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Writing as a Threshold between the Worlds: Glyphomancy in China

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Abstract

This article addresses how the meaning of life, the unconscious desire, or, to put it another way, destiny, is sought. It raises the question of decrypting a hidden, unconscious meaning, causing it to emerge by means of divination that examines the body, dreams and, specifically here, writing, seen as a "threshold between the worlds," in other words a way of questioning, of bringing out the difference, the distance between our two registers of language: the conscious and the unconscious. Entirely dedicated to different mantics, amongst which the incubation of dreams, Shizhu shan is dedicated to the Nine Immortal Lords (transformed into) Carps, Jiuli xianjun 九鯉仙君, whose legendary life illustrates this quest. From the practice of a soothsayer that performs the divination with the Secret Book of Zhuge's Divine Numbers, *Zhuge miben shenshu* 諸葛祕本神數,

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we examine the question of what constitutes a text? How to approach its practice, its coding and deciphering? What makes a community consider a text to be "true," even when it is apocryphal?

Keywords: writing, divination, deciphering, destiny, unconscious meaning, *Zhuge shenshu*

This article addresses how the meaning of life, the unconscious desire, or, to put it another way, "destiny" is sought. It raises the question of decrypting a hidden meaning, making it emerge through divination that examines the body, dreams and, specifically here, writing, seen as a "threshold between the worlds," in other words, a way of bringing out the difference, the distance between our two registers of language: the conscious and the unconscious. To do this, I shall describe the practice of a soothsayer I met more than twenty years ago on Shizhu shan 石竹山, near Fuqing (northern Fujian). This small mountain, entirely devoted to different mantics, is also devoted to the Nine Immortals whose asceticism I shall conclude with, because their legendary life illustrates this quest. It involves a mountain that, now more so than ever, relates to a body that is made to communicate,[1] a soothsayer who analyzes the questioning of his visitor in the specific context of a pilgrimage, of "care of the self," and a text that demonstrates clearly the situation I have just mentioned regarding the play between conscious and unconscious discourses, each obeying different logics.[2]

I shall also examine the question of what constitutes a text and how to approach its practice, its coding and deciphering. What

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[1] See Brigitte Baptandier (ed.). *De la lacune, le battement de la vie. Le corps naturel et ses représentations en Chine/On the lacuna, the pulsation of life. The natural body and its representations in China* (to be published by the Société d'ethnologie, Nanterre, coll. Recherches sur la Haute-Asie).

[2] As Daniel Pimbé explains clearly: http://www.daniel-pimbe.com/pages/les-maitres-a-penser/page-18.html (consulted June 13, 2015). "Although for conscious thought, the simple association of two ideas in our mind is not sufficient to establish true community between them, the unconscious uses as a pretext the slightest connection, however futile, to "shift" to the second idea the energy invested in the first, or to "condense" into a single idea the investments previously attached to several ideas. Although the principle for conscious thought is that not everything can happen at the same time, the unconscious does not take time into account. And while conscious thought respects the principle of reality and takes into consideration the coefficient of adversity of things, the unconscious obeys only the pleasure principle, the demands of immediate satisfaction. We are dealing with two systems, both coherent and both incompatible: the unconscious text does not have the same logic as the conscious text. It is this logic, and not the fact of being unconscious, that characterises the unconscious."

makes a community consider a text to be "true," even when it is apocryphal? How are the origin and transmission of texts envisaged, how do we invent an identity for them that reflects the thinking of those that make use of them? What is the status of their supposed or actual authors and what are the processes of their being written down, their modes of validation? What relationship can be established between practices of writing and the setting down of a "text"? What relationship is there between a text conceived of as a body: a "matrix of graphs," and an image "already written," conceived as the expression of the rhetoric of the sign? And, taking this further, how does a text become an anthropological object.[3] Following on from an article on the role of dreams as an elaboration of the self at this site, this article attempts to account for the peculiar atmosphere of Shizhu shan, a place one comes to as if seeking a memory through language in order to elaborate one's own idea of the "truth."

I. Shizhu shan

Stone Bamboo or Stone and Bamboo Mountain lies 25 *li* (14.4 km) west of Honglu in the city of Fuqing. At its peak is the temple of stone and bamboo, Shizhu si 石竹寺, where pilgrims pray to the Nine Immortal Lords, Jiuxian gong 九仙公, also named The Nine Immortals transformed into carp, Jiuli xian 九鯉仙. These immortals cultivated the art of longevity during the reign of Emperor Wu of the Han dynasty (140–86 BC). They practised alchemy and refined cinnabar at Shenyun dong 深雲洞, the "grotto in the depths of the cloud," where a cult was first devoted to them. They are famous for sending divinatory dreams to people who request them.[4]

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[3] Cf. Brigitte Baptandier, "Le texte en filigrane," in *Du corps au texte. Approches comparatives*, ed. Brigitte Baptandier and Giordana Charuty (Nanterre: Société d'ethnologie, 2008), 10 *ff*.

[4] On the subject of dreams, see Baptandier "Entrer en montagne pour y rêver," *Terrain* 26 (1997), 99–122. The Shenyun grotto "in the depths of the cloud" is still accessible via steps cut out of the rock above the Belvedere of the Nine Immortals. Pilgrims ask for the most intensely desired dreams there.

Shizhu xian shan, Zhonghua meng xiang 中華夢鄉石竹仙山

Three sites are dedicated to the Nine Lords. The first is Jade Mountain, Yushan 玉山, in Fuzhou, where they were said to have engaged in ascetic practices. The second lies to the south of Fujian, in the mountains of the aptly-named district Xianyou 仙遊, the trek of the immortals, the lake of the Nine Carps, Jiulihu 九鯉湖, where they obtained the *dao*. Legend has it that they flew from the town of Fuzhou in the form of carps, hence the name of the lake. Perched high on the mountain also lies the site known as the Stony Place, Shisuo shan 石所山, or Shizhu shan 石竹山, the Stone Bamboo Mountain, where a pavilion is devoted to them and where dreams are also requested. The great traveller Xu Xiake 徐霞客 (1586–1641) went there in person and gave an enraptured account of the place.[5] The third site is the Shizhu shan of Fuqing where they bestowed their benevolence as divinities. A saying that mentions Xu Xiake, which is also cited at the temple of Fuqing, states that the "Stony

[5] See Jacques Dars, *Xu Xiake. Randonnées aux sites sublimes* (Paris: Gallimard, 1993), 146–55.

Place (or Stone Bamboo Mountain) should be visited in the spring and the Carp lake in the autumn." In Fuqing, it is interpreted as "In spring, we ask for a dream from the stony bamboo; in winter, we examine the divinatory slips of the Nine Immortals."

This is why a popular ditty specifies:

> The Nine Immortals of the He clan
> Practised asceticism on Yushan
> Reached *dao* in [the district of] Jiuli [Nine Carp]
> Manifest their divine powers at Shizhu [Stone Bamboo].

The construction of their temple, first known by the Daoist name of Lingbao guan 靈寶觀 (Belvedere of the Magic Jewel),[6] did not begin until 847, under the Tang dynasty. Under the Song dynasty in 1121, the name of the temple became Lingbao tong guan 靈寶通觀, Belvedere of Communication with the Magic Jewel. It was extended and repaired under the Ming dynasty. It was not until between 1796 and 1821, under the Qing dynasty, that the temple was called *Shizhu chansi* 石竹禪寺 *chan* temple [of contemplation] of Stones and Bamboo, giving a new Buddhist shade to the cult.[7] The temple was then alternately under the control of the Daoist association (recently in 2009, for example) and the Buddhist association.

