

Summer Institute 2024: Cross-Cultural Perspectives Along the Silk Road
Fulbright-Hays Groups Projects Abroad
UC Berkeley

Partnership with the British Library

Lesson Plan

Name, School, Grade Level

Brian Thomas, Saint Mary's College High School, 10th, 11th & 12th

Title of Unit/Lesson

Source Analysis of *Divination of Maheśvara* & playing to learn

Organizing/Essential/Guiding Questions

What does the study of divination contribute to the study of religion?

What does the history of the transmission of divination tradition across cultures (Sanskrit, Tibetan, Turkish, and Chinese texts) along 'Silk Road' routes contribute to the study of processes of transfer more generally?

How does this divination system work? Who are the gods and spirits it invokes and what do they tell us about the community at Dunhuang in the 10th century? What do they tell us about the blending of religious ideas along the 'Silk Roads'?

Introduction/ Overview

This lesson assumes familiarity with the overland routes through Central Asia and the fact that Buddhism spread from India into China, and that knowledge of silk production (along with domesticated horses, cotton, paper and gunpowder) spread from China to the west.

Further, this lesson assumes a basic knowledge of the Dunhuang manuscripts and the Stein Collection's importance in Silk Road studies.

An analysis of one of these primary sources: *Divination of Maheśvara*

Class creation of their own 'oracular responses' to create a divination text

Content Standards

[AP Historical Thinking Skills](#)

Skill 2 Sourcing and Situation

Analyze sourcing and situation of primary and secondary sources

2.A Identify a source's point of view, purpose, historical situation, and/or audience

2.B Explain the point of view, purpose, historical situation, and/or audience of a source

2.C Explain the significance of a source's point of view, purpose, historical situation, and/or audience, including how these might limit the use(s) of a source

Objectives

Students who have a general understanding of the sharing of religious ideas along the Silk Road routes will refine their understanding by looking closely at a specific source from the “library cave” - *Divination of Maheśvara*

Students should understand that The *Divination of Maheśvara* is a text from 10th Century Dunhuang, a center for Buddhist art and textual production and was a multi-ethnic community of Chinese, Tibetans, Khotanese, Sogdians, and Uighurs.”

Students will understand that the group of gods and spirits in this text are as diverse as the community that sought divination. This text is evidence of a diverse ninth- to- tenth-century Dunhuang Chinese-speaking community. This reinforces other examples of the visual and textual artifacts that mix Indic and Chinese gods and spirits found in the Mogao Caves.

Materials/Resources

handout: “English translation of The Divination of Mahesvara”

handout: “Gods and Spirits Invoked by the Numerical Trigrams”

Special Equipment

Paśāka Dice (you can buy them from etsy [here](#)) -or- just any 4-sided die (you can buy from amazon [here](#))

Teacher Preparation

Watch Brandon Dotson’s [presentation](#) for the Tang Center for Silk Road Studies

Read Dotson, Brandon, et al. “Dice and Gods on the Silk Road: Chinese Buddhist Dice Divination in Transcultural Context.” *Dice and Gods on the Silk Road*, Brill, 2021, <https://brill.com/display/title/59960>. (pdf download is open access)

Time/Timeline

5 min warm up question

10-15 min presentation

10-15 min source analysis answering questions

10-15 min writing our own ‘oracular responses’ and trying them out

Procedures

Post agenda and essential questions on the board

Warm up: Do you want to know your future? Why? Why not?

Prezi presentation on dice divination traditions and *Divination of Maheśvara*

Assessment – Performance Standards, Rubric, Project

Written short responses to the following questions:

1. Looking through the list of Gods and Spirits invoked, list the religions that are included in this manuscript.
 - a. answers will vary but must include: Buddhism, Daoism, Hinduism
2. What does this tell you about 10th century Dunhuang?
 - a. answers will vary but should include something about the diversity of the people who lived there and the people who traveled through Dunhuang
3. Looking at the oracular responses, what does this tell you about the people seeking guidance and their everyday concerns?
 - a. answers will vary - may include: travel, concern for clothing, food, camels and horses, promotion of position, salary, marriages, family, reputation, home, news from far away, physical health, lawsuits, emotions like worries, fear, joy, celebration,

Students should have fun (yet be respectful) creating their own oracular responses. Divide 64 responses by the number of students that you have to get the number of oracular responses each student should make. **This should also be a good way for students to make connections between the concerns in their own lives and the concerns in the lives of the people of Dunhuang over a thousand years ago.** Finally let each of them concentrate on their question and roll the dice to get their own divination using the divination text created by the class.

Dice and Gods on the Silk Road

Prognostication in History

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Dice and Gods on the Silk Road

*Chinese Buddhist Dice Divination in
Transcultural Context*

By

Brandon Dotson
Constance A. Cook
Zhao Lu



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*Dedicated to Chelsie, Jude, Ella, and Henry,
who love to play games (BD)*

To Michel Strickmann (CAC)

To IKGf (ZL)



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Preface and Acknowledgements

It is customary to begin a book about divination with an apology. To devote time and effort to the study of something that persists like an unwelcome guest or an ignored beggar at the fringes of religion and outside the bounds of science, it seems, requires justification. The “introduction by apology” is often edifying, and it typically points to the varieties of divination, the contributions of divination and “divinatory rationalities” to scientific, proto-scientific, and religious thought patterns, divination’s ubiquity across cultures and across periods, and divination’s persistence in modern industrialized societies. Given that such an apology has become obligatory, it is no surprise that scholars for whom divination’s value as an object of study is taken as a given might push back at this convention and its undertones of self-flagellation. The main question in this context, then, is whether the pushback will be a correction in the form of bombastic overstatement of the significance of divination, or whether it will be something more measured.

The nature of this correction depends to some degree on how one answers the questions, What does the study of divination contribute to the study of religion? and What does the history of the transmission of this tradition across cultures contribute to the study of processes of transfer more generally? We mainly address such questions by way of examining details in our case studies of various dice divination texts, but we also reflect on some more general themes relating to games and gods and with respect to order and chaos. Readers can decide for themselves the extent to which this recommends divination as a worthy topic of study. Here, we would like to extend our thanks to those who have contributed to our collaborative project.

Every divination starts with a problem or an issue (*shi* 事), and our book likewise started with a problem. This problem was taking shape in Erlangen in the summer of 2017 when the authors were all members of the International Consortium for Research in the Humanities with the theme “Fate, Freedom, and Prognostication: Strategies for Coping with the Future in East Asia and Europe” based at Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg. Brandon Dotson had been studying a form of Tibetan dice divination preserved in about two dozen excavated early Tibetan manuscripts (8th–10th century CE) from the Silk Road sites of Dunhuang, Turfan, and Mazār Tāgh, and he became interested in a very similar text, also from Dunhuang, but in Chinese. The text, called the *Divination of Maheśvara* (*Moxishouluo bu* 摩醯首羅卜), had been noticed before by Sinologists, but most had assumed it to be a Chinese tradition, and did not connect it to the Tibetan texts, or to the Sanskrit texts from

which these Tibetan texts apparently derived. The problem that the *Divination of Maheśvara* presented, in the most naïve terms, was “What is this?” or, more specifically, “Where does this fit in the context of Dunhuang, China, and the Silk Roads?”

Over the course of many coffees, meals, and Franconian beers, this question—along with the fascination of the text itself—came to captivate the attentions of Connie Cook and Zhao Lu. Having just co-authored a book on a 4th-century BCE Chinese stalk divination text, the *Stalk Divination (Shifa 筮法)*, they were well positioned to see both how the *Divination of Maheśvara* did and did not fit within Chinese divination traditions. Venturing deeper into the initial question, many further questions came to supplant it: How does this divination system work? Who are the gods and spirits it invokes and what do they tell us? From these followed larger, more unwieldy questions: What is the relationship between the gods or spirits and the mantic figures such as numerical trigrams to which they are somehow connected? What, if anything, unifies this tradition across the Sanskrit, Tibetan, Turkish, and Chinese texts in which it is found? This sense of doubling back and revisiting the initial problem also mirrored the divination process itself, which in the *Divination of Maheśvara*'s case allows one to divine three times on a given matter, and thus receive three different perspectives on one's question.

Beyond the three perspectives of the three authors, this book is also informed by conversations with friends and colleagues in Asian Studies and Religious Studies. Just as every text-based divination is a collaborative event, with client and diviner, as well as an assembled audience or “divinatory congregation” interpreting a randomly selected oracular response to arrive together at meanings, our conversations with colleagues have helped us to make sense of the texts and traditions we study. Our process of writing this book has not been randomly generated by the fall of the dice, but it has been similarly collaborative, with discussions of different interpretations sometimes before audiences of our peers in Asian Studies and Religious Studies. This constituted itself formally at conferences and workshops, and informally in a variety of conversations. The most consequential of these workshops was a Henry Luce Foundation/ACLS Program in China Studies Collaborative Reading Workshop devoted to the *Divination of Maheśvara* held at Georgetown University in June 2019. In addition to the authors, this workshop included Megan Bryson, Allan (Yi) Ding, Imre Galambos, Ai Nishida, Stephen Teiser, and Michelle C. Wang. We are deeply thankful to all of these scholars for their perceptive comments and suggestions and for their active participation in this workshop and in follow-up conversations since.

During the germination of this book many others have shaped the conversation, and we take this opportunity to acknowledge their input and to express our gratitude. This includes Andrea Bréard, Charles Burnett, Esther-Maria Guggenmos, Marta Hanson, Matthias Hayek, Stephan Heilen, Tze-ki Hon, Marc Kalinowski, Stephan Kory, Martin Kroher, Michael Lüdke, Fabian Schäfer, Rolf Scheuermann, Kelsey Seymour, Nicholas Sims-Williams, Alexander K. Smith, Jan-Ulrich Sobisch, Carsten Storm, and Bee Yun.

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We would like to extend our deepest gratitude to Michael Lackner, the director of the Consortium, without whose foresight these conversations would have never taken place. We are also grateful to Fabrizio Predagio and to the anonymous reviewer of our manuscript, as well as to Albert Hoffstadt and Patricia Radder at Brill for their roles in shepherding this book to publication.

This book is offered not as an end to these conversations, but as an invitation for others to join.

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Abbreviations

- Dh Manuscript of the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts collection, St. Petersburg.
- DZ Weng Dujian 翁獨健. 1935. *Daozang zimu yinde* 道藏子目引得. *Combined Indexes to the Authors and Titles of Books in Two Collections of Taoist Literature*. Beijing: Yenching University. (Harvard-Yenching Institute Sinological Index Series, no. 25.) Repr. Taipei: Chengwen, 1966.
- IOL Tib. Tibetan manuscripts of the India Office Library of the British Library. Followed by an additional letter, e.g. “J,” and then by a number to form a shelfmark.
- Or. Oriental collections, now held in the British Library. Followed by an additional number, e.g. “8210” to specify the part of the collection, followed by an additional number to form a shelfmark.
- T. *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* 大正新脩大藏經. Edited by Takakusu Junjirō 高楠順次郎, Watanabe Kaigyoku 渡邊海旭, et al. 100 vols. Tokyo: Taishō Issaikyō Kankōkai, 1924–1934. T. is followed by the number, volume, page, and line numbers.
- P. Pelliot chinois Dunhuang manuscript collection at the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris. Followed by a number to form a shelfmark.
- P.tib Pelliot tibétain Dunhuang manuscript collection at the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris. Followed by a number to form a shelfmark.
- S. Stein Dunhuang manuscript collection at the British Library, London. Followed by a number to form a shelfmark.

Playing Dice with the Gods

This book is about movement: the random movement of dice as they fall through the air and then settle on the ground in a particular configuration; the ontological and positional movements of gods and diviners through a ritual that brings about their intersection; and the physical movement of dice, books, and ritual techniques across India, Central Eurasia, and China. The event at the heart of these various movements is a ritual in which humans attempt to impose order, intention, and control over dice divination and over the gods, but where both dice and gods are united as unwieldy forces that largely evade these efforts.

This book is also about books, and about one book in particular. At its heart is a slim tenth-century codex from Dunhuang containing four medical texts and four divination texts, one of which is called the *Divination of Maheśvara* (*Moxishouluo bu* 摩醯首羅卜). The latter is a dice divination text whose method is unlike that in any other extant Chinese divination text, but which can be found in Turkish, Tibetan, Sanskrit, and Sogdian divination texts from the sixth through tenth centuries. The text was used to interpret the results of dice throws in concert with a local, perhaps Dunhuang-specific pantheon of Indian and Chinese gods and spirits led by the Indian god Śiva in his esoteric Buddhist guise as Maheśvara. There is one deity assigned to each of the *Divination of Maheśvara*'s sixty-four written oracular responses, each of which is further keyed to one of sixty-four different numerical trigrams, or combinations of three numbers. Such methods place the text in a long tradition of Chinese numerical trigram divination on the one hand, and within Indian dice divination traditions on the other. The *Divination of Maheśvara* is also a product of its specific time and place in Dunhuang, a center of Buddhist iconographic and textual production and a multi-ethnic enclave of Chinese, Tibetans, Khotanese, Sogdians, and Uighurs. As such, the *Divination of Maheśvara* can be approached from many angles as relevant to, variously, the Buddhicization of Chinese divination techniques; the Chinese assimilation or appropriation of transregional divination traditions; innovations based on long-standing Chinese divinatory traditions; the local reception and adaptation of Indic Buddhist pantheons; and the local articulation of divinatory relationships with the gods.

This book is sympathetic to its subject matter in the sense that it is structured somewhat like a consultation of the *Divination of Maheśvara*. Just as the latter

allows one to divine up to three times about a given matter, this book has three main chapters, each of which, like an oracular response, has a similar structure but differing contents. The first chapter is a detailed study of the *Divination of Maheśvara*, the second surveys numerical trigram divination in China, and the third surveys dice divination on the Silk Roads.¹ Each chapter attends to the materiality of divination, and also interrogates divination users' ideas about the power of dice and of other objects used to construct mantic figures. Each chapter also investigates the mantic figures themselves, and how these perform an interpersonal communication between gods and humans. Besides such issues of materiality, ritual process, and divinatory aesthetics, each chapter also considers the gods and spirits that make up the divinatory pantheons of various Indian, Tibetan, and Chinese divination systems, and how these align with and diverge from the contents of the texts. These three chapters and their contents were not arrived at through a randomized throw of the dice, but the book nevertheless hopes to reward other ways of navigating its pages than proceeding from front to back.

1 Meta-Divination

It will be helpful to begin by introducing how one consults the *Divination of Maheśvara* and also to offer a glimpse of the text through a short “meta-divination.” Suppose you live in Dunhuang in the tenth century, and you have an important issue about which you need some advice, or perhaps an outsider's perspective. You visit a diviner and agree to his fee. He tells you to sit down and face west. The diviner then invokes the gods Śakra, Brahmā, and the four heavenly kings, as well as a host of other spirits as witnesses. He tells you to state your name, to focus your mind, and to profess a vow. Then he tells you to announce the issue that brought you here, and gives you an odd, rectangular die. Its four sides each have concentric circles as pips: one on one side, two on the next, three on the next, and then four circles side by side (see figs. 6a and 6b). The diviner tells you to throw the die three times. Your first roll is a four, your second is a two, and your third roll is a one. The diviner looks through the pages of his book, stops, and reads out loud,

¹ By “Silk Roads,” we refer to the multiple travel routes linking East Asia with Central and South East Asia. See Valerie Hansen, *The Silk Road: A New History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 9–10.

4-2-1 This is called the King of the Wind Spirits set. You are constantly unhappy. Even if this is the case now, you'll later have happy celebrations. Don't worry or be fearful, as before long things will go your way. Initially inauspicious, but later auspicious.

The diviner tells you that this is a good result. You are not sure of this, and ask if you can roll the dice again. The diviner nods and tells you to once again announce the issue you are divining about while you throw the dice. This time you roll a one, then a two, and then a two again. Once more the diviner turns the pages of the book. He pauses, then intones:

1-2-2 This is named the Supervisor of Life Allotments Demon set. If you completed this set, no evil will reach you, but nothing you seek will come about and none of the goods you want will follow. You must be calm and tranquil, and contemplate goodness. This mantic figure is therefore neutral.

You consider this silently, thinking that this seems better than the first one, even if it is supposed to be "neutral" whereas the first response was "auspicious." After a long silence, you ask the diviner if you can throw the dice again for a third response. The diviner tells you that it is permitted to divine three times, but not more. You think this over, and consider the danger of ending up with a bad response.

"How many responses are there in the book?" you ask.

"Sixty-four," replies the diviner.

You decide to try one last time. Holding the die and running your thumb over the circular pips on each of its four sides, you announce your issue again and throw it three times. Two, two, and two. Once more the diviner turns the pages of the book, and stops near the front. He recites:

2-2-2 This is named the God Vināyaka set. If a person has issues to resolve, the god will protect him/ her. Whatever s/he needs will soon be obtained; clothing and food will come of their own accord and whatever s/he seeks will be fulfilled. Subsequently, camels, horses, and various domestic animals will not die or be injured. Greatly auspicious.

You feel a great sense of relief. The diviner looks pleased. You try to reflect solemnly on each of the three responses, but it is this last one that repeats in your head, blotting out the uncertainty of the first two. You feel a sense of lightness.

This “meta-divination” offers a sense of the divination ritual’s sensibilities and of the *Divination of Maheśvara*’s contents. Its basic method also reveals what it is and what it is not. One creates a numerical trigram by throwing the die three times. The numbers or values from the die—one, two, three, or four—can occupy three slots, such that their ordering matters. There are as a consequence sixty-four possible combinations of numbers, that is, sixty-four numerical trigrams. Mathematically, one can represent this simply as $4^3 = 64$. As a point of reference, this is precisely analogous to how the four nucleotides in DNA and in mRNA, adenine (A), uracil (U), guanine (G), and cytosine (C), combine in groups of three (e.g., ACU, GAC) to form sixty-four possible codons. It should also be noted by way of comparison that although the method used by the *Book of Changes (Yijing)* also results in sixty-four possible combinations and sixty-four corresponding entries in the text, this is arrived at in an entirely different way that demonstrates the dissimilarity of the two traditions. In the *Changes*, one sorts stalks to create a set of three unbroken (Yang) or broken (Yin) lines, thereby producing one of the Eight Trigrams, or *bagua* 八卦. Mathematically, the possible outcomes are thus $2^3 = 8$. Repeating the process, one creates a second trigram and then combines these two trigrams to make a hexagram, e.g. $8^2 = 64$. It is in short an utterly distinct method of combining signs that happens to also produce sixty-four possible combinations.

Even if it is practically and numerically a bounded system, the sixty-four possible outcomes in the *Divination of Maheśvara* might have been conceived of in their totality or in their potentiality as symbolizing the entire field of possibilities. Casting the dice and creating a numerical trigram, however, decisively narrows the field to one named god or spirit who either protects or is a source of harm. In the above meta-divination, we encountered the King of the Wind Spirits (*Fengshen Wang* 風神王), the Supervisor of Life Allotments Demon (*Siming Gui* 司命鬼), and the god Vināyaka (Dasheng Tian 大聖天). The first is to be linked with the Indic god Vāyu, but also evokes Feng Bo 風伯, the Chinese wind spirit associated with birds, mountains, and the Winnowing Basket astral lodge. The second god, the Supervisor of Life Allotments, is a famous ancient Chinese god associated with fate and with the underworld. The third, Vināyaka, is a Buddhist guise of the elephant-headed Indian god Gaṇeśa. This is a fairly representative sample of the Indic, Buddhist, Chinese hybrid pantheon of the text, which speaks to its divinatory sensibilities and to its social and religious context in tenth-century Dunhuang. The three gods and the three responses also mirror the three main chapters of this book, with their respective emphases on the *Divination of Maheśvara*, the long history of numerical trigram divination in China, and the transmission of dice divination out of India and across the Silk Roads.

2 Gambling with the Gods

The meta-divination additionally demonstrates the dynamics of play and of risk that inform dice divination. The die is a playful object, both in the sense that it is used in games and also in its being fundamentally equivocal. A die's multiple faces encode randomization and chance more completely and more succinctly than any other object used in divination. Dice divination is rooted in dice games, and in particular in the tradition of dicing or gaming with the gods. Tales of gambling with supernatural partners come to us from both China and India. In China dicing with the gods is often associated with the game of *liubo* 六博, in which opponents advance twelve pieces—six for each player—on a board by casting rods or dice.² While the image of immortals playing *liubo* became a popular motif during the Han, the game was also associated with lowlife gamblers and violent youths.³ Mark Edward Lewis recounts a story from the *Zhanguo ce* 戰國策 (*Intrigues of the Warring States*), compiled between 23 BCE and 8 BCE:

[A] “bold youth” (*han shao nian* 悍少年) ... challenged the deity of a shrine to the god of the earth to a game of *bo*. The stakes stipulated that if the youth won he would borrow the god's power for three days, while if he lost the god could make him suffer. He made throws for the god with his left hand, throws for himself with his right, and won the match. He accordingly borrowed the god's power but then did not return it. After three days the god went to seek him, and as a consequence the grove around the shrine withered and died.⁴

Surveying this and other episodes of gambling with the gods, Lewis observes that those who play *liubo* with the gods or spirits “are portrayed as figures bordering on the criminal who challenge the conventional order.”⁵ This may be largely due to the association of the game with drinking and gambling. Additionally, it must be acknowledged that to challenge the gods is fundamentally

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- 2 There are different variants of the game; for a recent overview, see Armin Selbitschka, “A Tricky Game: a Re-evaluation of Liubo 六博 Based on Archaeological and Textual Evidence,” *Oriens Extremus* 55 (2016): 105–166.
 - 3 Mark Edward Lewis, “Dicing and Divination in Early China,” *Sino-Platonic Papers* 121 (2002): 12–15; Selbitschka, “A Tricky Game,” 141–146.
 - 4 Lewis, “Dicing and Divination in Early China,” 12; see also the contextualization of this anecdote in Selbitschka, “A Tricky Game,” 137.
 - 5 Lewis, “Dicing and Divination in Early China,” 13.

a transgressive act. This is signaled by the stakes and by the mode of interaction, which Lewis even likens to combat: the game will establish a winner and a loser, and by winning humans seek to effectively become god-like, that is “to expand their own powers, alter their fate, and manipulate their world.”⁶

The instances of gambling with the gods in China come largely from literary sources where they feature in anecdotes and cautionary tales. Gambling with the gods enjoys a more prominent place in Indian mythology and narrative. As in China, in India there are myths about the gods playing dice with each other and those in which the gods dice with mortals. In one example of the former type of myth, from the *Kedārahāṇḍa*, it is the game of dice that precipitates the fragmentation of the unified, androgynous godhead into its male and female constituents, Śiva and his wife Pārvatī, when it/they are invited to play. In the course of a few rounds both the god and the goddess resort to cheating (*chalena*). Pārvatī wins from Śiva his crescent moon, his necklace, and his earrings, and then finally takes even his loincloth. In anger, Śiva stalks off to the wilderness to practice austerities in solitude. The story is full of humor and irony, but at its heart is the theme of oneness and separateness, and the remainder of the story is about the loss of wholeness that both Śiva and Pārvatī feel, and their attempts to regain it.⁷ A passage just after Śiva’s departure depicts Pārvatī’s ambivalent love for and frustration with her sore-loser husband:

She was tormented by this separation and found no joy anywhere. She thought only about Śiva. Her attendant Vijayā said to her, “You won Śiva by self-mortification; it was wrong to play dice with him. Haven’t you heard that dicing is full of flaws? You should forgive him. Go quickly, before he is too far away, and appease him. If you don’t, you will be sorry later.”

Pārvatī replied, entirely truthfully: “I won against that shameless man; and I chose him, before, for my lover. Now there is nothing I must do. Without me, he is formless [or ugly—*virūpa*]; for him, there can be no separation from, or conjunction with, me. I have made him formed or formless, as the case may be, just as I have created this entire universe with all its gods. I just wanted to play with him, for fun, for the sake of the game, in order to play with the causes of his emerging into activity [*udbhava-vṛtti-hetubhiḥ*].”⁸

6 Ibid., 14.

7 This myth is the main topic of Don Handelman and David Shulman’s book, *God Inside Out: Śiva’s Game of Dice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), and is summarized at 17–25.

8 Ibid., 19.

This exceedingly rich passage sets up a contrast between the usual way of winning a god's favor, such as through self-mortification, and playing a game of dice.⁹ The game of dice is "full of flaws," possibly because of the cheating that accompanies it, possibly because the undeserving can win by chance, or possibly for both reasons.

It is curious that Pārvatī's reply is marked as having been given "entirely truthfully." The meaning here is surely not ironic, since she is in fact revealing the core of the myth and the heart of the game: it is about fragmenting the androgynous, holistic godhead, "a state of infinite density and interconnect-edness, in which no discontinuities exist" into discrete, gendered entities, and doing so for play (*līlā*), for fun, and "for the sake of the game." As we will see, this playful fragmentation of holism has a powerful analogy in dice divination.

One other point that this myth conveys is also found in many other Indian myths about dice games, namely, that dice games disrupt the social and cosmic order. The game achieves this by almost invariably dealing a loss to the ontologically or positionally superior party. This dynamic is present in the shearing off of aspects of Śiva, represented by his jewelry and garments, which then accrue to the winner, Pārvatī. The topsy-turvy sensibility of the dice game is even more apparent when human gamblers challenge gods. In one myth of this type from South India, a human gambler named "Unfettered" (Niraṅkuṣa) is reminiscent of the transgressive "bold youth" from the *Zhanguo ce*. He prefers erotic treatises to the *Vedas*, and instead of staying with his wife he whiles away his time playing dice with courtesans until he loses all of his wealth and is thrown out of his house. Destitute, he enters a ruined Śiva temple, insults the god, and challenges him to a game of dice. Like the Chinese youth's game of *liubo*, "Unfettered" plays both sides, casting the dice for himself and for the god, who remains silent, represented by a stone *liṅga*. "Unfettered" eventually wins and demands his prize: Rambhā, the courtesan of the gods.¹⁰ Loudly demanding payment, "Unfettered" ties a red cloth around the "neck" of the stone *liṅga*.

9 This is specific to the trials of Pārvatī. The more characteristic way of winning a boon from a god is by the practice of *tapas*, which Handelman and Shulman define as 1) turning inward the self-externalizing drive of the divinity; 2) internal heating or melting; and 3) rediscovery of preexisting totality within. They emphasize that this is not "austerity" or "penance," and that asceticism "hardly exists in the Hindu frame and is quite foreign to any Hindu metaphysics"; *ibid.*, 161.

10 *Ibid.*, 96–106.

He pulled the edges of the cloth even more tightly together, strangling the god. Śiva appeared before him—perhaps because he accepted his defeat at the hands of someone who spoke the truth; or because he respected his aggressive devotion, a reflection of the fact that Unfettered was more of a god than he was; or possibly because Unfettered was really an idiot, and this brought out the god's compassion.¹¹

The passage underlines the ambivalent status of the gambler: he is possibly an idiot, but he is also “more of a god” than Śiva. As for the meaning of this latter gnomic statement, Handelman and Shulman answer this by describing the characteristics of gamblers like Unfettered:

They are impudent, supremely confident, unstable, unpredictable ...; above all they are perfectly at home in the shifting and fluid world of the game—indeed they are in a sense analogues of the game itself, or human embodiments of its inherent trickiness and flux. Emerging from below—unlike the god, who enters the mode of play from his higher order level of wholeness—they act as solvents on any form of solid or static being, including the rules of the game they play.¹²

Unfettered is more god than Śiva because in being drawn into the game of dice Śiva is drawn out of his own supreme confidence, instability, and unpredictability and is crystallized into one particular form, just as in his game with Pārvatī he was sheared off from a state of unbounded wholeness to become a wandering, bereft, gendered god. The game is tricky in part because it can invert the usual dynamics of human-divine relations, reducing or canalizing the fractal nature and ontological multiplicity of the god—its “trickiness”—while enabling and facilitating something very like this for the human gambler, who is transformed by virtue of his winning from the god some of these very powers.

There are several analogies to be made here between dice and the gods. As we have emphasized, they are both multi-faceted. This is obvious in that a die is defined largely by its number of faces, and it is also obvious in the case of a god with more than one head or face. But a die's simultaneously representing a potential range of possibilities and its decisively settling on one of these in a given moment also points to the tendency of gods and spirits to similarly shift

¹¹ Ibid., 101.

¹² Ibid., 97.

through a variety of forms, modes, and affective states according to time, place, and ritual setting. Bernard Faure, drawing on the work of John Law, describes the dynamic and shifty nature of the gods as follows:

a god is a 'fractional object'—that is, an object that is 'more than one and less than many.' Gods are also plural because they owe their being to a network of relations. There may not be two Nyoirin Kannon, Aizen Myoo, or Benzaiten exactly alike: sometimes an individual name designates a combination of several deities, at other times a specific aspect of a multifaceted deity. Their fractal nature also reflects an essential, ontological multiplicity that cannot and should not be reduced to historical accidents.¹³

The difference between the die as it falls through the air and the die that has settled on the ground is very like the difference between the unified godhead and its constellation as, say, Śiva. More obviously, both dice and gods have the power to determine a winner and loser, to benefit or to harm, or to grant a boon or deal a loss. Dice do this unpredictably, at random, and their own transition from unrolled potential to one particular outcome both models and precipitates the god's movement from infinite density and holism to a fragmented specific entity. These movements transpire in the game itself, which invites reversals in which human gamblers can become tricky and unwieldy and gods can become static.

Not all dice games are fair, and cheating is often an expected part of the proceedings. But trickiness on the part of the players can also succeed too well, to the point of rigging the game. This is in fact precisely the point of the dice game that forms a part of the Vedic horse sacrifice, or *aśvamedha*. In part of this ritual the king plays a dice game in which the danger of his opponent's potential winning throw, a four, is ritually neutralized and further exorcised by the sacrifice of a "four-eyed dog," which represents and incarnates the winning throw.¹⁴ The danger thus averted, the ritual will succeed predictably as planned. Commenting on this and on another similarly staged and similarly predetermined game of dice in another Vedic royal consecration ritual, the *rājasūya*, Handelmann and Shulman write that "[t]he Rājasūya and the Aśvamedha games preview hypothetical futures that will be brought into being, and provide pro-

13 Bernard Faure, *Gods of Medieval Japan, Vol. 1: The Fluid Pantheon* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2016), 15–16.

14 David Gordon White, "Dogs Die," *History of Religions* 28.4 (1989): 300–303; Handelmann and Shulman, *God Inside Out*, 64.

cedures that will actualize these acts of cultural imagination ... Put otherwise, the Rājasūya and Aśvamedha dice games contain their futures within themselves, and control processes of causality that actualize these futures.¹⁵ Placed in dialogue with Śiva's game of dice with Pārvatī and his game with the human gambler "Unfettered," we might also simply say that in the cases of the Rājasūya and the Aśvamedha kings and priests have rigged the game, emptying it of all its "trickiness." These are very different sorts of players than Unfettered: where his brash confidence came from his unstable, unpredictable, and shifty nature, and established him as an agent of disorder, those who rig these royal dice games represent the forces of order.

This dynamic of exerting control over the game, and eliminating its instability and unpredictability, is perfectly clear in a ritual dice game that has formed a part of the Tibetan New Year's festivities since at least the 17th century. Here a representative of the Dalai Lama plays a game of dice with a figure who is essentially a scapegoat king, or a monstrous royal double of the Dalai Lama, called the *lugong gyelpo* (Tib. *glud 'gong rgyal po*). But this unfortunate's black dice are customarily marked with all ones, and the Dalai Lama's white dice have all sixes.¹⁶ After his inevitable loss at the dice game, the *lugong gyelpo* is expelled from the city of Lhasa. Such manipulation of the die itself is a literal destruction of its multifaceted nature and a reduction to stasis and certitude.

The dice game is an arena for communication between humans and gods, where forces of instability and unpredictability pull against those of order and coercion. In the parlance of games and gaming, a dice game is ludic in the sense that it is governed by a clear set of rules, where there are winning rolls and losing rolls. *Alea* is the pure chance or unpredictability of rolling the dice to see who wins and who loses. *Agôn* is *alea's* opposite, the operative dynamic in a contest of pure skill. Roger Caillois describes *alea* in terms that lay bare its challenge to social and cosmic order:

15 Ibid., 65.

16 The ritual has been witnessed and described by various early travelers to Lhasa, and in some accounts, the white dice are large and the black dice are small, so that the onlookers will not be able to see the number of pips should the *glud 'gong rgyal po* win. On the *glud 'gong rgyal po* ceremony in general, see Hugh Richardson, *Ceremonies of the Lhasa Year* (London: Serindia, 1993), 60–73; Samten Karmay, "The Man and the Ox: a Ritual for Offering the *glud*," in *The Arrow and the Spindle*, ed. Samten Karmay (Mandala Book Point, 1998; reprint 1991), 348–359;–73; and Rachel Guidoni, "L'ancienne cérémonie d'État du Glud.'gong rgyal.po à Lhasa" (M.A. Thesis, Department of Ethnology, Université Paris Ouest Nanterre La Défense, 1998).

In contrast to *agôn*, *alea* negates work, patience, experience, and qualifications. Professionalization, application, and training are eliminated. In one instant, winnings may be wiped out. *Alea* is total disgrace or absolute favor. It grants the lucky player infinitely more than he could procure by a lifetime of labor, discipline, and fatigue. It seems an insolent and sovereign insult to merit.¹⁷

Alea's "insolent and sovereign insult to merit" is very likely one of the "flaws" that Pārvatī's attendant Vijayā saw in the dice game. The ritual attempts to erase *alea* and to avert risk can also be seen as a response to the "trickiness" of the dice game. As the myths we've just introduced show, dice and the dice game are not impartial. Their disruption of the cosmic order is also a disruption of the status quo. They correct in favor of balance, which is itself an assertion of a different sort of cosmic order. Even in a "fair" game of dice, such as that between Śiva and Pārvatī, the ontologically weaker party usually wins. This is even more apparent in the game between a human gambler and the great god. A god-like figure such as a king or a Dalai Lama would therefore theoretically face great danger when dicing against a lowly figure like the *lugong gyelpo*.

3 Dice Gaming and Dice Divination

The die carries many of the sensibilities of gaming with the gods into the practice of dice divination. In some forms of Tibetan dice divination, as described in chapter three, the ritual approximates a dice game with a divine opponent, such that we refer to this type of dice divination as "oracular gambling" and to the diviner as an "oracular gambler." Dice divination's entanglement with dice games helpfully corrects the common misapprehension that divination is only about accessing hidden knowledge or seeing the future. While divination can be concerned with prognostication, this is not all that it does, and it is not simply a matter of revelation. Like the game, which creates a winner and a loser, divination is also creative, bringing into existence a new situation with respect to the actors involved. As Filip de Boeck and René Devisch put it in their study of Ndembu basket divination, "divination does not so much offer a mimetic model of a social context, but rather *makes* a world ... [It] constitutes a space in which cognitive structures are transformed and new *relations* are generated in

17 Roger Caillois, *Man, Play and Games*, trans. M. Barash (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1961), 17.

and between the fields of the human body (senses, emotions), the social body and the cosmos.”¹⁸ It is this creative, world-making element of dice divination that its relation to the dice game spotlights. This is not to the exclusion, however, of divination’s uses of models and microcosms as a part of its creative processes.

Dice divination differs from dicing with the gods in two important ways. Firstly, its communication with the gods is radically aleatory in a way that the dice game is not; secondly, it introduces the intermediary of the mantic figure or numerical trigram. Divining, the dice will bring one into contact with a god or spirit, but which god or spirit that will be remains unknown until the dice have fallen through the air and settled on the ground. Divining with the *Divination of Maheśvara* is not a targeted communication like a prayer or sacrifice that is offered to a specific god or spirit. The gods and spirits of the divination text are on shuffle, “up in the air” like the dice themselves until a given roll summons forth one of their number. Until their number is called, these gods and spirits remain a pantheon in potential, unknown as a whole to any but perhaps the diviner or a habitual user of divination.

One cannot choose the god or spirit the dice invoke any more than one can choose whether this contact results in benefit or in harm. Moreover, because some combinations are almost inevitably missing in the dice divination book, sometimes there will be no response at all. This ability of a divination system to refuse to respond and to remain silent is known as “resistance,” and it is an important indicator not only of perceived “objectivity,” but also of the vitality of a given system.¹⁹ Also, whereas dicing with the gods instrumentalizes the game’s ability to invert order and bring down the god as it raises up the human gambler, dice divination performs an interpersonal relationship with the gods that is less determined, less coercive, and less transactional in nature.

The second main difference between dicing with the gods and dice divination concerns their respective media. The bold youth’s game of *liubo* with the soil god and Unfettered’s dice game with Śiva were both more or less direct, even if the gods’ rolls were done by proxy with the gamblers’ “other” hands. There was a god, a human gambler, and dice. In dice divination, by contrast, there is an intervening medium, which is the mantic figure (Chinese *gua* 卦).

18 Filip de Boeck and René Devisch, “Ndembu, Luunda and Yaka Divination Compared: From Representation and Social Engineering to Embodiment and Worldmaking,” *Journal of Religion in Africa* 24.2 (1994): 99–100.

19 See George K. Park, “Divination and its Social Contexts,” *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 93.2 (1963): 198; see discussion in chapter three.

As for the form and content of the mantic figure, the gods and spirits of the divinatory pantheon are invoked in the first instance not with words, but rather with one of sixty-four figures, or “numerical trigrams” randomly generated by the dice. This mode of communication between human and divine simultaneously insists on difference by avoiding the medium of human language, but also on some degree of commensurability by appealing to the language of numbers or of visual representations of numbered groups of dice pips, counting rods, or stalks.

The intermediary role of the dice-generated mantic figure, which in dice divination stands between the human divination user and the invoked god or spirit, further complicates the more direct communication found in the dice game. In the latter, there is a clear homology between the dice game and the cosmogonic process. This trades on the Vedic principle of homologies, or *bandhu* connections: “[t]he dice game, and the dice embedded within the game, are constituted through homologies. Since the dice model the cosmic process, their action effects the dice game. And since the dice game models the cosmic process, its action effects the cosmos.”²⁰ It is precisely these *bandhu* connections that priests exploited when rigging the royal dice game during the horse sacrifice, thereby controlling the processes of causality. With the introduction of the intermediary mantic figure generated by the dice, the *bandhu* connections seem to be randomized and potentially more difficult to manipulate: there appears to be no homology, for example, between a dice roll of three twos and the god Vināyaka. Even if the relationship between a given god or spirit and a given mantic figure can be said to be “arbitrary”—as loaded a term as one finds in divination—this does not negate the more consequential homology that remains: the shiftiness of the dice is captured or crystallized in the mantic figure just as the god or spirit is drawn out of the “pantheon in potential” and into invoked presence. It is the mantic figure, interposed between the dice and the god, that attracts them both in the manner of a magnetic opposite. Where gods and dice are shifty and equivocal, the mantic figure is solid and certain.

The intermediary role of the mantic figure in relation to gods and spirits and with respect to the material culture of divination has also been theorized in a Chinese context. Here, rather than the microcosmic-macrocosmic homologies of *bandhu* connections, one tends to speak of correlative cosmology, the workings of *qi*, and the principle of creating a stimulus (*gan* 感) to elicit a response (*ying* 應) from the gods. A particularly utilitarian view both of the mantic fig-

20 Handelman and Shulman, *God Inside Out*, 66–67.

ure and of the material culture of divination is offered by Yu Chan (287–340) in his treatise on milfoil and turtle divination.

After material things [e.g., stalks, turtles] are brought forth, there are images (or symbols [*xiang* 像]). After there are images, there are numerical appetencies (*shu* [數 decoding of the symbols/ mantic figures]). After there are numerical appetencies, benign and malign tendencies abide in them. The milfoil plant is the chief item for looking into numerical appetencies, but is not something that is made real by the divine spirits. The turtle is the basic substance for disclosing ominous signs, but it is not something that is brought into being by unearthly presences ... It is the same as with the fish-trap which, although it captures the fish, is not the fish; or the rabbit-snare which, although it captures the rabbit, is not the rabbit. In this way one uses the image to search out the subtle message, and when the message is found, then the image may be forgotten. So, the milfoil is used to search out the spirit, and when the spirit is thoroughly understood, then the milfoil may be dispensed with.²¹

Put simply, divination is here seen as a means to an end of communicating with gods or spirits. The mantic figure is there to be decoded, and rather than being fetishized it should be discarded once its purpose has been served.

Against this utilitarian approach to mantic figures as signs to be read, understood, and then discarded, there is the opposite extreme that treats the mantic figures as gods themselves. The Eight Trigrams that form the basis of the *Changes*' sixty-four hexagrams, and which are also arrayed in a variety of mantic figures, for example, are deified as the Eight Spirits (*bashen* 八神) or the Eight Archivists. This is comparable to the deification of other cosmological, calendrical, and astrological forces such as the Stems and Branches, the planets, and the Astral Lodges (*xiu* 宿).

The form of the mantic figure may be pertinent to whether it is understood as a sign to be decoded, an invocation to the gods, or a god itself. In the *Divination of Maheśvara* the mantic figures that stand at the beginning of each oracular response are simply numbers, as they are in the Sanskrit dice divination texts in the sixth-century *Bower Manuscript*. As such they are signs with phonetic values. In Tibetan and Turkish dice divination texts, however, the mantic figures are pictorial representations of dice pips. That is, the pips

21 From Paul Kroll, "The Representation of Mantic Arts in the High Culture of Medieval China," in *Coping with the Future: Theories and Practices of Divination in East Asia*, ed. Michael Lackner (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 106–107.

of the dice are not “translated” into numbers on the page. There are similar pictorial sensibilities in Chinese numerical trigram texts in which the array of stalks or counting rods that constitutes the mantic figure is similarly transferred rather than translated on the page. This choice of representation relates to the issue of “legibility,” and to what Yu Chan assumes about reading or decoding the “numerical appetencies” of the mantic figure. As we will see throughout the book, the *Divination of Maheśvara* and many other Chinese numerical trigram texts implicitly reject the premise that their constituent parts—the three individual numbers or symbols making up the trigram or mantic figure—are to be “read” and interpreted. This is the case even when these texts use some of the vocabularies of correlative cosmology that might connect them to Yin and Yang and other standard interpretive strategies for reading and decoding mantic figures.

To complicate the status of the numerical trigram and its location between sign and symbol, the numerical trigrams of the *Divination of Maheśvara* are named after gods and spirits, and other Chinese numerical trigram traditions that use pictorial representations—as well as the hexagrams of the *Book of Changes*—are also given names. The precise relationship between the mantic figure and its name or the god or spirit associated with it is usually left undefined, to be teased out by the semantics of the oracular responses and by other hints in the text. But some gods appear more than once, and some are linked to one mantic figure in one text but to a different mantic figure in another text. The link between a mantic figure and a given god or spirit is, if not random, characterized by flux and by a sense of play.

4 A Relational Network of Gods, Dice, Books, Divination Users, and Mantic Figures

This trickiness—of the mantic figure, of the dice, of gods, and of the game, has seeped into the fibers of this divination tradition, infusing it with a sense of movement that extends also to divination books. These books are found on their own in paper and birchbark scrolls and codices, but they are also often found as parts of compilations that variously include astrological texts, medical texts, ritual texts, and legal texts. This demonstrates that divination is one ritual mode among many, and that it usually falls short of offering a comprehensive program of diagnosis, prognosis, healing, and exorcism, to say nothing of cosmology and soteriology. But besides showing divination to be deficient as a panacea, or not fully self-sufficient, these partnerships or collocations of ritual modes and practices testify to divination’s adaptability and malleability.

Divination has a tendency to work in tandem with other modes of ritual action. An oracular response in a divination text might, for example, prescribe that one perform a specific ritual in order to ensure good fortune or avert bad fortune. Similarly, divination might reveal the source of a malady as a preliminary to exorcism or to other more elaborate and well-established ritual prescriptions. And it might be employed at the end, to confirm that a ritual worked. Divination's use for diagnosis and prognosis also makes it a natural partner for medicine.

In addition to their tendency to join other texts within compilations or sometimes stand on their own, divination texts are also infused with movement themselves. A dice divination book should have sixty-four oracular responses, and as we will see, there are various strategies for how to array these responses (e.g., descending order) in a book so that there will be no repeated or omitted combinations. Nevertheless, every Sanskrit, Tibetan, Turkish, and Chinese dice divination text that we've studied features repetitions and/or omissions. As a result, very few dice divination books feature the prescribed sixty-four responses. In fact, the only dice divination books that include sixty-four responses without omission or repetition are those that have been "canonized"—the Sanskrit *Pāśakakevalī* and the Tibetan "Divination Calculation" (Tib. *Mo rtsis*)—later developments that we do not cover here. Faced with these and similar textual peccadillos in isolation, the textual scholar's tendency is to assume sloppy scribes and lazy editors, or to take these as indications of a text's popular or vernacular milieu. But given how widespread this phenomenon is across divination texts, and given also the dynamic instability of all of dice divination's other elements—dice, gods, mantic figures, and oracular gamblers—we additionally perceive here a tendency of the texts to shift, seemingly at random, under the hands of their users, scribes, and editors.

This textual shiftiness represents an extreme version of what Paul Zumthor, in a medieval European context, refers to as "mouvance." This is the process by which anonymous or semi-anonymous texts, as opposed to those with attributed authors, are prone to high degrees of variation on both structural and syntactic levels as a result of traditional modes of composition across the oral and literary divide.²² As a consequence, a given text is "materialized in an unstable way from manuscript to manuscript, from performance to performance."²³

22 Paul Zumthor, *La lettre et la voix: De la "littérature" médiévale* (Paris: Seuil, 1987), 160–168.

23 Idem, *Speaking of the Middle Ages* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1986), 96. Paul Copp applies these same insights of Zumthor's to Dunhuang ritual manuals in his study of

The aleatory mode of dice divination only compounds this instability, producing a more virulent strain which we call “divinatory mouvance.” Like the genius of the dice game and its tendency to invert social and cosmic orders, divinatory mouvance similarly informs dice divination and frustrates human attempts to wield and control. Divinatory mouvance is infused with *alea*, the lifeblood of dice divination. The missing and repeated responses, unstable orthographies, and other traces of divinatory mouvance are the vital signs of a divination system that is alive, coursing with creative tension against human efforts to wield it. Where *alea* is exorcised, by contrast, and humans fully subdue a divination system by emptying it of risk through “house rules,” ritual adroitness, and other forms of “cheating,” they only succeed in proffering a system that is inert and lifeless. It is no coincidence that only the “canonized” dice divination texts, which also suffer from creeping morality and soteriology, as well as impoverished oracular poetics, are perfectly ordered, with sixty-four responses.

There is a variety of ways in which one might approach this state of flux involving tricky and elusive dice, gods, mantic figures, divination users, and divination books. One might emphasize the mantic figure and its relationship to the concepts of sign and symbol. One might attend to the identities and biographies of the gods and spirits of divination on the one hand or to the determinative or interpretive agency of human diviners and clients on the other. Or one might make a fetish of the material culture of divination, so as to attribute autonomy and power to inanimate objects like dice and books. A safeguard against this latter approach, and against permitting any one of dice divination’s moving parts—dice, gods, mantic figures, books, or divination users—to dominate or overbalance the others, is Michael Taussig’s observation that “apparently self-bounded and potent ‘things’ are but the embodiments and concretizations of relationships which bind them to a larger whole.”²⁴ Taussig continues,

Their identity, existence, and natural properties spring from their *position* in an all-encompassing organic *pattern* of organization in which things are understood as but partial expressions of a self-organizing totality ... If attention focuses on a single thing, as it must at some point in any

talismans; Paul Copp, “Manuscript Culture as Ritual Culture in Late Medieval Dunhuang: Buddhist Talisman-Seals and their Manuals,” *Cahiers d’Extrême-Asie* 20 (2011): 196.

24 Michael Taussig, “The Genesis of Capitalism amongst a South American Peasantry: Devil’s Labor and the Baptism of Money,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 19.2 (1977): 143.

analysis, then the thing is to be seen as containing its relational network and surrounding context within itself; the “thing” is a system of relationships.²⁵

Attending to the gods, dice, books, divination users, and mantic figures as a “relational network” in this manner is further supported by actor-network theory as developed by Bruno Latour. This recommends itself for its emphasis on movement, and also for addressing itself to the situational and contingent dynamics that define dice divination. “A network is not a thing but the recorded movement of a thing. The questions AT [actor-network theory] addresses have now changed. It is no longer whether a net is a representation or a thing, a part of society or a part of discourse or a part of nature, but what moves and how this movement is recorded.”²⁶ The actor, or “actant” need not be human, and it is also characterized by movement: “actors are not conceived as fixed entities but as flows, as circulating objects, undergoing trials, and their stability, continuity, isotopy has to be obtained by other actions and other trials.”²⁷ In dice divination, the moving pieces—the dice, the mantic figures, the books, the gods, and the human divination users—act upon each other through movements. The dice fall through the air, the mantic figure is formed, the pages of the divination book are turned, a god is drawn out from the pantheon and invoked into presence, and the relations of divination users to their worlds are altered. The actor-network of dice divination might be visualized as a web of axons and neurons, with a given roll of the dice setting in motion one action and not another. But unlike the neuroscientific simile, the movements are multidirectional.

In applying actor-network theory to dice divination we are also inspired by how Bernard Faure makes use of Latour’s concept of the actant in his study of Japanese gods.

By viewing the Japanese gods as actors in this sense, and by remembering that they are ever-changing nodes within a network constantly in flux, we can more accurately perceive the Japanese gods as the unstable aggregates that they are rather than as static projections of human minds, society, culture, or what have you. Furthermore, actor-network theory allows us to see that the relationship between gods and humans was bidirec-

25 Ibid.

26 Bruno Latour, “On Actor-Network Theory: a Few Clarifications,” *Soziale Welt* 47.4 (1996): 378.

27 Ibid., 374.

tional: gods were not only a product, but in taking on a life of their own, they too became active, productive elements within a larger network.²⁸

Dice divination makes a larger network than this bidirectional relationship by its injection of similarly “unstable aggregates”—dice, mantic figures, and divination books—and by the infusion of this network with *alea*. Once again, if dice divination has something to offer actor-network theory it is its injection of randomization.

Besides Zumthor’s concept of mouvance, Taussig’s view of “things” as standing in for relational networks, and Latour’s actor-network theory, we are also indebted to the gods of divination and to the oracular responses of divination texts themselves for suggesting to us a further interpretive framework. Although a dice divination book’s sense of instability, born of the push and pull of order and disorder, might make it an attractive and sympathetic harbor for the gods, the gods of divination often convey something different from the oracular responses to which they are attached. In the *Divination of Maheśvara*, for example, there is a preponderance of gods associated with death and misfortune, and there are also a number of gods associated with the wind and with celestial phenomena, or who transit the liminal space between heaven and earth. Gods of the wind and sky also occupy central positions in Sanskrit and Tibetan dice divination texts. Similarly, poetic images of wind and clouds are a hallmark of Chinese oracular poetry. Coming up against these wind gods and images of wind and sky again and again, it dawned on us that the wind is the central element in dice divination in much the same way that fire is the central element in the *homa/goma* ritual.²⁹ Amidst the shifting gods, dice, books, and mantic figures, as well as the uncertain concerns facing the human divination users, the sense of being “in the wind” offers the perfect leitmotif for dice divination and its various movements.

Wind whips and batters or it gently cools; it bears along tidings of good or ill; it blows against the traveler or it fills one’s sails. These are all relevant to divination, as is the fact that the wind is helpfully plural in the sense that there are many different kinds of winds, some of them named, and there are also various diverse, culturally specific ways of thinking about the wind. Wind blows across the dice as they fall through the air, and it blows through the pantheon

28 Faure, *Gods of Medieval Japan*, Vol. 1, 10.

29 On this ritual and its movements across Asia, see Frits Staal, *Agni, the Vedic Ritual of the Fire Altar*. 2 Vols (Berkeley: Asian Humanities Press, 1983); and Richard K. Payne and Michael Witzel, eds, *Homa Variations: a Study of Ritual Change Across the Longue Durée* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

of dice divination texts. The wind also whips through the pages of divination books, aligning it with mouvance and the tendency of the books' textual contents to twist or tatter, and also to move alongside medical, astrological, and other ritual texts. Like metaphor, which both "is" and "is not" simultaneously, wind conveys order and disorder.³⁰ It might be disruptive, in the way that divinatory mouvance is disruptive and chaotic when restoring balance and *alea* in the face of manipulative diviners and clients. But winds can also be calming forces, and in an excavated Sanskrit dice divination text from Kucha it is the Maruts—wind gods associated with storms and battles—who ensure the truth of the divination process (see chapter three).

The wind is similarly ambivalent in various Chinese traditions. In the *Divination of Maheśvara* wind appears in oracular response [51]:

3-1-1 This is named the King of the Mountain Spirits set. Body and mind are like the wind neither stopping nor going. Nothing you want will be accomplished. Your thoughts are so unfixed that they cannot settle on their own. This matter will not be achieved. Inauspicious.

Here wind symbolizes prevarication, or pointless activity or thought that results in nothing.

In earlier Chinese numerical trigram divination texts, as we will see in chapter two, wind can be the source of a curse. This does not mean, however, that wind is inherently bad or destructive: it is the type of wind that matters, and one's relationship to that wind. The expression "Eight Winds" (*ba feng* 八風), for example, refers to the movement of the four seasons. Sages who live in harmony with the Eight Winds enjoy long life; those who go against the wind, or who are struck by wind from the wrong direction, suffer harm.³¹

30 For an application of Paul Ricoeur's theory of metaphor to divination, see Patrick Curry "Embodiment, Alterity and Agency: Negotiating Antinomies in Divination," in *Divination: Perspectives for a New Millennium*, ed. Patrick Curry (London: Routledge, 2010), 95–96. See also the brief discussion in chapter three.

31 The "Eight Winds" refer to the cosmic *qi* of the eight cardinal points, and in Chapter 1 "Shanggu tianzhen lun" 上古天真論 of the *Huangdi neijing Suwen* 黃帝內經素問, sages learn to live in harmony with heaven and earth by following the pattern (or cosmic principle) of the Eight Winds (八風之理). See Paul U. Unschuld and Hermann Tessenow, trans., *Huang Di Nei Jing Su Wen* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), Vol. 1, 43 & n. 67. In Chapter 3 "Jingui zhenyan lun" 金匱真言論, however, the Eight Winds are sources of evil *qi* (*xie* 邪) that travel through the conduits (*jing* 經) of the body, into the organs and cause illness (ibid., 83). This chapter goes on to categorize the Winds by season, organ affected, and vulnerable areas of the body (84–87). For the "depletion evils" (*xu xie* 虛邪)

As a leitmotif for dice divination, and as the governing element of its relational network, wind points to divination's "shiftiness," and its restlessness to blow across the Silk Roads and embrace a variety of users who speak different languages and profess different beliefs. Wind also cannot be pinned down or bottled, and our own attempts here to make sense of dice divination are offered with this in mind, and with a recognition of the limits of our powers to fully capture or comprehend a tradition that has not been practiced for hundreds of years.

5 Outline of the Work

These theoretical reflections could certainly be pressed further to include an even greater emphasis on the analogy between dice divination and the dice game as bounded models that act upon an unbounded world, as a map of an actor-network, and as a venue for constituting gods and humans interpersonally through an aleatory mode of communication. There are also further points on embodiment, gender, ontology, positionality, contingency, and eventuality that follow from our approach to divination. But this is not that kind of book. Its chapters are not theory driven but are shaped rather more like case studies out of which we draw observations about the dynamic exchanges between divination users, gods, mantic figures, and the material culture of divination books and the objects of divination.

Chapter one attends to the Dunhuang codex in which the *Divination of Maheśvara* is contained, and then offers a close analysis of the text's instructions, its semantic fields, and its treatment of affective states. The semantic analysis of the *Divination of Maheśvara's* oracular responses lays bare the divination process that it imagines. Namely, the client's intentions interact with the dice, which then form a mantic figure. Through the act of naming the mantic figure after a specific god or spirit, that god or spirit is invoked and activated as an agent of either protection or harm. Chapter one also explores the *Divination of Maheśvara's* pantheon of gods and spirits in some detail, attending to their fluid classifications, their various identities, and the question of their relationship with the mantic figures and the oracular responses. The chapter closes with a full translation and transcription of the *Divination of Maheśvara*.

of the Eight Winds when they come in from the directional junctures by season and cause affliction, see Chapter 26 "Ba zheng shenming lun" 八正神明論 (437 & n. 21).

Chapter two contextualizes the *Divination of Maheśvara* within a long history of divination with numbers and numerical trigrams in China, from the fourth-century-BCE excavated bamboo manuscript of the *Stalk Divination* to medieval divination codices from Dunhuang like the *Duke of Zhou Divination Method* (*Zhou Gong bufa* 周公卜法), and the *Guan Gongming Divination Method* (*Guan Gongming bufa* 管公明卜法) that are contemporary with the *Divination of Maheśvara*. It attends to the ritual process and material culture of divination with stalks, counting rods, coins, draughtsmen, and dice-like teetotums. It also focuses on the format of some of these books, particularly divination codices from Dunhuang. Additionally, chapter two emphasizes the role of divination in identifying the sources of curses to be exorcised, and it contrasts divination with the production of talismans and their differing modes of interaction with gods and spirits. Chapter two also attends to oracular poetry and the recurring images in divination texts, as well as to different forms of the mantic figure. Throughout, the chapter wrestles with questions about correlative cosmology and its (in)applicability to many forms of numerical trigram divination, and also considers the ways in which cosmological representations are used to variously lend further efficacy to divination and/or to attempt to fit it within Daoist, Buddhist, or other cosmologies and soteriologies. It finds divinatory mouvance at work in some Chinese numerical trigram texts, and identifies materials and methods that come close to those of the *Divination of Maheśvara*.

Chapter three surveys Turkish, Tibetan, and Sanskrit dice divination texts that share the *Divination of Maheśvara's* method, and traces this tradition to India. It begins by introducing Old Turkish and Old Tibetan dice divination codices from Dunhuang that are contemporary with the *Divination of Maheśvara* and which use the same method of dice divination. It then examines a larger body of ninth-century Old Tibetan dice divination texts from Dunhuang and Turfan, and explores the “trickiness” of Tibetan diviners who interact with the patron goddesses of divination as their opponents and their partners in a contest whose ludic dynamics justify its being called “oracular gambling.” Chapter three also examines the two dice divination texts in the sixth-century birchbark *Bower Manuscript* from Kucha, which are the earliest extant dice divination texts of this tradition. Attending both to divination books and to the archeological record of the four-sided dice used in this form of divination, known in Sanskrit as *pāśaka*-s, the chapter demonstrates that the *Divination of Maheśvara* ultimately derives from a tradition of dice divination and of dicing with a deep prehistory in India. Across these texts, there are some striking continuities, but the most persistent constant is their “shiftiness,”—a simultaneous willingness to be adopted and adapted while at the same time resisting the full imposition of order.

The short concluding chapter considers the pantheons, poetics, and sensibilities of these various texts and finds them to be united by images and creatures of the wind and the sky. It reflects on the paradoxes of a divination system whose hallmark in its transmission across the Silk Roads has been its variability and adaptability. The appendix offers full translations and transcriptions of the *Tricks of Jing* (*Jingjue* 荆訣), the *Duke of Zhou Divination Method*, and the *Guan Gongming Divination Method*, which are introduced and analyzed in some detail in chapter two.



At once comparative and rooted in close philological study, especially of the Chinese and Tibetan texts, this book owes a great debt to path-breaking research in both dice divination and Chinese numerical trigram divination. We are particularly indebted to the incisive works of Marc Kalinowski on the latter, as is apparent throughout the book and in chapter two especially.³² We have also taken obvious inspiration from Michel Strickmann's preliminary comparative treatment of dice divination in the context of his larger, wide-ranging study of the transcultural transmission of lot divination (*chouqian* 抽籤).³³

A divination book in the abstract might represent unbounded possibilities and omniscience, but in practice it consists of (more or less) sixty-four responses. Our book is similarly bounded, and there are some topics that it does not treat. It does not attempt a definitive global history of the tradition of divining with four-sided *pāśaka* dice. Such a history would have to go into more archeological and material cultural detail than what we provide in chapter three. It would also have to address the transmission of this form of dice divination to the Islamic world, and the many related dice divination texts found in Persian, Arabic, and Turkish dating from at least the late-14th century onward. We all but ignore these texts here, as well as the archeological finds of *pāśaka* dice as far west as Egypt. Because our inquiry begins in Dunhuang, with a tenth-century manuscript, we have emphasized excavated texts and vernac-

32 Marc Kalinowski, "La divination par les nombres dans les manuscrits de Dunhuang," in *Nombres, astres, plantes et viscères: sept essais sur l'histoire des sciences et des techniques en Asie orientale*, ed. Isabelle Ang and Pierre-Étienne Will (Paris: Institute des Hautes Études Chinoises, 1994), 37–88; idem., "Cléromancie," in *Divination et société dans la Chine médiévale: Étude des manuscrits de Dunhuang de la Bibliothèque nationale de France et de la British Library*, ed. Marc Kalinowski (Paris: Bibliothèque nationale de France, 2003), 301–368.

33 Michel Strickmann, *Chinese Poetry and Prophecy: The Written Oracle in East Asia* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005).

ular texts. We do not examine the later (post-13th-century) Tibetan Buddhist tradition, nor the similarly “canonical” Sanskrit *Pāśakakevalī*.³⁴

Also, while we illuminate the *Divination of Maheśvara* by comparison with related dice divination texts and similar numerical trigram traditions, that is where the comparison ends. Since this is not a global history of *pāśaka* dice divination, we do not put it on the “transcultural divination map” by comparing dice divination at length with the *Book of Changes*, with Greco-Roman *sortes* traditions, or with Islamic *al-Raml* divination and its variants such as Ifa and Yifa. We hope that our case study and our reflections on the many movements of dice, mantic figures, gods, books, and divination users will have something to contribute, however, to such a project.

34 For a preliminary work that takes on some of these tasks, see Brandon Dotson, “Three Dice, Four Faces, and Sixty-Four Combinations: Early Tibetan Dice Divination by the Numbers,” in *Glimpses of Tibetan Divination, Past and Present*, ed. Petra Maurer, Donatella Rossi, and Rolf Scheuermann (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 11–48.

The *Divination of Maheśvara*

The first chapter of this book presents the *Divination of Maheśvara* largely on its own terms, without yet introducing too much of the comparative material found in chapters two and three. It does this by first considering the *Divination of Maheśvara*'s format and its compilation in the same manuscript within a group of medical and divinatory texts, and how this helps both to date the text and to situate it with respect to related works. It then presents the *Divination of Maheśvara*'s introduction and discusses its implicit and explicit ritual assumptions. This additionally pertains to the method of divination, and to the material objects involved. Proceeding to the *Divination of Maheśvara*'s sixty-four oracular responses, this chapter considers the numerical combinations, their names, their associated gods and spirits, and their final evaluations as, e.g., “greatly auspicious” (*da ji* 大吉), “inauspicious” (*xiong* 凶), or “neutral” (*ping* 平). An analysis of the semantic fields of this divination system also teases out some of its assumptions about the relationship between the querent's intentions, the dice, the mantic figures or trigrams (*gua*), and the gods or spirits. Looking not only to the structure of the responses but also to their contents, here we find instructions to invoke the names of the Buddha or the Three Jewels, or to seek out monks as ways to counteract an inauspicious divination result. The chapter also introduces the divinatory pantheon of gods and spirits associated with the sixty-four oracular responses. These, which span translocal Indic gods and bodhisattvas as well as famous and obscure Chinese gods, ghosts, and spirits also speak to the *Divination of Maheśvara*'s and to Dunhuang's cosmopolitan context. The chapter closes with a full translation and transcription of the *Divination of Maheśvara*.

1 The Manuscript

The *Divination of Maheśvara* (*Moxishouluo bu* 摩醯首羅卜) is a Chinese dice divination text contained in a butterfly-bound codex from Dunhuang held in the Stein Collection at the British Library. The codex, or certain of its texts, have been catalogued and described by Marc Kalinowski, Wang Jingbo, Wang Shumin, Wang Aihe, Lü Deting, and the International Dunhuang Project.¹

1 Kalinowski, “La divination par les nombres dans les manuscrits de Dunhuang,” 63–64; see,

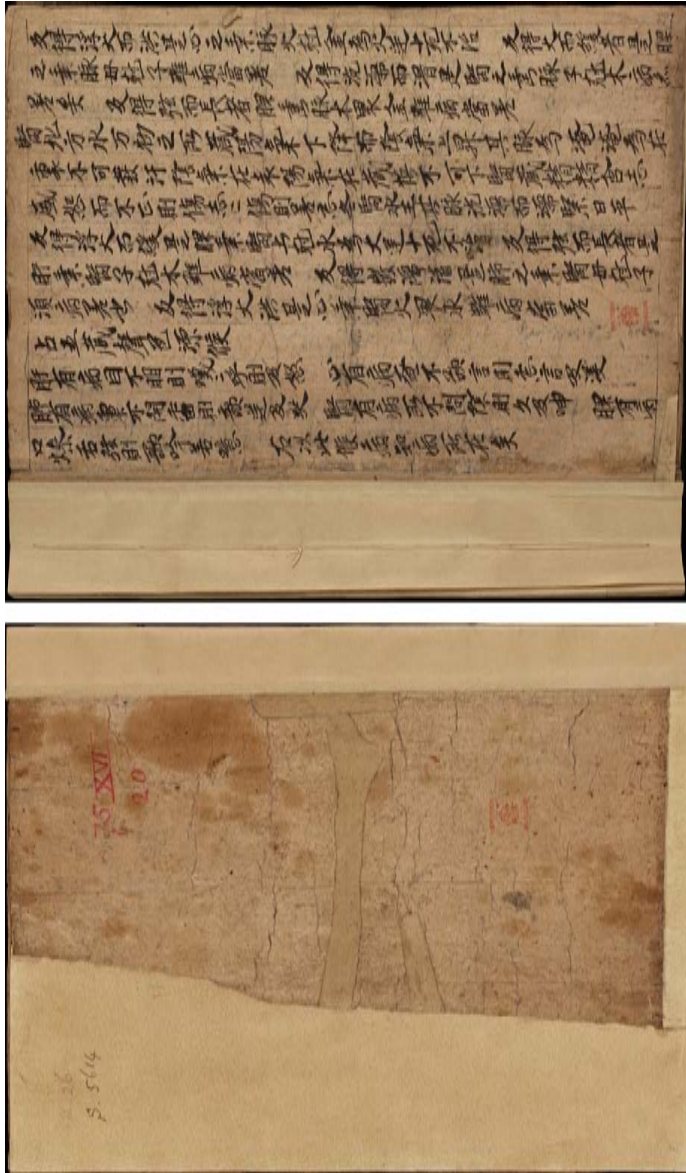
Wang Aihe and Guan Changlong, respectively, transcribed the text. Our study draws on these resources, on high-quality digital images published online by the International Dunhuang Project, and on examinations of the manuscript itself carried out in London in August 2017 and March 2020.

The manuscript bears the shelfmark S.5614, and the site number 75.XVI.20.² It measures 30 cm high × 21.5 cm wide. There are two important features about this manuscript that come to bear on its genre and its date: it is a compilation of texts, and it is a codex. As a compilation, S.5614 includes medical texts and divination texts, among them the *Divination of Maheśvara*. As a codex, the manuscript is butterfly bound, which means that rather than nesting multiple folia and then folding them and binding them, as in a modern booklet, folded bifolios are placed side-by-side and then bound by string and/or paste. The codex S.5614 comprises six bifolios and two leaves, all of which were once held together with animal paste at their gatherings. It might have had a cover or a wrapped backing at some point, but if so this is now lost. During its conservation in London—first at the British Museum, then at the Oriental Office Library, and then at the British Library—the manuscript was mounted on conservator’s paper and “bound” into a purpose-built booklet. Conservators have used pencil to number both the twenty-eight resulting “pages” and the fourteen “leaves,” reflecting both the conserved and original formats of the manuscript.

The manuscript is torn in places and stained in others. This evidence of use confirms what its textual contents and its rough handwriting otherwise suggest, namely that the manuscript was consulted often, and in all likelihood used for its intended purposes.

more recently, *idem.*, “Cléromancie,” 320; 352–353; Wang Jingbo 王晶波, *Dunhuang zhanbu wenxian yu shehui shenghuo* 敦煌占卜文獻與社會生活 (Lanzhou: Gansu jiaoyu, 2013); Wang Shumin, “Appendix 2: Abstracts of the Medical Manuscripts from Dunhuang,” in *Medieval Chinese Medicine: the Dunhuang Medical Manuscripts*, ed. Christopher Cullen and Vivienne Lo (New York: Routledge Curzon, 2005), 389–393; Wang Aihe 王愛和, “Dunhuang zhanbu wenshu yanjiu” 敦煌占卜文書研究 (Phd. Dissertation: Lanzhou daxue, 2003); *idem.*, “Moxishouluo bu xingzhi chubu fenxi” 摩醯首羅卜性質初步分析, in *Dunhuang Fojiao yishu wenhua guoji xueshu yantaohui lunwenji* 敦煌佛教藝術文化國際學術研討會論文集, ed. Zheng Binglin 鄭炳林 (Lanzhou: Lanzhou daxue, 2002), 116–125; Lü Deting, “Moxishouluo tian xingxiang zai Zhongguo de yanbian” 摩醯首羅天形象在中國的演變 (Lanzhou daxue, 2011); *idem.*, “Lun ‘pusa xiang’ leixing de Moxishouluo xingxiang” 論‘菩薩相’類型的摩醯首羅天, *Dunhuang xue jikan* 2012.3: 140–147.

2 One also finds “1L.26” written in pencil on conservator’s paper, in the upper left of the first “page.”



FIGURES 1A-B Front cover (left) and back (right) of the codex S.5614. Note shelfmark and site number in 1a, British Museum stamp on both, and pagination in pencil "28" in the lower right corner of 1b. Being torn, 1a shows the dimensions of the conservator's paper on which the booklet is mounted, while the left side of 1b clearly shows the conservator's paper binding fashioned by conservators

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The *mise en page* is consistent throughout the manuscript. There are 13 or 14 inked columns, measuring 15 mm per column. Margins vary somewhat, but are usually 8 mm at top and bottom, both inked, and 15 mm between the outside of one bifolio and the outside of the adjacent bifolio. Here one can often see reddish stains from the original glue. In the case of the inside of a folded bifolio, the gutter is negligible. The manuscript is torn at the bottom left of page 7 (right of page 8), away from the spine near the edge of the codex. There, an 8.3 × 2.2 cm tear has cut into 2.5 columns of text. The tear is in the same place at the bottom left of page 9 (right of page 10), where it has become slightly wider: 8.3 × 3.1 cm, cutting into four columns of text. These tears account for some minor lacunae in the oracular responses of the *Divination of Maheśvara* at sets [22] and [23] and sets [47] to [50]. The remaining tears in the codex are in the same relative place in the pages following, and are significantly larger: 11 × 11 cm at pages 11/12; 11 × 11 cm at pages 13/14; 11 × 11 cm at pages 15/16 (figure 2); and 10.5 × 11 cm at pages 17/18. Following these tears, which belong to the second, third, and fourth bifolios, there is a single untorn leaf comprising pages 19 and 20. This is followed by two more untorn bifolios comprising pages 21–28.

The script is clear and legible throughout, with characters generally measuring 1 cm². The writing is fairly typical of vernacular texts from Dunhuang during the 9th and 10th centuries. It is more cramped than the 17 characters per column one finds in Buddhist sutras of the Tang period, with around 28 characters per column on average.³ In the *Divination of Maheśvara* and in a few of the other texts contained in this codex, the scribes fit two columns of text into a single inked column; in the *Divination of Maheśvara* this allows each oracular response, which usually runs to two lines of text, to remain within one inked column. This can be seen in figure three. The writing of the *Divination of Maheśvara* and the surrounding mantic texts looks to be the work of a single scribe, but the script changes, and employs larger, messier characters (average of 22 characters per column) from pages 14 to 17, precisely where the content shifts from divination and hemerology to medical texts. To compound this, the bifolio for pages 15 to 18 was overly absorbent, so the ink shows through from recto to verso, as can be seen in figure 2.

While the four divination texts in the first half of the codex appear to be the work of a single hand, there may be more than one scribal hand in the four medical texts in the second half of the codex.

3 On the number of characters per column in Dunhuang manuscripts, see Akira Fujieda, “The Tun-huang Manuscripts: a General Description, Part 1,” *Zinbun: Memoirs of the Research Institute for Humanistic Studies, Kyoto University* 9 (1966): 1–32.

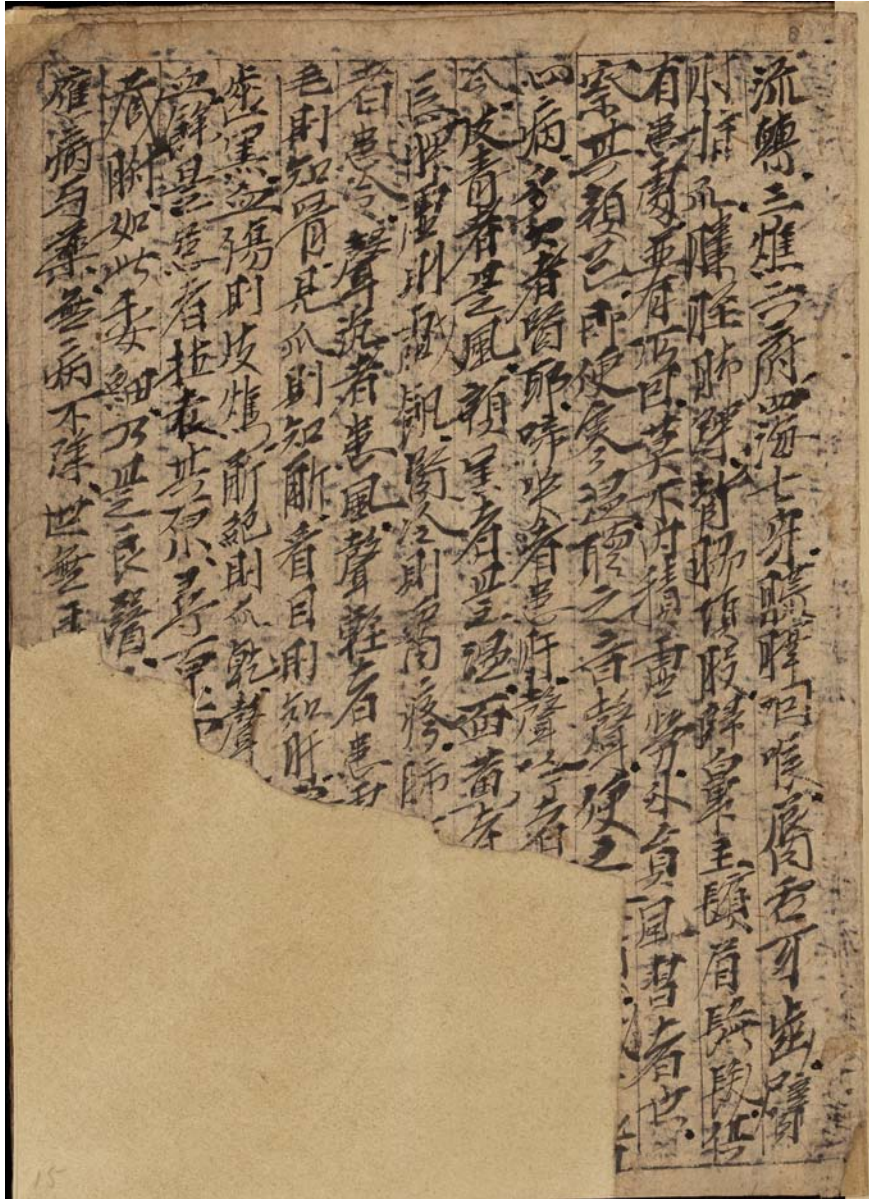


FIGURE 2 Page 15 of S.5614. Note the large tear and the absorbent paper, with writing bleeding through from the verso. The lighter colored paper on which the torn page is mounted is conservators' paper added in London
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As a compilation, the codex's eight texts are fairly closely related.⁴ The following is a brief description of the manuscript's contents:

- o. 1a (page 1): Blank, half-torn cover.
1. 1b1–3a13 (pages 2–5): Text on eclipses and solar phenomena, 52 columns of text. Includes four sections (36 through 39) of a longer text. Gives prognostications based on which branch day a solar phenomenon occurs.⁵
2. 3b1–6a4 (pages 6–11): *Divination of Maheśvara (Moxishouluo bu 摩醯首羅卜)*, 122 columns of text.⁶
3. 6a5–7a7 (pages 11–13): Hemerological text called the *Method for Divining the Twelve Time Periods (Zhan shier shi bufu 占十二時卜法)*, 29 columns of text. Evidently a variant of *Duke of Zhou's and Confucius's Method of Prognostication (Zhou Gong Kongzi zhanfa 周公孔子占法)*.⁷
4. 7a8–7a14 (page 13): *Duke of Zhou's Prognostic Method for Choosing the Day of a Journey Based on the Eight Heavens (Zhan Zhou Gong batian chuxing zeri jixiong fa 占周公八天出行擇日吉凶法)*, 7 columns of text.⁸
5. 7b1–10b7 (pages 14–20): *Treatise on the Five Viscera, Text B (Wuzang lun, yi ben 五臟論乙本)*, 83 columns of text.⁹
6. 10b7–13b9 (pages 20–26): *A Brief Outline of Normal Pulses, Text A (Pingmai lüeli, jia ben 平脈略例甲本)*, 61 columns of text.¹⁰
7. 13b10–14b9 (pages 26–28): *The Positions of the Pulses Corresponding to the Five Viscera and the Mutual Overcoming of Yin and Yang*

4 On compilation texts in Dunhuang, see Imre Galambos, "Composite Manuscripts in Medieval China: the Case of Scroll P.3720 from Dunhuang," in *One-Volume Libraries: Composite and Multiple-text Manuscripts*, ed. Michael Friedrich and Cosima Schwarke (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2016), 355–378.

5 Deng Wenkuan and Liu Lexian, "Uranomancie," in *Divination et société dans la Chine médiévale*, 78.

6 Kalinowski, "La divination par les nombres dans les manuscrits de Dunhuang," 63; idem., "Cléromancie," 352.

7 Ibid., 352.

8 Ibid., 352.

9 Wang Shumin, "Appendix 2: Abstracts of the Medical Manuscripts from Dunhuang," 389; also available online at the International Dunhuang Project, http://idp.bl.uk/database/oo_cat.a4d?shortref=WangShumin_2005&catno=7.2; last accessed May 21, 2019.

10 Wang Shumin, "Appendix 2: Abstracts of the Medical Manuscripts from Dunhuang," 390–391.

(*Wuzang maihou yinyang xiangcheng fa* 五臟脈候陰陽相乘法), 16 columns of text.¹¹

8. 14b10–14b13 (page 28): *Tracing Signs of Disease to the Origin by Divination from the Sounds and Colors Corresponding to the Five Viscera* (*Zhan wuzang shengse yuanhou* 占五臟聲色源候), 4 columns of text.¹²

The manuscript is split evenly between medicine and divination, with the latter blurring into the former in some places, such as text 8. Included under the rubric of divination here is not just cleromancy—such as the dice divination of the *Divination of Maheśvara*—but also divination based on celestial omens such as solar eclipses (uranomancy), and divination based on the calendar (hemerology). These medical, hemerological, and astrological imbrications should be kept in mind as part of the immediate material cultural context of the *Divination of Maheśvara* amidst its textual neighbors in this compilation codex. As will be discussed in chapter three, the *Divination of Maheśvara*'s being part of a compilation together with medical and divinatory texts nicely echoes what we find in the sixth-century Sanskrit *Bower Manuscript* from Kucha (in modern Xinjiang).

Turning to format, the manuscript's butterfly-bound codex format is significant for the fact that the codex was very rare in Dunhuang before the late-ninth century.¹³ Along with the concertina, the codex is thought to have been introduced to Dunhuang as a result of Tibetan and Central Asian influence there.¹⁴ The majority of texts in concertina format are written in Tibetan, and the codex is similarly a format used for writings in a variety of languages, including Tibetan and Old Turkish.¹⁵ The codex recommends itself for ease of access, and

11 Ibid., 392–393.

12 Ibid., 394.

13 Jean-Pierre Drège, “Les cahiers des manuscrits des Touen-houang,” in *Contributions aux études sur Touen-houang*, Vol. I, ed. Michel Soymié (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 1979), 17–28.

14 Fujieda Akira, “The Tun-huang Manuscripts,” in *Essays on the Sources for Chinese History*, ed. Donald Leslie, Colin Mackerras, and Wang Gungwu (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1973), 120–128; Imre Galambos, “Non-Chinese Influences in Medieval Chinese Manuscript Culture,” in *Frontiers and Boundaries: Encounters on China's Margins*, ed. Zsombor Rajkai and Ildikó Bellér-Hann (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2012), 76.

15 See Jean-Pierre Drège, “Les accordéons de Touen-houang,” in *Contributions aux études de Touen-houang*, Vol. III, ed. Michel Soymié, et al. (Paris: École française d'Extrême-Orient, 1984), 197; and Galambos, “Non-Chinese Influences in Medieval Chinese Manuscript Culture,” 76–77. For two Chinese codices on dream divination, P.3908 and Dx 10787, see Dimitri Drettas, “Deux types de manuscrits mantiques: pronostication par tirage au sort et clefs des songes,” in *La fabrique du lisible: la mise en texte des manuscrits de la Chine ancienne et*

one can certainly understand how it would be more convenient to look up the entry corresponding to a given roll of the dice in a codex than it would be to unfurl a long scroll for the same purpose. Nevertheless, codices are by no means the exclusive format of dice divination texts in Dunhuang. In fact, among the seventeen or eighteen ninth- and tenth-century Tibetan dice divination texts from Dunhuang, only one is a codex, and four are long scrolls.¹⁶

The codex format of S.5614 is important both because it advertises the *Divination of Maheśvara's* multilingual and multicultural context, and because it immediately suggests a date range for the manuscript. With the sealing of Mogao Cave 17 occurring in the first decade of the eleventh century as the *terminus ante quem*, we can date the manuscript more generally to the late-ninth or the tenth century, with the tenth century being the more likely. The manuscript's being a compilation complicates matters, since it is possible that the seven texts it contains were not all written at the same time. The apparent difference between the scribal hand(s) of the medical texts in the second half of the manuscript and what appears to be a single scribal hand responsible for the divination texts in the first half of the manuscript could conceivably be taken to suggest different dates for the two halves of the manuscript. The latter suggestion would be particularly persuasive if there were evidence for it in the construction of the codex; for example, if the medical texts began on new folios or bifolios such that one could even suggest the joining of two separate booklets into one. The construction of the codex makes this argument unlikely, however, since the transition from divination texts to medical texts happens in the middle of a bifolio. The general similarity of the handwriting across these texts also speaks against the idea that they were written at very different times.

The date of the manuscript is obviously not necessarily the same as the dates of the texts it contains. Wang Shumin, who attended only to the four medical texts and who mistakenly took S.5614 to be a concertina, suggested a date range of "early Tang" for texts five, six, and seven on the basis of taboo characters.¹⁷ She dated the eighth and final text of the manuscript to the same period based on the assumption that it was copied at the same time.¹⁸ The observance of character prohibitions does not by itself date a text, however, since these are

médiévale, ed. Jean-Pierre Drège and Costantino Moretti (Paris Collège de France, 2014), 126–128.

16 See the table in Ai Nishida, "A Preliminary Analysis of Old Tibetan Dice Divination Texts," in *Glimpses of Tibetan Divination: Past and Present*, ed. Petra Maurer, Donatella Rossi, and Rolf Scheuermann (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 51.

17 Wang Shumin, "Appendix 2: Abstracts of the Medical Manuscripts from Dunhuang," 389–392.

18 *Ibid.*, 393.

often transmitted when later copies of a text are made. Given the codex format of S.5614, it is most likely the case that these older texts were copied in the ninth or tenth century based on exemplars going back ultimately to the early Tang or Six Dynasties.¹⁹ This relates, however, only to the medical texts.

Turning specifically to the *Divination of Maheśvara*, this is the only known exemplum of the text. Similar dice divination texts in Tibetan that date to the ninth and tenth centuries suggest that the genre of dice divination features a remarkable variability such that its literary corpus is not amenable to an approach that assumes a fixed text or hyparchetype from which various reliable or unreliable witnesses descend.²⁰ Rather, dice divination texts are highly responsive to ritual practice and to their users' quotidian concerns, and this accounts both for the adaptability of these texts across languages and cultures and for their relevance to the social and religious mores of their respective geographical and temporal settings. It also accounts for the remarkable leeway that the copyists give themselves in the one instance in which they purport to copy one of the text's earlier oracular responses into its final oracular response, as we detail towards the end of this chapter. All of this argues in favor of seeing the *Divination of Maheśvara* as a product of its time, that is, dating the text to roughly the time of the manuscript, and thus approaching the *Divination of Maheśvara* as a product of ninth- or tenth-century Dunhuang.²¹ This places the text in the aftermath of the Tibetan occupation (786–848) during the period of the Guiyijun (848–1036), when Dunhuang, controlled by a local family of Chinese strongmen, entertained contacts with Uighur kingdoms, with Khotan, and with various other groups in the Gansu Corridor and the surrounding areas.²²

19 Oddly, Wang specifically rejects Luo Fuyi's suggestion, based on the manuscript's format, that it dates to the Five Dynasties or early Song period; *ibid.*, 389. This may come of Wang's mistaking this codex for a concertina, but the point is not further elaborated or defended. Wang cites Luo Fuyi, *Xichui gu fangjishu canjuan huibian* 西陲古方技書殘卷彙編, compiled and personally distributed in 1952.

20 On this point see Brandon Dotson, "Three Dice, Four Faces, and Sixty-Four Combinations," 34–35, 41–44.

21 This is to argue against Wang Aihe's proposal that the original text may have been authored by a Buddhist monk in the Six Dynasties period (222–589); Wang Aihe, "Moxishouluo bu xingzhi chubu fenxi," 121.

22 Hansen, *The Silk Road: A New History*, 191.

2 Introducing the *Divination of Maheśvara*

The *Divination of Maheśvara* consists of a brief introduction with ritual instructions, followed by sixty-four²³ oracular responses. The responses generally share the same structure: numerical set, followed by a name, a prognosis, and an evaluation. Every oracular response is headed by a stack of three numbers, each valued from one to four, such that one response begins, for example, “2-4-1.” These mantic figures or numerical trigrams are referred to as numerical “sets” (*ju* 局) at the beginning of each entry and as *gua* 卦 in the body of the response. Each “set” is assigned a specific name, which doubles as the name of a god or spirit. The oracular response then offers a prognosis for the divination user, and closes with a short evaluation, e.g., “greatly auspicious,” “inauspicious,” or “neutral.” Sometimes a response will also include prescriptions, such as rituals to perform, and sometimes it will make use of simile. The text gives its title at the beginning and also at its end, but includes no colophon regarding its transmission. All of these features are described in detail below, along with an analysis of the *Divination of Maheśvara*’s semantic fields and its explicit and implicit claims about how its system of divination works.

2.1 *Title and Introduction*

The text does not begin or end with a distinct title offset from its contents, but rather opens with the statement, “This [text] is called the Divination of Maheśvara” (*ci ming moxishouluo bu* 此名摩醯首羅卜). Moxishouluo is a Chinese phoneticization of the name of the Indian god Maheśvara, better known as Śiva. Maheśvara is a malleable and mobile god who crosses geographical and sectarian boundaries with ease. Like many other Indic gods, he is imperfectly incorporated into esoteric Buddhism, such that he appears sometimes in the service of Buddhism and other times as a rogue element. His association with both spirit possession and with dice divination is therefore particularly fitting, since both of these persist similarly on the margins of Buddhism. This marginal incorporation of both divination and of originally non-Buddhist Indic gods is aptly illustrated in the “Divination Sutra” which makes up the tenth chapter of the fifth-century *Book of Consecration* (*Guanding jing* 灌頂經, T.1331). Here Brahmā—who also figures prominently in the *Divination of Maheśvara*—provides the Buddha with a divination technique, which

23 The text in fact includes sixty-five, but this is an error: the combinations 1-4-3 (sets [16] and [61]) and 1-3-1 (sets [10] and [50]) each appear twice, and the combination 1-3-2 is omitted.

was said to be something that the “heretical sects” possessed, but which Buddhism ostensibly lacked.²⁴ This is a very interesting rhetorical pose to adopt, since it proposes to keep divination at arm’s length as something coming from outside of Buddhism while simultaneously embracing divination as the Buddha’s teaching by proxy. Any hard and fast differentiation between religious traditions is problematized, however, by the degree to which Buddhists had by this point embraced and to some extent transformed gods such as Brahmā and Maheśvara. In the *Divination of Maheśvara* the two gods seem to be claimed by Buddhism, but they still occupy a gray area not only with respect to religious affiliation, but also with regard to local, Chinese, and translocal pantheons. They serve as high-god proxies for a method of dice divination, and they additionally stand at the head of an eclectic pantheon of Indian and Chinese gods and spirits.

Following the name of this Indian god, we have the term *bu* 卜 or “divination,” completing the title of the text. Some divination texts in Dunhuang describe themselves as “divination methods” (*bufa* 卜法) and others simply as *bu*. *Bu* is customarily described as a pictograph deriving from the shape of the cracks made in a turtle plastron or a scapula when heat is applied to it in the course of divination. It came to have the sense of “to predict.”²⁵ As a general term for divination, *bu* is sometimes contrasted with *shi* 筮, which tends to refer to stalk divination, the cleromantic technique linked to, among other things, the *Book of Changes* (*Yijing* 易經) tradition.²⁶ The two terms also form a compound, *bushi*, indicating divination more generally. Here in the context of the *Divination of Maheśvara*, the term *bu* refers to a cleromantic technique, but using dice rather than stalks.

Following the title, the text launches straight into instructions to its users:

When Śakra, Brahmā and the four guardian kings and the many spirits gather and are watching, sit facing west and announce your name as follower So-And-So. Focus the mind and profess a vow.

24 Michel Strickmann, “The Consecration Sūtra: A Buddhist Book of Spells,” in Robert E. Buswell, ed. *Chinese Buddhist Apocrypha* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 1990), 75–118; idem, *Chinese Poetry and Prophecy*, 58–59.

25 David Keightley, *Working for His Majesty: Research Notes on Labor Mobilization in Late Shang China (ca. 1200–1045 B.C.) as Seen in the Oracle-Bone Inscriptions, with Particular Attention to Handicraft Industries, Agriculture, Warfare, Hunting, Construction, and Shang’s Legacies*, China Research Monograph 67 (Berkeley: University of California Institute of East Asian Studies, 2012), 279.

26 Constance A. Cook and Zhao Lu, *Stalk Divination: A Newly Discovered Alternative to the I Ching* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 18.

釋²⁷梵四天王神諸 (> 諸神) 共集，政 (> 正) 看之時，面西坐，稱名 [弟] 子某甲，志心發願。

The first part evokes the gods Śakra (Indra) and Brahmā, the four guardian kings (east: Dhṛtarāṣṭra, south: Virūdhaka, west: Virūpākṣa, north: Vaiśravaṇa), and the “many spirits” as witnesses whose presence presumably ensures the efficacy of the divination ritual. It is interesting that one is instructed to face west, since earlier Chinese divination texts, including the *Tricks of Jing*, tend to enjoin the diviner and/or client to face east.²⁸ This may be a significant clue concerning the ritual orientation of this divination method, and it could equally be an instance in which divination, as it often does, plays with the boundaries of prescribed ritual norms.²⁹

Identifying oneself by name, and as a “follower,” would seem to invite a high degree of ritual commitment and sincerity, and guard against duplicity. It also brings up the question of who is performing the divination, and whether it might be performed for a client. A “do-it-yourself approach” in which the roles of diviner and client are united in one performer is certainly prescribed in another tenth-century Chinese divination text found at Dunhuang, the *Guan Gongming Divination Method*. This text employs a method of numerical trigram divination that combines Buddhist with Daoist and other ritual traditions. It closes its introduction with the statement, “If you have an issue, divine yourself, and don’t keep bothering your teacher” (*you shi zi bu, bu lao wen shi* 有事自卜，不勞問師).³⁰ Such advice may be implicit in the *Divination of Maheśvara*’s introduction, but this cannot be stated for certain. We generally prefer, therefore, the term “divination user(s)” or the shorter “user(s)” to encompass both scenarios in which one divines for oneself and in which one consults a diviner. In the *Divination of Maheśvara*, the text directly addresses the person who announces their intention and poses their question or issue, and we refer to this person as the “querent,” a term that is similarly agnostic as to whether this query was performed alone or through a diviner.

27 Wang includes the character *shi* 釋 at the end of the title instead of as the first word of the text; Wang Aihe, “Dunhuang zhanbu wenshu yanjiu”; idem, “Moxishouluo bu xingzhi chubu fenxi,” 116–125.

28 Divination texts from Chu, where the diviner possibly faces south, are one exception to this general rule; Cook and Zhao, *Stalk Divination*, 26–27.

29 See Adam B. Seligman, Robert P. Weller, Michael J. Puett, and Bennett Simon, *Ritual and Its Consequences: An Essay on the Limits of Sincerity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 73–74, 80.

30 The text is discussed in chapter two and translated in the appendix, section three.

The injunction to “focus the mind and profess a vow” establishes the querent’s sincerity and ritual stance. “Professing a vow” (*fa yuan* 發願) is a common injunction in Buddhist rituals, and a formal part of liturgical practices such as the dedication of merit. It establishes one’s intentions and motivations. This is a preliminary to bringing up the matter or issue (*shi* 事) about which one is seeking guidance through divination.

