

## Time Manipulation in Early Daoist Ritual: The East Well Chart and the Eight Archivists

Daoism is deeply concerned with time. Its formative period, from late Han through the Six Dynasties, was one of political chaos and social turmoil. Constant warfare, rampant epidemics, and natural disasters were perceived as symptomatic of a continuing cosmological crisis: the various cosmic cycles and the natural harmonies were disordered, leading to the disasters and depredations which inflicted suffering on the population. Scriptures from this period abound with descriptions of the sorry state of humanity and are filled with eschatological foreboding of the end of civilization, as well as hopes for those who convert and follow the correct path – the teachings of the Dao.<sup>1</sup>

The solution advocated by Daoists was twofold. On the one hand, Daoists were urged to adhere to a moral and ethical path, which called for following the precepts of the Dao as presented in a number of texts. On the other hand, they championed ritual reforms that would enable humanity to reestablish the original harmony within the universe. If one were to follow this twofold program, one would be able to cross over 度.<sup>2</sup> The use of this term in Daoism should not be confused with its use in Buddhist terminology, where it refers to the crossing over

THE AUTHOR is indebted to John Kieschnick, Donald Harper, Marc Kalinowski, and two anonymous reviewers for their valuable and insightful comments on earlier drafts of this paper. Texts in the Daoist Canon are referred to as *HY*, followed by the number as listed in Weng Dujian 翁獨健, ed., *Combined Indices to the Authors and Titles of Books in Two Collections of Taoist Literature*, Harvard-Yenching Sinological Index Series 25 (Beijing: Yanjing University, 1925).

<sup>1</sup> For a general survey of Daoist eschatological writings, see Li Fengmao 李豐楙, “Chuancheng yu duiying, liuchao daoqing zhong ‘moshi’ shuo de tichu yu yanbian” 傳承與對應六朝道經中末世說的提出與衍變, *Bulletin of the Institute of Literature and Philosophy* 中國文哲研究集刊 (1996.9), pp. 91–130; for a partial translation and study of one of the most important eschatological scriptures, *Taishang dongyuan shenzhou jing* 太上洞淵神咒經 (*HY* 335), see Christine Mollier, *Une apocalypse taoïste du ve siècle: Le Livre des Incantations Divines des Grottes Abyssales* (Paris: Collège de France, Institut des Hautes Études Chinoises, 1990).

<sup>2</sup> *Laojun yibai bashi jie* 老君一百八十戒 is found in two recensions: *Yunji qiqian* 雲笈七籤 (*HY* 1026, j. 39, pp. 1a–14a) and *Taishang laojun jinglu* 太上老君經律 (*HY* 785, pp. 2a–12b). See Barbara Hendrichke and Benjamin Penny, “The 180 Precepts Spoken by Lord Lao 老君說一百八十戒: A Translation and Textual Study,” *Taoist Resources* 6.2 (1996), pp. 15, 22.

into nirvana and evading rebirth. While carrying the general meaning of salvation, in Daoism, “crossing over” referred more specifically to either crossing over into a celestial bureaucratic position following one’s death, or crossing over into the next existing universe once the present one has ceased to be.<sup>3</sup> “Crossing over” was thus conceived of as transcending the limitations of time and continuing to live within the realm of the Dao in a refined physical body. The Daoist revelations, with their moral precepts and ritual system, were to abrogate contemporary practices, perceived as the heterodox ways of the stale vapors of the Six Heavens. A new cosmological base – the Three Heavens – underlay the new ritual forms by which the pure emanations of the Dao could be contacted by Daoist masters.<sup>4</sup>

I have so far presented the Daoist concern with time in rather bold terms. However, we must remember that Daoism was never, especially at this formative period, a unitary phenomenon. Rather, we should think of it as a number of intersecting textual and ritual lineages which, with a set of shared core beliefs or attitudes, formed a commonality, as opposed to other traditions – particularly the practices of local popular cults and those of Buddhism. We must also remember that the Daoists constructed their new ritual systems while relying on diverse older and contemporary practices. If we bear these caveats in mind we may better understand why early Daoist rituals and practices are found in multiple versions and seem to have multiple meanings.

In this paper I examine the ritual to summon the Eight Archivists (*bashi* 八史), spirits of the Eight Trigrams, which exemplifies the concern with time in early Daoism. This ritual is, first and foremost, a ritual for the mastery of time. We will see, however, that different notions of temporality, and of ritual mastery, appear in different versions of the ritual. I will focus on the ritual for summoning Eight Archivists as it appears in the *The Upper Scripture of the Five Ascendant Talismans of the Highest, Limitless Great Way and the Self-Generating Perfect One* (hereafter shortened to *Five Ascendant Talismans*), one of the original Lingbao 靈

<sup>3</sup> See the discussion in Stephen Bokenkamp, *Early Daoist Scriptures* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: U. of California P., 1997), pp. 382–83, and *passim*. The Daoist concept stems from the notion of “crossing the generations 度世,” used in the discourse of immortality cults and referring to the concept of continuous life. It was already developed by mid-Han as evidenced by the use of this term in Wang Chong’s 王充 (27–ca. 100 AD) *Lunheng* 論衡, where, intriguingly, such beliefs are labeled as Daoist; see the *Lunheng* chap. “Falsities about the Dao” 道虛; *Lunheng jiaoshi* 論衡校釋, Huang Hui 黃暉, comp. (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1990), vol. 2, p. 334, on Laozi; p. 335 on Wangzi Qiao; and p. 338 for Wang’s summary and criticism of the notion of *dushi*.

<sup>4</sup> For an introduction to the Six Heavens and the Three Heavens, see Bokenkamp, *Early Taoist Scriptures*, pp. 188–93, 200, n. 21, 225, n. 5.

寶 revelation texts.<sup>5</sup> In this version of the ritual, the Eight Archivists are combined with two other symbolic devices – the five Lingbao talismans and the East Well Chart. I argue that this symbolic concatenation provides the meaning of the ritual in the *Five Ascendant Talismans*: the re-creation of the moment of the rise of the Han dynasty. The importance of the Han dynasty in Daoist mytho-historical imaginaire is evidenced by several references linking the Han with the emergence of Daoism.<sup>6</sup> This intriguing topic requires further study, but is beyond the scope of this paper. Nevertheless, the ritual summoning of the Eight Archivists in the *Five Ascendant Talismans* analyzed in the following pages may serve as further, and previously unnoticed, data for this complex issue. As evidence for this assertion, I explore the changes in the symbolic value of the East Well asterism and, in particular, the divination device known as the East Well Chart.

Another version of the ritual for summoning the Eight Archivists is found in the *Chart of the Saintly Writ and True Shape of the Most High Eight Archivists of Spiritual Communication* (hereafter referred to as *Chart of the Saintly Writ*), which has been studied by Poul Andersen.<sup>7</sup> This version of the ritual makes no reference to either the five Lingbao talismans or to the East Well asterism. The analysis of the changing symbolism and function of the ritual in these two early Daoist texts and an examination of its antecedents will allow us to compare different ways of conceptualizing and manipulating time.

While it is difficult to judge which is earlier, the *Five Ascendant Talismans* or the *Chart of the Saintly Writ*, it is safe to assume that the *Five Ascendant Talismans* dates to the late-fourth century and is among the earliest of the Lingbao texts.<sup>8</sup> The affiliation of the *Chart of the Saintly*

<sup>5</sup> *Taishang wuji dadao ziran zhenyi wuchengfu shangjing* 太上無極大道自然真一五稱符上經 (HY671). The Dunhuang manuscript P2440, *Lingbao zhenyi wuchengjing* 靈寶真一五稱經, preserves an early version of the text with important variants; see Ōfuchi Ninji 大淵忍爾, *Tonkō Dōkyō zuroku hen* 敦煌道經圖祿編 (Tokyo: Fukubu shoten, 1979), pp. 10–22. For a study of the text and a comparison of the two versions, see Gil Raz, “Ritual and Cosmology: Transformations of the Ritual for the Eight Archivists,” M.A. thesis (Indiana University, 1996). See also the illustration and discussion in Stephen Little (with Shawn Eichman), *Taoism and the Arts of China* (Chicago: The Art Institute of Chicago, 2000), pp. 201–3; Ishii Masako 石井昌子, “Reihō kyō rui” 靈寶經類, in *Kōza tonkō 4: Tonkō to Chūgoku Dōkyō* 講座敦煌 4, 敦煌と中国道教 (Tokyo: Daitō, 1983), pp. 164–67.

<sup>6</sup> E.g. the history of Daoist revelation in the early-5th-c. *Inner Explanations of the Three Heavens* defines Han emperors as “children of dragon seed 龍精之子,” and asserts that the revelation to the Celestial Master was in order to aid the Han; *Santian neijie jing* 三天內解經 HY1196, j. 1, pp. 4b7–5a6, 8a2–8b10; Bokenkamp, *Early Taoist Scriptures*, pp. 213–14, 219–21.

<sup>7</sup> *Taishang tongling bashi shengwen zhenxingtu* 太上通靈八史聖文真形圖 HY766; Poul Andersen, “Talking to the Gods: Visionary Divination in Early Taoism (The Sanhuang Tradition),” *Taoist Resources* 5.1 (1994), pp. 1–25.

<sup>8</sup> For the Lingbao scriptures, see Ōfuchi Ninji, “On *Ku Ling-Pao-Ching*,” *Acta Asiatica* 27

*Writ* is more obscure. Andersen considers it to belong to the Sanhuang 三皇 tradition, the magico-religious tradition of the Jiangnan region, exemplified by Ge Hong 葛洪 (283–343) and his representative text, *Inner Chapters of the Master Embracing the Unhewn* (*Baopuzi neipian* 抱朴子內篇). Ge Hong refers to a ritual for summoning the Eight Archivists, and lists a *Chart of the Eight Archivists* (*Bashi tu* 八史圖) in the bibliographic chapter of *Baopuzi*.<sup>9</sup>

A comparison of the variant forms of the ritual for summoning the Eight Archivists in the *Five Ascendant Talismans* and the *Chart of the Saintly Writ* shows that both were compiled from earlier practices adapted to fit different ritual systemizations and cosmological speculations, both of which may be termed Daoist. Tracing the sources for these rites reveals that Daoists were drawing upon a number of distinct traditions such as imperial ritual, herbal lore, and the Han weft-text tradition. The ritual of the Eight Archivists exemplifies another major tradition which Daoists drew upon – astronomical and calendrical divination practices 數術, particularly practices associated with the *shi* divining board 式盤.<sup>10</sup>

Different cosmologies and practices are correlated to the Eight Archivists ritual in the two texts. The *Chart of the Saintly Writ* retains the traditional Chinese association of the Eight Trigrams and the eight compass directions, while in the *Five Ascendant Talismans* the spatial relationship is extended to the ten directions 十方, thus revealing Buddhist influence. In the *Five Ascendant Talismans* the rite of the Eight Archivists is linked with the five Lingbao talismans, and its timing is inexorably tied to the East Well asterism. Neither of these devices is mentioned in the *Chart of the Saintly Writ*. In the *Chart of the Saintly Writ* the Archivists are divided into male and female couples, and the ritual can be performed as a sexual rite by a husband and wife. The gender of

(1974), pp. 33–56, and Stephen Bokenkamp, “Sources of the Ling-Pao Scriptures,” in Michel Strickmann, ed., *Taoist and Tantric Studies in Honour of R. A. Stein* (Bruxelles: Institut Belge des Hautes Etudes Chinoises, 1983) 2, pp. 434–86.

<sup>9</sup> *HY* 1177; the most convenient edition is Wang Ming 王明, ed., *Baopuzi neipian jiaozhu* 抱朴子內篇校注 (Zhonghua shuju: Beijing, 1985). For a convenient, if outdated, translation, see James R. Ware, *Alchemy, Medicine and Religion in the China of AD 320, The Nei P'ien of Ko Hung* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1966; rpt. New York: Dover, 1981). A *Chart of the Eight Archivists* is listed in *HY* 1177, j. 19, p. 4b5; Wang, *Baopuzi*, p. 333; Ware, *Alchemy*, p. 382. The summoning ritual is mentioned in *HY* 1177, j. 15, pp. 10a10–10b5; Wang, *Baopuzi*, pp. 272–73; Ware, *Alchemy*, p. 255; and see below, for details.

