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	Sommario/riassunto	Humanity's love affair with mathematics and mysticism reached a critical juncture, legend has it, on the back of a turtle in ancient China. As Clifford Pickover briefly recounts in this enthralling book, the most comprehensive in decades on magic squares, Emperor Yu was supposedly strolling along the Yellow River one day around 2200 B.C. when he spotted the creature: its shell had a series of dots within squares. To Yu's amazement, each row of squares contained fifteen dots, as did the columns and diagonals. When he added any two cells opposite along a line through the center square, like 2 and 8, he always arrived at 10. The turtle, unwitting inspirer of the "Yu" square, went on to a life of courtly comfort and fame. Pickover explains why Chinese emperors, Babylonian astrologer-priests, prehistoric cave people in

France, and ancient Mayans of the Yucatan were convinced that magic squares--arrays filled with numbers or letters in certain arrangements--held the secret of the universe. Since the dawn of civilization, he writes, humans have invoked such patterns to ward off evil and bring good fortune. Yet who would have guessed that in the twenty-first century, mathematicians would be studying magic squares so immense and in so many dimensions that the objects defy ordinary human contemplation and visualization? Readers are treated to a colorful history of magic squares and similar structures, their construction, and classification along with a remarkable variety of newly discovered objects ranging from ornate inlaid magic cubes to hypercubes. Illustrated examples occur throughout, with some patterns from the author's own experiments. The tesseracts, circles, spheres, and stars that he presents perfectly convey the age-old devotion of the math-minded to this Zenlike quest. Number lovers, puzzle aficionados, and math enthusiasts will treasure this rich and lively encyclopedia of one of the few areas of mathematics where the contributions of even nonspecialists count.