THE THREE SOVEREIGNS TRADITION:
TALISMANS, ELIXIRS, AND MEDITATION IN EARLY MEDIEVAL CHINA

A DISSERTATION
SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES
AND THE COMMITTEE ON GRADUATE STUDIES
OF STANFORD UNIVERSITY
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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March 2010
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Abstract

This dissertation attempts to elucidate the origins and nature of the lost Sanhuang wen (Writ of the Three Sovereigns), and identify its surviving fragments in the Daoist Canon. The text’s revelation was the basis for a religious movement that originally flourished between the third and sixth centuries, in Jiangnan, China. The first part of the present study is devoted to a historical analysis of the Three Sovereigns movement and its sources. It scrutinizes the immediate social, economic, and political pressures that shaped a cohesive Three Sovereigns identity, before re-tracing the tradition’s development through its textual history and lineage. From the fourth century onward, a numerous scriptures were attached to the original three scrolls of the Sanhuang wen until it formed its own corpus, the Dongshen jing (Canon for Storing the Divine), which occupied an entire section out of the Daoist Canon’s original three. After a scroll-by-scroll inventory of the entire Dongshen jing, this study identifies its surviving fragments, and more pointedly, those of the tradition’s eponymous scripture, the Sanhuang wen, in canonical sources. These remnants are chiefly found in the Dongshen badi miaojing jing (Scripture of the Wondrous Essence of the Eight Emperors from the Canon for Storing the Divine) and the “Sanhuang yaoyong pin” (“Chapter on the Essential Functions of the Three Sovereigns”) from the Wushang biyao (Peerless Secret Essentials). Through the examination of these two key sources, the second part of the dissertation explores the principal features of the Sanhuang tradition as reflected in its rituals and methods. The use of talismans for the purpose of divination is a key component of Sanhuang practice and its best-known facet. Other, frequently overlooked dimensions to the tradition include the integration of elements and techniques from external alchemy (waidan), and the heavy emphasis placed on meditation. Very often, the latter involves the visualization of inner gods or the modification of form (xing). Other, more conceptual features of the Sanhuang tradition include the reliance on the operative notion of true form (zhenxing) and the theoretical prominence of complementarity as defined by a binary cosmology. By shedding light on an overlooked corner in the study of Daoism, this dissertation provides a more complete and nuanced picture of the development of Chinese religion and thought.
Acknowledgments

This dissertation grew out of a long series of conversations in Tokyo, with Fabrizio Pregadio, during the fall of 2006. Countless hours of further discussions have given it the shape it now has. Throughout the entire process, Fabrizio Pregadio has been a constant support; his presence can be felt throughout the pages of this study. He has painstakingly guided me every step of the way, showing remarkable patience and selflessness.

I am grateful to Carl Bielefeldt for having brought me to Stanford and provided me with guidance over the years. I extend my gratitude to him for the inspiration he has provided me. I am also indebted to Bernard Faure, whose kindness and generosity have left a deep impression upon me. I have always looked up to his scholarly acumen, and I truly hope that an infinitesimal portion of it may have rubbed off on me during the time that I spent under his instruction.

I would like to extend my gratitude to Robin DS Yates, Grace Fong, and Victor Hori, who initiated me to the academic study of history and religion. Their time and friendship is greatly appreciated. Poul Andersen, James Benn, Wendi Adamek, Paul Harrison, George Clonos, and Andrew Rankin have been a tremendous help with comments, advice, or encouragement at various stages of this project. I am thankful for their assistance.

I am grateful to Yamada Toshiaki and Kikuchi Noritaka for the direction they supplied me with during the early stages of the dissertation. My heartfelt thanks go to Florin Deleanu for his support. Hubert Durt and Iyanaga Nobumi deserve special mention for their friendship. Their company and guidance was invaluable during my time in Tokyo.

Finally, I must thank Tiberiu and Viorica Balint for instilling in me the motivation to persevere and see all my projects through to the end.

The Japan Foundation and the Bukkyō dēndō kyōkai generously provided financial support for my research in Japan. I am also grateful for a dissertation grant from the Freeman Spogli Institute and an award from Stanford’s Graduate Research Opportunities, which allowed me to complete my work.
# Table of Contents

**Introduction. Ge Hong, Heir to the Sovereigns**  
1

I. Vestiges of the Sanhuang  
1  
   1. Early Accounts from the Master Who Embraces Simplicity  
   1  
   2. The Talismans of the Sanhuang wen  
   11

II. Overlooked Facets of the Sanhuang Tradition  
15  
   1. Alchemy  
   15  
   2. Guarding the One  
   17  
   3. True Form Divination  
   19

**Chapter 1. A Genealogy of the Sanhuang**  
24

I. The Southern Esoteric Tradition  
24  
   1. Expression, Antagonism, and Accommodation  
   24  
   2. The Way of the Bo Family  
   33

II. Key Figures in the Sanhuang Transmission Lineage  
35  
   1. Bo He  
   35  
   2. Lord Wang and the Essential Instructions to Bo He  
   39  
   3. Lord Wang and Wang Yuan  
   44  
   4. The Western Citadel and Mount Wangwu  
   50  
   5. Bao Jing and the transmission to Ge Hong  
   58  
   6. Bao Jing and the Dayou jing  
   64

III. Appendix 1: Synopsis of Principal Six Dynasties Sources  
   Containing Fragments of the Sanhuang wen and Associated Materials  
   71

**Chapter 2. The Formation of the Sanhuang Tradition**  
76

I. The Three Sovereigns and the Eight Emperors: Expanding the Corpus  
76  
   1. Lu Xiujing, the Three Caverns, and the Dongshen Division  
   76  
   2. Tao Hongjing and the Expansion of the Dongshen jing  
   82  
   3. The Fourteen-Scroll Dongshen jing  
   88
II. Prescriptions, Proscriptions, and Prohibitions

1. The Liturgical Scrolls: The Sanhuang chuanshou yi
   (Transmission Rituals of the Three Sovereigns) 92
2. The Liturgical Scrolls: The Sanhuang zhaiyi
   (Three Sovereigns Purification Ritual) 94
3. The Liturgical Scrolls: Further Fragments 97
4. Precepts 101

III. The Fate of the Sanhuang in the Tang

1. Buddhist Polemics 110
2. The Politics of Perception 115
3. Later Developments 120

IV. Appendix 2: Bibliography of Early Medieval Sources Related to the Sanhuang wen and the Fourteen-Scroll Dongshen Canon 128

Chapter 3. Defining Features of the Sanhuang Tradition: Talismans

I. In nomine veritas: Fu and the Power of Writing in the Sanhuang Tradition 134

1. Writing as Identity 134
2. Word is Bond 140
3. Cosmic Congealment: the Sacred Characters of the Sanhuang wen 145

II. From Word to Text: Remnants of the Sanhuang wen 151

1. The Great Characters of the Celestial Writ 151
2. Traces of the Tianwen dazi 158
3. The Appended Materials 162
4. Essential Instructions from the Western Citadel 167

III. Appendix 3: Overview of Variations in Titles for the Purpose of Distinguishing between Versions of the Sanhuang wen in Relevant Early Medieval Sources 174

IV. Appendix 4: Deities Summoned with the Ninety-two Talismans of the “Xicheng yaojue” along with Corresponding or Associated Deities from the Talismans of the “Sanhuang yaoyong pin” 177

V. Appendix 5: Comparative Inventory of “Floating Talismans” and Ordination Materials for the Sanhuang Tradition from Relevant Sources 181
### Chapter 4. Defining Features of the Sanhuang Tradition: Elixirs and Meditation 186

I. The Alchemical Share 186
   1. Li Shaojun and the Taiqing line 186
   2. Elixirs 193

II. Meditation 197
   1. Meditations on the One 197
   2. The Sanhuang sanyi jing 202
   3. The Inner Pantheon 206

III. Regressive Time in Sanhuang Meditative Practices 209
   1. Gestational Symbolism 209
   2. Regressive Gestation 216
   3. Nonary Technologies 219
   4. The Nine Hymns of the Nine Charts 227


V. Appendix 7: Charts of the Nine Sovereigns 236

VI. Appendix 8: Cosmological Description of the Nine Sovereigns According to the “Jiuhuang tu” (“Charts of the Nine Sovereigns”) 239

### Chapter 5. Defining Features of the Sanhuang Tradition: True Form Charts as Chronotopic Complements 240

I. The Ontology of Xing: True Form in Sanhuang Meditation 240
   1. Guarding the Mysterious One and the Modification of Form 240
   2. Numinous Topography and the True Form Charts of the Five Peaks 254

II. True Form Divination: The Eight Envoys in the Sanhuang Tradition 263
   1. Cosmology, Complementarity, and Chronotope: the Eight Trigrams in the Sanhuang Tradition 263
   2. The Eight Envoys and Visionary Divination 274
   3. From Heaven Down to Earth: Envoys and Asterisms 285
Conclusion: Situating the Sovereigns 292

List of References 299

I. Primary Sources 299

II. Secondary Sources 306
Introduction
Ge Hong, Heir to the Sovereigns

I. Vestiges of the Sanhuang

1. Early Accounts from the Master Who Embraces Simplicity

Serving as a Daoist prelate at the Liu Song (420-479) court, Lu Xiujing 卢修静 (406-477) presented the first systematized elaboration of what is now known as the Daoist canon in 437. His Sandong jingshu mulu 三洞經書目錄 (Catalogue of Scriptures and Writings of the Three Caverns) was divided into three sections. The first contained texts from the Shangqing 上清 revelation, the second, texts from the subsequent Lingbao 靈寶 revelation. The third section, that of the “cavern of divinity” or “storehouse for divinity” (Dongshen 神), was devoted to earlier heterogeneous materials dealing with the veneration of ancient deities and related divinatory practices.

A later preface to the Sandong jingshu mulu specifies that Dongshen writings are for “calling upon the gods of heaven and earth and making them obey one’s orders. Their efficacy is fathomless; hence they were given the name of shen 神 (god, divine).”¹ This section was organized around a set of talismans (fu 符)

¹ Yunji qiqian 雲笈七籖 (Seven Lots from the Bookcase of the Clouds; 1032), 6.1b; translation from Schipper’s “General Introduction” to Schipper and Verellen, The Taoist Canon: A Historical Companion to the Daozang, 1:16.
that had been “the pride of Ge Hong’s 葛洪 (283-343) library” the preceding century.\(^2\) The *Baopu zi neipian* 抱朴子内篇 (Master Who Embraces Simplicity: Inner Chapters; CT 1185) is the earliest datable record of these talismans; known collectively as the *Sanhuang neiwen* 三皇内文 (Esoteric Writ of the Three Sovereigns) or *Sanhuang wen* 三皇文 (Writ of the Three Sovereigns), the *fu* were divided into three scrolls (*juan* 卷) from the outset, one for each of the Sovereigns of Heaven (*Tianhuang* 天皇), Earth (*Dihuang* 地皇) and Humanity (*Renhuang* 人皇). A detailed description of the text and its uses can be found in the following lines from chapter 19:

I heard Zheng Yin say that among the important works on the Way, none surpass the *Sanhuang neiwen* and *Wuyue zhenxing tu* 五嶽真形圖 (True Form Charts of the Five Peaks). The ancients, immortal officers (*xianguan* 仙官), and accomplished men (*zhiren* 至人) respect and jealously guard their methods. They only transmit them to those who bear the title of “immortal” (*xian* 仙). The writings are handed down once every forty years, after swearing an oath of blood (*shaxue er meng* 歪血而盟) and establishing a bond through offerings.

These scriptures are found in all the famous mountains and the Five Peaks, but they are hidden inside stone chambers and inaccessible places. When one who is fit to receive the Way enters the mountain and meditates on them with pure intentions and sincerity, the mountain spirits will open the mountain and allow the adept to see the texts. Such was the case of Bo Zhongli 布仲理, who obtained [the *Sanhuang neiwen* and *Wuyue zhenxing tu*] inside a mountain. He immediately set up an altar, made an offering of silk, upon which he made a copy of the texts and departed. The texts should be kept in a purified place, and whenever they are used, it is necessary to first announce one’s intentions, as is done when submitting a proposition to one’s lord or father *ru feng junfu* 如奉君父).

The scripture itself states (*qijing yue* 其經曰) that when a household has the *Sanhuang wen*, it will dispel evil and hateful demons, quell disease pneumata, banish calamities, and rout misfortunes. If someone is suffering from illness and on the cusp of death, let him or her clutch the text; provided they have faith in

\(^2\) Schipper, ibid., 1:14.
its methods with all their heart, they will surely not die. If a woman is having
difficulty to the point of exhausting her vital pneuma, let her grip this text, and
her child will be born immediately. If adepts wishing to seek long life
(changsheng 長生) clench this text when entering the mountains, it will scatter
tigers, wolves, and mountain spirits (shanjing 山精). The five poisons (wudu 五
毒) and hundred calamities (baixie 百邪) will not dare approach. Crossing rivers
and seas [with this scripture] will make crocodiles flee, as it will halt the wind
and waves. Obtaining this work will permit one to carry out transformations
(bianhua 變化), and embark on endeavours (qigong 起工) without having to
inquire about favorable sites or auspicious days. One’s household will know no
adversity.

If one aims to build a new house or tomb, several dozen copies of the Dihuang
wen 地皇文 (Writ of the Sovereign of Earth) should be made and strewn about
the site. Consult them on the morrow, and if a yellow hue appears on them, then
one may begin work there and then. The household will surely become rich and
fortunate. When others are being interred, reproduce the Renhuang wen 人皇文
(Writ of the Sovereign of Humanity). Also inscribe your own name and
surname on a folded paper, and introduce both items in the deceased’s grave
without letting anyone know. This will exempt you from unexpected
tribulations and thieving bandits. Those plotting against you will have their
harm returned against them.

Furthermore, after a hundred-day purification rite, one may summon the
celestial spirits (tianshen 天神) and Director of Destinies (Siming 司命) with
this scripture. The Supreme Year (Taisui 太歲), Daily Traveler (riyou 日遊),
and the gods of the Five Peaks, Four Waterways, and of the altar and shrines
(wuyue sidu shemiao zhishen 五嶽四瀆社廟之神) will reveal themselves in
their human form. One may thereupon ask them about auspicious and
inauspicious matters, safe or unsafe undertakings, and the improving or
worsening lots of the ill. Moreover, there are eighteen characters to be kept
inside one’s garments that will ensure safe passage across distant rivers and seas
free from worries of winds and waves.

If a household has the Wuyue zhenxing tu, it can quell any woe arising from
soldiery. Anyone who wishes harm on its members will have it rebound on
them. There may be adepts who have obtained [both] documents but cannot
apply the principles of humanity and righteousness, nor do they have a
benevolent heart. They do not show the proper spirit and are not meticulous in
their enterprise, and will thus incur disaster and destruction on their household.
This they should not treat lightly.³

³ Baopu zi neipian, hereafter Baopu zi, 19.336—37, from Wang Ming, ed. Baopu zi
neipian jiaoshi; Ware, Alchemy, Medicine and Religion in the China of A.D. 320: The
Nei P’ien of Ko Hung (Pao-p’u tsu), 314—16; all subsequent Baopu zi citations will
A few elements from this passage pertaining to transmission call for closer examination. Firstly, the textual materials are jealously protected, handed down once every forty years to the most deserving of initiates. Their bestowal from one generation to the next is sealed by a blood oath (xuemeng 血盟), one that Ge Hong likely swore in order to obtain the documents himself.4 This covenant is representative of a Southern religious culture rooted in the “Confucian” Apocrypha (weishu 正書) and fangshi 方士 (master of recipes) traditions of the Han dynasty (206 BCE-220 CE).5 The esoteric nature of the transmission is further highlighted

refer to the Wang Ming edition followed by the page numbers from Ware’s English translation. Most recently, a large proportion of this passage was translated into French by John Lagerwey, “Littérature taoïste et formation du canon,” 479—80.

4 This rite, according to which officiants smeared their lips with the blood of a sacrificial victim, arose in the Zhou 周 dynasty (1045—256 BCE) and was practiced in political or religious circles until the Han; see Lewis, Sanctioned Violence in Early China, 43—50. Blood oaths particularly flared Tianshi Dao 天師道 (Way of the Celestial Masters) tempers since they exemplified the wastefulness of “profane cults” (sushen 俗神). A description of the tensions between Tianshi dao devotees and indigenous Southern cults is found in see Strickmann, “The Mao Shan Revelations,” 7; and “On the Alchemy of T’ao Hung-ching,” 145, n. 69, by the same author; see also Stein, “Les religions de la Chine,” especially 19.54.3—5. Despite being strongly discouraged, the practice of blood oaths managed to survive in Southern China until the sixth century, when it was gradually supplanted by offerings of gold and silk, or the ingestion of (blood-colored) cinnabar; see Strickmann, “On the Alchemy of T’ao Hung-ching,” 189. S.3750 and P.2559, two Dunhuang manuscripts from the Liang Dynasty (502—557 CE) edited by Tao Hongjing 陶弘景 (456—536), preserve a later version of the ritual. The fragments contain transmission rites for the Sanhuang wen and Wuyue zhenxing tu; see Ofuchi, Tonkō dōkyō mokuroku hen, 331—32.

5 Or what Harper, Early Chinese Medical Literature: The Mawangdui Medical Manuscripts, 64, terms the state-sanctioned fields of “natural philosophy” and “occult knowledge” on the one hand, and “shamanic customs” on the other. The Apocrypha or “weft-texts” (weishu; alternatively, chenwei or chanwei 諸緯), belonged to a genre of portent literature typified by prognosticatory commentaries on the classics and the interpretation of omens. Their principal aim was to legitimate the political power of new rulers. For more on the apocrypha, see Ch’en P’an, Gu chenwei yantao ji qi shulu jieti; Dull, “A Historical Introduction to the Apocryphal (Ch’an-wei) Texts of the Han Dynasty”; Kaltenmark, “Les Tch’an-wei,” 363—73; Seidel, “Imperial Treasures and Taoist Sacraments: Taoist Roots in the Apocrypha,” 291—371; Yasui Közan and Nakamura Shōhachi, Isho no kisoteki kenkyū; and by the same authors, Isho shūsei.
by the fact that the *Sanhuang wen* is hidden deep inside a mountain, revealed only to the worthy. Just as the blood oath, the storing of sacred scriptures in caves within peaks is a recurrent theme in Southern religious transmission narratives. The paradigmatic example of the grotto revelation is found in a contemporaneous cousin to the *Sanhuang wen* that circulated in the same Southern intelligentsia family networks; the *Lingbao wufu xu*’s 靈寶五符序 (Prolegomenon to the Five Lingbao Talismans; CT 388) famous “Grotto Passage” reproduces many of the details from Ge’s description of the initial transmission of the *Sanhuang wen*, including the revelation of a sacred document deep within the cavernous entrails of a mountain.6

The first chapter of the dissertation will first identify the historical context of the *Sanhuang wen* and describe the social forces that shaped its formation. The Sanhuang 三皇 movement that developed around the scripture and its practices was firmly entrenched in the climate of religious ferment that permeated the mid-Six Dynasties (220-589). Nonetheless, it was first and foremost a characteristic

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6 *Taishang lingbao wufu xu*, hereafter *Wufu xu*, 1.7a-1.11a. An abridged version of this same passage survives in *Baopu zi*, 12.229; Ware, 209—10; cf. *Huangdi jiuding shendan jingjue* 黃帝九鼎神丹經駅 (Instructions on the Scripture of the Divine Elixirs of the Nine Tripods of the Yellow Emperor), 2.6b. For more on grotto revelations, consult Bokenkamp’s “The Peach Flower Font and the Grotto Passage”; and Kaltenmark’s “Ling-pao: Note sur un terme du taoïsme religieux.” The *Lingbao wufu xu*, 3.5b, also refers to sacrificial blood oaths, although this specific section of the text already displays some concessions to the Tianshi dao. The early layers of the *Lingbao wufu xu*, dated to the late third- or early fourth-centuries, rely heavily on the traditions of the *fangshi* and the Apocrypha. On this point, see Yamada Toshiaki “Futatsu no shinpu: *Gogaku shingyōzu to Reihō gofu,*” and his “Reihō gofu no seirisu to sono fuzuiteki seikaku”; see also Gil Raz, “Creation of Tradition: The Five Talismans of the Numinous Treasure and the Formation of Early Daoism,” 286—304.
current of the Southern esoteric tradition; even at a cursory glance, this is readily apparent from the previous *Baopu zi* excerpt. As a result, defenders of the Southern tradition soon appropriated the Sanhuang as a spearhead in the effort to preserve Jiangnan’s local customs and culture in the wake of massive influx of Northern émigrés. Its complex relationship to the comparatively syncretistic Shangqing and Lingbao movements will also be briefly considered, as well as its ties to the obscure Bojia dao (Way of the Bo Family), another emblem of the South’s fecund religious landscape.

The Bojia dao was based on the teachings of the reputed fangshi Bo He. This same figure is mentioned in the above passage from the *Baopu zi*, under his cognomen Zhongli, thus further cementing the bonds between the *Sanhuang wen* and a rich meridional heritage of second or third century mantic and prognosticatory practices. In fact, Bo He is often cited as part of the first link in the human transmission of the talismanic characters, that he receives from Lord Wang of the Western Citadel (Xicheng Wangjun), or more simply Lord Wang (Wangjun), during the Three Kingdoms period (220-265). This constitutes the initial phase of the so-called “orthodox” textual lineage of the *Sanhuang wen*. The second part of the first chapter will reconstruct the successive transmissions of the scripture on the basis of accounts from the *Baopu zi*, the *Shenxian zhuan* (Biographies of Divine Transcendents), the *Yunji qiqian* (Seven Lots from the Bookcase of the Clouds; 1032), and a handful of other sources. Particular attention will be devoted to the murky Lord Wang of the Western Citadel, who is often hastily identified as Wang Yuan or other immortals of Shangqing repute. These associations are often tenuous and warrant reconsideration. After the
transmission to Bo He, the *Sanhuang wen* eventually made its way to Zheng Yin (ca. 215-ca. 302), and finally, to Ge Hong.

A number of accounts hold that Bao Jing 鲍靓 (or 鲍靖; 230 or 260-330), Ge Hong’s father-in-law and master to Xu Mai 许迈 (300-348 CE), uncovered another rendition of the talismanic writ in a cave on Mount Song (Songshan 嵯山) during the Yuankang era (291—299) of the Western Jin (265—316) dynasty. Bao Jing’s discovery of a new, purportedly more comprehensive rendering of the *Sanhuang wen*, complete with an independent genealogy, was the harbinger of revelatory trends of the fourth and fifth centuries that elaborated on a foundation of pre-existing notions and practices. The Shangqing school in particular recognized the potential of incorporating and developing notions from earlier traditions. Soon enough, Bao’s *Sanhuang wen* was championed in an effort to establish a continuum between the new revelations and the older strata of religious beliefs; however this unwittingly highlighted the contradictions of having two separate Sanhuang genealogies with two seemingly distinct texts, the *Dayou sanhuang wen* (Writ of the Three Sovereigns from the Cavern of Greater Existence) and the *Xiaoyou sanhuang wen* (Writ of the Three Sovereigns from the Cavern of Lesser Existence). Ge Hong probably received both renditions of

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7 See for instance, *Yunji qiqian*, 4.10b, and 6.11b. Xu Mai’s younger brother, Xu Mi 许迈 (303—376), was the primary recipient of the watershed Shangqing revelations.
8 Schipper, ibid., 1:15.
9 “Xiaoyou” and “dayou” could be references to the fourteenth hexagram of the *Yijing*. However, one of the earliest passages to mention both terms concurrently is found in the *Zhengao*, 13.11b, suggesting a Shangqing initiative in applying them to Sanhuang materials:

This man [Zhang Xuanbao 张玄宝 of the Cao Wei 曹魏 (220—265)] was apt at discussing Emptiness and Nothingness (*kong wu* 空無). He was an expert debater. Once, he was addressing the principle of fundamental Non-being (*wu* 無).
the scripture, but his Baopu zi makes no mention of Mount Song version—and this
despite being tied to Bao by the twin bonds of family and discipleship.

Chapter 2 examines the expansion of the original three scrolls into a multi-
volume corpus. The process began with the appearance of Bao Jing’s Sanhuang
wen and continued with the first sketches of Lu Xiujing’s Three Caverns (sandong
三洞); Sanhuang documents occupied an essential position among the three
foundational stanchions of the Daoist Canon. Despite a relative wealth of works
that claim descent from the Sanhuang wen and its divinatory practices, the exact
composition of the early Sanhuang canon remains the subject of debate. When Lu
Xiujing submitted his Sandong jingshu mulu to the emperor, the Dongshen section
comprised no more than four scrolls, considerably fewer than its Shangqing and
Lingbao counterparts. Lu transmitted the Sanhuang wen to Sun Youyue 孫遊嶽
(399-489), who then handed it down to Tao Hongjing 陶弘景 (456-536). By the
time of Tao’s death, the Dongshen canon had been rearranged into eleven scrolls

無): “Non-being is the abode of Greater Existence (dayou), which gives birth
to Lesser Existence (xiaoyou). By persisting in Lesser Existence one can only
foster Lesser Non-being. By seeing Greater Existence one can root oneself in
Greater Non-being. Having Existence is the same as not having Non-being;
not having Non-being is the same as having Existence. Therefore, my eyes do
not see any object (wu 物), and the objects also do not manifest Non-being.
When I straddle Existence and I achieve Non-being; I straddle Non-being and
[still] obtain Non-being.

Moreover, the Qingxu xiaoyou and Kongming dayou 空明大有 窟洞 heavens
are the first and second of the “ten major grotto-heavens” (da dongtian 大洞天);
Tianti gongfu tu 天地宮府圖 (Chart of the Palaces and Bureaus of the [Grotto-]
Heavens and the [Blissful] Lands), from Yunji qiqian 27.1ab, “Dayou” is also the
name of a celestial palace at the center of Heaven, most notably referred to in the
Shangqing Dongzhen taishang suling dongyuan dayou miaoqin 洞真太上素靈洞元
大有妙經 (Scripture of the [Celestial Palace] of the Immaculate Numen; CT 1314).
or “chapters,” one for each of the Three Sovereigns and Eight Emperors. One explanation for the re-organization of Sanhuang texts into eleven-scrolls rests on the interpretation of the Three Sovereigns as forms of the Three Primes (sanyuan 三元) and the Eight Sovereigns as manifestations of the Eight Trigrams (bagua 八卦), thereby lending cosmological cohesion to the collection. However, three liturgical compilations were added shortly after, bringing the Dongshen total to fourteen scrolls.

Around the turn of the fourth century, the Sanhuang wen was counted among the most potent and valuable Daoist documents. While the original is no longer extant, significant portions of the Sanhuang wen are believed to have survived in the Sanhuang yaoyong pin” 三皇要用品 (“Essential Functions of the Three Sovereigns”) chapter of the Wushang biyao 無上祕要 (Peerless Secret Essentials; CT 1138). The sixth-century compendium as a whole offers an important assortment of citations attributed to the corpus of the Sanhuang tradition, a collection of works known as the Dongshen jing 洞神 (Canon for Storing the Divine) that accrued around the Sanhuang wen. As previously mentioned, this corpus swelled from an initial three scrolls to fourteen between the third and seventh centuries. One of its central texts is the Dongshen badi miaojing jing 洞神八帝妙精經 (Scripture of the Wondrous Essence of the Eight Emperors of the Storehouse for Divinity; CT 640), whose central section, the “Xicheng yaojue

\[10\] Yunji qiqian, 6.12; and Wushang biyao, 30.3a; see Chapter 2, 82—87, for a discussion of the expansion.
\[11\] Baopu zi, 19.336; Ware, 314.
\[12\] Wushang biyao, 25.1a-10b.
\[13\] See Lagerwey, Le Wu-shang pi-yao: somme taoïste du Ve siècle, 106—07, for a partial treatment and overview of the “Sanhuang yaoyong pin”; and ibid., 265, for a list of citations from the Dongshen jing.
sanhuang tianwen dazi” 西域要訣三皇天文內大字 (“Essential Instructions from the Western Citadel on the Esoteric Great Characters of the Celestial Writ of the Three Sovereigns”) is presented as the original Sanhuang wen.14

The latter part of Chapter 2 is devoted to identifying some of the remnants of the Sanhuang corpus in the Ming edition of the Daoist Canon. Precepts and purification rites serve as a focal point for recognizing surviving fragments of the three liturgical scrolls. The structure and cleanliness that ensue from an individual’s observance of ritual and moral prescriptions also have politico-social relevance. The Sanhuang tradition makes no effort to hide this; its namesake, the Three Sovereigns, points to the archetypal Chinese monarchs, quintessential sage-rulers of antiquity and masters of statecraft. Perhaps because of its moral imperative, the Tang (618-907) authorities deemed the Sanhuang wen seditious, banning it outright in 647, and replacing its place at the head of the Daoist Canon’s Dongshen cavern with the Daode jing 道德经 (Scripture of the Way and its Virtue). Some possible reasons for the proscription are presented before a brief overview of the Sanhuang’s fate during the Tang and Song (960-1279 CE) dynasties.

14 Dongshen badi miaojing jing; CT 640, hereafter abbreviated Badi miaojing jing, 12a-29b. The Sanhuang wen is first attested in sources from the early fourth century, but it is believed to have circulated during the third century. The Wushang biyao was compiled at the end of the sixth century, but it is based on earlier materials The Badi miaojing jing is dated between the fourth- and sixth-centuries.
2. The Talismans of the Sanhuang wen

In terms of practical application, the *Baopuzi* passage from chapter 19 reveals that the *Sanhuang wen*’s value broadly lay in the alleviation of daily preoccupations related to illness, miscellaneous misfortunes, armed assaults, and poverty. More specific are the benefits afforded to mountain-dwellers and travelers, a concern that indicates the intended bearer of the document should also be an initiated seeker of immortality; adepts would often scour mountains on appropriate dates and times in search of herbs and fungi that bestowed long or even eternal life. Ge Hong explains:

When accomplished adepts (*shangshi* 上士) enter a mountain they carry the *Sanhuang neiwên* and *Wuyue zhenxing tu*. Wherever they may be, they summon the gods of mountain. In accordance with the demon statutes (*guilu* 鬼錄), they [also] summon the local god of the altar (*zhoushe* 州社) the mountain ministers (*shanqing* and the officers of the homesteads (*zhaiwei* 宅尉) to question them. Therefore, the wraiths of trees and rocks (*mushi zhi guai* 木石之怪), and the essences of mountains and rivers will not dare approach and test them.15

Travel was a common undertaking for religious practitioners in early medieval Jiangnan. When treading through wild and unfamiliar territory for the purpose of initiatory pilgrimage, or in search of rare herbs and minerals, it was necessary to guard oneself against all potential mishaps, supernatural or otherwise. Since the Warring States (475-221 BCE) at least, the South enjoyed a tradition of “travel magic” which figures prominently, among other places, in the *Baopu zi*.16

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15 *Baopuzi*, 17.300; *Ware*, 282.
16 Harper, *Early Chinese Medical Literature: the Mawangdui Medical Manuscripts*, 167, coins the term “travel magic” in reference to accounts of breath magic (*jinzhou 禁咒*) and recipes of Yue (*Yue fang* 越方) found in the Mawangdui manuscript entitled *Yangsheng fang* 養生方 (Recipes for Nourishing Life); the notion of travel magic however circumscribes much of the South’s thaumaturgical traditions: “This
Recurring expressions such as “ascending mountains” (ru shan 入山; deng shan 登山) and “crossing rivers” (she shui 渉水) are clear indications of this to be taken literally to a certain degree, they are also common metonyms for describing religious pursuits in secluded sites—from ingredient hunting and meditation to searching for celestial grottos: the title of chapter 17 from the Baopu zi, “Ascending and Crossing” (deng she 登渉), refers to the synecdoche in question.17

The essential component of travel magic is the talisman, more pointedly, the apotropaic and summoning powers that are inherent to the implement. The protective power of the fu initially stems from its power to invoke, and thereby control, a deity or a demon by possessing its name; in most cases talismanic scripts consist of a god’s name, sometimes in combination with an injunction or the name of a higher-ranking entity.18 Certain works, including the Sanhuang wen, are used as talismans themselves; this is especially true of scriptures that contain fu, rosters, or descriptions of gods and demons.19 The mere prospect of subservience, coupled

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17 Baopu zi, 17.299; Ware, 279, translates the title as “Into Mountains: Over Streams.”
19 In terms of thaumaturgical potential, the actual difference between a talisman and a book was almost negligible. Commenting on the Shangqing housheng daojun lieji 上清後聖道教君列記 (Annals of the Sage of Latter Time, Lord of the Golden Gateway of
with the threat of uncovering their true identity are enough to scares malevolent spirits and creatures away. Hence, summoning and dispelling are two sides of the same coin. The talisman simply changes its polarity depending on the targeted spirit. Against a hostile demon or malicious specter, its effect is expulsive, but if aimed at an obliging god, it is invocative. The amulets of Lord Lao (Laojun 老君), for instance, are said to ward off ghosts, snakes, tigers, wolves, and noxious spirits.  

In another passage, the same talismans are said to command mountain gods if worn at the belt. Similarly, the Sanhuang tradition uses the same logographic tool for both purposes. However, while its protective talismans fade into the undifferentiated mass of Six Dynasties apotropeia, the fu that are used for summoning have the distinct benefit of conjuring deities that can foretell the adept’s future. This is not only discernible in the first Baopu zi excerpt examined above, but in most passages dealing with the Sanhuang wen; Ge Hong once more

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The Highest Purity; CT 442), Strickmann, Le taoïsme du Mao Chan: Chronique d’une révélation, 57 believes that it “was itself a matchless talisman, a badge of identity and passport through (apocalyptic) carnage.” In another Shangqing text, we find a register to be transmitted along with a star map indicating the choreographic paces that will permit the adept to travel the entire universe; as a complement to the map there is a talismanic passport or name card to be affixed on the adept’s head when on his or her intergalactic voyage; Shangqing dongzhen tianbao dadong sanjing baolu (Precious Registers [Corresponding to the Grade] of Disciple of the Three Luminaries of the Celestial Treasure of the Great Cavern 上清洞天真寶大洞三景寶録; CT 1385) 1.18b-19a. This notion of talismans as passports is also congruent with their inclusion in the arsenal of travel magic. The talismanic use of scriptures in Buddhist circles offers interesting parallels; cf. John Kieschnick, The Impact of Buddhism on Chinese Material Culture, 164—185; and Gregory Schopen, “The Phrase ‘sa prthivīpradeśaḥ caityabhūto bhavet’ in the Vajracchedikā: Notes on the Cult of the Book in Mahāyāna.”

20 Baopu zi, 17.311; Ware, 296.

21 Baopu zi, 17.300—01; Ware, 282. They are referred to as Laozi’s jade tablets (Laozi yuce 老子玉策). In a line that hints at a close functional proximity between the Laojun talismans of the Southern tradition and those of the Sanhuang wen, Ge Hong, Baopu zi, 19.335; Ware, 313, relates that “Zheng Yin used to say that the talismans that came down from Lord Lao were all in celestial script. This is because he could communicate with the loftiest of deities (shenming 神明), and it was them who transmitted the talismans to him.”
emphasizes the divinatory dimension to summoning in response to a question about prescience:

Some people use the *Sanhuang [nei wen]* […] to summon the Director of Destinies (Siming 司命), the Director of Dangers (Siwei 司危), the Lords of the Five Peaks (Wuyue zhi jun 五岳之君), the Headmen of the Roads (Qianmo tingzhang 齋陌亭長), or the spirits of six *ding* (liuding zhi ling 六丁之靈). All make themselves visible to people, and reply to various inquiries. They make good or bad fortune as clear as if it were held in the palm of one’s hand; whether distant, near, abstruse, or profound, all can be known in advance.22

It is in large part because of its promotion of divination through invocation that the *Sanhuang wen* was afforded high standing in the hierarchy of Six Dynasties Daoist texts.

The third chapter of the dissertation begins with an appraisal of the power of writing in the process of talismanic summoning. The Sanhuang talismans’ potential for agency principally lies in its written capital, that is to say, in the fact that its characters are inscribed in sacred celestial script (*tianwen* 天文). Through the conduits of true form (*zhenxing* 真形) and names (*ming* 名), the injunctive phonemes provide the most direct conduit to the will of gods and spirits. The primacy accorded to celestial script has lead some to see in the *Tianwen dazi* 天文大字 (Great Characters of the Celestial Writ) an alternate name or sub-title for the *Sanhuang wen*. On the other hand, the term may also have been used to signal a distinction between the two separate *Xiaoyou* and *Dayou* versions of the *Sanhuang wen*. The remaining pages of the chapter gauge the central importance of talismans in the tradition and identify specific Sanhuang *fu* that are referred to in early inventories of Dongshen documents. Chapter 3 finally proceeds to locate the

22 *Baopu zi*, 15.272—73; Ware, 255.
amuletic inscriptions in extant works. As a corollary, it traces a number of
passages from the “Sanhuang yaoyong pin” in the Wushang biyao to the Xiaoyou
jing and the Badi miaojing jing’s “Xicheng yaojue” to the Xiaoyou jing and Dayou
jing. Consequently, a better understanding of the features and content of the late
second-early third-century Sanhuang wen emerges.

II. Overlooked Facets of the Sanhuang Tradition

1. The Alchemical Heritage

Divinatory talismans are the most readily recognized dominion of the
Sanhuang tradition. Nevertheless, as a product of distinct religious culture, the
Sanhuang wen was associated with other aspects of Southern esoterica from the
outset. Taiqing 太清 alchemy for one, is intricately tied to the historical and textual
development of the Sanhuang corpus. Accounts of Bo He’s reception of the
Sanhuang wen and Wuyue zhenxing tu often include a Taiqing zhongjing 太清中經
(Central Scripture of Great Clarity). Alchemical and Sanhuang materials appear to
have shared a similar transmission lineage. Detailing his privileged relationship
with Zheng Yin, Ge Hong boasts: “although he had more than fifty disciples, I
was the only one to receive the scriptures on gold and cinnabar (jindan zhi jing 金
丹の経), and the Sanhuan neiwen […] Some of his followers had never even laid
eyes on the titles of these works." Many of the names that gravitate around discussions of *Sanhuang wen* genealogies—Li Shaojun 李少君, Ma Mingsheng 马鸣生, Yin Changsheng 隐长生, Zuo Ci 左慈, Lord Wang of the Western Citadel, or Zheng Yin—read as an enumeration of alchemical patron saints.

The fourth chapter of the present study investigates the relation between these figures and the tradition of the *Sanhuang wen*; it also evaluates the role of elixirs (*dan*) in repositories of early Sanhuang practices, such as the *Badi miaojing jing* for example. Aside from granting immortality, elixirs, like talismans, also offer the advantage of summoning gods and expelling demons. The *Huangdi jiuding shendan jingjue* (Instructions on the Scripture of the Divine Elixirs of the Nine Tripods of the Yellow Emperor; CT 885), a quintessential Taiqing text of the early Tang, informs adepts that once the elixir is properly prepared, they may conjure the Gods of Soil and Grain (*sheji*), the Count of Wind (*fengbo*), and Taiyi. These exact deities, some of whom were local fixtures in the South’s cultic scene from the third to sixth centuries, can also be summoned with talismans from the *Sanhuang wen*.

Confirming the functional overlap, Pregadio explains that “at the same time, as do the talismans of the *Three Sovereigns* and the *Real Forms [of the Five Peaks]*, the

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23 *Baopu zi*, 19.333; Ware, 312.
24 And vice versa, Sanhuang talismans can also grant immortality. The interchangeability of functions between talismans and elixirs will be treated in the first part of Chapter 4.
25 *Huangdi jiuding shendan jingjue* (Instructions on the Scripture of the Divine Elixirs of the Nine Tripods of the Yellow Emperor; CT 885), hereafter *Jiudan jingyue*, 1.9b, 1.10b, and 1.11a, from Pregadio *Great Clarity*, 129. The author, ibid., 123—39, provides an in-depth analysis of how Taiqing alchemy intersects other religious currents of Jiangnan, including the Sanhuang.
26 See *Badi miaojing jing*, 19a, 18b, and 19b, for the talismans that summon the Duke of Soil and Grain (*Shegong* 社公 and *Dugong* 土公), the God of Wind (*Feilian* 貔廉), and Taiyi respectively.
Taiqing elixirs grant the power of expelling dangerous demons and keeping away harmful deities.” Commenting further, he adds: “to do so, one does not necessarily need to ingest the elixirs, and may merely keep them in one’s hand or carry them at one’s belt—a revealing detail since scriptures and talismans could also be used in the same way.”

2. Guarding the One

Closely related to talismanic practices and alchemical elixirs is a meditation known as guarding the One (shouyi 守一). From the fourth century at the latest, the practice came to denote intense concentration on one point of the body or visualization of the deity residing in that point. Ge Hong distinguishes between two types of guarding the One: the first he calls “guarding the real One” (shou zhenyi 守真一), while the second is referred to as “guarding the mysterious One” (shou xuanyi 守玄一). The latter offers adepts the possibility of ubiquity (fenxing 分形), and the power to dispel malicious creatures or spirits. The former, on the

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27 Pregadio, ibid., 129; see Jiudan jingyue, 1.9b, and 1.13b.
28 One of the early accounts of Guarding the One meditation can be found in the Taiping jing shengjun bizhi 太平聖君祕旨 (Secret Directions on the Holy Lord on the Scripture of Great Peace; CT 1102), which Kohn, The Taoist Experience: An Anthology, 193—97, dates to the Han, although the time of composition of this work is contested.
29 Baopu zi, 18.325; Ware, 305; although this is also attributed to the practice of guarding the real One a few lines above: “for preserving one’s form and scattering evil, there is only the real One”; Baopuzi zhi, 18.324; Ware, 303. Essentially, guarding the mysterious One provides the same results as guarding the real One, without the notable benefit—as discussed below—of direct communication with deities. Given that adepts must memorize a litany of names and surnames, and recognizes the appearance, clothes, and sizes of gods in order to summon them, shouxuan yi
other hand, is appreciated for conferring the capacity to communicate with the
gods (*tongshen* 通神), thereby granting divine protection.\(^{30}\) In order to do so, one
must first visualize and meditate on the plural manifestations of the One within the
body. These internal gods reside in the three Cinnabar Fields (*dantian* 丹田):

The One has surnames and names. It has clothes and colors. In men its height is
nine-tenths of an inch, while in women, it is six-tenths of an inch. Sometimes it
is in the lower Cinnabar Field, two inches and four-tenths below the navel;
other times, it is in the middle Cinnabar Field, below the heart in the Golden
Portal of the Crimson Palace (*jianggong jinque* 紅宮金闕). Sometimes it is in
the space between the eyebrows [...] in the upper Cinnabar Field. From
generation to generation, they orally transmit the surnames and names [of the
inner gods] after smearing their mouth with blood.\(^{31}\)

The remainder of Chapter 4 is an analysis of the “Sanhuang sanyi jing” 三皇三
一經 ("Scripture of the Three Sovereigns on [Guarding] the Three Ones"), a short
meditation text preserved in the *Badi miaojing jing* that contains instructions for
guarding the real One along the vertical axis of the Three Primes (*sanyuan*).
Strikingly, it reproduces an excerpt from the *Laozi zhongjing* 老子中經 (Central
Scripture of Laozi; CT 1168) almost verbatim and overlaps with passages in the
*Wufu xu*. The exact nature of the relationship between these three texts will be
investigated, along with their connection to the enigmatic *Huangren jing* 皇人經
(Scripture of the August One) that is often mentioned is the same breath as
guarding the One meditations. All of these sources enjoin adepts to engage in what

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\(^{30}\) *Baopu zi*, 18.325; Ware, 305.
\(^{31}\) *Baopu zi*, 18.323; Ware, 302; see also Pregadio, *Great Clarity* 137. His section on
“Alchemy and Meditation,” 136—39, provides a sound treatment of Ge Hong’s
understanding of both *shouyi* meditations along with their relation to the Taiqing
tradition.
could be best termed as “regressive gestation,” that is to say the return *(huanyuan 還元; fanben 返本)* to an original infantile or embryonic form of being through meditation exercises by way of which they may unite with the original cosmic singularity of the Dao. The motif of retrograde chronology is not uniquely encountered in documents that deal with guarding the One; it is a recurrent theme throughout Sanhuang sources such as the “Jiuhuang tu” 九皇圖 (“Chart of the Nine Sovereigns”) for example, a brief illustrated section of *Badi miaojing jing* that will be closely examined.

3. True Form Divination

By doing away with the clutter of the inner pantheon, guarding the mysterious One foregoes direct communication with spirits. Yet the meditation remains prized for its apotropaic potential and its efficacy with respect to form-related practices. The topic of the fifth chapter is the concept of true form *(zhenxing 真形)* in the Sanhuang tradition, and its incarnation in practices that find their conceptual roots in metamorphosis *(bianhua)* like guarding the mysterious One, “entering the ground” *(rudi 入地)*, and “deliverance from the corpse” *(shijie 尸解)*. All of these involve a degree of physical self-mortification, which in chronological terms, is the diametrical opposite of regressive gestation; while the former method results in unity with the undifferentiated Dao through death and the acceleration of time, the latter achieves the same goal through (re-) birth and the reversion of time.
The Sanhuang preoccupation manipulating, or rather, mastering form is noticeable in numerous passages; the “Sanhuang yaoyong pin” declares “all places [that possess the Writ of the Sovereign] of Earth will receive the thousand transformations (qianbian 千變) and myriad metamorphoses (wanhua 萬化).”

Likewise, the Badi miaojing jing incorporates the modification of form in the curriculum of the consummate Sanhuang Daoist:

The immortal [Lord Wang] said: […] People know that nighttime is when one can escape from the one’s body (taoshen 逃身), but they do not know the art of concealing one’s form (zangxing 藏形). Although people know they can avoid hardships by dwelling in seclusion (pice 僮側), they are not willing to practice the arts of metamorphosis. […] [When] the Dao is fathomed, then one realizes its extensions (fang 方); [when] it is cultivated to the utmost, then one can fully penetrate it (mingtong 命通).

True form is an operative concept in the Sanhuang tradition; this can be gathered not only from the references to ubiquity or other analogous practices in the pages of meditation manuals, but also from the importance assigned to the Wuyue zhenxing tu, the companion text to the Sanhuang wen. These find their symbolic precursors in the pairing of Hetu 河圖 (Chart of the Yellow River) and Luoshu 洛書 (Writ of the Luo River), text (wen 文; or jing 經) and chart (tu 圖), ling 靈 (celestial numina) and bao 寶 (earthly receptacle). This marriage joins the three cosmic planes (heaven, earth, and humans) to the Five Phases (wuxing 五行), fundamental constituents of all observable phenomena. Together, the Three Sovereigns and Five Emperors (wudi 五帝) define the vertical and horizontal vectors of time and space.

32 Wushang biyao, 25.1ab.
33 Badi miaojing jing, 13b.
34 Kaltenmark considers the fundamental relevance of the last two terms to Daoist systems in his “Ling-pao: note sur un terme du taoïsme religieux,” 559—88.
A less common counterpart to the *Sanhuang wen* is the *Bashi tu* 八史圖 (Charts of the Eight Envoys), so named after the spirit emissaries of the eight trigrams (*bagua* 八卦). The spirits in question, termed the Eight Envoys (*bashi* 八史), are not only functionally likened to the Five Peaks, but they are also, as the Three Sovereigns, both ministers and manifestations of Taiyi on microcosmic, mesocosmic, and macrocosmic planes; thus they find a natural complement in the triad of suzerains. This resonance led exegetes to count among Sanhuang materials texts that expound Eight Envoy methods of meditation and divination, such as the *Taishang tongling bashi shengwen zhenxing tu* 太上通靈八史聖文真形圖 (Chart of the Saintly Writ and the True Form of the Eight Envoys for Communicating with Numina; CT 767).\(^3^5\) In their embodiment as the Eight Emperors (*badi* 八帝), the spirits of the eight trigrams were also used as a template for the structure of the eleven and fourteen-scroll Dongshen canons of the Six Dynasties.

Despite the tradition’s importance, only a handful of scholars have published studies about Sanhuang and its texts. In Japan, Fukui Kōjun and Ōfuchi Ninji devoted sizeable portions of their books to the subject, but few others followed suit.\(^3^6\) The former underscores the *Sanhuang wen*’s weighty contribution to the formation of the Three Caverns system that became the configurative framework for the Daoist Canon. The scope of Ōfuchi’s treatment is comparatively

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\(^3^5\) Andersen, “Talking to the Gods: Visionary Divination in Early Taoism (The Sanhuang Tradition),” 1—24, addresses the connection between this text and the Sanhuang tradition.

\(^3^6\) Fukui Kōjun, *Dōkyō no kisoteki kenkyū*, 170—204; and Ōfuchi, Ninji. *Dōkyō to sono kyōten*, 219—96. Kobayashi Masayoshi. *Rikuchō dōkyōshi kenkyū*, 223—25, and 371—73, touches on the close connection between the figures of the Three Sovereigns and the Three Caverns, although in lesser detail; some of his conclusions notably differ from Fukui’s; see also his “Kyūten shōshin shōkyō no keisei to Sando setsu no seiritsu,” 1—19.
broader, tracing the textual development of the *Sanhuang wen* and *Dongshen jing* from the fourth century to about the Tang. Although dated, his *Dôkyô to sono kyôten* 道教とその経典 (Religious Taoism and its scriptures) is still regarded as a benchmark in the field of Daoist studies; as expansions of themes he initially addressed, some of the findings from chapters 1 and 2 of this dissertation are beholden to Ôfuchi’s research.

Chinese scholarship on Sanhuang is equally scarce; aside from Chen Guofu’s brief but pioneering overview of the Bo He and Bao Jing versions of the *Sanhuang wen* in his *Daozang yuanliu kao* 道藏源流考 (Studies on the origins and development of the Daoist Canon), the efforts of a handful of specialists such as Liu Zhongyu and Ren Jiyu deserve mention. Liu Zhongyu offers an overview of Sanhuang semiotics, drawing the conclusion that the *Sanhuang wen* was a guidebook for assembling the elemental stem-graphs of “celestial script” (*tianwen*) into talismans. Ren Jiyu reiterates many of the standard positions forwarded by his Chinese and Japanese predecessors, but he adds a rare and invaluable analysis of Sanhuang precepts and transmission rites. Gu Jiegang and Yang Xiangui’s monograph on the mythological Three Sovereigns of Chinese antiquity, *Sanhuang kao* 三皇考 (The History of the “Three Emperors” in Ancient China), is an invaluable reference with respect to early imperial cults—specifically, those devoted to the deity Taiyi—and their relation to sources of the Sanhuang tradition.

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Similarly, European and American scholars have generally opted to shy from the topic of Sanhuang, with the notable exception of Poul Andersen, and Isabelle Robinet. Andersen’s work is the only western language study entirely dedicated to the Sanhuang tradition, although its focus is relatively restricted; for the most part, the article centers on the role of the Eight Envoys in “visionary divination,” the summoning of deities in order to gain insight into matters that have not yet unfolded. Robinet’s work considers the Sanhuang wen’s position in the constellation of Southern texts and practices that heavily influenced the development of the Shangqing movement.

The present dissertation aims to contribute to the small body of work on the Sanhuang wen and its tradition in the hope of stimulating further research in this neglected yet relevant corner of Chinese religion. Laying the foundation for the formation of the Three Caverns system and the Daoist Canon, the Sanhuang wen is a pillar of early medieval Daoism. With firm grounding in fangshi practices the Apocrypha, it constitutes a bridge to the religious traditions of early China; while the unmistakable mark it left on Shangqing, Lingbao, and even Buddhist texts is a window into the religious universe of medieval and late imperial China.

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39 Andersen, “Talking to the Gods”; and Robinet, La révélation du Shangqing dans l’histoire du taoïsme, 17—34.
Chapter 1
A Genealogy of the Sanhuang

I. The Southern Esoteric Tradition

1. Expression, Antagonism, and Accommodation

Precipitated by Zhang Daoling’s 張道陵 second-century revelation in Shu 蜀 (Sichuan), the Tianshi dao 天師道 [Way of the Celestial Master] was the first expression of an organized, institutionalized, and formal “Daoist religion.” About six decades later, in 215, after Cao Cao’s 曹操 (155—220) victorious military offensive in the southwest, Zhang Daoling’s grandson Zhang Lu 張魯 (?—215 or 216) retired to Ye 翟, in present-day Hebei. The relocation of Zhang and his followers to North China had a profound impact on the religious history of China: one after the other, the Northern aristocratic families swore allegiance to the Tianshi dao, a trend that would continue until the sinicized Xiongnu 匈奴 forces of the Han Zhao 漢趙 defeated the imperial troops and occupied Luoyang 洛陽 in 311. At that time, most of the North’s ruling class, including the Jin 晉 imperial family, moved south of the Yangzi to establish a new capital in Jiankang 建康.
(Nanjing, Jiangsu). Along with their Northern traditions and mores, they brought with them their religion as well.¹

Upon their arrival in Jiangnan, the Tianshi dao were confronted with a vibrant network of local beliefs and practices dating back to the Han. The main features of the Southern esoteric tradition included alchemy, meditation practices, the belief in inner gods, the use of talismans to summon deities or obtain protection, and techniques for achieving invisibility, ubiquity and metamorphosis.² Most representatives of this tradition, including the Ge clan, had served the government as officers or specialists in mantic technologies since the second century CE.³ In either function, they were primarily appreciated for their familiarity with Han-dynasty esoteric sciences; their work demanded intimate knowledge of the *Yijing* (Book of Changes) and its legacy of commentaries, and perspicacious expertise in the fields of cosmology, calendrical computation, and the interpretation of portents.⁴ These skills, which constituted the first stratum of the Southern esoteric tradition, were closely related to the Apocrypha, a genre of Han prognostication and prophetic texts otherwise known as the *weft-texts* (*weishu; chanwei*). The second layer was composed of ritual elements absorbed

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¹ A concise analysis of the disintegration of the Western Jin (265—316), and the ensuing establishment of the Eastern Jin (317—420), is found in Zürcher, *The Buddhist Conquest of China*, 81—86 and 96—106. A more detailed account, with emphasis on the tensions between Southern and Northern literary factions, is given by Strickmann, *Le taoïsme du Mao chan*, 92—121.
² Strickmann, “On the Alchemy of T’ao Hung-ching,” 168, used the term “southern occult tradition” to define the Jiangnan religious legacy prior to the advent of the Shangqing and Linghao schools. See also *Le taoïsme du Mao chan*, ibid.
⁴ This was in direct opposition to the “sublime learning” (*xuanxue*) of the Northern aristocrats, which found one of its clearest expressions in Wang Bi’s commentary on the *Book of Changes*. For a lucid analysis of the distinctions between Southern and Northern intellectual traditions see Strickmann, *Le taoïsme du Mao Chan*, 98—106. See also Zürcher, *The Buddhist Conquest of China*, 86—94.
from the local ecstatic and exorcistic cults of Wu and Yue. Most likely, it was from these cults that a number of talismanic and meditation techniques were borrowed. For schematic purposes, it could be said that the theoretical and intellectual dimensions of the Southern esoteric tradition were acquired from an amalgam of Han cosmological and divinatory traditions, while its practical and ritual components were drawn from local cults.

Needless to say, the families that preserved this legacy were imbued with a strong sense of identity. The conscience of their cultural autonomy was supported, in part, by a distinct regional dialect and by local calligraphic styles that notably played an important role in the Shangqing revelations. In a climate of such rich ancestral patrimony, the initiated aristocratic families of the South were intent on the preservation and continuation of their own traditions. It is not surprising to find that in these circles, the emphasis was firmly placed on pedigree. This chapter examines the initial stage in transmission lineage of one of the Southern esoteric tradition’s most representative texts, the *Sanhuang wen*. The following pages first contextualize the revelation and set the transmission of the scripture against the backdrop of a unique Southern socio-cultural tapestry, before proceeding to identify its key players, Bo He, Lord Wang of the Western Citadel, a composite character who subsumed several other figures into his persona over the centuries. The chapter closes with a discussion of Bao Jing and his role in the introduction of a second *Sanhuang wen*, the Shangqing-sanctioned *Dayou jing*.

When the Jin ruling class was transplanted to Jiangnan, it encountered a sovereign and proud host culture. Accordingly, they opted for the mollifying route

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in the first years following the exodus from the North. Domains were enfeoffed to influential Southern clans, and capable local officials rose rapidly in the ranks of government. However, once the Jin became more comfortable within their adoptive home and its inhabitants, their condescension towards Southerners transpired, directly impacting promotions and advancements. With the founding of the Eastern Jin dynasty in 317, the old prejudices that were firmly entrenched since the conquest of Wu 呉 thirty-seven years earlier resurfaced. The Southerners who had emigrated to North China after 280 were ridiculed for their intellectual awkwardness and their clumsy attempts to imitate metropolitan culture; in the eyes of the Luoyang intelligentsia, the disposition of the austral exiles seemed irreconcilable with the intricacies of “Pure Conversation” (qingtan 清談) or the refinement of “Subtle Learning” (xuanxue 玄學). Moreover, the oppression and pauperization of foreign residents who settled in the Chang’an 長安 region—up to five hundred thousand of them, corresponding to half of the area’s population—was institutionalized. Non-Chinese, particularly from North and West China, were exploited as draft soldiers, conscript laborers, and even slaves. As the campaigns against the “profane cults” (sushen) testify, the import of Northern culture, Tianshi dao, and Buddhism precipitated the gradual corrosion of the Southern host culture. Before long, this tripartite assimilation campaign resulted in synthesis, or

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6 Strickmann, ibid., 92. About qingtan, xuanxue, and their antagonism to the Southern intellectual climate, see Zürcher, The Buddhist Conquest of China, 86—95.
7 Zürcher, ibid., 81.
8 For a detailed account of Buddhism’s penetration into the South, and how members of the Northern aristocracy favoured its incursion, see the chapter entitled “Buddhism at Chien’kang and in the South-east” in Zürcher, The Buddhist Conquest of China, 81—159. With the assistance of their Northern patrons, Tianshi dao libationers (jijiu 祭酒) were particularly vehement in eradicating the “profane cults” of Wu and Yue. The rationale of this undertaking was that, for Daoism to become the empire’s higher
cultural concession, a denouement that makes the examination of unadulterated
texts, such as the Sanhuang wen, even more valuable for the study of the Southern
esoteric tradition.

Despite a demonstrated precedence of discrimination, a few years after the
arrival of the Northern refugees some local families still found it more judicious to
pledge their allegiance to the new rulers and adopt their religious habits. Perhaps
their conciliatory attitude stemmed from a submissive impulse to cater to the new,
more powerful overlords and thereby curry their favor, even at the steep cost of
dignity and identity. Ge Hong for one, in his Baopu zi waipian 抱朴子外篇 (Book
of the Master Who Embraces Simplicity: Outer Chapters; CT 1187), was vocal
about the transparently opportunistic motivations that guided these families and
their pernicious effect on the Southern tradition. Other families thought it best to
resist absorption and shun official life in the Jin bureaucracy, managing in the
process to safeguard their traditions a few generations more; they sometimes found
a receptive audience in the entourage of local warlords, where their erudition in the
Yijing and related subjects was highly prized. Nonetheless, the best the Southern
intelligentsia could hope for was peaceful coexistence with Northern religious
culture.

religion, worship of and wasteful offerings to allegedly bloodthirsty malevolent
demons who preyed on “naive yokels” for animal sacrifices was to be eliminated.
Buddhism and the secular administration sanctioned the Tianshi dao in this endeavor.
The religion’s fervent zeal transpires in the “Protocols of the 1200 Officials” preserved
in the Dengzhen yinjue 登真隱訣 (Concealed Instructions for Ascent to Perfection;
CT 421), 3.21b, in a section that supplies directions for destroying the shrines and
temples of native cults. A description of the tensions opposing Tianshi dao devotees
and adepts of indigenous Southern traditions is found in see Strickmann, “The Mao
Shan Revelations,” 7, and “On the Alchemy of T’ao Hung-ching” 145, n. 69; see also
Stein, “Les religions de la Chine,” especially 19.54.3—5
9 See the passages from chapters 25 and 26 of Ge Hong’s Baopu zi waipian translated
in Strickmann, Le taoïsme du Mao chan, 112—113 and 106—108, respectively.
According to Strickmann, this coexistence, more accurately described as synthesis, was established around the mid-fourth century in the shape of the Shangqing revelations. He explains, “[the] Mao Shan 茅山 texts [received by Yang Xi 楊羲 and the Xus 許 in 364—370] provide the most comprehensive testimony to the integration of old Southern beliefs and practices within the social and liturgical framework provided by the Tianshi dao. Out of this mingling was born a new Taoism of the intelligentsia which, by the end of the Six Dynasties period, had in its turn spread to all of China.”

Although this interpretation of events is more readily applicable to the Lingbao school and its liberal borrowing of Tianshi dao elements, it offers a glimpse into the complex dynamics of Six-Dynasties Daoism.

In order to be officially recognized, religious traditions had to be formally officiated, yet Shangqing sources are virtually devoid of any liturgical framework. Thus, the Xus only externally complied with the Tianshi dao to register their school as an official religious entity. The fact that libationers were the only government-sanctioned priestly class that existed at the time—any rite that fell outside the boundaries of the Tianshi dao monopoly on ritual was deemed illicit—offered scant option to Southern families keen on preserving or advancing their spiritual heritage.

In actuality, points of intersection between the Tianshi dao and Shangqing traditions are not very numerous. As Robinet explains, “they are limited to certain fragmentary borrowings, a few bodily gods that are more or less similar, and one or two ritual forms.”

The few Tianshi dao elements that were integrated into the

11 Robinet, La révélation du Shangqing, 1:64; the only discernible Tianshi dao rituals to make their way into Shangqing texts are the rite for entering the chamber (rujing 入
Shangqing system were considered “minor arts” (*xiaoshu* 小術).\(^\text{12}\) “On the contrary,” she continues, “profound differences separate the two ways, principally those concerning the pantheon, the relation of the adept to the gods, demonology, and the concept of health, along with the parent notion of salvation.”\(^\text{13}\) In other words, what Strickmann would term a “synthesis” of traditions would more properly be termed a Shangqing alignment with Tianshi dao ritual prescriptions. Nonetheless, given that Southern traditions were unconcerned with liturgical propriety, at least initially, this gesture on the part of the Xus could be interpreted as a minor token of appeasement that would guarantee the continued existence of both local traditions and foreign ones; the Tianshi dao was also heavily reliant on the Shangqing because of the latter’s strong ties to the aristocracy.\(^\text{14}\)

While the *modus operandi* for the Tianshi dao was to bluntly eliminate local and “disorderly” religious expressions and promote the superiority of their own institutionalized variety, the guarantors of the Shangqing school had to organize a response that went beyond rebuke and confrontation. A simple reaffirmation of the supremacy of local practices would prove insufficient. In order to ensure their survival, the Xus formulated their legacy in such a way that it incorporated elements from competing systems such as the Tianshi dao, Taiqing, 靜) and the submission of petitions to the gods to dispel noxious influences and disease; Robinet, ibid., 1:60—61; both these ritual forms are not documented in the revealed texts of the Shangqing tradition but appear in the liturgical prescriptions penned by Tao Hongjing; see his *Zhengao* 真詣 (*Declarations of the Perfected*; CT 1016), 7.6a—9b; and *Daojiao yishu* (Pivot of Meaning of the Daoist Teaching), 3.5b—11b, and 3.14b—23b.

\(^\text{12}\) Robinet, ibid., 1:71—75; Pregadio, *Great Clarity*, 150.

\(^\text{13}\) Robinet, ibid., 1:65; pages 1:65—70 provide an analysis of these differences complete with textual support.

\(^\text{14}\) Robinet, ibid., 1:73; see Pregadio, ibid., for a counter-example of a Tianshi dao source adopting Shangqing cosmology.
and Sanhuang traditions, always remaining mindful to relegate these elements to the lower echelons of their hierarchy.  

By absorbing certain aspects from pre-existing religious currents on the one hand, and adopting a conciliatory stance towards newer imports on the other, the Shangqing movement could avoid marginalizing adepts from either faction—especially the more influential ones—while positing itself at the summit of a new hierarchy. Indeed, the primary feature of the Mao Shan revelations was its promise of access to higher celestial regions and to more exalted and powerful immortal intercessors than previous movements: the transmitted scriptures unveiled the existence of a hitherto unknown superior class of beings (immortals, xian 仙, are superseded by the perfected, zhenren 真人), heavens (the Taiqing Heaven is supplanted by the Shangqing Heaven), and so on. The fact that the Shangqing and later, the Lingbao revealed texts repeatedly underscore their capacity to offer salvation in similar terms as their Sanhuang and Taiqing predecessors but by quicker, easier, and more direct means, is reflective of this accommodating attitude. It also partly explains how Shangqing found itself atop of the Three Caverns while the older Sanhuang, Taiqing and Tianshi dao materials were consigned to the lower echelons. The need that tradition (x) would have to posit itself as a superior, more expedient, and more sophisticated alternative to tradition (y) should be an indication that in actuality, tradition (y) was a widely accepted precursor.

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15 Another Southern aristocratic family, the Ges, applied this same model with the Lingbao revelations, choosing to adopt a comparatively more apologetic or mollifying route with regard to their embracing pre-existing local, Tianshi dao, or Buddhist influences.

16 Strickmann, “The Mao Shan Revelations,” 9; and Le taoïsme du Mao chan, 203—08, by the same author.
At the very least, the Shangqing revelations gave a disenfranchised Southern elite, which was to remain barred from the higher official ranks and functions until the establishment of the Chen 陈 dynasty (557—587), the ironic redemption Northern aristocratic and imperial patronage. This frequently afforded them far greater power and influence than they could have amassed with an official career.17 While the vicissitudes of the Southern intelligentsia’s political strategy are beyond the scope of the present study, they are nonetheless indicative of how the Sanhuang wen went from the most prized of Daoist scriptures to a lower-tier relic in the Shangqing ranking.

Still, the symbolic capital of the Southern esoteric tradition, its texts, and its figures, was of great value south of the Yangzi. Moreover, since the Shangqing and later, Lingbao revelations were disseminated along the same family networks as Taiqing and Sanhuang materials, there was at least some emphasis on safeguarding and integrating past cults into the new ones; it is no coincidence that Ge Hong, was both an heir to, and the figurehead of the Southern esoteric tradition, was also a close relative of the individuals responsible for the revelations that were to reshape his region’s religious landscape. In Jiangnan, the paramount importance of social class, geographic provenance, academic heritage, and above all lineage ensured the perseverance of habitus, even in the production of novel forms of religious culture.

2. The Way of the Bo Family

The Shangqing and Lingbao acknowledgement of Tianshi dao or even Buddhist legitimacy guaranteed that they would attract the ire of new, socio-politically dominant Northern transplants.\(^{18}\) Earlier works from the same region, however, were conspicuously devoid of outside influence. Texts like the *Baopu zi*, whose *Inner chapters* were completed by 317 and make no mention of Zhang Daoling—let alone Buddhism—thus offer a pristine portrait of an autonomous, autochthonous tradition at its pinnacle. Soon afterwards, the Ges would adopt a more apologetic spiritual stance, like that of their neighbors and relatives, the Xus.\(^{19}\)

Regardless of subsequent developments, the *Baopu zi* resolutely situated the *Sanhuang wen* in the context of local cults. As Pregadio observes, “Ge Hong’s statements, as well as evidence available elsewhere, show that the *Sanhuang wen* and the *Wuyue zhenxing tu* embodied essential features of the religious lore of Jiangnan before the Shangqing and Lingbao revelations.”\(^{20}\) Unfortunately, the Southern esoteric tradition and its religious lore could not be organized into a

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18 Schipper, “Purity and Strangers,” 61—81, provides a clear picture of the vagaries governing the Daoist emulation and sometimes glaring acquisition of Buddhist concepts. Bokenkamp, “Lu Xiujing, Buddhism, and the First Daoist Canon,” 181—99, also broaches the question. On the topic of the absorption of elements from different traditions or schools, Bokenkamp, 188—89, writes that the new scriptures of the Shangqing, and Lingbao integrated and rewrote significant portions of earlier material from Buddhist, Daoist, and popular sources: the previous “partially understood early releases” of the Tianshi dao, early Buddhism, and the *fangshi* or Confucian divinatory traditions, were revealed in fullness, re-packaged into the more complete, “improved versions” of the Shangqing, Lingbao, and Dongshen canons.

19 This was notably the case with Ge Chaofu 葛巢甫 (fl. 403). An analysis of the South’s socio-political stage and its actors can be found in Zhou Yiliang’s *Wei Jin Nanbei chao shilun ji*, particularly in the “Nanchao jingnei de gezhong ren ji zhengfu duidai de zhengce” section, 30—93.

20 Pregadio, *Great Clarity*, 127.
coherent institutional whole, thus rendering its survival precarious. Many of its
core tenets and practices were passed on orally through tightly-knit family
networks; what had been committed to writing was apparently handed down
sporadically and in a sometimes haphazard manner, a fact that explains the sparsity
of extant sources.

Nonetheless, the clan-based channels of transmission did encourage the
formation of quasi-formal Southern schools; one of them, the Bojia dao 布家道, or
Way of the Bo Family, enjoyed considerable popularity around the time of the
Northern exodus.\textsuperscript{21} The movement is eponymously named after Bo He and his
teachings, although not much is clear about them. While the Bojia dao remains
shrouded in a cloud of mystery, it is known that both the Xu and Ge clans, who
were responsible for the Shangqing and the Lingbao revelations, were initiates.\textsuperscript{22}
Indeed, many of the South’s reputable families were involved with the Bojia dao in
one way or another. Among other things, the movement’s proclivity for wasteful
animal sacrifices caused indignation among the Tianshi dao, and this may have
been one of the reasons for its rapid decline during the latter half of the fourth
century. In fact, the “profane cults” that proved such a powerful magnet for
libationer spite appear to share a number of attributes with the Bojia dao. The term
first appears in the \textit{Zhoushi mintong ji} 周氏冥通記 (Mr. Zhou’s Records of his
Communication with the Invisible World; CT 302), dated to 517. In it, Tao
Hongjing writes: “venerations linked to the ‘profane cults’ are commonly called

\textsuperscript{21} Chen Guofu, 276—77.
\textsuperscript{22} Tao Hongjing’s \textit{Zhengao}, 20.13b—14a, testifies to the rampant Bojia dao
phenomenon in Six Dynasties (220—589) Southern China.; see also Chen Guofu,
\textit{Daozang yuanliu kao}, 277; see also Strickmann, \textit{Le taoïsme Mao chan}, 132—33. On
Ge Hong as a possible adept of the Bojia dao see Chen Guofu, \textit{Daozang yuanliu kao},
277.
the Bojia dao.”  

The Zhengao 周詔 (Declarations of the Perfected; CT 1016) states that Xu Mai was a Bojia dao follower and that he “exploited many people.”  

In both excerpts, the negative tinge of Tao’s comment is no doubt attributable to his partiality towards Shangqing materials, but all other occurrences of the term are equally pejorative. The Baopu zi does refer to Bo He, but there is no mention of the Bojia dao; this could imply that the term developed sometime between the second half of the fourth century and the early sixth century, and that it was applied retroactively as a deprecatory referent to a vague set of indigenous Southern beliefs and practices.  

Given Bo He’s prevalent position in both Bojia dao and Sanhuang lineages, and considering the latter’s indelible ties to Southern religious identity, it is not impossible that the Sanhuang wen was counted among the Bojia dao’s textual patrimony.  

II. Key Figures in the Sanhuang Transmission Lineage  

1. Bo He  

Bo He is a pivotal figure in the transmission lineages of the Bojia dao and Sanhuang wen. A passage from chapter 19 of the Baopu zi, translated above,  

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23 Zhoushi mintong ji, 1.13a; see also Chen Guofu, Daozang yuanliu kao, 276—77.  
24 Zhengao, 4.10b.  
25 See Baopu zi, 19.336 and 20.350—51; and Ware, 314 and 327—28 for references to Bo He.
underscores Bo’s role as the first human recipient of the talismanic scripture.\(^\text{26}\)

Elsewhere in the text, Ge portrays the figure as a sage who appears among the people from time to time, and then abruptly decamps. He was sighted in Luoyang 洛陽 towards the end of the third century, dispensing advice and solving the riddles posed to him by advanced adepts of the Way. He claimed to be 8700 years old, and while no one knew his true age, people readily believed that he was over a thousand. Later, he precipitately departed for an unknown destination.\(^\text{27}\) Ge Hong also discloses that when Bo He manifested in Luoyang, a witness verified his immortal status by confirming that his pupils were indeed square.\(^\text{28}\) The sixth-century *Shuijing zhu* 水經注 (Annotated Classic of Waterways) remarks that Bo He’s gravesite could be found just outside Luoyang, and that his stele was still standing two centuries after being erected in 302.\(^\text{29}\) This provides an approximate date of death that is consistent with the *Baopu zi*’s timeline. The *Shuijing zhu* gives Bo’s *ming* as Hu 護, and Ba-Shu 巴蜀 (Sichuan) as his provenance. Conversely, the figure’s hagiography in the *Shenxian zhuan* 神仙傳 (Biographies of Divine Immortals) presents him as a native of the Han commandery of Liaodong 遼東 (Liaoning), and only lists his cognomen.\(^\text{30}\) He later moved to the Mount Difei

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\(^{26}\) *Baopu zi*, 19.336; Ware, 314; see 2—3, in the introduction to this study.  
\(^{27}\) *Baopu zi*, 20.350—51; Ware 327; see Chen Guofu, *Daozang yuanliu kao*, 236; and Campany, *To Live as Long as Heaven and Earth*, 137.  
\(^{28}\) *Baopu zi*, ibid.; Ware 328. Petersen, “The Early Traditions Relating to the Han Dynasty Transmission of the *Taiping jing*,” 194—95, discusses this passage.  
\(^{29}\) *Shuijing zhu* 水經注 (Annotated Classic of Waterways), 15.206; see Campany, *To Live as Long as Heaven and Earth*, 137; Chen Guofu, *Daozang yunaliu kao*, 276.  
\(^{30}\) *Shenxian zhuan*, from *Taiping yulan* 太平御覽 (Imperial Digest of the Taiping Xingguo Reign Period), 663.6b; Chen Guofu, ibid., believes the *Shenxian zhuan* account to be inaccurate, but as Campany, *To Live as Long as Heaven and Earth*, 133, n. 1, explains, a person’s “origins” refers to where a subject’s clan is officially registered, and does not always denote the place of birth. What is more, either Bo He or his master might have been of foreign extraction; Zürcher, *The Buddhist Conquest*
(Difei shan 地肺山) region (Jiangsu), the same area where Ge Hong’s family hailed from, to study under Dong Feng 董奉. After imparting a number of methods, Dong Feng dismissed his pupil and encouraged him to seek further teachings far and wide.32

Bo He then traveled to Mount Xicheng (Xicheng shan 西城山), where he served Lord Wang of the Western Citadel (Xicheng Wangjun). Prior to taking a leave, Lord Wang instructed the sage to remain in a cave and contemplate the north wall without respite. After three years of determined staring, some characters suddenly appeared to Bo:33

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31 Dong Feng has his own hagiography in the Shenxian zhuān; see Campany, *To Live as Long as Heaven and Earth*, 141—46, and 390—93. He is said to have been about forty years of age during the reign of Sun Quan 孫權 (229—252 CE); this agrees with the chronology from Bo He’s vita. However, Dong Feng’s entry makes no mention of Bo.

