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A Star God Is Born: Chintaku Reifujin Talismans in Japanese Religions

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Abstract: This article examines a talismanic culture in Japanese religions through the case of the Chintaku reifu 鎮宅霊符 ("numinous talismans for the stabilization of residences"). Whereas previous scholarship viewed the set of seventy-two talismans as having an ancient Korean origin or connection to the Onmyōdō 陰陽道 tradition in Japan, my analysis of the talismans suggests that they arrived in Japan directly from Ming China around the late Muromachi period. Once introduced, the talismans were widely adopted across different religious traditions such as Buddhism, Shinto, Confucianism, and Shugendō under the name Chintaku reifujin 鎮宅霊符神 (the god of Chintaku reifu talismans) in Japan. Locating the talismans as a major force that shaped the medieval and early modern Japanese religious landscape, this article argues that the worship was not an extension or variation of Chinese Big Dipper worship but a sophisticated form of religious mosaic, which allowed an array of different forms of doctrinal thinking, cosmological knowledge, and ritual logics to coexist.

Keywords: Zhenzhai lingfu; Chintaku reifujin; talismans; thing; materiality; Myōken; Zhenwu

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1. Introduction: Talismans—More Than a Thing

In 2020, a rather unusual tablet was opened to the public at the Palace Museum in Beijing, China, for a special exhibition celebrating 600 years of the Forbidden City (Ch. Zijincheng 紫禁城). The wooden tablet, a little bigger than the largest iPad model, was one of the unexpected discoveries made in 2006 when the palace underwent repairs.[1] During the rehabilitation work, five wooden tablets were found above the caisson ceiling (Ch. *zaojing* 藻井) at the Hall of Supreme Harmony (Ch. Taihedian 太和殿). One of them was the very tablet called the tablet of Zhenzhai lingfu 鎮宅霊符 or the "numinous talismans for the stabilization of Residences", placed in 1731. The artifact, whose installed location was right above the throne, was meant to protect the hall as well as its resident, the Qing emperor Yongzheng 雍正 (r. 1678–1735). Both sides of the tablet were densely covered with various engraved items such as diagrams, *dhāraṇī*, as well as seventy-two miniaturized talismans. Information presented on this tablet may have looked foreign to the modern viewers at the exhibition but probably not to the talisman admirers who lived in premodern Japan.

In Japan, this set of talismans has been known as the Chintaku reifu 鎮宅霊符 talismans, mostly circulated in the form of printed paper or hanging scrolls.[2] Often called "*gofu*" 護符 "*jufu*" 呪符, or "*ofuda*" お札/御札 in Japanese, talismans are an integral part of the religious scene not only in modern Japan but also in the premodern era. What is unique about the Chintaku talismans is that their worship cut across institutional boundaries such as Buddhism, Shinto, Confucianism, and Shugendō 修験道. The versatility of the talismans was central in garnering their popularity. The assumed protection by the seventy-two individual talismans was not limited to the house and its dwellers.[3] Almost like an umbrella insurance policy, their coverage extended to other domains such as buildings, residential moves, and even the nation. Elaborate rituals were devised for the aforementioned occasions, and throughout the medieval period Buddhist, Confucian, and Shinto religionists developed their own variations on these rituals. As I will explain further below, originally developed in China, the talismans came to be introduced to Japan around the

late Muromachi period (1392–1573) and reached their pinnacle during the Edo period (1603–1867).

Despite their long and deep history, the Chintaku reifu talismans have largely remained unexplored.[4] A few articles discuss the talismans in passing, and some of these studies mischaracterize them as an archaic example of "Daoist" influence on Japanese religion.[5] Some of them even claimed a Paekche 百濟 (18 BCE–660 CE) origin or Onmyōdō 陰陽道connections.[6] Some of these misinterpretations are mostly due to the lack of scholarly interest in talismans in Japanese religion, as well as the existing disparities among established religious institutions (in which Buddhist and Shinto studies dominate), leaving talismanic culture out of the normative narrative of Japanese religious praxis.[7] The peculiar paucity of studies on talismans also has to do with the dichotomy and hierarchy among the religious objects in modern scholarship. Compared with other "high" art in Buddhist visual and material culture, talismans have long been relegated to "low", "folk", "superstitious", and "magical" beliefs that were deemed unworthy of scholarly research and, therefore, studies of talismans have been marginalized (Robson 2008). Moreover, talismans have been circumscribed by rigid institutional boundaries. However, as James Robson made clear, Chinese Buddhist talismans are neither a Daoist property nor fall simply into the category of popular religion.[8] Scholars such as Stephen Teiser and Paul Copp also have warned against scholarly biases toward religious practices that do not neatly fall between the two "great traditions."[9] Rather than seeing talismans as "Daoist" elements in Japan, an exemplary "Buddho-Daoist practice" in Japanese religion, or a form of popular religious practice, this study explores them from the perspective of material culture, looking at talismans as a thing itself while taking into consideration the Japanese religious landscape and sociohistorical conditions that were closely linked to East Asian talismanic culture.[10]

The article opens with the transnational history of Chintaku talismans starting from China. Drawing on examples of the "household protection" talismanic tradition from China, the first section examines the historical development of the talismans. After charting the historical background, the second section illustrates the Chintaku talismans and their deification process in Japan. The third section offers a closer look at the material and semiotic aspects of the Chintaku talismans mandala. The study closes with reflections on the methodological issues drawn from the case of the Chintaku talismans, with the intention of providing a fresh look at talismanic culture in Japan.

2. A Genealogy of the Talisman for the Stabilization of Residences

An unassuming Shinto shrine called Yatsushiro 八代 in Kumamoto 熊本 city is arguably the birthplace of talismans in Japan. According to legend, the talismans known as the Chintaku reifu are believed to be the direct transmission from Prince Imsŏng 琳聖 (Jp. Rinshō), the Korean/Paekche prince of the seventh century.[11] At first glance, the narrative appears to echo certain historical ties between Paekche and ancient Japan. However, in fact, there are few records to prove its connection to the Paekche prince. While it is still possible that early Chinese talismanic culture had arrived in Japan via Paekche, the Chintaku reifu talismans appear to have arrived from China in a much later period.

Chintaku reifu talismans are part of the long history of talismans in China. Talismans or "*fu*" 符 (among many other Chinese equivalent terms) originated from a government document used for issuing edicts or military orders during the Han dynasty (206 BCE–220 CE).[12] By the early fourth century, the religious use of talismans had flourished (Campany 2002, p. 63). Once they underwent the ritualized act of writing, talismans needed to be "activated" with incantations or spells, as well as secret hand gestures.[13] Talismans, in this sense, were not simply a piece of paper with an illegible script and odd images or a mere representation of deities to be summoned. Rather, they were a conduit for the manifestation of deities, a miniaturized locus in which deities revealed themselves, and a sacred space for the contact between holders and spirits. Including other religious actors, early Buddhists in China quickly discerned the politico-spiritual benefits of talismans and actively adopted

them in their textual and ritual arena (Steavu 2019, pp. 14–15). During the Middle Ages (200–900 CE), the use of talismans flourished in China, but it was mostly the Song period (960–1279) that witnessed major developments in talismanic culture when talismans began to diversify and expand in their usage. They responded to various religious and social needs, such as exorcistic, therapeutic, and funerary rituals, which resulted in the inclusion of more complex visual components such as cartographic, symbolic, corporeal, and cosmic elements, as well as stylized scriptural elements in the talismans.

