AN ANALYSIS AND DESCRIPTION OF THE MAJOR CATEGORIES OF SYMBOLISM EMPLYED ON THE TAOIST TALISMANS OF TAIWAN PROVINCE CHINA

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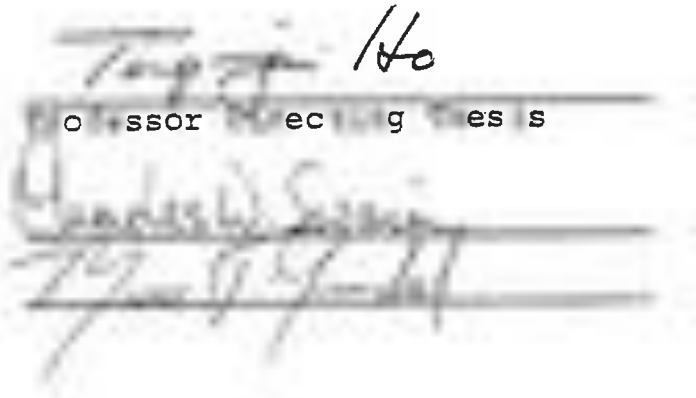
Approved:



Professor Directing Thesis

August, 1979

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to those American soldiers, sailors, marines, and airmen who have died in America's wars in Asia; The Boxer Rebellion, The Philippine Insurrection, World War Two in the Pacific, The Korean War, and The Indo-China war.

"So far from home
sleeping under the stars
in the earth's warm bosom
America's children,
may they find eternal rest."

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INTRODUCTION

Nearly a score of articles and books have attempted in some fashion to describe and analyze the function, useage, or symbolism of Chinese charms and talismans since the first article written by Robert Morrison[1] in 1835 until the most recent book by Michael Saso[2] in 1978. Some like DeGroot,[3] Dore,[4] and Legeza[5] have concentrated on those talismans that appear in classical Chinese works or those that come from Taoist manuals. Dudgeon,[6] Chen,[7] and Kuo[8] have chosen to deal with medical talismans.

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[1]Robert Morrison, "Some Accounts of Charms and Talismans and Felicitious Appendages Worn About the Person or Hung Up in Houses, and Used by the Chinese," Transactions of the [illegible]al Asia[illegible]c Societ[illegible] of Great Britain and Ireland [illegible], pp. [illegible].

[2]Michael Saso, Th[illegible]ings of Taoist Master Chuang, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978).

[3]J.J.M. DeGroot, The Religious System of China, Vol. 6, (Taipei: Ch'eng Wen Publishing Co., 1972).

[4]Henry Dore, Researches into Chinese Superstitions, Vol. 3, (Taipei: Ch;eng Wen Publishing Co., [illegible].

[5]Laszlo Legeza, Tao Magic: The Chinese Art of the the Occult (New York: Pa[illegible] [illegible].

[6]J. Dudgeon, "Chinese Arts of Healing," The Chinese Recorder and Missionary Jo[illegible] (Dec. 1869), pp. 183-187, (March 1870), pp. 267-272, (May 1870), pp. 332-339.

[7]Hsiang-chun Chen, "Examples of Charms Against Epidemics with Short Explanations," Folklore Studies 1 (1940), pp. 37-54.

[8]Li-chen Kuo, "Chu Yo Ko; Healing with Charms," Echo November 1974, pp. 45-53.

Some writers have used an anthropological approach and have described how Chinese talismans are used in particular ethnic groups of Chinese. This perspective has been used by Comber[9] for the Chinese community of Malaya, Topley[10] for the Cantonese of Singapore, and Dumoutier[11] for the Vietnamese. The relationship of the Taoist priest and talismanic traditions have been described by McCreery[12] and Saso[13]. There is even a book by Remmelts[14] that deals with metal coin type talismans that have found their way into numismatic collections of Chinese coins. The passing references about talismans and charms by those who have written about Chinese customs or religion are too numerous to cite. In short, nearly everyone who has written about Chinese religion has felt an obligation to say something about talismans.

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[9]Leon Comber, Chinese [illegible] in [illegible] (Singapore: [illegible], [illegible].

[10]Marjorie Topley, "Paper Charms and Prayer Sheets as Adjunct to Chinese Worship," Journal of the Mal[illegible] Branch of the Royal Asiatic Socie[illegible], pp. [illegible].

[11]M.G. Dumoutier. Studies on the Religious Ethnography of the Annamese: Sorcery and Divination. International Congress of the Orientalist, [illegible], No. 11, 1897, p. 275-409.

[12]John L. McCreery, The [illegible]lism of Taoist Ma[illegible]c, (Ph.D. dissertation, Corne[illegible]vers[illegible]ty, [illegible].

[13]Saso, [illegible].

[14]A.A. Remmelts, Chinese Charms and [illegible] (Amsterdam: Johan Mevious, 196[illegible].

One may well ask why all the interest; to which Kelly has provided an excellent reply. He writes,

> "The charm is, in fact, the quintesence of Taoist and Buddhist lore, esoteric mysticism and practices, based on ancient cosmic notions... and handed down by books and traditions. All practical and popular Taoism is summed up in charms...The whole scheme of Chinese philosophy, Chinese cosmic notions, the supposed influences of astrology over the life of man, much of venerable antiquity is embodied in the charm."[15]

Kelly's thesis of charms being the "quintessence of Taoist lore" I wholeheartedly embrace, but how does one go about testing this thesis today? From the previously mentioned books and articles one would imagine that testing the hypothesis would be rather straightforward; simply acquire some talismans and decipher them. This is exactly how I began my research, rather naively in retrospect, in 1975. Since I wanted to test Kelly's theory on modern talismans, those used as illustrations by western writers before 1975 were not considered as reliable indicators of modern trends, but they could be of use for comparison. The first problem was how an investigator could acquire enough talismans for a comparative study; the solution to which embodies a section of this thesis. The second problem was to assemble enough reference works concerning talismans and begin deciphering. It must be admitted that the above list of books and articles are a rather mixed lot of widely varying quality and only a few make the mark as modern scholarly

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[15]Dore, vol. 3, p. vii.

works, attempt decipherment in a systematic manner, or deal precisely with talismanic lore and its symbolism in Taiwan. Therefore, I have endeavored to glean from those articles and others, the more relevent parts as a base to my own findings. To this I have added my own translations of Chinese works on talismanic, lore, folk religion, and Taiwanese history to further enhance the explanations of the symbolism. To this synthesis of ideas, I have applied the best examples from the nearly seven hundred talismans which are the base of the investigation. The result has been, to produce a manual that will provide to an investigator, possessing a modest knowledge of Chinese, like myself, maximum access to the meaning and symbolism of Chinese talismans. Therefore, in addition to the main body of explanation of symbolism, several tables in the appendix have been added to provide an investigator with some of the required Chinese terms that one needs to decipher talismans. I cannot claim to have been 100% successful in explaining all of the symbolism; however, I do feel that modest progress has been made made on producing a manual that will be of service to testing and proving Kelly's thesis, not only in Taiwan but in other areas of South East Asia where Chinese communities are found. In addition, the many examples of symbolism that are illustrated will provide an investigator ample material to discover and explain the various symbols, phrases, and diagrams employed on talismans.

The Taoist tradition has a great many kinds of talismans that deal with spiritual matters and the Tao Tsang (道藏), sometimes referred to as the Taoist Canon, contains over three thousand basic talismans. It would be a most formidable task to try to describe such a large amount of material. From the onset it should be made clear that only a single type of talisman,called a p'ing an fu (平安符) distributed by Chinese temples and printed for mass distribution,will be examined in this thesis. P'ing an talismans from Taiwan fall into two natural broad categories of classification; iconographic and mandate talismans. The iconographic talisman always includes a picture of a deity in full royal, martial, or civil costume with all the attendants, regalia, and pomp of an earthly Chinese emperor or official. The costume and regalia of the deity has a direct correspondance to his rank or title in the divine bureaucracy. The mandate talisman is a command or order from one of the higher deities to a lesser deity to act in a prescribed manner as directed in the language of the talisman. Both of these talismans are common throughout Taiwan and many temples will distribute both kinds. As a rule of thumb, the iconographic talisman is displayed on the family ancestor altar, while the mandate talisman is carried on the person or affixed to ones car or boat quite analogous to a St. Christopher medal

used by some Roman Catholics.[16] Because these talismans employ somewhat different kinds of symbolism, I have found it convenient for discussion to separate them along stylistic lines. However convenient it may be to divide them along these lines of style, it must be borne in mind that these talismans exhibit the same cosmological world view; the universe is an ordered one, its principles can be discovered, and it responds to the needs of mankind.

Because the discussion will be limited to p'ing an talismans, it is best to set a foundation for the term p'ing an as it is used in Taiwan. No other term occurs with as much frequency on talismans and for this reason it has been chosen as the type name for this genre of talismans. The Chinese character [illegible] (平) means "peace" and the character an (安) "safe", but the ideal of "p'ing an" is much more complex than this simple explanation would suggest. The best description of p'ing an and its ramifications is one by Jordan who writes about a Taiwanese family that is p'ing an. He describes a p'ing an or harmonious family as:

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[16]Oftentimes taxi cab drivers will have as many as ten or fifteen talismans suspended from the rear view mirror. In fact it is the exception to find a cab in Taiwan without such talismans. I have also hitch hiked extensively through out Taiwan and every truck that I rode, without exception had no fewer than ten talismans from different temples. I've had many chats with the drivers over the various merits of talismatic protection. To a man, they firmly believe in their power to protect the truck and driver.

> "...one that is functioning the way a household is supposed to function...No one is sick in a harmonious family. There are no financial reverses. Sons are not killed in war. There are no major accidents. Crops are not destroyed by insects, floods, or drought. There are no domestic quarrels, nor jealousy between brothers, nor friction between daughters-in-law and their mother-in-law. A family that is inharmonious on the other hand, is cursed by disaster. It is a household in which family members are quarelling, or which there are grave financial difficulties, a place where luck is generally bad or where (most commonly) there is sickness and death."[17]

Jordan's description of the harmonious or p'ing an family is much richer and detailed than one might suppose from a simple translation of "peace" and "safe".

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[17]David K. Jordan, Gods, Ghosts, and Ancestors: The Folk Religion of a Taiwanese Village, Berkeley, Univ. of California Press, 1972, p. 4.

METHODOLOGY OF COLLECTION

This study is based on nearly seven hundred talismans that were collected in Taiwan Province, The Republic of China from January 1975 until September 1977. They come from every county and city in Taiwan including Peng Hu (The Pescadore Islands) and the Island of Kin Men (Quey Moi). These in turn have been supplemented with talismans from the overseas Chinese communities of Malaysia, Thailand, Singapore, Hong Kong, and the Philippines. All of them were acquired from temples and none are copies from previously printed sources.

The talismans were obtained from three sources. The first source was from friends, families, and students who were aware that I was collecting them for possible use in graduate school.[1] The second method was a mailing request sent to the temples I could not visit personally. The last and most interesting and fruitful method was direct solicitation from the temples themselves. Since the first

[1]I would especially like to mention Mr. Paul Bateman, who provided many fine specimens for comparitive study that he collected for me in Thailand, Malaysia, and Hong Kong. I am also indebted to Mr. Robert Leroy, who collected many fine talismans in Japan and kindly added them to my collection. A final word of thanks goes to Mr. A.A. Remmelts for the specimens from Singapore and Indonesia which he provided.

method is self evident it needs no further mention. However, the last two methods need further explanation.

Almost every town, village, and hamlet in Taiwan has a temple, but obtaining talismans from these temples was a bit more tedious than one might expect. One stumbling block was finding the temples. In the country one can ride the bus until you see a temple roof and then get out. This method is very time consuming in areas where the bus runs infrequently. In more settled areas there are more temples and one can walk from temple to temple. Having spent many afternoons and weekends on such trips, I feel the biggest stumbling block is that old bugbear: Language. The vast majority of the temples I visited were cared for by elderly members of the community. Since these people grew up when Taiwan was still occupied by the Japanese, very few speak Mandarin Chinese, but only speak the local Chinese dialect Taiwanese.[2] A few of the better educated people had attended Japanese schools and therefore speak Japanese very fluently. Since I can only speak Mandarin this was a real problem at times. Most of the time however, there were young people about who were more than a little curious about the white man whom they jokingly refer to as "ah to ah" (the nose), and

[2]David K. Jordan Gods, Ghosts, and Ancestors: The Folk Religion of a Taiwanese Village. Berkeley: Univ. of Calif. Press, 1972), p. vii.

willingly helped.[3] I have had young children as young as six or eight years old be the interpreter. Later, I learned two basic sentences in Taiwanese to use if an interpreter was not to be found, "Sir (or Ma'am) do you have talisman?" The other sentence was, "I don't know how to speak Taiwanese." The templekeepers were always a little surprised and would always want to know why I needed the talisman. I would then explain that I was a student in Taiwan and wanted to use them for a research project on Chinese folk religion. I was never refused a talisman from any of the several hundred temples that I visited.[4] Moreover, the usual donation of 10 New Taiwan Dollars (25¢) was very rarely accepted. On the few occasions that it was accepted, I was issued a receipt like the one on the following page. Very often the templekeeper would insist on me having tea with him and it was at times a little difficult to have such elderly people waiting on you. During the time we were sipping tea, I

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[3]The Taiwanese have a very interesting stereotype of the white people all having a big none. Another stereotype is that all white people are Americans. Most of my European acquaintences would be a little put out that they were always called Americans.

[4]This contrasts sharply with Laszlo Legeza's statement, "Even today, talismans have been refused to non-Taoist and non-Chinese enquirers." Lazlo Legesza, Tao: Magic: The Chinese Art of the Occult (New York: Pantheon Books, 1975), p. 8.

Nan Yao Ma Tsu Temple Donation Receipt. Changhua City, Taiwan 1977.

would often receive some lore about the talismans and their proper use.[5]

The last to be mentioned method of collecting talismans was via the mail. I obtained the addresses from three main sources: Taipei Shih Ssu Miao Kai Lan[6] (A General Inspection of the Temples of Taipei City), Taiwan Ssu Miao[7] (Taiwan Temples) and Taiwan Ssu Miao Ta Chaun[8] (A Complete Survey of Taiwan Temples). Of the three the most useful was Ssu Miao Ta Chuan as it not only had the addresses of the temples, but also it listed their main deities. However, the main drawback of both Taiwan Ssu Miao Ta Chuan and Taiwan Ssu Miao are that they were based on the 1960 government survey of temples and many of the addresses have been changed over the years. Taiwan Ssu Miao is a four volume work published annually between 1973 and 1975. It includes

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[5]Two such comments were not to place the talisman in the room where children sleep, because it will stunt their growth and the other was not to take the talisman into the restroom as this is disrespectful to the god. On pilgrimages I have often seen Taiwanese forego this last taboo and enter the restroom wearing their talisman clearly pinned on their shirt or dress and making no attempt to remove it.

[6]Tai[illegible]i Shih Ssu Miao Kai Lan (A General Inspection of the [illegible]es o[illegible]aipe[illegible] Taipei: Taipei City Bureau of Civil Affairs, 1974).

[7][illegible] (Taiwan Temples) Ed. Chiang Tun Lin. (Tai[illegible] Hua Publishing Co., 1973).

[8]Lin Heng Tao. [illegible] (A Complete Survey of Taiwan T[illegible]n Publishing Co., 1974).

pictures of the various temples but the photographs are of intermediate quality. However, this book contains more information than either of the other two works concerning temple histories and special features of the temples. Using the telephone book and the yellow pages was of little use as most of the small and rural temples do not have a telephone.

After I chose the addresses of two thousand temples, I had the following letter printed and mailed to various temples. The letter appears on the following page and translates as follows:

> "How are you? I am an American studying in Taiwan. I have been in Taiwan two years studying Chinese culture and history. I regard Chinese history and culture with great interest and endless respect. At the present time in order to write my thesis concerning the Taoist "ping an" talisman I am looking for all kinds of reference materials. I am hoping with your temple's help, you will send me a "ping an" talisman or other such reference help. I have enclosed a self addressed stamped envelope. Thank you for your help."

In all, some three hundred replies (15%) to this request were received at a cost of approximately Three Hundred Dollars U.S. The high cost of mailing prevented me from completing the mailing to the additional two thousand two hundred temples in Taiwan.[9] I feel that this was a satis-

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[9]I am continuing with the mailing project with the temples in Singapore. I have ordered from the Reference Services Division National Library of Singapore a copy of [illegible]. I intend to launch this [illegible].

敬啓者：

　　您好！本人是一美國在台[illegible]的留學生，在台[illegible]研究中國文化、歷史、我已在台[illegible]待兩年了，本人對[illegible]國的文化、歷史感到非常有[illegible]趣及無比的敬仰，而本人現在爲了寫一[illegible]有[illegible]道教（平安符）的論文正在各方面收集資料以供參考，希望藉　貴廟的幫忙能寄給我一些（平安符）或有[illegible]這類的[illegible]料，本人並與此附上回郵信封

敬請幫忙！

功德無[illegible]

甘慕白　上

factory return from this sort of mailing effort and it had several advantages over personal visits. Two advantages that immediately come to mind are that it is possible to survey a large number of temples in a relatively short time and it allows you to receive material from places that you may not have a chance to visit personally. Another bonus was that many temples included letters telling how to use the talisman and other lore connected to the deity or temple. I was able to obtain a few more insights into Taiwanese folk religion because of this. These letters and other materials make excellent references and unlike memories of conversations they do not fade with time.[10]

I have tried to use this method by mailing a similar request from the United States to the temples in Hong Kong. However, the results were rather discouraging. Out of the fifty-seven temples solicited in Hong Kong only two made reply. This mailing effort cost nearly Twenty Dollars U.S. I've also tried this with three temples in San Francisco for which the addresses came from the yellow pages of the telephone book but unfortunately none of these temples replied.[11]

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[10] I obtained the addresses of the temples of Hong Kong by writing to the Chinese Temples Committee, Home Affairs Department, Government of Hong Kong.

[11] I have tried the telephone books of various eastern and west coast cities but Taoist temples seem to be seldom listed.

METHODOLOGY OF DESCRIPTION

The problems of making definitive statements concerning Chinese talismans are many fold. Beyond the obvious need for a reading knowledge of Chinese in general, one must be knowledgeable in Chinese folklore and history as well. In addition, one must also have a firm grasp on the special terminology of religious Taoism that is outside the normal dictionary meaning. With regards to Taiwan talismans, one has to be familiar with the immigration patterns of the early pioneer settlers plus have a command of the folk religious life that is peculiar to Taiwan because of this experience. The last to be mentioned skill one needs to acquire is a good knowledge of the geography of Taiwan.

The talismans from Taiwan may have as few as two symbols or as many as a score employed upon it. To further complicate description, talismans do not use the symbols in the same relative order, although there is a general order present. The method of description I have chosen is as follows: I have taken the talismans which have the most representative styles and symbols and copied them on the Xerox. These copies in turn have been disected in much the same manner as a lab specimen in biology.[1] These various

[1]The following convention will be used to facilitate description of talismans. The number T#000 will correspond to the index Table of Talismans and Their Origin. In most

symbols have been grouped into categories of like symbolism; asterisms ,color symbolism, special bureaucratic terms, etc. In this manner it will be able to discuss the symbols in isolation. Otherwise it would be chaotic to try to describe all of the symbols at once. The description will attempt to discuss the placement of the symbol on the talisman, its function and symbolic meaning with regards to talismanic use, and its history and origin. It must be emphasized that the symbols used on Taoist talismans are quite ecclectic and come from many esoteric sources that may not be in complete agreement. It is quite likely that some symbolism will be familiar to those who are acquainted with Chinese religion or art but presented in a different fashion than was previously encountered. All of these reasons force me to use "perhaps", "maybe", "likely", etc. far more than one may wish.

Another great difficulty to be encountered is that many of the talismans are very much "homemade" looking because of the primitive method in which they were printed, primarily with hand held wood blocks. Topley describes this kind of charm printing in Singapore, but the description fits Taiwan equally well. She writes,

> "Charms are made by cutting sheets of paper faced with the requisite colour - usually

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cases this table will furnish the name of the temple, its address, and the main deity of the temple. Occasionally following the number, the letter R or L will follow. This indicates which side of the talisman that element came from. This type of orientation is required for only a few types of elements.

> yellow - to the size of the blocks. A vermillion substance used widely in Chinese medicine, or Chinese ink mixed with water in a bowl, is used to form the imprint, the paper being rubbed on the block, not the block applied to the paper...A woolen glove serves to prevent the ink from staining the hand used to rub the imprint into the paper. The resultant charm is usually somewhat illegible and over-inked, but this does not diminish ifs efficacy, the message it carries being perfectly comprehensible to the gods if not to the people who buy it."[2]

With regards to those talismans that have been chosen for reproduction, I have endeavored to use only those with sharp, clear impressions.[3] Only a few of the reproductions have been "enhanced" by darkening the Xerox copy for better reproduction. Also, I have chosen to use the various symbols in the exact size in which they occured on the talisman; this will insure future researchers a reliable comparison to Chinese talismans in other times and places.

Even with the best of intentions and a well planned methodology, one will encounter talismans whose meaning is impossible to decipher. This type of talisman has given rise to the Chinese phrase kuei hua fu[4] (鬼画符)

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[2]Topley, p. 72.

[3]While collecting talismans from temples in Taiwan, I have amused more than one templekeeper by searching through a stack of talismans trying to get ones with sharp impressions. They always seemed a little put out for what they felt was much ado about nothing and would invariably tell me that it doesn't matter if they were clear or not.