32 Shenxian zhuān, from *Taiping yulan*, 663.6b; Campany, ibid., 134.

33 Shenxian zhuān, from *Taiping yulan*, 187.4a; Campany, ibid., 134—35.
Carved by someone in ancient times, [the words] were those of recipes for [making] divine elixirs from the Taiqing zhongjing (Central Scripture of Great Clarity), as well as those of the Sanhuang tianwen dazi 三皇天文大字 (Great Characters of the Celestial Writ of the Three Sovereigns), and the Wuyue zhenxing tu. These were all manifest on the stone wall. Bo He recited all ten thousand words, but there were places where he did not understand the meaning. Lord Wang therefore bestowed oral instructions (koujue 口訣) on him, whereby he became an earthbound transcendent on Linlu Mountain (Linlu shan 隆慮山).

This passage narrates the same events that are recorded in the Baopu zi, but in more detail. The transmitter, Lord Wang, is also clearly identified, and while his role with respect to the revelation is an intermediary one, he does directly administer oral instructions to Bo He. Even more significant than swearing an oath or the presentation of offerings, the conferral of oral instructions to complement the revelation is the crux of the transmission ceremony. Without these instructions, revealed materials are unintelligible arcana. It is not uncommon for adepts to acquire scriptures years ahead of obtaining oral instructions. Bo He contemplates

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34 As mentioned in the introduction, the Sanhuang tianwen dazi is a variant title for the Sanhuang wen. It appears fairly early, in the Baopu zi for instance; see Appendix 3. A distinction between the Sanhuang wen and [Sanhuang] Tianwen dazi is drawn in later materials to discriminate between the text obtained by Bo He and that issued from a second transmission line; see 151—61, below, for more on the topic.

35 Shenxian zhuan, from Taiping yulan, 663.6b; Campany, To Live as Long as Heaven and Earth, 135, n. 9, with minor changes. The Xianyuan bianzhu 仙苑編珠 (Threaded Pearls from the Garden of Immortals; CT 596), 2.17b, and the Leishuo 類說 (Classification of Sayings), 3.9b, confirm this account. However, the Taiping yulan, 187.4a, and Chuxue ji 初學記 (Record of Initial Learning), 24.585, report that the words from the Taiqing jing 太清經 (Scripture of Great Clarity) alone appeared on the wall; see Campany, ibid. In a paraphrase of the passage, the Badi miaojing jing, 15b, lists the “Taiqing zhongjing jinye shendan zhi fang” 太清中經金液神丹之方 (“the Central Scripture of Great Clarity and the method of the Divine Elixir of the Golden Liquor); see 42, and 192, below. A second, considerably shorter version of Bo He’s hagiography in the Shenxian zhuan makes no mention of the Sanhuang wen, Wuyue zhenxing tu, or Taiqing zhongjing; it solely links the figure to waidan 外丹 (external alchemy) techniques; Campany, ibid., 135—36, and 387; see also Chen Guofu, Daozang yuanliu kao, 176.

36 Pregadio, Great Clarity, 80, elaborates on the role of oral instructions in transmission rituals.
the “invisible” characters on the wall for three full years before receiving them. The importance of oral instructions is highlighted in Bo’s Shenxian zhuan vita from the Xianyuan bianzhu (Threaded Pearls from the Garden of Immortals; CT 596), where Lord Wang prefaces his indications for prolonged cave contemplation with the admonishment: “Instructions on the Great Way may not be hurriedly obtained (Dadao de jue fei ke zu de)大道之訣非可卒得.”

2. Lord Wang and the Essential Instructions to Bo He

Oral instructions were ideally not to be written down, but in practice, some probably were. More than forty scrolls of the Shangqing revelations for example, are introduced as transcribed oral instructions that Yang Xi received from the perfected. The Badi miaojing jing contains a section entitled “Xicheng yaojue sanhuang tianwen dazi” (“Essential Instructions from the Western Citadel on the [Esoteric] Great Characters of the Celestial Writ of the Three Sovereigns”) that is organized around ninety-two talismans for summoning various deities. This text is presented as the Sanhuang wen and a transcription of the accompanying oral instructions as spoken by Lord Wang. Ge Hong lists several of the talismans from the “Xicheng yaojue” in his description of the Sanhuang tianwen. A substantial

37 Shenxian zhuan, in Xianyuan bianzhu, 2.17b; Campany, ibid., 388.
38 Ge Hong’s master, Zheng Yin, was adamant about not having his own teachings and sayings reproduced, although the scriptures he transmitted could be copied; Baopuzi 19.332; Ware 312.
39 Badi miaojing jing, 12a-29b.
40 Baopu zi, 15.272—73; Ware 255; see 14, in the introduction, for a translation of the passage. The talismans that Ge mentions summon the Director of Destinies (Siming), the Director of Dangers (Siwei), the Lords of the Five Peaks (Wuyue zhi jun), the
narrative section precedes the ninety-two talismans; it consists of Bo He recounting some of the directives uttered by Lord Wang on the day the Sanhuang wen was revealed to him on Mount Xicheng. An annotation to the title introduces the section:

The Immortal of the Western Citadel (Xicheng xianren 西城仙人) applied (shiyong 施用) and established (licheng 立成) these [talismans]; he hid them in the Dark Hill (Xuanqiu 玄丘), where Duke Bo (Bo Gong 甾公) recorded them (jilu 記錄). They were received (shou 愛) on the third day of the first month on the first year of the Tianhan reign (100 BCE).

A few lines below, Bo He appears to distinguish between the date that copies of the Sanhuang wen and its instructions were made and the date that they were initially revealed to him:

In the second year of the Taichu era of the Western Han (103 BCE), under solemn covenant, Lord Wang bestowed upon me the instructions (jue) for the Great Way (Dadao). He had me burn incense and perform purifications for three days and three nights, after which he revealed the teachings.

The lapse is consonant with the three-year period from the Shenxian zhuan biography. However, the order of events is slightly different; in this account, Bo He seems to obtain the text and the instructions on the same occasion. Presumably, after pondering them for three years (between 103 BCE and 100 BCE), he

Headmen of the Roads (Qianmo tingzhang), and the spirits of six ding (liuding zhi ling); they are found in Badi miaojing jing, 17a, 17b, 21ab, 19a, and 18a, respectively. Bo He’s retelling of his exchange with Lord Wang spans from Badi miaojing jing, 12a to 17a. Only a few passages are translated below. The rest of the section is made up of miscellaneous indications pertaining to morality, ritual protocol, the ingestion of herbal and mineral drugs, and more.

Badi miaojing jing, 12a; Andersen, “Dongshen badi miaojing jing,” 267, has a slightly different rendering: “The ritual practices [shiyong 施用] and established forms [licheng 立成] [of the Sanhuang fu] of the Immortal of the Western Citadel.”

The account from the Baopu zi, 19.336—37, notes that Bo copied the characters on site, shortly after the revelation; this is also implied in Bo He’s biography from the Shenxian zhuan.

Badi miaojing jing, 12b.
penetrates their meaning and makes multiple copies, thereby officially “receiving” (shou) them. Despite this minor discrepancy, the details of the transmission are surprisingly consistent with those of other versions. For example, the oral instructions Bo He receives are the same “instructions on the Great Way” as in Lord Wang’s warning from the Shenxian zhuan.45

The “Xicheng yaojue” proceeds to meticulously document how the materials were handed down. After receiving a few alchemical recipes and a method for detaining the hun魂 souls, Bo He prostrates himself and does not rise:

The master [Lord Wang] said: ‘If the method is shallow, then it will be insufficient [for repelling] all evils.’ I then bowed down and uttered these words to the immortal before me: ‘When I was young and untalented, still bound by worldly matters, I traveled halfway around the world without returning home; far and wide, I sought the paths of life, clumsily harboring the teachings of the Dao [for the first time]. Ten years have passed since then. Later, I came to know the methods of sagely wonders and verifications of immortality. On these matters, I already have a modest amount of insight, but nothing more. Now if birds and beasts gaze upon a secluded dwelling, they will find grief, even in the broadest of confines. Yet people will find solace in this very dwelling. Deep streams and profound abysses are suitable for fish and water lizards, yet people will dread them. Individuals determine what is appropriate for them, but only the Dao is intimate to all.

Since I received the subtle essentials and the methods for governing the body, I have appropriately practiced their teachings with reverence, and kept them with me at all times.46 Although my intention was to venerate [their principles] and further pierce [their secrets], my mind was not sufficiently capable.

In the past, I heard of the arts of subjugating gods and demons (yishi役使鬼神之數), as well as the methods of summoning the hundred numina (zhaozhi bailing zhi fa召致百靈之法). If one sits in reclusion, isolates all noxious influences, and applies these [techniques],

45 Xianyuan bianzhu, 2.17b.
46 If we rely on the chronology from Bo He’s Shenxian zhuan hagiography, these essentials and methods would correspond to those he learned from Dong Feng. The Taiping yulan, 663.6b, lists them as teachings for circulating pneumata (xingqi行氣) and ingesting atractylis (shu枇杷), while the Xianyuan bianzhu, 2.17b, adds avoiding grains; see Campany, To Live as Long as Heaven and Earth, 133—34.
then the thousand spirits of the earth will unite [with the adept]. The most abstruse of mysteries will be spontaneously and effortlessly penetrated. If threats arise, they will be immediately dispelled. One who truly listens to these matters, finds no need to scrutinize texts. Naturally, Heaven and Earth have innate principles. [Similarly, the principles] of the Way and its Virtue [are innate and] cannot be taught. Still, even if Bian Que were to let a patient die, surely he would not discard his needles. Thus I implore you to grant me insight and illumination in order to release my mind.’

The master then had me sit again, and while fixing me with his gaze, he declared: ‘I still cannot teach you the Great Way. In three years’ time, I will return and consult with you.’ Thereupon, he rose from his seat and took his leave. After three years of effort and persistence, I had yet to acquire further understanding.

The master [returned] and said: ‘You are now ripe for attainment. You may, once more undertake purification rites for three days, burn incense in offering, perform ritual ablutions, and announce your request for the Dao. You will then [receive] the Sanhuang tianwen dazi, the Taiqing zhongjing (Central Scripture of Great Clarity), and the method of the Divine Elixir of the Golden Liquor. Do not divulge these to other people, regardless of whether they are dead or alive, even if they are the very spirits of your deceased father and mother.’ I then received the statutes (xing) inside the Dark Hill.

Poul Andersen argues that biography of Bo He in the Shenxian zhuan, and by extention, in the Baopu zi served as bases for the composition of the “Xicheng

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47 In other words, even if at first the Way is unfathomable, one should persevere in trying to understand it. The name Bian Que refers to both the mythical healer from the time of the Yellow Emperor, and the “historical” Qin Yueren (ca. 500 BCE), an early master physician of considerable repute named after his divine predecessor. Bian Que’s biography in the Shi ji (Records of the Historian), 105.2785—2794, suggests the figure emerged as the result of the early deity’s historicization. Han reliefs depict Bian Que as a human with the head of the bird; Lu and Needham, Celestial Lancets, xxxiii, and 79—87.

48 These must be the three years during which, according to the Shenxian zhuan, Lord Wang was away and Bo He was staring at a cavern wall, between 103 BCE and 100 BCE.

49 Note the pairing of Sanhuang and Taiqing documents.

50 Badi miaojing jing, 15ab. The alchemical recipe and method for detaining hun souls that precede this passage appear in the Baopu zi, although there are substantial differences; compare Badi miaojing jing, 14b, to Baopu zi, 4.86; Ware 95; and Badi miaojing jing, 14b-15a to Baopu zi, 5.112; Ware 102.
yaojue,” which is necessarily a later creation.\textsuperscript{51} However, the reverse is just as likely. While the \textit{Badi miaojing jing} is composed of multiple layers, close analysis reveals that a number of its ninety-two talismans were contained in the \textit{Sanhuang wen}.\textsuperscript{52} The supporting materials, including the passage translated above, are quite possibly a version of the initial “oral instructions” that accompanied the scripture. While the cited dates, namely 103 BCE and 100 BCE, are considered spurious, some scholars believe that many, if not the majority of the texts that make up the \textit{Badi miaojing jing} circulated as independent documents around the turn of the fourth century.\textsuperscript{53} Although the argument is conjectural, Yoshioka Yoshitoyo and Wu Chengquan, for example, are confident the “Baopu miyan” ($\text{秘密 words of embracing simplicity}$), the section immediately after the “Xicheng Yaojue,” was authored by its narrator, Ge Hong.\textsuperscript{54} Finally, another clue that points to an early date of composition for the “Xicheng Yaojue” is that Lord Wang is not yet identified with the immortal Wang Yuan (fl. 146—95). Indeed, by the fifth century both figures were definitively conflated.

\textsuperscript{51} From Schipper and Verellen, \textit{The Taoist Canon: A Historical Companion to the Daozang}, 1:268.

\textsuperscript{52} See the discussion in Chapter 3, 162—67.

\textsuperscript{53} In the \textit{Baopu zi}, 19.336; Ware 314, Ge Hong cites the \textit{Sanhuang wen} (the classic itself states that…”), implying that by the early fourth century, the text was no longer exclusively made up of talismans, and that instructions were already appended.

\textsuperscript{54} Yoshioka Yoshitoyo, \textit{Dōkyō kyōten shiron}, 47; Wu Chengquan, \textit{Hanmo Wei Jin Nanbei chao daojiao jieliu gufan yanjiu}, 132. The “Baopu miyan” extends over \textit{Badi miaojing jing}, 29b-32a. Also consider the “Sanhuang sanyi jing” 三皇三一經 (“Scripture of the Three Sovereigns [on Guarding] the Three Ones”) that precedes the “Xicheng yaojue” in the \textit{Badi miaojing jing}, 2b-4b; its style, format, and content closely parallel that of the \textit{Lingbao wufu xu}’s (Prolegomenon to the Five Lingbao Talismans) “Zhenyi jing” 真一經 (“Scripture on [Guarding] the Real One”), 3.14a-23b, dated to the late third- or early fourth-centuries; see chapter 199--201, for more
3. Lord Wang and Wang Yuan

When Tao Hongjing authored his *Zhenling weiye tu* (Tables of Ranks and Functions of the True Numina; CT 167), the correspondence between Lord Wang and Wang Yuan was already firmly established. Lord Wang of the Western Citadel is listed as a moniker for “Wang Yuan, cognomen Fangping.”

Later, the thirteenth-century *Qingwei xianpu* (Chronology of the Immortals of the Qingwei Heaven) and the fourteenth-century *Maoshan zhi* (Chronicle of Maoshan) unequivocally equate Wang Yuan with Lord Wang of the Western Citadel. In contrast, earlier sources like the *Baopu zi* and *Shenxian zhuan* clearly draw a distinction between the two personages.

The latter work is noteworthy for the long hagiography it devotes to Wang Yuan. Despite an unremarkable career in officialdom, the Donghai (Shandong) native was an accomplished fangshi, well-informed in esoteric sciences and the weft-text (weishu) tradition. Eventually, he retired to the mountains, even refusing to serve Emperor Huan of the Han (Han Huandi; r. 146—168 CE) when called upon. After decades of reclusive self-cultivation, he attained “deliverance from the corpse” (shijie) in 185. As a transcendent, he

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55 *Zhenling weiye tu*, 3a.
57 For the full *Shenxian zhuan* hagiography and a pertinent commentary, see Campany, *To Live as Long as Heaven and Earth*, 259—70, and 456—63; Bokenkamp, *Early Daoist Scriptures*, 351, n*, offers a succinct list of texts that contain Wang Yuan biographies based on the *Shenxian zhuan* entry; also see Fukui Kōjun, *Shinsenden*, 126.
58 The precise year of his shijie does not figure in the *Shenxian zhuan* hagiography. According to Benjamin Penny, “Wang Yuan,” 1019, “this date is ascertained by cross-checking with the details of Chen Dan [his patron and housemate]’s career as it is revealed in the *Hou Hanshu* or *History of the Later Han.*”
headed out for Mount Guacang (Guacang shan 括蒼山) (Zhejiang). On his way, he stopped by the house of the peasant Cai Jing 蔡經 and instructed him in the essentials of the Way before promptly setting off once more. In an atypical case of shijie, Cai Jing also joined the ranks of immortals and subsequently departed.\(^{59}\)

Following a ten-year absence, the peasant reappeared to announce Lord Wang (Yuan)’s imminent return. Wang arrived with great fanfare and summoned Magu 麻姑.\(^{60}\) They called for a mobile kitchen (xingchu 行廚) and enjoyed a lavish banquet, replete with intoxicating liquor from the celestial kitchens.\(^{61}\) After

\(^{59}\) The Shênxian zhuan records that “Cai Jing felt his entire body grow hot as if on fire. He craved cold water to bathe himself in; his entire family brought water and poured it over him, and it was like making steam by pouring water over hot rocks. This went on for three days. Then, once his bones had completely dissolved, he stood up, went into his room, and covered himself with a blanket. Suddenly he vanished. When his family looked inside the blanket, only his outer skin was left, intact from head to foot, like a cicada shell”; from Campany, To Live as Long as Heaven and Earth, 260; see 266 for an interesting discussion on this particularly rare variety of shijie.

\(^{60}\) Schipper partially translates the segment concerning Wang Yuan’s return to Cai Jing’s house in L’Empereur Wou des Han dans la légende taoïste, 52—53.

\(^{61}\) Maspero reproduces the banquet passage from the hagiography in “Le Taoïsme dans les croyances religieuses des chinois à l’époque des Six-Dynasties,” chapter from the volume on Daoism in his Mélanges Posthumes, 48—49. He sees in this passage an idealized depiction of what a communal meal in a Daoist congregation must have been like; see also Doré’s rendering of Wang Yuan’s vita in Recherches sur les superstitions, 12:1118—20. Schipper has noticed an interesting trend in the transmission legends of Shangqing scriptures: due to prohibitions on gender, sacred texts are often passed down from master to disciple by the intermediary of a female deity. What is more, the transmission often occurs on the occasion of a banquet. He cites the case of the Han Wudi neizhuan 漢武帝內傳 (Esoteric Biography of Emperor Wu of the Han; CT 292), in which Small Lord Green Lad (Qingdong xiaojun 青童小君) hands down the twelve talismans to his disciple Emperor Wu of the Han (Han Wudi 漢武帝; r. 141—87 BCE) via Lady of the Highest Prime (Shangyuan furen 上元夫人). Another example from the same text is that of the Queen Mother of the West (Xiwang mu 西王母), who transmits scriptures from two male deities, the Celestial Monarch of the Primordial Beginning (Yuanshi tianwang 元始天王) and the Lord of the Dao (Daojun 道君), to the (male) emperor. The Shênxian zhuan presents an analogous situation with Wang Yuan’s transmission to Cai Jing during a banquet, and in the presence of Ma Gu. This is evocative of the same Wang Yuan’s bestowal of talismans on Mao Ying 茅盈, during another banquet with the Queen Mother of the West. The scene is replicated once more with Wang Bao 王褒’s initiation into
conferring a talisman and a text in a small box on one of Cai Jing’s neighbors, a
district-level commander named Chen, Wang Yuan withdrew. Years later, he
returned once more to bestow another text on Commander Chen. Its characters
mostly resembled seal script (zhuanwen 篆文), although some were written in
unintelligible Perfected Writ (zhenshu 真書). Aside from this last detail—the
script that Bo He discovered in the grotto was also “unintelligible”—there is
nothing in the Shenxian zhuan to connect Lord Wang with Wang Yuan.63

Ge Hong’s autobiography from the Baopu zi waipian contains a terse
reference to a certain “Fangping” whom he was wont to emulate.64 The Baopuzi is
equally fleeting in its sole mention of Wang Yuan. It occurs in the context of a
discussion on apotropaic methods for use when entering the mountains: “some
adepts carry Wang Fangping’s realgar pills at their waist.”65 This brief reference

transcendence by a jade maiden (yunü 玉女) right after a banquet, yet again; see
L’Empereur Wou des Han dans la légende taoïste, 58—59. Schipper contends that this
is a device to relegate to the background the much criticized sexual practices of
previous Daoist currents without completely doing away with them; hierogamy is
presented as an initiatory means to an end rather than the end itself; see Schipper,
ibid., 60, for a description Wang Bao’s gender-bending feats in compliance with
transmission protocol; Wang Bao is also discussed below, 52—55. For more on
mobile kitchens, see Mollier, Buddhism and Taoism Face to Face, 23—54.

62 Shenxian zhuan, from Campany, To Live as Long as Heaven and Earth, 264;
Campany, ibid., 264, n. 478, adds that “seal script (zhuanwen) would have been an
archaic but intelligible way of writing at this time, but the perfected script (zhenshu)
was in a celestial writing system unintelligible to uninitiated mortals.” See
Bokenkamp, Early Daoist Scriptures, 21, 381, and, 422, n*; and Robinet, La
révélation du Shangqing, 1:112—16 for more on perfected script.

63 Upon closer inspection, it appears that Wang Yuan and Ma Gu were originally local
gods of the eastern coastal region; see Campany’s analysis in To Live as Long as
Heaven and Earth, 268—70, and 457—62. He bases his argument on anomaly
accounts from Cao Pi’s 曹丕 (187—226 CE) Lieyi zhuan 列異傳 (Arrayed Marvels),
but also on passages from the Yiyuan 異苑 (Garden of Marvels) and the Qi Xie jie 齊
誼記 (Records of Qi Xie) that betray the deities’ origins in local coastal traditions. In
contrast, Lord Wang of the Western Citadel is typically tied to locales in Western
China; see 50—51, below.

64 Baopu zi waipian, 50.10b; Ware 16.
65 Baopu zi, 17.305; Ware 291.
may hark back to the figure’s fangshi roots, or hint at the looming fusion with the much more alchemically-inclined Lord Wang of the Western Citadel. The latter appears in the *Baopu zi*, independently of Wang Fangping/Wang Yuan, in a section that deals with the concoction of elixirs. Multiple passages from the *Baopu zi neipian* and *waipian*, the *Shenxian zhuan*, and the *Badi miaojing jing* corroborate that Wang Yuan and Lord Wang are unequivocally distinct figures.

Regardless of pre-existing literature, the Shangqing movement was unapologetic about confusing Wang Yuan and Lord Wang of the Western Citadel. The compounded figure played an important role in the transmission of Shangqing texts and methods, most notably as Mao Ying’s master. A number of scholars have elected to follow Shangqing exegetes in conflating the two figures.

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66 *Baopu zi*, 4.82; Ware 89. Here, Ge Hong reveals the method for preparing Lord Wang’s elixir (*Wangjun danfa* 𢠸𢠸):

> Place Sichuan cinnabar (basha 巴沙) and mercury inside some chicken eggs, and seal them with lacquer. Have a chicken incubate three such eggs, and on a king and minister day (*wangxiang ri* 王相日), ingest them. You will not grow one day older. Since it halts growth, small children should not take them. When given to chicks and puppies, they will not age. This is valid when given to any bird or beast.

This same method is referred to in *Baopu zi*, 2.16; Ware 40, where it is labelled an “age-arresting drug” (*zhunian yao* 七年藥). Several elements tie the recipe to Lord Wang of the Western Citadel. Firstly, the mention of Sichuan cinnabar is perhaps of relevance since Lord Wang, like his disciple Bo He, is associated with the Ba-Shu region; see below, 50—51. Secondly, in the “Xicheng yaojue,” Lord Wang reveals a series of elixir methods to Bo He, one of which lists cinnabar and mercury as key ingredients; see *Badi miaojing jing*, 14b. Finally, the expression “king and minister” is found on two occasions in the *Badi miaojing jing* in relation to talisman-based summoning practices; *Badi miaojing jing*, 11a, has “king and minister time” (*wangxiang shi* 王相時), and “king and minister day” (*wangxiang ri* 王相日) a few lines further. “King and minister” is used to denote the days or times whose first and second cyclical markers (*ganzhi* 干支) are respectively associated with the Agent (*xing* 行) that “rules” (*wang*) and the agent that “assists” (*xiang*). In spring, wood “rules” and fire “assists,” so the auspicious days are those marked by *jia* 甲 or *yi* 乙 (wood) and by *wu* 戊 or *si* 巳 (fire); see also Sivin in Ware, *Alchemy, Medicine, Religion*, 89, n. 3.

67 Yusa Noboru, “Seijyō ōkun,” 321, writes that the merging of figures occurred sometime after Ge Hong’s generation.
Wangs. Robinet for one, in her masterful *La révélation du Shangqing*, equates the Donghai native with the immortal from Mount Xicheng: “A la fin des Wei, c’est Zhi Mingqi […] qui fut initié à la fabrication de cet elixir [the rainbow elixir; *hongdan* 虹丹] par Xicheng Wangjun, qui est Wang Yuan, le maître de Maojun, l’un des maîtres aussi de la tradition du Taiqing et du Sanhuang wen, et maître en outre de Wang Bao, dont la Dame Wei Huacun fut la disciple.” While Robinet accurately describes various sets of associations, between the Sanhuang tradition, alchemy, and Lord Wang, the identification with Wang Yuan is not supported by sources outside the Shangqing corpus. Campany believes Robinet’s conclusion to be hasty on account of there being no explicit connection between Wang Yuan and Mount Xicheng anywhere in the *Shenxian zhuan*; moreover, the specific methods that are attributed to Lord Wang of the Western Citadel are never mentioned in relation to Wang Yuan, and nowhere in the *Zhengao* do the names Wang Yuan or Wang Fangping appear. 

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68 Isabelle Robinet, *La révélation du Shangqing dans l’histoire du taoïsme*, 1:47; see also 2:392. Pregadio considers the connection between Lord Wang of the Western Citadel and the Shangqing movement to be firm enough that the mention of his name in a text definitively links the scripture to the revelatory tradition. Commenting on the fact that Lord Wang of the Western Citadel appears twice in the *Taiji zhenren jiuzhuan huandan jing yaojue* (Essential Instructions on the Scripture of the Reverted Elixir in Nine Cycles of the Perfected of the Supreme Ultimate; CT 889), on 1a, and 5a, he concludes that “an earlier text was incorporated into the Shangqing corpus with the mere addition, or alteration of two sentences containing Lord Wang of the Western Citadel’s name”; see Pregadio, *Great Clarity*, 58, for the passage in question, along with 193, and 199, for more on the same issue. Given Lord Wang’s pre-Shangqing alchemical affiliations, it is possible that the occurrence of his name does not necessarily imply a relation to the Shangqing school. In this specific case however, Shangqing editors likely retouched the original text; see 134, n. 77, for more on the title “*taiji zhenren* 太極真人” (Perfected of the Supreme Ultimate).

does surface on a few occasions, mostly in instances where Mao Ying discusses his masters and the texts they handed down. Given the web of potent practices that were synonymous with Lord Wang’s name, it is not difficult to fathom why the Shangqing movement was so intent on absorbing him into their pantheon. As an agent of revelation, he imbued transmission materials with an instantly recognizable aura of prestige. A corollary of his inscription into the Shangqing system, the identities of Lord Wang of the Western Citadel and Wang Yuan became permanently intertwined.

To add another layer of complexity, Wang Yuan is probably a composite personage made up of two distinct figures. Bokenkamp identifies Wang Yuan with Lord Wang of the Western Citadel, but he is more discriminate in suggesting that Wang Yuan and Wang Fangping were originally separate entities. Since Wang Yuan is noted for having refused his services to Emperor Huan, it is generally agreed that he lived during the Han Dynasty, circa 150 CE. On the other hand, Wang Fangping is remembered as a contemporary of Dongfang Shuo (ca. 160—93 BCE). A handful of Tianshi dao texts that testify to Wang Fangping’s existence situate him on or around Mount Pingdu (Pingdu shan; in present-day Sichuan). These scriptures also disclose that he received a revelation from

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220—22, and Bokenkamp, *Early Daoist Scriptures*, 339—62, for translations; Bokenkamp, ibid., 351, n*, notes that the final character “you” was probably mistakenly appended by copyists since “the phrase yuanyou [遠遊], ‘distant traveling,’ is so common in Daoist writings.”

70 *Zhengao*, 14.16a-17a; see Strickmann, “On the Alchemy of T’ao Hung-ching,” 131, for a translation of the passage, in which he also equates Wang Yuan with Lord Wang of the Western Citadel, as does Schipper, *L’Empereur Wou des Han dans la légende taoïste*, 29.

71 Bokenkamp, *Early Daoist Scriptures*, 213, n.*; Lord Wang of the Western Citadel is explicitly identified with Wang Yuan on 351, n*.

72 See the *Santian neijie jing* (Scripture of the Inner Explanations of the Three Heavens), in Bokenkamp, *Early Daoist Scriptures*, 213, and 213, n*. 
Laozi or alternatively, that he was himself a transformation of Laozi. The latter scenario is encountered in a passage from the *Laozi bianhua jing* (Scripture on the Transformations of Laozi), which atypically places Wang Fangping near Chengdu (Sichuan) right before the Yangjia period (132—136 CE), a mere generation earlier than Wang Yuan’s purported transcendence. Such proximity in dates may have contributed to the merging of the two figures.

4. The Western Citadel and Mount Wangwu

The ambivalence surrounding Lord Wang’s identity parallels uncertainty about the location of Mount Xicheng. Japanese scholars tend to situate the peak in the kingdom of Shu, in present-day Sichuan. This conviction stems from a *Xuanmen dayi* (Great Meaning of the School of Mysteries) passage about the *Sanhuang wen*: “It was handed down to many immortals, and safely stored in various famous peaks. In the region of Shu, this text is also hidden in

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73 Bokenkamp ibid., lists *Dongtian fudi yuedu mingshan ji* (Record of Grotto Heavens, Auspicious Sites, Marchmounts, Marshes, and Famous Mountains; CT 599), 12b, and *Yunji qiqian*, 4.12a, and 28.8a, as passages that describe him receiving a revelation from Laozi.

74 Penny, “Wang Yuan,” 1019; see also Seidel, *La Divinisation de Laozi à l’époque des Han*, 68, where she translates the following line from the *Bianhua jing*: “à l’époque des Han, son nom [à Laozi] était Wang Fangping.” The next sentence does indeed refer to Laozi’s manifestation in the Yangjia period of the Han, but Seidel stipulates that the two entries are unrelated due to a lack of chronological or logical consonance. In fact, the very general “époque des Han” contrasts with the specificity of the rest of the chapter, a point that suggests the sentence was designed to fill some kind of narrative void; Seidel, ibid., 68, n. 2, adds that Wang Fangping “s’agit de Wang Yuan, célèbre immortel qui aurait vécu au temps de l’empereur Houan des Han posterieurs.” Her note implies that Wang Fangping subsequently reemerged in the Eastern Han (25—220 CE) as Wang Yuan.

75 See, for example Ōfuchi Ninji, *Dōkyō to sono kyōten*, 242—43; and Yusa Noboru “Seijyō ōkun,” 321.
Mount Emei of Xicheng (Xicheng Emei shan 西城峨眉山).”76 A Yunji qiqian passage paraphrasing the same text adds that while the Sanhuang wen was distributed among many famous peaks, not all of them contained the full version; the complete scripture obtained by Lord Wang, is only found at Mount Emei in Shu.77 As noted earlier, Bo He is a native of the same area, just as Wang Fangping.78

On the other hand, a large proportion of Western-language studies concur that Mount Xicheng is located in what is now Shaanxi province.79 This discrepancy is partly attributable to the fact that Xu Mi’s father, Xu Fu 許副, was awarded a Western Citadel (Xicheng xian 西城縣) prefecture in present-day Shaanxi as compensation for serving Sima Rui 司馬睿 (276—322 CE) and participating in the military campaigns of the Eastern Jin (317—420).80

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76 The Xuanmen dayi passage is preserved in the Daojiao yishu 道教義樞 (Pivot of Meaning of the Daoist Teaching; CT 1129), 2.6b; Yunji qiqian, 51.a, suggests that the Western Citadel of Lord Wang’s name refers to a western chamber (xishi 西室) inside the mountain—most likely a cavern on the western flank of the summit. The term “xicheng” could also be understood as “Western boundary,” reading cheng 城 as a “fortified wall” demarcating the edge of a defined space instead of a “citadel” or “city.” This would figuratively point to Shu’s position at the furthest orient of the Chinese cultural sphere; see 54, n. 87, for more on this interpretation.

77 Yunji qiqian, 6.11b. The subsequent lines elaborate on the “incomplete” versions: “Long ago, an immortal by the name of Zhi Qiong 智瓊 brought forth two scrolls of the Huangwen 皇文 (Sovereign Writ), but [no one] could fathom their meaning, and so he returned them to whence they came.” On the significance of Zhi Qiong’s aborted role in the transmission of the Sanhuang wen, see Fukui, Dōkyō no kisoteki kenkyū, 176; see also Soushen ji 搜神記 (Record of Seeking Spirits), 1.31:16—17, where Zhi is referred to as “Duke Cheng” 成公; DeWoskin and Crump, In Search of the Supernatural, 16—17. This may be the same Duke Cheng (Shang Chenggong 上成公) that appears in Houhan shu 後漢書 (Book of the Later Han), 82B.2748.

78 Refer to pages 36, and 49, above; the Dongtian fudi yuedu mingshan ji, 3b-4a, ties Wang Fangping and the Western Citadel to Shu.

79 See Boltz, “Wuyue zhenxing tu”; and Yamada Toshiaki, “Bojia dao,” in Pregadio, Encyclopedia of Taoism, 2:1076, and 1:237, respectively; Campany, To Live as Long as Heaven and Earth, 134, n. 6, locates Mount Xicheng in Shaanxi as well.

80 Zhengao, 20.6ab; Strickmann, Le taoïsme du Mao Chan, 122.
Lord Wang’s incorporation into the Shangqing pantheon, the existence of a local Xicheng administrative unit so close to the Xu family powerbase probably paved the way for the relocation of Shu’s Mount Xicheng to Shaanxi; at the very least, the coincidence would have generated some confusion about where the peak was actually situated. Despite the convenient toponymic happenstance, Shangqing sources were more concerned with tying Lord Wang of the Western Citadel to another mountain. Abandoning his former abode, the immortal relocated to a new domain, Mount Wangwu (Wangwu shan 王屋山), 50 kilometers north of Luoyang on the Henan-Shanxi border.81

With the rise of the Shangqing movement, Lord Wang was transplanted from his Western Citadel in Shu to Mount Wangwu. However, this site was already home to another presiding Wang. Previously a Han Dynasty fangshi of the highest distinction, Wang Bao 王褒 (fl. 73—49 BCE) was elevated to the position of ruler of the Grotto Heaven of the Pure Vacuity of Lesser Existence (Qingxu xiaoyou dongtian 清虚小有洞天) directly below Wangwu Mountain, thereafter adopting the title “Lord Wang, Perfected of the Heaven of Pure Vacuity” (Qingxu zhenren Wangjun 清虚真人王君).82 This Lord Wang was a teacher to Yang Xi’s

81 Gil Raz, “Wangwu shan,” in Pregadio, The Encyclopedia of Taoism, 2:1025. A Wangwu township, roughly 50 kilometers north of Luoyang on the Henan-Shanxi border still exists today. Li Zhongfu’s Shenxian zhuan hagiography lists a Lord Wang of Hongnong 弘農 known for his practice of the dunjia 遁甲 (hidden stem) method, by which one may escape the space-time continuum through a “crack” in the structure of the universe. During the Han, Hongnong commandery straddled the modern Henan-Shanxi border and included Wangwu shan. This Lord Wang of Hongnong might very well be Wang Zhongdu 王仲都, a native of the same area.

Campany, To Live as Long as Heaven and Earth, 230, n. 352, and 271, puts forward the possibility that either of these two figures (potentially one and the same) are the Lord Wang of Shangqing renown.

82 Strickmann, Le taoïsme du Mao Chan, 83; and Chavannes, “Le jet des dragons,” 133—34. The Taiping yulan, 669.6a, contains a Wang Bao biography that is attributed
master Wei Huacun 魏華存, the Lady of the Southern Peak (Nanyue furen 南嶽夫人). According to the Shangqing tradition, Wang Bao’s own master was none other than the ubiquitous Lord Wang of the Western Citadel, from whom he most notably received the Shangqing jing 上清經 (The Shangqing Scripture). In her discussion of Wang Bao’s lost biography, Robinet lists his teacher as the taiji zhenren 太極眞人 (Perfected of the Supreme Ultimate) Lord Xiliang (Xiliang jun 西梁君), which entails that this figure is one and the same as Lord Wang of the Western Citadel. A similar conclusion may be drawn from the eleventh-century Dongyuan ji 洞淵集 (Anthology of the Abyssal Cavern; CT 1063), in which

to the Shenxian zhuan. For more sources on the personage, see Campany, To Live as Long as Heaven and Earth, 550—51.

83 Writing on the diffusion of Yang Xi’s manuscript corpus, Tao Hongjing, Zhengao, 20.2b, reveals the existence of a Wangjun zhuan 王君傳 (Biography of Lord Wang). This is the Qingxu zhenren Wangjun neizhuan 清虚眞人王君內傳 (Esoteric Biography of Lord Wang [Bao], Perfected Immortal of Pure Vacuity), reputedly authored by Wei Huacun herself. While the text is lost, a long narrative section survives in the Yunji qiqian, 106.1a-8a; see Strickmann, “The Mao Shan Revelations,” 59, and 59, n. 147, for a translation of the Zhengao passage and some bibliographic data relating to the Wangjun zhuan. Robinet, La révélation du Shangqing, 2:369—73, doubts the authenticity of the surviving fragment.

84 This is what Robinet, La révélation du Shangqing, 1:47, and 1:128, contends; following the Shangqing example, she equates Lord Wang of the Western Citadel and Wang Yuan. Concerning the transmission of the Shangqing jing, see Yunji qiqian, 4.9b-10a. A passage from the Baopu zi translated above, 47, n. 66, exposes Lord Wang’s Elixir Method (Wangjun danfa), which is also included in the pages of the Zhengao, 14.8b, in a section entitled “Rainbow Elixir of Lord Wang” (Wangjun hongdan 王君紅丹). In this instance however, the technique addresses shijie rather than stunting growth or slowing the aging process, and it is attributed to the Perfected of the Xaoyo heaven of Pure Vacuity beneath Mount Wangwu—an unambiguous reference to Wang Bao, and not Lord Wang of the Western Citadel. Nevertheless, Wang Bao could have obtained the recipe from his master, Lord Wang, and disseminated it without changing its original name; this was most certainly the case for the hongdan elixir. Thus, the “Wangjun” in the Zhengao’s “Wangjun danfa” could still designate Lord Wang of the Western Citadel; see Strickmann, “On the Alchemy of T’ao Hung-ching,” 144, for a discussion of the Zhengao passage in question. For more on elixirs and recipes associated with “Wangjun” (Wang Bao) in the Shangqing corpus, see Robinet, La révélation du Shangqing 1:45—47, 52, and 2:371—73; see 1:47, in particular for the transmission of the hongdan recipe.

85 Robinet, ibid., 2:371; cf. Zhenling weiye tu, 10a, where Lord Xiliang appears as a separate individual from Lord Wang of the Western Citadel.
Mount Xicheng is said to be inhabited by the Perfected Wang Fangping—that is Lord Wang of the Western Citadel; the passage goes on to state that “the site is one thousand *li* 里  west of Chengdu prefecture in Liang province (Liangzhou Chengdu *fu* 梁州成都府). It is the entrance to the Western World (*ru xishi* 入西界).”86

Thus, Lord Wang of the Western Citadel is Lord Xiliang, literally the Lord from Western Liang.87

In the context of Shangqing sacred space, the master-disciple relationship encountered in certain texts might explain why the Immortal from the Western Citadel and the Perfected Immortal of Pure Vacuity were placed in such proximity to each other. The master, a celestial Lord Wang, presides over Wangwu Mountain above, while his chthonian adept Wang Bao rules Wangwu’s negative space, the Xiaoyou grotto below. Alchemy could offer another potential legitimation for Lord

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86 *Dongyuan ji*, 2.1a. The passages makes no mention of Lord Wang of the Western Citadel in connection with Mount Wangwu. Instead, the site is listed as Wang Bao’s domain. Interestingly, he is presented as Du Zhong Wang Bao 杜沖王褒. Du Zhong is another *taiji zhenren* who has a notice in the “Taiji zhenren zhuans” 太極真人傳 (“Biographies of Perfected of the Supreme Ultimate”) from the *Yunji qiqian*, 104.6—8.

87 Strangely, Robinet, *La révélation du Shangqing*, 1:128, rebukes this very claim (which she then supports on 2:371), contending instead that Lord Wang and the Lord from Western Liang are two distinguishable entities. Furthermore, on 1:52, Robinet proposes that Lord Xiliang was master to Wang Yuan (Wang Fangping), that is to say Lord Wang of the Western Citadel, and Wang Bao’s “great-master.” An attempt at illustrating these ties is sketched out in a table on 1:50, but this time the *taiji zhenren* from Western Liang is shown to be two generations removed from Lord Wang of the Western Citadel. The matter is further muddled by the fact that the table also identifies Chief Perfected of the Western Ultimate (Xiji zongzhen 西極總真) as Lord Wang of the Western Citadel. The *Zhenling weiye tu*, 3a, equates Wang Yuan and Wang Fangping with the Lord Chief Perfected of the Western Boundary from the Western Ultimate (Xiyu xiji zongzhen jun 西域西極總真君). Note the substitution of the graph *cheng* 城 with the graph *yu* 域, hinting at the previously proposed reading of “western boundary” for *xicheng*. Finally, a passage on 1:48, equates the Metropolitan Master of the Western Numina (Xiling zidu 西靈子都) with Wang Yuan, and transitively, with Lord Wang of the Western Citadel. Once more, the *Zhenling weiye tu*, 10b, mentions a Great Mystery Immortal Woman Metropolitan Master of the Western Numina (Taixuan xiannü xiling zidu 太玄仙女西靈子都), but she is distinct from Lord Wang and any of his avatars.
Wang’s emigration to Wangwu. As seen above, both he and Wang Bao are associated with the alchemical practices. So is the *taiji zhenren* Lord Xiliang, who according to Shangqing sources, was among the first to disseminate the *Jiuzhuan shendan* 九轉神丹 (Nine Cycle Divine Elixir).\(^88\) Even before the revelations, Mount Wangwu was inscribed in the landscape of alchemical geography: the *Baopu zi* notes: “upon ascending Mount Wangwu, the Yellow Emperor (Huangdi 黃帝) was given the *Jindan jing* 金丹經 (Cinnabar Classic).”\(^89\) Whatever reasoning was used to justify his relocation, the pre-existing spiritual currency that Lord Wang enjoyed in the South made it hard for Shangqing systematizers to resist including him in their nascent pantheon and nexus of correspondences. The figure found a fitting protectorate in Mount Wangwu, bringing with him the established local clout of the Sanhuang and alchemical traditions.

The logic behind Lord Wang’s defection becomes even clearer when considering the prefixes attached to the *Sanhuang wen*: one version of the scripture is known as the *Xiaoyou sanhuang wen* (Writ of the Three Sovereigns from the Heaven of Lesser Existence), or *Xiaoyou jing* 小有經 (Scripture of Lesser Existence), while the other, historically later (but mythologically earlier) version is entitled *Dayou sanhuang wen* (Writ of the Three Sovereigns from the Heaven of Greater Existence), or *Dayou jing* 大有經 (Scripture of Greater Existence). The two are named after the grotto heaven in which they originally appeared. The *Yunji qiqian* discloses that the *Xiaoyou sanhuang wen* was created “in the Jade Commandery (Yüfu 玉府) of the Xiaoyou Heaven, and that is why it is referred to

\(^88\) See Robinet, *La révélation du Shangqing*, 1:50, for exact references.
\(^89\) *Baopu zi*, 13.241; Ware 215. See *Baopu zi*, 4.74; Ware 75, for a paraphrase from the *Jindan jing* about how the Yellow Emperor rose to Heaven after ingesting the divine elixir; see also *Huangdi jiuding shendan jingjue*, 5.2a, and 13.3a.
as such; it can be called *Xiaoyou jing*.”\(^90\) Betraying a thinly veiled hierarchy of heavens and revealed materials, the passage immediately specifies “the *Xiaoyou sanhuang wen* originally came from the Dayou [heaven].”\(^91\) From this passage alone, a Shanqing-imposed classification of Sanhuang materials is perceptible. The complement to the Xiaoyou Heaven of Mount Wangwu is located beneath Mount Weiyu (Weiyu shan 委羽山), which falls under the administrative rule of deified Han diviner Sima Jizhu 司馬季主 (d. 170 BCE).\(^92\) This *fangshi* is at the fore of the biographies of immortals that Xu Mi was compiling, and he figures prominently in the anecdotes that the Perfected transmitted to Yang Xi.\(^93\) Mirroring the case of Lord Wang of the Western Citadel, it would appear that Sima Jizhu’s omnipresence in Shangqing materials was in some ways a function of realpolitik: in this instance, the Jin (265—420 CE) rulers and more germanely Xu’s patron,

\(^90\) *Yunji qiqian*, 6.5ab. These lines are also found, with some variation, in the *Daojiao yishu*, 2.6b—7a, and the *Yunji qiqian*, 6.11ab. All three passages are based on the lost *Xuanmen dayi* (although a small portion of the text survives in the Daoist Canon under the title *Dongxuan lingbao xuanmen dayi* 洞玄靈寶玄門大義 (Great Meaning of the School of Mysteries from the Numinous Treasure Storehouse of Mystery; CT 1124). While the *Yunji qiqian* preserves a selection of excerpts, a large percentage of the *Daojiao yishu* (dated ca. 700) is taken from the late sixth- or early seventh-century *Xuanmen dayi*, which was sometimes referred to as the *Daomen dalun* 道門大論 (Great Discussion on the Gate of the Way). The *Xuanmen dayi* itself is based on an earlier text, which partially survives in Dunhuang manuscript P.3001. On the relationship between the latter two documents, see Ōfuchi Ninji’s article “Tonko zankan sansoku.” The three aforementioned passages, two from the *Yunji qiqian* (6.5a—6b; 6.11a—12a) and one from the *Daojiao yishu* (2.6b—7a), are derived from a common *Xuanmen dayi* segment that broadly deals with the Sanhuang tradition. Nonetheless, they exhibit telling discrepancies, some of which will be addressed in the following pages. The content of *Yunji qiqian*, 4.10a—11a, is significantly similar, but not close enough to be considered a product of the same root passage; cf. Ōfuchi Ninji, *Dōkyō to sono kyōten*, 222—57.

\(^91\) *Yunji qiqian*, 6.5b.

\(^92\) Interestingly, a passage from a lost Shangqing scripture preserved in *Yunji qiqian*, 8.13a, contradicts this arrangement by tying the Xiaoyou Heaven with Lord Wang’s original home, Xicheng shan.\(^93\)

Emperor Jianwen (Jin Jianwendi 晉簡文帝; r. 371—372 CE)—whose personal name was Sima Yu 司馬昱—were direct descendants of the Sima clan and therefore kinsmen of the illustrious Sima Jizhu himself.

If Shangqing systematizers appointed Sima Jizhu to the Dayou Heaven partly in order to gain political favour, moving Lord Wang of the Western Citadel to Mount Wangwu for the purpose of augmenting their spiritual capital would be far from outlandish. The very distinction between the Xiaoyou and Dayou sanhuang wen was an ad hoc contrivance designed to theologically justify the supremacy of the scripture’s second version—the one that the Shangqing approved. 94 Textual evidence indicates that in the first decade of the fourth century, there was a single known version of the text in circulation. The second version appeared shortly thereafter, when another master tied to the Ge family, Bao Jing, received a new revelation of the Sanhuang wen, an event that would ultimately result in the proscription of the text during the Tang Dynasty. 95

5. Bao Jing and the transmission to Ge Hong

94 Since no confirmed pre-revelation source mentions the Xiaoyou jing or the Dayou jing, a reference to either should constitute a relatively reliable indicator of dating.
95 See 110—115, below, for more on this. Chen Guofu, Daozang yuanliu kao, 72—74, associates the Xiaoyou jing with the Bo He lineage while the later Dayou jing is tied to the Bao Jing version of the Sanhuang wen. Curiously, Ôfuchi Ninji, Dôkyô to sono kyôten, 275—85, refuses to draw this distinction, arguing instead that the Dayou jing was a name (based on a Shangqing reorganization of Heavens) that the Sanhuang tradition came up with to counter the derogative Xiaoyou jing diminutive that was used in reference to their text. The Xiaoyou jing referent reflected the Sanhuang wen’s lowly position in the Daoist Canon, hence it is still a relatively late matter, in which the Shangqing and Lingbao schools—each jockeying for top honours in the new Three Caverns system—undoubtedly had a hand.
Born in a family of Han civil servants, Bao Jing was widely learned in classical Confucianism and esoterica, eventually rising to the post of governor of Nanhai (Guangdong).96 Bao’s master, Yin Changsheng 陰長生 taught him how to perform “shijie by means of a blade” (dao shijie 刀尸解), a method for which he later became renowned.97 Their initial meeting, according to one source, took place in 318.98 Around the turn of the fourth century, in an episode that is highly evocative of Bo He’s revelation, Bao Jing discovered the Sanhuang wen in a cavern on Mount Song (Songshan 嵩山) (Henan):

During the Jin, Bao Jing studied the Way on the peaks of Mount Song.99 In the Yongkang era of Emperor Hui’s (Jin Huidi 晉惠帝; r. 290—307 CE) reign (300), he ritually purified himself and meditated on the Way in Lord

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96 Bao’s origins vary according to the source, but many scholars agree that he was born in Langye 琅邪 in present-day Shandong; see Chen Guofu, Daozang yuanliu kao, 76, for discordant views about his birthplace.
97 These are the essentials of Bao Jing’s entry in the Shenxian zhuan; see Campany, To Live as Long as Heaven and Earth, 295—97, and 485, for a complete list of primary materials pertaining to the figure. His biography is also preserved in the Jinshu 晉書 (History of the Jin), 95.2482; see also Jinshu 72.1911, and 80.2106—07. Bao also has entries in the Daoxue zhuan 道學傳 (Biographies of Students of the Dao), which survive in the Taiping yulan, 663.5a, and the Xianyuan bianzhu, 3.20a; for these, see Bumbacher, Fragments of the Daoxue zhuans, 325—29; Chen Guofu, Daozang yuanliu kao, 76; Ōfuchi, Shoki dōkyō, 536—52; and Robinet, La révélation du Shangqing 1:11. Shijie by means of a blade, or “martial liberation” refers to achieving deliverance from the corpse by sustaining a seemingly lethal injury from a bladed weapon.
98 See Yunji qiqian, 85.14b-16a, for more on their encounter.
99 Bao Jing’s discovery of the scripture on Mount Song, one of the Wuyue zhenxing tu’s Five Peaks, is a narrative detail that agrees with other descriptions of the Sanhuang wen’s revelation; as Ge Hong explained, the Sanhuang wen and Wuyue zhenxing tu were hidden in the very same Five Peaks that gave their name to the charts; Baopu zi, 19.336; Ware, 314; see the introduction for the passage.
Liu’s (Liujun 劉君) cavern.100 Thereupon, the Sanhuang wen suddenly appeared, carved into characters.101

Bao then offered four hundred feet (chi 尺) of silk, swore an oath to his master Ge Xuan 葛玄 (164—244 CE), and received the oral instructions to the text. Later on, the passage explains, Bao transmitted the scripture to Ge Hong.102 A contrasting account of Bao Jing’s reception exists: in marked departure from his other hagiographies, a selection from the Yunji qiqian affirms the governor of Nanhai obtained the Sanhuang wen directly from Ge Xuan’s master, Zuo Ci 左慈:

It is also said that Jing’s learning excelled in the Classics and in the Apocrypha (jingshu weihou 經書緯候).103 From his master Zuo Yuanfang 左元放 [Zuo Ci], he received the [Taiqing] Central Methods ([Taiqing] zhong bu fa [太清中部法]), but also the Sanhuang and Wuyue essentials for summoning. In his practice of these methods, he received divine verification (shenyan 神驗), making spirits and ghosts submit to his will, and placating the demons that roamed the mountains.104

This excerpt invites Bao Jing into a relatively prestigious transmission lineage, linking him and the Sanhuang wen to the ancestry of Taiqing alchemy. In this version of events, Zuo Ci passes the Sanhuang text to Bao Jing, and one

100 According to the Shenxian zhuan, Liu Gen 劉根 “left the world behind and practiced the Way. He entered a cave on Mount Songgao (Songgao shan 嶽高山) that was situated directly above a sheer cliff over fifty thousand feet high.” I borrow Campany’s translation of the passage from To Live as Long as Heaven and Earth, 240; see also 240—49, and 48—49. Liu Gen has an entry in Hou Hanshu, 82B.2746.

101 Daojiao yishu, 2.7a; cf. Yunji qiqian, 4.10b-11a; and Yunji qiqian, 6.5b-6a, and 6.11b-12a; the Yunji qiqian, 4.10a, version of this passage has “the second day of the second month of the second year of Yuankang (292)” as the date of Bao Jing’s reception.

102 Daojiao yishu, 2.7a.

103 “Wei” 維 refers to the Apocrypha, the prognosticatory commentaries on the Classics, while “hou” 候 denotes a specific commentary on the Shangshu 尚書; see Hou Hanshu, 82A.2703; and Ngo, Divination, magie et politique, 74.

104 Yunji qiqian, 85.15a. Zuo Ci’s biography from the Hou Hanshu, 82B.2747—2748, is translated in Ngo, ibid., 138—39.
assumes, to his famous disciple Ge Xuan as well. From that point on, the
Sanhuang wen would have piggybacked on the Taiqing line and come down to Ge
Hong via Zheng Yin (ca. 215—ca. 302 CE). Admittedly, this is a rather
exotic interpretation of the Sanhuang chain of transmission, and its rarity is
probably indicative of how little currency it had. The vast majority of accounts that
tie Bao Jing to the Sanhuan wen rely on the spontaneous grotto revelation
narrative, followed by a direct transmission to Ge Hong.105

Nevertheless, this isolated association between Bao Jing and Zuo Ci
accentuates several similarities between Sanhuang and Taiqing traditions. In
chapter 19 of the Baopu zi, the Sanhuang wen heads a list of scriptures and
talismanes received by Ge Hong from his master Zheng Yin, an avowed
alchemist.106 Among his more than fifty pupils, Ge was the only one to obtain the
prized writ. The transmission of materials must have occurred before 302, the year
that is traditionally given for Zheng Yin’s “retirement from the world.”107 At that
time, he was already into his late eighties or nineties, hence his date of birth would
be around 210 or 215.108 Ge received alchemical materials, namely the Taiqing
jing, the Jiudan jing (Scripture of the Nine Elixirs), and the Jinye jing (Scripture of the Golden Liquor) in 300 or 301, when he was about eighteen,
roughly a year before his master’s disappearance.109 In the Baopu zi, he reminisces
about obtaining these “scriptures of gold and cinnabar” (jindan zhi jing 金丹之經)

105 The versions in the Daojiao yishu, 2.7a, and the Yunji qiqian, 4.10b-11a, 6.5b-6a,
and 6.11b-12a, are consistent on these points.
106 Baopu zi, 19.333; Ware 312.
107 Baopu zi, 19.338; Ware 317
108 Ge Hong, who studied with Zheng between the age of fourteen and nineteen,
explains that he joined his master when he was “leaving his eighties”; see Baopu zi,
19.331; Ware 310.
109 See Pregadio, Great Clarity, 5, and 256, n. 16.
and the *Sanhuang neiwen* in the same breath.\(^{110}\) As previously noted, the *Badi miaojing jing* and the *Shenxian zhuan* claim the *Sanhuang wen* was transmitted together with the *Taiqing zhongjing* and its recipes.\(^{111}\) It is therefore feasible that the *Sanhuang wen* was transmitted to Ge Hong on the same occasion that he obtained alchemical materials from Zheng Yin.\(^{112}\)

While Zheng Yin’s timeline overlaps with that of Bo He, and Ge lists them both as holders of the text, there is no record of them meeting, let alone any indication that documents changed hands.\(^{113}\) Furthermore, it should be kept in mind that these personages were at the very least semi-legendary: since Bo and Zheng basked in auras of great prestige, it was not uncommon for influential Southern literati families to subsume either of them into their spiritual lineage and tie them to materials already in their possession.

Additionally, the so-called historical lineages were often shadowed by “celestial” lineages, that is to say transmissions between deities that predate a text’s revelation to humans. The Yellow Emperor is an early recipient in a few

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110 *Baopu zi*, 19.333. Zheng Yin did not transmit the actual Taiqing texts because they were already in the possession of the Ge family since the time of Ge Xuan. What Ge Hong received from Zheng Yin would have amounted to the oral instructions (*koujue*) required for understanding the scriptures and undertaking the methods contained therein; cf. Pregadio, *Great Clarity*, 3—5 passim. The account from *Baopu zi*, 4.71; Ware, 70, however, insists that Zheng Yin handed down the scriptures themselves. The same passage relates that Zuo Ci transmitted the *Taiqing jing* to Ge Xuan, who then passed it on to Zheng Yin. The *Shenxian zhuan* on the other hand, recounts that the *Taiqing jing* manifested before Bo He’s eyes in a cavern on Mount Xicheng, indicating that there were at least two transmission lineages (unless Zuo Ci carved the characters in the cave) that converged in the person of Zheng Yin. Likewise, the revelation of the *Sanhuang wen* to Bo He does not necessarily indicate that this was a unique line of transmission.

111 See 38, n. 35, and 42, above.

112 *Baopu zi*, 4.71; Ware 69; this section addresses the transmission of Taiqing materials—a few lines after mentioning the *Sanhuang neiwen*; see Pregadio, *Great Clarity*, 3, for translation.

113 See the relevant passage in *Baopu zi*, 19.336—37; Ware 314—16; and Chen Guofu, *Daozang yuanliu kao*, 71.
textual legacies, including that of the *Sanhuang wen*: “Of old, when the Yellow Emperor came eastward to Azure Hill (Qingqiu 青丘), he passed Mount Wind (Fengshan 風山) and met the Master of the Purple Residence 紫府先生 (Zifu xiansheng). From him, he received the *Sanhuang neiwen* which enabled him to summon the myriad spirits [...].” In the *Wushang biyao*’s “Sanhuang yaoyong pin,” the Yellow Emperor is listed as one of the first legatees of the *Sanhuang wen*, but he also supplies the oral instructions to the text, echoing Lord Wang of the Western Citadel’s role in the “Xicheng yaojue.” Moreover, like Lord Wang, the Yellow Emperor is cited in relation to the early or inaugural stages of alchemical transmissions.

The Bo He line for the transmission of the *Sanhuang wen* is relatively well established in pre-revelatory Jiangnan. Ge himself claims to have obtained his copy of the text from that very lineage, via his master Zheng Yin. Unfortunately, there is no surviving account of how the *Sanhuang wen* made its way from Bo He

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114 *Baopu zi*, 18.323; Ware 302. This same passage is found in *Daojiao yishu*, 2.7a, and with variations in *Yunji qiqian*, 6.5a, and 6.11b; see also *Yunji qiqian*, 100.27a; and *Lingbao wufuxu*, 3.17b. *Wushang biyao*, 22.12ab, contains an enumeration of sites where Shangqing deities reside and texts were revealed. Among them figures a Palace of Purple Residence (Zifu gong 紫府宮), flanked by the Azure Hill (Qingqiu) to the right, and Mount Wind (Fengshan) to the left. It is where the Heavenly Perfected Divine Immortal Jade Maiden Youguan (Tianzhen shenxian yunü Youguan 天真神仙玉女遊觀) resides.” A Mount Wind (or “mountains of wind”) appears in relation to an Azure Hill in a description of lands south of Yis hatuo 伊沙陀; *Wushang biyao*, 4.5b; see also *Shangqing waiguo fangpin Qingtong neiwen* 上清外國放品青童內文 (Esoteric Text of the Green Lad on the Goods Deposited in Foreign Countries), 2.32a. 115 *Wushang biyao*, 25.1b, *Daojiao yishu*, 6.6b, and *Yunji qiqian*, 6.5ab, add that the *Sanhuang wen* comes from Lord Divine Treasure (Shenbao jun 神寶君), the Sovereign of Humanity (Renhuang 人皇), who transmitted the text to Lord Wang of the Western Citadel. The figure of Lord Wang marks the transition from a “celestial” lineage to a human lineage; see also *Wushang biyao*, 6.5a, and 24.1ab; and Ōfuchi, *Dōkyō to sono kyōten*, 281. 116 Pregadio, *Great Clarity*, 41—43. Wang, *Baopu zi neipian jiaoshi*, 247, n. 16, draws attention to the ambivalence about whether the first revelation of the *Jindan jing* was addressed to the Yellow Emperor, or whether he was merely a later link in the chain of transmission.
to Zheng Yin. Given the coupling of Taiqing and Sanhuang materials in a number of sources, one possibility adepts might entertain is that the Sanhuang wen came down through the mythical Zuo Ci and Ge Xuan.117 This is what the above Yunji qiqian passage intimates, with the awkward insertion of Bao Jing into the equation. However, the crucial link in the chain, Ge Xuan, is not explicitly mentioned. Notwithstanding the anomalous inclusion of Bao into the line, the hypothesis that Ge Hong obtained Sanhuang materials from Lord Wang and Bo He through the intermediary of Zheng Yin is widely accepted—primarily due to the fact that it is outlined in the Baopu zi.118 Another, competing scenario, unrelated to the previous one, features Bao Jing as the beneficiary of the Sanhuang wen’s grotto revelation, Ge Xuan as the dispenser of oral instructions, and Ge Hong as the subsequent recipient.

6. Bao Jing and the Dayou jing

117 Chen Guofu, Daozang yuanliu kao, 76, mentions the possibility without explicitly discrediting it. Ōfuchi, Shoki дōkyō, 545, regards any direct transmission from Zuo Ci to Bao Jing as highly improbable, but he does not reject the idea that the Sanhuang wen could have made its way from one figure to the next by way of intermediaries. While these lineages were often fabricated to lend legitimacy to a tradition, they were still expected to be chronologically sound and conform to internal logic.

118 Chen Guofu, Daozang yuanliu kao, 72, summarizes:

According to the usual structure of Daoist scriptures, many texts narrate their own origins. Therefore, [the Yellow Emperor passage] that is recorded in “Earthly Truth” (“Dizhen” 眞) [chapter 18 of the Baopu zi] is likely to have been taken from the Sanhuang wen itself. The historical reliability of this account however, is untrustworthy. Furthermore, Bo He and the story of his transmission are the origins of this scripture’s appearance. The “Gazing Afar” (“Xialan” 視) [19th] chapter of the Baopu zi says that Ge Hong’s master Lord Zheng (Zheng Yin) obtained the Sanhuang neiwen. […] We can surmise that Bo He originally obtained the Sanhuang neiwen, followed by Zheng Yin, who then passed it on to Ge Hong. However, when Zheng Yin entrusted it to Ge Hong, it was presented as originally coming from the Yellow Emperor.
The two Bao Jing lines examined in the preceding pages document the existence of a second *Sanhuang wen* pedigree, independent of the Lord Wang—Bo He transmission. Some scholars relegate the Western Citadel genealogy to the realm of myth—in the same category as the celestial bequeathal to Yellow Emperor—affirming instead that Bao Jing’s revelation and the conferral of materials on his son-in-law are more historically reliable alternatives.\(^\text{119}\) In stark contradiction to this claim, the *Baopu zi* fails to connect Bao Jing to the *Sanhuang wen*. Even the figure’s short *Shenxian zhuan* biography presents him as little more than a recipient and practitioner of *shijie*.\(^\text{120}\) Ôfuchi Ninji believes the omission is attributable to Ge meeting the Nanhai governor after the completion of the *Baopu zi* (and quite possibly after that of the *Shenxian zhuan*).\(^\text{121}\) Although a draft was completed by 317, the final version of the *Baopu zi* was not penned until 330, the year of Bao Jing’s death. However, Ge Hong became a disciple of Bao Jing shortly after meeting him in or around 312, when both withdrew to Mount Luofo (Luofu shan 羅浮山; in present-day Guangdong) to study the esoteric arts.\(^\text{122}\) It is very likely that Ge received the *Sanhuang wen* on this occasion, or at the very least, that he became aware of the Bao’s revelatory episode on Mount Song.

Moreover, the second item in Ge Hong’s bibliographic catalogue, immediately below the *Sanhuang neiwen: tian, di, ren* 三皇内文天地人 (Writ of the Three Sovereigns: Heaven, Earth, and Humanity) in three scrolls, is a *Yuanwen* 元文 (Original Writ), also in three scrolls. This is most likely an abbreviation for

\(^{119}\) See for example, Schipper, *L’Empereur Wou dans la légende des Han*, 29.

\(^{120}\) Campany, *To Live as Long as Heaven and Earth*, 295.

\(^{121}\) Ôfuchi Ninji, *Shoki dōkyō*, 503.

the full title of a second version, the *Sanhuang yuanwen* 三皇元文 (Original Writ of the Three Sovereigns).\(^{123}\) These two works would be the Bao Jing and Bo He versions of the *Sanhuang wen*. The *Xuanmen dayi* confirms that Ge Hong received two versions of the text, one from Bao Jing, and the other from the Bo He line, via Zheng Yin.\(^{124}\)

If Ge Hong possessed both renderings of the *Sanhuang wen* before the completion of the *Baopu zi*, then his reasons for not discussing the Bao Jing version remain obscure. Had the texts been identical, there would be no need to distinguish them. The same would hold true if Ge Hong had only obtained Bao Jing’s *Sanhuang wen*, and then deceptively presented it as an earlier revelation, inherited from Bo He. Yet, after the advent of Bao’s *Sanhuang wen*, the *Daojiao yishu* reveals “the writ that Lord Bao obtained in the cave (lit. “stone chamber”) does not agree with the version that is presently known in the world” (*Baojun suode shishi zhi wen yu shi bu tong* 鮑君所得石室之文與世不同).\(^{125}\) This is reflected in the *Yunji qiqian*, which distinguishes between Bao’s cave revelation, and its predecessor, a text “acquired in a mountain” and already “known in the

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\(^{123}\) *Baopu zi*, 19. 333; Ware 312. Campany, *To Live as Long as Heaven and Earth*, 67, n. 177, endorses the possibility that the *Yuanwen* refers to a second version of the scripture. Wang Ming, *Baopu zi neipian jiaoshi*, 339—40, n. 25, notes the *Sanhuang neiwen tiandiren* is sometimes more accurately rendered as the *Sanhuang neiwen tianwen* 三皇内文天文; the title notably appears in *Baopu zi*, 15.272. This agrees with Ware, *Alchemy, Medicine and Religion in the China of A. d. 320*, 320, 382, whose reading of the bibliography unequivocally finds a *Sanhuang neiwen tianwen* followed by a *Sanhuang neiwen yuanwen* 三皇内文元文.

\(^{124}\) *Yunji qiqian*, 6.12a; and *Daojiao yishu*, 2.7a. Since Ge obtained Bo He’s *Sanhuang wen* from Zheng Yin before 302, he should have already had it in his possession by the time he met Bao Jing.

\(^{125}\) *Daojiao yishu*, 2.7a. Because this passage is based on the earlier *Xuanmen dayi*, the “*shi*” 世 here indicates the epoch corresponding to the compilation of the *Xuanmen dayi*, namely the late sixth-century; it may also point to an earlier date, since the *Xuanmen dayi* itself was partly grounded on antecedent materials; see also *Yunji qiqian*, 12a.
world”; reinforcing the distinction, the passage concludes that the *Sanhuang wen* “obtained in the cave (*shishi* 石室), is different from the ‘Xiao’ [version] of the *Sanhuang wen* that is known today.”¹²⁶ In other words, the Lord Wang—Bo He *Xiaoyou sanhuang wen* predates, and is different from Bao Jing’s *Dayou sanhuang wen*.

Since knowledge of the discrepancies between texts gradually spread as Bao Jing’s version gained exposure, the two scriptures were probably not initially referred to as *Xiaoyou jing* and *Dayou jing*. This particular taxonomical distinction is attributable to the Shangqing propensity for categorizing and then incorporating influential Southern traditions. Before Yangxi’s revelations, both interpretations of the *Sanhuang wen* were known under different names. The earlier Bo He text was simply known as the *Sanhuang (nei)wen* or the *Sanhuang tianwen dazi*. As for Bao’s variant, an annotation in the *Badi miaojing jing* might provide a glimpse of the titles it once bore: the text identifies the *Baogong neijing* (Inner Scripture of Duke Bao), alternatively rendered *Bao xiansheng jijie* (Master Bao’s Explanations in Verse), as a similar, yet competing version of the collection of talismans it introduces.¹²⁷ Irrespective of their original appellations, the association with the Xiaoyou and Dayou grotto heavens guaranteed a continued

¹²⁶ *Yunji qiqian*, 6.5b-6a. There is some ambiguity as to whether the “mountain” and “cave” transmissions exclusively referred to the Bo He and Bao Jing versions of the *Sanhuang wen*; while some accounts, like the one above, seem to draw a distinction, others—from the very same source—are more equivocal; consult for example *Yunji qiqian*, 6.12a; see also Ōfuchi Ninji, *Dōkyō to sono kyōten*, 244, and 284—85.
¹²⁷ *Badi miaojing jing*, 29a, and 32a, respectively. The reference is found in the “Xicheng yaojue,” which presents itself as the Bo He version of the *Sanhuang wen*, cum oral instructions. This demonstrates that the *Badi miaojing jing* was compiled at a time when both versions of the *Sanhuang wen* were in circulation. In actuality, the “Xicheng yaojue” is a pastiche of *Dayou jing* and *Xiaoyou jing* materials; see the following chapter for a complete discussion.
existence for the *Sanhuang wen* scriptures within the influential Shangqing system, albeit at the cost of a considerably lower standing in the hierarchy of texts.\(^{128}\)

It is worth noting that Bao Jing was also incorporated into the Shangqing pantheon as Xu Mai’s teacher. In effect, his principal role seems to have consisted of supplying the movement with a hagiographical link to Yin Changsheng and his methods, some of which were deemed interesting to Shangqing exegetes.\(^{129}\) Otherwise, Bao Jing’s modest rank in the spiritual hierarchy was emphasized in order to showcase new improvements on the obsolete cultivation techniques that he represented, without altogether alienating the broad base of adepts that had previously practiced those same techniques.\(^{130}\)

Although Bao Jing’s status in the Shangqing pantheon was relatively low, he fulfilled an essential role for the tradition: his association with the *Dayou jing* was a crucial device for incorporating the *Sanhuang wen*, a prized jewel of Southern esoteric lore, while simultaneously keeping a distance from the figure of

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\(^{128}\) This is perhaps analogous to the case of the *Taishang huangting neijing yüjing* 太上黃庭內景玉經 (Jade Scripture of the Esoteric Effulgence of the Yellow Court; CT 331) and the *Taishang huangting waijing yüjing* 太上黃庭外景玉經 (Jade Scripture of the Exoteric Effulgence of the Yellow Court; CT 332); both texts pre-date the Shangqing revelations. Like the *Dayou jing*, the former, penned a number of years after the latter, was considered to be more representative of Shangqing sensibilities. As a result, the Daoist school favored the “inner” version over the “outer,” but both were nonetheless collected under the banner of Shangqing scriptures.

\(^{129}\) For more on Yin Changsheng and his association with *shijie* and alchemy, see his *Shenxian zhuan* hagiography in Campany, *To Live as Long as Heaven and Earth*, 274—76. Bao Jing had Yin as a teacher, while Yin himself had previously been a disciple of Master Horseneigh (Ma Mingsheng 馬鳴生). From him, he notably received the *Taiqing shendan jing* 太清神丹經 (Scripture on the Divine Elixir of Grand Purity). Master Horseneigh is sometimes confused with another alchemical figure, Bo He. The *Taiping yulan*, 661.7a, gives Ma Mingsheng’s surname as Bo 鄭, while the “Ma Mingsheng zhenren zhuan” 馬鳴生真人傳 (“Biography of Master Horseneigh the Perfected”) from the *Yunji qiqian*, 106.15b-21a, lists it as 馬. For more on the conflation, see Chen Guofu, *Daozang yuanliu kao*, 77—78.

\(^{130}\) The *Zhengao*, 12.3a, for instance, recounts that “Bao Jing did not achieve much, for he was stubborn and of unexceptional capacities.”
Bo He and his contentious Bojia dao. In sixth-century works, northern émigré and Tianshi dao polemicists used the Bojia dao as an expedient all-encompassing symbol of the South’s “nameless religion.”131 With a designated target, rhetorical attacks could be significantly more effective. Depicting Bo He as the epitome of the Southern esoteric tradition had non-negligible implications for the Sanhuang wen; in the Baopu zi and the Shenxian zhuan, he is known first and foremost for his reception of the sacred talismans. Without negating the authenticity of Bo He’s Xiaoyou jing, Shangqing exegetes found it wiser to promote a version of the Sanhuang wen that originated with Bao Jing. In effect, they could not do otherwise; according Shangqing genealogy, Bao Jing had been Xu Mai’s master. This bond also allowed the Shangqing school to invite prestigious fangshi into their lineage via Bao’s alchemical heritage. Many of the practices associated with Zuo Ci and Ge Xuan for example, were central to Shangqing praxis, and without the proper pedigree—fabricated or not—their inclusion would not have been regarded as legitimate.

