see a character as an autonomous human body and to see *ge* as the bones of a character which bind up and control its literal and pictographic meaning, which are its sinews and muscles. This elusive aspect of characters is not easy to grasp, not to mention that each of the thousands of different characters has its own *ge*. Yet an adept of this technique should be trained in finding the *ge* of a character swiftly and precisely. The author of the above-mentioned manual provides the reader with plenty of *ge* for frequently used characters, which were all written in eight-character couplets with extremely ambiguous meanings.[240]

This conceptualization of characters as replicas of the human body coincides with a long-established tradition in Chinese calligraphic theories of seeing characters written on paper as

[240] See *Cezi midie* for the whole explanation of the methods discussed above. For the information about the author with the full text of the manual, see Song Chuanyin and Yang Chang, *Gudai cezi shu zhuping*, 200-264.

a living body. Xiong Bingming points out that since the late Northern and Southern Dynasties period, literati commentaries frequently used the idea of seeing written characters as a living body with flowing blood, sinews and bones.[241] Such a 'body analogy', as he shows, went beyond simple metaphorical associations between the appearance of a written character and the body, but treated the body and a written character as composed of the same qi. As qi is also the preliminary substance of the human body, the body of a character is animated. Written characters and the human body are also assimilated in this qi homology. As such it can retain the qi of its writer and deliver qi to its readers. Written characters are on the one hand an integrated whole, and on the other hand, an extension of the calligrapher with a homological substance. Similarities of written character and the body go beyond a morphological and structural level. As we have seen, morphological as well as structural similarities between a written character and a human body in character physiognomy are believed to be the manifestation of the deeper energetic similarities between them, that they are both made of qi, a formless and fluid cosmic force. The manifestation of the movement of qi always display the same pattern which can be understood numerologically. Written characters, the body, and the cosmos are essentially the same, not only in their formations and images, but also their very substance. It is this 'energetic homology' way of thinking that allows physiognomists to examine a written character in order to detect stories of human life behind it, since characters and an individual who wrote it are connected as one. The relationship between the body of a character and the body of a calligrapher also tells us how a particular character is written. In other words, its materiality is part of what it can express, not limited to linguistic meaning.

[241] See Xiong Bingming, *Zhongguo shufa lilun tixi*, 16-19.

Beyond literal and pictographic meanings, a written character is a powerful medium of communication in that the quality of its material conditions on paper, as the direct reflection of qi, is also meaningful, and this is why one can use a person's written characters for physiognomy.

Because of this, the harmonious structure and propensities of a written character are judged in light of the harmonious status of a human body. Another type of harmony pursued in the Tang and Song literati's perceptions of calligraphy, Xiong notices, is the correspondence between written characters and the universe. In some of the scholars' commentaries on the relationship between calligraphy and the universe in different periods, the idea of yin and yang, the Five Phases, the Eight Notes in Chinese musicology (*bayin* 八音) and the *Yijing* hexagram system are used to describe different styles and writing processes.[242] In this way, written characters are not only treated as human bodies, or the extension of human bodies, but also as a microcosmic system as well as part of the movement of the universe. A cosmic temporal structure is seen as homological to the spatial structure and material conditions of a written character. This resembles the collection of verses and songs of the physiognomy theories on Chinese characters included in the early Qing imperial collection *Anthology of Books of the Past and Present*.[243] The songs, verses and prose in this section all appeared in previous dynasties and were included without a very systematic categorization of the skills they documented. Nonetheless, it is still possible for us to see in these texts a strong tendency to link character physiognomy to a broader system of divination practice and its cosmological principles. The auspiciousness and inauspiciousness reflected in a person's writing should be

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242 See Xiong Bingming, *ibid*, 57-58.

243 See *Gujin tushu jicheng*, *Chaizi bu huikao*, 50-65.

understood in consideration of several factors: the balance between the yin and yang of a character, the Phase of a character, the relationship between the sixty-four hexagrams and a character, and to what extent a character resembles the power of the Six Divine Animals (*liushen* 六神). Although the literal and pictographic meanings are stressed, in the texts there are many more discussions on the importance of knowing how a character is written. Especially in one text called *Formation of Style in Relation to the Five Phases* (*Wuxing tige shi* 五行體格式), the qualities of the brush and quality of the ink used are categorized in accordance with the Five Phases. That is to say, to physiognomists, the particularity of one prognostication not only lies in the method of dissecting a character, but also the way the sign is presented or written. This is perhaps why in the anecdote about famous Song character physiognomist Xie Shi 謝石, even though two of his clients wrote the same character for his predictions at the same time, the results of predictions were completely different, and he could even foresee the health and longevity of his clients from the quality of ink.[244] The body is seen as the origin of a person's sociality, and written characters, like all the other aspects of a person's social life, are an extension of the body. Therefore, a written character is a text, but a text is also a picture, a material 'artefact', and a cosmic process at the same time. A process in a grand process of cosmic change is just like a wave in a current in the ocean. A wave is a micro-current, and also a part of the movement of a current.

What we also cannot ignore is the complex relationship between written characters and the environment. Richard Smith points out in his analysis that a character physiognomist did not simply inspect a character on its own, but also related it to what he or she saw around

[244] See 'Xieshi chaizi,' in *Yijianzhi*, *bujuan* 19, 1788.

them. Thus how a character can tell the future of a person not only depends on the character itself but also, according to the manuals, on the time and space when it is written. Apparently in the actual application of this technique, along with the various kinds of ways of examining the character itself, the emergence of a character is not simply a coincidence, but is part of the predestined movement of the world. Thus physiognomists need to be very sensitive to the interrelations between a character and other clues of a person's fortune latent in the environment. In addition, the technical facet of character physiognomy was sometimes illustrated by the previous incidents or rumours related to it, especially in the late Ming early Qing scholar Zhou Lianggong's 周亮工 (1612-1672) physiognomy book *The Touch of Characters* (*Zichu* 字觸).[245] He quoted many stories and anecdotes of physiognomists' practices he had heard and read to explain the abstruse part of character physiognomy. The whole manual is made of stories and anecdotes rather than theoretical explanations of this technique.

Conclusion

How to understand the representation of the body in Chinese cosmology matters to our understanding of the conceptualization of physiognomy in China, since the technique is deeply rooted in the repertoire of the body discourse in Chinese culture. Since the early period, qi as the most important cosmological as well as medical concept stands out in the conceptualization of the body in classical Chinese texts. Qi is the primary power of the universe and the fundamental energetic element of the human body. Therefore, the body is a

[245] See Zhou Gongliang, *Zichu* the whole manual.

homological microcosm based on the view that the body and the cosmos are composed by the same substance. The cosmogenic aspect of qi was interpreted in a highly numerological manner later in the Ming. Qi cosmology was also adopted in other inspections of various 'things' in the material world. The complexity of the conceptualization of physiognomy is also seen in the scope of physiognomic inspections and its classification in Chinese history. The existence of physiognomy of things in traditional China proves that physiognomy, unlike its popular impression, was actually much broader than only a type of 'body technique'. In fact, *xiangwu*, or the physiognomy of things, shows that the human body, the cosmos, society, and . Furthermore, the physiognomy of things was also once part of a broader and widely acknowledged divination and numerological system, explaining human beings and the cosmos in a discourse as well as theoretical framework known as yin-yang and the Five Phases cosmology. It is even connected to the technique of farming and forecasting weathers. From physiognomy manuals on animate things and inanimate things, we can see that not only a clear boundary between the two categories is absent in this technique, but also that it links human beings' fortunes and changes in life to those of the surrounding things and natural phenomena. Therefore, to inspect certain things for predictions in this context not only refers to reading the future of some specific things, but to read the future of the persons related to them. In some cases, the things salient to human activities are even perceived and explained in the light of the human body.

What we can also find is that when inspecting and interpreting a thing, it was not only understood as a text where through an index of symbols and meanings, but also considered a powerful item that could actually influence its owner and the environment it was attached to.

Their material/energetic conditions are also meaningful in predicting fortune. Material things are part of the cosmic movement and the flow of fortune just like waves in an oceanic current. Therefore, human beings, things and the environment were always believed to be in a relationship of mutual influences and reflections. This perhaps can explain the reason why the idea of '*wu*', thing, in a traditional Chinese context, especially after the Song, often refers quite broadly to the myriad beings in this world including human beings and natural phenomena. Also because of this idea of mutual influence and reflection, things themselves were not regarded as static or confined. That is to say, like the material world in general, particular things are always in motion and subject to change, and they can always reveal the process of their formation when properly interpreted. One example is physiognomy of characters. In this particular technique, written words were not only seen as powerful things that could travel between the so-called spiritual and material world, but also as a reflection of the process of writing itself. From styles to the configuration of a written Chinese character, one could imagine and reconstruct the gestures and body style of its writer. Written characters were seen as a reflection of the process of writing. Because of this, in the physiognomy of characters, written words were conceptualized as the replica of the human body, and could thus show their writer's fortune as a mirror of it.

Chapter II

The Physiognomic Body in Ming Manuals

Following our investigation of the conceptualization of physiognomy in traditional China, we will now discuss the theorization of the physiognomic body in extant Ming manuals. The pivotal questions here are, similar to what Judith Butler raises in her discussion of gender and the body, why the body matters in knowing a person's fortune, and how the body is defined in the manuals in regards to the relationships between individual human beings, society and the cosmos.[246] As Butler suggests, the materiality of the body is an irreducible, if not crucial, part of the social power structure that defines, produces and regulates each individual's sociality; in Butler's view, such a kind of sociality is gender.[247] That is to say, the body as a unity of cosmic movements, human being's physical existence, mind and emotions, and sociality, contributes to how we perceive and interact with the exterior world and ourselves. The same can be said about cosmologies of Chinese physiognomy in the Ming physiognomy manuals of human physiognomy. Connections between the body, society and the cosmos are vital to conceptualizations of the body and society in a specific historical milieu. In the case of physiognomy in Ming China, the physiognomic body was directly linked to the movement of the cosmos, and was considered as a 'totality' of a person's life. The body was capable of revealing information about a person's fortune and changes in society and cosmos because of

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[246] See Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter*, 11-30.
[247] See Butler, *ibid*, 3-28.

their shared physical common ground.

Yet what is different in Chinese physiognomy manuals from a modern understanding of the body, especially the idea of seeing the body as a 'text' for social meanings? One might think that when fortune-tellers reading a human being's body, they are reading the body as a text, a story of an individual's past, present and future. Yet just like what we have seen in the physiognomy of things, Ming physiognomy manuals of the human body have a particular way of understanding and dealing with the body in contrast to the presumption that the body is a text for physiognomists, a narrative of the body which this chapter copes with. The body is considered a part of the natural movements of the cosmos, and a replica of them. The human body is the most refined kind of existence between heaven and earth, and the most complex replica of the cosmic interactions of the qi of yin-yang and the Five Phases.[248] The numerological body comes from and resides in a numerological cosmos composed of the qi of yin-yang and the Five Phases. As we have seen in the previous chapter, this is a micro-cosmic system seen in early Chinese medical and cosmological classics, and adopted in the manuals of human physiognomy. In contrast to the idea that the body is a representation of meanings and reproduced by individual human beings' social actions, in the physiognomy manuals, the body is seen as the product of cosmic change and corresponds to the cosmos.

In other words, the body is also a wave, the most sophisticated wave, in the current of cosmic change. The body is a micro 'process' in the larger process of cosmic movement, a wave that resembles the bigger current the most. A passage ascribed to the famous early Ming

[248] Which is mentioned in different passages in differen manuals. For example, see '*Guijian xiangfa*' in *Shenxiang quanbian*, *juan* 7, 23-24, '*Dongxuan jing*' in *Shenxiang quanbian*, *juan* 9, 10-11. Also see *Shuijing shenxiang*, *juan* 2, 4-5. In fact, this kind of statement is frequently seen in the Ming manuals, one can easily skim these manuals and spot numerous similar texts which I will not fully list out in this note.

physiognomist Yuan Liuzhuang[249] called the 'Yuan Liuzhuang's Verse of Human Image' (*Yuan Liuzhuang renxiang fu* 袁柳莊人象賦) states that the three hundred and sixty areas (*buwei* 部位) of the human body tally with the days of a year and the layout of earth and heaven, and the appearance of these parts along with the quality of qi and color 'decide' (*ding* 定) a person's fortune.[250] Thus, the bodily space itself is a unity of cosmic time and space, and certainly a person's social life is included. The body is not simply a text telling the story of a person's life time, or a representation of fortune and life separate from the occurrences of these events and movements. As we shall see, the body is the very place where these events in a person's life happens, and the provenance of fortune and life. Hence, the body is 'ecologic'. The manuals frequently refer to the human body as something that comes from the universe, and resembles the universe the most. It is just like studying and predicting a current in an ocean from analyzing its most powerful and outstanding waves. Waves are a current, not a separate text of it, and within each wave the elements of a current can be found. Therefore, just like things, the human body is also an index of past, present, and future, and the most informative one according to the manuals, because a person's life time, or social being, is just recognized as a potential of the body. What a wave can do and effect, where it could go are just its potentials.

Different Ming manuals share this cosmology as a common narrative and use it to explain how the body reflects fortune. Ming physiognomy manuals offer detailed methods of interpreting the human body from such a perspective. As we have seen in the previous chapter, an energetic homology appears in the physiognomic understanding of the relationship between human beings and the material world. This homological view is continued in the

[249] Who will be introduced in Chapter IV.
[250] See *Shenxiang quanbian*, *juan* 7, 1.

physiognomy of the human body, which again differs from a structuralist and linguistic sense of 'homology'. The body is defined and operated as cosmological due to the energetic as well as mechanic 'sameness' between the two. Numerological tools used to interpret macro-cosmic changes are also applicable to the body. Just like the case in the physiognomy of things, people's life and social 'time' is also 'spatialized' in the bodily space. Different aspects of a person's social life and the pattern of the movement of his or her life time are somaticized, seen as corporeal. This means that the space of a human body, its morphology, qi qualities, and other attributes in this bodily space in a particular moment is a pattern of its time, its past, present, and future. In this way, the body itself unifies the somatic, the cosmic, and the social.

A person's life time as the totality of his or her social existence is considered as the same with this person's bodily space. Hence the body can tell a person's past, present, and future, since the body is a person's past present and future. Such a logic of the physiognomic body became a shared narrative among different manuals. It is under this shared narrative that technical procedures of predictions are explained. This chapter continues the discussion of this complex physiognomic logic and how this shared narrative of the body is formed in the Ming manuals. In the next chapter, we will see how specific aspects of fortune and the body are elaborated in this shared narrative.

Of course, active ways of cultivating the body will change a person's fortune, since the body is the source of fortune, and one's social life is only the potential of the body. But these ways of cultivation are also seen as part of the cosmic movement, where a person realizes the cosmic nature of the body and uses it. Thus the body is predisposed and informative about its own future. Features of the body is a consequence of the movements and interactions of cosmic

powers and goes beyond one's conscious control of it. By and large, to understand the cosmology and theorizations of Ming physiognomy is to understand this particular type of body cosmology developed in the Ming dynasty. These complex theories of the physiognomic body also belong to the new cosmological landscape of Ming. Ming physiognomy manuals diverse connections with Chinese medical traditions, and intellectual discourse at that time makes them representative in reflecting the changes of thoughts in this period.

In the manuals, the content is to a large extent practice-oriented. The manuals first and foremost give practical guidance on how to inspect the body for fortune-telling. Without any clarification, predisposed rules and principles in the manuals can be confusing, like what we can find in the Dunhuang physiognomy manuscripts.[251] However, a distinctive aspect of the manuals produced in Ming China is their endeavor to unify different techniques and methods under a highly theoretical and cosmological tools, especially texts and concepts related to classical medical and cosmological traditions. For example, the *Inner Canon* became an important reference in the manuals for the legitimization of this technique. Ming manuals' theorization of the body is part of the Ming qi cosmology we have mentioned in the previous chapter. Features that appear in new medical and philosophical contexts in the Ming dynasty also appear in these physiognomy manuals. We shall see how the construction of a physiognomic body in these Ming manuals is related to the Ming intellectual and cultural context.

[251] Which only contain 'tips' of physiognomic inspections and the content is rather practical, lacks theoretical depth, see Marc Kalinowski, 'Mantic texts in their cultural context,' 109-133.

The Topology of Fortune

Although traditional medical theories and physiognomy share a theoretical as well as cosmological common ground, there is a clear difference of focus between physiognomy and medicine. In physiognomy, the visibility of this relationship between the macro and micro-cosmos is much more emphasized. Kuriyama Shigehisa points out that the visibility of bodily status and the penetrating sight required to see these faint visual signs were key to early Chinese medical diagnosis and the philosophy of the body.[252] But he also mentions that in a medical context, doctors were more likely to value immediate and rapid changes of a person's body for precise diagnosis. In contrast, physiognomy as a fortune-telling technique prioritizes a more fundamental and enduring aspect of the body than any irregular changes, namely the overall bodily layout (*ge* 格). This is the same term used in character physiognomy manuals to describe the mysterious structure of a written character. Moreover, the physiognomic micro-cosmos also largely focuses on how a person's whole life fortune is manifested in this system, rather than short term changes caused by diseases. Most of the content in the manuals tells their readers how to explore a person's fortune on the body, and what particular types of bodily features say about a person's life. In other words, how a person's time is spatialized in the body. What we can see and how we can see fortune on the body are frequently discussed in the manuals. A verse in the *Compendium* called 'The Physiognomy of Nobility' (*Xianggui* 相貴) contains some further clues about the natural legitimacy of body physiognomy. In this verse the author attributes nobility and mediocrity in human society to natural distinctions between the different qualities of qi that constitute the universe and the body:

[252] See Kuriyama Shigehisa, *The Expressiveness of the Body*, 153-158.

> Since the shell of chaos was chiseled, two types of qi have existed in pure or turbid forms. In the pure, the sage comes into being, and in the turbid, the ignorant come into being. There is never a single reason for a noble appearance; it is either from a person's own cultivation or the celestial hidden [in the body]. It can also be the case that either stars or deities are banished into this world, or deities and immortals come into this world through Embryonic Breathing.
> 自從鑿開混沌殼，二氣由來有清濁。孕其清者生聖賢，孕其濁者生愚樸。貴相之來故非一，或自修來或神匿。星辰謫降或精靈，或自神仙假胎息。[253]

In this text, social stratification between the noble and mediocre is attributed to natural distinctions between pure qi and turbid qi in the body, which are a result of cosmic movements. In this way, the body is seen as the fundamental and only source of social differences. Similar views are expressed in pulse physiognomy manuals as well, and we will discuss this further in this chapter. This idea of seeing the body as the fundamental reason as well as expression for differences in humanity and social life is common in the Ming manuals.[254] One of the features we see here is the recognition of the popular qi cultivation 'Embryonic Breathing' (*taixi* 胎息) often found in Daoist texts or stories in generating different body qualities and fortune, a breath cultivation for its practitioners to prolong life and even become a celestial being.[255] Again, we only find this kind of endeavor to absorb all kinds of religious and popular practices into physiognomy in manuals dating after the Song. In the late Ming manual *The Divine Physiognomy of Guan Yu's Iron Halberd* (*Shenxiang tieguan dao* 神相鐵關刀), the physiognomy of the body is described as a similar system to Chinese geomancy, *fengshui* 風水.[256] The body is seen as a replica of natural landscapes where different kinds of qi reside, and as landscapes may be purposefully changed and cultivated for the better, so it is for human appearances. The

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[253] See *Shenxiang quanbian*, *juan* 4, 20.
[254] Similar views expressed in the passage '*Lun qi*' in *Mayi shenxiang*, *juan* 3, 9-10, and '*Mianxiang zonglun*' in *Shuijing shenxiang*, *juan* 1, 30-31.
[255] See Stephen Eskildsen, *Daoism, Meditation, and the Wonders of Serenity*, 254-261.
[256] See *Shenxiang tie guandao*, *juan* 3, 28.

way in which the body is formed is the way in which society and the whole natural world are formed. They are all consequences of movements of cosmic qi and share the same dynamic. The so-called natural order and social order are unified in the body, and different physiological features of the body manifest social orders, and thus fortune becomes visible.

Popular sociological and anthropological theories focus on how the corporeality of the body, the institution of the social body and the discourse of the body in a cultural discourse are interrelated and interplay with each other.[257] In this sense, the body and the socio-cultural body are understood as different categorical concepts, one as the physical/biological body and the other as a socially constructed text. Yet according to the physiognomic explanation of the body, social distinctions are understood as corporeal, and the body is seen as innately social as well as cosmological. In other words, there is not a person's body that is originally corporeal but then defined by, used by, and even 'thrown' into socio-cultural constructions. The corporeality of the body itself is the determinant of human sociality, and this corporeality is determined by the cosmos. One passage of palm print reading in the *Water Reflection* manual states that palm prints and other bodily features of an individual were generated when he or she was in the womb, the Origin of Embryo (*taiyuan* 胎元).[258] These bodily features contain a person's future fate that can be distinguished even when this person is a baby. The quality of the body already shows the status of one's life power that determines one's fortune. In this sense, human sociality is human corporeality, and thus sages palm prints naturally form the shapes of auspicious written characters, indicating their special bodily as well as moral

257 See Arthur Frank, 'For a sociology of the body,' 36-103.

258 See *Shuijing shenxiang*, *juan* 1, 50-52.

status.[259] This idea tallies well with the passage in the *Compendium*, showing that a person's social life lies in the body. Therefore, fortune is manifested in the body, according to the theory of physiognomy, not because of the social construction of fortune which we then impose on the body, but because the body already possesses a fortune in itself which later turns into a person's social life. The fortune of an individual is manifested on his or her body because the body, whilst being formed by the cosmos, has already been given corresponding social consequences as its potentials. These consequences transcend linear time and are already displayed at the very beginning of a person's life. This means that people's social time, their past, present, and future in society are spatialized in the body, and as we shall see, human beings' sociality is seen as the body's potential in this physiognomic context.

Yet not every text is explicit about its cosmological foundation. It seems that by and large, the more practical question of how fortune and misfortune can be read from the body outweighs the question why exactly they are manifested in the body. Connections between a particular physiological feature and a particular type of fortune are sometimes given without any further exposition.[260] Esoteric traditions may have played a significant role in the dearth of cosmological information in many of these texts, which will be further discussed in Chapter IV. The existence of an oral tradition, secretive ways of dissemination, and prerequisite medical knowledge for practising physiognomy mean the theories behind the manuals remain implicit. As a group of texts connected to traditional medical knowledge and other mantic techniques, Ming physiognomic manuals presume certain types of knowledge that were taken for granted

[259] See *ibid*.

[260] The whole book of *Shenxiang tie guandao* is made of this kind of texts, which contain specific steps and 'knacks' of physiogbomy but no detailed cosmological explanation, though cosmology is briefly mentioned scatteredly in different places, see *juan*1, 22, *juan* 4, 32. *Shenxiang quanbian* and *Shuijing shenxiang* also contain similar passages but these two books have more texts that give physiognomy cosmological explanations.

and transmitted without further explanation. Another possible reason is that these manuals were initially written for the purpose of practice rather than academic discussion, and therefore their theories, rules and examples were produced from and for practical use. As we shall see, physiognomic rules and principles put cosmology directly into practice.

Since the question of how to read fortune on a person's body is vital to physiognomy theories, the procedure of body inspection is especially important. At the very beginning of *The Compendium*, two passages are introduced in regard to overall steps of body inspection. Following a sequence, the inspection procedure covers the major aspects of the body that are relevant to a person's fortune. The first detailed instructions for body inspection appear in the book 'Ten Inspections' (*shiguan* 十觀). In these instructions, ten steps are listed in the sequence that should be followed during an inspection:

1. Dignified demeanor (*weiyi* 威儀)
2. Sobriety and spirit (*dunzhong jingshen* 敦重精神)
3. Purity and turbidity (*qing zhuo* 清濁)
4. Round head and forehead (*touyuan dinge* 頭圓頂額)
5. Five mountains and the three partitions in the face (*wuyue santing* 五嶽三停)
6. Five officials and six palaces of the face (*wuguan liufu* 五官六府)
7. Waist, back, chest, and abdomen (*yao bei xiong fu* 腰背胸腹)
8. Hands and feet (*shouzu* 手足)
9. Voice and heart (*shengyin xintian* 聲音心田)
10. The layout of the body and the Five Phases (*xingju wuxing* 形局五行)[261]

In these ten steps, there is no particular stress on why the ten aspects of the body should be inspected in such an order. At first sight the first three aspects are relatively general and insubstantial ones. The terms 'spirit' and qi implied in the first three steps to describe specifically what physiognomists are inspecting on the body. Since 'spirit' and qi are such basic

[261] See *Shenxiang quanbian*, *juan* 1, 1-6.

elements of the body and because of the way in which they connect to the larger cosmos, one might argue that these first steps take stock of the overall cosmological quality of the body that is being inspected. The last aspect, 'the layout of the body and the Five Phases', also refers to the overall inspection of the body, but concentrates more on the morphological and tangible body rather than qi and spirit. Later, though, we will see that qi and spirit are also visible parts of the body to physiognomists. From the fourth to the ninth step, physical parts of the body are listed with additional, albeit sketchy, rules for inspection. This comprehensive and systematic method of inspection is an innovation in the Ming manuals that even extant Song manuals hardly mention, not to mention the earlier texts. The Song *Jade Flute* manual contain a section called "Thousand Gold Verse" (*Qianjin fu* 千金賦) which mentions that inspections should follow the order of spirit and qi, the Five Phases, and the shape of the body.[262] The systemization of physiognomic inspection in the Ming manuals also influenced how the different items in the manuals are categorized, and this can be seen in the contents of the *Compendium*.

Based on the level of details it provides, the list of then seems to emphasize the head more than any other body aspect. The significance of the head in physiognomic inspections is mentioned in the fourth step, saying 'for a person's head is the master of the body and the commander of the limbs' (*ren tou wei yishen zhi zhu, sizhi zhi yuan* 人頭為一身之主，四肢之元). Almost a third of the whole list is devoted to aspects of head physiognomy. The steps then look at the body from its various physiological dimensions, including the flesh, body shape, and overall layout. We shall discuss ways of locating fortune on the body based on the head

[262] See *Yuguan zhaoshen ju*, 2.

and body dimensions, to understand the way in which physiognomy manuals explain this 'topology of fortune' and its own cosmology.

The Head and the Face: Microcosm of a Microcosm

The importance of the head is also seen in many other passages in the manuals. In the *Jade Flute* manual, it is mentioned that the first part of the body to examine in an inspection should be the head and face, because it is the 'chief of the Five Phases'. A section in both the manual *Mayi's Divine Physiognomy* (*Mayi shenxiang* 麻衣神相) and *The Compendium* called 'The Pandect of the Face' (*Toumian zonglun* 頭面總論), again gives particular significance to the physiognomy of the face and head:

> [t]he head is the chief of the whole body, the master of the hundred organs, the assembling point of various yang channels, and the unification of the Five Phases. It is circular and stays up high, like the virtues of heaven. …it is the face that is in the sublime location among the hundred parts of the body, leading to the divine paths of the five viscera, developing the image of the three potencies [of the *Book of Changes*], and determining the gains and losses of the whole body.
> 頭者，一身之首，百骸之長，諸陽之會，五行之宗，居高而圓，象天之德也…列百部之靈居，通五府之神路，推三才之成象，定一身之得失者，面也。[263]

Here the head is regarded as the most powerful and superior part of the body and resembles the virtues of heaven, and accordingly, the face located at the front of the head is the most expressive manifestation of a person's bodily auspiciousness. Moreover, the face is seen as an index of the five viscera, which indicates that the face itself is already a miniature of the inner body. In other words, the face is a micro-cosmos of the micro-cosmos. This explains why in most of the manuals inspections of the head and face always come first and take up much

[263] See *Mayi shenxiang, juan* 2, 2, or *Shenxiang quanbian, juan* 3, 1-3.

more space than inspections of other bodily aspects. It is not very hard for us to understand the significance of the head in a symbolic way. Since Mary Douglas, anthropologists have realized that the body is often taken as the paradigm of symbolic meanings in different societies and cultures; the configuration of the body provides us with an analogy to understand the world based on a particular cultural understanding of the body.[264] As Mari Womack suggests, in this sense the spatiality of the body plays a significant role in human beings' empirical understandings of the structure of society and the world; thus 'the head' is frequently used in different contexts to describe the most powerful and superior person or position.[265] Particularly, the head is often related to political power and physical potency.[266] In return, the analogous symbolism can be used to define the body; the head of a state can be a king, and the king of a body is its head. In the case of physiognomy, the head is regarded as master, heaven, a chief, and a replica of the body. A passage in the *Water Reflection* manual again states that the head is the master of the six yang channels of the body, and the hundred organs, and contain the 'essence' (*jing* 精) of the whole body.[267] The head is a miniature of natural landscapes, stars, and the cosmos.[268]

However, physiognomic conceptualizations of the head go beyond this simple form of symbolism by analogy. As mentioned before, homological common ground between the body and the cosmos and the body means that the body and the cosmos are regarded as the same in their origins and constitution. In this sense, the symbolic significance of the body has an

[264] See Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger*, 141-159, and Steven Van Wolputte, 'Hang on to yourself,' 251-269.
[265] See Mari Womack, *The Anthropology of Health and Healing*, 14.
[266] See Edmund Leach, 'Magical hair,' 177-200.
[267] See *Shuijing shenxiang*, *juan* 2, 7-8.
[268] Not only the passages cited above, but also in *Shenxiang tie guandao*, juan 1, 11, and *Shenxiang quanbian*, juan 3, 1.

energetic basis. That is to say, the reason why the body and the cosmos can be understood in terms of analogous symbolism is their energetic sameness rather than a meaningful connection that only exists in a specific context or language. They are not two different entities that are analogized as the same in a metaphor, but they are the same thing in a physiognomic context. It is stated in the passage quoted above that one of the reasons why the head is such a vital organ for physiognomic inspection is its role as an 'assembling point of yang channels' (*zhuyang zhi hui* 諸陽之會). This phrase originally appears in the medical classic the *Yellow Emperor's Canon of Eighty-One Difficult Issues* (*Huangdi bashiyi nan jing* 黃帝八十一難經).[269] Again, this early medical classic is connected to physiognomy theories. The forty-seventh of the so-called difficult issues deals with the question of why the head among all the organs is the most cold-resistant, to which the answer is that 'the head is an assembling point of all the yang channels. All the yin channels go up from the two feet, and reach a person's chest and then go back, but only yang channels go up to the head and ears. This makes the head cold-resistant.' [270]

This explains why the head resembles the features of heaven, for heaven is traditionally believed to be round and an assembling point of all the yang energy in the cosmos.[271] Therefore, the reason why the head 'symbolizes' heaven is that the two are physically the same. They are both composed of the same yang energy such that they are essentially the same thing; the head is heaven in a bodily cosmos. Again, this is the point where physiognomic body homology differs from the traditional structuralist and linguistic sense of homology in a

[269] Which is described as a Han text but probably restored in the Song, see Michael Loewe, *Early Chinese texts*, 146.
[270] See *Nanjing jizhu*, 325.
[271] See *Huainan zi, jingshen xun*, 100.

modern Euro-American academic context. Homology here is not limited to the 'visual' as well as structural similarities between a macro-system as a whole and its components as two distinctively different entities, like a clock and its toothed gears.[272] Homology here in the physiognomy of the head means that the reason why the head and the cosmos share these morphological as well as structural similarities is that they are essentially the same, only different in their scales. The head and the upper part of the universe are made of the same type of energy and works in the same way. Therefore, the body and the cosmos are unified in their ultimate similarities, not separated as different things.

The importance of the head and the face leads to a very detailed method of inspection in the manuals. Firstly, there are multiple ways and perspectives with which to read the face. A rhyming passaged called 'The Pictorial Song of the Thirteen Points' (*Shisan buwen zong tu ge* 十三部位總圖歌) lists the thirteen most important and frequently-used facial points in physiognomic inspections. All of the points are vertically aligned along the central line of the face, from forehead to lower jaw:

The Heavenly Centre (*tianzhong* 天中)
The Heavenly Court (*tiannting* 天庭)
The Minister of Work (*sikong* 司空)
The Just Point (*zhongzheng* 中正)
The Hall of the Seal (*yintang* 印堂)
The Root of the Mountain (*shangen* 山根)
The Superior Year (*nianshang* 年上)
The Superior Life (*shoushang* 壽上)
The Tip of Measurement (*zhuntou* 準頭)
The Human Midpoint (*renzhong* 人中)
The Water Star (*shuixing* 水星)
The Container of Liquids (*chengjiang* 承漿)

[272] Which is clearly stated in anthropological theories of homology, see Hanks, 'Pierre Bourdieu and the practices of language,' 67-83.

The Ground Pavilion (dige 地閣)[273]

Figure 1 The General Index of the Thirteen Points (*Shisan buwei zongyao tu* 十三部位總要圖) in *Shenxiang quanbian*.[274]

These are the most frequently-used facial points in physiognomic inspections. The points of The Container of Liquids, and The Ground Pavilion are also acupuncture points.[275] There are more points listed that are horizontally aligned with each of the thirteen points. By only looking at the list of thirteen points, we can hardly tell what the exact functions of these points

[273] See *Mayi shenxiang*, *juan* 1, 3.
[274] See *Shenxiang quanbian*, *juan* 1, 3.
[275] See Paul Unschuld, *Medicine in China*, 136.

are in knowing fortune. Cathrine Despeux traces the names these thirteen points back to the Dunhuang manuscripts on divination and argues that these names are connected with the Tang development of facial diagnosis in medicine.[276] Another lyrical passage from the same manual 'The Song of the Flowing Years and Moving Qi in the Body Parts' (*Liunian yunqi buwei ge* 流年運氣部位歌) provides some clues about the referential roles of these points on the face. According to this song, the body can be divided into one hundred areas, and each area represents one year in a person's life.[277] When inspecting the qi and countenance of the face, each of these spatial coordinates refers to the fortune of a particular year in relation to a person's age; qualities of qi and countenance in each area reflect the weal and woe of that year. In other words, spatial and morphological features of the face indicate a pattern of temporal movement. If one particular area is shining with luminous qi and good color, and its flesh and bones are in an appropriate condition, then this person will have a propitious life in the year that area represents, and vice versa. If a person's age surpasses a hundred years, then the reading of the areas goes back to the first one, and a new cycle starts all over again. Within this facial structure, the thirteen vital points are linked to a person's specific age, and they can be categorized into three groups according to where they belong on a one-hundred-year spectrum:

Group 1	
Tianzhong	Age 16
Tianting	Age 19
Sikong	Age 22
Zhongzheng	Age 25
Yintang	Age 28

[276] See Catherine Despeux, 'From Prognosis to Diagnosis of Illness in Tang China,' 176-206.
[277] *Shenxiang quanbian, juan* 1, 21.

Group 2	
Shangen	Age 41
Nianshang	Age 44
Shoushang	Age 45
Zhuntou	Age 48
Renzhong	Age 51
Group 3	
Shuixing	Age 60
Chengjiang	Age 61
Dige	Age 71

Table 2 Groups of Important Points and Corresponding Ages.

The thirteen points in the Flowing Year Song cover major phases of a person's life, from 16 to 71. Between the three groups, each group roughly covers ten years of a person's life. This year gap tallies with another way of dividing the face in physiognomy called 'The Division of Three Realms and Three Sections' (*sancai santing* 三才三停). The terms *sancai* and *santing* recur in many different places in various manuals. The term 'Three Realms' first appears in the Appended Statements (*xici* 系辭) of the *Book of Changes*, referring to the most fundamental elements in the universe: heaven, earth and humanity.[278] In a passage called 'On the Three Realms and Three Sections' (*Sancai santing lun* 三才三停論) in the *Water Reflection* manual, an explanation is given for this method of inspecting the face. In the physiognomic application of the Three Sections, the forehead is heaven, the nose humanity, and the chin earth.[279] They should be in harmonious proportions and be full and broad. The Three Sections refer to the facial areas between the hairline and eye brows, the eyebrows and nose tip, and the nose tip and chin point. Each area represents a temporal phase of a person's entire life, the first section youth, the second section middle age, and the last section old age. The three sections should

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[278] See *Yijing jianyi*, *juan* 8, 13.
[279] See *Shuijing shenxiang*, *juan* 1, 25.

be equal in length and width and be broad and full. This way of division, as general as it is, shows a logic similar the Thirteen Points and Flowing Years inspection in that they all regard the facial space as a mirror of time. This means that the pattern of the temporal movement of a person's life can be spatialized on the face. The spatial structure of the face is a structure of time, and morphological and energetic features in this facial space tallies with according situations in time.

Broadly speaking, the whole 'Song of the Flowing Years and Moving Qi in the Body Parts' introduces a medical and astrological theory that already appears in the *Inner Canon*, and then applies it to physiognomy. This is known as the Five Moving Phases and Six Moving Qi Theory (*Wuyun liuqi* 五運六氣), or more concisely as the Moving Qi Theory. This theory received fervent discussion and was systematically developed in the Song and Ming dynasties. It was well-integrated into the contemporary calendric system.[280] The Moving Qi Theory allocates one energetic Phase of the Five Phases and the yin and yang divisions to the annual appellations of each year, which is a combination of two symbolic characters from the Ten Heavenly Stems and Twelve Earthly Branches. That is to say, the qi of each year has a particular cosmological and energetic property according to each year's annual appellation.[281] This property is reflected in the meteorological phenomena of the year. It also influences the microcosmic system of the body. The theory has an intricate numerological method of calculating the qualities of qi in each year, and from that discovering climatic impacts on a person's body. Manfred Porkert, in his minute explanation of the Moving Qi Theory, points out that this system strongly emphasizes the circularity of the movement of qi, stipulating the basic

[280] See Jia Dedao, *Zhongguo yixue shi lue*, 157-159.
[281] See *Yunqi yilan*, *juan* 1, 12-14.

60-year cycle as a unit of such movement, and also that this system applies the spatial structure of heaven to explain the temporal movement of qi in a year.[282] Ma Weiqi believes that this way of understanding the movement of qi in different years actually came from the observation of the spatial movement of qi in the sky among different celestial bodies.[283] In other words, the Moving Qi system also shows an inclination to use a spatial pattern to explain temporal movements of the universe.

In the 'Song of the Flowing Years and Moving Qi in the Body Parts', the Stems and Branches are also used to mark the circulation of fortune on a face. From the age of 76, one Earthly Branch reflects the fortune of two years, which means that the twelve Branches cover the last twenty-four years of a full circle of a hundred years. Every annual point of the hundred-year cycle has a Phase in charge. The 'Verse of the Moving Qi' (*Yunqi koujue* 運氣口訣) in the same manual shows that the Five Phases also influence a person's annual fortune in a cyclical way.[284] Water controls the first year, Wood the second year, Metal the third year, Earth the fourth year, and Fire the fifth year, then the same order begins again. Although we cannot see exactly why the Five Phases move in this circular order, the reason why Water is the initial Phase of life seems to be related to Chinese water cosmology. In the Warring States Period philosophical text *Guanzi* 管子, rewritten in the Western Han, water is regarded as the origin of the myriad things, and the human body is generated from water.[285] Sarah Allan remarks that in early China, water is depicted as the nourishing and fertilizing power fundamental to all forms of life, an attribute that other Phases do not share.[286] The excavated

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282 See Manfred Porkert, *The Theoretical Foundation of Chinese Medicine*, 55-87.
283 See Ma Weqi, *Zhongyi yunqi xue jianming jiedu*, 33.
284 See *Shenxiang quanbian*, *juan* 1, 22-23.
285 See *Guanzi*, *Shuidi*, 236.
286 See Sarah Allan, *The Way of Water*, 76.

Warring States bamboo strips Guodian Chujian 郭店楚簡 contain a very similar cosmogonic theory stating that the Ultimate One (*taiyi* 太一) gives birth to water and their mutual movement gives birth to the myriad.[287]

The circular pattern of the facial space resembles the movements of a person's time in life. As Catherine Despeux mentions, the macrocosmic Moving Qi theory was, to many Song and Ming scholars, both divinatory and medical.[288] Yet the Moving Qi theory we see in the physiognomy manuals is not as complicated and numerological as the calendric one, apart from the pulse physiognomy system, which adopts the entire Moving Qi system for divinatory predictions, simply listing a fixed circulation of fortune on the face. Although elsewhere in the manual it is mentioned that the inspection of the qi of a person's face should be related to the Phase of the particular year, season, month, and even day of the inspection, in the song itself no further explanations are given on this issue. But what the song does show is the idea that the linear time in a person's life, one year after another, is manifested on the body as a circular spatial structure. This understanding of time may go a step further from the phenomenological understanding of 'embodied time' in which time as a concept is structured and molded by people's physical experiences in the material world.[289] The pattern of time is not only experienced but cosmologically generated. Although the body is still given its importance in the physiognomic understanding of personal time, the pattern of time is actually not confined to the body's specific relationship to spatio-temporal situations. Instead, time is predisposed and predetermined by a person's physiology in relation to the cosmos. Time is recognized as

[287] For analysis of it, see Dirk Meyer, *Philosophy on Bamboo*, 209-226.

[288] See Catherine Despeux, 'The system of the five circulatory phases and the six seasonal influences,' 121-166.

[289] See Margaret Wilson, 'Six views of embodied cognition,' 625–636.

the body's potential, and the pattern of its potential is already shown on the face. Schipper and Wang find out that in texts of early Daoist rituals, the inner bodily time is not only seen as a part of the cosmic time, but actually produces time outside the human body.[290] This means that in Daoist rituals, outer time is seen as an extension of the bodily time. Thus a person's bodily time is an index of his or her life as well as the movement of the cosmos. That is to say, the body not only resembles the cosmos in their same energetic substance and structure, but also in the way in which the cosmos moves. The homology between the body and the cosmos therefore also indicates that the body and the cosmos share the same mechanism.

In addition to this minute way of analyzing faces, there are several similar and easier methods of categorizing facial space for prognostications that seem to have come into circulation at a later date. These categorizations of facial space again prove that from a physiognomic perspective, human beings' social time is 'spatialized'. Lineal time of a person's life is located on different directions and areas of a facial space, indicating that time is actually spatial and corporeal. Seven different types of facial divisions are placed under the Moving Qi Song in the *Mayi* manual and the *Water Reflection* manual, the Master Liuzhuang manual, and the *Compendium*, but apart from the trigram system, six of these specific ways are not yet found in any manuals produced before the Ming dynasty.[291] The Dunhuang manuscripts do not have any of the seven methods of categorization. From my observation of different anecdotal writings, only in the early Ming collection of physiognomy stories *Discernment on Figures in the*

[290] See Kristofer Schipper and Wang Hsiu-huei, 'Progressive and regressive time cycles in Taoist ritual,' 185-205.

[291] At the beginning of the first or second juans of each of these manauls, these categorizations are given as a guidance to the inspection of the face, and these texts are by and large the same. See *Mayi shenxiang*, *juan* 1, 6-16, *Shuijing shenxiang*, *juan* 1, 5-29, *Liuzhuang xiangfa*, juan 1, 9-11, 22-24, and *Shenxiang quanbian*, *juan* 1, 28-37, *juan* 2, 1-25.

Past and Present (*Gujin shijian* 古今識鑒) some terms in these categorizations appear.[292] My sense is that these common categorizations of facial areas in the Ming manuals are Ming inventions, or at least systematized and put in text during the Ming dynasty. These seven categorizations of the face also shows specific frameworks in which the body unifies social and cosmic orders and through which the spatial order of the body contain a pattern of time.

The first way of categorization is called 'The Twelve Palaces' (*shier gong* 十二宮).[293] Twelve points are identified as 'palaces' and each is given a name directly related to the type of fortune it represents. These twelve palaces are the same as the way in which star signs are positioned in Chinese astro-divination *Ziwei doushu* 紫微斗數, which first appeared in the Song dynasty.[294] This system divides the facial space according to a social order of different aspects in a person's social life, indicating that the facial space is a replica of a 'social space' of a person. Different social relations in a person's life are also collectively reflected on the face, which means that the body is not only an ensemble of individual's social life, but also relevant people in this person's life. The glabella point (between eye brows) is the Palace of Life (*ming gong* 命宮), in charge of wisdom and the overall fate of a person. The nose is the Palace of Wealth (*caibo gong* 財帛宮), the point of material affluence. The eyebrows are the Palace of Fraternity (*xiongdi gong* 兄弟宮), which displays the fortune of a person's brothers. In addition, the area right above the head of each eye brow, according to another passage, is known as the Palace of Parents (*fumu gong* 父母宮).[295] The left point is called the Solar Horn (*rijiao* 日角), which reflects the situation of the paternal side, and the right one is the Lunar Horn (*yuejiao*

292 For example, the term five mountains (*wuyue*) and six halls (*liufu*) appear in the stories of Yuan Lizhuang, see *Gujin shijian*, juan 7, 7.
293 See *Shuijing shenxiang*, *juan* 1, 8-11.
294 See *Ziwei doushu quanshu*, 18.
295 See '*Shier gong mijue*' in *Mayi shenxiang*, *juan* 1, 7.

月角), which reflects the situation of the maternal side. Yet this palace is not included in the Twelve Palaces system in the *Compendium*, and none of the other palaces shows a person's parental information, whereas, in the *Water Reflection* manual, the Palace of Parents is listed as the twelfth palace, instead of the Palace of Appearance which will be discussed further below. It is possible to read from the face a variety of aspects of the parental situation, including their health, their marriage, their sexual life, their financial situation, their longevity, and even whether the person is their legitimate child or not.

The upper eyelids are the Palace of Estate (*tianzhai gong* 田宅宮), which shows a person's future situation in terms of real estate and family legacy. The lower eyelids are the Palace of Descendants (*nannü gong* 男女宮), the point of the fortune of a person's offspring. The chin is called the Palace of Servants (*nupu gong* 奴僕宮), and interestingly, it does not only show the fortune or any situation of the servants themselves but whether the person being inspected will have the power (*quan* 權) to control them or not. Thus the chin stresses the power and ability to manage a person's subordinates, and how loyal a person's subordinates will be. The eye corners and crow's-feet are called the Palace of Wives (*qiqie gong* 妻妾宮). Again, the content of the fortune of a person's wife or concubines revealed by this palace centre around the husband, including the loyalty of his wife, the material condition of their marriage, or whether a person's wife can help him to earn more salary or not. This palace also shows evidence of promiscuity of a person, which is regarded as a negative influence on marriage in general. The Mountain Root point on the nose mentioned in the Thirteen Point system is in this context the Palace of Diseases and Mishaps (*ji e gong* 疾厄宮), which tells a person's future health conditions and possible mishaps. A person's temples are defined as the Palace of

Transports (*qianyi gong* 遷移宮). This palace is the reflection of a person's future migrations and travel situations. Different attributes of this area indicate different circumstances in the future in which a person may leave his family and travel.

The mid-upper forehead is called the Palace of Emolument (*guanlu gong* 官祿宮), which adumbrates a person's political future, as well as possible lawsuits. Following the Palace of Emoluments is the Palace of Luck and Virtue (*fude gong* 福德宮), which runs to the left and right sides of a person's upper forehead close to the hair line. This palace is in charge of the movement of a person's fortune in an entire life span and a person's mental/emotional status. In other words, the Palace of Luck and Virtue shows more generally when good and bad fortune will happen to a person, be it his adolescence, middle age or senior years. The two sides are also called the Barn of Heaven (*tiancang* 天倉). When inspecting, this Palace should be examined along with the chin, the Pavilion of Earth, which covers the full spectrum of a person's life. It is also vital to see whether the 'Five Stars' (*wuxing* 五星) on the face are located in their proper positions or not. The term 'Five Stars guarding the centre' (*wuxing chaogong* 五星朝拱) indicates that the five sense organs on the face and their relations to the Palace of Luck and Virtue also reflect the movement of fortune. This also means that different categorization systems of the facial space are not separate from each other, but co-exist with each other and should be used in reference to each other. Before we continue with a discussion of the system of the Five Stars on the face, one last location is left on the list, the Palace of Appearance (*xiangmao gong* 相貌宮). The Palace of Appearance is not a single point or area on the face, but the face as a whole and the inspection of it largely depends on the panoramic view, the overall shape, structure and spirit of the face.

Apart from the possibility of seeing a face as a combination of different palaces, there are different methods of analyzing facial structures and describing divisions of the face. These divisions of the face are also less intricate than the previous systems. Different systems also resemble each other in the locations of crucial points. The face is first divided into 'Five Officials' (*wuguan* 五官). The ears are the Officials of Adoption and Audition (*caiting guan* 采聽官). The eye brows are the Officials of Long Life Guarantee (*baoshou guan* 保壽官). The eyes are the Officials of Inspection (*jiancha guan* 監察官). The nose is the Official of Judgment and Discernment (*shenbian guan* 審辨官). The mouth is the Official of Income and Expenditure (*chuna guan* 出納官). The five officials are believed to represent the good fortune in different phases of a person's life. According to the *Water Reflection* manual, each official covers ten years of a person's life:

> Only if one official in the Five Officials is flawless, [a person] can enjoy ten years of good fortune. If all five of them are flawless, then a person's nobility lasts until he dies.
> 但于五官之中，倘得一官成，可享十年之貴也。如得五官俱成，其貴老終。[296]

Here the physiological features of the Five Officials are seen as the pattern of temporal movement of a person's life manifested on the face, so that time can be read from the analysis of space. Their names seem to have no conspicuous connection with what kind of fortune they represent, but *The Pandect of the Five Officials* (*Wuguan zonglun* 五官總論)in the *Water Reflection* manual shows how different physical features of each official directly denote certain kind of fortunes.[297] This means that in this system, each 'official' represents both the social themes and temporal movement in one's life. The Five Officials are also seen as the mirror of the viscera

[296] See *Shuijing shenxiang, juan* 1, 13.
[297] *Ibid.*

and inner organs. The ears show the status of the kidneys, the eyebrows the gallbladder and the heart, with the nose, the lungs, and the mouth the overall health of the five viscera. According to this text, a person's ears, eyebrows and eyes form a hierarchical relationship in their spatial positions; the ears are the lord of the eyebrows, and the eye brows are the lord of the eyes. Therefore, the ears should ideally be higher than the eyebrows, and the eyebrows should be significantly higher and broader than the eyes. Only in this harmonious hierarchical structure can a person's good fortune be established. The Five Officials system highlights temporality in a facial space. With each official in charge of ten years of a person's life, a face is again seen as the map of the temporal movement of fortune. The two methods of categorization above fuse a person's social life aspects with the body.

The face is also depicted as a geographic landscape in small, and structures and patterns in nature are also regarded as tallying with the face. The idea that a real-life landscape can be represented on a smaller scale, such as a hand, the face, a house or a landscape in a flowerpot is fundamental to the Chinese culture of micro-geography.[298] The Five Mountains and Four Rivers system (*wuyue sidu* 五嶽四瀆) depicts the facial space as a circular geographic space with mountains and rivers mapped on to each other. The mountains and rivers are named after actual landscapes. The forehead is the south mountain, Mount Heng (*Hengshan* 衡山). The chin is the north mountain, Mount Heng (*Hengshan* 恆山). The left cheek bone is the east mountain, Mount Tai (*Taishan* 泰山), and the right cheek bone is the west mountain, Mount Hua (*Huashan* 華山).[299] The nose is the middle mountain Mount Song (*Songshan* 嵩山). Directions on the face follow the coordinates, with the north underneath, the south above, the

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[298] See Rolf Stein, *The World in Miniature*, 72.
[299] See Wuyue sidu in *Mayi shenxian*, *juan* 1, 8.

east on the left, and west on the right side, which is more frequently seen in early Chinese cosmology.[300] This way of dividing the facial areas shows the importance of centrality over the periphery, thus the centre should be high and uplifted so that the other four mountains can lean towards the master and find support on it. As the text suggests, '…the Five Mountains should be orientated towards each other' (*wuyue xuyao xiangchao* 五嶽須要相朝).[301] The Five Mountains are all preferably be high and steady. In the *Iron Halberd* manual, the Five Mountains system is also related to Chinese *fengshui* theories. If one mountain on a person's face is significantly better than the rest, then this person should live in a house that is facing towards the same direction. In this case, a person's physiological configuration is made to tally with that of the residential environment, and good fortune can be magnified.[302] The reason why physiognomic inspection and geomantic inspection are considered as the same in their principles is that both the body and natural landscapes are the consequences of cosmic qi movement, and the morphological and energetic formation of the two are exactly the same.[303]

In contrast to the mountains, rivers on the face ought to be deep and long. The ears are the Yangtze River (*Jiangdu* 江瀆), the eyes the Yellow River (*Hedu* 河瀆), the mouth the Huai River (*Huaidu* 淮瀆), the nostrils the Ji River (*Jidu* 濟瀆). The Four Rivers on the face should resemble the four rivers in reality, which are broad, deep, long, and flowing. Banks and shores of each river should also be well shaped and steady so that a person's family fortune can be protected. Connections between mountains and rivers are also mentioned. The passage in the *Water Reflection* manual emphasizes the importance of mutual dependence and mutual

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[300] See Liling, *Zhongguo fangshu zhengkao*, 101-107.
[301] See *Mayi shenxiang*, *juan* 1, 8.
[302] See *Shenxiang tie guandao*, *juan* 3, 26.
[303] See *Shenxiang tie guandao*, *juan* 3, 28.

influence between mountains and rivers on the face. The passage quotes an unknown physiognomy book called *The Scripture from the Mysterious Cave* (*Dongxuan jing* 洞玄經):

> Rivers are elegant because of mountains; mountains are clear because of the rivers.
> 水以山為秀，山以水為清。[304]

On the other hand, mountains and rivers on the face are also distinguished according to the different sides of fortune they stand for. Mountains are seen as a sign of a person's social station in the future, be it noble or not, and rivers are seen as a sign of that person's future wealth.[305] Mountains on the face are believed to be formed at the earliest stages of a person's life. When inspecting a child, even the bone patterns of the child may not be complete, but mountains are already fixed, and the first mountain formed is the central mountain: the nose.[306] Thus the mountains system on the face is considered the most stable signs for inspection. The system of mountains and rivers again takes the body as a unity of social and natural orders. The order and structure of natural landscapes and patterns of a person's social life correspond to each other and are connected through the body.