<sup>10</sup> Donald Harper, “Warring States Natural Philosophy and Occult Thought,” in Michael Loewe and Edward Shaughnessy, eds., *The Cambridge History of Ancient China: From the Origins of Civilization to 221 B.C.* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1999), pp. 839–43; Marc Kalinowski, “Les instruments astro-calendériques des Han et la méthode *liu ren* 六壬,” *BEFEO* 72 (1983), pp. 309–419.

the Archivists is only alluded to in passing in the *Five Ascendant Talismans*, and the ritual is explicitly individual and not sexual. On the basis of these differences, Andersen posits that the *Chart of the Saintly Writ* may in fact be the very same *Chart of the Eight Archivists* mentioned by Ge Hong, and that it is likely to have been compiled no later than the third or fourth century.<sup>11</sup>

A critical difference between the *Five Ascendant Talismans* and the *Chart of the Saintly Writ* is the different status accorded to hemerological divination in their rituals. The *Chart of the Saintly Writ* emphasizes the residence of the Archivists in the Dipper, which the *Five Ascendant Talismans* only hints at. On the other hand, the divinatory process of the *Five Ascendant Talismans* is replaced by a mechanistic correlation of days for the descent of the Archivist couples in *Chart of the Saintly Writ*.

As I demonstrate below, the *Five Ascendant Talismans* is directly related to Han-period astrological divination systems. Hence, while I concur with Andersen's assertion that "it is inconceivable that the system of the *Chart of the Saintly Writ* could have been derived from the Lingbao context as defined by the *Five Ascendant Talismans*,"<sup>12</sup> the reverse is also true: the ritual in the *Five Ascendant Talismans* could not have developed from the system found in the *Chart of the Saintly Writ*. While the differences between the ritual programs in the two texts may not suffice to decisively determine the relative precedence of the texts, they exemplify the process by which earlier practices were adapted to fit different Daoist molds. We have, therefore, two distinct versions of the same ritual in two nearly contemporaneous texts in which the same basic practices are given different cosmological interpretations and assimilated into what are essentially different symbolic systems.

#### THE EIGHT ARCHIVISTS IN EARLY DAOIST TEXTS

As mentioned above, Ge Hong knew of a divination practice that centered on summoning the Eight Archivists. Besides listing a *Chart of the Eight Archivists* in his bibliographic chapter, he refers to the actual practice as one of the superior divination methods:

Employ the Celestial Writ of the Three Luminaries 三皇天文 to invoke the Director of Fates, Director of Dangers 司危, and the lords of the Five Marchmounts, the Borough Masters of the Paths 阡陌亭長 and the Numina of the Six-*ding* 六丁之靈. This will enable you to see and question them about all matters so that fortune and

<sup>11</sup> Andersen, "Talking to the Gods," pp. 6, 18–23.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 19.

misfortune will become clear. If you continuously manage this, then you will have foreknowledge of all things near and far, profound and deep. Or you may invoke the Six-yin Jade Maidens by this method, which is completed in sixty days. When done, you will be able to summon and dispatch them. Or you may conduct a sacrifice and call upon the Eight Archivists. The Eight Archivists are the essences of the Eight Trigrams 八卦之精. This too will suffice to obtain advance knowledge of that which has not yet taken shape.<sup>13</sup>

The same practice, or one very similar to it, was also known to the early Celestial Masters, who explicitly banned it in the *Hundred and Eighty Precepts of Lord Lao*, probably compiled in the early-third century:

You should not possess the prognosticatory writings of the lay people or the *Chart of the Eight Spirits* 八神圖. Also, you should not practice any of them.<sup>14</sup>

The references in the *Hundred and Eighty Precepts of Lord Lao* and in the *Baopuzi* suggest that a divination ritual involving the deified spirits of the Eight Trigrams was a popular practice from late in the Han through the early Six Dynasties. This popular practice was adapted by different Daoist lineages to fit their specific ritual programs. The version in the *Chart of the Saintly Writ* is thus representative of a particular, yet unspecified, Daoist lineage,<sup>15</sup> while the ritual variant in the *Five Ascendant Talismans* was a modification of the same ancient practice to accord with the Lingbao system.

The Lingbao scriptures, said to have been revealed to Ge Xuan 葛玄,<sup>16</sup> Ge Hong's great-uncle, were released into the world in the final years of the fourth century. Based on a comment in *Zhen'gao* 真誥 made

<sup>13</sup> HY 1177, j. 15, pp. 10a10–10b5; Wang, *Baopuzi*, pp. 272–73; Ware, *Alchemy*, p. 255.

<sup>14</sup> Precept number 114; Hendrichske and Penny, "The 180 Precepts," p. 25. Kristofer Schipper suggests the *bashen tu* is a manual for divination based on the Eight Trigrams; Schipper, "Purity and Strangers, Shifting Boundaries in Medieval Taoism," *TP* 80 (1994), p. 67 n. 16.

<sup>15</sup> As mentioned, above, Andersen suggests that the *Chart* was part of the so-called Sanhuang textual corpus. It is unclear what social entity the latter corpus represents: Andersen notes that the sexual practices there are reminiscent of those found in *Huangshu guodu yi* 黃書過度儀 (HY 1284). This may suggest an influence of Celestial Master Daoism on an earlier *Eight Archivist* ritual and may reflect an attempt to modify the rite so as to conform to Celestial Master ideology.

<sup>16</sup> According to his hagiography in *Shenxian zhuan*, Ge Xuan was active in the Wu region during the early to mid-3d c. He received teachings from Zuo Ci 左慈 (z. Yuanfang 元放; active early-3d c.), including alchemical texts that are especially noted by Ge Hong. Ge Xuan in turn transmitted these teachings to Zheng Yin 鄭隱, Ge Hong's teacher. See Robert F. Campany, *To Live as Long as Heaven and Earth* (Berkeley: U. of California P., 2002), pp. 152–59.

by Tao Hongjing 陶弘景 (456–536), and first noted by Chen Guofu 陳國符 and since accepted by most scholars, the Lingbao texts were actually composed by Ge Chaofu 葛巢甫 of Jurong 句容, a later clansman of Ge Hong, between the years 397–402.<sup>17</sup>

This set of revelations was a conscious attempt at synthesizing the three traditions current among the elite in southern China at the end of the fourth century. The first, probably earliest, tradition has been dubbed by Michel Strickmann the Southern Occult tradition.<sup>18</sup> Among the basic traits of this tradition were the use of drugs, herbal and mineral, and divination in quest of immortality. Ge Hong was a major representative of this tradition. The second was the Shangqing 上清 textual tradition, which was revealed through the medium Yang Xi 楊羲 to the Xu 許 family, relatives by marriage of the Ge clan, beginning in 364.<sup>19</sup> The third tradition incorporated into the Lingbao system was Buddhism, the popularity of which was increasing during the third and fourth centuries with a spate of new translations.<sup>20</sup>

The importance of the *Five Ascendant Talismans* is that it is among the earliest of the original Lingbao scriptures. It displays a rather crude, probably early, attempt at this synthesis. Textual layering is very obvious, and the Buddhist cosmology of ten directions grafted onto the

<sup>17</sup> HY 1010, j. 19, p. 11b5; Chen Guofu, *Daozang yuanliu kao* 道藏源流考 (rpt. Beijing: Zhonghua, 1989) 1, p. 67; Bokenkamp, "Sources," pp. 440–41. Kobayashi Masayoshi 小林正美, *Rikuchō Dōkyōshi kenkyū* 六朝道教史研究 (Tokyo: Sōbunsha, 1990), pp. 127–80, suggests that Ge Chaofu had composed only one text, the *Five Tablets of Perfect Writs in Red Script* (*Lingbao chishu wupian zhenwen* 靈寶赤書五篇真文), which is the source for the current *Yuan-shi wulao chishu wupian zhenwen tianshu jing* 元始五老赤書玉篇真文天書經 (HY 22), whereas the remaining texts in this corpus were composed by later disciples, Lu Xiuqing 陸修靜 in particular. In the following pages, I argue that the *Five Ascendant Talismans* is probably among the earliest compilations of the Lingbao lineage, and certainly earlier than the *Five Tablets of Perfect Writs in Red Script*.

<sup>18</sup> Michel Strickmann, "On the Alchemy of T'ao Hung-ching," in H. Welch and A. Seidel, eds., *Facets of Taoism* (New Haven: Yale U.P., 1979), pp. 169 ff. Robinet has shown that this term is somewhat of a misnomer. The so-called "Southern tradition" stems from traditions known during the Han and claiming descent from individuals of various regions of China. However, Robinet argues, as we know these traditions through the representative texts *Baopuzi* and *Array of the Five Lingbao Talismans of the Most High* (*Taishang lingbao wufuxu* 太上靈寶五符序; HY 388), the term "Southern" may be used to represent only the Ge family tradition, that is, the accumulated learning of one prominent Southern family, which forms the backdrop for both the Shangqing and Lingbao traditions; see Isabelle Robinet, *La révélation du Shangqing dans l'histoire du Taoïsme* (Paris: Ecole Française d'Extrême-Orient, 1984) 1, p. 23. The *Array of the Five Lingbao Talismans* was probably compiled in the Wu region in the late-3d c. It preserves Han-era practices and is closely related to the Han weft-text tradition. While the main redaction of the text predates Ge Hong, the current version includes later interpolations; see Gil Raz, "Creation of Tradition: The Five Numinous Treasure Talismans and the Formation of Early Daoism," Ph.D. diss. (Bloomington: Indiana U., 2004).

<sup>19</sup> A detailed account of the Shangqing revelations may be found in Michel Strickmann, "The Mao Shan Revelations: Taoism and the Aristocracy," *TP* 63.1 (1977), pp. 1–67.

<sup>20</sup> Bokenkamp, "Sources," esp. p. 436.



ritual descriptions of the scripture had not been fully worked out. Old ritual forms, including the carving of effigies, the use of hallucinogenic herbs, and astrological divination, are maintained alongside the newer terminology of visualization techniques

CONTENTS OF THE *SCRIPTURE*  
OF THE FIVE ASCENDANT TALISMANS

The original *Scripture of the Five Ascendant Talismans* consisted of one chapter, but the current version is divided into two.<sup>21</sup> The second chapter includes instructions for three rituals, the first of which is the summoning of the Eight Archivists. In the first chapter, before the ritual instructions, the text provides the basic definitions for the terms Lingbao and for the Five Talismans which are at the core of the new ritual and cosmology. The scripture begins by describing the evolution of the text itself as part of the process of creation. It is through Lingbao that the cosmogonic process proceeds and is maintained. The term Lingbao is defined thus:

*Ling* 靈 is to communicate with the Dao. One who is able to communicate the great Dao will achieve numinous efficacy (*ling*) and command the myriad spirits. *Bao* 寶 is the ability to preserve (*bao* 保) [one's life] equivalent to heaven and earth.<sup>22</sup>

The term thus incorporates the basic duality of the universe. *Ling* is the spiritual power, the celestial half of the compound-word. *Bao* is the terrestrial half and connotes both the vehicle by which the spiritual power is manifested on earth and the status gained by this vehicle. The vehicle may be a person such as a medium or shaman, an auspicious object, or, most often in Daoism, a text. By glossing *bao* ("treasure") by its homonym *bao* ("protect"), both meanings are juxtaposed as complementary aspects of "preservation." In the context of our scripture, the term may refer to the various talismans, and the scripture itself, which functioned as the terrestrial receptacles for spiritual powers.<sup>23</sup> The use of the term Lingbao in the *Five Ascendant Talismans* is but one example of the ways in which old ritual forms and meanings were incorporated into the new dispensation.

<sup>21</sup> The Dunhuang MS P2440 is not divided into chapters. The Lingbao catalogue refers to the text as consisting of one *juan*; see Ōfuchi, "On Ku Ling-Pao-ching," p. 37.

<sup>22</sup> P2440, l. 11; HY671, j. 1, p. 3a.

<sup>23</sup> Max Kaltenmark, "Ling Pao 靈寶: Note sur un terme du Taoïsme religieux," *Melanges, L'institut des Hautes Etudes Chinoises* (Paris: 1960) 2, pp. 559–88.



One of the core practices reformulated in this text, which remains at the core of the Lingbao ritual and cosmology, is the deployment of the five Lingbao talismans, which were at the heart of the ritual program of the *Array of the Five Lingbao Talismans*. The *Five Ascendant Talismans* defined the talismans as central cosmological emblems:

The five ascendant self-generated talismans 五稱自然符 respond above to the ordinances of the five stars and the joint contracts of the five dippers. Below, they manifest the Five Marchmounts, and are the common root of the Five Phases.<sup>24</sup>

The text then proceeds to outline the basic correlations of the world according to the Five Phases. All natural phenomena are subsumed under controlling deities, the Five Thearchs, who are simultaneously directional and astral. These thearchs are in turn correlated to the five Lingbao talismans. The text provides illustrations of the talismans, which when carved in color on rocks serve to “secure 鎮” each direction. Finally, the five directions and their Marchmounts are correlated to the Eight Archivists, without relating them to their respective trigrams.<sup>25</sup> It is here that *Five Ascendant Talismans* lays the groundwork for introducing the Lingbao talismans, along with the new religious ideology, into the ritual of the Eight Archivists.