The same associative logic informed the Shangqing-sponsored migration of Lord Wang of the Western Citadel, another personage that is tied to the textual lineage of the Sanhuang wen. Aside from being featured in the aforementioned Baopu zi and Shenxian zhuan passages, he also figures prominently in the “Xicheng yaojue” section of the Badi miaojing jing, a document that contains the most elaborate account of his transmission to Bo He. In later sources, Lord Wang is often conflated with the immortal Wang Yuan, cognomen Wang Fangping.

131 Strickmann, Chinese Magical Medicine, 4, uses this term to denote the local “proto-Daoist” traditions that the Tianshi dao found themselves at odds with in Jiangnan and the rest of China’ the expression was first coined by Stein, Tibetan Civilization, 191, in reference to indigenous Tibetan religious systems or practices that were distinct from Bon; see also Davis, Society and the Supernatural, 8—9.
although there is no textual support for this outside of Shangqing materials. Moreover, there is evidence that Lord Wang, Wang Yuan, and Wang Fangping are all distinct characters. Shangqing systematizers probably collapsed them into one in order to appropriate some of the clout that each figure had in its respective, originally independent sphere of influence, and thereby reconcile different traditions. Adepts of Southern esoterica who were familiar with Lord Wang from his previous incarnations undoubtedly found the uncharted Shangqing terrain more hospitable with a familiar face in its pantheon.

Similarly, Lord Wang’s namesake, the Western Citadel, was moved from its original location in Shu closer to the Shangqing powerbase. Wangwu mountain became the immortal’s new place of residence, in large part because it satisfied the internal logic of Shangqing textual historiography and fulfilled the requirements of sacred geography: while Lord Wang rules Mount Wangwu from atop its summit, his disciple Wang Bao presides over the grotto below the peak, the Heaven of Lesser Existence. This is notably where the Sanhuang wen that Lord Wang transmitted to Bo He, the so-called Xiaoyou jing, was composed.

From the outset, the Dayou jing was awarded a higher status in the Shangqing hierarchy of texts than Bo He’s version. Nonetheless, the governor of Nanhai’s Sanhuang wen was quickly mired in controversy. The Yunji qiqian alludes to its marginal status, and Ge Hong does not mention the scripture once in his Baopu zi, despite evidence that he was cognizant of its existence. Regardless of issues of authenticity, both the Xiaoyou jing and Dayou jing found their respective place in the growing Sanhuang corpus of the late Six Dynasties. The next chapter will look at how the Dongshen canon developed from the three scrolls of the
Sanhuang wen to a fourteen-scroll collection with its own set of precepts, transmission procedures, and liturgical rituals.
Appendix 1: Synopsis of Principal Six Dynasties Sources Containing Fragments of the Sanhuang wen and Associated Early Materials


This text is composed of seven sections with illustrations of talismans and meditation aids.

i. “Zhai chi bajie fa” 齋持八戒法 (“Ritual Purification of Maintaining the Eight Precepts”) (1a—2b).

This section contains a discussion of the Eight Precepts (bajie) and a discussion of their importance. The Eight Defeats (bacai 八財) that arise from failing to maintain the Eight Precepts are also examined. This section appears as a requisite purification before performing the methods presented in the subsequent sections.


This section features a visualization meditation on the Three Ones (sanyi), hypostases of the god Taiyi 太一 in the three cinnabar fields (dantian 丹田) of the body. A description of the method is followed by an elaboration on its benefits and generative processes, part of which can also be found in the Laozi zhongjing 老子中經 (Central Scripture of Laozi) 25, from Yunjiqiqian, 18.20ab. This section may contain fragments of the lost Huangren jing 皇人經 (Scripture of the August One).


This section holds nine verses addressed to Imperial Sovereins of the Nine Heavens (Jiutian dihuang 九天帝皇) and their emissaries, the divine youths (shentong 神童). These are to be intoned in preparation for the visualization practice described in the subsequent section.

iv. “Jiuhuang tu” 九皇圖 (“Charts of the Nine Sovereigns”) (6a—10a).

This section provides illustrations and descriptions of the Nine Sovereigns, the Three Former, Three Middle, and Three Latter Sovereigns for the purpose of meditation. The gods are manifestations of Taiyi across multiple spatial and temporal planes. Their charts, which are to be included in the “floating talismans,” are mentioned as part of the earliest transmission materials linked to the Sanhuang wen.

The first half of this section (10a—11a) introduces three talismans for summoning the true spirits of the Three Sovereigns. These talismans are possibly designed to summon the deities from the “Charts of the Nine Sovereigns” section. Detailed ritual directions complement illustrations of the talismans in question. The latter half of the section (11b—12a) contains a Talisman for Ascending to Heaven (shengtian fu 昇天符) along with its illustration and instructions for use. This item is also most likely part of the “floating talismans.” The appended text mentions two alchemical figures.

vi. “Xicheng yaojue sanhuang tianwen dazi” 西城要訣三皇天文内大字 (“Essential Instructions from the Western Citadel on the Esoteric Great Characters of the Celestial Writ of the Three Sovereigns”) (12a—29b).

This is the central section of text, around which the other materials accrued. While other early sections such as the “Sanhuang [shou] sanyi jing” appear fragmentary or abridged, this one is most probably complete, standing alone before its inclusion in the Badi miaojing jing and the Dongshen canon. The text is presented as the original Sanhuang wen, the version that Bo He obtained from Lord Wang of the Western Citadel. It is complete with paratextual material, namely prefatory material, discursive commentaries, and illustrations of the Great Characters (dazi) from the Sanhuang wen; these likely date from the Ming edition of the Daoist Canon and are, therefore, not the talismans from the third century, when the scripture first circulated. Lord Wang’s oral instructions (koujue) on how to summon gods are also incorporated, either under respective talismans or as part of the body of the text. Considering, among other clues, the duplication of certain talismans, the “Xicheng yaojue” almost certainly includes two sets of talismans; those from Bo He’s version of the scripture, the Xiaoyou jing, and those from Bao Jing’s version, the Dayou jing. Nonetheless, the instructions, commentaries, and introductory materials seem to exclusively reflect Bo He’s text. This section is sub-divided into a number of distinct segments without headings.

Part 1 (12a—13b): this portion of the text functions as a prologue, explaining the cosmic dimension to Sanhuang practice. Bo He also relates how he obtained the Sanhuang wen from Lord Wang. Follows a discussion of the moral prerequisites and mental fortitude demanded for proper practice. The Thirteen Interdictions (shisan jin 十三禁) are listed in this context.

Part 2 (14a—15a): this subdivision introduces a series of alchemical and meditation methods. The first, also found in the Lingbao wufu xu 靈寶五符序 (Prolegomenon to the Five Lingbao Talismans), 2.19a, is concerned with the ingestion of the Hook Kiss (gouwen 鉤吻) herb; the second technique, entitled Lesser Cinnabar Method (xiao danfa 小丹法), involves realgar.
and cypress seeds (bozi 柏子), while the third, Another Lesser Cinnabar Method (youxiaodanfa 又小丹法), makes use of realgar, mineral cinnabar (dansha 丹砂), and quicksilver (shuiyin 水銀). The former shares a number or points an alchemical recipe from the Baopu zi (Master Who Embraces Simplicity), 4.86. The last method discussed, the Method for Detaining the Hun Souls (Juhun fa 押魂法) is a visualization technique based on the absorption of astral essences, as encountered in the Laozi zhongjing (Central Scripture of Laozi) 11, in Yunqi qiqian, 18.7ab, and the Lingbao wufu xu 1.18b—19b.

Part 3 (15a—17a): this segment relates in great detail the exchange that occurred between Bo He and Lord Wang on Mount Xicheng leading up to the transmission of alchemical sources and the Sanhuang wen. It emphasizes secrecy and ritual purification as key components of initiation. The passage ends with an elaborate exhortation against misdeeds and breaching ritual or moral prohibitions.

Part 4 (17a—28b): This is a list of 92 talismans from the two versions of the Sanhuang wen with illustrations and some instructions.

Part 5 (29a—29b): the last part of the “Xicheng yaojue” opens with an annotation that contrasts Bao Jing’s version of the Sanhuang wen to Lord Wang’s [and Bo He’s], constituting proof of the composite nature of the above list. The last few paragraphs are devoted to further liturgical notes on the writing of talismans for summoning and specifications on when in the presence of summoned deities.


This final section contains two distinct narrative threads. In the first (29b—30b), Ge Hong candidly relates his experience with using the Sanhuang wen to summon deities. In the second (30b—32a) Bao Jing briefly discusses the importance of precepts and ritual observances when using the Sanhuang wen for summoning. He then proceeds to elaborate on the origins and versions of the scripture. This and the first section (on the Eight Precepts), make up the most recent layer of the Badi miaojing jing. They were visibly added to previous materials at a time when structured ordination or transmission rituals became a requirement for canonical induction, in other words, between the late fifth- and late sixth centuries.

The “Sanhuang yaoyong pin” is divided into eight sections. Illustrations of talismans are not included.

i. “Sanhuang tianwen dazi” 三皇天文大字 (Great Characters of the Celestial Writ of the Three Sovereigns) (1a—3a).

The title of the first section is missing, but can be reconstructed as above. The section opens with a short introduction and subsequently presents sixteen talismans, with little or no instructions, composed of one 171 characters. The talismans of the first constitute a partial inventory of the Tianwen dazi 天文大字 (Great Characters of the Celestial Writ).

ii. “Tianhuang wen diyi fa” 天皇文第一法 (First Method: Writ of the Sovereign of Heaven) (3a—5b).

The second section lists fourteen talismans 192 characters. The instructions accompanying the talismans are relatively elaborate.

iii. “Dihuang wen di er fa” 地皇文第二法 (Second Method: Writ of the Sovereign of the Earth) (5b—7a).

The third section has fourteen talismans made up of 164 characters, complete with instructions.


The fourth section has five talismans totaling 60 characters. Some instructions are appended. The second, third, and fourth section make up a large portion of Bao Jing’s Sanhuang wen. There is some overlap with the talismans of the Tianwen dazi presented in the first section.

v. “Sanhuang neiying” 三皇内音 (Esoteric Sounds of the Three Sovereigns) (7a—9a).

The fifth section contains five talismans with detailed instructions. These are part of the “floating talismans” closely associated with Sanhuang transmission materials from early on.

vi. “Sanhuang neishu biwen” 三皇内書秘文 (Secret Script and Esoteric Writing of the Three Sovereigns) (9a).

The sixth section contains the second half of the instructions to the last talisman from the previous section and nothing more.

vii. Sanhuang zhuanwen” 三皇傳文 (Three Sovereigns Transmission Talismans) (9a—9b),
The seventh section holds two more talismans and their instructions. These are also part of the “floating talismans.”

viii. “Dazi xiapian fu” 大字下篇符 (Talismans from the Second Chapter of the Dazi) (9b—10b).

The eight and last section of the “Sanhuang yaoyong pin” contains nine talismans with some instructions. The talismans of this section should follow those of the “Sanhuang tianwen dazi” section. Together, the first and eighth sections of the “Sanhuang yaoyong pin” form a considerable part of Bo He’s Sanhuang wen, otherwise known as the Tianwen dazi.
Chapter 2
The Formation of the Sanhuang Tradition

I. The Three Sovereigns and the Eight Emperors: Expanding the Corpus

1. Lu Xiujing, the Three Caverns, and the Dongshen Division

Following the deaths of Ge Hong and Bao Jing, the Sanhuang wen seems to have enjoyed an increasingly wider readership. This was due in large part to its dissemination alongside Shangqing materials among prominent Southern families.1 After all, the recipients of the mid-fifth-century revelations, the Xu family, were related to the Ges by marriages over several generations;2 Bao Jing was also Xu Mai’s master. Slightly later, Lingbao texts were spread by agents from the same nucleus of families along the same rhizomatic circuits. Lu Xiujing obtained the Sanhuang wen along with Shangqing and Lingbao scriptures through these networks, an event that culminated in the development of the Three Cavern system.3 Addressing the importance of these three groups of texts in the formation of the basic classification scheme for the Daozang, Ôfuchi reflects:

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1 Ôfuchi Ninji Dōkyō to sono kyōten, 221.
2 Zhengao, 20.7b, elaborates on the genealogy of the Xus, revealing that four daughters of the Ge clan, including Ge Hong’s elder sister, were given in marriage to the forebears of Xu Mi and Xu Hui; also see Bokenkamp, “Sources of the Ling-Pao Scriptures,” 445.
3 For more on Lu Xiujing see Bokenkamp, Early Daoist Scriptures 377—98; and his more recent, “Lu Xiujing, Buddhism, and the First Daoist Canon,” 181—99 passim.
All this suggests an added significance to the fact that it was these particular [Shangqing, Lingbao, and Sanhuang] texts that composed the Three Tung [Caverns]: it must have been due to something more than the Buddhist concept of the Three Vehicles. Instead, the arrangements of the canon must have been realistic, closely corresponding to the current position of the Shang-ch’ing school at a time when tripartite systems of classification were most in fashion. This, I believe, is the way in which the earliest form of the Taoist Canon came into being.\(^4\)

Lu had positioned himself as an heir to and undisputed specialist of the three main “native” Jiangnan religious movements of the Six Dynasties. Furthermore, he had intimate knowledge of Tianshi dao and Buddhist materials, making him the ideal candidate for the establishment of a canonical inventory of scriptures. The catalogue that he presented to the Liu Song emperor in 437, entitled *Sandong jing mulu* (Catalogue of Scriptures and Writings of the Three Caverns), was divided into three repositories: the *Dongzhen* 洞真 (Storehouse of Truth) section contained the texts of the *Shangqing jing* 上清經 (Shangqing corpus); the *Dongxuan* 洞玄 (Storehouse of Mystery) section contained the texts of the *Lingbao jing* 靈寶經 (Lingbao corpus); and the *Dongshen* section contained the *Sanhuang jing* 三皇經 (Sanhuang corpus) or *Dongshen jing* (Dongshen corpus), made up of the three-scroll *Sanhuang wen* and a supplementary scroll of appended materials, or “floating talismans.”\(^5\)


\(^5\) For an overview of the formation of the Daoist Canon, see Judith Boltz’s “Sandong/Three Caverns” entry in the Encyclopedia of Taoism, 1:33—35; a rich bibliography is provided; see also Ofuchi Ninji “Formation of the Taoist Canon” 253—67; and Schipper’s “General Introduction” in Schipper and Verellen’s The Taoist Canon: A Historical Companion, 5—44. Ofuchi, Dōkyō to sono kyōten, 273, suggests that the term *Sanhuang jing* might have existed by Ge Hong’s time since he uses the term “jing” in reference to the *Sanhuang wen*; see Baopu zi 19.336; and 80—81, in Chapter 3 for the significance of this detail. For more on the equivalence between the *Dongshen jing*, *Sanhuang jing*, and *Sanhuang wen*, see Ofuchi,
According to surviving fragments from the *Sandong jingshu mulu*, the original *Dongzhen* division was composed of thirty-four works in forty-one scrolls, while the *Dongxuan* division was made up of approximately twenty-seven titles. The *Dongshen* division was comparatively much smaller, counting only four scrolls. Strictly speaking, there was no distinct Sanhuang tradition prior to Lu Xiujing’s three-tiered division of Daoist texts; after all, his systemization of materials amounted to a cosmetic parceling of a hitherto plastic collection of religious expressions. Nonetheless, his decision to organize a number of scriptures and talismans around the *Sanhuang wen* is some indication of the cohesion that underlies the materials of the *Dongshen jing*.

This chapter traces the evolution of the Sanhuang corpus from the three-scroll *Sanhuang wen* to the fourteen-scroll *Dongshen jing*. The basic structure and format of the corpus are attributed to Tao Hongjing; through the examination of bibliographic sources preserved in the *Yunji qiqian* and Dunhuang manuscripts, the following pages will attempt to reconstruct the *Dongshen jing* in its various Six Dynasties incarnations. While the Sanhuang corpus was principally composed of revealed texts, it also accrued a number of liturgical scrolls that outlined the proper transmission rituals for the Sanhuang tradition. The title of the texts containing the original transmission rituals have survived, but not their content. The second part of the chapter isolates a number of texts that are linked to the early Sanhuang ritual scrolls; features, such as precepts, are analyzed in an effort to define the character of early liturgical protocols, a key component in the development and solidification of the Sanhuang tradition during the fifth and sixth centuries. Finally, the chapter

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“Formation of the Daoist Canon,” 254 and 257; also see Ōfuchi, *Dōkyō to sono kyōten*, 272

looks at the Buddho-Daoist polemic surrounding the proscription of the *Sanhuang wen* in 648, before closing with a brief overview of the sources that contributed to a Sanhuang revival in the late-Tang and Song dynasties.

The *Dongshen jing* occupied the third and lowest tier of the Three Caverns. This position was attributed by systematizers, and adhered to by both Shangqing and Lingbao schools. With the addition of the Four Supplements (*sifu 四輔*) to the Three Caverns, the *Dongshen* label was extended beyond scriptures related to the *Sanhuang wen* to the category of texts that were representative of pre-Shangqing and pre-Lingbao local traditions, but the hierarchy implicit in the designation persisted. Conversely, the term “*Sanhuang jing*” had less a deprecative connotation. Other expressions were also used to denote the early Sanhuang canon: the Lingbao *Shangqing taiji yinzhu yujing baojue* 上清太極隱注玉經寶訣 (Concealed Commentary and Treasured Instructions to the Jade Scripture of the Grand Ultimate; CT 425), dated to the fourth or early fifth century, confirms that the “*Sanhuang tianwen* is also called “*Dongshen, “*Dongxian 洞仙 *(Storehouse of Immortals),” or “*Taishang yuce 太上玉策 (Supreme Jade Tablet).”*7

Furthermore, the *Wushang biyao* quotes the “*Dongshen jing*” and “*Sanhuang jing*” on numerous occasions, but it also borrows from the “*Dongshen sanhuang jing* 洞神三皇經” (Sanhuang Corpus for Storing Divinity).8 The same title surfaces in a preface to the *Sandong jingshu mulu*, preserved in the *Yunji qiqian*: “As for the

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7 *Shangqing taiji yinzhu yujing baojue* 上清太極隱注玉經寶訣 (Concealed Commentary and Treasured Instructions to the Jade Scripture of the Grand Ultimate; CT 425), 12a.
8 See Lagerwey, *Wu-shang pi-yao: somme taoïste du Vie siècle*, 265, for a list of *Wushang biyao* quotations from the *Dongshen jing* and *Sanhuang jing*. The reference to a *Dongshen sanhuang jing* occurs in *Wushang biyao* 43.1a4. Dao An’s *Erjiao lun*, 52.141b, from the Northern Zhou (557—581), also includes a reference to the “*Sanhuang jing.*”
titles of these scriptures, the *Dongshen* is also called “*Dongshen sanhuang*” 洞神
三皇 (Sanhuang Storehouse for Divinity), the *Dongxuan* is also called “*Dongxuan
lingbao*” 洞玄靈寶 (Lingbao Storehouse for Mystery) and the *Dongzhen* has an
assortment of names.” The more common designations, “*Dongshen jing*” and
“*Sanhuang jing*” were used interchangeably, sometimes in reference to the three-
scroll *Sanhuang wen*.

Already by the time that Ge Hong received the text, about a century and a
half before the composition of the *Sandong jingshu mulu*, the talismans of the
*Sanhuang wen* were accompanied by some kind of instructions; as previously
noted, the *Baopu zi* notes “the scripture [of the Three Emperors] itself states that
(*qijing yue* 其經曰) […].” Judging from this phrase it appears that by the early
fourth century, the instructions to the *Sanhuang wen* had been incorporated into the
central body of the text and individually attached to each talisman. In light of
this, the four scrolls handed down to Lu Xiujing likely contained the three-scroll
*Sanhuang wen* with integrated “oral” instructions; the last scroll either comprised
an alternate version of the text, supplementary talismanic materials, or a
combination of both. The exact contents of this fourth scroll will be discussed
below. Regarding the first three scrolls, a *Xuanmen dayi* passage relates that Lu
Xiujing received Bao Jing’s version of the *Sanhuang wen*, namely that which does

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9 *Yunji qiqian* 6.2b; see Ōfuchi, *Dōkyō to sono kyōten*, 273.
10 Since the *Sanhuang wen* constituted the first three scrolls of what would eventually
become the fourteen-scroll Sanhuang canon, such references were usually formulated
as “*Sanhuang jing*” or “*Dongshen jing*” followed by a scroll number between 1 and 3.
In other words, “*Dongshen jing*, 4” for example, would not indicate the *Sanhuang
wen*.  
11 *Baopu zi*, 19.336; Ware, 314; Ōfuchi, *Dōkyō to sono kyōten*, 222, has also noted
this.  
12 This is notably the case with the “*Xicheng yaojue*” from the *Badi miaojing jing*; for
a discussion of this section’s structure, see Appendix 1.
“not agree with the [Xiaoyou] version that is known in the world (yu shi bu tong 與世不同).”\(^\text{13}\) As a Shangqing patriarch, and in accordance with his transmission lineage, Lu would have given primacy to the Dayou jing over Bo He’s version of the text. Thus, the three-scroll Sanhuang feng from Lu’s four-scroll Dongshen jing was most likely the one revealed to Bao Jing on Mount Song.

Lu Xiujing subsequently passed down the four Sanhuang scrolls to his disciple, Sun Youyue, head of the Xingshi guan 興世館 (Abbey of World Prosperity) monastery and eighth patriarch of the Shangqing lineage.\(^\text{14}\) The Yunji qiqian verifies that there were four scrolls in Sun Youyue’s possession and further reveals that the scrolls were subsequently handed down to Tao Hongjing:

Upon obtaining this scripture, Master Lu [Xiujing] first transmitted it to his disciple Sun Youyue, at which point there were four scrolls and nothing more. Sun later passed them on to Master Tao, who then divided their contents according to branches and currents (fenxi zhiliu 分析枝流).\(^\text{15}\) At that time [the scripture] amounted to eleven scrolls and none more. The material was that which was transmitted in the mountain.\(^\text{16}\)

According to Shangqing systematizers, the Xiaoyou jing absorbed a number of supplementary materials over the years; the sample that was bestowed on Bo He was already diluted with additional instructions and talismans that were not included in the original revelations to the Three Sovereigns of antiquity:

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\(^\text{13}\) Daojiao yishu, 2.7b; Yunji qiqian, 6.5b-6a, and 6.12b.
\(^\text{14}\) Sun Youyue’s fragmented vitae are scattered in various sources, including in the Sandong zhunang 三洞珠囊 (Pearl Satchel of the Three Caverns; CT 1139), 1.4a, and 2.7b; and the Shangqing dao leishi xiang 上清道類事相 (The True Appearances of the Categories [Pertaining to] the Tao of the Highest Purity; CT 1132), 1.12a. Chen Guofu, Daozang yuanliu kao, 44—46, provides a coherent portrait from disparate sources; as well as Bumbacher, Fragments of the Daoxue zhuan, 107, and 263—64; see Mugitani Kunio, “Sun Youyue,” in The Encyclopedia of Taoism, 2:928—29.
\(^\text{15}\) Daojiao yishu, 2.7b, has Lu Xiujing first giving the four scrolls to Sun Youyue, and then, later, handing them down himself to Tao Hongjing.
\(^\text{16}\) Yunji qiqian, 6.12a.
The Way of Transcendents (xiandao 仙道) has the Sanhuang neiwen, which enables one to summon the gods and numina of Heaven and Earth. Although it is found in the world today (shizhong 世中), it is not the original revealed text (zhenben 真本).17

Thus, in the eyes of Tao Hongjing and his homologues, Bao Jing’s newer Dayou jing was the only legitimate and unadulterated version of the Sanhuang wen, the same one obtained by the Sovereigns of Heaven, Earth, and Humanity. One would need no further reason to place it at the head of the four-scroll Sanhuang corpus. The Xiaoyou jing was nonetheless of value. As a treasure-trove of Jiangnan religious lore, it was preserved with other materials like it, in the last scroll of the four-scroll Dongshen jing. The fourth scroll was a sort of pot-pourri volume of talismanic practices whose contents were reorganized and redistributed among scrolls four to ten of the ten-scroll corpus. Another set of documents was added shortly thereafter, bringing the total number of scrolls to eleven.18 This is why the Yunji qiqian insists that Tao Hongjing’s Dongshen jing is made up of “that which was transmitted in the mountain.”

2. Tao Hongjing and the Expansion of the Dongshen jing

Lu Xiujing died at the age of 72 in the 5th year of the Yuanwei era (477), and Sun Youyue died at the age of 91 in the 7th year of the Yongming era (489). As it was customary for disciples to follow their masters, Sun moved with Lu to the capital.

17 Zhengao, 5.4a; see 65—66 in the previous chapter for more on how the expression “found in the world today” refers to Bo He’s Sanhuang wen.
18 For more on the eleventh scroll, see below, 82—101, passim.
during the Taishi period (465-471) of the Southern Qi 南齊 (452-498), relatively late in his life. Tao Hongjing became a disciple of Sun’s in 484, the second year of the Yongming era. He obtained basic records and received the scriptures sometime during the next four years.19 Therefore, in or around 489, the Sanhuang jing or Dongshen jing still consisted of four scrolls. With the transmission to Tao Hongjing, the number of scrolls in the Sanhuang corpus significantly expanded. The specifics of the Shangqing patriarch’s restructuring are blurry, but a rare inventory of the ten-scroll canon exists in P.2559, an incomplete Dunhuang manuscript penned by Tao during the Tianjian period (502-519) of the Liang dynasty. Together, this work and S.3750, form the Taogong chuanshou yi 陶公傳授儀 (Lord Tao’s Rites of Transmission and Reception), a set of liturgical instructions for the ritual transmission of the Sanhuang wen and its companion document, the Wuyue zhenxing tu.20 Under the heading “Shoushou sanhuang fa” 授受三皇法 (“Ritual for the Transmission of the Three Sovereigns”), one finds the following annotation:

The Three Sovereigns [are transmitted through] the ritual of the Da[you]jing. Nowadays, the scripture [also] contains the following several scrolls, all of which were transmitted to us from Bao and Ge. [Among these] the Qingtai 青胎 (Green Embryo) in one scroll is the only other text that is written with the perfected characters (zhenzi 真字) of the Da[you]jing. Other materials include the Xicheng shixing 西城施行 (Applied Practices of the Western Citadel) in one scroll. These form the essentials (yao 要) of summoning. As for the other scrolls, I will not comment on them in detail, but altogether the texts came to form one satchel (zhi 帥) in ten scrolls, to be transmitted together and received collectively.21

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19 Ōfuchi, Dōkyō to sono kyōten, 261. For general introductions to Tao Hongjing, see Catherine Bell, “T’ao Hung-ching”; Mugitani Kunio, “Tō Kökei nenpu kōryaku”; and Qing Xitai, Zhongguo daojiao 1:251—53.
20 For more on this text, see Ōfuchi, Tonko dōkyō: Mokuroku hen, 331—32.
21 P.2559, in Ōfuchi, Zurokuhen 724 l.99; see also Ōfuchi, Mokurokuhen, 331—32.
As in the Yunji qiqian passage, the last line of the segment reiterates that the materials received by Tao Hongjing are the same as the ones he later transmitted; only their grouping was modified. Therefore, the content of the ten-scroll Dongshen jing was already established by Liu Xiujing’s time, when the four-scroll canon was first compiled.²²

As for the actual organization of the ten scrolls, the first few words of the passage offer some clarification. Tao wastes no time in identifying which transmission line is the orthodox one for the Shangqing school, citing both Bao Jing and his Dayou jing by name. The exact format of the scripture is verified in a subsequent passage from P.2559:

I humbly make respectful reception of these texts that were formerly and long ago transmitted down from the Master of Old (xianshi 先師): the esoteric writs (neiwen 内文) of [1] the Tianhuang 天皇 (Sovereign of Heaven), [2] Dihuang 地皇 (Sovereign of Earth), [3] Renhuang 人皇 (Sovereign of Humanity) in three parts, along with [4] the Tianwen dazi 天文大字 (Great Characters of the Celestial Writ), [5] the Qingtai (Green Embryo), and [6] the Jianqian zhongfu 棄乾衆符 (Collected Talismans for Inspecting Heaven); altogether they make up 10 scrolls.²³

The three-scroll Dayou sanhuang wen occupies the first three scrolls of the Dongshen jing. The fourth scroll is taken up by the Tianwen dazi, which is another name for the Xiaoyou jing. This version of the Sanhuang wen, complete with Lord Wang’s integrated oral instructions, is alternatively known as the “Xicheng yaojue,” whose full title is “Xicheng yaojue sanhuang tianwen nei dazi.” An annotation immediately below the title reads: “Ritual practices and established forms [talismans] of the Immortal of the Western Citadel” (“Xicheng xianren

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²² Ōfuchi, Dōkyō to sono kyōten, 265—68, discusses P.2559 at length and reaches a similar conclusion.
²³ P.2559, 724 l.119—20.
This is the Xicheng shixing that replaces the Tianwen dazi in the P.2559 passage. In fact, both selections from the Dunhuang manuscript describe the content of the four-scroll canon that Tao Hongjing received; the Qingtai was lumped together with the Tianwen dazi in the talismanic miscellany of the fourth scroll, as was the Jianqian zhongfu that Tao refrains from commenting on “in detail.”

Unfortunately, there is no detailed information about how the above documents were distributed within the ten-scroll canon. The two P.2559 passages imply that as in the four-scroll canon, the Dayou sanhuang wen took up the first three scrolls, followed by the Tianwen dazi and the Qingtai in one scroll each; the Jianqian zhongfu occupied the last five scrolls. This is not explicitly stated however, thus the claim is nothing beyond an informed guess. While P.2559 describes a ten-scroll Dongshen jing, the Xuanmen dayi excerpt from the Yunji qiqian a few pages above insists on eleven scrolls. Addressing the phantom scroll, Ôfuchi argues: “it is very questionable to assert that the eleventh juan was put into place and accepted during Tao’s lifetime.” The extra scroll must have been added sometime between his death in 536 and the composition of the Xuanmen dayi, circa 610. In the later fourteen-scroll Dongshen jing, the closing scroll is a liturgical manual, the Sanhuang chuanshou yi.

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24 Badi miaojing jing, 12a.
25 See Yunji qiqian, 6.12a; and 81, above. Interestingly, the other two corresponding passages from the Daojiao yishu and the Yunji qiqian do not mention an eleven-scroll corpus; While they do bring up Tao’s restructuring of the canon, they keep silent on the question of how many scrolls his reorganized Dongshen corpus amounted to; cf. Daojiao yishu, 7a and Yunji qiqian, 6.6a.
26 Ôfuchi, Dōkyō to sono kyōten, 248.
(Transmission Rituals of the Three Sovereigns).\textsuperscript{27} If the fourteen-scroll corpus is any reflection of its predecessor then the last scroll of the eleventh-scroll corpus should contain instructions for the ritual transmission and reception of Sanhuang texts.\textsuperscript{28} The \textit{Taogong chuanshou yi} notably addresses the very same topic, in addition to bearing a similar title, although there is no concrete evidence for it being included in the eleven-scroll \textit{Dongshen jing}. In fact, the ten-scroll corpus might have simply been reorganized into an eleven-scroll corpus—without the addition of an extra scroll—for the purpose of compatibility with certain cosmological frameworks.

The inclusion of an eleventh scroll after Tao Hongjing’s death gave the ten-scroll Sanhuang canon a more formalized structure that came complete with the trappings of correlative theology—something that escaped its previous incarnations. The \textit{Wushang biyao} explains the organization of the eleven-scroll \textit{Dongshen jing} as follows:

\begin{quote}
\textit{The Xiaoyou jing xiaji} 小有經下記 (Later Record of the Classic of Lesser Existence) says: When the Three Sovereigns ruled the world, each of them received one scroll by which they could govern all under Heaven. [With these scrolls, one can] promptly marshal deities from Heaven above, or summon demons from the earth below, and place them in one’s service. These are also called the \textit{Sanfen} 三墳 (Three Tombs). Later came the Eight Emperors (\textit{Badi} 八帝). They followed the Three Sovereigns and ruled [over all]. They also received one scroll each, and governed all under heaven by means of the teachings of divine numina (\textit{shenling zhi jiao} 神靈之教). The first group of three scrolls [they received] are called the Three
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{27} See below, 81—101, for a complete discussion of the \textit{Dongshen jing}’s liturgical scrolls.

\textsuperscript{28} An annotation in the \textit{Chuanshou sandong jing jiefa lulüe shuo} 傳授三洞經戒法録略說 (Short Exposition on the Transmission of the Scriptures, Precepts, and Registers of the Three Caverns), 1.7a, explains: “The \textit{Dongshen jing} transmitted from Master Tao [Hongjing] was thirteen-scrolls long. This is the only mention of a thirteen-scroll canon that I’ve come across. In this case also, it would appear that a liturgical scroll was added after Tao Hongjing’s death, bringing the total of Dongsen scrolls to fourteen by the early- to mid-sixth century. Perhaps the differences in content between a four-, ten-, and thirteen-scroll canon were negligible.
Essences (san jing 三精). The second set of three scrolls are the Three Changes (san bian 三变), and the last two scrolls are the Two Transformations (er hua 二化). All together, there are eight scrolls. That is why they are called the Basuo 八索 (Eight Cords).29

The mention of the Sanfen and Basuo here is of interest since it reinforces a suspected connection between the Sanhuang wen and a collection of cryptic prognostication texts from antiquity.30 The Sanfen, Wudian 五典 (Five Exemplars), Basuo (Eight Cords), and Jiuqiu 九丘 (Nine Hills) form a set of early esoteric manuals, which are believed to have dealt with divination and perhaps, summoning.

While they are no longer extant, they are referred to in a number of texts, such as the Zuozhuan for example.31 In the same way as the Sanhuang wen, the Sanfen were supposedly revealed to the Three Sovereigns of antiquity, Fu Xi 伏羲 (the Sovereign of Heaven), Shennong 神農 (the Sovereign of Humanity), and Huangdi (the Sovereign of Earth).32 This has led to speculation that the Sanhuang wen is a

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29 Wushang biyao, 30.3ab. This passage is listed as “coming from the scriptures and registers of the Dongbishen 洞秘神 (Storehouse of Secret Divinity).” The same passage is found in Yunji qiqian, 9.9a, under the heading of “Dongshen bilu” 洞神祕錄 (“Secret Registers for Storing Divinity”); see also, Yunjiqiqian, 6.11b—12a; Yunji qiqian, 4.10ab, elaborates on these same lines.

30 The Daozang quejing mulu 道藏經目錄 (Catalogue of the Lost Scriptures of the Daoist Canon; CT 1430), 2.12b, lists a lost Sanhuang tai gushu shanfen jing 三皇太古山紂 (Scripture of the Three Sovereigns on the Supreme Ancient Documents of the Mountain Tomb), a Sanhuang tai gushu qifen jing 三皇太古氣墳 (Scripture of the Three Sovereigns on the Supreme Ancient Documents of the Pneuma Tomb), and a Sanhuang tai gushu xingfen jing 三皇太古形墳 (Scripture of the Three Sovereigns on the Supreme Ancient Documents of the Form Tomb), in one scroll each.

31 See Zuozhuan 左傳 (Chronicles of Zuo), Duke Zhao 12th year, 1151; see also Legge, The Chinese Classics 5:639—40.

32 Yunji qiqian 4.10b, and 6.12a; On the “historical” Three Sovereigns, and the variations in their identity, see Gu Jiegang and Yang Xiangui, Sanhuang kao, 108—51.
version of the *Sanfen* from the Warring States (476 BCE-221 BCE) period. The above passage supports the hypothesis, explicitly identifying the *Sanhuang wen* with the *Sanfen*. It also equates the scrolls of the Eight Emperors, who are tied to the spirits of the eight trigrams (*bagua*), with the *Basuo*, linked to the same group of spirits.

Around the time of Tao Hongjing’s death in the late sixth century, the *Dongshen jing* had materialized into an eleven-scroll repository of summoning techniques and talismanic methods. The first three scrolls contained the *Sanhuang wen*. The next eight were devoted to the *Badi jing* (Scripture of the Eight Emperors), itself made up of the Three Essences (*sanjing*), Three Changes (*sanbian*), and the Two Transformations (*erhua*). As seen above, textual accounts emphasize that the contents of the eleven-scroll *Dongshen jing* were not drastically different from the *Sanhuang wen* and the appended materials or “floating talismans” that had circulated immediately after Bao Jing’s death two centuries earlier. The scriptures of the Sanhuang tradition must have enjoyed relative cohesion and continuity between the early fourth century and the late sixth century.

3. The Fourteen-Scroll *Dongshen jing*

While the materials making up the first ten or eleven scrolls, depending on the account, were supposed to be identical to those in the possession of Lu Xiujing, an

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33 See Campany, *To Live as Long as Heaven and Earth*, 234, n. 378; and Smith, “Ritual and the Shaping of Narrative: The Legend of the Han Emperor Wu,” 461; 34 This dating is based on the assumption that the eleventh scroll was added between the time that Tao Hongjing passed away and the compilation of the *Xuanmen dayi* or the *Wushang biyao*, both of which mention the eleven-scroll *Dongshen jing*.
additional three scrolls of mainly liturgical documents were attached to the
*Dongshen jing* in the sixth century. This completed the mature Sanhuang corpus in
its final incarnation as a fourteen-scroll canon. This version of the *Dongshen jing*
seems to have appeared and circulated around the same time as the eleven-scroll
version, that is to say, in the later part of the sixth century. An excerpt from Master
Meng’s 孟先生 (Jade Apocrypha) confirms that a few man-made
ritual scrolls were simply appended to the materials of the eleven-scroll corpus,
thereby forming a fourteen-scroll counterpart. The difference between the
versions therefore amounted to little more than the inclusion of a few rites of
reception and transmission. Theologically, however, they were very different,
since the eleven scrolls were a product of revelation, whereas the fourteen-scroll
version bore the mark of human interference. Some scholars have speculated that
the titles *Xiaoyou jing* and *Dayou jing* differentiated between the eleven-scroll and
fourteen-scroll versions that circulated at the same time, and not between Bo He
and Bao Jing’s redactions. However, textual evidence appears to refute this
claim; one account presents the *Xiaoyou sanhuang wen* as having been originally

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35 *Yunji qiqian*, 6.11b. The complete title of the scripture is the *Mengfashi yuwei qibu jing shumu* 孟法師玉緯七部經目 (Scriptural Catalogue of the Seven Sections of the Jade Apocrypha or Ritual Master Meng), it is often credited with combining the Four Supplements (*sifu*) with the Three Caverns (*sandong*), resulting in the “Seven Sections.” Its author, Master Meng, was probably Meng Zhizhou 孟智周, also known as Xiao Meng, of the Twofold Mystery (*Chongxuan*) school, who lived during the Liang dynasty.

36 This point is valid only if the eleven-scroll Sanhuang corpus was a reorganization of the previous ten-scroll corpus. If the eleven-scroll corpus was made up of the ten-scroll corpus with the addition of a one-scroll transmission ritual, then the eleven-scroll corpus would have already contained non-revelatory materials.

37 See Ōfuchi Ninji, *Dōkyō to sono kyōten*, 244—45, and 274—76; Wang Ka, “Dunhuang can chaoben Taogong chuanshou yi jiaodu ji” 89—91, argues that the *Xiaoyou jing* is the more recent version of the scripture, dating from the Western Jin, and therefore, associated with the Bao Jing lineage.
derived from the *Dayou jing*.\(^{38}\) If the only thing that separates the corpora is the number of scrolls they have there is little sense in making such a distinction, especially when the eleven-scroll version is known to antedate the fourteen scrolls of the *Dayou*.

The *Taishang dongshen sanhuang yi* (Rituals of the Three Sovereigns; CT 803), dated to the late Sui or early Tang, reproduces the fourteen scrolls of the *Dayou dongshen jing* from a *Dayou lutu jing mu* (Catalogue of Registers, Charts, and Scriptures of the *Dayou* [Canon]), that lists the fourteen scrolls of the *Dayou dongshen jing*:

- **Dongshen jing juan 1** (Dayou lutu tianhuang neiwen 大有錄圖天皇內文)
- **Dongshen jing juan 2** (Dayou lutu dihuang neiwen 大有錄圖地皇內文)
- **Dongshen jing juan 3** (Dayou lutu renhuang neiwen 大有錄圖人皇內文)
- **Dongshen jing juan 4** (Badi miaojing jing shang 八帝妙經經上)
- **Dongshen jing juan 5** (Badi miaojing jing zhong 八帝妙經經中)
- **Dongshen jing juan 6** (Badi miaojing jing xia 八帝妙經經下)
- **Dongshen jing juan 7** (Badi yuanbian jing shang 八帝元變經上)
- **Dongshen jing juan 8** (Badi yuanbian jing zhong 八帝元變經中)
- **Dongshen jing juan 9** (Badi yuanbian jing xia 八帝元變經下)
- **Dongshen jing juan 10** (Badi shenhua jing shang 八帝神化經上)
- **Dongshen jing juan 11** (Badi shenhua jing xia 八帝神化經下)
- **Dongshen jing juan 12** (Sanhuang zhaiyi 三皇齋儀)
- **Dongshen jing juan 13** (Sanhuang chaoyi 三皇朝禮)
- **Dongshen jing juan 14** (Sanhuang chuanshou yi 三皇傳授儀\(^ {39}\))

\(^{38}\)Daojiao yishu, 7a; Yunji qiqian, 6.5b, and 6.11a.

\(^{39}\)Taishang dongshen sanhuang yi (Rituals of the Three Sovereigns; CT 803), 5ab. For more on this text, see below, 92—94. This list is also reproduced in Chen Guofu, *Daozang yuanliu kao*, 73—74.
This fourteen-scroll format corresponds to the Xuanmen dayì description found in the aforementioned Yunji qiqian passage, complete with the three jìng, three biàn, and two hua subdivisions.40 The first three scrolls are immediately recognizable; these are the Sanhuang wen proper, in their Dayou jìng incarnation. Scrolls four to six (the jìng texts) are found in the Daoist Canon, under the same title of Badi miaojing jìng, but in one scroll instead of three. This work, contains a “Xicheng yaojue” and other seemingly early materials that have been identified with the four and eleven-scroll Dongshen jìng. Most sources are silent about the next five scrolls, the biàn and hua texts. The Wushang biyao, Yunji qiqian, and Daojiao yishu copiously refer to the Sanhuang wen itself, to scrolls four through six of the Dongshen jìng, and to the liturgical texts that make up the final three scrolls. For reasons unknown, there are only sparse mentions of scrolls seven to eleven. Although the two scrolls of the Badi shenhua jìng (nine to eleven) are lost, the Badi yuanbian jìng (scrolls seven to nine) appears to have survived under the title Badi xuanbian jìng 八帝玄變經 (Scripture of the Mysterious Transformation of the Eight Emperors; CT 1202).41 While the extant version is dated to the eighth or ninth centuries, it is an elaboration on an earlier redaction supposedly edited by the Buddhist monk Huizong 惠宗 around the late third or early fourth centuries.42 The Buddhist edition itself was based on an even earlier writing associated with the Sanhuang tradition, the Taishang tongling bashi shengwen zhenxing tu 太上通靈八史聖文真形圖 (Image of the Saintly Writ and the True Form of the Eight

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40 Yunji qiqian, 6.11a-12a; see above, 87.
41 See Chen Guofu, Daozang yuanliu kao, 74. Poul Andersen, “Dongshen badi yuanbian jìng,” 502-03, also concludes that the Badi xuanbian jìng and the Badi yuanbian jìng are essentially the same text.
42 See Badi xuanbian jìng (Scripture of the Mysterious Transformation of the Eight Emperors; CT 1202) 34ab.
Archivists for the Spiritual Communication with the Most High; CT 767) roughly dated to the third century.43

Regarding the content of the last three scrolls, those that were added to the revelations of the Dongshen jing, some clues surface in early Tang sources. A full-length study is needed to clarify the connection between the handful of Sanhuang liturgies that survive in the Daoist Canon and the twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth scrolls of the Dongshen jing. While this is beyond the scope of the present study, a few general impressions will be sketched out in the following pages nonetheless.

II. Prescriptions, Proscriptions and Prohibitions

1. The Liturgical Scrolls: The Sanhuang chuanshou yi (Transmission Rituals of the Three Sovereigns)

Although they may not have been formally incorporated into the Sanhuang corpus, liturgical materials such as the Taogong chuanshou yi circulated alongside the eleven-scroll Dongshen jing. The ensuing fourteen-scroll corpus incorporated three compilations of rituals chiefly pertaining to transmission, the last one being the Sanhuang chuanshou yi. This work survives in the Daoist Canon under two separate titles: the aforementioned Taishang dongshen sanhuang yi (Rituals of the Three Sovereigns) and the Taishang dongshen sanhuang chuanshou yi 太上洞神

43 For a discussion of this text and the Badi xuanbian jing, see Chapter 5, 278—79.
三皇傳授儀 (Rituals for the Transmission of the Scriptures of the Three Sovereigns; CT 1284), both dated to the late Sui or early Tang. This is confirmed in a citation from the fourteenth scroll of the Dongshen jing from the Yunji qiqian that corresponds to a passage from the Taishang dongshen sanhuang yi.\textsuperscript{44} Scholars including Ôfuchi Ninji surmise that the Taishang dongshen sanhuang yi identifies itself as the fourteenth scroll of the Dongshen corpus (under the title Sanhuang chuanshou yi) within its own pages, in the index presented above.\textsuperscript{45}

The Taishang dongshen sanhuang yi begins with the ritual opening of the incense burner (falū 發爐), but ends abruptly with a presentation of the Three Sovereigns’ attributes; the matching section on the closing of the burner (fulū 復爐) is missing. However, it is found in the Taishang dongshen sanhuang chuanshou yi, which conspicuously lacks an opening section.\textsuperscript{46} Furthermore, the latter text perfectly fills the former’s narrative lacunae, listing a plethora of writs and talismans that are referred to but never presented in the first work.\textsuperscript{47} On account of this apparent complementarity in content, and the added similarity in titles, it is very likely that the Taishang dongshen sanhuang yi and Taishang

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\textsuperscript{44} Yunji qiqian, 6.10ab corresponds to Taishang dongshen sanhuang yi, 12b-13a. Moreover, the cited passage from the Yunji qiqian edits out a few lines found in Taishang dongshen sanhuangyi, hinting that the latter text is the original integral source of the passage. Other quotations from the same fourteenth scroll of the Dongshen jing that are found in Yunji qiqian 6.11a, Sandong zhunang 2.8a, and Sandong zhunang 4.9a however, do not correspond to known passages from the Taishang dongshen sanhuang yi nor the Taishang dongshen sanhuang chuanshou yi (Rituals for the Transmission of the Scriptures of Three Sovereigns; CT 1284). This might indicate that the surviving texts are but fragments of the fourteenth scroll, the Sanhuang chuanshou yi.

\textsuperscript{45} Taishang dongshen sanhuang yi, 803.5b. It seems peculiar that a text would include itself in an catalogue of a its own tradition’s works, but Ôfuchi remarks that while strange, it is not unheard of for a Daoist text to cite itself; Dōkyō to sono kyōten, 250.

\textsuperscript{46} Taishang dongshen sanhuang chuanshou yi, 14a.

\textsuperscript{47} Compare Taishang dongshen sanhuang yi, 8a-12b to Taishang dongshen sanhuang chuanshou yi, 13a.
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dongshen sanhuang chuanshou yi constitute the opening and closing segments of the fourteenth scroll of the *Dongshen jing*, the *Sanhuang chuanshou yi*.48

2. The Liturgical Scrolls: The Sanhuang zhaiyi (Three Sovereigns Purification Ritual)

The “Shou dongshen sanhuang yipin” (Chapter on the Rites for the Transmission of the Scriptures of the Dongshen Division) from the *Wushang biyao* offers the first in a series of clues as to the exact nature of the twelfth scroll of the Sanhuang corpus. As its title indicates, the *Wushang biyao* passage contains a short transmission rite for Sanhuang works. Most of its content is reproduced, sometimes verbatim, in the “Transmission Rites” section of the Tang dynasty *Taishang dongshen xingdao shoudu yi* (Liturgy for the Transmission of the Storehouse of Divinity; CT 1283).49 Most of the “Shou dongshen sanhuang yipin” is quoted from the lost *Lingbao zhaijing* (Lingbao Scripture of Ritual Purification); with both traditions developing in the same geographical area within the same general time frame, it is very possible that Sanhuang rites were incorporated into—or simply identical to—Lingbao rites. Thus in many respects, citing from the *Lingbao zhaijing* would amount to citing

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48 Schipper, The Taoist Canon: A Historical Companion, 506—07, follows the same reasoning. According to Chen Guofu, Daozang yuanliu kao, 74, the *Taishang chuanshou dongshen sanhuang yi* 太上傳授神三皇儀 (Rituals for the Transmission of the Scriptures of the Three Sovereigns) listed in the fifteenth century Daozang quejing mulu 道藏闕經目錄 (Catalogue of Missing Books in the Daozang; CT 1430), 1.15b, is an alternate name for the *Sanhuang chuanshou yi*.

49 *Taishang dongshen xingdao shoudu yi* (Liturgy for the Transmission of the Dongshen division; CT 1283), 10a-13b. Save for a passage on 4b, *Wushang biyao* 38.1a-5a roughly corresponds to the *Taishang dongshen xingdao shoudu yi*’s 10a-13a. Lagerwey, *Wu-shang pi-yao*, 130—32, provides a line-by-line comparison.
from Sanhuang zhaijing.\textsuperscript{50} There are, however, quotations from sources other than the Lingbao zhaijing, including the Dongshen jing. The exact scroll number is not provided, but the passage in question contains the “Yangge jiuzhang” (Nine Yang Hymns) from the Badi miaojing jing that corresponds to scrolls four through six of the fourteen-scroll canon.\textsuperscript{51} The same hymns surface in the Taishang dongshen xingdao shoudu yi.\textsuperscript{52} In an incomplete colophon, the text’s anonymous author explains that he compiled the liturgy because the transmission rituals for the Dongshen canon were incomplete and no longer known in his time.\textsuperscript{53} In reconstituting a representative sample of Sanhuang rites, he borrowed from a number of works, among them the “Shou dongshen sanhuang yipin,” or the sources on which it was based.

The Taishang dongshen xingdao shoudu yi offers precious glimpses into the largely opaque world of early Sanhuang liturgies. The text opens with a ritual of nocturnal announcement (\textit{suqi}). This is the name for a generic, imperially endorsed rite that was to be included in the transmission rituals for a number of traditions such as the Lingbao and Sanhuang.\textsuperscript{54} According to the Daozang quejing

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\textsuperscript{50} An example of how early Sanhuang purification rituals were absorbed into Lingbao liturgy is provided below; even in a passage dealing with Sanhuang transmission rituals, if two sources were considered more or less equivalent, the editors of the Wushang biyao would have deferred to a Lingbao rather than a Sanhuang text since the compendium is mainly grounded in the Lingbao liturgical tradition.

\textsuperscript{51} The hymns in \textit{Wushang biyao} 38.3b-4a are from \textit{Badi miaojing jing} 5ab.

\textsuperscript{52} The first hymn of the series appears in \textit{Taishang dongshen xingdao shoudu yi}, 2b, 6b, 13b, and 15b; an incomplete set of three hymns is found on 12ab; the complete set of nine is included on 4b-5b.

\textsuperscript{53} \textit{Taishang dongshen xingdao shoudu yi}, 15b. This was probably a result of the 647 proscription of the Sanhuang wen, on which see below, 110—15. Schipper, \textit{The Taoist Canon: A Historical Companion}, 507—08, dates the text to the Tang.

\textsuperscript{54} See Lagerwey, \textit{Wu-shang pi-yao}, 4. For an example of the Sanhuang nocturnal announcement, see \textit{Wushang biyao} 35, especially 1a-2a; for the Lingbao variety, see the entirety of \textit{Wushang biyao} 48. Aside from a handful of minor modifications, both rituals are identical.
mulu (Catalogue of Missing Books in the Daoist Canon), an alternate name for the twelfth scroll of the Dongshen corpus, the Sanhuang zhaiyi 三皇齋儀 (Three Sovereigns Purification Ritual) is Taishang dongshen sanhuang baozai suqi yi 太上洞神三皇寶齋宿啓儀 (Rites of the Three Sovereigns for Precious Purification and the Nocturnal Announcement). With such a title, the Sanhuang zhaiyi must have contained a nocturnal announcement ritual, most likely the basis for the versions found in the Wushang biyao and the Taishang dongshen xingdao shoudu yi.

The Sanhuang zhaiyi was further known as the Sanshi xingdao yi 三時行道儀 (Rite of the Three Times for Practicing the Dao) or the Sanshi tongyong xingdao yi 三時通用行道儀 (Rite of Communication of the Three Times for Practicing the Dao), an indication that the twelfth scroll might have also contained instructions for the “rites for practicing the Dao” (xingdao yi 行道儀), a rite for the solemn invocation of the gods. The “Dongshen xingdao yi” 洞神行道儀 (Rites for Practicing the Dao of the Storehouse of Divinity) section of the Taishang dongshen xingdao shoudu yi that lends its name to the scripture notably reproduces this rite. Furthermore, this section opens with a passage that is found verbatim in Wushang biyao’s “Shou dongshen sanhuang yipin,” a writing that was tied to the three Sanhuang ritual scrolls a few lines above. In an effort to resurrect the

55 Daozang quejing mulu 1.15b; Chen, Daozang yuanliu kao, 74.
56 Daozang quejing mulu, ibid.; Chen, ibid.
57 The “Dongshen xingdao yi” section is found on 3a-6b of the Taishang dongshen xingdao shoudu yi.
58 The lines from Taishang dongshen xingdao shoudu yi, 3a, correspond to a segment Wushang biyao, 38.2a, which is identified as quotation from the Lingbao zhaijing. The same passage is also found at the end of chapter 38, on 5a. This seems to be a standard formula related to the ritual opening and closing of the incense burner or more
Sanhuang transmission protocols that had fallen into disuse, the *Taishang dongshen xingdao shoudu yi* borrowed surviving snippets from the tradition’s own liturgical sources, including twelfth. Albeit impressionistic, the fact that it preserves some version of the nocturnal announcement and practicing the Dao rituals is a reliable indication of this.

3. The Liturgical Scrolls: Further Fragments

No discussion of Sanhuang liturgy is be complete without the mention of the “Sanhuang zhaipin” (Chapter on the Three Sovereigns Purification Rite) from chapter 49 of the *Wushang biyao*. The name of the section, which generally, brings the twelfth scroll of the Sanhuang corpus to mind, is

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59 Maspero, *Le Taoïsme et les religions chinoises*, 417, briefly discusses this rite. However, his treatment of the *Tianshi dao* Purification of the Yellow Register (*huanglu zhai* 黃錄齋), Golden Register Purification (*jinlu zhai* 金錄齋), along with that of the Purification of Mud and Soot (*tutan zhai* 土炭齋) are much more elaborate; see 324—29 and 417—20.
apparently derived from its only source, the *Sanhuang zhai licheng yi* (Three Sovereigns Established Rites of Purification).60 Beyond cosmetic similarities, the “Sanhuang zhaipin” shares terminology and a structural likeness with some of the materials tied to the *Sanhuang zhaiyi*.61 The opening passage on establishing the altar for instance, is strongly evocative of its counterparts in the “Shou dongshen sanhuang yi” and the *Taishang dongshen xingdao shoudu yi*.62 

The “rite of nocturnal announcement” (*suqi yi*), appearing yet again in association with Sanhuang transmission rites, also contains a number of formulas that arise in the “Suqi fa” (Rituals of Nocturnal Announcement) section of the *Taishang dongshen xingdao shoudu yi*.63

Documents containing some form of Sanhuang purification rites were already in circulation during the first half of the fifth century, when the Sanhuang corpus counted a mere four scrolls. Lu Xiujing’s *Dongxuan lingbao wugan wen* (The Five Sentiments [of Gratitude]; CT 1278) supplies a few lines

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60 *Wushang biyao*, 49.19a.
61 P.2559 may also be included in this list; compare the use of the phrase “Sanhuang zhenjun qian” on 724 l. 115, to its occurrences in the “Sanhuang zhaipin”; *Wushang biyao*, 49.3a, 7b, 8a, 16b.
62 Compare *Wushang biyao*, 49.1a, to *Wushang biyao*, 38.1a, and *Taishang dongshen xingdao shoudu yi*, 10a; see Lagerwey, *Wu-shang pi-yao*, 152—56 for his comments on the the chapter. He also notes the overlap between chapter 49 and other materials related to Sanhuang transmission rites from the same period.
63 See *Wushang biyao*, 49.2ab, and *Taishang dongshen xingdao shoudu yi*, 1a-2b; compare to the *suqi* ritual in *Taishang dongshen sanhuang chuanshou yi*, 14a. Other passages from chapter 49 of the *Wushang biyao* use the exact same wording as the *Taishang dongshen xingdao shoudu yi* the libation to the Three Sovereigns, during which adepts request that their perfected pneuma (zhenqi) descend, is a case in point. *Wushang biyao*, 49.8b-10a, roughly corresponds to *Taishang dongshen xingdao shoudu yi*, 3a-4a. Concerning the latter text’s recurrent passages of unsure provenance (e), one potential source may be the “Sanhuang zhaipin” of the *Wushang biyao*, or perhaps—given the slight discrepancies with respect to presentation and order—a third, common source for both texts (the *Sanhuang zhai licheng yi*?).
on a *Dongshen sanhuang zhi zhai* 洞神三皇之齋 (Three Sovereigns Purification Rites of the Storehouse of Divinity). In this account, which predates all liturgical materials related to the tradition, including the *Taogong chuan shou yi*, the Sanhuang purification rite is situated as the seventh among a list of nine Lingbao retreats. While the passage itself is not exceptionally informative—it consists of the standard regimen of incense burning and ablutions—some of its terminology and procedures are reflected in the “Sanhuang zhaipin.” This has notably led Ôfuchi Ninji to argue that, via its connection to Lu Xiujing’s text, chapter 49 of the *Wushang biyao* is intimately tied to the twelfth scroll of the *Dongshen jing*, the *Sanhuang zhaiyi*.

A final source that merits inspection is the *Taishang sanhuang baozhai shenxian shanglu jing* 太上三皇寶齋神仙上籙經 (Supreme Scripture on the Registration as a Divine Immortal [through the Performance of] the Precious Purification of the Three Sovereigns; CT 854). As does the *Sanhuang zhaipin*, this text describes a purification ritual for the transmission of Dongshen materials.

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64 *Dongxuan lingbao wugan wen* (The Five Sentiments [of Gratitude]; CT 1278), 6b-7a. The passage includes instructions on incense and lamp oil, a topic that appears in a number of texts linked to the *Sanhuang zhaiyi*; for more on the “Five Sentiments,” see Verellen, “Daoist Religion,” 404—06.

65 Its ranking among Lingbao rites would begin to explain why the “Shou dongshen sandong yi” substantially borrows from the *Lingbao zhaijing*.

66 The use of “cloud water” (*yunshui* 雲水) for ablutions is an example that stands out. From the ubiquitous “fragrant pearls” (*xiangzhu* 香珠) to the number of times (36) the officiant is to light incense, perform ablutions, and swallow aromatic pills, the entire passage is very similar to its counterpart in *Wushang biyao* 49; compare *Dongxuan ligbao wugan wen*, 6b-7a, to *Wushang biyao*, 49.1b-2a. Lu Xiujing’s name is cited in connection with the *Sanhuang zhaiyi*.

67 Ôfuchi Ninji, *Dokyo to sono kyōten*, 253—54. Ôfuchi does entertain the possibility that the *Sanhuang zhai licheng yi*, on which *Wushang biyao* 49 is based, may be a different text than the *Sanhuang zhaiyi*, speculating that there might have been two concurrent sets of purification rituals (*zhaifa* 祇法) related to the *Dongsheng jing*.

68 Compare *Taishang sanhuang baozhai shenxian shanglu jing* (Supreme Scripture on the Registration as a Divine Immortal [through the Performance of] the Precious
is tentatively dated to the early Tang dynasty, although an oblique reference to the eleven-scroll Sanhuang corpus may point to an earlier composition. This scripture is chiefly concerned with the logistics of transmission and ordination rites; it features detailed instructions for perfuming ablution water, making fragrant oil lamps, and the production of the ubiquitous incense pearls of the Highest Prime (shangyuan xiangzhu). These same indications are also encountered in a Wushang biyao passage that cites the Dongshen jing as its source. The Taishang sanhuang baozhai shenxian shanglu jing, is therefore at the very least partially heavily reliant on liturgical materials that were included in the fourteen-scroll Sanhuang corpus by the second half of sixth century at the latest.

Despite the fact that the liturgical texts of the fourteen-scroll Sanhuang canon have not been preserved in their original format and under their Six Dynasties titles, some of their remnants in the Daoist canon can be readily identified. The Taishang dongshen sanhuang yi and the Taishang dongshen sanhuang chuanshou yi appear to contain a large part of the Dongshen jing’s fourteenth scroll, the Sanhuang chuanshou yi. Similarly, the Taishang dongshen xingdao shoudu yi, the “Shou dongshen sanhuang yipin” and “Sanhuang zhaipin” from the Wushang biyao, and the Taishang sanhuang baozhai shenxian shanglu jing seem to take the Sanhuang zhaiyi, scroll twelve of the corpus, as their basis.

Purification of the Three Sovereigns; CT 854), 2b, to Wushang biyao, 49.2a: note the appearance of the expression “incense pearls of the Highest Prime” (shangyuan xiangzhu 上元香珠) in both texts.

69 Taishang sanhuang baozhai shenxian shanglu jing, 1b-2a refers to numinous scriptures that were transmitted to the Three Sovereigns and later, to the Eight Emperors. These include the Sanqi 三奇 (Three Marvels), the Sheng qilu 聖七錄 (Seven Sagely Records). The Tang date is ascribed in large part because Zhang Wanfu (fl.711—713)’s name is mentioned in the last folio. For more on the figure, see Benn, The Cavern-Mystery Transmission, 137—151.

70 Wushang biyao, 66.4b, 8ab, and 8b-9a; also see the Wushang biyao, 49.1b-2a, in the “Sanhuang zhaipin” section; Lagerwey, Wu-shang pi-yao, 175—76, and 265.
Surviving fragments of the *Dongshen jing*’s thirteenth scroll, the *Sanhuang chaoli* 三皇朝禮 (Audience Rite of the Three Sovereigns), are considerably harder to locate. A possible candidate might be the “Chao liyi” 朝禮儀 (The Audience Rite) section of the *Taishang dongshen xingdao shoudu yi*, but there is little evidence on which to base this hypothesis aside from the proximity in titles and the text’s previously-discussed connection to Sanhuang liturgical materials.\(^7^1\) As seductive as they may seem, the associations between the lost Sanhuang liturgies of the sixth century and scriptures from the Daoist Canon are still tentative. A more thorough study of the question is needed to establish the reliability of these ties and perhaps uncover new ones as well.

4. Precepts

Ôfuchi Ninji has suggested that certain Sanhuang materials pertaining to purification rites (*zhai*) in particular, were extracted from the earlier eleven Dongshen scrolls and lumped together in liturgical works.\(^7^2\) This would explain why little or no time seems to have passed between the appearance of an eleven-scroll canon and that of a fourteen-scroll version; it would shed some light on the numerous instances of repetition that scattered about the Sanhuang corpus. The *Sandong zhunang* 三洞珠囊 (Pearl Satchel of the Three Caverns; CT 1139) quotes

\(^{71}\) *Taishang dongshen xingdao shoudu yi*, 13b-15b. Some formulas from this section are reproduced in the “Shou dongshen sanhuang pin” from *Wushang biyao* 38. A single line from a *Sanhuang chaoyi* 三皇朝儀 (The Three Sovereigns Audience) does survive in the *Shangqing daolei shixiang* 上清道類事相 (The True Appearances of the Catergories [Pertaining to] the Dao of the Highest Purity; CT 1132), 4.5b—6a; the text also quotes the *Sanhuang zhaiyi* on 4.5a, and the *Sanhuang jing* on 4.6b and 4.11a.

\(^{72}\) Ôfuchi, *Dōkyō to sono kyōten*, 254.
an entire folio from “the twelfth scroll of the Dongshen jing,” namely, the
Sanhuang zhaiyi.73 The excerpt constitutes the bulk of a section entitled the
“Shouchi bajie zhaipin” (Purification for Maintaining the Eight Precepts”). It lists eight precepts that are introduced and concluded by some
remarks on the benefits of observing the rules in question.74 These exact lines also
occur, with some minor variations, in the opening folios of the Badi miaojing jing,
which corresponds to the sixth scroll of the Dongshen jing. They are found in a
section entitled “Zhai chi bajie fa” (Ritual Purification of Maintaining
the Eight Precepts):

Purification, in turn, lies in making the rectification of the zhai a priority.
This priority involves purifying (zhai) and rectifying both body and mind,
and once this is accomplished, then one will be shielded from chaos or defeat
(pai). Defeat may arise from many causes; the chief among them are the
following eight:

1. Killing others to save one’s own life
2. Stealing from others to provide for oneself
3. Indulging wantonly in all of one’s lascivious desires
4. Falsely advertising one’s abilities
5. Loosing decorum by means of drink
6. Sleeping on high, broad, and roomy beds
7. Adorning oneself with precious fragrances and extravagant ornaments
8. Engaging in the superfluous pastimes of singing and dancing75

73 Sandong zhunang, 6.13b. It was noted above that substantial portions of the
Sanhuang zhaiyi correspond to the “Sanhuang zhaipin” from Wushang biyao 49,
which quotes a Sanhuang zhai licheng yi; the phrase “the twelfth chapter of the
Dongshen jing says” can also be found in the Shangqing daolei shixiang, 4.5a, and
Yunji qiqian, 42.10a; neither work mentions a Sanhuang zhai licheng yi.
74 Sandong zhunang, 6.13b-14a. These lines are also found in Yunji qiqian, 40.15a-
16a, under the title “Shouchi bajie zhaiwen” (Writ on the Purification
for Maintaining the Eight Precepts).
75 The Sandong zhunang version differs here by adding the injunctive “do not” in front
of the eight transgressions. The imperative form is nonetheless included in the Badi miaojing jing, 2a, a few lines below, where the precepts are repeated in a format that
also elaborates on the benefits of observing them. For example: “Do not kill and the
defeat of blame and resentment will not arise; the completion (cheng) of kindness,
benevolence and long life will be spontaneously established (zili); do not rob and
The seed of a heart that seeks reward, as evidenced in scholars, sages, the perfected, and immortals, will not commit these eight transgressions, and therefore the eight defeats will not arise. If the eight defeats do not arise, then the eight completions will be spontaneously established (ziran li 自然立). Once these are established, they will endure steadfast, and one will enjoy extended years (yangnian 延年) and the preservation of life (baoming 保命), transcendental faculties, penetrating insight, superlative wisdom, and profound concentration.

It is improbable that the Eight Precepts were first recorded in the twelfth scroll of the Sanhuang corpus only to be duplicated and retroactively introduced into the sixth. It is also unlikely that the reference from the Sandong zhunang mistakenly attributes the section to twelfth scroll since it is corroborated in the Yunji qiqian. Ōfuchi Ninji’s theory, namely that the material composing the liturgical scrolls was reproduced and compiled from pre-existing Dongshen jing texts, appears very plausible.

The passage on the Eight Precepts from the Sandong zhunang yields another interesting piece of information about the Sanhuang liturgical scrolls. It is prefaced with the words “Prepared by the ranking official (xianchen 衙臣) Lu Xiujing, and explained as follows.” Similarly, the Yunji qiqian has “explained as follows by Master Lu Xiujing of the Liu Song dynasty.” The subsequent lines

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76 The Sandong zhunang has “nowadays we see in good men and good women, that if these eight points (bashi 八事) are not infringed upon, then the eight defeats will not arise.” This modification was made to match the introduction to the quotation, which also refers to “good men and good women.”

77 Badi miaojing jing, 1a-2b; compare to San dong zhunang, 6.13b-14a.

78 Yunji qiqian, 40.15a; see 102, n. 74, above.

79 Sandong zhunang, 6.13b.

80 Yunji qiqian, 40.15a; for more on Lu’s connection to the eight precepts, see Wu Chengquan, Han mo weijin nanbei chao dao jiao jielu gufan yanjiu, 131—34, and 241.
discuss “Maintaining the Eight Precepts” in Lu’s own voice. If the attribution to Lu is reliable, it would imply that the “Zhai chi bajie fa” that open the Badi miaojing jing was added to the text either by Lu himself—at the time of the expansion of the Sanhuang wen into a four-scroll Dongshen jing—or by Tao Hongjing, when he was expanding the canon. That being said, the tradition adamantly maintains that Tao Hongjing simply reorganized the four scrolls that he received from his predecessor. Lu Xiujing on the other hand, is already tied to Sanhuang ritual purifications (zhai) through his Dongxuan lingbao wugan wen. Moreover, according to surviving citations, the rite from his scripture and the Eight Precepts were both featured in the twelfth scroll of the Dongshen jing, the Sanhuang zhaiyi.

Whether it was Lu Xiujing or one of his followers that incorporated the Eight Precepts into the Sanhuang corpus, the task was probably undertaken in an effort to standardize the tradition and prepare it for integration into the Three Caverns system. As far as depictions in early sources are concerned, readers of the Sanhuang wen were not overly preoccupied with questions of propriety and ethics. Generic transmission rites and stock moralistic content were affixed to provide a semblance of conformity to the universal requirements of a nascent Daoist Canon. The identification of the Dongshen jing with the most common

81 If we are to believe that Lu Xiujing is the author, then the “twelfth scroll of the Dongshen jing says” reference is anachronistic and refers to the passage’s locus classicus at the time of the Sandong zhunang’s composition.
82 This the Dongxuan lingbao wugan wen 6b-7a does demonstrate that its author was familiar with a Three Sovereigns transmission ritual (dongshen sanhuang zhi zhai) although it does not specify its full title.
83 See 81, above.
84 The Daoist impulse for self-regulation and organization was partly a reaction to the recent incursion of highly structured Buddhist religious systems. Thus the Eight Precepts exude an undeniably Buddhist aura; aside from a few details, such as
ordination grade for Daoist clergy was surely relevant too. These factors motivated systematizers such as Lu Xiujing and Tao Hongjing to add some parameters to an otherwise disorderly four-scroll corpus; they were also the impetus for the reorganization of the *Dongsheng jing*, and later, for the emergence of clearly identifiable set of liturgical materials.

Following its absorption into the Three Caverns system, the Sanhuang, now a full-fledged tradition, incorporated more than one set of precepts. The *Badi miaojing jing* contains a second series of rules, the Thirteen Interdictions (*shisan jin* 十三禁).85 These are found in the “Xicheng yaojue,” and spoken by Lord Wang of the Western Citadel himself:

If you wish to study the Dao and cultivate Perfection, if you desire to extend your years and attain longevity, then you should guard against the [offenses] listed in the following interdictions (*jìnji*):

Do not exhibit languor, for it drains your life.
Do not overeat, for it obstructs the conduits of *qì*.
Do not drink in too much, for it enfeebles weakens the bladder.
Do not expose yourself to excessive heat, for it dissolves bone marrow.
Do not expose yourself to excessive cold, for it harms the flesh.
Do not eat cold food, for it causes illness.
Do not cry and spit, for it drains the body of fluids.
Do not stare for a long time, for it dims the eyes.
Do not listen for a long time, for it dulls the faculties.
Do not weep for a long time, for it saddens the [internal] spirits.
Do not shout unexpectedly, for it startles the *hun* and *po* souls.

Temporal indications regarding food consumption, they are a near-perfect match to the Eight Precepts of Buddhism. For the external influences on the Eight Precepts of the *Dongsheng jing*, see Wu Chengquan, *Han mo weijin nanbei chao daoqiao jielu guifan yanjiu*, 240—42; see also Kobayashi Masayoshi, *Dōkyō no saihō girei no shisō shiteki kenkyū*, 335—93, where he addresses, albeit in a later historical context, the interchange between Buddhists and Daoists on the topic of “Maintaining the Eight Precepts.”85 While the terms “interdiction” (*jìn*) and “precept” (*jie*) became interchangeable from the Southern and Northern Dynasties (420—589) onward, the *Sanhuang zhai licheng yi* explains that, while the precept is just as important, the interdiction is a more solemn and “grave” (*zhòng*) proscription; *Wushang biyao*, 49.7a; and Wu Chengquan, ibid., 275, and 278.
Do not think too hard, for it invites distraction.
Do not become excessively angry, for it upsets the [internal] spirits.\(^{86}\)

In contrast to their Buddhist-inspired octet of cousins, the Thirteen Interdictions from the *Badi miaojing jing* are less concerned with morality than they are with “Nourishing Life” (yangsheng 養生) or macrobiotic practices.\(^{87}\)

A passage from *Sanhuang licheng yi* quoted in the *Wushang biyao*’s “Sanhuang zhai pin,” presents another set of Thirteen Interdictions also presented by Lord Wang of the Western Citadel; they are similar, but not identical, to the ones from the *Badi miaojing jing*.\(^{88}\) Wu Chengquan speculates that the *Sanhuang zhai licheng yi* modified and elaborated the earlier set from the *Badi miaojing jing* to suit new needs in the religious community and society at large.\(^{89}\) The alterations probably occurred around the mid to late sixth century, on the occasion of the *Dongshen jing*’s expansion from eleven to fourteen scrolls.