The idea of "stabilizing the house" (Ch. *zhenzhai* 鎮宅) with talismans has a long history. As a primary living space for humans, the idea of protecting a house against evil spirits was developed from very early on in China, resulting in a wide range of house guardian gods and rituals associated with them. The earliest mention of the *zhenzhai* talismans comes from Ge Hong 葛洪 (283–343) *Baopuzi* 抱朴子 (early 4th century), which explains the method of pasting seventy-two talismans (Ch. *qishier jingzhenfu* 七十二精鎮符) at the four corners of the house to ward off all evil spirits.[14] Directional symbolism played a key role in the further development of the seventy-two talismans. A geomantic manual discovered from Dunhuang (Pelliot Tibetan 4667v) illustrates the use of four stones of different weights that were buried at the corner of houses to subdue malefic spirits.[15] This house-protecting practice using stones is well documented in the *Jingchu suishiji* 荊楚歲時記, a text that describes folk beliefs and seasonal festivals of southern China in the sixth or seventh century (Fukunaga et al. 2003, p. 226). According to the text, at the end of each year, people dug holes at each of the four corners of the house and placed a large stone in them as a way to ensure residential protection. Various types of talismanic texts designed for "stabilizing a house" emerged in Daoist circles as well. A text titled *Wushang sanyuan zhenzhai linglu* 無上三元鎮宅靈籙 (attributed to Jinming qizhen 金明七眞, c. 5th–7th c) is one such example.[16] Three talismans are included in the text and are supposed to be effective in avoiding three calamities (Ch. *sanzai* 三災, the major three are fire, floods, and storms, and the minor three are wars, pestilence, and famine). These three talismans have constellations at the top and the bottom, a noticeable pattern found in the later *zhenzhai* talismans. Medieval Chinese Buddhists had internalized the very idea of household protection since the Tang period. In a constant dialogue with Daoist talismanic culture, the Chinese Buddhist tradition actively used *dhāraṇī* to create a unique Buddhist version in the popularized household protection enterprise. One of the most well-known of such texts was the *Foshuo anzhai shen zhujing* 佛安宅神呪經 (T. 1394, 2109,11a16–912b09). Buddhist divinities, rituals, and language were put into use to make "Buddhist" *zhenzhai* talismans and associated rituals.[17]

What makes the seventy-two Zhenzhai lingfu unique is their bold claim for all-encompassing protection in the simplest form. This idea of an encyclopedic collection for total visualization was already present prior to the Song. For instance, hieroglyphical home-stabilizing talismans of the tenth century from Dunhuang point to this collage of talismans that were readily available in the domestic setting (Figure 1). In this example, known as the *Huzhai Shenli juan* 護宅神歷卷 (P3358), twenty talismans are listed as a totalizing attempt. Each talisman—some of which are accompanied by highly graphic, imaginative renderings of anthropomorphized demons—is paired with a short, written explanation of its proper use. These talismans were used to address domestic issues such as how to drive away evil spirits, family conflicts, infertility, and nightmares, as well as how to bring good luck and good health (Mollier 2003, p. 419). While this example does not necessarily bear visual affinities with the seventy-two *Zhenzhai* talismans, the underlying idea is the same. If the number twenty was not enough to cover all domestic issues, there was also another example to show the upper limit of the protection. Very likely influenced by the culture of the encyclopedias and daily-use compendia (Ch. *riyong leishu* 日用類書) among the Song intellectuals, the ritual manual *Taishang laojun hunyuan sanbu fu* 太上老君混元三部符 (Three Divisions of Talismans of Mystery Prime, revealed by the Highest Lord Lao, Song period) contains 742 talismans in total. The text classifies a large number of talismans

into twenty-six categories, all of which are devised to dissipate countless problems in the domestic setting.



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Figure 1. The Scroll of the Household Protection Talismans, 26.2 × 37.8 cm, Ink on paper, 10th c., Pelliot Collections (P3358) Bibliothèque nationale de France.

The seventy-two *Zhenzhai* talismans partake in this large constellation of the development of talisman manuals. The talismans are collected in a text called the *Taishang mifa zhenzhai lingfu* 太上秘法鎮宅靈符 (Most Secret Numinous Talismans for the Stabilization of Residences) with an origin story.[18] The text is part of the Daoist Canon (Ch. Daozang 道藏, the 1445 edition, DZ86). Kristopher Schipper tentatively dates the text around the Ming (1368–1644) period with a question mark (Schipper and Verellen 2004, vol. 2, pp. 1235–36). The text begins with the backdrop of seventy-two talismans. According to the story, Emperor Wen of the Han dynasty 漢文帝 (203/202–157 BCE, r. 180–157 BCE) was the one who endorsed the benefits of the talisman and encouraged his people to use them. After the ideologically colored story, the text presents seventy-two talismans, each of which is paired with a short description. The aforementioned tablet discovered in the Forbidden City is a prime example of the actual use of the seventy-two talismans with ritual concerns (Figure 2).

While some of their visual elements (i.e., the eight trigrams with the Big Dipper and the seventy-two talismans) are directly taken from the *Taishang mifa zhenzhai lingfu*, many others were added based on the religious milieu in China during the eighteenth century. The front side of the tablet has four registers: (1) the Eight-syllable Mantra of Mañjuśrī,[19] (2) twenty-one deity names,[20] (3) three mantras (The White Canopy Buddha Mantra, The Tenfold Powerful One, also known as the monogram of Kālacakra Mantra, and the Six-Syllable Mantra) and (4) the eight trigrams with the Big Dipper (Ch. *xuanji bagua* 璇璣八卦).[21] The rear side displays the individual image of the seventy-two talismans. The tablet's inclusion of various incantations and separate placement of an incense burner and candles suggest the dual functions of the tablet; the tablet itself *is* a talisman but also functions as a ritual altar replete with the multimedia sensorial ritual program. While the installation of the tablet may have to do with political strife and the emperor's attempt to bring stability to the palace, its installment in the highest and the most secret space implies strong imperial support for the *zhenzhai* talismans, as well as the pan-religious nature of their worship.



Figure 2. (**Left**) Front: Zhenzhai lingfu tablet. (**Right**) Rear: the seventy-two talismans, d. 1731, 23 × 37.5 cm, The Palace Museum, Beijing.

