III. TEXT AS TU: TEXTUAL DIAGRAMS
MAPLESS MAPPING:
DID THE MAPS OF THE SHANHAI JING EVER EXIST?

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INTRODUCTION

The Shanhai jing (Itineraries of Mountains and Seas, hereafter the SHJ),¹ is a comprehensive and systematised description of the inhabited world compiled no later than the beginning of the 1st century BC, the largest of the terrestrial descriptions to have survived from Ancient China.² It is characterised by the impression of topographical accuracy, providing details of precise distances and cardinally-oriented directions between the 447 mountains described in the first part of the text, the Shanjing (Itineraries of Mountains) or the Wuzang shanjing (Itineraries of Mountains: the Five Treasuries, hereafter WZSJ),³ and the directions and confluences of rivers emanating from these mountains. Although precise distances between landmarks are not given in the second part, the Haijing (Itineraries of Seas), this does not really affect the overall impression of general topographical accuracy of the text. Indeed, in contrast to the Shanjing, which features the centre of the world (roughly corre-

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¹ The proposed translation of the text’s title will be elucidated in the course of this paper.


³ For the title Wuzang (Five Treasuries), see Fracasso (1983: 659, esp. footnote 4).