

*Brief Note:*

## “The Seal of the Jungle Woman”

One particularly interesting example in the history of therapeutic sealing, *Ch'ang-chü-li tu-nü t'o-lo-ni chou-ching* 常懼利毒女陀羅尼咒經 (*Dhāraṇī-Spell of Jānguli, the Poison Woman*), is said to have been translated by a monk named Gupta, apparently active in China during the 630s;<sup>1</sup> but (like many other Tantric and proto-Tantric ritual texts) it is extant only in a single manuscript copied in 1152 and preserved in a Japanese monastic library. The text is interesting in its own right, as an early document in the Buddhist cult of the goddess Jāngulī (“Jungle Woman”), described here as an ascetic virgin of great beauty dwelling on the northern side of the Himalayas, dressed in deerskin and adorned with all sorts of poisonous snakes, and with other venomous serpents as her companions and playfellows.<sup>2</sup> This singular woman is said to have presented the Buddha with her

THE EDITORS of *Asia Major* offer here the closing part of a publishing project with the late Michel Strickmann. We had approved his “Seal of the Law” (see *Asia Major* 6.2 [1993]), but then in editorial discussions realized that a long section of that piece represented a lively excursion into the history of sealing (sigillation) that might stand well on its own. Prof. Strickmann agreed. At the same time, he submitted a typescript for consideration in our issue *in memoriam* Anna Seidel. This was published last year: “Saintly Fools and Chinese Masters (Holy Fools),” *Asia Major* 7.1 (1994), pp. 35–48. We present here the excised portion of “Seal of the Law.” It represents what might be called *Asia Major*’s role in bringing out the posthumous works of Michel Strickmann. Publishing progress is being made elsewhere. The author’s *Mantras et mandarins: le bouddhisme tantrique en Chine* was issued in Paris by Gallimard in 1996; and there is currently movement concerning other unpublished works.

In order to set the text for “The Seal of the Jungle Woman” we have culled two previous, larger versions of Strickmann’s sigillation study. One of them contained an additional footnote or two in the “Jungle Woman section” that we utilized, along with some notes on separate sheets. An additional footnote (no. 4) was placed into the following article based on Strickmann’s references on those sheets. We also added bibliographic notes 1, 7, and 8, below, and emended the opening sentence of the article.

<sup>1</sup> See the work printed as no. 1263 in *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* 大正新脩大藏經 (Tokyo: Taishō issaikyō kankōkai, 1924–35; hereafter *T*). The three sets of seal figures, printed below, are all taken directly from *T* no. 1263.

<sup>2</sup> The Buddha rather spoils this splendid image of independent womanhood (the sort of image that Buddha regularly spoiled) by clarifying – quite unnecessarily, to our minds – that even though Jāngulī chooses to appear in the form of a woman, she is not really a woman at all, but is in fact a *man*; since thanks to their miraculous powers, Buddhas and Bodhisattvas

powerful spell. When recited in the presence of deadly dragons or serpents, it stuns them, smashes their heads, smashes them and causes their blood to flow out, and (after all this!) binds them so that they are unable to move.

If one of the Buddha's disciples simply *hears* Jāngulī's spell recited, he will be safe from snakebite for the next seven years. As is usual in such cases, the spell is specifically intended for the particularly difficult conditions under which Buddhists will have to live as the end of the world and the end of Buddhism approach.

The spell is stated to be highly potent against every sort of toxic envenomation: not only from the bites of snakes and scorpions but also toxic states manifesting as swellings, tumors, buboes and wens, as well as toxicity originating in mountain springs and streams, in contact with raw gold or other poisonous *pharmaka*, and by various sorts of witchcraft (*ku-tu* 毒術).<sup>4</sup> Jāngulī's spell is to be recited over water, which is then swallowed by the sufferer. Such water is to be held in the mouth while the spell is recited by him silently seven times, and then all the root causes of the envenomation will be removed, and he will come to no harm. The necessary ritual includes painting a detailed image of the goddess Jāngulī: such ritual instructions are often excellent sources for iconography, and this short text is no exception. The goddess is to be depicted in her deerskin garments.<sup>5</sup> Later descriptions of her in Sanskrit and Tibetan texts assign various attributes to her hands (of which she sometimes has two, but sometimes four or six): an exorcistic fly-whisk, a serpent, a cluster of snake-dispelling peacock feathers, a sword, a poisonous flower.<sup>6</sup> In this medieval Chinese text, however, Jāngulī is given just two hands; in the right is held a poison-subduing sword, in the left is a poison-controlling *wooden seal*. It is clear that this goddess of the Himalayan wilderness has been incorporated into the Buddho-Taoist complex of

are able to take any form they choose in order to conquer the various sorts of poisons. This sort of rationale, we should note, is typical of Buddhist scripture.