Next, the introduction summarily presents the randomizing device at the heart of this divination method, and the manner of production of a numerical sequence that functions as a mantic figure:

After enunciating the matters at hand, throw the die three times and complete the set. If it comes out good, then you can rest after one mantic figure. If the divination results in an inauspicious set, then you can look at up to three sets.

具說上事由了，擲頭（>投）投子（>骰子）三遍，然後補局。若得好，一卦便休；卜得凶局，許看三局。

Enunciating one’s issues, or the matter about which one is divining, is a crucial step that immediately precedes casting the dice. It is essentially to pose the question to which the dice—and the gods—will respond. Several oracular responses refer back explicitly to the issue or matter about which one has divined. The issue that one divines about is a matter of anxiety and worry, suggesting that one generally divines about serious and potentially troubling, rather than trivial matters.

The instructions state that one should throw the die three times to complete a “graphic arrangement of numbers” or “set.” This “set” refers to the stacks of three resulting numbers at the head of each of the text’s sixty-four oracular responses, e.g., 1-1-1, 4-2-3, or 3-1-4, also referred to by the term *gua*. Casting three times to make one such set, e.g., 3-1-2, the querent or diviner would then look this up in a divination book. The oracular response indexed by the set 3-1-2 [65], for instance, happens to be “greatly auspicious.” According to the instructions, one should end the divination session after receiving a good outcome such as this, so as to essentially quit while one is ahead. If, on the other hand, casting the die produces a set whose value is inauspicious, then the system allows one to repeat the procedure up to two more times in order to arrive at a good result. It is highly unlikely that one would have three bad oracular responses in a row, and the introduction is silent as to what recourse such an unfortunate querent might have. Presumably, a good result on the second or third try would allow one to ignore any bad results on the first or second try.

The instruction to “throw the die” goes to the heart of the material culture of this form of divination. It also poses philological problems: the phrase we read as “throw the die” is written *zhi tou tou zi* 擲頭投子, which admits various readings. We read the phrase as verb-object (“throw the die”), with two syllables making up each. Others read verb-object verb-object (“cast a piece and throw a piece”) with the intent of casting a die or game piece expressed in two different ways. There are rationales for both readings. The second and third syllables in the four-character phrase were both pronounced *duw* in middle Chinese according to Baxter-Sagart reconstruction, raising the possibility that the graphs they were written with were chosen for their sounds more than their original meanings (“head” and “throw”). The entire phrase would have sounded something like “*drjek-duw duw-tsi*.” The verbs *zhi* and *tou* had slightly different senses. The verb *zhi* meant to cast or hurl something onto the ground or into water. The verb *tou* also meant “to hurl down” as well as tossing something through the air or pitching it towards an object. In later literature, the verbs *zhitou* could be used together. We also find the verb-object combination of “to cast dice” *zhi tou* 擲骰, as well as the noun combination “dice” *touzi* 骰子, and the phrase *zhi touzi* used in medieval and early premodern literature.³¹

A Song Dynasty dictionary of rhymes, the *Guangyun* 廣韻, compiled in roughly 1008, has the following definition of the word *qiong* 擲: “dice, dice used in gambling, also called *touzi*” (*qiong, bo qiongzi, yi ming touzi* 擲博擲子一名投子).³² Here *tou* is written as the verb “to cast” but clearly used as a noun with the addition of *zi*. The modifier *bo* describing the *qiongzi* as dice for gambling suggests a connection to early game of *Liubo* or even the use of draughtsmen as in the divination text, the *Classic of Empowered Draughtsmen* (*Lingqi jing*

31 See, for example, in tales recorded during the Song Dynasty in the *Taiping guangji* 太平廣記. In the section on Female Sylphs (Nü xian 女仙), a scholar must roll dice (*zhi touzi*) to select which of three female spirits he would sleep with. In the section on Shamans (Wu 巫), within a subsection on those who cast spells (Yanzhou 厭呪), it says that a certain Song Jushi of Tang times would chant while throwing dice (*zhi touzi*) “Yidi Midi, Mijieluodi” 伊帝彌帝 · 彌揭羅帝 10,000 times in order to win. See *Taiping guangji*, comp. Li Fang 李昉 in 978, Beijing: Zhonghua, 1961 (1986 rpt), Vol. 2, 429, Vol. 6, 2261. The chant seemed to invoke Buddhist gods of unclear identity. Midi, for example, may be short for a version of Maitreya. A similar situation is found in the *Consecration Sūtra*; Strickmann, “The Consecration Sūtra,” 81. See also the dice charm that is chanted before rolling the dice in the second of the dice divination texts in the *Bower Manuscript*; chapter three, below.

32 Yu Naiyong 余迺永, ed., *Huzhu jiaozheng Songben Guangyun* 互註校正宋本廣韻 (Taipei: Lianhe, 1974), 193, “Xia ping 下平” 14.32.

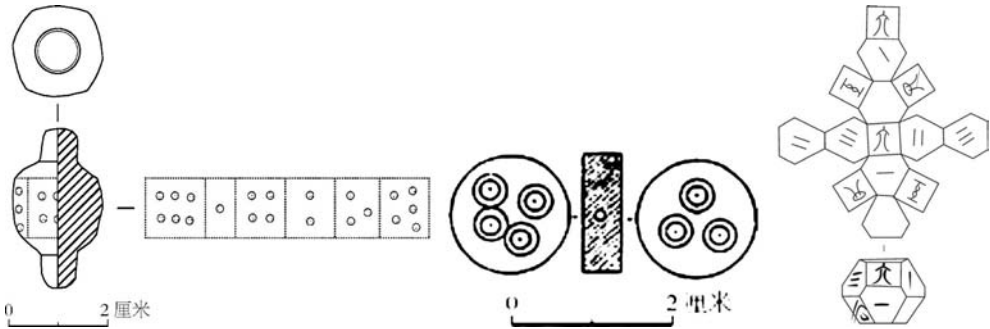


FIGURE 4A–C Early Chinese dice: from left to right, a clay Han spindle (numbers one to six), a stone Han token (numbers four and three), and an ivory Warring States Qi 14-sided die (numbers one to six, with two ones and sixes, and two blanks)

靈棋經), versions of which were found at Dunhuang.³³ However, there does not seem to be a connection between the twelve draughtsmen used in *Empowered Draughtsmen* and the multifaceted dice found in *Liubo* sets with numbers of one to six (see figure 4c). The die used to produce the *Divination of Maheśvara's* method of divination had to be limited to numbers one to four, and there are no known Chinese dice that fit this requirement.³⁴

33 Marc Kalinowski suggests that *zhi tou* and *tou zi* may refer to a choice of two types of objects, the first being dice (*tou* “head”) and the second draughts (*zi*). See “La divination par les nombres,” 63, n. 75. One problem with this idea is that Dunhuang divination texts tend to specify only one divination method, and not an alternative of two. Also, in Tang and later literature, the operative verbs for playing with games pieces or draughtsmen (*qizi*) tend to be “toy with” (*nong* 弄), “place down” (*baixia* 擺下 or *zhixia* 置下), or “spread out for gambling” (*bubo* 布博).

34 For a discussion of ancient Chinese dice and the mathematical possibility of their use as early as the late Western Zhou, see Andrea Bréard and Constance A. Cook, “Cracking bones and numbers: solving the enigma of numerical sequences on ancient Chinese artifacts,” *Archive for History of Exact Sciences* 2019: 1–31; Andrea Bréard and C.A. Cook, “Placing the *Zhouyi* in BCE Stalk Divination Traditions: Views from Newly Discovered Texts,” in *The Yijing: Alternative Visions and Practices*, ed. Hon Tze-ki (Leiden: Brill, forthcoming). According to transmitted Chinese texts, dice during the Tang period were basically the same as modern six-sided square dice, with ones (*yao* 幺) represented with red painted dots (*dian* 點) and the other numbers black. Four was apparently a winning number. For a review of transmitted Chinese sources describing medieval dice, see Ren Yaixin 任曜新, “Xinjiang kumutula fota chutu Baoweier xieben yanjiu” 新疆庫木吐喇佛塔出土鮑威爾寫本研究 (A Comprehensive Study of the Bower Manuscript from the Stupa of Kumutula in Kuchar, Xinjiang) (Phd. Dissertation: Lanzhou University, 2012), 120–123. Ren notes that dice were found in the Tang and Song layers of a site discovered in 1986 Chengdu, Zhihui 指揮 street. The names for dice or dice-like objects over the years besides *touzi*, include *shaizi* 色子, *cai* 采, *zhu* 箸, *jiu* 究, *qiong* (various graphs including 琼), and other words.

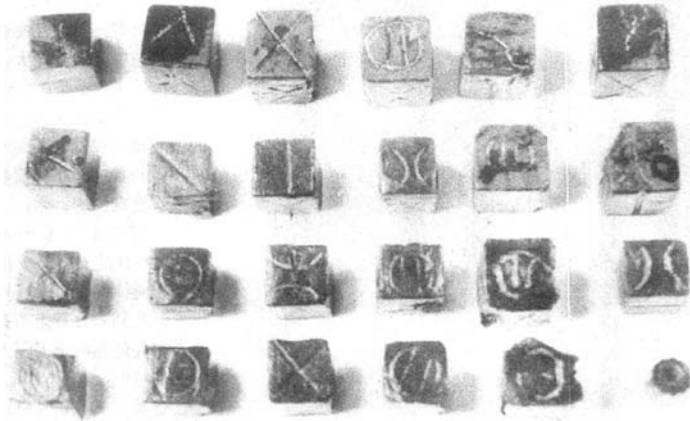


FIGURE 5 Cubiform Chinese dice: twenty-three wooden dice from a Qin tomb in Wangjiatai, Hubei (twenty-one dice, numbers one to six; two dice, numbers one and six twice and two blank sides)



FIGURES 6A–B

Four-sided rectangular bone die from Gandhara, where faces of three and two pips are visible; 1st–3rd century CE; Metropolitan Museum of Art, acc. no. 2000.284.19; and all four faces of a bone die from Sirkap; after Marshall, *Taxila*, plate 200, no. 37

It is quite likely that the type of die prescribed by the *Divination of Mahēśvara* was the oblong four-sided die known in Sanskrit as a *pāśaka*. Dice of this type, whose sides are marked with one, two, three, and four pips, usually in sequential order, have been found at Silk Road sites such as Khotan, with which Dunhuang had close trading and diplomatic relations, and at sites ranging from Central Asia (Uzbekistan, Afghanistan) to the Indus River.³⁵

35 Marc Aurel Stein, *Ancient Khotan: Detailed Report of Archaeological Explorations in Chinese Turkestan*. Volume III: Plates (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1907), plate LXXIV, N. xv. 004; Daniel Michon, *Archaeology and Religion in Early Northwest India: History, Theory, Practice* (New Delhi: Routledge, 2015), 152–200; Dotson, “Three Dice, Four Faces, and Sixty-Four Combinations,” 13–19.

Crucially, these types of dice are associated with a method of dice divination represented not only in the Sanskrit *Bower Manuscript*, but also in dice divination texts from Dunhuang, Turfan, and Mazār Tāgh that are contemporary with the *Divination of Maheśvara* and which also employ an almost identical method of indexing sixty-four oracular responses with sixty-four numerical trigrams represented either as numbers or as dice pips. Among these are about two dozen Old Tibetan texts, as well as the Old Turkish *Irq Bitig*. There are also a few Sogdian texts from Turfan. These will be described in some detail and compared with the *Divination of Maheśvara* in chapter three; suffice it to say here that the *Divination of Maheśvara* performs a method of divination that in its Tibetan, Turkish, and Sanskrit guises prescribes the use of a *pāśaka* die.

Contrasting the use of *pāśaka* dice with other forms of divination present in Dunhuang, one can note that there are a number of divination manuscripts from Dunhuang that prescribe methods that require a variety of material objects. For example, there was the *Twelve Coin Divination Method* (*Shier qian bufu* 十二錢卜法) represented in Chinese and Tibetan manuscripts and sometimes associated with Laozi's use of the *Book of Changes*; the *Confucius Horse Head Divination Method* (*Kongzi matou bufu* 孔子馬頭卜法), which uses nine bamboo stalks inscribed with numbers one through nine viewed through the hole in a bamboo tube; the *Empowered Draughtsmen Divination Method* (*Lingqi bufu* 靈棋卜法), which employs twelve draughtsmen; the *Sutra on the Divination of Good and Bad Karmic Retribution* (*Zhancha shan'e yebao jing* 占察善惡業報經), which spins three sets of small wooden "wheels" similar to teetotums; the *Duke of Zhou Divination Method* and *Guan Gongming Divination Method*, which use thirty-four stalks sorted by fours arranged into patterns representative of sixteen numerical trigrams; and the *Five Omens Divination Method* (*Wu zhao bufu* 五兆卜法), which sorts thirty-six stalks by fives to represent configurations of the Five Agents.³⁶ These texts, all of which are discussed in chapter two, are less obviously the result of transcultural influences, yet all revolve around the materiality of stalks, coins, draughtsmen, or other tokens to produce mantic figures. Notably, *Divination of Maheśvara* was the only one that explicitly used dice.

36 For studies of these texts, see Kalinowski, "La divination par les nombres"; idem., "Cléromancie"; Wang Jingbo, *Dunhuang zhanbu wenxian yu shehui shenghuo*; Zheng Binglin 鄭炳林 and Chen Yuzhu 陳于柱, *Dunhuang zhanbu wenxian xulu* 敦煌占卜文獻敘錄, ed. Yu Taishan 余太山 (Lanzhou: Lanzhou daxue, 2013). Each is presented in greater detail in chapter two.

To return to the *Divination of Maheśvara's* introduction, this passage is interesting not only for its succinct presentation of the method, but also for its semantic content. Specifically, one “throws” (*zhi* 擲) the dice to “obtain” (*de* 得) a set, and one can “look at” (*kan* 看) up to three sets (*xu kan san ju* 許看三局). These are all volitional verbs, and emphasize the agency of the divination user(s) within the mechanical and ritual processes of divination. The relationship between focusing one’s intentions (as prescribed in many manuscripts requiring the invocation of deities and self purification) and throwing the dice to create the set or mantic figure is to some extent clarified by the final oracular response in the text. This entry, for the combination 3-1-2 [65], states, “[w]hat you are intending and seeking determines the mantic figure” (*si qiu ding gua* 思求定卦). In other words, it is one’s intentions with regard to the question or matter on which one focuses one’s mind when throwing the dice that determine what numbers come up and what set or mantic figure is formed.

This small, text-internal note is extremely valuable for understanding the assumptions of this divination system, which would otherwise remain implicit. It falls short, of course, of explaining why it should be that one’s intentions have the power to influence the fall of the dice and the creation of the mantic figure. The claim is at the heart of divination and theories of its efficacy in that it marks the dividing line between seeing divination results as random or chaotic and seeing them as participating in and governed by ritual or cosmological principles. The text’s introduction effectively draws this line as that between the faithful (*xinzhe* 信者), and those who should not consult this divination practice. One explanation for how intention might affect the dice and determines the mantic figure comes from the neo-Confucian Song philosopher Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130–1200), who was generally a skeptic of divination. Zhu Xi rationalized the perceived efficacy of divination by appealing to *qi* 氣, which infuses Heaven, Earth, and the human mind. “Once man’s mind moves, it must reach the *qi* [of Heaven and Earth]. And with this [*qi*] contracting and expanding, coming and going, it mutually stimulates and moves. Things like divination are all thus.”³⁷ Adapting this interpretation to the *Divination of Maheśvara's* emphasis on the gods—something Zhu Xi probably would not countenance—, one would say that the *qi* of the querent’s mind and intention interact with the *qi* of the gods and spirits.

A further important medieval Chinese conceptual framework that applies not only to intention and the mantic figure, but also to interpersonal com-

37 From Yung Sik Kim, “Chǒng Yak-yong on *Yijing* Divination,” in *Coping with the Future: Theories and Practices of Divination in East Asia*, ed. Michael Lackner (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 363.

munication with the gods is “stimulus-response” (*ganying* 感應). In the *Divination of Maheśvara*, the divination querent’s intention and action are the stimulus that elicits a divine response: announcing their name to the gods and ritually setting their focus, and stating their intentions by professing a vow, the querent states their business and then casts the dice. This results in a numerical set or mantic figure, which invokes a god or spirit and returns an oracular response. The dice and then the mantic figures that they form effect the contact and communication between human intention and divine response. They are the medium, or rather the amplifier, through which the supplicant’s stimulus (*gan*) can receive a divine response (*ying*). The *Divination of Maheśvara* does not directly reference stimulus-response as a theoretical framework for how divination works, but there is perhaps an oblique reference to it in the form of the text’s one mantic figure that seemingly isn’t named after a god or spirit, but rather an idea, [27] Yinyuan 因緣, the Buddhist concept of dependent origination (Skt.: *pratītyasamutpāda*). As Robert Sharf has shown, medieval Chinese Buddhists such as Zhiyi 智顛 (538–597) identified this concept with stimulus-response “insofar as it too served as the metaphysical foundation for theoretical explanations of ritual efficacy, action at a distance, the inevitability of moral recompense, and so on.”³⁸ Stimulus-response also implies the sort of immediacy of connection and communication that dice divination performs. As Robert Campany explains “[h]umans and the Buddhist pantheon and cosmos are bound tightly together via the mechanism of stimulus-response. On the other hand, *ganying* implies that the Buddhist unseen world is exquisitely responsive: it is not aloof and indifferent.”³⁹ The *Divination of Maheśvara*’s pantheon is similarly “out there” as a whole, in potential, yet each of its individual members can be immediately called into contact in response to the visible construction of its mantic figure through the roll of the die.

Given the emphasis on the link between one’s intentions and desires and the mantic figure and oracular response that these call into being, it is perhaps surprising that the instructions make use of the “rule of three.” That is, one can disregard up to two responses, and receive a maximum of three. This appeal to “wobble room” or even to a sense of play introduces a counterpoint to the emphasis on sincerity that precedes it and to the insistence on infallibility that follows it. This also informs the querent of the risks involved by naming

38 Robert Sharf, *Coming to Terms with Chinese Buddhism: a Reading of the Treasure Store Treatise* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2002), 130.

39 Robert F. Campany, *Signs from the Unseen World: Buddhist Miracle Tales from Early Medieval China* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2012), 49.

inauspicious responses as distinct possibilities. Nevertheless, as we shall see, the probability of receiving three inauspicious responses is negligible.

The introduction closes with statements about the method's efficacy and an appeal to secrecy.

Believers can look at them but non-believers should not. If a person is careful, there will not be one mistake in ten thousand. This [method] grants what is sought, and must not be transmitted to outsiders for even a thousand pieces of gold.

信者看之，不信者必不須看。如人審 [細]，万不失一。此是隨求，千金莫傳。

The verb “to look at” (*kan*) is the same verb used previously in the introduction where it stated that one can look at up to three sets, meaning that one can divine up to three times. The same verb appears repeatedly in the oracular responses that follow, suggesting an emphasis on the sense of sight in particular to verify the results. It also emphasizes the two-step procedure of first creating the mantic figure and then looking up the corresponding entry in a book.

The point of not transmitting this to outsiders once again emphasizes the necessity of sincerity and faith, while reinforcing the value of the *Divination of Maheśvara* as a proprietary ritual technology. Similar statements about not transmitting Buddhist ritual technologies to the faithless may be found in Nāgārjuna's *Treatise on the Five Sciences* concerning seals such as the Buddha's Crown seal that grants invisibility.⁴⁰ Notably, only those who put their trust in this divination method are permitted to look. This second appeal to sincerity and belief reinforces the contractual nature of the divination ritual, including invoking gods, focusing one's intentions, professing a vow, and identifying oneself before them prior to casting the dice. It also constructs two separate groups: the divining community of the faithful (*xinzhe*), and those non-believers who cannot efficaciously take part in this divination ritual. Presumably for the method to work, the users of divination must put their trust in the pantheon of Indic, Chinese, and local deities invoked. This is not to say that

40 *Longshu wuming lun* 龍樹五明論; T.1240.21.963b4–16; see Strickmann, *Chinese Magical Medicine*, 172–173. On the Buddhist adoption of Chinese seals as a ritual technology, see *ibid.* See also our discussion of seals and talismans in relation to mantic figures in chapter two.

it defines a sectarian community of, say, Buddhists; rather, it simply includes those who believe in the efficacy of divination and in the interventions of the gods and the spirits.

To emphasize faith or trust (*xin* 信) in this way is to insist upon divination's ability—and by extension that of the gods—to produce a truth that is not open to question in the same way as a common, that is to say representational truth is open to question. In his discussion of truth in the context of Afro-Cuban *Ifa* divination, Martin Holbraad addresses this question directly, writing that “oracular truth does not depend on the possibility of comparing the oracle's pronouncements with the world as it is, as a representational image of truth might have it. Rather than representing the world, the oracle transforms it by interfering with its very meaning—an ontological rather than an epistemic operation.”⁴¹ The introduction's statement that this system of divination is essentially flawless (“there will not be one mistake in ten thousand”) as long as a person “is careful,” may appeal to this difference between oracular and representational truth. Careful attendance to the ritual process and careful examination of the responses is a clear indication that the responses are to be interpreted, and that their truths are to be created (or found) in a dialogic process between the divination system (and the gods) who provide them on the one hand and the people who make them their own by applying them to their specific issues and situations on the other. The fact that the method responds to the matters at hand or “what is sought” suggests particularity to a given person and situation. It is also, a cynic might add, a useful “out clause” by which an oracular response is necessarily infallible: if your response seems irrelevant, then you probably were not “careful” or did not have sufficient faith or trust.

The method's “granting what is sought” might be read in multiple ways. Most obviously, it grants a response to one's query about a specific matter. But the system also tends to grant what is sought in the sense of giving people comfort: as will be clear from an examination of the ratio of auspicious to inauspicious responses, in concert with the option of rolling three times, it is very likely that one will come away from consulting the *Divination of Maheśvara* with an uplifting message.

41 Martin Holbraad, *Truth in Motion: The Recursive Anthropology of Cuban Divination* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), xviii. We briefly return to these matters when discussing signs meant to establish divination's truth in chapter three.

2.2 *The Oracular Responses*

The *Divination of Maheśvara* contains sixty-five oracular responses. It should be sixty-four. This error is due to the repetition of two combinations and the omission of one. Such mistakes are legion in related Tibetan, Turkish, and Sanskrit dice divination texts, which also repeat and omit combinations, and in doing so reveal, among other things, their practice-based, popular contexts.⁴² Mathematically, a combinatory system that employs three objects that each provide values from one to four—or which, like the *Divination of Maheśvara*, uses one such object three times—and in which order matters (e.g., 3-2-1 [set 12] is different from 1-2-3 [set 11]), yields sixty-four possible outcomes. The number of possible outcomes may be represented as $4^3 = 64$. It is therefore fair to speak of the *Divination of Maheśvara* and of similar divination systems as containing sixty-four oracular responses, even if this is a platonic ideal that often eluded tired or careless scribes, or which left rough edges in the process of textualization. Approaching the *Divination of Maheśvara*'s sixty-four oracular responses, one attends to their order, structure, and semantic fields as well as their prescriptions, pantheons, and overriding concerns.

The first four “sets” (*ju*)—to use the *Divination of Maheśvara*'s own terminology—are triplets that proceed in ascending order: 1-1-1, 2-2-2, 3-3-3, and 4-4-4. The sets then proceed fairly chaotically, with the next four being set [5] 2-4-1, [6] 2-1-4, [7] 4-1-3, and [8] 1-4-2. The fifty-six remaining sets proceed without any apparent order at all (see table 2). Pattern recognition is at the heart of divination, so naturally one can look hard at the arrangement and order of the sets to try to perceive a logic behind it. In this search for order there are many common strategies, some of which are known from other divination traditions. The sets might be arranged deliberately in ascending order from sets of low numbers to sets of high numbers, such as we find in the *Classic of Empowered Draughtsmen (Lingqi jing)*.⁴³ Or the sets can proceed in descending order. The sets might, in the manner of the paired hexagrams of the *Book of Changes*, be arranged in inverse pairs such that 4-1-1 and 1-1-4 form a pair and 3-1-2 and 2-1-3 form another pair. Or they might, as in the Sanskrit *Pāśakakevalī* and the two dice divination texts in the *Bower Manuscript*, be arranged in groups that exhaust the possible combinations of a given set of three numbers, such that

42 For examples, see Dotson, “Three Dice, Four Faces, and Sixty-Four Combinations,” 34–35.

43 The *Lingqi jing*'s first four sets are 1-1-1, 1-1-2, 1-1-3, and 1-1-4, and it proceeds in order through its sixty-first to sixty-fourth sets, 4-4-1, 4-4-2, 4-4-3, and 4-4-4 before factoring in blanks or zeros to construct the remaining sixty-one of its 125 sets; see further details in chapter two.

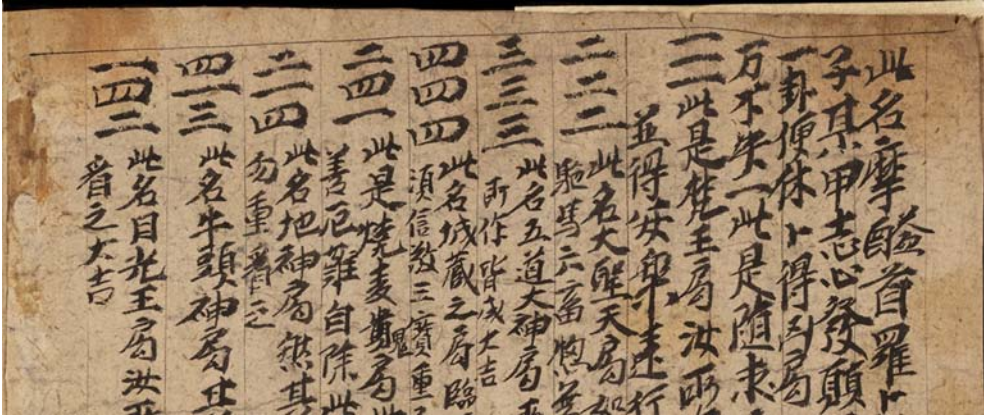


FIGURE 7 Detail from first page of the *Divination of Maheśvara*, showing the numerical sets or mantic figures at the head of each response
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4-4-3, 4-3-4, and 3-4-4 are grouped together, and 3-2-4, 4-3-2, 2-4-3, 4-2-3, 3-4-2, and 2-3-4 appear together.⁴⁴ Amidst all of these options, the *Divination of Mah-éśvara*'s sets, maddeningly, appear to follow no ordering principles, and those few instances of paired or related sets are evidently there by accident rather than by design. The only hint of any willful arrangement of the numerical sets appears to be the opening four triplets and their ascending order. This general disregard for the numerical values of the sets generally agrees, as we shall see, with the lack of any numerological sensibilities linking the numerical values of the mantic figures to the contents of their oracular responses.

The oracular responses themselves contain four essential parts as well as a few ancillary or optional elements. The four essential parts of a response are its numerical combination or set (*ju*); its name (*ming* 名), which is that of a god or spirit; its prognosis, which responds to the client's or diviner's issue or intention; and a final evaluation that typically declares the trigram (mantic figure, *gua*) to be auspicious, inauspicious, or neutral. To these four core parts, some responses add prescriptions in the form of instructions for what a person should do to avoid danger or to ensure success. Also, some responses make use of similes.

44 On these groups of related combinations, known in Sanskrit as *āya*, see Heinrich Lüders, *Das Würfelspiel im alten Indien* (Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1907), 29–37; see also the discussion in chapter three.

2.3 *Casting the Dice, Creating the Set*

One of the more enduring questions in the study of divination concerns the relationship between the divination user(s), the randomizing device, and the gods. Fritz Graf, writing on Greco-Roman sortition, gives voice to a view shared by many, even beyond a Greco-Roman context: “[i]n dice oracles, it is the throwing of the dice—or the *astragaloi* [sheep knuckles]—that introduces randomization, and the hand of god that determines the outcome.”⁴⁵ In the Chinese “stimulus-response” framework, there is also often an emphasis on the sincerity and intention of the diviner. As we have seen, the *Divination of Maheśvara* offers its answer to the question of the relationship between the querent and the dice by stating that the querent’s intention affects how the dice land and thereby determines the creation of the set. It is only when we come to the sets themselves that the text takes up the question of where gods and spirits figure into this process.

The form of a given set in the *Divination of Maheśvara* is three numbers, evidently read from top to bottom. This form of mantic figure, consisting of three parts, is a trigram, and more specifically, a numerical trigram. Both the form of the numbers and the direction of reading are stylistic choices, since there was a wide variety of numerical trigram styles, not all of which use written numbers. The most “archetypal” trigrams were the eight base trigrams that not only formed the 64 hexagrams in the *Book of Changes* but were widely employed in directional cosmograms for Daoist rituals. By medieval times, these eight trigrams were converted from ancient numerical sets into abstracted sets of three lines, either solid or broken, representing Yang and Yin, respectively. They were usually “read” from bottom to top, although there was in fact another tradition active in the fourth century BCE where four trigrams were placed in a square and read top to bottom, right to left (found in the *Stalk Divination*, or *Shifa*). The lines of the trigrams in that tradition remained numbers, with 1 (or 7) and 6 the most common and 4, 5, 8, and 9 as extraordinary numbers. This suggests an ancient combined method of dicing and stalk sortilege.⁴⁶

During the Han period, when the *Changes* gained ascendancy, alternative trigram divination texts began to employ a reduced system of numerical stacks of numbers 1–4, such as we find in the *Divination of Maheśvara*. This tradition is evident in the early Han bamboo divination text, the *Tricks of Jing*, and contin-

45 Fritz Graf, “Rolling the Dice for an Answer,” in *Mantikē: Studies in Ancient Divination*, ed. Sarah Iles Johnston and Peter T. Struck (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 61–62.

46 Bréard and Cook, “Cracking Bones and Numbers.”

ues in the related texts descended from it such as the *Duke of Zhou Divination Method* and the *Guan Gongming Divination Method*.⁴⁷ Significantly, the stacks of numbers are depicted graphically as counting rods, with one to four rods in each of a trigram's three tiers. The upper and lower values are arranged horizontally, and the middle figure separating them is arranged vertically. This form of numerical trigram also appears in talismans or charms (*fu* 符) used for protection, including one linked in another Dunhuang text with Guan Gongming (see fig. 20 below).⁴⁸ The stacked numbers of the *Divination of Maheśvara* by contrast, are numbers and not counting rods, and their arrangement is somewhat more straightforward and perhaps mundane.

As noted above, even and odd numbers in numerical trigrams could be reduced to oppositional forces. In the case of the *Stalk Divination (Shifa)*, these forces are female and male, and in the *Book of Changes* they are Yin and Yang. The *Empowered Draughtsmen* method followed the concept of odd numbers for Yang values and even numbers for Yin, but depicted them sometimes as counting rods, and sometimes as stacks of Chinese directional words. Positional values were assigned to each position in its numerical stack: the top number (*shang* 上) represented the heavens, the middle (*zhong* 中) the place of humanity, and the bottom number (*xia* 下) that of the earth. This follows a conceptual cosmic framework formed during the Han period and applied to reading the *Book of Changes'* hexagrams.⁴⁹ Combining these "place values" with the Yin and Yang values of even and odd numbers opens a vast horizon of interpretive possibilities.⁵⁰ In the *Classic of Empowered Draughtsmen*, one commentary to the numerical trigram 1-1-2, for example, states, "The positions of Heaven and Man are both Yang; the Dao of Earth is pliant and beautiful. The Yin in Earth's position has not yet attained the point of flourishing; above and below respond to each other."⁵¹

47 These are described in detail in chapter two. See also Kalinowski, "La divination par les nombres," 57–60.


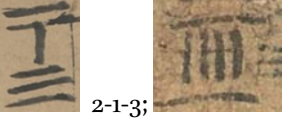
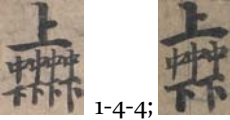
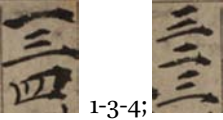
48 Christine Mollier, "Talismans," in *Divination et société dans la Chine médiévale*, 416, 421, 427; Kalinowski, "Mantic texts in their cultural context," in C. Cullen & V. Lo, ed. *Medieval Chinese Medicine: the Dunhuang Medical Manuscripts* (London and New York: Routledge-Curzon, 2005), 116, 128, 133 n. 85.

49 Robert F. Campany, *Strange Writing: Anomaly Accounts in Early Medieval China* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996), 344.

50 Carol Morgan, "An introduction to the *Lingqi jing*," *Journal of Chinese Religions* 23 (1993): 99–100.

51 Adapted from Ralph Sawyer and Mei-Chün Lee Sawyer, trans., *Ling Ch'i Ching: a Classic Chinese Oracle* (Boulder: Westview Press, 2004), 31.

TABLE 1 Styles of numerical trigrams, with images from the *Stalk Divination*, P.3398, P.4984, P.3782, and S.5614

Numerical trigram style	Examples	Relevant texts
“Archaic Numbers”	 <p>1-1-6; 1-6-1 1-1-1; 1-1-1 (odd numbers = <i>Yang</i>; even numbers = <i>Yin</i>)</p>	<i>Stalk Divination</i>
“Counting-Rod Style”	 <p>2-1-3; 1-4-1</p>	<i>Tricks of Jing; Empowered Draughtsmen Method; Duke of Zhou Divination Method; Guan Gongming Divination Method</i>
“Place Values”	 <p>1-4-4; 1-3-2</p>	<i>Empowered Draughtsmen Method</i>
“Numbers”	 <p>1-3-4; 3-2-3</p>	<i>Divination of Maheśvara</i>

The highly developed assumptions of the *Empowered Draughtsmen* about the values of the lines of its numerical trigrams illustrates how this can inform commentary and analysis, but it also forms a contrast with the apparent absence of such considerations with respect to other numerical trigram traditions, such as the those of the *Tricks of Jing*, *Duke of Zhou Divination Method*, and *Guan Gongming Divination Method* trigram traditions. The disregard for Yin and Yang is perhaps even clearer in the *Divination of Maheśvara*'s numerical sets. There is no mention of Yin or Yang in its oracular responses, nor is there any indication that the putative genders of the individual numbers or of the trigram as a whole have any bearing on the identity of the god with which they are associated or with the quality of the prognosis.

For example, in the *Divination of Maheśvara*, while the “über-Yang” combination 1-1-1 indexes the male god Brahmā, the “über-Yin” combination 4-4-4 indexes the bodhisattva Dizang, who is also male. Other very “Yang trigrams,” [36] 3-3-1, and [53] 3-1-3, index “Lady Traveler” (行路夫人), and “Lady Heaven Net/ Wife of Tianluo,” respectively, but “Nisuo God” and “Lady of the Mirror-vessel/ Wife of Jingbo” are indexed by putatively “Yin trigrams” [43] 2-4-4 and [58] 4-4-2. These examples could be multiplied, but the point is already clear: these numerical trigrams were not “read” with respect to Yin and Yang or female and male.

The *Divination of Maheśvara*’s numerical trigrams are paradoxical in the sense that although they are mundane numbers that can be easily identified or “looked at” (*kan*) as such, they are also resistant to being “read as words” (*yan* 言) and interpreted line-by-line in the manner of the *Empowered Draughtsmen Method* or the *Changes* method. They are plain numbers, but they resist cosmological correlations, leaving the entire trigram and its link to its associated deity frustratingly, wonderfully, fuzzy. This indeterminate link between mantic figure and associated god is something that we will also observe in Chinese numerical trigram texts in chapter two and in Tibetan dice divination texts in chapter three.

2.4 Naming the Sets

Following the stack of three numbers constituting the numerical set, each entry in the *Divination of Maheśvara* begins with a name. This is simultaneously the name of the set or mantic figure and the name of a god or spirit. That the mantic figures should be named does not go without saying. The *Guan Gongming Divination Method*, for example, does not name its trigrams. In the *Divination of Maheśvara* there is a comparatively elaborate rhetorical pattern for naming the trigrams. After the numerical trigram, there always follows a phrase with a structure such as “this is named the So-and-So set” (*ci ming Xju* 此名X局). For example, following the combination 4-1-3 [set 7] it states “[t]his is named the Ox-Headed Spirit set” (*ci ming niu tou shen ju* 此名牛頭神局).

This rather clipped style is the usual semantic form, but a few variants clarify the grammar. The entry for the set 4-4-4, for instance, uses the genitive *zhi* 之: “this is named [bodhisattva] Dizang’s (Kṣitigarbha’s) set” (*ci ming dizang zhi ju* 此名地藏之局). This creates a relationship of possession between the set and the god to which the set belongs. But grammatical possession is vague, and it certainly does not necessitate a congruent divine or demonic possession whereby the spirit possesses or infuses the numerical trigram. “This is named Dizang’s set” could, for example, mean that this numerical combination invokes or summons Dizang. It might also imply that this mantic figure

itself contains something essential to this god, but the relationship of possession could equally be of a weaker or more circumstantial nature. This leaves some indeterminacy in the relationship between the mantic figure and the god or spirit for whom it is named.

The entry following the combination 2-4-1 (set 5) substitutes the word *shi* 是 for *ming* 名 “name” suggesting its use here as a copula rather than a demonstrative: “[t]his is the Burning Wheat Demon set” (*ci shi shao mai gui ju* 此是燒麥鬼局).⁵² The same form, using *shi*, is found in the very first oracular entry, for 1-1-1, which suggests that one can understand *ming*, standing in the same place as *shi*, as behaving verbally. This is reflected in our choice of translation, e.g., “this is *named* ...” Other numerical trigram texts also associate gods, spirits, or supernatural forces with their mantic figures, but they do so in a shorthand. The *Tricks of Jing* simply states the name of the mantic figure, e.g., Bing 丙, just before the mantic figure itself, e.g., 3-4-3, and the attached oracular response. The *Duke of Zhou Divination Method* places the name of the mantic figure next to the mantic figure, offset from and above the oracular response, e.g., “2-2-2: Confucius trigram” (*Kongzi gua* 孔子卦). The full sentences of the *Divination of Maheśvara*, by contrast, emphasize the fact of naming in such a way as to perform the act of naming itself. In the context of ritual, and of Chinese invocations and exorcisms in particular, to name is to wield. The power of naming, particularly through the technology of writing, is emphasized in Xu Shen’s famous 1st century CE comments to the *Huainanzi*: “[f]ollowing the patterns established by the tracks of birds’ feet, Cangjie created writing in correspondence to all things. The demons were afraid that they, too, might be noted down in the books and hurled themselves into the darkness.”⁵³ This association between naming and wielding or exorcising demons is the operative principle that informs large-scale Buddhist and Daoist demonological texts. Strickmann notes, for example, that “the *Spirit Spells of the Abyss* is essentially a repertory of the fiends’ names and numbers. Whether assimilated to a legal code or to a demonifuge incantation, such comprehensive naming and numbering was prerequisite to full control over the enemy ... by naming the demon, everyone

52 The primary meaning of *shi* at this time remained the neutral demonstrative “this,” but by the Tang it was already used as a copula in vernacular writing; Paul Kroll, *A Student’s Dictionary of Classical and Medieval Chinese* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 417. Its appearing in the phrase just after the demonstrative *ci* “this,” along with the absence of any other verb, suggests it is here acting as a copula.

53 Anna Seidel, “Imperial Treasures and Taoist Sacraments: Taoist Roots in the Apocrypha,” in *Tantric and Taoist Studies in Honour of R.A. Stein*, Vol. 2, ed. Michel Strickmann (Brussels: Institut Belge des Hautes Études Chinoises, 1983), 322.

seems to agree, you neutralize it.”⁵⁴ In the *Divination of Maheśvara*, naming also applies to the gods who protect, and naming is part of the alchemy that draws together a given mantic figure and a given god or spirit.

To name each set or numerical trigram is to translate raw numbers into meaningful configurations by associating them with a specific spirit or god. But naming something, as pointed out by J.L. Austin, is also a very specific technology that calls something into existence through a performative utterance.⁵⁵ It calls into being a new truth, so to speak: “this baby is christened ‘Mary,’” or “I hereby name this boat ‘The Queen Elizabeth.’” This truth rests on the authority of the namer and the willingness of other speakers and listeners to accept the act of naming. In the *Divination of Maheśvara’s* context, we might ask whose voice is revealing the names of these sets. Is it Maheśvara, as the source of this tradition? A disembodied voice representing the cosmic “response,” in a sense, the divination tradition itself? We shall return to this in considering who speaks the prognoses, many of which address the querent directly with the second-person pronoun “you” (*ru* 汝).

One notes here a similarity between the act of throwing dice and the act of naming: both are *decisive*, irreversible. “*Alea iacta est*,” Caesar is supposed to have said when crossing the Rubicon, “the die is cast.” Similarly, once one has named one’s child “Lucifer” or “Rubella,” there’s no taking it back. This sense of decisiveness of both dice-throwing and naming is precisely the point when it comes to divination because it brings to a definitive end a process that begins with almost total uncertainty. Here we also see a chain of consequences put into motion through the divinatory process: intention determines the dice rolls, which constitute the set, which, through naming, invokes a given god or spirit. And as we will see, it is that god or spirit that determines the prognosis by variously protecting a person or bringing them misfortune.

2.5 *The Deity’s Response: Prognosis*

Far more than simply creating an index between a numerical set and a named god or spirit, this act of naming effectively invokes or activates a god or spirit. This is apparent from the fact that in the prognosis that follows the name it is a set’s god or spirit who bestows, protects, or harms. Once again, the semantics reflect the assumptions of the divination system. The second oracular

54 Michel Strickmann, *Chinese Magical Medicine*, ed. Bernard Faure (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), 113.

55 J.L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962), 8–9.

response, for the set 2-2-2 for instance, begins: “[t]his is named the set of the god Vināyaka. If a person has issues to resolve, its god will protect him/her” (*ci ming dasheng tian ju, ru ren qiu shi, qi tian yonghu* 此名大聖天局：如人求事，其天擁護). This underlines that the god invoked is addressing the querent’s specific issue (*shi*), something that is taken for granted after being explicitly mentioned in the first two responses. In nine further responses, the god or spirit of a given set protects the diviner or client.⁵⁶ Often this protection is specifically bodily, as in the entry for set [16] 1-4-3: “[t]his is named the Yama set. Its god protects your body” (*ci ming yan luo tian ju, qi tian yonghu ru shen* 此名梵 (> 炎) 羅天局。其天擁護汝身).⁵⁷ The emphasis on the bodily should here be qualified somewhat by noting that *shen* 身 could refer both to a person’s physical embodiment and to his or her “person,” with the latter including, for example, one’s *jing* (精) and *hun* (魂) spirits.⁵⁸

The reference point of “its” (*qi* 其) in the phrase “its god protects you” is the trigram itself which has invoked a particular god or spirit. Returning to the relationship of belonging encoded in phrases like “this is named Dizang’s set,” where the god or spirit grammatically possesses the mantic figure, the phrase “its god protects you” introduces a reversal in this grammatical relationship: first the god’s set was named, and now the set’s god protects. It is as if the act of naming the mantic figure as or after a given god gave the mantic figure the power to deploy that god, either for protection or for harm.

While most of these phrases refer to gods (*tian* 天), a few refer to kings (*wang* 王). For the set [42] 3-4-3, for example, it states, “[t]his is named the Former Kings set. Its kings protect your body” (*ci ming xianwang ju, qi wang yonghu ru shen* 此名先王局。其王擁護汝身). Similarly, in the *Divination of Maheśvara*’s two “Asura(s) sets” ([57] 3-4-4 and [65] 3-1-2) we find the statement “its king protects your body” (*qi wang yonghu ru shen* 其王擁護汝身) and “its king protects [you]” (*qi wang yong hu* 其王擁護). Here “king” is presumably used because of the Asuras’ associations with kings, and also because there is a set, [50] 1-3-1, called the “Asura King(s) Set” (*axiuluo wang ju* 阿修羅王局).

56 These are for the sets [16] 1-4-3, [26] 1-2-4, [41] 4-2-4, [43] 2-4-4, [45] 4-1-4, [42] 3-4-3, [57] 3-4-4, [62] 3-3-4, and [65] 3-1-2.

57 We cautiously suggest that Fanluo Tian is an error for Yanluo Tian. This is discussed further below.

58 Medieval Chinese perceived their bodies full of many different soul types, “essence” (*jing*) and “cloud-soul” (*hun*) are just two. See Catherine Despeux, “Âmes et animation du corps: La notion de shen dans la médecine chinoise antique,” in *De l’esprit aux esprits, enquête sur la notion de shen/ Of self and spirits: Exploring shen in China. Extrême-Orient Extrême-Occident* 29 (2007): 71–94.

This use of “king” (王) is in parallel with “god” (天), in the sense that they both refer to gods. It is also important to understanding the semantic range of the latter term. The word *tian* means heaven or heavenly entity, which in a medieval Buddhist context was a common translation for the Sanskrit *deva*. In the *Divination of Maheśvara* it also seems to be more generalized, such that it can refer to a bodhisattva such as Avalokiteśvara in set [62] 3-3-4, can refer to a spirit—the “Obtainment Spirit” (*de shen* 得神) at set [45] 4-1-4, and to the Lady of the Divine Horse (*tianma furen* 天馬夫人) at set [26] 1-2-4. In all of these cases, it is the god or spirit after whom the set takes its name who protects the client or diviner. In only one case, set [28] 1-4-4, do we find the phrase “its god” or “its king” omitted: “[t]his is named the Lady of the Good Minister set. [It] protects your body” (*ci ming liangchen furen ju, huwei ru shen* 此名良臣夫人局。護衛汝身). Were this not anomalous (one instance against ten), one might assume the set itself, rather than its associated god or spirit, to be the agent who protects the divination user. This would make the *gua* comparable to a mantic drawing or talisman (*fu* 符), which is not unheard of, and is further explored in the next chapter. From the phrases “its god” and “its king”—rendered in our translation below slightly less literally as “the god” and “the king”—, however, it is clear that it is the gods and spirits of the named sets who are the agents of protection and harm.

The “king” or “god” are the highest class of spirit called up by the mantic figure. They, among other classes of spirits, indicate an auspicious or baleful prognosis for the client. In some cases, they might be actively protective or harmful. This is also the case with lower classes of spirits, which are termed “spirits” (*shen* 神) and “ghosts, demons” (*gui* 鬼). By the Tang period, *shen* represented body gods, one of many types of souls that wandered the interior of the human body; but also divine agents of time or of objects in the natural environment and sky above. The *gui* represented revenants, the human undead, or other ill-intentioned spirits, mostly associated with the underground. In the *Divination of Maheśvara’s* Buddhist-influenced pantheon, they might simply represent lower classes of spirits, closer to *yakṣas* or to *pretas*.

The *Divination of Maheśvara’s* eclectic pantheon of Indian, Buddhist, and Chinese gods and spirits is fascinating by itself, and will be explored in detail. Before considering who these gods and spirits are, however, it is important to establish what they do and how they do it. This is found in the prognoses. In the most general terms, a prognosis addresses the client’s issues to resolve. Based on the contents of the oracular responses, these issues include wealth, food and clothing, family, travelers coming to visit, tidings, positions, salary, marriage, livestock, finding something that has been lost, enemies, quarrels, slander, traveling, harvests, lawsuits, spirits, demons, and trade. Basic con-

cerns, such as ill health, marriages, and travel are typical of divination texts, as one can see in the following list, from the 4th-century-BCE *Stalk Divination*:

In the case of the seventeen “commands” (mantic topics): they are called “Results,” “Arriving,” “Sacrificial Offerings,” “Life and Death,” “Obtaining,” “Visiting,” “Healing,” “Spiritual Blame,” “Male and Female,” “Rain,” “Selecting a Wife,” “War,” “Completing,” “Travel,” “Negotiation,” “Dry Weather,” “Curses.”

凡十七命：曰果，曰至，曰享，曰死生，曰得，曰見，曰瘳，曰咎，曰男女，曰雨，曰娶妻，曰戰，曰成，曰行，曰讎，曰旱，曰崇。

This list covers most of the sorts of concerns that one finds in divination, with a few notable exceptions.

Given the often close relationship between divination and healing, it is perhaps surprising to find next to nothing in the *Divination of Maheśvara's* prognoses about prospects for recovery of ill patients, especially given that the text appears together with medical texts in the same codex. One might take from this the suggestion that other divinatory or hemerological methods may have been considered more efficacious for healing physical afflictions and that this text dealt with other life issues. The one hint of healing comes in set [37] 1-3-4: “[e]vil demons will move around in your body. You must cultivate goodness and good fortune so that the evil demons leave your body of their own accord” (*egui liu ru shen zhong, yi xiu shan fu, egui zi li ru shen* 惡鬼流汝身中。宜修善福，惡鬼自離汝身). Here we see malicious *gui* inside the body instead of protective *shen*, as in set [25] 2-3-1: “[c]hoosing places in your body, the Six Spirits will protect [you]” (*qu mi ru shen, liushen yonghu* 取覓汝身，六神擁護).⁵⁹ In [54] 3-1-4 we see a prominent topic “worry” also linked to the effect of this emotion of bodily spirits: “[t]here will be many worries and lots of fear, and your *jing* and *hun* spirits will be scared” (*duo you duo ju, jing hun kongbu* 多憂多懼，精魂恐怖). Even though medical healing is not directly addressed in the *Divination of Maheśvara*, the relationship of the divination to the client is personalized by constant reference to his or her body or person.

59 For the location of gods in the body, see Donald Harper, “Iatromancie,” in *Divination et société dans la Chine médiévale*, 471–512. The term Six Spirits could refer to protective Stem signs, such as the Six Ding.

Prognoses concerning trade are also notably sparse. This is potentially surprising, since Dunhuang is a key stop for merchant caravans, and divination is a common technique among traders who face more uncertainty regarding travel, weather, thieves, and so forth than do farmers and city dwellers. Trade, or possibly corrupt officialdom, appears in only one entry, for set [63] 2-3-3, where it is a proscription: “[y]ou cannot use wealth to resolve this matter” (*buke cai jiao chu shi* 不可財交除事). References to trading goods, to specific directions of travel, or to good days for travel are absent. Hints regarding lawsuits and neighborhood or domestic quarrels suggest a settled clientele. Perhaps not surprising for Dunhuang are the several mentions of animals, suggesting the importance of animal husbandry: in set [2] 2-2-2 it states, “[s]ubsequently, camels, horses, and various domestic animals will not die or be injured” (*tuo ma liuchu, ran wu si sun yu hou* 駝馬六畜，然無死損於後).⁶⁰ Some of the similes also involve livestock: in set [19] 4-1-2, we find the language of proverbs: “[i]t is like abandoning a horse to look for a calf and then losing both the horse and the calf” (*ru qi ma qi du, du ma ju wu* 汝棄馬乞犢，彡 (> 犢) 馬俱無).

Adherence to traditional Chinese cosmology, Yin-Yang, the Five Agents (*wuxing* 五行), the 28 Astral Lodges, etc. is seen in other Dunhuang divination texts but is completely missing from the *Divination of Maheśvara*. Only the concept of cosmic vapor, *qi*, comes up once, but in a mundane context of sound (*sheng qi* 聲氣). This is in the small part of the text that is damaged, in set [21] 3-2-2: “[t]here will be quarrels, so the sound goes to your ...” (*he you koushe, shengqi dao ru* 合有口舌，聲氣到汝xxx). There is also a general absence of any discussion of the relevance of an oracular response to specific days, months, or years and their correlations with Stems and Branches (*ganzhi* 干支) and the 60-day ritual calendar first used by the Shang in the 2nd millennium BCE in calendrical astrology. Use of this Stem and Branch system is common in other Dunhuang divination texts and even found in the next text in the compilation after the *Divination of Maheśvara*. The only thing approaching such concerns is in the entry for set [4] 4-4-4, where the prognosis depends on the age of the client, and, less so, in the entry for set [16] 1-4-3, where matters are projected to improve after the full moon.⁶¹ This suggests that hemerological and astrological concerns are secondary at best to this particular divination system.

This observation on the *Divination of Maheśvara*'s general lack of hemerological or astrological sensibilities does not ignore, however, that its pantheon

60 Horses and domestic animals are also mentioned in set [22] 2-3-2 and set [28] 1-4-4.

61 The entry for [41] 4-2-4 uses the image of the full moon as well, but in a simile.

of gods and spirits overlaps in part with those of hemerological and astrological texts. One example is the spirit “Erudite” (Boshi 博士) in set [64]. A spirit of this same name is found in later calendars, mostly dating to the Qing, as one of the four main calendar spirits in hemerological diagrams.⁶² Given how much later these calendars are, and given the propensity of gods to shift, one hesitates to say that the Erudite in the *Divination of Maheśvara* is “the same” as the auspicious calendar spirit of the Qing: Erudite may have been in a different, earlier stage of his career; these might be two different spirits that share a name; or they could express different facets of this spirit. As we will see, these sorts of considerations apply to many of the gods and spirits in the *Divination of Maheśvara*’s pantheon.

In the *Divination of Maheśvara*, coping with anxiety is one of the most predominant concerns, and anxiety takes shapes in two semantic clusters: worry and fear.⁶³ Worry is expressed by words such as “contemplating, brooding” (*silü* 思慮), “concern” (*lǜ* 慮), “worry” (*you* 憂), and “fret” (*chou* 愁). Fear is described in the text by the words “surprise” (*jing* 驚), “fright” (*youju* 憂懼), and “terror” (*bu* 怖).⁶⁴ These words not only suggest emotions, but also actions. Namely, the first two suggest the action of thinking, by which the mind is kept preoccupied, and the closely related *you* and *chou* both imply the action of dwelling on troubles and difficulties. *Jing*, *youju*, and *bu* emphasize reactions to the anticipation of potentially negative outcomes. The underlying action perpetuating all of these words is thinking, which is to say thinking, overthinking, and dwelling only on the negative.

Thinking about what? According to the *Divination of Maheśvara*, it is the matter at hand, or *shi*. The term refers to whatever matters that are the object of a given inquiry. Before casting the divination, the querent needs to present the matters (*shang shi* 上事) to the deities. The very first response in the text begins, “1-1-1 This is the King Brahmā set. For any issues you seek to resolve, as long as you know how to keep it in your mind, everything will go your way” (*yi yi yi: ci shi Fanwang ju: ru suo you qiu shi, dan zhi cun xin, wu bu chen yi* ——— :

62 Richard J. Smith, “The Legacy of Daybooks in Imperial and Modern China,” in *Books of Fate and Popular Culture in Early China: The Daybook Manuscripts of the Warring States, Qin, and Han*, ed. Donald Harper and Marc Kalinowski (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 350.

63 For more on the understanding of anxiety, see Allan V. Horwitz, *Anxiety: A Short History* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013), esp. 4–5.

64 Notice that most of the words in the first group have overlapping semantic meanings in literary Chinese. For the use of *you* especially in *Shijing* 詩經, or *Book of Poetry*, see Ulrike Middendorf, “The Making of Emotive Language: Expressions of Anxiety in the *Classic of Poetry*,” *Ming Qing yanjiu* 10.1 (2001): 177–222.

此是梵王局：汝所有求事，但知存心，無不稱意). The divinatory results then discuss “the matters being sought” (*you qiu shi* 有求事), with responses ranging from confirmation that the matter will end satisfactorily (*chenyi* 稱意), to warnings that the matter in question cannot be accomplished at all (*jie bucheng* 皆不成). This participates in the common assumptions of Chinese divination, namely that its main function is to “resolve issues” (*jue shi* 決事) and to distinguish the auspicious (*ji*) from the inauspicious (*xiong*).⁶⁵

The *Divination of Maheśvara* describes the matters at hand from two angles: from the progression of the matters themselves and from perspective of the querent. As in most divination texts, the former is expressed through degrees of auspiciousness, wherein certain events will unfold beneficially or inauspiciously. The second of these two perspectives is marked by language alluding to how the querent would like the events to unfold, such as: “what you seek will be satisfied” (*suoqiu chenyi* 所求稱意), “you will get what you wished for” (*suoyuan cong xin* 所願從心), and “matters will be fully resolved in your favor” (*shi jin de sui xin* 事盡得遂心). The expressions *chenyi*, *cong xin*, and *sui xin* literally mean “in accordance with your intentions,” “following your mind,” and “fulfilling your wish,” respectively. Together with the aforementioned *lü* and *siliü*, they elaborate on the action of contemplation: one hopes for good results and one worries about receiving bad ones. In general, the text assumes not only that querents come to the divination with a matter in mind, but also that they have contemplated the potential outcomes of the matter.

Worry and fear thus belong to the scenario where matters do not develop as one hoped. In the *Divination of Maheśvara*, worry and fear are associated with the matters at hand in distinctive ways. When auspicious, the results instruct the querent not to worry, as in the phrases “don’t worry” (*wu you* 勿憂), and “you need not worry” (*buxu youlü* 不須憂慮), etc. Typically, worry is negated in this way in auspicious prognoses. Reciprocally, worry hardly ever appears un-negated, as in this inauspicious prognosis: “what you do will not be accomplished, and there will be much worry and fear” (*suozuo bu cheng, duoyou duoju* 所作不成，多憂多懼). The inverse situation obtains for the text’s use of the term “terror” (*bu* 怖): there are no auspicious responses that state “have no fear,” but there are inauspicious ones that say things like, “you will be terrorized night and day” (*zhouye jing bu* 晝夜驚怖), or “you will have something horrific occur and thus be fearful” (*ru bieyou eshi, you kongbu* 汝別有惡事、有恐怖).

65 Cook and Zhao, *Stalk Divination*, 18.

In other words, the *Divination of Maheśvara* calms its users regarding worry, while it reports to them situations they should fear. Such specific semantic bifurcation is rather unusual among divination texts. In the *Classic of Empowered Draughtsmen*, for example, both fear and worry appear as predictions in the sense of something fearful or “something worrisome” (*youyou* 有憂).⁶⁶ This could be because the *Divination of Maheśvara* considers worry a default state for the querent. An assumption of the querent’s worry would account for why, when the divination results are inauspicious, the text almost never announces “worry” as part of the prediction. In contrast, fear reflects another level of danger, so the text does point it out.⁶⁷

In contrast with many divination texts from Dunhuang, the *Divination of Maheśvara* does not usually specify what the matter at hand is. For example, the *Duke of Zhou’s and Confucius’s Method of Prognostication* (*Zhou Gong Kongzi zhanfa* 周公孔子占法; P.2574) consistently lists the topics, such as litigation, quarrels, robbery, trading, etc., and then unambiguously attaches certain degrees of auspiciousness to them.⁶⁸ The *Divination of Maheśvara* only occasionally mentions concrete topics such as travel and marriage, but does often elaborate on the development of the non-specific matter at hand. For example:

[8] 1-4-2: This is named the set of [Bodhisattva] King Moonlight. When whatever matters you have to resolve are achieved and completed, it will be deeply satisfying. You don’t need to worry anymore. What you want will happen on its own. Great joy and celebration. Do not look again. Greatly auspicious.

一四二此名月光王局：汝所求事，成就已訖，甚稱，汝更不用愁，好欲自至，甚忻慶。勿重看之。大吉。

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- 66 This is especially the case in the received version of the *Classic of the Empowered Draughtsmen* from *Daozang* 道藏. See *Lingqi benzhang zhengjing* 靈棋本章正經, HY 1035, *Zheng-tong dao-zang* 正統道藏 (1445) reprinted as *Zhonghua Daozang* 中華道藏, edited by Zhang Jiyu 張繼禹 and Wang Ka 王卡 (Beijing: Huaxia, 2004), 1.5b7; 1.10b6–11a4; 18b6–8; 19a10.
- 67 For the relationship between fear and anxiety, see Joanna Bourke, “Fear and Anxiety: Writing About Emotion in Modern History,” *History Workshop Journal* 55 (2003): 126–128. For more on fear, see her *Fear: A Cultural History* (London: Virago, 2005).
- 68 Note that this text is related to the text that appears just after the *Divination of Maheśvara* in the codex S.5614.

The statement predicts that the matter at hand will be satisfactory and will be accomplished. It then advises that one does not need to worry any more, and reassures the querent that the desired outcome will automatically arise. Focusing on worry instead of worrisome events, the text copes with the querent's anxiety in addition to the uncertainty of the future.

When the predicted result is auspicious for the matters at hand, the *Divination of Maheśvara* describes the matters by mentioning how they might progress or be completed. These successes are also expressed in a range of words. For example, the text uses concrete expressions such as “official ranks and salary will be increased” (*jiaguan jinlu* 加官進祿) and “official positions will be upgraded” (*guan zhi jianqian* 官職加遷). Meanwhile, it also uses the more general expression “every day you will advance” (*riri shengjin* 日日升進), which aligns with the non-specificity of one's matters or issues. For completion, the text constantly uses the word “to accomplish” (*cheng* 成), such as in “everything you undertake will be accomplished” (*suo zuo jie cheng* 所作皆成).

The mention of specific concerns occurs alongside the more general—and generalizable—statements that appear in most of the prognoses. Positive outcomes outweigh negative ones, and tend to come in the form of statements such as, “you will get everything you want” (*suo qiu jie de* 所求皆得; set [16] 1-4-3), “matters will be fully resolved in your favor” (*shi jin de suixin* 事盡得遂心; set [15] 4-3-2), and “what you want will arrive of its own accord” (*hao yu zizhi* 好欲自至; set [8] 1-4-2). In the context of a neutral prognosis, such as that in the response for set [13] 2-2-3, we find a general statement such as the following: “matters are difficult to resolve, so it is better to rest” (*qi shi nan de, yi yi xiuxi* 其事難得，亦宜休息). Negative general statements, as one might guess, tend to invert the language of the positive statements, e.g., “nothing desired will happen and all undertakings will fail” (*suoyu wu zhi, shi jie bucheng* 所欲惡至、事皆不成; set [5] 2-4-1).

These more general statements of course leave an opening for the divination user(s) to apply the oracular responses they receive to the matter at hand, and to do so without the restrictions that more specific statements would introduce. In the context of text-based divination, this is where the work of interpretation takes place. Typically, this is only the province of the diviner, but could also be the work of the client and, if applicable, the gathered human and divine witnesses who constitute a divining community. Together they co-create meaning in conversation with the text's oracular responses.⁶⁹ This might involve

69 On the role of interpretation in text-based divination, and the relationship between the text, the diviner(s), client(s), and witnesses, see Philip Peek, “Introduction: the Study of

discussing various suggestions for how a given prognosis applies to the querent's specific situation. With the *Divination of Maheśvara's* "rule of three," there could also be three opportunities to find a prognosis that one can, through examination, apply usefully to one's question or concern.

As noted above, a prognosis in the *Divination of Maheśvara* can optionally include two further components: a simile and/or a prescription. The simile makes use of the technique of analogy, which is widespread in divination across cultures. Here an image, sometimes poetic and other times quotidian, is first given, and then applied to the querent's situation. A few examples will demonstrate how this works in the *Divination of Maheśvara*: "[i]t is as if you fell into the water and a boat came to the rescue. Since you can reach the bank of the river, what worries are left?" (*Ru shen zai shui, de chuan jiuzai, ji de ji an, geng he you zai*. 汝身在水，得船救載。既得濟岸，更何憂哉; set [29] 4-3-1).⁷⁰ "It is as if a person faces a tree without seeing the flowers covering it which will come to seed of their own accord. All your concerns will result in benefits" (*Ru ren xiang shu, bu jian huahua, ji zi jie zi. Ru you qingshi, ji dang liyi* 如人向樹，不見花花，即自結子。汝有情事，即當利益; set [58] 4-4-2). These similes, and the simile of losing one's horse while searching for a calf, given above, might also reveal something about the sensibilities of the text and its users. Some, like the auspicious image of a cow approaching her calf (set [22] 2-3-2) might be drawn from daily life in Dunhuang, while others are more exotic. One simile mentions flora more closely associated with India: "[I]ike the banana tree flower withering (to produce fruit), you will flourish" (*Ru baojiao hua ku, de ling zizhang* 如芭蕉花枯，得令滋長; set [23] 2-2-4).⁷¹

Many of these similes are formulaic, and can be found elsewhere. In set [38] 3-2-3, for example, we read, "[y]our affairs will be as if you were holding a clod of earth and tossed it into the water, where it sinks and disintegrates without a trace, sunken into the depths and unattainable" (*Ru chi tukuai, zhi yu shui zhong, chen san ji jin, ru shi yiran, chenzhi bu de hao* 如持土塊，擲於水中，沉散即盡，汝事亦然，沉滯不得好). This image of tossing clods of earth in water (*zhi yu shui zhong* 擲於水中) also appears in a *dhāraṇī sutra* associ-

Divination, Past and Present," in *African Divination Systems*, ed. Philip Peek (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 1–22; David Zeitlyn, "Finding Meaning in the Text: the Process of Interpretation in Text-Based Divination," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 7.2 (2001): 225–240; and Holbraad, *Truth in Motion*, 189–194.

70 A boat simile, which could be understood as being influenced by Buddhism's favoring the image of the raft and the other shore, is also found at set [30] 3-4-1.

71 The growing range of banana plants, whose hollow structure makes them a staple of Buddhist similes for the lack of self or essence, extends only into southern China.

ated with the deity Ucchuṣma, with identical phrasing: “suppose you took up 108 clods of earth, tossed them into the water to cross over, (then) watering things can not harm man” (*ruo jiachi tukuai yibaiba, zhi yu shui zhong ran she zhi, shuixing zhi shu bu neng shang ren* 若加持土塊一百八。擲於水中然涉之。水性之屬不能傷人).⁷² As we will see in chapter three, a similar image of “mud mixed in water” is also a baleful simile in a Tibetan dice divination text from 10th-century Dunhuang.

The other optional element of an oracular response, a prescription, appears together with a simile in set [37] 1-3-4:

Your affairs will be as if you were climbing a mountain, or that it frequently rained but nothing grew. Evil demons will move around in your body. You must cultivate goodness and good fortune so that the evil demons leave your body on their own.

汝如上山，數數下雨，花草不生，此事亦然。惡鬼流汝身中。宜修善福，惡鬼自離汝身

Here one must engage in what is typically a Buddhist practice, the cultivation of goodness (*xiu shan* 修善), in order to release evil demons from one’s body. Notably, this seems to also constitute the cultivation of good fortune (*fu* 福), strongly suggesting that the two go hand in hand. In this and other negative prognoses, the prescription is a “correcting ritual” (as opposed to the more traditional popular solution, exorcism) that gives the client a clear means of counteracting an unfavorable oracular response.⁷³

Most such prescriptions involve Buddhist practices. It is here, in addition to the Buddhist figures after whom many of the sets are named (e.g., Kṣitigarbha, Avalokiteśvara, Locana, Vaiśravaṇa), that the *Divination of Maheśvara* establishes its *bona fides* as a Buddhist form of divination. Prescribed Buddhist rituals are mentioned in numerous entries. They are all fairly cursory, represented by phrases such as “invoke the Buddha(s)” (*nian fo* 念佛); “invoke the Three Jewels” (*nian sanbao* 念三寶), and “contemplate goodness” (*nian shan* 念善). These are notable for their frequency, and for their occurring largely as

72 *Da weili Wushusemo mingwang jing* 大威力烏樞瑟摩明王經 T.1227.21.0151a25–26; we are grateful to Megan Bryson for this observation.

73 On correcting rituals in the context of Mongolian divination, see Katherine Swancutt, *Fortune and the Cursed: the Sliding Scale of Time in Mongolian Divination* (New York: Bergahn Books, 2012), 10.

correcting rituals for an inauspicious prognosis. On balance, nineteen out of sixty-four prognoses include Buddhist prescriptions, and sixteen of these nineteen are correcting rituals to stave off or reverse what appears to start out as a bad prognosis.

One impression that one can take away from this is that cultivating moral rectitude and seeking out Buddhas and monks are practical remedies that one turns to in times of trouble. The entry for set [5] 2-4-1 reads, “[i]f you are scared, then contemplate goodness and difficulties will dissipate of their own accord” (*Ruo bu nian shan, e’nan zi chu* 若怖念善、厄難自除). The entry for set [18] 4-1-1 states, “[I am] afraid that what comes out of the mouths of those who resent you is not good, and their words become increasingly evil. Only if you recite the names of the many Buddhas will you get what you want” (*Kong you yuanjia wen ru shenshang, kou bing bu shan, yanyu zhuanzhuan jia e. Wei nian zhu Fo, hou de ru yi* 恐有怨家問汝身上，口秉不善，言語轉轉加惡。唯念諸佛，後得汝意). The overarching assumption of the text as regards the utility of Buddhism’s scriptures, Buddhas, and monks is encapsulated in the entry for set [46] 4-2-3: “[c]ontinuously invoke the Three Jewels (*triratna*), and then the matters at hand will change from evil to good” (*Ruo zhuan nian sanbao, qi shi ji bian e wei hao* 若轉念三寶，其事即變惡為好).⁷⁴ Similar prognoses, where contemplating goodness or focusing the mind on the Buddha(s) will improve a dire situation, are voiced in the entries for sets [15] 4-3-2, [17] 2-3-4, [20] 1-3-3, [33] 1-2-2, [36] 3-3-1, [39] 4-2-2, [45] 4-1-4, [49] 1-4-1, [56] 4-3-4, and [61] 1-4-3. Other prescriptions make the same point, but in a negative sense: “if you don’t contemplate [goodness] then evil will surely arise” (*Ru bu nian, ji e zi zhi* 如不念，即惡自至; set [21] 3-2-2). Only in two cases, in the entries for the sets [41] 4-2-4 and [62] 3-3-4, is Buddhist practice not a prescribed correcting ritual, but something that accompanies an unremittingly positive prognosis, wherein Buddhist practices serve to make a good situation even better.

These Buddhist prescriptions nearly all employ the same verb, *nian* 念, translated variously with “invoking,” “recollecting,” or “contemplating.” *Nian*, although an old Chinese word implying retaining a memory internally or “to think of,” translates here the Sanskrit concept of *smṛti*, which is “to call to mind, to cultivate,” and also “to recite (the name of a deity),” as in the invocation of a Buddha (*Buddhānusr̥ti* / *nianfo*). The most frequent object of the verb in the

74 The same phrase is found in a Yogacara commentary, the *Yujia lunji* 瑜伽論記: “as for evil, sometimes evil changes into good” 惡，或變惡為好; T1828.42.0634a22. We thank Megan Bryson for this observation.

Divination of Maheśvara, however, is “goodness” (*shan* 善). This latter term is used to refer to, among other things, the ten good deeds, which are cultivated and contemplated in medieval Chinese Buddhism and Daoism alike.⁷⁵ In the quotation above, the consequence of not contemplating, that is, not “turning the mind toward” goodness, is that its opposite, evil (*e* 惡), will arise automatically (“arrive on its own,” *zi zhi* 自至). While the specific point of reference might be the ten good deeds, which entail avoidance of the ten evil deeds, the message also fits well with the emphasis on allaying worry and anxiety, as described above. This virtue is also personified as a “Goddess of Goodness” *Shan Nütian* 善女天 in the entry for set [64] 2-4-3.

There are a few places where such Buddhist prescriptions seem like an afterthought. In the entry for the set [4] 4-4-4, for example, we read, “[i]f they are fifteen or sixteen, their official positions will be upgraded. But they still need to be devoted to the Three Jewels (*triratna*)” (*Shíwu shiliu guanzhi jiaqian, yi xu xinjing sanbao* 十五十六官職加遷。亦須 (>須) 信敬三寶).

While a prescription is usually an optional element of a prognosis, in two instances the prescription appears at the end of the response, after the evaluation: “[i]t will really be difficult to get anything done, so don’t bother. This mantic figure is therefore neutral. Fixing your mind, seek out the Sangha to avoid suffering” (*Gu nan de cheng, bu xu qiu zhi. Ci gua qie ping, zhi xin qiu seng, tuo de ku’e* 固難得成，不須求之。此卦且平。至心求僧，脫得苦厄; set [18] 4-4-1); “[t]his mantic figure is really bad. Contemplate goodness day and night to resolve it naturally” (*Ci gua da e. Riyenian shan, zi de xiaosan* 此卦大惡。日夜念善，自得消散; set [34] 2-1-2). This demonstrates that the prescription is a separable element that fits most easily with, but need not always go together with, the prognosis.

To return to the semantics of the prognoses, it is notable that they address the querent with the second-person pronoun “you” (*ru* 汝). The tone this speaker employs is practical and hortative. While there are similes, the content is largely prosaic, and there is little in the way of obscure or imagistic utterances. The voice of the prognoses is not that of a first-person narrator in the sense that it is not the god or spirit of a given set saying “I will protect you.” Rather, the prognoses state, “its [the set’s] god protects you.” It is clear, therefore, that the prognoses are not issued from or spoken by the gods or spirits of each set. The speaker is rather a disembodied third-person voice, either of the divination system itself or of its putative source, the god Maheśvara. In either

75 Kristofer Schipper and Franciscus Verellen, eds., *The Taoist Canon: a Historical Companion to the Daozang, Volume 1* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 238–239.

case, it is a non-human voice that hails the querent directly in the second-person, a situation that emphasizes both the alterity and dominance of the speaker.

Maheśvara's—or the divination system's—direct hailing of the querent creates an interesting parallel with its treatment of gods and spirits. An oracular response singles out one god or spirit from the pantheon of sixty-four by naming it. Something very close to naming—the direct hailing of the querent as “you”—singles out the querent and his or her issue at hand from a theoretically infinite range of querents and queries. This recalls the introduction's statement that the method “grants what is sought.” The specificity of calling forth a single god or spirit to address a specific querent and that querent's issue also speaks to the text's claims to infallibility. The direct hailing of the divination user in the second person occurs in Old Tibetan dice divination texts as well, and the dynamics of this situation are explored further in chapter three.

2.6 *Judgement: The Final Evaluation*

Each oracular response ends with an evaluation. These, following Chinese divinatory traditions, are usually either “auspicious” or “inauspicious.” There is a middle ground, however, represented by the term “neutral.” There are also matters of degree, such that a response can be simply “auspicious,” “greatly auspicious” (*da ji* 大吉), or “greatly auspicious celebration” (*da ji qing* 大吉慶). It can equally be “inauspicious” or “very inauspicious” (*da xiong* 大凶). In addition, there are five entries that end with the evaluation “initially inauspicious, later auspicious” (*xian xiong hou ji* 先凶後吉). An evaluation is missing in the two entries in the damaged part of the manuscript, but the content is sufficient enough to allow one to suppose that these would have been at least “auspicious.”⁷⁶ Five further entries, for the sets [6] 2-1-4, [37] 1-3-4, [41] 4-2-4, [42] 3-4-3, and [45] 4-1-4, lack an evaluation, but their contents again permit an educated guess as to whether it should have been auspicious or inauspicious.⁷⁷

76 The damaged entries are for the sets [47] 1-1-4 and [48] 2-1-3.

77 Their contents imply, however, that the first three of these would have been evaluated as “greatly auspicious,” and that the response for [45] 4-1-4 would have been “inauspicious, then auspicious.” Only the entry for [37] 1-3-4, which prescribes reciting cultivating goodness and good fortune to rid one's body of demons, is ambivalent enough that we cannot confidently state whether its implied evaluation is auspicious, inauspicious, or neutral. Its content is somewhat parallel to that for the set [18] 4-4-1, which also includes correcting rituals, and which is evaluated as neutral.

The balance of oracular responses is weighted strongly in favor of a good outcome, distributed as follows:

- 3 Greatly Auspicious Celebration (*da ji qing* 大吉慶)
- 32 Greatly Auspicious (*da ji* 大吉)⁷⁸
- 9 Auspicious (*ji* 吉)⁷⁹
- 6 Initially Inauspicious, Later Auspicious (*xian xiong hou ji* 先凶後吉)
- 9 Neutral (*ping* 平)
- 3 Inauspicious (*xiong* 凶)⁸⁰
- 1 Greatly Inauspicious (*da xiong* 大凶)
- 1 Greatly Evil (*da e* 大惡)

Exactly half of the sixty-four responses are evaluated as greatly auspicious, and fifty out of sixty-four are on balance auspicious. This makes it 78% likely that one will receive a favorable response on the first try. Only five outcomes are inauspicious or worse, giving one an 8% chance of receiving one of these five responses. Factoring in that one may try again should one have an unfavorable response the first time, and that one may even do so for a third time in the unlikely event that one is unlucky twice in a row, the likelihood of getting an inauspicious result on three straight rolls becomes a miniscule 0.05%.

Such probabilities are frustrated by the use of trumps, which are included in some of these evaluations, and which prohibit one from casting the dice again. One phrase that appears in the context of four greatly auspicious responses is “[d]o not look at it again” (*wu chong kan zhi* 勿重看之).⁸¹ This refers back to the instructions in the text’s introduction, where it states that one can “look at up to three sets.” In both cases, “look at” is shorthand for “roll the dice, complete the set, and look up the response in the text.” The clear message from such a response is that one has received a good outcome, and should not bother trying for an even better one. In only one case does a similar phrase appear in a neutral response, for the set [38] 3-2-3: “[i]t is better to take a break, and even if you have doubts, do not look again. This mantic figure is therefore neutral” (*Hao yi tingxi, yi bu xu kan zhi. Ci gua qie ping* 好宜停息，癡（疑）不須看

78 Includes implied evaluations of [6] 2-1-4, [41] 4-2-4, and [42] 3-4-3. Combination [44] 3-4-2 is evaluated as *da ji* even though the oracle is clearly inauspicious, suggesting an error by a sloppy copyist.

79 Includes implied evaluations of [47] 1-1-4 and [48] 2-1-3.

80 Includes implied evaluation of [45] 4-1-4.

81 This appears in responses to sets [6] 2-1-4, [8] 1-4-2, [31] 2-2-1, [38] 3-2-3, and [50] 1-3-1.

之。此卦且平). These instructions would seem to trump those of the introduction, such that someone receiving this oracular response on the first or second try would not have the option of throwing the dice again to try for a better response.

The inclusion of these slightly admonitory trumps obviously suggests that querents did try for a better response even after receiving a good one or a neutral one, despite the instructions in the text's introduction. This points to what might be seen as a tension, if not a contradiction, in the divination process itself. Namely, it emphasizes its infallibility, and the necessity that one put trust (*xin*) in the divination, while at the same time constructing a system where one is permitted to reject up to two oracular responses created through one's dice rolls. This seems quite a lot like saying, "oh well, best two out of three" after one loses a coin toss, which is certainly not the type of ritual stance that our text's introduction would appear to support. So how does the system's purported infallibility survive and remain credible when one is allowed to essentially ignore one's first response in favor of the second, or the first and second in favor of the third? Is it conceivable that the divination was "wrong" the first time? It is a difficult question, but one can imagine it is one that a diviner in tenth-century Dunhuang might easily answer. Viewing it here from the outside, one answer might be that this form of dice divination invites a sense of play that serves as a counterpoint to the more "standard" rhetoric of sincerity in Chinese ritual and divination. There is also a more general sense that as one plays over in one's mind the matter at hand that one has come to divine about, one is also "playing" the objects of divination, whether these be dice, coins, draughts, counting rods, or yarrow stalks. The results, too, have some play in them, whether this be the play of changing the lines of a trigram or inverting a trigram in the *Changes* tradition, or whether this be the play of interpretation at the level of the whole or the parts of the mantic figure. One could equally call much of this "work," but therein lies the creative tension in a system that yields an infallible result that is simultaneously a result one is permitted to ignore.

While the other evaluations are transparent, the category of "neutral," which always appears in the compound "therefore neutral" (*qie ping* 且平), includes at least two types of responses. The first type of "neutral" response is inauspicious, but promises success if one follows a prescribed correcting ritual such as invoking the names of the Buddha. The second type, like the one quoted immediately above, counsels against action and prescribes patience and rest. These latter responses more closely resemble those that are classed as inauspicious, while the former might be just as easily classed as "initially inauspicious, later auspicious." The only meaningful distinction here might be that in most but not

all of these “initially inauspicious, later auspicious” prognoses, matters tend to improve of their own accord without correcting rituals. Neither of these two types of “neutral” responses is truly neutral in the sense of being non-committal on whether the querent should or should not pursue a given course of action: they give clear instructions to either perform a ritual or to wait. The *Divination of Maheśvara* is decisive, and will always provide a clear answer, even if that answer is “wait.” This contrasts with many other systems of divination such as those in Old Tibetan dice divination texts that we will examine in chapter three, which feature truly neutral responses in the form of “non-responses” or responses that effectively state that the matter is unclear.

Evaluations such as that for [38] 3-2-3 quoted above also demonstrate the precise linguistic reference point of the evaluation: it evaluates the mantic figure (*gua*). We find this term in further evaluations such as “[a] greatly auspicious mantic figure” (*daji zhi gua* 大吉之卦; set [58] 4-4-2), “[t]his mantic figure is really bad” (*ci gua da e* 此卦大惡; set [34] 2-1-2), and “[t]his mantic figure is therefore neutral” (*ci gua qie ping* 此卦且平; set [5] 2-4-1). There are also the statements, “[t]his mantic figure means you will get what you want” (*ci gua ruyi* 此卦如意; set [39] 4-2-2), and “[w]ith this mantic figure [you] will receive satisfaction” (*ci gua ji de chen qing* 此卦即得稱情; set [61] 1-4-3). The text is in this way consistent in its use of two separate terms to refer to its oracular responses. “Set” (*ju*) is used when introducing the name of an arrangement of three numbers and the spirit or god to whom the set belongs. “Mantic figure” (*gua*) is used in evaluations of the entire oracular response. The two, *gua* and *ju*, are inverted only in the introduction—“[i]f the divination results in an inauspicious set” (*bu de xiong ju* 卜得凶局)—, but never inverted in the oracular responses.

This consistent use of the terms “set” (*ju*) and “mantic figure” (*gua*) contrasts with what we find in the other numerical trigram texts such as the *Tricks of Jing*, its descendants the *Duke of Zhou Divination Method* and the *Guan Gongming Divination Method*, and also the *Empowered Draughtsmen Divination Method* and the *Five Omens Divination Method* (*Wu zhao bufu*). These variously avoid either term, refer to numerical combinations as *gua* and not *ju*, or use both *gua* and *ju*. For these texts the matter might be inconsequential, or a case of simple overlap: mantic figures are one specific subcategory included within the category of numerical sets; and numerical sets are one subset—albeit a very significant one—of mantic figures.

Nevertheless, while the terms *ju* and *gua* can both be said to refer to numerical trigrams, the *Divination of Maheśvara*’s disambiguated use of these two terms suggests a purposive distinction. As we have seen in the causal chain of the ritual process, the dice rolls and the numerical set are the response

to the client's or diviner's intentions. This set is then named, thus invoking a god or spirit who is a source of protection or of harm. Given that the *Divination of Maheśvara* only refers back to the trigram as a *gua* in the context of the final evaluation, which comes only after a spirit has been invoked, there is a sense in which the ritual process of divination transforms a stack of numbers into a mantic figure through the invocation of a god or spirit.

Besides “set” and “mantic figure,” there is one other term that the text uses in a self-referential manner. This is the term *xiang* 相, whose usual meaning is “mutual,” but which in a mantic context is usually associated with physiognomy (*xiangfa* 相法), that is, telling people's fortunes by reading their faces, hands, etc.⁸² *Xiang* also translates the Sanskrit words *nimmita* or *lakṣaṇa*, meaning “appearance,” but also a sign or omen.⁸³ In a few oracular responses *xiang* refers to the mantic figure, as in set [6]:

2-1-4 This is named the Earth Spirit (Pṛthivī) set. [This is] such that the omen (*xiang*) will make it so that whatever you wish will happen on its own. There is no need to worry: you have just encountered a great omen (*da xiang*).

[6] 二一四：此名地神局：然其相當好欲自至。不須憂慮，即逢大相。

At set [11] we find the similar “[your] good affairs already encountered a great omen, and you will presently get what you wanted, so be happy and celebrate!” (*haoshi zao feng da xiang, suoyuan ji de xin qing* 好事早逢大相，所願即得忻慶).

In these examples *xiang* is occupying a place analogous to *gua* in the phrases treated above, such as “this mantic figure means you will get what you want” and “with this mantic figure [you] will receive satisfaction.” This is a rather interesting use of the term *xiang*, since it is nearly analogous to the homophonous *xiang* 象 “image.” The latter can refer to a mantic figure as a whole, as in the case of the quote from Yu Chan in the introduction, where materi-

82 See Catherine Despeux, “Physiognomie,” in *Divination et société dans la Chine médiévale*, 513.

83 Kroll, *A Student's Dictionary of Classical and Medieval Chinese*, 497–502; Esther-Maria Guggenmos, “A List of Magic and Mantic Practices in the Buddhist Canon.” In *Coping with the Future: Theories and Practices of Divination in East Asia*, ed. Michael Lackner (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 170; Ding Fubao, ed., *Foxue dacidian* (Beijing: Wenwu, 1984) 839.4.

als create images (*xiang* 象), which are read for their “numerical appetencies” (*shu*) in order to comprehend their benign or malign meanings. A comparable statement is found at the end of the introduction to a Dunhuang version of the *Divination Method of Empowered Draughtsmen*:

Each mantic figure (*gua*) represents auspiciousness or inauspiciousness according to its arrangement of odd or even numbers: odd being Yang and even Yin. Thus the omen (*xiang*) is drawn out so that the auspiciousness can be known.

凡卦皆次奇偶為吉凶，奇為陽，偶為陰，以此相推，吉凶可知。〇〇〇〇 84

This “drawing out of the omen” (*xiang tui* 推) implies here its reading according to numerology and Yin and Yang in order to determine auspiciousness. As we have seen, the mantic figures of the *Divination of Maheśvara* resist this sort of process of “reading.”

This meaning of *xiang* 相 as mantic figure or omen appears also in the *Divination of Maheśvara*'s pantheon in the form of the “Omen God” (Xiang Tian 相天), who is associated with both set [10] and set [41]. There is also the Displaying Omens Spirit (Buxiang Shen 布相神) at set [41]. This appears to be a further case, like that of “contemplating goodness” (*nian shan*) and the Goodness Goddess (Shan Nütian), where the text's contents and its pantheon neatly intertwine.

2.7 End Title/ Colophon

The *Divination of Maheśvara* has no distinct title at its end and no colophon with any information about its transmission and production. Its final entry is curious, however, and it appears to be the case that a scribal error is effectively hiding the text's end title. It ostensibly includes two entries, the first associating the numerical set 3-1-2 with Maheśvara, and the second, possibly competing entry, associating it with Asura(s). The entry can be broken into two parts on both paleographic and semantic grounds. Part one is in large characters in a single column going two-thirds of the way down the page; part two is in smaller characters, split into two columns in the final third of the page. Like the rest of the text, they appear to be in the same hand.

84 P.4048; see chapter two for a full translation and analysis of the text's introduction.

Part one of the entry reads: “3-1-2: this is named the Maheśvara set. What you are intending and seeking determines the mantic figure. The divination elsewhere amply proclaims ...” (*San yi er: Ci ming Moxishouluo ju. Siqu ding gua, bu bie da yun* 三一二: 此名摩醯首羅局。思求定卦。卜別大云). Part two then reads: “[t]his is the Asura(s) set. The king protects you. You will get whatever you want. All clothing and food will come from your own actions. As for your body, no one will bully you. Greatly auspicious” (*Shi Axiuluo ju. Qi wang yonghu, ru zhi suo xu ji de, yiqie yishi qi yu ru ji, ru shen wuren gan qi. Daji* 是阿修羅局，其王擁護，汝之所須即得，一切衣食起於汝己，汝身無人敢欺。大吉). This is the third Asura(s) set in the text: set [50] has the Asura king(s), and set [57] also has Asura(s). Looking at set [57], it is clearly this entry that is referred to here by the phrase “the divination elsewhere amply proclaims.” Sets [57] and [65] have the same basic outline: the kings protect you; you get clothing and food; nobody will bully you; and it is greatly auspicious. The only differences are minor and formulaic, as is apparent when they are placed alongside one another, with their divergences marked in bold:

[57] 3-4-4: 此名阿修羅局。其王擁護汝身，一切好衣食自至，汝身上無人欺凌，已後日彡(>日)昇進。大吉慶也。

This is named the Asura(s) set. The king(s) will protect your body. All good clothes and food will come of their own accord. As for your person, no one will bully or intimidate you and things will daily improve from now on. Greatly auspicious celebration.

[65] 3-1-2: [eliding part one about Maheśvara] 是阿修羅局，其王擁護，汝之所須即得，一切衣食起於汝己，汝身無人敢欺。大吉。

“This is the Asura(s) set. The king(s) will protect you. You will get whatever you want. All clothing and food will come from your own actions. As for your person, no one will dare bully you. Greatly auspicious.”



FIGURE 8
(left): the final entry of the *Divination of Maheśvara*
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We shall return to the small differences between the entries and what they might tell us about the process that produced them. First, their overall similarity confirms that the Asura(s) entry for set [65] is dependent on the Asura(s) entry for set [57], and this in turn creates a problem. Namely, is entry [65] an Asura(s) set or a Maheśvara set? Why is there an Asura(s) response after the Maheśvara response? The tidiest solution to this question is, unfortunately, not to read the first part of the entry at face value, but rather to assume a scribal error. In this case we believe there is ample justification. The scribe's putative error would be writing *ju* 局 (“set”) when s/he should have written *bu* 卜 (“divination”). The first part of the entry, in large script, should have mirrored the title at the start of the text as an end title: *ci ming moxishouluo bu* 此名摩醯首羅 卜 “[t]he name of this [text] is the *Divination of Maheśvara*.” This might have been an error of hearing (by dictation or sub-aural), but it need not have been; the previous 64 entries in the text all follow the pattern 此名 ... 局 “the name of this is the xxx set.” Our assumption is that the scribe simply followed this pattern and did not notice the error. It may also be the case that the scribe(s) accidentally inverted the order, where the oracular response should have appeared first, and the title last.

Reading *ju* 局 (“set”) as an error for *bu* 卜 in the first part of the entry allows the rest of it to fall into place, and accounts for the clear continuity between part one and part two of the entry: there is the end title and a general statement about the divination in larger script, followed by the text's final oracular response in smaller script. Our translation of the “end title/ colophon” and final entry in full reads:

This [text] is named the *Divination of Maheśvara*. What you are intending and seeking determines the mantic figure. The divination elsewhere amply proclaims, “This is the Asura(s) set. The king(s) will protect you. You will get whatever you want. All clothing and food will come from your own actions. As for your person, no one will dare bully you. Greatly auspicious.”

The conclusion that the response for Asura(s) set [65] is dependent on that for Asura(s) set [57] offers further insight into the text's process of creation. In the first place, it suggests that the compilers and scribes saw no problem with the text's including two more or less identical entries both associated with the same god or spirit. (Here, we distinguish the Asura(s) entries in sets [57] and [65] from the Asura King(s) entry for set [50].) In the second place, the two entries reveal something about this text's compositional profile. Specifically, it is not a faithful—in the sense of word-for-word—copy of a source text. Here,

in an instance where the scribes have gone back to entry [57] to craft entry [65], and where they ostensibly quote the former entry in the latter, the differences are telling. “Your person/ body” (*ru shen* 汝身) is either included or elided; food and clothing can come “of their own accord” (*zi zhi* 自至) or “from your own actions” (*qi yu ru ji* 起於汝己); and one can optionally include a formula like “things will improve daily from now on” (*yihou riri shengjin* 已後日日昇進) or “you will get whatever you want” (*ru zhi suo xu ji de* 汝之所須即得). And as far as evaluations go, there is no meaningful difference between “greatly auspicious” (*da ji* 大吉) and “greatly auspicious celebration” (*da jiqing* 大吉慶). These differences suggest a composition process that rather resembles the skilled shuffling of a repertoire of formulae and topoi such as one finds in oral literature. This, combined with the many variant characters and abbreviated phrases, amply demonstrates the vernacular character of the *Divination of Maheśvara*.

3 The Gods and Spirits in the *Divination of Maheśvara*

This detailed introduction has attended to the *Divination of Maheśvara*'s explicit claims and also to what its prognoses, contents, and semantics reveal about the divination system and its operation. One specific point that this has brought up is the roles of the gods and spirits in this system of divination, and their relationship to the dice, to the mantic figures the dice create, and to the prognoses of the oracular responses. One god or spirit is associated with each oracular response, though we have noted that the gods do not speak directly to the querent. The creation of a numerical set, and its naming, invokes a god or spirit who oversees or guarantees the prognosis. Given that prognoses are auspicious, inauspicious, or neutral—the latter having been defined more specifically as first bad and then better, or else counselling inaction—the gods and spirits would seem to play parallel roles, that is, as protectors in auspicious responses and as tormentors in inauspicious responses. Indeed, if one were given the list of gods and spirits of the *Divination of Maheśvara* as a divine cast of characters that includes gods (*tian* 天) and god-kings (*tianwang* 天王) but also spirits (*shen* 神) and demons/ghosts (*gui* 鬼), one might expect to find the “good” gods ensuring the auspicious responses, and the “bad” demons guaranteeing the baleful responses. As will become clear, and as one can see in the table below, things are not so simple: some demons are associated with good prognoses, and some gods and goddesses are linked to bad ones.

This sense of disorder is perfectly in keeping with a text whose sixty-four oracular responses are actually sixty-five as a result of the repetition of two

combinations and the omission of one. This admixture of foreign and local gods and demons seems also to be imbued with a sense of play. It is a very specific divine assembly, but as an assembly or a totality of gods and spirits it is one that exists in the abstract, whose figures are invoked or summoned one at a time when their proverbial number is called. To look at these gods and spirits all together, one must read the text as it was never meant to be read, that is, from start to finish. Doing so, one sees the rough edges that would go unnoticed when consulting the text through dice for divination. The most obvious such rough edge is the phenomenon of the repeated numerical set: why should the combination of dice rolls 1-3-1, for example, invoke the Omen God in response [10] and the Asura King(s) (Axiuluo Wang 阿修羅王) in response [50]?⁸⁵ And what mechanism other than chance would have one look through the divination book for the entry for 1-3-1 to arrive at response [10] and not at response [50]? One also notices that some gods or spirits appear repeatedly: the Asuras respond at set [57] and give essentially the same response at set [65]; and the Omen God gives different responses at [10] and [41]. Together with the sometimes dissonant relationship between the protecting or threatening character of a god or spirit and their associated auspicious or inauspicious oracular response, this also suggests a sense of play—not to say total arbitrariness—in the relationship between the *Divination of Mahesvara's* spirit pantheon and its textual contents. Mute though they may be, these gods and spirits also tell a story about ritual and divination, though it is one that may not be fully integrated into the text. Were these gods and spirits illustrated, we would be dealing here with the familiar dynamics of the relationship between text and image. Here we have something similar, but the images remain potential, or at least unrealized in our text. The absence of visual representations notwithstanding, we can attend to this unruly pantheon and consider how its testimony both parallels and diverges from that of the text and its oracular responses.