[4]Senhower Liu, [illegible]s Art in Taiwan (Taipei: The Lion Art Book Co., 1976), p. 108.

which literally means a "ghost written charm" and is meant as a term of derision for ones poor penmanship. Sometimes bits and pieces of characters may be recognized, but no coheasive meaning can be extracted. On the following page #T216 and T#248 illustrate this problem well. With regards to T#216 nothing can be descerned and I'm not even positive that if it is properly oriented as to top and bottom. The other example, T#248, is only slightly better. On this talisman the name of the temple (順天宮) and its location (沄水) are written clearly but the talismanic language is certainly beyond my powers of decipherment.[5]

This is not to say that very elegent talismans are not to be found which equal or rival some of the better pieces of Chinese folk art. Some are executed extremely well with fine lines, beautiful calligraphy, and excellent perspective and treatment of space. If one has enough experience he will begin to notice that many talismans are remarkably alike; too alike to be left to chance happening. The talismans of this type are clearly standardized and differ only in the name of the temple and the name of the

[5]I was oftentimes perplexed by this phenomena early in my studies because the talismans would not fit into neat patterns. Later I was able to discern what I felt were mistakes in symbolism, although I'm very hesitant to use that word now. The quality control of some printers does leave much to be desired and if one is observant enough one can find errors. The difficulty of pronouncing mistakes is that the meanings very often comes from the "little tradition" and interpretations vary widely.

T#216

T#248

god that is being invoked. The temples may be in the same general locale or they may be far distant. This must be the work of printers that cater to the temple trade. On the following page are illustrated three talismans that come from different temples. Even a person unfamiliar with Chinese can notice quite easily the general layout of T#214, T#469, and T#206 are the same. Examples T#214 and T#206 are both from Tainan County (台南縣) only sixteen kilometers apart, while T#469 is from Chia I County (嘉義縣) less than a score of kilometers to the north. Within the collection there are a dozen or more talismans that come from the Chia I-Tainan area and differ only from these in that they come from different temples and represent different deities. As a person gathers a large number of talismans these similarities and differences become more readily noticeable and an investigator is cheered by the discovery of a talisman that is unlike the others he has collected. The talismans becomes not unlike a picture puzzle in reverse. The trick is to render it into its constituent symbolic parts, rather than to assemble them.

T# 214

T# 469

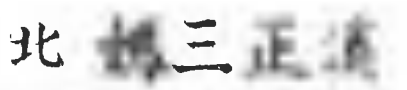
T# 206

DETERMINING THE SOURCE OF TALISMANS

What appears to be a relatively simple and direct task of determining the source of a talisman often becomes a toilsome endeavor. A great many talismans have neither the name of the temple nor locality printed on them while some have the name of the temple but not its location. Since many temple names are the same it is almost impossible to identify the origin without having both the name and location. Properly speaking, the name and location of the temple are not required and do not really have a symbolic meaning with regard to the talisman. However in practice, if the effectiveness of a temple's talisman become well known, they become sought after and this increases the reputation (and revenues) of the temple. Therefore, all of the larger temples prominently print their names on their talismans and some of the smaller ones do likewise. If a talisman has the temple of origin printed on it, this will be the first element at the top, although it is possible for it to occur lower down. Some talismans like T#404 is written in an ancient seal script and not modern type characters. This is a formidable problem sometimes as this requires a specialist for reading. This problem is not common enough, however, to require much worry. Another problem may

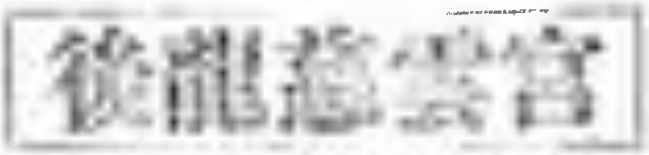
T#404

T#112

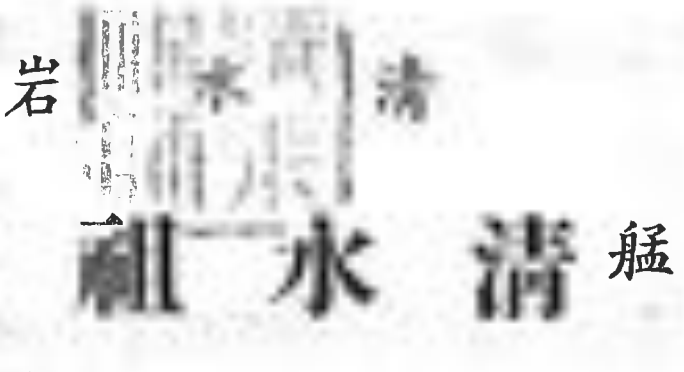


T#522

T#491



T#337



T#419

be that the temple will continue to use its old place name long after it has been officially changed by the government. Among the illustrations on the following page, T#419 and T#112 illustrate this problem in slightly different ways. The two characters on the extreme left and right of T#419, meng chia (艋舺), is the old place name of what is the modern day Wan Hua District (萬華區) of Taipei. T#112 uses the obsolete term i (邑) for county which has been replaced by the modern term [illegible] ( ). Therefore, the old place used on T#112, Ping I (屏邑) will be found on modern maps as Ping Tung Hsien (屏東縣). Finding the modern day name of these old towns and villages of Taiwan can be a real chore. An excellent source for the old names of Taiwan and their modern counterparts is Chapter 15 of Taiwan Min Su[1].

Another problem that is very difficult to overcome is that in many cases a place name will be used, but it will not include a term to indicate city, county, village, etc. T#522 includes the two characters Hsi Pei (溪北), but one has no way of determining whether this is a village or county district, city, etc. T#491 has two place names, Yun Lin (雲林) and Tou Liu (斗六), again one has no way to determine which name refers to the county (Yun Lin) and which refers to the township (Tou Liu). T#337 simply incorporates the place name Hou Lung (後龍) with the temple name (慈雲宮) with

[1] Wu Ing Tao. "Ti Ming" (Geographical Names) Taiwan Min Su (Taiwan Folklore) Chapter 15. (Taipei: Shih T[illegible] Co., 1975), pp. 309-322.

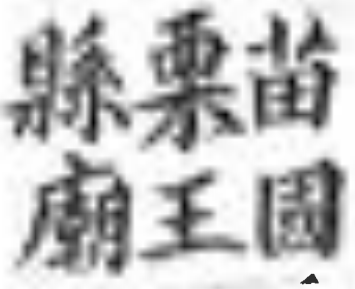
no attempt to differentiate between the two.

Those illustrations on the following page do use place names with their proper terms for county, city, province, etc. and this makes identification of the temple in question quite a bit easier; T#346 uses the term province, (省); T#480 uses the term city, (市); and T#520 uses the term county, (縣). To assist those whose knowledge of the place names of Taiwan may be limited, Appendix B of this thesis has been provided for reference. Appendix B includes all of the terms to designate the political divisions of Taiwan plus a table of all its counties. Another aid that may be of good use to a researcher is Appendix A of this thesis which includes all of the terms used to designate temples, both Buddhist and Taoist, in Taiwan. It is not uncommon to find talismans with the temple name and place name written together, as on T#337, or to have the place name written on either side of the temple name as on T#491, T#522, and T#419, etc. To make things even a bit more complicated the characters can be written from top to bottom as on T#346, left to right as on T#520, or right to left as on T#337.[3] Therefore, one must spend some time becoming very familiar with both the

[3]Naturally, these remarks are intended for those, like myself, whose understanding of Chinese is modest. Those with more experience may find this obvious enough, but at least in my experience it wasn't obvious at all.

T#346

T#480



T#520

T#349

temple terms and the many geographic names of Taiwan before one can readily locate the origin of the talisman. After a number of false starts this problem will iron itself out as one becomes familiar with these terms.

DETERMINING THE NAME OF DEITIES

Like trying to identify the name and location of a given temple, determining which gods appear on a talisman can be quite time consuming. The same god may have different names depending on what part of Taiwan one is in or which dialect community one has asked. With reference to this fact Lin Heng Tao writes,

> "...some (names) are commonly used throughout Taiwan while some are used in small definable areas. For example: under the various names used by Kuan Sheng Ti Chun (關聖帝君), Kuan Ti (關帝) is commonly used throughout Taiwan while Fu Mo Ta Ti (福德大帝) is used in Chang Hua County (彰化縣), Taichung City (台中市) and Chang Chou dialect speaking areas. Hsien T'ien Ta Ti (先天大帝) is yet another common name used in Tainan City (台南市), Keelung City (基隆市) and Chang Chou dialect speaking areas...."[1]

From all of the above reasons, it becomes apparent that identifying the deity can be troublesome. This is even a problem for the Chinese and there has been attempts to make a listing of the deities and their proper and ancillary titles. One such table has been modified for use in this thesis and appears as Appendix D and titled, "A Table of the Deities of Taiwan with their Correct and Secondary Titles." If we return for a moment to the example of Kuan Shen Ti Chun (關聖帝君) given by Lin Heng Tao, number five on Ap-

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[1]Lin Heng Tao. Taiwan Ssu Miao Ta Chuan. (Taipei: Ching Wen Publishing Co., 1974), p. 30. (Author's trans.)

pendix D we find that Kuan Sheng Ti Chun has no less than twenty different names presently in use in Taiwan! Not all of the deities have such a proliferation of names but there is more than enough to cause confusion. Only by trial and error can one gain the skill required to handle such a cumbersome table. This table is an adaptation of one printed in Taiwan Ssu Miao[2] and has some features that I have added that will benefit researchers who do not read Chinese.

The first section of the table will appear exactly as it does in Taiwan Ssu Miao with the exception that at the top of each deity's name will be a number which will correspond to a list of the deities names translated into the most commonly used term in English with a short comment on this deity's function or history. Number five would be entered thusly,

	Name	English Term	Function
5.	關聖帝君	Kuan Kung	God of War, Patron of Merchants.

Since many of these gods are of a local nature not all of them will have clearly defined roles of responsibility but will be a kind of protecting deity for a local village. An additional table has been prepared to list the various

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[2]Chiang Tun Lin, ed., [illegible] (Taipei: Li Shih Wen Hua Publishing Co., [illegible]), 20, 21-22.

titles used by the deities in Taiwan both Buddhist and Taoist. This appears as Appendix C and titled, "Table of Terms of Rank for Deities in Taiwan." By consulting these two tables one will be able to determine the deities that appear on the talismans from Taiwan.

THE SYMBOLISM OF CHINESE ICONOGRAPHIC TALISMANS

Chinese iconographic talismans present the viewer with a vivid look at the Chinese pantheon and how it operates in the minds of the faithful as an imperial-bureaucratic system, largely modeled on Confucian values and ideas in which Taoism itself plays only a supporting role. This system is described in great detail by the following passage from Taiwan Ssu Miao,

> "According to Taiwanese folk religion, the Jade Emperor (玉皇) is the Supreme Lord of Heaven (天公). Not only does he send orders to the emperor of the world of mortals, but also governs the Confucian, Taoist, and Buddhist religions and all the other deities and immortals including those of nature and those with human traits. Since antiquity until now, the so called Atmospheric Gods (天神), Earthly Worthies (地祇), and the Shades of Men (人鬼) have been under his equal jurisdiction; he is the Supreme One among the gods.
>
> With regards to the Atmospheric Gods, the Jade Emperor is himself one as well as the stellar gods of the sun, moon, stars, and constellations; the Master of the Winds; and the God of Rain. In short, these Atmospheric Gods are the deification of the forces of nature. Complimenting them are the Earthly Worthies who are the terrestrial manifestations of the forces of nature. For example, the Earth God, the God of the Harvest, mountain, river, and ocean deities are classed as Earthly Worthies. The Shades of Men are historical people who have become deified after death. In this group are sage kings (先王), ancestors (先祖), national heroes (忠烈), and other historical people.

> If one examines the world of the gods one will find they have wives, concubines, sons and daughters, and servants. So that the staff, secretaries, subordinates, guests, etc., are organized like that of mankind. The differences between the gods and people are like those between the common folk and officials. Therefore the gods are called officials (官) while the living mandarins are called officials (官). They can bestow blessings or disaster. The yin officials are ranked higher than the yang officials and for this reason the living officials must ask for the cooperation and protection of the gods. This is their only point of divergence."[1]

To further substantiate the claim that the pantheon has more Confucian traits than Taoist ones, we need only to examine Appendix C, the table of titles and ranks of Chinese pantheon. If we examine Appendix C, we can note that of the twenty-nine terms listed only three are peculiar to Taoism; God (神), Perfect Man (真人), and Immortal (仙); two terms are Buddhist; Buddha (佛) and Boddhisattva (菩薩): and the remaining twenty-four terms are imperial, military, bureaucratic, or family terms of address.

To illustrate the imperial-bureaucratic genre of the Chinese pantheon, nine iconographic talismans have been chosen as representative of the main types. The civil bureaucracy will be illustrated by three talismans for the City God; martial deities will be represented by the Third Prince (三太子) and Kuan Sheng Ti Chun (關聖帝君); the

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[1]Tun Lin Chiang, ed., Taiwan Ssu Miao, vol. 1 (Taipei: Li Shih Wen Hua Publishing Co., 1973), pp. 9-10. (Authors trans.)

goddesses Matsu (媽祖) and the Jade Maiden (玉女) will represent female deities; and the final category of deified priests will be represented by Ching Sui Tsu Shih (清水祖師 for the Buddhists and Chang T'ien Shih (張天師) for the Taoist clergy. Unlike the methodology used to describe the mandate talismans, the iconographic talismans will not be separated, but left whole. The description will try to emphasize the bureaucratic symbolism first and then concentrate on the symbolism that may be associated with the personal history of the deity in question.

The Symbolism of the Civil Official

The most representative of the deities of the civil bureaucracy of the Chinese pantheon is the City God (城隍). Hegel writes,

> "City Gods derive their power and authority from the Jade Emperor, the heavenly counterpart in folk religion of the mortal ruler of China's imperial past. The City God is actually the name of an official filled by the Jade Emperor's appointment. This superior divinity chooses from the qualified dead of each locality. Positions change hands; requirements include either great loyalty, filial piety, or great learning and exemplary behavior."[1]

The realm of the dead so resembles that of the living that not only do the City Gods have the possibility of promotion but also they can be demoted or exiled to another city for misfeasance of office.[2] These City Gods are ranked according to the size of the locale they officiate over and in Taiwan have three ranks. Those which govern a province are styled Duke (公), a prefecture Baron (侯), and a county Earl (伯).[3] These three ranks are illustrated by T#155 for the rank of Duke, T#454 for the rank of Baron, and T#266 the rank of Earl.

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[1]Robert Hegel, "The Seventh and Eighth Lords: China's Divine Bodyguards," Echo (July-Aug.,1971), p. 18.

[2]Arthur P. Wolf, "Gods, Ghosts, and Ancestors," Religion and Ritual in Chinese Society (Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 1974), p. 144.

[3]Chiang, p. 15.

The bureaucracy extends below the rank of the City God as well and his staff is greatly swelled by a great number of runners, policemen, secretaries, and constables that are required for this office to function. These lesser office holders are: the Civil and Military Judges (文武判官); the Six Departments Controllers (六司), which consist of the Controller of Longevity (延壽司), Controller of Praising Benevolence (善[illegible]司), Controller of Increasing Prosperity (增祿司), Controller of Investigations (糾察司), Controller of Speedy Rewards (速報司), and the Controller of Punishing Evil (罰[illegible]司). In addition there are the two constables Lord Horse (馬爺) and Lord Ox (牛爺), the two generals, General Hsieh (謝[illegible]) and General Fan (范將軍), the Thirty-six Heavenly Generals (關將), and the Seventy-two Earthly Worthies (地煞).[4]

The talisman illustrated on the following page, T#155 is from the Temple of the City God in Tainan City (台南市), the old imperial capital of Taiwan. One might expect that these City Gods would be attired in the official costume of the last dynasty of China, the Ching (1644-1911 A.D.), but interestingly enough, they are garbed in Ming dynasty (1368-1644 A.D.) costume. The City God is seated upon a tiger skin covered throne and holding his badge of office, the kuei (圭). According to White,

[4]Chiang, p. 15.

T155

> "The tablet carried by civil officials and by royalty is a symbol of official rank and goes back to very early days. It is a narrow strip of ivory or jade slightly tapered to one end, the corners of which are slightly rounded or pointed. It is this smaller end which is always held uppermost. Ceremonially the object should be held in both hands, which should be covered. There are two names for the object, that of *kuei* (圭), which possibly refers to the jade or stone type which seem mainly for ceremonial use; and that of *hu* which is commonly applied to ivory, wooden, or bamboo tablets."[5]

There is seldom a statue, painting, or print of a Taoist deity that does not possess such a tablet with the possible exception of martial deities that may be brandishing arms. Below the City God are two constables with bamboo cudgels attentively awaiting the commands of the divine magistrate. Also in attendance in the center foreground is a crouching tiger who is also styled Lord Tiger (虎爺).[6] The tiger has always been thought of as a magical animal in China and in imperial times its likeness was drawn on the walls of a mandarin's residence and its claws and hair were used as talismans.[7]

On the next page we can see a City God of the Baron rank from the Temple of the City God in Chia I City (嘉義市) illustrated by T#454. The treatment of this scene is

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[5]William C. White, Chinese Temple Frescoes (Toronto: The University of Toronto Press, 1940), pp. 168-169.

[6]The tiger is not native to Taiwan.

[7]Samuel Couling, [illegible] (Shanghai: Kelly and Walsh, 1917), p. 558.

T454

slightly different than the previous City God, T#155 because the attention to detail is much finer. On the immediate left and right of the magistrate are two secretaries (舍人); one holding a rolled scroll and the other brandishing a pen and open record book. On the desk are other writing brushes, ink stone, etc. On the extreme right side of the table top is the wrapped seal of office of the magistrate. In the lower lefthand corner Lord Horse is in ready attendance holding a "wolf tooth cudgel" (狼牙棒), while Lord Ox is at the ready with his trident ([illegible]. This scenario is somewhat different from the last in that in the immediate center foreground is an inscence burner. The intended meaning of the burner may be to draw emphasis on the spiritual,rather than the temporal,nature of this court.

The last to be described City God is that of T#266 who holds the lowest rank for this official, Earl (侯). This magistrate is flanked on his right side by General Fan (范將軍) or as he is commonly called in Taiwan, the Seventh Lord (七爺) who is holding aloft a sign in his right hand that reads; "May the Good and Evil Be Clearly Separated." In General Fan's left hand he holds a set of iron manacles for the condemned.[6] On the City God's lefthand side is General Hsieh ([illegible] or the Eighth Lord (八爺) in Taiwan. He holds a feathered fan in his left hand and a kuei in his

[6]Senhower Liu, Reli[illegible]s Art in Taiwan (Taipei: The Lion Art Book Co., 1976), p. [illegible].

T266

T#266

right. General Hsieh's hat has four characters that read "One Look Is a Great Blessing" (一見大吉). In the foreground we can see the incense burner and the small figure of a tiger between the burner and throne of the City God.

A persistent theme of these scenarios of the court of the City God seems to be that the violators of the law will find the judge stern, the law enforced, and the punishment swift.

The S[illegible]lism of Martial [illegible]ties

When viewing the iconographic talisman of marital deities one would naturally expect the symbolism to gravitate towards arms and armor. On the following page T#362, depicts the paramount martial deity of the Chinese pantheon, Kuan Sheng Ti Chun (關聖帝君), who because of his martial fame in China is sometimes erroneously dubbed "The God of War" by western writers. Kung Sheng Ti Chun's claim to glory is partly based upon historical facts, but his most famous exploits have come from folk tales, operas, and especially the novel, The Romance of the Three Kingdoms (三國演義).

This talisman has many similarities with that of the civil official. Like the City God, Kuan Sheng Ti Chun has attendants. On his left side acting as the "Keeper of the Seal" (印 [illegible]) is his adopted son Kuan P'ing (關平) and on his right is his trusty "Arms Bearer" (劍監), Chou Tsang (周倉);[1] both of whom figure more prominantly in fictional rather than historical sources. The battle axe, dubbed the "Crescent Moon" (偃月刀) held by Chou Tsang belongs to his master and has considerable fame in Chinese folklore quite analogous to the sword of King Arthur, Excalibur. In the right hand of Kuan Sheng Ti Chun is an open

[1]Clarence Burton Day, Chinese Peasant Cults: Be[illegible] a St[illegible] of Chinese [illegible] Gods [illegible]a[illegible]'eng [illegible]en P[illegible]sh-[illegible]o., [illegible], p. [illegible].

T362

copy of the Ch'un Ch'iu Tso Chaun (春秋左傳, Tso's Commentary on the Annals, an ancient historical work which Kuan Sheng Ti Chun is supposedly to have memorized "from beginning to end"[2] and for this feat he is sometimes considered a patron of scholars.

Because of his feats in war, Kuan Sheng Ti Chun has long been thought of as a powerful exorcizing deity. Werner writes,

> "The sword of the public executioner used to be kept within the precincts of his temple, and after an execution the presiding magistrate would stop there to worship for fear the ghost of the criminal might follow him home. He knew that the spirit would not dare to enter Kuan Ti's presence."[3]

Kuan Ti lived in the waning years of the Han dynasty, but it is difficult to say with authority whether or not the costume of these three deities are faithful to that period. There is not much doubt, however, that they are wearing martial, as opposed to civil robes and headdress and it is not Ching dynasty clothing.

On the following page is a second martial deity, the Third Prince (三太子) or Li No Cha (李哪吒) depicted on T#376. According to Taiwanese folklore, he is the favored general before the Jade Emperor who made him "Commander of

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[2]Anthony Christie, Chinese Mythology (Middlesex, England: The Hamlyn Publishing Group Ltd., 1968), p. 59.

[3]E.T.C. Werner, A Dictionary of Chinese Mythology (New York: The Julian Press, 1961), p. 229.