The rite of the Eight Archivists is described in the second *juan*.<sup>26</sup> It is followed by instructions for a second rite, summoning the deities of the Six-*jia* 六甲.<sup>27</sup> Both rites are examples of older divination practices transformed into Daoist summoning rituals. Significantly, in both rites herbs are used for communication with the numinous powers, but with a different basis for efficacy.

In the rite of summoning the Eight Archivists the herb employed, *zhangju* 章拒, more commonly known as *zhanglu* 章陸, or *shanglu* 商陸, is used for its psychoactive qualities.<sup>28</sup> As the *Array of the Five Talismans*

<sup>24</sup> P2440, l. 14; HY671, j. 1, p. 3a.      <sup>25</sup> P2440, ll. 164–88; HY671, j. 1, pp. 12b–13b.

<sup>26</sup> P2440, ll. 205–482; HY671, j. 2, pp. 1a1–4b1.

<sup>27</sup> P2440, ll. 276–96; HY671, j. 2, pp. 4b3–5b3.

<sup>28</sup> Based on the list of alternative names in HY671, j. 2, pp. 9b–10a, and references in *Array of the Five Lingbao Talismans*, it may be ascertained that the common names of the plant are *zhanglu* and *shanglu*. Modern researchers identify it as *Phytolacca acinosa*; see James A. Duke and Edward S. Ayensu, *Medicinal Plants of China* (Algonac, Michigan: Reference Publications, 1985), p. 477; Porter F. Smith and G. A. Stuart, trans., *Chinese Medicinal Herbs* (San Francisco: Georgetown Press, 1973), p. 319; *Zhongyao yaoming cidian* 中藥藥名辭典, editor-in-chief Cai Yongmin 蔡永敏 (Beijing: Zhongguo zhongyiyao chubanshe, 1996), p. 323; and Li Shizhen 李時珍 (1552–1578), comp., Gan Weisong, annot., *Bencao gangmu* 本草綱目 (Taipei: Hongye shuju, 1985), vol. 3, “Supplement,” p. 54. For a color photo, see *Zhong caoyao caise tupu* 中草藥彩色圖譜, editor-in-chief Xu Guojun 徐國鈞 (Fuzhou: Fujian kexue jishu: 1990), pp. 184–85.

This herb was commonly used by Daoists and their herbalist predecessors. *Array of the*

states: “Masters of the Dao always plant this medicinal herb in the garden of a Silent Chamber. It leads one to communicate with the spirits.”<sup>29</sup> The Daoist rhetoric of “communication with spirits” may be contrasted with the hallucinogenic effects described in medical texts.<sup>30</sup> These effects occur not only when the herb is ingested but also when the roots are carved, as during the preparatory stage of the ritual for summoning the Eight Archivists. At this stage, *zhangju* roots are carved into human shape, while the adept contemplates the forms of the spirits of the twelve chronograms 辰. This causes the spirits to appear, indicating that the active ingredients may be absorbed cutaneously. Intriguingly, this use of the herb was still known in the early-Qing:

Those of the left Dao carve the *zhanglu* root into human shape, and utter incantations to it. It enables one to know calamity and fortune. It is called Spirit of *zhanglu*. Medical books say to take the leaves of *shanglu* and dry them in the shade for 100 days. As you pound it, not yet eating it, lie down and think of things which you wish and they will immediately appear by themselves before your eyes. Two aspects are supernatural in these perfect plants, their moving the Yin pneuma and their possibility of imparting much knowledge. Small men will be transformed in a flash. Ghosts and goblins by the hundreds will be expelled.<sup>31</sup>

While this description recalls the “white flower” powder mentioned in the *Five Ascendant Talismans*, which when swallowed causes one’s body to unite with the Archivists,<sup>32</sup> it also implies that the active ingredient in *shanglu* is absorbable through the skin.

The herb used during the invocation of the Six-*jia*, *liujia fumu* 六甲父母 (Father and Mother of the Six *Jia*), is employed for its symbolic shape: a central large sprout surrounded by twelve smaller ones.<sup>33</sup> These examples of the cooptation and adaptation of older practices into Daoist ritual illustrate the synthetic nature of Daoist ritual.

---

*Five Talismans* describes it: “The root of *zhanglu* is sour and poisonous. It cures evil pneumas in the heart, relieves swelling and kills evil spirits. It refines the five viscera by scattering water pneuma. The root has a spirit with a human-like form. It grows in fields and at old burial grounds. This herb is a divine herb” (HY 388, j. 2, pp. 10b4; also cited in *Yunji qiqian* [HY 1026, j. 82, p. 7] as “Method of Yu of Xia Bestowed on the Perfected”). *Array of the Five Talismans* includes several further references to *shanglu*, HY 388, j. 2, pp. 11a, 23b, 28b.

<sup>29</sup> HY 388, j. 2, p. 10b10.

<sup>30</sup> Li Shizhen defines *shanglu* as poisonous. Ingestion of lesser quantities causes bloody stools and hallucinations; ingestion of larger amounts may be fatal; *Bencao gangmu*, ce 14, j. 17, pp. 7–8.

<sup>31</sup> Zhang Erqi 張爾岐 (1612–1677), *Haoan xianhua* 蒿庵閒話, in *Congshu jicheng*, vol. 22, p. 3.

<sup>32</sup> P2440, l. 233; HY 671, j. 2, p. 2a9–10.

<sup>33</sup> Identified as the rhizome of *Gastrodia elata*, an herb usually called Celestial Hemp (*tianma*

The final section of the *Five Ascendant Talismans*, following the ritual instructions, introduces a new ritual scheme, a set of twenty-four charts defined as “the perfect pneumas of heaven 天之真氣.”<sup>34</sup> The first chart in this list is the East Well Chart, the third is the Chart of the Eight Archivists, the fourth is the Chart of the Six-*jia*.<sup>35</sup> While these charts are related to the ritual procedure for summoning the Eight Archivists and of the Six-*jia*, their placement in the list of twenty-four charts incorporates yet another ritual systemization. Understanding this list is crucial to understanding the relationship between the Lingbao scriptures and Han-era traditions of technical knowledge and practice.

#### THE RITUAL FOR SUMMONING THE EIGHT ARCHIVISTS

The ritual begins by marking out the ritual space, which at this stage extends beyond the home:<sup>36</sup>

You must mark, around your home, the eight directions and the twelve chronograms. At each chronogram direction and to the left and right of the gate plant the *zhi* herbs of spiritual communication,<sup>37</sup> fourteen shoots in total. Take the memorial-like diagrams of the Eight Trigrams to make the Mysterious Cavern Talismans of Numinous Communication at the eight directions. Place the five talismans of ascendance in the center of the room, on the central roof beam.<sup>38</sup>

---

天麻) or Red Arrow 赤箭. Alternative names are given in *Wufu xu*: Red Arrow 赤箭, Departing from the Mother 離母, Ghost Supervisor 鬼督郵, Spiritual Grass 神草, Shakes Alone 獨搖, Blocking Bitterness 當苦, Victorious 勝子, Ghost Arrow 鬼箭 (*HY*388, j. 2, pp. 9b–10b). A similar description is also found in *HY*1177, j. 11, p. 7a; Wang, *Baopuzi*, p. 200; Ware, *Alchemy*, p. 183.

<sup>34</sup> P2440, ll. 422–41; *HY*671, j. 2, pp. 11b9–12b8. See appendix 3 for the list of twenty-four charts.

<sup>35</sup> The second chart is the Chart of the Five Marchmounts. While it is obviously related to the famous Chart of Perfected Forms of the Five Marchmounts (*Wuyue zhenxing tu* 五嶽真形圖), in this context, allusion is probably to the emplacement of the five talismans; see, below, section “The Twenty-four Lingbao Charts.”

<sup>36</sup> Trans. based on P2440, ll. 208–40; cf. variants in *HY*671, j. 2, pp. 1a5–2b7

<sup>37</sup> I follow *HY*671, j. 2, p. 1a6 here; P2440, l. 209 has *daoshen* 道神 instead of *tongshen* 通神, the standard adjectival compound for describing the *zhi* 芝 plant, or more precisely its hallucinogenic effects. *Zhi* is described as a type of mushroom or fungus; usually purple it symbolizes spiritual efficacy and longevity. *Caozhi* 草芝 is one of the five types of *zhi* given by Ge Hong in *Baopuzi*; *HY*1177, j. 11, p. 2b.10; Wang, *Baopuzi*, p. 197; Ware, *Alchemy*, p. 179. Here it is used as a generic term for plants of spiritual communication.

<sup>38</sup> See appendix 1 for a talismanic representation of the Eight Trigrams and images of the five talismans. On memorial-like diagrams, my translation follows P2440, l. 210, which gives 奏書 instead of 春書 in *HY*671, j. 2, p. 1a7. As this term refers to the talismans representing the eight trigrams, I suggest that these talismans are perceived to function similarly to administrative documents.

The ritual space is therefore marked on the outside by the twelve markers of time. Note that at this point these markers of time are outside the home. Inside this circle are placed the eight talismans signifying the trigrams, the *Xuandong tong ling fu* 玄洞通靈符.<sup>39</sup> The five Lingbao talismans are hung on the central roof beam.

In the next stage the ritual space is moved inside the home:

Purify the hall, making it a pure chamber, mark the eight directions and twelve chronograms. Take the *zhangju* 章拒 roots, fourteen in all. First, place those of the gate in front of the hall outside the doorpost, so as to forbid the hundred evil spirits from being able to enter and oppose [the ritual]. Then, take the twelve [plants at the] chronogram points, beginning with *yin* 寅, to the front of the hall. Each is carved into a human [shape]. [Plants on] Yang 陽 [chronograms] are to be made into males, [those on] Yin 陰 are made into females. Place each inside the hall at their respective chronogram point. At each point dig into the ground, making holes [deep enough] so that their heads are level with the ground.

This completes the emplacement of the ritual space. The instructions now turn to the time element of the ritual:

On the fifth *yin* 寅 day of the vernal equinox, pick orchids and, in the center [of the ritual arena] make an infusion [with the flowers]. Wash [yourself with this]. On the fifth *mao* 卯 day take the brewed chrysanthemum and boil it to a broth, at the place of *yin* and *mao*. On the next day pick the *zhangju* stalks. Just as you are about to pick them, purify the [ground at their] side. Of small mats make fourteen seats for them. Light incense, and worship each with wine and dried meat. Bow repeatedly and say the incantation: “*Zhangju* beings, of pure and uncorrupt bodies, protectors of the twelve pneumas of the palaces,<sup>40</sup> communicators with spirit numina, now I shall unite my spirit officers with you,<sup>41</sup> be your companion and travel with you to some famous mountain’s south face. If called you must respond, if asked you must reply. Neither

<sup>39</sup> This is the collective name of the talismans of the Eight Archivists in *Bashi tu*; see Andersen, “Talking to the Gods,” pp. 18–19.

<sup>40</sup> The 12 palaces may refer to various astrological combinations: at least nine systems are mentioned in *Zhongguo dao jiao da cidian* 中國道教大辭典, ed. Min Zhiting 閔智亭 and Li Yangzheng 李養正 (rpt. Taipei: 1996), p. 23. The reference here is insufficient to determine which system is meant.

<sup>41</sup> P2440, l. 223 has *xiang* 香 “fragrance,” probably instead of *xiang* 鄉 “village,” itself a mistake for *qing* 卿 “officer,” as in *HY*671, j. 2, p. 1b10. The latter is a standard term for the bodily spirits.

of us is to deceive the other in this [contract]. We join tallies as a covenant.”<sup>42</sup>

After presenting wine, the adept is to carve the roots into human shape, naming them and distinguishing male from female. Now that the twelve images are ready, the ritual enters its climactic stage. This is the first mention of the East Well (Dongjing 東井) constellation, which marks the beginning of the ritual cycle:

At dawn the next day when the heaven points to East Well, and the sun is before the door, kneel and say to yourself: “Your descendant, so-and-so, has taken this day to bathe.” Then, enter the room and set out the *zhangju*. At the advent of each of the “days of the five ascendants” take a brush to draw the talisman of the day.<sup>43</sup> Make the five talismans in accord with the method. In ten days you will be finished. Then light incense and sacrifice to each *zhangju* at its chronogram position. First, using their names call out this incantation: “Lord so-and-so of Numinous Communication. Now, together with you I guard the twelve chronograms.”<sup>44</sup> After sixty days they will respond to you. When the twelve days of sacrifices are over, at the following dawn light incense, and retain 存 in mind the eight Archivists,<sup>45</sup> recalling their surnames and personal names. At the same time take “dried white flowers”

<sup>42</sup> P2440, l. 222; HY671, j. 2, p. 1b5–9.