Further, the face is divided into nine geographic administrative areas according to the directions of the Eight Trigram system, known as Nine Prefectures and Eight Trigrams (*jiuzhou bagua* 九州八卦).[307] We see scattered evidence of using Eight Trigram divination from the *Book of Changes* to interpret human body features for fortune-telling from early Chinese texts; using Eight Trigrams for body divination and categorizing the body according to the trigrams has been a continuous discourse, unlike other methods of categorization mentioned.[308] In the

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[304] See *Shuijing shenxiang*, *juan* 1, 5.
[305] See *Shenxiang tie guandao*, *juan* 4, 30.
[306] See *Liuzhuang xiangfa*, 5
[307] See '*Jiuzhou bagua ganzhi tu*' in *Mayi shenxiang*, *juan* 1, p.3.
[308] See *Qianfu lun*, *Xianglie*, 310, and the story of physiognomist Guan Lu in *Sanguo zhi*, *juan* 29, 824.

physiognomic system, *Jizhou* 冀州 is the chin, the north side of the face, and it is on the location of the trigram *kan* 坎☵. This is the prefecture that shows the fortune of a person's family estates. *Yangzhou* 揚州 is the forehead, the south side of the face, and it is on the location of the trigram *li* 離☲. This is the prefecture that shows the fortune of a person's personal living conditions. *Qingzhou* 青州 is the left cheek, the east side of the face, and it is on the location of the trigram *zhen* 震☳. This is the prefecture that shows the fortune of a person's financial circumstances. *Liangzhou* 梁州 is the right cheek, the west side of the face, and it is on the location of the trigram *dui* 兌☱. This is the prefecture that shows the fortune of a person's virtue and credibility. Yongzhou 雍州 is beneath the left dimple near the mouth, the northwest side of the face, and it is on the location of the trigram qian 乾☰. This is the prefecture that shows the fortune of a person's political career. *Yanzhou* 兗州 is on the opposite side of *Yongzhou*, the northeast side of the face, and it is on the location of the trigram *gen* 艮☶. This is the prefecture that shows the fortune of a person's safety in life. Jinzhou is near the left temple point on the forehead, the southwest side of the face, and it is on the location of the trigram *kun* 坤☷. This is the prefecture that shows the future of a person's intelligence and literary ability. *Xuzhou* 徐州 is on the opposite side, the southeast side of the face, and it is on the location of the trigram *xun* 巽☴. This is the prefecture that shows the future of a person's offspring. In the middle of the nose is *Yuzhou* 豫州. This is the prefecture that shows a person's longevity and general fortune. Names and directions of prefectures in this system are the same with those in the early Chinese geographic text the 'Tribute of Yu' (*Yugong* 禹貢) representing an imagined early Chinese geo-political as well as cosmological geography.[309] A systematic

[309] See *Yugong* in *Shangshu*, 1-4. Also see John D. Wong, 'The shifting concept of space and territory in China during the Warring States era,' 1-35.

combination of the Nine Prefecture and Eight Trigram models in the context of qi movement in the cosmos perhaps appeared during early Tang dynasty and was applied to geomantic theories.[310]

This Nine Prefectures and Eight Trigrams system adopts the trigrams on the face in the pattern known as the 'Posterior Heaven Eight Trigram Position' (*houtian bagua fangwei* 後天八卦方位). First seen in early China, this way of arranging the spatial order of the eight trigrams was further systemized and popularized by the Song scholar Shao Yong 邵雍 (1011-1077) to explain the rules and dynamics of human society.[311] The Eight Trigram Positions were understood in the Song and Ming intellectual context as a pattern of energetic flows of the cosmos and movements in human society, and were correlated with the calendric and geomantic systems. The Nine Prefectures and Eight Trigrams system in the physiognomy manuals makes this connection explicit, and only in the Ming manuals we see a clear application of this system on the body for divination. Facial structure here is related to the inspection of the countenance and the movement of qi on the face.[312] According to the rules, the colors in different prefectures that appear at different times of the year can precisely reflect a person's future in great detail. We shall further probe into this in our discussion of the inspection of qi and the facial colors.

The last major way of facial division is that of the Five Stars and Six Celestial Bodies (*wuxing liuyao* 五星六曜).[313] The left ear is the Wood Star (*muxing* 木星), and the right ear is

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[310] See Lin Minsheng, 'Xiao Ji *Wuxing dayi* de yinyang wuxing yu kongjian fenge sixiang,' 1-50.
[311] See Richard Smith, *Fathoming the Cosmos and Ordering the World*, 46, and Zhu Bokun, *Yixue zhexue shi*, 185-187.
[312] Which is also seen in a Dunhuang text from the Tang, see Despeux's article 'From prognosis to diagnosis'.
[313] See *Shuijing shenxiang*, *juan* 1, 5-7. These 'stars' might refer to the planets in modern astronomy, but because of the complexity of what they actually refer to, I translate them simply as 'stars'.

the Metal Star (*jinxing* 金星). Again, they denote a person's fortune in the early stages of life. The mouth is the Water Star (*shuixing* 水星), which reflects a person's literary technique and wisdom. The forehead is the Fire Star (*huoxing* 火星), which foretells a person's political achievement and intelligence. The Earth Star (*tuxing* 土星) is the nose. The Earth Star reflects a person's fortune in general, including longevity and wealth. The left eye is the Greater Yang (*taiyang* 太陽), which refers to the sun. The right eye is the Greater Yin (*taiyin* 太陰), which refers to the moon. The nose bridge is called the Hard Light of the Moon, (*yuebei* 月孛), and the glabella point is called the Purple Qi (*ziqi* 紫氣). The left eyebrow is called *luohou* 羅睺, and the right eyebrow is called *jidu* 計都. These two names refer to the two celestial bodies in classical Chinese astrology which were named after two Indian deities, Rāhu and Ketu, but frequently seen in Daoist rituals from the Song dynasty onwards.[314] In fact, the eleven names listed above all belong to the Daoist astrological theogony known as 'The Eleven Celestial Bodies' (*shiyi yao* 十一曜) or 'Seven Rulers and Four Auxiliaries' (*qizheng siyu* 七政四余) which was first seen in the Tang dynasty. The seven rulers are the sun, the moon, and the stars of Metal, Wood, Fire, Water, and Earth. The Four Auxiliaries are *yuebei*, *ziqi*, *luohou*, and *jidu*. Huang Yinong points out that this astrological theogony, especially the Four Auxiliaries, was often used in personal divination in late imperial China, losing its larger astronomical and astrological connotations.[315] These stars are also important signs in Chinese alchemy, each represents different elements in the process of making elixirs.[316] The system of the Five Stars and Six Celestial Bodies in physiognomic manuals was not regarded as an independent system

[314] See Niu Weixing, 'Tang Song zhiji daojiao shiyi yao xingshen chongbai de qiyuan he liuxing,' 85-95.
[315] See Huang Yinong, 'Qing qianqi dui siyu dingyi ji cunfei de zhengzhi,' 201-210, and 12 (04), 344-354.
[316] See Edward Schafer, *Pacing the Void*, 35-41.

but should be used along with the Five Officials system and the Five Mountains system. Different methods of reading the face should be combined in physiognomic inspections.

There is also the Six Halls system (*liufu* 六府) and the Eight Schools system (*ba xuetang* 八學堂), yet they are seldom used in the manuals, except for brief references at the beginning of the majority of them. Their content is similar to the previous systems to the point that they almost look like a repetition of the others. It is possible that these names and ways of division were used by different physiognomists in different periods of time in different areas of China. The actual content of the rules remains stable despite these different names.[317] Names of physiognomic points on the face are not mere appellations, but indicate subtle rules of harmonious structure and auspiciousness in personal fortune. Different systems were not parallel to each other, but were, as we have seen, considered in the same paradigm and regarded as coexistent. So far these different ways of analyzing the face depict it as a comprehensive replica of the universe, with different officials, geographic landscapes and celestial bodies all positioned on the corresponding facial areas. The face is seen as a microcosm within another microcosm, which is the whole body. The physiological features of the face form an index or projection of a person's lifetime. Although the body is always transforming through time, larger patterns of its movement are already visible at the beginning of a person's life, spatialized on the face in accordance with the cosmic order. This means that the body encompasses people's mind and sociality, since the body prefigures one's mind status and sociality as its potentials. A person's ears as In Deleuze's review of Spinoza's stress on the body he highlights the body as an important parallel to our mind in the composition of one's

[317] See Zhuang Huiqi, 'Zhongguo zhonggu shiqing de xiangshu yu xiangshu lilun,' 10-25.

self.[318] Different from this European theoretical as well as metaphysical discourse, the body is not seen as a parallel to human beings' mind, but the very source of it in Ming physiognomy manuals, meaning that the body contains the mind and generates the mind and its future patterns. The body is the unity of individuals' physicality, sociality, time and the cosmos.

We see in different styles of facial space divisions an ostensibly 'metaphorical' body as well. Different areas of the face are signified as mountains, stars, geographical locations and officials. Yet this metaphorical body is conceptualized differently from a classical linguistic point of view. Lakoff and Johnson make it clear that in the European linguistic as well as philosophical tradition, the metaphorical way of thinking means that the world is understood metaphorically rather than literally, using metaphor to build up conceptual, cognitive, and experiential modes.[319] This metaphorical way of thinking links two essentially different but partially similar things or concepts together because of their partial resemblance. The reason why a metaphor works is because of the innate differences and partial similarities of two things in relations to human being's bodily as well as mental experiences and the process of conceptualization. That is to say, only two essentially different things can be related together in a metaphor due to their superficial similarities. Yet metaphors in the 'body homology' in Chinese physiognomy follows an opposite logic. As we have seen as will further investigate later in this chapter, the body, material things, and the cosmos are understood as essentially the same in Chinese physiognomy; they are formed by the movement of qi, the primary energetic force of the universe. The apparent differences between for example the human body and a written character are only superficial, whereas the pattern of their qi composition as a

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318 See Gilles Deleuze, *Spinoza*, 17-25.

319 See George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live by*, 52-56.

deeper layer of their material existence are the same. Thus two things can be related together in a metaphor is due to their partial differences and essential 'sameness'. The reason why areas on the face can be understood as stars, rivers and mountains, officials and geographical locations is because these things are the same in their qi composition.

In the texts that described the structuring of the face, there is little mention of detailed rules of inspection and prediction. Most of the rules mentioned prioritize the need for harmony between different facial areas and stress the physical qualities of the face, such as brightness, plumpness, and smoothness, but they are all described in a very general manner. The features of the bones, flesh, qi, and color on the face are subsumed into different systems and evaluated under each system's conceptualization of the face. All in all, these ways of understanding the face merely provide the guiding 'vocabulary' for detailed physiognomy inspections. As technical as they are, they hardly contain anything specific about the methodology of physiognomic inspections. These ways cannot stand alone without an understanding of the specific physical characteristics of the body and their concrete links to fortune.

Bones, Flesh, Qi, Color, and the Spirit: From the Formed to the Formless

If we go back to the principles of inspection mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, we can see that apart from the head and the face, many other aspects of the body are outlined as subjects of physiognomic examination as well. In the Ten Inspections quoted above, the physicality of the whole body is also emphasized along with the head. In the following examples of the ten methods of inspection, the body is understood in its different physiological

components. These include flesh (*rou* 肉), bones (*gu* 骨), qi, color (*se* 色), spirit (*shen* 神), and sound and voice (*sheng* 聲). Other passages at the beginning of the *Compendium* also show a similar way of understanding the human body. The passage named 'Tang Ju's Physiognomy of the Spirit and Qi' (*Tang Ju xiang shen qi* 唐舉相神氣) divides the human body into form (*xing* 形) and spirit and qi (*shen qi* 神氣).[320] It describes the formed flesh body as the result of the movement of qi in the universe, and the formed body as a vessel of the energetic force of the universe. The spirit is the fire of a lamp, and qi is the lamp-oil, whereas the form of the body is the external side of a lamp. In the dialogue ascribed to Yuan Liuzhuan and the Yongle Emperor in the Ming dynasty, the emperor asks Yuan how to read people's good and bad fortune, and Yuan answers:

> …human beings resemble heaven and earth and conform to the Five Phases. [One] should distinguish between the south, the north, the east, and the west, and then determine the pattern of form and spirit [of that person]
> 人同天地相合五行，要分南北東西，須定形神格局。[321]

It is in the Ming manuals that we see for the first time the theoretical explanations of relationships between these body layers in a physiognomic framework. Although in *Qianfu lun*, the Eastern Han scholar Wang Fu 王符 (83-170) already distinguished between the inspection of the bones and the inspection of qi and color as two different methods of physiognomic prediction, he hardly made any comments on the relationship between the two.[322] What he did point out is that in his time, bone inspection was the most important method of physiognomy, as bone patterns were considered vital in deciding fortune. The

[320] See *Shenxiang quanbian*, *juan* 1, 9.
[321] See *Shuijing shenxiang*, *juan* 4, 32.
[322] See the passage in *Qianfu lun* called '*Xianglie*,' 310.

pattern of the form and spirit (*xingshen geju* 形神格局) mentioned above denotes the significance of interrelations between the morphological aspects of the body and the energetic/fluid aspects of the body. The body is demarcated into two dimensions, the dimension of concrete form and the dimension of elusive qi and spirit. In *The Physiognomy of Master Liuzhuang*, the body is divided into four dimensions: bones, body parts and points in the flesh (*buwei* 部位), form and spirit (*xingshen* 形神), and qi and color (*qise* 氣色).[323] The four aspects of the body are defined here according to their different roles in physiognomic inspections. The bones are the most stable dimension of the body, for the bones reflect the fortune of a person's whole life. The ultimate nobility of a person's life is determined by the bones. The body parts and points in flesh determine the format of changes, ups and downs (*xiaozhang* 消長) in a person's life. The qi and colors reflect specific fortunes in specific years and dates. Unlike the bones, which provide a clear black and white answer about fortune, the body parts and points as well as qi and color show more detailed aspects of fortune.

The relationship between form and spirit is rather vague in this manual, for what it stresses is the spirit of a person. Yet the explanation of the term *xingshen* in *The Physiognomy of Master Liuzhuang* is that the spirit sprouts from the physical form of the body (*shen fayu xing* 神發於形), locating the spirit in the physical form of the body.[324] In this way, what this term refers to is the spirit of a person that lies in and is manifested by the physical form. According to the manual, form and spirit determine changes in fortune. The *Liuzhuang* Manual is not very explicit about what it means by this. Yet the *Iron Halberd* manual records four secrets of physiognomy, the fourth of which is that form and spirit are mutable. Particular methods of

[323] See *Liuzhuang xiangfa*, 35.
[324] *Ibid.*

changing the form and spirit are not stated in the manual, for these are secrets that should not be revealed, but this tallies with the description of form and spirit in the *Liuzhuang* manual, in that unlike the other elements of the body, this particular physical dimension is not completely fixed and can be changed by certain esoteric methods. Thus this dimension of the body is related to the mutability of fortune, the aspect that is not predestined or completely fixed. In our discussion of the mutability of fortune, we will tackle this issue in more detail. The last dimension of the body is color and qi, and this dimension determines the specific fortune of a specific event at a specific time. As we saw in the last chapter, qi and facial color were regarded by the Song and Ming physiognomists as elusive but detailed signs of the time of an important future event happening to a person. If a person could grasp the characteristics of moving qi and color, then it was possible to make predictions in great detail, including the exact date of a future event in a person's life.

These dimensions of the body, despite their frequent presence in the manuals, are not depicted with a completely unified voice. Sometimes the steady morphological dimensions, the bones and flesh, are valued as the prior aspect in inspections, while in some other passages the elusive energetic dimensions are seen as the most fundamental evidence of fortune. However, what does look relatively consistent is the idea that different body dimensions are related to and dependent on each other, and that they together form a body in accordance with the cosmological and numerological rules. Therefore, steady bone features are the essence (*ti* 体) of physiognomy, whereas colors and qi are the effects (*yong* 用).[325] A similar way of understanding the relationship between the physical form of the body and its elusive

[325] See *Shenxiang quanbian*, *juan* 5, 2.

dimensions can be found in early Chinese philosophical discussions.[326] They are seen as different sides of one single entity, the physiognomic body. Physical forms are the foundation of the physiognomic body necessary for its energetic dimensions to flourish:

> The physical form nourishes blood. Blood nourishes qi. Qi nourishes the spirit. Therefore, if the physical form is complete, then qi is complete. If qi is complete, then the spirit is complete.
> 形以養血，血以養氣，氣以養神。故形全則氣全，氣全則神全。[327]

Such a view of the interdependence of different bodily dimensions and the generative relationship between them is in accord with physiological theories in the medical canons such as the *Inner Canon*, in which the physical forms and energetic dimensions of the body are in a mutually beneficial relationship.[328] In physiognomy, harmony between different dimensions of the body leads to good fortune and a more refined demeanor. In the *Iron Halberd* manual, the energetic elements, qi and color, are treated as the products of bones and flesh. Qi is generated by the bones, and color is generated by the flesh of the body.[329] Similar views are found in other manuals as well. The bones, the flesh and blood, or in other words, the morphological dimensions of the body, are generated by the qi of the cosmos.[330] The co-dependence of different bodily dimensions also indicates transformations of each dimension into another. The transformation also partially explains how the cosmos and the body are linked. The primary qi in its perpetual movement manifests itself in the human body, and the dimensions of the human body in this way express different types of this ubiquitous cosmic movement. The bodily dimensions are in perpetual movement and transformation as well. At

[326] See Xing Yurui, *Huangdi neijing de lilun yu fangfa lun*, 63. Also see *Liangshu*, *juan* 48, '*Fan Zhen zhuan*', 665.
[327] See *Shenxiang quanbian*, *juan* 1, 9.
[328] See Liu Jiancheng, '*Huangdi neijing* de xingshen lun sixiang,' 30-41.
[329] See *Shenxiang tie guandao*, *juan* 2, 15.
[330] See *Shenxiang quanbian*, *juan* 1, 9.

the end of this process follows a person's spirit, which is described as the subtle and unadulterated light that lies in the bodily forms and is revealed in the eyes.[331]

The vitality of *shen* 神, the spirit, is valued over all the other physiological dimensions. Historically the meaning of *shen* varied depending on the textual context. Roel Sterckx explores the meaning of *shen* in relation to sacrificial rituals in early China, arguing that in a cultivational sense *shen* referred to a type of ubiquitous, subtle, and refined cosmic force hiding inside the myriad things, as opposed to their physical forms.[332] This way of understanding the spirit, *shen*, was inherited later in the Tang Daoist body cultivation texts as well, which defined *shen* as the root of a person's vitality, whose purification and emancipation became the ultimate goal of Daoist immortality practices.[333] In the physiognomy manuals, the spirit is also understood as a form of volatile and ethereal power or light that lies in human beings' bodily forms and gives life to the leather-bag-like physical form of the body:

> The spirit of heaven lies in the sun, and the spirit of a human being lies in the eyes. [It is only] when the light illuminates things, [that] the four limbs can stretch and move. If the eyes are bright, the spirit is clean. If the eyes are fuzzy, the spirit is blurred. A person's decimus spirit leads to a tenth of clothes and salary, and a person's full spirit leads to the full amount of clothes and salary.
> 天之神在日，人之神在目。光照物，舒揚四體。眼明則神清，眼昏則神濁…人有一分神，則有一分衣祿，有十分神，則有十分衣祿。[334]

Here, the spirit is directly related to a person's material life. The strength and luminosity of the spirit show abundance in material life because the spirit is similar to the sun, which brings life and prosperity to the myriad things. The first sentence of this passage quoted is

331 See *Shenxiang quanbian*, *juan* 2, 22-25, and Damo zushi xiangjue michuan in *Mayi shenxiang*, *juan* 3, 14-15.
332 See: Shen and sacrifice in Warring States and Han philosophy and ritual,' 23-54.
333 See Livia Kohn, 'Eternal life in Taoist mysticism,' 622-640.
334 See *Shuijing shenxiang*, *juan* 2, 13-15.

derived from the Song Neo-Confucian scholar and fortune-teller Shao Yong's work The Book of the August Ultimate Through the Ages (*Huangji jingshi shu* 皇極經世書), in which Shao applied the Eight Trigram and Five Phases numerology to understand the human body.[335] As we have seen, this is not the only time where Ming manuals ascribe physiognomy theories and concepts to medical, philosophical, and cosmological texts. Shao's idea was that the spirit hides itself in the five vicera in the human body, and its light radiates from the eyes. This spirit as the fundamental vitality maintains human beings' bodily forms. Sometimes the spirit is defined as the most decisive element in fortune and longevity in the physiognomic context. Although the bones are seen as the most stable determinants of fortune, they are not the decisive ones. As one manual phrases it 'the spirit inhabits the physical form, but it cannot be seen; qi takes the nourishing of life as the root of life' (*shen ju xing nei buke jian, qi yi yang shen wei minggen* 神居形內不可見，氣以養神為命根). In the end, whether a person will have a noble future or not depends on the quality of the spirit.[336] The spirit is considered the first part of life, a refined form of qi that emerges and comes into being prior to the physical forms and the Five Phases in the body.[337] As the root of life, the significance of the spirit in determining a person's fortune overrules any other bodily dimensions. Even if a person's morphological features are complete and fine but the spirit is not clear in the eyes and the qi is dim, then no matter how propitious a person's morphological features are, this person will still have a bad fortune.[338] Inspections of the spirit allow people to distinguish a person's health from a person's longevity. When a person is suffering from a deadly disease, if the spirit is still bright

[335] See *Huangji jingshi shu*, *juan* 8, 43.
[336] See *Shuijing shenxiang*, *juan* 1, 10.
[337] See *Yuguan zhao shen ju*, 2.
[338] See *Shuijing shenxiang*, *juan* 2, 34.

and visible in the body, he or she will not die.[339] In this way, how long a person will live does not depend on how healthy that person's formed body is, but the condition of this refined energy in the body, the spirit. Diseases are thus a part of someone's fortune and are regarded as events in a person's life rather than as directly related to death. Only in the Ming manuals do we find this detailed understanding of the relationship between the energetic and morphological features of the body, and a strong emphasis on the importance of the spirit in physiognomic inspections, which is absent even in the Dunhuang manuals.

Shen, the 'spirit', became a significantly important and relevant concept in Ming Neo-Confucian philosophy and qi cosmology at the same time. Joseph Adler shows that in a late Song early Yuan Neo-Confucian context, *shen* became one of the most highlighted key concepts for literati to discuss the relationship between human beings and the cosmos.[340] Defined as the most primary, refined and pure form of qi residing inside the body based on early medical classics, the spirit was believed to be the fundamental 'vitality' of individual human being's life and a bridge between individuals' lives and the cosmos in this Song-Yuan discourse. Ming Neo-Confucian intellectuals inherited this discussion of the spirit and repeatedly stated the importance of the spirit in the understanding of the cosmos and bodily as well as moral cultivations.[341] For example, the mid-Ming scholar and official Wang Tingxiang 王廷相 (1474-544) believed that the cosmos and individual human beings are unified in the heart, *xin* 心, and the heart as both the physical organ and a term to describe human mind, is actually a 'house for the spirit to habit' (*qishen zhi she* 棲神之舍).[342] This is something one passage in the

[339] See *Shenxiang tie guandao*, *juan* 1, 13, and *Yuguan zhao shen ju*, 86.
[340] See his 'Varieties of spiritual experience: *Shen* in Neo-Confucian discourse,' 2-120.
[341] See Huang Jili, 'Shenti yu gongfu,' 354-358. Also see Deng Keming, *Wang Yangming sixiang guannian yanjiu*, 46-48 as a good example of the discussion of the spirit in this Ming context.
[342] See *Wang Tingxiang ji*, *Yashu*, 836.

Compendium explicitly expresses, saying that 'the heart is a palace hall for the spirit' (*xin nai shen zhi gongshi* 心乃神之宫室).[343] Both statements are reiterations of the definition of the heart and spirit from the *Inner Canon* cosmology, in which the heart as a container of the spirit is seen as the most supreme organ in the body and the center of qi movement.[344] The spirit according to Wang as the most refined and pristine form of qi is the most intelligent and sensitive part of human body. He even pointed out that as the most fundamental and generative power of life hiding inside the body, the spirit is the bridge through which qi can transform itself into forms (*xing* 形).[345]

This understanding of the spirit in the human body in Wang's writing concurs with the physiognomic discourse of the spirit. The spirit as the root and source of human beings' morphological body and life is regarded as the most powerful and influential element to an individual's life and the unity of different realms and elements of the body. The accordance between Ming physiognomic and Neo-Confucian discourses on the spirit is more than just a coincidence. We have seen that one of the textual as well as theoretical features of Ming physiognomy manuals is an attempt to link physiognomy to classical medical, cosmological, and philosophical texts, from early Chinese texts to Song ones. Wang Tingxiang was well-known for his interest in reinterpreting early Chinese medical, cosmological, and divinatory texts and Song Neo-Confucian cosmology, and so were many other Ming literati.[346] There is no direct textual link between for example Wang's writings on the spirit and those in Ming

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343 See *Shenxiang quanbian*, *juan* 4, 5.
344 See Li Jianmin, *Sisheng zhiyu*, 225.
345 See *Wang Tingxiang ji*, *Shenyan*, 753-754.
346 See Wang Junyan, *Wang Tingxiang yu mingdai qixue*, 13-23, and Elman, 'The unravelling of Neo-Confucianism,' 63-88. Also Zhou Zhichuan, 'Songming lixue zhi taiji benti dui chuantong yixue de yingxiang,' 87-101.

physiognomy manuals. Contemporaneous manuals were perhaps not regarded as important Confucian 'classics' by Ming literati. However, their very similar understandings of the spirit and developments of ideas in previous classical texts suggest that there might have been an intellectual common ground for both physiognomy and literati's theorization of the body during the Ming dynasty. The fact that the physiognomy of the spirit is not seen in any previous physiognomy texts means that it is at least not a textual theme that Ming manuals inherited. Therefore, it is perhaps not completely irrational for us to presume that certainly the emphasis of the spirit in the Ming manuals belongs to a broader Ming intellectual discourse.

The inspection of such a crucial element of life is difficult. As mentioned earlier, the visibility of the spirit is realized as the light in the eyes. To grasp such a subtle kind of life power, one needs to check the qualities of the light of the eyes. In principle, the light of the eyes should be pristine, strong, and concentrated. A muddled and blurred spirit means sudden death or devastating misfortune for a person. The clarity of the spirit (*qing* 清) is repeatedly stressed in most of the manuals as the primary auspicious quality of the spirit. As Kristofer Schipper has pointed out, in traditional Daoist cosmology, the spirit, *shen,* is understood as the purest force in the human body, a form of celestial power hiding inside the body.[347] When examining the eyes, the clear and flourishing spirit should radiate from the eye, yet an overflowing spirit is not a desirable quality. One of the important features of the spirit is its hidden nature (*bulu* 不露). The hidden tranquility of the spirit shows the fixity and stability of it; a shallow, overactive and overexposed spirit will lead to unsettling blood and qi, which can disturb a person's life and fortune.[348] The nobility of a person lies in the depth of the spirit in

347 See Kristofer Schipper, *The Taoist Body*, 35-36.
348 See Damo xiang zhushen in *Shenxiang quanbian*, *juan* 2, 24-26.

the body. Moreover, the spirit can be examined through a person's behavior, demeanor, conditions of their hair, the clarity and brightness of qi and color, and even dreams. A clean spirit generates a staid, controlled and powerful demeanor, along with good hair and peaceful dreams.[349] The spirit can be seen as the unification of the physical form and mind, and the body and a person's social life. The generative power of the spirit is explained as the source and root of a person's fortune and social life, which means that while transforming qi into forms and generating the body, the spirit also generates sociality as the body's potential.[350] While Neo-Confucian literati stress the unity of the body and virtue in their discussion of the spirit and qi, the spirit is initially seen as the unity of the body, cosmos, and social life in this physiognomic context.

The inspection of qi and colors pertains to the elusive dimensions of the body and are directly connected to the condition of the spirit. Qi and the color are often bonded together as a physiognomic subject. The notion of bodily colors mainly refers to the color of qi on different body parts. Most of the manuals regard colors on the body as an extension of qi:

> Qi is the root of the myriad things, and the color is the sprout of the myriad things.
> 氣乃萬物之根，色乃萬物之苗。[351]

The relationship between qi and bodily color is depicted in analogy with the relationship between the root of a tree and its sprouting shoots. Qi is believed to be flowing underneath the skin and therefore hard to see like the root of the tree, whereas the color shines on the skin and becomes visible like the shoots. But qi is also visible to adept eyes.[352] Thus qi and color should

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[349] See *Shenxiang quanbian*, *juan* 2, 24-25, and *Shenxiang tie guandao*, *juan* 2, 16.
[350] See *Shenxiang quanbian*, *juan* 6, 28-30.
[351] See *Shuijing shenxiang*, *juan* 1, 60.
[352] Stories of physiognomists in the Ming dynasty shows that visual training to see qi was used, this will be discussed in Chapter IV.

always be inspected together. The elusiveness of qi and color means that the inspection is not easy to achieve. The discussion of the physiognomy of things show a strong connection with qi inspection techniques in geomancy practice. This is also well illustrated in the *Water Reflection* manual. In order to catch the minute and elusive movements of qi and color on the body, one should, for instance, inspect the qi of plants in the different seasons, the color of mountains at sunrise and sunset, and the color and qi of different types of weather. Only in this way can a person's eyes be perceptive enough to see qi and color on the body. The same passage also quotes a method of training the eyes from an unknown Tang source, which states one should be able to distinguish five threads in different colors in the dark to see qi and color on the body.[353] Yet another paragraph in the manual states that the exact method of training the eyes has been lost.

In general, a person's qi should be peaceful, flush and clean, and his or her color should be lustrous, glossy, bright and moderate. Like the criteria applied to the spirit, any degree of weak or overflowing qi and color is considered inauspicious. There are six different kinds of qi (*liuqi* 六氣) in the manuals designated by the names of six different celestial deities (*liushen* 六神).[354] The six kinds of qi are:

The Turquoise Dragon (*qinglong* 青龍)
The White Tiger (*baihu* 白虎)
The Red Bird (*zhuque* 朱雀)
The Black Snake and Tortoise (*xuanwu* 玄武)
The Crouching Weapon (*gouchen* 勾陳)
The Swift Serpent (*tengshe* 騰蛇)

Among the six kinds of qi, the Turquoise Dragon is the most auspicious, and the other five

353 See *Shuijing shenxiang*, *juan* 1, 60.
354 See *ibid*, and *Shenxiang quanbian*, *juan* 10, 35.

qi lead to different types of misfortune. The good and bad fortune of the six kinds of qi are reflected in their general perceptible qualities. Turquoise Dragon qi is brightly purple like a clear sunrise with beautiful clouds, and the rest of the different types of qi look ominously repulsive and strange.[355] The location of the appearance of any kind of the six on the face is particularly stressed, along with the color of the location. The Song scholar Shen Kuo 沈括 (1031-1095) pointed out that the combination of the six kinds of qi and the six celestial deities was popularly applied in Circulatory Qi theory, with the six kinds of qi being connected to the correlative system of cosmic powers in order to illustrate the energetic movement of the universe in a particular time-space.[356] Cosmic signs such as the Eight Trigrams, the Five Phases, and ten Heavenly Stems and twelve Earthly Branches are connected to the pattern of the movement of qi; it is the same as the movement of bodily qi and color. Different kinds of qi and color on the face should be inspected in a particular time and space. The microcosmic structure of the face is connected to different kinds of qi and color. The date and season of the inspection should again be considered influential factors when predicting a person's fortune according to his or her bodily qi and color. In other words, the microcosmic structure of the face and the environmental conditions at the moment of a person's inspection are relevant to the physiognomic inspection of the body:

> [The qi of] the three months of spring is Wood, and [lies in] the east direction on the cheek bone where the [Heavenly Stems] *jia* and *yi* [are]. The color turquoise reflects the celestial power developed from the liver, so turquoise qi appears. It is the sign of [liver's] vigor. If [in that area] the color red appears, it is a sign of generating [Wood qi]. Although [this is a sign of] generation, there will be a quarrel first, and then great happiness will be accomplished. If white color appears, it means prison, because Metal [with the associated color white] overcomes Wood, and [this means] prison. If [both] turquoise color and

[355] See *ibid.*
[356] See his *Mengxi bitan*, *juan* 7, 48.

> yellow color appear, it means Wood overcomes Earth, and [the person] will die because of this… [whenever someone] has yellow and red splendor that runs from the nose tip to the Hall of Seals, and fills the Heavenly Court [on the face], in principle, there will be wealth and happiness [falling upon the person] within twenty-one days. It will be either the windfall of land and houses or happy events like marriage.
> 春三月，木東方甲乙，在顴骨是也。青乃肝發之神，故顯青氣也，旺相也。亦先憂驚而後喜。顯赤色者，相生也。雖相生亦先主口舌，後成大喜。顯白色者，囚也，乃金剋木，為牢獄也。顯青黃二氣色者，木剋土也，以此死亡矣…凡準頭至山根印堂透天庭有紅黃光彩者，主三七日內財喜，或進田宅，生子娶妻妾等喜。[357]

Again, the correlative system here resembles the Circulatory Qi system which is derived from the *Inner Canon*.[358] The idea behind it is that a person's physiological status should always be in harmony with cosmic movements in a numerological and correlative sense. The inspection of facial colors is associated with the system of Nine Prefectures and Eight Trigrams mentioned above. With different colors attributed to various geo-physical areas and different trigrams, the discrepancies or similarities between the colors on the face and what they ought to be then leads to different results in predicting fortune. Features of qi and colors on the face can be transformed into specific dates and specific types of events that will happen to a person in the near future according to this numerological system. In the manuals, cosmic and calendric movements of qi in the universe and the movements of qi on the human body are closely interconnected. The color of qi on the one hundred and twenty areas on the face, which refers to the facial divisions of the moving years and the Twelve Palaces system, tallies with the twelve hours of a day, twenty-four solar divisions of a year, and twelve months of a year. The idea that 'the way of qi and color corresponds to the qi between heaven and earth' (*qise zhidao, nai he tiandi zhi qi* 氣色之道，乃合天地之氣) makes the inspection of qi and color a

[357] See *Shenxiang quanbian, juan* 10, 22-23.
[358] See Ma Weqi, *Zhongyi yunqi xue jianming jiedu*, 97.

method of numerological calculation.[359] In the same passage in the *Compendium*, the color of qi is also defined as reflections of different emotions in the future, which tallies with the medical understanding of color as the minute reflection of emotions generated by different viscera.[360] Thus, qi and color were regarded by physiognomists as a precise and minute reflection of the specific time-space coordinates of a person's fortune. The inspection of qi was sometimes combined with the inspection of bones, for qi comes from the bones. Again, a refined and clean quality of the bones along with a moderate, pure, and lively condition of qi will lead to great eminence in life.[361] There in qi inspection, we also see the 'spatialization of time'. Personal and cosmic time is located on the bodily space. The structure of this space is seen as the structure of personal and cosmic time. Movements in a person's life is transformed into the qi movement in this spatial structure. What happens in a person's life time seems to be lineal, one year after another, one event after another. Yet this lineal time in physiognomy is spatial and directional. Events like marriage and wealth increase in a person's life span is related to the qi in the east, so that the lineal time is dissected into a geo-somatic compass.

Accurate predictions also depend on the perfect conditions of a person's qi and colors without disturbance. The manuals argue that both alcoholic drinks and sexual intercourse are obstructing influences on the body and immediately after drinking or sex a person's qi and colors are muddled, hence a prediction will not be accurate.[362] The best time to inspect the flow of qi and the light of colors is at the crack of dawn before the sun starts to rise.[363] In other

[359] For the idea of such a correspondence, see *Shuijing shenxiang*, *juan* 1, 60.
[360] For the medical understanding of the relationship between emotion and facial color, see Kuriyama Shigehisa, *The Expressiveness of the Body*, 174-175.
[361] See *Shenxiang quanbian*, *juan* 10, 21-25, and *juan* 11, 1-26.
[362] See *Shenxiang tie guandao*, *juan* 4, 29, and *Liuzhuang xiangfa*, 318.
[363] See *Shenxiang quanbian*, *juan* 8, 25.

words, qi and color on the body can be influenced by external powers like the climate and time of day. In early Chinese medical theories, the body was already seen as a microcosm, but it was not a microcosm that merely shared a similar structure with the macrocosm; the body's boundaries were also 'permeable', open to the cosmos and constantly affected by it, a ecologic body.[364] Qi was the medium that bridged the body and the universe.[365] With the trainings on a person's sight, the inspection of this subtle and elusive aspect of the body emphasized the delicate energetic movement in the body numerologically, under the influence of the cosmos. The numerological calculation based on the inspection of the body was seen as a process of reconstructing the changes of the universe. Qi and color rather than bones and flesh were the more decisive and reliable physical dimensions when telling the fortune of a child or infant. Inspection of infants should follow a comprehensive order according to most of the manuals, with every dimension of the body scrutinized. But because their firm physical forms are not fully developed yet, the bones and flesh of children may still change, and so qi and color on the body are more informative and explicit.[366]

In Despeux's study of the Dunhuang facial qi and color inspection manuals, she points out that in comparison with qi inspections in earlier medical texts, the Tang manuals already contain a system that relates the colors of different qi on the face to the cosmic qi of seasonal changes for precise prognoses of the dates of future events.[367] However, despite the inheritance of this qi correlation system from the Dunhuang manuals in the Ming texts, we see considerable differences between the Ming manuals and the Dunhuang manuals. Despeux

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364 See Hsu, 'The biological in the cultural,' 91-126.

365 See Nathan Sivin, 'State, cosmos, and body in the last three centuries B. C.,' 5-37.

366 See *Shenxiang quanbian*, *juan* 2, 26, and *Liuzhuang xiangfa*, 293.

367 See Despeux's Dunhuang manuscript article 'From prognosis to diagnosis'.

claims that later texts do not provide equivalent minute details about the relationship between the facial areas and the content of the prognoses these areas indicate in the same way as the Dunhuang manuals do. This is simply not the case with later texts, and on the contrary, the inspections of qi and color in the Ming manuals are much more sophisticated and complex than those in the Tang texts. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, we only see inspections of qi and color as important counterparts to the comprehensive physiognomic inspection system in the Ming manuals, where they are related to other methods of physiognomic inspection. Also, only in the Ming manuals do we see the principle that inspections of facial qi and color should be practiced not only in relation to seasonal and geographic qi and color but also the Shapes of the Five Phases of the human body.[368] In other words, the harmonious balance of the energetic aspects of the body is realized between the balance of different types of qi on the face, the body phases and seasonal qi at the same time. This means that facial qi and color in the Ming manuals are not the only paradigms of qi and color inspection. The body as a whole should be taken into consideration. Yet the Dunhuang manuals barely mention anything that relates the inspection of qi and color to the Five Phases.

Moreover, the correlations between different colors on the face and their possible cosmic and social meanings in Despeux's study are mainly based on an analysis of the same terms that appeared in the earlier philosophical and medical texts before the Tang. Thus these meanings are not what the Dunhuang manuals themselves say, but based on how other books explain these similar terms in their own context. The Dunhuang manuals simply relate one type of qi on the face to some kinds of specific events happening in a person's life. By contrast,

[368] See *Shenxiang quanbian*, *juan shou*, '*Lun qise*', 17.

what we see in the Ming manuals is a much more elaborate theoretical framework backing up qi and color inspection. The common ground many Ming manuals stand on is that color is the light radiating from bodily qi and that the light of a color is essential to physiognomic inspections. Using candle light to examine this bodily light in the morning is repeatedly mentioned in the manuals.[369] This is the core of the definition of color in Ming physiognomy manuals that is not found anywhere else in the early manuals. In addition to this, Ming manuals show a much more elaborate thinking about the possible relationships between a particular facial color and qi, and a particular type of event. In the *Compendium*, for instance, more than two hundred types of correlations appear in the texts. Another way of understanding qi and color that is not seen in the Dunhuang manuals or any earlier ones is that qi and color are specified according to the point where they show up on the face, and that the results can be different according to division system that is used.[370] Qi and color should also be examined not only on the face but also on the hand palms and foot soles as well as the body as a whole, since an imbalance between facial qi and the rest of the body is considered inauspicious. The language the Ming manuals apply to describe the quality of qi and color is even more intricate. Rather than only distinguishing the main colors, different types of a single color are differentiated, such as the kind of green called 'curved willow green' (*chuiliu qing* 垂柳青).[371] That is to say, the Ming manuals are substantially different from their Tang predecessors in terms of the sophistication of their qi and color inspections.

The voice is seen as an extension of bodily qi as well. Well-nourished and harmonious qi

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[369] See *Shenxiang quanbian*, *juan* 11, '*Qise lun*', 210. Also see Needham, *Science and Civilisation in China* 4(1): 26, 78-79 for the Chinese conventional definition of light.
[370] See *Shenxiang quanbian*, *juan* 11, 203.
[371] See *Shenxiang quanbian*, *juan* 7, 149.

and spirit can make the voice of a person smooth and soft.[372] The root of the voice is a point on the body called the 'Elixir Field' (*dantian* 丹田), which is the most important body point in Inner Alchemy practice and other forms of qi cultivation because refined qi and spirit are stored here.[373] Thus the voice and qi are mixed together in the body and breathed out together as well. The voice of human beings is defined as the vibration of qi, which is the external manifestation of the inner qualities; thus the quality of the vibration reflects the conditions of its origin. Therefore one of the most important criteria for voice physiognomy is to see whether the voice and the corresponding qi are emitted synchronically or not. If the emission of qi and the emission of voice from the body do not happen at the same time, this indicates a lack of fixity of qi, which is inauspicious. Consequently, the voice is understood in terms of different physical qualities and cosmological properties. A strong voice ought to be like a giant copper bell or big drum, whereas a small voice ought to be like a clear creek and the music played by string instruments. Both should be clear, moderate, controlled and appropriate. Different physical, as well as acoustic qualities of the voice, are assigned to different Phases. The voice of Earth is deep and solid; the voice of Wood is high and clear; the voice of Fire is scorched and smoky; the voice of Water is torrential and mercurial; the voice of Metal is peaceful and moist.[374]

Similar ways of understanding physical qualities of the body can be found in its morphological dimensions; the bones and flesh of the body are interdependent. The bones are the yang side of the body, the masters of its physical forms, the structural form itself (*xing* 形),

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[372] See *Shenxiang quanbian*, *juan* 1, 26. for the criteria of voice inspection

[373] See Fabrizio Pregadio, 'Early Daoist meditation and the origins of Inner Alchemy,' 139-140.

[374] See 'Xufu tingsheng pian' in *Shenxiang quanbian*, *juan* 2, 28.

whereas the flesh is the yin side of the body, the subordinate, and the expression of the body (*rong* 容).[375] In this case, the bones should control the flesh and be protected and nourished by the flesh. At the same time, the flesh should hide the bones, support the bones, and fill in the seams between the bones. It is only in this way that one can successfully avoid calamities. In principle, the bones are like ores and stones in nature, so they should be steep, and stern, rather than fierce and bulky, or soft and cold. The importance of bones is stressed in some manuals. In a passage known as the Miscellaneous Discussion of Yuan Liuzhuang (*Yuan Liuzhuang zalun* 袁柳莊雜論) in the *Compendium*, it says:

> [t]he shape and form [of a person] are the roots of physiognomy. Qi and colors are the branches and leaves [of physiognomy]. Only when the root is firm the branches and leaves can be lush, and if the root withers then the branches and leaves fade. Therefore, when discussing about a person's physiognomy, [we should] probe into the morphology and bones first and then inspect his qi and color.
> 形體，相之根本也。氣色，相之枝葉也。根本固則枝葉繁，根本枯則枝葉謝。夫論相所以先究形骨而後觀其氣色。[376]

This passage clearly points out that the bone pattern is superior to qi and colors in the practice of physiognomy. It is a fundamental aspect of the physiognomic body. However, such an important part of physiognomy is not given much space in the *Compendium*. Seldom do we see independent discussion of bone patterns in the book, and the only chapters concerning bone physiognomy gives nothing more than some vague phrases about it. Even in the biography of Yuan Liuzhuang, to whom the above passage in the *Compendium* is ascribed, he is quoted as emphasizing the importance of qi and facial colors in physiognomy and predicted

[375] See *Shenxiang tie guandao*, *juan* 1, 20, and *Shenxiang quanbian*, *juan* 1, 38. There is a similar understanding of the importance of the bones in modern funeral rituals in southern Chinese villages, see Emily Ahern, *The Cult of the Dead in a Chinese Village*, 175-190.

[376] See *Shenxiang quanbian*, *juan* 7, 18. There are multiple editions of the *Compendium*, but for the sake of consistency, I will use the Shuzang edition in this thesis for general discussion of its content.

people's fortunes based on them rather than bone patterns.[377] In the *Mayi* manual, ascribed to the legendary teacher of Chen Tuan, a verse contains a similar claim is made about the significance of bone structure. It says:

> Bones decide the vicissitude of a person's whole life, [whereas] the qi and colors determine the fortune and misfortune of a year.
> 骨骼為一世之榮枯，氣色定行年之休咎。[378]

But again, in this manual, only this short passage is devoted to the physiognomy of bones. What leads to the absence of this important and fundamental branch of physiognomy in the manuals and stories? It is possible that as the most fundamental and stable type of evidence of a person's fate, the bone patterns are the most difficult part of a body to inspect. We will see in Chapter IV that the inspections and examinations of people's qi, facial color and the appearance of the skin and flesh were regarded as the most direct and immediate aspects by physiognomists. The bones have to be hidden inside the flesh rather than be exposed, for any exposure of them will make vitality and good fortune become exposed, and leak away. The flesh of the body should grow in accordance with the bones, and the figure should neither be too obese nor too slender. The sinews (*jin* 筋) should in principle bind up the bones; the muscles must consistently inhabit the body structure; the skin must wrap up the whole body tightly. Otherwise, it is a sign of imminent death.[379] The flesh ought to be smooth and supple, and the skin should shine with auspicious colors.[380]

However, the bones and flesh of the body are seldom isolated as autonomous categories

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377 See *Mingshi*, *juan* 299, 7642.
378 See *Mayi shenxiang*, *juan* 4, 306-307.
379 See 'Xiangrou,' in *Mayi shenxiang*, *juan* 2, 2.
380 See 'Xianggu,' and 'Xiangrou' in *Shenxiang quanbian*, *juan* 1, 38.

with distinctive criteria of inspection in the way the spirit, qi and colors are. The bones and flesh are more prone to be inspected and interpreted together and analyzed according to the locations of their features on the body. Because the bones and flesh make up a person's physical form and appearance, they are understood in terms of the body parts they constitute. The different facial structures mentioned earlier are one way to examine the bones and flesh of the face and head. The bones and flesh of the face are read not in terms of their own properties but those of the facial entirety. Thus the features of the bones and flesh of the face are subsumed into different systems of facial divisions. We will further discuss the rules of inspecting the different body parts according to their body structures and flesh textures in our investigation into the relationship between the body and society in the next chapter. Apart from the facial systems, another more encompassing way to unify the bones and flesh and even qi, color and the spirit is known as 'Five Phases Shape Physiognomy' (*wuxing xingxiang* 五行形相). People with different morphological as well as energetic features are categorized into five different types in relation to the Five Phases. Such a method of categorizing the body is first seen in the *Inner Canon*. In the passage in 'Lingshu' of the *Inner Canon* called 'The Twenty-Five Types of People in Yin and Yang' (*Yinyang ershi wu ren* 陰陽二十五人), human beings with different body features are categorized into twenty-five different types of phase shapes (*xing* 形).[381] The general idea is that physical shapes can be described in terms of the Five Phases, as can color and qi on the body. Different combinations of different body shapes and colors mean the combination of different phases. Already in the *Inner Canon*, a connection is made between the physicality of the body, behavioral characteristics, a person's penchants and the Five Phases:

[381] See '*Yinyang ershi wu ren*' in *Huangdi neijing Lingshu*, *juan* 9, 16.

People in the shape of earth resemble [the musical note of] upper Gong. They look like the ancient Yellow Emperor. This kind of people have yellow and round faces, big heads, beautiful shoulders and backs, big bellies, beautiful thighs and small hands and feet. [Their bodies are] full of flesh, and the upper body and the lower body are in balance. [They] walk peacefully on the ground, and their steps are floating. Their hearts are still. They love to help people and they don't like power and clout. They are good at approaching people. They can [enjoy] the autumn and winter but not spring and summer. During spring and summer, they will become sensitive and disease will rise [in them]. The ultimate yin pulses on their feet are powerful and steady.
土形之人，比于上宮，似于上古黃帝，其為人黃色圓面、大頭、美肩背、大腹、美股脛、小手足、多肉、上下相稱行安地，舉足浮。安心，好利人不喜權勢，善附人也。能秋冬不能春夏，春夏感而病生，足太陰，敦敦然。

Physical shape here entails the forms and energetic aspects of the body and even personalities. The passage in 'The Twenty-Five Types of People in Yin and Yang' is quoted and reinterpreted in many Ming physiognomy manuals and is taken as one of the most vital method in guiding physiognomic inspections.[382] The criteria for categorization stay the same. In general, the five types of people in the manuals are as follows:

The Shape of Wood: Thin figure, straight body, strong and hard bones, inimitable demeanor.
The Shape of Metal: Square figure, tight flesh, thick bones.
The Shape of Water: Round figure, heavy and thick flesh, drooping stomach, high shoulders, strong qi.
The Shape of Fire: Sharp figure, restless character, exposure of bones, dry qi, changeable constitution.
The Shape of Earth: Steady figure, strong back and haunches, happy and tranquil[383]

Table 3 The Table of Physical Shape Correlations.[384]

[382] For example, *Yuguan zhaoshen ju* already mentions this Five Phases Shapes and what each shape means, see *Yuguan zhaoshen ju*, 64. Also see *Shenxiang quanbian*, *juan* 1, 7-10.
[383] See *Shenxiang quanbian*, *juan* 5, 27.
[384] See '*Lin Zongxiang wude pei wuxing*,' in *Shenxiang quanbian*, *juan* 1, 6-9. Manfred Porkert has a similar chart based on the medical system stemed from the same *Inner Canon* treaty, see *The Theoreticl Foundations of Chinese Medicines*, 82-87.

Shapes of Phases	Colour	Viscera	Direction	Virtue	Facial Organ	Body Part	Branch	Number
Water	Black	Kidney	North	Wisdom (*zhi* 智)	Ears	Teeth and Bones	Ren 壬	One
Fire	Red	Heart	South	Propriety (*li* 禮)	Tongue	Blood and Hair	Bing 丙	Two
Wood	Turquoise	Liver	East	Benevolence (*ren* 仁)	Eyes	Sinews, Fingers and Toes, and Nails	Jia 甲	Three
Metal	White	Lungs	West	Righteousness (*yi* 義)	Nose	Skin	Geng 庚	Four
Earth	Yellow	Spleen	Middle	Fidelity (*xin* 信)	Mouth	Flesh	Wu 戊	Five

The *Inner Canon* does not mention the that different phases can be in a person's body at the same time, though this is vital for Ming physiognomy. The Ming Five Phases physiognomy developed a more complex system based on the Inner Canon framework, suggesting that features of different phases may reside in a person's body at the same time, and that the auspiciousness and inauspiciousness of different combinations of the phases should be examined and analyzed carefully.[385] As summarized in Table 3, the Five Phases categorization is related to the cosmology of Heavenly Stems, five directions, five viscera and five virtues, indicating that this system is also applicable to calendric predictions in fortune-telling. The shapes of the Five Phases, five cosmic directions, five viscera, and five virtues are seen as different points on a single spectrum. Only when the virtues, the viscera, the shapes, the directions and the rest of the elements are in the right position in relation to each other and they are congruent with the overall cosmological pattern will good fortune fall upon a person. According to the manuals, although people with a certain number of distinctive features can be categorized into a particular shape, every individual has all the Five Phases within his or her body. The situation only depends on which phase is the strongest one and what the

[385] See *Shenxiang quanbian*, *juan* 1, 1-3, and *Shuijing shenxiang*, *juan* 2, 43-48.

balancing relationship between each phase within a person's body is like. For example, if a person is to be assigned overall in the shape of Water, but his Metal features are also relatively strong, then this is called 'Water carrying Metal' (*shui zhong dai jin* 水中帶金). This is considered auspicious, for Metal generates Water.[386] Different dimensions of the body have to stay in a harmonious and generating relationship with each other based on this model; otherwise the disharmony is taken to be an indication of disorder of a person's constitution and fortune. In the *Iron Halberd* manual, different kinds of shapes within one phase are mentioned:

> … there are different sizes in the Five Phases of Metal, Wood, Water, Fire, and Earth. For example, the shape of metal is like ores, and among ores, there are differences between big and small ones or hard and soft ones. The shape of Wood is like trees, and among trees, there are differences between delicate and pretty ones or oily and unkempt ones. Among the shapes of Fire, there are differences between the fire of the sun and the fire of lamps and candles. Among the shapes of Water, there are differences between rivers and gullies. Among the shapes of Earth there is the difference between the shape of Mount Tai and a mound. How could there be no mistake in judging a person based on their size alone?
> …況金木水火土五行，俱有肥瘦；如金形則若石，石有大小堅輕之石；木則若樹，樹有清秀凝油濁之殊；火則有太陽燈燭之分；水則有江河溝洫之別；土則有泰山邱垤之形；何以肥瘦定人豈不錯哉！[387]

Further subcategories of the Five Phases are also seen in the traditional Chinese astrological divination technique known as Eight Characters (*bazi* 八字). This way of using the Heavenly Stems and Earthly Branches relates to the birth date and hour of a person specifying a particular phase that controls a person's fate, and is called the System of Musical Note Application (*nayin* 納音). From the astral combinations calculated from a person's birth date,

[386] See Chunyang xiangfa rumen in *Shenxiang quanbian*, *juan* 1, 2-5, also for the overcoming relationships, see '*Wuxing xiangke ge*,' in *Shenxiang quanbian*, *juan* 4, 30.
[387] See *Shenxiang tie guandao*, 11.

this person's future physical appearance can be predicted.[388] Yet the connection between the Five Phases system in physiognomy and in astrology is not confirmed by the manuals. Zhu Pingyi points out that the physiognomic Five Phase categorization is already seen in the Han texts, and was influenced by medical knowledge in early China, but the early system in the texts are not as sophisticated as the one in the Ming manuals.[389] Li Jianmin points out that the homological qi cosmology of early China put the physical as well as the energetic body in comparison with the structure of the universe. The cosmic body system, in this case, delineates the body as a unified spatial-temporal system that was not entirely based on anatomical facts but also on a more abstract cosmic-political worldview.[390] Thus empirical understandings of the human body must be combined with the cosmological system to fully explain the mechanism of the body. The physiognomy of the Five Phases shares similar ideas with early Chinese medical knowledge, and further complicates the early cosmic-medical framework. This is also something generally unique to the Ming manuals, and entirely absent from the Dunhuang and any earlier texts. The systematic understanding of the categorization of human physical forms according to the Five Phases system is something we find only in later texts.

The Five Phases categorization unifies different dimensions of the body into a single cosmological system as the main index for physiognomic inspections. Different aspects of the body are regarded in the physiognomy manuals as different levels of the manifestation of a person's life. The inspection of the body is a process of probing into different layers of a person's bodily as well as social existence following a single cosmological model. Here, the

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[388] See *Tong qiong baojiao lan jiang wang*, *juan* 3, 7.
[389] See Zhu Pingyi, *Handai de xiangren shu*, 65-66.
[390] See Li Jianmin, *Faxian gumai*, 205-227.

body homology means that the body and the cosmos does not only share the same energetic substance, but even the same structure of composition, yin-yang and the Five Phases. The structural resemblance of the body also means that they have the same mechanism of movement; the body moves just like the cosmos. This is the reason why the body is 'cosmological'. Not only does it come from the cosmos, the body also works like the cosmos. Virtue is also regarded as a bodily matter, as well as a person's behaviors. That is to say, the inspection of the body is also the inspection of one's mind, since it is also generated by the essence of qi and the spirit. In a phenomenological sense, the body's engagement with the world, i.e., bodily experiences, is the source of a person's mind and existence; the corporeality of mind lies in this kind of embodied experiences as the foundation of culture, sociality, and thoughts.[391] The body is seen in the Ming manuals as a unity of a person's existence, in which a person's social life/time, behavior, and relationships with the whole world are unified in his or her physical being. Generated by a homological energy, the body not only participates into human beings' social life, but also indexes it, showing proclivities and predestined events of the future as parts of the grand cosmic movement, since the future is part of the body's potential.