Currently, the *chan* Buddhist hall is found on the ground floor, with the shrine to Guanyin, giver of dreams. Going upstairs, one passes through three landings: the shrine to Wenchang, the God of literature, also reputed to send divinatory dreams; the small room of the God of the soil, and then the shrine to the Jade Emperor, master of the Daoist pantheon, before reaching the top of the belvedere where one finds the shrine to the Nine Immortals, to which pilgrims come to pray to receive divinatory dreams. Today

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[6] Regarding this term from Daoist vocabulary, which designates the treasure of the sacred texts that echo the original breaths of the spontaneous writings of the heavens, cf. Max Kaltenmark, "Ling P'ao. Note sur un terme du taoïsme religieux," in *Mélanges de l'Institut des Hautes Etudes Chinoises* (Paris: PUF, 1960), 559–88. Cf. also Kristofer Schipper, *Le corps taoïste* (Paris: Fayard, 1982).

[7] See He Daguang 何大光 and Wang Qisheng 王啟生 (eds.). *Shizhu shan zhi* 石竹山誌 (*Shizhu shan Monograph*), Fuqing shi Zongjiao ju 福清市宗教局, Fuqing shi Fojiao xiehui 福清市佛教協會, Fuqing shi Shizhu si 福清市石竹寺 (Xiamen daxue chubanshe chuban 廈門大學出版社出版, 1992).

Miaoxuandong, Shizhu chansi 石竹禪寺妙玄洞

Heshi Jiuxianjun 何氏九仙君

the temple is under the governance of the country's Buddhist association, which runs and maintains it. This does not, however, mean that this is a Buddhist site. The history and the configuration of the temple, as well as the different practices that take place there, show clearly that it is both a *guan* 觀 (Daoist temple) as well as a *chansi* 禪寺 (Buddhist temple of *chan* contemplation).[8]

There is a peculiar atmosphere to the hall of the belvedere where one goes to dream. Built into the rock, intentionally level with it, it provides a bird's-eye view over the entire mountain. The shrine to the Nine Lords with their golden statues is set in the center. In front of them stands a table of offerings constantly laden with food, fruit, cakes, and red candles. Incense flows from burners that often catch fire. The scented smoke contributes to making this place slightly unreal and dream-like.

The ground on both sides of the shrine is strewn with straw mats so that pilgrims can lie down and sleep as they await the requested dream, to the extent that the hall often resembles a disorderly dormitory. The area to the left of the shrine, west of the temple, is reserved for women and the right for men.

Women waiting for a dream

[8] My most recent visit was in 2011. New temples and shrines had been built over the last few years, including those for the Three Pure Ones, Sanqing 三清, and for Doumu 斗母. It is possible that the situation today (2015–16) has changed yet again.

At night, people use multicoloured quilts as well as the mats. The walls of the hall are covered with ex-votos—red, yellow, and pink fabric embroidered with a thanksgiving formula and the name of the faithful, along with pictures and paintings. The dim light takes on the red and golden hues of the silky offerings, while at night the candle flames bathe the dozing, restless, expectant bodies in a flickering glow. For the celebration of the Nine Lords, the sixteenth of the third month according to the lunisolar calendar, crowds gather to pay tribute to them. However, the faithful flock to the slopes of the mountain and the temple all year round.

The divinatory practice of dreams is usually associated with other mantics and this is also the case on Shizhu shan. Climbing the mountain is both a quest supported by the various techniques offered along the way, and a pilgrimage along a trail studded with places of worship. Shizhu shan rises five hundred and thirty-four metres above sea level. Stone steps take the pilgrim gradually up to the great gateway to the mountain, i.e., to the temple. Between these two points, one passes through several stages that all require their offering of incense, to the extent that the slopes take on the air of a huge incense-burner dotted with bushes of red sticks giving off pale smoke that mingles with the low-hanging clouds. “Four sacred springs, twelve rocks engraved with memorial inscriptions, seven peaks, six grottos, three cliffs each with their tale or legend and pavilion” where gods such as Guanyin are worshipped make up the stages of this climb.

A shrine of Guanyin

As is always the case in China, in places of pilgrimage, each grotto and each rock are "alive" and bear an inscription telling of the site's past. A map gives specifications about the landscape. The mountain is populated with spirits and divinities. Of course, it is principally the territory of the Jiuxian, and the climb is a kind of encounter, a progressive communion with their souls, *hun* 魂, that reside there. In front of the belvedere lies an important site for their memory and cult. It is a sort of rocky peak, a natural feature, in front of the temple's terrace and connected to it by a narrow bridge that stretches across the vertiginous drop between the two areas. It is said that the outcropping is the mortar in which the Nine Immortals prepared the elixir of immortality from the alchemic substance cinnabar. The faithful who wish to conceive a child cross the daunting bridge and pray, on the metaphorical "field of cinnabar," to the immortals to grant them one.

The Jiuxian's field of cinnabar

There are many other landmarks. Certain stones bear inscriptions engraved there by famous "dreamers" in homage and thanksgiving to the Jiuxian: Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130–1200), the philosopher of the Song dynasty; Ye Xianggao 葉向高 (1559–1627),

a prime minister of the Ming dynasty and native of Fuqing, the supposed author of the temple's divinatory slips; the traveller-geographer Xu Xiake, and many others who are rightly or wrongly honored here. By this yardstick, the mountain seems to be studded with sites of events, sites where an incident, an encounter, a vision, or an even more tenuous event occurred for such and such a pilgrim, anticipating his subsequent dream. The mountain is both this divinatory path as just described and the site where, suspended like imperceptible traces, reside the dreams that all have dreamed for more than a thousand years. Throughout the ages collections of dreams have apparently been conserved in the temple. Despite the presence of the souvenirs of the most famous visitors, which are the pride of the temple, pilgrims from all social classes have always come here—peasants and educated people, labourers and ministers, men and women (who make up the majority). Dreaming, studying the dreams and "putting them into action" are considered to be a useful task for managing one's life.[9] It is not idle daydreaming that takes place here, but two types of "work"—an attempt at interpretation and prognostication as well as a seeking enlightenment.

II. Zhuge's Divine Numbers, *Zhuge shenshu*

Shizhu shan is an emotive place for many reasons. The name Stone Bamboo—or Stones and Bamboo—was given to the mountain because of its many bamboo rhizomes wrapped around the rocks, giving them the appearance of a tapestry while the slopes of the mountain resemble a torrent of leaves. This "tapestry" of vegetation echoes the dreamlike, mysterious atmosphere created by the many divination practices associated with dreams that are performed there. Climbing and descending the mountain is an expression of asceticism that reveals a secret meaning intimately bound to the person who ascends the mountain and to his or her life. Each stage

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[9] For a comparison with Greece regarding dreams, cf. Michel Foucault, *Le souci de soi. Histoire de la sexualité* (Paris: Gallimard, 1984), vol. 3: chap. 1, on Artemidorus' Interpretation of Dreams, a book from the 2nd century CE.