<sup>43</sup> This term refers to the cycle of days developed in the hemerological system known as “Ruler-minister” (*wangxiang* 王相), which correlated the ten days of the traditional Chinese week with the Five Phases, represented here by association with the seasons. Each “ruler-minister” pair is here defined as days of ascendance of a phase. This system is adapted in the first *juan* of the text to include the Eight Archivists by correlating them with days of ascendance. In order to fit the Eight Archivists into this system, the fifth set, that is in fact the days of the center, is associated with the Eight Archivists as a group included with a whole host of spirits of the cosmos: “Take the first day of spring, which is like the ascendant days of *jiayi* 立春 時若甲乙王相日... Its archivists are *riyuan* 日原 and *taixuan* 太玄... Next take the ascendant days of *bingding* which are like the first day of summer 丙丁王相日若立夏時... its archivists are *lin’gang* 臨剛 and *zhushi* 柱史... Next take the ascendant days of *gengxin* which are like the first day of autumn 庚辛王相日若立秋時... its archivists are *jiangang* 建剛 and *xuanjing* 玄精... Next take the ascendant days of *rengui* which are like the first day of winter 壬癸王相日若立冬時... its archivists are *tianjian* 天建 and *yuejing* 月精... Next take the ascendant days of *wuji* which are like the days of the mid-seasons 戊己王相日若四季之時... The spirits of the endless Great Way all arrive, the Eight Archivists of the ten directions, the Father and Mother of the *liujia*, [and a host of other spirits and immortals] ... all arrive 無極大道神皆至諸十方八史六甲父母” (HY671, j. 1, pp. 12a–14a).

<sup>44</sup> I follow P2440, l. 231, which has *shou* 守 instead of *zi* 子; HY671, j. 2, p. 2a8.

<sup>45</sup> In Daoist texts *cun* refers to a visualization techniques which cause the actualization of spirits within or by the meditator’s body. See, e.g., discussion in Isabelle Robinet, *Taoist Meditation*, trans. Julian F. Pas and Norman J. Girardot (Albany: SUNY Press, 1993); Bokenkamp, *Early Taoist Scriptures*, p. 288.

powder and ingest a spoonful of it in the hall so as to make your body spirits and the archivists unite in companionship.<sup>46</sup>

This completes the procedure for the first stage in the ritual cycle.<sup>47</sup> From this point we seem to be entering into the realm of ritual time played out on the divining chart:

At the following occurrences of the East Well day, unfasten the talismans and always take them when you wash. When finished, return and refasten them. The next day, again, take them out according to this model. When all five washings have been completed, a period of 124 days will have elapsed. All the spirits will have arrived. You will have heard their voices or seen their shapes as on the charts. At dawn the next day worship them below the doorpost. The spirits will then speak with you. You must ask the Eight Archivists about seeking the methods of spiritual transcendence and long life. The archivists will enter the heavenly lodgings for you to examine the registers and tell you. If initially you lack a life record on the transcendent registers, and are far removed from transcendence, it is fitting that you cultivate and revere the Archivists, in order to garner wealth and extend your life by three to four hundred years.<sup>48</sup>

In the following pages I analyze the symbolism of the East Well constellation in the rite of summoning the Eight Archivists. I first examine the symbolism of East Well in Han dynasty sources. Next, I analyze the significance of timing the ritual of the Eight Archivists by reference to the East Well day. Third, I suggest that the obscure East Well Register exemplifies a little-known calendrical system, the *shuoxiu* 朔宿, in which the names of the twenty-eight constellations were used for the enumeration of days.

#### THE EAST WELL DIVINATION SYSTEM

In the following analysis of the ritual I show that the manipulation of time associated with the East Well is linked primarily to the tradition of calendrical divination practices related to the *shi* divining board. Moreover, I argue that whatever may have been the original intent of the system, it gains significance in the ritual as an emblem of the establishment of the Han dynasty.

<sup>46</sup> P2440, ll. 226–34; HY671, j. 2, pp. 2a3–2b1.

<sup>47</sup> See appendix 2 for a symbolic representation of the emplacement of the talismans and herbs in relation to East Well.

<sup>48</sup> P2440, ll. 234–43; HY671, j. 2, p. 2b.

The final preparatory stage of the ritual is reached when the *zhangju* plants are harvested and carved into human shape. This part of the ritual proceeds according to a precise timetable. On the fifth *yin* day after the vernal equinox the practitioner is to prepare an orchid infusion and wash. On the next day, the fifth *mao* day, he is to boil this infusion and place it between the markers of *yin* and *mao*. On the next day the plants are picked. On the following day, defined as the day of East Well, the actual rite of carving occurs and subsequent communication starts.

The day of East Well is a crucial date for the ritual in *Five Ascendant Talismans*. East Well, a constellation of eight stars in the southern Palace of the Vermilion Bird, is the twenty-second Lunar Lodge.<sup>49</sup> In calendrical terms it correlates to the second month of summer, in which falls the summer solstice. The timing of the ritual follows the passage of the sun among the twenty-eight lunar lodges. Depending on the actual day of the sexagesimal cycle on which the spring equinox falls, the fifth *yin* day after the vernal equinox would fall 51 to 60 days later, almost a month before the summer solstice. Within two days, we are told, the sun rises in East Well. This makes good astronomical sense. Although usually associated with the summer solstice, the East Well constellation actually covers a wide swath of the heavens. The sun enters it a month before the solstice in the median period of the fourth month.<sup>50</sup> In temporal terms, the constellation covers three fortnightly periods. What then is the significance of East Well within the divination ritual? The answer to our question is based on hints in the text. Following these I believe that a hitherto unknown divination system can be partially reconstructed. I will call it the “East Well system” and provide a historical and mythological rationale for it in the *Five Ascendant Talismans*.

#### *Early Astro-calendrical Associations*

According to the *Liji*, the East Well is correlated with the second month of summer. The entire season is associated with south and red. Its thearch is Yandi 炎帝, identified with Shennong 神農. The *Liji* text continues with more specific attributes for the time, which may help to elucidate the centrality of East Well in the divination process:

<sup>49</sup> In modern astronomical terms, East Well includes the stars Gemini:  $\mu$ ,  $\nu$ ,  $\gamma$ ,  $\xi^2$ ,  $\epsilon$ ,  $\zeta$ . See Edward H. Schafer, *Pacing the Void: Tang Approaches to the Stars* (Berkeley: U. of California P., 1977), p. 77.

<sup>50</sup> Kalinowski, “Les instruments astro-calendériques,” p. 337, table 8.



The emperor is to dwell in the southern center chamber of the Luminous Hall (Mingtang 明堂). At this time the emperor orders that the people be directed to perform sacrifices for the mountains, rivers and springs. Then a great winter sacrifice is held, and the emperor employs the full orchestra. Then he orders the localities to perform winter sacrifices to the local earth deities. All should be fulfilled by the people in order to ensure the ripening of the grain. The longest day falls in this month, Yin and Yang struggle, death and life separate. [At this time] a superior person should purify himself and practice abstinence, and dwell in concealment without movement. He should refrain from music and sex.<sup>51</sup>

According to this, the time of East Well is traditionally associated with a critical moment in the cosmic cycles, namely the time when the Yang principle reaches its apogee, and the Yin principle begins its ascent. This process leads to the decrease of Yang until its symbolic nadir at the winter solstice. Rituals are necessary to ensure the continuation of the cycle and of the harvest. The crisis in nature is reflected in the human realm as life and death are decided. Divination would be essential at this time when fates are decided and may be influenced by the proper ritual performance. The linkage made in the *Liji* between East Well, the solstice, and imperial ritual may have influenced the East Well divination system. There were, however, other sources whose impact on this symbolic complex were more immediate and more profound.

In the astronomical treatises of *Shiji*, *Hanshu*, and *Jinshu* the East Well asterism is said to be in charge of the world's water balance, reflecting its association with the Yin principle. The "Tianguan shu 天官書" section of *Shiji* succinctly says: "East Well handles the affairs of water. Its westernmost star is Yue 鉞, north of Yue is Northern River and south of it Southern River. These two rivers form the bridges between Heaven's Pillars 闕間爲關梁."<sup>52</sup> The commentary to this passage cites the weft text *Yuanming bao* 元命包: "The eight stars of East Well are in charge of the water balance 主水衡." The *Jinshu*, "Treatise on Astronomy," describes East Well thus:

[It] forms the southern gate of the heavens, through which the ecliptic passes. These stars also form the observation pavilion of the heavens and govern [all] affairs concerned with the water balance, showing how laws and decrees bring about justice and

<sup>51</sup> "Yueling" 月令 sect. of *Liji zhengyi* 禮記正義, in *Shisan jing zhushu (zhengli ben)* 十三經注疏(整理本); chief ed. Li Xueqin 李學勤 (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 2000), vol. 13, pp. 582, 586, 590.

<sup>52</sup> *Shiji* 史記 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1962) 27, p. 1302.

equality. When the ruler shows impartiality the stars of Well shine with brilliance and keep their proper array... The moon lodging in East Well forecasts wind and rain.<sup>53</sup>

East Well is thus traditionally viewed as responsible for the water balance, and by extension, to the proper maintenance of the legal order. This is summarized in the Tang-era *Kaiyuan zhanjing* 開元占經:

The eight stars of East Well govern the water balance. Well is the image of water as standardized. When standardized water is level, [human] inner nature is fixed, and not licentious. Hence, [East Well] governs the [water] balance. 東井八星主水衡。井者象法水，法水平定執性不淫，故主衡。<sup>54</sup>

The association of the East Well constellation with water is reflected in Han-era inscribed bricks. A good example is the inscribed brick on one side of a well found in Yanshi 偃師 (Henan province). The brick is inscribed: “East Well extinguishes fire 東井滅火.” The phrase is divided into two couplets arranged vertically around a male figure walking to the right, dressed in a short tunic and cap. He holds a flask or gourd in his left hand and carries a long pole topped with a pennant in his right hand. He is followed by a rooster.<sup>55</sup>



*Han Inscribed Brick: East Well Extinguishes Fire*

After Henan Handai huaxiang zhuan (cited n. 55).

<sup>53</sup> Ho Peng Yoke, *The Astronomical Chapters of the Chin Shu* (The Hague and Paris: Mouton, 1966), p. 103.

<sup>54</sup> *Tang Kaiyuan zhanjing* 唐開元占經, comp. Gautama Siddhārta (Jutan Xida 瞿曇悉達) (*SKQS zhenben*, *siji* edn.), vol. 6, j. 63, p. 2b.

<sup>55</sup> Zhou Dao 周到, Lü Pin 呂品, and Tang Wenxing 湯文興, comps., *Henan Handai huaxiang zhuan* 河南漢代畫像磚 (Shanghai: Shanghai remin meishu, 1985), illus. 127; for a color illustration and short discussion, without explanation of the inscription, see Jessica Rawson, ed., *Mysteries of Ancient China: New Discoveries from the Early Dynasties* (New York: G. Braziller, 1996), pp. 193–94.

While the symbolisms of the depicted figures might be unclear, the inscribed phrase seems to imply that the inscription is a protective device against fire. The apotropaic function is probably related to the association of East Well with the cosmic water-balance. Fire in this context may be an emblem of the Yang principle, which is to be extinguished by Yin, the East Well.<sup>56</sup> The association of East Well with water control is reflected in the association of the East Well with ritual bathing in the *Five Ascendant Talismans* and in later Daoist scriptures, which I discuss below.