A third group of Sanhuang precepts survives in the *Wushang biyao.*

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\(^{86}\) *Badi miaojing jing*, 13ab. The thirteen interdictions are also found in Zhang Wanfu’s 張萬福 (fl. 710—13) *Sandong zhongjie wen* 三洞衆戒文 (Comprehensive Prescriptions for the Three Caverns; CT 178), 2.6b-7a. The first interdiction replaces *yi* 懈 (languor) with *jing* 精 (essence), thereby modifying the reading to “Do not grant your essence, for it drains your life.” The sexual overtone here is unmistakable. The seventh interdiction is also slightly different, substituting the *Badi miaojing jing*’s *ti* 涙 (cry) with *ke* 咳 (cough): “Do not cough and spit, for it drains bodily fluids.” The basic meaning remains the same. In both texts, the tenth interdiction also involves tears, rendering the seventh interdiction from *Badi miaojing jing* redundant. The *Sandong zhongjie wen* xu, 5b-6a, also preserves the “Eight Defeats” (babai 八敗) from *Badi miaojing jing*, 1b-2a; Wu Chengquan, *Han mo weijin nanbei chao daojiao jielu guifan yanjiu*, 275—76. Zhang Wanfu’s *Chuanshou sandong jing jiefa lulue shuo*, 1.2a, also mentions the “Thirteen Precepts” (shisan jie 十三戒) of the Sanhuang.

\(^{87}\) The absence of a Buddhist fingerprint on this second set of interdictions and their inclusion in the “Xicheng yaojue” hint at an earlier date of development.

\(^{88}\) *Wushang biyao*, 49.5a-7a. Lord Wang appears alternately as Xicheng zhenren Wangjun 西城真人王君 (Lord Wang, Perfected of the Western Citadel) or Xicheng zhenren 西城真人 (The Perfected of the Western Citadel); see 49.5b, and 6a, respectively.

\(^{89}\) Wu Chengquan, *Han mo weijin nanbei chao daojiao jielu guifan yanjiu*, 277—78. The *Sanhuang licheng yi* is believed to be closely related to the *Sanhuang zhai yi*, one of the liturgical scrolls of the Sanhuang corpus.
Collectively arranged under the heading “Dongshen jiepin” (Section on Dongshen Precepts), they are in fact three distinct groups of regulations. The first set, entitled Dongshen Precepts for the Three Worlds (Dongshen sanjie jie (洞神三世) is again associated with “imperial dignitary Lu” Xiujing (dili Lushi 帝栗陸氏). As in his Eight Precepts, a certain amount of Buddhist influence is discernible: some rules exhort adepts to be conscious of their karmic origins (yinyuan 因縁); others urge them to practice diligently and abstain from egotistical acts. Respecting these prescriptions will cause the Orthodox Spirits of the Three Pneumatas (sanqi zhengshen 三氣正神) to descend and unite with the adept.

The second set of precepts, known as the Five Dongshen Precepts (“Dongshen wujie” 洞神五戒), is promulgated by the Yellow Emperor. In order to ensure the protection of fifteen inner gods that report to the Five Elder Imperial Lords (wulao dijun 五老帝君), the regulations invite the practitioner to govern the excesses of the five senses. For instance, the fourth precept instructs one “not to covet the five flavors, but rather to practice embryonic breathing (taixi 胎息) and desist from slanderous talk.” The repression of desires that arise from the five senses, or the five regulators (wu guan 五官) as they are sometimes called, is a common theme in pentadic precepts, irrespective of the school or current. Aside from Five Dongshen Precepts, the Wushang biyao contains two other prescriptive quintets: the Lingbao “Shengxuan wujie” 昇玄五戒 (Five Precepts of Ascending to the Abstruse) and the Tianshi dao’s “Zhengyi wujie” 正一五戒 (Five Zhengyi

90 Wushang biyao, 46.14b.
91 Wushang biyao, 46.14ab.
92 Wushang biyao, 46.14b-15a.
93 Wushang biyao, 46. 15a.
Precetps), also devised to curb sensory indulgence.\(^{94}\)

The final set consists of eight precepts, the Eight Dongshen Precepts (Dongshen bajie 洞神八戒). A discussion between the Yellow Emperor and the god Taishang 太上 serves as a preamble to the prescriptions. Rather than a traditional enumeration of rules for conduct, these read more like instructions for meditation with pronounced Confucian and correlative overtones. There are, for instance, indications to “refine your understanding of the five arrangements (\(wuj\) 五紀) and simultaneously visualize them, together with pneuma (\(yu \, qi \, toncun\) 與氣同存).”\(^{95}\) This is evocative of the parallels between macrobiotic hygiene and precepts observed in the Thirteen Interdictions. The directives that bear no reference to meditation are by and large borrowed from the “Nine Divisions” (\(jiuchou\) 九疇) section of the \(Shu \, jing\) 書經 (Book of Documents)’s “Hong fan” 洪範 (Great Plan) chapter.\(^{96}\) Wu Chengquan has highlighted and analyzed similarities between the respective passages, concluding that the \(Dongshen \, jing\) prescriptions from the \(Wushang \, biyao\)’s “Dongshen jiepin” were designed to reflect the three teachings of Buddhism, Daoism, and Confucianism.\(^{97}\)

The formalization of Sanhuang transmission rituals was undertaken in an attempt to affix an image of orthodoxy and homogeneity to an otherwise eclectic

\(^{94}\) \(Wushang \, biyao\), 46.1a, and 16b; see Kusuyama, “\(Dōkyō \, to \, jukyō\),” 73—78, for an analysis of the five precepts in Daoism.

\(^{95}\) \(Wushang \, biyao\) 46.15b. See \(Wushang \, biyao\) 46.15b-16b for the “Dongshen bajie.”

\(^{96}\) \(Shujing\) (Book of Documents), 161—65; see, James Legge, \(The \, Chinese \, Classics\), 3:324 for an example of the overlap in question, and 3:320—44 for a translation of the “Great Plan”. The five arrangements (\(wuj\)) notably figure in the “Great Plan” as what may generally be termed units of time (year, month, day, stars, planets, and zodiacal signs) for calendrical calculations.

\(^{97}\) Wu Chengquan, \(Han \, mo \, weijin \, nanbei \, chao \, daojiao \, jielu \, guifan \, yanjiu\), 131—34, and 196—201; also see Kusuyama’s “\(Dōkyō \, to \, jukyō\),” 51—93, and especially 73—81, from where Wu’s examination of the \(Wushang \, biyao\)’s \(Dongshen\) precepts draws inspiration.
Dongshen cavern. The Sanhuang liturgies were drafted as a result of the influx of new religious influences into the South, such as Buddhism and the Tianshi dao. Local traditions strove to adopt the image of their more organized religious interlopers. The appearance of Lu Xiujing’s name in a number of sources pertaining to Sanhuang rites indicates that the ultimate purpose of the liturgical appendages was to facilitate the integration of Sanhuang texts into the Three Caverns scheme. Now armed with a formal structure and ritual cohesion, a heteroclite collection of Sanhuang documents relating to talismanic, meditative, and alchemical practices organized around the theme of summoning gave place to what could be properly termed a Sanhuang tradition. Shortly after the Dongshen jing found its rightful place in the Daoist Canon, the transmission of Sanhuang materials was standardized and used by all Daoist priests as an initiation into the first level of the Three Caverns. As a corollary, this precipitated the devaluation of the Dongshen corpus during the Tang; formerly the pride of Ge Hong’s library, and among the most prized of Daoist scriptures, the Sanhuang wen and its talismans became more appreciated as tokens of ordination than for their soteriological properties.
III. The Fate of the Sanhuang in the Tang

1. Buddhist Polemics

During the Tang dynasty, the Sanhuang tradition remained on the sidelines of religious development. After the middle of the seventh century, Sanhuang scriptures served as little more than emblems of the most basic ordination grade within the Daoist liturgical system—a far cry from its glory days as a pillar of inspiration for the Shangqing and Lingbao revelations, and as a figurehead of Southern religious lore. Aside from sporadic periods of exegetical effervescence, the tradition garnered little attention from scholars and commentators. The coup de grâce that decisively dashed Sanhuang aspirations to its former greatness occurred in 647. However, the events of that year were rooted in an earlier controversy, almost as old as the tradition itself.

From the outset, the authenticity of Bao Jing’s version of the Sanhuang wen had been called into question. Dao An 道安 (312-85)’s Erjiao lun 二教論 (Treatise on the Two Teachings) plainly states that Bao Jing fabricated the text he claimed to have discovered on Songshan. The passage explains: “in the Yuan Kang reign of the [Western] Jin (between 291 and 299), Bao Jing created the Sanhuang jing and consequently incurred capital punishment.”98 The notion that Bao was

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98 Erjiao lun (Treatise on the Two Teachings) in Guang hongming ji 廣弘明集 (Illustrious Collection for the Spread of Buddhism; T.2103) vol. 52 8.141b. The dates proposed in the Erjiao lun match the chronology of Bao Jing’s discovery on Mount Song; see Lagerwey, Wu-shang pi-yao, 26 for a brief discussion of the passage; see also Catherine Despeux, “La culture lettrée au service d’un plaidoyer pour le bouddhisme. Le ‘Traité des deux doctrines’ (Erjiao lun),” 152—66.
executed for forgery is not mentioned in the sources of his *vita*, but it is reflected in Zhen Luan’s 甄鸞 (fl. 535-581) *Xiaodao lun* 笑道論 (Essays to Ridicule the Dao).

The Buddhist diatribe reports that “Bao Jing created the *Sanhuang jing*; the matter was [eventually] exposed, and so he was put to death.” This instance of capital punishment is uncorroborated in historical materials, including the *Jin shu*, but in light of Bao’s association with techniques of “liberation by means of a bladed weapon” (*bingjie fa* 兵解法), it is not beyond the realm of possibility that he was actually executed. Factual or not, the Buddhist indictment of the Sanhaung

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99 *Xiaodao lun* (Essays to Ridicule the Dao) in *Guang hongming ji* 9.151b; see Livia Kohn’s monograph on the Erjiao lun, *Laughing at the Tao: Debates among Buddhists and Taoists in Medieval China*; she translates the above passage on 138; see Lagerwey, *Wu-shang pi-yao*, 21—28, for a discussion of both the *Erjiao lun* and the *Xiaodao lun*; see also Zürcher, *The Buddhist Conquest of China*, especially the last two chapter, 254—320; and Schipper, “Purity and Strangers.” For an interesting perspective on the less incendiary, but equally vitriolic underbelly of Buddhho-Daost clashes, see the works of Kamata Shigeo, in particular *Dōzō nai bukkyō shisō shiryō shūsei*, where he draws a list of Buddhist texts that were reprinted with little or no changes in the Daoist canon, and presented as authentic Daoist scriptures.

100 Bao Jing’s biographies agree on a probable date of death around 330, a full three decades after the alleged fabrication of the *Sanhuang wen*. He departed the world by means of corpse liberation (*shijie*); see the Shenxian zhuan accounts in *Taiping yulan*, 664.2b-3a; see also above, 58; Bao Jing’s bodily remains—that is to say, his *exuviae*—were supposedly buried in a locality called Shizi gang 石子剛. Other sources link Bao Jing with the “art of release [by means] of a sword” (*daojie zhi shu* 道解之術) or a bladed weapon (*bingjie fa*); see *Maoshan zhi*, 13.9; *Yunji qiqian*, 85 1b, 12a, and 14a; and *Taiping yulan*, ibid. Bumbacher, *Fragments of the Daoxue zhuàn*, 329, n.1087, explains that in this mode of liberation, practitioners must first be executed by means of a bladed weapon, after which they become immortals—in other words, the weapon liberates adepts from their mortal frame. This understanding is based on a passage from the *Baopu zi*, 12.228, where it is said that “Zuo Ci was executed by a bladed weapon and did not die” (*Zuoci bingjie er busi* 左慈兵解而不死). Similarly, *Taiping guangji* 太平廣記 (Extensive Records of the Taiping Era), 13.94f, contains the following: “[Guo Pu said to the executioner.] ‘You may use my sword.’ The executioner, moved by [Guo’s] past favours [showed to him], did his duty shedding tears. Three days after the funeral,…[when they] opened the coffin, there was no corpse [in it], [for] Pu had obtained the dao of “being released by means of a weapon (*bingjie zhi dao* 兵解之道).” I borrow Bumbacher’s translation from *Fragments of the Daoxue zhuàn*, ibid. Bao Jing is sometimes credited with receiving this method, which is typically used in cases where the practitioner is put to death; furthermore, his coffin in Shizi gang was officially inspected after the burial, perhaps a post-execution
fulfilled its purpose by sowing the seed of a controversy that would ultimately lead to an indelible stain on the tradition’s reputation during the Tang. Cynicism surrounding the authenticity of the dominant Sanhuang wen version proved almost impossible to dispel, even after three hundred years. The Fayuan zhulin (Forest of Pearls in the Garden of the Law) recounts:

In the twentieth year of the Chen Guang era of the Tang (647), there was a certain Madam Wang, the wife of a jailer from Jizhou [present-day Jiangxi] named Liu Shaolu. She was in possession of the Wuyue zhenxian tu (Charts of Perfected Immortal from the Five Peaks) and the Sanhuang jing that had been fabricated by the Daoist master of old, Bao Jing. This work totaled fourteen sheets (heyi shisi zhi 合一十四紙). Madam Wang would exalt the text’s powers and claim: “Invariably, when nobles have this scripture, they become rulers; those among the great statesmen who possess this text will be as parents for the people; those among commoners who possess this text will amass many riches for themselves; and ladies who possess this text will inevitably be made empress (huang hou 皇后).”

custom; for an account from the Jianjing (Sword Scripture) in which Bao Jing receives the bingjie fa, see Schipper and Verellen, The Taoist Canon: A Historical Companion, 3.1255; and Robinet, La Révélation du Shangqing 1:11—12, and 2:137—40. Campany, To Live as Long as Heaven and Earth, 295, n.16, adds that bingjie or “martial liberation” as he terms it, “was also a hermeneutical device by which the untimely, violent deaths [including executions] of self-cultivators could be interpreted and explained”; on this reading of bingjie, see Robinet, “Metamorphosis in Taoism” 61—62.

101 Chen Guofu, Daozang yuanliu kao, 76, and Ōfuchi, Shoki no Dōkyō, 325—26, support that Bao’s execution was a polemical confabulation designed to cast further doubt on the already fragile credibility of his revelation.

102 The text should read Wuyuezhenxing tu.

103 The Sanhuang jing from the previous sentence seems to indicate the Dongshen jing (with Bao’s Dayou sanhuang wen at the vanguard) as a whole. The “fourteen sheets” refer to the Sanhuang jing alone since the Wuyue zhenxing tu was transmitted as separate documents. As previously discussed, the various Sanhuang transmission rites exclude the Wuyue zhenxing tu; even the Taogong chuanshou yi contains distinct proceedings for both sets of materials; see S.3750 721 l.24 — 28 and P.2559, 721 l.1 — 722 l.42. Some sources assert that each scroll of the original Sanhuang wen was divided into fourteen chapters (bian), although that would amount to forty-two “sheets” for the entire text rather than fourteen; see also 155. Perhaps the “fourteen sheets” are a reference to the fourteen scrolls of the Dongshen jing. Liu Zhongyu, “‘Sanhuang wen’ xintan,” 27—28, suggests the possibility that these were concertina.
Around that time, Ji Bian, a Legal Adjutant (sifa canjun 司法參軍) from Jizhou came to inspect the prison, and found the documents in Madam Wang’s dresser. Thereupon, he called on Shaolue and his wife to inquire about them. They answered that they had “obtained them from a daoshi 道士.” [Ji Bian] then took the charts and scriptures to the regional offices (zhouguan 州官), to determine if they were forgeries or omens. Subsequently, they were sealed up and sent by express service to the capital in order to make further inquiries. A request to investigate the matter was issued to the capital offices.

At that time, the Gentleman for Court Discussions (chaoyi lang 朝議郎), the Gentleman for the Bureau of Punishments (xingbu lang 刑部郎), Ji Huaiye 紀懷業 and his associates, summoned daoshi Zhang Huiyuan 張惠元 from the capital’s Xiaqing abbey 下清觀, along with daoshi Cheng Wuying 成武演 from the Xihuan abbey 西華觀. Both reported that [the Sanhuang jing] was a heterodox work recklessly fabricated by the daoshi of yore, Bao Jing. They also emphasized that they had nothing to do with the falsification of this scripture.

Subsequently, an edict was drafted to destroy the text. This also included a report from the Office of Land Bestowal (tian ling guan 田令官) which declared that [Daoism], as Buddhism, relies on its own codes and regulations. Accordingly, when Buddhist monks and nuns take the precepts for ordination, they each obtain a stipend (yintian 隱田) in the amount of thirty mu. Now both male and female Daoist clergy rely on the Sanhuang jing [for ordination purposes]; from the Upper Clarity (shangqing 上清) to the Lower Clarity (下清) [grades], this text is [for Daoists] what the precepts are for Buddhist monks and nuns. On this basis, the Daoists, [just as the Buddhists], also benefit from thirty mu of land per capita. However, this scripture is a forgery and it is now condemned to eradication. Since the Daoist clergy finds itself without valid precepts and legal codes, it should not benefit from the land grant. It is requested that this practice be abolished along with the scripture (jing).

Upon hearing of this, all Daoists of the capital were terrified and feared the confiscation of their land. They sent out a petition to the Office [of Land Bestowal] requesting that [the Sanhuang jing] be replaced by Laozi’s Daode jing. On the fifteenth day of the fifth month of the same year, an order came down from Vice President (shilang 侍郎) Zui Renshi.

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104 No mention is made of the Wuyue zhenxian tu/Wuyue zhenxing tu from the point that the texts are sent to the capital, but the Sanhuang jing is referred to by name on a few occasions. This would indicate that the Wuyue zhenxing tu was exonerated from accusations of fabrication; see also Seidel “Imperial Treasures and Taoist Sacraments,” 326.

105 One mu is equivalent to 6.6 acres; hence, thirty mu roughly correspond to 200 acres. For the existence of Tang statutes granting land rights to the clergy, and this episode in particular, see Shigenoi Shizuka, Todai bukkyō shiron, 131—36.

106 On the Daode jing’s role in initiation rituals, see Barrett, Taoism Under the T’ang, 25; Chen, Daozang yuanliu kao, 469; and Yoshioka Yoshitoyo, Dōkyō to Bukkyō 3:161—219.
崔仁師 which read: ‘The script and characters of the Sanhuang jing cannot be transmitted, and its words are also reckless perversions, hence it is fitting that it be destroyed. It will be replaced by Laozi’s Daode jing. All those among the populace or the Daoist abbeys who possess this text must imperatively forward it to the authorities for immediate destruction.’ In the winter of the same year, all the Regional Detective Envoys (zhoukao shi 州考使) returned to the capital and assembled in court. The numerous copies that they had gathered were brought in front of the hall of the President of the Board of Rites (libu shangshu 禮部尚書), where they were set ablaze and eradicated in compliance with the edict.\(^{107}\)

Aside from offering crucial insight into an event that definitively impacted the development of the Sanhuang tradition, this passage also reaffirms that the Sanhuang wen served as a basic ordination certificate for the entire Daoist monastic community.\(^{108}\) Already towards the end of the Sui, public perception characterized the Dongshen canon as a primarily liturgical corpus: the Taishang dongxuan lingbao benxing suyuan jing 太上洞玄靈寶本行宿緣經 (Scriptures on Destiny as Determined by One’s Original Deeds; CT 1114) describes the Shangqing canon as the treasure of the Dao (daobao 道寶), the Lingbao canon as the treasure of the highest writings (taishang jing bao 太上經寶), and the Dongshen canon as the treasure of the ritual master (fashi bao 法師寶).\(^{109}\) By the

\(^{107}\) *Fayuan zhulin* (Forest of Pearls in the Garden of the Law; T. 2122), 55.708ab; the passage is reproduced in Chen, *Daozang yuanliu kao*, 77. A substantial paraphrase is also found Barrett, *Taoism under the T’ang*, 23—25.

\(^{108}\) Barrett, *Taoism under the T’ang*, 24—25, doubts this was in fact the case, since the Sanhuang wen was associated with the lowest and “least doctrinally profound” of the Daoist Canon’s Three sections. The passage it seems, must have simplified matters for “it is highly unlikely that mere possession of the works mentioned in the Fa-yüan chu-lin’s account qualified one for membership in the clergy.” Rather, he suggests that the text was used for basic initiation into a specific grade or rank of the Daoist monastic organization.

\(^{109}\) *Taishang dongxuan lingbao benxing suyuan jing* (Scripture on Destiny as Determined by One’s Original Deeds; CT 1114), 12a; quoted as *Dongxuan qingwen jing* 洞玄請問經 (*Dongxuan Scripture of Questions [and Answers]*) in *Wuishang biyao* 24.1b-2a; see Lagerwey, *Wu-shang pi-yao*, 104—05.
early Tang dynasty, Sanhuang materials were virtually indissociable from questions of Daoist liturgy.

2. The Politics of Perception

When the *Dongshen jing* was proscribed in 648, it was a universal prerequisite for initiation into the Three Caverns of the Daoist Canon. Another related, but more tendentious example of the Sanhuang contribution to the Daoism also exists. While the notion that the Dongshen division was formed around the *Sanhuang wen* is well established, some sources suggest that the Three Sovereigns of the *Sanhuang wen* constituted a blueprint for the Three Caverns system. A quote from an unspecified scroll of the *Sanhuang jing* in the *Wushang biyao* discloses the following:

The Yellow Emperor said: as for the Three Sovereigns, they are the venerable gods (*zunshen* 尊神) of the Three Caverns, the ancestral pneuma of the Dayou [Heaven]: Lord Tianbao 天寶君 is the initial origin (*shouyuan* 首元) of the *Dadong taiyuan yuxuan* 大洞太元玉玄 [Cavern].

Lord Lingbao 靈寶君 is the primordial origin (*shiyuan* 始元) of the *Dongxuan taisu hunching* 洞玄太素混成 [Cavern]. As for the Lord Shenbao 神寶君, he is the wondrous pneuma (*miaoqi* 妙氣) of the *Dongshen hao lingbao taixu* 洞神皓靈寶太虚 [Cavern]. Therefore these Three Origins (*sanyuan* 三元) transmuted and were then called the Three Caverns […] The pneuma of the Dadong is the Heavenly Sovereign. That of the Dongxuan is the Earthly Sovereign. That of the Dongshen is the Sovereign of Humanity.111

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110 On “Dadong” as an earlier name for the *Dongzhen* canon, see Ōfuchi, Dōkyō to sono kyōten, 273.
111 *Wushang biyao*, 6.5a; see Lagerwey, *Wu-shang pi-yao*, 82; Seidel, “Imperial Treasures and Taoist Sacraments,” 362, also refers to this passage. The three Lords of the Treasures (*baojun* 寶君) are also associated with the Three Caverns in another
Although the excerpt is taken from the *Sanhuang jing*, it is not entirely clear that the Three Caverns found were modeled specifically on the Three Sovereigns of the *Sanhuang wen*; the Three Sovereigns could also refer to the three mythical rulers of Antiquity, thereby implying that the Three Caverns originated at the beginning of time. The Sanhuang tradition plays on this very semantic overlap, drawing much of its spiritual legitimacy from the confusion between the mythical rulers and the cosmic entities. In either case, the correspondence of the Three Sovereigns to the Three Caverns explains why the *Sanhuang wen* and associated texts were used as basic ordination documents for Daoist clergy; and while some scholars believe the identification of the Three Sovereigns with the Three Caverns was part of a program of counter-propaganda in response to Buddhist harangues, others entertain the possibility that the *Sanhuang wen* actually played a role in the development of the Daoist Canon’s three tiers.¹¹² The latter scenario would

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²¹² Ōfuchi, ibid., 325—26, argues that the Sanhuang tradition linked the Three Sovereigns to the Three Caverns after the three-tiered organizational framework was decided; conversely, Lagerwey, ibid. 24—26, and 26, n.1, discusses the *Sanhuang wen* as a structural schema for the Daoist Canon. Lu Xiujing, who played an integral role in the development of the Three Caverns system, had intimate knowledge of materials from the three traditions that were to constitute the three divisions; Kobayashi, *Rikuchō dōkyōshi kenkyū*, 223—25, and 371—73, points out that Lu or someone from his entourage might have used the fortuitous tripartite division of the *Sanhuang wen* to map out an organizational model for the canon; in “La Culture lettrée au service d’un plaidoyer,” 209, Despeux’s reading of the *Erjiao lun* passage leads her to conclude that the earlier “Three Sovereigns” designation that was used for the divisions of the Daoist Canon was substituted with the term “Three Caverns” because of a “taboo” on the character “huang” 皇 (sovereign).
validate the claims of the *Erjiao lun*, which implies that the appellations for the Three Caverns, namely Donzhen, Dongxuan, and Dongshen, were adopted in attempt to create some distance with the Three Sovereigns, and deflect the negative attention garnered through the diatribes of Dao’an and others.\textsuperscript{113}

Madam Wang’s seditious slip of the tongue about becoming an Empress did set in motion a series of events that culminated in the proscription and burning of Bao Jing’s *Sanhuang wen*; but at least her fateful utterance was doctrinally sound. The Sanhuang corpus is replete with passages that underscore the scripture’s role in the pursuit of harmonious government. A citation from the *Dongshen jing* preserved in the *Wushang biyao*’s “Zhongsheng chuanjing pin” 衆聖傳經品 (Transmission of Scriptures by the Sages) claims:

> The texts of Dadong yuqing [heaven] 大洞玉清 are cultivated among all the Lofty Perfected of the Highest Sovereign (Huangshang gaozhen 皇上高真). They are not transmitted to those of the earthly realm. As for the texts of Dongxuan shangqing [heaven] 洞玄上清, at proper times they are passed down and taught, transmitted to adepts (shi 士) for study. Those of the Dongshen sanhuang [heaven] 洞神三皇 are handed down to the world and used in protecting and assisting the kingdom, as well as supporting and aiding the people.\textsuperscript{114}

Once more, the textual corpora are divided along the lines of the heavenly, earthly, and human realms (governed by each of the Three Sovereigns), but this passage is also noteworthy in that it specifies the destined recipients—and in one case, the uses—of Daoist scriptural collections. Since the *Dongshen jing* is the lowest of the Three Caverns, it enjoys the distinction of being the only canon that is fit for use by the “spiritually challenged” inhabitants of the human realm.

\textsuperscript{113} *Erjiao lun*, 8.141bc.
\textsuperscript{114} *Wushang biyao*, 32. 1a.
Moreover, the Sanhuang corpus is the only one that is readily applicable to statecraft. After all, the earliest descriptions of the *Sanhuang wen* link it to the archetypal ruler, the Yellow Emperor, who, upon receiving the text, used it to convoke the myriad gods and spirits.¹¹⁵

Instructions for using the *Sanhuang wen* for the purposes of government are found in an excerpt from the *Dong bishen lujing* (Scripture of Registers for Storing Secret Divinity): “when the Three Sovereigns ruled the world, each of them received one scroll by which they could govern (zhì 治) all under Heaven.”¹¹⁶ Although the *Baopu zi* is relatively bashful about it, the core notions of control and rulership were inherent to the tradition from the start—the *Sanhuang wen* contains a clear reference to the golden age of Chinese statecraft in its title. Moreover, the entire tradition relies on the metaphor of government; it rests on the image of the perfect ruler, who attracts representatives from the farthest reaches of the empire to his court, making his subjects come to him. For adepts of the Sanhuang, the distinction between managing a disorderly populace, unruly demons, or wayward inner gods is little more than cosmetic.

By the time of the fourteen-scroll canon, references to statecraft were more explicit; by protecting them against calamities, the powers afforded by the *Dongshen jing* served the empire and the people (*wei guo wei min* 為國為民).¹¹⁷

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¹¹⁵ *Baopu zi*, 18.323; Ware, 302. See Chapter 1, 62 above. Ware, *Alchemy, Medicine and Religion*, 302, uses “control” instead of “govern.”
¹¹⁶ *Yunji qiqian*, 9.9; and *Wushang biyao*, 30.3ab, where the passage is cited as originally coming from the second scroll of the *Xiaoyou jing*. See above 86—87, for a translation of the full excerpt. As previously noted, these lines are also found in slightly more elaborate form in *Yunji qiqian*, 4.10ab as a quotation from the *Sanhuang jing*.
¹¹⁷ *Xingdao shoudui yi*, 10b. The “Sanhuang zhaipin” from *Wushang biyao*, 49.3a, adds that merits will extend to the empire and its rulers.
The following lines from the early Tang dynasty-"Xingdao shoudu yi" illustrate the order of priorities for potential Sanhuang adepts:

The methods of the Dongshen sanhuang 洞神三皇 are for communicating with spirits, subjugating demons, and summoning the myriad spirits. They pacify the country, appease the household, and help the people. Adepts of meditation (xueshi 學士) who refine its practices can ascend to immortality and transcend the world.118

The Sanhuang penchant for politics in the late Sui and early Tang certainly contributed to unwanted attention on the part of imperial authorities in 648. The theory of the Sanhuang dayou jing’s fabrication had been postulated early in the text’s history, alledgedly resulting in Bao Jing’s execution. Yet, such accusations had not stymied its development during the three centuries prior to governmental proscription. The tipping point, if one is to believe the account from the Fayuan zhulin, was the jailer’s wife’s claim that mere possession of the Sanhuang wen could bestow imperial power. On the pretext of eradicating an illicit fabrication, three hundred years ex post facto, the government promptly confiscated and destroyed the work. As further testament to the Sanhuang wen’s overtly political tone, it was replaced in the Daoist Canon by the Daode jing, one of the archetypal Chinese texts on statecraft.

118 Xingdao shoudu yi, 15b. In the next line, the passage refers to Laozi as “Xianshi,” the “Master of Old,” a rare expression that is encountered in two other texts tied to the Sanhuang tradition: the Taishang tongling bashi shengwen zhenxing tu 太上通靈八史聖文真形圖 (Image of the Saintly Writ and True Form of the Eight Archivists for Communication with the Most High; CT 767), 13a; and the Taishang tongxuan lingyin jing 太上通玄靈印經 (Book of Efficacious Seals for Penetrating Mystery; CT 859), 3a. The importance of these texts in determining the exact relation between the Sanhuang wen and the True Form Charts of the Eight Archivists (bashi zhenxing tu) will is examined below, 263—285.
Matters of subversion aside, the irreparable stigma that Bao Jing brought to the tradition after 648 forced later generations of Sanhuang followers, and Daoists in general, to distance themselves from the figure. The Songzhi 宋志 (Chronicles of the Song), for example, lists a Yin Changsheng Sanhuang jing 隍長生三皇經 (Yin Changsheng’s Scripture of the Three Sovereigns). Similarly, the section on Daoist books from the Chongwen zhongmu 崇文總目 (General Catalogue of Venerated Works) mentions a “Sanhuang jing in three scrolls compiled (xuan 遴) by Yin Changsheng,” just as the Tongzhi lüe 通志略 (Monographs from the Comprehensive History of Institutions) lists a “Sanhuang jing edited (xuanxiu 適修),” once more, “by Yin Changsheng.”119 In the wake of the proscription, Bao Jing became a posthumous persona non grata, omitted from official histories in favor of his less controversial master, Yin Changsheng.

3. Later Developments

Despite being officially banned and burned, the Sanhuang wen nonetheless survived into the Song (960-1279). The neat categories of the fourteen-scroll Dongshen jing, over which Lu Xiujing, Tao Hongjing, and others had toiled, noticeably suffered. Later inventories from the Song dynasty (960-1279) reveal a rag-tag corpus apparently composed of surviving scraps and fragments, such as a central Sanhuang jing in one scroll accompanied by the Wuyue zhenxing tuwen 五嶽真形圖文 (Charts and Writs of the Trues Shapes of the Five Peaks) in one scroll.

119 From Chen, Daozang yuanliu kao, 77—78.
the Lingbao wuyue zhenxing tu 靈寶五嶽真形圖 (Numinous Treasure True Form Charts of the Five Peaks) in one scroll, the Tianhuang neiwen 天皇内文 (Esoteric Writ of the Sovereign of Heaven) in one scroll, the Sanhuang neiyin 三皇内音 (Esoteric Sounds of the Three Sovereigns) in one scroll, and the Sanhuang neiwen 三皇内文 in one scroll.120

Even though the structure and integrity of the Sanhuang corpus was compromised after 648, it continued to grow throughout the Tang and Song Dynasty. Du Guangting 杜光庭 (850-933)’s editorial work on a number of Dongshen liturgical titles was surely a factor in sparking a Sanhuang revival.121

The principle additions reflect a preoccupation with divination and apotropaea – the same concerns that brought Sanhuang writings their notoriety during the Six Dynasties. These were never wholly abandoned, even during the Tang, although they were eclipsed at times by ordination texts. Sanhuang scriptures that were included in the Dongshen section of the Daoist Canon during the Song are indicative of a return to bread-and-butter basics. The Taishang dongshen xuanmiao boyuan zhenjing 太上洞神玄妙白猿真經 (Veritable Scripture of the White Monkey; CT 858) and the Taishang liuren mingjian fuyin jing 太上六壬明鑑符院

120 Tongzhi lüe 通志略 (Monographs from the Comprehensive History of Institutions) from Chen, ibid., 78. In 713 however, the fourteen-scroll version of the Dongshen jing was still transmitted, although ex-libris materials were appended. See the “Sanhuang famu” 三皇法目 (Catalogue of Sanhuang Methods) in Zhang Wanfu’s Chuanshou sandong jingjie falu lüe shuo (Short Expositions on the Transmission of the Scriptures, Rules, and Registers of the Three Caverns; CT 1241), 1.7a.

121 Du Guangting edited Sanhuang ritual works such as the Dongshen sanhuang qishier jun zhai fangchan yi 洞神三皇七十二君齋方讚儀 (Ritual of Repentance to the [Four] Directions during the Retreat of the Seventy-two Lords of the Three Sovereigns; CT 804) and the Taishang dongshen taiyuan hetu sanyuan yangxie yi 太上洞神太元河圖三元仰謝儀 (Ritual of the River Chart of the Great Origin, for Atonement to the Three Principles; CT 805). The latter’s attribution to Du is challenged however, by what appears to be a reference to a thirteenth century text.
經 (Book of the Most High Luminous Mirror of the Six Ren Tallying with Yin; CT 861) are two related works that deal with mantic techniques. The latter is also known as the Yuanshu 猿書 (The Monkey Book), since a white ape allegedly revealed it to the pre-imperial strategist Sun Bin 孫臏 (d. 316 BCE).\(^{122}\) Both texts were originally part of a single Sanhuang scripture, which is now lost, but their close relationship is evident from the customary lore they contain; these include the absorption of alchemical substances, form-modifying practices, and summoning rites that employ diagrams and talismans.\(^{123}\)

The Sanhuang renaissance of the Song was sometimes the victim of its own success, with at least one example of antiquarianism sneaking into the Dongshen canon. The Taishang chiwen dongshen sanlu 太上赤文洞神三錄 (Three Dongshen Registers of the Red Writs of the Most High; CT 589) claims Tao Hongjing as its compiler and Li Chunfeng 李淳風 (602-670) as the author of its preface, dated to 632; but references to the Black Killer (heisha 黑殺) along with the use of ritual hand-gestures (shouyin 手印; mudras) and pseudo-siddham spells (mantras) suggest that the text is rather a product of the Song dynasty. Nonetheless, the methods described are consistent with earlier Dongshen works. The first and third registers rely on talismans of the Eight Trigrams and Six Jia respectively for the purposes of summoning deities and inquiring about the future. These methods

\(^{122}\) See Taishang liuren mingjian fuyin jing (Book of the Most High Luminous Mirror of the Six Ren Tallying with Yin; CT 861), 3.28a, and 1.1b, for the self-referential Yuanshu; see also 1.1ab for an account of its transmission.

\(^{123}\) For references to the original source for both texts, see Taishang dongshen xuanmiao boyuan zhenjing (Veritable Scripture of the White Monkey; CT 858), 13b, and Taishang liuren mingjian jing, 3.25b, and 4.16b. The use of talismanic symbolism and iconography is prevalent throughout both texts. A passage concerning alchemy appears on 3b-10b of the former scripture, and a quintessential section on concealment is found on 4.2a of the latter text. These works are tentatively dated to the Northern Song (960—1127); Schipper and Verellen, The Taoist Canon 3:975—81.
are similar to—though cruder than those found in the *Dongshen badi xuanbian jing* (Scripture of the Mysterious Transformation of the Eight Emperors), which corresponds to scrolls 7 to 9 in the fourteen-scroll Sanhuang corpus. The techniques of the second register deserve special mention, as they include the Method of the Five Simulations (*wujia fa* 五假法), a practice that enables an adept to merge his body with one of the five elements, so as to become invisible or obtain protection from a noxious manifestation of the element in question.124

The same Method of the Five Simulations is expounded in another Sanhuang scripture of the Song, the *Taiqing jinque yuhua xianshu baji shenzhang sanhuang neibi wen* (Inner Secret Writs of the Three Sovereigns [Constituting] the Divine Chapters of the Eight Poles of the Lustrous Writings of Immortality of the Gold Portal of Taiqing; CT 855), where it is presented alongside other pursuits of the Southern Esoteric tradition, such as cultivating immortality, summoning spirits for exorcism, penetrating mountains in search of rare herbs and minerals, and subjugating demons.125

While techniques for subduing demons are commonly encountered in Daoist writings, those presented in the *Taiqing jinque yuhua xianshu baji shenzhang sanhuang neibi wen* are exceptional in that they enable practitioners to exploit the demons that they have subdued; at one’s behest, they can take revenge.

124 *Taishang chiwen dongshen lu* (Three Dongshen Registers of Red Writs of the Most High; CT 589), 10a-11a.
125 *Taiqing jinque yuhua xianshu baji shenzhang sanhuang neibi wen* (Inner Secret Writs of the Three Sovereigns [Constituting] the Divine Chapters of the Eight Poles of the Lustrous Writings of Immortality of the Gold Portal of Taiqing; CT 855), 3.7b-8a, and 11b-13a for the Five Simulations; see also the *Yuanyang zi wujia lun* 元陽子五假論 (Essay on the Five Simulations by Master Yuanyang; CT 864), 1a-5b; the *Taishang dongshen xuanmiao booyuan zhenjin*, 10b-13a; and the *Guigu zi tiansui lingwen* 鬼谷子天隨靈文 (Master Guigu’s Numinous Writ on the Essence of Heaven; CT 867), 1.8b-11b, for more on the method.
on enemies, or even commit robbery to profit the commanding adept. Instructions for achieving similar effects also appear in the *Taishang tongxuan lingyin jing* (Book of Efficacious Seals for Penetrating Mystery; CT 859). On the whole, techniques aimed at personal gain or fulfilling worldly ends such as these are more characteristic of Esoteric Buddhism. The *Longshu wuming lun* (Nāgārjuna’s Treatise on the Five Sciences) for example, contains a method of compelling demons to do one’s bidding; this purported sixth-century work also exhibits a number of similarities with other methods described in Sanhuang materials.

There are numerous Three Sovereigns scriptures from the second half of the Tang or later that warrant closer examination. The titles listed above offer a

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126 The *Taishang tongxuan lingyin jing* (Book of Efficacious Seals for Penetrating Mystery; CT 859), is centered around the talismans of the Eight Envoys (bashi 八史) and reproduces a number of highly specific technical terms from earlier Sanhuang works containing identical techniques. The “xuantong lingyin” of the title recalls the “Xuandong tongling fu” 玄洞通靈符 (“Talismans for Communicating with Numina from the Storehouse of Mystery [Corpus]”) that appear in *Taishang wuji dadao ziran zhenyi wucheng fu shangjing* (Supreme Scripture of the Most High Boundless Great Way and the Spontaneous True and One Talismans of the Five Correspondences; CT 671), 2.11b; see 279—85, below for more on this text; the same “Xuandong tongling fu” are also mentioned in the *Baopu zi*.

127 See Strickmann, *Chinese Magical Medicine*, 123—93, passim, especially 170—8 for an overview of these; and Kosaka Shinji, “Onmyōdō to dōkyō,” 360—2; see also Ōsabe Kazuo, *Tō-sō mikkyōshi ronkō*, 234—47. Davis, *Society and Supernatural in Song China*, 128—152, discusses the role of *Longshu wuming lun* as a formative text for Dao-Tantric cults of the twelfth century. Xiao Dengfu’s *Daojiao xingdou fuyin yu fojiao mizong* provides textual examples of Esoteric Buddhist borrowings from Daoist sources, particularly with respect to apotropaic and divinatory techniques; see also his *Daojiao yu mizong*. More recently, Mollier’s *Buddhism and Taoism Face to Face* has investigated the fertile interplay between (Esoteric) Buddhism and Daoism in the context of textual pirating, hybridization, and repackaging.

128 A final work dated to the Southern Song (1127—1279) deserves mention since it contains a facsimile of the *Wuyue zhenxing tu* that still enjoys wide circulation in contemporary China as an exorcistic and talismanic image. The text in question is the *Sanhuang neiwen yibi* (Transmitted Secrets of the Inner Writs of the Three Sovereigns; CT 856). It presents itself as an alternate or “secret” autonomous version of the *Sanhuang wen*. Fukui Kojun, *Dōkyō no kisoteki kenkyu*, 190, proposes
mere glimpse into the rich patrimony of the Sanhuang tradition of the medieval period. Interactions with Esoteric Buddhist currents, not to mention Daoist movements including the Quanzhen and Tianxin orders, are undeniably fertile lines of inquiry that, one hopes, future studies will pursue.

When Ge Hong wrote about the *Sanhuang wen* in the early fourth century, the text amounted to three scrolls and was probably together transmitted with a few talismanic methods that shared echoed similar goals, applications, or ritual procedures. With the development of the Three Caverns system and the ensuing standardization of Daoist textual corpora, the *Sanhuang wen* and its supporting materials were codified into a four-scroll format. Bao Jing’s version of the text occupied the first three scrolls, while the fourth scroll housed Bo He’s version, along with appended talismans, and quite possibly, the first inklings of a transmission ritual. This collection of documents composed the *Dongshen jing*, whose creation heralded the birth of a new Daoist tradition, the Sanhuang. When Tao Hongjing received the *Dongshen jing*, he reorganized its content thematically, and the corpus grew to ten scrolls. Later on, around the time of Tao Hongjing’s death, an eleventh scroll was added; whether this scroll was the result of a second redistribution of pre-existing Dongshen materials, or whether it signaled the introduction of a supplemental text, probably pertaining to liturgy, is not entirely clear. A few years after the appearance of the “Three Sovereigns Eight Emperors” eleven-scroll Sanhuang corpus, three other texts were added, bringing the total number of scrolls to fourteen. The last three documents exclusively dealt with

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1306 as the compilation date for this text; like the *Badi miaojing jing* and the “Sanhuang yaoyong pin” of the *Wushang biyao*, the *Sanhuang neiwen bi* contains amulets in talismanic script, otherwise known as “esoteric writ” (*neiwen*), for each of the Three Sovereigns, and a series of talismans for entering mountains. Additionally, this work includes the aforementioned version of the *Wuyue zhenxing tu*, 11a-13b.
ordination and transmission rituals. Although these liturgical scrolls are lost, a handful of texts from the Daoist Canon either preserve some of their fragments or are revised expansions of the same rituals; for example, the Taishang dongshen sanhuang yi, the Taishang dongshen sanhuang chuanshou yi, the Taishang dongshen xingdao shoudu yi, the “Shou dongshen sanhuang yipin” and “Sanhuang zhaipin” from the Wushang biyao, and the Taishang sanhuang baozhai shenxian shanglu jing can be linked to Dongshen liturgies.

Precepts were a central feature of Sanhuang rites. During the Six Dynasties, the tradition developed a few sets of rules, but two of the earliest, the Eight Precepts (bajie) and the Thirteen Interdictions (shisan jin), can be found in the Badi miaojing jing, corresponding to scrolls six to eight of the fourteen-scroll canon. The former set is also cited as part of the Sanhuang zhaiyi, scroll 12, suggesting that a) the Sanhuang tradition enjoyed its own liturgy from the time that Lu Xiujing incorporated it into the Three Caverns, but also that b) the Badi miaojing jing in its current form, reflects the contents of the fourth scroll of the four-scroll Dongshen canon, in other words, all non-Dayou sanhuan wen materials that were transmitted with the scripture before the mid-fifth century. The next chapter will isolate remnants of this fourth scroll and the three preceding ones—those of the Sanhuang wen—in two sources from the Daoist Canon.

During the sixth century, the Sanhuang also developed other series of moral injunctions to complement its growing array of ritual purifications and ceremonial offerings. The liturgical applications of the Sanhuang corpus became dominant, superseding its more divinatory and apotropaic uses. The high level of visibility enjoyed by the Sanhuang tradition during the early Tang dynasty, coupled with its pronounced political overtones attracted unwanted attention on the
part of the imperial authorities. Buddhist polemics added fuel to the fire, and in 648, the *Sanhuang wen* was proscribed on the basis that Bao Jing had fabricated and deceitfully presented the scripture as a revelation. Nonetheless, the late Tang and Song dynasties witnessed a small Sanhuang renaissance with the inclusion of new texts into the Dongshen canon.
Appendix 2: Bibliography of Early Medieval Sources Related to the Sanhuang wen and the Fourteen-Scroll Dongshen Canon

I. Principal Six Dynasties Sources Containing Fragments of the Sanhuang wen, its Oral Instructions, and/or the “Floating Talismans” (Scroll 4 of the Four-scroll Sanhuang wen)


II. Principal Six Dynasties and Early Tang Sources Tied to, or Containing Fragments of Texts from the Fourteen-scroll Dongshen Canon

i. The Fourteen-scroll Dongshen Canon

| Scrolls 1—3 | Dayou sanhuang neiw en 大有三皇內文 |
| Scrolls 4—6 | Badi miaojing jing 八帝妙經 |
| Scrolls 7—9 | Badi yuanbian jing 八帝元變經 |
| Scrolls 10—11 | Badi shenhua jing 八帝神化經 |
| Scroll 12 | Sanhuang zhaiyi 三皇齊儀 |
| Scroll 13 | Sanhuang chaoyi 三皇朝禮 |
| Scroll 14 | Sanhuang chuanshou yi 三皇傳授儀 |

ii. The Sources


Partially corresponds to scrolls 1—3 of the fourteen-scroll Dongshen jing; also includes portions of scrolls 4—6.

Contains portions of scrolls 1—3; corresponds to scrolls 4—6 of the fourteen-scroll *Dongshen jing*; this correspondence may be misleading since some sections of the present text were shifted to other scrolls before and after the creation of the fourteen-scroll canon; for example, the section on the Eight Precepts (*bajie 八戒*) is cited in the *Sandong zhunang* 三洞珠囊 (Pearl Satchel of the Three Caverns), 6.13b, as part of scroll 12.


Corresponds to scrolls 7—9 of the fourteen-scroll *Dongshen jing*; early version of the *Dongshen badi yuanbian jing*.


Corresponds to scrolls 7—9 of the fourteen-scroll *Dongshen jing*; later elaboration on and re-edition of the *Taishang tongling bashi shengwen zhenxing tu*.


Corresponds to scroll 12 of the fourteen-scroll *Dongshen jing*.


Corresponds to scroll 12 of the fourteen-scroll *Dongshen jing*.

7. *Dongxuan lingbao wugan wen* 洞玄靈寶五感文 [The Five Sentiments (of Gratitude)]. Lu Xiujing 陸修靜 (406-477). Daozang, CT 1278.6b-7a

May constitute the basis for portions of scroll 12 of the fourteen-scroll *Dongshen jing*.

As an elaboration of the Dongxuan lingbao wugan wen, may contain portions of scroll 12 of the fourteen-scroll Dongshen jing.


Partially corresponds to scroll 14 of the fourteen-scroll Dongshen jing.


Partially corresponds to scroll 14 of the fourteen-scroll Dongshen jing.


As one of the earliest liturgical texts of the Sanhuang tradition, may constitute the basis for portions of scrolls 12 to 14 of the fourteen-scroll Dongshen jing; pre-dated only by the Dongxuan lingbao wugan wen in this respect.

12. Taishang sanhuang baozhai shenxian shanglu jing 太上三皇齋神仙上籙經 [Supreme Scripture on the Registration as a Divine Immortal (through the Performance of) the Precious Purification of the Three Sovereigns] Tang (618-907)? Daozang, CT 854.1a—6b.

Contains portions of scrolls 12, 13, or 14 of the fourteen-scroll Dongshen jing; reproduces passages that Wushang biyao, 66.4b and 66.8a—9b quote from the pre-Tang Dongshen jing.

13. Wuyue zhenxing tu 五嶽真形圖序論 [Prefatory Treatise to the True Form Charts of the Five Peaks]. Late Six Dynasties. Daozang CT 1281.

Although it was probably not included in the fourteen-scroll Dongshen jing, the present text is sometimes counted as part of the Six Dynasties Sanhuang corpus; what is more, its transmission ritual was closely associated with that of the Sanhuang wen, as shown in the Taogong chuanshou yi. The charts themselves are lost.

As a citation-based anthology of Daoist sources up to the late sixth century, the *Wushang biyao* offers a number of quotations from the fourteen-scroll *Dongshen jing*. Among these, 25.1a—10b, 38.1a—5a, and 49.1a—19a are sizeable passages that have been connected to specific scrolls above. Other references to the Sanhuang canon, often considerably shorter and sometimes generically attributed to the *Sanhuang jing* (Canon of the Three Sovereigns) or *Dongshen jing* (Canon of the Storehouse for Divinity), are contained in the compilation; these include 5.7a—8a, 5.12a—15b, 6.5a—7a, 20.8b—10a, 30.3a—3b, 32.1a, 43.1a, 46.14a—16b, 66.4b, and 66.8a—9a.

IV. Principal Six Dynasties and Early Tang Sources Containing Descriptions the *Sanhuang wen*


   Brief references and short descriptions of the *Sanhuang wen* and its powers can be found on 4.71, 15.272, 17.300, 17.308, 18.323, and twice on 19.333. The passage on 19.336 is comparatively elaborate. It is the earliest detailed account of the scripture.


   The section on “The Meaning of the Three Caverns: Part 5” (*sandong yi divu* 三洞義第五) (2.1a—7b), contains a few lines, 2.6b—7b, on the textual history and lineage of the *Sanhuang wen*. The same passage is also found, with some changes, in *Yunji qiqian*, 6.5a—6b, and 6.10a—12a.


   Brief references to the *Sanhuang wen* and its practices can be found on 5.16a, 7.6a, 7.8b, 9.13b, 16.1b, 27.12b, 37.6a, 41.3b, 79.16a, 85.15a, 100.27a, and 106.12a. More sizeable passages, generally dealing with the scripture’s textual history and transmission lineage, can be found on 3.13b—18b, 4.10a—11b, 6.5a—6b, and 6.10a—12b. The last two passages considerably overlap; they are also encountered, with some changes, in *Daojiao yishu*, 2.6b—7b.
V. Principle Song Dynasty Sanhuang Sources

1. *Sanhuang neiwen yibi* 三皇内文遵祕 [Transmitted Secrets of the Inner Writ of the Three Sovereigns]. Southern Song or later. Daozang, CT 856.


VI. Other Sources Allegedly Containing Fragments of the *Sanhuang wen*

1. “*Yun zhuanfu gao*” 雲篆符詔 (“Revealed Cloud and Seal-script Talismans”) in *Daomen dingzhi* 道門定制 [Prescribed Rules for the Daoist Community]. Lü Yuansu 呂元素 (fl.1188-1201); preface dated 1188. Daozang, CT 1224.4.1a—7b.

Under the heading “Sanhuang neibi yingwen” 三皇內秘隱文 (“Esoteric, Secret, and Concealed Writ of the Three Sovereigns”), *Daomen dingzhi*, 4.1a-7b, one finds a succession of talismanic characters separated by three large talismans. Each of the three talismans is accompanied by instructions, the only legible parts of this section, where the words “Tianhuang neizhuan” 天皇內篆 (Esoteric Seal of the Sovereign on Heaven), “Dihuang neiwen” 地皇內秘 (Esoteric Marvel of the Sovereign of Earth), and “Renhuang neiwen” 人皇內文 (Esoteric Writ of the Sovereign of Humanity) respectively figure. Each section of “illegible” characters in celestial script is introduced with a line that can be deciphered as follows: *tianhuang neixue wen* 天皇內學文 (Characters of Esoteric Learning of the Sovereign of Heaven); *dihuang jishu* 地皇內錄書 (Esoteric Dragon
Writing of the Sovereign of Earth); renhuang neishe congwen 人皇內社聰文 (Superior Writ of the Esoteric Bond of the Sovereign of Humanity(?)). These section headings bear some resemblance to renderings of the Sanhuang wen’s three scrolls in Dongshen inventories from the early Tang; see, for instance, Dongxuan lingbao sandong fengdao kejie yingshi, 4.7b, and Taishang dongshen sanhuang yi, 12a—13b. As a result, a number of scholars have tied this passage to the early versions of the Sanhuang wen; see for example Ôfuchi Ninji, Dôkyô to sono kyôten, 271, and more recently, Pregadio, Great Clarity, 283, n.8. Nonetheless, the content of the instructions suggest a Tang or Song date of composition at the earliest.

2. “Fujian guifan pin” 符簡軌範品 (“Chapter on Standards for Talismanic Tablets) in Lingbao lingjiao jidu jinshu 靈寶領敎濟度金書 [Golden Book of Salvation according to the Lingbao Tradition]. Transmitted by Ningh Quanzhen 寧全真 (1101—1181); compilation attributed to Lin Lingzhen 林靈真 (1239—1302). Daozang, CT 466.262.1a—32b.

Lingbao lingjiao jidu jinshu, 262.22b—29b, contains a series of talismanic characters under the heading “Sanhuang neiwen” 三皇內文 (Esoteric Writ of the Three Sovereigns). These are divided into three groups: “Tianhuang wen” 天皇文 (Writ of the Sovereign on Heaven) (22b—25b) “Dihuang wen” 地皇文 (Writ of the Sovereign of Earth) (25b—28a), and “Renhuang wen” 人皇文 (Writ of the Sovereign of Humanity) (27a—29b). Beyond the titles of the heading and sub-headings, there is not much evidence, textual or otherwise, to tie this source to the Sanhuang wen. Nonetheless, some scholars argue that this source contains the original talismanic characters from the third-century scripture; see for instance, Liu Zhongyu “Sanhuang wen xintan,” 27—28.
Chapter 3

Defining Features of the Sanhuang Tradition: Talismans

I. *In nomine veritas:* Fu and the Power of Writing in the Sanhuang Tradition

1. Writing as Identity

The previous chapter addressed the formation of the Sanhuang tradition through the codification of its textual materials and the elaboration of a fourteen-scroll corpus. As seen, scrolls twelve through fourteen were exclusively devoted to the subject of liturgy. Scrolls one to eleven on the other hand, contained the revealed scriptures and coveted instructions that defined the tradition; meditations on true form (*zhênxing*) or inner gods, and the ingestion of alchemical elixirs were badges of individuality for the Sanhuang. However, the characteristic that set this Daoist school apart from others was the practice of summoning gods with talismans for the purpose of divination, protection, or healing. This chapter is devoted to an analysis of talismans in the Sanhuang tradition, that is to say the talismans of the *Sanhuang wen* and a few “floating talismans” that were loosely associated with the text. These two categories of materials were transmitted side-by-side, from the time of Ge Hong, to that of Lu Xiujing’s four-scroll Dongshen canon, and the mature fourteen-scroll canon. Although sparse, the little information does endure about the talismans of the *Sanhuang wen* will provide the basis for a partial reconstitution of the early corpus. The following pages will
uncover fragments of the Sanhuang wen preserved in sixth-century Daozang texts, namely the “Sanhuang yaoyong pin” (Essentials of the Three Sovereigns) from the Wushang biyao, and the “Xicheng yaojue” from the Badi miaojing jing.” These texts contain some of the earliest references to the Sanhuang wen and its talismanic practices. Moreover, they preserve a substantial amount of the oral instructions (koujue) regarding the talismans from Bo He’s Xiaoyou jing, and Bao Jing’s Dayou jing. Before returning to textual matters and delving deeper into the universe of the Sanhuang wen’s talismans, a proper introduction to the ingredient notions of the Daoist epistemology of talisman writing and the mantic mechanics of scripts is in order. Thus, the chapter will begin with an examination of the writing as a mark of identity, as contractual bond, and as a spontaneous cosmic expression of the Dao.

The earliest Chinese script was devised not to record human speech, but rather in an effort to communicate with the divine.¹ Divination specialists developed Shang oracle bone- and tortoise-shell inscriptions to record ritual interactions with the supramundane; these inscriptions were intended exclusively for the eyes of the spirits.² Daoism, with its use of inscribed talismans for summoning, and the Sanhuang tradition in particular, are thus direct heirs to the most archaic form of official Chinese religion. While Confucians later

¹ For more on this, see Lagerwey, “The Oral and the Written in Chinese and Western Religion”; the author also supplies pertinent Judaeo-Christian semiotic comparisons; see also Vandermeersch, “De la tortue à l'achillée,” 42—45.
² This is why they are sometimes found on the inside of ritual vessels. Perhaps grotto revelations, by which sacred texts are carved on the inside of a mountain, operate on similar principles; see Vandermeersch, Wang-tao ou la voie royale, chapter 26.
appropriated this scribal tradition along with its political and moral trappings, to become “masters of the text,” Daoists remained “masters of the sign.”

Citing a Bao nanhai xumu (Lord Bao of Nanhai’s Prefatory Catalogue) the Yunji qiqian relates that the three scrolls of the Sanhuang wen “compose characters that look like talismanic script, or seal script, or even the script of antiquity.” In the eighth century, Zhang Huaiguan also relates that the writing used in the Sanhuang wen is “unintelligible” and “resembles tallies or seal script.” Rather than being regarded as a shortcoming, the unintelligibility of talismanic writing is considered evidence of its uncompromised sacredness. Legend holds that Chinese graphs were originally divine, and only in their subsequent corruption were they rendered legible to humans; the more indecipherable the script, the closer it is to the numinous origins or writing. Nevertheless, the first characters readable by humans were still quite potent. Derived from nature, which artlessly exudes cosmic patterns, these graphs provided a glimpse into the profundity of the otherwise abstruse workings of gods and demons. The Huainan zi (Book of the Master of Huainan) recounts that “In antiquity, Cangjie [ca. 2650 BCE] produced writing; Heaven then let

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4 Yunji qiqian, 6.11a. Liu Zhongyu, “‘Sanhuang wen’ xintan,” 28—29, takes this sentence to mean that the Sanhuang wen was made up of three distinct scripts, presumably one per scroll; he argues that the scripture was a type of instruction manual for the writing talismans; Liu Zhongyu, ibid., 30—31. Since the previous sentence in the passage underscores how old the text is, I believe the reference to talismanic script, seal script, or the type of calligraphy of antiquity, is designed to demonstrate how archaic—and therefore spiritually potent—the Sanhuang wen was.
5 Shu duan, in Zhongguo shuhua quanshu 1:85, cited from Eugene Wang, Shaping the Lotus Sutra, 422, n.109; see also Wang Yucheng “Daojiao qiyi fuming,” 32.
grains rain down and demons hurled themselves into darkness.” Xu Shen 許慎 (ca. 58-147), the first-century commentator, adds:

By gazing at the pattern of the footprints of birds, Ts’ang Chieh created writing in correspondence to them (tsao shu yu ch’i 造書有契), then… the demons feared that they also might be recorded in the books and therefore they howled at the night."6

The *Lidai minghua ji* 歷代名畫記 (Records of Famous Painters of Successive Generations) elaborates that Cangjie “determined the forms of the [first] written characters. Then creation could no longer hide its secrets […] supernatural beings could no longer hide their form, therefore the demons hurled themselves into darkness.”7 The act of writing is indistinguishable from the act of naming, which is not merely descriptive, but also performative. It brings to light and reveals what was originally obscure, thereby empowering the writer (and the reader).

Theologically, there is little difference between conventional writing and talismanic script; they are both expressions of original pneuma (yuanqi 元氣), but they differ in that one is esoteric while the other is exoteric. Esoteric talismanic script is less removed from its cosmic origins, thus it is legible to gods and not to humans. Exoteric writing on the other hand, is comparatively more “decayed,” rendering it readable to humans.

The authority to hold sway over spirits and demons finds its roots in the adept’s knowledge of the spiritual entity’s true form (zhenxing), or “true nature.” This is manifested in the true name of the spirit or demon, which is inscribed on

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7 From Seidel, “Taoist Scaraments,” n.107, p. 322, with slight modifications.
the talisman in the language that only supernatural beings can decipher. Names are intimately connected to identity, to such an extent that knowing a deity’s or demon’s true name is tantamount to exerting full control over that spiritual entity. This permits talisman-holders to compel these entities to act on their behalf, like an emperor compelling his officials or ministers. The mechanics behind the talismanic rites of the Sanhuang are connected to the original function of talismans as imperial tallies; the two pieces of a split talisman were held by two different individuals, and only upon joining both halves—as proof of imperial authority, a reference to the persona ficta of the emperor—was the order verified and carried out. Spirits and demons attempt to conceal their true form, since possessing it grants dominion over them; talismans, proof of an alternate form of “imperial” authority—one of a spiritual nature—offer temporary relief from the veil of deceit

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8 Chinese custom maintains that the characters of a person’s name contain more of his or her essence than a portrait, photograph, sculpture or other mode of representation; see Gernet’s “La Chine—Aspects et fonctions psychologiques de l’écriture.” In her cornerstone work, La Signature, Béatrice Fraenkel traces the birth and development of signatures in Europe to the emergence of a culture of identity (related to the patronym) and more importantly, royal and imperial authority. The parallels between the signature in Western cultures and talismans (or yin; seals) in early China are intriguing. Signatures, by virtue of representing a name and identity, were guarantors of supreme truth, and consequently functioned as an immanent symbol—more appropriately, an embodiment—of the person or authority (individual, institutional, national, royal, etc.) to whom the signature belonged. This is also applicable to the Daoist talisman. Furthermore, the double function of the fu (juridical and magical—see 140—45 for more on these) is reproduced in signatures:

La conception de la signature comme empreinte corporelle s’inscrit, on l’a vu, dans une double tradition: celle de l’usage effectif d’empreintes comme signes de validation—la signature, parce qu’elle est autographe peut leur être assimilée—et celle médiévale, des signatura dont le déchiffrement permet la connaissance du monde—de la même façon, la signature suscite l’interprétation comme si le scripteur pouvait y être lu et connu en sa vérité cachée.

See Fraenkel, La Signature, 235; Ginzburg’s “Signes, Traces, Pistes. Racines d’un paradigme de l’indice,” looks at how infinitesimal traces such as writing can lead to the revelation of a deeper, broader reality.
in which spiritual beings (who often function as officials) cloak themselves, thereby providing short-lived *de facto* control over their actions.9

More broadly, the same is true for the power of writing in Chinese culture.10 It is not without reason that many scriptures in both Daoist and Buddhist traditions function as apotropeia themselves, protecting the holder just as a single talisman would. In essence, all revealed texts are talismanic since they function just like imperial sacraments: as magnets for and receptacles of primordial pneuma.11 They bring divine protection and simultaneously testify to a pact with celestial forces, bearing witness to the spiritual genealogy that links the adept to the gods. Much like the *Sanhuang wen*, Shanging texts, elaborates Robinet, teach the adept “les ‘noms’ […], et les formes des personnes et des lieux divins, et par là les moyens du salut, ils sont le gage de la protection de ces divinités qui en leur

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11 In her “Imperial Treasures and Taoist Sacrements,” Anna Seidel explains how the functions of imperial sacrament, daoist revealed scripture, and talisman are intertwined.
2. Word is Bond

The use of talismans in China predates the Han dynasty, and while their applications are manifold, two main applications emerge. The first, which does not necessarily predate the second, is juridical or administrative in nature. In early China, the word *fu* (†) (talisman) denotes a tangible contractual symbol or insignia of authority binding one to obey its holder. The talisman was primarily made of bamboo, but sometimes jade or metal, and was divided in two parts, or tesserae (*qi* 契). Once both holders of a tessera unite their respective halves, the authority, pledge, bond, or contract is verified. The second function is thaumaturgical and

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13 For pre-Han feudal customs involving talismans see for example, Rolf Stein “Aspects de la foi jurée en Chine,” 411—15.
14 The logograph for *fu* is composed of “to join” (*fu* 併) and “bamboo” (*zhu* 竹) (“joining bamboos”). Faure, *Visions of Power*, 255, n. 7, explains that in France, these implements were called “tailles” (incisions) because an incision was made on two juxtaposed sticks. This is the origin of the English word “tally.” He also underscores another point of intersection between European and Chinese understandings of the tessera: “The primary sense of the *symbolon*, ‘part of an object divided between two people to serve as a signal of recognition between them,’” see Faure, ibid., 225. Citing Jean-Joseph Goux’s *Les Iconoclastes*, Faure, loc cit, explains that, like the talisman, “this *symbolon* is the symbol of the symbolic function itself, ‘the representation of unity and of the division of the opposites introduced by the operation of symbolic scission.’” Schipper, “The Written Memorial in Taoist Ceremonies,” 155, suggests that the word *fu* has traditionally been translated as “talisman” because “its most characteristic use in lay religion was observed to be a protective one.” Instead, he proposes to translate it as “symbol,” based on the Greek *symbolon*.
15 See Des Rotours, “Les Insignes en deux parties (*fou*)”; the article is a history of the juridical talismans in Chinese imperial military and bureaucratic circles during the Tang.
constitutes what could be termed “spiritual technology.” Conceptually at least, it is related to the juridical function since the talisman signals authority for its holder and obligation for the entity whose name is inscribed on the talisman. This numinous contractual bond is the mechanism that compels gods or demons to manifest before the adept; both come together mutatis mutandis, like the two matching tallies, forming a cohesive symbol in their union.

The logic of this relationship is dictated by the hierogamy of lingbao 灵宝, a particular kind of magical talisman initially employed in the imperial context as evidence of legitimacy and divine approval. The bao 寶 is a sacrum, a dynastic treasure revealed to the founder of a ruling house in supernatural circumstances as physical proof of a Celestial Mandate (tianming 天命). Faure explains that in the case of the ruler “spiritual harmony with heaven is revealed by the appearance of an auspicious sign that has the value of an emblem, a ‘bao that serves as a guarantee.’ The model also works in a liturgical context: the bao or fu [talisman] is only one half of a pair, and was compared to a female pheasant who attracts the male, thus symbolizing ritual hierogamy.” In this dichotomy, ling 章 embodies

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16 Although originally precious items, these bao (literally “treasures”) came to include magical diagrams and talismanic texts. Among the most ancient are the Hetu (River Chart) and Luoshu (Book of the Luo River). Kaltenmark, “Ling-Pao: Note sur un terme du Taoisme religieux,” 573, notes that “Entre les joyaux sacrés (pao), talismans dynastiques ou familiaux, et les charmes magiques (fou), il n’y avait pas de différence de nature, mais peut-être tout au plus une différence de degré, proportionnelle en somme au prestige de leur propriétaire, roi, noble, ou simple magicien.”

17 Faure, *Visions of Power*, 226—27. Schipper, “The Written Memorial in Taoist Ceremonies,” 155—159 supplies a thorough description of talismanic rite from a Tianshi dao liturgy. The use of talismans in the Sanhuang tradition is markedly different in a number of respects, one of them being that the celestial master will usually write orders or commands on the talisman rather than names; see Strickmann, *Chinese Magical Medicine*, 9. On “symbolosis,” the rite of union between cosmic powers and those conferred on the celestial master, Schipper, ibid., 159, writes that “the many symbols [fu] the priest wears as he goes up to present the memorial to Heaven symbolize that ‘covenant with the powers,’ that alliance, that contract (yueh)
the celestial (male), divine power, while bao is its human (female) receptacle. The underlying sexualized aspect of “matching tallies” (hefu 合符) and more generally all talismanic practices, is made manifest in a few instances where the tesserae to be joined are explicitly identified as male or female. In some cases, military or administrative insignias were embossed (in relief; yang 陽) on one half, while the opposite half was carved into (yin 陰) the material, so that the inscriptions interlock when joined together.

In the Sanhuang tradition, talismans consist of the names of the deities or demons that they invoke. They are “calling cards,” logographic lines of communication that swiftly make the marshaled entity appear. By possessing the talisman of a spirit, adepts also have the spirit’s name, and in effect, its true form by means of which Lord Lao bound the Four Generals and the ‘hundred demons of the temples and rivers’ to Chang Tao-ling and gave him and his heirs dominion over the Powers [...]. That pact was signified (sealed) by means of a split rock: the work of thunder, the work of Yü.”

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18 Andersen, “Talking to the Gods,” has demonstrated the existence of pronounced sexual undercurrents in a text belonging to the Sanhuang tradition: the Tongling bashi shengwen zhenxing tu (Image of the Saintly Writ and True Form of the Eight Archivists for the Spiritual Communication with the Most High) contains “talisman couples”, but also the pairing of male or female deities with practitioners. Additionally, certain rites confer the power to make everyone love the adept. More surprisingly, if there are “troubles” in joining male and female devotees, the text guarantees the bestowal of a celestial spouse in the form a Jade Maiden with a green waistband; see Andersen; ibid., 21—22; for a discussion of this Sanhuang scripture, see Chapter 5, 278--285. The practice it describes is reminiscent of the Tianshi dao rite in which the male and female registers are joined; see Schipper, “The Taoist Body,” 377. The Shangqing movement further developed the notion of hierogamy in matching talismans (hefu) or “joining qi” (heqi 合氣); see Strickmann, “The Mao Shan Revelations,” 28.

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20 When “at rest,” talismans are treated with the same care and ritual attention as a spirit; Legeza, Tao Magic: The Chinese Art of the Occult, 18, insists “the magic power of the talismans derived [...] from the fact that, according to Taoist belief, they were permanently inhabited by spirits. Thus men were able to communicate directly with spirits by means of these talismans without the participation of a medium.”
(zhênxing); in other words, they hold in their hands the very identity of the spirit.21

The “Xicheng yaojue” from the Badi miaojing jing is organized around a series of ninety-two talismans closely tied to the Sanhuang wen and their instructions.

Likewise, the Wushang biyao’s “Sanhuang yaoyong pin” is a text centered on a series of 61 talismans, many of which come complete with the exact number of numinous characters that constitute the respective deity’s name.22 Below is an example of how these ritual implements are presented. This specific example concerns the Great Bond of the Divine Immortal Ascending to Heaven (Shenxian shingtian daquan wen 神仙昇天大券文), a notable talisman since it underscores both the juridical and thaumaturgical functions:

This talisman was derived from the sixty-eighth character of the [Writ of the] Sovereign of Humanity.23 This bond (quan 券) is transmitted together with a seal (yìn 印). If you are enfeofed, but have not received the Great Bond of the Three Heavens (Santian daquan 三天大券), neither the Three Officers of the Flood (shuǐ sānguān 水三官) nor the local gods and numina of the rivers, mountains, and earth will fear you.24 [If you are enfeofed] but

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21 This calls to mind an illustrative episode from Freud’s psychoanalytic sessions. In Totem and Taboo, 57, he recalls a patient who took it upon herself to never write down her name for fear that it would fall into someone’s hands, and that person would thereby possess a piece of her personality. She decided to never surrender anything related to her self, which she identified first and foremost as her name, and secondly, as her hand writing. She ended up never writing anything down anymore; see Freud, Totem and Taboo, 57.

22 Ofuchi, Dōkyō to sono kyōten, 269, only lists forty-nine talismans, choosing to omit two groups of three and nine talismans that are found in the text’s last section, the “Sanhuang zhuàn wen 三皇傳文” (Transmitted Writ of the Three Sovereigns). See Appendix 1, Appendix 4, and Appendix 5 for a description of the text and the talismans it contains. The central forty-nine talismans that make up the “Sanhuang yaoyong pin” are evocative, perhaps in number only (although their apotropaic powers are also similar), of the forty-nine Laojun 老君, Yellow Emperor, and Central Embryo (Zhōngtài 中胎) talismans that Ge Hong addresses in the Baopu zi, 17.308.

23 This ostensibly refers to the twenty-eight character of the fifth talisman listed in the “Renhuáng fā” 人皇法 (Method of the Human Sovereign); see Wushang biyao, 25.7b. This talisman, made up of 62 constituent characters, summons the Record Officer of the Nine Heavens (jiùtiān lùshǐ 九天錄史).

24 The Great Bond of the Three Heavens is an alternate name for the Great Bond of the Divine Immortal Ascending to Heaven.
disregard your administrative duties (xing 行), then contrary to
expectations, misfortune will befall you. There are one thousand two
hundred [administrative] articles to respect [if your possess a fiefdom], and
without the Bond, they cannot be properly implemented. If you have
received the Bond but not the fiefdom, then it is also impracticable.25

This talisman appears to be reserved for landowners who were required to
summon an entourage of deities in order to execute their administrative duties. It is
a good illustration of how practices related to talismans rest upon juridical
obligations and guarantees of authority. In this case, the temporal authority of the
land title reinforces the spiritual authority of the talisman. Conjugated with the
desire to respect the legal statutes (representing moral authority), the talisman
grants access to a matching fiefdom whose divine “serfs” are bound by numinous
contract. The practitioner holds one copy (or half) of the contract on earth (bao),

25 Wushang biyao, 25.8b-9a. A “Talisman for Ascending to Heaven” (shengtian fu 昇
tian 符) appears in the Badi miaojing jing, 11b. The instructions however, are
significantly different:

Inscribe the talisman on the right in blue ink on a three inch (cun 尃) square
piece of fabric as white as the heart of a bamboo while facing the kingly
direction. Once the Dao has been received, and one has already obtained
success in its practice, if adepts intend to ascend to Heaven, they should ingest
this talisman. Thereupon they will fly away.