T376

T#376

the Five Battalions of Celestial Generals and Soldiers for the North, South, East, West, and Center" and commissioned him with the task of subduing evil ghosts.[4]

The Third Prince is always shown with a magic bracelet in one hand while brandishing his lance ( ) overhead while he walks about on two magic wheels of fire and clothed in hard armor. The Third Prince also has his "Keeper of the Seal" (印童) and "Arms Bearer" (劍童), but they like their master, are but youths which can be determined by their tufted hair style. These youths are not clothed in armor, but in civilian dress of the Ming dynasty or earlier.

These two prints offer a remarkable study in contrast of divine personality. Kuan Ti is a study of mature, seasoned, and prudent planning. He is shown thoughtfully stroking his beard with a severe look upon his face as his thoughts are concentrated upon the lessons of the Tso Annals. The Third Prince, in contrast, is literally bouncing with enthusiasm, brandishing his weapons, and eager for the fray of battle. Kuan Ti's demeanor is one of an old veteran of the carnage of war and the Third Prince exhibits the wild abandon of youth.

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[4]Wu Ing-tao, Taiwan Min Su (Taipei: Shih Tai Book Co., 1975), p. 71

The Symbolism of Female Deities

Female deities never appear on Chinese iconographic talismans as civil bureaucrats of martial figures, but always as good daughters, faithful wives, or as royalty. A possible expection to this rule may be Buddhist Boddhisattvas which have their origins in Indian and Buddhist iconography. Two deities have been selected as representative of this genre; Matsu, a Sea Goddess and the Jade Maiden, a deified girl of Taiwan. Matsu has probably the largest following of any deity in Taiwan and her temples, although not the most numerous, are certainly the most splendid.[1] Of her origins Thompson writes,

> "...she was born in the year the Sung dynasty was founded (A.D. 960) on the island of Meicho just off the coast of Fukien province. Her birth was attended by auspicious portients. She was an exceptionally pious girl, and at the age of thirteen she met a Taoist Master who presented her with certain charms and other secret lore. When she was sixteen she manifested her magical power by saving the lives of her father and brother, who boat was capsized. ...When she died, still a young girl, a temple was erected in her community, seeking to attract her continuing favors...She received high titles by imperial decree; for example, in 1409: t'ien fei, "Imperial Concubine of Heaven", who "protects the country and shelters the people, looks after (those who call on her) with mysterious "ling", and saves universally by her great kindness." This imposing title was elevated by the Kang Hsi Emperor in 1683 to t'ien hou "Consort of

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[1]Lin Heng Tao, Taiwan Ssu Miao Ta Chuan (Taipei: Ching Wen Publishing Co., 1974), p. 3.

H[illegible]n". To the people she is more familiarly k[illegible] as Mats[illegible], a Fukienese word for grandma."[2]

If we closely examine the talisman on the following page, T#332, we can see that any resemblence to her humble origins has been quite forgotten and her status is that now of an empress. Nothing in this scene reminds one of ships, fisherment, or the ocean which is all the more surprising because she is the patroness of all those who ply the seas for a livelihood or as passengers. All the symbolism is chanelled to her position as the "Consort of Heaven". She is shown holding her badge of office, the kuei, and on either side she is flanked by her Ladies in Waiting (宮娥) holding "Fans of the Clouds of Good Fortune of the Fragrant Silk" ([illegible]慶雲之扇).[3] Instead of having an arms bearer, Matsu has been furnished with two bodyguards. The bodyguard on Matsu's right is the "General Thousand Mile Eyes" (千里眼) holding a crescent bladed halberd ([illegible]) in one hand while the other bodyguard "General Fairwind Ear" (順風耳) is stationed on the left holding a battle axe (大斧). In the lower center is the Third Prince who is not really associated with the cult of Matsu or her legend. His presence may be explained by considering him to be a "guest" of the goddess. The entire scene is set within a palace

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[2]Laurence Thompson, Chinese Reli[illegible]on: An Introduction (Belemont: Dickenson Publi[illegible], p. [illegible].

[3]Legeza, p. 63.

T332

T#332

with coiling dragons on the pillars and soaring roof gables: both very typical of Taiwanese temple structure.

The talisman on the following page, T#364, is that of the Jade Maiden (玉女) who was a native of Taiwan during the Ching dynasty and will provide us with a goddess that shares many similarities with Matsu, but has interesting points of divergence also.

Her biography has been recorded as follows,

> "At the time the Jade Maiden was born, Heaven announced it with rosy clouds and the room was filled with fragrance and everyone felt something special. At the age of three, she abstained from meat. At five years of age, she began the study of Buddhist ritual and for several years continued diligently without stopping; oftentimes with her eyes closed and seated motionless reciting sutras. When she was sixteen, there was a drought in the northern area about Tamsui and the wells and rivers were dry and there was nothing for the country people to drink. At this time, the magistrate of Hsin Chuang County received a divine relevation in a dream that he should ask the Jade Maiden to pray for rain and they would get the desired result. The next day the magistrate dispatched some men to secretly investigate th[illegible]irl. Exactly as expected, [illegible] learned that K[illegible] Tu had a "divine youth" ([illegible]) named the Jade [illegible]iden. Thereupon, they cor[illegible] invited her to come to the county religious service to pray for rain. As expected from the prophecy, the seasonable rains fell far and wide. When she was eighteen [illegible]s old, precisely between the hours of seven and [illegible] A.M. ,on the Fifteenth Day of the Sixteenth Year of the Emperor Tao Kuang (May 15,1837), the Jade Maiden personally prepared some fragrant soup and purified herself by abstinence and ritual bathing, burnt incense, sat peacefully and then soared to heaven."[4]

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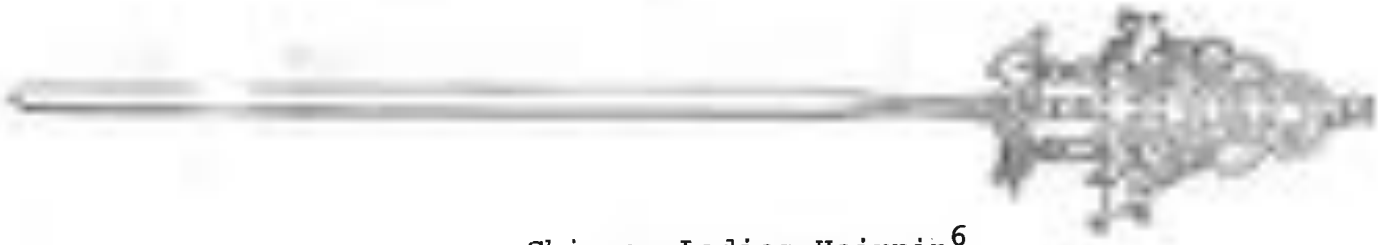
[4]Shih Ts'ui Feng, Ssu [illegible] Yu Ch'in[illegible] Chuan, vol. 2 (Taipei: Shih Pao Wen Hua [illegible], p. 76.

By examining the talisman we can see none of the status symbols that accented Matsu's exalted position. She has no attendants, bodyguards, or ladies in waiting, nor does she possess the badge of office, the kuei. She is seated, but one would be hard pressed to say that she is seated upon a throne and not an armchair. Her robes and dress are not unlike the bridal costume of Ching dynasty brides and her hair is made up into a simple bun with no crown. From the bun appears a hairpin (錫[illegible]) which is a talismanic device often worn by women in China's not distant past.

DeGroot writes that the hairpin is,

> "...a miniture copy of a crosier which Buddhist clergymen wield and brandish while celebrating certain religious rites, especially those which are designed for delivering souls from hell; as such, it not only exerts a great power over infernal beings, but, in general, resists and counteracts the whole host of spirits of darkness that, according to Chinese conception are always at hand to injure men..."[5]

The illustration that accompanied DeGroot's description is reproduced below.



Chinese Ladies Hairpin[6]

[5] DeGroot, vol. 1, p. 55.

[6] Ibid.

the male deities, but mercy and understanding from the goddesses.

T364

T#364

The Jade Maiden also possesses two other highly talismanic objects: the fly-whisk in her right hand called a "Cloud Sweeper" (雲篲) and is, "the Taoist symbol of being able to fly at will through the air and to walk upon the clouds of heaven."[7] The double chambered gourd (胡[illegible]) in her left hand is no less a talismanic power. Wheat writes,

> "This double chambered gourd is considered by the Chinese to be an object of magic and mystery. It was originally used as a flask for water and wine or as a container for herbs. The interior is said to be a minature mountain paradise into which a soul can enter and wander about in a state of bliss. Folk tradition has it that evil spirits can [illegible] captured and trapped inside the hu lu ([illegible]). Its presence serves as a scarecrow to f[illegible]en off undesirable forces."[8]

Because the Jade Maiden has no badge of office, title, attendants or other trappings of office to indicate she is a member of the divine bureaucracy, she is probably best classified as a hsien (仙) or Immortal; certainly more powerful than any human but without any assigned duties in the government of the Jade Emperor.

Both Matsu and the Jade Maiden present a much more approachable demeanor than either the civil officials or the martial deities. Perhaps it is because of this approachability that the cult of Matsu is found throughout Taiwan and in the overseas Chinese communities of South East Asia. One has the feeling that a person could expect justice from

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[7]Werner, Pg. 349

[8]William Wheat, "Temple Roof Decorations," Echo (Oct. 1975), p. 19.

the male deities, but mercy and understanding from the goddesses.

The Symbolism of Deified Priests

The number of either Taoist or Buddhist priest which have reached the status of a god in Taiwan are extremely few. If we look for a moment at Appendix D of this thesis, we can find only six deities that were at one time priests.[1] Among this group, two are rather obscure deities of whom not even the names are known.[2] From this rather small group, two priest have been chosen, one Taoist and one Buddhist, to represent the deities of this class.

The talisman on the following page, T#233, is that of Ching Sui Tsu Shih (清水祖師) a deified Buddhist priest of the Sung dynasty. This priest is a guardian and patron deity for the Fukien immigrant people from the Chang chou (漳州) prefecture and especially of An Hsi (安溪) county. His biography is as follows,

> "Ching Sui Tsu Shih is only worshipped by the peop[illegible] of An H[illegible]. He is said t[illegible] a holy monk [illegible]y the na[illegible] of Chen Ying ([illegible] who lived duri[illegible] the rei[illegible] of Sung Empero[illegible] Tsung, (1023-1064 A.D.).
>
> When still a child, he was sent to Ta Yun Monastery to be a monk. Later he moved to Mt. Kao Tai where he built a hut and spent his time meditating. Then he studied for three years with a hermit who lived on Mt. Ta Chih and from him learned the true meaning of Buddhism.

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[1]Numbers: 52, 53, 58, 59, 87, and 88.

[2]Numbers: 87 and 88.

T233

> When he returned home, he began working with the poor and sick. Once when a village in An Hsi was struck with drought he was asked to help them pray for rain, not only because he possessed great powers but also the gods were more likely to listen to the prayers of a holy man. Miraculously, it started raining the moment Chen Ying arrived.
>
> The grateful populace insisted that he stay with them. Many wanted to build a house for him, but he chose to live in a cave just outside the village. This h named Ching Sui Yen ( ), or Clear Water ck, because a clear lowed from a rock st outside the cave. Henceforth he was called ing Sui Tsu Shih."[3]

By consulting Chen Yi's biography, we can learn the origins of some of the symbolism of the talisman. At the top of the talisman appear the two characters An Hsi (安) placed on either side of the name of the temple, Fu An Ssu (安寺). Normally, these characters would denote the location of the temple, but in fact refer to An Hsi county, Fukien province. His Buddhist origins also explain the inclusion of the "mystic knot" (腸), a Buddhist symbol, which symbolized long life because it has no beginning or end and therefore has a talismanic meaning, on the lower portion of his robe-cape.[4] This symbol came to China via Tibetan Buddhism[5] which has had considerable influence on Chinese talismans because of its interest in magic. The crown or (毗 帽) also comes from

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[3]"Temples," Echo (April-May, 1975), p. 26.

[4]Williams, p. 292.

[5]Phillip Brandt, "Tibetan Carpets," Echo (Dec.1973), p. 32.

Tibetan Buddhism and is worn by Chinese Buddhist priest that officiate at masses for the dead.[6] The five points of the crown are symbolic of the Buddhas of the Five Directions: "Vairocana, the Supreme, in the center and the Buddhas of the four directions on the sides, Aksobhya (east), Ratnassambhava (south), Amitabha (west) and Amogha (north)".[7] This crown is often shown being worn by Ti Tsang Wang, the Chinese Buddhist "Judge of Hell". Perhaps the intent of it being worn by Chen Yi is to indicate that he is an official assigned to the court of Ti Tsang Wang. Another indication of his exalted status are the two dragons that appear out of the fur fringe of the cape. About the neck of Chen Yi are several necklaces to which are suspended medallions or chin p'ai) which are given to the god as thanks by people that the god has assisted in some way. These medallions have never been worn by the living which presents something of a puzzle unless the talisman is a picture of the statue of Chen Yi at Fu An Ssu and not intended as a picture of Chen Yi himself.[8] Some support of this theory is the inclusion of the incense burner in the lower center with a spiral of smoke disappearing into the

[6]Michael Saso and David W. Chappel Buddhist and Taoist Studies I (Honolulu: The Univ. of Hawaii Press, 1977) p. 101.

[7]National Palace Museum, s of Chinese Tibetan Altar Fit in the Nat a ace um Taipei: Nat Palace Museum, 1971), p. 71

[8]This is speculation on my part.

folds of the robes of Chen Yi. These incense burners are certainly temple paraphenalia and not part of the court ceremonial objects. The last piece of symbolism to be discussed on this talisman are the ju yi (如意) scepter heads () that have been cleverly worked into the upper corners as scroll work. The term ju yi comes from the phrase wan shih ju yi (萬事如意) which means, "May Ten-thousand Affairs Be As You Wish". The shape of this symbol is the "... conventionalized form of the mystic fungus... and which conveys the implication of power, fortune, and the granting of every good wish".[9]

As was the case with Buddhist priests that have become deified, the number of Taoist priest that have made the ranks of the gods in Taiwan are extremely rare; only Chang Tao Ling (張道陵) and Lu Tung Ping (呂洞賓) have acquired a following among the Taiwanese.[10] Chang Tao Ling has been selected as representative of this class because he is generally aknowledged as the "founder" of religious Taoism and there is a stock of historical evidence to outline his life. According to traditional and historical sources, Chang was born in the Han dynasty in A.D. 34 and,

> "... is said at the age of seven years to have already mastered the writings of Lao Tsze

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[9]Edourd Chavannes, The Five Emperors, Trans. Elain S. Attwood (New York: Weatherhill, 1973), p. 103.

[10]Based upon the data in Appendix D of this thesis.

> and the most recondrite treatises relating to the philosophy of divination....Retiring to seclusion in the mountain fastnesses of Western China, he devoted himself there to the study of alchemy and to cultivate the virtues of purity and mental abstraction. His search for the elixir or life was successful, thanks to the instructions conveyed in a mystic treatise supernaturally received from the hands of Lao Tsze himself. The later years of the mystics earthly experience were spent at the mountain called Lung Hu Shan (in Ki), and it was here that, at the age of 12 , after compounding the grand elixir ( ), he ascended to the heavens to enjoy the bliss of immortality."[11]

Chang Tao Ling is shown on the following page by T#361 seated not upon a throne like all of the other gods, but upon the back of a tiger. All of the symbolism of this talisman very much emphasizes Chang Tao Ling's efficacy as an exorcist.

The sword on the right with its point buried in a cloud cushion is, according to legend, one of a pair given Chang Tao Ling by Lao Tsu that are dubbed 三五斬邪此雄雌劍.[12] Welch writes,

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[11] William F. Mayers, The Chinese Reader's Manual (Taipei: Cheng Wen Publishing Co., 1971), p. 10.

[12] V.C. Hart, "The Heavenly Teachers," Chinese (Nov.-Dec., 1879), p. 446. (I have found very cumbersome to translate into English. The first two characters san wu are the most troublesome. San wu literally means three-five. The term three five, according to Saso, Taoist Master Chuang, p. 197, is symbolic of the three principles and and the Five Elements: wood, metal, and water. The remaining five characters can be phrased as the "Male and Female Demon Beheading Swords". My best shot is the "Three-Five Demon Beheading Male and Female Swords" or "Three Principles-Five Elements Demon Beheading Male and Female Swords".

> "Of all magical instruments, the Precious Sword is most efficacious. Indeed its power has no limits. It can subdue any demon anywhere in the world. For that very reason it is used solely as a last resort, after prayers, rites and talismans have failed."[13]

On the left side of the talisman, wrapped in cloth and cushioned by a cloud, is the seal of Chang with the inscription 陽平治都功印 which has been variously translated as: "Seal of the Metropolitan of the See of Yang-P'ing" or "Seal of Immortals of the Retreat at Mount Yang-P'ing", and like the sword, has been handed down by the descendents of Chang for sixty-four successive generations and is now in Taiwan in the possession of the present "Heavenly Master" (天師) or leader of the Taoist clergy.[14] Chang's priestly robes are very much like the currently worn Taoist priestly costume and display several previously discussed symbols of talismanic power; the Fu Hsi Trigrams, the "ball and link" asterisms, and the badge of office, the kuei. Atop Chang's head is a crown from which springs a flame, symbolic of the sun and primary demon destroyer.[15] Even Chang's mount, the tiger "is an animal of Yang, it can grasp spectres, tear usunder and devour them".[16] Below this

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[13]Holmes Welch, "The Chang T'ien Shih and Taoism in China," Journal of Oriental Studies 4 (1957-58), p. 197.

[14]Ibid, p. 196.

[15]DeGroot, vol. 6, p. 1267

[16]Ibid, p. 955.

noble beast's raised paw is a character that appears to be fire (火), another demon destroying element. If indeed this is the proper meaning, it means that wherever the tiger has walked he has left talismanic imprints in his wake. Directly above the head of Chang Tao Ling are the symbols for the Three Pure Ones and on either side of his hear are two phrases meaning "Guard the Home with a Brilliant Light" (鎮宅光明) and the plea for the "Whole Family to be Harmonious" (合家平安).

Chapter Three

THE SYMBOLISM OF CHINESE MANDATE TALISMANS

The mandate talisman is part and parcel of the view of the Chinese pantheon being a divine bureaucratic government as depicted in the lively imagery of the iconographic talismans. The ideal or archetype mandate talisman would consist of three categories of symbolism: its passive symbols, color, borders, etc.; its mandate language, borrowing heavily from the bureaucratic conventions of imperial China; and its seal of authenticity or authority. The mandate language includes not only the order or command of the talisman, but also the name of the temple, its location, and the name of the god or gods being invoked. It must be admitted however, that there is a wide variety of variations to the ideal format. On the following page T#409 is a representative example of an ideal type. Although it does not include all the possible symbols, it does exhibit some of the more frequently encountered ones. In the discussion of the symbolism of mandate talismans that follows below an attempt will be to focus upon the major catagories of symbolism by providing those examples from the collection which are most representative. In most cases the symbolic nature and function of the symbol as it is employed as a talismanic devise will receive primary consideration.

Mandate Talismans and Bureaucratic Symbolism

Because Chinese talismans are designed along the lines of imperial orders and mandates, bureaucratic conventions and symbolism are widely encountered. These conventions must be understood in order for one to fully grasp the form and content of Chinese mandate talismans. Dore writes,

> "Two things may be considered in a charm, its official character and the devious manners in which the document is drawn up. A charm is an official document, a mandate, an injunction, emating from a god and setting to work superhuman powers who carry out the orders of the divinity. The Chinese world of spectres is modeled after the administration of the country. As there are high and low officials, so there are higher and lower gods. The former command, give orders and injunctions, and the latter carry the commands of their superiors. A charm, therefore, generally begins by the word ch'ih (敕), to order to command."[1]

By consulting the examples on the following page, we can see that in addition to the term ch'ih (敕) many other terms of the old Chinese bureaucratic language have been incorporated into Chinese talismanic language. All of these terms fell into disuse with the end of the Ching dynasty in 1911 but still continue in use on talismans. The term feng (奉) on T#388 means to receive an imperial order and is repeated in the phrase chih feng (旨奉) on T#620 meaning "by imperial decree" while on T#038 it is combined in the phrase feng ch'ih ling (敕令) meaning a divine or "imperial commission."

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[1] Dore, Henry. Researches into Chinese Superstitions, Trans. M. Kelly, Vol. I (Taipei: Ch'eng Wen Publishing Co., 1966). p. iii.

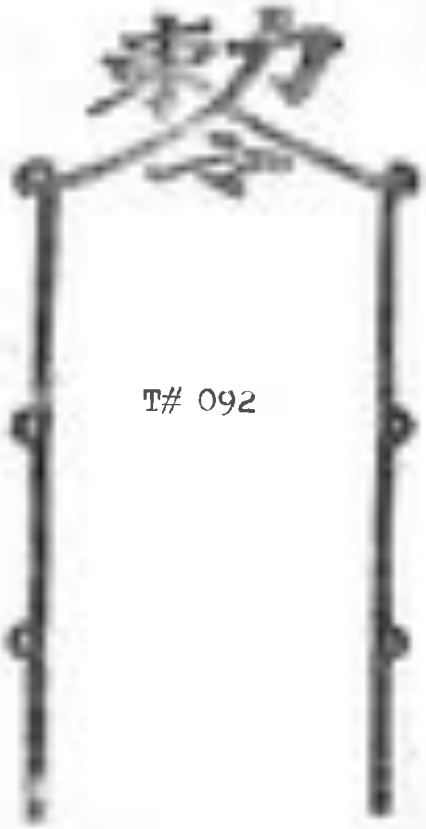
T# 388

T# 620

T# 038

T# 387

T# 491



T# 092

T# 381

On T#387 the top term yu (玉) means jade or imperial and is followed by chih (勅) combining to form the phrase "jade (imperial) decree."