Climbing the mountain

of the stone stairs that climb the mountain, each terrace, is occupied by a soothsayer who offers his services: physiognomy specialists read the map of the body, the structure of the face or the lines of the palm; specialists in astrological horoscopes, decipher the destiny inscribed within the eight cyclical signs of birth; and experts in glyphomancy, i.e., "divination by breaking down words" (from "glyph," inscription, a hollow mark), which most often consists, strictly speaking, of "splintering writing" as Artaud would have it, or "dismantling" it, *chaizi* 拆字, as the Chinese say.[10]

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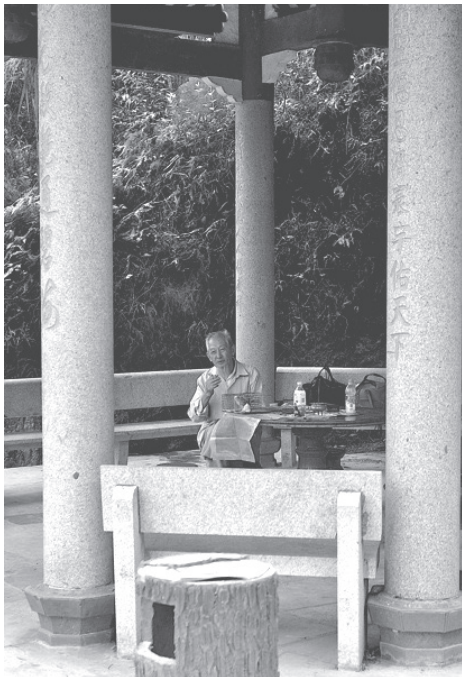
[10] Antonin Artaud, *Le théâtre et son double*, in *Oeuvres complètes* (Paris: Gallimard, 1978), vol. IV, 7–137. Wolfgang Bauer, "Chinese Glyphomancy (ch'ai tzu) and its uses in present day Taiwan," in Sarah Allan and Alvin P. Cohen eds., *Legend, Lore and Religion in China, Essays in Honor of Wolfram Eberhard on His Seventieth Birthday* (San Francisco, CA, Chinese Materials Center, 1979); Brigitte Baptandier, "Le pont Loyang: des mots, des humains et des dieux," *Langage et société* 57, *Métaphore et diglossie en contexte ethnologique* (1991), 9–43. See also Brigitte Baptandier, "La biographie de la mère. La tablette à écriture," in *Du corps au texte*, eds. Brigitte Baptandier and Giordana Charuty (Nanterre: Société d'ethnologie, 2008), 111–50; and "Le texte en filigrane," ibid., 7–24.



Climbing the mountain

An ancient divination method that bears the name of its supposed inventor, Zhuge Liang 諸葛亮 (181–234), provides a particular example of this. In all likelihood, Zhuge's name was given to this ancient divination method that took shape from various borrowings over the centuries in order to endow it with the prestige surrounding the illustrious strategist Zhuge Liang who lived during the heroic era known as the Three Kingdoms period (220–265).[11] Maybe this kind of divination is all the more fascinating because of the intimate relationship that is established, here, with the dream, itself often taken as a return toward a landscape in which writing seems to be a constant sign to be interpreted, to bring out its internal logic. In short, the encrypted and random aspect of some divinatory writings—the coding and decoding—is a part of the culture and literature. It involves a skilful play between the written character and its analysis, and great significance is given to chance, to lapsus, to "spelling mistakes," and therefore to unconscious desire, *yi* 意. This method of divination consists of examining the words of a sentence written by the pilgrim, which contains—without revealing overtly—his or her secret question. I saw this method performed by

[11] Other divinatory methods are also attributed to him, such as the *Maqian ke* 馬前課 for example. Cf. Steve Moore, *Maqian ke. A prophetic text attributed to Zhuge Liang. Preliminary translation and commentary*, http://www.biroco.com/yijing/Maqian_ke.pdf (2012) (consulted November 20, 2015).

the soothsayer Shi Hansheng, 施漢生, who has been settled on Shizhu shan as a soothsayer for years, "halfway" *banlu* 半路 through his life, having lived as a family man until he was about sixty. This man, now 73, had until then lived a secular life—a difficult life, incidentally, that led him to consult a Buddhist master from Shizhu shan who, having retired at Xi chansi 西禪寺 in Fuzhou, has since died. Little by little, Shi Hansheng progressed in his personal construction, leaving his family and establishing himself on Shizhu shan as a soothsayer. He uses the divination methods of the *Yijing*, the *bagua* 八卦 as well as Zhuge's Divine Numbers, *Zhuge shenshu* 諸葛神數, all methods that have nothing specifically Buddhist about them and are also used by Daoists and "secular" soothsayers. His eldest son has now taken over his work as a soothsayer in Fuqing, and a second son, deaf and dumb, currently assists him on Shizhu shan. He lives permanently on Shizhu shan where he has built a sanctuary of the "Purification of the Spirit" *Qingxin* 清心 at the very place where a spring originates—a sign of a favourable geomancy—indicating his desire to put an end to the incessant agitation of thought. He has, however, gradually established a network of followers and actively participates in the mountain's transformations and the construction of the new temples—Buddhist and Daoist—that are being built with generous donations from the faithful who have become rich and from Taiwanese pilgrims whose families were originally from Fuqing, as well as with a grant from the provincial government. This is where I met him over twenty years ago, at the place where he practises divination by "Zhuge's Divine Numbers."

This divination is practised in several different ways: either with sapeque coins, *Zhuge jinqian shenshu* 諸葛金錢神數, or with grains of rice to give the divine number sought, *Zhuge shenshu mizhanfa* 諸葛神數米占法, or with characters of writing, *Miben Zhuge shenshu* 秘本諸葛神數. Each of these methods is based on two possible texts: one is encrypted, illegible as a "continuous" text but which is said to contain three hundred and eighty-four hidden predictions;[12] the other is "in plain text" revealing the three

[12] This version is generally found in almanacs. I have a version in the almanac of
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hundred and eighty-four enigmatic oracle poems extracted from the encrypted text, each in lines of four or five characters (of sixteen to twenty characters in total) ready for the soothsayer's interpretation.[13]

To practise divination with sapeques, one uses a set of ten coins. The method is simple: while asking one's question of the divine numbers, one shakes the coins numbered from zero to nine in both hands. Then a first coin is taken with the left hand from the right hand. The coin's number is noted down. This is done three times and one thus obtains a three digit number. If it is higher than three hundred and eighty-four, this magic number is subtracted from the total figure as many times as necessary. This gives the number of the oracle to be consulted in the "plain text" of the three hundred and eighty-four poems. If a zero is picked three times running, the oracle must not be consulted for ten days. Divination using grains of rice is somewhat similar: using the left hand, one takes the grains of rice held in the right hand three times. The figure obtained follows the same rules as for the sapeques and refers to the same "plain" text.

(Note 12—*Continued*)
Yongjing Tang 永經堂, ed. Wing King Tong CO LTD (Hong Kong, dating from the year 丙子年, 1996). Cf. Xue Yuntong 薛允通, *Zhuge shenshu* 諸葛神數 (Taiwan: Ruisheng shuju, 2013), which gives two versions: encrypted and explicit, with a description of the various methods and uses. See also, amongst others, Youxian jushi 有閑居士, *Wanshi wen lingqian* 萬事問靈籤 (Zhengzhou: Zhongzhou guji chubanshe, 1995). Xie Xiangjing 謝祥京, *Zhuge shenshu* 諸葛神數 (Haikou: Sanhuan chubanshe 三環出版社, 1991). Ye Jinqian 葉錦鑒, *Bagua shenshu Zhuge Liang yishi miben* 八卦神數——諸葛亮遺世秘本 (Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 1994 Cf. also Zhang Guiguang 張桂光, in ed. Hu Fuchen 胡孚琛, *Zhonghua daojiao dacidian* 中華道教大辭典 (Beijing, Shehui kexue chubanshe, 1995), 836, which presents this divinatory method in the section *Zhuge shenshu*. See also Martin Palmer (ed.), *T'ung shu: The ancient Chinese almanac* (Boston: Shambala, 1986), 142–49.

