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CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

TALISMANS AND DIAGRAMS*

CATHERINE DESPEUX

DESCRIPTION

Talismans (*fu* 符), registers (*lu* 簄), diagrams (*tu* 圖), written documents (*shu* 書, *chishu* 禺書), perfect texts (*chenwen* 真文) and cloud seal writing (*yunzhuan* 雲篆) are fundamental elements of Daoism, closely related to the doctrines expressed in revealed scriptures and to legitimation of power invested by the gods in their representatives on earth.

Talismans, commonly used in conjunction with incantations or spells (*zhou* 咒) as well as with registers, are oblong pieces of wood, metal or, more recently, colored paper (usually yellow, red or blue) inscribed with figurative signs and formal symbols, written in black or red ink. Depending on the situation, they may serve as a manifestation of cosmic energies, a geomantic chart, the representation of a deity, an edict from the spirit world or an order issuing from one or the other god, which makes ghosts and demons tremble and keeps them under tight control. Registers, usually linked with talismans to form a sacred pair, are writs that contain lists of deities' names (or their images), talismans or diagrams. Formed by the spontaneous coagulation of cosmic energies and transmitted by the gods, all these sacred documents are contracts that give their holders power over divine troops and ensure the authenticity of scriptural transmission to human society (see *Siaoshu* 晴書 35.1092).

Compared to talismans and registers, diagrams or sacred charts are a great deal less numerous and less frequently used. They can be divided into three major categories. The first includes those representing mythical geography or drawing the true shape of a geographic feature; examples are the charts of the five sacred mountains, of the Bird-Man Mountain, of the Lingbao paradise of Fuli 浮黎 and of the underworld of Fengdu 鬼都. The second type includes diagrams associated with the *Iying* 易經 (Book of

* Translated by Livia Kohn

Changes), which reveal the functioning of the universe and its cosmogonic principles; examples are the "Diagram of the Great Ultimate," the "River Chart," and the "Writ of the Luo." The third, finally, consists of representations of the body, syntheses of cosmogonic elements, depictions of body gods, the underworld, alchemical processes and talismanic elements; the prime example here is the *Neijing tu* 內景圖 or "Diagram of Interior Lights."

They have in common that they depict, in abstract and diagrammatic form, the workings of the universe in its raw and undiluted state, showing adepts the interior structure, the true shape of things and thus endowing them with power over them.

HISTORY

ORIGINS. Talismans and diagrams are documented from the earliest Daoist movements under the Han. According to Anna Seidel,

the talismans, charts, registers, writs and tallies are not magic wands invented from scratch or derived from some preexisting folk religion or medium cult; they are, rather, elaborations upon the Han theme of imperial treasure objects, the presence of which guaranteed the imperial mandate. (1983, 292)

The most important of these treasures since the Han have been the *Hexu* 河圖 (River Chart) and the *Luoshu* 蘿書 (Writ of the Luo), which have been subject to numerous interpretations and speculations, but whose original design is unknown. They are, as will be documented below, the ancestors of all Daoist diagrams. For example, a Six Dynasties scripture recovered from Dunhuang, the *Ruiying tu* 瑞應圖 (Chart of Being in Accord with Good Fortune, P. 2683), describes several mythical animals carrying sacred diagrams just like the *Hexu* and *Luoshu*.

As regards our view of the texts themselves, one of the apocryphal texts of the Han, the *Longyu hexu* 龍魚河圖 (River Chart of Fish and Dragon) relates the origins of talismans and registers specifically to Heaven in the legends of the Yellow Emperor (Huangdi 黃帝). When he was fighting his battle with the Wormy Rebel (Chiyou 嚣尤), Huangdi was aided by Heaven, which sent sacred talismans through a mysterious fish. Since then, talismans and registers have been transmitted in the world (see Seidel 1983, 313).

Historically, the various terms involved (*fu*, *lu*, *tu*, *shu*) were used interchangeably in the texts. Both talismans and registers, moreover, were closely related to the idea of the contract (*qi* 契), while diagrams are connected with the concept of the true interior shape (*zhenxing* 真形). As a

result, these different sacred objects were often similar to one another—talismans easily can resemble diagrams, and vice versa.

The most ancient talismans transmitted to date are from the Han. Archaeological excavations of Eastern Han tombs have brought to light some specimens dated before 151 C.E. (e.g., from Luoyang, Dingzhou and Gaoyou; see Wu 1981, 61-62). Even earlier, a manuscript excavated from tomb no. 3 at Mawangdui, dated to before 168 B.C.E., prescribes the ingestion of a talisman burnt to ashes and dissolved in water as a remedy for the effects of the infamous *Gu* poison. This indicates the therapeutic application of talismans already under the Western Han (see Harper 1982; 1998).

The same kind of therapeutic use is also attested for the Daoist movement under Zhang Daoling 張道陵, the first Celestial Master. Founded on the idea of a contract between the newly arisen Lord Lao and the Daoist community, it promised its members that the gods would grant them health and long life—provided they did not commit any sins. Therapeutic talismans were accordingly considered documents that guaranteed the contract between the deity and humanity (see Kaltenmark 1960, 584). In the same period, Zhang Jue 張角, the leader of the Great Peace movement in eastern China, also "drew up therapeutic talismans. He ordered the sick to prostrate themselves on the ground and confess their sins, then gave them talismanic water to drink, so they would be cured" (*Sanguo zhi* 三國志8.112; see Kobayashi 1991; Tsuchiya forthcoming).

In addition to healing, in the Later Han, talismans were also believed to have powers of exorcism and protection against harm. The *fangshi* Fei Changfang 費長房, for example, received a talisman from his master that allowed him to command demons and earth spirits. The latter protected him well until he lost the talisman (*Hou Hanshu* 後漢書 72.2734-45; see Ngo 1976, 128-34; Seidel 1983, 315; DeWoskin 1983).

LATER DEVELOPMENTS. In the Six Dynasties and Tang, all Daoist schools made use of talismans either as part of personal cultivation (complementing abstention from grains; see Eskildsen 1998, 58-59), as a means of entering the mountains safely, as protection during visualization practice or as collective charms in community rituals. Diagrams, on the other hand, were used largely in the Lingbao 畫寶(Numinous Treasure) school, directly continuing usages of the imperial treasures of the Han.

From Song times onward, new Daoist schools proliferated that combined the teachings and practices of the three major medieval currents (Shangqing, Lingbao, and Celestial Masters) with new methods and other elements. Exorcistic, therapeutic and funerary rituals multiplied manifold, and individual practices, such as inner alchemy and ecstatic visualizations, were newly joined with rites geared to bring resolution to collective

problems, such as epidemics, droughts and communication with the dead. As a result, cartographic, symbolic, corporeal, cosmic and scriptural elements increased dramatically in the talismans. They became more diversified in type and a great deal more complex in nature, involving also more figurative forms. In addition, the sheer numbers of talismans transmitted in the literature of the period are enormous, much higher than before, especially since the great ritual compendia were produced then. Diagrams similarly became richer and more complex; they were associated primarily with the Shenxiao 神霄 (Divine Empyrean) school, with numerical speculation and with the philosophical discourse of the *Yijing*.

CELESTIAL MASTERS. The religious organization of the Celestial Masters followed the cosmological model of the *Yiqi tu* 一氣圖 (Chart of the Energy of Unity), which represented the twenty-four energies of the year. They had accordingly twenty-four parishes, plus one in the cosmic center—the great parish of Lord Lao on Mount Kunlun 鹿鳴山. The *Yiqi tu* was transmitted by libationers and consisted entirely of talismans, which were also handed down separately from a master to each disciple on the basis of his or her personality and fundamental destiny (as determined by the eight characters of the horoscope). Receiving the talismans made the disciples formally members of the community of Orthodox Unity. The talisman of transmission incorporated the energy of the master's body as well as the authority of the celestial realm. In the transmission ritual, the adept would identify himself with the essence of the talisman, which thereby became a protective force as well as one of control and critical awareness. The protective powers it commanded had human forms, and the adept had to learn how to see and interact with them. As he, with the help of the talisman, integrated himself into the overall cosmic chart, so he would become a full member of the social organization. His talisman, moreover, came with distinct registers that contained a list of his powers and established his rank within the institutional grades (Schipper 1994, 89–91). The registers served as the foundation of the Celestial Master's legitimization, and adepts' lives were punctuated at regular intervals by their transmission. The *Zhengyi mengwei falu* 正一盟威法錄 (Formal Registers of the Awesome Covenant of Orthodox Unity, CT 1209) lists fourteen kinds, including registers for infants and those of ten generals, seventy-five functionaries, 150 immortal generals, and of the "three and five" used in sexual rites, as well as registers that protected the body, destiny and longevity, together with those that eliminated impurities and helped against demonic influences (see Fig. 1). Typically talismans were rectangular in shape and of a simple composition, mainly consisting of symbolic signs and stylized characters. In this they were similar to those contained in Ge



1. The great register of
mission of the Celestial

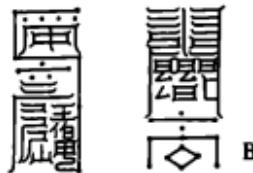
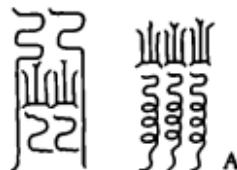


Figure 2. Talismans of
Orthodox Unity (A) as
compared to those in Ge
Hong's *Baopuzi* (B). Source:
Sanwu zhengyi fulu, 3.13ab;
Baopuzi 17.

