The Tang and Song Dynasties saw the production of three of the most important books in the Daoist Canon in relation to medicine. These were:

Huangting dunjia yuanshen jing 黃庭遁甲圓身經 (Book of the Hidden Period and the Causal [Karma] Body of the Yellow Court, hereafter YSZ). DZ 0873;
Shangqing1 huangting wuzang liufu zhenren yuzhou jing 上清黃庭五藏六腑真人玉軸經 (Precious Scroll of the Zhenren on the Six Receptacles and Five Viscera of the Yellow Court of Shangqing, hereafter YZJ). DZ 1402;
Huangting nei jing wuzang liufu buxie tu 黃庭內景五藏六腑補瀉圖 (Chart on the Procedures for Filling and Emptying the Six Receptacles and Five Viscera according to the Inner Landscape of the Yellow Court, hereafter BXT). DZ 0432.

The importance of these three books is that they are all based on the zangfu 藏腑 theory, which was comprehensively set out in different treatises of Huangdi nei jing 黃帝內經 (Yellow Emperor’s Inner Canon) and the Huangting jing 黃庭經 (Canon of the Yellow Court), compilations which date respectively to c. 1st century CE and 2nd–3rd centuries CE. This theory divides the body’s organs into six zang 藏 inner (Yin 陰) organs and six fu 腎 outer (Yang 陽) organs. In the versions of the texts incorporated into the Daoist Canon, a real or mythical beast was selected to represent each one of the five zang organs and one fu organ, i.e. the Gallbladder. This marks a major development in zangfu 藏腑 theory made by Daoist doctors and medical thinkers in the era between the Northern and Southern Dynasties, 420–589 CE and the Song (960–1279 CE). The Lungs were represented by the lion, the Heart by the red (vermilion) bird, the Liver by the dragon, the Spleen by the phoenix, the Kidneys by the (two-headed) deer and the Gallbladder by the gui-she (a tortoise or turtle and snake entwined). These conceptions had an important influence on the practices of both medicine and Daoism. This chapter will examine and compare the six beasts based on their descriptions in the three books.

1 Shangqing 上清 (Highest Purity) Daoism developed from the 3rd century CE onwards. It had a highly literate and scholarly focus, and as the name suggests, was much concerned with the expurgation of the vulgar, popular practices (especially sexual) of earlier ‘Daoisms’.

2 Unschuld, 1985, pp. 77–83.

The discourse of medieval Chinese medicine was open to the incorporation of alternative and contemporaneous authorities about the body. One significant element was to be found in the writings and institutions of Daoist alchemy. Daoist visualisation of animal and other spirits as resident in the vital organs became a part of classical Chinese medicine. This chapter shows how esoteric ideas contributed to an ongoing search to articulate physiology. The individual functions of the organs were characterised by animal spirits, which through their natures expressed a delicate relationship between organic function and states of emotion. By looking at the way in which the text-image dynamic constituted a homology, we understand how emotional excesses could disrupt organic function and, potentially, vice versa. Thus the emotions were rooted in organic function and could, conversely, be regulated through correct visualisation.

The beasts were selected to represent their respective organs according to the principles of one or more different theories:

Xingzhuang Zhi Xiang 形狀之象 (Physical Resemblance)

The organ in question simply bears an imagined resemblance in some of its characteristics to the beast which represents it, or possibly they are associated through analogy with another object which they are both believed to resemble. These ‘intermediary objects’ are things like xuanqing 懸磬 (hanging ‘bells’), lianhua 蓮花 (lotus flowers), xuanpao 懸匏 (hanging gourds), fupen 覆盆 (blackberries), yuanshi 圓石 (round stones). This is a particular feature of the yzj, where both the beasts and the organs themselves are illustrated.

Fangwei Zhi Xiang 方位之象 (Direction Correspondence with the Wuxing 五行 (Five Agents))

In the wuxing correspondence system, the Five Agents (Wood, Metal, Earth, Water and Fire), also themselves correspond to points of the compass (East, West, Centre, North and South), and again in turn to organs of the body. So the Lungs represent duijin 兮金 (Metal) and correspond
to West; the Heart represents *li huo* 離火 (Fire) and the South; the Liver represents *shen mu* 防木 (Wood) and East; the Spleen represents *kun tu* 坤土 (Earth) and the Centre; the Kidneys and the Gallbladder represent *kan shui* 坎水 (Water) and North. However, in these three texts, only the correspondences of the Heart, Vermilion bird and South, and of the Liver, Dragon and East, are entirely consistent with the regular directional correspondences of the Five Agents.