[13] Cf. Xue Yuntong 薛允通, *Zhuge shenshu* 諸葛神數 (Taipei, Ruicheng shuju, 2013). The translation of the oracle text "in plain text," from the Chinese, is by Stefan Kappstein (trans.), Zhuge Liang: *Shen Shu—Das Orakel der Heiligen Zahlen* (Seeshaupt and München: Ryvellus Medienverlag, 1994). For the French translation from the German, see Christian Muguet (trans.), Zhuge Liang*: Shen Shu. L'oracle des nombres sacrés* (Paris: Éditions Médicis, 2004). It also gives a commentary of the poems. A translation into Portuguese also exists, and perhaps into other languages too.

Here, however, we examine its practice with writing and encrypted text, as I observed it in Shizhu shan and as it is described in the almanac.[14]

III. The Secret Book of Zhuge's Divine Numbers, Miben Zhuge shenshu

Zhuge's method features in most almanacs under the title "*The Secret Book of Zhuge's Divine Numbers,*" *Miben Zhuge shenshu* 祕本諸葛神數. It is presented as "a classic mantic, and one of the most authoritative." It is made up of mathematically encoded numbers, *shu* 數.[15] The method consists of analyzing hermeneutic encryptions connected to a possible tale of origins, a story from elsewhere. This naturally raises the question of the origins of this text. This is the answer provided by the almanac, accompanied by Steve Moore's translation:[16]

> This text comes from an old manuscript, which was very fragmentary. It has been handed down from remote times and is largely unknown to the world. According to tradition, it was written by Zhuge Wuhou of the Han [dynasty]. In all, there are [384] predictions, similar to the 384 lines [of the Yijing]. Long and short sentences are mixed together. In my opinion, its judgement of good and bad luck is profound and inexhaustible. Compared with Jin Qian and Maqian divination, the

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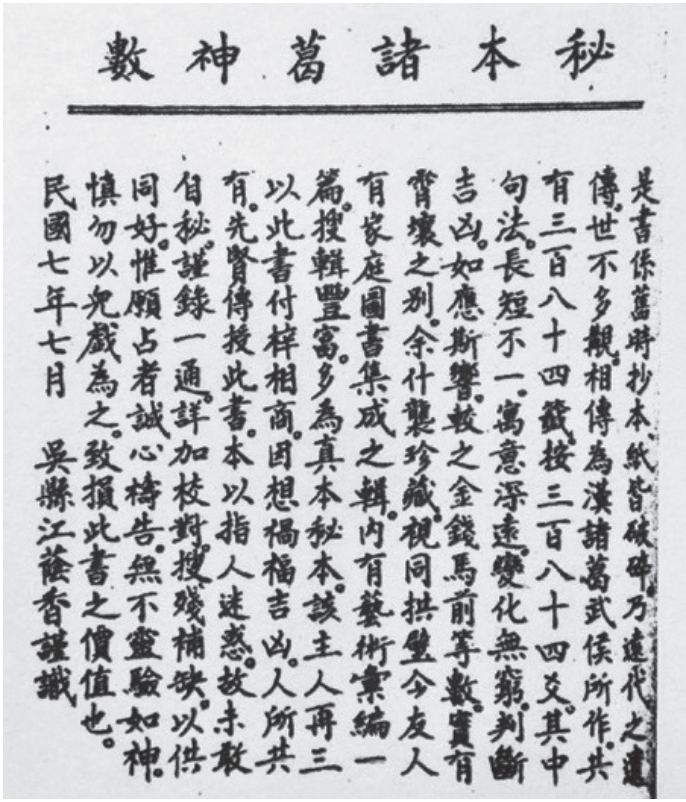
[14] For earlier versions of research on this text with regard to writing, cf. B. Baptandier, "La méthode divinatoire de Zhuge," in Écritures: sur les traces de Jack Goody, ENSSIB. http://barthes.ens.fr/colloque08/pdfOK/BAPTANDIER.pdf (Lyon, 2008). This article entitled "Writing as a threshold between the worlds—glyphomancy in China" was also presented during the *L'Hétérogène de l'écriture* conference organised by Brigitte Baptandier, Liliane Gherchanoc and Alain Sounier, Association *Éphémère laboratoire,* Espace culturel La Faïencerie (Creil, March 27, 2010).

[15] For an analysis of mantics with numbers, cf. Marc Kalinowski, "La divination par les nombres dans les manuscrits de Dunhuang," in Isabelle Ang and Pierre Etienne Will, eds., *Nombres, Astres, Plantes et Viscères. Sept essais sur l'histoire des sciences et des techniques en Asie orientale* (Paris: IHEC, 1994), 37–88.

[16] Steve Moore, "Lost (and found) in translation: The Shenshu 神數 attributed to Zhuge Liang 諸葛亮. A review article," www.biroco.com/yijing/Moore_Shenshu.pdf (2012), 6 (consulted on November 20, 2015). Cf. Richard J. Smith, *Chinese Almanacs* (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 1992), 71–72, who, according to Moore, provides an excellent survey of such works.


秘本諸葛神數

responses are very accurate and correspond to everything in the world. A friend of mine has a large and prized library of books on such arts of which this is the most treasured volume, and I repeatedly requested that he allow it to be printed so that mankind's fortune and misfortune, and good and bad luck, could be made available to the public. The old sage passed down this text to resolve people's confusion, rather than to be mysterious, and it should always be used respectfully, to avoid injury and contribute to well-being. If one divines with sincerity, the answers are always divinely right. Be careful not to play with this book or you will destroy its value.

7th month of the 7th year of the Republic [1918].
Respectfully written by Jiang Yinxiang of Wuxian [an old name for Suzhou].[17]

[17] Martin Palmer (ed.), *T'ung shu. The ancient Chinese almanac* (1986), 142, gives
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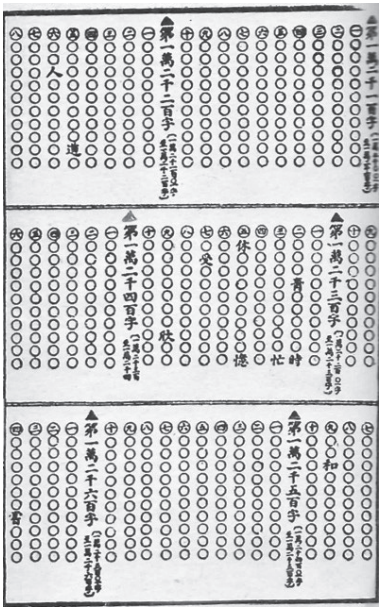
A page in the almanac *Zhuge shenshu* (characters 100 to 600, *diyibaizi* 第一百字 to *diliubaizi* 第六百字)

Enigmatic as it is, we shall have to make do with this proposition typical of legendary origins and texts created over the centuries, and eventually attributed to famous figures such as Zhuge Liang (181–234)—who probably had little to do with the text to which he nevertheless lends his name and his aura of an outstanding strategist, also known by his Daoist name Crouched Dragon, Wolong 臥龍.[18] It is thus associated with the context in which Zhuge Liang lived, the era of the Three Kingdoms (220–280), illustrated by the heroic epic of the same name, *Sanguo zhi yanyi* 三國志演義 in which he figures alongside the historic heroes Liu Bei 劉

(Note 17—*Continued*)
a very similar Chinese version, followed by his own translation, deemed too imprecise by Moore.

[18] This text may be compared with other mantics also attributed to the famous strategist—we have already mentioned the *Maqian ke*, translated by Moore (2012)—and thought to be literary derivatives of the Book of Changes, *Yijing* 易經.