The last three examples, T#491, T#381, and T#092 show some of the possibilities that the phrase ch'ih ling is written in ornamental style calligraphy. At times these characters become extremely free formed and quite difficult to decipher unless one has a fair amount of familiarity with Chinese "running" or "grass" script. On the whole, the printed talismans are much easier to read and decipher as the characters tend to be more standard while hand made ones written by a priest for a specific individual tend to be more individualistic and offer considerable difficulties in decipherment.

In addition to the terms borrowed from the bureaucrats other conventions as well have been incorporated into talisman construction. Primary to any official command is the seal of the official to make the order a legal document. De Groot writes,

> "Written orders, even from the most powerful potentates, cannot in China claim obedience, in fact are mere white paper, unless they bear the impress of the seal of the authorities who issued them. Taoists are want to say, and write in their books, that a charm without a seal is an army without a commander. The use of seals in charm magic must be very old, for we read explicitly that sealed house charms were used in the Han dynasty."[2]

[2] De Groot, J.J. M. The Religious System of China, Vol 6, (Taipei:Ch'eng Wen Publishing Co., 1972). P. 1047.

The talismanic power of the seal cannot be underestimated for it is possible for a charm to consist of this mark alone on a piece of paper. On the following page are illustrated two such talismans, T#598 and T#181. T#598 is the seal of Liao T'ien-ting (廖添丁), a Taiwan version of Robin Hood who was executed for his efforts by the Japanese army and later became a folk hero and local deity.[3]

Another such seal talisman is T#181 and is from the seal of Kuang-tse Tsun Wang (尊王) the protective deity of the immigrant people from Ch'uan Chou (泉州).[4]

The last to be discussed bureaucratic convention found on talismans is the signature of the god. The term you (由), which means henceforth, is often used as the signature but is seldom to be found in the standard character form. On the following page, T#515 illustrates only one bizzarre form that this character is sometimes found. T#552 is another commonly found rubric that is substituted for the four character phrase; 一 , 片 , 忠 , 心 , that has the meaning "with a true heart.."[5] The final character,

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[3]It is one of those strange ironic twists of fate that Liao T'ien-ting, born in grinding poverty, illiterate, and executed in 1908 at the age of twenty-six years, quite possibly never owned a seal in his lifetime, while in death he has one that would do justice to a mandarin.

[4]The symbolism and composition of the ink used for seals will be discussed in the section on color symbolism.

[5]Dore, Vol. 3. P. xxiii.

T#598

T#181

T#552

T#515

T#388

that is more Taoist in origin than bureaucratic, is the character for kang (罡), the tip of the Northern Dipper (北斗) constellation and an exorcising diagram itself, is shown by T#388. The character kang is "...a basic design used by Taoists of all orthodox traditions to sign documents or to finish off the writings of a talisman with a flourish."[6] The characters kang (罡), you (由), and the phrase, "with a true heart" are most often the final element of a talisman and, therefore, are found on the bottom portion of the talisman.

[6]Michael Saso, The Teachings of Taoist Master Chuang, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1978), p. 254.

Ornamental Characters and Phallic Symbolism

Although the rules and limitations for making the talisman may seem rigid at first glance, a great amount of individual expression appears in the writing of the characters and some talismans have an asthetic appeal because of this factor. DeGroot writing at the turn of the century from Fukien Province states,

> "... the principles of charm writing are rather simple and can only appear mysterious to those to whom Chinese writing itself is a mystery, in the first place,therefore, at least nine tenths of the Chinese people itself. Nevertheless, even to Chinese who understand reading and writing, the ready interpretation of charms is as a rule difficult work, seeing that they may contain archaic writing, which none but the charmwriters by profession know, or also fragments of characters, or characters in abreviated form, or in current handwriting which is perplexing to many readers, not to mention arbitrary omissions, or modifications of lines and strokes."[1]

The technical term in Chinese for 'arbitrary omissions, additions, and modifications' is hua shih (花式) flower or ornamental style. In addition to eye appeal the modification of characters in some cases can provide secondary symbolism.

On the following pages occur some of the more commonly found characters that are modified. After the principles of how and why they are modified are understood, recognizing this type of symbolism and its function on the

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[1] DeGroot, Vol. VI, p. 1041.

[2] Chen P'an, ed. [illegible] Yi [illegible] Hsiao Ch'i vol. 2 (Taipei: Academi[illegible], 19[illegible]. p. 134.

T# 349

T# 381

T# 514

T# 387

talisman is not difficult.

All four characters on the previous page are that of t'ien (天) or heaven and they exhibit only a few possible variations one finds on talismans. On T#349 the character for heaven has been written with thick brush strokes with some slight lateral stretch, while T#514 has about the same thickness of stroke but exhibits very prominent vertical stretch. On T#381 the vertical stretch to the "leg" portion of the character has been curled upward slightly and has acquired six small loops or spots. On the final character, T#387, the upper portion of the character has become almost geometric, while the lower section has become very sinuous. All of these characters show a great deal of individualistic flourish and expression that the standard printed character lacks.

Aside from whatever artistic flair the modifications may add to enhance the attractiveness of a talisman, these modifications can be handled in such a way that they produce additional talismanic symbolism. The previously mentioned character of heaven (天) with the additional "spots" or "loops", characterized by DeGroot as "arbitrary omissions or modification", is in fact a very cleverly designed talismanic symbol composed of the character heaven (天) and a double asterism of the constellation Northern Bushel (北斗) superimposed to form a single talismanic symbol.

Saso writes,

> "The character for heaven (天) is combined with the tail of the Big Dipper (North Bushel, 北斗). The four interjections of the upper part of the character equals the four stars of the Dipper; the three tail stars on the left are yin and the right are yang. Thus the Dipper is always drawn twice, once for 366 days, once for yang days."[3]

The examples that are shown on the following page vary only slightly from the above description. If we look for a moment at T#279-A, we see the character for heaven with the "leg" portion with extreme vertical stretching. In the center are the double asterisms for the Northern Bushel (北斗) with the "bowel" portions pointing outward. T#279-C shows these symbols combined and this is the exact form as it appears on the talisman, T#279.

Another ornamental symbol has been formed from the phrase chih ling (勅令); to command, to order. Illustrated on the following pages, it will be demonstrated how this phrase has been modified in such a way as to produce a very interesting type of phallic symbolism that is at first only suggestive of a phallus to that of an undeniable depiction of a penis in outline. On the following page T#626 shows the phrase chih ling (勅令) combined with only slight modification in the stretching of the "leg" portion of the lower character ling very much in the

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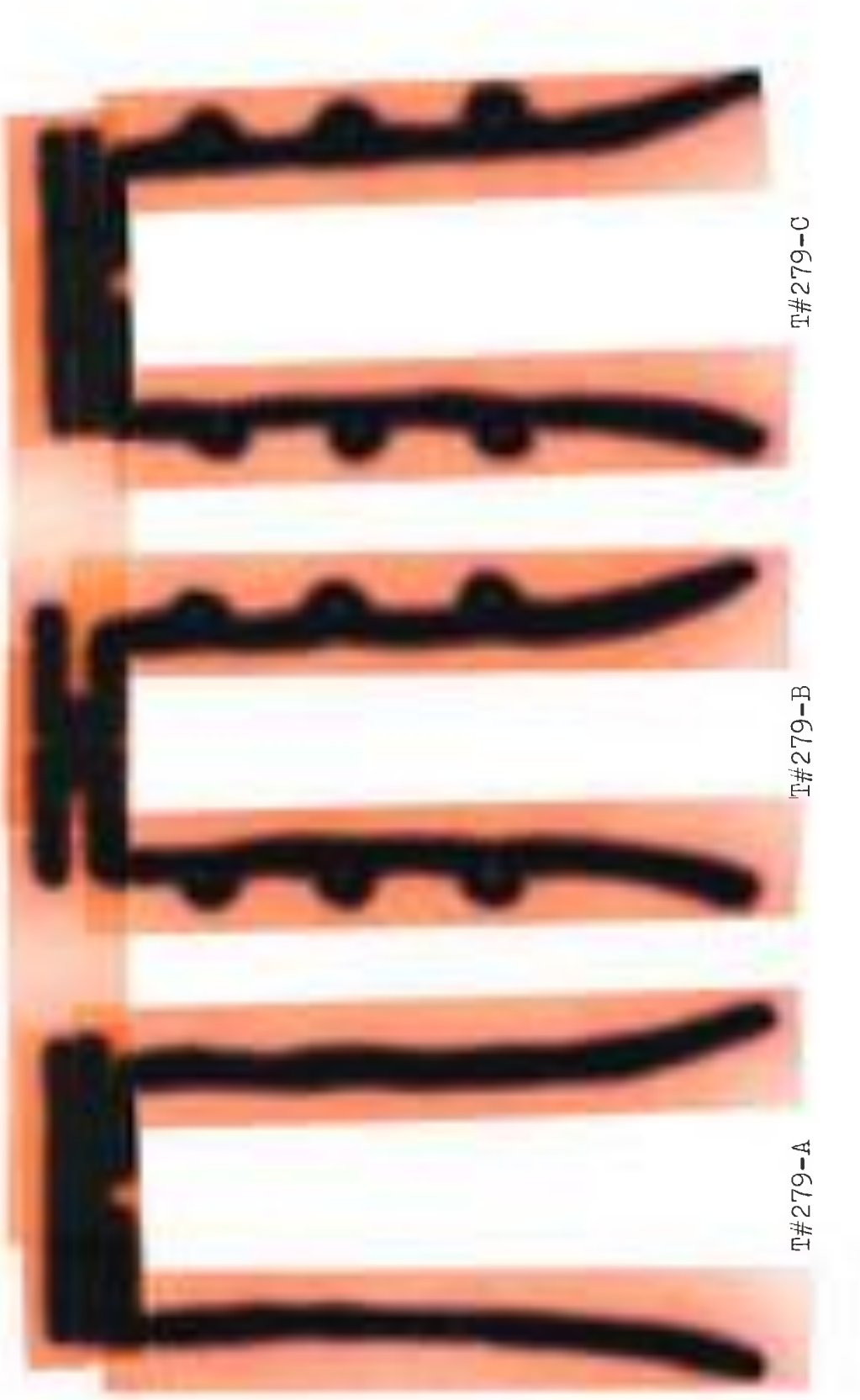
[3]Michael Saso, Personal letter to James Kemp, February 12, 1979.

T# 346

T# 626


T#279-C
T#279-B
T#279-A

same way the character for heaven (天) was handled. T#346 shows the same phrase very much more ornamental, but still maintaining a recognizable affinity to T#626. The most obvious difference being the additional loops on the "leg" of [illegible] (令). The intended effect is to modify the phrase in such a way to produce in silhouette an ancient Chinese phallic symbol and badge of office, the kuei (圭). This object is found with Shang dynasty (1766-1122 B.C.) burials as a symbol of high rank and was symbolic of "spring and the first awakening of life".[4] Because it was associated with spring, the kuei was symbolic of the East: the origin of the sun and the greatest natural yang source. The kuei is still very much an item of present day Chinese iconography and there is seldom a Taoist statue in Taiwan that is not holding this badge of office. The two drawings below are an attempt to show how these two symbols can be compared; the barred (////) portion is the intended duplication.

(kuei (圭)

([illegible] (勅令)

[4] J.P. Palmer, [illegible] (Middlesex: Hamlyn House,1967), p.40.

At this point, it must be admitted that the symbolism so far discussed is more suggestive of a phallus than graphic. However, on the following page, the complete evolution of this phrase into an undeniably phallic symbol is graphically demonstrated. On T#520 the character ling has been modified by stretching and rounding the upper part of the character to form a phallus shape. The chih ling phrase has been discarded completely on T#130 but its symbolic affinity to T#520 is readily apparent. T#094 shows the final and complete stage of modification whereby the chih ling phrase has been altered to produce a graphic representation of a penis. T#594 demonstrates that other characters, in this case "great" (ta, 大), can be modified into phallic symbols as well. Regardless of the phrase or word chosen to be modified into a phallic symbol, they all underscore the "maleness"[5] of the talisman. According to Legeza that, "...curative diagram is based on the concept of illness (excess of yin influence being cured by re-establishing the right balance between yin and ...."[6]

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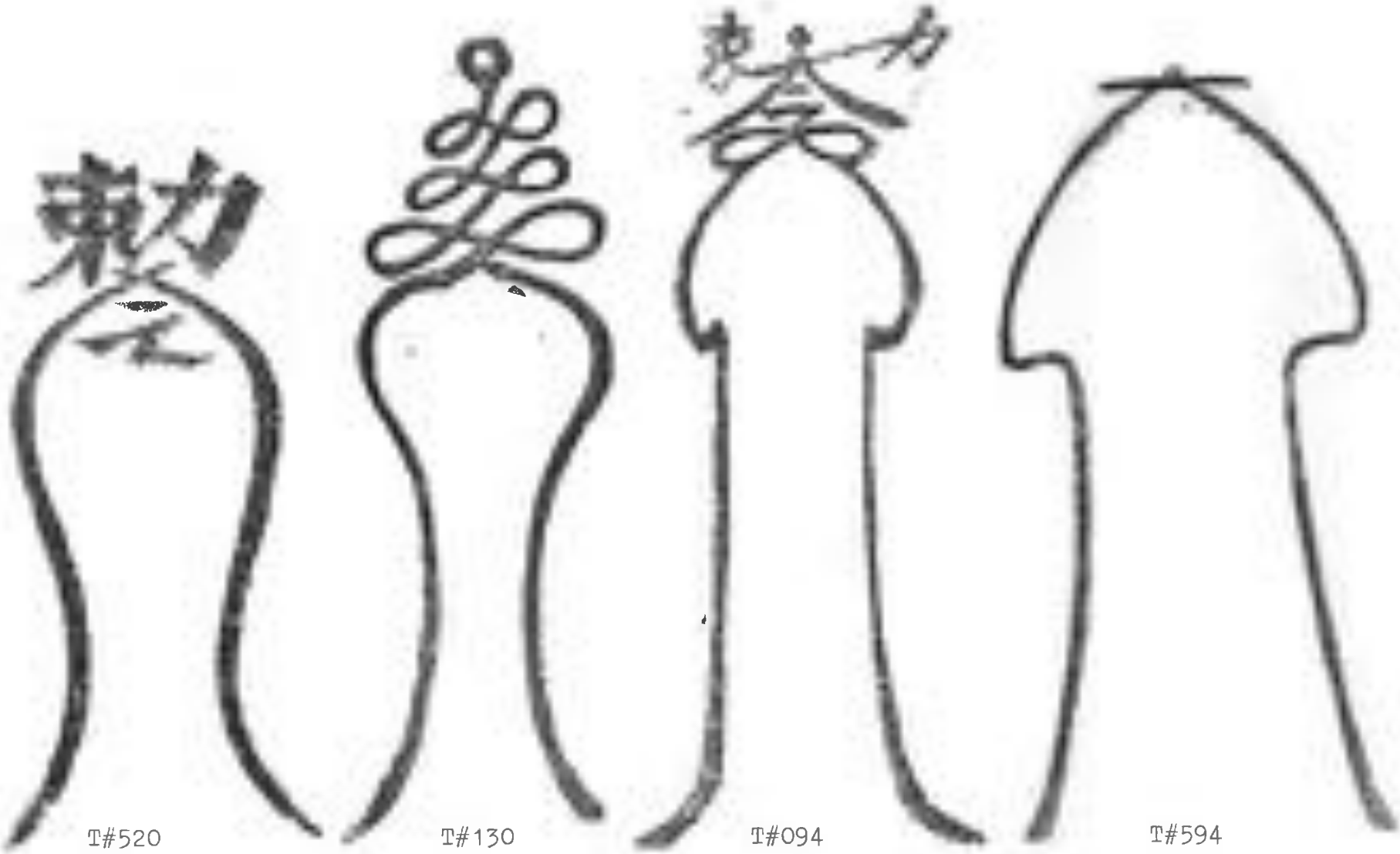
[5]The term I really want to use is "yangness", which seems to be neither good English nor good Chinese.

[6]Legeza, p. 62.



T#520 T#130 T#094 T#594

Margins and Borders

The margins and borders that are found on "ping an" talismans from Taiwan carry interesting symbolism, but compared to the talismanic language, they are of secondary importance. Most talismans do not have any with the exception of a solid black line that seems to have a utilitarian function of framing the talisman. The designs that follow on the three following pages naturally fall into three types; floral, geometric meander, and dragons. The floral designs are conventionalized to a degree but most can be identified as to their species while a few remain so abstracted that identification is speculative at best.

The floral motives that most often appear are the to (朵) or flower bud, leaves, and an undulating vine that becomes so abstracted it may become either scroll work or a dragon. All of these forms have a symbolic meaning, and more importantly a talismanic function. Numbers T# 391-A and T#608 are conventionalized chrysanthemum blossoms. According to Ai Su-shan, "Chrysanthemums, the autumn flowers that bloom when all others have died, became the symbol of longevity, gentility, and fellowship."[1] The two kinds shown have only slight variation. Number T#391-A has four petals and five round points, while T#608 has eight petals and only one central dot. These patterns are commonly found

[1]Ai Shu-shan. "Chinese Flower Arrangements," Echo. Vol. 4, No. 2. (Feb. 1974), p. 36.

T#391-A

T#608

T#351

T#704

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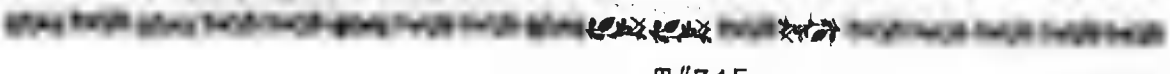
T#603-A



T#315

T#603- B

T#391-B

on embroidery work in essentially the same form and appear on articles as a decorative motif at least as far back as the Ming dynasty (1369-1628 A.D.).[2] The flower that appears in T#351 cannot be positively determined, but it does have a strong resemblance to the wild plum (梅花) while T#704 is certainly the plum blossom in stylized form. With the possible exception to the peach tree, no other flowering plant has such strong yang symbolism. Mai-mai Sze writes,

> "The blossoms are the Yang principle, that of heaven....Its basic number is five, and its various parts and aspects are based on odd and even numbers. The peduncle, from which the flower issues, is a symbol of the T'ai Chi (the Ridgepole of the Universe, the Supreme Ultimate, the Absolute), and hence it is the upright form of the calyx. The part supporting the blossom is a symbol of the San Ts'ai (Three Powers of Heaven, Earth, and Man) and consequently is drawn with three sepals. The flower issuing from the calyx is a symbol of the Wu Hsing (Five Elements) and is drawn with five petals. The stamens growing in the center of the flower are symbols of the Ch'i Cheng (Seven Planets: the five planets with the sun and moon) and are so drawn numbering seven. When the flowers fade they return to the number of the T'ai Chi and that is why the cycles of growth and decline of the plum are nine."[3]

If we carefully scrutinize T#704 we will notice that the stamens number only five instead of seven as we are to

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[2]Wu Feng-p'ei. "Carved Lacquerware Art and Ornamental Design," Chinese Cultural Renaissance Month[illegible] Vol. 10, No. 12 ([illegible]c. [illegible], p. [illegible].

[3]Sze Mai-mai. The [illegible] of Chinese Pain[illegible]. (New York: Vintage Books. 19[illegible], p. [illegible].

expect from the above quotation. There must be more than one stylized form as the one dollar coin of the Republic of China has such a five petal, five stamen plum blossom on the reverse exactly like the one on T#704.

On T#603-A instead of flowers being the predominate motif, leaves appearing in groups of five are dominate. The number five occurs regularly in talismanic symbolism and here it may represent the Five Elements. Another explanation, and one that is often used in flower arrangements is that, "a group of five, arranged in permutations of either four-one or three-two was an omen of good luck: the five blessings of longevity, happiness, peace, virtue, and wealth."[4] If we look closely under the two stars (**) we can see a solitary plum blossom cleverly hidden among the leaves. Although T#315 is most certainly a floral type it is impossible to describe the desired plant with any degree of accuracy. T#603-B presents a most interesting problem as it is most certainly a floral design, but one would be hard pressed to find the fleurs-de-lis in Chinese symbolism. My guess is that this must be a relatively modern motif that someway crept into the Chinese printing scene without notice.

The final motif to be mentioned on this page is the one at the very bottom T#391-B. I have examined this motif

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[4]Ai Su-shan. p. 36.

under 8X magnification and I have been unable to identify it precisely. My first impression was that it was that of a flying swallow. If this is indeed what it is, it is well suited as a good luck symbol. Williams writes,

> "The coming of the swallows and their making nests in a new place, whether dwelling place or store, are hailed as an omen of approaching success, or a prosperous change in the affairs of the owner or occupier of the premises."[5]

On the following page we find the floral pattern continuing but instead of emphasizing the flower, emphasis is placed upon the undulating vine or creeper. No attempt is made at reproducing foliage that is faithful to an identifiable species and on T#044 the "vine" has become so stylized that it has lost its botanical identity entirely and appears as an open worked scroll design. While T#349 is a little more realistic with a half lotus blossom dominating the center of the vine, it takes only a little knowledge of botany to realize that lotuses have stalks that emerge from the water and are not formed on vines. The lotus is more often found with Buddhist iconography than Taoist. The lotus is symbolic of the Budda and is associated with purity because it emerges clean from the dirty waters of the pond. The lotus does have Taoist symbolic meaning and in paintings and flower arrangements and is emblematic of summer: the zenith of the yang season.[6]

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[5]C.A.S. Williams. Outlines of Chinese S[illegible]ism and Art Motives. (Taipei: Cave[illegible] Co., [illegible] p. [illegible]

[6]Ai Su-shan. p. 36.