<sup>4</sup> On *ku* poisoning, see Paul U. Unschuld, *Medicine in China: A History of Ideas* (Berkeley, U. of California P., 1983), pp. 16–30; H. Y. Feng and J. K. Shryoek, "The Black Magic in China Known as Ku," *JAO* 55 (1933), pp. 1–30.

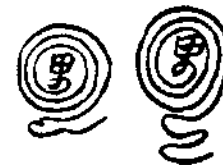
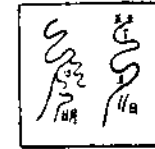
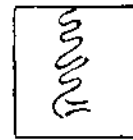
<sup>5</sup> An image of Jāngulī appears in the long handscroll painted by Chang Sheng-wen 張勝溫 (completed 1173–76) kept in the National Palace Museum in Taipei. A color reproduction is in Li Lin-tsan 李霖燾, *Nan-chao Ta-li-kuo hsin tsu-liao te tsung-ho yen-chiu* 南詔大理國新資料的綜合研究 (Taipei: Kuo-li ku-kung po-wu-yüan, 1982), p. 110, image no. 99 (Li misnumbers the images on this page; it should be image no. 97). For the goddess as a form of Kuan-yin, see Rolf A. Stein, "Avalokiteśvara/Kouan-yin, un exemple de transformation d'un dieu en déesse," *Cahiers d'Extrême-Asie* 2 (1986), pp. 17–80.

<sup>6</sup> Marie-Thérèse de Mallmann, *Introduction à l'iconographie du tantrisme bouddhique* (Paris, 1975), pp. 198–99.

seal-therapy, which we have been reconstructing.

The rest of her iconic panoply is similarly colorful. She is adorned all over her body with intertwining serpents, wreathed into finger rings and armlets, bracelets, and anklets. In front of her is to be painted a boy dressed in blue, holding a bowl of water in one hand and an incense burner in the other. Spread out in front of her should be painted all sorts of toxic fruits and poisonous potions. All about her mountains are to be painted as well tigers, wolves, lions, venomous dragons (that is, cobras), vipers, and all sorts of other wicked deadly serpents, surrounding her on every side. This lively icon is to be placed within the ritual area; five bowlsful of broth of aconite should be poured out to it in a clean place, as an offering, and other poisonous plants should be burnt as an incense-offering to the goddess whose spell is then recited 7,000 times; or, more effectively, 30,000 times; for the highest potency, 70,000 times.

The text then illustrates two square seals. For the first, one is to use wood from a jujube tree that has been struck by lightning. It should be 1.7 inches square. Its use is twofold; first it is to be printed on paper, which is swallowed by the patient. The second seal, slightly smaller (1.3 inches; see left-hand seal here) and simpler in inscription, should be made from white sandalwood. It is to be employed in the same manner. Next, five little talismans are presented, each suggesting a curling snake (below), which are to be drawn in black ink upon the point of envenomation, as well as being written in vermilion on paper, and then swallowed.



Then comes the text of a talisman for writing in vermilion on paper, sealing in an envelope and carrying about with one to keep off demonic influence (the text reads "Ritual seal of Jāngulī; Jāngulī cures the

hundred envenomations! Kill and bind! Enchant and bind! Apprehend, goddess! *svāhā!*" – clearly a Chinese adaptation of the goddess's Sanskrit spell). This too, we are told, may be written in vermilion on paper and swallowed, to remove illness and pain from the stomach, but great care must be taken not to dirty or defile the talisman. And finally, there are illustrations of a right and a left hand, on which has been carefully written which parts of which fingers relate to the treatment of which ailments – the Tantric practitioner literally holds the cure of a wide variety of illnesses in the palm of his hand.<sup>6</sup>



If this text indeed dates from the middle of the seventh century, it may also rank among the earliest explicit references to printing such curative seals on paper. The talisman for internal consumption is produced by means of the same ritual implement that impresses its powerful imprint on the patient's skin. In a later version of the Jāngulī ritual, *Jang-yü-li t'ung-nü*

<sup>6</sup> The system is described in the *Book of Exorcistic Healing* (*Chin-ching* 禁經), comprising ch. 29–30 of Sun Ssu-miao's 孫思邈 (581–682) early-7th-c. medical collection, *Ch'ien-chin i-fang* 千金翼方 (facs. of 1878 printed edn.; Taipei: Kuo-li Chung-kuo i-yao yen-chiu-so, 1965).