*Texing Zhi Xiang* 特性之象 (Character of the Image)

According to the descriptions given, each of the *zangfu* has its own *xiang* 象 (image) and *shen* 神 (spirit). The descriptions of the *xiang* vary in length but are of a similar type. Once again the intermediary objects feature as described above under *Xingzhuang zhi xiang*. However the descriptions of the *shen* are quite different. They appear to use the animal imagery as metaphors for the distinctive spirit or character of each organ. This is an idea derived from Daoism of the Tang and Song. The Daoists were themselves developing the ideas of *Shenzang sixiang* 神藏思想 (spirit-organ theory) found in the *Huangdi neijing*. The latter mentions only briefly the physical form of each organ but the 3rd-century CE *Huangting jing* gives detailed descriptions of the *shen* (spirit) of each of the *zangfu* according to the characteristics of each of the associated animal spirits.

**Fei Shen** 肺神/ Lung Spirit (*zang*)

![Image of Lion/White Beast of the Lung, DZ 1402.](Figure 27.1 Lion/White Beast of the Lung, DZ 1402.)

| Spirit Image/ Designation | Bai Shou 白獸: The White Beast/Lion |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| The *yijing* says ‘Its spirit is like the white beast’ (*qi shen ru bai shou* 其神如白獸). The *yijing* has the same description except that the final *shou* character is not 鬼 (ghost) but the homophone 狩 (hunting). There is no such clear description in the *bxing*, but the picture, a lion in profile, is nearly identical to that in the *yijing*. In the *yijing* the lion is viewed from head on. On the evidence of *Shuowen* 説文 (Explanation of Characters) and the *Shijing* 詩經 poem ‘Che gong’ 車攻 (Our Chariots Were Strong), the characters *shou* 鬼 (ghost) and *shou* 狩 (hunt) were graphic variants, so it can be assumed that the Lung Spirit was called the White Beast (*bai shou* 獸). |

| Types of Shen |
|---------------|
| All three books describe the spirit of the Lungs (*fei shen* 肺神) as a *po* 魂 (earthly soul), but in differing ways. The *yijing* says the Lungs are the master of the soul (*fei zhu po* 肺主魂). The *yijing* says the Lungs give birth to the soul (*fei sheng po* 肺生魂). This slight difference in the *zhu*/*sheng* 主/ 生 formulation is repeated throughout these two books. The largely un-annotated *bxing* says: ‘the Gate of Soul (*po men* 魂門)’ is above the Jade Hall (*yu tang* 玉堂). |

| Character (not addressed in *bxing*) |
|------------------------------------|
| The *yijing* says the key characteristic of the *fei shen* is irascibility. (*qi shen duo nu* 其神多怒). The *yijing* says that anger originates in the Lungs. |

| Manifestation (Not addressed in *bxing*) |
|-----------------------------------------|
| According to both the *yijing* and *yijing* the spirit takes the form of a young boy, 7 *cun* 寸 (approximately 23cm) in height, who resides in the Lungs. |

| Principles (for soothing) |
|---------------------------|
| The *yijing* and *yijing* both prescribe controlling desires, being kind-hearted and just. Anger should be avoided and one should not allow oneself to be stirred up by others. Through control, harmony will be created within the body. *Bxing* does not specifically describe a principle of soothing the temperament of the Lungs, but it prescribes personal cultivation (*xiuyang fa* 修養法), drug prescriptions, and the six Qi/breaths method (*liu qi fa* 六氣法), along with various intra-mensual dietary prohibitions (*yue shi jinjifa* 月食禁忌法) and *daoyin* – all in great detail compared to the other two books. |
The spirit of the Lung organ (fei zang 肺臟) is a po (earthly spirit) and is characterised by being easily roused to anger. The lion is chosen to represent this force because it is associated with a similar fierceness of spirit, and is a beast that is regarded as dominating others.

**Xin Shen 心神/Heart Spirit (zang)**

| Spirit Image/Designation | *Zhu Que* 朱雀: The Vermilion Bird |
|--------------------------|----------------------------------|
|                          | Both YSJ and YZJ tell us ‘its spirit is that of the vermilion bird (*zhu que*). In BXT the image is unnamed but is very similar to the image in YSJ, and in both cases the bird is depicted in profile. In the YZJ, as with the *bai shou*, it is seen head on. |

Types of Shen

| Character | The YSJ says that the Heart dominates the spirit. The YZJ says that the Heart gives birth to the spirit. The BXT says that the Heart is the location of life’s Root Spirit (*ben shen* 本神). |
|-----------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| (not addressed in BXT) | The YSJ and the YZJ both say that the spirit of the vermilion bird is restless and unpredictable (*qi shen zao er wu zhun* 其神燥而無准), ‘flighty’ we might say in English. The YZJ also warns that all sudden unexpected ‘attacks’ on one’s health are due to its action in the Heart. |