A page in the almanac *Zhuge shenshu*

備, and Zhang Fei 張飛, and their enemies such as Cao Cao 曹操.[19]

The method is based on a very unusual text in that it cannot be read continuously; the words, despite following on from one to another, do not make up a "text," although sometimes we may come across a sequence of characters that makes sense. It is also dotted with empty circles. These "blanks" do not signify missing characters nor do they represent punctuation marks or elements that refer directly to the *yang* lines of the hexagrams of the *Yijing*,

[19] Luo Guanzhong 羅貫中 (1330–1400?), *Sanguo zhi yanyi* 三國志演義, based on the work by Chen Shou (3rd century). The Three Kingdoms (220–280) are those of Wei 魏, Shu 蜀, and Wu 吳. Cf. Jean and Angélique Levi (trans.), Louo Kuan Tchong (author), *Les Trois Royaumes* (Paris: Flammarion, 2009). See also Moss Roberts (preface and translation), *Three Kingdoms: A Historical Novel* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2014). The epic has also been dramatized in traditional and modern plays, and adapted for the cinema. Cf. the DVD, *Les Trois Royaumes. L'intégrale de la Saga,* with Tony Leung, Takeshi Kaneshiro, and John Woo.

associated with black circles, symbols of *yin* lines as in the *Maqian ke*, for example. There is nothing like that here—these circles are "holes" from which, as we shall see, meaning emerges. The book contains twenty-four pages, each formed of three horizontal tables composed of blocks of vertical lines, and each containing ten characters, i.e., a total of one hundred per block (ten times ten characters). These are either characters of writing, *zi* 字, or "circles," *quan* 圈, indicating the absence of a word at this point. We have, then, a kind of text "with holes."

The further we read, the more circles we encounter. While the groups of characters seem relatively consistent in the early pages, the blanks gradually increase in number, and in the final block of one hundred, there are only six characters for ninety-four blanks.[20]

This text is said to contain 384 predictions comparable to those written on the "divinatory slips," *qian* 籤, evoking by their number (384) the "lines" (*yao* 爻) of the *Yijing* hexagrams. It is, then, an encrypted text, as its name *Miben zhuge shenshu* 秘本諸葛神數 indicates.

The person consulting the oracle must write three words, and only three, expressing a hidden question whose content will not be revealed to the soothsayer. These three words must then be reduced to the number of strokes of which they are respectively composed, and the start number—that is the sum of the three numbers—is thus obtained. The text is then consulted to find the sign—a character or empty circle—that corresponds to this first number. Then the number 384 (the magic number) is added to the initial figure, and this is done as many times as is necessary to form other words making up the answer to the question submitted for divination until a "hole" is reached that will "punctuate" *quandian* 圈點 the research and complete it. A certain number of words are thus obtained that must then be put together to make a few phrases of four characters (or more, depending on the case) that make sense, and are then interpreted. An enigmatic text emerges from this coming and going between the written characters chosen to ask the

[20] In total, there are 127 blocks, each with 100 characters, i.e., 12,700 characters (between 500 and 600 per page). There are around 7,445 characters and 5,255 circles.

question, the strokes they are made up of and their numbers, which refer to new words written in the text of the *Miben Zhuge shenshu*.[21] The poem of a few lines thus created constitutes the answer to the question posed by the utterance. The poems extracted in this way from the encrypted text *Miben Zhuge shenshu* always refer to one of the poems collected and published in the "plain" text of the *Zhuge shenshu*: it is always one of its 384 oracles, whatever the words offered for divination. This is why, in order to save time and patience, they say, soothsayers often prefer to use an explicit text rather than "dissecting" the lines and "breaking them down" into numbers, referring the three words offered by their client as a question back to characters.

We have, then, two texts, one illegible (*Miben Zhuge shenshu*), indecipherable, coded and encrypted of 384 predictions, studded with holes or blanks from which magically emerges an oracular, unexpected, unpredictable meaning, which, however, is *always already* there in the first place. And the other, legible text (*Zhuge shenshu*), the result of deciphering and decoding, presenting in plain text the hidden secret of the encrypted text, causing its hidden face to emerge. There are no longer any blanks or holes, unless the number originally drawn is a triple zero, which prohibits any consultation of the oracle.

IV. A Personalised Text

Zhuge's method, despite appearing extremely precise and codified and obeying the law of numbers, nevertheless integrates some specific parameters. When breaking down the words, any lapsus in the writing is also left uncorrected and taken into consideration as it has been written, such a spelling mistake (e.g., if a dot or stroke is missing from the chosen character), or a confusion between two homophonic characters. For the final interpretation of the oracular poem thus obtained, the personal "code" of the person consulting

[21] This coming and going resembles other types of writing such as computer language. See Clarisse Herrenschmidt, *Les Trois écritures: Langue, nombre, code* (Paris: Gallimard, 2007).

is also taken into account: their "eight birth characters" *bazi* 八字, the direction of the journey they took to reach the soothsayer, the time at which they arrived, the instrument they used to write the three enigmatic words, etc. In this way, a kind of personalised text is created within which is found—almost physically—the person consulting the soothsayer.

In short, the written words of a hidden question are "peeled back" and reduced to the strokes of which they are composed to obtain numbers that allow a new text to emerge, which, once written and chanted in phrases, constitutes an oracle in response to the initial question, formulated inexplicitly, to be interpreted with regard to the person questioning his or her destiny in the form of a personalised "improvization" or elaboration.

Put another way, someone "believed to know"—the soothsayer—is there to point the person consulting him to a discourse *already inscribed and encrypted*, and lead that person to find *the* answer there, to a question of which the soothsayer is ignorant and that the patient believes he knows, but which, in reality, is gradually transformed as the final oracle emerges.

And neither is the answer to the patient's secret question *explicitly* expressed in the text of Zhuge's divine numbers, which is illegible and full of gaps. It is in its gaps, its holes, its blanks that the meaning, the response to the secret desire of the person consulting emerges. This situation is a perfect illustration of the idea that desire, "although articulated, remains inarticulable," as Lacan observed.[22] Here, the holes or blanks "punctuate" (*quandian*

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[22] Lacan, *Le séminaire Livre XXIII, le Sinthome,* ed. J. A. Miller (Paris: Le Seuil, 2005). As Jacques Alain Miller puts it (March 18, 2009) "Choses de finesse en psychanalyse" XII, *Cause Freudienne*, 2: "When he developed his theory of desire, at the time of Seminar VI and his writing 'La direction de la cure,' he emphasized that desire is inarticulable, to conjoin to it that it is articulated; it is articulated in the signifiers, without, nonetheless, delivering its final word. And indeed, the final word is what remains, in psychoanalysis, always wrapped in problems, in other words, as an aporia. The final word is the basis of appointments: 'See you next time!' (laughter). And when the final word arrives, when we stop, by whatever means, the final word remains suspended, the final word remains problematic. Hence the idea of granting an extension for those that think they have the final word. This extension of the analysis is what Lacan

(*Continue on next page*)

圈點) the creation of a text in response to this secret desire and serve as windows onto the real.[23] This clearly illustrates the fact that the unconscious text does not have the same logic as the conscious text. And it is this logic, and not the fact of being unconscious that characterizes the unconscious.[24]

As with the divinatory dream practised on Shizhu shan, those who use divination by Zhuge's divine numbers fear projections of their own desire that are too great, which would give a distorted dream, here a "parasite" message—in other words, they fear missing the "impassibility," the other dimension of "sincerity," *cheng* 誠, that leads to the truth.[25] It is the sincerity, *cheng,* of the

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(Note 22—*Continued*)
called 'la passe.' It means 'Continue talking! To others, to two others—not just to a single person anymore—so that they tell it to a jury who will consent that you have the final word of your business.'"

[23] "And the real, most of the time, only emerges in the form of anguish in the window frame of the fantasy." Le Toullec and Vaneufville (2012), *Dessins de lettres—Psychanalyse, littérature, théâtre* (11th A.l.e.p.h. symposium, Lille, 2010). With regard to the "blank" and the spaces it opens up, see Anne-Marie Christin, *Poétique du blanc. Vide et intervalle dans la civilisation de l'alphabet* (Paris: Vrin, 2009) (collection Essais d'art et de philosophie). See also *L'image écrite ou la déraison graphique* (Paris: re-published by Flammarion 2009, [Champs Arts]).