### *Mytho-Historical Associations*

We should recall that in the ritual scheme, the adept, having hung the five talismans representing the five planets, awaits the day of East Well. This, I suggest, is a direct reference to the establishment of the Han dynasty that was portended by a conjunction of the five planets that occurred in the constellation of East Well.<sup>57</sup> In fact, the constructed space and time of the ritual in *Five Ascendant Talismans* may have been directly inspired by the idealized description of the establishment of the capital Changan by the first Han emperor, an event rooted in mythological and cosmological symbolism. This momentous event, as described by Ban Gu 班固 (32–92 AD) marks the start of a new cosmic era:

When it came time for the great Han to receive the Mandate  
and establish the capital,

Above, they perceived the Eastern Well's spiritual essence;

Below, they found the site in harmony with the River Chart's  
numinous signs.<sup>58</sup>

Ban Gu linked Liu Bang's 劉邦 (Gaozu 高祖; r. 202–195 BC) entry into Xianyang 咸陽, the establishment of Chang'an, and the celestial conjunction as simultaneous events. As the rhapsody tells it, the celestial portent was accompanied by a terrestrial one, locating an auspicious site "in harmony with the River Chart." The celestial portent, signifying the receipt of Heaven's Mandate, placed Han Gaozu on the same mythological scale as the initiators of the human universe – Zhuanxu 顓頊, Yao 堯, Yu 禹, and king Wu of Zhou 周武王.

<sup>56</sup> I wish to thank an anonymous reader of the manuscript for this suggestion.

<sup>57</sup> See appendix 2 for a diagrammatic representation of the ritual space of the ritual for summoning the Eight Archivists.

<sup>58</sup> Ban Gu, "Liang Du fu: Xijing fu" 兩都賦西京賦 ("Rhapsody of the Two Capitals: The Western Capital), in *Wenxuan* 文選, comp. Xiao Tong 蕭統 (501–531) (Shanghai: Shanghai guji, 1986), p. 6. The same text appears in Ban Gu's biog. in *Hou Han shu* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1965) 40, p. 1336. I follow the translation by David R. Knechtges, *Wen xuan or Selections of Refined Literature, Volume One: Rhapsodies on Metropolises and Capitals* (Princeton: Princeton U.P., 1982), p. 101.

The mythical River Chart, much referred to and discussed by Chinese scholars ever since the Han, is a diagram in which the numbers from 1 to 10 are arranged in pairs of even and odd numbers to represent the production cycle of the Five Phases. The mythical emperor Fu Xi is supposed to have been inspired by the chart to draw the Eight Trigrams in the arrangement known as Anterior Heaven. In this arrangement, the trigrams express the potentiality of the universe, eternal bliss and continual life.<sup>59</sup> Ban's rhapsody continues, relating this portentous moment to the establishment of the capital Chang'an. Built on a cosmological plan, with twelve gates in the surrounding wall and a Luminous Hall in the center, the city becomes the cosmic center and the model for the altar of the ritual in the *Five Ascendant Talismans*.

The rise of the Han is clearly associated with a five-planet conjunction in East Well. *Shiji* does not provide a precise date but only a general statement that "at the rise of Han, the five planets were gathered in East Well."<sup>60</sup> In Ban Gu's *Hanshu* this occurrence is clearly related to Liu Bang's entry into Xianyang: "In the tenth month of the Inaugural year, the five planets were gathered at East Well."<sup>61</sup> According to this, the conjunction occurred at some time between November 14 and December 12, 207 BC. During this time, however, the planets were not in conjunction. This was noted early on by Gao Yun 高允 (390–487).<sup>62</sup> The conjunction, though, was not imaginary, but had occurred in May of 205.<sup>63</sup> We are dealing with mytho-historical and cosmological factors whose veracity may be greater, and are certainly more important, than such quibbles.

An anecdote in *Shiji* demonstrates the importance of the conjunction in the complex machinations of the period. Though the details may not be true, they do illustrate the mindset and possible motivations of contemporaries. Early in 206 BC, Xiang Yu 項羽 (232–202 BC) enfeoffed the various lords and generals who had supported him; the coming conflict with Liu Bang was clearly looming. Zhang'er 張耳 (d. 203 BC) and Chen Yu 陳餘 (d. 204 BC) had been respectively prime minister and

<sup>59</sup> Michael Saso, *Taoism and the Rite of Cosmic Renewal* (Pullman: Washington State U.P., 1972), pp. 69–70; see also Richard J. Smith, *Fortune-tellers and Philosophers: Divination in Traditional Chinese Society* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1991), pp. 59–60.

<sup>60</sup> *Shiji* 27, p. 1348.

<sup>61</sup> *Hanshu* 漢書 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1962) 1, p. 22.

<sup>62</sup> *Weishu* 魏書 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1974) 48, pp. 1068, cited in Huang Yi-long's portion of the "Forum" published in *EC* 15 (1990), p. 101.

<sup>63</sup> Homer Dubs considers the middle of May to be the correct date; see "The Conjunction of May 205 B.C.," *JAO* 55 (1935), p. 311. Huang Yi-long deduces May 29; Huang, in "Forum," p. 100 (table 3), p. 101.

commander of the by then defunct state of Zhao. Zhang'er who had followed Xiang Yu into the pass was enthroned as king of Changshan, while Chen Yu, who did not, was appointed as duke of Nanpi:

Chen Yu was increasingly furious, saying: "Zhang'er and I were of equal merit, yet now Zhang'er is king and I am just a duke. This Xiang Yu is unfair." It was then that Tian Rong 田榮 (d. 205 BC), king of Qi 齊, rebelled against Chu, so Chen Yu sent Xia Yue 夏說 (d. 205 BC) to persuade Tian Rong [to join forces with him]. He said: "Xiang Yu is unfair as administrator of the world. He has enthroned his generals as kings over good lands while removing the former kings to rule over poor lands. The king of Zhao is now dwelling in Dai 代. I wish to borrow your troops, and will request that Nan Pi 南皮 serve as shield."<sup>64</sup> Tian Rong, wishing to establish a pact with Zhao against Chu, dispatched troops to follow Chen Yu. Chen Yu then raised the troops of his three counties and attacked Zhang'er, king of Chang Shan 常山. Zhang'er ran in defeat and thinking the lords had no one to turn to, said: 'The King of Han and I have a long relationship but Xiang Yu has power and has appointed me. I wish to go to Chu.' Master Gan 甘公 comments: 'When the king of Han entered the pass the five stars were assembled in East Well. East Well is the domain of Qin. The first to reach it would be ruler. Although Chu was powerful, inevitably it was to belong to Han.' That is why Zhang'er went to Han.<sup>65</sup>

The identity of Master Gan is problematic,<sup>66</sup> and his comment may be an anachronistic rationalization of Zhang'er's action. Nevertheless, the cosmological explanation reveals the import of this event. The various states of China were each mapped to a correlated asterism,<sup>67</sup> and events in either the terrestrial or celestial realm were reflected in the corresponding domain. Hence, the conjunction in East Well symbolized the fall of Qin and the rise of Han. A second explanation is found in the astronomical treatise of the *Shiji*:

<sup>64</sup> Cf. *Shiji* 7, p. 321; William H. Nienhauser, Jr., ed., *The Grand Scribe's Records* (Bloomington: Indiana U.P., 1994), p. 197.

<sup>65</sup> *Shiji* 89, p. 2581.

<sup>66</sup> Master Gan 甘公 may be the mysterious Gan De 甘德 who lived at the final period of the Warring States, possibly into the beginning of the Han. He is said to have written eight volumes of astrological works. Although there are fragmentary citations and references to his work, these are mostly anachronistic. See Sun Xiaochun and Jacob Kistemaker, *Constellating Stars and Society: The Chinese Sky during the Han* (Brill: Leiden, 1997), pp. 75–76. Donald Harper notes that according to recent studies of astronomical records attributed to Gan De, he would have been active between 317 and 305 BC, certainly too early to be the one mentioned here; Harper, "Warring States Natural Philosophy," p. 829.

<sup>67</sup> Schafer, *Pacing the Void*, p. 76.

When a conjunction of the five planets occurs, it allows for ease of movement. The virtuous will receive grace. Great men will be established who will conquer the four directions and their descendants will flourish; those without virtue, will receive calamities and death. When the five planets are all great, their affairs are great too; when they are all small, their affairs are small too.<sup>68</sup>

The passage in *Shiji* that precedes the above citation details the various possible combinations of planetary conjunction, according to correlations with the Five Phases. The final line summarizes all these combinations, which may be auspicious or inauspicious, depending on the greatness, in other words, the brightness, of the various planets in the conjunction. A great conjunction would bring about a drastic change – the moral quality of the age will be renewed, and will depend on personal virtue.

*Hanshu* reports a legend that recounts the various celestial anomalies that portended the fall of former dynasties, and the rise of the Han:

Formerly, Confucius had told Duke Ai of Lu of both Jie of Xia and Zhou of Yin, who had violently abused all under heaven. Therefore, the calendar was disrupted, the Assistant Conductors had lost their bearing 攝提失方, and the months were disordered 孟陬無紀. These anomalies were all due to the changing of the surnames [that is, dynastic change] 易姓之變. During the final years of the First Emperor of Qin and [during the reign] of the Second, the sun and moon were eclipsed, the mountain peaks were destroyed, Mercury appeared in the middle of the four seasons, and Venus crisscrossed the sky. There were no clouds yet it thundered; meteorites flashed through the night as arrows. Mars assailed the moon, disastrous fires burnt the palaces, wild beasts cavorted in the courtyards and the gates of the capital collapsed. A giant was seen in Lin Tao 臨洮, and there was a rockslide in Dong Jun 東郡. A comet obscured Great Horn.<sup>69</sup> If we observe Confucius's words and examine the anomalies during Qin's acts of violence, the fidelity of Heaven's Mandate is awe-inspiring. At Xiang Ji's defeat too, a comet assailed Great Horn. When Han entered Qin, the five planets were in conjunction in East Well having received the symbol of all under heaven.<sup>70</sup>

<sup>68</sup> *Shiji* 27, p. 1321.

<sup>69</sup> Ying Shao's commentary states that Great Horn was the seat of the celestial lord. If a comet assailed Great Horn, then Great Horn would submit and be hidden.

<sup>70</sup> *Hanshu* 36, p. 1964.

An apocryphal story tells of Confucius' foreknowledge of the five-planet conjunction in East Well that pointed to the new Han. This syncretic exemplar of the Han weft texts illustrates well the intellectual mindset in which the early Daoists were operating:

In the fourteenth year of Duke Ai of Lu 魯哀公, Confucius, while sleeping between three catalpa trees, dreamt that in Feng at the state of Pei there was fiery vapor rising. He then summoned Yan Hui 顏回 (Yuan 淵) and Zi Xia 子夏 to come and watch. They rode a carriage to Fan Shi Jie 范氏街 (unknown) in the northwest of Chu. There they saw a cowherd boy who had caught a unicorn and wounded it in its front left leg. He had covered it with firewood. Confucius asked: "Boy, what are you known by?" The boy replied: "My surname is Red Pine, my name is Ziqiao and my style name is Shouji [received the guidelines]." Confucius asked: "What have you seen?" The boy replied: "I saw an animal, like a goat with a horn on its head with flesh at its tip." Confucius said: "Below heaven now there is a ruler, that is the Fiery Liu. Chen and Xiang shall be its aides; the five planets will enter Well, following Jupiter." The boy then took the firewood off the unicorn and showed Confucius. Confucius rushed towards it. The unicorn covered its ears and vomited three scrolls. The charts were three-inches wide and eight-inches long; each had twenty-four characters. Its words were: "Liu should rise and the Zhou will descend. When the fiery pneuma arises the fire brightness will rise up. The Dark Hill (Confucius) will direct its mandate; the emperor will be *mao jin* 卯金."<sup>71</sup>

Conjunctions of the five planets were noted for their cosmological significance even before the formalization of the political aspects of the Five-Phase ideology. Pankenier provides evidence for the veracity of the historical records of conjunctions marking the rise of the Xia, Shang, and Zhou dynasties. He even speculates that king Wen of the Zhou initiated his actions against the Shang following the planetary conjunction of 1059 BC.<sup>72</sup> Pankenier provides evidence to show that

<sup>71</sup> At least three versions are preserved among the fragments of the Han weft-texts: "Xiaojing yuanshenqi" 孝經援神契 ("Extended Mystical Tally of the Classic of Filiality"); "Xiaojing youqi" 孝經右契 ("Right Tally of the Classic of Filial Piety"), in Yasui Kozan 安居香山 and Nakamura Shōhachi 中村璋八, comps., *Isho shūsei* 緯書集成 (Tokyo: Kangi bunka kenkyūkai, 1960–63) 5, p. 58.1, p. 63.4, and p. 63.13; cited without attribution in Gan Bao 干寶 (comp. 335–349) *Soushenji* 搜神記 (Taipei: Liren shuju, 1982), j. 8, no. 231; see Kenneth J. DeWoskin and J. I. Crump, Jr., *In Search of the Supernatural: The Written Record* (Stanford: Stanford U.P., 1996), p. 107; also cited in *Songshu* 宋書, "Furuizhi" 符瑞志 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1974) 27, p. 766.