The Shengtian fu seems to have been an established talisman among the
materials tied to the Sanhuang wen from an early date. The Taishang dongshen
sanhuang chuanshou yi (Rituals for the Transmission of the Scriptures of the Three
Sovereigns) 13a, mentions the Talisman for Ascent to Heaven (shengtian fu) in a list
of talismans to be transmitted as part of initiation into the Dongshen cavern; a
Heavenly Bond for Ascent in Broad Daylight (Risheng tianquan 日昇天劵) is included
the Dongxuan lingbao sandong fengdao kejie yingshi (Regulations for the Practice of
Taoism in Accordance with the Scripture of the Three Caverns), 4.7b, and again in
Taishang dongshen sanhuang yi (Rituals of the Three Sovereigns), 8a, as part of
similar lists. The latter specifies that two writs (liang wen 鐓文) are to be joined
together, but no mention is made of a seal (yin 印) as alluded to in the beginning of the
“Sanhuang yaoyong pin” passage. However, A Talismanic Bond of the Nine Heavens
(Jiutian fu quan 九天符劵) and a Talismanic Seal of the Nine Heavens (Jiutian fu yin
九天符印) do appear a few pages later; see Taishang dongshen sanhuang yi, 11b; and
Appendix 5.
while the spirits figuratively hold another copy (or half) with them in the heaven (ling), in the form of their name.

3. Cosmic Congealment: The Sacred Characters of the Sanhuang wen

With a series of talismans as its very foundation, the religious legitimacy of the Sanhuang tradition firmly rests on the talismanic power of written word. Indeed, the genesis of the Sanhuang wen is tied to the discovery of writing:

The Huangwen 皇文 (Script of Sovereigns) predates even the [historical] Three Sovereigns. It is none other than the initial Great Writing (dazhang 大章) [discovered] in the footprints of birds (niaoji 鳥跡) […] 26 The Huangwen and the Dishu 帝書 (Writing of Emperors) were spontaneously formed amidst vacuity, absence, and emptiness (xu wu kong 虛無空). 27 Eventually their pneuma congealed into characters. […] Originally, [the Huangwen] was undifferentiated (wuyi 休異). When came the time of the Three Sovereigns, each of them received one part, which was divided in accordance with the Three Primes (sanyuan 三元) and the Way of the Three Powers (fenwei sanyuan sancai zhi dao 分為三元三才之道) […] 28

26 Yunji qiqian, 6.10b, attributes this line to the sixth scroll of the Dongshen jing. This would correspond to the Badi miaojing jing, which made up scrolls 4 to 6 of the fourteen-scroll Sanhuang corpus. Lo and behold, Lord Wang utters the same words in the Badi miaojing jing’s “Xicheng yaojue”; this indicates that the Badi miaojing jing that is currently found in the Daoist Canon is not drastically different from the one contained in the sixth-century fourteen-scroll Dongshen jing.

27 According to the Yunji qiqian, 6.10b, this line is from the third scroll of the Dongshen jing, which would make it a quotation from the Dihuang wen (Writ of the Sovereign of Earth). “Vacuity, absence, and emptiness” (xu wu kong) refers to successive stages in cosmogony, marked by the progressive materialization of cosmic pneuma. The expression appears in the Jiuhuang tu 九皇圖 (Charts of the Nine Sovereigns) section from the Badi miaojing jing, 6b, where the Former Sovereigns (Chu huang 初皇) are said to be transformations of vacuity, absence, and emptiness; see below 219—227 for more.

28 This is a possible reference to a passage from the “Shuobu” 說卦 (Explainin the Trigrams) chapter of the Yijing, which presents the Three Powers as the Way of establishing Humanity (li ren zhi dao 立人之道).
[Before being brought down into the texts], the [writing of] the Three Primes and Eight Assemblies (bahui 八會) spontaneously coagulated into individually manifested characters of about ten square feet square (zhang 丈) that lay suspended in emptiness.29

Here, the genesis of the Sanhuang wen is described as a function of Daoist cosmogony. Its textual evolution parallels the successive stages of cosmic development. Hence, in its undifferentiated state, the Sanhuang wen (Writ of the Three Sovereigns) is known simply as the Huangwen (Script/Writ of the Sovereigns). With the division of the One into the Three Primes (sanyuan), which, like the Three Powers (sancai), denote the three primordial energies of Heaven, Earth, and Humanity, the Huangwen was also separated into scrolls for the Sovereigns of Heaven, Earth, and Humanity.

The script of the Sanhuang wen, that is to say its talismans, also transformed according to the same cosmic processes. The appearance of the Sanhuang talismans in the world of humans is directly connected to Cangjie’s discovery of the first Chinese graphs. The underlined “spontaneity” of the writing is precisely the written word’s source of power. The imprints of bird tracks, or the bu patterns on heated tortoise shells are all unmediated expressions of the Dao. They are neither calculated nor devised; they are sudden expressions of divinity, subtitles to the cosmic process that adepts try to decipher, hints of a transmundane truth.

The last line of the excerpt supplies some clues as to how the Sanhuan wen progresses from the congealed characters of Three Primes and Eight Assemblies—the script in which Daoist scriptures are written before they are transmitted to humans—to a form of writing that is more akin to Chinese graphs. Nonetheless,

29 Yunji qiqian, 6.10b-11a.
even after its transmission to the Three Sovereigns, the *Sanhuang wen* was still an “esoteric writ” composed in characters that humans of normal faculties could not decode.

The “Baopu miyan” (Secret Words of Embracing Simplicity) from the *Badi miaojing jing* also refers to the *Sanhuang wen* as the “script of the Three Heavens (santian 三天) and Eight Assemblies (bahui) and all directions (qun fang 群方).”

Here, the Three Heavens are a substitute designation for the Three Primes. The script of the Three Primes and Eight Assemblies is often encountered in discussions on the divine origins of scriptures tied to the Southern esoteric tradition. According to tradition, this script antedates the development of human writing, stemming from the first manifestation of the Dao in forms (xing 形); at that moment, yin and yang separated, and the uncorrupted characters of the Three Primes and Eight Assemblies manifested. With the advent of the Three

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30 *Badi miaojing jing*, 31a.
31 The concept of the Three Heavens however first appears in the fourth-century *Lingbao wufu xu* (Prolegomenon to the Five Lingbao Talismans), a text with roots in Jiangnan spiritual lore and strong ties to the Three Sovereigns. Later, the Tianshi dao appropriates the term to contrast between the purity of their Three Heavens (santian) and the corruption of the Southern esoteric tradition’s Six Heavens (liutian 六天). This cleavage was intended to distinguish the pure gods of the Dao that are generated from the Three Pneumata (sanqi 三气), mysterious (xuan 玄), original (yuan 元), and inaugural (shi 始), from the demons and pernicious gods that populate the pantheons of the profane cults (yin su); for a complete analysis, see Kobayashi Masayoshi, *Rikuchō dōkyōshi kenkyū*, 482—510; and his *Dōkyō no saihō girei no shiteki kenkyū*, 6—12. For the later Tianshi dao understanding of the term, see the *Santian neijie jing* (Scripture of the Inner Explanations of the Three Heavens; CT 1205), introduced and translated in Bokenkamp, *Early Daoist Scriptures*, 186—229.
32 Strickmann, *Le Taoïsme du Mao-chan*, 118, writes: “un élément de ce patrimoine méridional était une théorie de l’écriture, étroitement liée à la spéculation cosmologique, et aussi déjà tributaire, en quelque sorte, des sources indiennes.” The numerical symbolism of three and eight is particularly relevant to the Sanhuang tradition; see 86—88, and, 270—74, for a discussion.
33 *Zhengao* (Declarations of the Perfected, 1.8a-9b. The passage reproduces the expression “and all directions” (qun fang) found in the *Badi miaojing jing*, 31a. The complete sentence from the Zhengao, 1.8b, reads: “Yinyang zhi fen, ze you sanyuan
Sovereigns, this primeval unsoiled script gradually decayed into a string of writing styles that eventually became intelligible to humans. Nonetheless, the script of the Three Primes and Eight Assemblies is still used by the Perfected (zhenren) and celestial immortals (tianxian 天仙) of higher heavens. Numinous beings also employed another set of graphs, the lower-ranking Cloud Seal script (yunzhuan zhi zhang 雲篆之章), for writing divine talismans or in the composition of the scriptures that were revealed to Yang Xi.34

Another mention of the Three Primes and Eight Assemblies occurs in the “Baopu miyan.” Elaborating on the formation of the Sanhuang wen and Tianwen dazi (Great Characters of the Celestial Writ), Ge Hong, the narrator, discusses the peculiarities of their script:

 bahui qun fang feitian zhi shu 陰陽之分則有三元八會群方飛天之書”; Strickmann, *Le Taoïsme du Mao-chan*, 118—20, renders “feitian” as “deva,” thereby reading “l’écriture des Huit Assemblées des Trois Primordiaux (3X8=24), l’écriture des devas dans les diverses regions […].”

34 Zhengao, 1.8b-9b. The Lingbao school also developed its own mythological pure esoteric script; see Bokenkamp, *Early Daoist Scriptures*, 386—87, and 422. The Lingbao interpretation of divine script betrays a strong Buddhist influence: it is sometimes referred to as “Brahma” (fantian 梵天) script, and its shape is said to imitate the curves of Indic writing systems. Moreover, its characters are often accompanied by mantric cosmic sounds, much like siddham spells; for more on the topic see Zürcher, “Buddhist Influences on Early Taoism,” 110—12; and Bokenkamp, “Sources of the Ling-pao Scriptures,” 461—65. The Lingbao application of the Concealed Language of the Great Brahman (Dafan yinyu 大梵隱語) is strikingly akin to that of the Sanhuang wen:

The *Book of Salvation* ([Duren jing 度人經]) represents the utterance of the Primal Heavenly Worthy ([Yuanshi tianzun 元始天尊]) for the salvation of mankind. Composed of the “inner names” (neiming 内名) of the Lords of all the heavens as well as the forbidden names of the demon-kings and the hidden names of the hundred spirits, its power is such that the Primal Heavenly Worthy’s ten initial recitations of the scripture were sufficient to summon all the Perfected and sundry spirits of the ten heavens.

Translation from Bokenkamp, ibid., 462.
The Sanhuang wen and the [Tianwen] dazi (Sanhuang wen ji Dazi 三皇文及大字) were compiled and edited by the Immortal Lord Wang (Xianren Wangjun). They were copied out sequentially in one scroll each so that its contents could be examined and put to use. [...] I once heard that Master Li, the Patriarch of the scripture of the Way said: ‘Upon returning to Yingzhou 瀹州, I paid a visit to Lord Dong Zhong 竹仲君. Lord Zhong had both the Nine Heavens Dayou jing in four scrolls, and the Xiaoyou jing, also in four scrolls. The characters in the scriptures were two inches (cun) square; they stood apart and were subtly elegant. The scrolls were as big as a bamboo stalk five inches (cun) in diameter. According to the table of contents, they contain one million words.’ Master Li doubted that the scrolls were so few yet their characters so numerous. Lord Zhong explained: ‘This script is not the script of our world. It is the Great Writing (dazhang) of the Three Heavens and Eight Assemblies. One graph of this script contains thirty-three [constituent] characters. [The graphs are written] from east to west, top to bottom; they take form by assembling the individual characters. Several characters from the [Heaven of] Great Being were selected for viewing and transmission in the truest and most superlative of the ancient arcane classics. If this is the case for the Sanhuang neiwen and Tianwen dazi, then why would their four scrolls not contain forty thousand words?’ Moreover, the Bao xiansheng jijie (Master Bao’s Explanations by Sections) states: ‘The Sanhuang [wen] and [Tianwen] dazi were copied from the script of the Dayou and Xiaoyou [heavens] respectively, but they are separate in name and nothing more.’

This excerpt from the “Baopu miyan” is one of a handful of passages that make a distinction between the Sanhuang neiwen and the Tianwen dazi in unequivocal terms. More interestingly, it also clearly locates the origins of the Sanhuang wen in the Dayou Heaven, and those of the Tianwen dazi in the Xiaoyou Heaven. In other words, the above lines identify the Sanhuang (nei) wen as the

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35 The passage is most probably referring to Dong Zhong, the legendary master of talismanic script; see Soushen ji (Record of Seeking Spirits), 1.28:14—15; and also the “Dongyong bianwen” (Dongyong’s Transformation Writ; S.2204); Dunhuang manuscripts S. 5775 r+v, and P. 3358 reveal his personal talismans; see Mollier “Talismans,” 416—17. According to Bo He’s Shenxian zhuhan vita, Lord Wang also sojourned in Yingzhou; see Shenxian zhuhan, from Taiping yulan, 187.4a; Campany, To Live As Long as Heaven and Earth, 134—35; Smith, “Record of the Ten Continents,” 91—92; Campany, Strange Writing, 53—54.

36 Elsewhere in the passage, it is said that the text has forty thousand words.

37 Literally, “by putting together that which is separate” (sui xing suo yong fenji zhi 随形所用分集之).

38 Badi miaojing jing, 30b-32a; Daojiao yishu, 2.6b-7a, and Yunji qiqian, 6.5b, 6.11a, also relate that Bo He’s Xiaoyou Sanhuang wen was composed in the Xiaoyou heaven.
*Dayou jing* and the *Tianwen dazi* as the *Xiaoyou jing*. Interestingly, it ties both versions of the text to Lord Wang, thereby implying that the version that Bao’s discovery of the *Dayou jing* on Songshan was also revealed by the immortal.39

Remarkably, the “Baopu miyan” lists the *Dayou jing* and *Xiaoyou jing* as having four scrolls each, an account that contradicts the findings of the previous chapters, whereby the *Xiaoyou jing* was included in the fourth scroll of the *Dongshen jing* along with other talismanic materials. This was most probably the case shortly before or around the establishment of the Three Caverns system, when two concurrent four-scroll versions of the *Sanhuang wen* were in circulation. As the acceptance of three-tiered model grew, one version of the text—Bao Jing’s *Dayou jing*—was selected as the standard one, absorbing the other one into its scroll of “floating talismans.” Therefore, the fact that there are two four-scroll scriptures suggests that the “Baopu miyan” was written before 437, the year that Lu Xiujing submitted his *Sandong jingshu mulu* (Catalogue of Scriptures and Writings of the Three Caverns) to the throne. At the very latest, this section of the *Badi miaojing jing* was composed prior to Tao Hongjing’s reorganization and expansion of the Sanhuang corpus, in the late-fifth or early-sixth centuries.40

Regardless of the number of scrolls it occupied, the *Sanhuang wen* was defined by the talismans it contained. The first half of the chapter examined these talismans from a conceptual standpoint, considering the dynamic between summoning gods, numinous cosmic scripts against the backdrop of the Sanhuang tradition. The second half will look at individual talismans from the “Xicheng

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39 According to one account, the oral instructions (*koujue*) to Bao Jing’s revelation were supplied by Ge Xuan; see *Daojiao yishu*, 2.7a; and 59 of the present study.
40 The “Nine Heavens” (*jiutian*) prefix to the *Dayou jing* also suggests a mid fifth-century date of composition for the passage.
yaojue” and the “Sanhuang yaoyong pin,” two texts that preserve sizeable portions of the Bo He and Bao Jing’s versions of the Sanhuang wen. Through the identification and classification of these fragments, the following pages will shed light on the configuration of the early fifth-century four-scroll Dongshen jing and its relation to earlier Sanhuang materials that are attested to in the Baopu zi for example.

II. From Word to Text: Remnants of the Sanhuang wen

1. The Great Characters of the Celestial Writ

The “Baopu miyan” distinguishes between the Dayou Heaven’s Sanhuang wen from a Dazi (Great Characters), issued from the lesser Xiaoyou Heaven. Both texts are separate, yet they share a modifier that occasionally blurs the distinction: tianwen, or “celestial writ” is used as a suffix for the Sanhuang wen as early as the fourth century.41 In the Sanhuang neiwen tianwen (Esoteric Writ of the Three Sovereigns in Celestials Script) rendering for instance, it is used to express the idea that the scripture is composed in celestial script, namely the writing of the Three Primes and Eight Assemblies according to certain sources. Similarly, the same expression serves as a prefix for the Dazi in order to convey the notion that its graphs are also in the writing style of the Three Primes and Eight Assemblies. To

41 Baopu zi 15.272, and 19.333; see Appendix 3.
make matters even more confusing, the *Dazi* is sometimes preceded by the terms *Sanhuang* or *Sanhuang tianwen* in its title. Other times both scriptures are listed consecutively without a conjunction to set them apart.\(^{42}\) This has lead some scholars to believe that the *Tianwen dazi* is just another way of referring to the same *Sanhuang wen* that Ge Hong discussed. In reality, they are quite different texts.\(^{43}\) After the creation of the Dongshen division and the incorporation of Sanhuang documents into the Daoist Canon, Bao Jing’s *Dayou jing* came to be known as the *Sanhuang (nei) wen*, appropriating the shorthand title of Bo He’s version in the process. In order to impose some distinction, Bo He’s scripture reverted to its original unabridged title, the *Sanhuang (neiwen) tianwen dazi*, often abbreviated to *Tianwen dazi*.\(^{44}\)

Chapter 25 of the *Wushang biyao*, the “Sanhuang yaoyong pin” definitively establishes the *Tianwen dazi*’s independence from the *Sanhuang wen*. The text begins with prefatory overview of the *Tianhuang wen* ˂, *Dihuang wen* ˟, and the *Renhuang wen* ˄, which it

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42 See *Badi miaojing jing*, 32a for example.
43 The *Chuanshou sandong jing jiefa lulue shuo*, 1.7a, for example, clearly differentiates the *Sanhuang neiwen* from the *Sanhuang dazi* 三皇大字 (Great Characters of the Three Sovereigns); the same is true for the *Dongxuan lingbao sandong fengdao kejie yishi* 洞玄靈寶三洞奉道科戒經始 (Regulations for Practicing the Dao in Accordance with the Scriptures of the Three Caverns; CT 1125), 8a—12b.
44 This title appears in early texts such as the *Wufu xu*, 3.17b, whose last stage of compilation was between 280 and 317. The *Sanhuang neiwen tianwen dazi* is mentioned in a segment that narrates the Yellow Emperor’s reception of the scripture from the master of the Purple Residence (Zifu xiansheng). The *Baopu zi*, 18.323; Ware, 302, reproduces the passage, but it refers to the transmitted scripture as the *Sanhuan neiwen*; see Chapter 1, 62, for a translation of the passage; and Gil Raz, “Creation of Tradition,” 182—86 for the date of the *Wufu xu*. While scant, there is some evidence to suggest that pre-fifth-century sources occasionally shortened the title of the *Sanhuang neiwen tianwen dazi* to *Tianwen dazi*; see, for example, *Baopu zi*, 17.308; and also, Wang Ming, *Baopu zi neipian jiaoshi*, 339—40, n.25.
introduces as the *Sanhuang tianwen dazi*. Under this heading, the chapter continues to elaborate on the scripture:

The Yellow Emperor obtained its divine diagrams (*shentu* 神圖) and characters of the Celestial Writ (*tianwen zi* 天文字) by which he came to know the names of the Nine Heavens and the [esoteric] characters of the numina of mountains and streams. If one is among those who can summon various gods according to this writ (*wen*), then one can also [obtain] long life […]. If later, one cultivates the way and seeks its arts, the rank of divine immortal (*shenxian* 神仙) will surely be obtained.\(^{45}\)

The passage proceeds to cite more benefits of the *Tianwen dazi* periodically referring to itself as “this writ” (*ci wen* 此文) and once as “this celestial writ, record of earthly [spirits] (*ci dilu tianwen* 此地錄天文).”\(^{46}\) A few lines below, the text quotes itself:

The *Tianwen* says (*tianwen yue* 天文曰): ‘those who wish to call upon the various gods of the Nine Heavens (*jiutian* 九天), Nine Earths (*jiudi* 九地), and Five Peaks (*wuyue*), those of the Four Waterways (*sidu* 四瀆), Three Rivers (*sanhe* 三河) and Four Seas (*sihai* 四海), Taiyi, the Lord of the North (*Beijun* 北君), and the gods of the sun and moon, the Five Emperors, and all of their fathers, mothers, and consorts, as well as their maidens, the Secretary Inspector Against Obscenities (*lushi cijian* 録吏剩絃), and the Officers of Prohibitions (*jin guan* 禁官) should all use this method for summoning. It is to be employed in times of illness, raging epidemics, or even for urgent official matters.\(^{47}\)

What follows is a list of sixteen talismans that roughly corresponds to the deities enumerated above.\(^{48}\) These constitute a partial inventory of *Tianwen dazi*

\(^{45}\) *Wushang biyao*, 25.1b.
\(^{46}\) *Wushang biyao*, 25.2a.
\(^{47}\) *Wushang biyao*, ibid.
\(^{48}\) *Wushang biyao*, 25.2b-3a; the gods of the Four Seas and the spirits of the Officers of Prohibitions (*jin guan*) have no equivalent in the talismans. Likewise, the Director of Destinies (*Siming*), Three Dukes (*sangong* 三公), the Queen Mother of the West (*Xiwang Mu*), the King Father of the East (*Dongwang Fu* 東王父), Lord Lao
talismans. Annotations for each of the sixteen talismans provide the name of the spirit that is represented in “celestial script” and the number of its constituent characters.\textsuperscript{49} The first and tenth talismans have slightly longer oral instructions \textit{(koujue)} describing the circumstances in which the deities should be summoned.

The “Sanhuang yaoyong pin” then presents fourteen other talismans under the title “Tianhuang wen di yi fa” 天皇文第一法 (First Method: Writ of the Sovereign of Heaven).\textsuperscript{50} The directives are relatively thorough, sometimes containing detailed instructions about the size and material of the instructions, as well as indications relative to the cardinal direction adepts should face and the number of breaths to take in preparation for an audience with the spirit.

Subsequently, the reader is introduced to another set of fourteen talismans supported by meticulous annotations; this sections bears the name “Dihuang wen di er fa” 地皇文第二法 (Second Method: Writ of the Sovereign of the Earth).\textsuperscript{51} Lastly comes the “Renhuang wen disan fa” 人皇文第三法 (Third Method: Writ of the Sovereign of Humanity). This time however, only five talismans are included under its heading.\textsuperscript{52} The preceeding “Tianhuang wen” and “Dihuang wen” each contained fourteen talismans, therefore it appears that nine are missing from the “Renhuang wen.” This corresponds to other accounts that describe the \textit{Sanhuang wen} as three scrolls of fourteen “chapters” made up of talismans and their

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{49} The sixteen talismans of the “Sanhuang tianwen dazi” section are collectively composed of 171 constituent characters.
\item \textsuperscript{50} \textit{Wushang biyao}, 25.3a-5b; the “Tianhuang wen diyi fa” section is constituted of 192 talismanic characters.
\item \textsuperscript{51} \textit{Wushang biyao}, 25.5b-7a; the talismans from the “Dihuang wen” section are made up of 164 constituent characters.
\item \textsuperscript{52} \textit{Wushang biyao}, 25.7ab; the five talismans of the “Renhuang wen” section consist of 60 characters.
\end{itemize}
accompanying instructions. A citation from the *Sanhuang jing* preserved in another chapter of the *Wushang biyao* recounts: “the Sovereign of Heaven received the Dayou charts and the *Huangwen* (Writ of Sovereigns) talismans for summoning in fourteen chapters (*shi si pian* 十四篇).”\(^{53}\) While this exclusively designates the *Tianhuang wen*, the *Tianzun Laojun minghao liqiong jingluě* 天尊老君名號歷劫經略 (A Brief History of the Celestial Worthy Lord Lao’s Names) relates that the *Sanhuang neijing* 三皇内經 (Esoteric Scripture of the Three Sovereigns) was transmitted in three scrolls of fourteen chapters each.\(^{54}\)

An annotation at the end of the “Renhuang wen” section informs the reader that “the remaining characters are recorded in the *Tianwen*” (*yuzi zhu zai tianwen zhong* 讀字注在天文中).\(^{55}\) In other words, the nine missing talismans from the “Renhuang wen” are to be found in the “Sanhuang tianwen dazi” section from the very same chapter of the *Wushang biyao*. Unfortunately, it is impossible to determine exactly which talismans of the “Sanhuang tianwen dazi” also belong to the “Renhuang wen,” but the annotation does reflect that there was at least some overlap between Bao Jing’s *Sanhuang wen* and Bo He’s *Tianwen dazi*. Indeed, it is possible that both texts summoned the same deities, the main divergence between them lying in the specifics of the oral instructions and the script that the talismans were written in (that of the Dayou heaven versus that of the Xiaoyou heaven); as the “Baopu miyan” insists, the *Sanhuang wen* and *Tianwen dazi* differed only in name and nothing more.\(^{56}\)

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\(^{53}\) *Wushang biyao*, 6.6b.

\(^{54}\) From *Yunjii qijian* 3.14a; see also Chapter 2, 112, for a brief discussion of the “fourteen sheets” (*shi er zhi*).

\(^{55}\) *Wushang biyao*, 25.7b.

\(^{56}\) *Badi miaojing jing*, 32a; see 147, above, for translation.
For uncertain reason, another excerpt from the *Tianwen dazi* appears at the opposite end of the *Wushang biyao*’s twenty-fifth chapter. The “Dazi xiapian fù” 大字下篇符 (Talismans from the Second Chapter of the Dazi) is the last section of the “Sanhuang yaoyong pin”; it contains another series of nine talismans reproducing the esoteric names of the Nine Heavens (*jiutian*). These presumably followed the first sixteen talismans from the “Sanhuang tianwen dazi” section. Indeed, the opening section of the “Sanhuang yaoyong pin” closes with the line: “As for the sixteenth talisman, these nine characters (*zi*) are (*shi*) the names of the Nine Heavens.” In marked departure from the other fifteen talismans, the characters are described as “being” (*shi*) the esoteric names of the Nine Heavens rather than “summoning” (*zhao*) gods; the actual talismans and their instructions are missing in the “Sanhuang tianwen dazi” section, but they appear in the “Dazi xiapian fù” section, where they are used for the purpose of summoning (*zhao*). Thus, the sixteenth talisman of the “Sanhuang tianwen dazi” was subdivided into nine talismanic characters, one for the name of each heaven, themselves composed of multiple constituent characters. If these were the same group of nine talismans missing from the “Renhuang wen,” it may explain why they were set apart from the rest of the “Sanhuang tianwen dazi” in the “Sanhuang yaoyong pin.”

The “Sanhuang yaoyong pin” contains considerable portions of the *Tianwen dazi*. If this text is a version of the *Sanhuang wen* as the “Baopu miyan”

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57 *Wushang biyao*, 25.9a-10b; see Ofuchi, *Dōkyō to sono kyōten*, 261. These nine talismans also have counterparts in the “Xicheng yaojue,” namely talismans number 1 through 9 in the same order. The significance of this coincidence is discussed below, 168—173.

58 *Wushang biyao*, 25.3a.
notably suggests, then one should expect some overlap with the talismans of the
“Tianhuang wen,” “Dihuang wen” and “Renhuang wen” section from the same
chapter, which represent the other version of the Sanhuan wen. And there is such
an overlap: in addition to the aforementioned nine talismans from the “Renhuang
wen,” Taiyi, the Lord of the North (Beijun), the Director of Destinies (Siming),
and the Generals of the Sun and Moon (riyue jiangjun 日月將軍) from the
“Tianhuang wen” have their counterparts in the opening “Sanhuang tianwen
dazi.”59 The “Dihuang wen” has talismans for the gods of the Five Peaks (xiyue,
beiyue, nanyue, zhongyue, dongyue), the Four Waterways (sidu), and the Three
Rivers (sanhe), all of which figure in the “Sanhuang tianwen dazi.”

Chapter 25 of the Wushang biyao, the “Sanhuang yaoyong pin” preserves a
sizeable portion of Bao Jing’s Sanhuan wen—or at the very least, a late sixth-
century version of it.60 If, as certain accounts purport, this scripture was composed
of three groups of fourteen talismans, then it likely contains all of it—save for the
illustrations of the talismans and the extended instructions. The “Sanhuan
yaoyong pin” also holds a “Sanhuang tianwen dazi” section and a “Dazi xiapian
fu” section, which constitute a large fragment of Bo He’s Tianwen dazi. If this text,

59 The last group of talismans from the “Renhuang wen,” includes a Scribe of the Nine
Heavens (jiutian luli 九天織吏), who is strongly reminiscent of the Nine Heavens
Inspector Against Obscenities (jiutian cijian shi) mentioned in the “Sanhuan tianwen
dazi” section of the chapter.
60 Poul Andersen, “Dongshen badi miaojing jing,” 269, agrees; however, he sustains
that the “Sanhuan tianwen dazi” and “Dazi xiapian fu” sections are partly based on
Bao Jing’s Sanhuan wen, on account of a passage from Wushang biyao, 25.2b.1—2,
that corresponds to a quotation in Taiping yulan, 676.8b, from a Sanhuan xumu 三皇
序目 (Prefatory Catalogue to the Three Sovereigns Corpus). Andersen surmises that
this is the same Xumu attributed to Bao Jing in the Xuanmen dayi citation found in
Yunji qiqian, 6.10b-11b. The two lines from the “Sanhuan yaoyong pin” are the
instructions to the first talisman from the “Sanhuan tianwen dazi” series.
Nevertheless, instructions for the “Dazi xiapian fu” talismans were to be counted as
part of Bao Jing’s “Renhuang wen,” hence it is entirely possible that other directives
from the Tianwen dazi were also included in the Dayou sanhuang jing.
like Bao Jing’s, incorporated a total of (3X14) forty-two talismans, then the fragments conserved in the “Sanhuang yaoyong pin” amount to about half of the original number from Tianwen dazi.

2. Traces of the Tianwen dazi

Substantial segments of the Tianwen dazi survive in chapter 25 of the Wushang biyao, the “Sanhuang yaoyong pin.” The same chapter also includes a later version of the Sanhuang wen, and while there is no explicit mention of Bao Jing or his Songshan revelation, the “Tianhuang wen,” “Dihuang wen,” and “Renhuang wen” sections likely postdate those of the “Sanhuang tianwen dazi” and the “Dazi xiapian fu”; in the first place, the appended instructions to their talismans are much less lacunose than those of the segments based on the Tianwen dazi. Secondly, the three Sanhuang wen methods direct the reader to the Tianwen 天文 for clarifications on a number of occasions.61 The “Dihuang wen,” for example, provides the talisman for summoning the spirits of snakes, vipers, insects, and rats, further specifying that inquisitive adepts should look up their individual esoteric names in the Tianwen dazi.62

Although Ge Hong did not relate Bao Jing to the Sanhuang wen in his writings, the distinction between a Sanhuang tianwen in three scrolls and a what

61 See, for instance, Wushang biyao, 25.7ab and 9b; the “Tianhuang wen,” 25.4b-5a, offers a remedial method for those who have transgressed against the liturgical prescriptions of the Tianwen dazi and whose requests were consequently denied. Could Bao Jing’s text have been a simpler, more “user-friendly” version of the Sanhuang wen?
62 Wushang biyao, 25.6b.
appears to be [Sanhuang] yuanwen in the Baopu zi’s bibliographic catalogue does indicate that he was familiar with both versions. In light of the findings from the present chapter, Ge Hong’s affixing of the term “tianwen” to the title of the Sanhuang wen in a handful of passages appears much more significant than previously thought: “some people use the books of the Sanhuang tianwen to summon the Director of Destinies, the Director of Dangers, the Lords of the Five Peaks, the headmen of the roads, or the spirits of the Six Ding who permit themselves to be seen of men and to make replies […]” Here, Ge Hong is tacitly attempting to differentiate Bo He’s version of the text from the Sanhuang yuanwen of Bao Jing—which was steeped in controversy from the moment of its appearance. Due to Ge Hong’s close relationship to Bao Jing, as his disciple and son-in-law, distinguishing one text from the other had to be done tastefully and discreetly, without any discernible references to the question of authenticity.

Elsewhere in the Baopu zi, Ge Hong discusses a talisman from Bo He’s Sanhuang wen in a passage that contains the earliest occurrence of Tianwen dazi as a title for the scripture:

The Tianwen dazi contains the writing [for the name] of the Emperor of the North (you Beidi shu 有北帝書). If one writes this on a piece of silk and

63 Baopu zi, 19.333; Ware, 312, and 382.
64 Baopu zi, 15.272—73 from Ware, 255. The talismans for all the deities listed in this passage can be found Wushang biyao 25 and the Badi miaojing jing’s “Xicheng yaojue.”
65 The account of Bo He’s reception on Mount Xicheng from the Shenxian zhuan, cited in Taiping yulan, 663.6b, also carefully underlines the distinction by alluding to the Sanhuang tianwen dazi; see 37—38 for the passage in question. Conversely, the corresponding lines from the Baopu zi simply refer to the Sanhuang neiwen; see Baopu zi 19. 336—37; Ware, 314.
wears it at the waist, it will also repel wind and waves, crocodiles, tigers, and water creatures.\textsuperscript{66}

Despite the distinction, both versions of the \textit{Sanhuang wen} remained intimately connected. As examined above, their methods were apparently interchangeable, differing only in the minutiae of ritual prescriptions, and perhaps, the talismanic graphs. In an excerpt that recalls the one a few lines above, The \textit{Baopu zi} extols the benefits of the \textit{Sanhuang wen} in similar terms to those employed for the \textit{Tianwen dazi} talisman: “it will rout tigers and wolves […]. When crossing rivers and seas with this book, adepts will be able to dispel crocodiles and dragons, and halt the wind and waves.”\textsuperscript{67} Shortly thereafter, Ge Hong enumerates further merits of applying the \textit{Sanhuang wen}. He notes:

There are also eighteen characters, and by keeping it inside your clothes, you may travel far over streams, rivers, and seas, and end your journey at the windless and waveless boundaries.\textsuperscript{68}

The thematic elements that are listed here are reminiscent of those of the Emperor of the North’s talisman from the \textit{Tianwen dazi}. Returning to the “Sanhuang yaoyong pin,” the “Tianhuang wen” includes a talisman whose method is now familiar:

The fifth talisman, which is made up of \textit{eighteen characters}, summons the Lord of the North (\textit{beijun}). If you fear hardships related to water, or if you have fallen victim to a water disease, then perform this rite like the one

\textsuperscript{66} \textit{Baopu zi}, 17.308; Ware, 295; The only text in the \textit{Baopu zi}’s bibliographic catalogue that contains either the terms \textit{tianwen} or \textit{dazi} is the \textit{Sanhuang tianwen}; this leaves no doubt as to the fact that Ge Hong is referring to the \textit{Sanhuang wen}.

\textsuperscript{67} \textit{Baopu zi}, 19.336; I borrow Ware’s translation from \textit{Alchemy, Medicine, Religion}, 315.

\textsuperscript{68} \textit{Baopu zi}, 19.337; Ware, 316.
pertaining to Taiyi, and the Lord of the North will surely come to you. He will transmit encouraging words and thoughts, and you will surely be free of any trouble. By merely writing out the characters of the Lord of the North and keeping them in your clothing, then, even if traveling on a vessel for ten thousand li, neither wind nor waves will rise up, nor will the ship sink. Surely you will consider [the worth of this talisman] verified!

The likeness between passages that are tied to Bao Jing’s Dayou sanhuang wen and those relating to the Tianwen dazi demonstrate that the two versions of the scripture had considerable overlap in content and especially in function. Moreover the parallels between the respective passages in the Baopu zi and the “Sanhuang yaoyong pin” show that they were based on very similar sources.

Chapter 25 of the Wushang biyao thus offers a precious window into the Bo He and Bao Jing versions of the Sanhuang wen during the fourth to sixth centuries.

3. The Appended Materials

69 The talisman for summoning Taiyi precedes this one in the “Tianhuang wen.” Its instructions are comparatively more fleshed out; see Wushang biyao, 25.3b-4a.
70 Wushang biyao, 25 4a4. Italics mine for emphasis; see Wushang biyao 25.2b, and Badi miaojing jing, 22a, for talismans related to the same deity.
71 In describing the applications of the Tianwen dazi, the Yiqie daojing yinyi miaomen youqi (The Origin and Development of Daoist Doctrine; CT 1123), 5.24a, duplicates a stock phrase that is often used for the Dayou sanhuang wen: “as for the [San] huang wen dazi, it permits one to communicate with the spirits and make the numina descend” (tongshen zhiling 通神致靈).
72 Ofuchi, Dōkyō to sono kyōten, 260, and 274, suggests that what is preserved in the “Sanhuang yaoyong pin” might be identical to texts that Ge Hong had in his collection; he notes another, although less glaring parallel between the Baopu zi and Wushang biyao 25; Baopu zi, 19.337; Ware, 315, describes one of the powers afforded to those who possess the Sanhuang wen in the following way: “if others are plotting against you, their harm will turn against them (you moyi zi zhe, bi fan zizhong shang 有謀議己者必反自中傷); correspondingly, the Wushang biyao, 25.6a, explains “if others are covertly plotting against you (ruo ta yinmo xutu zi zhe 若他陰謀欲圖己者) , then write this method […], and all will be auspicious.”
Aside from the segments on the *Dayou sanhuang wen* and the *Tianwen dazi*, the “Sanhuang yaoyong pin” also includes a few more sections that are based on Sanhuang materials. The first of these is the “Sanhuang neiyin” (Esoteric Sounds of the Three Sovereigns), which contains five talismans; one of them, the Great Bond of the Divine Immortal Ascending to Heaven (Shenxian shengtian daquan wen), was presented above. The title of this section bears a strong resemblance to the “Sanhuang neibi yinwen” (Occulted Secret Esoteric Script of the Three Sovereigns) sub-division of the *Daomen dingzhi* (Prescribed Rules for the Daoist Community; CT 1224), 4.1a—7b; the passage in question allegedly holds (what is most probably a Tang or Song dynasty impression of) the *Sanhuang wen*’s talismanic graphs; see Ófuchi Ninji, *Dōkyō to sono kyōten*, 271; and Pregadio, *Great Clarity*, 283, n.8.

While they...
are unrelated to the *Sanhuang wen* in the *Baopu zi*, the “Sanhuang yaoyong pin” presents the talismans as part and parcel of the scripture’s transmission materials.\(^7\)

These were addenda incorporated into the tradition after Ge Hong’s time in light of their identical function—namely summoning deities for divinatory or apotropaic purposes—and common roots in the Southern esoteric tradition. They are included in the aforementioned *Dongshen jing* inventories, but are duly isolated from the three-scroll (*Dayou*) *Sanhuang wen* and the *Tianwen dazi*.\(^7\) The “Sanhuang yaoyong pin” alludes to their status as secondary materials, by specifying that they were derived from the primary talismans of the *Sanhuang wen* or *Tianwen dazi*.

These “floating talismans” were collected and incorporated into the fourth scroll of the four-scroll early fifth-century *Dongshen jing*. As indicated in the

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\(^{77}\) *Wushang biyao*, 25.7b-9b. *Baopu zi*, 17.300; Ware, 282, places the Seal of the Crimson Office (Zhuguan yin 夔官印) on relatively equal footing with the *Sanhuang neiwen* and *Wuyue zhenxing tu*, explaining that all three talismanic documents should be used in conjunction when entering mountains and summoning their spirits.

\(^{78}\) See Appendix 5; and, *Dongxuan lingbao sandong fengdao kejie yingshi*, 4.7b; *Taishang dongshen sanhuang yi*, 8a—12b; and *Taishang dongshen sanhuang chuanshou yi*, 13a.

\(^{79}\) See the opening line for the instructions accompanying each talisman on *Wushang biyao*, 25.8ab.
“Baopu miyan” there were two versions of this fourth scroll, one transmitted with the *Dayou jing*, the other with the *Xiaoyou jing*. Without a doubt, the appendices from the respective Sanhuang collections shared numerous talismans, but there was also a good deal of dissonance; this explains the disparity observed when comparing different inventories of the *ex-libris* Sanhuang talismans; depending on the source, some of the talismans from the “Sanhuang neiyin” are absent, and new ones are added. Others are more consistently recorded in *Dongshen jing* indices; fixtures include the Collected Talismans for Inspecting Heaven (*jianqian zhongfu*) and Green Embryo talisman (*qingtai fu*). The Green Embryo Talisman encountered in the “Sanhuang yaoyong pin,” for instance, also appears in Tao Hongjing’s catalogue of Sanhuang materials obtained from Sun Youyue; it is listed as coming from “Bao and Ge,” which signals that it was likely included in the *Dayou jing*’s list of “floating talismans,” but not the *Xiaoyou jing*’s.

Chapter 25 of the *Wushang biyao* further contains two supplemental talismans in the “Sanhuang zhuanwen” (Three Sovereigns Transmission Talismans) section, namely the Most High Talisman for Longlife and Preservation (*taishang changcun fu*) and the Hidden Talisman of the Five Peaks (*wuyue yinfu*). The latter is presented as a kind of requisite complement to the *Wuyue zhenxing tu* that guarantees an audience with the spirits.

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80 The vast majority of “floating talismans” from *Dongshen jing* catalogues are attested in the *Baopuzi*; see Appendix 5.
81 P.2559, in Ôfuchi, *Zurokuhen*, 724, l. 99, and 724, l. 119—20; Ôfuchi, *Mokurokuhen*, 331—32. The presence of the Crimson Embryo Talisman in the *Baopuzi* was signaled above, 163, n. 76; for the Collected Talismans for Inspecting Heaven (*jianqian zhongfu*), see *Baopuzi*, 19.335; Ware, 384—8.5
82 *Wushang biyao*, 25.7b-8a;
83 *Wushang biyao*, 9b.
of the Five Peaks. Like the talismans from the “Sanhuang neiyn,” these were probably counted among the materials of the fourth scroll.

From the outset, the appended talismanic materials of Sanhuang tradition were used as tokens of spiritual achievement or guarantees of proper pedigree in the transmission rites—confirmation that the adept was worthy to receive the coveted Sanhuang wen. The Dongxuan lingbao sandong fengdao kejie yingshi (Regulations for Practicing the Dao in Accordance with the Scriptures of the Three Caverns; CT 1125) supplies a two-tiered list of talismans to be transmitted along with the Sanhuang scriptures. It classifies almost thirty charts, writs, and talismans in two separate categories of reception: one for lower-level Dongshen initiates (dizi 弟子) and the other for “peerless Dongshen ritual masters” (wushang dongshen fashi 無上洞神法師). While the

84 The text explains: “another of [this talisman’s] many names is the Tiansheng taijing (Scripture of the Heavenly Generated Embryo); if the adept has the Wuyue tu (Charts of the Five Peaks) but does not possess this hidden talisman, then the Five Peaks will not send forth their five sentinel spirits”; Wushang biyao, 9b.
85 Ironically, this symbolic role was eventually taken over by the Sanhuang wen itself, when it became a transmission material for basic ordination into the Daoist tradition.
86 Dongxuan lingbao sandong fengdao kejie yingshi, 4.7b. Yohioka Yoshitoyo, Sando hodo kakai gihan, 39—45, proposes a date of composition around 550, therefore coterminous with the circulation of the eleven and/or fourteen scroll Sanhuang canons; see also a related section of the this text that was only preserved in P.2337 Sandong fengdao kejie yifan (Observances on the Rules and Precepts for Practicing the Dao in Accordance with the Scriptures of the Three Caverns); the list Sanhuang transmission talismans can be found on 2.9b-10a, in Zhonghua Daozang, 42.002, 33—34; see also Ōfuchi Ninji, Tonkō dōkyō: Mokurokuhen, 116—21; Zurokuhen, 223—42 see Kohn, The Daoist Monastic Ritual, 23—48; and her “The date and compilation of the Fengdao kejie, the first handbook of monastic Taoism,” for a complete treatment and translation of the Daozang and Dunhuang sources; see also Yoshitoyo, “Sandō hōdō kakai gihan no kenkyū,” 39—45; and Liu Tsun-yan. “Sandō fengdaō kejie yifan juan diwu: P. 2337 zhong Jin Ming Qizhen yici zhi tuice.”
87 Two other texts that were mentioned in Chapter 2, the Taishang dongshen sanhuang yi (Rituals of the Three Sovereigns) and the Taishang dongshen sanhuang chuanshou yi (Rituals for the Transmission of the Scriptures of Three Sovereigns), also provide similar lists of “floating talismans” and other transmission materials; however, these
catalogue includes the *Sanhuang wen*, the *Tianwen dazi*, and the talismans of the “*Sanhuang neiyin*” that together constituted the four-scroll Sanhuang corpus, it also enumerates other materials that are tied to the fourteen-scroll version; this has led scholars to conclude that the list is a table of contents of the fourteen-scroll *Dongshen jing*.\(^88\) Thus, the transmission of the *Sanhuang wen* involved appended materials from the moment that a fourth-scroll was formed—and possibly earlier. In fact, the *Sanhuang wen* acquired an increasing number of scrolls, precisely for the purpose of regulating the transmission of “floating talismans” and other documents. With the restructuring of the corpus into the ten- and fourteen-scroll formats, the earlier materials that made up the fourth scroll were reorganized and preserved.

With a seemingly complete set of talismans from Bao Jing’s *Sanhuang wen*, and a series of “floating talismans,” the *Wushang biyao*’s “Sanhuang yaoyong pin” constitutes an integral snapshot of the four-scroll *Dongshen jing*. What is more, it contains a sizeable fragment of Bo He’ *Sanhuang wen*, the *Tianwen dazi*. Since all the materials from the chapter are taken from the *Dongshen jing*, then one may safely assume that both versions of the *Sanhuang wen* were included in the nascent Sanhuang corpus.\(^89\) This, at least, would be the case for the *Dayou jing* version of the corpus; after the establishment of the Three Caverns, Bo He’s

\(^{88}\) Andersen, “*Dongshen badi yuanbian jing,*” 502. The list ends with the following observation: “*Dongshen jing* in fourteen scrolls”; *Dongxuan lingbao sandong fengdao kejie yingshi*, 4.7b. The materials do not appear to be divided by chapter or scroll.

\(^{89}\) *Wushang biyao*, 25.15a.
Tianwen dazi was preserved but relegated among the “floating talismans” of the fourth scroll. One would assume that the reverse was true of the four-scroll Xiaoyou jing mentioned in the “Baopu miyan,” that is to say, Bao Jing’s Sanhuang wen was relegated to the background, leaving the first three scrolls to the Tianwen dazi. Given that it opens with the “Sanhuang tianwen dazi,” it would be tempting to see the Wushang biyao’s “Sanhuang yaoyong pin” as the four-scroll Xiaoyou jing, but given the sometimes impressionistic nature of the instructions and the jumbled order of sections (a fragment from the Tianwen dazi also closes the text) it is impossible to draw this conclusion with certainty; in either case, the materials were ostensibly the same, and it remains that chapter 25 of the Wushang biyao is a precious portrait of the elusive four-scroll Sanhuang corpus.

4. Essential Instructions from the Immortal of the Western Citadel

Large fragments of Bao Jing’s and Bo He’s versions of the Sanhuang wen survive in the “Sanhuang yaoyong pin.” The “Xicheng yaojue” from the Badi miaojing jing is another text that contains remnants of the talismanic scripture. The section’s full title, “Xicheng yaojue sanhuang tianwen nei dazi” (Essential Instructions to the Esoteric Great Characters of Celestial Writ of the Three Sovereigns) unambiguously refers to Bo He’s Tianwen dazi and to Lord Wang’s oral instructions.90 In his Taogong chuanshou yi (Lord Tao’s Rites of Transmission

90 The name of the text is the full title for Bo He’s Sanhuang wen. It recalls the Sanhuang newiwen tianwen dazi (The Great Characters in Celestial Script of the
and Reception) Tao Hongjing alternately identifies this text as the *Xicheng shixing* (Applied Practices of [Lord Wang] of the Western Citadel) or the *Tianwen dazi*.91

Indeed, fourteen of sixteen talismans listed in the “Sanhuang tianwen dazi” from the “Sanhuang yaoyon pin” can be found in the “Xicheng yaojue.”92 The two texts have incomplete instructions for many of their talismans, thus it is hard to compare specific details. Nonetheless, even with partial instructions, the results are impressive. For example the talisman for summoning the Lord Marquis of Rivers (He houjun), from the “Sanhuang tianwen dazi” series contains a phrase that is highly analogous to its “Xicheng yaojue” counterpart: “The fifteenth talisman, which contains ten characters, summons the Marquis of Rivers, to whom one may ask about floods and drought (*yiwen shuishi* 訇_svg).”93 The corresponding passage in the “Xicheng yaojue” has: “[this talisman] can summon the Count of Rivers (Hebo 河伯)[…], [to whom] one may inquire about floods and drought (*kewen shuihan*_ ünü_svg).”94 While the annotations to the talismans are not identical, they are close enough to determine that they were reproduced from slightly dissimilar redactions of the same text, namely the *Tianwen dazi*.

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91 P.2559, in Ōfuchi, *Zurokuhen*, 724, l. 99, and 724, l. 119—20, respectively; also see *Ōfuchi, Mokurokuhen*, 331—32; see Chapter 2, 83—84, for translations of the passages in question.

92 Since the images of the talismans from the “Sanhuang yaoyong pin” are lost, it is unfortunately impossible to compare them with those preserved in the “Xicheng yaojue.” The names of deities from talismans 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14, 15, and 16 from the “Sanhuang tianwen dazi” correspond to those found in the instructions to talismans 28, 48, 49, 59—63, 90, 40, 59—63, 64, 65, 69, 46, 70, 11, 55, and 1—9 respectively in the “Xicheng yaojue.” Only the thirteenth talisman from the first group, which summons Laozi, also known as Lao Peng 老彭, has no equivalent in the “Xicheng yaojue”; see Appendix 4 for details.

93 *Wushang biyao*, 25.3a; cf. *Wushang biyao*, 25.10a, for quasi-identical instructions

94 *Badi miaojing jing*, 18a:
On the other hand, the talismans from the “Dazi xiapian fu” section of the “Sanhuang yaoyong pin” are found in the “Xicheng yaojue,” in the same order and with complete instructions to boot.95 Every bit of information, from the name of the Nine Heavens, to the name of the deities that the talismans summon, down to specifications about the color of ink, is a quasi-verbatim replica of the “Dazi xiapian fu.”96

Aside from preserving a number of talismans from the Tianwen dazi, the “Xicheng yaojue” also contains a substantial narrative component with moral and ritual directives, recipes for elixirs, and an account of Lord Wang and Bo He’s meeting.97 These supplementary oral instructions serve the purpose of contextualizing the talismans, and together with them, constitute the closest thing to a complete specimen of Tianwen dazi.

However, upon closer inspection, many of the talismans from the “Tianhuang wen,” “Dihuang wen,” and “Renhuang wen” sections of the “Sanhuang yaoyong pin” also appear in the “Xicheng yaojue.”98 Moreover, some of the deities from this text’s first nine entries, whose source is confirmed to be

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95 Thus the “Sanhuang yaoyong” might be based on two different redactions of the Tianwen dazi. This would explain why the two fragments were not consecutive.
96 All of the stipulations from the “Dazi xiapian fu” are duplicated in the same order, and word for word in the “Xicheng yaojue,” although the latter contains more detailed directives. Compare Wushang biyao, 25.9b-10b to Badi miaojing jing, 17a-18a. There is one exception: the last talisman from the “Dazi xiapian fu” is to be copied in “red writing” (danshu 丹書), a directive that is not found in the corresponding passage from the “Xicheng yaojue”;
97 See Appendix 1 for an overview of the text and its sections.
98 The deities from the fourteen “Tianhuang wen” talismans are also encountered, with minor variations, in the “Xicheng yaojue”’s 9th and 76th, 2nd and 23rd, 1st and 84th, 22nd, 40th (again), 2nd, 3rd, 5th, 8th and 67th, 10th, 11th, 13th, 12th, and 14th talismans respectively. The talismans from the “Dihuang wen” section correspond to talismans 16, 15, 4 and 85, 17, 18 and 19, 25, 20, 33 and 89, 35, 34 and 92, 36, 32, 37, and 52 and 65 of the “Xicheng yaojue.” The five talismans of the “Renhuang wen” section are equivalent the “Xicheng yaojue”’s 10th and 80th, 3rd (but also 2nd, 22nd, 23rd and 90th), 26th, 24th, and 27th talismans respectively; see Appendix 4 for correspondences.
Tianwen dazi, reappear in the roster of talismans with different instructions and different graphs. The Sovereign of Heaven (Tianhuang 天皇) for instance, second among the names of the Nine Heavens, appears sixty-nine talismans later as the Lord Sovereign of Heaven (Tianhuang jun 天皇君). These duplicate are from Bao Jing’s Dayou jing, which was known to summon many of the same deities as the Tianwen dazi. On account of this overlap and the presence of talismans that are included in the Dayou sanhuang wen excerpts from the “Sanhuang yaoyong pin,” it appears that the “Xicheng yaojue” also incorporated talismans from Bao Jing’s version of the scripture.

Due to the fragmentary way in which the “Sanhuang yaoyong pin” and the “Xicheng yaojue,” preserved the Dayou sanhuang wen and Tianwen dazi, it is impossible to determine what proportion of talismans comes from each version of the Sanhuang scripture. Some deities have two talismans, others three. It is however, possible to approximate: the “Xicheng yaojue” holds ninety-two talismans. As speculated above, assuming that each scroll had fourteen talismans, the total number of talismans for Bao Jing’s Sanhuang wen would be forty-two. If the Tianwen dazi, fundamentally the same text, had an equal amount, namely forty-two (fourteen per for each of its three scrolls), then the sum of talismans from both scriptures would be eighty-four, eight shy of the “Xicheng yaojue” count.

99 Compare Badi miaojing jing, 17a to 26a; consider also the Lofty High (Gaoshang 高上), who appears in the 1st and the 84th talismans; Badi miaojing jing, 17a and 27b; the Director of Destinies (Siming 司命), whose name occurs in the 2nd and 48th talismans; Badi miaojing jing, 17a and 23a; the Director of the Underworld (Siyin 司陰), found in the 4th and 85th talismans; Badi miaojing jing, 17b and 28a; the High Sovereign (Gaohuang 高皇), who can be found in the 7th and 83rd talismans; Badi miaojing jing, 18a and 27b; the Heavenly Emperor (Tiandi 天帝), who appears in the 9th and 76th talismans; Badi miaojing jing, 18a and 26b; and finally the Father and Mother of the Nine Heavens (Jutian fumu 九天父母), seen in the 9th and 49th talismans; Badi miaojing jing, 18a and 23a; see also Appendix 4.
Regardless of the exact number, the “Xicheng yaojue” appears to have borrowed talismans from Bo He and Bao Jing in roughly equal proportions.

Nonetheless, given the predominance of references to Lord Wang or Bo He—from the title to its narrative scaffolding, the “Xicheng yaojue” was definitely partial to the *Tianwen dazi* and its transmission lineage. Although it remains delicate, a passage at the end of the text reinforces the distinction between the two *Sanhuang wen* revelations, implicitly favoring one over the other:

Among the above talismans, those that start from “The Name of Gaoshang” down to “The Name of Tiandi” [talismans one through nine, from the *Tianwen dazi*] are to be used in conjunction with the Nine Practices (*jiuxing* 九行). The instructions for summoning that are inscribed below [the talismans] are different from the stipulations and prescriptions found in the *Baogong neijing* (Inner Scripture of Duke Bao). If adepts are to rely on the *Wangjun shixing* (Applied Practices of Lord Wang), then they should follow the annotations for the Nine Practices [as they are found in the present text].

The above lines betray that originally, the “Xicheng yaojue” was uniquely composed of Bo He’s *Tianwen dazi* and its instructions. They also reveal that the text was annotated at a time when both versions of the *Sanhuang wen* were in circulation, namely from the beginning of the fourth century to the mid-seventh. However, the absence of references to the *Xiaoyou jing* or *Dayou jing*, and the mention of a “*Baogong neijing*” in lieu of the more habitual post-437 “*Sanhuang wen*” suggest that the gloss was added as early as the mid to late fourth century.

100 *Badi miaojing jing*, 29a1; also see Ofuchi, *Dōkyō to sono kyōten*, 270—71. Note that self-referential *Wangjun shixing* is almost identical to the title *Xicheng shixing* (Applied Practices of the Western Citadel) provided by Tao Hongjing in his *Taogong chuanshou yi* (Lord Tao’s Rites of Transmission and Reception); P.2559, in Ofuchi, *Zurokuhen* 724 l.99; Ofuchi, *Mokurokuhen*, 331—32; see Chapter 2, 83, for the complete passage.
The text itself almost certainly antedates the annotation. Thus, despite the fact that it lacks many of the oral instructions for individual talismans, the *Tianwen dazi* portion of the “Xicheng yaojue” provides a privileged look at Bo He’s *Sanhuan wen*—quite possibly the same one that Ge Hong had in his possession.

The reasons for subsequently integrating the talismans from Bao’s *Sanhuan wen* into the “Xicheng yaojue” are hard to fathom, particularly in a tradition that so heavily emphasized distinctions between transmission lineages. The answer to this riddle might lie in the Tang dynasty proscription of the *Dayou sanhuang wen*, or contemporaneous polemical pressures. The *Dayou jing* may have been concealed within the “Xicheng yaojue” after the proscription of 648, within the very bosom of its textual compeer, in order to ensure that it would survive. The extant version of the *Badimiao jing’s “Xicheng yaojue”* thereby preserves a sizeable part of what eventually became the *Dayou jing* and *Xiaoyou jing*.

The “Sanhuang yaoyon pin” from the *Wushang biyao* and the “Xicheng yaojue” contain a large proportion of the four-scroll *Dongshen jing*, which, according to contemporary accounts, was composed of the same materials that later formed the eleven and fourteen-scroll Sanhuang corpora. The fragments of Bao Jing’s *Dayou sanhuang wen (Dayou jing)*, Bo He’s *Sanhuan tianwen dazi (Xiaoyou jing)*, and the “floating talismans” that survive in the “Sanhuang yaoyong pin” and the “Xicheng yaojue” represent the textual core of the Sanhuang tradition of the six Dynasties, and the fundaments for the Daoist Canon’s Dongshen division. All of these documents explored the same topic, the use of talismans in divinatory techniques and apotropaic methods, the quintessential feature of the Sanhuang. The “Xicheng yaojue” and “Sanhuang yaoyong pin” are vivid
illustrations of how vital these ritual implements are to the tradition. Talismans are the focal point of Sanhuang scriptures, the textual nexus around which peripheral elements such as oral instructions, metaphysical speculations, precepts, alchemical recipes, or meditation practices accrue. Nevertheless, despite their secondary standing, these ancillary components of the tradition are just as important, for they define the contours through which the tradition establishes its identity.

The next chapter will consider some of these lesser-known characteristics of the Sanhuang tradition. More pointedly, the preparation of elixirs and meditative exercises on the gods of the inner pantheon are two often-ignored practices that are just as ingredient to the Sanhuang as talismans. Through a better understanding of these elements and how they fit in tradition’s repertoire of magico-divinatory technologies, a more accurate formulation of the Sanhuang worldview may be articulated, one that hopefully goes beyond the familiar cliché of a tradition that is solely defined by talismanic practices.
Appendix 3: Overview of Variations in Titles for the Purpose of Distinguishing between Versions of the Sanhuang wen in Relevant Early Medieval Sources

BH = title refers to Bo He’s version
BJ = title refers to Bao Jing’s version
BJ+BH = titles refer to both Bo He’s and Bao Jing’s versions
The absence of an annotation denotes a passage in which the title does not specifically refer to one of the two versions.


3. Yunji qiqian 雲笈七籖 [Seven Lots from the Bookcase of the Clouds]. Zhang Junfang 張君房 (fl.1008-29), ca. 1028. Daozang, CT 1032.
*To the best of my knowledge, this is the only example of “三皇天文” being used in reference to Bao Jing’s version of the Sanhuang wen.


### Appendix 4: Deities Summoned with the Ninety-two Talismans of the “Xicheng yaojue” along with Corresponding or Associated Deities from the Talismans of the “Sanhuang yaoyong pin”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>List of Talismans from the “Xicheng yaojue” 西城要訣, 17a—28b</th>
<th>Corresponding or Associated Talismans from the “Sanhuang yaoyong pin” 三皇要用品, 1a—10b*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. 高士太和 (高上名)</td>
<td>16. 九天之名 (“三皇天文大字”)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. 高上 (“天皇文”)</td>
<td>1. 高上太和 (高上名) (“大字下篇符”)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. 司命 (天皇名)</td>
<td>16. 九天之名 (“三皇天文大字”)</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. 司命 (“天皇文”)</td>
<td>6. 司命 (天皇名) (“大字下篇符”)</td>
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<td>2. 司命, 司錄, 太一, 天一 (“人皇文”)</td>
<td>2. 司命, 司錄, 太一, 天一 (“人皇文”)</td>
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<td>3. 司錄 (高皇名)</td>
<td>16. 九天之名 (“三皇天文大字”)</td>
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<td>7. 司錄 (“天皇文”)</td>
<td>3. 司錄 (高皇名) (“大字下篇符”)</td>
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<td>4. 司陰 (太上名)</td>
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<td>3. 司陰 (“地皇文”)</td>
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<tr>
<td>92. 咲水王, 南嵠郎</td>
<td>10. 南嵠 (“地皇文”)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

* Out of the 58 talismans contained in the two versions of the *Sanhuang wen* from the “Sanhuang yaoyong pin,” only talisman 13 of the “Sanhuang tianwen dazi,” which summons Laozi 老子 (or Laopeng 老彭), does not find its equivalent or parent in the “Xicheng yaojue.”
Appendix 5: Comparative Inventory of “Floating Talismans” and Ordination Materials for the Sanhuang Tradition from Relevant Sources


In light of the fact that it is the most elaborate surviving specimen, the following list from the Dongxuan lingbao sandong fengdao kejie yingshi will be used as the basis for comparison between other inventories of “floating talismans” and ordination materials related to the Sanhuang tradition. The Dunhuang version (P. 2337) of the text contains three fewer documents than the Daozang version. In total, 28 consecutively numbered talismans or texts are listed. Corresponding documents from other indexes are listed according to the numbers and order from the Dongxuan lingbao sandong fengdao kejie yingshi, but their titles are rendered as they appear in respective sources. Additional documents that are not encountered in the Dongxuan lingbao sandong fengdao kejie yingshi inventory but can be found in multiple other texts are listed in “Additional ‘Floating Talismans’” under the relative source. Pagination is provided either at the end of the bibliographic information, or, in the case of disparate page references, next to the title of individual documents.

1. 金剛童子錄
2. 竹使符
3. 普下版
4. 三皇內精符
5. 三皇內真諱
6. 九天發兵符
7. 天水飛騰符
8. 八帝靈書內文
9. 黃帝丹書內文
10. 八成五勝十三符
11. 八史録
12. 東西二禁
13. 三皇三戒五戒八戒文
14. 天皇內學文
15. 地皇記書文
16. 人皇內文
17. 三皇天文大字
18. 黃女神符
19. 三將軍圖
20. 九皇圖
21. 昇天券
22. 三皇傳版
23. 三皇真形內諱版
24. 三皇三一真形內諱版
25. 三皇九天真符契令
26. 三皇印
27. 三皇玉券
28. 三皇表鞄帶
2. *Taishang dongshen sanhuang yi* 太上洞神三皇儀 [Rituals of the Three Sovereigns].
Late Sui or early Tang. Daozang, CT 803.7a—12a

| 1. 童子籙     | 16. 人皇內文     |
| 2. 竹使符     | 17. 三皇天文大字 |
| 4. 祝內精符   | 18. 黃女神符     |
| 5. 三皇內諷板 | 19. 三皇將軍     |
| 6. 九天發兵[符] | 20. 九皇圖      |
| 7. 飛騰符     | 21. 昇天劵      |
| 8. 靈書內文   | 22. 三皇內諷板  |
| 9. 丹書內文   | 23. 三一內諷板  |
| 10. 八威五勝十三符 | 24. 九天符契   |
| 14. 天皇內學字 | 25. 九天印      |
| 15. 地皇內記經文 | 26. 九天印      |

3. *Taishang dongshen sanhuang chuanshou yi* 太上洞神三皇傳授儀 [Rituals for the Transmission of the Scriptures of the Three Sovereigns]. Late Sui or early Tang. Daozang, CT 1284.13a

| 1. 童子籙 | 18. 黃女符 |
| 2. 符使符 | 20. 九皇圖 |
| 3. 威下版 | 21. 昇天符 |
| 6. 九天符 | 22. 傳版 |
| 7. 天水符 | 24. 三一真形 |
| 8. 靈書 | 25. 符契 |
| 9. 丹書 | 26. 三皇越章印 |
| 10. 八威五勝符 | 27. 券文 |
| 14—16. 三皇寶文 | 28. 軍帶 |
| 17. 皇文大字 |     |

4. *Chuanshou sandong jiefa lulüe shuo* 傳授三洞經戒法籤略說 [Short Exposition on the Transmission of the Scriptures, Precepts, and Registers of the Three Caverns].
Zhang Wanfu, 張萬福 713. Daozang, CT 1241.1.7a.
1. 金剛童子錄
2. 普下版
3. 三一真諱
4. 三將軍圖
5. 九皇圖
14—16. 三皇內文
17. 三皇大字


13. 八戒 (1a—2b)
14—16. 三皇文 (12a—29b)
17. 三皇天文大字 (12a—29b)
20. 九皇圖 (6a—10a)

19—21. 三皇內文


6. 九天發兵內符 (25.8a)
7. 天水飛騰內符 (25.8b)
14—16. 三皇文 (25.3a—7b; 9b—10b)
17. 三皇天文大字 (25.1a—3a; 9b—10b)
21. 神仙昇天大券文 (25.8b—9a)

Additional “Floating Talismans”:

a. 金光自來內音符 (25.8a)*
b. 朱官青胎之符 (25.7b—8a)†
c. 五嶽陰符 (25.9b)
d. 太上長存符 (25.9b)

* see *Baopu zi* 19.335 for a 自來符 and a 金光符.
† see *Baopu zi* 17.300 for a 朱官符; and 19.335 for a 朱胎符; see also *Taogong chuanshou yi*, P.2559.724 l.100; l.120, for a 青胎.


2. 竹使符 (P.2559.723 l.82)
12. 三五之符, 西岳公禁山符 (S.3750.721 l.3—4)
14. 天皇内文 (P.2559.724 l.119—120)
15. 地皇内文 (P.2559.724 l.119—120)
16. 人皇内文 (P.2559.724 l.119—120)
17. 西城施行/天文大字 (P.2559.724 l.100/1.120)

Additional “Floating Talismans”:

b. 青胎 (P.2559.724 l.100; 1.120)*
e. 監乾符 (P.2559.724 l.120)

* see Baopu zi 19.335 for a 朱胎符; and “Sanhuang yaoyong pin” in Wushang biyao 25.7b—8a for a 朱官青胎之符.
† see Baopu zi 19.335 for a 監乾符 and “Renpin” 人品 (“Chapter on Humanity”) in Wushang biyao 5.7a—8a for a 洞神監乾經.


Aside from the textual materials and “Floating Talismans” listed below, a considerable proportion of the Sanhuang wen talismans listed in the “Xicheng yaojue” and the “Sanhuang yaoyong pin” also figure the Baopu zi’s bibliographic catalogue (19.333—35).

2. 竹使符 17.308; 20.349—50 12. 三五禁, 西岳公禁山符 17.313
4. 五精符, 玄精符 19.335 14—17. 三皇内文 19.333 (see Appendix 3 for variations)
6. 九天发兵符 19.335 18. 黃神越章之印; 17.313
7. 天水符 17.308; 19.333; 採女符 19.335
天水神符 19.335
8. 九靈符 19.335 (少千三十六將軍符 19.335)
11. 八史圖 19.333; 八卦符 19.335 25. 九天符 19.335

Additional “Floating Talismans”:

a. 自來符, 金光符 19.335*
b. 朱官印 17.300; also 朱胎符 19.335†
e. 監乾符 19.335‡

* see “Sanhuang yaoyong pin” in Wushang biyao 25.8a for a 金光自來內音符.
† see Taogong chuanshou yi, P.2559.724 l.100, and l.120, for a 青胎; and “Sanhuang yaoyong pin” in Wushang biyao 25.7b—8a for a 朱官青胎之符.
‡ see Taogong chuanshou yi, P.2559.724 l.120, for a 監乾衆符; and “Renpin” in Wushang biyao 5.7a—8a for a 洞神監乾經.
1. Li Shaojun and the Taiqing line

The previous chapter centered on talismans as chief constituents of Sanhuang identity. The few scholars that discuss the tradition depict it as an assortment of methods for summoning deities by means of talismanic inscriptions; and for good reason, since most pre-modern primary-source accounts present it in a similar light. The *Huangdi jiuding shendan jingjue* (Instructions on the Scripture of the Divine Elixirs of the Nine Tripods of the Yellow Emperor), for instance, explains that the mere possession of the *Sanhuang wen* enables practitioners to convene the gods and obtain their protection.\(^1\) The following chapter will go beyond the convention of the Sanhuang as a tradition exclusively devoted to the divinatory and apotropaic applications of talismans, and introduce new, hitherto unexamined dimensions to its teachings and ritual lore. First among these is the use of alchemical references in the surviving fragments of Sanhuang texts. A close examination of alchemical imagery will reveal close ties to the Taiqing methods and cement the conviction that the Sanhuang is a firmly grounded in Southern esoteric tradition. A second underrepresented element of the tradition is meditation, particularly that of the

\(^1\) *Jiudan jingyue* 10.6b-7a, citing the *Baopu zi*, from Pregadio, *Great Clarity*, 87.
variety that brings the inner gods of the body into play. The Three Ones (sanyi 三一), gods of the three Cinnabar fields (santian 三田) and the embryological discourse that governs the relationship between them are prevalent themes in Sanhuang meditations. These are also rooted in the network of ideas that informed the religious landscape of Jiangnan between the third and sixth centuries. Hence, it is not surprising to find parallels between certain documents of the Sanhuang preserved in the Badi miaojing jing for instance, and other seminal scriptures of the South like the Laozi zhongjing 老子中經 (Central Scripture of Laozi) or the Lingbao wufu xu (Prolegomenon to the Five Lingbao Talismans) that are similarly steeped in Han dynasty correlative and prognosticatory ideologies.

It was previously noted how elixirs and talismans share the same functions of conjuring gods, offering protection, and bestowing long life. Furthermore, as discussed in Chapter 1, the transmission lineage of the Sanhuang wen was closely related to that of the Taiqing jing.² The Baopu zi and the Shenxian zhuan both relate that the texts were handed down together. As expected, the “Xicheng yaojue” makes numerous references to alchemy, but even its supporting materials—those that were included in the fourth scroll of the Dongshen jing—contain evidence of an alchemical heritage. The instructions to the Badi miaojing jing’s version of the Talisman for Ascending to Heaven (Shengtian fu) that was examined in the previous chapter explain: “Long ago, Wei Shuqing 衛叔卿 transmitted the [talisman] on the day that he ascended to heaven (dengtian zhi ri zhuan) to Li Shaojun 李少君.”³

² See 59—61, especially.
³ Badi miaojing jing 11b. This talisman is also featured in the “Sanhuang yaoyong pin”; Wushang biyao, 25.8b. It also appears in in the bibliographic catalogue of the
Wei Shuqing is a Han dynasty master of esoterica active around the time of Han Emperor Wu (141—87 BCE). He famous for having achieved transcendence after ingesting an elixir based on “five colored cloud mother” (wuse yunmu 五色雲母) a variety of mica. As for his relation to Li Shaojun (fl. ca. 133 BCE), there is no record of them meeting, but they are contemporary figures from the same broad tradition. Li Shaojun is one of the patron saints of laboratory or “external” alchemy (waidan 外丹), a fangshi of obscure origin who served Emperor Wu as an advisor in matters related to spiritual cultivation—from the transmutation of gold to the feng 封 and shan 禪 sacrifices. Li Shaojun’s alchemical method involved making offerings to deities such as the Stove God (zaoshen 灶神). This was undertaken in an effort to solicit their presence so that they may assist in the preparation of elixirs. In this respect, it is evocative of the

_Baopu zi,_ 19.335; Ware, 384—85; and a host of other indexes of Sanhuang materials; see Appendix 5 for a list of these.

^4 _Shenxian zhuan_, in Campany, _To Live as Long as Heaven and Earth_, 271—74, and 464—67; see also, _Baopu zi_, 11.203; Ware, 187.

^5 _Shiji_, 28.1385; see Watson, _Records of the Grand Historian_, 2:39; Li Shaojun also appears in _Shiji_, 12.455; and _Hanshu_, 25A.1217; his _Shenxian zhuan_ hagiography mainly paraphrases the two previous sources, but a third episode has him saving Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒 on account of his medicinal prowess; see Campany, _To Live as Long as Heaven and Earth_, 222—28, and 434. Taiyi and corpse liberation are also featured in his vita, two themes that are linked to the Sanhuang tradition. Li Shaojun is mentioned in three _Baopu zi_ passages, namely 2.17, 2.19—20, and 20.347; Ware, 42, 47, and 321; he is also featured in the _Hanwudi waizhuan_, 3a, and 7b-12b. The latter is translated in Smith, “Han Emperor Wu,” 570; see also Schipper, _L'Empereur Wou des Han dans la légende taoïste_, 120; For more on the figure, see Pregadio, _Great Clarity_, 28—32, and Robinet, _La révélation du Shangqing_, 11, 17, 22 and 25—26.