[24] Cf. Pimbé http://www.daniel-pimbe.com/pages/les-maitres-a-penser/page-18.html (consulted June 13, 2015): "These two objectives correspond exactly to the two Freudian theories on the unconscious. In order to give meaning to an oversight or lapsus, one must first see it as a lacuna, imagine the missing text and try to reconstitute it by inserting, between the conscious intention and the act, the unconscious intention not to commit the act or to commit a different act. However, one also has to accept that this unconscious intention does not merely disrupt the first, that its specific tendency, its "particular property" is, instead, to form with the first intention a compromise, to allow the subject to do what he has to do whilst satisfying his desire to do the contrary, but in a non-serious mode, as if it were merely an oversight, a mere lapsus, excusable because of tiredness, etc. Oversight and lapsus are thus the little masterpieces of the unconscious system, subtle ways of giving into the pleasure principle without overtly transgressing the principle of reality."

[25] Cf. Brigitte Baptandier, "Entrer en montagne pour y rêver," *Terrain* 26 (March 1996). Jacques Gernet, *Le monde chinois* (Paris: Armand Collin, 1972), 257, discussing ancient philosophical values in the thinking of Li Ao李翱 (ca. 772–841? CE), writes, "The truth–which is perfect sincerity (and impassibility), *cheng*–is beyond any distinction, any opposition between fundamental nature and passion. We find here the fundamental dialectic play of the *chan* school

(*Continue on next page*)

desire, *yi* 意 that gives access to the inspired emotion, which produces the dream.

> A theory of the "objective dream" develops in these conditions. As a woman on a pilgrimage said to me, "you get someone else to dream, without revealing the question to him, and if the dream corresponds to the secret request, then you know that it is a 'good dream'." In this context, one is wary of a "parasite" dream, caused by a desire that is too strong, or even by a demon. It is as though desires are taken for dreams/realities. . . . A great number of pilgrims thus make use of "dreamers," people who "know how to dream," in other words, how to produce this substance, this image/object, and capture a message from the gods.[26]

This is perhaps why it is so important that here, too, the meaning of the secret question remains hidden, as it is when a person asks someone else to dream for them at the temple of the Nine Immortal Carps, Jiulixian. We thus end up creating a kind of unconscious, random text that is ultimately ambiguous and heterogeneous.

V. "Manufacturing" a Text

In reality, of course, and as stated in the preface to the *Miben Zhuge shenshu*, the choice of the number of three hundred and eighty-four hidden predictions deliberately corresponds to the three

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(Note 25—*Continued*)
transposed in the vocabulary of the classics and the Mencius." According to Jacques Alain Miller, "Choses de finesse en psychanalyse," *Cause Freudienne* XII (March 18, 2009), 2: "The truth is the master-signifier of Lacan's teaching at its beginning. He places it as distinct from exactitude, the truth is not saying what is, it is not matching the word with the thing–according to the ancestral definition–the truth depends on the discourse. In analysis, it is a question of making truth of what has been. There is what was missing to make truth, the traumatisms, what constituted the hole –which Lacan called "*troumatism*" [from *trou*, the French for hole]. It involves summoning the discourse of what had not been able to take up its place, to say what one had not been able to say, or what one had said in a biased way, aside–analysis is the chance to rectify what one has said wrongly. To say. The solution is to say. This has been popularised in psychoanalysis with the slogan "*the words to say it*."

[26] Brigitte Baptandier, "Entrer en montagne pour y rêver," *Terrain 26* (1996), 111.

hundred and eighty-four "lines" (*yao* 爻), or "strokes" of the sixty-four "figures" *gua* 卦, or hexagrams (sixty-four by six) of the *Yijing*, the *Book of Change*.[27] It is as though Zhuge's text conserved the "traces," as they are called, the "lines" of the mutations of the universe, through which the meaning (an oracle) emerges, forcing its way through. Thus, the words chosen by the pilgrim to ask his or her secret question, reduced to the lines that compose them, could be compared to the handful of milfoil stalks used for *Yijing* divination purposes. Hidden within is the *infinitesimal seed of change* that, once disclosed, enables action. This instant will be represented here by these blanks, these circles that punctuate the divination. In short, they will be the equivalent to the line that marks the change from one hexagram to another, the tipping point. When one lands on a circle, the answer to the question emerges in the form of the solicited poem now completed. Furthermore, even if one finds no trace in this text of the hexagrams that make up the *Book of Changes*, nor of the commentaries that have been added to them, some authors still strive to match up the oracle poems of the *Shenshu* and the *Yijing*, whilst esteeming the attempt to be "somewhat forced."[28]

As we have seen, the three hundred and eighty-four poems of the *Miben* extracted into plain text have also been translated, firstly into German from the Chinese by Kappstein (1994), and then into

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[27] Cf James Legge, *The I Ching* (republished New York: Dover, 1963); Richard Wilhelm and Etienne Perrot, *Yi King. Le livre des Transformations* (Paris: Librairie de Médicis, 1973). François Jullien, *Figures de l'immanence. Pour une lecture philosophique du Yi king* (Paris: Grasset, Figures, 1993).

[28] Xue Yuntong 薛允通, *Zhuge shenshu* (2013), 78 ff, gives the text of the *Zhuge shenshu* in plain text (79 *ff*.), accompanied by correspondences he establishes with the *Yijing*. He adds a commentary that he attributes to Shao Kangjie 邵康節 (i.e. Shao Yong 邵雍), followed by his own. As specified by A. Arrault, *Shao Yong (1012–1077), poète et cosmologue*, Mémoires de l'Institut des hautes études chinoises XXXIX (Paris: De Boccard, 2002), 173–186: Shao Yong has been credited with two divinatory works: the *Meihua yishu* 梅花易數, and the *Tieban shenshu* 鐵板神數, both visibly apocryphal dating back, at the earliest to the Ming dynasty. Attributing them to Shao Yong can probably be explained by the fact that his writings include a certain number of numerical speculations (not indisputably divinatory) and several anecdotes that portray him as a soothsayer. This *yuanzhu* 原註 is part of the same legend.

French from the German by Muguet (2012), and into other languages as well. Strangely, neither the German nor French translations make any reference to the Chinese edition, nor do they mention the encrypted text (*Miben*), which, we should note, is strictly "untranslatable." The Chinese text is thought to have been written by Zhuge Liang, and he is designated as its author, and is the "signatory" of the book in the German and French versions.[29] But as Muguet (2012, p. 456) writes, "The author of the text is thought to have been Zhuge Liang. The oracle should, therefore, be considered his work. In reality, knowing whether or not he is really the author is irrelevant." "Although most of the verses are written in the style that was common during the Three Empire period, certain passages of more modern craftsmanship indicate that modifications and additions were made a millennium later, simply because the archaic style of certain lines had become incomprehensible to contemporaries of the period of Song and Yuan" (p. 457). This point is certainly doubtful, since the texts—both the coded text and the decrypted text with its three hundred and eighty-four poems—not to mention its somewhat enigmatic origins, are in all likelihood far more recent. Their association with the Three Kingdoms period and its heroic strategists lends them a legendary, magical aura. Moreover, as Muguet himself explains, perplexed (and to whom we leave full responsibility for this explanation) (2012, p. 454): "The text was probably written around 220 CE. However, the theory cannot be totally excluded that major modifications were made later (. . .) The text is original to the extent that it is a veritable literary and spiritual counterpoint to the *I-Ging* (. . .). The author of the sacred numbers has quite simply taken up the number of verses, in this case 384, i.e. the 64 x 6 lines of the hexagrams of the *I-Ging*. However, the content of the text goes in a totally different direction: it contains powerfully poetic lines borrowed from the diversity of the natural processes and normal unfolding of events connected to human relationships."