T#044

T#349

T#448

T#666

T#286

Geometric meanders or diapers are occasional border motives that have had a long association with talismanic symbolism and can be found on Chinese bronze vessels as early as the Shang dynasty (1766-1122 B.C.).[7] In the collection on which I have based my studies only two types have been observed: the "T" pattern as on T#666 and T#286; and the rolling thunder pattern as found on T#448. The "T" pattern shows some variation as to the heaviness of line as can be seen in the two examples T#666 and T#286. The "T" pattern is a variation of the swastika and came to China from India via Buddhism.[8]

The Chinese term for the swastika is wan tze (萬字) and is described as, "the accumulation of lucky signs possessing ten-thousand efficacies."[9] The much older and purely Chinese rolling thunder motif is very potent talismanic symbol as it is one of the most powerful of the yang elements. The constant repetition of the rolling thunder diaper must produce a deafening roar to hiding specters or ghosts within sight of the talisman. The origin of this motif is the archaic character  which means to

[7]Masterworks of Chinese Bronze in the National Palace Museum. (Taipei: National Palace Museum. 1969),p.46.

[8]C.A.S. Williams, p. 381.

[9]C.A.S. Williams, p. 291.

T#579

T#486

T#221

T#280

evolve and by extension to transform: which provides its talismanic origins.[10]

The last to be mentioned motif is perhaps the sole symbol that can be so readily identified with China: the dragon. The dragon also is a major motif that has come down from the bronze ritual vessels made in the Shang dynasty.[11] In the west the dragon evokes an image of the dinosaur: immense, powerful, and ferocious. In China it represents, "all things good: wisdom, justice, harmony, righteousness, benevolence, and gook luck".[12] Du Bose writes,

> "The dragon is the Great Mystery itself. Hidden in the caverns of inaccessible mountains, or coiled in the unfathomable depths of the sea, it awaits the hour when it shall slowly put itself in motion. It spreads out of its coils in the clouds of the tempest, and washes its mane in the darkness of foam crested whirlpools. Its claws are the prongs of lightning; its scales gleam in the bark of rain swept pine trees. Its voice is heard in the hurricane which sweeps away the dead leaves of the forest and quickens a new spring. It is glorious and symbolic of that organic elasticity which makes vibrate the inert mass of worn out matter. Coiled upon its strength, it mixes its wrinkled skin in the battle of the elements, and for an instant is half revealed by the brilliant shimmer of its scales."[13]

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[10] Ibid., p. 291.

[11] Masterworks of Chinese Bronze p. 32

[12] E.T.C. Werner. A Diction[illegible] of Chinese [illegible] (New York: The Jualian Press, [illegible], p. [illegible]

[13] Ibid.,p. 297.

From Du Bose's description we can see that its many yang elements, lightning, action, coiling, etc., endow it with life renewing and transformational powers that enhance the effectiveness of the talisman. On the examples T#280, T#221, and T#486 we can see the writhing wriggling motion so adequately spoken of by Du Bose. The ones illustrated are only one side of the talisman. At the top of the talisman between the two dragons appears a flaming sphere or "flaming pearl". Rawson and Legeza write,

> "Far and away the most common and least understood of symbols derived from the Taoist cult is the flaming pearl or gem which dragons play with on thousands of paintings, jades, ceramics and embroidery robes. The pearl represents the essence of yin and [illegible] condensed into [illegible] and ch'i, sexu[illegible]ergy and vital [illegible], at once human and cosmic, enveloped in the fire of transformation. The dragon symbolize the creative energies within the pearl, and from it generate the cosmos. [14]

On T#579 we see that the dragon motif has been captured in a type of vine or creeper very reminiscent of the floral design previously discussed. In fact if it were not for the fact that T#486 has a dragon head, T#579 might be considered to be a kind of floral scroll pattern and might have gone unrecognized as a dragon motif.

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[14] Phillip Rawson and Laszlo Legeza. Tao: The Eastern Philos[illegible] of Time and Chan[illegible]. (New York: Bounty B[illegible]s, [illegible], p. [illegible].

Color Symbolism

One of the most striking elements that a person notices when first seeing a talisman are the bright bold colors that are used for the paper and ink. Talismans may be printed on five basic colors of paper stock that represent the five directions: north, black; south, red; east, green; west, white; and center, yellow. Although it is possible to find talismans of all these colors, red and yellow are by far the most predominant colors chosen.[1] Yellow is most favored as it was, until the end of the imperial system of China, the reserved color of the emperor and his mandates and orders were written on yellow paper. De Groot writes,

> "Charms are orders, mandates, injunctions. The most powerful mandates imaginable, obeyed by all men and spirits whom the celestial orb envelopes, are issued by the Son of Heaven, who is lord of gods and men equally. It is then a proof of the sagacity of man, that to enhance the power of his charms he perferably writes them on paper of the imperial colour."[2]

Secondly, only to yellow, is the color red; chosen because it is the color of the south and hence yang. Red also has additional talismanic qualities. Legeza writes,

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[1]This study is based upon 576 talismans; 94% are yellow, 4% red, 1% black, and 1% other colors.

[2]J.J.M. De Groot, The Re[illegible], Vol. VI. (Tapiei: Ch'eng Wen Pub[illegible], p. 1047.

> "...red was especially important in that it also symbolized blood, the life force, and was considered to have supreme magic powers. Red talismanic paper protected the whole family from pestilence and ills."[3]

In addition to being used as the base color of talismans, many talismans are printed with red ink. The use of red was, like using yellow paper, an imperial perogative and the yellow paper, red ink combination has a compounded talismanic power. Ideally this red ink was compounded from cinnabar which has long been an article of trade with Taoists who were interested in alchemy. Rawson and Legeza write,

> "Perhaps the most powerful symbolic natural substance of all, which has a profound meaning is cinnabar. This is a rosy-purple crystaline stone, sulphide of mercury. Ground up, it is the red pigment used in painting. But in Taoist symbolism it represents the nuclear energy of joined yang and yin."[4]

Cinnabar is also a major component of the special ink that is used on Chinese seals and most talismans are sealed with this color.[5] Although cinnabar red may be the theoretical ideal for ink used on talismans, the most commonly encountered color used is the ordinary black ink used for writing

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[3]Laszlo Legeza, Tao Magic: The Chinese Art of the Occult, (New York: Panthe[illegible]75), p. 27.

[4]Phillip Rawson and Laszlo Legeza, Tao: The Eastern Philosophy of Time and Change, (New York: Bounty Books,

[5]Na Chih-Liang, The Panoramic View of Chinese Seal Development, (Taipei: China Cultural Enterprises Ltd., 1972 p. 17.

Chinese characters with the brush. This is probably due to reasons more with utility than symbolism as this type of ink is much cheaper and easier to obtain for mass printing of talismans to be given away at the temple. An exception to this is sometimes encountered with talismans for the Pole Star God who uses black paper for the talisman. Black is the color of the north and therefore explains this use, but the other colors white, green, purple, etc, are not often seen.

San Ching (三) Symbolism

At the top part of the talisman, in many cases, will appear three dots, checks, spots, or circles that represent the San Ching (三清) trinity. This trinity is most often called the "Three Pure Ones" in English and according to Legeza,

> "The highest of the Taoist divinities are the Three Pure Ones of the Prior Heavens. These are the so called Primordial Heavenly Worthy, Elder Lord of the Heaven, controlling the past: the Precious Spiritual Heavenly Worthy, Ling Pao, Lord of the Earth, also known as the Jade Emperor, controlling the present; and the Precious Divine Heavenly Worthy, Tao-te, Lord of Man, also known as Lord Lao, controlling the future. They reside in the three highest heavenly realms."[1]

The importance of this trinity is central to religious Taoism because, "From the Three Pure Ones are generated the five movers or the five elements: wood, fire, earth, metal, and water; and from the five movers come the myriad things of nature."[2] Therefore, the San Ching trinity is viewed as the great regulators of the cosmsos and are important to include if one is trying to attempt to adjust the balance of the yin or yang elements of ones body or household.

By examining the examples on the following page we can see some of the various forms that this trinity is symbolized in. T#142 and T#422 show the most commonly seen

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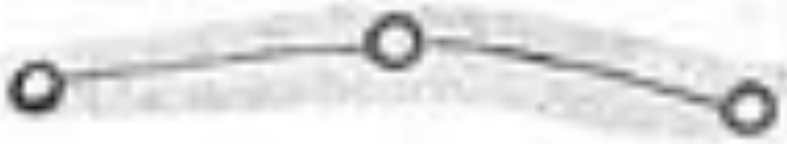
[1]Laszlo Legeza, Tao Magic: The Chinese Art of the Occult. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1975), p. 16.

[2]Michael Saso, The Teachi s of Taoist Master Chuan . (New Haven: Yale Univers ty ress, , p.

T# 142

T# 479



T#381

T# 422

T# 514

T# 626

T# 624

San Ching style and they vary only in the size of execution. Because of the suggested sillhouette of a bird, I have coined the term "bird tick motif" for this style. T#479 is also a brush tick and "rain drop" may be an appropriate term for this style. The three circles and link arrangement of T#381 is very suggestive of an asterism motif and would have been considered as such had it not been located at the topmost section of the talisman. The style of T#626 and T#624 show some individuality but do not readily bring to mind secondary symbolism. The final one to be discussed on the previous page is T#514 and is the most complicated and interesting symbol of the group. These three characters will not be found in a standard Chinese dictionary as they are esoteric forms for writing San Ching in a special script called tdze (諱 字) or term of avoidence.[3] (Terms of avoidence will be discussed in a separate section.)

One must be cautioned that not every group of three ticks or dots one encounters on a talisman can be only the San Ching. Another trinity, the San Kuan (三 官) also appear on talismans immediately below the phrase chih ling (勅令) as shown on the following page on T#179.[4]

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[3]Michael Saso, Chuan Lin Hsu Tao Ts A Collection of Taoist Manuals, Vol a pe eng en P . Co., 1975), p. 5757.

[4]Chen P'an Chuan, Han Chin Yi Chien Shih Hsiao Ch'i Chung, (Taipei: Academia

T#179 

--- chih
--- ling
--- San Kuan

This trinity represents the three powers of Heaven, Earth, and Water and has had a long association with talismans and religious Taoism.

Werner writes,

> "These Three Rulers are said to send down good or evil fortune on men, and to punish the wicked. The [illegible] the San Ku[illegible] originated [illegible]ng Heng [illegible], son of Ch[illegible]g Tao Ling ([illegible]), in the [illegible]f Ling Ti ([illegible]帝) (A.D. 16[illegible] the later [illegible]asty.[5] He [illegible]mposed a book of charms, purporting to cure all kinds of disease. The patient was required to write, on three scrolls, his name and surname and a promise to confess all his sins. One of these was offered to Heaven by being deposited on the summit of a high mountain, another to Earth, by being buried in the ground, and a third to the Water, by being thrown into the sea, a river, etc."[6]

Dore writes further that, "The Ruler of Heaven grants happiness (天官賜福), The Ruler of Earth remits sin (地[illegible]),

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[5]Chang Tao Ling is generally credited as the founder of religious Taoism and for this reason is sometimes referred to in western articles as the first Taoist "Pope."

[6]E.T.C. Werner, A Diction[illegible] of Chinese [illegible]thol[illegible], (New York: The Julian Press, [illegible] p. [illegible].

and the Ruler of Water delivers from evil (水官解厄).[7] The form illustrated on T#179 is virtually unchanged from example on bamboo slips that were used in the Han dynasty (206 B.C. to A.D. 196) instead of paper.[8]

[7]Henry Dore, Researches into Chinese Superstitions, Trans. M. Kelly, Vol. 6 (Taipei: Ch'eng Wen Publishing Co., 1966), p. 27.

[8]Chen P'an Chuan, p. 27.

Solar, Lunar, and Stellar Symbolism

Solar, lunar, and stellar deities form an important part of the pantheon of religious Taoism and the symbolism representing these deities appears on nearly all talismans from Taiwan. The convention for star symbolism can occur in one of three ways; by a character or phrase naming the deity or constellation, by a simple picture of the heavenly body, or by an asterism. Asterisms or "star diagrams" often appear in what Joseph Needham calls the "ball and link" convention and have been unchanged in design from at least the Han dynasty (202 B.C. to A.D. 265).[1] On some talismans all three types of symbolism appear while on others only one is used. By closely examining the examples which follow on the next two pages we can see the rich variation of celestial symbolism.

Solar symbolism commonly occurs in one of two fashions. The sun may be represented by a simple picture as in T#381-R or as the character erh (日) as in T#784-R, T#096, T#413-R, etc. The sun, called the "Great Yang" (太陽) in Chinese, has a very important function on a talisman because, "... the sun, the very source of universal light and fire, has the dignity of chief expeller and destroyer of demons."[2]

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[1]Joseph Needham, Science and Civilization in China, Vol. 3, (Cambridge: University Press, 1954), p. 276.

[2]DeGroot, Vol. 1, p. 317.

The moon or "Great Yin" (太陰), is also represented in a similar fashion with a picture, as in T#381-L or by the character yueh (月) as in T#784-L, T#096-L, T#413-L, etc. The moon is not thought to function, like the sun, as a demon destroyer, but more as a regulator of the yin essence. Mayer describes the moon as,

> "... representing the concreted essence of feminine principle in Nature, as the masculine principle is embodied in the Sun. The Moon is consequently regarded as chief and director of everything subject in the cosmic system to the Yin (陰) principle, such as darkness, the earth, female creatures, water, etc."[3]

To this list we can add ghosts and specters as they are yin creatures and subject to the powers of the moon. The symbolism for the sun and moon follows two patterns: they always appear as a pair, and the sun is always on the right or yang side and the moon will be on the left or yin side.

Stellar symbolism is found on talismans with or without the accompaniment of solar or lunar symbolism and chief among the stars and constellations is the Northern Bushel (北斗), our Big Dipper. The Northern Bushel is a nature's great clock and measure of one's allotted time on earth. DeGroot describes the seven stars of the Northern Bushel, in this passage as the "Bushel", by saying,

> "The seven stars of the Bushel, which are styled the Revolving Pearls or the Balance of Jasper, are arrayed so as to form a body of seven rulers. The Bushel is the chariot

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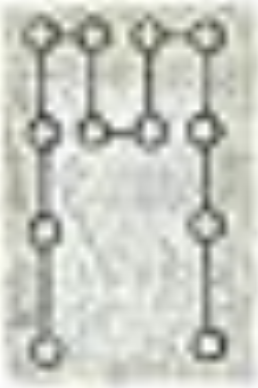
[3]William F. Mayers, The Chinese Reader's Manual, (Taipei: Ch'eng Wen Publishing Co., 1971), p. 288.

T# 381-L

T#381-R

T# 497-L



T# 497-R

T# 413-L T# 413-R

T# 686-L

T# 686-R

T# 479-L T# 479-R

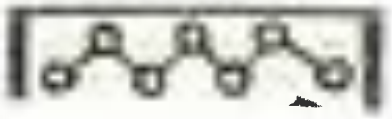
T#222-L

T#222-R

T#515-L T#515-R

T# 784-L

T# 784-R



T# 496

T# 096-L

T# 096-R

T# 632-R

> of the Emperor (i.e. of Heaven). Revolving around the pole, it descends to rule the four quarters of the sphere to separate the Yin and Yang: by so doing it fixes the four seasons, upholds the equilibrium between the five elements, moves forward the subdivision of the sphere, and establishes all order in the Universe."[4]

Because of its preoccupation with the measure of time, this constellation was associated with death and could be appealed to for an extension of one's alloted span of years. According to White, "The Spirits of Stars of the Northern Dipper (Bushel) record men's actions, both good and evil, and according to one's virtuous deeds, they add or cut off a portion of his life."[5] The Northern Bushel asterism is illustrated on the previous page by T#381-L, T#413-L, T#686-L, and T#479-L. The seven stars which make up this constellation have individual names and from the farthest one on the "handle" portion are: Heaven's Pivot (天樞), Heaven's Beam (天權), Jade Transverse (玉衡), Disclosed Yang (開陽), Gemmy Light (瑤光), Heaven's Armil (天璣), and Heaven's Jade-cog (天璇).[6] The three stars of the "handle" form a sub-group designated Piao (杓) and are charged with man's destiny and are popularly referred to as the Star of Happiness (福星), the

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[4]DeGroot, Vol.1, p. 317.

[5]William C. White, Chinese Temple Frescoes, (Toronto: The Univ. of Toronto Press, 1940), p. 174.

[6]Edward H. Schafer, Pacing the Void, (Berkely: Univ. of California Press, 1977), p. 51.

Star of Emolument (祿星), and the Star of Long Life (壽星).[7]

The asterism that is most often found paired with the Northern Bushel is the Southern Bushel (南斗) constellation. The constellation is always oriented on the right side of the talisman and is illustrated on T#381-R, T#479-R, T#413-R, T#686-R, etc. This constellation is also one that deals with long life, but does not seem to project the fear and awe of the Northern Bushel. In the literature concerning the Northern and Southern Bushels, the Northern Bushel seems to be rather well described, while the Southern Bushel is more often glossed over as a "longevity" star. On T#632-L and T#632-R, we can observe that the Northern Bushel is implored to "send an omen of blessing" (降禎祥) while the Southern Bushel, here termed 南辰, is appealed to "add years to one's alloted span" (添壽算).

If one is observant enough, it will be apparent that the orientations of the Northern and Southern Bushels show a wide variety of positioning and stylization. According to Saso, the orientation of the "handle" and "bowel" portions of the Northern Bushel have important magic function. He writes,

> "The tip of the Pole Star (Northern Bushel) handle ... is commonly called [illegible]-chun (璇璣) in esoteric terms. The direction in which the [illegible]-chun points is the gate of life, while the direction the open top of the dipper points is evil. A special chart is also made which shows the position of the

[7]Mayers, p. 301.

> star at any given time of the day and [illegible]. Furthermore, without knowing its location, the proper performance of exorcism, blessing, or even meditation is impossible."[9]

To determine the actual reasons for the differences in stylization of the Bushel may be difficult to determine with precision. Edward Schafer, in a personal letter, outlines the problems of identification, as he sees them;

> "...the use of arbitrary stylizations on the charms: much comparitive study might be necessary before all identifications are certain. In my experience, different texts represent constellations in different ways--not helping to make identification easy."[10]

Some of these representations of the Northern Bushel are quite old and have a long association with the occult. The "zig-zag" stylization of the Northern Dipper found on T#496, T#632-L, and T#096-L is found on the jade ceremonial objects of the Han dynasty (206 B.C. to A.D. 196) in this same form, while the more familiar "dipper" shape can also be traced to the Han.[12]

The other constellations shown like those of T#222-L, T#222-R, T#515-L, T#515-R, T#784-L, and T#784-L cannot be

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[9]Ibid, p. 246.

[10]Edward H. Schafer, Personal letter to James Kemp, 20 July, 1978.

[11]Shun-sheng Ling, "A Study of the Scepter kuei of Ancient China," Bulletin of The Institute of Ethnology Acedamia Sinica 20 (Autumn 1965): plate 14.

[12]Needham, Vol. 3, p. 241.

identified with any precision. In addition to the previous remarks of Edward Schafer, one must be aware that different constellations have the same arrangement of the "ball and link" configuration. T#784-R may be the constellation "Stomach" (胃), "Heart" (心), or "Horn" (角).[13] Thus, for the time being, these conventions can be recognized as constellations, but assigning these conventions to a particular constellation is speculative at this point. Although we cannot, at this point, conclusively identify all of the asterisms, we can say that they have been important elements of talismans from at least the Fourth Century A.D. where they appear on the talismans of Ko Hung (葛洪) author of the Taoist classic Pao P'u Tzu (抱朴子).[14] This work has numerous talismans shown and the Northern Bushel constellation is readily identifiable in the familiar "ball and link" motif previously described.

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[13]Schafer, Letter.

[14]DeGroot, Vol. 6, p. 1037.

The Six Chia (六甲) and the Six Ting (六丁) Spirits

An often appearing group of stellar deities that merit special consideration and description are the Six Chia (六甲) and Six Ting (六丁) Spirits. These spirits are invoked on a great many different talismans regardless of who is the main deity mentioned. Although they are secondary deities in terms of the talismans, they have a central position of importance in Taoist exorcism and are potent members of the Taoist pantheon. DeGrott describes the symbolism of these deities,

> "... Ting represents the south, and accordingly the devil destroying element fire. In the course of the Universe of Time,... ting recurs six times performing its exorcising functions; hence it is often that we see it in charms repeated, or in the form 六丁. Similar is the part played by chia,... assimilated with the east, where the devil destroying sun rises. Seeing that the two characters represent destruction of evil by the course of time or of the Universe, it is quite clear why they are preferably inscribed in charms which puport destruction of the unhealthiness or epidemics produced by the seasons."[1]

What DeGroot fails to note is the martial aspect of these deities and how the Taoist priest gains mastery over them in order to direct their actions. Saso writes that,

> "...each of the Six Chia Spirits is a general leading an army of spiritual soldiers. All are ready to leap forth at the summons and call of the Taoist, provided he has gained power over them by a knowledge of the talismanic charms and mantric incantations...."[2]

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[1] DeGroot, Vol. 6, p. 1044.

[2] Saso, Teachings, p. 142.

> The spirit generals, once brought under the Taoist's command, will come at his summons to obey whatever orders he gives them.... Through the spirits are mainly used to combat one's enemies in battle, they can also be used to cure illness, exorcise, and protect the Taoist from black magic used against him by a rival practitioner."[3]

From this excellent description of the martial aspects of the Six Chia Spirits, we need only to add that the Six Ting Spirits are military as well and function as the lieutenants under the Chia Spirits. Therefore, the symbolism of these deities is easily understood in the illustrations below.