The pantheon of gods and spirits is colorful and eclectic, reflecting a diverse ninth- to- tenth-century Dunhuang Chinese-speaking community. It is of a piece with iconographic and ritual programs at Dunhuang that mix Indic and Chinese gods and spirits.⁸⁶ We find some overlaps with esoteric Buddhist

85 The other repeated combination, 1-4-3, invokes Yama (*yan luo tian*) in response [16] and Brahmā (*fan mo tian*) in response [61], and the contents of the prognoses are also distinct from one another.

86 See, for example, the appearance of Xiwangmu alongside Asura and other Indic figures in Dunhuang Cave 249, dating to the Western Wei (535–551); Dorothy C. Wong, “The Mapping of Sacred Space: Images of Buddhist Cosmographies in Medieval China,” in Philippe Forêt & Andreas Kaplony, eds., *The Journey of Maps and Images on the Silk Road* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 57.

TABLE 2 The *Divination of Maheśvara's* sets, gods, and evaluations

[1] 1-1-1 梵王 <i>Brahmā</i> King 大吉 Greatly Auspicious	[2] 2-2-2 大聖天 <i>Great Sacred God/Vināyaka</i> 大吉 Greatly Auspicious	[3] 3-3-3 五道大神 <i>Great Spirit of the Five Paths/gatis</i> 大吉 Greatly Auspicious	[4] 4-4-4 地藏 <i>Dizang/ Kṣitigarbha bodhisattva</i> 大吉慶也 Greatly Auspicious Celebration	[5] 2-4-1 燒麥鬼 <i>Burning Wheat Demon</i> 平 Neutral
[6] 2-1-4 地神 <i>Earth Spirit/ Pṛthivī</i> 勿重看之 <i>Do not look at the set twice</i> [Greatly auspicious]	[7] 4-1-3 牛頭神 <i>Ox-Head Spirit</i> 凶 Inauspicious	[8] 1-4-2 月光王 <i>King Moonlight</i> 大吉 Greatly Auspicious	[9] 1-1-3 華神 <i>Flower Spirit</i> 大吉 Greatly Auspicious	[10] 1-3-1 相天 <i>Omen God</i> 大吉 Greatly Auspicious
[11] 1-2-3 華輪天王 <i>Flower Wheel God King</i> 大吉 Greatly Auspicious	[12] 3-2-1 九子母 <i>Mother of Nine Children/Demon Mother, Harīti</i> 吉 Auspicious	[13] 2-2-3 匿然魍魎鬼 <i>Noxious Spooks</i> 平 Neutral	[14] 4-1-1 白帝將軍 <i>White Emperor General</i> 平 Neutral	[15] 4-3-2 北大梵天王 <i>Great Brahmā God King of the North</i> 大吉 Greatly Auspicious
[16] 1-4-3 梵羅天 <i>Yama (?)</i> 大吉 Greatly Auspicious	[17] 2-3-4 布相神 <i>Displaying Omens Spirit</i> 吉 Auspicious	[18] 4-4-1 白蒙鬼 <i>White Cover Demon</i> 平 Neutral	[19] 4-1-2 妻神 <i>Wife Spirit</i> 大凶 Greatly Inauspicious	[20] 1-3-3 呼馨香鬼 <i>Exhaling Fragrance Demon</i> 大吉 Greatly Auspicious
[21] 3-2-2 自在天王女 <i>Mahēśvari, female form of Maheśvara</i> 凶 Inauspicious	[22] 2-3-2 五王天井 吉 Auspicious	[23] 2-2-4 神龜 <i>Spirit Turtle</i> 大吉 Greatly Auspicious	[24] 4-2-1 風神王 <i>King of the Wind Spirits/ Vāyu</i> 先凶後吉 <i>Initially Inauspicious, but later Auspicious.</i>	[25] 2-3-1 欣樂天人 <i>Delightful Music Transcendent(s)</i> 吉慶 <i>Auspicious celebrations</i>
[26] 1-2-4 天馬夫人 <i>Lady of the Divine Horse</i> 大吉 Greatly Auspicious	[27] 3-2-4 因緣 <i>Dependent Origination</i> 平 Neutral	[28] 1-4-4 良臣夫人 <i>Lady of the Good Minister</i> 大吉 Greatly Auspicious	[29] 4-3-1 牛影天 <i>Ox Shadow God</i> 大吉 Greatly Auspicious	[30] 3-4-1 點然魍魎鬼 <i>Flaming Spooks</i> 大吉 Greatly Auspicious
[31] 2-2-1 那羅延王 <i>Nārāyaṇa</i> 大吉 Greatly Auspicious	[32] 1-2-1 灰林天 <i>Ash Woods God</i> 大吉 Greatly Auspicious	[33] 1-2-2 司命鬼 <i>Master of Life-allotments Demon</i> 平 Neutral	[34] 2-1-2 厄難天 <i>God of Predicaments</i> 大惡 <i>Really bad</i>	[35] 3-3-2 土鬼 <i>Soil Demon</i> 平 Neutral

TABLE 2 The *Divination of Maheśvara's* sets, gods, and evaluations (*cont.*)

Numerical trigram style	Examples	Relevant texts		
[36] 3-3-1 行路夫人 Lady Traveler/ Wife of the Traveler 吉 Auspicious	[37] 1-3-4 風神夫人 Lady Wind Spirit/ Wife of Vāyu 宜修善福，惡鬼自離汝身 You must cultivate goodness and good fortune so that the evil demons leave your body of their own accord.	[38] 3-2-3 神夫 Spirit Husband 平 Neutral	[39] 4-2-2 老鬼 Old Ghost/ Pāñcika 大吉 Greatly Auspicious	[40] 2-4-2 魍魎夫人 Lady Spooks 先凶後吉 Initially Inauspicious, but later Auspicious
[41] 4-2-4 相天 Omen God 所求者念佛求之，轉遂汝情 To get what you seek, recite the names of Buddha and things will turn your way. [Greatly Auspicious]	[42] 3-4-3 先王 Former Kings 好消息欲至，從心 The good news will come as you wish. [Greatly Auspicious]	[43] 2-4-4 尼娑天 Nisuo God 大吉 Greatly Auspicious	[44] 3-4-2 雷公 Thunder Lord 大吉 Greatly Auspicious	[45] 4-1-4 得神 Obtainment Spirit 念善已後，即得昇進 After you contemplate goodness, you will be promoted. [Inauspicious]
[46] 4-2-3 良遂夫人 Virtuous-gentle Lady/ Wife of Liangsui 吉 Auspicious	[47] 1-1-4 盧神 Locana [Missing; probably auspicious]	[48] 2-1-3 北神 Spirit of the North [Missing; probably auspicious]	[49] 1-4-1 五道王 King of the Five Paths/ <i>gatis</i> 先凶後吉 Initially Inauspicious, later Auspicious	[50] 1-3-1 阿修羅王 Asura King(s) 大吉 Greatly Auspicious
[51] 3-1-1 山神王 King of Mountain Spirits 凶 Inauspicious	[52] 2-1-1 青魍魎鬼 Green Spooks 吉 Auspicious	[53] 3-1-3 天羅夫人 Lady Heaven Net/ Wife of Tianluo 先凶後吉 Initially Inauspicious, later Auspicious	[54] 3-1-4 宅神 Residence Spirit 平 Neutral	[55] 4-4-3 毗沙門天王天 Vaiśravaṇa 吉 Auspicious
[56] 4-3-4 西王母 Grand-mother of the West 大吉 Greatly Auspicious	[57] 3-4-4 阿修羅 Asura(s) 大吉慶 Greatly Auspicious Celebration	[58] 4-4-2 鏡鉢夫人 Lady of the Mirror-vessel/ Wife of Jingbo 大吉 Greatly Auspicious	[59] 1-1-2 趙女天 Goddess Zhao 大吉 Greatly Auspicious	[60] 4-3-3 博士 Erudite 大吉 Greatly Auspicious

TABLE 2 The *Divination of Maheśvara's* sets, gods, and evaluations (*cont.*)

Numerical trigram style	Examples	Relevant texts		
[61] 1-4-3 梵摩天 Brahmā-Deva 大吉 Greatly Auspicious	[62] 3-3-4 觀音天 Avalokiteśvara 大吉 Greatly Auspicious	[63] 2-3-3 天王 God-King(s) 吉 Auspicious	[64] 2-4-3 善女天 Goodness Goddess 大吉 Greatly Auspicious	[65] 3-1-2 阿修羅 Asura(s) 大吉 Greatly Auspicious

groupings of deities, such as the twelve directional deities and the *Garbhadhātu maṇḍala*, depictions of which are found at Dunhuang.⁸⁷ There are also some significant overlaps with deities found in astrological texts and with the similarly eclectic pantheons found in various versions of the “Water and Land Ritual Feast” (*shuilu zhai* 水陸齋), which was emerging as a popular Chinese Buddhist ritual during the Song.⁸⁸ This suggests to us a pantheon that is at once local and connected to transregional Indic and Chinese traditions. It is also a pantheon whose divinatory inflection lends it a unique, purposeful character.

Like the “inherent variability” of dice divination, the gods themselves express the cultural and religious contexts of the ritual’s users, but they also retain some fascinating constants, particularly across the Indian, Tibetan, and Chinese texts. Taken together, the gods and spirits of the *Divination of Maheśvara* form a pantheon, and here we use the term in Bernard Faure’s sense, not only as a taxonomy of gods and spirits, but also as “an instrument of production, a generative and transformative matrix.” Faure writes,

87 For the pantheons of the *Garbhadhātu maṇḍala* and its precursors, see Ulrich Mammitzsch, *Evolution of the Garbhadhātu Maṇḍala* (New Delhi: International Academy of Indian Culture and Aditya Prakashan, 1991).

88 The rite is attributed to Emperor Wu of Liang (464–549), but the textual record of the tradition so far has its earliest witness in the *Shuilu Yi[wen]* of c. 1071 by the layman Yang E (1032–1098). The most influential text, still in use today, is the *Guidelines for Performing the Purificatory Fast of the Sublime Assembly of Saintly and Ordinary Beings of Water and Land Throughout the Dharmadhātu* (*Fajie shengfan shuilu shenghui xiuzhai yigui* 法界聖凡水陸勝會修齋儀軌; short title: *Shuilu yigui*), compiled in the Song by Zhi Pan 志磐, revised in the Ming by Zhuhong 祿宏 (1535–1615); Daniel B. Stevenson, “Text, Image, and Transformation in the History of the *Shuilu fahui*, the Buddhist Rite for Deliverance of Creatures of Water and Land,” in *Cultural Intersections in Later Chinese Buddhism*, ed. Marsha Weidner (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2001), 33–35; cf. Daoyu 道昱, “Shuilu fahui yuanyuan kao” 水陸法會淵源考, *Pumen xuebao* 普門學報 37 (2007): 1–20.

In the same way as the *interpretatio graeca* allowed ancient Greeks to translate near-eastern deities into their pantheon, the *interpretatio buddhica* provided a device for mythological proliferation: although it seemed to reduce foreign gods to local gods, in fact it allowed the introduction of those foreign deities into the local picture and therefore added new valences to local gods. Far from simply registering a preexisting, objective reality, any classification is performative, and to classify gods in a pantheon is to classify desires.⁸⁹

Faure's "generative and transformative matrix" well describes the *Divination of Maheśvara's* divinatory pantheon/ pandemonium, and the discussion of "new valences" for local gods accords with the processes that inform its tenth-century Dunhuang context. The intersection of the local and the translocal, as well as the fractal nature of the gods, is apparent when we turn our attention to the titular god of the text, Maheśvara, and his place in tenth-century Dunhuang. As the putative source of this tradition, Maheśvara is to be distinguished from those gods of the pantheon who are called forth in its responses. Similarly, the gods Śakra, Brahmā, and the four guardian kings who preside over the divination method play a different, arguably more integral role to the system's operation than do the gods and spirits who appear in the oracular responses. These more central gods, do, of course, also sometimes appear in the responses, a circumstance that further emphasizes their malleability.

3.1 *Excursus on Maheśvara*

Maheśvara is, on the face of things, a form of Dunhuang's most popular Buddhist god, Avalokiteśvara.⁹⁰ Maheśvara was not, however, a prominent deity in

89 Faure, *Gods of Medieval Japan*, Vol. 1, 24.

90 Avalokiteśvara is one of the most, if not the most, popular deities in Dunhuang. The sections of sutras mentioning Avalokiteśvara were copied more than a thousand times in Dunhuang by devotees. See Shi Dashen 釋大參, "Dunhuang *Guanyin jing* tiji: jiesu zhairi chaojing wenhua zhi kaocha" 敦煌《觀音經》題記—節俗齋日抄經文化之考察, *Dunhuang xue* 2015.3: 155–177. For the images of Avalokiteśvara and relevant transformation texts, see Zheng A'cai 鄭阿財, "Guanyin jingbian yu Dunhuang Mogaoku siyuan jiangjing zhi lice" 觀音經變與敦煌莫高窟寺院講經之蠱測, *Pumen xuebao* 35 (2006): 57–80. For a list of the images of Maheśvara in Dunhuang and Khotanese arts, see Zhang Yuanlin 張元林, "Dunhuang, Hetian suojian Moxishouluoitian tuxiang ji xiangguan wenti" 敦煌、和闐所見摩醯首羅天圖像及相關問題, *Dunhuang yanjiu* 2013.6: 2–5. For perceptions of Avalokiteśvara reflected in the *jiangjing wen* 講經文, or "speeches explaining the sutras," see Shi Dashen 釋大參, "Dunhuang P.2133v *Miaofa lianhua jing jiangjing wen zhi neirong yu sixiang*" 敦煌 P.2133v 《妙法蓮華經講經文》之內容與思想, *Dunhuang xue jikan* 2007.4: 77–96.

Chinese Buddhism until the spread of esoteric Buddhism, and this did not erase his various roles as a demonic opponent and an embodiment of anti-Buddhist teachings in earlier Mahāyāna texts. His Śaivite identity as a popular god across the Indic world also informs the Zoroastrian form of the wind god Veshparkar, which in turn feeds back into how Maheśvara might have been seen in Dunhuang in the tenth century.⁹¹

Maheśvara's subjugation by Vajrapāṇi and his subordination within the esoteric Buddhist pantheon may be most salient when considering his place in Buddhism, but this subjugation narrative was not translated into Chinese until the early 11th century.⁹² According to the foundational esoteric Buddhist subjugation myth, Maheśvara was defeated by Vajrapāṇi and was reborn as the Buddha "Soundless Lord of Ashes" (Bhasmeśvara-nirghoṣa).⁹³ Based on this narrative, Maheśvara became a protector of Dharma, depicted either with the iconography of a bodhisattva (*pusa* 菩薩), or of a guardian demon king or *yakṣa* (*yecha* 夜叉), in paintings from the Song dynasty onwards.⁹⁴

91 Puri, *Buddhism in Central Asia*, 132–133.

92 The story is originally in *Sarva-tathāgata-tattva-saṃgraha* (The Compendium of Principles of All Tathagatas) from the seventh century. According to Minoru Kiyota, the text was partially translated into Chinese in the mid-eighth century, but the section about Maheśvara's subjugation was not until the 11th century. See Minoru Kiyota, *Shingon Buddhism: Theory and Practice* (Los Angeles/Tokyo: Buddhist Books International, 1978), 19–25. Also see Linrothe, *Ruthless Compassion: Wrathful Deities in Early Indo-Tibetan Esoteric Buddhist Art* (Boston: Shambhala, 1999), 26, 183. For more in-depth study of the text, see Steven Neal Weinberger, "The Significance of Yoga Tantra and the Compendium of Principles (Tattvasaṃgraha Tantra) within Tantric Buddhism in India and Tibet" (PhD Thesis: University of Virginia, 2003), 13–91.

93 For this event, see the synopses by Ronald M. Davidson, "Reflections on the Maheśvara Subjugation Myth: Indic Materials, Sa-skyapa Apologies, and the Birth of Heruka," *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 14.2 (1991): 200–202; and Rob Linrothe, *Ruthless Compassion: Wrathful Deities in Early Indo-Tibetan Esoteric Buddhist Art*, 183–190.

By "esoteric Buddhism," we follow Ronald Davidson and understand it as Buddhist communities that "insisted on an immutable master-disciple bond, employed royal acts of consecration, and used elaborate *maṇḍalas* in which the mediator was to envision himself as the Buddha in a field of subordinate Buddhas ... It is only in the second half of the seventh century that the definitive esoteric system emerges ...". See Ronald M. Davidson, *Indian Esoteric Buddhism: A Social History of the Tantric Movement* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), chapter 4, esp. 117. For different definitions of esoteric Buddhism, see Charles D. Orzech, Richard K. Payne, and Henrik H. Sørensen, "Introduction," in *Esoteric Buddhism and the Tantras in East Asia*, ed. Charles D. Orzech, Henrik H. Sørensen, and Richard K. Payne (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 5.

94 Lü, "Lun 'pusa xiang' leixing de Moxishoulou xingxiang," 140–147.

Earlier Mahāyāna Buddhist texts tended to view Maheśvara either as a demon or as a bodhisattva. On the one hand he was the prince of demons, namely Bisheshe 毘舍闍 (Piśāca), with an iconography comprising three eyes, three heads, and eight arms, seated on a bull; on the other hand he was a bodhisattva of the highest degree, namely Da Zizaitian 大自在天, who was about to enter Buddhahood.⁹⁵ Maheśvara appears as an embodiment of heretical teachings in the *Commentary on the Perfection of Wisdom in 25,000 Lines* (*Mahāprajñāpāramitāopadeśaśāstra*; *Dazhi dulun* 大智度論) translated by Kumārajīva (344–413 CE) between 402 and 405 CE. Here Maheśvara figures as a god (*tian* 天) who claims to possess omniscience (*yiqie zhi* 一切智) like the Buddha. This claim is dismissed because of Maheśvara’s aversion and pride. The assembled audience of this discourse is further warned that they should not worship this kind of deity (*buying shi tian* 不應事天).⁹⁶ In another example from *Notes on the Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* (*Jushelun ji* 俱舍論記) by Puguang 普光 (?–664 CE), Maheśvara is depicted as a violent deity who is fond of eating blood, flesh, and marrow. The text not only defines his other name (or form) “Rudra” (Rudaluo 魯達羅) as “cruel and evil”; it also distinguishes his followers as heretics who cover their bodies with soil and shave most of their hair. In these examples Maheśvara has a straightforward role as a god of the opponents of the Buddha and his teachings.

Maheśvara’s absorption by Buddhism is apparent in the *Lotus Sutra* (*Fahua jing* 法華經), where Maheśvara figures as one of the thirty-three manifestations of Avalokiteśvara.⁹⁷ Translated by Kumārajīva, the *Lotus Sutra* had been the *locus classicus* for the worship of Avalokiteśvara and Mahāyāna Buddhism in general. The story about Avalokiteśvara’s thirty-three manifestations was also popularly narrated and depicted in Dunhuang wall paintings, silk paintings, and in transformation texts (*bianwen* 變文), where the god’s form as Maheśvara was also found. In both pictorial and narrative contexts, these works place Avalokiteśvara at the center, with Maheśvara at the periphery.

Amidst this polyvocality there are many times where Maheśvara’s role is indeterminate, and where it is probably fruitless to try to pigeonhole him as bodhisattva, Hindu god, or esoteric Buddhist protector. Maheśvara is the titular god, for example, in the Chinese Buddhist articulation of the “*āveśa* method,” which employed child mediums in order to divine. As Rolf Giebel has pointed

95 *Ru Dasheng lun* 入大乘論 T.1634.32.0046a25–0047b08.

96 *Da zhi du lun* 大智度論 T.1509.25.0073a05–25.

97 *Miaofa lianhua jing* 妙法蓮華經 T.262.09.0056a14–25. For a comprehensive study of the worship of Avalokiteśvara in China, see Chün-fang Yü, *Kuan-yin: The Chinese Transformation of Avalokiteśvara* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), esp. 45–91.

out, the *Quick and Effective Āveśa Method Explained by Maheśvara* (*Suji liyan Moxishouluotian shuo aweishe fa* 速疾立驗魔醮首羅天說阿尾奢法, hereafter “*Āveśa Method*”) was of Śaivite origin, but was placed in a Buddhist context during the Tang dynasty.⁹⁸ This is a rather close parallel with the use of Maheśvara in our text.

We find a more localized worship of Maheśvara in Dunhuang locust-control rituals. In Tang China, Buddhist communities actively engaged in warding off locust disasters. A common method was for individuals, especially local officials, to make a written vow (*fayuan wen* 發願文) at a dharma-assembly. The ritual might have also involved creating a Golden Light platform (*jin guang-ming tan* 金光明壇) and reciting certain *dhāraṇī*-s or sutras, both of which were common to tantric practices.⁹⁹ In the texts of the written vows from Dunhuang, Maheśvara was supplicated as a general (*dajiang* 大將) who would defeat the army of locusts (*huangjun* 蝗軍).¹⁰⁰ Compared to locust-control rituals used elsewhere, Maheśvara’s presence is especially predominant.¹⁰¹ This type of ritual instrumentalizes Maheśvara’s protective and apotropaic role, which would seem to align with his place in esoteric Buddhism. At the same time, it emphasizes his governing of the wind in opposition to flying insects, which might pertain to a form of Maheśvara that merged with a Zoroastrian wind god, Veshparkar.

Veshparkar would have been known to inhabitants of tenth-century Dunhuang through the influence of Sogdians and their worship of this Zoroastrian god. Like Buddhism, Zoroastrianism appropriated Maheśvara through its interactions with Śaivism. Originating in pre-Islamic Iran, the Zoroastrian religion was practiced by Sogdians and spread along the Silk Road with their caravans. Meanwhile, Sogdians’ worship differed from Zoroastrianism in Iran.¹⁰² One of

98 Rolf Giebel, “A Śaiva Text in Chinese Garb? An Annotated Translation of the *Suji liyan Moxishouluo tian shuo aweishe fa*,” in *Esoteric Buddhism in Mediaeval Maritime Asia: Networks of Masters, Texts, Icons*, ed. Andrea Aciri (Singapore: ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute, 2016), 381–388.

99 S.1137; Lü Deting 呂德廷, “Fojiao yu rang huang” 佛教與禳蝗, *Wenhua yichan* 文化遺產 2014.5: 123. David Bello, “Consider the Qing Locust,” *East Asian Science, Technology, and Medicine* 48 (2018): 49–80. *Tan* here can also mean mandala. See Charles D. Orzech and Henrik H. Sørensen, “Mudrā, Mantra and Mandala,” in *Esoteric Buddhism and the Tantras in East Asia*, ed. Charles D. Orzech, Henrik H. Sørensen, and Richard K. Payne (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 81–82.

100 See P.2058v and S.5957.

101 See Lü Deting, “Fojiao yu rang huang,” 125.

102 For Zoroastrianism in Iran and its spread in Central Asia, see P. Gignoux and B.A. Livinsky. “Religions and Religious Movements—1,” in *History of Civilizations of Central Asia*. Eds. B.A. Litvinsky, Zhang Guang-da, and R. Shabani Samghabadi (Paris: UNESCO, 1996), 403–

the most noticeable differences was the tendency toward polytheism: while Zoroastrianism in Iran tended to worship only Ahura Mazda, the Sogdians' practice included other deities, such as Nana, originally a Mesopotamian goddess.¹⁰³ The image of Maheśvara merged with another main deity in Sogdian Zoroastrianism, the god of the wind Veshparkar, whose iconography also had four arms and three faces with different expressions.¹⁰⁴

This iconography of Veshparkar/Maheśvara was particularly abundant in Khotan.¹⁰⁵ According to Zhang Yuanlin's 張元林 list, there were eleven cases either on wooden plates or wall paintings, which shared the similar three-headed and four-armed iconography. Most of them also have *linga*, a feature that is not present in the image of Maheśvara related to Avalokiteśvara. Additionally, some of them appear in a triad, reminding us of the *trimurti* in Hinduism, though the other two images in the triad are not necessarily Brahmā and Viṣṇu. More interestingly, these plates were excavated from Buddhist temples, and date to approximately the sixth century.¹⁰⁶

412. For Zoroastrianism in Dunhuang, see Yao Chongxin 姚崇新, Wang Yuanyuan 王媛媛, and Chen Huaiyu 陳懷宇, *Dunhuang sanyi jiao yu zhonggu shehui* 敦煌三夷教與中古社會 (Lanzhou: Gansu jiaoyu, 2013), 3–160. For Zoroastrianism in Chinese societies, see Chen Yuan 陳垣, "Huo Xianjiao ru Zhongguo kao" 火祆教入中國考, in *Chen Yuan xueshu lunwen ji* 陳垣學術論文集 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1982), 303–328. Chen's article was originally published in 1922.

103 Guitty Azarpay, *Sogdian Painting: The Pictorial Epic in Oriental Art* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), 132–139.

104 For this phenomenon of including local deities such as Śiva, see Helmut Humbach, "Vayu, Śiva und der Spiritus vivens im ostiranischen Synkretismus," in *Monumentum H.S. Nyberg (Acta Iranica 4–7)* (Téhéran: Bibliothèque Pahlavi, 1975), 397–408; Nicolas Sims-Williams, "Some Reflections on Zoroastrianism in Sogdiana and Bactria," in *Realms of the Silk Roads, Ancient and Modern*, ed. David Christian and Craig Benjamin (Turnhout: Brepols, 2000), 6–8. In the former work, Humbach proposed that Śiva became Veshparkar in certain contexts.

105 For the identification of Veshparkar in Khotan and his relationship with Maheśvara, see Markus Mode, "Sogdian Gods in Exile: Some Iconographic Evidence from Khotan in the Light of Recently Excavated Material from Sogdiana," *Silk Road Art and Archaeology* no. 2 (1992): 186–187. Also see the follow-up with more recent excavations in Rong Xinjiang 榮新江, "Foxiang haishi Xianshen: Cong Yutian kan Silu zongjiao de huntong xingtai" 佛像還是祆神—從于闐看絲綢宗教的混同形態, in *Sichouzhilu yu dongxi wenhua jiaoliu* 絲綢之路與東西文化交流, ed. Rong Xinjiang 榮新江 (Beijing: Peking University Press, 2015), 313–329; "Zai tan Sichouzhilu shang zongjiao de huntong xingtai: Yutian Fosi bihua de xin tansuo" 再談絲綢之路上宗教的混同形態—于闐佛寺壁畫的新探索, *ibid.*, ed. Rong Xinjiang, 330–333.

106 Zhang Yuanlin, "Dunhuang, Hetian suojian Moxishouluo tian tuxiang ji xiangguan wenti," 4.

In addition to Khotan and Dunhuang, Zoroastrianism also spread further into the heartland of Tang China. During the mid-sixth century, Chinese sources used several terms to indicate Zoroastrian worship: they “serve” (*shi* 事) Heavenly Deities (*tianshen* 天神), Fire Deities (*huoshen* 火神), and Barbarian Deities (*hutian* 胡天, *hu tianshen* 胡天神).¹⁰⁷ More specifically during the Tang dynasty, they engaged in *xian* 祆, a term indicating Zoroastrian worship and teachings.¹⁰⁸ In the sources, they clearly refer to some kind of worship, especially in Karashar and Sogdiana. However, with the exception of the last term, the others are all general terms, some of which only at best imply the non-Chinese origin of the practice. Only *xian* more specifically designates a particular kind of worship, since the character was newly made in the Tang dynasty.¹⁰⁹ The sources also report that in the Tang dynasty, the *xian* temples were particularly abundant in Chang’an and Luoyang. And in some cases, Sogdian caravan leaders (*sabao* 薩寶, possibly derived from *sarthavaha*) were in charge of the *xian* sacrifice, which strongly points to Zoroastrian practice.¹¹⁰

The movements of Veshparkar into Tang China bring up the question of how this god was perceived. A typical mention of Zoroastrian worship comes from Wei Shu 韋述 (?–757 CE): “In the southwest corner of the Buzheng Street, there is a foreign (*hu*) Zoroastrian (*xian*) temple that was built in 621 CE. This foreign (*hu*) heavenly deity from the west is what Buddhist sutras refer to as Maheśvara” (布政坊西南隅胡祆祠。武德四年所立，西域胡天神，佛經所謂摩醯首羅也).¹¹¹ Regardless of whether Wei Shu had ever seen this Zoroastrian temple located in Chang’an, he clearly distinguished Zoroastrianism from Buddhism, mentioning the former as “foreign” and “from the west.”¹¹² Meanwhile, he states that this foreign deity is “the same as” Maheśvara in Buddhist

107 Note that *tian* and *tianshen* are interchangeable in this case.

108 According to Chen Yuan, the first reference that possibly links one of the terms to Zoroastrianism is from *Wei shu* 魏書, which was completed in 554 CE. Chen Yuan, “Huo Xianjiao ru Zhongguo kao”, 305–307.

109 *Ibid.*, 308–311.

110 *Ibid.*, 316–319.

111 Wei Shu 韋述, *Liangjing xinji jijiao* 兩京新記輯校 (Xi’an: Sanqin, 2006), 34.

112 Often the word *hu* is translated as “barbarian,” indicating the inferiority of other peoples. However, in literary Chinese, the word as a modifier can simply denote its foreign origin, such as *hujiao* 胡椒 (pepper) and *hugua* 胡瓜 (cucumber). In this sense, *hu* can generally mean “foreign” or more specifically point to communities in the west or northwest. As Yang Jidong has pointed out, during the Tang, *fan* 梵 was reserved to denote things from India, while *hu* was for the other foreign things. See Yang Jidong, “Replacing *hu* with *fan*: A Change in the Chinese Perception of Buddhism during the Medieval Period,” *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 21.1 (1998): 157–170.

sutras.¹¹³ This approach to the gods and their ostensive sectarian affiliations accords with Xuanzang's observations during his travels to India, when he recorded people covering themselves with dust and worshipping Śiva. Aware of the traditions, he referred to these contemporary Hindu temples as "Temples of Deities" (*tianci* 天祠) and pointed out Śaivites by specifying that many of them worshipped Śiva. But instead saying "Śiva" (Shipo 濕婆), he still recognized the deity with his Buddhist name as Da Zizaitian 大自在天.¹¹⁴ In other words, the practice of worshipping Śiva might be heretical, but the deity is the same one as in Buddhism.¹¹⁵ This recalls the point made by Sylvain Lévi that "a rigid classification which simplistically divided divinities up under the headings, Buddhism, Śaivism, and Vaiṣṇavism, would be a pure nonsense; under different names, and at different levels, the same gods are for the most part common to different confessions."¹¹⁶

This approach to the gods begins with human worshippers and assumes that they wield "the same god" as a defined entity, perceived differently by different people. To regard the gods as fractional objects characterized by their instability and metamorphic potential is to describe ostensibly the same phenomenon from a different angle, and to place less stock in the power of worshippers to define and apprehend their gods. Both ways of approaching Maheśvara's polyvalence are helpful for understanding his popularity in Dunhuang. While Buddhism had the firmest institutional grounding in Dunhuang, Śiva (and/or Veshparkar) was a predominant deity in neighboring areas along the Silk Roads. The encounter of the two situations—both of them already multivalent on their own—resulted in a localized form of worship for Maheśvara. In this localized form, the rituals and cosmologies might be typically Buddhist, but it is probably the case that Maheśvara gained a more central place due to his broader popularity, which came from his multivalence. The influence of Veshparkar,

113 Cf. Yao Chongxin, Wang Yuanyuan, and Chen Huaiyu, *Dunhuang sanyi jiao yu zhonggu shehui*, 112. In literary Chinese, *suowei* 所謂 means "what is said in," indicating a reference.

114 *Da Tang xiyu ji* 大唐西域記 T.2087.51.0892c27–0893a20.

115 This phenomenon of a deity moving across different traditions of worship and geographical boundaries is well-documented in cases like Nalakūbara/Nezha 哪吒 and Wutong 五通. See Meir Shahar, *Oedipal God: The Chinese Nezha and his Indian Origins* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2015), x–xii; 157–186; Richard Von Glahn, *The Sinister Way: The Divine and the Demonic in Chinese Religious Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 180–221.

116 Sylvain Lévi, *Le Népal, Étude historique d'un royaume hindou*, Vol. 1 (Paris, 1905; reprint New Delhi, 1991), 319; translation from David Gellner, *Monk, Householder, and Tantric Priest: Newar Buddhism and Its Hierarchy of Ritual* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 76.

moreover is also that of the wind, the same element that blows through the entire pantheon of the text and tradition over which Maheśvara presides. Maheśvara is, on this reading, analogous to the text itself: a local Chinese Buddhist phenomenon, linked to translocal and Indic beliefs, and infused by an essential mutability or “shiftiness.”

3.2 *The Divinatory Pantheon*

The central role of gods and spirits in the *Divination of Maheśvara* is inaugurated from the opening invocation, where the querent identify themselves before Śakra, Brahmā, the four guardian kings, and the many spirits. This rather general hierarchy of divinity narrows through the divination process. Intention determines the fall of the dice; this determines the numerical set; and the set invokes a specific god or spirit from the pantheon who then provides protection (or not) and ensures an auspicious prognosis (or not). These gods or spirits are the agents of the divine world, invoked through the interaction of one’s intentions and the dice, creating an unmistakable link between the querent and the god or spirit of the set received. These members of the divinatory pantheon are its more active agents, the more frequent “actants” of its relational network.

After the invocation of the patron gods and spirits, the first four members of the invoked pantheon, who appear in the first four oracular responses, are Brahmā, Vināyaka, the Great God of the Five Paths,¹¹⁷ and the bodhisattva Kṣitigarbha (Dizang). These first four, following the tone of the introduction, strike the text’s Buddhist pose, emphasize the Buddhist cosmology of the five classes of beings and also of judgement in hell, and spotlight Dizang, the most mantric and magical of all bodhisattvas, and one immensely popular in medieval China.¹¹⁸

The *Divination of Maheśvara* uses various terms to refer to the gods and spirits that stand at the head of each response. Some gods and spirits are named without classificatory titles, but most are classified. The terms that the *Divination of Maheśvara* uses encode a classification system that overlaps, albeit imperfectly, with those found elsewhere in medieval Chinese Buddhism. The

117 Frederick Chen, “The Great God of the Five Paths (Wudao Dashen 五道大神) in Early Medieval China,” *Journal of Chinese Religions* 46.2 (2018): 93–121; Ding Fubao, *Foxue dacidian* 281.1; Glen Dudbridge, “The General of the Five Paths in Tang and Pre-Tang China,” *Cahiers d’Extrême-Asie* 9 (1996–1997): 65–98.

118 Zhiru Ng, *The Making of the Savior Bodhisattva: Dizang in Medieval China* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2007). For Dizang’s association with the *Zhancha shan ‘e yebao jing*, see Whalen Lai, “The *Chan-ch’a ching*: Religion and Magic in Medieval China,” in *Chinese Buddhist Apocrypha*, ed. Robert Buswell (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 1990), 178–179.

ten-fold Dharma-realm (*dharmadhātu*), a Buddhist classification transmitted from India, is comprised of (1) Buddhas; (2) bodhisattvas; (3) *pratyekabuddhas*; (4) *arhats*; (5) gods; (6) demigods (*asuras*); (7) humans; (8) animals; (9) hungry ghosts (*pretas*); and (10) hell beings. This schema informs, among other things, the arrangement of the inner and outer altars in the Water and Land Ritual Feast rites. Among the *Divination of Maheśvara*'s classes of gods and spirits we find, in no particular order, (1) seven kings (*wang* 王), (2) ten gods or *devas* (*tian* 天); (3) four god-kings (*tianwang*); (4) one lord (*gong* 公, popularly translated as “duke”); (4) three to four goddesses known as *wangnü* (王女), *nütian* (女天), and possibly *tiannü* (天女); (5) ten spirits (*shen* 神); (6) nine demons or ghosts (*gui* 鬼); (7) eight ladies or wives (*furen* 夫人); (8) two mothers (*mu* 母); (9) one husband (*fu* 夫); and (10) one transcendent (*tianren* 天人). The deities without titles are largely Indic, such as those mentioned in the introduction: Maheśvara, Śakra, Brahmā, and some in the oracular responses, such as Kṣitigarbha [4], Nārāyaṇa [31], Asura(s) [57, 65], and, curiously, the abstract Buddhist concept of dependent origination (*yinyuan* 因緣) [27]. For a number of deities, the title is the name, such as White Emperor General 白帝將軍 [14], Spirit Turtle 神龜 [24], Spirit Husband 神夫 [38], Erudite 博士 [60], and possibly also 天王 God-King(s) [63].

Some of these deities also appear with the title king (*wang*), such as Brahmā 梵王 [1] and Asura(s) 阿修羅王 [50]. Other “kings” include Moonlight King 月光王 [8], Former Kings 先王 [42], and King of the Five Paths (*gati*) 五道王 [49]. Two kings are kings of spirits (*shen*), such as King of the Wind Spirits/ Vāyu 風神王 [24] and King of the Mountain Spirits 山神王 [51]. Notably, Brahmā and Vāyu 風天 are usually classified as gods, and Moonlight King as a bodhisattva. The King of the Five Paths appears again in the text, but as a “great spirit” (*dashen*). These are just a few of many instances of classificatory fluidity in the terms that the *Divination of Maheśvara* uses to refer to the members of its pantheon.

Another class of spirits, the gods (*tian*), are also mostly Indic, although a number are unknown. They include Vināyaka 大聖天 [2], Omen God 相天 [10, 41], Brahmā 梵摩天 [61], Ox Shadow 牛彰天 [29], Ash Woods 灰林天 [32], God of Predicaments 厄難天 [34], Nisuo God 尼娑天 [43], and Avalokiteśvara 觀音天 [62]. The combined title God-king (*tianwang*), includes Flower Wheel God King 華輪天王 [11], Great Brahmā God King of the North 北大梵天王 [15], and the generic God King(s) 天王 [63], possibly in reference to the kings of the four directions, to the Buddha's cousin Devadatta, or to Maheśvara. Uniquely, Vaiśravaṇa 毗沙門天王天 [55] is referred to as a “god-king god” (天王天), a misapplication of titles that nicely fits this important, transformational figure. Among goddesses, there is a Female King (or Queen) (*wangnü*) Zizaitian, that

is Maheśvarī, the consort of Maheśvara [21], and two *nütian*, Goddess Zhao 趙女天 [59] and Goodness Goddess 善女天 [64].

The classic generic Chinese categories for spirit (*shen*) versus demon (*gui*) are not exclusively reserved for Chinese spirits. As noted already, the Spirit of the Five Paths was called the Great Spirit (*dashen*) [3],¹¹⁹ but also a King [49]. The Earth Spirit 地神 (*Prthivī*) [6], the Obtainment Spirit 得神 [45], Spirit of the North 北神 [48], and Residence Spirit 宅神 [54] could be Chinese or Indian, whereas the Flower Spirit 華神 [9], Displaying Omens Spirit 布相神 [17], and Locana 盧神 [47] have Indic origins. Demons are likewise mixed. There is the Burning Wheat Demon 燒麥鬼 [5], White Cover Demon 白蒙鬼 [18], Exhaling Fragrance Demon 呼馨香鬼 [20], Supervisor of Life Allotments Demon 司命鬼 [33], Soil Demon 土鬼 [35], and Old Demon 老鬼 [39]. The Supervisor of Life Allotments (*Siming*) is also a very old deity and normally not categorized as a demon. Likewise, the soil spirit was known in BCE China as Soil Lord (*houtu* 后土) or Earth Lord (*dizhu* 地主). Later he was known as *digong* 地公, among other names and titles, and also linked to the modern *tudi gong*. This spirit often functions to protect a residence or property. If the White Cover Demon is in fact a variant or corruption of the name *Sitātapatrā*, then this is a Buddhist protectress, and one would similarly not expect the category of *gui* to be applied.

There is a subcategory of demons called Spooks (*wangliang gui* 魍魎鬼) that are represented in the *Divination of Maheśvara* by Hidden Spooks 匿然魍魎鬼 [13], Flaming Spooks 點然魍魎鬼 [30], and Green Spooks 青魍魎鬼 [52]. The category of minor demon, the *wangliang*, goes back to before the Han Dynasty. The predominance of *gui* and *wangliang gui* in the *Divination of Maheśvara*, along with the appearance of underworld figures such as the Great Spirit of the Five Paths, the Supervisor of Life Allotments, and possibly Yama, might also suggest a connection with the Buddhist category of hungry ghost (*preta*; *egui* 餓鬼). The only approximation of *egui* in our text is in the passage given above, from response [37], where “evil demons” (*egui* 惡鬼) will leave one’s body after one cultivates goodness and good fortune.

The title *gong* (Lord) was also applied to Chinese nature deities, such as the Thunder Lord 雷公 [44], an ancient deity. Another seemingly Chinese category, “transcendent” (*tianren* 天人), is applied to the Delightful Music Transcendent(s) 欣樂天人 [25], which, as noted below, might be identified with Indic *kiṃnaras*.

119 Also known as General of Five Paths, with assistant spirits *Siming* and *Silu*, was associated with death and King Yama; see Bernard Faure, “Indic Influences on Chinese Mythology: King Yama and his Acolytes as Gods of Destiny,” in John Kieschnick and Meir Shahar, ed. *India in the Chinese Imagination: Myth, Religion, and Thought* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014), 52, 55.

One of the most striking features of the *Divination of Maheśvara's* pantheon is the relative prevalence of goddesses and female spirits, who comprise over 20% of its number. Besides the goddesses already mentioned, other female spirits include “mothers” and “ladies.” The mothers were both old deities linked to fertility or immortality, such as Jiuzimu, a Chinese deity connected with or assimilated to the Indic Guizimu (Hārītī) [12], and the Grandmother (Queen Mother) of the West [56]. Likewise, some female figures appear to combine Indic and Chinese legacies. These include Lady/ Wife of the Divine Horse [26], Lady of the Good Minister [28], Lady Traveler/ Wife of the Traveler [36], Wind Spirit Lady/ Wife of Vayū [37], Lady Spooks [40], Virtuous-gentle Lady/ Wife of Liangsui [46], Lady Heaven Net/ Wife of Tianluo [53], and Lady of the Mirror-vessel/ Wife of Jingbo [58].

The *Divination of Maheśvara's* emphasis on goddesses and female spirits could be seen to draw on both its Chinese and its Indic inheritances. To try to locate this female-inflected pantheon within Chinese traditions, and to account for its various wives and ladies, one might cite Daoist rituals that require male and female pairings and the balance of Yin and Yang powers. The worship of goddesses also played an important role in Tang cultic practices.¹²⁰ Turning more specifically to Chinese divination traditions, numerical trigram texts have far less elaborate pantheons, and their mantic figures are often associated with (super)natural forces such as the Stems and Branches rather than with gods or spirits. The *Duke of Zhou Divination Method*, one of the few to associate a named person or god with a numerical trigram, employs only male figures, including Confucius and the Duke of Zhou. The Chinese numerical trigram texts such as the *Tricks of Jing* and the *Stalk Divination* also sometimes include spirits who are the sources of supernaturally induced afflictions or curses (*sui* 祟), and it is here that we find some female figures. In the *Stalk Divination*, for example, sources of curses include “Girl who died of fright from a big-headed [demon]” (*nüzi da mian duan xia si* 女子大面端嚇死) and “Elder daughter who died while a concubine” (*zhangnü wei qie er si* 長女為妾而死). The *Stalk Divination's* “pandemonium” differs quite a lot in character from that of the *Divination of Maheśvara*, however, in that the latter's female gods and spirits are not specifically noxious, and they represent the gamut of the divine hierarchy, from the Grandmother of the West, Hārītī, Pṛthivī, and Maheśvarī down to the “Lady Spooks.” It is therefore likely that the impetus for the inclu-

120 See Catherine Despeux and Livia Kohn, *Women in Daoism* (Cambridge, MA: Three Pines, 2003), esp. Part I.

sion of many such female gods and spirits in the *Divination of Maheśvara* did not come from within the tradition of Chinese numerical trigram divination.

Indian pantheons equally offer a legacy of male Indian gods having female counterparts or consorts (e.g. Maheśvarī). Women and goddesses also factor heavily in Indian traditions of dice divination and dice gaming as in the myth of Śiva and Pārvatī's game of dice. The role of goddesses in dice divination is central in Tibetan dice divination as well.

As detailed in the introduction, Śiva's game with Pārvatī fractured the androgynous wholeness of the unitary godhead, leaving the now separate god and goddess to try, respectively, to recapture what was lost. We have already outlined how dice divination is an analogue of this process, with the system's sixty-four responses and the die in mid-fall gesturing towards unbounded wholeness, while an individual oracular response, arrived at by specific rolls of the die, is like the fragmentation of the unitary godhead into discrete parts. Presiding over the system, but not necessarily invoked in any single oracular response, Maheśvara seems to embody the divination system as a whole, remaining at the level of unbounded wholeness and omniscience while other gods and spirits are drawn down individually by invocation, sheared off from the unity of the pantheon to respond to a specific matter. This is essentially the inverse of Śiva and Pārvatī's situation after the dice game. After her victory in the dice game with her husband Śiva, Pārvatī's says, "[w]ithout me, he is formless [or ugly—*virūpa*]; for him, there can be no separation from, or conjunction with, me. I have made him formed or formless, as the case may be, just as I have created this entire universe with all its gods." From that game's vantage point, it is she, rather than her husband, who should stand outside the pantheon, representing unbounded holism. Yet it is Maheśvarī, the female counterpart of the god, who is invoked by the dice for the combination 3-2-2 in response [21], and drawn down to be associated with a baleful prognosis.

The divine couple's dice game is a provocation that results in their fragmentation, an allegory for creation. The *Divination of Maheśvara's* pantheon is a further cosmological provocation for the way it sets up Maheśvara as the god presiding over something very like the dice game he is famous for losing. In a system whose essence seems to be its value of balance, and the "correction" of imbalance and manipulation, the ascendance of Maheśvara as patron of the divination and the enlisting of Maheśvarī as one of its roster of gods and spirits could be seen as precipitating various eruptions of goddesses and female spirits throughout the pantheon. In many cases, these seem like male gods or spirits that have become female by the addition of a suffix, e.g., *furen* 夫人 and *wangnü* 王女.

The process is in a sense analogous to the myth of Andhaka, Śiva's rogue *asura* son who lusts for Pārvatī. Facing total destruction at the hands of Andhaka, and in response to his exaggerated masculinity, the gods, including Brahmā and Viṣṇu, transformed themselves into female forms and hid, while another group of fearsome goddesses—the “mothers” (*mātrkā*)—, defeated Andhaka by devouring the blood from his wounds that would otherwise spawn myriad Andhaka clones.¹²¹ Seven such goddesses, including Maheśvarī, were organized into a group of mother goddesses (*sapta-mātrkā*) adopted in esoteric Buddhism. Another notable “devouring mother” in the *Divination of Maheśvara's* pantheon is Hārītī, the child-devouring demon who, in the “homeopathic style” of demon-taming typical of Buddhism, was converted by the Buddha into a protectress of children and a goddess of childbirth.

The presence of *mātrkā* or “devouring mothers” like Maheśvarī and Hārītī in the *Divination of Maheśvara*, and of analogous goddesses like Śaṣṭhī in the Sanskrit *Bower Manuscript*, alludes to another process that, like the dice game, is a doomed attempt to regain lost wholeness. This is ingestion, which can create wholeness, or defeat fragmentation and proliferation, as it did in the case of the *mātrkā-s'* ingestion of Andhaka's blood. The image of the demon mother devouring her child is one in which a unitary being externalizes a part of herself when she gives birth to a child, and then attempts to become whole once more by devouring her child. It is a demonic feminine counterpart to the godhead's fragmentation and to Śiva's subsequent quest for wholeness following the dice game. It could also be read as a meta-commentary on the dice game and on dice divination, since the quest for wholeness is impossibly futile when the game is being played or when divination is in motion, because it can only produce one part of the whole and not wholeness itself. The divination system itself in the abstract, like the die up in the air, might recapture this wholeness momentarily in the process of fracturing it. In this it might even resemble the addiction of gambling, and the promise held out before the first die is thrown.

Many of the *Divination of Maheśvara's* gods, goddesses, and female spirits are variously associated with wind, thunder, rain, children, and death. In these cases the common “jurisdictions” of these gods and spirits do not overlap quite so easily with the ostensive concerns of the text and the contents of its prognoses. It is tempting to see here a sense of freedom and of play that frustrates efforts to draw hard-and-fast ties between the character of a given god or spirit and the content of its associated prognosis. Indeed there is a sense in which the *Divination of Maheśvara's* pantheon is telling a tale whose threads run parallel

¹²¹ Handelmann and Shulman, *God Inside Out*, 113–145.

to the prognoses, weaving sometimes in and sometimes out of the text's contents which, after all, have only a little to do with wind, thunder, rain, children, and death. The gods, then, are similar to the dice in frustrating human attempts to wield them.

The *Divination of Maheśvara's* pantheon overlaps imperfectly with groups of gods and spirits found in astrological texts, esoteric Buddhist mandalas and groupings of deities, and with the deities that populate the Water and Land Ritual Feast. The text's various inheritances from Chinese divination traditions, esoteric Buddhism, and Indic dice divination render many gods polyvalent, such that one cannot—and perhaps should not—know if the god is Chinese or Indian. This polyvalence infuses Jiuizimu/ Hārītī, but it is also true of the King of the Wind Spirits/ Vāyu ([24]), Lady Wind Spirit/ Wife of Vāyu ([37] Fengshen Furen 風神夫人), and Thunder Lord ([44]), since the gods of wind and thunder are paired in ancient Chinese traditions, in Vedic traditions, and also in esoteric Buddhism.

These connections are partly what makes it possible to see otherwise unlikely Indic influences in some of the names of the *Divination of Maheśvara's* gods and spirits, such as the “Lady of the Divine Horse” ([26]), which reminds us of the Aśvins, who appear in a response in the first divination text in the Sanskrit *Bower Manuscript* (see chapter 3) but which might otherwise recall mythological or real Ferghana horses or even the strange dog-like creature from the *Shanhaijing* 山海經. Another such case is the “Exhaling Fragrance Demon” ([20]), which could evoke a *gandharva* (*qiantapo* 乾闥婆). These are celestial gods who occupy the lowest heavens between the high heavens and the earth. They are also associated with birth, and in Buddhism with the process of rebirth, a theme that fits well with the underworld figures in the *Divination of Maheśvara's* pantheon such as the General of the Five Paths.¹²² Similarly the “Delightful Music Transcendent(s)” ([25]) suggests the *kimnaras*, hybrid human-horse-bird spirits associated with love and music, and with regions just below the heavens. Like the *gandharvas*, they figure as one of the eight classes of supernatural beings inherited from Indian demonology, but they have played a less prominent role in East Asia than they have in South and Southeast Asia.¹²³

The *Divination of Maheśvara* has a surprising number of gods and spirits concerned with death and the underworld. The most obvious are the God of the Five Paths [3, 49], Yama [16]—though his identification in the text is admittedly conjectural—, the Supervisor of Life Allotments [33], and the bodhisattva

122 Strickmann, *Chinese Magical Medicine*, 64–65.

123 Ibid., 65.

Dizang [4]. Here the Supervisor of Life Allotments also displays the polyvocality typical of the gods: he takes his place in the bureaucracy of hell, but simultaneously overflows this as an older god of fate and destiny found in the *Stalk Divination* and other Chinese divination texts surveyed in chapter two. Besides these central underworld figures there are also the Ox-Head Spirit ([7]), who is a hell spirit with a bull's head, and the Soil Demon ([35]), another chimeric hell spirit with a horned three-eyed tiger head and a bull-like body. And in a further instance of the manifold nature of the gods, the wind also blows through hell in that the King of the Wind is associated with hell. To these one could add the various minor spirits and ghosts that are associated with death and peril: the Burning Wheat Demon ([5]), the God of Predicaments ([34]), and the various types of "spooks" (*wangliang*; [13], [30], [40] and [52]). Adding the Grandmother of the West to this rich mix not only of hell beings but of wind and thunder gods, bodhisattvas, gods, and goddesses, it is evident that the pantheon speaks to death and rebirth, with the possibility of immortality sprinkled in.

As a "generative and transformative matrix," the *Divination of Maheśvara's* pantheon may be "blown by the wind," but it is also informed by water and earth. The Water and Land Ritual Feast, which was also emerging in China at about this time, was an elaborate ritual involving text, image, and performance concerned primarily with wielding the Buddhist pantheon to benefit or liberate hungry ghosts and hell beings. The pantheons for the Water and Land Ritual Feast rites differ from source to source. One of the more widespread textual sources, the *Shuilu yigui* compiled by the Tiantai master Zhipan (ca. 1220–1275) and revised by Yunqi Zhuhong (1535–1615), delineates twenty-four stations for different classes of beings. There are ten in the upper hall: "Buddhas; bodhisattvas; *pratyekabuddhas*; *śrāvakas* (*arhats*); Chinese Buddhist patriarchs; immortals (*rśi-s*; Buddhist protectors); Dharma-protecting gods (Brahmā, Indra, etc.); divine protectors (of monasteries, relics, etc.); and great masters or luminaries of the *shuilu*." There are fourteen in the lower hall: "gods of the celestial bureaucracy; gods of the terrestrial bureaucracy; sovereigns, officials, etc., of the human bureaucracy; humans (hierarchically by occupation); demigods and demonic beings (*asuras*, *quishen*); hungry ghosts (*preta*, *equi*); Yama and the Ten Purgatorial Courts of the Netherworld; denizens of hell; animals; liminoids in the process of rebirth (*wangling*); local gods of city, shrine, village; guardian gods of the monastery; departed spirits of abbots, teachers, brethren, and monastery donors; departed spirits of ancestors, relatives, teachers, and friends (of the *shuilu* sponsors)."¹²⁴ This eclectic pantheon, with a mixture of

124 Stevenson, "Text, Image, and Transformation in the History of the *Shuilu fahui*," 50–51.

high gods, Buddhas, bodhisattvas, and worthies on the one hand, and demons, ghosts, and spirits on the other hand, contains many of the same ingredients found in the *Divination of Maheśvara*.

The character of the *Divination of Maheśvara's* pantheon may well be influenced by the emergence of the Water and Land Ritual Feast rites. But its emphasis on death and rebirth may also be something like a Buddhist default for rituals that address contingency and the unknown; these turn inexorably to death and rebirth in one of the five or six classes of beings. This creates some incongruity when one might be divining about trade, marriage, or other matters that fall short of life or death, and when the contents of the oracular responses are similarly more concerned with this-worldly issues.

The pantheon is as unwieldy as the dice. It is Chinese, Indic, and esoteric Buddhist. It is both hybrid and vernacular, and its mix of ancient Chinese gods and more recent Indic and esoteric Buddhist arrivals perfectly reflects the dynamic mix of concerns that intersected and interacted in tenth-century Dunhuang. Its gods are many things at once: groups of directional deities, fugitives from mandalic arrays, reminders of a heroic or mythical Chinese past, unwanted demonic eruptions, and reminders of mortality and its transcendence. Like the disarray of omitted and repeated oracular responses in the text, the gods—and the *asuras*—sometimes repeat, and one can draw connections between one god and another in the same way as one can find similar content in more than one response. Here, too, it is almost as if the gods are playing, shifting positions like the fall of the dice, frustrating the coherence of the pantheon that attempts to contain them while also endowing it with the energy and power that is the source of its efficacy.

Below we provide only a brief sketch of these gods and spirits. Some are the subjects of book-length studies while others are virtually unknown. We make no claims to be authorities on any of these gods and spirits, nor to do justice here to their complicated histories. In many cases our identifications are preliminary or conjectural and will require emendation. The gods are, as we emphasized in the introduction, moving targets, and we do not expect to succeed in capturing them in this book.

3.3 *Gods and Spirits in the Introduction*

Moxishouluo 摩醯首羅, Maheśvara. Another name for Śiva, one of a triad of high Indian gods along with Brahmā and Viṣṇu. Incorporated into esoteric Buddhism in association with Avalokiteśvara.

Shi Fan 釋梵, Śakra and Brahmā. Śakra, aka Dishī 帝釋, Śakra is a name for Indra, commonly used in Buddhism. Indra is the king of the gods and the lord of the 33 devas in the Trāyastriṃśa heaven.

Brahmā is a creator god, and Śakra and Brahmā guard the Buddhist cosmos. Also similar to Fan tian 梵天 and Fan wang 梵王, names for Brahmādeva.

Si Tianwang 四天王, Four Celestial God-kings. Four directional guardian god-kings (east: Dhṛtarāṣṭra; south: Virūḍhaka; west: Virūpākṣa; north: Vaiśravaṇa) who live on the sides of Mt. Sumeru. In early medieval Chinese tales, they descend on days of observance to protect practitioners.¹²⁵

Shenzhu 神諸, The Many Spirits. Normally *zhu* 諸 (syllable 14) precedes the noun it modifies, as in *zhushen* 諸神.¹²⁶ It is unclear if this represents ignorance on the part of the copyist or an effort to rhyme with *bu* 卜 (syllable 7). However, standard Middle Chinese pronunciations of syllables 7 and 14, *puwk* and *tsyo*, do not seem close.

3-4 Gods and Spirits Invoked by the Numerical Trigrams (Indexed Here by Order of Appearance)

- [1] *Fan Wang* 梵王, Brahmārāja. Often rendered in Chinese phonetically *pi luo he me tian* 婆羅賀麼天.¹²⁷ See also the appearance of *fan* 梵 in the names of [15], [16], and [61].
- [2] *Dasheng Tian* 大聖天 Great Sacred God. Probably to be identified with Vināyaka, known in Japanese esoteric Buddhism as Shōten 聖天, but more often as Shōten Kangiten 大聖歡喜天. The figure can be traced back to the elephant-headed god Gaṇeśa, the eldest son of Śiva.¹²⁸
- [3] *Wudao Dashen* 五道大神, Great Spirit of the Five Paths/*gatis*.¹²⁹ Typically depicted as one of the generals of hell, he oversees rebirth among the five

125 Ding Fubao, *Foxue dacidian* 379.2. Campany, *Signs from the Unseen World*, 53–54.

126 The *Fahua jing* 法華經, “Yaocao yupin” 藥草喻品 has the expression “Shifan many kings” (*Shifan zhuwang* 釋梵諸王); in the *Miaofa hualian jing* see T.262.09.0020a23. See Ding Fubao, *Foxue dacidian*, 788.3, 1460.3.

127 Ding Fubao, *Foxue dacidian* 934.4.

128 Willam E. Soothill and Lewis Hodous, *A Dictionary of Chinese Buddhist Terms* (London, 1937. Digital edition, Tokyo, 2003), 487. <https://mahajana.net/en/library/texts/a-dictionary-of-chinese-buddhist-terms>. Michel Strickmann, *Mantras et mandarins: Le bouddhisme tantrique en Chine* (Paris: Gallimard, 1996), chapter 5; Iyanaga Nobumi, *Daikokuten hensō*, ch. xi. 8–9; and Bernard Faure, *Gods of Medieval Japan, Vol. 2: Protectors and Predators* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2016), 75–116.

129 Dudbridge suggested that this god was likely another name for Pāñcika, who might be [39] below; Dudbridge, “The General of the Five Paths,” 89. Chen finds no evidence for this conclusion; Chen, “The Great God of the Five Paths,” 116–117; see also Ding Fubao, *Foxue dacidian* 281.1.

- classes of beings (hell-beings, hungry ghosts, animals, humans, and gods). Referred to as Wudao Wang 五道王 at [49].
- [4] *Dizang* 地藏, Kṣitigarbha bodhisattva. Linked to foreknowledge, divination, and saving those condemned to hell.¹³⁰
- [5] *Shaomai Gui* 燒麥鬼, Burning Wheat Demon. Unidentified; possibly a local demon. Assuming an error, it could be a hungry ghost (*preta*) with a burning mouth, such as Jvālamukha, the king of the *pretas*.
- [6] *Di Shen* 地神, Earth Spirit; the Indic goddess Pṛthivī. Associated with Vaiśravaṇa and with fertility, she is also one of the twelve directional deities, representing the nadir.¹³¹
- [7] *Niutou Shen* 牛頭神, Ox-Head Spirit. A Hell spirit sometimes depicted with a bull's head; described as having a human body with metal claws.¹³² Niutou is also the name of a constellation in the *Fayuan julin* 法苑珠林, where it is one of the Seven Astral Lodges (*qi xiu* 七宿) of the north ruled by the Chinese directional deity Xuanwu 玄武.¹³³
- [8] *Yueguang Wang* 月光王, Moonlight King. Possibly to be identified with Prince Moonlight, Candraprabha-kumāra, a bodhisattva linked to medicine and healing, to the Medicine Buddha Bhaiṣajyaguru, and to mes-

130 Ding Fubao, *Foxue dacidian* 536.4–537.2. For his association with the *Zhancha shan's* *yebao jing*, see Lai, "The *Chan-ch'a ching*: Religion and Magic in Medieval China," 178–179.

131 Faure, *Gods of Medieval Japan*, Vol. 2, 32–35. Getting earth gods (*dishen*) to bend to human will was a matter of concern in the Han selection of auspicious days; see the *Lunheng* 論衡 "Ji ri" 譏日 which warns about disturbing the earth on the wrong days for fear of riling up the *dishen*; Beijing daxue Lishixi 北京大學歷史系, ed. *Lunheng zhushi* 論衡注釋 (Beijing, Zhonghua, 1979), Vol. 4, 1364. A Dunhuang geomancy text helps to plot the days when the astral spirit Tu Gong 土公 (Lord of the Soil) is traveling in particular directions to help ward off bad luck when disturbing the earth (P.2964). See the fourth-century *Baopuzi* 抱朴子 "Neipian, Xia lan" 內篇遐覽 the name of a Daoist text describing methods for commanding *dishen* of mountains and water; see Wang Ming 王明 ed., *Baopuzi neipian jiaoshi* 抱朴子內篇校釋 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 2018), 334.

132 Ding Fubao, *Foxue dacidian* 360.2.

133 See *Fantian huoluo juyao* 梵天火羅九曜, T.1311, an astrological text dated to 874 that includes star mandalas; see Édouard Chavannes and Paul Pelliot, "Un traité manichéen retrouvé en Chine," *Journal Asiatique* 11. 1 (1913): 167; and Jeffrey Kotyk, "Yixing and Pseudo-Yixing: a Misunderstood Philosopher Monk," *Journal of Chinese Buddhist Studies* 31 (2018): 16–20. Kotyk in his dissertation notes an Ox constellation in cross-cultural contexts. In medieval China, Saturn is depicted wearing an ox-head crown; "Buddhist Astrology and Astral Magic in the Tang Dynasty" (Ph.D. Dissertation: Leiden University, 2017), 167, fig. 5.15.

sianic scriptures. Popularly linked to fifth- and sixth-century dissident political movements.¹³⁴

- [9] *Hua Shen* 華神, Flower Spirit. Possibly a bodhisattva who offered the Buddha flowers. Hua shen appears along with Pṛthivī [6], Hārītī [12], and Indra/ Śakra [opening invocation]—all of whom are included in the *Divination of Maheśvara*—in a *dhāraṇī* sutra, the *Dafoding guangju tuoluoni jing* 大佛頂廣聚陀羅尼經.¹³⁵ Alternatively, it may be read Xin Shen 莘神, indicating the spirit who descended into Xin during 15th year of reign of King Hui of Zhou 周惠王, according to a tale collected by Liu Xiang 劉向 (79–78 BCE) in the *Shuoyuan* 說苑.¹³⁶ If the spirit received offerings and incense from the people, he knew the government was good.
- [10] *Xiang Tian* 相天, Omen God. On *xiang*, see pp. 71–72. An alternative reading would be “Assistant [to the] God.” See also [17] and [41].
- [11] *Hualun Tianwang* 華輪天王, Flower Wheel God-king. Appears in the *Flower Garland Sūtra* (*Avataṃsaka sūtra*; *Huayan jing* 華嚴經) as an abbreviation for golden wheel *cakravartin*.¹³⁷ Golden Wheel was one of four *cakravartins*, each named after a metal (gold, silver, bronze, iron), and ruling over four, three, two, and one continents, respectively.
- [12] *Jiuzimu* 九子母, Mother of Nine Children, also known as Guimuzi 鬼母子. Identified with the demon mother Hārītī, a goddess linked to the death of children and later worshipped as a fertility goddess.¹³⁸ Before Jiuzimu was linked with Hārītī, she was the mother of the Nine Stars of the Dipper.¹³⁹ Yan Shigu 顏師古 (581–645) in a commentary to the *Hanshu* 漢

134 Robert E. Buswell, *Chinese Buddhist Apocrypha*, 10; Strickmann, “The Consecration Sūtra,” 100, 103; Ding Fubao, *Foxue dacidian* 348.2. Erik Zürcher, “Prince Moonlight: Messianism and Eschatology in Early Medieval Chinese Buddhism,” *T’oung Pao* 68.1–3 (1982): 1–75.

135 *Foxue dacidian* 1049.4.

136 *Shuoyuan* 說苑, “Bianwu” 辨物 18.8a, *Sibu beiyao* 四部備要 edition (Taipei: Zhonghua, 1970).

137 Alternatively, this might be a lotus mandala for the *padmakula* or “lotus family.” We thank Megan Bryson for this suggestion. See *Taishō zuzō* 大正圖像. Edited by Takakusu Junjirō 高楠順次郎 and Ono Genmyō 小野玄妙 (Tokyo: Daizō Shuppan Kabushiki Kaisha, 1932–1934), v. 22, no. 430.2, p. 849c7–15. Flower Wheel is explained in the *Fo shuo amituo jing yaojie bian mengmiao* 佛說阿彌陀經要解便蒙鈔 *juan* 2 中, 4 as “short for the *cakravartin*’s golden wheel, as big as 40 *li*” 輪王金輪。大四十里。且舉最小者言。

138 Noël Péri, “Hārītī la mère-de-démones,” *Bulletin de l’École française d’Extrême-Orient* 17.3 (1917): 1–102; Gregory Schopen, “A New Hat for Hārītī: on Giving Children for their Protection to Buddhist Nuns and Monks in Early India,” in *Buddhist Nuns, Monks, and other Worldly Matters. Recent Papers on Monastic Buddhism in India*, ed. Gregory Schopen (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2014), 130–156.

139 Despeux and Kohn, *Women in Daoism*, 64–79.

書, “Chengdi ji” 成帝紀, mentions a hall with illustrations (*huatang* 畫堂) including a painting of the Mother of Nine Children.¹⁴⁰ Maybe elsewhere referred to as Jiuzimuye 九子母耶.¹⁴¹

- [13] *Niran Wangliang Gui* 匿然魍魎鬼, Hidden Spooks. *Wangliang* are minor demons that live in dusty corners of the built or natural environment that can disturb the health and welfare of people nearby. They are also associated with plagues, pestilence, and epidemics. In Tang sources, these demons cause a variety of afflictions, including mental confusion and miscarriage. Some sources suggest these are malevolent ghosts of dead children, such as those of the legendary Zhuan Xu 顛頊.¹⁴²
- [14] *Baidi Jiangjun* 白帝將軍, White Emperor General. Baidi, “White Emperor,” is one of the *di* (gods, emperors) linked to the Chinese cosmogram of Five Agents, five directions, seasons, and colors. White was associated with metal, west, and autumn. Myth has it that Baidi was conceived when a red star appeared in his mother’s dreams. Baidi is another name for the mythical figure Shao Hao 少昊.¹⁴³ In their roles as generals, they perhaps acted as thunder gods or protectors of the Five Paths. In Daoist ritual, the White Emperor General is one of five body gods that could emerge from the nose via the lungs.¹⁴⁴
- [15] *Bei Da Fan Tianwang* 北大梵天王, Great Brahmā God-king of the North. Unidentified.
- [16] *Fanluo Tian* 梵羅天, Possibly an error for Yanluo 閻羅 Yama, king of Hell, usually called Yanluo Wang 閻羅王, but also known as Yanmo Tian 焰魔天 / 炎魔天.¹⁴⁵ This relies in part on reading *yan* 炎 for *fan* 梵. Otherwise

140 Yuan Ke 袁珂, *Zhongguo shenhua chuanshuo cidian* 中國神話傳說詞典 (Shanghai: Shanghai cishu, 1985), 13. Mentioned in commentaries to Liu Zongyuan’s 柳宗元 (773–819) *Liu Hedong ji* 柳河東集 14. Also called Nü Qi 女歧 in the *Chuci* “Tianwen” 天問: 女歧无合, 夫焉取九子, see also Liu 14.6b.

141 See Meng Qi 孟繁’s *Ben shi shi* 本事詩 1, 26a and Bai Juyi 白居易’s *Bai Xiang shan shi ji* 白香山詩集 40b; see Sun Shaohua 2014.

142 See *Soushenji*, 16; *Yuhanshan fang ji yishu* 玉函山房輯佚書, in Yuan Ke, *Zhongguo shenhua*, 37, 444.

143 *Shanhajing*, “Xici san jing” 西次三經; *Yuhanshan fang ji yishu*; *Chunqiu wei yuan ming bao* 春秋緯元命苞, see Yuan Ke, *Zhongguo shenhua*, 71, 132.

144 *Daofa huiyuan* 道法會元, DZ 1210, *juan* 1518, *Shangqing tianpeng fumo dafa* 上清天蓬伏魔大法, available in ctext.org, <https://ctext.org/wiki.pl?if=gb&chapter=63946&remap=gb>, accessed July 31, 2019.

145 One factor that might have contributed to a putative scribal error is the use of *fan* in the previous entry for 北大梵天王. Reading Fanluo Tian at face value would also make it very similar to the god who stands at the head of response [61], Fanmo Tian. The latter response is also headed by 1-4-3, but does not overlap with this one, in contrast to the two

it is perhaps a variant name for Brahmā. See the appearance of *fan* in the names of [1], [15], and [61].

- [17] *Buxiang Shen* 布相神, Displaying Omens Spirit. See [10] above for this translation of *xiang*. The term *buxiang* could also refer to a net, or *zongbu* 纒布. Otherwise, this is an unknown spirit.
- [18] *Baimeng Gui* 白蒙鬼, White Cover Demon. Possibly Sitātapatrā, White Parasol goddess, a Buddhist protectress usually known as “the white parasol that cover’s Buddha’s head,” Baishan Gai Fo Ding 白傘蓋佛頂.¹⁴⁶
- [19] *Qi Shen* 妻神, Wife Spirit. The character read *qi* isn’t entirely clear. An alternative reading is Poison Spirit 毒神, which could indicate female and male spirits for quelling snakes and toxic ghosts, found in Tang sources in association with Brahmā and magical medicine. One could possibly connect this to the Buddhist deity for counteracting poison, Jāngulī, though her name is usually phoneticized, e.g., *changquli* 常瞿利.¹⁴⁷ A further alternative is Jiang Shen 姜神, that is, Jiang Ziya 子牙 or Jiang Taigong 太公, a legendary strategist for Zhou founders, King Wen and King Wu, in their overthrow of the Shang.
- [20] *Hu Xinxiang Gui* 呼馨香鬼, Exhaling Fragrance Demon. Unidentified. Possibly indicating *gandharvas* (usually phoneticized *qiantapo* 乾闥婆), the lowest class of gods who feed on scents, and who are famous as celestial musicians. They are also associated with birth, and have hybrid animal features.¹⁴⁸
- [21] *Zizai Tian Wangnü* 自在天王女, Princess of the Self-Existent God; Mahēśvarī, the female counterpart of Maheśvara, who is known as Zizai Tian or Da Zizai Tian. She is included among the seven mother goddesses (*mātrkā*). This same moniker is sometimes applied to Mahāmāyā, mother of Śākyamuni, also known as Māyādevī.¹⁴⁹

Asura(s) responses at [57] and [65]. Elsewhere in the text 羅 phoneticizes the Sanskrit *ra*, as in Moxishouluo 摩醯首羅 for Maheśvara.

- 146 In Buddhism, a “white cover” (*bai gai* 白蓋) was the name of one of the colored silk gauzes found in the Buddhist heavens and perhaps a reference to the White Parasol goddess; Ding Fubao, *Foxue dacidian* 456.4.
- 147 See, e.g., the *Book of Incantations and Dhāraṇī of the Jāngulī Woman*, or *Fo shuo Changquli dunü tuoluoni zhoujing* 佛說常瞿利毒女陀羅尼呪經, T.1265.21.295a19–22; Strickmann, *Chinese Magical Medicine*, 151–156. We thank Megan Bryson for this reference.
- 148 We thank Megan Bryson for this suggestion. For a discussion of *gandharvas*, including references to a large body of scholarship, see Frederick M. Smith, *The Self Possessed: Deity and Spirit Possession in South Asian Literature and Civilization* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 224–232; cf. Faure, *Gods of Medieval Japan*, Vol. 2, 180–181.
- 149 Ding Fubao, *Foxue dacidian* 194.1–3. For Umā, Maheśvara’s consort (*Jingguangming zui-shengwang jing shu* 金光明最勝王經疏, T.1788.39.307a2–3); and/or the female deity

- [22] *Wuwang Tianjing* 五王天井, Five Kings Sky-well. In the *Sutra of the Five Kings* (*Fo shuo wuwang jing* 佛說五王經), the Buddha teaches about the four sufferings: birth, getting old, sickness, and death.¹⁵⁰ If the graph *jing* 井 was simply a misreading of a poorly written *nü* 女 (*tiannü* would be a Celestial Maiden, a well-known Tang concept), then this could be a female avatar for the Five Kings. Alternatively, it could refer to Draupadi, wife of the five Paṇḍava brothers who was lost in a game of dice in a famous scene in the *Mahābhārata*. Reading it as it stands, as *jing* 井, it might indicate an asterism, such as in the Buddhist version of the Twenty-Eight Astral Lodges (*xiu* 宿), a central feature of Chinese hemerology. The Lodge named Well was associated with southern gods; it could be called Punarvasu and linked to Aditi the sun spirit, a Gold Master (Jin shi 金師).¹⁵¹ Generally, the cosmic pattern of eight squares around a middle as in the graph *jing* 井 was a Chinese cosmograph, known in Daoism as the Nine Palaces.¹⁵² This is a pattern found in Dunhuang geomancy texts. *Tianjing* was also the sacred *impluvia*, a physical space represented in architecture consisting of a square opening in the roof of a central room, possibly a feature in local residences.¹⁵³
- [23] *Shengui* 神龜, Spirit Turtle. One of the four spirit animals in Chinese lore. Historically associated with divination, long life, and magical transformations.¹⁵⁴ In medieval lore it was a conveyance for transcendents into the purple cloud vapor (*qi*). It lived in the ocean with a shell representing the cosmos: the dipper stars were in the center of his shell, which was like a

in Maheśvara/ Śiva's crown (T.1280, *Moxishouluo Dazizaitianwang shentong huasheng jiyi tiannü nianyongfa* 摩醯首羅大自在天王神通化生伎藝天女念誦法). The name Zizai Tianwangnü occurs in the *Huayanjing*, which includes it as one of the forms of Lady Māyā (*Dafangguangfo huayanjing* 大方廣佛華嚴經 T.278.9.763b5–9).

- 150 T.523. For a study of its connection to childbirth and embryology, see Hsin-Yi Lin, *Dealing with Childbirth in Medieval Chinese Buddhism: Discourses and Practices* (Ph.D. dissertation: Columbia University, 2017).
- 151 Ding Fubao, *Foxue dacidian*, 792. For the role of the Chinese Astral Lodges in Buddhist astrology, see Kotyk, "Buddhist Astrology and Astral Magic in the Tang Dynasty." *Tianjing* was also a name given to some mountain passes and lakes.
- 152 See Gil Raz, "Time Manipulation in Early Daoist Ritual: The East Well Chart and the Eight Archivists," *Asia Major*, 3d ser., 18.2 (2005): 27–65.
- 153 Rolf Stein, "Jardins en miniature d'Extrême-Orient, le Monde en petit," *Bulletin de l'École française d'Extrême-Orient* XLII (1942): 1–104. The term *tianjing* is found in Buddhist scriptures in connection with archery rituals and the eight directions.
- 154 See Yuan Ke, *Zhongguo shenhua*, 300. The term *shengui* appears in Buddhist scriptures, including some with Water and Land rituals.

yellow-gold pan; the sun and moon shone on the left and right.¹⁵⁵ In Indic lore, Kūrma was a turtle avatar of Viṣṇu that supported the cosmos.

- [24] *Fengshen Wang* 風神王, King of Wind Spirit(s). Perhaps the Indic god Vāyu, also called Feng Tian 風天. In Tang sources, the King of the Wind was linked to the northwest (like the Indic god Vāyu) and to hell. There is a Feng Bo 風伯 spirit associated with tales of the Yellow Emperor, especially his battle with Chi You 蚩尤. Feng Bo and Yu Shi 雨師 (Rain Master) were often paired.¹⁵⁶ By the Tang there were many spirits of the wind, and Vāyu had merged with Chinese wind gods in the esoteric Buddhist pantheon. In Indic traditions the wind spirits are the Maruts, who are ruled by either Rudra or Indra.
- [25] *Xinle Tianren* 欣樂天人, Delightful Music Transcendent(s). In the *Huayan jing*, the term “Delightful Music Kīṃnara King” 欣樂緊那羅王 appears.¹⁵⁷ Kīṃnara spirits were associated with song and dance. An occupant of Heaven was called a *tianren*.¹⁵⁸
- [26] *Tianma Furen* 天馬夫人, Lady of the Divine Horse. *Tianma* often refers to the blood-sweating Ferghana horses prized by Han Wudi and often depicted in sculpture.¹⁵⁹ In the *Shanhajing* there is a *tianma* described as a beast shaped like white dog with a black head that flies when it sees people and makes a cry that sounds like its name. Neither of these two identifications leaves much room for a “lady” or “wife” of the *tianma*. Another possibility, given the appearance of these gods in Sanskrit dice divination texts, is that “divine horse(s)” refers to the Aśvins, twin Vedic gods who, pulling a chariot, appear to symbolize day and night, and oversee oaths and truth in speech. They are also associated with healing. Their wife and sister is Uṣas, the goddess of the dawn, who figures prominently in the *Rig Veda*.¹⁶⁰ The goddess Sarasvatī (in Japan, Benzaiten), is also said to be a consort of the Aśvins.¹⁶¹

155 Zhang Junfeng, *Yunji qi qian*, 18.6b (Beijing: Qi Lu, 1988, 110a).

156 *Hanfei zi*, “Shi guo”; *Shanhajing*, “Da Huang bei jing,” see Yuan Ke, *Zhongguo shenhua*, 90. For an example of the Buddhist Fengshen Wang with wind and rain spirits see *Fo shuo Daban nihuan jing* 佛說大般泥洹經 T0376.12.0855c04–05. Elsewhere it is listed as one of the *liu dao guishen* 六道鬼神.

157 *Da fanghuang Fo huayan jing* 大方廣佛華嚴經 T.279.10.0004a18. Thanks to Megan Bryson.

158 Ding Fubao, *Foxue dacidian* 232.3.

159 See Yuan Ke, *Zhongguo shenhua*, 63.

160 Asko Parpola, *The Roots of Hinduism: the Early Aryans and the Indus Civilization* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 108–113.

161 Faure, *Gods of Medieval Japan*, Vol. 2, 164–165.

- [27] *Yinyuan* 因緣, Buddhist concept of dependent origination (Skt.: *pratītya-samutpāda*). In this case, it seems the concept is personified as the name of a spirit.
- [28] *Liangchen Furen* 良臣夫人, Lady of the Good Minister. The Good Minister was one of six *chen* 臣 who acted as “regulators of relations between heaven, earth, and man” (*tian di ren zhi zheng* 天地人之正), also known to be astral or natural forces during the Han Dynasty.¹⁶²
- [29] *Niuying Tian* 牛影天, Ox Shadow God. Unidentified. Possibly a reference to the Buddhist metaphors of ox-herding and the ox’s shadow.¹⁶³
- [30] *Dianran Wangliang Gui* 點然魍魎鬼, Flaming Spooks. Unidentified.
- [31] *Naluoyan Wang* 那羅延王, Nārāyaṇa 那羅延, another name for Viṣṇu. He often comes up in groups with Maheśvara, Hārīti, Pṛthivī, Brahmā, Indra, and Vināyaka.¹⁶⁴
- [32] *Huilin Tian* 灰林天, Ash Woods God. Unidentified. It could be identified with one of the many Buddhist groves associated with the Buddha. The transcription of the first character is uncertain.
- [33] *Siming Gui* 司命鬼, Supervisor of Life Allotments Demon. Siming, also known as the Supervisor of Fate, is already known in manuscripts from the fourth century BCE. Earlier considered a deity, not a demon, but along with the God of the Five Paths, he became associated with Yama and the bureaucracy of hell.
- [34] *Enan Tian* 厄難天, God of Predicaments. Unidentified. Perhaps a phonetic (mis)spelling. Vaguely reminiscent of the “Supervisor of Calamity” (Si Huo 司禍) who appears in the fourth century BCE Baoshan divination record.
- [35] *Tu Gui* 土鬼, Soil Demon. This is the name for a god of the underworld, who has a horned three-eyed tiger head, bull-like body, and taste for human prey.¹⁶⁵

162 See Wang Xianqian 王先謙 (1842–1918), ed., *Hou Hanshu jijie* 後漢書集解 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1984), Vol. 1, 83, *juan* 3.14b.

163 The line “Being like Huiyue grabbing the tiger’s whiskers, and Daoshun seeing the ox’s shadow” 至如慧越之捋虎鬚。道舜之觀牛影 is found in *Xu gaoseng zhuan* 續高僧傳, T.2060. 50.597a10–11. We thank Megan Bryson for this reference.

164 Identification thanks to Megan Bryson.

165 Found in Tang sources. See Zhang Junfang (c. 1000), *Yunji qi qian* 30.16a (Beijing: Qi Lu, 1988, 177a) where it is linked to an “earth corpse” (*di shi* 地尸). In the Chu song “Summoning the Soul” (“Zhao hun” 招魂) the “Earl of the Earth” (Tu Bo 土伯) occupies “the dark city of the dead” waiting for human flesh; see Gopal Sukhu, *The Songs of Chu: An Anthology of Ancient Chinese Poetry by Qu Yuan and Others* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017), 173; Yuan Ke, *Zhongguo shenhua*, 18.

- [36] *Xinglu Furen* 行路夫人, Lady Traveler/ Wife of Xinglu. Unidentified. A son of Huangdi's liked to wander far away and died on the road and is therefore called a *xing shen* 行神.¹⁶⁶ Possibly to be linked with Vināyaka/ Gaṇeśa as a remover of obstacles and a god of travellers. Different story cycles link Vināyaka with various female deities.
- [37] *Fengshen Furen* 風神夫人, Lady Wind Spirit/ Wife of the Wind Spirits. Unidentified. This could be related to the classes of Chinese wind spirits mentioned above at [24], and/ or it could pertain to Vāyu, and indicate either his wife or the female spirits associated with him.
- [38] *Shenfu* 神夫, Spirit Husband. Unidentified. Possibly to be paired with [19] Qi Shen 妻神 Wife Spirit.
- [39] *Lao Gui* 老鬼, Old Demon. Possibly short for Lao Gui Shenwang 老鬼神王, an epithet of Pāñcika, husband of Hārītī, the goddess is named in set [12].¹⁶⁷ Together, Pāñcika and Hārītī constituted a divine couple of fertility and prosperity.
- [40] *Wangliang Furen* 魍魎夫人, Lady Spooks. Unidentified.
- [41] *Xiang Tian* 相天, Omen God. Same as [10].
- [42] *Xianwang* 先王, Former Kings. Likely a reference to Sage Kings of prehistoric eras and to the founder kings of the Western Zhou.
- [43] *Nisuo Tian* 尼娑天. Nisuo God, possible abbreviation for Qiujuanisuo 求迦尼娑, also known as Jujianasuo 拘迦那娑, (Pāli) Cūḷakokanadā or Kokanadā, daughter of Pajjunna, a rain god in the Pāli canon.¹⁶⁸
- [44] *Lei Gong* 雷公, Thunder Lord. An ancient Chinese meteorological deity often paired with Yu Shi (Rain Master).¹⁶⁹ Lei Gong is also assimilated to

166 See Yuan Ke, *Zhongguo shenhua*, 159. Sacrifices to Xing Shen by long distance travelers are documented in the Song *Zhuzyu lei* 諸子語類, “Li 禮 7, ji 祭” 15. For pre-Tang road rituals, see Guolong Lai, “Death and Otherworldly Journey in Early China as Seen through Tomb Texts, Travel Paraphernalia, and Road Rituals,” *Asia Major* 3rd Series 18.1 (2005): 1–44.

167 See *Zabao cang jing* 雜寶藏經 (T.203.04.0492a13): “Hārītī is the wife of the old king of the demons and spirits, Pāñcika” 鬼子母者，是老鬼神王般闍迦妻。See Hu Wenhe 胡文和, “Yungang shiku ticai neirong he zaoxing fengge de yuanliu tansuo tiyao—yi fo zhuan bensen yinyuan gushi weili” 雲岡石窟題材內容和造型風格的源流探索提要——以佛傳本生因緣故事為例, *Zhonghua foxue xuebao* 中華佛學學報 19 (2006): 370. We thank Megan Bryson for this suggestion.

168 *Bie yi za d'han jing* 別譯雜阿含經 T.0100.02.0469a03–4: 1 (二七一) 如是我聞。一時佛在王舍城耆尼山時求迦尼娑天。本是波純提女。We are grateful to Megan Bryson for this suggestion.

169 The “Thunder God” and “Rain God” serve as bodyguards to the spirit on a spirit journey in the Chu song “Wandering Far Away” (“Yuan you” 遠遊), see Sukhu, *The Songs of Chu*, 147; see Yuan Ke, *Zhongguo shenhua*, 402.

- Lei Shen 雷神 in esoteric Buddhism, where he appears together with Vāyu (Feng Shen 風神) among the twenty-eight attendants of 1,000-armed Avalokiteśvara/ Guanyin. In Daoism, thunder generals quell demons.
- [45] *Deshen* 得神, Obtainment Spirit. The word *de* is used for the Sanskrit word *prāpta* “to gain (as in spiritual power).”¹⁷⁰ The category of *de* “obtaining (what one desires)” is prevalent in Chinese divination going back to at least the fourth century BCE.
- [46] *Liangsui Furen* 良遂夫人, Virtuous-gentle Lady/ Wife of Liangsui. Unidentified.
- [47] *Lu Shen* 盧神, possibly Lushena 盧舍那 aka Liushena 流舍那, Luzhena 盧遮那, that is, Locana, the female counterpart of the Buddha Vairocana (Piluzhena Fo 毗盧遮那佛). Alternatively, if *lu* was read as *lu* 爐 “hearth, burner” this may be a god of the incense burner (the Chinese stove god was normally referred to as *zao shen* 灶神).
- [48] *Bei Shen* 北神, Spirit of the North. An ancient cosmological deity. The spirits of the four directions are seen in pre-Qin texts and likely go back to the Shang period. In the Buddhist context, it could also be Kubera.
- [49] *Wudao Wang* 五道王, King of the Five Paths. See [3].
- [50] *Axiuluo Wang* 阿修羅王, Asura King(s). Powerful deities in Buddhist cosmology who oppose the gods; also “great cosmic demons that hold the sun and the moon.”¹⁷¹ The king of the Asuras is Vemacitrin, whose daughter married Śakra, the king of the gods. See also [57] and [65].
- [51] *Shanshen Wang* 山神王, King of Mountain Spirits. Every mountain had a spirit. Some were associated with herbs and medicines.¹⁷²
- [52] *Qing Wangliang Gui* 青魍魎鬼, Green Spooks. Unidentified.
- [53] *Tianluo Furen* 天羅夫人, Lady Heaven Net/ Wife of Tianluo. Tianluo was an alternative name for the Dipper star, Tianwang 天綱 (天罔, or Tiangang 天罡) or for Bi 畢, one of the Astral Lodges associated with the west.¹⁷³

170 Ding Fubao, *Foxue dacidian* 1000.2–3.

171 Strickmann, *Chinese Magical Medicine*, 147.

172 See *Baopuzi*, “Neipian, Jin dan” 金丹 for a list of mountains famous for their spirits who bring good luck and help complete elixirs; see Wang Ming ed., *Baopuzi neipian jiaoshi*, 85. Mountain spirits are also recorded in the much earlier *Shanhaijing*. See Yuan Ke, *Zhongguo shenhua*, 30–31.

173 The star name Tianluo is found in the *Zhengao* 真誥 and in the *Chenshu* 陳書 (“Gaozu ji” 高祖紀). This is also the name of a king of Magadha, Devāla in T.1705.33.0257b28-c1: 國名摩伽陀。此云不害人。無亂殺法也。亦云摩竭提。此云天羅。天羅者即班足之父。We thank Megan Bryson for this reference. The father of Banzu (Kalmāśapāda) was possibly Raghu.

- [54] *Zhaishen* 宅神, Residence Deity. An ancient deity, known by various names since the fourth century BCE. In Tang Buddhist and Daoist sources it can protect the residence against thieves.¹⁷⁴
- [55] *Pishamen Tianwang Tian* 毗沙門天王天, Vaiśravaṇa, one of the four God-kings, guardian of the north, and Dharma protector.¹⁷⁵
- [56] *Xiwangmu* 西王母, Grandmother of the West. The epithet *wangmu* was used to refer to deceased grandmothers in pre-Han times. By the Tang, the Grandmother of the West was identified as a goddess of immortality living on top of the Kunlun Mountains. Commonly known as “Queen Mother” among Western scholars.¹⁷⁶
- [57] *Axiuluo* 阿修羅, Asura(s). Same as [65]; see also [50].
- [58] *Jingbo Furen* 鏡鉢夫人, Lady of the Mirror-vessel/ Wife of Jingbo. Unidentified. A vessel filled with water could function as a mirror, and mirrors are central to a variety of Chinese Buddhist mantic practices.
- [59] *Zhao Nütian* 趙女天, Goddess Zhao. Unidentified; possibly the female version of Zhao Gongmin 趙公明 (aka Zhao Xuantan 趙玄壇), who escaped the world during the Qin period to cultivate the Dao. Able to tame extreme weather, expel sickness, etc.¹⁷⁷
- [60] *Boshi* 博士, the Erudite. Possibly to be identified with the eponymous spirit found in Qing-period calendars as one of the four main calendar spirits, together with with Silkworm Room (Canshi 蠶室), Strongman (Lishi 力士), and Memorialist (Zoushu 奏書), who feature in hemerological diagrams. Of these, Erudite and Memorialist were considered auspicious.¹⁷⁸
- [61] *Fanmo Tian* 梵摩天, Brahmā. Possibly an error for Yanmo Tian 炎魔天 Yama, King of Hell. See [1, 16].
- [62] *Guanyin Tian* 觀音天, Avalokiteśvara, the bodhisattva of compassion.

174 In Tang Buddhist & Daoist sources. Zhang Junfang, *Yunji qi qian* 59.16a. In the Daoist *Taishang zheng yi zhongui jing* 太上正一咒鬼經 4a. There are a number of Dunhuang texts concerned with *zhai* 宅 divination and deities of the earth and sky, see Guan Changlong 關長龍. *Dunhuang ben shushu wenxian jijiao* 敦煌本數術文獻輯校 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 2019), Vol. 2, 653–872.

175 Ding Fubai, *Foxue dacidian* 794.1.

176 See Suzanne Cahill, *Transcendence & Divine Passion: The Queen Mother of the West in Medieval China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993).

177 *San jiao sou shen da quan* 三教搜神大全 3, see Yuan Ke, *Zhongguo shenhua*, 208–209. Women from the ancient state of Zhao were celebrated for their beauty and singing ability in Tang poetry.

178 Smith, “The Legacy of Daybooks in Imperial and Modern China,” 350.

- [63] *Tianwang* 天王, God-king(s). This could indicate the kings of the four directions. *Tianwang* is also the name that the Buddha bestows on his wicked cousin Devadatta in the twelfth chapter of the *Lotus Sutra*, when he predicts that Devadatta will become a future Buddha by this name. The term can also indicate Śiva/ Maheśvara.
- [64] *Shan Nütian* 善女天, Goodness Goddess. Unidentified. Possibly associated with the Mountain Spirits of the Four Directions, Sifang Shanwang 四方山王.¹⁷⁹ Goodness is also personified in the form of the “good spirits” (*shan shen*), a class of demon-dispelling spirits—converted demons, in fact—that appear in the expanded *Mañiratna Book of Great Spirit Spells* comprising the eighth chapter of the *Consecration Sutra*.¹⁸⁰ They also appear in numerous medieval Buddhist miracle tales studied by Robert Campany, where they variously encircle and protect a person observing the precepts, or even reside in a person’s heart/ mind.¹⁸¹
- [65] *Axiuluo* 阿修羅, Asura(s). Same as [57]; see also [50]. The start of entry, which we read as a corrupted end title, names Maheśvara.

4 Translation and Transcription of the *Divination of Maheśvara*

The *Divination of Maheśvara* has been transcribed previously by Wang Aihe and Guan Changlong, respectively, but has never been translated.¹⁸² Our transcription is based on high-quality digital images of the text freely available from the International Dunhuang Project, and from consulting the manuscript itself on separate occasions at the British Library in London. When an original graph X is read as another graph Y, then graph Y is marked as (> Y). Words in brackets are added for meaning and not in the original. A graph that is missing, blurred, or a guess will be marked as [Y]. The symbol ˋ used in the original manuscript and replicated here means the character before it is repeated.