The most fascinating aspect of this method is undoubtedly the

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[29] On the subject of the signature, see Béatrice Fraenkel, *La signature. Genèse d'un signe* (Paris: Gallimard, 1992).

juxtaposition of the two texts, encrypted and explicit, which simultaneously reveals its two facets, unconscious and conscious, the plain version having been extracted from the coded, illegible text. Steve Moore deplores the fact that the magic of the encrypted text has been destroyed by the extraction into plain text, reducing these "Divine Numbers," *Shenshu,* to a mere game by revealing their secret:

> For a start, the whole notion of the answers "appearing by magic" from a bloc of unintelligible text has been abandoned, with all three hundred and eighty-four answers now being already extracted and appearing in order, generally one to a page; each answer has also been provided with an explanatory commentary. Predictably, the original consultation method has had to be discarded as well, and Kappstein's translation and the various editions derived from it, have turned the *Shenshu* into a lot-drawing oracle, with ten coins.[30]

We could, therefore, conclude "traduttore, traditore"[31] because the reduction of the text to its plain version certainly betrays it, but only if one sidesteps the other, encrypted version, as is the case in these translations. And if the Chinese soothsayers make use of this double text (encrypted and legible), we might wonder if it is only "to save time," as Shi Hansheng cheerily claims on Shizhu shan. On the contrary, it is the interdependence of the two facets that makes sense, like the warp and weft of a single fabric revealing its pattern. It is precisely the weaving of these two languages, these two texts that we are interested in here. We could, then, consider this divination method using the "text with holes" of the *Miben Zhuge shenshu*, as closely resembling the "writing machine," the "mystic writing pad" to which Freud compared the psychic apparatus and

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[30] Steve Moore, "Lost (and found) in translation" (2012), 9.

[31] Joachim Du Bellay (1522–1560), *La deffence et illustration de la langue françoyse* (Paris, Librairie Droz, 2007) (1549), chapiter VI. "Mais que dirai-je d'aucuns, vraiment mieux dignes d'être appelés traditeurs que traducteurs? vu qu'ils trahissent ceux qu'ils entreprennent exposer, les frustrant de leur gloire . . ." [But what shall I say of some who truly deserve rather to be called traitors than translators? For they betray those they undertake to reveal, denying them their glory]."

its very essence, memory.[32] The mechanism of memory, as we know, resists and opens up to the intrusion of the trace. The oracle obtained by the person consulting Zhuge's Numbers intrudes into a "holed," lacunary text, comparable to a memory in which it is unconsciously etched, revealing the expressed desire with regard to his or her life, for it to be, according to him or her, a "good life." The question it raises is not of knowing if the psyche is really a kind of text, but rather, what is a text?[33]

VI. The Nine Immortal Lords

But let us return to a Daoist myth, the legend of the Jiuli xian 九鯉仙, the divine masters of the mountain. The simplest of them, mentioned in the book of mirabilia, *In Search of the Supernatural, Soushen ji* 搜神記 (*xia*, p. 58), describes them simply as nine blind brothers who, to escape the murderous rage of their father, He Tongpan, took refuge in the mountains to the northwest of

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[32] Freud describes this process, referring to the idea of the "mystic writing pad." See "L'Esquisse pour une psychologie scientifique," in *La naissance de la psychanalyse* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, collection Psychanalyse, 1996 [1895]) and *La note sur le bloc magique*, in ed. Jean Laplanche, Œuvres complètes-Psychanalyse, Vol. XVII (Paris: PUF 1992 [1923–1925]). Cf. also Jacques Derrida, *L'écriture et la différence* (Paris: Le Seuil, 1979) (Points Essais), 293–340.

[33] On this subject of text as an anthropological subject matter, see Brigitte Baptandier and Giordana Charuty (eds.), *Du corps au texte. Approches comparatives* (Nanterre: Société d'ethnologie 2008). See, notably, Brigitte Baptandier's introduction, "Le texte en filigrane": "We wanted to know under what conditions can anthropology make use of ancient and founding texts constituting references for the communities studied, the annotations and exegeses, the contemporary interpretations with dogmatic and/or scientific aims? How can it provide an anthropological perspective of them? What can it contribute for licensed specialists of textual study, philologists or historians? The premise put forward at the start of this study was that the texts were not merely a description of the real, but interpretations of some of its elements to which they gave meaning, which affects the real. The problem posed was, therefore, both a problem of meaning and of a text's authority, for those that recognise in it a certain participation in truth: sacred writing or a work considered as founding, in any field of knowledge." in Brigitte Baptandier, ed., *Du corps au texte* (2008), 13–14.

Xianyou where they became immortal by means of alchemy. Each of them then mounted a carp and disappeared, and for this reason, a temple was built in their honor near the Lake of the Nine Carps.

There is another book, the *Shenxian tongjian* 神仙通鑑 (VII, art. 7 and 8), *The Comprehensive Mirror of Deities and Immortals,* quoted by Doré (1931, IX: 190), which contains the following version, elaborating somewhat on the central theme. Having become immortal, the nine brothers set out for Mount Sumeru in the company of Taiji Zhenren 太極真人 (the Real Man of the Great Ultimate). They came at the invitation of the king of Min 閩 to Fuzhou's Jade Mountain to demonstrate their extraordinary magic skills and, upon leaving, left the king a bamboo stick with which the fifth brother had transformed a dragon. This episode led to the temple being built in Fuzhou on Jade Mountain, where the stone mortar said to have been used in their alchemy can still be seen today.

However, the oral version of this legend as told on Shizhu Shan in Fuqing elaborates a different aspect of the same story. I record it here as the soothsayer and interpreter of dreams Zheng Zonghua recorded it in his written monograph of the temple[34] and as it is also to be found in the *Annales légendaires de Min, Mindu bieji* 閩都別記 (1987, II: 523–525).

The Nine Immortal Lords 九仙公 lived under the reign of the Emperor Wu of the Han dynasty (140–86 BCE). At the time, the Emperor had appointed a certain Wu Zhu as king of Min. The father of the nine future immortals, a man named He, was governor, *taishou*. The king's minister, *chenxiang*, was called Bao Jie and he played an important role in their story. Governor He had only one wife, Dame Lin. She gave birth to nine sons, all blind except the eldest, who could see with one eye. The entire story revolves around the fact that the father could not bear the image

[34] Zheng Zonghua was a specialist interpreting dreams and divinatory slips at Shizhu Shan. He wrote a monograph on Shizhu Shan of which the Bureau of Religions did not approve. In 1993, he gave me this book, with a collection of dreams on Shizhu Shan by pilgrims from different times, the text of the divinatory slips, and his own interpretation. He has now retired.

his disabled sons reflected upon him, or, to adopt the Chinese point of view and language, he could not tolerate what his sons' disability did to him, causing him to "lose face." A child should be the image of its father, resembling him as closely as possible in the same way that a man owes a son to the generations before him so that the genealogy and the cult of ancestors can be perpetuated. A disabled child is an insult to the entire lineage and proof that its shared essence, its *jing* 精, is corrupted. Their very unloving and very short-sighted father therefore wished to kill them to erase his shame, his loss of face. But the family intervened in their favor and they lived at the rear of the garden, cloistered in a room where they remained sitting around a stove without food or sleep and without thought for the cold or heat. "Like a binding thread around the hearth at New Year" as they say, meaning the united family at this transitional time of year.