This is the point where physiognomy diverges from phenomenology. A Merleau-Pontian point of view only explains how the body generates human being's cognition of and interaction with the world and ourselves through sensory experience as his focus is on how to explain human mind and human consciousness.[392] However, from a physiognomic point of view, the body does not only generate experiences and thoughts at present, but also prefigures a person's

[391] Thomas J. Csordas, 'Somatic Modes of Attention,' 135-156

[392] See Maurice Merleau Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 235-282.

internal mind and external social relations in the future. In other words, in physiognomy the corporeality of human beings' social and cosmic time does not come from bodily experience, but from the generative power of the body itself. A current in the ocean is generated movements of waves. This technique cares less about how human beings perceive through the body, but more about how human beings' lives are represented and generated by the body. The Five Phases categorization of the human body is a good example of how the body is understood as the provenance of a person's social time as well as inner experiences. It is not a categorization of ways of cognition, but a categorization of ways of existence.

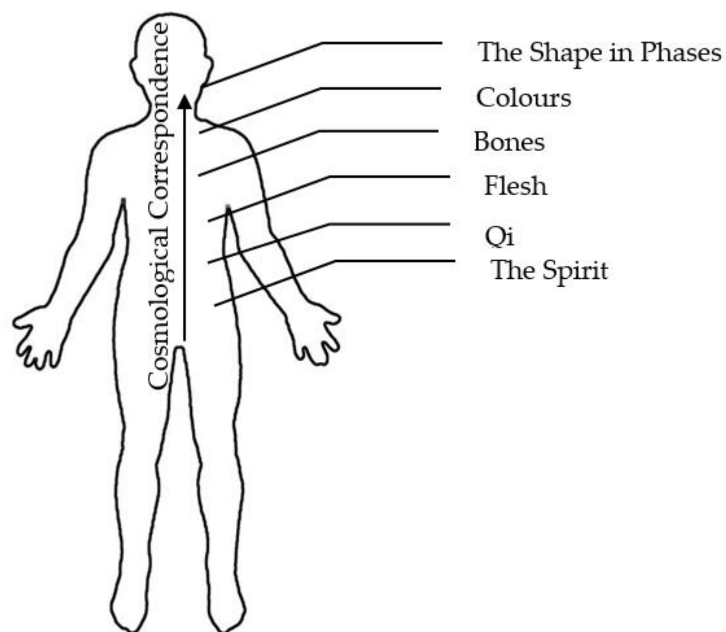

Figure 2 The Composition of the Physiognomic Body.

Other physiological elements like essence (*jing*) are briefly mentioned but never treated as essential parts of physiognomic inspections. The reason is that the essence hiding in

different viscera of the inner body can be reflected by the spirit in the eyes.[393] Therefore, the inspection of the spirit is regarded as the same with the inspection of the essence. Furthermore, physiognomic inspections focus less on the condition of the viscera and the inner body for their own sake, but what kind of fortune they reflect. In this way, physiognomic inspection is not medical prognosis. The inspection of the five viscera and their essence is realized through the inspection of the face and diseases are regarded as part of a person's fortune in the future.[394] Physiognomic inspection as a process of locating fortune on the body goes into different layers of the body in order to achieve a comprehensive understanding of a person's fortune. Different dimensions of the body indicate different aspects of fortune, and the visible and perceptible features, along with their spatial-temporal movements in the body, signify specific events in a person's future and be detected and then calculated. Yet this way of calculating by using well-established numerological tools is defined by the manuals not as a human construction applied to the body and universe but as a natural manifestation of the universe on the body. That is to say, the numerological structure of the body is cosmological.

The Physiognomy of Pulses

Traditional physiognomy seems to have been less concerned with the inspection of pulses, which was such a crucial subject for medical prognosis and diagnosis. Most of the physiognomy manuals emphasize the morphological features of the body, like the shape of the nose, the structure of the bones, or the color of a person's countenance, as we have seen, or the

[393] See *Shuijing shenxiang, juan* 2, 12.
[394] For example, see *Shenxiang tie guandao*, 12-13.

subtle inspection of the spirit in the eyes. In the *Compendium*, there are only two items assigned to the physiognomy of pulses out of a total of 230: 'The Signs in Qi, Color and the Pulse of Life and Death' (*Qise shengsi maihou* 氣色生死脈候), and 'The Esoteric Verses of the Accordance between the Color of Pulses and Signs' (*Maise yinghou jue* 脈色應候訣).[395] Again, these two treatises focus on the visual qualities of the pulse on the face, rather than the tangible qualities at the wrists, and combine inspection of the pulse with inspection of facial structures. Yet in the Qing catalogue of earlier physiognomy manuals, *The Physiognomy of the Grand Qing* (*Daqing xiangfa* 大清相法), we can see a particular type of physiognomy named 'The Pulse of Greater Purity' (*taisu mai* 太素脈).[396] It is introduced as a systematic practice of predicting a person's future from the examinations of a person's pulse, the *mai*. The name *taisu mai* is mentioned in many different private diaries of Song and Ming scholars, and in different medical treatises during this period. While the term 'pulse physiognomy' (*xiangmai* 相脈) shows up in some Eastern Han texts, it was only regarded as a type of medical inspection in which many cosmological elements were involved.[397] Later in the Song and Ming texts, pulse physiognomy was considered a skill similar to pulse diagnosis, but one in which practitioners predicted people's fortunes by examining their pulses. A record of using pulse diagnosis to predict a person's fortune can be seen at an earlier time during the Tang without the name *taisu mai*.[398]

At first glance it may seem like that The Pulse of Greater Purity should be classified as part of the physiognomy tradition in *The Physiognomy of Grand Qing*. However, if we look at the perception of this technique before the Qing period, we will see a totally different story.

[395] See *Shenxiang quanbian*, *juan* 11, 24-25.
[396] See *Daqing xiangfa*, *juan* 4, 5.
[397] See Donald Harper, 'Iatromancy, diagnosis, and prognosis in early Chinese medicine,' 99-120.
[398] Again, one may find the earlier record in *Jutan lu*, 30.

Most of the collections that include the *taisu mai* manuals are collections of medical materials rather than physiognomy materials.[399] The late Ming physician Wu Kun 吳昆 (1552-1620) in his essay anthology *On Pulses* (*Maiyu* 脈語) said that pulse physiognomy was a hybrid of pulse diagnosis and human physiognomy. He believed that it was an aberration in medical practice, and should not be used by doctors at all because its understanding of the pulse was purely numerological and divinatory, but not sufficiently clinical.[400] To Wu Kun, no matter whether it worked well or not, as long as pulse diagnosis was not used in treating diseases, it should be considered anything medical. Wu Kun was correct about the fundamental intention of pulse physiognomy, at least based on what is written in the two extant manuals of pulse physiognomy. The two versions of *The Esoteric Verses of the Pulse of Greater Purity* (*Taisu maijue* 太素脈訣) both place the numerological understanding of the pulse and the method to predict the future based on pulse examination at the very front of the texts, and the proportion of these passages by far outweigh those related to medicine. One of them is compiled by the late Ming physician Gong Tingxian 龔廷賢 (1522-1619) and the other one written by another contemporary Ming physician and scholar Peng Yongguang 彭用光. Especially in the *Esoteric Verses* manual by the late Ming physician Peng Yongguang, there is hardly any content directly related to medical healing or diagnosis.

Paradoxically, most of the figures who commented on pulse physiognomy were doctors or medical theorists.[401] In general, physiognomic knowledge does contain a significant amount of traditional medical and physiological knowledge, yet the overlap between

399 For example, see Li Shizhen, *Binhu maijue*, 8.
400 See Wukun's *Maiyu*, 492-493.
401 For example, the Qing physician Li Yanshi was a pulse physiognomy practitioner and also argued that a lot of physicians in history used this technique for diagnosis. See *Maijue huibian*, 9.

physiognomy and traditional medicine should not be exaggerated. The common ground that physiognomy and traditional medicine share is mainly the similar cosmology and the way of conceptualizing the body, as we have seen earlier, and it is only the Pulse of Greater Purity which is deeply rooted in medical understandings of the pulse. Yet professional physicians and medical theorists' disagreement on and even contempt for this form of pulse physiognomy show the resistance from professional medical circles to this technique because the major purpose of pulse physiognomy is still to predict fortune. It is hard to say that *taisu mai* belongs to the system of conventional human physiognomy, nor would it fit in the category of conventional pulse diagnosis. As a technique applying divinatory knowledge to an extremely medical subject, the pulse, it is natural that most of the interest on pulse physiognomy stemmed from doctors and physicians. Unlike facial features and other bodily features, the pulse is more complex for people without a medical background to understand; detecting and examining the pulse requires good medical training, and this makes pulse physiognomy easier to understand and learn for doctors. But we cannot say in this case that pulse physiognomy is less physiognomic. This technique has been perceived as, applied as, and known for a fortune-telling technique. The fundamental idea of predicting fortune based on the examination of human physique stays the same in pulse physiognomy, as it is in conventional physiognomy.

The name *taisu*, the 'Greater Purity' is first seen in the late Eastern Han text *Liezi* 列子:

> In the past, the sage organized heaven and earth by yin and yang. If the formed beings were born from the formless, then where do heaven and earth come from? Thus [the sage] says: there are the Greater Simplicity, the Greater Initiation, the Greater Origin, and the Greater Purity. The Greater Simplicity is where qi is not seen yet; the Greater Initiation is where qi begins to emerge; the Greater Origin is where the forms begin to emerge; the Greater Purity is where qualities begin to emerge.
> 昔者聖人因陰陽以統天地。夫有形者生於无形，則天地安從生？故曰：有太易，有太初，有

太始，有太素。太易者，未見氣也：太初者，氣之始也；太始者，形之始也；太素者，質之始也。[402]

This passage is also quoted in one of the pulse physiognomy manuals compiled by Gong Tingxian.[403] The notion of 'Greater Purity' is regarded as the fundamental idea of pulse physiognomy. Again, the text ascribes this technique to classical philosophical ideas and quotes the philosophical texts verbatim. The examination of the pulse is the examination of its physical qualities. According to the manuals, qualities are differentiated into yin and yang and the Five Phases. Their movements and interactions create the universe and the human body. Yin and yang power and the Five Phases constitute the five viscera and six inner organs, as well as the pulses and channels in the body, and the bones and flesh. The cosmos and pulses share the same physical and energetic grounds as proposed in other physiognomy manuals.

The physicality of the cosmos and the body can further be divided into the eight trigrams, the ten Heavenly Stems, the twelve Earthly Branches, and other different correlative systems of cosmic powers.[404] This very organized and sophisticated system of correlations describing cosmic movement in the two Ming dynasty *Esoteric Verses* manuals is more systematically and minutely embedded in the Song and Ming medical theory of 'The Five Circulatory Phases and Six Seasonal Qi'. Circulatory Qi theory is defined in the pulse physiognomy manuals as the fundamental basis for this technique. The numerological aspect of the Circulatory Qi system is well-adapted to the numerological properties of the pulse in the medical manuals.[405] The numerological movement of cosmic power and that of energy in the body follow the same

402 See *Liezi*, *Tianrui*, 2-3.
403 See Gong's *Chong ding taisu maijue*, 1-2.
404 See *ibid*, 4-13.
405 See Peng's *Taisu maijue*, 462-463.

pattern and are connected by qi. The mechanism of the pulse is correlated with cosmic changes.

This system of pulse correlation serves as an index for the prediction of fortune. Human beings are defined as a consequence of the movements and interactions of qi, and from the movements arise the different physical qualities of human beings, then the difference between eminent individuals and humble ones, and different kinds of fortunes:

> The birth and nature of human beings are formed by yin and yang; eminent and lowly positions are distinguished by the qi that one receives. The five viscera and six internal organs discriminate the different roots and bases [of human life]. Fortune and misfortune in people's lives are miraculously revealed in such a way.
> 人生資稟貫陰陽，受氣沖和分貴賤，五臟六腑別根基，平生災禍如神見。[406]

Here, the logic behind pulse physiognomy is that the body generates people's different types of sociality and different patterns of social life. Social life is determined by the configurations of cosmic power in the body. Human beings' social life is a part of human physicality. Thus social stratification is essentially cosmological and physical. The nobility and mean status of one's life are reflected in the bodily configuration of qi, which is the pulse. Thus mantic aspects of the pulse can be seen as an extension of the well-established qi monism in [407]traditional cosmology.[408] Sakade Yoshinobu argues that the oneness of qi as the preliminary power of the world is the general concept underlying most of the prognostication techniques in traditional China; the manifestation of the movement of qi in the material world and material things is the trace of fate in time and space.[409] This is explained by William Matthews as a kind of 'ontological homologism' in Chinese qi cosmology, which takes all ostensibly

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406 See Peng's *Taisu maihjue*, 403.
407 See Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisibl*e, 130-155.
408 For the discussion of qi monism, see Liu Changlin, 'Shuo qi,' 101-140.
409 See Sakade Yoshinobu, 'Guantong tiandi ren zhi yiqi,' 141-156.

disparate material phenomena as homogeneous and transformable on a more basic level, and as the fundamental mode of human existence.[410] Thus there is no human existence beyond the body in pulse physiognomy. Again, this qi homologism also reminds us of the Merleau Pontian concept 'flesh'. This 'flesh' is defined in his phenomenology as a field or energetic 'stuff' pervasive in space and open to bodily sensations; flesh encompasses all human beings' perceptions of and interactions with oneself and the rest of the world.[411] Yet we can easily see the difference here: although proposed as a unity of interrelatedness between human being and the rest of the world, phenomenological 'flesh' as the primary substance of existence only refers to the visibility and tangibility of the world and the self in bodily perceptions. In other words, phenomenological flesh is a concept or a type of sensibility only exists in human beings' bodily experiences of social relations, nothing 'pre-social' and pre-cognition. The 'monism' of flesh can be concluded as an energetic/material unity between subject and object in bodily perceptions. Nonetheless, the unity of qi proposed in the Ming physiognomy manuals states the exact opposite of phenomenological 'flesh'. Qi is not only the primary life force that is 'pre-social' and 'pre-perception', it is represented in the texts as something autonomous to human perceptions. In other words, it is represented as a somewhat universal and objective life force and 'raw' energy in the universe, and its existence does not depend on human beings' bodily perceptions. Although qi is experiential since it can be perceived by human beings' bodily experiences, it is a cosmic power that generates the human body and the cosmos, in which perceptions become possible. Therefore, the unity of qi as a 'homological' force emphasizes the sameness and 'oneness' between the body, cosmos, and human beings' social lives. This

[410] See William Matthews, 'Ontology with Chinese characteristics,' 265-285.
[411] See Douglas Low, *Merleau-Ponty's Last Vision*, 7-58.

oneness itself is prior to any social and somatic experiences.

Because of the highly complex numerological cosmology of pulse physiognomy, it follows a way of examining the pulse which is different from conventional physiognomy. In the *Compendium*, as a representative of conventional physiognomy, examinations of the pulse are described as techniques to inspect the visible qualities of the pulse on the face, because conventional physiognomy centralizes the face as the most expressive part of the body. In contrast, pulse physiognomy applies the method of medical pulse diagnosis: to touch the six points on people's two wrists, which are *cun* 寸, *guan* 關 and *chi* 尺 on each wrist.[412] The six points are in correspondence with the twelve pulse channels of the five viscera and six inner organs (*wuzang liufu* 五臟六腑), and their correlative properties.

心部 肝部 腎部 肺部 脾部 命門

小腸 膽 膀胱 大腸 胃 三焦

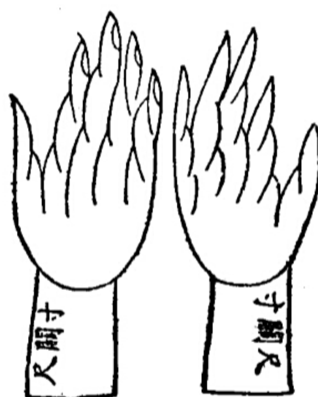

Figure 3 The Cun, Guan, and Chi Correspondences.[413]

412 See Gong's *Taisu maijue*, 34.
413 See Gong's *Taisu maijue*, 27.

The palpable features of different pulses are the basis of mantic predictions. Different physical qualities of the pulse assessed through sensory contact provide information about a person. In pulse physiognomy, the way of categorizing the different qualities of the pulse is not the same as the popular *Inner Canon* system. The unique method of differentiation is called 'The Five Types of Yin Pulses, Five Types of Yang Pulses, and Four Types of Provisioning Pulses' (*wu yinmai, wu yangmai, si yingmai* 五陰脈，五陽脈，四營脈):

> Five Yang qualities: Floating (*fu* 浮), Slippery (*hua* 滑), Solid (*shi* 實), Tight (*xian* 弦), Strong (*hong* 洪)
>
> Five Yin qualities: Hidden (*wei* 微), Sinking(*chen* 沉), Slow (*huan* 緩), Astringent (*se* 澀), Concealed (*fu* 伏)
>
> Four general qualities: Light (*qing* 輕), Clear (*qing* 清)
> Heavy (*zhong* 重), Blurred (*zhuo* 濁)

Further explanations are given to illustrate the different qualities.[414] The yin and yang qualities should also be evaluated based on the particular kind of pulse in concrete examinations. For example, the heart pulse is a yang pulse among the pulses of the five viscera; thus it preferably has yang qualities; the six inner organ pulses are all yang pulses compared to the five viscera pulses, so their yang qualities should be more explicit than the viscera pulses, and vice versa. Because the yin or yang attributions of the pulses of the organs and viscera are relative, the qualities are also relative. The four general qualities are divided into positive and negative ones, rather than being allocated to specific kinds of pulses. The qualities are also assigned to the Five Phases system. If the phase of the qualities above and the phase of the pulse itself match well, then the result is auspicious; otherwise, it is considered a disorder. This

[414] See Gong's *Taisu maijue*, 28-31.

is a unique way of categorizing pulse qualities that is not seen in any other medical books.

The examination follows a fixed order. Firstly the examiner precisely locates the six points on the wrists, and through these points detects the status of the pulse channels, of the viscera and of the inner organs. Then he matches them with the correlative systems, the Five Phases, the Stems and Branches, and trigrams and so forth. Then the examiner should evaluate the balance between the pulses and the balance of the cosmic powers with which the pulses are correlated to. It is well known that the traditional Chinese cosmological system, especially the one we have here, is highly relational. Each element of the system has multiple relationships with other elements in different ways. Taking the Five Phases system as an example, different phases have two types of relationships, generating ones and overcoming ones (*xiangsheng xiangke* 相生相剋). This means that a phase will always generate one particular phase while being overcome by another. These rules are also applicable to the pulses. The physical qualities of the pulse and the correlations should also be examined with an awareness of seasonal conditions, the phase of the cosmic movement and the condition of the geographic environment. The Moving and Circulatory Qi systems are used in the examination to see the accordance between the situation of the pulse and the situation of the cosmos. The time of examination is calculated in terms of the Heavenly Stems and Earthly Branches, and their Five Phases configurations. The quality of the pulse should be evaluated in relation to the calendric system, and the particular physical quality of the pulse is understood in light of the numerological properties of the examination time. For example, during the spring, the phase of Wood dominates the season, the yang power starts to grow, and accordingly, a person's liver pulse is supposed to be strong, and a person's spleen pulse should be slightly weaker. If the

phase of Water is in charge of the year, then the liver pulse should be stronger than the heart pulse. Only with such a more sophisticated kind of accordance does a person's body shows an auspicious status for his or her fortune; otherwise the disharmony may denote bad fortune.[415] This is the point where the pulse is interpreted within a more complex numerological system and related technically to the movement of the universe. Figure 11 from Peng's manual shows how different pulses are correlated with different numerological elements.

415 See Gong's *Taisu maijue*, 15-18.

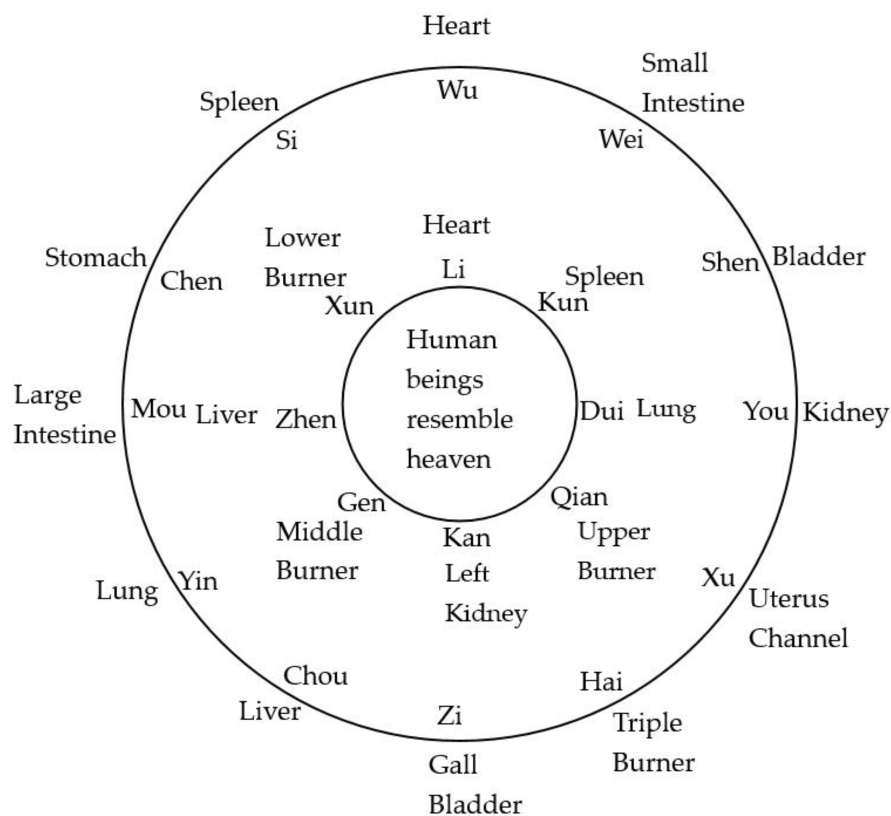

Figure 4 The Figure of Mastering Diagnosis (*Zhenfa zhizhang tu* 診法指掌圖).[416]

A person's own bodily conditions should also be considered in the examination of the pulse. The first vital condition is a person's age because different pulses dominate different life stages, and a person of a specific age should have a particular pulse examined more carefully (Heart Pulse: age 0~25, bladder: 25-30; liver: 30-50; stomach: 50-death). Different physical qualities of the pulse also foreshadow what is going to happen in a person's future years. In this way, a personal lifespan is located and specified in the bodily space. When making predictions, the bodily spatial structure and physical qualities are the indexes of an individual's temporal changes. The second is the small-scale bodily conditions of the person, which are a person's daily bodily status. Thus the pulse should be examined in the morning

[416] See Peng's *Taisu maijue*, 412.

when a person's qi is settled and calm. Both the manuals claim that 'whenever performing pulse physiognomy, the pulse must be examined between 3 and 5 o'clock (*yin* 寅) in the morning at the crack of dawn, and it will be precise. If the examination is rushed, and the examined person's qi and blood are not settled, or his heart is confused, then the examination will not be accurate'.[417]

The third condition is that of pulse disorders. Irregular pulses as a result of body disorders are considered inauspicious and directly related to the risk of death. The rate of each pulse is counted, and the frequency of the pulse is related to the Five Phases and hexagram numerology stemmed from the *Book of Changes*.[418] These numbers with their numerological properties are then related to the Stem and Branch system, which is used for calendar making. Thus the pulse rate can be transformed into a specific date, and according to the manuals, this is the date that a person will die. Both of the manuals offer very detailed descriptions of how the pulse measuring method works in a numerological manner. We can conclude that pulse physiognomy examines the pulse comprehensively. It even takes environmental conditions into account. The potential of the pulse as an index of people's fortunes lies in a divinatory understanding of the physical qualities of the pulse rather than a solely medical one. It is also interpreted in light of the numerological nature of the universe.

Transformation of Medical knowledge and the Phenomenological Pulse

Despite Wu Kun's criticism of pulse physiognomy from a medical stance, most of the pulse physiognomy masters we know of were local physicians. Many Ming physicians used pulse

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[417] See Peng's *Taisu maijue*, 402.
[418] See Gong's *Taisu maijue*, 13-14.

physiognomy to diagnose diseases as well as tell people's fortunes.[419] In the manuals, we see a mixture of the two kinds of knowledge system, with the mantic function of the pulse to be seen as a broader extension of its medical nature. That is to say, physiological conditions of pulses determine a person's sociality, and reflect the pattern of temporal movements of a person's life. From this point of view, the body is not the subject of social imposition at all but the other way around. Not only was the pulse used for people to assess their health, but also to predict various changes over time. It is perhaps an extreme type of 'embodiment', if embodiment, in Csordas's sense, means that the self is a process in which the body orientates itself in the material world.[420] Then Chinese pulse physiognomy takes a step further by claiming that the self is the body, but nothing else. Even the social aspects of human existence, which ostensibly go beyond human physiology, are actually part of it. Actions, encounters, and reactions in human beings' social relations are not activities detached from physiology; rather, physiology prefigures social life and the process of making 'self'. This process of self again follows the logic of 'body homology' in physiognomy. An individual's 'self' is not understood as autonomous and unique, but only the entirety of the mechanism of the numerological body, which is made of the same substance with the cosmos and works in the same way. This is not only seen in pulse physiognomy manuals but Chinese physiognomy in general, but this 'body homology' is best exemplified in pulse physiognomy, as the pulse is the most important somatic dimension in Chinese medical and religious traditions.

Now we can also better understand why many physicians mastered the technique of the Pulse of Greater Purity. Not only did pulse physiognomy require professional medical

[419] See Yang Wende's story in *Zhongguo yiji kao*, 297.
[420] See Thomas Csordas, *The Sacred Self*, 1-22.

knowledge, but given that medical knowledge and the prediction of social life can be seen as fundamentally the same, then medical knowledge already contains the potential for prognostication. The two extant manuals do not distinguish what is 'medical' and what is 'mantic' as we define them today, but simply take prognostication as part of what the physicians (*yi* 醫) could learn. Telling fortunes was a natural consequence of mastering abstruse medical knowledge, rather than something that required a completely heterogeneous learning process. Because human life is entirely physical in this sense, any knowledge of the body is at the same time direct knowledge of the world. Therefore, pulse physiognomy is an extreme version of Chinese physiognomy, revealing the 'oneness' of medical and mantic knowledge systems that conventional physiognomy does not explicitly explain. The very technical nature of understanding the pulse makes pulse physiognomy a bridge between the big picture of cosmology and the practical action of touching the pulse.

Conclusion

The physiognomic body unifies the body with numerological cosmology in Ming China, and the numerological properties of the body are shown to be part of its essence in the transmitted manuals. The body and its perceptible features are subsumed into the cosmological understanding of the world. As Nathan Sivin suggests, the Chinese way of conceptualizing the body is always based on experience, but never tries to be anatomically or empirically approachable in the modern scientific way of understanding the body.[421] Empirical facts of the

[421] See Geoffrey Lloyd and Nathan Sivin, *The Way and the World*, 192.

body are interpreted by a cosmological mode. Initially, the cosmological mode is seen as the pattern of natural movements of the universe rather than a human construction. Signs and elements in the correlation system are not abstract symbolizations of the universe, but a way of categorizing cosmic powers. Thus telling a person's fortune according to his or her somatic features and the cosmological understanding of these features is a way to interpret natural manifestations of fortune on the body; numerological interpretations of the physical features are part of such a natural manifestation. Because the body and the cosmos are understood as the same in their material and energetic foundation, and mechanism, this 'homological relationship' goes beyond simple metaphors between the body and the cosmos. The reason why the body can be defined and examined as a replica of the universe and an index of fortune is because of the 'sameness' between the composition and dynamics between these seemingly different spheres.

In this sense, we see no fundamental demarcation between symbolic aspects of the body and the material aspect. The meaningful signs of the body are not seen as constructed, but as ubiquitous patterns of cosmic movements and they are only meaningful when inspected and understood in terms of the physicality of the body rather than in their own terms. The world of ideas and the world of material have long been divided rather than unified in modern social theories, yet our understanding of the world and ourselves can never jump out of the single material world in which we live.[422] In the cosmology of Chinese physiognomy, we see ways of connecting and correlating the body and the world systematically on account of homogeneous compositions between the body and the world. Therefore, the physicality of the body and its

[422] See Tim Ingold, *Being Alive*, 19-27.

numerological properties are actually different dimensions of one same thing, and the two dimensions are connected like two sides of one coin. The way that the body reflects a person's fortune is the process in which the body naturally manifests movements in cosmos

Hence the physiognomic body is a moving process as well as an ensemble of human beings' 'palpable' relations. The body is a process in the sense that it is the process by which cosmic movements are realized as individual fortune; the body as an open microcosm is the process by which the cosmos reflects itself on a smaller scale. Individual fortune is a replica of the movement of the universe as well. The somatic manifestation of fortune on the body is the result of the process of cosmic movement. As Hans Jonas suggests, the being of the body is its doings, thus the body is its movement.[423] The physiognomic body is a moving process of the cosmic manifestation. It is not only the shape of flesh we can see but also the condensation of a person's life time in it, the pattern of its movement in time; they are all called the body. Human behavior, sociality, and fortune as part of the bodies' 'doing' are an extension of the body. The pattern of its doing, or the pattern of the cosmic manifestation, as a pattern of time, is embedded into the body's spatial as well as tangible features. In this way, the body as a process is also an ensemble of different relations. Different parts of this process of manifestation are related and even 'meshed' together as a whole body, and this body connects every individual's life with the cosmos. We see in the manuals that the body is actually a congregation of the relations themselves. Such a composition also reflects the pattern of its movement in time. Physiognomic inspection of the body is not only about the physical dimensions of the body but the relations between them. The relationality of the body includes

[423] See Hans Jonas, *Mortality and Morality*, 88.

the links between the body and the cosmos. Numerological compositions of the body contain interconnections of different aspects of the material world. To inspect the overall pattern of the body, in terms of the different cosmic powers like the Five Phases, is to inspect the relationality of the body. In result, we cannot say that the numerological composition of the body is analogous if by analogous we mean that people deploy something as a linguistic analogy to explain something else with a completely different essence.[424] The connections between the cosmos and the body, between the body and its constituents like the face, are considered physical, homological, and tangible.

Chapter III

Society, Fortune, and the Body in Physiognomy Manuals

Physiognomic methods of categorizing and differentiating bodily features according to the

[424] See Philippe Descola, *Beyond Nature and Culture*, 201.

different kinds of fortunes they entail are regarded in the Durkheimian sense as a form of 'primitive classification'.[425] Largely based on the work by de Groot, Durkheim and Mauss argued that Chinese body cosmology, including body divination, is essentially similar to all other 'primitive systems', in which the relationships between things in certain ways of classifying the material world replicate the collective social relationships between the people. Thus 'primitive classification' is socially symbolic. Yet if we accept that the classification of the physiognomic body is a form of 'primitive classification', then this would imply that the criteria of such a classification come from the collective ideal of society and social relations, and purposefully reiterate this ideal. If so, the problem of the Durkheimian way of understanding Chinese physiognomy is that the collective social structure uses the classification of the body to express itself. But this is a self-explanatory and circular argument that denies anything in a classification system if it is not socially and sociologically meaningful. This means that the way people understand the body is cultural and social. The categorization of bodily features is based on similar categories in society. Yet in the physiognomy manuals, this statement is reversed. We shall see that these physiognomy manuals actually see the way of categorizing society as an extension of the categorization of the body.

Mary Douglas is the first to point out that there are two bodies in human existence as a kind of animal but also a social and cultural being: a natural body and a social body.[426] She argues that a social body is a way of social control in a society or a social community by domesticating the body and subsuming it into cultural and social categorizations. This echoes with ideas proposed by Marcel Mauss and Norbert Elias that the body is always used,

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[425] See Emile Durkheim and Marcel Mauss, *Primitive Classification*, 67-88.
[426] See Mary Douglas, *Natural Symbols*, 73-91.

perceived and regulated in a particular social sphere, and human beings' behaviors and bodily actions are embedded in social definitions of the body.[427] Behind this way of conceptualizing relationships between the body and society is a division between the social body and the natural body. Thus the visible and body alone cannot be the whole foundation for a person's sociality and personhood; it is the social interpretation of the visible and body that defines a person's existence.

Since the physiology of the body is by itself a provenance of human social existence, the visibility of the body is not only an index of its physiological information but to some extent molds a person's sociality. Patterns of a person's social life in a time and space are seen as an extension of the body. Similar to what Christopher Tilley suggests, human beings' physical perceptions of the material world and bodily 'self' are to certain extent the only source of their consciousness and conceptualization of the world, a 'totality' of existence, which is opposed to the dualistic view of a division between mind and body, the social and the natural/physical.[428] Consequently, human mind, behaviors and social relations are seen as corporeal, which can be seen as a physical potential to perform socially.[429] We as embodied beings make the world and ourselves meaningful to us only through bodily senses and actions.[430] Because the body contains its potential social performance and manifests such potential performances in itself, the body can also be used to interpret a person's future. This is the basis of the practice of physiognomy, as I will explain in the following paragraphs.

The physiognomic body is similar in that its all-encompassing spatial structures and

[427] See Marcel Mauss, 'Techniques of the body,' 70-88.
[428] See Christopher Tilley, *Body and Image*, 15-51.
[429] See Judith Butler, 'Performative Acts and Gender Constitution,' 401-417.
[430] See Eric Matthews, *Merleau-Ponty: A Guide for the Perplexed*, 41-56.

perceptible features foreshadows a person's possible social encounters, social performance and social life patterns. This means that the body homology not only incorporates the resemblance between the body and the cosmos, but also sees the body and human being's sociality/fortune as the same. Yet physiognomy explains this 'embodied fortune' in a technical way and offers different methods to observe patterns of this process. A numerological system of understanding the universe in the Ming China is also used to understand the corporeal relationship between fortune and the body in the manuals. In this system, there was already a whole series of interpretive rules like the Five Phases as a premise, which was believed to reflect the reality of human beings' bodily mechanisms. For this reason, whatever the body generates in people's social lives can be measured accordingly. After all, the body and the cosmos share the same primary substance, qi, which allows constant interaction between the two. Hence physiognomic interpretations of fortune and the body are different from 'embodiment'. The relationship between the body and fortune is pre-social and pre-perception, not limited to a person's subjective bodily feelings but a physiognomic system that exhibits universal connections between the world and the body.[431] It is not that each individual bodily senses give different meanings to the world, but that the body and its potentials can be observed and dealt with universally. The cosmological system is used to categorize different physical features on the body according to their social denotations. Different positions in people's social life, including social status, political power, marriage, personality, mishaps and moral and immoral conducts are explained as a result of distinctions between physical features. In other words, the physicality of the body is naturally social and ethical, and social ethics and

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[431] Embodied subjectivity is commonly seen in the discussion of the phenomenology of the body, see Hubert L. Dreyfus, 'The current relevance of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of embodiment,' 1-20.

social stratifications are naturally corporeal. As we have seen in previous discussions, the body was believed to be a result of cosmic movements, and its essence or qi generates a person's life. Thus body is a root of human sociality, and human sociality is an extension of the body. Physiognomy conceptualizes society and human social life as such not because the body embodies the social world, but because the body generates the social and determines the social. What is behind physiognomic understandings of the relationship between the body and society is this absolutization of the body. We will see in the manuals how physiognomy as a conduit for this absolutization of the body is realized.

The reason why the physiognomy manuals in the Ming regard different somatic features of different people as a provenance of different social lives, and therefore different fortune is that the body is not only a medium between society and the cosmos, but also the starting point where social behaviors happen. Thus like N. J. Allen concludes in her study on definitions of personhood in different cultures, the categorization of persons indicates that social discourses of individuality the uniqueness of each person's self beyond or superior to the body are highly problematic since human beings' share similar physical basis.[432] In physiognomy even human beings' bodies are not heterogeneous to each other by nature. An individual human being's existence can be explained by physiognomic methods that dissect 'self' into different bodily processes. The same goes with understanding social hierarchy. Thus distinctions that compose social hierarchy are not determined ultimately by fortune, power, longevity, blood lineage, or talent, but by the life power that resides in a person's body, *ming*. While different factors in the mechanism of a social hierarchy are rather contingent and uncontrollable, the body is precise

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[432] See N. J. Allen, 'The category of the person: a reading of Mauss's essay,' 26-45.

and reliable in showing the future—at least from the viewpoint of Ming physiognomy.

Here we see the technicality of physiognomy. Categorizing people's bodies is a technical activity. It aims at predicting each individual's fortune, locating each individual's predestined positions in a social hierarchy via a categorization of each individual's body. In this chapter I discuss how in physiognomy, concrete bodily features are understood as the provenance of a person's sociality and prospect in certain hierarchies. The categorization of human body represented in the manuals will be examined to show how social orders are conceptualized as 'homological' to somatic as well as cosmic orders. We have seen in the previous chapter that the body is understood as 'homological' in its composition and origin with the cosmos, and this body homology can also be extended to the relationship between the body and human being's sociality in a physiognomic context. By looking at the categorization of different bodies and bodily features, the differentiation between the physiognomically 'beautiful' and 'ugly' bodies, and the physiognomy of virtue, we shall see how social orders and human beings' sociality are somatic and how the body is represented as a unity of the social and the natural in the manuals. After explaining why the body could tell fortune in this physiognomic body cosmology, this chapter also deals with the question of how the body tells specific fortunes in human life. As we have mentioned, physiognomy is a technique of inspecting the body, a technique that was used and performed. Despite the complex concepts and theories put in words to answer why the body could tell fortune, physiognomy manuals ought to show their readers how to do it, and it is indeed what these manuals were for. Hence we have to pay attention to the particular methods of categorizing and classifying the body in these manuals to understand physiognomy not only as a cosmology but a technique. These particularities in

the manual again show how specific aspects of social life is 'somaticized' in the Ming physiognomy discourse.

The Categorization of the Body

The categorization of body parts is operated based on three different levels: the spirit, qi, and morphology (*xing* 形). Different bodily features of a particular body part are often related to different animals and other things. This kind of resemblance is seen as important reference to people's fortune. The section on the features of eyes in the *Compendium* classifies different eyes into thirty-nine categories, with thirty-six of them named after various animals.[433] This list of animals includes ordinary ones, such as goat or dog, and legendary ones, such as dragon (*long* 龍) or phoenix (*feng* 鳳). A similar way of categorization is also seen in two verses called 'Poetic Judgment on Bird-like Eyes' (*Qinmu shiduan* 禽目詩斷) and 'The Poetic Judgement on Beast-like Eyes' (*Shoumu shiduan* 獸目詩斷) in the *Compendium*.[434] In general, the resemblances between human eyes and different animals' eyes are related to the auspiciousness or inauspiciousness of particular animals. Take the following example:

> The eyes [of tigers] are huge and the eyeballs are faintly golden. The pupils are sometimes short and sometimes long. The character of [such persons] is firm, steady, and carefree. He will live a wealthy life until he dies but his sons may suffer.
> 眼大睛黃淡金色，瞳仁或短有時長。性鋼沉重而無患，富貴終年子有傷。

The eyes of tigers are considered auspicious by and large. It is only ominous to a person's descendants. The eyes of dragons are considered extremely auspicious and perfect in all

[433] See *Shenxiang quanbian*, *juan* 3, 13-18.
[434] See *Shenxiang quanbian*, *juan* 9, 38-39.

aspects so that only an emperor or a Prime Minister at court could have them:

> The black and white [of the eyeballs] are clear and the spirit and essence are in fine fettle. The wave of the eyesight is long. The eyes are big and the qi and the spirit are hidden. If so, [this person's] wealth and nobility will be exceptional, and in the end he will receive high emoluments and assist the wise emperor.
> 黑白分明精神彩，波長眼大氣神藏。如此富貴非小可，竟能受祿輔明皇。[435]

The auspiciousness of a dragon's eyes is noticeable in both concrete ways in shape and size, and more elusive energetic ways. A dragon's eyes have sufficient qi and spirit. When something is labelled as a dragon this will always be considered the most auspicious and rare type of feature, since this legendary creature is closely related to the emperor and the royal family, especially from the Song onwards.[436] A pair of eyes that looks similar to those of the dragons' means that a person's fortune and capability resemble a dragon as well. A person whose physiological constitution resembles a dragon is also very likely to be successful in civil service, in contrast to the features of tigers, which indicate such persons' future achievement in military service.[437]

The comparison between human physical features and other creatures are not only based on morphological similarities but the assumption that a person will behave like the animal according to which his eyes are categorized. Thus a person is what he looks like:

> The eyeballs of wolves are yellow, and their sight is shaky. Such a person will be greedy and vulgar and will confuse himself. He is cautious and troubled and will live a hundred years of brutality and derangement.
> [t]he eyeballs of cats are yellow, big and round. Such a person's character is gentle and pure, and he likes to gorge fresh food. He is talented and strong, capable of [different] assignments. During his whole life he is always cherished by powerful figures.
> 狼目睛黃視若顛，為人貪鄙自茫然。倉皇多錯精神亂，兇暴狂徒度百年。

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435 See *ibid*.
436 See Shi Aidong, *Zhongguo long de faming*, 40.
437 See *Shenxiang tie guandao, juan* 4, 31.

貓目睛黄而闊圓，淵純稟性好飽鮮。有才有力堪任使，常得高人一世憐。[438]

We can see from above that the categorization of people's body features in terms of other creatures in physiognomy manuals is behavioral rather than merely visual. It also indicates that the world of natural things like animals is considered morally, socially, and hierarchically differentiated. Some animals are inherently auspicious and positive while others are not. Thus human beings' social criteria are regarded as present in nature as well. Indeed since early China, the animal world has been conceptualized not as an autonomous realm of different species but homologous to human society, the holder of universal ethics and hierarchy.[439] The physiognomic categorization of human body features links the presumed morphological resemblances between humans and animals to a resemblance of temperament and habitual natures.

This is also a discourse that Ming manuals inherited from previous physiognomy culture. Manuscripts in Dunhuang already contain texts that occasionally use the morphological resemblance between the human body and that of animals as a reference for predicting fortune.[440] But this kind of resemblance is represented more like a metaphor rather than an index system of ad hoc relationships between particular kinds of bodily features and specific types of fortune. Physiognomy stories in early Chinese historiography also include scattered information of using animal physiology as references for physiognomic inspections of human bodies, yet as He concludes, they seemed lack a systematized body of knowledge for this kind of resemblance.[441] However, in the Ming manuals, we see a well schemed system for the exact

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[438] See *Shenxiang quanbian*, *juan* 3, 16-17.

[439] See Roel Sterckx, *The Animal and the Daemon in Early China*, 15-29, 79-88.

[440] For example, see transcriptions of the manuscripts in *Dunhuang xieben xiangshu jiaolu yanjiu*, 27, 64.

[441] See Jianjun he, 'The body in the politics and society of early China,' 17-18.

same method of categorizing the human body. For example, in the *Compendium*, important parts of the face including the eyebrows, the eyes, the nose, the ears, and the mouth are all interpreted according to their resemblance to different kinds of things, most of which are the corresponding animal parts.[442] In the case of the features of the eyes, thirty-nine different kinds of eyes are listed in the *Compendium* according to their resemblance to eyes of different animals, and each type of eyes indicates an ad hoc type of behavior and fortune, just like what we have seen in the dragon eye text. The resemblance between the human body and animal body in the Ming context is not simply a metaphor one occasionally uses to explain fortune, but a systematic index of the relationship between the human body, the natural world and social life. In this index, the bodily order is considered as the same with natural orders, as well as social orders.

Categorizations of some other aspects of the head are explicit in their names but subtler in terms of the definition of the features. Bone structures on the back side of the head are known in physiognomy as 'pillow bones' (*zhengu* 枕骨). According to the *Water Reflection* manual, pillow bones are the most miraculous and precise bones in manifesting fortune, yet also the hardest to evaluate.[443] In the *Compendium*, thirty-three different types of pillow bones are given, with small pictures in front of every item to describe their appearance.[444] Yet the pictures are rather vague and abstract and their names are excessively concise as well. We can only suspect that they are used to describe shapes and patterns of bones on the back side of the head. In the *Compendium*, it is clearly stated that all of the pillow bones are rarely seen on

[442] See *Shenxiang quanbian*, *juan* 3, 8-38.
[443] See *Shuijing shenxiang*, *juan* 2, 56-60.
[444] See *Shenxiang quanbian*, *juan* 10, 9.

people's heads, but once they rise up and stay strong, they always indicate good fortune. Different types of bones directly denote specific achievements in a person's political career. For example, the 'Pillow Bone of Full Moon' (*yuanyue zhen* 圓月枕) is a bone on the back head that is round and prominent on its own without any adjacent bones, and this bone indicates that the person will serve in the high court or governmental departments but only in a leisurely and easy position (*qingzhi* 清職), whereas the 'Pillow Bone of the Double Dragons' (*shuanglong zhengu* 雙龍枕骨) indicates the achievement of a 'General with Prominent Seal' (*jieshu jiangjun* 節樞將軍). These rare bones are evidence of a unique and noble fortune a person may have in his future social life, and with a clear spirit and qi in the bones, these potentials will be realized.

The categorization of the features on other body areas apart from those on the head can be more complex. The categorization of hands not only includes differentiations between auspicious and inauspicious bodily features in general but also includes a detailed way of analyzing palm and finger prints. Normally passages on palm physiognomy are more technical and lucid than those about other bodily parts. Generally speaking, a hand should be supple, soft, bright, flexible, ameliorated and broad. The joints on each finger should be small and delicate, and the palm should be naturally fragrant. These properties represent a refined constitution of the body, where good fortune resides.[445] However, the inspection of the hand does not stop at the tangibility of two hands. The hand is seen as a sprout of the whole body (*yishen zhi miao* 一身之苗), and a sign of millions of situations (*wanban zhi shuo* 萬般之說), thus it is again a microcosmic structure that in itself contains comprehensive information on a person's fortune.[446]

[445] See *Shenxiang quanbian*, *juan* 8, 1.
[446] See *Liuzhuang xiangfa*, 26.

As a microcosm, the hand is interpreted numerologically, and the numerological structure of the hand is immediately pertinent to the physiognomic analysis and categorization of the palm prints. The numerological analysis of the body in physiognomy is usually realized on the basis of the body's various prints, lines, and energetic features, such as finger prints, wrinkles on the face, or the color of body channels. The three fingers in the middle are the three master fingers (*zhu* 主), and the mid finger is the most important one among them. The mid finger should be the longest and strongest one to control the whole hand, and it has to be in good position to the palm.[447] The palm is seen as an eight-trigram structure similar to the face, and the different palm areas assigned to different Trigrams entail different aspects of fortune. For example, the left side of the left hand palm is the area of *zhen* 震, which is in charge of a person's political rank and personal wealth in the future.[448] The palm can also be divided into four even parts according to the four seasons and the Five Phases like the face. The movement of qi on the hand, palm prints and their features of the two hands is then placed in a temporal-spatial model for numerological predictions. Interestingly, the systematic inspection of hand palm is something we can only find in the Ming manuals. Even the extant three Song manuals do not provide any detailed rules of hand palm reading. The spatial structure of two hands again is regarded as the structure of a person's life time, as well as a miniature of the temporal structure of the cosmos. Not only does the space of the body itself reflect the pattern of temporal movement on both individual and cosmic levels, different parts of the body like hands and the head can also be understood as a micro-system on their own.

The categorization of palm prints is more intricate than sticking to the clear cut between

[447] See '*Shouxiang zonglun*' in *Shuijing shenxiang*, *juan* 1, 55.
[448] *Ibid*.

the good and bad signs. First of all, the auspicious and inauspicious prints should be examined in light of the prints of the whole hand, rather than inspected on their own. The texture of the prints and their numerological positions are also evaluated according to what they can express. For example, although the pattern of the print as a whole indicates its auspiciousness, a coarse and shallow print means that the good fortune will not stay easily or may even turn into a bad fortune.[449] The print called 'Heaven Seal' (*tianyin* 天印) is an auspicious print for political achievements, but only when it shows up on the position of the trigram *qian* 乾 or *zhen*.[450] There is no clear connection in the manuals between the names of the prints, what they express and what they look like. Most of the prints are illustrated in the hand illustrations, but the pictures are vague and abstract, making it very hard to tell what kind of print they are referring to. What we can say is that most of the palm prints listed in the manuals are auspicious or neutral, and that inauspicious ones are much fewer. One of the possible reasons is that, as mentioned in the manuals, complex and delicate palm prints themselves are rare qualities of the hand, and in this case, the very presence of such prints is already precious no matter what they mean. So a pair of good hands must have prints on it:

> Prints on hands are like patterns and rings on wood. A piece of wood with beautiful prints is rare material. Hands with beautiful prints are noble in their quality. Those with prints are the superior ones in physiognomy, and those without prints are the inferior ones.
> 手中有紋者，亦象木之有理。木之美紋者，名為奇才。手之有美紋，乃貴質也。故手不可以無紋。有紋者上相，無紋者下相。[451]

Palm prints are more expressive of a person's sexual and marital problems as well. Among the seventy-one types of palm prints in the *Compendium*, as many as seventeen indicate bad

[449] See *Mayi shenxiang*, *juan* 3, 1-3.
[450] See *Mayi shenxiang*, *juan* 3, 5.
[451] See *Shuijing shenxiang*, *juan* 1, 51.

consequences of lust.[452] In general, the categorization of palm prints takes the prints on both hands as natural and cosmic signs of different fortune, and a proper understanding of the positions and conditions of these prints is equally complex as that of the features on the head.

Another important and probably the most explicit type of categorization is the categorization of moles and dots on the skin. As observed by Nina Jablonski in her study of the function of skins among mammals, primates including human beings are 'visual-oriented' animals, and the skin serves as a major conduit for non-verbal communication, in which moles and other marks on the skin generate human beings' understandings of each other as social beings.[453] In Chinese physiognomy, moles are seen as indicators of fortune, and a method of interpreting the quality and location of the moles is developed. But they not seen as 'social entities', in contrast, as evidence that sociality is generated from the body. There are different criteria to judge the auspiciousness of the moles:

> Black moles are like trees growing on a mountain, and hills rising out of the earth. If a mountain contains fine substances, and then nice trees grow to reveal its elegance. If earth accumulates the filthy soil, and ugly hills rise up to accommodate its filth. The rules of the myriad things are like this. Therefore, when a human being has fine substance, [fine] black moles appear to exhibit his nobility. When a human being has filthy substance, ugly moles appear to reveal his humility.
> 夫黑子者，若山之生林木，地之出堆阜也。山有美質，則生善木以顯其秀。地積污土，則生惡阜以樂其濁。萬物之理皆然。是以人有美質也，則生其黑以彰其貴，有濁質也，則生惡痣以表其賤。[454]

Fine or ugly moles are seen as a natural reflection of social hierarchy. Good moles should be hidden on the body rather than being exposed, and that makes all moles on the face inauspicious, and moles on the palm auspicious. They should be dark and shiny like oil colors,

452 See *Shenxiang quanbian*, *juan* 8, 4-12.
453 See Nina Jablonski, *Skin*, 121-159.
454 See *Shenxiang quanbian*, *juan* 10, 16.

or red like cinnabar. The color should be pure and clean, and without any other disturbances like hair on it. Apart from the moles near the hairline, most of the facial moles listed out in the *Compendium* are harmful moles. Some of them are even harmful to a person's descendants.[455] Facial moles are markers of a person's future events and they should be examined according to those physiognomic points on the face where each mole is located. The location of moles are meaningful indicators in a bodily space. Yet what is more complex about moles is that the physical conditions of these dots also influence what kind of information they contain. It does not matter whether we draw a coordinate system on a piece of paper or a black board; as long as the calculation stays the same we have the same result regardless of the material condition of this coordinate. But for the physiognomic calculation, the physical qualities matter equally.

The categorization of the physiognomic body does not exclusively concentrate on the body alone but also relates the body to the environment which it inhabits. This means that while the body generates individual's sociality, collective differences of the bodies of different socio-geographic communities are regarded as important components of physiognomic rules. This means that on a macro level, socio-geographic orders and physiological distinctions of human bodies are considered as 'homological' as well. People living in different geographic areas of China and people from other foreign countries are classified according to different criteria and different aspects of the body are emphasized. In the *Compendium*, a passage called 'On Forms and Customs' (*Lun xing su* 論形俗) says,

> As for people from the Shu area their eyes should be inspected. As for people from the Min area their bones should be inspected. As for people from the Zhe area their purity [of the body] should be inspected. As for people from the Huai area their weight should be inspected. As for people from the Song area their mouth should be inspected. As for

455 See *Shenciang quanbian*, *juan* 10, 13-14.

people from the Jiangxi area their colors should be inspected. As for people from the Lu area their prowess should be inspected. As for people from foreign lands their nose should be inspected. As for people from the Taiyuan area their virtue and dignity should be inspected.
蜀人相眼，閩人相骨，浙人相清，淮人相重，宋人相口．江西人相色，魯人相軒昂，胡人相鼻，太原人相重厚。[456]

A similar method of inspection can be found in other manuals as well:

This theory applies to [the geographic system] of the northern and southern capitals and [other] thirteen provinces. It is not seen in ancient books, but in the heart method of the Master Liuzhuang. [The continent] is divided into twelve palaces. It is said that the south is in the phase of Fire, therefore [people from there] should be inspected for their Heavenly Court [on the forehead]. It is clear that Fire is strong [for people from the south]. In the same way the north is in the phase of water, therefore [people from there] should be inspected for their Earthly Pavilion [on the chin]. Their water phase ought to be strong. People from the Zhe area is in the phase of metal, so their metal phase ought to be pure. In this way, the prosperity of the body is promised. People from the Min area should be inspected for their mouth, lips, and teeth. The Min area is close to the sea, which [correlates to] the space between the lips. The Taiyuan area is in the West Shan region in the west, and it is part of the middle country in the phase of earth. People from the Henan area should be inspected for their bodily composure, Huainan for weight and width of the body, Huaibei for its prowess, Jiangnan for its levity and purity. [People from] the Yangtze River area is not afraid of the heaviness and turbidity of the body. Yuezhou is a mountainous and precipitous area, thus [people from there] should only be inspected for their qi and color of the river surfaces and the surpassing tails[457] but not to be considered based on their bones. But only when every part of the body flourishes with each other, then the overall layout of the body will be splendid. Otherwise, it is difficult to promise a body of prosperity.
此論南北二京十三省說,古書無此，乃先生心法也。分十二宮，言之南方屬火，故相天庭，宣火旺，亦為有北方屬水，相地閣，宜水旺為妙。浙人屬金，故金宜清，方許身榮。閩人相唇口齒，閩地近海，乃唇口之間。太原乃陝西，西方也，為中國，屬土。河南相穩重，淮南相厚實，淮北相軒昂，江南相輕清。江水不嫌重濁。岳州乃山嶽峻地，故獨看江面越尾相氣色，不以骨格為念，但各處相菲得局方妙，不合難許榮身。[458]

Despite the divergences between the *Liuzhuang* manual and the *Compendium*, they both exhibit a tendency to differentiate people according to a cosmic-geographic system and ascribe

[456] See *Shenxiang quanbian, juan shou*, 8.
[457] May refer to the surface of the body, but the original meaning of this term is not clear.
[458] See *Liuzhuang xiangfa*, 58.

different somatic features and behavioral penchants of different people to their distinct cosmic-geographic environments. This is something clearly stated in the manuals as a new technique that the ancient books did not yet contain, as we have seen in the quotation above. As mentioned earlier, the interpretative system of physiognomy not only focuses on the body alone but also understands the body in terms of its relations with the environment and other forms of environmental divinations such as geomancy. The idea is that different geographic regions with different configurations of cosmic power produce different types of bodies and character, and this idea can also be seen in some medical theories.[459] In this way, the body becomes part of people's regional identities.