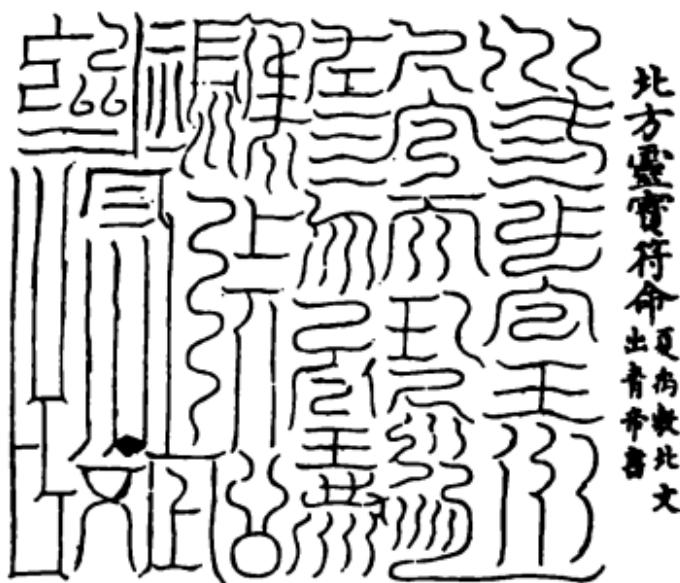


Figure 3. The Lingbao talisman of the north. Source: *Lingbao wufu* (CT 388) 3.11b.

Hong's 葛洪(273-341) *Baopuzi* 抱朴子(*Book of the Master Who Embraces Simplicity*, CT 1185; see Fig. 2).

NUMINOUS TREASURE. The fundamental scripture of the Lingbao (Numinous Treasure) school is the *Lingbao chishu wupian zhenwen* 畫寶赤書五篇真文 (Perfect Text of Numinous Treasure in Five Tablets, Written in Red, CT 22) of the late fourth century C.E. It presents the five perfect texts of the five cosmic emperors, each associated with one of the five inner organs. These perfect, celestial texts consist of characters believed to have been created from cosmic fire before the dissolution of primordial chaos. They were also considered numinous diagrams (*lingtu* 畫圖).

The five talismans (*wufu* 五符) of the five emperors and the five sacred mountains, convoluted and intricate designs of lines and circles (see Fig. 3), are at the very core of the Lingbao tradition in the Six Dynasties. According to the *Lingbao wufu序* (Explanation of the Five Lingbao Talismans, CT 388), they were transmitted from the Three Sovereigns and



Figure 4. Diagram of the true shape of Mount Heng, the sacred mountain of the south.
Source: *Lingbao wayue guben chenxing tu* (CT 441), 9b.

Five Emperors down to the flood hero Yu 禹 who hid them on Zhongshan 鐘山 (Bell Mountain) of the Kunlun range, where they were rediscovered by King Helü 闔閭 of Wu. The latter, however, was not worthy of them and lost them again (see Kaltenmark 1960; Bokenkamp 1986). The talismans were made accessible again to the human world at the end of the Han, notably to Ge Xuan 葛玄, who transmitted them to his descendants of the Ge family. In Ge Hong's time, in the early fourth century, the five talismans formed part of the Lingbao scriptures; one set appears as the five talismans used to enter the mountains (*Baopuzi* 17; see Chen 1975, 62-66). For the latter, we even have instructions on their use:

When you are going into the mountains, choose a *juyin* day on which to write the talismans on plain silk, place them at night on a table, and as you face the Northern Dipper offer them sacrifices of wine and salted meat. To each of them introduce yourself briefly by name, bow twice, and then place them in the neck of your garment. This will drive from you the many ghosts and powers, the tigers, wolves, insects, and poisons from the mountains and rivers. (Ware 1966, 295)

These talismans, therefore, protected the adept while entering the mountain, while also giving him the means to collect the right herbs, surround himself with guarding charms and find support in his quest for immortality.

While the earliest Lingbao scriptures are lost except for some traces in Han-dynasty apocrypha; they apparently consisted to a large extent of cosmic diagrams. Three parts are known:

1. *Hetu yincan fu* 河圖隱存符 (River Chart Talisman of Invisibility), which consisted of talismans associated with the *Hetu* that allowed adepts to become invisible;

2. *Yiwo feigui* 伊維飛龜 (Flying Tortoise of the Yi and Luo Rivers), which described the *Luoshu* as brought to humanity by a wondrous tortoise;

3. *Pingheng* 平衡 (Equalizer), which dealt with the cosmic balance of great peace, as symbolized by the star Yuheng 玉衡 of the Northern Dipper.

For Lingbao Daoists of the fifth century, these texts were none other than the *Hetu* and *Luashu* themselves (see Kaltenmark 1960; Seidel 1982; Yamada 1989, 103).

Although diagrams are most prominent in Lingbao Daoism, other schools also made use of them. For the pre-Song period, three series should be mentioned. First, there is the group of diagrams associated with the *Wuyue zhenxing tu* 五嶽真形圖 (Chart of the True Shape of the Five Sacred Mountains, CT 1223; see Chen 1975, 77-78). Their first and very ancient symbolic representation is attributed to Dongfang Shuo 東方朔, magician under the Han emperor Wu 武帝 (see Smith 1992), who made it accessible to the world. Their next appearance, similar to the first but with more inscriptions, is in a manuscript associated with Ge Hong. Here each mountain looks like a big black shape placed in a square box. The black shape represents the true form of the mountain, while the lines and small (red) points inside indicate the sources and courses of its waterways; the larger (yellow) points are grottos (see Fig. 4).

Other lines of transmission of the "True Shape" series run from Xiwang mu 西王母, the Queen Mother of the West, to the Han emperor Wu (see Schipper 1967), and again from Lord Lao to Lu Nusheng 魯女生, Ji Zixun 蒋子勗, Feng Junda 馮君大, Zuo Ci 左慈, Zheng Xuan 鄭玄 and Ge Hong (Shennian zhuan; see Güntsch 1988). Any adept carrying them has his name inscribed in the registers of immortality, is free from all illness, pestilences and calamities, can easily enter the mountains, has access to their healing plants and powerful spirits, and will be honored by the gods and spirits. In addition, the *Wuyue zhenxing tu* diagrams are inseparable from the *Sanhuang wen* 三皇文 (Texts of the Three Sovereigns; see Andersen 1991), because they form the terrestrial counterpart to the Five Emperors in heaven and thus represent a key level of the tripartite cosmos—heaven, earth, humanity (Schipper 1975, 29).

The next major series of diagrams is the *Renniao shan tu* 人鳥山圖 (Diagram of Bird-Man Mountain), so named because it has the appearance of a human figure and a bird. It is linked with to Bian Que 扁鵲, a legendary physician of antiquity and also a bird-man (see *Shiji* 史記 105), like the Lord of Great Unity (Taiyi jun 太一君), the father of the Dao (Kaltenmark 1974, 159). A residence of the celestials, the mountain is described in the *Shizhouji* 十洲記 (Record of the Ten Continents, CT 598; see Smith 1990) of the Six Dynasties as one section of the tenth paradise island; it contains particularly numinous grottoes. A matrix of the world and



Figure 5. Diagram of the Man-Bird Mountain. Source: *Xuanlan renqiao shanjingtu* CT 434), 5a.

origin of heaven, earth and humanity, Man-Bird Mountain is the place where primordial energy originates, the wondrous transformations at the beginning of time occur and the sacred scriptures are preserved—themselves traces of marvelous spirit forces that surged from the primordial transformation of cosmic energy. They formed eleven characters in spontaneous writing in the interior of the mountain, plus 244 on its exterior—124 to the left and 120 to the right (see Fig. 5). The words describe the mountain and its cosmic powers and have, in fact, been transmitted in the *Baopuzi* (6.117; Ware 1966, 120-21). According to this, the exterior line of characters describes the mountain as the Mountain of Great Origin 大元山, while the interior group lauds it as the Mountain of the Long Valley 長谷山. It is here that the peaks of the father and mother of the Dao are united (Lagerwey 1991, 134-36).

The diagram also plays a role in the Shangqing (Highest Clarity) school, where it appears in the *Taiji yinjue* 太極隱訣 (Secret Instructions of [the Lord of] Great Ultimate, CT 425). According to this, Man-Bird Mountain was where Xiwang mu first submitted herself to Daoist training (9ab). Animals on the mountain are immortals who can move about flying and have better intellectual powers than humans on earth. The mountain itself and its properties, moreover, suggest that it might be considered as a flying peak with wondrous abilities and powers. Its diagram is activated either by ingesting it, an act that integrates and interiorizes the cosmic origin and paradise in the adept's body, or by carrying it on one's body. Either way, it



Figure 6. The talisman "Liquid Gold Firebell." Source: *Yanguang shanyuan bianjing* (CT 1332), 8a.

ensures extended longevity, gives access to the Dao and allows the realization of the perfection and mystery of the Three Caverns.

A third series of diagrams is also of Lingbao origin. A set of twenty-four charts, described in the *Lingbao ershisi shengtu* 畫寶二十四生圖 (Twenty-four Lingbao Diagrams of Life, CT 1407, *Yunji qiqian* 80), they seem to have been of some importance in the Six Dynasties but have not survived to the present day, with the possible exception of some materials contained in CT 767 (see Andersen 1994). The text we have in CT 1407 describes them and explains their origin, virtues and related talismans. It seems also that the diagrams were closely associated with the twenty-four jade talismans used in contemplation of the gods and palaces within the body. The latter were first presented by Lord Li after one thousand days of

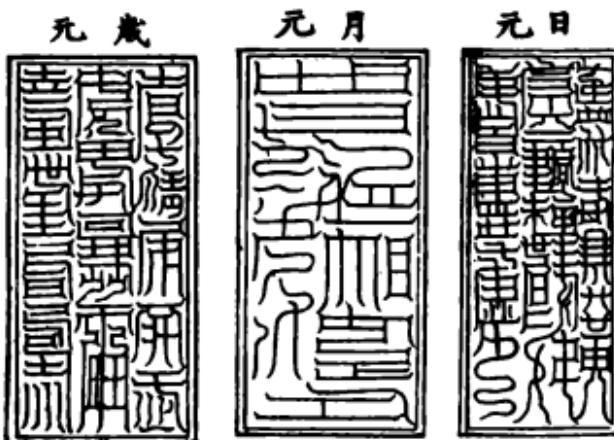


Figure 7. The first three of the talismans "Seven Primes Falling."