The seventy-two talismans mirror individuals' anxieties in premodern times. As seen above, all talismans are rectangular in shape and accompanied by short explanatory descriptions containing wishes for very specific and practical benefits. Examples of these talismans are: "hitting the jackpot", "expelling demons", "preventing fire in the house", "longevity of the dwellers", "being healed", "no nightmares", "career promotion", "money fleeing the house", "good crop of silk", "good stockbreeding", "poltergeists", "not getting neighborly slander", "removing the bloody stink of the placenta", "avoiding baleful stars, or hobgoblins, or snakes, or insects", to name just a few. However, because of its illegibility, reading each talisman is no different from solving an insoluble enigma. Often, pictorial representations on talismans inform users about the invoked deity and sometimes the ritual formulas used in its worship. In the case of the seventy-two talismans, each talismanic script is combined with constellation signs as the main deity is the Big Dipper, which reigns over all these stars.

A careful analysis of the talismanic writing of the seventy-two talismans further reveals its close relationship to the traditional Chinese astrological and divination system. As James Robson has shown, the power of talismanic writing stems from its unique position between "the illegible" and "the legible" (Robson 2008, p. 138). As for the script part, one of the key features of talismanic writing is also the technique of "alienation", a process of inscription and inspiration, which means known, static characters are transformed into the unknown and alive. Through elongation, abbreviation, omission, repetition, and connections, this highly stylized cursive writing instills life into the paper. Although it is not meant to be deciphered, an attempt to "read" the *zhenzhai* talismanic script shows the rich symbolism behind its visual program. Straight lines and small circles in each talisman refer to a particular constellation that controls certain aspects of human affairs. For instance, the jackpot talisman features prominently the sixth star in the Big Dipper, that of Wu Qu 武曲. Traditionally, the Wu Qu star is associated with the Metal element, which symbolizes wealth.[22] Overall, what makes all of the seventy-two talismans unique is their mandalic presentation on a single sheet of paper. They are based on the idea of permutation, which conditions and completes the concept of totality, operating as one giant talisman.

3. The Deification of Talismans: Chitaku Reifujin in Japan

It is uncertain when Chinese talismanic culture arrived in Japan. But the earliest example of "talismanic writing" in Japan emerges from a wooden slip called *mokkan* 木簡 of the seventh century, which bears the stereotypical commanding formula, "promptly, promptly, in accordance with the statutes and ordinances" (*kyū kyū nyo ritsurei* 急急如律令)."[23] The phrase is also found in the mountain ascetic traditions of Mt. Ōmine 大峰 and Mt. Kimpusen 金峯山 from early on (Seidel 1989, pp. 300–1). Esoteric Buddhism was another major vehicle through which Chinese Daoist knowledge was transmitted to Japan (p. 302). Various technologies of protecting the house/living space found their way to the country with the introduction of esoteric Buddhism to Heian Japan (794–1185). Tang Chinese Buddhists' extensive use of the art of *zhenzhai* was observed by the Japanese Tendai Buddhist monk, Ennin 圓仁 (794–864), during his visit. In his *Nyūtō shingū seikyō mokuroku* 入唐新求聖教目錄 (Catalogue of the sacred teachings newly obtained in China, T. 2167), one copy of the *Bonji Fudō zon Chintaku shingon* 梵字不動尊鎮宅眞言 (the Sanskrit version of Zhenzhai dhāraṇī of Fudō Myōō) is included. In the text, we find the *dhāraṇī* of household protection (Ch. *zhenzai zhenyan* 鎮宅眞言), indicating that the Buddhist version of *zhenzhai* rituals was known to Ennin. In another text, the *Hishō* 秘鈔 (T. 2489), compiled by the Shingon prince-monk Shukaku 守覚 (1150–1202), the same *dhāraṇī* is contained. Known as "Chintaku Fudō hō 鎮宅不動法" in which Fudō is venerated as the main deity, the ritual was incorporated into the Tendai's and Shingon's existing Fudō worship and was performed during the mid-Kamakura period. As Anna Seidel noted, worship of the Big Dipper enjoyed long-standing popularity from the Heian to the Edo, and the constellation's power was believed not only to control one's fate but also to guard against disease and misfortunes (Seidel 1989, p. 303).[24] As part of Big Dipper worship, house-stabilizing rituals had been performed since the Heian court. According to the record from *Nihon sandai jitsuroku* 日本三代実録 (901), in the year 877, Onmyōdō masters performed a house-stabilizing ritual for a newly constructed building in the palace, as evidenced in the *Gyokuyō wakashū* 玉葉和歌集 (1314) and *Azuma kagami* 吾妻鏡 (13th c.) (Fukunaga et al. 2003, p. 233).

The introduction of the seventy-two-piece set of Chintaku reifu talismans to Japan seems to be the byproduct of the diplomatic contacts between Ming China and Japan in connection with maritime disputes around the *wako*倭寇, collectively called "Japanese pirates."[25] According to one transmission from the Yatsushiro shrine, the two extant woodblocks of Chintaku reifujin come from the fourteenth century, and the talisman woodblocks are said to be enshrined by Prince Kanenaga 懐良親王 (1329?–1383), the sixth son of Emperor Go-Daigo 後醍醐 (r. 1318–1339) (Yamagishi [1929] 1970, p. 26). After the Mongol invasions of 1274 and 1281, the exchanges between China and Japan were halted for seventy years. The newly crowned Ming emperor, Hongwu 洪武 (r. 1368–1398), however, wished to reestablish tributary relations with Japan and solve the *wako* problems in Chinese coastal areas. Between the years 1369 and 1381, numerous Ming envoys arrived on the shores of Japan. Prince Kanenaga, the head of the Office for the Subjugation of the West (Jp. *Seiseifu* 征西府) in Kyūshū, dealt with them. After the second contact from China, the prince reluctantly dispatched Japanese envoys to present tributes to the Ming emperor (Ma 2017, pp. 27–54). The *Mingshi* 明史 records details of the diplomatic missions, as well as items exchanged (e.g., Datongli 大統曆 or the Great Unification Calendar was bestowed from the Ming emperor to the prince Kanenaga in 1371). Considering the short-lived but intense human contacts and material exchanges between the Ming court and Kyūshū, it is possible that items such as the *zhenzhai* talismans may have arrived in Japan through these contacts.

The reception and uptake of the talismans were relatively quick because of the various stellar cults already existing in Japan, such as Myōken. Japanese Buddhists took the talismans as another expression of Myōken 妙見, the astral deity widely worshipped since the Heian period.[26] The identification between the two deities linked to the Big Dipper took place in major Myōken worship places such as the Nose Myōken 能勢妙見 shrine (the headquarters of the Nichiren 日蓮 tradition). With the existing astral deity worship