^6 _Shiji_, 28.1385; see also Pregadio, _Great Clarity_, 31—32; Robinet, _La revelation du Shangqing_, 25; and Schafer, “The Stove God and the Alchemists,” 263—64; see also Kim Daeyeol. “Métallurgie et alchimie en Chine ancienne”; and Needham, _Science and Civilisation in China_, 5.3, 29, for more on the Stove God and his conjuration relative to waidan alchemy.
Sanhuang wen and its summoning powers.\textsuperscript{7} Another early source on alchemical practices, the lost Hongbao yuanbi shu (Arts from the Garden of Secrets of the Great Treasure) elaborated on “holy immortals and their arts of conjuring spirits and making gold, together with an important method of Zou Yan’s (305 BC - 240 BC) for prolonging life.”\textsuperscript{8} Li Shaojun was succeeded at the court of Han Wudi 漢武帝 (r. 141—87 BCE) by his disciple, Li Shaoweng 李少翁, “a specialist in conjuring spirits.”\textsuperscript{9} Summoning, by means of elixirs rather than talismans, later became a core feature of the Taiqing tradition. Pregadio writes that the “Taiqing alchemical medicines were valued for two reasons. First, they granted transcendence and immortality; second they made it possible—even with no need of ingesting them—to summon benevolent gods and expel demons and other causes of various disturbances, including illness and death.”\textsuperscript{10}

In the Baopu zi already, the conjuring properties of elixirs and talismans seem interchangeable. More than half of the nine elixirs from the “Gold and Cinnabar” (jindan 金丹) chapter can marshal deities and make them subservient.\textsuperscript{11} Alchemical methods are often employed for the express purpose of summoning gods such as the Six Jia (liu jia 六甲) and Six Ding (liu ding 六丁), who are also

\textsuperscript{7} The Stove God is closely tied to Yandi 炎帝, the Flaming Emperor, who is identified as one of the Three Sovereigns of antiquity.
\textsuperscript{8} Hanshu, 36.1928. from Pregadio, Great Clarity, 26—27.
\textsuperscript{9} Shiji, 28.0116b, and 12.458; Schafer, “The Stove God and the Alchemists,” 264. Li Shaojun is sometimes credited with summoning the spirit of Emperor Wu’s former consort, Lady Li, although the feat is traditionally attributed to Li Shaowen; see Campany, Strange Writing, 64—77 and 306—18.
\textsuperscript{10} Pregadio, Great Clarity, 8. For more on elixirs that function as talismans, see 129—30. That is not to say that Taiqing practices relegated talismans to the proverbial dustbin. They made heavy use of them, particularly for their demonifugic and apotropaic properties. For an overview of Taiqing talismans see Pregadio, Great Clarity, 87—97.
\textsuperscript{11} Baopu zi, 4.74—76; Ware, 76—78. Some elixirs of the Taiqing tradition are referred to as “talismans”; see Pregadio, Great Clarity, 172.
featured in the surviving fragments of the Sanhuang wen. Indeed, the instructions accompanying the recipe for Yuzhu’s elixir (Yuzhu danfa) in the Baopu zi sound like they were taken directly from the Sanhuang wen: after ingesting the elixir for a hundred days, “the divine maidens of the Six Jia and Six Ding will come to the adept who may make use of them to inquire about everything that happens in the entire world.” Here, the divinatory dimension to summoning gods firmly underlines the teleological resemblance between Taiqing and Sanhuang movements. Although this particular example is from the early fourth century, the kinship was established in the third and second centuries, taking root in the fangshi circles of Han dynasty and Wu Kingdom courts. These common origins are still discernible in the concordance of Taiqing and Sanhuang lineages. As noted above, Li Shaojun, but also Zuo Ci, Ge Xuan, Yin Changsheng, and Zheng Yin were tied to textual transmissions in the two movements. Ge Hong, a privileged heir to the both traditions, explains how he came to obtain the Taiqing alchemical scriptures:

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12 The 39th talisman of the “Xicheng yaojue” summons the Father and Mother of the Six Jia, while the “Secret Words of Embracing Simplicity” advises the adept to “visualize the true talismans of the Six Jia”; Badi miaojing jing, 22a, and 32a; The Six Ding are found in the “Method of the Celestial Sovereign” and the “Method of the Human Sovereign”; see Wushang biyao, 25.5a and 7a, respectively. The deities also figure in the Badi miaojing jing, 3b, and 18a.
13 Baopu zi, 4.81—82; Ware, 88.
14 Robinet, Histoire du Taoisme, 223, argues that the Taiqing movement significantly draws on the apocrypha used by Han dynasty court masters of recipes; alchemy “poursuit la tradition des weishu avec son exegese du Yijing, ses speculations sur les nombres, ses representations du monde sous forme de diagramme, tous les elements qui forment une part essentielle de son discours.”
15 See Chapter 1, 59—61.
Of old, when Zuo Yuanfang [Zuo Ci] was engaged in meditation on Tianzhu shan (Heaven’s Pillar mountain; in present-day Shandong or Anhui), a divine being transmitted to him the scriptures of immortals on gold and cinnabar (jindan xianjing). At that time, the Han came to a chaotic end [ca.220 CE] and he was unable to synthesize and complete [the elixirs]. He fled the disorder, crossing into Jiangdong [south of the Yangzi River] hoping to retire to a famous peak to cultivate the Way. My paternal grand-uncle [Ge Xuan], the Lord Transcendent (xiangong), received [the texts] from Yuanfang. Altogether, he obtained the Taiqing danjing (Scripture on the Elixir of Great Clarity) in three scrolls, the Jiuding danjing (Scripture on the Elixirs of the Nine Tripods) in one scroll, and the Jinye danjing (Scripture on the Elixir of Gold Liqueur) in one scroll. My own teacher, Lord Zheng, was a disciple of my paternal grand-uncle, the Lord Transcendent; he received [the texts] from him […]. These texts had never existed in Jiandong before: they emerged with Zuo Yuanfang, who transmitted them to my paternal grand-uncle, who transmitted them to Lord Zheng, who transmitted them to me. This is why no other adepts (daoshi) know of them.16

The Shenxian zhuang upholds that Bo He, who was a major figure in the genealogy of the Sanhuang tradition, was also to be included in alchemical ancestries; his hagiography relates that he received a Taiqing (zhong) jing (Central Scripture of the Great Clarity) from Lord Wang in addition to the Sanhuang wen.17 However, Bo’s ties to alchemy extend beyond the furtive mention of an alchemical scripture in an isolated passage. A second version of his vita from the same Shenxian zhuang recounts that Bo He “lived in seclusion on Mount Wuzhong (Wuzhong shan), and synthesized a divine elixir. He also made five thousand catties of yellow gold on the mountain, and used it to relieve the people.”18 In this entry, Bo He is primarily renowned for his skill at transmutation. He is inscribed in the same tradition as Li Shaojun, and is sometimes even conflated with Ma Mingsheng who, together with Li Shaojun, was a disciple of

16 Baopu zi, 4.71; Ware, 69—70.
17 See Chapter 1, 38.
18 Shenxian zhuang from Taiping yulan, in Campany, To Live as Long as Heaven and Earth, 135—36, and 387.
Anqi Sheng 安期生 (fl. ca. 200 BCE). Ma Mingsheng is also noted for having transmitted materials to Yin Changsheng, who then handed them down to Bao Jing. Thus, Bao Jing, the progenitor of one version of the Sanhuang wen, can count Li Shaojun and his legendary teacher, Anqi Sheng, in his spiritual pedigree. In this instance, and in the case highlighted in the above passage from the Baopu zi, the Sanhuang lineage follows the same chain of succession as Taiqing lines of textual transmission. Sanhuang sources confirm this: as noted above, the “Xicheng yaojue” from the Badi miaojing jing explains that the Sanhuang wen was transmitted together with “methods of the divine elixir” (shendan zhi fa). The cement that predominantly bound the traditions together was the overlap in functions between Sanhuang talismans and Taiqing elixirs.

19 Anqi Sheng, sometimes rendered Anqi xiansheng 安期先生 (Master Anqi) is a fangshi, reputed to have already been one thousand years old by the Qin (221 BCE—206 CE) dynasty. He is often depicted as Li Shaojun’s master, and is mentioned a number of times in the Shiji; see 12.455, 28.1385, and 80.2436, for instance; he is also the subject of an entry in the Lie xianzhan; see Kaltenmark, Le Lie-sien tchouan, 115—18. For Anqi Sheng’s role in the Taiqing tradition, see Pregadio, Great Clarity, 145; and Strickmann, “On the Alchemy of T’ao Hung-ching,” 145. Anqi Sheng also appears in Huangfu Mi’s 皇甫謐 third century Gaoshi zhuan 高士傳 (Biographies of Eminent Masters), 2.10a. For his identification of Bo He with Ma Mingsheng, see Chapter 1, 67, n. 129.

20 For more on Yin Changsheng, see Chapter 1, 58. This figure is known for his alchemical methods and for a simulated-corpse technique, which he most notably bequeaths to Bao Jing; see Bao Jing’s biography from the Shenxian zhuans in Campany, To Live as Long as Heaven and Earth, 295—97; see also 58—59.

21 For the most part, the admission of Anqi Sheng, Ma Mingsheng, and Yin Changsheng at the forefront of the Taiqing transmission line is a Shangqing innovation; see Pregadio, Great Clarity, 145—47; Nonetheless, Zuo Ci and Zheng Yin were tied to Taiqing and Sanhuang lineages from the outset; see, for example, Zhengao, 12.3b, where Zuo Ci is presented as a student of Li Zhongfu—a figure sometimes identified with Lord Wang; see Chapter 1, 81, n. 52; and Robinet, La révélation du Shangqing, 10, and 16. The Yellow Emperor provides another, more generic alchemical link to the Sanhuang tradition, by virtue of his role in the celestial transmission of sacred alchemical recipes; see, for instance, pages 55 and 62 of this study; and Pregadio, Great Clarity, 41—42.

22 Robinet, La révélation du Shangqing, has illustrated this very clearly; see “tableau 2,” 17; and “tableau 3,” 18.

23 Badi miaojing jing, 15b.
2. Elixirs

With the elaboration of the Four Supplements (sifu 四輔) and their addition to the Three Caverns (sandong) of the Daoist Canon around 500, came the formal confirmation of Taiqing bonds with the Sanhuang. Addressing the new divisions, the Daojiao yishu (Pivot of Meaning of the Daoist Teaching) explains:

The Great Clarity supplements the Dongshen Cavern. This is because in matters of summoning and controlling gods and demons (zhaozhi guishen 召制鬼神), the Dongshen Cavern needs the Taiqing. Meditating on (cun 存) and guarding (shou 守) the Great One (Taiyi 太一), and ingesting the Golden Elixir (jindan 金丹) help one to achieve this Way. Thus the spiritual faculties are expanded.²⁴

While the ad hoc restructuring of pre-existing lineages and the joining of heterogeneous corpora were often undertaken to highlight the sophistication of newer revelations or accommodate to new religious climates, they reflected strong affinities nonetheless. The Taiqing predilection for summoning and controlling spirits was a bridge to the Sanhuang that predated the organization and reorganization of the Daoist Canon.²⁵

An eloquent illustration of this association is found in the Sanhuang’s use of alchemical elixirs and their ingredients. Realgar (xionghuang 雄黄), one of the Three Yellows (sanhuang 三黄), is especially celebrated for its apotropaic and

²⁴ Daojiao yishu, 2.12a; Pregadio, Great Clarity, 154.
²⁵ See Pregadio discussion of this point in Great Clarity, 152—55.
divinatory properties. Ge Hong parades the manifold ways to ingest realgar and concludes: “In each case it will confer longevity; the hundred illnesses will be dispelled and the three corpses will be evacuated; scars will disappear; white hair will turn black, and fallen teeth will grow anew.” Then, as if exalting the substance’s most prized faculty, he adds: “after a thousand days, the Jade Maidens will descend and tend to you; you may put them in your service, and use them to summon the mobile kitchens (xingchu 行廚).” The potency of the mineral is also attested in the “Xicheng yaojue” when the immortal Lord Wang of the Western Citadel reveals the Lesser Elixir Method (xiao danfa 小丹法) to Bo He:

26 Note the homophonic correspondence between the Three Sovereigns (sanhuang) and the Three Yellows (sanhuang), an alchemical trinity consisting of orpiment (cihuang 楪黃), realgar (xionghuang) and arsenic (pihuang 砒黃); see Pregadio, Great Clarity, 247. Another list substitutes arsenic for sulfur (liuhuang 流黃), as given in Needham, Science and Civilization, 5.3, 201. Schipper, L’empereur Wou des Han, 88, n.2, proposes yellow gold (huang jin 黃金) as the third yellow, but gold, at least alchemically speaking, has nothing to do with orpiment and realgar. The same triad, with yellow gold instead of arsenic, is also found in a fragment of Rong Chenggong 容成公’s biography in the Shensian zhuan: “Sire Rong Cheng ingested the Three Yellows and thereby attained transcendence. The [Three Yellows] refer to realgar (xionghuang), orpiment (cihuang) and yellow gold (huangjin). The fragment is preserved in Sandong qunxian lu (Records of the Multitude of Immortals of the Three Caverns; CT 1248), 1.19b; Campany, To Live as Long as Heaven and Earth, 358—59 and 534—35; see also “Orpiment” and “Realgar,” in Shafer, The Peaches of Samarkand: A Study in T’ang Exotics, 213—14, and 219—20; and, by the same author,“Orpiment and Realgar in Chinese Technology and Tradition,” 73—89. Schafer, ibid., 83—84, notes that the virtues of realgar, mentioned in the Shenhuang bencao jing (Canonical Pharmacopoeia of the Divine Husbandman) and probably established in the Han dynasty were the following: “(1) as a general restorative and rejuvenator; for lightening the body to the condition of a deity or Taoist sylph; (2) for specific diseases, notably chills and fever, scrofula, ulcers, abscesses, and necrosis; (3) against insect and reptile poisons”; furthermore, (4) “this potent drug is able to kill all specters, demons, malignant emanations, and even to give protection against weapons.”; cf. Baopu zi, 19.336; Ware, 315, where Ge Hong gives a similar description of the Sanhuang wen’s powers.

27 Baopu zi, 11.203; Ware, 187—88; cf. Baopu zi, 17.304—05; Ware, 289, where Ge presents realgar as a general apotropaion against snakes while on retreat in mountains and swamps. It is also an antidote against their bites.
Prepare one thousand cypress seeds (bozi 柏子). Sift out the dregs five times over and keep only the refined part. Thereupon mix the treated cypress seeds with ten pounds (jin 斤) of pine oil. Take one pound of realgar (xionghuang). Its color should be like that of red plums. Join it to the previous mixture, and then pound it repetitively in accordance with the [established] method. Steam the combination for an entire day, then extract the jelly-like (yi 餱) product. Sit upright facing the north, and ingest five pills of this substance at sunrise. After daylight subsides, you will be able to communicate with the gods.\textsuperscript{28}

In the “Xicheng yaojue,” alchemical recipes are primarily used for summoning gods, while in the Taiqing tradition, the elixir’s capacity to conjure spirits is a collateral effect of the quest for immortality. Although it seems to have been less of a pressing matter than obtaining immediate audiences with otherworldly beings, Sanhuang adepts likewise sought long life and immortality. Another Lesser Cinnabar Method (youxiao danfa 又小丹法) is indicative of these pursuits:

Take quicksilver (shuiyin 水銀), cinnabar (dansha 丹砂), and realgar (xionghuang). All three ingredients should be first independently prepared in equal amounts before finally joining them to white honey. Make pills from the mixture the size of large beans. Then, by a clear dawn on a fogless and cloudless day, face eastwards and ingest seven pills. Gargle afterwards with “fragrant water” (huashui 華水; fresh water drawn from a well). Ingest one pill per day and continue to do so for three years, after which your body will become radiant. If you continue to consume the pills for a long time, you will be able to escape death (ke bu si 可不死).\textsuperscript{29}

The time frame here is representative of Sanhuang priorities. The former elixir, the one for communicating with gods, is effective a few hours after initial ingestion; the latter one on the other hand, demands a full three years just for the body to become radiant—escaping death requires an additional “long time.” A method with a quasi-identical title, the Recipe for the Lesser Divine Elixir (xiao

\textsuperscript{28} Badi miaojing jing, 14a.
\textsuperscript{29} Badi miaojing jing, 14b.
shendan fang 小神丹方) is contained in the Baopu zi. Its preparatory directives and effects are also redolent of the “Xicheng yaojue” counterpart:

Take three pounds of true cinnabar (zhendan 真丹), six pounds of white honey (baimi 白蜜), stir them together, and cook the mixture under a brilliant sun until it can be shaped into pills. Every dawn, ingest ten pills about the size of a hemp seed. In less than a year, white hair will turn black again, lost teeth will grow anew, and the body will be gleaming. If you consume the pills for a long time you will not age, and the elderly will regain their youth. Long life will be granted, and death will be avoided (changsheng busi 長生不死).³⁰

Honey and cinnabar, along with the ritual significance of sunrise and proper atmospheric conditions are familiar elements encountered in Another Lesser Cinnabar Method. However, in this version, the effects on the body can be observed within a year versus three in the “Xicheng yaojue,” but once more, the amount of time required to attain immortality is vague.

Pregadio has demonstrated the Taiqing’s indebtedness to prior Jiangnan religious culture.³¹ Similarly, the Sanhuang is itself a medley of ancient Southern lore. As a catalog of local traditions, the Baopu zi reveals many of the ties that bind both movements and ground them in a shared spiritual inheritance. The use of talismans for the purpose of summoning spirits and protecting against noxious influences or evading death is one expression of this common legacy. The compounding of elixirs for the same ends is another. Ge Hong prized a third practice, meditation, even more effective than talismans or elixirs and just as emblematic of the Southern heritage. While later alchemical currents eventually

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³⁰ Baopu zi 4.86; Ware, 198. This method is followed by three other alchemical recipes, some of which compel deities to descend to the adept; see Baopu zi 4. 86; Ware, 198—99.
³¹ Pregadio, Great Clarity, 15—16 and especially 123—39.
incorporated meditative practices, thus resulting in inner alchemy (*neidan* 内丹), the Sanhuang was synonymous with the techniques revered in the *Baopu zi* from its inception. Guarding the One (shouyi 守一), which essentially consisted of visualizing manifestations of Taiyi within the body in order to communicate with them and obtain their favors, was adopted as a core exercise of the tradition since the first drafts of a Dongshen canon, and possibly earlier.32

## II. Meditation

### 1. Meditations on the One

Along with divinatory or apotropaic talismanic methods and alchemy, the meditation known as guarding the One was one of the three characteristic religious practices of the South. The entirety of chapter 18 in the *Baopu zi* is devoted to an exposition of the technique. Ge Hong cites from one of the earliest sources to expound the method for guarding the One.33 The same source is identified as a *Tian huang[ren] zhenyi zhi jing* 天皇[人]真一之經 (Scripture of the Celestial August [Man] on the True One” in the *Wufu xu*; as in the *Baopu zi*, the passage elaborates on how the Yellow Emperor received this corpus of meditation practices

32 The *Daojiao yishu*, 2.12a, passage cited above, 193, equates the Sanhuang tradition with guarding the One meditations.
33 *Baopu zi*, 18.323—24; Ware, 302; see also Pregadio, *Great Clarity*, 136.
on his tour of the four directions of the world. Only at the culmination of his peregrination, after obtaining the Sanhuang wen from the Master of the Purple Residence (Zifu Xiansheng), does he receive the coveted method for guarding the One from the Celestial Perfected August Man (Tianzhen Huangren) on Emei shan.

The same parable from the Wufu xu and the Baopu zi is related, with a few modifications, in a segment from the Yunji qiqian, but the passage distinguishes itself by providing a title for the transmitted text: a postscript notes that the discussed method for guarding the One is be found in the Huangren shouyi jing (Scripture of the August Man for Guarding the One). One of the rare surviving excerpts from this text is preserved in the Wushang biyao. In it, the human body is compared to a kingdom, and much like a kingdom, it should be properly managed, its residing deities properly guarded (shoushen) so that illness does not arise. The emphasis is therapeutic, but the entire passage relies on the political simile; gods, officials and ministers inhabit the inner kingdom, and each of them must first be appropriately governed—only after the blood is fortified

34 Lingbao wufu xu, 3.17a-18b. These lines open with a “Taishang taiyi zhenyi zhi jing yue 太上太一真一之經曰…” (The Most High Scripture of Guarding the True One Taiyi says…”). The complete passage, 3.17a-23b, forms a separate section, independently preserved in the Daoist Canon under the title Taishang dongxuan lingbao sanyi wuqi zhenjing (True Scripture on the Three Ones and the Five Pneumata; CT 985). Once more, the Yellow Emperor appears as a recipient in a celestial transmission, affording him equally high standing in the three main genera of southern methods, namely talismanic divination, alchemy, and guarding the One meditation.

35 Baopu zi, 18.324; Ware, 303. The Wufu xu simply refers to him as “August Man” (Huangren). Note that Emei shan is the site of the Western Citadel, where the transmission of the Sanhuang wen to Bo He occurred; see Gil Raz, “Creation of Tradition,” 187—99 for an annotated comparison of the Wufu xu and Baopu zi versions of the passage.

36 Yunji qiqian, 33.11a-12a.

37 Wushang biyao, 5.6b-7a.
and the pneuma is purified can the adept successfully meditate (cun _ghost) on the True One (zhēn yī 真一). This passage from the Huangren shouyi jīng irrefutably ties guarding the One meditation to an inner landscape of divine subjects, setting the stage for the following distinction; while talismans and elixirs invite deities to visit adepts, guarding the One propels adepts onto the microcosmic plane, where they visit the gods that reside within their bodies in order to communicate with them.

The same lines from the Huangren shouyi jīng resurface in the Baopu zi, where instead, they are presented as Zheng Yin’s instructions on guarding the One, and also in the Wufu xu’s discussion of the meditation. There is some uncertainty about which of these two texts was written first. Kobayashi argues that the Baopu zi predates the Wufu xu’s treatment of guarding of the One, and that it is in fact the source for the latter; Wang Ming, on the other hand, suggests that the Wufu xu passage is earlier. Raz agrees that Ge Hong’s rendition predates the so-called “Zhenyi jīng” (Scripture on [Guarding] the True One”) from the Wufu xu, but he points to the possibility that both passages may be based on an earlier work; this would be the Huangren shouyi jīng cited in the Yunji qiqian, also rendered Huangren jīng in the Wushang biyao. The Tang dynasty Shangqing dao leishi

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38 Wushang biyao, 5.7a.
39 Baopu zi, 18.326; Ware 307—08; and Wufu xu, 3.20ab; see also, Taishang dŏngxuăn lingbao sanyi wuqi zhenjing, 2a.
40 See Kobayashi, “Taijō reihō gofujo no sosei katei no bunseki,”(2) 28—29; and Wang Ming, Baopuzi neipian jiaoshi, 327, n.6; Wang believes that the Xianjing (Scripture of Immortals) to which Ge Hong refers is the basis for the two passages. However, this title might be a generic referent to “scriptures of immortals” a category under which the Huangren zhenyi jīng would certainly fall.
41 In the Baopu zi, the material on guarding the One is either attributed to Zhen Ying, or to the Xianjing; see Baopu zi, 18.323 l.5, for an example of the latter; on the other hand, the Wufu xu names its source as the Tian huang[ren] zhenyi zhi jing (or the
xiang (The True Appearances of the Categories (Pertaining to) the Tao of the Highest Purity) also reproduces a passage that is found in the Wufu xu’s exposition on guarding the One, this time attributed to the Huangren shou sanyi jing 皇人守三一經 (Scripture of the August Man on Guarding the Three Ones). The addition of a “three” is noteworthy since it suggests parity between the practices of guarding the One and guarding the Three Ones. Robinet speculates that the scripture dealt with both methods, hence the discrepancy in titles. Another citation, this time from the Taiping yulan 太平御覽 (Imperial Digest of the Taiping Xingguo Reign Period) ascribes a selection describing the Yellow Emperor’s encounter with the Celestial Perfected August Man to a Sanyi jing 三一經 (Scripture on the Three Ones). The lines in question correspond, once again, to the guarding the One section from the Wufu xu.

The common source for the Baopu zi and the Wufu xu on matters relating to guarding the One was a text belonging to the Sanhuang tradition that circulated under the title Huangren (sanyi) jing or any of the aforementioned variations.

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Taishang taiyi zhenyi zhi jing), which is none other than the Huangren shouyi jing; see the discussion in Gil Raz, “Creation of Tradition,” 175—82.  
42 Shangqing dao leishi xiang, 1.3a; the cited lines roughly correspond to Wufu xu, 3.18a 1.6—7; see Shangqing dao leishi xiang, 1.4b, in the same passage; it correspondins to Wufu xu, 3.18a, but cites the Wufu xu instead of the Huangren shou sanyi jing. This would suggest that Wang Xuanhe, who compiled the Shangqing dao leishi xiang, either had access to two sources on the same passage, namely the Huangren shou sanyi jing and the Wufu xu, or that he knew the latter was based on the former.  
43 The alchemical treatise Huangdi jiuding shendan jingjue 黄帝九鼎神丹經訣 (Instructions on the Scripture of the Divine Elixirs of the Nine Tripods of the Yellow Emperor; CT 885), 7.2a, lists the Huangren sanyi jing as the source for its method on guarding the One.  
44 Robinet, La révélation du Shangqing, 1:28—29.  
45 Compare Taiping yulan, 661.3a, to Wufu xu, 3.17b-18a.  
46 See Robinet, La révélation du Shangqing 1:27, 29—32; and Raz,”Creation of Tradition,”175, and 177. The Daozang quejing mulu (Catalogue of Missing Books in
The *Taiping yulan* cites the *Sanhuang jing* itself in yet another narration of the Yellow Emperor’s meeting with the August Man atop Mount Emei. Additionally, after recounting the Yellow Emperor’s reception of the *Sanhuang wen*, the “Zhenyi jing” section of the *Wufu xu* proceeds to extol the loftiness of Sanhuang teachings; upon reaching Qingcheng shan (Green Citadel Mountain), the Yellow Emperor learns that although Master Ning (Ning Xiansheng) obtained the Way from the Initial Immortals (*shixian*), he is not among the Celestial Perfected Officials of the Sanhuang, and therefore, he cannot understand their writ on [guarding] the True One (*zhenyi zhi wen*), much less transmit it to him. The Yellow Emperor must seek it elsewhere.

As a cross-section of Six Dynasties Sanhuang practices, the *Badi miaojing jing* fittingly contains a “Sanhuang sanyi jing” (*The Three Sovereigns [Method for Guarding the] Three Ones*), one of the sparse extant Dongshen sources on the meditation, and quite possibly a surviving fragment of the *Huangren (sanyi) jing*.

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the *Daozang* lists a *Huangren shouyi jing*, 2.3a; a *Huangren sanyi tu jue* (Instructions on the Chart of August Man for [Guarding] the Three Ones), 2.5a; and a *Huangren shou Huangdi sanyi shengxuan tu jue* (Instructions on the Chart for Ascent to the Mysterious through the August Man’s [Method] of Guarding the Yellow Emperor’s Three Ones), 2.14b), as lost; Robinet, ibid., n.1 p.28, believes these works to be fragments of, or elaborations on the *Huangren (sanyi) jing.*

47 *Taiping yulan*, 678.1b; cf *Wufu xu*, 3.17b-18a. The episode has the August Man bestowing the method of the Five Sprouts of the True One (*Zhenyi wuya zhi fa*), later discussed on 3.21ab; for more on the coupling of the Five Sprouts and guarding the One, see Kaltenmark “Quelques remarques,” 10; Lagerwey, Deux écrits taoïstes anciens,” 2—3; and Robinet, *La revelation du Shangqing*, 28—29.

48 *Wufu xu*, 3.17b-18a.
2. The Sanhuang sanyi jing

The Three Ones (sanyi 三一) are manifestations of the Supreme One, Taiyi, who can temporarily take up residence in one of the three cinnabar fields (dantian 丹田) of the human body. The Three Ones triad dates back to the Han dynasty at least, when it enjoyed an official cult on the basis of precursory fangshi sacrificial rites to the Heavenly One, the Earthly One, and the Supreme One.\(^49\) Meditation on the Three Ones was born out of a fusion between the Han dynasty cult, visualization practices revolving around the inner gods, and the metaphysical notion of guarding or embracing the One (baoyi 抱一), which can be traced as far back as the Laozi and Zhuangzi.\(^50\) The Baopu zi, the Wufu xu, and their common Sanhuang source, are the first materials to mention the practice of guarding the Three Ones, thereby tracing its inception to the second half of the third century, or the early fourth century.

The Baopu zi differentiates between two types of meditations on the One. The first, “guarding the mysterious One” (shou xuan yi 守玄一) will be addressed in the following chapter. The second method that Ge Hong discusses, “guarding


\(^{50}\) Robinet, *La révélation du Shangqing*, 31. On embracing the One, see Lao zi, 10, and 22; and Zhuangzi, 11, and 23; Zhuangzi, 12, has: “Fathom the One, and the all things will be completed.” (“tongyu yi er wanshi bi” 通於一而萬事畢); Baopu zi, 18.323; Ware, 301 opens with the same words, and proceeds to explain the maxim, as does the Wufu xu, 2.22ab; compare to Wufu xu, 1.22b, for a similar line in a passage on guarding the Three Ones. These selections underline kinship, of a spiritual nature at the very least, between the method of guarding the One and the Zhuangzi. The Laozi is also a prized source for elaborations on guarding the One; see for example, Wufu xu, 3.22b; on guarding the One, see Kohn, “Guarding the One: Concentrative Meditation in Taoism”; Pregadio, *Great Clarity*, 136—39; Robinet, *La révélation du Shangqing* 1:30—32, and 41—43; and *La méditation Taoïste*, 183—211, by the same author.
the True One” (shou zhenyi 守真一) or simply “guarding the One” (shouyi 守一),
is an amalgam of a number of meditation practices that were sometimes
bewildering in complexity.\(^{51}\) It essentially consisted of visualizing the inner gods,
namely multiple manifestations of the One inhabiting the body’s three cinnabar
fields. Much like elixirs and talismans, guarding the One grants the practitioner
access to divine beings: “If you guard the One and ponder the True (cunzhen 存真
), you will be able to communicate with the gods (tongshen 通神).”\(^{52}\) And just like
its alchemical and talismanic analogs, guarding the One also affords apotropaic
potential in defense of demons, tigers, wolves, snakes and other malevolent
creatures.\(^{53}\)

The “Sanhuang sanyi jing” from the Badi miaojing jing is devoted to the
practice of guarding the Three Ones (shou sanyi). It mentions meditations on
guarding the Supreme One (shou Taiyi 守太一), guarding the true One, and
guarding the mysterious One, but the methods differ from those discussed in the
Baopu zi.\(^{54}\) Rather than presenting them as distinct practices, the “Sanhuang sanyi
jing” describes the Supreme One, true One, and mysterious One as the three names
adopted by Taiyi when residing in the three cinnabar fields. Thus, guarding the
Three Ones consists in meditating on either the Supreme One, the true One, the
mysterious One, or all of them together.

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\(^{51}\) See Baopu zi, 18.324; Ware, 304; and Pregadio, Great Clarity, 136—39, for more
on Ge Hong’s misgivings regarding the difficulties inherent to guarding the One.

\(^{52}\) Baopu zi, ibid; Ware, 303.

\(^{53}\) Baopuzi, 18.324, 325; Ware, 304—05.

\(^{54}\) Badi miaojing jing, 2b.
The *Wufu xu* also defines the Three Ones as the gods of the three cinnabar fields, identifying them as the Three Primes.\(^{55}\) Their associated meditative practices are listed as guarding the Heavenly One (*tianyi* 天一), the Earthly One (*diyi* 地一), and the Human One (*renyi* 人一), a division that mirrors that of the Three Sovereigns.\(^{56}\) The “Sanhuang sanyi jing” is similar in this respect, ascribing an ontological category and cinnabar field to each of the Three Ones. Below are some of the instructions for guarding the Supreme One:

At the top of the head is the Upper Prime god (*shangyuan shen* 上元神), his style is Prime Foremost (*Yuanxian* 元先). He is Lord Taiyi. He is not in the heart, but he is a heavenly spirit. By guarding him in the heart, one can join with Heaven. When adepts join with Heaven, they are called “divine person” (*shen ren* 神人). This deity’s name is Venerable Man of the Southern Pole (Nanjí laoren 南極老人) and below, he resides in the Palace of Taiyi (*Taiyi gong* 太一宮); located three inches from the top of one’s head, it is called the Palace of the Supreme Ultimate (*Taiji gong* 太極宮)—otherwise, its name is Palace of Taiyi. At dawn, early in the day, and at midday on a *jiawù* 午甲 day, one should always call out: ‘Lord Taiyi Prime Foremost of the Southern Pole, I wish to obtain the way of long life through divine elixirs (*shendan* 神丹).’\(^{57}\) Thereupon, close your eyes and visualize Taiyi as a young lad (*Taiyi dòngzi* 太一童子) in your heart; his vestments are crimson, and the color of his pneuma is true orange (*zheng zhihuang* 正赤黄) like the sun. Recite and visualize this for ninety breaths, upon which you may cease.\(^{58}\)

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55 *Wuful xu*, 1.22a-23b.
56 *Wuful xu*, 1.22a-23a; the *Baopu zi* echoes this account, explaining that the Three Ones are the shapes adopted by the One in the images of “Heaven, Earth, and Humans; *Baopu zi*, 18.323; Ware, 301—03.
57 The technical terms for the ritual times are *ping dan* 平旦 (dawn), *ri chu* 日出 (early in the day), and *ri zhong* 日中 (midday); they correspond to specific times (0300—0500; 0500—0700; 1100—1300 respectively) in the twelve double-hour division of the day and their associated twelve markers (*yín* 寅; *mao* 卯; *wu* 午); see Kalinowski, “Les instruments astro-calendriques des Han et la méthode Liu Ren,” 349, for a complete table of correspondences.
58 *Badi miaojing jing*, 3a; cf. *Wuful xu*, 1.23a 1.6—17.
Along with the *Wufu xu*, the *Laozi zhongjing* (Central Scripture of Laozi) is a product of the same milieux as the texts of the Sanhuang tradition. Robinet believes that the scripture forms a junction between the *Sanhuang wen* and the *Wufu xu*, since it contains an impressive number of passages from both works. A selection from chapter 25 of the notably matches the above instructions from the “Sanhuang sanyi jing”:

The highest of gods is styled Lord Taiyi of the Prime Radiance (*Yuanguang*). It is the god that is sought by those who wish to obtain Taiyi. He is not the god of the heart but is a heavenly spirit known as Prime Radiance, Venerable Man of the Southern Pole (*Nanji laoren*). Below he is located in the heart. At dawn and midday, on *jiawu* and *bingwu* days, one should call out: “Lord Taiyi of the Prime Radiance, Venerable Man of the Southern Pole, I wish to obtain the way of long life through the divine elixirs of Taiyi.’ Thereupon, close your eyes and visualize Taiyi as a young lad (*Taiyi dongzi*) in your heart; his vestments are crimson and elegant, and his color is true orange (*zhi huang*) like the sun. Recite and visualize this for ninety breaths, upon which you may cease.

The passage from the *Badi miaojing jing* goes on to list the methods for the other two Ones of the Three Primes, namely Lord Taiyi of the Central Pole (*Taiyi zhongji jun*) and the Mother of the Way of the Dark Valley of the

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59 Only a handful of studies focus on the *Laozi zhongjing*; among them, see Kato, “*Roshi chukyō* to naitan shisō no genryū”; Lagerwey, “Deux écrits taoïstes anciens”; Pregadio, “Early Daoist Meditation and the Origins of Inner Alchemy”; Schipper, “The Inner World of the *Lao-tzu chung-ching*”; and his “Le calendrier de jade: note sur le *Laozi zhongjing*”; see also “The Inner Landscape” chapter from his *Taoist Body*, 100—12.

60 Robinet, *La révélation du Shangqing*, 1:27—29; *Wufu xu*, 1.18b-21b, and 26b, correspond to *Yunji qiqian* 19.4b-5b; 19.8a; 18.10b-11a; 18.21b; 19.9a-10a; Lagerwey, “Deux écrits,” 7, and 11—12, n. 45, lists the passages that are shared by the *Laozi zhongjing* an the *Wufu xu*. Chapters 11 and 18 of the *Baopu zi* display a number of similarities with chapters 2 and 3 of the *Wufu xu*; see Robinet, *La révélation du Shangqing*, 27, n.4, for specific references; and Schipper, “Le calendrier de jade,” 75—76, for concordances between the *Baopu zi* and the *Laozi zhongjing*.

61 *Laozi zhongjing* (Central Scripture of Laozi; CT 1168; and *Yunji qiqian* 18, and 19), 25, from *Yunjiqiqian*, 18.20ab.
Northern Pole (Beiji guxuan daomu 北極谷玄道母). While the names of the deities are noticeably different, the instructions in the equivalent Laozi zhongjing passage are almost identical. In fact, aside from a few introductory lines and a closing section, the “Sanhuang sanyi jing” is essentially a duplicate of chapter 25 from the Laozi zhongjing’s. An invocation from the “Sanhuang sanyi jing” cements the relationship between the texts; it summons the “Director of Records (Silu) and the Six Jade Maidens (liuding yunü) to erase this adept’s name from the Register of Death and inscribe it in the “Jade Calendar of Long Life” (Changsheng yuli),” an alternate title for the Laozi zhongjing.

3. The Inner Pantheon

In light of what can be gathered from surviving fragments, the Huangren (sanyi) jing appears to have been one of the foremost early Southern works on the topic of guarding the One meditations. The third scroll of the Wufu xu and much of chapter 18 from the Baopu zi are based on the lost scripture. An integral passage is also preserved in the Wushang biyao. Given that the Huangren (sanyi) jing was associated with the Sanhuang tradition, and surviving citations are sometimes attributed to the Sanhuang jing or a Sanyi jing, one might be tempted to add the “Sanhuang sanyi jing” from the Badi miaojing jing, and by extension, the Laozi

62 Compare Yunji qiqian, 18.20a-21a to Badi miaojing jing, 3ab.
63 Badi miaojing jing, 3b; The equivalent passage in the Laozi zhongjing has the same supplication, but solicits the deities to inscribe the adept’s name in the “Register of Life of the Jade Calendar” (Yuli shenglu 玉暦生録) instead; Laozi zhongjing, 25, from Yunji qiqian, 18.21a. However, the Laozi zhongjing does refer to itself as the “Jade Calendar of Long Life” (Changsheng yuli) in two other occurrences of the formula; Laozi zhongjing, 10, from Yunji qiqian, 18.6b; and 53, from Yunji qiqian, 19.19a.
zhongjing, to the list of its extant fragments. Due the paucity of evidence however, prudence is recommended. Nevertheless, the Badi miaojing jing, Huangren (sanyi) jing, Laozi zhongjing, and Wufu xu essentially denote identical religious currents. The texts emerged from the same cultural area, during the same period, gaining inspiration from the same combination of antecedant sources; it is no coincidence that all are generously represented in the Baopu zi, a true mirror of the Southern esoteric tradition.

The warp and woof that weave these currents together appears tighter still when comparing the names of the deities in respective registers of inner gods. A quotation from the Dongsheng jing that survives in the Wushang biyao introduces a roster of deities whose names are, save for a few exceptions, identical to a another list from the Wufu xu.64 Once again, the Laozi zhongjing appears to function as a bridge between the two traditions; its pages also contain many of the deities that are mentioned in the Dongshen excerpt and the Wufu xu.65 The fact that the editors of the Wushang biyao selected the Dongshen jing excerpt in their “Chapter on Inner Gods” (“Shenshen pin” 身神品), rather than a selection from the Laozi zhongjing or the Wufu xu, indicates that the passage was recognized as a locus classicus for descriptions of the inner pantheon.66 The list from the Dongshen jing is related to a similar inventory from the Longyu hetu 龍魚河圖

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64 Compare Wushang biyao, 5.12b-15b, to Wufu xu, 1.20a-21b; see Lagerwey, Wushang pi-yao, 79—80, for a synopsis of the Dongsheng jing version. The Shangxuan gaozhen yanshou chishu 上玄高真延壽赤書 (Red Book of the Most Subtle Great Realized Extension of Life; CT 877), 2a, citing the Wufu xu, provides a comparable, although not identical list of inner gods.

65 Laozi zhongjing 22, 23, and 26, in Yunji qiqian, 18.16a-19b, and 18.21a-22a; see also Laozi zhongjing 37, in Yunji qiqian 19.7b-8b; consult Lagerwey, “Deux écrits,” 11, n.45, for a brief discussion of the coinciding passages.

66 The Wufu xu is quoted on a number of occasions in the Wushang biyao, but never in connection with internal deities or guarding the One; see Lagerwey Wu-shang pi-yao, 233, for a list of citations.
(Dragon-Fish River Chart), an apocryphon from the Han Dynasty closely tied to the constellation of meditation texts examined above. What emerges from this complex set of correspondences is the impression of a cohesive Southern esoteric tradition. Surveyed in the Baopu zi and represented in the Wufu xu, the Laozi zhongjing, Sanhuang, and even Taiqing materials, this tradition benefited from well-defined set of practices with an identifiable repository of textual forerunners on which it could rely. The apocryphal weft texts (weishu) doubtlessly accounted for a large fraction of this repository, supplying the blueprint for what would later become elaborate summoning rites and meditative techniques.

67 Kaltenmark has established the relation between the Longyu hetu and the Wufu xu; see “Ling-pao: Note sur un terme du taoïsme religieux,” 559—88; and by the same author, “Les Tch’ an-wei,” 363—73; see also Yasui and Nakamura, Ishō shūsei, 6:93; Seidel, “Imperial Treasures and Taoist Sacraments,” 322. Robinet, La révélation du Shangqing, 1:63, has tabulated the names of the deities as they appear in the Wufu xu, Dongshen jing, Laozi zhongjing, Shangqing gaozhen yanshou chishu (Red Book of the Most Subtle Great Realized Yanshou), and Longyu hetu passages; Pregadio, “Early Daoist Meditation,” 129, writes:

The Xiang’er commentary holds the belief that the human being is the residence of inner gods. The generation of an inner embryo is also achieved through practices focused on the five viscera, which are the temporary residences of the One. Around the same time, the Taiping jing gives the earliest descriptions of deities dwelling within these loci of the inner body. Neither texts mention the names of the inner gods. These are found for the first time in an apocryphon or “weft text” approximately dating from the same period as the above texts. One of the extant fragments of the Longyu hetu (River Chart of the Dragon-fish) names the deities of the hair, ears, the eyes, the nose, and the teeth, followed by two short sentences on a meditation practice. The same names appear in a longer list found in the Lingbao wufu xu, a work dating from the fourth or early fifth century but known to reflect, among others, apocryphal traditions of the late Han period. Since the Lingbao wufu xu mentions the five gods in the same order as in the fragment of the [Longyu hetu], and continues with details on the same meditation practice summarized there, it may preserve the original passage of the [Longyu hetu]. Taken together, the works quoted above show that alchemical imagery was used in relation to meditation practices as early as the mid-second century, and that the notion of an embryo generated within one’s inner body already existed by the beginning of the third century. Related contemporary sources mention the existence of deities residing within the human being—the Great One and Laozi himself among them—and give their names.
As a beacon for unwavering apologists of communication with spirits, the Sanhuang sought to gather all relevant methods from the pool of Southern esoterica under its aegis. Divinatory and apotropaic talismans were iconic ambassadors for the movement, but elixirs and meditation were also prized because of their potential for manifesting divine interlocutors. The visionary meditation of guarding the One distinguished itself in that it presented an alternative to making gods “descend below.” Posited as a microcosmic counterpart to conventional summoning tools, guarding the One afforded a channel of communication with the divine through which adepts could visit the hypostases of the One in their own bodies.68

III. Regressive Time in Sanhuang Meditative Practices

1. Gestational Symbolism

The Sanhuang method for guarding the Three Ones, as depicted in the “Sanhuang sanyi jing,” was a benchmark reference in meditation literature during the Six Dynasties, catalyzing later innovations in guarding the One mediations.69 The last

68 See Maspero, *Le taoïsme et les religions chinoises*, 303—17, for a discussion of similar themes.
69 Robinet, *La méditation taoïste*, 183—211, passim, especially 191—201; the influence of Sanhuang meditation is most visible in the Shangqing *Dongzhen taishang suling dongyuan dayou miaojing* (Scripture of the (Celestial Palace) of the Immaculate Numen; CT 1314); according to Tao Hongjing, this text is the seminal manual on guarding the One; *Dengzhen yinjue*, 1.3a; compare the preceding excerpts from the “Sanhuang sanyi jing” to *Dongzhen taishang suling*
section of the “Sanhuang sanyi jing” contains a complementary section on visionary mediation, this time involving a familial trope and a description of the literal generation of an embryo:

As for Taiyi, it is the essence (jing 精) of the womb (bao 胞; lit. placenta) and embryo (tai 胎); it oversees metamorphosis (bianhua zhi zhu 變化之主). The hun 魂 and po 灵 souls are generated from the spirit (shen 神) of the embryo, while the life pneuma (mingqi 命氣) is generated from the womb. The souls and pneuma are transformations of Dijun 帝君 (Lord Emperor). When all these elements are joined together, they turn into the person (ren 人). For this reason, the divine Taiyi is the mother of birth. The venerable Dijun [on the other hand] is the father of birth. Father and mother are originally joined; in this state they are known as Primal Pneuma (yuanqi 元氣), but by responding to transformations, they embody their distinct forms and are called ‘father’ and ‘mother.’

The mother is named Taiyi, also known as Wu Youshou 務猶收 and her style is Gui Huichang 歸會昌. Another of her names is Jie Ming 解明 or again, Ji Fan 寄煩. If you know these names then be cautious not to spread them indiscriminately. Visualize (cun 存) this deity inside your body and you will attain long life without death. Dijun, [the father,] is called Feng Lingfan 鳳凌梵 and his style is Lu Chang 履昌, the numinous spirits (lingshen 靈神). Now if adepts know this, their form (xing 形) will no longer enter the ground (rudi 入地), since the Jade Lads and Maidens will assist the adept in entering the Nine Heavens.70 Celestial gods (tianshen 天神) are the progeny of this very Dijun. It is he who governs the Purple Chamber of the Palace of the Supreme Ultimate (Taiji gong zifang 太極紫宮). When he is merged with Taiyi, they are also called Lord Prime Taiyi (Taiyi yuanjun 太一元君). Neither male nor female, its brilliant radiance is the most marvelous. It can manifest as Laojun or as the Infant (Yinger 懷兒); its responses are inexhaustible; its transformations are boundless.71

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70 In other words, this mediation on the One prevents the body’s po souls from escaping into the ground after physical death; this permits one to maintain a human form (xing) while ascending to heaven with both hun and po souls. For another interpretation of “entering the ground” (rudi), see Schipper, L’empereur Wou des Han dans la légende taoïste, 42; and 245—48, in the next chapter.
71 Badi miaojing jing, 4ab. There is no apparent break between this passage and the previous account of meditation on the Three Ones. However, these last lines from the
In accordance with the notion that the One is the origin of forms, the theme of transformation permeates this entire selection; the celebrate line from the *Laozi* reads: “Dao generates the One, the One generates the Two, the Two generates the Three, and the Three generate the myriad things.” The “Sanhuang sanyi jing” instructs adepts to fuse the three components of their person, namely the essence (*jing*) pneuma (*qi*), and spirit (*shen*) of the Three Ones, and transform them into One. Taiyi provides essence for both the womb and the embryo. The womb combines this essence with its pneuma, derived from Dijun. The embryo joins its essence with the spirit, also imparted by Dijun, in the form of *hun* and *po* souls. When both womb and embryo are united the resulting product is a [true] person (*ren*), an “Infant,” who like the like the deified Laozi, is an embodiment of a primordial One. As with other guarding the One meditations, this version consists in visualizing multiple manifestations of the One in order to resorb them and oneself back into a unique entity, thereby reproducing the *solve and coagula*, as Robinet put it, of the Origin and End of the world.

The Infant from the “Sanhuang sanyi jing” is also mentioned in *Dongzhen taishang suling dongyuan dayou miaojing* (Scripture of the (Celestial Palace) of the Immaculate Numen; CT 1314) as the hypostase of the One that inhabits the lower cinnabar field, but there is no trace of a gestational metaphor in that passage. Despite its vividly accurate description, the “Sanhuang

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“Sanhuang sanyi jing” paint a different picture of the practice, with different names for the three deities, and a marked emphasis on Taiyi.

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72 *Laozi*, 42.
73 See Appendix 6 for a schematic overview of this process.
74 Robinet, *La méditation taoïste*, 189.
75 *Dongzhen taishang suling dongyuan dayou miaojing*, 31b-32a.
sanyi jing” is an exercise in theology, figuratively likening a meditation that is replete with cosmogonical connotations to the generation and nourishment of an embryo. The fully-grown unified embryo is the embodiment of an ethereal “true self,” a pure distillation of the individual adept and unmediated expression of Taiyi.  

The Laozi zhongjing contains a similar discourse, this time more evidently allegorical. The “Yellow Elder” (Huanglao 黄老), otherwise known as “Master Yellow Gown” (Huangchang zi 黃裳子) and the Jade Woman of Mysterious Radiance (Taiyin xuanguang yunü 太陰玄光玉女), two deities of the inner pantheon, appear as the father and mother of the Red Child (Chizi 赤子), whom they feed with “yellow essence” (huangjing 黃精) and “red pneuma” (chiqi 赤氣). This procedure is accomplished through a meditation—described elsewhere—on the absorption of solar (yellow; male) and lunar essences (red; female). After

76 Already in the third century, the Xiang’er 想爾 commentary to the Laozi, attributed to Zhang Lu 張魯 (d. 216), notes that for some, the generation of an inner embryo can be achieved through a meditative practice centered on the five viscera, temporary dwellings of the One; the text also draws parallels between the landscapes and the body; Bokenkamp, Early Daoist Scriptures, 89; Rao Zongyi, Laozi Xiang’er zhu jiaojian, 13, n. 1; and Seidel, La Divinisation de Lao Tseu dans le taoïsme des Han, 79.

77 Laozi zhongjing, 11, and, 12, in Yunji qiqian, 18.7ab, and 18.7b-9a, respectively; see Pregadio, “On the Origins of Inner Alchemy,” 135—38. For more on the Red Child in the Laozi zhongjing, see Maeda, “Rōshi chūkyō oboegaki,” 488—90; the figure also appears in the Dongzhen taishang suling dongyuan dayou miaojing, 27a-28b, and 31b-32a, as the presiding deity of the upper cinnabar field; he is also mentioned in the Wufu xu, 1.13a, as the Cinnabar Child (Zidan 子丹). Under the same moniker, the deity surfaces once more in the Taishang huangting waijing yujing 黃庭外景玉經 (Jade Scripture of the Exoteric Effulgence of the Yellow Court; CT 332), 34a, where he is the only god to benefit from a name; the Cinnabar Child is mentioned again in the Taishang huangting neijing yujing 黃庭內景玉經 (Jade Scripture of the Esoteric Effulgence of the Yellow Court; CT 331), 12a, in section 35; he also appears in section 17, 8a, as the Yellow Gown Cinnabar Child (Huangchang zidan 黃裳子丹); and in section 13, 4b, as Yellow Gown (Huangchang), the father of the Red Child in the Laozi zhongjing.
absorption, the essences are distributed throughout the body to feed its resident
gods, in this case, the Red Child.78 Once more, the Laozi zhongjing acts as a bridge
between the traditions represented by the Sanhuang wen and the Wufu xu. The later
work, for example, proposes a similar method for absorbing solar and lunar
essences in the aim of generating a unified embryonic deity:

By nourishing [oneself with] the essence of the sun, one can attain long life […] Concentrate on the sun and visualize a small child (xiao tongzi 小童子) dressed in red in your heart […]. You will see the red radiance of the sun and a yellow energy will appear before your eyes. Make this enter your mouth and swallow it twice nine times. Then rub your heart and recite the following incantation: ‘Ruler of the Sun! Let your primal yang energy merge its power with me! Let us together raise the immortal child in the scarlet of the heart!’ Concentrate a little longer and the child will descend from the heart to the lower cinnabar field in the abdomen […]. By nourishing the essence of the moon you can strengthen the root of the kidneys and make white hair turn black again […]. Stand outside facing the moon and chant the following words: ‘Ruler of the Moon! Let your primal yin energy merge its power with me! Let us together raise the immortal child in the cinnabar field!’ 80

78 Laozi zhongjing, 51, in Yunji qiqian, 19.15b-16a; see Despeux, Taoïsme et corps humain, 152—58; see Laozi zhongjing, 34, 35, and 36 in Yunji qiqian, 19.4b-5b, 19.5b-17a, 19.7ab, for more methods of astral absorption for the nourishment of an inner “small lad” (xiao tongzi 小童子) and a Perfected Cinnabar Child (Zhenren zidan 真人子丹) in the last instance. In Laozi zhongjing, 34 from Yunji qiqian, 19.4b-5b, one attains inner vision by shedding the light absorbed by the sun and moon through the eyes (and a third source of illumination—located around the pineal gland or “third eye” identified with the Pole Star—which acts as a mirror by reflecting the light of the sun and moon) onto an internal geography populated with various gods; Schipper, The Taoist Body, 105.
79 The passage speaks of the “small lad” (xiao tongzi), as in the Laozi zhongjing; see the previous note. This excerpt from the Wufu xu corresponds to a number of passages from the Laozi zhongjing; cf., Wufu xu, 1.12b-11a, for more on astral essences.
80 Wufu xu, 1.18b-19b; translation from Yamada, “Longevity and the Lingbao Wufu xu,” 119. The same process is repeated for the absorption of lunar essence. The “Xicheng yaojue” section from the Badi miaojing jing, 14b-15a, also includes a similar technique entitled “Juhun fa” (Method for Detaining the Hun Souls) that definitively ties the absorption of astral essences with visualizations of the Three Ones; Laozi zhongjing, 11, from Yunji qiqian, 18.7ab does the same, while incorporating the practice of using the essences to nourish the Red Child. For an overview of the absorption of astral essences in the Badi miaojing jing and the Wufu xu, see Robinet, La révélation du Shangqing, 1:32—34. The purpose of the “Juhun fa” from the “Xicheng yaojue” is to keep the souls in the body in order to artificially prolong one’s lifespan; this recalls the xing bu rudi (“their form will no longer enter
This method, along with its equivalents from the *Laozi zhongjing* and the *Badi miaojing jing*, is replete with alchemical motifs that would later typify internal alchemy practice (*neidan*). References to the generation of embryos and the binary valence attributed to the “ingredients” that are necessary for their development are readily apparent, but the ontological peculiarities of the selections from the last few pages warrant closer inspection. The “Sanhuang sanyi jing”, for example, explains that Taiyi and Dijun, the original mother and father, emerge from an undifferentiated state, the Primal Pneuma (*yuanqi*). After the division into two Ones, a third One is generated. Towards the end of the passage, this third deity is identified as Lord Prime Taiyi (Taiyi yuanjun), a product of the Taiyi and Dijun. In other words, the Three and the myriad things to which it subsequently gives birth are the result of a regression to the original undifferentiated state. The composite Lord Prime Taiyi, who is also Lord Lao, the Infant, or the “person” (*ren*) contains its own progenitors. This is an operative principle of alchemical processes, by which yin and yang, both issued from Pure Yang (*chunyang*), are recombined and revert to their original state of unity.  

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81 Pregadio, “Origins of Inner Alchemy,” 136—38, points to both *waidan* and *neidan* imagery in the *Laozi zhongjing* and the *Wufu xu*; see also Katō Chie’s “Rōshi chūkyō to naitan shisō no genryū.”

82 This applies for one, to huandan 還丹, the “reverted elixir.” Pregadio, *Great Clarity*, 100, explains that in waidan: “[…] mercury (Yin) is refined from cinnabar (Yang), added to sulphur (Yang), and refined again. This process typically repeated nine times [Yang], yields an essence deemed to be entirely devoid of Yin and thus to incorporate the qualities of Pure Yang (chunyang), the state of oneness before Yin and Yang arise. [Alternatively] refined mercury (Real Yin, zhenyin [真陰]) is refined from cinnabar
The embryo from the “Sanhuang sanyi jing” is a synthesis of the mother and father in the image of their primordial union, a reverse image of the cosmic Taiyi; it is the corporeal manifestation of the primordial pneuma (yuanqi) that emanates from the Dao, embodied as pure “self” (wu 吾) or the “master of one’s real self” (zhenwu zhi shi 真吾之師). The Laozi zhongjing clarifies:

I (wu) am the son of the Dao (Daozi 道子). Others also have me so I am not only “I.” […] My mother is above me, on the right, she embraces (bao 抱) and nourishes (yang 養) me; my father is above me, on the left, he teaches and protects me […]. My body (shen 神) is Primal Yang (yuanyang 元陽), my name is Cinnabar Child (Zidan 子丹). 83

The ties that bind these Three Ones are visibly based on a familial model. Indeed, even the inner gods that do not dwell in the three cinnabar fields, those that preside over the liver, or the kidneys for example, are ascribed gender and kinship. These data are usually distributed in accordance with the nature of their interactions, either mutually successive (xiangke 相克) or mutually engendering (xiangsheng 相生); in the former case, their bonds are marital, whereas in the latter, they are parental. 84 The father-mother-child triad that defines the Three Ones is reproduced throughout the Laozi zhongjing, along the axis of the three cinnabar

(Yang), and refined lead (Real Yang, zhenyang 真陽) is refined from native lead (Yin). The elixir produced by joining refined mercury and refined lead to each other is also equated to Pure Yang.”

83 *Laozi zhongjing*, 12, in *Yunji qiqian*, 18.7b-9a; also see sections 23, 37, and 39, in *Yunji qiqian* 18.17b-19b, 19.7b-8b, and 19.9b-10b respectively, for associations between the Red Child or Cinnabar Child and the self; see Schipper, “Le calendrier de jade,” 78. The process in the Laozi zhongjing differs from the one described in the Badi miaojing jing in one significant aspect: while the latter describes the genesis of a third entity through the union of mother and father principles, the former uses yin and yang essences merely to feed a Cinnabar Child or Red Child that has been lying dormant in the stomach all along; see Katō Chie, “Rōshi chūkyō to naitan shisō no genryū,” 22—25. The father principle in the Badi miaojing jing however, is an embryo (tai), whose origins and provenance are unclear.

84 Schipper, ibid.
fields, but also within each of the fields, their identities varying from one site to another. In the region of the head for instance, there is Xi Wangmu (Queen Mother of the West), Dong Wangfu (King Father of the East), and Taiyi, while lower in the body, they are known as Nanji Laoren (Venerable Man of the Southern Pole), Xuanguang yunü (Jade Woman of Mysterious Radiance), and Zhongji dongzi 中極童子 (Young Lad of the Central Pole). The system of meditation presented in the text and its entire narrative structure are modeled on gestation. The lower cinnabar field, where the belly or womb is located is thus the focal point of meditative activity.\textsuperscript{85}

As with the use of talismans for summoning, one of the narrative motors behind the (re)generative processes described in the “Sanhuang sanyi jing,” \textit{Laozi zhongjing}, and the \textit{Wufu xu} is hierogamy. Schipper suggests that in fact, most sections of the \textit{Laozi zhongjing} contain either a literal or thinly veiled treatment of reproductive functions.\textsuperscript{86} The procreative metaphor is valued for its end result, the genesis of a new, perfected “self.” By regressing to an original state of perfect union with the Dao, the meditation practices prized by the Sanhuang also afford practitioners the unique benefit of manipulating time.

\textit{2. Regressive Gestation}

\textsuperscript{86} Schipper, \textit{ibid.}, 371. Maspero, “Les procédés de ‘nourrir le principe vital’ dans la religion taoïste ancienne” 570—71, and 571, n.1, applies the same description to the \textit{Taishang huangting neijing yujing} 太上黃庭內景玉經 (Jade Scripture of the Esoteric Effulgence of the Yellow Court; CT 331), on which, see above, 67, n. 128, and 212, n. 79.
Although the Sanhuang’s *Huangren (sanyi) jing* is lost, the meditation on the Three Ones that it contained is preserved in a number of Southern works from the early Six Dynasties. The *Laozi zhongjing* and the *Wufu xu* are foremost among these, along with the “Sanhuang sanyi jing,” the only text on the meditation technique that is directly tied to the Sanhuang tradition. All surviving accounts of guarding the Three Ones reflect a similar framework: through persistent practice the inner embryo is nourished, and a purified, ethereal real self (*zhenwu*) is gradually cultivated. It grows as large as the “coarse self” and merges with it, eventually overtaking and effacing the pre-existing identity and the carnal envelope in which it grows. In the “*Xicheng yaojue*,” Lord Wang of the Western Citadel informs Bo He that “[…] by discarding the self, one can generate another self (*liuji ze shengshen* 留己則生身). When the Dao is fathomed, then one realizes its extensions (*fang* 方); when nourishment (*yang*) is complete, then one’s destiny is understood.”

The “true self” is activated through the suspension of distinctions

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87 *Badi miaojing jing*, 13b. The wording of “discarding the body” (*liuji*) brings up the issue of self-mortification or ritual suicide in Daoist practice; for a preliminary discussion, see Strickmann, “On the Alchemy of T’ao Hung-ching,” 137—38, 160, 191, and 81, n.197; see also *Le taoïsme de Mao-chan*, 132—33, by the same author. The notion of ritual suicide fits the logic of *shijie*; cf. 111—12, n. 100, on martial liberation; Robinet, *Metamorphosis in Taoism*, 65—66, also documents the practice of ritual suicide to escape periods of political and social turmoil; she notes that in some case, the initiatory death of *shijie* was achieved through the ingestion of drugs, or “divine pills”; Robinet, ibid., 61—62. Buddhist ritual suicide found its most exalted expression in the practice of self-immolation: see Benn, *Burning for the Buddha: Self-Immolation in Chinese Buddhism*; Filliozat, “La mort volontaire par le feu et la tradition bouddhique indienne,” 21—51; Gernet, “Le rituel du suicide par le feu chez les bouddhistes chinois,” 527—58; Lamotte, “Le suicide religieux dans le bouddhisme ancien,” 156—58; and Seidel, “Dabi,” 573—85; There is one documented case of Buddho-Daoist self-immolation; see Zürcher, “Buddhist Influences on Early Taoism,” 103—04.
between yin and yang, mother and father, corporeal and ethereal self, I and other, and the return to the undifferentiated essence of the Primal Lord Taiyi.88

The Laozi zhongjing provides a glimpse of regressive chronology in its isolated discussions of the Cinnabar Child, but more broadly, the text displays a systemic concern for cyclical time patterns. The eight nodes (bajie 八節) repeatedly appear as temporal markers, as do longer measurements, including those of the coinciding Three Primes (sanyuan) every thirty six years, and the ominous “meetings of Heaven and Earth” (tiandi zhi hui 天地之會) every forty-five, ninety, hundred eighty, three hundred sixty, thousand, three thousand six hundred, eight thousand, and thirty six thousand years.89 Indeed, the Laozi zhongjing derives its alternate title, the “Jade Calendar of Long Life,” from its pronounced sensitivity to the flow of time.90 Schipper reflects: “[…] le Calendrier de Jade permet aux adeptes de connaitre les temps de la terre, celui de la conception et de la gestation, de la vie et de la mort, afin de leur permettre de retrouver le rythme fondamental de l’univers et l’union avec le Tao.”91 The “Sanhuang sanyi jing” and other excerpts from the Badi miaojing jing also share the same enthusiasm for chronological speculation. Yet beyond simply “knowing the times of Heaven and Earth,” and “living in harmony with their rhythm” the

88 This cyclical model of time recalls Ouroboros, which is among other things, a (sometimes alchemical) symbol of immortality that operates according to a “feedback” through which it brings itself back to life by consuming itself, killing itself, then fertilizing and birthing itself; Jung has notably established the identity between Ouroboros and the One.
89 Laozi zhongjing, 52, in Yunji qiqian, 19.16a-17a.
90 Notions of time in Chinese religions will not be discussed in detail here; for these, see Huang Chun-chieh and Zürcher, Time, Science and Society in China and the West: A Study of Time; DeBernardi, “Space and Time in Chinese Religious Culture”; Granet, La pensée chinoise, 88—89; and Ricoeur, “The History of Religions and the Phenomenology of Time Consciousness,” especially 26-27.
Sanhuang tradition is further concerned with exerting effective control over time, a preoccupation that is most notably discernible in the “Jiuhuang tu” 九皇圖 (“Charts of the Nine Sovereigns”) from the Badi miaojing jing.

3. Nonary Technologies

The “Jiuhuang tu” were an integral part of the Three Sovereigns corpus since the elaboration of the eleven-scroll canon at the latest. An excerpt from the Xuanmen dayi preserved in the Sandong zhunang (Pearl Satchel of the Three Caverns) relates that scroll 6 of the eleven-scroll Dongshen jing, which would correspond to the Badi miaojing jing, lists three Former, three Middle, and finally three Latter Sovereigns.92 The “Jiuhuang tu” also appear in inventories of materials that were transmitted to new initiates. A Tang dynasty “Sanhuang famu” (Catalogue of Sanhuang Methods) includes it among documents to be handed down as part of the fourteen scrolls of the Dongshen jing, while the Dongxuan lingbao sandong fengdao kejie yingshi (Regulations for the Practice of Daoism in Accordance with the Scripture of the Three Caverns) mentions the title together with the Sanhuang neiwen and Sanhuang tianwen dazi as required texts for attaining the position of “peerless Dongshen ritual master” (wushang dongshen fashi).93 They are also presented as transmission materials in the Sanhuang yi (Rituals of the Three

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92 Sandong zhunang, 8.32a3.
93 Chuanshou sandong jing jiefa lulüe shuo, 1.7a; Dongxuan lingbao sandong fengdao kejie yingshi, 4.7b.
Sovereigns) and the *Sanhuang chuanshou yi* (Rituals for the Transmission of the Scriptures of the Three Sovereigns).\(^{94}\)

The “Jiuhuang tu” are illustrations of the Nine Sovereigns for the purpose of visionary meditation.\(^{95}\) The Nine Sovereigns are manifestations of the Three Sovereigns along a tripartite temporal axis, resulting in a former (*chu* 初; past), middle (*zhong* 中; present), and latter (*hou* 後; future) incarnation for each of the Three Sovereigns. In the first group, the Former Sovereigns (*chuhuang* 初皇), adopt a human form; they are represented in official garb grasping jade tablets. Their size, nine inches (*cun*), indicates that they are to be visualized inside the body, most probably in the three cinnabar fields, although this is not specified.\(^{96}\) Only after three years of diligent effort will they appear to the adept and bestow their secrets. These gods are said to be the transformations of vacuity (*xu* 虚), absence (*wu* 無), and emptiness (*kong* 空), from which the *Sanhuang wen* spontaneously formed.\(^{97}\)

In the first part of the “Jiuhuang tu” meditation, the Three Sovereigns are identified with the Three Ones of the inner landscape, an association that would explain the privileged position awarded to guarding the One in the Sanhuang tradition.\(^{98}\) The meditations on the Three Ones examined in the previous pages

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\(^{94}\) Sanhuang yi, 7b; and Sanhuang chuanshou yi, 13a, respectively.

\(^{95}\) They are found in Badi miaojing jing, 6a-10a.

\(^{96}\) See Appendix 7 for illustrations of the Nine Sovereigns as they appear in the “Jiuhuang tu” (“Charts of the Nine Sovereigns”).

\(^{97}\) See 145—46, above; Yunji qiqian, 6.10b-11a, attributes this line to the Dihuang wen, the second scroll from the Sanhuang wen.

\(^{98}\) In the Han dynasty version of their cult, the Three Sovereigns were known as the Heavenly One (Tianyi 天一), the Earthly One (Diyi 地一), and the Supreme One (Taiyi). These deities were based on the earlier Qin understanding of the Three Sovereigns, namely, the Sovereign of Heaven (Tianhuang), the Sovereign of the Earth (Dihuang), and the Eminent Sovereign (Taihuang 泰皇), also known as the Supreme
highlight the presence of the father, mother, and child (Taiyi) triad in each of the three cinnabar fields. This additional group of “Three Ones” at each of the three loci in which the One manifests implies the existence of Nine Ones in the body, the so-called Nine Sovereigns from the “Jiu huang tu.”

The Middle Sovereigns (zhonghuang 中皇), are the transformations of mystery (xuan 玄), primarity (yuan 元), and beginning (shi 始), the three pneumata (sanqi 三氣). In contrast to the previous series, their names are given, along with the date of their manifestation in the world of humans. They are also more striking in terms of their appearance. All three are theriomorphic: the Middle Greatness (Taihao 太昊); see Robinet, *Histoire du taoïsme*, 194; see also *Shiji*, 6, and 28, where the the Tianyi, Diyi, and Taiyi are referred to as the Three Ones (Sanyi) of later Sanhuang repute.

The Middle Sovereigns of Earth emerges during the Taishi reign. Chinese history witnessed five of these: 96—93 BCE, 355—363 CE, 551—552 CE, and 818 CE. Finally, the Middle Sovereign of Humanity rises during the Taiping reign, which could be any among the following intervals: 256—258 CE, 300—301 CE, 409—430 CE, 485—492 CE, 556—557 CE, and 616—622 CE. Assuming that Pingchu should be read Chuping, the earliest successive reigns are 190—193 CE, 355—363 CE, and 409—430 CE, thereby pushing back the section’s purported date of composition to the middle of the fifth century at the latest. The discordance in reign names and dates could also indicate that they were prophetic estimations of when the Sovereigns of the present age would manifest, and that the reign periods were imminent but had not yet occurred. The mention of the Palace of Three Clarities (Sanqing zhi gong 三清之宮), 7a, supports the hypothesis of a mid-fifth century date of composition; the Three Clarities are associated, with the Three Worthies (sanzun 三尊) of the Three Caverns (sandong) of the early Daoist canon; for more on the subject, see Qing Xitai, *Zhongguo daojiao shi* I: 523—30.
Sovereigns of Heaven (Zhong tianhuang 中天皇) and Earth (Zhong dihuang 中地皇) possess multiple human heads and the body of a snake, while the Middle Sovereign of Humanity (Zhong renhuang 中人皇) has nine human heads atop the body of a dragon. He “leads the ten million nine thousand troops of the Three Offices of Heaven Earth and Water,” a responsibility that betrays his Tianshi dao antecedents. Indeed, these Middle Sovereigns take on markedly eschatological features that are reminiscent of the *Taishang dongyuan shenzhou jing* 太上洞淵神咒經 (Scripture of Divine Incantations from the Cavernous Abyss; CT 335) and its apocalyptic prophecies:

[…] Upon soliciting these Lord Sovereigns, they will lead their following of troops and soldiers. They will assemble and join with a lone Grand General of the Central Heaven (zhongtian da jiangjun yiren 中天大將軍一人), the three Grand Generals of the Three and Fives (sanwu da jiangjun sanren 三五)

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101 The appearance of these three Middle Sovereigns is highly evocative of Gonggong’s vassal, Minister Liu (Xiangliu 相柳), whose nine human heads crown a green serpentine body; *Shanhai jing* 山海经 (Scripture of Mountains and Seas), 8.1b-2a; Strassberg, *A Chinese Bestiary*, 176—77; Gonggong is also depicted with a human face and a reptilian body; *Shanhai jing*, 16.1ab; Strassberg, ibid., 215—16; *Shiji*, 20, notes that nine brothers known as the “Nine Heads” were the Sovereigns of Humans (renhuang 人皇). Each of these “Nine Sovereigns” (Jiuhuang) ruled on one of the Nine Continents (jiuzhou 九州) from a walled city or citadel (cheng 城); Granet, *Danses et légendes de la Chine ancienne*, 360, and 468. Laozi zhongjing 2, from *Yunji qiqian* 18.1b, describes the Lord of the Dao (Daojun 道君) as having nine heads. He is identified with the Sovereign of Heaven, Yaopo bao (Tianhuang yaopo bao) 天皇耀魄寶; *Laozi zhongjing* 6, from *Yunji qiqian* 18.4b, mentions that Lord Lao (Laojun 老君) is also named Lord of the Nine Heads (Jiutou jun 九頭君), “because he always assists the Lord of the Dao (Daojun) on the left.”

102 *Badi miaojing jing*, 8a.

103 This does not necessarily suggest that the text is of Tianshi dao origin since the Tianshi dao and their beliefs—including the notions of stale pneumata and demon statutes that surface in the excerpt—were integrated into Jiangnan religious lore from an early date; see Nickerson, “Shamans, Demons, Diviners, and Taoists: Conflict and Assimilation in Medieval Chinese Ritual Practice (c. A.D. 100–1000).”; for a complete treatment of the *Dongyuan shen zhoujing* (Scripture of Divine Incantations from the Cavernous Abyss), see Mollier’s *Une apocalypse taoïste du Ve siècle.*
大將軍三人), and one hundred ten-thousand man battalions of troops and soldiers.

Once the mind is purified and concentrated, they will dispatch their army of officials within the adept’s body. They will widely propagate the divine pneuma (shenqi 神氣) and strike fear and awe [into the hearts of maleficient spirits]. They will assist the adept in restraining subversive demons, evil officials, and malicious men, and will execute them all. Thereupon the prohibitions and taboos will be upheld, the stale pneumata of the Six Heavens (liutian 六天) will be eliminated. Elemental demons and baleful creatures will thereby surrender; all malevolent spirits will be made subservient. In response, your pure heart will receive immediate verification, the treated shall be cured, the summoned shall arrive, what is requested shall be obtained. [As with the ruler] each word uttered will permeate everything; as confirmation, all matters and affairs will come to fruition.104

In the last series, the Latter Heavenly Sovereign (Hou tianhuang 後天皇) is depicted as Bao Xi 座犧, otherwise known as Fu Xi 伏羲, the mythical culture hero and primogenitor of Chinese civilization. The Latter Earthly Sovereign (Hou dihuang 後地皇) is none other that Fuxi’s wife and sister Nüwa 女媧. Consistent with other descriptions, both are shown as snakes with a single human head. The Latter Sovereign of Humanity (Hou renhuang 後人皇), Shennong 神農, the Flaming Emperor (yandi 炎帝) is slightly different from traditional accounts in that he is shown with an equine head atop a human body.105 This is one of the earliest extant passages to unequivocally identify the Three Sovereigns of the Sanhuang tradition with the mythical Three Sovereigns of Chinese antiquity. Just as the Former Sovereigns are expressions of the three ontological states of vacuity,

104 Badi miaojing jing, 8ab; the Wushang biyao offers an analogous passage: in the “Method for the Five Commencements,” the Five Emperors (wudi) are associated with spirit armies (90,000 for the east, 120,000 for the center, and so on), that offer protection to adepts who enter the mountains in search of transcendence; Lagerwey, “Deux écrits,” 5.
105 This iconography of the Sovereign of Humanity became standard in Sanhuang materials.
absence, and emptiness, and the Middle Sovereigns correspond to the three pneumata (sanqi), the Latter Sovereigns are the embodiment of the Three Terraces (santai 三台), transformations of the Three Primes (sanyuan). While the Three Primes are cosmogonic stages that are also associated with incarnations of the Taiyi in the three cinnabar fields, the Three Terraces refer to a constellation of six stars directly below the Big Dipper. In some apocrypha, they represent “the road along which Taiyi descends and ascends” from the macrocosm to the microcosm.