Source: *Shangqing huoluo qixuan fu* (CT 392), 1ab.

intense purification practice. While the diagrams are not included in the surviving text, their names show that they were linked with books found in the library of Ge Hong. Here twenty-four spirit administrators are mentioned who serve in the three primordial realms (*sanyuan* 三元), eight in each. Lord Li ordained that adepts make a copy of the twenty-four diagrams as they appeared in heaven, written in characters of jade on tablets of gold (see Bokenkamp 1983, 458-59).

HIGHEST CLARITY. In Shangqing Daoism, talismans served as a necessary counterpart to the sacred scriptures. As Isabelle Robinet explains:

Those who possess the *jing* without *fu* will be harmed by heavenly demons; for those who possess the *fu* without *jing*, their meditation will not engender [any response] and the true spirits will not descend. (*Suling jing* 素靈經 53b; Robinet 1993, 32)

Talismans here for the most part are concretizations of cosmic essences, including such elementals as the sun, moon, stars, clouds, thunder, lightning, planets and so on. In addition, they incorporate the power of the gods and thus function not only as cosmic passports but also as devices of protection.

A key talismanic series of Highest Clarity is linked with the talisman called *Liqin huolong* 流金火鈴 (Liquid Gold Firebell; see Fig. 6), which was formed from the yang essence of the nine stars of the Northern Dipper, created before the emergence of the Nine Heavens. It shines above the head of the Lord of the Dao and proved its power when it helped drive out the six demonic heavens and install the salvific reign of the Three Heavens (see CT 1322, 7-17a; CT 1337, 8a-12a; Robinet 1984, 2:113; 1995, 32). It is closely associated with the talismans called *Huolu qiyuan* 蒲落七元 (Seven Primes Falling; see Fig. 7), a manifestation of the yin rays of the Dipper stars which open the gate of heaven and close the door of death (see CT 392; CT 1337, 4a-6b).

The two sets of talismans are indispensable for adepts who wish to travel up to heaven and wander on the starry net above. Adepts may also apply other talismans for the same purpose, such as those listed in the *Feigang siming dalu* 飛罡司命大錄 (Great Register of the Ruler of Fates for Flying along the Net, CT 675). This text presents a register in the form of a combination of talismans; the latter are to be placed on different parts of the adept's body while he undertakes visualizations that move him up and into the celestial spheres.

Certain talismans also operated as supports for the gods of the pantheon. The key canonical scripture here is the *Dadong zhenjing* 大洞真經 (Perfect Scripture of Great Profundity, CT 6; see Robinet 1983), which consists of thirty-nine talismans associated with specific deities of Highest Clarity. The talismans are linked with a number of positive body gods, such as those of the Gate of Life, of the five inner organs, six viscera, blood and vital energy, but they also help to dissolve demonic influences which people carry within their bodies.

Other major talismans of Highest Clarity are the *Jinku fu* 金虎符 (Talisman of the Metal Tiger; CT 1337) and the *Shenku fu* 神虎符 (Talisman of the Divine Tiger; CT 1333, 1334; Robinet 1984, 2:180-81, 247-48), which grant general protection and spiritual support. Others are more specific, ensuring invulnerability from water, fire and weapons and helping to procure a lifespan of cosmic dimensions (CT 1315, 16b-20b; Robinet 1984, 2: 119-25). Aside from talismans, the school also makes use of registers, which mainly provide the secret names of the gods of the stars, the body, the dragons of space and other deities, notably those of Tortoise Mountain 龜山, the root of the Nine Heavens 九天 and origin of all energies, where the Queen Mother lives (see CT 1396). They also include the *Hexu*, whose key number nine corresponds to the nine stars of the Dipper and which was both transmitted and carried by adepts of Highest Clarity (CT 1367, 2ab).



Figure 8. The three key talismans of the Heavenly Heart school.

Source: *Tianxin zhengfa* (CT 566), 3.4a, 6b, 7a.

HEAVENLY HEART. The new school of Tianxin 天心 began in the 930s in the southern kingdom of Min and is commonly associated with the find of a number of secret texts on Mount Huagai 华蓋山 (Jiangxi) in 994. It centers on the force of the "Heavenly Heart," the stars of the Dipper and a deity most noted for his healing powers. The cult spread widely in twelfth-century south China and developed a special form of exorcism that was also focused on the demon-quelling powers of the North Culmen 北極 (see Drexler 1994, 23-46).

The talismans of this school are mainly contained in seven texts:

- *Tianxin zhengfa* 天心正法 (Proper Methods of the Heavenly Heart, CT 566), by Deng Yougong 鄭有功 (1210-79; see Boltz 1987, 35; Andersen 1991, 81-85).
- *Zhuguo juimin biyao* 助國救民秘要 (Secret Essentials on How to Aid the State and Save the People, CT 1227), by Yuan Miaozong 元妙宗, dat. 1116;
- *Beiwei tianxin zhengfa* 北極天心正法 (Proper Method of the North Culmen and Heavenly Heart, CT 567);
- *Yutang dafa* 玉堂大法 (Great Methods of the Jade Hall, CT 220), by Lu Shizhong 路時中 (fl. 1120-30; see Andersen 1991, 97-101);
- *Daomen tongjiao biyong ji* 道門通教必用集 (Collection of Works Necessary for All Daoists Penetrating the Teaching, CT 1226), especially *juan* 9;
- *Fahai yizhu* 法海遺珠 (Lost Pearls from the Sea of Ritual, CT 1166; see Boltz 1987, 51);

— *Daofa huixuan* 道法會元(A Corpus of Taoist Ritual, CT 1220), of the Yuan dynasty (see Boltz 1987, 30, 47; Loon 1980), especially *juan* 159-69.

The *Zhuguo jumin bijiao* stands out in particular because it has, for the first time, pseudo-Sanskrit words associated with talismans (Boltz 1987, 33-38), but the other texts also contain a large variety and many new forms of talismanic design.

The Heavenly Heart school centered its practice on three main talismans: the *Sanguang fu* 三光符 (Talisman of the Three Luminants); the *Tiangan fu* 天罡符 (Talisman of the Heavenly Net), which shields against disasters and epidemics, and consists of heavenly characters that say: "The Great Sage of the Heavenly Net orders all demons be slayed!"; and the *Zhenwu fu* 真武符 (Talisman of the Perfect Warrior), associated with the Dark Warrior (Xuanwu 玄武), which consists of a group of characters plus a variety of symbols that present a figurative representation of the deity (see Drexler 1994, 161). The three key talismans (see Fig. 8) are typical for those used in exorcistic rituals and thunder rites, showing the way talismans developed under the Song. In the Six Dynasties, registers sometimes also included drawings of the deities' forms. Later such drawings became parts of talismans, first using only the head, then the entire body, showing how the sacred object was related to both the god and the human body. Later still, further stylization and other new elements were added to the design, evolving into the intricate and complex forms used in the Song.

DIVINE EMPYREAN. The school of Shenxiao 神霄 was greatly favored by Emperor Huizong (r. 1101-1125) under the influence of his advisers Lin Lingsu 林靈素 (1076-1120) and Wang Wenqing 王文卿 (1093-1153; see Strickmann 1975; 1978). In 1117, they declared that the Imperial Lord of Blue Efflorescence (*Qinghua dijun* 青華帝君) had transmitted a number of celestial writings for the emperor, which contained a new cosmology that placed Divine Empyrean at the center of the Nine Worlds and at the top of all paradises, even above Highest Clarity.

The *Duren shangpin futu* 廣人上品符圖 (Talismans and Diagrams of the Highest Scripture of Universal Salvation, CT 147) by Wang Wenqing, with a preface attributed to Huizong and dated to 1120, contains several new writings, talismans and diagrams that confirm the legitimacy of Huizong's cosmic and earthly powers. It says: "When the government effects the transformation of all things in accordance with their true nature, the secrets of heaven and earth are revealed and wondrous signs appear (2.4b-5a). Its first *juan*, moreover, describes the region where the Heavenly Worthy of Primordial Beginning (*Yuanshi tianzun* 元始天尊) first revealed the *Duren jing* through a series of sacred diagrams, beginning with the *Lingbao shiqing*

靈寶始青變化圖

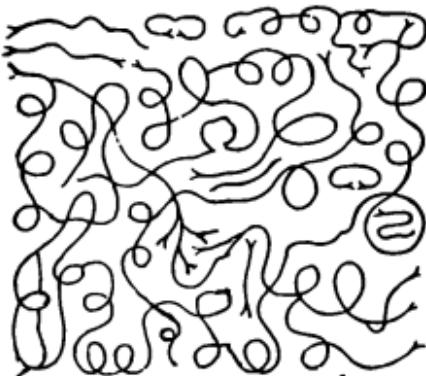


Figure 9. The Diagram of Blue Original Transformation of Numinous Treasure.

Source: *Duren shangpin futsu* (CT 147), 1.2a.

bianhua zhi tu 畫寶始青變化之圖 (Diagram of Blue Original Transformation of Numinous Treasure; see Fig. 9). The diagram shows creation as a combination of the sounds, energies and spirits of the void; if absorbed, it ensures longevity and enhances the energies of life. The second diagram is the *Biluo kong ge zhi tu* 碧羅空歌之圖 (Diagram of the Chant of the Biluo Space), which shows how energies and sounds form a cosmic network, matched by the vessels and meridians in the human body. Following this is the *Da fulitu zhi tu* 大浮黎土之圖 (Diagram of the Great Floating Earth; see Fig. 10), showing the region of the first and central development of the earth which corresponds to the spleen and stomach in the human body. Absorption of this diagram will cause longevity and extended youth, while carrying it ensures that one will be respected by the gods and spirits.

Beyond these elemental diagrams are six that are circular in shape, representing the new cosmology of Divine Empyrean. They are presented as part of a writ called *Hundong chiwen* 混洞赤文 (Red Writings of Chaos Cavern), which was transmitted by the gods in 1112, revealed to humanity in 1120, and is now contained in the *Duren shangpin futsu*. The diagrams consist of a series of circles, one placed inside the next and each containing



Figure 10. The Diagram of the Great Floating Earth.