T#387-1 T#387-R

T#515-L T#515-R

On T#387-L the Six Chia are called "powerful knights" (力士) while on T#387-R the Six Ting are called "heavenly soliders" (天兵). On T#487-L the Six Chia are called "Divine

[3]Ibid, p. 187.

generals" (神將) and on T#487-R the Six Ting are called the "divine soldiers" (神兵). This seems to emphasize the commander-soldier concept quite closely. T#515-L and T#515-R upset this neat symbolism by calling both the Six Chia and Six Ting spirits "divine generals" and not showing a superior-inferior relationship. We need to return once more to Saso for a description of one of the Chia spirits, Chia-shen (甲申). which will give an excellent account of the type of spirit we have been discussing. He writes,

> "The Chia-shen spirit...is ten feel tall, with the face of an ugly woman, yellow hair, and large protruding white teeth. On her head is a crown made of pearls. She wears a purple robe fastened with a jade belt, with scarlet sandals on her feet. In her hands she grasps a huge sword capable of splitting mountains. Over her breasts she wears chain-mail armor. Her mantric summons is "Cheng-jan!" Under her command is the lieutenant general Ting-hai and a hundred thousand spirit troops. By her power one can make swords fly and knives shoot out, break the enemy's ranks with self-propelling spears. Mounted troops or cavalry troops or bandits, there are none that do not bow down and fear her orders. By nature she loves to kill, and no one who meets her lives to tell."[4]

It is no wonder that Saso adds to this, "The Six Chia spirits are truly terrifying demons and their control is not a matter for the weak-hearted or the pretender among the Taoists."[5]

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[4]Saso, Teachings, p. 158.

[5]Ibid, p. 188.

The Eight Trigrams and Lo Shu Symbolism

An important element of many talismans which is also the quintessence of Taoist cosmological thinking are the Eight Trigrams of Fu Shi (伏羲) and the Lo Shu (洛書) diagram. By understanding the Taoist viewpoint regarding these two symbolic diagrams one can gain real insight into both religious and philosophical Taoism and how they interact. Fu Hsi (2852- 2738 B.C.), the first legendary emperor of China,[1] was inspired to make the Eight Trigrams after seeing a "dragon-horse" emerge from the waters of the Yellow River and for this reason the system is also called the Ho T'u (河圖) or "River Plan".[2] The Eight Trigrams of Fu Hsi are said to be a plan of

> "...the Prior Heavens, the abode of the transcendant and eternal Tao. The Prior Heavens are exempt from changes and represent the mystic sources of life, primordial breath, and blessing in the world..."[3] Moreover, "It is this chart which depicts the annual rebirth of the cosmos...and depicts the Yin and Yang aspects of the five elements as joined in blissful marriage, thus causing eternal or constant life."[4]

[1] William F. Mayers, The Chinese Readers Manual, (Taipei: Ch'eng Wen Publishing Co., 1971), p. 44.

[2] I Ch[illegible]: Book of Ch[illegible]s, Trans. James Legge, (New York: [illegible], 1964), p. 14

[3] Laszlo Legeza, Tao Ma[illegible]ic: The Chinese Art of the Occult, (New York: Pantheon [illegible]s, 1971), p. 16.

[4] Michael Saso, Taoism and the Rite of Cosmic Renewal, (Pullman: [illegible]on State Univ. Press, 1972), p. 56.

In addition to the Prior Heavens, there is also a Posterior Heavens; the abode of the common gods, where change does take place and this is represented by the Lo Shu (洛書) or Lo River writing.

The Lo Shu, although not as old as the Ho T'u, also hails from China's great antiquity. According to Cammann the Lo Shu,

> "...is supposed to have been first revealed on the shell of a sacred turtle which appeared to the mythical King Yu (Died: B.C. 2197) from the waters of the Lo River in the twenty third century B.C., at the time when this revered culture hero was striving to tame the floods which ravaged ancient China...From this quasi-historical t[illegible]he diagram can to be called the Lo Shu ([illegible]), meaning Lo River Writing."[5]

It is the Lo Shu that inspired King Wen to write the I Ching: Book of Changes during the Chou dynasty around B.C. 1105.[6] It was also King Wen that introduced the convention of writing the trigrams with solid and broken lines to replace the circles and dots of Fu Hsi.[7] The Lo Shu depicts the five elements as no longer joined but separated or divorced and "the elements no longer bring life, but move inexorably away from Yang and blessing to Yin and death...Yin is now the supreme ruler, and [illegible] has been overcome."[8] Because

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[5]Schuler Cammann, "The Magic Square of Three in Old Chinese Religion," History of Religions, (1971), p. 38.

[6]Saso, Cosmic Renewal, p. 58.

[7]I Ching, Trans. James Legge, p. 16.

[8]Saso, Cosmic Renewal, p. 58.

of the close association with yin and death, the Lo Shu diagram never appears alone on a talismans, but is always paired with the Ho T'u diagram. In this way the natural waxing and waning of the universe is represented by the inclusion of both diagrams. It must be mentioned, however, that the Ho T'u diagram, in the guise of the Eight Trigrams of Fu Shi, is a very frequent element on talismans without the inclusion of the Lo Shu diagram.

If it is agreed that it is desirable to include both the Trigrams of Fu Hsi and those of King Wen to represent the permutaions of the cosmos, one is faced with the problem of whether to use spots and circles or solid and broken lines for the scheme. Furthermore, there is the consideration of how one should arrange these two systems that is both eye appealing and space conserving. By consulting the illustrations on the following page we can see these systems, consider some possible combinations, and finally see the solution as it has been solved by the makers of the talismans in Taiwan. Because both the Fu Hsi and King Wen trigrams[9] use the same trigrams and only differ in how they arrange them, combining these two systems together, as shown by the diagram [10] in the lower lefthand corner, one can become confused as to the intended meaning. If one

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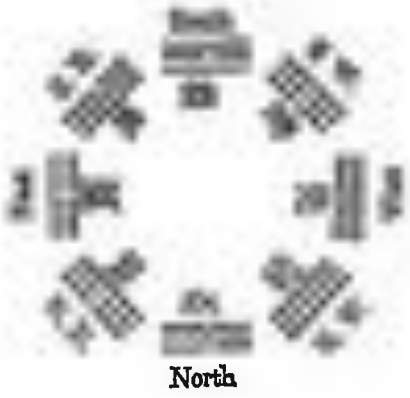
[9]Mayers, p. 335.

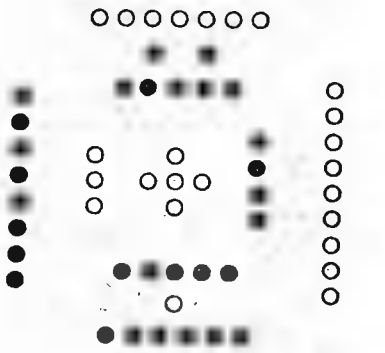
[10]Phillip Rawson and Laszlo Legeza, Tao: The Eastern Philosophy of Time and Change, (New York:Bounty Books,1973) p.14.

Fu Hsi Trigrams

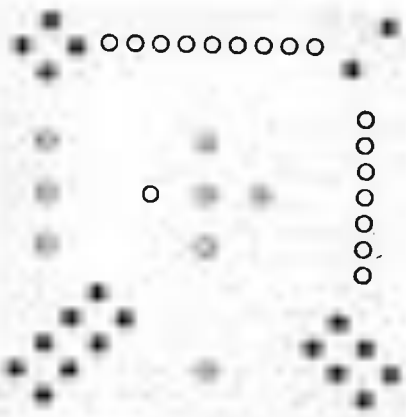
King Wen Trigrams



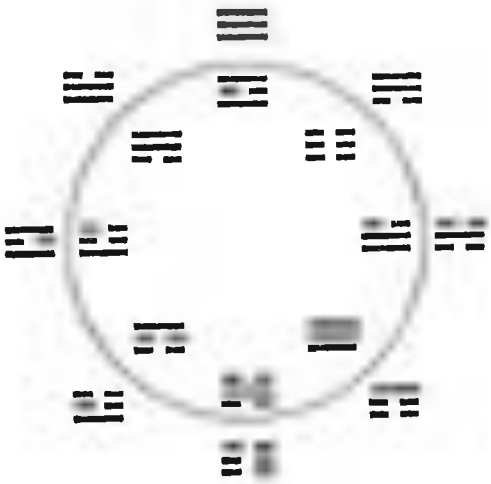
Ho T'u Diagram



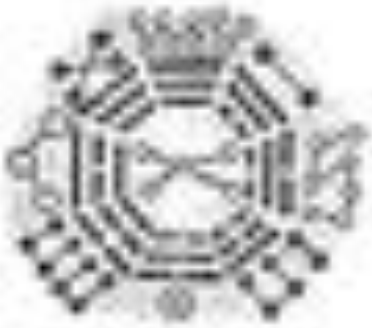
Lo Shu Diagram



Fu Hsi and King Wen Trigrams Combined



Fu Hsi Trigrams and Lo Shu Combined



T#347

chooses to use the forty-five dots and circles of the Lo Shu and combine them with the fifty-five of the Ho T'u,[11] an equally confusing arrangement would result. However, if one chooses to use the trigrams to represent the Ho T'u and circles and dots for the Lo Shu, then both may be combined in an eye appealing manner, conserve space, and retain their separate identity. This, in fact, is the convention chosen by those who design the talismans, and we can see this solution on the example from T#347. The Fu Hsi Trigrams or Ho T'u occupy the inner ring, while the Lo Shu occupies the outer.

There is still yet another way to combine these two systems in an appealing manner and that is to devise a new set of symbols that carry the same meaning. This is precisely what happened to the Lo Shu in the Sung (960-1279 A.D.) dynasty when the T'ai Chi T'u (太極圖) became the new symbol to replace the previous spot and circle convention. Cammann writes,

> "...sometime in the Sung, a new symbol appeared, to take over the...symbolic function of the Lo Shu. The new symbol was also intended to represent the workings of the Tao through the actions of the Yin and Yang, as the Lo Shu had once done; but the device was so much more obvious that it immediately found favor as a symbol, and it retained its popularity down to modern times."[12]

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[11] I Ching, pp. 15, 18

[12] Cammann, "Magic Squares of Three in Old Chinese Philosophy and Religion," p. 77.

The T'ai Chi T'u is probably the most easily identifiable Chinese cultural symbol for most western people; rivaled only by the dragon. Illustrated below is the Tai Ch'i T'u in its usual form from T#689 and a very common variation; the two characters T'ai Chi (太極) which are very commonly substituted for the T'ai Chi symbol.

T#689

T#676

The term T'ai Chi or the T'ai Chi symbol are symbolic of and synonymous with the state of the universe at the moment of creation or as it is also termed hun-tun (混沌).[13] From this primal matter came yin-yang and the universe.

Weiger describes the evolution of the hun-tun into yin-yang by writing,

> "In the beginning there was the hun-tun (混沌). This term must not be translated by chaos. It was the gaseous state of matter, absolutely homogeneous, so tenuous that nothing was visible or tangible. Then, matter, condensing, but always homogeneous, became tangible. Then, in the womb of homogeneous matter, coarser and heavier concretions were formed. The equilibrium was then upset. The cosmic mass (sic) split, the subtle rising, the solid descending. The subtle became heaven the solid became the earth. The influx of the heaven on the earth began immediately. The heaven operated, the earth complied. In the median space light-heat burst out, and set in

---

[13]Saso, Master Chuang, p. 215.

> motion the two wheels, that of abo
> and that of the five agents (五 ow.[14]

From this description of Weiger's we can more easily understand the representations of both the Fu Hsi Trigrams and the T'ai Chi symbol. The swirling churning motion of the yin and yang depicted in the T'ai Chi symbol represents the 'vapour' of Weiger's description. On the Fu Hsi Trigram scheme the trigram (乾, ☰) represents the paramount yang force and is for this reason placed at the top of the triagrams. The ch'ien trigram (乾, ☰), symbolic of pure yang, is a very potent element for talismans as it represents what is, "great and originating (元), penetrating (亨), advantageous (利), correct and firm (貞)."[15] Therefore, one will encounter the phrase yuan (元), (亨), li (利), (貞) quite frequently both in combination with the trigrams or as a separate phrase.[16]

The illustration below from T#028 shows how the Eight Trigrams of Fu Hsi have been tastefully combined with the T'ai Chi symbol to produce an effect which is very symmentrical and pleasing to the eye. We can also observe the charac-

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[14]Leo Weiger, A History of the Religious Beliefs and Philosophical Opinions in China, (New York: Paragon Book Reprint Corp., 1969), p. 337.

[15]I Ching, p. 57.

[16]The phrase ng has additional symbolic meaning that c in the section on Chu Yo Ko symbols.

ter ch'ien written directly above the ☰ trigram and the phrase [illegible] li [illegible] alongside.

T#038

T#038 and the previous example T#347, showing the Lo Shu - trigram combination, are archetypes because they exhibit the symbolism in almost perfect fashion. Many of the talismans under close scrutiny will display the Ho [illegible] Lo Shu symbols incorrectly. By consulting the six examples on the following page we can examine some of the move obvious discrepencies. The form of the trigrams and [illegible] symbol are correct on T#515 and shall serve as the reference point.

T# 515

T# 387

T# 062

T# 676

T# 360

T# 085

The trigram arrangements on T#387, T#062 and T#676 have become confused and only the four representing the cardinal points have retained their proper order. For the Lo Shu symbolism it was previously stated that the odd numbered light circles would represent yang and the even dark spots yin. We can see that this rule has only been partially followed on T#676 and totally disregarded on T#360 by using circles to represent both yin and yang numbers, while T#085 has used dark spots for the yin and yang numbers.

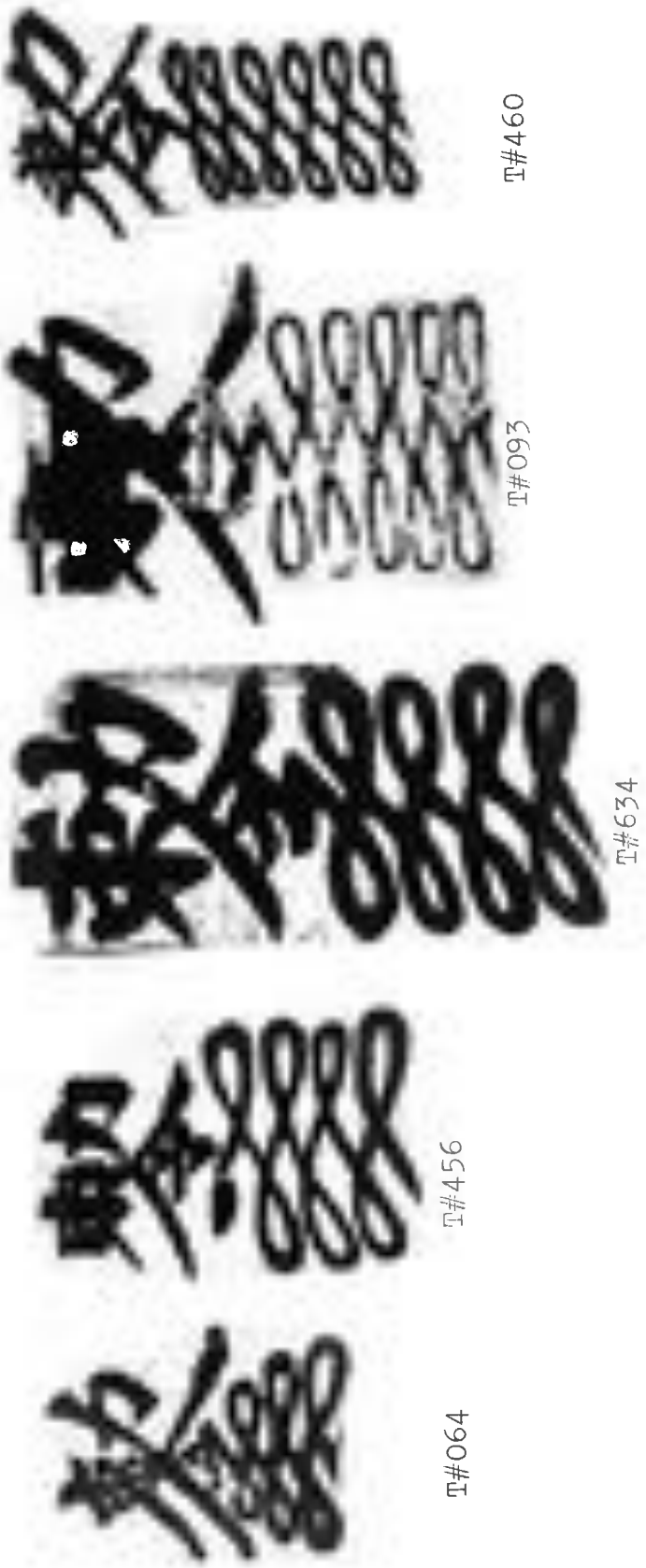
How is it possible to account for these variations, which are but a few among many? One should hesitate to label them mistakes as there is always a possibility that there may be an unknown and previously undisclosed symbolism present. However, one is probably not far from the mark if one assumes that these variations took place at the printer's shop where quality control was lacking and understanding of Taoist symbolism marginal.

Twisted Thread or Rope Pattern Symbolism

On the following two pages are reproduced several examples of the "twisted thread" or "rope thread" motif. The ones chosen for discussion are particularly well formed, but it must be mentioned that many of the twisted thread patterns on talismans are poorly executed and for this reason are very difficult to decipher with precision.

By looking for a moment at the following page, we can see the "loops" that issue out from the phrase chih ling (敕令); to command. These loops are termed the twisted thread or rope pattern motif.

Normally the name of a deity that is being ordered into service will appear immediately after the phrase chih ling (敕令). Therefore, it is logical that the loops are symbolic of a deity or group of deities that have some association with the number that the loops are written. Some deities have very strong association with certain numbers and are frequently encountered on talismans in other forms. The probable deity that is intended on T#064 is that of the Six Ting or Six Chia spirits. The seven loops on T#456 have a strong possibility of representing the Northern Bushel (北斗) constellation which has seven stars. T#634 has eight loops and may represent the Eight Trigrams of Fu Hsi. T#093 has ten loops or five double loops and five has a strong association with the Five Elements (五行). T#460 has twelve loops and is probably representing the


T#460
T#093
T#634
T#456
T#064

Six Chia and Six Ting spirits.

Although most often appearing as loops and with the phrase chih ling (敕令) the rope thread motif may be encountered with other characters and in a different style. On the previous page we can see that the rope thread motif has been added to the character feng (奉) and has six round loops. T#569, the character t'ien (天) has been affixed with six loops on the "leg" portion of the character. These may again be the Six Ting spirits. The character [illegible] (天), lightning, has eight spirals looping out from the bottom exactly like those of the chih ling type. The final character lei (雷), thunder, on T#111 has two twists on either side and help to make up the upper portion of the character ling (令), to command. DeGroot describes these loops that issue out of the character lightning (電) by writing,

> "In the sign [illegible], expressing lightning, the projecting strok[illegible]nifies the flash; therefore its effect as a charm is indefinitely increased by lengthening that stroke so that it looks like a spiral which at the same time represents the rolling thunder"[1]

Dore also makes mention of these loops spirals, but on the whole his explanations are not very reliable as they are so

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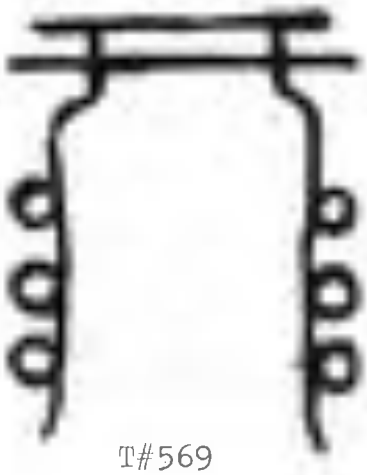
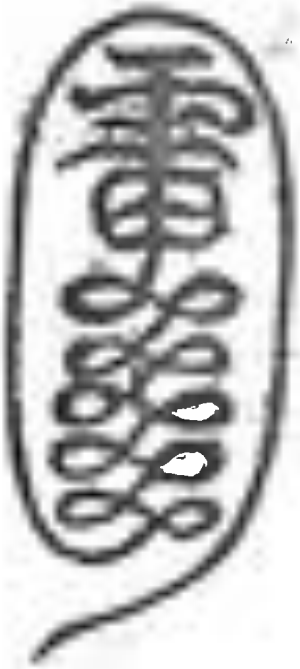
[1]DeGroot, Vol. 6, p. 1040.

T#085



T#569



T#462

T#111

inconsistent.[2] A case in point is he variously identifies fifteen loops as the Eight Trigrams of Fu Hsi in one place[3] and the very same symbol as the Six Earthly Branches (六地支) in another.[4]

[2]Dore's explanations for talismanic symbolism must be used with a great deal of caution. He makes many contradicting statements and he does not footnote his sources well. Therefore, one cannot tell how he reaches his conclusions.

[3]Dore, Vol. 3, p. 284.

[4]Ibid, Vol. 3, p. 254.

Terms of Taboo

Most of the characters that are employed on talismans are readily found in a standard Chinese dictionary although it must be admitted the proper Taoist meaning may not be always determined with a great deal of certainty. In addition to characters that have an esoteric meaning within Taoism, there is also a class of perculiarly Taoist terms that are not found in a standard dictionary. These characters are often bits and pieces of regular characters that have been combined to form secret, or at least taboo terms, called huei tdze (諱字). One such character is illustrated below from T#381.

T#381

This character is not found in a modern dictionary, but is found in the classical Kang Hsi Dictionary (康熙字典). DeGroot recognized this term on talismans, but because he relied upon the Kang Hsi Dictionary he failed to discover its true secret Taoist meaning and symbolic nature.

DeGroot, quoting the Kang Hsi Dictionary as his source, writes,

> "When a man dies, he becomes a kwei (鬼,ghost), when perceived by men, frightens them. And when a kwei dies, it becomes a fan (梵) which terrifies the kwei which sees it. If, therefore, this character in chew writing is pasted above a door, the effects of the work of all kwei which exist are removed a thousand miles from the spot."[1]

At face value this definition seems valid enough to explain its place on a talisman, but there is a deeper and more significant explanation of this term which can only be found in secret Taoist manuals. Michael Saso has been successful in having a great collection of these, before secret, manuals printed and made available to researchers for the first time. From this collection, the Chuang-Lin Hsu Tao Tsang, the term can be correctly identified and explained.