A more complex issue here is the differentiation between the so-called indigenous Chinese people and the imagined 'foreign ethnic others' (*hu* 胡). According to Mark Elliott, this division between the so-called Chinese and the foreign *hu* is the result of the elite discourse in the Ming dynasty developed from a previous Song discussion of ethnicity which absolutized political boundaries between the powerful and cultured 'Chinese' people and their foreign counterparts.[460] Such a view hardly reflects the ethnic reality in traditional China but this kind of cultural as well as political imagination of ethnicity had been developing for centuries. This Ming discourse definitely influenced physiognomy. Geographic classifications of the physiognomic body do not often explicitly claim this imagined ethnic preference, but rules and standards in the physiognomy manuals are more variable for the imagined ethnically 'non-Chinese' people in some other passages:

Crossing Head means that the *yinti* points on the two sides of the forehead are closely

[459] See *Huangdi neijing*, *Taisu*, *juan* 19, '*Zhi fangdi*,' 318-320.
[460] See Mark Elliott, 'Hushuo,' 173-318. For its Song predecessor, see Ge Zhaoguang, *Zhaizi zhongguo*, 40-60.

chained up and invade the *yintang* point. Because the *yintang* point is the palace of official post and emolument, [therefore] if the eye brows are broad then the person will become an official and his life will become stable and peaceful. And if [the points] are chained up tightly that means there will be no wealth from his post, and in his whole life, he will only be an irritable fool…Barbarian people do not fall within this restriction.
头交者，言两头印提交锁，侵犯印堂也。盖缘印堂是官禄宫，若得眉宇宽则为官平生安稳。若交促者无禄。而一生走骤愚夫…胡人不在此限。[461]

The manual itself does not explain why the so-called foreigners are not limited to this rule. We may suspect that it is because of the ubiquity of such physical attributes among the non-Chinese. As Marc Abramson points out, during the Tang dynasty, physiognomic distinctions between the Tang Chinese and the non-Chinese 'barbarians' were often realized by distinguishing their physical features ubiquitous to other ethnic groups but rare among the so-called Chinese and attributing these to cosmic-geographic variations in the movement of qi.[462] The Republican physiognomist Chen Gongdu 陳公篤 believed that the Ming manuals did not illustrate the rules of physiognomy for the so-called ethnic others simply because that the rules were the same, and one can simply change particular standards in the system in adaptation to specific geographic variations. He said,

Gongdu says: There are changes and alterations of the Heavenly Way in physiognomy. There are axiomatic theories about the different tendencies of the geographic features, the condensed spirit of the mountains and rivers, and the vicissitude of risings and falls. The application [of the rules] does not change. For the rest the ten thousand nations are the same and the entire globe is connected. There are differences in the nature of races and there is diversity in the cold and hot regions.
公篤曰：相法有天道之轉機。地形之偏重。山水之鐘靈。盛衰之變化。古法多定論。執而不變矣。剩下萬國共和。全球交通。種族之性質不同。寒熱之地帶各異。[463]

Chen Gongdu himself applied rules in the extant manuals to the physiognomy of

[461] See *Shenxiang quanbian*, *juan* 2, 5.
[462] See Marc Abramson, *Encounters with Asia*, 82-99.
[463] See *Gongdu xiangfa*, *juan* 7, 258.

European people according to his own observation of the physiology of Europeans and geography of different European countries at that time. We cannot be certain to what extent his interpretation of the physiognomy of non-Chinese in the manuals are theoretically valid, but we can see that in physiognomy, the vague boundary between the so-called 'us' and the 'others' is visible in bodily forms. Identity, in this case, is a somatic issue as well as a social issue. And again, foreign people's sociality and fortunes are rooted in their own bodies and geomantic features of their birth places. Thus differences and similarities in the sociality of people in different geographic areas and ethnic communities are regarded in the physiognomy manuals as the result of the distinctions in the body. The manuals acknowledge the limit of these rules due to the multiple geographic and ethnic variations of human bodies. This is saying that both the environmental circumstances of a person's domicile and the culturally construed ethnic differences should be considered when doing physiognomic predictions. Manuals in the Ming period certainly take on the prevalent social discourse of geographic differences and perceptions of ethnicity at that time and give space to exceptions of these issues. It means that the elite discourse at that time was not far away from popular techniques like physiognomy, and physiognomy in return may even have reinforced these imaginations.

The categorization of physiognomic body also takes the time people live in into account:

> There are so many kinds of ancient physiognomy and [they are] difficult to deal with in a short time. [Because of] the mandate of qi of the current time, it is hard to follow the ancient books [for contemporary physiognomy].
> These two sentences are [from] the physiognomy of Chen Tuan. The Master Mayi passed on [this technique] to Chen Tuan in a stone cave, and later Chen saved people's lives to accumulate hidden merits. How could [one say] that small things like saving people from travesties and poverty, recommending the virtuous kind to worthy posts, and predicting good and bad fortune are not hidden merits? Later there are thirty-seven different sects of earlier worthies' physiognomy including Master Lü, Damo, Guigu zi and Tang Ju, and

their discussions vary [from each other]. Later people in the Song compiled [their discussions] as the *Anthology of Human Physiognomy*. The preface says: There are ten thousand kinds of physiognomy but [none of them] can easily escape the generating and overcoming relationship [of the Five Phases]. Although theories [of physiognomy] differ from each other but there are secretly transmitted [methods] of the physiognomy of the whole body. The way of heaven for people in current time goes to the south in the period of Lower Prime of Jiazi. [People today] are not like the ancient people who had powerful qi and strong body, and who were born with rich spirit and deep flesh. Most of the people today are thin, slender, barren and dry. Some of them are [still] with great wealth and nobility, but [people] today are still weaker [than the ancient ones], and the thickness and slimness of people today do not match.
古相多般一時難過，今時氣數難依古書。
此二句乃夷相法。是麻衣祖師在石室中授陳翁，後陳翁以積陰德救世人性命，小則解人困苦，舉善為賢，知凶知吉，豈不是陰功？後有呂祖、達摩、鬼谷子、唐舉諸先賢共有七十三家相法，論各不同，後宋人著為人相編，總雲：相有萬般難逃生克之中，理雖各別一身相有秘傳。今時人天道南行下元甲子，非若古人氣壯身強，生得神餘肉厚，今人薄削枯乾者及多，內中有大富大貴，今固然弱故，今人厚薄不合。[464]

This passage in the *Master Liuzhuang* manual suggests that people in different periods in history had different collective features on their bodies and different collective fortune due to different cosmic power and qi movement dominating each period. The author of the manual ascribed this 'secretive knack' to the Song physiognomy master Chen Tuan. We will discuss Chen Tuan's life story and how he was established as a textual authority in Ming physiognomy in Chapter IV. Here the author states that although different manuals represent different theories of physiognomy that may look contradictory to each other, they should be understood in the particular social and cosmic circumstances when these manuals and theories were produced. That is to say, different theories may only work for the physiognomy of people living in the same period, and when the cosmic movement changes to another era, people's collective body features also change accordingly. In this way, physiognomy theory should also be updated. One should always examine the overall numerological composition of his or her

464 See *Liuzhuang xiangfa*, 4.

era before examining people's physiognomy. There is a sense of 'historicity' of the body from the perspective of physiognomy in this passage, that ancient people in general had better body constitution and better fortune then the author's contemporaneous, and this is due to the changes in cosmic movement. The passage later suggests that similar secrets exist in the ancient physiognomy manuals and it is ignorant for contemporary physiognomists to waste their time on these theories without the knowledge of these secret knacks. This passage shows that the cosmic power that causes and 'propels' historical changes of a society also works on human bodies on both individual and collective levels. Although the passage ascribes this recognition of the temporal differences of human being to Song texts, we still do not have clear evidence on such a claim.

Therefore, the body is open to external influences. Being the totality of a person's existence does not mean that this totality—the body does not change. It is a body ecologic, homological to the cosmos and the society. Categorizations of the physiognomic body incorporate the the body into their physiognomic meanings. From the theorization of fortune and the body, we see the 'fetish' or even the 'absolutization' of the body as the source of human beings' diverse social lives and social behaviors. Perhaps the classical understanding of the relationship between the social body and the body should be re reversed in this sense. The body is the totality of social expressions. As mentioned before, the generation of the individual's fortune is seen as a physical as well as cosmic process rather than a social construction in physiognomy. The very foundation of society, human beings' sociality, is thus a somatic matter. The physiognomic categorization of the body is not a medium through which society expresses itself, but a process in which the body as part of the cosmos manifests itself through sociality.

As the product of cosmic change and qi movement, the body is also under the effects from the cosmos which also work on an era or a society. The body is not static but dynamic, and as a totality of a person's sociality and social time, any changes in the body will cause change in people's social lives. The body can be seen as an open 'platform' of interactions between individual's life and the cosmos; the cosmos affects people's lives through the body, since the body generates social life. The corporeality of human beings' sociality and social time in physiognomy is cosmic. This corporeality is not limited only to the body itself or bodily perceptions, but constantly in the flow of the cosmos and open up to the rest of the world. In this sense, the categorization of physiognomic body is also a categorization of different kinds of sociality according their cosmic corporeality.

Why is the categorization of the body a provenance for the categorization of people's sociality in physiognomy? Physiognomy is a prognostic technique, which means that its purpose is to predict a specific fortune by examining specific bodies and specific bodily features. Therefore, this technique aims to understand human society and individual's life in a predictive agenda and to work out particular predictions. What is important here is how the body is approached, and how it serves as a visible source of fortune. Human fortune and social life are then condensed in the body, not vice versa. When we look at how specific body behaves and moves in a social situation, a stage, for the purpose of understanding the current social mechanism, we will easily come to the conclusion that the body is immersed in a social milieu. Yet this is not the goal of physiognomy. It aims at encompassing the whole society into the somatic form of human beings, the body, in order to understand the future. Because of this, the body is the beginning and the end of human social life in a lifespan, a temporal-spatial

composition. At this point, the categorization of the physiognomic body is an endeavor to use human beings' physiological constitution to understand differences in a society and social orders. After all, if human life is destined, then there shall be an answer to the contingent and changeable social life. The answer in physiognomy is the body.

Gender and Body Growth in Physiognomy

One significant division in human bodies is the division between males and females. Most of the rules in Ming physiognomy manuals are more applicable to men, and the physiognomy of women is often highlighted as a separate type of technique. As a vital social division, gender differences are explained in this physiognomic context again as a somatic division. A woman's fortune is defined in terms of her influence on her husband and children. Her successful role in her families and the propriety of her behaviors are also vital in her fortune. A Woman's fortune is seen as the unique consequence of her physiological constitution, which is defined as fundamentally different from men. In physiognomic inspections, the first and most practical difference between male and female bodies is the different concentrations of life force and fortune on the left and right side of the body. Unlike men's fortune, women's fortune inhabits the right side of the female body.[465] Thus when inspecting women's body, the physiological features on the right side outweigh those on the left. This is the same for the energetic configurations of the male and female body. In the *Esoteric Verses of the Pulse of Greater Purity* manual compiled by Gong Tingxian, we can find the distinction between the male body and the female body's pulse and the fortunes resides in different viscera:

[465] See *Yuebo dongzhong ji*, 16.

In general, [when inspecting pulses], male's liver pulse should be heavily pressed to search for the [sign of] the trigram *zhen*. In this way, [the fortune] of his early ages will be seen. Touch moderately to inspect the dominant fortune of his middle age. [Touch] the Right Joint point and the spleen pulse to decide the dominant fortune of his old age. It should be heavily pressed. Female's lung pulse should be heavily pressed to search for the [sign of] the trigram dui. In this way, [the fortune] of her early age will be decided. Touch moderately to inspect the dominant fortune of her middle age. [Touch] the spleen pulse to decide the dominant fortune of her old age…In general, it is auspicious for a man's pulse to run in the qi circulation of the southeast. [It represents the trigrams of] *li*, *xun*, *zhen*, and *kun*. When you take his qi the circulation [patterns of these trigrams] generates each other, and there will be no harm and no obstacles. It is auspicious for a woman's pulse to run in the qi circulation of the northwest. [It represents the trigrams of] *qian*, *dui*, *kan*, and *gen*. Ideally, when you take her qi it should be restrained and solemn. If a man has the circulation of the northwest, it means mishap. [In his] career and life there will be many failures.
大抵男子以肝部沉取震卦，以看其初年。中取以看其中主。右關脾脈以斷其末主。沉取方是。女子以肺部沉取兌卦，以決初年。中取以斷中主。脾部沉取以斷其末主…大抵男子宜行東南氣運，離巽震坤是也。取其氣運相生，不剋不滯。女子宜行西北，乾兌坎艮是也。取其氣肅斂為宜。倘若男子得西北之運，為晦滯。行事多有成敗。'[466]

Physiological distinctions between the male body and the female body lead to their different patterns of fortune. Crossing such a physiological boundary means that their social life will be impaired. Yet this physiological boundary of the social roles of gender is not permanent. After a certain age, the dominant pulse and viscera of men and women in their fortune will become the same. Thus in this sense, gender in social life is only a phase in a longer process of bodily change. This is similar to the transformation of the female body in Inner Alchemy, in which the female body of yin blood should be transformed into the yang form of power, which will allow gender barriers to be overcome and replaced by immortality.[467] Valussi finds out in her study of the emergence of female Inner Alchemy in Chinese history that systematic ways of practicing female Inner Alchemy based on the difference between

[466] See *Taisu maijue*, 14-15.
[467] See Catherin Despeux and Livia Kohn, *Women in Daoism*, 223-225.

female physiology and male were possibly brought up in the texts during the late Ming.[468] T. J. Hinrichs points out that it was already during the Song dynasty that women's physiology started to be treated differently from men's on a theoretical level, conceptualizing the female body as a physical being dominated by yin power, the blood, opposed to male body which is dominated by yang power, *jing* and qi according to what the new medical treaties suggest.[469] It is the same in the physiognomy manuals:

> The male body is generated by the essence of qi, and the female vitality is nourished by blood. If a man's essence dries out, he will immediately die, and if a woman's blood is exhausted, she will not survive. Although [we say] the essence dominates male's body, where should we inspect it? The sun and the moon are the essences of heaven, and the two eyes are the essence of the human. The spirit is the seedling of the essence, and if the essence is strong, then the spirit is clear. If the spirit is clear, the eyes are refined. Therefore, men should have dark eyes, with glowing light. If his pupils are as dark as an oil color, he will thrive and be eminent for his whole life. If his spirit is full and his qi is tamed, then he will start a successful career from scratch. Thus the essence of the spirit dominates men. Blood dominates women. Where is the proof? The blood is under the skin, and color is on the skin. If the blood in the skin is adequate, then there must be light and glow on the skin. The blood is inside and the color is outside. One is the root and one is the sprout. Where there is the root there will be the seedling. Where there is blood there is the color. It is the best when [a woman] has both the blood and the color. If the color [of her skin] is not nourished, then it is less ideal, because there is only the root but no sprout. If the color is bright but has no blood in it, then there is only the sprout but no root. In principle, it means a lusty proclivity. If the blood is nourished but not flourishing, it means an early death. If the light of the blood is floating, it means a licentious personality. If the color is dark and the lip skin is dry and white, it means an early death. [This also means] that the blood is not nourished, so this woman cannot produce a son. She will be a base wife. Moreover, the hair is the extension of the blood. It is not good if the hair is clustered and thin, or yellow and short. The best color [of hair] is dark black, and it is wise to keep it long. The *Book* said: if a woman's hair is dark, then she will become noble and prosperous. If her hair is also long and nourished, she will give birth to a wealthy son. If a woman's hair is curled, spinning, thin, and short, she will end up poor and base. She will also bring bad fortune to her husband and harm her children. Men's eyes should be clear, and women's hair should be thick.
> 男以精生身，女以血養命，男子精幹即死，女人血枯即凶。男雖以精為主，不知何處可觀？天以曰月為精華，人以雙目為精神，神乃精之苗，精壯即神清，神清則目秀，故男子要眼

[468] See Elena Valussi, *Beheading the Red Dragon*, 55-65.
[469] See T. J. Hinrichs 'The Song and Jin Periods,' 100.

黑，光彩射人。眼似點漆，終身榮昌，神足氣綏，白手成家。故男子以精神為主。女子以血為主，何處驗？血在皮內，色在皮外，皮內若血足，皮外必光明，血內色外，乃為一根一苗，有根即有苗，有血方有色，凡血色兩件皆有者為妙，如色不潤，也不妙，為有根無苗。如色明內無血，為有苗無根，主淫相。如血潤不華，主夭。血光色浮，主淫。色暗唇皮幹白，主夭。乃為血不潤，不出子，賤婦也。又發乃血之餘，發若束薄、黃短亦不好也。青黑為貴，長為賢。書云：發青之女貴且榮，長潤生兒定富饒，若是旋螺並短薄，貧賤妨夫又殺子。男子要目清，女人要發厚。[470]

This detailed passage highlights differences between the male body and the female body and the different focus on where to locate fortune on the gendered bodies. Male and female bodies share the same physiological substances but they differ in their dominant substance. The condition of women's blood is directly related to their fertility and their capability of producing healthy male descendants, and their influence on the fortune of those male members in their families. Such a view tallies with the quintessentially Ming gynecological idea that women's body is dominated by blood transformed from the primary qi, and blood is vital to a woman's menstrual process and fertility.[471] This emphasis on the dominance of blood in female bodies first appeared and received its sophistication during the Song period, when the interaction between Neo-Confucian ideals and new medical theories gave birth to a separate type of gynecological medicine.[472] Menstruation and fertility became the primary focus of this new medical discipline, in a society of higher pressure for reproducing male members in families and of new moral landscapes.[473] As Françoise Héritier-Augé points out, it is women's fertility rather than other socially significant differences in gender or sex that demarcates the fundamental division between male and female and produces the idea of female submission in traditional cultures.[474] Physiognomy particularly stresses on the

[470] See *Liuzhuang xiangfa*, 18.
[471] See Charlotte Furth, *A Flourishing Yin*, 144.
[472] See *ibid*, 59-93.
[473] See Francesca Bray, *Technology and Gender*, 283-289.
[474] See Françoise Héritier-Augé, 'Semen and blood,' 159-175.

capability of female fertility as the major component of a woman's fortune and traces the origin of fertility back to the domination of yin power in female bodies, which is cosmologically submissive and static in contrast to men's yang power. Just like the case in Chinese medicine, the physiognomy of the female body was not a separate discipline or theme with its own rules and theorization in earlier manuals. Dunhuang physiognomy manuscripts only mentions women's bodily features whenever a particular physiognomic rule does not apply to women, suggesting that the female body is a 'deviance' of the male one.[475] New gendered physiognomy themes clearly corresponds to the overall intellectual as well as medical innovations from the Song onwards.

From this quotation, we can conclude that the fortune of a woman lies in their bodily status and their complimentary function in men's life as if the nature of women is to be supportive and inferior to men. Yet beyond the strong and repetitive representations on a subordinate role of women in domestic life, the physiognomy of women does celebrate various types of female nobility and good fortune for women, including those who are even more powerful than most men. Another passage in the same manual continues to stress on differences between the male body and the female body in terms of what kinds of fortune they show:

> …*The Book of Changes* says: The way of *qian* transforms into male, and the way of *kun* transforms into a female. Yin and yang are different, and firmness and gentleness have their own forms. Therefore, the physiognomies of men and women are different from each other. Gentleness is the root of female physiognomy, and firmness is its shape. Purity means nobility and turbidity mean humility…The reason why the Imperial Consort Yang[476] was licentious was that her eyes exposed the deep light [in her body]. The reason

[475] See *Dunhuang xieben xiangshu jiaolu yanjiu*, 63-64.

[476] Yang Yuhuan (719-756), a tragic imperial laday of Xuanzong in early Tang. See *Jiu tangshu*, *juan* 51, 2178.

why Lady Xie Daowen[477] was extremely talented was that her blood was placid, bright and nourished. The cause of the beautiful woman Lüzhu's[478] suicide by jumping off from a pavilion was the hollow on her *yintang* point. The reason why the empress Wu Zetian[479] met the emperor Gaozong [through whom she obtained her road to power] when she was a nun was that she had a round face and lips like a pearl. The reason why the female general Mu Guiying[480] could break the enemy's military line-up of the Heaven Gate was that she had a four-*chi* waist when she was fourteen. The reason why Lady Zhao[481] died in a foreign country in the north was that she had a small mouth, dark forehead, and sharp teeth. The reason why Madam Wu[482] gave birth to two eminent sons was that her navel is deep enough to hide a marble...Why can women become military generals? Mainly because of their big eyes and straight and strong eye brows.
象曰：乾道成男，坤道成女，陰陽有別，剛柔有體，故男相與女相不同，女相以柔為本，以剛為形，以清為貴，以濁為賤…楊妃好色，皆眼露光深。謝女才高，只為血和明潤。綠珠身映樓前，可恨印堂一陷。武則尼遇高宗，實乃面圓唇珠。桂英力破天門，十六腰圓四尺。昭君北番身殞，小口額暗牙尖。吳夫人產二英，臍內深藏彈子…何故女人為將，蓋因目大眉横。[483]

This paragraph uses several well-known female historical figures to illustrate the unconventional fortunes of eminent women. Female physiognomy in most of the manuals celebrates supportive and virtuous women as successful wives and mothers. Yet exceptions like those mentioned above are given an explanation as well. For women's fortune, contents vary hugely in that they can even exceed in fields which are predominantly controlled by men, such as military achievements. This is also reflected on the female body. Thus, although the nature of female body is gentle and soft, it can manifest itself as tough and firm. In fact, in many passages in the different manuals, the overly soft, desirable, tempting, and coquettish

[477] Xie was a famous female literati and poet during the Western Jin dynasty. See *Jinshu*, *Wang Ning zhi qi xieshi zhuan*, 2516.
[478] Lüzhu was a legendary lady in the Western Jin period who was famous for her beauty and musical talent. She commited suicide in a triangle love affair. See *Shishuo xinyu*, *juan* 36, 770.
[479] Wu Zetian (624-705), the first and only female emperor in China in early Tang who married Gaozong emperor as his empress before she came to the throne. See N. Harry Rothschild, *Wu Zhao*, 32. Also see *Jiu tangshu*, *juan* 6, 115.
[480] A fictional female military general in Northern Song dynasty created in a Ming novel. See *Beisong yangjia jiang quanzhuan*, *juan* 7, 12-13.
[481] Wang Zhaojun, a famous early Han imperial court concubine who was sent to marry the nomadic Xiongnu king. See *Hou hanshu*, *juan* 89, 2940.
[482] Madam Wu, the empress dowager of Wu kingdom during the Three Kingdom period who gave birth to two famous Wu kings Sun Ce and Sun Quan. See *Shanguo zhi*, *juan* 50, 1195.
[483] See *Liuzhuang xiangfa*, 18-19.

type of femininity is seen as reprobate and degenerate. The ideal image of a noble woman would be someone who is graceful, solemn, collected, and clean.[484] In some cases, a natural bodily fragrance is preferred as well, which indicates an auspicious bodily condition.[485] Hence vulnerable and sexually glamourous demeanors are not cherished at all in female physiognomy, as constructed by the overwhelmingly male authors. Similar to what Beverly Skeggs finds out in public ideas of femininity in a highly hierarchical society like Victorian England, the desirability of a woman's body was considered degenerate and vulgar which only belongs to women from certain social class, while the powerful and superior women's body should be somewhat plain, serious and even asexual.[486] The ideal women in Chinese physiognomy should transcend sexuality itself. Although sex is determined by the the body, femininity as a somatic feature is detached from the gender ideal.

The categorization of the body does not treat the human body as a static timeless entity, but a process that moves and changes in time as well. A body ecologic means that it is in constant changes and interrelations with the external world. In fact, not only is the body seen as a process indexing an individual's lifespan, it is also a collective ensemble of various social relations a person shares with other people in his or her life. That is to say, a human body is not completely equal to a holistic individual. The spatial order of the body is also an order of a person's social relatives. These two types of understandings are reflected in the physiognomy of infancy and descendants. These two kinds of physiognomy deny a single and monolithic concept of individual person and 'self' in a society but treats individuals as an assemblage of

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[484] See '*Damo furen xiang,*' in *Shenxiang quanbian*, *juan* 9, 1.
[485] See '*Guigu furen ge,*' in *Shenxiang quanbian*, *juan* 9, 3-4.
[486] See Beverly Skeggs, *Formations of Class and Gender*, 98-117.

social relations and physical stages in a life span concentrated on the body. Thus a monolithic individual is subdivided into different social relations and physical processes. On the one hand, infants are seen as 'humans-in-making'. They are undefinable beings without a stable and fully accomplished body, thus their fortune is unspecific and the somatic manifestation of their social lives is unclear. An inspection cannot fully depend on the morphological features but must take into account the energetic conditions of the body:

> The bones of infants are not complete, so an inspection should only be on qi and colors. The Gate of Life [*mingmen*] point, mouth and lips should be inspected immediately (after birth). If all of them are in a dark color, then in five days this child will die. If all of them are in a yellow color, then within three days they will die. If the *renzhong* point is black, then do not expect this child to live any longer. If the *yintang* point is in crimson, then it is difficult to promise that [this child will] survive the misfortune.
> 小兒骨骼未成，獨氣色為主，立應先看命門、口唇，俱有青色者，五曰內喪；俱有黃色者，三曰內亡；人中黑，休望再活；印堂赤，難許退災。[487]

Infants and children are seen as in an incipient stage of the process of their human maturation. At this stage, their bodies cannot be regarded as those of adult humans', because the concrete morphological conditions of their bodies are unstable and thus unreliable for physiognomic inspections. Therefore special attention is paid to energetic/formless aspects of the body like qi, color, and voice in order to capture the ongoing process of children's growth.[488] The inspection of an infant's fortune is still possible without a fully developed morphological structure. Some manuals hold a slightly different idea on the inspection of the morphological features of infant's body. In a passage called 'Esoteric Verse of the Secret Discussion of Mayi on the Difficulties and Easiness of Raising a Child' (*Mayi milun xiao er yiyang nanyang jue* 麻衣密論小兒易養難養訣), it is clearly stated that although the morphological features of an infant

487 See *Liuzhuang xiangfa*, 115.
488 See *Shenxiang tie guandao*, *juan* 4, 33, for the examination of infant's voice.

are not mature yet, there are three points on the face that have been formed before the child was born and do not drastically change after birth.[489] They are the forehead, nose and chin. The same passage also mentions gender divisions of infants. For boys, a thriving qi and a pair of refined eyes are more important, and for girls, the hidden qi and a pair of clear eyebrows are more important. Yet, in this passage, qi is still stressed as the root of the infant body:

> Women's blood is full when they are thirteen, and men's bones are complete when they are fifteen. When the embryo of ordinary people is conceived, none of them can accomplish their forms without the qi of heaven and earth. If [the embryo] is conceived with righteous qi, then [this infant] has refined bones and clear spirit. If [the embryo] is conceived with deviant qi, then [this person] has coarse bones and turbid qi. If [this person] comes from as practice of cultivation [in a previous life], then even if [his or her] Buddha nature becomes unclear, [his or her] appearance will not be far from Buddha. If [a person] receives the appearance from the misconduct of bad karma, then despite the fact that [he or she] turns out as a human, [he or she] will not be far from animality.
> 女子十三歲血足，男子十六歲骨成。凡人一結胎，無有不得天地之氣而成其形者。得正氣而成者，其骨秀神清。得邪氣而成者，其骨粗而氣濁。然從修行中來，雖昧佛性不離佛相；相從作孽來，雖為人相不離獸性。[490]

Here bodily qi is the primary power that supports a human body in its incipience. Yet qi has a moral quality that determines the condition of the body. The embryo itself is not seen as the beginning of a completely new life but a transitional phase of a being from the past life to the new one. Buddhist influences on physiognomy are visible in the passage. The Buddha-like physiology of a person is a result of this person's Buddhist practice in previous lives. Thus we can see that the infant is not morally neutral in physiognomy. Human morality or someone's future moral character is already predisposed on the physicality of the body in the wombs. The manuals also emphasize moral cultivations. Although a person's body will decompose after death, the consequences of moral cultivations will be carried with him or her and help

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[489] See *Shuijing shenxiang*, *juan* 3, 57-58.
[490] See *ibid*, 59.

form a new body in a next life. In this way, infancy is a stage of inheritance from a previous life as well, but given final shape by cosmic movement. This is not the only place where we see the idea that the generation of the body is a process of inheritance.

The discussion of the moral composition of an infant body is already seen in the physiognomy of infant in Western Han dynasty.[491] Discussions in early China focused on the nature of human beings at the infant stage as impeccably good or incorrigibly evil. By the time of the Song and Ming periods, the division between a good and an evil nature of infants is more flexible. Good and evil were no seen as the absolute and invariable essence of human beings but as varying across different individuals. In the manuals, the moral composition of infants is part of their fortune, and morality is also reflected in their longevity and the difficulty or easiness to raise someone (*yang* 養). The easier to raise, the more eminent the infant will become.[492] According to this criterion, a precocious ability to speak, walk and having teeth at a very early age is considered inauspicious and a sign of premature death. A late acquisition of language is seen as a good sign of the well-hidden spirit.

Premature death is repeatedly highlighted in infant physiognomy. Pei-yi Wu points out that sentiments of and bereavement for an infant or child who died young are often seen in the Ming biographic literature, which reflects a widely spread social sentimentality for the early death of family members.[493] The inspection of possible early death on the infant body, and the probability of them surviving their youth are seen as the most important purpose of infant inspection. An inauspicious infant body can also do harm (*fang* 妨) to its parents. The signs of

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[491] See Anne Behneke Kinney, 'Dyed silk,' 17-56.
[492] See '*Guanlu xiang ying er*,' and' *Xiang ying er guijian*' in *Shenxiang quanbian*, *juan* 9, 17-18
[493] See Pei-yi Wu, 'Childhood remembered,' 129-156.

early death may also mean the bad fortune that this baby brings to the mother and the father, and at the same time indicates the infants' future misfortunes.[494] The infant body does not only affect individual fortune but connects a person's fortune with the fortune of people in the child's surrounding. Social relations in this sense are corporeal, and the corporeality of social relations means that human beings' social bounds transcend a particular time and space, reflecting the past and future of human life on the body at the same time generated by it.

This is the same as the physiognomy of descendants, and the physiognomy of parental units, which means by examining a person's body, one can tell the fortune of this person's children and parents. Even after the parents' death, their influence on descendants is still powerful and visible. In the dialogue attributed to Yuan Liuzhuang and Emperor Yongle, there are detailed discussions about the relationship between the father's physiognomy and his sons:

> If the father's appearance can bring prosperity to the family but his son has the appearance of decline, then will the family end up in failure? If one wants to know [his] failure in old age, then one has to observe the chin and the skin on the top of the head. If one wants to know the prosperity of his descendants, then one has to inspect the nipples and the belly button. These parts [of the body] can determine a person's fortune. If the chin is sharp, and the skin on the top of the head is dry and withering, then it is difficult to assert that he will have sons with filial piety when he is old. If the nipples are drooping, the belly skin is thin, and the belly button is shallow, then he will definitely have a son of failure when he is old. If someone has an auspicious face in total, but only these parts are ominous, then it is hard for him to escape [bad fortune]. After the disappearance of his body and the end of his life, [the family] will still end up in failure. This is to say that the father's appearance is not auspicious in his old age.
>
> If the father's appearance is not auspicious but the son's appearance shows [a future] of wealth, does that mean that the family can thrive? If his son has his own family in the father's old age, and this father has a bad physiognomic composition on his face but only good and supple eye pouches and high nipples, then [this father] can make this son his heir after he has his own family. If the periphery of his face rises, and his chin soft, then in his old age he will have a son who can be established as an heir. It is also said: if the *yintang* point is broad, the eyebrows shining with colors, then such a person [as a son] will bring

494 See *Liuzhuang xiangfa*, 73.

prosperity to the family and support the whole country. If the four *ku* points on the face are plump, the auricles in the right position, then he must be the son of a prominent and noble father. If this person is outstanding and brings prosperity to the family, then he must have a round head and a broad forehead. If someone become successful by his own effort, then it is only because of his high cheek bones that enhances the earth phase on his face. 父相起家子相敗，可得破家否？欲知暮年破敗，須觀地閣頭皮，要知子息榮華，還看乳頭臍腑。此數件可定運矣。地閣削陷，頭皮乾枯，老景難言子孝。乳朝下，肚皮薄，臍者淺，老年定有破敗之兒。一面好相，獨此數件不好，難得過,曰自是消之身亡之後，了必敗矣。此言父相老來不好也。

父相不好也，子相富，不知可能興家？若得末年成家之子，若一面格局不好，獨蠶老潤，乳頭高，末年可立成家之子。邊地隆，下頦嬌，末年必有成立之男。又雲：如印堂廣，雙眉成彩，興家助國之人。四庫豐，耳輪正，榮公顯父之男。卓立興家，必是頭圓額廣。自來發積，皆因土厚顴高。[495]

A similar method of inspection can be found in the examination of the Palace of Parental Units and the Palace of Descendants on the face.[496] The mother's physiology also plays an important role in the fortune of the whole family and the next generation. Such a view denies an agency of one's own in a society in creating one's fortune. Seeing bodily appearances as the root of human social relations means that fortune is not essentially someone's personal belonging, but a relational assemblage that is more extensive than an individualistic life. It even goes beyond one single body. The influences on a person's fortune will still be present after the death of the ancestors, as mentioned above. Death in this way does not end the social influence of a human being in the family. The regeneration of life is not solely the renewal of fortune but also a process of inheritance.[497] Thus in physiognomy, the reproduction of the body in a family unit is in itself the reproduction of power. The father's fortune reflected on his body will participate in his son's fortune, and the son's fortune can be seen as a continuum of his father's fortune with variations. The physiognomic bonds between family members

[495] See *Liuzhuang xiangfa*, 64-65.
[496] See *Shenxiang tie guandao*, *juan* 4, 30.
[497] See Maurice Bloch and Jonathan Parry, 'Introduction,' 1-44.

constitute the fortune of the whole family.

The growth of the body and inter-generational as well as inter-gender influences between different bodies are highlighted. Infants carry with them their influence on their parents' fortune, and people in their old age still cast their influence upon their descendants. We can say that by looking at gender and aging issues in physiognomy, a clear idea of a single and unique self does not exist. Human beings live in a bodily process, and life is an extension of this process as life is pre-manifested in it. Both gender and aging are two aspects of physiognomy that are almost absent in the Tang dynasty Dunhuang manuals as well.[498] Earlier manuals definitely did not pay too much attention to these two aspects and lack a theoretical framework for the discussion of them.

Physiognomy as an inspection technique does not only answer the question of 'why' the body could tell people's fortune and only responds to the overall theoretical as well as conceptual inquiries on the body. A manual of a technique should also contain information of how to practice this technique, and in the case of physiognomy, it should be how to understand specific content of fortune manifested on the body. Ming manuals apply the categorization of different body types, body features, and body status to illustrate specific methods of interpreting fortune. These categorizations of specific human bodies transform the physiognomic body homology and cosmology into a body of technical knowledge of the body. In this transformation, specific social orders including socio-political hierarchy, gender differentiations, domestic kinship and hierarchy, and so on are seen as bodily orders embedded in a bodily spatial structure. The categorization of physiognomic bodies is a

[498] Which can be seen in the transcription of manuals at *Dunhuang xieben xiangshu jiaolu yanjiu*.

unification of social and bodily orders, both of which correspond to the grand cosmic order at the same time.

Differentiating Physiognomic Bodies and Bodies of Exceptions

As Kenneth Dutton points out, the human body always fits in a pattern of aesthetic conventions that in return produce the visual message of the body.[499] To him, the socially determined aesthetic conventions decide what we consider beautiful or ideal about the body. In the Ming physiognomy manuals, a similar division of 'beauty' (*mei* 美) and 'ugliness' (*chou* 醜)/'badness' (*e* 惡) is used. This differentiation between the 'beautiful' and the 'ugly' bodies provides an overall technical criterion in physiognomic inspections and integrated elements in specific body feature categorization into a more general system of inspection. This classification of the beautiful and ugly bodies also falls into a broader social context of body ideals during the Ming dynasty. Yet bodily beauty in physiognomy is not defined in terms of common values but as the extent to which the body conforms to physiognomic criteria. Thus beauty is not about bodily attractions but physiognomic appropriateness. What is beautiful is the noble, refined, and healthy body with strong and clear qi.[500] If any body parts conform to the criteria, then those are beautiful. The ideal physiognomic body is the auspicious body, which may look different from an attractive body in a conventional sense. Yet no single person can have a perfect body with all the auspicious features, thus beauty and ugliness can exist in the same body at the same time:

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[499] See Kenneth Dutton, *The Perfectible Body*, 289.

[500] See *Shuijing shenxiang*, *juan* 3, 2-6.

If the human form can be extremely beautiful, it can also be extremely ugly. If the human form can be extremely ugly, it can be extremely beautiful. Thus it can be known that there is ugliness in beauty and beauty in ugliness. [Knowing this, a person's] physiognomy will be no less impressive than the Master Gubu Ziqing.
人形甚美必有甚惡，人形甚惡必有甚美。誠能知美中有惡，惡中有美，相術不減于姑布子卿矣。[501]

The manuals do not depict an ideal physiognomic body in pictorial forms. Illustrations of faces, like the images in medical manuals in general, are less functional and representative but more decorative.[502] These images themselves cannot be the paradigm for a beautiful body. But it is also understandable that the manuals elude direct visual representations of the ideal body because, in physiognomy, beauty as the harmony of the body also includes aspects such as its voice, qi, movement and even cultivation of virtue, which cannot be easily represented in a picture. The idea of bodily 'perfection' does not exist at all in this context. Unlike the medieval European ideal of the body as a perfectly harmonized model of the cosmos like the musical measurements, Chinese physiognomy is less concerned with the perfection of the body in its concrete form.[503] Beautiful and ugly bodies are both the manifestation of the cosmos. Because the body is a natural manifestation of the cosmos, both the positive and the negative sides of the cosmos reside in the body. Therefore, the body is auspicious and beautiful but can never possess all the possible good traits, and perfection as an absolute concept is not realistic in Chinese physiognomy. Thus the single somatic form of the human being, the body, contains various possibilities of auspiciousness and inauspiciousness, hence beauty and ugliness.[504] We may say that the body is not an imperfect replica of the ideal universe in Chinese physiognomy,

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501 See *Shenxiang quanbian*, *juan* 1, 2.
502 See Roel Sterckx, 'Chatu de juxian,' 70-82.
503 See Umberto Eco, *On Beauty*, 61-85.
504 See *Liuzhuang xiangfa*, 4.

but the universe itself. Because the universe is always dualistic, possessing both the yin and yang sides, as a homological replica of it, so is the body.

Not only do the preferences for beauty vary in specific situations, but there are also cases in which normal physiognomic criteria do not apply to certain types of people. That is to say, general ideas of beauty and ugliness, and their relationship with nobility and base are not compatible with these figures. One of the cases is the physiognomy of sages (*shengren* 聖人). Zhu Pingyi has showed in his study of physiognomy in Eastern Han China that the sage could not be inspected according to physiognomic conventions (*shengren buxiang* 聖人不相).[505] The belief was that a sage as an exceptional being must have an erratic bodily appearance that cannot reconcile with the aesthetic conventions for ordinary people, because a sage is beyond normal sense of nobility as someone who goes beyond ordinary rules. In early Chinese thoughts, the sage's body is seen as a vessel for the convergence of all the cosmic powers and rules, and thus his appearance echoes with such an inner quality of sagehood.[506] They may look ugly and ill-looking according to normal rules but their true nobility hides inside their bodies. It is not clear whether there has been a separate method of inspection of the erratic appearance of the sage due to the lack of material, but in the manuals we have today, the odd and unconventional appearance is defined in its own aesthetic senses:

> Physiognomists only inspect the beauty of the body and the spirit, and tell [a person's] physical nobility. [But as for] the four types [of bodily beauty], purity, magnificence, antiquity, and oddity, they are similar to the sorts of frigidity, gaud, ungainliness, and turbidity. The purity of a body is close to frigidity, and a pure body without the spirit is called frigidity. The magnificence of the body is close to ungainliness, and a magnificent body without the spirit is ungainliness. The antiquity of the body is close to the ordinary, and the body with ancient forms but without spirit is called gaud. The oddity of the body

[505] See Zhu Pingyi, *Handai de xiangren shu*, 77-93.

[506] See Roel Sterckx, *Food, Sacrifice, and Sagehood in Early China*, 173-182.

> is close to turbidity, and an odd body without spirit is called turbidity…thus purity resembles the full moon of autumn reflected on a cold lake; magnificence resembles troughs in the soil and towering pillars; antiquity resembles the high and sharp monolith; oddity resembles steep cliffs and lonely mountain peaks. [People with these features] are truly noble ones.
> 相家但觀其身魄貌美，但言其貴。惟清奇古怪四端，近於寒俗陋濁之類也。清者之相近于寒，清而無神謂之寒。奇者之相近于陋，奇而無神謂之陋。古者相近于俗，古而無神謂之俗。怪者相近于濁，怪而無神謂之濁…故清如寒潭秋月，奇如聳壑喬楹，古似嵯峨盤石，怪似峭壁孤峰者，真貴人也。[507]

Exceptions in physiognomy are hence regarded as the highest type of auspicious body and can be easily confused with unwanted body types. The decisive element that differentiates the ideal forms and fate from the unwanted ones is the spirit. If the spirit lies in the body and becomes visible, then the supposedly ugly features can be turned into auspicious and rare features. As mentioned before, the spirit resides deep in the body and is hard to grasp. Such a kind of aesthetic exception can therefore be quite elusive to observe:

> The gigantic odd stone confuses the idling cloud, but the jade tablet from the heavenly mountain of Kun has already been carved out. This refined treasure can become apparent on the exterior of the body, but it is [initially] contained in the interior of the body. Who could have this without the replication of heaven and earth, and the cultivation of the Way?
> 峨峨怪石迷閑雲，昆山片玉已琢出。此至精之寶發於外，而蘊於內，非天地之鐘，道之涵養，而能有此乎。[508]

This is saying that an odd physical appearance can be confusing to the amateurs of physiognomy, and the true quality of these people lies deep inside their body. Only a person whose body contains the essence of the world and who cultivates in the Way has such a subtle and rare physical nature. Hidden qualities inside the body challenge the aesthetic conventions of beauty and ugliness, and the supposedly ugly and inauspicious physical features become auspicious and fair. A passage in the *Water Reflection* manual entitled 'Forty-Nine Features of

[507] See *Shuijing shenxiang*, *juan* 2, 31.
[508] See *Shenxiang quanbian*, *juan* 1, 12.

the Exceptional Appearance of Confucian' (*Kongzi yixiang sishi jiu biao* 孔子異相四十九表) lists out unique morphological features of the historical sage's body.[509] Following this is a list of the thirty-two sublime beauties of Buddha (*ru lai sanshi er xiang* 如來三十二相). Directly quoting other religious and historical texts and relate these texts to the philosophy of physiognomy is typical of the Ming manuals, reflecting their eclectic nature. These unique and sometimes even abnormal features are regarded as evidence of sagehood. Thus the exception of unconventional bodies in physiognomy means that a physiognomic aesthetics is not entirely monolithic, and concrete morphological features on the body surface can be deceiving. Such an exception also distinguishes between the truly professional physiognomists and the amateur ones, since only the former would be able to make such crucial distinctions. The elusive aspects of the body again play a more decisive role in a person's fortune. It also shows that although sages and truly noble people to some extent 'transcend' conventional rules and values in a society, their 'transcendence' itself is still a somatic matter. The body itself even manifests the transgression of certain social orders, and the opposition of social orders is still part of this bodily order. However, this also means that unlike the early Chinese concept of 'physiognomy does not apply to sages', in the Ming manuals, accomplished cultivation practitioners can be a subject of physiognomy inspection and rules, just not the normal ones. If even Buddha and Confucius' bodies can be used as a paradigm of physiognomy, then it is not sensible to say that physiognomy does not apply to sages in this Ming context, because it does.

If we can conclude that the sages are seen as exceptional beings who bring order and

[509] See *Shuijing shenxiang, juan* 2, 1.

harmony into society with their unique body, there is another type of physiognomic exception of the individuals who transcend society through bodily cultivation. Daoist and Buddhist practitioners are seen as a group of people who are outside physiognomic rules of social beings. The purpose of their cultivation is concluded in the manuals as the achievement of immortality and enlightenment, and the transformation of their lives into a more superior and powerful being. The Daoist ideal of the transcendent (*xian* 仙 or *shenxian* 神仙) and the Buddhist ideal of Buddhahood (*fo* 佛) are seen as predisposed on the body, and Daoist cultivators and Buddhist monks are sometimes directly referred to as transcendent and Buddha. In general, these figures should have bright and shining bodies, refined qi, calm and stable breath, strong bones, and tranquil deportment.[510] Their pulses should be pristine and luminous like a drop of water which ordinary people cannot possess.[511] A passage in the *Water Reflection* manual called Bodhidharma's Discussion on the Five Provenances of Physiognomy (*Damo lun xiang wulai* 達摩論相五來) elucidates five types of exceptional bodily appearance from the perspective of reincarnation. The idea is that there are five different types of exceptionally noble appearances, and they are all generated by cultivations in the previous lives of a person not as a human being but more powerful beings:

> Any person who is born from the [previous life] of cultivation will have distinctive constitutions because of the deep root of good karma in the past life. His eyesight will be authentic and compassionate. His face will be peaceful, and everyone will love to see such a face. His qi will be relaxed. His personality is kind. His voice is clean, slow, and long, and everyone will love to hear [his voice]. His hands and feet are supple, and the prints on the palms are deep and intricate. His skin is pristine, white, fresh, bright, and without dirt. His mind is wise, and his heart is intelligent. His deportment is respectful and diligent. The basis of his words is reasonable, and this person is happy to conduct

[510] See *Shenxiang quanbian*, *juan* 9, 10-11. Similar idea that an achieved cultivation practitioner should have an exceptionally clean body morphology and qi is also expressed in *Shuijing shenxiang*, *juan* 2, 9-10.
[511] See Gong's *Taisu maijue*, 49.

> Buddhist rituals. If in an official post, he will be righteous and honest. He will serve the country and love the people, and he will be a person with filial piety.
> 凡人從修行來者，因前世積德根深，體格不同。目光有真而慈秀，顏貌舒泰，眾所樂觀。氣寬性善，聲清悠遠，眾所樂聞。手足柔軟，輪文深妙，肌膚白淨，鮮明離垢，志慧心靈，舉動恭勤，言根至理，樂於佛事，居官清正，為國愛民，為人孝悌。

Here the word cultivation (*xiuxing*) perhaps refers exclusively to Buddhist cultivation, for other kinds of cultivations are particularly pointed out in the following passages, and this cultivation mentioned in the passage above directly results in a passion for Buddhist practice in this life. Then other passages follow:

> Any person who is born from a past life as an animal deity was a flying bird or a walking beast who spent a long time in a deep mountain or vast valley. He used to eat the food for celestial beings constantly, and over hundreds and thousands of years, he gained the essence of heaven and earth, the sun and the moon. As a result he would be born with an odd appearance. He could resemble the lion king or a monkey or elephant, or look similar to a tiger, a crane, a rhinoceros, or a dragon. His qi is strong and his shape is firm. His eyes are broad, and his sight is majestic. His spirit is like bear or ox, and his palm and finger prints are special. His words touched upon the heretic and flawed. He always has a heart of killing. He is a brave person.
> 凡人從精靈中來者，乃前世飛禽走獸久在深山曠谷，常食仙品，千年百載，亦得天地日月精華，而生形貌古怪。或類獅王猴象，或類虎鶴犀龍。氣壯形堅，目廣視威，精神熊特，掌指奇紋，言涉邪訛，常有殺伐之心，為人勇猛。

This passage clearly states that the resemblance between a person's physical form and that of some animals is due to the continuum from this person's past life as an animal deity. Thus the resemblance between the body parts of some animals and those of human beings is not simply a metaphor, when we follow this text, but an actual physical inheritance. Those who have a body like a monkey may have been a monkey in their past lives, resulting in the preservation of bodily features into their human form. Then the passage goes on:

> Any person who is born from the past life of a celestial being will be born with extraordinary bones because of his broad cultivation of virtue and the nourishment of the ultimate spirit in a previous life before they completely left this world of dust. His

appearance will be pure and ancient. His demeanor and movement will be like the wind. His spirit and poses will be high and smooth. His nature will be fine and his qi relaxed. He will be born into a noble family, but he [will not take himself] to be noble. He will be happy to live in mountains and forests, and always has the aspiration to practice inner cultivation. His instinctive thought is profound and ethereal. He is [someone] from outside this world of wind and dust, and he is an unrestrained person.
凡人從神仙中來者，前世廣修道德，修養玄神，未脫塵世，而生骨骼不凡。形貌清古，舉動風生，神姿高徹，目光淡碧，性惠氣舒，居貴非貴，樂於山林，常有修煉之志，靈機空洞，自是風塵物外，為人瀟灑。

In this passage, it is mentioned that people from a past life of celestial being should have a pair of eyes with light blue light. Those practitioners who have not completely been detached from this world will incarnate again in the circle of life. Then the passage goes on:

Anyone who is born from the past life of a star deity was a star in the sky who has descended to be reborn on earth. An ominous star will be born on earth as a star of killing, with a majestic and severe appearance and strong sight strong. He will be brave and loyal. His great name will spread all over the world. His demeanor is strict and solemn. His nature is bright and his heart is intelligent. He will always have aspirations like rainbows and lightening. If an auspicious star has descended to be reborn on earth, his face will be covered with the accumulating and radiating purple qi. The light of his yang energy can shine on the Big Dipper. His spirit and bones are refined and extraordinary. His organs are pure and beautiful. His chest and heart are auspicious. He always retains a heart of compassion and charity. He can reach the level of divine creation, and he will be a generous and broad-minded person.
凡人從星宿中來者，即天上星宿降生也。兇星降生便為殺星，形相嚴厲，目光城記，勇猛忠義，英名蓋世，舉動端肅，性明心靈，常有虹電之志。吉星降生，面多紫氣聚耀，陽光射斗，神骨秀異，諸竅清美，胸臆吉祥，常存普濟之心，能涉造化，為人曠達。

Any person who is born from the past life of deities was originally a pious son or loyal servant of the emperor, who died and then ascended as a deity, and is reborn in this world because of his unfinished karmic connections. His appearance is odd and special. His face is full of divine light. The eyes are big and pristine. They are also translucent and clear. He is smart and upright, and he can expel the evil and cunning beings. He has a prescient intelligence, and his words are majestic and fortunate. He always has a heart for [receiving] sacrifice rituals, and he is loyal and heroic.
凡人從神祇中來者，前世原為忠臣孝子，死作神明，因緣未了而復生于世。形貌奇特，神光滿面，目廣清淨，洞徹分明，聰明正直，能驅邪佞，性靈先覺，言涉威福。常有祭祀之心，為人忠烈。

Any person who has not cultivated in a past life but comes from a practice of all kinds of

> bad karma (*ye*) will have blunt and dull senses, and his appearance will be rough and ugly. The eyes are blurred and without spirit. The qi is scarce and the color [of the body] is floating. He will have the jaw of an eagle and the ears of a mouse. His face will be like a fly and his head will be like a ball. He can be blind and deaf, mad and mute. He can be stooped and paralyzed. His breath is foul and pungent. His heart is full of greedy thoughts, and he can be confused and lunatic. He will suffer from punishment and misery very often. He will be terribly ill and his face [will look] exhausted. Whoever sees him will be disgusted. He will lack clothing and food and will be lonely without anybody to depend upon. He will end up without descendants.
> 凡人前世不修，作諸惡業來，諸根暗鈍，相貌矬陋。目泛無神，氣短色浮，鷹腮鼠耳，蠅面球頭，盲聾瘋啞，佝僂跛疾，口氣穢臭，心多貪想，癡迷狂亂，常遭刑難。惡病痟顩，見者無不厭憎。缺衣乏食，孤露無依，終無結果。[512]

The last paragraph may not refer to a particular type of unfortunate person but the mishaps that all ordinary people might have in their life, whereas people with previous lives of cultivation have removed these misfortunes from their lives. According to this illustration of exceptions in physiognomy, cultivation is vital for an extraordinary life and body. Effects of bodily and virtuous cultivation can be transferred to the next life, and the new body will be generated according to one's cultivation in previous lives. Particular methods of cultivation that a person practiced in in the past life will also reappear in the next life, where personal proclivities towards a method of cultivation are seen as the remnant of previous habits. A Daoist celestial being may continue his Daoist cultivation in this life; a Buddhist practitioner may continue Buddhist practice in a new life. Bodily achievements in the previous life will be carried to the next life as well. The morphological body will decay, but achievements from bodily cultivations continue as if the cultivation process is part of the inherited body and superior to the physical form of the body itself. Someone's unconventional somatic beauty tallies with his or her extraordinary fortune and moral qualities. There is also a moral complexity in these five types of physiognomic exceptions. People reincarnated from ominous

[512] See *Shuijing shenxiang, juan* 3, 1-3.

stars and animal deities can have a ferocious and bloodthirsty penchant in their behaviors, but are still regarded as extraordinary and auspicious. Their inclination to killing is part of their unconventional power and their distinctive morality.

One of the unusual features mentioned above is the blue eyes of celestial beings. This feature shows up in the manuals as a sign of accomplished Daoist or Buddhist practitioners and their particular aesthetic accomplishment. In the *Iron Halberd* manual, it is written that the celestial beings and Buddhas will have a blue light in their eyes (*yan you bi guang wei xian fo* 眼有碧光為仙佛).[513] From a Tang poem we may presume that blue eyes for celestial beings and cultivations practitioners were part of a discourse on cultivation in Chinese society:

> I met the true master under the Mount of Plain Lady, who had dark skin, blue eyes and square pupils.
> 麻姑山下逢真士，玄膚碧眼方瞳子。[514]

One of the exceptional bodily marks of Buddha mentioned in before is also a 'turquoise blue eye' (*yan ganqing se* 眼紺青色), showing Buddha's completion in his cultivation.[515] Li Jiakai in his study of the relationship between Daoist bodily practice and Chinese physiognomy provides a possible explanation for this mention of blue eyes. First he points out that in the physiognomy manuals only the results of the Daoist bodily transformation are mentioned, whereas the process itself by which the bodily transformation is achieved is left out[516] Transformations occur when cultivation progresses and the ordinary body, no matter auspicious or inauspicious, are transformed into the body of immortals, whose bodily features

[513] See *Shenxiang tie guandao*, *juan* 1, 15. This is also mentioned in
[514] See Li Xian's '*Linchuan feng Chen Bainian*,' *Quan tang shi*, *juan* 644, 7386.
[515] See the *Dīrgha Āgama Sutra* (*Chang ahan jing*), *juan* 1, 5-6.
[516] See Li Jiakai, 'Xiangshu zhongde shouxiang yu shenxian zhi xiang,' 45-77.

will be completely disparate from the ordinary features. Li argues that in physiognomy manuals after the Song dynasty, only the most important and conspicuous features of the transformation are recorded. The complete result of such a secretive and personal practice is not the concern of physiognomy, because the latter only focuses on the bodily change in terms of fortune as a result of cultivation. One of the most fundamental and noticeable changes Li has found out is the light in the eyes. The frequent appearance of blue eyes in the manuals means that this feature is the evidence of differences between an ordinary person and an accomplished cultivation practitioner. Thus what is regarded as auspicious, noble, and aesthetically superior is not the color itself but bodily achievements behind it. We can rarely see any other references in the classical scriptures regarding the connections between blue eyes and immortality. Only in the modern practitioner and scholar Master Nan Huaijin's 南懷瑾 books on Buddhist and Daoist meditations, he mentions that the blue light in the eyes is a sign of entering the ultimate tranquillity of the body and the mind (*ru ding* 入定), in which all the pulses, channels, and the pores are opened up.[517] Yet further study is needed on the connection between blue eyes and bodily cultivation in classical texts.