此名摩醯首羅卜。釋梵四天王神諸 (> 諸神) 共集，政 (> 正?) 看之時，面西坐，稱名[弟]子某甲，志心發願，具說 (> 兌) 上事由了，擲

179 Found in Sui and Tang Buddhist sources: Buddhist *Jingguangming jing* 金光明經 (*Golden Light Sūtra*, T.663.16); Daoist: *Youlong zhuan* 猶龍傳 and *Sanbao wanling fachen* 三寶萬靈法懺。

180 Strickmann, *Chinese Magical Medicine*, 118.

181 Campany, *Signs from the Unseen World*, 54.

182 Wang Aihe, “Moxishouluo bu xingzhi chubu fenxi,” in Zheng Binglin ed., *Dunhuang Fojiao yishu wenhua guoji xueshu yantaohui lunwenji* (Lanzhou: Lanzhou daxue, 2002), 116–125; Guan Changlong, *Dunhuang ben shushu wexian jijiao*, Vol. 1, 461–467.

頭 (> 投) 投子 (> 骰子) 三遍，然後補¹⁸³局。若得好¹⁸⁴，一卦便休；卜得凶局，許看三局。信者看之，不信者必不須看。如人审 [細]¹⁸⁵，万不失一。此是隨求，千金莫傳。

This is called the divination of Maheśvara. When Śakra, Brahmā, and the four heavenly kings and the many spirits gather and are watching, sit facing west and announce your name as follower So-and-So. Focus the mind and profess a vow. After enunciating the matters at hand, throw the die three times and complete the set. If it comes out good, then you can stop after one mantic figure. If the divination results in an inauspicious set, then you can look at up to three sets. Believers can look at them but non-believers should not. If a person is careful, there will not be one mistake in ten thousand. This [method] grants what is sought, and must not be transmitted to outsiders for even a thousand pieces of gold.

[1] 一一一：此是梵王局：汝所有求事，但知存心，無不稱意，財寶自來、家宅大小並得安樂。遠行通達。大吉。

1-1-1 This is the King Brahmā set. For any issues you seek to resolve, as long as you know how to keep it in your mind, everything will go your way. Wealth will come of its own accord, all generations at home will be safe and happy. Those traveling afar will have unobstructed roads. Greatly auspicious.

[2] 二二二：此名大聖天局：如人求事，其天擁護，所須 (> 需) 即得，衣食自至，思情 (> 請) 求者並得從心。駝馬六畜，然¹⁸⁶無死損於後。大吉。

2-2-2 This is named the God Vināyaka set. If a person has issues to resolve, the god will protect him/ her. Whatever s/he needs will soon be obtained; clothing and food will come of their own accord and whatever s/he seeks will be fulfilled. Subsequently, camels, horses, and various domestic animals will not die or be injured. Greatly auspicious.

183 Guan thinks that the graph *bu* 補 should be read as *bu* 佈, meaning “to make” or “to plan.”

184 Guan suspects that after *hao* 好, there is another character *ju* 局 that is completely cut off from the manuscript.

185 Guan writes the two graphs read as *shen xi* 审細 (“to examine the details”) as *shen zhi* 審知 (“to understand through examining”).

186 Guan reads the graph as *zong* 惣 instead of *ran* 然.

[3] 三三三：此名五道大神局：所求皆合，遠行通達、消息自至、若也欲¹⁸⁷福、加官進祿、婚姻嫁娶，所作皆成。大吉。

3-3-3 This is named the Great Spirit of the Five Paths set. All of your requests will be met. Those traveling afar will be unobstructed and tidings will come of their own accord. And also the desired fortune, promotion in official positions, higher salary, and marriages into or out of the family, and everything you undertake will be achieved. Greatly auspicious.

[4] 四四四：此名城（>地）藏之局：臨行人年命十四，至；廿三、卅一、五十、八十、五十九，其年即至，大喜；十五十六官職加遷。亦須（>須）信敬三寶重。且見喜事、得貴人接引，是事通達，無不稱情。大吉慶也。

4-4-4 This is named the [Bodhisattva] Kṣitigarbha's set. If the people about to travel are fourteen years of age, they will arrive; if they are twenty-three, forty-one, fifty, eighty, or fifty-nine, they will arrive. There will be great happiness. If they are fifteen or sixteen, their official positions will be upgraded. But they still need to be devoted to the Three Jewels (*triratna*). They will frequently encounter happy matters, and receive the patronage of superiors. This matter [about which you divined] will go smoothly and be achieved. Greatly auspicious; celebration.

[5] 二四一：此是燒麥¹⁸⁸鬼¹⁸⁹局：此是相惡詐恠言說；所欲惡至、事皆不成、晝夜驚怖。若怖念善、厄難自除。此卦且平。

2-4-1 This is the Burning Wheat Demon set. This indicates mutual dislike, cheating, and lies. That which you desire won't come to pass and all undertakings will fail. You will be terrorized night and day. If you are scared, then contemplate goodness and difficulties will dissipate of their own accord. This mantic figure is therefore neutral.

[6] 二一四：此名地神局：然其相當好欲自至。不須憂慮，即逢大相。少思慮，使汝進達。勿重看之。

187 Guan read the graph as *xiu* 修 instead of *yu* 欲.

188 The scribe uses the vulgar character *mai* 麥 instead of *mai* 麥.

189 鬼, inserted to the right, replaces a deleted character, mistakenly written as *gui* 貴.

2-1-4 This is named the Earth Spirit (Pṛthivī) set. [This is] such that the omen will make it so that whatever you wish will happen on its own. There is no need to worry: you have just encountered a great omen.¹⁹⁰ There is little to worry about, since it will lead to your advancement. Do not look again.

[7] 四一三：此名牛頭神局：其事積難，不須求人。所作不成，徒損功力。此卦惡，不可為。凶。

4-1-3 This is named the Ox-Head Spirit set. The issues are piled up with difficulties, but you should not ask others for help. Nothing you do will be achieved, and it is all a waste of effort. This mantic figure is bad; don't do anything. Inauspicious.

[8] 一四二：此名月光王局：汝所求事，成就已訖，甚稱，汝更不用愁，好欲自至，甚忻慶。勿重看之。大吉。

1-4-2 This is named the [Bodhisattva] King Moonlight set. When whatever issues you have to resolve are achieved and completed, it will be deeply satisfying. You don't need to worry anymore. What you want will happen on its own. Great joy and celebration. Do not look again. Greatly auspicious.

[9] 一一三：此名華神局。心事所¹⁹¹情，皆得從心。變惡為好，所求如意，日彡昇進，行處通達。大吉。

1-1-3 This is named the Flower Spirit set. Whatever your aspirations regarding personal affairs, they will all go your way. You will convert all bad matters into good ones in accordance with your intentions; every day you will advance, and anywhere you go will be unobstructed. Greatly auspicious.

190 As noted above, the word *xiang* is used in the text here to mean something analogous to “mantic figure”; see pp. 71–72.

191 See Huang Zheng 黃征, *Dunhuang suzidian* 敦煌俗字典 (Shanghai: Shanghai jiaoyu, 2005), 392. Wang does not recognize the character.

[10] 一三一：此名相天局。汝曾經¹⁹²善，甚無不忻¹⁹³。今將是¹⁹⁴也，但今念善，所願¹⁹⁵從心。煩多口舌，念善兌（>脫）¹⁹⁶得苦厄。大吉。

1-3-1 This is named the Omen God set. Due to all the good you practiced earlier there is nothing to worry about. Now this will be the case going forward, but you must remember to contemplate goodness so that you will get what you desire. If there are a lot of quarrels, contemplating goodness will avoid suffering. Greatly auspicious.

[11] 一二三：此名華輪¹⁹⁷天王局。汝不須愁¹⁹⁸甚，好事早逢¹⁹⁹大相，所願²⁰⁰即得忻慶。有遠離者，重得相見娶（>聚）²⁰¹集。大吉。

1-2-3 This is named the Flower Wheel God-king set. You don't need to worry too much. [Your] desired issues just encountered a great omen, what you desire will immediately become happy and celebratory! Those separated by a long distance will come together again. Greatly auspicious.

[12] 三二一：此名九子母局。有人所求，如有音暗²⁰²然雲裏有光，皎²⁰³清明，²⁰³汝亦然。先暗後明，不須憂慮。喜慶自不須愁。吉。

3-2-1 This is named the Hārītī set. When someone wants something, it will seem murky, but just as a beam of light radiates through the clouds, so it

192 See Huang Zheng, *Dunhuang suzidian*, 203. Wang recognizes the graph as *wu* 無, but it is more likely to be *jing* 經.

193 Wang and Guan recognize the graph as *qing* 情.

194 Wang recognizes the two graphs as *sun chang* 損長.

195 Wang recognizes the graph as *qiu* 求. See Huang Zheng, *Dunhuang suzidian*, 525.

196 The original graph is *dui* 兌, which is cognate to *tuō* 脫 in the context.

197 The graph here read *hua* 華 “flower” is read as *xin* 莘 by Guan. The original graphs for the two words are similar but not exactly the same. While we and Guan recognize the graph as *lun* 輪, Wang recognizes it as *zhuan* 轉. But in the original text, the right part of the graph is neither 專 nor 侖.

198 Wang recognizes the graph as *ji* 急.

199 Wang recognizes the graph as *da* 達.

200 Wang recognizes the graph as *zhi* 至.

201 The original graph is *qu* 娶.

202 As Wang correctly points out, *yin an* 音暗 is cognate to *yin an* 陰暗.

203 Wang reads the last thirteen graphs as 如有音暗，然盈象有出，皎須消晴. Guan reads them as we do.

will be for you. First there will be darkness and then light, so don't worry. Happy celebrations will come, so don't be anxious. Auspicious.

[13] 二二三：此名匿然魍魎鬼局。其事難得，亦宜休息，不須增²⁰⁴問，於今日²⁰⁵已後²⁰⁶日 彡 昇進，稍遂稱意。此卦且平。

2-2-3 This is named the Hidden Spooks set. The issues are difficult to achieve, so it is better to rest. Don't bother to ask again, since after today [you] will daily advance and things will become relatively satisfactory. This mantic figure is therefore neutral.

[14] 四一一：此名白帝將軍局。恐有怨家問汝²⁰⁷身上，口氣²⁰⁸不善，言語轉 彡²⁰⁹加惡。唯念諸佛，後得汝意。此卦且平。

4-1-1 This is named the White Emperor General set. [I am] afraid that what comes out of the mouths of those who resent you is not good, and their words become increasingly evil. Only if you recite the names of the many Buddhas will you get what you want. This mantic figure is therefore neutral.

[15] 四三二：此名北大梵天王局。汝其所求天擁護，事並得遂心。自己後多不成就，至心求佛、念三寶，必稱情以得。大吉。

4-3-2 This is named the Great Brahmā God-king of the North set. The god supports [you in] that which you seek, and matters will be fully resolved in your favor.²¹⁰ From then on there will be fewer successes. But fix your mind, seek the Buddha, and invoke the Three Jewels, and you will get what you want. Greatly auspicious.

204 Wang and Guan recognize the graph as “monk,” *seng* 僧.

205 Wang recognizes the last three graphs as 秋分日.

206 Guan reads the graph as *fu* 復 instead of *hou* 後.

207 Wang recognizes the graph as *rang* 讓.

208 Wang recognizes the character as *su* 素.

209 Wang recognizes the graph as *zhi* 之, but it is more likely the repetition sign in the shape of “彡.”

210 The somewhat garbled syntax here is understood as meaning 其天擁護汝所求.

[16] 一四三：此名梵 (> 炎) 羅天局。其天擁護汝身。如月初出極小²¹¹，漸至長大，十五日圓滿具足。今日已後，汝轉增好，所求皆得，不須憂。大吉。

1-4-3 This is named the Yama set.²¹² The god protects your body. It is like the moon appearing as a sliver at first, but gradually waxing so that, by the fifteenth day, it is entirely full. From this day onward, you will be progressively better and get everything you want. You need not worry. Greatly auspicious.

[17] 二三四：此名布相神局。汝求諸事稍難成。至心求佛，勤念三寶，即得稱意，日見進達。吉。

2-3-4 This is named the Displaying Omens Spirit set. Everything you seek will be slightly difficult. Fix your mind on seeking the Buddha and diligently invoke the Three Jewels, then all will be achieved and daily you will meet with advancement. Auspicious.

[18] 四四一：此名白蒙鬼局。所求諸事多不遂心，虛費功力，固難得成，不須求之。此卦且平。至心求僧，兌 (> 脫)²¹³得苦厄。

4-4-1 This is named the White Cover Demon set. Most of what you seek will not come out as you wish, and all effort will be wasted. It will really be difficult to get anything done, so don't bother. This mantic figure is therefore neutral. Fixing your mind, seek out the Sangha to avoid suffering.

[19] 四一二：此名妻²¹⁴神局。汝棄²¹⁵馬乞犢，彡馬俱無。汝事皆生煩惱²¹⁶進縮，所求不遂。此卦大凶。

4-1-2 This is named the Wife Spirit set. It is like abandoning a horse to look for a calf and then losing both the horse and the calf. Everything you do

211 Wang recognizes the graph as *bu* 步, and thus punctuates the sentence differently.

212 We cautiously suggest that Fanluo Tian is an error for Yanluo Tian. It is otherwise similar to Fanmo Tian at set [61].

213 Guan reads the graph as *mian* 免 instead of *tuo* 脫.

214 *Wang* 妄 is Wang's reading which Guan follows. The original graph has 主 on top and 女 on the bottom and could possibly be read as *du* 毒, following Kalinowski.

215 Wang recognizes the graph as *qi* 乞, but Guan recognizes it as *qi* 棄, which works better in this context.

216 Wang recognizes the graph as *lü* 慮, but the graph is *yuan* 愬, a variant of *yuan* 怨.

will give rise to frustration and stagnation, and what you seek will not be achieved. This mantic figure is greatly inauspicious.

[20] 一三三：此名呼馨香鬼局。汝別²¹⁷有惡事、有恐怖，汝今日²¹⁸已後，所欲向好，勸²¹⁹須²²⁰念善，惡事自消散。大吉。

1-3-3 This is named the Exhaling Fragrance Demon set. You will have something horrific occur and be fearful, respectively; but from now on if you tend towards good in what you desire and if you diligently contemplate goodness, bad things will dissipate on their own. Greatly auspicious.

[21] 三二二：此名自在天王女²²¹局。合有口舌，聲氣到汝xxx如不念，即惡自至²²²。凶。

3-2-2 This is named the Maheśvarī set. Should the sound of quarrels reach your ... if you don't contemplate goodness then bad things will happen. Inauspicious.

[22] 二三二：此名五王天井局。如牛向犢，其人還來，汝所願xxx尊敬增²²³益。吉。

2-3-2 This is named the Five God-kings Sky-Well set. Like a cow approaching its calf, so a person will return and what you wish will ... reverence will be increasingly abundant. Auspicious.

[23] 二二四：此名神龜局。如苞蕉花枯²²⁴，得令滋長。可²²⁵憂xxx後²²⁶憂，自今²²⁷已後日☳昇進。大吉。

217 Wang recognizes the graph as *dao* 到.

218 Wang recognizes the last two graphs as *chu nan* 出難.

219 Wang recognizes the graph as two: *qin* 勤 and *xin* 心. Guan writes only *qin*.

220 Wang does not recognize the graph. Guan accepts it as *xu* 須.

221 Wang recognizes the graph as *gu* 姑.

222 Wang recognizes the graph as *sheng* 生.

223 Wang and Guan recognize the graph as *seng* 僧.

224 *Ku* 枯 here is probably cognate to *gu* 骨, as in the word *guduo* 骨朵, "bud."

225 Wang recognizes the graph as *qian* 前.

226 Guan deciphers this partial graph as *hou* 後.

227 Wang recognizes the graph as *he* 合.

2-2-4 This is called the Spirit Turtle set. Like the banana tree flower withering [so that it may fruit], you will flourish. One might worry about ... later worries, but from this day onward things will daily improve. Greatly auspicious.

[24] 四二一：此名風神王局。汝恒無歡情。今將是也，後有喜慶。莫憂懼，不久即稱汝情。先凶後吉。

4-2-1 This is called the King of the Wind Spirit(s) (Vāyu?) set. You are constantly unhappy. Even if this is the case now, you'll later have happy celebrations. Don't worry or be fearful, as before long things will go your way. Initially inauspicious, but later auspicious.

[25] 二三一：欣樂天人局。如鳥取食，其事亦然，取覓汝身，六神擁護。不被趣，更何憂懼？好所欲自至，所願吉慶。

2-3-1 The Delightful Music Transcendent(s) set. Like a bird seeking food, your affairs will be likewise. Choosing places in your body, the Six Spirits will protect you. Not being rushed by others, what other worries and fears can you have? What you want will happen on its own and whatever you wish will result in auspicious celebrations.

[26] 一二四：此名天馬夫人局。其天擁護汝身，所求如意，遠行通達，日日昇進欣樂。大吉。

1-2-4 This is named the Lady of the Divine Horse set. The god protects your body. You will get what you seek and arrive if you travel far. Every day will get happier and happier. Greatly auspicious.

[27] 三二四：此名因緣局。如小得 (> 兒?) 望月²²⁸，欲以手把將²²⁹為可及。汝事亦然，其事不成，不須求之。此卦且平。

3-2-4 This is named the Dependent Origination set. It will be just like a child looking at the moon reaching out to grab it. Your affairs will be like-

228 Wang recognizes the last two graphs as *jing yue* 經月. Guan recognizes the last two graphs as *wang yue* 望月 and reads the sentence as *ru xiao'er wang yue* 如小得 (兒) 望月, "like a small child looking at the moon." We follow Guan's reading.

229 See Huang Zheng, *Dunhuang suzidian*, 190. Wang recognizes the graph as *chi* 持.

wise; none will be accomplished so don't bother to try. This mantic figure is therefore neutral.

[28] 一四四：此名良臣夫人局。護衛汝身，所有鞍馬、六畜日自²³⁰增益。倉庫之屬自多豐饒²³¹。大吉。

1-4-4 This is named the Lady of the Good Minister set. It protects your body and the number of your riding horses and domestic animals will daily increase. Storehouses will multiply and fill on their own. Greatly auspicious.

[29] 四三一：此名牛影天局。汝身在水，得船救載。既得濟岸，更何憂哉。大吉。

4-3-1 This is named the Ox Shadow God set. It is as if you fell into the water and a boat came to the rescue. Since you can reach the bank of the river, what worries are left? Greatly auspicious.

[30] 三四一：此名點然魍魎鬼局。其事若乘船²³²過海，得及岸側²³³。喜慶欲至，求者進達，凝矣。大吉。

3-4-1 This is named the Flaming Spooks set. It is like taking a boat across the sea and reaching the shore. A happy celebration will occur and everything sought for will be achieved. For certain! Greatly auspicious.

[31] 二二一：此名郟²³⁴羅延²³⁵王局。其事早已成就吉慶，一切好事欲自至，稱汝情。大吉。勿重看之。

2-2-1 This is named the Narāyaṇa King set. If all matters are accomplished early, there will be auspicious celebrations. All good things will arrive on their own, in accordance with your desires. Greatly auspicious. Do not look again.

²³⁰ Wang recognizes the graph as *ri* 日.

²³¹ We follow Wang's reading of the graph as *rao* 饒.

²³² Wang recognizes the graph as *zhou* 舟.

²³³ Wang recognizes the graph as *dao* 倒.

²³⁴ The graph is a variant of *na* 那.

²³⁵ We are not sure what this graph represents.

[32] 一二一：此名灰²³⁶林天局。所願從心。土地神祇共皆擁護。所作遂心，求者即得，行處通達，不須葱 (> 匆) 速。大吉。

1-2-1 This is named the Ash Woods God set. Everything you wish for will occur. The earth spirits will all protect you so that everything you do will be what you want and whatever you seek you will find; all places you travel will be reached without need to rush. Greatly auspicious.

[33] 一二二：此名伺（司）命鬼局。汝正其局，²³⁷惡事皆不達，所求不遂，一切求財物不²³⁸稱情，身須安住²³⁹念善。此卦且平。

1-2-2 This is named the Supervisor of Life Allotments Demon set. If you completed this set, no evil will reach you, but nothing you seek will come about and none of the goods you want will follow. You must be calm and tranquil, and contemplate goodness. This mantic figure is therefore neutral.

[34] 二一二：此名厄難天局。万²⁴⁰物崩摧，海水枯涸，所求破散，事彳 不合。此卦大惡。日夜念善，自得消散。

2-1-2 This is named the God of Predicaments set. Everything will come tumbling down and be destroyed, all seas will dry up, whatever you seek will be broken apart, and nothing you do will come together. This mantic figure is really bad. Contemplate goodness day and night to resolve it naturally.

[35] 三三二：此名土鬼局。汝好且足，若求大事，損費功力，其事宜停，不須苦求，亦厄 (> 惡) 遠行。此卦且平。

236 The reading of this graph is uncertain. It is possibly a poor copy of another graph. It looks like a 刀 next to 夭. We provisionally follow Wang in reading *hui* 灰; see also Huang Zheng, *Dunhuang suzidian*, 165–166.

237 Guan punctuates after the next graph, *e* 惡, making the sentence mean “if you completed this set it would be evil and nothing would be achieved.” Since the opposite of *e shi* “evil affairs” is found in [11] above, *hao shi* 好事, we do not follow Guan. This allows an explanation for why the mantic figure would be neutral.

238 The second *bu* 不 which starts a new column seems to be redundant.

239 We follow Wang's reading for *zhu* 住.

240 The manuscript uses *wan* 万 instead of *wan* 萬.

3-3-2 This is named the Soil Demon set. What you have is good and enough; should you seek to accomplish something major you will waste a lot of energy. It is better to stop these matters and not try too hard. In addition, do not do any long-distance travel. This mantic figure is therefore neutral.

[36] 三三一：此名行路夫人局。汝所謀事，造次不遂。志心燒香念佛，懇苦發願，惡事自消，所願從心，不須憂慮。先憂後吉。

3-3-1 This is named the Lady Traveler/ Wife of the Traveler set. Whatever you are planning should not be rushed. Concentrate your mind on burning incense and reciting the names of the Buddhas, and on earnestly uttering vows, and evil things will naturally dissipate. You will get what you wished for; you don't need to be worried. At first you will be worried but later things will be auspicious.

[37] 一三四：此名風神夫人局。汝如上山，數☵下雨，花草不生，此事亦然。惡鬼流汝身中。宜修善福，惡鬼自離汝身。

1-3-4 This is named the Lady Wind Spirit(s)/ Wife of the Wind Spirit(s) (Vāyu) set. Your affairs will be as if you were climbing a mountain, or that it frequently rained but nothing grew. Evil demons will move around in your body. You must cultivate goodness and good fortune so that the evil demons leave your body on their own.

[38] 三二三：此名神夫局。如持土塊，擲於水中，沉散即盡，汝事亦然，沉滯不得好，宜停息，癡（>疑）不須看之。此卦且平。

3-2-3 This is named the Spirit Husband set. Your affairs will be as if you were holding a clod of earth and tossed it into the water, where it sinks and disintegrates without a trace, sunken into the depths and unattainable. It is better to take a break, and even if you have doubts, do not look again. This mantic figure is therefore neutral.

[39] 四二二：此名老鬼局。如鳥不及網，立²⁴¹即高飛²⁴²。努力念善，即網不及身。此卦如意。大吉。

241 Guan recognizes the graph as *zhi* 至.

242 Wang does not recognize the character.

4-2-2 This is named the Old Demon (Pāñcika?) set. It is like a bird being nearly caught by a net, and immediately soaring up high. Diligently contemplate goodness so no net catches you. This mantic figure [means you] will get what you want. Greatly auspicious.

[40] 二四二：此名網岡 (> 魴魴) 夫人局。其事如洪水入天，當慈 (> 滋)²⁴³怖，汝事亦然，水害滔天。此無憂之。先凶後吉。

2-4-2 This is named the Lady Spooks/ Wife of the Spooks set. This matter is like a flood reaching heaven, just terrifying! Your affairs will be also thus, with water damaging and overflowing the sky. But there is nothing to worry about. Initially inauspicious and later auspicious.

[41] 四二四：此名相天局。其天擁護此人。斯情求事皆好吉慶，至十五日圓滿具足，汝事亦然。所求者念佛求之，轉遂汝情。

4-2-4 This is named the Omen God set. The god protects this person. The situations and issues all result in auspicious celebrations. Your affairs will be like the moon reaching perfect fullness on the fifteenth of every month. To get what you seek, recite the names of Buddha and things will turn your way.

[42] 三四三：此名先王局。其王擁護汝身，早逢稱意，及得物財²⁴⁴，平安甚善。好消息欲至從心。

3-4-3 This is named the Former Kings set. The kings protect your body. Early on you will get satisfaction and goods. There will be peace and great happiness. The good news will come as you wish.

[43] 二四四：此名尼娑天局。其天擁護汝身。所有不成之事皆得進達。眷屬和會，日彗昇進，訴訟得理，離散重合。大吉。

2-4-4 This is named the Nisuo God set. The god protects your body. You will make progress and will achieve all of your uncompleted affairs. Family members will come together harmoniously. You will progress daily. Law-

243 It is possible that this graph was crossed out by the copyist. Guan recognizes the graph as *bing* 並.

244 Wang reverses the order of the two graphs.

suits will be won and things that are separated will come together again. Greatly auspicious.

[44] 三四二：此名雷公局。人多道汝惡，見汝似虎²⁴⁵，家內別懷怨則(>賊)詐親。所求不遂，損費汝功。此卦大吉。

3-4-2 This is named the Thunder Lord set. People say a lot of bad things about you and see you as a tiger.²⁴⁶ At home, there are grudges and relatives cheating each other. Nothing you want will occur, and will all be a waste of effort. This mantic figure is greatly auspicious.²⁴⁷

[45] 四一四：此名得神局。其王擁護，所求事多進退，恐難成就。且求三寶，兌(>脫)²⁴⁸得苦難。念善已後，即得昇進。

4-1-4 This is named the Obtainment Spirit set. The king protects you.²⁴⁹ Much of what you want will come and go, and [I'm] afraid it will be difficult to accomplish. So, just seek the Three Jewels and you will exorcise difficulties. After you contemplate goodness, you will be promoted.

[46] 四二三：此名良遂夫人局。汝心所憂骨肉，夜彡[不]寐²⁵⁰，所求不多²⁵¹稱心。若轉念三寶，其事即變²⁵²惡為好。從今日已後，所求皆吉。

245 We follow Wang's reading here. Also see Huang Zheng, *Dunhuang suzidian*, 158.

246 Tigers like *gui* 鬼 could be demonic presences that made people ill or caused other misfortune.

247 This is clearly a copying error on the part of the scribe. The evaluation should obviously be inauspicious. This evaluation might have been intended for the next oracular response, which lacks an evaluation but whose content suggests it might have been evaluated "inauspicious, then auspicious."

248 Guan recognizes the graph as *mian* 免 ("to avoid, escape").

249 Here "king" should refer to the spirit, De Shen 得神. This demonstrates once again the fluidity of the classification of gods and spirits in this text. Structurally, in this section within a response, it is either a "god" or a "king" who protects. Guan writes *zhu* 主 ("to occupy") instead of *wang* 王, which would suggest that the god occupies the body in order to protect it.

250 Guan feels that a *bu* 不 is missing before the *mei* 寐 ("sleep").

251 *Buduo* 不多 here is probably a mistake for *duobu* 多不. Guan also suggests this.

252 Guan recognizes the graph *qing* 慶 ("celebrate") as *bian* 變 ("to change") and reads "to change evil into goodness" (*bian e wei hao* 變惡為好). Since this same phrase appears in Buddhist writings, we follow Guan.

4-2-3 This is named the Virtuous Gentle Lady/ Wife of Liangsui set. You worry about your bones and flesh (i.e., children) so much that you can't sleep at night. Much of what you want will not go your way. If you continuously invoke the Three Jewels, then the matters at hand will change from evil to good. From this day forward everything you ask for will come up auspicious.

[47] 一一四：此名盧 (> 爐?) 神局。汝自至紀，極大稱心，不須愁，天xxx皆悉從心，日日昇xxx。

1-1-4 This is named the Locana set. You come to a resolution by yourself and have great satisfaction—no need to worry. Heaven ... all affairs will be just as you want them and every day the situation will improve

[48] 二一三：此名北神局。汝所願者，皆悉從心，日彡昇進，無不xxx。

2-1-3 This is named the Spirit of the North set. All your desires will be fulfilled as you want them and situations will daily improve. There is nothing that ...

[49] 一四一：此名五道王局。一切於汝身上欺罔，但念諸佛，聖xxx自至。先凶後吉。

1-4-1 This is named the King of the Five Paths set. You will be cheated in every situation. But if you recite the names of the many Buddhas, the saints ... will come of their own accord. Initially inauspicious, later auspicious.

[50] 一三一：此名阿修羅王局。所作勿憂，一無障尋 (> 碍)，所願²⁵³事xxx。大吉。勿重看之。

1-3-1 This is named the Asura King(s) set. There should be no worries about whatever you do, and there will be not a single obstacle. Whatever you desire ... Greatly auspicious. Do not look again.

253 Wang recognizes the graph as *qiu* 求. Guan recognizes it as *yuan*, but suggests that the following partially obscured graph is *cheng* 成 instead of *shi* 事.

[51] 三一：此名山神王局。身心如風，不處不足²⁵⁴，求事不成，汝心或定或定不得自安。²⁵⁵是事不達。凶。

3-1-1 This is named the King of the Mountain Spirits set. Body and mind are like the wind, neither stopping nor going. Nothing you want will be accomplished. Your thoughts are so unfixed that they cannot settle on their own.²⁵⁶ This matter will not be achieved. Inauspicious.

[52] 二一一：此名青魍魎鬼局。汝怨家居住交²⁵⁷難，事意恐怖²⁵⁸，不須憂愁，自救汝身，即令稱汝情，不得忿 彡 (> 忽忽)。吉。

2-1-1 This is named the Green Spooks set. Your enemies constantly bring trouble to your family. The situations are terrifying, but there is no need for worry as you will be saved from them and be satisfied. No need to rush around. Auspicious.

[53] 三一三：此名天羅夫人局。如人上山下山，或吉或凶。自今已後，日 彡 進好。先凶後吉。

3-1-3 This is named the Lady Heaven Net/ Wife of Tianluo set. It will be like someone going up and down a mountain, sometimes auspicious and other times not. From today onward, everyday matters will improve. Initially inauspicious, but later auspicious.

[54] 三一四：此名宅神。汝所求不遂，所作不成，多憂多懼，精魂恐怖。此卦且平。

3-1-4 This is named the Residence Spirit set. Nothing you seek will be obtained and nothing you do will be completed. There will be many wor-

254 Wang recognizes the graph as *zou* 走.

255 Wang punctuates the last part differently. Guan switches the original around to read 或定或不定，得自安 based on what he believes is a correction mark. Note that this is precisely where the manuscript is torn, and that this may simply be part of a stroke from the missing column to the right.

256 An alternative translation of 不得自安 would be “will not get self-contentment.”

257 Wang recognizes the graph as *shou* 受.

258 Guan suggests an alternative translation with different punctuation: 汝怨家居住，交難事，意恐怖 (“Your enemies stay around, you meet with difficult affairs, and perceive something terrifying”).

ries and lots of fear, and your *jing* and *hun* spirits will be scared. This mantic figure is therefore neutral.²⁵⁹

[55] 四四三：此名毗沙門天王天局。其擁護汝身，所思想稱汝情，得進達如意，不須憂慮，親眷相見。吉。

4-4-3 This is named the God-king God Vaiśravaṇa set. It protects your body. Everything you think of will be satisfied. You will be promoted as you wish. No need for worry. Relatives will see each other. Auspicious.

[56] 四三四：此名西王母局。其事先好，汝自毀²⁶⁰者。若所求覓，上念三寶，還便稱意，家口平安。大吉。

4-3-4 This is named Grandmother of the West set. Things start off well, but will be destroyed by your own actions. If you seek anything then take up invoking the Three Jewels and then you can find satisfaction and family members will be safe. Greatly auspicious.

[57] 三四四：此名阿修羅局。其王²⁶¹擁護汝身，一切好衣食自至，汝身上無人欺凌，已後日彡昇進。大吉慶也。

3-4-4 This is named the Asura(s) set. The king(s) will protect your body. All good clothes and food will come of their own accord. As for your person, no one will bully or intimidate you and things will daily improve from now on. Greatly auspicious; celebration.

[58] 四四二：此名鏡鉢夫人局。如人向樹不見花，彡即自結子。汝有情事，即當利益，親眷相見。大吉之卦。

4-4-2 This is named Lady of the Mirror-vessel set. It is as if a person faces a tree without seeing the flowers covering it, which will come to seed of their own accord. All your concerns will result in benefits. Relatives will see each other. A greatly auspicious mantic figure.

259 From the contents of this response, one might assume it would be evaluated as inauspicious. As we've seen at set [44] above, it is possible for the scribe(s) to err when writing the evaluation.

260 Wang recognizes the graph as *bai* 敗.

261 Wang recognizes the graph as *tian* 天, and Guan recognizes it as *zhu* 主. See fn. 249 above.

[59] 一一二：此名趙女天局。其事如鳥巢，其子見母，唯思其食。所求者皆成，訴訟得理，分別相見。大吉。

1-1-2 This is named the Goddess Zhao set. Affairs will be like a bird nest in which chicks think of food when they see their mother. Whatever you seek will be accomplished, lawsuits won, and those separated brought together. Greatly auspicious.

[60] 四三三：此名博士局。汝但好心，無不稱意。念善已後，汝求財物皆得合。日彡通達遂心，稱汝情意。大吉。

4-3-3 This is named the Erudite set. As long as you set your mind on goodness, everything will be satisfactory. After you contemplate goodness, you will get all goods that you seek just as you wish. With each day you will achieve more as you wish. Everything will be according to your intentions. Greatly auspicious.

[61] 一四三：此名梵摩天局。其事早已成就，汝自毀壞。求佛念善，此卦即得稱情。大吉。

1-4-3 This is named the God Brahmā set. Everything that has already been accomplished will be ruined by your own actions. Seek the Buddha and contemplate goodness. With this mantic figure [you] will receive satisfaction. Greatly auspicious.

[62] 三三四：此名觀音天局。其天擁護，汝志心敬²⁶²佛念善，即財寶自隨，家宅安樂。大吉。

3-3-4 This is named the God [bodhisattva] Avalokiteśvara set. The god protects [you]. If you devote your heart to respecting the Buddha and contemplating goodness, then wealth will follow and your home will be peaceful and joyful. Greatly auspicious.

262 Wang does not recognize the graph. Guan punctuates this differently. He places *ru zhi xin* as the object of the verb “to protect,” which suggests that the god is protecting the internal human spirit termed *zhi* (found in other Dunhuang texts) as well as the heart. But *zhi xin* can also simply mean “intentions” or to do something with intention or purpose, which is how we understand it.

[63] 二三三：此名天王局。若与²⁶³外人為重，還往其²⁶⁴人口美。心事難得，不可財受²⁶⁵除事，意皆得清。吉。

2-3-3 This is named the God-king(s) set. You will have repeated interactions with an outsider and, upon returning home, people will speak well of it. What you want will be hard to get. You cannot use wealth to resolve this matter. Your desires will all be satisfied. Auspicious.

[64] 二四三：此名善女天局。四方山神，皆共擁護。汝所謀事，無²⁶⁶不遂心，母子親眷，重得相見，亦有遠消息欲至。大吉。

2-4-3 This is named the Goodness Goddess set. Mountain gods of the four directions all protect [you] together. Anything that you plan will go according to your wishes. Mothers, children, and relatives will be able to see each other again, and news that you wish from far away will arrive. Greatly auspicious.

[65] 三一二：此名摩醯首羅局 (> 卜)²⁶⁷。思求定卦。卜別大云：是²⁶⁸阿修羅局，其王²⁶⁹擁護，汝之所須²⁷⁰即得，一切衣食起於汝己，²⁷¹汝身無人敢欺。大吉。

3-1-2 This [text] is named the Divination of Maheśvara. What you are intending and seeking determines the mantic figure. The divination elsewhere²⁷² amply proclaims, “This is the Asura(s) set. The king(s) will protect [you]. You will get whatever you want. All clothing and food will come from your own actions. As for your person, no one will dare bully you. Greatly auspicious.”

263 The manuscript uses the vulgar *yu* 与 instead of *yu* 與.

264 Wang recognizes the graph as *ben* 本.

265 Wang recognizes the graph as *bao* 寶. Guan recognizes it as *jiao* 交.

266 Wang recognizes the graph as *duo* 多, which reverses the meaning of the sentence.

267 We assume a scribal error here; see above, pp. 72–75.

268 Wang recognizes the graph as *jian* 見.

269 Wang recognizes the graph as *tian* 天. Guan reads it as *zhu* 主.

270 Wang recognizes the graph as *sun* 損.

271 Wang recognizes the last two graphs as *dadi* 大地.

272 The response that follows loosely reproduces the Asura(s) set at [57], as noted above at pp. 72–75.

The *Divination of Maheśvara* and Chinese Numerical Trigram Divination

The presentation of the *Divination of Maheśvara* divination method in chapter one emphasized the ritual preparations, the method of constructing a numerical trigram, and the process by which the divination ritual invokes gods and spirits, as well as the character of its “divinatory pantheon.” In doing so, it has referred in passing to other traditions of divination. This chapter more fully engages with select Chinese divination systems—mostly limited to numerical trigram divination—in order to consider their continuities and discontinuities with the *Divination of Maheśvara* and its ritual assumptions. A variety of numerical trigram divination practices, their material cultural bases, and their ritual assumptions are first introduced through an examination of their introductions and a comparison with the *Divination of Maheśvara*. The chapter then devotes three subchapters to closer investigations of related texts. In the first of these, it explores stalk divination as practiced in the *Stalk Divination (Shifa)* and the Baoshan divination record; in the second, it reviews the use of draughtsmen in the *Empowered Draughtsmen Divination Method (Lingqi bufā)*, and the use of something like teetotums in the *Sutra for the Prognostication of Good and Evil (Zhancha shan’ē yebao jing)*. The third and longest subchapter is a case study that investigates the development of one specific form of stalk divination as represented in three separate texts, the *Tricks of Jing*, the *Duke of Zhou Divination Method (Zhougong bufā)*, and the *Guan Gongming Divination Method (Guan Gongming bufā)*. As these texts are all short, consisting of an introduction and sixteen entries each, they are translated in full in the appendix. Their divergences and developments with regard to both poetics and pantheons make for an interesting case study to bring into conversation with the *Divination of Maheśvara*, whose transcultural twists and turns are detailed in chapter three.

1 Material Culture and Ritual Process in Chinese Numerical Trigram Texts

The *Divination of Maheśvara* dictates that one must face west, identify oneself before Śakra, Brahmā, the four god-kings, and the assembled spirits, and

then focus one's mind and express one's intentions. Then one casts the dice to receive up to three oracular responses. These short instructions take up themes found in several other Chinese divination texts, and they raise a number of questions. Could one divine by oneself, or did a diviner perform this on one's behalf? How decisive or sincere can the connection between dice rolls and an oracular response truly be if one is allowed to discard a response and roll again, up to three times? What is the connection between a given spirit and a given mantic figure? How might the material cultural basis of the randomizing device affect the divination system and its oracular responses? The instructions to several divination texts, as well as accounts of divination rituals offer some materials on which to reflect while considering the answers to such questions.

The *locus classicus* for the Chinese divination event is drawn from a mourning ritual in the Confucian ritual canon, the *Yili* 儀禮, “Shi sang li” 士喪禮.¹ We see a highly choreographed ritual for divining the burial date of an elite man. The turtle is first burned on the east side of the shell while its head is to the south, and then is burned on the north side of the shell while its head is to the west, covering every direction of the cosmos. First, the auspicious Yang directions (associated with spring and summer) are addressed and then the inauspicious Yin directions (associated with fall and winter) are addressed. Other aspects of this traditional Chinese version of divination ritual are compared below with the *Divination of Maheśvara* version.

On divination day, after the dawn wailing, everyone returns outside to stand in position. The diviner first formally presents the turtle in the western family hall for instruction with its head facing south on a mat. Thorn punks are lit and he burns the turtle on its eastern side (left side).

卜日，既朝哭，皆復外位。卜人先奠龜於西塾上，南首，有席。楚焯置於燋，在龜東。

The clan elder supervises the divination and the ancestral temple representatives wearing auspicious uniforms stand at the western gate, facing east and tiered [in ranks] southward. Three divination interpreters stand to his south, tiered [in ranks] northward. The diviners and those holding the burning punks and mats stay in the western section of the instruction hall. The hostesses [matriarchs] and those of the inner quar-

1 Ruan Yuan 阮元, ed. *Yili zhushu* 儀禮注疏, in *Shisanjing zhushu*, Taipei: Yiwen, 1960, Vol. 4, 441–442.

ters stand behind the door to the east. Mats are placed outside the threshold, to the west of the door sill. When the ancestral temple representatives announce the event, the host faces north, takes off his hemp rope, and holds on to it with his left hand. The supervisor of the divination takes up position to the east of the gate facing west. The diviner holds the turtle and burning punk and formally presents the turtle, then, with its head to the west, and burns it on its northern side (right side).

族長蒞卜，及宗人吉服立於門西，東面南上。占者三人在其南，北上。卜人及執燠、席者在塾西。闔東扉，主婦立於其內。席於闔西闔外。宗人告事具。主人北面，免經，左擁之。蒞卜即位於門東，西面。卜人抱龜燠，先奠龜，西首，燠在北。

The ancestral temple representatives receive the turtle from the diviner and present it to the high ancestor. The supervisor looks at the turtle and then returns it. The ancestral temple representatives turn and retreat slightly to receive the command [announcement to the spirits]. The command said: "Mourner So-and-so, came on such-and-such day, to divine about the burial of his father, Mr. So-and-so. When his father fell, did he not harbor personal regrets?" It is permitted not to transmit the command, but once he returns to the mat, he sits facing west. When commanding the turtle, rise up. Give the diviner the turtle and back against the eastern door. The diviner sits and, when working on the turtle, rises up. The ancestral temple representatives receive the turtle and present it to the supervisor, who takes a look and then returns it. The ancestral temple representatives retreat and face east. Then displaying the divination [results], they finish up and do not further explain the turtle. They [simply] announce to the supervisor and the host: "The divination says to follow such-and-such a day." They give the turtle to the diviner and make the announcement to the hostesses [matriarchs] who wail. They announce it to those of different ranks and then send someone to announce it to the main guests. The diviner removes the turtle. The ancestral temple representatives announce the end to the event. The host, wearing a hemp head covering, enters and wails, going to the divination site. The guests exit; bowing he sends them off. If [the day determined] is not followed then the divination must be performed from the beginning.

宗人受卜人龜，示高。蒞卜受視，反之。宗人還，少退，受命。命曰：「哀子某，來日某，卜葬其父某甫。考降，無有近悔？」許諾，不述命；還即席，西面坐；命龜，興；授卜人龜，負東扉。卜人坐，作

龜，興。宗人受龜，示蒞卜。蒞卜受視，反之。宗人退，東面。乃旅占，卒，不釋龜，告於蒞卜與主人：「占曰某日從。」授卜人龜。告於主婦，主婦哭。告於異爵者。使人告於眾賓。卜人徹龜。宗人告事畢。主人絰，入，哭，如筮宅。賓出，拜送，若不從，卜擇如初儀。

This classic account, although tailored for deciding an auspicious time for an elite burial, provides revealing continuities and differences in practices suggested by the *Divination of Maheśvara*. In both texts performing the divination ritual requires facing a particular direction. The older account stipulates the auspicious directions of east and south, with west and north associated with death. The aristocratic culture reflected in the *Yili* followed the traditional cosmogram of Yin and Yang and Five Agents (*wuxing*). The *Divination of Maheśvara*, by contrast, honors the west. The event in the *Yili* takes place in a sacred space, a cosmically oriented hall. The *Divination of Maheśvara* does not specify this, but one might assume that it also required some sort of sacralized space, perhaps in a local monastery. Common to both divination events was the need to “look at” and verify the results, starting over if necessary.

A major difference between the two practices is the divination tools employed. These reflect a typological difference between divination with bones and turtle shells, usually referred to as *bu*, and divination with stalks, usually referred to as *shi*. The materials also partly reflect a divide between elite and popular practices. Turtle divination was expensive, wasteful, and less portable. Stalks, counting rods, and other randomizing devices, by contrast, could be carried on the person and used without much preparation, participants, or even elaborate choreography. The turtle symbolized the cosmos, round like heaven above a square earth.² The direction and shape of the cracks on a turtle shell required the subtle knowledge of specialists who read them—much like the varied pulse readings hidden in the channels of the body—, as images representing mantic powers: the Yang of fire over the Yin of (a) water (creature).³ Stalks, counting rods, or even dice, by contrast, were not necessarily symbolic of larger meanings, or else these meanings were little known.

One example of how the act of sorting stalks became a cosmological act is found in the transmitted version of the “Appended Statements” (*Xici* 繫辭), a

2 Sarah Allan, *The Shape of the Turtle: Myth, Art, and Cosmos in Early China* (Albany: State University of New York, 1991).

3 For the Han practice of crack reading, see Stephan Kory, *Cracking to Divine: Pyro-plas-tromancy as Archetypical and Common Mantic and Religious Practice in Han and Medieval China* (Phd. Dissertation: Indiana University, 2012), 442–448 (appendix three).

text discussing the Yin and Yang relationships within a temporal cosmology. The passage has often been cited in connection with the stalk sorting method of the *Changes* tradition:

Generally the numbers of Heaven and Earth come to fifty-five, through which changes are achieved and the ghosts and spirits (*guishen*) move. The numbers of the Great Expansion [method] come to fifty, of which forty-nine are used. Divide them into two piles to form two images, dangling one of them [between the fingers] so as to make up three images and then sort them by fours to make images of the four seasons. Then return the odd ones (the remainders) [into a single group] and use stalk sortilege to make an image of the intercalary month. Every five years there are two intercalations, so one must repeat the stalk sortilege to result in a *gua*.

凡天地之數，五十有五，此所以成變化，而行鬼神也。大衍之數五十，其用四十有九。分而為二以象兩，掛一以象三，揲之以四以象四時，歸奇於扚以象閏。五歲再閏，故再扚而後掛（卦）。

The precise details of this method have been subject to debate, but the passage establishes how the act of moving stalks through one's hands and into piles is taken to relate to numbers, heaven and earth, ghosts and spirits, and the seasons and the calendar.⁴ By the medieval period, the method was standardized into a series of divisions of stalks in order to produce a result. The aforementioned passage was interpreted as the following instructions: 1) take fifty stalks, and remove one from the pile; 2) randomly divide the pile into two, and take one stalk out of one of the piles; 3) divide each of the piles by four, and remove the remainders from both piles (if the pile can be evenly divided, the remainder is considered four); 4) repeat steps 2 and 3 twice using the leftover stalks to remove more remainders; 5) divide the final leftover stalks by four, which would constitute the first, or the bottom line of the six lines of a hexagram. This whole process then needs to be repeated five more times to produce a hexagram from bottom to top. Mathematically speaking, the result of step 5 only has four possi-

4 How exactly one dangled the stalks in one's fingers is a matter of controversy. Wang Li (1900–1986) defined *le* 扚 as “in between the fingers” (手指之間), presumably influenced by its loan for *lei* 肋 “rib bones” which *Changes* scholars understand as a metaphor for the two sides of the body. By extension, they understand the method as “dangling the stalks by two sides” (掛蓍草之兩旁). See *Wang Li gu Hanyu zidian* 王力古漢語字典 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 2000), 348; Chen Guying 陳鼓應 and Zhao Jianwei 趙建璋, *Zhouyi zhuyi yu yanjiu* 周易注譯與研究 (Taipei: Taiwan Shangwu, 2000 rpt), 907.

bilities: 6, 7, 8, 9. The two odd numbers then are each rendered as an unbroken line and the even numbers as broken lines in a binary system.⁵

An opposition between turtle shell divination and stalk divination is evident in the introduction to the second-century-BCE *Tricks of Jing*, a numerical trigram text that appears to stand near the beginning of a tradition also represented by the *Duke of Zhou Divination Method* and the *Guan Gongming Divination Method*.⁶ Like the *Divination of Maheśvara* and many other divination texts, the *Tricks of Jing* begins with instructions. The diviners of the *Tricks of Jing* dismissed turtle divination as less efficient and requiring outside specialized knowledge to view and interpret the cracks. This dismissal also represents a shift of the divination ritual from a public to private process, and from one involving many people to one that could be performed by a single individual, albeit one literate in esoteric arts.

Drilling tortoises and announcing [the results of] stalk [divination] is not as good as [using] the *Tricks of Jing*. Whether [determining the influences of] Yin or Yang, or the short or long [cracks], their crack-reading is not efficient and their divination is no good; one must be able to inspect [them oneself] in order to understand.

Take thirty stalks to divine whether affairs are auspicious or not, just follow the stalks. In the left hand hold the book and in the right hand grasp the stalks, and face east. Divide the thirty stalks into three piles, placing the ones in the upper pile horizontally, the ones in the middle pile vertically, and those in the lower pile horizontally.

Remove the remainders repeatedly by fours, until [the number of stalks in the remaining pile] does not exceed [four].

鑄（鑽）龜告筮，不如荊決。若陰若陽，若短若長。所卜毋方，所占毋良，必察以明。卜所卜卅算以卜其事，若吉若凶，唯算所從。左手持書，右手操算，必東面。用卅算，分以爲三分，其上分衡（橫），中分從（縱），下分衡（橫）。四四而除之，不盈者勿除。

5 See Cook and Zhao, *Stalk Divination*, 22–23; Xiang Chuansan 向傳三, “Zhouyi shifa de gailü yanjiu” 周易筮法的概率研究, *Zhouyi yanjiu* 周易研究4 (1997): 67–83; Sun Jinsong 孫勁松, “Lue lun Zhu Xi he Guo Yong de shifa zhi bian” 略論朱熹和郭雍的蓍法之辯. *Shantou Daxue xuebao* 汕頭大學學報 26, no. 6 (2010): 19–25.

6 Beijing daxue chutu wenxian yanjiusuo 北京大學出土文獻研究所, *Beijing daxue cang Xi Han zhushu* 北京大學藏西漢竹書, Vol. 5 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji, 2014), 169–177; Zi Ju 子居, “Beida jian Jingjue jiexi” 北大簡《荊決》解析 (<https://www.xianqin.tk/2015/12/28/309/>). Because the manuscript was stolen from its original archaeological context, dating is uncertain. From the contents Zi Ju speculates it was a Western Han copy of a Qin text.

The practical instructions following its slightly polemical opening are terse. There is no mention of the locale, of any cardinal directions, or of any deities to invoke. Similar to the *Changes*, the method of the *Tricks of Jing* requires a division process that randomly separates thirty stalks into three piles, marked as “upper,” “middle,” and “lower,” respectively. Subtracting from each of the piles four at a time, the remainders of each pile eventually form a “counting rod-style” numerical trigram (see Table 1). The significance of using thirty stalks is unstated, as is any cosmological correlation for the upper, middle, and lower piles into which these are sorted. Nor does the text give any cosmological reason for removing four stalks at a time. The introduction does nevertheless provide us with a powerful image of the material culture of text-based divination: the diviner holding the book in their right hand and the stalks in their left.⁷

The *Tricks of Jing* is not the earliest numerical trigram text in China, but it is the earliest extant text to limit itself to numbers one to four, and this is one reason why it is an apt comparandum for the *Divination of Mahēśvara*. Another important comparandum is the *Classic of Empowered Draughtsmen* (*Lingqi jing*), early versions of which were called the *Empowered Draughtsmen Divination Method* (*Lingqi bufu*). This method involved casting twelve game pieces (*qi* 棋 or *qizi* 棋子) called “spiritually empowered draughtsmen” in part because they were carved out of “thunder” (*pili* 霹靂) wood.⁸ Three sets of four pieces, each blank on one side, were marked with the graphs “upper,” “middle,” or “lower” on the other. The number of signs for each tier—from blank/zero to four—formed the numerical trigram which indexed the *Empowered Draughtsmen*’s oracular responses. A Dunhuang version, P.4048, begins with a statement of its transmission, going back to the third-century Huainan 淮南 region, and then describes its method:

Its divination method employs twelve draughtsmen, each one-inch square, and four each with the graphs “upper,” “middle,” or “lower” written on them. When divining, one must be purified, light incense, and sit quietly for a short while before holding the pieces (*qi*) in your hands and incanting: “I, the one divining, Mr. So-and-So, sincerely rely on the four

7 Comparing this with the *Yili* passage above, if the diviner’s head was facing south like the turtle, then the book would be oriented east, a Yang direction, and the stalks would be oriented west, a Yin direction.

8 P.3782, S.557, P.4048, P.4984V, S.9766, see Zheng & Zhang, *Dunhuang zhanbu wenxian xulu*, 35–37; Wang Jingbo, *Dunhuang zhanbu wenxian yu shehui shenghuo*, 61–74; Morgan, “An Introduction to the *Lingqi jing*,” 102.

elder spirits, the four middle spirits, and the four younger spirits. The twelve astral officials up above, starting with [1] Heaven and Earth, [and continuing with] the [2] Father and Mother, [3] Lord Lao of the Great Supreme, [4] the Sun and Moon, and [5] the Five Planets, [6] the Seven Stars of the Dipper, [7] the Four Seasons [8] the Five Agents, [9] the Stems and Branches and [10] Yin and Yang, [11] the Twenty-Eight Astral Lodges, and [12] Jupiter when it reaches the Hall of Light.⁹ Please resolve whatever doubts I, So-and So, have. If it is auspicious then say (*yan*) ‘auspicious’ and if inauspicious say ‘inauspicious’; as for gains or losses and truth or falsehood, please cause them to form omens so that one’s inner doubts can be articulated (*yan*).’

Cast (*zhi*) the pieces (*qi*) and observe the mantic figure formed through the distribution of [the signs] “upper,” “middle,” and “lower” to determine [the mantic figure]. Once [the mantic figure of] auspiciousness is settled, do not divine again, because if you do the auspiciousness will become uncertain.

When divining, purify your heart and clear your thoughts, either through the nocturnal invocation or by scrutinizing the affairs. The upper, middle, and lower indicate the three luminaries (heaven, humanity, earth), and they are rolled to display [one of] the 124 mantic figures. Each mantic figure represents auspiciousness or inauspiciousness according to its arrangement of odd or even numbers: odd being Yang and even Yin. Thus the omen is drawn out so that the auspiciousness can be known.¹⁰

其卜法用棊子十二枚，各方一寸，書上中下字，各四枚。每卜占之時，皆須清淨燒香，安坐少時，然後執棊而咒之曰：“卜兆臣某乙，謹因四孟諸神、四仲諸神、四季諸神。十二辰官，上啟天地、父母、太上元老、日月五星、北斗七星、四時五行、六甲陰陽、廿八宿、歲得明堂。某乙心有所疑，請為決之。吉當言吉，凶即言凶，得失是非，請形于兆，心中所疑，但且言之。”擲棋看上中下布卦為定[兆]。吉凶已定，不要再占，再即吉凶不定，即吉凶不定。凡卜須至心淨念，或宿啟，或緣事，切急擔心，亦不假宿啟。上中下三才之義也，展轉

9 The celestial Hall of Light was the northern polar asterism around which the Twenty-Eight Astral Lodges rotate; it was also another name for the Heart Lodge; David Pankenier, *Astrology and Cosmology in Early China* (Cambridge University Press, 2013), 347–349, 461. Guan Changlong reads *de* as a loan for “virtue” but we follow the original; Guan Changlong, *Dunhuang ben shushu wexian jijiao*, Vol. 1, 419.

10 For a translation of the prefaces to the Daozang version, which overlap somewhat with this Dunhuang version, see Morgan, “An Introduction to the *Lingqi jing*,” 100–103.

都有一百廿四卦。凡卦皆次奇偶為吉凶，奇為陽，偶為陰，以此相推，吉凶可知。。。。

The contrast with the terse instructions of the *Tricks of Jing* could hardly be more striking. One must perform preliminary purification rituals, notably the Daoist rite of “nocturnal invocation” (*suqi* 宿啟), “through which the sacred area is established, purified, and consecrated.”¹¹ One must also chant a ritual incantation. Doing so, one identifies oneself by name as the person divining, marking this as a notionally “do-it-yourself” tradition where client and diviner are united in one individual. The incantation involves holding the draughtsmen in one’s hands in what would seem to be a part of the process of rendering them “spiritually empowered.” These twelve pieces represent a spiritual hierarchy of sibling relationships: “elder” (*meng* 孟), “middle” (*zhong* 仲), and “younger” (*ji* 季). They are referred to as the Twelve Astral Officials (*shier chen guan* 十二辰官), and each of them is identified with a cosmologically charged force, figure, or grouping, such as Yin and Yang, the Twenty-Eight Astral Lodges, or the Seven Stars of the Dipper. The cosmological richness of this symbolism is overwhelming: one essentially holds the components and forces of the cosmos in one’s hands and then sets them in motion by casting the draughtsmen to form a specific configuration.

This symphony of cosmological signifiers potentially becomes a cacophony with the addition of another densely packed symbolic object onto which the draughtsmen are cast. This is the *shi* 式 or *shi pan* 式盤, a mantic device, diagram, or astrolabe dating back to at least the Warring States period.¹² Besides its association with *liu ren* 六壬 divination, *shi* devices were used for other divination practices and were also employed on their own for a variety of purposes.¹³

11 See *The Encyclopedia of Taoism*, Vol. 1, ed. Fabrizio Pregadio (London: Routledge, 2008), 539–544. *Suqi* forms the first part of a tripartite ritual program: it is “followed by the main rite of communication—conceived as an audience with the supreme deities—in which a Declaration (*ci*) is read. The program concludes with the Statement of Merit (*yangong*), the purpose of which is to reward the spirits that have assisted the priest in transmitting his messages to heaven”; *ibid.* In the divinatory context one notes that *suqi* is also a preliminary to communication with the gods and spirits.

12 There is a long Sinological tradition of studying these boards, going back to Joseph Needham, *Science and Civilisation in China*, Volume 4.1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962), 261–269. For an overview and for further references, see Marc Kalinowski, “The Notion of *shi* 式 and Some Related Terms in Qin-Han Calendrical Astrology,” *Early China* 35 (2013): 331–360.

13 Guan Changlong, *Dunhuang ben shushu wexian jijiao*, Vol. 1, 471–483 includes several different types of divination manuscripts under the *shi* 式 divination category: *Liuren* (2 Dunhuang mss), *Tui shi lu nishun ge* 推十祿逆順歌 (1 ms), and *Qimen dunjia* 奇門遁

While there are different types of *shi* devices, a common feature is the use of a circle with twenty-eight sections labelled with the Twenty-Eight “Astral Lodges” or *xiu*, which often turns on a square base that is also marked with such features as the Stems and Branches and the Twenty-Eight Astral Lodges.¹⁴ *Empowered Draughtsmen* divination does not, however, usually provide responses based on which quadrant or section of a *shi* board the draughtsmen land, and this suggests that the board is used in lieu of a table, the ground, or a spread carpet as a relevant cosmological object, but not as a consequential element in determining the divination.

The divination resolves doubts, and it is requested to articulate what is auspicious and what is inauspicious. This request seems to be addressed to the divination system itself, or else to the twelve spiritually empowered draughtsmen as a whole. The practical instructions for creating and interpreting the mantric figures formed by the draughtsmen equip one with cosmological rubrics for understanding the numbers and their positions. Like the *Tricks of Jing*, it creates a numerical trigram with an upper, middle, and lower number. Here, however, these are explicitly aligned with heaven, humanity, and the earth, respectively. The odd and even sums of each line are also read in terms of their identification as Yang and Yin, respectively. As noted in chapter one, this is a powerful interpretive framework that allows one to “read” the trigrams in a highly specific and meaningful way.

The *Empowered Draughtsmen Divination Method's* instructions suggest that one cast the draughtsmen only once for a given query. The *Daozang* version specifies that one cannot cast again, even if one receives an inauspicious response: “[t]okens should be thrown only once ... if cast more than once for the same matter, its auspicious and inauspicious aspects will not be accurately [revealed].”¹⁵ This prohibition of trying a second time would seem to be commensurate with the ritual preliminaries involved in manipulating such powerful and charged objects. It contrasts with the *Divination of Maheśvara's* “rule of three,” and also with its lack of explicit emphasis on the sacrality or symbolism of the dice.

Further instructions preserved in a selection of Dunhuang divination texts involving coins, rods, and other materials offer additional insights into the rit-

甲 (2 mss). The title *Liuren* and *Qimendunjia* are not originally on the manuscripts, but given by Guan, indicating their affinity with the received methods.

14 See Marc Kalinowski, “Les instruments astro-calendériques des Han et la méthode Liuren,” *Bulletin de l'École Française d'Extrême-Orient* 71 (1983): 309–419; and Kalinowski, “The Notion of *shi* 式.”

15 Morgan, “An Introduction to the *Lingqi jing*,” 102.

ual context of divination performances and attitudes and beliefs about the material bases themselves.¹⁶ In a manuscript version of the Twelve Coin method called the *Twelve Coin Method of Laozi's Book of Changes* (*Li Lao Jun Zhouyi shier qian bufa* 李老君周易十二錢卜法, S.3724), the identification of the time, name, and business of the divination event is emphasized, but there is little in the way of invoking specific deities. The use of twelve items is notable, as is the fact that the pattern must be “looked at” to be interpreted. The last line affords an exalted position to the diviner:¹⁷

The plain [side] is Yin and the patterned is Yang; if Yin is facing up then Yang is facing down. Laozi's method for divining with the *Changes* is to cast (*zhi*) twelve coins into a basin and look at (*kan*) whether they are plain or patterned to determine auspiciousness; not one in ten thousand will fail. Anyone who wants to divine grabs the coins in their hands and invokes (*zhou*): “On X year X month and X day, I, So-and-So, will divine about X matter: when it is auspicious make it auspicious, producing (*zuo*) a mantic figure (*gua*) of mutual generation; when it is inauspicious articulate (*yan*) it inauspicious, such that the mantic figure signifies inauspiciousness and mutual conquest.” Spirits and coins benefit each other and so one's pleas are understood, and thus take the diviner's position as one of high stature since he/she is responsible for producing (*zuo*) the mantic figure omen.

縵為陰，文為陽，陰仰陽覆。老子卜易之法，用錢十二文擲着盤中，看文縵即知吉凶，萬不失一。來卜者人捉錢，如咒之曰：“為某年某月某日某乙所卜其事，吉時作吉，作相生之卦；凶時言凶，即道凶相剋克之卦。”神錢合利，所乞之（知）之，卜者情高，任作卦兆。¹⁸

As in the *Empowered Draughtsmen Divination Method*, the diviner requests that the objects—or their invoked deities—speak, and say what is auspicious and inauspicious. Both texts thus emphasize orality and speech, despite their being text-based traditions. The *Twelve Coin Method of Laozi's Book of Changes* specified a connection between coins and spirits, but not one so strong and

16 See Kalinowski, “La divination par les nombres.”

17 S.3724; Wang Jingbo, *Dunhuang zhanbu wenxian yu shehui shenghuo*, 77; Zheng & Zhang, *Dunhuang zhanbu wenxian xulu*, 22; Guan Changlong, *Dunhuang ben shushu wenxian jijiao*, Vol. 1, 450–460.

18 Zheng & Zhang punctuate differently and consider *gua zhao* to begin the next section which quotes from the *Yi*.

explicit as the *Empowered Draughtsmen* when it identifies each of its twelve draughtsmen with a particular deity or cosmological force. The text does not even correlate the twelve coins to the twelve Branches or any other cosmologically resonant group of twelve. The diviner, who effects this connection between coins and spirits by casting the coins and producing a mantic figure, is praised as being of high stature. It is an open question whether this is a rhetorical device, or whether indeed this method required that one consult a diviner rather than performing it oneself.

Another Dunhuang divination text, *Confucius' Horsehead Divination Method* (*Kongzi matou bufu*), makes use of nine notched rods, but its introduction similarly ignores any numerological and cosmological significance of the number nine, which otherwise represents the peak of Yang power. This quick method did not require knowledge of a particular spirit pantheon. Nor did the client have to identify themselves. It does, like the *Divination of Maheśvara* and other Dunhuang divination texts, advocate focusing the mind. It also specifies a range of daily matters it can deal with, including weather, illness, lost items, burial, lawsuits, family relations, and so forth. Each issue has nine possible answers marked by numbers one through nine. There are several versions but the one with the longest preface is found in the Dunhuang manuscript bearing the shelfmark S.5901v.¹⁹

In cases of Yin-Yang stalk divination, the way of the *Changes* is the source. [This tradition] has many words like rivers and seas, such that only the sages could decide, so how could an ordinary person judge? So Confucius created (*zao*) this divination, in which nine rods are used as tokens for calculation (*suanzi*), each of which has [a number one through nine] incised on it, is three inches long, and used to fill a bamboo tube. The tube is closed on both ends with a small hole through which the rod can slip in and out. When a person has troubles, engage it to solve whatever doubts one wants. [For] every matter without exception, [it] will hit the mark, so it will not be necessary to look (*kan*) twice.

While traveling, Confucius was sitting on his horse; he focused his mind and set his intentions. If divining, one cannot have a chaotic mind. The

19 See also S.2578; Wang Jingbo, *Dunhuang zhanbu wenxian yu shehui shenghuo*, 103; Zheng & Zhang, *Dunhuang zhanbu wenxian xulu*, 28. On S.9501V+9502V. We see first the issue presented for divination (lost objects, rain, etc.), and then an oracular response written in regular-sized script under large numbers one through nine. Guan Changlong, *Dunhuang ben shushu wexian jijiao*, Vol. 1, 439–449.

one with problems divines immediately,²⁰ so that is why it is called the Confucius Horse Head divination method, which Confucius prepared for later generations. Whenever divining, focus the mind and set the intentions, to surely get what you tested about.

凡陰陽卜筮，易道為宗，文義甚多，猶如江海，非聖不裁，豈凡能決！所以孔子造此卜法立成，用算子九枚，枚別有卦（刻），長三寸，竹槿（筒）盛之，密蓋兩頭，一頭開一小孔，容一算子出入，緣身時行所有疑，逐意決之，事無不中，不許再看。孔子因行，馬上坐，定心啓願，如卜不得亂心，有疑事者立馬便上（卜），故曰孔子馬頭卜，備於後世。凡卜之時，定心啓願，必獲有驗。

Another Dunhuang manuscript version of this text, whose method seems like an abbreviated version of the famous *qian* divination with 100 wooden slips known all across contemporary East Asia, appears to differ from the above version in specifying that there should be a diviner and a client.²¹ It also mentions that there are preliminary invocations. While such preliminaries are probably to be expected, the statement still forms a counterpoint to the very matter-of-fact introduction given above.

The introduction to another divination text from Dunhuang, the *Five Omens Divination Method* (*Wu zhao bufa*), contrasts sharply with the *Confucius' Horse-head Divination Method's* apparent lack of concern with invocation, cosmology, and the mechanics of the divination process. Before giving its specific method, in fact, the introduction to the *Five Omens Divination Method* waxes poetic about these topics, effectively catechizing its readers on how to divine properly.

Deities will not descend for whoever comes to divine if they are not [invoked] though stalk divination. Whoever goes out to ask questions of an instructor should not come empty handed. The old saying goes: “what good would come from deceiving a teacher or cheating a father?” Whoever wants to divine for a mantic figure must first light incense, focus their mind and bring up the request, invoking: “Kindly ask the four elder, four middle, and four younger spirits, up above begin with the Sun, Moon, and Five Planets, the Twenty-Eight Astral Lodges, the Stems and

20 This is a pun: 立馬 *lima* means both “stopping the horse” and “immediately.” The text is not suggesting that one needs to sit on a horse in order to divine.

21 Kalinowski, “Cléromancie,” 319.

Branches and Yin and Yang, the Supreme Lord of the Great Above, the Four Seasons, and the Five Agents, please resolve all deep and stagnant lingering doubts.” Also invoke: “milfoil divination, [with] stalk divination achieves the round pattern [of Heaven] like a spirit, and [with] a mantic figure achieves the square pattern [of Earth].²² The spirit already knows the future and the knowledgeable one knows the past when they talk of auspiciousness or inauspiciousness and report their myriad manifestations, changing and uniting, irrespective of the person’s desire. If auspicious, then the mantic figures will generate each other, and if inauspicious, they become empty and falling.”

Whenever studying the method of omens, divide the thirty-six rods with two hands, and then eliminate the remainder by groups of five, each viewed in their own positions, determining the five agents—Metal, Wood, Water, Fire, and Earth; first put Wood down in the east on Jia and Yi, next put Fire down in the south on Bing and Ding, next put earth in the center on Wu and Ji day, next put Metal down in the west on Geng and Xin, then put Water in the north on Ren and Gui.²³ The numbers for the five omens are: one is called Water, two is called Fire, three is called Wood, four is called Metal, and five is called Earth.

凡人因來卜事，不著（祝）神靈不降。凡人出門問師，必不得空手。古語云：誑師欺父，何得美哉？凡欲卜卦，先須焚香，至心啟請，咒云：“謹請四孟、四仲、四季諸神，上啟日月五星、廿八宿、六甲陰陽、太上元主、四時、五行，沉滯[X] 豫，請為決之。”又咒曰：“著筮（之）得（德）圓如神，卦【之】得（德）之妨（方）所（以）妨（知），神已（以）知來，智已（以）知（藏）往，吉凶言之，變通萬象，吉凶俱告，勿逐人情。吉則卦兆相生，凶則空亡剝落。”凡學兆之法，用算子卅六，先以兩手停擘，然後五五除之，各覓本位，五行金、木、水、火、土為定：初下東方甲乙木，次下南方丙丁火，

- 22 Guan Changlong, *Dunhuang ben shushu wexian jijiao*, Vol. 1, 257, n. 1 points out the similarity of this invocation to a line in the *Xici shang* commentary to the *Changes*: 故著之德，圓而神；卦之德，方以知。Legge translates, “the virtue of the stalks is versatile and spirit-like; that of the diagrams is exact and wise” (available in Ctext <https://ctext.org/book-of-changes/xi-ci-shang>); Shaughnessy: “that is why the milfoil’s virtue is round and spiritual, and the hexagrams’ virtue is square and thereby knowing”; *I Ching*, 199. This is part of a passage following the categorization of numbers one to ten as either belonging to Heaven (all odd) or Earth (all even).
- 23 From Jia and Yi to Ren and Gui, the whole sequence of the Heavenly Stems corresponds to the directions as part of the procedure to generate a mantic figure.

次下中央戊己土，次下西方庚辛金，次下北方壬癸水。五兆卜數，一曰水，二曰火，三曰木，四曰金，五曰土也。²⁴

This exceedingly rich passage makes explicit what many others presumably omit as something that “goes without saying.” Its statements are therefore worthy of unpacking. First, it emphasizes reciprocity in the relationship between the spirits and the diviner. One must make offerings and invocations if one expects them to assist one in determining what is auspicious and what is inauspicious, and the duty to uphold one’s part in this exchange is likened to one’s relationship with a teacher or with one’s father. This involves material offerings such as incense, and a proper ritual attitude of focusing the mind and bringing up one’s request. The invocation seems to borrow from the *Empowered Draughtsmen Divination Method*, even mentioning the four elder, middle, and younger spirits, and then beginning—but not completing—an enumeration of these twelve that includes the same figures found in the *Empowered Draughtsmen Divination Method*. It then emphasizes the responses, which, as in many other texts, “say” if it is inauspicious or auspicious. Crucially, the spirits are the sources of knowledge about the future. The passage also stresses the objectivity of divination by stating that its prognoses do not arrive according to a person’s situation. That is to say, one doesn’t get a good prognosis because one strongly desires or needs it.

To relate these various texts’ introductions and their assumptions about the divination process to the *Divination of Maheśvara*, we can revisit its introduction. As we have seen, it emphasizes focusing the mind, expressing one’s intentions, and identifying oneself by name before Śakra, Brahmā, the four celestial god-kings, and the many spirits. This differs markedly from the cosmological figures and forces invoked in the *Empowered Draughtsmen* and the *Five Omens Divination Method*. The *Divination of Maheśvara* mentions dice only in the context of casting three times to create a set. Dice are not identified with any gods, spirits, or cosmological forces. Nor does the text state explicitly that there is any connection between dice and spirits, as in, for example, the *Twelve Coin Method of Laozi’s Book of Changes*’s statement that “[s]pirits and coins benefit each other.” The *Divination of Maheśvara*’s rule of three also contrasts with the *Empowered Draughtsmen*’s insistence that one divine only once concerning a specific query. The latter injunction seems to emphasize the finality—and sacrality—of the process by which a mantic figure emerges from the random

24 P.2859B; Wang Jingbo, *Dunhuang zhanbu wenxian yu shehui shenghuo*, 33; Zheng & Zhang, *Dunhuang zhanbu wenxian xulu*, 41.

manipulation of objects. The *Divination of Maheśvara's* rule of three also differs from those of other divination systems, some of which are explored in chapter three, that insist on repeating the process three times. This latter type of rule of three effectively acts as a “control” so that the objectivity and veracity of the process is confirmed: even if it may be possible for divination—or a spirit—to get it wrong once, it is highly unlikely that divination—or a spirit or, as is often the case, a succession of three spirits—will get it wrong three times in a row. The *Divination of Maheśvara's* rule of three, by contrast, makes the process seem more like a game: three tries for an auspicious result. Such a sentiment is very far from the prescribed ritual stance of sincerity, but it seems to be there in the process nonetheless. Perhaps it is an artefact of the material culture of the *Divination of Maheśvara's* form of divination, of the use of dice that are just as often the province of gamblers as they are of diviners. This is once again an instance where the explicit and implicit assumptions of divination tell sometimes opposing and sometimes complementary stories. This is much like the contrast between the gods and spirits of the *Divination of Maheśvara* and the contents of the prognoses, which create both striking alignments and unexpected juxtapositions.

2 Numerical Trigrams in the *Stalk Divination* and the Baoshan Divination Record

Having given a brief overview of the methods and ritual assumptions of various forms of numerical trigram divination, it remains to investigate some of these further to see how their poetics, pantheons, and worldviews either contrast or overlap with those of the *Divination of Maheśvara*. Beginning with the fourth-century-BCE *Stalk Divination (Shifa)* and related texts, one encounters a strong emphasis on diagnosis and exorcism which, seen in this *longue-durée* perspective, lends depth to some comparable features in the *Divination of Maheśvara*.

The *Divination of Maheśvara's* use of numerical trigrams brings it into dialogue with an ancient and vibrant Chinese tradition of divination centered around sets of numerical mantic figures that trace back to antiquity, and which can be seen on twelfth- through- eighth-century-BCE bones and ceramics dating to the Shang and Western Zhou eras.²⁵ These early numerical sets evolved

25 Constance A. Cook and Andrea Bréard, “Placing the *Zhouyi* in BCE Stalk Divination traditions: Views from Newly Discovered texts,” in *The Yijing: Alternative Visions and Practices*, ed. Hon Tse-ki (Leiden: Brill, forthcoming). Li Xueqin 李學勤, “Qinghua jian *Shifa* yu

over time, but are preserved in a unique form in the untitled fourth-century-BCE bamboo divination text referred to by modern scholars as the *Stalk Divination* (*Shifa* 筮法). Other notable material evidence of Chinese traditions of numerical trigrams is found in the second-century-BCE *Tricks of Jing* and in a variety of mostly tenth-century-CE Dunhuang divination texts, many of which were just introduced. The range of divinatory methods represented in these Dunhuang texts suggest a rich and entangled history since ancient times.

Among the numerous other types of divination popular in ancient China, those that included hemerology or calendrical astrology (including the use of cosmograms and *shi* devices) reflect two important considerations when examining the cultural contexts of Chinese divination texts.²⁶ One is the continuing importance of time as a cosmic indicator of supreme power, dating back to the origin of the ritual calendar in the Shang. The other is that the texts of different eras and places reflect evolving cosmic understandings, embracing new factors or supernatural agents.

Before the introduction of simplified methods and of non-Chinese cosmologies, numerical omens in Chinese tradition were generally produced in sets of six numbers, including combinations of 1, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9. Traditionally, it is understood that each number was the result of a calculation of stalks, but recently it has become clear that other objects had been used in combination with stalks to produce the recorded numerical results.²⁷ Besides dice, these could have included cowries, spindles, stones in a turtle rattle, bones, or other objects. Unfortunately, there are no records providing details and the earliest dice date only to the third century BCE. Preserved texts for interpreting the numerical images date to only the fourth century BCE and cannot be relied upon to interpret the earlier number sets. These include the versions of the classics, such as the *Book of Changes*, focused on sets of six figures (hexagrams), or, more precisely, combinations of two sets of three (trigrams).

The *Changes* further multiplied the Eight Trigrams into sixty-four possible hexagrams, each line of which was linked to an oracle that could be read in sets of six or linked with other hexagrams in a variety of patterns. The numbers in the *Changes* are essentialized into powers of Yin and Yang and recorded

shuzigua wenti” 清華簡《筮法》與數字卦問題, *Wenwu* 文物 2013.8: 66–69; Wang Huaping 王化平 and Zhou Yan 周燕, *Wanwu jie you shu: shuzigua yu xian Qin Yi shi yanjiu* 萬物皆有數：數字卦與先秦易筮研究 (Beijing: Renmin, 2015).

26 Donald Harper and Marc Kalinowski, eds, *Books of Fate and Popular Culture in Early China: The Daybook Manuscripts of the Warring States, Qin, and Han* (Leiden: Brill, 2017).

27 Cook and Bréard, “Placing the *Zhouyi*.”

as broken or unbroken lines. However, the numbers were recorded and clearly retained a primary mantic power in the fourth-century-BCE bamboo text, the *Stalk Divination (Shifa)*.²⁸ Here the Eight Trigrams formed of odd and even numbers were essentially the same as those in the *Changes*, but the manner in which they were combined and read was entirely different.²⁹ Like the Dunhuang *Five Omens* text mentioned above, mini-cosmograms were formed in which the relationship between the pattern of the mantic figures determined the oracle. The eight component parts of the arrangements, linked to powers of time, gender, and spirits, must also be considered as spiritual pantheons representing a select subset of the larger pantheon invoked and intimately connected to the diviner's intention and their tools which produce the images.

The *Stalk Divination* manuscript included a rudimentary cosmogram illustration (later ones include Stems and Branches but these are found separately in the *Stalk Divination*).³⁰ It featured a human body inside a space mapped out according to seasonally affixed trigrams, colors, deities, and other factors.³¹ In a chart below the cosmogram's Stem-and-Branch correlates are noted. The human body depicted in the center is marked in sections with different trigrams, possibly protective like a talisman, or at least indicating which trigram agent should be used to interpret the divination.

The numerical trigrams marking the body in the *Stalk Divination* diagram likely matched with the chart listing the curse-causing ghosts under each trigram name. Hence, we can be fairly certain that trigrams protected and expelled supernatural influences in the designated sectors of the body. This contrasts with a vapor-based pathology: there are hints in other fourth-century-BCE divination records of a simple vessel theory (*mai* 脈) for the internal up-and-down flow of cosmic vapor (*qi*), or at least that there was a perceived correct direction of flow between the chest and abdomen (downward). The

28 Li Xueqin 李學勤, ed, *Qinghua daxue cang Zhanguo zhujian* 清華大學藏戰國竹簡, Vol. 4 (Shanghai: Zhongxi, 2013); Cook and Zhao, *Stalk Divination*.

29 Cook and Zhao, *Stalk Divination*. Similar variants are found in the *Guicang*, a hexagram text discovered in Hubei. See E.L. Shaughnessy, *Unearthing the Changes: Recently Discovered Manuscripts of the Yijing (I Ching) and Related Texts* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013).

30 See for example, Marc Kalinowski, "Hemerology and Prediction in the Daybooks: Ideas and Practices," in *Books of Fate*, ed. Harper and Kalinowski, 182–183.

31 Deities of the four directions include: Kan, the Supervisor of Trees (Si Shu 司樹), south, Fire, Red; Zhen, the Supervisor of Thunder (Si Lei 司雷), east, Wood, Green; Dui, the Supervisor of Receiving (bringing in the harvest) (Si Shou 司收), west, Metal, White; Li, Supervisor of Storing (the harvest) (Si Cang 司藏), north, Water, Black. Note that the layout of the text in C.A. Cook and Zhao Lu, *Stalk Divination*, p. 132 is flawed in organization.

Why is it called Kan? The Supervisor of planting is the reason it is called kan.

It is the South, Fire, Red.

Why is it called Zhen? The Supervisor of Thunder is the reason it is called Zhen.

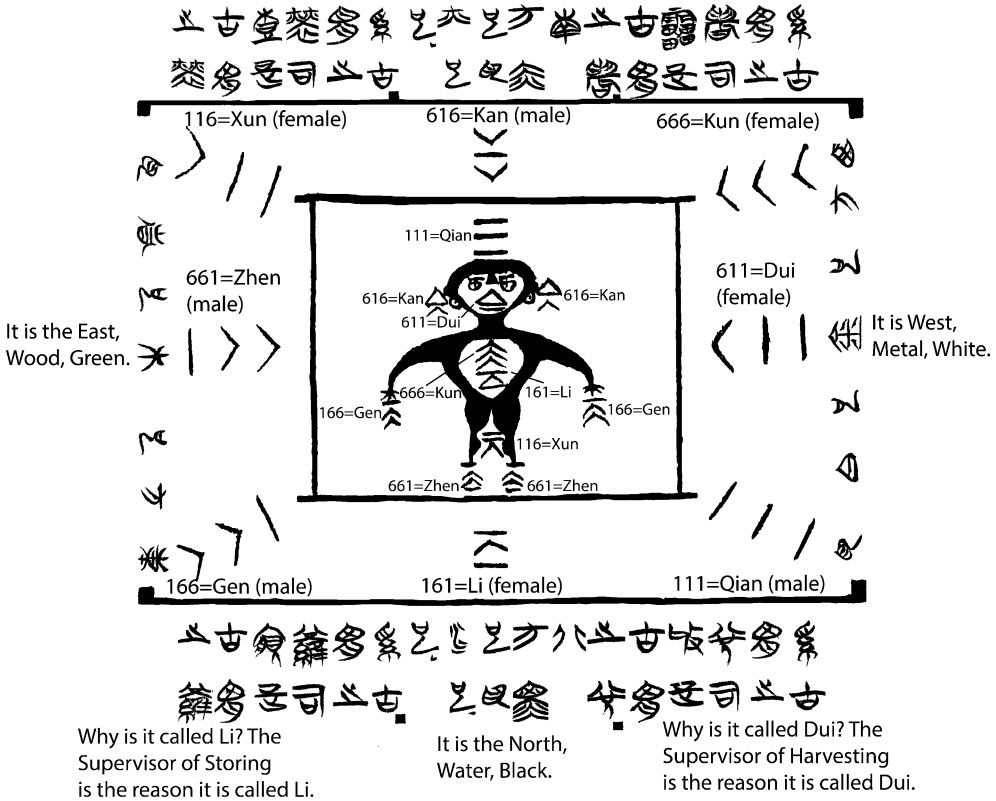


FIGURE 9 Cosmogram from Tsinghua Bamboo Manuscript *Stalk Divination*
AFTER COOK AND ZHAO, *STALK DIVINATION*, 55, ILLUSTRATION 3.1

healer, like the diviner, had tools for “attacking” (*gong* 攻) and “releasing” (*jie* 解) the curse-causing influence. These influences were generically known in Han medical texts as “deviant vapors” (*xieqi* 邪氣).³² The wet dark interior of

32 The nefarious influence of “wind” and “heat” in the *Stalk Divination*’s lists of sources for *sui* suggest an active theory of *xieqi* as defined in Han medical texts. In the Baoshan record, the client is having problems with his *qi* moving upwards (instead of the proper direction of downward as described in Han theory), but external sources of natural vapors/winds/breaths are not listed among the possible sources of *sui* (except named deities or altars of earth and sky). The most dangerous sources seem to be ghosts and revenants. It is possible that the *sui* that had to be expelled from his residence chamber was related to the ancient idea of corpse-ghosts that would haunt specific places and specific times. See the discussion of the death corpse-ghost diagrams (*si shi tu* 死失圖) in

the body was marked off with female trigrams and the exterior exposed to light was marked off with male trigrams. This Yin-Yang balance also accords with later medical theory.

Signs on the body, whether talismans for protection, or trigrams useful for identifying demonic influences, trace back to ancient Chinese culture besides finding currency in medieval Chinese Buddhism.³³ The marking of bodies with Branch signs is found in Qin and Han daybooks and in Dunhuang medical manuals. In a text in the Dunhuang manuscript P.2675, the twelve Branches and other hemerological systems denote the locations of the human soul (*ren-shen* 人神), which resides in different sections depending on the twelve time periods. Sections where the soul resides cannot be subject to invasive healing methods such as acupuncture or moxibustion.³⁴

Besides the cosmogram with the body in the center, the *Stalk Divination* diviner constructed micro-cosmograms of four trigrams presumably randomly selected through the process of casting the dice and stalks. These four trigrams represented a pattern that could be mapped onto a diagram supplied in the text with four life areas of concern (army strategy, official relations, family relations, and physical spaces in the residence), each divided into four subcategories.³⁵ Trigrams of different genders, often presented as oppositional pairs and representing what would later be identified with Yin and Yang, deal with different sets of temporal and seasonal factors as well as indicating bad actors. For example, for the most powerful male and female trigrams (composed of all odd or all even numbers), we see that the male (Qian 乾) reveals the curse sources

Kalinowski, "Hemerology and Prediction in the Daybooks," 179, 190; and Yan Changgui, "Daybooks and the Spirit World," in *Books of Fate*, ed. Harper and Kalinowski, 216–219.

33 Donald Harper, "Dunhuang iatromantic manuscripts P.2856R^o and P.2675 V^o," in *Medieval Chinese Medicine*, 134–164. Examples of *sui*-causing spirits in P.2856 R^o include Tree Spirit (Shu Shen 樹神), Lord of the North (Bei Jun 北君), Supervisor of Life-Allotments (Si Ming 司命), the Venerable (Zhangren 丈人), [Ghosts] who Died by Weapons (Bingsi 兵死), Ghosts who are without Descendants (Wuhou Gui 無後鬼), and Southeast Earth Sir (Dongnan Tugong 東南土公) (translation following Harper, p. 141). These spirits can more or less be traced back to the Warring States. See also Copp, *The Body Incantatory: Spells and the Ritual Imagination in Medieval Chinese Buddhism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014).

34 See the discussions in Donald Harper, "Iatromancie," in *Divination et société*, 471–493; Despeux, "Âmes et animation du corps," 71–94; Vivienne Lo and Sylvia Schroer, "Deviant Airs in 'Traditional' Chinese Medicine," in *Asian Medicine and Globalization*, ed. Joseph S. Alter (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), 45–66; Li Jianmin 李健民, *Faxian gumai: Zhongguo gudian yixue yu shushu shentiguan* 發現古脈：中國古典醫學與數術身體觀 (Beijing: Shehui kexue wenxian, 2007).

35 Cook and Zhao, *Stalk Divination*, 119–121.

as destroyed ancestral temples, deceased father spirits, and the Middle of the Room, which may have been an early equivalent to the *impluvium* spirit or Sky Well, possibly seen in the *Divination of Maheśvara*. The female (Kun 坤), on the other hand, reveals the sources as places one passes through such as gates and walkways,³⁶ or Yin spirits, such as deceased mother spirits, the ghosts of slaves or those punished, and, oddly, an event, the Western Sacrifice.

This text required detailed knowledge of how to use it, although hints are embedded seemingly at random in a few places in the text. These include a statement found on bamboo slip number 51 (out of 63) tacked to the end of a chart listing the categories of spirits and demons that might curse (*sui*) (see Table 3): “[i]n the Way of Heaven, the male [trigram] overcomes the female [trigram] and the many [trigrams of one type] overcome the lone one” (夫天之道*1^u?-s · 男勝女*nra? · 眾勝寡*[C.k]^wra?). This rhyming rule reflects the cosmic patriarchy, but also the importance of a majority in a result (three out of four was positive). Essentially, when a talismanic set of four numerical trigrams (in two stacks placed as a square) was produced, the diviner had to privilege the male (Yang) trigram over the female (Yin) one, but if there were three of any kind, that meant the result was affirmative. In fact, it is not always obvious in the examples provided in the text what rules the fourth-century diviners followed. It seemed there were multiple factors depending on which of the charts were consulted or even the values created by the relationships perceived between the four trigrams of the array. For example, paired male and female trigrams (that is, graphic opposites of each other) could weigh more heavily than other values depending on their location in the array. This suggests if not a sense of play, at least a “play of interpretation” that gave the diviner some leeway in decoding the array of mantic figures.

A defense of the efficacy of the stalk method is found in the last line of the entire text, tacked onto the list of topics for which it could be used (see below). Such a defense reminds us of the later *Tricks of Jing*, but in this case it is probably not turtle divination—which required a stable ritual space and wealth—which this handy transportable manual warned against, but the use of dice:

In each case, the [topics] will all have their appropriate trigrams, so then one can prognosticate about them using stalk sortilege,³⁷ when prognos-

36 Note a “door” (*hu* 戶) spirit was indicated by a male trigram, possibly because unlike a gate, it represented the wooden door and not the opening.

37 This is the earliest occurrence of the verb for “using stalk sortilege” (*le* 扞). It appears again only much later in the transmitted version of the “Appended Statements” (*Xici*) given above. The first century CE *Shuowen* dictionary corrects the verb “to dangle [stalks

ticating one must use the stalk sortilege [method] to get the trigram so there is no mistake.

凡是，各當其卦，乃扞占之，占之必扞，卦乃不忒。

While seemingly the *Stalk Divination* diviners were encouraged to use stalks, the proliferation of ones and sixes in the numerical trigrams suggests that stalk sorting may have been to further refine dice results. It is known that some dice in existence around that time had only ones and sixes on four sides and blanks on the other two (see figures 4 and 5 above). Andrea Breárd suggests that throwing a blank with such dice may have then required the use of perhaps fifty-eight stalks, the results of which would further refine the numerical results of the basic 1 (or 7) and 6 to include the “special numbers” 4, 5, 8, and 9.³⁸ A limited number of trigrams included these special numbers, but their appearance in the array affect the interpretation of the entire set, usually negatively.

In all cases of line numbers no matter whether big or small, when arising in the upper outer [trigram] they indicate something baleful; if they arise in the lower inner [trigram] they indicate something baleful; if they arise in both upper and lower [trigrams] then the country will experience military commands, a *zhixie* monster,³⁹ wind and rain, or eclipses⁴⁰ of the sun and moon.

凡爻，如大如小，作於上外有吝；作於下內有吝；上下皆作，邦有兵命、鷹獬、風雨、日月有戕(災)。

between the fingers to make a *gua*” 掛 to “create a *gua*” 卦. The former word is distinguished only by the addition of the “hand” semantic element (扞). For texts and discussion, see Chen Guying and Zhao Jianwei, *Zhouyi zhuyi yu yanjiu*, 607–613; Ding Fubao 丁福保, comp. *Shuowen jiezi gulin zhengbu hebian* 說文解字詁林正補合編 (Taipei: Dingwen, 1978), Vol. 9, 1327–1329. The idea that *le* referred to stalk sortilege per se also comes from this Han period gloss and is assumed by modern scholars to apply to the earlier *Shifa*.

38 Cook and Bréard, “Placing the *Zhouyi*.”

39 A *zhixie* monster was a one-horned goat-like spirit that is first mentioned in *Mozi* as an arbitrator of truth and honesty. Reference to this beast is found in various Han texts written in a number of ways, such as *xiezi* 解廌, *xiexie* 𪚩𪚩, *xiezhi* 獬豸, *zhixie* 豸獬, and so on. See “Ming gui, xia” 明鬼, *Mozi jiangou* 31.144. The *Shuowen* defines it as a goat used to decide trials, *Shuowen jiezi gulin* Vol. 8, 10, shang. 517–521. Han texts with mention of this animal include *Shiji*, *Hanshu*, *Hou Hanshu*, *Lunheng*, *Du Duan*.

40 The Tsinghua team read the original word, meaning to “be cut, reduced,” as *shi* 食 for 蝕 “to eclipse” which was certainly the larger meaning. The original graph however was *zai* 戕 (minus the “fire” 火 semantic), which was not phonetically close to *shi*. The word *zai* (also written 災) meant “calamity,” which is how eclipses were interpreted.

Baleful numbers do not seem to be of concern after the Warring States period. Possibly the persuasive strength of Yin-Yang reductionism perpetuated by the *Changes* allowed for less technical know-how.

A further list in the *Stalk Divination* gives the oracular images or omens that are associated with each stalk-derived number (4, 5, 8, and 9) versus the common ones and sixes, which may have been dice derived.



FIGURE 10
Numbers from the Tsinghua Bamboo Manuscript *Stalk Divination*

With regard to line number images for 8, they are wind, water, words, flying birds, swellings, fish, measuring cylinders; [when 8 appears] in an upper [trigram], it is alcohol [with sediment], and in a lower [one] it is rinse water.

凡爻象，八為風、為水、為言、為飛鳥、為腫脹、為魚、為罐筩。在上為醪，下為沃。

The images for 5 are sky and sun, noble men, soldiers, blood, chariots, squares, worry, fear, and hunger.

五象為天、為日、為貴人、為兵、為血、為車、為方、為憂、為懼、為飢。

The images for 9 are large animals, trees, sacrificial preparations, heads and feet, snakes, snakes, bends, semi-circlets of jade, (archery) bows, *hu*-jades, *heng*-jades.