One day, as the father was offering a banquet to the minister, the nine sons burst into the room in grotesque fashion and greeted them. The father was in despair, while the minister asked them questions—questions that were very strange indeed. He asked them, "Are you brothers from the same womb?" to which the brothers replied, "Yes, we are as hands and feet," which, despite being the usual expression in Chinese, is interesting nonetheless. The minister continued with his questioning. "Could you be separated?" To which they replied, "No, we shall live and die together." "What do you desire, in that case?" asked the minister. "We wish to retire to the mountain as hermits." But, fearing they would become beggars and humiliate him further, the stubborn father refused. So the minister promised to supply them with provisions and took them to Fuzhou, to Yushan, the Jade Mountain. After three years, during which they refused any food and practised internal alchemy and the refinement of cinnabar, and distilled and ingested plants, they obtained the drug of immortality, which they swallowed. Having concluded their ascetic training and paid a visit to their benefactor, whose offers of help they had, however, declined, they wished to visit their parents to take leave of them. The father, seeing them arrive in rags and still in single file, could no longer bear his shame. He ordered a servant to take them to the bridge that spans the

river Min in Fuzhou, and drown them, which the servant resolved to do. But upon arriving on the banks of the river, the nine brothers, as of one mind, all threw themselves into the water and disappeared. It is said that they did this to purify themselves. A moment later, their heads reappeared at the water's surface, and, miraculously, their eyes were open! The eldest brother continued to outdo the others, now having an additional, third eye on his forehead. They then turned into carps, the fish that symbolizes longevity, and swam off to the south. They reached Xinghua, where there is a lake that still bears the name Jiuli hu 九鯉湖, Nine Carps Lake.

After swimming in its waters for several days, they turned into nine Daoists who set off for Fuqing's Shizhu Shan, where they became deities. Later they gave the minister, their benefactor, a divine diagram, a charter of the universe, which allowed him to succeed with his plans to redesign the city. The minister, and then the father and the entire family, including their pets, soon rose up "to heaven in the middle of the day," where they, too, became immortal.

In the language of the tale, because of their blindness, the nine sons are equated with animals. They walk holding onto each other's clothes, in single file like rats; they arrive in front of their father forming a big snake; and, again, always holding on to the one in front, in single file, although this time the Chinese expression says "as a string of fish," as they eventually throw themselves into the river, where they indeed become carps before reaching the state of immortality. Between the two states—human or animal and immortal—there is still room for the state of clown, a term their enraged father saddles them with. The buffoon is a classic character in the legends of immortals and martial arts. Certain elevated souls are able to recognise this character beyond his unflattering appearance, and they are, then, rewarded by him.

This tale presents a certain number of oedipal pointers according to a very specific modality shaped by Chinese culture.[35]

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[35] For an analysis of another Oedipal story, the child divinity Nezha, see Meir Shahar, *Oedipal God, The Chinese Nezha and its Indian Origins* (Honolulu:

(*Continue on next page*)

The nine sons are born blind, a state that predisposes them to transcendent vision and divination. While there is no prediction establishing that they will kill their father, their blindness nevertheless constitutes an inherent threat to him: they cause him to lose face, lose his social standing, cutting him off from his lineage, the continuous marrow of the generations of his forefathers. There is no incest here either. And yet there is reference to a consubstantiality between the nine brothers and their mother, Dame Lin, that is inacceptable: they are "as hands and feet," born "of the same womb" and inseparable, instead of being the image of their father. When he drives them out, they come together around a stove, "as a tie that binds," the image of a united family at the cyclical rite of the New Year; also, the stove hints at the alchemic quest for immortality that they are to undertake. Their true departure, however, to the Jade Mountain, makes the meaning even more explicit. They "enter into the mountain," they undertake the regressive asceticism of Daoism: refining the self by means of "internal alchemy" that corresponds to an elaboration of breath and vital essence, the "embryo of immortality." This implies that they endeavour to give birth to themselves by returning to the womb/mountain, dispossessing the "old body" in order to become immortal. Their return, as a result of this process that they conclude, completes the symbolic "murder" of their father who is, in the story, the true blind man. He once again condemns his sons to death and it is then that they are transformed, and join the *dao*: they purify themselves by jumping into the river, they obtain transcendent vision, the object of their quest, and they become Daoists after spending a liminal transformative phase as fish. Fish are at the same time in relation with the world of the dead, the universe of *yin,* and water, as well as being the symbol of immortality.

(Note 35—*Continued*)
Hawai'i University Press, 2015). See also David Johnson (ed.), *Ritual opera, operatic ritual. "Mu-lien rescues his mother" in Chinese Popular Culture* (Berkeley, University of California, Publications of the Chinese Popular Culture Project, 1989).

The theme—fundamental in China—of filial piety, takes on a peculiar paradoxical colouring: its supreme accomplishment takes place—as is very often the case—by means of the symbolic murder of the father.[36] Here, after these incidents, the father, who has not been able to recognise the true nature of these sons who have made him lose face, is nonetheless looked after by them: they make him "rise to Heaven in the middle of the day" with all his family, including his pets. We could cite many other examples of rebellious sons or daughters who nevertheless save their stubbornly-misguided parents. These are, it could be said, the sons of "nightmares." The nightmare here involves blurring the orthodoxy of the image of lineages in order to enhance its essence. This coincides with the hypothesis of Strickmann (1987), according to which the demons of dreams are in fact the dead of past generations, a theme that E. Jones (1951) elaborates in his own way.[37] As for the good minister who was able to see the ascetics in these nine blind brothers, he became a civilising hero and founder of the city thanks to the "true map," a magic diagram that revealed the very essence of the site, before joining the others in the immortals' paradise.

Refining breath and essence, communicating with immortals, achieving enlightenment and transcendent vision, the journey of the soul and transformation, crossing the frontiers of the worlds, producing generations, demonology—the themes of the "novel" of the Nine Lords are not foreign to a conception of dreams of which desire, sincerity/impassibility, affinity and vision are the bedrock. Writing, the favoured medium of divination in the method of Zhuge's Divine Numbers, is also a threshold between the worlds, an interface between conscious and unconscious language.

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[36] See Brigitte Baptandier. "Du meurtre symbolique du père et de l'aspect insaisissable du présent," *Extrême-orient, Extrême-Occident* (2012), Romain Graziani and Rainier Lanselle (eds.), special issue *Père institué, père questionné, The Father in question*, 277–311.

[37] See Michel Strickmann, "Dreamwork of psycho-sinologists: doctors, Taoists, monks," in C. T. Brown (ed.), *Psycho-Sinology. The Universe of Dreams in Chinese Culture* (Asia Program, Woodrow Wilson international Center for Scholars, 1987). See also Ernest Jones, *On the Nightmare* (New York, Liveright: 1971).

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文字作為連接不同世界的「門檻」——測字術在中國

貝桂菊

摘要

本文關注的是對生命的意義、無意識的慾望，或者說「命運」的探詢方式。文章提出了通過占卜對隱藏意義進行解密這一問題。文字在這裡作為占卜的測算手段，被視為連接不同世界的「門檻」以及揭示意識與無意識兩種語言間「延異」的途徑。位於福建的石竹山為祈夢、夢境孵化等各類占卜方式提供了合適的土壤。石竹山的主神是化身為鯉魚的九鯉仙君，他們的傳說正展現了對隱藏意義的尋求過程。當地占卜者對《諸葛秘本神數》一書的運用讓人不禁思考：什麼是文本？如何探討對文本的實際運用、加密和解密？如何解釋社區群體將一份文本奉以為「真」，儘管它很可能是偽作。

關鍵詞：文字、占卜、文本、解密、命運、無意識、《諸葛神數》