The crucial message of this long list of physiognomic exceptions is that cultivation practitioners cannot be examined according to the rules and criteria used for ordinary people, because their purpose in cultivation is to transcend the ordinary world. Their bodies are given different aesthetic preferences and ought to be analyzed in their own separate standards. A cultivation practitioner's body is seen as a somatic accomplishment and the ultimate end of someone's self-cultivating process. Interestingly, in the physiognomy manuals, all the religious,

[517] See Nan Huaijin, *Yaoshi jing de jishi guan*, 415.

moral, as well as social practices are seen as body techniques. No matter whether it is the Buddhist enlightenment or the Daoist mysterious unity with the way, the transformation of the body is the final step. Physiognomy sees bodily changes as the underlying factor for aesthetic differentiations. Only through bodily differences can physiognomists trace out the social, moral, and ritualistic achievements of a person, and then the true nature of beauty. In this sense, even the 'transcendence' or 'transgression' of social conventions and normal physiognomic rules are seen as part of the physiognomic bodily order. This bodily order again is ecologic, which interacts with various internal and external factors and is open to change. It is at the same time homological, which means that social orders and their transcendence are unified in the body, and a social order is bodily order. Therefore, any technique and cultivation aiming at perfecting or emancipating individual persons as social beings are in the end body techniques, for the social and the somatic are essentially the same.

The influence of physiognomy on the social perceptions of a 'noble' body is still present in the historical records. Exceptions in the physiognomy manuals stimulated certain social imaginations of what a truly noble body looks like. In this sense, while physiognomy theories somaticized social orders, by doing so new physiognomic social discourses and 'orders' are created in return. In the profession of art since the Song, particularly the genre of portraiture, influences of physiognomy is noticeable. In the Song dynasty historical treaties of painting theories and painters the *Records of the Stories of Paintings* (*Tuhua jianwen zhi* 圖畫見聞志), two portrait painters are recorded as an expert on physiognomy:

> Hao Cheng is from Jurong in Jinling. He is good at [the portraits of] Buddha, Daoist priests, demons, and deities. He has fully studied physiognomy, and he is an expert in human portraits.

郝澄，金陵句容人，工畫佛道鬼神。學通相術，精於傳寫。

Mou Gu's provenance is unknown. He studied physiognomy, and was good at human portraits. He was a short-listed candidate for the Royal Painting Academy in Taizong's reign. At the beginning of the Duangong year (988), he was summoned to accompany the ambassadors to go to the kingdom of Jiaozhi. He drew the authentic portraits of the Anan King Li Huan and his serving ministers. He stayed there for several years.
牟谷，不知何許人。工相術，善傳寫，太宗朝為圖畫院祇候。端拱初，詔令隨使者往交趾國，寫安南王黎桓及諸陪臣真像，留止數年。[518]

Here both portraitists were specialized in human portrait, and they were good at physiognomy. The same book quotes the artist Xie He 謝赫 from the Southern Qi dynasty to stress the importance of physiognomy in portraiture, saying that the mastery of painting is the natural manifestation of qi and spirit, the impression of the heart, which is the same in physiognomy.[519] A person's spirit, qi, and heart can be preserved in his portrait as it is in the body itself. Thus the highest aesthetic achievement in portrait painting is to grasp the spirit and qi of a person and preserve it in the portrait. In Xie He's comments, it is particularly stressed that like physiognomy of the body, the physiognomy of the portraits can also be used to tell a person's fortune as an extension of a person's body and life.

Okawa Yoichi points out that this is the reason why physiognomy becomes an indispensable technique for portraitists during the Yuan and Ming period, which is a tradition that possibly started from the Song.[520] Craig Clunas suggests that portraiture was never a mainstream genre in the history of Chinese art, and that the composition and use of portraits were often related to ritualistic and religious occasions, especially for those portraits used in funerals and ritualistic sacrifices.[521] Thus it is not surprising at all to find that portraitists at

518 See *Tuhua jianwen lu*, *juan* 3, 133, 138.
519 See *Tuhua jianwen lu*, *juan* 1, 29.
520 See Okawa Yoichi, 'Myo sē no shōzō ga to jinzō jutsu,' 49-62.
521 See Craig Clunas, 'Man,' 88-100.

that time were deeply connected with physiognomy. Physiognomy even affected the terminology of portrait painting theories in the Ming dynasty. Okawa quotes a passage called 'The Esoteric Verse of Portrait Painting' (*Xiexiang mijue* 寫像秘訣) composed in the Yuan dynasty and included in the early Ming encyclopedic writing *Chuogeng lu* 輟耕錄. It clearly states that physiognomy is necessary for painters of portraits:

> Whoever paints a portrait has to fully understand physiognomy. In general the facial parts of human beings tally with the five mountains and four rivers. They all have their own reference [in the cosmos], and the qi [of the body] differs in the four seasons [like the cosmic qi]. The true nature of a person can be revealed when he is shouting, yelling or conversing, and I can discover it in tranquility. I remember it in my heart, and when I close my eyes, [the nature of the person] is present as if he is standing in front of me. When I put the brush on the paper, [the nature of the person] is almost under the brush. Then with light link to fix the contour, [the brush] will sway and the concrete figure will rise. First are the *lantai* and *tingwei* areas, and then the nose tip. After the nose tip is completed, the tip should be centralized. If the *shangen* area on the nose is high, then [the nose should be painted] with one long stroke from the *yintang* area on the face. If the *shangen* area is neither low nor high, but about eighty or ninety percent, then [it should be painted] with one whole stroke from one side [of the nose]. Then the philtrum, the mouth, then the rim of the eyes, then the eyes, the shoulders, the forehead, the cheeks, then hairline, the ears, the hair, the head, then draw a circle. The one in the circle is the face…
> 凡寫像須通曉相法。蓋人之面貌部位，與夫五嶽四瀆，各各不侔，自有相對照處，而四時氣色亦異。彼方叫嘯談話之間，本真性情發見，我則靜而求之。默識於心，閉目如在目前，放筆如在筆底，然後以淡墨霸定，逐旋積起，先蘭台庭尉，次鼻准，鼻准既成，以之為主。若山根高，取印堂邊一筆下來；或不高不低，在乎八九分中，則側邊一筆下來；次人中，次口，次眼堂，次眼，次肩，次額，次頰，次髮際，次耳，次發，次頭，次打圈。打圈者，面部也…。[522]

In this passage, a portraitist's process of grasping the nature or essence of a person is described, not as a process of creation, but as a process of transmission. Physiognomic knowledge is seen as helping a portraitist to grasp the physical nature of a person and transmit it onto paper. Terms from physiognomy are used in the theory of portrait painting as well; physiognomic facial areas and points like *lantai* or *shangen* are also used in the instruction of

[522] See *Nancun chuogeng lu*, *juan* 11, 163.

painting. The order of painting different parts of the body is also congruent with the importance of physiognomic points of the body. A similar fusion between physiognomic knowledge and portraiture theories can also be found in late Ming and early Qing manuals.[523] The idea that portrait should also reflect the depicted person's nature is present in painting theory. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the face is seen as the most important and expressive part of the body in physiognomy, and the nose is the center of the face, which controls the whole facial area and reflects the inner qi of the viscera. In the passage quoted above, the author particularly stresses the nose as the first part of the body to paint, after one has grasped the spirit and nature of the other person. It is hard to deny that in this case, there is overlap between physiognomic aesthetics and visualizations of the human body. Portraitists adapted physiognomic criteria to the production of human portraits, and perhaps even amplified the auspicious features on the body. Thus some of the portraits we have seen today in the Ming were 'physiognomicised' to some extent, which means that physiognomic differentiations between noble/beautiful bodies and base/ugly bodies were not limited to physiognomy manuals themselves, but were used and transformed into a type of social preference of the body. One of the best known example of the influence of physiognomic aesthetics is the series of 'true appearance' portraits of Zhu Yuanzhang 朱元璋 (1328-1398), the first emperor of the Ming dynasty. It is well established that the extant portraits of Zhu can be distinguished into two categories. One is the official portraits made by the Ming court, and the other is the portraits transmitted outside the court. Among the transmitted ones, most of the faces of Zhu look extremely similar and in a uniquely odd style:

523 See Park, *Art by the Book*, 79-80. Also see Weng Ang's manual *Chuanzhen miyao*.

Figure 5 The Portrait of Zhu Yuanzhang (part). Ming Dynasty. Taipei: National Palace Museum.

Figure 6 Portrait of Zhu Yuanzhang. Early Ming Dynasty. Taipei: National Palace Museum.

Whereas the portrait of Zhu preserved in the Ming court looks completely different:

Figure 7 Portrait of Zhu Yuanzhang. National Palace Museum, Taipei.

In the unofficial portraits, Zhu Yuanzhang is depicted as a man with a strange face, sick skin, and slender body. In court portraits, however, the emperor is presented as a decent, healthy, and strong figure. It is hard to argue which representation is closer to Zhu's actual look. One of the established explanation for such a huge difference is due to the physiognomic construction of Zhu's body. Hu Dan in his thorough study of the relationship between the physiognomic construction of Zhu's body and his surviving portraits points out that the popular portraits of Zhu might be the result of a long-lasting deliberate construction of Zhu's

appearance by the Ming ruling class, including Zhu Yuanzhang himself.[524] The idea behind this deliberate construction might have been to make Zhu's appearance closer to a dragon and justify his rise to the throne. Zhu Yuanzhang's portrait is an extreme example of the deep influence of physiognomy on portrait art. It is difficult to know to what extent the 'deliberate construction' argued by Hu is indeed the result of a purposeful construction by the imperial court itself or goes back to people's imagination of their ruler. Yet we cannot ignore that the influence of physiognomy on the understanding of the body in the Ming periods has made the visualization of the body a physiognomic enterprise. The body is the natural legitimation of political power and a paradigm of nobility. The beauty of the body lies in such a nobility which is formed by cosmic power.

Distinguishing the noble/beautiful bodies and the base/ugly ones in the manuals is a process of constructing the overall criterion of classifying the body in this physiognomic context. This differentiation absorbs and unifies different categorizations of human bodies, bodily features and status into a more general rule of inspection. The physiognomic discourse of bodily beauty follows its own principles and cosmology, and explicitly discriminates itself from social conventions of bodily beauty. A conventionally ugly and despicable body can be beautiful and noble because of the exceptional qi and spirit hiding inside this body. In this way, the body as a index and source of sociality, social differentiations and even social hierarchy contains an order that goes beyond common-sensical social norms. Physiognomic rules even contradict themselves. Exceptions of normal physiognomic rules are represented as an achievement of religious, bodily, and ethical cultivations. Accomplished practitioners' bodies

[524] See Hu Dan, 'Xiangshu, fuhao yu chuanbo,' 15-32.

transcend normal physiognomic rules because these figures are 'emancipated' from ordinary lives and existence. The transcendence or transgression of social orders is also part of the body's potential. This bodily exception in physiognomy depicts the body as a platform of personal and social transformations. If the liberation from social conventions is a bodily matter and true nobility goes beyond people's common sense of beauty vs. ugliness, then does it mean that the body itself, rather than anything else, is a solid proof of power, social superiority and even enlightenment? Consequently, religious and ethical cultivation, the pursuit of sagehood, and portraying people, all these various social techniques become body techniques in this discourse. Even reincarnation itself is conceptualized as a constant bodily process.

Fortune, Heart, and Virtue

We have seen how the body in Chinese physiognomy is regarded as the provenance of a person's sociality and fortune, and how social orders are seen as bodily orders. Social life is seen as an extension or a potential of the body, and somatic beauty in the physiognomy manuals is defined according to the numerological and cosmic conceptualization of the body. The body is thus the root of human existence in physiognomy and the ultimate end of it. Fortune hence is an extension of the body as well, and the pattern of fortune is already predisposed on the somatic constitution of a person, just like the flow of a current in an ocean can be manifested in its waves. Yet several paradoxes remain in the logic of physiognomy. One of the most long-lasting and challenging argument in Chinese physiognomy is the discrepancy between virtue (*de* 德) and good fortune. Do virtue and high morality matter at all in having a good fortune? Why in some cases can virtuous persons not have an auspicious body and

good life accordingly? Does the cultivation of virtue play a role in fortune or not? Is fortune entirely predestined or changeable? If social orders are homological to the body and the body does unify the social and the cosmic in its physiological order, then what about morality, one of the most important aspect of human society? These questions indicate the complexity of the level of flexibility of fortune. To what extent is fortune fixed as 'fate'? In the physiognomy manuals, these issues are raised instead of concealed. In this section, we shall discuss of the relationship between the changeability of fortune, virtue, and the body, and see how virtue is 'physiognomicized' in the manuals.

Heart, Virtue, and the Potentiality of the Body

The Eastern Han dynasty scholar Wang Fu 王符 (78-163) had his doubts on the popularity of physiognomy as a fortune-telling technique. Wang Fu, an intellectual outside the Eastern Han court, repeatedly refused the summons from central government and recommendations from high-ranking officials.[525] In his writings, he tried to use the *ru* 儒 tradition to emphasize the importance of virtue and its cultivation in politics and the necessity of a ruler who would have the wisdom to distinguish authentic worthies, which to him was something an ideal ruler should aspire to. To Wang Fu, stressing the importance of virtue was a prior condition for receiving the Mandate of Heaven (*tian ming* 天命) as fixed destiny.[526] Wang Fu believed that cosmological portents as tokens of the Mandate of Heaven only indicated that the overall span or trend of reality, whereas, within different possible realities, the active constructions of

[525] See Margeret J. Pearson, *Wang Fu and the Comments of a Recluse*, 9-17, and Yan Buke, *Chaju zhidu bianqian shigao*, 80-88, for the growth of favoritism in this system.
[526] See See Chang Jiaozhen, 'Wang Fu de rencai guan,' 35-40.

human beings were the genuine determinants of fate. Following this logic, although Wang Fu was strongly influenced by the cosmology in Eastern Han dynasty and the practice of physiognomy, and although he frequently used typical esoteric concepts like qi or the Way or yin and yang, his overall argument was against the prevalent inclination to attribute fate to the uncontrollable movement of the cosmos.[527] We have seen in the discussions in the first chapter how Xunzi's idea of the vital role of the heart (*xin* 心) as the ethical dimension of human existence as a reaction to the idea of predestined fortune.

As these arguments show, Chinese physiognomy raises the question that if human beings' lives lie in the fixed relationship between the body and fortune, it is difficult to see where is the role of virtue and moral self-improvement? This discussion was carried on until the late Qing. In the Ming manuals, the heart and virtue are not ignored but highly valued. The heart, being both an organ in the body and a term for moral consciousness at the same time, is seen as the visualization of a person's morality, and the origin of the concrete physical form of a human being. Both a person's morality and his or her physical form are derived from the heart:

> Since the physical appearance comes into being after the heart the art of physiognomy is true. The heart is capable of generating the appearance, like the story of butchering the ox [in *Zhuangzi*]. *The Divine Scheme*[528] says: The heart is prior to the forms, and the forms are posterior to the heart.
> 相逐心生相術真。心能生相，原牛理也…《神機》云：心在形先，形居心後…。[529]

Also:

[527] See *Qianfu lun*, 310. In fact, earlier philosophers also mentioned similar ideas. For the relationship between Xunzi and Wang Fu, see Magaret J. Pearson, *Wang Fu and the Comments of a Recluse*, 37-46, and Zhang Xiaohu, 'Lun Wang Fu jiqi *Qianfu Lun*,' 45-54. For the similarities between Wang Chong and Wang Fu, see Ge Rongjin, 'Wang Fu zhexue sixiang yanjiu,' 36-41.
[528] The exact source of this quoted book is unknown.
[529] See *Shenxiang quanbian*, *juan* 1, 3.

> …*On the Sage and Ordinary People*[530] says: the heart is the lord of the body and the origin of the Five Phases. *Mayi* says: before inspecting the appearance and the form, one should inspect the field of the heart first. These two [quotes] are statements about the knack [of physiognomy]. The esoteric verse says: the heart is the commander of the body. If the heart commander is upright, then how can the form not be right? If the form is not right, then it does not matter. [Figures such as] the King Fuxi with a human's head and the body of a snake, and the King Shennong with a human's head and the body of an ox, all became the sage kings of the three eras. The logic of the knack are crystal clear.
> 聖凡論云：心為身主，五形之先，麻衣雲：未觀形貌，先相心田，此二者方寸之說也。秘訣雲：心者，身之帥，心帥以正，則形孰不正？形有不正者，無論矣，即如伏羲人首蛇身，神農人身牛首，為三代之聖君，方寸之論彰彰明矣。[531]

The heart is both an organ and a term for virtuous nature of human beings. This is very similar to some conceptualizations of the heart in medieval Europe, where the heart as an organ was seen as the central location of intelligence and compassion over the brain, according to which virtue cultivation could strengthen the heart.[532] The manuals do not distinguish between the heart organ and heart as the intelligence and mind of a person. After all, this physiognomic 'heart' is not spiritual at all, for the heart is also the material and physical origin of the visible body. Yet we cannot assume that this is a form of somatic embodiment, in which the body is the materialization of the consciousness and social interactions. The theory of embodiment transforms the body into the 'anti-flesh' cultural and social consciousness, which means that the body is subsumed into the social and cultural semiotics.[533] Yet the physiognomic heart is closer to the Ming Neo-Confucian idea of the heart, which is the all-encompassing facility capable of comprehending and interacting with both human mind and the material world.[534] In the physiognomy of the pulse, the pulses and body channels are defined as the energetic composition of the heart, thus the inspection of the pulses is also called

[530] The exact source of this quoted book is unknown.
[531] See *Shenxiang quanbian*, *juan* 1, 5.
[532] See Heather Webb, *The Medieval Heart*, 10-49.
[533] See M. L. Lyon and J. M. Barbalet, 'Society's body,' 48-68.
[534] See On-Cho Ng, 'An early Qing critique of the philosophy of mind-heart (*xin*),' 89-120.

'to observe the heart' (*chaxin* 察心):

> Those who are good at [examining] the pulse can then observe the heart. The Ultimate Way is subtle, and its change is endless. When one is familiar with its origin, the external form and the inner qi, then the physiognomy will be complete.
> 善脈者…然而可以心察…至道玄微，變化無窮，熟知其源，形表氣里，而為相成也。[535]

By tracing physical features of the pulse, a physiognomist can observe a person's heart. The physical form and qi are the two sides of the heart (*xingbiao qili* 形表氣里). A concrete physical form is the exterior of the heart, and qi is its interior. Elisabeth Hsu points out that this term already appears in Western Han texts about medicine and life nourishing. In these texts, the heart is a vessel or platform where refined qi of the body resides and where important qi movements and processes occur, which directly influence a person's emotion and external physical appearance.[536] This view of seeing the heart as a space of refined qi, as we have seen in the previous chapter, was reiterated in Ming Neo-Confucianists' discussions of virtue and the body, as well as in physiognomy texts. The heart is vital to a human being's existence as a person in this physiognomic context. The heart is a 'palace' where the spirit resides inside the body, and a 'king' of the body. As we have seen, it is the source and habitat of virtue and the origin of the physical form of a person. This is the reason why we cannot easily say that the body is an embodiment of the heart. Because the body is part of the heart, and the heart has its own physical and tangible dimensions, the body. The heart is the center and master of the body. As the body inhabits between heaven and earth, and resembles them, the same can be said about the heart. Inhabiting in the human body which resembles heaven and earth, the heart controls the whole body. Therefore, the heart is not parallel to the body but lies in this material

535 See Gong Tingxian's *Taisu maijue*, 3.
536 See Elisabeth Hsu, 'Outward form and inward qi,' 103-124.

world:

> Human beings rise from the refined qi of yin and yang, and the Five Phases, and [the human] body inhabits the space between heaven and earth. The heart lives inside the body and is complete with the rules of the myriad things. It is the most intelligent among the myriad things. It understands the time of heaven, the order of earth. It is familiar with human affairs and can grasp the status of things. The heart is good at catching the sound, color, smell, and taste of the myriad things, and because of this, the most intelligent being is human. The master of the human body is the heart.
> 夫人者稟陰陽五行之秀氣以生，身居天地之中，心居人身之內，備萬物之理，為萬物之靈，識天時，知地理，通人事，明物情，善萬物聲色氣味，故靈於萬物者人也，主人之一身者心也。[537]

The heart generates the physical form of the body, and at the same time, virtue resides in the heart and influences the body through the heart. The idea that the heart 'is complete with the rules of the myriad things' (*bei wanwu zhi li* 備萬物之理) is an important philosophical theme in Neo-Confucianism during in late Song and Ming, in which the human heart is understood as the same with the cosmos, and thus the human body is complete with everything in the universe.[538] This physiognomic text quoted above again adopts this Neo-Confucian theme and takes it as a physiognomic guideline. In this sense, human virtue is not confined in pure consciousness. Human beings' sense of morality is somatic; it is linked to the material world through the heart and the body. Early in *Mengzi* there are already comments on the cultivation of virtue saying that virtue can nourish the bodily qi.[539] The heart is the link between moral dimensions and the somatic dimension of social life. We can find some familiar ways of understanding the heart in different discussions of virtue and the body by Song and Ming neo-Confucianists, and similar understandings of the heart in later Buddhist discussions.

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[537] See Gong Tingxian's *Taisu maijue*, 3.
[538] See Liu Zeliang ' Wanwu jie bei yu wo kaobian,' 28-31.
[539] See Mark Csikszentmihalyi, *Material Virtue*, 101-141.

Chen Lisheng concludes the core belief of Neo-Confucian discussions on the heart and bodily practices is that the heart contains sentient and sensitive qi that gives the morphological body vitality.[540] Chen Bing in his study of the technical elements of Yuan and Ming Buddhist meditation mentions that it is a religious idea at that time to locate the ultimate consciousness of all sentient beings, the fundamental 'store-house consciousness' (*Ālaya-vijñāna a lai ye shi* 阿賴耶識) somewhere near the heart organ. This consciousness is the origin of each individual sentient being's body as well as the root of a being's samsara.[541] Thus the heart is considered the center of human existence and the core of cultivation and bodily transformations. Virtue in physiognomic manuals as the highest moral accomplishment is not only internalized in a society by its social members but also internalized in each social member's body. Morality in physiognomy is not only contextual and but also physical, unlike Kenneth Read's interpretation of it as a formidable moral context in human mind.[542] The *Compendium* says:

> The heart generates the physical appearance [of a person] and establishes the foundation. The foundation is a metaphor for the field of the heart. The *Ode of Human Principles* says: if virtue is cultivated in the heart, then fortune and misfortune can be revised. Chen Tunan says: if the seed of good sprouts in the heart, then various kinds of good fortunes will accumulate. *Mayi* says: before inspecting the appearance and the form, one should inspect the field of heart first. The esoteric verse says: the heart generates the physical appearance. It is the ultimate truth. If the human heart exceeds in unnecessary adornment and embellishment, and the nourishment of life is exhausted, even if someone has all the beautiful forms without any damage, the good fortune will decline. If a person cultivates in the land of heart, then his principles of life remain complete. Even if he has inauspicious physical forms without any change, good fortune will still accumulate. Anyone who studies this technique must know this.
> 心生相貌立鎡基。鎡基寓言心地也。人倫賦雲：借使修德於心，吉凶可易，陳圖南云：心發善端諸福集，麻衣云：未觀形貌先相心田。秘訣雲：心生相貌，以理言也，夫人心雕琢太甚，生理盡矣，具有美形，未見有減，惟福自減耳，培養方寸，生理全矣，雖有惡形，未嘗有改，

540 See Chen Lisheng, *Shenti yu quanshi*, 73-110.
541 See Chen Bing, 'A lai ye shi de zhenwang jiqi zai xiuxing zhong de yingyong,' 21-29.
542 For Kenneth Read's classic understanding of social morality, see 'Morality and the concept of the person among the Gahuku-Gama,' 233–82.

惟福自增耳，學術者此不可不知。[543]

Because of the superiority of the heart, true cultivation should focus primarily on the heart and its virtuous dimension, rather than on outer morphological aspects. A virtuous heart can sometimes absolve someone from the bad fortune caused by inauspicious physical features.[544] The vitality of life lies in a virtuous heart, and the body as a part of the heart is the visible phase of movements of the heart. In the manuals, virtue is regarded as a 'tool' (*qi* 器) by which a person's potential fortune hidden in the body can be realized; virtue is a tool by which the body and fortune can be carved.[545] Without the tool of virtue, morphological features of the body are like an empty bag without substance and can be of no use.[546] In this sense, morphological features of the body are not the absolute manifestation of fortune, but the potentiality of the body from which fortune can then be carved out. Only when virtue lies in the heart then forms of the body express the direction of fortune. All these terms and discussions belong to the quintessential ideas of Song and Ming intellectual discourses between the body and ethics, and the manuals seem to subsume them into the physiognomic framework in order to show the importance of virtue and heart over particular morphological features of the body. Wang Yangming in his discussion of Song Neo-Confucianists' views on the human body and the heart, he stated that the 'domination of the body is just the heart' (*shen zhi zhuzai bianshi xin* 身之主宰便是心), and that 'the heart of the Way is always the master of the body' (*daoxin changwei yishen zhizhu* 道心常為一身之主).[547] Wang explicitly claimed that therefore, the cultivation of the body is the cultivation of the heart, and once the heart is fully

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[543] See *Shenxiang qianbian*, *juan* 1, 6.

[544] See '*Guande*,' in *Yuebo dongzhong ji*, 5.

[545] See *Shenxiang quanbian*, *juan* 1, 11-16.

[546] See *ibid.*

[547] See *Chuanxi lu*, *juan* 1, 5-7.

cultivated, one will see that there is a fortune/fate (*ming* 命) behind all the 'failures and successes, death and longevity' (*qiongtong yaoshou* 窮通夭壽).[548] Since then, one will never move one's mind in any situations and this is the start point of understanding the heaven (*zhi tian* 知天). Wang's words of describing the superiority of the heart is exactly the same with physiognomy. He even admitted that knowing fortune is necessary for a bodily as well as virtuous cultivation. The idea is that the generative power of the heart is the origin of human beings formed body and sense of morality, which are interconnected and both generated by the heart. This discourse of the heart started from the late Song Neo-Confucian cosmology and theorization of the heart as a cosmic, energetic, and moral entity, which was strongly influenced by Chan Buddhist thoughts.[549] Discourses of the heart in this philosophical tradition is absorbed into physiognomy theories. Yet physiognomic texts do not focus on the technical steps of how virtue and the heart can be cultivated, but the somatic manifestation of such an accomplishment. If virtue is in the heart, it is then in the body, and any techniques of enhancing virtue is inevitably a body technique. In the *Water Reflection* manual, the relationship between virtue and the body is defined as: 'virtue is also bodily appearance (physiognomy)' (*de yi xiang ye* 德亦相也).[550] Therefore, there is never an object called 'virtue' to be inspected by human beings' eyes. Virtue can only be detected and inspected from its manifestation on the body. Virtue is the body and its appearance; virtue is homological to the body. The heart is also regarded as the provenance of energetic aspects of the body, which are the roots of the body's morphology.

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[548] See *ibid*, 5.
[549] See William Theodore De Bary, *Neo-Confucian Orthodoxy and the Learning of the Mind-and-Heart*, 67-180, and the idea that in a Neo-Confucian context, qi, the heart and virtue are 'homological' is systematically analyzed in Zhou Fangmin's 'Yi li benlun, xin benlun, qi benlun fenxi songming lixue zhi shangque,' 117-146.
[550] See *Shuijing shenxiang*, juan 2, 13.

The inspection of the heart is in this way the inspection of virtue, and virtue and the heart are seen as replaceable terms.[551] Although the body is a manifestation of the heart, and the inspection of virtue and the heart are conducted through an examination of their bodily manifestations, this kind of inspection is different from general inspections of bodily features. In a passage called *Mayi's Physiognomy of the Heart* (*Mayi xiang xin* 麻衣相心) in the *Compendium*, two aspects of the heart are mentioned in relation to heart inspection.[552] The heart as a palace of the spirit and the origin of a person's physical look hides in the body and cannot be seen. However, what can be seen and inspected is its exterior (*biao* 表) on the body, which refers to the chest, also called 'field of the heart' (*xintian* 心田). Morphological features of the chest directly reflect status of the heart inside the body, and how well the spirit is protected. The other aspect is a person's overall behavior. The passage says that when inspecting the heart, one should 'inspect [his or her] movement and stillness first, and then see the field of the heart' (*xian guan dongjing, ci jian xintian* 先觀動靜，次見心田). Manners of speaking, expressions in the eyes, voices, and words one chooses when speaking, all manifest the status of the heart, the spirit and virtue. The harmony or 'peace' (*he* 和) of a person's body, behavior, and overall 'demeanor' is considered as the most evident reflection of a person's virtuous nature.[553]

Nonetheless, the paradox still remains. If the body, virtue, and even the cosmos are homological to each other, then what if the virtue of a person is enhanced or reduced? If cultivation can change the heart, then automatically a person's bodily appearance will be

551 See *Shenxiang quanbian*, *juan* 4, 11-12.
552 See *Shenxiang quanbian*, *juan* 4, 5-6.
553 See *ibid.*, 7.

changed as well. Does this mean the change of fortune? The ecology and homology between the body, cosmos, and social orders represented in Ming physiognomy manuals are never static and changeless, for the body is always ecologically open to internal and external influences. Therefore, Ming manuals contain a significant amount of discussion on cultivation and changing fate. Yet this focus on changes of the body and the future co-exists with the idea of a predestined fortune. The centrality of the heart and its virtuous dimension mean that their interaction with the physical forms of the body decide the direction of fortune. In this way, what can be shown on the concrete physical form of the body is a potential tendency of future fortune, and such a potential is then under the influence and navigation of the heart and virtue in the body. As mentioned before, qi and the spirit are also connected to a person's virtue and the status of the heart. In this sense, different dimensions of the body manifest their different potentials on different levels, from the most decisive to the most changeable. The concrete constitution of the body is seen as a horizon. In most cases, physiognomists are capable of predicting the movement of fortune according to what is beyond the horizon. Yet what is beneath the horizon is also a part of the entire movement of fortune.

Cultivation and the Changing Fortune

We will see in Chapter IV that the tangible aspects of the body are seen as a horizon where fortune moves through, and unseen changes in the body can also change the picture of fortune. In the manuals, there are theories of changing people's bodily look to change fortune. In the *Iron Halberd* manual, such a type of knowledge is regarded as an esoteric practice:

There are four secrets of this book: the first one is that there will be no printed versions.

The second secret will never be transmitted. The third secret will be hidden in the mouth. The fourth secret is to change the physical form [of the body] and the spirit.
此書有四秘：一秘無刻本，二秘永不傳，三秘口藏秘，四秘改形神。[554]

The last secret means that forms of the body and the spirit which are the roots of destined fortune can be altered, and therefore fortune can be altered. The manual does not go into details about this particular secret. The alteration of the body and fortune can be briefly divided into two types. The first one is the ordinary changes of the body. Many manuals mention that a sudden change of the body like a mark or a wound, especially on the face, may impair the original good fortune of a person; this is known in physiognomy as a 'Broken Look' (*po* 破, or *po xiang* 破相).[555] Good fortune can be damaged by breaks on a person's look, such as wounds, scars, or other ugly changes. In contrast, changing a person's face in a good way can bring better fortune to this person and enhance his or her overall luck, and in the *Halberd* manual, growing a long beard and constantly nourish and groom it is one of the ways to do so.[556]

Yet these small tricks to alter fate and change fortune are not recommended. Instead the recommended method of changing fortune is to cultivate oneself following the sage's ways, be it the Confucian, Buddhist or Daoist way. It seems that the radical method to change fate is to ultimately renew the physical and mental constitution, by removing oneself completely away from the worldly rules. As we have mentioned before, the physical appearance of a person's current life is decided by the consequence of his or her cultivations in past lives. Similar ideas can be found in many Buddhist and Daoist texts, which means that the relationship between

[554] See *Shenxiang tie guandao*, *juan* 2, 29.
[555] See '*Liunian buwei yunqi ge*,' in *Shenxiang quanbian*, *juan* 1, 21. Also see *Yuguan zhaoshen ju*, 15.
[556] See *Shenxiang tie guandao*, *juan* 2, 28.

cultivation and reincarnation is well accepted not only in the Ming when the physiognomy manuals were systematically composed. An early Inner Alchemy text *The Anthology of the Transmission of the Teachings from Zhong Liquan to Lü Dongbin* (*Zhong Lü chuandao ji* 鐘呂傳道集) shows that to be reincarnated as a human being or a celestial being requires a huge amount of cultivation and effort. Without such an endeavor, an individual human being easily falls into the category despicable beings again like animals or ghosts.[557] A more detailed description can be found in a Mahayana Buddhist scripture *Mahā ratnakūṭa sutra* (*Da baoji jing* 大寶積經), or the *Canon of Accumulated Treasures* translated into Chinese during the Tang dynasty. In the 72nd *juan* of this scripture, the Buddha explained the six different types of human beings coming from six different destines (*ṣaḍgati liudao* 六道) in terms of their physical appearance, voices, and their different penchant. For example, it says:

> Listen, you heretics! Someone who is reborn among the human beings from the destiny of Asura will have this appearance, and the wise man should know [about it]. [This person] will be proud and arrogant, and often likes to be angry. [This person] is eager to argue and fight, and will never let go his grudges [with others]. [This person] will be arrogant. His or her body will be strong and gigantic. His or her eyes will be white like a dog. His or her teeth will be long and exposed. [This person] will be powerful and brave, and often likes to engage in warfare or battles. He or she will also like to use cunning words to alienate others. They will be self-conceited and despise other people…You heretics! There are numerous different kinds of appearance like this, and I have now only briefly explained these appearances. They are called "Being reborn among humankind from being an Asura". A wise man can know it, and a fool cannot fathom.
> 外道諦聽，若從阿修羅終生人中者，當有是相，智者應知。高心我慢，常喜忿怒，好樂鬪諍，挾怨不忘，起增上慢。其身洪壯，眼白如犬，齒長多露，勇健大力常樂戰陣，亦喜兩舌破壞他人，踈齒高心輕蔑他人…外道！有如是等無量眾相，我今略說如是等相，是名從阿修羅終來生人間。智者能知，非愚所測。[558]

Interestingly, here the term '*xiang* 相' is used to describe the physical appearance as well

[557] See '*Zhenxian*,' in *Zhong Lü chuandao ji*, 656-657.
[558] See *Dabao ji jing*, *juan* 72, 410-414.

as behavioral traits of a person. In this part, Buddha told the heretics that if one did not follow Buddha's teachings and practice, then one would have no control over his or her life cycle, and inevitably, fall back into the despicable destinies again. Only cultivation can guarantee a person's good reincarnation, and, furthermore, the end of it. The pervasive idea of a link between the physical appearance of human beings and reincarnation, its influence on a person's current life, and further the importance of cultivation influenced the broader Song and Ming social discourse.[559] Isabelle Robinet points out that from the Song Daoist text *The Scripture of the Grand Cave* (*Dadong jing* 大洞經) and other cultivation texts in the Daozang, we can conclude that a typical Daoist agenda in life transformation is to challenge the predestined fate.[560] Even in teachings of a Ming popular religion master Lin Zhaoen 林兆恩 (1517-1598CE), the founder of 'Three-in-one Teaching' (*Sanyi jiao* 三一教), we see a discussion of how human beings are made of qi and the essence as the primary power of reincarnation, and how the qualities of qi differentiate human fortune into the eminent and the base.[561] Lin also believed that there were physical dimensions of morality because the morality of heaven and earth gave birth to the human body. Judith Berling concludes that Lin's ideas on qi and the homological relationship between human beings and the universe were not only theoretical and conceptual but also related to actual physical practices according to the text.[562] By using Lin's method of cultivation, one was said to be able to get re-unified with the primary qi and challenge a person's worldly fate.

The same views can be spotted in the physiognomy manuals, and the popularity of bodily

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[559] For example, similar teachings are seen in the Non-Action movement in the Ming, see Barend ter Haar, *Practicing Scripture*, 37-39.
[560] See Robinet, *Taoist Mediation*, 143-150.
[561] See *Linzi quanji*, zhenbu, 1273, also see *Zhongguo minjian zongjiao shi*, 752.
[562] See Berling, *The Syncretic Religion of Lin Chao-en*, 90-144.

techniques definitely influenced the Song and Ming intellectual and religious world. In fact, early in the Song scholar Zhu Xi 朱熹's work, similar views were proposed. In a chapter called 'Nature of Human Beings and Objects, and Nature of the Quality of Qi' (*Renwu zhi xing qizhi zhi xing* 人物之性氣質之性) in *The Assorted Conversations of Master Zhu* (*Zhuzi yulei* 朱子語類), Zhu Xi constantly used the divinatory concepts like 'weal and woe' (*huofu* 禍福) and 'longevity and death' (*yaoshou* 夭壽) in his conversations.[563] His idea underlying the conversations is even more physiognomic, that the fortune and social hierarchy of human beings are determined by the cosmic qi, which is also part of the body. The cosmic qi generates everything, and the physical form and society are simple the product of its movement. The body inherits cosmic qi in a specific time and space when we were born, and thus fortune is determined by the body. The clarity of qi generates nobility and good fortune, whereas the turbulence of qi leads to baseness and bad fortune. The same goes with objects:

> Someone asked: 'Human beings depend on the qi of the Five Phases between heaven and earth. But [since] [human beings] are given birth by [their] parents, is it still the case that [we] are the same as that qi [between heaven and earth]?' [Zhu] said: 'This qi has to come over through the human body. Nowadays fortune-telling technique according to the Five Phases calculation of [people's] birthday, and the geomancers evaluate the direction of the trend of mountains and forests, are all based on this idea.'
> 或問：人稟天地五行之氣，然父母所生，與是氣相值而然否？曰：便是這氣須從人身上過來。今以五行枝幹推算人命，與夫地理家推擇山林向背，皆是此理。[564]

Zhu Xi believed that the human body was the connecting point between the human world and the cosmos. In this sense, fortune-telling techniques do tell the partial reality of human beings. The numerological understanding of the human body and fortune was valid to Zhu Xi. Thus, according to him, for those who intend to understand what fate and sagehood were,

[563] See *Zhuzi yulei*, *juan* 1, '*Xingli*,' 56-81.
[564] See *ibid*, 60.

they had to fathom the nature of the body: the product of the cosmic qi. Zhu Xi then pointed out that a sage was not someone who had good fortune in a normal sense, but someone who cultivated oneself in order to understand the nature of fortune. Therefore in Zhu Xi's mind, although fortune-telling did tell a certain kind of truth about human existence, what really mattered was cultivation. In the manuals, however, religious practices and self-cultivation are not examined in terms of their own technical rules, but how the consequence of these techniques will influence a person's fortune and fate. The most common one is a person's moral condition. This means that in the physiognomy manuals, religious practices are not systematically subsumed into physiognomy. They are only taken as one of the many important techniques that may affect fortune.

Moral cultivation is sometimes regarded as a way to immediately change a person's fortune. In the Ming manual the *Five Gathering Wise Tortoises of Physiognomy* (*Xiangfa wu zong gui* 相法五總龜)[565], thirty six different forms of moral conduct are introduced as the 'Physiognomy of Heart' (*xiangxin* 相心) that are believed to be able to change a person's fortune, including sharing a person's food to always remember other people's kindness and repay it.[566] As mentioned, the heart is defined not only as a physical organ but the source of a person's moral conduct. As the texts suggest, proper moral conduct would save a person from a doomed mishap. The reason is that a good conduct will add a type of special line on a person's face known as the Hidden Settlement (*yinzhi* 陰騭). This is a line that only professional physiognomist can recognize and it is the proof of the 'override' of moral conduct over a person's prior mishaps. A similar idea can be found in many other manuals like the

[565] Which is a common metaphor for monumental works.
[566] See *Xiangfa wu zong gui*, 20-21.

Halberd manual where it says that a repentant heart can change a person's face and add the line of Hidden Settlement on it.[567] A passage called 'Essays on the Person of the Way Youji's Secret Theory of the Hidden Settlement Lines' (*Youji daoren yizhi wen milun* 右髻道人陰騭紋秘論) explains the lines as a special contour of the qi and color on the face that only reveals itself in the very dim light, or when the person is in extreme emotions.[568] According to this passage, physical forms of the body are the congenital layer of the body, whereas the spirit and the qi are the acquired constitution of the body. Thus the energetic part as the primary and decisive layer of the body is actually controllable and under a person's active influence. The Hidden Settlement lines are the manifestation of the energetic constitution of the body. Therefore, any changes will be reflected on the face and can be caught by the trained eyes. Moral enhancement is an effective method of changing the energetic constitution of the body, so the Hidden Settlement lines are directly linked to a person's hidden luck (*yinfu* 陰福). This idea certainly influenced general understandings of morality during the Ming dynasty, and possibly the Song. A late Ming book of moral teachings and practice called *Essays of Hidden Settlement by the King Wenchang* (*Wenchang dijun yinzhi wen* 文昌帝君陰騭文) specifically discusses the existence of Hidden Settlement, a subtle evidence of low key moral conduct and cultivation reflected on the body. At the beginning of this book, a story of a Buddhist monk physiognomist is even used to illustrate the idea that morality is corporeal, and that a person's moral cultivation will be manifested in the body.[569]

The physiognomy manuals also include a more extreme version of changing fortune, that

567 See *Shenxiang tie guandao, juan* 1, 15.

568 See '*Youji daoren yinzhi wen milun,*' in *Shuijing shenxiang, juan* 3, 50-53.

569 See *Wenchang dijun yinzhi wen, juan* 1, 55.

is known as the Way of Practice (*xiuxing* 修行), which is used to describe various bodily and mental practices in Chinese society.[570] One of the passages known as the Thirty Two Looks and Eighty Magnificent Traits of Buddha in the *Water Reflection* manual describe Buddha's exceptional physical appearance recorded in the Buddhist scriptures *Yogācārabhūmi-śāstra* (*Yujia shidi lun* 瑜伽師地論) as the result of long-lasting cultivation that has endured for more than one life.[571] In this passage, the exceptional looks of Buddha form an index and specimen of good fortune, and these good fortunes can be achieved by constant cultivation.[572] But the passage does not give any information on how one could achieve a physical appearance like the Buddha's. The most detailed passage about using cultivation to change fortune is perhaps the passage called 'Essays on the Person of the Way Youji's Appearance Alteration' (*Youji daoren bianxiang lun* 右髻道人變相論) in the *Water Reflection* manual.[573] The passage starts out by stating that traditional ideas of a fixed fortune on a fixed physical form are wrong because there have been ways of changing different parts of the body in history. The bones, flesh, moles, qi and the spirit, all bodily dimensions, forces, and realms are subjects to alteration. The underlying logic is that the bodily qi is the primary power of the bodily form generated by the heart, and all the other aspects of the body can change according to changes in a person's qi. The bodily qi is, further in this passage, connected to a person's intentions (*yi* 意) and nature (*xing* 性). Nature gives birth to a person's intention and the bodily form at the same time. The fortune of a person, his nobility and baseness, wealth and poverty, are all generated from here.

[570] For example, in *Shenxiang tie guandao*, *juan* 3, 22, and *Shenxiang quanbian*, *juan* 5, 27, *xiuxing* seems to suggest all kinds of cultivations, and the texts does not further explain what kind of cultivation this term refers to. But in *Shuijing shenxiang*, *juan* 2, 16, Buddhist, Daoist, and Confucian methods of cultivation are clearly distinguished, and their effects are same, an exceptional spirit in the eyes.

[571] See *Yujia shidi lun*, *juan* 49, 566-568.

[572] See *Shuijing shenxiang*, *juan* 2, 2-3, also for Buddha's look, see *Yujia shidi lun*, *juan* 49, 566.

[573] See '*Youji daoren bianxiang lun*,' in *Shuijing shenxiang*, *juan* 3, 2-6.

If a person's nature can be altered, then the intention and bodily form will change, and naturally, his fortune will be changed as well:

> Thus for the study of human physiognomy, the description of a person's appearance, demeanor, and bones are only half of the whole, whereas a grasp of the changes is the other half. Those who study this technique cannot remain ignorant about this.
> 故相人之學，形其形容骨骼者十之半，得其變者亦半也，學術者亦不可不知也。[574]

The changes in a person's nature comes from moral cultivations as well as nourishment to a person's qi and the spirit in this passage. Both ways can influence the body and heart, and in this way, fate can be redirected. But the following passage called Various Passages of Ancient People's Physiognomy Observations (*Guren guanxiang zhupian* 古人觀相諸篇) goes even further. Not only worldly moral cultivation will change a person's bodily constitution and fate, so do other practices, especially those Buddhist and Daoist ones, and they are even more radical and effective than moral cultivations yet very hard to accomplish. The story in this passage shows how the famous Daoist master Lü Dongbin 呂洞賓 in the Tang dynasty had completely changed his bodily constitution, especially his spirit and then accomplished the path of the Way. Because of this, although his body looks devastated, his inner vitality is still glowing as a proof of sagehood.[575] This passage also mentions those with a Bodhisattva Appearance (*pusa xiang* 菩薩相), who on their Buddhist cultivation path perfect their moral composition, so that their bodies display an exceptional qi that is different from the ordinary people.

We can say that changing fortune was another side of Ming physiognomy, which formed a bridge between physiognomy as a prognostic technique and other different types of practices

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[574] *Ibid*.

[575] See '*Guren guanxiang zhupian*,' in *Shuijing shenxiang*, *juan* 3, 28-29.

at that time. The body is not only seen here as the root of human life but also as a tool for self-improvement and the transcendence of the worldly existence. Because society and human life are seen as the extension of the body, changes in the body also mean the change of these ends. Fate, as the ultimate pattern of human social existence, is still a bodily matter. Moreover, we see the body dissected as the composition of different types of bodies for good reasons. The body of flesh and bones is merely a congenital vessel for qi and spirit, the energetic body. The energetic body, if operated correctly, can override the fortune and fate generated by the body of flesh and bones. The energetic body is not only the master of the formed flesh and bones but also exhibits and influences a person's moral composition. In this sense, there is a corporeal facet of human morality, and the body is a moral body.

Morality and the cultivation of virtue are homological to human beings' physiology. Enhancing virtue and cultivating life are body techniques in this physiognomic discourse. Virtue is the body, lying in the heart and reflected as specific bodily features and qualities, and whoever grasps the way to change this virtue/heart can change fortune as a result. Yet as it is pointed out in 'Essays on the Person of the Way Youji's Appearance Alteration', changing the body and fortune is extremely difficult. One has to stick to his or her virtue and noble pursuits in the most challenging predicaments in life in order to achieve such a result.[576] For this reason, to most of the people fortune still remain unchanged and predisposed. Transforming the body into a higher level is seen as the body's potential, just as sociality and fortune is another potential of it. This is how the idea and techniques of changing fortune can co-exist with a predisposed fortune/fate, in that they are both the body's potentials and as the majority of

[576] *Shuijing shenxiang*, *juan* 3, 3-4.

people realize its potential of destined fortune, some others manage to discover its potential of change. In the *Iron Halberd* manual, changing fortune by conducting virtuous deeds (*shanshi* 善事) is a secret that only virtuous people are worthy of knowing.[577] In the *Compendium*, specific new bodily features from accumulating this type of 'hidden virtue' (*yinde* 陰德) in life is depicted as a type of rare phenomena that goes beyond normal rules of physiognomy, therefore Xunzi's stress on the importance of heart and virtue over fixed fate on the body is seen as a secret 'knack' in physiognomy.[578]

This is how many passages in the Ming manuals reconcile a long-lasting debate over physiognomy between virtue and fortune. If social orders such as nobility, political power, wealth, and so on are bodily orders, and if the body is a person's sociality, then the alteration and transcendence of such an order should also be corporeal. They are two connected by different types or different levels of bodily potentials. From the categorization of the body in the first half of this chapter we see that the body is conceptualized in Ming physiognomy as a stable pattern and index of social structures. Social hierarchy is a somatic order indexed and even generated by certain bodily features. Categorizing numerous bodily features according to their resemblance to things and phenomena in nature is a method to grasp possible social differentiations of people, which is in the end part of a grand cosmic movement. Individual life, cosmos, and the society are unified in the body and they are the same in their origins, composition, and how they work. Therefore, these specific features interweave different human bodies that are physiognomically and to some extent cosmologically beautiful and ugly, a differentiation that goes beyond conventional social understandings of 'attractiveness' and

577 See *Shenxiang tie guandao*, *juan* 4, 28.

578 See *Shenxiang quanbian*, *juan* 5, 40-41.

beauty. But at the same time, the body is ecologic, susceptible to internal and external changes. Thus it possesses another potential of change, a change of its own form and energy, and an alteration or even transcendence of social orders accordingly. A predisposed fortune in the body and the possibility of altering it are two sides of one coin. The body does not only unifies different orders and assimilates them into one, but also unifies order and change.

Conclusion

In the physiognomy manuals, the human body is generally defined as the totality of human existence. This 'body' is the morphological, energetic, cosmic, and moral bodies rolled into one. Physiognomic prediction is based on the idea that the whole society and individual's social life are extensions of the body, rather than vice versa. Therefore, the body is not only homological to the cosmos, it is also homological to society. Consequently, social stratification is embedded in the body and somaticized. Social hierarchy in physiognomy is a bodily matter. No matter how a specific social hierarchy is formed, the distinction between the different social status of individual people is fixed in the body. Gender distinction follows the same logic in the manuals. Consequently, as a technique of inspection, reading fortune out of the body is conducted through this systematic framework of categorization. This kind of physiognomic-social distinction gives birth to a unique type of aesthetic values about human beings' physical appearances, and how people perceive their bodily beauty during the Ming period.

However, this does not mean that the body and the bodily fate of every human being are

perpetuated. Moral and religious cultivation are a technical path through which a person's physical look, as well as the moral nature, can be transformed, and then, fortune and fate can be influenced. In the manuals, the physical appearance of each individual human being is the result of moral and religious cultivation in their past lives. Changing fate is also vital to physiognomy, which means that as a fortune-telling technique, physiognomic predictions are not totally deterministic. The body in this physiognomic discourse is seen as a horizon of the vision of the world, and physiognomists only explicitly examine what is above this horizon. They are the fortune, fate, social events and relationships of a person or a group of people at the time of observation. Yet that does not mean that beneath the horizon there is nothing else. Virtue lying inside the heart is the key to altering fortune. While social orders are part of the bodily order, and a person's future sociality is the body's potential, changing such a fortune is also its potential. By enhancing virtue and cultivate the body, a seemingly fixed social order generated by the body can be transcended. This discourse of virtue and the heart in the human body is tightly connected to Ming Neo-Confucian discussions of the heart. Both of them reinterpret early Chinese classics in order to construct a new understanding of the heart. Ming physiognomy manuals absorbed various terms and ideas from this Neo-Confucian discourse from late Song to Ming dynasty, showing a particular historical uniqueness in its own repertoire of fortune, cosmos, and the body.

Chapter IV

Physiognomists and their Techniques: Socialization of Physiognomy in the Ming

In the anecdotal collection *Ertan leizeng* 耳談類增 compiled by the Ming scholar Wang Tonggui 王同軌 (?-1620), a story is recorded with the title 'the physiognomic technique of Li Fengjun' (*Li Fengjun xiangfa* 李封君相法). The story depicts how a local student for the imperial civil examination named Li Fengjun was accidentally bestowed with the technique of physiognomy from a travelling Person of the Way (*daoren* 道人).[579] The Person of the Way inspected Li and his schoolmate, who had snuck into his room and discovered a physiognomy manual. The Person of the Way asserted that the two young men would be famous because of their auspicious appearances. Li Fengjun then underwent a small test from the travelling Person of the Way. The Person of the Way took out a bundle of threads in five colors (*wuse xian* 五色線), and asked Li to stare at the sun directly for a while, and then distinguish the threads according to their colors. Li exceeded his schoolmate in this test, without any mistakes, and because of this, the Person of the Way imparted his technique of physiognomy to him by giving Li his physiognomy manual. He then became famous for his efficacious use of the technique and was also appointed as a local official of Yizhou. Many local officials from different counties and provinces heard about his divine and miraculous technique and came to him for prognostications. Some of them, out of suspicion or curiosity, tested Li with different tricks,

[579] See *Ertan leizeng*, *juan* 7, 54.

and he successfully demonstrated the accuracy of his physiognomy every time. Later on, he even precisely predicted the date of his own son's death, who was an academician in the high court.

This short story in *Ertan leizeng* evinces many important details pertinent to our discussion in this chapter and adumbrates the social dynamics of physiognomy practice. First, there are two types of physiognomists that appear in this story. One is the *daoren*, a travelling Person of the Way, and the other is Li Fengjun himself, as an official but also an occupational physiognomist at the same time. We cannot help but ask, who was the Person of the Way? Why was he called the 'Person of the Way'? What did he do for a living? Did he make a living out of physiognomy? What was his relationship with Daoism in his time? Moreover, although Li inherited the Person of the Way's technique, he himself did not go into the full-time profession of physiognomy. How was it possible that Li, being well-known as a physiognomist, was at the same time a local official? This story thus raises important questions concerning the identity of physiognomists in China after the Tang dynasty. Namely, who were physiognomists, and who could actually practice physiognomy? Was the category of 'physiognomist' (*xianggong* 相工 or *xiangshi* 相士) that is commonly seen in the records from early China still applicable in this time period?

Secondly, one detail mentioned in the story about the test conducted on Li and his schoolmate is particularly intriguing. The use of a test with 'five-color threads' can be regarded as an initiation ritual for the disciples of masters of physiognomy since it is also seen in many other stories in miscellaneous notes and anecdotal writings, especially those produced in the Ming period. This test, which might well have been crucial for the successful acquisition of

physiognomic techniques, is also found in the *Water Reflection* manual.[580] Can we assume, then, that there was a connection between physiognomy manuals and the practice of physiognomy represented in the stories about physiognomists? If so, what are the other elements, skills and ideas that are kept in the records of physiognomists' practice, and also recorded physiognomy manuals, and is there anything that the manuals do not say? Moreover, the tests given to Li Fengjun by his fellow officials show that among literati community, there were many who were incredulous of Li's physiognomy, and more than once they tested the physiognomist before they asked for any prediction. One might wonder whether such a prudent view was only directed at particular physiognomists, or was a popular view that Ming literati held of physiognomy, or divination in general. And if they were suspicious, then why did they make such an effort to ask Li Fengjun for predictions anyway? What could be the underlying urge of these literati to patronise physiognomists despite their reservations about the technique? It is also worth noting that although Li Fengjun was 'invited' to consult with officials and literati, the story does not directly indicate that material remuneration was given to him for his predictions. Yet we should never presume that because there is no mention of economic exchange between physiognomists and the people they served, that their relationship was totally without economic interest. Intricate forms of exchange frequently occurred in the business of fortune-telling in China, making it very unlikely that a fortune-teller like Li Fengjun could stay away from economic issues. How the exchange was accomplished also deserves our attention.