in the Tendai Buddhist tradition, the Chintaku talismans further enriched Tendai astral knowledge. Onjōji 園城寺 (the headquarters of the Tendai Jimon 寺門 school, also popularly known as Miidera 三井寺) was one of the major forces shaping this deification process. At Onjōji, since the Insei period (1086–1185), a deity by the name of Sonjōō 尊星王 was devised as a singular force of religious and political dominance over other esoteric star rituals and political rivalries (Kim 2019, pp. 75–88).[27] Chintaku reifujin, in this context, came to be associated with Sonjōō. Through stories and rituals, the two deities were brought together as well (Yamagishi [1929] 1970, pp. 46–47). Myōken's anthropomorphized image was also possibly influential to the personification of Chintaku reifu. The Chinese deity Zhenwu 真武 (also known as Xuanwu 玄武) came to be the "face" of Chintaku reifujin, possibly due to Zhenwu's role as the guardian of the north.[28] During the Ming, Zhenwu received imperial patronage in China, and it is highly possible that this version of Zhenwu reached Japan.[29] Onjōji seems to have played some significant role in this deification process. The temple stores several images of Zhenwu, some of which can be traced back to as early as the fifteenth century. Also, one of the earliest known examples of the Chintaku reifujin mandala (between the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries) is stored at the Ichigami 市神 shrine located on the eastern side of Lake Biwa in Shiga.[30] Given the Onjōji's interest in the astrological deities, the temple stands out as one of the best candidates behind the promotion of Chintaku reifujin. Japanese military elites in the late medieval period took part in this process.[31] Myōken was favored by prominent families such as the Chiba 千葉 clan and the Ōuchi 大内 clan.[32] Since the twelfth century, Myōken became the protective deity for the Chiba clan. Among numerous iconographical variations of Myōken, the Zhenwu-type Myōken, also known as Chiba Myōken, received strong support from the military elite (Nikaido 2021, pp. 535–41; Faure 2016, pp. 77–79; Yoshioka 1966, pp. 103–38). Considering the existence of Zhenwu-type Myōken, it seems Chintaku reifujin's depiction as Zhenwu was not an unexpected one. Other than Buddhists, Shinto and Shugendō circles readily marked their interest in Chintaku worship. In the early modern period, Ame no Minakanushi 天之御中主神, one of the first gods recorded in *Kōjiki* 古事記 and *Nihon shoki* 日本書紀, came to be associated with Chintaku reifujin.[33] Ame, no Minakanushi's name itself, hints at his place at the center of the celestial universe, whose position is said to be that of Myōken or the Pole Star. Shugendō centers incorporated talismanic culture and were involved with making talismans across Japan.[34] Some Shugendō traditions even identified Kongō Zaō 金剛蔵王 (also known as Zaō Gongen 蔵王権現) as Chintaku reifujin.[35]

The seventy-two talismans and their associated rituals gained a much broader cultural currency during the Edo period, the time when Japanese intellectuals experienced a renewed interest in Chinese Studies. Edo intellectuals' interest in Chinese culture led some Confucian scholars to look into Chinese philosophical elements (and possibly calligraphic esthetics) reflected in the worship.[36] Manuals for the use of the talismans were written and circulated. Unlike other books, however, the making of the Chintaku talismans was a highly ritualized act, as were their copying, activation, and deactivation.[37] Numerous commentaries were also published. While most works were dedicated to preserving the correct use of the talismans, others were critical of the talismanic practice. Nakae Tōju 中江藤樹 (1608–1648), for example, a Confucian thinker, extensively discussed the Chintaku talismans in his work, *Reifu gige* 霊符疑解 (c. 1640).[38] Another Confucian (along with Daoist) and corrective interpretation of contemporaneous Chintaku worship is found in Kawaradani Sanjin 瓦谷山人's *Hokushin Chintaku Reifu Ben* 北辰鎮宅霊符弁 (1792) (Yamagiwa 2007, p. 146).

During the Edo period, Buddhist monks devoted to the worship of Chintaku reifujin produced several treatises on divinity. In *Chintaku reifu engi shūsetsu* 鎮宅霊符縁起集説 (1707), Takuryō 澤了, a monk of Jūnen-ji 十念寺 temple in Kyoto, provides various mythological accounts and descriptions of rituals for Chintaku reifujin, as well as the seventy-two talismans.[39] In it, Takuryō claims that Chintaku reifujin subsumes all the teachings of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism. Several decades after Takuryō's work, a Zen monk, Kōshū 弘宗 of Taiyō-ji 大陽寺/太陽寺 in Mie Prefecture, authored *Taijō Shinsen*

Chintaku reifu kō 太上神仙鎮宅霊符考 (1750).[40] This text presents an intriguing mythological account.[41] According to the text, the temple site was chosen by Sekizan Myōjin 赤山明神, the guardian deity of the Tendai master Ennin. The text also states that the woodblock of Chintaku reifujin in the temple's possession was carved by Prince Shōtoku 聖徳 (574–622). The text creates layers of further links to establish theological connections between the talismans and Tendai Buddhism. It continues to state that the Zen master Daiyō 大用 taught Kōshū the authentic talisman-making method passed down from Saichō 最澄 (767–822), the founding figure of Tendai (Yamagiwa 2007, pp. 145–46). The text makes several hermeneutical claims to establish a new theology for the deity. For example, the Tendai notion of *zanmai* 三昧 (Skt. *samādhi*, a high level of meditative concentration) is highlighted to explain the philosophical nature of the seventy-two talismans. The text even claims that worship of the talismans helps believers to achieve *samādhi*. Whether Kōshū's attempt to establish the talismans as an orthodox "Tendai" practice was successful or not, its creative bending and interpreting of Tendai doctrine adequately demonstrate how much the talismans captivated religious intellectuals in the Edo period.

Its popularity during the period led to the spread of shrines and temples dedicated to Chintaku reifujin all over Japan. Other than Yatsushiro in Kyūshū, where the talismans were initially introduced, the Kansai area preserves their strong remnants. Horikoshi shrine 堀越神社 and Ikukuni tama 生國魂神社 shrine in Osaka advance the Paekche prince's transmission story as their origin story. Tenmangū 天満宮, Hōon-in 報恩院, Hoshida Myōkengū 星田妙見宮, and Chintaku reifu 鎮宅霊符神社 shrine in Osaka have a small sanctuary dedicated to Chintaku reifujin. In Kyoto, Kōdō Gyōgan-ji 革堂行願寺, a Tendai temple, also has a shrine of the deity built in 1813. Ōbaku 黄檗 Zen also had some ties with the veneration of the deity. Nichiren temples, along with their Myōken worship, often venerate Chintaku reifujin. Daruma-ji 達磨寺 in Gunma Prefecture and Akebono-dera 曙寺 (also known as Kanga-an 閑臥庵) in Kyoto betray evidence of Ōbaku Zen's involvement with the Chintaku reifujin worship. Chintaku reifujin 鎮宅霊符神社 shrine in Onmyōdō machi in Nara is another cultic site of Chintaku reifujin. Chintaku reifujin's iconography, known as Yatsushiro's Chintaku reifu mandala 八代鎮宅霊符曼荼羅, spread along the extensive network of the Chintaku sanctuaries. As discussed so far, the worship of talismans transcends geographical and institutional boundaries. Along with the versatility of the talismans, the lack of institutionalized Daoism in Japan created conditions favorable for the Chintaku talismans to cut freely across different religious institutions.