九象為大獸、為木、為備戒、為首、為足、為蛇、為蛇、⁴¹為曲、為玦、為弓、琥、璜。

The images for 4 are ground, circle, drum, earring, circlet of jade, heels, snow, dew, hail.

四之象為地、為圓、為鼓、為珥、為環、為踵、為雪、為露、為霰。

41 This repetition was a copyist error.

While we might imagine that each category of image had a vaguely Yin or Yang sense to it depending on whether the number was odd or even, in fact, the *Stalk Divination* gives us no clue how the diviner “read” or “saw” these images.⁴² Perhaps the diviner was to include one somehow in his calculation of the auspiciousness if it was in the immediate environment or perhaps to use as reference when looking up oracles in another text. Did these images project causative or receptive values of “perverse vapor”? Or, was their power purely visual, somehow connected creatively to the image projected by the written display of numbers themselves?

The oracular responses of the *Stalk Divination* also indicate possible sources of the afflicting perverse vapor or curse (*sui*), such as trouble-causing ghosts, for the diviner to consider. Although not described as demons inside the body as in the *Divination of Maheśvara*, the ideas are related. This feature of designating ghosts is not shared with hexagram texts in either the *Changes* tradition or an alternative tradition known as the *Guicang* 歸藏 (“Returning to be Stored”). A third-century-BCE version of the latter reveals sixty-four mantic figures with numerical lines essentialized into Yin- and Yang-style broken or unbroken lines (written with numbers 1 一 and 8 八), just as in the fourth-century-BCE *Zhouyi* (*Changes of Zhou*) manuscripts. The *Guicang* however, like the later *Tricks of Jing*, included no line oracles, only verses following the hexagram name. These verses are completely different than those in the *Changes*. Notably, the *Guicang* verses often quote ancient diviners speaking (*yue* 曰), implying that the poetic imagery or mythical events mentioned were parts of incantations or spells. This suggests that equally vivid imagery and odd bits of tale preserved in the *Changes* and in the *Tricks* genre of texts also had a magical dimension. In other words, bits of spells and incantations were perhaps preserved in the *Tricks* genre texts as well as in the *Changes* and *Guicang*. These texts can also include pragmatic advice and evaluations of auspiciousness, but only the *Tricks of Jing* preserved the *Stalk Divination* tradition of suggesting lists of curse-originating ghosts and spirits.

The spiritual pantheon invoked by the production of numerical trigrams was a key part of the divination’s efficacy. Notably, differences from the deities in the *Divination of Maheśvara* are apparent beyond the lack of influences from an organized religion, such as Buddhism. The names of the Eight Trigrams are given, but these are not specifically deified as, say, the Eight Archivists

42 There is some doubt whether the concept of Yin and Yang as cosmic powers had actually evolved by then; see Sarah Allan, “Yin 陰 and yang 陽 before yin-yang theory: Evidence from the Guodian and Tsinghua University Bamboo-Slip Manuscripts,” in Li Xueqin, Ai Lan 艾蘭, and Lü Dekai 呂德凱 ed., *Qinghua jian yanjiu* 3 (2019): 358–380.

TABLE 3 The Eight Trigrams in the male-female pairs in the order provided in the *Stalk Divination*. Below each trigram is the list of *sui*-trouble causing spirits and influences that appeared with each trigram

乾 Qian (M)	坤 Kun (F)	艮 Gen (M)	兌 Dui (F)	坎 Kan (M)	離 Li (F)	震 Zhen (M)	巽 Xun (F)
滅宗 Destroyed Shrine	門 Gate	殮 Burial	女子大面端嚇 死 Girl who died of fright from a big- headed [demon]	風 Wind	熱 Heat	日出東方 The east at dawn	字殤 One who died pre- maturely in childbirth
山 Mountain	行 Walkway	豨 Boar	長女為妾而死 Elder daughter who died while a concubine	長殤 Elder child that died pre- maturely	溺者 One [who died] by drowning	食日 監(炎?)天 Blue sky at mealtime	巫 Shaman
父之不葬 死 Unburied father	母 Mother	暵魃 Drought demon		伏劍者 One felled by sword	縊者 One [who died] by hang- ing	晝 日(顯?)天 White sky in the after- noon	粒(孳)孳 One split open giv- ing birth to twins ^a
室中 Middle of the room	奴以死 Slave that died			牡豨 Male boar	長女殤 Elder daugh- ter who died prematurely	雨師 Rain Mas- ter	狂 Insane per- son
父 Father	西祭 Western sacrifice			縊者 One [who died] by hang- ing	辜者 One [who died] by being dismembered	狂者 Insane per- son	縊者 One [who died] by hanging
	縊者 One [who died] by hanging			辜 One [who died] by being dismembered		戶 Door	

a For a study of this phenomenon in Chu myth, see C.A. Cook and Luo Xinhui, *Birth in Ancient China: A Study of Metaphor and Cultural Identity in Pre-Imperial China* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2017).

(*ba shi*) in later Daoist practice. The sources of the curses are not specifically named spirits or demons either, but rather anonymous ghosts of people, animal demons, and supernaturally charged events (a sacrifice, a period of time) and spaces (an ancestral temple). The most obvious contrast is the bifurcation between ostensibly benevolent trigram names and the curse producers. In fact, it seems that the two layers of spirits (trigrams and curse-producers) were most likely popular in the ancient region dominated by Chu 楚 culture in the Yangtze River valley during the Warring States period.

Named gods play a more prominent role in a fourth-century-BCE record found in a tomb in Baoshan 包山, Hubei, which is also concerned with the sources of curses.⁴³ This record covered three years of diviners' efforts to discover the source of their client's curse (*sui*). This record is particularly attentive to the relationship between diviners, gods, and their divining tools, and helps to broaden our understanding of divination's role in interpersonal communication with gods and spirits.⁴⁴

While this record does not mention trigrams by name, it makes a point of naming the diviner and precisely which divining instrument they used. This naming, along with the precise time of the divination event, suggests a contractual relationship between the diviner and the spirits contacted for help to resolve the specified client's issues (career and health). In the Baoshan record we find one set of named spirits contacted—these tend to receive sacrifices and gifts—and then another set, mostly anonymous, that must be exorcised (“attacked and released”) from the client's body or living spaces. Only rarely do the two sets overlap.

Scholars have assumed that the eight divination tools mentioned must accord with the classical categories of turtle divination followed by stalk divination. The tools did seem to be used in alternation, with each divination event commonly requiring more than one method. But although each tool is named, whether it was a turtle, stalk, dice, or other implement remains unknown. Two tools, “Uplifting Ascendence” (*Chengde* 承德) and “Respecting Fate” (*Gong ming* 共>恭命), did produce numerical trigrams. Since the sets of four trigrams produced were mostly composed of ones and sixes it is likely that dice were used. The divination tool that was most commonly used and tended to start each divination event is believed to be a turtle method called “Protecting Home” (*Baojia* 保家), a name that could easily stand for the elite male client. It could summon the greatest number and variety of spirits. Not

43 Ke Heli 柯鶴立, “Shiyong Qinghua jian ‘Shifa’ jiedu Baoshan zhanbu jilu zhong gua yi” 試用清華簡《筮法》解讀包山占卜記錄中卦義, *Jianbo yanjiu* 簡帛研究 2016: 12–22; C.A. Cook, “A Fatal Case of Gu 蠱 Poisoning in the Fourth Century BC?” *East Asian Science, Technology, and Medicine* 44 (2016): 61–122. For a study of the complete text, see Constance A. Cook, *Death in Ancient China: The Tale of One Man's Journey* (Leiden: Brill, 2006). For recent studies of the spirits in Chu texts, see Yan Changgui 晏昌貴, *Wugui yu yinsi: Chu jian suojian fangshu zongjiao kao* 巫鬼與淫祀：楚簡所見方術宗教考 (Wuhan: Wuhan daxue, 2010).

44 The spirit world depicted in Qin and Han daybooks is even more vast (including most of the Chu spirits); the categories of ghosts indicated by the many systems of divination (such as by musical notes, Branches, Five Agents) are too many to account for here, see Yan Changgui, “Daybooks and the Spirit World.”

all tools were capable of further indicating which demons were to be attacked or expelled. Uplifting Ascendance and Respecting Fate were the most versatile. They could help determine the (astral, earth, mountain, residential, ancestral) spirits requiring sacrifices, but also determine those demonic forces (e.g., water spirits, ghosts of people who had died by drowning or in war, or unnamed ancestors) requiring “attack and release,” and, finally, also those, such as the Spirit of the Residence Chamber, requiring “expelling” (*chu* 除).

The most notable difference between the Baoshan record and the early manuals is in the lists of named ghosts. These are all ancestral spirits to the individual client, who is specifically registered with the use of each divination tool. His name and complaint (e.g., trouble with work, lingering illness) is stated after the date, diviner, and tool are specified. Personalized spirit pantheons would only be effective for specific clients. However, the later texts do not even mention ancestral spirits generally.

Putting alongside one another the methods and assumptions of the *Stalk Divination* and those of the Baoshan divination record, one observes some clear contrasts, as well as some stark differences from the *Divination of Maheśvara*. This is to be expected, given that these two texts come from the fourth and third century BCE, while the *Divination of Maheśvara* comes from the tenth century CE. One of the notable points that the Baoshan record brings up is the variety of techniques available to a prospective divination client. The divide between tortoise shell divination and stalk divination is foremost, but as in the *Stalk Divination*, it is clearly possible that dice were used alongside stalks. The mantic figures in the *Stalk Divination*, whatever the material means by which they were created, were made up of an array of four out of the eight possible numerical trigrams, the positions of which were read according to a pattern that included temporal and spatial correlates. This contrasts with the manner in which the *Changes'* numerical trigrams were arrayed and read, underlining again the mutability and variation of divination methods, even when using similar materials. Additionally, the numbers comprising the trigrams themselves had specific associations: one might say that each number came with a ready-made repertoire of stock images from which a skilled diviner might build an oracular response.

The “pantheons” of the *Stalk Divination* and the Baoshan record, if one may speak of them as such, are not as elaborate as that of the *Divination of Maheśvara*. Notably one figure summoned by turtle divination in the Baoshan record, the Supervisor of Life Allotments (Si Ming 司命), appears in the *Divination of Maheśvara*, but in the latter he is classified as a demon. There are similar “near misses” or quasi-continuities regarding the Thunder Lord, as well as spirits of the earth, wind, and mountains. More relevant than such minimal continuities,

however, is the general bifurcation in both of these ancient divinations of blessing on the one hand and cursing on the other. The latter mode, in particular, emphasizes the dead and the dangers they pose to the living. In exploring the *Divination of Maheśvara's* spirit pantheon in chapter one, we noted its eminent underworldly members, as well as a few passages that were concerned with exorcising harmful spirits from one's person. While the *Divination of Maheśvara* does not explicitly identify sources of curses, when it is not supplying an auspicious prognosis it can be said to be concerned with confirming a person's worries and prescribing ritual countermeasures. Seen through the comparative lens of these two early numerical trigram traditions, the underworldly inflections of the *Divination of Maheśvara's* spirit pantheon, as well as its correcting rituals and hints of exorcism, suggest continuities with long-standing Chinese divination traditions.

From a technological point of view, we have observed stalk-based methods and dice-based methods from the *Changes* to the *Divination of Maheśvara*. It is unclear in what specific ways the Baoshan divination record and the *Stalk Divination* produced their results, but by and large stalk-based methods require the random separation of a certain number of stalks and the reduction of the separated piles to generate a result. For dice-based methods, the randomization comes from tossing the dice. Four happens to be the "magic number" for several methods: both the standard *Changes* method and the *Tricks of Jing* use four to divide stalk piles; the standard *Changes* method produces four possible initial results: 6, 7, 8, and 9, and the *Tricks of Jing* likewise produces 1, 2, 3, and 4; similarly, the *Divination of Maheśvara* uses a *pāśaka* die that can land on one of four long sides. We can imagine that by changing the divisor, the number of sides on the dice, or even combining stalks with dice, different numbers can be produced, as we see in the *Stalk Divination*, where the numbers 1, 4, 5, 6, 8, and 9 appear in sets of four trigrams. Most trigrams in the *Stalk Divination* and Baoshan sets were composed of numbers symbolizing internal binary oppositions, thus indicating a step closer to *Changes*-style divination, but not quite the same thing.

3 **The Empowered Draughtsmen Divination Method and the Sutra on the Divination of Good and Bad Karmic Retribution**

The *Stalk Divination*, the *Book of Changes*, and the Baoshan divination record lend a *longue-durée* perspective to numerical trigram divination, but their casting methods are not particularly relevant to the *Divination of Maheśvara*. Even if dice were used in conjunction with stalks, the process by which the mantic

figure is constructed in the *Stalk Divination* is entirely different from the process in the *Divination of Maheśvara*. Also, the fact that the *Divination of Maheśvara* and the *Book of Changes* each yield sixty-four combinatory possibilities with sixty-four corresponding oracular responses means next to nothing when the latter does so by combining two of the Eight Trigrams whereas the former does so by combining three values of one to four. Two other numerical trigram traditions share more in common with the *Divination of Maheśvara's* combinatory method, and one employs objects not unlike four-sided *pāśaka* dice. These are the *Empowered Draughtsmen Divination Method* and the *Sutra on the Divination of Good and Bad Karmic Retribution*.

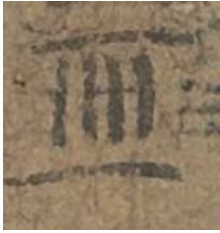
The opening invocation and instructions to a Dunhuang version of the *Empowered Draughtsmen Divination Method* was introduced above. There we saw its emphasis on the sacrality of the draughtsmen, each of which was associated with a sacred or cosmological force. In her study of the Daozang canonical version of the text, known as the *Classic of Empowered Draughtsmen (Lingqi jing)*, Carole Morgan dates the text to between 280 and 289 CE.⁴⁵ The *Empowered Draughtsmen's* method is to cast twelve “spiritually empowered draughtsmen,” essentially twelve coins each of which has one blank face. As described already, these are correlated to the four elder, four middle, and four younger spirits in the text’s introduction, and their inscribed faces are marked with “above,” “middle,” and “below,” respectively. They are further correlated with heaven, humanity, and earth. Casting them all at once, zero to four draughts can land with “above” facing up, zero to four with “middle” facing up, and zero to four with “below” facing up. The results form a numerical trigram that can either be represented “pictorially” or reduced to numbers in the form of counting rods.⁴⁶ Three “aboves,” two “middles,” and one “below,” for example, can be depicted in either of the two forms shown in figs. 11a and 11b.

This latter form of numerical trigram is also found in the *Tricks of Jing*, the *Duke of Zhou Divination Method*, and the *Guan Gongming Divination Method*. As noted in chapter one, the use of counting rods—something also found in talismans—distinguishes these numerical trigrams from the simple numbers used in the trigrams of the *Divination of Maheśvara*. The Daozang version of the *Classic of Empowered Draughtsmen*, however, also “translates” these into numbers, including, from about the thirteenth century, zeros.

The *Empowered Draughtsmen* method of combination makes for 125 possible outcomes, and each of these outcomes indexes an oracular response.

45 See Morgan, “An introduction to the *Lingqi jing*.”

46 See Kalinowski, “La divination par les nombres,” 56–57.



FIGURES 11A–B

The numerical trigram 1-4-1 in P.3782 and P.4984, respectively, both being versions of the *Empowered Draughtsmen Divination Method*

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FIGURE 12

The numerical trigram 1-1-2 in P.4048

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(Initially 124, since 〇-〇-〇—or “blank-blank-blank”—was not at first admitted as a response.⁴⁷) Each of the resulting mantic figures is named, with the name sometimes written around or next to the numerical trigram where it appears in the text. In the image above, the numerical trigram is large, in the top margin of the codex P.4048, with its name, *Jiantai* 漸泰 “Gradual Peace” written above it. None of the mantic figures is identified with a named god or spirit.

The oracular responses that follow each mantic figure in the *Classic of Empowered Draughtsmen* include an imagistic oracle, an accompanying verse, and commentary from four different sources. The oracular responses are poetic, including rhymes and quotes from poetry classics such as the *Book of Odes* (*Shijing* 詩經) and the Chu song “Encountering Sorrow” (Lisao 離騷) by the legendary Warring States scholar Qu Yuan 屈原. The clear preference for Chinese cosmology in the *Empowered Draughtsmen* method is noteworthy. It follows the *Changes* tradition of interpreting odd numbers as Yang and even as Yin, a method evident as early as the fourth century BCE. The commentaries very often include explicit evaluations such as “auspicious.” It is here, and not in the images and verses, that one finds commonalities with the *Divination of Maheśvara*. For example, the evaluation for the combination 3-4-4 states, “this mantic figure means regret in all matters, the official [position] you seek will not happen soon, marriages will be only mildly auspicious as Yin and Yang are only

47 Morgan, “An introduction to the *Lingqi jing*,” 99.

somewhat corresponding; this is what [the mantic figure] says” (此卦百事有悔，求仕進彌非，婚姻小吉，陰陽頗應，故言也).⁴⁸

The arrangement of the mantic figures in the text is methodical. It proceeds in ascending order, with one caveat: the blanks (or, from around the thirteenth century on, the zeros) have a section to themselves. The responses are arranged in thirty-one groups of four. The first four are 1-1-1, 1-1-2, 1-1-3, and 1-1-4; the next four are 1-2-1, 1-2-2, 1-2-3, and 1-2-4; and the sixteenth group goes from 4-4-1 to 4-4-4.⁴⁹ The next fifteen groups of four employ one or two blanks, e.g., “1-x-1” or “x-1-x.” These blanks came to be represented as zeros, probably from the thirteenth century on, and to these thirty-one groups of four combinations a final combination or numerical trigram, 0-0-0 was added to make 125 in all.⁵⁰

One notes here that the first sixteen groups comprise the same sixty-four mantic figures as are found in the *Divination of Maheśvara*. This is because without the blank or zero the *Empowered Draughtsmen* method also combines one to four numbers or values into sets of three. It is the blank side that adds a fifth number or value to yield 125 (that is, 5^3) rather than 64 (which is 4^3) possible outcomes. It could even be said that from the perspective of the *Empowered Draughtsmen*, the *Divination of Maheśvara* uses essentially its same method, without the blanks/ zeros, and with dice instead of draughtsmen.

Despite a different material cultural point of entry—draughtsmen versus dice—the *Empowered Draughtsmen* method is closer than any other to that of the *Divination of Maheśvara*. Besides its differing materials, it is only the use of blanks or zeros that sets it apart. Another divination method also makes use of objects with blank sides, and recalls the blank sides of the excavated dice mentioned above and shown in chapter one. This is the *Sutra on the Divination of Good and Bad Karmic Retribution* (*Zhancha shan'e yebao jing*; T.839.17; hereafter, “*Zhancha jing*”), which employs three sets of four-sided objects to reveal one’s karmic deeds in the past, present, and future.

The *Zhancha jing*, besides bringing us closer to something resembling dice divination, also emphasizes the bodhisattva Kṣitigarbha (Dizang) and ritual practices geared toward a degenerate world age near the end of the Buddha’s dispensation. The *Zhancha jing* is generally regarded as an apocryphal sutra, and is dated to between 580 and 590. It shares the framing and structure of all Buddhist sutras, and in this case the Buddha presides over an assembly in which a bodhisattva named “Firm and Pure Faith” (Jianjingxin Pusa 堅淨信菩薩)

48 Wang Jingbo, *Dunhuang zhanbu wenxian yu shehui shenghuo*, 62.

49 Morgan, “An Introduction to the *Lingqi jing*,” 99.

50 Dotson, “Three Dice, Four Faces,” 33.

asks what method one can turn to in order to resolve one's doubts during a degenerate age or in the age of the end of the Buddha's Dharma (*mo fa* 末法). The answer, in the form of the entire sutra in two fascicles, comes not from the Buddha, but from the bodhisattva Dizang.⁵¹ The first fascicle details the divination method, while the second expounds meditation methods. Taken as a whole, the sutra articulates a three-stage path comprising divination, penance, and meditation.⁵²

The framing story, as well as many of the sutra's contents, is notable for connecting to one of the overriding concerns identified in our examination of the semantics of the oracular responses of the *Divination of Maheśvara*: anxiety. Here the trope of the decline of the Dharma—as relevant in tenth century Dunhuang as it was in the end of the sixth century when the *Zhancha jing* was composed—serves to magnify worry and fear. The figure of Dizang, who features in the fourth entry of the *Divination of Maheśvara*, supplies a further continuity. In the *Zhancha jing*, Dizang directly addresses those who are concerned about their divination-related worries and fears: “[a]lways recite my name day and night. If [you are] truly sincere, divination will be auspicious, desires will be fulfilled and [you] will actually be freed from anguish” (应当昼夜常勤誦念我之名字，若能至心者所占則吉，所求皆獲，現離衰惱).⁵³

As a preliminary to the divination, one performs purification rituals, invokes Dizang, professes vows, and venerates the Three Jewels. One then announces the matter at hand, and requests a true answer to one's questions. The sutra cautions that the method will not necessarily work for those lacking sincerity, a point echoed in the *Divination of Maheśvara*.⁵⁴

The divination process itself proceeds in three stages, each stage employing its own set of four-sided objects, referred to as “wooden wheels” (*mu lun* 木輪). Here one “turns” or spins the “wheels,” just as the Buddha “turns the wheel of Dharma.” The semantics of interacting with these objects, as well as their form, place them between teetotums (spinning tops) and dice. Like a *pāśaka* die, the “wheel” has four sides, and is cuboid rather than pyramidal. Where a *pāśaka* die's four elongated sides make it almost impossible for it to fall on one of its two ends, the “wheel” has no elongated sides but it has sharpened ends. This is

51 Esther-Maria Guggenmos, “*Qian* Divination and its Ritual Adaptations in Chinese Buddhism,” *Journal of Chinese Religions* 46.1 (2018): 51–52.

52 Itō Makoto, “The Role of Dizang Bodhisattva in the *Zhancha Jing*,” *Journal of Indian and Buddhist Studies* 64.3 (2016): 256.

53 T17.906c; Itō, “The Role of Dizang Bodhisattva,” 257.

54 Whalen Lai, “The *Chan-ch'a ching*: Religion and Magic in Medieval China,” in *Chinese Buddhist Apocrypha*, ed. Robert Buswell (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1990), 182.



FIGURE 13 Set of “wooden wheels” (*mu lun* 木輪) used in contemporary *Zhancha jing* rituals
BY KIND PERMISSION OF ESTHER-MARIA GUGGENMOS

not to say that one object has influenced the other, or that the *Zhancha jing*'s “wheels” are variants of Indic *pāśaka* dice. For these reasons we do not refer to these “wheels” as “dice.”⁵⁵ The wheels are, nevertheless, more similar to *pāśaka* dice than any other object employed in Chinese divination traditions.

In the first of the three “turnings” of the “wheels,” one spins ten “wheels,” each of which is inscribed with one of the ten virtuous actions on one face with the opposing non-virtuous action inscribed on the opposite face. The other two faces are left blank. Spinning these reveals one's past virtuous or unvirtuous karmic actions. The next “turning” involves three “wheels” marked “body,” “speech,” and “mind,” respectively. These reveal the depth of one's karmic actions revealed in the first “turning.”⁵⁶

55 See, by contrast, Guggenmos, “*Qian* Divination,” where the “wheels” are called “dice,” 51–54.

56 Lai, “The *Chan-ch'a ching*,” 180–181; see also Beverley Foulks McGuire, *Living Karma: The Religious Practices of Ouyi Zhixu* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), 42–45; Kuo Liying, “Divination, jeux de hasard et purification dans le bouddhisme chinois: Autour

The third and last spin is the one that most concerns us, and it stands somewhat apart from the first two by more closely resembling other forms of Chinese numerical trigram divination. Its process creates a number from zero to 189, and each number has a corresponding entry in the sutra with an oracular response relating not only to spiritual matters but also to promotions, wealth, and health. The process involves spinning a set of six “wheels” three times. Each “wheel” is inscribed with numbers on three faces, with one face blank. The numbers proceed from one to eighteen, e.g., one, two, three, blank on the first “wheel”; four, five, six, blank on the second “wheel,” and so on up to eighteen. When all six “wheels” are spun the resulting numbers are not combined in the manner of other numerical trigram traditions, but rather added together to make a sum from zero to sixty-three. When this is repeated twice more, all of the sums are added together to return a number from zero to 189 that is essentially one’s mantic figure. Looking up the corresponding oracular responses in the *Zhancha jing*, 1–160 pertain to the present, 161–171 to the past, and 172–189 to the future. All blanks or “o” is the perfect roll, indicating the exhaustion of one’s karma.⁵⁷

This method stands in an interesting place between the *Stalk Divination* and the *Divination of Maheśvara*. The dice marked with ones and sixes but also with blank sides, which may have been employed alongside stalks in *Stalk Divination* divination, seem like ancestors of the *Zhancha jing*’s “wheels” and their blank sides. On the other hand, apart from the analogy of spinning the “wheels” and turning the wheel of Dharma, the *Zhancha jing* pays comparatively little attention to any sacrality of its objects and of the mantic figures they produce. Perhaps this comes of adding sums rather than combining symbols. While the unfussy representation of numerical mantic figures as simply numbers is something the *Zhancha jing* shares with the *Divination of Maheśvara*, the latter places a far greater emphasis on the mantic figure, even if it is only depicted by numbers and not counting rods as in the *Empowered Draughtsmen* method. There is also the fact that if one spins the numbered “wheels” just once instead of three times, the result is sixty-four possible outcomes (zero to sixty-three), just as in the *Divination of Maheśvara* (one to sixty-four).⁵⁸ However, this is as circumstantial a resemblance as that of the *Book of Changes*’ sixty-four

d’ un sutra apocryphe chinois, le *Zhanchajing*,” in *Bouddhisme et cultures locales: Quelques cas de réciproques adaptations*, ed. Fukui Fumimasa and Gérard Fussman (Paris: École Française d’ Extrême-Orient, 1994), 145–167.

57 Lai, “The *Chan-ch’a ching*,” 181–182.

58 Dotson, “Four Dice, Three Faces,” 27.

hexagrams, and is similarly arrived at via an entirely different combinatory method. Like the *Empowered Draughtsmen* method, the use of blanks is significant, and marks its difference from other divination systems that don't employ a blank or a zero value.

The *Zhancha jing's* Buddhist framing and its appeal to the “end of the Dharma” connect it to the earlier “Divination Sutra” contained in the *Consecration Sutra* of 457 CE. There, in the Buddha's presence, the god Brahmā preached a divination method for resolving doubts. These texts' sutric framings go far beyond the *Divination of Maheśvara* in providing a narrative of Buddhist incorporation for a given divination method. The *Zhancha jing* goes even further, thoroughly embedding divination in a Buddhist program that includes penance and meditation as something more than just preliminaries to the divination ritual.

4 A Case Study in Transmission: The *Tricks of Jing*, the *Duke of Zhou Divination Method*, and the *Guan Gongming Divination Method*

The *Empowered Draughtsmen* method displays the closest approximation of the *Divination of Maheśvara's* method of combining numbers, and the *Zhancha jing's* four-sided “wheels” are the closest thing in the material culture of Chinese divination to the *Divination of Maheśvara's* four-sided dice. Another set of related texts, however, is uniquely similar to the *Divination of Maheśvara* in also constructing numerical trigrams made up of the numbers one to four. This method is found in the second-century-BCE *Tricks of Jing*, already introduced above, and in two related texts known as the *Duke of Zhou Divination Method* and the *Guan Gongming Divination Method*, both of which are found in Dunhuang manuscripts roughly contemporary with the *Divination of Maheśvara*. All three texts share the method of employing stalks to construct one of sixteen numerical trigrams, represented with counting rods. Besides sharing a common method, their contents are also similar, and it is possible to demonstrate their textual dependence.

The *Tricks of Jing's* introduction, translated above, gives only brief instructions on how to construct a mantic figure. Facing east, one holds the book in the right hand and one holds thirty stalks in the left. One then makes three piles of stalks, with the stalks of the upper and lower piles arranged horizontally, and the middle pile's stalks arranged vertically. One then removes stalks from each pile by fours until four or fewer stalks are left in each, the result being a counting-rod-style numerical trigram. The text mentions no tutelary deity overseeing the process, and there are no ritual preliminaries of purification,

invocation, or sincerely expressing one's intentions or announcing the matter about which one is divining.

The *Tricks of Jing* has sixteen oracular responses, each indexed by a numerical trigram. Each response begins with a name that corresponds to a Stem or Branch. This is followed by the numerical trigram itself, an oracular verse containing both poetic images and interpretation, and then an evaluation, and the source of a curse (*sui*). The oracular verse, which makes up by far the majority of the response, is rendered in rhymed verse (roughly indicated by approximate reconstructed phonetics) and may have informed the word choice of the prognosis.⁵⁹ The structure and character of the oracular responses is evident in the following entry, the second in the text:

A Yi (Stem 2) trigram, 4-1-1. The dragon living in the swamp wants to soar to Heaven. On an auspicious day during a fine season, it soars high to look around, signs of it seen by colors [in the sky]. What a day it is today that auspicious joy will be limitless: having crossed a bridge, what is desired will be in accordance with one's wishes. Auspicious. The curse will come from outside.

乙: 4-1-1⁶⁰。蠱（龍）處于澤（*lʰrak），欲登于天（*lʰin）。吉日嘉時（*dǎʔ），登高曲（矚）望（*maŋ-s），相須(> 焉)以色（*s.rək）。今日何日（*C.nik），吉樂無極（*grək）。津橋氣（既）行（*Cə.gʰraŋ），願欲中音（意*ʔrək-s）。吉，外為崇。

Like every other response, this one correlates its numerical trigram with a Stem or Branch, the order of which we will explore shortly. The oracular verse is imagistic (“dragon living in the swamp”), followed by a more pragmatic interpretation (“what is desired will be in accordance with one's wishes”). The meter is only abandoned for the evaluation and for the source of the curse. These latter two features appear sometimes in this order and sometimes with the evaluation following the source of the curse. The source of the curse is omitted in three of the sixteen responses, all of which are auspicious. Nevertheless, it is mentioned even in the case of an auspicious prognosis like this one. This is

59 William H. Baxter and Laurent Sagart, *Old Chinese: A Reconstruction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014). PDF available online. Archaic Chinese reconstructions are applied here for the *Jingjue* and Middle Chinese for the Dunhuang texts.

60 These numbers are represented pictorially as counting rods, which is why we've opted for Arabic, rather than Chinese numerals in the transcription.

strongly reminiscent of the “bifurcation of blessings and curses” mentioned in the context of the *Stalk Divination* and the Baoshan divination record. It suggests that besides performing this divination for a specific matter such as health or trade, one might also employ it specifically to diagnose misfortune. There is also a difference of character between the interpretations on the one hand and the information on the source of the curse on the other in that the former is general while the latter is specific. In fact, the interpretations are nearly all vague and general, ceding far more space to the imagistic verses that precede them. Only in the mention of a person arriving, in four responses, is the interpretation specific. There is otherwise no detailed prognosis for health, wealth, marriage, and so forth as one finds in some divination texts, including the *Tricks of Jing*'s descendants, the *Duke of Zhou Divination Method* and the *Guan Gongming Divination Method*.

The oracular responses in the *Tricks of Jing* are arrayed in the text according to at least two separate logics. First, the numerical trigrams proceed in roughly descending order, beginning with those starting with a four and proceeding through those beginning with threes, twos, and ones. Second, each numerical trigram is correlated to a Stem or Branch, proceeding first through the Stems and then through the Branches in ascending order. As often happens when mapping one numerical group onto another for cosmological or divinatory reasons, the ten Stems and twelve Branches are not congruent with sixteen numerical trigrams. The solution in this case was to omit Stems seven and eight and Branches nine through twelve.⁶¹ The trigrams do not seem to appear in related pairs or groups according to inverse numbers or any other discernible pattern significant to, for example, the *Changes* tradition.

The *Tricks of Jing* is aware of Yin and Yang, since its introduction mentions how these factor into tortoise shell divination, and since Yang is the source of a curse in response ten. It does not, however, appear to meaningfully connect Yin and Yang to the numbers that make up its numerical trigrams. Just to take the final two entries as examples, [15] 4-4-2 and [16] 2-4-4 might each be read as having all Yin lines, but the former corresponds to 午 Wu, which is valued Yang,

61 The skipping of Geng and Xin (stems 7 and 8) may have observed a taboo associated with dangerous spirits. In the Qin daybook A from Shuihudi, affliction on a Geng or Xin day indicated a fatal curse coming from a ghost outside the kin-group, requiring an offering of dog meat and fresh white eggs 庚辛有疾，外鬼傷死為祟，得之犬肉、鮮卵白色。See Shuihudi zhujian zhengli xiaozu, ed., *Shuihudi Qin mu zhujian* 睡虎地秦墓竹簡 (Beijing: Wenwu, 1990), 193. Alternatively, there may have been a reason for excluding any Stems (7 and 8) or Branches (9 and 10) associated with Metal.

TABLE 4 Numerical trigrams, Stem-and-Branch correspondences, evaluations, and curses in the *Tricks of Jing*

Numerical trigram; stem or branch	Evaluation	Source of curse
[1] 4-3-3 甲 Jia S1	凶 Inauspicious	泰父 Exalted Father
[2] 4-1-1 乙 Yi S2	吉 Auspicious	外 Outside
[3] 3-4-3 丙 Bing S3	吉 Auspicious	百厲 100 Plague Ghosts
[4] 4-2-4 丁 Ding S4	吉 Auspicious	None
[5] 3-1-2 戊 Wu S5	吉 Auspicious	None
[6] 3-3-4 己 Ji S6	凶 Inauspicious	First there will be a curse, but later no consequences
[7] 2-3-1 壬 Ren S9	凶 Inauspicious	外死不葬 One who died outside and was not buried
[8] 2-2-2 癸 Gui S10	吉 Auspicious	王父母 Grandparents
[9] 2-1-3 子 Zi B1	吉 Auspicious	司命 Supervisor of Life Allotments
[10] 1-4-1 丑 Chou B2	Missing: probably Inauspicious	陽 Yang
[11] 1-3-2 寅 Yin B3	凶 Inauspicious	行 Walkway; 竈 Stove; 百厲 100 Plague Ghosts
[12] 3-2-1 卯 Mao B4	凶 Inauspicious	行 Walkway; 竈 Stove
[13] 1-2-3 辰 Chen B5	吉 Auspicious	社 Earth Altar
[14] 1-1-4 巳 Si B6	吉 Auspicious	泰父母 Exalted parents
[15] 4-4-2 午 Wu B7	吉 Auspicious	None
[16] 2-4-4 未 Wei B8	凶 Inauspicious	巫 Shaman; 位 [Spirit Altar] stand; ^a 社 Earth Altar

a For a discussion of Han and later spirit “seats,” see Wu Hung, *The Art of the Yellow Springs: Understanding Chinese Tombs* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2010), 64–84.

and the latter to 未 Wei, which is valued Yin. It is debatable, however, whether the Stems and Branches during the Han were seen as gendered as they were in some earlier Qin-period daybooks.

The Stems and Branches can be additionally associated with both temporal and spatial coordinates. Assuming a meaningful use of Stems and Branches, this could also suggest that the *Tricks of Jing* was employed together with hemerological divination texts or a *shi* 式 device, which often combined directions, the Five Agents, Stems and Branches, the Twenty-Eight Astral Lodges, and the Dipper as a kind of dial.

In addition to an apparent inattention to Yin and Yang values, the *Tricks of Jing* system also seems to be unconcerned with a numerological approach to trigrams. Its seventh and eleventh oracular responses, for example, are for the trigrams 2-3-1 and 1-3-2, which, as numerical opposites or visual inversions would represent gendered pairs in the *Stalk Divination*. They seem to have no particular value in the *Tricks*, and their responses are not inverse nor related in any discernible way.

A Ren (Stem 9) trigram 2-3-1. Phoenixes do not roost but fly in all directions. What I would like to see cannot be obtained without too much harm. Flying quickly with mournful cries, the troubled are so gloomy. The hardworking (those who care for others) will not be given credit and their affairs not achieved. Inauspicious. The curse will come from one who died outside and was not buried.

壬：2-3-1。凡（鳳）鳥不處，洋洋（洋洋）四國。我欲見之，多害不得。疾蜚（飛）哀鳴，愛心墨墨（默默）。勞身毋功，其事不得。凶，崇外死不葬。

A Yin (Branch 3) trigram 1-3-2. There is a dark tree on the mountain, whose leaves have been dispersed. One with a stressed mind will die without anyone knowing about him. One who may wish to meet with an elegant [person] must part with him/her later. One who is secluded is said to be full of sorrow. Those who do not gather at first light will be laughed at by others. Curses may come from the Walkway, the Stove, or the 100 Li Demons. Inauspicious.

寅：1-3-2。山有玄木，其葉卑（披）離。勞心將死，人莫之智（知）。欲與美會，其後必離。有隱者，雲古（風）滿滿（瀟瀟）。晨鳴不會，直為人笑。崇行，竈，百厲，凶。

If one can speak of a divinatory pantheon in the *Tricks of Jing*, its most colorful characters are the curse-producers, where we find once more the Supervisor of Life Allotments, but also Plague or Haunting Ghosts, a Shaman, the Unburied Dead, and Exalted Parents and Grandparents. There are also more abstract sources of curses, such as earth altars and Yang. The mantic figures themselves are named after natural or cosmological forces rather than gods and spirits. This forms a contrast with the *Divination of Maheśvara*, and it raises the question of whether or not one cannot meaningfully speak of Stems and Branches or other (super)natural forces as being “deified” as supernatural agents that act in the same manner as, say Dizang or The Supervisor of Life Allotments where these appear associated with numerical trigrams.

The *Tricks of Jing* method is taken up with some modifications in the early medieval period in the *Duke of Zhou Divination Method* (*Zhougong bufa*). This text is preserved in at least two Dunhuang codices, both dating to the ninth or tenth century.⁶² Besides dating to roughly the same time, the *Duke of Zhou Divination Method* also has in common with the *Divination of Maheśvara* that it is included in a large-format compilation codex. P.3398.2, like S.5614 which includes the *Divination of Maheśvara*, is a codex of rather large dimensions (20.5 × 15.3 cm). It is also part of a compilation, and it is followed by a hemerological text, *Tui shier shi ren mingxiang shu fa disawu* 推十二時人命相 屬法第卅五, that makes use of the twelve branches, and then by the *Tui ren shier shi er ming re, zu gang, shou zhang yang deng fa* 推人十二時耳鳴熱，足痒，手掌痒等法, which offers predictions based on certain bodily conditions or symptoms. The first two texts are written in the same hand. The third is in a messier hand, which is not necessarily to say that it was executed by a different scribe. A colophon at the end of the codex gives a date, and mentions that it was copied by a monk from Sanjiesi Monastery. It presumably refers to the copying of all three texts. This is interesting for putting us in close temporal and physical proximity to the *Divination of Maheśvara*, that is, in late-ninth to tenth-century Dunhuang, in codex format, and in a compilation.

The *mise en page* of the *Duke of Zhou Divination Method* in this codex is also interesting for its use of blank space. The numerical trigrams and their names occupy the top third of the page, offset from the oracular responses below them by blank space. This creates an upper register of about seven cm (including an upper margin of about 12 mm) and a lower register of about 13 cm (including a bottom margin of about 1 cm).

62 See Kalinowski, “Cléromancie,” 316–317, 338. A third, S.557, is only fragmentary.

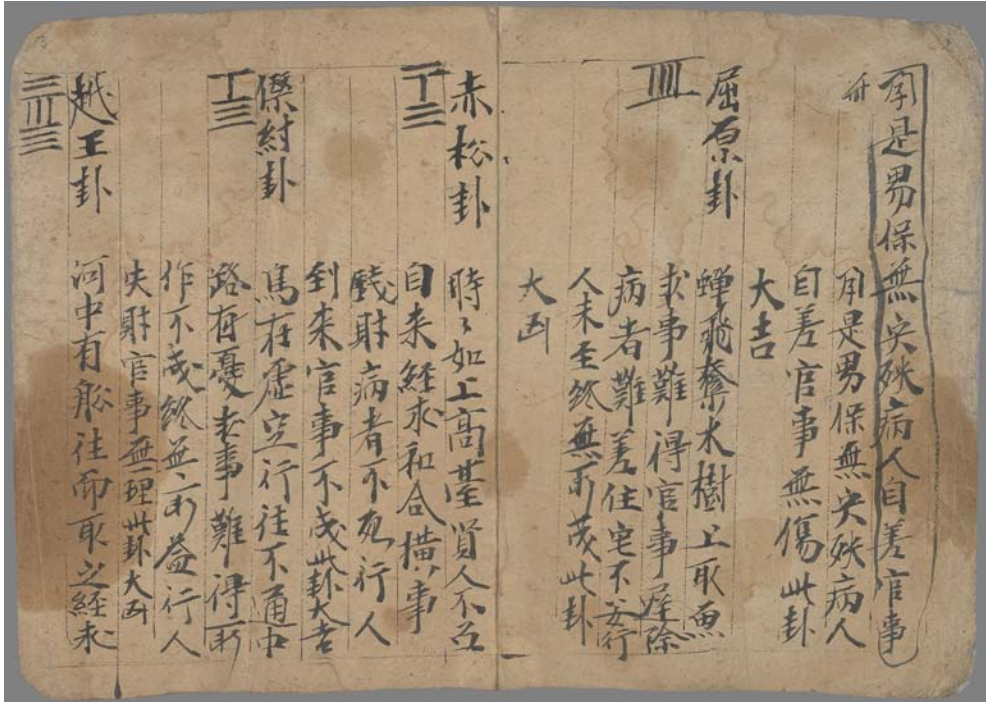


FIGURE 14 A view of the opened *Duke of Zhou Divination Method* codex, pages two and three. Note the rounded edges, as well as the conservator's pagination in pencil in the upper corners. Shelfmark P.3398.2

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The scribe of this text tried to preserve this *mise en page*, deleting the first column of text that s/he had mistakenly begun in the upper register (see fig. 14). The use of blank space is almost always significant, especially in the context of Dunhuang during the Tibetan and Guiyijun periods, when paper was at a premium, and when scribes often repurposed discarded manuscripts by writing on their versos. This blank space can be a mark of respect, for example, where it is used in letters, and on a smaller scale a blank the size of one character often acts as a “reverence mark” preceding a sacred person or place.⁶³ This codex’s use of space to set apart the numerical trigrams and their names emphasizes their sanctity, and forms a contrast with the lack of any such space separating the *Divination of Maheśvara*’s numerical sets from its oracular responses.

63 See Imre Galambos, “Punctuation Marks in Medieval Chinese Manuscripts,” in *Manuscript Cultures: Mapping the Field*, ed. Jörg Quenzer and Jan-Ulrich Sobisch (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2014), 355–357.

Another Dunhuang version of the text is preserved in the Luo Zhenyu collection, now preserved in Beijing under shelfmark San 678. This is notable for including the title of the text, which is missing in P.3398.2. It also includes an incantation following the text.

The *Duke of Zhou Divination Method* is named after a Confucian sage, a brother of the founder of the Western Zhou Dynasty, who famously invoked the gods to take him instead of his ill nephew, the heir to the Zhou throne.⁶⁴ His name is linked with many divination texts in later times. The text contains the same sixteen numerical trigrams found in the *Tricks of Jing*, formed in counting-rod style using a nearly identical stalk-sorting method. As in the *Tricks of Jing*, the sixteen numerical trigrams of the *Duke of Zhou Method* bear names, and they are divided into two groups of eight. Instead of Stems and Branches, however, the first eight mantic figures are associated with legendary or notorious figures in Chinese history, drawing from Confucian and Daoist pantheons, while the last eight are correlated to the Eight Trigrams (*bagua*) of the *Changes* tradition, which can also be traced back to the fourth-century-BCE *Stalk Divination*.

The *Duke of Zhou Divination Method's* introduction is only slightly more detailed than that of the *Tricks of Jing* in that it might reveal something about its intended uses and clientele. The stalk-sorting method itself is the same, except that the diviner begins with thirty-four instead of thirty stalks.

Whenever divining the auspiciousness of experiences and inquiries regarding market negotiations, marital relations, contracting marriages, distant travel, visiting people, agriculture and sericulture, illnessor lawsuits, focus your mind, and then opening with an oath, divine it and you'll never go wrong.

[San 678]凡卜經求、買賣、婚姻、嫁娶、遠行、看人、田蠶、疾病、...爭訟吉凶，但請志心啓 [P.3398.2] 呪卜之，萬不失一。

The details on focusing one's mind and making an oath emphasize sincerity, but there is nothing here explicitly Buddhist or Daoist such as one finds in the *Empowered Draughtsmen* and the *Zhancha jing*.

64 For a summary of the Duke of Zhou's role in divination, see Vincent Durand-Dastès, "Divination, Fate Manipulation, and Protective Knowledge in and around *The Wedding of the Duke of Zhou and Peach Blossom Girl*," in *Coping with the Future: Theories and Practices of Divination in East Asia*, ed. Michael Lackner (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 132–134. The literature on the Duke of Zhou as a literary figure and culture hero is immense.

The *Duke of Zhou Divination Method's* oracular responses themselves consist of the name, the numerical trigram, and an oracular verse containing rhymed poetic images and interpretation, as well as an evaluation. This differs from the *Tricks of Jing* by incorporating the evaluation into the verse and by not including anything about curses (*sui*). The first entry suffices to illustrate the text's form and style:

The Duke of Zhou trigram. 3-4-3. A phoenix flies to a high tower, beating its wings, flapping back and forth. The sick will recover on their own; misfortune will depart and good fortune come. You will get everything you seek. There will be unexpected money and goods. Travelers will arrive and there will be no disasters at home. This mantic figure is greatly auspicious.

周公卦。3-4-3鳳飛高臺 (doj)，奮翼徘徊 (hwoj)。病者自差，禍去福來。所求皆得，橫入錢財。行人即至，宅舍無災。此卦大吉。

On balance, the interpretations are as long or longer than the imagistic verses, and are also more detailed and methodical. The interpretations begin with vague pronouncements like “you will get everything you seek” or “what you seek will not be obtained” and then proceed to prognoses for such categories as wealth, travelers arriving, household affairs, births, marriages, illness, and “administrative entanglements” (*guan shi* 官事). This latter category appears to refer to the predations of officials, itself a popular theme in Buddhist and Daoist literature, where officials are often likened to demons or ghosts.⁶⁵ In the Daoist *Scripture on the Prolongation of Life* (*Yisuan Jing* 益算經), each of the seven stars of the Northern Dipper drives out a particular class of affliction. These include evil *qi* (*e'qi* 惡氣); the undead (*feishi* 非屍); various demons (*baigui* 百鬼); arguments (*koushe* 口舌); nightmares (*e'meng* 惡夢); administrative entanglements (*guan shi* 官事); and bankruptcies (*xuhao* 虛耗).⁶⁶ That these “administrative entanglements” are also perilous in the *Duke of Zhou Divination Method* is clear from the contexts in which they appear. Take the following couplet, from the second entry: “[t]he sick will recover on their own and administrative entanglements will not harm [you]” (*bingren zi chai, guanshi wu shang* 病人自差，官事無傷). Or, in the sixth entry, “administrative entanglements will dissipate by themselves and travelers will soon return” (*guanshi zi san, xingren ji gui* 官事自散，行人即歸).

65 Strickmann, *Chinese Poetry and Prophecy*, 67–68.

66 Christine Mollier, *Buddhism and Taoism Face to Face: Scripture, Ritual, and Iconographic Exchange in Medieval China* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2008), 122.

The arrangement of the numerical trigrams in the text is perhaps even more haphazard than the *Tricks of Jing's* roughly descending order. If one assumes that the *Duke of Zhou Divination Method* derives from the *Tricks of Jing* then this is curious, because one would expect that the *Tricks'* order would be kept, or else that any changes to the order would be meaningful. Similarly, the *Duke of Zhou* method's using thirty-four instead of thirty stalks comes with no cosmological or numerological justification. Both starting sums mathematically limit one's possible results when dividing them into three piles and subtracting by fours.

The text does have something more like a pantheon, made up of Confucian and Daoist figures and the Eight Trigrams. The figures themselves include those who are closely associated with divination, such as Confucius and the Duke of Zhou. They roughly divide into heroic or villainous characters. The five positive characters, the Duke of Zhou, Confucius, Red Pine, the King of Yue, and Tai Gong, are linked to immortality, morality and positive political power (the beginning rather than the ending of a state). The lives of the three negative figures were all cut short. While some like Qu Yuan and Zitui had noble yearnings, Jie-Zhou were corrupt rulers that died with the fall of their state.

The use of the names of the Eight Trigrams to designate the second and final group of eight numerical trigrams ostensibly marks a shift from historical and mythical figures to abstract cosmological/ divinatory forces. The Eight Trigrams have long been deified, however, as the Eight Archivists (*ba shi*), who are the essences of the Eight Trigrams thought to reside among the stars of the Northern Dipper. They were the subject of a form of divination that was popular from the late-Han to the early Six Dynasties period.⁶⁷ Similarly to the *Tricks of Jing's* use of the Stems and Branches, the *Duke of Zhou's* use of the Eight Trigrams theoretically opens up further avenues for correlative cosmology. It is equally possible, however, that these were used simply as a convenient group of eight to correlate with the second group of eight numerical trigrams. The latter is suggested by the non-correspondence of the Eight Trigrams to the numerical trigrams when looked at in terms of their lines' putative Yin and Yang values. It is also curious that the Eight Trigrams do not appear in their usual order, from Qian to Kun. This might suggest that they are being inserted into a system with its own logic to which they are made to cohere, but what logic if any that might be remains opaque. The (non-)correspondences are apparent in Table 5 below (note that the full list of combinations, names, and evaluations can be found in Table 6):

67 Gil Raz, "Time Manipulation in Early Daoist Ritual," 29–32.

TABLE 5 Numerical trigrams and their *Bagua* names in the *Duke of Zhou Divination Method*, Sets 9 to 16

Numerical trigram	Ostensive Yin-Yang values	Name / <i>Bagua</i> trigram	Ostensive Yin-Yang values of trigram
[9]		兌 Dui	
3	Yang	--	Yin
1	Yang	—	Yang
2	Yin	—	Yang
[10]		坤 Kun	
3	Yang	--	Yin
2	Yin	--	Yin
1	Yang	--	Yin
[11]		離 Li	
4	Yin	—	Yang
3	Yang	--	Yin
3	Yang	—	Yang
[12]		乾 Qian	
2	Yin	—	Yang
3	Yang	—	Yang
1	Yang	—	Yang
[13]		巽 Xun	
2	Yin	--	Yin
4	Yin	--	Yin
4	Yin	—	Yang
[14]		坎 Kan	
1	Yang	--	Yin
2	Yin	—	Yang
3	Yang	--	Yin
[15]		震 Zhen	
4	Yin	--	Yin
2	Yin	--	Yin
4	Yin	—	Yang
[16]		艮 Gen	
4	Yin	—	Yang
4	Yin	--	Yin
2	Yin	--	Yin

As the table makes clear, there is not a single cosmological correspondence. The impression is that the link between a given numerical trigram and its assigned *bagua* trigram is entirely arbitrary. Alternatively, if one assumes the deification of the *bagua* as the Eight Archivists, then it is possible that these latter had already effectively unmoored themselves to float free from the symbols whose essences they ostensibly embody. This would be to express the “shifty” aspect of the gods that we underlined in the introduction.

As noted above, a second Dunhuang codex of this text, San 678, includes an incantation following its final oracular response. Whether integral to the text or not, the incantation appears prior to the text’s end title. It quite explicitly participates in the full deification of cosmological forces, in this case invoking the most famous Stem deities.

Invoke saying: “[You] Six Jia and Six Yi that possess demonically, speedily depart! The Six Gui and Six Ding know your names, [you] possessing vapors of Poshe.⁶⁸ [You] spooks and deviant spirits quickly retrieve your impish essences, and so likewisebe punished, so if you don’t seem to leave, I will apply spiritual power, [calling up by] naming the Six Ding, tens of thousands of feet tall with two eyes like solar crystals, who will retrieve them with iron ropes and [once] capturing the deviant imps will use tongs to pull out their tongues and then dare to eat them whole. Speedily come out, speedily depart! You may not halt or linger! Quickly, quickly, as the statutes command!”

呪曰：六甲六乙，魔注速出。六癸六丁，知如（> 汝）姓名，破射注氣。魍魎夭（> 妖）靈，速收汝精，亦口口刑，如若不去，吾將神力，字名六丁，身長万丈，雙目日晶，收持鐵索，捕捉夭（> 妖）精，口鉗拔舌，敢食汝刑（形）。速出速出，不得停流（留），急急如律令！

The incantation’s presence here is remarkable for how it draws together two different modes for dealing with the spirit world—divination and incantation—each of which so often work in tandem with other ritual technologies. The incantation makes use of cosmological sensibilities of the Stems and Branches, invoking groups of six deities each of which takes its name from a Stem (Six Jia = the six days out of the sixty-day calendar which begin with Stem 1; Six Yi = Stem 2; Six Gui = Stem 10; Six Ding = Stem 4). The technology of invo-

68 This is a body critter, a type of *shoushi* 守尸 ghost, which like the nine worms causes mortality; for more details see note to translation in the appendix, section two.

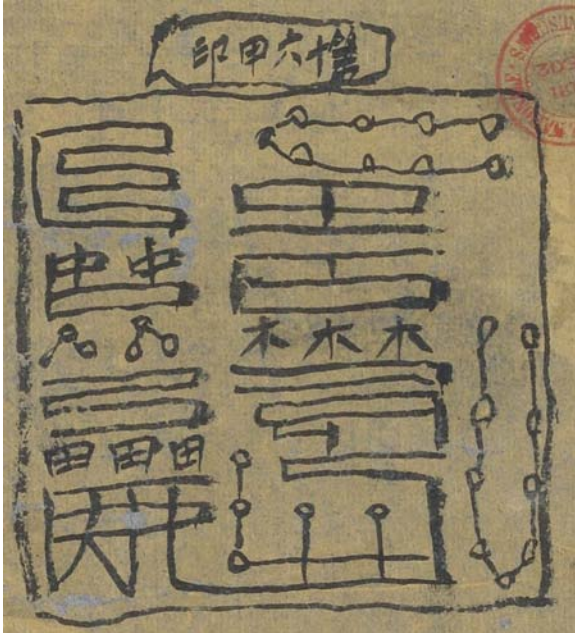


FIGURE 15 Six Jia Seal, P.381o

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cation is explicit: it is through knowing their names that the demons can be controlled and defeated. This recalls our discussion of naming and its role in the *Divination of Maheśvara*, but its relevance here is more in the context of invocations and of talismans, where the emphasis is on writing down the name of a demon to be expelled, and sometimes also drawing its image. One of the two threatening groups at the start of the incantation, the Six Jia, are warded off, for example by a seal, the creation of which is modelled in the Dunhuang manuscript P.381o.⁶⁹

Against the Six Jia and Six Yi, and against the deviant imps, this incantation summons the Six Gui and especially the Six Ding. The latter figure prominently in the *Secret Lingbao Method Concerning the Spirits of the Six Ding Days* (*Lingbao liuding bifa* 靈寶六丁祕法).⁷⁰ Each Ding spirit oversees ten days in the

69 See Shih-san Susan Huang, “Daoist Seals, Part One: Activation and Fashioning,” *Journal of Daoist Studies* 10 (2017): 95, fig. 13.

70 DZ 581, 10: 751.

sixty-day cycle, a function they share with the Jade Maidens.⁷¹ In this incantation they are activated to capture and devour the deviant imps.

The closing words, “Quickly, quickly, as the statutes command!” (*ji ji ru lü ling* 急急如律令), constitute a closing formula that functions as the “canonical intensifier of incantations” in both Buddhist and Daoist texts.⁷² Just after these is a glyph, apparently in medieval seal script that may represent the word of command, the character *chi* 敕/勅, “official order,” the latter appearing frequently in talismans after this formula. The same glyph is found at the end of the famous Stein Painting 170, “Dhāraṇī Talisman for Offerings to Ketu and Mercury, Planetary Deity of the North,” where it follows the same formula and closes the talisman (see fig. 16). In the lower left corner one can see the glyph in question, enlarged here and displayed side-by-side with ostensibly the same glyph in San 678 (see figs. 17a and 17b).

The shared context and slightly different orthography suggest that this glyph functions here like the formula it follows, to add potency to, and perhaps to seal the incantations.⁷³ Provided that this glyph is as rare and idiosyncratic as it appears to be, it may also help to date the texts in which it is found. The Stein Painting 170 is roughly dated by the British Museum to 926–975.

This incantation for expelling deviant imps is interesting for its appearing at the end of the *Duke of Zhou Divination Method*, and not in a more “bespoke” fashion like the correcting rituals that address individual responses in the *Divination of Maheśvara*. It appears to act like an all-purpose correcting ritual that can be employed as an evasive measure in the event that one receives a bad

71 Catherine Despeux, “Talismans and Diagrams,” in *Daoism Handbook*, ed. Livia Kohn (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 530; Gil Raz, “Time Manipulation in Early Daoist Ritual,” 55.

72 See Copp, *The Body Incantatory*, 54; see also Strickmann, *Chinese Magical Medicine*, 31, 146–147.

73 Assessing this talismanic writing in Stein Painting 170, James Robson writes, “this talisman looks like what might be produced by someone who was trying to copy or mimic the style of other talismans without understanding, or having mastered, the logic that goes into their construction”; James Robson, “Signs of Power: Talismanic Writing in Chinese Buddhism,” *History of Religions* 48.2 (2008): 155. Note, however, that Yu Xin wrote of the glyph’s appearance in the talisman, “[a]t the end of the prayer is a cipher in red ink. It is probably the signature of the sorcerer”; Yu Xin, “Personal Fate and the Planets: A Documentary and Iconographical Study of Astrological Divination at Dunhuang, Focusing on the Dhāraṇī Talisman for Offerings to Ketu and Mercury, Planetary Deity of the North,” *Cahiers d’Extrême-Asie* 20 (2011): 169. We did not come across the glyph again when perusing dozens of Dunhuang incantations and talismans, but further instances would help clarify its meaning. There is in P.3106, the *Bai guai tu* 百怪圖, a totally different glyph in seal script following this formula, which again speaks in favor of our contention that the glyph is there to add potency. See further discussion in the notes to the translation of the text in the appendix, section two.



FIGURE 16 “Dhāraṇī Talisman for Offerings to Ketu and Mercury, Planetary Deity of the North,” Stein Painting 170

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FIGURES 17A–B

Glyph following incantation in San 678 and Stein Painting 170

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prognosis. The incantation also returns us to the dangers of the spirit world lurking beneath the surface of divination—something taken for granted in the *Tricks of Jing* and in the *Stalk Divination*. This addition of incantation, along with the different naming of the mantic figures, the extension of the prognoses, and the inclusion of categories like “administrative entanglements,” demonstrates the adaptation of the *Tricks of Jing* tradition to new ritual norms and to its users’ milieu. It also helpfully connects divination and its material culture to that of talismans and seals.

The third text belonging to this group, the *Guan Gongming Divination Method*, also features links to talismans. It is also very close in space and time to the *Divination of Maheśvara*. It is preserved in a tenth-century Dunhuang codex, P.4778 + P.3868, and in a fragment, Dh 2375 V^o.⁷⁴ Unlike the large (30 × 21.5 cm) codex S.5614, which contains the *Divination of Maheśvara*, this one measures a more manageable 11.5 × 10.3 cm, and is not a compilation text.

Following its title on the cover, the next page includes the names of the seven Buddhas in large sloppy characters and idiosyncratic orthographies. There is then a long introduction, and sixteen oracular responses each headed by a counting-rod style numerical trigram. After the last of the sixteen oracular responses, it helpfully states “sixteen mantic figures” (*yi shi liu gua*—十六卦). This might be to guard against any scribal lapses that could result in omitted or repeated oracular responses. It could equally be an alternative title or a genre descriptor to refer to this form of divination shared with the *Tricks of Jing* and the *Duke of Zhou Divination Method*.

74 Kalinowski, “Cléromancie,” 317.

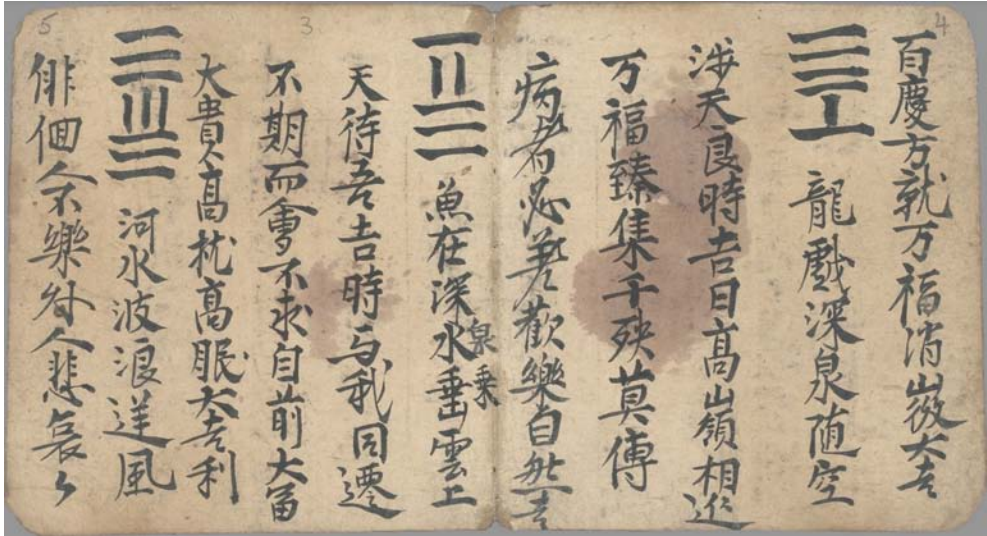


FIGURE 18 A view of the opened *Guan Gongming Divination Method* codex, pages four and five. Note the rounded edges, as well as the conservator's pagination in pencil in the upper corners and the notation "3" near the middle, which numbers the bifolio. Shelfmark P.3868

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Following the text there is then a colophon that states that "Mister Zhai revised [the text]" (*zhai yuanwai xun guo* 翟員外尋過). Marc Kalinowski tentatively identifies him with Zhai Fengda 翟奉達 (born 883), a famous literatus at Dunhuang who was active from 902 to 966, and who edited nearly all of Dunhuang's almanacs between the years 926 and 959.⁷⁵ This would place the manuscript in the early- to mid-tenth century, roughly contemporary with the manuscripts of the *Duke of Zhou Divination Method* and the *Divination of Mahéśvara*.

The *Guan Gongming Divination Method* is deeply indebted to the *Duke of Zhou Divination Method*, and is also named after a sage.⁷⁶ Guan Gongming (aka Guan Lu 管輅, 209–256 CE), like the Duke of Zhou, was a legendary diviner-strategist with magical abilities. Affiliated with the Wei Kingdom during the

75 Ibid., 317, 343. On Zhai Fengda, see Stephen Teiser, *The Scripture of the Ten Kings and the Making of Purgatory in Medieval Chinese Buddhism* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1994), 102–121, 242–243; Qiang Ning, *Art, Religion, and Politics in Medieval China: the Dunhuang Cave of the Zhai Family* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2004), 76–77.

76 See *Guan Gongming bu yaojue jing yi juan* 管公明卜要決經一卷 in Kalinowski, "Cléromancie," 317–318, 343, 345.

Three Kingdoms period, he was proficient at stalk divination, the *Zhouyi*, and at physiognomy. Books on divination attributed to him include *Essential Instructions for Contacting Spirits with the Zhouyi* (*Zhouyi tongling yaojue* 周易通靈要訣), *Scripture for Destroying Tempers* (*Puo zao jing* 破躁經), and *Prognostication Winnowing Basket* (*Zhan qi* 占筮). The text's long introduction calls for Guan Gongming to be worshipped, and sets out a divination ritual that blends Daoist, Buddhist, and divinatory sensibilities.⁷⁷

Calculations come out of the Heavenly Gate; *Changes* come out of the Nine Palaces. Driving the Six Dragons, prognosticate on the omens to resolve doubts. If you have an issue, divine on your own employing thirty-four counting rods, from top [to bottom, in three piles] reduce them by factors of four, until you have completed the divination.

Whenever initiating divination, with clarity and quiescence worship Guan Gongming, focus and call to mind the divination as well as naming the Seven Buddhas.

If you get an auspicious result with the first divination and with the second get an inauspicious one, use it. If your divination results in three mantic figures and two of them are good and one bad, then go ahead and use it. If two are bad and one good, don't use it. Focus and recite while divining, proclaiming the names of the Seven Buddhas; Guan Gongming plays the role of Later Sage, and Wu Zhong prognosticates the auspiciousness, and observes all matters.

With all thirty-four counting rods, make an invocation (*zhou*) and say: "Numinous Rods (*linggan*), clearly settle the Qian and Kun, drive the Heavenly Dragons, and travel through the Eight Gates to prognosticate the auspiciousness." To resolve the doubts of So-and-so set up horizontal [groups] removing factors of four until you no longer can, then divine the matter. If you rely on the mantic figure, you can never go wrong. If you have an issue, divine yourself and don't keep bothering your teacher.

筮（筮）出天門，易出九宮。乘駕六龍，占相決疑。有事自卜，用筮（筮）子卅四枚，從上四四除之，盡即成卜。凡為卜者，清淨禮拜管公明，專心念卜，又稱七佛名字。若卜得一吉，更卜後卦惡，可使。若卜三卦，兩卦好一卦惡，用；如兩卦惡一卦好，不可用。凡卜唯須念七佛名字，管公明為后賢，吳仲占吉凶，觀万事。凡

77 Christine Mollier, "Talismans," 414.

竿（筭）子卅四枚，呪曰：“靈竿審定乾坤，乘駕天龍，同游八門，以占吉凶。”某乙決疑，橫以四除，除盡則卜事，依卦萬無失一。有事自卜，不勞問師。

This introduction is a jumble of invocations, formulas, and practical instructions. Both the Heavenly Gate and the Nine Palaces refer to Daoist ritual choreographies used among other things for manipulating or transcending time. Riding Six Dragons refers to using the six lines of a hexagram. Driving a dragon chariot goes back to the myth of King Mu of Zhou's travels to the goddess of immortality located in the West. In the Kunlun Mountains, the Grandmother of the West (Xiwangmu) was so famous that she was also included in the *Divination of Maheśvara* pantheon. Notably in the *Guan Gongming*, while Seven Buddhas are invoked, the Chinese sage Guan Gongming is the tutelary spirit of the process and therefore perhaps higher in the hierarchy. Guan Gongming “acts as a Later Sage” (*houxian* 後賢) as opposed to the original sages, *qian-sheng* 前聖, and remains in the background while Wu Zhong 吳仲, the younger brother of the legendary founder of the ancient state of Wu,⁷⁸ divines and oversees (*guan* 觀) everything. We will encounter similar divisions of roles in the introductions to two Sanskrit dice divination texts in the next chapter.

There is a strong emphasis on recitation and on synchronizing one's speech with one's physical actions of sorting the counting rods. The diviner must worship Guan Gongming with “clarity and quiescence” (*qingjing* 清淨)⁷⁹ as well as recite the names of the Seven Buddhas. The invocation, which had to be recited when holding the thirty-four counting rods, effectively activates them as “numinous rods” (*linggan* 靈竿).

The rather verbose introduction to the text also provides some practical instructions. Like the *Tricks of Jing* and the *Duke of Zhou Divination Method*, it mentions that one sorts the counting rods into three groups, reducing each pile by factors of four until one can produce a mantic figure. Near the beginning

78 Wu Zhong was the legendary royal Zhou descendant and younger brother of the Wu State founder, Wu Taibo, according to the Late Han Zhao Ye 趙曄, *Wu Yue Chunqiu* 吳越春秋, “Wu Taibo” 吳太伯, *juan* 1.3a–b (see Kanripo <http://www.kanripo.org/text>). Also called Zhong Yong 仲雍 and Yu Zhong 虞仲. He and his older brother, claiming to go pick medicinal herbs on Mt. Heng 衡, escaped to the Jing-man 荊蠻 peoples, tattooed their bodies and cut off their hair, so that their younger brother, Jili 季歷, could become the first ruler of the Zhou.

79 This is a Huang-Lao expression which refers to the ideal state of mind and body. It is also the name of a popular Daoist scripture by the tenth century as well as an early Buddhist term; *Encyclopedia of Taoism*, Vol. 2, 799–800.

it also introduces something like a motto: “if you have a problem, divine it yourself” (*you shi zi bu* 有事自卜). Its closing line reiterates that this is a divination that one can do for oneself. That is to say that this method was, theoretically, not just the province of professional diviners. In this sense it is accurate to refer to the text as a “manual,” a term that should otherwise be used sparingly in reference to sacred or mantic books. The other very practical information that sets it apart is its reference to up to three repetitions of the divination process. This makes an interesting point of comparison with the *Divination of Mahesvara's* “rule of three,” described in chapter one. There, one had essentially three chances to get an auspicious result. In the *Guan Gongming Divination Method*, by contrast, there is something like a “majority rule” policy that also admits up to three divinations. It seems that if one has one or more good results, these are kept, but if one has two bad results this can be rejected. These instructions raise more questions than they answer: Was it permissible to divine just once? What if one receives three bad responses—can one still “not use it,” or is this inauspiciousness unavoidable? If one gets two good responses and one bad, does one treat the specifics of those two good responses as having equal validity, does one have to choose one or the other, or can one “cherry pick” parts of each?

The richness of the invocations and recitations forms a contrast with the simplicity of the “do-it-yourself” method, and one can ask whether or not these are truly relevant or were perhaps borrowed into the text from another form of divination. It is fair to ask, for example, how the “Spirit Rods inspect and settle the Qian and Kun, drive the Heavenly dragons, and travel through the Eight (directional) Gates to prognosticate the auspiciousness.” The Eight Trigrams have ostensibly nothing to do with this method. They do not lend their names to the mantic figures as they do in the *Duke of Zhou Divination Method*. And the creation of a grid of the terrestrial Nine Palaces with the Eight Trigrams arrayed in a “magic square” serves no integral function in this cleromantic method of sorting counting rods. These features in the invocation, and the invocation itself, seem to consist of efficacious multipliers, present for their ability to confer additional potency, rather than for their coherence within the ritual and cosmological system. This could equally explain the invocations to the Seven Buddhas, whose messy names on the inside cover of the codex make it look like something of a crib sheet. This use of ritual/cosmological multipliers to the point of cacophony is something we’ve already observed in the *Empowered Draughtsmen's* use of a *shi* board, and it is in fact a common occurrence in a variety of medieval Chinese rituals.

What is seen from one angle—we hesitate to say “popular”—as multiplying potency may be seen from another, however, as conferring legitimacy by bring-

ing divination into alignment with Daoist and Buddhist cosmologies. Gil Raz summarizes the problem in a Daoist context, but it is one that certainly has broader applicability.

I suggest that it is in the cosmological entailments of the mantic procedures, as interpreted by the Daoists, that we will find reasons for both the Daoist proscription of and assimilation of divination. If divination were perceived as actual manipulation of cosmological emblems then diviners would be seen as playing havoc with the normal harmonies of the universe. When these same emblems were incorporated into the coherent ritual systems of the Daoists—in which the entire cosmos was manipulated simultaneously and synchronically—then the effect was attainment of the Dao.⁸⁰

In the *Guan Gongming Divination Method* and in related numerical trigram divination texts the question seems to be who is incorporating whom into a coherent ritual system. Divination is elastic and unpredictable, and it adapts a variety of gods, ritual sensibilities, and cosmologies as it moves across linguistic and religious borders—something that chapter three will illustrate in some detail. There we will also question how divination and play—so well embodied by the die—tend to resist their users' efforts to impose on them a given structure or order. From the perspective of the underlying divination system, the *Guan Gongming's* introduction and invocation reveal the rough edges of its being incorporated into a Buddhist and Daoist milieu. We suggest something further: these rough edges are equally produced by divination's tendency to partner with other techniques and traditions while simultaneously resisting, by way of its own aleatory sensibilities, the rigorous imposition of ritual and cosmological order.

While its ritual preliminaries are well articulated, the *Guan Gongming Divination Method* differs from the *Tricks of Jing* and the *Duke of Zhou Divination Method* by leaving its mantic figures unnamed. Its sixteen responses therefore include the numerical trigram, an oracular verse containing poetic images and interpretation, and an evaluation. Its interpretations are slightly shorter than those in the *Duke of Zhou*, but they include the same categories, particularly illness and travel. Unlike the *Duke of Zhou*, it does not incorporate the evaluation into verse.

⁸⁰ Raz, "Time Manipulation in Early Daoist Ritual," 61.



FIGURE 19

The first numerical trigram in the *Guan Gongming Divination Method* codex P.4778

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The numerical trigrams are sometimes messy and sometimes even wrong. For the very first trigram, for example, the scribe drew four lines on top, four in the middle, and three below. Realizing the mistake, either the editor “Mister Zhai,” or the scribe added thin ink to make two of the top lines into one very thick line in order to produce the correct trigram, 3-4-3 (see fig. 19).

The scribe made further such errors that went uncorrected in the eleventh and thirteenth trigrams, drawing “3-3-3” for 4-3-3 and “2-4-1” for 1-4-1, respectively. These sorts of gaffes immediately recall the repetition in the *Divination of Maheśvara* of combinations 1-4-3 and 1-3-1 and the omission of 1-3-2. One’s first recourse when faced with this and similar phenomena is to assume sloppy scribes and lazy editors. This, however, is a well-produced text with a colophon, possibly even edited by a famous literatus. We therefore take these errors as evidence of the same type of divinatory mouvance we have observed in the *Divination of Maheśvara*, and which we will also see in the Sanskrit, Tibetan, and Turkish dice divination texts surveyed in chapter three.

The *Duke of Zhou Divination Method* and the *Guan Gongming Divination Method* overlap significantly. They begin with the same two responses, 3-4-3 and 2-2-2, and end with 4-4-2, but otherwise follow different orders. The contents of the *Guan Gongming*, however, are largely dependent on the *Duke of Zhou*, as can be seen in the close correspondences between the two texts’ responses in both poetic image and prognosis for the combinations 3-3-4, 3-2-1, 2-3-1, 2-1-3, and 1-3-2, as well as some close overlaps (of image or prognosis) in the combinations 3-4-3, 2-2-2, 3-1-2, 4-1-1, and 4-4-2. Also, the image and prognosis of the response for 3-3-4 in the *Duke of Zhou* correspond to those for 1-1-4 in the *Guan Gongming*. Only five responses, for 4-3-3, 1-4-1, 2-4-4, 4-2-4, 1-2-3, do not have significant overlaps, though they may end with identical evaluations, e.g., “greatly auspicious.”⁸¹

81 Kalinowski has a slightly different tally, stating that nine responses are similar, two have a vague connection, and the remaining five have none; Kalinowski, “Cléromancie,” 318, n. 61.

TABLE 6 Numerical trigrams and evaluations in the *Duke of Zhou Divination Method* and the *Guan Gongming Divination Method*

<i>Zhougong</i> <i>Gua</i> ; name	<i>Zhougong</i> evaluation	<i>Guan Gongming</i> order (no name)	<i>Guan Gongming</i> evaluation
[1] 3-4-3 周公 Zhou Gong	大吉 Greatly Auspicious	1	大吉 Greatly Auspi- cious
[2] 2-2-2 孔子 Kongzi	大吉 Greatly Auspicious	2	吉利 Auspicious and Profitable
[3] 1-4-1 屈原 Qu Yuan	大凶 Greatly Inauspicious	13 ^a	大凶 Greatly Inauspi- cious
[4] 2-1-3 赤松 Red Pine	大吉 Greatly Auspicious	14	吉利 Auspicious and Profitable
[5] 1-1-4 桀紂 Jie and Zhou	大凶 Greatly Inauspicious	6	大吉 Greatly Auspi- cious
[6] 3-3-4 越王 King of Yue	大吉 Greatly Auspicious	4	大凶 Greatly Inauspi- cious
[7] 1-3-2 子推 Zitui	大凶 Greatly Inauspicious	15	凶 Inauspicious
[8] 4-1-1 太公 Tai Gong	大吉 Greatly Auspicious	9	吉 Auspicious
[9] 3-1-2 兌 Dui	大吉 Greatly Auspicious	3	大吉 Greatly Auspi- cious
[10] 3-2-1 坤 Kun	大吉 Greatly Auspicious	5	吉 Auspicious
[11] 4-3-3 離 Li	大凶 Greatly Inauspicious	11 ^b	大凶 Greatly Inauspi- cious
[12] 2-3-1 乾 Qian	大吉 Greatly Auspicious	12	大吉 Greatly Auspi- cious
[13] 2-4-4 巽 Xun	大吉 Greatly Auspicious	7	凶 Inauspicious
[14] 1-2-3 坎 Kan	大吉 Greatly Auspicious	10	大吉利 Greatly Auspi- cious and Profitable
[15] 4-2-4 震 Zhen	大凶 Greatly Inauspicious	8	大吉 Greatly Auspi- cious
[16] 4-4-2 艮 Gen	大吉 Greatly Auspicious	16	吉 Auspicious

a The text reads 2-4-1, which is an error; *ibid.*, 318, n. 61.

b The text reads 3-3-3, which is an error; *ibid.*, 318, n. 61.

An example of a response where numerical trigram, image, and evaluation all overlap is as follows:

Duke of Zhou Divination Method:

The Red Pine trigram. 2-1-3. From time to time it will seem like going up a high tower with wise men coming of their own accord. What you've sought for a while will be harmonious, with unexpected cash and goods brought in. The sick will not die. This mantic figure is greatly auspicious.

赤松卦。2-1-3 時時如上高臺 (doj)，賢人不召自來 (loj)。經求和合，橫事錢財，病者不死。此卦大吉。

Guan Gongming Divination Method:

2-1-3 Quiet in nature and open minded, as if climbing a high tower. Then there appears a spirit without being summoned. Whatever direction you go will be harmonious and unexpectedly result in wealth. The sick will recover on their own and travelers will quickly return. Auspicious and profitable.

2-1-3 性淨心開 (khoj)，如登高臺 (doj)。乃有神人 (nyin)，不召自來 (loj)。所向和合，橫得錢財。病者自差，行者速迴。吉利。

As noted already, the *Duke of Zhou Divination Method*, and by extension the *Guan Gongming Divination Method*, is indebted for its method and text to the 2nd-century-BCE *Tricks of Jing*. The corresponding response in the latter text demonstrates that the debt extends beyond method:

Tricks of Jing:

A Zi trigram 2-1-3. So good, the beginning [of the Earthly Branches]! It is like climbing up a high tower. An elegant personage will come without being called. His evenly spaced emerald wings rise up like a banner. If it is not taken as a beginning, it will be like climbing up a high hill; there will be no blame ensuing. Today or any day, a person from far away is coming. Auspicious. The curse will reside in the Supervisor of Life Allotments.

子 2-1-3。善哉，首如登高臺 (*lʰə)。布 (甫) 有美人 (*ni[ŋ])，弗召自來 (*rʰə)。齊其翠羽 (*[g]ʷ(r)aʔ)，或 (> 又) 與 (舉) 旌旗 (*C.[g]ər)。非以為首 (*!uʔ)，如登高丘 (*[k]ʷhə)，安而毋軌 (> 咎 *[g](r)uʔ)。今日何日，遠人將來。吉，崇在司命。

We find similar correspondences of images for the numerical trigrams 1-2-3 (dragon in a deep spring, clouds in the sky) and 4-4-2 (passes and bridges).

These three related texts allow one to chart developments and variations in a single divination method over time. They also make for an interesting comparandum for the *Divination of Maheśvara*. Among the main themes and points of comparison are the presence or absence of numerological or cosmological (e.g., Yin-Yang) beliefs, the physical method, the ritual stance, the physical appearance of the mantic figure, its being named or unnamed in association with Stems, Branches, *bagua*, or mythico-historical figures, and the poetics of the oracular responses.

On a superficial level, there are two obvious differences between the four trigram texts using numbers one to four: their mantic figures do not bear the same names, whether of gods or of cosmological forces, and similarly numbered numerical trigrams do not necessarily have the same evaluation. If we compare only the sixteen combinations shared by all four texts and simply reduce them to positive “+,” negative “-,” or neutral “o,” the incongruity becomes obvious (see table 7). As one would expect, the greatest incongruity is between the three *Tricks*-genre texts and the *Divination of Maheśvara*. There is, however, considerable variance even within the three texts which so closely overlap in their methods and contents. In each case, the majority of trigrams have auspicious results: 9/16 for the *Tricks of Jing*, 11/16 for the *Duke of Zhou Divination Method* and the *Guan Gongming Divination Method* (although not all the same ones), and about 50/64 for *Divination of Maheśvara*. The diviners clearly wanted good odds for happy customers.

We have repeatedly noted the lack of a numerological sensibility in each of these texts. It appears certain that in each case these numerical trigrams were not read line by line but taken as a whole. In the case of the three *Tricks*-genre texts, the method constructs a counting-rod style trigram, which is then rendered “pictorially” on the page of a divination book. It is easy to comprehend how such a system could lend itself to comprehending the mantic figure holistically as a symbol that lacks any phonetic value as a sign or else has to have this assigned as the name of the numerical trigram. Seeing the numerical trigram holistically and compartmentalizing or ignoring the numerical values of each of a trigram’s three layers seems like a more difficult task in the case of the *Divination of Maheśvara*, where the trigrams are composed of three written numerals, that is, signs with immediate phonetic values.

TABLE 7 Comparison of numerical trigrams and evaluations

Numerical trigram	<i>Tricks of Jing</i>	<i>Duke of Zhou Divination Method</i>	<i>Guan Gongming Divination Method</i>	<i>Divination of Maheśvara</i>
4-3-3	-	-	-	+
4-1-1	+	+	+	0
3-4-3	+	+	+	+
4-2-4	+	-	+	+
3-1-2	+	+	+	+
3-3-4	-	+	-	+
2-3-1	-	+	+	+
2-2-2	+	+	+	+
2-1-3	+	+	+	NA [+]
1-4-1	-	-	-	+
1-3-2	-	-	-	NA
3-2-1	-	+	+	+
1-2-3	+	+	+	+
1-1-4	+	-	+	+
4-4-2	+	+	+	+
2-4-4	-	+	-	+

5 Poetry, Talismans, and Divination

One major contrast between the *Divination of Maheśvara* and most of the texts surveyed in this chapter is the general lack of poetic images in the former. Michel Strickmann in his book *Chinese Poetry and Prophecy: The Written Oracle in East Asia* explains that “[T]he bond between poetry and prophecy is primordial ... [r]hymed, rhythmic, or assonantial verse has at all times been a vehicle for the gods, whether as a direct conduit for oracular voices or through the medium of a divinely inspired poet.”⁸² The attachment of set verses to mantric figures, named or not, written in a text mitigates the immediacy of “direct conduit.” On the other hand, this sense of original immediacy can be revived through singing or incanting them. This display of a magical bond lends authorization to the pragmatic advice following and to the ultimate determination of auspiciousness. Only some of the texts under consideration included such

82 Strickmann, *Chinese Poetry and Prophecy*, 87.

verses. Verses with bits of myth and history, and some magical imagery used as oracles are seen in the *Guicang* and the *Changes*, but not in the *Stalk Divination*.⁸³ In the *Tricks* genre the verses themselves depict a world magical with flying beings, clouds, light beams, dragons, towers, and trees. This persists in the *Duke of Zhou* and the *Guan Gongming*, but it is somewhat muted by their expansion of the interpretations.

The incantatory power of poetic imagery may have allowed the diviner a bit of interpretative flexibility. It may have functioned much like the opening nature imagery in the *Book of Odes* (*Shijing* 詩經) called “uplift” (*xing* 興) in the preface to the *Odes* and understood variously by later scholars as the use of a natural image to evoke a feeling, or to create a “stimulus.”⁸⁴ Much in the way that we can understand invocations to stimulate a response from the gods, we might understand the magical landscapes and beings of the poetic oracular responses to also evoke a response. Many of the images of flying monsters, dragons, and birds along with mountainous, watery, or heavenly landscapes filled with numinous trees, luminous clouds, and certain colors of leaves or wings and so forth shared by the *Tricks*, the *Duke of Zhou*, and the *Guan Gongming* can be found in the *Book of Odes*, *Songs of the South* (*Chuci* 楚辭), and the *Classic of Mountains and Seas* (*Shanhaijing* 山海經)—the latter two associated with Chu culture. Somewhat similar images can also be found in stalk divination texts, to a lesser degree in the *Guicang* and the *Changes*, but to a greater degree in the Han *Mr. Jiao's Forest of Changes* (the *Jiaoshi yilin* 焦氏易林).⁸⁵

83 The use of myth and history in incantations and talismans is commonly found in other religions; see, for example, Ayo Opefeyitimi, “Ayajo as Ifá in Mythical and Sacred Contexts,” in *Ifá Divination, Knowledge, Power, and Performance*, ed. Jacob K. Olupona and Rowland O. Abiodun (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2016), 17–31; Mary R. Bachvarova, “Adapting Mesopotamian Myth in Hurro-Hittite Rituals at Hattuša: IŠTAR, the Underworld, and the Legendary Kings,” in *Beyond Hatti: A Tribute to Gary Beckman*, ed. Billie Jean Collins and Piotr Michalowski (Lockwood, 2013), 23–44. See Sarah Allan’s discussion of *historiolea* in “‘When Red Pigeons Gathered on Tang’s House’: A Warring States Period Tale of Shamanic Possession and Building Construction set at the turn of the Xia and Shang Dynasties,” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 25.2 (April 2015): 1–20.

84 For “opening evocative stimulus” see Pauline Yu, “Allegory, Allegoresis, and the *Classic of Poetry*,” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 43.2 (1983): 377–412; Pauline Yu, *The Reading of Imagery in the Chinese Poetic Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987).

85 This latter text was presumably composed in the first century BCE, after the *Tricks of Jing*, although most scholars believe it was actually compiled later. It was originally a collection of 4096 verses reflecting all the possible combinations of 64 × 64 hexagrams, that is, the basic hexagrams multiplied into all possible paired combinations (much like the idea of multiplying the Eight Trigrams to come up with all possible pairs of trigrams and sixty-four hexagrams). It seems that the *Tricks* and *Mr. Jiao's Forest* may have drawn on some of the

The most colorful imagery in the *Tricks of Jing* is found in its first oracular response. We can understand this to be a travel warning, which is a type of warning found in the *Stalk Divination* and other divination texts.

A Jia (Stem 1) trigram 4-3-3. The Qiongqi monster will soar up into the sky and float on clouds like a person. But once he's already up there, the clouds he is riding on will turn murky and dark, so that going along he will encounter a Great Spirit as tall as a city [tower] breathing in great breaths like thunder, startling him midway. The Great Father will cause a curse to appear during my life. Inauspicious.

己(> 甲) : 4-3-3。窮奇欲登于天 (*f'in), 浮雲如人 (*niŋ)。氣 (> 既) 已行之 (*tə), 乘雲冥冥 (*m^əeŋ), 行禹 (> 遇) 大神 (*Cə.lin)。其高如城 (*deŋ), 大 (> 太) 息如壘 (雷 *C.r^əuj), 中道而驚 (*kreŋ)。泰 (> 大) 父為崇, 欲來義 (> 我) 生 (sreŋ), 凶。

The Qiongqi monster is unusual because it is named. It is described in the *Shan-haijing* in the section on Western Mountains ("Xishan jing" 西山經) as a hairy bovine that roared like a dog and ate people. During the Han, it may also have become linked to the legendary dragon-like Gonggong 共工 that wreaked havoc in Heaven. The image of a dragon soaring up to Heaven is seen in the *Guicang*, but soaring up to Heaven is also mentioned in the *Changes*; floating on clouds is also found in the *Songs of the South* and *Mr. Jiao's Forest of Changes*. Images of flying phoenixes and dragons are again found in the Dunhuang trigram texts.

If we look at the imagery of inauspicious trigrams in the *Duke of Zhou Divination Method*, we find nature images in a topsy-turvy scenario. Commonly fish are up in trees, birds fly without getting anywhere or are found in wells, and rivers have no water. The *Guan Gongming Divination Method* describes a scenario not unlike the *Tricks of Jing* in its oracular response for the mantic figure 4-3-3, but without the Qiongqi monster. While the magical landscape persists, there is a hint that the metaphors represent the feelings of the client, as is the case for the few uses of similes in the *Divination of Maheśvara*.

A bird jolts into the sky, gloomy and dark, it runs into a Celestial Spirit and is frightened mid-way. What you seek will not be obtained, what you do will not be completed. Greatly inauspicious.

same sources of mantic lore, or that texts like the *Tricks of Jing* were sources for the later compilation.

有鳥沖天 (then)，幽幽冥冥 (meng)，行逢天神 (zyin)，中道而驚 (kjaeng)。所求不得，所作不成 (dzyeng)。大凶。

Inauspicious trigrams in the *Duke of Zhou* and the *Guan Gongming* also feature directionless or circuitous travel, emblems of frustration and helplessness. For example, in the *Duke of Zhou*:

The Li trigram. 4-3-3. A bird heads up into the sky watching upon high, flapping around back and forth. Travelers on the road will have poor [roads and] blocked paths. What you seek will be hard to get with an unexpected loss of wealth. The sick will become much sicker, resulting in tears and mourning. This mantic figure is greatly inauspicious.

離卦。4-3-3 鳥鼻天餘 (yo)，高望徘徊 (hwoj)。行人在路 (luH)，窮道不開 (khoj)。求事難得，橫失錢財 (dzoj)。病者沉重，哭泣悲哀 ('oj)。此卦大凶。

Or in the *Guan Gongming*:

A deity has come down while dragons fly up into space. The travelers are tired and the roads blocked. Nothing you try to complete will be managed; nothing you do will be worthwhile. Inauspicious.

神人在下 (haeX)，龍飛在空 (khuwngX)。行人道倦 (kjwenX)，閉塞不通 (thuwnG)。為成不就，所作無功 (kuwnG)。凶。

[4]-3-3 The waves on the river go back and forth against the wind. Someone will be unhappy outside and go into a state of sad mourning. The household will be separated and the cash and goods lost. The sick will not recover and travelers will not come. Greatly inauspicious.

河水波浪 (lang)，逆風徘徊 (hwoj)。人不樂外 (ngwajH)，人悲哀哀 ('oj)。家室離別，散失錢財 (dzoj)。病者不差 (tsrheaj)，行人不來 (loj)。大凶。

[1]-4-1 The spirit does not fly up high but flits back and forth over dangerous hills. It runs into a swallow carrying an egg in its beak. The yellow bird has lost its flock and been captured by someone. Gossip unexpectedly comes and one will witness imprisonment. Greatly inauspicious.

神飛不高 (kaw)，徘徊畏丘 (khjuw)。與雀相逢 (*C.bron)，橫為卵啄 (*mə-tʰrok)。黃鳥失群 (gjun)，被人攝錄 (ljowk)。口舌橫來，坐見牢獄 (*ŋrok)。大凶。

In all three texts, auspicious rhymed imagery involves dragons flying up into the sky, brilliant colored birds flying and gathering, receiving sunlight when everywhere else is dark, unusual trees, certain mountains, a boat in the river, sunlit clouds, and so forth. The *Guan Gongming* also includes meetings with immortals, whereas the *Tricks* simply refers to the arrival of an elegant person (*meiren* 美[人]). While few of the shared images between the *Tricks* and the Dunhuang texts are exact, the *Tricks* image for Wu 3-1-2 is clearly related to the *Guan Gongming* image for 3-1-2:⁸⁶

A Wu (Stem 5) trigram 3-1-2. In the sea of Darkness, I alone get its light. In thunder and lightning, and great shadow (Yin), I alone get the light (Yang). Someone is coming who is as noble as a lord or a king. The trees have not yet produced [fruit], but the leaves are so, so green. Inauspicious matters will all be exorcised and the auspicious matters will be completed smoothly. Auspicious.

戊 3-1-2。冥冥之海 (*m̄ ʼəʔ)，吾獨得其光 (*kʷaŋ)。雷電大陰 (*qrum)，[吾]蜀 (獨) 得陽 (*laŋ)。有人將至 (*tit-s)，貴如公王 (*Gʷaŋ-s)。樹木未產 (*s-ŋrarʔ)，其葉綉靖 (青青 *s.ɿʰeŋ)。凶事盡除 (*lra)，吉事順成 (*deŋ)。吉。

3-1-2 Clouds and rain darken the sky, yet one gets sunshine. Gloomy and dark, yet one gets radiance. Immortals arrive, yet one avoids [their] black and yellow [powers]. Troublesome illness can be expelled and cured. Good fortune and salary flourish auspiciously. Greatly auspicious.

雲雨天陰 ('im)，吾得其陽 (yang)。幽幽冥冥 (meng)，吾得其光 (kwang)⁸⁷。仙人來至 (tsyijH)，吾免玄黃 (hwang)。憂病除差，福祿吉昌 (tsyhangH)。大吉。

86 For a comparison of the text for each numerical trigram in the three texts, see Zhou Xiaoyu, 255–258.

87 Interestingly the rhyming words *guang* 光 and *yang* 陽 appear in both verses, but in reverse order. The rhyme is continued with *wang* 王 in the *Tricks* and *huang* in the *Guan Gongming*. *Hai* 海 and *yin* 陰 do not rhyme in ancient Chinese, nor did *yin* and *ming* 冥 in middle Chinese.

The images in the three *Tricks*-genre texts tend to be fabulous rather than consisting of objects possibly viewed in the environment where the diviner was located. This suggests their use in incantations. They all appear to be informed by the Han-period poetry exalting immortality and the transcending of time. However, in medieval times they also seemed to be poetic reflections of human feelings. We will return to these sorts of celestial images, and especially to the thunder and the wind, in the concluding chapter.