The immediate questions related to this one story illustrate different aspects of the social

[580] See *Shuijing shenxiang, juan* 1, 59.

representation of physiognomy in a Ming context. This chapter, therefore, will mainly focus on the reception and narrative of the social practice of physiognomy recorded in these Ming texts, a time of relatively fluid social mobility, increasing uncertainty in the political life of the elites, flourishing commerce, and a sophisticated religious environment. As mentioned before, physiognomy is a technique of inspecting and examining the human body for fortune-telling. As a technique, its cosmology and theorization are only half of the whole story of physiognomy. A technique is not only a type of thought or ideas, but skills used and performed in various social milieu, events happening in people's lives. That is to say, theories and cosmologies Ming physiognomy manuals exhibit are not the whole historical picture of physiognomy. This is something studies of physiognomy should carefully and minutely distinguish. I have mentioned that in previous studies of early Chinese studies, there has been a tendency to take stories and accounts of the social practice of physiognomy as texts of physiognomic 'thoughts'. Due to the lack of material in early China, we can barely make the comparison between the theorization of physiognomy and its socialization. However, thanks to the abundance of materials on both physiognomy theories and social accounts preserved in the Ming dynasty, we can make such a differentiation between two types of materials. In this chapter, we will see how physiognomy was perceived as a technique or performance in Ming dynasty's historical and social context by literati and officials. In other words, how was it socialized. Stories and accounts of physiognomy practice also on the one hand, show consistency with the theories and technical elements in the manuals, reflecting how cosmologies and theories of physiognomy were linked to its performance, but on the other hand, contain discrepencies, divergence from the manuals, and information that are not included in them. This put the

methodological stances in the studies of physiognomy in early China into question. Textual accounts of the social practice of physiognomy composed and edited by Ming literati show that at least from their particular narrative, the social practice of physiognomy is not congruent with its cosmology and theorization.

In order to fully understand the textual narrative of the social practice of this technique in the Ming, we also need to incorporate important stories and records from the Song. As we shall see, distinctive features of the way in which physiognomy is depicted in Ming texts are similar to the Song ones, and these features in the Ming texts clearly show a continuity of the style of depicting physiognomy from Song to Ming. It is incomprehensive and insensible to ignore the continuity of the way in which physiognomy was depicted from Song to Ming and new pieces of information about physiognomy appear in Song and later texts that are not seen in earlier ones. These new features recorded in different stories throughout Song and Ming also help us to understand the innovations in the Ming physiognomy manuals. In view of this, it is necessary to study the social reception and perception of physiognomy in the Ming in light of the Song. Many of these texts about the social practice of physiognomy in the Song can be connected to physiognomy theories in the Ming manuals, and numerous technical elements are not seen in previous manuals at all. Therefore, to fully understand the complexity of the contents of the Ming manuals, Song stories should not be ignored.

In fact, most of the stories about Song physiognomy selected in this chapter are from the collections of anecdotal writings and local histories edited and printed during the Ming period. These stories are either in the received texts in the Ming, reedited and reprinted, or included in story collections compiled by Ming scholars. Barend ter Haar already points out that one of

the most famous Southern Song anthology of anecdotes *The Record of the Listener* was only transmitted in the Ming private collections, which means that the earliest editions and commentaries available today are Ming editions.[581] Therefore, although they are stories about the Song, the content matters to how physiognomy is perceived in the Ming. Many Ming scholars and literati even relied on this kind of stories to comprehend and conceptualize physiognomy. What also needs to be clarified is that stories in this chapter mainly reveals the point of view of the author or the story-teller in relation to physiognomy. We can hardly reconstruct the social reality of physiognomy in Ming China only based on these narratives, yet this does not mean that they lack value in understanding the social reception of physiognomy completely. What are shown in these stories are clues of the social perception of physiognomy. No matter whether these events truly happened in history, they were perceived and understood as such, and this perception was part of the 'social reality' of physiognomy in the Ming. It is this historical perception that we are investigating into in this chapter.

When Li Fengjun snuck into the Person of the Way's room, he also saw a physiognomy manual written by him. This detail hints the existence of a manual culture in Chinese physiognomy during the Ming periods and it is related to physiognomists themselves and their practices. In fact, some so-called Song manuals (which are only available in their Ming editions) and large numbers of physiognomy manuals from the Ming were preserved not only by local literati privately but also by imperial collections compiled by scholars at court. Just like the performance of physiognomy, physiognomy manuals themselves are socialized objects as well, produced and transmitted in specific historical and social conditions. On the one hand,

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581 See Barend ter Haar, 'Newly Recovered Anecdotes from Hong Mai's *Yijian zhi*,' 19-41.

these manuals represent physiognomy as ideas and theories, on the other hand, these manuals are texts, objects of human beings' composition and alteration. As crucial instructions of physiognomy, these manuals as socialized objects are part of the social landscape of this technique. How were these manuals compiled? What were the relationships between different manuals? How was a manual transmitted and inherited in different periods in traditional China are how were these manuals perceived and used as a part of the social practice of physiognomy? With these questions, in this chapter we will also investigate into the culture of manuals in Chinese physiognomy to understand the social as well as technical milieu of Chinese physiognomy in this particular period.

The Identification of Physiognomists

Before we enter the discussion of the composition of the category of physiognomists, we should first be aware of who was not seen in this profession. Women rarely appeared in the physiognomist group. In other words, we seldom see female physiognomists or female figures with any background performing physiognomy. We do occasionally see the appearance of female fortune-tellers in Song and Ming records, but not in large numbers.[582] Based on my observation of 98 different anecdotal writing collections throughout Song and Ming listed in *Biji xiaoshuo daguan* 筆記小說大觀, only three stories directly mentioned female physiognomists, and only of them only practiced physiognomy via inspecting portraits rather than face to face inspections as we shall see in this chapter. Why then, are women absent from the practice of physiognomy? In my view, physiognomy largely depended on specialized

[582] See the story of Xieshi in *Yijian zhi* where a Lady of the Way (*daogu* 道姑) appears as a fortune-teller, *Yijianzhi*, *bu zhi*, 1788. The other two stories of female physiognomists will be mentioned later in this chapter.

knowledge, a certain level of education, viewing and touching other people's bodies, and the freedom to travel long distances. Even physiognomists in peripheral areas were at least familiar with certain kinds of physiological knowledge and were literate. These conditions were essential to the practice of physiognomy and might have not been available to women. Domestic space in a late Song and Ming context was constructed as a physical as well as cultural frame between genders, in which women's access to the public world was limited.[583] As some anthropologists of ritual have suggested for other practices, physiognomy was a 'male-monopolized' knowledge and technical repertoire.[584] In this sense, women were not consciously or intentionally excluded from the practice of physiognomy. Rather, they rarely had the potential to practice.

The nature of the so-called 'physiognomists' after the Tang changed considerably from preceding periods, although there was also continuity in some respects. We cannot exclude the possibility that the appearance of new elements in the practice of physiognomy after the Tang was due to an increase in the availability of information from the Song onwards. What we do know is that different intellectual environments, changes in medical knowledge and practice, and new economic relationships would have influenced the way in which physiognomy was conducted, perceived, and conceptualized after the Tang. Since the Song, we start to see more detailed evidence showing that the practice of physiognomy was no longer confined to 'full-time' diviners who only served elites, with the fortune-tellers working mainly for commoners. Instead, people from different social strata, economic and religious backgrounds and geographic regions appeared as physiognomy practitioners, and the clients of a physiognomist

[583] See *Technology and Gender*, 91-150.

[584] See Dev Nathan, Govind Kelkar, and Xu Xiaogang, 'Women as witches and keepers of demons,' 58-69.

began to come from a broader social spectrum. As we shall see, the social practice of physiognomy became more complex in Chinese society at that time. The evidence also indicates that the technique itself was not exclusive. Zhu Pingyi believes that during the Han dynasty, physiognomists belonged to a exclusive group wit their own social mechanisms and identifiable roles in society, and that physiognomy was not a shared body of knowledge by social elites.[585] Scattered accounts of physiognomists during the Tang dynasty also suggests that these figures took physiognomy as an occupation, and Tang aristocrats rarely learnt this technique.[586] Yet records of Song and Ming physiognomists represent a more multi-faceted picture of who practiced physiognomy. Roughly speaking, the recorded practitioners of physiognomy in Song and Ming historical records and anecdotal writings can be categorized as follows: 1) professional full-time physiognomists; 2) Buddhist monks; 3) Daoist priests; 4) diviners and soothsayers who possessed various skills including physiognomy; and 5) literati and officials. These categories were not mutually exclusive. We will see that many physiognomists had different social roles at the same time, whereas others often moved from one social role to another. The complex backgrounds of many famous physiognomists mean that they did not hold a single identity.

What is noticeable about physiognomists after the Tang is that more Buddhist monks were recorded as practitioners, and from the extant records, they seemed to outnumber Daoist priests regarded as physiognomists. The increasing number of Buddhist monks in

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585 See *Handai de xiangren shu*, 147-180.

586 Apart from the famous Tang physiognomist Yuan Tiangang, who was a low level salt trade official at the end of Sui dynasty and then took physiognomy as a profession (*Jiu Tangshu*, *juan* 191, 5092) most of the Tang stories of physiognomists I found suggest that these physiognomists were occupational ones and serve Tang aristocratic families full-time. See the stories of Zhang Jingzang (*Jiu Tangshu*, *juan* 191, 5097), Yifu hongli (*Jiu Tangshu*, *juan* 191, 5091), and Jin Liangfeng (*Jiu Tangshu*, *juan* 191, 5104) for examples.

physiognomy after the Tang dynasty correlated with the prevalence of Buddhism in China both at the court and at a local level.[587] We have to keep in mind that in general, the intersection between Buddhist figures and Chinese divination techniques was not new in the Song nor Ming. In the early Southern and Northern Dynasties when Buddhism was only in its initial stage of transmission in China, Chinese divination was an indispensable component of an educated monk's knowledge.[588] The same was true for Daoist figures. In many Tang collections, both Daoist masters (*daoshi* 道士) and Buddhist monks (*saṅgha seng* 僧, or *śramaṇa shamen* 沙門) were referred to as physiognomists.[589] One of the most famous physiognomists in the early Tang dynasty, Li Chunfeng 李淳風, was known as a Daoist master.[590] However, in the materials concerning the practice of physiognomy after the Tang, we seldom see Daoist priests practicing physiognomy, while many scholars and literati encountered Buddhist monks who offered them precise prophecy via physiognomy. Only occasionally were Daoist priests mentioned as physiognomy professionals. For example, in *Laoxue an biji* 老學庵筆記 written by Lu You 陸遊(1125-1210), a Daoist priest from Hebei called Jia Zhongmiao 賈眾妙 is mentioned as someone who was 'good at physiognomy' (*shanxiang* 善相).[591] Another famous Daoist figure was Wang Wenqing 王文卿 (1093-1153) in the Song dynasty, a physiognomist who later becomes an illustrious Daoist priest.[592] However, it is likely that Buddhist monks in this period more often appeared as physiognomy professionals.

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587 See *Mematsu chūgoku bukkyō no kenkyū*, 25-30 for the power balance between Buddhism and Daoism in Ming. Also see Yin Jian, 'Fojiao zai zhongguo de chuanbo yuansheng daojiao de yuanyin,' 42-43.

588 See Li Chuanjun, 'Weijin nanbei chao shiqi fojiao gaoseng de zhishi jiegou yu xuefeng haoshang,' 47-51. Wang Jiangdong, 'Lun fojiao chuchuan yu shenxian fangshu de guanxi,' 9-13.

589 For most of the stories, one can easily find the collection in the Song anthology *Taiping guangji*, *xiang*. The stories include those of Buddhist monks such as *seng shanxiang*, 1742, and *Linghu Tao menseng*, 1742, and Daoist priest such as Ren Zhiliang, 1743, and Yin Jiuxia, 1743.

590 See *Xin tangshu*, *juan* 203, 5798

591 See *Laoxue an biji*, *juan* 7, 69.

592 See *Yijian zhi*, *ding zhi*, 582, and also see Edward L. Davis, *Society and the Supernatural in Song China*, 54-55.

The most famous story about the Buddhist monk as physiognomist in the Song is the story of Northern Song official Qian Ruoshui 錢若水 (960 -1003CE). In different versions of this well-known story, the plot rarely changes. When Qian was young, he paid a respectful visit to the master Chen Tuan 陳搏 (872-989CE) for physiognomy, who was first a scholar and later devoted himself to the Daoist bodily practice of Inner Alchemy (*neidan* 内丹). Chen Tuan was historically famous for his physiognomy and there were several texts produced in later periods that were ascribed to him. Qian was told to visit Chen again after half a month. In due time, Qian came again as promised and was invited to a mountain. In a fasting spot for monks, he saw an old and blind Buddhist monk. Chen told the monk that Qian had the capacity to become a celestial being, but he could not confirm it because he could not see the essence of Qian's body. Therefore Chen had to consult the blind monk about this. After inspecting him, the monk said that Qian was going to be a noble gentleman but not a celestial being. When Qian asked Chen afterwards who the monk was, Chen said, 'The Person of the Way in plain clothes' (*mayi daozhe* 麻衣道者).[593] In *Xu wen jianjin lu*, however, the monk is referred to as the 'Person of the Way in the White Pavilion' (*baige daozhe* 白閣道者).

Chikusa Masaaki points out that this monk was perhaps the Monk in Plain Clothes (*mayi heshang* 麻衣和尚) who was an active physiognomist during the late Five Dynasties period and early Song, and very likely to have been the teacher of Chen Tuan.[594] It was also very common in the Song to designate Buddhist monks as 'Persons of the Way', a term used extensively to address lay Buddhist and Daoist figures in the Song and Yuan periods.[595] Yet in

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593 This story is found in *Xiangshan yelu*, and *Shaoshi jianwen lu*, and we have little idea of its exact provenances. See *Xiangshan yelu*, *juan shang*, 39, and *Shaoshi jianwen lu*, *juan* 7, 70.
594 See Chikusa Masaaki, *Songen bukkyō bunka kenkyū*, 470-474, and Livia Kohn, '"*Mirror of Auras*",' 215-256.
595 See Masaaki, *ibid*, and Barend ter Haar, *The White Lotus Teachings in Chinese Religious History*, 29-43.

many other stories of physiognomy scattered through Song and Ming sources, the terms 'monk' (*seng* 僧) and 'Person of the Way' are more often used to refer to two distinctive social groups, monastics and lay people respectively.[596] These presumably lay practitioners usually possessed highly sophisticated skills. Many of these Persons of the Way showed impressive accuracy in their prophecy and even instructed Buddhist monks in the practice of physiognomy. The Song monk Miaoying 妙應 was taught physiognomy techniques by a Person of the Way when he was begging for alms in Yangzhou; he later entered the capital city and successfully predicted the death place of the Prime Minister Cai Jing 蔡京 (1047-1126).[597] In the Ming case of Monk Rulan 如蘭, his first inspection for the later famous official Yu Qian 于謙 (1398-1457) was very positive, even though Yu Qian was only a child at the time. Yet a Person of the Way who happened to pass by reminded Rulan that his inspection was not enough. Rulan did it again and recognized that Yu Qian would eventually end up dying miserably.[598] Monk Rulan was actually a friend of Yu Qian's father, indicating a literati background.[599] These were the monks who were also literate and shared close connections to literati's life.

In scholarly writings about physiognomy, some Buddhist monks are revered and depicted as esoteric and infallible fortune-tellers. Some Buddhist monks in the Song and Ming dynasties were literate scholars as well as local elites, or well-connected with local elites.[600] In fact, some

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[596] See Barend ter Haar, *White Lotus Teaching*, 29-43.
[597] See *Jiangning fuzhi*, *juan* 51, 739.
[598] See *Lidai buren zhuan,* 36. This is frequently recorded in Ming and early Qing sources and appears in more than twenty different historiographical and biographic writings. See *Jinxian beiyi*, *juan* 19, 468, *Benchao fensheng renwu kao*, 113, and *Wuxue bian*, 398.
[599] See *Xiguangting zashi*, *juan* 2, 40.
[600] See Jennifer Eichman, *A Late Sixteenth-Century Chinese Buddhist Fellowship*, 25-30. Also Welter's 'Confucian Monks and Buddhist Junzi,' 222-277.

monks themselves were in a highly privileged social milieu for quite a long duration of Chinese history.[601] In the time of Song, Yuan, and Ming, they were deeply involved in political, economic, and ritualistic affairs on both a court level and a local level.[602] In a story from the Ming anecdotal collection *Kuaiyuan* 獪園 called 'The Divine Physiognomists' Techniques in Beijing' (*beijing shenxiang shu* 北京神相數), a member of the gentry elite Zhou Jian 周檢 of Jiangyin visited the Temple of Zhenkong in Beijing with two princes from the court, dressed up in fancy garments, to meet an old monk for divine physiognomy and ask for his advice on their political careers.[603] Here, unlike Persons of the Way and other professional diviners, who as we will see travelled around in order to sell their unique techniques for a living, princes and local elites visited the monk for his technique. Some of the monks were even established in these texts as authorities on physiognomy, which was substantiated in Chen Tuan's case. A very similar relationship occurred between the eminent official-physiognomist Yuan Gong 袁珙 (1335-1410) and a foreign monk during the late Yuan and early Ming period. After the monk met Yuan Gong, he gave Yuan a test of his talent for physiognomy and then passed his technique on to him.[604] Yuan Gong became famous at the time for this technique of physiognomy and served the emperor Zhu Yuanzhang in the Ming as a court physiognomist.

Unlike the social privilege of certain Buddhist monks, the social situation of professional/occupational physiognomists, diviners, and sorcerers who applied more than one technique was quite different. Here, it is necessary to clarify who the professional physiognomists were. Sometimes in the stories, we may see the words '*xiangshi*' (相士),

[601] See E. Zürcher, *The Buddhist Conquest of China* the whole book for the historical development and establishment of the elite monk in early and mediaeval China.
[602] See Timothy Brook, *Praying for Power*, 159-217.
[603] See *Kuaiyuan*, *juan* 3, 583.
[604] See *Ming shi*, *juan* 299, *Yuan Gong zhuan*, 7642. Also see the Ming collection *Shuanghuai suichao*, *juan* 3, 48.

'*xiangzhe*' (相者) or '*xianggong*' (相工) which all literally mean 'physiognomist'. However, the role of '*xiangshi*' was not necessarily congruent with the larger category of 'people who practiced physiognomy', but instead with those who practiced physiognomy as an occupation, many of whom served local elites and literati regularly. For example, the Song physiognomists Su (*Su xiangshi* 蘇相士) in *The Record of the Listener* and Zhu Xiaorong 朱曉容 in *Bozhai pian* can be seen as this kind of 'professional'.[605] Yuan Gong was also more likely to be seen as one of them. Some of them were servant guests or subordinate officials in a high official or general's house.[606]

Beyond these vocational physiognomists, there were persons known as 'those who were good at physiognomy' (*shanxiangzhe* 善相者) or 'extraordinary people' (*yiren* 異人). These figures, along with other diviners and sorcerers, travelled in a recondite manner and seldom revealed their names. Their manner somehow resembled that of the Persons of the Way. In the Song miscellaneous notes collection *Suishou zalu* 隨手雜錄 by Wang Gong 王鞏(1048-?), he recorded a story about an official named Cai Chizheng 蔡持正. When he was having dinner with his friends in a brothel, a 'beautiful young man' (*mei shaonian* 美少年) came down with sumptuous clothes and joined their dinner.[607] During the feast the young man inspected Cai Chizheng and said, '…you will be [as noble as] Li Deyu[608].' and then inspected his friend and said, 'When this gentleman [Cai Chizheng] becomes an eminent official, you will also be renowned because of his fame.' After the feast, the young man left them and no one really knew who he was. Later on his prediction was demonstrated to be true. Cai Chizheng also

[605] See *Yijian zhi*, *geng zhi*, 1141, and *Bozhai pian*, 93.
[606] See the story of Wang Qing in *Sungong tanpu*, 21, and the story of a lower general in *Qingbo zazhi*, 351.
[607] See *Suishou zalu*, 2.
[608] A Prime Minister in late Tang.

received a similar prophecy from a Person of the Way when he was about twenty, and the Person of the Way even predicted when he would die, which was also proven to be true.[609] The name of the Person of the Way was not given and we do not learn where he came from or where he went. We can say that one of the reasons why information is scarce for many of these physiognomists is because they moved around very secretively. They were considered strange and mysterious practitioners who only revealed a limited amount of information to their clients. Nor did these physiognomists build any strong connections with local elites and literati. They existed on the periphery of the social elite's circle and adopted a reclusive lifestyle. Their secretive manner is often intensified by the narrative of these stories as well, as we shall see soon. Stories of physiognomy often depict these figures as mysterious and reserved in providing information to their audiences, and most of the stories I have encountered only record those physiognomists who successfully predicted the future. This means that the precision of predictions by different physiognomists enhanced the 'miraculousness' of these figures.

Another possible reason for the mysterious image of this kind of physiognomist—the mysterious figures—should not be ignored. From the position of practitioners, we can understand why they might have been reluctant to reveal sensitive information concerning who would come into power and rule in the central government. Furthermore, some of these mysterious practitioners even possessed deity-like features, moving and behaving in mysterious ways, and could not be explained with ordinary people's common sense. Alternatively, the literati and scholars who encountered these mysterious practitioners and

[609] See *Lan zhezi*, 75.

recorded the encounters, would mostly not have given these diviners full credibility regarding their predictions in the first place. As we have seen, literati often recognized the accuracy of predictions only after the promised events happened, by which point they had no way of knowing physiognomists' names. The strange way in which they received the predictions would also contribute to the *post-facto* legitimacy of the prediction. A story in *Yijian zhi* entitled 'The Physiognomy of the Poor Man in the Capital City' (*Jingshi pinshi xiang* 京師貧士相) epitomizes both the mystique of the physiognomist and the *ex posteriori* certitude of the person who is inspected:

> Wang Heng with the honorable name Yanchu entered the capital city from Mingzhou for the Provincial Exam. Before the day when the placard was revealed, he stayed in his inn alone. He was about twenty and because he was very poor he did not go out for fun. After a while, a poor man bowed to him respectfully, and Wang thought he was a beggar, so he took a glance and did not look back. Suddenly the man asked a question: 'Is the Flourishing Talent waiting for the placard [to be released]?' Wang said, 'Yes. Are you good at physiognomy? Will I succeed in this round?' The man said, 'If you can come and have a drink with me, I will definitely tell you.' Wang said, 'I am lacking money for travelling and I have no cash for a drink in my pocket.' The man threw out hundreds of strings of cash from his sleeve and said, 'We can use these and it will be enough.' Wang was rather surprised. Then Wang followed him and they proceeded to the restaurant. After several toasts, they stopped. Wang bowed to the man again with respect and said, 'Tomorrow the Public Announcement will be made, and I sincerely hope you can resolve my success and failure.' The man said, 'The Announcement will be made the day after tomorrow, not tomorrow.' Wang said, 'I just happened to see the Official of the Edict Announcement enter the Examination Hall to unseal the scroll. How could it be delayed for two days?' The man said, 'I just know it will be like this. Unexpectedly, the Flourishing Talent will not succeed this time. You will when you are fifty-eight.' Wang said, 'If it is as you said, the path ahead will not be broad and long [for me].' He said, 'But there are some good aspects. Soon after the exam, you will be appointed to a post in an office in the capital city. Within three years you will be unconventionally promoted to Minister Inspector, with a successive favor [because of his nobility] as Command Governor and Regional Inspector. Your age will reach into the eighties.' Wang did not look very happy. He left the man and went away. After a while, he encountered the Servant of the National University passing the gate, and he asked him about the Public Announcement. The Servant said, 'There are mistakes in the collection of the scrolls, and it was postponed for another day.' Wang was startled. In the end, he did not succeed. He looked for the man and tried to visit him but there was no one who knew him. The subsequent events were all as he predicted. Wang

gained fame in the Jichou year of Daguan [1109] and was appointed as the Official of Public Transportation of the Jingxi region in the first year of Jianyan [1127]. In the Jia volume of my book, there was a record of the poem he dreamt about.

王珩彥楚，自明州入京師赴省試。揭榜前一日，獨在邸捨，時年方二十，以貧甚，不出遊。俄有貧士前搖，謂為丐者，略不顧視。士忽發問曰：秀才待榜乎？ 王曰：然。君豈善相人耶？珩今舉可得否？士曰：秀才能從吾飲，當言之。王曰：我正乏旅費，囊無酒資。士傾袖中錢數百，曰：用此足矣。王頗異焉。即相與詣旗亭，酌數杯罷，復叩之曰：明日榜出，幸為決得失。士曰：後日方榜出，明日未也。王曰：恰已見宜押台官入貢院拆封，何由留連信宿？士曰：我但知如是耳。秀才猝未登第，直到五十八歲乃可。王曰：倘如所言，前程當不能遠大。曰：卻有些好處，才了當便任京局，不三年超遷卿監，連典大郡作監司，壽登八十。王意色不懌，捨之去。頃之，遇太學齋僕過門，問以放榜事。僕曰：奏諫錯誤，展作後日。王始驚嘆。已而不第。尋訪貧士，更無識之者。後悉如其說。王以大觀己醜成名，建炎初為京西轉運使。甲志嘗載其夢中詩雲。[610]

Zhang Mingxi believes that these mysterious practitioners were constrained in their manners because they wished to protect and preserve their technique.[611] Such a contrived image influenced the way in which people perceived these mysterious practitioners, regarding them as 'miraculous' or 'extraordinary'. But perhaps it was in fact related to fortune-tellers' wish to maintain their pure and esoteric technique as something exclusive and effective. The technique was preserved as it was passed on to those with the best aptitude. Moreover, because many of physiognomists, no matter if they were *xiangshi* professionals or mysterious practitioners, still treated physiognomy as a business, it is understandable that the transmission of this profitable technique should be fully under their control. An external factor that forced physiognomists to maintain a low-profile image might have been the ambiguous social circumstances of techniques like physiognomy, ambiguous in the sense that curiosity and demand for physiognomy existed, but also because there were doubts, objections, and even legal restrictions concerning its public practice, of which the restrictive policies of the

[610] See *Yijian zhi*, *ji zhi*, 1310.
[611] See Zhang Mingxi, *Shenmi de mingyun mima*, 71-74.

central government regarding divination and magical practice were representative. The Ming courts held a vigilant and ambiguous attitude towards fortune-telling techniques, which was manifested in their regulation of diviners and their techniques, even though some emperors themselves were infatuated with fortune-telling.[612] Threatened by the potential for political instability, discretion was better than recklessness for physiognomists.

Some literati and officials themselves were capable of physiognomy as well. The mysterious and elusive nature of physiognomy transgressed different social spheres and boundaries, just like what we saw in Li Fengjun's story. That is to say, the technique was practiced by the officials and literati, or in other words, the 'refined personages', and did not differ fundamentally from so-called lay practice. Furthermore, although certain scholars and literati were known at this time as adept physiognomists, we have to keep in mind that this does not indicate the homogeneity of this group. Some of them were scholars who were bestowed with the technique from various practitioners when they were young students and continued to be officials and physiognomists simultaneously. The official-physiognomist Li Fengjun mentioned at the beginning of this chapter can be seen as one of these. Others were first famous for their physiognomy and then granted a post in government after their reputation ascended to the court. Yuan Gong is certainly a representative case. There were also educated students who, after failure in the Imperial Examinations or because of other reasons, became physiognomists. Fu Jue 傅珏, recorded in *Tingshi* 桯史 of the late Song to early Yuan, is a good example.[613] He was from a prominent and wealthy local elite family, but he did not

612 See Shao Hong, 'Shenquan longduan de beilun,' 132-138, and Yang Qiqiao, *Mingqing huangshi yu fangshu*, 9-27.
613 See *Tingshi*, 329.

make much effort in studying for the Imperial Examinations and throughout his political career stayed in a menial governmental post. But he was good at physiognomy, and he claimed that he spontaneously acquired this technique without knowing why (*zide yu xin, buneng jie ye* 自得于心，不能解也). When he was passing by the feast to celebrate Wang Yi's 王沂 (?-1362) success in the prefectural examination, he inspected Wang Yi and ascertained that he would be a prime minister in the future. No one believed him but Wang Yi himself. Fu offered Wang Yi some cash and determined to make friend with him. Therefore Wang Yi and his brothers, out of their belief in his prophecy and their gratitude, served Fu throughout his entire life. Later on, Wang Yi indeed became a prime minister in the Yuan court.

Beyond the three types of official and literati physiognomists, there were figures that cannot be defined easily. The most famous one is Chen Tuan. His life story spread widely in the early Song from the high court to the local gentry. He was also an alleged author of many later Ming physiognomy manuals. There was even a Yuan play called 'Chen Tuan Lying in a High Position' (*Chen Tuan gaowo* 陳摶高臥), extolling his exploits in helping the Taizu emperor of the Song dynasty, Zhao Kuangyin, to establish his regime.[614] Livia Kohn insists that Chen Tuan was a Daoist master.[615] Because of his experience in Daoist Inner Alchemy at an early age, he was usually seen as a Daoist figure. However, Liao Hsien-huei points out that the multi-faceted nature of Chen Tuan's background makes him a complex figure.[616] Liao's study shows that with his high accomplishments in literature and poetry, immense knowledge of bodily techniques and the Confucian canon, and his efficacious physiognomy, Chen Tuan gained

[614] See *Chentuan gaowo* in the collection of *Riben cang Yuanke gujin zaju sanshi zhong*.
[615] See Livia Kohn, 'Chen Tuan on physiognomy'.
[616] See Liao Hsien-huei, 'Kōdō no teikan,' 81-104.

huge favor and even worship at the Song court. In the 'Biographies of the Recluses' in *History of the Song*, Chen Tuan is described as a natural genius with spectacular memory and intelligence, but a failure at the Imperial Examinations.[617] He later shifted his interest to Inner Alchemy and retreated into the caves of Mount Wudang and Mount Hua. In the *History of the Song* Chen Tuan is only referred to as 'a man outside convention' (*fangwai zhiren* 方外之人), but never a Daoist priest (*daoshi* 道士). In the biography of Chen Tuan compiled in the Yuan dynasty, *Taihua xiyi zhi* 太華希夷志, he is more often referred to and self-addressed as a 'recluse' (*yinshi* 隱士) rather than a Daoist.[618] Thus Chen Tuan was not necessarily a Daoist figure, at least not in the eyes of his contemporaries. In the collection of miscellaneous notes *Dongxuan bilu* 東軒筆錄, there are two stories of Chen Tuan's physiognomy indicating his close relationship with the contemporary high elites.[619] In the following discussion of the practice of physiognomy, we will take a close look at some of the special aspects of Chen Tuan's technique.

As Liao suggests, in the Song dynasty divination was suffused with different kinds of religious elements and popular beliefs, yet divination itself, in the perception of outsiders, seemed to be an autonomous skill rather than a technique attached to any religious practice or teachings.[620] In other words, physiognomy was more 'technical' than 'religious'. The same can be said about divination in the Yuan and Ming as well. We should also remember, as Durkheim says, that '[a] church of magic does not exist'[621]. The relationships within the clientele of physiognomists and between different physiognomists were not in this sense religious. Being

[617] See *Songshi*, *Yinyi liezhuan*, *juan* 457, 13420.
[618] See *Taihua xiyi zhi*, *juan shang*, 15.
[619] See *Dongxuan bilu*, *juan* 1, 2, 7-8.
[620] See Liao Hsien-huei, 'Exploring weal and woe,' 347-395.
[621] See Émile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, 43.

involved in the business, or more precisely, the profession of physiognomy did not mean that they formed or stayed in an integrated and closed community. The stories of physiognomists in this period show an amalgamation of various strands of the profession and openness of the technique to people from different social as well as religious arenas. Interestingly, we find a similar situation for fortune-tellers in France in the 19th century.[622] Despite government suppression, the prevalence of rationalism, and a scientific culture, fortune-tellers in post-Revolutionary France remained active, and diverse in their backgrounds. Thus we can assume that in a complex, multi-layered, large-scale, and highly mobile society, the practices of fortune-telling and magic may follow a very different dynamic from those in a small-scale tribal society. Many anthropological investigations of divination in small-scale tribal societies show that divinatory knowledge and techniques are often confined to an exclusive blood lineage or community.[623] Following Edward Davis' argument in his study of spirit possession in Song China, the identity of physiognomists can be called a 'technological convergence' in which different figures were interwoven together simply because they practiced this technique.[624] That is to say, the practice of physiognomy did not necessarily create a unified social role for its performers. They simply 'converged' on a technique. This also means that the people who practiced the technique did not necessarily perform the same version of it on the same level. In our investigation of the practice of physiognomy, and its relationship with the

[622] See David Harvey, 'Fortune tellers in the French court,' 131-157.

[623] The inheritance of divination-like witchcraft in Azande in Africa certainly pertains to this kind of classical anthropological mode, see E. E. Evans-Pritchard, *Witchcraft, Oracles, and Magic among the Azande*, 2-17. Victor Turner also studied African divination in tribe-based society where divination was limited to a specific community of diviners, see *Revelation and Divination in Ndembu Ritual*, 243-330. For a recent example of divination in a small-scale tribal society, also see David Anderson, 'Diviners, seers and spirits in eastern Africa,' 293-298.

[624] See Edward Davis, *Society and the Supernatural in Song China*, 13.

theory of physiognomy, we will see how different techniques, different preferences, and personal developments within this technique converged.

Physiognomy in and beyond Theory

The whole picture of physiognomy was not simply what is represented in the manuals. Like many other forms of technical knowledge, there was a gap between its textual and theoretical representation and its perceived social performance in social life. This difference between textual theory and social practice may be ascribed to both the social milieu of a technique and the nature of the technique itself. The changing social environment of physiognomy and a strong esoteric tradition of the technique made it inevitable that the theoretical sources only a partial reflection of physiognomy as a living social practice, and the same goes with stories of its practice. Some practitioners belonged to a relatively esoteric tradition, but at the same time, the technique itself was not confined in a single community. These social variations of physiognomy indicate that physiognomy cannot be fully represented in the widely circulated manuals. However, we should not presume that the Ming manuals reflect nothing whatsoever of the practical aspects of physiognomy. There is also accordance between the manuals and the stories of practice. This means that the manuals are not entirely detached from the sphere of social practice, although the reality of past practice is limited in its textual representation. Therefore, from the stories of physiognomic practice and the manuals of physiognomy theories, we receive different images of Chinese physiognomy, and these images have a number of shared elements while differing in other aspects. We will explore in detail the

connection between physiognomy and other divinatory techniques, dissonances within the practice of physiognomy represented in the manuals, and the social perception of physiognomy, focusing here on the social dimension of physiognomic practice. These two types of texts, the Ming physiognomy manuals and stories of the practice of physiognomy certainly do not fully exhibit the reality of physiognomy in the past, but only two types of textual representations of this technique. Yet we still cannot ignore the multi-faceted relationship between these two types of texts, since similarities and differences between the Ming manuals and stories of physiognomy practice shows that the theorizations and social perception of a technique are interrelated but not the same.

Physiognomy and Other Techniques

We have seen in Chapter II the bodily qi is seen as an important subject of physiognomic inspections. Qi was also recorded by witnesses of physiognomy from Song to Ming as a significant evidence of fortune. A physiognomist known as 'Geng the Sound Listener' (Geng Tingsheng 耿聽聲) in the Southern Song dynasty is depicted as an unconventional physiognomist.[625] He could predict a person's fortune by listening to their voice, the sound of an object in their possession, or by smelling them. He usually attributed his successful predictions to the particular qualities of the qi of the subject of his examination, be it a person or an object. In the story of famous Yuan physiognomist Li Guoyong 李國用, it is explicitly stated that this man from the north of China was good at telling fortunes by the 'Inspection of Qi' and human physiognomy.[626] Such a connection between the Inspection of Qi and human

[625] See *Qidong yeyu*, *juan* 15, 281.
[626] See *Chuogeng lu*, *juan* 4, 69.

physiognomy was not something that came into being around the time of the Song as we have seen in Chapter I. This technique had already appeared in early China as a foundation for many other inspection techniques, including military prognostication and geomancy.[627] Chen Pan has argued that after the fall of the Han dynasty, the technique of the Inspection of the Qi, previously monopolized by the court as a part of the calendar-making process, started to infiltrate a broader arena of divinatory practice.[628] From the late Ming scholar Qian Qianyi's 錢謙益 (1582-1664) discussion of his own acquisition of this skill, it appears that the Inspection of Qi still survived as an independent technique at that time and Qian believed that this technique had existed long before the Ming.[629]

As a common ground for many other techniques, including human physiognomy, and as a technique that deals with the most important and ubiquitous substance in traditional Chinese cosmology, the Inspection of Qi certainly provided physiognomists with a more refined skill to tell people's fortunes. Early in the Liang dynasty, the physiognomist Wei Ding 韋鼎, knowing that the young man Chen Baxian 陳霸先 (503-559) had arrived in Southern Xuzhou by inspecting the qi of the place, predicted that Chen would become emperor.[630] In this way, in possession of the technique of seeing and analyzing qi, physiognomists could tell a person's fortune without meeting that person face to face. This is something the Ming manuals hardly mention. Moreover, the fortune of a place could be revealed by the collective attributes of the qi of its residents. The Southern Song physiognomist Miao Yingfang 妙應方, by examining the qi of the people in Weiyang, asserted that soon soldiers from Jin would

[627] See Rong Zhaozu, 'Zhanbu de liuyuan,' 47-88. Also see Chen Pan, 'Yingchao Dunhuang xieben zhan yunqi shu canjuan jieti,' 1-27.
[628] See Chen Pan, *ibid*.
[629] See *Youxue ji*, *juan* 20, 1569.
[630] See *Suishu*, *juan* 78, 1770.

slaughter the people in the city, and later, his prediction was proven correct.[631] Another story also shows how the qi of individuals was connected to the fortune of a place. The physiognomist Li Xinqing 李信卿 of the early Yuan period, who was also a master of the Inspection of Qi, was asked to predict the result of Kublai Khan's attack on Xiangyang city before the battle started. Li told the Khan that he saw that the 'qi of wealth' was with the soldiers; how could it be possible that all the soldiers had the qi of wealth if the attack on the wealthy city was not successful? His prediction was proven to be true in the end.[632]

Stories also show how physiognomists examined the qi of the human body to make predictions. A local official in the Northern Song summoned a physiognomist and asked him to point out who among the maids was his wife. The physiognomist said, '…her ladyship certainly has the yellow qi over her head.' All the maids stole a glance at each other, and the physiognomist pointed out the wife who was pretending to be a maid.[633] In this story, the physiognomist claimed that he could see the different colors of qi around different people's bodies. Despite the fact there are many records about physiognomists who could see the qi of a person, seldom do we see—in the stories or the manuals—how this ability was achieved. This may be for two reasons: first, the inspection of qi was already regarded as a well-accepted form of knowledge to practitioners of physiognomy, and therefore did not require any textual presence; and second, it was considered to be a highly specialized art and one that must have been preserved in a secretive manner. What was common knowledge to one circle may have been unknown to others. That said, we may find some clues as to how this inspection skill

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631 Unfortunately the only available version of this story is in the Qing gazetteer of Yangzhou, see *Yangzhou fuzhi*, *juan* 10, 412.
632 See *Suichang zalu*, 38.
633 See *Jiang linji zazhi*, 16.

could be achieved by looking at scholars' and doctors' discussions of bodily qi and meditative practices written during the Song, Yuan, and Ming dynasties.

The Northern Song official and Neo-Confucian scholar Lü Xizhe 呂希哲 (1036-1114) believed that the cultivation of a person's qi could lead to the capacity to see qi, allowing someone to visualize another person's fortune by examining the way in which it was reflected in their qi:

> Those junior students who just start their study should be able to fathom the signs of qi. When the status of qi is refined, hundreds of things [in their life] will be smooth and appropriate. With the status of qi a person's eloquence, demeanor, seriousness and frivolity, irascibility and calmness can be seen. Not only are gentlemen and villains distinguished by this, but also [a person's] nobility and baseness, longevity and death are determined by it.
> 後生初學且須理會氣象，氣象好時百事順當。氣象者，辭令容止輕重疾徐，足以見之矣。不唯君子小人於此分焉，亦貴賤夭壽之所由定矣。[634]

Scholars point out that this new respect for the Neo-Confucian practice in the early Song dynasty emphasized not only the ethical but also the physiological aspect of self-cultivation.[635] Both Zhang Rongming and Chen Lisheng note that the pursuit of a visual breakthrough is often realized through meditative practices in the Ming Neo-Confucian context.[636] The visual breakthrough, in this particular context, can be understood as the sensitivity of a person's eyes to qi and subtle colors reflected on a person's body. Zhang Rongming argues that this visuality is key for us to understand the visibility of qi and the bodily energy channels not only in a Neo-Confucian context but from a more technical viewpoint. Both Yang Rubin and Charles Wei-hsun Fu propose that many of the meditative practices that the late Song and Ming Neo-

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[634] See *Songyuan xuean*, *juan* 23, 904.
[635] See Huang Jinxing, 'Lixue jia de daode guan,' 283-311, and Mary E. Tucker, 'Religious dimensions of Confucianism,' 5-45.
[636] See Zhang Rongming, *Cong laozhuang zhexue zhi wanqing fangshu*, 131-156, and Chen Lisheng, 'Jingzuo zai rujia xiushen xue zhong de yiyi,' 1-12.

Confucian scholars applied contained technical aspects related to the Buddhist, Daoist, and popular body cultivation methods.[637] It is emphasized that of the different Buddhist influences on Neo-Confucianism, the meditative practice of 'Quiet Sitting' (*jingzuo* 靜坐) was the most profound.[638] Yang also mentions that the practice of Quiet Sitting adopted many qi cultivation skills (*qigong* 氣功) in order to observe the immanent qualities of the practitioner's qi. After a certain amount of time doing Quiet Sitting, one would gain a particular kind of visual breakthrough with which one can visualize the qi inside a person's body, as many qi cultivation skill texts claim so.

In the story of the Yuan physiognomist Li Guoyong mentioned above, how he acquired his technique is also specifically described. Before he became a physiognomist, he served in the army. He encountered a celestial being (*shenxian* 神仙) and the celestial being bestowed upon him the 'Method of Inspecting the Sun' (*guanri zhifa* 觀日之法). Then his eyesight became clairvoyant and he could directly see people's viscera. This was how he learnt physiognomy and the Inspection of Qi. The story does not go into detail about what exactly the Method to Inspect the Sun was or who the celestial being was. Yet the name reminds us of the initiation ceremony that both Li Fengjun and Yuan Gong underwent when they were bestowed with the physiognomic technique, which involved looking at the sun for a while and then distinguishing a bundle of threads in five different colors. In addition, this clairvoyant sight echoes other techniques presented in medical and qi cultivation practices. Li Shizhen 李時珍 (1518-1593), the well-known Ming physician and herbalist, also mentioned in his medical book

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[637] See Yang Runbin, 'Lun guan xinu aile weifa qian qixiang,' 33-74, and Charles Wei-hsun Fu, 'Morality or beyond,' 375-396. Rodney Taylor also mentions how Buddhist cultivation is adapted and assimilated into Neo-Confucian praxis, see *The Religious Dimensions of Confucianism*, 77-91

[638] See Ari Borrell, 'Ko-wu or Kung-an? ,' 62-96.

The Investigation of the Extraordinary Vessels and Eight Channels (*Qijing bamai kao* 奇經八脈考) that:

> Only those who can 'Observe in Introspection' can see lucidly the Interior Landscape and the Tunnels and Vessels.
> 內景隧道，惟返觀者能照察之。[639]

Here he used two distinctive terms belonging to both medical and religious traditions, including Inner Alchemy cultivation.[640] The first one is *neijing* 內景, 'the Interior Landscape', also written as 內境, the Inner Realm, which is often seen in qi cultivation texts and Daoist bodily practice manuals.[641] An early annotation of the Daoist as well as medical text the *Scripture of the Inner Realm of the Yellow Hall* (*Huangting neijing jing* 黃庭內景經) already contains the idea that once a person's qi is settled, he or she would be able to see both celestial beings and ghosts, and at the same time, this person's own inner organs and channels.[642] This refers to the microcosmic view of the inner body, understanding the inner body as a cosmos and an anatomical realm at the same time.[643] Li Shizhen then pointed out that those who can 'Observe in Introspection' (*fanguan* 返觀) can see through a person's body and observe the inner appearance beneath the skin. What Li Shizhen is trying to express here is that only those who possess the ability of Observation of Retrospection can see the inner body of a human being. The Daoist Inner Alchemy technique Inner Inspection (*neiguan* 內觀) shares a similar attitude, emphasizing the clairvoyant sight of the practitioner.[644] This Observation in

[639] See *Qijing bamai kao*, 82.
[640] See one of the most famous texts on the illustration of *neijing*: *Taishang huangting neijing jing*. Also see the '*neijing*' item in *Zhonghua daojiao da cidian*, 1224.
[641] See Cheng Lesong, 'Cunsi de neijing', 141-176.
[642] See the preface of *Huangting neijing yujing zhu*, *juan* 1, 4.
[643] See Shih-shan Susan Huang, *Picturing the True Form*, 67-85.
[644] See Fabrizio Pregadio, *The Encyclopaedia of Taoism* 2, 766.

Introspection is regarded as one of the capacities of qi cultivation practitioners and is related to the development of medical practice in China.[645] This term also appears in Chinese Song Buddhist texts as one of the achievements of Buddhist cultivation, referring to an epiphanic moment in meditation when one is able to envision a person's own viscera.[646] After a certain amount of meditation and breath control, a Buddhist monk should be able to see the internal constitution of his body and that of others.[647]

It is hard to know with any certainty what the relationships between human physiognomy, the qi-related techniques, and medical and meditative practices were from the extant texts alone. However, pulse physiognomy provides us with strong evidence that the medical knowledge of the time was well integrated with physiognomy. Here we shall have a brief look at one of the famous pulse physiognomists in the Song. A Buddhist monk and physician Zhiyuan 智緣 of the Northern Song period was known for his prodigious skill of telling fortunes by testing pulses. He could also tell the fortunes of a son by inspecting the pulse of the father.[648] Zhiyuan also had a very close relationship with both the Song court and Tibetan elite monks simultaneously, being involved in many political events on the border between the Song and Tibet.[649] Both Wang Gui 王珪 and Wang Anshi 王安石 (1021-1086), two court officials and close friends of Zhiyuan, were amazed by his pulse physiognomy. Wang Gui considered this to be a relatively new practice, whereas Wang Anshi thought that it would not be surprising at all if archaic physicians had already possessed this skill because a seemingly

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645 See Zhang Chengyi, 'Dui gudai qigong shi yanjiu zhongde yixie wenti de yijian,' 24-29.
646 See *Fahua sanmei chanyi*, 950-955, and also see Wang Leiquan, 'Tiantai zhiguan xueshuo shuping,' 95-111, and Wang Yueqing, *Zhongguo fojiao lunli sixiang*, 204.
647 See Alan Sponberg, 'Meditation in Fa-hsiang Buddhism,' 30-36.
648 See *Songshi*, *juan* 462, 13524, and *Qingbo zazhi*, *juan* 11, 350.
649 See Zhu Lixia, 'Zhiyuan jiqi yu beisong xihe diqu hanzang guangxi,' 51-57.

similar method of physiognomy could be found in many historical records.[650] Tang Jinzhong argues that although the name of this technique appeared in the Song period, the same type of knowledge is already found in the *Inner Canon*.[651] He also finds that in traditional Tibetan pulse diagnosis after the tenth century, a similar fortune-telling skill also exists. According to the Republican Chinese scholar Dong Zhiren, it is possible that at least in the early Sui dynasty, pulse physiognomy was established as an autonomous fortune-telling technique.[652]

Pulse diagnosis was not the only conspicuous medical element in Song and Ming physiognomy. The categorization of the shape and morphology (*xing*) of the human body according to the Five Phases, which first emerges in the *Inner Canon*, is seen in physiognomic predictions as well, as we have seen in Chapter II. A story in the Northern Song miscellaneous notes collection *Mingdao zazhi* 明道雜志 by Zhang Lei 張耒 (1054-1114) shows how such a kind of prediction was conducted:

> When the Academician Jiang Lingji was (serving) in the Royal Library, many lords wanted the acquaintance because of his fame at that time. But when Jiang [became] poor and unsuccessful, he only stayed friends with the previous Prime Minister Wu Zhengxian. Once, there was a Buddhist monk who was good at physiognomy and medicine. He visited the families of Jiang and Wu. Very soon, Jiang was summoned to compile the emperor's daily journal, and Wu was thrilled about this. One day Wu asked the monk, 'Is the news of my honored student Jiang compiling the emperor's journal worth celebrating?' The monk looked grievous and said, 'About this matter nothing is known yet.' Wu asked him for the reason, and the monk said, 'Your student Jiang is in the shape of the Metal phase, and theoretically speaking he will be eminent. But still he has been retained (in this base post), and I could not figure out why until now.' Wu said, 'Why?' The monk said, 'It is not good metal but lead. On the day when he goes for the compilation he will stand beside the emperor. Our dynasty is designated with the virtue of Fire. If lead is next to fire, how could it remain for long?' Wu was not convinced by it. Around one hundred days later, Jiang got a lung disease and died.

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650 See *Songshi*, *juan* 462, 13524.

651 See Tang Jinzhong, 'Zhongzang yimai zhen bijiao yanjiu,' 87-109. The *Yellow Canon* is traditionally believed to be composed during the Western Han dynasty but the earliest version extant is a Song version.

652 See Dong Zhiren. 'Taisu mai kao,' 3-11.

江鄰幾學士在館閣，有時名，諸公多欲引之，而鄰幾流落不偶，與故相吳正憲相善，時有一僧能相人，且善醫，游江、吳二家。無幾，江被召修起居注，吳相甚喜，一日謂僧曰：江舍人修注，殊可賀也。僧愀然曰：事未可知。吳詰其故，僧曰：江舍人金形人，於法當貴，而留滯至今，久不解其故，近方能了耳。吳曰：何也？僧曰：非佳金，鉛金耳。修注當日在君側，本朝火德，鉛在火側，安能久也？吳亦未以為信。後百餘日，江得肺疾不起。[653]

Not only was Jiang's fate manifested in the physiological features of his body, but it was also related to the phase of the whole dynasty. In this sense, the individual's life was strongly influenced by the cosmological power lying in the whole society, and the emperor's body epitomized this. The cosmological practice of designating the virtues of Five Phases to different dynasties is first mentioned in a chapter of the *Shangsu* —the historical record of the Spring and Autumn period—called the 'Grand Rules' (*Hongfan* 洪範), and was later systematized in the Western Han dynasty.[654] With regard to medical aspects, Zhu Pingyi's research has shown that certain items of qi inspection in the Ming physiognomy manuals tallies precisely with the medical descriptions of the categories of the human body attributed to the Five Phases in the *Inner Canon*.[655] Yet in the prediction we see above, what is not mentioned in the *Inner Canon* is the more detailed categorization of the human body in terms of the Five Phases. Not only did the monk discern which phase Jiang belonged to, but also within the phase Metal, which particular kind of metal he was. This allowed the monk to provide a crucial differentiation within the overall categorization to explain this particular individual's case. The phase of the state and the phase of an individual were linked together and influenced each other in a complex way in this story. In the practice of physiognomy, the cosmic virtue of the state, and the medical as well as cosmological conceptualization of the human body, here determined a

[653] See *Mingdao zazhi*, 263.
[654] See Aihe Wang, *Cosmology and Political Culture in Early China*, 75-128. See *Shangshu*, *juan* 27, 126. This system was further developed during the Eastern Han dynasty, see Tiziana Lippiello, *Auspicious Omens and Miracles in Ancient China*, 40-51.
[655] See Zhu Pingyi, *Handai de xiangren shu*, 66-67.

person's fortune together. Moreover, an individual's fortune was treated in relation to the whole society, although this may have had to do more with his high status.

Buddhist techniques were believed to be able to change a person's physical appearance and fortune and therefore overturn a physiognomist's 'accurate prediction' in some texts. Some of the Buddhist rituals and ways of praying are recorded as efficacious techniques on changing people's physical appearances and fortune. Already in the Tang period, many stories show that reading and praying with Buddhist scriptures, or simply becoming a monk, could change a physiognomist's prediction of bad fortune[656]. A particular Song story in the Song Buddhist anthology of miraculous events called '*Notes on the Miraculous Resonance of Kṣitigarbha's Figure*' (*Dizang pusa xiang lingyan ganying ji* 地藏菩薩像靈驗感應記) shows how the power of Kṣitigarbha Bodhisattva, a Buddhist deity of saving ghosts and demons, changed the inauspicious appearance of a young boy and thus overturned his bad fortune:

> The Monk Shi Huiwen in the Temple of Kaibao of the Song dynasty had a young boy [as his acolyte]. His name was unknown, and he was fourteen. A physiognomist called Jianzhen saw the boy and said, 'This boy has the shortest life. There is only one month left for him.' The Monk heard what the physiognomist said, and asked the boy to go back home. [On his way home] heavy rain poured down, and transport was blocked. Thus he stayed with a painter. He saw a portrait of Kṣitigarbha Bodhisattva, and using his own fingernails, drew on the wall [the figure of the Bodhisattva] according to the portrait. After the rain stopped and the sun came out, he returned home. Several months later, he visited Kaibao temple again. Huiwen was thrilled and said that the physiognomist Jianzhan's prediction was spurious. He then summoned Jianzhen to inspect the boy. [Jianzhen said,] 'This child's life has been prolonged for fifty years. I genuinely don't know the reason.' The boy said, 'I drew the portrait of Kṣitigarbha Bodhisattva. At night there was a monk who lay down with me and told me, 'You, fifty! You, fifty!' He said it again and again. Apart from that, I did not receive any philanthropic acts. The master Huiwen approached the physiognomist and exclaimed, 'The power of the divine is unthinkable!' Later on, the boy became a real monk and followed Buddhist doctrine. He was known as Master Huizang.

[656] See the story of Yan fashi in *Chisong jingang jing lingyan gongde ji*, 156 and the physiognomist's prediction in Liu Hun Zhuan in *Xin tangshu*, *juan* 144, 4671.

> 大宋開寶寺釋惠溫，有童子，不知姓名，歲十四。相者健真。見彼童子曰：此子，壽命最短。所殘命只一月而已。師聞健真之說。放童子還親家。時大雨降，往還不通，投宿畫師屋。見圖地藏菩薩像，自以爪甲，學彼畫圖書壁上。天晴雨盡還家。月餘之後，復到開寶寺。惠溫歡喜，謂健真所說空。即召真，令見童子：此兒延命。將五十季。實不識所由。童子自語：吾以爪甲畫地藏像。其夜有僧，交臥言談：汝五十五十。如此再三唱。除此外，無餘修善事。師及相者嘆曰：聖力不思議。後童子出家具戒，惠藏法師是也矣。[657]

This story shows how the power of Buddhist deities were believed to be able to penetrate normal human's lives and change what was destined to happen. This is something we already see in early Chinese Buddhist beliefs that Buddhist deities were able to change people's fortune and bodily appearance after supplicants' dedicated practices of Buddhist rituals, and stories in the Tang also show same belief.[658] Although the story does not elaborate on the complete set of principles according to which the destiny of the boy was changed, we can see from the physiognomist's reaction that his physiology must have been very different from before. A similar story also show that a benevolent offer of help may also totally change a person's fate and physical look. The story about a merchant running a business in Hangzhou during the late Yuan dynasty shows how such an alteration could be achieved.[659] The merchant was told by a physiognomist in Hangzhou, known as 'Ghost Eye' (*guiyan* 鬼眼), that he would die around the next Mid-Autumn Festival. The merchant then decided to go back home to wait for his death. On his way back, he encountered a pregnant woman who was about to commit suicide because she had lost all her money because of a failure in family business. The merchant helped her by giving her some cash. Then he went back home and safely survived Mid-Autumn. He felt strange and went back to Hangzhou, where he met the woman he saved

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[657] See *Dizang pusa xiang lingyan ji*, *juan* 1, 593.
[658] See Robert Campany, *Signs from the Unseen Realm*, 186-188. Also see *Fahua lingyan zhuan* 法華靈驗傳, 11 for a Tang dynasty story with very similar content and theme.
[659] See *Chuogenglu*, *juan* 12, 188.

again. The woman told him that thanks to him she had given birth to a healthy boy, and she would always remember the merchant's help. When the merchant passed by where Ghost Eye lived, Ghost Eye saw him and said that he must have saved two lives, and because of this, his fate had been changed.