4. Semiotics of Chintaku Reifujin

Perhaps the most powerful aspect of the talisman is its ability to transform. Catherine Despeux notes that talismans render ordinary space cosmic and change time into cosmic time (Despeux 2000, p. 529). Arranged in the mandalic form, the two-dimensional Chintaku reifujin mandala is also meant to transform into a three-dimensional realm through contemplation and ritual. The compositions, artistic details, and materials all differ from the existing examples. One thing in common is the mode of representation, that is, the single-page mandalic presentation of the seventy-two talismans. In this arrangement, it functions as a "semiotic encyclopedia" that represents the "totality of knowledge" (Rambelli 2013, p. 68). A closer semiotic reading of the mandala and associated ritual reveals how these nonhuman entities allow humans to do creative things with them and forge meanings around them. What follows is an analysis of some of the semiotics embedded in the mandala, such as the symbolism around the north and the significance of the number seventy-two, both of which are closely linked to the mandala's transformative power. After that, a discussion of its ritual dimension, focusing on the ceremonial altar (Jp. *saishi* 祭祀), will be provided.

Among the four cardinal directions, the north occupied a special place in Japanese cosmology, omenology, and mythology since Antiquity. As the direction of the Pole Star or the Big Dipper, the north symbolized the celestial center, as well as a political authority on earth. The immovable center, the *axis mundi*, thus required a high degree of protection,

leading to several deities associated with the north, such as Myōken, Bishamonten 毘沙門天, and Zhenwu/Xuanwu. Chintaku reifujin shared the roles of which these divinities partook and was perceived as the personification of the Big Dipper. Chintaku reifujin presides over the seventy-two talismans, and they, in turn, represent the changing constellations that are observed in the sky but are intimately connected to human affairs on earth.[42] The mandala of Chintaku reifujin faithfully visualizes these celestial visions. In the mandala, as a personification of northern power, Chintaku reifujin sits on the top of the palatial structure. The diagram that contains the Three Stars of Fortune and the Big Dipper, along with the eight trigrams in the upper middle of the mandala, is taken from the diagram included in the *Taishang mifa Zhenzhai lingfu*. His image (with the face of Zhenwu), two acolytes, and the Black Tortoise (Jp. *Genbu* 玄武) are all coded with the power of the north as well as the fundamental Daoist cosmology (Figure 3). The personified Chintaku reifujin is seated on an elevated place, as would a typical Daoist immortal. The two acolytes, Hōke Dōji 抱卦童子 (lit. "revealing trigram") and Jike Dōji 示卦童子 ("concealing trigram"), embody the principle of the interplay between Yin and Yang. The former holds a banner and the latter brandishes a club, representing speedy and powerful performance (reminding us of the typical talismanic formula), yet their ongoing obedience to the order of the divine message. Genbu, a tortoise entwined with a snake, expresses the balance between Yin and Yang, but the mythic animal also symbolizes the power of the north.



Figure 3. Chintaku reifujin mandala, Hanging scroll, color on silk, 17th–18th c. Ichigami shrine, Shiga.

Most visually stimulating in the mandala are the densely chained seventy-two talismans. The number seventy-two carries a rich array of meanings. Although there are numerous variations in the arrangement of individual talismans, the total number always amounts to seventy-two. Several theories have been suggested to decode the significance of the number. According to a Daoist interpretation, based on the numerology in *Yijing* 易經, it is said that when the sixty-four hexagrams and the eight trigrams are combined together, the total number becomes seventy-two (Yamagishi [1929] 1970, p. 55). Another local tradition notes that the number corresponds to the total number of the peaks on Mt. Wudang 武當 in China, the birthplace of Zhenwu (Yoshioka 1966, p. 116). However, there

are other possible ways to make sense of why the number seventy-two represents the concept of completeness. One possibility comes from a Chinese calendric system from *Liji* 禮記, wherein one year can be subdivided into four seasons, twelve months, twenty-four solar terms, and seventy-two weeks. The number seventy-two, therefore, can be the most fractionalized unit that details human affairs and yet still signifies the entire year. "Weeks" is called "*hou*" 侯 in Chinese, and the word also denotes "'state,' 'symptomatic moment' (of a disease), or "time when something happened" (Martzloff 2016, p. 66, fn. 22). Putting all of these elements together, the visual program of the mandala is replete with spatial and temporal themes; while the northern direction elevates Chintaku reifujin to the highest altar, the seventy-two talismans featured in the mandala embody the seventy-two significant temporal moments throughout the year.

A closer look at the ritual manual for Chintaku reifujin unlocks its daily applications in religious settings. Yamagishi Kenjun, the abbot of Myōhō-ji 妙法寺 in Osaka, edited the volume *Chintaku Reifujin: Kannō himitsu shūhōshū* 鎮宅霊符神: 感應秘密修法集 (1929). Based on numerous Chinese Daoist texts such as *Yunji Qiqian* 雲笈七籤 and earlier texts on Chintaku reifujin, Yamagishi's encyclopedic text collects various myths, rituals, and visual examples of Chintaku reifujin. Although his emic description should be taken with a grain of salt, the book contains invaluable details of the Chintaku reifujin rituals, at one time concealed as completely secretive knowledge. Different rituals transmitted in different religious traditions are recorded. One of the most noteworthy is the Buddhist version of the Chintaku reifujin ritual. As seen below (Figure 4), Chintaku reifujin is identified as the Tendai Jimon's most esoteric astral deity, "Sonjō/Sonsei 尊星" (or also known as "Sonjōō 尊星王") here.

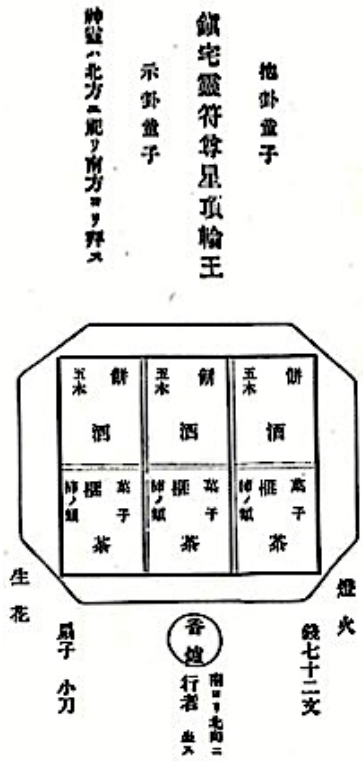


Figure 4. Ceremonial Altar for Chintaku reifujin (Yamagishi [1929] 1970, p. 52).

According to the descriptions, the image of Chintaku reifujin (along with his acolytes) should be placed in the north so that the ritual performer can face the deity from the southern direction. Various items were offered: rice cake, five kinds of tree, liquor, sweets, tea (made from the Japanese Torreya tree, called *kaya* 榧), and fruits (such as dried persimmons or dates). Under the offering altar, six other items were placed (from right to left):

a candle, seventy-two coins, an incense burner, a folding fan, a small knife, and flowers (Yamagishi [1929] 1970, pp. 51–58).

