

The Quest 393

Chapter 393: Taoist Meaning (1)

In the vast expanse of the Spirit Field, there was a secluded patch of land.

Mo Hua sat on the ridge, beginning to practice the Thick Earth Formation on a patch of bare earth in front of him.

The principles of the Thick Earth Formation itself, Mo Hua had already mastered with the help of the Taoist Stele.

The only problem was that when drawn, the formation had no effect.

Thick Earth espouses the virtue of vastness; it carries weight, cultivates, and nurtures all living things.

This Formation must use the land as the Formation media to truly take effect.

Mo Hua, holding his brush dipped in ink, began to draw the Thick Earth Formation on the ground.

After a while, a mysterious and ancient Thick Earth Formation, containing eleven Formation Patterns, was completed.

Mo Hua infused Spiritual Power, hoping to activate the formation.

But the Spiritual Power entered the formation like water pouring into a bucket with a hole; it drained away in an instant.

Mo Hua wiped the Formation Patterns with his hand, and they were easily erased.

Mo Hua sighed.

He had failed.

Mo Hua was not willing to give up and started to draw again.

As expected, the second drawing also failed.

The third drawing did not succeed either...

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After his Divine Sense was exhausted, Mo Hua sat in meditation, waiting for it to fill up again before continuing to draw.

But no matter how he drew, the Patterns could not merge with the land, and the Spiritual Power could not circulate.

Mo Hua furrowed his brows and thought:

"It seems Master was right, it sounds simple in theory, but in practice, it's totally different..."

"No matter how I draw, the Patterns cannot stay on the ground, and the Spiritual Power cannot resonate with the earth."

"Moreover, after drawing so many times, there's still no progress..."

"Should I ask Master again?"

Mo Hua hesitated, then shook his head.

Better to contemplate it again.

If Master had wanted to tell him, he would have done so already.

Master's silence must mean something else, that he wanted him to figure it out on his own.

There's an old saying, "The master points the way, but the cultivation is up to the individual."

It's better to learn and think on one's own; the understanding is deeper that way.

Mo Hua nodded to himself, then pondered:

"I must not have drawn enough."

"Draw a Formation a hundred times, and its meaning will reveal itself."

"Let's draw a hundred times first, and if there's still no clue, then I'll ask Master."

Mo Hua nodded again, concentrated his breath, and resumed drawing the Thick Earth Formation on the land.

He drew from morning to afternoon, and from afternoon to evening.

Mo Hua did not need to sleep at night.

When his Divine Sense was exhausted, or he felt tired, he would sink his Divine Sense into the Sea of Consciousness.

Sitting quietly in front of the Taoist Stele for a while in meditation, his Divine Sense would be replenished, leaving him feeling refreshed.

Mo Hua drew the Formation day and night without rest.

Bai Zixi, with a young child in tow, brought food to Mo Hua.

But seeing that Mo Hua was absorbed in drawing the Formation, she did not disturb him, simply leaving the food beside him quietly.

When Mo Hua tired from drawing and took a break, he would casually eat a few bites upon seeing the meal box.

After eating, he would continue drawing the Formation.

Several days later, Mo Hua had drawn the Thick Earth Formation eighty to ninety times, but the Patterns still could not merge with the earth.

Mo Hua began to doubt himself.

Was the method incorrect?

Is it that my own comprehension just isn't enough?

Can't really have to draw it a hundred times, right...

But according to this pattern, even if I drew it a hundred times, there doesn't seem to be any progress.

Mo Hua frowned, propped his chin and silently thought.

Had he overlooked something?

The elements of the Formation: Formation media, Formation Patterns, Formation Pivot, Formation eye.

He should have considered all of these...

Besides these, there's the Spiritual Ink, Spiritual Power, Divine Sense...

Mo Hua muttered each term, suddenly feeling a jolt in his heart.

Divine Sense...

Cultivators must use their Divine Sense to comprehend Formations.

But he was also using his Divine Sense to comprehend Formations, wasn't he?

Could it be that what he needed to comprehend wasn't just the Formation?

The Formation is drawn upon the earth, with its profound ability to carry all things, the Dao of the Earth... so in addition to the Formation, is there also the "earth" to comprehend?

Mo Hua sat down cross-legged with a try-and-see attitude, took a deep breath, and concentrated, starting to communicate with the earth through his Divine Sense.

An hour passed.

Nothing happened...

Mo Hua felt a bit disheartened and puzzled.

Suddenly he clapped his forehead, recalling something.

Mr. Zhuang had just told him:

"For a cultivator to comprehend the Dao, simply having perception is not enough, it's easy to become intangible and abstract, formalistic, lacking substance."

"And a Formation is the manifestation of the Heavenly Dao, the bridge that connects cultivators with the intangible Heavenly Dao."