On the following page this character is shown as it is written stroke by stroke and each stroke of the character is a phrase or deity finally forming a spell; thirty-three in all. To the right of each stroke is a number which will be translated as below,

1) Heavenly Ruler, Presiding over the First Period
2) Earthly Ruler, Presiding over the Middle Period
3) Water Ruler, Presiding over the Last Period
4) The Six Stars of the Southern Bushel

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[1]DeGroot, Vol. 6, p. 1046.

[2]Michael Saso, Chuang Lin Hsu Tao Tsang: A Collection of Taoist Manuals, Vol. 20. (Taipei: Cheng Wen Pub. Co., 1975), p. 5943, 5944.

紫微

(5) The Seven Stars of the Northern Bushel
(6) The Duke of Thunder
(7) The Mother of Lightning
(8) The Master of Wind
(9) The Count of Rain
(10) General Tung
(11) General Ko
(12) General Chou
(13) desire
(14) huge
(15) prosperity
(16) civil
(17) honest (and)
(18) martial
(19) assistance
(20) to raise
(21) Field Marshall T'ien Peng (The Element Metal)
(22) Field Marshall T'ien Yo (The Element Wood)
(23) Sagely True Prince Yi (The Element Water)
(24) Field Marshall Hsin T'ien
(25) King of Beheading Ghosts and Demons
(26) to depart (and)
(27) to arrive at
(28) the firey
(29) Heaven
(30) Honorable
(31) Sage
(32) Great Emperor of the Pole Star;
(33) all completely arrive!

We can see why the ghosts of the definition quoted by DeGroot would want to "remove themselves a thousand miles" if such a host of divine spirits were about to gather!

Another such character that appears is the character ling (靈) which has been described as having spiritual "power" by DeGroot[3] and "effective" by Dore[4]. Neither, however, explain why this character is both effective and powerful. The explanation for the character ling (靈) can

[3]DeGroot, Vol. 6, p. 1045.

[4]Dore, Vol. 3, p. 229.

be found by consulting the Taoist manuals. This character, too, is a kind of magic spell whereby each of its twenty eight strokes represents one constellation of the Chinese system of astrology. These constellations are,

> "(1) The Horn, (2) The Neck, (3) The Bottom, (4) The Room, (5) The Heart, (6) The Tail, (7) The Seive, (8) The Measure, (9) The Ox, (10) The Girl, (11) Emptiness, (12) Danger, (13) The House, (14) The Wall, (15) Astride, (16) A Mound, (17) The Stomach, (18) Mao, (19) The End, (20) To Bristle Up, (21) To Mix, (22) The Well, (23) The Imp, (24) The Willow, (25) The Star, (26) To Draw a Bow, (27) The Wing, and (28) The Cross Bar."[5]

The twenty-eight strokes of the character ling (靈) and the constellations it represents are illustrated below,

"1 一 角
2 二 亢
3 干 氐
4 干 房
5 冂 心
6 冂 尾
7 冂 箕
8 冂 斗
9 雨 牛
10 雨 女
11 雨 虛
12 雨 危
13 雨 室
14 雨 珀
15 雨 奎
16 雨 婁
17 雨 胃
18 雨 昂
19 雨 畢
20 雨 皆
21 雨 參
22 雨 井

[5]Mayers, pp. 356, 357, 358.

23 [illegible] 鬼　　26 [illegible] 張
24 [illegible] 柳　　27 [illegible] 翌
25 [illegible] 星　　28 [illegible] 軫　　"6

From this information we can say that the term [illegible] ([illegible]) illustrated below on T#349 can be best described as being "effective" and "powerful" because it is representing the twenty-eight stellar deities of the Chinese zodiac.

T#349

[6]Saso, Taoist Manuals, Vol. 20, p. 5757.

Chu Yo Ko (祝由科) Terminology

Chu Yo Ko (祝由科) is a kind of Taoist system of healing with charms that employ characters that have additional radicals added to them to form the magic rubrics of this system. According to tradition this system was developed by the legendary Yellow Emperor (2697-2598 B.C.). Kuo Li-cheng writes,

> "An account of the origins of chu yo ko asserts that the science was set down by the Yellow Emperor, who was believed to have a profound understanding of medicine himself. He feared, however, that his knowledge might be lost and that future doctors might forget the most efficacious cures. He ther[illegible] ordered his official historian Tsang Chieh [illegible]), to structure chu yo ko into an organized syste[illegible] healing.
>
> Tsang Chieh divided chu yo ko into two parts: the secret characters and the five thunder charm characters. [illegible]e radical for rain, [illegible] ( ) was the "ruler" ( ) of the secret ch[illegible]t[illegible]s. [illegible] ( ) the radi[illegible] for ghost, was the [illegible]i[illegible]er ( ), [illegible] the second m[illegible] important radical, t[illegible] se[illegible]h acters. [illegible]he five thunder charm characte[illegible]e radical [illegible] (尚) was the general, while [illegible] (食) was the [illegible]er sign. Other miscellaneous [illegible]als lent their powers to the five thunder charms to help them expel evil spirits and cure illness."[1]

Although we look at the early date of the Chu Yo Ko system with some disbelief, there is no doubt that this system can be traced accurately to at least the Sung dynasty in 1045 A.D., when a secret manual containing these characters was found and published by Chen Chih-pang (陳治邦).[2]

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[1]Kuo Li-cheng, "Chu Yo Ko," Echo. Vol. 4, No. 10 (Nov. 1974), p. 49.

[2]Ibid.

The earliest western writer who describes the Chu Yo Ko healing system appears to be Dr. J. Dudgeon who founded the Peiking Union Medical College in 1861.[3] His article written in 1869 under the title, "Chinese Healing Arts," was published in the December, 1869 issue of The Chinese Recorder and Mission Recorder.

In Researches into Chinese Superstitions, Henry Dore uses many examples of talismans employing the Chu Yo Ko rebus, but strangely, he never mentions the system. DeGroot was apparently unaware of the system when he wrote The Religious System of China, because he illustrates three of these characters and comments on them by writing, "These characters occur in no human dictionary, but are elementary symbols in whimsical combinations, evidently harbouring some mystic meaning."[4] DeGroot's work is most methodical and his footnotes excellent and, therefore, if he had some notion of the origin of these characters it would not have passed without comment. Che'en Hsiang-ch'un makes an attempt to describe the "extra-radicals" added to regular characters by writing,

> "The combinations of shang-shih (尚食) is of great importance in charm inscription. It is frequently used in charms against disease."[5]

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[3]Pierre Huard and Ming Wong, Chinese Medicine, (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1972) p. 157.

[4]DeGroot, Vol 6, p. 1306.

[5]Ch'en Hsiang-ch'un, "Examples of Charm Against Epidemics with Short Explanations, "Folklore Studies, Vol. 1, (1942), p. 51.

But he admits his frustration at his inability to solve this problem by adding, "It is very difficult to get the real meaning of this combination."[6] He goes on to muddy the waters with two theories of his own that are at best described as "speculative." It was not until the article by Kuo Li-cheng do we get an idea of what these extra radicals mean and how they function.

As has already been explained, these Chu Yo Ko characters are most often connected with medical useage, but they do occur on ping an talismans from Taiwan in a very restricted form. Below are illustrated four characters, normally written yuan (元), heng (亨), li (利), cheng (貞), as they appear on T#594.

yuan heng li cheng

T#594

The extra radicals that have been added are shang (尚) and shih (食). Yuan, heng, li, cheng are the first four words that begin the commentary on the I Ching (易經) as written by King Wen (文王). Because of this, they are sometimes used to represent first, second, third, and fourth. However, they have a far more significant symbolic meaning as symbolizing the "inception, climax, balance, and anti-climax"

[6] Ibid.

of the universe from creation to destruction.[7] Because of their being symbolic of the flux of the universe, they have, since the Sung dynasty (960-1279 A.D.), been symbolic of the four seasons: yuan representing spring; heng, summer; li, fall; and cheng, winter.[8]

Characters that are very similar to Chu Yo Ko style also appear on papers and parephenalia of Chinese secret societies. Stanton describes several tens of characters that have had the extra radicals rain (雨), tiger (虎), water (氵), or ghost (鬼) added to them.[9]

Stanton further mentions that the purpose of the extra radicals was to conceal the meanings to outsiders[10] and also correctly associates these characters to those on talismans. He writes,

> "Priests and sorcerers employ superfluous characters and phaseograms similar to the above in writing spells and charms to exorcise evil spirits or dispel evil spirits or dispel evil influences."[11]

Saso, writing about Taoist secrecy in ritual, has some comments that would equally apply to Taoist codes like

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[7]Herbert Chatley, "Chinese Mystical Philosophy in Modern Terms," The China Journal of Science and Arts, Vol. 1 (1923), p. 212.

[8]Needham, Vol. 2, p 486.

[9]William Stanton, The Triad Society [illegible] Earth Association, (Hong K[illegible] and Walsh Ltd., 1900), p. 40.

[10]Ibid, p. 91.

[11]Ibid, p. 93.

Chu Yo Ko. He writes,

> "The ritual of religious Taoism is esoteric; that is it is not meant to be directly understood and witnessed by all of the faithful. The esoteric meaning of Taoist ritual and magic is concealed from all but the initiated; only after many years of training and gradual introduction secrets is the disciple deemed worthy of elevation to the rank of master and full knowledge of the esoteric meanings of religious ritual."[12]

Therefore, it is safe to say that the key to the deeper meanings to the Chu Yo Ko symbols rests with the Taoist masters who are probably quite content not to reveal the deeper meaning to the curious.

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[12]Michael Saso, "Orthodoxy and Heterodoxy in Taoist Ritual," Religion and Ritual in Chinese Society, Arthur P. Wolf Ed. (Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 1974), p. 325.

Phrases and Terms Imploring Peace, Harmony and Tranquility

The most often encountered phrase expressing a desire of peace and tranquility is p'ing an (平安) and for this reason it has been chosen as the type name for the talismans described in this thesis. Seldom does one encounter a talisman distributed by a temple without this phrase used in some form. On the following page are illustrated five of the most often encountered sentences that this phrase will be a major component. These sentences translate as follows:

T#361 Ho [illegible] an [illegible]); May the whole fam[illegible] peac[illegible] tranquil!

T#522 [illegible]): May the house [illegible]t peace, and tranquil!

T#360 Ho [illegible] an [illegible]); May the whole fam[illegible] peac[illegible]nquil!

T#388 Ho [illegible] an ([illegible]); May the whole fam[illegible] peace [illegible]quil!

T#496 [illegible] fu [illegible] an [illegible]); ex[illegible]l[illegible] bo[illegible], peace and tranquility protected!

Other themes that express a desire for slightly different hopes are shown on the next six sets of paired couplets. At the risk of being accused of seeing yin-yang symbolism in everything, one can make a strong case for such an interpretation of these lines as they are often times paired with one sentence expressing a positive (yang) desire while the other expresses a negative (yin) statement. Yang statements request a blessing, while the yin statement emphasizes exorcism, banishment, or control of ghosts, etc.

T#496

T#388

T#360

T#522

T#361

By examining these couplets, that are illustrated on the following page, this pattern will become apparent. For example:

T#497- A. [illegible] (福祿延年); May happiness be bestowed and life lengthened!

B. [illegible]; May evil be expelled and ghosts banished!

T#620- A. [illegible] (千災[illegible]); May a thousand catastrophes be swept away!

B. [illegible] (百福[illegible]); May a hundred blessings be received!

T#689- A. Kuo [illegible] min an (國泰民安); May the nation be at peace and the people tranquil!

B. [illegible] (風調雨順); May the winds be harmonious and the rain favorable!

T#686- A. [illegible] fu [illegible] (百福來臨); May a hundred blessings descend (from Heaven)!

B. [illegible] sao [illegible] (千災掃盡); May a thousand catastrophes be entirely swept away!

The final two couplets deal with control of ghost and spirits:

T#341- A. Fu chu' t'ien hsia wu tao kuei (符鎮天下[illegible]); May this talisman banish all [illegible] (and)

B. [illegible]

T#323- A. [illegible] (符鎮宅中[illegible]); May this talisman suppress [illegible] within the household (and)

B. [illegible]


驅邪逐怪
錫福延年

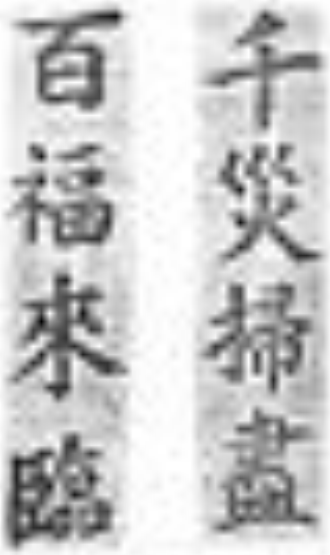
A--T#497--B


百福迎来
千災掃去

A-T#620-B


風調雨順
國泰民安

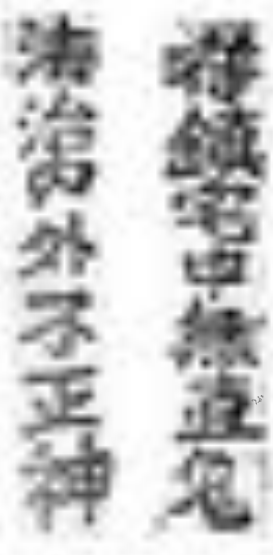
A-T#687-B


千災掃盡
百福來臨

A-T#686- B


符驅天下無道鬼
法治人間不正神

A--T#341--B


神鎮宅中無道鬼
海治外不正神

A--T#323--B

All of these couplets can be translated with the aid of a dictionary and do not present problems of special Taoist terminology.

Buddhist Symbolism and Influences on Taoist Talismans

The talismanic tradition in China is undoubtedly Taoist in origin, but talismans do exhibit Buddhist symbolism and borrowed phrases and terms from Buddhism, especially of the tantric form. The most often encountered tantric symbol is the mantra. DeGroot defines the mantra as,

> "...spells by which, besides religious sanctity, felicity of all living things being insured and promoted, so that their purpose is not essentially different from that of the spells in the Taoist system."[1]

The inclusion of Buddhist terminology into Taoist magic and talismanic usage can be traced to the Ch'ing-wei (清微) sect of the Tang dynasty (589-904 A.D.) located at Hua Shan (華山) in Shen Hsi province (陝西省).[2] Because of the long inclusion into Taoist usage, one is surprised that only one phrase, Om mane padme hum! is commonly encountered on ping an talismans. This phrase is most often translated as, "Hail the jewel in the lotus!" and is used by Buddhists to invoke the special help of the Kuan Yin Boddhisattva.[3] Although each of the syllables of this mantra carry a special magical meaning, the first and last words of this mantra, om and hum, have particular functions as terms for the

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[1]DeGroot, Vol. 6, p. 1061.

[2]Saso, Master Chuang, p. 17.

[3]John Blofeld, [illegible], (Boulder: Shambala, 1978), p. 130.

T# 707

T# 092

T# 326

T# 690

T# 296

T# 142

subduing of ghosts and demonic spirits. Master Hua writes,

> "The word (om, 唵) is so powerful that, be they evil ghosts or gods, all must follow the rules. [illegible]) causes all the ghosts and spirits to listen with palms together to the recitation of the mantra."[4]

The magic function of the last syllable of the mantra, hum, is described in full by David-Neel. She writes,

> "Hum! at the end of the formula, is a mystic expression of wrath used in coercing fierce deities and subduing demons. Hum! is a kind of mystic war cry: uttering it is challenging the enemy."[5]

By looking at the examples on the preceding page, we can see how the mantra, Om mane padme hum!, has been incorporated into Taoist terminology and usage on talismans. On the example shown on T#092 we see how the mantra is ordinarily written using Chinese characters. T#707 is especially interesting as this talisman uses Sanskrit letters to write the mantra.[6] The use of Sanskrit letters on talismans is not common, but they are occasionally found. The single word om (唵) is sometimes written at the top of the talisman in the same position that the more Taosit phrase chih ling (敕令) is found. T#326 shows this character as it occurs in isolation as T#096 shows the character hum

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[4]The Dharani Sutra, Trans. The Buddhist Text Soc. (San Francisco: The Buddhist Text Society, 1976), p. 142.

[5]Alexandra David-Neel, [illegible], (New York: Dover Publications, 1971), p. 262.

[6]"Sanskrit Characters," The China Review, Vol. 7, (July 1878 to June 1879), p. 352.

separated from the mantra. It is very common to find both of these words alone and disassociated from other parts of the mantra. The two terms ya chiao (唖吽) on T#142 are, according to DeGroot, varient forms of om-hum (唵 , 吽).[7] The last to be mentioned Buddhist symbol is that of T#690, the swastika. The Chinese term for swastika is wan tzu (萬字) and is, "the accumulation of lucky signs possessing ten thousand efficacies and is also regarded as the seal of Buddha."[8] The Om mane padme hum! phrase has become a standard part of the ping an talismans of Taiwan and is freely used with both Taoist and Buddhist deities. On the following page we can see that on T#026 the mantra is used on a talisman from a temple for the Buddha. Also, on this talisman are the Eight Trigrams of Fu Hsi; certainly a Taoist symbol. On T#028, the talisman shows the Buddha receiving a command from the Taoist Ministry of the Thunderbolt! These are just two examples of how Taoist and Buddhist symbols and deities have become freely mixed in the folk religion of Taiwan. The reasons for this mix are detailed by Lin Heng Tao. He writes,

> "These temples established in the past by ignorant and uneducated immigrants (from Fukien and Kuangtung provinces) often display a number of absurd errors when examined from the point of view of Taoist and Buddhist doctrines, rites, institutions, etc. Often

[7] DeGroot, Vol. 6, p. 1061.

[8] Williams, p. 381.

T#026

T#028

> one discovers some ridiculous errors. For example, taking a Buddhist deity and identifying it incorrectly as a Taoist deity. Or, taking many totally unrelated idols and worshipping them in a single temple. This state of affairs is seldom seen in the provinces of Mainland China. This can be said to be one unique feature of Taiwan's folk religious beliefs."[9]

Therefore, from this description of Taiwan folk religion by one of the foremost Taiwanese experts in the field, we can understand how the Taoist and Buddhist exchange of symbolism came about. On many of the talismans from Taiwan this dual symbolism is commonly exhibited.

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[9]Lin Heng Tao, Taiwam Ssu Miao Ta Chuan, (Taipei: Ching Wen Publishing Co., 1974), pp. 34-35.

Taiwanese Influences and Characteristics of Mandate Talismans

Based upon the illustrations accompanying the works of Dore,[1] DeGrott,[2] Legeza,[3] Topley,[4] and others, the Taoist talismans from Taiwan do not radically differ from those of mainland China or South-east Asia with the exception of only two variations that may be termed "Taiwanese" in character. These characteristics are the inclusion of place and temple names on the talismans and the inclusion on the talisman of very local deities or spirits that might be rightly called ghosts themselves.

The inclusion of the temple and place name is a great aid to a researcher as a device to fix a particular talisman to a certain Taiwan locale. However useful this may be to the researcher, the probably intention of the temple was a bit of low key propaganda to spread its fame to other parts of the island when the pilgrims returned home. This is not to say that the inclusion of the temple and place name is exclusively restricted to Taiwan, but in the many hundreds of illustrations of talismans mentioned in the works above only two include

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[1]Dore, Researches in to Chinese Superstitions, vols. 1,2,3, passim.

[2]DeGroot, The Religious System of China, vol. 6, pp. 1037-1045, passim.

[3]Legeza, Tao Magic, passim

[4]Topley, Paper Charms, passim

a place name;[5] none a temple name.

In this study one hundred and ninety two talismans include both the place and temple names; ninety have the temple name, and eighteen a place name; demonstrating clearly that this is a distinctive feature of the talismans from Taiwan.

The inclusion of local spirits and deities into the talisman is a feature that may be truely unique to Taiwan. For the most part, the deities which make up the Chinese pantheon found in Taiwan are those that were brought to Taiwan in the various waves of immigration during the past three hundred years and can be readily found in the accounts of Chinese folk religion in western writings before the fall of the mainland to the communists in 1949. Their inclusion into the talisman are a continuation of the format and style established many centuries ago in the Taoist tradition; especially the Taoist-folk tradition found in the two coastal provinces of Fukien and Kwangtung. However in some cases, a class of spirits, which are more properly classified as powerful ghosts rather than proper gods, sometimes occupy the traditional position of a "regular" god. Although these gods are sometimes honored with the title duke (公)[6] or king (王),

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[5] Dore, Researches into Chinese Superstitions, vol.2, p. 224 and Legeza, [illegible], figure 39.

[6] [illegible]ery comm[illegible] titles are [illegible] tou kung (金斗公) and you [illegible] kung (有[illegible]公).

one can clearly discover the true status of these spirits by either the style of worship[7] offered to them or by the names of their shrines; very often termed ssu (祠) or shrine instead of miao (廟), or temple. Wang characterizes these spirits as,

> "...supernaturals who may be powerful but who lack legitimate authority. People say these lesser spirits have no sense of justice and will respond to anyone who makes offerings to them. Popular opinion holds that only lowly types like gamblers and prostitutes worship at these shrines, and they do so at night rather than during the day."[8]

Very commonly these spirits are associated with bones discovered while plowing, drowning victims, and others who have suffered a cruel fate with no family members to care for their life in the world of shades. In this condition they are sometimes referred to as ku hun (孤魂), "orphaned souls".[9] and are clearly in the ghost class. Over a period of time it is possible for these spirits to develop a following and become "legitimate" members of the pantheon.