Buddhists were not the only ones who developed and incorporated Chintaku reifujin rituals (Jp. *shuhō* 修法) into the tradition. Confucian and Shinto traditions also performed rituals for the deity in accordance with their own vocabulary, cosmology, and doctrine. Except for the preparatory purification rituals, such as cleansing one's body and wearing a clean cloth, etc., each ritual invoked different deities and used varied liturgical texts and incantations (Yamagishi [1929] 1970, pp. 58–70). For instance, whereas Confucian rituals for the deity included the Emperor Wen of the Han (a faithful rendering of the Chinese original text), the Shinto version incorporated the typical talismanic commending formula, i.e., "*kyū kyū nyo ritsurei*". These wide and wild variations of ritual practices around the talismans seem to suggest that followers of the talismans made great efforts to tap into the talismans' assumed power. At the same time, these variations speak to the flexibility and adaptability of the talismans.

Talismans' forms, contents, and possibilities seem to be limitless. Through rituals, sacred power is "transferred" and "translated" to the paper in the form of a miniaturized altar. The transferal is, however, transient. At the same time, it can bring enormously transformative effects. The Chintaku talismans were not a passive, transient "thing" awaiting human use. On the contrary, they made their human counterparts do something with talismans. The talismans provided a platform where their devotees could communicate and interact with the supernatural. In that sense, talismans are not only the miniature version of sacred power (Earhart 1994) but also the embodiment of the invoked deity. The efficacy of the talismans paradoxically relies on illegibility that communicates intelligence. On an abstract level, talismans are a structure that renders visible the movement of the *qi* that connects the holder to the cosmos. On a concrete level, they are extremely specific and purposeful in their demands. When they are activated and applied, an unprotected part of the home can be protected, an afflicted body can be healed, and endangered areas can be blessed. In this sense, talismans are more than visual. They are auditory, tactile, olfactory, and somatic. In essence, talismans are a "thing" that calls for human action and acts like a "coagent" throughout their life cycle.[43]

5. Conclusions

History repeats itself in mysterious ways. Nowadays, Rakuten, one of the largest Japanese online retail companies, sells various kinds of *zhenzhai/chintaku* talismans made in China.[44] Initially developed in China as the collection of seventy-two talismans, the talismans have made their way to Japan doubly. As seen above, historically speaking, the seventy-two Chintaku talismans underwent two notable changes that were not seen in China: deification and mandalization. Once fixed as a mandala form, the earlier Chinese emphasis on writing was partially replaced by icon-based devotionalism in Japan. A close analysis of the Chintaku reifujin mandala, as well as its cross-cultural context, reveals that the worship did not simply mean an extension or variation of Chinese Big Dipper worship. Rather, it presents a sophisticated form of a religious mosaic, which allowed an array of different forms of doctrinal thinking, cosmological knowledge, and ritual logic to coexist.

The worship of Chintaku reifujin tells us a great deal about its users and the scholarly gaze upon them. It is tempting to explain away these talismanic cultures as "superstitious folk beliefs", "mumbo jumbo" practices of degenerative syncretism straddling Buddhist and non-Buddhist elements. Alternatively, one can also conveniently label them as an example of "Buddho-Daoist" worship. The "Buddho-Daoist" model, however, fails to capture the complex horizons of Chintaku reifujin worship in Japanese religious traditions. In this sense, Chintaku reifujin disturbs previous scholarly prejudices and asks us to reconsider the value-laden nature residing in the "Buddho-Daoist" conglomeration.

Through the case of Chintaku reifujin, this study attempted to situate things at the front of the historical stage as a way to understand multiple aspects of the material culture of medieval Japanese religions. By doing so, the article illustrated how things interacted

with people, ideas, and systems and how talismanic worship defies simple labeling and categorization. The worship of Chintaku reifujin cuts across the modern typology of established religions. The present study further suggests the predicaments of the typology of scholarly biases, which fail to adequately study those religious practices that fall into the cracks between institutionalized religious traditions. What hopefully becomes clear to readers at this point is that talismans are not just a medium. Rather, they are multimedia agents for transforming the illegible (talismanic scripture) into the legible (tapping into their symbolic power) through multisensorial engagements.

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Appendix A. The Preface of the *Taishang mifa zhenzhai lingfu* (太上秘法鎮宅靈符)

According to the *Shangyuanjing* 上元經, a long time ago, the Emperor Wen of the Han dynasty asked Tianlao 天老: "people keep talking about the House of Three Follies. What is it?" Tianlao replied: "the first folly is that it is located on the higher ground in the front and lower ground in the back. The second folly is living in a house located near a stream, which flows from the southern to northern direction. The third folly results from the house siting in a place where the Southern and Eastern side is on higher ground and the Western and Northern side is flat." One day the emperor covertly came out of the palace and arrived at the district of Hongnong 弘農. There, he encountered a house that had five dwellers and recognized that, in fact, it was the House of Three Follies. However, the house appeared to be affluent, with as many as fifty workmen. The emperor could not figure out why it was the case but had to return to the palace.

The following day, the emperor summoned two Yin-Yang masters. The emperor disguised himself as a Yin-Yang master, and the three of them went back to the house. They arrived at the front door and wanted to meet the owner to ask about the house. When someone saw the three, they informed the owner, and soon the owner came to greet them. The three were invited inside the house. After exchanging salutations, they sat at a table prepared with drinks and food. Haltingly, the [disguised] emperor asked the owner: "may I ask your name?" The owner replied: "My name is Liu Mingjin 劉名進." The emperor asked again: "how long have you been living here?" The owner answered: "about thirty years". The emperor said, "based on the *Zhaijing* 宅經, this house is the classic case of the House of Three Folly. Moreover, the land is ill-fated so that there is no way for people to inhabit it at this spot. Were there any methods that were used to remedy this and to turn it into a house with great fortune? And if so, could you tell me?" The owner replied: "At first, dwellers in the house continued to suffer from mischance such as losing riches and getting injured or sick for several years. Livestock and all the family members were in pain and impoverished. But one evening two strangers arrived at the door and asked for room and board. But due to the destitute situation, only a morsel of thin rice gruel was served to the travelers. After the food, the two asked: 'how come you live in this ill-fated house?' I [the owner] answered: 'we are too poor to move.' The two visitors said: 'we can tell you a method that protects your house. With it, you do not even need to move.' When I asked for the method, the two gave me the seventy-two house protecting talismans. And then they told me that 'with the protection, you will become extremely rich within the next ten years. After ten more years, your descendants will flourish. After ten more years, an emperor with a white robe will visit you'". After finishing the story, the owner said, "although this is the thirtieth year, the emperor has not visited us yet". Upon hearing this, the emperor smiled. The emperor asked again: "what happened to the two visitors?"

The owner answered: "after offering the talismans and their methods and giving a farewell speech, they left. About fifty steps away, they vanished into thin air but I also saw white smoke ascending toward heaven". The emperor said: "Can I have the talismans?" The owner immediately presented the talismans to the emperor.

The emperor took them and returned to the palace. He then ordered all the houses to have talismans to protect them and bring auspiciousness to the dwellers. With these, there were no more misfortunes. People became happy and enjoyed longevity. The descendants also prospered. Farming harvests increased, and silkworm crop yields doubled. Animals thrived. All the immoral behaviors and evil spirits disappeared. Once the mysterious talismans were put on the doors or in the house, they would protect the house for a long time. There are so many benefits of these talismans that it is difficult to list them all. Thus, these talismans came to be carved on a woodblock in order to spread them widely.