The ultimate enterprise of the “Jiuhuang tu,” which involves the manipulation of time and space, is revealed in the last paragraph of the section:

The spirits of the above Nine Lord Sovereigns are originally One. By responding [to the various planes of the body] it becomes differentiated. It contracts in the beginning, but then expands in the middle (yin chu ji zhong 引初及中). While its gradations are distinguished, in the end, it reaches the ultimate, and thereby returns once again to sameness. The Former Sovereigns are transformations of speechlessness (buyan 言), while the Middle Sovereigns teach by means of imperceptible words (weiyan 微言). The Latter Sovereigns make knots in cords (jiesheng 結繩) and thereby establish order (zhī 治). Adepts of meditation (xueshi 學士) should thus recognize the Nine Sovereigns. One should first meditate on (xue 學) the

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106 Badi miaojing jing, 9b; the Three Terraces are also employed in alchemical contexts; Pregadio, Great Clarity, 96—97, notes that in the Huangdi jiuding shendan jingjue (Instructions on the Scripture of the Divine Elixirs of the Nine Tripods of the Yellow Emperor), 7.3b, at the center of the Chamber of Talismans (fushi 符室), “one arranges the layered alchemical altar (here called Three Terraces, santai, from the name of a constellation formed by six stars below the Northern Dipper) and the supports for the crucible (here called the Five Peaks, wuyue, the designation of the five sacred mountains).” See Chen Guofu, Daozang yuanliu xukao, 35—36, on santai and wuyue as alchemical terms.
108 The term xueshi appears at four strategic places in the “Jiuhuang tu,” once in each of the passages pertaining to the Former, Middle, and Latter Sovereigns, and a final time in the conclusive paragraph translated above. This compound most likely refers to “adepts of meditation” or “meditators” rather than “students.” Instead of the more habitual si 思, cun 存, or nian 念, the graph xue 學 was sometimes used to designate
Latter Three [Sovereigns].\textsuperscript{109} For this one must be able to tie knots in cords [(that is to say, to understand their literal words)]. Next comes [the ability to fathom] imperceptible words, which subsequently culminates in the absence of words. At this point you have joined with the Dao.\textsuperscript{110}

As with the previous meditations on the Three Ones, the “Jiuhuang tu”

presents a regressive chronology through which the adept returns to a state of

identity with the One, or the Dao. As with the generation of the inner perfected

infant, an expression of the pre-cosmic Taiyi, the chronology of the “Jiuhuang tu”

is properly cyclical since the end and beginning are united in sameness. Only the

middle is gradated and distinguished. This is the dominion of the Latter Sovereigns

whose teachings are broken down into words, the “knots in cords,” and made most

readily perceptible to human sensibilities.\textsuperscript{111} The second level of learning is

the practice of visualization in the earliest of meditation manuals. As in the “Jiuhuang

tu,” these manuals often gave no information about the locus of the deities to be be

visualized despite supplying elaborate descriptions of their appearance. This is

because adepts could meditate on the deities in question on various scales, as either

inner-, outer-, or cosmic gods; cf. \textit{Baopu zi}, 15.273, where Ge Hong describes Laozi as

an object of meditation.

\textsuperscript{109} These are the Sovereigns of the mesocosm, whose manifestations fall within the

boundaries of human understanding.

\textsuperscript{110} \textit{Badi miaojing jing}, 9b-10a.

\textsuperscript{111} The Sanhuang tradition is inscribing itself in the lineage of the \textit{Yijing} and its

divinatory system. In the \textit{Yijing’s Xici 繫辭 (Appended Statements)} 2.2, Fuxi, the

forefather of Chinese civilization:

[…] gazed upon the images (\textit{xiang 象}) in Heaven. He lowered his gaze and

contemplated the laws (\textit{fa 法}) of the earth. He then looked at the patterns (\textit{wen 文}) of birds and beasts, and considered how they agree with where they are.

For the familiar he proceeded from the self; for the distant he borrowed from

the other (\textit{wu 物}). Thereby, he created the eight trigrams (\textit{bagua 八卦}), which

enabled him to share the virtue of divine luminaries and classify the conditions

of the myriad things. He made knots in cords and used them for hunting and

fishing; the idea is likely to have come from the trigram \textit{li 離}.

Like the talismans of the Sanhuang, this passage shows that Fu Xi’s trigrams

were devised from natural patterns and occurrences. They also serve as means of

communicating with deities, often for the purpose of divination. For more on the

significance of the eight trigrams in the Sanhuang tradition, see the second part of
represented by the Middle Sovereigns, who communicate through “imperceptible words.” 112 Finally, the adept attains the undifferentiated speechless Dao that resides in the “emptiness, absence, and vacuity” embodied by the Former Sovereigns. 113 In purely chronological terms, the adept is projected back in time regressing from the Latter, to the Middle, and finally Former Sovereigns along a trajectory of reverse cosmogony. The destination is a contracted singular event containing all of space and time.

By the seventh century, a Sacrificial Offering to Nine Sovereigns (Jiuhuang jiaoyi 九皇醮儀) was practiced in relation to a Precious Register of the River Chart (hetu baolu 河圖寶録). 114 The contemporaneous Shangqing hetu baolu 上清河圖寶録 (Precious Register of the River Chart of the Highest Clarity; CT 1396) notes that the register is based on the secret names (hui 謳) of the Nine Sovereign Lords (Jiu huangjun 九皇君), the nine stars of the Big Dipper. 115 This

Chapter 5. The “knots in cords” mentioned in the Badi miaojing jing refer to human civilization, pointing to the compatibility of Fu Xi’s teachings with the capacities of his mortal interlocutors. Chronologically, the Xici recounts the rules of Fu Xi, followed by that of Shennong, also a Latter Sovereign, and those of the Yellow Emperor, Yao, and Shun; these are the mythical Five Emperors (Wudi 五帝).

A number of parables from the Zhuangzi illustrate the value of language in conveying meaning; see the relevant passages in chapters 2, 4, 17, 25, and 27; once meaning is grasped, words lose their relevance, and communication is achieved through “imperceptible words” of meaning; Zhuangzi, 26, explains: “Words exist because of meaning; once the meaning is understood, one can forget the words. Where can I find a man who has forgotten words so I can have a word with him?”

See Appendix 8; numerous passages from the Laozi refer to the ineffability of the Dao; see for example, Laozi, 1 (“dao kedao, feichang dao” 道可道非常道), 2 (“xing buyan zhi dao” 行不言之道), 43 (“buyan zhi jiao” 不言之道), and 56 (“zhizhe buyan, yanzhe bu zhi” 知者不言, 言者不知).

Dongxuan lingbao daoshi shou sandong jingjie falu zeri li 紫玄靈寶道士受三洞經 諜法稽擇日歷 (Calendar for Selecting the Days on which Daoist Priests should Receive Scriptures, Precepts, and Liturgical Registers of the Three Caverns; CT 1240), 5b.

Shangqing hetu baolu (Precious Register of the River Chart of the Highest Clarity; CT 1396) 1a-8b, passim, especially 7b-8b; see also Shangqing qusu jueci lu 上清曲素
last work associates the Nine Sovereigns with the Nine Heavens (jiutian), a detail that can potentially shed some light on the relationship between the “Jiuhuang tu” in the *Badi miaojing jing* and Sanhuang cosmology.

4. The Nine Hymns of the Nine Charts

In the *Badi miaojing jing*, the “Jiuhuang tu” are preceded by the “Yangge jiuzhan” 陽歌九章 (“Nine Yang Hymns”). These are nine hymns that adepts must chant to form a contractual bond with the emissaries of the Imperial Sovereigns of the Nine Heavens (Jiutian dihuang 九天帝皇). In the *Badi miaojing jing*, the Yang Hymns are introduced by the following preamble:

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訣辭錄 (Highest Clarity Register for the Instructions on the Emanations from the Labyrinth; CT 1392), 18b-24a; and *Beidou jiuhuang yinhui jing* 北斗九皇隱諱經 (Book of the Secret Names of the Nine Sovereigns of the Big Dipper; CT 1456; *Yunji qiqian*, 24.9a-14a) for a meditation practice centered on the visualization of the Nine Sovereigns; see also *Taishang zhengyi mengwei falu* 太上正一盟威法録 (Complete Division of the Liturgical Registers of the One and Orthodox Covenant with the Powers of the Most High; CT 1209), 34b-38b for another, similar, Register of the River Chart where the Nine Sovereigns are termed the Nine Ones (Jiuyi 九一). These texts seem to be related to the *Foshuo beidou qixing yanming jing* 佛說北斗七星延命經 (Sūtra on Prolonging Life through the Worship of the Seven Stars of the Northern Dipper, Preached by the Buddha; T. 1307), and the bevy of Daoist works devoted to the cult of the Big Dipper’s anthropomorphized nine stars; see Mollier, *Buddhism and Taoism Face to Face*, 134—73, especially 165—68, for a list of these texts and the associations between them; see also Franke, “The Taoist Element in the Buddhist Great Bear Sūtra (Pei-tou ching),” 75—111; and Orzech and Sanford, “Worship of the Ladies of the Dipper,” 383—95.

116 The “Nine Yang Hymns” are found in *Badi miaojing jing*, 4b-6a.
117 *Badi miaojing jing*, 4b. A clue as to the ritual function of the “Nine Yang Hymns” can be found in the *Taishang dongshen sanhuang yi* (Rituals of the Three Sovereigns), 7ab, in a passage that notes the existence of “sounds” (yin 音) to be intoned by the Dongshen ritual master and disciple during the transmission of the *Sanhuang jing*; these are found in the fourth scroll of *Dongshen* corpus.
Perform purifications and uphold the precepts, guard the One and harmonize with the spirits. Your understanding will be refined and your sapience far-reaching. The Imperial Sovereigns of the Nine Heavens (Jiutian dihuang) will dispatch the divine lads to come down and guard the records and charts. They will order the Mysterious Maiden (Xuannü) to intone the Nine Yang Hymns in order to diffuse the subtle pneuma, thereby spreading auspiciousness and erasing misfortune. Adepts of meditation (xuezhe 學者) should recite these hymns when performing circumambulations (xunhui 巡迴) and practicing the Dao to form a divine contract [with the gods].\\(^{118}\)

A number of texts tied to the Sanhuang tradition reproduce the same “Nine Yang Hymns.”\\(^{119}\) The Wushang biyao also includes them in its pages, but it further accommodates another set of verses in its “Xiange pin” 仙歌品 (“Hymns of Immortals”).\\(^{120}\) The chants are composed of a different group of Nine Yang Hymns, complemented by Six Yin Hymns (Yinge liuzhan 隱歌六章). Recited together, they pacify the souls and essences, harmonize the five spirits and offer protection from the myriad noxious pneumata.\\(^{121}\) Similarly to their Badi miaojing jing analogues these chants are intoned by “jade lads and jade maidens” from Heaven. They descend to teach the Way and the hymns to those who are destined to attain immortality.\\(^{122}\)

As reflected in the Wushang biyao, a complete cycle of hymns includes both yang and yin chants, yet the Badi miaojing jing preserves only the former.

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118 Badi miaojing jing, 4b.
119 See for example, the aforementioned Taishang dongshen sanhuang yi, 7ab; and Taishang dongshen xingdao shoudu yi (Liturgy for the Transmission of the Dongshen division), 2b, 4b-5b, 6b, 12ab, 13b, and 15b; the passages are discussed on 95—96, and 227, n. 117.
120 For the hymns from the Badi miaojing jing, see Wushang biyao, ibid. For the “Hymns of Immortals” section, see Wushang biyao, 20.4b-8b; and Lagerwey, Wushang pi-yao, 97. These are associated with the Shangqing tradition; see Strickmann, “The Mao Shan Revelations: Taoism and the Aristocracy” 61, and n. 159, p.161.
121 Wushang biyao, 20.8b; see Wushang biyao, 38.3b-4a for the “Nine Yang Hymns” from the Badi miaojing jing.
122 Wushang biyao, 20.6b; see also Schipper, L’Empereur Wou des Han dans la légende taoïste, 54.
However, the *Wushang biyao* quotes a group of Nine Yin Hymns (from the *Sanhuang jing*—ostensibly the missing complement to those of the *Badi miaojing*). A few prefatory lines introduce the chants:

The Perfected of the Orthodox One (*Zhengyi zhenren 正真人*) revealed these hymns to Zhao Sheng, 趙昇 who declares that the Imperial Monarchs of the Nine Heavens (*Jiutian diwang 九天帝王*) will command the Pure Maidens of the Nine Yin Hymns [to descend] and unite with [the Divine Lads of] the Yang Hymns. Adepts of meditation (*xueshi 學士*) should intone these hymns in practice.

Together, the yin and yang hymns represent a hierogamic union between cosmic elements, but also between the adept and the divine. As previously considered in the context of the *Laozi zhongjing*, the *Wufu xu*, and the “Sanhuang sanyi jing,” the themes of sexuated pairing between deities or ecstatic union between adepts and deities underlie the practice of meditation, particularly the variety that involves the visualization of gods.

The coupling of human and divine forces often foreshadows mediumistic events; Tao Hongjing notes that the recitation of yin and yang hymns “seems to announce a revelatory séance,” as if it were the key that unlocks the floodgates of divine communication. Such coupled hymns were encountered in the *Zhengao* of course, but also in other revealed texts such as the *Han Wudi neizhuan* 漢武帝内傳 (Esoteric Biography of Emperor Wu of the Han; CT 292), where they closely precede the revelation of texts or charts. In the tradition of the *Chuci* 楚辭

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123 *Wushang biyao*, 20.8—10a. The reference to the *Sanhuang jing* is on 20.10b.
124 *Wushang biyao*, 20.8a.
125 *Zhengao*, from Schipper, *L’Empereur Wou des Han dans la légende taoïste*, 55.
126 Schipper, ibid., 54—62; see also, Strickmann, “The Mao Shan Revelations: Taoism and the Aristocracy,” 61, n.159.
(Songs of the South), the hymns themselves are revered as mediumistic revelations.127

The motif of hierogamy, or at the very least that of binary complementarity, extends further still. The opening lines of the “Nine Yang Hymns” identify each verse with an Imperial Sovereign of the Nine Heavens (Jiutian dihuang), suggesting that the Sanhuang tradition understood the Nine Sovereigns as gods of the Nine Heavens.128 This also solidifies the hymns’ connection to the charts of the subsequent “Jiuhuang tu” section, examined above.129 As figurative maps of the entire universe and its history—from cosmogony to the advent of human society—the deities depicted in these charts incorporate both spatial and temporal features. This is also true of the Nine Heavens, which are represented by the deities in the nine charts: on a horizontal plane (bao; earth; female), they denote the eight directional points plus the center.130 On a vertical plane (ling; heaven; male), the Nine Heavens are progressive temporal indicators of divisions in the Primal Pneuma (yuanqi) of the cosmos.131

127 The Chuci offer a number numerous parallels with the Sanhuang tradition; unfortunately, these are beyond the scope of the present study. For an introduction to the Chuci, see Waley, The Nine Songs: A Study of Shamanism in Ancient China.
128 As they are in the Shangqing hetu baolu; see 226, above. The Former Sovereign of Heaven, whose “chart” is first depicted, dons the Treasure Cap of the Nine Heavens (jiutian baoguan 九天寶冠), a probable reference to not only to his rank, but also to his origin and function; Badi miaojing jing, 6a.
129 The “Jiuhuang tu” might be the very charts that are referred to in the introduction to the “Nine Yang Hymns”; Badi miaojing jing, 4b; see the translation on the previous page.
130 The Lüshi chunqiu (Spring and Autumn Annals of Master Lü) and Huainan zi are the usual references for this interpretation of the Nine Heavens; see Knoblock and Riegel The Annals of Lü Buwei: A Complete Translation and Study, 279; and Major, Heaven and Earth in Early Han Thought: Chapters Three, Four and Five of the Huainanzi, 69—71, for translations of the relevant passages. I am indebted to Fabrizio Pregadio for these references.
131 Dongxuan lingbao ziran jiutian shengshen zhangjing 薳玄靈寶自然九天生神章經 (Stanzas of the Life Spirits of the Nine Heavens; CT 318), 1a-2a. This text relates how
In the Sanhuang tradition, the notion of time was inextricably tied to the notion of space, an epistemic constant reflected in the interchangeable natures of cosmographical and cosmogonical models: the Nine Heavens simultaneously evoke the nine successive transformations of Original Pneuma and the nine points of space.132 Similarly, the Three Primes (sanyuan) can be understood as a temporal sequence (xuan, yuan, shi) arising from the original oneness of the Dao, or they can be interpreted as a microcosmic representation of full space in the three cinnabar fields. This understanding of interlocking systems of correspondence is the bedrock of Sanhuang self-cultivation techniques. Whether by way of talismans, elixirs, or meditation, the primary purpose of practice is to, firstly, summon deities (ling; heaven; male), and make it unite with the adept (bao; earth; female), so that they may, eventually, merge and master time and space, thereby transcending their boundaries.

The theological core of the Sanhuang tradition rests on the hierogamic principle of marrying complementary dimensions or corresponding elements. In the case of textual transmission for instance, the three scrolls of the sanhuang wen, the Three Treasures (sanbao) or Three Worthies (sanzun) of the Three Caverns, deities that are closely associated with the Three Sovereigns, produced the Three Pneumata (sanqi; xuan, yuan, and shi) of the Three Clarieties (sanqing). For an exposition of the relation between the Jiutian shengshen zhangjing and the Sanhuang wen, see Fukui Kōjun, Dōkyō no kisoteki kenkyū, 170—213; Kobayashi Masayoshi has a different persepective on the matter; see his Rikuchō dōkyōshi kenkyū, 217—40, and his “Kyūtenshōsin shōkyō no keisei to Sandō no seiritsu.”The “Jiuhuang tu,” 7a, mentions a “Palace of the Three Clarieties; see 221, n, 100, above. The Heavens of the Three Clarieties then further subdivide into the Nine Heavens. In later cosmologies, the Nine Heavens are inscribed within larger frameworks such as the Thirty Six Heavens of the Shangqing; see Shangqing waiguo fanping jing Qingtong neiwen (Esoteric Text of the Green Lad on the Goods Deposited in Foreign Countries), 2.5a-16b (reproduced in Wushang biyao, 16.1a-6a); and Lagerwey, Wu-shang pi-yao, 90—91. Tying together a number of notions from the Badi miaojing jing’s “Sanhuang sanyi jing” and “Jiuhuang tu,” the Jiutian shengshen zhangjing, 2a, explains how during the nine months of gestation, the Three Primes and the pneumata of the Nine Heavens nourish the developing embryo.

132 As do their “complements,” the Nine Continents (jiuzhou).
which denote time (past, present, future) along a vertical axis, were to be handed
down with the five charts of the *Wuyue zhenxing tu*, which embody the five
cardinal points on a horizontal matrix. In Daoist cosmology, the variation
experienced by a set of determined parameters along a temporal vector, in other
words, the combination of space and time, is defined as form (*xing* 形). Form, a
reflection of image (*xiang* 象), is transient by nature, mutating into new
incarnations as time elapses. Image, on the other hand, is immutable, it is the
original true form (*zhenxing* 真形), an unmediated expression of the Dao that
cannot be modified. The *Xici* (Appended Statements) explains: “What is above
form is called the Dao; what is below the form is called an object.”

The mastery of time assumes the mastery of space, and just as the
meditations examined above aim to to reverse time to the period of the Dao’s
infancy, they strive to reveal the adepts’ perfected “true-selves” (*zhenwo*), a
cosmic true form (*zhenxing*) that is barely distinguishable from the Dao. Talismans
too offer convenient shortcuts for uncovering the true form of deities, by granting
temporary communion with the concerned entity and a fleeting glimpse into
cosmic inner-workings. This is also true of elixirs, prized by the Sanhuang chiefly
because of their capacity to summon gods rather than for function as longevity-

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134 “*Xing er shang zhe wei zhi dao, xing er xia zhe wei zhi qi* 形而上者為之道, 形而
下者為之器”; from Pregadio, “The Notion of ‘Form’ and the Ways of Liberation in
Daoism,” 95; see also Wilhelm, *The I Ching or Book of Changes*, 323. Pregadio, ibid.,
90—99, explains that the term *qi* 器, “literally meaning ‘vessel,’ is used in this
sentence as a synonym of *wu* [物], ‘thing’; it denotes any entity that exists in the world
of form, distinguished from the Dao, which is above form. The same term occurs in
another famous statement, found in section 11 of the *Laozi*, which Daoist authors often
quote or refer to in order to illustrate the relation of form to formlessness: ‘One molds
clay to make a vessel (*qi*), but the use of a vessel lies in where there is nothing.’ A
‘vessel’ here is an object whose function is to provide a lodge for formlessness […]
one of the main functions of form.”
granting drugs. Merging with the divine, even if for a short time, seems to have overshadowed the pursuit of immortality. The fact that Sanhuang and Taiqing alchemical scriptures were discovered, composed, between the third and sixth centuries undoubtedly played in part in making talismans and elixirs the two edges on the same sword of self-cultivation.

Yet, Sanhuang meditations on the One were of a different order than its talismanic and alchemical methods. They were inscribed in an elaborate tradition of contemplation, associated with the earliest descriptions of internal gods and the inner pantheon. The *Huangren (sanyi) jing* is a testament to the Sanhuang’s close relation to guarding the One mediation techniques. Fragments of this text survive in the *Wufu xu*, the *Baopu zi*, and *Wushang biyao*, but also in the *Badi miaojing jing*, under the heading “Sanhuang sanyi jing.” This section contains indications for a meditation on the Three Ones, which involves the visualization of Taiyi, in the three cinnabar fields (*dantian*), and the generation of an inner-infant. This is achieved through the joining of Taiyi and Dijun, the archetypal mother and father, gendered manifestations of the unified Taiyi. Throughout this process, adepts undergo a regressive gestation through time and space until they realize their true-selves, merging with Taiyi, the Supreme One, divine expression of the Dao’s incipient singularity. The same operation is undertaken in the meditation on the “Jiuhuang tu,” the Charts of the Nine Sovereigns. Mother, father, and infant, or the Three Ones, are projected onto the three cinnabar fields of the Three Ones, resulting in Nine Ones, or Nine Sovereigns. Here, the spatial dimension is more clearly linked to the temporal, since each of the Nine Sovereigns, in effect, the nine points of space, are associated with chronological value, namely, former (*chu*), middle (*zhong*), or latter (*hou*). Again, the ultimate end of this meditation is to
return, by means of uniting with the objects of contemplation, to point in space and
time where the adept may dissolve into the Dao. This is also the purpose of the
practices that will be considered in the following chapter—such as the meditation
on guarding the mysterious One (shou xuanyi)—although these are guided by a
different logic. Regardless of specifics, Sanhuang methods were unified in a
common objective, to transport the adept where there was no distinction between
the Dao and other, when there was only the “Great Image without form” (daxiang
wuxing 大象無形).\textsuperscript{135}

\textsuperscript{135} Daode jing 41.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Description</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1)</td>
<td>太一 (元君; 老君; 嬰兒)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2)</td>
<td>太一 帝君</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3)</td>
<td>精 (胞) 精 (胎) 氣 (胞) 神 (胎) — 魂魄</td>
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<td>4)</td>
<td>胞 胎</td>
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<tr>
<td>5)</td>
<td>太一 (人; 真吾; 嬰兒)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the “Sanhuang sanyi jing” 三皇三一經 (“The Three Sovereigns [Method for Guarding the] Three Ones”), in Dongshen badi miaojing jing 八帝妙經 (Scripture of the Wondrous Essence of the Eight Emperors of the Storehouse for Divinity), 2b-4b.
Appendix 7: Charts of the Nine Sovereigns

Former Sovereign of Heaven

Former Sovereign of Earth

Former Sovereign of Humanity
Middle Sovereign of Heaven

Middle Sovereign of Earth

Middle Sovereign of Humanity
Latter Sovereign of Heaven

Latter Sovereign of Earth

Latter Sovereign of Humanity

From the “Jiuhuang tu” (“Charts of the Nine Sovereigns”), in Dongshen badi miaoqing jing (Scripture of the Wondrous Essence of the Eight Emperors of the Storehouse for Divinity), 6a-10a.
Appendix 8: Cosmological Description of the Nine Sovereigns According to the “Jiuhuang tu” (“Charts of the Nine Sovereigns”)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sovereigns</th>
<th>Ontological State</th>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>Temporal Scale</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Former Sovereigns</td>
<td>Vacuity, Absence, Emptiness</td>
<td>“Speechlessness”</td>
<td>Pre-Cosmic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Laozi)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle Sovereigns</td>
<td>Mystery, Primarity, Beginning</td>
<td>“Imperceptible Words”</td>
<td>(Zhuangzi)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Three Pneumata)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latter Sovereigns</td>
<td>Three Terraces</td>
<td>“Tying Knots”</td>
<td>Human</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Three Primes)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the “Jiuhuang tu” 九皇圖 (“Charts of the Nine Sovereigns”), in Dongshen badi miaojing jing 洞神八帝妙精經 (Scripture of the Wondrous Essence of the Eight Emperors of the Storehouse for Divinity), 6a-10a.
Chapter 5

Defining Features of the Sanhuang Tradition: True Form Charts as Chronotopic Complements

I. The Ontology of *Xing*: True Form in Sanhuang Meditation

1. Guarding the Mysterious One and the Modification of Form

The preceding chapter noted how the practice of guarding the real One (*shou zhenyi; shouyi*) confers a direct line of communication with the gods of the inner pantheon. As a corollary, it also grants apotropaic immunity from the ill intentions of malevolent spirits. More significantly, the meditation culminates in the genesis of an embryonic deity that grows from within practitioners to eventually resorb their beings and achieve union with the Dao. The *Baopu zi* identifies a second kind of meditation on the One, guarding the mysterious One (*shou xuanyi* 守玄一), which is lauded as a simpler version of guarding the real One.\(^1\) Ge Hong elaborates:

> In guarding the Mysterious One, you must meditate on yourself dividing into three people. When these three are visible, repeat the meditation and increase their number, until it reaches several dozen, all like yourself, either

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\(^1\) Ge writes: “Guarding the mysterious One is much simpler than guarding the real One. The real One has names, sizes, and colors [to keep in mind], but in guarding the mysterious One these are automatically visible; *Baopu zi*, 18.325; Ware 305.
hidden or manifest. Such methods have oral instructions; they are the so-called ‘way of dividing one’s form’ (fenxing zhi dao 分形之道) […].

The inner gods that are visualized when guarding the real One are, in the end, multiple forms (xing) of that the One adopts on a microcosmic level. Adepts strive to conflate the deities of their body, themselves, the “true-self,” and Taiyi, but this is merely an individual example of a universal ontological equivalence between the One and all things. Guarding the mysterious One operates along the same lines, but in the opposite direction; adepts outwardly project their form—in actuality, like the inner embryo, a manifestation of the true self and of the One, into multiple doppelgangers. In other words, while guarding the real One involves visualizing numerous forms of the One in a single internal locus, the practice of guarding the mysterious One casts numerous forms of the One, that is, oneself, in various loci. Both methods confer protection against malevolent spiritual entities, and both offer a means of communication with gods, although guarding the mysterious One emphasizes summoning in the more traditional, extrasomatic arena.

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2 Baopu zi, 18.325; Ware, 306; more recently, the passage has been translated in Pregadio, Great Clarity, 138.
3 Robinet, “Metamorphosis and Deliverance from the Corpse in Taoism,” 50, n. 58, provides textual examples of adepts visualizing themselves as Taiyi; see for instance, Dongzhen taiyi dijun taidan yinshu dongzhen xuanjing 洞真太一帝君太丹隱書洞真玄經 (Secret Scripture of the Supreme Elixir of the Lord Emperor Taiyi; CT 1330), 29a-30a, 31a-32b, and 38b-43a. In the “way of dividing one’s form” or ubiquity, the adept is projected onto the entire canvas of the cosmos, inhabiting every point of space at once. The same is true of practitioners who achieve corpse liberation (shijie), another method that involves the modification of form; as their similes remains in one point among the world of mortals, they can freely move about the universe, bending space and time.
4 Baopu zi, 18.326 reads: “My master [Zheng Yin] used to say that thse who wish to communicate with the gods should […] divide their form, for it they will be able to see the three hun and seven po souls within their body, and interact with all the numina of heaven and the spirits of earth (tianling diqi 天靈地氣). They will be
to practices relating to form.\textsuperscript{5} Methods for summoning deities or demons, particularly when making use of visualization, talismans, or esoteric names/sounds (often one and the same as talismans), can also be tied to this category by virtue of the fact they imply a manipulation of the true form of the conjured entity’s name. An adage from the \textit{Xici} appendix to the \textit{Yijing} cited in Sanhuang materials explains: “those who know the Way of metamorphosis knows the divine!”\textsuperscript{6}

This final chapter analyzes the place of true form (\textit{zhenxing}) in the Sanhuang palette of divination and meditation methods. While the variety of practices that center on true form are ancillary to those defined by talismanic summoning and visualization of the inner gods, they remain crucial complements, constituting the conceptual counterweight to the self-cultivation techniques examined above.

As briefly outlined above, the practice of guarding the mysterious One can be conceived as a teleological mirror image to guarding the real One. Instead of adhering to regressive time cycles and a reproductive discourse in its pursuit of fusion with the undifferentiated Dao, the meditation enjoins the adept to seek out death, a figurative one at least, in order to pierce through it and re-emerge as a perfected being. In this process, only the mortal body is destroyed. The form (\textit{xing}) endures, but in a refined expression that is a direct manifestation of the Dao.

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\textsuperscript{5} Schipper, “The Taoist body,” 366—68, comes to the same conclusion with respect to the meditation techniques found in the \textit{Laozi bianhua jing} 老子變化經 (Scripture of the Transformations of Laozi) and the \textit{Hunyuan shengji} 混元聖經 (Saintly Chronicle of Chaotic Origin of the Sovereign Emperor; CT 770), where the adept’s body is linked to Laozi’s “real form” (\textit{zhenxing}).

\textsuperscript{6} \textit{Zhi bianhua zhi dao zhe, qi zhi shen zhi suowei hu}; 知變化之道者，其知神之所為乎; “Xici” in \textit{Yijing}, 9.10. The line is borrowed in the Sanhuang’s \textit{Dongshen badi yuanshiṅ jīng} 道神百帝元神經 (Scripture of the Mysterious Transformation of the Eight Emperors), 1b.
the true form (\textit{zhenxing} 真形). In the “Sanhuang sanyi jing” (“Three Sovereigns Scripture on [Guarding] the Three Ones”), this notion is translated as the Infant (\textit{ying’er}), or as the true self (\textit{zhenwo}) in other meditation texts from the same period.

True form is also an operative principle in Sanhuang divinatory methods since the talismans that are employed depict the otherwise hidden names of the summoned deities. These names are inscribed in celestial script, a form of writing that is a direct reflection of the god’s true form. As with meditation, there are two approaches to the use of talismans in the Sanhuang tradition. The first, amply documented in the \textit{Baopu zi}, is chiefly apotropaic: adepts either wear the talismans or summon deities obtain protection. The second is divinatory; practitioners use the talismans to summon gods and inquire about matters of fate. In what appears to be more a more esoteric elaboration on this basic practice, advanced adepts by-pass the formality of requesting the deity’s services through an established protocol, and directly merge with it, thereby acquiring its powers of omniscience. In other words, adepts themselves are divinized and become immortals.\(^7\) In these cases, it is true form that enables the symbiosis. By identifying their true form with that of the deity—both of which are expressions of the undifferentiated Dao—adepts and gods become one. Such practices sometimes feature talismans or images of the deities that are to be conjured (the “Jiuhuang tu” (Charts of the Nine Sovereigns) from the \textit{Badi miaojing jing} is an example of the latter), but very often, divination

\(^7\) The instructions appended to illustrations of talismans often include a phrase that either guarantees practitioners can eventually acquire the powers of the summoned spirit or one that promise transcendence after prolonged practice; see \textit{Badi miaojing jing}, 11a, ensures that “if adepts wear these talismans on them at all time, then they will surely become divine immortals.”
that involves a considerable degree of identification between adept and deity make use true form charts (zhenxing tu 真形圖).

The following pages will survey how true form is a key concept in meditation and divination practices encountered in texts of the Sanhuang canon. The ubiquity of the Wuyue zhenxing tu and the Bashi zhenxing tu, two documents that are often tied the transmission of the Sanhuang wen, are clear examples of how the classical notion of complementarity between chart (tu) and text (wen) impressed upon the tradition. The themes of symmetry and complementarity, intrinsic components of Sanhuang identity, were actuated either as rhetorical devices, or as the conceptual motors behind various methods of self-cultivation.

The “Sanhuang sanyi jing” makes a rare explicit mention of guarding the mysterious One, but references to invisibility and ubiquity are numerous throughout the tradition’s sources. Metamorphosis, transformation, and the manipulation of form are the underlying bedrock of Three Sovereigns praxis. The “Sanhuang yaoyong pin” lists the “concealment of form” (cangxing 藏形) as one of the three prerequisites for receiving the Tianhuang wen, after seeking long life and before renouncing worldly glory. The same passage explains that after obtaining the scripture, adepts who practice “concealment of the body” (cangshen 藏身) will obtain “celestial nourishment (tianshi 天食) as their emolument.”

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8 See for instance, Badi miaojing jing, 2b.
9 Wushang biayo, 25.1a. Another interpretation of “concealment of form,” especially in the context of the passage in question, could be the “concealment of spiritual attainments.” In other words, the accomplished practitioner is expected to dissimulate his achievements and not use them for unworthy ends.
10 Wushang biyao, ibid. In this instance the terms “concealment of the body” (zangshen) or “concealment of form” (zangxing) are rather ambiguous and could refer to shijie, which is another variety of metamorphosis (bianhua); Pregadio points out the close connection between the concepts of xing and shijie in “The Notion of ‘Form’ and the Ways of Liberatation in Daoism,” 95—130.
the “Xicheng yaojue,” Lord Wang of the Western Citadel lists the arts of invisibility (literally “concealing one’s form” (cangxing zhi shu 藏形之術) and metamorphosis (bianhua zhi fa 變化之法) as benefits of cultivating the Way.11 Later, the immortal introduces a talisman for summoning the consort of the Director of Destinies of the Metropolitan Office (Duguan siming furen 都官司命夫人), a deity who oversees transformations (zhu bianhua 主變化).12 Similarly, the “Sanhuang sanyi jing” depicts Taiyi as the“lord of metamorphosis” (Taiyi zhe [… ] bianhua zhi zhu 太一者[… ]變化之主); if practitioners carefully learn the names of its permutations in the three cinnabar fields and comply with ritual proscriptions, then they “may extend their years, escape death, undertake transformations, and become a divine transcendent.”13

In the previous chapter, Taiyi was also noted in relation to “entering the ground” (rudi 入地), an expression that sometimes refers to becoming invisible by disappearing into the earth, a yin element.14 This technique shares a number of

11 Badi miaojing jing, 13b. Robinet’s “Metamorphosis and Deliverance from the Corpse in Taoism,” 37—70, supplies what is still the most exhaustive and useful study on the numerous assortments of form manipulation including metamorphosis/transformation (bianhua), ubiquity (fenxing), invisibility (yinxing), corpse deliverance (shijie), form-purification (lianhua 煉化, lianbian 煉變, or lianxing 煉形).
12 Badi miaojing jing, 23a.
13 Badi miaojing jing, 3b-4a. Beginning with the Zhuangzi, it was not uncommon to depict Taiyi as the principle governing transformations, or more generally, form; see for example, Daojiao yishu, 2.23a, translated in Pregadio, “The Notion of ‘Form’,” 118; the passage deals with resurrection, a sub-genre of shijie.
14 See 210, n. 70, for a brief discussion of the relevant passage from Badi miaojing jing 4b; see also Zhuangzi 25 for a similar expression, “drowning in dry earth” (luchen 陸沉) which carries the meaning of becoming a recluse or withdrawing from society. “Entering the ground” is undoubtedly tied to the practice found in the Shangqing danjing daojing yindi bashu jing 上清丹景道精隠地八術經 (Scripture of the Eight Arts for Concealing Oneself within the Earth; CT 1359); This work, dated to the Eastern Jin (317—420) is mentioned in the earliest Shangqing texts, but it may predate the revelations of 364—370. This suspicion is partly based on the Yindi bashu jing’s
elements with another form of “disappearance” (yin 隱) into what is known as
Supreme Yin (or the Great Darkness; taiyin 太陰).\(^\text{15}\) The Han wudi neizhuan
explains that by performing what is described as “refining one’s bodily form in the
[Palace of] Supreme Yin” (taiyin lian shenxing 太陰煉身形) adepts purify their
identification of the Eight Trigrams (bagua 八卦) with the Eight Effulgences (bajing
八景) and Eight (Calendrical) Nodes (bajie 八節), a feature that sets it apart from
other Shangqing texts, but interestingly ties it to the Dongshen corpus; see
Kaltenmark, “King yu pa-king;,” 1147—57. A reference to the Eight Arts (bashu 八術)
and their association with the Six Methods (liudun 六遁) surfaces in the Hanwudi
neizhuan: “Les Six Méthodes de se rendre invisible du Jen-kouei [rengui liudun 任癸
六遁; the rengui hemerological compound is subsumed under the northern direction,
earth, winter, and death] permettent de disparaître dans l’infini, de ce celer aux regards
des myriades de pointes d’armes, de se déplacer dans les montagnes, de se cachersous
le sol et dissimuler son ombre, de faire effondrer les montagnes et combler les ravins;
avec les Huit Recettes et les Six [Méthodes; bashu liudun] miraculeuses, on obtient dix
mille victoires toujours parfaites! Qui porte sur soi ces six [talismans] pour se rendre
invisible (dun 偷), reste éternellement jeune sans mourir”; from Schipper, L’Empereur
Wou des Han, 116, italics mine. In the above description, the Eight Arts appear to be
interchangeable with the Six Methods, and intimately tied to the technique of dunjia
遁甲(Hidden Stem); note the mention of “hiding in the earth/ground” (yindi 隱地).
One account of dunjia mentions “walking backwards, from the Gate of Heaven to the
Door of the Earth. When the Gate [of the Jade Maiden] is closed, the body is hidden.”
Thus, one “hides in the earth.” In some sources, this practice is explained as a
(temporal) regression through Three Irrational Powers (sanqi ling 三奇靈; not to be
confused with the group of texts known as the “Three Wonders” sanqi 三奇)), which
permits one to “vanish in broad dayling” once the threshold of the Irrational Opening
(qimen 奇門) is entered; Schipper and Wang, “Progressive and Regressive Time
Cycles,” 200—201. The authors, ibid., 201, note a passage from the Baopu zi 17.302,
where Ge Hong employs the expression “entering Supreme Yin” (ru taiyin zhong 入太
陰中) as a term for becoming invisible through the practice of dunjia. In this case,
Supreme Yin is identified with the six ding, thereby emphasizing the hemerological
dimension to the technique and suggesting a close relation to the aforementioned Six
Methods.
\(^{15}\) Schipper, L’Empereur Wou des Han, 114, n. 5, describes taiyin as an “expression
avec laquelle on désigne parfois la lune, [qui] indique […] l’état du Cosmos où les
forces de la nature, bien que présentes, ne s’extrériorisent pas. C’est cet état d’ataraxie,
pendant lequel tous les esprits vitaux sont maintenus en paix, qui caractérise les
attitudes taoïstes telles que le Wou-wei, le “Non-agir,” et le Tsouen-tao, le “Maintien
du Tao,” i.e.: la meditation. C’est là, comme […] le point de départ de toute
génération; mais c’est aussi une puissance qui peut tout niveler, et ramener l’univers a
son point de départ.” Note the emphasis on a reversion to cosmogony. On Supreme
Yin, see Bokenkamp, Early Daoist Scriptures, 46—48; Seidel, “Post-mortem
Immortality,” 230—32; and Robinet, “Metamorphosis and Deliverance from the
Corpse,” 63—66.
skeletons and pass through the gate of earth; “only then,” the instructions continue, “can one attain deliverance from the corpse” (shijie). The Tianshi daos identify the Palace of Supreme Yin as the location where post-mortem sublimation or purification of the soul occurs; this consists of a “liberation from form” by which the is refined in a “second birth.” In a literal sense, both “entering the ground” and “refining in Supreme Yin” refer to ritual death, followed by eventual rebirth (fusheng 復生) in a non-decaying body. The euphemism “feigned death” (tuo si 託死) applies a glossy film over the grim reality:

Great Darkness [Supreme Yin] is the palace where those who have accumulated the Dao refine their forms (lianxing 煉形). When there is no place for them to stay in the world, the worthy withdraw and, feigning death, they pass through the Supreme Yin to have their images (xiang 象) reborn on the other side. This is called ‘obliterating the self without perishing.’ The profane are unable to accumulate good deeds, so when they die it is truly death.

16 Han wudi neizhuan, from Schipper, ibid., 131.
17 See Pregadio, “The Notion of ‘Form’ and the Ways of Liberation in Daoism,” 123—26. The Lingbao school also contains a rite by which the deceased may sublimate their form in Supreme Yin; see Bokenkamp, “Death and Ascent in Ling-pao Taoism,” 1—20.
18 This new body is the true form (zhenxing 真形) of one’s perfect image (xiang 象). A shijie practice from the Wufu xu, 2.25a-26a, that revolves around the Lingbao taixuan yinsheng zhi fu (Numinous Treasure Talisman of the Supreme Mystery for Living in Hiding) talisman, invites the practitioner to “meditate on being dead” (sinian zizuo siren 思念自作死人).
19 Xiang’er, 21, from Bokenkamp, Early Daoist Scriptures, 102; cf. Xiang’er 43, also translated in Bokenkamp, ibid., 135; and Pregadio, “The Notion of ‘Form’ and the Ways of Liberation in Daoism,” 123—24; the sentence “obliterating the self without perishing” (moshen bu dai 没身不殆) is from Laozi, 16; see also Robinet “Metamorphosis and Deliverance from the Corpse in Taoism,” 63; and Seidel, “Post-mortem Immortality,” 230. A similar account of rebirth, complete with the elements feigned death and Supreme Yin can be found in the Shangqing taishang dijun jiu zhen zhongjing 上清太上帝君九真中經 (Central Scripture of the Nine Perfected; CT 1376), 1.9b-10b; Wushang biyao, 87.10b-11a, and Yunji qiqian, 86.a, all originally part of the same scripture; see Pregadio, ibid., and 124—25, n.94; Robinet ibid.; and Seidel, “Post-mortem Immortality,” 231.
Robinet argues that Supreme Yin is also thought of as a womb, “since at the time of the winter solstice, yang is contained within it, preparing to be reborn.”20 In this case however, the second body (or maturation of the perfected embryo) is attained by speeding up the habitual course of time rather than reverting to the moment of genesis. Whereas the meditations previously considered are based on regressive time cycles, practices that incorporate the concepts of Taiyin, self-mortification, or shijie in general, emphasize the acceleration of temporal flow.21 After undergoing an “apparent death,” adepts experience a precipitated gestational process, and subsequent rebirth as an immortal.22

20 Robinet, “Metamorphosis and Deliverance from the Corpse in Taoism,” 63.
21 This is also true of waidan, which attempts to bring time to an end with the production of its elixir. Neidan on the other hand, leads the adept back into time via the generation and regressive transformations of the inner embryo; see Pregadio, “The Representation of Time in the Zhouyi cantong qi,” 155—73. Pregadio, ibid., n.4, p.158, and Great Clarity, 66—67, Schipper and Wang, “Progressive and Regressive Time Cycles in Taoist Ritual,” 197, note that waidan incorporates the opposite notion of chronology as well. Fire-phasing in the furnace is modeled on a forward-moving conception of time, while the conditions within the crucible reverse time, causing matter to revert to its “essence” (jing), the prima materia that spontaneously flows forth from the Dao. The distinction is drawn along the boundary of internal/external, with the “inner world” observing retrograde temporal motion and the “outer world” adhering to the traditional understanding of progressive of time. The same macro-microcosmic dichotomy can be applied to inner alchemy, and more generally, meditations on form as well: macrocosmic modifications of form—metamorphosis, ubiquity, corpse deliverance, invisibility—follow forward-flowing time, progressing from life, to death, and back to rebirth or immortality whereas microcosmic modifications of form—the generation of an inner “true self” or of aperfected embryo—follow the reverse process, from waking “death” to transcendent life; Sivin, “Chinese Alchemy and the Manipulation of Time,” on the other hand supports that the time cycles in alchemy and are exclusively progressive, accelerating processes that naturally result in purification.
22 A number of scholars insist that shijie is a sub-category of resurrection or revivification, since the latter concept, dated to the 4th century BCE, antedates the first; see Harper, “Resurrection in Warring States Popular Religion,” 24—25; see also Robinet, “Metamorphosis and Deliverance from the Corpse in Taoism,” 96; both shijie and resurrection require undergoing death and necessitate an acceleration of the normal course of events or subjective flow of time. However, resurrection results in the adept reappearing in carnal form to engage once more in worldly activities, whereas shijie, grants transcendence over the corporeal; Harper, ibid., 26—27.
The association between the Three Sovereigns and resurrection partly stems from the central role played by the Director of Destinies (Siming) in the summoning rituals of the *Badi miaojing jing* and “Sanhuang yaoyong pin,” where the figure is called upon to extend short lifespans and reveal matters of fate. In other sources however, the Director of Destinies is more openly known for his capacity to revive the terminally dead. The *Zhuangzi* for instance, relates that he can “restores one’s form to life (fusheng zixing 復生子形),” and in a Fangmatan tomb account examined by Harper, the scribe of the Director of Destinies is petitioned to resurrect an interred corpse. While the power of restoring life is peripheral to the *Sanhuang wen*, the “scripture itself” stops short of boasting such powers. Instead, it claims: “If someone is suffering from illness and on the cusp of death, let him or her clutch the text; provided they have faith in the Dao with all their heart, they will surely not die.”

Nonetheless, transformation through death or ritual self-mortification regularly surfaces as a theme in the Sanhuang writings. For instance, two major

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23 *Badi miaojing jingi*, 3b, and 17a; *Wushang biyao*, 25.1b, 4a, 7a, and 10a.
24 *Zhuangzi*, 18; Harper, “Resurrection in Warring States Popular Religion,” 13—14; the author adds, 17—19, that the scribe of the Director of Destinies was probably regarded as the underworld equivalent to the Qin Dynasty (221 BCE-207 BCE) Royal Scribe to whom administrators reported. This would make the Director of Destinies an equivalent to the Emperor in a spiritual bureaucracy. The Director of Destinies appears as a deity from about the fourth century BC, in the Fangmatan account of course, but also in *Baoshan Chu jian* 包山楚簡 (Baoshan Chu divination slips); see *Baoshan Chu jian*, 32—37; and Li Ling “Formulaic Structure of Chu Divinatory Bamboo Slips,” 71—86; and Zhongguo fangshu kao, 286—93, by the same author. This is evidence that state religion and appended notions of the underworld, once defined by a sacrificial cycle and divination, were being reformulated along bureaucratic lines.
25 *Baopu zi*, 19.336; Ware, 315.
26 Aside from the passage on “entering the ground” discussed in the preceding pages, the “Xicheng yaojue” also mentions a “herb of supreme yin” (taiyin zhi cao 太陰之草) named Hook Kiss (*Gouwen* 匝吻). Its ingestion guarantees immediate death. However, the selection does not appear to espouse the consumption of the herb since it
figures of the Sanhuang pantheon were celebrated adepts of shijie—a practice that invariably results in “physical” death and the production of a corpse.27

Overcoming the physical limitations of the body and attaining the Dao can only be accomplished through the medium of true form (zhenxing). Adept must return or advance to original form—a process that is sometimes undertaken post-mortem. True form is equivalent to image (xiang 像), the fundamental substance of things that renders them conversant with perceivable reality. Yet image, and thus, true form, are direct conduits into the Dao that exist beyond the conventions of form. As emphasized in the Laozi, “the Dao is the Great Image without form.”28 In turn, they must shed the media of true form or image as well before attaining union with the formless, imageless, undifferentiated Dao. The body is an expendable object, a sacrificial victim that is invariably surrendered in the quest for spiritual progress. It performs a function akin to that of effigies (xingxiang 形像) known as “replacement bodies” (tishen 替身) or “simulacra” (daixing 代形) that are commonly employed in Daoist exorcistic and funerary rites.29 Form however, is to

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27 See the note on martial liberation (bingjie), 111—12, n. 100. For more on Li Shaojun and his ties to shijie, see 188, n. 5; Smith, “The Record of Ten Continents,” 105, n. 69; and Harper, “Resurrection in Warring States Popular Religion,” 25. Li Shaoweng 李少翁, disciple of Li Shaojun, is renowned for having brought Han Wudi’s deceased consort Lady Li 李夫人 back to life; Campany, To Live as Long as Heaven and Earth, 225, n.329, and 142, n.38.
28 Laozi 41.
29 On these rites and their use of “replacement bodies,” see Schipper, “Chiens de paille et tigres en papier: Une pratique rituelle et ses gloses au cours de la tradition chinoise,” especially 88—89; and, by the same author, “The True Form: Reflections on the Liturgical Basis of Taoist Art,” 93—94. In a similar vein, Campany, To Live as Long as Heaven and Earth, 56—59, examines the deceptive dimension to “corpse liberation,” by which adepts would generate a simulacrum of themselves, in some cases their original body, in order to fool the spirits in charge or recalling souls due for termination. This technique also involved changing one’s name—which is intimately
be cherished as the precious seat of individuality. Pregadio probes the subtleties of Daoist ontological discourse on the question:

[...] while ti [體], or “body,” refers specifically to the material frame and the physical substance of human beings and other living or inanimate entities, xing, or “form,” is what identifies and defines the single entities as such, and distinguishes them from each other. The frequent association of “form” and “name” in the compound xingming [形名] shows that forms play a function similar to the one played by names in making an entity apprehended as an individual object.  

True form (zhenxing) goes a step further by supplying the link to a formless Dao or “Absolute Reality.” Pregadio elaborates: “Since the Absolute is the only Reality, and forms do not have existence outside it, each particular form partakes in that Reality. This is the “real form” (zhenxing) of each particular object, which is intrinsic to and not separated from it, but like the Absolute, is not manifested.”  

It is a transition between individualizing form and the formless Dao. The Sanhuang heavily relies on the ontological proximity between name, form, and Dao, collapsing what distinctions remain in its conception of talismans. Thus, when practitioners manipulate the talismans of a deity, they take hold of its entire linked to form—in an effort to deceive the scribal gods who keep the “Register of Death” (siji 統籍). One might interpret the swords, sandals, or staves left behind in the more generic instances of shijie to play a role similar to that of replacement bodies since they temporarily take the shape of somatic simulacra long enough for adepts to “escape.”  

30 This might be a factor in explaining why shijie, release from the corpse, implies physical death while the complex of practices known as xingjie 形解 (or jiexing 解形), release from form, do not require crossing the threshold of mortality. The term xingjie was progressively replaced by other expressions such as lianxing 練形, refining the form, rendering the distinction more marked; see Pregadio, “The Notion of ‘Form’ and the Ways of Liberation in Daoism,” 116—17. This article is the most complete treatment of “form” in Daoism.  


32 Pregadio, ibid. p.106.
being. Such unconditional dominion permits adepts to transfer the hardships that were originally destined to befall them onto the conjured god. The tenth talisman of the *Tianwen dazi* (Great Characters of the Celestial Writ) as it figures in the “Sanhuang yaoyong pin” (“Essential Functions of the Three Sovereigns”) summons the consorts, maidens, father and mother of the Three Dukes (*san gong* 三公). The appended instructions specify:

> Whenever there is urgency, you may summon the consorts, maidens, father and mother of the various gods of heaven and earth, and place responsibility for the matter solely on them. Consequently, your entire life will be without grievance.\(^{33}\)

It appears that in this particular karmic equation, the logic that typically permits the adept to make the body into a disposable scapegoat can be extended to true form as well. This illustrates that true form is also precarious; despite its equivalence to image (*xiang*) and its relatively direct relation to the featureless Dao, true form is still far from unadulterated. True form is ultimately to be shed in an “ascent to the formless” whereby all is to be merged with the indivisible Dao.

The process of returning to formlessness on an individual level is grounded in a cosmogonic reversal of the sequence of mitotic divisions that turned an undifferentiated Dao into the myriad things. The *Huainan zi* notes: “One who can return to what he was generated from, as when he had not yet a form, is called Perfected (*Zhenren* 真人).”\(^ {34}\) As already noted, cosmogonic regression in the

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33 *Wushang biyao*, 25.3a.
34 *Huainan zi*, 14.235. The earliest instance of association between form and temporal inversion is found in the *Shiwen* 十問 (Ten Questions), a Mawangdui medical manuscript in which the “purity that flows into the form” results in life, but “the form that produces a body” occasions (eventual) death. Consequently, the adept is urged to reverse the sequence that leads from life to death by literally “exiting from death and entering into life” (*chusi rusheng* 出死入生). This phrase is the opposite of “exiting
service of generating a perfected self underlies the practices of the “Sanhuang sanyi jing” (Scripture of the Three Sovereigns [on Guarding] the Three Ones” and the “Jiuhuang tu” (Charts of the Nine Sovereigns). The Sanhuang concern with form and the fluctuations in the Dao that it embodies derive from its roots in the Apocrypha and the fangshi currents of the Han and Three Kingdoms. All of these traditions aimed to uncover what is meant to be hidden and conceal that which should be shown, whether the applications were political or soteriological.

Ge Hong explains that “the human body is naturally visible, and there are methods for making it invisible. Gods and demons are naturally invisible, and there are ways for making them visible.” In the Sanhuang tradition, this was accomplished through, to a certain extent, the ingestion of alchemical elixirs, from life and entering into death,” from Laozi, 50, although the phrases can be read as complementary, with the latter constituting the first phase in a process of self-cultivation and the former, directives for the second phase. The entire operation results in a second birth in which one is “released from form” and “becomes a spirit”; Shiwen sec. 4 from Pregadio, ibid., 113—14; and Harper, Early Chinese Medical Literature: The Mawangdui Medical Manuscripts, 393. Another excerpt from the Huainan zi, 1.10—11, echoes the previous one, stating that, “undergoing transformations means returning to formlessness”; see Pregadio, ibid., 101. In this case, formlessness is the obliteration of individuality, or death; compare to the following line, preserved in the Baopu zi, 19.336; Ware, 315, purportedly from the Sanhuang wen itself, which claims that “obtaining this work will permit one to carry out transformations”; see also Badi miaojing jing, 4ab.

Zheng Yin, who transmitted the Sanhuang wen to Ge Hong, is also portrayed as a true repository of metamorphosis methods in the Baopu zi; see for example, Baopu zi, 18.324; Ware, 304; also consider 15.270—71; Ware, 251, where Zheng is tied to the Dayin fu 大隠符 (Talismans of Great Concealment), which permit adepts to disappear.

Pregadio, ibid., 102—03; speculations on the alteration of form (xingbian) can be read in the Qianzuo du 乾鑿度 (Laws of Qian, the Fountainhead), an apocryphon to the Yijing (Book of Changes) dated to the first or second century CE; see Qianzuo du, in Yasui Kōzan and Nakamura Shōhachi, eds., Isho shūsei, 1a, 23—25, and 38—39; and below 268, for more on the topic; the Shiiji, 28.1368—69, criticizes fangshi for practicing questionable “methods for immortality and the release from the form through dissolution and transformation [of the body], relying on services offered to gods and demons”; I follow Pregadio’s translation, ibid., 115; see also Pregadio, Great Clarity, 26. Ngo Van Xuyet, Magie, divination et politique, 49, and 302, also touches on some of the earliest extant material concerning metamorphosis or form manipulation.

Baopu zi, 16.284; Ware, 262—63.
meditation techniques that abided by either progressive or regressive time cycles, and more generally, the use of talismans. In each of these methods, the ultimate aim is to expose the hitherto true form of the adept or summoned deity—ultimately one and the same, and to discard their carnal envelopes and deceptive cloaks. For practitioners, this implies nothing less than the complete transformation from mortal human to immortal.

Despite the relevance of true form to the entire gamut of Sanhuang self-cultivation techniques, some practices relied on the notion more heavily than others. The previous pages have considered the meditation on guarding the mysterious one in this light. Likewise, on account of their indebtedness to true form, methods that integrate the *Wuyue zhenxing tu* (True Form Charts of the Five Peaks) are to be counted in the same category.

2. *Numinous Topography and the True Form Charts of the Five Peaks*

In transmission accounts from the *Baopu zi* (Master Who Embraces Simplicity), *Shenxian zhuan* (Biographies of Divine Immortals), and *Taogong chuanshou yi* (Lord Tao’s Rites of Reception and Transmission), the *Wuyue zhenxing tu* appears as a perennial companion to the *Sanhuang wen*. however, the diagrams also enjoyed a separate cult. Numerous studies have already examined this independent tradition in detail. Since the scope of the present study solely encompasses the *Sanhuang wen* and its surviving fragments, it is needless to reiterate their findings.

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38 See 2, 11, 38, 83-84, and 120-21, for passages and relevant references.
However, a few words on the theoretical significance of pairing the
Sanhuang wen with the Wuyue zhenxing tu are in order.

The Wuyue zhenxing tu is inscribed in the tradition of true form illustrations
together with other notables such as the Xuanlan renniao shan jingtu 玄鸞人鳥山
經圖 (Scripture and Illustration for the Mysterious Contemplation of the Mountain
of the Bird-Men).\(^\text{40}\) Diagrams as these often served the purpose of meditation aids,
much like the “Jiuhuang tu” discussed above.\(^\text{41}\) However, instead of vertically
depicting a nine-phase cosmogony, the Wuyue zhenxing tu paints a picture of
cosmic space according to the schema of the five cardinal points. Other such
diagrams include the Luoshu (River Chart), the subject of several weft texts, and
the Lingbao wufu (Five Lingbao Talismans).\(^\text{42}\) Documents of this kind derive their

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\(^{39}\) Interested readers should refer to Boltz, “Cartography in the Daoist Canon”; Chen
Guofu, Daozang yuanliu kao, 77—78, and 276—77; Schipper, “Gogaku shingyō zu no
shinkō,” 114—62; Schipper, L’Empereur Wou des Han dans la légende taoïste, 26—
33; Schipper, “The True Form: Reflections on the Liturgical Basis of Taoist Art,” 91–
113; and Yamada Toshiaki, “Futatsu no shinpu: Gogaku shingyōzu to Reihō gofu,”
147–65.

\(^{40}\) See Xuanlan renniao shan jingtu (Scripture and Illustration for the Mysterious
Contemplation of the Mountain of the Bird-Men; CT 434; YJQQ 80.10b-23b);
Lagerwey, Taoist Ritual in Chinese Society and History, 161–67; see also,
Chavannes Le T’ai chan: Essai de monographie d’un culte chinois. The Mountain of
the Bird-Men is sometimes associated with a form of Taiyi (described as having a
human head atop a bird’s body), who figures prominently in the Badi miaojing jing
and other Sanhuang texts. On this incarnation Taiyi, consult Lagerwey, “Deux écris
taoïstes anciens,” 7, n.28.

\(^{41}\) Schipper, “The True Form: Reflections on the Liturgical Basis of Taoist Art,” 102,
contends that true form charts were used for mystical contemplation and that they
were worshipped. The Shangqing jiutian shenghua taiqing zhongji jing 上清九丹上化
胎精中記經 (Highest Clarity Scripture on the Central Record of the Embryonic
Essence from the Superior Transmutation of the Ninefold Elixir; CT 1382), 16b, for
instance, instructs practitioners to contemplate the successive transformations of
the Five Peaks; Robinet, “Metamorphosis and Deliverance from the Corpse in Taoism,”
43.

\(^{42}\) Schipper, L’Empereur Wou des Han dans la légende taoïste, 30, argues that the
Wuyue zhenxing tu discussed in the Han Wudi waizhuan 漢武帝外傳 (Exoteric
Biography of Emperor Wu of the Han) represent the paradisical five isles of the
immortals (in opposition to the “terrestrial” charts tied to the Sanhuang). The Wuyue
power from a symbolic capital, the first layer of which draws on the potential of topography. The science of mapping out terrae incognitae goes hand in hand with the earliest Chinese apotropaic methods. Based on the idea that only the unknown (or occulting true form) is potentially harmful, early cartography set out to accomplish on a geographical plane what talismans achieved at an individual or local level. The *Zuo*zhuan (Chronicles of Zuo) explains: “[armed with a map] when people went to the rivers, lakes, mountains, and forests, they did not encounter these adverse beings nor did the hill-sprites, monstrous things, and water-sprites accost them. As a result, harmony was maintained between those above and those dwelling on the Earth below, while everywhere the people received the protection of Heaven.”

Since gods and demons are intimately tied to their locus of primary influence, from the inner body to lofty asterisms, early mapping was essentially an effort to gain the favours of, protect oneself from, or simply identify the spirits that inhabited a certain area. As Eugene Wang succinctly puts it, “early topography is tantamount to demonology.” The charts, or “maps” of the *Wuyue zhenxing tu* are thus natural complements to the *Sanhuang wen*, and inherently relevant to a tradition not only concerned with summoning gods, but

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*zhenxing tu* 五嶽真形圖序論 (Prefatory Treatise to the True Form Charts of the Five Peaks; CT 1281), contains portions of the *Shizhou ji*, and *Han Wudi neizhuan* and *waizhuan* that support this hypothesis; this is undoubtedly the *Wuyue xu* 五嶽序 mentioned by Tao Hongjing in his *Zhengao*, 10.23a, and 14.20a) constituting the central scripture of an independent Six Dynasties *Wuyue zhenxing tu* lineage; see Schipper, ibid., 27—33 for a complete discussion; see elsewhere, by the same author, “The True Form: Reflections on the Liturgical Basis of Taoist Art”; and especially “Gogaku shingyō zu no shinkō.”

43 Chunqiu zuozhuan zhengyi 春秋左傳正義 (Rectified Interpretations of the Spring and Autumn [Annals] and the Chronicles of Zuo), slightly modified from Strassberg, A Chinese Bestiary, 4.

44 Wang, *Shaping the Lotus Sutra*, 188 insists: “According to a description of ancient sacrificial offerings in the *Rites of Zhou* (3rd century BCE), the ritual procedure for invoking the presence of spirits essentially involves envisioning them in their topographic habitats.”
also cataloguing them.

The *Sanhai jing* may offer some insight into the exact nature of the relation between the *Sanhuang wen* and *Wuyue zhenxing tu*. Scholars have suggested the work was a constituent part, the oral instructions (*koujue*) in fact, of a larger endeavour principally composed of topographical charts (*tu*). These maps conferred their holder complete command over the creatures described in the *Shanhai jing*, a feature that has led some scholars to surmise that such collectanea of geographical data were politically motivated. The illustrations were symbols not of the land, but of its denizens; they were the “secret names” by which the inhabitants of a region were summoned. In this alternate version of feudal assemblies, the symbolic sovereign would unite the image and text of beings that populated the pages of the *Shanhai jing*, constituting a tessera that confirmed the solemn bond between himself and his vassals. This same dynamic between *wen* 文 and *tu* 圖 is applicable to the *Sanhuang wen* and the *Wuyue zhenxing tu*; individually, they function as the “terrestrial” or *bao* component of a tally, the other half of which is held by the gods or creatures they depict. Considered together, they are the complementary parts of a single tally, a joined *lingbao* conjugating the celestial and terrestrial domains for absolute authority over their supernatural inhabitants. This marriage encapsulates the fundamental forces into which the Dao originally divided: yin and yang are represented by text (*wen*) and image (*tu*) in the symbol of a perfectly balanced cosmos. The binary structure also implies a harmony between verticality and horizontality, time and space.

46 Schipper, ibid.; in *L’Empereur Wou des Han*, 28, he adds that with the *Wuyue zhenxing tu*’s potential for marshalling deities and placating demons, “on est en droit de penser que le taoïste ait en quelque sorte un lien contractuel avec la montagne qu’il visite.”
The *Shanhai jing* is attributed to Yu the demiurge, who reaffirms his legitimacy as a centrifugal ruler of all under Heaven by making the spirits, and by extension the very fiefdoms, realms, or topographical features that they occupy, come to him.\(^{47}\) Lagerwey adroitly remarks that in antiquity, this is how one “who ruled by moral force (*de* 德) remained in place while all the lesser stars did him homage.”\(^{48}\) Yu is more famously associated with another set of *tu* regalia, the maps engraved on the nine cauldrons that guaranteed spiritual, and therefore political stability in the empire.\(^{49}\) Speculations abound that the images on these tripod vessels were in fact those that the *Shanhai jing* was designed to complement, and while the question deserves further study, it does nonetheless hint at an established early Chinese convention of pairing text (*wen, jing* 經, *lu* 錄) with image (*tu*) to form a complete work.\(^{50}\) These illustrated demonographies would later inspire a vast gamut of Daoist registers and Buddhist supernatural litanies.

\(^{47}\) For the attribution to Yu, see Schipper’s translation of the passage from the *Annals of Wu and Yue*, 2.3b, in his “The Written Memorial in Taoist Ceremonies,” 160.

\(^{48}\) Analects, 2.1 from Schipper, ibid., 161.


\(^{50}\) Schipper, “The True Form: Reflections on the Liturgical Basis of Taoist Art,” 95, maintains that works from the Chinese southern cultural sphere such as the *Liexian zhuan* (Arrayed Biographies of Immortals) and the *Laozi zhongjing* (Central Scripture of Laozi) were completed by charts or images representing the subject’s true form. This form depicted what could be best termed a “soul,” whether that of a demon, immortal, human being, or even a river or mountain. For the *Shanhai jing* as a companion to Yu’s tripods, see Needham, *Science and Civilization*, 3: 503—04; see Lewis, *Writing and Authority in Early China*, 269—70. Ge Hong’s *Baopu zi*, 17.308; Ware, 295, refers to a *Jiuding ji* 九鼎記 (*Record of Nine Tripods*) that also dealt with the fauna of far off lands and the methods to subdue them; see also Seidel, “Taoist Sacraments,” 320—21 and especially 321, n.100. Kiang, *Le Voyage dans la chine ancienne*, 72—73, translates an excerpt from the *Fayuan zhulin* (Forest of Pearls in the Garden of the Law) that was borrowed from the *Jiuding ji*. Yu’s Nine Cauldrons were considered such an effective political symbol that their image was resurrected in 699 to legitimize Empress Wu Zetian’s 武則天 (625—705) Zhou Dynasty (690—705).
Far removed from lofty political aspirations, the majority of charts and scriptures first and foremost offer most their holders the very concrete benefit of apotropaic protection. As Ge Hong underscores in his description of the Sanhuang wen and Wuyue zhenxing tu, complementary demono-topographic materials afforded power over the potentially malevolent or simply intimidating supramundane inhabitants of various genera of hinterlands including swamps, rivers, and mountains.51

The human body was also regarded as an unexplored territory of sorts. Talismans that uncovered the true names and appearances of internal deities were one attempt to remedy this gap in knowledge. Anatomical charts illustrating the body’s inner landscape of conduits and storehouses for numinous energies were another. While the story of Yu is principally employed as a metaphor for the taming effect of civilization over the unbridled power of nature, it can also be read in the context of macrobiotic hygiene as it applies to the body. Robinet explains how the mythical ruler, aided by the images on his cauldrons “was able to ‘cure’ (zhì治) China of its ‘great floods,’ not by building dams (as his father unsuccessfully tried to do) but by opening natural pathways along the lines of force in earthly geography to drain the water. One has to know the map of both the world and the body in order to know how to direct the vital forces and let them circulate.”52

51 For true form in general, the Baopu zi, underlines that it can be used to sidestep curses and traps laid by noxious spirits as well as humans; see Schipper, L’Empereur Wou des Han, 27—28. In his study of Japanese Buddhist mandalas, which also come in a gendered pair, kongō 金刚 (vajra) and taizō 胎藏 (womb) and encompass both time and space, Manabe Shunshō, “Meaning of the Esoteric Mandalas in Japan,” 287—88, remarks that the term “mandala” originally comes from manda, “true nature” or “true essence.”

52 Robinet, Growth of Taoism, 91—92; see also Granet, Danses et légendes, 482.
The power of talismans and charts resided in the fact that they were made up of the true names or true forms of gods and demons, a characteristic that ties them to the Apocrypha. This group of texts very often illustrated and named supernatural beings, in addition to providing methods for placating them.\(^5^3\)

Apocryphal commentaries on the *Hetu* (River Chart) and *Luoshu* (Book of the Luo River) text-chart tandem provide the most common example of this tendency, but later works that were directly inspired from the Han weft-text tradition, such as the *Baize jingguai tu* 白澤精怪圖 (Illustrations of the Spectral Prodigies of the White Marsh; Dunhuang ms. P.2682 and S.6261) are equally illustrative.\(^5^4\) An aforementioned apocryphon, the *Longyu hetu* (Dragon-Fish River Chart) provides the names and surnames of various topographical deities, adding that the sovereign “who possesses the names of the gods of the rivers, mountains and the four seas has the power to invite them, summon them, as well as to employ or expel their magic forces (*guiqi* 鬼氣).”\(^5^5\)

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\(^5^3\) Seidel, “Imperial Treasures and Taoist Sacraments,” 318—19; Robinet, ibid., 111, notes: “The world of the gods thus takes form in language and vision; the process of sanctification occurs through that knowledge of topology and toponomy [shape and name] at the core of many Taoist texts. It happens through speech and sight. Indeed the character for “holy” in Chinese includes the elements used to write the words for “ear” and “mouth,” and the holy man is a person with acute vision and hearing.”

\(^5^4\) For the *Baize jingguai tu* (Illustrations of the Spectral Prodigies of the White Marsh) in relation to the apocrypha, see Seidel, “Taoist Sacraments,” 321; Wang, *Shaping the Lotus Sutra*, 420—21; and Kiang Chao-yuan, *Le Voyage dans la Chine ancienne*, 71—79. Ch’en P’an, *Gu chenwei yantao ji qi shulu jieti*, 280, has compiled a comparative list of the supernatural creature names from the *Baize tu* and various apocrypha. Illustrations from the *Baize jingguai tu* have survived in two Dunhuang manuscripts, P.2682 and S.6261, on which see Ch’en P’an, ibid; Harper, “A Chinese Demonography of the Third Century B.C.,” 491—94; and Jao Tsung-I, “Ba Dunhuang ben baize jingguai tu.”

\(^5^5\) Slightly modified from Seidel, “Imperial Treasures and Taoist Sacraments: Taoist Roots in the Apocrypha,” 322; see the original passage in Yasui and Nakamura, *Isho shûsei* VI, 92.
Some commentaries relate how the *Hetu* displayed “the shape of the Jiang [River], the Yellow River, the sea, the mountains, streams, hills, and swamps, [but also] the divisions of the ruled provinces and countries, as well as the countenances and appearances of the Sons of Heaven and the Sages.”\(^{56}\) Other accounts describe it as a prophetic enumeration of successive dynasties and their rulers: “the River Chart is the regulator of the mandate. It charts the periods of the beginning and end of Heaven and Earth and the rise and decline of the emperors and kings; it records (*lu*) the rules of the dynasties.”\(^{57}\) The *Hetu* and *Luoshu* are remembered as sometimes charts, sometimes as text, and often times as both, that is to say, a text accompanied by illustrations or a chart bordered by text.\(^{58}\) In these accounts the *Luoshu* is composed of text while the *Hetu* consists of images. The two works, representatives of *ling* and *bao*, encapsulate Heaven and Earth along with all the spirits that populate it. Eugene Wang provides an explanation that is applicable to the *Sanhuang wen* and *Wuyue zhenxing tu* pair. He states: “the inscribed prophecy of future events pertains to time; the cosmological/cartographic picture involves space.”\(^{59}\) In a similar vein, Seidel concludes: “To trace the layout of the land, to

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\(^{56}\) *Hetu* section of a Dunhuang fragment quoted in Ch’en P’an, *Gu chenwei yantao ji qi shulu jieti*; cf Seidel, ibid., 318—19, where she discusses the passage.

\(^{57}\) Seidel ibid., 319, from Yasui and Nakamura *Isho shūsei* II: 61; see also Ch’en P’an, ibid.

\(^{58}\) This is notably the case of the *Renniao shan tu* (Illustration of the Mountain of the Bird-Men); for more on this document and the *Xuanlan renniao shan jingtu* (Scripture and Illustration for the Mysterious Contemplation of the Mountain of the Bird-Men) in which it survives, see 255, above.

\(^{59}\) Wang, *Shaping the Lotus Sutra*, 199. Basing themselves on the premise that true form and written characters are the two sides of a same divine coin, some scholars argue that the shape of the chart determines the name of the entity it represents. The same graphico-mimetic dynamic is arguably true of talismans. Commenting on a Todaiji  東大寺 map dated to 756 that closely matches one of the earliest samples of the *Wuyue zhenxing tu*, Wang, ibid., 217, notes that the height of the peaks and the incline of their slopes are depicted by curvilinear patterns that seem to spell out the mountains’ very names. Schipper, “The True Form: Reflections on the Liturgical
have fixed in a diagram the correct position of the heavenly bodies, to perceive the images of ancient sovereigns and to have insight into their succession in past and future, and finally, to possess the secret names of natures and demons—all these powers over Heaven and Earth, over space and time, are given to the sovereign who rightfully owns the Script and Chart.”

II. True Form Divination: The Eight Envoys in the Sanhuang Tradition

1. Cosmology, Complementarity, and Chronotope: the Eight Trigrams in the Sanhuang Tradition

Basis of Taoist Art,” 103, echoes this sentiment: “What appears beyond doubt, is that we have here a graphic representation of a mountain as seen from above […] The True Form of a mountain and its shape as seen from the viewpoint of the gods, from above. It is the pattern of rigs and valleys, which is the spontaneous writing, the sign, and the signature, and also the manifestation of the power of the mountain. Stretching the semantics a bit further, we may say that the graphs express the soul of the landscape.” A more traditional interpretation of the shapes found on true form charts makes them literal portraits of an entity’s essence. This is why the Hetu, as seen above, is sometimes said to be a collection of rulers’ likenesses, and why the image of the Renniao shan tu resembles a theriomorphic being. Since the “geological and zoomorphic domains in the ancient Chinese imagination are more intimately interrelated than our modern taxonomic sensibility is prepared to accept,” with the proper incitement, hill contours and river courses were likely to take on various zoomorphic or anthropomorphic shapes; Wang, ibid., 187. The stimulation required to make the connection might have been provided by accompanying incense burners and their evocative miniature landscapes, along with the undulating columns of (psychoactive?) smoke they billowed forth: “This would produce a mesmerizing effect or trigger a trancelike perception. The beholder would be cast under a spell as the forms, obscured by the incense, readily metamorphosed into something other than themselves—mountains into tigers and vice versa”; Wang, ibid., 190—91; see Strickmann, Mantras et mandarins for an enchanting discussion of optical illusions in religious rituals, 165—72.