Source: *Duren shangpin fulu* (CT 147), 1.3b-4a.

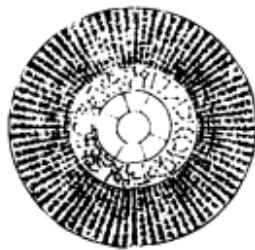


Figure 11. The cosmology of Divine Empyrean.

Source: *Duren shangpin fulu* (CT 147), 2.5b.

some starry patterns and/or specialized inscriptions. One shows, for example, the Nine Empyreans of the cosmos, with Divine Empyrean in the center (see Fig. 11).

The drastic increase in Daoist funerary rites under the Song also went hand in hand with a new type of diagram: that showing the underworld of Mount Fengdu in the form of a rectangular labyrinth, recalling the "True Shape of the Five Sacred Mountains" (see CT 1221, 34.14ab; CT 219, 68.24b; CT 508, 40.5b; Chenivesse 1996; 1997). Grottoes or palaces depicted as part of the mountain represent underworld regions, communication nodes, areas of transmutation and rebirth, or again palaces



Figure 12. The underworld realm of Mount Fengdu.

Source: *Shangyong lingbao dafa* (CT 1221), 17.22a.

of the gods that rule human destiny (see Fig. 12). In the rituals, the officiating priest is equipped with the diagram. He accomplishes his wanderings to the specific site originated within his own body and heart. The talisman ensures total protection against the demonic forces assembled in the deep wells of death, while diagrammatic map of Mount Fengdu helps to project himself into the processes of cosmic involution, thus allowing him to return to the origin of all things, to their perfect form. Ritually manipulated, the talisman serves to open the gates of purgatory and ensure the salvation of the dead. (Chenivesse 1996, 69; see also Boltz 1983)

PURE SUBTLETY. The Qingwei 清微 school, which claimed the late Tang female master Zu Shu 祖舒 as its founder, was in fact founded on Mount Qingcheng 青城山 (Sichuan) under the leadership of Nan Bidao 南畢道 (b. 1196), who became officially its ninth patriarch. Its talismanic techniques are said to go back to the Heavenly Worthy of Primordial Beginning, who resides in the heaven of Pure Subtlety; they are used primarily in thunder rites. A number of the school's scriptures, said to have arisen directly in the heavenly palaces, were written in cloud-seal script, in each case presented with a translation into earthly writing. Such is the case in the *Qingwei yuanjiang dafa* 清微元將大法 (Great Methods of the Prime's Descent from Pure Subtlety, CT 223), whose talismanic characters can be

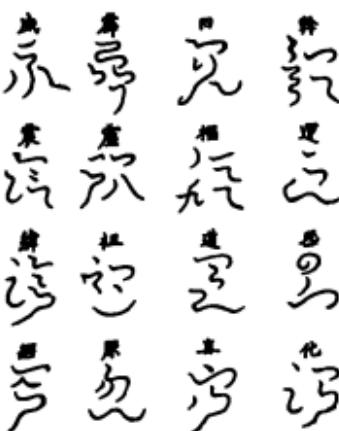


Figure 13. The floating talismanic characters of Pure Subtlety.

Source: *Qingwei yuanjiang dafa* (CT 223), 6.4b.

easily identified as vague, cloudy-style writings that float freely about (see Fig. 13). Compared with similar patterns found in the Six Dynasties, they are more detached and abstract, leaving ordinary writing behind and accentuating their roundness and floating nature.

Beyond this text, which sees every sacred character as a talisman, the school also had integrated and complex talismans. They stand out because of their unique combination of round shapes (symbolizing movement) and squares (showing immobility), next to representations of trigrams, cosmic characters and symbolic signs (see Fig. 14; see also Schipper 1987).

NUMINOUS TREASURE OF MOUNT TIANTAI. In the twelfth century, a new branch of Lingbao Daoism developed on Mount Tiantai 天台 (Zhejiang), founded by Ning Quanzhen 寧全真 (1101-1181) and expanded by Lin Lingzhen 林靈真 (1239-1302), who transplanted it to Wenzhou (see Ren 1990, 559; Boltz 1987, 43-46). The numerous rituals of this school focused on the salvation of the living and the dead; they were linked with practical exterior methods using cosmological correlations and the force of thunder as well as with interior techniques patterned on inner alchemy, thus ensuring their highest efficacy.

The new Lingbao school produced several ritual compendia, which contain talismans of the classical model, i.e., of rectangular shape, but most



Figure. 14. Qingwei talismans integrating round and square shapes.

Source: *Qingwei shenzi bifa* (CT 222), 2.1b-2a.

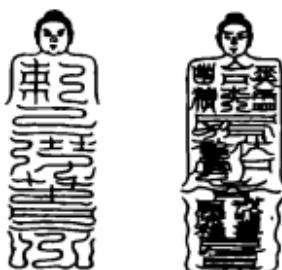


Figure. 15. Lingbao talismans topped by human heads.

Source: *Lingbao sulang zhenfu* (CT 389), 3.18ab.

commonly have those of a new, more complex and irregular. There is also the tendency to use human-shaped patterns for talismans. They can appear as specimens topped with the form of a human head, looking like a bust (see Fig. 15); or in those that are partially or entirely human in shape, showing silhouettes of demons, formally garbed officials (see Fig. 16) or divine personages with their heads enveloped by halos, like Buddhist saints. In addition, there are also symbolic shapes in greater numbers, using animals,



Figure 16. Talisman using the human form.

Source: *Santian yutang dafa* (CT 220), 21.6a.



Figure 17. Talismans applying animal shapes and wheels.

Source: *Daifa huiyuan* (CT 1220) 83.8a and *Santian yutang dafa* (CT 220), 25.4a.

circles, wheel and furnaces, found in related collections, such as the *Yutang dafa* 玉堂大法 and the *Daifa huiyuan* (see Fig. 17).

COSMIC DIAGRAMS. In 1118, Emperor Huizong decreed that all Daoists had to acquire expertise in the Confucian classics, especially the *Tyng* (see *Xu zizhi tongjian* 續資治通鑑 93). As a result, the latter text gained an even greater importance in Daoist thinking, which in turn explains the presence of six *Tyng* commentaries, dating from the eleventh and twelfth centuries, in the Ming canon (CT 157-62). Illustrated in various ways, these commentaries include a number of diagrams, not only related to the trigrams and hexagrams of the text, but also more cosmological, such as the *Taiji tu* 太極圖 (Diagram of the Great Ultimate), *Hetu* and *Luoshu*. The

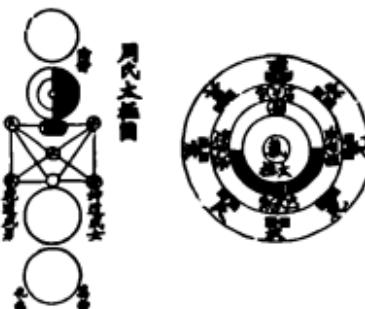


Figure 18. Two versions of the *Taiji tu*. Source: *Zhouyi tu* (CT 157), 1.1ab.

latter in particular serve to illustrate the cosmological and calendrical theories that formed part of public discourse at the time. Among Song literati, diagrams came to be used as a new way to express norms and cosmic models, and in many ways they came to be regarded as more important than formally written documents, which yet remained indispensable to complement them. None of the many Song trends could escape the tendency toward putting abstract thoughts into diagrams (see Reiter 1990, 30). It is thus not surprising that diagrams presented by Neo-Confucian thinkers, such as Zhou Dunyi 周敦頤 (1017-1073) and Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1120-1200), were accorded a high position in philosophical speculation, not unlike the honored status of sacrality that was accorded talismans in earlier Daoism. In fact, the Neo-Confucian texts trace themselves to the Daoist Chen Tuan 陳搏 (d. 989) and his lineage, which runs from the Daoist Zhang Fang 張房 (fl. 1000) to the Neo-Confucians Shao Yong 邵雍 (1011-1077) and Liu Mu 劉牧 (1011-1084; see CT 160; Robinet 1990, 375; Kohn 1990; Li 1990).

All representations of *Taiji*, the Great Ultimate, are based on the geometrical form of the circle. In the *Zhouyi tu* 周易圖 (Diagrams of the Zhou Book of Changes, CT 157) of the twelfth century, there are 114 diagrams to explain the cosmology of the *Iyung*, going back to eminent thinkers, such as Zhou Dunyi, Zheng Dongqing 鄭東卿, Liu Mu, Shao Yong and Hong Mai 洪邁. The Great Ultimate is presented in three different forms. One shows it as a series of concentric circles that represent—from inside to out—the one energy, yin and yang, the five phases and the eight trigrams. Another is the famous version of Zhou

Dunyi, which presents it in a series of circles from above to below (see Fig. 18; see also Jiang and Chen 1995).

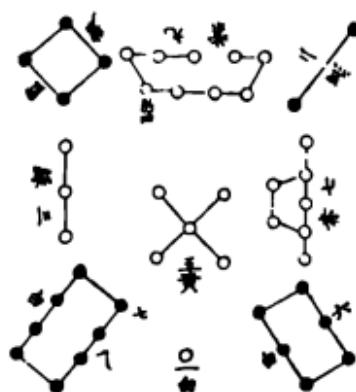
Another variant goes back to Zheng Shaomei 鄭少梅; it places the trigrams in a circle around a center and attaches various cosmological elements to them (see CT 158, 1.1b). Then again, there is Liu Mu's *Yushu gouyin tu* 易數鈎隱圖 (Diagrams of an Inquiry into the Secret Numbers of the *Yi*ng, CT 159), where the Great Ultimate is depicted as an ellipsis with ten stations on its periphery (1.1b); the *Yixiang tushuo waipian* 易象圖說外篇 (Outer Chapters of Explanations and Diagrams of *Yi*ng Symbols, CT 162), in turn, shows it as a blank circle (1.3b). Daoist speculation made special use of Zhou Dunyi's version and related it to alchemical theories. Examples are Chen Zhixu's 陳致虛 (fl. 1330) *Jindan dayao tu* 金丹大要圖 (Diagrams of the Major Essentials of the Golden Elixir, CT 1068) and the *Zhonghe ji* 中和集 (Collection of Central Harmony, CT 249; see Robinet 1995). Here diagrams show both the unfolding of cosmic processes and, in an inverted reading, the stages of inner alchemical attainment in the body (see Lackner 1990, 144). The *Taiji tu* was also a representation of the human body—one of its key functions in later Daoist thought.