Notes

1 For the curator's report and detailed study of the tablet, see Luo (2009, pp. 6–25). I thank Dr. Wenhua Luo for his generous permission to use the image of the Zhenzhai lingfu tablet in this article. My special gratitude also goes to Dr. Lan Wu, who introduced me to Dr. Luo.

2 Paper was one of the most favored media in the making of talismans in Asia, and talismans may even have played a role in the advancement of printing technology (Strickmann 1993, pp. 291–371). While talismans were mostly drawn on paper, sometimes talismans were with such media as air, sand, or blood (Despeux 2000, pp. 534–35).

3 With the increasing demand, other types of Chintaku talismans were also devised. While the seventy-two-piece set is the most well-received, there are other sets of zhenzhai/chintaku talismans, such as twenty-eight talismans from *Chintaku nijyūhachi fusai sakuhō* 鎮宅二十八符祭作法 (1605, the text is currently stored at the Tokyo shiryō hensan-jo) and fifty-eight talismans from *Butei Ōyō Gojyū-hachi Reifu* 武帝応用五十八霊符.

4 The most comprehensive work on Chintaku reifujin is Yamagiwa Teppei's master's thesis (Yamagiwa 2009) and the survey of the historiography on the subject by the same author (Yamagiwa 2007). For secondary literature not included in Yamagiwa's survey, see Yabe (1934, pp. 3–23); Konoe (2014, pp. 59–72); Hirase (2013, pp. 21–37); and Fukunaga et al. (2003, pp. 225–35). For English scholarship that discusses Chintaku reifujin, see Faure (2016, pp. 73–76) and Dolce (2006, pp. 16–17). For the most updated general study of Japanese talismans, see Chijiwa (2010). Omamori 御守/お守り is another talismanic object that shares several characteristics with talismans. While recognizing that talismans, amulets, and charms can be used interchangeably in certain contexts, it is more precise to call them amulets, which have ornamental and three-dimensional qualities. A few thematic approaches to Japanese talismans have been made. For the use of talismans in the *rokujikyōhō* 六字経法 ritual in medieval Japan, see Lomi (2014, pp. 255–304). For an analysis of Kumano talismans as written oaths and their broader social functions in medieval Japan, see Moerman (2020, pp. 219–30). As for the talismans that deal with women's reproductive health, see Andreeva (2018) and Poletto (2021). The modern use of talismans in Japan has received more attention from scholars. For an overview of ofuda, see Frank (2006); and Kyburz (2014). For studies on contemporary amulets in Japan, see Reader (1991, pp. 168–93); Earhart (1994, pp. 611–20); Breen (2010, pp. 295–315); and Gygi (2018, pp. 423–52). Ofuda became popular among some Western collectors. For Bernard Frank's ofuda collection, see Kyburz et al. (2011). For an overview of the Japanese talismans and amulets stored at the Náprstek Museum in Prague, Czech Republic, see Kraemerová (2014, pp. 39–68).

5 Daoist scholars have argued for the "non-existence" of institutionalized religious forms of Daoism in Japan. For an overview of Daoist studies in Japan, see Kohn (1995, pp. 389–412); Seidel (1989, pp. 299–304).

6 Kanezashi thinks this is the case (Kanezashi 1974, pp. 169–80). Such a view, which is not supported by historical evidence, has been reproduced in later English scholarship.

7 Compared with Japanese talismans, there is an extensive body of literature on Chinese talismans, although most of the focus has been on pre-Daoist or Daoist talismans. For major scholarship on Chinese talismans, see Seidel (1983, pp. 310–16); Despeux (2000, pp. 498–540); Mollier (2003, pp. 405–29); Robinet (1993); Drexler (1994); Ōgata et al. (2005); and Sawada (1984). "Buddhist" talismans have also begun to generate interest in recent scholarship. For rich discussions of the shared use of talismans in the Buddhist and Daoist traditions, see Strickmann (2002, pp. 123–93); and Robson (2008, pp. 130–69). For the Ucchuṣma talismans, Yang (2013, pp. 259–316). For a discussion of dhāranī-talisman, Copp (2014, pp. 29–58). Also, on analyzing talismans and diagrams from their paratextual aspects, see Steavu (2019, pp. 11–40).

8 James Robson argues that this syncretic model is by and large a scholarly invention and calls for a different, more comprehensive approach to capture the complexities of Chinese religiosity (Robson 2008, 2009).

9 For a critical analysis of the term "popular religion", see Teiser (1995, pp. 378–95); and Copp (2014, p. 42).

10 In tandem with the increasing interest in rethinking the human-centric tendency in our work, this study seeks to think through things, in this case, talismans. As Martin Holbraad and Morten Pedersen summarize in their work on Afro-Cuban powder and Mongolian talismans, there can be two ways to take things seriously: "humanist" and "posthumanist" approaches (Holbraad

and Pedersen 2017, p. 201–2). Whereas humanist approaches attempt to raise the status of things or even "emancipate" them in terms of the ontological distinction between humans and things (p. 201), posthumanist approaches eschew such distinctions. Here I follow the humanist approach in an attempt to uncover the seminal roles that talismans played in the medieval Japanese religious landscape from the things' perspective. Such an approach allows us to see "how closely things are intertwined with the lives of humans, allowing some of the light of what it is to be human to shine on them too" (p. 202). Likewise, as Daniel Miller has shown, this humanist approach helps us view how things can be more fully understood through their associations with other things and how those associations become constituent parts of the lives of humans (Miller 2005). Along this line of thinking, this article places talismans squarely front and center, thinking through and alongside them. For more useful discussions on this matter, see Miller (1998, 2005), Brown (2001), and Morgan (2021). For studies that focus on materiality in Japanese religion and culture, see Rambelli (2007) and Kamens (2017).

11 Chintaku reifu engi shūsetsu 鎮宅霊符縁起集説 (1707). Also, see Faure (2016, vol. 1, p. 342, fn. 36). The story is found in the Higo kukushi 肥後国誌 (1772), a local gazetteer compiled by Morimoto Ichizui 森本一瑞 (1705–1784). The text provides a brief explanation of the seventy-two talismans and their iconographical details but does not mention Prince Imsŏng.

12 For instance, in early Daoist history, *fu* (talismans) and *tu* 圖 (diagrams) were interchangeably used, although *fu* was considered "male" and *tu*, "female." But, around the sixth or seventh century, distinctions between the two became more pronounced, such that *fu* denotes a relatively more text-based talisman, whereas *tu* refers to a more image-based one (Steavu 2019, p. 14, fn. 8).

13 Incantation was often part of talismanic writing (Despeux 2000, p. 535).

14 "其次即立七十二精鎮符，以制百邪之章，及朱官印包元十二印，封所住之四方，亦百邪不敢近之也。" https://ctext.org/ (accessed on 6 March 2021).

15 (Morgan 1996, p. 342). Prior to the wide use of paper or silk for talismans, stones were another medium frequently used in the ritual of quelling demons in the dwelling, which was an evolution of their original use of protecting the dead.