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[7]The article by C. Stevan Harrell, "When a Ghost Becomes a God," Arthur P. Wolf ed. Chinese Ritual and Religion (Stanford: Stanford Univer[illegible] pp. 192-206 is an excellent source for this class of spirits and worship.

[8]Wang S[illegible]sing, "Taiwanese Architecture and the Supernatural," [illegible]ligions and Rit[illegible] in Chinese Societ[illegible], p. 190.

[9]Tong, p. 34.

On the following page are two talismans, T#278 and T#417, which come from temples of this special class of deities. At the top of T#417 are printed the two characters i chung (義塚) which is the term for a cemetery for the bones of unidentified people, but otherwise there is nothing different about the talismans with regard to form, style, or terminology. The gods of talismans, T#278, however, seems to have made the transition to legitimate gods as there is nothing to "label" them precisely as gods originating from the ghost category and only by consulting the history of the temple is one made aware of their "ghostly" origins.[10]

Because most of these deities have shrines that are very small and the worship is irregular, they do not often have all of the niceties regular deities enjoy. Therefore, talismans that originate from this type of temple are probably not very numerous. In Appendix D of this thesis only eleven talismans[11] can be clearly and unquestionably designated as belonging to this class of ghost-deities.

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[10] [illegible]

[11] These talismans are T#084, 139, 140, 141, 229, 278, 384, 406, 417, 444, and 465.

T#278

T#417

The entrance of these deities into the Taoist-folk pantheon in Taiwan, and then their eventual appearance on talismans is,

> "...made possible by the basic nature of Chinese folk religion, an ecclectic system that draws belief from Buddhism, Taoism, and the Official-Confucian tradition, and thus inevitably contains varying explanations for the same phenomena. But Chinese folk belief is not merely, syncrestistic; it is flexible and individualistic in the sense that there is no one authority, no church or theocratic state, that establishes dogma and determines belief." [12]

The inclusion of these spirits on the talisman may be a unique contribution and innovation to the Taoist talismanic tradition that can be clearly labeled "Taiwanese" in origin.

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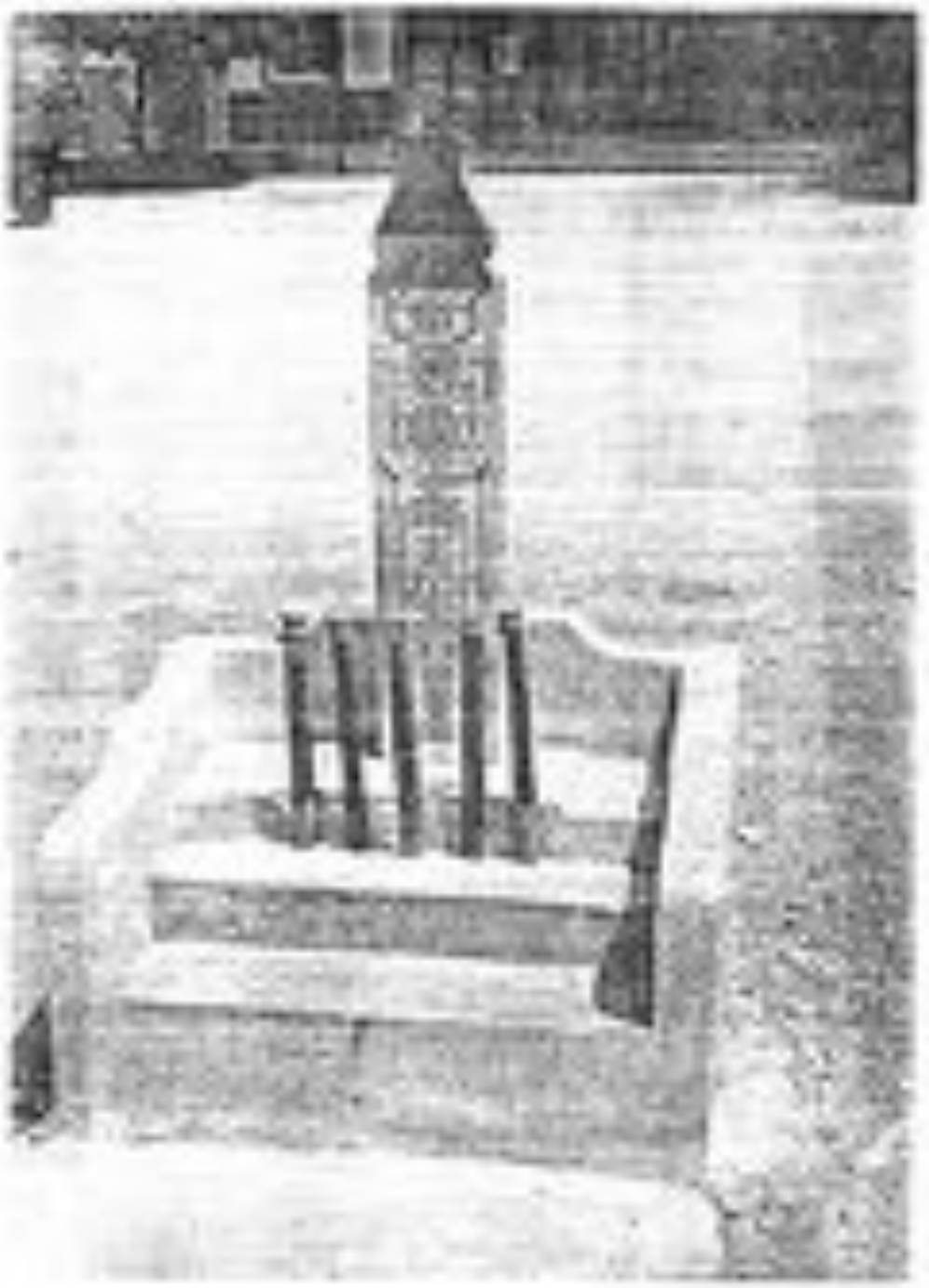
[12] C Steven Harrell, pp. 203-204.

Stone Mandate Talismans

The photograph of the talisman illustrated on the following page was taken in Hu Hsi Township ([illegible] Peng Hu County (澎[illegible]縣), Taiwan in March 1977. In layout, terminology, and symbolism, it does not vary in a significant manner from those mandate talismans already discussed. In the photo a number of easily identifiable symbols appear; [illegible]sms, Ei[illegible] Trigrams of Fu Hsi, terms of taboo [illegible] and [illegible], ornamental characters, the signature [illegible] and the final term <u>kang</u> (罡). It does radically differ from the other talismans in these respects: its placement out of doors, its communal rather than personal orientation; its material of construction, either ferro-concrete or stone; and the deities which it invokes, the Divine Army of the Five Directions (五營 [illegible]

These stone or ferro-concrete talismans are placed alongside the roads in Peng Hu County just before entrance into a hamlet or village and in front of the villabe temple which is the psychological and sociological "center" of the village if not its exact geographic center. Because they are placed out of doors, the talismans are made of stone or ferro-concrete to withstand the elements. These talismans act as a kind of spiritual "first line of defense" for the entire community and are quite conspicuous



Stone Mandate Talisman

Peng Hu County, Taiwan

by their large size; some as large as one meter tall by twenty centimeters in width, exclusive of the stand.

The talisman in the photograph invokes the protection of Field Marshall Lee, Great General of the Central Battalion of the Divine Army of the Jade Emperor (李元帥中元大將軍).[1] The Divine Army of the Jade Emperor is divided into five commanderies corresponding to the four cardinal points plus the center and "the spectral world has no more powerful and dangerous enemies than these Celestial Generals."[2] If one looks closely at the photograph he will notice five heads surrounding the character ta (大) which represent these Five Commanders.

In other villages and hamlets in and about Peng Hu County one will find other such stone talismans which are in no way different from paper talismans in their symbolism, terminology or the deities that they invoke. In fact they are mandate talismans in all respects except they are made of stone and placed out of doors. The custom of placing permanent stone mandate talismans out

[1]This deity is described more fully in this thesis in the section dealing with iconographic talismans.

[2]DeGroot, vol. 6, p. 1278.

of doors may be a unique addition to the talismanic tradition by the Taoists of Peng Hu County.[3]

[3]I have traveled extensively in Taiwan and I have never encountered stone mandate talismans elsewhere. I have found two other [illegible] with the inscription [illegible] and stones with the p[illegible] 石敢當) neithe[illegible] the narrow sense because they do not conform to the conventions of bureaucratic form. I have been informed by Michael Saso (Personal letter to James Kemp, Feb. 12,1979) that the posting of the Five Commanders is a very [illegible] rite [illegible] Taiwan by priest of the Mao Shan ([illegible] and Lu Shan ([illegible] 山) sects of Taoism. My claim o[illegible] uniquesness i[illegible] solely based upon the stone construction of these talismans

Chapter Four

PENNANT TYPE TALISMANS

The two pennant type talismans that appear in the photographs on the following page are of a special type that are carried by devotees while on pilgrimage. Sung Lung Fei describes the use and symbolism of these pennant talismans by the followers of the popular Taiwan deity, Matsu in 1971. Lung writes,

> "With regards to the use of the pilgrimage flag (進香旗) every member has one. On it are written the pilgrims name and in principle one cannot use it to represent someone else. However, supposing a father and son together join the pilgrimage, the son may carry the father's flag. However, the majority of the people don't do it in this manner because most of the sons have their own flags and do not use their father's flag. [illegible] image flags are also called Matsu Mandate Flags (令旗) and are the personal mark of protection for each pilgrim. Therefore, in ordinary times the flag is placed on the family's ancestral altar with the main deity. If the owner of the pilgrimage flag dies, the flag must be burned. With regards to children, they do not have a flag until they are sixteen years of age or older. Therefore, it is possible for one family to have several flags. Everytime they make a pilgrimage to Peikang they always take the flag and place it upon the altar of Matsu to be charged with the magic power of Matsu symbolizing a renewal of one's life."[1]

The pennant in the upper photograph is the more common pilgrimage flag while the lower one is the "mandate" flag. On the vertical white band where the staff is

[1]Sung, Lung Fei. "Taiwan Ti Chu Ma Tsu Miao Chin Hsiang Te Liang Ke Shih Li," Bulletin of the Institute of Ethnology. Vol. 31 (1971) p. 81. (Author's Trans.

Pennant Type Talismans

attached are written not only the devotees name as in the quotation by Lung but also the devotees address. On the streamer above the pennant proper is the date the flag was purchased written in the traditional sixty year cycle system of ancient China. This pilgrimage flag comes from the Matsu temple located in Hsin Kang Township ([illegible]鎮, Chia Yi County (嘉[illegible]縣), Taiwan.

The material the present day pennant talismans are made from is nylon but it is not improbable that they were made from silk in the not too distant past.[2] Traditionally, the staff was made of bamboo but this too has been modernized with a 1/4 inch plastic dowel. These pennants measure about twelve inches on the vertical edge by about eighteen inches on the horizontal edge, and in 1976 cost about seventy five cents U.S. After one purchases a pennant, a temple worker will write the date and the devotee's name on it and then stamp it with the temple's seal. The devotee would then take it and pass it over the main censer of the temple to "charge" it with magic power or ling (令). While on the pilgrimage the devotees will very often visit many temples

[2]Because the flags are burned at the death of a devotee it is not easy to acquire old specimens. However, I do have one silk pennant talisman donated by an elderly Taiwanese woman that is marked Chi Yu Year (1909 or 1969, I think the later is more likely). I also have a pennant talisman made from calico. The material has small white and yellow flowers with yellow an[illegible] background. It has five hand [illegible] and is very much "home made" l[illegible] tained from a small temple in [illegible]

of the same deity in different localities, or more often, several temples of different deities in a single location. Whatever the pattern, the pilgrims will almost always make a donation to the temple visited and have their pennant talisman stamped with the seal of that temple. Therefore, if an observer looks closely at the seals of an old pennant he will see many different seals representing not only different temples but also different deities.[3] The pilgrimage pennant in the top photograph has one streamer above on which the date is written. The lower photograph, of the mandate flag, is somewhat different in that it has two streamers: the red streamer has the name and address of the temple (斗六南聖宮関) while the pink streamer has the devotee's name and address. On the mandate flag illustrated, the seal of the temple is stamped prominantly to the right of the circled character for mandate, ling (令). Sung also mentions this special flag by saying,

> "The character ling (令) is actually symbolic of the command of Matsu (or other deity). Everytime Matsu leaves on a tour of inspection, the black mandate flag is in the vanguard of the procession opening the road."[4]

Symbolically the pennant in the upper photo is more ornate. It has the "T" border or swastika diaper that occurs on many paper talismans and has additionally a dragon gamboling about

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[3] One specimen I have has fifteen separate seals with at least five different deities readable. Older ones, would no doubt, have more.

[4] Sung Lung Fei, p. 110.

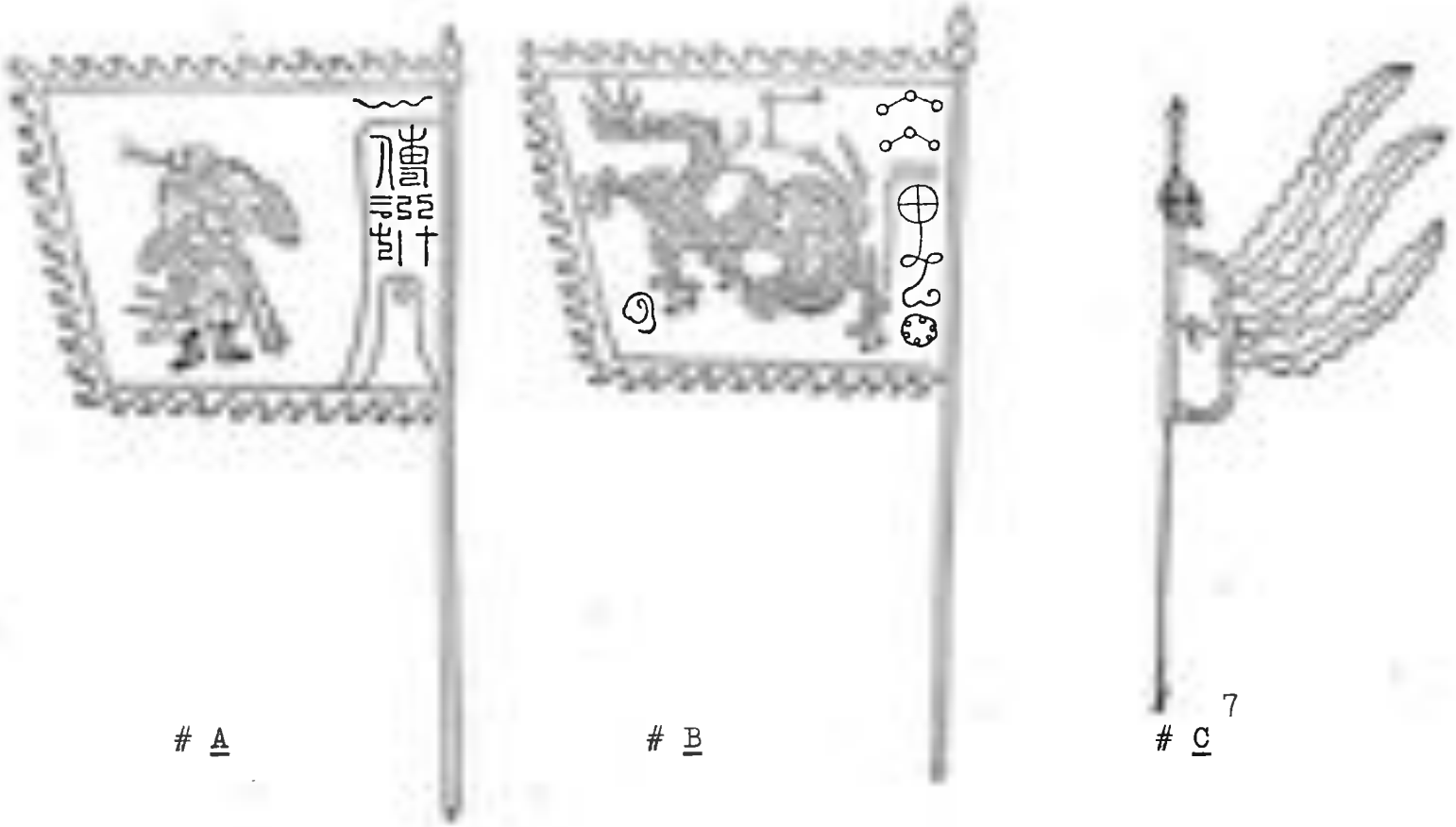
for the flaming pearl.[5] The colors chosen for these talismans vary considerably but they seem to be chosen more for eye appeal rather than symbolism as one temple will offer several color combinations for sale at the same time. As a general rule they are all very bold and brightly colored. Red and gold, both yang colors, do seem to have a little more prominence as the color of choice for the main field while the borders and margins can be green blue or other colors.

In terms of usage the pilgrimage flag and the mandate flag can be considered a more permanent type of talisman but certainly they are of the same genre as the paper variety.

Flags and pennants that had talismanic qualities and have been standard equipment in Chinese armies since antiquity.[6] The three flags which are illustrated on the following page are typical of this genre. The Chinese encyclopedia Ku Chin T'u Shu Chi Ch'eng (古今圖書集成) published in 1726 A.D. has over thirty such talismanic flags attributed to the Sung dynasty (960-1278 A.D.). Curiously enough, these flags have the "ball and link" asterism mentioned earlier. In addition to the twenty-eight constellations, flags for

[5]These motives are discussed in the section on boarders and margins.

[6]E.T.C. Werner, Chinese Weapons, (Los Angeles: Ohara Pub Inc., 1975) p. 122.



A # B # C[7]

Flag Talismans

[7]E.T.C. Werner, Chinese Weapons (Los Angeles: Oraha Publications, Inc., 1975), pp. 120,121,136.

the sun, moon and Northern Bushel are illustrated. In the Fifth century B.C. classic, "The Art of War" by Sun Tzu, mention is made of flags in battle but unfortunately no description is given. The three chosen from "Chinese Weapons" share important features of symbolism with the photographs previously discussed. On #A we can observe a talisman alongside the flagstaff. #B features a dragon the same as on the upper photo from the talisman from the Matsu temple. Illustration #C is the same as the lower photo of the "mandate flag." One can surmise from these examples, that the folk religion is a preserver of traditions of imperial times that have since passed into disuse in modern Taiwan.

SUMMATION

An analysis and description of the symbolism of the Taoist talismans from Taiwan offer a unique way to observe the balance and interaction of Buddhist, Taoist, and Confucian ideas and practices in Chinese folk religion. The philosophical wing of Taoism is most apparent in the application of the Yin-Yang Five Element theory as the theoretical model of the universe. The abstracted principles of the philosophical Taoists have been deified and arranged in a pantheon by the religious Taoists which is surprisingly not modeled upon Taoist egalitarianism, but more on Confucian notions of rank and station. The symbols of the talisman are a kind of cultural repository of China's imperial past and the iconographic talismans are a reminder of the splendor, pomp, and glory of imperial China which is only history except for a few of the eldest members of Chinese society today. The Buddhist influence on talismans has been given only the briefest mention, but those influences seem to be slight and have been so absorbed into the terminology of the Taoists that they have lost their Buddhist identification. The mandate talismans have preserved China's most ancient notion about the universe; it is orderly, its principles can be discovered, and it can be influenced to interact for the benefit of mankind. If all or most of these propositions can be verified by direct

evidence from the talismans we have made excellent progress in affirming Kelly's proposition that the talisman is,

> "...the quintesence of Taoist and Buddhist lore, esoteric mysticism and practices, based on ancient cosmic notions...and handed down by books and traditions. All practical and popular Taoism is summed up in charms. The whole scheme of Chinese philosophy, Chinese cosmic notions, the supposed influences of astrology over the life of man, much of venerable antiquity is embodies in the charm."[1]

This attempt to substantiate Kelly's thesis was one of the objectives set forth in the introduction. The second objective was to use a methodology whereby others interested in Taoist talismans, but only possessing modest talents in Chinese, could find the major categories of Taoist talismanic symbols in a format that they could readily use. I feel that there has been some modest success in this area, but the methodology I chose, the disection of the talismans and then grouping the symbols into like categories has a potentially serious flaw that deserves comment. Under the burden of trying to digest the meanings of the various symbols, one may become distracted to the point of forming the mistaken impression that the talisman is only an aggregate of symbols and failing to notice the underlying structure of the talismanic language; i.e., the forest and trees syndrome. This all the more true when one considers the fact that the talisman comes from many different sects of Taoism, which fail not only to agree on the exact format of

[1]Dore, vol. 3, p. vii.

the talisman, but also the orthodox interpretation of the symbols.

One significant area of talismanic understanding that still needs to be addressed is the development of a systematic explanation of the underlying structure of mandate talismanic language, i.e., a grammar. I have toyed with this problem for some time, and I am convinced that by applying those techniques and theories of modern linguistics one will uncover the basic patterns of mandate language. This problem is one main residual problem that will have to be resolved before a real comprehensible, and not piecemeal, understanding of the symbolism of talismanic mandate is reached. The great benefit of this, of course, is that an investigator will have to learn only a limited amount of grammar rules and be conversant with the lexicon of symbols in order to generate an infinite, or nearly so, set of mandate talismans.

To others that may be interested in the Taoist talismanic tradition, I think a most fruitful area of study will be the overseas Chinese communities in Southeast Asia. I have a small number of talismans from this area and in most respects they are not widely divergent from either those in this study nor in other studies I have read. For the most part the ethnic mix of the overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia is in many respects similar to Taiwan, although the relative proportions of each ethnic group may vary with

local conditions. A comparative study of the talismanic traditions in these areas to those of Taiwan would be most interesting.

To all those who read this thesis, I wish

一路平安