Aside from its Confucian uses, the diagram also appears in Lingbao writings of the Song and Ming, where it is called the *Taiji miaohua shenling handong chiwen tu* 太極妙化神靈混沌赤文圖 (Divine and Numinous Diagram of the Great Ultimate of Wondrous Transformations, Written in Red in the Grotto of Chaos); without doubt, it is one of the most sacred documents of the school (see CT 89-90).

The *Hetu* and *Luoshu*, in their square form with points linked symbolically to different numbers and constellations, appear in the *Zhouyi tu* (CT 157, 1.3b-5a), the *Dayi xiangshu gou Shen tu* 大易象數鈎深圖 (Diagram of an Inquiry into the Divine Nature of the Emblems and Numbers of the *Yi*ng, CT 158; 1.8b-11b), the *Gouyin tu yilun* 鋼隱圖意倫 (CT 160, 3.12b) and the *Yixiang tushuo neipian* 易象圖說內篇 (Inner Chapters on Diagrams and Theories about the Emblems of the *Yi*ng, CT 161; 1.7b-8b; see Fig. 19). Attributed to Chen Tuan, these two diagrams functioned as cosmic charts and were used principally in rituals that set up a sacred space. However, they could also be used as protection against demons; the *Shangqing lingbao daya* 上清靈寶大法 (Great Methods of Highest Clarity and Numinous Treasure, CT 1221) suggests placing the *Hetu* inside a cauldron to prevent disasters (12. 10ab).

BODY CHARTS. Daoist thought did not make a fundamental separation between the natural, the sacred and the human body; the realm of talismans and diagrams was one area where the three actively coincided. The same diagram could, therefore, have an inscription that referred to the three domains, which would indicate simultaneously the immortals in

河 數 圖



洛 數 圖

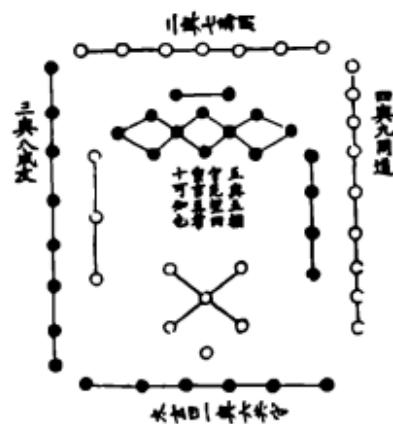


Figure 19. The *Huo* and *Luo* in their square form.

Source: *Daiyi xiangshu goushen tu* (CT 158), 1.8b-9a.

paradise, the sacred mountains and waterways on earth, and the five organs in the human body (see CT 1386, 15b). Diagrams that focus specifically on the body, then, appear only since the Song dynasty, following the general Chinese tendency to place stronger emphasis on the image of the body—also seen in the increase in human-shaped talismans at the time. There was, it appears, a change in the conception of the mutual interrelation between body, cosmos and state, and between interior and exterior, especially with the development of inner alchemical techniques and their integration into ritual (see Skar 1997).

The first diagrammatic representation of the human body known to date is a set of six figures attributed to Yanluozi 煙蘿子 of the Five Dynasties (Chen 1975, 284) and conserved in the *Xuzhen shishu* 修真十書 (Ten Books on the Cultivation of Perfection, CT 263; 18.1a-6a) of the year 1250. Those depicting the front and back are strictly anatomical, while those showing the body from the sides represent alchemical processes. They have inscriptions that allude to the *Huangting jing* 黃庭經 (Yellow Court Scripture) and the gods of the inner organs as described there. These gods are also depicted in the *Huangting wuzang liufu bixi tu* 黃庭五臟六腑補氣圖 (Diagrams to the Yellow Court Scripture on supplementing the Five Organs and Six Viscera, CT 432) of the ninth century (dat. 848). They can also be linked with the later vision of the cosmic body with its interior paradises and underworld realms (see Despeux 1994, 31-38, 110-33; Yamada 1995).

A more integrated version of the diagram appears a little later, both in a Daoist commentary to the medical text *Nanjing* 雜經 (Classic of Difficult Issues, CT 1024; see Unschuld 1986), by Li Jiong 李酮 of the year 1269, and in a fifteenth century edition of the *Shilin guangji* 事林廣記 (Extensive Record of a Forest of Affairs) by Chen Yuanqing 陳元觀 of the Song (see Needham 1983, 112; Despeux 1994, 40-43). Most recently, two diagrams have become prominent, the *Neijing tu* 內景圖 (Diagram of Interior Lights) and the *Xuzhen tu* 修真圖 (Diagram of the Cultivation of Perfection; see Lagerwey 1991, 128-34). Like those of Yanluozi, these charts present lateral visions of the body.

The *Neijing tu* in its most ancient version is found on a stele dated to 1886 and attributed to Liu Chengyin 劉誠印 of the Baiyun guan 白雲觀 (White Cloud Monastery) in Beijing. This imitates a picture scroll, found on Mount Song in Henan. Natural elements dominate; inscriptions and notes on the diagram link it with alchemy and the *Huangting jing* (see Despeux 1994, 44-48; Sakade 1991; Rouselle 1933). The *Xuzhen tu*, although following the same model, contains more inscriptions in textual form, more symbols of paradises and the underworld, more signs of alchemical processes, as well as lunar phases, the names of the twenty-eight constellations and elements that refer to thunder rites (see Fig. 20). Versions of the diagram were found

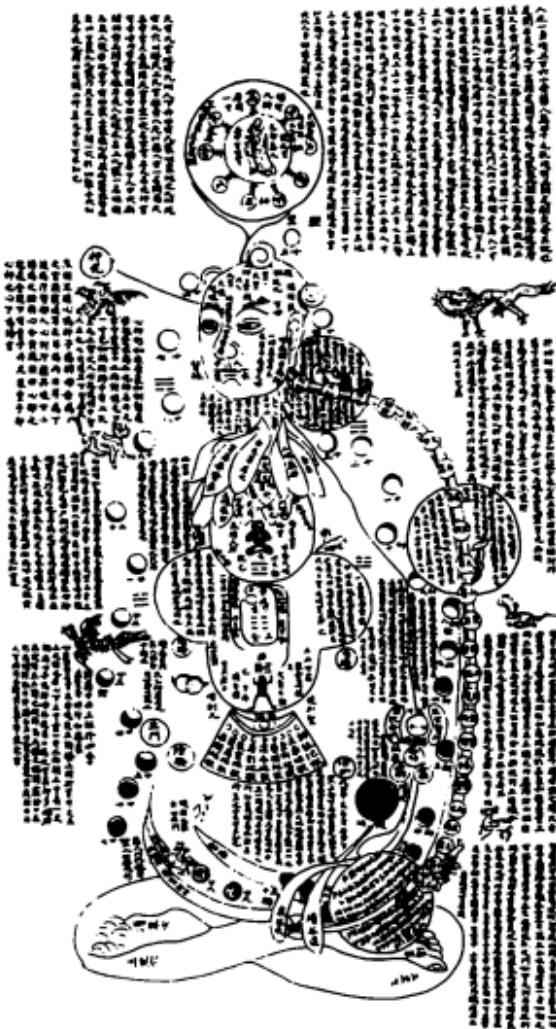


Figure 20. The Diagram of the Cultivation of Perfection, Wudang shan version.

in Canton (dat. 1812), on Mount Wudang 武當山 (Hubei), on Mount Qingcheng (Sichuan) and in Daoist monasteries in Beijing and Shanghai. It shows a close relationship between inner alchemy and thunder rites, evoking in a visual manner the intricate connection between the two and using forms of symbolic representation not unlike those applied in talismans. It is, in fact, very much like a talisman that shows the human head or body, and can be said to represent the divine body of the adept as he or she undergoes the salvific alchemical transformation (Despeux 1994; 1996).

The various diagrams of the human body, although they use the natural form of the body as their base and serve primarily to illustrate alchemical processes, are yet cosmic and magical charts, very much like those described earlier. Not limited to their representative and didactic functions, they also serve a religious purpose in that they reveal the true, cosmic form of the human body and its interior deities. They thereby serve to empower adepts who receive them to realize the depicted processes for themselves and attain an interior vision of the cosmic body and its gods. Their ritual use is unknown, but they most certainly had one. Without a doubt, their use in cultivation and ritual practice was as important as that of talismans and registers.

TEXTS

HAN-SIX DYNASTIES. *Lingbao wufu* 畫寶五符序(Explanation of the Five Lingbao Talismans, CT 388, 3 j.), dat. fourth century. Together with the *Taipingjing*, this is one of the oldest Daoist scriptures. It underwent various revisions and expansions and has a number of problems and gaps (Kaltenmark 1960, 560-62; Chen 1975, 64-65). The first *juan* describes the mythical history of the five talismans as they were discovered by the floodhero Yu and later transmitted into the Ge family (see Bokenkamp 1986; Kohn 1993, 43-48). It also describes various longevity techniques, including the ingestion of mountain plants and herbs, the absorption of solar and lunar essences, concentration on the body gods and other kinds of visualizations (see Yamada 1989). *Juan* 3 contains reproductions of the five talismans themselves. Square like great seals, they consist of symbolic signs, such as spirals, flowing lines, curves and stylized characters (for "sun," "king," "rain"; see Fig. 3). They are closely linked with specific rites of transmission and must be strictly avoided on inauspicious days.