*ching* 穢穢梨童女經, translated or assembled by Amoghavajra in the eighth century,<sup>7</sup> the “seal” concerned is the more usual sort found in Tantric Buddhist texts, formed by the officiant using his own fingers. With this hand seal he is directed to empower his own body in five places (right and left shoulders, heart, throat, and forehead, dispersing the seal at the crown of his head). Then he is to visualize himself as the fearsome Jāngulī maiden: green, like a dragon-woman, with seven heads, four arms, all the serpentine adornments, and fire streaming from every pore of his body. Visualizing himself in this manner in front of the victim who has been bitten or otherwise poisoned, the priest takes a bowlful of water, enchants it with the goddess's spell, and with his right hand throws water at the victim's heart. As he does this, the toxic influence will gradually dissipate. It is interesting to note the application, under the patronage of a single Indian Tantric goddess, of two different but parallel procedures: the finger-seals, as usual, hand-crafted by the priest – true “*Handwerk*”; and the solid wooden seal introduced in the more sinified version of the ritual.

Significantly, a comparable juxtaposition of finger-seals and wooden seals is found in a Taoist text of the same period. The *Red Script of the Three Registers of Divinity* 太上赤文洞神三錄,<sup>8</sup> bears a preface dated 632, and the work as a whole reveals Tantric Buddhist influence. It concentrates upon a fivefold symbolism of the planets and elements (or phases of change), and after a miscellaneous inventory of practical applications for its “seals,” it lists the instruments by means of which these ends may be accomplished. First come finger-seals of Heaven, Earth, and the Five Phases (Earth, Fire, Metal, Water, Wood). They are followed by the Sanskrit spells of the Elemental Sages of the Five Directions.

Then come illustrations of five seals, one for each of the Five Phases, to be carved in “wood from a jujube tree which has been frightened by a dragon.” Finally, there are invocations of the Gods of the Five Directions: Sino-Tantric constructions, the “Great Golden Crested King of the Disc of Autonomy, of Wood and the East,” and his like-named colleagues of Fire, Water, Metal, and Earth. The applications to which the two types of seals and their divine sponsors may be put are of the familiar sort; perhaps the

<sup>7</sup> Tao, 1264b.

<sup>8</sup> Ascribed to Tao Hung-ching 陶弘景 (Tang-era contm. Li Shun-feng 李淳風); listed as work no. 389 in Weng Tu-chien 翁圖健, ed., *Combined Indices to the Authors and Titles of Books in Two Collections of Taoist Literature*, Harvard-Yenching Sinol. Index Ser. 25 (Peking: Ha-fu Yen-ching hsüeh-she, 1965).

most interesting feature of the instruction is the way in which they nonchalantly mingle both sorts of seal. If, for example, you print the five wooden seals on five sheets of paper that you then apply to your body, and next form the “Water” finger-seal over your shadow as cast in moonlight, if you then leap ten paces, your shadow will disappear. The wooden seals may be placed in a gourd, which is then taken outdoors and becharmed under the moon; brought back in and decanted, the seals will illumine your chamber, a technique termed “supplanting the moon’s light.” And if pressed on the soles of your feet in the by now familiar manner, the seals will permit levitation a hundred feet into the air; the “Earth” seal alone, so imprinted, will allow you to walk on water and cross rivers and streams. This text appears to be one of the earliest to give instructions on Taoist finger-seals, and it terms them simply “seals” (*yin* 印), rather than “secrets” or “formulae” (*chüeh* 訣), as they came to known in later Taoist usage. Their principles of construction are simpler than their Tantric Buddhist analogues, for they are essentially formed with a single hand; each finger is equated with one of the Five Phases – hence the pentadic orientation of this text – and the thumb serves as pointer or indicator. In Tantric Buddhism, the finger-seal applied to the body imprints a “seed-syllable” (*bija-mantra*) – a single syllable evocative and emblematic of a deity – on the priest’s vital points; the wooden seal, *more sinico*, makes this all perfectly concrete and tangible. A mystic gesture has been frozen into an artifact.”

Apart from seals made of wood and seals formed with the fingers, the other pairing found in sixth- and seventh-century scriptures aligns wooden seals with paper talismans. In view of their analogous form and function, this was only to be expected. The important point is the neat parallelism between the two techniques, for both are fully *official*, not to say bureaucratic. Both employ writing, the unifying cultural trait of Chinese civilization; and moreover, they both make use of an archaic or archaizing “seal script” to whose secrets only officers and gentlemen, priests and administrators, scholars and commanders were privy. The written talisman was swallowed to perform its wonders deep within the body; the graven seal impressed its authority upon the body’s outer surface. How appropriate, then, not only that the two techniques should have existed in

tandem, as complementary aspects of treatment, but that by the middle of the seventh century, if not earlier, they should indeed have coalesced, the wooden seals being used not only to impress the outer man, but also to produce the talisman that would plumb his inner depths.

” On the placement or imposition of mantras on the human body or other objects to be sanctified, a procedure known as *nyāsa*, see André Padoux, “Contributions à l’étude du Mantraśāstra,” II, *BEI/EO* 67 (1980), pp. 39–102.