<sup>72</sup> David Pankenier, "The Cosmo-political Background of Heaven's Mandate," *EC* 20 (1995), p. 130.



the main failure of the last rulers of the fallen dynasty was their inability to maintain the proper time:

It is not surprising that a mismanagement of religious time caused by a failure to conform with the images displayed in the heavens should figure prominently among the shortcomings of deposed dynasties, though not as mere portents, as traditional interpretations of accounts like those in *Mozzi* would suggest, but conceivably as precipitating causes.<sup>73</sup>

I will not discuss here whether the cosmological signs at the final years of the Qin influenced the actions of contemporaries like Zhang'er, as Master Gan claims, or as the apocryphal references to Confucius imply. Human motivation is much too difficult to presume, but clearly the resonance between the political and celestial realms led to a general understanding that a critical realignment of the universe was due.

Similarly, we cannot decide whether the political collapse of the Eastern Han in the late second century AD triggered a cosmological crisis or whether the reverse, a rupture in the cosmological paradigm, led to a general expectation for dynastic change. But we can be certain that the formative period of Daoism was permeated by feelings that the synchronicity of the cycles of time was once again disordered and that order should be reestablished.

Though the historicity of the ancient conjunctions is debatable,<sup>74</sup> their mythological value is of prime importance. As the five planets are correlated with the Five Phases, their conjunction was more than simply auspicious, it was perceived as a start of a new cosmic cycle. The significance of the East Well conjunction is specifically linked to Han-dynasty history and not simply to a general notion of cosmic cycles. By the symbolism of the East Well divination ritual, the Daoists linked themselves to a core legitimating symbol of the Han imperial claim.<sup>75</sup> In the ritual scheme of the *Five Ascendant Talismans*, 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

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., p. 158.

<sup>74</sup> See the "Forum" in *EC* 15 (1990), esp. Huang Yi-long (pp. 97–112) and David Panke-nier (pp. 117–32).

<sup>75</sup> The symbolic links between early Daoism and Han imperial symbols and practices have already been noted by Anna Seidel, "Imperial Treasures and Taoist Sacraments: Taoist Roots in The Apocrypha," in Strickmann, ed., *Taoist and Tantric Studies* 2, pp. 291–371.

cosmic beginning. The practitioner himself becomes Han Gaozu, and by extension king Wen of Zhou, Yu, Yao and Zhuanxu.

DIVINATION AND RITUAL:  
SYMBOLIC VALUES OF THE EAST WELL

The East Well has four distinct symbolic functions in the *Five Ascendant Talismans*. The first is its use as the temporal marker in the Eight-Archivists summoning ritual translated and examined above.<sup>76</sup> The second symbolic function, to be discussed below, is linked to the temporal cycles indicated in the ritual instructions. The third function of East Well is that found in the transmission ritual of the Lingbao talismans, discussed in the next section, in which it serves as a temporal marker for bathing. Finally, the fourth symbolic function of East Well is in the systematized list of twenty-four charts that appears at the end of the scripture.

I argued, above, that in the ritual for summoning the Eight Archivists the temporal function of East Well is to form an emblem for the concatenation of auspices signifying the Han dynasty's receipt of Heaven's Mandate. This symbolic function represents a specific adaptation of the five-planet conjunction in East Well to the ritual needs of the new Lingbao ideology.

Futhermore, we should note that the ritual includes a more complex function of East Well. According to the ritual instructions the talismans are to be laid out on an East Well day, with the next day dedicated for purification. This procedure is repeated five times, whenever the day of East Well is reached again, for a total of 124 days.<sup>77</sup> In actual astronomical terms, East Well day occurs only once a year. I therefore suggest that the procedure in this passage is not timed by events in the heavens but on a cyclical device, such as the *shi* divining boards that whose outer rims were marked with the twenty-four solar nodes.<sup>78</sup> If we delete the days of purification we are left with 120 days, which equal five cycles of twenty-four days in which the East Well day recurs. Thus, rather than a year between occurrences of the East Well day, the cycle is only twenty-four days long. This suggests that after the first actual occurrence, "East Well day" does not refer to the actual summer solstice, but to a symbolic "summer solstice" on the *shi* divining board. In this ritual and divinatory system the twenty-four fortnightly periods

<sup>76</sup> See my translation of it in the sect. "Ritual for Summoning the Eight Archivists."

<sup>77</sup> P2440, l. 234-6; HY671, j. 2, p. 2b.

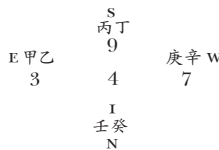
<sup>78</sup> See n. 10, above, for studies of divining boards.

are symbolized in a consecutive cycle of days marked by the emblems on the divining board. These twenty-four temporal nodes became a central motif in the symbolic association of the East Well.

The third symbolic function of East Well in the *Five Ascendant Talismans* is its place in the ritual of transmission of the scripture and talismans found in the final section of the scripture. The function of East Well in this rite reinforces the correlation of East Well to the twenty-four annual divisions that we noticed in the rite of the Eight Archivists. It is important in the development of the scheme of the twenty-four Lingbao charts. The correlation with the twenty-four energy nodes is explicitly stated in the transmission ritual of the *Five Ascendant Talismans*: “The twenty-four days [symbolized by the twenty-four incense burners] respond to the twenty-four celestial pneumas.”<sup>79</sup> These twenty-four celestial pneumas, or energy nodes, are twenty-four fortnightly periods into which the tropical year of 360 days was divided. This correlative system of twenty-four energy nodes is at the base of the *Five Ascendant Talismans* ritual pattern, and was of prime importance for the Daoists as it structured both the Daoist religious year and the geographical layout of the Celestial Masters parishes.<sup>80</sup>

The instructions of the transmission ritual specify that on an East Well day one is to set out incense burners and then bathe. Sitting in the center and facing south, the practitioner is to arrange incense burners in the following order:

When heaven is at a day of East Well, wash, enter the room, and following the numbers of the five directions, burn incense: three at the left, seven at the right, nine in front and one behind, four at the center.<sup>81</sup>



<sup>79</sup> HY671, j. 2, p. 10b; P2440, l. 395.

<sup>80</sup> For the 24 parishes of the Celestial Masters, see Franciscus Verellen, “The Twenty-four Dioceses and Zhang Daoling: The Spatio-liturgical Organization of Early Heavenly Master Taoism,” in Phyllis Granoff and Koichi Shinohara, eds., *Pilgrims, Patrons, and Place: Localizing Sanctity in Asian Religions* (Vancouver: U.B.C. Press, 2003), pp. 15–67; Wang Chunwu 王純五, *Tianshidao ershi si si zhi kao* 天師道二十四死四治考 (Chengdu: Sichuan daxue chubanshe, 1996). For the importance of the number 24 in Daoist altar emplacements and ritual, see John Lagerwey, *Taoist Ritual in Chinese Society and History* (New York: Macmillan, 1987), esp. pp. 26, 103–4, 120–21; Kristofer Schipper and Wang Hsiu-wei, “Progressive and Regressive Time Cycles in Taoist Ritual,” in J. T. Fraser et al., *Time, Science, and Society in China and the West* (Amherst: U. Massachusetts P., 1986), p. 189. In these later ritual schemata, the 24 nodes are marked in the outer altar, which represents the schema’s devaluation within the Daoist cosmology.

<sup>81</sup> HY671, j. 2, p. 10b1; P2440, l. 394.

The numerical values given to the directions in this altar arrangement differ from the standard Daoist altar arrangements.<sup>82</sup> The numbers in the four directions are the same as those in the magic square of the Nine Palaces. However, instead of the more standard correlation of the center with five, in this arrangement the center is correlated with the four, thus attaining a total value of twenty-four.

The yearly cycle, however, forms a unity. This is expressed in the next lines, which describe, from the perspective of the Dao, the result of properly setting up the rite:

I am at the center. Below the five planets I watch the five dippers and five Marchmounts. These spirit numina will arrive together at the Thearchical thrones. The five Thearchs will bestow talismans. Those who receive [the talismans] will have long life.

The adept is now unified with the Dao itself, as he observes the basic five-fold correlations of the universe unfold below him. We should note that in this transmission rite East Well day serves to date the ritual that includes the bathing that must precede the transmission of the Lingbao talismans. This ritual bathing harks back to the symbolism of East Well as controller of the cosmic water-balance. This symbolic function is emphasized in the next section.

### *The East Well Register* 東井識

The third function of the East Well is to determine times for ritual bathing. These “East Well days” are calculated by reference to an East Well Register. This may in fact be the earliest layer in the text. Purportedly instructions from the Heavenly Elder to the Yellow Thearch, the rite described in this passage is to be a model for the transmission rite of the *Five Ascendant Talismans* scripture:

The Yellow Thearch says: The heavenly elder, realizing I did not yet know of the heavenly pneumas, instructed me in the *Scripture of the Lingbao Five Ascendant Talismans*. He asked that I consult the *East Well Register* for a pure auspicious day and auspicious time to bathe and abstain in order to receive the Lingbao talismans.<sup>83</sup>

The text provides the following set of East Well days according to the East Well Register:

<sup>82</sup> See Schipper and Wang, “Progressive and Regressive.” For the numerical associations of the Middle and Inner Altars, see Bokenkamp, *Early Taoist Scriptures*, p. 19, table 2.

<sup>83</sup> P2440, l. 446; HY671, j. 2, p. 13a.

MONTH	1	2	3	4	5	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
DAY	10	8	6	4	1	29	27	25	22	20	18	15	13

This register records the passages of the moon through the East Well asterism.<sup>84</sup> The East Well register is related to Han and Six Dynasties *shi* divination boards of the *liuren* 六壬 system. Such boards correlated the twelve annual lunations with both the solar months and with the twenty-eight asterisms. This correlative system provided an associative base for number of calendrical formulations. One was a method of counting the days of each lunation by the names of the 28 asterisms. This system was in fact a part of the hemerological tradition already current in the late Warring States, as evidenced by the almanacs found at Shuihudi 睡虎地. As elucidated by Marc Kalinowski, this system, called *shuoxiu* 朔宿, aligned the first day of each lunation with a specific asterism, and the days were named sequentially according to the order of the lodges.<sup>85</sup> The *Five Ascendant Talismans* system accords with the *Liuren* system developed in the Han. The earliest extant texts related to this system, such as the *Huangdi Longshou jing* 黃帝龍首經 are preserved in the *Daozang*.<sup>86</sup> Based on the *Longshou jing* we can construct the following table to extrapolate the days of East Well in each month.<sup>87</sup>

MONTH	1	2	3	4	5	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1 <sup>st</sup> DAY	室	奎	胃	畢	井	井	柳	張	角	氐	心	斗	女
EAST WELL DAY	10	8	6	4	1	29	27	25	22	20	18	15	13

The table in the *Five Ascendant Talismans* agrees with the *liuren* system of the *Longshoujing*. Clearly, the *Five Ascendant Talismans* adapted the system tracking the moon through the twenty-eight asterisms to specifically signal the passage through East Well. The text defines these lunar passages as “celestial pneuma” (*tianqi* 天氣), which here seems not to refer to the fortnightly divisions, but to auspicious days:

<sup>84</sup> See appendix 2A.

<sup>85</sup> Marc Kalinowski, “The Use of the Twenty-Eight Xiu as a Day-Count in Early China,” *Chinese Science* 13 (1996), p. 55–81.

<sup>86</sup> *HY* 283; see Kalinowski, “The Use of the Twenty-Eight Xiu,” p. 69; idem, “Les instruments astro-calendériques,” pp. 396–402, for an introduction to this and related texts.

<sup>87</sup> *HY* 283, j. 1, pp. 2b9–3b2. Note that as the first day of the fifth is an East Well day, there is a second east well in the fifth month.

When the moon lodges at East Well, you are to merge incense with the spirit transcendents. On this day bathe and the spirits will descend. Bathing in orchid infusion indicates that a Daoist wishes to communicate with spiritual beings. It is said that common people should not observe this bathing.

The reference to the Five Lingbao talismans in the statement attributed to the Yellow Thearch, quoted just before this passage, may be alluding to the five-planet conjunction, and seems to be an addition to an earlier Register of the East Well. While the act of ritual bathing partakes of East Well's astrological association as "water governor," the significance in the passage translated here is extended to ritual purity, emblematic of preparation for receiving spiritual instruction. This relationship is emphasized further in the fourth association of East Well in the *Five Ascendant Talismans*, in the scheme of the Twenty-four Charts of Lingbao.