60 Seidel, ibid., 319.
Adepts who possess both the yang-text of the *Sanhuang wen* and the yin-images of the *Wuyue zhenxing tu* constitute an effective cosmogram. All of time and space are symbolically compressed and encompassed in the interstice of the sacred documents. Concretely, this faculty is expressed by the capacity to marshal all of the deities that reign over specific sites or spatial directions (the Headmen of the Roads, the God of the Yellow River, the Lord of the Eastern Marchmount), and those that govern human fate or can see into the past and future (the Director of Destinies, the Gods of the Nine Heavens).\(^6^1\) Otherwise, possessing the *Sanhuang wen* and *Wuyue zhenxing tu* could also unlock parallel spatiotemporal structures akin to those of *dunjia* (Hidden Stem) divination, especially with respect to the hidden topography of mountains, grotto heavens, or inner landscapes.\(^6^2\) In this sense, the *Sanhuang wen*—*Wuyue zhenxing tu* tandem is evocative of other “architectonic fusions of time and space”—chronotopes as they are termed—such

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\(^{61}\) See Andersen, “Talking to the Gods,” 1—24, for more on the how “visionary divination” is executed in relation to the latter group of gods. The temporal function of talismans is already distinguishable in the ritual specifications that accompany them; Despeux, “Talismans and Diagrams,” 530, explains that the majority of talismans are to be activated at defined times in order to unlock their cosmic potential in synchrony with sequences of renewal; “only then, too, can they properly protect the adept during his passage through dangerous and difficult phases in the temporal cycle […].” Talismans associated with the sixty-day cycle are specifically linked with the six jade maidens or Jia deities (Liuji), 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 form of the Five Mountains.’ The same talismans also correspond to the six celestial palaces of the jade maidens. Each one of them represents a number of temporal elements and gives power over them, including also the cycles of yin and yang”; for more on conceptions of time in Chinese religion, see Frazer et al. *Time, Science and Society in China and the West*; Needham, “Time and Eastern Man”; see Schipper and Wang, “Progressive and Regressive Time Cycles in Taoist Ritual”; Rawson and Legeza, *Tao: The Chinese Philosophy of Time and Change*.

\(^{62}\) Ge Hong discusses these benefits in *Baopu zi*, 17.300—02; Ware 282—85. Some true form charts are believed to be representations of or maps to grotto heavens. In both cases, only adepts of a certain grade may access the landscape depicted in the charts on specific dates and times.
as the *shi* divination board the Mingtang, the alchemical crucible, and quadrangular Buddhist reliquiaries.63

The following lines, found in both the *Badi miaojing jing* and the *Laozi zhongjing*, reveal another chronotope that gives the practitioner control over time and space:

Below the navel is [...] the Northern Pole. Always, at midnight on *jiazi* 甲子, *wuzi* 戊子, *bingzi* 丙子, *gengzi* 庚子, and *renzi* 壬子 days, one should call out: 'Mother of the Way of the Valley of Darkness of the Northern Pole (Beiji guxuan daomu 北極谷玄道母), this adept wishes to obtain the golden liqueur and spring of nectar that can be ingested.' Thereupon, close your eyes and visualize white qi between your kidneys. Amidst this qi is the Divine Tortoise (*Shengui* 神龜). On its back (guishang 龜上) is the Dark Maiden (*Xuannü* 玄女) who is flanked to the right by the Director of Destinies (*Siming* 司命), and to the left by the Director of Emoluments (*Silu* 司錄).64

The *Laozi zhongjing* supplies further information: the lower cinnabar field, between the kidneys, is the gateway of intercourse, pregnancy and birth.65 In this seemingly confined space lies a vast ocean where the Divine Tortoise swims; its yellow shell is in the form of a golden plate adorned with a pattern of the seven

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63 Wang, who describes the term “chrononotrope” as “an architectonic fusion of time and space,” astutely gauges the applicability of the concept to the study of eastern religions. The term originally comes from Einstein’s theory of relativity, although Bakhtin was the first to recycle it for extra-disciplinary use: “Time, as it were, thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible; likewise, space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot, and history. This intersection of axes and fusion of indicators [of time and space] characterize the artistic chronotrope”; from Bakhtin, “Forms of Time and Chronotrope in the Novel,” in Wang, *Shaping the Lotus Sutra*, 355; see also Granet, *Danses et légendes*, 247—64, for the establishment of new temporal orders in a reserved ritual space, or what the author terms “l’avénement d’un nouvel espace-temps.” For the divination board as a cosmogram, and its yin and yang/spatial and temporal components, see Donald Harper “The Han Cosmic Board (shih)”; and Michael Loewe, *Ways to Paradise*, 60—85. For a discussion of the Mingtang along the same lines, see Gernet, ibid., 228—40. For the athenor, or alchemical crucible, see Pregadio, *Great Clarity*, 75; and Robinet, *Taoism: Growth of a Religion*, 103—05. For reliquiaries, see Wang, ibid., especially 317—96, especially 340—64.

64 *Badi miaojing jing*, 3b; cf. *Laozi zhongjing* 25, in *Yunji qiqian*, 18.20b-21a.

65 *Laozi zhongjing* 17, in *Yunji qiqian*, 18.13a.
stars of the Dipper—a clear reference to the *shi* divination boards of the Han dynasty.\(^{66}\) Like the *shi* cosmograms, the Divine Tortoise is an autonomous cosmic egg; mounted on its back, the Director of Destinies (Siming) and the Director of Emoluments (Silu) endow the amphibian with the prophetic faculties of forecasting the course of adepts’ lives, or shortening and extending their allotted spans.\(^{67}\)

It has been suggested that the text of the *Laozi zhongjing* itself reproduces the structure of the Han divination board as every celestial being is manifested in the adept’s body, an equivalent of the earth plate.\(^{68}\) Schipper adds with insight:

“Thus, the inner world is a total space, where according to a few fundamental structures such as the trinity and the five agents, the entire mythical universe can be classified. The system is closed and completely self-containing, yet it is also open because it can accommodate any amount of diverse elements. Like the ocean between the kidneys, it contains space where there is no space.”\(^{69}\) In this instance, the “few fundamental structures” are the organizing temporal and spatial principles of the microcosm, yet they are the same ones that govern the universe described by

\(^{66}\) Lagerwey, “Deux écrits,” 17—18; Schipper, “The Inner World,” 126; see also *Laozi zhongjing* 10 and 19, and especially 20, in *Yunji qiqian*, 18.6b and 18.14a, 18.15a, respectively; see 264, n. 63.

\(^{67}\) In his “De la tortue à l’achilée,” 41, Vandermeersch discusses the role of testudines in Chinese mythology:

> Enfermée dans sa carapace, ne représente-t-elle pas l’œuf cosmique, et par là la totalité du monde spatial? De plus, sa longévité proverbiale en fait également l’emblème de la totalité du temps. La tortue est donc le signe global de tout l’univers spatio-temporel. La carapace, dans sa partie dorsale, est ronde comme le ciel. Sa partie ventrale est plate, et même carrée par la forme de ses deux épaulettes latéraux, ainsi que les Chinois imaginent la Terre; composée de neuf écaillles, elle reproduit les neuf continents de la géographie mythologique. Y reporter les figures divinatoires, c’était replacer les événements symbolisés par celles-ci dans le contexte général du monde, les intégrer à l’ordre universel.

\(^{68}\) Lagerwey, “Deux écrits,” 17—18.

\(^{69}\) Schipper, “The Inner World,” 127.
the Sanhuang wen and Wuyue zhenxing tu. While the “trinity” provides the cosmic clock by which the undivided Dao gradually generates an entire pantheon and the spirits of the myriad things before ultimately resorbing into a singular event, a system of pentadic correspondences supplies the alternatively expanding and collapsing space that accommodates these transformations. The sum of these two coordinates (3+5=8) results in a self-contained chronotrope, the eight trigrams (bagua 八卦).

The figures are traditionally attributed to Fu Xi 伏羲, a mythical ruler sometimes identified as one of the Three Sovereigns. Some of the earliest texts to discuss them include the Xici (Appended Statements) and Shuogua (Explanation of the Trigrams) appendices to the Yijing (Book of Changes), but also the Zuozhuan (Commentary of Zuo) and the Guoyu (Discourses of States). In Daoism, the eight trigrams are generally used to translate certain notions onto the spatiotemporal plane. The chronological dimension of the eight trigrams is expressed in the eight nodes (bajie 八節), the two solstices, two equinoxes, and first days of each season in the solar calendar; these are notably the dates on which Daojun, or Taiyi, the center of the cosmic pantheon, is to be worshipped. Like the Badi miaojing jing, the Laozi zhongjing passage on the Divine Tortoise mentions the Director of Destinies and the Director of Emoluments. In their function as gods of destiny, and therefore time cycles, they are often assisted by the Envoys of the eight trigrams (bashi 八使).70

Form is intimately tied to the chronological cycle that is marked by the succession of the eight nodes: a number of texts coordinate the ingestion of

70 See Laozi zhongjing 13, in Yunjiqiqian, 18.9ab.
talismans with the eight nodal days, in some cases for a duration of eight years (8x8=64), in order to obtain the powers of release from form (jiexing 解形) and transformation (huashen 化身), or the capacity to be in a thousand different places (that is to say, points in space) at once.71 Furthermore, the spatial dimension of the eight trigrams is expressed in the notion of the eight sectors of the world (bafang 八方), the four cardinal and four inter-cardinal directions. The eight trigrams also figure in Daoist altars, as delineators of sacred space.

Again, Laozi zhongjing describes the Dark Maiden, the Red Child, and Taiyi resting on the back of the Divine Tortoise who swims in the ocean between the kidneys.72 The same passage also positions Taiyi (or its hypostases) in the center of two other triads, thus recreating the schema of the magic square within the body. This template is identical to that of the Nine Palaces prognosticatory mechanism, a precursor to, and inspiration for the shi cosmogram. This early divinatory computation is formally known as the Taiyi xing jiugong 太一行九宮 (Circulation of Taiyi through the Nine Palaces), and it is first attested in a weft-text known as the Qianzuo du 乾鑿度 (Laws of Qian, the Fountainhead).73 The prognostication method is based on the movements of Taiyi, the spirit of the pole

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71 See the aforementioned Yindu bashu jing, 1.2b-9b; for more, see Pregadio, “Notions of ‘Form’,” 104 and 116; Robinet, “Metamorphosis,” 51; and La révélation du Shangqing 2:142, by the same author.
72 Laozi zhongjing 19, in Yunji qiqian, 18.15a. These three are among a total of nine deities who ride the Divine Tortoise; Laozi zhongjing 23, in Yunji qiqian, 18.19a, only lists the Dark Maiden (Xuannü), Emptiness (Kongwu 㝬), and the Mother of the Dao (Daomu) instead; see also Laozi zhongjing 10, for a different roster of deities mounting the Divine Tortoise.
73 Yiwei qian zuodu, in Yasui and Nakamura, Isho shūsei 1a, 41—42; see Kalinowski, “La transmission du dispositif des neuf palais sous les Six-Dynasties,” 777—78; see also 777, n. 12 and 13, for an introductory bibliography on the Nine Palaces divination system.
star, through the Nine Palaces, where the gods of the eight trigrams reside. The Nine Palaces were eventually internalized and mapped out onto the limbs and viscera of the human body, or within the chambers of the brain.

While texts like the *Dengzhen yinjue* (Secret Instructions for the Ascent as a Perfected) or the *Dongzhen taishang suling dongyuan dayou miaoqin* (Scripture of the [Celestial Palace] of the Immaculate Numen) contain the most striking descriptions of visualization exercises related to the inner Nine Palaces, some sections of the *Laozi zhongjing* also present analogous meditations. From the centrifugal position occupied by Taiyi, in the navel, radiates a concentric administration, first populated by the Five Emperors, and then by the gods of the eight trigrams. With the additional hypostases of Taiyi in the upper and middle cinnabar fields, the esoteric circle of the *Laozi zhongjing* is the same one described by the Three Sovereigns and Five Emperors of the *Sanhuang wen* and *Wuyue zhenxing tu*; it is the *Taiyi wushen* (Taiyi and the Five [Emperor] Gods) worshipped in Qin and Han dynasty official cults. The Nine Ministers (*jiuqing*), namely Taiyi and the Eight Envoys (*bali*), compose the exoteric circle. Finally, there is an outermost layer of administration manned by the Twelve Towers (*shi’er lou*), also known as the Twelve Princes (*shi’er taizi*).

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74 On the basis of the discovery of a Nine Palaces *shi* board dating from around 173 BCE and instructions from a later text, Kalinowski, ibid., 778, explains that the eight trigrams were arranged in accordance with the numbers of the magic square along a three by three grid. This constituted the mobile (heaven) component of the cosmograph, while the static (earth) plate was divided into peripheral sectors informed by a succession of the eight nodes (*bajie*). In addition to the Nine Palaces, the eight trigrams were also mapped out onto the body in early sources; see, for instance, the *Shuogua*, which contains one of the earliest passages to that effect.

75 Kalinowski, ibid., 788—91; Kakiuchi Tomoyuki, “Tōbu kuku no zaishi to Tai’itsu, 22—40; Robinet, “Les marches cosmiques et les carrés magiques dans le taoïsme,” 81—94.

76 See for instance, *Baopu zi*, 14.256; Ware, 234.
As Lagerwey has pointed out, this passage attempts to map out the cosmography of the Han dynasty shi divination board, more specifically the Nine Palaces cosmogram, onto the body: the navel, Taiyi, is the central pivot of the Heaven plate; he is the immobile Pole Star of the Northern Dipper. The spatio-temporal markers of the Five Citadels (five seasons), Eight Envoys (eight nodes), and Twelve Towers (twelve months) make up the earth plate.

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77 The passage describing the microcosmic administrative space is found in Laozi zhongjing 14, from Yunji qiqian, 18.10b-11a:

The navel is the fate of humans. At times it is called the Middle Ultimate (zhongji 中極), at other times it is know as the Great Abyss (taiyuan 太淵), Kunlun 崑崙, Special Pivot (teshu 賽樞), or the Five Citadels (wucheng 五城). The Five Perfected reside in these Five Citadels. The Five Citadels are the Five Emperors. On the outside are the Eight Envoys (bali), gods of the eight trigrams. Together with Taiyi, they form the Nine Ministers [...]. The Perfected of the Five Citadels are charged with reporting merits and misdeeds at the four times, and the eight spirits on the days of the eight nodes [...] Thus at midnight on the evening of new moons and the days of the eight nodes, Taiyi beats on the drums of the Five Citadels to summon all the spirits. They revise tabulated acts dicuss the recorded merits and misdeeds. Those who have a [positive] record will have their life extended, and the spirits will hold them aloft; those who have none will perish, and the Director of Destinies will expunge their name from the register of Life. This is why before going to bed on the evenings of new moons and the days of the eight nodes, one must meditate (nian) on the Taiyi of the upper cinnabar field, the Taiyi of the middle cinnabar field, and the Taiyi of the lower cinnabar field, [and ponder] the Perfected of the Five Citadels and Twelve Towers.

See Lagerwey, “Deux écrits,” 8—9 for a French translation of the same passage; and Schipper, “Le calendrier de jade,” 79. The Wufu xu, 1.20b contains a similar passage explaining: “the gods of the eight trigrams are eight in number. Together with Taiyi, in the navel, they form the Nine Ministers.” Note the rare use of the graph 史(li) instead of shi 史 in the Laozi zhongjing passage; see below, 274, n. 87 for more on the term “Eight Envoys.”

78 Lagerwey, ibid., 18—19. The absence of the equatorial divisions of the twenty-eight lunar mansions and the emphasis on the Nine Ministers definitively ties the Laozi zhongjing account to the Taiyi Nine Palaces shi cosmograph rather than to that of the liuren 六壬 method; see Kalinowski, “Instruments astro-calendériques des Han et méthode Liu ren,” 324; and “Le transmission du dispositif des neuf palais,” 777. Laozi zhongjing 53, in Yunji qiqian, 19.18b, describes a meditation on the navel in which the Yellow Spirit (Huangshen 黃神), the inspector general (zongyue 總閱), this term also
Given Taiyi’s ubiquitous presence in Sanhuang materials, it is not surprising to find that a considerable role is reserved for his ministers, the Eight Envoys. The spatiotemporal plane defined by the Three Sovereigns—Five Emperors (*Sanhuang wen—Wuyue zhenxing tu*) tandem has already been noted. To this, one may add another chronotope, the one made up of the upper, middle, and lower cinnabar field Taiyi triads as encountered in the “Sanhuang [shou] sanyi jing” or the “Jiuhuang tu” for instance. The account from the latter text is notable for its mention of a nineheaded Middle Sovereign of Humanity. This is the center slot of the magic square, a position represented by the navel in the body, and inhabited by the Nine Ministers with Taiyi as the nucleus. The Middle Sovereign of Humanity thus corresponds to Daojun, son and not-son of Taiyi; just as in the “macrocosmic” description from the “Jiuhuang tu,” he is illustrated with nine heads in the microcosm of the *Laozi zhongjing*. The likeness in despictions appears in relation to one of Taiyi’s duties in section 13 of the text, does his rounds on the autumn equinox, one of the eight nodes; Lagerwey, “Deux écrits,” 16, n.62, sees Taiyi in this Yellow Spirit. He further ties him to the eight trigrams, emphasizing that the date of his inspection tour during the eighth month is no coincidence. He cites the following description of a Han dynasty administrative practice from Michele Pirazzoli-t’Sertevens, *La Chine des Han, histoire et civilization*, 22: “Les tournées d’inspection, qui existaient déjà sous les Qin, furent systématisées à la fin du IIe siècle avant notre ère. On créa alors un corps de douze Inspecteurs… Ils se rendaient tous les ans au 8e mois dans leur circonscription, vérifiaient les comptes, la justice et l’administration, puis regagnaient la capitale où ils présentaient un rapport pour le jour de l’an”; Lagerwey, ibid., 15, n.59. This system likely contributed to the elaboration the Taiyi xing jiugong (Circulation of Taiyi through the Nine Palaces) divination method and the meditations on the navel described in the *Laozi zhong jing*. 

79 The only time the term “Three Sovereings” appears in the *Laozi zhongjing* is in the context of the Three Sovereings—Five Emperors dyad; *Laozi zhongjing* 20, in Yunji qiqian 18.15a: “The stomach is the Great Granary, the kitchen and storehouse of the Three Sovereigns and Five Emperors.” Note that the product of 3 (Sovereigns) and 5 (Emperors) is 15, the sum of all lines in the magic square.

80 “He has one body but nine heads—or he turns into nine beings [the Nine Sovereigns?] 一身九頭或化為九人 […] 太一之子也非其子也 Yiwen jiutou, huo hua wei jiuren… Taiyi zhi zi ye. Fei qi zi ye; Laozi zhongjing 2 in Yunji qiqian 18.1b-2a; see also ibid., 6, in Yunji qiqian 18.4b. Laozi zhongjing 13, in Yunji qiqian 18.9a-10b, introduces the Eight Envoys; it describes how Taiyi, the administrative god of
underscores the correspondence of central strata between macro and microcosmic orders. But the ninefold architecture, with Taiyi at the nexus buttressed by the gods of the eight trigrams, translates onto macrocosmic and microcosmic scales as a whole. Whether they are represented as the hypostases of the Three Primes (sanyuan) in each of the body’s three cinnabar fields (3X3=9) or as the Nine Sovereigns (3+3+3=9), the deities in question are always identified with Taiyi and human destiny, is manifested in the body as the Lord of the Northern Dipper manifests in the sky:

People also have [the Lord of the Northern Dipper] in their navel. It is Taiyi, lord ruler of humans […] who oversees the twelve thousand gods of the body […] Lord Taiyi has (you 有) the Eight Envoys (bashi 八使), the gods of the eight trigrams […]. On days of the eight nodes, [they] report to Taiyi.

Here, the Eight Envoys record good and bad deeds and relate them to Taiyi; see Wushang biyao, 9.4a–11b; Lagerwey, Wu-shang pi-yao, 88–89, for a similar account of the relationship between Taiyi and the Eight Envoys. Otherwise, chapter 13 of the Laozi zhongjing exhibits parallels in tone and detail with the descriptions of the Former and Middle Sovereigns from the “Jiuhuang tu”; compare Yunji qiqian, 18.9a, especially, to Badi miaojing jing, 6a-8b. Later in the passage, the gods of the eight trigrams are explicitly linked to meditations on form, in what appears to be a rare mention of all three practices of guarding the One (taixuanzhen shouyi 太玄真守一) that appears almost verbatim in the “Sanhuang sanyi jing”; see 203; and Badi miaojing jing, 2b. By the Tang dynasty, there was no longer any distinction between Nine Palaces arrangements involving the gods of the eight trigrams and those that involved the nine gods of the dunjia method, who also answered to Taiyi. In other words, the eight trigrams, Nine Palaces and the related magic square and Nine Sovereigns would appear to be interchangeable as cosmological models. In fangshi circles, there was considerable ambiguity between both groups of deities and their respective divination methods as early as the Han, a detail that partly explains the association of the gods of the eight trigrams with form modification practices; see Ngo, Magie, divination, et politique, 190—93; and Kalinowski, “Dispositif des neuf palais,” 780, n. 31. Ge Hong, Baopu zi, 17.301, cites from a Taiyi dunjia 太乙遁甲 (The Taiyi Hidden Stem Method) and a Jiutian biji 九天秘記 (Secret Record of the Nine Heavens) with respect to the importance of selecting the proper days when “entering the mountains” (rushan 入山); the term is sometimes used as periphrasis for disappearing into a parallel dimension by means of dunjia divination. Doorways to other realms were typically activated through the performance of the Pace of Yu (yubu 禹步), a ritual dance patterned on the sequence of the Nine Palaces according to the numbers of the magic square; see Schipper and Wang, “Progressive and Regressive Time Cycles, 199, and 205, n.22, where they highlight a Taiyi dunjia practice that involves a series of Eight Gates on a Heavenly Compass (tianpan 天盤) that point to hours in coordination with the “day periods” displayed on an Earthly Compass (dipan 地盤); this would appear to describe a specimen of the rare Nine Palaces shi board.
the gods of the eight trigrams (1+8=9).\textsuperscript{81} By the same token, each of gods of the eight trigrams is ultimately a manifestation of Taiyi (9=9).

As protectors and/or manifestations of Taiyi, the gods of the eight trigrams rank relatively high in the Sanhuang pantheon of the late Six Dynasties.\textsuperscript{82} They are otherwise known as the Eight Envoys, or the Eight Emperors (badi 八帝) lending their name to the eight “outer” scrolls of the Dongshen jing that encase the three “inner” scrolls of the Sanhuang wen.\textsuperscript{83} Quite fittingly, this collection of texts is sometimes identified as the mythical Basuo 八索 (Eight Cords) that were purportedly revealed by the gods of the eight trigrams.\textsuperscript{84} The Six-Dynasties Sanhuang corpus itself is patterned on the Nine Palaces, with the Sanhuang wen as

\textsuperscript{81} In the Shi ji, 3, the Nine Sovereigns refer to the Three Sovereigns, the Five Emperors, and Yu the Great (Da Yu 大禹), legendary founder of the Xia dynasty (ca. 2070 BCE—ca. 1600 BCE); thus, 3+5+1=9.

\textsuperscript{82} Laozi zhongjing 16, in Yunji qiqian, 18.12b-13a. provides a list of their names:

The scripture says: ‘The celestial gods of the eight trigrams (bagua tianshen 八卦天神) [sometimes] descend to frolick (you 燈) among humans. They are the protectors (suwei 宿衛) of Taiyi, emissaries of the Eight Directions. On days of the eight nodes, they are charged with reporting [good deeds and misdeeds], and revise [the allotment of] auspiciousness and inauspiciousness. The spirit of qian 乾 is named Zhongni (Confucius); cognomen Fuxi 伏羲. The spirit of kan 坎 is named Da Zengzi 大曾子. The spirit of gen 艮 is named Zhao Guangyu 照光玉. The spirit of zhen 震 is named Xiao Sengzi 小曾子. The spirit of xun 災 is named Da Xiahou 大夏候. The spirit of li 厲 is named Wenchang 文昌. The spirit of kun 坤 is named Yangdi Wang 揚翟王; cognomen Nügua 女媧. The spirit of DUI (note: the name should read Bashi 八世). On the days of the eight nodes, always meditate (cunnian 存念) on these gods who reside in your navel, and they will extend your lifespan.

The inclusion of Fuxi among the spirits is significant; he is one of the Three Sovereigns (and Nine Sovereigns) and the architect of the trigrams. His wife and sister Nügua, another Sovereign, also appears in the roster.

\textsuperscript{83} These are the three scrolls of the Badi miaojing jing, the three scrolls of the Badi yuanbian jing, and two scrolls of the Badi shenhua jing.

\textsuperscript{84} Wushang biyao, 30.3ab; and 87. The “Sanhuang yaoyong pin,” Wushang biyao, 25.1a, gives Qianhuang neijing 乾皇內經 (Inner Scripture of the Sovereign of Heaven) as an alternate title for the Tianhuang (nei)jing.
a tripartite Taiyi and the surrounding scrolls of the Eight Emperors symbolizing the
gods of the eight trigrams. The identification of the gods of the eight trigrams with
the Eight Emperors underscores functional bonds with the Five Emperors of the
Wuyue zhenxing tu. On the cosmological significance of the Three-and-Eight,
Schipper writes: “The One energy gave rise to the Three Heavens, the three
spheres of the universe, and the three divisions of the body. […] The three levels
of the body were oriented in space according to the eight points of the compass and
the placement of the Eight Trigrams. Reproducing these eight points on each of the
three spheres or levels gives the number twenty-four, perfectly corresponding to
the twenty-four energies of the annual solar cycle.” He continues: “each of the
subdivisions, each of the categories, which could be multiplied infinitely, had its
essence, expressed in a spontaneous sign as a fu [符], tessera, symbol, and ‘true
image;’ a somatic structure of skeleton.” 85 The talismans of the Sanhuang wen and
charts of the Wuyue zhenxing tu are these essential representations.

The essence of the gods of the eight trigrams is also expressed in a “true
image” that sometimes replaces the Wuyue zhenxing tu in its function as a
companion document to the Sanhuang wen. In some cases, it is even considered a
chronotopic substitute for the Sanhuangwen—Wuyue zhenxing tu pair.

Accordingly, the “true image” diagrams of the Bashi zhenxing tu 八史真形圖
(True Form Charts of the Eight Envoys) earned a prized place in the Sanhuang
canon. The document’s use in divinatory rituals resonated with other materials
from the Dongshen jing, and was undoubtedly a factor in its integration into the
corpus.

85 Schipper, The Taoist Body, 62.
2. The Eight Envoys and Visionary Divination

The Baopu zi is the earliest datable source to examine divination techniques based on the gods of the eight trigrams. In response to a question about forecasting one’s good or bad fortunes, Ge first and foremost advocates the use of the Sanhuang over the more unreliable traditional prognosticatory methods like toirtoise and milfoil divination. This particular text has the advantage of convening the deities that oversee human destiny—among them the Director of Destinies, Director of Dangers, the Lords of the Five Peaks, Headmen of the Roads, and the spirits of the Six Ding—so that they may be questioned in the comfort of one’s home (bu chu weimo 不出帷幕). Next, in order of efficacy, he recommends conjuring the jade maidens of the Six Yin (liuyin yunü 六陰玉女), before finally advising to make the Eight Envoys descend by means of offerings (ji zhi bashi 祭致八史); “as for the Eight Envoys, they are the essence (jing 精) of the eight trigrams, and through them one may know beforehand what has not yet taken form.” Ge Hong also records a Bashi tu 八史圖 in his bibliographic catalogue.

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86 Baopu zi, 15.272—73; Ware, 254—55.
87 Baopu zi, ibid.; Ware, ibid. The Baopu zi, like the vast majority of sources dealing with the Eight Envoys uses the characters 八史 (bashi; lit. the eight scribes/archivists; Ware, 255, has Eight Recorders)—the Laozi zhongjing stands out in this regard since it employs the graphs 八史 (bali; lit. the eight officials) or more commonly, 八使 (bashi; lit. the eight emissaries/messengers/envoys) instead; see 269, n. 77, above for relevant passages. Poul Andersen, who has published on divinatory systems relating to the gods of the eight trigrams, translates bashi 八史 as “Eight Archivists”; see his “Talking to the Gods,” 17—24 passim, especially. Others including Gil Raz, “Time Manipulation in Early Daoist Ritual: the East Well Chart and the Eight Archivists” have followed suit. Andersen, “Taishang tongling bashi shengwen zhenxing tu,” 261, explains his reasons for his translation of the term in a notice on the Taishang tongling
Ther interpretation of the term *shi* may be deduced from the name of the trigram 坤 in the system of the present text. It is given alternately as *zhuxia* 柱下 and *zhushi* 柱史, both of which are short forms of the title *zhuxia shi* (literally, “scribe beneath the pillar”), and both of which are used as names for Laozi, the archivist of Zhou (see *Hou Han shu* 59.1908—9 and [*Yunji qiqian*] 3.3a). The ancient office of *zhuxia shi* is variously defined as that of a censor or archivist, and the title is used also as the name of a star in the Central Palace (possibly Draconis), said to be occupied with the “recording of offenses” (*jiguo* 記過; *Jin shu* 11.289). The practice related to the Eight Archivists are described in the present text as taking place beside a pillar at the center of the hall (*tangshu* 堂樞), where two archivists are thought to be permanently on duty […].

While Andersen’s rendering is accurate, it implies that the *Bashi* are manifestations of Laozi, a position that is theologicially tenuous. Rather, translating *Bashi* as “Eight Envoys” minimizes the semantic deviation between *shi* 使 and *shi* 史. Furthermore, it preserves the image of the gods of the eight trigrams being dispatched from the center, Taiyi, and faning out into the world before periodically returning back to the center in order to report on the moral qualities of human subjects. The *Taiyi zhao hunpo danfa* 太乙招魂魄丹法 (Taiyi’s Elixir Method for Summoning the Hun and Po Souls) from *Baopu zi*, 4.81; Ware, 87, is an illustration of how deities that are associated with Taiyi, either as incarnations of the god or its subordinate helpers, are often referred to as “envoys” (*shi* 使). After being resurrected, the formerly deceased “all recall seeing envoys (*shi* 使) with the tally (*chi jie* 持節) [of Taiyi] coming to summon them.” Although it is not specified here, these “envoys” are very probably the gods of the eight trigrams. This particular example also merits attention for connecting Taiyi and the “envoys” to revivification.

88 *Baopu zi*, 19.333; Ware, 382. The *Bashitu* 八史圖 (Charts of the Eight Envoys) is listed immediately after a *Yuce ji* 玉策記 (*Record of the Jade Tablet*), a detail that may be of significance since the Sanhuang corpus is also known as the *Taishang yuce* 太上玉策; see Chapter 2, 79—80. Furthermore, the Former Sovereign of Heaven is noted as holding the “Jade Tablet of the Flying Immortal” (Feixian yuce 飛仙玉策) in the “Jiu huang tu”; *Badi miaojing jing*, 6a. Elsewhere in the *Baopu zi*, 11.199; Ware, 181, Ge directs the reader avid for more information on rocky excrescences (*shizhi* 石芝) to peruse the pages of a text known as the *Taiyi yuce* 太乙玉策 (Taiyi’s Jade Tablet). Finally, the previously-discussed *Qingyu zhenren Wangjun neizhuan* (Esoteric Biography of Lord Wang [Bao], Perfected Immortal of Pure Vacuity), in *Yunji qiqian*, 106.1a-8a, mentions an apotropaic text by the name of the *Jade Tablet of the Eight Roads* (Badao yuce 八道玉策); the Eight Roads (*badao* 八道) are the mystic roads traveled by the sun and moon, spatial counterparts to the (temporal) eight nodes; see Schafer, “The Eight Daunters,” 4—5; see also 7—8, and 13, n.46, for the related Shangqing Tablets of the Eight Majesties (*Bawei ce* 八威策).
Although he sometimes discusses the Sanhuang wen in the same breath as the Bashi tu, Ge Hong never states that they are part of a unique tradition.\textsuperscript{89} Originally, eight-trigram divination was practiced in circles partial to portent interpretation, as one of the prognosticatory methods most cherished by proponents of the Apocrypha during the Han. The technique must have been relatively widespread since it is outlawed in the Tianshi dao’s Laojun shuo yibai bashi jie 老君說一百八十戒 (The Hundred and Eighty Precepts Spoken by Lord Lao; Dunhuang ms. P.4562 and P.4731), a text believed to predate the Baopu zi. Article one hundred fourteen stipulates: “Do not collect vulgar manuals on prognostication, including the Bashen tu 八神圖 (Charts of the Eight Gods). What they teach should not be practiced.”\textsuperscript{90} The Sanhuang wen and Bashi tu were initially unrelated documents, each evolving in distinct, yet similar environments. However, a number of factors eventually brought practices and texts dealing with Eight Envoys divination into the Sanhuang fold.

Firstly, both traditions employ the same means for identical ends, namely the conjuring of deities by use of talismans in order to obtain apotropaic protection, long life, or more commonly, to inquire about the future. Secondly, these practices and the deities at their center have common roots in the Apocrypha. Taiyi, the gods of the eight trigrams, and a large proportion of the gods listed in the “Sanhuang yaoyong pin” and the “Xicheng yaojue” stem from the same theological reservoir of Han dynasty cults—the so-called “stale pneumata” of the Six Heavens so

\textsuperscript{89} See Baopu zi, 15.272—73; Ware, 355.
objectionable to the Tianshi dao.\textsuperscript{91} They belong to the shared stratum of beliefs recorded in Ge Hong’s opus, the common pool of deities and rituals that found renewed currency in third- and fourth-century Jiangnan before the influx of Northern emigrés. Lastly, the same combinatory logic that rendered the \textit{Wuyue zhenxing tu} an unavoidable companion document to the \textit{Sanhuang wen} also made \textit{Bashi} and Dongshen materials natural complements. This was especially relevant around the fourth and fifth centuries, when the classificatory fervor that resulted in the Three Caverns was applied to the \textit{Sanhuang wen} and its accretion of pre-revelatory Southern esoterica; the amount of materials that were appended to the initial three scrolls probably could not be organized into an additional five—the obvious choice for a tradition that lent itself so well to the Three (Sovereigns) and Five (Emperors) model. Rather, systematizers such as Lu Xiujing found it more fruitful to organize texts according to a Three (Sovereigns) plus Eight (Emperors/gods of the eight trigrams) template in light of the fact that Eight Envoys lore was so similar and probably already loosely associated with the \textit{Sanhuang wen} for the two previous reasons.\textsuperscript{92} Regardless of precise motivations, the classification of Eight Envoys practices and text under the heading of Dongshen only became standard by the beginning of the Tang dynasty.\textsuperscript{93}

\textsuperscript{91} See Schipper, ibid., 70, for examples of deities that the Tianshi dao consider \textit{deus non grata}; almost all of these gods appear in the \textit{Badi miaojing jing} or scroll twenty-five of the \textit{Wushang biyao}. Seidel, “Imperial Treasures and Taoist Sacraments,” 325—27, is the first to have demonstrated the continuity between the prognosticatory tradition of the Apocrypha and the Sanhuang.

\textsuperscript{92} \textit{Yunji qiqian}, 9.9a, and 6.12a, provide a glimpse of this reasoning.

\textsuperscript{93} \textit{Dongxuan lingbao sandong fengdao kejie yingshi} (Regulations for the Practice of Daoism in Accordance with the Scripture of the Three Caverns), 4.7b, notes a \textit{Bashi lu} (Register of the Eight Envoys) as part of the Dongshen canon; Andersen, “Talking to the Gods,” 21.
Nonetheless, the fifth-century eleven-scroll Sanhuang corpus did contain divination practices based on the gods of the eight trigrams. Scrolls seven to nine housed the *Badi xuanbian jing* 八帝玄變經 (Scripture of the Mysterious Transformation of the Eight Emperors), which comprised instructions relative to summoning the Eight Envoys. It is thought to be closely related to the *Dongshen badi yuanbian jing* 洞神八帝元變經 (Scripture of the Abstruse [read *xuan* 玄 for *yuan* 元] Transformations of the Eight Emperors for Storing the Divine; CT 1202), although this text appears to date from Tang dynasty, well after the eleven-scroll *Dongshen jing* was articulated; it is therefore more likely that scrolls seven to nine contained some version of the text on which the *Dongshen badi yuanbian jing* is based, namely the late third-early fourth-century *Taishang tongling bashi shengwen zhenxing tu* 太上通靈八史聖文真形圖 (Chart of the Saintly Writ and the True Form of the Eight Envoys for Communicating with Numina; CT 767), hereafter *Bashi shengwen zhenxing tu*. Andersen established the *Dongshen badi yuanbian jing*’s debt to the *Bashi shengwen zhenxing tu* on the basis of correspondences in the names of the gods of the eight trigrams and homogeneity in the form, organization, and application of talismans. He has argued that the latter title was the foremost source for Eight Envoys divination rituals during the Six Dynasties, a work known to Ge Hong as the *Bashi tu*.

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94 Andersen, ibid., 5, and 17—18.
95 From Schipper and Verellen, *The Taoist Canon*, 502—03. Since Andersen already provides a dependable overview of the two texts and their methods for summoning the gods of the eight trigrams, doing so here would be redundant; see Andersen, “Talking to the Gods,” 17—24; and his entries in Schipper and Verellen, ibid. 261—65, and l ibid.
96 See Andersen, “Talking to the Gods,” 17—18; and his entry on the *Taishang tongling bashi shengwen zhenxing tu* in Schipper and Verellen’s *The Taoist Canon*,...
The Bashi shengwen zhenxing tu also served as the grounding for the Taishang wuji dadao ziran zhenyi wucheng fu shangjing 太上無極大道自然真一五稱符上經 (Supreme Scripture of the Most High Boundless Great Way and the Spontaneous True and One Talismans of the Five Ascendants; CT 671), henceforth abbreviated as Wucheng fu, a text dated to ca. 400.97 In this source, the talismans for summoning the Eight Envoys are known as the Xuandong tongling fu 玄洞通靈符 (Talismans from the Abstruse Cavern for Communicating with Numina), the same term employed for the corresponding ritual implements in the Bashi shengwen zhenxing tu.98 Among other similarities, Andersen remarks the names of the gods of the eight trigrams are identical in both documents.99 The first part of the Wucheng fu concerns the revelation of five Lingbao talismans that cosmically correlate to the five planets (wuxing 五星), five peaks (wuyue 五嶽), and five viscera (wuzang 五藏); the section exhibits a number of stylistic parallels with the Bashi shengwen zhenxing tu, particularly in its Dunhuang version.100 The subsequent part presents the talismans of the Eight Envoys as potent adjuncts to

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97 On this text and its dating, see Bokenkamp, “Sources of the Ling-p’ao Scriptures,” 480; and Raz, “Time Manipulation in Early Daoist Ritual,” 29—31; 29 n.5 contains a bibliography of secondary sources pertaining to the Wucheng fu.
98 Compare Wucheng fu, 2.1a, and 11b, to Bashi shengwen zhenxing tu, 5b-9a. Unfortunately, the talismans of the Eight Envoys are not reproduced in the Wucheng fu, only their instructions. A Xuandong jing 玄洞經 (Scripture of the Abstruse Cavern) in ten scrolls appears in Ge Hong’s bibliographic catalogue; Baopu zi, 19.334; Ware, 380. Anderson, “Talking to the Gods,” 19, n. 60, suggests the term Xuandong is reserved for materials related to the Eight Envoys, as it appears in the Badi yuanbian jing, 10b, and 34a; although in some instances, it also seems to denote grotto-heavens; see Wufu xu, 1.12a.
99 Andersen, ibid., 19; pages 17—18 explain why the Bashi shengwen zhenxing tu predates the Wucheng fu.
100 Andersen, ibid., 19 first noted the resemblance; see P.2440 in Ōfuchi, Tonkō dōkyō: Mokurokuhen, 20—26; Zurokuhen, 10—22; and Ishii Masako, “Reihō kyō rui,” 164—67.
their predecessors; they are designated as the *Bagua xuan dong tong ling bawei shenfu* 八卦玄洞通靈八威神符 (Divine Eight Majesties Talismans of the Eight Trigrams for Communicating with Numina), a term that immediately brings to mind the *Bawei wusheng fu* 八威五勝符 (Talismans of the Eight Majesties and Five Supremacies) evoked by Ge Hong.\(^{101}\)

While the Dunhuang version of the *Wucheng fu* contains numerous references to the “Five Supremacies” (*wusheng 五勝*), the Daozang text shies away from identifying its first set of talismans as such, although the closing passage does laud the benefits of the *Wucheng bawei [fu]* 五稱八威[符]
([Talismans of the] Five Ascendants and Eight Majesties):

> The *Kaiming jing* 開明經 (Scripture of Incipient Insight) records that the household that has [joined] *ling* 靈 and *bao* 寶 will live ten thousand years without aging.\(^{102}\) Lords (*jun 君*) who possess the Five Ascendants and

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\(^{101}\) See for example, *Wucheng fu*, 2.3a, 2.9a, 2.9b; the *Bawei wusheng fu* are listed in *Baopu zi*, 19.335. The “Eight Majesties” also appear in relation to the *Taishang dongyang lingbao bawei zhaolong miaojing* 太上洞玄靈寶八威召龍妙經 (Lingbao Scripture on the Eight Majesties and Summoning the Dragon Deities; CT 361). Interestingly, this sixth-century Lingbao work does provide instructions for summoning the *nāgārāja* (longwang zhanren 龍王丈人) on the *eight nodes* (*bajie*); the text also extols the summoning and apotropaic virtues of the *Bawei cewen* 八威策文 (Tablets of the Eight Majesties). These are notably encountered in the *Wufu xu*, 3.12b, and in a number of passages from the *Wushang biyao*.

\(^{102}\) The opening passage of the *Wusheng fu*, 1.3a, defines *ling* and *bao* as follows:

> Lord Lao (*Laojun 老君*) said that *ling* is communication with the Way. The ability to communicate with the Great Way (*dadao*大道) precipitates efficacy (*ling*) in commanding the myriad gods. *Bao* is the capacity to preserve (*bao* 保) [oneself] concomitant with Heaven and Earth. For this reason, the Lingbao [talismans] are the ultimate worthies of the most supreme Way (*taishang dao zhi jizun* 太上道之極尊); they are the five so-called talismanic decrees (*fuming* 符命) of Heaven, Earth, and Humanity.

See Raz, “Time Manipulation in Early Daoist Ritual,” 34, for a short discussion of the above lines; see also Kaltenmark “*Ling-pao*: Note sure un terme du taoïsme religieux,” 559—88; In some instances, “Lingbao” 靈寶 may refer to the
Eight Majesties (Wucheng bawei) will never see their good fortunes (bao 寶) decline. It is said that warding off calamities [by any other means] will no longer be necessary. As for those who must govern the people, they cannot fulfil their mandate if they are without this text.  

There is no mistake that the first set of five and second set of eight talismans in the Wucheng fu are collectively known as the Bawei wusheng fu.  

These are famously counted among the materials to be transmitted along with the Sanhuang wen as ingredient parts of the fourteen-scroll corpus. They are listed in Dongshen catalogues from the early Tang dynasty, namely in the Dongxuan lingbao sandong fengdao kejie yingshi (Regulations for the Practice of Daoism in Accordance with the Scripture of the Three Caverns), the Taishang dongshen sanhuang yi (Rituals of the Three Sovereigns), and the Taishang dongshen sanhuang chuanshou yi (Rituals for the Transmission of the Scriptures of the Three Sovereigns).  

The talismans of the Eight Envoys, and to a certain extent those of the five Lingbao “correspondences,” were probably associated with the Sanhuang tradition from relatively early on. This can be gathered from the following passages preserved in the Wucheng fu, dated to the turn of the fifth century:  

Moreover, the Yuzha ji 玉札記 (Record of the Jade Tablet) says that as theFive Talismans, which are the correspondences (cheng) of the [spirits of the] Five Directions (Wufang 五方), are the True and One (zhenyi 真一) [manifestations] of the Dao. Thus, if it is not the talismans, precious writ and worthy script of this very scripture that one takes into the temple deified Laozi; Kaltenmark, “Quelques remarques sur le T’ai-chang ling-pao wou-fou siu,” 1.  

103 Wucheng fu, 2.13b.  
104 Andersen, “Talking to the Gods,” 19, concurs.  
105 Dongxuan lingbao sandong fengdao kejie yingshi, 4.7b, Taishang dongshen sanhuang yi, 10b-11a; Taishang dongshen sanhuang chuanshou yi, 13a.  
106 The Dunhuang version of the text has Yuji ji 玉機記 (Record of the Jade Instrument (?)) instead.
(shenfang 神房) and meditation chamber (qingshi 靜室), then it should be lumped together with the multitude of [common] writings.\textsuperscript{107} Always use [the Five Talismans] in the privacy of your own abode (lit. tent; zhang 帳). There are also the Eight Talismans for Communicating with Numina (tongling bafu), which subjugate (weizhi 威制) the spirits of the eight directions. The talismans of the [Three] Sovereigns (huangfu 皇符) are hard to ingest, therefore it is better to present a variant offering (ji 祭). It is like the one for obtaining [the talismans of the Three Sovereigns], but instead, it brings the Eight Gods under one’s control (weishi bashen 威使八神).\textsuperscript{108}

Once more, methods for conjuring the Eight Envoys fullfil the same functions as the \textit{Sanhuang wen}; they are obtained through the same transmission rites, but they have the added nicety of being simpler to perform. Undoubtedly, this is also one of the reasons for which the \textit{Wuyue zhenxing tu} became a companion text to the \textit{Sanhuang wen}. Unlike the plethora of gods that populated the pages of Sanhuang texts—many of whom have their own spiritual jurisdictions and areas of specialty—the gods of the eight trigrams are more “efficient” in that can be called upon for virtually any divinatory or apotropaic end. The universality of user-friendly gods and talismans was of particular concern for Six Dynasties devotees, as evidenced in the following lines from a Lingbao apologia:

Lord Lao (Laojun) said that Lingbao is the first among the ways, so its divine numina can always be trusted; they are the collected gods of Heaven, Earth, and Sages (sheng 聖) that were all worshiped together. The [gods of the] True Talismans for Communicating with the Numina and the Divine (Xuandong tongling shenzhen fu 玄洞通靈神真符), the Sanhuang tianwen dazi, and the Dongzhen jing 洞真經 (Canon for Housing the True) were originally together in Lingbao. First, the selection was made for the

\textsuperscript{107} The juxtaposition of fang 房 and shi 室 in this context may be suggestive of the kind of sexual rites encountered in the \textit{Bashi shengwen zhenxing tu}, 12b; the passage in question employs similar terminology, namely, fangshi zhi shi 房室之事 (lit. “affairs of the bedchamber”) in reference to the act of consecrated copulation; see Andersen, “Talking to the Gods,” 22.

\textsuperscript{108} \textit{Wusheng fu}, 2.13b. The following line stipulates that the \textit{Wusheng fu} is only transmitted once every forty years, like the \textit{Sanhuang wen}. 

282
Talismans of the Five Ascendants (*Wucheng fu*). What was left over entered the celestial pneuma (*ru tianqi* 入天氣). This is why they are called “characters in celestial script” (*tianwen zi*); they became the talismans of the [Three] Sovereigns (*huangfu*). ¹⁰⁹

The universal potency of the Talismans of the Five Ascendants is stressed to the detriment of left-over particular gods relegated to the *Sanhuang wen*, manifestations of a divided pneuma and therefore further from the ontological purity of the original Dao. Leaving the particularities of Lingbao rhetoric aside, the above passage is of interest for two reasons: first, it attempts to provide an account of the genesis of Sanhuang talismans whilst imposing a hierarchy that favours Lingbao materials; and second, whereas a distinction is originally drawn between the divinatory traditions of the Eight Envoys, Sanhuang, and Shangqing, the passage appears to classify all summoning techniques under the rubric of talismans of the [Three] Sovereigns after instauring the Talismans of the Five Ascendants atop the said hierarchy. Indeed, the subsequent lines are devoted to establishing the superiority of the Five Ascendants method of conjuring over that of the Sanhuang.¹¹⁰

Despite belonging to independent currents, it would appear that in terms of their transmission rites, invocation procedures, and talismans, Shangqing and especially Eight Envoys summoning rituals were principally grounded in the Sanhuang tradition.

The cited passages demonstrate that by the early fifth century, sources pertaining to Eight Envoys divination techniques were, at the very least, loosely associated with the *Sanhuang wen*. Nonetheless, they maintained canonical autonomy. Interestingly, the *Bashi shengwen zhenxing tu* makes no overt reference

¹⁰⁹ *Wusheng fu*, 2.11ab.
¹¹⁰ *Wusheng fu*, 2.11b.
to the text or its talismans, but it does mention the Celestial Lord Sovereign of Heaven (Qianhuang tianjun 乾皇天君) in an incantation; the Wushang biyao also employs “Qianhuang” instead of Tianhuang 天皇 in the title of the Qianhuang neijing (Esoteric Scripture of the Sovereign of Heaven), confirming that the substitution was a commonly accepted one. The Bashi shengwen zhennxing tu also alludes to the “Divine Sovereign Fu Xi” (shenhua Fuxi 神皇伏羲) in the same passage, a foreseeable inclusion since it immediately precedes directions for a rite of sexual congress: as previously noted, Fuxi is identified as the Latter Sovereign of Heaven, a markedly yang deity, in the “Jiuhuang tu.” A few lines below, he is referred to again, this time more unequivocally as the “Celestial Lord of the Eight Trigrams Fuxi, Sovereign of Heaven (Bagua tianjun Fuxi tianhuang 八卦天君伏羲天皇), and involved in the obtention of the astral talismans (xingfu 星符) of the Eight Envoys.

3. From Heaven Down to Earth: Envoys and Asterisms

As seen in the Laozi zhongzheng (Central Scripture of Laozi), the gods of the eight trigrams were considered to be internal gods, divine bureaucrats of the

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111 Bashi shengwen zhennxing tu, 11a; and Wushang biyao, 25.1a, respectively; see 273, n. 84, of the present chapter.
112 Badi miaojing jing, 9a. The Shi yi ji (Uncollected Records) recounts that it is Fu Xi who revealed the Bashen tu to the Yellow Emperor; see Kaltenmark, “Grottes et labyrinthes: en Chine ancienne,” 481; this conflicts with the Yellow Emperor’s account in the Bashi shengwen zhennxing tu, 5b, 13a, where he states that he obtained the talismans from Laozi (the Master of Old; xianshi), who also introduced them to India (chi yi ru hu 持以入胡); Fu Xi is credited with first devising the eight trigrams after being inspired by the Hetu (River Chart).
113 Bashi shengwen zhennxing tu, 11b.
inner pantheon. Much along the same lines, the *Bashi shengwen tu* makes the spirits of the Five Viscera, the Cinnabar Child (*Zidan*), and Eight Envoys intermingle in its summoning ritual.\(^{114}\) Other texts plot out each of the eight trigrams and their gods onto the top of the head, below the navel, on the two arms, the two feet, and both sides of the torso.\(^{115}\) The Eight Envoys also manifest in the macrocosm. From above, they descend into the practitioner’s abode and are to be found at a pillar in the main hall;\(^{116}\) but as gods that manage human destiny—when questioned, they return to the Dipper in order to consult the Register of Fate—they are first and foremost astral deities.\(^{117}\) This much is abundantly clear from the *Bashi shengwen tu*, which locates the origins of each trigram and its talismans in one of the Dipper’s stars and places their spirits under the authority of the Lord of the Dipper (*Doujun* (Pointer).\(^{118}\)

The astral dimension to the Eight Envoys stems from their role as deified aspects of the Eight Effulgences (*bajing* 八景), themselves sideral expressions of the eight trigrams denoting the eight astral bodies: the sun, the moon, the five planets, and the Big Dipper. These are sometimes identified as the Outer Effulgences (*waijing* 外景), while their microcosmic counterparts are termed Inner

\(^{114}\) *Bashi shengwen zhenxing tu*, 10b-11a.

\(^{115}\) *Shangqing taishang basuo zhenjing* 上清太上八素真經 (True Scripture of the Eight Purities; CT 426), cited in Kaltenmark, “Jing yu bajing,” 1150; see also 268, n. 74.

\(^{116}\) *Bashi shengwen zhenxing tu*, 1b; and 13a; based on Andersen’s readings, “Talking to the Gods,” 21, and 20, respectively.

\(^{117}\) *Bashi shengwen zhenxing tu*, 10a, and 12a.

\(^{118}\) *Bashi shengwen zhenxing tu*, 6a-9b, and 13ab; the latter passage explains how the eight talismans appeared to Laozi in the stars of the Big Dipper. Conversely, the *Badi yuanbian jing*, 1a, and 2b, ties the Eight Envoys to the Southern Dipper.
Effulgences (neijing 内景). The three “groups” of Eight Envoys, or rather, the three planes on which they manifest parallel the three sets of Inner Effulgences distributed in the body along the vertical axis of the upper, middle, and lower cinnabar fields (sanyuan bajing 三元八景; Eight Effulgences of the Three Primes, or sanbu bajing 三部八景; Eight Effulgences of the Three Regions). Together, they form the twenty-four effulgences that are both deities and nexus of luminosity. They are considered nodal points through which divine pneumata

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120 The twenty-four effulgences of the body are related to the twenty-four (Lingbao) charts (Ershisi shengtu 二十四生圖) through their association with the twenty-four pneumata of the year (jieqi 節氣) and the twenty-four zodiacal constellations. These charts, the majority of which are attested in chapter nineteen of the Baopu zi, allowed devotees to summon and control the deities denoted in their titles; their function and Southern origins draw inevitable comparisons with the coterminous Sanhuang wen and Wuyue zhenxing tu; Bokenkamp, “Sources of the Ling-pao scriptures,” 458—60; and Raz, “Time Manipulation in Early Daoist Ritual,” 64—65, offer lists of the charts. Raz also tabulates correspondences in the Wucheng fu (Talismans of the Five Victories; P. 2440), Yunji qiqian, 80.18, and the Baopu zi; also see Raz, ibid., 36, for more on the topic. The Wusheng fu is the earliest text to introduce the ritual scheme of the twenty-four charts; this occurs via the scripture’s presentation of the East Well (dongyi 东井) divination system, which uses the temporal divisions of twenty-four pneumata as a central motif. The East Well day represents the summer solstice on the shi cosmogram, symbolically corresponding to the Han’s reception of the heavenly mandate; Raz explains East Well divination is primarily linked to the tradition of calendrical divination practices of the shi cosmogram; it is also an emblem of the establishment of the Han dynasty. ”By the symbolism of the East Well divination ritual, the Daoists linked themselves to a core a legitimating symbol of the Han Imperial claim. In the ritual scheme of the Five Ascendant Talismans [Wusheng fu], the five planets are represented by the five Lingbao talismans hung on the roof-beam of the hall. Setting the altar creates sacred space. When this space is correlated with the time of East Well, the practitioner recreates the mythical moment of Liu Bang’s attainment of Heaven’s Mandate, a moment of cosmic beginning. The practitioner himself becomes Han Gaozu, and by extension King Wen of Zhou, Yu, Yao and Zhuanxu”; Raz, ibid., 49—50. The chronotope depicted by the East Well system combines a twenty-four-(or eight) point temporal dimension with a five-point spatial one. The Sanhuang tradition similarly attempts to symbolically recreate the instant of cosmic genesis—or the moments that closely follow it—by conjugating three-tiered temporal coordinates with pentadic space coordinates.
enter or leave the microcosm, and during meditation, they merge together to guide practitioners through their ascent.

In his study on the “octet of lamps,” Schafer defines the Eight Effulgences as “a set of luminiferous spirits who defend the strategic channels of the human body but also, externalized and free of their somatic prison, are mobile and far-ranging, and may attend the mystic vehicle that takes the successful adept to his eternal home.” He continues: “to put it differently, voyages through the depths of space are simultaneously transits of the vital circuits of one’s own body.”

Like the Eight Envoys, the Eight Effulgences have both spatial and temporal significance; they correspond to the interalia of the eight directions and the eight nodes, dispelling dark miasmas illuminating the paths of practitioners along their transitory journeys to immortality. In their apotropaic functions, they are

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122 Schafer, ibid., 4. They also play a central role in practices that contribute to untying the eight “knots of death.” The knots and nodes (jiejie 結節) serve the purpose of holding together the five viscera, but at the same time, they are also eventually responsible for eventual death; see Pregadio, “Early Daoist Meditation and the Origins of Inner Alchemy,” 142; and Robinet, La révélation du Shangqing 1:141, and 2:172-73. A segment from the Jiudan shanghua taijing zhong ji jing, (Supreme Clarity Scripture on the Central Record of the Embryonic Essence from the Superior Transmutation of the Ninefold Elixir), 3ab, explains:

When one is born, there are in the womb twelve knots and nodes that hold the five viscera together. The five viscera are obstructed and squeezed, the knots cannot be untied and the nodes cannot be removed. Therefore the illnesses of human beings depend on the obstructions caused by these nodes, and the extinction of one’s allotted destiny (ming, i.e. one’s death) depends on the strengthening of these knots.

I borrow Pregadio’s translation from “Early Daoist Meditation and the Origins of Inner Alchemy,” 142; on this scripture, see Robinet, Taoist Meditation, 139-43; and, by the same author, La révélation du Shangqing, 1: 78-79, 126, and 2: 171-74. In order to escape their congenital affliction, practitioners generate an embryonic version of themselves devoid of knots and nodes.
represented by a specially-dispatched set of deities known as the Eight Majesties (bawei), or the Envoys of the Eight Majesties (bawei shizhe 八威使者).\(^{123}\)

The correlation of the Eight Envoys, and even the Five Peaks, with astral bodies that is so prevalent in proto-Lingbao scriptures such as the *Wucheng fu* paved the way for the eventual identification of Sanhuang practices as astrological computations. In this framework, the rituals essentially amounted to submitting queries to destiny-governing stars. Prior to the fourteen-scroll *Dongshen jing* and the need for a structured Daoist canon, the associations that existed between the Eight Envoys and the Three Sovereigns principally revolved around their function as inner gods. However, through the contagious prism of Lingbao correlative thinking, Sanhuang methods are portrayed as the pinnacle of sideral divination during the Tang dynasty.

In his *Wuxing dayi* 五行大儀 (*Great Meaning of the Five Phases*), Xiao Ji 蕭吉 (?-614) presents the Three Sovereigns as the embodiment of the three stars that administer human fate; their reign periods and areas of influence are determined by the calendrical markers.\(^{124}\) Two Dunhuang manuscripts dated to the Tang, P.2623r, and S.1473r also attest to a pronounced Sanhuang preoccupation with astrological computation. The former document counts the Three Sovereigns as individualized hemerological gods, marking their cycles on stems (gan 甲),

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\(^{123}\) This is established in the fourth- or fifth-century *Taishang huangting neijin gu yujing* 黃庭內景玉經 (*Jade Scripture of the Esoteric Effulgence of the Yellow Court*; CT 331), most notably; see Schafer, “The Eight Daunters,” 7—8.

\(^{124}\) *Wuxing dayi*, sect. 20, chapt. 34, from Kalinowski, *Cosmologie et divination dans la Chine ancienne*, 104—05 and 377—79. Elsewhere, Xiao Ji cites the *Sanhuang jing* in relation to macrobiotic hygiene or the microcosm of the human body. These passages are a more faithful to the concerns of Sanhuang practitioners of the Six Dynasties; see Kalinowski, ibid., 48, 303 and 528, n. 95.
branches (zhi 支), and trigrams (gua). The latter manuscript confirms their status as annual cyclical deities.\textsuperscript{125}

Despite its newfound popularity as an astral cult, the Sanhuang tradition was not necessarily antithetical to star-worship and calendrical calculations prior to the Tang. In fact, textual evidence suggests that prior to the Six Dynasties, the Three Sovereigns were more directly tied to the firmament. Rather, astral and hemerological themes were probably underscored to reinvigorate the tradition after being pigeonholed as chiefly liturgical in character. The Three Terraces (santai 三台) and Big Dipper constellations figure prominently in summoning rituals, and some fu, like the Esoteric Talisman of the Self-Generating Golden Radiance for instance, are explicitly composed of stellar pneuma.\textsuperscript{126} The Nine Sovereigns are sometimes interpreted as the gods of the nine stars of the Big Dipper, and even the blinding brilliance of the \textit{Tianhuang wen} (Writ of the Sovereign of Heaven) is said to descend from the sun, the moon, and the twenty-eight asterisms.\textsuperscript{127}

Since the deities in charge of human destiny were construed as residing in or actually being heavenly bodies, the sideral dimension to the Sanhuang tradition

\textsuperscript{125} See Arrault and Martzloff, “Calendriers,” 145—47, and 187—89. The authors supply relevant bibliographies on 147 and 187. P.2623r is dated to 959, while S.1473r was composed in 982.
\textsuperscript{126} \textit{Wushang biyao}, 25.8a.
\textsuperscript{127} The god of the Northern Culmen (beichen 北極), in the Northern Dipper is the Sovereign of Heaven (Tianhuang), his Han dynasty equivalent Tianyi, the Heavenly One, or Taiyi; see \textit{Shiji}, 28; see also Cheu, \textit{The Nine Emperor Gods}. Other sources tie the deity to the Northern Chronogram (beichen 北辰), or Polaris, the tip of the Dipper’s handle; see Schafer, \textit{Pacing the Void}, 46. According to Tao Hongjing, the essence of the Three Sovereigns is crystallized in the Great Emperor Sovereign of Heaven Yaopo bao (\textit{Tianhuang dadi} 天皇大帝耀魄寶), a star that corresponds to 32 H Cephea; see Kalinowski, \textit{Cosmologie et divination dans la Chine ancienne}, 566, n. 11. The Great Emperor Sovereign of Heaven Yaopo bao is notably featured in the \textit{Laozi zhongjing} 2, from \textit{Yunji qiqian} 18.1b, a text with pronounced ties to Sanhuang materials; see Chapter 4, 197—219. On the radiance of the \textit{Tianhuang wen}, see \textit{Wushang biyao}, 25.1a.
also accentuates its function as a system of divination; the Director of Destinies (Siming) and the Director of Dangers (Siwei), two of the quintessential deities that determine human lifespan, are saliently present in the majority of sources tied to the Sanhuang. Furthermore, the portrayal of the Three Sovereigns as astral deities emphasizes their close relationship to time cycles and their role as “cosmic clocks” so to speak, features they shared with the spirits of the eight trigrams. Coupled with the spatial designation implicit in the notion of the Eight Envoys, this thematic overlap made the Bashi zhenxing tu a natural complement to the Sanhuang wen. Likewise, the same set of sideral, celestial, and temporal associations rendered the Wuyue zhenxing tu and its delineation of chthonian sacred space an ideal textual companion to the Sanhuang wen. True form chart and text are paired together like the two halves of the tessera in order to give its holder sway over spirits and restore the channels of communication between ling and bao.

The dividing line between divination and meditation in the Sanhuang tradition is relatively blurry. Both rely on the notion of true form as an operative principle, and both are means to a similar end, namely to interact with the divine. However, while one method employs material aids such as talismans or charts, the other chiefly relies on the power of visualization. The difference lies in the arena in which the results of the respective practices materialize. For divination techniques the effects are perceivable as the invited spirits manifest before the practitioner’s eyes. In the case of meditation, it is the gaze of the mind’s eye that verifies the successful outcome of a method. Sometimes, objective substantiation is impossible since the adept is taken over by the conjured deity; the generation of an inner embryo, the true self (zhenwo), is a case in point. Alchemy too aims to establish a direct line of communication with the gods. By relying on the concoction of
vegetomineral elixirs and often using them to summon gods, alchemical methods borrow from talismanic summoning. Moreover, alchemy facilitates the internal transformative processes for which it is renown by depending on visualization techniques, thereby combining elements from divination and meditation. However, true form is not as crucial of a concept in external alchemy as it is in other Sanhuang practices.
Conclusion

Situating the Sovereigns

Out of the considerable wealth of materials contained in his library, Ge Hong ranked the *Sanhuang wen* among his most prized. His fondness for the text was largely a product of its efficacy in summoning gods and protecting against demons. Yet, it was also undoubtedly grounded in the fact that the scripture was recognized as an emblematic banner for Southern Chinese religious identity and culture. The *Sanhuang wen* and its tradition were rallying points for Jiangnan’s spiritual, intellectual, and political elite.

The figures that made up the *Sanhuang wen*’s transmission lineage are a clear indication of the scripture’s status as a figurehead of Southern spiritual lore. Chapter 1 re-examined this textual pedigree, distinguishing between two transmission lines. While the celestial transmission is the same for both, the earliest “human transmission” begins with Lord Wang of the Western Citadel and continues with Bo He, Ge Xuan, Zheng Yin, and finally, Ge Hong. These individuals, many of them semi-mythical, handed down what is known as the *Xiaoyou jing* (Scripture of Lesser Existence) version of the *Sanhuang wen*. The second version, known as the *Dayou jing* (Scripture of Greater Existence), was revealed to Bao Jing who then entrusted it to Ge Hong, although Ge Xuan and Zuo Ci are sometimes implicated in this genealogy.
Most of the figures that are featured in the two lineages are tied to another bulwark of Southern culture, the Taiqing alchemical tradition. Thus, the Sanhuang wen transmission line subsumed key figures of local lore, just as its methods constituted a cross-section of Jiangnan spiritual practices. Talismanic divination, alchemy, and meditation techniques were all equally emphasized. Aside from geographic provenance, there were hardly any boundaries, let alone sectarian lines, to be observed or over-stepped. Even the issue of geography was moot to a certain extent, since the Sanhuang traced some of its roots to Shu, the western edge of the Chinese cultural sphere and home of the Han dynasty’s ruling house. Indeed, many Sanhuang methods are elaborations of Han official cults, especially those pertaining to divination. The fangshi ritual specialists of the Han court migrated to that of the Wu following the period of disunity. A number of their descendants, such as the Ge clan, eventually settled in Jiangnan where they integrated the aristocracy and heavily contributed to local traditions.

With the arrival of outside, highly structured systems such as Buddhism and Tianshi dao Daoism, it was incumbent upon the stalwarts of the Southern esoteric tradition to organize a coherent retort in order to avoid assimilation. This response took the form of the Shangqing revelations, which articulated newer, more effective practices to supplant those of alien creeds. In actuality, these were by and large a reformulation of various pre-existing elements of Jiangnan religion. Since the Sanhuang wen was already established as one of the principal textual embodiments of Southern religious identity, Shangqing systematizers found its reservoir of practices and associated lore an ideal source of inspiration. A number of personages, sites, and techniques that are closely tied to the Sanhuang tradition regularly resurface in Shangqing and even Lingbao scriptures.
As a corollary of its influence on Six Dynasties Daoism and its role as a universal signifier for the Southern esoteric tradition, the Sanhuang wen and associated materials were housed in the lowest and most basic of the Three Caverns. This was likely a reflection of the scripture’s quality as an elementary and quitessential component of Southern culture rather than a disparaging relegation. Chapter 2 of this dissertation traced the Sanhuang wen’s evolution in the early Daoist Canon, from the original three scrolls to the formalized fourteen-scroll Dongshen division and beyond. Since the Three Caverns system was itself an endeavor to re-affirm the relevance of Southern traditions in an institutionalized framework while simultaneously incorporating components from newer religious imports in an effort to establish dialogue, the Sanhuang corpus found an appropriate place at the core of structure. Some medieval sources even suggest that the Three Caverns were initially patterned on the triad of Heaven, Earth, and Humanity and its corresponding gods, the Three Sovereigns.

In accordance with its position at the base of the Daoist Canon, the main text of the Sanhuang corpus, the Sanhuang wen, became the chief register for the initial level of ordination into Daoist priesthood. The Sanhuang tradition developed sets of precepts that were expounded in a series of liturgical manuals and used as the main moral guidelines for members of the clergy. These precepts underlined the dual nature of the Sanhuang; they appeared in Shangqing and Lingbao writings, testifying to the tradition’s status as a centripetal symbol of Southern culture—yet they also absorbed Buddhist and Tianshi dao influences, cementing the Sanhuang’s standing as a synthetic force in Six Dynasties religion.

The principal features of the Sanhuang tradition also underscore the same dual nature. Talismans, for example, are employed for divinatory or apotropaic
ends in Buddhism and Tianshi dao, but they figure most prominently in the gamut of Southern mantic techniques. Chapter 3 examined the mechanics behind their use and identified the fragments of Sanhuang talismanic collections in the Daozang. Remnants from the “Sanhuang yaoyong pin” (Essential Functions of the Three Sovereigns) and the *Dongshen badi miaojing jing* (Scripture of the Wondrous Essence of the Eight Emperors of the Storehouse for Divinity) were tied to Bo He’s version of the *Sanhuang wen*, the *Tianwen dazi* (Great Characters of the Celestial Writ). The two canonical sources were also shown to contain considerable portions of Bao Jing’s version.

In many ways the Sanhuang was a harbinger of the widespread impulse for systematization and codification that marked fifth- and sixth-century Jiangnan religion. While the plethora of deities summoned by its talismans appears, *a priori*, as an arbitrary hodgepodge, what remains of the *Sanhuang wen* in the Daozang betrays some method to the madness. There are manifestly different classes of talismans in the “Sanhuang yaoyong pin” and the *Badi miaojing jing*. The “floating talismans” discussed in Chapter 3 are generally apotropaic, or they summon groups of often unspecified gods; these are considered ancillary to the divinatory talismans used in summoning specific, individual deities. Among the latter, regional or topographic spirits are represented (the spirit of the hundred trees; the spirit of tigers and leopards); these fall under the rubric of local Jiangnan deities and are associated with the Sovereign of the Earth. Gods that oversee human destiny or are involved in human affairs (the Director of Dangers; the Daily Traveler) are also included; the deities from this category are typically derived from Han cults and are tied to the Sovereign of Humanity. Finally, the *Sanhuang wen* incorporated what could be termed “celestial gods” (Queen Mother of the
West; Big Dipper) that were more or less associated with Daoism, divination, or
the quest for immortality since the Han dynasty or earlier. Aside from ordering
deities according to their relation to Heaven, Earth, and Humanity, Sanhuang
materials further situated them in microcosmic or macrocosmic planes, sometimes
in both concurrently.

Therefore, despite the impression of disorder conveyed by surviving
fragments, the Sanhuang tradition was instrumental in the systematization of the
South’s luxuriant pantheon. By first classifying and then re-organizing all manner
of deities according to its own cosmology, the Sanhuang reunited the various
traditions of early medieval Jiangnan under one banner. This also meant that the
practices tied to various gods had to be absorbed as well, and so, alchemy and
meditation formed an integral part of Sanhuang praxis from early on. The first half
of Chapter 4 analyzed the presence of Taiqing elements in the texts of he
Dongshen corpus. The second half considered meditation techniques in the same
context, revealing a complex web of correlations between visualization methods
encountered in a number of early Daoist works. As the prime representative of the
Southern esoteric tradition, the Sanhuang brought alchemy and meditation, the two
loftiest paths to immortality in Ge Hong’s view, under its aegis. Despite its
emphasis on talismans, the fact that the Baopu zi speaks of the Sanhuang wen as
the most prized of scriptures shows that by the early fourth century, alchemy and
meditation must have already been absorbed into its pages.

In addition to the unity afforded by common geographic or cultural origins,
the glue that bound these myriad gods and disparate practices together was a
shared identification with the principles propounded in the Yijing, the Zhuangzi,
and above all, the Laozi. These sentiments were often expressed in the form of
direct quotations from the aforementioned texts, or more typically with paraphrases, veiled references, and borrowed concepts. While the ties were largely rhetorical, self-inscription into a common “spiritual lineage” was sufficient to lend a strong sense of cohesion to a sometimes ragtag assortment of spirits and methods.

Theologically, the motley assemblage of deities and techniques under the Sanhuang standard was explained in terms of complementarity between yin and yang, time and space, ling and bao, text (wen) and chart (tu). The notion of true form played an important role in many of these pairings, by providing the rationale for the interdependence. For instance, holders of the bao component of a god’s true form—the talisman—can compel that god, who holds the ling component of his true form, to comply with their demands. Sanhuang meditations, wether internal or external, also rely on practitioners’ knowledge of their true form. Chapter 5 discussed a few of these visualization methods, before turning to true form charts, more specifically, the Wuyue zhenxing tu (True Form Charts of the Five Peaks) and the Bashi zhenxing tu (True Form Charts of the Eight Envoys). Both are classified as illustrations, yet they function just as talismans do in apotropaic and divination rituals. They are essential companions to the Sanhuang wen in the capacity that they complete the cosmological picture painted by the tradition. The relationship between talismans and diagrams operates on the same principles as that of ling to bao, yin to yang. It can also be compared to that of the Dao and its De.

The Sanhuang tradition brought vast pantheons under a single cosmology, collapsing entire macrocosms and microcosms in the space of a few folios. The Laozi states:
Without going outside the door, one knows all under Heaven. Without looking out the window, one knows the Heavenly Way. The further the travels, the lesser one knows. This is why the sages knew all, but did not move. They were aware, but did not see. They accomplished without acting.¹

With proper initiation, the correct observance of ritual prescriptions, and the talismans of the *Sanhuang wen*, adepts too could hold the vastness of the cosmos and its divine inhabitants in the palm of their hands. All the gods and methods of early medieval Jiangnan spilled into the Sanhuang tradition, just as streams from valleys empty into the rivers and seas, and the Dao flows into the world.

¹ *Laozi*, 47.
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317