Lingbao wuyue shenfu 畫寶五嶽神符 (Divine Lingbao Talismans of the Five Sacred Mountains, CT 390, 15 pp.). This presents a collection of talismans used to bring stability to the state by protecting it from military and demonic dangers and spreading peace and prosperity among the

people. The text accompanying the talismans describes how they have come to be transmitted down from various mythical emperors, such as Yao, Shun and Yu, and how they should be used. They include talismans of the gods of the five mountains, combined with those of the six perfected of the mountains who serve to stabilize the emperor's palace; the talisman of the white tiger (8a), also mentioned in the *Baopuzi* (19.307); the talismans that stabilize the five directions (8b-11a); the talisman of Great Peace (11b); those that create sovereignty (12b-14b); and finally the talisman of the five generals used for military affairs and applied successfully by Fan Li 范蠡 in the Spring and Autumn period to destroy the state of Wu (14b).

Wuyue guben zhengxing tu 五嶽古本真形圖 (Old Text of the Chart of the True Shape of the Five Sacred Mountains, CT 441, CT 1281, *Yuyi qiqian* 79; see Schipper 1967, 114-62; Chen 1975, 77-78; Seidel 1983, 326). The preface, attributed to Dongfang Shuo (1a-4b), describes the gods of the five Chinese sacred mountains and the four central Daoist mountains (Qingcheng shan, Lushan 峴山, Huoshan 火山 and Qianshan 潤山) with their acolytes and powers (see also CT 1281, 21b-25b). After this, the work outlines the transmission and reception ritual, attributed to Zheng Xuan 鄭玄 (4b-6a; CT 1281, 18b-19b). Then follow the actual diagrams, showing the nine true forms of the mountains, each with a talisman and a short commentary that indicates how to write and carry the diagram.

This entire part is then followed by a second, similar series, mainly different in that the diagrams are more elaborate in design and have inscriptions both inside and out; their texts correspond closely to materials transmitted by Ge Hong. The story goes that the shape of the five mountains was created by flying celestials in a time before the mythical emperor Shennong 神農, just as that of the four Daoist mountains was designed by the Yellow Emperor after his ascension. Possessing the charts allows adepts to enter the mountains without harm and to avoid attacks from weapons and other dangers. They are used by suspending them from the belt, just as the "True Shape of the Five Mountains" is carried sewn into a cinnabar satchel and suspended around the neck.

Xuanlan renniao shan jingtu 玄覽人鳥山經圖 (Scripture and Diagram of the Man-Bird Mountain, According to the Mysterious Mirror, CT 434, *Yuyi qiqian* 80, 6 pp.), revealed by Lord Lao and possibly originally part of the *Lingbao wufuxu* (see Bokenkamp 1983, 456n80). The text contains a chart of the Man-Bird Mountain (see Fig. 5), together with a description of its setting, a retelling of its revelation and an outline of its powers and ritual activation. After fasting for one thousand days, the adept paints the mountain's shape in cinnabar ink on a square area of three by five paces. He then enters a first absorption, focusing on the direction associated with the current year to ensure his longevity. His second absorption procures

immortality, while the third serves to attain oneness with the Dao. The meditative process integrates the cosmic parades into the adept's body.

TANG. *Taishang laojun huanyuan sanbu fu* 太上老君混元三部符 (Three Divisions of Talismans of Mystery Prime, Revealed by the Highest Lord Lao, CT 673, 3 j.), edited in the Song on the basis of earlier materials (Ren and Zhong 1991, 481). The text contains 742 talismans with brief commentary on their functions and ways of usage. Classified according to twenty-six categories, the talismans serve to support different aspects of life and help to dissipate numerous problems of home and family. Those designated to pacify the residence were suspended in different places (five directions, corners, doors, central courtyard); others serving to eliminate negative influences of the earth were applied in more widespread locations. Generally, the domestic environment is of prime concern in the collection, as is evident in the numerous talismans that destroy nasty spirits in animal form (rats, snakes, foxes) and those that aid in agricultural and silkworm fertility. 151 talismans alone serve to counteract strange phenomena thought to be caused by demons in animal shape, by domestic ghosts or those afflicting the stove. Personal health, finally, is guaranteed by 106 talismans that support long life and protect the holder against epidemics, difficult pregnancies and complicated labor.

Lingbao suling zhenfu 畫寶素真符 (Perfect Lingbao Talismans of Immaculate Numen, CT 389, 3 j.), preface by Du Guangting 杜光庭 (850-933), dat. 906. In the mid-eighth century, the Celestial Master Daoist Zhai Qianyou 蔡乾佑 received these talismans in revelation from the Heavenly Worthy together with a scripture on alchemy. In 906, Du Guangting received the text on Mount Pingdu 平都山 (Sichuan) while traveling in search of materials to reconstitute the Daoist canon from provincial collections (Verellen 1989, 124; Chen 1975, 128; Yoshioka 1955, 119). The text presents therapeutic talismans efficacious for 23 kinds of illnesses, including infections, fevers, colds, headaches, stomach troubles and more. The talismans come complete with instructions on their application and a description of their effect.

SONG. *Duren shangpin futu* 廬人上綱符圖 (Talismans and Diagrams of the Highest Scripture of Universal Salvation, CT 147, 3 j.) by Wang Wenqing 王文卿 (1093-1153), with a preface attributed to Emperor Huizong and dated to 1120. The work provides various types of spontaneous writings (jade texts, red texts, numinous writing) as well as talismans and diagrams used in the rituals of the school of Divine Empyrean. It is complementary to the commentary to the *Duren jing* produced by this school (Strickmann 1975). The first *juan* has three square diagrams of the place where the Heavenly Worthy revealed the *Duren jing*. *Juan* 2 contains circular diagrams depicting Shenxiao cosmology (see Fig. 11) together with several samples of spontaneous writing, while *juan* 3 has

illustrations of the calendar associated with Shenxiao cosmology as well as images of the nine energies of the Nine Empyreans and the five talismans that correspond to the texts written in red.

Duren shangjing dafa 延人上經大法(Great Methods of the Highest Scripture of Universal Salvation, CT 219, 72 j.; Boltz 1987, 18). A Shenxiao text and major document in the Dongzhen section of the Daoist canon, this became a major ritual compendium under the Ming, containing ritual materials from many different periods and traditions. It also has a great number of talismans, including square ones that look like seals (e.g., 200 examples in ch. 5), rectangular ones that evoke classic forms of the Six Dynasties (see ch. 6), as well as those in human form or with a human head at the top (see ch. 56, 4a-5b). Black demonic shapes used for talismans in thunder rites are not frequent (only three examples); on the other hand, there are several talismans that have black balls in various areas—formed on the basis of the secret names of gods, they are most efficacious in dispelling malevolent influences (chs. 11-15, 36).

The talismans have various functions: they may protect adepts from demons and disasters, save the souls of the damned, assemble good spirits, make the gods descend to the sacred altar, allow the invocation of rain or fair weather and permit Daoists to wander about in cosmic space. The text also has a number of diagrams, such as the "True Shape of the Five Mountains" (21.14a-22b) which represents the second series of the *Wuyue zhengxing tu* (15b-26b); the three diagrams contained in the *Duren shangjin fulu* (69.26a-27b); the *Hetu*, used in ritual space for ordering cosmic disturbances (33.6b); diagrams of lamps to illuminate the underworld (50.9b-11a); and those of the thirty-two heavens (50.10a).

Lingbao lingjiao jidu jinshu 畫寶靈教濟度金書(Golden Text for the Attainment of Salvation, Based on the Numinous Teaching of Numinous Treasure, CT 466, 320 j.), compiled by Ning Benli 壹本立 (1101-1181), the codifier of Lingbao liturgies, and edited by Lin Weifu 林偉夫 (1239-1303; see Boltz 1987, 45). The first chapter contains various designs showing the organization of sacred altars and spaces, including the placement of lamps used in funeral rites, of celestial writings and of talismans suspended in strategic locations (see Lagerwey 1994). In addition, most talismans in the collection are found in *juan* 260-81, beginning with those used to purify the corpse in funerary rituals (*liaoshi* 鎮尸). They are mostly applied on the corpse of the deceased and the coffin, but some are also used specifically in different phases of the rite to communicate with the gods, destroy the gates of the underworld and save lost souls. *Juan* 275-81, in addition, give instructions on how to draw and compose the talismans in a ritually correct fashion. The talismans are for the most part rectangular in shape with points alluding to the constellations, symbolic lines, wondrous

characters and sometimes spirals. Some are surrounded by a cluster of deities, others by human forms (with occasional halo; e.g., 264.33a).

Lingbao yujian 畫寶玉鑑 (Jade Mirror of Numinous Treasure, CT 547, 43 j.), dat. 1108-1129. The text divides into twenty-five sections, which contain sacred writings, talismans, registers and diagrams. The first section "Resolving Doubts on Daoist Rites" explains the beginning and end of the world together with various cosmological processes. The other twenty-four sections reiterate purification rites and offerings (*zhayiao* 齋醮) from the Lingbao canon of the Song, largely covering funerary rites and the salvation of lost souls. The text also contains references to the jade hall of Lu Shizhong, elements of Tianxin ritual and of the *Lingbao dafa* 畫寶大法 (Great Methods of Lingbao; see Boltz 1987, 43). It has talismans to save the souls of unborn children, talismans based on the banners of the thirty-two heavens and those that destroy the twenty-four underworlds. Some talismans have the power to assemble the spirit-souls, other represent the bright lamps of the thirty-two heavens; some stand for the lamps that illuminate the underworld, others again serve to banish the eight forms of disaster.

Shangqing lingbao dafa 上清畫寶大法 (Great Methods of Highest Clarity and Numinous Treasure, CT 1221, 66 j.), transmitted by Ning Benli and compiled by Wang Qizhen. An encyclopedic work of the Song, this relies largely on the work of Ning Benli (1101-1181) of the Tiantai branch of Lingbao. It deals with rites for the salvation of souls, petitions to the gods and otherworldly law suits; in all cases, it includes the necessary talismans and incantations with a description of their function. There are the talismans of the Five Emperors that destroy the underworld, those of the secret names of the five mountains and those of the Five Emperors that protect different aspects of the body. In addition, there are eighty-one talismans corresponding to eighty-one numinous officials, talismans that invoke the Dark Warrior and the gods of the Dipper, and talismans that save from pestilences and cosmic disasters. Various forms of the *Hetao* (12.10a), the *Wuyue zhenxing tu* (17.16a-21b) and the true shape of Fengdu (17.22ab) complete the ensemble.