#### THE TWENTY-FOUR LINGBAO CHARTS

The fourth symbolic function of East Well is as the title of the first of twenty-four Lingbao charts introduced in the final pages of the scripture. This list follows the various ritual instructions discussed above, and is clearly presented as a distinct practice. The *Five Ascendant Talismans* is the earliest scripture to introduce the ritual scheme of the twenty-four Lingbao charts. They become the focus of another of the original Lingbao scriptures, *The Scripture of Twenty-four Life [bestowing?]-Charts of the Numinous Treasure from the Cavern of Profundity* (*Dongxuan Lingbao ershisi shengtu jing* 洞玄靈寶二十四生圖經).<sup>88</sup>

Most, if not all of these charts are mentioned in *Baopuzi*, but unlike the schematic lists in the Lingbao texts, Ge Hong does not refer to the charts in a set order and they are scattered among his list of charts and talismans.<sup>89</sup> While Ge Hong also mentioned a "Scripture of Twenty-four Life [bestowing charts?]" 二十四生經 there is no evidence linking it and the various charts and talismans associated with the Twenty-four Charts.<sup>90</sup> It seems, therefore, that the concept of the Twenty-four Charts was an innovation by Ge Chaofu, who wished to collate and systematize the practices he found most important in his family's tradition into a unified, coherent, and hierarchical ritual order.

<sup>88</sup> HY1396.

<sup>89</sup> See appendix 4; Bokenkamp, "Sources," pp. 459–60.

<sup>90</sup> HY1177, j. 19, p. 3b10; Wang, *Baopuzi*, p. 333; Ware, *Alchemy*, p. 382.

In the systematized Lingbao order, the first chart is that of East Well. The second is the well-known Chart of the Perfected Forms of the Five Marchmounts (*Wuyue zhenxing tu* 五嶽真形圖). The third and fourth charts, respectively, are the Chart of the Eight Archivists and the Chart of the Six-*jia*. The presentation of the rituals in the *Five Ascendant Talismans* follows this sequence, possibly presaging the order of the charts. The text proceeds from dating the ritual by the East Well to visualizing and communicating with the Eight Archivists, and finally moves to a second ritual dealing with the Six *Jia*. Whether this sequential order of the charts is part of the systematization process in the Lingbao scheme, or part of an older divination tradition, has yet to be studied.

Six *Jia* refers to the stem-branch combinations resulting when the sexagesimal cycle is arranged in six rows of ten (*xun* 旬) following the sequence of the heavenly stems. Each row begins with a combination of the initial *jia* stem with a paired earth branch. In this case, too, the ritual is for summoning spirits, those of the Six *Jia*. These form the basis for a divination rite which, as in the ritual summoning of the Eight Archivists, also involves a plant.<sup>91</sup> Here the role of the plant seems not to be a function of hallucinogenic effect but rather of its shape, which recalls the form of the early divining boards: the dipper at the center, surrounded by chronogram markers. The description of the “Six *Jia* father and mother” plant affirms this: “consider the canopy 宇 as the Bowl-and-Handle 魁剛 that governs the Six *Jia* father and mother.”<sup>92</sup> Bowl and Handle are the two parts of the Dipper, and the noun-compound is a synecdoche for the larger complex.<sup>93</sup> The Six *Jia* rite, too, is an amalgam of astronomical and herbal divination, with the Dipper as a major symbol.

The list of Lingbao charts reveals more links to older divinatory systems that were dropped, or reformulated, as visualization and meditation replaced divination as a vehicle for communication. The names of the charts reveal their association with systems linked with the *shi* divining board. One well-known method is the “Passage of *Taiyi* through the Nine Palaces” (*Taiyi jiugong* 太一九宮). This system is preserved, at least by name, in the Lingbao charts: the fifth chart is the *Chart of the Nine Palaces of the Purple Chamber*, and the twenty-second is the *Chart of Grand Unity* (*Taiyi tu* 太一圖).

<sup>91</sup> P2440, ll. 274–296; HY671, j. 2, pp. 4b–5b.

<sup>92</sup> P2440, l. 287; HY671, j. 2, p. 5a5.

<sup>93</sup> *Array of the Five Talismans* describes the rotation of the smaller sprouts around the central sprout during the day; HY388, j. 2, p. 10a4.



Included in the list are also practices related to other traditions of practice, such as the *Chart for Stretching and Guiding* (*Daoyin tu* 導引圖), traceable to pre-Han hygienic practices,<sup>94</sup> and the *Chart for Opening Mountains and Gathering Herbs* (*Kaishan zhiyao tu* 開山芝藥圖), which is obviously related to Ge Hong's herbal tradition.

The list of charts is presented as a unified system correlated with the annual twenty-four pneumas. Though the precise relationship between the various charts remains unclear, it seems that they are conceived of as a hierarchy of knowledge that one was to acquire after being initiated with the five Lingbao talismans:

If you already have the Lingbao talismans, you must get the Lingbao charts. There are twenty-four charts, which are heaven's perfect pneumas, the name of my methods, and the true methods of the great Dao.<sup>95</sup>

In this hierarchized scheme, East Well is associated with bathing and purification, as we have seen in all three rituals described above. It is also introduced as the gateway in one's search for transcendent knowledge, which will be gradually revealed as one is initiated into the secrets of the remaining charts:

If you wish to seek the methods of the Dao, first purify and expel impurities, then you should get the Chart of East Well.<sup>96</sup>

This sentence, which is the opening line in the systematized list of twenty-four Lingbao charts, partakes of much of the procedural complexity of the various rites associated with East Well. Although the list does not include an explicit reference to the five-planet conjunction, its arrangement, which follows the ritual order described in the text, suggests that bathing and purification in an initiatory context may allude to the East Well's association as an emblem of the establishment of the Han.

The later *Scripture of the Twenty-four Living Charts* associates the charts with a far more complex cosmology. The charts are now accompanied by short poems that illustrate the basic symbolism of each in the system. However, in this system, the associations of the East Well Chart, both in its title, *East Well Chart for the Bathing of the Perfected* (*Zhen-*

<sup>94</sup> Recent finds have shown that *daoyin* was a known technique during the late-Warring States period. A chart with stretching figures was discovered in Mawangdui and given the title *Daoyintu* by researchers; and a bamboo strip manuscript was titled *Yinshu* 引書 (mid-2d c. BC; discovered at Zhangjiashan 張家山, Hubei); see Harper, "Warring States Natural Philosophy," pp. 876, 881.

<sup>95</sup> P2440, l. 421; HY671, j. 2, p. 11b6.

<sup>96</sup> P2440, l. 422; HY671, j. 2, p. 11b9.

*ren muyu dongjingtū* 真人沐浴東井圖), and accompanying poem, seem to return to the basic astrological significance of governor of the water balance and its function of symbolizing purification.<sup>97</sup>

The ritual associations of East Well with the five talismans and Eight Archivists are no longer apparent, and there is no allusion to the planetary conjunction granting the Mandate to the Han. This may well be because this scripture deals with an incomparably larger time frame. The charts now described as emanating from the Cavern of Void 空洞 were revealed by the Primordial Heavenly Worthy (Yuanshi tianzun 元始天尊) at the beginning of human time, when the Fiery Brilliance 赤明 eon initiated its radiance.<sup>98</sup> Presumably, the symbolism of the Han dynasty was no longer required for the reordering of the universe that this scripture envisions.

## CONCLUSION

The ritual of Summoning the Eight Archivists, which incorporated the symbolism of the East Well, demonstrates the synthesizing process by which the Lingbao scriptural and ritual tradition was formed. It further points to the competition of traditions in early Daoism. The Eight Archivists appears to have been a popular divination ritual. Its popularity is attested by the ambivalent attitude towards it by the Celestial Masters. On the one hand, they circulated injunctions against it, and on the other hand, attempted to incorporate it, as evidenced in the *Chart of the Saintly Writ*. Known to Ge Hong and part of his family tradition, the ritual appears in the *Five Ascendant Talismans* in a transformed state, tailored to fit the new theoretical basis developed in the Lingbao revelations.

As we saw, while some early Daoist texts proscribed divination practices, the *Five Ascendant Talismans*, the *Chart of the Saintly Writ*, and related texts incorporated the symbolic systems and techniques of these prohibited practices into new ritual syntheses. Some scholars have suggested that the reason Daoists both proscribed and assimilated diverse forms of mantic arts may have been economic competition, a weakening and succumbing to popular practices or a search for inclusivity. These interpretations are insufficient and do not take account of the

<sup>97</sup> *HY*1396, p. 4a7.

<sup>98</sup> *HY*1396, pp. 1a1, 1b9. *Chiming* eon is the third cosmic era, in which the primal and inaugural pneumas appeared and heaven and earth divided; see Bokenkamp, *Scriptures*: 381. See *HY*457, pp. 2a ff; *HY*23, pp. 11b ff. *HY*87 j. 2, p. 7a. Peter Nickerson, "Shamans, Demons, Diviners and Taoists" *Taoist Resources* 5.1 (1994), p. 65.

various and different ways in which Daoists of various lineages have dealt with distinct systems.

Peter Nickerson's interpretation of this process is much more subtle and nuanced. On the one hand, he sees it as part of the bureaucratization of popular religion by the Daoists, and on the other, as reflecting the moral-ethical vision of the Daoists: "Nothing undercut the Taoists' entire *raison d'être* more directly than the use of divination and ritual to promote the private, competitive interests of individuals. Such acts stood in direct opposition to the Taoists' championing of the bureaucratic and, hence, their insistence on the imputation of disease to one's long list of sins in the Celestial Bureaux."<sup>99</sup> Nickerson suggests that as long as divination techniques were subordinate to the Daoists methods they could be accommodated within the practices Daoists had access to.

A recent study by Lai Chi-tim 黎志添 sees the Daoists' rejection of popular practices as theological, entailing three aspects. First, the unity and formlessness of the Dao transcended all popular deities. Secondly, moral and ethical precepts were intended to transcend the taboos related to demons and ghosts terrorizing the populace. Thirdly, the bureaucratic petitioning ritual of the Daoists was to replace popular sacrifices.<sup>100</sup>

While useful, I find these interpretations insufficient in explaining the appropriation and adaptation of complex symbolic systems such as we find among the twenty-four charts. The East Well Chart, as we have seen, partakes of two distinct symbolic meanings: the traditional astrological associations and, when combined with the Five Talismans and Eight Archivists, as an emblem of the Mandate of the Han. As shown above, the East Well Chart referred to a manipulative process by which the practitioner speeds up the natural cycles of time, giving him control over nature. Moreover, if we are correct in relating the divination to Liu Bang's apotheosis, then the symbolism becomes that of cosmic cycles. Each divination ritual recreates the ultimate conjunction, and hence a new cosmic beginning. It is at this point that we notice that Daoist ritual is primarily a manipulation of time – and that the concept of "sacred time" is an insufficient analytical tool to explicate the distinct ways of time manipulation.

<sup>99</sup> Nickerson, "Shamans, Demons," p. 65.

<sup>100</sup> Lai Chi-tim, "Liuchao tianshi daojiang yu minjian zongjiao jisi" 六朝天師道教與民間宗教祭祀, in *Daojiao yu minjian zongjiao yanjiu lunji* 道教與民間宗教研究論集 (Taipei: Xuefeng wenhua shiye, 1999), pp. 11–39.

Time manipulation in Daoist ritual has received very limited attention. Nathan Sivin has suggested that Chinese alchemy, both internal and external, should be interpreted as escalating time frames. The alchemical procedure was a method for accelerating the natural processes of nature, which inevitably led to purification and refinement.<sup>101</sup>

Fabrizio Pregadio, in his study of the *Zhouyi cantongqi* 周易參同契, builds on Sivin's insights and demonstrates how the symbolic system within the text serves to bring the adept to realize that the transformations and manifestations of the mundane world are but an aspect of the timeless Dao. Therefore, the same set of emblems is used to represent both the undifferentiated unity and the multiplicity of the universe, "[W]hatever practice they [the Daoists] follow, they achieve their work by reproducing the pattern of time in order to transcend it and attain timelessness, or immortality."<sup>102</sup>

More pertinent is Schipper's and Wang's study of progressive and regressive time cycles in Daoist ritual; it shows that the construction and oblation of the ritual space is a reenactment of the cosmogonic procedure culminating in its reversion to original unity. They stress the fact that the various symbolic devices used in setting up the altar are all representations of time cycles, nested within each other. Incorporated into the ritual altars are the various cosmological devices. The altars are divided into three levels, the outer altar demarcated by twenty-four markers representing the twenty-four pneumas. Twenty-eight lamps representing the asterisms mark the next level. The Middle Altar is formed of a square with the eight hexagrams enclosing the twelve earth-branches. The hexagrams are arranged in the Latter Heaven form and assimilated into a mathematical magic square, known as the Nine Palaces, or the Luoshu magic square. The Inner Altar is marked by the Five Perfect Writs, which are descended from the Five Lingbao Talismans. The numerical values of these writs correspond to the values in the *nayin* 納音 device, which assimilates the five tones and five directions and is perceived as the beginning of time in the manifested universe. The installment of these Writs reenacts the initial stage of cosmogony and the original revelation of the Dao.