In the context of the *Stalk Divination*, it was stated above that its named arrays of four numerical trigrams “must also be considered as spiritual pantheons.” In chapter one, we saw that within the semantics of the *Divination of Maheśvara’s* oracular responses, it is the gods and spirits more than the mantic figures that are the agents of protection. This points to a larger issue about the nature of the mantic figure and its relationship to gods and spirits, a point introduced through a semantic analysis in chapter one. Here, we have observed that the counting-rod trigrams of the *Tricks* and its descendants are “pictorial” in the sense of rendering precisely on the page the mantic figure created with counting rods. We have also seen how these mantic figures can be set apart from the text by their *mise en page*, as in the codex P.3398.2. The counting-rod trigrams bring to this discussion a further element, which is their use in talismans.

Notably, there is the “Divine Talisman of Guan Gongming” (*Guan Gongming shenfu* 管公明神符), found in the *Protecting Residence Spirit Calendar* (*Hu zhaishen lijuan* 護宅神曆卷, P.3358), along with a variety of *dhāraṇīs*, incantations, and talismans (see fig. 20).⁸⁸ Here two numerical trigrams, 1-3-2 and 2-2-2, appear over a depiction of water and possibly of seven stars. The latter is the second mantic figure in the *Guan Gongming Divination Method*, and the former is the second to last; so, almost alpha and omega, but not quite. In the *Tricks of Jing, Duke of Zhou*, and *Guan Gongming* texts, 1-3-2 is inauspicious and 2-2-2 is auspicious. The “Divine Talisman of Guan Gongming” explains that when a person looks at this divine talisman, demons will leave out of the mouth. The talisman also protects one’s wealth and is to be affixed to one’s door.⁸⁹

That this talismanic use of numerical trigrams should be associated with Guan Gongming is particularly appropriate, since the *Guan Gongming Divination Method* is the only of these three related texts that allows the mantic figures to stand on their own, unnamed, and not associated with a Stem, Branch, sage,

88 Mollier, “Talismans,” 416, 421, 427; Kalinowski, “Mantic texts in their cultural context,” 128, 133 n. 85. On talismans more generally, see Copp, *The Body Incantatory*.

89 Mollier, “Talismans,” 421.



FIGURE 20 “Divine Talisman of Guan Gongming” (*Guan Gongming shenfu* 管公明神符), in the *Protecting Residence Spirit Calendar* (*Hu zhaishen lijuan* 護宅神曆卷, P.3358). The numerical trigrams are near the top, in the second column from the right
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Villain, or *bagua*. This puts the emphasis squarely on the mantic figure itself, and returns us to the question of the extent to which a mantic figure acts not only as an index of a response, or of a god or spirit, or as a medium of communication, but perhaps as a divine agent in its own right.

In the most general terms, talismans are usually either protective/ preventative or they are for exorcising demons and misfortune.⁹⁰ The former type of talisman is often associated with stars, planets, and Stems and Branches, not unlike the mantic figures in the *Tricks of Jing* and the *Duke of Zhou Divination Method*. The latter type of talisman often depicts iconographically the demon

90 Ibid., 409.

to be exorcised, or prominently displays the word “demon” (*gui* 鬼; see fig. 20, left side). Protective talismans like Stein Painting 170 (fig. 16), which includes images of Mercury and Ketu, also iconographically depict protecting figures. In the talisman of Guan Gongming, the two numerical trigrams form a part of the “depiction” of Guan Gongming, who here chases demons out of one’s body. Two mantic figures lifted from the divination text—one auspicious, the other inauspicious—in this way embody, *pars pro toto*, the sage Guan Gongming and help to activate his exorcistic powers. This dual point of reference using two ostensibly opposing mantic figures is a fascinating way to depict and invoke a god, since it does not name him directly or refigure him iconically, but instead alludes to his creative and destructive functions. (That is, unless the selection of an auspicious and inauspicious mantic figure was purely coincidental; we find this unlikely, even if the random and the coincidental may never be ruled out completely where divination is concerned.)

This relationship between *gua*-s and gods in the talisman is interesting to think with when considering the same relationship within divination texts. Specifically, it points to how divination’s mode of engagement with gods and spirits diverges from that of talismans. In the *Duke of Zhou Divination Method* the first six mantic figures are each associated with a sage or a mythical figure. These names appear just next to the mantic figures, with names and mantic figures being the only two elements found in the upper register of the divination codex P.3398.2, and the oracular responses themselves in the lower register, separated by blank space (see fig. 14). The nature of this “association” between a given mantic figure and a given name is unstated, and the oracular responses themselves do not allude in any notable way to, say, Confucius or Red Pine or whoever’s name they follow. Does this imply that the mantic figure 2-2-2 somehow *is* Confucius? Does it invoke or activate Confucius? Is Confucius then the source for the oracular response and its auspiciousness? Or is Confucius’ name and presence there more arbitrary or even desultory? Here one hesitates to make any claim that overdetermines a relationship that is in a characteristic state of flux.

Where the comparison with talismans is more instructive is in the visual and structural similarity to talismans of placing the “pictorial” element of the counting-rod numerical trigram at the top, with a caption as it were, and placing the text of the oracular response below. Such is the typical layout of image and text in talismans, so that if one were to apply the latter’s logic to divination texts, the mantic figure and the name in P.3398.2 occupy the space appropriate either to protective gods to be invoked or to noxious demons to be expelled. Beyond these documentary features, similarities extend to the semantic level as well: both genres tend to feature short entries with such terms as fear (*bu*),

worry (*you*), calamity (*zai* 災), and misfortune (*huo* 禍), and many end with “greatly auspicious.”⁹¹

In the *Divination of Maheśvara* it is clear that a given mantic figure is named for a god or spirit, and that this god or spirit is a source of protection or harm. But a given numerical trigram is the “numerical set (*ju*) of” such-and-such a god or spirit like, say, Dizang. Even if one takes this relationship of possession as one in which the mantic figure is something like the god’s symbol or sigil, this falls well short of the mantic figure embodying or constituting the god in the way that the two mantic figures do in the above talisman of Guan Gongming. And as we observed in chapter one, the relationship of possession is mutual: it may be that “this mantic figure is the set of xxx god,” but it is also the case that “its [that is, this set’s] god protects you.” This leaves a remarkable amount of interpretive leeway for what this dual possession means for the nature of the relationship between *gua* and god. This is particularly apt for understanding these as actors in a network that constitute themselves through their interactions.

In the case of Guan Gongming, accessing him through the divination text is quite different from accessing him through the talisman, even if both use overlapping mantic figures. While one might turn to either mode of ritual action to solve a specific problem, the outcome of the divination is far more uncertain than that of making and using the talisman. Even if Guan Gongming or perhaps Wu Zhong are held to be responsible for the oracular response(s) one receives when divining, these come by chance, unpredictably, and they can be either auspicious or inauspicious. Where talismans use specific methods for specific outcomes, divination uses specific methods but furnishes uncertain and unspecified outcomes. If talismans wield the gods, divination reinstates the gods as unwieldy. Where a talisman is coercive, divination is receptive, open to many possible responses. In the *Divination of Maheśvara*, divination can also call forth gods and spirits one may not know or wish to know.

Both talismans and divination interact with the elements and with human bodies in a process of transformative efficacy. In the case of talismans, this transformation (*hua* 化) occurs after the talisman is manufactured, when it is worn, burned, eaten, etc., but the transformative efficacy of the material objects of divination such as dice or counting rods is activated earlier in the process of divination, when the dice fall through the air and when the counting rods or stalks pass from the diviner’s hands.⁹² In both cases, this is the point at which

91 Despeux, “Talismans and Diagrams,” 531.

92 On the various methods for transforming the talismans through contact with bodies and elements, see Mollier, “Talismans,” 408.

the proceedings are turned over to the gods, but the talisman relays a command while divination poses a question. This is also where the contrast is most glaring, since in divination one turns at this point to the oracular response in a divination book for the answer, whereas the person using a talisman must simply wait, or perhaps divine to see if the ritual was successful. This dynamic also pertains to the point made in the introduction, where we noted that some see a mantic figure as a god and while others understand it as a means of communication that can be discarded once the communication is completed.

Looking at other forms of interpersonal communication with the gods in Chinese traditions, and to the role of physical media and signs, there is perhaps an analogy to be drawn with the Daoist practice of sending a written missive to the gods by burning it. Of this practice Michel Strickmann wrote, “[t]hrough the action of fire, the priest’s writing is transmuted into a gigantic, otherworldly script bearing a command that can move the gods.”⁹³ Here the semiotics of interpersonal communication seems rather more straightforward, perhaps because the transformative power of fire is more familiar than the analogous processes of wind or air that seem to govern divination. Adapting this remark to dice divination, for example, one might say, “through the action of wind (as they fall through the air), the fall of the dice is transmuted into a mantic figure that has the power to summon a spirit or god.” As we have seen, however, from exploring its talismanic function, the mantic figure is more than a “smoke signal to the gods”: it is a medium created through an aleatory process that harnesses one’s intentions, and it is the act of naming that marks the transition from *qua* to god.



This survey of numerical trigram texts has brought us from the fourth century BCE to the tenth century CE in Dunhuang, and afforded us a deeper comparative perspective on where the *Divination of Maheśvara* stands in relation to other Chinese numerical trigram texts. It has introduced a wide array of material cultural bases including coins, stalks, counting rods, dice, “wheels,” and draughtsmen. Some of the objects and a few of the methods come very close to those employed in the *Divination of Maheśvara*, but there is no clear antecedent tradition one might point to as the Chinese source for its method. The methods and contents of the texts surveyed here display some interesting continuities and contrasts. In the first place, there are those texts like the *Stalk Divination*,

93 Strickmann, *Chinese Magical Medicine*, 9.

the *Empowered Draughtsmen*, the *Five Omens Method*, and *Confucius' Horse-head Divination Method* that are deeply enmeshed in correlative cosmologies, and whose mantic figures and interpretations participate meaningfully in correspondences with Yin and Yang, the Five Phases, the Stems and Branches, and so forth. On the other hand, there are those texts like the *Tricks of Jing* and its descendants the *Duke of Zhou Divination Method* and the *Guan Gongming Divination Method* where any such correlations, if present, appear to be skin deep at best, much like what we've observed in the case of the *Divination of Maheśvara*. This is exemplified in the naming of the *Tricks'* and the *Duke of Zhou's* numerical trigrams after Stems, Branches, and *bagua* while apparently ignoring their cosmological values. Another persistent theme is the use of divination to identify the source of a curse or of harmful, perverse vapors. This is clearly a concern in the two earliest texts surveyed here, the *Stalk Divination* and the *Tricks of Jing*, but it is absent or else implicit in the other texts. In the incantation included in—or appended to—the *Duke of Zhou Divination Method*, however, we are reminded again of these noxious elements that may be revealed or perhaps even summoned by the act of divination.

Turning now from the *Divination of Maheśvara's* Chinese cultural inheritance to its foreign progenitors, we will similarly explore the underlying methods, cosmologies, pantheons, and poetics of Sanskrit, Tibetan, and Old Turkish dice divination texts in chapter three before returning to these issues of gods, mantic figures, and poetic incantations in the concluding chapter.

The *Divination of Maheśvara* and Indic Dice Divination

The *Divination of Maheśvara* can clearly be approached as an heir to Chinese numerical trigram divination going back to at least the eighth century BCE. Its combinations of numbers, its pantheon of gods and spirits, and its assumptions about invoking these gods and spirits can all be said, at least in part, to draw on and participate in long-standing Chinese practices and traditions. The manuscript's material cultural context—a three-cubic-meter chamber (Cave 17) carved into the side of a larger cave (Cave 16) at Mogao—also links it to Chinese numerical trigram divination. Among the thousands of manuscripts that rested alongside the *Divination of Maheśvara* in this chamber, untouched for nearly one thousand years, were Chinese divination texts such as the *Changes*, *Empowered Draughtsmen*, *Duke of Zhou Divination Method*, and *Guan Gongming Divination Method*. There was another body of texts in this same chamber, however, that resembles the *Divination of Maheśvara* even more closely both in form and content, save for the fact that these texts are written in Tibetan and in Runic Turkish rather than Chinese. These other physical neighbors also point towards a long intellectual and ritual legacy, but one which traces its links to Indian rather than Chinese antiquity. The nearly identical divinatory methods of these Tibetan and Turkish texts with those of the *Divination of Maheśvara* effectively temper the idea that the latter constitutes a variation on an old Chinese theme, and raises several questions about the workings of transmission and assimilation of foreign traditions in the context of ninth- and tenth-century Dunhuang.

This chapter considers these traditions by starting with the *Divination of Maheśvara*'s close neighbors in time and space and then by following the material cultural trail of divination books and divination dice further west across the Silk Roads to Turfan, Kucha and Khotan, and then south along the Indus to India. It begins with two texts which, like the *Divination of Maheśvara*, are tenth-century dice divination codices from Dunhuang, but happen to be written in Runic Turkish and in Tibetan. It then examines a corpus of about two dozen Old Tibetan dice divination texts not only from Dunhuang, but also from the Silk Road sites of Turfan and Mazār Tāgh, mostly dating to the ninth century. Moving further west and further back in time, it introduces the two Sanskrit dice divination texts found in the sixth-century *Bower Manuscript* from

Kucha. In the process, the chapter considers the methods, assumptions, and contents of these texts and compares these with the *Divination of Maheśvara*. The chapter closes with an examination of the material culture not only of the manuscripts, but also of the dice that constitute this divination system's other essential material cultural component. The brief examination of the archeological record of *pāśaka* dice also shifts from Central Asia southward along the Indus River to Taxila at the turn of the common era, and thence even further back into Indian antiquity to the third millennium BCE in Mohenjo Daro.

The evidence presented makes a strong case that the form of dice divination preserved in the *Divination of Maheśvara* derives ultimately from India. At the same time, the analysis makes clear that dice divination texts, perhaps more so than any other genre—and certainly more so than Buddhist sutras and even popular epics—transformed their contents according to the sensibilities of their users, be they Indians, Tibetans, Turks, Sogdians, or Chinese. In each case, this transformation and adaptation also involves the gods of these different divining communities, and their responsiveness to human needs and to divinatory methods.

1 The *Divination of Maheśvara* and Two Other Tenth-Century Dunhuang Dice Divination Codices

The Guiyijun period in Dunhuang was a time of great cultural and religious creativity and ferment. Following Tibetan rule (786–848), Dunhuang was ruled by the Zhang family (848–ca. 915) and then the Cao family (ca. 915–1036). While this is often glossed as a return to the Chinese cultural and political fold, no less an authority than Rong Xinjiang emphasizes that Dunhuang was a vassal state under the Tang, but a de-facto foreign power during the Five Dynasties and the Song. This is reflected in official histories: the *Jiu Wudaishi* 舊五代史 discusses Dunhuang in its chapter on the Tibetans (“Tubo zhuan” 吐蕃傳); the *Songshi* 宋史 places it in the section on foreign states (“Waiguo zhuan” 外國傳); and the *Song huiyao* 宋會要 discusses Dunhuang in the context of “barbarians” (*fan yi* 蕃夷).¹

During the late Tang and after, when Dunhuang became a de-facto independent kingdom, it remained a multi-ethnic and multi-lingual community. Many Tibetans who had settled there for generations of Tibetan rule remained, and Dunhuang's Chinese, Uighur, and Khotanese inhabitants continued to

1 Rong Xinjiang, *Eighteen Lectures on Dunhuang*, trans. Imre Galambos (Leden: Brill, 2013), 6–7.

use Tibetan as a *lingua franca*.² Dunhuang's political connections with the Ganzhou Uighurs and the kingdom of Khotan grew in the tenth century through dynastic marriage, warfare, and trade. It is in this context—of something resembling “creolization” in ninth- and tenth-century Dunhuang—that one can best understand the production of texts such as the *Divination of Maheśvara*.

As detailed in chapter one, the *Divination of Maheśvara* is one of eight texts contained within a butterfly-bound codex, and the codex format itself is likely a foreign import introduced to Dunhuang in the mid- to late-ninth century. As we have seen in chapter two, many of the numerical trigram divination texts from Dunhuang that we surveyed were also in codex format. This includes the *Empowered Draughtsmen Divination Method* (P.4048), the *Duke of Zhou Divination Method* (P.3398.2) and the *Guan Gongming Divination Method* (P.4778 + P.3868). The format recommends itself as both portable and easily navigable, the latter being particularly relevant in the context of a text-based divination method in which one must look up an oracular response. As we will see, however, the majority of Tibetan dice divination texts are in scroll format, so one should hesitate to draw too firm a conclusion on form and function linking the techniques of divination and the technology of the codex. Nevertheless, there are two other tenth-century divination codices also from Mogao Cave 17 that use precisely the same method as the *Divination of Maheśvara*. One is the famous Runic Turkish *Irq Bitig* or “*Book of Omens*,” and the other is a Tibetan dice divination text bearing the British Library shelfmark 10L Tib J 739. The *Irq Bitig* measures 13.6 × 8 cm, and the Tibetan codex 10L Tib J 739 measures a similar 15 × 12.5 cm. These are both “pocket sized” in comparison with the *Divination of Maheśvara*'s measurements of 30 × 21.5 cm. The latter represents a more common size of paper such as we find used in sutras copied during the period of Tibetan rule.³ Like the *Divination of Maheśvara*'s codex, the *Irq Bitig*'s codex is also oriented such that it is read “back to front,” at least from a western bibliographic perspective. This is because Runic Turkish script is read from right to left. It also features a butterfly binding, like the *Divination of Maheśvara*'s codex, such that folded bifolios are essentially stacked upon one another and then glued together to form the booklet. The Tibetan codex, by contrast, is bound at the top, apparently sewn, and one can see small holes at the top of 5^r, 10^r, and

2 Tokio Takata, “Multilingualism in Dunhuang,” *Acta Asiatica* 78 (2000): 49–70; Tsuguhito Takeuchi, “Sociolinguistic Implications of the Use of Tibetan in East Turkestan from the End of Tibetan Domination through the Tangut Period (9th–12th c.),” in *Turfan Revisited*, ed. Desmond Durkin-Meisterernst, et. al. (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer Verlag, 2004), 341–348.

3 Fujieda, “The Tun-huang Manuscripts: a General Description, Part 1,” 24.

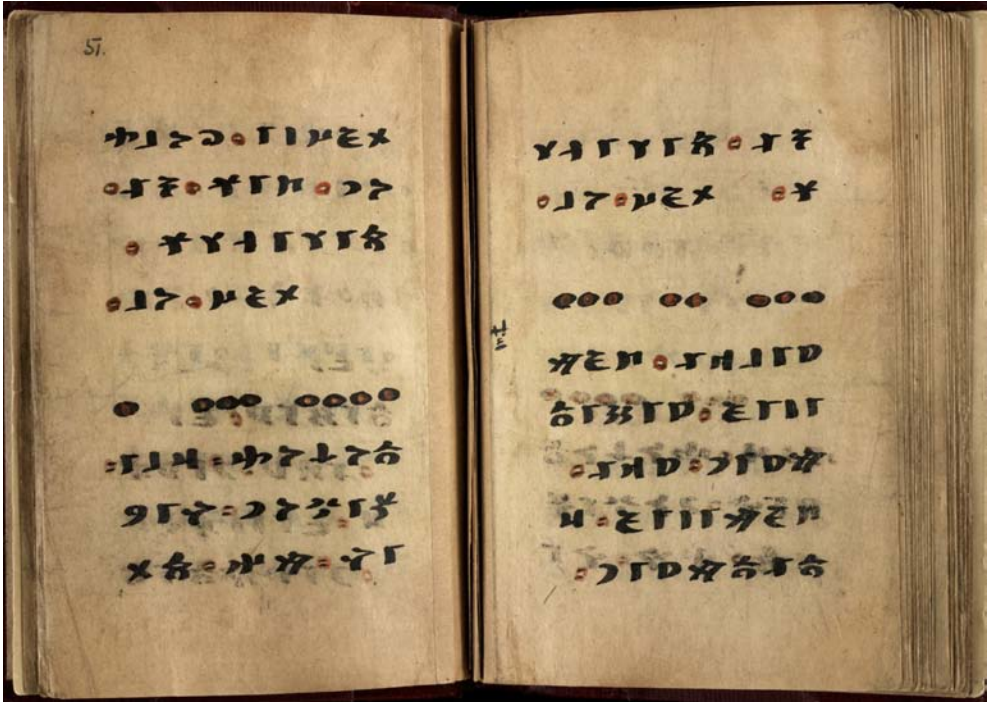
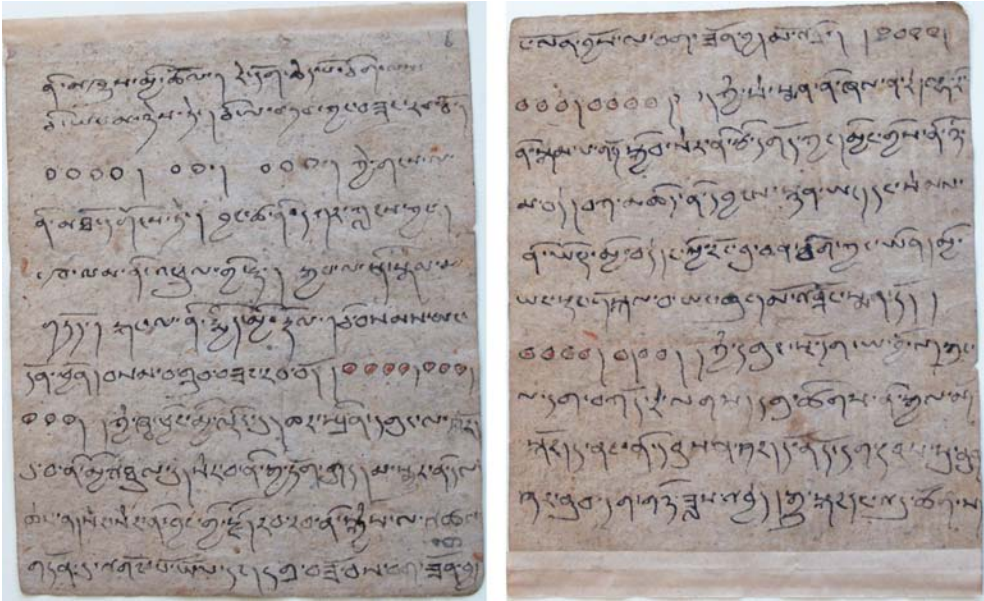


FIGURE 21 Open pages of the *Irq Bitig* codex; shelfmark Or.8212/161
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11^r. One turns its pages vertically, as in a legal pad, with the binding at the top of the recto, which is to say at the bottom of the verso. Tibetan is read from left to right, and the codex is read from front to back. It is unbound now in its present state of conservation, and supporting tape obscures the binding.

At first glance the *Irq Bitig* appears to be, like the *Divination of Maheśvara*, a part of a compilation. Before and after the *Irq Bitig* in the codex are fragments of two Chinese Buddhist texts: the *Wuhui Fashi zan* (五會法事贊) on 1^r to 5^v, and a “Eulogy on the Boat for the Children of the Buddha” (佛子船讚), on 55^v to 58^v.⁴ Nearly all scholars are in agreement, however, that these are later additions, although it remains an open question of how much later these may have been added. The codex was prepared exclusively for the *Irq Bitig*, and the two extra bifolios at the front and the one at the back were apparently meant to

4 Volker Rybatski and Hu Hong, “The *Irq Bitig*, the Book of Divination: New Discoveries Concerning its Structure and Content,” in *Interpreting the Turkic Runiform Sources and the Position of the Altai Corpus*, ed. Irina Nevskaya and Marcel Erdal (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 2015), 158–173.



FIGURES 22A–B Folios 6^r and 6^v of the tenth-century Tibetan dice divination codex; shelfmark 10L Tib J 739. Note that this is a head-bound codex, the pages of which one turns vertically; the leaves have now been separated and the binding holes are under conservator’s tape located at the top of the recto and the bottom of the verso.
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serve as covers to protect and insulate the manuscript.⁵ Most, if not all, of the eight texts in the *Divination of Maheśvara’s* codex, by contrast, appear to have been written down at roughly the same time.

The *Irq Bitig* contains a colophon that names its scribe, its recipient, and its date. Volker Rybatski discusses the problems that the colophon poses, and offers a translation. “In the year of the Tiger, on the fifteenth (day of) the second month, (I) the humble monk of the Taygüntan monastery, after listening to the omen-master, wrote (this down) for our elder brother, the affectionate General Itacug.”⁶ The tiger year in question is probably 930 or 942, with the adjoining Chinese texts apparently written some decades later. The *Irq Bitig* does not include any introductory instructions or invocations such as one finds

5 Rybatski and Hu, “The Irq Bitig, the Book of Divination,” 150–153.

6 Volker Rybatski, “The Old Turkic Irq Bitig and Divination in Central Asia,” In *Trans-Turkic Studies: Festschrift in Honour of Marcel Erdal*, ed. Matthias Keppler, Mark Kirchner, and Peter Zieme (Istanbul, 2010), 89.

in the *Divination of Maheśvara*, but simply begins with its first numerical set and oracular response.

The Tibetan codex IOL Tib J 739 is dated to the tenth century based on its format and its paleography.⁷ The end of the text, which would have been two or three more folios, is missing, so there is no colophon. This is very common for Old Tibetan dice divination texts, nearly all of which are fragments. IOL Tib J 739 is unique among these texts for including an introduction, which features both a ritual invocation and practical instructions. It emphasizes the role of the *smān*, who are goddesses associated with highland spaces and with wild animals, particularly those that are hunted. These goddesses are invited into the ritual space and offered jewels, food, and libations. As we will see, they form a critical part of the ritual-spatial universe of this early Tibetan divination tradition, which, like the *Irq Bitig*, displays little or no interest in Buddhism. The introduction also mentions a ritual fee to be paid to the diviner who performs the ritual, which suggests that its normative divination rite included both a diviner and client(s), rather than one person uniting these roles to divine on his or her own behalf. The practical instructions recall the “rule of three” from the *Divination of Maheśvara*’s introduction, but here it is less optional: one is supposed to create three numerical sets and receive three oracular responses, regardless of whether one receives auspicious or inauspicious responses on one’s first and second rolls. This differing rule of three in fact changes the odds of receiving a favorable outcome, and would also seem to have an impact on the character of the ritual.

Like the *Divination of Maheśvara*, both of these dice divination texts contain—or intended to contain—sixty-four oracular responses, each indexed by a different numerical set formed by a combination of dice rolls. In their omissions of some numerical sets and repetitions of others, they are even less organized than the *Divination of Maheśvara*.⁸ By coincidence, however, the *Irq Bitig* also happens to have sixty-five responses; the Tibetan codex, which is incomplete, includes fifty-seven responses. The numerical sets at the head of each response also have a different form than the numerical trigrams in the *Divination of Maheśvara*: they are not written numerals but visual representations of dice pips in the form of sets of small circles in red and/ or black ink. This is not unlike the “pictorial” representation of numerical trigrams as count-

7 See Tsuguhito Takeuchi, “Formation and Transformation of Old Tibetan,” *Journal of the Research Institute of Foreign Studies* 49 (2012): 9.

8 See F.W. Thomas, *Ancient Folk-Literature from North-Eastern Tibet* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1957), 142; and Rybatski, “The Old Turkic Irq Bitig and Divination in Central Asia,” 89.

ing rods in the *Tricks of Jing*, the *Duke of Zhou Divination Method*, and the *Guan Gongming Divination Method*. In the *Irk Bitig* the sets of pips are set off on a line of their own, preceded by a blank line (see fig. 21). The Tibetan codex is more economical in its use of the available space, such that the pips share a line with text, but are set off from the text by punctuation (see figs. 22a and 22b). Punctuation similarly sets the pips off from one another, such that one can easily see where, e.g., a two—depicted with pips, “oo”—ends and where a four—depicted “oooo” begins. The visual representation of dice pips in lieu of written numbers is consistent with what we find in the twenty-two other extant excavated Tibetan dice divination texts from Dunhuang, Turfan, and Mazār Tāgh: all use pips rather than numbers or letters. All of these other Tibetan manuscripts—unlike this codex—appear to date to the ninth century, and are in scroll format.

To bring these two tenth-century dice divination codices into dialogue with the *Divination of Maheśvara*, it is necessary to consider their methods, the arrangements of their oracular responses, the forms of their numerical sets, the structure of their responses, and their contents both in terms of poetics and semantics, and with respect to their flora, fauna, spirits, and gods. We will first consider the *Irk Bitig* and then the Tibetan codex.

Like the *Divination of Maheśvara*, the *Irk Bitig* begins with the four triplets, but these occur in the order 2-2-2, 4-4-4, 3-3-3, and 1-1-1. This seeming disorder is mirrored in the responses that follow, which, as in the *Divination of Maheśvara*, appear to proceed in no particular order, beginning with 2-4-2, and ending with 3-3-2. The religious and cultural assumptions, as well as the poetics of the oracular responses, are markedly different from those of the *Divination of Maheśvara*: the *Irk Bitig* is full of horses, camels, raptors, and *khans*, and conforms to Turkish cultural norms. A few sample responses from Talat Tekin’s translation will suffice to demonstrate its character and its contents.

[18] 2-4-1 [the combination o ooooo oo, read from right to left]

“What is the inside of the tent frame like? What is its smoke hole like? What is its window like? It can be seen through. How is its roof? It is good. How are its ropes? They are all there, it says.” Know thus: [the omen] is very good.⁹

[20] 2-2-3

“I am a camel stallion [with a herd of] females. I scatter white froth. It reaches the sky above [and] penetrates the earth below. I go on my way

9 Talat Tekin, *Irk Bitig: the Book of Omens* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1994), 13.

waking those who were asleep [and] rousing those who were lying down. That powerful am I.” Know thus: [the omen] is good.¹⁰

[36] 4-1-1

“You don’t have the pleasure of a man bearing many titles. [On the other hand, however], you are not afraid of having a poor reputation. [In short], you don’t have a good fortune to be celebrated with flying flags,” it says. Know thus: [the omen] is very bad.¹¹

[42] 4-1-4

“A woman went away, leaving behind her cups and bowls. Then she [stopped and] thought thoroughly. ‘Where am I going apart from my cups and bowls?’ she says. She again came back [and] found her cups and bowls safe and sound. She rejoices [and] becomes delighted,” it says. Know thus: this is good.¹²

[47] 1-1-4

“A man went visiting [and] met a god. He asked for his divine favor. [The god] gave his divine favor [and] said: ‘May you get livestock in your pens! May your life be long!’” Know thus: [the omen] is good.¹³

[57] 2-2-1

“Her favorite [lover] has died [and] her pail has frozen. Why should her favorite [lover] die? He has the status of a *beg* (Turk noble). Why should her pail freeze? It is placed in the sunshine.” Know thus: at the beginning of this omen there is a little pain; [but] later it becomes good again.¹⁴

[60] 4-3-1

“I am a male maral deer with a nine-branched horn. Rising on my big and powerful knees, I bellow. Heaven above heard it and men below realized it. That powerful am I,” it says. Know thus: [the omen] is good.¹⁵

10 Ibid., 13–15.

11 Ibid., 19.

12 Ibid., 19–21.

13 Ibid., 21.

14 Ibid., 25.

15 Ibid., 25.

[63] 1-2-1

“The army of the *khanate* went out for hunting. [Meanwhile] a roe-buck entered the game battue. [The *khan*] caught it with [his] hand. All his common soldiers rejoice,” it says. Know thus: [the omen] is good.¹⁶

These oracular responses are short and evocative, each with the character of a distinct vignette. They differ in structure from those of the *Divination of Mahēśvara* in that the numerical sets and the responses lack names, and very few include gods. Each response may be said to consist of three elements: mantic figure (pips), prognosis, and evaluation. The prognosis is set apart as a speech act, as is clear from the phrase “it says,” which often appears between the prognosis and the evaluation. This is followed by “know thus” and then the evaluation, e.g., “the omen is good.”

In the case of fourteen first-person prognoses, including the first four of the text, the verb of speech “it says” might be said to mark the end of direct speech of, e.g., the camel stallion or the maral deer. The same verb is found, however, in the majority of responses which are in the third person, where it must refer to the prognosis itself, e.g., “[the omen] says.” In neither case is the response directly addressing or hailing the divination user(s): the camel stallion or maral deer is merely speaking, and not speaking to the divination user(s). They are of a piece with the poetic vignettes that lack a first-person speaker in that they are impersonal scenes that appear to occur at some remove from the divination user(s). It is only with the interpretation that their import is brought home, but this is done in a different voice, following the speech act: “know thus: [the omen] is good.” This contrasts with the oracular responses in the *Divination of Maheśvara*, where the named gods and spirits do not speak directly and where there is no verb of speech.

Unlike the *Divination of Maheśvara*, the prognoses in the *Irq Bitig* do not apply themselves to the client through the language of simile: there are no phrases such as “so too,” “just as,” or “like.” Users are presumably left to their own devices, and with recourse to metaphor, to read themselves into these evocative oracular scenes. This distinction between the use of simile—so widespread in the language of divination—and metaphor thus corresponds to an explicit versus implicit mode of relating poetic oracular images to the act of divination. Patrick Curry helpfully explores how metaphor relates to divinatory truth and its questionable relationship to propositional truth: “[t]he metaphorical ‘is’ of ‘x is y’ simultaneously signifies both ‘is’ (metaphorically) and ‘is not’

¹⁶ Ibid., 27.

(literally); it preserves the latter within the former *without* cancelling it.”¹⁷ Metaphor, like divination, is a creative act that calls into being a relational, metaphorical truth whose simultaneous admission of “is” and “is not” often provokes a correction. The most common such reaction is “to demythologize language by exposing metaphor (‘is’) as mere simile (‘is like’) and replacing it with scientifically licit, that is, non-metaphorical, language.”¹⁸

This tension between the creativity of metaphor and its taming in simile is relevant to the poetry of oracular responses. Here we will only observe that the uninterpreted—or implicitly interpreted—metaphor brings us closer to poetry than does the simile. The latter’s “so, too, you are like that” is where poetic image gives way to interpretation, and in the push and pull of divinatory aesthetics, we find the practicalities of interpretation sometimes overpowering and even drowning out the poetics of oracular images. Such was the general movement, over time, that we observed in the development of the oracular responses from the *Tricks of Jing* to the *Duke of Zhou Divination Method* and the *Guan Gongming Divination Method*.

Animals and humans predominate in the *Irk Bitig*’s prognoses, with only five mentioning gods. These gods are generally less specific than what we find in the *Divination of Maheśvara*: there is “the road god with a dappled horse,” “the road god,” “mighty god,” “a god,” and “the old road god.” There are no prescribed correcting rituals in the *Irk Bitig* that might reveal its religious affiliations as in the case of the *Divination of Maheśvara*’s Buddhist correcting rituals. The *Irk Bitig* has often been seen as featuring Iranian cultural influences, or as being Manichean.¹⁹ Remaining agnostic on this point, one can still point to some of its ritual sensibilities based on its prognoses. These include the virtue of the gods showing their divine favor (responses 2, 23, 47); devout prayer (response 19); and sacrificial exchange with Heaven (*tengri*) (response 41). There are also five responses that refer to “Heaven” (*tengri*) in phrases such as “the grace of Heaven,” “strength given by Heaven,” “Heaven was not pleased,” “dedicate [a calf] to Heaven,” and “Heaven above heard it.” This makes Heaven easily the most prominent divine power or god in this text. This would seem to accord fairly well with Turkish religious and cosmological traditions, but one should not entirely rule out Chinese influence; the *Irk Bitig*’s very first oracular response begins, after all, “I am Ten-si (‘Son of Heaven,’ i.e., the Chinese

17 Curry, “Embodiment, Alterity and Agency,” 95.

18 Ibid., 96.

19 See Gerard Clauson, “Notes on the Irk Bitig,” *Ural-Altäische Jarhrbücher* 33.3–4 (1961): 218–219; and Rybatski, “The Old Turkic Irk Bitig and Divination in Central Asia,” 91.

Emperor). In the morning and evening, I enjoy sitting on the golden throne. Know thus: [the omen] is good.”²⁰

Turning now to the evaluations that end each oracular response, after the phrase “it says” effectively closes the prognosis, the evaluation opens with “know thus.” This is followed by the evaluation itself, which features gradations similar to what we find in the *Divination of Maheśvara*. They are distributed as follows: five very good (*añīg ādgū*); thirty-three good (*ādgū*); seven with no evaluation; one initially bad, then good; seventeen bad (*yablag*); and two very bad (*añīg yablag*). The distribution of these different evaluations—what one might call the divination system’s “balance of fortune”—also differs from that of the *Divination of Maheśvara*. On balance, there is a far higher likelihood of receiving an unfavorable response than there is when consulting the *Divination of Maheśvara*, which features only five responses that are inauspicious or worse. The latter has six responses that are “initially inauspicious, later auspicious,” whereas the *Irq Bitig* only has one such response. The *Irq Bitig*’s seven responses with no evaluation are not neutral, but simply incomplete. Like all of the other responses, their prognoses end, “... it says. Know thus ...” but the final evaluation is missing. The entry for set [10] 2-4-3 offers one example: “I am a yawning leopard. Among the reeds is my head. That brave [and] capable am I. Know thus.”²¹ It is unclear why the scribe did not write the final evaluation after “know thus.”²² In some cases, one can infer what the evaluation might have been based on the character of the response. Given that these missing responses do not seem to be intended as the text’s refusal to answer, the *Irq Bitig* can be said to share with the *Divination of Maheśvara* an absence of truly neutral—in the sense of noncommittal—responses.

Before its colophon the *Irq Bitig* ends with a short conclusion from which it takes its title: “[n]ow, my dear sons, know thus: this book of divination is good. Thus, everyone is master of his own fate.” One notes here that “book of divination” (*irq bitig*) is less a title than a genre designation. The conclusion also resembles an oracular response with its use of “know thus” and its evaluation of the text as “good.” This recalls the final “entry” in the *Divination of Maheśvara*, which appears also to be a garbled conclusion whose form is similar to that of an oracular response.

20 Tekin, *Irq Bitig: the Book of Omens*, 9.

21 *Ibid.*, 11.

22 Rybatski takes these missing responses to support his theory that the *Irq Bitig* is a record of a divination séance, a hypothesis we discuss below and reject; Rybatski, “The Old Turkic Irq Bitig and Divination in Central Asia,” 89.

Turning to the Tibetan codex IO L Tib J 739, we find more elaborate responses, interpretations, and correcting rituals. The opening invocation in the text's introduction also lays out the divination system's ritual and cosmological underpinnings. The *smān* (phoneticized *men*²³) goddesses, who preside over wild animals and wild, highland spaces, notably enjoy pride of place in the text. They are invoked in the text's introduction, where named *smān* goddesses are invited into the ritual space of the divination rite and offered hospitality in the form of jewels, food offerings, and libations. The oracular responses construct a fascinating ritual-spatial universe in which the *smān* goddesses stand in relation to wild deer, antelopes, and gazelles as humans stand in relation to their livestock. The *smān* goddesses reside on mountains and uplands, whereas the human divination client is imagined as a valley dweller, thus constructing a clear axis of wild and tame, above and below. The ritual itself is performed by a diviner (Tib. *mo bdaḡ*) who is paid a ritual fee and offered a gift. It is the diviner who presumably negotiates the complex relationship between humans and *smān* goddesses and/ or gods (*lha*), and who mediates their exchanges.

The opening invocation is longer than that in the *Divination of Mahesvara*, and longer than any of those surveyed in chapter two. In verse, it evokes a "gods'-eye view" of the world, using formulae such as "the narrow earth" to refer to the place where humans dwell. It proceeds from the sky down to the clouds, then to meadows, valleys, rivers, and lakes. Incorporating also a horizontal axis, it invokes countries of four directions, which are Gug lcog, Sogdiana, Mon, and Rgya (perhaps China) in the West, North, South, and East, respectively. The *smān* goddesses of the sky speak, and the diviner receives their instructions. The invocation then describes the ritual setting and the offerings to the *smān* goddesses. A white carpet is laid out. White and red offerings are set out on the right, and incense is burned. Jewels, food, and libations are then offered to the mouths of the *smān* goddesses. Then there is the invitation or calling of the *smān*. First the chief of these goddesses, Nam *smān* Karmo (White Sky Goddess) is invited. She is said to be the chief of 700,000, and there follow after her groups of 1,000 attendants, each of which is headed by a named *smān* goddess. Some of these goddesses are, like Nam *smān* Karmo, known from other sources.

23 Tibetan terms that appear in the translations or in discussions are given in phonetics, with Wylie transliteration either in parentheses or in a transcription after the translated passage. *Smān* is the exception, for the practical reason that phrases like "dynamic interchanges between *smān* and humans" are less confusing than "dynamic interchanges between *men* and humans."

Oh! Inviting the sky *sman*,
 Oh! One hundred *sman*—they who come up,
 Their beautiful speech—*si li li!*
 The turquoise fog—*tu lu lu!*

Oh! From the upper part of the valley, having made shouts,
 They echo against the crags, *ti ri ri*.
 From the lower part of the valley, having flapped the streamers,
 Billowing—*jab ma jib!*

Oh! The lord of the 700,000,
 Nam *sman* Karmo!
 Her retinue
 The sky *sman*—the 999
 With Nyenki Dirma
 Making the hundredth, they are a full thousand.
 Oh! The snow-mountain *sman*—the 999,
 With Shamé Gangkar
 Making the hundredth, they are a full thousand.
 The slate *sman*—the 999
 With Dangma Zildruk
 Making the hundredth, they are a full thousand.
 The meadow *sman*—the 999,
 With Jichug Chingdem
 Making the hundredth, they are a full thousand.
 The crag *sman*—the 999,
 With Tselkar Shengang
 Making the hundredth, they are a full thousand.
 The lake *sman*—the 999,
 With Lenki Pardom
 Making the hundredth, they are a full thousand.
 The *chang*²⁴ *sman*—the 999,
 With Yu *sman* Drulma
 Making the hundredth, they are a full thousand.

24 *Chang* (Tib. *byang*) means north, and often in ritual texts it indicates the northern plateau, and specifically the hunting grounds there. It is interesting that it comes here at the bottom of the vertical axis, even after lakes.

*kye gnam sman gi spyang drangs nas / / / / kye sman brgya' ni yar gshegs pa'
 / bka' snyan ni si si li / g.yu bun ni thu lu lu / / / / kye phu nas nis khus btab
 pas / brag cha ni ti ri ri / mda' nas ni yab bor bas / lhog lhog ni ljab ma ljib /
 kye bdun 'buM ni snar gi rje / gnam sman ni dkar mo zhig / de 'i phyag rnyan
 ba' / gnam sman ni dgu' brgya' dgu / gnyan gi ni dir ma dang / brgya' ma ni
 stong re tham / / kye gang sman ni dgu bgya' dgu / sha myed ni gangs gar
 dang / brgya' ma ni stong re tham / / g.y'a sman ni dgu brgya' dgu / dang ma
 ni zil drug dang / brgya ma ni stong re thaM / mang²⁵ sman ni dgu' brgya'
 dgu / ji phyug ni phying 'dem dang / brgya' ma ni stong re tham / brag sman
 ni dgu brgya' dgu / mtshal kar ni shen gangs dang / brgya' ma ni stong re
 tham / mtsho sman ni dgu brgya' dgu / rlan gi ni phar 'dom dang / brgya'
 ma ni stong re tham / byang sman ni dgu brgya' dgu / g.yu sman ni drul ma
 dang / brgya ma ni stong re tham / /*

IOL Tib J 739, 2^v3–3^r7

The introduction then takes a practical turn as it comes to a close. It states that if the “gift” and the ritual fee are paid in full, then one may proceed. This, along with the many objects such as brocade, incense, libations, and so forth that are required, makes it clear that this is not a “do-it-yourself” divination. The introduction closes by stipulating that the client should receive three oracular responses in the course of the divination ritual.

The dice—if all three [results] are good,
 Since it is good, do not do it again.
 Two being good, with one bad
 This being middling, set it aside as null.
 Two being bad and one being good,
 Just once more—cast again.
 The dice—if all three are bad,
 Even if one [cast] again, it is of no use.

*cho lo ni bzang gsuM na/ bzang gis ni bskyar mya 'tshal/ bzang gnyis ni
 ngan gcig dang/ 'bring gis ni gzhi' la zhog/ /ngan gnyis ni bzang la gcig la
 / gcig tsham ni bskyar te btab cho lo ni ngan gsuM na/ bskyar kyang ni don
 ma mchis/*

IOL Tib J 739, 3^r7–3^v4

25 We assume an error for *spang*.

Casting for three oracular responses instead of one means that the diviner will read out three separate responses to the client, each with its own images, verses, and applications. This offers three opportunities for the client to read themselves into the verses and for the diviner to construct a narrative relating the specific responses and their verses to the question at hand and to the client. It also fundamentally changes the odds of receiving a given outcome. In the *Divination of Maheśvara*, there is an equal probability of receiving any one of the text's sixty-four responses, and this is also true of the Tibetan codex. The latter's instructions artificially reduce the possibilities to one of four outcomes described in the verse: three good; two good and one bad; one good and two bad; or three bad. Furthermore, its "rule of three" whereby one receives three responses radically alters its "balance of fortune" and raises some interesting questions about the operations of this divination system.²⁶

The ordering of the numerical sets in the Tibetan codex IOL Tib J 739 is more transparent than that of either the *Divination of Maheśvara* or the *Irq Bitig*. It does not begin with the four triplets, but employs these in the manner of headings for each section of the text in order to arrange the numerical sets in descending order. Thus the first combination is 4-4-4, followed by all possible combinations beginning with 4, e.g., 4-4-3, 4-2-4, etc. Once these sixteen combinations are exhausted, combination 3-3-3 is followed by all possible combinations beginning with 3; then 2-2-2 and all combinations beginning with 2; and then 1-1-1 and all combinations beginning with 1. The internal order, that is to say, how the omens progress from 4-4-4 to 3-3-3, and from 3-3-3 to 2-2-2, etc., is variable. This arrangement is obviously by design: at the end of the combinations beginning with 3, immediately prior to the combination 2-2-2, the text states, "the threes section is completed" (*gsum yul rdzogs*; 11^v4).

The sample responses below are translated rather freely in order to better give their gist and to sidestep some of the thornier philological issues that their often archaic and specialized vocabulary can raise.

[1] 4-4-4 [the combination 0000 0000 0000, read left to right]:
 "The land of the gods, where the *smān* goddesses play;
 The sky goddesses, their beautiful words.
 My speech summons numbers of *smān* goddesses,
 And now the great speech:

²⁶ These instructions obviously omit other possibilities that include responses that are neither good nor bad, but "middling." For a discussion, see Dotson, "Three Dice, Four Faces," 36–40.

Oh! Honest speech—examine the speech well
 The dice—they are gathered together,
 So let your heart and mind come to rest.

Living beings shall flourish and heaven shall endure.

Men are bountiful and rich.

Gods are powerful and lords are loving.”

You shall not die until your lifetime is exhausted. A very good divination.

// @@@@ / @@@@ @@@@ // // lha yul ni sman rol na / gnaM sman ni
 gnyan gis bka' / bdag gi mchid / sman grangs 'du 'du zhing / deng ma ni bka'
 bo che / kye bka' drang ni gsung rtag pas / cho lo ni gtsug 'dus kyis / dang
 sems ni rnal du phob / sems can ni so che gnam ring / myi 'phan nor phyug
 / lha brtsan rje 'byams / tshe lo mthar thug gyi bar du myi 'chi te bzang rab
 bo //

3⁵-4¹

[22] 3-4-1

Oh! the Sky *Sin* Demon says:

“From the heavens the *dü* demons cut,

While on the earth the *sin* demons gather.

Listen, wise man!

The divination you've cast is bad as a divination

The sign you've cast is bad as a sign.

They gather and gather, towards the predators

A deer—its eyes are gouged out!

They gather and gather toward the *sin* demons

A man—he will surely die.”

There is nothing Very bad.

// @@@ // @@@@ // @ // // kyi gnam srin ni zhal na re / gnam nas ni bdud
 / chad kyang / sa srin ni 'du tshogs pa / shes rab ni myi 'o la / mo btab ni mo
 ru ngan / ltas btab ni ltas su ngan / gcan la ni 'du 'du te / sha gcig ni dmyig
 las phyung / srin la ni 'du 'du te / myi gcig ni nges par 'chi / cho ki kha nas
 myed pas ngan rab bo //

8⁷-9³.

[23] 3-3-2

Oh! On the god mountain, the *sman* goddesses have gone away.

Over the wastes there wanders a deer.

Wherever it wanders, it meets with a predator.

Though it is custom to kill it,

It does not kill it but lets it go.

[You] shall be freed from a painful illness or fierce torment, or freed
from an obstacle year. Very good.

// @@@ // @@@ // @@@ // // // // kye lha rI ni sman shong nas / pas gyi ni
sha cig yar / gar yar ni lkyes dang mjal / gum ba nI lugs mchIs kyang / myi
'guM ni slar la gtang / nad tshab po che 'am / gmed ba drag po thar ba 'am
/ lo keg las shor te bzang rab bo //

9^r3-9

[25] 3-2-3

Oh! I myself remain powerful

[With my] fierce speech—[I am the] lord of all!

[With my] extensive ...—[I am the] owner of all!

When one fights with yaks or enemies

If one's own god is awesome,

The enemies one fights become friends;

The yaks one fights become food.

When one fights with *dré* or *sin* demons,

If one's sacred god supports one well,

Even the words “*dré*” and “*sin*” will be eradicated

And one's *mu* cord will be extended as a portent.

Ever joyous, glorious!

Very good.

/ @@@ / @@ / @@@ / kye bdag nyid ni btsan du bzhugs / kha drag ni kun gi
rje / rtu rings ni kun gi bdag / dgra dang ni g.yag 'dor yang / nyid kyi ni lha
gnyan bas / dgra 'dor ni gnyen du mchi / g.yag 'dor ni zas su mchi / 'dre dang
ni srin 'dor yang / lha dpal ni bsten legs pas / 'dre srin ni tshig yang phyung
/ dmu dag ni than du bsrings / re skyid ni dpal po che / bzang rab bo /

9^v4-11

[27] 3-3-1

Oh! Once there was a great noble one;

The *dré* and *geg* demons confronted him

But he did not dare to face them.

So he worshipped properly an awesome god

And relied upon the *bon* and *shen* [priests],

So the *dü* demons were ...
 And the *si* demons were entirely ...
 Life is long and life force is strong. Very good.

/ @@@ / @@@ / @ / kye re zhig ni dpal po che / 'dre dang bgegs g.yo yang
 / de 'is ni phod myi tshugs / lha gnyan ni mchod legs kyang / bon gshen ni
 bsten legs pas / bdud gyi spu gyur dang / sri 'i ni gong thar ro / tshe ring srog
 sra bzang rab bo /

10^r7-10^y1

[31] 3-2-4

Oh! Once upon a time
 The bird servant had weak wings,
 So he could not outpace the raptor that pursued him.
 The fawn had weak tendons,
 So he could not race straight away from the mountain pass.
 The young human was weak with illness,
 So anyone could cut him with their weapons
 Tomorrow, the day after, and henceforth
 The place where you gather your loving relatives
 Is the place where the *mu sman* goddesses support [you].
 Very good.

@@@ / / @@ / @@@@ / kye da rung ni da cung du / bya bran ni 'dab zhan
 pas / rgod gis ni rjes myi slebs / she 'u ni rgyus zhan pas / ri kha ni dkyus myi
 srong / myi cung ni nas zhan bas / mu su ni chas kyang gcod / sang phyi
 ni gnangs gong du / gnyen byams ni 'du 'tshogs sa / mu sman ni rgyab rten
 gnas / bzang rab bo

11^r4-10

[32] 3-1-2

Oh! From the valley, when looking away,
 The lands of barley and rice are not strong.
 Born under a minor constellation,
 Thrust into a household, the wife despises her husband.
 Acquainted with [the land of] Gugé, it is coarse,
 Fish and barley meal when chewed are bitter.
 There is a great augur demon (*ngo 'dre*), so perform an augur removal
 (*ngo yogs*) ritual!

@@@ / @ / @@ / kye lung nas phar bltas na / nas 'bras ni yul myi gnyan /
 sku 'khrungs ni za skar chung / khyim btsugs ni / khab bdag sdang / gu ge
 ni 'dris shing gyong / nya bag ni bcas shing kh'a / ngo 'hre ched po yod pas /
 ngo yogs gi cho ga gyis shig /

11^v10–11^v4

[37] 2-2-3

Oh! Up above, in the pure atmosphere,

A lammergeier—a vulture soars

Although a skilled one casts a lasso

It will never be caught with a lasso.²⁷

Above the slate, above the meadows

Wherever they go, they hunt the antelope

The thieves—they shall never hit them.

Bad for making things for yourself; good for enemy fortune/ activities
 towards enemies.

@@ / @@ / @@@ / kye bar snang dag ya byi na / thang 'phrom nig rgod
 lding ba' / rtsal bu ni zhabs 'deb bas kyang / zhags gyis ni re myi zin / g.y'a
 'gong ni spang 'gong du / gar shog ni rgod 'drim ba / rkun po ni re myi zug /
 rang bzo ba la ngan / dgra bya la bzang / /

12^v4–9

[41] 2-3-3

Oh! To the stars, the six *min* (Pleiades),

The eight planets upward gather.

The six *min*, they flee to the side.

To the choughs, the black ones,

Seven falcons upward gather

The choughs, they flee to the side,

And escape from grave danger.

This is very good for enemy fortune.

// @@ // @@@ // @@@ // // kye skar ma ni smyin drug la / gza brgyad ni
 yar du 'dus / smyin drug ni ldebs su shor / skyung khab ni nag mo la / khra

27 This quatrain is translated slightly differently in Joanna Bialek, *Compounds and Compounding in Old Tibetan: a Corpus Based Approach*. Vol. 2 (Marburg: Indica et Tibetica Verlag, 2018), 147.

*bdun ni yar du 'dus / skyung khab ni ldebs su shor / dang nyen ba zhig la
thar te / dgra bya la bzang rab bo //*

13^v2–6

[49] 1-1-1

Oh! *Nye 'u sing*—at the edges of the blue,
A *yam* felt and a white [carpet] are spread, and
A god and a *sin* demon, the two
Vie at a game of dice.

For three days, spreading and spreading,
For three nights, expanding and expanding.
The god wins, and receives its bounty
The *sin* demon loses, and suffers its deficit.
In the lands of gods and men
The laughter is loud and all reaching.
In the lands of *dré* demons and *sin* demons
They lie fully prostrate, *ti ri ri*.
Before yesterday and the day before,
The gods vied with the *sin* demons,
But the gods won.

Very good.

*@ / @ / @ / kye nye 'u sing nI sngo mtha ru / dbyam phyng ni dkar bting
zhing / lha dang ni srin gnyis gyis / cho lo ni rgyan cig btab / nyin gsum ni
bre bre zhing / mtshan gsum ni rgya rgya ste / lha rgyal ni seg du byung /
srin pham ni godu chad / lha dang ni myi yul na / gad rgyangs ni ye re mo
'dre dang ni srin yul na / dud rgyangs ni ti ri ri / khar tsang ni khar nyen
sngun / lha dang ni srin rgya ba / las la lha rgyal de bzang rab bo /*

15^v6–16^r2

[51] 1-4-3

Oh! The *Mu sman* goddess says:
“Above in the *sman* goddesses’ mountain,
From which one cannot return,
Still they go, hunting deer thither.
Still they go, stalking gazelles hither.
It does not trouble [the animals]:
I protect them—they are my possessions!
I gather them and put them in a paddock.”
Very good.

@ / @@@@ / @@@ / *kye mu sman ni zhal na re / sman ri ni ya byi na zlog
par ni ma 'drol kyang sha shor ni phas kyang mchi / lgo 'drim ni tshus kyang
mchi de 'is ni nyams myi skyod / skyo le ni bdag gyi nor / sdus shing ni ra bar
gsol / bzang rab bo /*

16^r5-9

[53] 1-3-3

Oh! Since you made a good offering to the site,
You killed your hated enemy
Without even worshipping your gods (*sku bla*);
And killed a deer on the wastes
Without even placating²⁸ the *sman* goddesses.

Offer to the gods of the land, and hunt the deer of the north.

You gathered your beloved relatives

And you struck your enemy's heart with a dagger.

This divination is very good for whatsoever you've cast it.

@ / @@@ // @@@ / *kye gnas la ni mchod legs pas / sku bla ni ma gsol bar /
stang gyi ni dgra zhig guM / sman du ni ma sdungs par / bas gyi ni sha cig
gum / yul gyi lha gsol dang / byang gyi ni sha shor cig / byaMs gyi ni gnyen
bsogs shing / dgra snying ni phur gyis btab / mo ci la btab kyang bzang rab
bo /*

16^v1-7

[56] 1-2-3

Oh! In the three upper valleys, up above,
The pale grassland, on the golden ridge,
Seven men, hunting deer;
At one deer, they make a shout.

In the three lower valleys, down below,

Three otters, they are weary.

Exhausted, and oppressed by hunger,

They fear an enemy,

But there is no danger. A very good divination.²⁹

28 *Sdungs* is a virtually unknown verb. It is read here contextually, and possibly as an error for *sdum*, "to agree" or "reconcile."

29 Here, uniquely, the evaluation is incorporated into the verse, and the response contains no prose.

/ @ / @@ / @@@ / kye phu sum ni ya byi la / spang snar / ni gser sdongs la
 / sha shor n[i] myi bdun kyis / sha gcig ni khus btap pa' / mda' gsum ni ma
 byi na / gyur gsuM ni thugs snyung ba' / 'o brgyal ni 'gres kyi non / dgra zhig
 la dogs pa las nyen myed de bzang rab bo /

17^r10–17^v6

Like those of the *Divination of Maheśvara*, these oracular responses consist of four elements. Whereas the *Divination of Maheśvara* has numbers, names (gods/spirits), prognoses, and evaluations, the Tibetan codex has pips, oracular verses, prose interpretations, and evaluations. The most notable distinction here is that between the oracular verse and the prose interpretation, in which the latter states a response's applications prior to the final evaluation. These prose evaluations are absent in nine responses, which go straight from oracular verse to evaluation. This suggests that these evaluations are a separable, if not optional element of this divination tradition. One marked difference from the *Divination of Maheśvara* is the fact that only four responses are associated with a named god or spirit, and of these only two issue directly from the mouth of a god or a spirit. In a few responses, though not in nearly so many as we find in the *Divination of Maheśvara*, responses make use of similes or prescribe correcting rituals to avert an inauspicious response. These latter prescriptions, as in the *Divination of Maheśvara*, usually appear in the interpretations or at the end of a response.

The oracular responses are notable for their use of six-syllable verse, which immediately advertises a heightened register associated with song and with orality. This is introduced in every response by the exclamation “Oh (*kyé*)!” which often precedes a song or a pronouncement. It can be said to be a stylistic device that evokes orality, but which is not necessarily evidence of oral performance itself. The meter and the register set the oracular verse apart from the prose interpretation that follows. Unlike in the *Irq Bitig*, this transition is not marked by a verb of speech or anything to indicate that the verse is a direct quotation. The shift in register and the shift from verse to prose is stark enough, however, to suggest that these two parts of the oracular response issue from separate speakers, and the translation conveys this by imposing quotation marks. In the case of those two responses that are direct speech coming from the mouth of a named god or spirit, e.g., “Oh! The Sky *Sin* Demon says,” it is indisputable that the verse represents the speech of the god or spirit.³⁰

30 Note that neither of these include the word *c(h)es/zhes*, which closes quotations, nor is this commonly used in earlier Tibetan dice divination texts.

The character of these verses is largely in keeping with the ritual and cosmological sensibilities found in eighth- to tenth-century Old Tibetan ritual texts. These largely include offering to and worshipping the gods in order to win their favor and their protection from demons, but there is also the reference in the entry for the set [27] 3-3-1 to someone relying on *bon* and *shen* priests. These are types of ritual specialists who perform a variety of rituals including exorcisms, soul recovery, and funeral rites, as well as divination.³¹ The same entry also mentions extending a person's *mu* cord, which refers also to long-standing folk beliefs—also found in Tibetan royal mythology—about a sacred cord attached to the crown of one's head. Additionally, we find astral mythology in set [41] 2-3-3's mention of the Pleiades, astrological concerns in set [32] 3-1-2's reference to a woman born under a minor constellation, and hemerological concerns in set [23] 3-3-2's prognosis that one will be freed from an obstacle year. Such contents, along with the repeated emphasis on relying upon the gods, tend to place the text in the context of Tibetan popular religion. This is not to exclude Buddhist participation, but to observe that the text makes no overt attempts at accommodating Buddhist cosmologies and beliefs.

Although we find only four gods or spirits associated with a given numerical set and its oracular response, several more responses are filled with references to various types of gods and spirits. These gods and spirits are fairly generic, and with a few exceptions they can be said to represent classes of gods and spirits rather than specific gods and spirits. The different classes of gods and spirits are familiar to Tibetan ritual traditions and beliefs from our earliest written sources to the present day.³² They populate a tripartite world in which the gods (*lha*) and *dü* demons reside in the heavens, *si* (*sri*) demons and *lu* (*klu*) spirits live below in the waters and in the subsoil or underworld, and humans and animals, along with *tsen* (*btsan*), *sin*, *dré*, and *gongpo* (*gong po*) demons reside in between.

31 Brandon Dotson, "Complementarity and Opposition in Early Tibetan Ritual," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 128.1 (2008): 41–67.

32 See René de Nebesky-Wojkowitz, *Oracles and Demons of Tibet. The Cult and Iconography of Tibetan Protective Deities* (Delhi: Classics India Publications, 1956; reprint 1998); Pascale Dollfus, "De quelques histoires de *klu* et de *btsan*," *Revue d'Etudes Tibétaines* 2 (2003): 4–39; Samten Karmay, "Une note sur l'origine du concept des huit catégories d'esprits," *Revue d'Etudes Tibétaines* 2 (2003): 67–80; Françoise Pommaret, "Etres soumis, Etres protecteurs: Padmasambhava et les Huit Catégories de Dieux et Démons au Bhutan," *Revue d'Etudes Tibétaines* 2 (2003): 40–66; and Brigitte Steinmann, "Le *Lha srin sde brgyad* et le problème de leur catégorisation—Une interprétation," *Revue d'Etudes Tibétaines* 2 (2003): 81–91.

The verses specifically emphasize the gods (*lha*) and the goddesses (*sman*) who support humans against the demons and spirits who beset them with misfortune. One's status, and one's fortune or misfortune is seen as a direct result of one's estimation in the eyes of the gods. Partly in response to worship and offerings, the gods either show their favor (*'go*), or they are repulsed (*'phangs*) and abandon one. They can also help one to defeat one's enemies, as seen above in responses [25] 3-2-3, [27] 3-3-1, and [55] 1-1-3. These gods are in most cases inherited at birth as protecting gods associated with one's family and/ or one's place of birth.³³ The favor of the gods was also mentioned in the *Irq Bitig's* entry [47] 1-1-4, where it led to flourishing livestock and long life.

A more complex and slightly more fraught role is played by female goddesses known as *sman*. As noted already, these goddesses are invoked in the codex's introduction, where they are invited into the ritual space with offerings of hospitality. These goddesses and their "livestock"—typically deer and antelope—form a wild, divine mirror image of the human divination client and his domestic livestock. This is apparent from the above responses in which *sman* goddesses milk deer ([2] 4-4-3) or place gazelle in a paddock to protect them against human hunters ([51] 1-4-3). Images of hunters, which occur throughout the text and in several earlier Tibetan dice divination texts, are paradigmatic of the exchanges at the heart of this system of divination. The divination client, who in this system of dice divination can be more accurately called an "oracular gambler," is in some prognoses aligned with a hunter "stealing" the *sman* goddesses' animals, as at response [53] 1-3-3. In others, the oracular gambler is likened instead to these very animals, and is similarly protected from predators by the *sman* goddesses, as at response [31] 3-2-4, or else shares the happy or unhappy fates of the goddesses' animals, as at responses [22] 3-4-1, [23] 3-2-3, [37] 2-2-3, [51] 1-4-3, and [56] 1-2-3.

Casting the dice in the presence of the invoked goddesses is thus part of a ludic contest that is not without risk. At stake is "fortune" or "fortunate essence" (*phyā* and *g.yang*), a quasi-substance that resides in wild spaces and in wild animals, and which humans call into their domestic spaces, their bodies, and their livestock in order to enrich themselves and improve their well being.³⁴

33 Brandon Dotson, "On 'personal protective deities' (*'go ba'i lha*) and the Old Tibetan verb *'go*," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 80.3 (2017): 536–540.

34 See Giovanni da Col, "The Poisoner and the Parasite: Cosmoeconomics, Fear, and Hospitality among Dechen Tibetans," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 18 (2012): 180; see also Brandon Dotson, "Hunting for Fortune: Wild Animals, Goddesses and the Play of Perspectives in Early Tibetan Dice Divination," in *Animals in the Religion and Culture*

The gambler's relationship with the *smān* goddesses in this way shifts such that in the ritual of oracular gambling they can be seen as "opponent-partners": on the one hand one wants their protection, and on the other hand one is trying to win from them their fortunate essence, symbolized by their wild "livestock."³⁵

What is most notable here is the creative mirrorwork and the hospitality that allows oracular gambling to act upon the goddess, and the existence of two distinct modes for doing so. In the first mode, likened to the work of a hunter, we have essentially a masked dance of predation disguised as hospitality, where the human stands in relation to the goddess as poacher does to a game warden. From the language of the oracular responses, it is evident that the oracular gambler symbolically takes the *smān's* wild "livestock," representing the fortunate essence proper to her and her upland realm. By carefully constructing a wild mirrorworld of the goddess and her "livestock" based on that of a human and his domestic livestock, and then by using hospitality to lure the goddess down into domestic space, the oracular gambler—in fact the diviner as their proxy—is able travel into her domain and appropriate that which is hers. In the second mode, however, the oracular response aligns the gambler with the *smān's* wild animals, and like them he is protected from harm by the *smān* goddess who is referred to as the owner of the wild animals. This ritual or dice divination thus pushes the gambler not only to traverse the distance between domestic, low-lying space and the wild upland space, but also that between human and animal, human and divine, and—in the case of a male oracular gambler—male and female.³⁶

This type of oracular gambler who shifts between predator and prey, between identifying with the goddesses' livestock and identifying with the poachers of her livestock, represents a "trickiness" that recalls dice games with the gods and the Indian gambler "Unfettered." The oracular gambler is fundamentally unstable as he shifts perspectives between human and goddess, and holds both perspectives at once. It is this instability that permits him to move into the positional and ontological space of the goddess and thereby to take part of her essence—her fortune, specifically—in the same way that one would win what was staked in a game of dice. But whereas Unfettered is impudent and supremely confident, even strangling the god to claim his winnings, the Tibetan oracular gambler employs the subtler and more equivocal technol-

of the Tibetan Plateau, ed. Geoff Barstow (Special issue of *Études Mongoles & Sibériennes, Centrasiatiques & Tibétaines* 50 [2019]), 5–9.

35 Ibid.

36 Ibid., 18.

ogy of hospitality, and his stance towards the goddess is simultaneously reverent and impudent.

The ludic contest of oracular gambling may be referenced in two oracular verses that mention dice. These are—perhaps not coincidentally—the oracular responses for the triplets [1] 4-4-4 and [49] 1-1-1. The former, as the first oracular response in the text, is certainly self-referential with its images of dice coming together and its injunction—reminiscent of the *Divination of Maheśvara's* similar instructions in its introduction—to “examine speech well.” Its further images of men who are bountiful and rich and gods that are powerful, accompanied by its evaluation that one will not suffer an untimely death, is something like a charter for the ideal situation that oracular gambling seeks to establish.

The triplet [49] 1-1-1 offers an image of a dice game between gods and demons where the gods prevail, leading to a celebration by gods and humans and to mourning in the lands of demons. This sort of epic dice game is in the first place reminiscent of several that we find in Indian and Tibetan mythology. It particularly echoes the rigged dice game that customarily formed a part of Tibetan New Year's rituals in which a representative of the Dalai Lama prevailed over a figure who constituted a sort of anti-ruler who was expelled from Lhasa following his inevitable loss, as described in the introduction. In the context of oracular gambling, though, this scene of gods beating demons at a dice game is more like an oddly refracted image of the oracular gambler's contest with the *śman* goddesses. Here it effectively ignores the goddesses' role as a partner to lay bare the more ludic component of the ritual in which the dice establish a winner and a loser.

The interpretations, as in the *Divination of Maheśvara's* prognoses, are often general. Their evaluative tenor can be said to accord more closely with that of the prognoses in the *Divination of Maheśvara*. To cite two, that for the combination [14] 4-4-1 states, “whatever wish you conceive will not be fulfilled”; and that for the combination [10] 4-2-3 states, “whatever you wish for, the matter will be resolved and you will get your wish.”³⁷ Other interpretations are more specific, such as that for [6] 4-3-1, which states, “if you've cast this for a traveler, it is a sign that no evil whatsoever will come, and that they shall return to their country. Very good.”³⁸ Following the verses for the combination [3] 4-4-2, which include images of horses and yaks, we find a highly specific application in the interpretation: “if you've cast this as a horse divination, no evil whatsoever shall come.

37 *bsam pa ci bsams kyang myi grub ste*; 4^v1-2; and *ci bsams yang don phyon / bsam ba grub*; 6^r6-7.

38 *byes myi la btan na ci yang myi nyes par yul du 'khor ba 'i rtags ste bzang rab bo*; 4^v11-5^r1.

Good.”³⁹ This is interesting for the fact that it reveals that one could apparently consult this divination system on behalf of a horse. A more general interpretation in the response for [37] 2-2-3, translated above, points to an interesting opposition within the types of responses one can receive, and the uses to which one can put different types of fortune won through this form of dice divination: “bad for making things for yourself; good for enemy fortune/ activities towards enemies.” While some oracular responses are good for everything and some are bad for everything, others are mixed, such that they may be good for creative activities and bad for destructive ones, or vice-versa. This more specific form of interpretation is found in other Old Tibetan dice divination texts, as we will see below.

It is in the interpretations that one also finds the optional elements of similes and correcting rituals, in parallel with their location in the responses of the *Divination of Maheśvara*. In three separate entries we find the same baleful simile, which follows the verse and appears in the interpretation: “it is like mud mixed into water” (4^v6; 8^v6; 14^r5–6). This same image accompanies a “neutral” response in the *Divination of Maheśvara*: “[y]our affairs will be as if you were holding a clod of earth and tossed it into the water, where it sinks and disintegrates without a trace, sunken into the depths and unattainable” (如持土塊，擲於水中，沉散即盡，汝事亦然，沉滯不得; [38] 3-2-3). As noted already, there are parallels in canonical Buddhist texts. This is too universal a simile to admit any conclusions about influence or intertextuality. The Tibetan codex is comparatively restrained in its use of simile, both in comparison with the *Divination of Maheśvara* and, as we shall see, with other early Tibetan dice divination texts.

Correcting rituals are similarly infrequent in the Tibetan codex, and these are also less varied than the multiple types of prescriptions found in the *Divination of Maheśvara*. Of the four correcting rituals in the Tibetan codex 10L Tib J 739, two occur prior to middling or mixed evaluations, and two stand in lieu of any evaluation at all, but imply a bad result. That found in the response for the combination [12] 4-3-3 is instructive: “as an obstacle, there is a *gongpo* demon, so be careful! Perform a *ngo lön* and be careful! A mixed divination.”⁴⁰ Similar instructions are found in the response for [45] 2-1-4, also immediately before a mixed or middling evaluation: “there is gossip. As an obstacle, there is misfortune. Perform a *ngo lön*. Mixed/ middling.”⁴¹ Here *ngo lon* appears to be

39 *rta 'i mor btab na ci yang myi nyes te bzang ngo*; 4^r8.

40 *gdon du 'gong po yo pa dang / dgra bzo bas bag zon bya / ngo lon byos la bag zon bya / mo 'bri[ng]*; 6^r11–6^v1.

41 *myi kha zer gdon du byur chags yod pas / ngo lon gyis shig / 'bring*; 14^v8–10.

a rite for counteracting a bad augur.⁴² A related term appears in the response for [8] 4-1-3, where the evaluation states, “there is gossip. You will not achieve your aim. Perform a *ngo yog* ritual!”⁴³

The fourth and final element of an oracular response in this Tibetan codex is the evaluation. The text contains fifty-seven responses, of which thirty-seven are on balance good, fourteen bad, six mixed or middling, and one incomplete, with the manuscript ending in the middle of the response at the end of the final extant page. That leaves six missing combinations and their responses. More specifically, the fifty-seven extant responses break down as follows: thirty-five very good (*bzang rab*); one good (*bzang*); one “it will turn out good” (*bzang bar ’ong*); three middling (*’bring*); one lower middling (*’bring smad*); one “very good for enemy fortune” (*dgra bya la bzang rab*); one “bad for making things for yourself, good for enemy fortune” (*rang bzo ba la ngan dra bya la bzang*); two “perform an augur removal rite” (*ngo lon gyis* or *ngo yogs gyis*); one “be careful” (*bag zon bya*); two bad (*ngan*); and nine very bad (*ngan rab*).

This is a balance of fortune very similar to what we find in the *Irq Bitig*, and far less favorable to that of the *Divination of Maheśvara*. As is already evident from the oracular response above for set [22] 3-4-1 with its image of gathering predators and demons, there is a risk when consulting this divination system that one will receive a dire result. Another response, for the combination [7] 4-1-4, states “it is an augur (*ngo*) that a man without progeny has been executed and is dead. Very bad” (5^r6–7). The risk of peril and misfortune is moderated, however, by the Tibetan codex’s rule of three, which diverges from that of the *Divination of Maheśvara*. In the latter, it will be recalled, one is instructed to essentially “quit while you’re ahead,” and stop rolling the dice after receiving a good response. It appears this *modus operandi* can be trumped in a few cases by responses that specifically state, “do not look again,” which is to say, do not roll the dice again to look up another response, even if this is a bad one. Otherwise, one can roll the dice up to three times in the *Divination of Maheśvara*. The Tibetan codex by contrast *requires* that one receive three responses. Also, it reduces the possibilities to one of four outcomes described in the verse: three good; two good and one bad; one good and two bad; or three bad. This is to ignore any combinations that are classed as middling. It is reminiscent of the rule of three in the *Guan Gongming Divination Method* described in chapter

42 On this term, see Bialek, *Compounds and Compounding in Old Tibetan*. Vol. 1, 488, n. 2. Bialek also furnishes examples of *len* in the second part of a compound where it indicates removing something. The assumption here is that it is the augur (*ngo*) that is removed.

43 *myi kha zer / rang yang don myi grub / ngo yogs gyi cho ga byos shig*; 5^r11–12.

two, which similarly leaves out some possibilities or at least leaves the process for dealing with them unstated.

The upshot of the Tibetan codex's rule of three is that one has about a 25% likelihood of getting three good responses in a row, a 33% chance of getting two good and one bad, a 13% chance of getting two bad and one good, and only a 2% chance of getting three bad responses in a row. Perhaps the most striking fact is that according to this method, one third of divination outcomes—those that return two good responses and one bad—yield a result that is referred to as *zhi* (Tib. *gzhi*). This term usually means “basis” or “foundation,” but in early Tibetan dice divination refers to a null outcome, that is, a result that is to be treated as largely meaningless.⁴⁴ This is fundamentally different from a “middling” prognosis which is essentially a mixed result that is good for some activities and bad for others. It is also different from plainly stating that the answer to one's question is at present unclear. Neither is it the same as a “neutral” prognosis in the *Divination of Maheśvara*, which, as discussed in chapter one, either indicates a bad fortune that can be improved by ritual, or else counsels inaction. The null response, by contrast, effectively endows the divination system with the “autonomy” to reject a client's or a diviner's query. This might be seen as a way for the system to assert its “objectivity” and its independence from human tampering. In the context of the study of divination systems, this feature is referred to as “resistance,” and it is a key indicator of a divination system's vitality.⁴⁵

The Tibetan system's high degree of resistance contrasts sharply with the certainty offered by both the *Divination of Maheśvara* and the *Irq Bitig*. It is not foreign, however, to Chinese divination traditions. The principle of resistance is well known from the phenomenon of casting two crescent-shaped blocks or *bei* (杯), either in conjunction with lot divination (*chouqian* 抽籤), or independently as a stand-alone divination ritual. When the *bei* land with both flat sides down, this means “no”; when they land one up and one down this means “yes”; but when they land with both flat sides up this means “the gods are laughing.”⁴⁶ This, too, is different from simply stating “the matter is unclear”: the latter stands in relation to the former as an interpretation, and a palliative one at that. The dice in early Tibetan dice divination might in a sense be seen assert-

44 On this outcome, see Brandon Dotson, “Three Dice, Four Faces, and Sixty-Four Combinations,” 36–40.

45 See Park, “Divination and its Social Contexts,” 198.

46 See, for example, Emily Martin Ahern, *Chinese Ritual and Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 45–49.

ing themselves as a technology not entirely beholden to its users, and one that draws on the sense of play encoded in their form.

The Tibetan codex's instructions raise several questions. If all that matters is a set of three evaluations, why not do this with dominoes or dice, without consulting a book?⁴⁷ Why all the poetic verses? Why the gods, goddesses, mountains, wild animals, and hunters, and the attendant ludic contest with the divine? Why the specific interpretations? Does a single response, with its verse and interpretation ever trump its evaluation (e.g., "good" or "bad") alongside two other evaluations? These questions are probably unanswerable, but they can be effectively defanged by the observation that they presuppose, against all that we know to the contrary, that people follow directions. The Tibetan codex offers these instructions, and through its oracular responses it equally invites the divination client to adopt a highly specific ritual stance in relation to gods and in relation to *śman* goddesses, or at least to have the diviner perform this ritual stance as the client's proxy. Just as we can safely assume that some clients did not accept this invitation and did not fully share the text's sensibilities, we can also assume that some did not abide by the text's rule of three. Widening our gaze to other excavated Tibetan dice divination texts, mostly from the ninth century, we should similarly avoid the assumption that these all followed the method given in this tenth-century codex. One thereby allows that users may have developed more than one way to consult these divination books.

2 Ninth-Century Tibetan Dice Divination Texts from Dunhuang, Turfan, and Mazār Tāgh

As a tenth-century dice divination codex from Dunhuang that includes invocations and instructions for use, the Tibetan codex IOL Tib J 739 is an ideal comparandum for the *Divination of Maheśvara*. It also connects us to around two dozen earlier Tibetan dice divination texts excavated not only from Dunhuang, but also from the Silk Road sites of Turfan and Mazār Tāgh. This pushes our enquiry back in both space and time, to the north and west, and to a period from the late-8th to the mid-9th century.

47 On domino divination in China, and a similar reduction of more complex information to binary evaluations, see Andrea Bréard, "How to Quantify the Value of Domino Combinations? Divination and Shifting Rationalities in Late Imperial China," in *Coping with the Future: Theories and Practices of Divination in East Asia*, ed. Michael Lackner (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 499–529.

These twenty-two texts are in scroll format or are fragments of scrolls. Some of their oracular responses overlap with those of the codex IOL Tib J 739. Ai Nishida has helpfully classified this body of literature into two types of texts. “Type-1” texts, to which the codex IOL Tib J 739 belongs, use verse in their oracular responses; “type-2” texts do not.⁴⁸ In type-2 texts, as well as in a few type-1 texts, we also tend to find a larger pantheon of gods than we find in the tenth-century codex.

Broadening our comparative horizons to this body of nearly contemporary Tibetan dice divination texts, we find some closer parallels to the *Divination of Maheśvara*, specifically with respect to its association of named gods or spirits with each oracular response. This happens differently in the two types of Tibetan dice divination texts: in type-1 texts, the oracular responses are often associated with or effectively named after a god or spirit, and in the type-2 texts the oracular responses issue from the mouth of a named god or spirit. The former situation is illustrated with recourse to a long scroll, shelfmark IOL Tib J 738, in which there are similar responses to what we find in the codex IOL Tib J 739, some even with overlapping verses. Here, however, we find a new component between the oracular verse and the prose interpretation that is reminiscent of the name of each numerical set in the *Divination of Maheśvara*. This is found in the majority of the text’s oracular responses, and takes the form of phrases such as, “this has fallen on the divination of the Queen of the Wind” (IOL Tib J 738, 1^v71). This differs structurally from what we find in the *Divination of Maheśvara* in that this identification or association of the set with a god does not appear at the head of the oracular response.

3-3-1

Oh! Up on the northern plains

Over there—they seek seven gazelles.

The thieves shall never get them

They are the property of the *mu sman* goddesses.

This has fallen on the divination of the *sman* goddess Göpang Shélé. If you have cast it for household fortune and life-force fortune, then the fortune of humans will be undiminished and the fortune of livestock will be undiminished. The gods protect your happiness and long life. If you undertake some matter, it will be accomplished. If you’ve cast this for a

48 See Ai Nishida 西田愛, “Ko Chibetto-go Saikoro-uranai-monjo no kenkyū” 古チベット語サイコロ占い文書の研究, *Nihon Seizō Gakkai Kaihō* 日本西蔵学会々報 54 (2008): 63–77. This is now superseded by idem, “A Preliminary Analysis of Old Tibetan Dice Divination Texts.”

sick person, s/he will recover. If you've requested an official post, it will be given. If you've cast it for progeny fortune, you will have progeny.⁴⁹ If you've cast it for companionship/marriage, you will meet it. If you go for trade, you will make a profit. If you've cast it for a visitor, s/he comes near. For whatsoever you've cast it, this divination is extremely good.

@@@ / @@@ / @ / kye byang ka nI ya bya⁵⁰ na dgo bdun nI phas kyang 'tshal / rkun pos nI re myI 'tshal / mu sman nI nyid gI dkor // mo 'dI sman rgod spangs she le'i mo la bab ste // khyIm phyā dang srog phyā la btāb na / myI'I phyva myI nyams // phyugs kyI g.yang myI nyams // dga' skyId tshe rIng lha srung / don gnyer na grub / nad pa la btāb na sos / rje blas gsol na gnang // srId phyā la btāb na srId yod / gnyen byas na 'phrod // tshong byas na khye phyIn / 'dron po la btāb na nye bar 'ong // mo 'dI cI la btāb kyang bzang rab //

10L Tib J 738, 3^v91–95

This does not explicitly name the numerical set and/or the oracular response after a god or spirit, as it does in the *Divination of Maheśvara*. The effect, however, is very similar: a numerical trigram and/or response is associated with this god, or it belongs to this god. The implications may likewise be similar: the named god or spirit might be viewed as the source of blessing or misfortune.

The interpretations in a type-1 text like 10L Tib J 738 go into greater detail than those of the Tibetan codex 10L Tib J 739. In laying out a given response's specific applications they are very valuable as a catalogue of the concerns of dice divination clients. They are also largely typical of the concerns found in divination traditions across cultures, which almost invariably concern trade, family, health, and wealth. These are all classified as different categories of fortune, referring back to the “fortunate essence” that one can win or lose through oracular gambling. A category that distinguishes this system of divination somewhat from the *Divination of Maheśvara* and the *Irq Bitig* is one that we've already encountered, namely “enemy fortune,” which relates to one's status vis-à-vis one's enemies and one's prospects for defeating them.

49 While *srid* can indicate subsistence, it is also a term for creating offspring. It appears to be used in both senses in divination under the category of *srid phyā*, and we follow Sobisch's suggestion here that it should indicate “outlook concerning the offspring”; Jan-Ulrich Sobisch, *Divining with Achi and Tārā: Comparative Remarks on Tibetan Dice and Mālā Divination: Tools, Poetry, Structures, and Ritual Dimensions* (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 33.

50 Read *byi*.

As in the *Divination of Maheśvara*, the gods and spirits associated with IOL Tib J 738's responses range from general to specific. Many have foreign names that seem to mix Chinese and Sanskrit, e.g., Ge'u shi tang sho tra; Than ci hva yen; Nam ci than; and Leng bu hva nyen. Others are more familiar Tibetan gods, such as Yulsa Karmo (the "White Goddess of the Place"), the "lu (*klu*) and nyen (*gnyan*) spirits," or the "little *smān* goddess." There is only one small hint of Buddhist content: one of the gods and spirits so named is 'Bog shIng bo de sa tva la (IOL Tib J 738, 1^o80), evidently a phoneticization of Puxian (普賢; Baxter-Sagart MC phuX-hen) bodhisattva, that is, Samantabhadra.

Once such a god or spirit is announced, there follow longer interpretations, some of which begin by directly hailing the divination user in the second-person, "you, human!" (*myi khyod*). This recalls the second-person hailing in the *Divination of Maheśvara*, but the specific use of "human" reinforces the speaker's alterity in a direct and powerful way: one is being spoken to, directly, by a god. This type of hailing, which could be seen as a divinatory gimmick or affectation where it appears in other divination texts, is rendered consequential by the positional and/or ontological crossings in Tibetan oracular gambling, where the diviner moves upward into divine space and the goddess is drawn down into domestic space through hospitality. The eruption of the second-person voice in the oracular response is therefore amenable to Eduardo Viveiros de Castro's observations on an encounter "wherein a subject is captured by another cosmologically dominant point of view, wherein he is the 'you' of a non-human perspective ... implying an objectification of the human I as a 'you' for this other."⁵¹ This sense of "capturing" is relevant to meeting a god or spirit or talking animal in the forest, where "[h]e who responds to a 'you' spoken by a non-human accepts the condition of being its 'second person' and when assuming in his turn the position of 'I' does so already as a non-human."⁵² Viveiros de Castro emphasized the transformative effects of this hailing on the human, but in the case of early Tibetan oracular gambling, it is the diviner's (quasi-)shamanistic crossings that insulate the divination client from any such danger.

As we have seen in the responses above, the verses in type-1 texts are usually spoken in a disembodied third-person voice, and the prose interpretations sometimes address or hail the human user directly in the second person. The verses appear to be speech acts even if they are not marked grammatically as such—a circumstance that is made clear in those less-common responses in

51 Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, "Cosmological Deixis and Amerindian Perspectivism," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 4.3 (1998): 483.

52 Ibid.

these texts where verses issue from the mouth of a named god or spirit. In type-2 texts, by contrast, the speakers are nearly always named gods, but their speech is more prosaic and is not rendered in verse. A few examples will suffice to demonstrate this.

[3] 4-4-1

From the mouth of [the god] Lhami Lhagyung: “When the rain falls from above it will not fall on the chicks’ nest. When the great river bursts its banks, it will not flood the fields. If an enemy comes, you will defeat the enemy. If you’ve cast this for hunting, you will have success/ will kill.” A good divination.

@@@ @@@ @ \$: // *lha myI la rgyung gyI zhal nas char yas bab na bye’u tshang du char myI bab / chu chen / po brug na zhIng myI khyar / dgra byung na dkra thub rI dags la btab na sode mo bzango /*

IOL Tib J 740, ll. 10–12

[30] 3-1-1

From the mouth of Garté Chöbu: “Winter is over and summer has come. The cuckoo resounds in the ears of the thin sheep of spring, and it goes from suffering to happiness, from poverty to wealth, from thin to fat. For you, human, so too shall it be.” A good divination.

@@@ @ @ \$: // *gar the chos bu’i zhal nas // dgun zad gyang dpyar byung / dpyid gyI lug rid gyI rna bar khyu byug brag ste nyon mongs pa las // skyid dbul ba las phyug / rid pa las tshos myI khyod gyang de dang mtshung ste mo bzang ngo //*

IOL Tib J 740, ll. 121–124

[59] 1-3-3

From the mouth of [the god] Lawo Lasé: “If human fortune (*myI phyva*) has escaped, summon the *yang* (*g.yang*) fortune! If a horse has gone missing, search for the horse! If one’s turquoise breaks, use an awl to fix it! If one repays a debt of fortune, it is good.”

@@@@ @@@ @ \$: // *sla bo sla sras gyI zhal nas myI phyva bros na g.yang lon cIq rta rlag rtas ’tshol cIq / g.yu chag na gsor gyIs sob cIq pya bun gyI phyva blan na bzango /*

IOL Tib J 740, ll. 225–227

In their direct tone, their association with named gods and spirits, their lack of verse, and their use of similes, these oracular responses in type-2 early Tibetan dice divination texts resemble those of the *Divination of Maheśvara*. Their contents are slightly more evocative and imagistic, but less so than the verses in type-1 texts. Their pantheon is less eclectic than that of the *Divination of Maheśvara*, however, since it is composed largely of Tibetan gods and spirits, some of them drawn from various regional traditions such as mountain cults.⁵³ In the longest of these texts, in the scroll IOL Tib J 740, no gods are Buddhist, nor is there any ostensive Buddhist content in the text. This is typical of the entire body of ninth- and tenth-century Tibetan dice divination texts.

Like type-1 texts, these texts also include correcting rituals as an optional element, usually in the form of simple injunctions to “offer to the gods” or “worship the gods.” This contrasts with the prescription of more specific rituals in the type-1 texts.⁵⁴

The balance of fortune in type-2 texts is similar to what we’ve observed elsewhere, with a roughly two-to-one ratio of good to bad evaluations. No extant type-2 text includes an introduction or a colophon, so we do not know if the differences between these two groups of texts was also accompanied by a difference in methods for casting the dice.

One type-2 text, shelfmark S.155, features an additional optional element which usually comes after the evaluation. This is a “sign” (*rtags*) that confirms the veracity of the oracular response. The character of these “signs” varies from physical marks such as moles to statements about one’s desires or one’s family. At the end of a “very good” response, for example, the text states, “[as a] sign, there is a mole by your right eye.”⁵⁵ The oracular response for the combination 2-4-2 conjures an image of an animal whose eyes have been gouged out by a dog. It then continues, “You, human! You are like that. Perform rituals and worship the gods, but it is of no use—you will die. As a sign, your secondary wife/concubine is committing adultery.”⁵⁶ These signs can also appear just prior to

53 For a list of these gods and a discussion of some of them in the scroll IOL Tib J 740, see Brandon Dotson, “Divination and Law in the Tibetan Empire: the Role of Dice in the Legislation of Loans, Interest, Marital Law and Troop Conscription,” in *Contributions to the Cultural History of Early Tibet*, ed. Matthew T. Kapstein and Brandon Dotson (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 22–25. See also the discussion in Nishida, “A Preliminary Analysis of Old Tibetan Dice Divination Texts,” 65.

54 See *ibid.*, 68.

55 *rtags gmylq.yas pa na smye ba*; S.155, l. 108.

56 *myl khyod kyang de dang 'dra ste bon byas lha mchod [kyang] myl phan shI 'o rtagsu yang chung mas byi phyin pa ylno mo*; S.155, l. 118.

the final evaluation, as at the end of the response for the combination 2-1-3: “as a sign, you have been released from a serious legal case. A good divination.”⁵⁷

Besides offering multiple contemporary Tibetan dice divination texts with which to compare the *Divination of Maheśvara*, these twenty-three extant excavated texts (including the codex IOL Tib J 739) are also notable for what they demonstrate about early Tibetan dice divination’s putative “unity of tradition.” The texts are divided almost equally between type 1 (with verse) and type 2 (without verse, usually spoken by gods or spirits). As a body of literature, we can observe some considerable “intertextuality” in the sense of recurring figures and themes, but also in the form of closely overlapping responses. These overlaps have been noted before, and what comes of the comparison is that sets of overlapping responses are too variable to prove the dependence of one text upon another, even allowing for the most cavalier of copyists.⁵⁸ Moreover, a response linked to one numerical set in one text may be anchored to an entirely different numerical set in another. Similarly, there is little to no consistency when considering the evaluations in relation to the numerical sets. A numerical set whose evaluation is “very good” in one text can be “bad” or “middling” in another. Similarly, the same gods appear across a variety of texts, but they are not linked to the same numerical sets, nor are their responses identical.⁵⁹ This absence of any “numerological” sentiment endowing certain numbers and sets with specific meanings accords well, incidentally, with the *Divination of Maheśvara*’s similar disregard for such concerns.

While there are significant overlaps, not one of the twenty-three texts can be said to be an exemplar for another. Even barely literate teams, where one person dictated and the other copied, cannot account for wild variation that we observe when comparing parallel verses or entries in two texts.⁶⁰ It is clear, nevertheless, that such texts were copied, and that there must have been exemplars. The codex is a case in point: its statement, “the threes section is completed” (*gsum yul rdzogs*; 11^v4), which appears after all of the combinations beginning with three have been exhausted, looks like an instance where a

57 *rtagsu ni zhal lce ched po la thar pa ylno* [mo] *bzango*; S.155, ll. 146–147.

58 Thomas, *Ancient Folk-Literature from North-Eastern Tibet*, 146–150; Chen Jian 陳踐, “P.T. 1046 骰卜 (P.T. 1046 Dice divination),” in *Dunhuang Tubo wenxian xuanji* 敦煌吐蕃文獻選輯, ed. Zheng Binglin 鄭炳林 and Huang Weizhong 黃維忠 (Lanzhou: Minzu chubanshe, 2011), 108–111; Nishida, “A Preliminary Analysis of Old Tibetan Dice Divination Texts,” 55.

59 See, however, Nishida’s notice of the generally favorable responses associated with the gods *Mu tsa med* and *Dbyar mo thang*; *ibid.*, 65. Small sample size should temper such observations—and some of our own—as preliminary.

60 See the comparison of parallel passages in *ibid.*, 60–61.

scribe copied down what was dictated, and accidentally wrote down an extra-textual statement by the person dictating. The same exclamation is absent, after all, at the end of the “ones section,” the “fours section,” and the “twos section.” Standard evidence of copying is found near the end of the codex, where the scribe begins the entry for the combination [55] 1-3-1 with the verse for the next entry and then strikes it through as an error: “~~Oh! Up above, In the upper three valleys, up above.~~ Oh! In [the land of] Khyung lung rngul mkhar.” The next entry, for [56] 1-2-3, just below this, opens, “Oh! In the upper three valleys, up above.” It is a textbook example of haplography or eye-skip, which the scribe(s), to their credit, managed to correct.