16 The zhenzhai talismans were not exclusively limited to house protection. One of the three talismans cited in the text is later used for *daoyin* 導引 practice, the Daoist practice of guiding *qi* and strengthening the body, in the Highest Clarity tradition. According to *Baoshenjing* 寶神經 (Scripture on Treasuring the Spirit, DZ 1319), adepts placed this talisman on their body or burned and drank the ashes (Kohn 2006, p.138). The zhenzai talismans were also incorporated into mantic practices, such as determining auspicious orientations as part of an almanac in China (Martzloff 2016, p. 297).

17 There is a set of eight talismans for household protection, known as Zhenzhai bawei jingang fu 鎮宅八位金剛符, that do not have constellations in the talismans but instead bear a discernible Buddhist name "*jingang* 金剛" or thunderbolt.

18 For the full translation of the preface, which explains the origin story of the seventy-two talismans, see Appendix A. The text is based on the edition found at: https://ctext.org/library.pl?if=gb&file=98637&page=1 (accessed on 1 April 2021).

19 The full Chinese title is *Foshuo Daweide bazi mixin tuolouni* 佛大威八字秘密心陀羅尼. It is noteworthy that the talismans were paired with the Mañjuśrī dhāraṇī. Mañjuśrī was beloved by the Qing court, which embraced Tibetan Buddhism. Already by the mid-to late-Tang, the Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī, whose earthly abode was perceived as Mt. Wutai 五台, was venerated as the protector of the emperors and guardian of the nation (Birnbaum 1983).

20 For the entire list, see *Taishang mifa zhenzhai lingfu* T. 1331, 21.0509c13-0510a04.

21 The Big Dipper consists of seven major stars and two minor stars. In later Chintaku reifujin mandalas, three stars (Ch. *sanxing* 三星, the three stars of fortune, prosperity, and longevity) are often depicted on top of the *xuanji bagua*.

22 Seven of the seventy-two talismans migrated to Korea and came to be used as the twenty-four set of Buddhist talismans in Korea. For more about this, see (Kim 2021).

23 For more about the formula, Seidel (1987, pp. 21–57); Maeda (1989, pp. 101–25).

24 For astral gods in medieval Japan, see Dolce (2006, pp. 3–44); Faure (2016, pp. 51–114).

25 Tonio Andrade and Xing Hang argue that the term "Japanese pirates" is a misnomer, at least in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, because they comprised people from China, Portugal, Southeast Asia, and the Ryūkyū Islands (Andrade and Hang 2016, p. 7).

26 The icon of Chiba Myōken 千葉妙見, for instance, is a prime example of the assimilation between Chintaku reifujin and Myōken. See Yoshioka 1966.

27 It is interesting to see that there is a parallel development on the Tendai Sanmon's side. Sekizan Myōjin, one of the principal Tendai Sanmon gods, came to be identified with Taizan Fukun 泰山府君. As the deity of the Chinese mountain, Mt. Tai 泰, Taizan Fukun is the god who controls human life. For more, see Faure (2016, p. 350, fn.148).

28 The Ōuchi clan was known as the promoter of Myōken worship. Around the fourteenth century, the association was firmly made (Hirase 2014, pp. 713–44).

29 For Zhenwu worship in China, see Major (1986, pp. 65–87) and Boltz (1987, pp. 86–91).

30 I am grateful to the kannushi at Ichigami shrine for their generous permission to use the image in this article.

31 Kusunoki Masashige 楠木正成 (1294–1336) may have been linked to talisman worship. There is a bronze mirror on which "Chintaku no reifu" 鎮宅の霊符 is inscribed, and the mirror is supposedly dedicated by Kusunoki (Yamagiwa 2007, p. 149).

[32] The Ōuchi clan was known as the promoter of Myōken worship. Around the fourteenth century, the association was firmly made. See Hirase (2014, pp. 713–44).

[33] Shinto also strategically embraced the talismanic culture. In the Yoshida Shinto, for instance, reifu talismans, known as Jingidō reiin 神祇道霊印—used in the esoteric ritual as early as the fifteenth century—played a crucial role in reifying their religious authority (Yamagiwa 2007).

[34] As Max Moerman has shown, talismans were an integral part of Shugendō tradition and also carried out various social functions (Moerman 2020, p. 219).

[35] The Tenkōzu 天罡図 at Shōmyōji temple in Kanagawa Prefecture dates back to the Kamakura period and illustrates three monstrous figures paired with a talisman. Each talisman is depicted upside-down. These talismans instruct how talismans can be used to heal certain bodily conditions. Each talisman is topped with the Chinese compound, Tenkō, meaning the northern Dipper, and continues vertically with other characters and diagrams ending with the typical commanding formula: "kyū kyū nyo ritsurei". These three figures are said to be the anthropomorphic representations of the three stars of the handle of the Big Dipper. The inscription of the manual begins with a six-syllable mantra, and one of the instructions mentions Kongō Zaō as a remedy; these astral talismans display strong Buddhist and Shugendō elements (Osaka shiritsu bijutsukan大阪市立美術館 2009, p. 183).

[36] Some Confucian scholars theorized that the Seven Emotions (Ch. *qiqing* 七情), i.e., pleasure, anger, sorrow, fear, love, hate, and desire, are none other than the earthly manifestations of the seven stars of the Big Dipper (Yamagishi [1929] 1970, pp. 20–21).

[37] For the detailed ritual manual for copying the talismans, inviting a deity to activate, Yamagishi [1929] (Yamagishi [1929] 1970, pp. 264–67).

[38] Nakae presents strong opposition to the talismans' worship based on Confucian rationalism.

[39] The full text is available at: https://rmda.kulib.kyoto-u.ac.jp/item/rb00018539#?c=0&m=0&s=0&cv=3&r=0&xywh=-2892%2C0%2C11398%2C3743 (accessed on 1 April 2021).

[40] This work was followed by another Zen monk, Hodō 甫童, from the same temple, whose work is titled *Reifu engi shuhō den* 霊符縁起修法伝 (1808).

[41] The full text is available at: https://kotenseki.nijl.ac.jp/biblio/100304034/viewer/5 (accessed on 2 April 2021).

[42] Not all Chintaku reifujin are depicted as Zhenwu. Nikaido reports that the Chintaku reifu mandala at the Horikoshi shrine in Osaka depicts Queen Mother of the West as Chintaku reifujin (Nikaido 2021, p. 538). Also, Zhongkui 鍾馗 (Jp. Shōki) is another deity often confused with Zhenwu. Zhongkui had been worshipped as the household god in China and Japan.

[43] David Morgan's idea of "coagency" (Morgan 2021) provides an apt vantage point to explain how Chintaku reifujin garnered so much interest across religious traditions. Seeing talismans as "coagents" imbued with ontological properties, it can be said that they also have the power to make humans into things, to affect our behavior.

[44] Modern visitors of those shrines and temples can also buy an ofuda in the middle of which Chintaku reifujin's name is written, rather than the actual talismans from the seventy-two-piece set.

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