

Taoist Models of *Hun* and *Po*, Part One

By David Twicken, DOM, LAc

Hun-Po is a traditional Taoist and Chinese cultural model for understanding medical and spiritual conditions. At the most basic, level it represents the multifaceted nature of yin-yang, including its dynamic interaction of opposition and inseparable unity.

Beyond this basic understanding, *Hun-Po* can also be presented in a more detailed and complex system, based on traditional Taoist and Chinese medical theories, principles and metaphysics.

Hun-Po originated in an ancient time with the legendary shamans of Chinese culture, including Fu Xi, Huang Di, Great Yu, Shen Nong and Wen Wang. These ancients discovered the early and later heaven *gua* (*xian* and *hou tian gua*), the *luo shu* nine palace magic square, the *he tu* formation, herbology, Chinese medicine and the *I Ching*, which all revealed a comprehensive view of life. From the Xia to the Zhou dynasties, these ancients created the building blocks to the eight branches of the Taoist arts, which include a view of *Hun-Po*.

Lao Tzu, credited as the founder of philosophical Taoism and deified by an emperor in the Han dynasty, made significant contributions clarifying the Taoist view of life. A profound contribution by Lao Tzu was the transition from a shaman view of many gods/deities to one encompassing unifying force, the creator of all life, and that each person has the same chance to realize and connect to the one creator and directly realize their eternal nature. Lao Tzu's classic text, *Tao Teh Ching*, is the source of religious, alchemical and mystical branches of Tao. The essence of the Taoist arts is an understanding of one's true nature. Lao Tzu's classic book (*Ching/Jing*) is one important tool to assist in realizing that goal. A common and fascinating Taoist model explaining this nature is *Hun-Po*. In true Taoist form, it is not a fixed, rigid model, but a flexible view that includes a variety of ways of expressing or communicating the Tao and life.

In the Han dynasty, the Five Elements (*wu xing*) were very popular and infused into most every aspect of Chinese culture. At this time its influence entered the classic text, *I Ching* or *Book of Changes*. The foundation text for Taoist internal alchemy is the *Can Dong Qi* or *Zhou Yi Can Dong Qi*, written by the legendary Wei Po Yang. It uses the *I Ching* as a metaphor and vehicle to explain a method of spiritual cultivation or *nei dan*. The Five Elements correspond to the five internal organs, and their relationships are found in the classic medical text *Nei Jing*, or *Yellow Emperor's Classic of Internal Medicine*. The roots of the *Hun-Po* theory can be found in three classic books: *I Ching*, *Nei Jing* and *Can Dong Qi*. The *Hun-Po* model relates directly to physical, emotional and spiritual aspects of life

This article explores common and non-common models of *Hun-Po*. My goal is to discuss and clarify the meaning of this classic Taoist model and present the central understanding common among all the models.

One *Hun* and One *Po* Based on Yin-Yang

Yin-yang is the foundation model of Chinese metaphysics; a deeper understanding is that yin-yang is a profound model containing complex and elegant patterns that are applied to every Taoist art. *Hun-Po* can be viewed as a yin-yang dynamic. An ancient method was to refer to the dragon and tiger, or the sun and moon, as metaphors for yang and yin, the two great opposing but interrelated forces. A common Taoist view is that each person contains yin and yang aspects of their spirit. The yin and more physical is the *Po*; the *Hun* is the yang and more subtle. The traditional view in common books on Chinese medicine and cosmology is that each person has one *Hun* and one *Po*. *Hun* relates to the ethereal soul and is lighter. At the time of physical death, it leaves the body to return to subtle realms. The *Po* is the corporeal soul. It is closely related to the physical world and returns to the earth at the time of physical death. The basic goal is to harmonize these two influences or energies, obtaining health, balance and self-realization. Cultivating *Hun* and *Po* is a refining process; as one refines oneself, her or she become more subtle and spiritual. At a refined state, the physical or *Po* aspects of our life support the *Hun*-spiritual aspects, leading to directly experiencing heaven on earth. The long and rich history of Taoism and Chinese medicine include many cultivation methods for refining ourselves. They include *tai chi chuan*, *qi gong*, *nei gong* (internal alchemy), sexual practice and nutrition.

One *Hun* and One *Po* Based on the *Luo Shu*

This understanding of *Hun* and *Po* links the *Hun* with the Wood element, East direction and Liver organ, and the *Po* with the Metal element, West direction and the Lung organ. From a Five-Element view, this is Wood and Metal, two elements contained in the controlling *ko* cycle of the Five Elements. These opposing energies, in both geographical and elemental nature, imply the need to be *harmonized* for the favorable qualities to manifest. This *harmonization* can occur by practicing the Taoist cultivations arts. The following diagram is the *Luo Shu*, which is commonly known as the "magic square."

Classic *Luo Shu* or Magic Square

Southwest 4	South Fire Red Phoenix <i>Shen</i> 9	Southwest 2
East Wood Dragon <i>Hun</i> 3	5	West Metal Tiger <i>Po</i> 7
Northeast 8	North Water Turtle <i>Zhi</i> 1	Northwest 6

The *Luo Shu* is the classic nine-palace diagram, believed to be founded by Yu the Great. It is a profound Taoist tool used in acupuncture, feng shui and astrology. In this *Luo Shu*, East is the dragon and West is the tiger. These are the classic metaphors for yang-yin and the *Hun-Po*. The *Luo Shu* emphasizes the importance and application of harmonizing opposing forces, a central theme in postnatal life. This model contains numerous applications, all expressing the same concept. For example, Wood and Metal are in the

controlling or *ko* cycle. When this cycle is in harmony, it is favorable. Disharmony may occur when an element "overacts" on another. The dragon can mean light and the tiger can mean dark. We desire the right balance of the two, which can change depending on circumstances. *Hun* and *Po* are physical and spiritual energies. When in balance, we live in harmony; when in disharmony, many conditions can manifest, including emotional and physical.

The *Luo Shu* or magic square contains profound numerological and cosmological relationships. Sum up all vertical, diagonal and horizontal palaces or boxes and the total is 15, revealing balance. It is this pattern that contains the 3 *Hun* and 7 *Po* numerological supports to many *Hun-Po* models. These models, and others, will be discussed in the second part of this article.

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