Such are the beliefs represented in these stories in which a person's predestined life path could be changed. These materials suggest that to some physiognomists, their predictions were not inconvertible or inexorably true, but open to different techniques, influences and possibilities. Yet that is not to say that physiognomists only provided people with an evaluation of possibilities for the future. The powers that could interfere with a person's fate were believed to be uncommon or not easy to attain as is illustrated by the previous examples, and as we have seen this is the same with what the manuals say about changing fortune and the body. A physiognomist's prediction of what was going to happen in the future in his eyes was definite. If it were not, they would have predicted the change in a person's fate before it occurred. Yet they were still able to recognize certain changes in the course of a person's fate that had been caused by some unknown influence. In this way, we may better see the body as a 'horizon of inspection', which defines what a physiognomist could and could not see. This horizon of inspection consists of the visible and invisible accumulative factors that can determine a person's fate. In other words, despite the fact that physiognomists were capable of knowing a person's fate as manifested on their body, there was a limit. What they could see was above the horizon and was clearly displayed to them; what they could not see was beneath the horizon and remained hidden. Until the consequences of the invisible influence rose above the horizon, physiognomists could not tell whether the person's fortune had been changed or

not. Yet seldom would they admit to such a limit to their technique. Thus the link between physiognomy and other religious practices that could change a person's fate was probably not willingly accepted or acknowledged by most of the physiognomists.

Therefore, physiognomy here is related to many different forms of techniques and knowledge. The interrelations between physiognomy and other techniques not only put physiognomy into a broader social picture but also suggest that what is known as 'physiognomy' is something pluralistic and inclusive, or at least perceived as such. In this broad picture of physiognomy, we can find the clue for the performative elements that are not mentioned in the manuals, as well as those that tally with the manuals. These interrelations also tell us in return where the limits or boundaries of physiognomy were, and to what extent some phenomena remained within the exclusive 'physiognomic sphere' while some others transcend this sphere. In conclusion, the relationship between physiognomy and other religious, divinatory or medical techniques, not only reflects what physiognomy can do but also what it cannot.

The Technicality of Physiognomy in Historical Records

Apart from the interrelations between physiognomy and other techniques, the technicality of physiognomy itself is also adumbrated in the stories of physiognomists. I borrow the word 'technicality' from the heuristic perspective of Theodore Porter in his analysis of the technicality of science to refer to the specialized knowledge and skill confined to physiognomists in our historical records.[660] According to him, the word 'technicality' refers to

[660] See Theodore Porter, 'How science became technical,' 292-309.

the attribute that is professional, not generalizable and possibly even secretive, pertaining to a form of practical knowledge or methods to do things. In this sense, although almost all types of techniques extant in human society are to some extent social techniques, which means they are naturally embedded in social relations of human beings and open to social perceptions, some of them are 'anti-social'. They refuse the popularization or even social interpretations of their knowledge. In other words, these types of knowledge concentrate more on how to do things than the meaning of things.

Not only do we need to pay our attention to the technicality of physiognomy in the records of how physiognomy was practiced in Chinese society, but we also need to see it as something different from the technique resented in the Ming manuals. These two different types of texts, stories and manuals, are partial representations of physiognomy in the past and neither of them should be seen as the absolute 'true' reality of physiognomy. Yet the connections between the content of these two types of texts do reflect the clues of the technicality of physiognomy. Because of the esoteric and technical nature of physiognomy, the distance between the theories of physiognomy and the practice of it may be part of its very technicality, although we can only postulate the practice of physiognomy based on the limited number of stories. Hence, the technical elements that we can find in the historical records are far from some trivial 'footnote' to physiognomy manuals, but actually providing us with the scenes that the manuals cannot and should not provide. A Song physiognomist the Old Man Yu (*Yuweng* 俞翁) clearly stated that physiognomy manuals written by him were far away from his actual technique.[661] Another story of the Ming physiognomist Chen Qing 陳清 also suggests that there were

[661] See *Yijian zhi*, *jia zhi*, *juan* 9, 76.

normally two ways of the transmission of physiognomic knowledge, manuals and esoteric 'knack' verses (*mijue* 秘訣).[662] Apparently, people valued his knack more than his physiognomic manual, yet after he died, his secret was buried with him, which was a regret to many of his acquaintances. His manual contained too many undecipherable phrases that the man who received it after Chen died was unable to decode. Indeed the oral tradition was highly appreciated and preferred in the inheritance of physiognomic technique, and teaching face to face is always how the efficacious physiognomists acquire their skill and an esoteric manner of this technique. Chen Qing had received the technique from a curious person whose name was unknown. Another story of a Ming physiognomist Zhang Tian 张田 indicating a kind of esoteric transmission of physiognomic knowledge.[663] Zhang Tian was famous for his precise physiognomy and could even tell the fortune of a temple by inspecting statues of deities inside. He received his technique from The Person of the Way Qing (Qing daoren 清道人), and he promised Qing that he would never pass his technique onto any other people, and according to this story, his technique remained a secret.

It is very difficult to know how exactly physiognomists thought of the manuals. Why were they bothered to write a manual if no one would know how to read and use it? Were they targeting at a particular group of audiences? Or should the secret knacks and manuals be used together to produce an accurate prediction? A dialogue included in the manual *Liuzhuang xiangfa* 柳莊相法 has a particular construction of the relationship between physiognomic theories and the transmission of its practice.[664] This dialogue in the text occurred between the

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[662] See *Zhongguo lidai buren zhuan*, 928.
[663] See *Zhenjiang fuzhi*, *juan* 40, 42.
[664] See *Liuzhuang xiangfa*, *juan* 2, 269-322.

Ming emperor Yongle 永樂 and the famous physiognomist Yuan Gong mentioned before. The veracity of this dialogue in history is suspect, since pre-modern writers did not have recording facilities and dialogues tend to be a form of creative fiction above anything else. Nonetheless, we can assume that it reflected the ideas of the author, despite its quasi-oral format. It is written in questions and answers, with the emperor's question and Yuan's answer. In many of Yuan's answers, he cited the principle of physiognomy from a 'book' or some 'books' (*shu* 書). The exact source of his citations has proven to be impossible to locate. His citations are often in a rhymed poetic genre and very short and concise. He usually gave out his own explanations to the emperor's questions first and then referenced them with the citations from the books. His answers are normally more specific, colloquial and easy to understand, in contrast with the obscure citations. In other words, he implicitly uses the manuals as something needed to be interpreted rather than taken for granted.

The need for the interpretation of manuals is reflected in a particular connection between the theory and practice of physiognomy: the prediction of the exact date of a future event in physiognomic prognostications. Prognostications made by physiognomists recorded in many stories possessed an extraordinary accuracy in terms of the exact date of what was going to happen. The Song physiognomist the 'Iron Face Wang' (*Wang tiemian* 王鐵面) was famous for giving out the prediction of dates.[665] His real name was Wang Ting 王廷 but because of his discretion and strictness on making predictions he was called 'Iron Face' by contemporary literati. In most of the predictions he made, his predictions on the exact date of the incidents were later on proven to be accurate. He often used the term '….[numbers of] days from now

[665] See *Yijian zhi*, *bingzhi*, *juan* 17, 510.

on…' (*zici* 自此 or *congjin* 從今). Interestingly, the exact dates he gave are usually days very close to the day he made a prediction. Normally he could foresee the precise date of an incident happening within a couple of months but not closer. We cannot tell based on what kind of inspection that he could tell the date of a future incident, but in the story, there is a line of his prediction in which he mentioned that 'the color on your forehead is bright and smooth, within twenty-nine days you will have the luck to be a regular official on your post…'. Here he explicitly stated that due to the quality of the color on the literatus's forehead, he could see the luck coming on that specific day. In fact, in many physiognomy manuals, the colors on a person's face are always regarded as the most direct reflection of a person's fortune.[666] The condition of facial colors and its interrelations with the seasonal changes and the Five Phases also in theory allow physiognomists to calculate the date of a particular event in a person's life. Nonetheless, this accordance between the manual and stories of practice contains a discrepancy: the theories on date calculation based on the color inspection in the manuals do not explicitly tell how to figure out on which specific day which specific event will happen. In other words, the language in the manuals is vague. It only uses metaphoric or rough figures when elaborating the calculation process, such as 'three days', 'ten days' or 'within a month'. Illustrations in the manuals do not specify the detailed content of a person's fortune or misfortune as well, unlike the very detailed predictions given by Iron Face Wang.

A more complex divergence between manuals and practice is contained in this story as well; that is, a difference of emphasis on different physiological aspects of the body. Although we have seen how the qi of a person's body was highly valued in physiognomy, there were

[666] For example, see Qise zonglun in *Xiangli hengzhen*, 207.

divergences regarding which physiological aspect was the most decisive and accurate one in revealing a person's fortune. It is well accepted that in cosmological as well as medical conceptualizations of the human body since early China the body was already dissected into different substances and dimensions: qi, blood, form and bone.[667] Just like what we have discussed in Chapter II, similar ways of dissecting human body appear in the manuals as well, with the difference however that the more common aspects highlighted are qi, color, sound, form and bone. It is not explicitly claimed that which is the only vital and decisive aspect in a person's fortune in the manuals, whereas some stories show different preferences of different physiognomists for which physiological aspect they think is more important. The most conspicuous divergence is between the inspection of qi and that of bone patterns. A story in *Yijian zhi* called Physiognomist Su (*Su xiangshi* 蘇相士) shows a physiognomist's emphasis on the importance of bones in his inspection over color and qi.[668] The physiognomist Su was invited by the Scholar Wang Jingfu 王敬甫, a friend of Hong Mai's (the author of *Yijianzhi*) for a prediction, but Su declined Wang's request. His reason was that because Wang had alcohol before he came here, his qi and color on his face were blurred. Thus Su's prediction could not be accurate. After Wang left, Su told Hong Mai that although alcohol could slightly impair a person's qi and color, but could not do anything to a person's bone patterns (*gufa*). The reason why Su did not want to tell Wang's fortune was that the latter did not have a promising prospect, and his hangover gave Su a good excuse. According to Su, qi and color on people's faces were something unstable, whereas the bone pattern of a person was a more stable and

[667] See Liu and Lei, 'The body and its image in classical Chinese aesthetics,' 577-594, also see Elizabeth Hsu, 'Outward form and inward qi,' 103-124.
[668] See *Yijian zhi*, *juan zhigeng*, 1141.

reliable physiological aspect to inspect. The bone pattern of a person's body rather than the qi that veraciously revealed a person's invariable fate. The reliability of bone patterns was also reflected in an unconventional type of physiognomy, called the 'Bone Touching' (*mogu* 摸骨). Most of the physiognomists who were specialized in this technique were blind and at least three practitioners during the Song dynasty were known as being good at Bone Touching. They were the blind physiognomist who inspected the Official Wang Jizhong and two blind monks in the Bantang temple in Huqiu.[669]

The superiority of bone patterns is also stressed in the manuals, as discussed previously. It is also noticed that although bone patterns are highly valued, in these manuals a few passages are dedicated to the technical information of bone inspection, and this is perhaps due to the difficulty of bone inspection since bones are hidden inside the concrete side of the body. In the stories, usually we see the inspection of qi and the face more than bone inspections. In fact, the stories mentioned above are the only stories I encountered on bone inspection in Song and Ming. Like physiognomists Su mentioned before, why physiognomists usually chose other aspects to inspect instead of the bones was possibly due to their social concerns. In other words, physiognomists could use the unstable status of the body to refuse other people's request for predictions, or only reveal very little what was going to happen. They might have feared the person who asked for prediction might have been infuriated by physiognomists if they had known that their overall fate was not going to be auspicious. As we have seen in previous chapters, the spirit is defined in the Ming manuals as the most vital subject of physiognomic inspection and the most important type of bodily energy in deciding people's

[669] For the story of the blind physiognomist, see *Yuhu qinghua*, *juan* 4, 96, and for the story of the two blind monks, see *Gengsi bian*, *juan* 1, 4

fortune. It is an idea that different manuals share in common, and related to a broader Song and Ming intellectual discourse. Nonetheless from the stories I have collected, there are no stories about the inspection of the spirit at all. The only story that mentions the spirit in the eyes is the one of a Ming physiognomist Liu Jian 劉鑑.[670] As an Advanced Scholar (*jinshi* 進士) in the Imperial Examination in early Ming, Liu received physiognomy from his tutor Dong Guang 董光 when he was a student. Dong Guang bestowed his physiognomy technique to Liu because he saw that there was the spirit in Liu's eyes (*mu youshen* 目有神). Later Liu was known for his accurate predictions, especially on people's death date. This literati physiognomist and his tutor are also a good example of a literati physiognomy lineage in the Ming. This is the only case in which the spirit in the eyes is mentioned in accounts of the social practice of Physiognomy. As such an important aspect of the physiognomic body in the Ming manuals, it is surprising to see that abundant historical records do not mention it at all. We do not even know whether this 'spirit in Liu's eyes' was used as a metaphor or description of Liu's eyesight or not. The absence of the spirit in the stories indicates that there might have been a significant discrepancy between the theoretical construction of physiognomy and how it was performed by its practitioners. Yet due to the lack of material, we would not be able to reach a definite conclusion. We have seen that in the manuals the spirit is known for its elusive nature and is difficult to observe. We might presume that it was not explicitly expressed and witnessed in various occasions the stories record.

There are different opinions held by physiognomists regarding the superiority of bones and physical morphology as well. When the Song physiognomist Xiao Zhu 蕭注 returned to

[670] See *Yangzhou fuzhi*, *juan* 54, 9.

the capital city from Shanxi, the emperor invited him to inspect two court officials, Han Jiang 韓絳（1012-1088）and Wang Anshi. The emperor asked Xiao Zhu for his advice on these two officials' new posts. Xiao Zhu told the emperor that Han would definitely succeed in his new appointment but Wang might not because although Wang had a pair of cattle eyes and the sight of a tiger, which indicated his determination and valor, his harmonious qi was less fortunate than Han's. Xiao Zhu said that only the harmonious qi can nourish the myriad things.[671] In his eyes, auspicious qi exceeded good morphological features. Qi was considered the fundamental substance in the universe.

Does it mean in this case that there was always a disagreement in physiognomic inspections, and different physiognomists usually stressed different bodily aspects in their predictions? In most of the stories of physiognomists giving predictions, we only see what they told the literati and officials rather than what they actually saw and thought. That is to say, written stories about physiognomists are filtered, first already by physiognomists themselves, secondly again by the authors of these stories. Physiognomists might only have revealed partially the reason of his prediction to other people and the authors of the story might only have recorded the most relevant part of it for their arguments, or the most efficacious one. Thus we cannot say that based on the stories, different physiognomists only focused on one single aspect of the body to make predictions. This is also a possible explanation of the absence of the spirit in these stories. We would never know from these stories whether physiognomists at that time really inspected the spirit or not. Such a technique may even have been kept as a secret, or the core 'knacks' of it. The following story shows in more detail how the

[671] See *Qingbo zazhi, juan* 4, 330.

physiognomist used a comprehensive way to make an inspection. When the early Song high official and ritual specialist Wang Qinruo 王欽若(963-1025) was visiting the official Qian Yi 錢易 with the honorable name Xibai 希白, Wang was refused to enter the house because Qian was receiving a fortune-teller for predictions. Wang was infuriated and started to swear the gate keeper with a loud voice. The fortune-teller heard his voice from far and told Qian that according to this man's voice he was peerlessly noble, but possibly his appearance did not match his voice. The fortune-teller would like to inspect this man in person and asked Qian to invite him in. Wang had risen up to the court from a remote and impoverished place, and he was famous for his slender body. There was even proud flesh on his neck. Qian found Wang despicable, yet the fortune-teller was amazed. He inspected Wang with reverence, and when Wang stood up, the fortune-teller said: '[r]arely [do I see] such a perfect nobility in people!' Qian banteringly said: '[t]here is another Prime Minister like him in this hall!'[672] The fortune-teller seriously said: '[w]hat are you talking about? There will always be a Prime Minister anyway. But for this man, if he becomes a Prime Minister, then all under heaven will be prosperous, and the emperor and his ministers will be in the right post. Until they die, there will be nothing to mourn for but only celebration….' The fortune-teller's prediction was believed to be accurate in the end.[673]

From the story, the fortune-teller did not only rely on one type of physiognomic inspection. It is important to see whether different aspects of a person's body match each other or not. This tallies with physiognomy manuals, where the order of inspection rather than the preference for a type of inspection is stressed. One should always comprehensively examine people's

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[672] Qian is actually referring to himself.
[673] See *Xiangshan yelu*, *juan shang*, 20.

body in order to make an accurate prediction. One physiognomist focused more on the qi in the stories while the others emphasized the bone patterns does not mean that they merely inspected the aspect they prioritized. Probably, they even changed their priority in different occasions or under different requests. In other words, what they told other people including the authors of these stories was not the whole story of what they saw and how they saw.

The comprehensive method of their inspection in this sense did not focus on a single aspect of the human body, but the overall relationship between different aspects of the human body as well. This comprehensive method of inspection was not necessarily limited to the body of the person in question. A story shows how physiognomists were capable of predicting people's fortunes without seeing their body on the basis of an object or location associated with their subject. When emperor Taizu of the Song could not decide whether his third son should be his heir, he summoned Chen Tuan to inspect him and provide his advice. Chen came to the prince's palace and looked around in front of the gate without going in, then he left. The emperor asked him why, and he said: '[e]ven the servant in front of his royal highness's gate has the fortune of being a military general. Why do I need to go into the gate?' Then the decision of the correct succession was settled.[674] Another story of Yuan Gong in the Ming resembled this anecdote featuring Chen Tuan. When Duke Ji of Ningyuan was almost dying because of a severe illness, Yuan Gong was summoned urgently. He inspected him and said it was impossible for him to live. Duke's wife came out with astonishment and bereavement. Yuan said as soon as he saw her that: '[d]on't worry! Don't worry! Madam has a top countenance and it is impossible that such a good countenance was vainly obtained!' As

[674] See *Shaoshi jianwen lu*, juan 7, 69.

expected, the Duke recovered and was sent for an expedition to Luchuan. Because of his feat, he was enfeoffed as the Duke of Ningyuan, and his wife was nominated as the First Class Madam. The author of our account then quotes an idiom saying: '[a] father's fortune can be extended to his son's position, and a husband's longevity can be prolonged through? his wife [*Fuming tuihu zilu, fushou keyi qiyan* 父命推乎子錄，夫壽可以妻延]'.[675]

Occasionally, physiognomists could even tell a person's fortune by inspecting that person's portrait. Interestingly, a female physiognomist in the late Song dynasty is recorded as someone able to tell fortune by inspecting portraits. The Lady Ding (Dingshi 丁氏), the wife of the high official Hu Zongyu 胡宗愈 (1029-1094), and the daughter of a respected minister was well known for her wit and smartness since she was a girl. It was said that her capability of physiognomy derived from her spontaneity. She often peeked through a seam in the window (mainly made of oiled paper) when she was living in the west palace of her father's. One day she saw the Prime Minister Cai Jing from far away and told her husband that Cai's appearance resembled a Prime Minister in the early Song called Lu Duoxun 盧多遜, whose whole family had been exiled to the south. Her husband thought she was just making a joke because she had never seen Lu in real person. Lady Ding said: '…although I have never seen Lu Duoxun, I often inspected a portrait of his, and the Prime Minister Cai's color and demeanor look very similar to Lu.' In the end, the Cai clan of those who were not killed during the fall of the Northern Song was exiled to the south. Lady Ding was also known for her ability to communicate with the spirits residing in the portraits.[676] A similar method of physiognomy is also found in other early Song records. By looking at the portrait of an early Song high official

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[675] See *Ertan leizeng, juan* 7, 54.
[676] See *Bozhai bian, juan* 4, 26.

Han Qi 韓琦's father, a servant of the prefectural government predicted that this man would give birth to a noble son. [677]

From these records of physiognomists' methods of inspection the extension of the human body was represented much more than the tangible body itself. Physiognomy could be conducted without the direct examination of people's bodies, and predictions of one particular person's fate could be made by the inspection of other people's bodies as well, which concurs with the idea of the body as an assemblage of individual human being's social relations showed in the manuals. The relatedness between the human body and the external world indicates the comprehensive concerns of the physiognomist in the process of inspecting, analyzing and interpreting human beings' fortunes as located on the body. Yet unlike a more thorough and revealing construction of physiognomy in the manuals, we see that despite the accordance between these stories of the social performance of physiognomy and the manuals, the stories represent physiognomists' techniques as different from what the manuals describe. At least based on how physiognomy was perceived and received by the authors of these stories, we see that a relatively consistent system of physiognomic inspections in the Ming manuals varied hugely in its social performance. Certain elements and themes in the manuals did appear in physiognomists performance of the technique, but they were differentiated and even relativized. In this way, how the physiognomic prediction was made could be quite different from how it was recorded and understood by others. Although we could never know how it was practiced, but at least the social representation of this technique in Song-Ming stories already display diverse performances, perceptions, and variations of physiognomy that

[677] See *Lanzhen zi*, *juan* 5, 83.

problematize the manuals' theoretical construction of it. The technicality of physiognomy is also enwrapped by esotericism. This esotericism, on the one hand, distances the technicality of physiognomy from non-practitioners, and on the other hand, differentiate the practitioner's practice from its textual theorization.

Social Perceptions of Physiognomy

In the performance of physiognomy not only the practitioner matters, but also the people who received it. The recipient's ideas on physiognomy co-determined the entire social narrative of this technique. Ideally, we would want to know about different ways of viewing physiognomy in all sectors of society, but the extant sources the reception of physiognomy have all been written by literati. The overall dominance of the literati's voice on certain social phenomena was not only confined to physiognomy in the Song and Ming periods. They were often the exclusive recorder and commentator of society and inevitably colored their comment with their own political, economic and moral stance.[678] Yet, on the other hand, it is because of the interactions between literati and physiognomists and their interest in recording them that we can have the chance to see how physiognomy was socially perceived and received at that time.

Acceptance and Criticism

Literati's acceptance and criticism of physiognomy were not binary in a simple way. Different aspects of physiognomy were carefully analyzed and evaluated in their writings. Sometimes

[678] See Jonathan Handlin Smith, 'Social hierarchy and merchant Philanthropy as perceived in several late-Ming and early-Qing texts,' 417-451, and Cynthia Brokaw, 'Book history in pre-modern China,' 253-290.

there was skepticism on physiognomy in general as nothing more than perplexing tricks. The Song scholar Kong Zhongping 孔仲平 already strongly repudiated physiognomy and said that it was not something people could rely on.[679] He listed out many historical figures whose fates falsified physiognomists' predictions, criticizing the over-generalization of people's bodies and fates. Different historical figures with similar distinctive physiological features could have totally different fate. Kong blamed physiognomists and their clumsy technique.

Yet because the theory and cosmology of physiognomy were well accepted, many scholars separated the philosophy or the cosmology of physiognomy from the performance of physiognomy by certain physiognomists they witnessed or knew of. In this way, the acceptance and criticism of physiognomy were much more complex rather than simple affirmation or rejection. Most of the Song and Ming scholarly comments, unlike the physiognomy manuals, pay more attention to the physiognomic reflection of a person's morality rather than fortune. Moreover, they treated the technology as a way for their political agenda; they were concerned with how to use physiognomy to find the truly virtuous talent for the emperor rather than how to tell people's fortune. Or they used it to make statements about important historical actors in the past. This is also again connected to their emphasis on the moral aspect of physiognomy.

The Northern Song official Wu Chuhou 吳處厚 saw physiognomy as a technique that should be '…urgently applied to the selection of real talents [for the government]…' rather than a trick for base fortune-tellers in markets and on the street to make money.[680] To Wu, physiognomy was an exalted technique for the good of the whole country. His contempt

[679] See *Kongshi zashuo*, *juan* 1, 3.
[680] See *Qingxiang zaji*, *juan* 4, 53.

towards physiognomists who use physiognomy for economic ends was also related to his understanding of the true nature of physiognomy. Because to him finding the true talent and virtuous man for the country was the ultimate goal of physiognomy, proper inspections should concentrate on a person's heart and dignified manners (*weiyi* 威儀) rather than a person's fortune and prospect in receiving practical benefits:

> Xunzi said, '…the physiognomy of external forms is not as important as evaluating the heart.' The idiom says: 'If [one has] a heart but no appearance, then the appearance will emerge according to his heart. If one has only appearance but no heart, then his appearance will diminish with the [absence] of his heart.' That is to say, the physiognomy of heart is most valuable.
> 荀子曰: 相形不如論心。諺曰: 有心無相, 相遂心生, 有相無心, 相隨心滅。此言人以心相為上也。

The quotation of Xunzi, the Warring States teacher-thinker, is known for his discussion entitled 'Anti-Physiognomy'' (*feixiang* 非相), in which he strongly criticized physiognomy as unreliable and deceptive, as we have seen in Chapter I.[681] The second statement can also be found in the *Compendium* and seems to have been used as something like a physiognomic proverb.[682] By using the words of ancient masters, Wu Chuhou intended to justify physiognomy as an archaic tradition of finding true worthies for the rulers, a lofty technique that should only be used by literati. Moral concerns, in this sense, were prioritized over a focus on fortune and practical benefits.

The Song scholar Qian Mian 錢愐 (?-1136) quoted the Tang Buddhist monk Yixing 一行 (673-727) to illustrate the true nature of physiognomy.[683] In Yixing's physiognomy, different moral, as well as mental status, decides whether this man was fortunate or not. If a man is loyal

[681] See *Xunzi*, *Feixiang*, 46.
[682] See *Shenxiang quanbian*, *juan* 1, 19.
[683] See *Qianshi sizhi*, 187.

and benevolent, with a strong sense of filial piety and justice, if his words and actions are congruent, and if in adverse situations he only behaves righteously, then this man's physiognomy will be auspicious. If he is nothing mentioned above and in adverse situations, he conducts evil deeds, then his physiognomy will be inauspicious. Because of the different virtues a person possesses, he will receive the reward of five states of happiness (*wufu* 五福) or the punishment of six penalties (*liuji* 六極). The rewards and punishments do not fall upon his own body, but will fall upon his descendants; however, in regard to reading the future from a person's physiognomy, it is impossible to exhaust a person's future. In his discussion, Qian values the inspection of virtue rather than fortune. He advocates the virtuous life people should lead; good fortune is simply the reward for one's virtue, not the ultimate end of one's life.

Despite the criticism of physiognomy being used as a commercial divinatory technique by fortune-tellers, many literati were convinced of its efficacy. The Song scholar and official Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修(1007-1072) once told Su Shi that when he was young, a monk told him that he would be famous all over the country because his ears were whiter than his face, and he would be the victim of an unprovoked personal assault because his lips were not touching his teeth. Ouyang felt that what the monk said had all come true. [684] Su Shi himself also expressed his trust in physiognomy. When he returned from his exile in Hainan, people asked about his suffering there. He answered that this mishap was due to his bone physiognomy. When he entered the capital at a young age, a physiognomist told him that he had a pair of scholar's eyes, but half of his head was like that of a banished soldier. Someday he would be

[684] See *Dongpo zhilin*, *juan* 5, 811. Also see *Qianshi sizhi*, 8.

famous for his literary skills but he would have the misfortune of a bad transfer for one of his posts.[685] Su Shi's fate was just like the monk's prediction.

A similar situation occurred for Ming literati as well. Complex feelings towards physiognomy are reflected in many scholars' discussions of the reliability and reputability of this technique. In the preface of the Ming physiognomy manual *The Sixteen Chapters of Xu Fu's Physiognomy* (*Xu Fu xiangfa shiliu pian* 許負相法十六篇), the editor Huang Xingzeng 黃省曾 (1490-1540), a well-known Ming scholar, expressed a similar ambivalence to physiognomy.[686] He mentioned that there were physiognomists and diviners gathering in wealthy gentlemen's houses providing predictions, but that these exquisite predictions were rarely true. The refined technique of Yuan Gong at the beginning of the dynasty had not been inherited by them at all, and the quality of technique varied drastically. This was the reason why he arranged the printing of this physiognomy manual ascribed to the famous Western Han physiognomist, Xu Fu. It was because he wished to provide traditional and efficacious physiognomy. To Huang, the versions of physiognomy his contemporary diviners used were lousier than ever, whereas the most refined techniques belonged to the ancient physiognomy masters. He did not deny the value of physiognomy, but simply lamented the loss of the great tradition and the decline of such a divine technique, which led to fraud and the disreputation of physiognomy. Unlike Huang, another contemporary official, Zhang Ning 張寧, believed that the elusiveness and cunning nature of physiognomists was part of their strategy, their 'technique' (*shu* 術).[687] He used the story of the physiognomist Yuan Zhongche, the son of the famous physiognomist

[685] See *Ruigui tang xialu*, *juan* 1, 6.
[686] See *Xufu xiangfa shiliu pian*, *xu*, 1-3.
[687] See *Fangzhou zalu*, 123.

Yuangong, to show how physiognomists used their enigmatic image to perplex people and convince them, and make vague predictions to protect their reputation. Yuan Zhongche often refused to provide predictions for his guests and blustered random words during banquets with a mysterious smile, as if there was something too sensitive to reveal. People thought that Yuan was a noble and professional physiognomist who would not use his technique readily. This enhanced his reputation at court. Yet to Zhang, it was part of his technique—not of being sophisticated in physiognomy, but of using physiognomy to manipulate human relationships. He indicated that this was an important component of physiognomy practice.

In Liao Hsien-Huei's study of the literati's attitude towards and involvement in mantic practice in the Song period, she points out that the discrepancy between their public renunciation of mantic practice and their personal involvement shows the complex intellectual, political and social landscape of the Song literati world.[688] One reason for literati to seek help from divinatory practice was the increasing contingency of political life. The Imperial Examinations that were institutionalized in the Song and conducted on a huge scale in the Ming, as many scholars have pointed out, allowed some intellectuals with poorer social conditions to participate in the scheme of power, intensifying social mobility.[689] Like their predecessors in the Song, Ming examinees were also obsessed with fortune-telling and often sought different forms of efficacious predictions about their examination results, including physiognomy, and their zeal for mantic practices including physiognomy was also largely due to the popular cosmology of fate.[690] The idea of 'fate' or 'mandate' (*ming*) was so popular that,

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688 See Liao Hsien-Huei, 'Exploring weal and woe,' 347-395.

689 See See Ho Ping-ti, *The Ladder of Success in Imperial China*, 92-165, and John W. Chaffee, *The Thorny Gates of Learning in Sung China*, 35-43.

690 See Benjamin A. Elman, *A Cultural History of Civil Examinations in Late Imperial China*, 299-326, Joseph Alder, conference paper 'Divination as spiritual practice in Song Confucianism,', and Liao Hsien-Huei's

in affairs ranging from marriage to the selection of officials, the perceived auspiciousness of one's fate played a significant role.[691] As Liao suggests, this concept of predestined fate made literati and their relatives not only consult diviners on issues of examination and political career, but also on many other problems like marriage, funerals, and health. The same can be said about the use of divinations in the Ming dynasty.[692] Therefore, literati's purpose in using physiognomy to come to terms with the uncertainty of their lives was not that different from that of common people in daily life or any consultants of divination in other cultures. The predominant concept of fate permeated every single aspect of social life in this period so that prognostication techniques like physiognomy were well accepted as a common strategy to cope with the volatility of daily life.

However, we also need to be aware that despite the reasons and motives for literati to pursue physiognomy, there were reasons why some of them still frequently repudiated physiognomy along with other divinatory skills. There were political tensions that did not allow literati to reveal their interest in physiognomy publicly. Any technique that could predict the life of the current emperor or who was going to be the future emperor usually drew extra attention from the court. Knowing the powerful and destructive power of prophecy in the society, the court held a cautious attitude towards mantic practice. Thus the univocal renunciation of physiognomy can be seen as compulsory under political pressure rather than a spontaneous choice. Yet spontaneous reasons for renunciation did exist. To many literati who were influenced by Confucian or neo-Confucian teachings, and who followed the ideal of the

article 'Weal and Woe'.

691 See See Bao Xinshan, 'Lun songdai de zhanxiang suanming zhifeng,' 62-66.

692 See Gong Baoli, *Shushu huodong yu mingqing shehui*, 246-253.

virtuous sage, the separation of fortune from virtue in widely spread physiognomic practices was despicable.[693] Their arguments, as we have seen, were that first, a man with an evil and cunning character but auspicious appearance could not have a better fortune than a man who was virtuous but bad-looking, and second that different historical figures with very similar physiological features lived very different lives. These logical fallacies showed that physiognomy was merely an unreliable trick rather than an insightful technique.

As for literati who condemned physiognomy in public and at the same time used it in their private life, we cannot simply dismiss their attitude as hypocritical. Liao's study suggests such contradictions did exist in many literati's attitudes toward physiognomy. Hans Steinmüller, in his study of modern Chinese local elites' similar self-contradicting ideas about divination and traditional rituals, proposes the existence of a type of 'cultural intimacy'.[694] This concept, originally put forward by the American anthropologist Michael Herzfeld, is used to describe the flexibility of attitudes towards a cultural phenomenon or to identify it as a source of external embarrassment but internal comfort.[695] Steinmüller argues that between the state's negation of local rituals and mantic practices and the intimate relationship that local people hold with their traditions, local elites adopt a binary and flexible strategy to cope with the dilemma. One the one hand, they publicly refer to these traditions as 'superstition' and renounce their value, and on the other hand, they deploy a more 'intimate', supportive and private relationship with these traditions on a vernacular and personal level. Such a kind of 'intimacy' with practices like divination, as we have seen, had already appeared in the Song

[693] For the ideal of virtuous sage in the Song, see Stephen Angle, *Sagehood*, 14-21.
[694] See Hans Steinmüller, 'Communities of complicity,' 539–549.
[695] See Michael Herzfeld, *Cultural Intimacy*, 1-39.

and Ming literati's interactions with physiognomy. Their acceptance and criticism of physiognomy show their manoeuvring to tackle the embarrassment.

Economic Exchange in Physiognomy Practice

The last facet of physiognomy practice salient in our discussion of the social perception of physiognomy is economic exchange. As mentioned before, there were a kind of physiognomists who took physiognomy as a career. In this way, they sold their physiognomy techniques as a commodity to others. Physiognomists could practice their technique in the market, on the street and in other public areas, selling predictions for cash, and some even served powerful local families and officials for further material benefits.[696] Yet more complex forms of exchange occurred in the practice of this commodified technique. For some physiognomists, immediate profit was not their primary concern at all when providing predictions for others. Sometimes physiognomists received poetry or proses from literati or students as remuneration for their services, and at other times they even offered financial help to their supplicants. The reciprocity between the prediction and its repayment went beyond the simple process of selling physiognomy for money.

In Luo Zongtao's study of literati's poetry given to physiognomists as gifts during the Song and Yuan dynasties, he suggests that giving poetry to physiognomists was not an occasional substitute for real money, but in fact a fashion at the time.[697] Large amounts of poems were written at physiognomists' requests or simply because many literati were not able

[696] See Zhang Mingxi, *Shenmi de mingyun mima*, 65-75, and Liao Hsien-huei, 'Kōdō no teikan,' *Studies in* 81-104.
[697] See Luo Zongtao, 'Songdai shiren zeng xiangshi shi tantao,' 203-232.

to provide money when they were just poor students. Luo shows that in certain cases physiognomists preferred literati's poetry to monetary profit, and in their requirements, they asked for literati to explicitly compliment their technique. Physiognomists used their poems as a symbol of their efficacious technique, and it was also the key to enter the circles of high society. The preface to a gift poem by the Southern Song scholar Yao Mian 姚勉 (1216-1262) to the physiognomist Chen the Sublime Eye (Chen Gaoyan 陳高眼) gives a clue as to how physiognomists used literati's poems.[698] When Yao Mian was a student he received Chen's physiognomy and wrote a poem for Chen in return. Chen said that Yao would come second in the poetry test of the Imperial Examinations because of his auspicious look. Yao felt that Chen was different from the charlatans who never paid any attention to poor students, and believed his words. After Yao came second in the test, Chen came again and asked him to write a poem. Yao asked him where the previous one went, and Chen said that the scroll had rotted in a jam jar and was not legible any more. Chen predicted that the next year, Yao would come first in the examination, and said that this time, he would put Yao's precious poem into a silk box to protect it. Yao was annoyed by Chen because he saw it as an act of snobbery. When Yao was a poor student, Chen did not take his poem seriously, and when Yao was famous, he came again seeking a new poem. Yao considered this behavior a type of investment by physiognomists in students and literati, and he detested this vulgar business.

Yao was probably right about the logic of physiognomists' requests for poetry. To many physiognomists, providing predictions to students and literati was a form of investment. With the favors, they offered to these potential leaders of the country, and the material as well as

[698] See *Quansong shi*, *juan* 64, 40436.

cultural proof of the favors—the poetry—they could extend their influence to the future high society and establish connections with people from a higher social station. Therefore, their poetry can be seen as a form of 'cultural capital' in Bourdieu's sense, a type of investment that was derived from but transcended immediate economic interest, and a type of capital with which a certain type of social relation could be reproduced.[699] On the other hand, as Liao points out, literati also made investments in physiognomists when they composed poems for them. By giving their poems to physiognomists, and knowing that most of them would travel around the whole country making new acquaintances in high society, literati wished for their reputation, literary achievements, or current situation to be transmitted via physiognomists' hands. On physiognomists' side, sometimes poetry from powerful people in the court was not a reward for the investment physiognomists put into them, but an end of physiognomists' good relationships with these important figures. In this way, physiognomists could protect themselves from a potentially dangerous status quo. The Ming physiognomist Liu Rixin 劉日新, after successfully predicting that Zhu Yuanzhang would be the new emperor of the new dynasty and the one to defeat the Mongols, refused the offer of official posts and wealth from Zhu. Knowing the risk of serving the emperor at the court and in court politics, he asked instead for a folding fan with a poem written on it by Zhu himself, and this was the token that allowed Liu to travel to anywhere in the country without restriction. Although Liu, in the end, was not able to survive Zhu Yuanzhang's persecutions, this folding fan kept him alive and free for many years.[700]

Beyond poetry exchange, some physiognomists offered literati, students or their

[699] See Pierre Bourdieu, 'The forms of capital,' 241-258.
[700] See *Wanli jinhua fuzhi*, *juan* 22, 1630-1632.

supplicants direct financial assistance in their times of predicament. When she was young the Zhangxian Mingsu Empress of the early Song (*Zhangxian mingsu taihou* 章獻明肅太后) travelled with her father to the Temple of Jade Spring (*Yuquan si* 玉泉寺), a Buddhist temple in Sichuan. The elder in the temple was good at physiognomy, and told her father that he was a noble man. After the elder saw the empress, he was astonished and said that her father's nobility was because of this daughter. Then the elder asked whether they wanted to travel to the capital or not. Her father was negative about the idea of going to the capital due to their impoverished circumstances, but the elder offered them a considerable amount of money to go, so they did.[701] Later the daughter was selected to be the emperor's concubine in the capital, and became a famous empress who attended to state affairs and ruled the country.[702] Luo Ling points out that the constant and generous donations from the Song court to Yuquan temple after the empress came to power were in fact at the empress' private request, and this loyal support from the empress was possibly inspired by the financial help from the elder monk.[703] The reciprocal relationship between the temple and the empress indicated that the investment by physiognomists in their supplicants could be made in a sophisticated way beyond simply offering predictions and receiving payments or gifts. They were perhaps even highly selective about to whom they provided predictions, if many of them regarded the practice of physiognomy as a form of investment. Only those with an auspicious appearance and a promising future deserved their services.

No matter what physiognomists intended to gain from literati and official's poetry, poetry

[701] See *Shaoshi wenjian lu*, *juan* 1, 8.
[702] See *Songshi*, *juan* 242, 8612.
[703] See Luo Ling, 'Song zhangxian mingsu taihou yu dangyang yuquan si guanxi zhi shishi bianzheng,' 22-24.

embodies the mutual investment between physiognomists and their supplicants. The same can be said about physiognomists' offers of help. This embodiment of mutual investment shows that despite its esoteric tradition, the practice of physiognomy was a highly social process, by which physiognomists could make their way to power and wealth. In other words, exchange in the practice of physiognomy in China from Song to Ming was not merely economic, but part of the process of producing and reproducing social relations. It also suggests that apart from the Imperial Examinations, there were many other ways in which people could participate in the institutions of power. Fortune-telling opened up different doors into the elite community. The reciprocity of providing predictions made the supplicants of physiognomists, normally literati, officials or their relatives, feel indebted to physiognomists who successfully foresaw their fortunate futures, and at the same time be infatuated by their miraculous technique. Therefore, along with the exchange of prediction and remuneration, what was also exchanged was trust between physiognomists and their supplicants; physiognomists believed that those people they invested in would be successful someday and their investment would be repaid, and the 'chosen ones' trusted their physiognomists to provide advice on their careers. Like the Ming physiognomist Yuan Gong and his son Yuan Zhongche, many physiognomists became the emperor's close consultants.[704] The exchange of trust was the reification of the generative power of physiognomy practice.

[704] See *Mingshi*, *juan* 299, 7643.

Physiognomy Manuals: Texts and Textuality

One of the most important reasons why the time from Ming should be regarded as a significant period in the history of Chinese physiognomy is that this was the time when most of the extant physiognomy manuals, or 'books of physiognomy' (*xiangshu*), were produced. We have seen in our previous discussion that physiognomy manuals were sometimes related to famous physiognomists and their techniques. Of course, physiognomy manuals were continuously composed and published in the Qing dynasty on both governmental and unofficial levels, but most of them were reiterations of the techniques recorded in Ming manuals. Ming manuals contain unprecedented originality and innovative progress in physiognomic theories as well as technical developments. Among the available sources we have today, manuals composed or reprinted in the Ming dynasty are the most integrated, well-preserved, consistent, but at the same time diverse ones. These manuals contain most of the technical elements we can find in later Qing and Republican manuals. In other words, Ming manuals are compendious in its content and range, and prototypical of later texts. Meanwhile, Ming texts contain many unprecedented inventions and possess distinctive generic features. This means that these mamnuals were socialized objects and were composed, edited, circulated, and accumulated in specific social as well as historical circumstances. Although the manuals represent theories and cosmologies trying to explain physiognomy as a universal way of understanding fortune and the body, these written texts, just like the social performance of physiognomy, were received and perceived in specific occasions. That is to say, Ming physiognomy manuals as socialized objects are part of physiognomy's social context and narrative in the Ming. To some extent, the accumulation, textualization, and transmission of physiognomic knowledge were part of

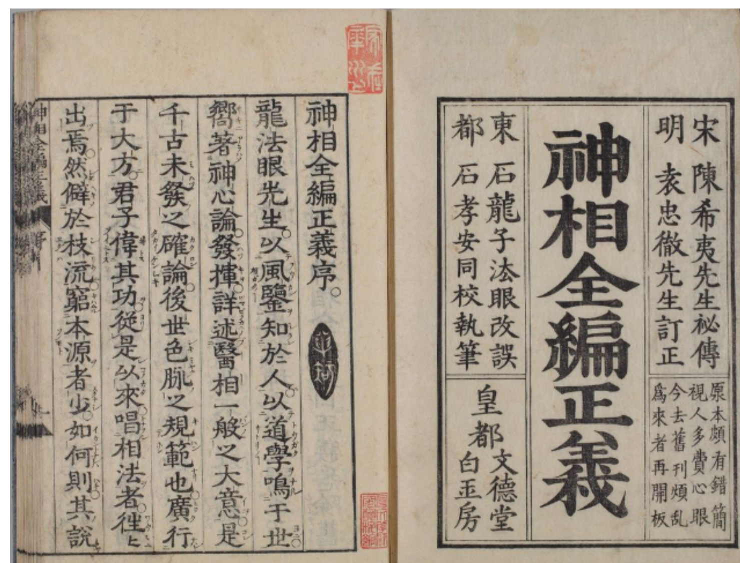
physiognomy's social performance. We will also see how the Ming texts serve as a bridge between the Song and Qing physiognomy manuals and how the Ming texts created an influential genre for the later manuals.

The Legacy of the Ming Manuals: Editions of the Compendium

Ming physiognomy manuals were also printed and transmitted in the Qing dynasty. The best known and comprehensive physiognomy manual available today is the *Compendium* manual, which is included in the early Qing imperial encyclopaedia *A Complete Collection of Illustrations and Writings from the Earliest to Current Times* (*Gujin tushu jicheng* 古今圖書集成). The transmission of different editions of the *Compendium* serves as a good example to show the stable transmission of physiognomy manuals from Ming to Qing. This manual includes 246 different items divided into fourteen volumes. The *Compendium* is the only physiognomy book included in the Qing imperial collections and there were many different popular editions circulating during the Qing dynasty as well. The best-preserved Qing popular edition was printed in 1825 by a book publisher called Jingguo tang 經國堂 in Nanjing.[705] This is the edition included in the most popular Qing edition from the imperial edition. It is hard to reconstruct the exact history of the wood blocks of the Jingguo tang version, but an interesting edition of the *Compendium* printed in Japan in 1651 ascribed to the Qing edition preserved by a private collector in Beijing already looks similar to a late Ming edition but with Japanese notes on it, which suggests that some woodblocks were preserved throughout time. The two editions are precisely the same in their content and font. This means that the same woodblock

[705] See *Shenxiang quanbian* in Shuzang collection, *juan* 78, 1-239.

imprints were used for both editions, or, equally likely, that the reprint of 1825 imitated the original edition in all of its details. This is the version that was later widely accepted as the most authoritative one in the Republican reprints. Interestingly, there is another Japanese edition of the *Compendium* edited and revised by a Japanese physician called Tokage 石龍子 and printed in Edo in the year 1805, which also states that the original imprints for the *Compendium* were finished in the year 1651.[706] This Japanese edition only contains a third of the items included in the Jingguo tang edition, but most of the content remained the same. The Jingguo tang edition contains more charts and illustrations, while the imperial edition omits most of them. The information of woodblock imprints seen in Ming and Qing books are also omitted in the imperial edition.


宋 陳希夷先生秘傳
明 袁忠徹先生訂正
原本頗有錯簡
視人多費心眼
今去舊刊煩亂
爲來者再開板
神相全編正義
東 石龍子法眼改譔
都 石孝安同校執筆
皇都 文德堂 白玉房

神相全編正義序
龍法眼先生以風鑒知於人以道學鳴于世
嚮著神心論發揮詳述醫相一般之大意是
千古未發之確論後世色脈之規範也廣行
于大方君子偉其功從是以來唱相法者往々
出焉然僻於枝流窮本源者少如何則其說

Figure 8 The Japanese edition of the *Compendium*.[707]

The most inclusive known edition of the Qing *Compendium* is thus the Jingguo tang edition.

706 The fourth year of the Keian Reign. See *Shenxiang quanbian zhengyi*, *juan xi*a, 55.
707 See the front page of *Shenxiang quanbian zhengyi*, 1.

The woodblock imprints for this edition also had an earlier ancestor. The earliest *Compendium* is perhaps the Ming edition printed by Zhihe tang 致和堂 in Nanjing. In the preface of this edition, it is stated that the text was revised by the imperial scholar Ni Yue 倪岳 (1444-1501) at the Ming court.[708] In this Ming edition, even the order of the items listed on the contents pages and the font of the imprints are the same as the 1825 Jingguo tang edition, not to mention the main texts in the book. The only difference lies in the illustrations, which means that the illustrations in the 1825 Jingguo tang edition were clearly remade on new blocks rather than transplanted from the Ming edition. There is no evident connection on paper between the Ming and the 1825 editions of the *Compendium*, yet the striking consistency between the two books shows how stable the transmission of physiognomy manuals was over time. A Qing 1787 edition printed by Baohan lou 寶翰樓 also resembles this Ming edition in terms of content, item order, font and total layout. Even the handwritten font of the preface ascribed to Ni Yue was reproduced which indicates that the imprint Baohan lou used as the same with this Ming edition. Another well-preserved Ming edition of the *Compendium* is the 1644 edition printed by a commercial publisher called Jishan tang 積善堂 in Nanjing. This edition has a different title, *The Compendium of Human Physiognomy* (*Renxiang quanbian* 人相全編), yet the content is exactly the same as the Ming Zhihe tang edition. Even in the Qing imperial encyclopaedia, which was notoriously censored, the majority of the content of the *Compendium* has been kept. Print culture itself gave physiognomy books the possibility of being reproduced in a stable and stipulated way. But the more profound reason behind the resemblance between the different editions of the *Compendium* goes beyond the technological progress of book printing in China.

[708] See the Ming Zhihetang edition of *Shenxiang quanbian*, 1-8.

Here the relationships between different editions of the *Compendium* are,

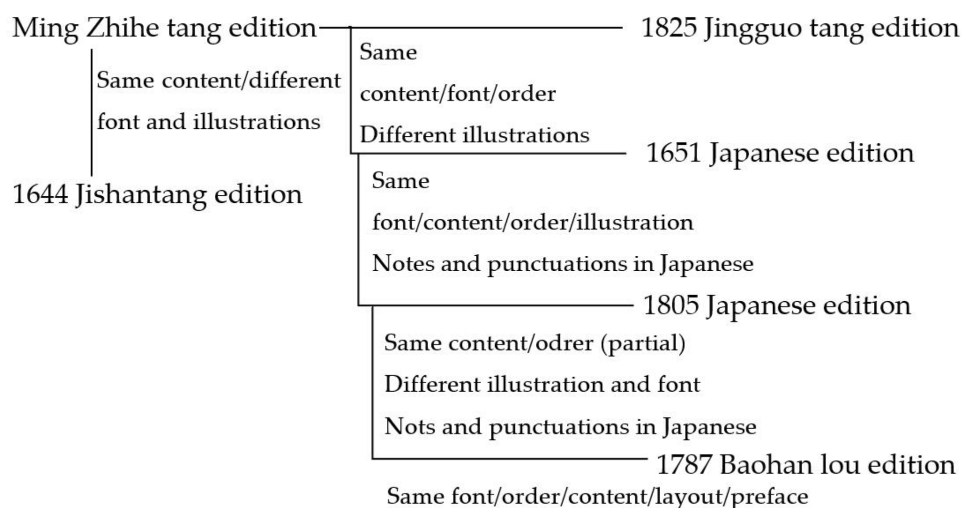


Table 4 Relationships between different editions of the *Compendium*.

Timothy Brookes shows that in spite of the fact that the Qing court launched a sweeping policy of destroying not only printed books containing anti-Manchu sentiment but also the wood blocks for these books actually many different types of writings survived[709]. The physiognomy manuals collected by the later Qing project of the *Complete Library of Four Sections* (*Siku quanshu* 四庫全書) are only limited to two very short Ming manuals which were believed to be reprints of Song editions, a short poetic text of physiognomy tips believed to be from the late Song, and an early Ming book.[710] The indifference of the later Qing court to physiognomy books also lies in the intact content of the manuals. For example, *Shiwan juanlou* 十萬卷樓 collection of the woodblock of the Song physiognomy book *The Game of Prying into Divinity through the Jade Flute* (*Yuguan zhaoshen ju* 玉管照神局) looks exactly the same as its *Siku quanshu*

[709] See Timothy Brookes, 'Censorship in eighteenth century China,' 177-196.

[710] *Yuebo dongzhong ji*, *Yuguan zhaoshen ju, Renlun datong fu* and *Taiqing shenxian*. See *Siku quanshu mulu, zibu* 7, *shushu* 5, *juan* 11, 22-23.

counterpart. Editors at the court seem to not have bothered to make any changes to the manuals at all. The scope of the imperial collection is also very limited. This unprecedented 'indifference' contrasts with the popularity of physiognomy books circulating in Qing society, and with the personal interest of many members of the Qing elites in collecting and compiling physiognomy manuals. One of the reasons we could suspect for this 'indifference' is that there is nothing explicitly anti-Manchu in the physiognomy texts, and surprisingly, unlike many other divination manuals, the extant physiognomy texts from the Ming and Qing private printers seldom mention dynastic changes either. Mostly the manuals talk about what a noble emperor should look like. The loose control over physiognomy manuals at the Qing court made it possible to preserve and transmit various texts throughout the dynasty. All these details of different editions of the *Compendium* from Ming to Qing shows that technical texts like physiognomy manual could be transmitted and inherited stably in the Ming/Qing transition, and the reproduction of the manuals like the *Compendium* suggests that they were still collected, circulated, and might even have played certain roles in Qing physiognomy discourse. Yet the stability of the transmission of Ming physiognomy manuals in Qing dynasty also raise a question that seems to be difficult to answer based on extant materials: why Song or even earlier physiognomy manuals, especially those included in the Imperial Libraries, did not survive Ming and Qing dynasty? This is a question that requires a further study of a longer history of physiognomy in China.

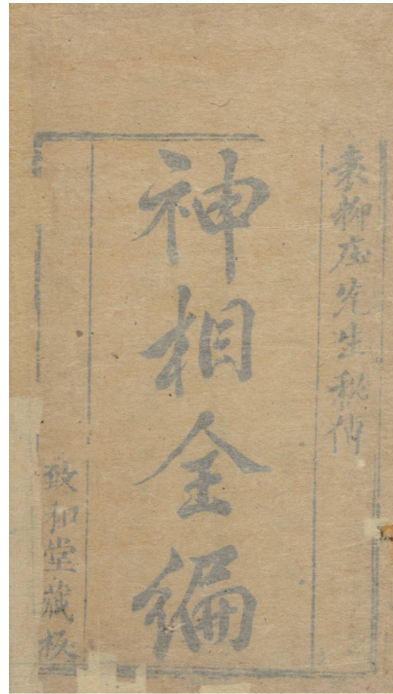


Figure 9 Front page of the Zhihe tang Ming edition of the *Compendium* preserved in the Harvard-Yen Ching Library.

Figure 10 17th year of Chongzhen Reign (1644) Jishan tang edition of the *Compendium*.[711]

711 See *Fengjian tonghui renxiang quanbian, juan* 12, 35.

Legacy of the Ming manual: Comprehensive Compilation

Ming manuals were produced in a transitional period where physiognomy became more intricate and complex. Lu Zhiji points out that from the end of the Northern Song dynasty, fortune-telling theories and practices in China began to enter a highly numerological and sophisticated phase and the importance of fortune-telling manuals started to emerge.[712] This was also the time when different types of knowledge like the Five Phases, the cosmological pattern of qi, and the complex calculations of the trigram symbols started to fuse with each other and become systematically connected as one single type of theoretical field called the 'Rules of Fortune' (*mingli* 命理). The Ming scholar Huang Xingzeng, in his preface to the physiognomy manual *Sixteen Chapters on Xu Fu' Physiognomy* (*Xufu xiangfa shiliu pian* 許負相法十六篇), mentioned that in Ming society, geomancy, birth date divination and physiognomy were the three major branches of the study of fortune. This is different from the characterisation of prognostic techniques in early China as simply 'Techniques and Formulations' (*fangji* 方技), a category which also included medicine, military knowledge, and so on.[713] Beyond the close relationship between fortune-telling techniques and other types of knowledge, there appeared the distinctive category known as the 'study of fortune'. At this point, fortune-telling techniques like physiognomy were hugely complicated and required more sophisticated and intricate means of explanation. One related phenomenon here, as Wu Yu points out, was the circulation of previously prohibited divination books outside the court and local government from the end of the Tang dynasty onwards.[714]

[712] See Lu Zhiji, *Zhongguo mingli xue shi*, 144-146.
[713] See the premise of *Xufu xiangfa shiliu pian*, 1-3.
[714] See Wu Yu, *Tang song daojiao yu shisu liyi hudong yanjiu*, 4-27.