Manifestation (Not addressed in BXT)

| The YSJ and YZJ say that the spirit appears as a young girl with a height of 8 cun (c. 27cm); she carries a priceless jade and moves in and out of the Heart. |

Principles (for soothing)

| The YSJ and the YZJ say that to achieve physical and mental peace and calm one should be filial, loyal, just and kind-hearted. Avoid a quick temper, settle the body and the spirit, and your Heart will be at peace. The BXT recommends the same practices as for the Lung Spirit above, but with no specific reference to any theory behind it. |

Summary

| The Heart Spirit is the Root Spirit. It is restless, unpredictable and liable to violent attacks. It corresponds to Fire and the South and is symbolised by the vermilion bird, the *zhu que*. |
## Spirit Image/Designation

**Long 龍: The Dragon**

YSJ and the YZJ both say the spirit of the Liver (gan 肝) is like a dragon. There is an image of a dragon which appears in each. A similar image appears in the BXT but with no descriptive text.

## Types of Shen

The YSJ says that the Liver ‘rules’ (zhu 主) the hun 魂, the heavenly or eternal soul (as opposed to the po 魄, the earthly one, which decays after death). The YZJ says that the Liver ‘generates’ (sheng 生) hun.

BXT says that the Liver is the main organ where the hun is dominant.

## Character (not addressed in BXT)

The YSJ and YZJ describe the essence of the spirit as benevolence and kind-heartedness. Benefvolent persons get their motivation from this organ.

## Manifestation (not addressed in BXT)

The YSJ it says that this spirit manifests as a young girl and a young boy together, one black and the other yellow. Each is 7 cun (c. 23cm) tall, one is accompanied by a dragon and the other holds a bottle of elixir. They move in and out of the Liver. There is a similar description in the YZJ, but there their heights are given as 1 cun (c. 3cm) each.

## Principles (for soothing)

The YSJ and YZJ both say that to calm the Liver and live a long life, one should live frugally in poor surroundings, avoiding all luxuries. This will create a higher harmony in the body.

BXT as above.

## Summary

The Liver Spirit is a hun, or heavenly soul. Its character is benevolence. Its image is the dragon (long). The dragon is associated with rain, beneficial to all living creatures. Its traditional correspondent direction is the East.
Pi Shen 脾神/ Spleen Spirit (zang)

**Figure 27.4** Phoenix of the Spleen, DZ 1402.

| Spirit Image/ Designation | Feng 風: The Phoenix |
|--------------------------|----------------------|
|                         | The YSJ and YZJ both say 'its spirit is like a phoenix' (qi shen ru feng 其神如風). The BXT does not name the creature but the image is very similar to that in the other books with only a few differences in artistic technique. |

| Types of Shen | The YSJ and the YZJ say that the Spleen is the master of one's intentions (pi zhu yi 脾主意). According to BXT, the Spleen is the pivot of the five zang-organs, and the seat of all intentions. |
|---------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

| Character (not addressed in BXT) | The YSJ and the YZJ say the character of the spirit is jealousy and that this feeling grows from the Spleen. |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

| Manifestation (Not addressed in BXT) | The YSJ and the YZJ describe the spirit as a young girl with the height of 6 cun (c. 20 cm), who circulates within the Spleen. |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

| Principles (for soothing) | The YSJ says to calm this spirit one should control sexual desire. The YZJ concurs and adds that one should not think too much. This will prolong one's life in harmony with Taiyin 太陰, cosmic Yin. BXT as above. |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

| Summary | Intention (yi 意) is founded in the Spleen organ (pi zang 脾臟). The main characteristic of the spirit is jealousy. Both the YSJ and the YZJ state that jealousy in women is caused by excessive Yin. The phoenix is selected to represent this as it is the counterpart of the dragon, which is Yang. |
|---------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
### Spirit Image/ Designation

**Lu: The Deer**  
The *ysj* and the *yzj* say ‘the spirit is like a white deer with two heads’. There is no written description of this in the *bxt* but the illustration is of a two-headed deer in a standing position, similar to that in the *ysj*. In the *yzj*, the beast is shown lying down.

### Types of Shen

Both the *ysj* and the *yzj* are vague about the spirit of the *shen zang* 肾臟, the Kidney Spirit, other than saying it is the essence of Yin. The *bxt* says that the Kidneys are the origin and storage point of all the essences.

### Character (not addressed in *bxt*)

The *ysj* and the *yzj* say the nature of the spirit is harmoniousness. Obedience in a person starts in their Kidneys.

### Manifestation (not addressed in *bxt*)

The *ysj* and the *yzj* say the spirit appears as a young boy with a height of 1 *chi* 尺 (1 Chinese foot, c. 33cm), who moves in and out of the Kidneys.