The Formation is the bridge that connects cultivators with the Dao of heaven and earth.

It's not sitting and daydreaming, but rather, using the Formation as a bridge, drawing the Formation while comprehending the Great Dao.

Mo Hua's eyes brightened, then he dipped his brush in ink again and began to draw the Thick Earth Formation on the ground.

Only this time, as he drew, he also unfolded his Divine Sense, communicating with the earth.

As his brush moved, Mo Hua faintly felt that his Divine Sense seemed to be stirred.

It seemed that the vast earth exhaled almost imperceptible breaths, which, as he replicated the Formation Patterns, gradually surfaced.

With each additional stroke of the Pattern, the earth's breath grew thicker.

The touch of Mo Hua's Divine Sense became clearer.

Once Mo Hua completed the Formation, he was certain in his heart that he had indeed sensed something.

It was a vast, profound, and compassionate breath.

But this was still just a sensation.

After the sensation, the earth remained silent, without a trace of breath.

Mo Hua looked down at the Formation he had drawn.

Parts of the Formation Patterns had already begun to fuse with the land, but only a shallow layer had merged, able to absorb only a faint Spiritual Power.

Despite this, Mo Hua's spirits lifted.

This meant his idea was correct.

To comprehend the Thick Earth Formation, one must not only understand the Formation itself but also experience the Great Dao it contains.

Only by combining the Formation with the Dao and using the "earth" as the Formation media can this Ultimate Formation be drawn.

He had now experienced some of its profound mysteries, but having drawn too little, and reflected for too little time, the intensity was still inadequate.

What he needed to do next was to simply keep drawing.

Mo Hua's eyes shone like stars.

He rallied his spirits and continued to practice the Thick Earth Formation using the method he had just realized.

The effect of this practice session was noticeably much better.

With each additional Formation drawn, the Pattern became more integrated with the land.

The perception of the earth's breath from his Divine Sense also gradually clarified.

It was as if the boundless earth possessed its own will, ancient and unchangeable, silent and wordless, yet also broad-minded, nurturing all beings.

Mo Hua communicated with this ancient will, gradually comprehending, his Divine Sense forming an affinity with it.

Hence, his understanding of the Thick Earth Formation became increasingly profound.

Finally, after an indeterminate amount of time had passed, Mo Hua successfully completed the first Thick Earth Formation upon the earth.

The Formation Patterns merged with the ground as one.

Mo Hua ignited the formation with his Spiritual Power.

In the deep night, the Thick Earth Formation emitted a warm and gentle luster.

Within the formation, the Spiritual Power also went through a special transformation.

It seemed to gain its own life, evolving independently, transforming into more delicate, more gentle Spiritual Power.

This Spiritual Power was like fine spring rain, merging into the land, nourishing life, proliferating endlessly.

Mo Hua could even feel a strong sense of vitality rising from the soil.

"The Earth's potential is fertile, its generosity sustaining all; is this the essence of the Thick Earth Formation..." he murmured, momentarily lost in thought.

He finally understood why the Ultimate Formations were called as such.

For the Spiritual Power circulation within Ultimate Formations had an essential difference compared to ordinary formations, bringing them closer to a deeper layer of the Dao.

Mo Hua now mastered two types of Ultimate Formations.

One was the Reversed Spirit Formation, the other was the Thick Earth Formation.

The Reversed Spirit Formation caused Spiritual Power to unravel, while the Thick Earth Formation allowed Spiritual Power to reproduce.

The unraveling of the Reversed Spirit signified death and destruction.

The nourishing of the Thick Earth signified endless life.

Both were transformations of Spiritual Power, distinct from each other, yet they both returned to the same origin, evolving within the Dao.

Suddenly, Mo Hua had an epiphany. His mind became crystal clear, and his understanding of the Great Dao deepened.

"To exhaust all Formation Studies is to approach the Dao..."

This saying of Mr. Zhuang was deeply etched into Mo Hua's Sea of Consciousness.

It was now past 1 a.m., and the night sky was filled with dense stars.

The moonlight, like a gauze, lay over the Spirit Fields and mountains.

Mo Hua's mood lightened considerably, and he let out a long sigh of relief.

After spending so much time, he had finally mastered the Thick Earth Formation.

Mo Hua wanted to rest for a while, but he felt lively and full of energy as if rest was unnecessary.

He decided to further consolidate the Thick Earth Formation.

So, Mo Hua once again drew the Thick Earth Formation on the ground.

But this time, he felt something was amiss.

Although the Formation Patterns merged with the ground, there were occasional interruptions; the Spiritual Power flow was not particularly smooth either.

After pondering, Mo Hua realized the issue.

Although he had sensed the breath of the earth, his understanding was still shallow.