The entry into the Inner Altar is by a combination of two ancient techniques – the Pace of Yu 禹步 and the *dunjia* 遁甲 system. This enig-

<sup>101</sup> Nathan Sivin, "Chinese Alchemy and the Manipulation of Time" *Isis* 67 (1976), p. 513–26; an expanded version published in Joseph Needham, *Science and Civilisation in China* (University of Cambridge: Cambridge, 1980), 5.4, pp. 210–323.

<sup>102</sup> Fabrizio Pregadio, "The Representation of Time in the Zhouyi Cantongqi," *CEA* 8 (1995), pp. 155–73.

matic and complex mantic technique relied on the missing combinations in the stem-branch sexagesimal list to effect an exit from “real” time and space. Schipper suggests that “Chinese religion conceived of two kinds of time, inner and outer, and that it devised theories of the calendar that tried to establish how one could enter from one into another.”<sup>103</sup> This differentiation is a key concept in their analysis. The outer represents the universe as is, modeled on the cosmogonic process. The inner, perceived as a regression along the gestative process to recreate the initial embryo, completes the ritual reversion to the primordial Dao.

The systems mentioned by Schipper and Wang will not be analyzed further here; suffice to say that they too belong to the pre-Daoist stock of divination and curative techniques as were the diverse devices incorporated into the East Well and Eight Archivists ritual and the other Twenty-four Charts. The example of the East Well system furnishes another example of the adaptation and use in Daoist ritual of the practices of the technical traditions. While the East Well Chart, as presented in the bathing and initiation rite, is clearly derived from the *liuren* divination system, we cannot reconstruct its function prior to this rite. The timing of the Eight-Archivist ritual by the East Well day is also clearly related to the *shi* divination board, as are the names of the Archivists. However, what may be the most intriguing point is that these diverse systems were amalgamated in the *Five Ascendant Talismans* to produce a ritual emblematic of the rise of the Han. This emblem was dissolved in the later *Ershisi sheng tu*. The elements which made up the rite were again distinguished into distinct charts and a new ritual hierarchy of wisdom was constructed.

What has yet to be studied, besides the specific historical developments of the various charts and the traditions in which they were developed, is how cosmological entailments, particularly the conceptualization of time, changed when the symbolic devices were incorporated into the *Lingbao* Daoist system. What we clearly see from our analysis of the East Well references is that astral time-markers could have multiple meanings depending on the particular context. The various time cycles in the universe, which were all to be transcended by the Daoist adept, were represented by diverse devices. The ritual emplacements, like divination systems, were models of and for the cosmos, and the manipulation of the symbolic elements on the altar, as on divination charts could cause real effects in the universe.

<sup>103</sup> Schipper and Wang, “Progressive and Regressive,” p. 203.

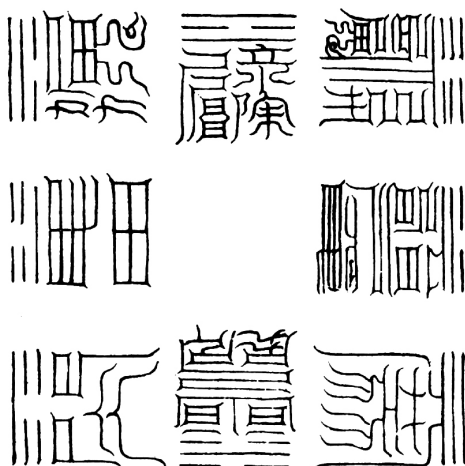
I suggest that it is in the cosmological entailments of the mantic procedures, as interpreted by the Daoists, that we will find reasons for both the Daoist proscription of and assimilation of divination. If divination were perceived as actual manipulation of cosmological emblems then diviners would be seen as playing havoc with the normal harmonies of the universe. When these same emblems were incorporated into the coherent ritual systems of the Daoists – in which the entire cosmos was manipulated simultaneously and synchronically – then the effect was attainment of the Dao.

#### *LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS*

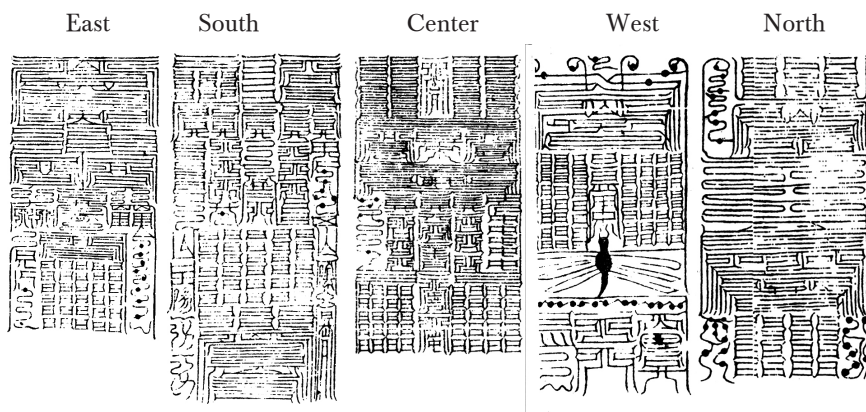
HY        Weng Dujian 翁獨健, ed., *Combined Indices to the Authors and Titles of Books in Two Collections of Taoist Literature*

*Appendix 1*

The Talismanic representation of the Eight Trigrams arranged in the Post-heaven sequence (from *Bashitu* HY 766, p. 3a).



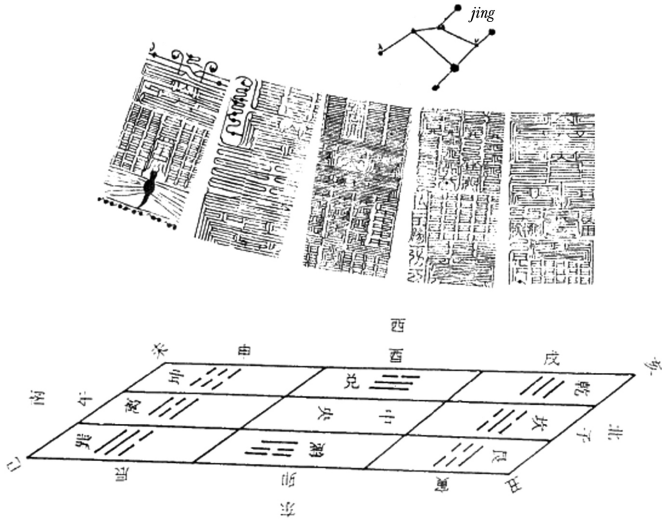
The Five Lingbao Talismans (from *Wuchengfu*, HY 671, pp. 3a–10a).





Appendix 2: Diagrammatic Representation of the Ritual Emplacement

East Well asterism (*jing*) in the sky; the five Lingbao talismans suspended below as the five planets in conjunction. On the ground the Eight Trigrams are surrounded by the twelve chronograms. Elements of this image are based on the talismans used in Appendix 1, and on Li Jianmin 李建民, *Sisheng zhi yu* 死生之域 (Taipei: Inst. History and Philology, 2000), p. 406.



Appendix 2A

The list of days and hours in *HY* 671: 2.13a5-14a1, and P2440, ll. 448-54, agree apart from discrepancies in the sub-line of the hour row. A citation of this passage in *Wushang biyao* 無上祕要 (*HY* 1130, j. 66, p. 3a9) concurs with the variant characters in P2440. As the list of hours is clearly corrupt and is not germane to the subject, thus I do not discuss it in this article.

HOURL	人定	黃昏	日入	下晡	上晡	日晡	日中	禺中	日出	雞三	雞初	過夜	夜半
DOUBLE HOURL	12 <sup>th</sup> 亥	11 <sup>th</sup> 戌	10 <sup>th</sup> 酉	8 <sup>th</sup>	7 <sup>th</sup>	9 <sup>th</sup>	5 <sup>th</sup>	6 <sup>th</sup> 巳	4 <sup>th</sup> 卯	鳴 3 <sup>rd</sup> cock crow	鳴 2 <sup>nd</sup>	半 past 1 <sup>st</sup> hr	1 <sup>st</sup> 子
P2440				日昃 8 未	日中 7 午	已食	食時 5 辰	平 食					

*Appendix 3. Variant Lists of the Twenty-Four Charts*

Column 1, below, presents the earliest systematized list in *HY*671; variants in *P*2440 are indicated with (P). Column 2 presents the list in *Yunji qiqian* (j. 80) and *Taiping yulan* (j. 659); included are only variant titles. Column 3 presents the list of titles in the developed system of the *Lingbao* scripture *Dongxuan Lingbao ershisi sheng tujing* 洞玄靈寶二十四生圖經 (*HY*1396). The same list appears in the late-Six Dynasties *Shangqing* text, *Taixuan bajing lu* 太玄八景籙 (*HY*258). Column 4 lists titles of charts and texts that appear in *Baopu zi neipian* (*HY*1177), which are probably the source for the systematized lists in columns 1 to 3. Titles in which the identification is problematic or titles not found in *Baopuzi* are marked by a question mark. Line numbers are indicated to demonstrate the non-systematized nature of Ge Hong's listing.

Note that charts 13 and 14 in *HY*671 are in reverse order in *HY*1396; and that chart 22 in *HY*671 is the final chart in *HY*1396. Charts 23 and 24 in *HY*671 are thus 22 and 23 respectively in *HY*1396.

	<i>Wuchengfu</i> (cf. <i>P</i> 2440)	<i>YJQQ</i> 80.18 <i>TPYL</i> 659	二十四生圖經 (cf. <i>Taixuan bajing lu</i> )	<i>Baopuzi</i>
1	東井圖		(上一)真人沐浴東井圖	東井圖 19: 4b3
2	五嶽圖		神仙五嶽真形圖	五嶽經 19:4b2 五嶽真形圖 19: 4b8, 8a8, 9b1
3	八史真形圖		通靈訣(決)精八史圖	八史圖 19:4b5
4	六甲通靈圖		神仙六甲通靈圖	六甲通靈符 19: 7a4
5	九宮紫房圖		神仙九宮紫房圖	九宮五卷 19:5a9
6	泰清圖 太清圖	太清圖	元始太清圖	太清經 19:4a5
7	混成圖		神仙真道混成圖	混成經 19:3b9 渾成經 19:5b9
8	西昇保錄圖 西升	西昇寶錄圖	神仙西昇保錄圖	玄錄二卷 19: 3b10
9	靈化圖		(中一)神仙通微靈化圖	二化經 19:4a1
10	九天圖		神仙耀靈(躡虛)天圖	九天發兵符九天符 19:6b8
11	九變圖		神仙九變圖	九變經 19:4a1
12	常存圖		神仙常存圖	常存禁 17:6b12 ?
13	含影圖	含景圖	神仙守一養身圖	生書一百五卷 19:2b3 ?
14	養身圖		神仙守神含影圖	含景圖 19:4b1

TIME MANIPULATION

15	精誠守志圖		神仙寂嘿(默)養精守志圖	
16	芝英玉女圖		芝英玉女圖	玉女隱微 一卷 19:5b3,10 ?
17	六陰玉女圖		(下一)神仙六陰玉女圖	六陰玉女經 19: 4b10
18	九九導仙圖	九元導仙圖	神仙九元導仙圖	?
19	導引圖		神仙導引圖	道引經十卷 19: 4a5
20	洞中洪寶圖 洞中皇寶	洞中皇寶	神仙洞中洪寶圖	鴻寶經 19:5b6
21	隱測圖 (P) 側	側	神仙變化隱測圖	大隱符 15:4a8 ? 隱守記 19:4b2
22	太一圖	—	—	
23	開山芝藥圖	採芝開山圖	神仙採芝開山圖	開山符 17:17a3
24	明鏡圖, or 含鏡圖		神仙明鏡圖	明鏡經 19:4a9
			神仙無極太一圖	無極經 19:5b2 太一飛符 50:3b8 太一之法 50: 3b10