MING. Fahai yizhu 法海遺珠 (Pearls from an Ocean of Rituals, CT 1166, 46 j.). This is a collection of therapeutic rituals from various traditions, including especially thunder rites as practiced south of the Yangzi in the twelfth to fourteenth centuries. The work shows Buddhist Tantric influence. Talismans here represent natural elements—wind, thunder, clouds, rain—and serve to evoke thunder, pray for rain, summon demons, avoid natural disasters, heal diseases and save the souls of the dead. There are also several talismans representing gods of the thunder tradition, including the Black Killer and the gods of the Five Thunder Offices (see

Skar 1997). Others show different divine lords, often depicted in a black, demonic form.

Daofa huixuan 道法會元 (A Corpus of Taoist Ritual, CT 1220, 268 j.), dat. about 1400 (see Boltz 1987, 30, 47; Loon 1980; Schipper 1987, 3-10). A ritual work focusing on the Shenxiao, Qingwei and several Lingbao currents, but also containing rites of the Celestial Master and Jingming schools, this contains writings from over a hundred different authors. For the most part it describes thunder rites as practiced in south China and, more specifically, in the northern Jiangxi, northwestern Fujian and their neighboring regions. Most texts date from the thirteenth century, and the latest date mentioned is 1356. *Juan* 1-55 represent the works of Qingwei; 56-155 have those of various schools. These chapters contain numinous talismans in black, human form or in black shapes reminiscent of birds. *Juan* 156-68 have the *Shangqing tianpeng fumo dafa* 上清天蓬伏魔大法 (Great Rites of the God Tianpeng of Highest Clarity to Destroy Demons), a text related to the Tianxin tradition. Shenxiao works and rites are found in *juan* 198-206; about twelve sections bear the marks of Wang Wenqing. There are also thunder rites associated with Bai Yuchan 白玉蟾 (fl. 1209-1224), including a comparison of different types of thunder rites current in his time. In addition, the collection has the ritual codes of Chen Nan 陳楠 (d. 1213), manuals of Hunyuan thunder rites that go back to Lei Shizhong 雷時中 (1221-1295) and Leiting rites associated with Mo Qijian 莫起炎 (1226-1294; see Boltz 1987, 47-48).

WORLDVIEW

CELESTIAL WRITING. In China, writing is believed to be an invention of divine culture heroes who scrutinized signs in the sky. "To write" (*shu* 書) does not simply mean to transcribe the spoken discourse, but to express the meaning of things on an utterly different level of discourse—that of the pictographic characters (*wen* 文; see Chaves 1977; Lagerwey 1985; Gernet 1994; Vandermeersch 1994, 237). In Daoism, patterns of writing associated with talismans and diagrams were celestial signs revealed to the world. Texts known as "perfect writings" (*zhewen* 眞文), especially in the Lingbao tradition, were thus revealed at the beginning of time when primordial chaos first unfolded and gave differentiated shape to the myriad things and manifold energies. At this time the luminous characters became primordial symbols of all things. Writings were then grouped according to the five directions and came to form an integrated cosmic system. Knowledge of these celestial signs and, through them, of the underlying, hidden structure of all things confers power over them and also over their deviate forms that manifest in demons and baleful influences. The *Huinanzi* 淮南子 says

accordingly: "In antiquity, when Cangjie 仓颉 invented writing, heaven let grains rain and the demons were hurled into the darkness." Xu Shen 许慎 of the first century C.E. comments:

Following the patterns established by the tracks of birds' feet, Cangjie created writing in correspondence to all things. The demons were afraid that they, too, might be noted down in the books and hurled themselves into the darkness. (8.116-17; Seidel 1983, 322)

The signs that make up talismans are sometimes embossed or engraved on paper, wood or stone, but they can also be formed in empty space, because just tracing their form activates their power. Through hand signs, the officiating priest thus transmits his vital essence and energy into the talismanic patterns, so that they become an extension of his true cosmic body (see Baptandier-Berthier 1993). The function of ritual gestures and talismanic tracings is, in turn, similar to that of the diagrams. As Sandra Chenivesse points out in regard to the mountain of the underworld:

The ritual master executes both a rite of writing and at the same time an interior rite, through which he actualizes a somatic vision of primordial energies and divine therapeutic guardians inside his body-sanctuary. He thereby also visualizes the path of souls lost in the depths of the purgatories. The cosmic energies animating his body then become a kind of condensed writing, which he projects outside to become part of a powerful talisman. (1996, 72)

THE DELIMITATION OF SPACE AND THE REPRESENTATION OF TIME. The basic form used in the diagrams is usually either square or round (see Lackner 1990), the former indicating the earth and mountains (such as the five mountains or the Man-Bird Mountain), the latter representing mythical worlds or paradises, or again the processes of the universe and the interior of the body.

The charts are first of all constituted by the inherent energy of the officiating Daoist, in the same way as the sacred area, which symbolizes both a sacred mountain and a grotto, is in reality created from the master's body through the exteriorization of his energy as breath (see Schipper 1994, 125-35). A great ritual of offerings described in the third chapter of the *Lingbao wufuzi* was undertaken in honor of the five perfect wrists—placed on five sacrificial tables—and directed to the Five Emperors who were represented by the wrists. By placing the texts in the five directions, a sacred space was created; the talismans rendered ordinary space cosmic and changed time into cosmic time. At the end of the sacrifice, the process was reversed and the talismans were raised up and burned (Lagerwey 1994, 325).

Talismans are most commonly represented in a square or rectangular format, with the exception of the Pure Subtlety school, where they are often

in a round or mixed (round and square) form. The space of the talisman is then clearly delimited either on all four sides, or at least on three, with a sort of formal frame. In some cases, it shows the form of a bell or special, stylized characters at the top, such as the character for "rain." Again, the frame itself is often constituted by a series of circular or square shapes. More rarely are they surrounded by a complete circle—in that case, often a demon is captured within.

The application of talismans and diagrams depends on the idea of time, both cyclical and linear, which generally plays an important role in Chinese religion (see Needham 1969; Frazer et al. 1986). Most talismans have to be activated at precisely defined times of the year in order to support the flow of cosmic forces and aid their cycle of renewal. Only then, too, can they properly protect the adept during his passage through dangerous and difficult phases in the temporal cycle (see Rawson and Legeza 1973; Schipper and Wang 1986). Talismans related to temporal cycles include the five seasonal talismans either swallowed or placed near the adept's bed to make the gods come and protect him and the eight talismans linked with the Eight Nodes or days of the beginnings and high points of the seasons (see CT 1359). Talismans associated with the sixty-day cycle are specifically linked with the six jade maidens or Jia deities (*Liu jia 六甲*), each responsible for a group of ten days; they appear first in a revelation granted to the Han emperor Wu and come together with the "True Shape of the Five Mountains" (CT 84; Robinet 1984, 2:211). The same talismans also correspond to the six celestial palaces of the jade maidens. Each one represents a number of temporal elements and gives power over them, including the cycles of yin and yang. In addition, Song-dynasty diagrams often show complex cosmological patterns and temporal calculations.

THE TRUE FORM OF THINGS. Diagrams that reveal the true shape of objects or cosmic patterns are very much like reflective mirrors, similarly used to recognize, trap and neutralize demons (see Schipper 1975, 28). Both mirrors and diagrams make usually invisible things appear in the world of visible shapes and play the role of demon-dispellers; they commonly have talismans attached to them that enhance this power (*Yuyi qiqian* 48.7b). In addition, the back of a mirror and the frame of a diagram often show cosmic emblems and mythical shapes that in themselves are protective signs, talismanic in nature. Two writings in the Daoist canon, the *Shangqing changsheng baodian tu* 上清長生寶鑑圖 (Shangqing Diagram of Precious

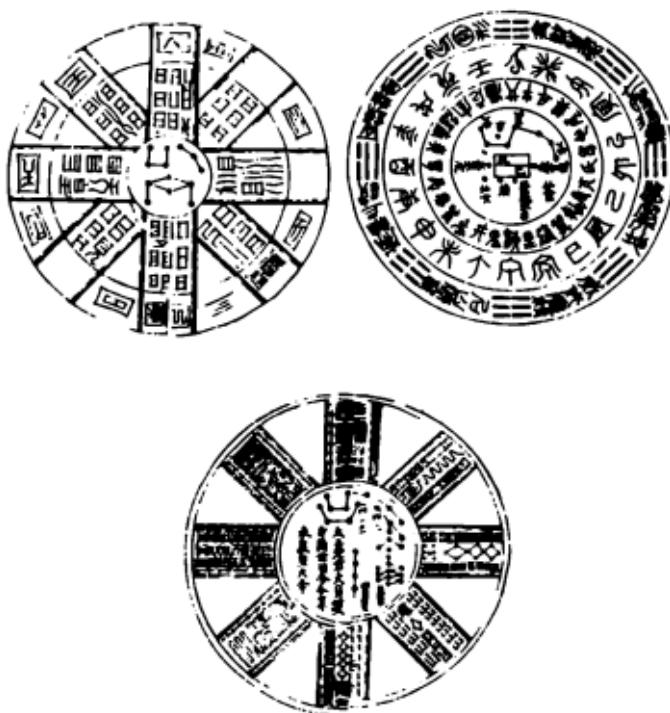


Figure 21. Diagrams on the backs of mirrors. Source: *Shangqing changsheng baojian tu* (CT 429), 11a-3a.

Mirrors for Long Life, CT 429) and the *Shangqing hanxiang jianjian* (上清含象劍鑑圖) (*Shangqing Diagram of Swords and Mirrors for Catching Shapes*, CT 431), dated to the Tang dynasty, combine the idea of diagrams and mirrors by presenting charts in mirror form (see Fig. 21). They consist of representations of the stars of the Dipper, the twenty-eight constellations, the animals of the sun and the moon, as well as those of the four heraldic animals, the trigrams and various talismans (see Kaltenmark 1974).