Their high degree of variability and their rough orthographies suggest that these were practical, vernacular texts, consulted for their intended use in divination. It does not, however, support the view that they are records of séances, or textualizations of oral performances. The consistent ordering of the oracular responses, proceeding in descending order through the combinations beginning with four, three, two, and then one, obviously falsifies a scenario in which some putative proto-ethnographer or proto-oral-literature documentarian recorded a diviner’s responses to clients following each random roll of the dice. A divination ritual, as we have seen, would also only produce three oracular responses, so a book of up to sixty-four responses could not be a record of a divination ritual. Be that as it may, the specter of oral performance is helpful for considering the very existence of these texts as physical artefacts. This form of dice divination may have indeed enjoyed a long oral prehistory, and its textualization may have been due to fears over loss of tradition. These texts may equally owe their existence to the prestige of the written word and of the book, particularly in the increasingly Buddhist context of Tibet in the ninth century. As it has come down to us, this is a text-based divination tradition, but our impression of it as such is dictated by the nature of our materials, which are by necessity texts. This does not mean, however, that the tradition could not have moved between textuality and orality at various points in its history.

Whatever the case, the fundamental instability of these texts not only with regard to their orthographies but also to their omissions and repetitions, suggests that “interperformativity” may be a more helpful way to refer to the relationship between these texts’ contents than is the more restrictive category of intertextuality.⁶¹ Dice divination emerges as one of the most adaptable of

61 On “metaperformativity” as an alternative to intertextuality in the context of the poetics of epic, see Richard Martin, “Similes and Performance,” in *Written Voices, Spoken Signs: Tradition, Performance, and the Epic Text*, ed. Egbert Bakker and Ahuvia Kahane (Cambridge:

genres, animated by the tendency of its contents to shift and rearrange themselves. This is what we've dubbed "divinatory mouvance," an extension of the aleatory into Paul Zumthor's concept about the instability of popular and vernacular texts, particularly those that bridge the putative oral/ literary divide. The method described in the introduction to the Tibetan codex adds another facet to the impression of the divination texts as unwieldy and in flux: "resistance." This high degree of resistance, whereby one-third of the time one will have no result from one's divination, is a fitting manifestation of the "shiftiness" of dice and dice divination, and also of the contingency of the entire actor-network, based as it is on so many unstable moving parts. The power of the ritual to refuse indicates that it is not fully beholden to its users. It recalls a famous adage about the taming of the indigenous gods of Tibet by the tantric Buddhist *siddha* Padmasambhava. Forced out of Tibet after taming the gods two times, he was unable to tame them a decisive third time, thus leaving the job for others to complete, but also allowing the gods to remain one-third wild. This vitality of the gods and their limited autonomy is celebrated each year on a festival day when all of Tibet's spirit mediums fall into trance. In dice divination, it is celebrated by the presence of resistance and divinatory mouvance that prevent the full imposition of human will upon the process.

3 Sanskrit Dice Divination Texts from Kucha

Early Tibetan dice divination texts have brought us further away from tenth-century Dunhuang to as early as the late-eighth century. Their geographical distribution has taken us as far north as Turfan and as far west as Mazār Tāgh in the kingdom of Khotan. It is no great stretch to move only slightly further north and west to Kucha, where we find two further relevant dice divination texts contained in the sixth-century birchbark *Bower Manuscript*, excavated from a damaged stupa at the Buddhist cave temple site of Kumtura in 1890. The manuscript contains three medical texts, two dice divination texts, and two parts of the *Mahāmāyurī-vidyārājñī-dhāraṇī*. This forms an interesting parallel with the admixture of medical and divinatory texts compiled along with the *Divination of Maheśvara* in the codex S.5614. The texts are written in Sanskrit interspersed with Prakrit vernacular. These texts have been subject to numerous studies, and the sensation caused by the manuscript's discovery helped to

Harvard University Press, 1997), 161. On "interperformance" as an alternative to intertextuality, see Lee Haring, "Interperformance," *Fabula* 29.3-4 (1988): 365-372.

fuel the expeditions that would lead to the recovery of manuscripts from Dunhuang and Turfan. While the *Bower Manuscript* itself may date to as late as the sixth century, some have dated it to as early as the third century, in part because its contents appear to reflect the assumptions of an earlier time.⁶²

The fourth and fifth texts in the *Bower Manuscript* are both dice divination texts, only the first of which is complete. Their contents do not significantly overlap. Each begins with an invocation. The first text begins with a series of salutations (*namaskāra*) to an impressive pantheon that overlaps somewhat with that of the *Divination of Maheśvara* by its inclusion of Śiva, Viṣṇu, and Vaiśravaṇa.

Salutation to Nandirudreśvara! Salutation to the *ācāryas*! Salutation to Īśvara! Salutation to Māṇibhadra! Salutation to all the *yakṣas*! Salutation to all the *devas*. To Śiva salutation! To Ṣaṣṭhī salutation. To Prajāpati salutation! To Rudra salutation! Salutation to Vaiśravaṇa! Salutation to the Maruts! Salutation!

Let the dice fall for the purpose of the present object! *Hilī! Hilī!* Let them fall as befits the skill of Kumbhakārī the Mātanga woman!

By the truth of all the Siddhas, by the truth of all Schools, by their truth and true consensus let Śiva declare what is lost and preserved, peace and trouble, gain and loss, victory and defeat, *svāhā!* On holy Nārāyana, the tutelary *devatā*, and on the *rṣis* rests the truth of the oracle, the truth of the process of divination. Let the dice fall openly! *Svāhā!* Let the truth be seen!

The efficacy of the magical formulas and medical herbs and prognostics ... is far from untruth. In praise of the *devatā* Viṣṇu.⁶³

62 On the date of the *Bower Manuscript*, see Lore Sander, "Origin and Date of the Bower Manuscript: a New Approach," in *Investigating Indian Art: Proceedings of a Symposium on the Development of Early Buddhist and Hindu Iconography held by the Museum of India Art Berlin May 1986*, ed. M. Yaldiz and W. Lobo (Berlin: Museum für Indische Kunst, 1987), 313–323. Daniel Michon prefers a date in the mid-fourth century, and cites Sylvain Lévi's study of one of the *Bower Manuscript's* ritual texts, the *Mahāmāyurī*, to argue that "the text itself reflects the social world of the north-western Indian subcontinent in the first three centuries of the common Era"; Michon, *Archeology and Religion in Early Northwest India*, 187–188; Sylvain Lévi, "Le Catalogue géographique des *yakṣa* dans la *Mahāmāyurī*," *Journal Asiatique* 5 (1915): 118. The status of these manuscripts within the prehistory of the longer transmission of the Sanskrit dice oracle *Pāśakakevalī* will not detain us here, as it would take us too far into India and into the second millennium; see Julius Erich Schröter, *Pāśakakevalī: ein Indisches Würfelerakel* (Borna: Druck von R. Noske, 1900).

63 A.F. Rudolf Hoernle, *The Bower Manuscript; Facsimile Leaves, Nagari Transcript, Roman-*

This opening is fascinating for its pantheon, and also for the fact that the god Śiva/ Maheśvara plays such a pivotal role. Here he is the one who declares “what is lost and preserved, peace and trouble, gain and loss, victory and defeat,” in other words, the oracular responses. As discussed in chapter one, this may be precisely Maheśvara’s role in the *Divination of Maheśvara*. Here Śiva is paired with the god Nārāyana/ Viṣṇu, who ensures the truth of the divination. This pairing is also found, as we will see, in the introduction to the second dice divination text in the *Bower Manuscript*. This is particularly interesting, given Viṣṇu’s reputation for illusion and subterfuge.

The other gods mentioned are in keeping with an early first millennium CE north Indian milieu, and mix Vedic, Hindu, and local gods. Some are categories rather than named individuals, such as “teachers” (*ācāryas*), “spirits” (*yakṣas*) and gods (*devas*). Among the named gods and spirits, Māṇibhadra is one of the leaders of the *yakṣas*, and is variously assimilated to Kubera and Vaiśravaṇa, and is also seen as a martial avatar of Śiva. Śaṣṭhī is a goddess of children and childbirth, who, like Hārītī and many other such goddesses, began her career by preying on and devouring children. Prajāpati is another shape-shifting god, or one may say that the term itself is used, like Īśvara, to refer to a variety of gods and forces depending upon its temporal, spatial, and sectarian context. Here, it may refer to the Vedic god of creation and bounty often seen as a precursor to the Hindu god Brahmā, or it might refer to the creative powers of Brahmā or another god. Rudra, “the howler,” refers to the terrifying god of storms, wind, and the hunt, overlapping in this respect with the god Vāyu. Rudra, too, is a Vedic deity—created to destroy the god Prajāpati, in fact—but “Rudra” can be used to refer to other gods and has become synonymous with Śiva. As god of the wind and storms, Rudra is the father of a troop of gods called the Maruts, who are themselves gods of storms and battles and deifications of the wind. In a further instance of the gods’ unwillingness to be easily defined or pinned down, the Maruts are other times the troops of the god Indra. In concert with the *Divination of Maheśvara*, the gods of the wind and sky loom large, as do gods of protection and childbirth, e.g., Hārītī and Śaṣṭhī, and the male gods of plenty often associated with them, e.g., Pāñcika, Vaiśravaṇa, and Māṇibhadra.

The reference to “Kumbhakārī the Mātanga woman” would seem to reinforce the role of women and goddesses in dice divination. The Mātanga is a low-caste woman who appears in a variety of stories and sutras, including the early eighth-century *Scripture of the Heroic March* (*Śūraṅgama Sūtra*; *Shou lengyan*

ised Transliteration and English Translation with Notes (Calcutta: Supt. Govt. Print. India, 1897), 197.

jing 首楞嚴經; T.945), where the Matangī girl is the source of a powerful spell. The Mātanga woman's appearance in this dice divination text's introduction might partly recall the game of dice between Śiva and Pārvatī, where Pārvatī transforms into a gorgeous tribal woman (*śabarī*) to seduce Śiva after he loses the dice game and leaves for the wilderness.⁶⁴ But this reading is, according to Lüders, an error, such that the phrase "Kumbhakārī the Mātanga woman" should be understood to refer to a pot, a discus, and an elephant carved into three respective dice to distinguish them one from another.⁶⁵ Such markings are apparently undocumented in the archeological record of *pāśaka* dice, and it was also surely the case that people practiced this form of divination with one die when three dice were lacking.

One of the interesting features of the invocation is the reference to dice, in particular the fact that they "fall" (*āpatanitaḥ*).⁶⁶ This involuntary verb aligns with the similarly involuntary verb "fall" (*babs*) found in the Old Tibetan dice divination texts, and contrasts with the *Divination of Maheśvara's* volitional "cast the dice" (*zhitou touzi*). The use of non-volitional verbs would seem to de-emphasize the agency of diviners and clients. In Tibetan oracular gambling, it may effectively level the playing field between the human oracular gambler and the *smān* goddesses who are his "opponent-partners" in an ostensibly fair contest. In the *Divination of Maheśvara*, by contrast, intention is foregrounded not only in the semantics of "throwing the dice," but in the preliminaries to the ritual. This would seem to convey that the numerical set and oracular response resulting from a roll of the dice is not random, but a product of a sequence of events that begins with the divination client's intention.

The mantic figures are constituted by written numerals, as in the *Divination of Maheśvara*. Following the invocation, the responses begin, as in the *Divination of Maheśvara* and the *Iṛq Bitig*, with the four triplets. Here, however, they proceed in descending order, 4-4-4, 3-3-3, 2-2-2, and 1-1-1. The remainder of the responses are organized into numerically related groups known as *āya*-s. Each *āya* has a specific name, and consists of either three or six numerical sets, depending on whether a number is repeated. The first group after the triplets, for example, is called the three *śāpaṭa*-s: the first *śāpaṭa* is 4-4-3, the second *śāpaṭa* is 4-3-4, and the third *śāpaṭa* is 3-4-4. This group contains all three possible combinations of two fours and one three. An example of an *āya* with six members is the six *vahula*-s: 3-2-4, 4-3-2, 2-4-3, 4-2-3, 3-4-2, and 2-3-4.⁶⁷ There

64 Handelman and Shulman, *God Inside Out*, 19–20.

65 Lüders, *Das Würfelspiel im alten Indien*, 22–23.

66 Hoernle, *The Bower Manuscript*, 210, n. 5.

67 The latter combination is missing in the text, which only names five *vahula*-s.

are thus sixteen *āya* groups in the text, to which one adds the four triplets, each of which constitutes its own unique *āya*, bringing the total number of *āya*-s to twenty.⁶⁸ These *āya*-s, like the four triplets, proceed in descending order, such that the first group is the *śāpaṭa*-s (4-4-3, 4-3-4, 3-4-4), and the last group is the *kharī*-s (1-1-2, 1-2-1, 2-1-1).

Despite this methodical organization of the numerical sets, there is apparently little relation between the numerical values or arrangements and the auspiciousness of their attendant oracular responses. The first four responses are a notable exception, the significance of which will become further apparent after a discussion of the material culture of the *pāśaka* die itself. There are no explicit evaluations at the end of the responses, but 4-4-4, 3-3-3, 2-2-2, and 1-1-1 effectively correspond to “very good,” “good/ very good,” “mixed,” and “bad,” respectively.

In common with all of the other dice divination texts we’ve surveyed, this one repeats and omits combinations. As a result, this “complete” text features fifty-nine, rather than the expected sixty-four oracular responses. A few sample responses, from Hoernle’s translation, will demonstrate their character and contents.

[1] A *cāṅṭayaṅṭa*: 4-4-4: Salutation! Janārdana (Viṣṇu) is well-pleased with thee who art an excellent man. All thy enemies are killed. What thou shalt desire that shall be done.⁶⁹

[21] The third *bhadṛā*: 1-4-2: Thou wilt obtain a virgin, and wilt conciliate thy friend; the *devatā*-s will give thee wealth together with affection and good luck.⁷⁰

68 We introduced the *Divination of Mahesvara*’s combinatory method by stating that it is analogous to how the four nucleotides in DNA and in mRNA combine in groups of three to form sixty-four possible codons. The fact that there are twenty *āya*-s into which the sixty-four possible combinations of dice rolls are grouped offers the opportunity to make a false analogy with the twenty amino acids specified by the sixty-four codons. This is false because it is simply a wonderful coincidence: the codons do not follow the same logic of the *āya*-s in terms of which codons specify which amino acids. There are, however, three “stop codons” that specify no nucleic acid at all, which is rather like those dice rolls that are omitted in the text, and which therefore return no oracular response. See Ann P. Smith, “Nucleic Acids to Amino Acids: DNA specifies protein,” *Nature Education* 1.1 (2008): 126.

69 Hoernle, *The Bower Manuscript*, 198.

70 *Ibid.*, 198.

[30] The second *dundubhī*: 2-1-3: Whether thou art forsaken by friends, or whether thou art supported by friends, thou wilt obtain thy favourite objects, in spite of the envy of the *devatā*-s.⁷¹

[31] The third *dundubhī*: 1-3-2: I see that thou enjoyest health of body at the present time; from the worship of the *devatā*-s thou obtainest the rest.⁷²

[46] The third *karna*: 4-1-1: Thou meditatest going on a journey, but thou wilt meet with misfortune; thou wilt return with thy business unfinished: there is no doubt about it.⁷³

These oracular responses have three main components: the name (*āya* name), numerical combination, and prognosis. There is no final evaluation. The prognosis addresses the divination client directly in the second-person, e.g., “thou wilt obtain a virgin.” It is declarative, usually in the future tense, and is sometimes in the first person. Only rarely does a prognosis exhort the client, as at the combination [35] 4-2-2, where it states, “[w]hatever there is in thy house, cattle, grain and money, thou shouldst distribute among the Brāhmins; thy advancement is then near at hand.”⁷⁴ The content is prosaic, and there is no verse, poetry, or metaphor. Only rarely does one even find a simile, such as in the response for the combination [26] 3-1-4 when the client is likened to a conquering king.⁷⁵ There are no correcting rituals.

The numerical sets appear after the *āya* name, e.g., “[t]he third *dundubhī*: 1-3-2,” and they are not set off as a separate line. The names of the numerical sets lend them an identity, and also guard the integrity of the system (and of the text in the case of copying), since each set should have its full complement of three or six combinations before a copyist moves onto the next set. Even so, this advantage was lost on the scribes of this particular manuscript—another sign, perhaps, of the tenacity of divinatory mouance. The use of *āya* names also allows one to refer to a given set by more than just the numbers themselves. Still, these *āya* names are qualitatively different from the names of gods and spirits associated with each set found in the *Divination of Maheśvara*, or those associated with gods in Old Tibetan dice divination texts: a name for a group

71 Ibid., 200.

72 Ibid., 200.

73 Ibid., 200.

74 Ibid., 200.

75 Ibid., 200.

of related numbers tend to lack the sort of biography and back-story that the name of a god and spirit invokes. To recall the brief discussion of the question of the “deification” of cosmological forces such as Stems and Branches that lend their names to numerical sets in the *Tricks of Jing*, the *āya*-s offer an example of the weakest case for being deified by association with a mantic figure. Nevertheless, the mere fact of their being named, and not standing on their own as a numerical trigram, is significant.

The prognoses are not spoken by named gods, and the only named gods apart from Janārdana (Viṣṇu) in the first response are the Aśvins, for the response to [24] 1-3-4. Along with Śiva, Rudra, and the Maruts, this would seem to emphasize the atmospheric realm and the wind.⁷⁶ It also calls to mind the various gods and goddesses of the wind in Tibetan dice divination texts and in the *Divination of Maheśvara*. There are, additionally, three references to the “word of the Marut-s,” but this is probably more a rhetorical statement about truth than an invocation of these gods. By contrast, a well-elaborated relationship that appears in the responses is that between the client and his or her personal gods or *devatā*-s. These *devatā*-s can bestow wealth and favor, or they can threaten one with their envy. This closely parallels the role of the gods described in Tibetan dice divination texts, where the gods either show their favor to their human devotees or withdraw from them.

The contents are otherwise practical and prosaic, and tend to focus on trade, family, and sex. The latter preoccupation is almost completely absent from the *Irq Bitig* and the *Divination of Maheśvara*, and uncommon in Tibetan dice divination texts. There is little in the way of the flora and fauna such as we find in Tibetan texts and in the *Irq Bitig*. In common with the Tibetan texts, however, some oracular responses do place an emphasis on defeating one’s enemies.

Although there are no explicit evaluations, one can judge based on their contents which oracular responses are good, bad, or mixed. By this rationale, we judge that this text contains thirty-one good responses, nine bad responses, and fourteen mixed responses. This aligns it generally with the balance of fortune found elsewhere, with the caveat that the number of mixed responses is comparatively high.

The second divination text in the *Bower Manuscript* appears immediately after the first. The writing is sloppier, and the text is incomplete, with only twenty oracular responses. The invocation, like that of the first text in the *Bower*

76 On the Maruts as wind gods, and their associations with Rudra, Śiva, and Indra, see Philip Lutgendorf, *Hanuman’s Tale: the Messages of a Divine Monkey* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 42–45.

Manuscript, emphasizes Viṣṇu, the ṛṣis, and the Maruts. To this it adds a charm to enlist the powers of a goddess referred to as the “Garlanded One” (*māli*):

I salute Janārdana (i.e., Viṣṇu), the lord of the world, by whom the truth of this [art of divination] has been decreed ... [Signs on] the palms and the forehead, good and ill fortune, life and death, in short all that may happen to men is here [in the art of divination] declared by the Maruts. Composed by ṛṣis, and fit to be used by those who reside on Mount Meru, is this charm: hence thereby the Maruts and others are made favourable to them that use it. It runs as follows:

“Oh, thou pure, pure, stainless *Devī*! Oh *Devī*! That which is true, that which is well, all that do thou show to us. Though the human eye may fail, the divine eye will prevail; though the human ear may fail, the divine ear will prevail; though the human [organ of] smell may fail, the divine [organ of] smell will prevail; though the human tongue may fail; the divine tongue will prevail. Oh thou Garlanded One, thou Garlanded One! *Svāhā!*”⁷⁷

This invocation unfortunately does not reveal any details about the method of casting the dice. As in most of the Tibetan texts, the method was apparently taken for granted. Here we also have a division of labor concerning the origins of the tradition. As in the first text’s invocation, Viṣṇu vouches for its truth. But this truth is here declared not by Śiva but by the Maruts, and it is written down by the seers (*ṛṣis*). The Maruts thus become the central gods of this form of divination, and consequently the main targets of the charm that follows. It is interesting that these gods of storms and battles are here paired with Viṣṇu, rather than with Rudra or Indra. The “charm” to be recited was written down by the seers (*ṛṣis*) and is dedicated to a possibly unnamed goddess who reveals through her divine senses that which human senses cannot access. For Hoernle, this “Garlanded One” (*māli*) is an epithet either of the goddess Kālī or of Parvatī, wife of Śiva. Another possibility is that this term, which Hoernle himself notes is “feminine for Mālinī” is not an epithet but a name, indicating the Śaivite “alphabet goddess” Mālinī, who is associated with mantras, and related to the powerful “mother goddesses” known as the *mātrkā*-s.⁷⁸ We have argued already in chapter one that the figure of the *mātrkā* as a mother devouring her child rep-

77 Hoernle, *The Bower Manuscript*, 209.

78 Judit Törzsök, “The Alphabet Goddess *Mātrkā* in Some Early Śaiva Tantras,” in *Second International Workshop on Early Tantras*, 2009 (Pondicherry: Hal Archives, 2012; <hal-00710939>).

resents a feminine counterpart to Śiva's fragmentation via the dice game and his doomed quest to regain wholeness; this might account in part for the prominence of women and goddesses in dicing and dice divination. In any case, this is a charm for securing favor, uttered before throwing the dice in order to ensure the favor of the Maruts—gods associated with divination—and other gods and goddesses as well. This is a rather different orientation than the more stoic and sincere focus on intentions that one finds in the introduction to the *Divination of Maheśvara*. It rather recalls charms intended to secure one's victory before casting the dice when gambling.⁷⁹ One can note here the similar dynamics in the Tibetan codex IOL Tib J 739, where one invokes the *śman* goddesses, but ultimately tries to find an edge in competing with them at oracular gambling. Both contrast with the sensibilities of the *Divination of Maheśvara*, where the gods in the opening invocation act as witnesses or guarantors.

The relationship between the first paragraph and the second paragraph creates a fascinating tension as well. They each offer ostensibly different means of accessing truth: one declared by the Maruts and guaranteed by Janārdana, and the other revealed by the stainless goddess, the "Garlanded One." This would almost seem to construct a competition between the two models, with one masculine and the other feminine, creating an intriguing parallel with the game of dice between Śiva and Parvatī. Here, given that Janārdana (i.e., Viṣṇu) is involved, it would be fitting for the garlanded goddess to be his wife, Lakṣmī. The two do in fact play a mythical game of dice very similar to that of Śiva and Parvatī, but it differs in that where both games fragment the gods' wholeness and lead to animosity between the divine couple, Viṣṇu's status as a trickster (Māyāvin) allows him to employ illusion in order to restore wholeness. There is a greater imbalance in that game, as Viṣṇu cheats in order to gain the upper hand, and in the end uses his powers to create a duplicate Lakṣmī when his irate wife goes away.⁸⁰ A similar imbalance is present in the relationship between the two paragraphs of this text's introduction and their two models of accessing divinatory truth: the statement about the goddess's revelatory powers is not given equal billing, but is rather only recited as a charm to secure the favor of the Maruts and others. This subordinates the goddess in a way parallel to her subordination in the myth of Viṣṇu and Lakṣmī's dice game, but it also makes the goddess, rather than Viṣṇu, a source of trickiness for securing one's desired outcome.

79 Lüders, *Das Würfelspiel im alten Indien*, 5–9; Michon, *Archeology and Religion in Early Northwest India*, 183–186.

80 Handelman and Shulman, *God Inside Out*, 93–96.

The second text's twenty responses do not begin with the four triplets. They do not refer to names of the *āya*-s, but are nevertheless arrayed, albeit imperfectly, within the *āya* groupings of similar numerical sets. The first three sets, for example, are 4-4-1, 1-4-4, and 4-1-4, but without any reference to these being the three *kūṭa*-s.⁸¹ The combination 3-4-3 is repeated at sets 6 and 10, indexing two totally different responses. A few sample responses will demonstrate the structure and character of the text's oracular responses.

[2] 4-1-4: Four, one in the middle, four at the end ... The object which thou art thinking of, that indeed is auspicious for the promotion of thy advancement: but thou doest not respect thy father and mother, nor thy friends and relatives, nor doest thou worship the elders, nor Maheśvara (i.e., Śiva), thy family *Devatā*. Hence none of the goods which thou think-est of will come to thee. But if he (i.e., Śiva) is propitiated, he will give thee peace and the desire of thy heart.⁸²

[9] 4-3-4: Money, and stores of grain, and health and happiness thou shalt attain; thy time of giving and enjoying, thy prosperity is at hand. Whatever thou hast designed in thy mind for the sake of any object, that thou shalt accomplish: do not be anxious: thy success is clearly indicated. And this shall be a token to thee: thou hast held sexual intercourse; but that rival wife of thine is disappointed and ready for marking.⁸³

[15] 4-4-2: Twice four and then two: this is a powerful throw for thee. With friends ...; an important and weighty thing thou has thought of in thy mind. But whether thou doest it or procurest it to be done, thou wilt have no success. Thou bathest with an empty jar, ... thou striketh. All that is profitless. Bethink thyself of something else: this will not promote thy happiness.⁸⁴

[19] 4-1-1: Four, and twice one,—if thus the dice have fallen, then surely good things will happen to thee, and thou wilt attain wealth; thy prosperity is at hand, and increase of wealth, and wisdom: and what matter thou prayest for, that will speedily happen. In the seventh year from hence thy

81 Hoernle, *The Bower Manuscript*, 210.

82 *Ibid.*, 210.

83 *Ibid.*, 211.

84 *Ibid.*, 212.

relatives will be destroyed.⁸⁵ And this shall be a token to thee; on the back of thy neck there is a mole. But do not be anxious: a time for thee to rejoice is at hand.⁸⁶

These longer responses differ in structure from those of the first dice divination text in the *Bower Manuscript*. They have only two main components: the numerical combination (e.g., “4-1-4”) and the prognosis. To this one can add two optional components: the addition of written numbers (e.g., “four, one in the middle, four at the end”) following the numerical combination, and a “token,” usually following the prognosis, that confirms the veracity of the response. The numbers are spelled out in fourteen of the twenty extant responses, and tokens are present in twelve. These spelled-out numbers come after the written numerals, forming a contrast with the *āya* names in the first text, which there precede the numerals. The tokens usually appear at the end of the responses, and there are no final evaluations. Several responses, such as that given above for [2] 4-1-4, include correcting rituals where one’s good fortune is usually dependent on properly worshipping a god.

The prognoses, while longer than those of the first dice divination text in the *Bower Manuscript*, are of a similar, prosaic character. They generally adopt the second-person declarative voice, usually indicating future activities and addressing the querent directly. The overarching ritual assumptions about propitiating tutelary deities to ensure good fortune remain the same. Some of the responses are more specific about their temporal points of reference, e.g., “thou wilt have trouble for five years,” or “on the seventh day from hence ... it will come to pass.” There is also a direct appeal to astrology in the phrase, “most keenly thy stars are opposing thee.”⁸⁷ There are similar concerns in the first text as well, like that in the statement in the entry for its final set [59] 1-1-2, “thou art delivered from thy unlucky star.”⁸⁸

The spelled-out numbers that appear after the numerical trigram or set of three numbers do not constitute names of the combinations, but they function to emphasize or dramatize the numbers. In this they very closely resemble certain Greco-Roman *sortes* traditions like the *Sortes Sanctorum*. There, for example, if one’s roll of five *astragaloi* comes up 1-3-3-3-4, this sum makes fourteen, and indexes a response associated with Poseidon that begins with these

85 Hoernle’s note states that this could also mean, “thy relatives will be saved,” which would seem to better fit the context; *ibid.*, 213, n. 22.

86 *Ibid.*, 213.

87 *Ibid.*, 210.

88 *Ibid.*, 202.

numbers and then states, “[one] Chian, three threes, and one four ...”⁸⁹ We shall return to the issue of how numerical trigrams seem to almost require adornment or association with something other than themselves or simply with numbers.

The responses in this second dice divination text in the *Bower Manuscript* display a greater degree of self-referentiality. This is apparent in phrases like, “if thus the dice have fallen,” “this is a powerful throw,” and “this throw has fallen for thee,” which appear after the numerical combination. One notes here the alternation between volition terms like “throw” and non-volitional words like “fall,” underlining the divination system’s animating dialectic of autonomy and control. Within a few of the prognoses themselves one also finds the self-affirming phrase, “[e]verything shall happen to thee, just as it has been indicated by the art of divination.”⁹⁰

This text’s use of tokens is perhaps its most striking feature, and it is one that has fascinated several scholars.⁹¹ On the face of it, the use of such specific tokens as moles and black spots claimed to be on the body of the client would seem to invite doubt, since these would be immediately falsifiable by divination users receiving these pronouncements. This matter touches on the performative nature of oracular or divinatory truth in relation to representational truth, and the degree to which it is appropriate to approach divination’s pronouncements as statements of representational truth. Understanding an oracular response as a performative act, we can make use of Roy Rappaport’s helpful observations on the how performative acts and declarative/ descriptive statements underpin inverse views of a given reality:

Statements *report* autonomously existing states of affairs. Performative acts *realize* states of affairs. The inverse nature of these relationships has obvious implications for assessment. The adequacy of a descriptive statement is assessed by the degree to which it conforms to the state of affairs that it purports to describe. If it is in sufficient conformity we say that it is true, accurate or correct. If it is not we say that it is false, erroneous, inaccurate or lying. *The state of affairs is the criterion by which the truth, accuracy or adequacy of a statement is assessed.* In the case of performatives there is an inversion. If, for instance, a man is properly dubbed to

89 Graf, “Rolling the Dice for an Answer,” 87. William Hansen also noted the close resemblance between such *sortes* oracles and the *Pāsakakevali*; William Hansen, ed., *Anthology of Ancient Greek Popular Literature* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), 286.

90 Hoernle, *The Bower Manuscript*, 211, 213.

91 See discussion in Strickmann, *Chinese Poetry and Prophecy*, 114–115.

knighthood and then proceeds to violate all of the canons of chivalry, or if peace is declared in a properly conducted ritual but soon after one of the parties to the declaration attacks the other, we do not say that the dubbing or the peace declaration were faulty, but that the subsequent states of affairs are faulty. *We judge the state of affairs by the degree to which it conforms to the stipulations of the performative act.*⁹²

This is to say that the oracular response isn't false because it states that you have a mole that you don't have, but rather that your not having this mole creates a quandary whose negotiation must occur outside of any assumption that the response was faulty. Martin Holbraad puts this slightly differently, from the diviner's perspective: "[i]f diviners do not argue for their truth-claims in the way we do, say, when we talk about them, that is because their truth-claims are of a sort that requires no argument."⁹³

Turning back to these tokens and their character, we can observe that they operate in precisely the same way as the "signs" in the ninth-century Tibetan Dunhuang dice divination text S.155 described above. This can be a physical mark, as in moles that appear in both texts, or it can refer to something that a person has done or thought. In the Sanskrit text, the latter includes one's sexual activities and dreams, and in the Tibetan text we also find reference to sexual activities, which are otherwise rare in the Tibetan texts.

As noted above, the concerns of divination clients across cultures tend to overlap. That one finds similar general prognoses about trade, health, family, and career in, for example, a Sanskrit dice divination text from the sixth century and a Tibetan dice divination text from the ninth century cannot be said to prove anything as regards transmission or influence. The simile of a clod of earth in water, found in Tibetan divination texts and the *Divination of Maheśvara*, is also perhaps too general and universal to admit any such conclusions. In the moles and sex acts that constitute the "tokens" and "signs" in the second divination text of the *Bower Manuscript* and the Tibetan dice divination text S.155, however, we have stumbled upon something sufficiently specific to suggest direct influence between these two practice traditions, if not between their textual artefacts.

92 Roy Rappaport, *Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 112–113; see also 117.

93 Holbraad, *Truth in Motion*, 242; cf. Curry "Embodiment, Alterity and Agency," 95–96. See also Barbara Gerke's discussion of the problem in the context of lifespan divinations, where clients are told when they will die; Barbara Gerke, *Long Lives and Untimely Deaths: Lifespan Concepts and Longevity Practices among Tibetans in the Darjeeling Hills, India* (Leiden: Brill, 2012) 225–226.

The second dice divination text in the *Bower Manuscript* is helpful both for how its introduction diverges from the first and for how it ratifies some of the concepts found there. First, its difference from the first text helpfully explodes the idea of an ur-text or ur-method from which others deviate. Yes, the first text begins with the four descending triplets (4-4-4, 3-3-3, 2-2-2, 1-1-1) in a way that is particularly satisfying with respect to the cosmological encoding of the *pāśaka* die and its symbolizing the descent of world ages (see below), but that congruence is found only here, and not even in the second divination text, despite its cultural, temporal, and physical proximity. Variation, in other words, starts at the beginning, insofar as these are our earliest texts.

4 The Archeology and Mythology of *Pāśaka* Dice

In chapter one we emphasized that the *Divination of Maheśvara* was contained in a codex and was part of a compilation text. Its being a codex dates the manuscript to the ninth or tenth century, and its being in a compilation links it to its astrological, divinatory, and medical textual neighbors. In chapters two and three we introduced other divination codices from Dunhuang that contain the *Empowered Draughtsmen*, the *Duke of Zhou Divination Method*, the *Guan Gongming Divination Method*, the Old Turkish *Irq Bitig*, and the tenth-century Old Tibetan divination text IOL Tib J 739. There is also a dice divination text of this type found in a Sogdian codex fragment from Turfan, dating to the ninth or tenth century. The text, shelfmark So 14410/1/, preserves twelve short oracular responses, each headed by a combination of three out of the four letters ρ , β , γ , and δ . The entries are not associated with named gods, and are prosaic, with straightforward advice.⁹⁴ The use of letters here instead of numbers or pips links this text with an entire body of related dice divination texts in Arabic and Persian, which will not be examined here.⁹⁵ It usefully demonstrates, however, that the four values used in this form of dice divination need not be the numbers one to four.

94 Christiane Reck, "Some Remarks on the Manichaean Fragments in Sogdian Script kept in the Berlin Turfan Collection," in *The Way of the Buddha 2003*, ed. Takashi Irisawa (Osaka: Toho Shuppan, 2010), 71–72.

95 For details and references see Dotson, "Three Dice, Four Faces," 18, 25. There is a second Sogdian fragment that is intriguing for using hash marks, or something like counting rods, but placing these side-by-side, e.g., "II III IIII" for 2-3-4, rather than arranging them like the mantic figures of the *Tricks of Jing* and related texts; personal communication, Nicholas Sims-Williams, March 12, 2020.

Besides being a codex, the Sogdian fragment is also part of a compilation that includes ritual texts and a hemerological text translated from Chinese. In this it most closely resembles the *Divination of Maheśvara's* being one of eight divinatory and medical texts in the compilation codex S.5614, and also recalls the compilation of medical, ritual, and divinatory texts in the *Bower Manuscript*. We have also seen smaller-scale compilation texts in the case of the *Duke of Zhou Divination Method* appearing alongside two other divination texts in the codex P.3398.2, and, to a lesser extent, in the *Irq Bitig's* appearance between two Chinese Buddhist fragments. Among the Tibetan texts surveyed, there was only one compilation text, IOL Tib J 740, which is an 8.5-meter-long scroll that is split almost evenly between a legal text and a dice divination text.⁹⁶ This latter manuscript introduces an interesting wrinkle, since the legal text mentions dice, and since the putative relationship between divination and law has an earlier Chinese prehistory going back to finds in Qin tombs.⁹⁷

In very general terms, then, the dice divination books represented by our survey can be in codex or scroll format, in paper or birchbark, and can date from the sixth to tenth centuries. That is already a remarkable degree of variation. Turning now to dice, and to a briefer and more selective survey, there are archeological finds of *pāśaka* dice that overlap with these texts in the kingdom of Khotan, but the record also takes us further west and south, as well as further back in time.

It was noted in chapter one that in imagining what sort of dice the *Divination of Maheśvara* would employ in order to get a number from one to four to create its numerical sets, Marc Kalinowski and Wang Jingbo each suggested a cubiform six-sided die where the faces otherwise marked with five and six pips are left blank. Kalinowski also entertained, but largely rejected, the idea that a pyramidal four-sided die was used. These suggestions in fact closely mirror the thought processes of German scholars some hundred years prior, when confronted with the same set of facts in the *Pāśakakevalī*, a more “canonical” Sanskrit dice divination text resembling the second of the dice divination texts contained in the *Bower Manuscript*. Albrecht Weber, in his pioneering translation of the *Pāśakakevalī*, supposed that a pyramidal four-sided die or a rounded die was used in conjunction with it, and Julius Erich Schröter, in his critical edition of the *Pāśakakevalī*, also suggested a pyramidal die.⁹⁸ Simi-

96 Dotson, “Divination and Law.”

97 See Mark Csikszentmihályi, “Severity and Lenience: Divination and Law in Early Imperial China,” in *Divination et rationalité en Chine ancienne*, ed. Karine Chemla, Donald Harper, and Marc Kalinowski (Paris: Extrême-Orient, Extrême-Occident 21, 1999), 111–130.

98 Albrecht Weber, “Über ein indisches Würfel-Orakel,” *Monatsberichte der Königlichen Aka-*

larly A.H. Francke, in his initial 1924 study of Tibetan dice divination texts from Turfan, suggested a solution very similar to Kalinowski's and Wang's: a cubiform six-sided die, with the fifth face blank and the sixth face occupied by a St. Andrew's Cross, that is, an "X."⁹⁹

Fortunately, the uncertainty about the dice—or rather, a lack of understanding about the specific types of dice involved—was dispelled by a remarkable short study published in 1907 by Heinrich Lüders, *Das Würfelspiel im alten Indien*.¹⁰⁰ Here Lüders described the *pāśaka* die as typically measuring 7 cm × 1 cm × 1 cm, that is, of dimensions that permitted it to land only on one of its four wide faces, and not on either of its two narrow ends. These faces were typically marked with pips rather than numbers. Lüders described the role of dice—*pāśaka*-s as well as other forms—in Indian myth, ritual, literature, and epic. He argued that the dice divination method associated with the *Pāśakakevalī* and the texts of the *Bower Manuscript* employed three *pāśaka* dice, each of which was marked with a different symbol to distinguish it from the others. Lüders' solution—that the dice used in connection with the tradition of dice divination represented by the *Pāśakakevalī* and the two texts in the *Bower Manuscript*—has been accepted by all who have since worked with the relevant Sanskrit, Tibetan, and Old Turkish, and Sogdian dice divination texts.¹⁰¹

At the time of Lüders' work, very few *pāśaka* dice had been unearthed and photographed. Fortunately, over a dozen were documented in the decades that followed. Aurel Stein published photographs of two *pāśaka* dice from Niya, in Khotan, in his books *Ancient Khotan* (1907) and *Serindia* (1921); John Hubert Marshall published photographs of four of the sixteen *pāśaka* dice he unearthed from his excavation of the Indus Valley city of Sirkap in his book *Taxila* (1950); and L.A. Albaum published sketches of two *pāśaka* dice from his excavations near Termez in Uzbekistan in his book *Balalik Tepe* (1960).

demie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin (1860): 162; See Schröter, *Pāśakakevalī: ein Indisches Würfelerakel*, xii.

99 A.H. Francke, "Tibetische Handschriftenfunde aus Turfan," *Sitzungsberichte der Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, philosophisch-historische Klasse* 3 (1924): 12.

100 Lüders, *Das Würfelspiel im alten Indien*.

101 See, e.g., A.H. Francke, "Drei weitere Blätter des tibetischen Losbuches von Turfan," *Sitzungsberichte der Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, philosophisch-historische Klasse* 7 (1928): 113–115; Thomas, *Ancient Folk-Literature from North-Eastern Tibet*, 113–114; Clauson, "Notes on the Irk Bitig," 218; Strickmann, *Chinese Poetry and Prophecy*, 115–118. Strickmann did not connect *pāśaka* dice to the *Divination of Maheśvara*, but his short notice on the latter seems to be largely reliant on Kalinowski's description of the text; *ibid.*, 138–139.

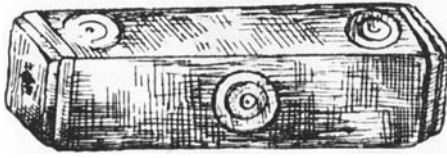


FIGURE 23
Pāśaka die from Khairabad Tepe, near
 Termez, Uzbekistan
 AFTER ALBAUM, *BALALIK TEPE*
 (TASHKENT, 1960), FIG. 33

These images helped philologists to better understand the ritual contexts of Sanskrit, Turkish, and Tibetan dice divination texts.

The archeological record of *pāśaka* dice is piecemeal and spotty, with details and occasional figures and photographs found in archeological reports, and with many objects resting in regional and national museums and archives. The objects are dated generally based on their find spots within an archeological excavation, but some represent surface finds, and others are poorly provenanced. Generally, the dice date to the first millennium CE, most often to the early centuries, with some dated a bit earlier, to the first millennium BCE.¹⁰²

The dice are found in various parts of India (e.g., Sonkh, Vikramaśīla),¹⁰³ but the distribution of the objects largely tracks the spread of Indic and Buddhist traditions northward out of the Gangetic plain to the Punjab, Gandhāra, Bactria, Sogdiana, Ferghana, and the Tarim Basin.¹⁰⁴ In the context of this diffusion, traditionally marked by ruined *stūpa*-s and statues and frescoes of Buddhas and bodhisattvas, *pāśaka* dice lie in the figurative and even literal shadows of Buddhist *stūpa*-s.

102 See discussion in Michon, *Archeology and Religion in Early Northwest India*, 171–172.

103 See Dieter Schlingloff, *Ajanta, Handbuch der Malereien/ Handbook of the Paintings: Erzählende Wandmalereien/ Narrative Wall-paintings Ajanta. Handbook of the Paintings, 1. Narrative Wall-paintings, vol. 1: Interpretation* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2000), 177. We thank Lucas den Boer for sharing a photograph of eight *pāśaka* dice kept in the Vikramaśīla Museum.

104 For Taxila, see Michon, *Archeology and Religion in Early Northwest India*, 152–200; for finds across the across the Oxus (or Amu Darya) River to the northern and western expanses of the early Buddhist world see Grigori Semenov, *Studien zur sogdischen Kultur an der Seidenstraße* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 1996), 20–22, 132; and O. Ju. Aripdzhanov, “Nakhodki igral'nykh kostey v Sredney Azii,” *Istoriya material'noy kul'tury Uzbekistana* 36 (2008): 142–148. For further details on these dice, and their western-most expansion to the Islamic World, see Emilie Savage-Smith, “Divination,” in *Science, Tools, and Magic: the Nasser D. Khalili Collection of Islamic Art, Volume XI* (Oxford: the Nour Foundation and Oxford University Press, 1997), 150, 158; acc. nos. MXD 172 and MXD 205; Finkel, “Dice in India and Beyond,” in *Asian Games: the Art of Contest*, ed. Colin Mackenzie and Irving Finkel (New York: Asia Society, 2004), 41, plates 2:4 and 2:5. Finkel’s article contains images of further *pāśaka* dice. See also Dotson, “Three Dice, Four Faces.”

Some of the thickest documentation of *pāśaka* dice comes from John Hubert Marshall's excavation of the ruins of Taxila, a city inhabited from the middle of the first millennium BCE to the middle of the first millennium CE. Daniel Michon combed through John Marshall's archeological report to try to better reconstruct the physical context in which the sixteen *pāśaka* dice, which Marshall classed under the rubrics of "games" and "playthings," were found.¹⁰⁵ Attending to each find spot, its location within the city, and the other objects found nearby, Michon discerned that *pāśaka* dice were recovered near stupas, were found together with charged ritual implements made of bronze, and were found near images that most likely represent the god Pāñcika and the goddess Hāritī.¹⁰⁶ Perhaps significantly, the latter goddess, and perhaps the former god as well, are found in the *Divination of Maheśvara*. In one find spot three *pāśaka* dice were buried together, though Michon did not comment upon, and was perhaps unaware of the possible relevance that three dice being found together might have for the practice of dice divination.¹⁰⁷ Michon ends his discussion by concluding that most of these dice from Sirkap were used for dice divination, but he leaves open the possibility that the objects had other uses besides.¹⁰⁸

The archeological record of *pāśaka* dice in India may go back much further than the turn of the first millennium. If we move further down the Indus from Taxila, to the ancient city of Mohenjo Daro, we find *pāśaka* dice that may date to around 2,000 years earlier. Dice were excavated there at both upper and lower levels of the dig, meaning that some of these dice could date to between 2600–1900 BCE. They differ slightly from the other *pāśaka* dice we've mentioned in that they have sides with one, two, and three pips, but the side on which one would expect four pips instead bears two long black lines.¹⁰⁹ While these objects might push the use of *pāśaka* dice back to the third millennium BCE, they do not necessarily confirm the existence of *pāśaka* dice divination at so early a date, since the dice may have equally been used for gaming or for other rituals.

105 Grigori Semenov similarly understood *pāśaka* dice excavated from Dalverzintepe, Tudai-Kalon, and Panjikent to be gaming dice; Semenov, *Studien zur sogdischen Kultur an der Seidenstraße*, 20–22, 132.

106 Michon, *Archeology and Religion in Early Northwest India*, 189–193.

107 *Ibid.*, 171–172.

108 Michon states, "we have found reasonable evidence to suggest that eleven of the sixteen dice found in the ruins of Sirkap were used in religious ritual, but not necessarily exclusively used for religious ritual"; *ibid.*, 200.

109 E.J.H. Mackay, *Further Excavations and Mohenjo-Daro*, vol. 2 (New Delhi: Government of India Press, 1937), plate 143.



FIGURE 24
Pāśaka die (bone) from Sirkap
 AFTER MARSHALL, *TAXILA*, PLATE 200,
 NO. 97

To sketch a rough, preliminary typology of these objects, *pāśaka* dice are variously made from stone, ivory, bone, antler, and terracotta. Their sizes range from 3.5 to 13 cm, though here one can perhaps distinguish a shorter type die of 3.5 to 5 cm (figs. 23, 25) from the longer dice, whose typical range is seven to nine cm (figs. 6, 6b, 24, 27).

Their pips are carved variously, some deep and some shallow, some with concentric circles and some surrounded by small dots. Two more general styles of pips are those that use a single circle whether concentric or not (figs. 6a, 6b, 23, 25), and those for which each pip is represented by three smaller circles, sometimes enclosed in a roundel (fig. 24). Some dice have one or more latitudinal incisions or bars carved into their ends (figs. 6a, 6b, 23, 27), and some have decorative features at their ends (fig. 24). Still others have designs or dots between and around the pips (fig. 27). One remarkable die, from Dalverzin-tepe, has carved birds in place of pips on its faces.¹¹⁰ A comprehensive survey of these dice should help to lay the groundwork to establishing more rigorous typologies that may help with their more precise dating.

The antiquity of the archeological record of *pāśaka* dice along the Indus River, and the indications that they were used for divination in Sirkap around the turn of the first millennium are not the only facts that argue in favor of an Indic origin for *pāśaka* dice divination. Such an origin is arguably encoded in the faces of the die itself, and relates to a fact noted by both Schröter and Lüders. To wit, the names of the four dice rolls are taken from the names of the four Vedic world ages (*yuga*-s), and vice-versa. *Kṛta* is four, usually corresponding to a world age lasting 4,000 years; *tretā* is three, corresponding to a world age

110 Semenov, *Studien zur sogdischen Kultur an der Seidenstraße*, 132, fig. 1.



FIGURES 25A–E Four-sided die, red terracotta from Khyber Pakthunkhwa in northwest Pakistan; Gordon bequest, British Museum no. 1880,1483. Note that one of the pips has broken away on the side that should have four pips

AFTER DOTSON, “HUNTING FOR FORTUNE” 3, FIG. 1

lasting 3,000 years; *dvāpara* is two, corresponding to a world age lasting 2,000 years; and *kali* is one, corresponding to a world age lasting 1,000 years, after which all is destroyed and returns to chaos, only for the cycle to be repeated, *ad infinitum*.¹¹¹ The names of the dice throws can also be associated with the four cardinal directions.¹¹² The *pāsaka* die is, on this reading, a specifically Indic microcosm, embodying all of cosmic time as well as space.

This cosmological encoding of the *pāsaka* die can probably account for an anomalous feature that may be otherwise inexplicable. Whereas it is a nearly universal principle that the pips of a die’s opposing faces should add up to the same number, this is not a principle that the majority of the extant *pāsaka* dice observe. Most of the *pāsaka* dice we’ve surveyed have pips that wind their way around the die sequentially, one, two, three, four, which, in reverse—four, three, two, one—rather perfectly expresses the successive decline of world ages. This means, however, that the opposing faces add up to four (one opposite three) and six (two opposite four), respectively, making the die an “unbalanced” anomaly when looked at from the perspective of the comparative study of dice.

On a cubiform six-sided die from the Classical period to the present, one and six oppose, as do two and five, and three and four. Each opposition adds up to seven, and it is a commonplace that this corresponds to the seven heavenly bodies or to another significant septet such as the seven days of the week.¹¹³

111 See Schröter, *Pāsakakevalī: ein Indisches Würfelerakel*, xvi; Lüders, *Das Würfelspiel im alten Indien*, 38–51; and M.P.V. Kane, *History of Dharmasāstra*, vol. 3 (Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1946), 886–888.

112 Lüders, *Das Würfelspiel im alten Indien*, 38.

113 Anna Contadini, “Islamic Ivory Chess Pieces, Draughtsmen and Dice in the Ashmolean Museum,” in *Islamic Art in the Ashmolean Museum*, ed. James Allan (Oxford: Oxford Uni-



FIGURE 26 Four-sided rectangular *pachisi* or *caupur* die showing face with six pips. Excavated from Fustat, Egypt, 10th–11th-century
METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART, ACC. NO. 1972.119.3; PUBLIC DOMAIN

The same principle of balanced opposing sums also applies to those dice or objects with non-serial pips. The four sides of the sheep knuckle used in Greco-Roman sortition and games, for example, are valued one, three, four, and six. The opposing sides add up to seven, with one and six opposing and three and four opposing.¹¹⁴

Their disdain for such “balance,” as well as their face values, also distinguish “divination *pāśaka-s*” from a more well-known type of *pāśaka* die employed in the Indian game of *caupur*/*pachisi* and the Islamic game of *nard*. The latter type of die has faces that are marked with one, two, five, and six pips, with opposing faces once again adding up to seven.¹¹⁵

While the games of *caupur*, *pachisi*, and *nard* are not well-known, they are perhaps comparatively less obscure than *pāśaka* dice divination, and this may account for some scholars tending to classify all of these objects together as gaming dice.¹¹⁶ There is little point, however, in erecting a hard-and-fast distinction between the “gaming dice” used for *caupur*, *pachisi*, and *nard* against those used for divination, since one could theoretically adapt either of these

versity Press, 1995), 127–129; 146, n. 65. There are some ancient dice from Egypt, India, and Mesopotamia that have other arrangements, such as consecutive pips opposing, e.g., one opposing two; three opposing four; five opposing six; F.N. David, *Games, Gods, and Gambling: the Origins and History of Probability and Statistical Ideas from the Earliest Times to the Newtonian Era* (New York: Hafner Publishing Company, 1962), 10.

114 The convex broad side is three, the concave broad side is four, the flat narrow side is one, and the “indented” narrow side is six; Stewart Culin, *Chess and Playing Cards: Catalogue of Games and Implements for Divination Exhibited by the United States National Museum* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1896), 827.

115 Lüders, *Das Würfelspiel im alten Indien*, 17. Lüders also mentions a die with sides of one, three, four, and six pips, respectively, just like an *astragalos*. Irving Finkel associates these with South India; Finkel, “Dice in India and Beyond,” 40; Contadini, “Islamic Ivory Chess Pieces, Draughtsmen and Dice in the Ashmolean Museum,” 127–129.

116 Semenov, *Studien zur sogdischen Kultur an der Seidenstraße*, 20–22.



FIGURES 27A–D Four faces of “hybrid” *caupur*-and-divination die, showing pips of one, two, six, and five, as well as the first four letters of the Arabic alphabet ا ب ج د. Note the bars at the ends, the ornate decorations around the pips, and the scorpion design on the die’s first face. Excavated from Fustat, Egypt, pre-1200
METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART, ACC. NO. 1974.98.7; PUBLIC DOMAIN

types of dice for use in gaming or in divination. In fact, there is what appears to be a “hybrid” die of this type with *caupur*-type pips of one, two, five, and six on its four faces, but which also includes the first four letter-numerals of the Arabic alphabet, which are used in the Islamic versions of this form of divination in lieu of pips or numbers one to four. What is remarkable about this die is that it follows both conventions at once: pips of one and six oppose, as do pips of two and five, creating a balanced gaming die; but the letters wind around the die following the *abjad*, a, b, j, d (that is, one, two, three, four) in the consecutive, “unbalanced” manner typical of divination dice. Thus the object is simultaneously a “balanced gaming die” and an “unbalanced divination die.”

The westward transmission of *pāśaka* dice divination out of India, and its assimilation in Persian and Arabic divination texts will not be treated here, but this object from Egypt is helpful for reminding us of the close relationship between games, gambling, and divination, which is something to which we will return in the concluding chapter when considering the few constants in dice divination across Indian, Tibetan, Turkish, and Chinese instantiations.

As a defining feature of these dice, their serial pips of four, three, two, and one have also left their marks on the pages of the books that accompanied them. The first text in the *Bower Manuscript*, for example, begins 4-4-4, 3-3-3, 2-2-2, and 1-1-1, precisely “quoting” the descending order of the four world ages on the faces of the die. What’s more, the corresponding entries proceed from auspicious to inauspicious, in keeping with the motif of cosmological decline. This “Indic signature” of the text is less apparent, however, in the second of the *Bower Manuscript* texts, which does not begin with the four triplets. It does nevertheless proceed in descending order, as do most of the Old Tibetan dice divination texts. One might see this as a process of adaptation, or, put another way, a gradual process of forgetting the tradition’s Indic origins or of purposefully or inadvertently effacing its signature. In this context the appearance of the four triplets at the beginning of the *Iraq Bitig* and at the beginning of the *Divination of Maheśvara* signals both the continuity of tradition and its rigorous adaptation to non-Indic norms. The *Iraq Bitig*’s opening four triplets—2-2-2, 4-4-4, 3-3-3, and 1-1-1—are perhaps a leitmotif of disarray, or of what we’ve referred to as “divinatory mouvançe”: tradition is retained, but it has shifted and moved due to its being put into contact with new actors and new users.¹¹⁷ The four triplets that begin the *Divination of Maheśvara*, by contrast, proceed 1-1-1, 2-2-2, 3-3-3, 4-4-4, as if to turn Indic cosmology on its head, or to rework the four triplets along a more familiar Chinese cosmological model of the one proceeding to two, then three, then many.

The archeological record of dice overlaps with that of dice divination books in the manner of a Venn Diagram, with the dice skewing earlier (first century BCE–ninth century CE), westward (Khotan, Khyber, Termez), and southward (Taxila, Mohenjo Daro), and the books skewing later (sixth–tenth century), northward (Khotan, Kucha), and eastward (Turfan, Dunhuang). This is less fortunate than a full temporal and spatial overlap, but there are good reasons not to be overly concerned that Khotan is our only clear instance where dice and books are found in roughly the same place and time. Firstly, it is quite likely that

117 Note, however, that were these pips inscribed on a die in this order, it would have balanced opposing faces.

the point at which we stand now is one of only slightly less ignorance than that of Weber in 1859 or Francke in 1924 before either was aware of the existence of *pāśaka* dice. That is to say, our sample of *pāśaka* dice is paltry, and it is quite likely that more dice are out there, yet to be noticed or yet to be found. In the second place—and this may sound like a bit of sophistry, but it isn't—one can practice dice divination without dice, without books, or without either. From our perspective as philologists, dice and books are the *sine qua non* in the sense that we'd know nothing of this tradition without them, given that this form of *pāśaka* divination appears to be no longer practiced. But one can just as easily create these numerical trigrams using draughts, lots, coins, stalks, playing cards, or any other method one could devise to randomly select three successive values from one to four.¹¹⁸ Equally, one does not have to look very far afield to see that diviners regularly commit oracular traditions to memory, and resort to books as props or *aides mémoires*. Divination traditions can be elastic: text-based divination may have once been oral, and may yet become oral again, and there is no reason to exempt the divination traditions considered here from this possibility. In a technology predicated on randomization and contingency, such variability should not come as a surprise. Nor should it trouble us, so long as we too remain elastic in our approach.

Despite the rampant variability and “mouvance” in this form of dice divination, it is a fairly specific system, and it is obvious from textual and material evidence that it was transmitted from India to Central Asia and China. (It was transmitted from India to the Islamic World as well, but that is a story for another time.) Whatever its proximate sources may have been, the *Divination of Maheśvara's* ultimate source was the Indian tradition of divining with *pāśaka* dice. Having surveyed Chinese numerical trigram divination texts in chapter two and Turkish, Tibetan, and Sanskrit dice divination texts in chapter three, it is now time to consider the Chinese assimilation of dice divination, and its continuities with both Chinese and transcultural traditions. It is most obviously a transfer of technology and technical expertise. But riding along with this transfer are certain gods, as well as divinatory sensibilities for interacting with gods and acting upon the world. It is to these gods, and to their relationships with mantic figures, dice, and diviners that we now turn.

118 Looking very far afield, an 18th-century Ottoman Turkish divination text prescribes a pyramidal four-sided die or, failing that, lots; J.-A. Decourdemanche, *Le Miroir de l'avenir. Recueil de sept traités de divination traduit du turc* (Paris: Bibliothèque orientale Elzevirienne 1899), 5–7.

CONCLUSIONS

Inheriting the Wind

[12] 3-2-1 This is named the Hārītī set. When someone wants something, it will seem murky, but just as a beam of light radiates through the clouds, so it will be for you. First there will be darkness and then light, so don't worry. Happy celebrations will come, so don't be anxious. Auspicious.

Having surveyed several Chinese numerical trigram divination texts as well as Turkish, Tibetan, and Sanskrit dice divination texts, we can now fully appreciate the *Divination of Maheśvara's* hybrid inheritance, and the way in which it expresses the essential mutability of an ultimately Indic tradition of dice divination. It is fascinating that a tradition or technique that finds enthusiastic users across cultures could have such variability and elasticity at its core. This is also perfectly fitting, however, for one that is based on a randomizing object, the die, which is also used in gaming, with all of the house rules and cheating that this implies. With dice divination's variability comes creative tension and creative license. There is a creative tension, for example, between a rule-governed system of gambling or divination and the gaming of that system through charms and cheats. And there is the creative license to innovate by, for example, adding a "rule of three," such that one performs the operation more than once, thereby radically altering the odds. Most obviously, there is the license of users to adapt the system to their own aesthetic sensibilities, to their own concepts of fortune or theories of divination, and to their own gods and spirits.

Despite all of this variability and adaptation, the basics of the divination system remain constant. The *Divination of Maheśvara*, like every dice divination text surveyed in chapter three, uses four-sided dice to create one of sixty-four possible sets of three numbers from one to four, and each of these sets indexes an oracular response in a divination book. This method is sufficiently specific to constitute a technology quite distinct from the methods of combination used in conjunction with, for example, the *Changes*, the *Empowered Draughtsmen*, or the *Tricks of Jing* and its descendants. Even where this might become an oral tradition, and even where another randomizing device is substituted for *pāśaka* dice, the basic combinatory method remains.

A method of combination itself is not divination; it could equally be binary code or could describe how nucleotides form mRNA codons. The common-sense answer to what makes it divination is that it must be *gua* (mantic fig-

ures) and gods, and these are indeed the main foci of the preceding chapters. But even here we find creative tension, where the mantic figure is sometimes symbol and sometimes sign, sometimes number and sometimes god. Looking across the broad expanse of *pāśaka* dice divination traditions and Chinese numerical trigram traditions, we can see that the gods, too, are optional. As the contrast between the two types of Old Tibetan dice divination texts demonstrates, gods can be replaced by poetry, or vice-versa. If the gods are optional, then the essential components that transform a system of combination into a system of divination must instead be the mantic figure and the oracular response, the purpose of which is to perform a communication with the divination user(s). Communication is a usefully broad term that includes not just information and disease, but also blessings and curses. This is helpful for keeping in mind that the communication that divination performs is not just about revealing hidden knowledge.

Dice, books, gods, mantic figures, oracular responses, and divination users are the main actors in dice divination's relational network. Any one of them can be emphasized, for example, as a "tricky" oracular gambler, as dice that "fall," as a deified mantic figure, or as a highly charged poetic oracular response. Any one of them can equally be de-emphasized, and some of them, like gods, can be absent. Surveying a variety of Chinese, Tibetan, Indian, and Turkish divination texts, we can appreciate the particular balance that the *Divination of Maheśvara* strikes with respect these various elements in order to articulate a highly adapted instantiation of this divination tradition specific to tenth-century Dunhuang. This survey has also allowed for an appreciation of these various parameters of divination and how they can vary within a given system, whether it be *pāśaka* dice divination or divination with counting rods and sixteen trigrams in the tradition shared by the *Tricks of Jing*, the *Duke of Zhou Divination Method*, and the *Guan Gongming Divination Method*.

To begin with material culture, we've observed that divination texts appear on their own or in compilations. The *Divination of Maheśvara* is found alongside hemerological texts and medical texts, and in our survey we've also seen divination texts alongside ritual texts and legal texts. This speaks to divination's tendency to partner with other techniques, and to its malleability. Divination can act as a simple diagnostic to confirm the success of a ritual, it can help an official catch a thief, or it can determine the source of a disease so that the appropriate ritual and medical remedies may be applied. A divination consultation very often leads on to other rituals, as when a client is faced with a baleful prognosis and wants to do something about it.

Divination texts also stand on their own. They are made of various materials (bamboo, paper, birchbark), and appear in different formats (scroll, codex).

The codex format of the *Divination of Maheśvara*, as a foreign technology that was rarely found in Dunhuang until the late-ninth century, already locates it in a transregional context and assists with its dating. Among the Dunhuang manuscripts we surveyed, several were codices, and they ranged from the very large-format 30×21.5 cm of S.5614, which contains the *Divination of Maheśvara*, to the more “pocket-sized” Tibetan codex IOL Tib J 739 (15×12.5 cm) and Turkish *Irq Bitig* (13.6×8 cm). Other Chinese Dunhuang divination codices, such as P.4048, a fragment of the *Empowered Draughtsmen Divination Method* (21.2×15 cm), and P.3398.2, the *Duke of Zhou Divination Method* (20.5×15.3 cm), stand somewhere in between in size. All but one of the extant Old Tibetan dice divination texts from Dunhuang, Turfan, and Mazār Tāgh are in scroll format. This would seem to pose a greater challenge for the divination user attempting to locate the appropriate mantic figure and its oracular response than it would for one flipping through a codex.

One's ease of negotiating a divination book is determined also by how it organizes its contents. This is one place where divinatory mouvance is most apparent in the repeated and missed combinations and in diverging organizing principles across texts. A text might, like the first divination text of the *Bower Manuscript*, be highly regimented, beginning with the four triplets in descending order and then proceeding through *āya* sets of combinations that share the same numbers. Or it could proceed in descending order through the sixteen combinations beginning with four, the sixteen beginning with three, with two, and with one, as many of the Tibetan texts do. It could also make purposeful use of the *mise en page*, like the *Duke of Zhou Divination Method* codex P.3398.2, which uses blank space on the page to set its numerical trigrams apart from the oracular responses.

The organization of a dice divination book is itself a cosmology, or a cosmological statement. To see all of the responses as a whole, instead of one at a time is in a sense to see behind the curtain, since the sixty-four responses can be said to represent each and every possible outcome, and to stand for the possible or even the infinite. To use this system is to access divine omniscience, as is hinted at in the statements in the introduction to the second dice divination text in the *Bower Manuscript*: “good and ill fortune, life and death, in short all that may happen to men is here [in the art of divination] declared by the Maruts.” But the dialectic of order and chaos is perhaps nowhere more apparent than in these texts' instantiations of this cosmology. While in theory the dice narrow down the field of infinite possibility to a single oracular response pertinent to one's own situation and intention, in practice we've seen that the texts have missing and repeated combinations. In the cosmological sense, we could say that certain destinies are foreclosed while others become more likely. Another reading

would be to conclude that divine omniscience is either impaired or else not fully accessible. This circumscription of destinies or pre-emptive shuttering of possibilities is not the work of a divine architect but rather a co-creation of inattentive scribes and various other transmitters of tradition. This is precisely the work of what we've termed "divinatory mouvance," which results in dice divination's characteristic combination of order and disorder. It also creates mantic figures to which there is no response, which is a form of "resistance," a divination system's right to refuse service to its would-be users.

One notable agent of order is the cosmological encoding of the four *yugas* or successive world ages in Indic mythology that are expressed in the sequential numbers of pips that wend their way around the "unbalanced" *pāśaka* die four, three, two, one. The same cosmology is expressed in a dice divination book's beginning with the four triplets and/ or proceeding in descending order. This is exemplified in the first dice divination text of the *Bower Manuscript*, which begins with the four triplets in descending order, 4-4-4, 3-3-3, 2-2-2, 1-1-1, proceeding, appropriately, from auspicious to inauspicious. Such a tidy expression of cosmology soon falls by the wayside or else is turned upside down when pips of the dice are not sequential and books do not begin with the four triplets in descending order. This is most apparent in the *Divination of Maheśvara* or the *Irq Bitig*, which retain certain hints at order such as beginning with the four triplets, but otherwise appear disordered and random. As argued at the end of chapter three, this may be seen as part of the process of adaptation, and the *Divination of Maheśvara's* beginning with the four triplets in ascending order might be to rework the tradition in line with a Chinese cosmological model. Taken as a whole, dice divination books' expressions of cosmology are playful, and their frustration of order could be taken as a manifestation of dice divination's resistance to cosmological theorizing, or as an insistence on a chaotic or at least more randomized, aleatory cosmology.

Like a dice divination book, the *pāśaka* die is also a model. It embodies time (the four world ages) and space (the four directions). The manipulation of such models in an Indian context trades on homologies or *bandhu* connections, which Handelman and Shulman put succinctly in remarks that apply as equally to dice divination as they do to dice games: "[s]ince the dice model the cosmic process, their action effects the dice game. And since the dice game models the cosmic process, its action effects the cosmos."¹ As a counterpoint to the centrality of the *pāśaka* die and its cosmology, we should note that some *pāśaka* dice

1 Handelman and Shulman, *God Inside Out*, 66–67.

do not feature the sequential pips that so aptly express the successive world ages.² And, paradoxically, one can perform this ritual of dice divination with other objects than dice. We have also seen that the texts are rather silent about the significance of dice. Neither the *Divination of Maheśvara* nor any of the Sanskrit, Tibetan, or Turkish dice divination texts we've surveyed offers anything about charging the dice with gods or numinous forces or for announcing any inherent connection between dice and the gods. "Let the dice fall openly! *Svāhā!* Let the truth be seen!" in the first divination text in the *Bower Manuscript* is the closest any of the texts come to valorizing the dice. Here it offers an analogy or a dependency between the dice falling openly and the revelation of divination's truth imparted by the gods. Even so, the text vacillates in that it refers both to "dice falls" and to "dice throws," as if the presence of a human hand in latter does not disrupt the open fall of the dice and the revelation of truth.

The texts themselves do not imbue dice with any cosmological significance of the type that is showered on the turtle shell, or on the twelve draughtsmen of the *Empowered Draughtsmen Method*, or on the "numinous counting rods" in the *Guan Gongming Divination Method*, all of which were discussed in chapter two. But if the key to an object's efficacy is that one ritually charges the object, be it counting rods, stalks, draughtsmen, or dice, one might still ask whether or not the choice of object is arbitrary, that is, if just about any randomizing device might be sacralized. In the *Twelve Coin Method of Laozi's Book of Changes* we find a brief statement linking spirits and coins: "[s]pirits and coins benefit each other and so one's pleas are understood" (神錢合利，所乞知之). The text neglects to specify just how or why these benefit one another. Taking a page from the *Five Omens Divination Method*, one might assume that it alludes to the round shape of heaven from which the deities of divination descend. Yu Chan's quotation in the introduction, where he uses Zhuangzi's analogy of the rabbit snare and the rabbit to characterize the relationship between the materials of divination and the oracular response, suggests that the tools of divination must at least be appropriate for the job.

If the texts and their introductions are unfussy or silent about the die as a sacred object, this may be because the die is so equivocal, simultaneously offering order and disorder at the heart of the system. Also, whereas objects like turtle shells, stalks, counting rods, and draughtsmen might require some explanation as to why they should be used in divination, the die is already associated with games of chance, and as such its use in divination might require less explanation.

2 Dotson, "Three Dice, Four Faces," 18.

For Yu Chan, the stalks or other material supports were a means to an end, and they began a process whose next step was the creation of a mantic figure. Even limiting our survey to numerical trigrams, we have encountered remarkable variability that stretches the bounds of what constitutes a numerical trigram. They can be made up of numbers, as in the *Stalk Divination*, the *Divination of Maheśvara*, and the two texts in the *Bower Manuscript*. Among dice divination texts, the trigrams can also be represented as letters, hash marks, or as dice pips. The latter, a pictorial representation, is a similar strategy to those Chinese numerical trigram texts that display the mantic figures as representations of arrays of counting rods. One can think of this as a distinction between translation and transcription, where the latter faithfully renders or “draws” on the page the shape of the mantic figure. The distinction between a sign and a symbol is also pertinent here, since a stack of three numbers such as we find in the *Divination of Maheśvara* is simultaneously three successive signs each with its own phonetic value. An array of counting rods, or of dice pips, on the other hand, has no such phonetic value either in part or as a whole. Yet both types of numerical trigram are powerful floating signifiers in the sense that, like magnets, too powerful or too needy to stand on their own, they attract names, descriptions, and associations.

It is very rare, and seemingly difficult, for a mantic figure to stand on its own. The one example we have seen is in the *Guan Gongming Divination Method*, where none of the sixteen counting-rod-style mantic figures has a name. In the first divination text in the *Bower Manuscript*, the mantic figures, which are also simply numbers, each have their *āya* name, e.g., “the second *dundubhī*: 2-1-3.” In the second divination text in the *Bower Manuscript*, the mantic figures, which are simply numbers, are followed by a literal spelling out, e.g., “4-1-4: Four, one in the middle, four at the end.” Even these designations of the mantic figures are minimalist when compared to the *Divination of Maheśvara*, the *Tricks of Jing*, the *Duke of Zhou Divination Method*, or type-2 Old Tibetan dice divination texts, whose mantic figures have each attracted an associated god, spirit, or cosmological force (e.g., Stems and Branches or the Eight Trigrams).

The association of the same god with different mantic figures, or a god’s association with one mantic figure in one text and with a separate mantic figure in another, also demonstrates that the word “arbitrary” accurately describes the relationship between a given mantic figure and a given god or spirit. This could be understood either as a manifestation of pure chance or *alea*, or as dice divination’s pushback against numerological or other attempts to forge ties between gods and mantic figures. In discussing the relationship between the numerical trigram and its associated god or spirit in chapter two, we emphasized that this is in a state of flux. The *Divination of Maheśvara* signals this

indeterminacy and flow grammatically by stating that a given mantic figure “is named the set (*ju*) of xxx god,” while also stating that “its [that is, this set’s] god protects you.” So, a god possesses a mantic figure, and a mantic figure possesses a god. This is particularly apt for understanding these as components of an actor-network, together with dice and humans, that constitute themselves unpredictably through their interactions, and where mantic figures can come to outweigh gods or vice-versa.

Besides being arbitrary in their relationship to the mantic figures, it is also clear from the Sanskrit, Tibetan, and Turkish texts that the gods—or at least the gods attached to each given oracular response—are optional. This is particularly apparent in the distinction between the two types of Tibetan texts, with one type featuring poetry and the other type featuring speaking gods. In this case the additional attachment of a god, spirit or any other name to the mantic figure is something like the cosmological multipliers of Daoist altars or of the *Empowered Draughtsmen’s* introduction and its additional use of a *shi* board: it is there to add potency, and not necessarily to interact in any fundamental way with the essential mechanics of the divination rite.

The gods are also insidious, and have a way of cropping up precisely where they seem to be most absent. The pictorial representation would seem to sanctify the mantic figure as untranslatable and sacred, in the same way as a talisman (*fu*) “could express or illustrate ineffable meanings and powers that defy transmission by traditional modalities of communication” and be “imbued with a spiritual power drawn from an ability to share in the essence of the thing it names or represents.”³ Taken to the extreme, this hyper-charged mantic figure could come to outweigh the gods and make them redundant. Indeed, there is a point at which the polarities seemingly flip, where the mantic figure, by displacing the gods, becomes a god itself. Such is the case of the Eight Trigrams (*bagua*) being deified as the “Eight Archivists” (*bashi*).

What is essential in one instantiation of this dice divination method is optional in another. Describing the relationship between mantic figure, god, and oracular response (his “oracle”) in the context of Greek astragalomancy, Fritz Graf writes,

In semantic terminology, the numbers thrown are the signifiers, while the divine names are the signified; but they turn into signifiers that point to an oracle as the ultimate signified. This ambivalent function of the divine names explains why at least in one oracle, they are left out altogether: the

3 Robson, “Signs of Power,” 138.

tripartite semantic chain is reduced to the signifying *astragaloi* and the signified oracle.⁴

Or, more precisely, the mantic figure signifies the oracular response.

One has only to imagine this as an oral tradition, or to invoke a knowledgeable audience or “divinatory congregation” of a living practice tradition to comprehend how a given mantic figure would immediately be recognized as being auspicious or baleful. In such a scenario one could even say that “the medium is the message” in a sense that bestows agency on the mantic figures themselves. Even so, the mantic figure does not speak for itself, and its meaning is contingent upon the divination users; or, as Taussig would have it, the “thing” contains its relational network.⁵ Moreover, the mantic figure is something rather greater than a signifier if its signified is a performative utterance that calls into being a new state of affairs. Therein lies its status as a malleable actor within this dynamic network: the mantic figure might be a simple means of indexing a response, or it might be something like a god itself. This range overlaps with, but is not correlated to, pictorial versus figural representations of the mantic figures, i.e., as pips or as numbers.

The apparent disposability of the gods in divination could support an argument that the process of randomization *is* the god, or that divination is divine because it is random, and random because it is divine. Here the gods and oracular poetry might be explained functionally with recourse to “mystification,” as a process whereby something slightly more complex than a coin flip adopts pretensions of sacrality.⁶ It could equally be argued, as we have here, that the instability and mutability of dice divination represents a safe harbor for the gods. In the manner of like attracting like, the gods’ shifting and fractal nature is attracted to dice divination’s own mutability, making for a volatile and vital pantheon. This accounts for the adaptability of the divinatory pantheon across cultures as well as its hybridity. Bernard Faure’s observations about Japanese Buddhist gods are apt for considering the gods’ and spirits’ tenuous perches in the divinatory pantheons:

4 Graf, “Rolling the Dice for an Answer,” 65.

5 Taussig, “The Genesis of Capitalism amongst a South American Peasantry,” 143.

6 On mystification as an organic, rather than premeditated phenomenon in the ritual process, see Maurice Bloch, “The Distinction Between Power and Rank as a Process: An Outline of the Development of Kingdoms in Central Madagascar,” *European Journal of Sociology* 18.1 (1977): 107–148.

Likewise, the gods are elusive figures, whose faces change in accordance with the fluctuations of human fears and desires, even though the deduced mind perceives their nature as stable. While their perceived transcendence is often expressed through metamorphosis, human vision tends to freeze their constant morphing into snapshots, immutable forms, and because of this the metamorphic shimmer is eventually reduced to static identities and contradictory appearances.⁷

Faure goes on to say that “a god’s name often is hardly more than a ‘floating signifier,’ an impossible algebraic sign whose value constantly changes, but which at all times represents a bundle of social groups and interests.”⁸ This could just as easily describe dice and dice divination in the sense that the die’s inherent variability acts in creative tension with the Indian, Tibetan, Turkish, and Chinese efforts to decontextualize and recontextualize, to harness and to wield. We have already described mantic figures with this same term. Each dice divination text is equally a contingent, culturally specific snapshot, but the “metamorphic shimmer”—whose correspondence in dice divination texts is divinatory movement—infuses each text or method, simultaneously frustrating its pretensions at order and supplying the chaotic creativity that is its essence.

To return to the *Divination of Maheśvara’s* pantheon after reviewing Chinese numerical trigram divination and transcultural dice divination is to come up against the themes of continuity and transformation once again. It is also to contend with the wind, since so many of these gods and spirits reside in the atmospheric realm between heaven and earth, a liminal “place of transition and motion” governed variously by Indra, Rudra, the Maruts, Vāyu, and by Tibetan and Chinese gods of the wind.⁹ Responding to the fall of the dice, these gods—“unstable aggregates” with “fractal natures,” to use Faure’s terms—are invoked by a technology whose similar variability gestures towards their own. Dice divination also inflects its pantheons, most notably with ambiguous mother goddesses like Hārītī, and with gods of the wind like Rudra, the Maruts, and Maheśvara.

Assessing the gods of divination, one must make a distinction between gods like Maheśvara, Śakra, Brahmā, and the Tibetan *sgan* goddesses who preside over a divination method on the one hand, and those gods and spirits who appear in the oracular responses on the other. While the latter might be in some

7 Faure, *Gods of Medieval Japan Vol. 1*, 8.

8 *Ibid.*, 9.

9 David Gordon White, *Myths of the Dog-Man* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 89.

senses optional or interchangeable, the former gods are usually seen as integral to the system's operation. The gods of the oracular responses play a more active role in the *Divination of Maheśvara*, for example, by being invoked by a given mantic figure. The patron gods like Maheśvara, on the other hand, are seen to be the source of the entire divination tradition, and perhaps the speakers of the oracular responses. It should also be said that the two groups overlap, as in the *Divination of Maheśvara* where Brahmā appears as a patron god and as a god in the oracular responses.

As a counterpoint to this emphasis on the shiftiness of the gods, it should be observed that it is also in the divinatory pantheons that one most clearly sees the influences of Buddhism, Daoism, and other religions. In the process of adaptation and appropriation, the pantheon is an easy target: one can remove foreign gods and insert one's own gods, spirits, cosmological forces, saints, or mythical figures. Here, as in all of the other opportunities for divination users to assert control over the system, there is a sense in which the divination system undermines these efforts. Benevolent gods are attached to baleful responses and noxious demons are associated with auspicious responses. The pantheon itself might seem to work at cross purposes with the oracular responses, as in the *Divination of Maheśvara*, where it is almost impossible to walk away from a consultation with an inauspicious result, but where one is also likely to encounter a god or spirit associated with death and the underworld. To put it unimaginatively, and without recourse to concepts like divinatory movement or the wind that blows through dice divination's actor-network, it is as if the priestly manipulators of divination texts did not have the care or inclination to impose consistency on a technique that they may have viewed as questionable or as being generally bereft of morality and soteriology.

There is also a sense in which divinatory pantheons are created in order to elicit tension very like that tension one finds in a game of dice. Once again Handelman and Shulman's observations on Indian dice games apply: "[t]he game, as a model of the cosmos, necessarily builds into itself contradictory forces that it should resolve or synthesize. The game pits at least two sides against one another, and through play, their opposition should be resolved into a winner and loser."¹⁰ We have observed these contradictory forces in the first two paragraphs of the second dice divination text in the *Bower Manuscript*, where the first is dedicated to Viṣṇu and the Maruts and the second to an unnamed goddess—perhaps Viṣṇu's wife Lakṣmī, or perhaps a *mātrkā* goddess. Subordinating the goddess, and reducing the verses glorifying her omniscience to a

¹⁰ Handelman and Shulman, *God Inside Out*, 67.

charm that one recites to gain an edge and please the Maruts, it is as if one initiates the divination ritual with a provocation.

The *Divination of Maheśvara's* pantheon could also be seen as a provocation when one compares the roles therein of Maheśvara and Maheśvarī with the positions of Śiva and Pārvatī in their mythical game of dice. Whereas in the aftermath of the dice game Pārvatī stands closer to the position of unbounded wholeness than does her bereft husband Śiva, the *Divination of Maheśvara* and its pantheon turns this upside down: Maheśvara seems to embody the divination system as a whole, while Maheśvarī is simply one of the members of its pantheon, linked to set [21]. As such, she, rather than her husband, can be drawn out of the wholeness of the pantheon to respond to a given matter.

If this reversal of the roles of the divine couple is intended to create an imbalance or a provocation that sets the game or the divination in motion, then we can observe a few reactions to it in the pantheon. One such reaction might be the prevalence of goddesses and female spirits in the *Divination of Maheśvara*, particularly those that might even be feminized versions of male gods and spirits. Another reaction to the ascendance of the god who lost the game of dice and the subordination of the goddess who won might be the presence of the “devouring mother” goddesses, who are intimately linked with dice divination. There is Saṣṭhī in the first divination text in the *Bower Manuscript* and Hārītī in the *Divination of Maheśvara*. If the identifications of the statues found near *pāśaka* dice in Taxila are correct, Hārītī is also the only deity that can be linked to dice divination by both archeological and textual sources. And looking ahead to later traditions of Tibetan Buddhist dice divination, it is the “Glorious Goddess” Palden Lhamo (Dpal ldan lha mo), who presides over dice divination from at least the sixteenth century to the present.¹¹ This goddess’s mythology, like that of Hārītī, is wrapped up with childbirth and child death, as well as prosperity and protection. These are multivalent goddesses, of course, but one thing that they do here is analogize and perhaps satirize the process of dice divination and the dice game itself. The dice game is a doomed attempt to regain lost wholeness, which will only produce greater differentiation in the form of a winner and a loser. Dice divination similarly fractures unbounded omniscience with a specific response to a particular matter. The devouring mother goddess’s eating of her child is likewise a doomed attempt to restore the wholeness that was fractured when she gave birth. It is a gruesome image that points to the futility of these flawed attempts at regaining wholeness.

11 See András Róna-Tas, “Tally Stick and Divination Dice in the Iconography of Lha-mo,” *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 6 (1956): 163–179 and Sobisch, *Divining with Achi and Tārā*, 23–27.

Besides the patron gods and the gods of the oracular responses, there are other, even more central gods in dice divination. These are the unnamed *devatā*, Tibetan gods (*lha*) and *smān* goddesses who are found in the body of the oracular responses as sources of favor, blessing, or else neglect. The *Irq Bitig* also mentions the favor of the gods and also of Heaven (*tengri*), which notably increases one's livestock and extends one's lifespan. In the Tibetan texts, as in the texts of the *Bower Manuscript*, the abiding concern is the favor of the gods. Here divination could be seen as a diagnostic, revealing one's standing in the eyes of the gods. It can also be seen as a situation that is produced through the ritual of oracular gambling and the exchanges of fortune it involves. In the *Divination of Maheśvara* each throw of the die invokes a god or spirit who may protect or harm, but this is not analogous to the relationships to one's personal gods in the Sanskrit and Tibetan texts. This more central relationship is found instead in the *Divination of Maheśvara's* correcting rituals, which instruct one to recite the names of the Buddha, invoke the Three Jewels, or "contemplate goodness" (*nian shan*).

The *Divination of Maheśvara's* replacement of personal and familial links to the gods with invocations of Buddhas and the performance of Buddhist rituals is emblematic of the process of Buddhism's adaptation of divination. It is also apparent in later Tibetan dice divination traditions that customarily insert introductions that emphasize tantric sensibilities and the link between the client, diviner, their central tantric deities (Tib. *yi dam*; Sanskrit *iṣṭadeva*), and/ or the central deity associated with divination, such as Palden Lhamo. The latter is understood to be the source of the hidden knowledge that divination offers, and the utility of Tibetan Buddhist divination rests largely on the strength of this connection between the tantric adept and the tantric deity into whose practice he or she has been initiated.¹² Here the relationship with one's personal or familial god retains a central place, but this god is now Buddhist.

The oracular response itself is also highly variable across divination texts. It can be direct, first-person speech from the mouth of a god, or it can come in a disembodied third-person voice, as it does in the *Divination of Maheśvara*. It can be in verse or in prose, obscure or mundane. A poetic image or vignette may stand on its own, or it may be followed by an interpretation, sometimes with the help of a simile. All of this can be followed by an evaluation, e.g., "good,"

12 Robert Ekvall, "Some Aspects of Divination in Tibetan Society," *Ethnology* 2.1 (1963): 31–39; Chime Radha, "Tibet," In *Oracles and Divination*, ed. Michael Loewe and Carmen Blacker (Boulder: Shambhala Publications, 1981), 3–37; Dorjee Tseten, "Tibetan Art of Divination," *Tibetan Bulletin* (April 1995): 1–9; Sobisch, *Divining with Achi and Tārā*, 47–60.

“bad,” or “neutral,” or there can be no evaluation at all. Some oracular responses can also include correcting rituals, and some reference signs that confirm their veracity.

The oracular responses of the *Divination of Maheśvara* inherit some of their poetics from Chinese divination traditions. The oracular response associated with Hārītī that begins this chapter, for example, uses the image of a beam of light through the clouds, which can be found in a variety of Chinese divination texts. Bright clouds appear, perhaps coincidentally, in the entries for the same numerical trigram, 3-1-2, in the *Tricks of Jing*, the *Duke of Zhou Divination Method*, and the *Guan Gongming Divination Method*. Despite the occasional poetic image or simile, the responses are far less imagistic and poetic than what one finds in the *Tricks of Jing*, or in type-1 Old Tibetan divination texts, both of which are in verse. The Tibetan verses allude to folkloric and ritual traditions, and often include images of wild settings and wild animals, as well as a variety of gods and demons. In the type-2 texts, by contrast, where the gods and spirits speak the oracular responses, there is less poetry. The gods, perhaps ironically, tend to give more banal, prosaic, and practical directives. Their contents are in this way closer to what one finds in the Sanskrit texts and in the *Divination of Maheśvara*. Each of the two types of Old Tibetan dice divination text can feature long interpretations, specifying the ramifications for health, family, trade, and so on, which are absent or less programmatic in the Chinese and Sanskrit texts.

The contrast between the two types of Old Tibetan dice divination texts reveals a succinct truth: poetry can replace gods. Whether a response includes beautiful oracular poetry or banal proverbs, these are equally drawn from pools of tradition that divination shares with various other genres. This creates an interperformativity or intertextuality specific to each cultural setting in which divination has been adapted. At the same time, there are some facets of divinatory poetics that one can speak about across linguistic and cultural divides. One is the balance between “poem” or “image” and “interpretation.” Those texts, like the *Irq Bitig*, whose responses are almost exclusively a poem or imagistic vignette, followed by a short evaluation, e.g., “it is good,” leave the work of interpretation to the divination user(s). For example, “I am a male maral deer with a nine-branched horn. Rising on my big and powerful knees, I bellow. Heaven above heard it and men below realized it. That powerful am I, it says. Know thus: [the omen] is good.”¹³ There is no simile following the vignette to say, “so too shall it be for you”; one must make this connection oneself. Inversely,

13 Ibid., 25.

there are those responses in the *Divination of Maheśvara* that read mostly like an interpretation or a prognosis, such that one is left in no doubt as to its application to oneself. Take the following: “[t]his is named the Displaying Omens Spirit set. Everything you seek will be slightly difficult. Fix your mind on seeking the Buddha and diligently invoke the Three Jewels, then all will be achieved and daily you will meet with advancement. Auspicious.” The latter type of oracular response gives the sense that one is trying, at the price of poetic impoverishment, to construct an easy and pragmatic system that gives a yes-or-no answer.

One Old Tibetan divination text does precisely that. Whereas many dice divination texts—and some other types of Old Tibetan divination texts—go into great detail in the interpretation, specifying the ramifications for health, family, trade, enemies, and so on, one text, P.tib.351, which includes more Buddhist content than any Old Tibetan dice divination text, simplifies these to “yes/ no” (*yin ma yin*) “will come/ won’t come” (*’ong myi ’ong*) and “go/ don’t go” (*song ma song*). This is to pull divination to its limits, and nearly to the point where it might be replaced by a proverbial coin flip.

At the opposite extreme of a divination system designed to give a straight answer is the high degree of “resistance” found in the method of Old Tibetan dice divination as described in the codex 10L Tib J 739. According to its rule of three, whereby one must divine three times, if one gets two good responses and one bad response—which mathematically should happen 33% of the time—this result is referred to as *zhi* (Tib. *gzhi*), which indicates a null outcome. This isn’t just “neutral” in the sense of neither good nor bad, nor does it mean “wait and see.” Rather it is a statement from the divination system that it refuses your request. The ritual fails; no communication is performed. This is an outlier among the divination texts surveyed here, but it is by no means unique. A functionally similar form of resistance, as noted above, is performed by the existence of missing responses in every dice divination text that we’ve surveyed.

An oracular response need not end with an evaluation. Those that do, however, typically state this briefly. In the Old Tibetan dice divination texts, in the *Irq Bitig*, and in the *Divination of Maheśvara*, the options are “good/ auspicious,” “neutral/ middling/ mixed,” and “bad/ inauspicious.” There are also intensifiers like “very.” The good responses outweigh the bad, generally by a ratio of 2:1, and sometimes by more. Those responses that fall in between good and bad vary across the texts. In the *Divination of Maheśvara*, “neutral” (*ping*) indicates a response is bad but can be improved with a correcting ritual, or it means that one should wait and not act. In Old Tibetan dice divination texts, by contrast “middling” (*’bring*) usually means that a response is good for some things and bad for others. In the *Divination of Maheśvara* and in the Tibetan texts, some

responses lack evaluations, and some evaluations are obviously wrong, that is, out of kilter with the character of the response. Observing the patterns and habits of a text's responses, it is fairly easy to make an educated guess at what these responses' evaluations should have been. The same operation can be performed for those texts, like the two Sanskrit dice divination texts in the *Bower Manuscript*, that have no evaluations, though this is to impose on these texts a practice that they do not follow.

The contrast of those texts whose oracular responses include evaluations versus those that do not also interacts with the rule of three, and how it alters the ritual of divination. The Tibetan rule of three would seem to boil down the three responses, whatever their poetry and their contents, to three simple evaluations. If this were truly so, then this would seem to do something similar to asking divination for a simple yes-or-no answer. Perhaps this accounts for the higher degree of resistance, which here serves to mystify the glorified coin flip. But this also strikes one as overkill to read such involved, poetic oracular responses, with their ritual-spatial universe of *śman* goddesses, animals, hunters, and thieves, only to zero in on the words "good," "bad," or "mixed" at the end. At the same time, it is also somewhat of a piece with reciting a paean to the omniscience of the stainless goddess only as a charm to get an edge in dice divination by pleasing the gods. Oracular responses without evaluations, such as those in the dice divination texts of the *Bower Manuscript*, are more resistant to the imposition of such a rule of three.

This points to another variation in how one performs divination as a divination user. The semantics of volition and non-volition offer one clue as to whether a user is called to respect the perceived autonomy of the divination system by letting the dice "fall" (Sanskrit: *āpatanitah*; Tib.: *babs*) versus injecting their will by "throwing the dice" (Chinese: *zhi tou tou zi*). In the *Divination of Maheśvara* the latter applies, and the impact of one's intentions upon the dice is spelled out in the text: "[w]hat you are intending and seeking determines the mantic figure." The ritual stance of sincerity, and the text's claim to infallibility, seems to exist in creative tension, however, with the *Divination of Maheśvara's* rule of three. This rule allows one to reject a bad response and roll again, up to three times in all, to get a good response. Against this, some responses are trumps, that state that one is not permitted to roll again. "House rules" such as the rule of three have the potential to alter the system in a way that is even more fundamental than changing its poetics or removing its pantheon. They seem to fly in the face of most assumptions about divination accessing infallible, divine knowledge. At the same time, they are playful. The rule of three, or at least the practice of getting second and third opinions about an important matter, is also a widespread phenomenon in divination across cultures.

The rule of three is something like a “cheat” that users employ to improve their odds. Other strategies include the charm supplied in the second divination text of the *Bower Manuscript*. Like many other features of dice divination, cheats and charms also find their license in Indian mythology, where Śiva and Pārvatī quickly resorted to cheating (*chalena*) in their game of dice and where the divine couple Viṣṇu and Lakṣmī did the same in theirs. There is also the impudence of the human gambler in the face of the gods, dramatized in Chinese tales and the Indian myth of the gambler “Unfettered” beating Śiva at dice. Something analogous to this type of ludic contest is acted out in Tibetan oracular gambling. Here the professional diviner, whose role is not far from that of a shaman, acts as the client’s proxy, and the fall of the dice determines whether one wins or loses fortune or “fortunate essence” (*phyal g.yang*), a quasi-substance that helps one with trade, health, family, and protection. The diviner offers the *śman* goddesses hospitality and thus invokes them into the ritual space as “opponent-partners” in the ritual of oracular gambling. Win, and you take from them the fortunate essence that they possess and oversee, embodied and/or symbolized by the goddesses’ “livestock” of deer, antelope, and other wild game animals. Lose, and you risk the increased dangers of those with a low level of fortune. The audacity of challenging the gods so directly probably accounts for the fascinating equivocation that is found in the oracular prognoses: in some the querent is likened to a deer protected by the goddess, and in others he is a hunter making a kill, “stealing” what is hers. This is the hunter’s deception (or seduction) as he emulates the prey; it is also to recognize that the game being played is zero sum, and that the goddess will incur a loss if he wins.

The Tibetan oracular gambler who participates fully in the contest that early Tibetan dice divination imagines is quite different from one who employs the rule of three. House rules support and construct different types of divination users. One can as easily envision a divination user who wants to skip over the poetry and get to the evaluation as one can imagine one who relishes each line and who would abhor the idea of divining more than once.

