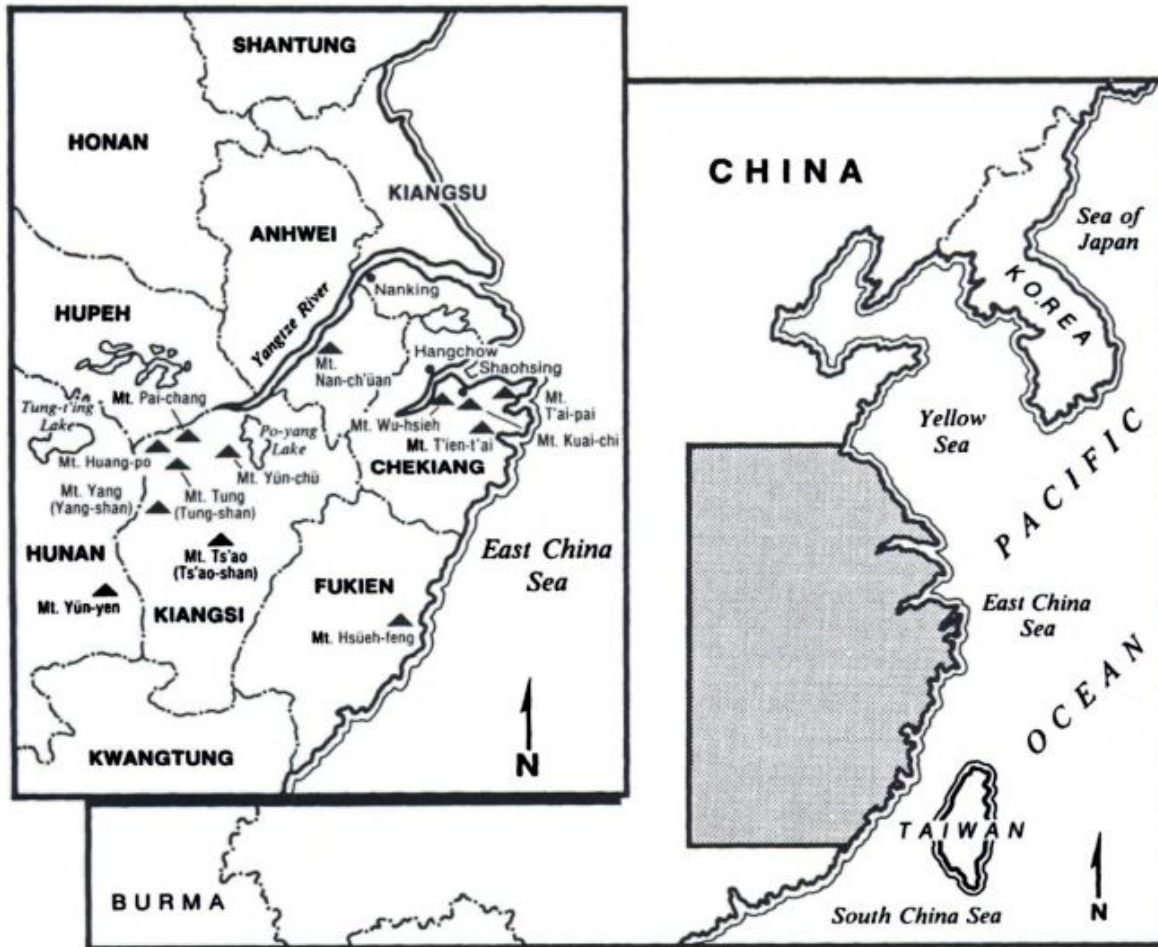


# The Five Ranks of Ts'ao-Tung

1. Particularity in universality. (subjectivity)
2. Universality in particularity. (objectivity)
3. Enlightenment emerging from universality
4. Enlightenment emerging from particularity
5. Enlightenment emerging from the mutual inter-penetration of the universal and the particular

## The Ts'ao-Tung Ch'an Lineage

Ts'ao-Tung was a Chinese Ch'an (zen) lineage. Ts'ao-Tung is a combination of the Ch'an Master names Tung-shan and Ts'ao-shan. Tung-shan had 26 dharma heirs and Ts'ao-shan was one of them. Tung-shan lived from 807-869 while Ts'ao-shan lived from 840-901. The Five Ranks were written by Tung-shan and refined by Ts'ao-shan. Tung-shan and Ts'ao-shan are revered as the founders of the Ts'ao-Tung lineage.



Ch'an Sites in Ninth Century Southeast China

Zen practice and culture during the ninth century was flourishing. This era is referred to as **The Golden Age of Zen**. *"The Record of Tung-shan"* richly describes this time:

The impression one gets from the various accounts of the Ch'an Buddhism of the middle period is of an elaborate network of masters, each transmitting his own creative understanding of Buddhism to numerous followers who wandered from master to master. Questions of lineage legitimacy, which characterized the early period, were no longer in evidence. The narrowing of the various lineages to five "houses," with their characteristic teachings or styles, had yet to occur. Most of the activity in the middle period was concentrated south of the Yangtse River, principally in an area west of Lake Po-yang in modern Kiangsi Province (see map, p. 22). In and around this area, known during the Sui and T'ang dynasties as Hung-chou, were located the centers of Ma-tsu (709 788), Pai-chang (720 814), Huang-po (d. 850), Tung-shan (807 869), Yünchü (835? 902), Ts'ao-shan (840 901), and Yang-shan (807 883). Slightly farther west of this area in modern Hunan were located the centers of Yün-yen (d. 850) and Kuei-shan (771 853). To the east in modern Fukien was the center of Hsüeh-feng (822 908). Lin-chi (d. 866), who eventually established his center far to the north, began his career in Hung-chou under Huang-p'o. All of these well-known masters were considered distinctly individualistic in their teaching styles and personalities. However, the fact that they were all contemporaries or near contemporaries, that their centers, except for Lin-chi's, were located in close proximity to one another, and that their students were in the habit of regularly visiting the other masters in the region gave to the Ch'an of this period a coherence and momentum that undoubtedly contributed to the significant later influence of this group of masters.

# The Five Ranks of Ts'ao-Tung

on The Zen Circle