Wu Yu argues that instead of reinforcing the Tang policy of controlling divination manuals, many kingdoms after the collapse of the Tang dynasty encouraged and sponsored the unofficial study of divination manuals out of the rulers' interests in predicting the coming of the next dynasty. The surge of Song book culture made the proliferation of physiognomy knowledge easier. In the *New Book of the Tang* (*Xin tang shu* 新唐書), we only see one human physiognomy book listed with seven other manuals on the physiognomy of things and the title does not tell us about anything related to the content of the manual.[715] Six physiognomy manuals are listed in the *Book of the Sui* (*Suishu* 隋書) with very brief titles. Whereas in the *History of the Song* (*Songshi* 宋史), there were twenty different human physiognomy manuals listed and attributed to different particular techniques of inspection, such as the inspection of qi and color, or the inspection of bones.[716] This is not to say that there were no manuals circulating in Tang society. Numerous physiognomy manuscripts found at Dunhuang, and several book titles mentioned in Tang anecdotal writings, yet to what extent these manuscripts were transmitted in Tang society still remains unknown. At least based on historical bibliography, we can see from the specific titles of the Song manuals that there had been a more analytical way of categorizing physiognomy knowledge developed.

Despite recent progress, it is still very hard for us to grasp the whole picture of the social conditions of physiognomy manuals during the Song since most of the books were lost or destroyed. Marc Kalinowski shows from his study of Dunhuang divination manuscripts that at least in the Dunhuang area during the Tang dynasty, people already tried to learn fortune-

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[715] See *Xin tangshu*, *juan* 59, *Yiwen zhi*, 1557.

[716] See *Suishu*, *juan* 34, *Jingji zhi*, 1039 for Sui imperial collection of the manuals. See *Songshi*, *juan* 206, *Yiwen zhi*, 5252 for the Song imperial collections.

telling from circulated manuscripts, and this 'do-it-yourself' culture in divination even reached people with no sufficient education, but the detailed information of this Tang phenomenon still remains limited.[717] The Yuan scholar Xue Yannian 薛延年 wrote a preface to a late Song book in the *Shiwan juanlou* collection called the *Verses on the Grand Unification of the Principles of Humanity* (*Renlun datong fu* 人倫大統賦). In this preface, he mentioned that students of physiognomy had long studied this technique following printed charts of the face and popular verses about physiognomy techniques, but had seldom gained the true gist of physiognomy like the historical masters.[718] This is a keyhole through which we can view how physiognomy was studied before the Ming dynasty through printed material. McDermott points out that from the end of the Song dynasty, wood block imprint gradually became a technique open to society, and printed books became less exclusive and expensive accordingly.[719] We can suspect that at least within certain social groups, learning the technique from printed manuals was common, and this is certainly the case in Li Fengjun's story. But they were despised by those who claimed to possess the true knowledge of physiognomy from early traditions and these texts were seen by them as useless or incomplete.

Ming manuals were compiled to be comprehensive and easy to look up information, showing their function as textbooks for the 'students' of physiognomy. Compilers of Ming compendious works claimed that one of the aims of these works is to comprehensively cover physiognomy theories from various periods and diverse origins and schools, and categorize these texts in an order easy for people to study physiognomy.[720] Another aim is to restore the

[717] See Marc Kalinowski, 'Mantic texts in their cultural context,' 109-133.
[718] See the premise of *Renlun datong fu*, 1-2.
[719] See Joseph McDermott, *A Social History of the Chinese Book*, 31-39.
[720] See *Shuijing shenxiang*, *juan* 1, 1-2, *Shenxiang quanbian*, *xu*, 1-5, *Xinkan jingben fengjian xiangfa renxiang bian*, *xu*, 1-2, and *Xinke mayi xiang*, *xu*, 1-2.

'sagely' philosophy and the true wonder (*miao* 妙) of this technique, which were believed to be lost in the compilers time.[721] Therefore, these compendious Ming manuals are aimed at being inclusive and big in size, trying to take in as many texts as possible. The *Verses of Grand Unification* itself is included in the *Compendium*, along with some other verses extracted from different books like *Yuguan zhaoshen ju*, mentioned above.[722] Although the referencing system of the Ming manuals is extremely vague in that the Ming manuals themselves do not necessarily mention the sources of the texts they quote, which makes it difficult to identify them, it is not sensible to presume that all the texts were created in the Ming. Apart from the three texts labeled as Song and Yuan manuals in the *Compendium*, scentences and expressions in certain Dunhuang manuscripts appear in this anthology and the *Mayi* manual as well.[723] My assumption is that there are earlier texts included in the Ming manuals, compiled, edited, transformed, or reinterpreted. Some of them are simply marked as ancient verses and often ascribed to famous historical figures.

The *Compendium* itself is even an anthology expanded from another compendious manual, showing that these compendious manuals were not produced in a single time but were continuously renewed and reproduced in history. The whole book is an extended version of a well-known and even canonical Ming manual called the *Divine Physiognomy of Plain Clothes* (*Mayi shenxiang* 麻衣神相), which refers to the Song physiognomy master Chen Tuan's teacher (as mentioned at the beginning of this chapter). Half of the *Compendium*'s items are actually based on the content of this book. In another 1601 edition of the *Compendium* edited by an

[721] This point is also mentioned in *Shenxiang tie guandao*, *xu*, 1, apart from the texts in the previous note.
[722] See *Shenxiang quanbian*, *juan* 6, 5.
[723] For example, see Dunhuang xieben xiangshu jiaolu yanjiu, 33-59, where the compilers list more than fifty phrases in the CH. 87 manual that later appear in the *Compendium* or *Mayi* manuals.

otherwise unknown figure called Huiyang zi of Shuoshan 朔山回陽子, who had the same name as a disciple of the famous master Wang Chongyang 王重陽(1112-1170), it is clearly stated that the *Compendium* was based on the *Mayi* book, and included many other teachings from other schools of physiognomy.[724] The most intact and seemingly comprehensive edition of the Mayi manual available today is the late Ming edition based on the woodblocks produced by the Ming private family-based printer Yingxu zhai 映旭齋 around the Jiajing period (1507-1566).[725] This book is now held by a private collector.

Figure 11 Ming dynasty Jishan tang edition of the *Mayi* manual.

This version of the *Mayi* manual and the more popular Qing Tongzhi edition (1870) have

724 See *Xinji mayi xiangren bianfa fengjian daquan*, 1. But this edition is not very well preserved and lost some of its contents. See, also for the name of Huiyang zi, see Yu Yingshi, *Wenhua yu lishi dezhuisuo*, 681.

725 For the history of Yingxu zhai, see Zhang Xuan's master thesis *Pingyao zhuan yanjiu*, Suzhou University.

the same woodblock imprints and the contents of these two editions are the same. One of the most conspicuous features of the Ming manuals is that most of them were produced by family-based private publishers. Wei Yinru points out that wealthy literati during the mid- and late-Ming period started to set up their own print houses in their homes as part of the book-collecting fashion in this community.[726] And these books survived massive censorship during the Ming and Qing, with more professional editing than the editions from the court or commercial publishers. The *Compendium* and the *Mayi* manual share a very similar structure, with the charts of the face and general physiognomy theories at the beginning, followed by the physiognomy of different body parts. All the items of the *Mayi* manual are included in the *Compendium*, which makes the latter one a textual extension of the first one. The extant editions of the *Compendium* outnumber those of the *Mayi* manual. One of the possible reasons is that with the imperial reprint of this book, the circulation of the *Compendium* became easier than any other physiognomy books during the Qing dynasty. Liang Weixian's study shows that the later Wanli (1587) reproduction of this *Mayi* book is perhaps more likely to be the prototype of the *Compendium* in the Qing period, with immense overlaps between the two on the sequence of items and unabridged content.[727] Liang even further suggests that the title *Mayi shenxiang* in the Ming sometimes refers to the *Compendium* and vice versa, and there were confusions of the use of the names of these two manuals. The close textual 'intimacy' between the *Compendium* and the *Mayi* manuals suggests that these manuals were not created in a once-for-all manner and stayed static; the books themselves are results of long accumulative processes. Thus the 'comprehensiveness' of these manuals might have been out of their nature as

[726] See Wei Yinru, *Zhongguo guji yinshua shi*, 99-107.
[727] See Liang Weixian, 'Mayi xiangfa banben chutan,' 131-164.

'growing' and evolving texts. Different compilers from different periods and areas continuously expanding certain anthologies and reshaping its organization, and consequently produced these comprehensive works or the foundation of them.

The comprehensiveness and the intention to restore physiognomy's sagely philosophy are also reflected in how these manuals were compiled in the Ming dynasties. Only in the Ming manuals do we see the compilation of these manuals following a systematic philosophy of categorizing physiognomic knowledge and understanding the relationship between physiognomy and other intellectual discourses. As mentioned, at the beginning of most of the Ming texts, the compilers usually mention that physiognomy is a sagely technique that a sagacious person would use to inspect individual people's natures and find the most worthy for the people and the state as good officials and rulers. Following this logic, the compilers of most of the Ming manuals believed that inspecting physical appearance was not merely a technique of fortune-telling but a way to inspect a person's heart. Such an understanding of physiognomy led to a specific method of manual compilation in the Ming that is not seen in any previous periods, and that put the writings on the conceptual frameworks of physiognomy, and general introductory texts on the morphology and qi circulation of the body at the beginning of each manual. For example, in the Jishan tang *Compendium*, nineteen different items on the overall theory of physiognomic inspections are listed as guidelines for physiognomy, whereas the rest of the text broadly categorizes various verses and passages into the physiognomy of the morphological and energetic aspects of the body. Moreover, the *Compendium*, the *Iron Halberd* and the *Water Reflection* manuals put items on inspecting the morphological body prior to the those on qi and color inspections, indicating that the more

concrete 'easier-to-understand' body system is a better start for physiognomy learners.[728] This way of compiling and sorting content is common in the Ming manuals, but not seen in the Dunhuang manuals. Such a method of organising the text indicates that to the compilers, there was a kind of philosophy behind physiognomic inspections, and this 'philosophy' should be highlighted as a set of general rules for physiognomy. This way of organizing the manuals also influenced Qing physiognomy texts. The famous Qing manual *The Physiognomy of the Grand Qing* explicitly stated that this manual is an heir of the famous Ming masters and categorized its items following the same order of the three Ming manuals mentioned above.[729]

Figure 12 Qing dynasty edition of the *Mayi* manual. [730]

The continuity between Ming and Qing physiognomy manuals does not mean that there

[728] See the contents page of each of the manuals at the beginning of every first *juan*.
[729] See the contents of *Daqing xiangfa*.
[730] See the Tongzhi edition of *Mayi shenxiang*, *juan* 1, 3-4.

were no innovations during the Qing period. Yet the majority of the Qing manuals we can find today are texts inherited from the Ming dynasty, sometimes even down to the exact wood blocks (or identical carvings). Clearly physiognomy texts avoided becoming the subject of severe censorship. The fact that most of these texts were circulated through private or non-governmental publishers may also have made it easier to protect the woodblocks over time. Most of the physiognomy manuals we have today are the legacy of the Ming, a time where Song physiognomy books were reproduced and reformed under new book production conditions and a time that left the Qing books with abundant materials to reproduce. The Ming manuals also gave inspiration to Qing physiognomists and scholars who, based on the Ming manuals, developed the theory of this technique in later times. The manuals produced in the Ming and reprinted in the Qing can be seen as an integrated textual as well as historical unit in our study of Chinese divination texts.

Textual Features of the Manuals

Most of the manuals have a number of generic features in common. The names of compilers are often ascribed to different well-known physiognomists or legendary figures. For example, most of the editions of the *Compendium* or the *Mayi* manuals attribute the technique to the famous early Song master Chen Tuan, and then identify the first compiler of these systematic and compendious texts as the famous early Ming physiognomist Yuan Gong. As mentioned before, these two figures were recorded as famous physiognomists and are supposed to have said to have physiognomy books left after their deaths. Yet there is no clear evidence for their authorship and it is more than likely that each of the manuals is an amalgamation of different

texts from different time periods later ascribed to famous figures like Chen Tuan as their compiler or author. There are many different passages within these texts that are ascribed to famous or even legendary figures as well. For example, the Chan Buddhist master Bodhidharma (usually referred to as *Damo* 達摩) often appears as the putative author of physiognomy songs or esoteric verses, some of which has been mentioned in earlier chapters. The *Compendium* contains three esoteric verses attributed to Master Bodhidharma, and the *Water Reflection* manual also contains a passage ascribed to him.[731] Bernard Faure has suggested that the name and life stories of this legendary figure were already very influential literary and religious themes during the Tang and Song period.[732] The deification and consecration of Bodhidharma made him a popular figure in folk religion and literature. In this way, it is not surprising at all to see some physiognomic texts related to his name, but they were not really written by him.

Clearly, in physiognomy manuals this literary strategy was not only confined to Bodhi dharma. The text 'Guigu's Physiognomic Song of Married Women' (*Guigu xiang furen ge* 鬼谷相婦人歌) mainly deals with inauspicious looks of women.[733] It focuses on what kind of women would live a luxurious life and quickly squander the family wealth, and what would happen if a woman possessed a masculine look. The name in its title, Guigu, literally means 'ghost valley'. It is a name that Zheng Jiewen suggests initially refers to the master of political strategy and philosophy 'Guigu zi' (鬼谷子), but which later described a Daoist deity, 'Heavenly Teacher Guigu' (*Guigu tianshi* 鬼谷天師).[734] Next to this text in the *Compendium* is a

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731 See *Shenxiang quanbian*, 2, 10, 11, and *Shuijing shenxiang*, *juan* 3, 1-3, for the titles of these verses.
732 See Bernard Faure, 'Bodhidharma as textual and religious paradigm,' 187-198.
733 See *Shenxiang quanbian*, *juan* 9, 3-4.
734 See Zheng Jiewen, 'Daojiao xianshi Guigu xiansheng jiqi *Guiguzi* kaobian,' 34-38.

rather long and detailed text called 'Discussion of Women by Mayi and Qiu Tanyue' (*Mayi Qiu Tanyue lun nüren* 麻衣秋潭月論女人), a lyrical-style discussion of the theories of female physiognomy.[735]

The two putative authors are, like Bodhidharma, not only seen in this chapter but frequently mentioned throughout the book. We already encountered Mayi as the more or less mythical teacher of early Song physiognomist Chen Tuan. Another name, Qiu Tanyue, literally means 'moon in an autumn lake'. Livia Kohn, in her study of the *Compendium*, regards this name as referring to an unknown figure, even though it appears plenty of times in the book, especially in texts on the physiognomy of women. However, there is indeed a reference to this phrase as a common expression of the status of Chan Buddhist enlightenment in monk's poetry. In the Chan historical record 'The Origin of the Five Lamps' (五燈會元 *Wudeng huiyuan*) from the Song dynasty, we first see this phrase in a poetic couplet: '…be as cold as the moon in an autumn lake, and [you] shall have no desire to be part of the ultimate void [anymore]' (l*engsi qiutan yue, wuxin he taixu* 冷似秋潭月，無心合太虛).[736] Similar to the Discussion of Women by Mayi and Qiu Tanyue, this text is also ascribed to the unknown figure Qiu Tanyue, who might have been a famous physiognomist of women. The title 'The Song of Qiu Tanyue Discussing Married Women' (*Qiu Tanyue shuo furen ge* 秋潭月說婦人歌) indicates that the name Qiu Tanyue is most likely a person's name like Bodhidharma that the text is ascribed to.[737]

Many of these texts ascribed to famous legendary or historical figures are quoted without changes over time in different books. Most of them are composed as if they originated in an

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735 See *Shenxiang quanbian*, *juan* 9, 5.
736 See *Wudeng huiyuan*, *juan* 16, '*Tongxiao*,' 342.
737 See *Shenxiang quanbian*, *juan* 9, 1-2.

oral tradition, in that their titles proclaim their genre as 'song' (歌 *ge*) or 'esoteric verse' (訣 *jue*). Most of these texts can be seen as independent materials without inherent relations to each other despite their similar terminology and their colloquial styles. These texts are also ascribed to famous figures throughout different dynasties. Livia Kohn's analysis, based on her comparison between the *Compendium* and other physiognomy manuals and her review of all the personal names quoted in the titles of these texts, shows that the content of the *Compendium* is actually pertinent to a larger and widely-transmitted tradition of physiognomy that dates back to the 10th century CE.[738] Yet we still require further studies to see the similarities and differences between the *Compendium* and other earlier manuals before we can say anything about the continuity of Chinese physiognomy's theories over this long period of time. Because the *Compendium* was edited and formed in the Ming, and presumably the content of the book was taken from popular songs and verses of physiognomy, the 'tradition' was perhaps more intricate than what we can see from the texts.

As Glen Dudbridge suggests, first the similarities found in different texts do not necessarily lead to a stable use of the similar content in different times and regions, and second an oral tradition itself is not established for the sake of writing or printing.[739] In other words, the reason why many of the songs and verses could have been transmitted orally at a time when printing and writing were prevalent, like the Song or Ming dynasties, was probably the limits of writing or the convenience of oral communication. Sometimes physiognomists themselves even refused to put their knowledge on paper for various reasons, as we saw in the previous chapter. Therefore, the textual representation of physiognomy can hardly be

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[738] See Livia Kohn, 'A textbook of physiognomy,' 227-258.
[739] See Glen Dudbridge, *The His-yu Chi*, 1-10.

taken as evidence for the whole picture of the tradition, but rather as a reflection of certain aspects of it. Furthermore, unlike normal story-telling, the tradition of physiognomy was mainly concerned with the practical end of it. Thus we should be aware that there was a layer of practice beyond the oral and textual representation of this technique. The distance between perceived social performance and theoretical texts can be seen in many Song and Ming stories about physiognomists as mentioned earlier in this chapter.[740] Based on what we have discussed above, the *Compendium* and many other manuals should always be studied with an awareness of their textual nature.

That being said, however, we cannot simply ignore the close link between the manuals, oral traditions and social practice, and thereby simplify the complexity of such a sophisticated tradition. According to fragmentary materials related to the early editions of the *Compendium*, it is clear several aspects of the technique were relatively coherent, and those aspects revealed in the *Compendium* are also seen in other manuals as well since much of the content is quoted many times in other manuals. It is highly probable that some of these common aspects of different texts were vital for the performance of physiognomy, considering the function of these texts as instructions for this technique. As mentioned in earlier in this chapter, one conspicuous tendency of the manuals is to see the spirit of the human body as decisive over morphological features, and another is to understand the body in terms of the metaphor of animals. In almost every chapter, animal analogy appears frequently, as we have seen in Chapter III. In the section on the inspection of particular body parts, graphic illustrations are given to explain specific types of body under the name of different animals. In other words,

[740] See Yuwen xiangren in *Yijian zhi*, *jia zhi*, *juan* 9, 76.

according to the *Compendium*, human beings' diversified physiological features can be categorized according to the natural hierarchy of animals. Yet the language of these texts is vague and abstract, which makes the links between written theories and the operation of this kind of inspection rather unclear. As we already saw in our discussion of the stories of physiognomists, practices of this technique represented in the stories were very different. Moreover, the written physiognomy manuals always required oral explanations and the 'knacks' of different physiognomists. This means that the content of physiognomy books was 'encoded' in their language and cannot be treated as direct guidance for inspections. Oral tradition mattered more in the transmission of physiognomic knowledge.

Another representative example is the illustrations in the manuals. Most of the manuals provide numerous illustrations when discussing the detailed composition of the human body, especially in relation to the categorization of particular body parts. For example, features of eyes are categorized in terms of their resemblance to different animals, and pictures are attached to different types of eyes. Yet the illustrations of these eye images, though showing differences between each other, exhibit hardly any difference specifically mentioned in the texts, and would have been unable to assist the reader in distinguishing between different types of eyes in practice. A more abstract type of illustration is those of hand palm prints. Without providing methods to identify different types of palm prints, most of the books only contain very abstract illustrations to explain what a given kind of palm print looks like. Roel Sterckx points out that illustrations in Ming dynasty medical texts served a decorative function rather than a pragmatic one.[741] Pictures printed in books, as he quotes Clunas, became a

[741] See Roel Sterckx, 'Chatu de juxian,' 70-82. Also Georges Métailié, 'The representation of plants,' 485-520.

commercial 'stunt' for promoting a good sales volume rather than for supporting the content. This is perhaps applicable to illustrations in physiognomy manuals as well. All the illustrations of body parts and different types of body in different manuals lack the technical precision that the texts at least possess. These pictures were included in the Qing editions of the manuals without any drastic improvements.

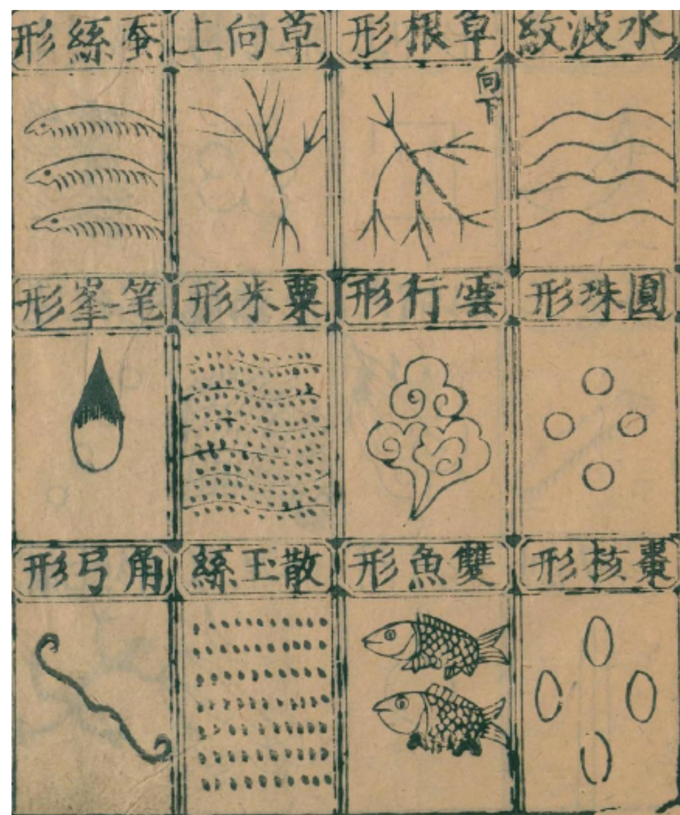

Figure 13 The Chart of Palm Prints in the Jishan tang version of the *Comepndium*.[742]

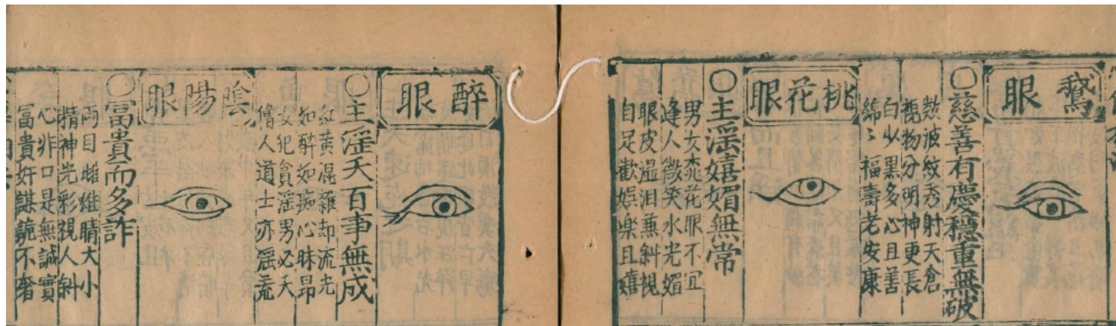

Figure 14 The pictures of different eye types in the Jishan tang version of the *Compendium*.[743]

Figure 15 Two types of strange faces in the Zhihe tang version of the *Compendium*.[744]

Therefore, in spite of the stable transmission of the manuals, there continued to be a considerable distance between what was written down in the text and the performance of the technique. These manuals would have been decipherable to the professional eyes of those familiar with how the language of physiognomy was encoded, but could not have provided

[742] See the Jishan tang edition of *Shenxiang quanbian*, *shou juan*, 18.
[743] See the Jishan tang edition of Shenxiang quanbian, *shou juan*, 8.
[744] See the Zhihe tang edition of *Shenxiang quanbian*, *juan* 4, 20-21.

the essential information for practicing physiognomy *ab initio* to amateur readers.

Without doubts, different types of manuals are also diverse in their generic features. Unlike the *Compendium* or the *Mayi* manual, which were purposefully made to be comprehensive and structurally neat, some other books, like the *Yuebo dongzhong ji* manual, are simply anthologies of unrelated verses. We have to be aware that the same method of production does not mean that these texts were used in the same manner. Especially in the case of physiognomy manuals, the texts were involved in an esoteric and oral tradition. Zheng Binglin and Wang Jingbo, in their study of the Dunhuang physiognomy manuscripts of the Tang dynasty, already discovered that one manuscript, called *The Method of Physiognomy* (*Xiangfa* 相法), differs hugely from other physiognomy manuals in that it records plenty of 'knacks' for applying the rules and implicit techniques of physiognomy to different cases in practice.[745] They believe that this kind of manual served a different function from the general manuals due to its nature of guiding practice. Thus it is less systematic and comprehensive but replete with case studies that are not normally seen in other Dunhuang manuals. They also point out that most of the content of the Dunhuang manuscripts can be found in later Ming manuals, especially in the *Compendium* and *Mayi* manuals. The consistency of the preservation of this content is strikingly high and cannot be coincidental. Yet the content of knack manuals is rarely seen in later ones.

Two late Ming texts, the *Water Reflection* manual and *Iron Halberd* manual, do contain knacks and tips pertinent to the practice of inspections, especially the latter, and were definitely less popularly-oriented than the manuals with more general knowledge. The

[745] See Zheng and Wang, *Dunhuang xieben xiangshu jiaolu yanjiu*, 202-203.

language of these knack texts however, remains vague and encoded, and very hard to fathom without any further explanations. This means that even with these books, learning physiognomy is difficult. Yet still, the available manuals experienced diverse patterns of transformation and cannot be treated as a monolithic group of texts. That is not to say, however, that there is no common ground between the available texts. They were by and large affected profoundly by the development of cosmology and the understanding of the body in Song and Ming society, particularly the Ming. The intertextual nature of these books shows that they explain the relationship between the body and fortune in a similar way.

Conclusion

The social history of Chinese physiognomists represented in texts composed by literati and social elites in the Ming is also the history of this technique; it not only gives us clues about the social mechanisms of physiognomic practice but also provides us with details of the how this technique was perceived and understood in a context different from its manuals. We see that full-time physiognomists, diviners, mysterious figures, literati, Buddhist monks, and Daoist priests performed this technique on different occasions, to different recipients, and formed different social relations via physiognomy practice. The composition of the category of 'physiognomist' was in this sense an intricate one. This makes the category of physiognomist less a permanent identity and more a temporary phase; those who performed physiognomy were seen as physiognomists, but in other contexts they might be something else. The mixed backgrounds of different physiognomists also indicate that the technique itself was related to

many different types of practices. Especially when it comes to the inspection of qi and color on a person's body, the visual ability of clairvoyant sight to see qi and subtle color appears in Buddhist meditation, Daoist cultivation, and popular qi cultivating practices. Physiognomy, particularly pulse physiognomy, also shares many elements in common with traditional Chinese medical practice. Therefore, like European ideas about divination in the late antique period, Chinese physiognomy can also be seen as a form of cultivation.[746]

The cultivational aspect of physiognomy also suggests that there was a kind of practical knowledge and technical element beyond its theory and cosmology. As we have seen in the stories of physiognomy, this type of knowledge, or knack of how to do physiognomy, was often withheld from physiognomy manuals and transmitted in an esoteric manner. A sensitive technique that can predict a person's political future like physiognomy was a potential source of concern for the government. Thus the esoteric tradition served as a way for physiognomists to protect themselves. Yet as a cultivational technique, it required a large amount of practice to perform efficacious physiognomy. In this way, many methods and a lot of experience might not have been possible to put into words. After all, these stories of physiognomy initially represent only the author's experience and perspective on this technique. The limited overlap between physiognomy manuals and practice was therefore part of its technicality; the technical elements of how physiognomy was performed are partly revealed in manuals but mostly hidden. One may only thoroughly learn these technical aspects by practicing physiognomy with a teacher.

In the ongoing controversy surrounding this technique and its esoteric features, the social

[746] See Peter Brown, 'Sorcery, demons, and the rise of Christianity from late antiquity into the middle ages,' 17-46.

perception of physiognomy reveals the complex attitudes literati held to physiognomy. Some of them believed that physiognomy as a noble enterprise should be used for more sublime ends like the inspection of virtue rather than fortune, or helping the emperor to find genuinely talented people to rule the country. Others publicly criticized physiognomy as fraud and despicable trickery. There were literati and intellectuals who also accepted physiognomy as a reliable and sensible technique, and attributed the frauds and failures of physiognomy to a decline in the level of physiognomists. Interestingly, we also find another kind of discrepancy in some literati's perceptions of fortune-telling techniques in their critical public statements and their continued embracing of them in their private lives. Seemingly hypocritical, this can be understood as a type of 'cultural intimacy', an endeavor to balance political pressures from the court and the popularity and long-standing influence of fortune-telling on people's lives.

The intimate relationship that literati, intellectuals and officials shared with physiognomists inevitably led to different kinds of economic exchanges. These exchanges were 'economic' in a sense that there were different levels of the exchange of profit, be it material or social or both. Rather than aiming at immediate material remuneration, many physiognomists devoutly offered financial help to the people they provided predictions to. Such selfless action, far from showing their pure philanthropy, was a sophisticated form of investment. By offering help to people with an auspicious appearance, physiognomists were expecting a solid relationship to be established and maintained even after the students would become successful. Some physiognomists did not ask for any monetary payment but for literati's poetry and used it as a symbol of their reputation and a key to enter the elite community. In the economic exchange of physiognomy practice, what was exchanged was not

only gifts, material benefits or personal favors, but also a sense of trust.

The consistency of the items in the physiognomy manuals in Ming and Qing China shows that the Ming dynasty manuals stand in the center of the textual history of Chinese physiognomy, as highly socialized objects and part of physiognomy's social context. Both the content and ways of categorizing physiognomy knowledge were inherited in the Qing manuals. Private productions of the manuals gave physiognomy a chance to avoid drastic censorship. After all, physiognomy manuals were not the most severely targeted subject of imperial censorship in Ming and Qing dynasties at all. The textualization of physiognomy knowledge showed that on the one hand, manuals were regarded as useful guidance for learning this technique, and on the other hand, they contain encoded knacks of practice which requires oral and secret explanations. The content in most of the manuals already indicates an oral tradition as the source of these written texts. Physiognomy was perceived as an esoteric technique beyond its textual presence.

In conclusion, we can see how the social history of physiognomy reflects how physiognomy was understood and practiced from the Song to Ming in China as presented in the texts. The stories of physiognomists are not only related to the theories and conceptualizations of the body in physiognomy manuals but also reveal what is not recorded in the manuals. The production and transmission of physiognomy manuals is also an indispensable part of the social history of physiognomy. Without an understanding of the social history of physiognomy, we cannot fully understand physiognomy as a technique in practice. Some technical aspects of physiognomy were not discussed in detail here due to the lack of adequate material, including the linear inheritance of knowledge, the use and

transmission of physiognomy in peripheral social areas, and whether physiognomists had their own exclusive community. There is still a vast field for exploration in the study of the social history of physiognomy.

Conclusion

Chinese physiognomy, *xiangshu*, was conceptualized as a technique of inspecting the morphology and qi of the material world, especially the human body, to predict fortunes of human lives in early China. Chinese physiognomy as a divination technique centralizes the body in understanding human existence, human fortune, and the relationship between society and the cosmos. Based on the available evidence, we see that the Ming period was a key period for the development of this technique, during which different authors further developed, systematized and enriched it through written texts. The physiognomy manuals and the social

history of physiognomy allow us to look both at its conceptual dimensions and social as well as historical ones. As a technique, its historical context contains both the theoretical construction and legitimization of physiognomy, and how its social performances were perceived and received in a period of time. From the connections between the stories and the manuals, we see the connections between the manuals and the social practices of physiognomy represented in different texts. Within the extant manuals, we also see different views of what physiognomy is, but at the same time, we find a conceptual common ground defining the relationships between the body, fortune, and the cosmos.

In the Ming manuals, there exists a cosmology that I conclude as body homology. Different from a structuralist use of homology, this homology in Chinese physiognomy manuals stress the 'oneness' between the cosmos, individual human bodies, society, and the myriad things in the world. Social orders and natural/cosmic orders are conceptualized as the same and unified in the microcosmic systems in the human body and different things. This homology means that different things are not only the same in their appearances and structure yet exist as innately different entities, but could be the same in their origin, composition, innate essence, and how they work. A human body is a microcosm because it looks like the cosmos, is structured according the cosmos, works like the cosmos, and is made of the same energy of which the cosmos is made. In this sense, this homology indicates that there is nothing innately different. Therefore, social orders, and people's fortune can be manifested on the body because the social order is the bodily order. A physiognomic logic would be that since the human body unifies cosmic and social orders, future social lives of a person as his or her 'fortune', *ming*, is spatialized in the body. The pattern of the temporal movement of a person's social life this case

is a person's physiological pattern; bodily space and conditions of a person are physiological, social, and cosmic at the same time.

This cosmology is deeply rooted in the repertoire of the body in Chinese medical and cosmological traditions. How physiognomy is conceptualized is directly linked to how the body is conceptualized in traditional China. Ming elites and physicians constantly went back to early traditions of qi cosmology and body microcosm, but interpreted these traditions with new philosophical and numerological inventions established since the Song dynasty, especially in a Neo-Confucian discourse. What stands out is the emphasis on qi as the primary power of generating the universe and the body, and the homological replication between the two. The sameness between the body and the rest of the world means that anything in this cosmos follows the same cosmic rules; diverse phenomena in the world can be seen as processes of the movement of this homological substance 'qi'. The movement of qi in both the universe and the body are understood in complex numerological systems that are not seen in any earlier manuals.

Nonetheless, the body was not the only target of Chinese physiognomy. The whole material world could be placed under physiognomic inspections in this homological worldview. Since early China, the idea of *xiang*, to inspect, or to appear, has been applied to explain not only the physiognomy of human bodies, but also material objects, or even natural phenomena. There are techniques known as the physiognomy of things, *xiangwu*, including animals, material artefacts, houses, and natural landscapes, and so on. The idea of things, *wu*, in this context refers to any visible entities and processes in the cosmos, a concept that can be traced back to early Chinese thoughts. According to the earliest documented way of

understanding *xiang* or physiognomic inspection, the whole material world including the body can be seen as a manifestation of the cosmological order and a potential source for forecasting human fate, so that by looking at the body, or material objects we possess, or the qi of people's residences, physiognomists were believed to be able to predict what will happen to a person based on the homological associations between human life and the material world. In later periods, the physiognomy of the human body and of things came to be seen as two related but independent techniques. In the Song and Ming period, material objects, as well as natural phenomena, were examined according to numerological rules. The symbolic meanings of an object and the physical conditions of it were equally valued and regarded as expressive in telling the future of a person. In the examination of material objects however, the body is still used as a central paradigm to understand the material world. Human being's material belongings, natural phenomena, and other kinds of objects are understood as extensions and replicas of the body. Human fortune hiding in these objects is analyzed and 'dissected' according to their resemblance of the human body as well.

The most representative example of this view and technique of things was the physiognomy of characters. First seen in the Tang period, the inspection of Chinese characters in order to predict someone's fortune became almost as popular as the physiognomy of the body. The rise of writing as a personal hobby, a method of cultivation and a form of art provided space for the divinatory comprehension of writing. Written characters were shown to physiognomists, and based on the semantic meaning of the character, the possible combinations of meaningful radicals, and even the quality of the ink and the personally-specific way in which the character had been written, a physiognomist could work out a

prediction for his or her client. The manuals of character physiognomy theorized this technique by treating written characters as the consequence of a bodily process and as replicas of the cosmos, a process-as-thing that unifies time and space. The body comes from the universe and contains a microcosm, and so do written characters, which come from the body and contain a micro-body as well as a microcosm. Using the Five Phases, the Branches and Stems system, and even the trigram system to dissect its meaning, the iconographic structure and physicality of a written character meant that it should be seen as a human body as well, which then opened up a range of cosmological and numerological interpretations. The physiognomy of things sees human fortune as part of the flow of the material world, which is of course an integral part of the cosmos. The pattern of this movement is everywhere within the cosmos, like the rings of a tree, and one only needs to know the rules to decipher such information. The systematic way of approaching the material world in the Song and Ming manuals of the physiognomy of things was part of the development of the intellectual as well as social discourse at that time in which the universe was increasingly understood as numerological and homological. Everything was essentially the result of qi movement, and qi movement itself contains complex variations and transformations that can be explained in a numerological way. Systems of trigrams in the *Book of Changes*, the Heavenly Stems and Earthly Branches, the Five Phases, and so on, are unified by this qi cosmology. Everything is connected with everything else through the exchange and sharing of qi so that material objects are expressive of human fortune as well. Hence physiognomy was perceived by Song and Ming scholars not simply as a body technique, but as a lens through which the material world was understood and interpreted as an index of human fortune.

Despite the broad purview of physiognomic inspections, the human body was its chief focus and the inspection of the human body was the most intricate technique within physiognomy as a whole. The body is constructed in the Ming manuals as a unity of social and cosmic orders and homological to the cosmos and people's social lives. A person's social time is spatialized and somaticized in the body. In most of the Ming dynasty manuals, the body is explained as the work of cosmic qi movements, and as the most exquisite and comprehensive entity in the world. The body comes from the universe and replicates the universe; thus it is a microcosm, a miniature of the cosmos. This is related to the Chinese medical tradition of seeing the physiological constitution of the body in accordance with formations in the natural world such as rivers, stellar constellations, and the ongoing temporal succession of seasons, an interpretative tradition derived from early Chinese texts but systematically developed further during the Song dynasty. That is to say, the body is a unity of time and space. In the case of physiognomy, most of the manuals see the body as a universe with a constant flow of qi, and the morphological features of the body as a reflection of the natural landscapes of China. This means that the techniques and rules for inspecting natural landscapes are also applicable to the body. When inspecting the body to read fortune, one should pay special attention to the most expressive aspects of it. This means that locating fortune on the body requires a structural perception of the bodily space. The body is inspected from six different angles, its bone patterns, flesh, blood, spirit, color, and qi. The bones of the body are the most decisive and long-lasting features showing a person's fortune, whereas the qi of the body is the most expressive, precise, and volatile. The bones and qi are categorized respectively as the morphological and the energetic facets of the body.

The head is the most important part of physiognomic inspections and this body cosmology, due to its energetic and morphological 'sameness' with the cosmos. The head itself is seen as a microcosm of the body and a replica of the body as well. Dividing the areas of the face into different physiognomic structures, physiognomists are able to scrutinize the information of the temporal movement of a person's life on the body. The division of the facial space is related to the structure of the world in Chinese cosmology. These structures also work for the inspection of the energetic facets of the body, namely spirit, color, and qi. The expressiveness of the energetic elements of the body on the face is vital to the prediction of the near future and the accurate calculation of the exact date of an event. This tallies with some of the stories of physiognomists from the Song period. There are nuanced differences in understanding which body layer is the most deterministic of human fortune in the manuals. Stress on the bones means that as the most stable part of the body, it is the most reliable evidence for the long-term future of a human being, and thus the most decisive. In contrast, some other passages highly value the energetic facets of the body, indicating that the morphological dimensions are generated by the spirit and qi. In this case, even if the morphological features of the body provide stable and long-lasting evidence for the future of a person, without a strong and refined spirit and qi, what they show would just be spurious. The emphasis of the spirit as the most important energetic element in the body tallies with the Neo-Confucian view of the body, seeing the spirit, *shen*, as the most refined form of qi in the body and the core of human being's mind and morality. Ming manuals even quote important Neo-Confucian scholars' words on this matter. Many different passages in different manuals univocally put the eyes at the center of physiognomic inspections; these are the organs where

the spirit hides. Both the physiognomy manuals' and Neo-Confucian literati's interests in the spirit echoes with an intellectual tendency of reinterpreting early Chinese medical and cosmological classics such as the *Inner Canon of the Yellow Emperor*. The importance of the spirit is certainly something the *Inner Canon* expresses, and something that no earlier manuals include.

The physiognomic inspection of the energetic aspects of the body even developed into a relatively autonomous technique, the physiognomy of pulses, in which equally, if not more, complex numerology is applied to the pulses for fortune-telling. The physiognomy of pulses is occasionally mentioned in manuals of human physiognomy but not given much space. Most of the manuals do not give a systematic or detailed description of how to inspect pulses and channels for mantic purposes. Yet some Song and Ming scholars and physicians believed that the physiognomy of pulses was perhaps a sophisticated and possibly ancient technique that had been passed on for generations. The earliest record for this technique is from the Tang dynasty, and the only manuals preserved today are two late Ming manuals with the same name: *The Esoteric Verses of the Pulse of Greater Purity* or *Taisu maijue.* The Pulse of Greater Purity, *taisu mai* is another name that is often used to describe this technique. Pulse physiognomy is more entangled with Chinese medical theories than any of the other branches of physiognomy, for the pulse is an aspect of the body that only people with certain kinds of medical training could probe into. The manuals of pulse physiognomy also contain more content on medical treatment and disease prognosis, which distinguishes them from conventional physiognomy manuals. Yet the ultimate purpose of these two manuals was still divinatory and not medical, which is further confirmed by the anecdotal evidence for this technique. This intricate

technique not only possesses a unique way of depicting and categorizing the tangible features of pulses on the wrist, but also attributes these pulses to different social aspects of people's lives, including achievements in the Imperial Examinations, number of offspring, and future financial conditions. The idea behind it is that the body is the product of cosmic qi, and that this qi also decides people's behaviors, events in daily life, and the moment of death. Social orders and cosmic orders are again unified in the qi flow of human beings' bodily channels. By applying the late Song Five Circulations and Six Qi theory and the systems of the *Book of Changes* to pulses and bodily channels, pulse physiognomy allows people to understand the physicality and energetic composition of the body not only for its own sake but as a reflection of the totality of human existence, which determines human sociality and fortune while revealing the past.

If cosmic and social orders are unified in the body's physiological orders, then the body is not only cosmic, but also social. The homology between social orders and the body's spatial/physiological orders is explained in the manuals where they deal with the prediction of particular aspects of fortune in human life. As a technique of inspection and fortune-telling, the Ming manuals establish a theoretical explanation of why the body can reflect fortune and why it is cosmic, but it should also answer the question of how. In other words, these Ming dynasty physiognomy manuals provide insight into contemporary views of the nature of human society and how fortune should be inspected on the body. Treating society as an extension of a human being, a 'physiognomic sociology' meant that all social occurrences could be traced back to corresponding bodily occurrences. For example, society is stratified because human beings' bodies vary, and bodily distinctions will necessarily lead to social distinctions.

Even in a society where social mobility is possible, like the Song and Ming, the potential rise of a particular person was inscribed on his or her body. The closer someone's body was to the ideal cosmic structure the more likely that person was to enjoy a prosperous future. There are multiple systems that different manuals follow to examine a person's sociality and social existence as manifested on the body, which I conclude as 'the categorization of the body'. This include the categorization of the body according its resemblance to natural orders, the differentiation between different sexes and ages of people, and the categorization of the beautiful and ugly, the moral and immoral.

Specific bodily features are understood first according to their specific links to animals, natural landscapes, and cosmic phenomena. Because in a Chinese discourse, there is never the distinction between the natural and the social, things and phenomena in nature are given social and moral connotations, and even put in a social hierarchy. Dragons are understood as more auspicious, superior, and powerful than dogs. In this way, different bodies resemblance to nature is an indication of the auspiciousness and inauspiciousness of a person's fortune in a society, since the natural order is the social order. Gender issues are also addressed in the manuals, primarily by distinguishing female physiology from that of the male. A woman is ideally characterized by solemnity, purity, self-control in sex, and fertility. These are believed to be the results of a harmonious yin body. A woman's fortune is largely defined in terms of her benefits to the males in her family, and fertility is most important among these benefits. Physical and sexual attraction by contrast are not favored attributes of women, for they are seen as damaging a woman's health and creating moral problems. However, some manuals are less negative towards the female bodies that are less 'effeminate', admitting that female

bodies with a strong yang energy, a masculine character, could be auspicious in special situations. Most of the time, however, this would harm the interests of her husband and the whole family. The manuals clearly see the physical sex of a person as related to their social gender roles, and try to unify the bodily differences between men and women with the social ideals of gender. Physiognomic values, in this case, influenced how people perceived beauty at the time. Female beauty was not defined in this case physical attractiveness, but by quality of qi and the fortune generated by the body. Physiognomic aesthetics also influenced how men should perceive a person's looks in general. Hence, in the manuals there is also the categorization of the beautiful and ugly bodies. Yet this classification creates a *sui generis* 'physiognomic' discourse of bodily beauty which degrades social conventions of bodily 'attractiveness'. One of the representative examples is the huge discrepancy we find between the court portraits of the first Ming emperor Zhu Yuanzhang and portraits produced outside a court context. The courtly version depicts him as a fine and strong man, with a face that is handsome and conventionally beautiful, while in the non-court versions, his face is deformed and strange. Neither depiction may be close to the truth, but here I focused only on the non-court versions. From the social history of the creation of this odd portrayal of Zhu Yuanzhang's face we can see that it may have been a deliberate tactic to make his face look like a dragon's head, so that he could be perceived by others as the 'true son of the dragon', a symbol of the legitimacy of power and rule.

We shall not then rush to the conclusion that his unofficial portrait was a physiognomic construction and the courtly version a genuine representation of him. From the stories of the court painters in the Song and Ming period, we recognize that most of them possessed

physiognomic knowledge, and often applied their knowledge to portrait painting. Thus the court version of an emperor may also consciously or subconsciously be a physiognomic construction. This means that physiognomy influenced people's preference over the body. Physiognomic qualities are not to be equated with simple aesthetic beauty. We already saw that this was not only true of women, but also became apparent from a range of physiognomic exceptions. Sages, celestial beings, enlightened monks and people with special qualities in their qi had constantly cultivated their bodies and minds in their past or current lives, which meant that their inner spirit (as a form of energy) was so strong that it would override their morphological features and general rules in a physiognomic inspection. In other words, these people might appear as physiognomically ugly, inauspicious or unwell, but because of their refined inner natures, their exterior should not matter at all. In some cases, their ostensibly base looks would even be a sign of exceptional fortune resulting from their unique spirit and qi. It means that as the social order is the bodily order, so is its opposition, the transcendence and transgression of social orders. Both the social order and the transcendence of it are comprehended as bodily 'potentials'. In this way, any techniques of liberating oneself morally and physically from the society is seen in the manuals as a body technique.

This brings the discussion of virtue and cultivation into the discourse of body homology. The reason why these people could transcend conventional physiognomic rules was their cultivation, which could change their bodies affect their fixed fate. Both bodily cultivation and moral cultivation were seen as important methods for changing a person's fortune and navigating fate, because virtue is understood as an aspect of the body related to the heart, *xin*. Sudden changes in destined fortune, such as the prolonging of a person's life, the avoidance of

mishaps, or a financial windfall, could be achieved by bodily and moral cultivation or virtuous conducts. The explanation was that physiognomy of the heart was at the core of all predictions. The heart was a rather subtle concept in Song and Ming physiognomy, since it referred to the organ in the chest, but at the same time, one's mental and bodily status as a whole. A good heart can change the supposed fortune reflected on a person's body, and by examining the heart, a physiognomist would be able to detect the genuine pattern of a person's fortune beyond what was manifested on the surface layers of the body. This discourse again is connected with the Neo-Confucian discussion of the heart in moral cultivations, which was highly influenced by Buddhism. The manuals do not provide clear steps for the examination of the heart, but this procedure certainly involved evaluating a person's morality and scrutinizing a person's physical qi. Because mentality and physicality are not two distinct entities in Chinese physiognomy, but two sides of one coin, changes in a person's mental status certainly would bring new conditions to someone's physical status, and vice versa. Morality is 'somaticized' in this physiognomic context. Virtue is part of the body and its potentials. Moral cultivation and moral conduct would result in the appearance of a special type of wrinkle on a person's face known as the Hidden Settlement Line, which was a sign that a virtuous reward had fallen upon a person so that his or her fortune had changed. Daoist and Buddhist methods of cultivation sometimes resulted in eyes with a blue light in both pupils. This was seen as a sign that a person has transcended conventional rules in physiognomy in one way or another. Yet in most of the manuals, it is clearly stated that these were extreme exceptions, whereas, for most people, the rules of fate were absolute.

Physiognomy manuals contain rich information about ideas and cosmology of

physiognomy in the Ming, and representing physiognomy in a theoretical manner. Yet physiognomy is not simply an idea or a collection of thoughts, but a technique, a skill that was used to predict fortune. The manuals only tell half of the story of physiognomy as a technique, displaying what physiognomy 'should be' in theory. Yet the second half of the story of this technique on what physiognomy 'was' in people's eyes cannot be found in the manuals. Consequently, the accounts of how physiognomy was performed, perceived, and received in a particular social as well as historical context show how physiognomy was socialized as a technique. The way in which physiognomy was connected to a broader Ming social and historical landscape is not limited to the connections between different ideas in the manuals and other philosophical as well as cosmological writings. It is pointed out that in the Ming society, divination techniques and theories were hugely developed and enriched, along with a huge market for fortune-tellers from the literati to the general populace, and this transition perhaps first occurred in the Song. From the Song onwards, literati showed their huge interest in fortune-telling techniques like physiognomy and in fortune-tellers. In official history and personal writings at that time, both local elites, literati's and government officials were recorded as clients of physiognomists or practitioner of physiognomy themselves.

The identity of physiognomists in late-imperial China was multi-faceted due to the openness of physiognomic practice. As an open technique, whoever practiced physiognomy was regarded as a physiognomist, from 'professionals' to part-time practitioners such as literati, anonymous travelers, beggars, Buddhist monks, Daoist priests, and lay religious practitioners. It was the technique itself that defined the identity of physiognomists, so that this identity became fluid and open in Song and Ming China. However, along with the fluidity of the

professional identity of physiognomists, we also see an effort to distinguish those who possessed 'genuine' physiognomy techniques from those who were 'fraudulent'. Physiognomists' techniques were open to anyone, but at the same time exclusive to those who had the true talent necessary to understand the 'knacks'. Thus the effectiveness of their practice in this sense also determined who the 'true' physiognomists were as well. Here we see a technicality-orientated social identity in which technical credibility was the root of the social status of the practitioners. The exclusiveness and openness of this technique were two sides of one coin. This meant that as an open technique, it might be combined with numerous other kinds of technique as well, such as medical diagnosis or religious cultivation. One of the most conspicuous interactions between physiognomy and religion was the Buddhist method of changing fate. Buddhist practitioners and believers often surprised physiognomists because of their miraculous changes in physical appearances, and, as a result, their fates.

Because of the diversity of its practitioners, physiognomy technique itself was also diversified, multiplied, and differentiated. The social history of physiognomists during the Ming period contains a large amount of technical information about physiognomic predictions that could serve as verifications of the rules proposed in different physiognomy manuals, or falsifications of certain theories in the manuals. The complex relationship between the manuals and the accounts of the social performances of physiognomy means that despite of the consistency between theories and practice, a technique like physiognomy is always in constant transformation, evolution, and individualization in a society. From the stories of physiognomy practices, we see that physiognomy was a contested and fervently debated technique during the Song and Ming period. There was a continuation of a more general intellectual debate

about divination that we can trace from the Warring States period, with literati doubting, questioning, and nuancing different aspects of physiognomy, from theory to performance. Yet doubts from some authors did not stop educated people from getting involved in physiognomic activities. Many high-level literati, though publicly denouncing physiognomy, were actually acquainted with physiognomists in private and followed their advice.

Just like the performance of physiognomy, physiognomy manuals themselves are socialized objects produced in specific social circumstances as well. That is to say, how physiognomy manuals were perceived, received, and circulated also matters to the socialization of physiognomy as a technique. After all, they were considered as important carriers of physiognomic knowledge and as stories show, they were understood as useful books to study physiognomy. Yet attitudes toward physiognomy manuals were not consistent in the stories. Some records show that there was the belief that textualized physiognomy manuals did not represent the true core of this technique, and physiognomists sometimes withheld important information or 'knacks' of physiognomy with them. These 'knacks' were only transmitted orally from masters to disciples, indicating esoteric lineages in the transmission of physiognomy. This problematizes the nature and social context of the manuals.

The manuals extant today are the only sources we have, apart from scattered stories of physiognomists, to understand what physiognomy was in traditional China. Many physiognomists supposedly wrote and compiled manuals themselves, like Chen Tuan and Yuan Gong. Yet there are no plausible editions of their manuals left to us. Instead we have manuals edited and compiled by later scholars or physiognomists who then ascribed these texts to earlier and more famous practitioners. Physiognomy was still perceived as a technique

closely attached to the manuals. Ming manuals stand at the center of the transmission and inheritance of physiognomic texts. *The Compendium of Divine Physiognomy* is the most representative example of Ming manuals' comprehensiveness and systematic structure. The stable transmission of this manual and similar texts from the Ming to the Qing shows that on the one hand, private publication as a social institution allowed the stabilization of the content of the manual, and on the other hand, that imperial censorship focused less on manipulating physiognomy manuals. These manuals were valued as precious texts guiding physiognomy practice. But the majority of the items in the texts were written in an encoded manner and clearly combined with oral tradition. This means that the manuals should not be understood verbatim but required special 'knacks' in order to be usefully practiced. The secretiveness or esoteric nature of physiognomy is sometimes explicitly stated in the texts. Nonetheless, the conceptualization of physiognomy during the Song-Ming period was definitely influenced by the rise of a written manual culture, at a time when printing became increasingly common and books could be more widely circulated and owned in literati communities. The transmission of printed physiognomy manuals shows a desire for a standardized, clarified, and stable way to understand physiognomy, which is stated at the beginnings of the manuals. Most of the compilers stated that the content came from celestial beings or mysterious masters. This was a way to justify the textual version of physiognomy as authentic and reliable.

This research does not claim to have the final word on the study of physiognomy in China, but only as a start. Divination in East Asian societies still possesses a huge vitality and exercises a strong influence on people's lives today. The way in which traditions are inherited and developed textually and practically means that techniques like physiognomy are still living

traditions. There have been conversations between traditional divination and Western science since the early modern period in China. This means that the impact of physiognomy, and what we see in the manuals, are only the tip of the iceberg. The philosophical understanding of the body in the manuals only served as general guidance for physiognomists' practice, which means that we should always bear in mind the practicality of divination as well. We have tried to gain more insight into the social performance pf physiognomy by looking at the anecdotal literature on physiognomy. As a living tradition, divination techniques like physiognomy not only tell people why fortune lies in the body but also how to change it. This can also allow us to re-examine other kinds of techniques that have existed in different religions and social communities over time, and to look at how religion, divination and popular cultivation are not only ideas in the human mind, but also techniques performed in human life.

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