Therefore, this perception was intermittent, and so was the formation itself, occurring in fits and starts.

Such a skill level could only be considered a forced learning, not mastery.

At the very least, it was probably much inferior to the Old Ancestor of the Sun Family.

Thinking of how the Old Ancestor of the Sun Family reconstructed the Spirit Field with the pattern of the Thick Earth Formation, Mo Hua was even further from achieving that.

Mo Hua frowned.

The root of the problem did not lie in the formation itself.

Having drawn it so many times, Mo Hua had become sufficiently proficient in the Thick Earth Formation; he could complete it even with his eyes closed.

The problem was the perception of the earth's breath.

Once Divine Sense lost this perception, the Formation Patterns could not harmonize with the earth.

Mo Hua closed his eyes and once again sought to connect with that breath using his Divine Sense.

This time it was much clearer, yet still faint and elusive, beyond his grasp to perceive any deeper.

No matter how much more he tried, this was as far as he could go.

Resting his chin on his hand and furrowing his brows, Mo Hua's thoughts raced.

He needed to find a way...

If one cannot clearly perceive this breath of the Dao, Divine Sense cannot communicate with the earth, and thus, one cannot draw the Thick Earth Formation accurately and with complete certainty.

Nor is it possible to construct a Spirit Field.

In that case, one cannot be said to have truly mastered the Thick Earth Formation.

"If my own Divine Sense is limited, what if I rely on the 'Taoist Stele'?"

Mo Hua's thoughts shifted, and as his gaze flickered, his Divine Sense plunged into the Sea of Consciousness.

Within the Sea of Consciousness, the Taoist Stele emerged.

Mo Hua, while drawing the Thick Earth Formation on the Taoist Stele, used it to sense the breath of the earth.

Suddenly, Mo Hua felt a tremor within the Taoist Stele.

It was as if Divine Thought from heaven and earth had descended, resonating with the Taoist Stele.

In an instant, Mo Hua's mind and spirit were both shaken.

It was as if his Divine Sense perceived an ancient and immortal colossal Divine Thought.

This Divine Thought was compassionate and magnanimous, vast as the endless sea.

And his own Divine Sense, faint and minuscule, was merely a grain within that sea.

Moreover, the breath of this Divine Thought seemed faintly familiar.

In a flash of realization, Mo Hua understood.

During his drawing of the Thick Earth Formation, the breath he perceived originated from this Divine Thought.

But his own Divine Sense was too weak, sensing only a trivial breath.

Now, with the assistance of the Taoist Stele, what he perceived was the magnificent Divine Thought!

This was the Divine Thought of the vast earth!

This Divine Thought contained neither good nor evil, neither joy nor anger, nor any of the selfish thoughts of the mortal world.

Just like the earth itself, bearing and nurturing all things, and yet allowing the cycle of life and death to unfold without interference.

Rather than calling it a Divine Thought, it was more akin to the "Dao" of the earth itself.

With luck on his side, Mo Hua started to draw the Thick Earth Formation on the Taoist Stele.

This time, the Thick Earth Formation was incredibly profound.

Every stroke seemed to contain the power of the earth.

Upon completion of the Thick Earth Formation, using the formation as a bridge, Mo Hua felt a faint connection with this Divine Thought.

His Divine Sense and the earth's Divine Thought became increasingly harmonious.

And through this Divine Thought, Mo Hua also personally grasped the "Dao of the Earth."

A mere moment of comprehension, yet it was profoundly deep.

Heaven births all things; the earth nurtures them all.

The withering of grass and trees, the falling of ripe fruit—life's continuous cycle, passed down through generations.

Upon the earth, the unfolding of countless lives was displayed.

In a trance, Mo Hua felt a revelation.

"Heaven's law is learned from the earth; man's law from heaven."

It was as if he truly stood upon the vast earth and glimpsed the "Dao" of the earth.

His Divine Sense was in harmony with the Dao of the earth.

Mo Hua faintly felt that one day, he truly would be able to use thought as his brush and "earth" as his paper.

Under heaven's expanse, within earth's reach, wherever Divine Sense travels, draw ground into Formation!

...

Meanwhile, Mr. Zhuang, who had been resting with his eyes closed, suddenly opened his eyes and saw Old Kui with a similarly shocked expression.

That moment, they both sensed an unforeseen trepidation in the air.

Mr. Zhuang whispered in disbelief:

"Who... has touched upon Taoist Meaning?"

Then both were shocked and looked towards the southeast direction of the Spirit Field.

There in the Spirit Field, his young disciple had been contemplating the Formation all along.

And at this very moment, within the Spirit Field, there arose a profound and indescribable breath, endlessly vigorous.

Mr. Zhuang's gaze became increasingly incredulous...