Similarly, there is the distinction between divining for oneself, which requires literacy, access to dice and books, and familiarity with the divination system, versus consulting a diviner or someone capable of performing the divination. The positional and/ or ontological shifts of Tibetan oracular gambling are such that they could only be performed by a professional diviner, and it is clear that one must engage a diviner and pay them a fee. At the other extreme, the *Guan Gongming Divination Method* instructs one to perform the divination oneself rather than bothering one’s teacher. The *Divination of Maheśvara* and most of the other divination texts we’ve surveyed stand somewhere in between,

where the ritual might involve a diviner and a client, or a single divination user combining both roles. Here we also have the play of interpretation, and the manner in which users make meaning. In a setting with a diviner and a client, as well as the invoked divine congregation of gods and spirits, and perhaps also a human congregation of friends, family, and onlookers, all of these users co-create the meaning of a given oracular response. Here imagistic and poetic responses or obscure images give the diviner greater license to interpret meaning, whereas the more mundane statements, veering even toward the yes-or-no response, facilitate access for non-professionals to divine for themselves.

These shifting parameters of material culture, mantic figures, gods and spirits, poetics, and divination users are what define and characterize each specific instantiation of dice divination in a particular time and place. The various adaptations of dice divination in Indian, Tibetan, Turkish, and Chinese contexts are the product of *longue-durée* movements—those of dice, books, gods, and divination users across geographical, cultural, and linguistic borders, out of India and across the Silk Roads. Throughout these movements, users have constructed various ritual strategies to try to better ensure an auspicious outcome when divining, and to better align dice divination with their own beliefs and aesthetic sensibilities. They clothe divination with their own cosmologies and ritual assumptions by, for instance, emphasizing intention and purification and their power to influence the dice. Time after time, however, dice divination frustrates these efforts to tame it. In an aleatory manner befitting dice, tears appear in the fabric of these raiments seemingly at random, resulting in a missing response here, a repeated response there, malformed combinations of signs, and errant final evaluations (e.g., “auspicious!” as an evaluation of an unremittingly inauspicious oracular response). The end results are compromised cosmologies, and oracular responses that evade elite interpretive frameworks.

The degree to which its resistance has been broken and its divinatory mounce frozen or paralyzed often charts a divination tradition's being tamed and canonized by Buddhist, Daoist, or other religious traditions. Divination texts remain, but where *alea* and the chaotic assertion of balance in the face of overzealous human manipulation once held sway, the texts are now animated by overarching theories about cosmic vapor (*qi*), stimulus-response (*ganying*), and dependent origination (*pratītyasamutpāda*, *tendrel* [Tib. *rten 'brel*]). Even so, this, like the infusion of the pantheon with Buddhist figures, tends to be compromised, with fascinating accommodations between religious gestures towards certainty and divinatory insistence on the aleatory, such that these elite religious concepts undergo their own sort of rebalancing at the hands of divination.

The “shiftiness” of dice divination is what propelled this tradition, like the images of wind and clouds in its oracular responses, and like gods such as Hārītī and Maheśvara, across the Silk Roads to be transformed, assimilated, or “shifted” by Turks, Tibetans, Sogdians, Chinese, and many others. The wind similarly blows through the entire pantheon of the *Divination of Maheśvara* and the Sanskrit and Tibetan dice divination texts we’ve surveyed, inflecting many of its gods in much the same way that the dice and their playful, randomizing influence inform and frustrate the orders and cosmologies of the texts. Blowing across the Silk Road to Dunhuang, but also evoked in poetic Chinese images of storms and clouds for millennia, the wind is the operative leitmotif for dice divination and for its pantheon. It is the “inconstant constant,” as well as the very element that infuses and informs the fall of the dice and the unpredictable movements of divination users, mantic figures, books, and gods. Like the die, the wind is *alea* embodied, and interacting with the mantic figures, oracular responses, and gods in an aleatory mode invites an understanding of our interpersonal relationships with gods, and of our own movements through the world, that dignifies both as unpredictable, unwieldy, and in a state of flux.

Divining with Sixteen Numerical Trigrams

The longest section of chapter two consisted of a case study of three related texts, the second-century BCE *Tricks of Jing*, the *Duke of Zhou Divination Method*, and the *Guan Gongming Divination Method*, the latter two being included among the Dunhuang manuscripts. These texts share the same method of dividing counting rods into three piles and subtracting from these piles four at a time in order to create one of sixteen possible mantic figures or numerical trigrams. The ritual assumptions and the poetics shift across these texts, from the *Tricks of Jing*'s inclusion of curses and imagistic oracular poetics to the *Duke of Zhou Divination Method*'s use of a protective invocation and the *Guan Gongming Divination Method*'s evocation of the names of the Buddhas. Tracing these developments and pointing out the debts that the two later texts owe to the *Tricks of Jing*, the case study in chapter two runs somewhat parallel to chapter three's laying out of the Indic lineage to which the *Divination of Maheśvara* belongs. This appendix offers full translations and transcriptions of each of these three texts to complement the analysis in chapter two.

1 Translation of the *Tricks of Jing* (*Jingjue* 荆訣)

The text, self titled (back of slip 2), consists of thirty-three bamboo slips with at least two missing. The Beijing University editors note that a similar text, in the form of a daybook, also exists in the Beijing University collection.¹ Comparison between the two texts helped them supply missing sections of the divination handbook as well as correct a number of errors made by the original copyist. The method produces sixteen different numerical trigrams using the numbers one to four. The trigrams are given calendrical names, eight Stem and eight Branch names, purposefully skipping Stems 7 and 8 (Geng and Xin). The text begins with instructions for use and then sixteen separate sections marked with first the calendrical name followed by the numerical trigram drawn out in stalk lines/counting rods. The calendrical name is written at the top of the slip followed by a space and then the drawing. The drawing takes the space of three characters with each set of lines taking up a single space. The text is written in a regular clear block script with even spacing between each graph.

1 Beijing Daxue chutu wenxian yanjiusuo 北京大學出土文獻研究所, *Beijing Daxue cang Xi Han zhushu* 北京大學藏西漢竹書. Vol. 5 (Shanghai guji, 2014), 169–175. Transcription and annotation by Li Ling 李零.

Slips 1–3 Instructions for Use

鑄（鑽）龜吉（告）筮，不如荆決（訣）。若陰若陽，若短若長。所卜毋方，所卜毋良，必察以明。卅筮以卜其事，若吉若凶，唯筮所從。左手持書，右手操筮，必東面。用卅筮，分以為三分，其上分衡（橫），中分從（縱），下分衡（橫）。²四=（四）³而除土（之），不盈者勿除。

Drilling tortoises and announcing [the results of] stalk [divination] is not as good as [using] the *Tricks of Jing*. Whether [determining the influences of] Yin or Yang, or the short or long [cracks], their crack-reading is not efficient and their divination is no good; one must be able to inspect [them oneself] in order to understand.

Take thirty stalks to divine whether affairs are auspicious or not, just follow the stalks. In the left hand hold the book and in the right hand grasp the stalks, and face east. Divide the thirty stalks into three piles, placing the ones in the upper pile horizontally, the ones in the middle pile vertically, and those in the lower pile horizontally.

Remove the remainders repeatedly by fours, until [the number of stalks in the remaining pile] does not exceed [four].

Slips 4–5 Stem 1

己（>甲）3-4-3（4-3-3）。窮奇欲登于天，浮雲如人。氣（既）已行土（之），乘雲冥=（冥），行禹（遇）大神。其高如城，大（太）息如壘（雷），中道而驚。泰（大）父為崇，欲來義（我）生，凶。

A Jia trigram 4-3-3.⁴ The Qiongqi monster⁵ will soar up into the sky and float on clouds like a person.⁶ But once he's already up there, the clouds he is riding on

2 The original has a comma-like mark which hooks downward after *heng* 衡.

3 The original simply has a “repeat” = sign after the first “four” 四.

4 It is clear from the order of the calendrical names in the text that the copyist made a mistake in the day sign, *ji* (*k(r)əʔ) instead of *jia* (*[k]ʰr[a]p). It is possible that the scribe was writing down what another read. The difference in the finals of the two words suggest a discrepancy due to dialect difference.

5 We suspect that Qiongqi (*[g](r)uŋ-N-k(r)aj) was a variety of *chimei* 魑魅 demon (also known as *chimei wangliang* 魑魅魍魎). In the *Chuci*, however, it was the ritualist or shaman, not a demon, that rose into the sky, usually on a dragon. In the song, “Lord of the East” 東君, the lord (i.e., the sun as deity) rides on the thunder sighing long sighs; see Sukhu, *The Songs of Chu*, 15.

6 Flying dragons and riding clouds is a common trope since the late Warring States, but cer-

will turn murky and dark, and eventually he meets a Great Spirit as tall as a city [tower] breathing in great breaths like thunder, startling him midway. The Great Father will cause a curse to appear during my life. Inauspicious.

Slips 6–7 Stem 2

乙 4-1-1。蠱（龍）處于澤，欲登于天。吉日嘉時，登高曲（矚）望，相須（>焉）以色。今日何日，吉樂毋（無）極。津橋氣（既）⁷行，願欲中音（意）⁸。吉，外為崇⁹。

An Yi trigram 4-1-1. The dragon living in the swamp wants to soar to Heaven. On an auspicious day during a fine season, it soars high to look around, signs of it seen by colors [in the sky]. What day is it today that auspicious joy will be limitless: having crossed a bridge, what is desired will be in accordance with one's wishes. Auspicious. The curse will come from outside.¹⁰

tainly popular in the Western Han. In *Mr. Jiao's Forest of Changes*, the image of “floating clouds” (*fu yun* 浮雲) appears six times and in most cases is a good omen. For a discussion of the Lord of the Clouds 雲君 as a Chu deity and the translation of the Chu song of a shaman flying to meet him in the clouds, see Sukhu, *The Songs of Chu*, 6–7. See also Hong Xingzu 洪興祖 (1090–1135), comm., *Chuci buzhu* 楚辭補注 (Kyoto: Chūbun, 1979), 32–33. The earliest tales of flying into and on clouds is in the first chapter of *Zhuangzi* 莊子, “Xiaoyao you” 逍遙遊, and at the end of the “Lisao” 離騷. On shamanic journeys in the *Chuci*, see also Sukhu, *The Shaman and the Heresiarch: A New Interpretation of the Li sao* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2012). The images of dragons soaring up to the sky are found in divination texts as early as the *Guicang* and *Yijing* and well into medieval times, in the Dunhuang *Duke of Zhou* and the *Guan Gongming* (see below).

- 7 The word *qi* 氣 was originally written with the phonetic *ji* 既 (*[k]ə[t]-s) over either a semantic “fire” 火 or “heart” 心 element. The graph used here for *ji* 既 with the “cloud” 气 and “grain” 米 did not become popular until the Han after the Qin used the graph 氣 for 饌 (offer food sacrifices).
- 8 The scribe writes only part of the graph for *yi* 意, but the full form on slip 8, the next slip. The scribe seems to have paid more attention to writing in a stylistic manner than to the meaning of the text. We find the same problem of two variants representing one word elsewhere, such as 我 and 義 on slips 8 and 10.
- 9 In the simplifying fashion of this scribe, the upper element of 崇, 出 is written 土. On slip 9 it is written the same except with an extra line, as 生 is often written.
- 10 Outside could refer to the dead on the mother or wife's side of the extended family. Or it could refer to ghosts outside the city gates.

Slips 8–9 Stem 3

丙 3-4-3。有鳥將來，文身翠翼。今夕何日(> 夕)，吉樂獨極。澤（釋）怒忘（亡）憂，適中我意。有人將來，嘉喜毋（無）亟（極）。吉，崇百厲¹¹。

A Bing trigram 3-4-3. There is a bird coming with a patterned body and emerald colored wings. What night is it tonight that auspicious joy will be limitless. Resolving anger and being without worries, everything matches my intentions exactly. There is someone coming, celebrate endlessly. Auspicious. The curse will come from the 100 Plague Ghosts.¹²

Slips 10–11 Stem 4

丁 4-2-4。善=哉=（善哉），百事順成。得天土（之）時，弗召自來。[翩翩]¹³蜚（飛）鳥，止陽[之]枝。¹⁴美人將來，與議（我）相智（知）。中心愛土（之），不智（知）其疵。吉。

A Ding trigram 4-2-4. Good! Good! All affairs will be completed smoothly. You have the timing of Heaven, and [everything] will come without asking. Flapping, flapping, the flying bird stops on a sunny branch. An elegant person is coming with whom we have mutual understanding. We overlook the flaws of those we love. Auspicious.

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- 11 The original graph looks like a combination of 兩 and 再 but with the upper line written as 立. If the lower element is read as a phonetic *liang* 兩 (as it appears on slip 25), then perhaps we should read this as *liang* 魍 instead of *li*, the Plague Demon. The problem is that *liang* demons appear always in the combination *wangliang* 魍魎. The term 100 ghosts *bai gui* 百鬼 is found in Han texts.
- 12 The reading of the original graph as *li* follows Zi Ju, “Beida jian *Jingjue* jieixi.” Although records of harmful Li demons appear as early as the *Zuozhuan*, there is no record of 100 Li Demons. The word *li* appears often in the *Zhouyi* but there it is interpreted as a warning of potential “harm” rather than the name of the source of a curse. In the *Zuozhuan*, it is a demon that causes illness and death. It is associated with pestilence and a scabies-like skin condition; see *Chinese Medicine and Healing: An Illustrated History*, ed. T.J. Hinrichs and L.L. Barnes (Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2013), 19. Zi Ju feels that here they simply refer to men who died without progeny to maintain sacrifices to them. Mu-chou Poo describes them as “haunting ghosts” who appear to kinfolk to demand reparations for injuries suffered in life or an inadequate burial. See Poo, “The Concept of Ghosts in Ancient Chinese Religion,” in *Religion and Chinese Society, Volume 1, Ancient and Medieval China* (The Chinese University of Hong Kong and École française d’Extrême-Orient, 2004), 181.
- 13 The slip is broken and this repeated word supplied by the editors, *Beijing Daxue cang Xi Han zhushu*, 172–173.
- 14 The added 之 character is supplied by the editors for the sake of maintaining the prosody.

Slips 12–13 Stem 5

戊 3-1-2。冥=(冥)土(之)海，吾獨得其光。雷電大陰，[吾]¹⁵蜀(獨)得陽。有人將至，貴如公王。樹木未產，其葉綉=(青青)。凶事盡除，吉事順成。吉。

A Wu trigram 3-1-2. In the sea of darkness, I alone get its light. In thunder and lightning and great shadow (Yin), I alone get the light (Yang). Someone is coming, who is as noble as a lord or a king. The trees have not yet produced [fruit], but the leaves are so very green. Inauspicious matters will all be exorcised and auspicious matters will be completed smoothly. Auspicious.

Slips 14–15 Stem 6

己 3-3-4。泰(大)官甚敬，身獨禺(遇)惡。且恐且懼，身毋定處。中心不樂，相追道路。請謁不得，獨留馭(繫)舍。[先]¹⁶來其祟，後乃毋(無)故。凶。

A Ji trigram 3-3-4. High officials greatly respect you, but you still encounter evil on your own. At once fearful and then frightened, you cannot stay in one place. Keenly unhappy, you hurry to meet each other down a road. Never receiving an invitation, you stay alone in a side hut. At first there will be a curse, but later no consequences. Inauspicious.

Slips 16–17 Stem 9

壬 2-3-1。凡(鳳)鳥不處，羊=(羊)(洋洋)四國。我欲見土(之)，多害不得¹⁷。疾蜚(飛)哀鳴，憂心墨=(墨)¹⁸。勞身毋(無)功，其事不得¹⁹。凶，祟外死不葬。

15 Slip is damaged here so the editors supplied the missing graph.

16 The slip is not broken but the graph is supplied by the editors.

17 Compare to the section in *Chuci* “Da Zhao” 大招 warning the *hun* soul against going west, where sand flows in all directions 西方流沙，漭洋洋只，and much harm will result 多害傷只 (*Chuci buzhu*, 91–92; Sukhu, *the Songs of Chu*, 181). Note that in the song “Summoning the Soul” (“Zhao hun” 招魂), the shaman uses stalk divination (*shi* 筮) to find the escaped soul (*Chuci buzhu*, 84). Flying phoenixes are also found in the Dunhuang *Duke of Zhou*.

18 The editors replace *heihei* with the binome *momo* 默默 found in the *Chuci* and elsewhere but in fact *heihei* occurs in Han texts, including the *Jiaoshi Yilin* Hexagram 36 明夷 in a line (iteration 19) that also implies a lack of clear direction: “The *Gu* variation 蠱: So culti-

A Ren trigram 2-3-1. Phoenixes do not roost but fly in all directions. What I would like to see cannot be obtained without too much harm. Flying quickly with mournful cries, the troubled are so gloomy. The hardworking (those who care for others) will not be given credit and their affairs not achieved. Inauspicious. The curse will come from one who died outside and was not buried.

Slips 18–19 Stem 10

癸 2-2-2。玄鳥朝蜚（飛），羊=（羊）（洋洋）翠羽。與人皆（偕）行，其身蜀（獨）處。請謁云若，有欲弗許。今日何日，吉人將來。日[夜望之]，[slip broken]（責）²⁰來會期。吉，崇王父母。

A Gui trigram 2-2-2. The dark birds fly at dawn with a great flutter of green wings. While accompanying someone traveling, you will stay by yourself. An invitation may be implied, but even if you want it, you will not be allowed. Today or any day, an auspicious person is coming. Looking for him day and night, the call will come at the right time. Auspicious. The curse comes from the grandparents.

Slips 20–21 Branch 1

子 2-1-3。善哉首，如登高臺²¹。布（甫）有美人，弗召自來。齊其翠羽，或（又）與（舉）旌旗。非以為首，如登高丘，安而毋（無）軌（咎）。今日何日，遠人將來。吉，崇在司命。

A Zi trigram 2-1-3. So good, the beginning [of the Earthly Branches]! It is like climbing up a high tower. An elegant personage will come without being called. His evenly spaced emerald wings rise up like a banner. If it is not taken as a beginning, it will be like climbing up a high hill; there will be no blame ensuing. Today or any day, a person from far away is coming. Auspicious. The curse will reside in the Supervisor of Life Allotments.

vated, so lonely, anxiety and calamity with intensity. To the north and south, no goals, and to the east and west nothing achieved” 文文墨墨，憂禍相雜。南北失志，東西不得。Jiao Yanshou 焦延壽, Shang Binghe 尚秉和 annotated, *Jiaoshi Yilin zhu* 焦氏易林注 (Beijing: Guangming, 2005), 364.

19 *Jiaoshi Yilin*, hexagram 30 Li 離 (iteration 59): “The *Huan* variation 渙: The sun enters the dark evil, the brightness of Yang is overshadowed, what the laboring heart of petty man seeks will not be obtained” 日入幽懸，陽明隱伏，小人勞心，求事不得。

20 Reading of a partial graph and others filled in by the editors.

21 Written as 者 over 室.

Slips 22–23 Branch 2

丑 1-4-1。沛=（沛）羽蓋乎，吾誰與特之？道路曲（矚）望，美人不來。氣（既）大有（又）小，如羊與牛。所來不得，或為土（之）患。雖欲行作，又閉於關。崇陽。

A Chou trigram 1-4-1 Numerous wings cover all over. Who will I support them with? I look all over on the roads, but the elegant person does not come. Big or small sizes, as in goats and water buffalos. You will not get what is coming and may suffer for it. Even if you want to travel or build something, the pass will be closed. The curse will come from Yang.²²

Slips 24–25 Branch 3

寅 1-3-2。山有玄木，其葉卑（披）離。²³勞心將死，人莫之智（知）。欲與美會，其後必離。有隱者，雲古（胡）滿=（滿）（懣懣）²⁴。晨鳴不會，直為人笑。崇行，竈，百厲，凶。

A Yin trigram 1-3-2. There is a dark green-leaved tree on the mountain, whose leaves have been dispersed. One with a stressed mind will die without anyone knowing about him. One who may wish to meet with an elegant [person] must part with him/her later. Full of suppressed woe, how can one not feel frustrated? One who is secluded is said to be full of sorrow. One who does not meet at the time of morning birdsong will be laughed at by others.²⁵ Curses may come from the Walkway, the Stove, or the 100 Plague Ghosts. Inauspicious.

22 Possibly emitted from the stove.

23 For the Dark-green Tree (*xuanmu* 玄木), see *Lüshi Chunqiu* 呂氏春秋, *juan* 14, “Ben wei” 本味 in the words of shaman minister Yi Yin 伊尹 to Tang 湯 “point to east of Gu, to the state in Zhongrong, where there are leaves with vermillion and dark green leaves” 指姑之東，中容之國，有赤木玄木之葉焉 (Zhuzi jicheng 諸子集成 edition, Shanghai shudian, 1991 rpt., 142). This line immediately follows a discussion of Kunlun mountain and the “flower of the Eternity Tree” 壽木之華.

24 The earliest example of 懣懣 seems to be in the Buddhist text *Yin chiru jing* 陰持入經 (T.603) translated by An Shigao 安世高 (d. 168). The reading of *gu* as *hu* is found in the late Warring States bamboo text *Zhao Wang hui shi* 昭王毀室 (*Shanghai bowuguan cang Zhanguo Chu zhujian* Vol. 4); see Dong Shan 董珊 “Du shangbo can Zhanguo Chu zhujian (si) zaji” 讀“上博藏戰國楚竹簡”(四)雜記, *Jianbo yanjiu wangzhan* 2-20-2005, http://www.bamboosilk.org/article-asp/_page_19_classic4.html.

25 In *Huainanzi* 淮南子, in *juan* 6 “Lan ming xun” 覽冥訓 and in *juan* 9 “Zhu shu xun” 主術訓, are described people who dressed up like a high official but were still laughed at as

Slip 26 Branch 4

[卯 3-2-1。介=(介) (靄靄)者雲，蔽天白日。美人不來，曰心疾。翻=(翻)飛鳥，間關浮雲。吾召不來，或為是]²⁶根(恨)。以車馳之，壹反壹頃(傾)。欲會美人，其事不成。凶，崇行、竈。

A Mao trigram 3-2-1. Gathering clouds cover the sky and turn the sun white. The elegant person does not come, which is called “sick at heart.” Flapping, flapping, fly the birds, intermittently passing through the floating clouds. I summon but he does not come, or is perhaps resentful. Going quickly by chariot, turning around and tipping to one side. If one wants to meet the elegant person, his affairs will not be complete. Inauspicious. The curse comes from the Walkway, the Stove.

Slips 27–28 Branch 5

辰 1-2-3。玄蠱(龍)在淵，雲持(待)才(在)天。嘉賓將來，以我[為]視(>親)。往來如矢，人莫土(之)止。今夕何如=>夕，如得父母。盈意中欲，其後不悔(悔)。吉，崇社。²⁷

A Chen trigram 1-2-3. The Dark Dragon resides in the abyss, clouds wait in the sky. A Fine Guest is coming who will treat me like a relative. Going back and forth like arrows, none of the people stop. What night is it tonight that it will be like getting parents. Excess intentions will fit with your desires, and later there will be no regrets. Auspicious. The curse comes from the Earth Altar.

Slips 29–30 Branch 6

巳 1-1-4。海有瑯干(玕)，南山有時=>植)。時命將合，不期而相得。同心不去，結志不離。有人將來，直其 X(盪)²⁸盈。今日何日，百事皆成。²⁹吉。崇泰(大)父母。

frauds; see Liu An, *The Huainanzi*, trans and ed. John Major, Sarah Queen, Andy Meyers, and Hal Roth (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 216, 327.

26 The editors have supplied the text from a missing slip, *Beijing daxue cang Xi Han zhushu*, 176.

27 The editors have corrected miswritten characters and supplied missing ones.

28 The original graph is written with 𠄎 and 𠄎.

29 The expression 今夕何夕 is found as early as the *Shijing* Tang air 唐風 “Chou mou” 綢繆 about looking up into the stars and trying to see a “good man” (*liangren* 良人). It and the complementary expression *jin ri he ri* 今日何日 are recorded in a Chu incantation in the *Shuoyuan* 說苑 *juan* 11 “Shan shuo” 善說: “Tonight or any night, pick the center islet

A Si trigram 1-1-4. In the sea there's a Lang'an (jade tree), and the Southern Mountain has plants. At the time the fate [of people] will conjoin; they encounter each other without planning. Those of the same mind will not leave, and those joined in intention will not depart. Someone is coming who will immediately fulfill [your wishes]. What day is it today that the 100 affairs will all be completed. Auspicious. The curse will come from the Esteemed Parents.

Slip 31 Branch 7

午 4-4-2。玄鳥朝食，南山土（之）陽。奮羽將蜚（飛），路毋（無）關梁（梁）。前如凶，後乃吉光。有人將至，甚好[以良。笑焉夷（悵）色，美人夕（憚）極。吉]。³⁰

A Wu trigram 4-4-2. The dark bird eats in the morning on the sunny side of south mountain.³¹ Beating wings will fly, but the roads have no passes or bridges. What at first seems inauspicious will turn out to be auspicious and radiant. Someone will arrive who is really nice and caring. Laughing with him will produce joyfulness. The elegant person will be extremely pleased. Auspicious.

Slips 32–33 Branch 8

未 2-4-4。繹（釋）哉心乎，何憂而不已？唯（雖）欲行作，關梁（梁）土（之）止。翻（翻）飛鵠，不飲不食。疾飛哀鳴，所來不得。愛（愛）（靄靄）者雲，作（乍）陰作（乍）陽。效人祠祀，百鬼莫嘗。凶，崇巫、立（位）、社。

in a flow; today or any day, get to share a boat with a prince. Suffer shame and so be cared for, do not criticize, berate, or humiliate, stubborn and relentless, know you will get the prince. The mountain has trees, and so the trees have branches, the lord does not realize what your heart tells him” 今夕何夕塞中洲流，今日何日兮，得與王子同舟。蒙羞被好兮，不訾詬恥，心幾頑而不絕兮，知得王子。山有木兮木有枝，心說君兮君不知 (Sibu beiyao 四部備要 edition, Taipei: Taiwan Zhonghua, 1970, 11.6b).

30 The editors have filled in the text from a missing slip, *Beijing daxue cang Xi Han zhushu*, 177.

31 The phrase “on the sunny side of south mountain” first appears in the *Shijing* and is repeated in various Han texts, including *Mr. Jiao's Forest of Changes*. The omen of a bird landing on a tree there and not singing or flying for three years is discussed by minister with King Zhuang 莊王 of Chu who retreated from his governing duties in a tale recorded in the *Xinxu* 新序 *juan* 5 “Za shi” 雜事.

A Wei trigram 2-4-4. So expressive and heartfelt! What concerns remain? Even if one wants to travel and build things, they will be stopped at passes and bridges. Flapping, flapping, the flying swans are not drinking or eating, but flying frenetically with mournful cries. What one wants will not come about. Gathering clouds will create cloudy and then sunny conditions. The instructors perform the cult and annual sacrifices, but none of the 100 ghosts partakes. Inauspicious. The curses come from shamans, [spirit] stands, and the Earth Altar.

2 Translation of the *Duke of Zhou Divination Method* (*Zhougong bufa* 周公卜法)

The *Duke of Zhou Divination Method* is preserved in a compilation codex kept in the Bibliothèque nationale de France, shelfmark P.3398.2. This text is unfortunately missing its first page, which would have presumably included the title. Another, damaged version of the text held in Beijing, shelfmark San 678, includes part of the title, as well as a spell following the text.³²

Our transcription follows P.3398.2 for the body of the text, appending content from San 678 at the beginning and the end, and referencing it in footnotes where it clarifies dubious readings. The calligraphy of the San manuscript is tighter and more constrained than that of the Pelliot version. The latter is a looser script as if it was written more quickly. It also uses many vulgar characters and scribal errors.

San 678:

□□卜法一卷。凡卜經求、買賣、婚姻、嫁娶、遠行、看人、田蠶、疾病、□□，爭訟吉凶，但請志心啓

P.3398.2:

[P.1]

呪卜之，万不失一。其卜法用筭子卅四莖，分作三分，上斜、中豎，下斜，後乃四四除之，餘者成卦，審看下卦歌頌，次定吉凶。

32 For the image of the original and a transcription of San 678, see Luo Zhenyu 羅振玉 ed., *Dunhuang shishi suijin* 敦煌石室碎金, 123–128 and *Zhensong tang cang xichui miji congcan* 貞松堂藏西陲秘籍叢殘, 373–375 in *Dunhuang congkan chuyi qi: Dunhuang shishi yishu bainian zhong* 敦煌叢刊初集七：敦煌石室遺書百廿種, Huang Yongwu 黃永武 ed., Taipei: Xinwenfeng, 1985. Also see Kalinowski, “Cléromancie,” 316–317, 338.

The [Duke of Zhou] Divination Method in One Scroll. Whenever divining the auspiciousness of enduring desires, market negotiations, marital relations, contracting marriages, distant travel, visiting people, agriculture and sericulture, illnessor lawsuits, focus your mind, and then opening with an oath, divine it and you'll never go wrong. This divination method employs thirty-four stalks as calculating rods divided into three groups, an upper horizontal one, a middle vertical one, and a lower horizontal one. Then each group is reduced by factors of four rods until the remainder produces the trigram. Inspect the song [recorded] under each trigram, and then decide the auspiciousness.

[1] 周公卦 3-4-3。鳳飛高臺，奮翼徘徊。病者自差，禍去福來。所求皆得，橫入錢財。行人即至，宅舍無災。此卦大吉。

The Duke of Zhou trigram 3-4-3. A phoenix flies to a high tower, beating its wings, flapping back and forth. The sick will recover on their own; misfortune will depart and good fortune come. You will get everything you seek. There will be unexpected money and goods. Travelers will arrive and there will be no disasters at home. This mantic figure is greatly auspicious.

[2] 孔子卦 2-2-2。飛鳥高翔，身得其光。前雖優(憂)恐，後大吉昌。懷
[P.2]
孕是男，保無災殃。病人自差，官事³³無傷。此卦大吉。

The Confucius trigram 2-2-2. A flying bird wings up high, your body will acquire its glow. What at first is upsetting and scary will later flourish with great auspiciousness. A pregnancy will result in a boy, and be protected without calamity. The sick will recover on their own and administrative entanglements will not harm [you]. This mantic figure is greatly auspicious.

[3] 屈原卦 1-4-1。蟬飛奪木，樹上取魚。求事難得，官事遲除。病者難差，住宅不安。行人未至³⁴，終無所成。此卦大凶。

33 The scribe made a formatting error. The characters 孕是男保無災殃病人自差官事, forming the first column of text on this page, are circled and marked for deletion because they begin in the space reserved for the name and numerical *gua* (see fig. 14, in chapter two, above, p. 166). The line begins again starting one-third of the way down the page. For more details on this *mise en page*, see pp. 165–166.

34 San 678 renders 行人未來至.

The Qu Yuan³⁵ trigram 1-4-1. A cicada flies snatching wood; catch a fish in a tree. Whatever you seek will be hard to obtain, and administrative entanglements will drag on. The sick will have difficulty recovering and the home will not be at peace. Travelers have yet to arrive, and nothing in the end will be achieved. This mantic figure is greatly inauspicious.

[P.3]

[4] 赤松卦 2-1-3。時 巽 如上高臺，賢人不召自來。經求和合，橫事錢財，病者不死。行人到來，官事不成。此卦大吉。

The Red Pine³⁶ trigram 2-1-3. From time to time it will seem like going up a high tower with wise men coming of their own accord. Enduring desires will be resolved harmoniously, with unexpected cash and goods brought in. The sick will not die. The travelers will arrive, but business with officials will not be successful. This mantic figure is greatly auspicious.

[5] 傑 (> 桀) 紂卦 1-1-4。鳥在虛空，行往不通。中路有憂，求事難得。所作不成，終無所益。行人失財，官事無理。此卦大凶。

The Jie and Zhou³⁷ trigram 1-1-4. A bird in space travels without getting anywhere. Midway there is trouble and what is sought will be difficult to obtain. Whatever you do will not be achieved and in the end there will be no benefit. Travelers will lose their goods and business with officials will be capricious. This mantic figure is greatly inauspicious.

[6] 越王卦 3-3-4。河中有船，往而取之。經求

[P.4]

得利，吉日良時。福得³⁸自至，喜樂無悲。官事自散，行人即歸。此卦大吉。

35 Qu Yuan is the presumed author of the shamanistic *Chuci* songs, see Sukhu, *The Shaman and the Heresiarch*.

36 Master Red-Pine is a transcendent that appears in the *Chuci* and is a popular immortal in Han times, understood to act as the Master of Rain (*yushi* 雨師) for Shennong 神農. See the *Master Red-Pine's Almanac of Petitions* (*Chisongzi zhangli* 赤松子曆), Francis Verellen, "The Heavenly Master Liturgical Agenda According to Chisong zi's Petition Almanac," *Cahiers d'Extrême-Asie* 14 (2004): 291–343. See also the Celestial Masters entry in *The Encyclopedia of Taoism*, Vol. 1, 272–273.

37 Jie and Zhou are the last rulers of the Xia and Shang dynasties. Both were overthrown for corruption and immorality.

38 Zhou Xiaoyu reads *de* 得 as *de* 德. This is unnecessary, although the combination *fude* 福德 does appear in the *Guan Gongming bufa*.

The King of the State of Yue³⁹ trigram 3-3-4. There's a boat in the river, go and get it. Enduring desires will become profitable, the day will be auspicious and the timing good. Good fortune and success will come of their own accord and you will be happy without sadness. Business with officials will resolve on its own, and travelers will soon return. This mantic figure is greatly auspicious.

[7] 子推卦 1-3-2。井中取鳥，樹上取魚。求事不得，徒失功夫。官事失理，得病難除。卜得此卦，家宅貧虛。此卦大凶。

The Zitui⁴⁰ trigram. 1-3-2. Catch a bird in a well and a fish in a tree. What you seek will not be obtained. It is nothing but wasting your effort. Official affairs will lose all order and you'll become sick and have a hard time getting rid of it. If you obtain this mantic figure when divining, your home will become destitute. This mantic figure is greatly inauspicious.

[8] 太公卦 4-1-1。神龍起飛，昇于千里。經⁴¹求得利，田蠶万倍。嫁

[P.5] 娶相宜，所求稱意。病者自差，行人即至。此卦大吉。

The Tai Gong⁴² trigram 4-1-1. The Spirit Dragon rises up into the air, going up 1,000 *li*. What you experience and seek will become profitable; fields and silkworms multiply by 10,000. Marriages will be mutually appropriate, and what you seek will be satisfied. The sick will recover of their own accord. Travelers will arrive. This mantic figure is greatly auspicious.

[9] 先（兌）卦 3-1-2。雲飛上天，投得其陽仙。若卜求覓，其⁴³事皆吉。懷孕是男，永無災殃。經求得利，住宅平安。此卦大吉。

39 A reference to the Goujian 勾踐 (r. 495–465) who conquered the state of Wu to the north. Famous for persistence and for suicidal warriors.

40 Zitui was also known as Jie zhi Tui 介之推 or Jie Tui. Famous for saving the Lord of Jin (around 636 BCE) when he was starving by feeding the Lord with flesh from his own thigh. But when the Jin Lord turned his back on Zitui, Zitui hugged a tree and burned to death in a fire; *Zhuangzi*, “Dao Zhi” 盜跖, see A.C. Graham, *Chuang Tzu: The Inner Chapters* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1981), 238. Later memorialized by Han scholar Dongfang Shuo 東方朔 and on cold festival days.

41 San 678 has 所 before 經.

42 Tai Gong was the founder ancestor of the Zhou royal house. See Sarah Allan, “The Identities of Taigong Wang in Zhou and Han literature,” *Monumenta Serica* xxx (1972–1973): 89–98.

43 San 678 has 得 instead of 其.

The Dui trigram 3-1-2. Cloud-flying up to the sky, find refuge with Immortal Yang there. If divining about what you seek, all the concerns will be auspicious. Pregnancies will result in males and there will never be a calamity. Enduring desires will become profitable and your home will be at peace. This mantic figure is greatly auspicious.

[10] 坤卦 3-2-1。日月盛時，雲曜其光。所求稱遂，不見閤（關）⁴⁴梁。
[P.6]

前雖憂恐，後大吉昌。官事不成，此卦大吉。

The Kun trigram 3-2-1. When the sun and moon are full, the clouds are glorious with their light. What you seek will follow and you will see no [obstacles at] passes and bridges. What at first seems troublesome and scary will later flourish with great auspiciousness. Administrative entanglements will not succeed. This mantic figure is greatly auspicious.

[11] 离（離）卦 4-3-3。鳥鼻天餘，高望徘徊。行人在路，窮道不開。求事難得，橫失錢財。病者沉重，哭泣悲哀。此卦大凶。

The Li trigram. 4-3-3. A bird heads up into the sky watching upon high, flapping around back and forth. Travelers on the road will have poor [roads and] blocked paths. What you seek will be hard to get with an unexpected loss of wealth. The sick will become much sicker, resulting in tears and mourning. This mantic figure is greatly inauspicious.

[12] 乾卦 2-3-1。皇帝入山，路逢仙人。言對論議，財物昇天。福祿
[P.7]

集會，求事難疑。病人自差，官事不成。此卦大吉。

The Qian trigram 2-3-1. The emperor goes into the mountains and on the way runs into an immortal. Conversation and debate will be good and fitting, and one's wealth will increase astronomically. Good fortune and salary will come together, so that it will be hard to doubt that one will not get whatever one seeks. The sick will recover on their own, and administrative entanglements will not succeed. This mantic figure is greatly auspicious.

44 Zhou reads 閤 as 關. This is probably correct.

[13] 巽卦 2-4-4。鳳飛高臺，眾鳥集之。求事得達，嫁娶相宜。經求得利，百事無疑。病者自差，行人即歸。此卦大吉。

The Xun trigram 2-4-4. A phoenix flies to a high tower and birds flock there. What you seek will arrive and marriages will be mutually suitable. What you have been seeking will become profitable, and all business ventures can be conducted without doubts. The sick will recover on their own and travelers return. This mantic figure is greatly auspicious.

[14] 坎卦 1-2-3。龍在深泉，雲飛上天。良時吉日，仕官高遷。商

[P.8]
價興財，倍利得千。官事自散，住宅平善。此卦大吉。

The Kan trigram 1-2-3. A dragon is in a deep spring, and clouds fly up in the sky. It is a good time and auspicious day for officials to move upwards. Market values rise, increasing by 1,000. Administrative entanglements will dissipate by themselves and all will be peaceful and good at home. This mantic figure is greatly auspicious.

[15] 震卦 4-2-4。河中無水，乘難度之。所求不得，疾病悲苦。經求損折，錢財不聚。行人未至，須慎官府。此卦大凶。

The Zhen trigram 4-2-4. No water in the river, so it is difficult to ride [a boat] across it. You will not get what you seek and sickness will be tragic. Enduring desires will be lost and broken; wealth will not accumulate. Travelers will not yet arrive and you will need to be careful in the administrative offices. This mantic figure is greatly inauspicious.

[16] 艮卦。4-4-2 眾鳥翔，樹陽奪

[P.9]
光。高飛有路，春至開（關）梁。前須憂愁，後大吉昌。所求稱意，百事勝常。此卦大吉。

The Gen trigram 4-4-2. A flock of birds fly around, contesting over the sunlit [patches] of the tree. Flying high, there will be a road; in spring you will arrive at passes and bridges. At first there will be worries but later great auspiciousness will arise. Whatever you seek will be satisfied and all affairs will be extraordinary. This mantic figure is greatly auspicious.

San 678:

呪曰：六甲六乙，魔注速出。六癸六丁，知如(汝)姓名，破射注氣。魍魎夭(妖)⁴⁵靈，速收汝精，亦口口刑，如若不去，吾將神力，字名六丁，身長万丈，雙目日晶，收持鐵索，捕捉夭(妖)精，口鉗拔舌，敢食汝刑(形)。速出速出，不得停流(留)，急急如律令！

Invoke saying: “[You] Six Jia and Six Yi that possess demonically, speedily depart! The Six Gui and Six Ding know your names, [you] possessing vapors of Poshe.⁴⁶ [You] spooks and deviant spirits quickly retrieve your impish essences, and so likewise ...be punished, so if you don’t seem to leave, I will apply spiritual power, naming the Six Ding, tens of thousands of feet tall with two eyes like solar crystals, who will retrieve them with iron ropes and [once] capturing the deviant imps will use tongs to pull out their tongues and then dare to eat them whole.

Speedily come out, speedily depart! You may not halt or linger! Quickly, quickly, as the statutes command!”

(Talismanic seal or signature)⁴⁷

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- 45 Guan Changlong (Vol. 2, 433) transcribes *yao* 夭 as *quan* 犬 because a dot is evident in the original. However, we believe this is a variant of *yao*, a much more common term for impish spirits than “dog” during the Tang, although spirits with dog shapes were not unknown. However, in P.3106, part of the *Bai guai tu* 百怪圖, in which the actions of dogs (*quan*) are evaluated as a form of divination, the graph for *quan* is written with a dot and extra slash across the descending right stroke, perhaps to distinguish it from variants of *yao*.
- 46 This is a body critter, a type of *shoushi* 守尸 ghost, which like the nine worms causes mortality. According to the medieval *Taishang chu sanshi jiuchong baosheng jing* 太上除三屍九蟲保生經 (Daozang V. 580), it can look like a small child, horse, or dog. For a discussion of these critters and worms and the inner alchemy needed to purge them from the body, see Shih-san Susan Huang, “Daoist Image of Body and Cosmos, Part 2: Body Worms and Inner Alchemy,” *Journal of Daoist Studies* 4 (2011): 33–65.
- 47 The first graph appears at the end of invocations on other medieval invocations; see figs 16a and 16b above. It is unclear if the second graph, most of which is missing and which appears at the top of the next line, has anything to do with it. The first talismanic graph is written in medieval seal script, and may be *la* 刺 or even a version of *xiang* 囊, often used for *rang* 攘, “to expel (misfortune).” For discussion of a version of the first graph (written in a looser fashion) found at the end of a Buddhist prayer as a signature, see Yu Xin, “Personal Fate and Planets,” 169. Interestingly, a *fu* placed after the same command in line 22 of the *Baiguaitu* (P.3106) is labeled a “dog oddity *fu*” 狗怪符. It consists of five layers, from top to bottom: [1] 日日, [2] □, [3] 日日, [4] 尸尸, [5] 日日 with the “solar” graphs of layer 5 tucked under “corpse” graphs of layer 4.

周公卜法一卷

The Duke of Zhou Divination Method in One Scroll.

3 Translation of the *Guan Gongming Divination Method* (*Guan Gongming Bufa* 管公明卜法)

The *Guan Gongming Divination Method* is also, like the *Duke of Zhou Divination Method* and the *Divination of Maheśvara*, found in a Dunhuang codex. In this case the codex was split into two fragments, each of which was catalogued under a separate shelfmark in the Bibliothèque nationale de France, P.4778 and P.3868.⁴⁸ Our transcription reunites them virtually. The first page or cover of the codex includes one title, *Guan Gongming Divination Method* (管公明卜法), whereas the inner title at the start of the text, following a list of the names of seven Buddhas, is given as the *Classic of Guan Gongming's Essential Instructions on Divination in One Scroll* (管公明卜要決經(經)一卷). This reference to itself as a scripture or a sutra (*jing* 經), in both Daoist and Buddhist contexts, is characteristic of its attempts to absorb this divination method into a new religious milieu.

[P.4778]

[P.1]

管公明卜法

Guan Gongming Divination Method

[P.2]

皮婆所佛，⁴⁹特（時）起佛，憤流尊佛，憤囉慇埃（牟）尼佛，加葉佛，皮寫夫佛，息迦埃（牟）佛⁵⁰

Vipaśyin Buddha, Śikhin Buddha, Krakucchanda Buddha, Kanakamuni Buddha, Kāśyapa Buddha, Viśabhū Buddha, and Śakyamu[ni] Buddha.

48 See Kalinowski, "Cléromancie," 317–318, 343, 345. See Guan Changlong, *Dunhuang ben shushu wenxian jijiao*, 427–430.

49 This scribe often inserted spaces as a form of punctuation.

50 The more commonly names for the seven Buddhas are: Piposhi Fo 毗婆尸佛, Shiqi Fo 尸棄佛, Juliusun Fo 拘留孫佛, Junahanmouni Fo 拘那含牟尼佛, Jiaye Fo 迦葉佛, Pishefu Fo 毗舍浮佛, and Shijiamouni Fo 釋迦牟尼佛, respectively.

[P.3]

管公明卜要決經（經）一卷，竿（筭）出天門，易出九宮。乘駕六龍，占相決疑。有事自卜，用竿（筭）子卅四枚，從上四☳（四）

[P.4]

除之，盡即成卜。

The Classic of Guan Gongming's Essential Instructions on Divination in One Scroll. Calculations come out of the Heavenly Gate;⁵¹ *Changes* come out of the Nine Palaces.⁵² Driving Six Dragons,⁵³ prognosticate on the omens to resolve doubts. If you have an issue, divine on your own employing thirty-four counting rods, from top [to bottom, in three piles] reduce them by factors of four, until you have completed the divination.

凡為卜者，清淨禮拜管公明，專心念卜，又稱七佛名字。若卜得一吉，更卜後卦惡，可使。若卜三卦，兩卦好一卦惡，用；如兩卦惡一卦好，不可用。

Whenever initiating divination, with clarity and quiescence worship Guan Gongming, focus and call to mind the divination as well as naming the Seven Buddhas.

If you get an auspicious result with the first divination and with the second get an inauspicious one, use it. If your divination results in three mantic figures and two of them are good and one bad, then go ahead and use it. If two are bad and one good, don't use it.

51 The Gate of Heaven is in the northwest corner of the Lingbao Daoist altar as microcosm, and is linked to Qian; see *Encyclopedia of Taoism*, Vol. 1, 57, fig. 9, 160. Southeast is Door of Earth-Xun; southwest is Moon Gate-Kun; northeast is Sun Gate-Gen; northwest is Gate of Heaven-Qian. The rite is framed by the “opening” and the “closing” of the incense burner. Master of Rites for transcendent officials saves the souls of the dead for nine generations, performs the confession to the Ten Directions, involving the host's willingness to “take refuge” with the deities of each direction. This is also a Daoist rite for the dead. The spirit departs the body through the Gate of Heaven in *neidan* practice; see *Encyclopedia of Taoism*, Vol. 1, 283, Fig. 26.

52 The Nine Palaces refer to a Shangqing Daoist meditation method for reaching the Nine Heavens; see *Encyclopedia of Taoism*, Vol. 2, 775–777. The Nine Heavens were sometimes named with Buddhist names but actually appear as early as *Huainanzi*; see *ibid.*, 882.

53 This refers to interpreting the six lines of a hexagram by an immortal. In the Tuan 彖 commentary to the first line in the first hexagram in the *Changes*, Qian 乾, it notes that one who “grandly understands beginnings and endings, the six positions (lines in the hexagram) finalize according to the right time, so at that time riding six dragons (i.e the lines) drive to Heaven” 大明始終，六位時成，時乘六龍以御天。

凡卜唯須念七佛名字，管公

[P.5]

明爲後賢，吳仲占吉凶，⁵⁴觀万事。

Focus and recite while divining, proclaiming the names of the Seven Buddhas; Guan Gongming plays the role of Later Sage, and Wu Zhong prognosticates the auspiciousness, and observes⁵⁵ all matters.

凡筭（筭）子卅四枚，呪曰：靈筭（筭）審定乾坤，乘駕天龍，同遊八門，以占吉凶。某乙決疑，橫以四除，彡（除）盡則卜事，依卦萬無失一。⁵⁶有事自卜，不勞問師。⁵⁷

With all thirty-four counting rods, make an invocation (*zhou*) and say: “Numerous Rods (*linggan*), clearly settle the Qian and Kun, drive the Heavenly Dragons, and travel through the Eight Gates⁵⁸ to prognosticate the auspiciousness.” To resolve the doubts of So-and-so set up horizontal [groups] removing factors of four until you no longer can, then divine the matter. If you rely on the mantic figure, you can never go wrong. If you have an issue, divine yourself and don’t keep bothering your teacher.

[P.6]

[1] 3-4-3⁵⁹ 鳳凰于飛，奮迅羽翼。拂除凶咎，主人福德。良時吉日，安樂無極。病者必差，遠行定來。求官得官⁶⁰，求財得財。大吉。

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- 54 Guan reads *wei* 為 as *ji* 及, and thus reads the sentence as 管公明及後賢吳仲占吉凶.
- 55 This is a Daoist “observation” method (of others, self, mind) employed with the recitation of the Daoist version of the *Heart Sutra*. See *Encyclopedia of Taoism*, vol. 2, 800–801, also Vol. 1, 118.
- 56 The scribe makes use of a “section mark” in the form of a small circle; see Imre Galambos, “Punctuation Marks in Medieval Chinese Manuscripts,” in *Manuscript Cultures: Mapping the Field*, ed. Jörg Quenzer and Jan-Ulrich Sobisch (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2014), 352–354. Notably the *wan* 萬 in this phrase is the full form whereas, earlier in the manuscript, the vulgar form was used.
- 57 The two graphs *wenshi* 問師, written in vulgar script, are squeezed in under the graph *lao* 勞.
- 58 Eight directions of the world correspond to the eight nodal days of the year (*bajie*); *Encyclopedia of Taoism*, Vol. 1, 219–220.
- 59 The top number 3 was originally written with 4 lines but corrected by filling in the space between the lower two lines; see p. 181, fig. 19, above.
- 60 Guan reads this graph as *guan* although it is written like 𠄎 over 反.

3-4-3 The phoenix flies up quickly beating its wings. Brushing away inauspicious spiritual blame, the host receives good fortune. With a good time and auspicious day, happiness will be without limit. The sick will definitely recover and distant travelers will certainly come. The official position you seek shall be obtained and the goods you seek shall be obtained. Greatly auspicious.

[P.7]

[2] 2-2-2 天馬馳驅，起與人俱。吾得吉利，終身歡娛。此卦大吉，病者得除。所求皆得，所願⁶¹皆成。婦人有娠生男。吉利。

2-2-2 Divine horses, urged forward, rise up together with the person (their rider). One obtains auspicious profit and happiness for the rest of one's life. This mantic figure is greatly auspicious. The sick can get rid [of their illness]. What you seek will all be obtained and what you wish for shall be achieved. Pregnant women will give birth to males. Auspicious and profitable.

[P.8]

[3] 3-1-2 雲雨天陰，吾得其陽。幽 ☵ (幽) 冥 ☷ (冥)，吾得其光。仙人來至，吾免玄黃。憂病除差，福祿吉昌。大吉。

3-1-2 Clouds and rain darken the sky, yet one gets sunshine. Gloomy and dark, yet one gets radiance. Immortals arrive, yet one avoids [their] black and yellow [powers].⁶² Troublesome illness can be expelled and cured. Good fortune and salary flourish auspiciously. Greatly auspicious.

[4] 3-3-4 有鳥沖天，幽 ☵ (幽) 冥 ☷ (冥)，
[P.3868]⁶³

[P.1]

行逢天神，中道而驚。所求不得，所作不成。大凶。

61 The word *yuan* was written with only 頁 and 彳 in reverse on the right side.

62 Or blue and yellow. The term *xuanhuang* refers to the different colors of the blood of two fighting dragons according to the sixth line of the Kun hexagram in the *Zhouyi*. The “Wen yan” commentary to the line interprets the dragons to represent Heaven (Yellow) and Earth (Blue/black). In Warring States texts the colors refer to silks that in myth Shang officers should gift to visiting dignitaries. The text *Shuogua*, attached to the *Zhouyi* as one of the ten wings, includes *xuanhuang* as an image associated with the Zhen trigram, along with thunder, dragons, a big road and horses.

63 At the end of P.3868 there seems to be random practice jottings with lines from the introduction (pages 12–13) after a reference on p. 11 (in a more practiced hand) to 一十六卦翟員外尋過 “The 16 trigrams have been looked over by Zhai *yuanwai*.” Kalinowski notes the

3-3-4 A bird jolts into the sky, gloomy and dark, it runs into a Celestial Spirit and is frightened mid-way. What you seek will not be obtained, what you do will not be completed. Greatly inauspicious.

[5] 3-2-1 日月光明，雲展其光。若人將行，五道開張。前須⁶⁴有憂，後大吉昌。

病者不死，答賽⁶⁵尋常。縱有少禍⁶⁶，須作福穰。吉。

3-2-1 The sun-and-moon's brilliant light radiates throughout the clouds. If someone is traveling, the Five Roads will spread open. At first there will be trouble but later great auspiciousness will flourish. The sick shall not die, but report and sacrifice to the spirits as usual. Even if there are minor problems, many blessings shall be created. Auspicious.

[P.2]

[6] 1-1-4 河⁶⁷中有船，天皇截之。福祿自至，不須憂疑。大慶即至，禍去福垂。官事解散，病者可醫。此卦大吉。

1-1-4 There's a boat in the river, a heavenly emperor stops it. Good fortune and salary arrive of their own accord, there will be no troubling doubts. A great celebration will come and disaster departs while good fortune dawns. Administrative entanglements will unravel and dissipate, and the sick will be doctored. This mantic figure is greatly auspicious.

[P.3]

[7] 2-4-4 神人在下，龍飛在空。行人道倦，閉塞不通。為成不就，所作無功。凶。

2-4-4 A spirit has come down while dragons fly up into space. The travelers are tired and roads blocked. Nothing you try to complete will be managed; nothing you do will be worthwhile. Inauspicious.

likelihood that Zhai Fengda 翟奉達 (b.883), active in the early tenth century as a Buddhist man of letters, was the reviser of this manuscript when he was the “doctor of classics at Shazhou.” See “Mantic Texts in their Cultural Context,” 119. 131 n. 36. Guan Changlong feels that this copy of *Guan Gongming bufa* was either dictated or copied by Zhai.

64 Zhou reads *xu* as *sui* 雖. This is not necessary.

65 Correction replacing a deleted character.

66 Correction replacing a deleted character.

67 This is a correction replacing a deleted character.

[8] 4-2-4 傳送于歸，將行其時。不呼自至，不喚自隨。

[P.4]

百慶方就，万福消微。大吉。

4-2-4 Deliver a jade emblem and go along with the right timing. He will come without being called and follow without being shouted at. A hundred celebrations will take place and ten thousand objects of good fortune be dispersed. Greatly auspicious.

[9] 4-1-1 龍戲深泉，隨空涉天。良時吉日，高嶺相延。万福臻集，千殃莫傳。病者必差，歡樂自然。吉。

4-1-1 Dragons play in the deep spring and following the Void traverse the sky. On a good time and auspicious day, high mountain ridges stretch on and on. Ten thousand objects of good fortune arrive at the same time; a thousand calamities are averted. The sick will recover and happiness will occur spontaneously. Auspicious.

[P.5]

[10] 1-2-3 魚在深泉，乘⁶⁸雲上天。待吾吉時，与我同遷。不期而會，不求自前。大富大貴，高枕高眠。大吉利。

1-2-3 Fish in a deep well, ride clouds up into the sky. One waits for the auspicious time and moves with it. Meeting without making appointments, advancing without seeking for it. Great wealth and great valuables, high pillows and good sleep. Greatly auspicious and profitable.

[11] 4-3-3⁶⁹ 河水波浪，逆風徘徊。人不樂外，人悲哀 彡（哀）。

[P.6]

家室離別，散失錢財。病者不差，行人不來。大凶。

4-3-3 The waves on the river go back and forth against the wind. Someone will be unhappy outside and go into a state of sad mourning. The household will be separated and the cash and goods lost. The sick will not recover and the travelers will not come. Greatly inauspicious.

68 This and the preceding character are insertions replacing 水.

69 The text reads “3-3-3,” but this is an error for 4-3-3; see Kalinowski, “Cléromancie,” 318, n. 61.

[12] 2-3-1 皇帝入山，道逢福仙。對共談話，懃心上天，百福雲集，三品日遷。
[P.7]

口舌消滅，福祿自然。大吉。

2-3-1 An emperor goes into the mountains and runs into a good fortune immortal on the road. They chat together and diligent at heart they go up to Heaven. A hundred good fortune clouds gather and ranks daily move up. Gossip dissipates and fortune and salary come spontaneously. Greatly auspicious.

[13] 1-4-1⁷⁰ 神飛不高，徘徊畏丘。与雀相逢，橫為卵啄。黃鳥失群，被人攝錄。口舌橫來，坐見牢獄。大凶。

1-4-1 The spirit does not fly up high but flits back and forth over dangerous hills. It runs into a swallow carrying an egg in its beak. The yellow bird has lost its flock and been captured by someone. Gossip unexpectedly comes, and one will witness imprisonment. Greatly inauspicious.

[P.8]

[14] 2-1-3 性淨心開，如登高臺。乃有神人，不召自來。所向和合，橫得錢財。病者自差，行者速迴。吉利。

2-1-3 Quiet in nature and open minded, as if climbing a high tower. Then there appears a spirit without being summoned. Whatever direction you go will be harmonious and unexpectedly result in wealth. The sick will recover on their own and travelers will quickly return. Auspicious and profitable.

[P.9]

[15] 1-3-2 井底蟬鳴，樹上鈎魚。所求不得，徒失功夫。錢財散失，家室空虛。憂⁷¹殃⁷¹禍來除。凶。

1-3-2 [As if] at the bottom of a well a cicada sings or you hook a fish in a tree: what you seek shall not be obtained; it is only a waste of effort. Wealth will be lost and the household vacated. Troubles and calamities will come and wipe everything out. Inauspicious.

70 The text reads “2-4-1,” but this is an error for 1-4-1; Kalinowski 2003: 318, n. 61.

71 殃 is an insertion in smaller writing.

[P.10]

[16] 4-4-2 鵝飛翔起，集住⁷²木枝。不飲不食，頭抵（低）尾垂。往於高嶺，乃有糧資。前須有坎，後見明

[P.11]

機。道無開（關）梁，所求得⁷³隨（遂）。吉。

4-4-2 Geese fly soaring upward gathering on tree branches. Not eating or drinking, lowered heads and dropping tails. They go to the high mountain ridges to get food. At first there will be a hole but later a bright pivot⁷⁴ will appear. The way without passes and bridges will go as one wishes. Auspicious.

72 住 added in at the top of the line.

73 得 added to the side as correction of miswritten graph.

74 Possibly the Northern Dipper, or other mechanism bringing light to a dark situation.

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English Translation of the *Divination of Maheśvara*

Dotson, Brandon, et al. "Dice and Gods on the Silk Road: Chinese Buddhist Dice Divination in Transcultural Context." *Dice and Gods on the Silk Road*, Brill, 2021, <https://brill.com/display/title/59960>.

This is called the divination of Maheśvara. When Śakra, Brahmā, and the four heavenly kings and the many spirits gather and are watching, sit facing west and announce your name as follower So-and-So. Focus the mind and profess a vow. After enunciating the matters at hand, throw the die three times and complete the set. If it comes out good, then you can stop after one mantic figure. If the divination results in an inauspicious set, then you can look at up to three sets. Believers can look at them but nonbelievers should not. If a person is careful, there will not be one mistake in ten thousand. This [method] grants what is sought, and must not be transmitted to outsiders for even a thousand pieces of gold.

[1] 1-1-1 This is the King Brahmā set. For any issues you seek to resolve, as long as you know how to keep it in your mind, everything will go your way. Wealth will come of its own accord, all generations at home will be safe and happy. Those traveling afar will have unobstructed roads. **Greatly auspicious.**

[2] 2-2-2 This is named the God Vināyaka set. If a person has issues to resolve, the god will protect him/ her. Whatever s/he needs will soon be obtained; clothing and food will come of their own accord and whatever s/he seeks will be fulfilled. Subsequently, camels, horses, and various domestic ani- mals will not die or be injured. **Greatly auspicious.**

[3] 3-3-3 This is named the Great Spirit of the Five Paths set. All of your requests will be met. Those traveling afar will be unobstructed and tidings will come of their own accord. And also the desired fortune, promotion in official positions, higher salary, and marriages into or out of the family, and everything you undertake will be achieved. **Greatly auspicious.**

[4] 4-4-4 This is named the [Bodhisattva] Kṣitigarbha's set. If the people about to travel are fourteen years of age, they will arrive; if they are twenty-three, forty-one, fifty, eighty, or fifty-nine, they will arrive. There will be great happiness. If they are fifteen or sixteen, their official positions will be upgraded. But they still need to be devoted to the Three Jewels (*triratna*). They will frequently encounter happy matters, and receive the patronage of superiors. This matter [about which you divined] will go smoothly and be achieved. **Greatly auspicious;** celebration.

[5] 2-4-1 This is the Burning Wheat Demon set. This indicates mutual dislike, cheating, and lies. That which you desire won't come to pass and all undertakings will fail. You will be terrorized night and day. If you are scared, then contemplate goodness and difficulties will dissipate of their own accord. This mantic figure is therefore **neutral**.

[6] 2-1-4 This is named the Earth Spirit (Pṛthivī) set. [This is] such that the omen will make it so that whatever you wish will happen on its own. There is no need to worry: you have just encountered a great omen. There is little to worry about, since it will lead to your advancement. Do not look again.

[7] 4-1-3 This is named the Ox-Head Spirit set. The issues are piled up with difficulties, but you should not ask others for help. Nothing you do will be achieved, and it is all a waste of effort. This mantic figure is bad; don't do anything. **Inauspicious**.

[8] 1-4-2 This is named the [Bodhisattva] King Moonlight set. When whatever issues you have to resolve are achieved and completed, it will be deeply satisfying. You don't need to worry anymore. What you want will happen on its own. Great joy and celebration. Do not look again. **Greatly auspicious**.

[9] 1-1-3 This is named the Flower Spirit set. Whatever your aspirations regarding personal affairs, they will all go your way. You will convert all bad matters into good ones in accordance with your intentions; every day you will advance, and anywhere you go will be unobstructed. **Greatly auspicious**.

[10] 1-3-1 This is named the Omen God set. Due to all the good you practiced earlier there is nothing to worry about. Now this will be the case going forward, but you must remember to contemplate goodness so that you will get what you desire. If there are a lot of quarrels, contemplating goodness will avoid suffering. **Greatly auspicious**.

[11] 1-2-3 This is named the Flower Wheel God-king set. You don't need to worry too much. [Your] desired issues just encountered a great omen, what you desire will immediately become happy and celebratory! Those separated by a long distance will come together again. **Greatly auspicious**.

[12] 3-2-1 This is named the Hārītī set. When someone wants something, it will seem murky, but just as a beam of light radiates through the clouds, so it will be for you. First there will be darkness and then light, so don't worry. Happy celebrations will come, so don't be anxious. **Auspicious**.

[13] 2-2-3 This is named the Hidden Spooks set. The issues are difficult to achieve, so it is better to rest. Don't bother to ask again, since after today [you] will daily advance and things will become relatively satisfactory. This mantic figure is therefore **neutral**.

[14] 4-1-1 This is named the White Emperor General set. [I am] afraid that what comes out of the mouths of those who resent you is not good, and their words become increasingly evil. Only if you recite the names of the many Buddhas will you get what you want. This mantic figure is therefore **neutral**.

[15] 4-3-2 This is named the Great Brahmā God-king of the North set. The god supports [you in] that which you seek, and matters will be fully resolved in your favor. From then on there will be

fewer successes. But fix your mind, seek the Buddha, and invoke the Three Jewels, and you will get what you want. **Greatly auspicious.**

[16] 1-4-3 This is named the Yama set. The god protects your body. It is like the moon appearing as a sliver at first, but gradually waxing so that, by the fifteenth day, it is entirely full. From this day onward, you will be progressively better and get everything you want. You need not worry. **Greatly auspicious.**

[17] 2-3-4 This is named the Displaying Omens Spirit set. Everything you seek will be slightly difficult. Fix your mind on seeking the Buddha and diligently invoke the Three Jewels, then all will be achieved and daily you will meet with advancement. **Auspicious.**

[18] 4-4-1 This is named the White Cover Demon set. Most of what you seek will not come out as you wish, and all effort will be wasted. It will really be difficult to get anything done, so don't bother. This mantic figure is therefore **neutral**. Fixing your mind, seek out the Sangha to avoid suffering.

[19] 4-1-2 This is named the Wife Spirit set. It is like abandoning a horse to look for a calf and then losing both the horse and the calf. Everything you do will give rise to frustration and stagnation, and what you seek will not be achieved. This mantic figure is **greatly inauspicious.**

[20] 1-3-3 This is named the Exhaling Fragrance Demon set. You will have something horrific occur and be fearful, respectively; but from now on if you tend towards good in what you desire and if you diligently contemplate goodness, bad things will dissipate on their own. **Greatly auspicious.**

[21] 3-2-2 This is named the Maheśvarī set. Should the sound of quarrels reach your ... if you don't contemplate goodness then bad things will happen. **Inauspicious.**

[22] 2-3-2 This is named the Five God-kings Sky-Well set. Like a cow approaching its calf, so a person will return and what you wish will ... reverence will be increasingly abundant. **Auspicious.**

[23] 2-2-4 This is called the Spirit Turtle set. Like the banana tree flower withering [so that it may fruit], you will flourish. One might worry about ... later worries, but from this day onward things will daily improve. **Greatly auspicious.**

[24] 4-2-1 This is called the King of the Wind Spirit(s) (Vāyu?) set. You are constantly unhappy. Even if this is the case now, you'll later have happy celebrations. Don't worry or be fearful, as before long things will go your way. **Initially inauspicious, but later auspicious.**

[25] 2-3-1 The Delightful Music Transcendent(s) set. Like a bird seeking food, your affairs will be likewise. Choosing places in your body, the Six Spirits will protect you. Not being rushed by others, what other worries and fears can you have? What you want will happen on its own and whatever you wish will result in **auspicious** celebrations.

[26] 1-2-4 This is named the Lady of the Divine Horse set. The god protects your body. You will get what you seek and arrive if you travel far. Every day will get happier and happier. **Greatly auspicious.**

[27] 3-2-4 This is named the Dependent Origination set. It will be just like a child looking at the moon reaching out to grab it. Your affairs will be likewise; none will be accomplished, so don't bother to try. This mantic figure is therefore **neutral.**

[28] 1-4-4 This is named the Lady of the Good Minister set. It protects your body and the number of your riding horses and domestic animals will daily increase. Storehouses will multiply and fill on their own. **Greatly auspicious.**

[29] 4-3-1 This is named the Ox Shadow God set. It is as if you fell into the water and a boat came to the rescue. Since you can reach the bank of the river, what worries are left? **Greatly auspicious.**

[30] 3-4-1 This is named the Flaming Spooks set. It is like taking a boat across the sea and reaching the shore. A happy celebration will occur and everything sought for will be achieved. For certain! **Greatly auspicious.**

[31] 2-2-1 This is named the Narāyaṇa King set. If all matters are accomplished early, there will be auspicious celebrations. All good things will arrive on their own, in accordance with your desires. **Greatly auspicious.** Do not look again.

[32] 1-2-1 This is named the Ash Woods God set. Everything you wish for will occur. The earth spirits will all protect you so that everything you do will be what you want and whatever you seek you will find; all places you travel will be reached without need to rush. **Greatly auspicious.**

[33] 1-2-2 This is named the Supervisor of Life Allotments Demon set. If you completed this set, no evil will reach you, but nothing you seek will come about and none of the goods you want will follow. You must be calm and tranquil, and contemplate goodness. This mantic figure is therefore **neutral.**

[34] 2-1-2 This is named the God of Predicaments set. Everything will come tumbling down and be destroyed, all seas will dry up, whatever you seek will be broken apart, and nothing you do will come together. This mantic figure is **really bad.** Contemplate goodness day and night to resolve it naturally.

[35] 3-3-2 This is named the Soil Demon set. What you have is good and enough; should you seek to accomplish something major you will waste a lot of energy. It is better to stop these matters and not try too hard. In addition, do not do any long-distance travel. This mantic figure is there- fore neutral.

[36] 3-3-1 This is named the Lady Traveler/ Wife of the Traveler set. Whatever you are planning should not be rushed. Concentrate your mind on burning incense and reciting the names of the Buddhas, and on earnestly uttering vows, and evil things will naturally dissipate. You will get

what you wished for; you don't need to be worried. At first you will be worried but later things will be **auspicious**.

[37] 1-3-4 This is named the Lady Wind Spirit(s)/ Wife of the Wind Spirit(s) (Vāyu) set. Your affairs will be as if you were climbing a mountain, or that it frequently rained but nothing grew. Evil demons will move around in your body. You must cultivate goodness and good fortune so that the evil demons leave your body on their own.

[38] 3-2-3 This is named the Spirit Husband set. Your affairs will be as if you were holding a clod of earth and tossed it into the water, where it sinks and disintegrates without a trace, sunken into the depths and unattainable. It is better to take a break, and even if you have doubts, do not look again. This mantic figure is therefore **neutral**.

[39] 4-2-2 This is named the Old Demon (Pāñcika?) set. It is like a bird being nearly caught by a net, and immediately soaring up high. Diligently contemplate goodness so no net catches you. This mantic figure [means you] will get what you want. **Greatly auspicious**.

[40] 2-4-2 This is named the Lady Spooks/ Wife of the Spooks set. This matter is like a flood reaching heaven, just terrifying! Your affairs will be also thus, with water damaging and overflowing the sky. But there is nothing to worry about. **Initially inauspicious** and later **auspicious**.

[41] 4-2-4 This is named the Omen God set. The god protects this person. The situations and issues all result in auspicious celebrations. Your affairs will be like the moon reaching perfect fullness on the fifteenth of every month. To get what you seek, recite the names of Buddha and things will turn your way.

[42] 3-4-3 This is named the Former Kings set. The kings protect your body. Early on you will get satisfaction and goods. There will be peace and great happiness. The good news will come as you wish.

[43] 2-4-4 This is named the Nisuo God set. The god protects your body. You will make progress and will achieve all of your uncompleted affairs. Family members will come together harmoniously. You will progress daily. Lawsuits will be won and things that are separated will come together again. **Greatly auspicious**.

[44] 3-4-2 This is named the Thunder Lord set. People say a lot of bad things about you and see you as a tiger. At home, there are grudges and relatives cheating each other. Nothing you want will occur, and will all be a waste of effort. This mantic figure is **greatly inauspicious**.

[45] 4-1-4 This is named the Obtainment Spirit set. The king protects you. Much of what you want will come and go, and [I'm] afraid it will be difficult to accomplish. So, just seek the Three Jewels and you will exorcize difficulties. After you contemplate goodness, you will be promoted.

[46] 4-2-3 This is named the Virtuous Gentle Lady/ Wife of Liangsui set. You worry about your bones and flesh (i.e., children) so much that you can't sleep at night. Much of what you want will

not go your way. If you continuously invoke the Three Jewels, then the matters at hand will change from evil to good. From this day forward everything you ask for will come up **auspicious**.

[47] 1-1-4 This is named the Locana set. You come to a resolution by yourself and have great satisfaction—no need to worry. Heaven ... all affairs will be just as you want them and every day the situation will improve

[48] 2-1-3 This is named the Spirit of the North set. All your desires will be fulfilled as you want them and situations will daily improve. There is nothing that ...

[49] 1-4-1 This is named the King of the Five Paths set. You will be cheated in every situation. But if you recite the names of the many Buddhas, the saints ... will come of their own accord. **Initially inauspicious**, later **auspicious**.

[50] 1-3-1 This is named the Asura King(s) set. There should be no worries about whatever you do, and there will be not a single obstacle. Whatever you desire ... **Greatly auspicious**. Do not look again.

[51] 3-1-1 This is named the King of the Mountain Spirits set. Body and mind are like the wind, neither stopping nor going. Nothing you want will be accomplished. Your thoughts are so unfixed that they cannot settle on their own. This matter will not be achieved. **Inauspicious**.

[52] 2-1-1 This is named the Green Spooks set. Your enemies constantly bring trouble to your family. The situations are terrifying, but there is no need for worry as you will be saved from them and be satisfied. No need to rush around. **Auspicious**.

[53] 3-1-3 This is named the Lady Heaven Net/ Wife of Tianluo set. It will be like someone going up and down a mountain, sometimes auspicious and other times not. From today onward, everyday matters will improve. **Initially inauspicious**, but later **auspicious**.

[54] 3-1-4 This is named the Residence Spirit set. Nothing you seek will be obtained and nothing you do will be completed. There will be many worries and lots of fear, and your *jing* and *hun* spirits will be scared. This mantic figure is therefore neutral.

[55] 4-4-3 This is named the God-king God Vaiśravaṇa set. It protects your body. Everything you think of will be satisfied. You will be promoted as you wish. No need for worry. Relatives will see each other. **Auspicious**.

[56] 4-3-4 This is named Grandmother of the West set. Things start off well, but will be destroyed by your own actions. If you seek anything then take up invoking the Three Jewels and then you can find satisfaction and family members will be safe. **Greatly auspicious**.

[57] 3-4-4 This is named the Asura(s) set. The king(s) will protect your body. All good clothes and food will come of their own accord. As for your person, no one will bully or intimidate you and things will daily improve from now on. **Greatly auspicious**; celebration.

[58] 4-4-2 This is named Lady of the Mirror-vessel set. It is as if a person faces a tree without seeing the flowers covering it, which will come to seed of their own accord. All your concerns will result in benefits. Relatives will see each other. A **greatly auspicious** mantic figure.

[59] 1-1-2 This is named the Goddess Zhao set. Affairs will be like a bird nest in which chicks think of food when they see their mother. Whatever you seek will be accomplished, lawsuits won, and those separated brought together. **Greatly auspicious.**

[60] 4-3-3 This is named the Erudite set. As long as you set your mind on good-ness, everything will be satisfactory. After you contemplate goodness, you will get all goods that you seek just as you wish. With each day you will achieve more as you wish. Everything will be according to your intentions. **Greatly auspicious.**

[61] 1-4-3 This is named the God Brahmā set. Everything that has already been accomplished will be ruined by your own actions. Seek the Buddha and contemplate goodness. With this mantic figure [you] will receive satisfaction. **Greatly auspicious.**

[62] 3-3-4 This is named the God [bodhisattva] Avalokiteśvara set. The god protects [you]. If you devote your heart to respecting the Buddha and contemplating goodness, then wealth will follow and your home will be peaceful and joyful. **Greatly auspicious.**

[63] 2-3-3 This is named the God-king(s) set. You will have repeated interactions with an outsider and, upon returning home, people will speak well of it. What you want will be hard to get. You cannot use wealth to resolve this matter. Your desires will all be satisfied. **Auspicious.**

[64] 2-4-3 This is named the Goodness Goddess set. Mountain gods of the four directions all protect [you] together. Anything that you plan will go according to your wishes. Mothers, children, and relatives will be able to see each other again, and news that you wish from far away will arrive. **Greatly auspicious.**

[65] 3-1-2 This [text] is named the Divination of Maheśvara. What you are intending and seeking determines the mantic figure. The divination elsewhere amply proclaims, "This is the Asura(s) set. The king(s) will protect [you]. You will get whatever you want. All clothing and food will come from your own actions. As for your person, no one will dare bully you. **Greatly auspicious.**

Gods and Spirits Invoked by the Numerical Trigrams (Indexed Here by Order of Appearance)

Dotson, Brandon, et al. "Dice and Gods on the Silk Road: Chinese Buddhist Dice Divination in Transcultural Context." *Dice and Gods on the Silk Road*, Brill, 2021, <https://brill.com/display/title/59960>.

[1] *Fan Wang* 梵王, Brahmārāja. Often rendered in Chinese phonetically *pi luo he me tian* 婆羅賀麼天.

[2] *Dasheng Tian* 大聖天 Great Sacred God. Probably to be identified with Vināyaka, known in Japanese esoteric Buddhism as Shōten 聖天, but more often as Shōten Kangiten 大聖歡喜天. The figure can be traced back to the elephant-headed god Gaṇeśa, the eldest son of Śiva.

[3] *Wudao Dashen* 五道大神, Great Spirit of the Five Paths/*gatis*. Typically depicted as one of the generals of hell, he oversees rebirth among the five classes of beings (hell-beings, hungry ghosts, animals, humans, and gods).

[4] *Dizang* 地藏, Kṣitigarbha bodhisattva. Linked to foreknowledge, divination, and saving those condemned to hell.

[5] *Shaomai Gui* 燒麥鬼, Burning Wheat Demon. Unidentified; possibly a local demon. Assuming an error, it could be a hungry ghost (*preta*) with a burning mouth, such as Jvālamukha, the king of the *pretas*.

[6] *Di Shen* 地神, Earth Spirit; the Indic goddess Pṛthivī. Associated with Vaiśravaṇa and with fertility, she is also one of the twelve directional deities, representing the nadir.

[7] *Niutou Shen* 牛頭神, Ox-Head Spirit. A Hell spirit sometimes depicted with a bull's head; described as having a human body with metal claws. Niutou is also the name of a constellation in the *Fayuan julin* 法苑珠林, where it is one of the Seven Astral Lodges (*qi xiu* 七宿) of the north ruled by the Chinese directional deity Xuanwu 玄武.

[8] *Yueguang Wang* 月光王, Moonlight King. Possibly to be identified with Prince Moonlight, Candraprabha-kumāra, a bodhisattva linked to medicine and healing, to the Medicine Buddha Bhaiṣajyaguru, and to messianic scriptures. Popularly linked to fifth-

and sixth-century dissident political movements.

[9] *Hua Shen* 華神, Flower Spirit. Possibly a bodhisattva who offered the Buddha flowers. Hua shen appears along with Pṛthivī [6], Hārītī [12], and Indra/ Śakra [opening invocation]—all of whom are included in the *Divination of Maheśvara*—in a *dhāraṇī* sutra, the *Dafoding guangju tuoluoni jing* 大佛頂廣聚陀羅尼經. Alternatively, it may be read Xin Shen 莘神, indicating the spirit who descended into Xin during 15th year of reign of King Hui of Zhou 周惠王, according to a tale collected by Liu Xiang 劉向 (79–78bce) in the *Shuoyuan* 說苑. If the spirit received offerings and incense from the people, he knew the government was good.

[10] *XiangTian* 相天, Omen God. Onxiang,

[11] *Hualun Tianwang* 華輪天王, Flower Wheel God-king. Appears in the *Flower Garland Sūtra* (*Avatamsaka sūtra*; *Huayan jing* 華嚴經) as an abbreviation for golden wheel *cakravartin*.¹³⁷ Golden Wheel was one of four *cakravartins*, each named after a metal (gold, silver, bronze, iron), and ruling over four, three, two, and one continents, respectively.

[12] *Jiuzimu* 九子母, Mother of Nine Children, also known as Guimuzi 鬼母子. Identified with the demon mother Hārītī, a goddess linked to the death of children and later worshiped as a fertility goddess.¹³⁸ Before Jiuzimu was linked with Hārītī, she was the mother of the Nine Stars of the Dipper.

[13] *Niran Wangliang Gui* 匿然魍魎鬼, Hidden Spooks. *Wangliang* are minor demons that live in dusty corners of the built or natural environment that can disturb the health and welfare of people nearby. They are also associated with plagues, pestilence, and epidemics. In Tang sources, these demons cause a variety of afflictions, including mental confusion and miscarriage. Some sources suggest these are malevolent ghosts of dead children, such as those of the legendary Zhuan Xu 顛頊.

[14] *Baidi Jiangjun* 白帝將軍, White Emperor General. Baidi, “White Emperor,” is one of the *di* (gods, emperors) linked to the Chinese cosmogram of Five Agents, five directions, seasons, and colors. White was associated with metal, west, and autumn. Myth has it that Baidi was conceived when a red star appeared in his mother’s dreams. Baidi is another name for the mythical figure Shao Hao 少昊. In their roles as generals, they perhaps acted as thunder gods or protectors of the Five Paths. In Daoist ritual, the White Emperor General is one of five body gods that could emerge from the nose via the lungs.

[15] *Bei Da Fan Tianwang* 北大梵天王, Great Brahmā God-king of the North. Unidentified.

[16] *Fanluo Tian* 梵羅天, Possibly an error for Yanluo 閻羅 Yama, king of Hell, usually called Yanluo Wang 閻羅王, but also known as Yanmo Tian 焰魔天 / 炎魔天.

[17] *Buxiang Shen* 布相神, Displaying Omens Spirit. See [10] above for this translation of *xiang*. The term *buxiang* could also refer to a net, or *zongbu* 纒布. Otherwise, this is an unknown spirit.

[18] *Baimeng Gui* 白蒙鬼, White Cover Demon. Possibly *Sit ā tapatr ā*, White Parasol goddess, a Buddhist protectress usually known as “the white parasol that cover’ s Buddha’ s head,” Baishan Gai Fo Ding 白傘蓋佛頂.

[19] *QiShen* 妻神, Wife Spirit. The character Qi isn't entirely clear. An alternative reading is Poison Spirit 毒神, which could indicate female and male spirits for quelling snakes and toxic ghosts, found in Tang sources in association with Brahm ā and magical medicine. One could possibly connect this to the Buddhist deity for counteracting poison, *J ā ngul ī*, though her name is usually phoneticized, e.g., *changquli* 常瞿利.¹⁴⁷ A further alternative is Jiang Shen 姜神, that is, Jiang Ziya 子牙 or Jiang Taigong 太公, a legendary strategist for Zhou founders, King Wen and King Wu, in their overthrow of the Shang.

[20] *Hu Xinxiang Gui* 呼馨香鬼, Exhaling Fragrance Demon. Unidentified.

Possibly indicating *gandharvas* (usually phoneticized *qiantapo* 乾闥婆), the lowest class of gods who feed on scents, and who are famous as celestial musicians. They are also associated with birth, and have hybrid animal features.

[21] *Zizai Tian Wangnu* 自在天王女, Princess of the Self-Existent God; *Maheśvar ī*, the female counterpart of *Maheśvara*, who is known as Zizai Tian or Da Zizai Tian. She is included among the seven mother goddesses (*m ā trk ā*). This same moniker is sometimes applied to *Mah ā m ā y ā*, mother of Ś ā kyamuni, also known as *M ā y ā dev ī*.

[22] *Wuwang Tianjing* 五王天井, Five Kings Sky-well. In the *Sutra of the Five Kings* (*Fo shuo wuwang jing* 佛說五王經), the Buddha teaches about the four sufferings: birth, getting old, sickness, and death. If the graph *jing* 井 was simply a misreading of a poorly written *nu* 女 (*tiannu* would be a Celestial Maiden, a well-known Tang concept), then this could be a female avatar for the Five Kings. Alternatively, it could refer to Draupadi, wife of the five *Pandava* brothers who was lost in a game of dice in a famous scene in the *Mah ā bh ā rata*. Reading it as it stands, as *jing* 井, it might indicate an asterism, such as in the Buddhist version of the Twenty-Eight Astral Lodges (*xiu* 宿), a central feature of Chinese hemerology. The Lodge named Well was associated with southern gods; it could be called *Punarvasu* and linked to *Aditi* the sun spirit, a Gold Master (*Jin shi* 金師). Generally, the cosmic pattern of eight squares around a middle as in the graph *jing* 井 was a Chinese cosmograph, known in Daoism as the Nine Palaces. This is a pattern found in Dunhuang geomancy

texts. Tianjing was also the sacred *impluvia*, a physical space represented in architecture consisting of a square opening in the roof of a central room, possibly a feature in local residences.

[23] *Shengui* 神龜, Spirit Turtle. One of the four spirit animals in Chinese lore. Historically associated with divination, long life, and magical transformations. In medieval lore it was a conveyance for transcendents into the purple cloud vapor (*qi*). It lived in the ocean with a shell representing the cosmos: the dipper stars were in the center of his shell, which was like a yellow-gold pan; the sun and moon shone on the left and right. In Indic lore, K ū rma was a turtle avatar of Viṣṇu that supported the cosmos.

[24] *Fengshen Wang* 風神王, King of Wind Spirit(s). Perhaps the Indic god V ā yu, also called Feng Tian 風天. In Tang sources, the King of the Wind was linked to the northwest (like the Indic god V ā yu) and to hell. There is a Feng Bo 風伯 spirit associated with tales of the Yellow Emperor, especially his battle with Chi You 蚩尤. Feng Bo and Yu Shi 雨師 (Rain Master) were often paired. By the Tang there were many spirits of the wind, and V ā yu had merged with Chinese wind gods in the esoteric Buddhist pantheon. In Indic traditions the wind spirits are the Maruts, who are ruled by either Rudra or Indra.

[25] *Xinle Tianren* 欣樂天人, Delightful Music Transcendent(s). In the *Huayan jing*, the term “Delightful Music Kimnara King” 欣樂緊那羅王 appears. Kimnara spirits were associated with song and dance. An occupant of Heaven was called a *tianren*.

[26] *Tianma Furen* 天馬夫人, Lady of the Divine Horse. *Tianma* often refers to the blood-sweating Ferghana horses prized by Han Wudi and often depicted in sculpture. In the *Shanhaijing* there is a *tianma* described as a beast shaped like a white dog with a black head that flies when it sees people and makes a cry that sounds like its name. Neither of these two identifications leaves much room for a “lady” or “wife” of the *tianma*. Another possibility, given the appearance of these gods in Sanskrit dice divination texts, is that “divine horse(s)” refers to the Aśvins, twin Vedic gods who, pulling a chariot, appear to symbolize day and night, and over-see oaths and truth in speech. They are also associated with healing. Their wife and sister is Uṣas, the goddess of the dawn, who figures prominently in the *Rig Veda*. The goddess Sarasvatī (in Japan, Benzaiten), is also said to be a consort of the Aśvins.

[27] *Yinyuan* 因緣, Buddhist concept of dependent origination (Skt.: *prat ī tyā- samutp ā da*). In this case, it seems the concept is personified as the name of a spirit.

[28] *Liangchen Furen* 良臣夫人, Lady of the Good Minister. The Good Minister was one of six *chen* 臣 who acted as “regulators of relations between heaven, earth, and man” (*tian di ren zhi zheng* 天地人之正), also known to be astral or natural forces during the Han Dynasty.

[29] *Niuying Tian* 牛影天, Ox Shadow God. Unidentified. Possibly a reference to the Buddhist metaphors of ox-herding and the ox' s shadow.

[30] *Dianran Wangliang Gui* 點然魍魎鬼, Flaming Spooks. Unidentified.

[31] *Naluoyan Wang* 那羅延王, N ā r ā yaṇa 那羅延, another name for Viṣṇu. He often comes up in groups with Maheśvara, H ā r ī t ī , Pṛthiv ī , Brahm ā , Indra, and Vin ā yaka.

[32] *Huilin Tian* 灰林天, Ash Woods God. Unidentified. It could be identified with one of the many Buddhist groves associated with the Buddha.

[33] *Siming Gui* 司命鬼, Supervisor of Life Allotments Demon. Siming, also known as the Supervisor of Fate, is already known in manuscripts from the Fourth Century BCE. Earlier considered a deity, not a demon, but along with the God of the Five Paths, he became associated with Yama and the bureaucracy of hell.

[34] *Enan Tian* 厄難天, God of Predicaments. Unidentified. Perhaps a phonetic (mis)spelling. Vaguely reminiscent of the “Supervisor of Calamity” (Si Huo 司禍) who appears in the Fourth Century BCE Baoshan divination record.

[35] *Tu Gui* 土鬼, Soil Demon. This is the name for a god of the underworld, who has a horned three-eyed tiger head, bull-like body, and taste for human prey.

[36] *Xinglu Furen* 行路夫人, Lady Traveler/ Wife of Xinglu. Unidentified. A son of Huangdi' s liked to wander far away and died on the road and is therefore called a *xing shen* 行神. Possibly to be linked with Vin ā yaka/ Gaṇeśa as a remover of obstacles and a god of travelers. Different story cycles link Vin ā yaka with various female deities.

[37] *Fengshen Furen* 風神夫人, Lady Wind Spirit/ Wife of the Wind Spirits. Unidentified. This could be related to the classes of Chinese wind spirits mentioned above at [24], and/ or it could pertain to V ā yu, and indicate either his wife or the female spirits associated with him.

[38] *Shenfu* 神夫, Spirit Husband. Unidentified. Possibly to be paired with [19] Qi Shen 妻神 Wife Spirit.

[39] *Lao Gui* 老鬼, Old Demon. Possibly short for Lao Gui Shenwang 老鬼神王, an epithet of P ā ṅcika, husband of H ā r ī t ī , the goddess is named in set [12]. Together, P ā ṅcika and H ā r ī t ī constituted a divine couple of fertility and prosperity.

[40] *Wangliang Furen* 魍魎夫人, Lady Spooks. Unidentified.

[41] *Xiang Tian* 相天, Omen God. Same as [10].

[42] *Xianwang* 先王, Former Kings. Likely a reference to Sage Kings of prehistoric eras and to the founder kings of the Western Zhou.

[43] *Nisuo Tian* 尼娑天. Nisuo God, possible abbreviation for Qiujianisuo 求迦尼娑, also known as Jujianisuo 拘迦那娑, (P ā li) C ū.lakokanad ā or Kokanad ā , daughter of Pajjunna, a rain god in the P ā li canon.

[44] *Lei Gong* 雷公, Thunder Lord. An ancient Chinese meteorological deity often paired with Yu Shi (Rain Master). Lei Gong is also assimilated to Lei Shen 雷神 in esoteric Buddhism, where he appears together with V ā yu (Feng Shen 風神) among the twenty-eight attendants of 1,000-armed Avalokiteśvara/ Guanyin. In Daoism, thunder generals quell demons.

[45] *Deshen* 得神, Obtainment Spirit. The word *de* is used for the Sanskrit word *pr ā pta* “to gain (as in spiritual power).” The category of *de* “obtaining (what one desires)” is prevalent in Chinese divination going back to at least the fourth century BCE.

[46] *LiangsuiFuren* 良遂夫人, Virtuous-gentle Lady/Wife of Liangsui. Unidentified.

[47] *Lu Shen* 盧神, possibly Lushena 盧舍那 aka Liushena 流舍那, Luzhena 盧遮那, that is, Locana, the female counterpart of the Buddha Vairocana (Piluzhena Fo 毗盧遮那佛). Alternatively, if *lu* was read as *lu* 爐 “hearth, burner” this may be a god of the incense burner (the Chinese stove god was normally referred to as *zao shen* 灶神).

[48] *BeiShen* 北神, Spirit of the North an ancient cosmological deity. The spirits of the four directions are seen in pre-Qin texts and likely go back to the Shang period. In the Buddhist context, it could also be Kubera.

[49] *Wudao Wang* 五道王, King of the Five Paths. See [3].

[50] *Axiuluo Wang* 阿修羅王, Asura King(s). Powerful deities in Buddhist cosmology who oppose the gods; also “great cosmic demons that hold the sun and the moon.” The king of the Asuras is Vemacitrin, whose daughter married Śakra, the king of the gods. See also [57] and [65].

[51] *Shanshen Wang* 山神王, King of Mountain Spirits. Every mountain had a spirit. Some were associated with herbs and medicines.

[52] *Qing Wangliang Gui* 青魍魎鬼, Green Spooks. Unidentified.

[53] *Tianluo Furen* 天羅夫人, Lady Heaven Net/ Wife of Tianluo. Tianluo was an alternative name for the Dipper star, Tianwang 天綱 (天罔, or Tiangang天罡) or for Bi 畢, one of the Astral Lodges associated with the west.

[54] *Zhaishen* 宅神, Residence Deity. An ancient deity, known by various names since the fourth century BCE. In Tang Buddhist and Daoist sources it can protect the residence against thieves.

[55] *Pishamen Tianwang Tian* 毗沙門天王天, Vaisravana, one of the four God-kings, guardian of the north, and Dharma protector.

[56] *Xi wangmu* 西王母, Grandmother of the West. The epithet *wangmu* was used to refer to deceased grandmothers in pre-Han times. By the Tang, the Grandmother of the West was identified as a goddess of immortality living on top of the Kunlun Mountains. Commonly known as “Queen Mother” among Western scholars.

[57] *Axiuluo* 阿修羅, Asura(s). Same as [65]; see also [50].

[58] *Jingbo Furen* 鏡鉢夫人, Lady of the Mirror-vessel/Wife of Jingbo. Unidentified. A vessel filled with water could function as a mirror, and mirrors are central to a variety of Chinese Buddhist mantic practices.

[59] *Zhao Nu Tian* 趙女天, Goddess Zhao. Unidentified; possibly the female version of Zhao Gongmin 趙公明 (aka Zhao Xuantan 趙玄壇), who escaped the world during the Qin period to cultivate the Dao. Able to tame extreme weather, expel sickness, etc.

[60] *Boshi* 博士, the Erudite. Possibly to be identified with the eponymous spirit found in Qing-period calendars as one of the four main calendar spirits, together with Silkworm Room (Canshi 蠶室), Strongman (Lishi 力士), and Memorialist (Zoushu 奏書), who feature in hemerological diagrams. Of these, Erudite and Memorialist were considered auspicious.

[61] *Fanmo Tian* 梵摩天, Brahmā. Possibly an error for Yanmo Tian 炎魔天 Yama, King of Hell. See [1, 16].

[62] *Guanyin Tian* 觀音天, Avalokiteśvara, the bodhisattva of compassion.

[63] *Tianwang* 天王, God-king(s). This could indicate the kings of the four directions. Tianwang is also the name that the Buddha bestows on his wicked cousin Devadatta in the twelfth chapter of the

Lotus Sutra, when he predicts that Devadatta will become a future Buddha by this name. The term can also indicate Śiva/ Maheśvara.

[64] *Shan Nuñian* 善女天, Goodness Goddess. Unidentified. Possibly associated with the Mountain Spirits of the Four Directions, Sifang Shanwang 四方山王. Goodness is also personified in the form of the “good spirits” (*shan shen*), a class of demon-dispelling spirits—converted demons, where they variously encircle and protect a person observing the precepts, or even reside in a person’s heart/ mind.

[65] *Axiuluo* 阿修羅, Asura(s). Same as [57]; see also [50]. The start of the entry, which we read as a corrupted end title, names Maheśvara.