In addition, the human body becomes a sacred space in the practice of individuals and is often conceived as a mountain or a grotto with internal labyrinths, deities and palaces. To enter it properly, adepts must know its true form and possess the right diagrams for their guidance. Daoist representations of the sacred body accordingly provide the names of key deities, secret spots, major internal processes and courseways. The body of flesh and bone in Daoist practice becomes increasingly a cosmic place, a double or shadow of the perfect inner body, the divine form of being as revealed in the diagrams (see Despeux 1996).

LEGITIMATION OF POWER. In ancient China, talismans were formed of two pieces, held each by one party of a given contract. Putting the two pieces together served to identify the authority of the two parties and the legitimacy of the contract. Imperial orders, moreover, were written in cinnabar ink on yellow paper and marked with a proper imperial seal. Daoists imitate both these ideas in constructing their talismans and registers—the former using the same style and format, and possession of the latter serving as a kind of divine investiture. A talisman is therefore, from beginning to end, a kind of official document; very often it contains terms of command or submission, such as *chi* 教 (summon), *ling* 令 (order), *ming* 命 (command), *zhen* 鎮 (suppress) and *sha* 杳 (kill). In the main section of the talisman one finds in addition words like *jiang* 降 (descend), *sheng* 升 (ascend) and *lai* 來 (come), which all indicate an active communication with the spirits. Towards the end the malicious or nefarious power to be destroyed is named, using terms such as *xiong* 凶 (evil), *zai* 灾 (calamity), *huo* 祸 (misfortune) or *fai* 匪 (assault). As regards registers, Daoists adopted not only the word from Han imperial practice but also the idea of investiture through a list of officers and the notion that the ruler was in control of the spirits (see Seidel 1969). As a result, Daoist practitioners become celestial officials, using talismans and registers to communicate and govern gods and demons. In their rituals, they travel to the paradises and the underworld, holding on to the talismans as their passports and letters of introduction to the supernatural world.

Han dynasty *sangshi* and their texts, the apocrypha (*chenwei* 繼緯), were concerned mainly with the changing rule of the sovereign and particularly with the manifestation of auspicious and inauspicious signs in relation to this rule. Dragons, phoenixes and magical tortoises appeared as good omens, as did celestial diagrams and charts, which then came to be considered "heavenly treasures" (*tianbao* 天寶; see Kaltenmark 1960; Seidel 1983). Diagrams, moreover, were commonly brought to the ruler by wondrous creatures, such as the black turtle, the yellow dragon, the white fish and the red bird—carrying good omens in their beak or mouth or on their back and transmitting them to the saints of the time (*Yuhai* 玉海 56.1b). During the troubled years of the Warring States, when power

struggles intensified, various ruling princes had begun to pay closer attention to signs and omens, striving for divine protection of their rule. Accordingly specialists began to produce miraculous objects for them, called *flying* 符應 or *ruiying* 瑞應, i.e., "talismans or objects of good auspices which reveal the proper correspondence of Heaven." Their appearance and treatment, then, constitutes the bulk of apocryphal and prophetic writings of the Han, the direct forerunners of Daoist talismans and expiatory commentaries.

GUIDE TO THE LABYRINTH. The diagrams of the Five Mountains, the Man-Bird Mountain and the city of the underworld all show the shape of a mountain or a deep grotto (see Stein 1988; 1990). Yet they also suggest intricate, convoluted patterns, pathways strewn with traps and pitfalls reminiscent of Western labyrinths. They show the complex path adepts have to travel on their way to sagehood, the intricate ways of searching for immortality drugs and the texts and talismans of salvation. In all cases, the principles of the Dao that must be discovered are hidden in the depth of the earth's entrails, and to search for them successfully adepts must undergo tests, manage difficult passages and discover the entrance and exit of the sacred places. The theme of the search and the intricate pathways comes up repeatedly in Daoist texts, both in regard to the heavens and the underworld, most frequently in connection with the labyrinth chart of Fengdu. The motif of the labyrinth, often linked with the geometrical shape of the spiral, is thus closely related to themes of life, death, resurrection and salvation.

PRACTICE

COMPOSITION OF TALISMANS AND DIAGRAMS. Talismanic writings commonly use patterns found in nature as well as highly archaic forms of writing. Perfect or celestial writing is also called "thunder script" and often appears as a variant of ancient seal script. The characters are drawn with strong emphasis on curved lines and evoke cloudy patterns, such as those drawn in depictions of the celestials floating down from heaven. This kind of writing is accordingly called "cloudy seal script" (*yunzhuàn*; see CT 1, chs. 5, 9; CT 1220, chs. 73-74).

Talismans consist of stylized characters, figurative elements, geometrical patterns and symbolic signs, drawn in close combination to create a powerful, intricate mixture. Scriptural elements play a role in the kinds of characters chosen; characters, moreover, can be abbreviated (such as those for "sun" and "moon") or doubled (see *Taiping jing*, chs. 104-7). They can also be written with parts transposed, the left part appearing on the right, for example, or newly created by putting radicals together that do not make

sense in common words. Characters may, moreover, be repeated in entire series—most commonly done with words like “fire,” “light,” “cinnabar” and “water.” There are talismans that consist of nothing but long series of such words.

The most commonly used symbolic elements are small circles that show stars or constellations, curves representing water, fire and the flow of *qi*, as well as spirals and curls indicating clouds and cosmic movements. Taken together, talismans show a great deal of variety in their composition, representing the forces of the universe and the words that grant power over them.

DRAWING TALISMANS. A number of texts, especially since the Song ritual compendia, describe the rules that apply to the proper drawing and preparation of talismans, including preparatory measures, proper times and conditions as well as accompanying visualizations. Few instructions, on the other hand, have come down to us regarding the composition of diagrams.

Drawing a talisman occurs in two phases. The first, called “separating the elements” (*souxing 散形*), consists of tracing the various necessary elements one by one; the second, called “assembling the elements” (*jixing 取形*), is their combination in an integrated structure. In some cases, the final product allows the clear distinction of the originally separate elements that created it; in others, the various parts are meshed together inextricably so that the talisman becomes one integrated whole. A good example for the latter are certain talismans used in thunder rites where the overall pattern obscures the various internal parts.

In the actual act of drawing, the Daoist master must make sure to inhale and exhale regularly, because the efficacy of the final product depends on the power exteriorized through his breath while drawing. Before sitting down with the brush, he has to purify his spirit and enter a state of great mental concentration; with every stroke of the brush, he voices a matching incantation, moving along with its rhythm and following the divine light of his visualization. Different schools give different instructions on the latter. Pure Subtlety, for example, demands that the master, after attaining deep mental concentration, pick up the brush and focus his eyes completely on its tip, then visualize a divine light emerge from his body and condense in the space around him until it shrinks to the size of a grain of millet. Then he sees this concentrated divine light attach itself to the tip of the brush and begins to write. His writing, moreover, he sees as a golden snake which comes flying and writhes along on his paper. He must never take his eyes off the tip of the brush, because it is through his eyes that the celestial seal enters the talisman (*Daifa huiyuan* 4.11b-12a).

The time of the drawing is selected from auspicious dates on the calendar, matching the elements of the talisman and the function for which it is designed. Talismans are most commonly drawn on paper; sometimes

they may be drawn in air or in sand, or in blood on the bones of a medium (Legeza 1976, 21). Occasionally one finds talismans to be executed on wood, most auspiciously peach wood which has demon-dispelling qualities, on metal or on stone. There also samples left of talismans or diagrams carved on stone stelae and placed at the entrance of villages or the gates of temples; textual sources note that a stone diagram of the Dark Warrior was placed in the four corners of Zhejiang villages to prevent fire (Rawson and Legeza 1973, 119), while one of the Five Mountains was put at the Erwang miao 二王廟 (Temple of the Two Kings) in Guanxian 漏縣 (Sichuan).

APPLICATION OF TALISMANS. The way talismans are applied depends on their specific venue, which might be personal, familial or ritual, and on their function, which could be exorcistic, protective, contractual and so on. Some are to be carried on the person (around the neck, tied to the elbow, suspended from the belt), others are to be placed in the house (above doors, in the courtyard, in the corners). Some should be attached to trees or placed in specific spots during rituals. Talismans are also burned and their ashes drunk in water to remedy various illnesses; others are rolled into pills after being burned and their ashes mixed with honey. In rituals, they are simply burned (Schipper 1994, 90). Talismans are used to drive out demons and eliminate various malicious influences, stabilize potentially harmful tendencies, obtain the protection of the gods and give orders to the spirits. They can prevent illnesses and aid during epidemics and assist adepts in attaining immortality (de Groot 1892; Doré 1917). To use them properly, one must commonly chant an incantation and make a secret gesture with one's hands. The incantation is often part of the talisman, contained in its stylized writing or printed on its side.

To transmit a talisman to the otherworld, it is commonly burned in a ritual manner. Often talismans are also burned together with petitions and official orders for the otherworld, for use as divine passports and identification papers in rituals of thanksgiving and salvation of the dead. Therapeutic talismans, such as the twelve associated with the animals of the zodiac which are applied to illnesses of the corresponding year, are often used to stop vomiting, stomach ache, fevers and other ailments. They, too, are burned, and their ashes are collected and dissolved in water, which is given to the patient to ingest—again under proper ritual circumstances and to the accompaniment of incantations.

Only protective talismans are conserved and held on to. They can be sewn into pouches and carried on the body, assisting adepts to pass through dangers or enter the mountains. To prevent epidemics and disasters from entering one's home, a protective talisman should be suspended above the door and in various other strategic locations. During funerals and near corpses, talismans are applied to keep demons at bay. They are used widely and popularly and can still be found in many temples in China today,

pouches with charms being sold to procure good health, a good marriage, success in examinations, childbirth, and safety on the road.

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