### Principles (for soothing)

According to the *ysj* and the *yzj*, to rest this spirit, one should be kind-hearted, calm and gentle. By nourishing all the things in accordance with Tai Qing 太清 (supreme purity), one increases one's essence and puts one's will in order, then one's physical form becomes whole.  

### Summary

**Jing** (essence) is the key attribute of the Kidney. This is different from medical theory of the time, which believes *zhī* 志 (will) is its key attribute. Daoism prioritised cultivating essence (**jingqi** 精氣). Its character is described as soft and obedient, virtues embodied by the deer. The two heads of the deer relate to the physical form of the kidneys. Deer also represent long life in traditional beliefs. As the Kidneys are the prenatal root of life (Kidney essence is also cognate with male sexual essence), the image of the deer expresses the aspiration for longevity.
**Dan Shen** 胆神/ Gallbladder Spirit (fu)

---

**Spirit Image/ Designation**

| *Gui-shé* 龜蛇: The Turtle and Snake |
|---|
| The *yśl* says ‘the spirit is a turtle and a serpent’. The *yzj* says ‘the spirit is like a turtle and a serpent’. No clear description is given in *bxt* and there are differences in artistic technique as well as in the illustration itself from the other two books, but it is nonetheless clearly a combination of a turtle and a serpent. |

**Types of Shen**

| Both the *yśl* and the *yzj* describe it as the essence of gold (*jin zhí jing* 金之精). This is not mentioned in *bxt*. |

**Character**

| (not addressed in *bxt*) |
| The *yśl* and the *yzj* say that the spirit’s characteristic nature is courage. Courage is rooted in the Gallbladder. |

**Manifestation**

| (not addressed in *bxt*) |
| The *yśl* and the *yzj* describe the spirit as a young boy with the height of 1 *chi*, who runs carrying a halberd in his hand. |

**Principles (for soothing)**

| The *yśl* says that, to rest this spirit, one should avoid arguing or debating with others. Be kind-hearted and just, and then you can live a long life. The *yzj* uses the same phrasing bar one character difference – the meaning is the same. *bxt* recommends personal cultivation methods (*xiúyáng fa* 修養法), the guiding and pulling (*dáoyín*) traditions of therapeutic movement, and Qi manipulation, (*qi fa* 氣法). |

**Summary**

| There is no clear single designation for the Gallbladder Spirit. The two annotated texts (*yśl, yzj*) say it is the essence of gold (*jin zhí jing*). This differs from traditional medical theory and may be related to Daoist practices. As with the deer, *gui-shé* represents long life. |
Conclusion
The three books all share the same structure with identical chapter titles and chapter orders, with each of the zangfu described in terms of its symbolic moving spirit. The illustrations in the three books are also very similar and their correspondence to the organs identical.

There are, however, some differences between the three books. In the Yuanshen jing and the Yuzhou jing, there are clear explanations for the naming of the images, and these in themselves are similar, except for some minor differences in relation to the Lung Spirit. However in the Buxie tu, there are no clear names or descriptions. Though the type of beast is the same in each book, there are differences in the style and technique of the illustrations as well as in the postures and the points of view from which they are shown.

In the Yuanshen jing and Buxie tu, only the animal spirit itself is illustrated. In the Yuzhou jing, there is in addition a simple illustration of the actual organ. Kind-heartedness and tranquillity seem to be the common factor for soothing most of the spirits in question. This idea was to be carried through to the yangsheng 養生 self-cultivation tradition of future centuries.

All told, the three books represent a continuation of earlier traditions extant in the medical classics Huangdi neijing and the more esoteric Huangting jing writings, but expressed in imagery derived directly from Daoist meditation practices. Text is simply used as an adjunct to supplement the power of the animal images. The variations from earlier wuxing and directional correspondence theories can be seen as confirmation of the influence of developments in Daoist thought and practice.

Bibliography

Primary Sources
Huangting dunjia yuanshen jing 黃庭遁甲緣身經 (Book of the Hidden Period and the Causal [Karma] Body of the Yellow Court) (ysj) DZ 0873.

Huangting neijing wuzang liufu buxie tu 黃庭內景五臟六腑補泄圖 (Chart on the Procedures for Filling and Emptying the Six Receptacles and Five Viscera according to the Inner Landscape of the Yellow Court) (bxt) DZ 0432.

Shangqing huangting wuzang liufu zhenren yuzhou jing 上清黃庭五臟六腑真人玉軸經 (Precious Scroll of the Zhenren on the Six Receptacles and Five Viscera of the Yellow Court of Shangqing). (yzj) DZ 1402.

Secondary Sources
Unschuld, P.U. 1985, Medicine in China: A History of Ideas, London: University of California Press.